## The Core Functions of the English Modals - Speech Act Approach

### Prashant Mishra , M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.

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## Abstract

The earlier approaches to the study of language, Structuralism and Transformational Generative Linguistics, exclusively deal with the formal and semantic aspects of language study and ignore the socio-cultural situations which govern the use of language in our daily lives. Philosophers like Searle (1969), Halliday (1970) and Leech (1983) were able to discover this leak in the earlier paradigms and contributed in different ways to the functional or pragmatic approach to the study of language.

These philosophers and linguists were of the view that when a person utters a sentence, he is not only using his vocal apparatus in speaking something but through the utterance he is also performing some communicative act; and through the communicative act, he is performing some social functions. Austin, Halliday and Leech are of the view that an utterance cannot be confined to a mere linguistic act. An utterance, according to them, is a performance of an action. Since modals represent various semantic categories like request, threat, promise, compulsion, duty and desirability, possibility etc, their semantics is often influenced by socio-cultural factors.

An attempt has been made in the present paper to apply Speech Act approach to the study of Modals. The analysis of the data reveals that modals perform various speech acts – directives, commissives, assertives and expressives and perform convivial, conflictive, collaborative and competitive functions depending on the semantic category and the social context in which they are used by the interlocutors.

**Key Words:** Modals, Illocutionary Act, Illocutionary Function, Pragmatics, Socio-Semantics

## Introduction

All the earlier approaches to the study of language confined their studies to the semantic and formal aspect of language. Traditional grammar defined some grammatical categories on the basis of their meaning and some on the basis of their forms and functions. Nouns, verbs, tense, number, gender and modals are the various grammatical categories which have been treated by using semantic criterion whereas adjectives and

adverbs are the grammatical categories which have been defined using functional criterion.

Structuralists criticized the mixing of criteria by traditional grammarians and based their studies exclusively on the form of words. They completely avoided relying on semantic criterion as it was thought to be outside the scope of scientific analysis due to its arbitrariness and introspective nature. They endeavoured to make the study of language a purely objective discipline and were interested in collecting and analyzing data, classifying form of various grammatical categories and formulating general principles which could be applicable to the data of language.

Structuralists tried their best to make the study of language as scientific as it could be and rejected various notional definitions like 'noun is the name of a person, place or thing' or 'verb is a word that denotes action' given by the Traditional Grammarians. But confining the study of language to only form resulted in so many anomalies in Structural linguistics.

These anomalies in Structural Linguistics and the consequent dissatisfaction against it ultimately resulted in the publication of Noam Chomsky's book "Syntactic Structures" in 1957 which gave birth to Transformational Generative Grammar.

While Structuralism confined itself to the description of the data, Transformational Generative Grammar went a step further and took into consideration native speaker's intuitive knowledge of the language as the data. Generative linguists regarded language as a mental phenomenon which is acquired and not inherited and the data for its study is available through intuition.

Generative Grammars have attached priority to syntax and completely ignored the social aspect of language. "But by accepting ambiguity and synonymy as among the basic data of linguistics, Chomsky opened a door for semantics" (Leech1983:2). However, Chomsky missed the important point when he confined his study only to the linguistic competence of the native speakers and refused to go beyond it.

**The Speech Act Approach**

Philosophers like Searle(1969), Austin (1962) and Hymes (1972) were able to discover this leak, which was a great hindrance in the way of the perfection of Chomskyan paradigm. They all contributed in different ways to the functional approach to the study of language. These philosophers opposed Chomsky by charging him of ignoring the situational use of language. According to them, people use language in different types of socio-cultural situations, which govern their lives. Any approach that disregards the social aspect of language is bound to be incomplete. A person cannot become competent in the use of language unless he learns to use a language in various socio-cultural situations. The functional grammarians discovered this lacuna and tried to overcome it by

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incorporating in their works socio-semantic functions of speech acts. Philosophers like Austin (1962), Halliday (1970), and Leech (1983) gave momentum to the functional approach.

J.L. Austin (1962) contributed significantly to the functional paradigm by relating meaning to its illocutionary force. He believes that a person utters a sentence not only to convey something but also to perform some act. When a person utters a sentence like- 'I promise to come back within a week', he is not making a simple statement but is performing the act of promising. According to Austin, " a complete account of the meaning of a sentence cannot be restricted to semantic analysis as these are usually understood and that they must be extended to include information about the kind of speech act involved in uttering the sentence – that is, its illocutionary force " (Boyd and Thorne 1969: 58). In languages, words perform multiple functions and different functions of words are governed by different contexts in which they are uttered. Context or the underlying conditions, which are in the background and shape the utterance, often provide us clues to distinguish various functions of utterance from one another. The speech act approach developed by Austin particularly "focuses upon knowledge of underlying conditions for production and interpretation of acts through words." (Shiffrin 1994: 6).

