

Analysis of Modality in EFL Textbooks for Junior High School Students

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ABSTRACT

This study explores modality in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks, addressing a gap in prior research that emphasizes modal verbs' frequency over their functional use. It analyzes the types and realization of modality in the Indonesian junior high school textbook English for Nusantara Grade VII using Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics framework. Data, sourced from exercises, dialogues, and passages, were categorized into modalization (probability and usuality) and modulation (obligation and inclination). Findings indicate a prevalence of medium modality, with "can" and "should" frequently used, reflecting moderate obligation and possibility. The textbook prioritizes expressing ability and certainty over obligation, suggesting the need for more balanced instructional material. This study underscores the importance of integrating practical exercises that teach nuanced modality use, enhancing students' ability to communicate effectively in real-world contexts. Aligning with language's interpersonal function, such improvements could foster socially appropriate and meaningful exchanges in English.

Keyword : EFL textbooks, Halliday and Matthiessen framework, Modalization, Modulation.



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1. INTRODUCTION

The textbook plays a pivotal role in English language teaching (ELT), necessitating the use of appropriate and well-structured material. The arrangement of materials in textbooks must be carefully considered to ensure that they align with the needs of students in their daily lives (Akhofullah & Oktavianti, 2023). One of the most frequently encountered linguistic elements in everyday life, yet one that may prove challenging for some students to master, is the use of modality (Ahmed, 2021; Pemberton, 2020). Modality pertains to the speaker's personal attitude and viewpoint regarding the proposition conveyed by the sentence or the situation that the proposition depicts (Lyons, 1977).

Although the significance of modality in language learning is widely acknowledged, existing studies on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks have primarily concentrated on the frequency and forms of modal verbs (Gao, 2024), without delving into their functional applications. The majority of textbooks emphasise the grammatical structure of modality, yet they fail to reflect the manner in which modality operates in authentic communicative contexts, such as in the expression of opinions, the formulation of suggestions, or the negotiation of politeness. It is imperative that this gap be addressed, as learners must not only comprehend the forms of modality but also learn to utilize them in contextually appropriate ways, as proposed by Halliday's interpersonal function of language.

A preliminary analysis of an English as a Foreign Language textbook for the seventh grade of junior high school in Indonesia indicates an imbalance in the use of modality. The data indicates that the use of modalisation, which expresses probability and possibility, is more prevalent than that of modulation, which conveys obligation or necessity. This indicates that the textbook places greater emphasis on conveying degrees of certainty than on instructing students on how to express obligations and responsibilities (Ramadhani et al., 2024; Sugianto et al., 2022).

Previous studies have demonstrated how modality is introduced through modal verbs in EFL textbooks, particularly within the Emancipated Curriculum (Akhofullah & Oktavianti, 2023; Dewanti & Oktavianti, 2024). These studies have primarily focused on the surface-level presentation of modality, but they have not addressed its functional use in communication. This study seeks to address the

aforementioned gaps by answering two research questions: firstly, regarding the types of modality used in Indonesian junior high school English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks for grade VII, and secondly, regarding the realisation of modality in Indonesian junior high school EFL textbooks.

2. RESEARCH METHOD/MATERIAL AND METHOD/LETERATURE REVIEW

A qualitative research design was selected for the analysis of the modality present in the EFL textbooks used at the Indonesian junior high school level. As Creswell stated, qualitative methods rely on text, and thus were employed as a means of analysing the information in order to interpret, validate and indicate the potential outcomes of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A qualitative research design was selected for the analysis of modality in sentences in Indonesian junior high school English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks. In this case, the research design was used to answer the following research questions:

What types of modality are used in Indonesian junior high school EFL textbook grade VII? What is the realisation of modality in Indonesian junior high school English as a Foreign Language textbook? The data was extracted from English for Nusantara grade VII, accessible on the official website of the Ministry of Education and Culture for Junior High School students in the Portable Document Format (PDF). This book was prepared by the Government in order to fulfil the need for quality, affordable, and equitable educational materials in accordance with the mandate set forth in Law No. 3 of 2017. The book was compiled and reviewed by various parties under the coordination of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology. In the absence of a specific focus on modality in the textbooks, the analysis was concentrated on the instructions for exercises, dialogue sections, and reading passages that could potentially contain modality.

