

Modal Auxiliaries in Philippine English Newspapers: a Corpus-based Analysis

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Abstract

The present study made use of five text categories sourced from newspapers in the data bank of the Philippine component of the International Corpus of English (ICE-PHI) compiled by Bautista, Lising, and Dayag (1999). The five text categories chosen for analysis belong to the major text category of written printed data: Skills and Hobbies (Instructional), Press Editorials (Persuasive), Press News Reports (Informational-Reportage), Humanities (Informational-Popular), and Social Science (Informational-Popular). The total number of texts analyzed for the present study is 50 (approximately 100,000 words). The present study aimed at describing the semantic functions of nine modals under study and investigating as to whether there are features in the use of modals in the Philippine context that do not conform to the current usage taught in the textbooks that conform to the American and British usage. The findings lead to tentative conclusions and implications to language teaching and open new windows for research.

Key words: corpus-based analysis, Philippine English, Modal auxiliary

Introduction

The analysis of English modal auxiliaries has been a subject of lively interest among linguists who are particularly interested in characterizing its use in different varieties of English and in different genres of text-types (Coates, 1983 cited in Kennedy, 1998; Biber, Conrad & Randi 1998; Jung & Min, 1999). For one, the complexity of the meanings associated with modals has posed a challenge to both semantic theory and descriptive grammar (Jung & Min, 1998). It is no wonder that different classificatory labels have been made by different writers in their attempts to analyze the semantic functions of modals. For example, Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik (1985) classify modals in terms of their 'root' and 'epistemic' meanings and

Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1983) in terms of their social interactional and logical uses. Verstraete (2001) talks about modals using deontic, epistemic, and dynamic categories. Yet some others such as Azar (2001), Swan and Walter (2001), and Swan (2001) describe the semantic functions of modals without much ado about classifications. Despite their differences in labeling, they all agree about the role of modal auxiliaries in expressing modality in language communication.

As has always been the case, researchers tread different routes using different frameworks and approaches in investigating modal auxiliaries. For instance, modal verbs have been investigated within the Contrastive Rhetoric framework in order to prove the presence of culture in writing and the differences in writing traditions across cultures. Differences in distributional frequencies have been the basis for concluding different values attached to modals. Of interest is the work of Vassileva (2001) whose contrastive analysis of English, Bulgarian, and Bulgarian English academic texts has gleaned results pointing to popular use of modal verbs in expressing detachment when writing academic texts and the less importance given to modal verbs in expressing boosting or commitment to the proposition.

More interestingly, research in modal verbs has been enriched using an approach to linguistic analysis known as corpus linguistics which has greatly expanded especially during the 1990s (Schneider, 2000). This cutting-edge development in terms of scientific techniques and methods lends itself to various investigations involving large quantities of data and computer-aided analysis. Valuable information about the use of modals in different varieties of English has been made available through systematic corpus-based study. According to Kennedy (1998), Coates (1983) who used representative samples of about 200 tokens from each of the modals in the London-Lund and LOB corpora arrived at important findings which have become a baseline of comparative research on modals with other English varieties. Some of her findings include: (1) *Would* is the most frequent modal in written British English, while *will* is more favored in the spoken English; (2) *Shall* is used to express obligation much more in written than spoken texts; (3) there seems to be significant differences between genres in terms of relative frequency of the 'root' and 'epistemic' uses of some modals; and (4) the epistemic use of *must*, *should*, *may* and *shall* is more frequent than the 'root' use in spoken compared to written English.

Linguistics from the 'Outer Circle' and the 'Expanding Circle,' too, have made significant contributions to the characterization of modals using corpus analysis. Schneider (2000) exploited the Kolhapur Corpus to investigate how different or innovative Indian English is in comparison to two dominant norms, American and British English. In his analysis of subjunctives, he found that *should* is the dominant main structural alternative to subjunctives after suasive expressions in the Kolhapur Corpus and that *Indian English* tended to behave more similarly with British English than with American English. Bautista (2010) replicated Schneider's (2000) study using ICE-PHI and ICE-SIN, comparing the two Englishes with Indian English. Her findings indicated that *should* as a structural alternative to the subjunctive in ICE-PHI and ICE-SIN is not as frequent as it is in the Kolhapur corpus, adhering more to the American English pattern than it did to the British pattern.

Jung and Min (1998), investigated the use of Korean English in Korean newspapers with respect to the other varieties of English. Three modals *will*, *shall*, and *would* were analyzed in terms of frequency and semantic functions. Some of their findings include: (1) *Will* and *would* are the most common modal forms; (2) Similar to other English varieties compared, the 'epistemic' meanings are more common than 'root' meanings.

Bautista (2004), in her work on Philippine English verb usage inspired by Svalverg (1998) on Brunei English, investigated the responses of 205 Filipino university students to grammatically correct and incorrect verb-forms in a Grammaticality Judgment Test. In the area of modal use, she found the participants to have had difficulty recognizing non-standard uses of *would*. In concomitance with the grammaticality test, she conducted a corpus-based analysis of *would* from local newspapers and journals. Her analysis revealed the presence of *would* non-standardisms in the data, which might be caused by the writers' need to communicate non-assertively, imperfect learning, and the propensity to simplify complex structures.

