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A Practical Exploration of High School English Textbooks Based on the Three-Dimensional Dynamic Grammar View—Taking the Grammar Teaching Design of "Modal Verbs" in PEP Compulsory 3 as an Example

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Abstract. In recent years, competency-based orientation has become an important objective of high school English instruction. Nevertheless, there is still a relatively common problem in grammar teaching. An excessive attention to rules and less to application results in students' lack of flexibility in using grammatical knowledge in real situations. The three-dimensional dynamic grammar view (Form—Meaning—Use) proposed by the National English Curriculum Standards for Senior High School provides an innovative approach for grammar teaching. However, there exist some shortcoming in the design of relevant parts in existing textbooks. Thereby, the paper takes the three-dimensional dynamic grammar view as a theoretical clue. Taking "modal verbs" in People's Education Press (PEP) Compulsory 3 textbook as the research object, the grammar teaching design is carried out. By means of textbook analysis, teaching case analysis and questionnaire survey, the applications effects of grammar teaching are explored from three aspects - textbook design, context creation and communicative application. The results show that the "three-dimensional grammar view" can promote students' understanding of grammatical forms and pragmatic ability, so as to realize the function of "learning for use". This paper attempts to find out some deficiencies in the textbook in contextual authenticity and task design, and makes some theoretical and practical references for grammar teaching and grammar learning under the background of core quality. This holds positive significance for promoting transformation in classroom teaching.

Keywords: Three-dimensional dynamic grammar view, Modal verbs, Grammar teaching, English textbook evaluation

1. Introduction

The *General English Curriculum Standards for Senior High School (2017 Edition, 2020 Revision)* (hereinafter referred to as the *Curriculum Standards*) states, "The goal of high school English grammar teaching is to enable students, on the basis of further consolidating and expanding existing grammatical knowledge, to appropriately use the learned grammatical knowledge in specific

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contexts to understand and express meaning, and to further enhance their English grammatical awareness." Moreover, the Curriculum Standards also points out that "the view of grammar for English teaching advocated by these curriculum standards is a view of grammar about 'form-meaning-use' three-dimensional dynamic grammar, which is oriented towards language application. Grammar participates in conveying the basic meaning of discourse, and the choice of grammatical form depends on the pragmatic meaning expressed in the specific context." [1] This idea requires grammar teaching to be oriented to language use, concentrate on students' comprehension and expression of meaning in real contexts, as well as the "form-meaning-use" unity of grammar knowledge. This puts higher requirements on textbook design and grammar teaching, meaning that grammar teaching should pass traditional explanation of formal rules, and pay more attention to the meaning construction and actual application of language. However, there are still some problems about grammar section design of current high school English textbooks, such as lack of contextual authenticity, single task design, and separation of learning and application. This makes it difficult for students to bridge the gap between knowledge comprehension and communicative application during the grammar learning process.

Modal verbs constitute an important part of high school English grammar teaching. Their grammatical features, usage, and expressive functions hold a significant position in instruction and teaching, which possess the following characteristics: Grammatical features: Modal verbs cannot function as main verbs independently, they can only form predicates with the base form of the main verb. They do not inflect for person or number and have no non-finite forms. Diverse usage: Modal verbs can express ability, permission, deduction, suggestion, obligation, etc., possessing rich semantics and functions. Teaching difficulties: The usage of modal verbs is complex and polysemous, often confusing students, such as distinguishing "may" from "might" and "must" from "have to."

This paper adopts the "three-dimensional dynamic grammar view" as its theoretical framework. This theory emphasizes that grammar teaching should take those into account: language structure (form), semantic function (meaning), and pragmatic context (use), enabling students to flexibly use grammatical knowledge in real communication. Currently, academic research on the teaching and study of modal verbs mainly focuses on the following aspects: First, the scientific nature of the three-dimensional grammar view. Wu Qinlin analyzed and compared the textbook compilation under the guidance of the three-dimensional dynamic grammar view of the theoretical effectiveness through a comparative analysis method, and concluded that "the new textbooks have the advantage of implementing the three-dimensional dynamic grammar view." [2] Second, related grammar teaching methods and strategies. Chen Zixuan and Shi Jinyuan analyzed and constructed a grammar learning system involving perceiving grammar, discovering grammar, inducing grammar, practicing grammar, and applying grammar. They concluded that grammar teaching methods and the three-dimensional grammar grammar theory can enhance students' English grammar levels, and can attain the teaching goal of "learning for using." [3] Hou Shuchen and Yang Na practiced multi-module grammar application under the guidance of the three-dimensional dynamic grammar view, deepened the practice module of

grammar application. And they finally determined that teachers shall have thorough understand of the three-dimensional dynamic grammar view of "form-meaning-use" which is oriented to language use proposed by the Curriculum Standards. Teachers also need to implement grammar teaching with the Curriculum Standards concept, and carefully design teaching activities [4]. Third, research about specific grammar points such as clauses. Zhang Yuan sorted out the text around the topic of non-restrictive attributive clauses and and researched them on the nature, meaning and usage, and

