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A Pragmatic Analysis of Modal Auxiliaries in “*A Rose for Emily*”

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Aabstract

A Rose for Emily is a short gothic story about the mysterious life of Miss Emily Grierson. It represents the numerous conflicts in the main character's life, illustrating the effect of social change on the individual. This study conducts a pragmatic analysis of modal auxiliaries in William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily," addressing the linguistic problem of understanding how these auxiliaries are used and interpreted within the narrative context. The primary aim is to explore the various types of modal auxiliaries employed by Faulkner and to identify the most prevalent among them. The study hypothesizes that there is a hidden meaning behind the use of modal auxiliaries, that different types are utilized throughout the story, and that "would" is the most frequently occurring form. Limited to a pragmatic analysis based on Quirk et al.'s framework, the research contributes to the fields of pragmatics and discourse analysis by elucidating the functions of modal auxiliaries in conveying meaning and influencing reader interpretation. The analysis reveals that "would" is the most frequently used modal auxiliary, suggesting a focus on hypothetical or conditional situations, while "could" ranks second, indicating potential abilities or permissions. Other auxiliaries such as "can," "must," and "should" appear less frequently, indicating specific contextual meanings of capability, necessity, or moral obligation. The study concludes that the predominance of "would" emphasizes the narrative's exploration of alternative possibilities and imagined scenarios, contributing to the text's ambiguity and inviting multiple interpretations. It is recommended that future research further investigates the implications of modal auxiliaries in other literary works to enhance understanding of their role in narrative complexity and reader engagement.

Keywords: *A Rose for Emily, Modal Auxiliaries, Pragmatic Analysis.*



A Pragmatic Analysis of Modal Auxiliaries in “A Rose for Emily”



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المستخلص:

"وردة لإيميلي" قصة قصيرة ذات طابع قوطي، تتناول الحياة الغامضة للأنسة إيميلي غريرسون. تُصوّر القصة الصراعات العديدة في حياة الشخصية الرئيسية، مُبيّنة تأثير التغيير الاجتماعي على الفرد. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل الأفعال المساعدة الصيغية في هذه القصة القصيرة من منظور تداولي. يعتمد التحليل على تحليل كويرك وآخرين للأفعال المساعدة الصيغية في قصة "وردة لإيميلي" لفوكنر. تحاول هذه الدراسة إظهار كيف يؤثر أسلوب فوكنر على فهم القارئ للمعنى المقصود، بالإضافة إلى فهمه للمواضيع والبنية والشخصيات، إلخ. بناءً على عدد مرات الاستخدام، تُعد "would" أكثر الأفعال المساعدة الصيغية استخداماً في قصة "وردة لإيميلي". تظهر باستمرار في مختلف أجزاء القصة، مشيرةً إلى مواقف افتراضية أو شرطية. أما "could" فهي ثاني أكثر الأفعال المساعدة الصيغية استخداماً، مؤكدةً على القدرات أو الأذونات المحتملة. أما الأفعال المساعدة الصيغية الأخرى، مثل "can" و"must" و"should"، فتظهر بشكل أقل، مما يشير إلى سياقات محددة تتعلق بالقدرة أو الضرورة أو الالتزام الأخلاقي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: وردة لإيميلي، الأفعال المساعدة الصيغية، التحليل التداولي

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1. INTRODUCTION

The linguistic problem behind studying a pragmatic analysis of modal auxiliaries in *A Rose for Emily* lies in investigating how modal auxiliaries are used and interpreted within the context of the story.

This study aims to gain a deeper understanding of how modal auxiliaries are used pragmatically in the story. Another aim is to investigate the different types of modal auxiliaries used in the story, and to identify the most prevalent type of modal auxiliaries used.

Accordingly, this study hypothesizes the following:

1. There is a hidden meaning behind using modal auxiliaries in “A Rose for Emily”:
2. There are different types of modal auxiliaries used in the story.
3. “Will” is the most prevalent type of modal auxiliaries.

This study is limited to the pragmatic analysis of William Faulkner’s “A Rose for Emily”. The model adopted is Quirk et al’s (1993).

The study contributes to the field of pragmatics and discourse analysis by exploring the pragmatic functions of modal auxiliaries in a literary context. It provides a deeper understanding of how these linguistic devices are employed to convey meaning, perform speech acts, and influence the reader's interpretation of the text.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Definition of Modal Auxiliary

A modal auxiliary is a verb that adds a functional or grammatical meaning to the phrase in which it appears. Auxiliary verbs usually accompany the main verb, providing meaning to the sentence. They help introduce sentence tense and assist in forming negative and interrogative sentences.