It is very unfortunate that the term 'speech-act' is widely misunderstood. Many people believe it to be the act of vocal utterance or an act of communication through spoken language. But Austin's doctrine of speech-act "gives explicit recognition to the social or interpersonal dimension of language behaviour and provides a general framework for the discussion of the syntactic and semantic distinctions that linguists have traditionally described in terms of mood and modality" (Lyons 1977: 725).

The earlier linguists attached more importance to sentences and utterances and regarded them as the minimal unit of human communication system. Austin looked at communication system through the goal-oriented pragmatic point of view.

For example, when a person says to a stranger, "There is a dog in my house", he not only informs him about the presence of the dog in the house but also warns him never to think of trespassing his house. Austin, thus, regarded the performance of a speech act as the smallest unit of communication system.

Austin divided the speech acts into locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary.

Locutionary act refers to the utterance of a sentence with a certain sense in a context. It includes the phonetic act, the phatic act and the rhetic act. Illocutionary act is an act performed in saying something and refers to "utterances, which have a certain conventional force" (Leech 1983:176). Perlocutionary act refers to the results or consequences achieved by saying something.

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In the beginning of his discussion Austin has made a distinction between performatives (short) utterances and constatives (descriptive) utterances. This distinction is related to the various functions performed by language. In his work "How to Do things with words" (1962) Austin says that constatives utterances refer to the statements which describe some event, process or state of affairs and which can be characterized as either true or false.

Performatives utterances, on the other hand, instead of evaluating something as true or false, are used to do something. The difference between constatives and performatives utterances depends upon the difference between saying something and doing something by the means of language. Austin, in this way, challenged the view of the logical positivists who thought that language makes only empirically verifiable statements. According to them language had only one function i.e. descriptive. All the other utterances are classified as emotive. But people like Wittgenstein (1961) who were earlier associated with this theory, soon came to realize that language utterances are heterogeneous and are determined by various social conventions. A person becomes competent in the use of language by learning to use a language in different types of social contexts. Besides relating the use of language to social situations, Wittgenstein also relates the semantic aspect of a word to its use.

Thus both Wittgenstein and Austin "emphasize the importance of relating the function of language to the social contexts in which languages operate and insist that, not only descriptive, but also non-descriptive utterances should be of concern to the philosopher" (Lyons1977:728).

Another philosopher who made significant contributions to speech act theory and who enriched it is Searle (1969). According to Searle 'a theory of language is a part of a theory of action' (1969:17). Searle rejected the distinction between meaning and speech acts, which Austin had indirectly made. He says that 'the study of speech acts are not two independent studies but one study from two different points of view" (1969:18). Searle holds that there are two types of speech acts–direct speech acts and indirect speech acts. He believes that whenever a speaker wishes to perform some goal with the help of the use of language, it requires a chain of actions.

In a direct speech act a speaker believes that the hearer understands his message and this understanding of the message will lead him to perform the desired action. Searle defined indirect speech acts as "cases in which one illocutionary act is performed indirectly by way of performing another" (1969:60).

Searle regards that both direct and indirect speech acts are performed at the same time and the performance of the one leads to the performance of the other. For example, the utterance 'This room is very hot, isn't it?' implies that the speaker wants the hearer to switch on the cooler.

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Thus through an indirect speech act exemplified above a direct speech act is performed. The indirect speech act leads the hearer to infer that the speaker wants him to switch on the cooler.

But Professor Leech is not satisfied with means-ends analysis. He is of the view that we cannot restrict all the uses of language to only instrumental function, as "we cannot treat all discourse as motivated by the goal of bringing about some result in the mental or physical condition of the addressee" (Leech 1983:40). "The concept of goal", says Professor Leech "should be applicable to the phatic use of language, the avoidance of taboo subjects and taboo vocabulary, etc. and other cases where although the pattern of linguistic behaviour may be clear, few people would claim that the user is aware of the goals that motivate this behaviour" (1983:40).

Apart from classifying speech acts into direct and indirect, Searle also classified illocutionary acts into various categories. His classification is based on the politeness principles. According to him, "assertives commit to the truth of the expressed proposition" are "neutral as regards politeness " (Leech 1983:105).

Assertives include stating, suggesting, boasting, complaining, claiming, reporting and belong to the collaborative category of illocutionary functions. Directives are the speech acts "intended to produce some effect through action by the hearer: ordering, commanding, requesting, advising and recommending are examples" (Leech1983: 106). These acts in most of the cases belong to the competitive category of illocutionary functions.

In the next place come commissives, which commit to some future action "e.g. promising, vowing, offering. These illocutionary acts are related to convivial function of politeness. Expressives express "the speaker's psychological attitude towards a state of affairs which the illocution presupposes: e.g. thanking, congratulating, pardoning, blaming, praising, condoling etc. Expressives like commissives also belong to the group of convivial as in them the "illocutionary goal coincides with the social goal" (Leech 1983: 104). The last category in the classification of illocutionary acts based on politeness maxims is the class of declaratives. Declaratives "bring about the correspondence between the propositional content and reality; e.g. resigning, dismissing, christening, naming, excommunicating, appointing, sentencing etc."(Leech 1983: 106). Declaratives according to Searle are institutional acts and do not involve politeness.