In the first glance, an evaluation of the previously mentioned literature on modal verbs seems to tell that a lot of information has already been given to describe English modal auxiliaries. However, there is more to be learned about the system of English modals in the context of Philippine English. Specifically, the semantic functions and complex verb-phrase structures of modal verbs in Philippine-English is still an unseeded ground.

This gap in research triggered me to investigate the nine English modals in order to gain insights as to how they are used in five different sub-genres of the newspaper genre in Philippine English. In particular, the present study aims at providing answers to the following questions:

1. What are the semantic functions attached to the nine modals that occurred in the five journalistic texts in the ICE-PHI corpus?
2. What are the most extensively used modals in the five text categories?
3. What are the similarities and differences in the use of modals across genres?
4. Are there unique features found in the use of modals in five text categories that do not conform to the current use of American and British English.

Methodology

Corpus

The data used here were chosen from the larger data bank of the Philippine component of the International Corpus of English (ICE-PHI) compiled by Bautista, Lising, and Dayag (1999). The five text categories chosen for analysis belong to the major text category of written printed data. The five text categories which were sourced from newspapers include: Skills and Hobbies (Instructional), Press Editorials (Persuasive), Press News Reports (Informational-Reportage), Humanities (Informational-Popular), and Social Science (Informational-Popular). Since there are only 10 texts specified for Skills and Hobbies, Editorials, Humanities, and Social Science, I only made use of 10 out of 20 texts available in the Press News category. The total number of texts analyzed for the present study is 50 (approximately 100,00 words).

Analytical Framework

Coding of the semantic functions of the modals was largely based on the chart of modals by Azar (2001), which I modified in order to incorporate

the functions listed by Quirk et al. (1985) and Swan (2001) on modals. For the analysis of *would*, the works of Svalverg, 1998; Bautista, 2004; Verstraete, 2001; Swan and Walter, 1997; and Alexander, 1988 proved to be very helpful (See Appendix A).

Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis is the occurrence of each type of modal in the texts as identified by the concordance system of Wordsmith Tools. All the occurrences of each type of modal were manually analyzed in terms of their semantic functions and complex verb-phrase structures.

Coding and Data analysis

The first stage in the analysis involved coding of the semantic functions of modals based on the analytical framework adapted for the present study. Each occurrence of a modal was read thrice or more and coded according to its function in the sentence. The contextual environment of the modals in the sentences was considered. Lexical nouns that are homophones of modals were removed from the total count of occurrences during the process of coding.

In the analysis of *would*, an intercoder who worked independently for a month coded half of the data. This action was resorted because of some of the 'problematic' usages of *would* in the data. Trial sessions were made prior to the intercoding. *Initially*, we reached over 98% intercoder agreement, but 100% agreement was made after we settled some of the disagreements in coding.

Stage two of the analysis consisted of the identification of the verb-phrase structures in which the modals occur.

Stage three involved tallying and percentaging of the distributional frequencies of the occurrences, complex verb-phrase structures, and semantic functions of modals.

Results and Discussion

Overall Distribution of the Nine Modals

The total number of tokens of each modal in five text categories is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1
Overall Distribution of the Nine Modals in the ICE-Phi Corpus Journalistic Texts

Modals	Frequency	Percentage
Will/'ll	343	23.50%
Can	327	22.40%
Would/'d	202	13.90%
Should	163	11.20%
May	153	10.50%
Could	119	8.20%
Must	111	7.60%
Might	33	2.30%
Shall	6	0.40%
Total	1,457	100%

The figures in Table 1 show that the most frequently occurring modal is *will/ll*, accounting for nearly one fourth of the total number of modals in five genres under study. This finding seems to agree with Jung and Min's (1999) observation that *will* outnumbers *would* in Korean English journalistic texts but runs counter to Coates' (1983, cited in Kennedy (1998) finding that *would* is the most frequent modal in written British English. *Would* only comes next to *can*, which is the second most frequently used modal. *Shall* and *might* are infrequent modals and appear to be less important than *should* and *may*, respectively.

Complex Verb-phrase Structures of Modals

Table 2 lists the verb-phrase structures in which the modals occurred and the extent to which the modals are used in those structures.

