UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

THE USE OF MODALITY IN WRITING AMONG SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN GHANA: A CASE STUDY OF NKENKAASU SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

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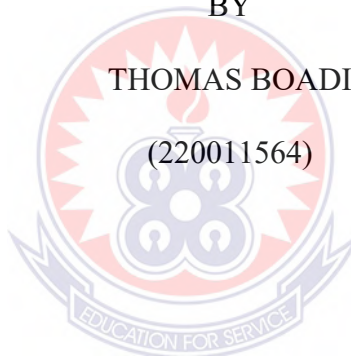
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THE USE OF MODALITY IN WRITING AMONG SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

STUDENTS IN GHANA: A CASE STUDY OF NKENKAASU SENIOR HIGH

SCHOOL

BY

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DECLARATION

Student's Declaration

I, Thomas Boadi, hereby declare that this thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

SIGNATURE………………………………

DATE……………………………………

Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.
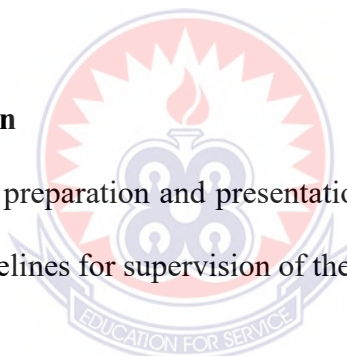
NAME: Prof. Rebecca Atchoi Akpanglo-Nartey

SIGNATURE………………………………..

DATE…………………………………………..

DEDICATION

My first dedication goes to my dear wife, Mrs. Juliana Boadi and my children. The next

dedication goes to Mr. Isaac Nsowah Acquah and all my loved ones.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

This thesis examined the use of modality in writing among senior high school students in Ghana. First of all, the study aimed at investigating the most frequently used modal verbs and the types of modal verbs used by the students. It also looked at the meanings communicated by students using core modal verbs, as well as underpinning factors for the underuse of modal verbs and problems associate with it. The research design comprises a qualitative technique through descriptive analysis. Also, a sample of 350 students and 6 teachers were selected. The study used document and semi-structured interview instruments for data collection. The research findings showed that some modal verbs were most frequently used while others were less frequently used by the students in their writing. Again, the results of the study revealed that the students used all the three types of modal verbs in their writing. Moreover, the study revealed that modal verbs were used to communicate modal meanings by the students in their writing. Also, it was discovered that some underpinning factors such as complex system of modality and risk-taking led the students to underuse some core modal verbs. Finally, the findings of the study revealed that the underuse of some modal verbs led the students to make some grammatical errors in their writing. In order to circumvent problematic items identified in the study, and to further improve teaching and learning of modal verbs among students in their writing, several recommendations such as training students to use all core modal verbs frequently have been proposed.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

This first chapter of the thesis sets the foundation on which the entire study rests. The chapter discusses the background to the study, the research problem statement, and the purpose of the study. The chapter also presents research objectives as well as the research questions that undergirded the study, limitation, delimitation of the study and; finally, the organization of the study.

1.1 Background to the Study

Several studies in the field of academic writing have highlighted the use of modality in writing. Moreover, modality has been investigated from various perspectives by many linguists. Similarly, numerous definitions of modality have been proposed. Palmer (2001) defines modality as an expression of attitude of the speaker.

Furthermore, the literature on modality shows a clear tendency among linguists to accept that semantic areas such as possibility, necessity and prediction (knowledge or epistemic modality), on the one hand, and permission, obligation and volition (deontic or root modality), on the other, constitute the domains of modality (Palmer, 2001; Narrog, 2012; Portner, 2009; Halliday, 2004).

In the extant literature, such as Narrog (2012), Ngula (2010, 2012), Larreya (2009), Halliday (2004), Palmer (2001, 1979), Wiredu (2012) and others, modality such as *can, could will, would, must may, might, shall, should* etc. have been used by many writers to express necessity, probability, permission, obligation, certainty or uncertainty, to make prediction, to make polite request or to show future occurrence in their writing.

It is generally expected that central modal verbs are used frequently by students of senior high schools to improve their grammar (Orlando, 2009; Nozawa, 2014; Leung,

2016, etc.), especially in the Ghanaian context where English is a second Language for both teachers and learners. Unfortunately, some core modal verbs such as *shall, must, might* and *should* etc. are underused in the senior high school levels in Ghana, especially in the Nkenkaasu Senior High School. This has been the concern of many scholars.

For instance, Leech (2003) has demonstrated that over the past decades the so-called core modal verbs have decreased in frequency in both written and spoken English among students. However, an analysis of the graphs in Aarts and Wallis (2011) reveals that of all the core modals, *should* has demonstrated a relatively small decline in usage, especially compared to such verbs as: *would, may or must*, all of which have significantly declined in frequency.

According to Hyland and Milton (1997), modal expressions are potentially complex and that has brought about the underuse of some modal verbs among second or foreign language learners.

Moreover, Perkins (1983) states that secondary modals (past form *could, would and might*) contain much more modal meanings than the primary ones (present form *can, will* and *may*). Perkins added that not familiar with these three secondary modals, senior high students feel safe to use more simple primary ones, avoiding the risk of making grammatical mistakes.

Kennedy (2002) asserts that an analysis of *will* in a corpus of written language (the London-Lund Corpus) reveals that it is not often used currently, even though it is more frequently used than other core modal verbs. Finally, Adams (1984) states that, not only do learners struggle with using modal forms and use some most often than others, but also with recognizing their meaning and range of meanings in reading and writing, causing confusion between accepted facts and objective statements, especially in scientific writing.

2

Against this background, the researcher was motivated to investigate the use of modality among Nkenkaasu Senior High School students in their writing. In the process, the study sought out to explore: the most frequently used core modal verbs among the students in their writing and the types of modal verbs used by the students in writing, the propositions or the meanings students do express or communicate in their writing, giving that modality is the expression of the attitude of the speaker or writer, or the expression of subjectivity of the writer's opinions and emotions (Narrog, 2010).

Also, he looked at the factors that underpin the underuse of some core modal verbs among senior high school students, as well as the problems associated with the underuse of some central modal verbs among the students of Nkenkaasu Senior High School in their writing.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Modality in English has been the focus of attention of scholars from distinct disciplines (see, Ngula, 2009, 2010, 2012; Declerck, 2009, Edu-Buandoh, 2012 & Larreya, 2009) and through different approaches over the years; many of them expressing their concern about the uses of modality in their studies. For instance, Palmer (2001) posits that the use of modality is concerned with the status of the proposition that describes the event. To Palmer (2001, p. 1), modality is the "expression of the attitude of the speaker, or the expression of the subjectivity of the speaker's opinions and emotions". In addition, Collins (2014) asserts that the use of modal verbs is important and as dynamic as a society.

Furthermore, as far as the field of linguistics is concerned, modality has been addressed from various perspectives, covering Semantics (e.g., Palmer, 1979, 2001 & Perkins 1983), Typology (e.g., Narrog, 2005, 2012), Pragmatics (e.g., Leech, 1983 & Papafragou, 2002), Systemic Functional Linguistics (e.g., Halliday & Matthiessen

3

2004), Cognitive Linguistics (e.g., Sweetser, 1996; Talmy, 2000; Chilton, 2004; Dancygier & Sweetser 1996, 2005) and Corpus Linguistics (e.g., Baker 2011) etc.

However, an empirical study that explores the use of all the nine core modal verbs among senior high school students in their writing is relatively rare. This motivated me to conduct a research that would explore the use of all the nine core modal verbs among students of Nkenkaasu Senior High School (located in the Ashanti Region of Ghana) in their writing.

Also, a lot of work has been done on frequency of some core modal verbs, however, the study that investigates the frequency of all the nine core modal verbs is also relatively rare. Therefore, the current study aimed at exploring the most frequently used of all the nine core modal verbs among the students in their writing as well as investigating the types of modal verbs used in their writing.

Moreover, there is an appreciable body of literature on the expression of different kinds of modal meanings (Lee, 2005: Malachi, 2008; Thompson, 2002), however, a study that takes a closer look at the meanings communicated by senior high school students using core modal verbs in writing, has not been given much attention. In view of this, the current study focused on investigating modal meanings communicated by senior high school students using core modal verbs in writing.

Finally, it was ascertained that students of Nkenkaasu Senior High School make grammatical errors in their essay writing due to underuse of some core modal verbs such as *shall* and *might.* For instance, they use present modal verbs to express past events in their essay writing. This prompted me to investigate the underpinning factors that cause the students to underuse some core modal verbs in their composition writing as well as problems associated with it.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the use of modality among senior high school students in Ghana, particularly, among Nkenkaasu Senior High School Students. In the first place, the research aimed at ascertaining the most frequently used core modal verbs by the students and types of modal verbs they use in their essay writing. Also, it sought to explore how the students expressed modality in their writing. Finally, the study sought to investigate the factors that underpin the underuse of some core modal verbs as well as problems associated with the underuse of some core modal verbs, among senior high school students in their writing.

1.4 Research Objectives

The research sought to identify:

1. the most frequently used core modal verbs among the students in their writing and the types of modal verbs they used.

2. propositions or meanings senior high school students use core modal verbs to express in their essay.

3. the factors that underpin the underuse of some core modal verbs and problems associated with the underuse of some central modal verbs, among senior high school students in their composition.

1.5 Research Questions

The following research questions undergirded the study:

1. what are the most frequently used core modal verbs among the students in their writing and what types of modal verbs they use?

2. what propositions do senior high school Students use core modal verbs to express or communicate in their essay?

3. what factors underpin the underuse of some core modal verbs, and what are the problems associated with the underuse of some core modal verbs among senior high school students in their composition?

1.6 Significance of the study

The current study is significant in many facets. First, it serves to contribute to the knowledge of modality especially, in the Ghanaian context where English is a second Language for both teachers and learners. Secondly, the findings of this study would help improve teaching and learning of grammar where modality is pivotal. Third, the information provided by the analysis of this study can be used to revise senior high school syllabus in order to make them meet the learners' needs more effectively. Finally, the results of the present study would enable teachers, parents and other stake holders of education to be aware of how students use modal verbs in order to provide the needed assistance to them.
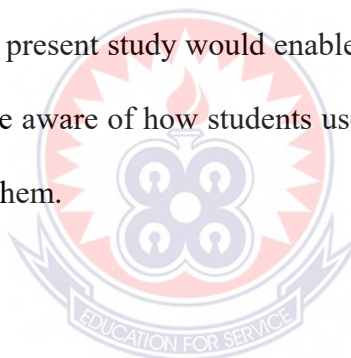
1.7 Limitations

The researcher encountered two limitations, first of all, the reception the researcher hoped to get from the participants was unpredictable. In conducting research of this nature, people read so many meanings into it. Although some people see it as a good thing, others may have the opinion that it rather reveals their inefficiencies to the public. In view of that some potential participants were not willing to avail themselves to provide the needed information during the interview time. In order to circumvent the situation, the researcher approached the potential participants individually and gave them an explanation about the purpose of the study and data collection process which enabled them to take active part in the interview.

In addition, the essay was given to the students as an assignment where the participants were expected to get enough time to write their essays and bring them at the stipulated time. However, most of the students did not bring their essays at the right time which was going to delay the research process. In view of that, the researcher had to meet those participants and talked to them and explained to them about the need for their essays to be brought on time. In the nutshell, these limitations delayed the process and the organization of this work.

1.8 Delimitation

In order to arrive at a justifiable conclusion and since modality is a broad topic, the study was limited to the core or central modal verbs: *may, might, can, could, will, would, shall, should and must* in expressing propositions such as: permission, obligation, possibility, necessity, probability, ability and prediction relating to epistemic modality, deontic modality and dynamic modality.

1.9 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is organised into five chapters. The chapter one lays the foundation upon which the entire study rests. This is done by highlighting the research problem, research objectives, research questions, purpose of the research, significance of the research, and delimitation.

Chapter Two provides a detailed discussion of both the literature in terms of the analytical and theoretical frameworks as well as related research with particular interest on modal verbs used by senior high school students: the frequency of use of modal verbs, the types of modal verbs used by the students in their writing, as well as prepositions that senior high school students express in their writing.

The research methodology is the subject of chapter three. The chapter provides information on participants including sampling technique, population, data collection procedure and methods of data analysis. It also deals with the research design, research approach, description and distribution of instruments.

Chapter four provides the analysis and discussion of data. Thus, having identified all core modal verbs used by the students in their writings, I then continued to analyze them to find out how often each modal verb was used in the data. Furthermore, the type of modal verbs used by the students in their writing were also analyzed. Also, I proceeded to critically examine propositions or meanings the students used modal verbs to communicate. That is, the modal verbs were critically examined in terms of expressing possibility, necessity, obligation, probability, permission, prediction etc.

Moreover, factors that underpin the underuse of some core modal verbs and problems associated with their underuse were also investigated and examined. Finally, Chapter five presents the summary of the key findings, implications drawn from the findings of the study, recommendations and a general conclusion to the study.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of related literature in order to position the research within the larger context of research on the research topic. This chapter covers: the definitions of modality, types or classifications of modalities and their meanings, volition and modality, forms of modality, proposition and expression of modality, characteristics of modality, modality and future tense, challenges about the uses of modal verbs, previous studies and theoretical frame work.

According to Schleppegrell (2004), language is seen as a social process that contributes to the realization of different social contexts through three contextual dimensions. These include: field (what is talked about), tenor (the relationship between speaker and hearer), and mode (expectations for how particular text types should be organized). He added that, the three contextual variables of field, tenor, and mode are thus realized through ideational, interpersonal, and textual resources and choices of language respectively.

Modality belongs to the interpersonal Meta function that essentially regards clauses and other linguistic units as "exchanges" of propositions and proposals, whereby a proposition involves an exchange of information and a proposal involves an exchange of "goods-and-services" (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). When we exchange information as a proposition, we are essentially arguing whether something is (affirmative) or is (negative), but in between these two extremes are also intermediate positions that can be realized through what systemic linguists call "modulization", which is one half of the overall concept of modality (Eggins, 2013).

Modality in English and other languages have been the focus of attention of scholars from distinct disciplines and approaches over the last thirty years. Within linguistics, the study of modality has witnessed a gradual shift from a monolithic, static conception to a more dynamic understanding of modality taking into account the relevance of linguistic and extralinguistic contextual factors in the production and interpretation of modal utterances in discourse (Bybee & Pagliuca, 2004) or the creation of modal textual coherence.

2.1 Definitions of modality

The notion of modality in semantics is not as easily defined as tense or aspect, but has been given many diverging definitions (Bybee et al., 2013, p. 176). It can be defined in different ways either in a narrow sense or in a broad sense. According to Narrog (2002, p. 1), there are three main different ways of defining modality in linguistic studies:

(1) modality as the expression of the attitude of the speaker, or the expression of subjectivity and the speaker's opinions and emotions (e.g., Nitta, 2000),

(2) modality as something including all linguistic expression outside the proposition.

(3) modality as the expression of realis vs. irrealis or factuality distinctions (e.g., Palmer, 2001; Narrog, 2002 & Nomura, 2003).

On the other hand, modality is not only about factuality and non-factuality, but it is also concerned with the concepts of 'probability, necessity, possibility and the related notions of permission, obligation and volition' (Barbiers, 2002, p. 1). Palmer (2001, p. 1) asserts that "modality is a valid cross-language grammatical category that can be the subject of a typological study."

Also, according to Quirk (2012, p. 219), "modality may be defined as the manner in which the meaning of a clause is qualified so as to reflect the speaker's

10

judgement of the likelihood of the proposition it expressed being true." In the view of Halliday (2004), modality is the speaker's assessment of probability and predictability. It is external to the content being part of the attitude taken up by the speaker. Therefore, it can be claimed that modality is concerned with the expression of the subject or speaker's involvement towards the propositional content of an utterance, whether in the form of agency or subjectivity. He argues that modality can be expressed by using modal verbs such as *can, would, should, or might* for permission, obligations, polite request etc.

He added that, Modality is a category of linguistic meaning having to do with the expression of possibility, necessity, certainty or uncertainty, permission, obligation, politeness and request. According to him, this is due to the fact that Language is not merely used for conveying factual information.

Declerck, (2006, p. 38-39) gives the following definition to the term modality: 'a semantic category that comprises two types of meaning: the representation of the speaker's assessment of the likelihood that a proposition (i.e. the content of a clause) is true (or that the situation referred to by a proposition actualizes), and the representation of one of the factors affecting the (non) actualization of the situation referred to, such as willingness, possibility, ability, obligation, necessity, advisability, permission, prohibition, volition, etc.'

The operational definition of modality for the purposes of this study is that: modality is defined as an expression of an attitude of the speaker through the use of modal verbs to communicate modal meanings.

2.2 Classifications or types and meanings of modality (modal verbs)

It is widely acknowledged by Narrog (2012) and Palmer (2001) that modal expressions may be used to communicate at least two broad clusters of meanings, that

11

is, epistemic modal meanings and deontic modal meanings. Epistemic modal meanings deal with the degree of speaker commitment to the truth of the proposition that forms the complement of the modal (Narrog, 2012). Coates (1983) asserts that epistemic modality is the assessment of speaker's possibilities and indicates confidence or lack of confidence in the truth of the proposition expressed. Deontic modal meanings on other hand, deal with the necessity or possibility of acts performed by morally responsible agents, e.g., obligation and permission (palmer, 2001), in other words according to him, it is defined with the concept of obligation and permission.

Apart from the epistemic and deontic distinction, a third main area of modal meaning is often recognized: the dynamic modality (Von Wright, 1951 & Palmer, 2001). This type of modality includes the notional categories of real-world ability, possibility and intention or willingness.

Palmer (2001) distinguishes between epistemic modality, deontic modality and dynamic modality. He explains that epistemic modality expresses the speaker's opinion about a statement, and it is concerned with the necessary and the possible truth value of propositions. Deontic modality is concerned with obligation and permission, and dynamic modality predicts something about the subject of the sentence. Epistemic modals with the preposition may be marked as past time, by using have. With deontic modals, modality and preposition can't be marked for past time. With dynamic modals the modality can be used to mark for past time. Hence, the use of modal verbs is important and as dynamic as a society (Collins, 2014). Palmer (2001) gives the following examples:

> A. John may be in his office. (Epistemic Modality)
>
> C. John may or can come in now. (Deontic Modality)
>
> D. John could run ten miles with ease. (Dynamic Modality)

Again, Huddleston (1984) makes the distinction between three types of modalities: epistemic modality, deontic modality and dynamic modality. Epistemic modality has as its basis of what the speaker knows about the world, while deontic modality calls for an action to be taken, and dynamic modality indicates that an individual is capable of doing a particular action when the circumstances arise. He also gives a distinction between mood as a category of grammar and modality as a category of meaning.

Normally, deontic and dynamic uses are grouped together under agent-oriented modalities (Perkins & Pagliuka, 2013; Bybee et al., 2013, p. 176 & Amoako-Atta, 1998), or root (deontic) modalities (Sweetser, 1996). In the present discussion, the root-epistemic distinction was adopted, since this always corresponds to the terms used in the literature on modality.

Quirk et al. (1985) classified verbs into three major verbs categories. The decisive factor for this division is the verb's function within the verb phrase. These are: open class of full verbs (also lexical verbs), a closed class of primary verbs (be, have, and do) and modal auxiliary verbs. They distinguish between four classes of modals and give examples which are:

A) central Modals (*will, would, shall, should, can, could, may, might,* and *must*), as in: *Can* you run 100 meters in three minutes?

B) marginal Modals (*dare, need, ought to, and used to.*), as in:
Need or dare we escape?

C) modal Idioms (*had better, would rather or sooner, be to,* and *have got to.*), as in: We *had better* leave soon.

D) semi- Auxiliaries (*have to, be about to, be able to, be going to, be bound to, be obliged to, be supposed to, be willing to*, etc.), as in: Brazil is *going to* win the World Cup.

The current study focused on (A), Central Modals (*will, would, shall, should, can, could, may, might, and must)* for the expression of probability, possibility, obligation, necessity, permission, Prediction and futurity.

Also, Leech (1987) divides modal auxiliaries in terms of frequency into three classes:

A) very frequent modal auxiliaries (*will, would, can and could*)

B) quite frequent modal auxiliaries (*must, should, may, might, and have (got) to)*

C) infrequent modal auxiliaries (*shall, ought to and need*)

Leech (1987) lists the basic meanings of the modals *can, may and must*: The modal *can* is used to express possibility, ability and permission. The modal *may,* is used to express possibility, permission and an exclamatory wish. The modal *must*, is also used to express obligation and logical necessity.

An interesting fact about the root and epistemic types of meaning is that they often tend to be expressed by a single class of modal expression in the languages of the world. Probably, the set of items for which this claim has been most extensively illustrated, is the set of English modal verbs (Palmer, 2001), mainly: *must, may, might, can, could, should, shall, will, would and ought to.* Quirk et al. (1985) classified the modal verbs into *can, could, may, might, shall, should, will, would, must, be used to, ought to, need and dare* etc. Modal verbs have been semantically analyzed in two main ways: one strand considers them ambiguous between root and epistemic meanings (Palmer, 2001 & Coates, 1983); others assign to them a unitary semantics, which is

14

pragmatically developed into epistemic or root interpretations in the process of utterance comprehension (Perkins, 1983 & Papafragou, 2002).

