Modal Verbs Of Ability And Permission Exercise At Auto English

Diploma Thesis from the year 2007 in the subject English Language and Literature Studies - Linguistics, grade: 1, University of Bucharest (Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures), 45 entries in the bibliography, language: English, abstract: Modality is a semantic concept that covers notions such as possibility, probability, permission, ability, volition, necessity and obligation. The class of modals is in many languages both syntactically and semantically highly irregular and unpredictable: modals frequently have idiosyncratic conjugational patterns and are subject to highly specialized syntactic rules. One of the main characteristic of modal verbs is their relatively imprecise and indeterminate meaning, their ambiguity: the same modal can be deontic (i.e. based on rules and regulations), but it may also involve processes, sets of knowledge or belief systems, and thus get an epistemic interpretation. In order to define the class of modals or to provide a set of environments in which a modal may be correctly or appropriately used, one must refer to many levels of language: the purely syntactic environment, as well as the logical structure, the context of the utterance, the assumptions that are shared by the speaker and the addressee, the social situation assumed by the participants in the discourse, the impression the speaker wants to make on the addressee, and so on. There is also the question of the appropriate context environments, that is, the semantic-pragmatic issue. Therefore, a complete analysis of a particular modal can only be achieved by looking both at its syntactic features and at its semantic structure; in other words, the syntax of a modal verb is based on its semantics, and these two dimensions are inseparable.

English for Academic Correspondence and Socializing is the first ever book of its kind specifically written for researchers of all disciplines whose first language is not English. With easy-to-follow rules and tips, and with authentic examples taken from real emails, referee's reports and cover letters, you will learn how to: • use strategies for understanding native speakers of English • significantly improve your listening skills • organize one-to-one meetings • feel confident at social events • manage and participate in a successful conversation • write effective emails • review other people's manuscripts - formally and informally • reply effectively and constructively to referees' reports • write cover letters to editors • use the telephone and Skype • participate in (video) conference calls • exploit standard English phrases Other books in the series: English for Presentations at International Conferences English for Writing Research Papers English for Research: Usage, Style, and Grammar English for Academic Research: Grammar Exercises English for Academic Research: Vocabulary Exercises English for Academic Research: Writing Exercises

This comprehensive and detailed analysis of second language writers' text identifies explicitly and quantifiably where their text differs from that of native speakers of English. The book is based on the results of a large-scale study of university-level native-speaker and non-native-speaker essays written in response to six prompts. Specifically, the research investigates the frequencies of uses of 68 linguistic (syntactic and lexical) and rhetorical features in essays written by advanced non-native speakers compared with those in the essays of native speakers enrolled in first-year composition courses. The selection of features for inclusion in this analysis is based on their textual functions and meanings, as identified in earlier research on English language grammar and lexis. Such analysis is valuable because it can inform the teaching of grammar and lexis, as well as discourse, and serve as a basis for second language curriculum and course design; and provide valuable insight for second language pedagogical applications of the study's findings.

A detailed account of the many uses and functions of these verbs. The nature of modality, and some controversial issues, are also discussed. How do I structure a journal article?; "Can I use 'I' in a research article?"; "Should I use an active or passive voice?" - Many such questions will be answered in this book, which documents the linguistic devices that authors use to show how they align or distance themselves from arguments and ideas, while maintaining conventions of objectivity.

This book provides a historical insight into the use and meanings of modal verbs in the language of the Early Modern English period. It investigates how William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe employ these verbs in their tragedies and history plays dating back to the end of the 16th century. Comparative analyses add to the clarity of the book and fill a gap in the research on Marlovian language, which so far has been under-investigated in contrast to the language of William Shakespeare. The findings offered here shed light on the history of modal verbs and constitute a valuable contribution to contemporary Early Modern English studies. As such, the book represents an important resource for students, teachers, and researchers involved in the study of Early Modern English language and language change.

Sign language linguists show here that all questions relevant to the linguistic investigation of spoken languages can be asked about sign languages. Conversely, questions that sign language linguists consider - even if spoken language researchers have not asked them yet - should also be asked of spoken languages. The HSK handbook Sign Language aims to provide a concise and comprehensive overview of the state of the art in sign language linguistics. It includes 44 chapters, written by leading researchers in the field, that address issues in language typology, sign language grammar, psycholinguistics, neurolinguistics, sociolinguistics, and language documentation and transcription. Crucially, all topics are presented in a way that makes them accessible to linguists who are not familiar with sign language linguistics.

