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Modality in Writing

Modality in Writing

In linguistics, modality is a category of meaning used to talk about likelihood, ability, permission, or obligation. Explicitly teaching the language of modality enables students to move from being too forceful, or too tentative, and towards interpreting and writing with clarity and credibility.

This workshop will explore the way that Swanlea School, as part of the Fetch Me a Pen project, has been working across a range of subjects to teach the language of modality in order to develop a common understanding and usage.

Participants will be given opportunities to engage in tasks and consider how this approach to language will support the improvement of writing in their schools.

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Encouraging modality in talk and writing

It's important that teachers model the kind of language they want their students to use orally and in writing.

Task: Look at the images taken from Science, Geography, History and RS (they may be used before studying a particular topic, or part-way through). How could modal verbs be used in questions that encourage students to explore the scenarios, issues or ideas captured by the images? Formulate these questions, and then consider how students may use modal verbs in their responses.

Task: Look at the questions from various subjects. How do they demand the use of modal verbs and modifiers in their answers? Could these questions be re-written to encourage modality?

Modal verbs

Can
Could
May
Might
Must

Shall
Should
Will
Would

can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will, would



a) Coastal pollution

Questions to encourage modality...



b) A burnt-out circuit board

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Using modal verbs in Science

can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will, would



a) A forest fire in Chile

Questions to encourage modality...



b) An ash-covered village after a volcano eruption in Indonesia

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Using modal verbs in Geography

can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will, would



a) German bombers over London, World War II

Questions to encourage modality...



b) 'And When Did You Last See Your Father?' - a scene from the English Civil War

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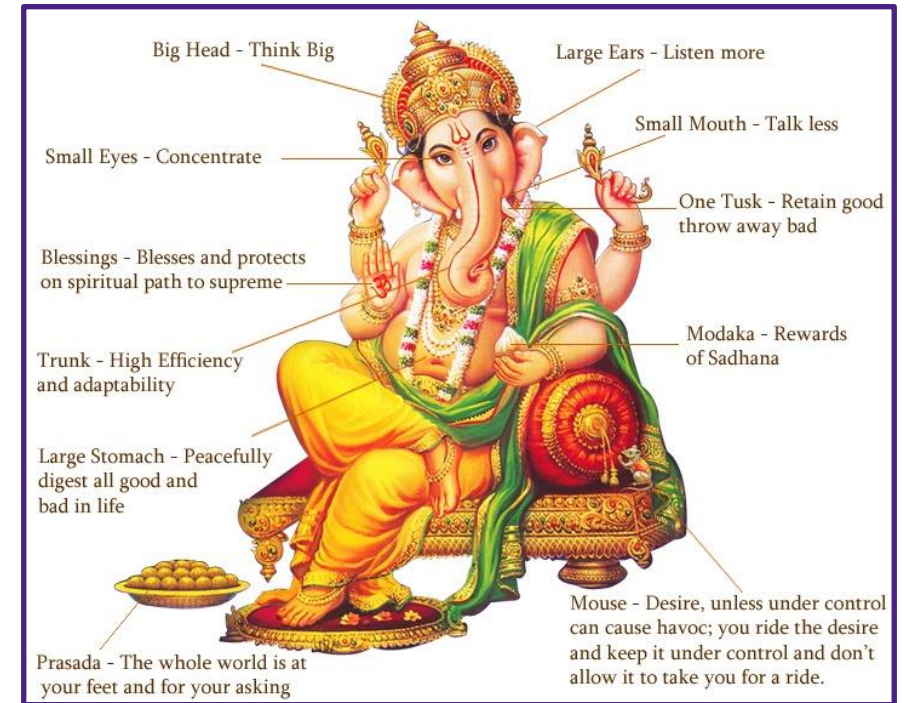
Using modal verbs in History

can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will, would



a) The Great Mosque-Cathedral of Córdoba

Questions to encourage modality...



b) Hinduism: Ganesha symbolism

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Using modal verbs in RS

Combining modal verbs with modifiers

Modals can be combined with various modifying words and phrases to further aid the expression of certainty, possibility, perception, interpretation etc.



English and Media
Modals and
modifiers

Modal verbs	Some modifiers	
<p>Can</p> <p>Could</p> <p>May</p> <p>Might</p> <p>Must</p> <p>Shall</p> <p>Should</p> <p>Will</p> <p>Would</p>	<p>Almost</p> <p>Certainly</p> <p>Clearly</p> <p>Consequently</p> <p>Definitely</p> <p>Effectively</p> <p>Essentially</p> <p>Evidently</p> <p>Immediately</p> <p>In effect</p> <p>In fact</p>	<p>In a sense</p> <p>Necessarily</p> <p>Often</p> <p>Perhaps</p> <p>Possibly</p> <p>Probably</p> <p>Somewhat</p> <p>Ultimately</p> <p>Undoubtedly</p> <p>Unquestionably</p>

Task: Look at the questions from various subjects. How do they demand the use of modal verbs and modifiers in their answers? Could these questions be modified or extended to encourage modality?

What would further deforestation mean for the Amazon rainforest?

How would a proportional representation electoral system be a good thing for the UK?

Teenage slang be banned in school classrooms. Discuss.

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Modality across the curriculum