Problems and Solutions for Enhancing Awareness of Tense, Aspect, and Modality in Teaching and Learning English in Vietnam

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Abstract

The aim of the article was to review knowledge and research done by previous authors in terms of tense, aspect and modality. By introducing thorough classifications and examples of a range of knowledge that is less acquired and educated in Vietnam, the problems in teaching and learning tense, aspect, and modality are discussed to clarify the challenges that Vietnamese teachers and learner encountered. The measures were proposed to boost academic performance among learners, and improve teaching quality among teachers, reducing tiredness and boredom in grammar teaching and leading to alternative viewpoints for these ranges of knowledge.

Keywords: tense, aspect, modality, teachers, learners

1. Introduction

In every statement, people universally place special emphasis on the timing and nature of an action or state, as well as the speaker's viewpoint towards it. These elements are grammatically represented through the concepts of Tense, Aspect, and Modality. These concepts are omnipresent and universal, as no language exists without them. Additionally, each spoken expression must include at least one of these elements (Hopper, 1982).

Currently, English learners face many challenges in mastering grammar knowledge, which is considered the foundation of English skills, especially in terms of concrete understanding of aspects and modalities, both of which are rarely educated and clarified in Vietnam. The reason why I value this aspect is that it corresponds with tense, which is the fundamental structure of other knowledge, such as reported speech, passive voice, subjunctive clauses, or conditional sentences. Many learners often find it difficult to distinguish between perfective and progressive because of their ignorance of this knowledge. Usually, using different tenses can change the ways of expressing past, present, or future events; learners even face the problem of precise application in complex contexts, such as when describing a repeated habit by using the present progressive.

When it comes to modality, English learners often cope with the complexity of expressing personal opinions and wishes through language. The usage of modalities such as subjunctive, wishes, abilities, and

suggestions requires learners to correctly identify and apply grammatical structures. For example, understanding the difference between "should" and "must" to express suggestions and commands is one of the most common difficulties. When learners are not able to understand and master this field of knowledge, they will be confused during the process of language acquisition in other fields of knowledge, such as perfect modals or expressions with modals.

These challenges can make learning English quite complex and demand dedication and time from the learners. However, mastering aspects and modalities plays a particularly important role in accurately and succinctly conveying meaning in English communication. This essay is divided into two parts, in which the first part is to provide foundational knowledge and differences derived from research findings between tense and aspect, discuss issues in teaching and learning tense that are related to a shortage of aspect comprehension, and discuss methods aimed at enhancing the acquisition of aspect. Meanwhile, the same strategy is used to gain language awareness in terms of modality.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Aspect

2.1.1. Definition of aspect
Verb aspect, or aspect, in linguistics, is a grammatical form that determines an action, event or a state of a verb from the perspective and viewpoint of the speaker. Verb forms are closely related to verb tenses but should not be confused with each other. The verb tense indicates the temporal relationship of (a) verb(s) in a sentence while the verb tense refers directly to the state of the verb.

Aspect is a term used to denote the activity, event, or state described by a verb, for example whether the activity is ongoing or completed (Richards & Schmidt, 2002).

Two types of aspect are commonly recognized:

A lexical aspect refers to the internal semantics of verbs.

A grammatical aspect in some languages indicates an action that is incomplete, in progress, or developing.

2.1.2. Differences between tense and aspect
Jespersen (1931) regards tenses has a correlation of time through the indications of verb forms, sharing the same thought with Richards and Schmidt (2002) who remark the connection of the verb form and time as affirming tense as "the relationship between the form of the verb and the time of the action or state it describes". Likewise, Finch (2005) believes tenses modify a verb form.

According to Comrie (1976) defines that "aspects are different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation". Similarly, Jarvie (1993) stresses the starting point of the action then comes to view it as aspect. Besides, in terms of grammatical view, Greenbaum and Quirk (2003) state "aspect is a grammatical category that reflects the way in which the action of a verb is viewed with respect to time". Especially, Smith (1997) compares aspect to the lens of a camera by using the metaphorical comparison of a camera to aspect since it aids the receiver in seeing situations and objects. Both tense and aspect, in general, are concerned with the timing of the event. The former pertains to other time points, whilst the latter deals with the timing of the actual circumstance.