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designed teaching activities [5]. By designing contextualization through context creation, cooperative learning, and multi-modal resources, Yang Jianguo and Zhou Hailan deepened students' understanding and application of attributive clauses [6]. Through practical interactive activities by combining real contexts, and expanding classroom design, Cheng Xinxin further enhanced the classroom teaching efficiency under the guidance of the three-dimensional dynamic grammar view. But Cheng also mentioned the lack of logical connection between different parts of classroom design [7]. However, summarizing the above discussions, what aspects of the high - school textbook are less researched and more systematically reflect the three-dimensional grammar view proposed in the Curriculum Standards in authentic contexts. Therefore, this study, under the guidance of the three-dimensional dynamic grammar view, through the analysis of textbooks and questionnaire data, digs and explores the actual dilemma facing the current grammar teaching in terms of context design and task design. Then, it combines theoretical discussion and empirical results, and directly points to the teaching optimization, which provides operable paths and implementation basis for promoting grammar teaching from "knowledge transfer" to "the application of multiple capabilities in situational environment" as well.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. The three-dimensional dynamic grammar view

According to the *General English Curriculum Standards for Senior High School (2017 Edition, 2020 Revision)* (hereinafter referred to as the *Curriculum Standards*), "The view of grammar for English teaching advocated by these curriculum standards is a 'form-meaning-use' three-dimensional dynamic view of grammar, oriented towards language use. Grammar participates in conveying the basic meaning of discourse, and the choice of grammatical form depends on the pragmatic meaning expressed in the specific context." The three-dimensional dynamic grammar view changes the static description mode of traditional grammar study, taking language as a dynamic whole that acts synergistically from three dimensions.This theory not only highlights that grammatical structures do not operate in isolation, but also underscores that contexts and language are intertwined. It suggests that grammatical structures are flexibly exhibited in actual communication, adapting to the context and the user's needs. "Larsen-Freeman, in her book Teaching Language:From Grammar to Grammaring, further clarified the concept of 'grammaring,' arguing that grammar rules themselves should not be the ultimate goal of grammar teaching; rather, grammaring is." [8] As the Curriculum Standards stipulate in the compulsory grammar knowledge content requirements: "The ultimate goal of learning grammar is to effectively use grammatical knowledge in context to understand and express meaning," and "Use the learned grammatical knowledge to understand the basic meaning of oral and written texts, describe people, objects, situations, and events in real and imaginary worlds, simply express opinions, intentions, and emotional attitudes, and engage in general interpersonal communication in daily life." [9]

Form means how the grammar is constructed. This is the basis of grammar. For example, the modal verb "must" is followed by the base form of the verb "do," and its negative form is "must not (mustn't)." Meaning then describes what the grammar means. This goes beyond literal translation, which involves explaining it to explain the functional meaning, for example, the meaning of "must" is not only "must" but also a "very sure deduction". Use indicates the use by whom and for the purpose. This is the most important part, emphasizing the communicative function and contextual appropriateness of grammar, and focusing on the connection between grammar itself and other linguistic and extra-linguistic elements. Larsen-Freeman emphasizes that "mastering the use of

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grammatical structures has a dual connotation: ensuring both the accuracy of grammar use and its appropriateness." [10]For example, a boss telling an employee "You must finish this by 5 PM" conveys a mandatory order, while telling a friend "You must come to my party" can not be expressed by a boss to an employee. This is also the essential difference compared to the traditional "static, rule-based" grammar teaching①. And it makes the original fixed and less flexible teaching mode present a more flexible and dynamic one. It also shows more essential characteristics of grammar from a dynamic perspective: the choice of grammar is not fixed but changes dynamically according to the communication setting, object, purpose, and tone all the time; grammar is a tool serving the expression of meaning, based on the subtle details of meaning to convey changes in grammar selection; the ultimate goal of grammar learning is to communicate effectively and appropriately, not merely to master a set of rule, and the grammar is not just a set of rules.

The introduction of the three-dimensional dynamic grammar view in the Curriculum Standards also further expresses the change trend of grammar teaching: changing a "knowledge-based" to a "competency-based" perspective, where the goal is no longer for students to "know" which modal verbs exist, but for them to "be able to use" these modal verbs to express thoughts. Moving from "mechanical repeating and drilling" to "meaning exploration". It can change the teaching emphasis from asking students to fill in sentences repeatedly (such as the sentence types such as "He knows the answer, He must know the answer" to "must tell why?" "why can't you use might?What's the

① Traditional grammar teaching: Focuses solely on formal rules, such as mechanical repetition exercises targeting fixed structures for memorization, while ignoring the specific contexts and real-world communicative functions of grammar application.