All verbal utterances take place in various types of socio-cultural situations. Hence an important feature of speech acts is that they have a close affinity with the socio-cultural background of the speakers and listeners. Human languages are culture specific. Speech acts differ from culture to culture. Individuals while communicating or interacting with the other individuals have to manage the socio-cultural conventions. These socio-cultural conventions play a vital role in human communication system.

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All languages differ from each other in these socio-cultural aspects pertaining to the context and form. Languages also differ in the use of the conventional principles of politeness, co-operation, informativeness, truthfulness, relevance, perspicuity, and clarity. Hence the theory of speech act which relates meaning to its illocutionary force is of great relevance. For example, 'He will come on Monday' can be analyzed as 'I predict he comes on Monday' and 'He may come on Monday' can be analyzed as 'I guess he comes on Monday.' In the above examples, modals 'will' and 'may' are related to the illocutionary forces of the speaker's mental acts of predicting and guessing respectively.

**Methodology and Data Collection:**

Halliday (1970) regards modality an important element of the semantics of personal participation. He believes that it is derived from the interpersonal function of language. Any discussion of modality will remain superficial without a consideration of the notions of speech act and illocutionary force which are governed by various speech situations. The addressee will be able to decode the semantics of modality fully well only if he is familiar with the context of the utterance. Therefore, we propose to study modals using the speech-act and pragmatic parameters developed by Austin, Searle and Leech as laid down in our discussion on 'The Speech-Act Approach'.

The data to support our point of view in the present paper have been collected from popular one-act plays written by modern writers in English. A detailed reference to the plays has been given in the appendix at the end of the paper. The plays selected to collect the data and support our point of view have been spread over a period of the last fifty years from 1950 to 2000.The data from these plays are preferred as these plays are written by the native speakers of English and these plays contain dialogues which are representative of the language spoken by the native speakers of English. We have selected only one example for each notional category expressing modality in English. We have proposed to analyze data using the following pragmatic parameters: 1. Meaning 2. Illocutionary Act 3. Illocutionary Function 4. Attitude of the speaker.

**MAY**

  **1.** ***Long may he reign!***

  *(The Seven Slaves)*

  Context of the Utterance:

  Lord High Chamberlain:  You are in the presence of the son of Heaven:  Bow yourselves low. Long live our gracious Emperor!

  All: Long may he reign!

  Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:
  Meaning: Wish.
  Illocutionary Act: Expressive.

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We all wish/ bless our gracious Emperor to reign for a long time.
Illocutionary Function: Convivial.
Attitude of the Speaker: The speakers wish for the welfare of the addressee.
The speakers, the citizens assembled in the court, wish that their Emperor reigns for a long time.

### 2. *May I have your attention please?*

*(Hijack)*

Context of the Utterance:
Captain Stewart: Ladies and gentlemen. This is Captain Stewart speaking. May I have your attention please. As you must be aware by now, a most regrettable incident has occurred. I want all of you to do exactly as Mr. Shafti says.
Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:
Meaning: Request for permission.
Illocutionary Act: Directive.
I request you to permit me to have your attention.
Illocutionary Function: Competitive.
Attitude of the Speaker: Wish that the hearers allow him to perform the action described in the propositional content.
Speaker wishes that the hearers allow him to have their attention to him.

### 3. *You may now unfasten your seatbelts and smoke if you wish to.*

*(Hijack)*

Context of the Utterance:
Captain Stewart (voice over the public address system): Ladies and gentlemen, this is your pilot, Captain Stewart, speaking. You may now unfasten your seatbelts and smoke if you wish to.
Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:
Meaning: Permission.
Illocutionary Act: Directive.
I permit you to unfasten your seatbelts and smoke if you wish to.
Illocutionary Function: Competitive.
Attitude of the Speaker: Wish that the hearers follow the instructions described in the propositional content.
The speaker wishes the hearers to unfasten their seatbelts and smoke if they wish to.

### 4. *He may come tonight.*

*(The Day of Atonement)*

Context of the Utterance:
Jacob: Perhaps Dr. Kraus will help us. We'll ask him next time he comes.
Marthe: He may come tonight. They told me at the hospital.
Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:

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Meaning: Possibility.

Illocutionary Act: Assertive.

I assert that it is possible for him to come tonight.

Illocutionary Function: Collaborative.

Attitude of the Speaker: The speaker predicts about the possibility of the event described in the propositional content.

The speaker predicts that there is possibility of Dr. Kraus to come tonight.

**CAN**

5. *Can I help you in any way?*

*(The Bishop's Candlesticks)*

Context of the Utterance:

Convict: If you call out. You are a dead man!

Bishop: But, my friend, as you see, I am reading. Why should I call out? Can I help you in any way?

Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:

Meaning: Offer.

Illocutionary Act: Commissive.

I ask you to tell me if I can help you in any way.

Illocutionary Function: Convivial

Attitude of the Speaker: The speaker is willing to perform the action described in the propositional content.

