CHAPTER 8
PEDAGOGICAL USES

No in-depth study of the pedagogical applications of this work is attempted in this chapter. Such an ambitious scheme is out of the scope of the present work. Also there are stipulations on the length of the thesis. Hence this brief concluding chapter just indicates some of the pedagogical uses of this work leaving other things for further research.

8.1 A sample error analysis

The sample analysed here has been extracted from about 500 response sheets collected from first year degree students of three different colleges affiliated to the University of Madras; the students took a diagnostic test specifically designed for this purpose. Errors other than those concerning the models have already been corrected in some of the sentences in the sample. This was done with a view to focusing the attention on the grammar and meanings of the models in English.

(i) (1)(e) *The train can started now.

(2)(a) *They shall coming next week.

(3)(a) *She will went home.

(4)(a) *He must gone to the station.

(5)(a) *I may not to join the army.
The errors in (1)(a)-(5)(a) are due to the ignorance of the rule that a modal can be followed immediately by a bare infinitive alone: i.e., the following verb cannot appear in any form other than the bare infinitive. The above sentences can be corrected as follows:

(1)(b) The train can start now.
(2)(b) They shall come next week.
(3)(b) She will go home.
(4)(b) He must go to the station.
(5)(b) I may not join the army.

(ii) OUGHT TO is the only modal that requires to which is often dropped by students, perhaps, on the wrong analogy of the other modals. The (b)-sentences of (5) & (7) are the corrected versions of the corresponding erroneous (a)-sentences.

(6)(a) *He ought work hard.
(b) He ought to work hard.

(7)(a) *Ought you attend the class?
(b) Ought you to attend the class?

(iii) (8)(a) *I am must not join the army.

The errors in (8)(a) are due to the ignorance of the following rules: a modal is always the first member of the verbal group; the auxiliary BE appears only when the sentence is marked for the progressive aspect. The errors can be corrected in two stages as follows:
(a)(b) I must am not join the army.

('I is brought to its correct position)

(a)(c) I must not join the army.

('am is deleted as there is no progressive aspect)

(iv) (5)(a) *We will don't listen to you.

The cause of the error in (9)(a) is the overgeneralization of the use of the dummy auxiliary DO. As a rule DO never appears in a sentence if there is already any of the optional auxiliaries M, HAVE, or BE; further, it appears only in negative statements and positive or negative questions. The corrected form of (9)(a) would be:

(b)(b) We won't listen to you.

(v) (10)(a) *I wrote the answers quickly and could complete the exam in three hours.

Perhaps, mother tongue interference is the sole cause for the error in (10)(a). MUTIYUM and IYALUM in their past affirmative finite forms always imply past actuality, whereas that of CAN implies tentativeness/unreality and not past actuality. Whenever there is an implication of past actuality, was able to and not could is used in English. The sentence can be corrected as follows:

(10)(b) I wrote the answers quickly and was able to complete the exam in three hours.
(vi) (11) *He can be able to come tomorrow only.

Ignorance of rule restriction is the cause of the error here. Adverbs like perhaps, possibly, and probably can occur with CAN or BE ABLE TO. Also the constructions will be able to, shall be able to, or even may be able to are acceptable. But the cooccurrence of CAN and BE ABLE TO is considered deviant. Perhaps, the predominant 'ability' sense of CAN contributes to the oddity of can be able to.

The possibility of mother tongue interference, although remote, is not ruled out. In Tamil, MUTIYUM and -la:am cooccur occasionally resulting in the form mutiyla:am which can literally be translated as 'can be able to'. While mutiyla:am is acceptable, can be able to is not. Hence (11) should be corrected as He will be able to come tomorrow only or simply He can come tomorrow only.

(vii) (12) *Politicians must be honest, but they won't.

Here again the error seems to be solely due to mother tongue interference. While a MUST-sentence does not allow for the non-event, a SHOULD/OUGHT TO-sentence does. In Tamil, VE:NTUM which is the only counterpart of both MUST and SHOULD/ought TO allows for the non-event. Mother tongue interference blurs the distinction between MUST and SHOULD/OUGHT TO, and therefore MUST occurs where SHOULD/OUGHT TO is appropriate. Now (12) can be corrected as Politicians should/ought to be honest, but they won't.
3.2 Problem areas

The English model system in general is a puzzle to Tamil learners. The following have been observed to be specific problem areas.

