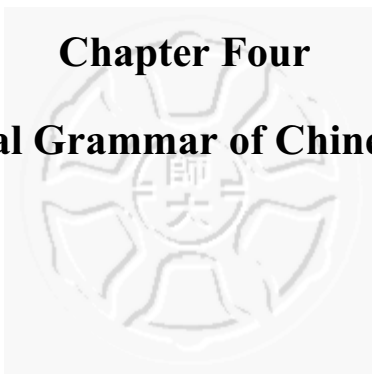


Chapter Four

Pedagogical Grammar of Chinese Modals



4.0 Introduction

There is a long-standing dispute over the ideal grammar for teaching. In Chapter Three, we have sieved out a list of modals in mandarin Chinese and divided them into three distinct groups: epistemic, deontic and dynamic. In this chapter, we turn to examine the modal construction from a pedagogical perspective. In section 4.1, following Teng (1997, 1998), we lay out the framework of Pedagogical Grammar. In section 4.2, we examine some properties of modals from pedagogical perspectives. In section 4.3, we target the basic level of Chinese teaching and provide a pedagogical grammar for Chinese modals. Finally, in section 4.4, we summarize this chapter.

4.1 The Framework of Pedagogical Grammar

Researchers have long focused on how to provide the most appropriate framework of language teaching. Many researchers have emphasized this issue from various linguistic perspectives and attempt to explore a sufficient way to deal with it. Odlin (1994) indicates that “the term pedagogical grammar usually denotes the types of grammatical analysis and instruction designed for the need of second language students”. He specifies several factors that motivate language teachers to think about the pedagogical grammar. They are time limitation, developing learning independence, preventing fossilization, proper guidance from instructors, etc. Coppetiers (1987), Ellis (1990) and others also argue from similar perspectives. In addition, Teng (1997) suggests a systematic way to deal with teaching grammars. He clarifies the status of “Pedagogical Grammar (hereafter PG)” as an autonomous field of language research that is independent of other linguistic fields such as syntax or pragmatics. Furthermore, “pattern sequencing” plays a significant role in PG because of the attempt to arrange an order for target-patterns in each level of language learning. In the spirit of Westney (1994), Teng (1997, 1998, 2003a) argues that the sequencing

should be hinged on the complexity and the frequency of patterns.

Teng (2003b), modifying the idea in Teng (2003a), argues that complexities should be regarded from two perspectives, inner and outer factors. Inner factors of the complexity refer to the formal complexity, the semantic complexity, the deductive complexity and the pragmatic complexity; whereas the outer complexity refers to the inter-linguistic distance. “Formal complexity” is defined in terms of the syntactic behavior of the pattern, whereas “semantic complexity” is defined in terms of meanings and functions of the pattern. “Deductive complexity” refers to how target patterns can be learnt in a systematic way, and “pragmatic complexity” is whether a pattern is pragmatically ambiguous, or has multiple functions. The outer complexity, “inter-linguistic distances”, refers to whether the characteristics of a pattern in L1 and L2 can be in analogy with one another systematically. Teng (2003b) argues that the inner factor of complexity, structural independency and frequency should all be taken into consideration and should have priority over the inter-linguistic distance.

Frequency, on the other hand, stands for one of the external differences of patterns. In other words, an item with higher frequency is expected to be taught earlier than items with lower frequency.

On the basis of the framework given above, we examine the modal construction in the following sections.

4.2 Pedagogical concerns

Before going to the examinations of Chinese modals in detail, it should be noted that different textbooks tend to use different terminology. By examining several textbooks, we find that there exists a considerable diversity.

Table 4- 1 Different terminology in textbooks ²⁹

modal verbs 能願動詞	漢語風 (1995)
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²⁹ Table 4-1 is based on the list given by Cheng (2000) and modified by adding more textbooks.

optative verbs 能願動詞	漢語初級教程 (1987) / New Practical Chinese Reader (新實用漢語課本) (2004)
auxiliary verbs 助動詞	實用華語(1993) / Chinese Unmasked (中文基本文法)(1994) / Chinese Primer (中文入門) (1989) / Interactions (1997) / Chinois Mode D'Emploi1 (1997) /實用視聽華語 (1997) / Integrated Chinese (中文聽說讀寫) (1997) / 遠東生活華語(Practical Everyday Chinese (2001)) / Chinese—A Comprehensive Grammar(2004) / Basic Spoken Chinese (2005)

It has also observed by Chen (2000) that in English, there are labels such as “auxiliary verbs”, “modal verbs” and “optative verbs”; in Chinese, there are “助動詞 (zhùdòngcí)”, “情態動詞(qíngtài dòngcí)” and “能願動詞(néngyuàndòngcí)”. Given the analysis in Chapter Three, modals in Chinese are functional categories rather than lexical verbs. Therefore, in order to reflect the characteristics of modals, we suggest using the term “能願助動詞 (néngyuàn zhù dòngcí) *modal auxiliary*” as the label.

In the following subsections, we explore the pattern sequencing of modal auxiliaries. To begin with, we consider “frequency”. Based on the result of frequency, we arrange the external sequence of modal auxiliaries.

4.2.1 The external difference of modal auxiliaries

Given Teng (1997), frequency plays a significant role in the pattern sequencing. In this section, frequency is utilized to specify an order of Chinese modal auxiliaries.

In Table 4-2, the number of frequency is the number taken from frequency lists; the smaller number stands for the higher frequency and the larger one refers to the lower frequency. For example, 會 ‘hui’ ranked as No. 23 in the frequency count data, which has higher frequency than the one ranked as No.40 such as 可以 ‘kěyǐ’.