Based on the previous studies about the differences between tense and aspect, as can be seen that the most prominent distinction is that tense focuses on the time when actions occur, while as being aforementioned, aspect is used to denote the activity, event, or state described by a verb. Let's take a look these examples:

(1a) He **is drinking** beer now.

(1b) He **is** always **drinking** beer.

Sentence (1a) is an action in progress at the time "now", and this action has not yet ended, however, despite being formed in the present continuous tense, sentence (1b) represents a frequently repeated action.

Another differentiation is that tenses pertain to reality, while aspect revolves around ongoing actions.

(2a) I **have seen** George Lamb today/this morning/this afternoon.

(2b) I **saw** George Lamb today/this morning/this afternoon.

Both past and present perfect can be used in the above two sentences; however, the present perfect cannot be used with the expression 'this morning' if "this morning" in completed and also cannot be used with the phrase 'this afternoon' if it is no longer afternoon.

(3a) I **lived** there for ten years. (The speaker no longer lives there)

(3b) We **have lived** in Da Nang for ten years. (The event is in progress)

In this article, I will not pay much attention to tense knowledge because in Vietnam, theoretically, Vietnamese English learners are exposed to basic tenses, such as the present or past simple tenses, and then to advanced ones such as the future perfect tense. On the contrary, I focus on aspects, which is a less popular knowledge among people learning English in Vietnam, resulting in them not truly understanding the meaning of each tense in English.

2.1.3.   Lexical Aspect

2.1.3.1.   Definition

The Lexical aspect proves to be a useful tool for understanding the functioning of the Progressive and the Perfect aspects.

2.1.3.2.   Types of lexical aspect

Active verbs (Dynamic verbs)		
	Definition	**Examples**
Punctual and Momentary Verbs	Momentary verbs, also known as punctual verbs, are verbs that describe an occurrence that only appears once in context and lasts a short period of time. Because of this, the present progressive aspect is somewhat unnecessary. To be short, it refers to events that do not have duration. Some examples of punctual and momentary verbs are "kick", "shoot", "find", "hit", "catch", etc.	**(a)** We **recognize** the problems you've faced (Progressive aspect may or may not be possible depending on whether the same activity is continued or not) (b) She **is recognizing** her old friend (the action "recognizing" does not mark duration, which is as same as (a))
Durative Verbs	The reverse is true for durative verbs, which means that they refer to duration. The continuity of an event over a period of time is described.	(a) They **talked** and talked until midnight. (b) She **has been cooking** for more than an hour. (c) Be quiet! She **was sleeping**.
Stative verbs		
	<u>Stative verbs are normally found only in the non-progressive forms. However, in terms of verbs referring to mental or emotional states, it would be different.</u>	(a) I think he**'s** crazy (In speaker's opinion, he/she believe in the event). (b) Be quiet. I **am thinking** about this problem (An uncompleted event occurs at the time of speech).
	Stative verbs do not normally occur in the progressive. However, in some cases, they are used in the progressive to emphasize incomplete physical or mental state.	(c) I**'m forgetting** my French (=beginning to forget) (d) Now, we**'re understanding** the lesson a little better (=beginning to understand)
	Stative verbs can be less important if subject is an agent.	(e) <u>The steak **weighs** 12 kilograms</u>. (subject is not an agent)

		(f) <u>The steak **is weighing** 12 kilograms</u> (subject is an agent)

2.1.4. Grammatical Aspect

2.1.4.1. Definition

Grammatical aspect refers to the resources provided by a language (such as verbal auxiliaries, prefixes and suffixes) to encode different perspectives taken by a speaker towards activities, events, and states (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). In English, there are two aspects: progressive and perfect.

