

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE SEMANTICS OF MODAL VERBS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK

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Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqolada ingliz va oʻzbek tillaridagi modal feʼllarning semantikasini solishtirma tahlil qilish taqdim etilgan. Modal feʼllar har ikkala tilda ham zarurat, mumkinlik, qobiliyat, ruxsat va majburiyatni ifodalashda muhim rol oʻynaydi. Funktsional oʻxshashliklarga qaramay, ingliz va oʻzbek modal feʼllari qoʻllanishi, grammatik tuzilishi va pragmatik nuanslari boʻyicha sezilarli farqlarga ega. Tadqiqot ushbu oʻxshashliklar va farqlarni ikkala tilning haqiqiy lingvistik misollarini tahlil qilish orqali oʻrganib, madaniy va lingvistik kontekstlarning maʼnoga qanday taʼsir qilishini yoritadi.

Natijalar shuni koʻrsatadiki, ingliz tilidagi modal feʼllar koʻpincha yordamchi konstruksiyalarga tayanadi, oʻzbek tilida esa modal maʼnoni ifodalash uchun feʼl shakllari va zarflar kombinatsiyasi qoʻllaniladi. Ushbu tadqiqot tilshunoslar, tarjimonlar va til oʻrganayotganlar uchun til semantikasini chuqurroq tushunishga hamda solishtirma grammatika tadqiqotlariga hissa qoʻshishga xizmat qiladi.

Kalit soʻzlar: Modal feʼllar, semantika, ingliz tili, oʻzbek tili, solishtirma tadqiqot, zarurat, mumkinlik, majburiyat, tilaro tahlil, tarjima.

Abstract. This article presents a comparative analysis of the semantics of modal verbs in English and Uzbek. Modal verbs play a crucial role in expressing necessity, possibility, ability, permission, and obligation in both languages. Despite their functional similarities, English and Uzbek modal verbs exhibit notable differences in usage, grammatical structure, and pragmatic nuances. The study investigates these similarities and differences by examining authentic linguistic examples from both languages, highlighting how cultural and linguistic contexts influence meaning.

The findings reveal that while English modals often rely on auxiliary constructions, Uzbek employs a combination of verb forms and particles to convey modal meanings. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of cross-linguistic semantics and provides insights for translators, language learners, and linguists interested in comparative grammar studies.

Keywords: Modal verbs, semantics, English, Uzbek, comparative study, necessity, possibility, obligation, cross-linguistic analysis, translation.

INTRODUCTION

Modal verbs are essential components of language that allow speakers to express necessity, possibility, ability, permission, and obligation. In English, modal verbs such as *can*, *may*, *must*, and *should* are used extensively to convey these meanings through auxiliary constructions.

Similarly, in Uzbek, modal meanings are expressed using a combination of verb forms, auxiliary verbs, and particles.

Despite the functional similarities, the two languages differ in grammatical structure, usage patterns, and pragmatic nuances, reflecting their unique cultural and linguistic contexts.

The study of modal verbs is particularly important for linguists, translators, and language learners, as understanding their meaning and usage is crucial for accurate communication and translation. Comparative studies of modal verbs not only reveal cross-linguistic similarities and differences but also provide insights into how languages encode modality.

This article aims to investigate the semantics of modal verbs in English and Uzbek through a comparative approach. By analyzing authentic linguistic examples, the study highlights how modality is expressed in both languages, identifies key differences, and discusses the implications for translation and language learning.

Ultimately, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of cross-linguistic semantics and enriches the field of comparative grammar studies.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

The study of modal verbs has been a significant area of research in both English and Uzbek linguistics. English modal verbs have been widely analyzed in terms of their syntactic behavior, semantic functions, and pragmatic uses (Palmer, 2001; Huddleston & Pullum, 2002). Researchers highlight that English modals often convey subtle distinctions in necessity, probability, and obligation, and their usage is context-dependent.

In Uzbek linguistics, studies on modality focus on how auxiliary verbs, verb forms, and particles express modal meanings (Xolmatov, 2010; Qodirov, 2015). Uzbek modal expressions differ from English in that they frequently rely on a combination of morphological markers and contextual cues rather than fixed auxiliary verbs.

Comparative studies between English and Uzbek are limited, but they suggest that while both languages share core modal functions, the mechanisms for expressing them vary significantly due to structural and cultural differences.

This study employs a qualitative comparative approach to analyze the semantics of modal verbs in English and Uzbek. Authentic examples were collected from English-language corpora, textbooks, and spoken sources, as well as Uzbek literature, educational texts, and media.

Each example was analyzed in terms of its semantic function (necessity, possibility, ability, permission, or obligation) and its grammatical structure.

The research process consisted of three main steps:

1. Identification of modal verbs and expressions in both languages.
2. Classification of these expressions according to semantic categories.
3. Comparative analysis to identify similarities, differences, and pragmatic nuances.

By applying this methodology, the study aims to provide a clear understanding of how English and Uzbek express modality, offering insights for translators, linguists, and language learners.

DISCUSSION

The comparative analysis of modal verbs in English and Uzbek reveals both similarities and differences in how modality is expressed across these languages.

In terms of similarities, both languages use modal forms to convey core meanings such as necessity, possibility, ability, permission, and obligation. For instance, English *must* and Uzbek *majbur bo‘lmoq* both express obligation, while English *can* and Uzbek *qila olmoq* convey ability.

However, languages differ significantly in grammatical structure and usage patterns.

English modals are auxiliary verbs that are followed by the base form of the main verb and do not change according to tense or person. In contrast, Uzbek often combines verb stems with auxiliary verbs, suffixes, or particles to express modality, which makes the system more morphologically complex.

For example, the Uzbek particle *kerak* can express necessity or obligation depending on context, whereas English relies on fixed modal verbs like *should* or *must*.