difference of certainty in the two?" This guides students to explore questions. Thereby deepening understanding of grammatical meaning differentiation. By the way, transitioning from "decontextualized"(or to say as not connected with context) to "authentic context," the grammar points can be learned embedded in the meaningful dialogues, texts and real life cases, so that students can learn about the situations and pragmatic functions of their usages.In view of this, English textbooks still need to make the following adjustments: From the perspective of the arrangement and design of grammar, grammar sections should no longer be single and only be the grammar learning.Rather, it should be integrated and implemented in the listening, reading, and writing task deeply under the unit theme. For example, in a unit about "MONEY," students might learn modal verbs expressing "suggestion" (should, ought to), "prohibition" (mustn't, can't), and "possibility" (may, could). Hao Yanmei and Ma Yanfeng, in their suggestions for contextual design, also proposed innovating teaching contexts. They suggested combining grammar with students' life experiences, and guiding students to understand grammatical structures in real contexts. For example, designing reporting activities related to campus news allows students to master grammatical knowledge through practice, stimulate learning interest, and enhance internalization effectiveness [11]. In terms of exercise design, reduce the number and amount of exercises which are isolated, form-focused and filling-in-the-blank or sentence transformation. Moreover, increase contextual multiple-choice questions, such as providing mini-dialogues or short paragraphs for students to choose the most appropriate modal verb. After discussion and explanation, different choices whether students choose or not can further deepen understanding and application of modal verb knowledge. Including dialogue completion tasks can assist students to understand and use grammar knowledge. Students can use appropriate modal verbs to complete sentences in authentic dialogues. Also incorporating writing output tasks based on using a certain number of modal verbs with a text conveying intended meanings such as requests, possibilities, need be considered. In the explanation sections and content presentation, besides using tables to list rules, leverage example

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sentences, texts, illustrations, and audio to collectively create a context for understanding the usage of modal verbs, and clearly point out their functional differences.

2.2. Modal verbs

The appendix of the PEP textbook describes modal verbs as follows: Modal verbs express the speaker's attitude towards a particular action or state [12]. Basic features include: Formally , modal verbs lack the various inflections of lexical verbs; they only have a few past forms like could, would, had to, might. Other modal verbs like must and ought to have the same form for both present and past. Semantically , most modal verbs have multiple meanings. For example, "can" can express "ability," "permission," "possibility," etc. In terms of use , modal verbs, like auxiliary verbs, are followed by the base form of the main verb to constitute the predicate. The specific lexical choice is determined by the context and communicative intention, considering the degree of certainty the speaker wishes to convey and the nature of the interaction.

2.3. Thematic grammar appropriateness

The Curriculum Standards requirement analysis: The ability to accurately select modal verbs in authentic contexts to express varying degrees of certainty.

This is a specific requirement of Academic Quality Level 3 (targeting the college entrance examination level) and a direct manifestation of the three-dimensional dynamic grammar view in the teaching of modal verbs. Authentic context means that the test question or teaching task will not present an isolated sentence. It will provide a short dialogue, a short paragraph, or a specific life scenario with background information. Students need to understand the context first to make the correct choice.

Example:

"-Look! Jane is carrying a pair of tennis rackets. -She be going to play tennis."

"The servant knew Henry (1)be hungry (past possibility), so he (2)bring food later (past future). But the owner thought Henry (3)be a thief (high certainty)."

In dialogue a, the visual scenario provided by "Look!" constitutes the authentic context. It gives a real dialogue that can be used in life. Students need to make an accurate choice, judging the different degrees of certainty expressed by the possible completions. This requires students not only to know the meanings of all options but also to accurately understand their subtle differences in certainty. In the example above, the options might include "must", "may", "can't." Guessing and giving the answer that she must be going to play tennis upon seeing tennis rackets best matches the speaker's degree of certainty. So "must" is the most accurate and right choice for answer. Choosing "may" (showing that it is possible) indicates insufficient certainty and is not accurate enough; choosing "can't" (showing it is impossible) is completely wrong. Students need to master the hierarchical relationship of modal verbs when expressing deduction and the degree of certainty. And then students should be able to select the most appropriate word according to the degree of certainty required by the context.

In dialogue b, the question is adapted from the story in the textbook, which is also the actual application scenario in life experience. The knowledge point of form change according to temporality of modal verb is involved, and it also requires students to connect different contents of learning and understand the meaning of sentences to answer.

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3. Textbook design evaluation

3.1. Evaluation process

We choose Unit 5, MONEY in PEP Compulsory 3 as the evaluation Unit. Under the guidance of the three-dimensional dynamic grammar view, we explore how to present modal verbs as the grammar point of this Unit. The source text is an adapted script from Act 1,

Scene 3 of Mark Twain's short story The Million Pound Note. It includes a great number of modal verbs with different meanings and usages.

Based on the theoretical principles of the three-dimensional dynamic grammar view, a sentence-by-sentence analysis of the main unit text, which is the Reading and Writing section, is conducted. All modal verbs appearing (e.g., can, could, may, might, must, should, would) are identified and counted. The meaning and usage of these structures are analyzed specifically to explore the functional meanings and how is being represented in the specific context (e.g., does "must" express "obligation" or "high certainty deduction?"). We also assess whether the context provided is authentic, typical, and helpful for students to understand why and when to use the structure, not just how to use it.

