



IIT Madras

BSc Degree

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Mood and Modal Verbs

Rajesh Kumar

Some examples -

- Can I tell you something?
- What can I do for you?
- I can play piano.
- I would love to hear from you.
- They may go to Canada next year.
- She might like these dresses.
- You can't (cannot) be serious.
- We must study.
- We should listen to others.

Modality and Moods

Adverbs and Modality

- Non inflectional elements like adverbs.
- Perhaps
- In all possibility
- Hedges
 - I would think (that) ...
 - If I were you ...

Modality

- Modality deals with semantic aspects of a sentence.
- Common among all modals is that they do not represent a situation as a fact.
- It deals with a range of semantic notions.
- It has following readings:
 - Possibility
 - Ability
 - Necessity
 - Certainty
 - Obligations
 - Willingness

Modals in English

Can could

May might

Must

Shall should
Will would



Tense in English

SNG

Is

Was

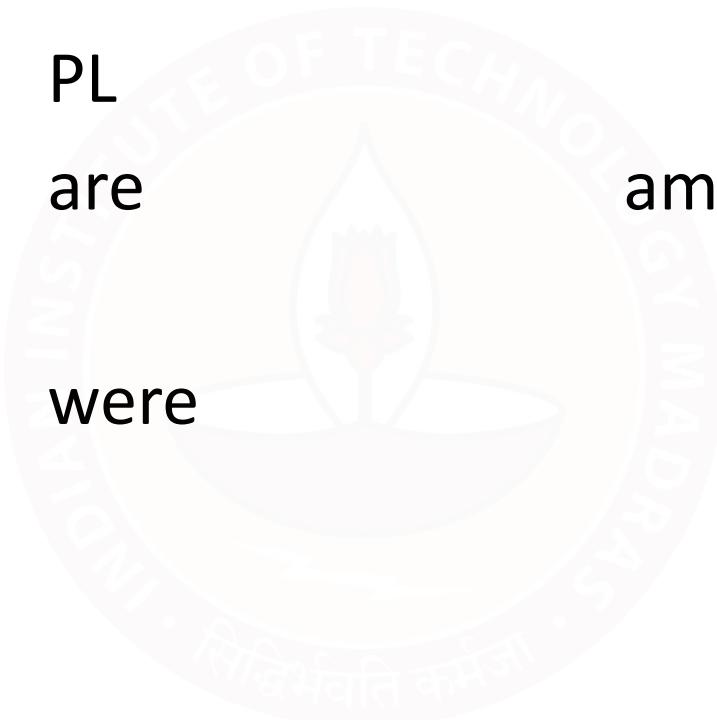
Shall/Will

PL

are

were

am



More than two readings ...

- CAN
- Anyone can become a minister. [Possibility]
- Can I ask you a questions? [Permission]
- She can walk fast. [Ability]
- They can speak several languages.

Tense Auxiliary and Modal Auxiliary

- No number and person distinction
- Does not mark tense
- Works separately for agreement, tense and negation
- Do not inflect or takes inflected verbs along
 - Do not have infinitive (like *to go*, *to come*) or –ing forms.
 - To can
 - Can^{ing}