2.1.4.2. Definition Progressive aspect

In English grammar, the term "progressive aspect" refers to a verb phrase formed with a form of "be + -ing" that denotes an activity or state ongoing in the present, past, or future. A verb in the progressive aspect, also known as the continuous form, typically refers to an action that occurs during a period of time.

The timing of an occurrence is not the only thing that a progressive aspect displays. It also demonstrates how the speaker views the situation in general as continuing and temporary rather than being finished or permanent.

A verb which could be used in progressive aspect is a dynamic verb.

Here key points about the progressive aspect:

- Ongoing Actions: Actions that are continuing or happening at the moment of speaking are denoted by the progressive aspect. For example: "She is watching television."
- Incomplete Actions: The activity is not yet done or complete, as suggested by the progressing aspect. It hints to the fact that the action is still in progress and on going. For example: "They are trying to discover a new treatment for this disease."
- Temporary Actions: The progressive aspect can convey the temporary nature of an action, in the lieu of a long-lasting state or habitual activity. For example: "I am staying at a 5-five-star resort for my holiday."

2.1.4.3. Types of progressive aspects

Aspects	Functions	Examples	Explanations
Present Progressive		(a) The Rhine **is** always **pouring** its water into the sea. (b) He **is pouring** water into the bottle.	In (a), the speaker wants to emphasize on an activity in the progress that is uncompleted and occurs all the time because it never stops and is reinforced by obligatory adverbial. However, in (b), the speaker mentions an ongoing action that is also uncompleted but occurs temporarily.
		(c) He **is doing** homework now. (d) He **is doing** homework every day to prepare well for mid-term exam.	In sentence (c), the action is temporary, while in sentence (b), it mentions a habit that is done repeatedly.
Present Perfect Progressive	to emphasize the activity in progress, or activity continuing.	(a) You should not urge him. He **has been trying** to find the key. (b) Sorry I'm late. I **have been trying** to find the key.	In sentence (a), the speakers would like to talk about an action in progress in the past for a period until now, while the speaker in sentence (b), the action is recently finished.
Past Progressive	To focus on how long activity continued, to focus on the activity itself.	(a) This semester was hard and **I had been making**	In sentence (a), the speaker emphasizes on the action in progress over a period up to a

		excellent progress. (How long activity continued) (b) She was an extremely gifted staff and she **had been making** excellent progress (focus on activity)	particular past point in time. As for sentence (b), it only focuses on activity.
Future Progressive	To emphasize the duration of an activity in progress at a particular point in the future	(a) When I come to see you, you **will have been waiting** for nearly two hours. (b) My plane has been delayed. I think Don and Sue **will have been waiting** for me at the airport for two hours.	In sentence (a), speaker would like to emphasize the duration of an activity in progress at a particular point in the future. However, there is a minor difference in terms of sentence (b) which emphasizes on an activity continuing to the current period).

2.1.4.4.   Definition of perfect aspect

The perfect aspect is expressed with the auxiliary *have* and the past participle form of the verb. It mentions an earlier action or state that has relevance at a later reference point or point of orientation.

For example:
- John **has bought** a new car.
- John **had bought** a new car when I met him last week.

2.1.4.5.   Types of perfect aspect

Aspects	Examples	Explanations
Present Perfect	(a) I **have played** the guitar for 10 years. (b) I **have played** the guitar since I was a kid.	In (a), the speaker mentions an event that started in the past and continues in the present, while in (b), the speaker talking about his/her own experience up to the present.
	(c) I can't get home. It **has been raining**. (d) It **has been raining** for hours.	In sentence (c), the speaker mentions an event that happed in the past but it is important in the present; meanwhile, in sentence (d), the speaker emphasizes on an event that is still continuing in the present.
Past Perfect	(a) When John lived in Vietnam, I **had met** his children. (b) I was very happy to meet John in the party. I hadn't met him before, but I **had met** his children several times.	In (a), the speaker mentions an event started in the past and continued up to a later time in the past, whereas in (b), the speaker talks about his/her experience up to a point in the past.
Future Perfect	(a) By the time you come, I'm sure I **will have got** to know the city really well. (b) I **will have got** to know what you warn me.	Sentence (a) mentions a prediction that is expected to be completed by a particular time in the future, whereas sentence (b) mentions an event that took place before now or before a particular point in the future.