Complete PET is a brand new course for the PET exam. It combines the very best in contemporary classroom practice with stimulating topics aimed at teenagers and young adults. The course covers every part of the PET exam in detail providing preparation, practice, information and advice to ensure that students are fully prepared for every part of the exam. Informed by Cambridge's unique searchable database of real exam scripts, the Cambridge Learner Corpus, and providing an official PET past exam paper from Cambridge ESOL, Complete PET is the most authentic PET exam preparation course available.

This handbook offers an in depth and comprehensive state of the art survey of the linguistic domains of modality and mood. An international team of experts in the field examine the full range of methodological and theoretical approaches to the many facets of the phenomena involved. Following an opening section that provides an introduction and historical background to the topic, the volume is divided into five parts. Parts 1 and 2 present the basic linguistic facts about the systems of modality and mood in the languages of the world, covering the semantics and the expression of different subtypes of modality and mood respectively. The authors also examine the interaction of modality and mood, mutually and with other semantic categories such as aspect, time, negation, and evidentiality. In Part 3, authors discuss the features of the modality and mood systems in five typologically different language groups, while chapters in Part 4 deal with wider perspectives on modality and mood: diachrony, areality, first language acquisition, and sign language. Finally, Part 5 looks at how modality and mood are handled in different theoretical approaches: formal syntax, functional linguistics, cognitive linguistics and construction grammar, and formal semantics.

This pack consists of the Student's Book and Workbook without answers, providing all the student's material in one place. The Student's Book fully prepares students to tackle each part of every exam paper. Grammar and vocabulary exercises train students to avoid common mistakes. The CD-ROM supports mixed ability focusing on students' own particular areas of difficulty. The Workbook consolidates and extends the language covered in the Student's Book and includes an Audio CD. Class Audio CDs, available separately, contain the recordings for the listening exercises in the Student's Book. A full practice test is available online for teachers to access.

Taiwanese Grammar: A Concise Reference is an unprecedented guide delivering clear, straightforward explanations of Taiwanese

grammar while offering insightful comparisons to Mandarin. Designed to be both functional and accessible, the text makes searching for topics quick and easy with fully cross-referenced entries and a comprehensive index. Topics covered range broadly from parts of speech (nouns, verbs, adverbs, etc.) to grammatical topics (aspect, negation, passive voice, etc.) to special topics (terms of address, pronunciation, time, etc.). This text is ideal for self-study and enables students at all levels to learn Taiwanese by building a solid foundation in grammar. Taiwanese (also known as Hokkien, Fookien, Amoy, Southern Min, or Fukienese) along with its variants is spoken by over 40 million people worldwide and is a member of the Chinese language family. Features of this text include: • Easy-to-use reference guide with cross-referenced entries and a comprehensive index • 1000+ example sentences using everyday vocabulary rendered in Taiwanese, Mandarin Chinese, and English • Character script for Taiwanese in accordance with the official selection of Taiwanese Characters by the Taiwanese Ministry of Education (2007) • Romanization provided for both Taiwanese (Pe?h-?e-j?) and Mandarin Chinese (Hàny? P?ny?n) • In-depth guide to pronunciation using English approximations and full explanations on rules for changing tones (tone sandhi) Tags: learn Taiwanese, learning Taiwanese, Taiwanese language, Taiwanese grammar, Taiwanese, Hokkien, learning Hokkien, Amoy, Southern Min, Fukienese, Fookien, Min nan

