

BBC Learning English – Q & A of the Week 129

About this script

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关于台词的备注:

请注意这不是广播节目的逐字稿件。本文稿可能没有体现录制、编辑过程中对节目做出的改变。

Modal Verbs 情态动词

Feifei: 大家好, 欢迎收听《你问我答》。我是冯菲菲。

Rob: And I'm Rob. So Feifei, what are we going to do today?

Feifei: Well, we *should* try and answer a question from one of our listeners.

Rob: Ah yes, a good example of using a modal verb Feifei.

Feifei: 情态动词。I didn't realise I'd used one. In fact, to be honest, I'm not sure what one of those is.

Rob: Well don't worry. You're not the only one. Let's read this letter from Gao Xiang.

Insert

*Hello. Please could you please explain the usage of modal verbs to me?
I'm always confused about using them.
From Gao Xiang, Hangzhou*

Feifei: 这个问题来自于杭州的 Gao Xiang. 他想学习情态动词的使用方法。So Rob, I know what a verb is.

Rob: And what is it Feifei?

Feifei: A verb is a word that describes action in a sentence. 一个表示动作、行动的词。 So words like walk, run, eat and learn.

Rob: You're right, they are verbs. But now it's time to add something extra. An extra verb or a modal auxiliary verb.

Feifei: 表示动词语态的助动词。So that's two verbs but what does the extra verb do?

Rob: This is the modal verb – we just call it a modal - and its aim is to add some expression or meaning to the sentence. A bit like adding some salt and pepper to your food.

Feifei: It can change its flavour.



- Rob:** And a modal can change the meaning of a sentence.
- Feifei:** 情态动词其实就好像是给一个句子添加了感情色彩。有时候它也可能会改变一个句子的意思。
- Rob:** A modal is used before the infinitives of other verbs and we don't use the word 'to'.
- Feifei:** 情态动词通常和动词原型连用，所以在情态动词后不要使用 to.
- Rob:** So for example, we can say I must water the flowers, but not, I must to water the flowers.
- Feifei:** Hmm, it's tricky.
- Rob:** It can be and, as always, there are exceptions on how to use them. Shall we hear an example?
- Feifei:** I think we should!

Insert

- Person 1: I really must write this essay, it's due in tomorrow.*
Person 2: Well, I've got to go and meet my friends at the cinema now but I can help you with it later.

- Feifei:** 上面这为女同学说她真的必须完成她的作文。她的朋友说看完电影后会去帮她。Some friend!
- Rob:** Some friend indeed. But did you spot the modals?
- Feifei:** Must? 必须。
- Rob:** Yes. She must write that essay. Must implies it's essential, it's a necessity: she has to do it. She could also say I will write my essay.
- Feifei:** Must 还有 will 表示必须要做某事。But Rob, her friend can help later.
- Rob:** Yes, can is another modal. Can implies a possibility. It's possible for her to help later. Other words like this include could, might or may.
- Feifei:** 像 can, could, might 或是 may 这样的情态动词，通常用来表示某事可能会发生。
- Rob:** The word should is another modal that implies a probability that something will happen. Like this...

Insert

I should be able to finish my essay by tomorrow. I'm just writing the last chapter.

- Feifei:** Should 是另一个用来表示可能性的情态动词。Rob, what other times might we use a modal verb?



Rob: When asking a question. The modal you choose to use, suggests a slightly different meaning but they all add politeness to your sentence. For example...

Insert

I'm really hungry; can I have a large bag of crisps?

Rob: Can is used to ask permission. It's more polite than saying I want. Here's another one...

Insert

May I sit here?

Rob: May is used to ask even more politely.

Insert

Dad, could I go to John's party...please?

Rob: Could is used to ask for permission with some uncertainty. And...

Insert

Excuse me Mr Smith, I know you're busy but might I be able to have a word with you?

Rob: Might is used to ask for permission when there is uncertainty.

Feifei: 像 can, may, could, would and might 这样的情态动词使用在不同问句中时，可以加强句子的礼貌程度。Rob, these small words can carry a lot of meaning?

Rob: They can so you need to make sure you pick the right word. It can be confusing knowing which one to use so in next week's Question and Answer programme we'll be giving you lots more examples.

Feifei: 在下周的《你问我答》节目中，我们将会通过更多例子来进一步讲解情态动词的使用方法。But hopefully we've helped Gao Xiang understand what a modal verb is.

Rob: He could be using them in no time.

Feifei: Rob, you squeezed in one more modal verb there, well done!

Rob: Thanks. It was nothing!

Feifei: 欢迎大家发邮件给我们来提出你在英语学习中遇到的问题。邮箱地址是 questions.chinaelt@bbc.co.uk

Rob: We look forward to hearing from you.

Both: Bye bye.