In analyzing the modality within EFL textbooks, Halliday and Matthiessen's framework (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) categorizes modality into two main types: modalization and modulation. Modalization deals with expressions of probability and usuality—how likely something is to happen and how often it occurs. This includes modal verbs such as *may*, *might*, *can*, and *could* to express uncertainty or likelihood, as well as adverbs like *often* or *sometimes* that indicate frequency. On the other hand, modulation refers to expressions of obligation and inclination, capturing how strongly actions or behaviors are recommended or required (e.g., modal verbs like *must*, *should*, *ought to*) and the degree of willingness or intention (e.g., *want to*, *intend to*). By systematically identifying and classifying these modal expressions in the EFL textbooks, the analysis highlights how the textbooks use modality to help learners understand both the factual aspects of situations (such as likelihood) and the attitudes or responsibilities conveyed by the language (such as obligations or intentions).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

a. Result

This section presents the findings from the analysis of modality in EFL textbooks for Indonesian Junior High School students, with a focus on identifying the types and frequencies of modal expressions. Using Halliday and Matthiessen's Systemic Functional Linguistics framework, the analysis explores how modality is realized through various linguistic forms, including modal verbs, mood adjuncts, and related expressions. The findings are organized into two main categories of modality: modalization, which encompasses expressions of probability and usuality, and modulation, which includes expressions of obligation and inclination.

Table 1. Modality in English for Nusantara for Grade VII
The table below shows the number of modality found in the English for Nusantara Textbooks for Grade VII

Modality	Type	Degree	Word	Number
Modalization	Probability	High	must	4
			should	18
		Medium	will	6
			would	1
			can	52
Low	may	5		
	Usuality	High	always	17

		Medium	never	3
			usually	24
			often	17
Modulation	Obligation	High	Must	4
			Have to	2
			Need to	4
		Medium	should	20
	Low		Can	73
			May	4
		Inclination	High	will
	Medium		Want to	14

The data presented above allows for the identification of several key findings, which are outlined below:

1. The medium modality is the most prevalent in terms of probability and obligation, as evidenced by the frequent occurrence of terms such as "can" (52 instances in modalisation and 73 in modulation) and "should" (18 in modalisation and 20 in modulation). This indicates a proclivity towards articulating potential actions and a moderate sense of obligation.
2. The use of high modality is more prevalent in terms of usuality, with words such as "always" (17 occurrences) being employed with greater frequency. This suggests a pattern of regularity or consistency in behaviour.
3. The low modality is represented by terms such as "may" (five occurrences in modalisation and four in modulation), which appear less frequently. This indicates that there are fewer instances of uncertainty or mild obligation in the dataset.

The distribution of modality demonstrates a balanced utilisation of high, medium and low degrees, with a notable emphasis on medium-level expressions, particularly in the context of abilities and regularities, as opposed to strong commands or uncertainty.

b. Discussion

The identification of modal clauses is preceded by an initial inquiry into the presence of a modal auxiliary verb within the clause in question. These verbs are of particular significance in the conveyance of modality. A grammatical clause may be considered to be marked by modality when it is intended to express the subject's intentions or attitudes. The use of modal auxiliary verbs is a common means of articulating these expressions of modality in both spoken and written language (Roberts et al., 2010).

A review of the data in Table I reveals that the modal verb "can" is the most prevalent in both modalisation and modulation. This finding aligns with that of a previous study which highlighted that the most commonly used modality in textbooks is "can" (Akhofullah & Oktavianti, 2023; Ardiansah, 2015).