Table 4- 2 Frequency word count³⁰

a. 1998 colloquial vernacular			b. 1997 In-print		
Modals	Frequency Number	1998 Sort	Modals	Frequency Number	1997 Sort
要	13	1	會	26	1
會	23	2	要	29	2
可以	40	3	得	38	3
得	50	4	能	46	4
能	72	5	可以	51	5
應該 ³¹	189	6	不會	224	6
不會	195	7	不能	247	7
不能	210	8	應該	275	8
不用	486	9	不敢	1537	9
不可以	911	10	不用	2000	10
敢	1081	11	敢	2573	11
不敢	1098	12	肯	3205	12

³⁰ The data in Table 4-2 are based on the Colloquial Vernacular Frequency Word Count 《民國八十七年口語語料調查報告書》 [*Minguo 87 nian kouyu yuliao diaocha baogao shu*] (1998) and the In-print Frequency Word Count 《民國八十六年書面語語料調查報告書》 [*Minguo 86 nian shumianyu yuliao diaocha baogao shu*] (1997) given in the website of “National Language Committee of Ministry of Education in Taiwan”.

However, these data have their own limitations. For example, in the frequency list, we cannot distinguish the 要 ‘yào’ which takes a noun as a lexical verb from the modal 要 ‘yào’ which takes a verb phrase as its complement. Similar to this, based on the frequency list, it is hard to check if this character is sorted only by 得 ‘de’, or if it mixes with the verb complement 得 ‘de’.

³¹ Surprisingly, although they take negative forms into the frequency count, in the reports of colloquial vernacular frequency word count (1998) and in-print frequency word count (1997), the negative form of 應該 ‘yinggai’ is not subsumed. Nevertheless, there is one term 不可能的 ‘bu keneng de’ at No. 17478 in the in-print word count.

肯	3002	13	不可以	3286	13
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By examining the affirmative forms, we observe that except 敢 ‘gǎn’ and 肯 ‘kěn’, all other modal auxiliaries are in the top 1000 of both colloquial vernacular and in-print frequency word counts. A similar result can be found in Table 4-3.³²

Table 4-3 Frequency count from *Xiandai hanyu pinlu cidian* (1986)

(a) Top 8000 words			(b) Top 4000 colloquial vernacular word		
Modals	Frequency Order number	Sort	Modals	Frequency Order number	Sort
要	34	1	要	32	1
能	38	2	能	52	2
會	66	3	會	97	3
可以	86	4	得	115	4
得	302	5	可以	164	5
應該	315	6	應該	284	6
敢	501	7	敢	285	7
肯	900	8	肯	646	8

In Table 4-3, most of the modal auxiliaries are with similar rank of frequency; only 敢 ‘gǎn’ and 肯 ‘kěn’ fall short. Teng (1998) proposes that straight rankings should be interpreted properly and sensibly. Given such “frequency block”, we find most modal auxiliaries are within top 500, only 敢 ‘gǎn’ and 肯 ‘kěn’ fall short (i.e. Table 4-3 (a)). Furthermore, if we assume that the Chinese learner should acquire about 1000 words at

³² The statistics of Top 8000 frequent words and Top 4000 frequent oral words are two lists provided in *Xiandai hanyu pinlu cidian* (1986).

the basic level, 敢 ‘gǎn’ and 肯 ‘kěn’ are excluded from the first 1000 words according to the colloquial frequency list given by the National Language Committee of Ministry of Education in Taiwan.

Within the four levels defined by *Hanyu shuiping denji biao zhun yu yufa denji dagang* (漢語水平等級標準與語法等級大綱)³³, most of the modal auxiliaries are ranked in the basic level- *Jia-ji* (the first level), except 肯 ‘kěn’, 應 ‘yīng’, 應當 ‘yīngdāng’ (in *Yi-ji* (the second level)), 須 ‘xū’ and 總得 ‘zǒngděi’ (in *Bing-ji* (the third level)).

Given the preceding observation, the modal auxiliaries at issue are listed in (1) that centers on the basic level of Chinese teaching. The number comes with the modal auxiliary indicates different interpretations of each modal auxiliary. These indication markers will be use throughout this chapter.

(1). Epistemic

- a. Possibility: 能 ‘neng1’, 要 1 ‘yao 1’, 可以 1 ‘keyi1’, 會 1 ‘hui1’
- b. Necessity: 應該 1 ‘yinggai1’

Deontic

- c. Obligation: 得 ‘dei’, 應該 2 ‘yinggai2’, 要 2 ‘yao 2’
- d. Permission: 可以 2 ‘keyi2’, 能 2 ‘neng2’

Dynamic

- e. 可以 3 ‘keyi3’, 會 2 ‘hui2’, 要 3 ‘yao 3’, 能 3 ‘neng3’

Within the list, 肯 ‘kěn’ and 敢 ‘gǎn’ are excluded because of their frequency, while 不用 will be included as the negative form of 得 ‘dei’. This list is by no means complete; due to the limitation of our research, we only deem those modal auxiliaries listed in (1) as the modal auxiliaries at the basic level of Chinese teaching.

³³ There are 8822 Chinese words listed in 《漢語水平等級詞彙與漢字等級大綱 [Hanyu shuiping denji biao zhun yu yufa denji dagang]》 according to proficiency levels. In *Jia-ji* (the first level), there are 1033 words.

4.2.2 The internal difference of modal auxiliaries

Regarding the sequencing of patterns, we also have to consider “complexity” — formal complexity and semantic complexity (cf. Teng (1997, 1998)).

To begin with, we concern the formal complexity. As shown in (2), modal auxiliaries have three kinds of distribution; however, (2b) and (2c) are quite marginal and only apply to certain modal auxiliaries (cf. Chapter Two for researches arguing these sequences of the modal construction as ungrammatical).

