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## **What Modals Are: Modal Verbs, Modal Words, and Auxiliary Modals**

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**Abstract.** The modals are a complicated grammatical phenomenon. As of today, the status of modals is still not precisely defined in the linguistics literature, and they are described under different names: modal verbs, modal words, auxiliary modals, or defective verbs. Modals express the result of the conversion of thought processes (deep structure) about the realization of actions into surface structure. As articles determine the status of nouns as indefinite or definite things, modals determine the relation of a person to actions or the quality of an action as realizable or unrealizable. Modals cannot truly be 'modal verbs', because they lack the morphological characteristics of verbs (aspect, voice, mood, and tense), and the term 'defective verb' is flawed for the same reason. Furthermore, they cannot be 'auxiliary modals', because they don't neutralize their main meanings when they become auxiliary. Thus, I propose to refer to these elements only as modals or modal words.

**Keywords:** modal verbs, auxiliary verbs, defective verbs, status, realizable or unrealizable, tense category.

**Introduction.** There are many questions concerning the origin, name and status of 'the modals' in grammar. It is necessary to clarify several essential issues: what the modals are, what the numerous names given to the modals denote, and what their status in grammar is.

Several different names for the modals are given in textbooks: 'modal verbs', 'modal words', 'auxiliary words', 'defective verbs' and others. First, in order to be an appropriatedesignator for this notion, each of the enumerated names above should have a relevant plane of content and a plane of expression. Second, it is impossible for a single notion to be appropriately denoted by four names. These factors indicate that this phenomenon has no certain status in linguistics.

**Materials and Methods.** This article was written on the basis of analyzing of huge number of sentences with modals. Different linguistic analysis were used in order to come to certain conclusions.

**Main part.** A human being differs from other living beings in possessing a qualitative thinking process and the ability to make inferences, judgments, and conclusions. On the basis of his/her thought process, a human being identifies positive and negative characteristics in his/her life. In solving problems, a human being takes into consideration subjective and objective written

and unwritten rules, laws, and obstacles. Only a human being has an evaluative system which works automatically, evaluating everything connected to the human being and managing his/her behavior. The objects evaluated by this system vary; they may include a person's appearance, relations, knowledge, attitude, actions and so on.

The modals are units of surface structure that evaluate only the actions that a human being intends to realize. Modals determine the necessity, possibility, or certainty of realizing these actions. Whether an action is realizable or unrealizable depends on subjective and objective circumstances or conditions. For an action to be realizable, the desire or intention of an agent is not sufficient. Certain objective conditions must also be met, such as appropriate weather conditions, sufficient finance, absence of force, etc. In the previous discussion on verbal aspect, we used the example of building a house. Everybody wants to build a house, but not everybody has the finance to purchase building materials, pay workers, acquire land, and so on. If a person has the intention and the financial wherewithal to build a house, he uses the modal word 'can': 'I can build a house'. If he has the desire, but does not presently have the funds to finance his project, he uses the modal word 'may': 'I may build a house' (in the future, if I can find the funds). He uses a modal expressing uncertainty because he doesn't know whether he'll find the money or not. If a person has nowhere to live, but he has the finances to pay for a dwelling, he uses the modal word 'must': 'I must build a house'. The above-given modals each illustrate different scenarios in which different degrees of necessity and certainty arise concerning a particular action (home construction).

If articles (indefinite and definite) help to define the status of nouns in sentential propositions, the modals similarly help to define the degree of realization of verbal actions. According to the manner in which they influence actions, the modals can be divided into two main groups: 'forcing' modals (FM) and 'straining' modals, which express the level of possibility/impossibility or certainty/uncertainty, respectively, of an action being realized. The modal words may be further subdivided into those forcing (indicating the necessity of) the realization of an action (must, shall, need, have to...); those allowing for the possibility of an action being realized (may, might...); those advising that an action be realized (should, ought to...).

For example, the modal word 'must' signals that a person has to overcome certain obstacles preventing the realization of an action. When the phrase 'you must do this' is uttered, no alternatives are offered to the person at whom this is directed: the action has to be performed. 'You must write a report'. The report will be written; otherwise, there will be negative consequences for the subject, 'you'.

