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MODALS IN ACTION: EXPLORING GRAMMAR THROUGH PADLET & CHATGPT

Mirrah Diyana Maznun*, Nurshahirah Azman, Nur Hazirah Mohd Fuat, Noor Fazzriene Jz Nun
Ramlan & Sheema Liza Idris

Academy of Language Studies UiTM Kampus Seri Iskandar, 32610 Bandar Seri Iskandar, Perak*

mirrahdiyana@uitm.edu.my*

ABSTRACT

Learning and mastering modal verbs have always been challenging for ESL learners, as the usage can be varied depending on the context. The traditional way of teaching modal verbs often relies on explicit instruction and controlled practice. This classroom-based innovation combines Padlet and ChatGPT to help ESL Part 2 Diploma students improve their understanding and use of modal verbs in sentences. The lesson focuses on the four main functions of modals, such as possibility, ability, necessity, and permission. Students worked in pairs to generate sentences using modals, received instant feedback from ChatGPT and posted their drafts to a Padlet wall. This approach helps to reinforce their grammar knowledge, and it also encourages creativity, critical thinking, and learner independence. Based on the implementation, the learners showed confidence and engagement when using modal verbs in their writing. As a simple and cost-effective method, this idea has strong potential to be used with other grammar topics or adapted to different ESL learning contexts.

Keywords: *Modal verbs, grammar, ChatGPT, Padlet*

INTRODUCTION

Traditional grammar lessons often leave students memorising rules without truly understanding how modal verbs such as “can”, “will”, or “could” function in writing. While textbooks provide plenty of practice, they rarely show students how proper modal verbs usage can make their arguments more persuasive and engaging. Technology-based and AI-integrated grammar learning exposes students to more personalized and instant feedback, which enhances students’ understanding and increases engagement.

Studies on grammar learning that utilize the advancement of AI tools have reported that the

incorporation of AI tools in teaching and learning encourages personalised and adaptive learning as AI gives feedback in real time, adapts to difficulty, and is able to address various needs of the learners (Aladini et al., 2025). Usage of AI tools in grammar learning has also shown an increase in engagement and motivation among learners as gamification and interactive features boost learners' confidence and motivation (Aladini et al., 2025; Song & Song, 2023). Another study reported that the usage of AI tools in writing lessons enhanced autonomy and self-regulation among learners, and it also fostered independent learning and self-efficacy (Bognar et al., 2024).

The use of an AI tool such as ChatGPT in grammar lessons has been widely used in recent years. A past study on the application of AI tools in grammar lessons focused on the combination of Grammarly and ChatGPT to improve learners' proficiency in grammar, and it was found that there is an improvement in test scores of the learners (Lalira et al., 2024). One more study also reported on their findings that learners displayed positive impacts on language skills, especially in writing, grammar, and vocabulary acquisition after the utilization of ChatGPT in lessons (Behforouz & Ghaiti, 2024; Sanchez, 2025). Past papers have shown a high frequency of ChatGPT usage in grammar lessons. This creates an opportunity to explore how the integration of ChatGPT and Padlet can enrich learners' learning experience and address challenges in learning grammar, particularly modal verbs, in a more interactive way.

This study will address the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the level of acceptance among ESL learners regarding the use of ChatGPT and Padlet in learning modal verbs?

RQ2: What are the learners' attitudes toward the use of ChatGPT and Padlet in learning modal verbs?

METHODOLOGY

This section presents the method employed in this study. This study employed a small-scale quantitative research design to investigate ESL learners' acceptance and attitudes toward the integration of Padlet and ChatGPT in grammar instruction, specifically in learning modal verbs.

A total of 68 Semester 2 diploma students from a public university in Malaysia participated in this study: 45 females and 25 males. All participants enrolled in an English language proficiency course, and their proficiency level was estimated to be at the B2 level. Purposive sampling method was used in the selection of participants in this study, as this sampling technique allows a researcher to select individuals based on criteria relevant to the objective of the study. This allows for the gain of an in-depth understanding of the participants' acceptance and attitude towards the usage of ChatGPT and Padlet in grammar lessons.

