



Modals Used in Interrogatives as Lubricants to Soften Directives and Commissives in English

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Abstract

Speakers of English use certain tones, grammatical and lexical items to express themselves politely. Avoiding impositions on the hearers, providing options to them by respecting their liberties and creating a congenial environment are the factors which call into play appropriate use of politeness strategies. Modals in English are used in a large number of socio-cultural situations. They are also used to perform multiple speech acts and functions. Hence the study of modals cannot be confined to the semantic and formal analyses. Man is a social being and his utterances are often shaped by socio-pragmatic factors. Since communication is a goal-directed activity, politeness strategies are used by the speakers to avoid unpleasant commands and impositions. The present paper explores the use of modals in interrogative sentences as lubricants to observe Tact Maxim of

politeness to avoid direct impositions on the hearer in directive and commissive speech acts in order to save an utterance from being impolite.

Keywords: Modals, Interrogatives, Politeness Maxims, Tact Maxim, Directives,
Commissives