Evaluating the Performance of Iraqi EFL University Students in Understanding The Meanings of English Modals

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ABSTRACT

This study aims at investigating the performance of Iraqi EFL University Students to recognize and use the various meanings of English models. This study has aimed to shed light upon: i) evaluating the understanding of English modals' meanings by Iraqi EFL learners at the university level ii) the acquisition rate of English modals and their meanings, and iii) the order of such an acquisition. It is hypothesized that: Iraqi college students do not distinguish the different types of English modals and their meanings.

2.The students' achievement at the recognition level is predicted to be higher than their achievement at the production level.

3- Of the various types of English modals, it is hypothesized that the order of acquisition is:-

Will-would > can-could > must > shall>may-might >other

On the basis of the above hypotheses, a twenty-item proficiency test has been administered to the First Year Iraqi EFL learners at the Department of English, College of Education, University of Babylon. The sample that were selected to test administration. consisted of (60) first-year subjects and has a representative rate of (100%) of all the admissible population. The statistical calculations show that the resultant performance rate is (38.75) which means that subjects at their final semester before final examinations are indeed far away from drawing close to achieving a good mastery of English modals. This result provides statistical evidence to the validity of the First and Second hypotheses. The relative weight of the correct-response frequencies indicate that the following hierarchy can be drawn for their acquisition route by Iraqi EFL learners at the first-year level:

Will-would > can-could > must > shall>may-might >other

The result above provides empirical data that proves the validity of the Third hypothesis.

Chapter One

The present chapter introduces the problem, hypotheses, aims, procedures, value and limit of study.

1.1 The problem:.

A modal auxiliary is any of auxiliary verbs which indicate the attitudes of speaker/writer towards the state or event expressed by another verb, i.e. which indicate different type of modality (Richards et al, 1992: 232). The set of modal auxiliaries found in English is usually assumed to include will, would, can, could, shall, should, may, might, must, ought to, need, and dare. Crystal, (1988:65) classifies had better, would rather, and have (got) to as modal idioms. Modal meanings are shown in the following examples; all are in contrast to simple assertion:

I may be wrong.(may=possibility)

That will be Tom at the door. (will=prediction)

You can smoke here. (can=permission)

I can play the piano. (can=ability) (Richards et al, 1992: 232).

Modality can be expressed in other ways too:

I may be wrong. = Perhaps I'm wrong. (ibid)

Iraqi EFL learners find difficulty in understanding the meanings of English modal verbs because each one of them has its own use and can be used according to the meaning that speaker wants to express i.e. permission, possibility, ability, necessity, obligation, and prediction.

1.2 The Hypotheses:

It is hypothesized that:

1- Iraqi college students do not distinguish the different types of English modals and their meanings.

2.The students' achievement at the recognition level is predicted to be higher than their achievement at the production level.

3- Of the various types of English modals, it is hypothesized that the order of acquisition is:-

Will-would > can-could > must > shall>may-might >other

1.3 Aims of the study:

The present study aims at:

1. Finding out the route to the acquisition of English modals, which involves:

a. Identifying the area of difficulty that Iraqi EFL learners encounter in the learning of this structure.

b. Investigating the role that markedness plays in determining the acquisition of this structure.

c. Drawing its acquisition hierarchy.

2. Putting forward some pedagogical implications and recommendations in the light of the results achieved.

1.4 Procedures of the study

The study consists of two parts: theoretical and practical. The theoretical part will include surveying some relevant literature concerning the topic under investigation. The practical involves the following:

1. Selecting the sample of the research.

2. Conducting a test to achieve the aims of the study by designing recognition and production tasks.

3. Analyzing the results.

4. Making pedagogical recommendations and suggestions based on the findings of the study.

1.5   Values of the study

The value of the study lies in:

1- Developing a method in explaining types of modals (modal auxiliary)

2- Presenting modals in detail for Iraqi EFL learners.

It is hoped that the findings of the study will be of value to EFL teachers and textbook writers since it deals with an area that needs more attention and concentration. The results of this study can prove to be useful for grammar syllabus designing and the preparation of remedial programs for the students of Departments of English, at Iraqi colleges of Education. This is because its statistics-based results highlight the route and level of learners' acquisition of English modals and their meanings.

1.6   Limit of the study

The study is limited to

1. Investigating the acquisition hierarchy of the English modals' meanings by Iraqi EFL learners, and the difficulty they encounter in the recognition and production of such English constructions.

