

Problems Encountered by 4th Level EFL Students at Women's College /Hadhramout University when Translating English Modals into Arabic

الصعوبات التي تواجهها طالبات اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في المستوى الرابع بكلية البنات بجامعة حضرموت عند ترجمة معاني الأفعال الناقصة من الإنجليزية إلى العربية

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Abstract

Translating English modals always constitutes a problematic area that faces Arab learners of English, especially translation students and trainee translators. This study investigates some problems that face 4th level EFL students at Women's College/Hadhramout University when rendering the meaning of some English modals into their accurate equivalent meanings in Arabic. It aims at facilitating this task by highlighting the main reasons behind committing mistakes when translating these modals. Further, the study aims at increasing the students' awareness towards the problem of translating these modals into Arabic. The study utilizes a translation test as to collect data from the study sample which consists of 51 female students enrolled in the 4th level English Department at Women's College. The study concludes that students have poor knowledge of English modality and modals as well as the equivalences of these modals in Arabic (their mother tongue). They

are, sometimes, overwhelmed by the idea that there is only one meaning (the commonest one) for each modal even it occurs in different contexts. Moreover, they, sometimes misled by the past forms of modals and consequently, mistranslate the tense of the sentence that includes the modal. The study recommends that EFL students should be familiarized with the different meanings of English modals as well as their functions. Moreover, EFL students in general and translation students in particular should be taught modals while relating them to their equivalents in Arabic. Further, the researchers recommend conducting research on translating modals in conditional clauses, passive voice, subordinate clauses, negative and interrogative sentences into Arabic and the difficulties that face Arab learners when translating modals in such structures.

Key words: Translation problems, Modals, Women's College, EFL students.

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مستخلص الدراسة

مختلفة. علاوة على ذلك، نجدهن يتخبطن في معاني هذه الأفعال عندما تأتي بصيغة الزمن الماضي وبالتالي يخفقن في تفسير معناها و ترجمتها بشكل صحيح. توصي الدراسة بضرورة أن يتعرف طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية على المعاني والوظائف المختلفة للأفعال الناقصة بالإضافة إلى تدريس تلك الأفعال لطلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية بشكل عام وطلاب الترجمة بشكل خاص من خلال ربطها بالمكافئ الدلالي لها في اللغة العربية. كما توصي الدراسة بإجراء بحوث على ترجمة معاني هذه الأفعال في الجمل الشرطية والجمل المبنية للمعلوم والمجهول والجمل الاستفهامية وفي حالة النفي. كما وتوصي الدراسة بربط هذه الموضوعات عند البحث بالمكافئ لهذه الأفعال في اللغة العربية والصعوبات التي قد يواجهها طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية من العرب عند التعامل مع ترجمتها إلى لغتهم الأم. الكلمات المفتاحية: الأفعال الناقصة، كلية البنات، مشكلات الترجمة، طالبات اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبي

تشكل ترجمة الأفعال الناقصة من اللغة الإنجليزية إلى اللغة العربية دائماً مجالاً إشكالياً يواجه دارسي اللغة الإنجليزية من الطلاب العرب، وخاصة طلاب الترجمة والمترجمين المبتدئين. تهدف الدراسة إلى بحث مشكلات ترجمة هذه الأفعال من الإنجليزية إلى معانيها المكافئة الدقيقة باللغة العربية لدى طالبات المستوى الرابع تخصص لغة إنجليزية بكلية البنات بجامعة حضرموت. كما تهدف الدراسة إلى وضع حلول لهذه المشكلات من خلال تسليط الضوء على أسباب إخفاق الطالبات عند ترجمة هذا النوع من الأفعال . و تحاول الدراسة من خلال أهدافها أن تزيد من وعي طلاب الترجمة بهذه المشكلات. وقد استخدمت الدراسة أداة اختبار الترجمة لجمع بيانات الدراسة من العينة التي تكونت من إحدى و خمسون طالبة. وخلصت الدراسة إلى أن الطالبات لديهن معرفة ضعيفة بمعاني الأفعال الناقصة في الإنجليزية وكذلك المكافئ لهذه الأفعال في لغتهم الأم. لذا نجدهن تطفى عليهن -في بعض الأحيان- فكرة أنه لا يوجد سوى معنى واحد (المعنى الأكثر شيوعاً) لكل فعل ناقص بغض النظر عن وجوده في سياقات

1. Introduction

The modal system makes up one of the four classes of auxiliary verbs, which are: verb to be, verb to have and verb to do .The word modal comes from the word mood, specifically the moods that languages tend to grammaticize, such as: certainty, wish, command, emphasis, or hesitancy. The word *modal* was originally used as an adjective for the type of auxiliary (i.e., modal auxiliary), but now we commonly use it as a noun to refer to this type of auxiliary verbs.

As the main issue of this study concerns translation and modality, the definitions of both key terms are better to be introduced here. Newmark (1988) defines translation as: "rendering the meaning of the text into another language in the way that the author intends the text." This definition supports the idea that the task of the translator is not easy but rather a challenging one because misunderstanding the message of the source language (SL) or rendering it into the target language (TL) in a way that the author does not intend may spoil it and cause it to be meaningless. Modality is defined by Quirk (Quirk et al, cited in Khalil: 1999) as "the manner in which the meaning of a clause is qualified as to reflect the speaker's judgment of the likelihood of the proposition it expresses being true." However, this definition is not enough because it describes only one type of modality, namely, *epistemic* as Palmer (1990) suggests, the other type *deontic* influences events and actions.

