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MODALITY AS A MARKER OF INFORMATION STRUCTURE IN NEWS DISCOURSE

Student: _____ Gunel Alovsat Tanirverdiyeva

Supervisor: _____ Prof. Azad Yahya Mammadov

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İddiaçı: _____ Günel Əlovsət qızı Tanırverdiyeva

Elmi rəhbər: _____ Prof. Azad Yəhya oğlu Məmmədov

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INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary world news stands as an essential tool for information distribution that develops public perceptions regarding diverse topics. News discourse functions as a dual-purpose tool because it delivers information while using its content to shape audience perceptions about political, social and worldwide events. The success of this communication depends on the way information is structured and presented because journalists use strategic language organization to highlight and prioritize content.

One of the most important concepts that is related to news writing is information structure, which deals with the arrangement of information in a discourse to make it easy to process. Different strategies are employed to ensure that the reader knows what is new, what is given, and what is significant. For instance, journalists may choose certain words, rearrange the sentences to highlight key points.

Journalists employ various techniques to present their message clearly and effectively through language. One of these techniques is modality.

Modality is a very common strategy in the organization of information in news articles. Journalism uses modality extensively in organization of information in news articles. Modality is used to express a speaker's or writer's degree of certainty or doubt, as well as to indicate a degree of probability of the information or the statement. Some examples of these kinds of words are must, might, can, which allow information to be categorized as fact, possibility, or opinion. These words allow the writer to express a stance or help focus the readers' attention toward specific aspects of the information for easier comprehension and interpretation of the message.

Furthermore, modality governs a relationship between the writer and audience, determining how the writer interacts with the audience. Journalists can select specific words, organize sentences, or use modal verbs to represent the probability or importance of specific information- all of which provide logical structure for the information.

The Relevance of This Thesis: The research topic of modality as an indicator of information structure in news discourse remains highly relevant today. Examining modality as a marker for information structure in news discourse is particularly important in our media dominated society.

News texts are powerful influencers of public opinion and social attitudes, therefore it is important to know how these texts are linguistically constructed. This research illuminates modality as an area of practice for both discourse analysis and media studies, by revealing how modality structures and highlights information in news reporting. Ultimately, it has provided readers with the analytical tools to critically engage with news texts in order to acknowledge the subtle way language creates meaning and shapes perceptions.

The Object of This Thesis: The object of this thesis is **news discourse**, specifically news articles from five categories: political, economic, health, sports, and technology. These texts, sourced from reputable media outlets, serve as empirical material for investigating how journalists utilize modal verbs, expressions, and markers to structure information and influence audience perception. The study employs linguistic and discourse analysis methodologies to examine modality's communicative functions and its impact on the textual complexity and comprehensibility of news reporting.

The Subject of This Thesis: The subject of this thesis is **modality as a linguistic feature**, with particular emphasis on its role as a marker of information structure in news discourse. Modality enables writers to express degrees of certainty, probability, and obligation, thereby influencing the presentation and interpretation of information. This study explores how modality contributes to the organization of information, reflects journalistic stance, and guides reader interpretation across various news categories. By analyzing modality's role within the framework of discourse analysis, this research seeks to uncover its function in shaping meaning in media communication.

The aims and objectives: The primary aim of this thesis is to understand how modality serves as a marker of information structure in news articles, specifically to analyze how modality is used to organize ideas, reflect the author's attitudes and position, and signal meaning to the reader in news discourse. Additionally, it aims to advance the field of discourse analysis by identifying the linguistic aspects of media communication. The specific objectives for this research are:

- To identify and analyze the use of modal verbs and expressions in a variety of news articles.
- To investigate how modality structures information and highlighting some aspects in news report.
- To explore the relationship between modality and writer's stance/attitude in news articles.
- To examine how modality shapes reader's understanding and interpretation of news articles.

- To identify patterns and trends in the use of modality across different categories and categories of news writing.

Research questions: The following research questions have been developed to guide the investigation in alignment with the aims and objectives of this study:

- 1) How do modal verbs and expressions function as a tool for structuring information in news discourse?
- 2) What patterns and trends can be identified in the use of modality across various categories of news writing?

The Method of the Thesis: The thesis uses both quantitative and qualitative research methods in the study. Qualitative research makes it possible to gain a detailed understanding of the use of modality as a marker of information structure in news discourse. To begin with, a review of news articles is made from linguistic, stylistic and discourse perspectives in order to identify and explain the function of modality in organizing information. Quantitative research enhances this by offering a statistical evaluation of the frequency and distribution of the modalities used in the chosen corpus. The study employs a sequential exploratory mixed-methods design that includes both qualitative and quantitative aspects to provide a full analysis of modality roles in distinct news categories. The established qualitative framework allowed to quantitatively analyze modal patterns throughout the extensive dataset.

Scientific novelty of the research: While modality and information structure have been thoroughly researched independently, there has been less scholarly attention examining how modality and information structure operate together in news discourse. In areas studying modality, it is studied primarily in relation to its role in expressing speaker attitude, guiding reader interpretation, and interpersonal meaning. In studies examining information structure, the main focus has been on how topic, focus, and emphasis are structurally integrated into the discourse.

This thesis will help to address this gap through an exploration of modality as a marker of information structure, investigating how modal words and expressions can semantically frame meaning, guide interpretation, and structure ideas through journalistic writing.

This study provides essential knowledge about the complex connection between modality and information structure in news discourse. The research contributes to both discourse analysis and

media linguistics fields while providing better understanding of language use in public narrative construction and reality building within journalistic practices.

CHAPTER I: LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 Information Structure in News Discourse

News discourse heavily relies on successful information organization techniques. Information structure focuses on textual construction as well as interpretation since it shows how text arrangement highlights essential points to improve reader understanding. Standard news organizations use specific writing patterns to direct readers toward the essential points of their content. This section studies basic information structuring methods which affect news storytelling by analyzing different expression patterns which construct this information.

In the field of language studies, researchers frequently examine the organization of information through various models such as Theme-Rheme (Halliday, 1994), Topic-Comment (Lambrecht, 1994), and Focus-Background (Prince, 1981). These frameworks show how different parts of a sentence help with the overall conversation and how some information is highlighted as important. To ensure clarity, coherence, and reader engagement, news discourse utilizes particular tools for sharing information (van Dijk, 1988).

The inverted pyramid structure represents standard practice for journalists to organize their articles. The story structure presents major details first alongside descending information components starting with most important elements at the beginning (Schade, 2018). Through such structure readers can easily identify important story material because it helps information-fast processors. Editors can efficiently shorten non-vital information at the end of the article by using inverted pyramid structure because it maintains the main points (Scanlan, 2003). The digital media benefits from this technique because readers tend to scan through their content.

The successful analysis of news discourse depends entirely on our ability to recognize both given and new information within text. New information stands out against familiar information that readers already have in their possession. Familiar knowledge encompasses easily understood existing facts. Readers understand new information by placing it within an existing knowledge structure because of proper element distribution. The delivery pattern in news articles starts with known elements followed by introducing new content points that help readers understand better and stay connected (Chafe 1976).

The chapter analyzes information structure rules in news discourse and examines how modality shapes text organization. Research uses existing studies and linguistic concepts to develop a complete understanding of news text structure and modal expressions' effect on textual meaning.

1.1.1 Defining and Conceptualizing Information Structure

Information Structure demonstrates the method through how language structures ideas within written texts. Through proper information structure writers can organize their content to enhance reader comprehension of essential points. Writers who apply effective information structure enable readers to distinguish between new information and previously known material. News articles implement these patterns to enable readers better follow their stories.

Core Concepts: Focus, Background, Topic/Theme, Comment/Rheme, New vs. Given Information

Information Structure (IS) deals with how we strategically use language to organize and present information. This organization reflects what the speaker/writer intends to express and what they think the listener/reader already knows. There are certain basic notions at the core of IS which describe how sentences are formulated to emphasize some things and contextualize others.

i. Focus and Background

Focus (or information focus): This is a central concept in IS. It is the most prominent or noticeable part of an utterance in a particular communicative context. Focus directs the attention of the reader or listener to that part of the information which is presumed to be new, contrastive, corrective, or otherwise prominent for the speaker or writer (Chafe, 1976, p. 33). An extensive framework for focus analysis is offered by Lambrecht (1994, p. 207), who categorizes focuses into different types based on their pragmatic function.

Contrastive Focus: This happens when the speaker or writer of the text wants to point out one of the many possibilities, usually, to correct an earlier hypothesis or draw attention to a difference. For example, the question “Did John eat the apple?” is answered with “Mary ate the apple” where the focus is placed on “Mary” in order to inform that John was not the doer of the action (Lambrecht, 1994). Prosodic features, such as stress and intonation, often play a crucial role in marking contrastive focus in spoken language. While in written discourse, it can be realized by

employing techniques such as cleft sentences (“It was Mary who ate the apple”) or particular lexical choices. The contrastive focus function is relatively more comparative among others; it not only asserts the existence of something but also the absence of something else.

Presentational Focus: The other name of presentational focus is new information focus or broad focus, which is used when the speaker gives out a new word or a piece of information from the current conversation, which is supposed to be unknown to the listeners or readers (Lambrecht, 1994). For instance, A new car arrived establishes itself as presentational focus because it serves to introduce this new entity. Thetic sentences usually utilize this focus type to introduce new information which lacks typical topic-comment organization. Presentational focus serves as a means to provide new information that expands shared knowledge between speakers.

