



**VIETNAM NATIONAL UNIVERSITY, HANOI**  
**UNIVERSITY OF LANGUAGES AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**  
FACULTY OF POST-GRADUATE STUDIES



**NGUYỄN THỊ LIÊN**

**A CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH PERFECTIVE MODALS OF  
NECESSITY, CERTAINTY AND ABILITY AND THEIR VIETNAMESE  
EQUIVALENTS FROM SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL PERSPECTIVE**

**(So sánh đối chiếu các trợ động từ tình thái hoàn thành tiếng Anh biểu hiện sự  
cần thiết, sự chắc chắn và khả năng và tương đương trong tiếng Việt trên quan  
điểm chức năng hệ thống)**

**M.A Minor Thesis**

**Field: English Linguistics**

**Code: 60 22 15**



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**Supervisor: Đỗ Tuấn Minh (Ph.D.)**



**HANOI – 2010**

## **DECLARATION**

I certify that all the material in this study which is not my own word has been identified and acknowledged, and that no material is included for which a degree has been conferred upon me.

Signature

Nguyễn Thị Liên

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In addition, an honorable mention goes to my family, colleagues and friends for their understandings and supports on me in completing this study. Without the help of the particular that was mentioned above, I would face many difficulties while doing this thesis.

Last, but no means least, my debt to the authors and publishers of the books listed in the References is equally great. To these all scholars, I offer my deep gratitude.

*Hanoi, August 2010,*

Nguyễn Thị Liên

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## ABSTRACT

Modality is a topic of great interest for many grammarians. As far as the traditional view is concerned, modality is defined as the grammaticalization of speakers' (subjective) attitudes and opinions. When it comes to Systemic Functional Grammar, modality refers to the area of meaning that lies between *yes* and *no* – the intermediate ground between positive and negative polarity. Despite the differences in the way they name, define or classify modality, linguists of traditional and functional view agree with each other on that modal auxiliaries are one of the most important means to express modality.

In the light of Systemic Functional Grammar, modal auxiliaries are characterized by the seven features. There is a fixed list of modal operators which are ranked according to the values. In this thesis, I have no intention of covering everything about modal verbs or all their meanings. Rather, only the modals with *have done* (called perfective modals) of three meanings - necessity, certainty and ability – are the concentrations of my analyses.

The modal verbs of necessity introduced by functional linguists are *must, needn't, have to, may, should, shouldn't, can* and *can't*. However, only *should, ought to* in the positive and *should not, ought not to, need not* in the negative can combine with relative past tense to express past requirement. The equivalents for these modals in Vietnamese are *cần, phải, cần phải, khỏi, nên*.

According to the functional grammarians, *must, will, may, could, can't, will, won't, should* and *needn't* are modals of certainty. Of the modal verbs, *must have, would have, should have, ought to have, may have, might have, could have* in the positive and *can't have, could not have, may not have* in the negative can go with *have done* to express certainty with different values. In Vietnamese, such verbs as *khắc, phải, có thể, không thể* can be regarded as the equivalents for these auxiliary verbs.

In English, the modals like *can, can't, could, could not* can express ability. The two modals – *could* and *could not* combine with relative past tense to indicate past ability. Vietnamese equivalents for the modals of ability are *có thể* and *không thể*.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, linguists have turned attention from structural to functional linguistics. Greater attention has been paid to the power of language as a tool of communication and areas of sentence's meanings. The concept of sentence's meanings has expanded to include not only representative but also modality.

Nevertheless, the area of modality is rather harder to define, as has been demonstrated by Palmer (1986). Similar notions of modality still live on in certain branches of linguistics. The notional category modality is grammatically realized very diversely throughout the sentence, in modal verbs and adverbs. Despite the strong interests in them, the modals remain a high controversial linguistic phenomenon. However, chosen for inclusion in this paper are grams with uses that are associated with modality - necessity, certainty and ability.

According to Palmer (1986), English has a system of modal verbs: *will, can, may, must*, etc. In Halliday's view, there are also 12 tenses which are available in non-finite and modalized verbal groups. We have past realized by (secondary) *have* (in a non-finite form) and past participle. "Although modality itself is not subject to variation in tense, it combines freely with any tense" (1970: 177).

Modal auxiliary verbs may sound easy at first but in fact, they are difficult. Making this explicit to teachers and learners could reduce the teaching and learning burden. Hence, a crucial requirement is the necessity to analyse perfective modals of necessity, certainty and ability in sufficient depth. That is my preoccupation in writing this paper.

### 1.2. RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Of all the languages in the world today, English deserves to be regarded as a world language. Verghese (1989: 1) points out: "One person out of every four on earth can be reached through English". In English, we can communicate a thought or an idea with precision by learning how to use a verb. It is, therefore, necessary to acquire a thorough knowledge of verbs, among which the English modals seem to be used at high frequencies. Thanks to modal verbs, the communication among people can be diversified and colourful

because they can bring emotions, attitudes or opinions into what they say by using modals. In fact, modal verbs are not simple as thought. They may be considered to be easy for the beginners who just know the meanings superficially. However, when we can command the language better, we find it really difficult to use their distinctive features properly.

English modal auxiliaries have captured my attention since I was a university student. At that time, the fact that the more frequently modals are used, the more errors are made urged me to do a careful research to find what the problems were called “Mistakes in using perfective modals of necessity, certainty and ability by Vietnamese learners of English”. That Graduation Paper was discussed taking the view of traditional grammar. As a part of M.A. program, I had chance to study Functional Grammar, which caused a number of troubles for me in the beginning but caught my fancy at the end. After this course, the topic for my thesis arose. That is analyzing perfective modals of necessity, certainty and ability using Systemic Functional Grammar as the theoretical framework.

Reviewing the literature, quite a lot of questions concern modality and modals but few of them have yet been definitely answered. Several researchers and learners have made studies of modality and modals in general rather than perfective modals. My paper does not yet offer a complete and coherent picture but it reflects, in my opinion, some of the best efforts in that direction.

All the three reasons mentioned above are my motivations to carry out this study.

### **1.3. AIMS OF THE STUDY**

It is my aim to focus on making some preliminary enquiries about modality and modal verbs in English and Vietnamese. However, neither is my ambition to cover all the things related to modality nor do I intend to deal with all aspects relating to each modal. In view of the complexity of my subject matter, I will have to be eclectic and illustrate the perfective modals of the three meanings of necessity, certainty and ability in the spirit of functional grammar view in detail followed by their Vietnamese equivalents. Bearing these aims and objectives in mind, I made every attempt to answer the following research questions:

1. What is modality and how modality conceptualized in traditional grammar and in Systemic Functional Grammar?
2. What are the modal verbs in English as seen from the light of Systemic Functional Grammar and their Vietnamese equivalents?
3. How is modality of necessity, certainty and ability expressed by perfective modal verbs and their equivalents in Vietnamese?

#### **1.4. SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

Studying all things about modality and modal verbs will be too broad themes and, therefore, an impossible task for any researchers. For the feasibility of a minor M.A. thesis, I narrowed the scope of my paper. Some preliminaries of modality and modal verbs are included in the second chapter. Modality in English is not discussed in any branch of grammar apart from in Traditional Grammar as the background and in the light of Functional Grammar as the focus. An overview grasp of modality in Vietnamese is also mentioned in contrast. In the main chapter, Chapter 3, I did not intend to investigate all the meanings of the modal auxiliaries. Rather, only three meanings - necessity, certainty and ability – were the concentration of my analyses. I did not study these modals in general or simple modals but the modals with *have done* (called perfective modals). My concern in the contrastive part was to find the equivalents in Vietnamese for those modals in English.

#### **1.5. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

The methodology of the study was based on descriptive analysis and qualitative data activities. The reference materials, after being collected or accessed, were selected, analyzed and grouped into categories so that the subject can be described in detailed. Examples, tables and figures were also provided to illustrate the description. For comparison, the writer applies comparison of modal verbs expressing similar meanings in some examples in English and Vietnamese.

#### **1.6. DESIGN OF THE STUDY**

This study comprises four chapters: Introduction, Theoretical orientations, English Perfective modals of necessity, certainty and ability from systemic functional perspective and their Vietnamese equivalents, and Conclusion.

The first chapter introduces, gives reasons, states what the study is aimed at, identifies the delimitation of the study, presents the methodology and the organization of the study.

Chapter 2 is mainly devoted to the theoretical dimensions of investigation, in which modality and modals in English and Vietnamese are studied. This includes two main parts: Modality in English and Vietnamese and Modal verbs in English and Vietnamese.

Chapter 3 is concerned with descriptions and analyses of the three meanings - necessity, certainty and ability in English and Vietnamese equivalents.

The last chapter closes, briefly, with the summary, the discussion of the problems in teaching and learning these modals and some suggestions for further research.

## CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL ORIENTATIONS

### 2.1. INTRODUCTION

The area of meaning referred to as modality is rather broad and finds expression in many areas of the language besides mood. Different linguists use different terms in talking about modality. Palmer (1986)'s study, *Mood and Modality*, reminds us that different languages draw on different features of their systems in order to present modality. I begin this chapter, therefore, with a brief account of the central area covered by modality in English and Vietnamese. Modality as grammatical categories is represented in Functional Grammar by operators at the different levels of underlying structure of the clause. The result from Palmer (1986:1) is that English actually has a system of modal verbs: *will, can, may, must*, etc. In describing the meanings and uses of the modal auxiliaries, we will make distinctions among three meanings, which I refer to as necessity, certainty and ability.

In this chapter, the preliminaries of modality in English and Vietnamese are treated in the sections 2.2 and 2.3, while sections 2.4 and 2.5 deals with modal verbs in English and Vietnamese. Section 2.6, finally, summarizes all the things discussed in the chapter.

### 2.2. MODALITY IN ENGLISH

Modality in this part will be seen from the lights of traditional grammar and Systemic Functional Grammar.

#### 2.2.1. The traditional view of Modality

As far as the traditional view of modality is concerned, the definition, types and markers of modality will be presented.

##### 2.2.1.1. *The definition of Modality*

In much of current linguistics, two concepts of modality are common. First, modality can be defined more broadly as “the set of elements of the sentence outside the proposition” (Fillmore 1968: 24). However, this definition is, in my view, far too broad to be of any real interest. It would, as I see it, be more rewarding to apply a narrower definition of modality. The second is modality as a grammatical category on a par with other grammatical categories such as tense, aspect, or voice.