Table 2

Verb-phrase Structures of Modals in the ICE-Phi Journalistic Texts and their Frequencies

<i>Modal Structures</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Modal alone	3	0.21%
Modal + Infinitive (e.g. can attest)	1,113	76.38%
Modal + be + Past Participle (e.g. can be made)	231	15.90%
Modal + be + Present Participle (e.g will be seeing)	19	1.30%
Modal + have + been + Past Participle (e.g. could have been said)	13	0.90%
Modal + have + Past Participle (e.g. may have gone)	51	3.50%
Modal + Periphrastic modal + be + Past Participle (e.g. may have to be deferred)	3	0.20%
Modal + Periphrastic modal + Infinitive (e.g. may have to bear)	23	1.60%
Modal + be + Periphrastic modal + Infinitive (e.g. may be able to do)	1	0.06%
Total	1,457	100%

*Percentage is with respect to the total number of structures in all text categories

As shown in Table 2, the modals occur in nine structures with different frequencies. Constituting the greatest percentage is the Modal + Infinitive (e.g. *should call*) and seconded by the Modal + be + Past Participle (e.g. *can be erased*) structure. There are only three structures which involved the combination of modals with semi modals (e.g. *will have to be surpassed*) and they are less common.

Frequencies, Structures, and Semantic Functions of Modals in Each Text Category

Can and Could

The frequency of occurrence of *can* and *could* in each text category is presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Frequency of occurrence of can and could

	Skills / Hobbies	Press Reportage	Editorials	Humanities	Social Science
Can	126/335 (37.6)	24/275 (8.7)	73/335 (20.6)	43/168 (25.6)	61/324 (18.8)
Could	13/335 (3.9)	21/275 (7.6)	32/335 (9.01)	23/168 (17.7)	30/324 (9.25)

*Percentage is with respect to the total number of modals in each text category

It is clear that *can* is comparatively highly frequent than *could* across five genres. *Can* is more frequently used in editorials, social science, skills and hobbies, and humanities than in press reportage. Of the four genres, however, skills and hobbies tends to put more importance on the modal *can*. Why this is so cannot be answered by the present data, but we can conjecture that this striking difference may be attributable to the differences in content among the genres under consideration; that is, the texts in skills and hobbies may have focused on what one can possibly or able to do more than the other four journalistic genres.

As regards the verb-phrase structure of *can* and *could*, we can see patterns in which they are more likely to occur. *Can* and *could* both have over 70% of their tokens in the Modal + Infinitive structure (e.g. can make, could speak). All five genres tend to unanimously give priority to Modal + Infinitive structure for both *can* and *could*. However, while *can* appeared only in two structures (Modal+Infinitive and Modal +Be+Past Participle), *could* is found in five verb-phrase structures, namely Modal+Infinitive, Modal +Be + Past Participle, Modal+Be+Present Participle, Modal +Have+Been+Past Participle and Modal+Have+Past Participle.

Three major functions are associated with *can* and *could*; possibility, ability and permission; but only ability and possibility functions figured in

the data. Table 4 presents the figures for the semantic functions of *can* and *could*.

Table 4
Frequencies of the Semantic Functions of can and could

<i>Modals</i>	<i>Skills/Hobbies</i>	<i>Press Reportage</i>	<i>Editorials</i>	<i>Humanities</i>	<i>Social Science</i>
<u>CAN</u>					
Ability	3 (2.0%)	3 (12.5%)	4 (5.5%)	11 (25.5%)	3 (4.9%)
Possibility	123 (98.0%)	21 (87.5%)	69 (94.5%)	32 (74.4%)	58 (95.1%)
Total	126 (100%)	24 (100%)	73 (100%)	43 (100%)	61 (100%)
<u>COULD</u>					
Possibility	13 (100%)	21 (100%)	30 (93.8%)	18 (78.20%)	30 (100%)
Ability (Past)	0	0	2 (6.25%)	5 (1.7%)	0
Total	13 (100%)	21 (100%)	32 (100%)	23 (100%)	30 (100%)

*Percentage is with respect to the total number of semantic functions of the modal in each text category

The possibility function of *can* and *could* constitutes the greatest percentage in all genres, a finding which parallels with that of Kennedy (1998). His analysis of the use of modals in the London-Lund and LOB corpora yielded results which revealed that the possibility meaning was the predominant function attached to *can* and *could*.

According to Swan (2001), the possibility sense of *can* and *could* is associated with 'theoretical' or 'general possibility', as in (1) and (2); while the ability sense is attached to 'general ability', as in (3) and (4).

(1) <ICE-PHI:W2E-006#52:2>

NPC solons can talk themselves to death and win the hearts of every freedom-loving Filipino, but there is no way they *can* get Charter-change die-hards to their side.

(2) <ICE-PHI:W2E-008#71:5>

There is a very real danger that the so-called <mention> 'lost commands' </mention> of the <indig> Moro </indig> rebel groups *could* seize the foreign journalists.

(3) <ICE-PHI:W2E-010#109:3>

They were undistinguished by name, property or intellectual gifts, so he lavished our taxes on his chums so they *could* pretend to be capitalists.

(4) <ICE-PHI:W2B-008#12:1>

From his various prints and watercolors of Filipinos, whether as streetwise urbanites (1974); overseas workers and scholars (1978); victims of natural calamities (1990); or as languid musicians (1995), BenCab proves he *can* dish out modern life with both gusto and sensitivity.

May and Might

The figures in Table 5 represent the frequency of occurrence of *may* and *might* in each text type.