(2). a. 張三終於可以回家了

Zhāngsān zhōngyú kěyǐ huíjiā le
ZS finally can go home LE

‘Zhangsan finally can go back home.’

b. 應該張三參加 (怎麼變成李四)

yīnggāi Zhāngsān cānjiā, zěnmē biànchéng Lǐsì
should ZS join how come turn to be LS

‘It is Zhangsan who was supposed to join (the game).’ (why is Lisi there)

c. 張三參加可以

Zhāngsān cānjiā kěyǐ
ZS join can

‘Zhangsan can join (the game).’

Thus, the pattern of (2a) should be considerably prior to the other two in Chinese teaching. As shown in (2a) and (3), the orthodox position of modal auxiliaries in Chinese as well as in English is between the subject and the verb.

(3). John can go back home.

In other words, a Chinese learner with English background is expected to analogize patterns such as (2a) to (3). As such, the modal structure is regarded to be simple because of its fixed syntactic position.

On the other hand, according to the list in (1), different interpretations can be represented by the same words. Such overlaps tend to confuse students. It is shown in the Table 4-4 that each modal auxiliary may have more than one interpretation, and thereby modal auxiliaries are considered to be more complex in terms of this property. For example, 應該 ‘yīnggāi’ *should*, 可以 ‘kěyǐ’ *may*, 能 ‘néng’ *can*, 要 ‘yào’ *must* and 會 ‘huì’ *can* all have more than two interpretations, and they overlap to a certain degree. They are regarded to be more complex than other modal auxiliaries.

Table 4- 4 Modal interpretations

Interpretations		Affirmative Form of Modal Auxiliaries					
epistemic	possibility		可以 1 不可能	能 1 不可能	會 1 不會/ 不可能	要 1 不會/ 可能	
	necessity	應該 1 不應該					
deontic	obligation	應該 2 不應該				要 2 不用/ 不必	得 不用/ 不必
	permission		可以 2 不可以	能 2 不能			
dynamic ³⁴			可以 3 不可以	能 3 不能	會 2	要 3 不要	

Furthermore, concerning negative forms of modal auxiliaries, we find that the situation becomes more complex. The negative form of 可以 1 ‘kěyǐ 1’ should be 不可能 ‘bùkěnéng’ and the negative form of 得 ‘děi’ should be 不必 ‘bùbì’ or 不用 ‘bùyòng’, but would never be *不可以 ‘bù kěyǐ’ or *不得 ‘buděi’. This asymmetry between affirmative and negative forms of modal auxiliaries is regarded to be complex and

³⁴ “Dynamic” refers to a wider interpretation that all kinds of ability, capacity of animate or inanimate subjects are included.

should be highlighted in teaching.

As observed in the preceding discussion, modal auxiliaries in Chinese have different behaviors in the formal and semantic complexity. In terms of the formal complexity, modal auxiliaries with asymmetric forms between affirmatives and negatives are more complex than other modal auxiliaries. On the other hand, in terms of the semantic complexity, modal auxiliaries with multiple interpretations are deemed as more complex than others are.

In order to avoid subjective judgements, Teng (1997), modifying Westney's (1994) framework, makes complexity into a more scientific measurement. Following such measurement, we set up the structural complexity of modal auxiliaries to be represented by symbols, the '+' (for complex) and '-' (for simple) features. In order to indicate the distinction clearly, we add feature '⊙' for the sense of neutral. The measurement of the formal complexity is in the first column in Table 4-5. Because modals have the same syntactic structure, we concern the symmetry/asymmetry of affirmative and negative forms (cf. the contrast in Table 4-4).³⁵ From the semantic perspective, some modal auxiliaries are marked as complex because of having various interpretations (as shown in Table 4-4). For those others are marked as simple.

Table 4-5 Complexity of each modal interpretation*

Differences within Each modal	Formal Complexity	Semantic Complexity	Complexity**
應該1	—	—	1
應該2	—	+	2
可以1	+	+	4
可以2	—	+	2

³⁵ The reason that 會 1 'hui' is represented by ⊙ in the formal complexity is because of its negative forms are “不會 'buhui' and 不可能 'bu kěnéng'” in which one of them can be derived directly from the affirmative form.

可以3	+	+	4
會1	⊙	+	3
會2	—	+	2
能1	+	+	4
能2	—	+	2
能3	—	+	2
要1	+	+	4
要2	+	+	4
要3	—	—	1
得	+	+	4

*+ : complex ⊙ : neutral — : simple

**1 means fewer complex whereas 4 means more complex

應該 1 ‘will’ and 要 3 ‘want, be willing to’ are simpler because they convey only one interpretation without overlapped part with other modal auxiliaries, and their negative forms are derived from affirmative forms directly. On the other hand, 應該 2 ‘must, should’, 可以 2 ‘may’, 會 2 ‘can, be able to’, 能 2 ‘may, be permitted’ and 能 3 ‘can, be able to’ are marked as less simple than 應該 1 ‘will’ and 要 3 ‘want, be willing to’ because there are overlapped interpretations among them. Furthermore, 可以 1 ‘might, may’, 可以 3 ‘can’, 能 1 ‘will’, 要 1 ‘will, be going to’, 要 2 ‘must, have to’, and 得 ‘must, have to’ are marked as complex because their negative forms are different from the affirmative forms and they have overlapped interpretations. Thus, in order to reflect the contrast clearly, we make a grading by taken both formal and semantic complexities into consideration. The result is shown in the last column of Table 4-5.

4.2.3 Pattern Sequencing

On the basis of the result of section 4.2.1 and 4.2.2, in this section, we arranged the pattern sequencing of modal auxiliaries in Chinese.