Though it is much vague and leaves open a number of possible definitions, the notion of modality along the lines of Lyons' (1977: 452) "opinion or attitude" of the speaker seems promising.

Palmer (1986: 16) clarified this notion and defined modality as "the grammaticalization of speakers' (subjective) attitudes and opinions".

#### ***2.2.1.2. Types of Modality***

Palmer's definition embraces epistemic, deontic, commissive, volitive and evaluative modalities, the last, which is not strictly modal but semantically rather closely related.

Epistemic modality concerns language as information. It is the expression of the degree or nature of the speaker's commitment to the truth of what he says (Palmer 1986: 121).

Deontic modality concerns language as action. It is mostly an expression by the speaker of his attitude towards possible actions by himself and others (Palmer 1986: 121).

Commissives are "where we commit ourselves to doing things" (Searle 1983: 166, cited in Palmer 1986: 115).

Volitives are expressions of wishing and hoping (Palmer 1986: 116), and evaluatives are expressions of attitudes towards known facts (Palmer 1986: 119).

#### ***2.2.1.3. Markers of Modality***

Various types of modality listed above are expressed or realized by markers of modality. As Palmer (2001: 19) has shown, "basically there are three types of marker: individual suffixes, clitics and particles, and modal verb". Whether these are grammatical or not can only be decided in terms of the degree to which they have syntactic restrictions and the extent to which they can be defined as a limited rather than open-ended system of items.

### **2.2.2. Modality in Functional Grammar**

When it comes to modality in Systemic Functional Grammar, four other respects that should be taken into account from our viewpoint are polarity and modality, types of modality, realizations of modality and values.

#### ***2.2.2.1. Polarity and Modality***

Polarity is included in this chapter because it is treated, in some accounts, as related to modality.



Halliday talks about polarity as the choice between positive and negative, as in *is/ isn't*, *do/don't*. Meanwhile, modality refers to the area of meaning that lies between *yes* and *no* – the intermediate ground between positive and negative polarity (1994: 356).

Polarity is seen in terms of the end-points of the scales of probability, usuality, obligation and inclination. Halliday (1994: 90) distinguishes between two types of negative polarity: one is realized as *n't* or unstressed *not* as part of Finite element of the clause, the other, realized by phonologically salient *not*, is analyzed as a separate modal Adjunct.

In accordance with Lock (1996: 193), it is possible to define modality both broadly and narrowly. A broad definition would encompass all expressions of interpersonal meanings that lie between *it is so* and *it is not so* or between *do it* and *don't do it*. A narrow definition of modality encompasses only the modal auxiliaries and their uses, and sometimes also adverbs functioning as modal adjuncts, such as *possibly*, *probably* and *certainly*. This chapter will take a fairly narrow view of modality:

“Modality is the speaker’s assessment of the probabilities inherent in the situation; or, in a derived sense, of the rights and duties” (Halliday and Hasan 1976:135).

#### **2.2.2.2. Types of modality**

Like differences in the way they define modality, functional grammarians, in their writings, mention numerous ways to classify modality. Dik distinguishes between different types of modality on the basis of the subdivisions proposed by Hengeveld (1987, 1989), who drew heavily on the insights of Lyons (1977) and Foley and Van Valin (1984) in particular (cited in Anna 1991: 123). He, then, divides the semantic distinctions typically subsumed under the label “modality” into three groups: inherent modality, objective modality and epistemological modality.

The term inherent modality refers to the speaker’s epistemic of the relationship between a participant in the state of affair (SoA) and the realization of that SoA. The types of modal distinctions conveyed by inherent modality include *ability*, *willingness*, *obligation*, *permissibility* and *volition*.

Objective modality is characterized in Functional Grammar as involving the evaluation of a SoA in terms of the speaker’s knowledge of its likelihood of occurrence (actuality).

The term epistemological modality is proposed by Hengeveld (1987) to cover subjective modalities and evidentials.

According to Geoff Thompson (1996: 57), if the commodity being exchanged is information, the modality relates to how valid the information in terms of probability (how likely it is to be true) or usuality (how frequent it is true). In order to distinguish these two basic types of modality, the first is called modalization (or epistemic modality), whereas the second is referred to as modulation (or deontic modality). The sub-categories of the former are *probability* and *usuality* while those of the latter are *obligation* and *inclination*. These types are summarized in the following table:

commodity exchange	speech function		type of intermediacy	typical realization	example	
information	proposition:	statement, question	modalization:	probability (possible /probable /certain)	finite modal operator modal Adjunct  (both the above)	they must have known  they certainly knew  they certainty must have known
				usuality (sometimes /usually /always)	finite modal operator modal Adjunct  (both the above)	it must happen  it always happens  it must always happens
goods-&-services	proposal:	command	modulation:	obligation (allowed /supposed /required)	finite modal operator passive verb Predicator	you must be patient  you're required to be patient
		offer		inclination (willing /keen /determined)	finite modal operator adjective Predicator	I must win!  I'm determined to win!

**Table 1: Modalization and modulation (Halliday 1994: 91)**

Halliday then adds, “there is one further category that needs to be taken into account, that of *ability / potentiality*” (1994: 359).

### 2.2.2.3. Realizations of modality

Modality covers a broad area and can be expressed by many forms. Downing and Locke (1992: 383, 384) observe that they may be divided into two main groups: the verbal and the non-verbal exponents.

Verbs expressing modal meanings include the following:

- (i) Lexical verbs such as *allow, beg, command, forbid, guarantee, guess, promise, suggest, warn*, etc.
- (ii) The verbs *wonder* and *wish*, which express doubt and wish, respectively.
- (iii) The lexico-modal auxiliaries composed of *be* or *have*, usually another element + infinitive (*have got to, be bound to*, etc.)
- (iv) The modal auxiliaries *can, could, will, would, must, shall, should, may, might, ought*, and the semi-modals *need* and *dare*.

Other means are also suggested to express modalities:

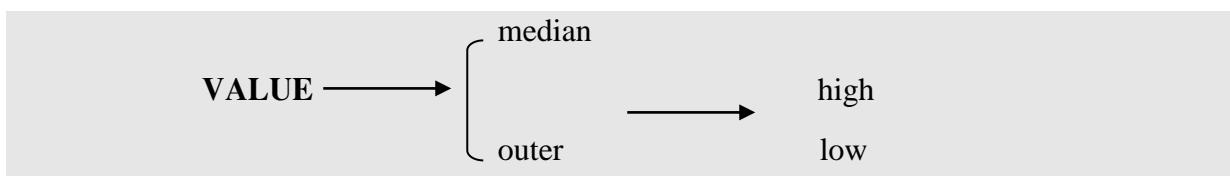
- (i) Modal disjuncts such as *probably, possibly, surely, hopefully, thankfully, obviously*.
- (ii) Modal adjectives such as *possible, probable, likely* used in personal constructions such as *It's possible he may come* or as part of a Nominal Group, as in *a likely winner of this afternoon's race* or *the most probable outcome of this trial*.
- (iii) Modal nouns such as *possibility, probability, chance, likelihood* as in *There's just a chance that he may come*.
- (iv) Certain uses of if-clauses as in *if you know what I mean; if you don't mind my saying so; what if he's had an accident?*
- (v) The use of the remote past as in *I thought I'd go along with you, if you don't mind*.
- (vi) The use of non-assertive items such as *any* as in *He'll eat any kind of vegetable*.
- (vii) Certain types of intonation, such as fall-rise.
- (viii) The use of hesitation phenomena in speech.

It is clear from Downing and Locke's presentation that there are a variety of means of expressing modality. In this paper, we will adopt a very limited scope, taking modal auxiliaries to be basically the expression of necessity, certainty and ability.

#### 2.2.2.4. Values

In Systemic Functional Grammar, discussing any type or any realization of modality will not be enough without taking values into account. Admittedly, language differs not only in the number and the kinds of the layer values but also in the means by which these values are expressed. Some languages use grammatical means; others use lexical ones. We talk about modality as involving degrees and scales. Functional structure is different in the way that it consists of attributes that are specified particular values. As Thompson (1996: 59) realizes, the speaker may signal “a higher or lower degree of certainty about the validity of a proposition”; or “a higher or lower degree of pressure on the other person to carry out a command”.

It is possible to formalize this to some extent and to establish three basic values (Halliday 1994: 358) or point on the scale: high, median and low, which he considers to be the third variable in modality. The system of values has the primary option between the median and outer values. Within the latter, there is also a contrast between the lower value and the higher value. With the median, the negative is freely transferable between the proposition and the modality, whereas, with the outer values, if the negative is transferred, the value switches (either from high to low, or from low to high). The following table is the presentation of modality values:



**Table 2: Modality value (Halliday 1994: 360)**

### 2.3. MODALITY IN VIETNAMESE

#### 2.3.1. Different viewpoints of modality in Vietnamese

In Vietnamese, different writers hold different viewpoints of modality. The broad conception of modality can be found in Đỗ Hữu Châu, Hoàng Tuệ’s writings, especially in Cao Xuân Hạo’s and many followers’ (Lê Đông, Phạm Hùng Việt, Nguyễn Văn Hiệp ...).

Cao Xuân Hạo (1991: 98) builds up the definition of modality from the relation with theme-rheme. He considers modality of an utterance as the attitude of the speaker towards what he says. It is the reflection of people’s opinions, assessment about reality.

### 2.3.2. Types of modality

Of different viewpoints of modality in Vietnamese, Cao Xuân Hạo's one is considered relatively clear and detailed as follows: When studying Vietnamese sentences, he claims that it is useful to distinguish three types of modality: modality of enunciation (tình thái của hành động phát ngôn), modality of predication (tình thái của vị ngữ) and modality of sentence (tình thái của câu) (1991: 97).

### 2.3.3. Expressions of modality

There are a variety of means expressing modality in Vietnamese. However, in non-inflected languages like Vietnamese, the distinction between lexicology and grammar means in expressing modality is not strictly discussed (Nguyễn Minh Thuyết and Nguyễn Văn Hiệp 1998: 221).