The speaker is willing to help the hearer in the way he likes.

6. *Some people can't bear pain.*

*(A Distant Relative)*

Context of the utterance:

Mr. Spriggs          : George! Where are you going?

Mr. Spriggs          : Damntist.

Mr. Price             : Poor George! Some people can't bear pain.

Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:

Meaning: Ability (endurance).

Illocutionary Act: Assertive.

I assert that some people are not able to bear pain.

Illocutionary Function: Collaborative.

Attitude of the Speaker: Speaker simply informs the hearer about the information (hearer's inability) described in the propositional content.

Mr. Price wants Mr. Spriggs to be aware of his inability to bear pain.

7. *No power on earth can save him from it.*

*(The Hour of Truth)*

Context of the Utterance:

John (indignantly)     : He wanted you to tell lie to save his skin, eh? Wanted you to perjure yourself?

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Baldwin: That wouldn't be necessary, John. He just wanted me to have an attack of poor memory. If I tell all I know John Gresham will go to jail – no power on earth can save him from it.

Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:

Meaning: Ability.

Illocutionary Act: Assertive

I assert that no power on earth has the ability to save him from going to jail if I tell all I know.

Illocutionary Function: Collaborative.

Attitude of the Speaker: Speaker simply informs the hearer about the information given in the propositional content.

**8.  *We can't offer you a substitute.***

*(The New Hangman)*

Context of the Utterance:

Governor: (On Phone) Yes, Governor, Wandswood Prison, speaking. A terrible thing has happened here. We have an execution at eight O'clock two minutes from now-- and the Hangman has struck…………. No, no! Won't do his job. I can only report how the case stands. No they won't; none of them ……….. you can't force them …Yes, I admit  the responsibility. But you can't hang without a Hangman --- --. No its his business ----- you sent him, he's your agent, he's failed you, we can't offer you a substitute -----

Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:

Meaning: Impossibility.

Illocutionary Act: Assertive.

I assert that it is impossible for us to offer you a substitute.

Illocutionary Function: Collaborative.

Attitude of the Speaker: Speaker simply informs the hearer about the information (impossibility for him to offer a substitute hangman) given in the propositional content.

**9.  *She can say anything she wants to say; without moving a muscle of her face!***

*(Under Fire)*

Context of the Utterance:

Lady Muriel: If they are only going to the Park, isn't it rather strange that they should choose to go alone? The Prince so insists on the Queen being properly attended. It's my belief they've been quarreling about something; and she wants to have it out with him.

Lady Grace: But she can't do that in the Park, with people staring at them.

Lady Muriel: Oh, can't she? She can say anything she wants to say; without moving a muscle of her face! She can whip you with a word, while she is smiling to someone else across the room. It's happened to me; so I know.

Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:

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Meaning: Ability.

Illocutionary Act: Assertive.

I assert that the Queen has the ability to say anything without moving the lips of her face.

Illocutionary Function: Collaborative.

Attitude of the Speaker: Speaker simply informs the hearer about the information (the ability of the Queen) given in the propositional content.

**MIGHT**

10. ***He might come slipping along there, and his friends might be waiting for him.***

*(The Rising of the Moon)*

Context of the Utterance:

Policeman B: A hundred pounds is little enough for the Government to offer for him.

Sergeant: I'll mind this place myself. I wouldn't wonder at all if he came this way. He might come slipping along there, and his friends might be waiting for him here, and once he got away it's little chance we'd have of finding him.

Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:

Meaning: Possibility (remote).

Illocutionary Act: Assertive (tentativeness).

I predict him to come slipping along there and his friends to wait for him here.

Illocutionary Function: Collaborative.

Attitude of the Speaker: The speaker predicts about the possibility of the event described in the propositional content.

The speaker predicts the patriot to come slipping along there.

11. ***Might I just kiss you again before we begin?***

*(Princess and the Woodcutter)*

Context of the Utterance:

Princess (nodding): Yes -- well, now we must think of a plan for making mother like you.

Woodcutter: Might I just kiss you again before we begin?

Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:

Meaning: Permission.

Illocutionary Act: Directive.

I request you to permit me to kiss you again before we begin.

Illocutionary Function: Competitive.

Attitude of the Speaker: Wish that the hearer allows him to perform the action described in the propositional content.

The speaker wishes the hearer to allow him to kiss her.

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**COULD**

**12. *Could I have a word with him, miss?***

*(Waterloo)*

Context of the Utterance:
Sergeant (saluting): Beg your pardon, miss, but does Corporal Gregory Brewster live here?
Norah (timidly): Yes, sir.
Sergeant: Could I have a word with him, miss?
Norah: He's not down yet.
Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:
Meaning: Permission.
Illocutionary Act: Directive.
I request you to permit me to have a word with him, miss.
Illocutionary Function: Competitive.
Attitude of the Speaker: Wish that the hearer allows him to perform the action described in the propositional content.
The Sergeant wishes that he should be permitted to have a word with the Corporal.