2. A sample of university students specializing in the teaching of English as a Foreign Language at the University of Babylon/College of Education, specifically those at the 1st year of study at the Department of English.

Chapter Two

2.1 Introduction

Verbs like can and may are called modal auxiliaries though they often referred to as modal verbs or models. They are frequently used when we are concerned with our relationship with someone else. We, may for example, ask for permission to do something; grant permission to someone; give or receive advice; make or respond to requests and offers, etc. We can express different levels of politeness both by the forms we choose and the way we say things (Alexander, 207:1988). Modals include the following: can, may, shall, will, must, could, might, should, would, and have (got) to. The marginal modal auxiliaries include used to, ought to, dare, and need. (Greenboum and Quirk,1990:39).

1-We may be right. (may=possibility) (ibid:61).

2-She will have had her dinner by now. (will=predication) (ibid:63)

3-Can we borrow these books from the library. (can=permission)

4-They say Bill can cook better than his wife. (can=ability) (ibid:60)

2.2   What are modal auxiliary verbs?

According to (Swan, 2005: 325), the verbs can, could, may, might, will, would, shall, should, must, and ought are called "modal auxiliary verbs". They are used before the infinitives of other verbs, and add certain kinds of meaning connected with certainty, or with obligation and freedom to act.

2.3 Grammar

a. Modal verbs have no- s in the third person singular.:

5-She may know his address (not she mays) (ibid.)

b. Questions, negatives, tags and short answer are made without do.

6-Can you swim? Yes I can.

7-He shouldn't be doing that, should be? (ibid.)

c. After modal auxiliary verbs, we use the infinitive without to of   other verbs. Ought is an exception for example:

8-We must do the same thing again (Dixson, 2004:57)

d. Modal verbs do not have infinitives or participles, and they don't normally have past forms (though would, could, should, and might can sometimes be used as past tenses of will, can, shall, and may) other expressions are used when necessary (Swan, 2005: 326)For example:

9-Would you mind for checking these figures?

10-Would you like to go for a ride with us? (Eastwood, 1999:128).

e. However, certain past can be expressed by modal verbs followed by a perfect infinitive (have+ past participle)

For examples

11-You should have told me you were coming.

12-I think I may have annoyed Aunt Mary (Swan, 2005, 326)

f. Modal verbs have contracted negative forms (can't, won't, etc….) which are used in an in formal style. Will and would also have contracted affirmative form's ('ll, 'd).

g. There is quite often used as a preparatory subject with modal verbs, especially when these are followed by be:

13-There're might be rain today. (ibid)

2.4 Meanings

We don't normally use modal verbs to say that situations definitely exist or that particular events have definitely happened. We use them, for example, to talk about things which we expect, which are or aren't possible, which we think are necessary, which we want to happen, which we are not sure about, which we want to happen, or which have not happened (ibid).

(Greenboum and Quirk,1990:60) distinguish two main kinds of meanings for modal

auxiliaries :

a. INTRINSIC modality (which includes permission, obligation, and volition) involves some intrinsic human control over events.

b. EXTRINSIC modality (which includes possibility, necessity, and predication) involves human judgment of what is or is not likely to happen.

Each of the modals has both intrinsic and extrinsic uses. In some instances there is overlap of the two uses; for example, the will in sentences such as I'll see you tomorrow then can be said to combine meanings of volition and predication. Most of the modals can paired into present and past forms(can/could, may/might, shall/should, will/would). From the point of view of meaning, the past forms are often merely more tentative or more polite variants of the present forms. Their past forms can be used to refer to present and future time (often with a tentative meaning):

14-I think he may/might be outside.

15-Will/Would you phone him tomorrow? (ibid:36).

2.4.1 **Can/could**

a. Possibility: We use can to say what we are able (or unable) to do because of the circumstances that we are in-what is possible in the situation.

16- We can go to Paris this weekend, because I do not have to work. (Swan, 2005, 98)

Could in its hypothetical sense often expresses (tentative)possibility, i.e. they refer to something which is possible but unlikely:

17- I wonder if there could be a simpler solution to the problem.

18- He could have been telling lies.

(Leech and Svartvik, 1994:146)

b. Ability: We use can/could to talk about future actions which we will be able to do because of present ability, circumstances, and decisions.