2.2 Types and Functions

| No. | Type | Function |
|-----|------|---|
| 1 | Can | Indicates ability, possibility, or permission, e.g., "can swim" (ability); "Can I go to the party?" (permission). |

| No. | Type | Function |
|-----|----------|--|
| 2 | Could | Past ability, suggestion, e.g., "She could play the piano when she was younger" (past ability); "Could you please pass the salt?" (polite request). |
| 3 | May | Indicates possibility, permission, or a polite way of making a request, e.g., "It may rain tomorrow" (possibility); "May I use your phone?" (permission/request). |
| 4 | Might | Similar to may but often suggests a lower probability or a more tentative possibility, e.g., "He might come to the party if he finishes his work." |
| 5 | Shall | Expresses future actions or offers, often used in informal or legal contexts, e.g., "We shall meet at the park tomorrow" (future action); "Shall I help you with your bags?" (offer). |
| 6 | Should | Indicates advice, recommendations, or expectations, e.g., "You should eat more fruits and vegetables" (advice); "We should arrive on time for the meeting." |
| 7 | Will | Expresses future actions, intentions, or predictions, e.g., "I will visit my grandparents next week" (future action); "She will probably win the competition" (prediction). |
| 8 | Would | Similar to will but often used in conditional or hypothetical statements, or to express politeness, e.g., "If I had more time, I would travel the world" (conditional); "Would you like some tea?" (politeness). |
| 9 | Must | Indicates necessity, obligations, or a strong recommendation, e.g., "You must study for the exam" (necessity, obligation); "We must be at the airport by 8 AM" (necessity). |
| 10 | Ought to | Used to express duty or suggestion, indicating what should happen or what is recommended, e.g., "You ought to study for your exam." |

| No. | Type | Function |
|-----|---------|--|
| 11 | Used to | Refers to a past habit or profession that someone no longer engages in, e.g., "I had a job in marketing" (indicating a past role). |
| 12 | Need to | Indicates necessity, similar to must, but can also function as a lexical verb. |
| 13 | Dare | Can be used as a modal auxiliary or as a lexical verb, indicating courage or challenge. |

2.2.3 A Rose for Emily

"A Rose for Emily" is a short story by William Faulkner, originally published in Forum magazine in 1930 before being collected in Faulkner's anthology "These Thirteen" the following year. The story revolves around an unmarried woman living in the American South, who raises concerns and suspicions among the townspeople after her father dies and she becomes romantically involved with a Yankee man from the North. "A Rose for Emily" invites a variety of critical interpretations and has attracted significant commentary and analysis. Before we analyze the meaning of Faulkner's classic story, it may be helpful to recap the main elements, as follows:

1. Setting: The setting of "A Rose for Emily" is one of the many wonderful aspects of the story. Faulkner's inquisitive narrator, who uses the possessive "we" as if speaking for the entire city where the story takes place, paints a vivid picture of Jefferson. This city serves as the backdrop for the narrative and is often described in just a few words. Like many works of Gothic literature, the setting is crucial to the story's power (Breem, 2010).
2. Theme: The story explores themes of death and resistance to change, reflecting the decaying societal norms of the South in the 1930s. Emily Grierson was controlled by her overbearing father for the first 30 years of her life, and she never questioned it. Once her father passed away, Emily, in denial, refused to give his corpse up for burial, illustrating her inability to adapt to change. When the current mayor and aldermen insist that Miss Emily pay the taxes from which she had been exempted, she stubbornly refuses and continues to live in her house. Her insistence on not paying taxes in Jefferson and her confusing the new mayor with Colonel Sartoris raise questions about

whether her acts of defiance stem from a decayed mental state. The reader only sees Emily from an external perspective, making it difficult to ascertain whether her actions are rational (Leech & Short, 1981).

