

INTERPERSONAL MEANING OF MODALITY IN UNDERGRADUATE THESES OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT: A SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

Modality is a key in articulating the authors' viewpoints in their arguments. To address the gap, this recent study aims to thoroughly describe the interpersonal meaning in terms of modality within English Literature's undergraduate theses. Textual analysis using a corpus-based approach was rigorously applied. This research utilized the AntConc 4.2.0 version as an instrument. The researcher meticulously selected 40 undergraduate theses between March and August 2023. The SFL concept proposed by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) was implemented to analyze the data. The findings demonstrated that undergraduate students largely used modalization in the context of probability across the undergraduate theses. It indicates that they utilize the modality to persuade readers by describing upcoming developments and exchanging information with them. Additionally, undergraduate students specializing in Linguistics are less assertive in presenting arguments and declaring opinions compared to those in Literary Studies specialization. Undergraduate students specializing in Linguistics lack strong and confident arguments when constructing their conclusion and suggestion sections.

Keywords: *Interpersonal Meaning, Modality, Undergraduate Theses, English Department, Systemic Functional Grammar.*

INTRODUCTION

An undergraduate thesis represents academic proof composed after conducting research and guided by the supervisors who are subject area experts (Program Studi Sastra Inggris, 2020). To accomplish an undergraduate degree expectation, undergraduate students need to compose undergraduate theses. Developing good concepts in undergraduate theses is susceptible to positive outcomes in further studies, for instance graduate theses or dissertations. As a result, undergraduate theses constitute the ultimate academic dedication among undergraduate students.

The current research looks at the conclusion and suggestion in undergraduate theses. It is due to the fact that the conclusion and suggestion demonstrate the use of linguistics devices to express a perspective and build the illustration of a powerful author's legitimacy (Loi et al., 2016). Similar to Dietrichs (2019), part of conclusion and suggestion belongs to the last section of the academic texts particularly undergraduate theses. It covers the summary of key results and provides

recommendations to readers. As a result, the linguistics aspect of conclusion and suggestion, particularly modality, is critical not only in modifying the author's standpoint, but also in encouraging dialogue between the author and the readers.

Modality is not completely uncommon for undergraduate students. They received exposure to such concepts in the first semester and have consistently utilized this term in their academic work. The modality additionally shows the authors' conviction or dedication to their notions (Ojo, 2020). More importantly, because the authors can portray the persona through the texts (Wahyuni et al., 2023), the selection of modality enables the authors to articulate a perspective about the issues they raise (Siregar et al., 2021). Moreover, modality can possibly be used as educational material for genre-based approaches for improving language skills (Suharyadi et al., 2021). Therefore, discovering undergraduate students' stance about constructing points of view in their undergraduate theses, especially with respect to linguistics devices in terms of modality, provides insight into whether the modality is feasible for the contexts and also the structures.

Prior research have dealt with undergraduate theses throughout numerous research objectives, for instance syntactic complexity between EFL along with native learners in the abstracts of undergraduate theses (Murniati, 2018), conjunctions within the abstracts of undergraduate theses by Indonesian learners (Kurniati, 2019), grammatical mistakes found in the abstracts of undergraduate theses (Syaifullah & Sukova, 2022), rhetorical constructions within the introduction sections (Indrian & Ardi, 2019), discourse markers within the introduction sections (Haninda & Bram, 2022), the error of noun phrases within the introduction sections (Syafutri et al., 2022), as well as grammatical cohesiveness within the undergraduate theses (Prasetyaningrum et al., 2022).

Prior research on interpersonal meaning involving various topics have additionally been carried out, especially with respect to political addresses which include Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's address (Amalia et al., 2018), Jacinda Ardern's addresses (Kristianti, 2020), Joko Widodo's addresses (Jannatussholihah & Triyono, 2020), Gettysburg Address (Latunra, 2022), Joe Biden's addresses (Brillianta & Ni Luh Putu, 2022; Herman et al., 2022; Ayuningtyas, 2021), and Tim Cook's addresses (Nurani et al., 2022); in social networking site (Ahmad et al., 2019; Luzón, 2023; Coberley et al., 2023); in Madurese song (Dzarna et al., 2023); in media outlets including discussion forums (Mustikawati & Sumarlam, 2017),

tourism website (Rahmasari & Lauwren, 2020), and piece of writing within issues pertaining to business (Wang & Huang, 2021; Vinchristo, 2022; Liu & Liu, 2023); in academic literature for instance papers (Ilham, 2019), report texts (Vrika et al., 2019), letter texts (Mangana & Kurniawan, 2020), hortatory exposition texts (Cahyati et al., 2021), written individual viewpoints (Pasaribu, 2022), analytical exposition texts (Puspitasari et al., 2021), and Chinese and German educational discourses (Yu & Wen, 2022); in children literature (Zohrabi et al., 2019; Gho & Pasaribu, 2021; Koutsikou et al., 2021); in Corpus of Historical American English as well as Corpus of Contemporary American English (Zhou, 2023; He, 2021); in various dialects such as Scottish Standard English as well as Southern British Standard English (Schützler & Herzky, 2022) and Khorchin Mongolian (Zhang, 2020); in sport comments specifically Morgan Freeman's address at the Qatar 2022 World Cup (Ningrum et al., 2023) and football (Fatoni et al., 2020); in legal texts (Đorđević, 2020; Ramadhani et al., 2019; Martín De La Rosa & Domínguez Romero, 2021; Salama, 2021; Farhan, 2023; Wu & Li, 2019); in spoken contents (Ngongo, 2021); and in oral and written texts (Asfina et al., 2018).