Table 2. Data Analysis of Probability in the Chapter I
The table below is the data analysis of Probability in the Chapter I

Type	Clause	Degree	Polarity
Probability	Mr., Mrs., or Miss are addresses that people can use in formal situations in English	Medium	Positive
	You can put or draw your picture in the box on the left	Medium	Positive
	You can listen to Part 1 and then Part 2. Or, you can listen to both Parts in one go	Medium	Positive
	You can greet your friends, teachers, janitors, and all other people at school	Medium	Positive
	Pak Edo likes cycling because it can make him healthy	Medium	Positive
	In Picture 1.2, you can see Galang and his friends. Can you identify each of them?	Medium	Positive

You can also look at the picture to write about their hobbies	Medium	Positive
You can use the words in the box to describe each person.	Medium	Positive
When we talk about an activity that is done regularly, we can use words to show action (he wears ...) or feeling (he likes...). The form of verbs can change depending on who is being described	Medium	Positive
We can use information about regular activities and facts to describe someone	Medium	Positive

The data set comprises a series of clauses pertaining to probability, all of which are characterised by a moderate degree of modality with a positive polarity. The use of the verb "can" in each clause indicates that the statements reflect a moderate level of certainty or possibility, thereby allowing for a range of potential actions or observations. The use of "can" indicates the existence of potential options or capabilities without asserting absolute necessity or obligation.

The clauses primarily relate to common, everyday actions or observations, such as addressing people formally (using titles such as "Mr., Mrs., or Miss"), following instructions in a task (for example, drawing pictures or listening in parts), or describing routine activities (such as greeting people or describing actions). The medium degree of probability reflects the assumption that these are typical actions that are reasonably expected to occur in the given contexts. The overall constructive tone is indicated by the positive polarity, which emphasises the actions that individuals are able or permitted to undertake in various scenarios.

Table 3. Data Analysis of Obligation in the Chapter II
The table below shows the analysis of obligation in the chapter II

Type	Clause	Degree	Polarity
Obligation	Name three cooking utensils you can find in the kitchen	Low	Positive
	Name three cooking ingredients you can find in the kitchen	Low	Positive
	You can use first, second, then, next, and finally to indicate the order	Low	Positive
	I can describe people's favorite meal	Low	Positive
	I can ask and give information about people's favorite meal	Low	Positive
	I can use the correct article before a word	Low	Positive
	I can write a description text	Low	Positive
	I can describe how foods are cooked	Low	Positive
	I can use imperative sentences	Low	Positive
	I can write a procedure text	Low	Positive

This set of clauses is primarily concerned with obligation, exhibiting a minimal degree of modality and positive polarity. The use of the verb "can" in each clause suggests a light or optional sense of obligation, indicating that the actions described are encouraged but not strictly required. The low degree of obligation allows for flexibility and choice, enabling individuals to engage in the activities at their own discretion.

The clauses pertain to tasks or skills that are typically educational in nature, such as naming utensils or ingredients, following procedural language (using terms like "first," "second," etc.), or describing actions related to food and cooking. The use of "can" serves to underscore the provision of a supportive learning environment, wherein the focus is on the capabilities of the learners rather than on the imposition of strict demands. Furthermore, the positive polarity serves to reinforce the constructive and enabling tone, thereby encouraging learners to develop practical language skills in an approachable manner.

Table 4. Data Analysis of Usuality in the Chapter I
The table below shows the analysis of usuality in the Chapter I

Type	Clause	Degree	Polarity
Usuality	Write what you usually say when introducing yourself in Worksheet 1.1	Medium	Positive
	Describing people typically contains information about their physical features, personality traits, their current condition or facts; such as job, age, hobby, and regular activities; or what they usually do	Medium	Positive

The data in question pertains to the concept of usuality, exhibiting a medium degree of modality and positive polarity. The clauses reflect habitual actions or typical behaviour, as indicated by the use of terms such as "usually" and "typically", which express regular or common occurrences.