A focus identification system depends strongly on the context in which it appears. Different pragmatic intentions of speakers in various discussion contexts determine how linguistic forms indicate focus types. Analyzing news discourse requires an understanding of focus to see how discourse emphasizes its central participants and occurrences and subsequent events which affect how readers interpret the news material

Background: While people usually pay a lot of attention to focus when talking about Information Structure, the background is also important for good communication. The background gives important information that helps us understand the main points better. Chafe (1976) says that background information usually includes what people already think they know. This supports the idea that the background gives us common knowledge or context we already understand. It's the place where the important information is shown. This information can come from different places:

Previous discussion: Information already stated in the previous conversation or text becomes part of the context for later utterances.

Situational context: The setting or surrounding situation in which communication takes place can be used as background information.

Shared knowledge: General knowledge, cultural assumptions, and common-sense understanding shared by listeners and speakers contribute to the background.

Lambrecht (1994) also emphasizes the function of context in the understanding of information structure. While his own research is centered on topic, focus, presupposition, and assertion, it does identify the function of background. The presuppositional aspect of an utterance, often coinciding

with background, supplies the context for the assertion, which in turn bears the emphasis. The presupposition, and indirectly the background, determines what is taken for granted, allowing the assertion to come forward as the new or emphasized information.

Background is not just the absence of focus; it is a dynamic and essential component of information structure. It provides the contextual background that enables the listener or reader to properly understand focused information and make sense of its significance in the overall communicative context. In the absence of the background properly established, the focus would be severed, and communication would be less effective.

ii. Topic/Theme and Comment/Rheme

These two sets of binary distinctions provide different but complementary perspectives on how clauses are organized to convey information.

Topic and Comment: The topic of a sentence, often described as what the sentence is about, typically represents information that is assumed to be given or familiar to the listener or reader (Chafe, 1976). The topic constitutes the entity or concept that forms the foundation of the communicative act. The comment, in contrast, is the claim or the attribution of the speaker/writer about the topic; it is usually the new or interesting factor in relation to the subject of the discussion. For example: “The government's new economic plan has faced strong criticism from business leaders.,” where “The government's new economic plan” functions as the topic, and “has faced strong criticism from business leaders.” is the comment. The topic mostly appears at the beginning of the sentence, giving the main ideas of the rest of the clause.

Theme and Rheme: Halliday’s Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL): Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p. 70) define theme as the first element of a clause which functions as the starting point for the message. It determines the direction of the message for the rest of the clause which is called the rheme. Thematic choice is an important aspect of textual organization, which helps in the flow and coherence of discourse. For example, in the sentence “Yesterday, the president announced a new policy,” “Yesterday” is the temporal theme, which gives the time frame, and “the president” is the topical theme, which represents the main actor. The rheme, “announced a new policy,” gives new information about the theme.

While the topic-comment structure is highly semantically and pragmatically oriented (focusing on “aboutness” and information status), the theme-rheme structure is more textually oriented

(focusing on clause organization and flow). There is a general practice that the topic functions as the theme, while the comment serves as the rheme, but it is generally accepted that they both belong to different system levels in the language (Bloor & Bloor, 2013, pp. 73). However, these differences are essential for the interpretation of the functions of the language used in news discourse. Thus, it helps the reader to follow the logical order, from the beginning to the end of the news, and to select the information expressed in the speech.

iii. New vs. Given Information

Another fundamental principle within Information Structure examines the separation between known information (Given) and unknown information (New). The distinction identifies when speakers and writers need to present known or unknown content within their communication. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) say that Given information consists of message elements which listeners or readers already understand because they were stated prior or can be inferred from background knowledge or common societal understanding. New information consists of details which have not been clearly established within a discourse or are unknown to the audience.

The distinction between given and new information serves fundamental purposes in spoken and written communication. According to Halliday & Matthiessen (2014, p.89), the structural elements of clauses connect Given information to thematic positions and assign New information to rhematic content. The sentence “The prime minister announced new reforms today” features “The prime minister” as established information known already in context while “announced new reforms today” delivers new information that progresses the discourse.

Chafe (1976) demonstrates that writers and speakers use language indicators to determine between information they feel their audience should know already and content they want to reveal for the first time. When messages use structured organization, they become easier to understand and maintain a progressive flow of information. News discourse requires this distinction between Given information for contextual foundation and New information containing news content according to Prince (1981).

In this relationship both Focus and Background align since Focus delivers new content while Background adds relevant background information which the audience should know. Readers obtain better insights into news story progression through their ability to identify new facts and

content that they already know when reading reports because New information functions with Given information.

Functional Perspectives on Information Structure

Functional Description of Information Structure (IS) does not just get into how the words in a phrase are organized, it plays a crucial role in how meaning is created and understood within a broader discourse (Lambrecht, 1994). By organizing information in a particular order, a speaker or a writer achieves several key communicative functions that contribute to effective interaction (Firbas, 1992).

IS functions as a primary mechanism to organize discourse structure and maintain logical coherence (Daneš, 1974). The order of information presentation determines how readers or listeners follow the development of ideas through what appears first and what gets emphasized and how new information relates to existing knowledge.

The analysis of IS reveals its three main functions which include creating cohesion and signaling relationships between ideas and facilitating processing. Das and Taboada (2017) argue that coherence relations are indicated more commonly and through more means than people generally think, suggesting that the signaling of coherence relations is more elaborate than usually considered.

Creating cohesion: The use of IS devices through referencing previous topics and clear new topic introduction strengthens textual cohesion. Pronouns that point to previous subjects help readers recognize given information which keeps the conversation flowing smoothly. The development of themes across clauses through thematic progression helps maintain discourse coherence. The discourse remains unified through the consistent use of the same topic as theme in consecutive sentences (Halliday & Hasan, 1976; Daneš, 1974; Bloor & Bloor, 2013).

Signaling Relationships Between Ideas: IS can signal logical relationships between ideas. It can present elements in an attention-grabbing way that will draw out their importance in causal relationships/chronology. The theme-rheme pattern indicates how the speaker or writer sees the relationship between the newly emerging information and the existing frame(s) of reference. Studies indicate that effective use of theme-rheme structures helps clarification and coherence in academic writing (Suharsono et al, 2024).

Facilitating Processing: Presentations that have a rational structure help with processing and remembering messages. Given information presented before the new prepares readers and listeners for the new information in a way that allows them to tie it into their understanding of the world (given information is like a cognitive anchor) (Chafe, 1976).

Information Structure serves as a set of reminders that lead the reader (or listener) to their understanding of the text. It indicates what is the most relevant among other aspects, what is important or presupposed, and what is new to the discourse.

The guiding function of IS becomes clearer when we analyze its ability to signal importance and control given and new information while shaping emphasis and perspective.

Signaling Importance: Focus, as we have already discussed, shows what the speaker or writer considers to be the most important or central information. By drawing attention to certain elements, IS directs the reader's attention and influences what they perceive as the key message. For instance, in news headlines, the focused elements are usually the most critical aspects of the story.

Managing Given and New Information: The presentation of information as either given (already known or inferable) or new (being introduced) is a fundamental aspect of IS that significantly affects comprehension. Given information is easier to process, and readers use it as a context to understand new information. Violations of the expected given-new contract can lead to processing difficulties or misinterpretations (Prince, 1981).

Influencing Emphasis and Perspective: The choice of theme can also have the indirect impact of influencing the reader's perspective. By placing some items in the thematic position, the writer can bring some actors or aspects of a situation into focus, dictating the type of attitude the reader has towards the ensuing information. For instance, by using the passive construction to place the affected item in the thematic position, attention can be directed away from the agent.

Information Structure (IS) performs two essential functions: it arranges meaning while it steers interpretation as well as maintaining the 'common ground' which represents mutual knowledge between speakers. The effective handling of common ground through Information Structure makes understanding possible while it enhances the ease of communication. A variety of strategies enable this management function to operate.

Reflecting Assumed Knowledge: This method follows what the speaker or writer assumes about the audience's known elements. When information appears as established it demonstrates its status

as shared knowledge between the communicators. The use of “the car” demonstrates to the listener their ability to recognize the particular vehicle being discussed.

Contributing to Common Ground: The introduction of new information through presentational focus or topic-comment comments helps to develop mutual understanding between speakers and writers. New information that a group shares following acceptance will contribute to their mutual knowledge database for ongoing communications (Krifka, 2008).

Negotiating Common Ground: IS functions through negotiation to establish mutual understanding of shared information. When utilized in questions these constructions check the listener's current knowledge while corrections that use contrastive focus serve to modify mutual understanding. A speaker uses the way they present information to indicate their stance regarding assumed common ground while displaying either confident or doubtful attitudes (Stalnaker, 2002).

The functional approaches to Information Structure highlight its crucial role in the creation of coherent and logical discourse, in the guidance of the interpretation of the reader or listener by signaling importance and controlling the flow of given and new information, and in reflecting and shaping the mutual knowledge of communicators. A consideration of these functions is essential to a comprehensive analysis of the construction and communication of meaning in various types of discourse, including news reporting.

1.1.2 Key Theoretical Contributions

The field of Information Structure has made substantial progress through the work of multiple scholars who studied how language structures and displays information in discourse. Multiple theories developed by these scholars provide fundamental tools for studying how language selection affects meaning, coherence and communication flow especially in news discourse. These theories explain the methods through which speakers and writers organize information to reach particular communication objectives.

A. Prague School Contributions to Information Structure: The Prague Linguistic Circle established key principles about Information Structure through the research of Vilém Mathesius, Jan Firbas and František Danes. Their theories explain how information is organized within and across sentences to support effective communication, a principle highly relevant to news discourse.

Mathesius's Concept of Sentence Perspective: Vilém Mathesius (1882–1945) introduced the concept of Sentence Perspective, emphasizing that sentence construction should align with communicative goals rather than just grammatical rules. Mathesius (1975) distinguished between the “theme” (what is being discussed) and the “rheme” (what is said about the theme), arguing that effective sentences naturally move from known to new information:

“The starting point of the utterance is that which is known or at least obvious in the given situation and from which the speaker proceeds in his discourse” (Mathesius, 1975).