Sentences with FM usually express a high probability, possibility, or certainty of an action being realized by its agent/subject. If such modals are used with negation the action has a high possibility/certainty of *not* being realized by its agent. 'Shall' also expresses a fixed, required action. 'You shall send the goods'. The subject of this sentence (you) also fulfills the action, overcoming obstacles if there are any, because no alternatives to successful completion are offered by the modal. The sentence with the modal 'need' also forces a person to perform an action: 'I need to go to the doctor.' It is a necessity. By contrast, the modal word 'may' gives a person freedom to choose whether or not to perform the action. 'You may come.' It is your choice to go or not to go.

Let's analyze sentences in which the modal words provide opportunities to do or not to do actions. They are *may, should, ought to*, etc. 'You may come if you have time.' 'May' gives freedom to the subject (you) to come or not to come; the speaker who pronounces this sentence takes into consideration the desires of his interlocuter. The subject (you) of the sentence will resolve the action on the basis of your desires and circumstances. Now consider, 'You should go to the lessons.' In this case, the subject (you) of this sentence also has an alternative; the speaker *advises* that you go to the lessons, but the action 'to go or not to go' depends on the subject (you). The modal word 'should' offers advice without forcing the subject, and in this respect, it differs from the modal 'may'. 'Should' expresses duty and moral obligation concerning the realization of an action.

Modality determines a person's intention and objective circumstances. An example of a person-oriented action is: 'You must prepare the subject if you want to pass this exam'. According to the context of this sentence, everything depends on the desire of 'you'; there are no objective obstacles.

'You **may** enter a university after school'. Based on the use of the modal word 'may', the subject of the sentence 'you' has alternatives. The modals 'must' and 'may' initially define the trajectory of the actions of a person.

An example of an object-oriented action is: 'Gather the hay, because it must rain, you see these heavy black clouds'. Here, one sees the objective circumstances, which don't depend on a human being.

From a linguistic point of view, the modals don't accept verbal morphology: aspect, voice, mood, number and person (although they may be integrated with tense: see below). They are usually placed in front of the main verb without changing its form (He must have read it; She should have done it).

Modals are considered to express the Tense category. For example, 'can' indicates present tense, while 'could' is taken to indicate past tense. Observe, however, the contrast between 'Can I help you?' and 'Could I help you?' 'Can' and 'could' express gradations of politeness rather than temporality in these sentences.

According to the rules of English grammar, if a sentence consists of two or more parts and the predicate of the first part is in the past tense, then the predicates of the other parts of the sentence should also be in the past tense. In that case, the pseudo-past-tense form 'could' will replace 'can'. However, 'must' is used without any alteration in the past tense.

Another question in the literature concerns whether the modals which expressed future tense diachronically continue to do so synchronically in Modern English. Do modals express the present tense or the future tense? Consider, for example, 'I must do that.' 'Must' is considered to be a present tense form, but according to the context, 'must' expresses an action that will be realized in the future.

There have been trends in the literature to explain mood in terms of modality. This notion has various ideas and supporters. It is difficult to say with certainty whether modals and mood are the same or different phenomena, because both categories have an uncertain status in linguistics. Consider the traditional definition of indicative mood, which states that this mood expresses actions represented as real facts. According to this definition, the indicative mood is a completed action, which has a result. The modals foresee and define the level of realization of actions, but to call the modal 'verbs' ignores the fact that they have no verb categories.

English is an analytic language, sentential questions and negations are formed with the help of auxiliary verbs. However, it is the modals themselves that form these questions and negations, retaining their original meaning while doing so; modals do not neutralize their modal meanings when they act as auxiliaries. We have seen that modals have no direct or indirect properties of verbs. Why does the mere fact that modals are situated in front of verbs lead some people to claim that they are predicates or verbs? Adverbs are also situated in front of predicates ('he always read') or between analytical predicates ('he has never read'), but they are not considered to be verbs or predicates themselves. Modals lack the morphological characteristics of verbs, and they also fail to express actions. Given these facts, we cannot reasonably claim that they are either modal verbs or defective verbs.

If modals are 'auxiliary verbs', they should neutralize their main meanings when acting as auxiliaries. In order to be able to neutralize their main verbal meaning, they must first *be* verbs.