In order to express modal meanings, the following means, according to Đỗ Thị Kim Liên (1999: 89-95), can be used:

- (i) Using word order (trật tự từ)
- (ii) Using intonation (ngữ điệu)
- (iii) Using modality particles (tình thái từ): *à, ư, nhỉ, nhé, chẳng, nhen, hén, hê, hỉ, nha, nhá, hử, hử, hả, hầy ...*
- (iv) Using modality complex (tổ hợp từ tình thái): *Giời ơi là trời, ối làng nước ơi, ối cha mẹ ơi, ôi! Bà con làng nước ơi, ối trời cao đất dày ơi, cha trời, ôi thôi thôi, eo ôi ...*
- (v) Using adjuncts (phụ từ): *đã ...không, đã ... chưa...*
- (vi) Using adverbs (trợ từ): *đã, mới, chỉ, mãi, tận, những, có, đến ...*
- (vii) Using affixes – *iếc* (hình thức tách xen từ hoặc iếc hóa)

### 2.3.4. Features of modality in Vietnamese

In spite of a large number of people involved in studying modality, no detailed list of features of modality in Vietnamese has been proposed. From the discussion of the eight expressions:

- (1) *Chắc chắn là Nam sẽ trúng cử.*
- (2) *Nam chắc chắn (là) sẽ trúng cử.*
- (3) *Nam trúng cử là cái chắc.*
- (4) *Theo tôi thì Nam thế nào cũng trúng cử*

- (5) *Tôi tin chắc là Nam sẽ trúng cử.*  
 (6) *Nam thì tôi tin chắc là sẽ trúng cử.*  
 (7) *Nam sẽ trúng cử một cách chắc chắn.*  
 (8) *Nam sẽ trúng cử, (và) đó là một điều chắc chắn.*

Cao Xuân Hạo drew the conclusion that modality of a sentence can make the content of a separate clause, the theme, the rheme or a minor clause (2006: 323,324). Here, it can be seen that the eight expressions with different ways of using words, phrases and structures bringing different meanings. Of them, the (1) and (8) expressions show the highest degree of certainty and the (6) shows the lowest.

In Vietnamese, we have the two choices of value to express modality, either certainty or possibility. If something is considered certain, then it is distinguished from possible and vice versa.

Apart from the above, other systems of modality in Vietnamese are frequency, which can be realized by both verbal and non-verbal forms like *ít, hay, thỉnh thoảng, đôi khi, etc*; polarity, which is represented by words like *có thể, chắc chắn, etc*; and consequence, which can be realized not only by verbal forms but also by non-verbal forms such as *may (mắn), rủi (rò), được, bị, phải*.

## **2.4. MODAL VERBS IN ENGLISH IN THE LIGHT OF SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR**

In what follows we will be concerned with the modal verbs in English as seen from the light of Systemic Functional Grammar. We now will present a brief characterization of the modals; and then the three specific meanings – necessity, certainty and ability – will be taken up in the following chapter.

### **2.4.1. Definition of English modal verbs**

A great number of books have been written about English modal verbs, modal auxiliaries, modal operators or shortly called modals. In his major study of English, Halliday (2005: 170) makes the claim that modality is expressed by either or both of two elements, one verbal and the other non-verbal (where verbal means ‘functioning syntactically as a verb’). The verbal forms are the modal auxiliaries.

In order to answer the question what modal auxiliary verbs are, Swan (2005: 353) states that modal auxiliary verbs are used before the infinitives of other verbs, and add certain kinds of meaning connecting with certainty, or with obligation and freedom to act.

To be easier to follow, in this paper we will follow the definition suggested by Downing and Locke: The modal auxiliaries in English “express the speaker’s attitude to a potential event” (1992: 382).

#### **2.4.2. Features of English modal verbs**

The modal auxiliaries are characterized by the following seven features presented by Halliday (2005: 170):

- (i) They have only finite forms: there is no *\*to can, canning*.
- (ii) They form negative and interrogative without expansion, the negative also being reducible: *he cannot (he can't), can he?, not he doesn't can, does he?*
- (iii) They are used as ‘code verbs’ in ellipsis: ‘can you swim?’ *yes I can; so can I.*
- (iv) They have three prosodic values, remiss (unstressed), ictus (secondary stress) and tonic (primary stress): // ^ he can / **go** //, // ^ he / can / **go** //, // ^ he / **can** / go //, the unstressed form being normally reduced; these are systemic variants, differing on meaning in a regular way.

They are further distinguished from the other verbal auxiliaries *be, get, have* and *do* by the fact that:

- (v) They do not take –s on the third person singular: *he can* not *\*he cans*.

Finally

- (vi) They do not occur in imperative.
- (vii) They do not combine with each other.

#### **2.4.3. List of modal verbs in English**

Freddi observed that there are various resources in the lexico-grammatical repertoire of English that a speaker can choose from to express modal meanings. Epistemic modality or modalization and deontic modality or modulation can be expressed by finite modal operators like *will, would, may, might, can, could, shall, should, must, ought to* and semi-modals like *need, dare, have to* and *used to*. (p. 96, 97)

In Goossens (2000: 151)'s view, the set of central modals in English is fairly well defined: it includes the items *can, could, may, might, will, would, shall, should, must*.

According to Halliday & Hasan (1976: 180), a modality is expressed either or both of two elements, one verbal and the other non-verbal. The verbal forms are the modal auxiliaries or the modal operators:

(i) *shall, will, should, would, can, could, may, might, must, ought (to)*

(ii) *am to, is to, are to, was to, were to* [*i.e.* finite forms of *be*, plus *to*]

(iii) *need, dare* (in one use)

#### 2.4.4. Modal verbs discussed in this study

Of various lists of modal verbs in English stated in 2.4.3, we follow Halliday (1994: 76)'s one. The full list of modal operators are shown in the following table:

	low	median	high
positive	can, may, could, might, (dare)	will, would, should, is/was to	must, ought to, need, has/ had to
negative	needn't, doesn't/didn't + need to, have to	won't, wouldn't, shouldn't, (isn't/wasn't to)	mustn't, oughtn't to, can't, couldn't, (mayn't, mightn't, hasn't/hadn't to)

**Table 3: Modal operators**

As can be seen from the table, he gives the different modal operators according to the different values: high, median and low. Not all the modals listed above will be discussed in this study. Only those being used in the perfective to express necessity, certainty and ability will be the focus, instead.

## 2.5. MODAL VERBS IN VIETNAMESE

### 2.5.1. Definition of modal verbs in Vietnamese

In general, many different grammar documents discussing modal verbs in Vietnamese have the following two points in common: First, modal auxiliary verbs are regarded as those being used to combine with other verbs to expose speakers' attitudes or volition towards reality. Only in the specific context, can we leave the main verb associated with it. Typical for this point are the authors Lê Cận, Phan Thiều, Hữu Quỳnh, Nguyễn Kim Thản. The second



view considers modal verbs to be those indicating the relation between the subject and the verb standing after the modal. Typical for this point is Diệp Quang Ban.

### 2.5.2. Features of modal verbs in Vietnamese

Nguyễn Kim Thản (1977: 165) calls the verbs that do not indicate actions or states but show ability, necessity or volition modal verbs. Their three main features are shown as follows:

(i) Like in English, modal verbs in Vietnamese are not often used alone. Instead, they are used in combination with other verbs constituting a complex group, which plays the role of the predicate.

(ii) Only in certain cases, mainly clear and evident linguistic context, can modal verbs be used without other main verbs.

(iii) However, unlike in English, Vietnamese modal verbs can go with adverbs of degree: *rất cần, rất muốn, rất mong, cần ... lắm, muốn ... lắm.*

Apart from the above persuasive opinion, the following findings of Diệp Quang Ban (1998: 67, 68) are also necessary to be noted. First, modal verbs, like other dependent verbs, can come before nouns: *Thế thì Oanh không phải khó nhọc gì, không phải một trách nhiệm gì, cái trách nhiệm hiệu trưởng hoàn toàn Thứ phải đương, mà được lợi về cái trường mỗi tháng trăm bạc* (Nam Cao). Second, they can go before S-V: *Chúng tôi cần các anh giúp cho một hôm nữa.*

### 2.5.3. List of modal verbs in Vietnamese

In what follows, we will see what modals are included in different writers' lists. Firstly, Ngô Đình Phương (2000)'s study showed that there are 22 modal verbs in Vietnamese such as *cần, chịu, có thể, không thể, có, dám, định*, etc. (p.217)

Secondly, Bùi Trọng Ngoãn's list of modal verbs include *cần, khỏi, muốn, buồn, thêm, định, toan, tính, chực, quyết, quyết định, nên, phải, chịu, đành, có thể, không thể, trót, nở, lỡ, bị được*, etc. (2002: 195).

Diệp Quang Ban (1998: 65, 66), moreover, divides these modal verbs into the following subgroups. Initially, modal verbs showing necessity and ability consist of *cần, nên, phải, cần phải ...; có thể, không thể ...* Subsequently, modal verbs expressing will, wish or

desire include *toan, địn, dám, chịu, buồn, nỡ ...*, *muốn, mong chúc ...* Last, modal verbs indicating withstanding comprise *bị, đượ, chịu, mắc, phải ...*

#### 2.5.4. Modal verbs discussed in this study

As can be seen from the lists in the previous part, different grammarians have different lists of modals in Vietnamese. Though having some differences in their lists, they agree with each other that *cần (need), chịu (bear), có thể (can), không thể (cannot), phải (must), nên (should), toan (intend), địn (intend), muốn (want), buồn, nỡ (have the heart to force), bị, đượ (be+ past participle with beneficial meaning)*, etc. are modal verbs. These will be the modal verbs in Vietnamese discussed in this study.

#### 2.5.5. Comparison of modal verbs in English and Vietnamese

As far as number is concerned, Ngô Đình Phương (2000: 217-219) finds that there are 25 modal verbs in English like *may, could, can, could, will, need, be able to*, etc. and 22 in Vietnamese like *cần, chịu, có thể, không thể, có, dám, địn*, etc.

In terms of structure, in the positive, the essential similarity is that modal verbs in the two languages have to be combined with the main verb to avoid being meaningless.

