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Problems in Translating the Modal Auxiliaries

'Can' and *'May'* from English into Arabic

The Case of Third Year LMD Students

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for a Master Degree in Applied Language Studies.

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Dedications

This work is dedicated:

In memory of lovely blessing Khouloud who will live forever in our hearts.

To My loving parents whom I will never be able to give back their love, care, mercy and compassion.

To My kind-hearted sisters; Chafika, Sabrina, Naziha, Nedjwa, Lamia, and to their husbands; Abd Almadjid, Musbah, Abd Alhalim, Abd Assalam and Chawki.

To All my brothers, Kamel, Djalel and Nassim.

To my dearest little beautiful sister Iman.

To All my funny gorgeous nephews; Soussan, Zachariah, Ayoub, Malak, Kossi, Audi, Louai, Hadil, Ferial, Hanine, Ikram, Roumissa, Yahiya, Adam, Ala'a, Wissale and Mohamed.

To my best friend Ikram and her grandparents Baira Ataher and Baira Aisha.

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To all the people who know me.

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Abstract

The present dissertation aims to shed light on the problems the modality system implies in translation. It is an attempt to check the problems encountered by 3rd year students when translating the modal auxiliaries '*can*' and '*may*'. The intention is to determine the source of the deviant translations and to figure out the different Arabic correspondences to be applied in translation.

A test was constructed to examine the hypothesis of this study and to elicit samples of the students' translations. Through the observation and analysis of the students' renditions, it was possible to identify the chief problems modals imply in translation, and the various lexical structures used in the translation of the previous two mentioned modal auxiliaries into Arabic.

The attained results reveal that the students do not encounter problems in differentiating between the modals; yet, they face problems in distinguishing between the shades of meanings that are associated with each modal auxiliary, and therefore the students mistranslate.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Imp: Imperative

Indi: Indicative

M: Modifier

MSA: Modern Standard Arabic

SC: Source Culture

SL: Source Language

ST: Source Text

Sub: Subject

Subj: Subjunctive

TL: Target Language

TT: Target Text

Vs: Versus

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General Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Translating grammatical elements seem to be an easy task because it is believed that it is no more than finding their equivalent in the target language .However; this is not the case since there are many problems which arise at the grammatical level. Amongst these, one essential issue is to find the exact equivalents in Arabic for English modals, in particular the two modal auxiliaries *'can'* and *'may'*. This is because the distinction between the different shades of meanings attached to the two modals in translation is of great importance which the students ignore or are not aware of.

Aims of the Study

The present study aims at investigating the ability of 3rd year LMD students of English to translate the modal auxiliaries *'can'* and *'may'* appropriately through:

- Identifying, describing and analysing the students' different translations.

- Pointing out the different Arabic equivalents used in the participants translations.

- Suggesting appropriate solutions for the problems students encounter in translating the modal auxiliaries *'Can'* and *'May'*.

The main objective of this research is to establish the importance of translating English modals by their exact equivalent in Arabic to preserve the target meaning. The study also aims at increasing the students' distinction between different meanings of modals.

Research Questions

This piece of research aims at addressing the following questions:

- What are the different problems students encounter when translating English modals into Arabic? And why?

- What are the Arabic correspondences used by 3rd year LMD students to translate the modal auxiliaries *'can'* and *'may'* from English into Arabic?

- What are the appropriate equivalents to be used in translation?

Hypothesis

We hypothesize that if students can distinguish between English and Arabic as far as modals are concerned, they will arrive at a near-translation.

Participants

The sample of the study consists of 20 third year LMD students of English reading for BA degree in Applied Language Studies at Mentouri University. The choice of this sample population has been motivated by the fact that they are supposed to have acquired the necessary basic knowledge regarding the English modality system and translation.

Research Tools

In order to test the research hypothesis and to obtain information that serves the objective of this study, an English test to be translated into Arabic, will be delivered to 3rd year students in the English Department at Constantine University. The data will be analysed quantitatively and qualitatively to uncover the students' problems in translating the modal auxiliaries *'can'* and *'may'*.

The Structure of the Study

The present research is basically divided into two main parts: a descriptive part which includes a chapter about the review of the related literature and an empirical part which includes a chapter about the data analysis.

Chapter one is devoted to the literature review and is divided into two parts; part one includes a synthesised review about translation; and part two relates translation with modals.

Chapter two is devoted to the analysis of data generated by a translation test which consists of a text to be translated by 3rd year LMD students in the English department Constantine University, taking into consideration their awareness concerning translation, and its problems. This test will be analysed to determine the different problems encountered by students when translating the modal auxiliaries *'can'* and *'may'* and try to find a solution to overcome the difficulties involved in the process of translation.

Chapter One: Theoretical Part

Part One: Translation

Introduction

Recent linguistic studies have elaborated various theories about translation which has become a major interest of scholars and linguists around the world since it is one way of bringing the world together. Therefore, in this part an attempt to define translation and its different types namely; free and literal translation is made. This will be followed by a review of some outstanding theories of translation. Finally, it will present some common grammatical and stylistic translation problems concerning Arabic and English.

1.1. Definition of Translation

Modern linguists have provided various definitions for translation. Amongst these, Levy's definition (1976) is a prominent one. He states that "translation is not a monistic composition, but an interpenetration and conglomerate of two structures. On the one hand, there are the semantic content and the formal contour of the original, on the other hand the entire system of aesthetic features bound up with the language and translation" (cited in Bassnett, 2002: 16).

Levy (1976) means that translation is an overlap of two essential elements; the first one consists of the meaning and the form of the original text, and the second one represents the stylistic features which are related to the language in which the text is translated. This means that the translation of the original text should embrace meaning, form and style.

Moreover, Roger (1993:5) states: " traduire c'est énoncer dans un autre langage (ou langue cible) ce qui été énoncé dans un autre langue source, en préservant les équivalences sémantiques et stylistiques." i.e., translation is the expression in another language (or target language) of what has been expressed in another source language preserving semantic and stylistic equivalence. So, translation consists of rendering a message from one language

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which is the source language to another equivalent message in another language which is the target language. This transference of message, however, should preserve both meaning and style.

Roger's definition entails the notion of equivalence which was first introduced by Nida (1965) when he describes translation as the process in which the translator reproduces in the target language the closest natural equivalent of the source message in terms of both meaning and style.

In contrast to these definitions which share the notion of equivalence taking into consideration meaning and style, Bassnett (2000) assumes that "in translation, there is a substitution of the target language (TL) meanings for source language (SL) meanings". So, she limits the notion of translation to the replacement of meanings from the TL to SL and ignores style and form.

In a nutshell, translation is the process of communicating a message from one language into another; it is the process of transmitting meanings from one language a source language (SL) to a target language (TL).

1.2. Types and Theories of Translation (Theories of Equivalence)

Linguists have elaborated many theories concerning translation and the notion of equivalence. The following are instances of some of these theories.

1.2.1. Types of Translation

During the process of translation translators always seek the best way to employ. They have to choose between two main types of translation namely, literal and free translation. Discussions among linguists concerning literal and free translation have resulted in a number of labels to refer to these types. For instance, Newmark's distinction for semantic (literal) and communicative translation (free), also Catford's rank-bound (literal) and bound (free), and others such as domestication and foreignization.

According to Yiefeng and Lei, literal translation is "word- for- word rendition of the original text so as to retain its linguistic features" (2008: 98). They mean that within this type of translation, the translator should keep the original message form and structure; moreover the aim is to be faithful to the original text. However, many linguists are in disfavour of literal type, Bassnett argues that "literal translation where the emphasis distorts the sense and syntax of the original" (2002: 87) that is to say that literal translation distorts the meaning and the structure of the source text (ST).

Free translation is defined as "the sense for sense rendition of the spirit of the original text by reproducing the sameness of impression and reaction caused by the original text in translation" (Ibid: 98). So, free translation aims at rendering the original message adequately regardless of the form, style and structure. Moreover, it aims at preserving or producing the same impact upon the target audience. Many linguists nowadays are in favour of free translation. They argue that allowing for a degree of freedom may help to transmit the message adequately.

To conclude, the choice of one type or another is determined by the translator, and the genre of the text s/he is attempting to render in the target language.