The exercises in the textbook's "Discovering Useful Structures" section and the "Using Structures" exercises for this unit in the "WORKBOOK" section are organized according to whether they focus on, with particular attention to, form practice, meaning understanding, or usage distinction, and whether they connect to input the text or not.

The grammar explanations related to modal verbs in the "APPENDICES" section at the end of the textbook are analyzed. The coherence between the grammar explanation section and the text is evaluated, and text is understood in terms of example forms and meanings.

3.2. Target grammar point frequency and meaning analysis

The following table selects the main dialogues in Scene 3, Act 1 of the classic play The Million Pound Note, and analyzes the 11 examples of sentences in which modal verbs appear. With the core logic of "Source Location-Grammatical Analysis-Contextual Interpretation", the table clearly points out the source of each example sentence location, summarizes the occurrence of modals, and analyzes the functional orientation and tone combination of modal verbs, the characters' identities (e.g., the nobility of the wealthy brothers, Henry's embarrassment) and the dialogue context.

Table 1. Compilation of modal verbs in the text

No.	Example Sentence	Source (Act/Scene/Line)	Modal Verb	Function and Context Analysis
1	Young man, would you step inside a moment, please?	ACT 1, SCENE 3, Line 8	would	Expresses a polite request or instruction. Using "would" shows the speaker's high social status and refined manner, making the tone more polite than "will."
2	May we ask what you're doing in this country and what your plans are?	ACT 1, SCENE 3, Line 21	may	Expresses a request for permission in a formal and polite way, reflecting the speaking style of the upper class.
3	Well, I can't say that I have any plans.	ACT 1, SCENE 3, Line 23	can't	Expresses inability or uncertainty, showing Henry's confused and unsure state of mind.

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Table 1. (continued)

4	Well, you mustn't worry about this.	ACT 1, SCENE 3, Line 38	mustn't	Expresses strong advice or gentle prohibition. The tone is firm but used to comfort Henry and emphasize reassurance.
5	Could you offer me work here?	ACT 1, SCENE 3, Line 43	could	Expresses a tentative and polite request. "Could" is softer than "can", matching Henry's poor and embarrassed situation.
6	If you don't mind, may I ask you how much money you have?	ACT 1, SCENE 3, Line 45	may	Expresses a polite request for permission. Although the question is personal, "may" keeps the tone formal and polite.
7	Well, it may seem lucky to you but not to me!	ACT 1, SCENE 3, Line 49	may	Expresses possibility or speculation. Henry admits one possible opinion while expressing his own different feelings.
8	Now if you'll excuse me, I ought to be on my way.	ACT 1, SCENE 3, Line 52	ought to	Expresses obligation or social appropriateness. It is slightly stronger and more formal than "should", showing Henry's wish to leave politely.
9	You mustn't think we don't care about you.	ACT 1, SCENE 3, Line 54	mustn't	Expresses strong advice to avoid misunderstanding. The tone is earnest and firm, with the same function as Example 4.
10	You can't open it until two o'clock.	ACT 1, SCENE 3, Line 62	can't	Expresses a strict prohibition based on the brothers' experiment rule.
11	Would you please come in?	ACT 1, SCENE 3, Line 13	would	Expresses a polite invitation. The use of "would" makes the invitation formal and courteous.

With a high frequency of 11 modals in this limited script dialogue, modal verbs are indispensable words in authentic and idiomatic dialogue structures. Among them, would (2 times), may (3 times), mustn't (2 times), and can't (2 times) are the most frequently used. Their functions are highly concentrated in interpersonal interaction : polite requests/invitations (examples 1,5,11) use "would" and "could," reflecting social distance and politeness principles; requesting permission (examples 2,6) uses "may," reflecting respect and formality in conversation; expressing strong attitudes (advice and prohibition) (examples 4,9,10) uses "mustn't" and "can't," with firm tones, used to set rules and express strong intentions; expressing deduction and possibility (examples 3,7) uses "can't" and "may," expressing the protagonist's uncertainty and subjective speculation.

3.3. Analysis of textbook exercise design

The main content of the grammar practice part of the modal verbs of the main text is mainly: Finding out modal verbs and analyzing in the text according to functions/meanings. Filling of long thinking texts of the text regarding modal verbs.Discuss the text content using modal verbs in groups. The WORKBOOK part, which is an after-text part after the text part, contains exercises such as Analyzing the meaning of and translation of sentences containing modal verbs. Besides, some part of exercises might be taken into account, like the completion of sentences with modal verbs in some specific contexts, and the completion of dialogues with modal verbs in some specific situations.

Analyzing the topic design of the textbook, learners need to return to the text based on given functional meanings, and then identify and analyze the meanings and functions of those modal verbs. This closely links function and form, using the specific context of the text for empirical analysis, so as to strengthen their understanding of the dynamic connections among different aspects

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of grammar. Learners should consciously try to apply the learned modal verbs in the group discussion task. In order to speculate, evaluate, put forward hypotheses and negotiate opinions, learners should continue to consolidate the real use in the group discussion task on the basis of their own grammatical knowledge. The "WORKBOOK" exercises serve as supplements and can expand the training context of the text with a more far-reaching application. Analyzing meaning and translating sentences focuses on precise interpretation of meaning. It is aimed at strengthening the understanding of the core ideas and knowledge of modal verbs. The main value of this design lies in its good discourse nature and practical significance. It can effectively move the teaching of modal verbs from single rule teaching to meaningful text explanation, exploration and real communication.

