

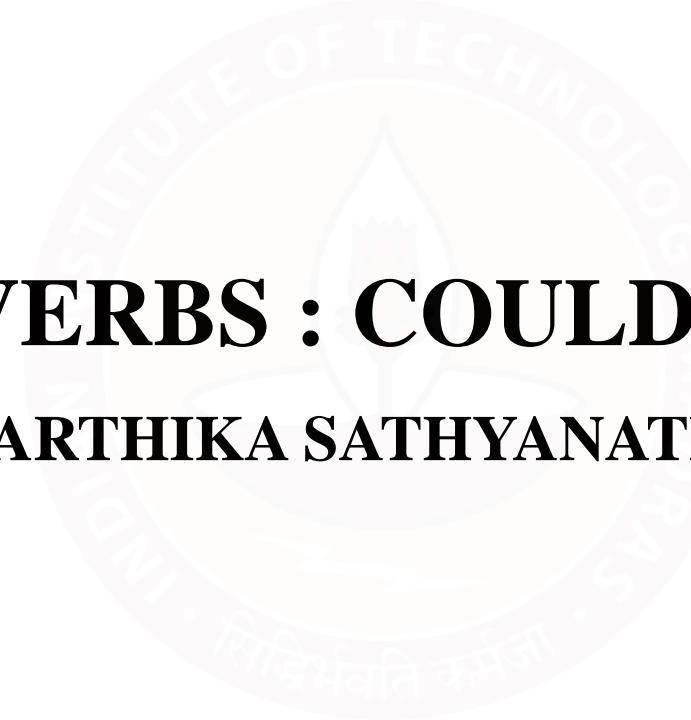
# IIT Madras

## BSc Degree

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# **MODAL VERBS : COULD vs WOULD**

## **KARTHIKA SATHYANATHAN**

# **COULD vs WOULD**

1. Both could and would are used to talk about the past.

I can run a few kilometers without any break. (present)

I could run a few kilometers without any break. (past)

I know he will pass the exam. (future)

I knew he would pass the exam. (past)

# **COULD vs WOULD**

## 2. Possible and imaginary situations.

Miss. Maya has set the question paper. The exam could be very tough.

My boss isn't responding to my mails. He could be busy.

Indicates possibility and not past form – would cannot be used in place of could

In imaginary situations, we prefer to use ‘would’.

If I had a lot of money, I would retire early. (I could retire early)

If Kishore worked hard, he would pass the exam. (He could pass the exam)

Would is used a lot more in imaginary situations.

# COULD vs WOULD

## 3. Polite expressions

### (a) Making suggestions

We could try Thai food for dinner.

We ~~would~~ try Thai food for dinner.

### (b) Making offers

Would you like some coffee?

~~Could~~ you like some tea?

### (c) Making requests

Could you please pass it on.

Would you please pass it on.

Could you please open this door for me?

Would you please open this door for me? (Very formal & polite)

Would you mind opening the window, please? (Fixed phrase)

~~Could~~ you mind opening the window please?

# COULD vs WOULD

(d) Ask for permission

Could I borrow your pen for a couple of minutes?

Would it be OK if I **borrowed** your bike for a couple of days?

Would you mind if I **borrowed** your bike for a couple of days.

(The verb should be in the past)

# ACTIVITY

1. ----- you mind sharing your notes with me?
2. Prabha ----- already speak three languages when she was 6.
3. If I became the prime minister, I would make health services free for everybody.
4. ----- I use your laptop to send an email.
5. ----- you want me to give you a ride back home?

# ANSWERS

1. **Would** you mind sharing your notes with me?
2. Prabha **could** already speak three languages when she was 6.
3. If I became the prime minister, I **would** make health services free for everybody.
4. **Could** I use your laptop to send an email.
5. **Would** you like me to give you a ride back home?