An interesting variant of the ambiguity approach, which has become increasingly influential in the literature on modality, is the polysemy account developed by Sweetser (1996). Sweetser places her discussion of modality within a more general approach to polysemy in language. Her basic claim is that polysemy is often motivated by a metaphorical mapping from the concrete, external world of socio-physical experience to the abstract, internal world of reasoning and of mental processes in general. She argues that modal verbs display a similar, motivated polysemy, thus rejecting the view that they are ambiguous between unrelated senses.

Sweetser uses as a basis for the semantics of the modals, Talmy's (2000) notion of force dynamics. Root modalities are taken to encode force-dynamic notions in the external world: for instance, 'may' encodes the existence of a potential but absent barrier, 'must' a positive compulsion, and 'can' either a positive ability on the part of the doer, or some potential force or energy.

These notions are extended metaphorically into the internal and mental domain and give rise to epistemic meanings: 'May' and 'must' thus come to denote barriers or forces operating in the domain of reasoning. Sweetser (1996) posits that semantic competence of speakers includes the process of metaphorical projection between the concrete and abstract domains, thereby synchronically representing motivated polysemy.

There are certain independently motivated linguistic arguments for preferring a unitary semantics over a polysemy approach to English modals, and thus for treating root and epistemic meanings as pragmatically driven aspects of utterance interpretation (Papafragou, 2002); it turns out that the polysemy approach inherits at least some of the

15

drawbacks of the ambiguity analysis, such as the empirical inadequacy of the traditional modal categories to cover all aspects of modal interpretations and meanings.

Therefore, the term modality does not represent a unified semantic concept, but should be seen as a cover term for three major semantic categories: epistemic modality, which is involved in expressions of certainty or uncertainty, and root modality, which is a more mixed bag, but which includes various types of relations to potential events (including inter-personal relations, such as authority and submission) and polysemy which could form part of the two.

Sweetser (1996) gives a unified treatment in terms of force dynamics and causality from a diachronic point of view, making it clear that epistemic modality is derived from root modality, and we shall elaborate on this below. Diachrony can also be understood from a language learning perspective: children acquire the deontic senses of modal verbs earlier than the epistemic ones Sweetser. Synchronically, root and epistemic modalities are related by means of a subsumption relation.

However, according to Sweetser, modality as a notion also needs to be examined in connection with tense and aspect, epistemic modality can be represented in a compact way together with tense in a graph which has time as one axis and possible worlds as the other. There is strong evidence that tense and modality are related: both are categories that are encoded in predications at the same level of depth, and both clearly interact with each other. If we consider tense, we shall also need to consider aspect, which deals with the internal configuration of time as it is expressed in verbs.

The three categories: tense, aspect, and modality are expressed mainly by auxiliaries; there is a great deal of crosslinguistic evidence that the three of them are closely interrelated (Narrog, 2002). Modals in English (*can, could, may, might, must, will, would, shall and should*) express grammaticalization which is reflected in some

morphosyntactic characteristics, such as the fact that they have no -s endings for the third person singular, and no infinitives, or past forms (except the forms 'could' and 'would' in some instances). In addition, many of them also have weak and contracted forms. However simple their morphosyntactic functioning has become, a corresponding simplification and reduction of their meaning has not taken place.

Fowler (1991), on the other hand, distinguishes four types of modalities from the perspective of making comments, which are to do with (a) truth, (b) obligation, (c) permission, and (d) desirability. Though Fowler's classification is more inclusive and useful in discourse analysis, it also neglects some modal meanings such as capability and intentionality.

Palmer proposes to 'take into account both type and meaning' in dealing with modality, as he realizes the value of both semantic basis to modality and its formal features in his later work (Palmer 1979, p. 2). However, in his early works, his main emphasis was 'on the detailed and systematic subdivisions of modal auxiliary verbs based on formal criteria' (Badran, 2002, p. 81). Von Wright (1951) divides modality into four categories. He called modality modes. His classification includes following four categories as indicated below including two of the most important modalities—epistemic modality and deontic modality:

> a. the alethic modes or modes of truth. (Alethic modality)
>
> b. the epistemic modes or modes of knowing. (Epistemic modality)
>
> c. the deontic modes or modes of obligation. (Deontic modality)
>
> d. the existential modes or modes of existence. (Existential modality)

17

2.3 Volition and modality

Some scholars provide an argument in favor of regarding volition as part of modality: its modal system of volition is idiosyncratic, and therefore may be thought to be the formal counterpart of a semantic system which fundamentally expresses necessity as another type of modality (Larreya, 2009, p. 17). Traditionally, volition is treated as a sub-category of deontic modality (Krug, 2000, p. 41).

Volitional modality is defined as a semantic domain with which speakers express their force of volitional stance involving willingness, desirability, or intentions indicated in the utterance and this force is evaluated in terms of volitional distance towards the center of willingness, which forms part of epistemic modality (Portner, 2009, p. 135).

Larreya (2009) argues that it is difficulty to regard volition as one of the prime constituents of modality, or place it at the same level as possibility and necessity. It nevertheless plays an important role in modality, on several counts, which will be very useful in analyzing meanings and uses of the modal operator *will* in the Ghanaian context. Some distinctions can be made within the domain of volition.

He added that Strong volition (as in *I will stay here*) implies that some physical or external volition (force) might prevent the accomplishment of the "willed" situation. Weak volition (as in *Ok, I will wash the shirt*) which implies that there is the existence of some external volition directed towards the accomplishment of the modalized situation.

While necessity and possibility are firmly established domains of modality, logically related to each other and involving clearly identifiable epistemic and deontic meanings, by contrast the prediction or volition domain discussed is less central. It includes epistemic uses of a temporal nature which may involve a minimal component

18

of modal meaning. Furthermore, the dominant type of non-epistemic meaning, involving the subject-referent's volition, has received little attention in the literature on modality, a situation explained by Krug (2000) as follows: Due to the progressive grammaticalization of the *will* future since Middle English, no central modal has 'desire' as its central notional domain any longer, even though some volitive traces can be found in *will* and *would* (Krug, 2000, p. 117).

There are also some other ways of classifying deontic modality by the scholars. For example, deontic modality can be divided into commissive modality, directive modality and volitive modality (Chung &Timberlake, 1985: Palmer, 1986: Owusu-Ansah, 2012). Commissive modality is a deontic modality that connotes the speaker's expressed commitment, as a promise or threat, to bring about the proposition expressed by the utterance.

Directive modality is also one of a deontic modalities that connotes the speaker's degree of requirement of conformity to the proposition expressed by an utterance. Directive modality is further divided into deliberative mood, imperative mood, jussive mood, obligatory mood, permissive mood, precative mood, prohibitive mood (Palmer, 1976 & Quirk et al., 1985).

The third type of deontic modality is volitive modality (Acquah, 2022). It is a deontic modality that expresses the speaker's attitude of hope, wish, or fear concerning the proposition expressed by the utterance. It is also further divided into imperative mood and optative mood (Palmer, 1976). This kind of classification is very much like the different categories of the speech acts which are related to the certain illocutionary acts in pragmatics.

For the purpose of this study, volitive modality was classified under epistemic modality that expresses the speaker's attitude of hope, wish, or fear concerning the

19

proposition expressed by the utterance. Aiming to group the similar modal meanings into proper categories in writing and investigating their functions more thoroughly, modality in this study is classified into three types: deontic modality, epistemic modality and dynamic Modality.

2.4 Forms of modality

Portner (2009, p. 1), classifies modality into three forms in a broad sense: sentential modality, sub-sentential modality and discourse modality. For Portner (2009, p. 2-3), sentential modality is 'the expression of modal meaning at the level of the whole sentence', and sub-sentential modality is any modal expressions within constituents smaller than a full clause, for example within the predicate (e.g., by verbs) or modifying a noun phrase (e.g., by adjectives), while discourse modality refers to the modal meanings beyond sentential truth conditions. However, the current study dwelled on sentential modality to identify all kinds of modal verbs in the data.

Also, Halliday (2004) classifies modality into two main forms: modalization in propositions (including probability and usuality) and modulation in proposals (including obligation and inclination). Fairclough (2001), however, also classifies modality into two forms: relational modality and expressive modality, depending on 'what direction authority is oriented in'. Relational modality here refers to the authority of one participant in relation to others, and expressive modality refers to the speaker or writer's authority with respect to the truth or probability of a representation of reality (Fairclough, 2001, p. 105).

Fairclough's classification of modality would be more reasonable if modality were only related to writing. But he is right in his view that modality is not restricted to its interpersonal meaning but is also concerned with the representation of reality. Traditionally, the semantic study of modality has been restricted to modal verbs (modal

20

auxiliaries), but recently, more linguists hold the view that there are other forms of expressing modality besides modal verbs (Barbiers, 2002).

Barbiers (2002, p. 14), for instance, claims that 'Modal verbs are just one way or form to encode modality in natural language. Among the other means and forms attested are modal particles and adverbs, imperatives and to infinitives' Other modal expression forms besides modal verbs, such as semi-modals (e.g., Krug, 2000), modal adjectives (e.g., van Linden, 2012) and modal adverbs (e.g., Nuyts, 2001, 2002), can also be found in semantic studies, though they often lack a common core: 'they are like scattered pieces of a highly complex puzzle' (Mortelmans, 2007, p. 869).

Furthermore, it is important to note that there is covert modality form, which is either marked by infinitives (Bhatt, 1999) or unmarked (Barbiers, 2002). However, different researchers may have different views towards this phenomenon. Covert form of Modality is 'modality which we interpret but which is not associated with any lexical item in the structure that we are interpreting' (Bhatt, 1999, p. 2). According to him, sentences with infinitival often involves covert modality. For example, "Tim knows how to solve the problem (covert modality)" can be interpreted as "Tim knows how one or he could or should solve the problem overt modality" (Bhatt 1999, p. 1).

Kissine (2008, p. 144), on the other hand, proposes that 'every asserted proposition which is not under the scope of an explicit modal may be considered as being under the scope of a covert epistemic necessity'. It is, therefore, rather controversial and difficult to identify their exact modal meanings. So, this thesis did not focus on covert modality or zero-marked modality, instead it focused on the overt modality for the expression of probability, possibility, permission, obligation, necessity and futurity.

21

2.5 Expressions or propositions of modality

Perkins (1983 as cited in Lee, 2005) says that, the concepts and expressions of modality are signified by both modal verbs such as "can", "could", "may", "might", "must", "ought to", "will", "would", "shall", "should", etc. and quasi-modal verbs such as "have to", "need to", "had better", etc. In addition, Perkins asserts that a modality is signified as a factor of language: an adjective and a participle of modality such as "be going to", modal adverbs such as "necessarily" and "probably" Fries (1940 as cited in lee, 2005) argues that modal verbs are the same as functional words. Lee added that, these can be divided according to their expression and significance:

(a) ability or power, such as "may", "might", "can", and "could"

(b) possibility or doubt, such as "may", "might", "can", and "could"

(c) permission, such as "may", "might", "can", and "could"

(d) obligation, such as "should", "ought", and "must"

(e) habitual action, such as "would", and "used to"

(f) appropriateness, such as "should" and "ought"

(g) future prediction, such as "should", "must", and "would"

(h) wish and will, such as "may" and "would".

According to Turnbull and Saxton (1997 as cited in Lee, 2005), both modal verbs and quasi-modal verbs are indicative of the probability of an event and a proposition for a problem. "Must", "need to", and "have (got) to" convey an inevitability of the state of things. They explain that, modal verbs have implications on an environment in relation to the state of affairs related to a question. On the other hand, "will", "would", "be going to", "shall", "should", "ought to", "had better", etc. are considered to be somewhere in between a probability and necessity.

Therefore, these modal verbs and quasi-modal verbs indicate a probability of things in relation to the state of affairs and can be induced to direct the truth. They concluded that, in particular, "can", "could", "be able to", "may", "might", etc. express a possibility of things because they show the lowest degree of the truth and the occurrence of the state of affairs.

The expression of modality with a modal adjective and an adverb requires the following considerations: Most often, a modal adjective and adverb have a meaning equivalent to that of the modal verb. For example, "necessary" and "necessarily" are equivalent to "must". "Probable" and "probably" are also equivalent to "can" and "may" (Lee, 2005). In addition, Perkins indicates that "advisable" has a meaning similar to "should", which is used to mention the actions of performance. "Likely" has a meaning equivalent to "will", which is used with reference to express probability of an occurrence. "Maybe" and "perhaps" are equivalent to "can" and "may", which are used with reference to the truth and the possibility of a proposition. "Certain" and "certainly", "sure", and "surely" are equivalent to "must", which is used with reference to the authenticity of a true proposition.

Thus, the list of the most common lexical ways of expressing modality according to Malachi (2008) is as follows:

(1) nouns such as chance, hope, presumption and expectation; intention and Determination.

(2) adjectives such as conceivable, possible, likely and obvious; appropriate and necessary. In other adjectives such as sure, surprise, able and finally doubtful and certain.

(3) adverbs such as hardly and perhaps; evidently, assuredly, fortunately, regrettably, surprisingly, and strangely.

23

(4) verbs: main verbs such as doubt, think, believe and predict; suggest; want, prefer, desire, permit and forbid.

Finally, parenthetical remarks indicate concepts of modality to be examined. In the case where "I know", "I'm certain", "I'm sure", "I think", "I believe", "I guess," "imagine," "suppose" etc. are used in parenthetical remarks, they have a modal meaning when they are separated from the remaining parts of a sentence (Lyons, 1977 as cited in Lee, 2005).

He states that, "I know", "I'm certain", and "I'm sure" mean that a speaker believes in the inevitability, which definitely happens in a correlated situation due to rational law. "I think" and "I believe" mean that a speaker expresses the probability that things will happen, but which may not necessarily happen in all situations.

Furthermore, Downing and Locke (1992, p. 383) note that 'modality is understood as a semantic category which covers such propositions and expressions as possibility, probability, necessity, volition, obligation and permission.' Recently, the concept of modality has been extended to cover other notions such as doubt, wish, regret and desire, and temporal notions such as usuality. Further, they add that in very general terms, modality may be taken to express a relation with reality, whereas a non-modal utterance treats the process as reality.

However, Thompson (2002, p. 57) notes that probability is how likely it is to be true. It means that how the sentence is equivalent to either yes or no, for instance, maybe yes or maybe no, with different degree of likelihood attached. Some of the basic points of probability scale are: possible, probable, certain. That scale confirms that possible is lower than probable, and probable is again lower than certain. It means that certain is more convincing than probable and possible. He assets that, Probability can be expressed in three ways: as finite modal operator, as modal adjunct, and as the combination of both finite modal operator and modal adjunct:

24

1. Probability which is expressed by finite modal operator.

  a. This guy may be a new comer. (Probability)

  b. He might join in our class. (Doubt)

  c. He must be from the same department. (Certainty)

2. Probability which is expressed by using modal adjunct.

  a. He is possibly a migration student. (Uncertainty)

  b. He probably joins us in this department. (Probability)

  c. He is certainly from the same department. (Certainty)

3. Probability which is expressed by using both finite modal operator and modal adjunct.

  a. The doomsday will possibly come in 2012. (Possibility)

  b. The doomsday will probably come next year. (Probability)

  c. The doomsday will certainly come on Friday. (Certainty)

Biber et al. (1999) state that 'shall' helps to express volitional meaning rather than prediction in both academic writing and rarely in conversation. In this case, it is generally used with a 1st person subject. Moreover, according to them, in older English, 'shall' was common in the second and third persons when the speaker wanted to show a strong emotion. Alexander, L.G. (2017) added that, 'shall' apart from its main use with I or we referring to the future, can be used for permissions and may also be given by a speaker in the 2nd and 3rd persons.

Use of *can* and *could* is related to the abilities, possibilities (epistemic modality) and permission (deontic modality). Scholars have different perspectives on the classification of *can* when it is related to the ability. Some scholars argue that can is epistemic (Perkins, 1983), while others suggest that can is non-epistemic. For instance, Coates (1983) remarks that *can* is deontic when it refers to the ability.

Coates regards ability as the core meaning, extending towards possibility as primitive and establish a cline of ability-oriented meanings as one moves towards the periphery. Again, Ngula (2012) analyzes the modal operator *will* under permission, intention, obligation and probability. In addition, Sakyi (2019) indicates that *can* is used to indicate ability and permission.

According to Hart (2010), a complete discourse analysis must necessarily express and function both as the production and interpretation of text, which 'entails a cognitive approach to discourse, accounting for meaning construction at both ends of the discourse process' (Hart, 2010, p. 23). This means that, in his view, the process of discourse analysis can be divided into three parts: text production; text itself; text interpretation.

By analyzing the forms of modality and the evidence given by the contexts in the text, we are able to identify the functions and expression of modality which the speaker or writer would like to convey through different forms of modality during the text production stage, namely the intentions or purposes of the speaker or writer.

Hart opines that, there is no doubt that every speaker has specific purposes in making a speech, and the speaker tends to make assumptions (consciously or unconsciously) that the choices of modality he or she makes or expresses can best achieve his or her purposes, even if the result is unclear.

Finally, according to Simpson (1993), expression and proposition of modality refer to the specific role's modality plays in academic discourse, such as 'expressing stance'. He further opines that, Modality has been studied widely in terms of stance from various perspectives, such as 'evaluation' (e.g., Thompson and Hunston 2000; Bednarik, 2006), 'appraisal' (e.g., Martin and White 2005), or 'epistemic stance' (e.g., Dancygier and Sweetser, 2000; Evans and Green, 2006) in discourse analysis.

Based on the above discussions, this study explored how the students used the core modal verbs to the expression of modal meanings: probability, certainty, obligation, permission, necessity, ability, possibility, prediction and obligation.

2.6 Characteristics of modal auxiliary verbs

Verbs in English, as well as in other languages form a large and versatile group that differs in meaning, in the forms they take, in independence, in features or characteristics and they can be divided into groups (Huddleston *et al.*, 2002 & Quirk *et al*., 1985). However, the number of the groups differs from author to author. The main reason for the differences in the classification is the point of view the grammarians take into account. For some of them, the most important factor of the classification is the meaning of the verbs. Others look at their morphological forms. Still, others look at their characteristics. Although there are so many differences, all grammarians agree that modal verbs form a distinctive verb group that play a different role in the verb phrase when compared with lexical (full) verbs (Huddleston *et al.*, 2002 & Quirk *et al*., 1985).

In this part, the researcher looked closely at the characteristics of modal verbs and some differences between modal verbs and non-modal verbs. Two representative sources of information were chosen. The first is a Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language written by Quirk *et al*. (1985) and the second is the Cambridge Grammar of the English Language written by Huddleston *et al.* (2002).

Generally, Huddleston et al. (2002) divide verbs into two main classes, these are lexical verbs and auxiliary verbs. The main criterion for this classification is the inflectional morphology and syntax of these verbs. Auxiliary verbs are divided into two classes. The first verb class is modal auxiliary verbs: *can, may, will, shall, must, ought to, need and dare*. The second verb class is non-modal auxiliary verbs: be, have and do.

27

Quirk et al. (1985) also classified verbs into three major categories. The decisive factor for this division is the verb's function within the verb phrase. There are: open class of full verbs (also lexical verbs), a closed class of primary verbs (be, have, do) and modal auxiliary verbs.

Modal auxiliary verbs are later divided into two groups: central modals and marginal modals. According to Quirk et al. (1985), both primary verbs (be, have, do) and modal auxiliary verbs, have something in common. Unlike the lexical verbs, these verbs are capable of functioning as auxiliaries ('helping verbs'); that is, the verbs contribute to the verb phrase in different way. Auxiliary verbs are somehow defective, that is they lack certain forms and tend to be semantically 'bleached' (Huddleston et al., 2002).

The authors further state that the general definition of auxiliary verbs is that they denote a closed class of verbs that are characteristically used as markers of tense, mood, aspect, and voice; that is, they are grammaticalized. In this way, they are distinguished from the modal verbs which are associated mainly with the expression of the modal meanings (possibility, obligation, volition).

According to Swan (1980), modal auxiliary verbs have more 'dictionary meaning' and they are not used to talk about things which are definitely happening, or have definitely happened. They are used when we say that we expect something to happen, or that the events are possible, or necessary, or improbable, or impossible, or we say that things did not happen, or that we are not sure whether they happened. Although auxiliary verbs vary in their function in the verb phrase, they share one important syntactic function – their ability to act as an operator. According to Quirk et al. (1985) the operator together with predication forms a predicate. The operator is defined as the first or the only auxiliary.

28

It has the crucial role in the formation of questions and negation. As mentioned before, both primary verbs and modal auxiliary verbs belong to the verb group with auxiliary function (Alexander, 2017). Even though they are members of one group, they differ in many aspects. Alexander further opines that structurally, modal auxiliaries resemble primary verbs be, have, do in some ways and differ from them in others.

Both, primary verbs as well as modal auxiliary verbs take the negative particle 'not' in negation and in questions, they take the pre-subject position. However, modal auxiliaries unlike primary auxiliaries are defective verbs because they lack some forms that ordinary lexical verbs have. Another important difference between the primary and modal auxiliaries is the number of verbs that may be combined in one verbal phrase (Alexander, 2017).