Consider a true auxiliary: to have.

- The main meaning of 'have' is 'possessing'. 'I have a car.'
- The modal meaning of 'have' together with particle TO is to force to do something. 'I have to translate this article'.
- 'Have' as an auxiliary verb neutralizes its main and modal meanings. In the sentence 'He has read,' 'has' loses its main and modal meanings when it acts as an auxiliary verb to produce the Perfect Aspect (result of action).

Unlike 'have', the modals don't meet the requirement for auxiliary verbs. For example: 'he must read' (future + obligatory). Here, the modal simply has its modal (and main) meaning, despite appearing in an auxiliary position.

It seems, then, that we should cease to consider modals 'verbs' in any sense. Instead, I propose to simply refer to them as 'modal words'. In order to be a word, a modal element should consist of lexical and grammatical meanings, forms and functions.

Let's take the example of *must*.

Lexical meaning: obligation

Form: four letters and four sounds

Function: expresses level of realization of actions.

Grammatical meaning: indicates realization of action.

Form: degree of realization of actions.

Function: part of the predicate.

If we accept the given grammatical meaning and form, then 'must' possesses both grammatical and lexical triads. These triads provide an element with the opportunity to be a word. Since they have their own lexical and grammatical forms, meanings, and functions, the modals should be considered a separate part of speech. Let them be considered in the same context as prepositions and conjunctions, which have no morphology of their own, but are needed for morphological analyses.

What are the modals, according to traditional grammar?

I. Kant used the term 'Modalität' for the modus sense that refers to the necessity and possibility of propositions (1, 14-15). According to I. Koshevaya, "modal verbs are used to show the speaker's attitude toward the action or state. Modal verbs express a variety of moods or attitudes towards a possible state or action" [2, 263]. In J. Bybee's opinion, "modal verbs express modality, which is defined as the grammaticalized expression of the subjective attitudes and opinions of the speaker, including possibility, probability, necessity, obligation, permissibility, ability, desire, and contingency. Modality is the expression of a speaker's attitude to what his utterance denotes. The speaker's judgment may be of different kinds, that is, the speaker may express various modal meanings. Modality is one of a number of multilateral linguistic phenomenon, which have not yet found terminological or factological unification. The range of meaning of the term "modality" is so broad that modality has actually not been defined as to its meaning or its forms of representation in language" [3, 153]. She continues, "A modal verb (also modal, modal auxiliary verb, modal auxiliary) is a type of auxiliary verb that is used to indicate modality—likelihood, ability, permission, and obligation." [4, 33].

There are several types of modal meanings according to modern modal logic:

- alethic modality (Greek: *aletheia*, 'truth') defines the possibilities or impossibilities of actions on the basis of inferences;
- epistemic modality (Greek *episteme*, 'knowledge') defines the possibilities or impossibilities of actions on the basis of knowledge;
- deontic modality (Greek: *deon*, 'duty') defines the possibilities or impossibilities of actions on the basis of principles, laws, rules and 'unwritten laws and rules' [5, 373].

Modality expresses the wide range of human intentions as demonstrated in the form of realization or non-realization of actions: (1) obligation (strong), (2) obligation (weak), (3) permission, (4) volition, (5) prediction, (6) ability, (7) possibility, (8) inference (strong), (9) inference (weak), (10) hypothesis [6, 27].

G. Leech gives 11 types of modal meanings: (1) possibility (theoretical, factual), (2) ability, (3) permission, (4) rules and regulations, (5) obligation/requirement, (6) exclamatory wish, (7) logical necessity, (8) prediction/ predictability, (9) willingness (weak volition), (10) intention (intermediate volition), (11) insistence (strong volition) [7, 73].

D. Mindt suggests the following modal meanings: (1) high probability/ possibility, (2) certainty/prediction, (3) ability, (4) hypothetical event/result, (5) habit, (6) advisability/ desirability, (7) obligation, (8) inference/deduction, (9) volition/intention, (10) intention, (11) politeness/ downtoning, (12) consent, (13) state in the past, (14) permission, (15) courage, (16) regulation/prescription, (17) disrespect/insolence [8, 13].