**13. *How could you, how could you do such things?***

*(Day of Atonement)*

Context of the Utterance:
Marthe: I don't know- I can't think. I only know that whatever he's done in the past, he has saved Else now. (Turning to Kraus) How could you, how could you do such things?
Marthe: I still can't believe it – (to Kraus) you, who are so kind and generous. How could you stand by and see such things done?
Otto: He didn't just stand by. He did them.
Kraus: I had my orders. I had to carry them out. If I hadn't, I should have suffered the same fate.
Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:
Meaning: Ability (Past)
Speech Act: Assertive.
I ask you how you were able to do such things as the mass killings of Jews.
Illocutionary Function: Collaborative.
Attitude of the Speaker: Speaker enquires from the hearer about his ability to tolerate the killings of innocent Jews in the past.

**WILL**

**14. *Persome, will you favour this gentleman with your company at supper?***
*(The Bishop's Candlesticks)*

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Context of the Utterance:

Convict: Stop! Neither of you leave this room till I do.

Bishop: Persome, will you favour this gentleman with your company at supper?
He evidently desires it.

Persome: Very well, brother.

Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:

Meaning: Willingness.

Illocutionary Act: Directive.

I request you to favour this gentleman with your company at supper.

Illocutionary Function: Competitive.

Attitude of the Speaker: Speaker wishes that the hearer performs the action described in the propositional content.

Bishop wishes his sister Persome to favour the convict with her company at supper.

15. *Won't you lie down now? Won't you sleep here?*

*(The Bishop's Candlesticks)*

Context of the Utterance:

Convict: I don't want any damned religion, I tell you.

Bishop: Won't you lie down now, it is late?

Bishop: Now won't you sleep here? See, your bed is ready.

Convict: No! (Looking at the Candlesticks) No! No! I daren't, I daren't – besides
I must go on, I must get to Paris, it is big, and I – can be lost there.

Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:

Meaning: Willingness.

Illocutionary Act: Commissive.

I offer you to lie down now.

I offer you to sleep here.

Illocutionary Function: Convivial.

Attitude of the Speaker: Speaker wishes the hearer to perform the action described in the propositional content.

The Bishop wishes the Convict to lie down and to sleep there.

16. *I will give the hand of my daughter, the Princess Precious Jade, in marriage; and succession to the Dragon Throne!*

*(The Seven Slaves)*

Context of the Utterance:

Emperor: To any man who is able to do so, I will give the hand of my daughter, the Princess Precious Jade, in marriage, and succession to the Dragon Throne!

Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:

Meaning: Promise.

Illocutionary Act: Commissive (conditional).

I promise to give the hand of my daughter to any man who is able to fulfill the condition.

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Illocutionary Function: Convivial.

Attitude of the Speaker: Speaker intends to perform the action described in the propositional content if the condition put by him is fulfilled.

The King intends to give the hand of his daughter in marriage to a person who passes the test of quality.

### 17. *I will fire you.*

<div align="right">*(Hijack)*</div>

Context of the Utterance:

Shafti: Hay! Stop! Go back to your sitting. Stop, I am saying, or I will fire you.

Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:

Meaning:  Threat.

Illocutionary Act: Commissive(conditional).

I threaten to fire at you if you don't go back to your sitting.

Illocutionary Function: Conflictive.

Attitude of the Speaker: Insistence. Speaker insists the hearer to perform the action described in the propositional content.

The speaker insists the passengers to go back to their seats or he will fire at them.

### 18.     *He will tell the truth – nothing but the truth.*

<div align="right">*(The Hour of Truth)*</div>

Context of the Utterance:

Martha: Your father has nothing against Mr. Gresham. He will tell the truth -- nothing but the truth.

John: Did you think I expected him to lie? Not father! He'll tell the truth: just the truth. It'll be plenty!

Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:

Meaning: Certainty.

Illocutionary Act: Assertive.

I assert that he will tell the truth.

Illocutionary Function: Collaborative.

Attitude of the Speaker: Surety. The speaker is sure about the hearer to perform the action described in the propositional content.

The speaker is sure that her husband will only tell the truth.

### 19.     *I will, I will; I'll just go on where I was going [Goes towards steps].*

<div align="right">*(The Rising of the Moon)*</div>

Context of the Utterance:

Man: I will, I will; I'll just go on where I was going [Goes towards steps].

Sergeant: Come back from those steps; no one has leave to pass down them tonight.

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Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:
Meaning: Determination.
Illocutionary Act: Commissive.
I am determined to go on where I was going.
Illocutionary Function: Conflictive.
Attitude of the Speaker: Speaker insists to perform the action described in the propositional content.
Speaker insists to go on where he was going.


### SHALL

*20.    Shall we take a stroll in the garden and admire the lotus – blossom, my princess?*

*(The Seven Slaves)*

Context of the Utterance:
 Shen-Su (to Precious Jade): Shall we take a stroll in the garden and admire the lotus-blossom, my princess?
Precious Jade (putting her hand on the arm): I am yours to command, my lord!
Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:
Meaning: Willingness.
Illocutionary Act: Directive.
I request you to have a stroll in the garden in my company.
Illocutionary Function: Convivial.
Attitude of the Speaker: Wish that the hearer participates in the act described in the propositional content.
The speaker wishes the hearer to take a stroll in the garden in his company.