In response to the researcher's knowledge, prior studies have placed little emphasis on the conclusion and suggestion parts of undergraduate theses. On top of that, there exists a paucity of in-depth discussion of prior research on modality within academic texts. Even though (Ilham, 2019) has looked into modality within academic writing, notably within papers, there remains a gap to be completed. As a result, the goal of the present research is to seek out the interpersonal meaning in the context of the modality within the chapter of conclusion and suggestion across the English Literature's undergraduate theses.

METHOD

The present study used the analysis of texts by applying corpus-based methods to identify modality sorts and examine how modality can disclose interpersonal meaning within undergraduate theses. The researcher used a corpus-based method, enabling an extensive number of textual subjects' analysis. As a consequence, given that seeking through the texts utilizing corpus, the researcher had the capacity to swiftly identify particular terms throughout an extensive number of documents. As a result, the current research used the AntConc corpus program (4.2.0 version) as a tool.

The researcher chose twenty undergraduate theses of Linguistics specialization as well as twenty undergraduate theses of Literary Studies specialization throughout a time frame of six months, from March until August 2023. The whole data comprises forty undergraduate theses, totaling 22,425 tokens; Literary Studies contains 9958 tokens, whereas Linguistics contains 12,467 tokens. The data source, particularly the undergraduate theses were successfully submitted by the undergraduate learners who accomplished on schedule across the span of four years, especially the 2019 cohort, and they were scheduled to graduate in 2023. This is additionally because undergraduate learners who have outstanding GPAs are more likely to graduate with their studies on schedule within four years (Febrilia et al., 2019). In addition, college learners who have access to proper resources for knowledge as well as support from their families are far more prepared to succeed in their undergraduate theses (Desmawati, 2022).

The researcher firstly identified the word based on its modality utilizing SFL theory by Halliday & Matthiessen (2014). The feature of Word List in the AntConc 4.2.0 version was employed to investigate the modality frequency within the texts. It is because the feature of Word List counts every single word within the corpus texts and presents them in an ordered set. The researcher then used the feature of Key Word In Context to find the modality occurrence within an entire sentence. The researcher then utilized the feature of File View to further study the data. At last, the researcher constructed the conclusions based on the results.

RESULTS

The research results revealed that 174 modality tokens (60%) were discovered within the Linguistics specialization, with 160 tokens (55.6%) as modalization along with 14 tokens (4.9%) as modulation. Furthermore, the findings revealed that 114 modality tokens (40%) were uncovered within the specialization of Literary Studies, which covers 96 tokens of modalization (33.4%) along with 18 tokens of modulation (6.3%). These results indicate that within the total of 288 modality tokens, modalization across Linguistics specialization accounted for half of them. It is obvious that the most commonly employed modalization across Linguistics specialization is 160 tokens (55.6%). It comprises 128 probability tokens (44.5%) and 32 usuality tokens (11.2%). The findings deserve to be noticed that modalization appears more frequently than modulation. It indicates that they use modality to convince the readers by

outlining potential avenues for future studies.

In addition, probability accounts for a significant portion of the modality within the data. Probability occurs when someone explains an occurrence and generates predictions regarding what transpires in a possible future (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). It suggests that college students used modality to persuade readers by imagining what might take place in a possible future. Probability comprises *can*, *could*, *may*, *might*, *will*, and *would* in undergraduate theses. *Can* represents the greatest amount of frequency. This is an illustration of probability:

Excerpt 1

For future researchers, there are various avenues for further exploration. Conducting comparative studies that compare the usage of metadiscourse markers in the context of Islamic debates with other contexts such as political debates would provide valuable insights. Another suggestion is to deepen the research by focusing on observational studies to enhance the depth of findings. Investigating the impact of metadiscourse markers on audience perception and their influence on the interlocutors' responses is also a promising area for future research. By considering these suggestions, researchers *can* broaden their understanding of the utilization of metadiscourse markers in Islamic debate forums and other debate contexts. (*L_10_conclusion and suggestion*).

The finite modal operator *can* used here to express probability. It represents the author's thought as either true or false. The author utilized *can* to show that his notions give future scholars a chance to succeed. These ideas possess the potential to improve future academics' understanding of metadiscourse markers in debate forums. In addition, such recommendations can provide extra perspective for prospective investigators who are encouraged to conduct comparative along with observational investigations on topics regarding the research, including the choice of the metadiscourse markers to expand the outstanding results. Therefore, in the above example, *can* is denoted by probability in medium degree. *Can* indicates the future researcher's potential to truly enhance the comprehension of the metadiscourse markers across the debate contexts.