(9) *On Sunday, we **could** stay up late.*

(10) *Sạ **phải** đem thân đi ở rể.*

We have the same formula: *S + modal verb + main verb*

Like in English, only in specific cases, especially in determined linguistic context, Vietnamese modal verbs can stand alone playing the role of the predicate.

(11) *Could you help me with this math problem? - Yes, I **could**.*

(12) *Đồng chí có **muốn** viết thư cho họ không? – Tôi rất **muốn**.*

However, between modal verbs in English and Vietnamese, there exist some differences in syntax features. Basically, modal verbs in Vietnamese can associate with adverbs of degree: *rất cần, rất muốn, rất mong, etc.* but most modal verbs in English cannot: We cannot say *\*I should leave now very much*. Modal verbs in English and in Vietnamese can be combined with other types of adverbs:

(13) *Mà mẹ nó **cũng nên** giữ sức khỏe, kéo ốm thì rầy rà lắm.*

(14) *You **ought always** to check your facts when you write essays.*

Ngô Đình Phương gives the following table to compare modal verbs in English and Vietnamese in the negative:

<b>English</b>	S + modal verb + not (n't) + main verb
	S + semi-modal + not (n't) + the rest of semi-modal + main verb
<b>Vietnamese</b>	S + không (hề) chẳng (hề) + modal verb + main verb chưa (hề)
	S + có nào có + modal verb + main verb + đâu
	Có phải Chẳng phải + S + modal verb + main verb + đâu

**Table 4: Modal verbs in English and in Vietnamese in the negative**

From the comparison above, we can see that Vietnamese language has more ways to create negative forms than in English, because Vietnamese has words (especially markers) to express grammatical meanings.

In the interrogative, English questions can be formed using modal operators: *Can Aristotle lift 1,500 pounds?* In Vietnamese, we cannot change the order of words in sentences to make questions. Instead, we use the words like *à, ư, hử, được chứ, hả* at the end of the sentence.

## 2.6. SUMMARY

This chapter has tried to study basic theory of modality and modal verbs in English and Vietnamese. Modality in English was discussed from the two views: the traditional and functional ones. In the traditional view, modality is considered to be “speakers’ (subjective) attitudes and opinions” by Palmer. This definition embraces epistemic, deontic, commissive, volitive and evaluative modalities. Also has been shown, three types of markers of modality are individual suffixes, clitics and particles, and modal verb. In the light of Functional Grammar, modality was studied in relation to polarity. Functional grammarians distinguished two basic types of modality: modalization and modulation. The discussion also revealed three basic values (high, median and low) on the scale.

Modality is also studied by quite a lot of the authors in Vietnam. Cao Xuân Hạo pointed out three types of modality and Đỗ Thị Kim Liên listed seven means of expressions of modality in Vietnamese (word order, intonation, particles, modality complex, adjuncts, adverbs, and affixes – *iéc*).

Among various viewpoints, English modal verbs can be understood as operators that can express the speaker's attitude to a potential event indicated by the infinitive. A modal auxiliary has the seven features presented by Halliday. Although there are a variety of lists of modal verbs, we choose to study in this paper are the different modal operators within each of the values - high, median and low - as suggested by Halliday:

high: *must ought to need has to is to*

median: *will would shall should*

low: *may might can could*

Like in English, Vietnamese modal verbs are used to express the speaker's attitudes or wishes towards the reality. Modal verbs in Vietnamese are also called dependent verbs. The list of modal verbs include *cần, chịu, có thể, không thể, phải, nên, toan, định, muốn, buồn, toan, nỡ, bị, được*, etc.

Finally, the comparison between modals in English and Vietnamese in terms of number and structure (in the positive, negative and interrogative) were discussed.

## **CHAPTER 3: ENGLISH PERFECTIVE MODALS OF NECESSITY, CERTAINTY AND ABILITY FROM SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL PERSPECTIVE AND THEIR VIETNAMESE EQUIVALENTS**

### **3.1. INTRODUCTION**

In Chapter 2, the domains of modality and modal verbs in English and Vietnamese were discussed. The topic of this chapter will be the domains of the three modal meanings – necessity, certainty and ability – in the perfective.

The words “necessity”, “certainty” and “ability” we got are of traditional origin. Functional grammarians have already studied these, although they used different labels for them. They used the other concepts like “obligation or requirement” for “necessity”, and “likelihood or probability” for “certainty”. To make it easy to follow and for the sake of consistency, I will still use these traditional terms and explain whenever ambiguity arises.

As stated in Halliday (1994), the modal operators, as a class, cover all the tenses and they are all varying degrees of polarity, different ways of constructing the semantic space between the positive and negative poles. We have also already known that the present perfect is formed with *have* or the contraction *'ve* and the past participle. While the meanings of some modal auxiliaries in the present perfect are unchanged, many modals have new or additional meanings in this. Therefore, to come to the discussion of specific perfective modals of each meaning and their uses in the negative, in each part we will see the list and the scale of the modals first as the basis for the thorough and integral understanding.

### **3.2. PERFECTIVE MODALS OF NECESSITY AND THEIR VIETNAMESE EQUIVALENTS**

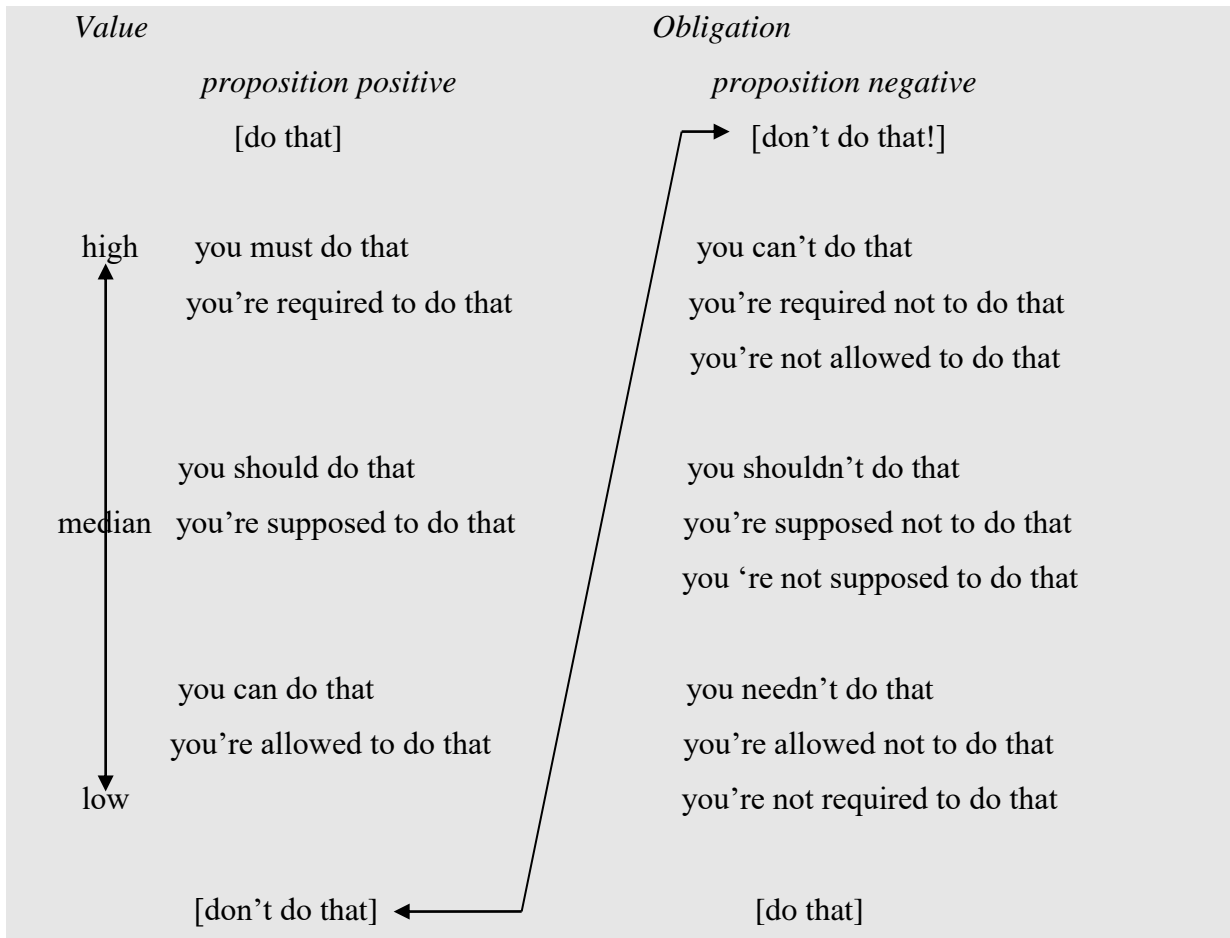
As can be seen from Table 1, necessity or obligation as Halliday calls is one of the two kinds of intermediate possibility in a proposal, which is used when the commodity being exchanged is goods and services. Now we will see what are included in the list of modals of necessity.

#### **3.2.1. List of modals of necessity**

Several lists of modals of necessity are proposed as follows.

Lock in *Functional English Grammar: An introduction for second language teachers* notes that requirement, or necessity as we understand, can be expressed by modal auxiliaries such as *have to*, *may*, and *should* (1996: 205).

Halliday (1994: 361) also gives the explanation for obligation, which is made in the form of a figure as follows:



**Figure 1: Probability and obligation with positive and negative propositions and proposals**

From the figure, we can enumerate the modals of necessity given by Halliday: *must*, *needn't*, *should*, *shouldn't*, *can* and *can't*.

Summing up, the modal verbs of necessity introduced by the functional linguists are *must*, *needn't*, *have to*, *may*, *should*, *shouldn't*, *can* and *can't*. In the next section, we will see how they are ranked according to the values.

### 3.2.2. Scale of necessity

Functional linguists often study modality in general and modals of necessity in particular in relation to the values. The first point of view should be taken into consideration is Halliday (1994: 358)'s. To illustrate the values of modality, he introduces the table:

	Probability	Usuality	Obligation	Inclination
High	Certain	Always	required	determined
Median	Probable	Usually	supposed	keen
Low	Possible	sometimes	allowed	willing

**Table 5: Three “values” of modality**

As can be seen from the table, there are three levels of modals of necessity or obligation called by Halliday: high (required), median (supposed), and low (allowed). Also from Figure 1, it can be seen that high necessity can be expressed by *must*, *can't*, median necessity can be expressed by *should*, *shouldn't* and low necessity can be expressed by *need*, *needn't*.

