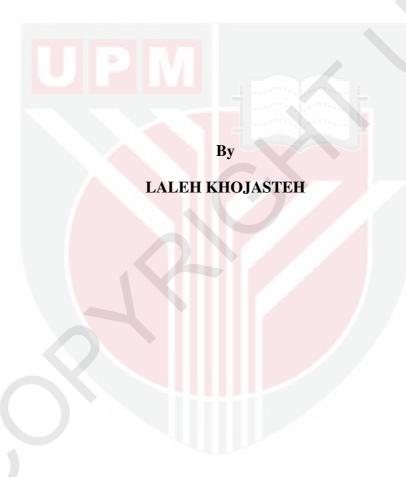**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

**MODAL AUXILIARY VERBS USED IN MALAYSIAN ENGLISH
LANGUAGE SECONDARY SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS**

LALEH KHOJASTEH

FPP 2012 15

MODAL AUXILIARY VERBS USED IN MALAYSIAN ENGLISH LANGUAGE SECONDARY SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS

By

LALEH KHOJASTEH

Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

December 2011

I'd dedicate each of the 219 pages of this thesis to:

My mother who gave me the courage and support to spread my wings and fly

My father who fostered my intellectual development profoundly

My late sister, Shekoofeh, who taught me to live as if I were to die tomorrow and learn as if I were to live forever

and

My sister, Sherry, who inspired me more than anyone in my life that difficulties are meant to rouse, not discourage.

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment
of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**MODAL AUXILIARY VERBS USED IN MALAYSIAN ENGLISH
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December 2011

Chairman   : Professor Jayakaran Mukundan, PhD

Faculty   : Educational Studies

Due to the reported difficulties of Malaysian learners in terms of syntactic and
semantic functions of modal auxiliary verbs in English, this research investigated 1)
the ways in which nine modal auxiliaries are introduced and presented in texts and
exercises, 2) modal verb phrase structures, 3) modal auxiliaries' semantic functions,
and 4) the frequency occurrence of these modal auxiliaries in both written and
spoken text types as well as spoken text type in five Malaysian English language
textbooks used in the secondary school level. This was addressed in four research
questions and the design applied was qualitative content corpus analysis. The
findings of this study have shown several valuable insights.

Firstly, from the discussion of the grammatical progression in the textbooks, we can see that the presentation of modal auxiliary verbs in Malaysian English language textbooks is not fully in accordance with their use in natural English, and that textbook writers tended to emphasize only certain semantic functions at the expense of others. Furthermore, frequency information on pragmatic functions has not been taken into account by Malaysian textbook authors.

Similarly, there are very great differences in the relative frequency of use of nine verb phrase structures in which modals can occur. In terms of modal auxiliaries and their semantic functions, the findings show that these textbooks offer a relatively biased-picture, overemphasizing the minor semantic functions and overlooking the frequent functions used in present-day English. It is also argued that although there are invaluable insights available in terms of modal auxiliary verb forms and their semantic functions in major corpus-based studies, this real-life language has not been well presented in Malaysian English language textbooks.

Finally, the frequency and ranked order of modal auxiliary verbs in the English language textbooks used in Form 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 in Malaysian secondary schools are presented in a descending order: *can, will, should, would, may, must, could, might* and *shall*. This finding shows that for almost all of the modal auxiliaries, there is a discrepancy between frequency order in the textbook corpus and the three major reference corpora. For example, although *would* and *could* are among the most frequent modals in real language, it is both a surprise and a concern to see that the both modals are neither among the top four most frequent modals in the textbook corpus nor are they even introduced to secondary learners. The findings of this study

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also show that the most frequent modals featuring spoken language are not dealt with sufficiently in the currently used pedagogical language in the Malaysian textbooks.

Findings from this corpus-based study tend to provide a sense of familiarity with five prescribed textbooks' content, thus assisting educators in identifying the particular strengths and weaknesses in textbooks already in use and helping them to overcome the discrepancies in order to achieve a higher degree of authenticity in textbook corpus. This level of awareness of modal auxiliary verbs and familiarity with them would also go a long way in ultimately assisting teachers with making optimum use of a textbook's strong points, recognizing the shortcomings of certain exercises, tasks, and entire texts.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk Ijazah Doktor Falsafah

KATA KERJA BANTU YANG DIGUNAKAN DALAM BUKU TEKS BAHASA INGGERIS SEKOLAH MENENGAH DI MALAYSIA

Oleh

LALEH KHOJASTEH

Disember 2011

Pengerusi : **Profesor Madya Jayakaran Mukundan, PhD**

Fakulti : **Pengajian Pendidikan**

Pelajar di Malaysia didapati mempunyai kesulitan di dalam penggunaan kata kerja modus Bahasa Inggeris dari segi sintaktis dan semantik.Dengan penggunaan Bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua di kalangan pelajar Malaysia, berkemungkinan ini berlaku kerana terdapat kekurangan di dalam sukatan pelajaran Bahasa Inggeris.

Kajian ini dijalankan untuk meneliti 1) cara-cara kata kerja modus diperkenalkan, diajar dan dipraktikkan di dalam kelima-lima buku teks Bahasa Inggeris di Malaysia, 2) strukturfrasa kata kerja modus, 3) fungsi semantik kata kerja modus, dan 4) frekuensi kewujudan sembilan kata kerja modus di dalam teks bertulis dan teks lisan. Hal ini dikemukakan dalam empat soalan kajian dan rekabentuk penyelidikan ini bersifat kualitatif dan dilaksanakan melalui analisis kandungan korpus.