Any investigation of modality and modals in English inevitably raises problems not only for ESL learners but also EFL learners as well. As Celce.Murcia and Freeman (1983: 80) clearly put it "Modal auxiliaries are one of the most difficult structures that you as an ESL/EFL teacher will have to deal with." One major area of the difficulties of translating English modals into Arabic is the relation between the meaning and the form of these modals, as Palmer (1987) says "If we decide to approach it exclusively either from form or from meaning, we run into difficulties."

In English, a speaker may use lexical expressions that express the modality such as: "it is possible...that", "it is necessary that..." , "it is certain that..." , "possibly", "perhaps..." , "I permit you..." ...etc. or modals such as: can, could, shall, should , will, would, may, might, be able to, had better, must ought to, have to, have got to...etc. Arabic on the other hand, expresses modality by using a set of particles, prepositional phrases and verbs such as: يجب، يحتمل،

لا بد، يلزم، عليك ربما، يمكن، يرجح، يستحسن، ينبغي، سوف

The lexical expressions that express modality are easier and more straightforward to be understood and consequently translated. However, modals remain vague, and to interpret them you have to match their meanings to the meaning of the context and avoid assuming that they have just one meaning. For example, the modal *can* has three various interpretations in the following examples:

- 1-The door can be repaired. "Possibility" "يمكن / بالإمكان اصلاح الباب"
- 2-He can swim. "Ability" "يستطيع أن يسبح"
- 3-You can go now. "Permission" "بوسعك أن تذهب الآن"

Most learners of English are familiar with the most obvious formal characteristic of modal verbs that there is no –s ending for the third person singular but there are some other criteria mentioned by Palmer (1990) which are:

- 1-Inversion with the subject. (e.g., Must he come?)
- 2-Negative form with "n't" (e.g., He can't go.)
- 3-Code. (e.g., He will come and so will she.)
- 4-Emphatic affirmation. (e.g., He may come.)

The above criteria are characteristics modals share with auxiliaries. Palmer (ibid) also mentions other criteria which are specific to modals and they distinguish them from primary auxiliaries as well as from other verbs:

- 1- No –s form of the 3rd person singular. (No may's , can's etc.)
- 2- No non-finite forms (infinitives, past and present participles)
- 3- No co-occurrence. (No He may will come etc.)

Palmer (ibid) also draws the reader's attention that not all the modals conform to all the above criteria, for instance, with reference to **BE TO**; it has all finite forms of be: *am*, *is*, *are*, *was* and *were*. *May* has no "n't" form in the present.

1.1.Statement of the Problem

Modals constitute a well-recognized system in English grammar but not in Arabic. The thing that may make the task of translating them into Arabic somehow difficult especially for the EFL students of translation and novice translators. This problem might emerge from the fact that each English modal has more than one meaning depending on the context it occurs in. However, students of translation think that there is only one meaning for each modal, i.e., the commonest one. Consequently, they translate any modal into the commonest meaning they know paying no attention to the factor of the context that modal occurs in. To the best of the researchers' knowledge there are only few studies have been conducted on this issue, especially among 4th level EFL students at university level. Thus the present study seeks to highlight this problem and investigate the reasons behind committing mistakes when translating English modals into Arabic among Women's College 4th level EFL students/ Hadhramout University

1.2.Purpose of the Study

The present study aims at investigating the problems of translating English modals into Arabic among Women's College 4th level EFL students /Hadhramout University. It seeks to discuss these problems and figure out the reasons behind facing them as to facilitate the task of translating English modals into Arabic appropriately. Further, the study aims at increasing the students' awareness towards the problem in question and the main factors that could facilitate translating modals appropriately.

1.3.Questions of the Study

1.3.1. Do 4th level English students at Women's College/Hudhramout University face problems when translating English modals into Arabic?

1.3.2. What are the main problems that face 4th level English students at Women's College/Hadhramout University when translating English modals into Arabic?

1.3.3. What are the reasons behind the problems that face 4th level English students at Women's College/Hadhramout University when translating English modals into Arabic?

1.4.The Significance of the Study

The topic of this study is both vital and crucial because it reveals the problematic areas encountered by EFL students when tackling the translation of English modals into Arabic. Furthermore, it may raise the awareness of those students and other novice translators to the factors that could facilitate the process of translating those modals. It may hopefully provide guidelines to overcome the problems of translating the meaning of English modals into Arabic.

1.5.Limitation of the Study

The study investigates the problematic areas of rendering the meanings of English modals into Arabic among 4th level EFL students at Women's College/Hadhramout University. The findings of the present study are limited to 51 students enrolled in 4th level English Department in the academic year 2020 /first semester. The study is confined to translating the meaning of some modals (the ones used in constructing the translation test) into Arabic. Other modals are left for further research in the future.

2. Review of the Related Literature

With reference to English, many linguists have studied and discussed modality and modals revealing some of the problematic areas of this subject in English grammar. Palmer (1987), (1990) is one of the linguists who make a great contribution in this respect. In his study, Palmer presents modals and modality as one of the most problematic areas in English grammar but still it is worth discussing. He confirms this idea in his book stating that "There is, perhaps, no area of English grammar that is both more important and more difficult than the system of the modals." (Palmer:1990)

Palmer (ibid) studies all kinds of modality and modals with relevance to many areas in English grammar such as time, conditionals, voice, negation, interrogation and modals in subordinate clauses. He also distinguishes two usages of modality; *epistemic* and *deontic*. The first one is concerned with making judgment about the truth of the proposition and the second is concerned with influencing actions, states or events.