'Markedness' is a central notion in linguistic theory. This book is the first to provide a comprehensive survey of markedness relations across various grammatical categories, in a sample of closely-related speech varieties. It is based on a sample of over 100 dialects of Romani, collected and processed via the Romani Morpho-Syntax (RMS) Database - a comparative grammatical outline in electronic form, constructed by the authors between 2000-2004. Romani dialects provide an exciting sample of language change phenomena: they are oral languages, which have been separated and dispersed from some six centuries, and are strongly shaped by the influence of diverse contact languages. The book takes a typological approach to markedness, viewing it as a hierarchy among values that is conditioned by conceptual and cognitive universals. But it introduces a functional-pragmatic notion of markedness, as a grammaticalised strategy employed in order to priositise information. In what is referred to as 'dynamic', such prioritisation is influenced by an interplay of factors: the values within a category and the conceptual notions that they represent, the grammatical structure onto which the category values are mapped, and the kind of strategy that is applied in order to prioritise certain value. Consequently, the book contains a thorough survey of some 20 categories (e.g Person, Number, Gender, and so on) and their formal representation in various grammatical structures across the sample. The various accepted criteria for markedness (e.g. Complexity, Differentiation, Erosion, and so on) are examined systematically in relation to the values of each and every category, for each relevant structure. The outcome is a novel picture of how different markedness criteria may cluster for certain categories, giving a concrete reality to the hitherto rather vague notion of markedness. Borrowing and its relation to markedness is also examined, offering new insights into the motivations behind contact-induced change.

Language Education Today: Between Theory and Practice is a collection of essays that appeal to teachers of modern languages (almost exclusively English) regardless of the level of instruction. The essays deal with three main aspects of the opposition Linguistic Identity vs. Multilingualism: language education (mother tongue – Turkish, Kurdish, and Serbian; contact linguistics – the impact of Slavic and of German on modern Romanian; the opposition L1 vs. L2 – Arabic, Farsi, Urdu and Serbian vs. English; and contrastive studies – German and Macedonian); English language teaching and learning (English as a Foreign or Second Language taught to Serbian and Ruthenian students; English for Specific Purposes – Business English, Information Technology English, the English of hotel terminology, and the English of business media taught to Romanian students; English language teaching and assessing methods to Thai, Italian, Malaysian, and Croatian students; and the profile of the language teacher in the universities of the F.Y.R. of Macedonia and of Romania); and linguistic issues (with focus on some English word histories and on some English modal verbs, on French spelling and on some French verbs of animal communication, and on the Latin Plesiosauria Nomenclature).

Seminar paper from the year 2005 in the subject English Language and Literature Studies - Linguistics, grade: 1, University of Marburg, course: Problems of English Grammar, 14 entries in the bibliography, language: English, abstract: Most linguists agree that there is a particular feature of certain verbs like e.g. want, begin, try or seem that sets them apart from other verbs: their ability to be combined into chains of verbs, to 'catenate' (Lat. catena: chain). (1) I don't want to have to be forced to begin to try to make more money. (Palmer 1987: 172) The term usually used for these verbs is 'catenative verbs'. There remains some form of disagreement about almost every aspect of these verbs, however, ranging from the question which verbs actually are catenative, to the problem of how to analyse or categorise them. Some linguists even question the need to define a class of catenative verbs in the first place. Huddleston concedes that: "This is one of the most difficult areas of English grammar and despite a great deal of intensive study over the last twenty years there remains much disagreement over the most basic aspects of the analysis."(Huddleston 1997: 209) The treatment of the grammatical phenomena is further complicated by the fact that linguists tend to introduce their own categories or descriptions for existing categories. This is particularly evident in the argument of modals vs. auxiliaries vs. operators. An approach differing from that traditionally taken by grammarians is that presented by Dieter Mindt who bases his observations on the analysis of a corpus of actual language. This paper gives an overview of the theories concerning catenative verbs, their relation to the auxiliaries and their features of clause complementation. Due to the scope of work that has been published, only the main approaches will be considered. The field of semantics in particular would merit a much closer look on the effects of sentence taxis.

This Book Introduces Adult Learners Of English To The Fundamentals Of English Grammar. Basic Elements Of The Language Are Introduced In A Graded Manner With Minimum Use Of Jargon Before Introducing The More Complex Structures And Sentence Patterns. Modal Auxiliary Verb (or 'Modal Verb' or 'Modal Auxiliary') is a verb that is used with another verb (not a modal verb) to express ability, intention, necessity, obligation, permission, possibility, probability, etc.English modal auxiliary verbs - may, might, can, could, will, would, shall, should, must, need, used(to), ought(to), dare different patterns and examples may and might are used to express- possibility, compulsion, obligation, probability (in present and future) can, could are used to express- ability, probability, possibility, suggestion, request, condition will, would are used to express- action in future, present habit, compulsion, obligation shall, should are used to express- action in future, suggestion, surprise, importance or purpose need is used to express necessity used(to) is used to express- past habit ought(to) is used to express- probability, recommendation, obligation, advise dare is used to express- be brave enough toSample This:Modal Auxiliary Verb -- May and Might'May' and 'Might' are used to show Possibility and Probability'May' and 'Might' are used to ask for Permission'May' is used to give or refuse PermissionSome Important Uses of 'May' and 'Might'To say what the purpose of something isWe eat that we may live.Her prayer was that the child might live.That he might be well fed his mother starved herself.To admit that something is true before introducing another point, argument, etc.You may not return to past glory, but don't stop believing.City may not have the roads to drive sports car, but it has excellent infrastructure.It may not be wise, but using force may be lawful.I may not have deserved the house I bought, but I'm glad I own it.He may not have been loved, but he was respected.We may have had to go without food, but he is very considerate.'May' is used to express wishes and hopesMay you live prosperous life!'May' is used to give or refuse Permission [In Informal and Polite Way]You may contact us for queries regarding donations.When you have finished your work you may go home.Note: Never use 'might' to give