**21. Shall I show you the bed, Barron?**

*(Lithuania)*

 Context of the Utterance:
 Mother: [taking up the lamp]: Shall I show you the bed, barron?
 Stranger: Yes, I really must turn in.
 Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:
 Meaning: Intention, offer of help.
 Illocutionary Act: Commissive.
 I request you to allow me to show you the bed.
 Illocutionary Function: Convivial.
 Attitude of the Speaker: Speaker intends to perform the action described in the propositional content.
 Speaker wishes to show the bed to the hearer.
 .
**22.    I shall shoot.**

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Context of the Utterance:

Marthe: No. There's another way out – through that door and up to the roof ……..[She starts forward towards the door left.]

Otto: Mother, I'm warning you. If he moves from this room except by my orders, I shall shoot.

Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:

Meaning: Threat.

Illocutionary Act: Commissive (conditional).

I threaten to shoot him if he moves from this room except by my orders.

Illocutionary Function: Conflictive.

Attitude of the Speaker: Insistence. Speaker insists to perform the action described in the propositional content if the hearer does not follow his orders.

Speaker insists the hearer not to move or he will shoot him.

### 23. *I shall always treasure the memory of this visit.*
*(The Queen and Mr. Shakespeare)*

Context of the Utterance:

The Queen: Thank you, Master Shakespeare, for a most instructive and enjoyable hour.

Shakespeare: I shall always treasure the memory of this visit, Madame. Myself a poor writer of plays, you the greatest Queen of all time!

Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:

Meaning: Promise.

Illocutionary Act: Commissive.

I promise that I shall always treasure the memory of this visit, Madame.

Illocutionary Function: Convivial.

Attitude of the Speaker: Willingness. Speaker is willing to fulfill the promise described in the propositional content.

Speaker is willing to always treasure the memory of Queen's visit.

### 24. *Not one word that you say shall go beyond these four walls.*
*(The Queen and Mr. Shakespeare)*

Context of the Utterance:

Shakespeare: I find it healthier, Sir Robert, not to discuss affairs of state, even with my closest friends, and never with such high officials as yourself. One feels ………safer.

Cecil: Oh, come, Master Shakespeare, I assure you that not one word that you say shall go beyond these four walls. Come, let us be frank with each other. What does your ordinary Englishman, whom you seem to know and understand so well, think of the government--and of the Queen?

Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:

Meaning: Assurance.

Illocutionary Act: Commissive.

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I assure you that not one word that you say shall go beyond these four walls.
Illocutionary  Function: Convivial.
Attitude of the Speaker: Willingness. Speaker is willing to fulfill the promise described in the propositional content.

## WOULD

**25.      Would you bless me before I go?**

*(The Bishop's Candlesticks)*

Context of the Utterance:
Bishop:  I see –you must travel by night.
Convict: I  -   I  - didn't believe there was any good in the world – One doesn't when one has been in hell, but somehow I  -  I  - know you're good and it is a queer thing to ask that –but could you, would you bless me before I go –  I  -  I think .I would help me.

Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:
Meaning: Willingness.
Illocutionary Act: Directive.
I request you to bless me before I go.
Illocutionary Function: Competitive.
Attitude of the Speaker: Speaker wishes the hearer to grant the request described in the propositional content.
The convict wishes the Bishop to help him.

**26.      Would the barrel be a good place to put a notice up?**

*(The Rising of the Moon)*

Context of the Utterance:
Policeman B: Would the barrel be a good place to put a notice up?
Sergeant: It might, you can put it there. (They paste the notice up)
Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:
Meaning: Suggestion.
Illocutionary Act: Directive.
I request you to tell me whether the barrel would be a good place to put up a notice board.
Illocutionary Function: Competitive.
Attitude of the Speaker: Speaker wishes the hearer to provide him the information asked in the propositional content.

**27.      I would like to make all my gentlemen at the court learn that passage.**

*(The Queen and Mr. Shakespeare)*

Context of the Utterance:
The Queen: Very observant of you, Cecil! I can read it myself. (Takes it from Cecil) Ha! Ha! This is good; listen to this, Cecil!

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'To thine own self be true---------'

There's wisdom in that Cecil. I would like to make all my gentlemen at the court learn that passage.

Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:

Meaning: Wish.

Illocutionary Act: Directive.

I wish all the gentlemen at the court to learn that passage.

Illocutionary Function: Competitive.

Attitude of the Speaker: Speaker instructs the addressees to perform the action described in the propositional content.

The speaker instructs all the gentlemen at the court to learn that passage.

### 28.     *Never would I write so lame a phrase.*
*(The Queen and Mr. Shakespeare)*

Context of the Utterance:

Shakespeare: Never would I write so lame a phrase, 'T is 'dulls the edge of husbandry',

I wrote it!

