

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Language is a crucial tool for communication that individuals and groups use to interact socially and express their thoughts and feelings. With the era of globalization, it is widely known that English is an international language since it has been largely spoken among foreign language speakers and it has become a language that is spoken worldwide. Kandasamy and Habil (2018) asserted that English is closely linked with technological advancements, education, science, the internet, tourism, commerce, and politics. This is reinforced by Getie (2020: 2), who states that English is spoken, read, and understood in most parts of the world.

Further, in using language for communication, it is important to notes the grammatical rules, semantic & pragmatic context. In English, one of the highlights and debatable topic is modal and modality. Modality is a crucial concept in language that helps to convey ideas and express one's thoughts and attitudes. The grammatical term used to describe the speaker's attitude is called the mode (or mood). It is reflected in the use of modal verb forms. (Maria, 2020:1). According to Alwi (1992:1), Aristotle was the first to articulate the concept of modality. He used a perspective based on modal logic, and identified the issues of necessity, possibility, and impossibility as central to the problem of modality.

Perkins (1983) has identified two important factors to consider in relation to modality. Firstly, it is important to take into account the speaker's attitude towards propositions or events. Secondly, the speaker's attitude towards the proposition or event needs to be based on the existence of some kind of principle set, whether in the form of rational rules, social rules, or natural laws. These two factors are used to determine the subcategories of modality in languages spoken around the world. According to Palmer (1988:96-97), modals reveal three kinds of modality, namely epistemic modality, deontic modality, and dynamic modality.

Modal verbs as stated by some sources provide different meanings such as probability, permission, volition, and obligation. In English, modals verbs are expressed through the words such as: shall, should, can, could, may, might, would,

must and sometimes will is expressed by using possibly, may be, perhaps, and necessarily. Modal verbs are a type of auxiliary verb (*verba pewatas*) that is mainly used to express moods or attitudes, expresses a variety of meanings including possibility, necessity, and politeness. (Shan, 2021, Ivanoska, 2014, Kearns, 2002).

However, different experts have varied views and interpretations regarding modality and its subcategories. Von Wright (1951), Lyons (1968), and Rescher (1968) mention four, three, and eight subcategories of modality respectively. Perkins (1983:10) considers this difference of subcategories not fundamental. According to his comparison, "the number of modalities one decides upon is to some extent a matter of different ways of slicing the same cake". (Alwi, 1992).

Learning English is a popular topic, and one of the closest discussions in this regard is about EFL learners. According to Nordquist (2024), which defines EFL as the study of English by non-native speakers in countries where English is not the dominant language. It should not be mistaken for English as a Second Language (ESL) or English as an Additional Language, which refers to the practice of learning English in a country where English is predominantly spoken.

Furthermore, there are several acronyms in the world of English learning, such as ESL, EFL, ESOL, ELL, and ESP, each representing unique aspects of the learning process. EFL is different from English as a Second Language (ESL), which involves learning English in a country where English is the predominant language. The main goal of EFL learners is to become proficient in English for various purposes, including academics, travel, or personal interest. It is also popular among individuals who want to learn English for travel, work, or academic reasons. (Landry, 2023).

According to McKay (2018), World Englishes (WE) can be viewed from three different perspectives (Bolton, 2004). The first perspective is a broad definition, which includes all varieties of English spoken worldwide. This includes English spoken as a first language (Inner Circle), as one of several official languages of a country (Outer Circle), and as a foreign language without any official status (Expanding Circle), as described by Kachru (1985). This definition is often used interchangeably with international English and global English (Jenkins, 2006).

Modal verbs and modalities are closely related to speech, and therefore it is important to observe their proper use. Written output can also provide insights into the

appropriate use of modal verbs and modalities. As a result, the researcher has identified some common errors in using modals and modalities, which form the basis of this study:

1. Students were uncertain about which modals to use to express modality in their sentences, and this could easily be seen in the inaccuracy of modals at the syntactic and specifically semantic levels. (Rosli and Malachi 1989, Manaf 2007, Khojasteh and Rainer, 2013).
2. The difficulty non-native language learners are facing in terms of semantic function of modal auxiliaries can be seen in both EFL and ESL settings. (Wong, 1989).
3. EFL students in India had major difficulty producing modals from different perspective (Bose, 2005).
4. Swedish students are tended to overuse modals, lack enough knowledge about register-interference aspect of modals and at last lack of enough information about modal phrases and larger sentence patterns. (Ajimer, 2002).
5. EFL students in Brazil wrote the compositions in a non-proficient way in terms of modal auxiliaries and had major problems producing them. (Viana, 2006).
6. Abdul-Majeed and Hassoon (2016) pointed out that EFL learners are faced with serious problems in using modal verbs.
7. Using modals properly is rather difficult for non-native speakers of English (Sedigheh, Marziyeh, & Jenaabadi, 2017).
8. According to Surujui and Scarabnaia's (2012) explanation, no equivalent grammatical form in the native langue makes learning modal verbs to be "one of the most difficult grammatical topic" (p. 68).
9. Modal verbs are often challenging for those teaching and learning English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL) due to their formal and functional complexities (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, Citation1999; Decapua, Citation2008; Manaf, Citation2007).
10. It is noted by Shan (2021) that using modals properly becomes a challenge to EFL learners.

The countless difficulties non- native students face in terms of modal auxiliaries have been reported by well-known linguists such as Thornbury (1999); Celce-Murcia

and Larsen-Freeman, (1983); Wong, (1983) and Hoyer, (1997), yet not many learner-corpus studies have covered the root of these difficulties by L2 learners with different nationalities. (Torabiardakani, Khojasteh, Shokrpour, 2015). Therefore, to view this debateable topic from another perspective the researcher aims to conduct a study involving EFL university students at UIN SU.