permission. [Always use 'may']Never use 'might not' to refuse permission. [Always use 'may not']Difference between 'May' and 'Might'Note: 'Might' is the past equivalent of 'may' in indirect speech.But it is used in the same way as 'may' to talk about the present or future.'May' denotes more possibility/probability'Might' denotes less possibility/probabilityIt may rain tomorrow (Perhaps a 75% chance) - More possibleIt might rain tomorrow (Perhaps a 50% chance) - Less possible'Might' also denotes 'would perhaps'You might attract President's attention later. (= Perhaps you would attract.)He might have to go (Perhaps he had to go.)'Might' is frequently used In conditional sentencesIf I pursued studies further, I might learn more.If I had pursued studies further, I might have learned more.'Might' has limitations while 'asking permission''Might' is very polite and formal. It is not common. It is mostly used in indirect questions.I wonder if I might work on your computer.Note: 'Maybe' is an adverb. ['Maybe' means 'perhaps']Maybe he came to know something secret and was removed from the post.ALSO NOTE:Difference Between 'May' and 'Can''May' is more formal than 'Can''May' is mostly used in 'formal' English.'Can' is mostly used in 'informal' (or spoken) English

Explores the language behaviour of speakers of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), through the lens of Gricean pragmatics. It will be of interest to a wide range of scholars across the fields of pragmatics, language contact, world Englishes, second language acquisition, and English as a second language.

Informed by the Cambridge Learner Corpus, and providing an official PET past exam paper from Cambridge ESOL, Complete PET is the most authentic exam preparation course available. Each unit of the Student's Book covers one part of each PET paper and provides thorough exam practice. Grammar and vocabulary exercises target areas that cause most problems for PET candidates, based on data from the Cambridge Learner Corpus, taken from real candidate scripts. The CD-ROM provides additional exam-style practice. A Student's Book without answers with CD-ROM, a Teacher's Book, Workbooks (with and without answers) and Class Audio CDs are also available.

The Language of Outsourced Call Centers is the first book to explore a large-scale corpus representing the typical kinds of interactions and communicative tasks in outsourced call centers located in the Philippines and serving American customers. The specific goals of this book are to conduct a corpus-based register comparison between outsourced call center interactions, face-to-face American conversations, and spontaneous telephone exchanges; and to study the dynamics of cross-cultural communication between Filipino call center agents and American callers, as well as other demographic groups of participants in outsourced call center transactions, e.g., gender of speakers, agents' experience and performance, and types of transactional tasks. The research design relies on a number of analytical approaches, including corpus linguistics and discourse analysis, and combines quantitative and qualitative examination of linguistic data in the investigation of the frequency distribution and functional characteristics of a range of lexico/syntactic features of outsourced call center discourse.

This new colour edition has been updated to conform to the revised FCE specifications.

The future of English linguistics as envisaged by the editors of Topics in English Linguistics lies in empirical studies which integrate work in English linguistics into general and theoretical linguistics on the one hand, and comparative linguistics on the other. The TiEL series features volumes that present interesting new data and analyses, and above all fresh approaches that contribute to the overall aim of the series, which is to further outstanding research in English linguistics.

Introduction to English as a Second Language is a course to prepare students for studying at IGCSE or equivalent level. Presented in a colourful updated design and offering clear, practical support for students, it follows a variety of interesting themes and topics, with a focus on skills development: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Each unit provides opportunities for thinking and discussion, along with developing research and study skills. Furthermore, each unit has a specific language-focus section to revise and consolidate key areas of language awareness and activities for vocabulary building. Audio CD is included for use with the listening activities.