In Lock (1996: 204)' study, there are varying degrees of requirement that a certain action should be carried out (or not carried out). He, however, uses the words “obligation” and “necessity” in rather different and narrow sense. As for him, *obligation* or *necessity* belongs to high requirement, whereas, mid requirement can be glossed as *advice*, and low requirement as *permission*. Hence, necessity as we are using must be equivalent to requirement in his use. The examples for this type are given:

<i>Requirement</i>	<i>Example with modal auxiliary</i>
High positive	... but there is something I <b>must</b> say to my people who stand on the warm threshold which leads to the palace of justice.
Mid positive	Animal lovers who think that hunting is cruel but do not subscribe to the extremist view <b>should</b> first ensure that they know all the facts.
Low positive	J....., you <b>can</b> copy yours on to a piece of paper too now.

**Table 6: Examples of requirement**

From the examples, Lock lists the modals *must*, *should*, and *can* in decreasing order of requirement.

Thompson (1996: 59) also refers to probability and obligation in the figure below, in which, the speaker may signal a higher or lower degree of pressure on the other person to carry out a command (“you must/ should leave”). He ranks the modals *must*, *ought to*, *can* from high to low necessity.

	Modalisation	Modulation
<b>HIGH</b>	I shall never be happy again.	You must ask someone.
↕		
<b>MEDIAN</b>	They should be back by now.	You ought to invite her.
↕		
<b>LOW</b>	I may be quite wrong.	You can help yourself to a drink.

**Figure 2: Modal values**

Besides, basing on Matthieseen (1995: 506), we have the examples:

			<b>OUTER</b>	
		<b>MEDIAN</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>HIGH</b>
<b>Modul.</b>	<b>Oblig.</b>	You should go home. You're supposed to go home.	You may go now. You're allowed to go now.	You must go home now. You are required to go home now.

**Table 7: Examples of modal verbs of necessity with the values**

As the table illustrates, the modal operator *may* express a low value of obligation or necessity, while *should* has a median value and *must* expresses a high value.

To put it simply, we can summarize the scale of modals of necessity suggested by different writers in the table as follows:

	<b>low</b>	<b>median</b>	<b>high</b>
<b>positive</b>	may, can	should, ought to	must, have (got) to, will, shall, need
<b>negative</b>	need not, don't have to, haven't got to	Should not (shouldn't), ought not to (oughtn't)	must not (mustn't), may not, cannot

**Table 8: Summary of modals of necessity in the scale (Lock 1996: 213)**

In the section below, we will analyze these modals in the perfective in detail.



### 3.2.3. Modals of necessity in the perfective

Before discussing perfective modals of necessity one by one, we should bear in mind that time reference is also the area, which we have to pay attention to. As mentioned above, modulation has to do with ordering, recommending or forbidding. Therefore, the action that modulation refers to would not be at a time previous to the utterance time. However, there are two cases that appear to involve past time reference and one case that refers directly to time prior to utterance time.

It is also necessary to realize that not all the modal auxiliaries can express necessity nor can all the modals listed above combine with perfective infinitive. Lock (1996: 208) points out that of the modals of requirement, only *should*, *ought to* in the positive and *should not*, *ought not to*, *need not* in the negative can combine with relative past tense to express past requirement. These modal auxiliaries are analyzed as follows.

#### 3.2.3.1. Perfective modal verbs of necessity in the positive

There exist in functional grammar sources the discussions of the two perfective modals of necessity in the positive: *should have* and *ought to have*.

The two structures are similar and equivalent in most situations. Both are used to express an unfulfilled action.

(15) *You **ought to have** waited until you were better prepared.*

(16) *The pale he **should have** taken to Saigon ...* (Lock 1996: 208)

They both show advisability. When we use *should have* and *ought to have*, we mean something was advisable or something was a good idea but you did not do it: *you didn't wait until you were better prepared; he didn't take the plane to Saigon*. Thus Huddleston and Pullum notes that we can't say *\*I did what I **should have** done* (instead we need *I did what I had to do*). Nevertheless, we can say *I don't know whether he told her, but he certainly **should have** done*. With *should have*, therefore, there is maybe some doubt as to whether the proposition of opposite polarity is true (2002: 204).

Although *should have* and *ought to have* share many characteristics, they have several differences. Used with *have done*, *should have* is more commonly used than *ought to have*.

*Ought to have* is rare in questions and negatives, where it is usually replaced by *should have*. On the whole, of all modals of necessity, only two of median value (*should* and *ought to*) can be used with *have done* in the positive. In the next section, I will confront some forms of perfective modal verbs of necessity in the negative.

### 3.2.3.2. *Perfective modals of necessity in the negative*

Lock (1996: 208) realizes that there is a potential problem with the relationship between positive and negative modals of requirements in that the negative sometimes negates the modality and sometimes the rest of the clause. Thus, both *must* and *mustn't* express high requirement (*obliged to* and *obliged not to*). However, *need* expresses high requirement (necessary to), whereas *needn't* expresses low requirement (*not necessary to*). Similarly, *have (got) to* expresses high requirement (*obliged to*), whereas *do not have to* or *haven't got to* expresses low requirement (*not obliged to*). Conversely, *may* expresses low requirement (*permitted to*), whereas *may not* expresses high requirement (*obliged not to*).

In combination with perfective infinitive, *should not have*, *ought not have* and *need not have* can express necessity with different values.

#### (i) *Of median values: Should not have and ought not to have*

They, as Huddleston and Pullum realizes, suggest that the action happen.

*You should/ ought to have told her* implicates that you didn't, while negative *You shouldn't/ ought not to have told her* implicates that you did (2002: 204).

*Should not have* and *ought not to have* can express a wrong or foolish action in the past, or suggest failure to observe a prohibition, or sometimes imply criticism of an action.

#### (ii) *Of low value: Need not have*

We use the form *need not have* to talk about an unnecessary past action. The action was performed though it was not obligatory.

*You needn't have told her* implies that you didn't have to tell her but you did (Huddleston and Pullum 2002).

*Need not have*, *should not have* and *ought not to have*, apart from belonging to different values, differ in that *should not have* implies criticism but *need not have* does not.

(17) *She shouldn't have stood in a queue. (It was wrong or foolish of her to do that).*

(18) She **needn't have** stood in a queue. (It was not necessary to do this but she did it.)

We have discussed, so far, such forms of perfective modal operators of necessity in English as *should have*, *ought to have*, *should not have*, *ought not to have* and *need not have*. In the following part, we will study their Vietnamese equivalents.

### 3.2.4. Vietnamese equivalents

Before discussing equivalents of modals of each meaning in Vietnamese, it should be noted that Vietnamese is a non-inflected language, which is out of the grammatical category of the Europe-Indian languages (number, person, tense, etc.). A Vietnamese word keeps its own form in various places in a sentence and when necessary, these categories are expressed by 'form words', pronouns, or adverbs. Hence, Vietnamese equivalents for perfective modals in English are, sometimes, similar to equivalents to simple modals in English only or simple modals with another time marker 'đã'.

Nguyễn Kim Thản (1977) offers a detailed study of Vietnamese verbs, in which he remarks that modal verbs expressing necessity in Vietnamese include *cần*, *phải*, *cần phải*, *khỏi*, *nên*. We will study these equivalents in turn.

#### 3.2.4.1. Cần, cần phải

*Cần*, *cần phải* are the equivalents of *need*. It denotes obligation and requirement:

(19) Các em **cần** chú ý, khi làm văn **phải** viết sao cho nổi bật chủ đề của bài, bố cục **cần** rõ ràng.

*Cần* expresses necessity but it has lower degree compared to *phải*. However, its effect may be stronger because of the two following reasons according to Bùi Trọng Ngoãn (2002: 198). The first reason is that with *cần*, the speaker indirectly convinces the listener that doing something is good, beneficial so the listener can meet the speaker's requirement easily. Second, *cần* also reduces pressure on the listener and keeps his or her face.

#### 3.2.4.2. Phải

As Bùi Trọng Ngoãn (2002: 197) explains, *phải* marks obligation, request and command. It is the interpretation of the modal auxiliaries *must*, *have (got) to* in English.

(20) Anh **phải** đi khỏi đây càng nhanh càng tốt.

When we use *phải*, the obligation is stronger. As it is interpreted as a request, we often think that the benefit belongs to the speaker. Moreover, *phải* expresses the outside social conditions compelling the speaker to perform the action in the statement.

(21) *All students **must** obtain the consent of the Dean of the faculty concerned before entering for examination.*

(*Tất cả sinh viên **phải** có sự đồng ý của ông chủ nhiệm khoa trước khi vào thi*)  
(Nguyễn Văn Hiệp 2008: 117, 118).

### 3.2.4.3. *Khỏi*

*Khỏi* is, sometimes, replaced by *khỏi phải* and *không phải*. While in the North *khỏi*, *khỏi phải* are often used in dependent clauses of purpose and *không phải* or *chưa phải* are used in independent clause, in the South *khỏi* is used in both cases. *Khỏi*, *khỏi phải*, *không phải*, or *chưa phải* can be considered the equivalents for the modals in English like *needn't*, *don't have to*, *haven't got to*. Look at the examples given by Nguyễn Kim Thản (1977: 169):

(22) *Bây giờ (...) chị **chưa phải** ốm em, **chưa phải** quét nhà.*

(23) *Thế là nhà mày đủ tiền nộp sưu, lại **khỏi** nuôi chó, **khỏi** nuôi con.*

### 3.2.4.4. *Nên*

Bùi Trọng Ngoãn remarks that each illocutionary act will create certain effects expressed by modals of necessity like *nên*, *phải*, etc. These verbs cannot be understood without the context. He takes an example:

(24) *Chỉ **nên** ra đề thi Văn học Việt Nam, tạm thời chưa ra đề về Lí luận văn học, Văn học nước ngoài và Tiếng Việt.*

Without the context, the sentence above can be interpreted as: First, “*nên*” may express a teacher’s advice to a colleague. Second, “*nên*” may be a teacher’s proposal with the leader for making the tests for graduation exams. Third, “*nên*” may express the request of a leader (Ministry, Department of Education) with the teacher (p.194).