Huddleston et al. (2002) claim that the modal auxiliaries, unlike primary verbs, have no secondary inflectional forms, that is, to –infinitival, bare infinitival, and imperative construction. That is why they cannot occur in constructions that require them. Modal auxiliaries cannot occur either in the gerund participle or in the perfect participle.

Quirk et al. (1985) also took into accounts this criterion. Auxiliaries are optional but when used they have a fixed position in the sequence. Because of the fact that modal auxiliary verbs have only primary forms they can occur only as the first element of the verb phrase and they cannot combine, that is, there is a possibility to use only one modal auxiliary in the verb phrase that takes the initial position in the sequence.

Huddleston et al. (2002) described modal auxiliary verbs as the verb class which does not display the usual person-number agreement with the subject in the present

29

tense. The normal distinction between a 3rd person singular and plain present tense is therefore missing.

Beside the 3rd person inflection criterion, Quirk et al, also have independence of subject criterion which more or less covers with Huddleston *et al's* agreement criterion. Modal auxiliary verbs are not only formally "independent" of the subject but also semantically.

Quirk et al. (1985) reflects the independence of the modal verb in three ways. First, it does not matter whether the modal auxiliary verbs are used with animate or inanimate subjects, that is, there are not any semantic restrictions (boy and bus). With lexical verbs it is different; there are more restrictions in their use. Not all verbs can be freely used with every subject. Secondly, there is a possibility of the use of the existential constructions with modal auxiliaries. Also, there is a possibility of the change of the voice (active and passive) without the change of the meaning.

According to Huddleston et al. (2002), central modal auxiliary verbs: could, would, should and might can be used with the modal meaning without the grammatical restrictions that apply with other verbs. They gave the examples below.

> a) I wish you could move it.   I wish you were able to move it.
>
> b) Could you move it?   Were you able to move it?

In a) both verbs (could and were able to) are the complements of wish and they have the modal remoteness meaning. But in b), that is, in the main clause, the preterit of *be able to* indicates the past time only. *Could*, on the other hand, indicates the past time as well as the modally remote non-past time meaning.

Quirk et al. (1985, p. 137) introduces one more criterion that applies for the central modal auxiliaries. Some of the central modal verbs have past forms (could, would, should, might). These forms, however, do not have to refer to the past, but similar to the present forms, they may refer also to the present as well as to the future

30

(often with the hypothetical meaning) as in the example (a and b). Also, modal auxiliaries which do not have a distinct past form (must, need, ought) can be used to refer to the past in the indirect speech as in the example (e):

> a) I think he may or might retire next year.
>
> b) Will or would you phone him tomorrow?
>
> e) I told him he must be home early.

Another characteristic feature of the central modal verbs according to Huddleston et al. (2002) is their inability to accept bare infinitival complements only. Most verbs with infinitival complements take to-infinitives. Examples are seen in the sentences below:

> a) I want to go there with him.
>
> b) *I must to work. *I can to read.
>
> c) You will be asked questions.
>
> d) *You will to be asked questions.

In addition, we can distinguish a group of central modal auxiliaries. However, as it has been mentioned before, there are also other modal verbs that share some of these characteristics with the central modal verbs. Quirk et al. (1985) introduces four verb groups that are placed somewhere between the lexical verbs and central modal verbs. These are marginal modals, modal idioms, semi-auxiliaries and catenatives. They also have their distinctive syntactic characteristics that distinguish these auxiliaries from the lexical verbs. These features are also shared by the central modal verbs. Also, core modal verbs are the prototype of modal categories and belong to locked words (Baker, 2011 & Brezina, 2018).

Huddleston et al. (2002) introduces the acronym NICE that stands for Negation, Inversion, Code and Emphasis. These are four non-canonical constructions that are not

found with lexical verbs, but they are found only with auxiliaries. Unlike lexical verbs, auxiliaries have the ability to create a negative form, that is to take the negative particle (not). Lexical verbs do not have this ability, so they have to take an operator to form a negative form.

Quirk et al. (1985) states that modal auxiliaries, as operators, admit inversion, that is, the subject noun phrase and the auxiliary (the first auxiliary if there are more than one) change places in some constructions, especially in the interrogative sentences.

Another characteristic feature of modal auxiliary verbs according to Huddleston et al. (2002) is their use in elliptical constructions. Quirk et al. (1985) proposes that in this case auxiliaries function as the operator. They are used in reduced clauses as they reply to the question where the main verb is omitted. On the other hand, a more likely reply would be the elliptical construction. Another type of reduced constructions are the clauses with so, neither, here the reduced clause also contains only an operator without main verb. Huddleston et al. (2002) refers to it as "stranding", that is, the verbs are left on their own before the site of ellipsis. In the example, d) the lexical verb help was left unexpressed but its semantic content is recoverable from the context.

a) Won't you try it again? Yes, I will [try again].

b) Can you drive a car? No, I can 't [drive a car].

c) Ann will stay and so will Barbara.

d) Ann won't stay and neither will Barbara.

e) Pat [can help him too]. I can help him and Pat.

Quirk et al. (1985, p. 124) also refers to modal auxiliaries as operators that can carry nuclear stress to mark sentence as positive rather than negative as in, (a). Lexical verbs in this case use the operator do as in (b). Huddleston et al. (2002, p. 98) talks about emphatic positives and emphatic negatives. Emphatic positives very often serve

32

to contrast the positive with the contrasting negative proposition that has been expressed in the preceding discourse as in (c). In negative emphatic polarity the stress is placed on the negative element as in (d).

> a) Won't you try again? Yes, I will try again.
>
> b) You did speak to her? ['I thought you didn't].
>
> c) That's not true: I will be there.
>
> d) You're wrong. I did not move it.

Palmer (2013) lists criteria which characterize modal verbs, be, have, and do and it is used to distinguish auxiliaries from full verbs.

> A) Negation, as in he will not work.
>
> B) Inversion with the subject in interrogation, as in Will he work?
>
> C) Code (the use of the auxiliary to avoid repetition of the whole verb phrase), as in She will study, and so will he.
>
> D) Emphatic affirmation, as in you must speak to the teacher.

According to palmer, 'secondary auxiliary has certain principal features in which it significantly differs from the full verb and also from its relative, the primary auxiliary verb. Those features are at both morphosyntactic and semantic levels' (Palmer 2001, p. 15). He added that they have no non-finite forms (present participle, past participle or infinitive). Thus, "they cannot appear in places in the verb phrase where one of these forms would be required. "(Palmer 2001, p. 100).

Moreover, 'one of the linguistic characteristics of conversation involving modality (and other spoken registers) is the use of contracted forms' (Biber & Conrad, 2009, p. 90). There is also the use of contracted form for core modal verbs: 'll (from the full form *will* and *shall)* in the textbook, indicating that basically spoken language

deals with efficiency, hence reduced forms are more preferable to minimize articulation (Crystal, 2008 & Rogerson, 2006).

Therefore, the current study, explored how the students used modal auxiliary verbs such as: *could, would, should, might* etc. to communicate modal meaning without the grammatical restriction. Also, analyzed meanings communicated by contracted and negative form of core modal verbs in the data.

2.7 Modality and Future Tense

Comrie (1989) indicates that, one major issue in the interface between modality and tense is the semantics of future tenses, particularly English 'will'. He defends the existence of future tenses, and the temporal semantics of 'will' and states that many authors have argued that 'will' has partly or even primarily modal semantics, and some have insisted that it is not a tense at all.

According to him, the suspicion that 'will' expresses modality in addition to, or instead of, tense arises from a number of observations, including the fact that diachronically, the futurate use of 'will' grew out of its modal use to indicate desire or willingness.

Comrie (1989) defends the conventional view of futures as tenses rather than modal categories, arguing that the mere fact that a category also has modal semantics does not mean that it is not a future tense. Regarding the diachronic evidence, he argues that while future time reference develops from morphology originally expressing desiderative and deontic modality, epistemic modality tends to develop out of the future uses rather than the reverse.

Comrie strikes down a number of non-arguments that there is no such thing as a future tense, including: the lesser certainty of future events (the fact that future events are less certain does not mean language has to encode them that way); the fact that

34

future is marked formally in a different way than other tenses (there is no necessary one-to-one correspondence between semantic category and morphological expression); and the fact that "future" forms often encode some sort of modality in addition to simple future time reference (future time reference is still a core part of modal uses of the future).

However, Enc (1996) argues that the so-called "future" in English is one hundred percent modal, and not temporal at all; he objects to the circularity of Comrie's claim that 'will' is a tense because its "basic meaning" is temporal. He Points out several clearly modal uses of 'will 'and its ability to express epistemic modality. In addition, Werner (2006) treats 'will as' a future-oriented modal rather than as a future tense. He argues that the future interpretation of 'will', and of non-epistemic (root) modals in general, arises from a semantic constraint he calls, the Disparity Principle: there must be some identifiable difference between worlds in the modal base, since the proposition under the modal cannot be universally true or universally false in all the worlds in the modal base (or else a modal would not be used).

In his view the Disparity Principle, together with an assumption of branching worlds, explain the future interpretations of root modals: modals involve a totally realistic modal base up to the time of speech, after which the possible worlds diverge. By the Disparity Principle, the worlds in the modal base are required to differ from each other in some way; by the assumption of branching futures, these worlds differ from each other only after the moment of utterance. A future interpretation falls out as a result.

The arguments reviewed here make it impossible to deny that future tenses, at least in English, partially modal in their semantics. By virtue of its syntactic and semantic parallels with other modals, as well as the inherent uncertainty of the future,

35

that is, the multiplicity of possible worlds that correspond to future times 'will' clearly patterns with modality in many respects.

Again, Comrie (1989) raises valid points in defense of the temporality of future tenses, including 'will', to which one might add the counter intuitiveness of classifying the only grammaticalized expression of futurity in English as fundamentally non-temporal. However, it seems likely that even this argument based on native speaker intuitions will not hold up: when a situation is really certain to occur at a future time, English allows the use of futurates, in which the simple present or present progressive makes an assertion about a future time.

Also, Copley (2005) proposes a modal semantics for futurate sentences in English, focusing on futurate progressives (e.g., I'm leaving at six tomorrow). She builds on the intuitions that futurates entail a plan, and that such a plan must involve the desires of some entity that has the ability to carry it out. She demonstrates that futurates cannot actually assert the existence of such a plan, and furthermore that speaker confidence that the plan will be carried out is not an adequate semantics for futurates.

Copley analyzes futurates as presupposing that a certain "director," the individual(s) responsible for the plan, has the ability to make the proposition become true, while asserting that the director is "committed" to making that proposition happen. "Commitment" is here used in a specific, modal sense, based on theory of modality: it reflects the director's desires in the best possible worlds according to the modal base (which may be metaphysical) and ordering source (which must take into account possibly conflicting desires on the part of the "director," weighted according to how much she or he wants each one).

36

In its focus on planning, Copley's analysis asserts the situation with greater certainty than will, as well as asserting that the situation is planned; the futurate progressive, conveys the plan without the certainty. The convincing analysis of futurates as a temporally-oriented modal with stronger modal force than the future "tense" provides additional evidence that future time is at the interface of tense and modality.

Condoravdi (2006) further probe these associations of past tense (or time) with certainty, future tense (or time) with uncertainty, and futurates with both certainty (which they call "settledness") and planning. They bring up the oft-ignored fact which Werner (2006), for instance, fails to explain that this settledness reading of futurates arises only with eventive predicates. They argue that settledness, which they assign its own operator, is in fact a property of sentences in all tenses; in the past and in stative presents, however, this reading is masked by the fact that all worlds in the set of historical alternatives are identical up to the relevant time (e.g., the moment of speech).

According to them, in futurates, the settledness reading probably arises from the inherent unknowability of the future, combined with the speaker's willingness to assert the situation despite that uncertainty. Modality is thus associated with all propositions and all tenses, with the particularly modal flavor of futurates falling out from independent factors.

They again explain that, Evidence for scopal interactions between modality and tense provides the most convincing argument for treating modality as a sentence-level operator. At the same time, differences between epistemic and non-epistemic (root) modality with regard to their scopal interaction with tense, have given rise to syntactic analyses in which these two classes of modals occupy different positions in the clause.

37

Condoravdi (2006) proposes a compositional semantic account of the differences in interpretation of "modals for the present" vs. "modals for the past." Modals of the present include may, must, might, should, and ought to; in modals of the past, a modal of the present is followed by the perfect morpheme have (e. g. should have, might have). The two types differ both temporally and in terms of the type of modal readings they can receive.

Regarding tense, modals for the present can have either a future or present reading, while modals for the past are only compatible with past frame adverbials; regarding modality, both types can receive an epistemic reading, but only modals for the past can have counterfactual readings, while only modals for the present can have metaphysical ones. To account for these differences, he crucially assumes that both modality and tense are operators that can scope over each other; for instance, the epistemic and counterfactual ambiguity of modals for the past arises from different scope options between the perfect and modal operators.

Palmer (2001) defines modality as semantic information associated with the speaker's attitude or opinion about what is said. Palmer indicates that *will* and *shall* are usually used to mark future time and modality. He treats mood and modality as two opposite categories- the former is grammatical whereas the latter is semantic.

"Modality in English is defined in terms of the modal auxiliaries, we *shall,* by including *will,* have to include within the system of modality both futurity, which seems to belong more to the system of tense, and volition, which has little in common with the more obvious modal concepts of possibility and necessity, but belongs more with the verbs of wanting, hoping, etc. which are essentially lexical rather than grammatical in English." (Palmer, 1979, p. 2: 1969) From this citation, we can see Palmer's

perspectives on modality. He argues that modality deals with possibility and necessity as well as future.

Moreover, Palmer (2001, p. 1) considers modality as grammatical category similar to tense and aspect in that "all three are, in some way, concerned with the event or situation that is reported by the utterance." While tense is used to set an event, action, state etc. in a certain time such as the present, the past or the future, and aspect deals with the duration or frequency of an event. Palmer states that" modality is concerned with the status of the proposition that describes the future event.

Another important aspect to consider is the close relationship between modality and futurity. Palmer (2001, p. 104) states that it is "not surprising that modal verbs should have future time reference. The future is not fully known and it is always no more than a reasonable assumption that a future event will ensue."

Again, Palmer (2001) and Kennedy (2002) assert that an analysis of *will* in a corpus of spoken language (the London-Lund Corpus) reveals that it is more frequently used in speech than in writing". *Will* in English is used to state propositions about the future in the second and third persons but express the willingness, desire or intention in the first person. Moreover, in Legal English *shall* is considered to be the most frequent means of deontic modality (Bazlik and Ambrus 2009; Cooper 2011 & Krapivkina, 2017).

Acquah (2022) employed habitual prediction, specific prediction, and the general prediction when he discusses the use of the modal operator *will* in Ghanaian English and indicates that habitual prediction, specific prediction, and the general prediction are used to show what happens in future. Also, *would* refer to habitual past of *will* (Whorter, 2018). Darragh (2000) also states that *shall* and *will* are synonymous in expressing futurity.

This current study focused on how the students of Nkenkaasu Senior High School used *shall, will etc.* to express future tense and as epistemic, deontic and dynamic modalities in their essay writing.

2.8 Challenges about the uses of Modal Verbs

As useful as modal verbs are in communication, including academic and scientific writing, they are not easy to learn or to use appropriately for non-native speakers of English (Gibbs, 1990). English second language learners may have a relatively simple time learning the surface positions of modal verbs but may have a bigger problem recognizing and using modal verbs properly with respect to their underlying meaning (Cook, 1978). Ferris (2002) adds that in Language learning, verb forms related to modals are problematic to both first (L1) and second language (L2) speakers.

According to (Holmes, 1988), One problem with modal verbs and all expressions of modality is that the linguistic forms do not have a one-to-one relationship with meaning. Furthermore, categories involved in expressing modal meaning are not clear, but rather are better understood as degrees of certainty or epistemic commitment to the validity of a proposition. In view of Thompson (2002), modals as a complex entity and that it is not easy to package the complexity into meaningful chunks of information to be presented to students.

Also, having students of mixed abilities and mixed interests in a classroom has resulted in difficulties for some language teachers when teaching modal verbs (Vethamani, 2001). Byrd (2004) discusses the teaching and learning of modals from the easy item to the more difficult ones. However, she discusses that there is a problem in deciding what is difficult and what is easy and to whom it is difficult or easy also needs to be considered.

Moreover, Hawanum (2004), opines that ESL teachers, being L2 speakers themselves, are often not certain as to how to go about teaching grammar(modality) to their students. He added that, they are not sure how much detail should go into explaining grammatical items (modal verbs). In English language teaching and learning, it is then also crucial to consider the use of modal verbs and materials used in teaching modal verbs since they are one of the most problematic grammatical units (Mukundan & Khojasteh, 2011; Romer, 2004).

Another challenge for non-native speakers is the fact that the use of modality, like other pragmatic features, is culturally determined. Since epistemic modality is used both to express the speaker's perspective about a proposition, as well as deference to one's addressee, students need to develop socio-cultural sensitivity to learn to use it appropriately (Holmes, 1983).

Not only do learners struggle with using modal forms and use some most often than others, but also with recognizing their meaning and range of meanings in reading and writing, causing confusion between accepted facts and objective statements, especially in scientific writing (Adams, 1984). Also, Lightbown (2000, p. 54) suggested that most important personality factors that influence the acquisition and the study of modality are: introversion or extroversion, self-esteem, inhibition, risk-taking, anxiety and empathy.

Hyland and Milton (1997, p. 151), 'argues that studies of second language writing and text have noted that non-native speaker's academic prose often creates an impression of a high degree of certainty'. According to them among other textual features that convey an exaggerated degree of definiteness is the fact that second language writing employs significantly more markers of the future tense and ignore other markers than native speakers' college-level writing does. For example, the

41

differences in the degree of certainty and definiteness expressed by means of the future marker *will* and the modal verbs *may and can* is readily apparent in the following contrasting sentences:

a) when goals are hard to define, managers *may* tell employees to do their best.

b) when goals are hard to define, managers *can* tell employees to do their best

c) when goals are hard to define, managers *will* tell employees to do their best.

In composition writing, the line between the meanings of modals of possibility, necessity, and prediction can be blurred (Raimes, 1992). However, in general terms, in second language academic writing modal verbs can be used effectively to moderate claims and avoid strong predictions and implications of certainty.

The meaning differences among modals largely deal with the degree of certainty, probability, and or possibility. For instance, *will* refers to the future with a high degree of certainty, and *may* indicates a possibility. Therefore, because the function of *will* is to predict the future, unless the writer can assure the reader of the outcome certainty, the uses of the future tense in academic texts is considered to be somewhat inappropriate (Biber, 1988).

Analyses of academic corpora have shown that *can and may* are by far the most common modals, whereas *must, should*, and have to are less frequent as are *will and would* (Biber et al., 1999 & Hyland, 1998). For this reason, when teaching modal verbs as hedges, it is important to concentrate on the contextual meanings of only some, but not necessarily all modal verbs.

Furthermore, recent corpus-based research by Leech (2003) has demonstrated that over the past decades the so-called core modals have decreased in frequency in both written and spoken English. However, an analysis of the graphs in Aarts and Wallis (2011) reveals that of all the core modals, 'should' has demonstrated a relatively small decline in usage, especially compared to such verbs as *would, may or must*, all of which have significantly declined in frequency. As such, *should* remains a stable element of the English language system.

They argue that modal verbs cause difficulties for non-native speakers. They suggest that many of the modals originally possess the same qualities as other ordinary verbs, however, these verbs have developed into a specialized category with distinctive features and functions. Nowadays modals embody a specific group and, according to Jacobs and Roderick, one may doubt whether they still can be counted in the category ″verb″.

They make a distinction between core modals and periphrastic modals. Core modals are composed of only one word, such as *can, must, will or shall*. On the other hand, periphrastic modals are groups of compound verbs that have a meaning similar to modals, such as being able to, be allowed to, have (got) to or be going to. Core modals are not marked for agreement. They do not receive any marking for person or number, but like other verbs they do carry tense features. Periphrastic modals tend to only have one shade of meaning, while simple modals generally have several different meanings.

Palmer (1979, p. 2) argues that "There is, perhaps, no area of English grammar that is both more important and more difficult than the system of the modals." He defines modality based on the relations between modality and modals, and further remarks that modals and modality have the same relations as form and meaning have. Palmer added that the semantics study of the modal verbs is, "extremely messy" and

43

"untidy" (Palmer, 1979, p. 2). According to him, this is the cause of the underuse of modal verbs among non-native speakers and the grammatical errors they make as they attempt to use them.

Perkins (1983) also states that "secondary modals (past form: could, would and might) contain much more modal meanings than the primary ones (present form: can, will and may)". Not familiar with these two secondary modals, senior high school students feel safe to use more simple primary ones, avoiding the risk of making grammatical mistakes. Reppen et al. (2002) adds that part of the difficulty of English modal verbs for linguists and language learner is that, although the modals are few, they have similar core meanings.

In the nutshell, the present study analyzed how the challenges to the study of modality and other factors have brought about the underuse of modality and problems associated with it among the students of Nkenkaasu Senior High School in their writing.

