

# Syntactic Accuracy: EFL Learners in using Modals and Modality in Sikola Virtual Learning

Ainun Fatimah<sup>1\*</sup>, Rezky Ramadhani<sup>2</sup>, and Andi Inayah Soraya<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Hasanuddin University

<sup>2</sup>Hasanuddin University

<sup>3</sup>Hasanuddin University

\*Corresponding author. Email: [ainunfatimah@unhas.ac.id](mailto:ainunfatimah@unhas.ac.id)

## ABSTRACT

This purpose of this research is to determine modal and modality that used by students in particularly at level of syntactic then to reveal the percentage of students' accuracy in answering modals and modality questions by using Sikola virtual learning as an online learning media in Covid-19 pandemic era. This study uses qualitative techniques in describing the use of student modal and modality that has been uploaded to the Sikola virtual learning. The data were analyzed using a syntactic approach. The data that appears is influenced by a linguistic phenomenon where the modals *can* and *could* show someone's ability or the possibility that it will happen. The results of the study were 68% accurate answers and only 32% inaccurate answers were made by 30 students. It can be concluded that the understanding of modals and modality of English Department students of Hasanuddin University batch 2020 using Sikola virtual learning media is still good but need to be improved.

**Keywords:** *Modals, Modality, EFL, Syntactic Accuracy, Sikola virtual learning*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Today, people who go to school to study to gain delicate expertise and hard abilities must learn one or more foreign languages, especially English as an international language. But the fact is, despite having studied for several years and even taking English courses, most EFLs in Indonesia cannot make simple sentences and communicate in English.

EFL In Indonesia, most high school graduates are not able to express ideas or ideas in English orally or in writing, nor can they understand simple texts, even though they have studied it for years since elementary school level or they study in remote villages. Why this happens, there are in all likelihood several main causes of student failure to master a foreign language in this case English; English language schools are treated the same as other knowledge-based subjects, such as biology, chemistry, and economics. Whereas language tends to be a skill that is mastered through repeated training, as it is believed that with frequent practice it will eventually become skilled. This is rooted in an incorrect practice that views learning as a form of preparing students to face tests or exams every semester from the elementary school level. This is exacerbated by the design of the exam as a tool or indicator to assess students' mastery of knowledge. In this case, the English itself being taught is stuck in a trap that requires it to be studied in the same

way as other subjects such as science subjects. As a result, learning activities are controlled by instructions and commands that force students to remember and practice the rules, grammar, phrases and sentences, paragraphs, basic past tense, and so on. The thing that makes this happen is mostly due to memorization activities so that the practice and practice of making and using correct sentences to convey ideas and feelings is becoming rare. Students fail to understand that the essence of learning English is to develop the skills needed to use it as a communication tool, not just knowing about the language.

Then, to realize the goal of learning English in EFL which is not only centered on theory but also practice, it is important for students to be able to form an accurate sentence. This is inseparable from the use of modal and modality, in other words the use of modal and modality cannot be avoided, so students are deemed necessary to master the use of modals and modality to produce graduates who understand theory and practice, especially EFL in this case students at the English Department of Hasanuddin University.

Furthermore, in this new normal era, the government appeals to all levels of society to establish health protocols such as maintaining distance, using masks, and so on. This also has an impact on the world of education being replaced with a virtual-based online learning

system. So that the full online learning method has become an option in the midst of the current new situation. This e-learning learning method is indeed not new for the community, especially students, in this case Hasanuddin University students, because before the pandemic they had implemented blended learning, namely LMS, which has now changed its name to Sikola as a virtual learning medium.

Therefore, research that focuses on EFL will reveal accuracy and inaccuracy in the use of modal which is expected to provide repertoire, especially for the students themselves as well as the contribution of linguistics and other relevant fields of science to complement teaching materials in class.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Several experts have given their opinions regarding modals and modalities as follows:

Meaning expressed by individualized modular working structures in English as representing modalities and that there are two types of modalities which are most semantically fundamental in modals and modality referred to ability and also possibility in this case are very different from one another. Modalities related to terms of meaning or can be said to be semantic terms and are elaborated as categories of grammar, similar to certain aspects, number and also gender. [12]

