

MODAL VERBS AS A LINGUISTIC CATEGORY: A SCIENTIFIC AND ANALYTICAL STUDY**Ahmedov Azimjon***teacher of Andijan State Institute of Foreign Languages.*

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Abstract: *Modal verbs constitute a crucial grammatical category in English, functioning as primary linguistic tools for expressing modality, that is, speakers' attitudes toward actions, events, and states of affairs. Rather than encoding concrete actions, modal verbs convey abstract meanings such as obligation, necessity, possibility, probability, ability, and permission. This article presents a scientific and analytical examination of modal verbs from a linguistic and pedagogical perspective. Drawing on established grammatical theories and empirical research in applied linguistics, the study analyzes the structural characteristics, semantic variability, and pragmatic functions of modal verbs in English. Particular attention is given to the role of context in meaning interpretation and to the challenges faced by language learners in mastering modal usage. The article argues that modal verbs should be treated not merely as auxiliary elements but as a central mechanism of meaning construction, essential for achieving communicative competence in English.*

Keywords: *modal verbs, modality, English grammar, semantic analysis, pragmatics, language teaching*

Аннотация: *Модальные глаголы представляют собой важнейшую грамматическую категорию английского языка и функционируют как основные лингвистические средства выражения модальности, то есть отношения говорящего к действиям, событиям и состояниям. В отличие от лексических глаголов, модальные глаголы не обозначают конкретные действия, а передают абстрактные значения, такие как обязательство, необходимость, возможность, вероятность, способность и разрешение. В данной статье представлен научно-аналитический анализ модальных глаголов с лингвистической и педагогической точек зрения. Опираясь на признанные грамматические теории и эмпирические исследования в области прикладной лингвистики, в работе анализируются структурные характеристики, семантическая вариативность и прагматические функции модальных глаголов в английском языке. Особое внимание уделяется роли контекста*

в интерпретации значений, а также трудностям, с которыми сталкиваются изучающие язык при освоении модальных глаголов. В статье обосновывается позиция, согласно которой модальные глаголы следует рассматривать не просто как вспомогательные элементы, а как центральный механизм конструирования смысла, необходимый для достижения коммуникативной компетенции в английском языке.

Ключевые слова: Модальные глаголы, модальность, английская грамматика, семантический анализ, прагматика, обучение языку

Annotatsiya: *Modal fe'llar ingliz tilida muhim grammatik kategoriya hisoblanib, modallikni ifodalovchi asosiy lingvistik vositalar sifatida xizmat qiladi. Modallik deganda so'zlovchining harakatlar, voqealar va holatlarga bo'lgan munosabati tushuniladi. Leksik fe'llardan farqli o'laroq, modal fe'llar aniq harakatlarni ifodalamaydi, balki majburiyat, zarurat, imkoniyat, ehtimollik, qobiliyat va ruxsat kabi mavhum ma'nolarni bildiradi. Mazkur maqolada modal fe'llar lingvistik va pedagogik nuqtai nazardan ilmiy-tahliliy jihatdan o'rganiladi. Tadqiqotda tasdiqlangan grammatik nazariyalar hamda amaliy lingvistika sohasidagi empirik tadqiqotlarga tayangan holda, modal fe'llarning tuzilish xususiyatlari, semantik o'zgaruvchanligi va pragmatik funksiyalari tahlil qilinadi. Shuningdek, ma'noni talqin qilishda kontekstning o'rni hamda til o'rganuvchilar modal fe'llarni o'zlashtirish jarayonida duch keladigan qiyinchiliklarga alohida e'tibor qaratiladi. Maqolada modal fe'llarni faqat yordamchi birliklar sifatida emas, balki ingliz tilida kommunikativ kompetensiyani shakllantirish uchun zarur bo'lgan markaziy ma'no yaratuvchi mexanizm sifatida qarash lozimligi asoslab beriladi.*

Kalit so'zlar: *Modal fe'llar, modallik, ingliz tili grammatikasi, semantik tahlil, pragmatika, tilni o'qitish*

Modal verbs occupy a distinctive and theoretically significant position in English grammar because they encode modality rather than concrete lexical meaning. In linguistic terms, modality refers to the speaker's subjective evaluation of a proposition, including judgments about necessity, possibility, obligation, and likelihood. Modal verbs such as can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will, and would allow speakers to move beyond factual description and express nuanced attitudes toward reality. As a result, modal verbs function as essential instruments of interpersonal and cognitive meaning.