Table 5
Frequency of occurrence of may and might

Modals	Skills/Hobbies	Press Reportage	Editorials	Humanities	Social Science
May	46/335 (13.7)	21/275 (7.6)	39/355 (11)	12/168 (7.1)	35/324 (11)
Might	3/335 (.89)	8/275 (2.9)	12/335 (3.4)	3/168 (1.8)	7/324 (2.2)

*Percentage is with respect to the total number of modals in each genre

The obviously striking difference between the two modals is the extensive use of *may* and the proportionally less common use of *might* in all genres. Of the five genres, however, *may* is more common in skills and hobbies, editorials and social science. *Might* received the least attention in skills and hobbies which only accounts for less than one percent of its total occurrences.

May and *might* tokens tend to use quite extensively the modal+ infinitive structures. Interestingly, this is the same structure that mostly realized the *can* and *could* modals discussed earlier. But unlike the latter, *may* and *might* appear to have more verb-phrase structures. *May* occurred in five structures, while *might* in seven structures.

Table 6 displays the frequencies of the semantic functions attached to *may* and *might*.

Table 6
Frequencies and Semantic Functions of May and Might

Modals	Skills/Hobbies	Press Reportage	Editorials	Humanities	Social Science
<u>May</u>					
Possibility	43 (93.5%)	21 (100%)	38 (97.4%)	12 (100%)	34 (97.1)
Concession	3 (6.5%)		1 (2.6%)		
Permission					1 (2.9%)
Total	46 (100%)	21 (100%)	39 (100%)	12 (100%)	35 (100%)
<u>Might</u>					
Possibility	3 (100%)	8 (100%)	12 (100%)	3 (100%)	7 (100%)

*Percentage is with respect to the total number of semantic functions of the modal in each text category

Looking specifically at the figures, we can see that all genres tend to give preference to *may* over *might* to express possibility. *May* and *might* are used to talk about the present or the future. They are used to say that there is a chance that something is true or possible, as in (5) and (6):

(5). <ICE-PHI:W2E-010#120:3>

But this failure to recognize a Filipino contribution *may* go deeper than language.

(6). <ICE-PHI:W2B-011#126:2>

A rebirth of central planning *might* just come about.

Might can occur as a past form of *may* in indirect speech situations (e.g., *We were afraid that you might be late*), in which case, the tense of *might* is back shifted to the past tense verb of the main clause. However, there is no such construction that figured in the data.

There is more to *may* than just the possibility meaning. It has a concessive force in main clauses preceding *but*, as in (7):

(7). <ICE-PHI:W2E-001#59-60:2>

Second, it is what Hillary Clinton should have fed US President Bill Clinton from the first time they met. There *may* be a firm basis for the first, but the second seems to rest on shaky grounds.

There is one instance of *may* associated with formal request for permission:

(8). <ICE-PHI:W2B-015#7:1>

Though there are a variety of ways to answer these questions, *may* I suggest a rather unorthodox means?

In sum, the difference between *may* and *might* in the present data is not only the less common use of *might* in favor of *may* to express possibility but also the number of meanings attached to each of them.

Shall and Should

Table 7 presents the frequency of occurrence of *shall* and *should* in each text category.

Table 7
Frequency of Occurrence of shall and should

Modals	Skills/Hobbies	Press Reportage	Editorials	Humanities	Social Science
Shall (with third person subject)	0	2 (.72%)	3 (.84%)	0	1 (.30%)
Should	42 (12.5%)	23 (8.4%)	45 (12.7%)	14 (8.3%)	39 (12.0%)

*Percentage is with respect to the total number of modals in each genre

Shall is a rare modal auxiliary in both British and American English (Quirk et.al, 1985). As can be seen in Table 7, the present data seem to support this unpopular use of *shall*. The main functions of *shall* are bifurcated into two: prediction and volition, which are both associated with the first person subject (Quirk et. al, 1983; Swan & Walter, 1997). Although less favored than *will* in expressing information about the future, *shall* is used with no difference of meaning from *will* in most situations. *I/we shall* and *I/we will* had the same meaning (Swan & Swalter, 1997).

Surprisingly, in the present data *shall* represents a usage that caused a difference between the exonormative and Philippine English use of *shall*. *Shall* here is used with a predictive sense associated with the third person subject as in (9) and (10):

(9). <ICE-PHI:W2D-008#28:1>

They shall be represented to the fullest extent possible in the various bodies that formulate policies, subject to the existing by-laws and policies of such bodies.

(10) <ICE-PHI:W2D-008#52:1>

The University shall ensure that they are afforded support in pursuing graduate studies and participating in conferences/seminars and training programs to fulfill the abovementioned expectation in accordance with the provisions of the established Faculty Development Program.