Complete First for Schools is official preparation for the revised 2015 Cambridge English: First (FCE) for Schools exam. This Student's Book combines the very best in contemporary classroom practice with engaging topics aimed at younger students. The information, practice and advice contained in the course ensure that they are fully prepared for all parts of the test, with strategies and skills to maximise their score. The CD-ROM contains grammar and vocabulary exercises for motivating, flexible study. The Workbook provides extra practice of the language covered in the Student's Book. The Audio CD provides the listening material for the exercises in the Workbook. Class Audio CDs, available separately, contain the recordings for the Student's Book listening exercises.

This book will be of particular interest to anyone interested in the application of corpus linguistic techniques to language study and instruction. This volume includes selected papers from the Fourth North American Symposium, held in Indianapolis and hosted by the Indiana Center for Intercultural Communication at Indiana University Purdue University in Indianapolis (IUPUI) in November, 2002. These papers – from authors representing eight countries including the U.S., Belgium, China, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, and Spain – provide a wide range of views of and approaches to corpus linguistic. Topics range from theory and analysis to classroom application, and include the study of oral discourse as well as the study of written discourse, including internet-based discourse. Consequently, this volume is divided into two sections. The first section focuses on the use of corpus linguistics in the analysis of spoken and written discourse; the second section focuses on the direct pedagogical application of corpus linguistics, reflecting the applied foundation of this branch of linguistics.

Pichi is an Afro-Caribbean English-lexifier Creole spoken on the island of Bioko, Equatorial Guinea. It is an offshoot of 19th century Krio (Sierra Leone) and shares many characteristics with West African relatives like Nigerian Pidgin, Cameroon Pidgin, and Ghanaian Pidgin English, as well as with the English-lexifier creoles of the insular and continental Caribbean. This comprehensive description presents a detailed analysis of the grammar and phonology of Pichi. It also includes a collection of texts and wordlists. Pichi features a nominative-accusative alignment, SVO word order, adjective-noun order, prenominal determiners, and prepositions. The language has a seven-vowel system and twenty-two consonant phonemes. Pichi has a two-tone system with tonal minimal pairs, morphological tone, and tonal processes. The morphological structure is largely isolating. Pichi has a rich system of tense-aspect-mood marking, an indicative-subjunctive opposition, and a complex copular system with several suppletive forms. Many features align Pichi with the Atlantic-Congo languages spoken in the West African littoral zone. At the same time, characteristics like the prenominal position of adjectives and determiners show a typological overlap with its lexifier English, while extensive contact with Spanish has left an imprint on the lexicon and grammar as well.

Modality is a grammatical, or semantic-grammatical, category. It is an important component of human languages. This is at least the case in most European languages. To what extent is it a near-universal? This thesis is to contribute to the question. It focuses on modal verbs in English and Chinese, two genetically and geographically unrelated languages, and analyzes what these two languages have in common and how they differ in their systems of modality. To achieve the aim, the thesis adopts the theoretical framework proposed by van der Auwera (1996, 1998 with Plungian, 2001) for the typological study of modality. Its language-specific descriptions involve the morphosyntactic features, notional functions, modal logic, and diachronic development. With these descriptions, it constructs a cross-linguistic database in a uniform, parallel structure. Then on the basis of this database, it deals with the cross-linguistic issues about modality in English and Chinese. Like many of the studies in this area, this research makes use of the well-sampled data in the relevant literature, thereby assuring the same degree of representativeness. When the data do not meet this need, it resorts to computer-based corpora. In the diachronic study of Chinese modality, quantitative analysis is adopted in proposing a development path for the senses of a modal. English translation is given particular attention in the description of Chinese modality and cross-linguistic analyses. One can only know one's own language only if one compares it with other languages. The present study is conducive to a better understanding of English and Chinese. It contributes not only to the

investigation of language universals, but also to the study of human cognition and other linguistic or applied linguistic issues.