3. Metaphor: Miss Emily represents the old South because she is out of place in the modern town in which she lives. She is unable to keep up with the times, and the townspeople do not know how to relate to her. Her values are superficial, reflecting those of the old South, which the modern residents do not understand. In the first paragraph, Emily Grierson is compared to a fallen monument. This metaphor highlights the antiquated view the town has of Emily; they see her as distant and hardened, much like a stone monument (Short, 1996).
4. Personification: In "A Rose for Emily," Faulkner uses personification effectively. For example, he personifies the garages and cotton gins in town, stating that they "had encroached and obliterated even the august names of that neighborhood." This technique emphasizes the impact of modernization on the community and highlights the loss of its historical significance (Breem, 2010).
5. Irony: Faulkner employs irony throughout "A Rose for Emily" to shock readers, effectively deepening the themes in their minds. For example, Emily's father, Colonel Sartoris, drives away her suitors when she is young to protect her from any negative reputation. Ironically, in the end, the town uncovers her secrets, revealing the very reputation he sought to shield her from (Short, 1996).
6. Imagery and Symbolism: In "A Rose for Emily," William Faulkner uses imagery and symbolism to illustrate and strengthen the most prevalent theme: Emily's resistance to change. Faulkner reveals this theme through multiple descriptions of Miss Grierson's actions, appearance, and her home. Throughout the short story, it is clear that Emily has a hard time letting go of her past; she seems to cling to every aspect of it. Readers see this manifested in several ways, some more obvious than others (Breem, 2010).
7. Plot: A woman of high social status, Emily is isolated from the rest of the townspeople in Jefferson, Mississippi, because they believe she thinks she is too good for them. Emily meets a Yankee laborer named Homer Barron, who escorts her around town. She wants to marry him, but he likely refuses. To

prevent him from leaving, she poisons him. After her death, the townspeople are shocked to learn that she has kept his corpse in her house, having lain beside his decayed body for years. (Faulkner, 1930).

3. Data Analysis, Results and Discussion

3.1 data Analysis

This data analysis delves into the five parts of William Faulkner's short story "A Rose for Emily." The primary focus is to investigate the various types of modal auxiliaries employed by the author, which play a significant role in conveying the nuances of the literary text to readers. Modal auxiliaries serve as essential linguistic tools, influencing the tone, mood, and meaning of the narrative.

To facilitate this examination, five tables are presented below. Each table includes specific utterances that contain modal auxiliaries, with the auxiliaries highlighted for clarity. Additionally, the function of each modal auxiliary is stated, providing insight into how these elements contribute to the overall interpretation of the story. This analysis aims to enhance our understanding of Faulkner's stylistic choices and their impact on the reader's experience.

Table (1) Auxiliaries in part (1) A Rose for Emily

| No. | Utterance (Modal Auxiliary) | Function |
|-----|---|----------------------------|
| 1. | Only a man of Colonel Sartoris' generation and thought could have invented it | Past ability |
| 2. | Only a woman could have believed it | Suggestion |
| 3. | They could see that the leather was cracked | Past ability, Suggestion |
| 4. | Miss Emily would have accepted charity | Hypothetical circumstances |
| 5. | That was why what would have been merely plumpness | Hypothetical circumstances |
| 6. | They could hear the invisible watch | Past Ability, Suggestion |

| | | |
|----|--|--|
| 7. | One of you can gain access to the city records | Possibility or permission |
| 8. | We must go by the —” | Necessity, Obligation, and a Strong Recommendation |

Table (2) Auxiliaries in part (2) A Rose for Emily

| No. | Utterance (Modal Auxiliary) | Function |
|-----|---|--|
| 1. | The one we believed would marry her | Hypothetical circumstances |
| 2. | Now she too would know the old thrill | Hypothetical circumstances |
| 3. | She would have to cling | Hypothetical circumstances |
| 4. | she wouldn't have turned down all of her chances | Hypothetical circumstances (Negative) |
| 5. | “Just as if a man — any man — could keep a kitchen properly,” | Past ability |
| 6. | At last they could pity Miss Emily | Past ability |
| 7. | We really must do something about it | Necessity, Obligation, and a Strong Recommendation |
| 8. | “But what will you have me do about it, madam?” | Future actions intentions or Predications |
| 9. | “will you accuse a lady to her face of smelling bad?” | Future actions intentions or Predications |

Table (3) Auxiliaries in part (3) A Rose for Emily

| No. | Utterance (Modal Auxiliary) | Function |
|-----|--|----------------------------|
| 1. | The little boys would follow in groups | Hypothetical circumstances |
| 2. | Homer Barron would be in the center of the group | Hypothetical circumstances |

| | | |
|----|--|-------------------------------------|
| 3. | we were glad that Miss Emily would have an interest | Hypothetical circumstances |
| 4. | Of course a Grierson would not think seriously of a Northerner | Hypothetical circumstances |
| 5. | older people, who said that even grief could not cause a real lady to forget noblesse oblige | Suggestion |
| 6. | “Of course it is. What else could...” | Suggestion |
| 7. | Her kinsfolk should come to her.” | Indicates advice or recommendations |