This summary of theories was adopted from Leonardi's (2000)

1.2.2. Theories of Translation:

1.2.2.1. Equivalence-Oriented Approach

This procedure is introduced by Viney and Darblent (1995) as the one which 'replicates the same situation as in the original, whilst using completely different wording'. The focal point which is targeted by this procedure is the situation in which the ST exists, or the context in which it occurs. They presuppose that the need to look for equivalence emerges from the situation itself. In this sense, both Viney and Darblent state that "the need for creating equivalence arises from the situation, and it is in the situation of the (SL)

text that translators have to look for solution" (Ibid). Eventually, the translators will attempt to preserve the situation impact, i.e., the TL text effect on the reader should remain the same as that of SL text. However, the use of equivalent idioms and collocations that exist in glossaries and dictionaries, Viney and Darblent state, is not exhaustive in their translation. They state that "even if the semantic equivalent of an expression in the SL text is quoted in a dictionary or glossary it is not enough, and it does not guarantee a successful translation" (Ibid), that is the existence of an equivalent expression in a dictionary or glossary does not guarantee that it will suit the situation or the context of the SL expression.

1.2.2.2. Semiotic Approach to Equivalence

Jackobson proposes that "translation involves two equivalent messages in two different codes" (1959: 236) that is translation consists of two equivalent messages into two different languages, or two different varieties of the same language, or between two sign systems. Thus, Jackobson divides translation into three types; the first type is intralingual translation which is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs in the same language, i.e., translation within the same language. The second type is called interlingual translation which is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language i.e, between two different languages. The third type is intersemiotic translation which refers to the interpretation of verbal signs by means of nonverbal sign systems).

Furthermore, Jackobson argues that "whenever there is deficiency, terminology may be qualified and amplified by loanwords or loan translations, neologisms or semantic shifts, and finally, by circumlocutions" (Ibid). This means that whenever there is a lack of equivalence in the TL, it is up to the translator to use the strategy that enables him to transmit the SL message to an equivalent message in the target culture, so translation remains possible

1.2.2.3. Formal Correspondence and Dynamic Equivalence

Nida (1982) distinguishes two types of correspondence namely, formal and dynamic equivalence. Formal correspondence "focuses attention on the message itself in both form and content" (Venuti, 2004: 129).Therefore, formal equivalence is a translation in which the features of the source text are preserved in the target text, i.e., the message in the receptor should match as closely as possible the different elements in the source language. Concerning dynamic equivalence Nida states that "a translation of dynamic equivalence aims at complete naturalness of expression and tries to relate the receptor modes of behaviour relevant within the context of his own culture". That is, in such a translation the emphasis is directed to the receptor response rather than the source message. So, dynamic rather formal is based upon the principle of "equivalent effect" (Rieu, Phillips, 1954: 150). To conclude, the translator's main concern is to establish a dynamic relationship between the receptor and the message as the one which occurs in the source language.

Formal correspondence and dynamic equivalence are usually associated with free and literal translation; yet, professional translators are in favour of dynamic equivalence since it preserves the original meaning and effect.

1.2.2.4. Introduction of Translation Shifts

Introducing shifts of translation ultimately brings up Catford's distinction of different types of translation as follows:

- Full translation versus partial translation distinction is relevant to the 'extent of the SL text which is submitted to the translation process' (Catford,1965:21)

- Rank-bound translation vs. unbound translation according to which grammatical rank translation equivalence is established.

- Total translation vs. restricted translation: this distinction associates the levels of languages which a translation involves.

The second type of Catford's distinction differentiates between formal correspondence and textual equivalence. Formal correspondence is referred to as "any TL category which may be said to occupy, as near as possible, the same place in the SL" (Catford, 1965: 32). That is to say that any category in one language is a formal equivalent of another category in another language.

Example: English: he is waiting **at** the bus station

Arabic: انه ينتظر **في** محطة القطار

Moreover, Catford adds that textual equivalence which is introduced as "that portion of a TL text which is changed only when a given portion of the SL is changed" (1965: 28), is the basis of formal correspondence, since a grammatical unit in one language will represent the formal equivalent of another grammatical item in another language. That is to say, any change made in a given item of the SL leads eventually to a change in the TL text.

Catford defines translation shifts as "departures from formal correspondence in the process of going from the SL to the TL" (Ibid: 73). He also points out that there are two main types of translation shifts namely, level shifts and category shifts.

1. Level shifts: refer to TL equivalent of SL item at one linguistic level (e.g. grammar) exists at different levels (e.g. lexis).

2. Category shifts: refer to unbound and rank- bound translation, they are established at ranks lower than sentence. Category shifts consists of four types as follows:

a)   *Structure shifts*: entail a grammatical alteration between the structure of the ST and the TT

Example: English: <u>Ali</u> <u>loves</u>   <u>strawberries</u>.

Arabic: <u>الفراولة</u>   <u>علي</u>   <u>يحب</u>

b)   *Class shifts*: entail the translation of a SL item specific to a particular grammatical class (e.g. verb) into a TL item which belongs to a different grammatical class (e.g. noun).

Example: English: **A <u>medical</u> student (Adj)**   French: Un etudiant **<u>en medcine</u> (M)** (ibid: 79).

In this example, the adjective is substituted by a modifier

c)   *Unit shifts*: entail a change in rank. That is a departure from formal correspondence in which the translation of unit at one rank in the SL is a unit at different rank in the TL.

d)   *Intra- system shifts*: "occur when the SL and TL possess systems which approximately correspond formally as their constitution, but when translation involves selection of non-corresponding term in the (TL) system." (Catford, 1965: 80). For instance, in translation SL singular becomes a TL plural (News in English becomes les nouvelles in French). Nevertheless English and French are supposed to possess formally corresponding systems of number.

1.2.2.5. Overt and Covert Approach to translation

House (1977), in support of semantic and pragmatic equivalence, introduces the notion of covert and overt translation. She claims that the ST function should correspond to that of the TT, and if the source text situational features vary from those of the target text, they will be considered as not 'functionally equivalent'. This determines the quality of translation as not being of a high one. In overt translation the ST is not directed towards the (target culture) TC addressees. House states that ST "is not specifically addressed to the TC audience" (1977: 195). However, covert translation aims at producing a target text which is relevant to the target audience. She asserts that covert translation is "the production of a text which is functionally equivalent to the ST" (Ibid: 23)

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1.2.2.6. Baker's Approach to Translation Equivalence

Baker (2001) investigates the notion of equivalence at different levels namely; equivalence at word level, and equivalence above word level. She claims that the translators should initiate at the word level and the word is the first constituent to be taken into consideration, then they may move to deal with word occurring into different combinations. Baker also introduces innovative notions of equivalence for instance, grammatical equivalence, textual equivalence and pragmatic equivalence. In the grammatical equivalence, further she persists that the grammatical multiplicity across languages implies real problems in translation, she claims that different grammatical devices in the SL and the TL may cause real alterations in the message ST expresses, amongst these devices she points out person, gender, number, tense, aspect, and voice. Textual equivalence refers to the SL text and a TL text in terms of information and cohesion. Pragmatic equivalence refers to the implicatures; these implicatures are not of what is stated overtly but of what is unstated or implicit.

1.3. Translation Problems

Translation problems are those difficulties which the translator faces during the process of translation and result in rethinking and may be using the dictionary to check words, meanings, and usage.

Ghazala suggests that, translation problems can be due to sound, lexis (word), grammar, and style (1995:18). Therefore, he classifies them into four types namely, lexical, phonological, grammatical and stylistic.

Since this research is concerned with the translation of a grammatical category (modals) one will only review grammatical and stylistic problems.

1.3.1. Grammatical Problems

Grammatical problems emerge in translation because there are quite a lot of grammatical constructions which are unsuccessfully understood or represented. For instance, the tense system in English appears to be poorly understood by Arabic second language learners , since the Arabic tense system constitute of only two simple tenses namely, past and present. The Arabic tense system seems to be simpler in comparison to that of English which entails a variety of tense categories. Thus, grammar differences between languages cause serious problems in translation, because grammatical rules and categories vary from one language to another. This creates the problem of finding direct equivalents in the TL. Grammar differences between languages are due to the different families they descend from; for example, both Arabic and English belong to different families. Arabic is of Semitic origin while English is of Germanic family.