2.2.   MODALITY

2.2.1.   Definition

According to Merriam-Webster, "modality is the classification of logical propositions according to their asserting or denying the possibility, impossibility, contingency, or necessity of their content". Downing and Locke (1992) note that "modality is understood as a semantic category which covers such notions as possibility, probability, necessity, volition, obligation and permission".

2.2.2.   Realization of Modality

The classification of modality is based on the research "Epistemic Modality And Deontic Modality: Two Sides of A Coin" which was conducted by Suhadi in 2015. Some examples would be the same as this research, while the remaning ones are written by me.

2.2.3. Ways of forming modality

"The unmarked form of modality is indicated by overt modal operators like must, can, could, may, might, will, would, shall, should, ought, and the semi-modals need and dare". Depending on the situation, they may have different meanings.

For example:

- Students must bring the ID card in the oral exam. (obligation)
- At midnight he **must have been** studying attentively. (Probability)
- It is raining heavily now; we **might not** hang out today. (Probability)
- He **can** dance very well. (Ability)
- You **can** break for fifteen minutes. (Permission)

Modal Adjunct

Modality may also be expressed by adjuncts such as certainly, definitely, probably, possibly, perhaps, maybe, surely, always, usually, obviously, etc.

For example:

- **Probably**, the best measure for reducing climate change is afforestation.
- **Certainly**, being a bilingual person is beneficial.
- **Possibly**, she gets home late because of heavy workload in the company.

Lexical verbs

Some lexical verbs may also express modality such as *allow, beg, believe, command, forbid, guarantee, guess, promise, suggest, warn, wonder, wish, think, or suppose*.

For example:

- The scientist **warned** that the environment is getting more and more polluted.
- I **think** imposing a heavy tax on fast food is the best way to reduce the rate of consumption.
- We **suppose** that all the students' works are fair.

Lexico-modal Auxiliaries

Lexico-modal auxiliaries are another way to convey modality. such as *be able to, be about to, be bound to, be certain to, be going to, be liable to, be sure to, be to, be likely to, be meant to, be supposed to, had better, would rather,* etc.

- Many small children nowadays **are able to** speak English well.
- What **would** you **rather** see: action or sci-fi movies?
- The temperature **is likely to** increase significantly.

Clause with Past Participle

In a phrase that contains a past participle and is followed by an infinitive or a that-clause, modality can also be expressed. It is prevalent to use the past participle verbs such as *allowed, determined, confirmed, obliged, required, or supposed.*

For example:

- He **is required to** revise the lessons carefully.
- It **is** *required* that all athletes be popularized the levels of awards in the case of winning golden medals.
- Foreign citizens **are** *obliged* **to** abide by the regulations of the host country.

Clause with noun

Another way that modality may be realized is associated with a phrase that starts with dummy subject there or it, which is followed by a noun, and then a that-clause. The nouns commonly used to express modality are *must, chance, certainty, likelihood, possibility, probability, or determination.*

- It is **a must** that every all students achieve IELTS with band 6.5 before graduating.
- It is **an obligation** that all football clubs worldwide conform Financial Fair Play (FFP).
- There is **a possibility** that the ice at the North and South Poles will be melted by global warming, and the polar bears will be on the verge of extinction.

Combination of Modal and Adjunct

An adjunct and a modal operator can be employed to indicate modality.

- Backlogs of order **will definitely** cause the current state of business stagnancy in this company.
- An unknown creature **might possibly** exist in the old building.
- The soldiers **must always be** ready for battle.