The organization of “The president delivered a speech yesterday” demonstrates effective communication because the known information (“The president”) appears first and follows with fresh details (“delivered a speech yesterday”). News writing implements inverted pyramid structure based on Mathesius's ideas to place vital information first so readers understand the story easily.

Firbas's Functional Sentence Perspective: The work of Mathesius became the base for Jan Firbas to create Functional Sentence Perspective (FSP) while adding the idea of “communicative dynamism” (CD). Firbas (1992) established that different parts of a sentence hold varying degrees of importance to advance communication. Firbas split sentences into three parts:

Theme: The information we already have that we use as a starting point.

Rheme: The new and key information in the sentence. For example, in the sentence: “Yesterday's storm caused a lot of flooding,” “Yesterday's storm” is the main topic, and “caused a lot of flooding” is what is being said about it. The rheme gives important new information to the audience. Firbas (1992) said that the rheme is the part of a sentence that plays the biggest role in moving the conversation forward.

Transition: The transition part serves as a connection between current knowledge with new information. The element which binds Theme and Rheme functions as a transition. The transition includes the verb and the remaining sentence components which fail to belong to both the Theme and Rheme and fail to convey the strongest communicative power in the Rheme. The essential function of this element consists of moving information from established knowledge to new concepts. The main transitional function in simple sentences comes from verbs which have higher CD than Themes but lower CD than Rhemes. In accordance with Firbas's theory sentence elements display different levels of Communicative Dynamism (CD). Theme and rheme act as essential components within this perspective. As the foundation for communication the theme represents the

initial concept while maintaining the least degree of communicative dynamism. New and essential information which accounts for the highest quantity of communicative dynamism enters the process of communication through the rheme (Mammadov, 2018).

A journalist benefits from comprehending Firbas's theory since this linguistic model aids in structuring sentences to establish key points effectively. Journalists maintain reader focus on essential message elements to help readers locate essential story information. News articles follow simple construction while presenting core information initially because of FSP principles.

Danes's Thematic Progression: The text structural analysis of themes and rhemes stems from Frantisek Danes' work in 1974 which expanded upon Mathesius and Firbas' theories. Danes describes three distinct methods through which rhemes connect in his formulation.

In Simple Linear Progression the rhematic elements from the first sentence operate as the thematic foundation in the following sentence. For example: The storm caused a lot of damage. The damage affected many homes.

In Constant Theme Progression multiple linked sentences employ the same theme to help readers stay engaged in the main thought. The rescue team came quickly according to this narrative. The rescue team started searching. The rescue team discovered three living people during their search.

Derived Theme Progression begins with establishing a fundamental concept that generates different support elements in consecutive sentences. Through these statements the main subject "The city after the flood" unfolds as follows: "The city looked devastated while buildings were damaged and streets became covered with water and people were in shock". "The buildings were damaged. "Water completely immersed all streets". "The people were in shock".

Danes (1974, p. 114) called these patterns the "skeleton of the plot" that is required to organize complex information. In news language, they guide readers logically through events and ensure coherence in both hard news and feature stories.

B. Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL): Theme/Rheme and Given/New: Michael Halliday built Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) which contains Theme/Rheme along with Given/New operational principles.

Michael Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) views language as a meaning-making system. The textual metafunction included in SFL explores strategies that create clear and logical

language structures for effective text organization. Two fundamental concepts form the basis of the Theme/Rheme and Given/New operational framework.

According to Halliday (2014) the Theme stands at the beginning of the clause since it appears first while establishing the main topic which serves as the central subject for the entire message. The speaker or author establishes this part as the starting point in their message. The Rheme refers to everything that follows the Theme within the clause as it discusses information relative to what was stated in the Theme. The background information stems from Theme which the Rheme section extends further. A Theme's choice enables listeners to understand both the speaker's mental orientation and the stream of data that follows.

Additional distinctions exist between information structure as well as thematic structure. Systemic Functional Linguistics analyzes the provided information and thematic sequence separately (Bloor & Bloor, as cited in Mammadov, 2018). The typical English language sequence follows given before new information while rheme usually appears as the final element of the clause to indicate its central communicative value. Spoken English has intonation flexibility but written English regulation restricts variation which means marks for new information require articles and adverbs and determiners and word order to function (Mammadov, 2018).

Halliday extends his discussion on information by introducing Given and New concepts. Information that is currently available to readers as well as listeners constitutes what they already know from their reading experience within that context. The introduction of new and highlighted points makes up New information during a speech. When communication succeeds Given information should precede New information because it creates an easier processing path by familiarizing the audience with the new information. The arrangement can be changed to achieve emphasis. The question “Who ate the apple?” presents the information about apple consumption as Given while it asks for obtaining the New information regarding the identity of the eater.

News reporting requires the strategic placement of Theme and Rheme together with Given and New information management to build effective and understandable narratives. News writers who choose their Theme carefully can immediately guide readers toward the main story focus. The presentation of known background information as Given information before presenting essential New details helps readers understand the news more easily.

C. Chafe's Work on Consciousness and Information Flow: Wallace Chafe's research focuses on the mental aspects of language together with the mental processing of information. According to his theory consciousness plays a crucial role in language creation and understanding especially when it comes to given information and new information.

Cognitive Analysis of Givenness and Newness According to Chafe (1976) given information refers to data that remains active within the mental awareness of both speakers and listeners at the time of communication. New information refers to data which enters consciousness for the first time. The researcher examines multiple mental states which include accessible information that exists beyond current awareness but remains easily obtainable.

The research findings of Chafe help explain why speakers and writers select particular linguistic choices. Given information receives expression through shorter less prominent forms like pronouns and definite articles because it remains active in the minds of speakers. The accessibility of new information determines writers to use more detailed noun phrases when expressing it. Our minds naturally process and integrate new knowledge through the information flow between given and new information.

The cognitive understanding of information plays a crucial role in news discourse. News reports start with information that the public already knows about developing events before delivering new information to readers. The method through which reporters present information as established or newly discovered affects reader comprehension of the story and their identification of essential developments.

D. Lambrecht's Information Structure and Sentence Form: Knut Lambrecht's work offers a very complete theoretical understanding of Information Structure, where he puts his focus on the interaction between pragmatic functions (e.g. topic and focus) and syntactic structures. His theory emphasizes the way sentence form is determined by the speaker's assumption regarding the hearer's mental representation of discourse referents.

Lambrecht (1994) describes in his book the following key concepts:

Topic is the primary information presented in a sentence. He specifies that topic has different types such as aboutness-topic and familiarity-topic.

Focus is the most important part of the utterance from the point of view of pragmatics. He goes into detail about some kinds of focus, for example, presentational, identificational, and contrastive focus.

Presupposition is the information that is assumed to be known by the speaker and the hearer before the conversation starts.

Assertion is the center of the utterance, the point the speaker wants to make, often in agreement with the focus.

Lambrecht also argues that syntactic structures realize different configurations of information structure. Therefore, cleft sentences (“It was John who.”) to signal a constituent as being in focus contrastive or identificational to a certain background. Word order variation (fronting) may also serve to signal topicality or emphasis.

Lambrecht's theory provides a framework for analyzing how news writers use different sentence structures to stress key information (focus), determine the main subject of the report (topic), and signal what information is assumed to be known (presupposition).

E. Prince's Taxonomy of Given/New Information: Prince's research provides an advanced classification system of given and new information which goes beyond basic binary classification. Her taxonomy provides a more detailed understanding of the different ways of information that can be known or new to the discourse participants.

Types of Given/New Information: Prince (1981) proposes a variety of categories:

Brand-New Information: Information that is totally new to the discourse and not assumed to be familiar to the hearer.

Unused Information: Information which is known to the hearer (e.g., from general knowledge) but has not yet been mentioned in the discourse.

Inferable Information: The hearer can deduce this information by analyzing the present conversation and surrounding context.

Evoked Information: The information exists in two forms: it appears in the preceding discourse textually (textually evoked) or it remains relevant to the present situation (situationally evoked).

The application of Prince's taxonomy enables researchers to study information introduction and reference patterns in discourse with greater accuracy. The framework helps researchers understand why specific linguistic structures appear in particular situations. A brand-new entity requires an indefinite article for introduction whereas an evoked entity uses pronouns or definite articles for reference.

The framework developed by Prince enables researchers to study how news stories present new information through actor and event introductions while using previously discussed material and audience general knowledge to establish context. The analysis of different given and new information types reveals how news texts structure their content to create understanding for their audience.

There are some similarities across the various theories of information structure, though each theory approaches information structure in unique ways. For example, both Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and Functional Sentence Perspective (FSP) from the Prague School posit that information is dynamic within the clause and that information moves through the clause in time; where SFL focuses primarily on Theme-Rheme organization, FSP focuses on communicative dynamism. Chafe and Lambrecht regard cognitive access to information mental processes and relate this to sentence construction; Chafe and Lambrecht's work lends a more psycho-social perspective to information structure than the functional linguistic perspective. Prince's distinction between Given/New information allows highly detailed classification of levels of information status, which varies a number of binary divisions of information structure that were established in earlier frameworks. Each theory examined in this chapter suggests that information structure exists at both the linguistic form level and cognitive level, and this analysis provides a firm basis for describing how modality and organization of information work together in news discourse.

1.1.3 Information Structure as a Feature of News Writing

Information structure is a fundamental resource in news writing, allowing journalists to systematically present information for clearer linguistic elements and organizational techniques, news writers establish emphasis reader comprehension and interpretation. Through various systems that highlight essential details while guiding readers through event complexity. The way

information is structured—within and between sentences and paragraphs—in news discourse follows recognizable patterns.