2.9 Previous Studies

One of the studies in the concern of grammar is entitled "investigating the Difficulties in Using and Understanding Central Modal Auxiliary Verbs conducted by Meshkat (2016). The study was conducted at Sudan University of Science and Technology. The main question of this study was (To what extents do EFL learners find difficulties in Using and understanding English central modal verbs?). The study hypotheses that learners find difficulties in understanding and using some modal verbs and they could not differentiate between these verbs and their functions.

The study found out that the students overgeneralize the rules of central modal verbs when they want to express their ability. It also found that some of the students are unfamiliar with the rule of modal verbs as the ones who use (must) for permission.

44

In addition to the above findings, it was noticed that some of the students used only one modal auxiliary verb for all occasions as well as a very important finding that the majority of the students are at risk of making interference while studying second language by using the rules of their first language in dealing with English language. In her study, the researcher recommends the students to deeply concentrate on practicing modal verbs and identifying the different functions that could be attained by using such verbs.

Another study was conducted by Aziz (2009) at the University of Sharjah under the title " learners' acquisition of modals". He reported in his study that the Arab EFL learners' acquisition of modal verbs is hindered by many difficulties at the mastery of modals at the levels of both recognition and production. The study posed the question that stated (How well can learners of English language select the proper modal verb to express certain function?).

The findings of his study show that the overall performance of the subjects in the study was quite low especially in the overlap in meaning and function that exists among most modals emerged as one of the major difficulties resulting in the misuse of modals. The study also found that the lack of an equivalent modal verbs system in the first language contributes to the difficulty encountered by learners when learning modals of the English language, especially, the pre-advanced stages of learning the language.

So, the research recommended that the learners should be exposed to a great deal of contextualized situations that enable them to decipher the subtle nuances that modals, and particularly those that tend to overlap, can convey and that the teachers and textbooks should raise the level of students 'consciousness to the importance of modals in daily communication. Teachers should alert learners to the negative

consequences of misusing modals. For instance, they could show them how a misuse of a modal can result in altering the meaning intended.

Vethamani (2008) conducted a qualitative study that aimed at investigating the use of modal verbs at the syntactic and semantic levels. The researcher used discourse analysis to analyze the data. The sample consisted of 210 narrative compositions written by students in the Malaysian school system. The research findings showed that *can, will and could* were more frequently in two levels. Modals of probability and possibility showed lower frequencies of use in the writing. A total of 386 counts of the modals identified were syntactically accurate and only 40 were not. Most Malaysian ESL learners were able to use appropriate verb forms on their own, but when a modal was present, meaning became indefinite in some sentences and the verb form tended to be incorrect.

Saeed (2009) investigated the extent to which university Arab learners of English have mastered modals at the levels of recognition and production. The researcher used a questionnaire, which comprises two versions, testing students' mastery of modals at the levels of both recognition and production. The sample of the study consisted of 50 English major university students. The results of the study showed that the performance of the students in both forms of the measuring instrument was low.

The function of requesting emerging as the most difficult for learners. On the other hand, the function of offer and permission received the highest number of correct responses. The function of possibility received a low rate of correct responses; it ranked second in terms of difficulty with a percentage of correct answers as low as 57.5%. The functions of offering and permission ranked the highest with 77% of correct responses.

Close and Aarts (2010) investigated *must*, *have to and have got to* in Present-Day British English (1960s–1990s). The sample consisted of 421,362 words from the

British component of the International Corpus of English collected in the early 1990s and 464,074 words from the London Corpus collected between the late 1960s and early 1980s. The corpus was explored by using the International Corpus of English Corpus Utility Program software.

In their study, the researchers found that a dramatic decrease in frequency of the core modal *must* and a significant increase in the frequency of the semi-modal have to in the Diachronic Corpus of Present-Day Spoken English. Changes in the modal system affect both epistemic and root uses of *must*, although have to was only an active rival to root must; epistemic instances of have to (and have got to) were rare in the corpus.

Kader et al. (2013) investigated the Malaysian ESL learners' use of modals in their written task. The sample of this study consisted of 406, 500 words. The researchers used discourse analysis to analyze the data. The results of the study showed that *can, could and should* were the most common modals. They found too; students used each modal to perform different functions in their argumentative compositions.

Furthermore, Orlando (2009) investigated the using of modal verbs in a corpus of written English (BNCW) and in a corpus of spoken English (BNCS). The sample consisted of 254,237 words. The results of the study showed that *can and will* were the two most frequent modal verbs in the textbook corpus. The researcher found that the frequencies of modal verb patterns in the textbook corpus were similar to those in spoken English.

Moreover, one of the quantitative research dealings with the modal verb *can, will, would* for the expression of: possibility, obligation, permission, ability, necessity and probability was conducted (Smutna, 2010). The sample of this research consisted of 45 newspaper reports. The findings of the research showed that 63 occurrences

47

represented the possibility meaning, 26 represented the ability meaning, and 4 occurrences represented the permission meaning.

Furthermore, Shaoyun (2013) conducted research about the use of modality among Chinese students in their writing and found out that modal underuse of modality among Chinese students was as a result of the fact that, the students were not introduced to modality early in their syllabus.

Hanaa (2019) conducted research on Exploring the difficulties of Using English Modal Auxiliaries among the Tertiary Level Students. He indicated from his study that; the modal auxiliaries constitute difficulties to the students in forming the correct structure of the sentences because they carry a functional role in producing correct structure. It is clear from his analysis that the incorrect answers ranged between 60% to 70%. This gives a clear picture to the readers that English modals cause some difficulty in dealing with English language grammar.

In the second part of his test (True/ False) question, the students find difficulties in differentiating between the modal verbs to the extents that they do not know the functions of each verb. This led to the use of (may) instead of using (would) for expressing polite request. It is clear from his data analysis that over 60% of the students were encountered by difficulties in using and understanding the modal auxiliaries. This could be reached at from the performance of the students in the test.

Using modals is to some extent problematic in the sense that the majority of the respondents in his study perform badly. Some of them could not differentiate between the modals in terms of functions and usage. Some auxiliary modals like (should and would) were used differently in different positions. If we take for example the expression [would you mind…], we come to know that it is used for polite request.

However, (should) which is used for expressing advice and obligation has a completely different role to carry within the sentence.

The third part of the test included a number of modal verbs (may) (could) (must) (might) and (should) to be used to complete the spaces in the paragraph. It was clear from his study that the inability of the students in identifying the functions and uses of these modal verbs resulted in the weak performance in that the correct answers ranges between 42% to 47% for the majority of the students. This means that such a test uncovers the problematic areas in using modal verbs in English. He concluded from his study that the use of modal verbs poses problems to the students in their grammar usage.

Furthermore, there has been some progress in the research into the semantic and pragmatic functions of modal verbs. For example, Xie (2009) found that the "obligative" meaning of *must* occurred more frequently than the epistemic meaning. On the different meanings of *must, can, and could*, Zhang (2013) claimed that the meaning of *must* as "obligation" and the meaning of *can and could* as "ability" tended to be overused in learner's written work. Ji and Lu (2008) obtained similar findings on *must and can* and also indicate that dynamic *could* is used more frequently in writing.

Some corpus-based studies on textbooks (Arellano, 2018; Burton, 2012; Cheng & Warren, 2007; Leung, 2016; Norberg & Nordlund, 2018; Phoocharoensil, 2017 & Yoo, 2000) prove that textbooks lack what it is used in real English. Focusing on modal verbs, they have been specifically studied by Khojasteh and Kafipour (2012), claiming that the presentation of modal verbs in textbooks is not in accordance with the real use of modal verbs.

In addition, Collins, (2006) and Gilmore, (2004) conducted a study and found out that some mismatches between the language used in textbooks and the 'real' use of

English. In other words, according to them, the language used in textbooks does not correspond to how English is actually used; for instance, the textbook conversations do not represent the actual English conversation.

Again, some scholars examined modal verbs in textbooks and grammar books and the results of their study indicated that the presentation of modal verbs in both textbooks and grammar books were not sufficient to cover the complex semantic and pragmatic aspects of the modal verbs (Orlando, 2009; Nordberg, 2010; Mukundan & Khojasteh, 2011; Khojasteh & Kafipour, 2012 & Nozawa, 2014).

Many researchers focused on cross-cultural studies of modal verbs used in English and other languages, exploring how academic writers use different modal verbs from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. For instance, Carrio-Pastor (2014) aimed to identify how language variation could be determined in Spanish and English communication when writers use modal verbs of possibility and ability with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Recent studies by Lee (2013), Hinkel (2013), Huschova (2015) and Yang (2018) have focused on the use of modal verbs in native speakers academic writing.

It could be said that the studies above have something in common with the study under discussion. That is to say, they have nearly similar objectives and questions. This makes some sort of emphasis to the importance of using of modal verbs. Some of the studies above aimed to identify the difficulties in using modal verbs in English Language that affect their study of grammar, to identify frequent use of modal verbs and type of modal verbs used, which are all common to the to the present study.

However, the present study is different from others because it used qualitative approach and interview as instrument while others used quantitative approach and

50

questionnaire as instruments. Moreover, the findings of the current study about the frequent use of modal verbs such as *will* and *could* is different from others.

The review of studies which were conducted on the use of modal verbs and modality, provided the researcher with valuable and sufficient literature for this study. As a matter of fact, these rich studies enabled the researcher to form the questions for the present study and paved the way for the researcher to follow a certain methodology.

2.10 Theoretical framework of modality

This section discusses the analytical framework of modality. It also discusses the functions in investigating students' writing. It was done by discussing the author whose work served as fulcrum to this study; and to the least extent, engaged other authors who have equally studied modality in order to justify my choice of a particular framework.

Palmer (2001) analytical framework of modality is the underpinning framework for this study. His views on: the definition of modality, frequency of modality, classifications of modalities, modal meanings or functions, factors for underuse of modality as well as problems he assigns to the underuse modality.

Palmer (2001) defines modality as the expression of the attitude of the speaker, or the expression of subjectivity and the speaker's opinions and emotions. This definition has been augmented by Narrog (2002, p. 1) who states that 'modality is the expression of the attitude of the speaker, or the expression of subjectivity and the speaker's opinions and emotions.

Palmer (2001) framework of modality classifies modality into three types: epistemic modality, deontic modality and dynamic modality. He explains that epistemic modality expresses the speaker's opinion about a statement, and it is concerned with the necessary and the possible truth value of propositions. Deontic

51

modality is concerned with obligation and permission, and dynamic modality predicts something about the subject of the sentence. He added that epistemic modals with the preposition may be marked as past time, by using have. With deontic modals, modality and preposition can't be marked for past time. With dynamic modals only the modality *can,* can be used to mark for past time.

According to him, the basic distinction between deontic modality and dynamic modality, is 'the status of the conditioning factors' to the person indicated as the subject. In terms of deontic modality, he posits that they are external when the person is permitted, ordered, allowed etc., to act, whereas with the dynamic modality, they are internal when the person is able, willing (Palmer, 2001, p. 70).

Palmer's classifications and meanings, he assigns to the type of modality is augmented by Huddleston (2002) who makes the distinction between three types of modalities: epistemic modality, deontic modality and dynamic modality. He explains that epistemic modality has as its basis of what the speaker knows about the world, while deontic modality calls for an action to be taken, and dynamic modality indicates that an individual is capable of doing a particular action when the circumstances arise.

According to Portner (2009), whereas epistemic modality involves knowledge, deontic modality concerns with moral evaluations concerning right and wrong based on certain rules. Again, Narrog (2012) proposes a two-dimensional classification from the standpoint of cross-linguistic: one, volitive modality and non-volitive modality; two, speech act-oriented modality and event-oriented modality.

He further classifies modality into nine categories: Epistemic Modality; Deontic Modality; Teleological Modality; Preferential Modality; Boulomaic Modality; Participant-internal Modality; Circumstantial Modality; Existential Modality; Evidential Modality (Narrog 2012, p. 8). Narrog's classification provides essential

52

evidence for this research, particularly for the concepts of volitive modality and speech act-oriented modality. However, for the purpose of this research, I dwelled on the two-dimensional classification driven by cross-linguistic approach focusing on the traditional categorizations, namely: epistemic modality, deontic modality and dynamic modality as indicated by Palmer.

In order to group similar modal meanings into appropriate categories and meticulously investigate their functions convey by students in their writings, modality in this study is put into three groups; viz, epistemic modality, deontic modality and dynamic modality.

The point of departure is that there has been no consensus on the classification of modality in semantic studies save epistemic modality, deontic modality and dynamic modality. Thus, previous studies show that epistemic modality, deontic modality and dynamic modality categories are non-controversial; unlike notions such as root modality, volitional modality, evidential modality, preferential modality etc., which are still controversial.
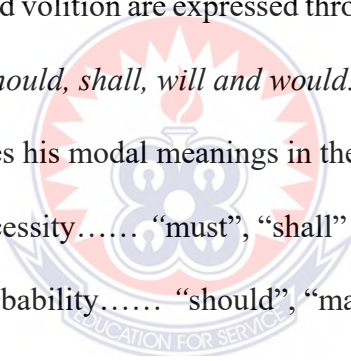
Palmer (2001) suggests that the modals more commonly used in English are: *may, might, will, would, shall, should, can, could, and must*. However, other modals used less frequently are had *better, have to, need,* and *dare.* He indicates that among all the nine core modal verbs, *will*, is most frequently used in writing.

According to Palmer (2001), an interesting fact about the meaning of modality is that it tends to be expressed by a single class of modal expression in the languages of the world. Probably, the set of items for which this claim has been most extensively illustrated, is the set of English modal verbs, mainly: *must, may, might, can, could, should, shall, will* and *would* to the expression of probability, necessity, possibility, ability, futurity, obligation and permission.

Palmer, sees modality as semantic information associated with the speaker's attitude or opinion about what is said. He indicates that *will and shall* are usually used to mark future time and modality. According to him, Modality in English is defined in terms of the modal auxiliaries, we shall, by including will, have to include within the system of modality both futurity, which seems to belong more to the system of tense, and volition, which has little in common with the more obvious modal concepts of possibility and necessity, but belongs more with the verbs of wanting, hoping, etc. which are essentially lexical rather than grammatical in English.

His view about the meaning of modality is augmented by Barbiers (2005), who states that the concepts of probability, possibility, necessity and the related notions of permission, obligation, and volition are expressed through the use of modal verbs: *must, may, might, can, could, should, shall, will and would.*

Palmer (2001) summarizes his modal meanings in the following way:

  a. necessity…… "must", "shall" and "will"

  b. probability…… *"should"*, "may" and "must"

  c. possibility……. "may", "might", "can", and "could

  d. permission…... "may", "might", "can", and "could

  e. obligation……. "should", "ought", and "must

  f. prediction…… "should", "would" "will", ''shall''

  g. ability………. may", "might", "can", and "could"

Furthermore, in palmer's framework of modality, he states the factors as to the cause of the underuse of modal verbs. He argues that "There is, perhaps, no area of English grammar that is both more important and more difficult than the system of the modals." Palmer (20001, p. 2). He defines modality based on the relations between modality and modals, and further remarks that modals and modality have the same

relations as form and meaning have. Palmer added that the semantics study of the modal verbs is, extremely messy and untidy. According to Palmer, the complex system of modality is the cause of the underuse of modal verbs among non-native speakers and the grammatical errors they make as they attempt to use the. Furthermore, Palmer states in his framework that the real problem with modality is that there is no clear basic feature.

Palmer (20001, p. 2) calls attention to the fact that 'the modal system of most familiar languages...is formally associated...with the verbal system of the language. But modality...does not relate semantically to the verb alone or primarily, but to the whole sentence. Not surprisingly, therefore, there are languages, in which modality is marked elsewhere than on the verb or within a verbal complex.'

In support of his framework, Holmes (2003) opines that one problem with modal verbs and all expressions of modality that brings about underuse of some central modal verbs is that, the linguistic forms do not have a one-to-one relationship with meaning. Furthermore, categories involved in expressing modal meanings are not clear, but rather are better understood as degrees of certainty or epistemic commitment to the validity of a proposition.

Palmer (2001) states that, other factors such as local transfer of modal verbs, cultural differences and many others are some factors that underpin the underuse of some core modal verbs among non-native speakers of English Language. Palmer, concludes that the underuse of modality among students is the reason for the grammatical errors non-native speakers make in their speech and in their writing.

Huddleston (2001) used Palmer's (2001) framework of modality to investigate modals in a corpus of written scientific English texts. The sample consisted of 135,000 words from 27 texts. The researcher found that17% of all finite verbs in the data

contained modal verbs. The researcher found that modal verbs were used to express certain meanings such as ability, Obligation, permission and necessity. Huddleston's study revealed that *will and would* were generally regarded as markers of prediction. He identified three major uses of *will,* namely futurity relative to present, induction and deduction.

Moreover, Palmer's (2001) framework of modality was used by Lexi (2021) to study the developmental Patterns of English Modal Verbs in the Writings of Chinese Learners of English.

Finally, Kareem (2021) used palmer's theory of modality when he conducted research about the participants use of modal auxiliary verbs in academic essay writing.

Palmer (2001) modality framework is the underpinning framework for this study because one, it is more inclusive and useful in practice, essentially in investigating the use of modality among students and the meanings communicated by students through writings. Two, his discussions about frequency of modality shows useful insights for the study of modality (Zhongyi, 2015); as such, it enabled me to do in-dept discussion about core modal verbs used by students of Nkenkaasu Senior High School through their writings.

Furthermore, Palmer's framework is essential by the fact that it is more plausible in demarcating the categories of modality and provides some useful implications for the classification of modality in this research, especially analyzing students' use of modality and the functions they communicate. Moreover, the factors he assigns to the causes of underuse of modality is also useful to this current study.

In conclusion, despite the broad area modality covers, the investigations into this phenomenon, that is, the use of modality by senior high school students in Ghana are generally rare. Against this backdrop, the present study sought to explore the use of

modality among Senior High School Students in Ghana, focusing on Nkenkaasu Senior High School.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

Good academic research depends on good methodological application. Research methodology is one of the important aspects of academic researches that determines a successful research work. A methodology is simply the processes and procedures that one employed in collecting and analyzing data of a particular phenomenon. This chapter is therefore devoted to the procedure used in data collection and analysis of the study.

The chapter is split into two parts. Although, Dornyei (2007, p. 124) believes that, 'a Qualitative data collection and analysis are often circular and frequently overlap.' The first part reports on the data collection: type of research design that was used for the study, the population for the study, the sample and sampling procedures, types of data collected, and the instruments that were used in the data collection process. While the second part reports on the procedures used to analyze and interpret the data for the study.

3.1 Data collection procedures and Data types

This part of the chapter discusses the research design, study area, the population of the study, sample and sampling technique, data collection method and instruments.

3.1.1 Research Approach

The study was rooted in the qualitative research paradigm. Qualitative methodology is dialectic and interpretive. This type of research refers to inductive, emic, holistic, subjective and process-oriented methods used to understand, interpret, describe and develop theory on a phenomenon or a setting (Morse & Field, 1995). The

58

process of qualitative research approach is, as Burns and Grove (1999, p. 35) define it "as a systematic, subjective approach used to describe life experiences and give them meaning." It is, therefore, the methods and techniques of observing, documenting, analyzing, and interpreting attributes, patterns, characteristics and meanings of specific, contextual or gestalt features of a phenomenon. This means that the description of qualitative research as modes of systematic inquiry is concerned with understanding human beings and the nature of their transactions with themselves and with their surroundings (Benoliel, 1984 as cited in Brink & Wood, 1998).

According to Dornyei (2007), Qualitative research involves data collection procedures that result primarily in open-ended, non-numerical data which is then analyzed primarily by non-statistical methods. Typical example: document analysis, interview research, with the transcribed recordings analyzed by qualitative content analysis.

Traditionally, many researchers in discourse studies have adopted methods of qualitative research (see e.g., Fairclough 2001, 2003; Fowler 1991 & van-Dijk 1988). There are several advantages to qualitative research in academic discourse studies: First, there are fewer restrictions for the form or amount of data in qualitative research. Second, qualitative research enables us to study the context of the data, which is essential for academic discourse analysis.

Third, qualitative research allows us to study a great variety of data in terms of differences.

Four, the qualitative research admits the researchers to discover the participants' inner experience, and to figure out how meanings are shaped through and in culture (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

The qualitative analysis in this thesis refers to the analysis of uses of modality among Nkenkaasu Senior High School Students in the context of their essay writing. By drawing on the qualitative research design, the researcher was able to give a detailed account of the modal verbs that were frequently used by the students of Nkenkaasu Senior High School. The design also enabled the researcher to carry out an in-depth analysis and discussion on propositions expressed by the students of Nkenkaasu Senior High School in their writing as well as the factors that underpin the underuse of some core modal verbs and problems associated with underuse of some core modal verbs.

3.1.2 Research Design

The qualitative research approach has different types of design: phenomenological, ethnographic, grounded theory, historical, case study, and action research. For the purpose of this research, a case study type of design was used. Gerings (2007) argues that traditionally, the case study has been associated with the qualitative method of analysis. Creswell (2003, p. 15) defines case study as "a type of design where researcher explores an in-depth program, an event, an activity, a process, or one or more individuals" Also, Leedy and Ormrod (2001) further require a case study to have a defined time frame.

