

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING
UNIVERSITY OF DANANG

NGUYỄN THỊ HOÀI NAM

**A STUDY OF MODALITY EXPRESSED IN TERMS
OF GRAMMATICALIZATION AND LEXICALIZATION
IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE**

Study Field : THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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**M.A. THESIS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE
(A SUMMARY)**

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Supervisor : **Prof.Dr. TRẦN HỮU MẠNH**

Examiner 1 : **Dr. NGUYỄN VĂN LONG**

Examiner 2 : **Dr. LÊ PHẠM HOÀI HƯƠNG**

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Rationale

“*Language is the light of the mind*” [74](John Stuart Mill quotes). Obviously, thanks to language, human beings are able to express their idea, their thoughts, to talk about things that happened, is happening and will or may happen beyond the here and now. We can do so through the Tense, Aspect and Modality systems of language. These three systems are not independent, but they closely associate with each other. Modality and tense are intimately interconnected: what was often a possibility a week or a month ago may not exist at the moment.

English modality can be expressed by the process called grammaticalization in the form of mood, tense, aspect, etc.. and lexicalization through lexical items (modal verbs, modal adverbs, modal adjectives, or some other lexical verbs). If modality is expressed in the forms of mood (grammatical categories), it is manifested grammatically. Meanwhile, modal meanings which are expressed by such modal verbs, adverbs, adjectives, or nouns as **must, will, possibly, certainly, possible, probable, obligation, necessity**, are said to be expressed lexically. These processes are called grammaticalization and lexicalization in due combinations.

To some extent, modality is a complicated problem in both English and Vietnamese. It has been the subject of various studies in teaching and learning foreign language.

From my teaching and translating experience, I find it difficult for Vietnamese learners to accurately use English modality in expressing appropriate degree of probability or obligation, especially when using text types that involve making judgments. Meanwhile, English modality can be expressed in the form of mood or by modal words, which may cause ambiguity for English learners. For that reason, I hope that this work will be useful for them as well as for further studies on English modality.

1.2. Aims and Objectives

1.2.1. Aims

- Investigating English modality expressed in terms of grammaticalization and localization comparing this with Vietnamese language.
- Making a comparison between different types of modal expressions in English and their Vietnamese equivalents.

1.2.2. Objectives

- Providing some suggestions for language teachers and learners to use English modality better.

1.3. Research Questions

1. What are grammaticalization and lexicalization denoting modality in English and Vietnamese?
2. What are the similarities and differences between English and Vietnamese in terms of grammaticalization and lexicalization denoting modality?

3. What are common errors made that the Vietnamese students of English at Danang schools may make and how should they be on guard against these?

1.4. Scope of the Study

- Focusing on modality, which is based on two types: Epistemic and Deontic, expressed in terms of grammaticalization and lexicalization .

- Surveying the similarities and differences between English modalities and their Vietnamese equivalents.

1.5. Significance of the study

- Hoping to help Vietnamese learners to avoid ambiguity in using English modality and how to use it properly.

1.6. The Organization of the Study

The thesis consists of five chapters as follows:

Chapter 1, Introduction, presents the rationale for choosing the field for studying, the aims and objectives, the scope of the study, the research questions and the significance and the organization of the study .

Chapter 2, Literature Review, deals with a review of previous studies related to the problem under investigation, a statement of unsolved problems and some theoretical knowledge.

Chapter 3, Methodology and Procedure, mentions the methods and procedure of the study, research methods, data collection and analysis

Chapter 4, Findings and Discussions, represents the study that focuses on the similarities and differences between English and Vietnamese in term of grammaritalization and lexicalization, and discussing specific uses of modality between the two languages.

Chapter 5, the conclusion of the study- summarizes the main points in the study and the major findings of the investigation.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Literature review

Huddleston and Pullum [14] define modality as a category of meaning which is grammaticalized by mood. Facchinetti, Krug & Palmer [8] additionally list lexical verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, etc,...