These modals show that there are many different modal manifestations. Human beings cannot live without modals; they give sense and reason to life and help to define or foresee a person's ability to do or not to do something.

"In Middle English *shall + will + Infinitive* are used as pure future, *shall* at first much more frequently than *will*. *Will* afterward came into more general use, till at last in many dialects—such as the Scotch—it has completely vanquished *shall*" [9.93]. The lexical meanings of 'shall'

(obligation) and 'will' (will) are modal. For example: 'You shall bring my book' (warning). The modals 'shall' and 'will' have several meanings, ranging from permission to threat.

*Shall* has the meaning of

- permission: *Shall* I bring these newspapers?
- prediction: He *shall* come. It may take more than a week.
- strong determination: He wants to meet her; he *shall* do it.
- obligation: You *shall* report about it to the boss.
- necessity: *Shall* I recite this poem?
- and so on...

'Shall' belongs to the FM type, which forces a person to realize an action without giving an alternative solution. 'Shall' strictly organizes actions, which is why it is used in commercial and military correspondences, where no objections are permitted, and everything will be done (or not be done) according to instruction. "Will" also expresses modality:

• instant decisions: I can't see any ideas from you, that is why I *will* solve this problem by myself.

- offer: I *will* come if you like
- and others.

'Shall' and 'will' express modality and futurity simultaneously. As auxiliary verbs, they organize futurity ('You *will* come'). Since they carry the meaning of both futurity and modality, the question arises whether 'shall' and 'will' are pure indicators of Tense, pure indicators of modality, or both at once. For example, 'shall', when used as a modal word, has the meaning of intention. 'I shall go to the university'. What kind of meaning is expressed by 'shall' in this sentence? 'Shall' indicates temporality, since the action 'go' will be realized in the future; however, it also indicates modality, since the intention of the subject will be realized in future. 'Shall' expresses two meanings, futurity and modality, in one form. Similarly, in the sentence 'You *will* bring my book tomorrow', futurity and modality are expressed simultaneously.

In order to express the pure future tense, the subject of a sentence must be an objective thing, without human intention. For example: It will rain. The process 'raining' doesn't depend on a person's intention; it depends on objective chemical and physical properties of air and many other things.

According to the history of the English language, there were, diachronically, no special indicators for future tense. Futurity was indicated with the help of adverbs and modals. Examples of this phenomenon still exist today. For example:

- 1) He arrives tomorrow.
- 2) He is arriving tomorrow.
- 3) He is going to arrive tomorrow.
- 4) He is about to arrive.
- 5) He must arrive tomorrow.

These examples of future tense all occur without 'shall' and 'will'. Each of them has its own context of use. They continue to be used in Modern English despite the fact that 'shall' and 'will' are considered to be the indicators of future tense.

'Shall' and 'will' do not lose their modality when combined with aspects and voices: 'When you come at night, I'll be sleeping' - modality (supposition) plus futurity. 'Shall' and 'will' differ from other modals (must, can...). They are part of a single conjugation ('I shall', 'you will') indicating futurity in some English variant, but in the American variant, 'will' is used with all persons for futurity and 'shall' is used as an indicator of modality. If we compare 'shall' and 'will' with traditional modal verbs must, can, may, etc, the similarities are:

- express only future tense
- modality

Differences between 'shall' and 'will' and the rest of the modal verbs are:

• 'shall' and 'will' can combine with certain persons and aspects as indicators of futurity: I, we shall; you, he, she, they will (You will have sold it by this year - futurity; but: He passed exams, he must have prepared – logical conclusion in the Past).

• 'shall' and 'will' combine with certain persons as indicators of modality in English variant: I, we will; you, he, she, they shall. (I shall – futurity; I will – modality)

• the rest of the modals combine with all persons equally as indicators of futurity and modality.

**Results.** The modals express the certainty, possibility, or necessity of a planned action being realized, Modals have no morphological verb characteristics (aspect, voice, tense, mood, number, and person), so we can conclude that they are neither modal verbs nor defective verbs. They are also not auxiliaries, because they don't neutralize their main meanings in order to appear in an auxiliary context. Modals reflect both human intentions and objective circumstances as factors determining whether an action will be realized. They are words whose lexical meanings express degrees of realization of actions.

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