8.2.1 Distribution of \( M \) in the AUX

This is quite a problem to the learners. If there is a model in a sentence, it has always precedence over the other members HAVE and BE of the AUX. It occupies the left-most position in the AUX, and it has no non-finite forms.

8.2.2 Form of the following verb

The verb that follows immediately the modal appears always in its bare infinitive form.

8.2.3 Problem of the dummy DO

This again causes considerable difficulty to the learners. Wherever a modal occurs, DO can also occur precisely in the same way. But DO appears in a sentence in the slot of \( M \) only if that sentence has none of the three auxiliaries \( M \), HAVE, or BE and only if it is a (positive or negative) question or a negative statement. Otherwise DO never appears.

8.2.4 The peculiarity of OUGHT TO

OUGHT TO is the only modal in English that requires a following to which is never dropped.
8.2.5 Syntactic functions of modals

Also the syntactic functions of the English modals, viz., inversion, negation, code, and emphatic affirmation cause difficulties to the learners. Inversion of the English auxiliary is a totally strange phenomenon to Tamil leaners as there is no parallel in Tamil. Similarly when to and when not to contract not causes learning problems. Code and emphatic affirmation too, although less important, cause problems.

8.2.6 Modal meanings in general

In general the learners are either ignorant of the various modal meanings or they are not sure of the few modal uses they might be familiar with. This results often in inappropriate uses of modals. They don’t, for example, distinguish between the ‘ability’ and the ‘permission’ uses of CAN. Usually they reserve CAN for the ‘ability’ use only.

8.2.7 MUST vs SHOULD/OUGHT TO

The learners employ MUST and SHOULD/OUGHT TO indiscriminately as they do not perceive the distinction between them. While MUST does not allow for the non-event, SHOULD/OUGHT TO does.

8.2.8 WILL and SHALL as modals

In traditional school grammar WILL and SHALL are simply treated as future tense markers to the detriment of their true modal nature. Hence it is very difficult for the students to
unlearn their strong early impressions of WILL and SHALL. Mother tongue interference perpetuates this problem as -P-, the Tamil counterpart of WILL and SHALL, is also treated simply as the future tense marker.

8.2.9 Tentative/unreal forms

This is the area where both the learners and the teachers face the greatest difficulty. Tamil has no tentative/unreal forms of modals, whereas English is rich in them. Simple past forms of MUTIYUM and IYALUM denote past actuality, while the past tense forms of WILL, SHALL, CAN, and MAY denote simply less assurance or unreality. There is no way of expressing clearly tentativeness/unreality in Tamil grammar. Even periphrastic constructions look odd. This being the L₁ situation, an area characteristic of L₂ causes no doubt the greatest difficulty.

In their attempt to understand an L₂ learning item unconsciously in terms of what they think to be the L₁ equivalent, the learners are most often: they employ would, should, could, or might (as they would use mutintatu or iyanratu in the L₁ situation), where there is clear implication of actuality.

8.3 Remedial measures

Learners’ errors may be classified into two major kinds - grammatical deviations and semantic deviations. Under either kind, errors may further be divided into sub-kinds on the basis of each of the rules or restrictions violated.
Representative errors may be picked out from each sub-kind for remedial teaching.

Excepting performance errors, most other errors arise due to lack of knowledge of the 'code' or the underlying 'rules'. Any remedial measure should drive home the 'rules' of the given teaching item; with this in mind oral drills, pattern practice, substitution exercises, etc., may be devised and administered to the students to help them learn the problem areas easily. All the remedial exercises must necessarily be text-based, i.e., they should be presented in 'meaningful situations'. If the prescribed text is not useful in this matter, suitable teaching materials can be prepared in the form of dialogues, short stories, etc.

8.4 Conclusion

Establishing comparability at the semantic level and limiting the scope to epistemic, deontic, and dynamic modalities, the modal systems of English and Tamil were described, compared, and contrasted in the preceding chapters. The motivation for the study was pedagogical but it would be a tall claim to say that what all has been dealt with in this work will be relevant or useful in the classroom. The purpose of this study would be fulfilled if the problem of teaching English models is understood better in the contrastive situation, and if teaching methods and materials could be devised effectively to help the students learn the problem areas easily. Other uses of this study such as theoretical, practical, etc., if any, will be incidental.