Data were collected through a post-lesson questionnaire (20 items) that combined elements from the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989) and Attitude towards Computer-Assisted Language Learning (A-CALL) (Aydin, 2013). In this study, there are 11 items adapted from TAM,

which consist of three elements: Perceived Usefulness (PU; 4 items), Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU; 4 items), and Behavioral Intention to Use (BI; 3 items). The adaptation of the items in the questionnaire survey was relevant to this study as it involves a specific classroom-based instructional context, and this also ensures that the items are relevant to the objectives of the study. Similar adaptations were found and validated by a past study by Dizon (2016), who confirmed the relevance of PU, PEOU, and BI in exploring learners' acceptance of technological tools in their learning. To explore the learners' attitude, 9 items were adapted from A-CALL (Aydin, 2013), which are most relevant to the context of this study. The instrument used a 5-point Likert scale to assess students' perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, behavioral intention, general attitudes, as well as affective and motivational aspects toward the use of ChatGPT and Padlet in learning modal verbs.

The lesson was conducted physically, and students were instructed to bring their own device. The majority of learners preferred to use a laptop, an iPad, or a tablet, while some of them used their smartphones. At first, learners were instructed to write sentences with their partner for each modal verb that is in the category of possibility, ability, necessity and permission. Next, they post their sentences on Padlet based on the respective modal verbs category. After they have written their sentences, the learners are then instructed to log in to ChatGPT, and they prompt ChatGPT to analyse and give suggestions for improvement on the sentences that they have written. The learners do this for each category of modal verbs. After completing the activity, the learners were invited to complete an online questionnaire anonymously.

The data collected in this study were analysed using SPSS version 22. The guidelines for the interpretation of mean scores of the results were based on Norasmah and Salmah (2011) which categorizes the scale according to "low" (1.00-2.00), "moderately low" (2.01-3.00), "moderately high" (3.01-4.00), and "high" (4.01-5.00).

FINDINGS

In this section, the results of this study will be outlined and discussed. Based on the results gathered, the participants seem to display a high level of acceptance and attitude towards the integration of ChatGPT and Padlet in modal verbs lessons. The results were categorized into learners' acceptance and learners' attitude towards the use of ChatGPT and Padlet in learning modal verbs.

Learners' Acceptance of the Use of ChatGPT and Padlet in Learning Modal Verbs

Table 1.: Learners' Acceptance of The Use of ChatGPT and Padlet

Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
1. Using ChatGPT and Padlet helps me understand modal verbs better.	4.148	0.652	High
2. ChatGPT enhances my ability to write grammatically correct sentences using modal verbs.	4.102	0.577	High
3. Padlet allows me to collaborate effectively in grammar activities.	4.074	0.581	High
4. ChatGPT and Padlet improve the overall quality of my grammar learning.	4.103	0.550	High
5. It is easy for me to use Padlet during grammar lessons.	4.177	0.571	High
6. I find ChatGPT easy to interact with when learning about modal verbs.	4.191	0.652	High
7. Learning to use both Padlet and ChatGPT was easy for me.	4.191	0.580	High
8. I can use these tools without needing much help from others.	4.015	0.782	High
9. I plan to use ChatGPT and Padlet for future grammar exercises.	3.956	0.609	Moderately high
10. I would recommend these tools to my peers for learning grammar.	4.147	0.675	High
11. I intend to explore more ways to use technology in my English learning.	4.309	0.580	High
Overall acceptance level	4.128	0.449	High

The results from Table 1 show that the overall mean score for learners' acceptance of using ChatGPT and Padlet in learning modal verbs is 4.128, which falls under the high category. This suggests that, generally, the students accepted the use of these tools positively during grammar lessons, particularly in modal verbs lessons.

The highest mean score is recorded for the item "*I intend to explore more ways to use technology in my English learning*" with a mean score of 4.309. This indicates that the use of ChatGPT and Padlet not

only supported their understanding of modal verbs but also encouraged learners to be more open in using technology for other aspects of English learning. Other items with high mean scores include:

“I find ChatGPT easy to interact with when learning about modal verbs” (M = 4.191)

“Learning to use both Padlet and ChatGPT was easy for me” (M = 4.191)

“It is easy for me to use Padlet during grammar lessons” (M = 4.177)

These results demonstrate that learners find both tools easy to use, which is an important factor in supporting learning engagement and reducing stress, especially when dealing with challenging grammar lessons like modal verbs.