*Nên* is the equivalent for such English modal operator as *should*, *ought to*. Now we will look into the specific meanings of *nên*. Firstly, it is used to give advice:

(25) *Thôi con ạ! Con cũng **chẳng nên** phân chí ...*

When it is used, the implications are: (i) someone thinks that doing something is good and (ii) something is good and beneficial to the doer. Next, *nên* is also used to make a suggestion following the model:

Speaker + đề nghị + listener + nên (doing) P

(26) *Tôi không biết tiền này nộp vào đâu nhưng nên kiên quyết bỏ đi* (Bùi Trọng Ngoãn 2002: 196).

In saying like the above, the speaker has to convince the listener that what he/she says is good, useful so that the listener follows. Thirdly, *nên* shows evaluation towards actions in the past. For example, we might say:

(27) *You should have gone to the meeting yesterday.*

(*Lẽ ra hôm qua anh nên đi họp*)

With this statement, we do not impose the obligation on the listener to go to the meeting yesterday but we only confirm that at a point of time before now, the speaker was in the situation that he/ she had to go to meeting (Nguyễn Văn Hiệp 2008: 111).

From the discussions above, we can see that *phải* expresses necessity of the highest value, *nên* expresses the lowest necessity and *cần* is of median value, between *nên* and *phải*.

Nguyễn Thị Thuận (2002), in addition, makes the interesting observation that the modals *nên*, *cần*, *phải* in Vietnamese are able to combine with not only verbs, transitive and intransitive verbs, but also adjectives. This is a distinguishing feature of Vietnamese grammar from European languages (p. 242).

### 3.3. PERFECTIVE MODALS OF CERTAINTY AND THEIR VIETNAMESE EQUIVALENTS

“Certainty” we will study in this part can be construed to be “probability” (“may be”), which belongs to the first type of Halliday’s modality – modalization or “likelihood”. The use of modalization, as Halliday (1994: 362-63) reminds us, always indicates doubt to some degree, at least it implies more uncertainty than not using any expression of modality at all. We have previously discussed the list and scale of necessity, in this section the list of certainty will be mentioned as well.

### 3.3.1. List of modals of certainty

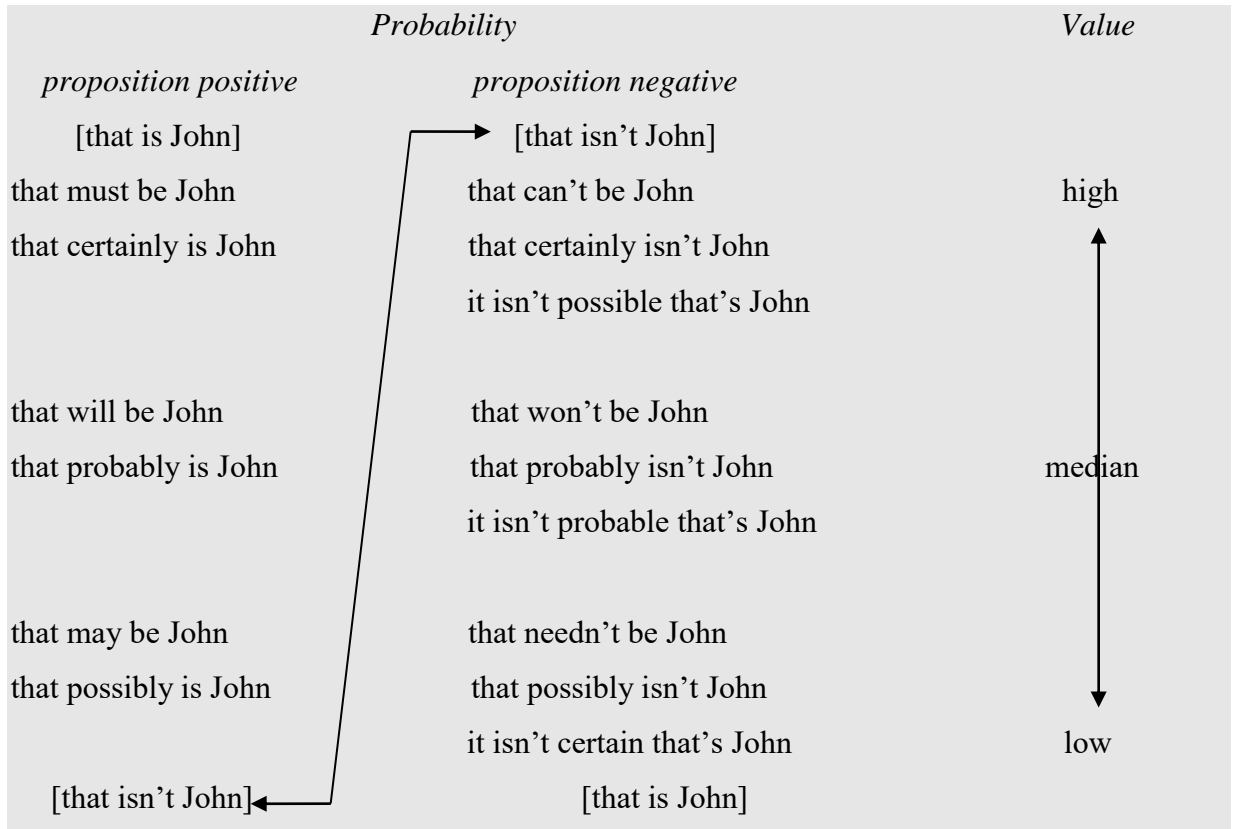
As far as modals of likelihood are concerned, Lock offers a distinction between *predictions* and *deductions*. While *predictions* are based on a certain premise, which may be a given situation, a general principle, or even a hypothetical condition, *deductions* are based on direct or indirect evidence (1996: 196). They are illustrated in the following table:

<i>Deductions</i>	<i>Predictions</i>
There <b>must have</b> been someone in during the weekend. The lights have been left on.	He <b>will</b> be in the cupboard. He always goes in there when he is afraid.
They <b>may</b> be there already. I can see smoke coming out of the chimney.	They <b>should</b> be there already. It only takes a couple of hours.
They <b>could</b> be there already. I think I can see smoke coming out of the chimney.	They <b>may</b> be there already. It only takes a couple of hours.
They <b>can't have left</b> yet. The lights are still on.	They <b>won't have</b> left yet. They never leave before 8.

**Table 9: Deductions and predictions**

Following the table, *must*, *may*, *could*, *can't*, *will*, *won't* and *should* are modals of certainty in Lock's use (1996: 197).

Modals of probability are, in addition, presented in Halliday (1994: 361)'s figure:



**Figure 3: Modal operators of certainty**

The modal verbs of certainty listed in the figure are *must*, *will*, *may*, *can't*, *won't*, and *needn't*.

To sum things up, the following modal auxiliaries can express the meaning of certainty: *must*, *will*, *may*, *could*, *can't*, *will*, *won't*, *should* and *needn't*. In the next section, we will see how they are distinguished in term of the values.

### 3.3.2. Scale of certainty

Certainty or probability, as Halliday uses, has such degrees as “possibly/ probably/ certainly”. They are equivalent to “either yes or no”, i.e. maybe yes, maybe no, with different degrees of likelihood attached” (1994: 89).

Following the writings of Lock (1996: 194), modals of certainty, or likelihood as he names, can be grouped according to the level of likelihood they express. The three basic levels are *high*, which can be glossed as *certainly*; *mid*, which can be glossed as *probably*; and *low*, which can be glossed as *possibly*. For example:

Likelihood	Example
High:	Ah! That <i>must</i> be Aunt Agatha. Only relatives, or creditors, ever ring in that Wagnerian manner. (“Ah, that is certainly Aunt Agatha.”) (Oscar Wilde)
Mid:	We <i>ought to</i> just make it, as long as traffic’s not too bad at the tunnel. (“We will probably just make it ...”)
Low:	There <i>may have</i> been some contaminant in the test tube. (“There was possibly come contaminant in the test tube.”)

**Table 10: Examples of likelihood**

In the examples above, *must* has the higher value of certainty than *ought to* and *may* has the lowest value of all.

From Thompson (1996: 59)’s point of view, the speaker may signal a higher or lower degree of certainty about the validity of a proposition (“it will/ may rain”). These are illustrated in the following figure for probability and obligation.

	Modalisation	Modulation
<b>HIGH</b> ↕	I shall never be happy again.	You must ask someone.
<b>MEDIAN</b> ↕	They should be back by now.	You ought to invite her.
<b>LOW</b>	I may be quite wrong.	You can help yourself to a drink.

**Figure 4: Modal values**

As shown in Figure 4, the modals *shall*, *should*, *may* are ranked from high to low certainty.

Basing on Matthiesseen (1995: 506), we also have the examples:

		<b>MEDIAN</b>	<b>OUTER</b>	
			<b>LOW</b>	<b>HIGH</b>
<b>Modaliz.</b>	<b>Prob.</b>	She’ll be home now. She’s probably home now.	She may be there. She is perhaps there.	She must be there. She is certainly there.

**Table 11: Examples of modal verbs of certainty with the values**



As can be seen from the table, the modal operator *may* express a low value of certainty or probability, while *will* has a median value and *must* illustrates a high value.

In brief, we have a summary of modal verbs of certainty according to the three values as follows:

	<b>low</b>	<b>median</b>	<b>high</b>
<b>positive</b>	may, might, could	ought to, should	must, have (got) to, will, shall, would
<b>negative</b>	may not, might not	should not (shouldn't)	cannot (can't), could not (couldn't), will not (won't), shan't, wouldn't

**Table 12: Summary of modals of certainty in the scale (Lock 1996: 213)**

### 3.3.3. Modals of certainty in the perfective

Before studying modals of certainty in the perfective in turn, we need to realize that once the modals go with the perfective they can be interpreted in three different ways. In the first case, the time referred is not past relative to now but past relative to some future time. Let us see the following example:

(28) *You **must/ ought to/ should have** completed two more assignments by Saturday.*

In the second case, requirements as to past experience are imposed. Note that not past action but the state resulting from past action is referred to:

(29) *Applicants **must/ ought to/ should have** worked at least four years in a similar position.*

The third case is worth mentioning. With *should* and *ought to*, reference is, in fact, the time prior to utterance time.

