

LANGUAGE IN INDIA

Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow

Volume 9 : 7 July 2009

ISSN 1930-2940

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A Socio-Semantic Study of 'Can' and 'Could' as Modal Auxiliaries in English

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Abstract

Modals cover a large number of semantic categories like request, offer, suggestion, compulsion, permission, threat, promise, prediction etc. These semantic categories cover a wide range of socio-cultural situations and perform a number of sociological functions ranging from a simple assertion of facts to the expression of commands, threats etc. Besides performing various communicative functions like requests, denials, offers, threats, promise, a wide range of semantic concepts covered by modals perform so many illocutionary goals.

Modals perform so many illocutionary acts and social goals by assuming to follow pragmatic principles and play an important role in an interpersonal rhetoric. The main aim of a teaching programme is to develop communicative competence in the learners by equipping them with the knowledge of using a language appropriately in various socio-cultural situations.

In most of the studies, formal and semantic criteria have been used to the study of modals. However, modals are highly ambiguous and cannot be interpreted in isolation without reference to socio-pragmatic considerations.

Hence, in the present paper, socio-semantic approach which takes into consideration non-linguistic details relating to socio-cultural situations and conventions, the goals, the topic, the shared interest and experience of the interlocutors has been used to study ‘can’ and ‘could’ as modal auxiliaries in English.

The utterances taken from the one act-plays of English have been analyzed on a six point scale (i) Meaning (ii) Illocutionary Act (iii) Illocutionary Function (iv) Attitude of the speaker (v) Illocutionary Goal (vi) Politeness Principles. The study of ‘Can’ and ‘could’ as modal auxiliaries reveals that modals are not only multi-propositional but are also multi-functional.

Key Words: Modals, Socio-Semantic, Illocutionary Act, Interpersonal Rhetoric, Politeness Principles

Framework: Socio-Semantic

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It is widely known that language cannot exist in a vacuum. It is vitally related to the society from which it springs. Any description of language outside its socio - cultural context is inadequate. The earlier approaches to the study of language, including Structuralism and Transformational Generative Linguistics, were primarily formalistic in nature. Both these approaches completely kept out of their study the social aspect of language.

The socio-semantic approach is an approach to discourse which employs sociological criteria for analyzing various linguistic categories like modals etc. keeping in view various social situations in which they are used and in which they are socially significant.

The socio-semantic approach (Halliday 1970) based on Hallidayan linguistic model takes into consideration non-linguistic details relating to socio-cultural situations and conventions, the goals, the topic, the shared interest and experience.

This approach encompasses into its study the whole sentence and has been concerned with the socio-cultural contexts which influence the content of these sentences considered for study. Socio-semantic approach, thus, is more situation specific than the semantico-grammatical approach which takes into account grammatical aspects and studies how various semantic options are represented by means of certain grammatical categories. In a socio-semantic approach, the criterion is to identify various situations which are socially significant and which influence our communication system.

Since human communication system involves transmission of message from the source to the receiver and message involves meaning that the speaker wants to convey to the receiver, socio-semantic approach holds that meaning cannot be expressed in a vacuum. Meaning is always influenced by various socio-cultural situations that govern our lives. Man is a social being and is a part and parcel of society to which he belongs; his utterances are often shaped by social factors and not the grammatical or linguistic ones.

Since Modals present various semantic options like request, threat, compulsion, duty and desirability, possibility etc., the socio-semantic approach studies these semantic options in relation to the various contextual situations.

The aim of the present paper is to explore how ‘can’ and ‘could’ which imply offer, ability, request for permission and possibility is influenced by interplay of socio-cultural factors in English. Since language functions in a socio-cultural setting, it seems to me that the semantic notion of modality should be dependent on socio-cultural factors rather than on syntactic or formal ones. A socio-semantic framework may provide additional support to formal i.e. morphological and syntactic criteria.

Need for the Present Approach

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Modals are used in various socio-cultural situations. In fact, these socio-cultural situations provide the background that determines the use of modals in various languages. In languages, words perform multiple functions and different functions of words are governed by different contexts in which they are uttered.