The only item with a moderately high interpretation is *“I plan to use ChatGPT and Padlet for future grammar exercises”* (M = 3.956). This slightly lower score suggests that learners appreciate using the tools in the current lesson, but this also shows that some may need more exposure or confidence before fully integrating the tools into their independent learning routines.

Learners’ Attitude Towards the Use of ChatGPT and Padlet in Learning Modal Verbs

Table 2.: Learners’ Attitude on The Use of ChatGPT and Padlet

Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
1. I enjoy learning modal verbs through digital tools like ChatGPT and Padlet.	4.118	0.680	High
2. Using ChatGPT & Padlet makes learning modal verbs more interesting.	4.191	0.580	High
3. I feel more confident in grammar (especially modal verbs usage) after using ChatGPT.	4.162	0.660	High
4. I prefer learning grammar through a combination of technology and traditional methods.	4.294	0.575	High
5. Learning modal verbs using ChatGPT and Padlet is less stressful than traditional lessons.	4.029	0.732	High
6. I feel motivated to participate in class when using ChatGPT & Padlet.	4.118	0.702	High
7. The visual and interactive features of Padlet help me stay engaged.	4.132	0.570	High
8. My lecturer's enthusiasm for using ChatGPT and Padlet	4.088	0.640	High

Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
encourages me to use them.			
9. I learn better when my lecturer combines traditional teaching with technology tools.	4.368	0.570	High
Overall attitude	4.167	0.482	High

The results in Table 2 show that the overall mean score for learners' attitude towards the use of ChatGPT and Padlet in learning modal verbs is 4.167, which falls under the high category. This suggests that learners generally have a positive attitude toward integrating these tools in their grammar lessons, particularly in learning modal verbs.

Among all the items, the highest mean score is recorded for the item *"I learn better when my lecturer combines traditional teaching with technology tools"* ($M = 4.368$). This shows that learners value a blended approach that balances both conventional and digital methods, and they respond well when their lecturer takes the initiative to incorporate tools like ChatGPT and Padlet into the lesson.

Another item with a high mean score is *"I prefer learning grammar through a combination of technology and traditional methods"* ($M = 4.294$), which further supports the idea that learners appreciate variety in teaching strategies. The use of technology does not replace the traditional way but complements it, making the learning process more meaningful and accessible.

Several other items also show high mean scores, such as:

"Using ChatGPT and Padlet makes the modal verbs lesson more interesting" ($M = 4.191$)

"I feel more confident in grammar (especially modal verbs usage) after using ChatGPT" ($M = 4.162$)

"The visual and interactive features of Padlet help me stay engaged" ($M = 4.132$)

These findings show that learners not only enjoy the tools but also feel that their understanding, confidence, and engagement have improved. In addition, learners agree that these tools reduce stress compared to traditional lessons. This is supported by the item *"Learning modal verbs using ChatGPT and Padlet is less stressful than traditional lessons,"* which has a mean score of 4.029.

Lastly, items related to motivation and teacher influence also score high:

"My lecturer's enthusiasm for using ChatGPT and Padlet encourages me to use them" ($M = 4.088$)

“I feel motivated to participate in class when using ChatGPT and Padlet” (M = 4.118)

The items above suggest that the students are influenced by their lecturer’s effort to use the tools. Thus, this reflects on how the lecturer’s role and usage of the tools positively shape students’ experience and attitude.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the incorporation of ChatGPT and Padlet in modal verbs lessons has proven to display learners’ engagement and interest in learning more about the correct use of modal verbs in sentences. This will eventually improve learners’ performance in writing. Learners reported high levels of acceptance and positive attitudes toward the usage of ChatGPT and Padlet in their grammar lessons.

This study can be further developed in the future as it does not include pre-tests and post-tests investigation due to time constraints. The number of participants is limited as this is a small-scale study. This study focused on determining students’ acceptance and attitude toward technology rather than measuring their performance or proficiency in writing sentences using the correct grammatical rules. Other studies in the future may use a larger scale of participants to gain more insight into the learners’ perceptions and performance in grammar skills.

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