1.3.2. Stylistic Problems

Style also causes problems in translation because it is an important part of meaning. For instance, formality and non formality may affect the meaning and also words and grammar. Joos (1962) presents a formality scale for English as follows:

1- Frozen formal   (فصيح جدا\متصلب\اقح)

2- Formal   (فصيح)

3- Informal   (غير فصيح\شبه فصيح)

4- Colloquial   (عامي)

5- Vulgar or slang   (سوقي)

(Cited in Ghazala, 1995:203)

To illustrate this scale, Ghazala presents following examples:

1- "Be seated"   (عليك بالجلوس)

2- "Have a seat"   (تفضل بالجلوس)

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3-"Sit down, please"   (اجلس لو سمحت)

4-"Feel at home"   (خذ راحتك\استرح\ارتاح)

5-"Sit bloody, down   (أنقبر\أنضرب على قلبك)

<div align="right">(op.cit: 203)</div>

This scale and examples show the differences of the degree of formality and informality between the SL and the TL that may cause problems in translation.

Conclusion

Translation is not as easy as it appears to be. Moreover, it does not mean word for word translation between any two languages. It is not a mechanical process where each word is translated to the target language; many factors are to be taken into consideration to get to the exact or appropriate correspondence in the target language.

Part Two: Translation and Modals

Introduction

This part presents the grammatical equivalence as explained by Baker (2001) dealing with its five main categories which are, number, gender, person, tense, aspect and voice. Then, it presents modality in English and tries to explain Arabic equivalent of modal auxiliaries. Finally, it includes some suggestions concerning the translation of English modals into Arabic.

The grammatical system varies from one language to another; therefore, it implies real challenges to translators since it is associated with important problems of translation because each language expresses the grammatical aspects differently. Hence, this part relates both grammar and translation.

2.1. Grammatical Equivalence

According to Baker (2001) grammatical categories are expressed differently from one language to another. However, notions such as gender and number are universal. Furthermore, the role of the language is to express the information and the role of the grammatical system is to clarify notions. In addition, she compares the grammatical categories with lexical categories, and then suggests that as far as translation is concerned, the most important difference between them is; the grammatical choices are largely obligatory while lexical choices are largely optional. This means that grammatical categories rules out the choices made by a translator.

Ivir (1981:56) states that "languages are differently equipped to express different real-world relations, and they certainly do not express all aspects of meaning with equal ease" (Cited in Baker, 2001: 85). This means that notional categories which are expressed in all languages are difficult to be found. Therefore languages differ in expressing grammatical aspects. Moreover, the difference in the grammatical structure between the SL

and TL changes slightly the information content of the message. For instance, the translator may add or omit some information in order to covey the same meaning of the target language category. Yet, translators would find it difficult to convey the same meaning of the original version when the TL lacks an equivalent grammatical device as that of the SL. Baker (2001) states that the grammatical categories which cause problems in translation are as follows: number, gender, person, tense and aspect, and voice.

First, the notion of number is probably universal since it is expressed in the lexical structures of all languages; however, grammatical categories of number do not exist in all languages and, still, are not expressed in an identical way in languages in which they exist. For example, the English distinction between the singular (one) and plural (more than one) is made by adding the suffix *"s"* or *"en"* or by changing the word form as shown in words like; *translator/translators, child/children, mouse/mice, man/men*. Yet, the grammatical category in some languages is expressed lexically or completely ignored. The Arabic distinction between one, two, and more than two shows a different notion of number for instance, طاولة refers to one table, طاولتان means only two tables, and more than two tables indicates the plural طاولات. This clarifies that the dual category is of great importance in Arabic, whereas, in English it has no significance.

Second, the grammatical category of gender distinguishes between masculine and feminine nouns and pronouns with reference to both animate and inanimate objects. In Arabic, determiners, adjectives and adverbs agree with both number and gender .However, in English gender appears in some semantic areas, for example, the use of different nouns to refer to professions such as (*manager / manageress*) also to refer to the same species *(ewe/ ram)*.In addition, the distinction of gender in English includes some pronouns such as, third person singular ,yet, third person plural includes one form for both feminine and masculine (*they*),by contrast, in Arabic the pronoun 'you' has different forms according to

the speaker whether male or female. English refers to the unmarked masculine using the pronouns '*she*' and '*he*' and '*his*' and '*her*'. Because of the Arabic distinction for gender, translators may face a lot of difficulties to express the same message in the target audience.

Third, the grammatical category of person is associated with the participants' roles which are identified through pronouns. English distinguishes between the first person singular and its plural, i.e., I (singular) and we (plural). It also distinguishes the third person which identifies person "*he vs. she*" from that which identifies things "*it*". Some languages consider a degree of formality and politeness in the use of pronouns, for instance, the French "tu" and "vous" which indicate the degree of formality and intimacy between the addressee and the addresser, in contrast the English *"you"* is used for both. Hence, translators should take into consideration the degree of intimacy that exists between participants otherwise their translations will result in loss of information (Baker, 2001).

Fourth, tense and aspect in English must be taken into consideration by translators because they express aspect differences and time relations. Tense locates an event in time (past, present, future), and aspect takes account of the temporal distribution of an event (complete or not complete, momentary or continuous). Languages differ in the way of expressing tense and aspect; therefore, translators must take into consideration each language tense system.

Fifth, the grammatical category voice is related to the verb subject relationships. In the active voice, the subject performs the action while in the passive voice the agent may not be specified according to the context. The category of voice and its use vary from one language to another. Baker suggests that the crucial function of voice in English is objectivity by not specifying the agent; yet, it is not the target function of passive in other languages which have this category (2001:103).

Mood, modality, direct and indirect speech are other grammatical categories which pose difficulties for translators. Baker argues that it is useful to compare such categories and their meaning within the source and target languages.

Word order is another essential aspect in grammatical equivalence. In English word order is fixed whereas in Arabic it is not the case, this may imply problems to translation.

2.2. Modality in English

Aarts states that modality is "a semantic concept concerned with notions such as: necessity, doubt, permission, intention, etc..." (2001:291). Moreover, modality is viewed as a semantic category that covers two main areas of meaning. The first area is concerned with the truth of the utterance, and the second is concerned with factors affecting the 'likelihood of actualization of situations'. In English, modality is expressed through modal auxiliaries such as (*will, can, may, must*). Most linguists agree that the most important distinctions of modality are; epistemic and non-epistemic modality.

2.2.1. Epistemic Modality

The main concern of this type of modality is propositions rather than events, i.e., it has to do with the truth of the utterance, more precisely "Epistemic modality is a type of grammatical marking that reflects the speaker's knowledge or opinion concerning the likelihood, possibility or certainty of the proposition expressed by a sentence"(Evans, Green , 2006: 387).

On this ground, epistemic modality is a grammatical identification which expresses the speakers' view or judgment regarding the truth of the utterance. Now consider the following examples:

a. Lily can cook a mean risotto (the speaker is confident or sure about lily's capabilities) (Ibid:625)

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b. I don't have her phone number, but Ikram may have it(the speaker is hesitant or not sure about what s/he says)

From these two examples, one can observe that this type of modality indicates the speaker's confidence or lack of confidence in the truth of the proposition s/he expressed.

2.2.2. Non-Epistemic Modality

Non-epistemic modality is also called "*root modality*". This type is concerned with the speakers' attitude towards the actualization of a situation and factors affecting it {actualization or non- actualization of the situation} (Declerk, 2006:39). He means that this type of modality is related to the conditions which affect the completion of the proposition in reality and the speakers' attitude towards it.

Examples (Ibid: 39):

a. You must pay me back now (the speaker insists on the pay back as an obligation)

b. I won't help you; if you don't pay me (paying back the speaker affects the actualization of the situation).

Non-epistemic modality is divided into two types:

2.2.2.1. Deontic Modality

Evans and Green **(2006: 625)** pointed out that: "Deontic modality expresses the speaker's judgement relating to obligation (moral or social), permission or prohibition". This means that Deontic modality is related to the action of the speaker in giving permission or laying an obligation.

Example: a. You can go now. (Permission)

b. Lily must go away from all of this. (Obligation)

2.2.2.2. Dynamic Modality

This type of non-epistemic modality refers to the subject ability in indicating an action. Nagle and Sanders (2003:113) state that dynamic modality expresses ability or volition, i.e., dynamic ability demonstrates the subject capacity or will.