The speech act approach developed by Austin particularly "focuses upon knowledge of underlying conditions for production and interpretation of acts through words" (Shiffrin 1994:6). Austin believes that a person utters a sentence not only to convey something but also to perform some act. When a person utters a sentence like - 'I promise to come back within a week', he is not making a simple statement but is performing the act of promising. According to Austin, a complete account of the meaning of a sentence cannot be restricted to semantic analyses as these are usually understood and that they must be extended to include information about the kind of speech act involved in uttering the sentence - that is, its illocutionary force" (Boyd and Thorne 1969:58).

Several linguists including Householder (1971), Boyd and Thorne (1969) and Lyons (1977) have acknowledged the fact that modals possess illocutionary force and to confine the study of modals only to semantic and formal analysis without taking into consideration their illocutionary potential will be a partial study. For example, 'He will come on Monday' can be analyzed as 'I predict he comes on Monday' and 'He may come on Monday', can be analyzed as 'I guess he comes on Monday'. In the above examples, modals 'will' and 'may' are related to the illocutionary force of the speaker's mental acts of predicting and guessing respectively.

Halliday (1970) regards modality an important element of the semantics of personal participation. He believes that it is derived from the 'interpersonal' function of language.

Modality is a form of participation by the speaker in the speech event (Halliday 1970). It includes speakers "comments on assessment of what they are saying -- that is to express their personal view of the situation" (Verma 1978:196).

Any discussion of modality will remain superficial without a consideration of the notions of speech act and illocutionary force which are governed by various speech situations. If we confine the study of modals to the formal and semantic analysis of the data available to us and ignore the context of the utterance, it will not help us in understanding the intended meaning of the speaker in making his utterance. The addressee will be able to decode the semantics of the modals fully well only if he is familiar with the context of the utterance. The context of the utterance will be of great aid to him in comprehending the communicative meaning intended by the speaker in producing his speech act.

Klinge (1993:318) rightly argues, "The modals in isolation have no paraphrasable meaning and rely on cotext and context for a meaning. Cotext and context thus become determining factors in the choice of a paraphrase, and it follows that cotext and context require an explicit place in the theoretical framework."

Linguists like Palmer and Lyons are of the view that sentences containing modals like 'may' and 'must', if interpreted in isolation, lead to ambiguity as these modals can be interpreted in more than one way. However, they can be saved from ambiguity by interpreting the situation in which they are uttered by the speakers.

Hypothesis, Data Collection and Methodology

Our main aim in the present paper is to investigate the uses of 'can' and 'could' as modal auxiliaries in various socio-cultural situations. In this connection, we have made the following assumptions:

a. Modals represent various semantic categories. However, these semantic categories are influenced by the interplay of various socio-cultural factors. Grammatical and semantic analyses are inadequate to interpret the actual intention of the speakers.

b. Modals are highly ambiguous. They cannot be interpreted in isolation and without reference to the socio-pragmatic considerations. The illocutionary force of the utterance cannot be brought out and understood without the aid of socio-pragmatic factors. To remove ambiguity, help has to be taken from the context and the socio-cultural situations.

c. To investigate our hypothesis, we have collected data from the one-act plays written over the last fifty years in English. The plays selected to collect the data and support our point of view have been spread over a period of the last fifty years from 1950 to 2000. We decided to collect the data from various one-act plays as this saved us from the exercise of inventing and deliberately constructing the data which are generally separated from the context.

d. We have proposed to analyze the data on a seven - point scale using the following socio-semantic parameters: i. Meaning. ii. Context of an utterance iii. Illocutionary Act. iv. Illocutionary function. v. Attitude of the speaker vi. Illocutionary Goal. vii. Politeness principle.

A sociological criterion takes into consideration a speech situation in which various semantic notions are expressed by means of formal categories. An utterance generally includes two participants -- an addresser and an addressee. The knowledge of their relationship, social distance between them, degree of formality or informality and any other knowledge -- like power, status, kinship, family relationship, age, sex, occupation, wealth, education etc -- that contributes to the understanding of an utterance may also be taken into consideration.

Apart from information about the participants, the context of an utterance is also important to comprehend an utterance. The context of an utterance means any background knowledge shared by the speaker and the listener. This background

knowledge includes the information about the previous utterances together with the beliefs and attitudes of the participants.

The context of an utterance includes the various assumptions about pragmatic principles like ‘co-operative principle’ (Grice 1975) and ‘politeness principle’ (Leech 1983) that a speaker observes in order to make his utterance effective and useful.