2.2. Theoretical Background

2.2.1. Modality

Modality is defined as a classification of propositions on the basis of whether they claim necessity or possibility or impossibility.

In both English language and Vietnamese language, we may notice the following diagram

2.2.2. Types of Modality

2.2.2.1. Epistemic Modality

Epistemic, is concerned with the speaker's judgement of the truth of the proposition embedded in the statement.

2.2.2.2. Deontic Modality

Deontic modality is concerned with "influencing actions, states, or events" (Palmer, 1990: 6) [17]

2.2.2.3 Modal verbs

Modal verbs are difficult to define in any language because of the wide range of pragmatic uses of modal verbs by native speakers.

Each modal verb can have two difference types of meaning: **personal** or **logical**.

2.2.2.4 Mood

Indicative Mood

Subjunctive Mood

Imperative Mood

2.2.3. *Grammaticalization*

Grammaticalization is a noteworthy and fascinating phenomenon that has attracted linguists' attention. It concerns the search for the natural source of words, the origin of grammatical forms, tense markers, plural and case markers.

2.2.4. *Lexicalization*

Lexicalization is “a process by which new linguistic entities, be it simple or complex words or just new senses, become conventionalized on the level of the lexicon”

2.2.5. *Grammaticalization and Lexicalization in Combination*

According to Lehmann (1995) [57], “*lexicalization and grammaticalization are processes that have much in common and are, to a certain parallel. The mirror image of grammaticalization is degrammaticalization, and the mirror image of lexicalization is folk etymology*”.

CHAPTER3

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

3.1. Methods of the Study

The study is conducted with qualitative approach using descriptive and contrastive method.

3.1.1. Data Collection and Analysis

3.1.1.1. Data Collection

Samples of data containing modalities are mainly taken from sources of English and Vietnamese novels and textbooks. Besides, the examples to illustrate the argumentation are also taken from works of Halliday[12], Palmer [17], Bybee [3], Nguyen Hoa [13], Cao Xuan Hao [21], Tran Huu Manh [24], Vo Dai Quang [25]...

3.1.1.2. Data Analysis

- Discussing grammatical and lexical features of English modality through data collected.
- Examining the differences between English and Vietnamese in terms of grammaticalization and lexicalization through data collected.

3.2. Research Procedures

The procedures are as follows:

- Identifying the research topic by reviewing previous studies.
- Choosing the approach to the research.
- Collecting data related to the research.
- Analyzing data based on grammatical and lexical features of English modality

- Suggesting some implications of English modality and how to use modality properly to Vietnamese teachers and learners.

- Suggesting further research.

3.3. VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. Lexicalization versus Grammaticalization.

In analyzing modality, divisions of the examples will be given in the set of tables for distinctions:

a. Lexicalization is different from grammaticalization, which is considered in the different aspects shown in table 4.3.

Table 4.1. The distinctions between lexicalization and grammaticalization.

| Lexicalization | Grammaticalization |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| + Lexical meanings of modal verbs | Distinction of grammatical categories of Mood, Tense and Aspect |
| + Modal adjectives | |
| + Modal adverbs | |
| + Modal nouns | |

b. A modality analysis can be made with the combination of lexicalization and grammaticalization, and through the change of tense (can- could) and aspect (expressions of regrettability, advisability, possibility, etc..

4.1.1. English modality

4.1.1.1. English modality expressed in term of grammaticalization

Grammaticalization is probably most often understood in a diachronic sense – as the development of grammatical marking over time, typically from lexical sources. English modality expressed in

term of grammaticalization through moods, tenses and aspects mainly.

1. Tense and aspect:

Comrie [63] defined tense as grammaticalization of location in time, and aspect as “grammaticalisation of expression of internal temporal constituency” (of events, processes etc.). Thus defined, the two categories are conceptually close in that both deal with time. Broadly speaking, tense refers to the absolute location of an event or action in time, either the present or the past.