In addition, the "searching for earrings" dialogue exercise is representative of the "WORKBOOK" based on the situational dialogue completion exercises. It provides a small but complete condition design for testing learners' understanding and learning of modal verbs. Searching for a lost personal item is a high-frequency and easy-to-happen event in real life. There exists a natural expectation for the dialogue process: a) Make deduction, in which both of them need to make a number of guesses about the location of the earrings; b) Make judgement, in which the two of them need to judge if one of the ideas is possible or not, and need to rank them according to probability and certainty; c) Make suggestion, in which one of them or both of them offer the search plan or action plan next; d) Express of certainty or uncertainty, in which both of them need to express degree of certainty of own and the partner's deduction and suggestion. This inherent communicative need makes the use of modal verbs not a mechanical fill-in-the-blank exercise but a necessary linguistic resource for effective communication. If the learners can not activate the relevant modal verbs, they can not effectively and appropriately realize communicative acts such as deduction and suggestion, let alone the required and basic communicative way. The "searching for earrings" situation dialogue exercise is not a simple grammar exercises to fill in the gaps. It is very authentic, communicatory, and functional, and truly reflects the actual application of modal verbs.

With analyzing the modal verb grammar exercises in this unit, it is found that their design follows a progressive, interlocking learning system: Discovery (identifying in text) → Practice (controlled exercises) → Output (discussion tasks). This system effectively integrates the three-dimensional grammar view of "form-meaning-use" into tasks at different levels, to demonstrate the process of the learner's grammar knowledge transforming into communicative competence. This aligns with the task-based orientation of the three-dimensional dynamic grammar view.

4. Analysis of questionnaire data

4.1. Overview

In the pre-stage of this study, 216 questionnaires were distributed, and a total of 201 were actually recovered; Invalid questionnaires were 9, and the number of valid questionnaires was 192, and we investigated the teaching feedback and optimization direction of grammar modules in high school textbooks. Through the analysis of the returned questionnaires, it is summarized that there are great differences in respondents' identification of grammar points in the textbook. Approximately 68% of the respondents can correctly connect grammar points with the textual context. However, only 41% of the answers in the all three-dimensional analysis dimension of "form-meaning-use" covered all three levels, which represents a weakness in systematic grammatical cognition.

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4.2. Response analysis

(1) Respondent Group Composition

The returned data shows that 90.63% of the respondents were Grade 12 students (or to be called as Senior 3 students in high school). Such an extreme skew in the structure of sample was largely driven by the impact of the textbook version. During the data collection phase, only Grade 12 students were surely known to have studied the Compulsory 3 textbook content.

(2) Basic Knowledge Mastery

Table 2. Questionnaire collection – analysis of basic knowledge responses

Question Type	Specific Content Assessed	Corresponding Option/Code/Grammar Point	Correct Rate	Conclusion
Grammar Dimension Matching	Form	B (Morphological difference between "must" and "might")	98.36%	The vast majority of students correctly understand the definitions of the three grammar dimensions.
	Meaning	C ("Could" indicates a certain possibility)	96.72%	
	Use	A (Whether it is appropriate in a social context)	95.08%	
Modal Verb Classification	may go	Present deduction (Code 1)	93.44%	Students demonstrate a good grasp of the tense forms and the concept of using modal verbs for deduction.
	must have left	Past deduction (Code 2)	93.44%	
	would later admit	Past future (Code 3)	100%	
Textbook Context Fill-in	Three-dimensional grammar analysis - Form	Modal verb + base form of verb	91.80%	Students can generally select appropriate modal verbs based on context, reflecting understanding of "possibility," "past future," and "high certainty."
	Three-dimensional grammar analysis - Meaning	Expresses possibility	96.72%	
	Three-dimensional grammar analysis - Use	Reflects a guess	96.72%	
	Fill-in-the-blank (1)	might	91.80%	
	Fill-in-the-blank (2)	would	93.44%	
	Fill-in-the-blank (3)	must have	88.53%	
Deduction Fill-in	Fill-in (1)	couldn't	96.72%	Students can correctly choose modal verbs based on logical relationships (negative deduction / hypothetical past action).
	Fill-in (2)	would	98.36%	

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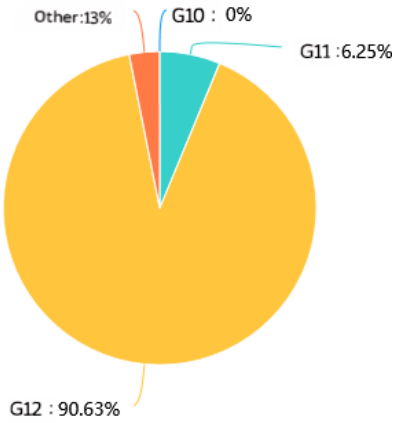


Figure 1. Questionnaire collection – respondent distribution

Combining the above table, the vast majority of questions have correct rates exceeding 90%. The high correct rates for items like the morphological difference between "must" and "might" (98.36%) and understanding the core meaning of "could" indicating possibility (96.72%) further reflect students' solid grasp of basic modal verb usage , including the three grammar dimensions, tense forms for deduction, and application in simple contexts.