The Queen: This is unbearable! I tell you wrote.

'Take the edge off husbandry'.

Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:

Meaning: Wish, vow.

Illocutionary Act: Commissive.

I vow never to write a lame phrase like this.

Illocutionary Function: Convivial.

Attitude of the Speaker: Speaker intends to fulfill the wish described in the propositional content.

### 29.     *They would pay somebody's rent.*
*(The Bishop's Candlesticks)*

Context of the Utterance:

Persome: Oh, go on! You are incorrigible. You'll sell your candlesticks next.

Bishop: No, no sister, not my candlesticks.

Bishop: oh! Why not! They would pay somebody's rent, I suppose.

Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:

Meaning: Guess, presupposition.

Illocutionary Act: Assertive.

I presuppose / guess that the candlesticks would pay somebody's rent.

Illocutionary Function: Collaborative.

Attitude of the Speaker: Speaker predicts about the event described in the propositional content.

The Bishop predicts about the cost of the candlesticks when they will be sold.

 **MUST**

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*30.      You must stay where you are please.*

<div align="right">*(Hijack)*</div>

Context of the Utterance:

Travers: Make mine a double whisky and soda.

Fanshaw : Think I'll join you old boy.

Shafti : No you must stay where you are please. All except the waitress must remain in his seats.

Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:

Meaning: Compulsion, obligation.

Illocutionary Act: Directive.

I command you to stay where you are.

I command all the passengers except the waitress to remain in their seats.

Illocutionary Function: Competitive.

Attitude of the Speaker: Speaker insists that the hearer performs the action described in the propositional content.

The speaker insists all the passengers to remain in their seats.

*31.      You must not pass this way.*

<div align="right">*(The Rising of the Moon)*</div>

Context of the Utterance:

Sergeant: I thought it might be a boat. I had a notion there might be friends of his coming about the quays with a boat.

Sergeant: If you don't stop that, I'll arrest you. (A whistle from below answers, repeating the air)

Sergeant: That's a signal (stands between him and steps) You must not pass this way ---- step farther back ---- who are you?

You are no ballad – singer.

Man: You needn't ask who I am; that placard will tell you (points to the placard)

Sergeant; You are the man I am looking for.

Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:

Meaning: Prohibition.

Illocutionary Act: Directive.

I command you not to pass this way.

Illocutionary Function: Competitive.

Attitude of the Speaker: Insistence. The speaker insists the hearer not to perform the action described in the propositional content.

The speaker insists the hearer not to pass that way.

.

*32.      She must go elsewhere.*

<div align="right">*(Day of Atonement)*</div>

Context of the Utterance:

Kraus: It's about future that I want to talk to you. Ilse must not come back here.

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Jacob: Were ashamed to ask for help when you have already done so much, but where can we turn?

Kraus: All right, Jacob, all right. For six weeks, I can get her into a sanatorium. After that, she must go elsewhere. Somewhere warm, if possible.

Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:

Meaning: Suggestion, advice.

Illocutionary Act: Directive.

I recommend that Else should go elsewhere somewhere warm.

Illocutionary Function: Competitive.

Attitude of the Speaker: Belief that the recommendation given in the propositional content will be good for the hearer.

### 33. It must be very strong heart of hers to stand up to such an operation.

*(Day of Atonement)*

Context of the Utterance:

Marthe: She is alive. She has had the operation.

Jacob: Her heart has stood up to it. That's good, Marthe, that's good. It must be very strong heart of hers, to stand up to such an operation, you know. She will get well, now.

Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:

Meaning: Inference, logical conclusion.

Illocutionary Act: Assertive.

I assert that her heart is very strong as it stands up to such an operation.

Illocutionary Function: Collaborative.

Attitude of the Speaker: Speaker assumes the information given in the propositional content.

## NEED

### 34. You needn't turn round.

*(The Rising of the Moon)*

Context of the Utterance:

Sergeant: You made me feel a bit queer with the way you talked.

Man: Give me a match, Sergeant (he gives it and Man lights pipe).Wait now till I give you a light, but you needn't turn round .Don't take your eye off the quay for the life of you.

Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:

Meaning: Absence of obligation.

Illocutionary Act: Directive.

I command you not to turn round.

Illocutionary Function: Competitive.

Attitude of the Speaker: Insistence. The speaker insists the hearer not to turn round as it may lead to his fall into the sea.

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**SHOULD**

*35.      You should disguise yourself as a beggar woman and approach each of the three Princes in turn, supplicating their charity.*

<div align="right"><em>(The Princess and the Woodcutter)</em></div>

Context of the Utterance:

King (with a sigh): You should disguise yourself as a beggar woman and approach each of three princes in turn, supplicating their charity. In this way we shall discover which of the three has the kindest heart. What do you say, my dear?

Queen: An excellent plan. If you remember, I suggested it myself yesterday.

Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:

Meaning: Suggestion, recommendation.

Illocutionary Act: Directive.