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Dapatan daripada kajian ini menunjukkan beberapa penemuan yang sangat bermanfaat. Pertama, daripada perbincangan mengenai perkembangan tatabahasa dalam buku teks, kita dapat melihat dengan jelas bahawa pengenalan modus di dalam buku teks Bahasa Inggeris di Malaysia tidak sepenuhnya memenuhi kehendak penggunaannya dalam bahasa Inggeris yang sebenar, dan perubahan amat digalakkan untuk menjadikan bahasa Inggeris yang digunakan di dalam buku teks dapat digunakan sepenuhnya di dalam penggunaan harian yang sebenar.

Dapatan kajian juga menunjukkan penggunaan modus di dalam buku teks lebih bersifat bertulis daripada lisan, oleh yang sedemikian, modus yang lebih kerap penggunaannya di dalam bahasa lisan tidak mencukupi.Terdapat juga perbezaan yang besar di dalam frekuensi penggunaan strukturfrasa modus.

Dari segi fungsi sematik modus, dapatan kajian menunjukkan, buku teks tidak memberikan gambaran yang seimbang di mana ia memberi tumpuan kepada fungsi semantik modus yang kurang kekerapannya berbanding dengan yang tinggi kekerapannya di dalam penggunaan bahasa Inggeris kini. Walaupun terdapat hasilan kajian yang bermanafaat berkaitan penggunaan modus dari segi sintaksis dan semantik di dalam kajian korpus yang utama, hasilan kajian seperti ini tidak dipersembahkan sebaiknya di dalam buku teks Bahasa Inggeris di Malaysia.

Akhirnya, frekuensi dan turutan peringkat kata kerja modus yang wujud di dalam buku teks Bahasa Inggeris yang digunakan dalam Tingkatan 1, 2, 3, 4 dan 5 di sekolah-sekolah menengah di Malaysia telah didedahkan mengikut turutan ke bawah: *can, will, should, would, may, must, could, might* and *shall*. Dapatan kajian

menunjukkan terdapat perbezaan bagi hampir kesemua modus dari segi turutan frekuensi di dalam korpus buku teks dan tiga korpus rujukan.Contohnya, walaupun *would* dan *could* adalah paling kerap penggunaannnya didalam penggunaannya yang sebenar, tetapi didapati kedua-dua modus tersebut bukan di kalangan empat modus tertinggi penggunaannya di dalam korpus buku teks dan tidak diperkenalkan kepada pelajar di peringkat menengah.

Dapatan daripada kajian yang berasaskan korpus ini dapat memberi rasa kebiasaan terhadap kandungan dalam kelima-lima buku teks tersebut, bagi tujuan membantu pendidik dalam mengenalpasti kekuatan dan kelemahan tertentu di dalam buku teks yang sedang digunakan dan membantu mereka untuk mengatasi perbezaan dan ketidaksesuaian dalam penggunaan buku teks agar dapat mencapai tahap autentik yang lebih tinggi di dalam penggunaan korpus buku teks. Tahap kesedaran dan kebiasaan penggunaan kata kerja modus akhirnya dapat membantu guru memanfaatkan secara optimum buku teks tersebut, mengenalpasti kelemahan latihan, tugasan, dan keseluruhan teks.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply indebted to those people whose assistance has been vital to my success in completing this thesis. I appreciate them from the bottom of my heart.

My chief debt is to my supervisor—Prof. Jayakaran Mukundan. Since my first year at UPM, I have been privileged countless times to sit in his classes and watch him inspires his students to a love of poetry and writing and teaches them to overcome their reluctance to make changes in their lives (…Carpe diem, seize the day boys, make your lives extraordinary!). As my mentor, he has always challenged me to live up to my potential and nurtured ambitions for me to be an outstanding researcher. This thesis could never have been completed without his support and extremely constructive suggestions. Thank you so much Prof. Jayakaran.

I also owe a great deal to my committee member, Dr. Roselan Bin Baki who guided me during my thesis project especially when I went astray. This thesis would not have developed into its current form without his constant encouragement, criticism, advice and most of all, his kindness. Thank you Dr. Roselan for never giving up on me or letting me give up on myself.

Looking back on the first two years of my PhD journey here in Malaysia, I like to express my gratitude to Dr. Reza Kafipour who was patient to my countless questions and was helpful at various stages of my research project. I would also like to express my deep appreciation to Norwati Roslim who inspired me with this research topic and was a valuable source of academic stimulation and moral support.

My gratitude also to the kindest person of all, Dzelfa Zainal Abidin, whose smile always assured me that everything is going to be all right. Thank you Dzelfa.

My best friend, Sima Sayadian, deserve my thanks for her support and sincere attitude toward life that strongly influenced my academic journey and everyday life. She taught me how to be more courageous than I could possibly be. I wish also to express thanks to my friends Narges, Sudabeh and Zoha for their support through ups and downs of this PhD journey. They are like my family members who always accompanied me through constant challenges.

Last but not least I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Dr. Reza Azadi who devoted time and energy to help me out with the organization and the formatting of my thesis.

Finally, I want to thank God. Thank you for this wonderful journey! All two million one hundred two thousand four hundred minutes of it! Thank you for the little and big milestones that have happened in my life. Growing up can sometimes be a painful thing especially when it involves handling our emotional and mental state. But what a four-year of learning and growing! I wouldn't change it for anything.

I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 16 December 2011 to conduct the final examination of laleh khojastehon her thesis entitled "**Modal Auxiliary Verbs used in Malaysian English Language Secondary School Textbooks** " in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U. (A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the relevant degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Members of the Thesis Examination Committee were as follows:

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Date: 2 March 2012

This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia has been accepted as fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.The members of the Supervisory committee were as follows:

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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis is my original work except for quotations and citations, which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously and is not concurrently, submitted for any other degree at Universiti Putra Malaysia or other institutions.

LALEH KHOJASTEH

Date:16 December 2011

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