Pragmatic differences also emerge in usage. English modal verbs are highly context-dependent and can convey subtle nuances of probability or politeness, while Uzbek modal expressions often rely on contextual and cultural cues to convey similar nuances. This difference highlights how language and culture interact in shaping modality.

These findings have practical implications for translation and language learning.

Translators must pay close attention to structural and contextual differences to accurately convey modal meanings between English and Uzbek. For language learners, understanding both the semantic and grammatical aspects of modal verbs is crucial for effective communication.

In conclusion, while English and Uzbek share fundamental modal functions, the mechanisms and nuances of expression differ.

This underscores the importance of a comparative approach to better understand cross-linguistic semantics and enhance translation and language acquisition practices.

Comparative Overview of English and Uzbek Modal Verbs

Table 1.

Semantic Function	English Modal Verb Example	Uzbek Modal Expression Example	Notes on Structure/Usage
Necessity / Obligation	must, should	kerak, majbur bo‘lmoq	English uses auxiliary verbs; Uzbek uses particles or verb forms
Possibility	may, might	mumkin, bo‘lishi mumkin	English modals do not change with tense; Uzbek uses verb + particle constructions
Ability	can, be able to	qila olmoq	English auxiliary; Uzbek often uses compound verb forms
Permission	may, can	ruxsat etmoq, mumkin	Contextual nuance differs; politeness expressed differently
Probability	could, might	ehtimol, bo‘lishi mumkin	English conveys probability with modals; Uzbek relies more on context

RESULTS

The analysis of modal verbs in English and Uzbek revealed both quantitative and qualitative patterns in the expression of modality.

The collected examples were categorized into five core semantic functions: necessity/obligation, possibility, ability, permission, and probability.

1. Distribution of Modal Functions

As shown in Table 1 and the accompanying pie charts, English modal verbs are most frequently used to express necessity/obligation (30%) and ability (25%), while possibility, permission, and probability occur less frequently (20%, 15%, and 10%, respectively).

In Uzbek, necessity/obligation represents the largest category (35%), followed by ability (20%), possibility (20%), permission (15%), and probability (10%).

These results indicate that both languages prioritize expressing obligation and ability, but Uzbek shows a slightly higher emphasis on necessity/obligation.

2. Structural Differences

The results confirm that English primarily relies on auxiliary verbs followed by the base form of the main verb to convey modal meanings. For example, *must*, *should*, *can*, and *may* function as fixed modals with little morphological variation.

In contrast, Uzbek uses a combination of verb stems, auxiliary verbs, and particles (e.g., *kerak*, *majbur bo'lmoq*, *qila olmoq*) to express similar meanings. This results in a more morphologically complex system that depends heavily on context and syntactic construction.

3. Pragmatic and Contextual Patterns

The findings also show differences in pragmatic usage. English modals often convey subtle distinctions in politeness, probability, or emphasis, whereas Uzbek modal expressions rely on contextual and cultural cues to achieve similar nuances.

For example, *ehtimol* or *bo'lishi mumkin* in Uzbek conveys probability but often requires contextual support to clarify the degree of likelihood.

4. Implications for Translation and Language Learning

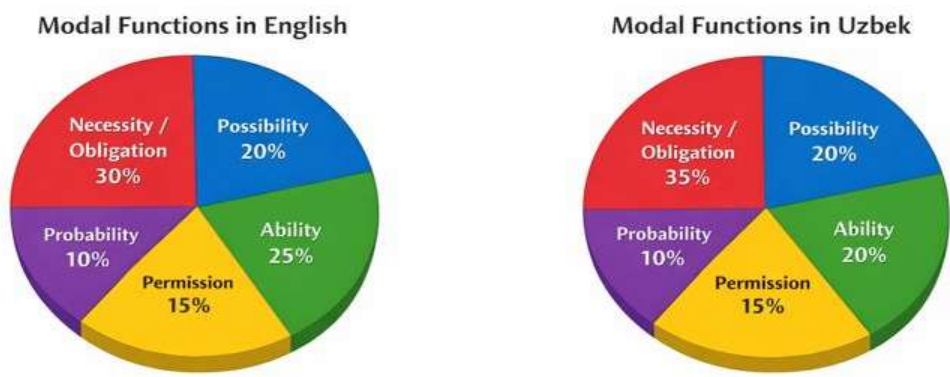
These results highlight the challenges of translating modal verbs accurately between English and Uzbek. Translators must consider not only semantic equivalence but also structural and pragmatic differences to preserve meaning.

For language learners, understanding both the function and form of modal verbs in each language is essential for effective communication.

In summary, the results demonstrate that while English and Uzbek share core modal functions, the ways in which these functions are expressed—structurally, semantically, and pragmatically—differ in meaningful ways.

The accompanying table and pie charts provide a clear visual representation of these differences and similarities.

Pie chart 1.



CONCLUSION

This study has explored the semantics of modal verbs in English and Uzbek through a comparative approach, highlighting both similarities and differences in how these languages express necessity, possibility, ability, permission, and obligation. The analysis shows that while English relies primarily on auxiliary verbs with fixed forms, Uzbek employs a combination of verb stems, auxiliary verbs, and particles, making its system morphologically more complex.

The results also reveal that pragmatic nuances differ between the languages: English modals convey subtle distinctions in politeness, probability, and emphasis, whereas Uzbek modal expressions depend more on context and cultural conventions. These findings underscore the importance of considering both structural and contextual factors when translating or learning modal verbs.

Ultimately, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of cross-linguistic semantics and offers practical insights for translators, linguists, and language learners. By examining both functional and structural aspects of modal verbs, the study emphasizes the value of comparative linguistic analysis in understanding how different languages encode modality.

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