Analysis on Modals of Filipino as a Category of Adverb

Niña Lilia R. Javier

Abstract—This study discussed and analyzed the different modals of Filipino language wherein a concise and easy to understand description of the modal was given by the researcher. There is only a limited number of books in Filipino that discuss modals. In the Tagalog and Filipino grammar, it was not yet clear on what lexical category modal is included. This study clearly explained that the modal in the Filipino language is a category of adverb because the adverb dictates the modal in Filipino. The modal is also focused on the word it modifies in the sentence; therefore, the modal acts as a modifier. The study used comparative analysis on the modals in Filipino and English. This analysis uncovered the great role of modals in changing the meaning of the sentence. It is important to understand the use of modals because by using modals in sentences (syntax), there would be a clear semantics or a well-defined meaning denoted and distinct purpose of the speaker. Overall, these insights will also serve as a contribution to the study and teaching of modals of Filipino and eventually, this can also be included in Filipino grammar books.

Index Terms—Adverb, modals, linguistics, semantics, syntax.

I. INTRODUCTION

Modals are used in sentences to make the intended meaning more vibrant and clearer. However, there has been varied interpretations and definitions of Filipino Modals. In fact, different grammarians have various assertions and theories that modals belong to lexical category. There is a book which states that modal is a noun whereas some assert that modal is a pseudo-verb (pseudo-verbs indicate some of the modalities (e.g., wants and obligations) expressed by modal verbs in English (e.g., can, may, should)). There are also who say that modal falls on the category of an adverb.

Moreover, studies and explanations concerning modals are still limited or only a few are being conducted. In fact, modals are rarely found and read in Tagalog grammar or even in Filipino grammar. The words gusto (like), nais (want), ibig (love), kailangan (need), dapat (must), maaari (may), puwede (can) are all considered pseudo verb (verb-like) [1].

It has been contrasted by other authors as words like dapat, kailangan, gusto, ibig, dapat, maaari, and puwede are called modal noun[s] [2].

Other authors also divided modals into two. These modals are embedded in modal verbs which express emotions. These modals are divided into non-derivative (dapat, nararapat, maaari, and puwede) and derivative (gusto, nais, ibig and kailangan) [3].

Some authors also called modal as “panagano”. Modal was defined as words that add perspective and express the feelings of the speaker such as modals of: necessity (kailangan, dapat), obligation (dapat, kailangan), permission (maaari, puwede), possibility (baka, tila, maaari), wish (sana, nawa), ability (kaya), want (gusto, ibig, nais) and certainty (talaga, totoo, tunay). Modals are placed under the category of adverbs a sit modifies an adjective, verb, adverb or a word group; thus, a modal is also a modifier [4].

In connection to this, the study on Filipino modals will only prove that it is different from English modals in the sense that English modals are under the category of verbs. This study will clearly explain and discuss the nature and characteristics of Filipino modals under the category of adverbs.

II. OBJECTIVES

This study sought to explain and address the following:

1. Define clearly the meaning of modals of Filipino as a category of adverb;
2. Enumerate the different types of modals of Filipino and the meaning it conveys in a sentence;
3. Analyze the modals in Filipino and prove that it is under the category of adverb.

III. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This study is a descriptive study on Filipino modals. It studied and investigated the structure and semantics of modals. The researcher also gathered books in Tagalog and Filipino which had discussions on modals [1]-[3], and [4].

In addition to that, the study of Coates [5] was also used as a reference of this study in her book The Semantics of Modal Auxiliaries. Another reference used by the researcher is the definition given by Palmer [6], Mood and Modality which is a study on modal in English grammar that clearly discusses modals functioning as a verb in a sentence.

Definitions and explanations on modals were analyzed and compared. The sentences and examples came from the corpus of spoken and written Filipino and were scrutinized accordingly. This study also considered the semantics of each modals to clearly present its meaning in sentences.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The clear definition of modal is that modal adds meaning to the totality of the message or statement [4]. A modal is a word that adds insight or thoughts of the speaker about a statement. It may state the possibility, uncertainty, certainty, necessity, wish, obligations, abilities, and the likes. Modal is also evident in the English language through verbs and not as an adverb. Modals in English grammar is more evident in
verbs like will, can, may, must, etc., but in Filipino, adverbs are the one which dictates the modal to be used [6]. This clearly shows the identity and uniqueness of the Filipino grammar.

Modal is a category of adverb; however, it is different from a usual adverb for a reason that adverb, according to its traditional definition, modifies verbs, adjectives, and another adverb but a modal can stand alone as a predicate whereas an adverb as a modifier cannot stand alone as a predicate without a word being modified.