Among the studies that were done by Arab researchers concerning this subject is that of Sari (1994) and EL-Hassan (1990). The study of Sari (1994) is based on a questionnaire concerning translating English modals into Arabic. He concludes that Arab learners of English find difficulties in doing such task, because modals themselves are so complex to identify and also because students have poor knowledge of English as well as of their mother tongue .

In his study , EL-Hassan (cited in Sari:1994) claims that " In traditional grammar of Arabic the entire category of modality is missing ". He adds that Arabic equivalents of English modals are in many cases particles which are sometimes discussed marginally within a number of subjects in grammar books.

With reference to some books of Arabic grammar such as: "موسوعة الحروف
"رصف المباني في شرح حروف المعاني العربية" ، "مغني اللبيب في كتب الأعراب" ، "لسان العرب"
" and others , EL-Hassan (ibid) mentions some modals such as : "ليت" ،
"عسى" ، "لعل" that can be used for the following purposes :

A- "لعل" (means maybe)

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1-For hope | "لعل الله يرحمنا" |
| 2-For fear | "لعل العدو يقدم" |
| 3-For reasoning | "لعلكم تشكرون" |

B- "عسى" (means maybe)

- 1- for hope "وعسى أن تكرهوا شيئاً وهو خير لكم"

2- for fear "وعسى أن تحبوا شيئاً وهو شر لكم"

C-"ليت" (means I wish)

1- Wish (for possible) "ليتك تزورنا"

2-Wish (for impossible) "ليت أيام الصبا رواجعاً"

Because this source EL-Hassan (cited in Sari:1994) mentions just three equivalent meanings to English modals, the researchers refer to another book in Arabic grammar, namely (Terms of grammar and grammatical particles) "مصطلحات النحو وأدوات الإعراب" by Hassiees (2004). This source includes the meanings of other particles such as: "سوف", "س", "قد". Hassiees (ibid) suggests that there is a slight difference in meaning between "س" and "سوف", although both of them refer to the future. For instance, "سوف" refers to the farther future while "س" refers to the nearer future. This is why we say sometimes in Arabic "سوفته" when we mean delaying something to the further future. As for "قد", it is used with the past simple tense for confirmation, as ﴿قد أفلح المؤمنون﴾ (Believers should win) *Al-Mu'minoon*, verse (1), and with present simple tense for doubting such as the sentence: (قد يقرأ الدرس) (He might read the lesson).

Other references discussed the issue in question are those of Khalil (1999) and Farghal and Shunnaq (1999). Khalil mentions, in his book where he makes a contrastive study of English and Arabic grammar, that English modals constitute a closed well-defined system. He adds that the meanings of modals are expressed in Arabic by particles, prepositional phrases, uninflected verbs and regular verbs. (Khalil: 1999). Farghal and Shunnaq (ibid) deal with modals in English and their different meanings and usages and how to translate them into Arabic.

Saeed (2009) studies Arab EFL learners' acquisition of modals. He states that the modals "May" and "Might" occupy different positions of difficulty. The students consider "May" more difficult in the recognition version while "Might" is more difficult in the production version. He refers to the confusion of the function of "Might" with other modals' functions.

Sabri (2011) investigates Iraqi learner' acquisition order of *epistemic* and *deontic* modals. He uses a questionnaire to test the students' mastery of this structure at the recognition level. The sample of this study consists of forty students from Third Year Classes/ English Department/ Al-Ma'moon University. The students participated in Sabri's study (ibid) have studied an extensive course concerning the structure of modals. Besides, they have studied modals before they joined the university. This study revealed that the students' responses were variable as all of them used *would* which expresses offer. However, they failed to use *must* for the function of *deduction* which received a low rate 18% of correct answers. Further, the study revealed that the sequence of students' acquisition is hierarchical one. The thing that shows some reasons behind the obstacles that face students when learning the meaning of modals.

3. Methodology

The methodology of the present study is based on a quantitative research design. What follows is an illustration of the sample of the study, instrument of the study, validity and reliability, data collection and data analysis:

3.1. Sample of the Study:

The sample of the study consists of 51 EFL students enrolled in 4th level English Department at Women's College/Hudhramout University. The study sample is a convenient one where the researchers include all the students who were available in the class in the day of conducting the study. The students included in the sample are homogenous in the sense that all of them have almost the same age, and proficiency level in English. Besides, they have covered the same number of English courses in the actual plan of English Department at Women's College. They mainly, have covered two translation course; one in the 2nd semester of 3rd level and another in the 1st semester of the 4th level.

3.2. The Instrument of the Study:

To carry out this study, the researchers construct a translation test which consists of three sections. Each section consists of a number of sentences that

include modals. Section. I has 4 modals (may, must, can, should); each modal is put in two different contexts A and B. Section. II has only two modals (may and must); each modal is put in two different contexts A and B. Section. III has 4 modals (might, could, should, would); each modal is put in only one context. Students are required to translate the sentences from English into Arabic, paying attention to the meaning of the modals when translating these sentences.

3.3.The Validity and Reliability of the Study Instrument

To validate the study instrument (the translation test), the researchers give it to three university professors; one is majored in translation and two are majored in linguistics. The researchers consider all the modifications recommended by the professors. As to gain reliability of the study instrument, the researchers conduct a pilot study among ten students as to see to what extents the sections and the items of the translation test are clear to the students to be answered. This pilot study gives the researchers an indication that the instrument is clearly understood by the students.