Thematic Progression: As described in Danes' (1974) model, thematic progression reflects a logical flow of information that results in clarity and developing a narrative. Journalists use the particular patterns of progression - Simple Linear, Constant Theme, and Derived Theme Progression - to create coherent news reports, where the information is able to flow into a new idea without interruption. These structural strategies help the reader to follow the sequence of events that are happening, clarifying the progression of information and the connections between previous knowledge and newly emerging information.

Focus Structures and Emphasis in News Writing: Through various means news writers create focus structures which lead readers to specific points of information (Lambrecht, 1994) by drawing attention to main events combined with main actors and vital consequences. This can be achieved by:

Placement in prominent positions: Often, the most significant new information is placed at the start of the headline and the lead paragraph.

Lexical emphasis: Employing strong verbs, mainly modal verbs and expressions, strong nouns, and evaluative adjectives may also highlight some aspects of a story.

Visual Emphasis: In print and online news, formatting such as bolding, italics, and larger font sizes can provide visual emphasis.

News reporting often adheres to these principles to ensure that the most crucial information receives the greatest emphasis.

1.1.4 The Category of News Discourse

News discourse serves as a clear communication category which has unique purposes together with clear structural elements. Analyzing Information Structure (IS) operations in this category requires knowledge of these specific conventions.

Mass media platforms—including newspapers, television, and online news sites—use news discourse to deliver current event information to the general public. The primary purpose of news

is to relay information about significant events based on journalistic principles (van Dijk, 1988). In news discourse, the main elements involve reporting facts accurately while adhering to standard stylistic conventions and presenting fresh information that is relevant to a diverse audience (Bell, 1991). News discourse implicitly advocates for objectivity and authority in its pursuit of delivering accurate event reports. The main societal functions of news discourse include:

The basic purpose is to inform the public about essential developments and significant issues that require awareness. The public's right to receive information, alongside the media's role in factual reporting, establishes the foundation for disclosure and transparency.

Through news discourse we receive more than just factual information since it provides explanations about event backgrounds as well as their causes and subsequent effects. The process requires additional details and expert opinions along with analytical components to help the audience understand better.

Newscast discourse maintains objectivity as a fundamental principle even though it subtly and explicitly shapes public reactions toward specific events. Mass media creates influence by choosing which stories to report and how they frame information while placing emphasis on particular storytelling components (Fowler, 1991).

Core News Values and Journalistic Principles

The effective function of journalism in society depends on several fundamental principles which determine how information is structured in news discourse.

Objectivity and Impartiality: Journalistic ethics demand that news reporting must rely on verifiable facts while remaining unbiased and free from personal opinions. Journalists need to show all relevant viewpoints with equal fairness while they should identify their information sources to credible institutions. News organizations maintain neutrality through balanced language while refraining from making evaluations in their factual reporting. Wien (2005) explains that news professionals follow objectivity as their professional standard which determines both news production methods and professional standards.

Clarity and Conciseness: News writing demands both clarity and conciseness because these elements make information accessible to a wide range of readers. Journalists employ basic language while staying away from technical terms and creating simple sentence structures to deliver information quickly. The method requires placing essential details first in both sentences

and paragraphs to determine thematic direction and focus points. Gopen and Swan (1990) demonstrate through their research that clear and concise writing serves as the most effective method to present complex information.

Relevance and Timeliness: News reports about fresh and important developments. News stories achieve their value through their ability to remain current and connect with audience interests and daily experiences. Journalists select current news developments while focusing on information that holds present-day importance. The news value of timeliness plays a vital role in determining which stories get selected and how they should be presented according to Bednarek and Caple (2017).

Other Related News Values: There are other related news values that could contribute to IS:

Prominence - stories which include public figures or public entities are usually given more prominence and are often key individuals are thematic.

Conflict - stories that include disagreement, violence or tension are generally perceived as more interesting, which might lead to the actors or issues that were in conflict being foregrounded.

Human Interest- stories with emotional content or personal connection might be favoured, which could influence the framing of the narrative and inclusion of individual stories.

Structural elements of news texts

A specific structure in news articles enables systematic information organization through a methodical presentation.

Headline: News content typically begins with a headline that serves to both capture attention and deliver brief essential information about the article. The headlines employ IS strategies by focusing key elements with specific language and through pause effects that enhance both powerfulness and compression according to Bell (1991). The headline “President Visit to flood affected area” presents President as the leading actor who undertakes the crucial event of visiting flood-stricken areas.

Lead (Lede): The lead segment of a news article known as the lede serves as crucial because it presents vital information with ease to readers by supplying the required information groups (the 5Ws plus H). The initial paragraph of a news article requires great importance because it should deliver essential information using an easily understandable format and engaging style that answers who, what, when, where, why and how questions. The lead paragraph of an information system

introduces the main elements including individuals and events which are designated roles while preventing unnecessary repetition. According to van Dijk (1988) the information in the first paragraph holds significant newsworthiness and stands out from the rest.

Body Paragraphs: Additional quotes and background details together with context and secondary information are presented in successive body sections. As mentioned earlier the body section builds on lead information by adding novel details that evolve the story progression throughout the news development.

1.1.5 Sources of Grammatical and Lexical Resources for Marking Information Structure

Discourse uses multiple grammatical and lexical and stylistic and punctuation-based devices to mark information structure. Mammadov (2018) explains that languages use articles, pronouns, particles, time adverbs, word order and stylistic tools like italics and inverted commas to emphasize new or crucial information in sentences. The elements function to differentiate between theme (known or given information) and rheme (new or emphasized information).

The indefinite article (a, an) together with the indefinite determiner (some) and the word “one” indicate new information (rheme) while the definite article (the) and personal and demonstrative pronouns (he, this, that) establish reference to known information (theme) according to Mammadov (2018) and Halliday (1994). Time adverbs such as now function as indicators which introduce new stages in the progression of discourse (Quirk et al., 1985).

Word order also plays a significant role. The English language follows a basic subject-verb-complement pattern, yet minor changes in word order help to direct attention toward specific details. The Prague School scholars demonstrate that word order flexibility exists in grammatical systems which maintain strict word order through pragmatic reordering for communicative effect (Firbas, 1992). According to Mammadov (2018) English places its natural rheme position at the sentence conclusion which creates emphasis on the final complement. The placement of elements at the beginning of a sentence through inversion or fronting constructions serves to highlight important information while controlling thematic emphasis.

Modality functions as a vital grammatical and lexical resource which enables the marking of information structure beyond structural means. Linguistic modalities function as tools which help

speakers and writers convey their beliefs about truth value and probability as well as their views on necessity, obligation, and permissibility (Palmer, 2001; Halliday, 1994). Through news writing modality functions as an essential tool to influence reader perception about information confidence together with the reported actors' positions (White, 2006).

Modal expressions which include modal verbs (might, must, could, should, will) and modal adverbs (possibly, certainly, probably) function as primary tools for information organization in discourse. The degree of certainty, possibility, and necessity expressed by these elements determines how readers understand information and what they should focus on (Palmer, 2001). The writer uses must or should to express urgency or obligation which brings forward essential points they want to emphasize. The modal words might and could show uncertain possibilities which enable readers to explore different potential results (Hyland, 1998).

The theme and rheme structure of sentences shows a direct relationship with modal words. Modal elements that start a sentence within the theme section establish the speaker's level of certainty which establishes the base for understanding the rest of the message. Modal elements placed at the end of a sentence function to introduce speculative meanings and open-ended interpretations which direct attention toward possibilities instead of certainties (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

Modality functions as a dual-purpose tool which determines proposition certainty and possibility while actively shaping information structure through thematic progression and reader engagement. Fairclough (1995) demonstrates that news discourse modality controls journalist commitment levels to events which subsequently influences public understanding through textual organization.

The multifaceted function of modality in discourse structure creates an opportunity to study its specific operations in news articles. The upcoming section investigates how modality functions as a fundamental tool to create meaning and arrange information in news discourse by analyzing its relationship with thematic and rhematic sentence components.

1.2 Modality in News Discourse: A Marker of Information Structure

This part of the literature review investigates how modality functions as an important linguistic tool for organizing news information. The research demonstrates how journalists express their attitudes and certainty alongside obligations and possibilities through modality in their articles. It

combines theoretical and practical insight. The research looks specifically at the expression of modality together with its communicative functions and interpretation process from Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and Communicative Dynamism (CD).

1.2.1 Defining Modality

The fundamental concept of modality in linguistics describes how language expresses speaker attitudes toward proposition likelihood, necessity, desirability and obligation. Through modality speakers and writers convey different degrees of certainty, possibility, permission and requirement which determines how information appears in communication (Palmer, 2001).

Modality functions as a vital element in discourse analysis and pragmatics because it indicates the level of speaker or writer commitment to statement truth. Modal verbs such as *must*, *might*, *should*, and *could* exemplify this, indicating varying degrees of certainty and obligation. Lyons (1977) identifies two fundamental modality categories which include epistemic modality for knowledge and belief assessment and deontic modality for obligation and permission evaluation.

Halliday (1994) uses Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) to study modality because it serves an interpersonal function which allows speakers to express judgment and opinion and negotiate with listeners. According to this view modality extends beyond truth conditions because it also determines how speakers relate to their audience and their stance regarding the proposition.

The field of modality research has extended its examination beyond basic binary categories through recent advancements. Nuyts (2001) presents a cognitive-functional framework which links modality to subjectivity and evidentiality since speakers need to explain their knowledge sources. Evidential expressions such as *apparently*, *reportedly*, or *it seems* function to show the origin of information through observation or hearsay or inference thus linking modality to information reliability and credibility.