An utterance is always a goal - directed activity. An addresser conveys his intended meaning to the addressee while an addressee, on the other hand, tries to guess the goal of the speaker with the help of the contextual knowledge that includes background information about the context together with the background assumptions about the pragmatic principles (PP and CP) that a speaker observes in order to achieve his intended goal. Lastly, a speech situation also includes the illocutionary act that an utterance aims to perform.

An illocutionary act is actually a verbal act that takes place in a particular situation. These verbal acts perform various social functions like promise, order, request, congratulations, suggestions, thanks, predictions and encouragement.

Modals are explicitly used by the speakers of English and come under the category of secondary auxiliary verbs. The purpose of the present paper is to study the functions of ‘can’ and ‘could’ as modal auxiliaries in relation to the socio-semantic framework proposed by us.

1. Can I help you in any way?

(The Bishop’s Candlesticks)

Context of the Utterance:

Convict: If you call out. You are a dead man!

Bishop: But, my friend, as you see, I am reading. Why should I call out? Can I help you in any way?

In the above utterance, ‘can’ is used to express the offer of help for the welfare or benefit of the addressee. The context of the utterance suggests that the speaker is uncertain about the wants of the hearer. Hence, he asks the hearer to provide him the information that is necessary for him to carry forward his offer to help the latter.

Utterance (1) deals with a situation in which a convict enters into Bishop’s house in the darkness of the night and threatens to kill him if he calls out the people. The Bishop who is a very kind - hearted person, offers to help him in any way he likes. He politely asks the convict if he can help him in any way.

An offer requires both a question and a request. The speaker thinks that the addressee needs his help. The speaker needs some information from the hearer and this information can be obtained through a question. The Bishop is willing to help the convict, in the

context in which (1) is used. So he offers his help in a simple and straightforward manner and makes his offer polite by using an interrogative sentence. In this way, Bishop (the addresser) uses a politeness strategy to win the confidence of the hearer (the convict) who otherwise is apprehensive of the possibility of calling police by the addresser.

Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:

Meaning: Offer.

Illocutionary Act: Commissive.

I ask you to tell me if I can help you in any way.

Illocutionary Function: Convivial

Attitude of the Speaker: The speaker is willing to perform the action described in the propositional content.

The speaker is willing to help the hearer in the way he likes.

Illocutionary Goal: The speaker consults the wishes of the hearer about the offer described in the propositional content.

Politeness Principle: Generosity maxim.

2. *Some people can't bear pain.*

(A Distant Relative)

The above utterance is ambiguous. It conveys more than one meaning. The two possible meanings are : (i) Impossibility (ii) inability (endurance). The two possible paraphrases of the above utterance are:

- i It is not possible for some people to bear pain.
- ii Some people are not able to bear pain .

Taken out of the context (2) performs more than one illocutionary function – the act of assertion of the inability or the act of impossibility of doing something. Therefore, it becomes necessary for us to interpret it in terms of the background knowledge shared by the participants in the above discourse.

Context of the utterance:

Mr. Spriggs : George! Where are you going?

Mr. Spriggs : Damntist.

Mr. Price : Poor George! Some people can't bear pain.

In this speech situation, Mr. Spriggs is suffering from a toothache and replies to the query of Mrs. Spriggs that he is going to see a dentist. It becomes clear from his reply that he is going to see a dentist as he is not able to bear pain. Hence, the information, given by Mr. Spriggs that he is going to see a dentist, becomes very important for us in understanding the real meaning of the above utterance. When Mr. Price says that some people can't bear pain, he has this information in his mind. Hence, this shared knowledge between the interlocutors helps us in comprehending the real intent of the speaker. 'May', thus, is used in this utterance as a modal of ability and not permission.

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Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:

Meaning: Ability (endurance).

Illocutionary Act: Assertive.

I assert that some people are not able to bear pain.

Illocutionary Function: Collaborative.

Attitude of the Speaker: Speaker simply informs the hearer about the information (hearer's inability) described in the propositional content.

Illocutionary Goal: Speaker wants the hearer to be aware of his inability described in the propositional content.

Mr. Price wants Mr. Spriggs to be aware of his inability to bear pain.

Politeness Principle: Sympathy maxim

3. No power on earth can save him from it.

(The Hour of Truth)

Taken out of the context, the above utterance conveys more than one meaning: (i) permission (ii) ability. It functions as either directive when it implies permission or assertive when it implies ability to do the event described in the propositional content.