3.4.Data Collection

The data of the study is collected by means of the translation test. The test yields quantitative data in terms of finding how many students translate the modals in the three sections appropriately and how many of them translate these modals inappropriately. Besides the data makes it clear where are the most problematic areas of translating modals that face the sample of the study.

3.5.Data Analysis

The data analysis is based on counting the frequencies and percentages of the students' appropriate and inappropriate Arabic translations of the English modals in the sentences included in the translation test. Each sentence is presented in a table that illustrates each modal's appropriate and inappropriate meaning given by the students along with the frequencies and percentages of the students' appropriate and inappropriate translations.

4. Discussion and Analysis of the Findings

This section of the study introduces the findings based on the data collected from the study sample. These findings are tabulated and followed by a discussion that illustrates the topic researched in the present study. At First, the tables of all sections are presented. Second, the questions of the study are answered in accordance with the findings in the tables. Third, a comparison is made between the findings of the present study and the findings of other studies mentioned in the literature review above.

FIRST : The following tables (1-10) illustrate the frequencies and percentages of appropriate and inappropriate translations of the modal verbs in all sentences in the translation test along with their correct and incorrect functions in the three sections.

Section 1

1. **May**: A: You may leave now.

B: I may visit you tomorrow.

Table (1) : The findings of Modal 1 in section. I

	Appropriate Translation	Inappropriate Translations		
A:	for giving permission	for possibility	for obligation	
No.	32	12	7	
%	62.7	23.5	13.7	
B:	for probability	for ability	for obligation	for future plans
No.	40	6	4	1
%	78.4	11.8	7.8	1.96

In Table (1)/ item A:

A percentage of 62.7% of the students translated “May” for **giving permission**. They gave the most appropriate translation for the SL sentence as “باستطاعتك المغادرة الآن”. However, 23.5% and 13.7% of the students translated it for **possibility** as “من المحتمل أن تغادر الآن” and **obligation** “يتوجب عليك أن تغادر الآن” respectively.

In Table (1)/ item B:

A percentage of 78.4% of the students translated “May” for **probability**. They gave the most appropriate translation for the SL sentence as “ربما أزورك” “غداً”. However, 11.8%, 7.8% and 1.96% of the students translated it for **ability** “سوف”، **obligation** “يجب أن أزورك غداً”، and **future plan** “سوف”، respectively. The findings above concerning the translation of the modal "May" indicate that the majority of the sample can recognize its function of **giving permission** and **ability**.

2. Can: A: Can you open the window?

B: Can you carry that heavy thing?

Table (2) : The findings of Modal 2 in section. I

	Appropriate Translation	Inappropriate Translation
A:	for polite request	for ability
No.	22	29
%	43.1	56.9
B:	for ability	for polite request
No.	49	2
%	96.1	3.9

In Table (2)/ item A:

A percentage of 56.9% of the students translated the modal “Can” for **ability**. They gave inappropriate translation for the SL sentence as “هل تستطيع فتح النافذة؟”. However, a percentage of 43.1% of the students translated it for **polite request** which is considered the accurate meaning of this modal. Consequently, their translation of the SL sentence as “هلا فتحت النافذة من فضلك؟” is considered the most appropriate translation.

In Table (2)/ item B:

A percentage of 96.1% of the students translated “Can” for **ability**. They gave the most appropriate translation for the SL sentence as “هل يمكنك حمل هذا الشيء الثقيل؟”. However, a percentage of 3.9% of the students translated it for **polite request**. They translate the SL sentence inappropriately as “هلا حملت

”هذا الشيء الثقيل من فضلك؟“. The findings indicate that the majority of the sample can recognize the function of **ability** of the modal “Can” better than the function of **polite request**.

3. Must: A: He must do it; otherwise, he will be punished.

B: You must be happy now.

Table (3) : The findings of Modal 3 in section. I

	Appropriate Translation	Inappropriate Translations		
A:	for obligation	unrelated translation		
No.	50	1		
%	98	1.96		
B:	for great expectation	for obligation	for preference	for possibility
No.	14	34	2	1
%	27.5	66.7	3.9	1.96

In Table (3)/ item A:

A percentage of 98% of the students translated “Must” for **obligation**. Consequently, they gave the most appropriate translation of the SL sentence as “يجب أن يفعل هذا الأمر و إلا سيعاقب”. However, only one student had an unrelated translation.

In Table (3)/ item B:

A percentage of 27.5% of the students translated “Must” for **great expectation**. They translated the SL sentence appropriately into “لا بد و أنك و سعيد الآن”. However, the majority (66.7%) of the students translated this modal for **obligation**. Consequently, their translation for the whole SL sentence as “يجب عليك أن تكون سعيداً الآن” is considered inappropriate. These findings indicate that the majority of the sample focuses on the commonest meaning and function of the modal "Must", definitely, "obligation". Thus they ignore the other meaning and function which is "great expectation".

4. Should: A: They should have finished their work by now.

B: You should help the poor.

Table (4) : The findings of Modal 4 in section. I

	Appropriate Translation	Inappropriate Translations			
A:	for task accomplishment	no task accomplishment			
No.	12	39			
%	23.5	76.5			
B:	for advice	for probability	for possibility	for inquiry	for encouragement
No.	46	2	1	1	1
%	90.2	3.9	1.96	1.96	1.96

In Table (4)/ item A:

A percentage of 76.5% of the students translated “should have finished” without confirming the **task of accomplishment** into “كان ينبغي عليهم أن ينهوا” or “عملهم الآن” or “يلزم عليهم إكمال واجبهم الآن”. These two translations are inappropriate. Only 23.5% of the students translated it appropriately, indicating the function of **task accomplishment**, into “لابد أن يكونوا قد أنهوا” or “لابد وأنهم قد أنهوا عملهم الآن”.