From a communicative based perspective, the sequence of modals is decided by the priority that “Total SUM (the sum of all numbers in the left-hand columns)” is prior to “Word count- colloquial vernacular frequency”. The “colloquial word count” is prior to the “Complexity (where different interpretation of modal auxiliaries is taken into consideration)”, and the “complexity” in turn is prior to the “Word count- In-print frequency”. The result is illustrated in Table 4-6

Table 4- 6 Modal frequency and complexity comparison

Modals	Word-CF ³⁶	Complexity ³⁷	Word-IP ³⁸	SUM
要 3	1	1	2	4
會 2	2	2	1	5
會 1	2	3	1	6
要 1	1	4	2	7
要 2	1	4	2	7
可以 2	3	2	5	10
得	4	4	3	11
能 2	5	2	4	11
能 3	5	2	4	11
可以 1	3	4	5	12
可以 3	3	4	5	12
能 1	5	4	4	13
應該 1	6	1	6	13
應該 2	6	2	6	14

According to the Table 4-6, the sequence is: 要3 ‘want’, 會2 ‘be able to’, 會1 ‘will’,

³⁶ The numbers in this column is taken from the sort of frequency in Table 4-2 (a).

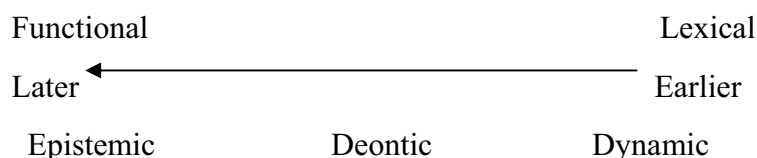
³⁷ The numbers in this column is taken from the sort of complexity in Table 4-5.

³⁸ The numbers in this columns is taken from the sort of frequency in Table 4-2 (b).

要1 ‘will’/要2 ‘must’, 可以2 ‘may’, 得 ‘must, have to’/能2 ‘may’/能3 ‘can’, 可以1 ‘possilbe, will’/可以3 ‘can’, 能1 ‘will’/應該1 ‘will, be supposed to’ and 應該2 ‘have to, must’. It seems to predict a teaching sequence like this. Nevertheless, due to the overlapped interpretation of modal auxiliaries, we argue that comparisons of modal auxiliaries with similar or same interpretation are significantly important. Given this, we suggeste a sequence with modifications of combining some modal auxiliaries: 要3 ‘want’, 會2 ‘be able to’, 要1/會1 ‘will’, 得/要2 ‘must, have to’, 可以2/能2 ‘may’, 能3/可以3 ‘can’, 可以1/能1 ‘possilbe, will’, 應該1 ‘will, be supposed to’ and then, 應該2 ‘have to, must’.

Note that in Chapter Three, modals have been divided into three types of interpretations: epistemic, deontic and dynamic, and each interpretation can correspondently reflects a distinct syntactic structure.³⁹ Dynamic modals are modals closest to the typical verbal predicate, and they are preceded by deontic modals. In turn, both dynamic and deontic modals are preceded by epistemic modals. Theoretically, such structural order should be able to reflect the sequence of acquisition.

(4).



As shown in (4), many researches of language acquisition support this assumption. Radford (1992) argues that children start out with a projection of a verb and its arguments, while children acquire functional projections later. The lower a functional projection is, the earlier it is acquired. It has often been observed that first language learners acquire root modals earlier than epistemic modals. Although we are not

³⁹ In terms of the PG of the modal *keyi* ‘can’, Chen (2000) also suggests such three-type division. However, we do not agree with the division of examples given in Chen (2000). Under her analysis, epistemic *keyi* ‘can’ includes examples such as *zhe-dong fengzi keyi zhu shi-ge ren* ‘Ten person can reside in this house’. She argues for these examples as possibility being licensed by an objective criterion permitted, whereas deontic *keyi* ‘can’ only indicates a permission given by person. Contrary to this analysis, we have argued in Chapter Three that the epistemic *keyi* ‘can’ in Chen (2000) is actually under the category of deontic. We only treat the *keyi* ‘can’ in *shuxue keyi hen youqu* ‘Math can be very interesting.’ or *wo mingtian keyi lai* ‘I can come tomorrow’ as epistemic.

going to discuss acquisition issues here, the result of language acquisition of modals echoes the curricular order. It is found that lexical verbs are taught before modal auxiliaries. In terms of modal auxiliaries themselves, it is predicted that dynamic modal auxiliaries should be taught earlier than deontic and epistemic modals.

In the list of sequencing, the dynamic *yao3* is prior to the deontic *yao2* and epistemic *yao1*, whereas the dynamic *hui2* is prior to the epistemic *hui1*. *Keyi* seems to behave differently. However, as mentioned in the preceding section, despite of interpretations, frequency and complexity are also important. Since language teaching at the basic level focuses on the oral performance, there is good cause for putting *keyi 2* to precede other interpretations of *keyi* regarding the frequency and complexity. Likewise, it has to note that all these items are within the same level of Chinese teaching, although modal auxiliaries are arranged into a sequence. In other words, regarding other patterns, modal auxiliaries should be treated as one unit.

Before going directly into the PG of modal auxiliaries in Chinese, next, we discuss some phenomena related to the inter-linguistic distance between Chinese and English in relation to modal auxiliaries.

4.2.4 Inter-linguistic distance

Due to the analysis argued in Chapter Three and because of the pedagogical concerns, we suggest to consider how textbooks present the grammar of modals. There are some points that we have to put emphasis on the arrangement of modal auxiliaries in textbooks.

- (5). a. How is the modal auxiliaries sequence organized in textbooks?
- b. Do textbooks show the affirmative and negative forms at the same time?
- c. How many interpretations of each modal auxiliary do textbooks cover?
- d. How do textbooks accommodate the overlapped interpretations?

As argued in section 4.2.2, it is important to emphasize the difference between affirmative and negative forms of modal auxiliaries. Since each modal item may

contain more than one interpretation, how textbooks arrange the difference between L1 and L2 and the difference between different modal auxiliaries plays a significant role.