(3) Textbook Grammar Recognition

"In this displayed section, character O's first utterance and last utterance reflect a specific grammar point from that unit. What is that grammar point?

DIALOGUE:

O: Now we can decide the result of the bet which Roderick and I made. If you've won for me, you shall have any jobs as my gift. Have you got the million-pound bank note?

H: Here it is, sir. ...

O: But wait, wait! The job, you know. I ought to give you a job, as I promised [13]."

The grammar point reflected in this section is the usage of modal verbs. In the dialogue, character O uses "shall do" to express a "promise/assurance" and "ought to do" to express an "obligation/duty" (or strong advice based on social expectation).

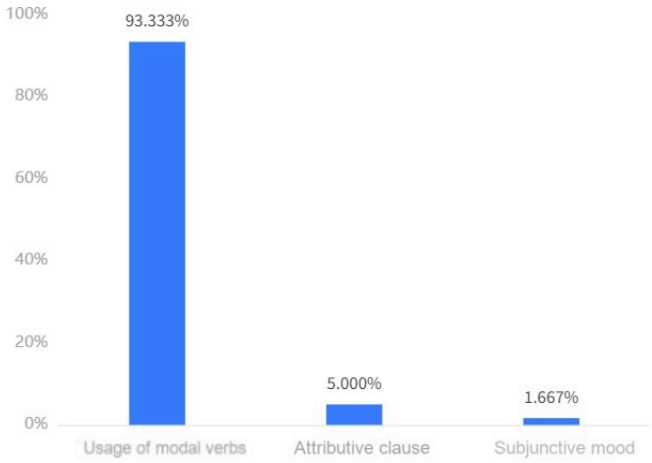


Figure 2. Questionnaire collection – respondents' identification of grammar points

From the statistical results, over 90% of students possess contextual grammar recognition ability, accurately extracting the target grammar point—modal verb usage—from the authentic dialogue.

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They also grasp the semantic functions of modal verbs, distinguishing subtle semantic differences like "promise" vs. "responsibility or advice." A few students confuse grammar concepts, confusing modal verbs with other structures like compound sentences or grammatical mood, indicating that systematic understanding of the grammar framework needs strengthening.

Regarding the learning design for modal verbs, knowledge-wise, they express multiple functions, such as "necessity, possibility, obligation, request, suggestion, intention." Activities guide students to find modal verbs in previously learned texts and discuss their different functions—an activity involving perceiving and inducing grammatical rules from discourse. Another activity involves filling in appropriate modal verbs in a context about encountering difficulties while traveling. The theme is closely related to the main text The Million Pound Note (strangers got in trouble), achieving grammar use in a meaningful context. Pair discussion tasks require students to discuss the plot of the main text The Million Pound Note and consciously use modal verbs in their dialogue; this is an output part for transforming grammatical knowledge into communicative competence.

The exercises are placed in meaningful contexts, especially closely linked to the unit theme "The Value of Money" and the main text story, making grammar learning no longer isolated. They follow a learning process of "Discovery → Practice → Output," helping students gradually internalize and master grammatical knowledge.

Organizing the feedback on the grammar explanation sections in the textbook reveals that this grammar module features fixed positioning and clear organization. Knowledge points are generally concentrated in the middle of the unit, forming an independent section, convenient for students to quickly locate. They follow a three-stage progressive structure of "rule presentation → semantic analysis → example application." However, significant shortcomings still exist in practical application: the fixed partition design leads to high module repetitiveness and lack of flexibility. Simultaneously, due to insufficient explanation of the relation between grammatical forms and usage scenarios, students often only master surface rules and lack practical application ability. In terms of example design, although memory is strengthened through life-like scenarios and comparative example sentences, the types are limited and lack multi-modal presentation (such as videos, interactive dialogues), making it difficult to sustain the interest of advanced learners. Additionally, supporting exercises have shortcomings, mostly focusing on rule reproduction and lacking open-ended tasks in authentic contexts (such as situational writing, error analysis), severely limiting the transfer effect of knowledge.

Table 3. Textbook design feedback

Teaching Design Features	Actual Textbook Feedback	Existing Contradictions
Emphasizes authentic context application	Single example types, lack of multi-modal support	Teaching intent not fully supported by textbook resources
Values communicative output	Insufficient supporting exercises, lack of open-ended tasks	The output link lacks support from textbook resources
Focuses on the connection of usage scenarios	Insufficient explanation of the connection between form and scenario	Students' application ability cultivation is hindered

The position of the grammar section in the textbook is fixed and the arrangement is modeled. Although it is easy to find and lock their gazes on those texts, it is difficult to adapt to diverse teaching paces and student differences. Teaching emphasizes real context and communicative competence, but the lack of examples and closed exercises in the textbook hinders students' leap from "mastering rules" to "developing abilities." Teaching design focuses on the comprehensive

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ability of the development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. But the textbook lacks corresponding multi-modal resources and open tasks. This limits the overall development of language ability. At the same time, in order to combine the application with theoretical learning closely, there is no clear and straightforward explanation of grammatical rules in the grammatical structure part, which is implemented in the textbook, which brings inconvenience to students ' learning.