In Table (4)/ item B:

A percentage of 90.2% of the students translated “should help” for **giving advice**. This meaning is the most appropriate translation. However, 1.96% of the students translated it for **possibility** as “ربما”, **inquiry** as “أ ساعدتم الفقير؟”, or **encouragement** as “فلتساعد المحتاج”. Further, 3.9% of the students translated it inappropriately for **probability** as “يفترض/من المفترض”. The findings indicate that the majority of the sample can recognize the function of **giving advice** for the modal “should”. However they have a difficulty in translating this modal when it is in perfect tense as it can be noted in section three.

Section 2

1. May: A: John may be there now.

B: John may come in now.

Table (5) : The findings of Modal 1 in section. II

	Appropriate Translation	Inappropriate Translations				
A:	for probability	for obligation			For facilitation	
No.	47	2			2	
%	94.1	3.9			3.9	
B:	for permission	for possibility	for facilitation	for obligation	for expectation	for future
No.	1	43	4	1	1	1
%	1.96	84.3	7.8	1.96	1.96	1.96

In Table (5)/ item A:

A percentage of 94.1% of the students translated “May” for **probability** and the whole sentence as “ربما يكون جون هناك الآن” which is the most appropriate translation. Only 3.9% of the students translated it inappropriately for **obligation** into “يتوجب على جون أن يأتي الآن” or for **facilitation** into “ينبغي على جون أن يحضر حالاً”.

In Table (5)/ item B: Only 1.96% of the students translated “May” for **permission**. Consequently, the translation of the SL sentence into “بإمكان جون أن يدخل الآن” is the most appropriate one. However, 84.3% of them translated it inappropriately for **possibility** as “ربما يأتي جون الآن”, and 7.8% for **facilitation** as “ينبغي أن يأتي جون الآن”. Further, there are other inappropriate translation, for instance, 1.96% of the students translated it for **obligation** “من المتوقع أن يأتي جون في الحال”, **expectation** “يتوجب على جون أن يأتي الآن”, or **future** “سيأتي جون في الحال”. These findings indicate that the majority of the sample can recognize the function of **probability** of the modal verb “May”. However, they have a difficulty in recognizing the function of **giving permission**.

2. Must: A: John must be there now.

B: John must come in now

Table (6) : The findings of Modal 2 in section. II

	Appropriate Translation	Inappropriate Translations			
A:	for confirmation	for facilitation		for great expectation	
No.	49	1		1	
%	96.1	1.96		1.96	
B:	for confirmation	for facilitation	for great expectation	for future	unrelated
No.	45	2	2	1	1
%	88.2	3.9	3.9	1.96	1.96

In Table (6)/ item A:

A percentage of 96.1% of the students translated the modal “Must” appropriately for **confirmation** and the whole sentence into “يجب على جون أن يكون هناك الآن”. They indicated **confirmation** by many phrases “لابد / من / يجب / الضروري / لزاماً على / من المؤكد / يجب”. However, 1.96% of the students translated it for **facilitation** “ينبغي أن يكون جون هناك الآن”, or **great expectation** “من المتوقع أن يأتي جون هناك الآن”. These two latter translations are considered inappropriate.

In Table (6)/ item B: A percentage of 88.2% of the students translated the modal “Must” appropriately for **confirmation** and thus the whole sentence into “يجب أن يحضر جون الآن”. They indicated **confirmation** by many phrases “يجب / من المؤكد / لابد / من الضروري / من اللازم”. However, a percentage of 3.9% of the students translated it inappropriately for **facilitation**, and the whole sentence into “ينبغي أن يأتي جون الآن” or for **great expectation** “من المتوقع أن يأتي جون الآن”. Further, 1.96% of the students translated it for **future** as “سيأتي جون في الحال”, which is unrelated to the English sentence as the students added

unnecessary phrase “يجب أن يكون جون في طريقه الآن”. These findings indicate that the majority of the sample can recognize the function of **confirmation** of the modal “Must”.

Section 3

1. Might: I might do my homework.

Table (7) : The findings of Modal 1 in section. III

	Appropriate Translation	Inappropriate Translations									
		for obligation	for possibility	for probability + wrong structure	for expectation	for confirmation + wrong tense	for preference	for request	for ability	Wrong tense (progressive)	Wrong tense (perfect)
No	15	15	9	3	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
%	29.4	29.4	17.6	5.9	3.9	3.9	1.96	1.96	1.96	1.96	1.96

As shown in Table (7): A percentage of 29.4% of the students translated “Might” appropriately for **probability** and the whole sentence as “ربما أعمل الواجب”. The same percentage translated it for obligation as “ينبغي علي أن انجز” “واجبي المنزلي”. However, 17.6% of the students translated it inappropriately for **possibility** as “يمكنني/بإمكاني عمل واجبي المنزلي”. Besides, 5.9% translated it for **probability** but with a wrong structure as “ربما علي إنهاء الواجب = I might have to do my homework”. Moreover, 3.9% of the students translated it for **expectation** “من المفترض أن أعمل واجبي” or for **confirmation** in past tense “قد عملت الواجب/تمكنت من حل الواجب”. Further, 1.96% translated it inappropriately for **request** as “يمكن تحل واجبي المدرسي”, **ability** “بإمكاني أن أفعل الواجب”, **confirmation** in progress tense “ما زلت أعمل الواجب” or for possibility in past tense as “كان من الممكن أن أقوم بتأدية الواجب”. The findings concerning this modal

indicate that the majority of the sample cannot recognize the function of **probability** of the modal verb “Might” and they obviously have a difficulty in choosing the suitable tense.