On the basis of these concerns, we briefly examine some textbooks on how modal auxiliaries are arranged.⁴⁰ We found that many textbooks list only the literal translation such as 會=‘can’, 應該= ‘must’. Only some of the textbooks such as *New Practical Chinese Reader* (2004) and *Basic Spoken Chinese* (2005) provide an overall introduction of modal properties and comparisons of similar modal auxiliaries. This seems to lead learners and instructors to consider that Chinese is similar to English regarding modal auxiliaries and that the modal auxiliary can be directly translated from Chinese to English. Relating to this issue, Teng (2003b) argues for a “Zero Instruction” that refers to ‘the non-existence and non-necessity of instruction’. The spirit of this idea is that once the target pattern can be glossed as its counterpart in L1, it can be introduced for the first time in a lesson without any grammatical explanation but with the gloss only. This is the most efficient way of pattern introduction. With Teng (2003b), we agree that when a pattern is highly analogized with the first language, there are no further instructions or explanations needed as long as a suitable condition for the pattern is set up in the textbook. However, this approach cannot be put forth to “all” modal auxiliaries.

In the context of English as first language and Chinese as second language, Teng (1998) points out that the difference between English ‘ought to’ and Chinese 應該 ‘*yinggai*’ is trifling, whereas it is substantial between ‘don’t have to’ and 不必 ‘*bubi*’. We found that there are many similar examples. Given our analysis in Chapter Three, it is a commonplace that modals represent more than one interpretation. In English, the form ‘have to’ has more than one interpretation. As shown in (6a), the reading is related to ‘necessary’, while the 不必 ‘*bubi*’ in (6b) is related to the meaning of ‘should, obligatory to’. (6d) and (6e) show a similar contrast. In (6d), ‘have to’ refers to ‘necessary’, while 不必 ‘*bubi*’ in (6e) is related to the meaning of ‘obligation’.

⁴⁰ The result refers to Appendix two.

- (6). a. You don't have to pay
b. 你不必付錢 'nǐ bùbì fùqián'
c. *你不得付錢 'nǐ budě fùqián'
d. Some people don't steal if they don't have to
e. *不必偷就不偷 'bùbì tōu jiù bù tōu'

In another complex case that *can* has several different interpretations as well as *may* (i.e. (7) and (8)), the translation of *can* into Chinese calls for different modal interpretations. For example, the 'can' in (7a) indicates 'the condition permits', but the Chinese 會 'hui' indicates 'the ability of doing something'. Thus, that glossing modals as “會=can” or “能=may” would cause the failure to recognize the difference between L1 and L2, and would lead to wrong acquisitions.

- (7). a. We can have dinner now. (Dinner is done)
b. *我們現在會吃飯了 'wǒmen xiànzài huì chīfàn le'
c. Can it be true?
d. ??可以是真的嗎? 'kěyǐ shì zhēnde ma'
(8). a. May I smoke here?
b. 我可以抽煙嗎? 'wǒ kěyǐ chōuyān ma'
c. He may have said so.
d. *他能這樣說 'tā néng zhèyàng shuō'

The contrast between (6b) and (6c) shows another importance in relation to L1/L2 differences. When students learn that 得 'děi' refers to 'have to', most of the students would come out sentence such as (6c) for the negative form; however, it is obviously incorrect. To avoid such mistakes, we argue that for those modal auxiliaries with asymmetric forms of negatives and affirmatives should be highlighted in textbooks and the curricula. In other words, affirmative and negative forms of modal auxiliaries should be taught at the same time. According to our observations in Table 4-2, different interpretations should be taught separately, because modal auxiliaries in

Chinese as well as in English have diverse interpretations that may be conveyed by one single item. Furthermore, when there are several modal auxiliaries with similar meaning or usage, they should be put into comparison.

On the other hand, Kubler (2001) specifies spoken and written skills should be taught separately in curricula of basic Chinese. In all languages, there is a difference between the spoken and written system. In Chinese, the difference seems to be greater than in western languages, because many Chinese characters contain many strokes and are often difficult to write. In addition, some characters have more than one pronunciation or meaning. Because of the influence from classical Chinese, substantial differences occur in spoken and written style. Thus, based on the concern about teaching and learning efficiency, Kubler (2001) argues that oral and written skills should be taught by separate but related materials. Instructors should not teach characters until the words they represent have been learned. Kubler (2001) indicates that there are different forms of written representation in Chinese: simplified version, traditional version, hand-written form, pinyin, various styles of calligraphy, etc. For an educated native Chinese speaker, pinyin would not be deemed as a formal writing system. However, even excluding pinyin, there are still many other styles in the Chinese written system. Thus, he suggests that in order to design a complete Chinese teaching course, these differences should be taken into consideration and should be reflected on the teaching material as well.

According to Table 4-7 (a), we find that although 敢 ‘gǎn’ and 不敢 ‘bùgǎn’ have the similar ranking, the frequency of them shows a distinct difference in the word count of in-print data. Comparing the colloquial vernacular frequency and the in-print frequency (with that colloquial vernacular having priority to the in-print date), the difference becomes clear.

Table 4- 7 Colloquial vernacular frequency vs. In-print frequency

Modals	1998 Colloquial vernacular Word count	1997 In-print Word count
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	frequency	Sort	frequency	Sort
要	13	1	29	2
會	23	2	26	1
可以	40	3	51	5
得	50	4	38	3
能	72	5	46	4
應該	189	6	275	8
不會	195	7	224	6
不能	210	8	247	7
不用	486	9	2000	10
不可以	911	10	3286	12
敢	1081	11	2573	11
不敢	1098	12	1537	9
肯	3002	13	3205	13

Note that 不用 ‘bùyòng’ is at the colloquial vernacular frequency as No. 486; it is at No. 2000 of literary frequency count. 不可以 ‘bùkěyǐ’ shows a similar pattern. In other words, for some words with higher frequency in colloquial vernacular may have lower frequency in the in-print data, such as the contrast shown in 不用 ‘bùyòng’ and 應該 ‘yīnggāi’. The differences shown in Table 4-4 echoes the need argued by Kubler (2001).