(4) Grammar Learning Demands

Among the multi-dimensional needs of grammar learning, learners' demands at the form level and practical use level are significantly higher than their attention to the meaning level. As shown in Figure 7, 78.13% of respondents hope to strengthen the showcasing of formal variants (e.g., negatives, interrogatives), 73.44% tend to increase examples of language use in real scenarios (e.g., video clips). However, learners focusing on meaning gradient diagrams is 57.81%, significantly lower than the frontier two demands, which indicates that learners have higher expectations for the explicit presentation of grammatical structures and their application mechanisms in authentic contexts. The arrangement of grammar teaching resources should further respond to this tendency to enhance the targeting and practicality of learning content. For example, introducing and using multi-modal examples such as video clips, dialogue recordings, and pictures combinations to enhance contextual authenticity and learning interest. Moreover, increasing task-based activities such as situational writing, role-playing, and error analysis, can provide supplementary materials and activity suggestions for grammar teaching and promote knowledge transfer and ability transformation.

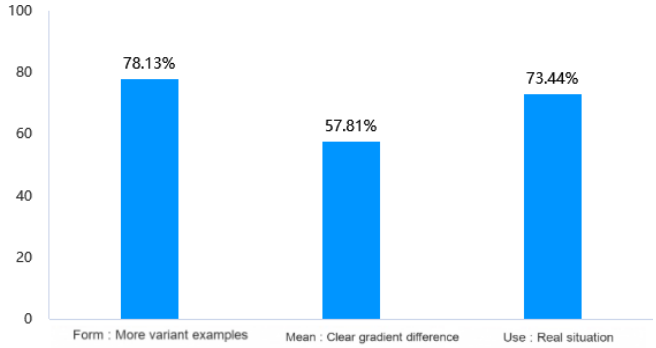


Figure 3. Questionnaire collection – feedback on textbook grammar learning needs

(5) Summary

The grammar sections in high school textbooks are effective in transmitting basic knowledge points. Students therefore have a solid grasp of basic rules for core grammar like modal verbs, and the textbook's design concept of "theme relation + progressive activities" aligns

with the three-dimensional dynamic grammar view. However, at the same time, there are some problems in the textbooks, such as module solidification, single example, closed practice and lack of multi-modal resources, making it difficult to achieve the teaching goal of "communicative competence cultivation." Future optimization needs to focus on strengthening the relationship of "form-scenario-application." Through flexible module design, diversified example presentation, and open task settings, we can help students achieve the leap from "mastering grammatical rules" to "developing language abilities."

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5. Suggestions for textbook optimization and countermeasures

5.1. Implement a "main + supplementary" dual-module design

Maintain stability in the main module: The main module of core grammar knowledge is retained in the middle of the unit, and the characteristics of 'Independent Partition' are continued. This ensures students can quickly locate basic rules and core examples, meeting regular learning and review needs.

Enhance flexibility with supplementary modules: Based on the relevance between grammar points and unit content, add "Grammar Micro-Annotation" supplementary modules integrated within the text itself (e.g., in margins or footnotes). For example, in the 'Million Pounds' text, the modal verb 'would' is used to indicate the past and future sentences, and the 'Grammatical Link': Past future use of 'would' (would + base form). Compare it with its use for polite requests (e.g., 'Would you...?') seen earlier." This is briefly relevant with the specific instance in the text with the corresponding explanation in the main grammar module, achieving "just-in-time" continuation of "text perception - rule linkage."

5.2. Design layered and flexible content within the main module

Divide the main module's content presentation into three areas:

"Basic Essentials": Contains core definitions of grammar rules (e.g., "Must expresses strong obligation or high certainty deduction") and fundamental example sentences to meet the needs of all students.

"Usage Notes": Supplements the correlation analysis of grammatical forms and scenes to meet the application needs of middle-level students.

"Extension": Sets open-ended questions or small research tasks. For example: "Comparing the tone differences between may and might in the request scene." This stimulates the exploration interest of advanced learners.

5.3. Supplement visual content for building a "grammar knowledge network"

(1) To address the problem of students confusing grammar concepts, add a "Grammar Connections" diagram at the end of the unit grammar module:

Connect the modal verbs in this unit with previously learned grammar points such as tenses or mood, and making signs to distinguish features. For example: "Modal verbs for deduction (must, might, can't) vs. Future tense (will): 'Will' expresses a future fact/prediction; modals express a degree of certainty about a present or past situation."