2. Could = The teacher could have been in the library.

Table (8) : The findings of Modal 2 in section. III

	Appropriate Translation	Inappropriate Translations								
		for possibility + present simple	for obligation	for expectation	for confirmation + past simple	Not translated	for confirmation + present simple	for confirmation + progressive tense	for inquiry	for future
No	10	20	6	3	3	3	2	2	1	1
%	19.6	39.2	11.8	5.9	5.9	5.9	3.9	3.9	1.96	1.96

As shown in Table (8): A percentage of 19.6% of the students translated “Could” in present perfect for **possibility**. They translated the whole sentence as “كان من الممكن أن يكون المعلم في المكتبة”. However, 39.2% of them translated it for **possibility** but in present simple “قد يكون المدرس موجوداً في المكتبة الآن”. Moreover, 11.8% of them translated it for **obligation** as “يجب/ينبغي/يتوجب على”. Other translations include the followings:

- 5.9% translated it for expectation as “من المتوقع أن يكون المعلم في المكتبة”, for confirmation in past simple as “قد كان المعلم موجوداً في المكتبة”, or did not translated it.
- 3.9% translated it for confirmation in present simple as “من المؤكد أن”, “ما زال المعلم في”, or confirmation in progress as “يكون المعلم في المكتبة”.

- c. 1.96% translated it for inquiry as “هل يستطيع الأستاذ أن يكون في المكتبة”،
1.96% of them for future as “سيكون المدرس في المكتبة”.

These findings indicate that the majority of the sample can recognize the function of **possibility** of the modal “Could”. However, they obviously have a difficulty in translating the perfect tense as previously mentioned in Table (4)/item B.

3. Should: They should have painted the wall.

Table (9) : The findings of Modal 3 in section. III

	Appropriate translation	Unsuitable translations				
	for preference + perfect tense	for obligation	for preference + present simple	Not translated	for possibility	for recommendation
No.	15	18	12	3	2	1
%	29.4	35.3	23.5	5.9	3.9	1.96

As shown in Table (9): A percentage of 29.4% of the students translated “Should” for **preference** in perfect tense and the whole sentence as “كان ينبغي أن يطلوا الجدار عليهم أن يطلوا الجدار”. However, 35.3% of them translated it for **obligation** and the whole sentence as “يجب/يتوجب عليهم أن يطلوا الجدار”. As for 23.5% translated it for **preference** but in present simple as “ينبغي عليهم أن يطلوا الجدار”. These findings indicate that the majority of the sample can recognize the function of **obligation** of the modal verb “Should” better than **preference**. Students usually focus on the commonest meaning of modals and ignore other meanings. It can be noted that the students have a difficulty in translating the perfect tense as previously mentioned in Table (4)/item B and Table (8).

4. Would: He would prefer tea to coffee

Table (10) : The findings of Modal 4 in section. III

	Appropriate Translation	Inappropriate Translations					
		for possibility	for confirmation + past simple	for confirmation + future	for preference	for recommendation	for appearance
No.	34	7	3	3	2	1	1
%	66.7	13.7	5.9	5.9	3.9	1.96	1.96

As shown in Table (10): A percentage of 66.7% of the students translated “would” for **confirmation of a habit** in present tense and the whole sentence as “هو يفضل الشاي على القهوة” while 13.7% of them translated it for **possibility** as “ربما هو يفضل الشاي على القهوة”. Besides, 5.9% of the students translated it for **confirmation** in past tense as “كان يفضل أن تشرب الشاي على القهوة” or in **future tense** as “سيفضل الشاي على القهوة”. Moreover, 3.9% of the students translated it for **preference** as “هو يود تفضيل الشاي على القهوة”. Further, 1.96% of them translated it for **recommendation** as “يستحسن أن يفضل الشاي على القهوة” or **appearance** as “يبدو أنه يفضل الشاي على القهوة”. These findings indicate that the majority of the sample can recognize the function of **confirmation** of the modal verb “Would” when it is in present simple.

SECOND : The answers of the study questions:

With reference to what has been illustrated above in the tables (1-10) in the three sections, the questions of the study are presented below along with their answers.

1.3.1. Do 4th level English students at Women's College/Hudhramout University face problems when translating English modals into Arabic?

The findings in the tables (1-10) above, indicate that 4th level English students at Women's College/Hudhramout University face problems when translating many of English modals into Arabic. The majority of the students mistranslate

the modals in certain sentences by conveying inappropriate meanings. The answer of question (2) below illustrates the mistranslations of the students for these modals.

1.3.2. What are the main problems that face 4th level English students at Women's College/Hudhramout University when translating English modals into Arabic?