From a grammatical perspective, modal verbs differ fundamentally from lexical verbs. They do not inflect for person or number, lack infinitive and participle forms, and are followed by the bare infinitive of the main verb. These formal properties classify modal verbs as functional auxiliaries rather than full verbs. However, their grammatical simplicity

contrasts sharply with their semantic complexity. A single modal verb may express multiple meanings depending on context, a phenomenon widely discussed in linguistic research as semantic polysemy. For example, *must* may express external obligation in one context and logical deduction in another. This contextual dependence makes modal verbs particularly rich objects of linguistic analysis.

Semantically, modal verbs are commonly associated with three major types of modality. Epistemic modality relates to knowledge and belief, expressing degrees of certainty or probability. Deontic modality concerns social norms, rules, and obligations imposed by external authorities. Dynamic modality, by contrast, reflects internal abilities or willingness. These categories are not rigid but overlap in actual language use, further reinforcing the idea that modal meaning emerges through interaction between grammar, context, and speaker intention. Linguistic theory thus views modal verbs as operators that modify the propositional content of a sentence rather than as carriers of lexical meaning.

Pragmatically, modal verbs play a critical role in shaping social interaction. Speakers frequently use modals to soften statements, express politeness, or signal indirectness. The choice between *can* and *could*, or *will* and *would*, often reflects social distance, power relations, or degrees of formality. This pragmatic dimension explains why modal verbs are indispensable in authentic communication yet difficult for learners to master. Errors in modal usage may not only result in grammatical inaccuracy but also lead to pragmatic failure, such as sounding impolite or overly direct.

In applied linguistics, modal verbs are consistently identified as a major source of learner difficulty. Research suggests that these difficulties stem from several factors, including semantic abstraction, cross-linguistic interference, and insufficient exposure to authentic input. Learners often attempt to map modal meanings directly onto equivalents in their first language, which may have fundamentally different modal systems. Additionally, traditional grammar instruction frequently presents modal verbs as fixed rules or isolated meanings, neglecting their contextual and pragmatic variability.

A scientific and analytical approach to modal verbs therefore requires a shift from purely form-based instruction toward meaning-oriented and discourse-based teaching. Linguistic research emphasizes that learners benefit from contextualized input, contrastive analysis, and explicit discussion of semantic nuance. Modal verbs should be taught as part of communicative acts rather than as isolated grammatical items. Such an approach aligns grammatical competence with communicative competence and reflects the true linguistic nature of modality.

From a broader theoretical perspective, modal verbs illustrate how grammar encodes human cognition and social interaction. They demonstrate that language is not merely a

system for describing reality but a tool for interpreting, evaluating, and negotiating it. The study of modal verbs thus contributes not only to grammatical theory but also to our understanding of how language functions as a cognitive and social system.

Modal verbs represent one of the most complex and conceptually rich categories in English grammar. Their importance lies not in their formal structure but in their ability to express modality, a fundamental aspect of human communication. This article has provided a scientific and analytical examination of modal verbs, highlighting their grammatical properties, semantic flexibility, and pragmatic significance. The analysis demonstrates that modal verbs function as central mechanisms of meaning construction rather than as secondary auxiliary elements. For language education, this implies that effective instruction must integrate grammatical form, semantic interpretation, and pragmatic use. Mastery of modal verbs is therefore essential for achieving both linguistic accuracy and communicative effectiveness in English.

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