In addition, modals and modality as a language system have the meaning of probability, there can also be necessity or there is also a contingency, and furthermore there is no agreement in general - describing it. Modality is closely related to the structure of the auxiliary modal. Modalities, however, are generally related to the adapted structure of modals and modalities. The systematic approach emphasizes that the customized working structure of modals and modalities is not the only feature of the modalities and there are many more. [11]

Furthermore, more modal verbs are not used to express statements or factual facts, but instead actions that exist as a frame of mind where it can happen in the future or not at all. [9]

Then, how to master how to use the modals and modality system is part of a complex mechanism found in English. The difficult part about modals and modalities for linguists and EFL is that even though there are few modals, they still have similar meanings. [1]

Other linguists agree that modals and modalities are certainly complicated and make EFL confused about the meaning represented by each of these modalities. Of course, this makes teachers really need to understand and master in modals and modalities so that in online and offline classes they are able to transfer adequate knowledge regarding modals and modalities to EFL and can anticipate and avoid misunderstood during learning activities.

The fact is that the formal system of modals and modalities in English is very complicated, namely that similar modals and modalities are often used to illustrate different ideas from each other as shown by their function. For example, namely probability and possibility

or certainty, as well as the tendency, ability of a person or thing that is required. Based on this, of course, EFL students will be confused and teachers must be vigilant in teaching these complex modalities and modalities to EFL students. [13]

## 3. METHOD

In this study, the researcher uses a qualitative research design and is analyzed with a syntactic approach, in this case, it is analyzed using discourse analysis to record emerging linguistic characteristics which will eventually be analyzed and studied. This discourse analysis method is used as a tool in analyzing sentences or data that has been collected to reveal findings from the data related to the use of modals by students using the Sikola virtual learning.

## 4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research showed that there are 68% accurate answers and only 32% inaccurate answers were made by 30 students. It can be seen on the table and explanation below.

Table 1. Data Accurate / Inaccurate Modals and Modality i.e. **Had + to**

Modals and Modality	Accurate	Inaccurate
<b>Had + to</b>	13	1

Based on the table above, accurate answers are shown in data 1,3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 12, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 23. The answers that are not accurate are shown in data 25.

The level of accuracy of students answering questions in the form of modals is shown by the following data:

Data 1

*You must do it at once > You had to did it at once.*

Data 3

*She has to wash the glasses > She had to wash the glasses.*

Data 5

*You'll have to read it again > You had to read it again.*

Data 7

*They must sell it at once > They had to sell it at once.*

Data 8

*We shall have to leave in the morning > we had to leave in the morning.*

Data 10

*I shall have to come again > I had to come again.*

Data 12

*they must change their shoes > they had to change their shoes.*

Data 15

*we have to begin before five o'clock > we had to begin before five o'clock.*

Data 17

*we shall have to do it again > we had to do it again.*

Data 19  
*I have to light a fire > I had to light a fire.*  
 Data 20  
*he has to go home early > He had to go home early.*

The inaccuracy of students answering questions in the form of modals is shown by the following data:

Data 25  
*they'll have to do what they're told > they would have to do what they were tell.*

Table 2. Data Accurate / Inaccurate Modals and Modality i.e. **can** and **could**

Modals and Modality	Accurate	Inaccurate
<b>Can and could</b>	2	5

Based on the table above, the data shows that students who answered the questions accurately were in the modal and modality question model in the form of can and could as many as 2 who answered accurately and 5 who answered inaccurately. Data that shows accurate answers are in data 2 and 4 while inaccurate answers are in data 9, 13, 21, 22 and 24.

The level of accuracy of students answering questions in the form of modals is shown by the following data:

Data 2  
*Can you swim underwater?*  
 Data 4  
*I could play much better ten years ago.*

The level of inaccuracy of students answering questions in the form of modals is shown by the following data:

Data 9  
*Andy can plays the piano*  
*(Andy can play the piano)*

Data 13  
 Could us read the book once more?  
 (Could we read the book once more?)

Data 21  
*He could reaches the first place of this championship.*  
*(He could reach the first place of this championship)*

Data 22  
 She could run really fast before the accident happens.  
 (She could runs really fast before the accident happens.)