The initial clause prompts the user to delineate the typical manner in which they introduce themselves, focusing on the recurrent patterns of behaviour observed in such self-presentations. The second clause provides an overview of the typical characteristics of descriptions, noting that descriptions of people often include information such as physical features, personality traits, and regular activities. The medium degree indicates that these actions are common, yet not universal, suggesting that while these behaviours are typical, there is scope for variation. The positive polarity emphasises a constructive and factual tone, thereby reinforcing the idea of common practices without imposing strict rules. The objective is to describe the regularity of behaviour or traits in an everyday context.

Table 5. Data Analysis of Inclination in Chapter II
The table below shows the data analysis of inclination in the chapter II

Type	Clause	Degree	Polarity
Inclination	The type of cooking you want to make	Medium	Positive
	Think about the vegetables that you want to cook and other ingredients that you may need	Medium	Positive

This data is focused on inclination with a medium degree of modality and positive polarity. Inclination refers to the speaker's or subject's desire or willingness to engage in an action, and in these clauses, the focus is on preferences or decisions regarding cooking.

In the first clause, "The type of cooking you want to make," the medium degree of inclination shows that there is some level of desire or intent, though it is not a strong or urgent demand. The phrase "want to" indicates a moderate level of choice or willingness, reflecting personal preference without compulsion.

Similarly, in the second clause, "Think about the vegetables that you want to cook and other ingredients that you may need," the focus remains on personal inclination toward selecting certain ingredients. The phrase "want to" again indicates moderate intent, while "may need" introduces a possibility, which complements the medium degree of modality.

Both clauses carry positive polarity, reflecting constructive guidance or suggestions. The tone is affirmative, encouraging thought and action related to cooking choices, without implying any negative

or prohibitive connotations. The medium degree of inclination indicates a balance between freedom of choice and the natural desire to act on preferences.

The Indonesian junior high school English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbook for grade VII demonstrates a clear emphasis on the utilisation of modal auxiliary verbs and adverbs that convey varying degrees of possibility, obligation, and frequency. The modal auxiliary verbs "can," "must," "may," and "should" frequently appear in contexts that emphasise both probability and obligation, thereby guiding students to understand and express likelihood or necessity in different scenarios. Furthermore, adverbs such as "usually" and "always" are employed to convey usuality, assisting students in describing regular actions or habits. These linguistic tools are integrated within the textbook in a systematic manner, within the instructions, examples and exercises, thus enabling students to grasp both the functional and communicative aspects of English. The strategic use of modality in the textbook ensures that students are not only exposed to the grammatical structures of modality but also encouraged to apply them in practical and meaningful ways, thus facilitating their acquisition of both linguistic competence and communicative proficiency.

4. CONCLUSION

The realization of modality in the Indonesian junior high school EFL textbook for grade VII is manifested through the strategic use of modal verbs, mood adjuncts, and related expressions. The analysis reveals that modal auxiliary verbs such as "can," "must," "should," and "may" are used frequently to convey varying degrees of probability, obligation, and inclination. This pattern helps students understand and express potential actions, responsibilities, and desires. Additionally, adverbs like "always" and "usually" serve to indicate usuality, aiding learners in describing regular or habitual actions.

The balanced distribution of medium, high, and low modalities, particularly the dominance of medium modality, such as the extensive use of "can" and "should," highlights a pedagogical approach that emphasizes moderate obligation and probability. This encourages students to explore possibilities and practice linguistic options without being overly prescriptive. The positive polarity of these expressions further supports a constructive learning environment, focusing on what students are capable of doing, thereby fostering both linguistic competence and communicative confidence.

In conclusion, the textbook's systematic incorporation of modality enhances students' ability to engage with language in both functional and communicative contexts. By exposing learners to a range of modal expressions, the textbook equips them with the skills necessary to navigate everyday interactions and academic discourse effectively.

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