The modal verbs can and may in English and SpanishGRIN Verlag

More than 35 million adults in the United States are native speakers of a language other than English. Those adults could be at a clear disadvantage in the workplace if their business communication skills aren't up to par. Briefings Media Group, LLC announces the debut of The Practiced Business Writer, the first book designed specifically for non-native English speakers who wish--and need--to improve their business writing skills. This brand new self-study guide offers readers clear explanations of the business writing mistakes non-native speakers' make most often. With this handy reference, readers learn how to: * Avoid grammatical mistakes * Proofread for punctuation, spelling, and capitalization errors * Avoid ambiguous writing * Be concise * Choose words carefully * Write clear, simple sentences * Organize ideas so that readers will find them easy to follow The book and accompanying CD-ROM contain hundreds of real-world examples and in-depth answer keys that identify correct answers and explain why they are correct. This book is a must-have resource for all non-native English speakers who want to excel at business writing.

A foundation course in English for Secondary & Senior Secondary Classes.The aim is to help young learners increase their vocabulary and get a solid grounding in English Grammar.

Modal Auxiliary Verb (or 'Modal Verb' or 'Modal Auxiliary') is a verb that is used with another verb (not a modal verb) to express ability, intention, necessity, obligation, permission, possibility, probability, etc. English modal auxiliary verbs - may, might, can, could, will, would, shall, should, must, need, used(to), ought(to), dare | different patterns and examples | may and might are used to express- possibility, compulsion, obligation, probability (in the present and future) | can, could are used to express- ability, probability, possibility, suggestion, request, condition | will, would are used to express- action in future, present habit, compulsion, obligation | shall, should are used to express-action in future, suggestion, surprise, importance or purpose | need is used to express necessity | used(to) is used to express- past habit | ought(to) is used to express- probability, recommendation, obligation, advise | dare is used to express– be brave enough to Sample This: Modal Auxiliary Verb -- May and Might Uses of 'May' and 'Might' (1). Possibility/Probability It may rain the day after tomorrow. [= Perhaps it will rain the day after tomorrow. OR It is possible that it will rain the day after tomorrow.] He may have caught the train. [= Perhaps he caught the train. OR It is possible that he caught the train.] (2). To say what the purpose of something is Many people flatter that they may win favor. [= Many people flatter in order to win favor.] They ran so that they might arrive in time. [= They ran in order to arrive in time.] (3). To admit that something is true before introducing another point, argument, etc. It may not be wise, but using force may be lawful. [= Although it is not wise, using force may be lawful.] (4). To express wishes and hopes May you live prosperous life! May you have a good time! My teacher blessed me that I might succeed in my exams. (5). To give or refuse Permission [In Informal and Polite Way] You may not withdraw money from your bank account. [= You are not allowed to withdraw money from your bank account.] (6). To seek Permission [In Informal and Polite Way] May I borrow your book for two days? (Yes, you may.) May I come in? (No, you may not.) Difference between 'May' and 'Might' 'Might' is the past equivalent of 'may' in indirect speech. 'Might' is very polite and formal. It is not common. It is mostly used in indirect questions. I wonder if I might work on your computer. But it is used in the same way as 'may' to talk about the present or future. 'Might' is used as a less positive version of 'May' 'May' denotes more possibility/probability 'Might' denotes less possibility/probability May I use your mobile phone? Might I use your mobile phone? (= A diffident way of saying 'May I use your mobile phone?') 'Might' also denotes 'would perhaps' You might attract President's attention later. [= Perhaps you would attract.] He might have to go [= Perhaps he had to go.] 'Might' is also used to express a degree of dissatisfaction or reproach; as, You might pick up an argument with him! You might have picked up an argument with him! 'Might' has limitations while 'asking permission' Note: Avoid using 'might' to seek or give permission. [Prefer to use 'may'] | Avoid using 'might not' to refuse permission. [Prefer to use 'may not']. Using 'might' to seek or give permission is very formal and is not used very often. Might I ask your address? Might I offer you something to eat? [Exception: You can use 'might' to give permission or 'might not' to refuse permission in "indirect speech"] He asked me whether he might stay in my house. Note: 'Maybe' is an adverb. ['Maybe' means 'perhaps'] -- Maybe he came to know something secret and was removed from the post. ALSO NOTE: Difference between 'May' and 'Can' 'May' is more formal than 'Can' 'May' is mostly used in 'formal' English. 'Can' is mostly used in 'informal' (or spoken) English 'Can' is used to show ability/capability/capacity, while 'may' is never used in this sense.