I suggest you to disguise yourself as a beggar and to approach each of the three princes in turn.

Illocutionary Function: Competitive.

Attitude of the Speaker: Speaker wishes that the hearer performs the action described in the propositional content.

The King wishes the Queen to disguise herself as a beggar woman and to approach each of the three Princes in turn.

**OUGHT TO**

*36.      It's a whole troop of police they ought to put here to stop a man like that.*

<div align="right"><em>(The Rising of the Moon)</em></div>

Context of the Utterance:

Man: That's so, indeed! You might be standing there, looking out that way, thinking you saw him coming up this side of the quay [points], and he might be coming up this other side [points], and he'd be on you before you know where you were.

Sergeant: It's a whole troop of police they ought to put here to stop a man like that.

Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:

Meaning: Suggestion, recommendation.

Illocutionary Act: Directive.

I recommend to put a whole troop of police here to stop a man like that.

Illocutionary Function: Competitive.

Attitude of the Speaker: Speaker wishes the hearer to follow the suggestion given in the propositional content.

Speaker wishes the hearer to put a whole troop of police to stop a man like that.

**Findings and Conclusion**

The analysis of the above samples shows that modals are not only multi-propositional but are also multi-functional. It is illustrated through the various examples culled from

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various one-act plays written in English that modals perform various illocutionary acts and functions depending upon the semantic category and the social context in which they are used by the interlocutors. In the present paper, utterances from one-act plays written in English have been chosen so that real intent of the speakers can be understood from the context.

The analysis reveals that the speech-act theory chosen by us very well applies to the study of modals in English and helps us in exploring their communicative potential.

The study shows that when 'may' semantically refers to 'wish' as in example No.1, it performs expressive act as the speaker simply expresses his intentions for the welfare of the addressee. It performs convivial function as the illocutionary goal matches the social goal.

In examples No. 4, 8, and 10 when 'may', 'can', and 'might' imply 'possibility' and 'impossibility', they perform assertive act as the speaker simply makes a statement about the possibility/impossibility of the event described in the propositional content. The speech function is collaborative as the illocutionary goal remains neutral towards the social goal. When 'may', 'might' and 'could' are used for 'making request for permission' as in examples No. 2, 11 and 12, the speech act is directive as the speaker asks the hearer to allow him to perform the action described in the propositional content. Illocutionary function performed is competitive as the illocutionary goal competes with the social goal.

When 'can', 'will' and 'shall' are used for expressing 'offer of help' and 'willingness' as in examples No. 5, 21 and 15, they perform commissive act as the speaker expresses his intentions and willingness to perform the action described in the propositional content. As the speaker's commitment is to help the hearer, the illocutionary function performed is convivial because the illocutionary goal is directed towards the social goal. Further, when 'will' and 'shall' are used to express 'promise' and 'threat' as we see in examples No. 16, 17,22 and 23, they perform commissive act as the speaker expresses his intentions or commitment to execute the action described in the propositional content. However, the commitment expressed through 'promise' as in examples No. 16 and 23 is of positive nature contrary to the commitment expressed through 'threat' as in examples No. 17 and 22 is of negative nature.

Therefore the illocutionary function expressed through 'promise' is convivial as the illocutionary act is in accordance with the social goal whereas illocutionary function performed by 'threat' is conflictive as the illocutionary goal conflicts with the social goal. When 'must' is used for referring to 'compulsion ' and 'prohibition' as in examples No. 30 and 31 and 'need not' for 'absence of obligation' as in example No.34,they perform directive act as the speaker directs or recommends or suggests the hearer to perform the action described in the propositional content.

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The illocutionary function is competitive as the illocutionary act expressed through 'obligation', 'compulsion' competes with the social goal. Similarly, when 'should' and 'ought to' are used to imply suggestions and recommendations as in examples No. 35 and 36, they perform directive act as the speaker suggests/recommends the hearer to perform the action described in the propositional content. The illocutionary function performed is competitive as the illocutionary goal competes with the social goal due to the directives given by the speaker to the hearer to do the action described in the propositional content. Thus, the analysis of the data strengthened our view that modals is English perform various illocutionary acts and functions quite competently.

Another important conclusion drawn from the analysis of the data is that illocutionary acts and functions performed by modals also depend on their socio-semantics. For instance, a directive functions as conflictive when it is used to express 'threat' to warn the addressee. On the contrary, a directive also functions as convivial when it expresses 'offer' and 'promise' and the illocutionary act is performed in the interest of the hearer. Therefore for a comprehensive study of modals interplay between semantic and pragmatic factors should be taken into consideration.

An attempt to extend the study of modals from the mere analysis of meaning to their social functions has been made in the paper to make a beginning in this direction and to further open areas of research for modal auxiliaries in English.

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## Appendix
## Selections of English One-Act Plays as
## Sources for Illustrative Material in this Study

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   ============================================================
Prashant Mishra, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.
Department of English
Government S.V. P. G. College
Neemuch 458 441
Madhya Pradesh
India
drprashant_mishra@yahoo.co.in

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