Example: I can get that information at the library   (Nagel, Sanders, 2003:114)

2.2.3 Modals: CAN, and MAY

According to Radford(2004: 236), "A modal auxiliary is an auxiliary which expresses modality", i.e., notions such as possibility, futurity or necessity That is to say that the basic function of a modal auxiliary is to indicate modality which expresses concepts such as; possibility, necessity...etc. Moreover, he adds that the set of modal auxiliaries found in English is usually assumed to include will/would, can/could, shall/should, may/might...etc

2.2.3.1. Can

The modal auxiliary "can" has three primary meanings; possibility, ability and permission. Consider the following examples:

a. Can you really dance until midnight? (Aarts,2001:36)

b. Malak can speak French.(Ibid: 40)

c. You can leave now. (Evans ,Green,2006: 547)

In example (a), we can paraphrase the meaning of *can* using "is it possible" i.e. can shows the possibility meaning. However, in example (b), can shows the ability meaning and it can be paraphrased as "is able to", and in example (c), the meaning of can may be paraphrased with "be permitted to".

Other meaning can also be associated with can.

• Example: You can't be hungry; you've just had a big lunch.

The meaning of "*can't*" can be paraphrased with 'it is not possible'

2.2.3.2. May

The modal auxiliary *"may"* is associated with two main meanings: the root (primary) meaning and epistemic or secondary meaning. The root meaning of "*may*" is related to permission and possibility. But the epistemic meaning of "*may*" expresses the speaker's lack of confidence in the truth of the proposition. Consider the following example:

a. You may now kiss the bride.(permission)   (Evans ,Green,2006:189)

Coates (1980) noted that the root possibility meaning of "*may*" is rare in English.

b. Soussan may be too sad to dance .(epistemic meaning)   (op.cit:631)

We should mention, here, that both *'can'* and *'may'* express permission and request. However, *may* shows a degree of hesitancy and politeness and *can* expresses informality.

Example:

- You may come in

- You can come in   (El-Hassan,1990:159)

Notice that the modal auxiliary 'may' sounds more respectful and polite than the modal auxiliary can. The modal 'may' is used also to express wishes and hopes.

Example: May God protect you

The following table indicates different meanings of the modals *'can'* and *'may'* as classified by Byrd and Benson(1995) who suggest that both modals entail the two different levels of modality namely, epistemic and root.

Modals as a List (adapted from Byrd/Benson)

Modal	Traditional Definitions	Present/Future	Past	Level
can	Ability	I can juggle.	I could juggle when I was young.	Epistemic
can	Request	Can I look at your costumes?		Root
can	Permission	You can look at my costumes.		Root
can	Possibility	You can pet the lion if you want.		Root
can	Past ability		I could juggle when I was young.	Epistemic
could	Request	Could you hold this for me?		Root
could	Possibility	I could be up there right now.	I could have been juggling now.	Epistemic
may	Request(formal)	May I pet the lion?		Root
may	Permission(formal)	Yes, you may pet the lion.		Root
may	Probability	The trapeze artist may be tired after the show.	The acrobats may have performed already.	Epistemic

Table 1: Different Meanings of Modals *'may'* and *'can'*.

2.3. Translating Modals

2.3.1 Modality in Arabic

Al-Mutawa and Kailani point out that: "No-comparative study between modality in English and Modern standard Arabic has, to our knowledge, been conducted. A few studies have been carried out on one Arabic dialect or another." (1991: 169). This shows that a few number of comparative studies have explained the different linguistic ways in which modality is expressed in Arabic. Moreover, they add that "modality both in form and meaning is a very intricate system....Moreover, the modal system in English is unique, or at

least appears as such when compared with a Semitic language like Arabic." (Ibid). That is to say; the English modal system is a very complicated system, particularly when attempting to find its equivalence in a language of a completely different origin such as Arabic. Furthermore, Al- Mutawa and Kailani state; "Although most English modals find counterparts in Arabic, these do not constitute a well-defined and a clear-cut special group as is the case in English" (1991:169). They mean that most modal auxiliaries of English have their equivalents in Arabic, in spite of that; they do not form an Arabic modality system. In Arabic, modal auxiliaries are translated into ordinary verbs or prepositions followed by the subjunctive (present) tense (Swan and Smith, 1987). For instance, *may* is translated as يمكن أن or بإمكانك أن, *must* is translated as يجب آن or من اللازم ان *can* is translated يقدر ان or يستطيع ان and so on.

El –Hassan states: "unlike English, Arabic does not seem to have a grammaticalized modality.... hence a variety of lexical items are used to express the meaning of a single modal auxiliary" (2009: 152) .That is, to acknowledge that Arabic does not comprise a modal system within its grammar, yet, modality is expressed through a wide range of lexical expressions. Moreover, a single modal can be translated with different lexical items. For example: 'may' can be rendered as ربما يحتمل ان يمكن ان ......etc.

So, modality in Arabic exists, yet the way in which it is expressed differs from that of other languages particularly English.

2.3.2. Problems of Translating Modals

According to El-Hassan, translating English modal implies two main problems. The first one is the students' comprehension of the right meaning of the modal and the second is to find the right equivalence that fits the meaning of the modal auxiliary. He states: "non-native learners of English including university students majoring in English take the

modal auxiliary meaning for granted" (2009: 150) El-Hassan means that ESL students employ the primary meaning of a modal auxiliary whenever they come across with, and ignore whatever cultural or social meaning it may be associated with. In a test concerning the meaning of *must* in the following sentence ,'He must see her', most students answer that '*must*' means the obligation to see her, El-Hassan observed that they were confused to know that '*must*' indicates a conclusion.

Byrd (1995) claims that "the problem lies neither in the surface positioning of modals nor in their wide range of meaning, but is associating the right modal with the right meaning." He suggests that despite the fact that each modal has more than one meaning this may not form a problem, yet the real problem is to relate the right modal with the right meaning.

Ghazala (1995) distinguishes seven problems students may face when translating modals into Arabic as follows:

The first problem is that the modals *'will, would, shall'* are not considered as verbs in Arabic; they are used to mean the future particle (سوف/ س) which refers to the near and far future. Take the following examples.

               1. They will forgive us   سيسامحوننا (سوف)

               2. We shall delay the meeting سنؤخر الاجتماع (سوف) (Ghazala, 1995: 37)

The second problem is the literal translation of the modals into Arabic. For instance, students relate the modal auxiliaries *may*, *can*, and *mus*t' to " يمكن، ،يستطيع "يجب، respectively, however, Ghazala (Ibid:38) suggests that they should be translated into:

يجب ان.يستطيع ان يمكن ان

Examples:

1.we can walk   نستطيع ان نمشي

2.we may walk   يمكننا ان نمشي

3.we must walk   يجب(علينا) يلزمنا ان نمشي

The third problem is related to the special use of *'shall'* in the register of law, here, it is used to mean obligation not future as students might think.

Ghazala suggests that it should be translated into the equivalent meaning of modal auxiliary *'must'*.

Example: the defendant shall appear before court, now. يجب ان يمثل المتهم أمام المحكمة الآن

The fourth problem is the student's misunderstanding of *'should'* as the past form of *'shall'*. However, in English it is employed to refer to obligation; and it is translated into Arabic as يجب ان/ علينا ان.

Example: you should say everything   عليك، يجب/ان تقول كل شئ   (Ghazala, 1995:39)

The fifth problem is that the students do not distinguish between the meanings of the following two constructions, *'must have'* and *'should have'*. They consider both as having the same meaning. In fact, these constructions are opposites. Ghazala explains the former as an action which took place and the latter as an action which did not take place.

Example: 1. They must have finished work   لا بد أنهم انهوا العمل

                   2.They should have finished work   كان عليهم ان ينهوا العمل

(Ghazala)

The sixth problem is that the meaning of 'could', 'would', and 'might' are not clear-cut. Students understand them as the past tense of can, will and may. To be translated into Arabic, Ghazala suggests that they should be translated having the sense of the modal auxiliary *'may'*.

Example:

1. She could blame herself

2. She would blame herself   (قد) يمكن ان تلوم نفسها

3. She might blame herself

The seventh problem concerns the use of the modal auxiliaries '*will*' and '*can*' to express a formal request in which they can be used to substitute the modal '*may*'. This may cause a problem for students since they relate the meaning of the modal '*will*' to future and 'can' to possibility not permission.

Example: 1. Can you open the window?   هل لك ان تفتح النافذة

               2. Will you open the window?   ا فتح النافذة ان أمكن من فضلك

               3. May you open the window?

So, Ghazala also in his distinction of the previous mentioned problems point out that, the misunderstanding of the modal auxiliaries meanings and conditions of use may mislead students' investigation for the appropriate equivalents of the modal auxiliary in the target language.

It seems that a number of authorities in the field agree among that the main problem of translating modals from English into Arabic is relevant to their meanings, and how they are interpreted by students or learners.