The effects of modality become crucial when discussing news discourse. The way events get framed together with truth claims and ideological positions spreads through subtle communication. Fairclough (1995) explains that modality operates as an ideological tool which allows journalists to regulate statement commitment thus influencing their perception of objectivity. The expression “The government must act now” requires immediate action and sense of emergency yet “The government might act soon” presents a range of possibilities. Through their selection of modal

choices readers develop their understanding while these choices reinforce specific narratives which political reporters often employ (Simpson, 1993; van Dijk, 1998).

Fowler (1991) shows that modality interacts with information structure elements including theme and rheme organization and given and new information patterns to generate meanings which affect public understanding. Modality functions as a textual mechanism which modifies both the structural elements and operational characteristics of journalistic language. Modality markers that emphasize new information and evaluative judgments strengthen or weaken the perceived significance and credibility of presented information.

The grammatical function of modality extends beyond its basic definition because it serves as a multifaceted semantic and pragmatic tool which generates significant discourse functions. News texts receive their structure and interpretation through modality as well as their evaluation of information. Research into modal expressions allows scholars to understand how news discourse expresses certainty together with doubt and necessity and obligation and evidential claims.

This section defines modality, distinguishes its types, and explains how it is used in news writing. It also presents various theories and previous studies to situate this research within the existing literature. This research seeks to contribute to a more refined understanding of how news texts mark certainty, doubt, obligation, and evidentiality by studying how modality functions as a marker of information structure.

1.2.2 The Role of Modality in Communication and Its Influence on Meaning

The use of modality is a key component in communication as people use it to convey their attitude towards the propositions they make, thus influencing the interpretation of the messages. In using modality, people are sometimes able to state the level of certainty, or the level of possibility, willingness, obligation or permission and this in turn affects the way that messages are received by the listener.

For instance, the shift from 'She must be at home' to 'She might be at home' is a shift in the level of certainty which in turn affects how the listener receives the message. This subtle expression is important in both spoken and written communication because it conveys the position of the speaker and also assists in the construction and management of interpersonal relationships.

In discourse analysis, modality is credited to contribute in constructing social reality and power dynamics. Using modal expressions in statements, speakers can claim authority or politeness, or lessen the force of a statement to effectively navigate social interactions.

In addition, in media discourse modality can be used to determine the credibility and objectivity of information. Journalists employ modal verbs to determine the chances of events or to report information without necessarily owning it, and this in some way determines how audiences receive and interpret news reports. (Bednarek,2006)

Portner (2009) emphasizes modality serves as both a linguistic formal device and a pragmatic tool which demonstrates speaker goals while showing awareness of communication situations. Through modality speakers communicate complexity using necessity and possibility levels to match social expectations.

1.2.3 The ways of expressing modality

In the English language, we have various tools to convey modality in several ways. The basic form of modality is demonstrated through specific modal verbs such as must, can, could, may, might, will, would, shall, and should, which express concepts like ability, possibility, permission, and obligation. They are used with other verbs to show what someone can do or what is necessary (Suhadi.J,2017).

Beyond core modal verbs, English uses various grammatical features, including modal adverbs (probably, possibly), modal adjectives (likely, certain), and other syntactic configurations, to express modality. These features can specify degrees of possibility, obligation, and certainty. For example, modifying modal verbs with adverbs “probably” or the adjectives “necessary” also adjusts how they communicate modality, while providing meanings (and emphases) beyond what could be done with just modal verbs (Facchinetti et al., 2003).

Modality in English can be shown in different ways using different language elements.

i. Modal verbs

Modal verbs function as the primary linguistic element for expressing modality in the English language. Modal verbs (or modals) are special verbs that help express ideas like possibility, ability, need, and permission. The language provides several modality markers which include must, can,

could, may, might, will, would, shall, and should. Before the main verb these verbs appear without changes to their form regardless of subject variation.

The interpretation of modality can vary depending on the context.

- a. Students must follow the university rules. (obligation)
- b. He must have been sleeping well at midnight. (Probability)
- c. It's raining now, so the teacher might not come today. (Probability)
- d. No one can pick up that heavy box. (Ability)
- e. You can go see your grandma with your mom. (Permission)

ii. Semi-Modal Verbs

Semi-modal verbs show modal verb characteristics but follow distinct grammatical guidelines. A group of semi-modal verbs include need to, have to and ought to as well as be going to and used to and dare. The use of “to” precedes main verbs and these verbs transform according to tense or subject requirements. For example:

- a. You need to prepare for the meeting. (Expressing necessity)
- b. He is going to call you later. (Expressing intention or certainty)

Semi-modal verbs can be used in the same way as modal verbs to show modality, beliefs, intentions, or desires.

Semi-modals can inflect for tense, making them more versatile than pure modals. Semi-modal verbs replace modal verbs in specific cases, including past obligations (must does not have a past form so we use had to).

According to Leech (2004) semi-modal verbs including have to have gained significant popularity during the present-day in spoken English usage. The study demonstrates that have to appears more often than the core modal must when people express obligations within casual spoken interactions. Semi-modals demonstrate an advancing pattern of replacement which absorbs some aspects of traditional modal verb functions.

iii. Lexical Modality

Besides modal verbs, modality can be shown using other parts of speech. The lexical items give subtle expressions of modality, which speakers can use to convey their attitudes and judgments.

While modal verbs are a central means of expressing modality, the lexical categories provide alternative ways to convey subtle nuances and a wider range of attitudes and judgment. Lexical modality is expressed through various word categories, including adjectives, adverbs, nouns, and verbs, each contributing to different levels of certainty, obligation, and possibility.

- a. Adjectives like necessary, possible, and likely show modality in sentences such as: It is necessary to participate in the meeting. (Necessity)
- b. Adverbs like probably, possibly, certainly, perhaps, and surely show how sure or unsure someone is: He will probably go to her house today. (Probability)
- c. Nouns like possibility, necessity, and permission represent modality ideas: There is the possibility of rain in two days. (Possibility)
- d. Verbs like require, suggest, permit, and insist can also show modality: The laws require my friends to sign in. (Obligation)

Lexical modality helps give more details and shows different levels of certainty or opinion. Huddleston and Pullum (2002) say this type of modality is important in academic and formal writing.

iv. Conditional Clauses

Modality appears through sentences with conditional clauses. Using these clauses writers depict realistic situations which have not occurred yet or situations that can possibly happen in the future. The modality appears through language that contains “if” and its forms such as “unless” and “as long as”. For example:

- a. Unless you study hard, you might not enter the university. (possibility).
- b. If you put enough spices, your food will be delicious. (probability).

Research done by Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) demonstrates that conditionals serve two functions: they enable discussions about cause and effect relationships and they allow us to make predictive statements (Suhadi.J, 2017).

v. Imperatives

Imperatives function as direct orders and requests for instructions which convey both obligation and necessity. For instance:

- a. Turn off the lights. (Obligation)

- b. Please close the door. (Request)

Imperatives serve as deontic modal expressions even though they do not contain explicit modality.

vi. Subjunctive Mood

The subjunctive mood shows unreal or imagined situations, wishes, or suggestions. It often uses verbs like suggest, recommend, or wish. For example:

- a. I wish that he were here. (Hypothetical)
- b. It is essential that she attend the meeting. (Necessity)

The subjunctive mood is used to talk about things that are not real, to express wishes, give suggestions, or make commands.

The subjunctive exists mainly in official situations. Huddleston and Pullum (2002) observe the subjunctive's decreasing usage in informal conversation, however, they emphasize its necessity in legal documents and academic papers.

vii. Idiomatic Expressions

Some fixed phrases or idioms also express modality. These phrases carry a meaning that shows possibility, necessity, or obligation. For example:

- a. You have no choice but to apologize. (Expressing necessity)
- b. There's a chance he'll join us later. (Expressing possibility)

Biber et al. (1999) found that idiomatic expressions are widely used in spoken English and help people express modal ideas in a more natural way.

English modality exists through multiple expression methods. The combination of modal verbs with semi-modals and lexical items and conditionals and imperatives and subjunctive mood and idioms enables speakers and writers to convey their meanings effectively. Through modality speakers and writers can adapt their expressions to show varying degrees of certainty and necessity and possibility based on the situation.

1.2.4 Types of modality

Modality refers to the degree of necessity, possibility, obligation, permissibility, feasibility and certainty etc. Researchers have established three major types of modality through different approaches: these types include epistemic modality and deontic modality and dynamic modality. It is essential first to outline key systems of classification which help us understand modality before discussing their individual types.

Jespersen (1924) distinguished twenty subcategories of modality which were defined as “certain attitudes of the mind of the speaker to the content of the sentence” (1924, p. 313). This kind of classification has a great impact on the current research on modality and its classification although it has too many subcategories with many overlapping (Kylyvnyk & Hykava, 2024).

The second classification was made by Rescher (1968, pp24-26). He classified the entire modality system into eight subcategories and his classification also includes two most important categories of modality that we still use nowadays, epistemic modality and deontic modality (Kylyvnyk & Hykava, 2024).

Von Wright (1951) made one of the classifications that are accepted by many scholars. He distinguished the modality into four categories. He called modality modes at that time. Two of the most important items that had been mentioned in the previous two classifications were also included in his classification. The following is Von Wright’s classification.

Four modes by Von Wright (1951)

- a. The alethic modes or modes of truth.
- b. The epistemic modes or modes of knowing.
- c. The deontic modes or modes of obligation.
- d. The existential modes or modes of existence (Kylyvnyk & Hykava, 2024).

According to Palmer, there is probably no area of English grammar that is at the same time so crucial and so complicated than the system of the modals (1979, Preface). He defines modality based on the relations between modality and modals, and further remarks that modals and modality have the same relations as form and meaning have. Therefore, they are inseparable.

“Modality in English is defined in terms of the modal auxiliaries, we shall, by including will, have to include within the system of modality both futurity, which seems to belong more to the system

of tense, and volition, which has little in common with the more obvious modal concepts of possibility and necessity, but belongs more with the verbs of wanting, hoping, etc. which are essentially lexical rather than grammatical in English.” (Palmer,1990)

According to Palmer modality primarily deals with exploring possibility and necessity. English requires modal expressions as an important lexical category to convey modality.