All five *shall* tokens in the data are predicated with the third person singular. This seems to suggest that *shall* has developed a meaning similar to that of the third person predictive sense of *will*. Or, to put it in another way, it seems that the association of *shall* with the first person subject as prescribed by grammar books (e.g. Quirk et al, 1985; Swan & Walter, 1997) is not respected in the current use of *shall* in the Philippine English journalistic texts. The tentative nature of this finding should be substantiated by an analysis involving larger amount of data.

Table 8

Frequencies of the semantic functions of shall and should

<i>Modal Functions</i>	<i>Skills and Hobbies</i>	<i>Press News</i>	<i>Editorials</i>	<i>Humanities</i>	<i>Social Science</i>
SHALL					
Prediction (with 3 rd person subject)	0	2 (100%)	3 (100%)	0	1 (100%)
SHOULD					
Advisability /Obligation	37 (88%)	20 (87%)	34 (76%)	11 (78.6%)	37 (95%)
Tentative Inference	4 (9.4%)	0	10 (22.2%)	2 (14.2%)	2 (5%)
Hypothetical	1 (2.3%)	3 (13.0%)	1 (2.2%)	1 (7.1%)	
Total	42 (100%)	23 (100%)	45 (100%)	14 (100%)	39 (100%)

Should is represented with more frequency in skills and hobbies, social science, and editorials than in press news and humanities . The majority of its tokens are found in Modal + Infinitive structures, over one fourth in Modal +Be + Past Participle, and a few in four other structures .

Should, the more frequent 'relative' of the modal *ought to* and the 'weaker' counterpart of *must*, is used as the past form of *shall* in indirect speech and in 'future in the past' situations and as a marker of hypothetical

and putative meaning. It is also used to express tentative inference and when talking about obligation or giving advice. The last function of shall received more importance in the present data as confirmed by the frequency count of its main functions. According to Kennedy (1997), Mind (1995) has arrived at the same finding in his qualified analysis of the English Modals. The following excerpts are examples of its obligation/advisability function:

(11) <ICE-PHI:W2E-001#59:2>

Second, it is what Hillary Clinton *should* have fed US President Bill Clinton from the first time they met.

(12) <ICE-PHI:W2E-005#53:3>

The Department of Health *should* start a thorough and comprehensive testing of the quality of drinking water before a major outbreak of gastro-intestinal disease takes place in the city.

Must

Table 9 summarizes the frequency of occurrence of the modal *must*.

Table
9 Frequency of occurrence of *Must*

	<i>Skills and Hobbies</i>	<i>Press Reportage</i>	<i>Editorials</i>	<i>Humanities</i>	<i>Social Science</i>
Must	12/335 (3.6)	5/275 (1.8)	36/355 (10.1)	25/168 (14.9)	33/324 (10.2)

*Percentage is with respect to the total number of modals in each category

Must is exploited in editorials, humanities, and social sciences ; it is less common in skills and hobbies and press reportage. It occurs in five complex verb-phrase structures but tends to exploit more extensively the Modal+Infinitive structure . The logical necessity sense of *must* appears to be outnumbered by the obligation/compulsion meaning which is uniformly favored in all text categories (see table 10 below).

Table 10
Frequency of the semantic functions of must

<i>Modal Functions</i>	<i>Skills and Hobbies</i>	<i>Press News</i>	<i>Editorials</i>	<i>Humanities</i>	<i>Social Science</i>
Logical Necessity	0	0	5 (13.9%)	4 (16%)	2 (6.0%)
Obligation/compulsion	12 (100%)	5 (100%)	31 (86.1%)	21 (84%)	31 (93.9%)
Total	12 (100%)	5 (100%)	36 (100%)	25 (100%)	33 (100%)

The advisability/compulsion of *must* is exemplified in (13) and the logical necessity in (14):

(13)<ICE-PHI:W2E-005#67:4>

The group takes another tack, saying that <quote> “ the constitutional mandate (Article II-Section 15) requiring the State to protect and promote the right of health of the people and instill health consciousness among them, *must* include the duty to warn the people of products, places and conditions that may be injurious to their health. ” </quote>

(14)<ICE-PHI:W2E-009#88:3>

Congressmen, including the whistle blowers, are certainly aware of this constitutional requisite and they *must* have already been alerted to the fact that whatever provisions were included in the Omnibus Power Bill on second reading would be no different when the third reading comes about.

Will and Would

The frequency of occurrence of *will* and *would* in five text categories is summarized in Table 11.

Table 11
Frequency of Occurrence of Will and Would

<i>Modal</i>	<i>Skills/Hobbies</i>	<i>Press Reportage</i>	<i>Editorials</i>	<i>Humanities</i>	<i>Social Science</i>
Will/'ll	78/335 (23.3)	112/275 (40.7)	61/355 (17.2)	18/168 (10.7)	74/324 (22.8)
Would /'d	15/335 (4.5)	59/275 (21.5)	54/355 (15.2)	30/168 (17.9)	44/324 (13.6)

As shown above, *will* is more favored than *would* in all text categories except in humanities where *would* outnumbers *will*. *Will* is used quite extensively in press news first, next in skills and hobbies, then in social science, and last in editorials. *Would* is utilized in editorials, social science and humanities, but not as often as in press news.