The two possible paraphrases of the above utterance are:

- i. No power on earth is able to save him from it.
- ii. No power on earth is permitted to save him from it.

In order to know the real intention of this utterance, it is necessary for us to take help from the contextual evidences and the background knowledge shared by the interlocutors.

Context of the Utterance:

John (indignantly) : He wanted you to tell lie to save his skin, eh? Wanted you to perjure yourself?

Baldwin: That wouldn't be necessary, John. He just wanted me to have an attack of poor memory. If I tell all I know John Gresham will go to jail – no power on earth can save him from it.

The situation in which (3) is used deals with the corrupting influence of money on people in a rootless society. Robert Baldwin is happy that his wife, son and daughter appreciate him for his devotion to truth. His son John tells his father that his partner Gresham, who is charged with corruption, wanted him to tell a lie to save his skin. Baldwin says that if he tells whatever he knows about John Gresham, no power on earth has the ability to save him from going to jail. Thus, it becomes clear from the context that in utterance (3) the speaker asserts the inability of the addressees to perform the action described in the propositional content. The speaker wants the hearer to be aware of the fact that if he tells whatever he knows about the case no power on earth will be able to save his partner from going to Jail.

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Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:

Meaning: Ability.

Illocutionary Act: Assertive

I assert that no power on earth has the ability to save him from going to jail if I tell all I know.

Illocutionary Function: Collaborative.

Attitude of the Speaker: Speaker simply informs the hearer about the information given in the propositional content.

Illocutionary Goal: The speaker wants the hearer to be aware of the facts described in the propositional content.

The speaker wants the hearer to know if he tells all he knows, no power on earth has the ability to save John Gresham from going to Jail.

Politeness Principle: Apathetic towards politeness.

4. We can't offer you a substitute.

(The New Hangman)

Removed from the context, the above utterance conveys more than one meaning. It either means permission or impossibility. 'Can' is performing more than one illocutionary act -- the act of assertion of the impossibility or it is functioning as a directive when it refers to permission. The two possible paraphrases of the above utterance are:

- i. It is not possible for us to offer you a substitute.
- ii. We are not permitted to offer you a substitute.

Context of the Utterance:

Governor: (On Phone) Yes, Governor, Wandswood Prison, speaking. A terrible thing has happened here. We have an execution at eight O'clock two minutes from now-- and the Hangman has struck..... No, no! Won't do his job. I can only report how the case stands. No they won't; none of them you can't force them ...Yes, I admit the responsibility. But you can't hang without a Hangman --- --. No its his business ---- you sent him, he's your agent, he's failed you, we can't offer you a substitute ----

We have to take help from the context and the shared knowledge between the interlocutors to find out the intended meaning of utterance (4). From the context, we come to know that the new Hangman revolts against the inhumanity of killing a prisoner. The Governor of the prison, who is in charge of this hanging, informs the Commissioner about the refusal of the Hangman to carry out the execution of a criminal. The Governor expresses the impossibility to find a substitute or to train a Hangman within twenty four hours. Governor's previous utterance 'almost impossible' makes our claim stronger that 'can't' in this utterance implies 'impossibility.'

Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:

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Meaning: Impossibility.

Illocutionary Act: Assertive.

I assert that it is impossible for us to offer you a substitute.

Illocutionary Function: Collaborative.

Attitude of the Speaker: Speaker simply informs the hearer about the information (impossibility for him to offer a substitute hangman) given in the propositional content.

Illocutionary Goal: Speaker wants the hearer to be aware of the impossibility described in the propositional content.

Governor wants the commissioner to be aware of the impossibility to find out a substitute Hangman within twenty- four hours.

Politeness Principle: Apathetic towards politeness.

5. *She can say anything she wants to say; without moving a muscle of her face!.*

(Under Fire)

Singled out from the context, the above utterance is ambiguous. It either implies possibility (theoretical) or ability. The two possible paraphrases are:

i. It is possible for her to say anything she wants to say without moving a muscle of her face.

ii. She is able to say anything she wants to say without moving a muscle of her face.

Context of the Utterance:

Lady Muriel: If they are only going to the Park, isn't it rather strange that they should choose to go alone? The Prince so insists on the Queen being properly attended. It's my belief they've been quarreling about something; and she wants to have it out with him.