Furthermore, inclination represents the least common modality within the data. Inclination refers to someone's readiness to do a task (Halliday &

Matthiessen, 2014). Inclination comprises *willing to*, *will*, and *would*. *Will* has the highest frequency in inclination. This is an instance of inclination:

Excerpt 2

In this chapter, the researcher *will* provide conclusions about the overall analysis in the previous chapter. (*LS_13_ conclusion and suggestion*).

In this instance, the finite modal operator *will* define inclination. *Will* indicates that the writer intended to convey the conclusions. The sentence implies that the author typically concludes the results within the conclusions chapter. *Will* is classified as inclination in medium degree. It emphasizes the author's desire to accomplish something, specifically to represent the conclusions.

DISCUSSION

Similar to Siregar et al. (2021) and also Vrika et al. (2019), the most prevalent sort refers to modalization. It implies that learners are more acquainted with modalization within academic papers than modulation. In addition, probability and usuality suggest that the primary aim is to effectively convey the information. Halliday & Matthiessen (2014) demonstrated that modalization is concerned with propositions, which refer to clauses which engage in the flow of information. Because modalization is more prevalent than modulation within English Literature's undergraduate theses, this setting suggests that undergraduate students prefer to communicate information with readers.

As reported by Coberley et al. (2023) and Pasaribu (2022), *can* and *will* were employed more often compared to other modality varieties. In line with Adrian & Fajri (2023), *can* becomes the most prevalent modality over all sorts of modality. According to Priyastuti (2020), *can* suggests possibility. In a similar vein, *can* suggests a person who has the capacity to perform something, or the author possesses the ability to accomplish activity (Puspitasari et al., 2021). *Can* emphasizes the capacity or the authority of individuals to undertake or complete acts without giving duty or desire (Coberley et al., 2023). Therefore, it signifies that the author enables somebody else the opportunity to perform an action.

In line with Coberley et al. (2023), Rui & Jingxia (2018), and Ahmad et al. (2019), specific modality categories, such as *can* and *will* had the greatest percentages. *Will* is primarily used to offer information about what is expected in the near future, or when someone desires to accomplish something (Puspitasari et al., 2021). *Will* is defined as inclination in medium degree that conveys the

person's expectations, readiness, determination, and attitudes towards the probability of a specific event (Mangana & Kurniawan, 2020; Rui & Jingxia, 2018).

In addition, modality sorts comprise three levels of value: high degree, medium degree, as well as low degree. Probability in medium degree within Linguistics specialization is the most prevalent value, accounting for 106 tokens (36.9%). It demonstrates that undergraduate students employed modality in medium degree more frequently, while low degree was employed infrequently. The results contradict Xiao (2017) study results, which found that EFL students overused high degrees. In contrast, EFL students employed more modality than native speakers, according to previous research by Qian (2017).

The results revealed that undergraduate students specializing in Linguistics are less assertive in presenting arguments and building opinions compared to those in Literary Studies specialization. Undergraduate students specializing in Linguistics generally lack strong and confident arguments when constructing their conclusion and suggestion sections. Consistent with Gho and Pasaribu (2021), there is a connection between the most frequently used modality and the writer's confidence in expressing ideas in the texts. With respect to the research results, medium degree of probability is the most commonly used modality in undergraduate theses, indicating that undergraduate students have medium level of certainty in their arguments. Modality in medium degree is more persuasive than low degree, but not as persuasive enough as high degree of modality to convince the reader. It is crucial to convince the readers and the scholars about the validity of research findings by using strong interpretations. As a result, undergraduate students must effectively communicate their interpretations of research findings to provide recommendations for future studies and to inspire enthusiasm among the readers and the other researchers.

CONCLUSION

In alignment with the objective of the study about figuring out how modality types may shape interpersonal meaning within undergraduate theses of English literature, it leads to the conclusion that undergraduate students mainly utilized modalization in the context of probability. It indicates that they use modality to convince the readers by outlining potential avenues for future studies. Since modalization outweighs modulation in English Literature undergraduate theses, it

signifies that undergraduate students convey information regarding research issues to the readers and the other scholars. Furthermore, undergraduate students specializing in Linguistics are less assertive in presenting arguments and declaring opinions compared to those in Literary Studies specialization. Undergraduate students specializing in Linguistics lack strong and confident arguments when constructing their conclusion and suggestion sections. With respect to the research results, the medium degree of probability is the most commonly used modality in undergraduate theses, indicating that undergraduate students have a medium level of certainty in their notions. Modality in medium degree is more persuasive than low degree, but not as persuasive enough as high degree of modality to convince the reader. It is crucial to convince the readers and the scholars about the validity of research findings by using strong interpretations.

As a result, undergraduate students must effectively communicate their interpretations of research findings to provide recommendations for future studies and to inspire enthusiasm among the readers and the other researchers. As such, further research on the factors influencing why undergraduate students specializing in Linguistics are less assertive in stating notions and articulating opinions is important to conduct in order to empower undergraduate students and the other scholars in enhancing academic writing skills.

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