The majority of the tokens of *will* and *would* occurs in Modal +Infinitive structures. However, *would* occurs in 7 structures, while *will* in only 4 structures.

The main functions associated with *will* are those of prediction and volition which are closely related to the future concept. Table 12 presents the figures for the semantic functions of *will*.

Table 12
Frequency of the semantic functions of will

<i>Functions of Will</i>	<i>Skills and Hobbies</i>	<i>Press News</i>	<i>Editorials</i>	<i>Humanities</i>	<i>Social Science</i>
Prediction	63 (88.5%)	106 (94.6%)	50 (82%)	12 (67%)	71 (96%)
Volition	9 (11.5%)	6 (5.4%)	7 (18%)	6 (33%)	3 (4%)
Total	78 (100%)	112 (100%)	61 (100%)	18 (100%)	7 (100%)

As can be seen in Table 12, the prediction sense in (15) supersedes the volitional meaning of *will* in all text categories.

(15) <ICE-PHI:W2B-004#67:1>

The Executive House which is where the administrative office of the National Museum is located, *will* open in 2001 as the National Museum of Art.

The volition sense of *will* includes both willingness and intention, as in (16) and (17). However, it is not easy to distinguish the willingness sense from the intention sense of *will*.

(16) <ICE-PHI:W2E-006#44:2>

To the question which is foremost in everyone 's mind--Why does nobody believe the President when he says he *will* not stay any minute longer in his post after his six-year term ends on June 30, 1998?--the Cardinal provided the answer.

(17) <ICE-PHI:W2C-002#19:1>

This time, he said, the new lawyers will be concentrating on nothing but the recovery of the Marcos assets with the collaboration of state prosecutors.

Similar to *will*, *would* carries predictive meaning which includes 'prediction in the past sense' or 'future in the past' situations and habitual prediction which describes characteristic behavior or personal habits (Quirk et. al, 1985). In addition, *would* is also used to express habitual behavior in the past tense narratives, politeness, volition, hypothetical meaning, and non-assertion/less definite form of *will*/hedging. Table 13 summarizes the frequencies of the semantic functions of *would*.

As shown in Table 13, the functions of *would* received different frequencies in five text categories; but its striking feature lies in the preponderance of prediction in the past sense in the press reportage category and of non-assertion in press reportage and editorials texts. While the present data limit us from making a claim about the differences in figures, we can offer an explanation that may be traced to genre constraints. As is well known, press reportage deals with a type of discourse that reports events and information that tend to exploit reported speech constructions. What is said by the original speaker in the future or present tense becomes a 'future in the past' or an indirect speech situation when reported in the news. Clearly then, it comes as no surprise to find 'predictions in the past sense' proliferate in press reportage. In the case of the clustering or non-assertion/less definite form of *will* meaning of *would* in press reportage and editorial texts, perhaps, there is a greater need for the writers in press

reportage and editorials to show non-assertion or less definiteness when they write about events that may have an uncertain outcome, or when they talk about topics for which they lack certainty.

Table 13

Frequency of the Semantic Functions of Would

<i>Functions of Would</i>	<i>Skills and Hobbies</i>	<i>Press News</i>	<i>Editorials</i>	<i>Humanities</i>	<i>Social Science</i>
Prediction					
Past Prediction or Future in the past'	1	31	9	3	8
Habitual prediction	3	5	2	10	6
Volition/Preference	3	1	3	0	4
Polite for 'want'	0	0	0	1	4
Hypothetical	3	3	13	6	7
Non-assertion/less definite form of will/hedging	5	16	24	9	12
Others	0	3	3	1	3
Total	15	59	54	30	44

The following excerpts are examples of the semantic functions of *would* identified in the present data:

Past Prediction/'Future in the Past'

(18). <ICE-PHI:W2C-001#6:1>

But while the government said it *would* exert all efforts to reach an accord with the MILF, the military reported violations of a truce signed last week.

Here, *would* is backshifted to the past tense verb of the main clause as triggered by the indirect speech situation.

Volition/Preference

(19) <ICE-PHI:W2A-007#50:1>

The Moros in particular viewed the Filipinos as Christians and they *would* not want to be called Filipinos because they would not want to become Christians.

(20) <ICE-PHI:W2C-001#16:1>

Mr. Estrada had said he *would* not give in to the rebels' demands but agreed to meet Salamat late this month to discuss economic prospects in mineral-rich Mindanao.

Sometimes, it is difficult to distinguish between the 'future in the past' sense and the volitional sense, as in (18) above because *would* in (20) is also within the indirect speech construction. Only the context of the sentence tells that the sense of *would* here is volition because it talks about preference between two options.

Habitual behavior

(21) <ICE-PHI:W2B-014#89:1>

In fact, they told of how their pupils, children of poor peasant Muslim families, *would* go to school with rice and <mention> Silver Swan </mention> (brand of soy sauce) as meal.