Based on these historical categorizations, modern linguistic research focuses on two main modalities which are epistemic and deontic while there are additional modal expressions needing consideration for a full comprehension of speaker stance expressions.

Epistemic Modality: The word epistemic comes from the ancient Greek term *epistēmē* which translates to knowledge. A speaker determines truth values of propositions through assessing their knowledge status. Epistemic modality has three distinct levels of certainty which are possibility and probability as well as certainty.

Speakers mainly employ epistemic modality when evaluating or interpreting reality through their speech acts. The statement “It might rain tomorrow” expresses doubt through speaker perception.

Traditional expressions of epistemic modality can be found through following statements:

Common expressions of epistemic modality include:

Modal verbs such as might, could, and must. For example, She must be at home implies a strong inference based on observable or contextual evidence.

Adverbs like probably, possibly, and certainly. For instance, He will probably join the meeting indicates moderate certainty.

Adjectives or noun phrases in more formal contexts, such as a likely outcome or an improbable result, serve a similar function of expressing judgment regarding the likelihood or truth of a proposition.

According to Palmer (2001) there exist two primary types of modality which include propositional modality and event modality. A propositional modality enables speakers to express their truth evaluations about propositions through epistemic modality. Event modality refers to the possible occurrences of events yet it usually appears through dynamic and deontic modalities in discourse. The internal factors that determine subject capability or desire fall under dynamic modality (e.g.,

She can swim) but deontic modality depends on external requirements such as permission or obligation (e.g., You must submit the report by Monday).

Palmer further identifies three subtypes of epistemic modality:

- a. Speculative: Expression of uncertainty (e.g., Leila may know about it).
- b. Deductive: Judgment based on evidence (e.g., Leila must know about it).
- c. Assumptive: Inference based on contextual knowledge (e.g., Leila is good at history, she will know when it happened).

According to John Lyons (1977) epistemic modality serves an evaluative purpose as it signifies the degree of claim confidence expressed by the communicator. Palmer (1990), further discusses how epistemic markers including probably and must serve crucial roles in academic writing and news discourse because they help speakers depict factual assertions versus probable evaluations.

Deontic Modality: The Greek word deont- (deon, obligatory) serves as the origin of deontic modality which technically defines obligation and permission. The expression shows whether an imperative proposal follows legal or moral rules or conventional standards. The degree of obligation in deontic modality includes necessity and advisability and possibility which represents permission.

Deontic modality differs from epistemic modality because it focuses on social rules that determine what is obligatory or permitted rather than truth or possibility. The markers used in deontic expressions show what actions are required or allowed or must take place. The statement “You must wear a helmet when riding a bike” establishes a behavioral rule through its obligation.

Deontic modality is conveyed through:

Modal verbs: Must, ought to, should, and can (for permission) are common. Employees should submit their reports on time expresses a recommendation or rule.

Adjectives and Noun Phrases: Necessary, required, or mandatory serve a similar function. It is necessary to register before voting indicates an obligation.

Phrasal Constructions: Phrases like has to and is supposed to are also used. Students are supposed to follow the code of conduct conveys obligation based on a social norm.

According to Palmer (2001) deontic modality is connected to social norms and obligations. Fairclough (1995) also notes its use in policy statements and guidelines to enact obligations and responsibilities. Deontic markers are very important in instructions, laws, and rules, as they clearly indicate what actions are required, as in You may take a break after completing this task, which is a permission in the workplace. This clarity is important for public announcements, educational materials, and everyday conversations.

Dynamic Modality: The internal capabilities of an agent which determine their willingness and capacity to perform actions constitute dynamic modality. Dynamic modality differs from epistemic and deontic modalities because it focuses on the natural attributes of the subject rather than external knowledge or social rules. The statement He can swim demonstrates his swimming ability but She will help you (in some contexts) indicates his willingness to assist. According to Palmer (2001) dynamic modality combines with volitional meanings and modals such as can, could and will serve as its primary expression. The description of personal competencies and internal motivations depends heavily on this type of modality.

Beyond the traditional categories, The Oxford Handbook of Modality and Mood (2016) also explores other modal subtypes contribute to the speaker's ability to frame information in discourse. They include:

Bouletic Modality: This kind of modality involves desires and wishes according to Portner (2009) as in statements such as I want to travel and I would like some coffee. The act of desiring leads to showing motivations that subsequently activates purposeful actions to achieve those desired goals thus organizing the story sequence.

Alethic Modality: According to Hughes and Cresswell (1996) alethic modality uses necessary truths and logical entailments to establish inherent properties of something thus framing information by setting natural truths and drawn conclusions. This declaration of logical necessity functions to organize definitions through understanding how bachelors must remain unmarried.

Teleological Modality: This modality defines possibilities and necessities based on the target objectives included in the discussion of von Fintel and Iatridou (2005). This statement demonstrates that the absolute requirement for stirring exists to achieve prevention of burning. Teleological modality functions as a direct information organization system through its effective connections between actions to their end results which create causal chains in verbalized interactions.

This study investigates epistemic deontic and dynamic modality in information structure marking but adds substance to our understanding by recognizing other modal dimensions. Even though these modal dimensions do not play a major role in the article they extend the theoretical base which studies how different modalities affect discourse presentation and interpretation.

The linguistic feature of modality allows journalists to openly express their personal attitudes and opinions and display how sure they are about the information they present. News discourse requires complete understanding of the varied functionality of modality because it serves to mediate the balance between news objectivity and subjective presentation of events. The functional aspect of modality in journalistic writing will be examined with special emphasis on how it affects the objectivity-subjectivity spectrum and how multiple modality markers operate and connect to information structure. Finally, the discussion will introduce SFL Systemic Functional Linguistics to develop a comprehensive modality analysis framework for news discourse. (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

1.2.5 The Functional Role of Modality in Journalistic Writing

Through modality journalists obtain a vital linguistic instrument for demonstrating their evaluation perspective regarding the information that they share with readers. The tactical use of modal expressions in journalistic writing guides readers toward better interpretation because it expands the reporting of factual information. Through different modalities journalists create textual features which build certain authorial voices and authorial tones within their written work. The introduction of modal expressions shapes audience understanding when discerning truthfulness and meaning in reported information in subtle yet powerful ways. Editorials along with analytical pieces demonstrate the most noticeable use of modality because writers heavily depend on their perspectives to guide the development of their content.

The Interplay of Modality: Navigating Objectivity and Subjectivity in News

The choice of modal expressions in news reporting either establishes or breaks down the factual stance of published stories. Journalists use modal expressions to define their position as storytellers relative to the facts they deliver through factual and neutral information or subjective presentation. Using modality has a direct effect on a news article's objectivity:

Increasing Objectivity: The use of neutral verbs and expressions can present the information as true and unbiased, which can create a sense of neutrality. A journalist who writes with low-modality language, for example, with words such as confirmed or undeniable, sounds objective in writing.

For example: - It is confirmed that the elections will take place in May.

This idea represents the goal of objective orientation in news discourse (to provide information that does not represent a personal, contextual bias or reading of the information) (Mukhtarullina et al. 2024).

Increasing Subjectivity. In contrast, writing with higher modality acknowledges subjectivity with every level of uncertainty and articulating personal and contextual perspectives. Using modality to express judgments or speculations can certainly introduce subjectivity. The use of might and could and believe within higher modality levels creates subjective interpretations in reporting processes.

For example: - Experts believe this could result in economic instability.

Rui and Jingxia (2018) examine modality in micro-blogging English news discourse, and how journalists use modal verbs to express different degrees of certainty and subjectivity. The study shows that the strategic use of modality enables journalists to present complex information in a way that is both informative and engaging without overwhelming or misleading the reader.

By utilizing modality, journalists take writers between facts and interpretations. The intentional decision between objective and subjective modal expressions means journalists can negotiate the distinction between reporting facts and offering interpretations. This permits the journalist to convey complexity in a way that informs and engages the reader without risk of overloading or misleading them. Achieving balance between these modes is essential in journalistic integrity while accounting for the complexities in news reporting (Xu, 2015). Modality assists the reader in understanding, circumstances, and complexity of a situation without being overwhelmed or mislead.

1.2.6 Modality and Information Structure in Discourse

Modality is more than a proposition; it is also important for how information is structured in discourse. Modality includes expressions of possibility, necessity, and obligation, and can also

have a huge impact on how focus, emphasis, and coherence are managed in both spoken and written language. As an organizational resource, modality can also take many forms, including modal verbs, adverbs, and adjectives (Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

Information structure is concerned with how discourse is organized by distinguishing between given and new information, and is one of the significant concepts of discourse analysis (Prince, 1988). Information structure intersects with modality because modality indirectly communicates the speaker's or writer's attitude toward the propositions being offered. Modality will affect how the audience frames the information. For example, a modal expression communicates the degree of commitment the speaker has toward a statement or the level of responsibility the speaker takes for an action, and this is important for the interlocutor's attention, interpretation, and overall understanding. Given this relationship, it is important to understand how modality and information structure work together and why speakers and writers both consider the flow of information through modality in order to create coherent discourse that has a communicative purpose.

The strategic use of modal words - might or must for example - can subtly promote certain elements in a sentence, creating a direct path to the reader's or listener's attention and guiding the intended interpretation(s) towards a specific meaning. The connection that exists between modality and information structure is the basis of how meaning is created and negotiated in interaction. Researchers indicate that speakers/writers place and use modal elements very strategically in order to foreground certain information, and make it more salient for the audience, which in turn affects the audience's interpretation and response. Therefore, a staging of modalities is particularly relevant to persuasive discourse as the modal elements that we strategically place in the discourse will orient the audience towards particular meaning - something to act upon.