Vertically analyse the different functions of the same modal verb. For example: "Different uses of 'would': Polite request ('Would you...?'), Past future ('He would later become famous'), Hypothetical/Conditional ('I would go if...')." Combine specific context examples from the unit or previous texts to take down the usage boundaries, strengthening systematic cognition of the grammar network.

(2) Addressing the problem of "not rigid rule explanation," adopt a presentation method that combines "Core Rule Clarity" with "Contextualized Notes":

Make core rules straightforward: Use concise, direct language. E.g., for expressing possibility/deduction: must (very certain/logical conclusion) > should/ought to (expected/probable) > may/might/could (possible, but less certain). can't/couldn't (certain something is impossible).

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Make supplementary notes contextualized: marking common exceptions or usage restrictions, ideally with brief example dialogues. E.g., "Note: 'Could' is often used for past ability ('I could run fast when I was young'), but for a single achievement in the past, we usually use 'was/were able to' or 'managed to' ('I was able to finish the race')."

(3) For easily confusing grammar points (like must vs. have to, or different uses of the same modal), add a "Compare and Contrast" feature, perhaps in a simple table format:

Table 4. Syntax point comparison example

Grammar Point	Correct Example (Scenario)	Incorrect Example (Analysis)
may vs might for speculation	It may rain tomorrow. (Based on the weather forecast, relatively high possibility)	It might rain now. (Error: "might" is not used for speculation in current/present situations; "may" should be used instead.)
must vs have to for obligation	You must finish your homework. (Subjective requirement). I have to go to the doctor. (Objective requirement)	I must go to the doctor. (Error: For obligations caused by objective reasons, "have to" should be used.)

5.4. Build a dual-resource library of "textbook + digital platform"

To address the strong demand for multi-modal and authentic examples, marking clear QR codes or providing links to a dedicated webpage or website in relevant sections in the textbook. This digital platform can host:

Grammar Micro-Lessons: Short animated or live-action videos can explain key concepts in 5-8 minutes, perhaps using the characters or themes from the unit. E.g., "The differences between the use of modal verbs in different cultures."

Interactive Exercises: Online quizzes with immediate feedback and explanations, moving beyond simple right or wrong to explain why an answer is correct based on meaning and use.

Authentic Language Clips: Search and learn real corpus such as news clips, movie lines, and speech records, and mark the application of grammar points.

6. Conclusion

This paper takes the three-dimensional dynamic grammar view advocated by the National English Curriculum Standards for Senior High School (2017 Edition, 2020 Revision) as its theoretical framework, combining with the grammar teaching case study of "modal verbs" in PEP High School English Compulsory 3. Through text analysis and questionnaire analysis, this paper systematically explores the implementation status, core contradictions, and improvement pathways for grammar modules in high school English textbooks. It can be concluded that current high school English textbook grammar modules have achieved some success in implementing the "form-meaning-use" three-dimensional dynamic grammar view. Moreover, students perform well in single-dimensional tasks such as identifying grammatical forms, understanding core meanings, and applying them in simple contexts. The "discovery-practice-output" progressive activities designed around unit themes in the textbooks initially reflect the concept of "relations between the texts and discourses." It also provides effective support for the internalization of grammatical knowledge. However, systematic construction for three-dimensional integration remains insufficient. Only a minority of respondents could fully discuss, explore and cover all three dimensions in their analysis, while some students confused concepts. The reason lies in the rigid limitations of textbook arrangement: the rigid module

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position, patterned presentation, simple and single examples, and not open-ended exercises. All those lead to weak explanations of the form-scenario relations. This makes it difficult to support the transformation and leap from "knowledge mastery" to "competence application."

Aiming at the above problems, this study presents learners' needs-based optimization plans. After collecting the questionnaire data, it can be clearly seen that the demands at the form level and the practical use level are far more than at meaning level and so on.The majority of the respondents wished for more clear demonstration of formal variants and more real scene examples. Based on the above requirements, the proposed plan is planned from four aspects: First, build a system integrating multi-modal examples and layered exercises. Through the deep integration of grammar learning content with the unit theme, the gap between learning and application can be bridged. Second, adopt a "main

+ supplementary" dual-module structure and layered content. The setting of combination dual module and hierarchical content is adopted to eliminate the situation of "one size fits all" and adapt to multiple needs. Third, construct a dual-resource library of "textbook + digital platform" to provide dynamic, updatable, and engaging content. And the authentic language use can come into the field of vision. Then the teaching model is moving toward "dynamic openness". At the same time, the role of artificial intelligence in personalized practice generation and feedback feedback can be deeply dug, and the development of grammar teaching will be promoted in the direction of accuracy and high efficiency. It must be noted that the sample of this study is concentrated on Grade 12 students, and the structure of the sample is relatively skewed. So the conclusions cannot be extended to the students of lower grades. And the optimization plan still requires testing in practice. Future studies can expand the sample range of grades, collect all grades from 10 to 12 to increase the universality of conclusions and try to carry out teaching experiments. By comparing the test scores and communicative performance of experimental and control classes, we can more carefully test the true effects of the proposed optimization strategies.

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