According to Walsh (2001), a case study is defined as an investigation or in-depth examinations of people, groups of people, or institutions. Content analysis is the term used to indicate the examination of communication messages obtained in case studies. Wash outlines the following advantages of case study: firstly, various data collection method may be used in case study, such as questionnaires, interviews, observations, document analysis, observation etc. Secondly, it ensures in-depth examinations of people, groups of people, institutions or phenomenon. Furthermore, it

seeks to understand individuals' views or perceptions of people as well as to highlight the special or typical events related to the case.

As stated above, a case study approach was employed for this study because, it helped me to achieve the purpose of the study, which was to explore the use of modality among senior high school students of Nkenkaasu. Also, the design allowed the use of multiple data collection methods such as interview and document analysis for the achievement of the purpose and objective for the study.

Furthermore, the design helped the researcher to understand and find out how the students express modal verbs in their writing. Finally, the design assisted the researcher to give a detailed and an in-dept description about the students' underuse of some core modal verbs in their writing and how they use modal verbs to express probability, obligation, necessity etc. in their writing.

3.1.3 Study Area of the Research

Nkenkaasu Senior High School is the study site for this study. Nkenkaasu Senior High School is one of the senior high schools in Ghana, within Ofinso North District in the Ashanti Region. It is one of the four senior high schools in the Ofinso North District. The school runs four programmes: General Arts, Visual Arts, Home Economics and Business.

It is Ghana Education Service category 'C' school. Therefore, it is expected by the standard that the students in the school use English Language fluently to communicate in their writing and speaking. This again, motivated me to conduct this study about the use of core modal verbs which helps to improve the sudents study of grammar in the English Language. It is also important to note that all the students of Nkenkaasu Senior High School study English Language as a core subject.

3.1.4 Population for the Study

Population is the total number of people living together in a particular place in peace and harmony. In other words, a population can be referred to as a group of people with a determined goal or purpose. In academic research, it is referred to as the people whom a particular study is targeted or about (Dornyei, 2007). A population is also defined as the whole group of people or object with some typical characteristics (Polit & Beck, 2006).

It can also refer to a set of people with a composed set of characteristics that are interest to a researcher. Now, the population used by the researcher to get the required information has a large impact on the quality of any good research work. These beliefs guided me in the selection of the various participants for the study. Polit and Beck (2003) argue that, there are two relevant populations in research: target and accessible population. They further indicate that the target population is the whole population that the researcher is concerned with and to which the findings of the sample can be generalized. While the accessible population is the sample available for specific analysis often a non- random sub-population of the target population.

According to Bartlett et al. (2001) and Creswell (2003), the part of the general population left after its refinement is termed target population, which is defined as the group of individuals or participants with the specific attributes of interest and relevance. The accessible population is reached after taking out all individuals of the target population who will or may not participate or who cannot be accessed at the study period (Bartlett et al., 2001). It is the final group of participants from which data is collected by surveying either all its members or a sample drawn from it. It represents the sampling frame if the intention is to draw a sample from it (Bartlett et al., 2001).

This means that the target population concerns the whole community or people that the researcher has chosen to deal with. Also, a particular section the researcher decided to use to represent the whole is what is referred to as the accessible population.

3.1.4.1 Target Population

The target population of the study consisted of all students of Nkenkaasu Senior High School. It has total population of one thousand four hundred and one (1401), comprising eight hundred and thirty-six (836) girls and five hundred and sixty-five (565) boys. Out of the total number, three hundred and seventy-eight (378) are form one Students, three hundred and ninety-five (395) are form two students and the rest of six hundred and twenty-eight (628) are form three students. Their ages ranged between 15 to 18 years old. These students come from different geographical background. This research was conducted within a period of one year. That is, June, 2022 to June, 2023.

3.1.4.2 Accessible Population

The accessible population for the present study was all the form two and form one General Arts Students of Nkenkaasu Senior High School. The first reason or purpose for choosing these students is that, the third-year students were not accessible or could not participate in the sense that they were writing their final year examination during the time of conducting this study. The second reason is that, General Arts students were many which enabled me to get the required participants in order to get enough data needed. Finally, I taught most of the General Arts classes so getting information or data from them was not a big problem.

3.1.5 Sampling and sampling techniques

Doryei (2007) argues that we cannot examine all people whose responses would be important to our research concerns, so we must be aware that the final picture

of our research will be a reflection of the result we would have expected to obtain from the target population. Doryei again points out that "the main aim of sampling is to find individuals who can provide rich and varied insight into phenomenon under study or investigation as to maximize what we can learn; this goal is best achieved by means of some sort of 'purposeful' or 'purposive' sampling' (Doryei, 2007, pp. 125).

Also, according to Creswell (2003, p. 148), "the aim of purposive sampling is to purposefully select…documents that will best answer the research question". The choice of purposive sampling for the present study was pertinent because according to Afful (2005), it has the potential in achieving the research purpose. For these reasons, the present researcher purposively sampled the data considering form one and form two General Arts students of Nkenkaasu Senior High School.

Thus, 150 form one General Arts students and 200 form two General Arts students counting three hundred and fifty (350) students were selected representing both male and female students, that is, one hundred and ninety (190) boys and one hundred and sixty (160) girls.

Additionally, six (6) teachers who teach English Language and five students were also selected and interviewed. The purpose of the interview was to find out about the reasons for students' underuse of some core modal verbs in their writing.

3.2 Data collection instruments

According to Cohen and Manion (1994), there are various data that a researcher may use when using qualitative approach, and these include: interviews, questionnaire, observation, field notes, audio recordings, and document analysis. For the purpose of this study, document analysis and interview methods were used.

3. 2.1. Document

According to Corbin and Strauss, (2008), document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents—both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material which requires that data be examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge.

Document analysis is a form of qualitative research in which documents such as: minutes, newspapers, students' essays etc. are interpreted by the researcher to give voice and meaning around an assessment topic (Bowen, 2009). There are three primary types of documents (O'Leary, 2014):

1. Public Records: the official, ongoing records of an organization's activities. Examples include students' transcripts and essays, mission statements, annual reports, policy manuals, student handbooks, strategic plans, and syllabi.

2. Personal Documents: first-person accounts of an individual's actions, experiences, and beliefs. Examples include calendars, e-mails, scrapbooks, blogs, Facebook posts, duty logs, incident reports, reflections or journals and newspapers.

3. Physical Evidence: physical objects found within the study setting (often called artifacts). Examples include flyers, posters, agendas, handbooks, and training materials.

The present study focused on the first type of document where students' essays were analyzed to elicit meaning and gain understanding about the students' use of modality. There are many reasons why the researcher chose to use document analysis.

Firstly, document analysis is an efficient and effective way of gathering data because documents are manageable and practical resources. Documents are commonplace and come in a variety of forms, making documents a very accessible and reliable source of data. Obtaining and analyzing documents is often far more cost efficient and time efficient (Bowen, 2009).

Also, documents are stable, "non-reactive" data sources, meaning that they can be read and reviewed multiple times and remain unchanged by the researcher's influence or research process (Bowen, 2009, p. 31).

Furthermore, document analysis is often used because of the many different ways it can support and strengthen research. Document can provide supplementary research data, making document analysis a useful and beneficial method for most research, as it also provides background information and broad coverage of data, and are therefore helpful in contextualizing one's research within its subject or field (Bowen, 2009).

Finally, Document analysis can also point to questions that need to be asked and answered or to situations that need to be observed, making the use of document analysis, a way to ensure that your research is critical and comprehensive (Bowen, 2009).

As already indicated, three hundred and fifty (350) written documents from form one and form two General Arts students of Nkenkaasu Senior High School were consulted for data.

3.2.2 Interview

The second instrument that was used for collecting data for this present study was interview. The interview method of data collection involves face to face contact with the respondent. The interview is roughly defined as an interaction between two

people on a particular occasion, where one acts as an interviewer and another as an interviewee. Thus, the interview is defined as an interchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme or a topic of mutual interest (Kvale, 1996).

Kvale stresses that a qualitative interview is based on a conversation in which a researcher asks questions and listens to interviewees at the same time, while respondents (interviewees) answer questions. From this perspective, Kvale implicitly puts a researcher and an interviewee in an equal position. Meanwhile, Sewell (2009) points out that in some professional interviews, such as job interviews or legal interrogation, the power of the questioner is much greater than that of the interviewee.

Rubin and Rubin (2005) regard qualitative interviews as conversations in which a researcher gently guides a conversational partner in an extended discussion. In this context, the position of researchers is clear because they drive the conversation. For Rubin and Rubin (2005), the direction of a conversation in an interview is in the hands of a researcher and not interviewee. The job of a researcher is only to uncover in-depth information from research participants; therefore, the information is presumed to be uncontaminated (Kvale, 1996).

There are three basic types of interviews in research. These are: structured (standard or close question) interview, semi-structured (open question) interview and unstructured interview. For the purpose of this study, semi-structured interview was used. Semi-structured interviews are widely used in qualitative research. They are typically used as research strategy to gather information about participants' experiences, views and beliefs concerning a specific research questions or phenomenon of interest (Lambert and Loissele, 2007). Sandelowski (2002) purports that one- to- one interviews are the most commonly used data collection tool in qualitative research.

67

Magaldi and Berler (2020) define the semi-structured interview as an exploratory interview. They further explain that the semi-structured interview is generally based on a guide and that it is typically focused on the main topic that provides a general pattern. In addition, they argue that the semi-structured interview provides opportunity for respondents to answer questions without restriction as compare to structured interview. The premise is that it is interrelated to the expectation that the viewpoints of interviewees are more likely to be expressed in a reasonably openly designed situation rather than in a standardized type of conversation, as in questionnaires (Flick, 2002).

The purpose of using semi-structured interview for this present study is that, the semi-structured interviews are practical for undertaking in-depth conversation. In other words, the semi-structured interview is more powerful in the sense that it allows the researcher(s), especially in qualitative research, to acquire in-depth information from informants compared to structured interviews. Usually, the researcher can critically scrutinize the conversations and varied initially superficial responses to arrive at multilayered conclusions. A researcher can further follow up most of the times, all verbal and non-verbal responses, such as hunches, laugher and silence, to reveal hidden information that may turn out to be helpful in the final data analysis of different themes extracted from the conversation (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

Furthermore, the interviewers can synthesize different themes to bring about flexibility. A researcher can discuss various topics with multiple themes in semi-structured interview. Therefore, it is flexible and adaptable. At the same time, it holds its direction, especially when compared to the unstructured type of interviews, where its direction is not carefully taken into account. Hence, the semi-structured interview might provide room for researchers to adjust it with their research questions if there is

68

a possible change yet still maintain its directive sense since the main topics to discuss have been prescribed beforehand.

Moreover, this interactive nature of semi-structured interview provides room for free responses from the interviewee, that is, the semi-structured interview provides opportunity for respondents to answer questions freely without restriction as compare to structured interview.

In conclusion, this data collection instrument was used by the researcher to ascertain the underpinning factors that led the students to underuse some core modal verbs in their essay writing.

3.3 Data analysis

Creswell (2014) explains data analysis as a process used for gathering data, making interpretations, and writing reports. It is the process of assigning meaning to the collected information and determining the conclusions, significance, and implications of the findings. Both the data collected through interview and document were analyzed qualitatively in this study.

First of all, an argumentative and debate type of essay that would enable the students use more central modal verbs were given to them. It is important to note that modal verbs were not given to the students to use, only the questions were given. At the end, three hundred and fifty (350) essays were obtained. In sampling the data, scripts of students' essays were photocopied and the sentences that made use of the modal operators: *will, would, may, might, can, could, shall, should* and *must* were selected or identified using Palmer (2001) framework of identifying modal verbs. The sentences were retyped without altering their structure or meaning.

Furthermore, the frequency distribution table was used to depict how often these modal verbs were used by the students in their writing. Again, after identifying

69

central modal verbs used by students, Palmer (2001) framework of classifying modal verbs was used to classify modal verbs students used into epistemic, deontic and dynamic.

In addition, based on the sentences containing those modal verbs, Palmer, (2001) framework of modality was again used to analysis the propositions or meanings they expressed in their writing, such as: probability, necessity, obligation, permission, possibility, ability and prediction.

Also, semi-structured interview was used to find out from some teachers and students about the factors that were the main causes of the students' underuse of some core modal verbs in their writing. Finally, the learners' corpus was analyzed to find out about the problems associated with the students' underuse of some core modal verbs in their writing.

3. 4 Ethical Considerations

protection of human subjects through the application of appropriate ethical principles was important in this research. Permission from the respected school authorities was first sought.

Participant's agreement to participation in this study was obtained only after a thorough explanation of the research process. The potential participants were approached individually and given an explanation of the purpose of the study and data collection process. They were given an appropriate time to ask questions and address any concerns.

The anonymity and confidentiality of the participants was preserved by not revealing their names and identity in the data collection, analysis and reporting of the study findings. Privacy and confidentiality of the interview environment were managed carefully during interview session, data analysis and dissemination of the findings. The

participants were tactfully treated by respecting their beliefs, habits, culture and lifestyle.

3. 5 Summary

The focus of this chapter was on the overall strategy and particular research approaches. The research design, the population for the study, sample size and the sample methodologies, data collection instruments as well as the procedure used for analyzing and interpreting the data for the study and finally, ethical consideration.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the results and discussions of the data. The discussion is done based on the research questions and the theoretical and analytical framework. Broadly, the chapter is made up of four sections. First, the analysis of frequency of core modal verbs: *may, might, will, would, shall, should, can, could and*. Second, the analysis of the classifications or types of modal verbs used by the students. Third, analysis of meanings the students do express in their essay writing and four, the analysis of the factors that underpin the underuse of some central modal verbs and problems associated with underuse of some core modal verbs.

4. 1 Frequency of modal verbs and types of modalities

In this subsection, the learner's corpus is compared in terms of the frequency of the modal devices employed and the types of modal verbs used. Table 1 displays the frequency of modal verbs used by form one and two General Arts Students of Nkenkaasu Senior High School. This subsection specifically answers the first research question.

4.1.1 Frequency of modal markers

Palmer's (2001) views on frequency of modal verbs was used to find out more or less frequently used modal verbs. Palmer suggests that the modals most commonly used in English are: *may, might, will, would, shall, should, can, could, and must*. However, other modals used less frequently are had better, *have to, need, and dare.*

72

Table 1: Frequency distributions of modal markers

Modal markers	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Will	564	36
Can	387	25
Would	249	16
Could	141	9
May	111	7.1
Should	54	3
Might	33	2.1
Must	18	1
Shall	12	0.8
Total	**1 569**	**100**

The results of the study showed that *will* occurred totally 564 (36%) times out of the total of 1569 modal verbs usage, which is the most frequent modal verb used in the learner's corpus. This endorses the theoretical framework as provided by Palmer (2001) and Kennedy (2002) who state in their work that an analysis of *will* in a corpus of written language reveals that it is more frequently used than other core modal verbs in writing.

Can takes up the second position with 387 counts (25%) followed by modal verb w*ould* with 249 occurrences. *Would* is the past form of *will,* it has 249 occurrences (16%) as the third most frequent modal verb used in the data. *Could* also has 141 occurrences (9%) which is a little bit higher than *may* with 111 counts (7.1%).

73

Furthermore, the findings showed that, *should* has 54 occurrences (3%) followed by *might* with 33 occurrences (2.1%) and *must* with 18 counts (1%). The modal verb *shall*, is the least frequent verb in the corpus with 12 occurrences (0.8%).

The underuse of *should* and *might,* was caused by the reason that they were introduced later in English textbooks and as the past tense form of *shall* and *may.* But actually, s*hould* and *might* are always used in some complex subjunctive conditional sentences to express more complicated and sophisticated modal meaning. Perkins (1983) states that, secondary modals (past form s*hould* and *might)* contain much more modal meanings than the primary ones (present form *shall* and *may)*. Not familiar with these two secondary modals, the students of Nkenkaasu Senior High School felt safe to use more simple primary ones, avoiding the risk of making grammatical mistakes.

Additionally, the underuse of modal verb *must* in the data, is that, form one and two General Arts students of Nkenkaasu Senior High School have the tendency of using *should* instead of *must* since they perform similar functions. *Should* is used as a necessity modal like *must*. However, it isn't as strong as *must*. Generally speaking, *should* and *must* are interchangeable.

Palmer (2001) argues that it is not at all clear that English makes any distinction between *should* and *must.* However, some scholars insist that there is difference between *should* and *must*. One of those who suggest that *should* and *must* are different is Coates (1983). Example 1 below indicates how the participants used the modal verb *should* instead of modal verb *must.*

Example (1)

They really *should* be home by now.

In the example 1 above, the speaker used the modal *should* to indicate that it is necessary for his opponent to be home by now. The student could have also used *must* but since *must* and s*hould* are used interchangeably, he decided to use *should.*

Shall is not very popular in students writing as seen in the data, as it has just 12 occurrences (0.8%). According to the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2008), *will* is used instead of *shall* most often to say that something certainly *will* or *must* happen, or that you are determined that something *will* happen.

The underuse of modal verb *shall*, which is the least frequent modal verb used in the learner's corpus is as a result of the fact that, the modal verb *shall* can be easily substituted with *will* according to the grammar of British English. Therefore, the students prefer substituting *shall* with the modal verb *will* to make future prediction and to indicate their intention and desire to do something, since both modal verbs perform similar functions. Examples 2 and 3 from the data show how speakers substituted *shall* with *will.*
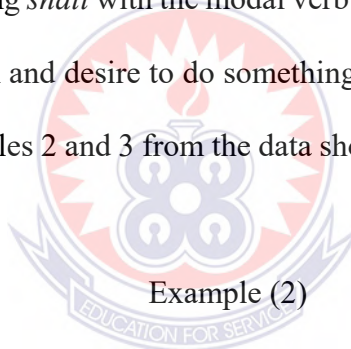
<p align="center">Example (2)</p>

<p align="center">I *will* present my argument in a systematic order.</p>

<p align="center">Example (3)</p>

<p align="center">I hope the judges *will* declare you a winner of this competition.</p>

The speaker in the example 2 used the modal verb *will* to show his intention of presenting his argument and the speaker in the example 3, used the same modal verb *will* to indicate who he thinks would be declared a winner of the argument. However, in both examples, the speakers could have also used the modal verb *shall* in such circumstances since they perform similar purposes. Notwithstanding, the speakers were more familiar with the modal verb *will* than *shall* so they prefer using the former than the later since *shall* and *will* are synonymous in expressing futurity (Darragh, 2000).

These findings above, confirm the work of Leech (2003), who indicates that modal verbs of high value such as *must* and *shall* have decreased by almost 30% and 40% over 30 years in both British English and American English among students in their writing. Therefore, it can be seen from the table that, the modal verb: *must* and *shall* were not frequently used by the students of Nkenkaasu senior High School in their writing. Also, the finding above is consistent with Orlando (2009) who investigated the frequent use of modality among students and concluded from his finding that *can* and *will* were the two most frequent modal verbs in the textbook corpus. It is important to note that the current study and the two studies above (Leech, 2003; Orlando, 2009) used a similar type of data to come out with the findings.

However, the findings above, where *must* and *shall* were less frequently used is inconsistent with Kader et al. (2013) who used similar data to investigated the Malaysian learners use of modals in their written task and came out with the results or findings that core modal verbs such as *should, must* and *shall* are most commonly used by learners in their writing.

4. 1. 2 Types of modal verbs

This subsection considers how modal verbs are classified based on Palmer's framework of classifying modality. Palmer (2001) classifies modal verbs into: epistemic modality, deontic modality and dynamic modality. Palmer explains that epistemic modality expresses the speaker's opinion about a statement, and it is concerned with the necessary and the possible truth value of propositions. Deontic modality is concerned with obligation and permission, and dynamic modality is concerned with the ability of the speaker to perform an action.

Table 2, provides the results of classifying all the individual modal verbs used by form one and two General Arts students of Nkenkaasu Senior High School in the corpus into epistemic modality, deontic modality and dynamic modality.

Table 2: types of modal verbs

Epistemic modal verbs	Deontic modal verbs	Dynamic modal verbs
Will	Will	Will
Can	Can	Can
Would	Would	Would
Could	Could	Could
May	May	May
Should	Should	Should
Might	Might	Might
Must	Must	Must
Shall	Shall	Shall

4.1.2.1 Epistemic modal verbs

This subsection consists of all epistemic modal verbs found in the data. They include: epistemic will, epistemic can, epistemic would, epistemic could, epistemic should, epistemic may, epistemic might, epistemic must and epistemic shall. These types of epistemic modal verbs have been discussed below, including examples taken from the data.

4.1.2.1.1 Epistemic Will

Will is the first epistemic modal verb used in the data. There is indication from the data that regarding the epistemic *will*, the students used it to predict what will happen in the future. Examples 4 and 5 indicate how the students used epistemic *will.*

<div align="center">

Example (4)

After my delivery, I *will* be crowned a winner.

Example (5)

His father *will* be disappointed if he does not prepare adequately
to succeed.

</div>

In the above example 4, the speaker is predicting confidently that after his delivery in the debate, he will be declared a winner. In the same way, the speaker in the example 5 is predicting the feelings of the father if he fails to prepare to succeed.

This finding is in line with Palmer (2001, p. 30) who explains that "the speaker believes the statement to be true… because of his experience with similar situations, regular patterns or repeated circumstances common in human life that can make prediction possible."