Lady Grace: But she can't do that in the Park, with people staring at them.

Lady Muriel: Oh, can't she? She can say anything she wants to say; without moving a muscle of her face! She can whip you with a word, while she is smiling to someone else across the room. It's happened to me; so I know.

In order to unravel the real intent of the addresser, it becomes necessary to relate it to the context in which it is uttered by the speaker. The situation in which (5) is uttered deals with the courage shown by the Queen in the moments of crises. An attempt on the life of the Queen was made by an offender. In order to catch the offender red-handed, the King and the Queen decide to go alone.

Lady Muriel and Lady Grace, who are the attendants of the Queen, talk to each other. Lady Muriel thinks that perhaps the King and the Queen have a quarrel and that is why they wanted to go alone to sort it out. But Lady Grace thinks that they can't do it in the Park where they are the centre of attraction of the people. Lady Muriel is, however, sure

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about her utterance. She thinks that the Queen has the ability to say anything without moving a muscle of her face. She also has the ability to whip a person with a word while smiling to someone else across the room. Thus, from the conversation of the two ladies, it becomes evident that Lady Muriel talks about the ability of the Queen. If we make a paraphrase of the whole utterance, it becomes clear that ‘can’ in utterance (5) is used for referring to ‘ability’ and not ‘possibility’.

Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:

Meaning: Ability.

Illocutionary Act: Assertive.

I assert that the Queen has the ability to say anything without moving the lips of her face.

Illocutionary Function: Collaborative.

Attitude of the Speaker: Speaker simply informs the hearer about the information (the ability of the Queen) given in the propositional content.

Illocutionary Goal: Speaker wants the hearer to be aware of the facts described in the propositional content.

Politeness Principle: Apathetic towards politeness.

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6. Could I have a word with him, miss?

(Waterloo)

Context of the Utterance:

Sergeant (saluting): Beg your pardon, miss, but does Corporal Gregory Brewster live here?

Norah (timidly): Yes, sir.

Sergeant: Could I have a word with him, miss?

Norah: He’s not down yet.

Taken out of the context, (6) is a simple question. Hence, it is obligatory for us to relate it to the context in which it is spoken by the addresser. In the situation in which (6) is used, a Sergeant from the Scots Guards arrives to the house of old Gregory Brewster, a Corporal who had won a medal for his valour in the battle of Waterloo. The Sergeant on reaching the house of Corporal Gregory requests the girl who was present there to allow him to have a word with the Corporal.

In utterance (6) the addresser uses an indirect illocution and in this way lessens the force of an impositive. Through the tactful request for permission, the addresser tries to establish intimacy with the addressee so that he will be able to achieve his intended goal of meeting the Corporal. Instead of giving an instruction through an imperative the speaker uses an interrogative to increase the degree of politeness and to lessen the force of an instruction. Hence we conclude that utterance (6) is a tactful request for permission and not merely a ‘yes – no’ question.

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Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:

Meaning: Permission.

Illocutionary Act: Directive.

I request you to permit me to have a word with him, miss.

Illocutionary Function: Competitive.

Attitude of the Speaker: Wish that the hearer allows him to perform the action described in the propositional content.

The Sergeant wishes that he should be permitted to have a word with the Corporal.

Illocutionary Goal: The speaker intends the hearer to grant him the permission to perform the action described in the propositional content.

Politeness Principle: Tact maxim.

7. How could you, how could you do such things?

(Day of Atonement)

In isolation the above utterance is ambiguous. It either implies permission or ability. It is multi functional. It is either used as a directive when it implies permission or used as an assertive when it implies ability. The two possible paraphrases of the above utterance are:

- i. How were you permitted to do such things?
- ii. How were you able to do such things?

Context of the Utterance:

Marthe: I don't know- I can't think. I only know that whatever he's done in the past, he has saved Else now. (Turning to Kraus) How could you, how could you do such things?

Marthe: I still can't believe it – (to Kraus) you, who are so kind and generous. How could you stand by and see such things done?

Otto: He didn't just stand by. He did them.

Kraus: I had my orders. I had to carry them out. If I hadn't, I should have suffered the same fate.