19-Can you run 1500 meters in 5 minutes? (Alexender,1988:212)

20- Jim could run very fast when he was a boy.

21-Barbara could sing very well when she was younger. (ibid:213)

c. Permission: We use can to ask for   and give permission.

22. Can I ask you something? (Swan, 2005, 100)

We also use could to ask for permission; it is more polite or formal than can.

We do not use could to give or refuse permission (it suggest respect, so is more natural asking for permission than in giving it.

23-Could I ask you something? Yes of course you can. (ibid: 101)

2.4.2 **May/might**

a. Possibility:

- Possibility of the fact (factual)

24-You may be right. (It is possible that you are right)   (Greenboum and Quirk,1990:61)

25-The railways may be improved. (Leech and Svartvik, 1994:145)

- Tentative possibility

26-He might be telling lies. (It just possible that he was/ has been telling lies) (ibid:146)

Permission: Swan, (2005, 318) states that may and might are used for permission mostly in a formal style. They are much less common than can and could.

1-asking for permission:

27-May I put the TV on?

May and might can both be used to ask for permission. Might is very polite and formal, and is mostly used in indirect question structures.

   28-I wonder if I might have a little more cheese. (More natural than Might I have...?)

2-giving and refusing permission:

29-You may! You may not

May is used to give permission; may not to refuse permission or forbid.

  30-May I put the TV on? -Yes, of course you may.

  31-May I borrow the car? No, I'm afraid you may not.

  32-Students may not use the staff car park. (ibid)

3-talking about permission:

May and might are not usually used to talk about permission which has already been

given or refused, about freedom which people already have, or about rules and laws. Instead, can and could are used.

33-These days, children can do what they like. (NOT .. .children may do what they like.)

34-I could read what I liked when I was a child. (NOT I might read what I liked...)

35-Can you I park on both sides of the road here? (More natural than May you park...?)

4-indirect speech:

However, may and might can be used to report the giving of permission. May is used after present reporting verbs, and might after past verbs.

36-The Manager says that we may leave our coats in the downstairs toilet.

37-What are you doing here? Peter said that I might look round.(very formal) (ibid).

2.4.3 Must

Greenboum and Quirk (1990:61) classify the meanings of must into:

a) (LOGICAL) NECESSITY

38-Mary must have a problem.

39-You must be very happy.

40-There is the doorbell. It must be Roger. (Swan, 2005, 334)

The 'logical necessity' meaning of must is parallel to the possibility meaning of may since it implies that the speaker judges the proposition expressed by the clause to be necessarily true, or at least to have a high likelihood of being true. Must in this sense means that the speaker has drawn a conclusion from things already known or observed. Must [= logical necessity] cannot normally be used in interrogative or negative clauses. Can is generally used in place of must in questions, so that corresponding to She must be the one you mean is the question Can she be the you mean?

The negative of can [= possibility] fills the negative gap, so that You must be joking [It is necessarily the case that you are joking] is synonymous with You can't be serious[It is impossible that you are serious] Similarly:

41-She must be asleep= She can't be awake. Greenboum and Quirk (1990:62)

There is another necessity meaning of must in examples like:

To be healthy, a plant must receive a good supply of both sunshine and moisture. ['It is necessary for a plant to…']

(b) OBLIGATION or COMPULSION

Must express obligation. It involves the speakers' authority:

42-You must be back by two o'clock. (Leech and Svartvik, 1994:163)

With a first person subject, must expresses authority over oneself and sense of duty:

43-I must phone my parents tonight.

44-We must invite the Stewarts to dinner. (ibid:164)

In these examples, there is the implication, to a greater or lesser extent that the speaker is advocating a certain form of behaviour. Thus must typically suggests that the speaker is exercising authority.

2.4.4 **Need, have (got) to**

Need refers to immediate necessity. It is often used to ask for or give permission-usually permission not to do something. It is not used to talk about habitual, general necessity (Swan, 2005, 342)

45-Our country 's prestige need not suffer.

46-There need be no doubt about that. (Leech and Svartvik, 1994:245)

It is possible, and indeed, common to replace auxiliary need by need to or have to accompanied by do-support.

47-You needn't worry about the test. [= 'You don't need/have to worry about that test'.] Greenboum and Quirk (1990:62).