2.3.3. Translation of 'can' and 'may' into Modern Standard Arabic (MSA)

Arabic does not grammaticalize modality but expresses it using a variety of lexical items (El- Hassan, 2009:152), therefore the following are suggestions concerning plausible translations for the modal auxiliary '*can*' and the modal '*may*'.

El-Hassan suggests that since *can* has semantic associations with physical ability elsewhere, it seems reasonable to translate it in Arabic by using بإمكان,سعيبو He adds that translating the modal '*can*' into these two expressions may include its original semantic

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features which are related to ability , however, the modal auxiliary *'can'* can be rendered into different equivalent lexical expressions. Notice the following example:

    1. Mark can carry those suitcases for you.

<div dir="rtl">

<u>يستطيع</u> مارك ان يحمل هده الحقائب عنك

<u>باستطاعة</u> مارك ان يحمل أو حمل هذه الحقائب عنك

<u>بوسع</u> مارك ان يحمل أو حمل هذه الحقائب عنك

<u>بإمكان</u> مارك ان يحمل أو حمل هذه الحقائب عنك

<u>يمكن</u> لمارك ان يحمل أو حمل هذه الحقائب عنك

</div>

The underlined items are suggested to be reasonable equivalents for the modal auxiliary *'can'*.

The   modal auxiliary '*may*' can also be translated in a number of probable corresponding lexical expressions, yet El-Hassan claims that "the Arabic ربما is probably the nearest equivalent of English may"(Ibid:135). He suggests that it is the most appropriate equivalent for the modal auxiliary *may*. Now consider the following renditions of the following example:

    1. The manager may be at home.

<div dir="rtl">

<u>يمكن</u> ان يكون المدير في البيت

<u>من الممكن</u> ان يكون المدير في البيت

<u>يحتمل ان</u> يكون المدير في أو ان المدير في البيت

<u>من المحتمل ان</u> يكون المدير أو ان المدير في البيت

<u>ربما</u> يكون المدير أو ان المدير في البيت

<u>قد</u> يكون المدير في البيت

</div>

(Al-Hassan, 2009: 152)

The above underlined items are said to be plausible correspondences for the modal *'may'*

Sometimes modals *'may'* and *'can'* are used to express the degree of formality of the context of the proposition; therefore, Al-Hassan suggests that when translated into Arabic one may consider this factor. Consider the following examples:

1. You may borrow the book again.   لك ان تستعير الكتاب ثانية

2. You can borrow the book again   بإمكانك ان تستعير الكتاب ثانية

   (op.cit:135)

Al-Hassan suggests لك as the appropriate translation to point out the degree of formality between participants.

Conclusion

In fact, modality in English is a crucial grammatical category that causes real implications for translators, particularly when the translation is carried out towards a completely different language such as Arabic which does not comprise such a grammatical category. However, the translation is never possible, because there are lexical expressions which may express the semantic meaning of the modal.

Chapter Two: Data Analysis

Introduction

The present study is designed to investigate students' ability to translate the modal auxiliaries *'can'* and *'may'* from English into Arabic. This will be checked through a test administered to 3rd year students in the department of English, Mentouri University Constantine.

This chapter presents empirical evidence to authenticate or refute the hypothesis that students' distinction of modals meanings helps them attain a near-translation. The ultimate end of this chapter is to acknowledge the different equivalents exploited by students to translate the modals *'can'* and *'may'*. This is accomplished through a quantitative/ qualitative analysis of the obtained results.

3.1. Description of the Test

In order to obtain the data on the student's translations of the modal auxiliaries *'can'* and *'may'* a highly explicit test is administered to twenty 3rd year students. The vocabulary of the constructed test is made straightforward in order to avoid any lexical complications and to focus only on grammar items. In addition, some useful vocabulary items are supplied to serve the previous mentioned purpose and also to diminish grammatical problems that might be caused by wrong lexical choices.

Sentences and dialogues of the administered test are adopted from 'Business English verbs by Evans (2000:48)'and 'Oxford guide to English' (Eastwood, 2000: 113). The use of such dialogues and sentences is of methodological assistance in this study. Firstly, their context is clearly determined which enables the students to interpret the utterances correctly, then translate according to these interpretations. Secondly, cultural situations are avoided as much as possible to direct students' productions to a clear-cut translation. Finally, they do not require an extensive period of time to be translated. This

test is not a formal examination, since official examinations create over-anxiety and make a room for memorization which affects the students' productions and performance.

The test involves two small dialogues which include the modal auxiliary *'can'*, three independent sentences and one simple dialogue which includes the modal *'may'*. It is believed that they allow students to produce as many modal equivalents as possible. This appears to make the students translations as genuine as possible.

3.2. Administration of the Test

The student were informed a day before the fixed date that they would perform a work relevant to the translation module. The test was administered, and the students were not limited by time. It lasted about one hour and a half. The following steps were followed. Firstly, the introductory note was read to the students, but they were not informed about the purpose of the test. Secondly, the test content was read to the students and the ambiguous vocabulary was explained. Thirdly, the papers were given to students and they were asked to hand them in whenever they finished.

Efforts were made to create a comforting mood different from that of official examinations. Subsequently, students appeared to be very stimulated to contribute.

3.3. Procedure of the Analysis

The analysis of students' productions follows the procedure of identifying, describing, and explaining the obtained translations in comparison with a model translation suggested by an expert. The model answer was taken as a basis against which the students' translations were evaluated. It is believed that all the produced translations reflect the authentic competence of the participants concerning the two intended modal auxiliaries. In the description phase, the comparison was made between the detected productions and their reasonable equivalents. The TL equivalents outlined in chapter one are considered as a reference. The translations produced were classified according to students'

interpretations of the meanings of the modals. Such a procedure resulted in a systematic and measured reporting of all the obtained translations. At the final stage, the classified productions are analysed to sort out the most appropriate ones. The following table will include the obtained results:

The Meanings of the Modal	Students' Translations	Number of Participants	Percentage of the Students Translations
The first meaning			
The second meaning			
The third meaning			
/	Total	∑N	∑%

Table 2: Students' Translations for Modal Auxiliaries

3.4. The Subjects

The participants in this study were twenty (20) 3rd year students at the Department of English, Applied Language Studies, Mentouri University, Constantine. They were chosen randomly to ensure the authenticity of the results. The choice of 3rd year students was due to their degree of awareness concerning grammar rules and translation because they have been studying grammar since their first year, and translation since their second year.

3.5. Analysis of the Results

The results are charted according to the meanings students associate to the modal auxiliary intended. A quantified description of the observed translations is displayed below:

Sentence One

Can I help you sir?

هل بوسعي مساعدتك سيدي؟ -

This sentence aims at investigating the students' interpretations of the modal *'can'* in requests. It attempts to look for the different translations produced and to distinguish the various meanings students associated to the modal in this context. Students' translations are charted in the table below:

The Meaning of the Modal *'can'*	Students' Translations	Number of participants		Percentage of the Students Translations	
Possibility	هل يمكنني مساعدتك سيدي؟	06	12	30%	60%
	هل بإمكاني مساعدتك سيدي؟	06		30%	
Ability	هل استطيع مساعدتك سيدي؟	04	08	20%	40%
	هل باستطاعتي مساعدتك سيدي؟	03		15%	
	هل بوسعي مساعدتك سيدي؟	01		5%	
Permission	/	/		/	
/	**Total**	**20**		**≈ 100%**	

Table3: Translating the Modal Auxiliary can in Questions

Translations of this request reveal that students' interpretations vary among two primary meanings of the modal 'can' namely; ability and possibility. Therefore, the produced translations differ according to these two meanings. Sixty percent (60%) of the participants' translations indicate the possibility meaning of the modal can via the lexical items يمكنني (30%), بإمكاني (30%). Forty percent (40%) of the translations express the ability meaning via three lexical item باستطاعتي (15%), استطيع (5%), and بوسعي (5%).

The translations given by the students show their awareness of the modal *'can'* primary meanings; however, despite of that it appears that the majority of students (12) (60%) made indication to the possibility meaning of the modal instead of its ability meaning. It appears that the ability meaning is the most appropriate one in this context, and

the lexical item بوسعي as suggested by El-Hassan (1990) could be a reasonable

correspondence to the modal '*can*' since it has semantic associations with physical ability

Sentence Two

Ah, yes we're promoting that very heavily this week, as you can see, we've got pictures

of it everywhere.