Further manifestation that modal is a category of adverb is that modal does not only modify a verb, adjective, or even another adverb, but also a modal can modify noun predicate, article, prepositional phrase or the complete predicate.

Example:
(a) Dapat titser si Yssa. (noun modifier) (Yssa should be a teacher)
(b) Parang si Ysrael ang doctor. (noun modifier) (It seems that the doctor is Rael.)
(c) Kailangan sa kapitan ang barangay. (article modifier) (The barangay should be for the captain.)
(d) Tila para kay Jared ang kotse. (prepositional phrase modifier) (The car seems to be for Jared.)

In examples (a) and (b), modals “dapat” and “parang” modify nouns. Example (c) shows that the modal “kailangan” modifies an article and in the example (d) the modal “tila” modifies a prepositional phrase in the sentence. Modals give additional colors to the meaning of each statement as shown in the following examples:

1. Pumunta ako sa bahay. (direct command) (I went to the house.)
   Baka pumunta ako sa bahay. (possibility of doing the action) (I might go to the house.)
2. Gumawa ka ng assignment. (direct command) (Do your assignment.)
   Kailangang gumawa ka ng assignment. (necessity to do the command) (You need to do your assignment)
3. Kailangan sundin ang dress code tuwing Lunes. (necessity to do the action) (Dress code needs to be observed every Monday.)
4. Gusto na nang pagbabago ng Pilipinas. (intense desire) (The Philippines wants change already.)
5. Dapat yatang sumali sa isangorganisasayon. (obligation with uncertainty) (Perhaps, it is a must to join an organization.)

To further understand modal in Filipino, the table below shows the following modal in Filipino and what each modal expresses together with its examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modal</th>
<th>Expresses</th>
<th>Example</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Kailangan (need)</td>
<td>Necessity</td>
<td>Kailangang maabalik ang aklat bukas. (The book should be returned tomorrow.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dapat (must)</td>
<td>Obligation</td>
<td>Dapat sundin ang batas trapiko. (Traffic rules must be followed.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kailangan (should)</td>
<td>Permission</td>
<td>Maaaring pumasok ang may ID. (Those with ID may enter.)</td>
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<td>Maaari (may)</td>
<td>Ability</td>
<td>Kaya miyag pumasa sa board exam. (He can pass the board exam.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pwede (can)</td>
<td>Possibility</td>
<td>Tila uulan mamaya. (It might rain later.)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Sana (may)</td>
<td>Request</td>
<td>Sana’y bumuti ang iyong kalagayan. (May your condition become better.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nawa (may)</td>
<td>Wish</td>
<td>Gusto kong bumili ng bagongkote. (I like to buy a new car.)</td>
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Evidences that modal in Filipino is a category of Adverb:
1. Modal is not a noun but this can be regarded as noun-predicate because according to the definition of an adverb, an adverb can modify verb, adjective, or another adverb. Adverbs can also modify phrases, clauses, and predicates.

   Examples:
   Kailangang piloto si Lui Abraham. (noun modifier) (Lui Abraham needs to be a pilot.)
   Dapat doctor si Angela. (noun modifier) (Angela must be a doctor.)
   Maaaring chef si Lanz. (noun modifier) (Lanz can be a chef.)

   2. Modals in Filipino are not pseudo-verbs. They do not have verb-like meaning, but modals modify verbs that function as an adverb.

   Example:
   Kailangang magbignay sa nangangailangan. (verb modifier) (We need to give to the needy.)
   Kailangang sundin ang dress code tuwing Lunes. (verb modifier) (Dress code needs to be observed every Monday.)
   Kailangang mong pumunta nang maaga sa klase. (verb modifier) (You need to come early to class.)

   3. Modal is not an adjective. Schachter and Otanes classified the words: “kailangan”, “dapat”, “maaari”,  

“pwede” and other such words under the category of adjectival. Modal is not an adjective but it can only modify an adjective which functions as an adverb.

Example:
Kailangang matalino ang titser.
(The teacher should be knowledgeable.)
Dapat matalino ang titser.
(The teacher must be knowledgeable.)

However, there is a difference between the necessity modals “kailangan” and “dapat.” The modal “kailangan” is used as an internal necessity (necessary or need) and “dapat” is used as an external necessity or appropriateness [3].

4. Modal modifies a verb and it is not considered as a verb therefore a modal is functions as an adverb. Modals in English grammar functions as a verb [6] [7]. The following examples proved that modal in Filipino grammar can modify a verb.

4.1. The modal of permission “maaari” (may) and “pwede” (can) are being followed are being followed by a verb or an action intended to do or happen.

Example:
Maaaring lumabas ako. (May I go out?)
Maaaring lumabas ko. (Can I go out?)
Maaaring lumabas ka. (Could I go out?)