2.2.4.   **Uses**

According to Oxford Reference, "the two main types of meaning expressed by modal auxiliary verbs are widely labelled EPISTEMIC (concerned with likelihood or certainty) and DEONTIC (concerned with the degree of obligation). A less widely used terminology substitutes MODALIZATION for epistemic modality, and MODULATION for deontic modality".

2.2.4.1.   Modalization (Epistemic)

Halliday (1994) presents that modalization involves the expression of two kinds of meaning:

1st meaning - Probability: The speaker expresses judgements as to the likelihood or probability of something happening or being.

There are three ways employed to indicate probability, including finite modal operator, modal adjunct, and the combination of both finite modal operator and modal adjectives.

WAYS	EXAMPLES
Probability expressed by finite modal operator	a. This guy **may** be a new student. (Probability) b. He **might** be a new student. (Doubt) c. He **must** be a new student. (Certainty)
Probability expressed by modal Adjunct	a. He is **possibly** our new manager. (Uncertainty) b. He is **probably** our new manager. (Probability) c. He is **certainly** our new manager. (Certainty)
Probability expressed by finite modal operator and modal adj.	a. The event **will possibly** come in 2012. (Possibility) b. The event **will probably** come next year. (Probability) c. The event **will certainly** come on Friday. (Certainty)

2nd meaning - Usuality: where the speaker expresses judgements as to the frequency with which something happens. In other words, it is associated with the frequency of a process. Thus, usuality can be probed by a question *How frequently does the process take place?*

Usuality can also be expressed in three ways. They are by finite modal operator, modal adjunct, and the combination of both finite modal operator and modal adjunct.

WAYS	EXAMPLES
Usuality expressed by finite modal operator	a. Every morning Jane **will** have breakfast at seven o'clock. a. When he was a small boy, he would/used to fish in the river on Sunday. b. Water will boil at 100 degrees centigrade.
Usuality expressed by modal adjunct	a. Jane **sometimes** has breakfast at seven o'clock in the morning. b. When he was a small boy, he **usually** fished in the river on Sunday.

	c. The young boy **always** comes to his girlfriend's house on Saturday night.
Usuality expressed by finite modal operator and modal adjunct.	a. Jane **may sometimes** have breakfast at seven o'clock in the morning. b. When he was a small boy, **he would usually** have breakfast at seven o'clock in the morning. c. He **will always** have breakfast at seven o'clock in the morning. .

2.2.4.2. Modulation

According to Cambridge Dictionary, "modulation relates to moral ideas such as responsibility, permission, and obligation. In other words, it brings about changes in their surroundings by obligations which are met, permissions given, promises kept and so on".

Obligation

In a command, it concerns the degree of obligation on the other person to carry out the command, which can be scaled by *allowed to*, *anxious to*, and *determined to*. Obligation can be expressed by a finite modal operator or by an expansion of the predicator typically by a passive verb or an adjective.

WAYS	EXAMPLES
Obligation expressed by a finite modal operator	a. The students **may** submit their assignment next week. b. The students **should** submit their assignment next week. c. The students **must** submit their assignment next week.
Obligation expressed by a passive verb	a. The students **are allowed to** take 15-minute break. b. The students **are advised to** take 15-minute break. c. Students **are not obliged** to take 15-minute break.
Obligation expressed by an adjective	a. The officers **are permissible to** wear informal clothes on Friday. b. The officers **are advisable to** wear informal clothes on Friday. c. The officers **are obligatory to** wear informal clothes on Friday.

Inclination

The degree of a speaker's readiness to accomplish something is expressed by inclination, a subtype of modulation. The speaker may indicate ability, willingness, and determination in their inclination. Ability suggests a person's capacity to act with the least amount of desire, whereas willingness suggests a higher inclination and determination is the highest inclination.

Inclination also can be expressed in two ways as follows:

WAYS	EXAMPLES
Inclination expressed by finite modal operator.	a. They **can** swim in this lake. b. They **will** swim across the lake. c. They **must** swim across the lake within ten minutes.
Inclination expressed by an expansion of the predicator typically by an adjective or a participle	a. Most men **are able to** swim in this lake. b. They **are willing to** swim across the lake. c. They **are determined to** swim across the lake within ten minutes.