Have (got) to can also be substituted for must with little or no difference of meaning as shown below:

(a) (LOGICAL) NECESSITY

48-There has (got) to be some mistake.

49-To be healthy, a plant has (got) to receive a good supply of sunshine and moisture.

(b) OBLIGATION or COMPULSION

50-You have (got) to be back by ten o'clock.

51-We have all got to share our skills and knowledge.

52-Productivity will have to be improved, if the nation is t prosperous.

Since must has no past tense form and no nonfinite forms, have to is have to is used in many contexts where must is impossible, eg following a model verb:

53-We'll have to be patient. (ibid).

2.4.5 **Ought to, should**

Auxiliaries should and ought to can express 'probability'; they are

weaker equivalents of must (= 'certainty') as in:

54-Our guests must be home by now. ('I am certain') (Leech and Svartvik, 1994:149)

55-Our guests should be at home by now. ('They probably are but I'm not certain.')

56- Our guests ought to be at home by now. ('They probably are but I'm not certain.')

Should is more frequent than ought to.

•Negation: Improbability can be expressed by shouldn't, oughtn't to:

57-There should not be any difficulties.

58- There ought not to be any difficulties.

- Questions (rare):

Should there be any difficulty in getting tickets? (ibid).

As ways of influencing other people, advice and suggestions are milder than commands. Strictly, these leave the decision about what to do in the hands of the hearer. But in practice, as the examples show, they are often <tactful> ways of giving commands or instructions.

• Advice

59-You should stay in bed until you start to recover.

60-You ought to keep your money in a bank. (ibid:168).

• Obligation:

Should and ought to express an obligation which may not be fulfilled. Compare [41 and [5] in 326 above with:

61-All students should submit their work by a given date ('.. . but some of them don't!').

62-I ought to phone my parents tonight ('but I probably won't have time')(ibid:164).

2.4.6 **Will/would ('ll I'd)**

(a) PREDICTION

1. Will can express the neutral future of predication:

63-I will be happy when this is finished.

64-He will have finished the whole job by this evening. (Swan, 2005, 616).

The correspondent 'predication in the past' sense of would is shown below:

65-I was told I would feel better after this medicine. (Greenboum and Quirk,1990:63).

2.Will can be used to express a 'prediction' about the present:

66-That will be my wife. (Leech and Svartvik, 1994:148)

67-They will have arrived by now.

This sort of prediction with will often occurs with conditional sentences :

68-If litmus paper is dipped in acid, it will turn red. (ibid)

3.Will can also be used in a habitual sense, to express the idea of 'predictability' or 'characteristic behaviour':

66-Accident will happen. (as saying)

69-A lion will only attack a human being when it is hungry.

The equivalent use of would to express habitual or characteristic 'predictable' behaviour' in the past:

70-She would often go all day without eating. (ibid:149)

(b)VOLITION

1 INTENTION (often in combination with a sense of prediction)

  71-I'll write as soon as I can.

  72-We won't stay longer than two hours.

  73-The manager said he would phone me after lunch. (Greenboum and Quirk,1990:64).

2 WILLINGNESS

  74-Will/Would you help me to address these letters?

  75-I'll do it, if you like.

This meaning is common in requests and offers.

2 INSISTENCE

    76-If you will go out without your overcoat, what can you expect?

77-She would keep interrupting me.

This somewhat rare use implies wilfulness on the part of the referent. The auxiliary is always stressed, and cannot be contracted to 'll or 'd. In this case, the past form would expresses past time, rather t tentativeness or politeness. (ibid)

2.4.7 **Shall**

1. Asking for instructions and decisions

Questions with Shall I/We are used to ask for instructions and decisions, to offer services, and to make suggestions. Will is not used in this way.

78-Shall I open the window.

79-What time shall we come and see you?

80-Shall we go for a meal?

81-Let's go and see Lucy, shall we? (Swan, 2005, 193).

2.Obligation

In contracts and other legal documents, shall is often used with third-persons subjects to refer to obligations and duties.

82- The hirer shall be responsible for maintenance of the vehicle. (ibid, 195)

2.4.8 Had better

Had better is used to give strong advice, or to tell people what to do (ibid:203):

83-I'd better go. (Crystal,65:1988)

84-You'd better turn the music down before your Dad gets angry.

Had better refers to the immediate future, It is more urgent than should or ought

85-I really ought to go and see Fred one of these days.

