

## РОМАНСЬКІ, ГЕРМАНСЬКІ ТА ІНШІ МОВИ

**Burkovska A.V.**

*Student,*

*Supervisor: Sukhorolska S.M.*

*Associate Professor,*

*Ivan Franko National University of Lviv*

### THE CORE MEANINGS OF ENGLISH MODALS CAN, MAY, MUST AND HAVE TO IN A SHORT STORY» FOR ESMÉ – WITH LOVE AND SQUALOR «BY J. D SALINGER

*Modality* refers to linguistic devices that indicate the degree to which an observation is possible, probable, likely, certain, permitted, or prohibited. Modal verbs such as **must, can, should, may, might** and **will**, which can be combined with «not» to negate their meaning, express these notions.

Unlike other verbs, modal verbs show the speaker`s attitude towards an action. They are always used with the infinitive, together with which they form a compound modal predicate. Only 12 modal verbs exist in the English language. They are: can, may, must, should, ought, shall, will, would, need, dare, to be, to have (to have got).

Our research is concerned with the primary meaning of the modal verbs **can, may, must** and **have to**.

As the scale of English tenses is not limited to the present tenses only, the need to put modals according to the corresponding time occurs. That is the reason why scholars divide modals into Present (may, can, etc.) and Past (might, could, would etc.). However, Geoffrey N. Leech argues with that claiming that it might be a better idea to call Present modals non-past due to the fact that they can refer both to the future and to the present. It might as well be not exactly accurate to call Past modals this way as they «have more important functions than that of simply indicating past time» [2, p. 73]. That is why in this paper instead of Present and Past, modals are to be called Primary and Secondary.

The next paragraph is dedicated to the general meanings and functions of modals according to Geoffrey N. Leech's classification. To begin with, **can** usually expresses possibility, ability, and permission. Sometimes the difference between possibility and permission is so subtle that a speaker struggles to decide whether the verb belongs to one category or another. «For example, *No one can see us here could be paraphrased «It isn't possible for anyone to see us here» or «No one is able to see us here»* [2, p. 73]. **May**, which is considered one of the middle-frequency modals as the decrease in its use can be noticed in modern English, can be used to express possibility, permission, and in other quasi-subjunctive uses (to give blessings and curses, in concessive subordinate clauses beginning with whatever, whenever, however and in some dependent clauses of purpose beginning with in order that, so that or that). As well as **may**, **must** is also considered a middle-frequency modal due to the same reasons. **Must** usually expresses obligation, which in contrast to **have to** is considered a self-obligation, requirement, and logical necessity. It should be mentioned that the word **must** is less common in its meaning of obligation and is now used less than it used to. The meanings of **have to** are very similar to those of **must**. They are obligation (external authority), requirement and logical necessity, used in a rather colloquial way mostly in the USA.

One more way of modal verbs classification is to divide them into categories. According to Günter Radden and René Dirven, modality can be divided into **epistemic** and **root**. Epistemic modality relates to the world of knowledge and root one applies to things and social interactions. The latter can be divided into three subtypes: **deontic**, **intrinsic** and **disposition modality**. «Deontic modality is concerned with the speaker's directive attitude towards an action to be carried out, as in the obligation *You must go now*. Intrinsic modality is concerned with potentialities arising from intrinsic qualities of a thing or circumstances, as in *The meeting can be cancelled*, i.e. «it is possible for the meeting to be cancelled». Disposition modality is concerned with a thing's or person's intrinsic potential of being actualised; in particular abilities. Thus, when you have the ability to play the guitar you will potentially do so. Notions of modality are expressed by cognition verbs such as I think, modal adverbs such as possibly, and modal verbs such as must» [4, p. 233].