3. Discussion
3.1. Tense and Aspect
3.1.1. Problems

Theoretically, Vietnamese English learners have absorbed a substantial and profound amount of knowledge about tenses in the national English curriculum, with difficulty escalating into the 12th grade. However, English learners often lack a solid foundation in tense knowledge as well as a thorough and comprehensive understanding of the precise and contextual usage, meanings, and nuances of each tense.

Typically, the lesson plan structure for tense-related lessons in the Vietnamese curriculum comprises four main components:

1. The function.
2. Sentence structures for affirmative, negative, and interrogative forms of each tense (accompanied by examples).
3. Signal words.
4. Practical tasks.

In Vietnam, the teaching methods for English tenses tend to be monotonous and lack practicality. Specifically, teachers often require learners to use signal words to determine the tense of each question in the practical exercises. For example, when identifying signal words like "now," "right now," "at the present," or "at the moment," learners can swiftly and easily identify that the tense being used is the present continuous tense. Furthermore, much knowledge is conveyed mechanically, lacking scientific and systematic explanations. Let's consider the following question:

Be quiet! The baby _____ **(sleep)**

For this exercise, many use the exclamation mark (!) as a recognition cue for the present continuous tense instead of helping students recognize the context of the statement related to an ongoing event at the present moment.

What's even more noteworthy is the lack of consistency between the content of learning and the examination system regarding tenses in Vietnam. Despite absorbing tense-related knowledge in class, learners are merely exposed to the time aspect of speech production emphasized by the teacher. However, the content of exam questions includes aspects related to the verb form. Consider the example below:

(4a) You **are** always **buying** new clothes.

(4b) I **am** always **meeting** my neighbor John near the station. I guess he works somewhere near there.

Many learners are confused about the above example, whose verb structure is formed in the present continuous tense. Based on the knowledge conveyed, they hold the opinion that the present continuous tense is only used to discuss the present moment. More seriously, many Vietnamese learners use frequency adverbs as recognition symbols for the current singular tense. In this situation, most people do not have sufficient awareness of the aspects of the present progressive. To be more specific, in sentence (4a), the speaker wants to complain or criticize someone by using "always". The speaker emphasized that the frequency of this occurrence is so repetitive that it has become a habit. Meanwhile, for sentence (4b), "unexpected things have happened several times".

In addition, due to the lack of flexibility, science, and logic in teaching, as well as a lack of in-depth understanding of aspects, it is difficult for learners to distinguish subtle differences in English verb structures. Let's take a look at these examples below:

(5a) Now, I **have** much money.

(5b) I wish I **had** much money.

These two examples use two different verb forms to explain the difference between fact (5a) and non-fact (5b), or to understand example (5b) in another way: by using the simple past tense associated with the wish structure, it describes events that are not real now, or it could be explained that the speakers or writers want to mention a futuristic event. Learners can easily identify the tenses; nevertheless, they seem to be unable to understand the subtle differences and true significance of these two examples.

In short, the lack of consistency in teaching and exam content has had detrimental impacts in Vietnam. In addition, a deficiency in this aspect may have some adverse effects on learners, especially those from languages such as Vietnamese that do not have a similar system. Learners struggle to construct sentences

correctly without having a profound and intensive insight into their aspects, leading to grammatical misunderstandings, misunderstandings of the semantics of English tenses, and incorrect or imprecise information conveyance.

3.1.2. Solutions

Before being taught the knowledge and difference between tense and aspect, learners need to build a solid foundation from basic tenses like present simple, simple past, and simple future to advanced tenses. It is likely that mastering the correct structure and usage of these tenses will offer a strong foundation for advancement. For example, learners cannot acquire knowledge of reported speech without mastering the structures of tenses because the tense of the verbs usually changes to reflect the shift from the original statement to the reporting context.