-Well, you'd better do it soon-he's leaving for south Africa at the end of this month. (Swan, 2005, 203).

Chapter Three

The Test

3. Data Collection

Data collection is conducted by defining the population of the study and the representative ratio of the selected sample first, then by describing the design of the achievement test and its administration to the subjects of the study

3.1 The Objectives of the Test

Tests are used to have specific aims to achieve. Test is the way by which we

will be able to elicit students' responses about the subject under study. It should be able to elicit the "intuitional" and the "textual" data that formulate the learners interlanguage. These two types of data comprise the receptive and the productive knowledge. The function of the first part of the test, the Recognition, is to elicit the receptive knowledge while the function of the second part, the Production, is to elicit the productive knowledge. Therefore, the most important objective of the test is to measure the testees' overall competence in the use of the English modal in accordance with the hypotheses of the present study. By using the present test, these hypotheses are either going to be validated or refuted.

3.2 Data Collection & Test Design

Research data consists of a twenty-item proficiency test administered during the last week of the academic year 2010/2011 to the First Year Iraqi EFL learners at the Department of English, College of Education, University of Babylon.

The selected sample to test administration consisted of (60) first-year subjects.

The group has a representative rate of (100%) of all the admissible population. Such a complete representative rate has been aimed at in order to rule out the disadvantages that are inherent in the random sample method such as the absence of exhaustiveness. Subjects were First Year male and female Iraqi students at the Department of English, College of Education. These students have been studying English as a foreign language in Iraqi primary and secondary schools for eight academic years before admission to college and they are expected to have a good understanding to meanings of English modals taking into consideration that they have already taught English modals in the first year of their study at the university; the textbook is English Grammar in Use.(Murphy, R. (1987).

The sample taken should be homogeneous (Corder, 1981: 103-6). Sample homogenization was ascertained through the admission of all those admissible subjects that share the same linguistic background, region, level of study, and nationality.

The test comprises two questions with a total of twenty items that assess the subjects' acquisition of meanings of English modals at the recognition and production levels. The first question has ten multiple-choice items that test the

subjects' recognition of English modals; whereas the second question has another ten items of the completion type testing the subjects' production of the same structures.

3.3 Test Virtues

Good test are characterized by two main virtues: reliability and validity. These two points are discussed in the following two subsections.

3.3.1 Reliability

It is the ability of a language test to achieve the same result time after time. (Rudner, 2001). A test is reliable test when it achieves the same result time after time and when its examiners give similar and comparable marks to the same test on different occasions. So using criteria and training in the use of grading rubrics/scales and test formats to minimize and reduce subjectivity and disagreement are highly important to achieve more reliable results. In other words, reliable tests produce similar results on different occasions under similar circumstances (Oller, 1979: 4). Test reliability can be assessed in a number of ways such as the test retest procedure, the split-half method, and the parallel test-forms method (Harris, 1969: 15). One widely used estimate of Test Reliability is that of Kuder-Richardson Formula 21:

$$R = 1 - \frac{M(n-M)}{ns^2}$$

where **M** is the mean, **n** is the number of the items in the test, and **s** is the Standard Deviation.

The application of the formula above requires calculating Standard Deviation first. By Standard Deviation (Henceforth: SD) is meant the extent to which each particular test score deviates from the test's mean (Baker, 1989: 45). In this test, SD has been calculated using the following formula:

$$SD = \sqrt{\frac{\sum d^2}{N}}$$

Where 'd^2' is the squared value of subtracting the test mean score of the upper one-sixth from the lower one-sixth, and 'N' is half the number of subjects (Harrison, 1983: 124). The application of the formula above to the test of has yielded the two a SD of 13.32.

On applying Kuder-Richardson formula above to the test scores , estimate of

test reliability was 88% while .The reliability estimate show quite acceptable test ratios, and as such confirm its consistency.

3.3.2 Validity

Validity, and reliability and are important principles for a good test. Validity can be defined as the extent to which a test measures what it is supposed to measure. All students should have an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge or skills in the content being assessed. Although students may have different English proficiency classifications, the meaning of their scores on content assessments should be comparable,(Young, 2008: 2).