Politeness

(22) <ICE-PHI:W2D-020#58:1>

We *would* like <indig> Mang </indig> Luis and others like him to learn a better way of doing what they already know. The quality is not consistent and the color fades or runs.

Hypothetical meaning

(23)<ICE-PHI:W2B-012#133:3>

Many Filipinos will likely tell Orwell that the world *would* be better off if permanently rid of the likes of Echegaray.

Non-assertion/less definite form of will/hedging

Drawing on Svalberg (1998), and Bautista (2004), *would* may express non-assertion when talking about an uncertain future or an uncertain outcome for which the writer lacks complete certainty. This meaning of *would* appears to correspond to what Alexander (1988) calls the less definite form of *will* which is used “when we want to sound less definite” (p. 238), or to what other writers such as Vassileva (2001) observes as a hedging device to show attenuation as in the extracts below:

(24) <ICE-PHI:W2E-006#101:4>

With his decision to convert a 53-hectare land in Rizal into a golf course, Torres is being asked, didn't he anticipate the problems his actions *would* create on the water situation in the metropolis? </p>

(25) <ICE-PHI:W2E-006#103:4>

Torres ' latest reversal of a DAR ruling *would* pave the way for the building of a 36-hectare golf course that, farmers say, *would* naturally damage the watershed area nearby. </p>

The writer here writes about events in the future which are not pre-programmed. It appears that the use of *would* is a manifestation of a non-assertive claim, considering that the building of a golf course and the damage of the watershed may or may not happen in the future.

(26) <ICE-PHI:W2B-015#113:2>

They would ease a lot of the problems of government welfare and human rights agencies by suggesting to their flock how to treat each other and behave more humanely, especially during life-threatening situations.

In (26) the writer talks about a possibility that priests may help resolve some of the problems of the government, an outcome which is uncertain. The writer appears to have used *would* to make his/her claim less definite.

(27). <ICE-PHI:W2B-017#101:2>

This *would* turn out to be slightly above 59 percent.

Would is also used when the writer is making an approximation of facts as in the above example (27). Here *would* seems to show that the author is quite uncertain about the exact figure.

(28). <ICE-PHI:W2B-018#49:1>

The idea is to become the most user friendly foreign investment code in the Asia-Pacific, to come up with a code that *would* basically give foreign investors “national treatment, or providing them with equal rights as domestic investors. </p>

In (28), *would* is contrasted to *must*. The ‘must sentences’ prior to the sentence where *would* occurs tend to show the author’s certainty about the information he/she conveys. Whereas, in the sentence where *would* is found, it appears that *would* is meant to express a hedged claim about an uncertain result in the future.

Others

For a lack of a better term, ‘others’ is placed here for the senses of *would* that appear to be problematic and fail to be accounted for by the non-assertion/less definiteness/hedging sense of *would*, a result which Bautista (2004) also found in her study.

To illustrate:

(29) The synchronization *will* include all annual investments in the National Capital Region of all the cities and municipalities and the national government [ICE-PHI:W2E-008#21:2]. This *would* be part of the Regional Development Plan for the National Capital Region [ICE-PHI:W2E-008#22:2].

In the first sentence, the author wrote about an announcement made by a politician on the synchronization of annual investments using the modal *will*, which is associated with 100% certainty (Azar, 2001). The second sentence, which is still referring to the synchronization, was expressed with *would*. Why did the writer use *would* to express a proposition that was formerly associated with certainty in the same linguistic environment? This is a question in which we do not have an answer as of the moment.

(30) They were asked to rate each one as <mention> “ Very Important, ” </mention> <mention> “ Somewhat Important ” </mention> or <mention> “ Not Important. ” </mention> [ICE-PHI:W2B-019#25:1] The summary indicator *would* be the margin of importance: percentage of <mention> Very Important </mention> minus percentage of <mention> Not Important </mention> [ICE-PHI:W2B-019#26:1].

(31) The summary margin *was* the sum of the percentages for <mention> Very Important </mention> and <mention> Fairly Important </mention> , minus the sum of the percentages for <mention> Not Very Important </mention> and <mention> Not at All Important </mention> [ICE-PHI:W2B-019#55:1].

The writer in (30) and in (31) reports about findings of a study which was conducted in the past. It was puzzling why he used *would* in (30) but later used *was* in (31) to refer to the same statistical item. The non-assertion/less definiteness theory cannot account for the *would* in (30) because the context of the sentences tells that the writer talks about a past event. She/He has nothing to hedge or to be less definite about because the action referred to was in the past. It appears that the usage of *would* here is problematic.

Conclusion and Recommendations

I would like now to give a thumbnail summary of the salient findings of this study.

1. The most frequently occurring modal in the journalistic texts considered is *will*.

2. The greatest percentage that constitutes the semantic functions of *can*, *could*, *may*, and *might* is the possibility meaning, corroborating previous findings about these modals. *Can* and *may* are more extensively used than *could* and *might* to express possibility.