2. Mood

Mood is a grammatical feature of verbs used to signal modality (Palmer, 2001) [17]. Within the scope of the thesis, we only discuss three major moods in English although there are also some minor moods:

(1) the indicative mood allows speakers to express assertions, denials, and questions of actuality or strong probability.

(2) the imperative mood allows speakers to make direct commands, express requests, and grant or deny permission

(3) the subjunctive mood expresses commands, requests, suggestions, wishes, hypotheses, purposes, doubts, and suppositions that are contrary to fact at the time of the utterance

4.1.1.2 English modality expressed in term of lexicalization

1. Lexicalized means expressing modality in English:

a. Modal adjectives

The class of modal adjectives includes adjectives such as "possible", "probable", "obligatory", "necessary", "required", "determined", "potential", etc.

b. Modal adverbs

The class of modal adverbs includes adverbs such as "possibly", "probably", "perhaps", "maybe", "sometimes", "always", "definitely", "never", "certainly". Most of them, which are used in Subjunctive mood express epistemic modality.

c. Modal Nouns

The class of modal adverbs includes adverbs such as "possibility", "probability", "obligation", "necessity", "requirement", "capacity", etc.

4.1.2. Vietnamese modality

4.1.2.1 Grammaticalized means in Vietnamese

In Vietnamese language, the distinction of lexical and grammatical means of expressing modality is not too strict compared to other indo-european languages.

a. Modal verbs:

According to Nguyen Van Hiep [23], modal verbs: *toan*, *định*, *muốn*, *cần*, *có thể*, etc...are considered as unmeaning verbs that are grammaticalized. On one hand, they are additive constituents of a verb (verb marker); on the other hand, they are dependent on subjective judgment of the speaker to the reality. For example:

[48] Ta có thể gặp lại một trường hợp như thế ở nhân vật Thúc Sinh

b. Adverbial particles:

Modal particles *đã, sẽ, đang, từng, vừa, mới, cũng, lại, đều* etc.. are considered as additive particles located in front of a verb to form a verbal frame in which the verb is central. They are used to express modality meaning in relation to the verb.

[48] Ấy! Sự đời lại cứ thường như vậy đấy, người ta đã định rồi chẳng bao giờ người ta lại làm được

c. Modal particles

Modal particles, or discourse particles, *mất, thật, nghe, xem, đây, đi, etc...*, which can be appear anywhere in a speech act, are considered as a concept reflecting the world transfer to the expression of modality. Let's consider the particle *mất*.

During the process of grammaticalization, “*Mất*” becomes modal expression which expresses the significance of “aspect”. For example,

[46] Tôi đợi *mất* hơn nửa giờ nó mới đến.

The process of grammaticalization then occurs, *mất* become modal particle positioned at the end of a sentence, for example:

[46] Không khéo trời tối *mất*.

4.1.2.2. Lexical means in Vietnamese

In Vietnamese language, except for some word combinations that can be defined, such as *tôi nghĩ (rằng), tôi biết (rằng), tôi e (rằng), may là, rủi là, etc..* it is hard to define other locutions. There are various kind of modal particles that we can list some within the scope of the study, as follows:

1.Modal locutions: *ai bảo, nói gì thì nói, ngó bộ, thảo nào, tội gì, kể ra*, etc..

2.Interjections: *ôi, eo ôi, chao ôi, ồ*, etc..

3. Sentence-final modal particles and equivalent idioms: *à, ư, nhỉ, nhé, thôi, cũng nên, lại còn, thì chết*, etc...

4.2. Similarities and differences between English and Vietnamese in terms of grammaticalization and lexicalization denoting modality.

4.2.1. English modal verbs versus Vietnamese modality

Quirk et al. (1985) identify nine central modals in present-day English, including CAN, COULD, MAY, MIGHT, SHALL, SHOULD, WILL, WOULD and MUST. Also, according to Quirk et al. [76], OUGHT (TO) may be added to the list of these nine central modal verbs. Besides, some forms of verbs, including *want to, need (to), have to, (have) got to*, are also referred to as quasi-modals (Brinton 1991) [78], semi-modals or marginal modals (Quirk et al) [76] and emerging modals (Krug 2000) [69].