(30) *The electrician **should / ought to have** installed the phone yesterday.*

Of the modal verbs, *must have*, *would have*, *should have*, *ought to have*, *may have*, *might have*, *could have* in the positive and *can't have*, *could not have*, *may not have* in the negative can go with *have done* to express certainty with different values.

#### 3.3.3.1. Perfective modals of certainty in the positive

(i) *Of high value: **must have**, **would have***

***Must have***

The three cases above can be seen clearly in Halliday (2005: 178)'s examples. Three interpretations of *must* suggested:

- (31) *he **must have** left yesterday* (surely he left yesterday)  
 (32) *he **must have** left already* (surely he has left already)  
 (33) *he **must have** left before you came* (surely he had left before)

The following is another example with *must*.

- (34) *I don't see Maude here. She **must have** left early* (Jacobs 1995: 234).

In the example, the speaker expresses his certainty about a past situation. He believes now that *she left early*. If he had seen her leave, he would have said *she left early*, but instead his conclusion is based on inference.

According to Lock (1996: 198), modals of likelihood can be combined with relative past tense to express deductions and predictions about past situations, in which a conclusion about the past is deduced in the present.

Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 203) discuss the scope relating to *must*. In their words, perfect *have*, when following a modal auxiliary may have scope over the modal:

- (35) *She **must have** saved him.*

In the example, the modality is present, with the past time expressed by the perfect applying to the saving: "I am forced to conclude that she saved him".

***Would have***

Downing and Locke (1992: 395) explain that to refer to a past event, *have* + *-en* is used. The event is understood to be contrary to fact.

- (36) *I **would have** helped you if I had been able.*

With *would* the speaker (or writer) can make in respect of the possibility of the proposition. The speaker can speculate or hypothesize and express a proposition as hypothetical. Consider the example:

- (37) *You said that if Rose **would have** consented, she might be alive today.*

The hypothesis in the example is expressed by the modal *would*. The speaker is thus enabled to hypothesize about what is possible given certain conditions, to manipulate reality

and experience by means of language to speculate on the “mights” or “might have beens” of life (Jackson 1990: 101).

**(ii) Of median value: *should have, ought to have***

When the speaker’s deduction leads to a provisional conclusion, less firm than that expressed by *must*, we have the notion of probability, or what is reasonable to expect, expressed by *should* and *ought to*. The main semantic feature distinguishing these modals from *must* is that they implicitly admit non-fulfillment of the predicted activity, whereas *must* does not. *Should* and *ought to* are said to be “non-factive”, that is not binding, as opposed to *will* and *must* which are “factive” or binding.

With past time reference, *should* and *ought to*, but not *must*, have an implication of probability, but can be “counter-factive”, leaving open the interpretation that the expected action did not occur. Contrast:

(38) *He should/ ought to have reached the office by now* (and he probably has/ but it seems he hasn’t).

(39) *He must have reached the office by now.* (Downing and Locke 1992: 386)

*Ought to have* is not used much in spoken English by now.

**(iii) Of low value: *may have, might have, could have***

***May have, might have***

Now let’s substitute *may, might* for *must*.

(40) *I don’t see Maude here. She may/ might have left early.*

With *must* the example indicates that the speaker feels certain to believe, but with *may, might* they indicate that speaker feels possible to believe. Again, the speaker’s conclusions are based on inference from evidence, but the evidence is not as strong when the speaker uses the modal auxiliaries *may, might*.

Look at another example:

(41) *He may/ might have seen her.*

Speaker opens a possibility in the epistemic domain for it to have been the case that “he saw her”/ removes a knowledge barrier which could have been invoked to claim that he did not see her (Goossens 2000: 155).

Hogg (1998: 177) states that in non-counterfactual contexts *may have* and *might have* are wholly or nearly synonymous and interchangeable. Hart (1999: p331, 332) illustrates this point by saying that when discussing something that was possible in the past and you do not know what happened, either *might have* or *may have* can be used:

(42) *I wonder where Jim is. He **may/ might have** stopped off at the bar.*

Because you do not know whether Jim stopped off at the bar, either *might have* or *may have* can be used. On the other hand, when discussing something that was possible in the past and you know what happened, only *might have* can be used:

(43) *Climbing that tree was stupid. You **might have** fallen out.*

Because I know that the person I am talking to did not fall out of the tree, only *might have* can be used.

Also as Jackson (1990: 101) has shown, the items *might*, *may* allow the speaker to draw back from the assertion of the proposition and be tentative or uncertain about it, express it as a possibility rather than an assertion (p.99).

### ***Could have***

Perfect *have*, when following a modal auxiliary may have scope over the modal:

(44) *She **could have** saved him if she'd tried.*

In the example, the past time applies to the modality, to the non-actualized ability: “It would have been possible for her to save him” (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 203).

We also use *could have* to show weaker possibility than *may have*. It can imply that there may be other explanations for the situation.

(45) *This car seems to be out of alignment. It **could have** been in an accident.*

### ***3.3.3.2. Perfective modals of certainty in the negative***

#### ***(i) Of high value: cannot have, could not have***

They indicate strong degree of certainty, which is the opposite of *must have*. They are negative deductions about a past event. They show impossibility and disbelief because we feel that it is impossible and unbelievable to conclude.

As Halliday (2005: 178) suggests, *Smith **can't have** been so busy* can be interpreted as *surely Smith wasn't / hasn't been / hadn't been so busy*.

He also realizes that *You couldn't have done that yesterday* is ambiguous whereas *You can't have done that yesterday* is not. The first may mean either (i) 'you were not able to do it' or (ii) 'it is impossible that you did it'; the second has only the latter meaning.

In conversation especially, speakers can avoid using modal auxiliaries to communicate probability, instead they use non-verbal forms:

(46) *I'm not sure she enjoyed that movie.*

**(ii) Of low value: May not have**

When we are less certain, we use *may not have* to express negative possibilities. We can see an example given by Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 175):

(47) *He may not have read it.*

In the example, the negation applies semantically to the complement of *may*: "It is possible that he didn't read it".

### 3.3.4. Vietnamese equivalents

In Vietnamese, such verbs as *khắc, phải, có thể, không thể* can be regarded as the equivalents for English modal auxiliary verbs of certainty. Their detailed meanings will be presented below.

#### 3.3.4.1. *Khắc, phải*

*Khắc, phải* are the equivalents of *must* in English. As being stated in Cao Xuân Hạo (2006: 339), *khắc* and *phải* can only be placed at the beginning of the predicate (vị ngữ). Originally, *khắc* came from an ethnic language, but soon it has been used as one of the popular language. *Khắc* is a modal verb expressing one's certainty about something happening right after another.

(48) *Đến ba giờ nó **khắc** ra.*

*Phải*, like *must*, has two interpretations in the following example:

(49) *Nó **phải** ăn nhiều bánh mì.*

*(He **must** eat a lot of bread.)*

Nguyễn Văn Hiệp (2008: 117) has pointed out that this statement can be interpreted as something which causes it to eat a lot of bread; or something makes me think that he eats a lot of bread.

### 3.3.4.2. Có thể

*Có thể* is the equivalent of *should* or *ought to*:

- (50) ... *I **should** ever **have** thought likely to fall in love with a man.*  
 ... *tôi lại **có thể** nghĩ là cô ấy đi mê một thằng trẻ ranh đến thế.*

Sometimes, it may be the equivalent of *would*:

- (51) *You **would have** been wrong ...*  
*Chị **có thể** làm ...*

In all the examples above, the speaker's inference is based on the evidence.

### 3.3.4.3. Không thể

*Cannot* (or *can't*) is translated as *không thể* in Vietnamese:

- (52) *You **can't** be such a besotted fool ...*  
*Cô **không thể** ngu ngốc đến mức ...*

## 3.4. PERFECTIVE MODALS OF ABILITY AND THEIR VIETNAMESE EQUIVALENTS

Ability is considered by Halliday to be one further category that is on the fringe of the modality system. Lock (1996: 209) regards ability as one kind of modality in addition to likelihood and requirement. Ability is not really concerned with judgments and attitudes in the same way as the other areas of modality. However, because they can be expressed by modal auxiliaries, they are usually regarded as a kind of modality.

### 3.4.1. List of English modals of ability

In English, the modals like *can*, *can't*, *could*, *could not* can express ability.

#### 3.4.1.1. *Can*

Lock (1996) makes the observation that the modal *can* expresses both ability and potentiality, for example:

- (53) *I am someone who **can** make friends easily.* (ability)  
 (54) ... *this situation **can** and will be changed.* (potentiality)

The essential difference between *ability* and *potentiality* is that with the former is internal abilities and skills that make it possible for a certain action to be performed or situation to come about whereas for the latter is the external circumstances that make it possible.

*Can* referring to ability is often be replaced by *be able to* with a little or no difference in meaning, for example:

(55) *I am someone who **is able to** make friends easily.*

#### **3.4.1.2. Cannot**

The negative *cannot* (*can't*) expresses negative potentiality and ability, for example:

(56) *When you get old, you **can't** talk to people snap at you.*

(57) *I just **can't** talk fluently in English* (Lock 1996: 211).

#### **3.4.1.3. Could**

The past of *can* is *could*. Lock (1996) notes that *could* can express both past potentiality and ability, for example:

(58) *I was fascinated by the prospect that sociologists **could** be paid to study what interested me about human life.*

(59) *... those few who **could** type did so with two fingers and great difficulty.*

More particularly, Hannay and Steen (2007: 167) analyze the example with *could*:

(60) *John **could** jump across this ditch when he was your age.*

Here the capacity is placed in the (known) reality preceding immediate reality, even if John may never have jumped across in the past.

#### **3.4.1.4. Could not**

*Could* can be used in the negative:

(61) *He **couldn't** escape.* (Downing and Locke 1992: 394)

In this case, it is interpreted as having the same result as he was not able to escape.

To conclude, modals of ability include *can*, *could*, *can't* and *couldn't*, of which only two modals *could* and *couldn't* can be used in the perfective. We will see their specific meanings now.