Given the discussions above, we argue that in terms of the teaching of modal auxiliaries in Chinese, first, a complete condition for introducing those modal auxiliaries with no huge difference between L1 and L2 in textbooks is needed. Second, affirmative and negative forms of modal auxiliaries should be introduced at the

same time. Meanwhile, teaching materials should provide notes regarding different interpretations that modal auxiliaries convey.

In section 4.3, on the basis of the concerns mentioned above, we provide a PG of modal auxiliaries.

4.3 Pedagogical Grammar of modal auxiliaries

In section 4.2.3, we have proposed a sequencing of modal auxiliaries according to the frequency and the complexity: 要 3 ‘want’, 會 2 ‘be able to’, 要 1/會 1 ‘will’, 得/要 2 ‘must, have to’, 可以 2/能 2 ‘may’, 能 3/可以 3 ‘can’, 可以 1/能 1 ‘possible, will’, 應該 1 ‘will, be supposed to’ and then, 應該 2 ‘have to, must’. Note that only modal auxiliaries for the basic level of Chinese teaching is relevant to our discussions.

Teng (1997), citing Sinclair (1990), argues that the terms, major statements, usage notes and productive features should be used in PG. “Major statements” refers to certain conventional rules that provide comprehensive explanations to help students understand the function of grammar points. “Usage notes” means explicit applicability that defines a clear range of use for students to follow. “Productive features” refers to the do’s and don’ts of certain patterns. These terms are simplified as “function”, “structure” and “usage”.

- (9). a. Functions— what does it do?
- b. Structure—how is it done?
- c. Usage—when shall it be used?

(9a) refers to what the pattern does and what the utterance depicts under this pattern. (9b) is the description of the target pattern. That is, the descriptions should show the different forms of the target pattern and lay out a suitable way to use it. The term in (9c) refers to the demonstration of a proper condition to use the target pattern, and shows under what kind of situation the pattern is appropriate or inappropriate for. Besides, the usage should also reflect the distinction between the target items and other similar items.

In the following sections, we demonstrate a sample PG, which targets at students with English as the first language.

4.3.1 Structure— Statements of modal auxiliary

Similar to English *can*, *may* or *must*, Chinese modal auxiliaries always co-occur with an ensuing main verb and serve to delineate certain meaning of sentences. For example, the modal auxiliary 應該 *yīnggāi* ‘should’ depicts a sense of ‘obligation’.

- (10). 你應該 告訴 我
nǐ yīnggāi gàosu wǒ
‘you should have told me’

Common Chinese modal auxiliaries include 要 *yào* ‘must, want’, 得 *děi* ‘must’, 該 *gāi* ‘should’, 敢 *gǎn* ‘dare to’, 會 *huì* ‘know how to’, 可能 *kěnéng* ‘be possible’, 可以 *kěyǐ* ‘may’, 能 *néng* ‘be able to’, and 應當 *yīngdāng*/應該 *yīnggāi* ‘should’. Some modal auxiliaries occur only in the negative forms, such as 不必 *bùbì* or 不用 *bùyòng* ‘don’t need to, not necessary.’

The basic properties of modals in Chinese refer to the list in section 2.2, Chapter Two.

4.3.2 Function and Usage—

The suggested function of each modal interpretations and the usage of them are enumerated as follows.

4.3.2.1 要 3 ‘yào 3’ (不要‘bùyào’)

Function

要 3 means willingness, and it is similar to *want* in English.

Examples

我買了台新電腦,你要不要看看? wǒ mǎi le tái xīn diànnǎo, nǐ yàobuyào kànkàn?

I bought a new computer; do you want to have a look?

有沒有人要下車? yǒuméiyǒu rén yào xiàchē?

Does anybody want to take off the bus?

Usage

1. The 要 3 here is different from the verb 要, which can take a noun as its object, although they are similar in the sense of ‘being willing to’.

Examples

verb 要+Noun: 我要那件衣服 wǒ yào nà jiàn yīfú

要 3 +Verb: 我要學游泳 wǒ yào xué yóuyǒng

我不要學游泳 wǒ bù yào xué yóuyǒng

4.3.2.2 會 2 ‘huì 2’ (不會 ‘bù huì’)

Function

會 2 means a result of a process of learning. It means ‘know how to, have learned how to’.

Examples

A: 您會說中國話呀! ? nín huì shuō Zhōngguóhuà yā?

B: 會一點兒? huì yīdiǎnr

A: 您也會寫中國字嗎? ? nín yě huì xiě Zhōngguó zì ma?

B: 有的也會寫,有的不會? yǒude yě huì xiě? yǒu de bù huì

A: 您還會其他的語言嗎? nín hái huì qítā de yǔyán ma?

B: 我以前會說一點兒西班牙語,可是現在全忘了

wǒ yǐqián huì shuō yīdiǎnr Xībānyáyǔ? kěshì xiànzài quán wàng le

Usage

1. There are several choices for translating English ‘know’ into Chinese. One has to distinguish 會 from two other verbs which are also often translated as “know”. They are 知道 ‘know that fact’ and 認識 ‘know someone, be acquainted with someone, recognize’.

Example

你會說中國話嗎? nǐ huì shuō Zhōngguóhuà ma?

‘Do you know how to speak Chinese?’

你知道台北在哪兒嗎? nǐ zhīdao Táiběi zài nǎr ma?

‘Do you know where Taipei is?’

你認識他嗎？nǐ rènshi tā ma?

‘Do you know him?’