4.2.1.1. Can, could, may, might (Permission, ability)

4.2.1.2. Must, should

4.2.1.3. Will, would, shall

4.2.1.4. Modal auxiliaries+perfect infinitive

4.2.2. Conclusion of similarities and differences

4.2.2.1. Similarities:

1. In both languages, modality expressed in terms of grammaticalization can appear in various types of indicative mood,

including explicit alternative questions, implicit alternative questions and Wh-questions.

4.2.2.2. *Differences:*

* Position:

- In Vietnamese language, modal particles and equivalent idioms which are grammaticalized and lexicalized functioned as pragmatic particles conveying subtle, diversified pragmatic information are placed at the end of the sentence such as *à, ư, nhỉ, nhé, thôi, đấy, chứ, cũng nên*, etc...

- In English, modal verbs can be transformed to express time of action, for instance, Can (present action) – could (past action)

- In Vietnamese, time localization of action is expressed by means of lexical meaning *sẽ, cũng, đã, lại đang, đều..*

4.3. Suggested analyses of modality

4.3.1. Suggested analyses of modality in context of some conversations in some textbooks.

4.3.2. Suggested Analyses of modality in context of some novels

4.4. Further discussion of Cases of Complexity

Epistemicity and / or Deonticity may sometimes be combined in cases of grammaticalization plus lexicalization (i.e. they may be referred to as Cases of Mixture)

4.4.1. In simple sentences

4.4.2. Cases of Complex Sentences

4.5. Common errors and Preliminary treatment.

4.5.1. Predicted errors.

(Sources of errors – Richards 1989) [58]

4.5.2. Common errors often made by English learners

1. Errors in addition

a/ Addition of another modal verb.

b/ Addition of -S, -ES.

c/ Addition of TO (all modal verbs, apart from *ought to*, require the bare-

infinitive)

2. Misformation

a/ Wrong verb use

b/ Wrong tense use

Totally, students made 132 errors in using modal auxiliaries, including 81 in (1) and 51 in (2).

Table 4.2. Statistical Data of Errors

| | Amount | Percentage |
|------------------------------------|--------|--------------|
| 1 Errors in addition | 81 | |
| a/ Addition of another modal verb. | 25 | 30,8% |
| b/ Addition of -S, -ES. | 19 | 23,4% |
| c/ Addition of TO | 37 | 45,8% |
| 2.Misformation | 51 | |
| a/ Wrong verb use | 17 | 33,3% |
| b/ Wrong tense use | 34 | 66,7% |

4.5.3. *Rectification methods that should be introduced*

a/ Systematic introduction of case of grammaticalization and lexicalization of minor uses of epitemicity and deonticity respectively.

Through the thesis, we suggest two ways of analyzing modality, as follows:

| a. Lexicalization | Grammaticalization |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| + Lexical meanings of modal verbs | Distinction of grammatical |
| + Modal adjectives | categories of Mood, Tense, and |
| + Modal adverbs | Aspect |
| + Modal nouns | |

b.

Lexicalization + Grammaticalization

+ **Change of tense**

Can – Could, May - Might

+ **Change of aspect**

expression of – regretability

- advisability

- possibility, etc..

Attaching students attention to be on guard against the errors mentioned above, particularly their actual errors.

c/ Explaining the sophistry of cultural and lingual contents of the four minor counterparts, namely grammaticalization, lexicalization, epitemicity and deonticity and more complicated utilization of these four in advanced education.