The use of modals serves effectively to draw viewers' focus onto essential components within communication messages. Speakers achieve message focus when they select proper modal verbs or adverbs to indicate what is possible or relevant to an event. The verb "must" makes something necessary while "might" demonstrates that something remains possible. A single word in a sentence modifies its meanings while altering reader comprehension of the information. The position of modal words within a sentence and the selection of proper modal words determines what elements stand out as vital information. Placing modal verbs at beginning of a sentence in English enables speakers to express their emotional stance toward what they want to convey. The

sentence underscores contemplation of future outcomes before making decision because it focuses the audience on this essential action.

A writer can make their ideas stand out more clearly by selecting the correct linguistic method keeping the reader focused on specific concepts. This statement presents the critical need to examine future results due to its emphasis on action.

Modality's Contribution to Textual Coherence in Discourse

A text achieves stronger coherence in ideas when modal expressions are used methodically to establish logical and semantic connections. The semantic connections between propositions become obvious through modality which enables authors to display their strategic viewpoint about these relationships. Modal adverbs work as cohesive devices which perform functions similar to conjunctions together with other types of linking expressions. Modals consisting of therefore, however, consequently, and yet simultaneously explain logical relationships between ideas and strengthen the overall textual coherence through their explications about writer perspectives on text segments. (Bahaziq,2016)

New information enters discourse with ease through the use of modality in discourse construction. Writers who want to introduce new concepts should use modal expressions to decrease their assertive tone by expressing their points as beliefs or suggestions. Writers use a step-by-step introduction of fresh propositions to create text flow which integrates novel information better with established textual components. (Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

1.2.7 Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and its Application to News Discourse

M.A.K. Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday, 2004; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) provides a unique and insightful perspective on modality. Modality is not simply a grammatical feature in SFL, but is a critical aspect of the interpersonal metafunction, where meaning is created socially.

Halliday explores language as a resource for the construction of meaning (Halliday, 2004). Each time we communicate through language, we make choices from the available system of language options, considering the communicative intentions of the speaker/writer and the intent within the

specific socio-cultural context. These choices are clearly not arbitrary, but are feathered in a systematic way to perform three significant metafunctions:

The Ideational metafunction - this metafunction allows us to represent our experiences of the world as a series of events, processes, participants and circumstances and is concerned with the content of our messages.

The textual metafunction enables us to construct organized coherent texts .

The Interpersonal metafunction - this metafunction allows us to establish and sustain social relations, present attitudes and judgments and express specific roles in interaction. Modality is central to this metafunction and shows our position in relation to the information presented in the communicative event, as well as our relationship with the audience.

Modality, then, is not simply a grammatical feature but a way of realizing social meanings and negotiating our relationship to the meaning we are communicating and the people we are communicating with.

Within the interpersonal metafunction, the Mood system is important (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The Mood system is realized by the organization of clauses in terms of Subject, Finite, and Predicator, which are the components of the clause and as they are organized they represent the grammatical encoding of the role of the speaker or writer in the exchange. The Finite part of the clause is the part of the verb phrase that carries tense, and that represents the speaker's commitment or judgement. In systemic functional linguistics, we consider modality as the main site of modality is in the Finite. It is present that the speaker expresses their member hot certain they are (epistemic modality), or expressing how certain obligations or permission (deontic modality) they feel.

i. Scales of Modality in SFL

SFL embraces the concept of modality as a scalar dimension, which denotes varying degrees of certainty or obligation (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). In terms of epistemic modality, the scalar range is relative to certainty, as follows:

- High Certainty: must, certainly, undoubtedly
- Median Certainty: will, should, probably, likely
- Low Certainty: may, might, possibly, perhaps

In a similar vein, for deontic modality, the scalar range corresponds to obligation:

- High Obligation: must, has to, is required to
- Median Obligation: should, ought to, is expected to
- Low Obligation: may, can, is allowed to

These scales allow for a sophisticated means of categorizing and analyzing the varying shades of meaning that can emerge through modal expressions.

ii. Application of SFL to the Analysis of News Discourse

The principles and analytical devices provided by SFL offer a strong toolbox for analyzing news discourse and how language construes meaning and directs the reader's understanding of certain events and their representations. For example, by analyzing the linguistic choices of news texts from an SFL perspective, researchers could reveal ideologies, power, and the socio-cultural context that may inform what news was produced and how audiences will read the news.

For example, Journalists employ modal expressions like “may” to present uncertain information which encourages readers to think about possibilities instead of treating information as absolute. Strong modal expressions including “must” create authoritative statements and calls for action which determine how readers perceive an issue.

Mineshima (2009) uses SFL to show how different linguistic choices in news texts can convince readers of the truth of arguments, emphasizing the role of modality when constructing meaning.

1.2.8 The integration of Communicative Dynamism (CD) with Halliday’s Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)

Through the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) framework researchers can understand how modality functions in language to construct meaning while Communicative Dynamism (CD) provides additional insights into information organization and emphasis across a text. The analysis of modal expressions becomes more detailed when researchers combine these two perspectives because they show how modal expressions both express certainty and obligation and control information flow and reader interpretation.

The Communicative Dynamism model shows that sentence elements with the highest communicative value tend to appear at the end of clauses (Firbas,1992). The SFL framework benefits from CD analysis because it shows how modality affects the thematic and informational structure of the clause. Modal expressions such as may or must that appear within the clause determine the strength of message delivery and which aspects receive attention from the audience.

The integrated framework demonstrates its highest value in news discourse analysis. Modality functions beyond neutrality because it both reveals and shapes specific ideological positions along with particular communicative objectives. The modal expression must creates strong certainty and necessity effects which establish information as authoritative and urgent but may expresses uncertainty and interpretive openness. The analysis of modal expression placement through CD reveals how sentence structure affects their communicative power.

The combined theories enable researchers to analyze how journalists organize information to both deliver news and influence public perception. News language contains ideological elements according to Fowler (1991) and modality usage demonstrates the social position of news institutions. Researchers can identify strategic language use for building particular viewpoints or maintaining ideological narratives by using SFL to analyze modal features in news texts and CD to evaluate their placement and informational weight.

The combination of SFL and Communicative Dynamism enables researchers to perform dual-layered analysis which examines both grammatical modality realization through mood structures and thematic organization and modality scales and functional information organization through degrees of communicative dynamism. The theoretical synthesis developed here will guide the later stages of empirical analysis to reveal how news texts employ modality for social and ideological positioning of readers and persuasive communication.

CHAPTER II: METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

This chapter presents the methodological framework used to investigate the use of modality as a marker of information structure in news discourse. The research methodology has been established to respond to the research questions while providing an exact research design. The main objective is to identify how modal verbs and expressions are used to arrange information while guiding reader comprehension in different news writing styles. The study investigates modality patterns and trends that appear throughout different categories of news texts.

The study employs mixed methods that include both qualitative and quantitative aspects to provide a full analysis of modality roles in distinct news categories.

The specific type of mixed-methods design followed in this research is a *sequential exploratory design*, where qualitative analysis was conducted first, followed by quantitative analysis. This approach was selected because initial qualitative insights were necessary to identify and classify different types and functions of modality in context. Once the qualitative framework was established, it enabled the systematic quantification of modality patterns across a broader dataset.

This design was chosen to allow the qualitative findings to guide and inform the structure of the quantitative phase, ensuring that the statistical analysis is grounded in rich contextual understanding. It also aligns closely with the research questions, which aim both to describe how modality structures information and to measure its patterns in real news discourse. By combining the depth of qualitative analysis with the scope of quantitative results, this design supports both interpretive insight and empirical generalization.

The research uses Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) together with Palmer's modality typology and Firbas's Communicative Dynamism (CD) as its theoretical frameworks. The combined theories enable a comprehensive analysis of modality's relationship with thematic and rhematic structures in news discourse. SFL and Palmer's typology enable researchers to study modality types and functions while CD helps identify how modality indicates new versus given information and shapes text organization. The study achieves enhanced analysis of modality structures, and information communication in news discourse through the combined use of these frameworks.

2.2 Corpus

The primary data for this study consist of a purposive sample of 20 news articles collected from 16 different, reputable English-language news outlets, including BBC News, CNN, The Guardian, Financial Times, Fox News, The Independent, The Washington Post and others mainly based on Western sources. The chosen sources have been selected because of their strong editorial standing and broad international audience and their ability to provide diverse news topics.

The sample includes a balanced distribution across five major news categories: political, economic, health, sports, and technology. This mix ensures the inclusion of both hard news (e.g., politics and economics) and soft news (e.g., health and sports), offering a diverse communicative context in which modality may be employed differently. The inclusion of such a range supports a broader and more comparative analysis of how modality functions across categories.

Although 20 texts were selected from 16 sources (meaning some sources contributed more than one article), this was a deliberate decision. The rationale was to include more than one article from sources that provided rich examples of modality or had significant variation in genre coverage. The selection process included sampling BBC News and CNN multiple times because these platforms present diverse content from various categories. The distribution pattern serves to maintain proper news category distribution alongside effective modality representation and complete dataset representation within the sample.

All selected articles were published within a year to maintain linguistic trends and current relevance. The articles were collected that demonstrated clear modality expressions through their incorporation of modal verbs, modal adverbs, and similar grammatical structures.

The selection of texts did not happen randomly. A targeted purposive sampling approach was utilized to discover texts that utilized modality actively during information construction. The study selected articles based on whether they contained modality expressions as its main inclusion criterion because the study objectives focused on understanding how these expressions function within communication structures. The exclusion of articles with no modality occurred because the research aimed to investigate how modality structures and emphasizes information.