In order to overcome the ambiguity of utterance (7), we take help from the context in which it is uttered. The situation in which (7) is uttered concerns the fate of Dr. Kraus who under Hitler's Nazi Germany had been a party to the killings of Jews in concentration camps. But later on, when he comes in contact with Carl Baeche, a Jewish priest, and when he listens to his lectures, he is impressed to learn that the Jews are decent human beings. Later on, Carl Baeche saves his life from the attack of the prisoners of the camp.

Now Dr. Kraus decides to atone for his sins by serving the Jews for the rest of his life. All these years, he has been serving the Jews selflessly. When Marthe was told about his past, she couldn't believe it as Dr. Kraus saved the life of her daughter and had been kind

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and generous to the family all these years. Marthe, therefore, asks Dr. Kraus how he was able to do such a heinous act as the mass killings of innocent Jews in the concentration camps. It becomes clear from the context and the shared knowledge between the interlocutors that 'could' is used in utterance (7) for referring to the past ability. Here ability implies capacity to tolerate or courage to stand such things as the mass killings of innocent people.

Sociological and Pragmatic Parameters:

Meaning: Ability (Past)

Speech Act: Assertive.

I ask you how you were able to do such things as the mass killings of Jews.

Illocutionary Function: Collaborative.

Attitude of the Speaker: Speaker enquires from the hearer about his ability to tolerate the killings of innocent Jews in the past.

Illocutionary Goal: Speaker wants to know from the hearer about his ability (courage to tolerate) to behave in a particular manner in the past.

Politeness Principle: Sympathy maxim.

Findings and Conclusion:

Thus, from the analysis of the above samples, it becomes clear that modals are potentially ambiguous and cannot be understood fully in isolation without reference to the context in which they are used. The socio-semantic parameters used by us helped in understanding the real intent of the speaker.

The paper shows that modals are not only multi-propositional but are also multi-functional. The study shows that 'can' when semantically refers to offer, ability and possibility performs assertive and commissive speech acts.

When 'can' semantically refers to 'offer' as we see in example No.1, it performs commissive act as the speaker expresses his willingness and commitment to help the addressee. The speaker expresses his commitment to fulfill the offer described in the propositional content. When 'can' is used for expressing 'present ability' and 'possibility' as in examples No. 3 and 4 and 'could' for 'past ability' as in example No. 7, they perform assertive act as the speaker simply informs the addressee about his or someone's ability/inability to do the action described in the propositional content or possibility/impossibility of some event or incident or programme described in the propositional content.

Moreover, when 'could' semantically refers to request for 'permission' as in example No. 6, it performs directive act as the speaker wishes that the hearer allows him to perform the action described in the propositional content. In interpersonal rhetoric, a speech act performs various illocutionary functions. When 'can' is used for expressing 'present ability' and 'possibility' and 'could' is used for expressing 'past ability', they perform collaborative function as the illocutionary goal remains neutral towards the social goal.

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When ‘can’ is used for expressing ‘offer’, it performs convivial function as the illocutionary goal of the speaker corresponds with the social goal. When ‘could’ is used for ‘request for permission’, it performs convivial function as the illocutionary goal corresponds with the social goal.

In interpersonal rhetoric, a speech act is a goal-directed activity and therefore to facilitate the communicative process to achieve their goals, addressers use politeness strategies to hedge direct impositives, orders or directions.

Analysis of the above examples shows that ‘can’ and ‘could’ are used to express generosity, sympathy and tact maxims.

When ‘can’ is used to express ‘offer of help’, the speaker uses generosity maxim as he expresses his intention to help somebody as in example No. (1) “Can I help you in any way?”. When ‘could’ is used for making request for permission, as in example No. 6, “Could I have word with him, miss?”, the speaker uses tact maxim as he tactfully hedges an impositive. When ‘can’ and ‘could’ are used for expressing ‘inability’ for the people who are not able to bear pain and the killings of innocent Jews as in example No. 2 and 7, the speaker uses sympathy maxim.

However, when ‘can’ is used for expressing mere ‘ability’ and ‘possibility’ as in example No. 3 and 4, the speaker merely asserts about the ‘ability’ and ‘possibility’ described in the propositional content and remains neutral towards politeness. Thus, the study of ‘can’ and ‘could’ reveals that modals perform various illocutionary acts and social goals by assuming to follow pragmatic principles like politeness strategies and, in this way, play an important role in interpersonal rhetoric.

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9 : 7 July 2009

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