<div dir="rtl">

آه، اجل نحن نروج لذلك بقوة هذا الأسبوع كما ترى صورها في كل مكان.

</div>

This sentence explores whether the students translate the modal auxiliary *'can'*

through its literary meaning or pursue other methods according to the context. The

following table includes the identified translations:

The Meaning of Modal *'can'*	Students' Translations	Number of participants		Percentage of the Students Translations	
Omission of the modal	كما ترى	17		85%	
Possibility	كما بإمكانك رؤيتها	01	02	5%	10%
	كما يمكنك ان ترى	01		5%	
Ability	/	/		/	
Permission	/	/		/	
No answer	/	01		5%	
/	**Total**	**20**		**≈100%**	

Table4: Translating the Modal Auxiliary *'can'* in Comparison

From the results in the table above, one cannot detect the students' different

interpretations of the modal *'can'* because the majority of the participants (17) (85%)

omitted it in their translations. However, their exist translations which involve the

possibility meaning of the modal (بإمكانك, يمكنك) yet with a small percentage of (10%).

These results indicate that students' translations are based upon the context which

permits the omission of the modal auxiliary *can* since the meaning of the phrase 'as you

can see' can be expressed without the use of lexical reference to the modal *can*. So, the

students appear to be aware that the modal auxiliary in this sentence can be omitted, and

they follow omission rather than the literal translation for the modal. Ghazala (1995) assumes that students translate the modal *'can'* in its literal Arabic equivalent يستطيع, nevertheless, this is not the case in this sentence in which the vast majority of students succeed in rendering it appropriately.

Sentence Three

Can I see it?

ـ هل لي ان أراها؟

Here again the purpose is to seek for various students' interpretations of the modal primary meanings (possibility, ability, permission) which determines their choices for the Arabic associations. The following are the translations produced by students.

The meaning of modal *'can'*	Students' Translations	Number of Participants		Percentage of the Students Translations	
Possibility	هل يمكنني ان أراها؟	08	14	40%	70%
	هل بإمكاني رؤيتها؟	06		30%	
Ability	هل استطيع رؤيتها؟	04	06	20%	30%
	هل باستطاعتي رؤيتها؟	02		10%	
Permission	/	/		/	
/	Total	20		≈100%	

Table5: Translating the Modal Auxiliary *can* in Requests.

To start with, the table shows clearly that this request was translated with reference to the modal 'can' primary meanings of ability and possibility, mostly seventy(70%) percent applied (بإمكاني.يمكنني) which expresses possibility, and thirty (30%) percent utilized (استطيع.باستطاعتي) which indicate ability.

These results indicate that the majority of 'students relate the meaning of *'can'* in this formal request to possibility not permission' (Ghazala, 1995:41). They do not

acknowledge the fact that the modal auxiliary in this case can be paraphrased as *"permitted to"*. EL-Hassan (1990) and Ghazala (1995) suggest that when translating permission, the students may use the Arabic لك which may replicate the degree of formality that exists in English. However, it seems that the students are not aware of the permission meaning of the modal auxiliary in this request.

Sentence Four

A: Of course you can choose three different types and you can select anyone of four different sizes.

طبعا لك ان تختار ثلاث أنواع مختلفة و بإمكانك انتقاء أي واحدة من أربع أحجام مختلفة. –

This sentence employs the modal *'can'* twice and the objective is to see whether students' translations are identical in the two phrases or different. This sentence is divided into two parts as follows:

    a. Of course you can choose three different types.

    b. And you can select anyone of four different sizes.

Part (a) is translated by students as the table below shows:

The Meaning of the Modal *'can'*	Students' Translations	Number of Participants		Percentage of the Students Translations	
Possibility	طبعا يمكنك اختيار ثلاث أنواع مختلفة	08		40%	
	طبعا بإمكانك اختيار ثلاث أنواع مختلفة	04	12	20%	60%
Ability	طبعا تستطيع ان تختار ثلاث أنواع مختلفة	06		30%	
	طبعا باستطاعتك اختيار ثلاث أنواع مختلفة	02	08	10%	40%
Permission	/	/		/	
/	**Total**	**20**		**≈100%**	

Table6: Translating the Modal Auxiliary 'can' in Responses

Part (b) was translated as shown in the table:

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The Meaning of the Modal *'can'*	Students' Translations	Number of participants		Percentage of the Students Translations	
Possibility	ويمكنك ان تختار أية واحدة من أربع أحجام مختلفة	09	11	45%	55%
	وبإمكانك اختيار أية واحدة من أربع أحجام مختلفة	02		10%	
Ability	وتستطيع اختيار أية واحدة من أربع أحجام مختلفة	06	09	30%	45%
	وباستطاعتك اختيار أية واحدة من أربع أحجام مختلفة	03		15%	
Permission	/	/		/	
/	**Total**	**20**		**≈100%**	

Table7: Translating the Modal Auxiliary *'can'* in Responses.

According to the answers obtained from part (a) ,most answers reveal that the students renditions are due to their understanding of the modal *'can'* as *'being able to'* and *'being possible to'*, most of the participants' (60%) answers are based upon the possibility meaning (يمكنك.بإمكانك), and the rest upon the ability meaning (تستطيع.باستطاعتك ان). These results indicate the students' ignorance of the permission meaning that exists in this part because none of the participants use the itemلك or another Arabic equivalent to convert the modal 'can' into Arabic.

Answers attained from part (b) indicate that approximately half of the participants (55%) rendered the modal *'can'* using its possibility meaning, and about (45%) translated using its ability meaning. The students' translations, as it seems from the two tables above, are based mainly upon the modal *'can'* primary meanings of possibility and ability. However, the majority of the students in the two parts are in favour of the sense of possibility. It is also noticed, that students did not use identical lexical item to render the modal in part (a) and part (b). Their translations' varied between possibility ability.

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The students in this sentence seem to be confused in linking the appropriate meaning with the modal. Byrd claims that "the problem lies not in the surface positioning of modals nor in their wide range of meaning, but in associating the right modal with the right meaning." (1995).This appears to be the problem the students were facing in translating the modal *'can'*.

Sentence Five

Woman: Can I book two seats on the three o'clock train to Hamburg?

- هل بإمكاني ان احجز مقعدين في القطار المتجه إلى هامبورغ على الساعة الثالثة

This sentence is meant to test the student's translations and awareness of the meaning associated with the modal in this request. The following are students' translations:

The Meaning of the Modal *'can'*	Students' Translations	Number of Participants		Percentage of the Students Translations	
Possibility	هل بإمكاني حجز مقعدين في قطار الثالثة المتجه نحو هامبورغ؟	07	14	35%	70%
	هل يمكنني ان احجز مقعدين في قطار الثالثة المتجه نحو هامبورغ؟	07		35%	
Ability	هل استطيع حجز مقعدين في قطار الثالثة المتجه نحو هامبورغ؟	04	05	20%	25%
	هل باستطاعتي حجز مقعدين في قطار الثالثة المتجه نحو هامبورغ؟	01		5%	
Permission	/	/		/	
No answer	/	01		5%	
/	**Total**	**20**		**≈100%**	

Table8: Translating the Modal Auxiliary *'can'* in Requests

As can be noticed, the students' translations embrace only two meanings of the modal *'can'* ,namely, possibility (بإمكاني.يمكنني ان) and ability (استطيع.باستطاعتي). This indicates that their translations are produced according to their inference of modal *'can'* meanings.

It is also noticed that most translations (70%) expressed possibility which appears to be appropriate in this sentence since it is concerned 'with the speakers' attitude towards the actualization of a situation and factors affecting it' {actualization or non- actualization of the situation} (Declerk, 2006).that is to say, this sentence expresses root modality and participants translated it successfully into Arabic.

Sentence Six

Woman: yes, I can reserve two seats for you.

ـ نعم بوسعي ان احجز لك مقعدين

The objective from this sentence is to check the students' ability in correlating the appropriate meaning to the modal auxiliary *'can'* in this sentence. The following table shows the students' different translations for this sentence:

The Meaning of the Modal *'can'*	Students' Translations	Number of Participants		Percentage of the Students Translations	
Possibility	نعم يمكنني ان احجز لك مقعدين	06		30%	
	نعم بإمكاني حجز مقعدين لك	05	11	25%	55%
Ability	نعم استطيع ان احجز لك مقعدين	04		20%	
	نعم باستطاعتي حجز مقعدين لك	03	07	15%	35%
Permission	/	/		/	
No answer	/	02		10%	
/	**Total**	**20**		**≈100%**	

Table9: Translating the Modal Auxiliary *'can'* in Responses.