Validity is concerned with relevance (Bell, 1981: 198). The two most important types of validity are content validity and face validity. Content validity is concerned with designing test items in such away as to allow the subjects' performance to truly reflect the language skill acquired for genuine communication in that language (ibid). For the purpose of securing content validity, the test should sample adequately "the class of situations or subject-matter about which conclusions are to be drawn" (Payne and McMorris, 1967:78). Moreover, "the items actually included are a sample of possible items" (Ingram, 1974: 314).

In this test, content validity has been obtained through the inclusion of only those items that are strictly related to the comprehension and production of the English modals.

3.5 Test Administration

The test was administered on May the 19thof the academic year 2010-2011. In order to take the test seriously, the subjects were asked to give their names on the test papers. In addition, they were informed beforehand to do their best and to leave out no blank items since this test will also be administered to students from other universities and that they were required to prove their true competitive efficiency in this respect. The subjects raised no questions on how to respond, and the test-papers were all submitted within the prescribed time. The testees were informed to answer on the test sheet to save time and avoid "possible errors arising from the 'mental' transfer of the answer sheet itself" (Heaton, 1988: 158).

To avoid the effect of guessing, testees were informed not to give any response

in case they were not sure of the right answer.

3.6 Scoring Scheme

A definite scoring scheme is adopted in order to add to the reliability and objectivity of the test.

Each test paper was scored out of **100** by allocating fifty marks for each of the two questions. In other words, both the recognition and the production were given an equal score. Blank items were neglected and given no scores. Multiple-choice recognition items were scored as either correct or incorrect. Production items were scored out of five marks each. Minor spelling mistakes, and errors not related to the production and recognition of English modals construction were all ignored.

Chapter Four

4.1 Introduction

Data analysis includes the calculation of test reliability and validity. Item analysis is carried out with the help of statistical means, formulas, and tables. It includes the calculation of both test items' facility and discrimination indices.

4.2 Item Analyses

Two types of item analysis are discussed below: Difficulty Level and Discrimination Level. These two reflect: i) how difficult the test items are, and ii) how well they sort out the better students from the poorer ones.

4.2.1 Difficulty Level

Difficulty Level (or index) is simply the percentage of students (high and low combined) who get each question right (Madsen,1983:181). It provides the tester with a mathematical means for measuring the difficulty of each test item. It is calculated according to the following formula:

High correct +Low correct

Difficulty Level = --

Total Number in Sample   (ibid).

The most usual facility value for a whole test ranges from about 40% to about 60% (Harrison, 1983: 128). In this test, the means of Difficulty Level for recognition part is

49% and for production part is 40%

This makes mean of Difficulty Level fall within the most usual range above; and as such confirm the fact that test items have the fairly and middling facility indices, which, as whole, satisfy one of the requirements of good tests.

Table (1)

Difficulty Level, Recognition

Item No	Difficulty Level %	Item No.	Difficulty Level %
1	57.3	7	36.7
2	52.1	8	52.3
3	50.2	9	43.1
4	36.6	10	55.2
5	57.9	Total	495.1
6	53.7	Mean	49%

Table (2)

Difficulty Level, Production

Item No	Difficulty Level %	Item No.	Difficulty Level %
1	27.6	7	59.2
2	45.6	8	49.1
3	52.5	9	51.8
4	32.1	10	8.3
5	41.5	Total	401.1
6	33.4	Mean	40.11%

4.2.2 Discrimination Level

Item level of discrimination means how well an item differentiates between those with more advanced language skill and those with less skill (ibid:182). Good tests are required not only to discriminate between the high-versus-low performance students as a whole, but also to ascertain that each test item also does so (Harrison,

1983: 128). This condition is satisfied when no test item that is incorrectly answered by the majority of the upper-half of the testees is correctly answered by the majority of the lower-performance testees.

The Discrimination Level is arrived at by subtracting the number of correct answers in the bottom group from the number of correct answers in the top group and dividing the result by the number of students in one of the groups (half the total number of students involved):

High correct – Low correct

Discrimination Level = ─────────────────────

Total Number of Sample (Madsen,1983:183)

The application of the of the above formula to recognition and production

scores show the following statistical means and rates:

1. There are no negative discrimination indices. The inference in this respect is

that all the test items are positively discriminative.

2. There are no null-discrimination indices.

3. The mean of the discrimination value of all the test items is 2.69%, which is a satisfactory index, given that the optimal rate in this respect is 3% (Harrison, 1983: 129).