Moving on to the story itself, we are to analyze modal verbs such as **can**, **must**, **may** and **have to**. First, let us analyze all the instances of **can**. «*The instant the hymn ended, the choir coach began to give her lengthy opinion of people who can't keep their feet still and their lips sealed tight during the minister's sermon*» [5, p. 7]. In this context, the primary modal **can't** is used in its ability function. It can be categorized into root modality and disposition subgroup. The following example: «*I can see that, I can see you have*» [5, p. 11]. The previous pattern of usage can also be applied to this instance. In the sentence «*In other words, you can't discuss troop movements*» [5, p. 16] the verb **can** is used in its different meaning – permission. The sentence can be paraphrased as follows «you are not allowed to discuss troop movements», which proves it. So, in this example **can** is categorized as belonging to the root deontic modality. «*It doesn't have to be exclusively for me. It can –*» [5, p. 17] introduces another usage of the **can**. This time it has features of epistemic modality and expresses possibility. «*Do you think you can bring yourself to take your stinking feet off my bed?*» [5, p. 23] in this very instance it is possible to substitute «**can**» for «are able to» which means that it belongs to the category of ability and disposition root modality. In the sentence «*Can't you ever be sincere?*» [5, p. 24] the word **can** expresses ability and possibility which are very close here. The interpretation of the question for «aren't you able to be sincere?» or «isn't it possible for you to be sincere?» does not significantly change the meaning. However, according to Geoffrey N. Leech in such cases ability is preferable with animate objects and possibility with inanimate ones. So, here the verb **can** might be interpreted in the ability sense. It has features of disposition root modality. «*I did not observe whether you were wearing one during our brief association, but this one is extremely water-proof and shockproof as well as having many other virtues among which one can tell at what velocity one is walking if one wishes. I am quite certain that you will use it to greater advantage in these difficult days than I ever can and that you will accept it as a lucky talisman*» [5, p. 26] – in these two sentences «**can**» is regarded as in the last aforementioned instance and is also to be classified accordingly – meaning of ability and disposition root modality.

Another modal verb to proceed with is **may**. In the sentence «*I have a title and you may just be impressed by titles*» [5, p. 12] this primary modal verb expresses possibility. Here it can be classified as an example of

epistemic modality. The modal **may** in «*May I inquire how you were employed before entering the Army?*» [5, p. 14] signals asking for permission. On such occasions **may**, rather than **can**, sounds more formal and polite. It belongs to the deontic root modality. Sentences «*I may drive over to Ehstadt later*» [5, p. 24] and «*I may practice a few steps in the room*» are examples of **may** in its possibility function. It indicates the uncertainty of the action and is classified as an epistemic modality. The final instance of the usage of **may** is in «*I am taking the liberty of enclosing my wristwatch which you may keep in your possession for the duration of the conflict*» [5, p. 26] which is regarded as an act of granting permission and therefore has the meaning of permission and belongs to deontic root modality.

It should be mentioned that in J. D. Salinger's «*For Esmé – with Love and Squalor*» there are only two instances of actualization of **must** as a primary modal. The first one is in the sentence: «*Miss Megley said you must come and finish your tea!*» [5, p. 12]. Here the meaning of **must** is impersonal and expresses external authority. It can be regarded as a requirement and as belonging to the intrinsic root modality. In the last example «*He was rather like a Christmas tree whose lights, wired in series, must all go out if even one bulb is defective*» [5, p. 12] **must** is used solely for the sake of emphasis.

When analyzing **have to** in «*It doesn't have to be terribly prolific!*» [5, p. 15] and «*It doesn't have to be exclusively for me*» [5, p. 17] it should be mentioned that in these instances the modal verb expresses requirement and, combined with not, it denotes negative requirement which can be paraphrased as «it is not essential to...». That is why it can be classified as an intrinsic root modality as it is an example of intrinsic necessity. Another instance when this type of modality is used is in «*Why do we have to get up at five?*» [5, p. 22]. It expresses speaker-external necessity. In this case, **have to** has the meaning of obligation.

All in all, in his short story Salinger uses modal verbs extensively. Modal verbs **can**, **must**, **may**, and **have to** are used in their various meanings and types of modality. **Can** tends to be the most frequently used verb in the story whereas **must** and **have to** are the least used among the analyzed modals.

### References:

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