The translations of this sentence, as shown in the above table reveals that the students' renditions of the modal auxiliary *'can'* in this answer are based upon its two main meanings of possibility (بإمكاني.يمكنني) and ability (استطيع. باستطاعتي). The majority of the participants (55%) used the possibility meaning rather than the ability meaning (35%)

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which appears to fit this situation since the speaker shows confidence in his ability to perform the action.

It seems that the students faced a problem of understanding the accurate meaning of the modal, and also encounter a problem in locating the precise correspondence that fits the meaning of the modal auxiliary. According to El-Hassan (1990), translating English modal implies two main problems. The first one is the students' comprehension of the right meaning of the modal, and the second is to find the right equivalence that fits the meaning of the modal auxiliary.

Sentence Seven

I may have shown you this before.

ـ ربما أريتك هذا من قبل.

This sentence aims at investigating the students' renditions of the modal *'may'* and the various correspondences used as plausible equivalents. This sentence has been translated by students as shown in the table:

The Meaning of the Modal *'can'*	Students' Translations	Number of Participants		Percentage of the Students Tranl	
Epistemic meaning	لعلني أريتك هذا من قبل	02		10%	
	قد اكو ن أريتك هذا من قبل	01	12	5%	60%
	ربما أريتك هذا من قبل	09		45%	
Root meaning (possibility)	/	/		/	
Root meaning (permission)	/	/		/	
Translation through an irrelevant meaning or structure	استطيع ان اريك هذا من قبل	01	08	5%	40%
	كان بإمكاني ان اريك هذا من قبل	07		35%	
/	**Total**	**20**		**≈100%**	

Table10: Translating the Modal Auxiliary may

The results in the table above indicate that the students' renditions vary among three lexical items ربما, قد and لعلني. These results reveal that the students' understanding of the modal auxiliary meaning in this context is accurate, since the modal *'may'*, in this sentence, expresses epistemic modality which shows the speaker's confidence or lack of confidence in the truth of the utterance. Most participants' (45%) translations were made by means of the Arabic item ربما which appears to be fitting the translation, as suggested by El-Hassan(1990), who claims that the Arabic ربما is probably the nearest equivalent of English may

The other participants' renditions were made through (استطيع ان.بإمكاني). These two items express possibility and ability which are primary meanings of the modal 'can'. These results show that the participants misinterpreted the meaning the modal *'may'* indicated in this sentence.

Sentence Eight

Customers may not bring their food into the cafe.

لا يسمح للزبائن إحضار طعامهم إلى المقهى.–

This sentence explores the students' ability to distinguish the meanings of the modal auxiliary 'may' and to select the appropriate one that fits the context. This instruction has been translated as follows:

The Meaning of the Modal *'may'*	Students' Translations	Number of Participants		Percentage of the Students Translations	
Epistemic meaning	/	/		/	
Root meaning(possibility)	/	/		/	
Root meaning(permission)	لا يسمح للزبائن إحضار طعامهم إلى المقهى	02		10%	
	لا يمكن للزبائن إحضار طعامهم إلى المقهى	09	14	45%	70%
	ليس بإمكان الزبائن إحضار طعامهم إلى المقهى	03		15%	
Translations through An Irrelevant Meanings(ability, obligation)	لا يستطيع الزبائن إحضار طعامهم إلى المقهى	02		10%	
	يجب على الزبائن عدم إحضار طعامهم إلى المقهى	04	06	20%	30%
/	**Total**	**20**		**≈100%**	

Table 3: Translating the Modal Auxiliary '*may*' in Instructions

As shown in the table above, most participants (70%) opted for translating the modal auxiliary *may* into three main Arabic lexical items:يمكن . يسمح. بامكان. This reveals that the students interpreted this modal in this instruction as *'not permitted to'*. The modal auxiliary *'may'*, in this sentence, reflects a non-epistemic type of modality specifically deontic, since the instruction is related to the action of giving permission, eventhough it is negated. Evans and Green, point out that: "Deontic modality expresses the speaker's judgement relating to obligation (moral or social), permission or prohibition" (2006: 625).

In addition, the rest of the participants' renditions (30%) were made by means of two Arabic lexical items. The first one is 'يستطيع' entails the meaning of ability that is irrelevant to the modal '*may*' primary meanings. The second ,however is 'يجب' related to obligation. These results reveal the students' misinterpretations of the meaning of the

modal *'may'*; and also their inability to distinguish the meaning of the modal *'may'* from that of the modals *'can'* and *'must'*.

Sentence Nine

 Any person may apply to join the club.

<div dir="rtl">يسمح لأي شخص طلب الانضمام إلى النادي</div>

The objective of this sentence is to determine the meanings students associated with the modal 'may' and to identify the different translations produced. The table shows students different translations of the previous note:

The Meaning of the Modal *'may'*	Students' Translations	Number of Participants		Percentage of the Students Translations	
Epistemic meaning	/	/		/	
Root meaning(possibility)	يمكن لأي شخص طلب الانضمام إلى النادي	10	16	50%	80%
	بإمكان أي شخص طلب الانضمام إلى النادي	06		30%	
Root meaning(permission)	/	/		/	
Translations through irrelevant meanings	يستطيع أي شخص طلب الانضمام إلى النادي	03	04	15%	20%
	باستطاعة أي شخص الانضمام إلى النادي	01		5%	
	Total	**20**		**≈100%**	

Table 4: Translating the Modal Auxiliary *'may'* in Notices.

The results in the table above show that most students' renditions (80%) are based upon their interpretations of the modal *may* in the sentence as *'being possible to'*, and the remaining translations (30%) are based upon their interpretations of the modal as *'being able to'*. These results reveal that students faced problems in associating the meaning which the modal *'may'* covers.

Most participants failed to link the modal *'may'* with the meaning of permission that the note entails. The note above can be paraphrased as ' anyone is allowed to join the club' .Byrd (1995) suggests the fact that each modal has more than one meaning may not form a problem, yet the real problem is to relate the right modal with the right meaning.

However, it appears that a number of students associated the modal 'may' meaning with a diverged one. This meaning is '*ability'* which has to do with the modal auxiliary *'can'*. These results reflect the students misunderstanding of the meaning of the modal. This problem was mentioned by El-Hassan as one of the problems that modals imply in translation.

- The objective of the following sentences is to investigate the students' interpretations and   translations for the modal *'may'*.

Sentence Ten:

 Leon: I may drive up to London on Saturday. There are one or two things I need to do there.

ليون ربما اذهب إلى لندن في سيارتي يوم السبت لدي أمر أو أمران أقوم بهما هناك.

This sentence was translated as follows:

The Meaning of the Modal *'can'*	Students' Translations	Number of Participants		Percentage of the Students Translations	
Epistemic meaning	ربما اذهب إلى لندن يوم السبت لدي أمر أو أمران افعلهما هناك	07		35%	
	قد أسافر إلى لندن يوم السبت لدي أمر أو أمران افعلهما هناك	03	17	15%	85%
	بإمكاني ان أسافر إلى لندن يوم السبت لدي أمر أو أمران افعلهما هناك	03		15%	
	يمكن ان أسافر لندن إلى يوم السبت لدي أمر أو أمران افعلهما هناك	04		20%	
Root meaning (possibility)	من الممكن ان أسافر إلى لندن يوم السبت لدي أمر أو أمران افعلهما هناك	01	02	5%	10%
	من المحتمل ان أسافر إلى لندن يوم السبت لدي أمر اوامران افعلهما هناك	01		5%	
(Permission)	/	/		/	
Translations through An Irrelevant Meaning (ability)	استطيع ان أسافر إلى لندن يوم السبت لدي أمر أو أمران افعلهما هناك	01		5%	
/	**Total**	**20**		**≈100%**	

Table 5: Translating the Modal Auxiliary '*may*' in Declaratives.

According to the answers obtained, most of the students' translations (85%) make reference to the epistemic meaning of the modal 'may'. This sentence entails an epistemic meaning of the modal because it 'reflects the speaker's opinion concerning the likelihood of the proposition'. Most participants succeed in approaching a near-translation via the Arabic equivalents ر بما (35%) and قد (15%); yet, others applied the Arabic items بإمكاني يمكن.. According to El-Hassan all the previous Arabic used items are plausible equivalents for the modal auxiliary '*may*'.