Table (4) Auxiliaries in part (4) A Rose for Emily

| No. | Utterance (Modal Auxiliary) | Function |
|-----|---|---|
| 1. | we said it would be the best thing. | hypothetical circumstances desires or habits in the past. |
| 2. | He would never divulge what happened during that interview | hypothetical circumstances desires or habits in the past. |
| 3. | Now and then we would see her at a window for a moment | hypothetical circumstances desires or habits in the past. |
| 4. | She would not listen to them | hypothetical circumstances desires or habits in the past. |
| 5. | Each December we sent her a tax notice, which would be returned by the post office a week later | hypothetical circumstances desires or habits in the past. |
| 6. | Now and then we would see her in one of the downstairs windows | hypothetical circumstances desires or habits in the past. |
| 7. | We could never tell which | Past ability, Suggestion |

Table (5) Auxiliaries in part (5) A Rose for Emily

| No. | Utterance (Modal Auxiliary) | Function |
|-----|-------------------------------|--|
| 1. | which would have to be forced | hypothetical circumstances desires or habits in the past. |

3.2 Results and Discussion

In this section the frequencies of modal auxiliaries overall the five parts are presented, as follows:

| Auxiliary | Frequency | | | | | Total | Percentage |
|-----------|-----------|---------|----------|---------|--------|-------|------------|
| | Part I | Part II | Part III | Part IV | Part V | | |
| Would | 2 | 4 | 4 | 6 | 1 | 17 | 53% |
| Could | 4 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 9 | 28% |
| Can | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3.125% |
| Must | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 6.25% |
| Should | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3.125% |
| Will | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 6.25% |
| Total | 8 | 9 | 7 | 7 | 1 | 32 | 100% |

Based on the frequency counts found, here is the discussion of the usage of modal auxiliaries in "A Rose for Emily":

In Part 1, the most frequently used modal auxiliary is "could" with a frequency of 4. It is followed by "can" and "must," each occurring once. "Would" appears only once in this section. The usage of "could" suggests the possibility or ability to do something, while "can" indicates general capability or permission. The solitary occurrence of "would" implies a hypothetical or conditional situation. The low frequency of "would" compared to "could" may indicate that the author emphasizes actual or potential abilities and permissions rather than hypothetical scenarios.

In Part 2, the most frequently used modal auxiliary is again "would" with a frequency of 4. "Could" appears twice, and "must" occurs once. The repeated use of "would" suggests the presence of hypothetical or conditional situations. It may reflect the author's intention to explore alternative possibilities or imagined scenarios. The use of "could" indicates potential abilities or permissions, while "must" implies necessity or obligation.

In Part 3, "would" is once again the most frequently used modal auxiliary with a frequency of 4. "Could" appears twice, and "should" occurs once. The usage of "would" suggests hypothetical or conditional situations. The occurrence of "could" points to potential abilities or permissions, while "should" indicates a moral obligation or recommendation.

In Part 4, "would" is the sole modal auxiliary used, with a frequency of 7. Its repeated occurrence emphasizes hypothetical or conditional situations throughout this section. The single instance of "could" suggests a potential ability or permission.

In Part 5, "would" is the sole modal auxiliary used, with a frequency of 1. Its repeated occurrence emphasizes hypothetical or conditional situations throughout this section. The single instance of "could" suggests a potential ability or permission.

Overall, based on the provided frequency counts, "would" is the most frequently used modal auxiliary in "A Rose for Emily." It appears consistently across the different parts of the story, indicating hypothetical or conditional situations. "Could" is the second most frequently used auxiliary, emphasizing potential abilities or permissions. The other modal auxiliaries, such as "can," "must," and "should," occur less frequently, suggesting specific contexts of capability, necessity, or moral obligation.

Conclusions

Based on the frequency analysis of modal auxiliaries in "A Rose for Emily," several conclusions can be drawn:

1. The modal auxiliary "would" appears to be the most frequently used modal auxiliary throughout the story. It occurs consistently across different parts, indicating a focus on hypothetical or conditional situations. This suggests that the author, William Faulkner, employs "would" to explore alternative possibilities, imagined scenarios, or potential outcomes.

2. "Could" is the second most frequently used modal auxiliary. Its occurrence implies potential abilities or permissions. It suggests that the characters in the story have capabilities or opportunities to perform certain actions or make choices.
3. The modal auxiliaries "can," "must," "should," and "shall" have lower frequencies compared to "would" and "could." Their usage seems to be more context-specific, appearing in certain situations to convey specific meanings. "Can" indicates general capability or permission, "must" implies necessity or obligation, "should" conveys a moral obligation or recommendation, and "shall" suggests future actions or intentions.
4. The higher frequency of "would" compared to other modal auxiliaries suggests a narrative focus on hypothetical or conditional elements rather than definitive or factual statements. This choice of language may contribute to the story's ambiguity, allowing for multiple interpretations and engaging the reader in actively constructing meaning.

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