Except for table (6) in section II, all the other tables (1-10) reveal that the students committed major mistakes in translating the meanings and functions of the modals as follows:

- a. Ninety students out of fifty one mistranslate the modal **may** by using it to express *possibility* and *obligation* while it expresses *giving permission* in the sentence **You may leave now.** (see table 1, section .I)
- b. Twenty nine students out of fifty one mistranslate the modal **can** by using it to express *ability* while it expresses *polite request* in the sentence **Can you open the window?** (see table 2, section. I)
- c. Thirty four students out of fifty one mistranslate the modal **must** by using it to express *obligation, preferences, and possibility* while it expresses *great expectation* in the sentence **You must be happy now** (see table 3, section. I)
- d. Thirty nine students out of fifty one mistranslate the modal **should** to express *task accomplishment* in the sentence **They should have finished their work.** (see table 4, section. I)
- e. Forty three students out of fifty one mistranslate the modal **may** by using it to express *obligation, preferences, expectation, future and possibility* while it expresses *permission* in the sentence **John may come in now** (see table 5, section. II)
- f. Thirty six students out of fifty one mistranslate the modal **might** by using it to express *obligation, probability, expectation and possibility* among other functions while it expresses *probability* in the sentence **I might do my homework.** (see table 7, section. III)

- g. Forty one students out of fifty one mistranslate the modal **could** by using it to express *obligation, expectation, confirmation* and *possibility in past tense* while it expresses *possibility in perfect tense* in the sentence (see table 8, section. III)
- h. Thirty six students out of fifty one mistranslate the modal **should** by using it to express *obligation, preferences in present simple* while it expresses *preference in the perfect tense* in the sentence **They should painted the wall.** (see table 9, section. III)
- i. Seventeen students out of fifty one mistranslate the modal **would** by using it to express *confirmation*, and *possibility* while it expresses *confirmation in present simple* in the sentence **He would prefer tea to coffee.** (see table 10, section. III)

1.3.3. What are the reasons behind the problems that face 4th level English students at Women's College/Hudhramout University when translating English modals into Arabic?

Based on what have been mentioned before, there are four major reasons behind the problems that face 4th level English students at Women's College/Hudhramout University when translating English modals into Arabic. **First**, the meaning of English modals may vary according to the context, so each modal may have more than one meaning when occurring in various contexts. One meaning is the most common among other meanings which might be not recognized by not only ESL learners but also EFL speakers as well. Palmer (1979) confirms these findings "If we decide to approach it exclusively either from form or from meaning, we run into difficulties."

Second, the students are unaware of the fact that there are two functions can be accomplished by modals *epistemic* and *deontic* as stated by Palmer (1990) who claims that modality is concerned either with making a judgment about the truth of the proposition or with influencing actions, states, or events. By making such division Palmer distinguishes two types of modality according to their usage, the first one is "epistemic" and the second is "deontic". Palmer (ibid) gives examples to illustrate his point of view:

1- John *may* be there now.

(epistemic)

2- John *must* be there now.

3- John *may* come in now.

(deontic)

4- John *must* come in now.

Palmer (ibid) suggests that the interpretation of the first two modals indicates a judgment about the probability of the truth of the proposition, **John is there now**, while the second two sentences influence the action of **John's coming in**, by giving him *permission* and by imposing an obligation on him to do so. Further, Palmer adds that there is ambiguity between the two meanings in all four cases, but he thinks that it can be solved by the context. The students may interpret "may" as "ربما" in (1,3) and "must" as "يجب" in (2,4), although each sentence in each pair has a different meaning that distinguishes it from the other .

Third, the students may encounter a problem when translating modals due to the fact that modality constitutes a well-defined system in English grammar but not in Arabic, so they have to seek the appropriate equivalent meaning for these modals. Moreover, they may be unable to draw a clear and fine distinction between the modals: **must, have to and have got to, and should** because they have poor knowledge of their mother tongue. Consequently, they may translate all these modals into one equivalent "يجب" thinking that they all suggest strong *obligation*. One factor to be mentioned here is that *must* does not always suggest *obligation*, but it has another meaning which is *logical necessity/deduction* as the example "He must be there now." لايد وانه "هناك الآن". Farghal and Shunnaq (1999) say that Arabic uses "يجب" and "يتوجب" for expressing *necessity*, and that "يتوجب" is less strong than "يجب". As for the *lack of necessity and prohibition have to and must* can be used in the negative case, which can be expressed in Arabic by using the phrases: ليس "ليس ملزماً"، "يجب ألا لزاماً"، "لسنا ملزمين".

Fourth, the differences between modal pairs such as: will/would, shall/should, may/might and can/could may be mistakenly understood as past tenses of these modals and consequently translated in this sense. For instance, in table 10, section. III, the students mistranslate the tense of the modal in the sentence **He would prefer tea to coffee**. They translate the modal *would* to express *confirmation in past simple* as

كان يفضل أن تشرب الشاي "

هو يفضل شرب " while it expresses *confirmation in present tense* as

"الشاي على القهوة". In his book, Palmer (1990) discusses the past forms of the

modals under the title *tentative forms*. Palmer says that these forms are used to indicate less certainty about the possibility of something. He adds that if "should" is used to mark *epistemic necessity*, it is relevant to "shall" but not "must". He gives the example "Mitoff comes in, takes a stunning left hand to the chin or what should be a stunning left hand." He says that it could be understood from this example that the thing Mitoff takes might not be what he thinks, a stunning left hand (ibid).

With reference to the same issue, Khalil (1999) mentions that the past forms of modals may be used to refer to present or future time but with probability gradience.

To this concern, one more point should be added about "could" and "would" which is that we can use them in request to show different levels of politeness especially if we compare them with "can" and "will". (Farghal and Shunnaq,1999)

THIRD: A comparison between the findings of the present study and the studies in the literature review

The studies by Sari (1994) and EL-Hassan (1990) indicate that Arab learners of English find difficulties in translating the meaning of modals into Arabic due to the fact that modals themselves are so complex to identify. Further, students lack the efficient knowledge of English as well as of their mother tongue that may help them to convey the meaning of modals appropriately from the SL to the TL. These findings go along with the findings of the present study. The students' answers shown in the tables above (1-10) indicate these findings.