Additionally, ten percent of the participants' conversions (10%) involve the possibility sense of the modal '*may*' which reflects root modality. However, Coates (1980)

noted that the possibility meaning of the modal 'may' is occasional in English. The items used in Arabic are من المحتمل and من الممكن which are considered also by El-Hassan as practical equivalents of the modal may.

Only five percent of the obtained translations reveal that the student's production is due to the misinterpretation of the meaning of the modal *'may'*. This participant made association with the meaning of ability which is in fact a primary meaning of the modal auxiliary *'can'*. So, he is unable to make the right or appropriate inference that leads him to achieve an accurate rendition.

Sentence Eleven

Simon: Saturday! You may get stuck in the traffic.

– سايمون: السبت! قد تعلق في زحمة السير.

The table below contains the participants' translations:

The Meaning of the Modal *'can'*	Students' Translations	Number of Participants		Percentage of the Students Translations	
Epistemic meaning	قد تعلق في زحمة السير	06	09	30%	45%
	ربما تعلق في زحمة السير	03		15%	
Root meaning(Possibility)	يمكن ان تعلق في زحمة السير	04	09	20%	45%
	بإمكانك ان تعلق في زحمة السير	03		15%	
	من الممكن ا ن تعلق في زحمة السير	02		10%	
Root meaning (permission)	/	/		/	
No answer	/	02		10%	
/	**Total**	**20**		**≈100%**	

Table 6: Translating the Modal Auxiliary *'may'* in Exclamatives.

The detected translations in the above table reveal the following:

On the one hand, approximately half of the students' translations (45%) were based upon the epistemic meaning of the modal, and they used the Arabic equivalents قد (15%) ربما (35%). Those students succeed in making the appropriate associations of the modal in Arabic and their translations appear to be acceptable. The previous Arabic items are suggested by El-Hassan (1990) as plausible correspondences of the modal *'may'*.

On the other hand, approximately half of the participants' renditions (45%) were based upon their inference of the possibility meaning of the modal. They translated it through the Arabic equivalents بامكانك, يمكن,من الممكن. Those participants failed to relate the modal with its accurate meaning which the sentence suggests.

3.6. Summary of Findings

From the previous discussion one can conclude the following:

- Students are aware of the modal *'can'* primary meanings, namely possibility ability and permission.

- Students generally opted to translate the modal '*can'* in the sense of *'able to'* and *'possible to'* utilizing the Arabic lexical items يمكن ان. يستطيع ان باستطاعة.بامكان.

- Students avoid translating the modal *'can'* in the sense of *'permitted to'* and do not use the Arabic lexical items لك and يسمح.

- Participants are aware of the modal '*may'* primary meanings mainly possibility and permission.

- Participants associate the modal '*may'* mainly with its possibility meaning and rendered it into Arabic correspondences بامكان يمكن ان

- Participants generally overlook the permission meaning of the modal 'may'.

- Students are able to distinguish between the two modal auxiliaries meanings in their translations.

- Students are confused in identifying the accurate meaning of the modal that a given utterance requires.

Conclusion

The previous results indicate that students are in favour of translating the modal *'can'* into its possibility and ability equivalents in Arabic namely; انيستطيع and يمكن ان, yet they avoid to render it with its permission Arabic probable correspondences such as: لك. Moreover, they opted for the translation of the modal auxiliary *'may'* into its Arabic possibility plausible equivalences, for instance, بامكانك ا ن and يمكنك انand avoid the permission meaning which may be transmitted through the Arabic lexical item يسمح and others. The present findings reveal that 3rd year students faced two main problems when translating the modal auxiliaries 'may' and 'can'. The first one is to interpret the right primary meaning of the modal that the sentence presents, and the second one is to find the right equivalent in Arabic that may preserve the English modality meaning presented in a particular utterance. These problems often result in deviations in students translations. The obtained results indicate that the main reason for the students' mistranslations is the intricate English modality system itself which assigns to each modal different shade of meanings. Students are aware of the two modals primary meanings and are able to distinguish one modal from the other. However, they seem to be confused in assigning the accurate meaning to the modal which the utterance requires, and then translate appropriately.

General Conclusion

The present study aimed at investigating the issue of translating modal auxiliaries from English into Arabic. The study specifically focused on the translation of the modal auxiliaries '*can*' and '*may*' by third year students at Mentouri University, Constantine. The purpose was to find out whether participants' mistranslations of this category (modality) stem largely from the shade of meanings which are related to each modal. A test was administered to a sample population; students' translations were identified, described and analysed. The analysis of the data generated by the test made it possible to distinguish the participants' mistranslations from the accurate ones.

The attained results made it possible to have a detailed picture of the learners' knowledge about the previous two mentioned modals semantic features. These results revealed that 3rd year students are aware of the different connotations associated with each modal; however, they faced genuine challenges to figure out which meaning is appropriate to be presented or that is required in a particular situation. So, students do not struggle to distinguish between the modal '*can*' and '*may*' as separate auxiliaries, nonetheless, they encounter problems in selecting the accurate meaning from the shades of meanings associated to the modal in a given utterance or proposition.

On this basis, it is advisable that students have to consider that modals have 'no fixed' meaning, and to realize their different grammatical functions. This may enable them to render the modals in Arabic accurately. It should be stressed that the results are not all conclusive because other factors might come into play.

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Appendix

Student's Test

Translate the following into Arabic:

1. A: can I help you, sir?

   ....

   B: yes, I'm interested in the cream that you are displaying in the main shop window.

   ....

   A: Ah, yes we're promoting that very heavily this week, as you can see, we've got pictures of it everywhere.

   ....

   B: Can I see it?

   ....

   A: Of course you can choose three different types and you can select anyone of four different sizes.

   ....

2. Man: can I book two seats on the three o'clock train to Hamburg.

   ....

   Woman: yes, I can reserve two seats for you.

   ....

3. I may have shown you this before.

   ....

4. Customers may not bring their food into the cafe.

   ....

5. Any person may apply to join the club

....

6. Leon: I may drive up to London on Saturday. There are one or two things I

    need to do there.

    ....

Simon: Saturday! You may get stuck in the traffic.

    ....

ملخص

يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة مختلف المشاكل التي يواجهها طلبة السنة الثالثة LMD بجامعة قسنطينة أثناء

ترجمة الأفعال الناقصة 'can'و 'may' من الانجليزية إلى العربية، ولقد تم هذا البحث من خلال اختبار أداء الطلبة في

ترجمة بعض الجمل التي احتوت على الفعلين الناقصين السابق ذكرهما.لقد خلص هذا البحث إلى ان الطلبة لا يواجهون

صعوبة في فهم مختلف المعاني التي ترتبط بكل فعل لكن يجدون صعوبة في اختيار المعنى المناسب الذي يدل عليه الفعل

في جملة ما، واعتمادا على هذا يجب على الطلبة الإلمام بمختلف معاني الفعل الناقص من خلال فهم الوظيفة الموكلة إليه

في الجملة مما يسهل عملية الترجمة إلى اللغة العربية،كما عليهم الابتعاد عن مقارنة نظام الأفعال الناقصة في الانجليزية

بالعربية لأنه مختلف تماما و قد يؤدي إلى ارتكاب أخطاء جسيمة.

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Résumé

Cette recherche a pour objectif d'étudier quelques problèmes auxquels les étudiants de troisième année anglais, système LMD, université de Constantine font face lors de la traduction des auxiliaires *'may'* et *'can'* de l'anglais vers l'arabe. A cette fin, un test a été administré à un échantillon d'étudiants. Il consiste en la traduction de quelques phrases contenant les verbes en question. Les résultats obtenus montrent que les étudiants ne trouvent pas de difficulté à comprendre le sens général de ces deux verbes quand ils sont hors contexte. Le problème se pose plutôt quand les deux verbes se trouvent dans le contexte d'une phrase et qu'ils acquièrent, en conséquence, un sens bien particulier. La recherche recommande une approche plus pratique à l'enseignement de ces deux verbes pour une meilleure compréhension et une meilleure traduction. Ce serait une approche plus explicite quand aux divers sens de ces deux verbes et leur variation en fonction du contexte où ils sont utilisés. Une étude contrastive entre l'anglais et l'arabe aiderait les étudiants à éviter les contrastes trop simplistes qui aboutissent forcément à une traduction littérale vide de tout sens.