It is necessary that teachers eliminate outdated methods related to tenses, such as teaching signal words or coercing learners to learn formulas by heart, as well as monotonous and impractical examples in current textbooks. Some of the suggested strategies below could be used to reverse this problem:

It might be helpful to make abstract contexts more understandable for learners by showing how aspects are used in specific contexts. To help students understand how aspects affect the interpretation of events over time, teachers are able to give brief passages or sentences that emphasize various aspects. The recognition and differentiation of different aspects in various linguistic contexts among learners is facilitated by using concrete examples. Students' comprehension of aspects can be significantly improved by implementing interactive learning strategies. Students can grasp the nuances of different aspects in various linguistic contexts through engaging activities including role-playing, debates, and group discussion. It is possible for learners to apply aspect rules to actual situations by actively engaging in these activities, which makes learning more applicable and memorable and helps learners investigate how aspectual differences are handled in their native language and the second language. Moreover, students are encouraged to think critically and given the opportunity to understand the nuances of aspects in a wider linguistic setting through this comparative examination.

Students are exposed to a variety of aspectual expressions when actual texts like speeches, news articles, and books are employed in the classroom. The practical applicability of their learning is reinforced by gaining a deep insight into how aspects are utilized by proficient speakers in real-world situations. Additionally, by encouraging students to develop their personal written or spoken works employing pertinent elements, teachers may help them develop their creativity and linguistic independence, leading to the fact that Students can build a strong foundation for properly using aspect in their language output by being taught the principles and patterns of aspect usage and given practice tasks.

3.2. Modality

3.2.1. Problems

The use of modality in English by second-language learners is likely to be complicated and obscure to understand and distinguish modal verbs (can, could, may, right, will, will, shall, should, must, etc.) without grasping their meaning and context. For example, Vietnamese learners often do not distinguish between "must" which is often used for more formal writing, such as manuals, regulations, or rules, and "have to" which is more commonly used in daily communication and informal writing.

In academic learning environments such as IELTS, learners often lack consistency and flexibility in their learning modality. For example, when describing a possible situation to avoid overgeneralization, they repeatedly use the structure of "can + Bare infinitive" or "will + Bare infinitive", rather than diversifying the grammar structures.

Another prominent issue is that the English learning environment in Vietnam is too passive, theoretically heavy, and lacks practice. Therefore, people learning English in Vietnam do not have sufficient awareness of the modality when exercising the skills in an advanced setting. For example, most English learners are confused about understanding the semantics of this sentence.

He *should have received* the package yesterday. I sent it two weeks ago.

This is a sentence with a perfect pattern structure, and learners find it confusing and struggle to interpret its meaning in communicative language or in oral tests that require the speakers to describe their regret at past events.

Another issue stems from the significant differences between the two language systems. The Vietnamese language system can include both temporal meaning and modal implications. For example:

Nó **vẫn đang** (temporal meaning) **phải (modality)** nằm viện.

Many people studying English in Vietnam will translate this sentence word for word and use the present continuous verb structure to translate the auxiliary "đang", resulting in the following:

He **still is having to be** hospitalized, instead: He **still has to** be hospitalized.

Another difference that can be mentioned here is the order of modal verbs in Vietnamese and English. Let's consider the example below:

Hắn ta **có thể sẽ** phải cần sự hỗ trợ về mặt tài chính

He **can will need** financial support.

For this translation, learners are quite confused when they have to process and find ways to arrange the order of modal verbs from the original Vietnamese sentence because of their lack of knowledge about how to form modal verbs through knowledge of modality.

Correct: It **is very likely** that he **will** need financial support.

More seriously, the combination of modal verbs, tense, and aspect really generates complex interrelationships, causing greater levels of confusion among learners. An example to illustrate this is that future time expression usually covers the numerous modal implications that the different forms of expressing futurity may convey.

He **will spend** a 3-day trip on Phu Quoc Island next month.