### **3.4.2. Modals of ability in the perfective**

#### **3.4.2.1. Could have**

*Could* combines with relative past tense to indicate past ability when the action was not performed as in:

(62) *It **could have** been a lot funnier.*

This expresses a situation, which had the potentiality to come about but did not (Lock 1996: 211).

In conditional sentences and implied conditions, *could have* is used to refer to ability or capacity that was not used owing to personal failure or opportunity.

(63) *If he had been here yesterday, he **could have** told us* (Alexander 1992).

#### 3.4.2.2. *Couldn't have*

It is also used to express lack of ability in the past.

(64) *I **couldn't** possibly **have** passed my driving test, even if I'd tried harder.*

#### 3.4.3. Vietnamese equivalents

Vietnamese equivalents for English modals of ability are *có thể* and *không thể*. We will see how they are used respectively.

##### 3.4.3.1. *Có thể*

*Can, could* are translated as *có thể* in Vietnamese. However, as Cao Xuân Hạo (2004) has shown, *có thể* is one of the cases in which one modal verb with the same syntactic functions can express two modal meanings. These situations may make people vague about their meanings. One example is given as:

(65) *Nó **có thể** vào đây* (p.97).

The example may be interpreted as that “*nó vào đây*” (he comes) is the potential occurred thing or the speaker considers he has the ability to come.

*Có thể*, as shown in Nguyễn Văn Hiệp (2008), first shows the inside conditions, the capacity helping the subject perform the action. For example:

(66) *Tôi chỉ **có thể** đánh máy chậm bởi tôi là người mới.*

(*I **can** only type very slowly as I am beginner.*)

Furthermore, *có thể* can be understood as deontic modality:

(67) *John **có thể** đi, ông chủ đã cho phép.*

(*John **can** leave – the boss gave him permission.*)

John's ability of leaving can be understood as deontic modality, the boss is an outside factor. In another case,

(68) *John **can** leave – he's got the key.*





	must not (mustn't) have (got) to will shall need may not cannot			phải  cần (phải)
<b>Certainty</b>				
<i>Low</i>	may may not might might not could	may have  might have	may not have	có thể  có thể
<i>Median</i>	ought to should should not (shouldn't)	could have ought to have should have		có thể có thể có thể
<i>High</i>	must have (got) to will will not (won't) shall shan't would wouldn't cannot (can't) could not (couldn't)	must have     would have	cannot have could not have	khác, phải    có thể không thể
<b>Ability</b>	can can't could could not	could have	couldn't have	có thể không thể

**Table 13: Summary of modal verbs of necessity, certainty and ability**

## CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

### 4.1. SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The discussions and analyses in Chapters 2 and 3 provided me with the foundation to answer the three research questions.

The papers from the first half of Chapter 2 (sections 2.2 and 2.3) helped me answer Research question 1: “*What is modality and how modality conceptualized in traditional grammar and in Systemic Functional Grammar?*” In fact, different languages draw on different features of their systems in order to present modality. In the traditional sense, modality can be defined as “the grammaticalization of speakers’ (subjective) attitudes and opinions”. This definition embraces five types of modalities (epistemic, deontic, commissive, volitive and evaluative modalities). Modality in English can be expressed by three types of marker: individual suffixes, clitics and particles, and modal verb. In the light of Systemic Functional Grammar, four respects were taken into account. First, modality refers to the area of meaning that lies between *yes* and *no* – the intermediate ground between positive and negative polarity. Halliday distinguishes two basic types of modality, the first called modalization (or epistemic modality) and the second referred to modulation (or deontic modality). Halliday then adds one further category named ability /potentiality. Modality can be expressed by a number of forms such as lexical verbs, lexico-modal auxiliaries, modal auxiliaries, modal disjuncts, modal adjectives, modal nouns, if-clauses, the remote past, non-assertive items, intonation and hesitation. Functional structure consists of attributes that are specified particular values (high, median and low).

The second research question: “*What are the modal verbs in English as seen from the light of Systemic Functional Grammar and their Vietnamese equivalents?*” was answered by the writings in the other half of Chapter 2. As previously discussed, modal auxiliaries in English “express the speaker’s attitude to a potential event”. They have the seven features as being presented by Halliday. Among various lists of modal verbs, this study follows Halliday’s one, which includes *must, ought to, need, has to, is to, will, would, shall, should, may, might, can, could*. In Vietnamese, there are two common viewpoints of modal verbs. The study adopted three main features of modal verbs given by Nguyễn Kim Thảo and the other two by Diệp Quang Ban. Of many lists of modal verbs in Vietnamese, we chose the modals *cần* (*need*), *chịu* (*bear*), *có thể*

(*can*), *không thể* (*cannot*), *phải* (*must*), *nên* (*should*), *toan* (*intend*), *định* (*intend*), *muốn* (*want*), *buồn, nỡ* (*have the heart to force*), *bị, được* (*be+ past participle with beneficial meaning*), etc. to discuss in this study. The chapter also dealt with the comparison of modal verbs in the two languages in terms of number, structure in the positive, in the negative and in the interrogative.

Studies in Chapter 3 were my efforts to clarify the last research question: “*How is modality of certainty, necessity and ability expressed by perfective modal verbs and the equivalent expressions in Vietnamese?*” For the first meaning, necessity, the list proposed comprises *must, needn't, have to, may, should, shouldn't, can* and *can't*. They are ranked according to the values: with low value (*may, can, need not, don't have to, haven't got to*), median value (*should, ought to, should not (shouldn't), ought not to (oughtn't)*) and high value (*must, have (got) to, will, shall, need, must not (mustn't), may not, cannot*). Of the modals of necessity, only *should, ought to* in the positive and *should not, ought not to, need not* can combine with relative past tense. Vietnamese equivalent for these modals in English are *cần, phải, cần phải, khỏi, nên*. As far as the meaning of certainty is concerned, *must, will, may, could, can't, will, won't, should and needn't* are the list mentioned. Modals of certainty can be grouped according to the level: low (*may, might, could, may not, might not*), median (*ought to, should, should not (shouldn't)*) and high (*must, have (got) to, will, shall, would, cannot (can't), could not (couldn't), will not (won't), shan't, wouldn't*). Of these modals, *must have, would have, should have, ought to have, may have, might have, could have* in the positive and *can't have, could not have, may not have* in the negative can go with *have done* to express certainty with different values. Such verbs as *khắc, phải, có thể, không thể* were regarded as the equivalents for English modal auxiliary verbs of certainty. Last, in English, the modals like *can, can't, could, could not* can express ability. In the perfective, *could* and *couldn't* can go with relative past tense to express the past ability. Vietnamese equivalents for these modals are *có thể* and *không thể*.

#### **4.2. PROBLEMS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH PERFECTIVE MODAL VERBS**

The English perfective modal verbs give rise to much difficulty for both teachers and students trying to render their meanings in a foreign language. The biggest problem they face with modals is their meanings. It is not too difficult to learn their syntactic features but

mastering their semantic features is really a challenge. Each perfective modal can have more than one meaning and each meaning is a member of an inter-related system. For example, *could have* is sometimes used to express ability and sometimes to show necessity or certainty. On the other hand, one meaning can be expressed by several modals. The meaning of certainty, for instance, includes *must have*, *would have*, *should have*, *ought to have*, *may have*, *might have*, *could have*, *can't have*, *could not have*, and *may not have*. Hence, in dealing with the semantics of the modals, one danger one facing is to get utterly lost in the variety of interpretations. Lock (1996: 214), then, adds one problem that some learners may speak a first language, which has forms roughly comparable to English modal auxiliaries. However, this does not mean that they are used in precisely the same ways in precisely the same contexts.

Another difficult area for teachers and students are the meanings of negative modals. Negation of the modals can be complex for students; there are two main reasons for this. Adding *not* after the modal does not always give the opposite meaning. For example, "the negative of *must* is sometimes *cannot*; and that of *should* is sometimes *need not*, etc." Overgeneralization of a rule can lead to confusion on the part of the student. The second problem with negation is that either the modality or the rest of the clause can be negated, thus confusing the meaning of the sentence to a learner. For example, *He might not have* killed her, is a good example of where the modality is negated. The problem arises when the rest of the clause is being negated. For example, *He needn't have* told her (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 204).

#### 4.3. SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

Studying the solutions for teaching and learning perfective modal verbs effectively will be a large and hard topic for many people. As for this minor thesis, we only give here some suggestions for the problems listed above.

Firstly, we have just known that modals can also appear in the perfect aspect with a *have + -en* construction. This can also be a difficult area for students. Generally, the student understands or produces a grammatical utterance, but the meaning may be incorrect or misunderstood by the student. As Lock (1996: 215) notes if the teacher does not present enough information about the perfect form and its complexities in meaning, then the student

may overgeneralize the rules. It is his experience that an abstract characterization of the meaning of a particular modal is of little use to most learners, whose difficulties have to do with nuances of modal meaning in specific contexts. Nor is it very useful to present the most important meanings or uses of each modal one by one, as this generally serves simply to confuse the learners. In most teaching contexts, the most effective ways of dealing with modals is to take each area of modal meaning separately (deduction, prediction, obligation, necessity, etc.), present and practice appropriate modals embedded within a rich context so that learners can develop a feel for how they are used.

Here again, the teacher should give equal weight to the form of modal + negation and what modal + negation means. There are other issues with negation of modals and their meanings; however, we believe the two issues stated above illustrate the typical, problematic patterns for learners.

#### **4.4. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

My study, in which I provided systematical and detailed uses of English perfective modals of necessity, certainty and ability and found the equivalent expressions in Vietnamese, may be considered the first step in linguistic research. Hopefully, this will pave the way for further studies on this subject with a larger scope, going far from what I have mentioned such as:

- Analyzing English perfective modals of necessity, certainty and ability from other viewpoints (pragmatics, cognitive grammar, T-G grammar, etc.)
- Studying other meanings of modal verbs apart from the three meanings I have mentioned (necessity, certainty and ability).
- Comparing the markers of modality in English and Vietnamese, not just verbal means or lexical means.

Owing the limitations of time, resources and especially my own knowledge and experience, there inevitably remain some mistakes and shortcomings. I would be very grateful to receive the contributive comments from my lecturers, colleagues and other readers to better the study.

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