Data 24  
*He could makes a mistake*  
 (He could make a mistake)

Table 2. Accurate and Inaccurate Modals ‘WH’

Data 14  
 “Would you mind if I put this bag back?”  
 Data 18  
 “When would you start cooking for dinner?”

Table 3. Data Accurate / Inaccurate Modals and Modality i.e. **would**

Modals and Modality	Accuarate	Inaccurate
<b>would</b>	2	0

Based on the table above, there are zero mistakes in data 14 and 18 concerning the were not to question model, there is something interesting from the findings from this data that students tend to answer accurately on the modal verb for the question ‘WH’ (model), this linguistic phenomenon could also occur in EFL especially in Indonesia.

By using a syntactic approach, it can be said that the information that appears is influenced by a linguistic phenomenon called *probability* where modals and modalities i.e. *can* and *could* are closely related to human abilities or future possibilities. There are different views from several experts regarding *can* and *could* when examined in terms of one’s ability or it can also be called individual skills.

Other experts also consider the meaning of the ability of the modals *can* and *could* to be very dynamic depending on the context of the sentence and this is certainly closely related to the meaning or semantics. However, this modals and modality *can* and *could* cannot be replaced by modals and modality *may* if the sentence relates to someone’s skill or someone’s proficiency in something. Furthermore, linguists argue that it can be replaced by actual dynamic modalities that fall into their respective categories. [7]

Based on this, the ability can be considered a threat from the possibility. If it shows the possibility, *can* is often used in negative sentences or *can* also be used in interrogative sentences. In many cases, there is no connection with the past, but politeness or other direct speech which of course has considerations related to pragmatics itself.

*Can* is also closely related to time and distant or remote facts according to the context of the existing sentence, or its semantic meaning. Furthermore, in syntactic analysis, it must express obligations/requirements from the speaker’s point of view and must disclose external obligations. [5]

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Then, it can be concluded that in this study there are 68% accurate answers and only 32% inaccurate answers were made by 30 students. Based on the findings above, the researcher concludes that the essential things that the understanding of modals and modality of English Department students of Hasanuddin University batch 2020 using Sikola virtual learning media is still good but need to be improved.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The writer would like to thank her parents, husband and kids, also my teammates; *Rezky and Inayah* for supporting her with this research. Along with that, the

writer would like to thank her colleges in English Department of Hasanuddin University and the *SYM team*.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Biber, D., et al., Longman grammar of spoken and written English, London: Pearson Education Limited, 1999
- [2] Bybee, J., Morphology, TSL No.9, Amsterdam: J. Benjamins, 1985
- [3] Chapin, P. G., Quasi-modals, journal of linguistics, 1973, Vol.9, No.1, pp1-9.
- [4] Chung, Sandra; and Timberlake, Alan, Tense, aspect, and mood, In: Shopen, Timothy(ed.), Language typology and syntactic description, 3. Grammatical categories and the lexicon, Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press, 1985, pp. 202-258.
- [5] Coates, J., The semantics of the modal auxiliaries, London: Croom Helm, 1983
- [6] Egan, Andy, Epistemic modals, relativism, and assertion, in Gajewski et al., <http://www.sitemaker.umich.edu/egana/files/mitwpl.proof.pdf>. (August, 2011), Eggins, Susan, 1994, An introduction to systematic functional linguistics, London: Pinter, 2005
- [7] Griffiths, Patrick, An introduction to English semantics and pragmatics, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006
- [8] Haan, Ferdinand de, The interaction of modality and negation: a typological study, New York: Garland, Halliday, M.A.K. 1994, An introduction to functional grammar, London: Edward Arnold. Halliday, M.A.K., 2004, An introduction to functional grammar, Third Edition, London: Edward Arnold, 1997
- [9] Hoyer, L., Adverbs and modality in English, London: Longman, 1997
- [10] Jinghua Zhang., A semantic approach to the English modality, China: Yanbian University, 2019
- [11] Lyons, J., Semantics, Vol 2, Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1977
- [12] Palmer, F. R., Modality and the English modals, London: Longman, 1990
- [13] Wong, I., Simplification features in the structure of colloquial Malaysian English, In Noss, R. (Ed), Varieties of English in south east Asia, Singapore: Singapore University Press (for SEAMEO), 1983, pp. 125-149