4.1.2.1.2 Epistemic can

This type of epistemic modal verb was also found in the data. Epistemic *can* conveys both epistemic meanings of ability and probability with intermediate epistemic stance towards the action. Examples 6 and 7 from the data illustrate how the students convey the meaning of epistemic can.

<div align="center">

Example (6)

For as much as teachers *can* do and must do, it is ultimately the faith

and determination of the students upon which this punishment lies.

</div>

<div align="center">

78

</div>

Example (7)

Weak students *can* only see what lies in front of them.

In Example 6, *can* conveys epistemic meaning with intermediate epistemic stance towards the action. That means, by adopting the epistemic modal *can*, the speaker claims the assertion whether the teachers have the possibility and ability to take designated action ultimately depends on the faith and determination of the students. However, *can* in Example 7 only has the meaning of ability which can be interpreted as the ability of weak students only 'see what lies in front of them', while the negative form of *can* encodes an epistemic reading.

4.1.2.1.3 Epistemic would

Would is the past form of *will,* indicating lower possibility and weaker epistemic stance than its original form because it is farther from the Centre of 'now' in terms of time and also farther to the Centre of certainty pertaining to epistemic distance (Langacker, 1991 as cited in Zhongyi, 2015). *Would* mainly conveys three semantic meanings in the data:

First, it is used to refer to the past of epistemic *will*; second, it means 'intermediate possibility' as epistemic modality, often indicating a kind of 'hypothetical knowledge where an outcome is predicated contingent on an unrealized condition' (Chafe 1986, pp. 269 as cited in Zhongyi, 2015); third, it is used to express the meaning 'intermediate willingness' or 'wish' in volitional modality. *would* in example 8 to example 10 indicate epistemic reading.

Example (8)

My opponent *would* grow weaker than anyone can imagine.

79

Example (9)

The documents are vital because they *would* reveal how many flaws

he had and where they are or may be located.

Example (10)

If it had been in my school, there *would* have been more.

Would in Example 8 is a case in point for the past form of *will*, indicated by 'he said' (the typical phrase used in reported speech). In this sense, *would* here is of high value, equals to its original form *will* in terms of epistemic stance. That means if this is used in direct speech, *would* can be replaced with *will*. Example 9, however, manifests how *would* can be used to express an epistemic modal marker of intermediate force.

By adopting *would*, the speaker claims that the documents are likely to 'reveal how many flaws he had and where…' based on probable knowledge, thereby avoiding responsibility for providing evidence (Chafe 1986, p. 269 as cited in Zhongyi, 2015). *Would* in Example10 is a case in point for indicating 'hypothetical knowledge', which is used in a subjunctive mood as it is in an irrealis condition. So, the epistemic stance of *would* in this example is much weaker than that of Example 9 as it encodes temporal distance which is correlated with epistemic distance (Chilton, 2014).

4.1.2.1.4 Epistemic could

Similar to *would, could* is the past form of *can,* indicating lower possibility and weaker epistemic stance than *can* as it is positioned remoter from the Centre of certainty. Like *can,* the semantic meaning of *could* is also varied. It has four different epistemic meanings in the data:

first, it is used to refer to the past form of epistemic *can*; second, it means low possibility in terms of epistemic modality, often used in a subjunctive sense; third, it

means intermediate necessity as deontic modality, which is equivalent to *should;* fourth, it is used to express the meaning of permission as deontic modality of low value. Examples 11, 12 and 13 indicate how the participants used epistemic *could* to convey varied epistemic readings.

Example (11)

He claims that his points are genuine if the judges *could* agree with him.

Example (12)

Some schools c*ould* re-introduce corporal punishment but not our school.

Example (13)

We waited to see if his points *could* be different from his principal speaker.

The first meaning of *could* has been demonstrated in Example 11, typically used in reported speech. In this sense, *could* in this example is of intermediate value, equal to its original form *can* in terms of epistemic modality. In example 12, the student used *could* in a conditional with weak epistemic stance towards the assertion. By doing so, he speculates that it is distant for them to see the truth. Similarly, *could* in Example 13 is also used in a conditional, but in a subjunctive mood as it is opposite to the truth.

Therefore, it seems that c*ould* in this example 13 expresses the weakest epistemic stance among the three examples (Sweetser, 1996). That is because the designated situation will never be actualized as it has been past. Because of this, the epistemic modals of low value including *could* are often used to play down the possibility, importance, relevance, etc. of those unwelcome opinions or propositions

81

(Simon-Vandenbergen 2007, p. 353). In this sense, this type of epistemic modals can reflect the speaker's belief (as part of his ideology) about what is not welcomed or unfavorable.

4.1.2.1.5 Epistemic May

Most of the epistemic may are nonfactive (with exceptions for concessive *may*). With a lexical verb expressive of wishes or desires and a third person subject, the nonfactivity of the modal is transparently related to the speaker's lack of first-hand knowledge. Examples 14 and 15 demonstrate how epistemic *may* was used in the learner's corpus.

<div align="center">Example (14)</div>

While many of you *may* disagree with each other about everything else, they all show that there's been a steady increase in my support.

<div align="center">Example (15)</div>

But there's another point which *may* not make any difference but every one of us knows.

In both examples 14 and 15, the speaker is emphasizing that, despite the truth of the proposition contained in the modal clause, some other condition applies; the modal permits the speaker to concede that even though one thing is the case, another is still true. The modal, in other words, focuses attention not on the truth of the proposition but on the unusual or unlikely fact of its combination with a further proposition.

4.1.2.1.6 Epistemic Should

Epistemic *Should* has a fairly high frequency of occurrence in the corpus. The corpus provides an example of epistemic *should* occurring in a context semantically equivalent to an unreal past conditional as found in example 16.

Example (16)

Might you not have done better without supporter? - No, I don't think I *should*.

This is roughly equivalent to 'I don't think you should have done better if you had been without supporter'. The sentence therefore offers an epistemic assessment of an unfulfilled and (because past) unfulfillable proposition. The essentially subjective nature of epistemic modality is underlined by the speaker's explicit reference to his own judgement.

4.1.2.1.7 Epistemic Might

Might is the past form of *May,* indicating a weaker epistemic stance than its base form, because it is farther in terms of epistemic distance and time span (Langacker, 1991 as cited in Zhongyi, 2015). It has not been used very frequently in the data, Examples 17 and 18 indicate epistemic *might.*

Example (17)

Other forms of punishment *might* work more effectively than the anticipated one which has some weaknesses.

Example (18)

Now, I understand that some *might* be skeptical about my stance.

In Example 17, the speaker adopts an epistemic modal marker of low value - *might* to express his speculation for the assertion, thereby showing his weak epistemic stance towards it. It means the possibility is low pertaining to the actualization of the

83

situation indicated. Put another way, the student legitimatizes his proposition by using *might,* which is positioned as distant from the center of certainty. Similar to Example 18, the use of *might* in this example indicates skeptical which is an unwelcome comment made by speaker by treating it and therefore reveals the speaker's true intention.

In addition, *might* in the example 18 likewise, reflects the speaker's own assumption that some people are skeptical of his stance, supported by an evidential marker- 'I understand'. This evidential implies that the epistemic reading expressed by *might* is based on his knowledge alone. By doing so, he makes a full commitment to his stance (Marin-Arrese, 2011).

In sum, the qualitative analyses of epistemic modal marker *might* shows that different choices of epistemic readings are linked to the speakers different rhetorical styles (Marin-Arrese, 2011) and reveal their different ideologies in terms of knowledge grading (certain, probable, possible and impossible knowledge).

4.1.2.1.8 Epistemic Must

Epistemic *must* is a type of modal verb found in the data. A significant number of corpus tokens of this modal share deontic and epistemic elements of meaning. An explicit conditional often weighs the argument in favor of an epistemic. *Must*, when it expresses this mixture of epistemic and deontic meaning, is compatible with an interpretation biased towards contra activity if the wider context signals disbelief in the modalized proposition as in example 19.

Example (19)

You will be told that the corporal punishment *must* go on at all costs.

The speaker in this example 19, clearly does not share the belief that corporal punishment must continue; whether or not it does, is of course a separate matter and one which the auxiliary does not directly address when deontic. There is a sense in the example 19 above where *must* is more subjective, and more overtly emotive.

4.1.2.1. 9 Epistemic Shall

Epistemic *shall* has only one occurrence in the data. The example of epistemic *shall* has future time reference and it does have a first person singular or plural subject. The element of logical deduction is clearly brought out in example 20.

<div align="center">Example (20)</div>

Teachers who've started using corporal punishment to discipline students,

must stop so that we *shall* get our peace in the school.

This example 20 of course depends on the accuracy of a previous prediction. Other instances depend on an explicit condition which serves to underline their relative factivity.
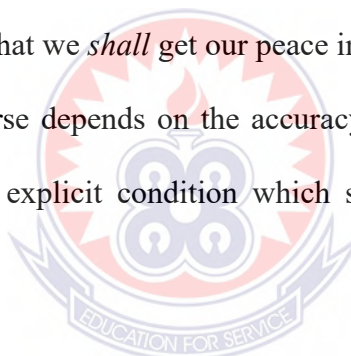
4.1.2.2 Deontic modal verbs

This type of modal verb includes; deontic will, deontic can, deontic would, deontic could, deontic may, deontic should, deontic might, deontic must and deontic shall. These types of deontic modal verbs have been explained below with examples from the data.

4.1.2.2.1 Deontic Will

Deontic *will* was frequently used in the data. It is clear from the student's context that deontic *will* was used to indicate volition and futurity. *Will* in the examples 21 and 22 carries deontic reading.

<div align="center">85</div>

Example (21)

He *will* be throwing dust into your eyes if he should say I'm going to say that we are happier than our forefathers.

Example (22)

I *will* wait to see if his argument will be as exciting as mine without tangible explanation.

It is quite evident from the student's context that this usage in example 21 is associated with an implicature that external volition (force) is directed towards the accomplishment of the modal situation and therefore it indicates volition and it is futuristic. Also, example 22 is associated with the implicature that some physical obstacle or some external volition might prevent the accomplishment of the modal situation.

This means that Modality in English is defined in terms of the modal auxiliaries such as: *will,* and *shall.* For instance, we shall, by including *will,* have to include within the system of modality both futurity, which seems to belong more to the system of tense, and volition, which has little in common with the more obvious modal concepts of possibility and necessity, "but belongs more with the verbs of wanting, hoping, etc. which are essentially lexical rather than grammatical in English." (Palmer, 1979, p. 2).

4.1.2.2.2 Deontic Can

Can is a modal verb that conveys deontic readings. Actually, *can* also has two semantic readings in terms of deontic modality in the data. One is 'responsibility', equivalent to the deontic marker *should;* and the other is 'permission', similar to the meaning of 'be allowed to'. Because of its multiple meanings, *can* becomes the second most popular modal used in the data.

Most of the tokens occur in an interrogative context and are nonfactive although several have a very strong relative factivity given that the event qualified by the modal and questioned by the interrogative form is immediately actualized. Some of the tokens have a first person singular or plural subject. Examples 23 and 24 demonstrate how deontic *can* was used in the data.

Example (23)

Can I come back to this question of democracy?

Example (24)

Before we move on ... *Can* I just try and clear this up?

These two examples, that is, example 23 and 24 above are obviously carrying deontic reading of requests, even if the speaker in example 24 does not wait for it to be granted. But one could argue that there is an element of dynamic ability here, with the speaker asking to be allowed to realize his ability. In other words, Deontic modal meanings on other hand, deal with the necessity or possibility of acts performed by morally responsible agents, e.g., obligation and permission (Palmer, 2001).

4.1.2.2.3 Deontic would

would refers to habitual past (Whorter, 2018). Deontic *would* often has the implication that the event is not actual, that is, is biased towards a contrafactive interpretation as in the example 25 below, which has a first-person subject.

Example (25)

The idea that we should reintroduce corporal punishment is to be irresponsible in the extreme and to betray the very people we *would* be fighting for.

4.1.2.2.4 Deontic Could

The corpus offered some examples of deontic could. All relate to an act of speaking, have a first-person singular subject and are either in an interrogative or conditional context. Frequently, the act of speaking is immediately actualized. *Could* in examples 26 and 27 carry deontic meanings in the learners' corpus.

<div align="center">

Example (26)

Could I just put it to you?

Example (27)

Could I just ask, because you seem to be contradicting

one of your colleagues?

</div>

Often the act of requesting permission relates to asking the addressee and deontic source a question which forms part of the request, as in example 28 to example 30 below.

<div align="center">

Example (28)

Could I ask you if you are going to compete next year?

Example (29)

Could I ask you what would you do if it happened again?

Example (30)

Could I remind them that their agreed main points were to

abolish corporal punishment?

</div>

Example 30 is most clearly a rhetorical question; 28 and 29 are rather more directly asking for action to be taken.

4.1.2.2.5 Deontic May

Deontic *may* was found in the data. Most of the deontic may occurred in the fixed phrase or slight variants of it where the lexical verb refers to an act of speaking which is immediately actualized as in examples 31 to 33.

Example (31)

And if I *may* say to Kwadwo, we do not want this kind of

argument, we want convincing one.

Example (32)

And in any case, if I *may* make a macabre joke, in the long run we'll

all be dead.

Example (33)

But *may* I say this: there's nothing wrong with corporal punishment.

Despite the frequency of occurrence of examples like deontic *may* above, it remains true that the modal is merely compatible - when it has this particular combination of contextual features with an immediately determined factual status. Logically speaking, request is not always granted and even if it is, the event for which request was sought might not take place.

4.1.2.2. 6 Deontic should

From the perspective of force dynamics, deontic *should* often indicates the clash between the subject's inner desires and a peripheral part representing the self's sense of responsibility (Talmy, 2000, p. 49). The fact that there are more instances of *should* than *must* in terms of modal verbs implies that suggestions may be more acceptable for hearers than demands. Consider examples 34 and 35 below.

Example (34)

You *should* agree with me right away.

Example (35)

The government of the country *should* not reintroduce corporal

punishment since it impedes learning effectiveness.

Compared with *must*, *should* expresses a weaker force from an outside or shared source (responsibility or reasoning), as shown in Example 34 and 35. The speaker in example 34, advises his listeners to support his points through a reasoning process; he gave a lot of reasons using conditionals in his speech. However, *should* has a stronger illocutionary force when it is used in the negative form as shown in example 35.

4.1. 2.2.7 Deontic Might

The corpus provided one example of deontic *might*. This is found in example 36.

Example (36)

And if I *might* say so, Tony, if you're thinking as deputy leader,

then you have   some issues to deal with about this kind of

punishment.

This is an instance of a deontic modal use pragmatically motivated, by reasons of politeness (or to give the appearance of politeness); the speaker is not really asking for his addressee's permission to speak. This, combined with the first-person subject and nature of the lexical verb - referring to an action over which the speaker or subject has full control - means that the event is realized.

4.1.2.2.8 Deontic must

About thirty percent of the examples of *must* in the corpus are deontic; the rest are epistemic but many of those have a deontic element in their meaning. There are a number of examples where the speaker wanted to express what he felt to be a general deontic requirement. In these cases, deontic *must* only very indirectly assesses the likelihood of the event or state-of-affairs coming about; what it does express is the strength of the speaker's conviction that this should be so almost regardless - at least

90

where the example has present time reference or has a general timeless reference - of whether it is so or not (Palmer, 1989). Example 37 illustrates deontic *must*.

Example (37)

A teacher *must* regard himself as a trustee for the whole school.

Sentence 37 is an example where the speaker wanted the listener to recall the deontic use of *must* for his remarks to be raised to the level of general truths.

4.1.2.2.9 Deontic shall

In general English, *shall* shares a role with *can, could, should, may, might, will, would, and must* (Foley, 2002, p. 366). It is important to note that, there is no occurrence of deontic *shall* in the data. The reading of deontic *shall* is closely aligned to deontic *may*. They remark that some writers use deontic *may* instead of deontic *shall.*

This finding is consistent with Bazlik and Ambrus (2009), Cooper (2011) and Krapivkina, (2017) who observed no use of deontic *shall* in comparison to other core modals in their work.
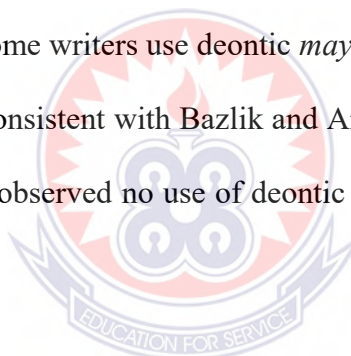
4.1.2.3 Dynamic modal verbs

This subsection also consists of dynamic modal verbs in the data. They include: dynamic will, dynamic can, dynamic would, dynamic could, dynamic may, dynamic should, dynamic must and dynamic shall. These types of dynamic modal verbs have been discussed below with some examples from the data.

4.1.2.3.1 Dynamic Will

Palmer (2003, p. 7) claims that dynamic modality can be found with *will*. The examples of dynamic *Will* in the corpus clearly show how this meaning can differ in degree. Example 38 illustrates the use of dynamic *will.*

Example (38)

91

> They *will* believe they have the right to do what they want to do
> with their life.

With this example 38 above, where *Will* almost has the force of a lexical verb. At the other, auxiliary *Will* seems to express only a shade of volitional meaning, contributed mainly by the subject. Furthermore, the corpus also provided example of negative dynamic *Will,* which is seen in the example 39 below.

<div align="center">Example (39)</div>

> I *won't* take it from anyone that this type of
> punishment is the best way of disciplining the students.

This means, the speaker disagrees with those who support corporal punishment as the best way of punishing the students. In his view, other types of punishment could be used instead of corporal punishment.

4.1.2.3.2 Dynamic Can

Huddleston et al. (2002) state that *can* has dynamic meaning. Because of its inherent meaning, it is often treated as dynamic modality, or as part of root modality. *Can* is the second frequently occurring modal in the corpus (after *Will)*. But it is probably the most difficult auxiliary to classify in terms of meaning. The vast majority of examples express some kind of dynamic possibility, though a simple paraphrase is often not appropriate, as in the case of example 40.

<div align="center">Example (40)</div>

<div align="center">He *can* always present false argument.</div>

This is dynamic modality used by the speaker to indicate what his or her opponent is capable of doing. This means that he or she does not have trust in the opponent since he has always been presenting false argument. This finding is in line with Huddleston and Pullum (2002, p. 178) who argue that 'Dynamic modality is

<div align="center">92</div>

prototypically associated with *can'* although Palmer (2003, pp. 7) claims that it can also be found with modal verb *will.*

4.1.2.3.3 Dynamic would

Examples of *would* in the corpus frequently have a volitional element of meaning; I classify these examples as expressing dynamic modality, acknowledging that, within root meanings, there is considerable semantic indeterminacy. Hence, this supports Palmer (1976, p. 96) assertion that 'Deontic (modality) ... includes those types of modalities that ... contain an element of *will* while, in the same book (p. 193), 'referring to ... dynamic modality with its notions of willingness and ability'. *Would* with a first person (singular or plural) subject often contains a volitional dynamic reading as can be seen in the examples 41 and 42.

Example (41)

There are many things the students might do which I *would* say well, you have to do it without me in the school.

Example (42)

We absolutely oppose that sort of punishment and *would* do it again.

Would in both example 41 and 42 contains a volitional dynamic reading.

4.1.2.3.4 Dynamic Could

The corpus offers more examples of dynamic *could.* The majority of the tokens of *could* in the corpus express dynamic meaning or reading. It is amongst these that we find the clearest uses of a modal auxiliary not accounted for by collocation with a first-person singular subject and a lexical verb of saying that the nonfactive uses in an interrogative context *could,* with a first-person plural or a second person subject will

93

usually be interpreted as a request for action rather than, say, a deontic request for permission or a query about the subject's ability as can be found in the examples 43 and 44 below.

Example (43*)*

Could we have slightly shorter questions please?

Example (44)

My co-debater, *could* you ask a final question?

In both examples 43 and 44, it is fairly clear that the speaker must be the winner who therefore has the power or authority to ensure that his request is complied with.

The above finding on the frequent use of *could* to indicate dynamic modality agrees with previous studies. For example, Ji and Lu (2008) and Zhang (2013) who found that learners tended to use *could* to show dynamic modality.

4.1.2.3.5 Dynamic May

This type of modality is not common in the data. The corpus does, however, provide some instances of what Quirk et al. (1972, p. 785) would describe *may,* used as 'a subjunctive substitute in formal style in a purpose clause' Example 45 shows how the participants used dynamic *may.*

Example (45)

It calls for a fertile ground where all *may* grow well but none may grow oppressive, above all, *may* this school of ours which we love so much find dignity and greatness and peace again.

I treat these tokens under dynamic *may* because the closest paraphrase I can find is 'let it be possible for'. This, presumably, is boulomaic modality. Time reference is always future for this meaning so this use of *May* is therefore always nonfactive.

94

4.1.2.3.6 Dynamic Should

Should also has dynamic meaning in the data. From the perspective of force dynamics, *should* often indicates the clash between the subject's inner desires and a peripheral part representing the self's sense of responsibility (Palmer, 2001). *Should* in example 46 indicates dynamic reading.

Example 46

My opponent *should* always avoid poking his nose into other

people's business or affairs.