3. *Shall*, an infrequent modal in American and British English, is also found to be unpopular in the present data. However, the association of *shall* with the 3rd person subject diverges from the exonormative use of *shall* which associates it with the first person subject.

4. *Must* and *should* are predominantly attached to the obligation sense.

5. The predictive sense of *will* outnumbers its volitional sense.

6. Three findings about *would* are quite revealing: (1) It has the most number of functions; (2) There seems to be a preponderance of the 'future in the past' semantic function of *would* in the press reportage category and of non-assertion/less definiteness/hedging sense in press reportage and editorials texts; (3) There are problematic usages of *would* that cannot be accounted for by non-assertion. It is puzzling why a writer is very certain in the first mention of a topic using *will*, then uses *would* in the next mention within the same linguistic context.

7. The modals appear in 9-verb phrase structures. Modal +Infinitive structure, which accounts for almost 80% of the modal structures, is the most represented verb-phrase structure.

8. Why a modal or a semantic function of a modal is more frequently favored in one genre but less extensively used in other genres is difficult to tell. However, some of the differences in the frequencies of modals may be accounted for by the differences in the nature of genres being considered.

The findings of this corpus-based investigation of modal auxiliaries suggest the following tentative conclusions and recommendations. First, the patterns of use of modal auxiliaries in the texts considered mirror some characteristics of Philippine English in relation to other English varieties. Most of the modal auxiliaries conform to the norms of the dominant native English varieties, with the exception of *shall* and *would*. Such findings could serve as an 'eye-opener' to researchers and might propel them to further examine the matter.

Second, it also suggests that investigations of language use or structure across genres be proliferated, since different genres or text-types may be responsible for why a particular linguistic variable behaves differently in different contexts or linguistic situations.

Third, since corpus-based analysis of language seems to be an effective approach to linguistic description, more studies of this nature must be done. It does not only introduce efficient linguistic description by allowing automatic analysis of texts, it also greatly expands the empirical bases of analysis while, at the same time, saves the researcher from the drudgery usually associated with linguistic analysis.

Finally, the findings of this study reveal that *shall* has a divergent use from the currently prescribed usage of native English variety. Further investigations must be made to ascertain if this is a feature of Philippine English. *Would* has several complex semantic functions that may have caused some of the problems in its usage in the present data. It might prove beneficial if language curriculum 'designers', as well as language teachers, take a deeper look at how modals are given importance and taught in our schools.

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Appendix A

The asterisks indicate which author whose description for a modal function was adapted in the study. The examples in the table are copied from the sources listed above except for the 5th and 6th function of *would* which were extracted from the present data.

Table 1 Coding Categories for the Nine modals

AUXILIARY	USES	PRESENT/FUTURE	PAST
May	1. Permission** 2. Possibility** 3. Subordinate clauses of concession or purpose 4. Polite request (only with I or we)**	You may leave the room. We may never succeed. We may have our differences, but... May I borrow your pen?	
Might	(1) Possibility**	He might be at the Library	He said he might be at the library.
Should	(1) Advisability/Obligation** (2) Tentative inference* (3) Hypothetical clauses*	I should study tonight. The mountains should be visible from here. Should an electrical failure occur in the motor, the grounded plug will protect the uses...	I should have studied last night, but I didn't.
Must	(1) Obligation/compulsion /strong necessity** (2) logical deduction**	I must go to class today. Mary isn't in the class today. She must be sick .	Mary must have been sick today.
Will	(1) 100 % certainty/ Prediction** (2) Willingness/Decisions/Intentions***	He will be here at 6:00. The phone's ringing. I'll get it.	
Can	(1) Ability* (2) Possibility*	Can you remember where they live? Even expert drivers can make mistakes.	
Could	(1) Past ability** (2) Possibility** (3) Polite request**	He could be at home. Could you help me?	I could run fast when I was a child. He could have been at home.

Shall	Future prediction (with I or we as a subject)**	I shall arrive at nine.	
Would	1) Prediction Past Prediction/Future in the Past*		I was told that I would feel better after this medicine.
	Habitual Prediction/behavior*	The old lady would sit in front of the television continuously.	
	2) Volition/Preference**	I would rather go to the park than stay home.	I would rather have gone to the park.
	3) Polite form for want (with like) **	I would like an apple, please.	
	4) Hypothetical (mostly in conditional sentence with if)*	If there were an accident, we would have to report it.	
	5) Non-assertiveness/Less definite form of hedging (when talking about an uncertain future or when showing non-assertion)****	(Name)'s latest reversal of a DAR ruling would pave the way for the building of a 36-hectare golf course that farmers say, would naturally damage the....	
	6) Others. The usage is problematic. It does not fit in any of the categories above.	The synchronization <i>will</i> include all annual investments in the National Capital Region of all the cities and municipalities and the national government. This <i>would</i> be a part of the Regional Development of Metro Manila, which includes	

* Quirk et al (1985) ** Azar (2001) *** Swan (1988) **** Bautista, 2004/Verstraete (2001)

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