2. In English, the verb *speaks* is utilized rather than *can* for asking the ability or habit whether “someone speaks certain language”. In such case, it is a pragmatically more polite manner as shown in example (1). On the other hand, in the sense of asking the ability of “know how to speak”, Chinese speakers would use the modal auxiliary 會. Examples are in (2).

Example

(1) ‘Do you speak Chinese?’

你說中國話嗎？nǐ shuō Zhōngguóhuà ma?

(2) ‘Can you speak Chinese?’

你會說中國話嗎？nǐ huì shuō Zhōngguóhuà ma?

你會不會說中國話？nǐ huì bù huì shuōzhòng guó huà?

‘Two years ago I didn’t yet know how to speak Chinese’

兩年前,我還不會說漢語. liǎng nián qián? wǒ hái bù huì shuō Hànyǔ?

4.3.2.3 會 1 ‘huì 1’ vs. 要 1 ‘yào 1’ (不會 ‘bù huì’ or 不可能 ‘bùkě néng’)

Function

The modal 會 is used to indicate an anticipated event or action in the future, which is the same as the ‘will’ in English. It is used to express possibility or the likelihood of the occurrence of an event.

Example

A：你明年做什麼？nǐ míngnián zuò shénme?

B：我明年會去臺灣學中文 wǒ míngnián huì qù Táiwān xué Zhōngwén

Usage

1. Note that the 會 ‘be likely to, will’ is similar to *will* in English. 要 ‘will’ often implies ‘be likely to’.

Example

我明年會去中國 wǒ míngnián huì qù Zhōngguó

‘I will go to China next year’

我明年要去中國 wǒ míngnián yào qù Zhōngguó

‘I will be going to China next year’

2. Sometimes, two modal auxiliaries could occur in a row of the interpretation as ‘it’s possible that it will’

Example

雖然現在是晴天，下午也許會變成陰天

suīrán xiànzài shì qíngtiān, xiàwǔ yěxǔ huì biànchéng yīntiān

油價又要漲了 yóu jià yòu yào zhǎng le

3. The negative forms of this meaning is 不會 ‘bù huì’ or 不可能 ‘bùkě néng’. Usually there would be a final 的 that conveys a sense of “likelihood”. Another particle 嗎 will replace 的 in an interrogative sentence. The sentence pattern is:

Subject+會+predicate 的

The 會 and 的 surround the predicate of the sentence, and this pattern is usually translated as ‘be likely to, would or will’, which expresses a speaker’s conviction that something is certain. This pattern is especially common in southern Mandarin, including the Mandarin in Taiwan, and this pattern is especially common in the speech of female speakers. Certainly, This pattern without 的 can still depict the basic meaning, and the final 的 lends additional assurance or assertion to the statement.

Example

他不會來的 tā bù huì lái de

我不可能告訴他的 wǒ bù kěnéng gàosu tā de

快走吧,不然你會遲到的 kuài zǒu ba? bùrán nǐ huì chí dào de

我想這兒的東西以後會越來越貴的

wǒ xiǎng zhèr de dōngxi yǐhòu huì yuè lái yuè guì de

4.3.2.4 得 ‘děi’, 要 2 ‘yào 2’ (不用 bù yòng or 不必 bù bì)

Function

The modal auxiliary 得, 要 2 can mean ‘need, must’. 得 is much more often used in

Beijing in colloquial speech rather than in other southern areas as indicating the necessity and the moral compulsory obligation. It is similar to English ‘have to do something’.

Example

我得走 wǒ děi zǒu

‘I must leave’

我要走了 wǒ yào zǒu le

‘I must be leaving now’

去動物園得/要坐幾路公車? qù dòngwùyuán děi/yào zuò jǐ lù gōngchē?

借了錢就得/要還 jiè le qián jiù děi/ yào hái

Usage

1. The negative form of 得 is 不用 ‘need not; not have to’ or 不必 ‘not have to’, rather than ‘不得’⁴¹.

Example

A: 明天得上課嗎? míngtiān děi shàngkè ma?

B: 明天是星期六, 不用(不必/*不得)上課。

míngtiān shì xīngqīliù, bù yòng (bùbì/* buděi) shàngkè.

2. 不用 can be abbreviated into 甬.

Example

A: 今天謝謝你了 jīntiān xièxiè nǐ le

B: 不用謝。/甬謝了。bùyòng xiè./béng xiè le.

3. Even though 不用 or 不必 are the negative forms of 得, these two negative forms do not have affirmative forms, 用 and 必.

Example

*如果明天下雨, 我用去嗎? rúguǒ míngtiān xià yǔ, wǒ yòng qù ma?

你也不是有錢人, 你不用給他錢

nǐ yěbùshì yǒuqiánrén, nǐ bù yòng gěi tā qián

⁴¹ Here, *不得 ‘must not’ is pronounced as **buděi*. In Chinese, there is another form of 不得 ‘must not’ pronounced as *budé*, for example, 寵物不得進入. The latter form is preserved from classic Chinese and it is often used in a formal occasion or in a slogan. Thus, this form is treated as a more advanced modal usage and should be separated from the unacceptable 不得 ‘*buděi*.’

4.3.2.5 可以 2 / 能 2 ‘kěyǐ 2 / néng 2’ (不可以, 不能, or 不行)

Function

The modal auxiliaries 可以 2 and 能 2 mean ‘permission’, which are similar to the English *may*. They are usually used to request in a polite manner rather than posing a real question.

Example

可不可以開慢一點 kěbù kěyǐ kāi màn yīdiǎn

‘Could you drive a little more slowly?’

Usage

1. Both 可以 and 能 can make a polite request. In Mandarin Chinese, however, there are other ways to convey the same meaning. For instance, one can use “請__” and “__好不好?” to make requests in a similar way.