Table (3)

Discrimination Level, Recognition

ItemNo	Discrimination Level %	Item No	Discrimination Level %
1	0.35	6	0.2
2	0.3	7	0.2
3	0.46	8	0.31
4	0.1	9	0.2
5	0.33	10	0.4
		Total	2.85
		Mean	0.285

Table (4)

Discrimination Level, Production

Item No	Discrimination Level%	Item No	Discrimination Level %
1	0.35	6	0.2
2	0.3	7	0.2
3	0.46	8	0.31
4	0.18	9	0.2
5	0.33	10	0.4
		Total	2.53
		Mean	0.253

4.3 General Results

4.3.1 Statistical Means and Acquisition Rate

The mean of test scores for the total subjects stands at (38.75), which is a quite low performance mean, being less than (50%). Only (23) of the total subjects of (60) managed to get at the pass mark of (50) out of (100), with a low pass-rate of (38.3%). The resultant performance rate of (38.75) shows that the subjects at their final semester before the final examinations are indeed far away from drawing close to achieving a good understanding to meanings of English modals.

This proves the validity of the first hypothesis which reads:

1- **Iraqi college students do not distinguish the different types of English modals and their meanings.**

Table (5)

Subjects' Scores (out of 100) and Test's

Mean

Subject No	Out of 100	Subject No	Out of 100	Subject No	Out of 100
1	80	21	50	41	30
2	75	22	50	42	25
3	75	23	50	43	25
4	75	24	45	44	25
5	70	25	45	45	25
6	65	26	45	46	25
7	65	27	45	47	25
8	60	28	45	48	25
9	60	29	40	49	20
10	55	30	40	50	20
11	55	31	40	51	20
12	55	32	40	52	15
13	55	33	35	53	15
14	55	34	35	54	15
15	50	35	35	55	15
16	50	36	35	56	15
17	50	37	35	57	15
18	50	38	30	58	10
19	50	39	30	59	5
20	50	40	30	60	5
				Total	2325
				Mean	38.75

4.3.2 Acquisition Route

Hereunder is a table showing the acquisition rates achieved by the subjects on the levels of production and recognition, all-together. For each of the basic categories of English modals: i) will-would (ii) can-could, iii) may-might, iv) must, v)shall, and vi)other types

Rates of Acquisition of English Modals Table (6)

English Modal	Rate of Acquisition
Can-could	58%
Will-would	67.2%
must	48%
May-might	24%
shall	46%
other	20%

On the basis of the relative weight of correct-response frequencies whose percentages are shown in the table (6), the following hierarchy can be drawn for their acquisition route by Iraqi EFL learners at the university level:

Will-would > can-could > must > shall>may-might >other

where " > " means "has acquisition priority over" (Dik, 1997: 30f).

One relevant observation is that the hierarchy above, based upon statistical evidence of markedness expressed by means of frequency, seems to reflect a general tendency in the acquisition of the categories of English modals by Iraqi EFL learners. More studies are required to verify this general tendency in Iraqi ESL acquisition.

The result above provides empirical evidence that proves the validity of the third hypothesis presented in 1.2 which reads:

3.**Of the various types of English modals, it is hypothesized that the   order of acquisition is:-**

Will-would > can-could > must > shall>may-might >other

Tables (7) and (8) below show the rates of acquisition for each type of the types of

English modals.

Rates of Acquisition of English modals(Recognition) Table (7)

English Modal	Rate of Acquisition
Can-could	52%
Will-would	86.6%
Must	60%
May-might	38%
Shall	62%
Other	30%

Table (8)

Rates of Acquisition of English modals (Production)

English Modal	Rate of Acquisition
Can-could	56%
Will-would	43%
Must	10%
May-might	16%
Shall	30%
Other	6%

The results above provide statistical evidence confirming the validity of the second hypothesis presented in section 1.2 which reads:

2.**The students' achievement at the recognition level is predicted to be higher than their achievement at the production level.**

Chapter Five

Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

This chapter sums up the conclusions arrived at from the general results mentioned in the previous chapter and from the description given in Chapter Two. These conclusions can be useful in pedagogical applications.