He **is going to spend** a 3-day trip on Phu Quoc Island next month.

He **will be spending** a 3-day trip on Phu Quoc Island next month.

He **will have been spending** a 3-day trip on Phu Quoc Island next month.

He **might spend** a 3-day trip on Phu Quoc Island next month.

It can be clearly seen that the speaker or writer expresses many different kinds of attitudes toward this futuristic event related to the timing of the action, the ongoing or completed nature of the action, and the level of certainty or possibility associated with it.

3.2.2.   Solution and how to apply in academic settings

To address these issues, designing more detailed lectures in terms of meaning, formation, and usage context is considered one of the best solutions to help English learners improve their understanding of using grammar knowledge when practicing specific skills. The curriculum and courses should pay in-depth attention to the knowledge of modality, from basic to intensive knowledge, and provide a detailed introduction in the context of how to form modality to avoid repeating familiar structures such as can, will, or should. This helps learners increase their awareness of this field of knowledge and helps them determine specific goals when learning a modality, such as writing personal letters, attending interviews, participating in conversations, or language application in an academic environment. The following example illustrates the importance of modularity in an academic environment (IELTS Writing Test).

Modality could be used in IELTS Writing Task 2 (writing a 250-word essay). In addition to a reasonably formal style, it helps the writer avoid generalization.

When writers make statements, state arguments, or express opinions, their tone in the essays is entirely appropriate with a cautious or neutral tone, but in another context, they intentionally or unintentionally make their tone strong. In other words, their opinions or arguments are overconfident, forceful, or opinionated, leading to overgeneralization.

For example:

Burning fuel is the main cause of global warming. **(Strong tone)**

Burning fuel could be the main cause of global warming. **(Neutral or cautious tone)**

Overgeneralization occurs when the language used by learners asserts that a phenomenon is true in all cases when, in fact, it is only true in most or a few cases.

For example, teenagers are addicted to computer games.

In fact, there are many teenagers who are increasingly involved in computer games. This could be true for many of them but could not be true for others in other contexts, which means that not all teenagers are addicted to computer games. In other words, this sentence is exaggerating and making overgeneralizations, leading to a negative impact on the coherence of the essay and a lower score in Task Response. To be more explicit, Task Response is described in Band descriptors as "presenting, extending, and supporting main ideas, but there may be a tendency to overgeneralize and/or supporting ideas may lack focus*".*

Therefore, modality could play a role as a cautious language to help writers avoid this error.

For example:

Teenagers are addicted to computer games. (overgeneralization)

⇒ **Possibly**, teenagers are addicted to computer games. (Probability expressed by modal adjunct)

⇒ Teenagers **can** be addicted to computer games (Probability expressed by a finite modal operator).

⇒ Teenagers **are believed to** be addicted to computer games. (Probability expressed by Past participants)

4. Conclusion

Tense, Aspect, and Modality have a collective and interrelated connection. Quirk and Green Baum (1973) state that while tense corresponds with the form of the verb and places emphasis on time, aspect is a grammatical form that determines an action, event, or state of a verb from the perspective and viewpoint of the speaker; in addition, it concerns manners and attitude among speakers and writers. When it comes to modality, it adds a layer of interpretation to the action described by the verb in addition to referring to the speaker's attitude or the degree of certainty, obligation, necessity, or possibility expressed in a sentence. With the comparison of Vietnamese and English as well as my own knowledge gained from teaching English to Vietnamese students, I have provided some teaching points that are likely to be some of the most challenging for Vietnamese learners and should receive additional attention. Without a doubt, there are still a great number of other crucial issues that need to be addressed, but due to the size of this essay, they are not covered here. Writing a pedagogic English grammar for Vietnamese students based on a thorough, in-depth contrastive examination of Vietnamese and English is one of the many significant tasks currently assigned to English teachers. Such a solution would need the knowledge and joint efforts of many instructors and experts, and I hope that the current study will be able to offer some insights so that Vietnamese learners have a golden chance to advance and master their English.

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