The findings of Sabri's study (2011) agrees with the current study's findings related to the modal "May" in Section. I and Section. II (1). The majority of the students have the correct answer and that can be traced to the appearance of the adverbial "now" which expresses a present activity. Also it is noted that the students have a clear understanding that the modal "May" has the function of *probability* rather than *obligation* or *necessity*.

In relation to the modal "Can", 96.1% of the students in the current study have a clear understanding of the function of *ability* unlike Sabri's study where only 52.5% of the students have the correct answer. Moreover, the structure of "Should + have + participle" expresses a *past activity* while "Should + infinitive" expresses a *present activity*. In Sabri's study the students have acquired the two structures equally. However, the students in the current study have a difficulty in understanding the structure "Should + have + participle". The correct answers are only 23.5% and 29.4% in Section 1 (A) and Section. III respectively. The students have a difficulty in understanding "Modal + have + participle" structure as noted in Section. III (2 and 3).

The findings of the study by Saeed (2009) indicate that students confuse the function of **Might** with the other modals' functions. The current study findings agree with these findings. The students confuse the functions of the modals especially "May" and "Might" which have correct answers of only 1.96% in Section. I (B) and 29.4% in Section. III, respectively. Moreover, the study findings indicate that the modal verb "Can" is relatively easy to be recognized by the students when it expresses *ability* function as 82% of the students have the correct answer. The current study also gets the same conclusion as 96.1% of the students have the correct answer in Section. I (2B) that expresses *ability* function.

Furthermore, the present study's findings agree with Saeed's study findings that one reasons behind the difficulties of using modals by Arab EFL learners emerges from the fact that Arabic language lacks the same equivalents of English modals. Many of the textbooks focus on the treatment of modals as forms (grammatical rules) at the expense of the more essential aspects of use

and functions (context). Another reason is the semantic complexity of modals that results in a problem to convey their meanings appropriately into the TL.

2. Conclusion and Recommendation

This study investigates some problematic areas concerning translating English modals into Arabic among EFL 4th level students at Women's College/Hadhramout University. The present study reaches to some conclusions concerning the investigated issue in addition to some recommendations as follows:

2.3. Conclusions:

Based on the discussion and the analysis of the findings that have been illustrated previously, the present study concludes the followings:

- 1- Modality is considered a recognizable system in English where modals are used for certain functions and to express certain meanings (deontic & epistemic). Arabic, in contrary, lacks this system as a set of recognized structures governed by certain grammatical rules. It expresses modality by means of certain verbs and phrases that could be, to some extent, equivalents to English modals. The thing that results in problems when EFL students translate English modals into Arabic.
- 2- The EFL students of 4th level face problems when translating English modals into Arabic due to their unawareness of the significant role of the context factor without which the meaning of these modals cannot be conveyed appropriately.
- 3- Students' poor knowledge of English and Arabic affects their translation of English modals appropriately into Arabic. Consequently, they stumble when they translate these modals and thus resort to literal translation.
- 4- Sometimes, students find that modals translation is a challenging task, especially, when it is used in a complex structure such as *could + have + past participle* (see the findings in table 9 & table 10).
- 5- The students are, sometimes misled by the past forms of modals and consequently, fail the task of translating them appropriately. Thus,

they fail to distinguish the suitable tense form of the sentence the modal occurs in.

2.4. Recommendation

Based on the findings and conclusions of the present study, the researchers recommend that:

1. EFL students should be familiarized with the different meanings of modals as well as their functions. Teachers of English and translation should raise the students' awareness to the fact that the context is very crucial to find out the most appropriate equivalent meaning of any modal.
 2. EFL students in general and translation students in particular should be taught modals while relating them to their equivalents in Arabic. The thing that might increase their background knowledge of modality in both the SL and TL and thus help them to translate modals appropriately.
 3. EFL and translation students should be familiarized with the major problems of translating English modals into Arabic and the reasons behind committing mistakes when translating them. Consequently, they may be able to know the most problematic areas of translating modals and thus overcoming them when tackling their translation.
-
1. Conducting studies on translating modals in conditional clauses, voice, subordinate clauses, negation and interrogation since modality in English is a very crucial issue as it constitutes an integral part of English grammar. Such issue requires more studies to be conducted as to reveal many of its complexities, and vagueness, especially with reference to translation.

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A Questionnaire

Dear students,

The researchers are conducting a study on " Problems Encountered by 4th Level EFL Students at Women's College /Hadhramout University when Translating English Modals into Arabic". You are kindly requested to translate the following sentences focusing on conveying the meaning of the modals appropriately.

Section.1.

1. *May*

A. You *may* leave now

.....

B. I *may* visit you tomorrow

.....

3. *Can*

A. *Can* you open the window?

.....

B. *Can* you carry that heavy thing?

.....

4. *Must*

A. He *must* do it; otherwise, he will be punished.

.....

B. You *must* be happy now.

.....

5. *Should*

A. They *should* have finished their work by now.

.....

B. You *should* help the poor!

.....

Section. II.

1. *May*

A. John *may* be there now.

.....

B. John *may* come in now.

.....

2. *Must*

A. John *must* be there now.

.....

B. John *must* come in now.

.....

Section. III.

1. *Might*

I *might* do my homework.

.....

2. *Could*

The teacher *could* have been in the library.

.....

3. *Should*

They *should* have painted the wall.

.....

4. *Would*

He *would* prefer tea to coffee.

.....