4.1.2.3.7 Dynamic Might

Might bears a dynamic interpretation, using the test of paraphrase with 'possible for', in each case, 'possible that', that is, epistemic possibility, provides an alternative, usually even more acceptable paraphrase. Examples 46 and 47 illustrate dynamic *might* used in the data.

Example (47)

They *might* come back or they *might* do it again.

Example (48)

There are many other forms of punishment, the instructors *might*

apply.

These two examples above, that is, examples 47 and 48 have future time reference; the modalized clause in 48 is further dependent on the fulfilment of the higher clause. The modal, in both examples, qualifies an event which is currently nonactual.

4.1.2.3. 8 Dynamic Must

Out of the total counts for *must* in the data, none of them was used as dynamic by the students. In the view of Huddleston et al. (2002, p. 184-5), dynamic *must* is used

95

to express possibility and necessity. Dynamic necessity expressed by *must* is a little more complicated. As Huddleston et al. (2002, pp. 188) point out, 'the category of dynamic necessity expressed by *must* is hard to pin down'

4.1.2.3.9 Dynamic shall

Dynamic *shall* has few occurrences in the data. The examples fall into the pattern of an interrogative with a first-person subject and second person indirect object, where the speaker or subject questions his addressee's volition. 'Do you want me to do X?' In each case the reference is to an act of speaking, which is clear in examples 49 and 50.

Example (49)

Shall I tell you something else?

Example (50)

Shall I tell you the reason?

As can be seen from the discussions above, so far, the current study confirms the precious studies (Narrog, 2012; Palmer, 2001 & Coates, 1983) who assert in their work that modal verbs may be used to communicate three broad clusters of meanings, that is, epistemic modal meanings, deontic modal meanings and dynamic modal meanings.

In conclusion, the students of Nkenkaasu Senior High School used modal markers: *will, would, can, could, shall, should, must, may and might* to communicate three broad clusters of meanings, namely: epistemic modal meanings, deontic modal meanings and dynamic modal meanings. However, the students did not communicate any meaning of 'dynamic *must'* and 'deontic s*hall'* in their writing.

96

4.2 Semantic categories

This subsection considers the propositions or the meanings students do express in their writing using modal markers based on Palmer's (2001) framework of modality, who states in his framework that semantic categories such as: probability, necessity, permission, obligation, possibility, ability, certainty and prediction are expressed by modal verbs such as: *can, could, may, might, must, will, would, shall* and *should* (p. 7-10). Subsections below provide the results of categorizing all the individual devices used in the data according to eight different semantic categories based on the framework.

4.2.1 Probability

The first semantic category expressed by the students is probability. The students used modal verbs such as: *should, may* and *must* to express probability in the data. Examples 51 to 53 demonstrate how students used *should, may* and *must* to express probability.
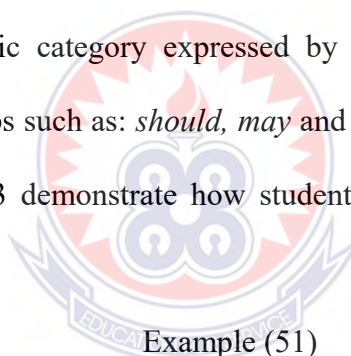
Example (51)

Our doubters *should* be home by now.

Example (52)

He *may* be thinking differently from the way we are thinking

by now.

Example (53)

Our judges *must* be compiling the results by now.

It can be seen from the above sentences 51 to 53 that; the speakers are not sure if they are speaking the truth. They carefully conclude on the basis of all the knowledge they have until now. Both *must* and *should*, which indicate probability can also mean both an obligation and a necessity. They do not express the conviction of a speaker

97

regarding the described events or the occurrences of the state of affairs, and are different from others.

4.2.2 Permission

Permission is the next semantic category in the learner's corpus. The students used *can, could, may* and *might* to express this kind of modality in the data. Both *could* and *might* are the past form of *can* and *may.* The above modal verbs convey the meaning of permission. They were used to ask for permission and grant permission in the learners' corpus as found in example 54 to 59.

Example (54)

Chairman, *can* I provide you with my evidence?

Example (55)

Audience, *could* I have asked him a question?

Example (56)

Ladies and gentlemen, *may* I have your attention?

Example (57)

Brothers and sisters, *might* I ask if he is presenting on the topic?

Example (58)

You *may* go on and argue.

Example (59)

You *can* disapprove of him.

In sentence 54 to 57, the speakers used those modal verbs to ask for permission while from sentences 58 and 59, the speakers used both *may* and *can* to grant permission. The concept of *may* involves both a permission and a possibility. In the case where the meaning is a permission, *can* may be used instead of *May*. *May* is less

98

frequently used as an auxiliary of a permission than *can* because *may* is a formal expression.

This confirms the work of Palmer (2001, p. 75) who opines that, 'deontic modals such as *can* and *may* are often used to indicate permission, obligation and possibility emanating from the speaker, but it cannot be claimed that they are always subjective in this sense'

The difference between English '*may* and *can* for granting permission usually lies in the level of formality, with *may* being more formal than *can'* (Palmer, 2001, p. 71; Warnsby, 2006, p. 34). Accordingly, Warnsby positions the two modals at the same point on the deontic scale, that is, neither one is stronger or weaker than the other. However, Huddleston et al. (2002, p. 183) point out that some speakers use *may* to express permission emanating from themselves, while *can* is used to express an objective permission emanating from another deontic source.

4.2.3 Ability

The concept of ability has also been expressed by *can* in the data which is closely related to theoretically possible. Examples 60 and 61 indicate how participants expressed ability by the use of modal verb *can*.

Example (60)

Tom *can* speak English fluently but his argument does not hold

water.

Example (61)

They say John *can* argue more than his principal speaker.

In both examples 60 and 61, the modal verb *can* in the sentences indicates what Tom and John are capable of doing. *Can* is used to express ability, but *can't,* "be unable to", or "incapable of" are used to express inability as seen in the sentence 62 and 63.

99

Example (62)

She *can't* prove to me the reason why he is supporting the

motion.

Example (63)

She *can* give the points, but she can't explain them vividly.

Usually *could* means "know how to", which indicates both perpetual and habitual

ability. "Be able to" often has a meaning of both ability and achievement.

4.2.4 Necessity

This is the fourth category expressed by the students in the data. Modal verbs

such as: *must, shall and will* were used by the students in the expressions of necessity.

Must often deals with epistemic necessity. In addition, *must* is also used as deontic

modality to show obligation. It is hard to differentiate these two modalities. Therefore,

scholars (see e.g., Griffiths, 2006 and Kearns, 2000) who argue that context is very

important to distinguish epistemic and deontic modality of *must*. *Must* often emphasizes

subjectivity rather than objectivity. "Have to" which has the similar meaning with *must*

can't be replaced by *must* in showing epistemic modality. *Must* in the example 64 and

65 indicate necessity.

Example (64)

The ground is wet. It *must* have proved successful.

Example (65)

He *must* be arguing there, because he always does so.

Negated *must* is often replaced by *can't* when it shows epistemic necessity.

Must and *can* are different modal verbs. However, when they are negated, the meaning

100

becomes identical because the two sentences are convertible based on the relative scope relationship as seen in the examples 66 and 67 below.

Example (66)

You *must not* provide the correct answer.

Example (67)

You *must not accept* the defeat.

In the example 66, the negated *must* in the: you *must not* provide the correct answer, can become, you *can't* provide the correct answer. In the same way, in the example 67, you *must* not accept the defeat, can become, you can't accept the defeat.

Will is used to express necessity as deontic modality when it is related to the volition. Volition includes intention and willingness. This volition is much related to the futurity. *Will* is often used in the sentence with second person subject when it shows willingness as demonstrated in the example 68.

Example 68

You *will* defeat him as you said if you prepare well.

Past form of *would,* is also possible in this case. Furthermore, when the subject is the first person, volitional or intentional *shall* shows speaker's undertaking to pursue a course of action and may be treated deontically.

4.2.5 Certainty

In the data, the students used *must* to express certainty. Sometimes they used 'have to' to replace *must*. This can be seen from examples 69 and 70 where learners used *must* to show certainty.

Example (69)

There *must* be some mistake.

101

Example (70)

You *must* be joking.

Sentences 69 and 70 above, indicate varying levels of certainty. *Must* used to express certainty in the data above, is equivalent to the possibility of *May*. This is because a speaker makes a judgement about a proposition which is either inevitably true or highly likely to be true. In the example 71 below, the student used 'have to' to replace *must* which still show certainty.

Example 71

They 'have to' be preparing to accept defeat.

In the example 71 above, the participant used have to in place of must to show certainty. This is because the speaker makes a judgement about a proposition which is either inevitably true or highly likely to be true.

4.2.6 Obligation

Obligation is the next sematic category closely related to necessity. In the learner's corpus, obligation is expressed by *must* and *should* as found in examples 72, 73 and example 74.

Example (72)

You *must* study hard to come out with tangible points.

Example (73)

He *should* explain his points to the understanding of everyone here.

Example (74)

Corporal punishment *must* or *should* be reintroduced in schools.

The above data convey the idea of an obligation. There is some difference of degree, but they all imply that a speaker supports a certain kind of behavior. *Must* typically

102

indicates a speaker who enforces his authority. The feature of almost certain is classified as both an obligation and a logical necessity. In other words, modality is defined with the concept of obligation and permission (Palmer, 2001).

The finding regarding the use of *must and should* in the expression of obligation is in line with previous studies Xie (2009) and Zhang (2013) who found out from their work that learners strongly favor the meaning of obligation when it comes to *must and should*.

4.2.7 Possibility

Based on the premise of the clause of modality assessed in a declarative sentence, there are three types of possibility found in the learners' corpus: virtually possible, theoretically possible, and contingently possible.

4.2.7.1 Virtually Possible

This type of possibiility indicates that either the given proposition is true or there is a possibility of it being true. The modal marker *may* was used to express this type of possibility in the learner's corpus. Example 75 to 77 illustrate how participants used *may* to express virtual possibility.

Example (75)

That *may* be a correct idea.

Example (76)

He *may* come back.

Example (77)

The points *may* be improved.

The above sentences, from 75 to 77 are virtually possible. The *may* selected here assumes that the given proposition is true or there is a possibility of it being true. This

is consistent with Lee (2005) who indicates that modal verb *may* is used to show virtual possibility.

4.2.7.2 Theoretically Possibility

Theoretically possible has a meaning of lesser possibility than virtually possible, in theory. This is expressed by the use of *can* as indicated in the example 78 to example 80.

Example (78)

Even brilliant students *can* make mistakes.

Example (79)

Anybody *can* make mistakes.

Example (80)

The points *can* be improved.

Examples 78 and 79 above, compare virtually possible with theoretically possible. Example 80, in theory, means that the points can be improved. However, in theory, it means that there is a concrete plan to improve the point.

4.2.7.3 Contingently Possible

Both *could* and *might,* with assumptive meanings, are often contingently possible. Namely, they both mean that it is possible, but that there is something uncertain about them in the future. Example 81 and 82 show how *could* and *might* were used by the students in the data to indicate contingently possible.

Example (81)

She *might* be telling lies.

Example (82)

Could you have left your child to be taken through this kind of
punishment?

It can be deduced from both sentences 81 and 82 that c*ould* and *might* mean it is
possible, but that there is something uncertain about them in the future.

This finding endorses Coates (1983) who asserts that epistemic modality is the
assessment of speaker's possibilities and indicates confidence or lack of confidence in
the truth of the proposition expressed. So far, the three options with a possibility have
been discussed in the above sentences.

4.2.8 Prediction

The final semantic category expressed in the data is prediction. This was
expressed in the data by the use of modal verb such as: *will, must* and *shall*. It is a well-
known fact that *will* is generally used to predict a future event. *Will* and *shall* were used
in the data to predict future events. This is consistent with the work of Palmer (2001)
who indicates that, *will and shall* are usually used to mark future time and modality.
Also, it is in line with Ngula (2012) who analyzes the modal operator *will* under
permission, intention, obligation and prediction. The prediction in the data falls into
three categories, namely specific prediction, habitual prediction, and timeless
prediction.

4.2.8.1 Specific prediction

This is where the speakers used *will*, *shall* and *must* to predict specific things
that would happen in future. Examples 83 to 85 from the data illustrate how students
used *will* and *shall* to depict specific prediction.

Example (83)

You *will* feel better after accepting defeat.

Example (84)

The game *will* be finished by now.

Example (85)

You *shall* become better after the winner is declared

From example 83 to example 85, the speakers used modal markers: *shall* and *will* to predict future events.

4.8.2 Habitual prediction

Habitual prediction is a prediction about the certainty of an event which one can be fairly certain of, based on evidence as in examples 86 and 87 below.

Example (86)

David *will* have concluded by now.

Example (87)

David *must* have arrived by now.

Will is also used in either a prediction or when describing a characteristic behavior which habitually occurs.

4.2.8.3 Timeless prediction

A habitual meaning of prediction is often used, either in a conditional clause or when stating the possibility of a timeless prediction. *Will* and *shall* in the examples 88 and 89 demonstrate a timeless prediction.

Example (88)

Your supporters *will or shall* leave you.

Example (89)

Kwame *will or shall* be exhausted if he argues this way.

Shall or will was used in the data to indicate a prediction or a volition. These are widely used and related to a subject of the first person. *Shall or will* was again used in a formal style to indicate a future event as indicated in the examples 90 and 91 below.

Example (90)

According to the opinion polls, he *shall* or *will* win quite easily.

Example (91)

When *shall* or *will* we know the results of the competition?

As a predictive characteristic is used with each option, it is described as a model option for all the other potential options. The three features are based on the assumptions of an extrinsic modality.

The finding is in support of Acquah (2022) who employed habitual prediction, specific prediction, and the general prediction when he discussed the use of the modal operator *will* in Ghanaian English and indicated that habitual prediction, specific prediction, and the general prediction are used to show what happens in future.

In the nutshell, through the discussions above, it can be concluded that the form one and two General Arts students of Nkenkaasu Senior High School used core modal verbs to express: obligation, possibility, ability, certainty, necessity, probability, permission and to make future predictions.

This finding is consistent with previous studies, such as Perkins (1983) and Palmer (2001) who remark that, the concepts and expressions of modality are signified by modal verbs such as *can, could, may, might, must, ought to, will, would, shall, should,* and also consistent with Downing and Locke (1992, p. 383) who note that,

107

'modality is understood as a semantic category which covers such propositions and expressions as possibility, probability, necessity, volition, obligation and permission.'

Furthermore, the finding of the current study agrees with Leech (1987) who lists the basic meanings of the modals *can, may and must*. According to Leech, the modal *can* is used to express possibility, ability and permission. The modal *may,* is used to express possibility, permission and an exclamatory wish. The modal *must,* is also used to express obligation and logical necessity.

However, the results of the semantic analysis on the possibility and probability modals show that Students of Nkenkaasu Senior High School have a great tendency to use possibility and probability semantic category in their writing more than the other categories. If we compare this finding with the findings of major corpus-based studies, we can say that this finding is not in an agreement with many of them. For example, Kennedy (2002) who studied modal auxiliaries in British national corpus and reported that both meanings of ability and permission are very frequently used in written register than the other semantic categories.

Finally, the current study is also in confirmation with Leech (2014) who states that modal auxiliary verbs are often used to show obligation, probability, necessity, possibility, and certainty, indicating that the writer presents something with greater or lesser modality.

4.3 Factors that contribute to underuse of some core modal verbs

This subsection presents some factors that underpin the underuse of some core modal verbs among form one and two General Arts students of Nkenkaasu Senior High School. As it can be seen from table 1 above, after compiling the data, it was found that some core modal verbs such as: *may, should, might*, *must* and *shall* were underused by the students. In order to ascertain the factors that were the causes of the underuse of

these core modal verbs, six teachers who teach students English Language and five students were interviewed. Factors given by the respondents have been discussed.

4.3.1 Factors for underuse of modality received from teachers

The respondents gave the following six factors: limited background knowledge of some core modal verbs, inhibition and risk-taking factor, the complexity of the English modal auxiliary system, local translation of some modal verbs, cultural differences and mismatch of modal verbs in teaching materials. These factors have been discussed below.

4.3.1.1 Limited and poor background knowledge

The first factor received from the respondents was that, senior high school students of Nkenkaasu Senior High School had not been exposed to some core English modal verbs for enough time, they had not been given adequate training in this aspect. According to the teachers, the background knowledge of modality the students had was limited. They added that, the students were not properly introduced to modality in their junior high school level. Due to these reasons, the students did not use some core modal verbs frequently, especially the ones under consideration: *should, might, must* and *shall*.

Out of six respondents who were interviewed, four of them mentioned limited and poor background knowledge as the cause of the underuse of some modal verbs. Examples 92 and 93 below indicate some responses given by some respondents.

Example 92

The students were not introduced to some core modal verbs such as *must* and *should* early enough in their syllabus.

Example 93

In our teaching, we found out that one reason for the underuse of

some modal verbs is that, the students were not given proper

teaching about modal verbs in their junior high school.

In example 92, the respondent associated the underuse of *must* and *should* to the latter introduction of such modal verbs to the students in their syllabus. While in the example 93, the participant attributed the underuse of such modal verbs to poor teaching.

This finding is in support of Shaoyun (2013), who conducted research on underuse and overuse of modal verbs and concluded that the underuse of *could* and *would* may be caused by the reason that they are introduced later in English textbooks and as the past tense form of *can* and *will.*

However, this finding is inconsistent with Burton, (2012) who argues that the underuse of some core modal verbs is caused by mismatching of modal verbs in the teaching materials and not later introduction of modal verbs to the students.

4.3.1.2 Risk-taking factor and low self-esteem

Another factor worth mentioning is risk-taking factor and low self-esteem. Three teachers mentioned that the students fear of taking risk and their low self-esteem inhibit their attempt to use more modal verbs in their writing. Examples 94 and 95 demonstrate how some respondents showed their concern about the students fear of making mistake or taking risk and their low self-esteem.

Example 94

It is necessary to make mistakes if a person wants to learn

modality, but our students fear of making mistake prevents

them from using some core modal verbs in their writing.

Example 95

The students protect their ego by building sets of defenses, their low self-esteem inhibit their greater success in using some core modal verbs.

In example 94, the participant associated the cause for the underuse of some modal verbs with the fear of making mistakes. In example 95, the respondent attributed underuse of some modal verbs to low self-esteem.

This finding is in support of Spada (2002) who opines that the concept of inhibition in learning modality is closely related to the notion of self- esteem and risk-taking. Furthermore, the finding agrees with Lightbown (2000, p. 54) who suggests that 'most important personality factors that influence the acquisition and the study of modality are: introversion or extroversion, self-esteem, inhibition, risk-taking, anxiety and empathy.'

However, the finding is not in an agreement with Thompson (2002) and Malachi (2008) who believe that the underuse of some core modal verbs, such as: *might* and *must* is caused by the complex nature of learning modal verbs and not risk-taking or low self-esteem factor.

4.3.1.3 The complexity of the English modal auxiliary system

Five respondents out of six, who were interviewed explained that one of the main problems in learning and teaching English as a second language is the complexity of the English modal auxiliary system. They indicated that in the standard formal English, the same modals express different notions, ranging from probability through permission to obligation. They added that, modals are not only auxiliaries in the grammatical sense but they also appear to contribute to the semantics of communication. Since communication is an integral part of the society, and the most

111

important means of human communication is language, the mechanics of language has to be understood in terms of how it facilitates communication. This includes the knowledge of grammar as without it, communication will fail as structure will be lacking.

They lamented that, in language learning, verb forms related to modals such as: *should, shall*, *might* and *must* are problematic to both first (L1) and second language (L2) speakers. That is, generally, the study of secondary modal verbs is very difficult for second language learners such as the students of Nkenkaasu Senior High School, as compared to the study of primary modal verbs and semi-modal verbs. Therefore, they concluded that, the students prefer using primary and semi-modal verbs as well as few common central modal verbs and ignore others that seem complicated to them in their writing.

This finding is in line with Ferris (2002) who states that verb forms related to modals are problematic to both first (L1) and second language (L2) speakers. Ferris opines that L1 speakers also make grammatical errors, if L1 speakers make errors, L2 speakers are even more capable of making the same errors and more in areas of formation of the verb phrases, passive and conditional forms, misuse of modals, underuse of modals, gerunds, infinitives and other grammatical items.

Again, this finding is in line with the work of Thompson (2002) who sees modals as a complex entity and that it is not easy to package the complexity into meaningful chunks of information to be presented to students. He added that if this were possible, that is reducing the complexity of the modals, this would make learning modals less problematic to second language learners of English. He agrees that learning modals can be confusing due to the meanings that each modal is depicted. However, the finding is not in an agreement with Carrio-Pastor (2014) who indicates that the

112

underuse of modality is associated with linguistic and cultural differences and not any other factor.

4.3.1.4 Local translation of modal verbs

Moreover, it was found from the participant that the local translation of modal verbs is one of the causes of underuse of some core modal verbs among the students in their writing. Four respondents explained that the students mainly just give the local translation of modal verbs. However, actually most of the modal verbs are not equivalent to their corresponding words in their local languages. And teachers have the tendency to instruct learners with the universal use of modals. Consequently, learners frequently practicing these expressions cause the monotony in their English output. That is, those modal verbs they cannot give local translation to, they fail to use them more frequently. Example 96 illustrates a comment made by a participant in that regard.