Furthermore, discussing about classroom activities, Pardjono (2002) explains that learning can only take place when there is some kind of action. This action does not necessarily have to be physical, it can also be mental. Hence, it appears that learning cannot take place without any form of activity. However, the real concern is not whether learning is possible without action, but what the essence of active learning is.

Classroom activities are becoming increasingly popular as an active learning strategy that offers students the opportunity to practice their communication skills through hands-on experience. According to Huang & Hu (2015), several studies have demonstrated the benefits of using classroom activities. For instance, Moore (2011) maintains that classroom activities can (1) engage students in learning, facilitate learning by doing, and provide a platform for practicing communication skills; (2) offer numerous advantages, such as immediate feedback to students, arousing high levels of interest and enthusiasm, enabling teachers to work with a range of student capabilities, and allowing experimentation with a model of the real environment.

In 2020, the University of California conducted research which found that students are more likely to retain information and apply it effectively when engaging in collaborative learning tasks. When it comes to teaching a foreign language like English, a consistent approach to skill development is essential. Thus, it is imperative to implement activities that foster English language proficiency and promote student engagement.

In addition to the previous study, there are numerous studies that also discuss this topic, such as Muhammad Dalimunte (2014) conducted a research about "Introduction to English Modality". Hasan Alwi (1992) conducted a research about "Modalitas Dalam Bahasa Indonesia". Yiming Shan (2021) did a research about "Analysis of a Grammatical Category in English Modal Verbs". Ruxandra Boicu (2007) conducted a research about "Modal verbs and politeness strategies in political discourse". Maria Theresia Priyastuti (2020) conducted a research about "Penggunaan

Modal verbs Bahasa Inggris Dalam Keterampilan Berbicara”. Najmeh Torabiardakani, Laleh Khojasteh, Nasrin Shokrpour (2015) conducted a research about Modal Auxiliaries and Their Semantic Functions Used by Advanced EFL Learners. Lexi Xiaoduo Li (2022) conducted a research about “Developmental Patterns of English Modal Verbs in the Writings of Chinese Learners of English: A Corpus-based Approach”. Eryon (2011) conducted a research about "Satu Tinjauan Diskripsi Tentang Modalitas Bahasa Inggris dan Bahasa Indonesia”. Raphael Salkie (1988) did a research about “F.R. Palmer, Mood and Modality”. Patrice Larroque (2013) conducted a research about “The Representation of Modality in Non-Standard English”.

This study aims to answer the question of which modals and modalities EFL university students at UINSU use the most during classroom activities such as presentation, group work, and pair work. The researcher also intends to explain why EFL university students at UINSU prefer certain modal verbs over others. By analysing the use of modals and modalities in students' interaction, the researcher will be able to gain insight of the students' understanding in using modals and modalities and how these language features shape their communication. The findings could also help teachers support students in using modals more effectively in both academic and everyday conversations. As a result, the study is titled "**The Use of Modal Verbs by EFL University Students in Classroom Activities: A Case Study at UINSU.**"

1.2.The Identification of the Problem

Based on the explanation of the problem above, the writer can identify several problems related to the title, as written below:

1. Students struggled with modal usage, resulting in inaccuracies at both the syntactic and semantic levels.
2. The semantic function of modal auxiliaries is difficult for non-native language learners in both EFL and ESL settings.
3. EFL learners had major difficulty producing modals from different perspective.
4. EFL students tend to overuse modals and lack knowledge about register-interference and larger sentence patterns.
5. EFL students had difficulties using modals auxiliaries in their compositions.
6. EFL learners are faced with serious problems in using modal verbs.

7. Non-native English speakers experiencing difficulties is using modals properly.
8. Modal verbs considered to be “one of the most difficult grammatical topic” as there is no equivalent grammatical form in the native language
9. Teaching and learning English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL) can be challenging due to the complexities of modal verbs.
10. EFL learners found an obstacle in using modals properly.

1.3.The Limitation of the Study

This study has certain limitations, as it focuses only on the use of modal verbs and modalities within a classroom setting. The research is limited to three types of classroom activities—presentations, group work, and pair work—while also exploring why EFL students at UINSU prefer specific modal verbs and the modalities they tend to use.

1.4. Research Question

Based on the limitation of the study above, the formulation of the study is as follows:

1. What kinds of modals and modalities that are most commonly used by EFL university students at UINSU in presentation activity, group-work activity, and pair-work activity?
2. Why do the EFL university students at UINSU prefer to use certain kinds of modal verbs?
3. What kinds of modalities tend to use by EFL university students?

1.5.Objectives of Study

Based on the formulation of the study above, the objective of this study is as follows:

1. To find out what types of modals and modalities that are commonly used by university students at UINSU in presentation activity, group-work activity, and pair-work activity.
2. To elaborate on why EFL university students at UINSU use certain kinds of modal verbs.
3. To discover what kinds of modalities tend to use by EFL university students?

1.6. Significances of Study

The significance of the study is expected will be useful for:

1.6.1. Scientific Significance

Scientifically, the researcher expects the result of this study can give useful information to enrich the knowledge about the politeness of students who speak English in doing communication.

Practical Significance

a. For the Learners

With this research, the researcher hopes that the learners will gain active participation in daily basis conversations inside the classroom using diverse modals and modalities.

b. For the English Teachers

The researcher expects that this study will be beneficial for English teachers. Teachers will be aware of their students' difficulties in speaking English as a result of this research, and they can use the strategy to help students speak and create many opportunities for learners to actively interact in classroom. By responding to the students' perspectives, the teachers will know what the steps they want to take further to reduce the difficulty, whether it is from the learning method, learning reference, or textbooks.

c. For the Further Researcher

Hopefully, the future researcher can use this study as an additional source for further investigation and be able to develop the research to make it better.

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