Table 4.4. Error treatment

| Error Treatment | | |
|---|--|--|
| Actual error (1) | Analysis (2) | Rectification (3) |
| -He should to eat his dinner | When combining a modal auxiliary with a simply present verb, “to” is not necessary | -He should eat his dinner |
| -Marina cans cook | subject-verb agreement does not apply to modals | -Marina can cook |
| -He will can escape from the prison | two modals cannot be used together in the same sentence | -He will be able to escape from the prison |
| -John could heard the bell | | |
| -Must I go with you? (offer) | | |
| -No, you mustn’t go with me. | combine lexical verb in past with the modal verb | -John could hear the bell |
| If I had been you, I would have gone to Italy | | |
| Vietnamese-English | | -Must I go with you? |

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| <p>translation</p> <p>-Cô ấy có thể phải sống một mình đấy.</p> <p>-She can must live alone</p> <p>-Anh ấy sẽ phải dùng lại chiếc máy chữ cũ.</p> <p>-He will must re-use his old typewriter</p> | <p>“mustn’t go” is a prohibition. “Don’t have to” should be used to express a lack of obligation, or a choice.</p> <p>Influenced by the formula of common usage</p> <p>“can” and “must” should be exclusively used</p> | <p>-No, you don’t have to go with me</p> <p>Or,</p> <p>-I think you don’t have to go with me.</p> <p>-If I were you, I would have gone to Italy.</p> <p>Perhaps she must live alone</p> <p>Or,</p> <p>Perhaps she will have to live alone</p> |
|---|--|---|

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| | <p>“Will” and “Must”, two modal verbs, should not be used together</p> | <p>-He will have to re- use his old typewriter (have to is a semi – auxiliary) Or, Possibly, he has to re- use his old typewriter (modal adverb)</p> |
|--|--|---|

4.6. Summary

Research into meanings and uses of English modality reflects the complexity of their grammatical, pragmatic, and contextual functions. Especially, some linguists, such as Palmer (1990, 2001) are concerned with linguistic analyses of modal verbs, as well as other markers of modality. The above analyses of modality in terms of grammaticalization and lexicalization are only suggested methods. It is hoped that Vietnamese students might find in this work some kind of help that may facilitate their study of English modality.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1. Concluding remark

It is said to be very hard to learn a foreign language well, because this involves a considerable commitment of time and efforts. Teachers and learners of languages in general, of English and Vietnamese in particular should make eclectic studies of the modality in the language being learned.

In our particular case of Vietnamese learning English, learners' attentions should be drawn to the following systematic ways of comprehending these:

- Grammatically, they should learn, initially, how to realize the distinction of the use of English modal auxiliaries in different verbal categories.

- Lexically, they should study and understand the specific cases of modal auxiliaries (i.e. their different meanings).

In order to grasp firmly modality, learners are suggested to:

- Learn modal verbs in context. It is useless to memorize lists of modal verbs and their definitions out of context – It is easy for you to be confused.

- Notice how they are being used. When you read, or watch movies or TV in English, pay attention to the language and notice how certain modal verbs are being used. Test out the modal words

yourself. Use them when talking to your teacher and ask your teacher if you've used them correctly.

5.2. Implications of the study

Learning a second language is really hard work and for most people it involves a considerably hard and concentrated efforts. With English speakers and learners of Vietnamese, they may feel at ease with single meaning of a modal auxiliary verb but the mastery of these verbs in their collocations seems to be rather complicated to express their ideas in English.

In teaching English to Vietnamese students (and vice versa) the teaching of modal verbs should be done systematically and gradually (from beginners to immediate and advanced level students) so that they may master the use of these verbal clauses , among the other types of modality (epistemic or deontic) .

5.3. Limitation

5.4. Suggestions for further research.

Based to the viewpoint of such linguisticians as Palmer and Talmy, it is obvious that lexicalization and grammaticalization are not at all contradictory processes. The study initially suggests some ways of analyzing modal verbs in terms of lexicalization and grammaticalization; and, to some extent, makes a comparison between English and Vietnamese modality. It is suggested that further researches on modality will be carried out to help Vietnamese learners to facilitate their study of English modality