Example

請你開慢一點 qǐng nǐ kāi màn yīdiǎn

開慢一點,好不好? kāi màn yīdiǎn? hǎobùhǎo?

2. The negative form for showing permission can be 不可以, 不能, or 不行. Sometimes, 不能, probably, for rhythmic reasons, is colloquially of wider use than 不可以.

Example

A: 我可以跟他談談嗎? wǒ kěyǐ gēn tā tántán ma?

B: 不可以。bùkěyǐ.

A: 這裡可以抽煙嗎? zhèlǐ kěyǐ chōuyān ma?

B: 對不起, 這裡不能抽煙。duìbuqǐ, zhèlǐ bùnéng chōuyān.

4.3.2.6 可以 3 / 能 3 ‘kěyǐ 3 / néng 3’ (不可以 ‘bùkěyǐ’ or 不能 ‘bùnéng’)

Function

The modal auxiliaries here, 可以 3 and 能 3, are used to indicate the general or physical capacity, and these two modals are often used with a quantitative measurement.

Example

木頭可以做成桌子 mùtóu kěyǐ zuòchéng zhuōzi

大蒜能殺菌 dàsuàn néng shājūn

我可以十天不喝水 wǒ kěyǐ shí tiān bù hēshuǐ

他能三天不睡覺 tā néng sān tiān bù shuì jué

Usage

1. There are several ways to translate the English ‘can’ into Chinese. 可以³ and 能³ can depict the meaning of ability, which is acquired through learning, to the sentence. Besides, they can convey the sense of ‘being physically able to’ or ‘being with the capacity of doing something’.

Example

Can she speak?

→ 他會說話嗎? tā huì shuō huà ma?

‘Has the baby already learned how to?’

他能說話嗎? tā néngshuō huà ma?

他可以說話嗎? tā kěyǐ shuō huà ma?

‘Is she physically able to speak? (after her recent illness)’

2. 可以³ and 能³ can also convey a sense of ‘skill’.

Example

我能用中文寫信 (wǒ néng yòng Zhōngwén xiěxìn)

‘I can write letters in Chinese’

他不能游泳 tā bùnéng yóuyǒng

棉花不可以殺菌 miánhua bùkěyǐ shājūn

4.3.2.7 可以¹ ‘kěyǐ¹’, 能¹ ‘néng¹’ (不能 ‘bùnéng’)

Function

The 可以¹ and 能¹ convey a sense of “possibility”: in the occasion that after fulfilling certain requirement, and then the possibility occurs.

Example

好像在夜市買東西的時候可以/能殺價

hǎoxiàng zài yèshì mǎi dōngxi de shíhou kěyǐ/ néng shājià

Usage

1. 可以 1 and 能 1 can be used in forming an interrogative sentence and answering the question.

Example

A: 明天的會你可以來參加嗎? míngtiān de huì nǐ kěyǐ lái cānjiā ma?

B: 我明天沒事, 可以參加。 wǒ míngtiān méishì, kěyǐ cānjiā.

A: 你這本書今天看得完嗎? nǐ zhè běn shū jīntiān kàn dé wán ma?

B: 可以, 我今天正好有空。 kěyǐ, wǒ jīntiān zhènghǎo yǒukòng.

2. There are two negative forms of 可以 1. One is 不能, and the other is the pattern 'V+不+complement'

Example

A: 明天的會你可以來參加嗎? míngtiān de huì nǐ kěyǐ lái cānjiā ma?

B: 我明天有事, 不能來了。 wǒ míngtiān yǒushì, bùnéng lái le.

A: 你這本書今天可以看完嗎? nǐ zhè běn shū jīntiān kěyǐ kàn wán ma?

B: 我想我這本書今天看不完 wǒ xiǎng wǒ zhè běn shū jīntiān kàn bù wán

3. 可以 2 vs. 可以 1.

Generally, in a request the subject of the sentence is usually with first/ third person, whereas the subject would be a second person or an inanimate subject in a question about possibility.

4.3.2.8 應該 1 'yīnggāi 1' (不會 'bù huì')

Function

Modal auxiliaries 應該 1 is used to speculate that something might happen or is supposed to happen.

Example

他現在應該到家了 tā xiànzài yīnggāi dàojiā le

他應該已經結婚了吧 tā yīnggāi yǐjīng jiéhūn le ba

Usage

1. The modal auxiliary 應該 1 is often occur with other modal auxiliaries to show the "supposition".

Example

他應該會知道這件事情 tā yīnggāi huì zhīdao zhè jiàn shìqing

作業應該可以明天再給老師吧 zuòyè yīnggāi kěyǐ míngtiān zài gěi lǎoshī ba

2. 不會 is the negative form of 應該¹ and 會¹.

Example

他昨天就離開了，不會還沒到家吧 tā zuótiān jiù líkāi le, bù huì hái méi dàojiā ba

4.3.2.9 應該 2 ‘yīnggāi 2’ (不應該 ‘bù yīnggāi’)

Function

The modal auxiliary 應該 2 means ‘should, have to, be obligatory to do something’. It conveys the senses of obligation and a strong advisability.

Example

租房子應該付租金 zū fángzi yīnggāi fù zūjīn

要學好中文就應該努力學習 yào xuéhǎo Zhōngwén jiù yīnggāi nǔlì xuéxí

你不應該去 nǐ bù yīnggāi qù

‘You shouldn’t have gone’

Usage

1. Sometimes 應該 2 can depict the meaning of counsel, advice, or to convey a moral obligation.

Example

學習應該認真一點 xuéxí yīnggāi rènzhēn yīdiǎn

4.4 Summary

Following the framework given by Teng (1997, 1998, 2001, 2003), a suggested pedagogical sequence of modal auxiliaries is provided in the preceding section, and we have demonstrated a PG of basic level of Chinese teaching on modal auxiliaries.