5.2 Conclusions

5.2.1 Theoretical Conclusions

Verbs like can and may are called modal auxiliaries though they often referred to as modal verbs or models. They are frequently used when we are concerned with our relationship with someone else. They can be used to ask for permission to do something; grant permission to someone; give or receive advice; make or respond to requests and offers, etc. Different levels of politeness can be expressed both by the forms we choose and the way we say things. Modals include the following: can, could, may, might, must, shall, will, need, have (got) to, should, would, and ought to. There are two main kinds of meanings for modal auxiliaries :

a. INTRINSIC modality (which includes permission, obligation, and volition) involves some intrinsic human control over events.

b. EXTRINSIC modality (which includes possibility, necessity, and predication) involves human judgment of what is or is not likely to happen.

5.2.2 Practical Conclusions

1. On the basis of the relative weight of correct-response frequencies whose percentages are shown in the table above, the following hierarchy can be drawn for their acquisition route by Iraqi EFL learners at the university level:

Will-would > can-could > must > shall>may-might >other

One of the possible causes for the easiness of the "Will-would" structure is that

it is highly emphasized in the learner's previous studies during the secondary and the first college levels.

The result above provides empirical evidence that proves the validity of the third hypothesis presented in 1.2 which reads:

3-Of the various types of English modals, it is hypothesized that the order of acquisition is:-

Will-would > can-could > must > shall>may-might >other

2. As for the rates of acquisition at the two levels of recognition and production, the mean of test scores was 48.5% and 30.3% respectively. These results provide statistical evidence confirming the validity of the second hypothesis presented in section 1.2 which reads:

2.**The students' achievement at the recognition level is predicted to be higher than their achievement at the production level.**

3. As far as the acquisition of English modals is concerned, Iraqi EFL learners at the end of first-year study of English as a second language at the university level are unable to distinguish the different types meanings of the English modals and their meanings. The resultant performance rate of (38.75) shows that the subjects at their final semester before the final examinations are indeed far away from drawing close to achieving a good mastery of English modals meanings

This proves the validity of the first hypothesis which reads:

1- Iraqi college students do no distinguish the different types of English modals and their meanings.

5.3 Recommendations

1. Being marked structures, English modals require special attention in curriculum design. One way that can facilitate their acquisition is by taking into consideration the hierarchy of their acquisition as formulated in this study. This can be achieved by introducing first categories first in the students' grammar books, then enhancing the instructional work in those categories that have a lesser accessibility of acquisition through adequate revisions. Presenting the material in a recycling technique is strongly recommended.

2. The poor test results obtained by the subjects of this study show that teachers of English should pay close attention to the teaching of English modals since teachers in most cases are the only input available to the students other than text books. Teaching this structure in a communicative context and authentic situations is one of the active solutions that enhance learners' performance and thus enable them to overcome difficulties they face in this area.

3. Teachers should refer to the difference between Arabic and English in signaling the English modals to avoid the negative carryover of learners' mother tongue.

Appendix

The Test Appendix

Q1 : Write the letter of the most suitable answer in the blanks:

1- …………………I have some more tea please. (a. could   b. shall   c. will   d. would)

2- Every one's asleep. We …………………make a noise. (a. couldn't   b. mustn't   c. needn't   d. wouldn't)

3- …………………you like to go for aired with us? (a. does   b. shall   c. will   d. would)

4- I wonder if this is the right way. It ………………….out be (a. can   b. could   c. might   d. must)

5- I don't think I want to see this film. Oh, I think you……………enjoy it (a. can   b. shall   c. will   would)

6- I'm quite happy to walk. You………………drive me home. (a. don't   b. haven't c. mustn't   d. needn't)

7- ………………I show you the way? Oh, thank you. (a. do   b. shall   c. must   d. would)

8- It's late. I thing we ………………better go. (a. had   b. have   c. would   d. should)

9- We all tried to push the van, but it …………….. move. (a. can't   b. couldn't   c.

won't   d. wouldn't)

10-   …………………you mind checking these figures? (a. does   b. would c. shall   d. can)

Q2 Complete the following sentences with a suitable modal that expresses the meaning found between brackets

1- We …………………go swimming tomorrow. (probability)

2- ………………..you fill this form, please? (ability)

3- We…………………have watered the garden because it's raining. (no – necessity)

4- I knew that I …………………be sorry for being late. (apologize)

5- …………………..help me to address these letters? (willingness)

6- You …………………report to me every day. (obligation)

7- …………………..I do the washing up? (offer)

8- No doubt I …………………see you next week. (predication)

9- ……………I sit down? (permission)

10-   …………………..you like to be in the team? (invitation)

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