4.2. The modal of wish uses words like “nawa” and “sana” followed by a verb. Notice that these wish modals modify the whole predicate in the sentence and not just the verb alone. A contracted “ay” (‘y) is added to the word whenever a modal of wish is used.

Example:
Nawa’y pagpalain ka ng Diyos.
Sana’y pagpalain ka ng Diyos.
(May God bless you.)

4.3. The modal of possibility is used to show that something is possible to occur or to happen but it can be probable or it can also be uncertain. Modals used in expressing possibility are as follows: “baka”, “tila”, and “maaari” modify the verb.

Examples:
Baka umulan mamaya. (possibility that it will happen)
(Til a rain later.)
Tila malakas ang kita niya sa negosyo. (uncertainty)
(Perhaps his profit in his business is high.)
Maaaring dumating sila ngayon. (possibility that the statement will happen)
(They might arrive now.)

The given examples above show that the verbs are being modified by the modals and the modals of possibility baka, tila, yata, show a slight variation in its usage. Baka asserts uncertainty and is partly false. Notice also that it was immediately followed by a declaration phrase. The modal tila expresses uncertainty about the result of an event or probably, a part of the statement is not true.

4.4. The modal of competence or ability states the capacity of a person or talent/skills in using an object and this also means truthfulness of the sentence. The modal ‘kaya’ is used however; the word ‘kaya’ may mean other things like using the word ‘marunong’.

Example:
Kaya nyang sumayaw. (ability to do)
She can dance.
Kaya niyang gumuhit. (ability to do)
He can draw.
Kaya kong makaya at maaasa na grado. (ability to do something)
(I can get high grades.)

4.5. Mods used in modals of desire are: gusto (like), ibig (love), nais(want). There is a slight difference in the modal of desire with its uses in a sentence. The modal gusto (like) is normally used and has an informal tone in expressing desire. The modal ibig (love) is more formal than gusto (like) and nais (want) has a most formal use in a statement.

Example:
Gusto kong humay ng ice cream. (desire to do)
(I like to eat ice cream.)
Ibig kong mamasyal sa maraming bansa. (want to do)
(I love to travel to many countries.)
Nais kong makipagkita sa presidente. (want to do)
(I want to meet with the president.)

Any of these modals – nais (want), gusto (like), and ibig(love) – can be used in a sentence. However, if modals of desire are followed by sana, the expression would be polite. And if the sentence expresses a more intense desire, the modals will just have to be repeated.

4.6. The modal of certainty expresses verification of the truth of the statement. In Filipino, to state the truthfulness of the sentence, the modal is inserted as a complement talaga (certainly), totoo (truly), and tunay(really) followed by the predicate being modified to confirm the truth in the statement.
Talaga (certainly) emphasizes the truthfulness of the predicate. Adverbs like talaga, totoo, and tunay can also be used to express certainty.

Example:
Talagang maganda ang bata. (The child is certainly beautiful.)
Totoong maganda ang bata. (The child is truly beautiful.)
Tunay na maganda ang bata. (The child is definitely beautiful.)

In the example, “talagang maganda” is an adverb of affirmation that modifies the subject “bata” (child).

V. CONCLUSION

Throughout this study, modal is different from a usual adverb because adverb, according to its traditional definition, modifies verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs. It is evident that the modals in Filipino modify predicate, clause, or a part of a predicate and are frequently used before the word it modifies. It was clearly shown in this analysis that modal in Filipino is a category of adverb. Unlike in English grammar, adverbs in Filipino grammar do not have a definite structure or pattern. Most adverbs in English have a suffix –ly, like the words: carefully, freely, etc. Several adverbs have the same structure as adjectives, for example, fast, good, etc. In general, modal clearly adds meaning to the totality of the statement. The purpose of the statement can easily be given with the use of modals. It can also be said that it is important to understand the use of modal because by using this in a sentence (syntax), there would be a clearer semantics or meaning of what the speaker conveys. Furthermore, modals are not only a category of adverb, but it also has special characteristics to deliver a clearer and more specific message.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In this study, the modals of Filipino have been discussed and analyzed thoroughly by the researcher. It is recommended that through this study, there would be further discussions about modals because there are only a few number of Filipino grammar books that discuss modal. It is suggested to generate a handbook or to include in a grammar book on modals of Filipino language. This will serve as a reference work which will give a concise and easy to understand description of the modal that can be very useful to students and teachers. This research on modal is designed to supplement beginning and advanced learners of the Filipino language with knowledge on Filipino grammar. This study on the modal of Filipino is an immense help to learners of the structure of Filipino language in understanding the language better. This can also be included in the books of Filipino grammar because discussions on this topic is still limited and only a few discuss modals as a category of adverb.

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REFERENCES


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