Example 96

The students use modal verbs that have equivalent to their corresponding words in their local languages frequently, and underuse those modal verbs that do not have equivalent to their corresponding words in their local languages.

This finding is also consistent with Yang (2018), who demonstrates in his work that in Chinese senior high students' mind, 'Neng' is the synonymous equivalence of *can*. Thus, they prefer to use the modal verb *can* when they want to express the sense of ability, not so much in the circumstances of permission and possibility, Consequently, learners frequently practicing these expressions cause the monotony in their English output.

Furthermore, the finding is in support of Sakyi (2019) who remarks that *tumi* is a Ghanaian Language (Akan) modal marker which is equivalent to *can* in English

113

Language to express different kinds of modal meanings such as: ability, potentiality, probability, permission and possibility. This may be the reason why *can* was the most second frequently used core modal verb in the data, since it is equivalent to *tumi* in the students' local Language. Also, since *can* communicates different kinds of modal meanings, it is possible for students to use it more frequently in their writing.

4.3.1.5 Cultural differences

Another factor worth mentioning in the data as to the cause of students underuse of some modal verbs was the culture differences between their local languages and English-speaking countries which contribute to the significantly divergent use of modal verbs. According to three participants, native speakers put more emphasis on the objective description of events while non-native learners like their students are more inclined to posture as they master with strong awareness of responsibility.

They argued that, the underuse of some modal verbs such as *shall and might* is the fact that the use of modality, like other pragmatic features, is culturally determined. Since epistemic modality is used both to express the speaker's perspective about a proposition, as well as deference to one's addressee, students need to develop socio-cultural sensitivity to learn to use it appropriately.

This result confirms Carrio-Pastor (2014) who states that language variation could be determined in Spanish and English communication when writers use modal verbs of possibility and ability with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

4.3.1.6 Mismatches of modal verbs and teaching materials

Furthermore, it was found that there were mismatches of modal verbs in the teachers' teaching materials: textbooks and syllabus. Out of six respondents, five of them mentioned that modal verbs found in the teachers teaching materials: textbooks

114

and syllabus do not match. Some of them stated that modal verbs such as: *can* and *will* are found in the students' syllabus whilst modal verbs such as: *shall and might* are also found in the text books . Sometimes teachers focus on the syllabus more than the students' textbooks. This brings about underuse of some modal verbs among students in their writing, especially, when teachers refuse to teach them those modal verbs in their textbooks.

Meanwhile, in English language teaching and learning, it is then crucial to consider the use of modal verbs and materials used in teaching modal verbs since they are one of the most problematic grammatical units (Mukundan & Khojasteh, 2011; Romer, 2004).

Therefore, teachers, textbooks and syllabus writers should present the same modal verbs in teaching materials such as textbooks and syllabus, to equip the learner with the real use of modal verbs in English Language. This aims to support the learners to be communicatively competent and use modal verbs more frequently (Gilmore ,2007).

Some corpus-based studies on textbooks by scholars prove that some modal verbs in ELT textbooks do not match with those in English syllabus (Arellano, 2018; Burton, 2012; Cheng & Warren, 2007; Leung, 2016; Norberg & Nordlund, 2018; Phoocharoensil, 2017 & Yoo, 2000). Focusing on modal verbs, they have been specifically studied by Khojasteh & Kafipour (2012), claiming that the presentation of modal verbs in textbooks is not in accordance with those in the syllabus. This confirms the reason why those modal verbs that were found in the Eglish syllabus were used more frequently in the data than others found in their textbooks.

This finding supports the work of other researchers (Collins, 2006 & Gilmore, 2004) who have found some mismatches between the modal verbs used in textbooks and English syllabus.

4.3.2 Factors for underuse of modality given by the students

This subsection presents three factors that underpin the underuse of core modal verbs received from five respondents (students) who were interviewed. They are: teacher factor, complex system of modality and absence of some core modal verbs in the students' grammar books.

4.3.2.1 Teacher factor

It was observed from the students that English as second Language teachers, being L2 speakers themselves, were often not certain as to how to go about teaching grammar, including modality to their students. Three respondents out of five who were interviewed remarked that some teachers who were teaching them English Language were new and had not been given much training about the use of modality. This prevented them from teaching their students modal verbs that were not common to them. Examples 97 and 98 give evidence of some of the information participants gave to buttress their points.

<div align="center">Example 97</div>

<div align="center">Some of our teachers do not teach us some modal verbs such as must.</div>

<div align="center">Example 98</div>

<div align="center">Newly posted teachers who teach English Language have not been taken

through proper method of teaching us central modal verbs.</div>

In the example 97, what the speaker meant was that some teachers did not teach them some modal verbs, therefore they were made to underuse those modal verbs they were

<div align="center">116</div>

not taught. Moreover, in the example 98, the speaker indicates that newly posted teachers were not taken through proper methods of teaching students modal verbs to understand and use them more frequently.

In view of the above, Byrd (2004) discusses the teaching and learning of modals from the easy item to the more difficult ones. However, she explains that there is a problem in deciding what is difficult and what is easy and to whom it is difficult or easy also needs to be considered.

The finding above is consistent with Hawanum (2004) and Vethamani (2001) who remark that English as second language teachers, being L2 speakers themselves, are often not certain as to how to go about teaching grammar(modality) to their students.

4.3.2.2 Absence of some modal verbs in grammar books

As teachers mentioned discrepancies or mismatches of modal verbs in the teaching materials, four students mentioned absence of some modal verbs such as *might* in their grammar books. Due to this, the students used modal verbs found in their grammar books more frequently and underused those that were not found in their grammar books.

This finding is in confirmation with other researchers (Orlando, 2009; Nordberg, 2010; Mukundan & Khojasteh, 2011; Khojasteh & Kafipour, 2012 & Nozawa, 2014). They examined modal verbs in textbooks and grammar books and the results of their study indicated that the presentation of modal verbs in both textbooks and grammar books were not sufficient to cover the complex semantic and pragmatic aspects of the modal verbs.

4.3.2.3 The complex system of modality

Finally, just like teachers mentioned the difficulties involve in the study of modality due to the fact that one modal verb may communicate three or more meanings, all the five students asserted that the study of modality is very difficult in the sense that some modal verbs such as: *would, might, should and might* can be used as present modal verbs and the same time past modal verbs. They explained that they don't know when to use them as past modal verbs and when to use them as present modal verbs. In view of that, they don't use them most often in order to avoid making errors in their writing. Sentences 99 and 100 illustrate examples of information given by the participants.

<center>Example 99</center>

We don't use some modal verbs more frequently because they are difficult.

<center>Example 100</center>

Some modal verbs can be used as present and at the same time past, so we don't know when to use them as present and as past.

4.4 Problems associated with underuse of modality

Modality refers to the speaker's attitude towards the judgment or assessment of what he says. The complexity and underuse of English modal auxiliaries comprise a serious challenge to English as foreign Language Students (Palmer, 2001). English as foreign Language students, such as Nkenkaasu Senior High School Students have problems associated with the underuse of modal verbs.

This subsection presents two main problems found from the data or learners' corpus as results of the underuse of some core or central modal verbs, which affected the students' grammar usage. The analysis is based on the framework mentioned above.

<center>118</center>

The problems include: the use of present modal verb to express past event and misuse of some central modal verbs. These problems have been discussed below.

4.4.1 The use of present modal verbs to express past events

Some students were not familiar with past form of some modal verbs such as: *can* and *may,* as a result, they could not use them in their writing which affected their grammar. Example 101 to example 104 indicate how students used modal verbs: *can* and *may* to express past events.

Example (101)

*My opponent *can* have provided evidence to the judges.

Example (102)

*You *can* have told him the right thing to do.

Example (103)

*He *may* have defeated him before the start of the game.

Example (104)

*The argument both of them raised *may* have been accepted, if they

waited.

From example 101 to example 104 above, the speakers used present form of modal verbs: *can* and *may* to express past events. This is due to the fact that the speakers were not familiar with the past form of those modal verbs. This made their statements or sentences to be grammatically incorrect. *Could* and *might* could have been used in the sentences above instead of *can* and *may.* In addition, they did not know the rules governing the use of modal verbs.

This finding is in line with Thompson (2002) who asserts that in order to reduce complexities of modals, we need to have a good understanding of the complexity. Then

119

only teachers would be able to explain the intricacies in terms of the rules that come with a modal. When ESL learners have a good grasp of modals, they can avoid making errors in their writing.

4.4.2 Misuse of some central modal verbs

Semantically, students had problems with using the appropriate modals. The choice of modals used were inaccurate leading to wrongly conveyed meaning. This was as a result of underuse of some modal verbs. Examples 105 and 106 illustrate misuse of some central modal verbs among the students.

<div align="center">

Example (105)

That night in my room, I *wouldn't* close my eyes because I was so excited to meet my opponents.

Example (106)

I *wouldn't* wait to be in Akumadan Senior High School where the debate competition was going to take place.

</div>

The modal *would not* in the example 105 is semantically inaccurate since what the writer is trying to say is that he or she was not able to sleep due to the excitement of going to meet his or her opponent. The modal *would not* could be changed to *could not* close my eyes instead, since it idiomatically means that he or she could not sleep. The placement of the modal was correct but the student used an inappropriate modal. One can argue that, the sentence could also mean that the writer did not want to close his or her eyes due to the excitement. This would mean that the sentence is semantically correct but not accurate, as *would* typically be interpreted in this utterance.

Furthermore, the appropriate modal verb in the example 106 above, is *couldn't wait* instead of *wouldn't w*ait to correctly indicate the eagerness of the writer to be in that school. *Couldn't* wait is also an idiomatic expression that has the meaning of

<div align="center">120</div>

looking forward to something. Semantically, the verb wait collocates with *could* and not *would.*

So, it can be seen from the above discussions that the underuse of some core modal verbs has affected the grammar of the students of Nkenkaasu Senior High School. This finding agrees with Palmer (2001) who argues that 'there is, perhaps, no area of English grammar that is both more important and more difficult than the system of the modals.' He defines modality based on the relations between modality and modals, and further remarks that modals and modality have the same relations as form and meaning have.

Palmer added that the semantics study of the modal verbs is, extremely messy and untidy. According to him, this is the cause of the underuse and misuse of some modal verbs among non-native speakers and the grammatical errors they make as they attempt to use them.

4.5 Chapter conclusion

The chapter has examined the use of modality among the students of Nkenkaasu Senior High School in their writing. It first began examining how often they used core modal verbs and the type of core modal verbs used by the students in their writing. Again, it examined the type of expressions or meanings the students do express in their writing. Finally, the chapter explored the factors that underpin the underuse of some core modal verbs in their writing and the problems associated with underuse of modal verbs.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This study investigated the use of modality in writing among senior high school students of Nkenkaasu Senior High School. This chapter presents a summary and a short discussion of the findings of the three research questions. It also attempts to explain and interpret the results in light of the reviewed literature. The chapter concludes with recommendations and a suggestion for future research.

5.1 Findings

The key findings emanated from the analytical procedure were presented in relation to the three research questions. In respect to the first research question, the study found that: one, all the nine core modal verbs: *may, might, will, would, shall, should, can, could and must* were used by the students of Nkenkaasu Senior High School in their writing.

Second, it was discovered that modal verbs such as: *will, can* and *would* were more frequently used while modal verbs such as: *could*, *may, should, might, must* and *shall* were less frequently used by the students in their writing. This finding confirms the work of Kader et al. (2013) who state that some modal verbs are most frequently used whilst others are less frequently used.

Third, the study revealed that *will* was most frequently used modal verb among all the nine core modal verbs which were studied whilst *shall* was the least modal verb used by the students in their writing. This finding endorses Palmer (2001) who states that an analysis of *will* in a corpus of written language reveals that it is more frequently used than other modal verbs in writing.

122

Fourth, the results of the study indicated that the students used all the three modal verbs in their writing: epistemic modal verbs, deontic modal verbs and dynamic modal verbs. This finding confirms the previous studies (Narrog, 2012; Palmer, 2001 & Coates, 1983) who remark that the uses of modal verbs are classified into epistemic modality, deontic modality and dynamic modality.

Concerning the second research question, the study showed that, form one and two General Arts students of Nkenkaasu Senior High School used modal verbs: *can, could, may, might, must, will, would, shall* and *should* to express or communicate modal meanings such as: probability, necessity, permission, obligation, possibility, ability, certainty and prediction in their writing. This finding is in support of Perkins (1983) and Palmer (2001) who demonstrate that, the concepts and expressions of modality such as probability, necessity, permission, obligation, possibility, ability, certainty and futurity are signified by modal verbs such as: *can, could, may, might, must, ought to, will, would, shall* and *should.*

In respect of the third research question, the study revealed that: one, some underpinning factors such as: risk-taking, complex nature of modal system, poor background knowledge, local translation of modal verbs, absence of some modal verbs in the students' grammar books etc. are the causes for the underuse of some core modal verbs among students in their writing. This finding is also consistent with Gibbs (1990) who opines that as useful as modal verbs are in communication, including academic and scientific writing, they are not easy to learn or to use appropriately for non-native speakers of English Language, this and other factors lead them to underuse some modal verbs, both in speech and in writing.

two, the finding of the study revealed that, the underuse of some core modal verbs among the students of Nkenkaasu Senior High School causes them to make some grammatical errors in their writing.

5.2 Conclusions

This study aimed at investigating the use of modal verbs in writing among senior high school students of Nkenkaasu Senior High School. It is clear from the discussion that core modal verbs such as: *may, might, will, would, shall, should, can, could and must* were used by the students of Nkenkaasu Senior High School in their writing.

In addition, central modal verbs: *will*, *can* and *would* were more frequently used by the students while *shall, must, might, should* and *may* were less frequently used by the students in their writing. It is also clear that the types of modal verbs used by the students are: epistemic modality, deontic modality and dynamic modality.

Furthermore, core modal verbs were used by the students to communicate modal meanings. Moreover, underpinning factors such as complex system of modality were the causes of underuse of some core modal verbs among students in their writing. Also, it was observed from the study that the underuse of some modal verbs among the students of Nkenkaasu Senior High School in their writing affected their grammar usage.

Moreover, the study contributes the following knowledge to the study of modality in English grammar: first, the frenquent use of core modal verbs helps to improve the students study of grammar in Eglish Language. Therefore, the students must be taught to use all the nine core modal verbs frequently in their essay writing. In addition, modal verbs are used to communicate different kinds of modal meanings such as ability, possibility, permission, obligation etc. Therefore, the students attention must be drawn

to the different kinds meanings they can use core modal verbs to communicate in their writing which will also help to improve their study of grammar in English Language.

5.3 Recommendations

Considering the outcome and the findings of the study, the researcher has come out with the recommendations below, hoping that they will go a long way to provide useful avenues for improving teaching and learning of modality in schools. The recommendations are given based on three research objectives.

5.3.1 Recommendations based on research objective one: frequency of modal verbs and the types of modal verbs used by the students

1. The teachers should train their students to use all core modal verbs more frequently in writing in order to improve their study of grammar.
2. The students' attention must be drawn to the modal verbs that are underused in their writing.
3. Again, the students' attention must be drawn to the three main types of modalities and be encouraged to use them more effectively in their writing.

5.3.2 Recommendations based on research objective two: the meanings or propositions students use core modal verbs to express or communicate in their writing

1. The students must be made aware of different meanings they can use modal verbs to express or communicate in their speech and writing.
2. More courses should be introduced that deal with the meaning of modal verbs and focus on teaching them in English grammar books.

3. Students should be encouraged to read more grammar patterns especially in the case of auxiliaries and verbs to identify the use and meanings of modals in different contexts.

4. Students should dig deep in the functions of grammatical categories to know the differences between such items as modals concerning meaning and usage.

5.3.3 Recommendations based on research objective three: factors underpinning the underuse of modal verbs and the problems associated with underuse of modal verbs

1. workshops and trainings should be given to the teachers that will help them to know how to teach all modal verbs more effectively.

2. Textbook writers, grammar book writers as well as syllabus writers should consider all the modal verbs in their writing.

3. Teachers, curriculum designers and stakeholders of education as well as the students' attention must be drawn to the factors that underpin the underuse of modal verbs and problems associated with the underuse of modal verbs.

In conclusion, the researcher wishes to recommend for future research that will cover the use of other modal verbs that are not included in this study such as semi-modal verbs and modal idioms.

5.3.4 Pedagogical implications

First of all, teachers must use different approach to teach modal auxiliary verbs in order to develop better comprehension and understanding among students to use modals appropriately and more frequently. They should also teach students about the functions of grammatical categories to know the differences between such items as modals concerning meaning and usage.

In addition, teachers can provide many contextualized examples so that students see how the different modal expressions are used in context and what meanings they convey. Again, students should experience the different modal verbs in various communicative settings through, for example, role plays where students work in pairs or groups to practice giving advice and suggestions, talking about personal abilities and preferences, and making requests and offers through the use of core modal verbs.

Moreover, teachers should develop guided activities such as providing students with specific scenarios and modal formulas like offering a ride to a friend or investigating a crime incident where students need to use past modals. Students can also work collaboratively on projects like creating invitation cards and appropriately responding to the invitation by accepting or rejecting using core modal verbs.

Additionally, the teachers can also help students to use core modal verbs to design surveys or questionnaires to collect information about their classmates' personal abilities or friends and family members. Excerpts from magazines, newspapers, and movies can be a rich source to analyze and discuss the use of modals. Finally, teachers can incorporate everyday objects and visuals such as using images of road signs. Students then interpret these through the use of modals of obligation.

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APPENDIX A

Examples of students' essays

Luuro Sunkyebe

1. We are happier than our forefathers. Write your argument for or against the motion.

Mr Chairman, Our Distinguished Guest, Panel Of Judges, Accurate Time keeper, Headmaster present, Teachers, Students, Ladies and Gentlemens.

I am by the name of Luuro Sunkyebe in Nkenkaasu Senior High School, I am first year student, I am standing here this morning to talk for the motion. We are happiers than Our forefathers.

I wish to also extend my Cheerful greetings to all members of the Club and my Co-debaters. I want to State that today is a red letters day in the history of our Club as we organise this important debate to Commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Club. I am also humbled by the opportunity to represent my club in this debate. I am Luuro Sunkyebe speaking in favour of the motion.

Mr Chairman, Panel Of Judges, Accurate Time Keeper, From my side, I will standing for the motion, because of Our forefathers time there is nothing Call mobile Phones, Car, Radio, School, Church, Mottor and bike.

Mr Chairman, Panel Of Judges, Accurate Time Keeper, first I may be talking about mobile phones, Our forefathers time there is nothing Call mobile phone, When you want to tell somebody Something or Communicate with your family or your friends you will be go there and Communicate with them. But now mobile phones is there when you are decide to Communicate with them, either your friends or family, you may Call them fast and tell them all your problems.

Mr Chairman, Panel Of Judges, Accurate Time Keeper, May Our forefathers would think that it help them to know a lot of placese. It would be that but it is not posible for me.

Mr Chairman, Panel Of Judges, Accurate Time Keeper, And now I should talk about Car, Now when they decide to go any where we would be taking Car and go, and it will be fast than our forefathers time. Now when any body want to go maybe Kumasi; or Accra there is a lot of Cars you will get and go fast. Our forefathers time when you went to go to kumasi you would be taking maybe five or six Months and go to that place, but now, if you decide to go you will talk may be two or three hours and go to that place, because we are happiers than Our forefathers.

BIKAMBA ALICE   24th october 2022

As your contribution to debate write arguments for or against the Preposition "We are happier than our forefathers"

Mr. Chairman, The Headmaster, Members of staff, Distinguished Guests Fellow Students Ladies and Gentlement I'm Nkankaasu senior high school Im 1A5 Student, It affords me much pleassue to be given this privilege to speak on this impodant occasion on the topic: "The Happreis Than Our forefather" I am highly greatful to the given Organisers for making this function a success

Mr. chairman, Fellow Students, now ourdays are a happiers days In the word because of the mordal Technology we found everything as easily and posible in this time. Mr. chairman because of the uses of moble phone we can chat with our friends or evry family members in differents Country or community. through moble phone with a friends in U.S.A becauses of the mordal technology. but forefather lack of moble phone They use to write a letter to the post office and sign. before that person will get the information about person. They can get that person through Signature and it take much of time before they will received the letter.

The Headmaster, Members of staff the using of cur in our mordal is help us to moue without take days it make movement easily as posible for us in this day we can go to Kumasi or everywhere is easily for us to go now the technology has changed everything are changed now. now adays When we use sick we can yet mottor or car to the hospital and take person life and time. that person life Operate the persot to

Another significant role of the education is most importants things in our days living We can enjoy anythings in this Word is through education helps us to achive everything well than our forefathers. Because they lack education.

The using of television is an agent of Socialisation. it connects countries Of the world and exposes the in our days peoples to other cultures. Informed about issues In other Countries through television. Television enables in our days peoples to see places and people and their way of life.

Mr. chairman, panel of Judges, ladies and Gentlement on this opporturnities I wish to appeal to the house to except my contention that our days in happiers than our forefathers.

end   Thank you

142

APPENDIX B

An interview question:

what are the underpinning factors that cause the underuse of some core modal verbs among the students of Nkenkaasu Senior High School?