All articles underwent pre-processing to eliminate advertisements along with multimedia and unrelated hyperlinks and other non-linguistic content before analysis started. Each article was transferred to Microsoft Excel before developing a structured data coding framework.

Every Excel worksheet includes:

1. A segment of the text
2. The identification of modality expressions
3. The classification of modality type (epistemic, deontic, dynamic)
4. The news category (e.g., political, health)
5. Contextual notes explaining the function of modality

The systematic and replicable coding process established consistency which enabled both qualitative and quantitative interpretations of the data. The annotated data formed a dependable foundation to detect category-specific trends and thematic organization while analyzing modality.

The research collection was made to support interpretive depth and empirical coverage through its balanced structure: the corpus size enables qualitative close analysis while its diversity and organization produces meaningful quantitative patterns.

2.3 The Procedure of Data Analysis

The research proceeds with a mixed-methods design that employs sequential exploratory steps starting with qualitative analysis and then followed by quantitative analysis. The research selected this design because the interpretive findings of the qualitative phase assist in developing the quantitative phase structure which leads to enhanced research question coverage through phase integration.

Phase 1: Qualitative Analysis

Analysis during the qualitative stage examines how modal expressions influence information structure and reader interpretation of news articles. Analyzing modality in this manner allows to conduct thorough investigations into how the technique helps to emphasize specific text elements. This research aligns with Research Question 1 that explores the impact of modal expressions on information organization within news articles.

The researcher carefully analyzed all 20 articles to identify and mark every instance of modal expressions through manual annotation in an Excel-based template.

Every modality instance required documentation of the following information:

1. Text excerpt containing the modal expression
2. Type of modality (epistemic, deontic, or dynamic)
3. Function of modality (prediction, possibility, necessity)
4. Thematic role (theme or rheme)
5. Information status (new or given)
6. Category of the news articles

This extensive annotation provides an analysis of modality's role in information flow by studying both thematic development and reader understanding. The research evaluated distinctive modal patterns across different literary categories by comparing the use of epistemic modality in political, economy, technology, health, and sports news.

Phase 2: Quantitative Analysis

The second research phase employs a quantitative approach after analyzing qualitative findings to study general patterns and frequency distributions. The second phase aims to address Research Question 2 through an evaluation of modality types' occurrence frequency in different categories.

The Excel spreadsheets served as the platform for quantitative analysis which allowed researchers to determine the frequency of each type of modality. Researchers transformed these frequency numbers into percentages to enable comparisons between categories with different word amounts. The research arranged the data according to news categories which included political, economic, health, sports, and technology to determine:

1. Modality Distribution Across News Categories
2. Modality Functions in News Discourse
3. Theme-Rheme Distinction in News Texts

Excel's COUNT IF and pivot tables functions together with basic statistical tools were applied to organize and display the frequency data. The focus remained on identifying meaningful trends which could enhance the qualitative findings besides seeking statistical significance.

The study achieves a more holistic insight through the integration of both research phases. Research gains from two different types of data interpretation when a step-by-step research approach was

used to combine both qualitative and quantitative analysis. The research identifies functional roles of modality through qualitative evaluation before using quantitative methods to determine the consistency of these roles across different categories. This combined methodology provides increased validation and dependability of conclusions while delivering an extensive understanding of how news discourse organizes information through modality.

The results of both phases are integrated and interpreted together in the next chapter, ensuring a clear connection between the research questions, the methodological steps, and the findings.

CHAPTER III: DATA ANALYSIS, RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The research findings in this section analyze how modality operates as both a grammatical system and a communicative tool in news discourse. The analysis demonstrates how different modalities (epistemic, deontic, and dynamic) affect textual organization while guiding reader interpretation and shaping news narrative framing. The research identifies modality patterns across political, economic, health, financial and sports news categories to show how journalists organize information to enhance clarity, emphasis, and reader engagement. The analysis also examines how modality contributes to textual coherence by guiding information flow and highlighting key propositions. In many of these texts, modality functions as the Theme, while evaluative meaning in the Rheme directs the reader's attention toward critical stances or interpretations.

3.1 Qualitative Analysis of Modality and Information Structure Across News Categories

The study analyzes news excerpts to demonstrate how modality structures information which affects how readers understand it. The research study uses news examples to demonstrate the effects of modal expression on news narratives and reader understanding. The analysis focuses on different news domains such as politics, economics, health, sports and technology to explore how modality shapes their story development and reader understanding. The function of modality in this context serves as the central concept (theme) while the narrative and interpretive results emerge in the concluding part (rheme).

A. Modality and Information Structure in Political News

Political news reports heavily depend on modality to convey obligations and necessities, and discuss unconfirmed or ongoing events. Writers supply information through modal verbs along with expressions while avoiding definitive statements. The practical application of this concept emerges in the following authentic news piece.

Example 1: The Washington Times, 16 April 2025

“Chinese hypersonic missiles could destroy U.S. carriers in minutes”

In the headline “Chinese hypersonic missiles could destroy U.S. carriers in minutes,” modality plays a central role in shaping the message. The modal verb “could” expresses epistemic modality, signaling the speaker's judgment about possibility rather than certainty. This means the statement does not assert that the destruction will happen—only that it might.

From the perspective of Theme–Rheme structure and Communicative Dynamism, the Theme is “Chinese hypersonic missiles,” which is the topical starting point of the clause and carries low communicative dynamism. It introduces the subject of the sentence, which is likely already known or inferable in context. The Rheme begins with “could destroy U.S. carriers in minutes,” which includes the modal verb “could” and the most informative, impactful part of the message. This segment carries higher communicative dynamism, as it introduces new, serious, and potentially alarming information.

The final phrase, “in minutes,” further intensifies the message by emphasizing the speed and urgency of the hypothetical action. It heightens the emotional effect, contributing significantly to the sentence’s communicative force.

The combination of modal selection and information arrangement in the headline effectively demonstrates the severity of military threats through cautious language that focuses on possibilities. Through modality the reader receives information about both the level of certainty and the sense of urgency and credibility of the news.

Example 2: Independent, 14 September 2024

“We need to boost our air defense and long-range capabilities to protect our people,” Zelenskyy wrote on social media. “We are working on this with all of Ukraine’s partners.”

In the news text “We need to increase our air defense and long-range capabilities to protect our people,” and “We are working on this with all of Ukraine’s partners,” Zelenskyy communicates both a strong sense of obligation and ongoing action.

In the first sentence, the phrase “need to” expresses obligation and commitment, showing what must be done. This is an example of deontic modality, where the speaker highlights the necessity of increasing defense capabilities. The Theme, “We need to increase our air defense and long-range capabilities,” presents this obligation as something already accepted or agreed upon—a shared priority between speaker and audience. The Rheme, “to protect our people,” gives the reason behind this obligation, adding an emotional appeal that explains why the action is important.

The second sentence, “We are working on this with all of Ukraine’s partners,” continues the message by showing that this obligation is already being acted upon. The Theme, “We are working on this,” focuses on the ongoing effort, while the Rheme, “with all of Ukraine’s partners,” introduces the new information about collaboration. This highlights a sense of collective responsibility and international support, reinforcing the speaker’s commitment and giving hope that the goal is achievable.

Together, these sentences guide the audience through a logical and emotional progression—from stating what must be done and why, to explaining the concrete steps being taken and the cooperation involved. This structure helps to build trust, urgency, and a sense of shared effort in facing the challenge.

Example 3: CNBC, 14 April 2025

Why Trump’s nuclear talks with Iran could be far more successful than Biden’s”.

In the headline “Why Trump’s nuclear talks with Iran could be far more successful than Biden’s,” the phrase “could be” indicates possibility; it indicates that Trump’s talks might be more successful, but isn’t entirely certain. Since this phrase is positioned right at the beginning, in the theme, a reader is invited to think of this concept as something that is real to think about, instead of a fact. In this way, the writer is leading the reader in and opening the reader up to the argument.

The rheme, the rest of the sentence, “far more successful than Biden’s,” provides the new information, clarifying exactly what kind of success is being discussed, and how it relates to Biden’s. So the sentence moves from general possibility in the theme, to specific comparison in the rheme.

By putting “could be” in the theme, the sentence conveys possibility and encourages readers to engage with the claim and remain curious regarding what is being stated in the rheme.

Example 4: Euro News, 11 March 2025

““Clarifications have to be in public and that's why it has to be through the parliamentary committee of enquiry,” he said.”

In the news excerpt “Clarifications have to be in public and that's why it has to be through the parliamentary committee of enquiry,” the modal phrase “have to” expresses deontic necessity, meaning that these clarifications are not optional, but are a required necessity. By using modality in this way, the speaker is framing their message as not simply a choice, but as an obligation.

The clause “Clarifications have to be in public” articulates the theme of the statement, and places the idea of necessity for public transparency at the start of the sentence. This structure also depersonalizes the obligation, as it treats the obligation as a shared understanding or accepted fact, thus influencing the continuance of the statement. The interpretation of this thematic placement also makes it easy for the audience to engage with the proposed premise assuming it to be true. By doing so, it is likely that the audience will agree to the premise of the story without second guessing its validity.

The rheme “through the parliamentary committee of enquiry” provides the reader with new and specific information, essentially explaining how to fulfill the identified obligation. Particularly, this provides institutional weight to the claim and shifts the focus from the general need for transparency to the formal mechanism that will deliver it.

Placing “have to” in the theme presents the obligation as common ground and the rheme serves as the institutional path for fulfilling the obligation. This ordering of modalities and structure conveys that public clarifications are necessary and urgent, mostly because we relate them to legitimate democratic processes.

Political journalism utilizes modality as a key tool for presenting uncertainty while simultaneously establishing requirements and making value judgments which control reader perceptions of news events. The modal verbs function as indicators of possibilities and warnings while avoiding strong claims. The modal elements in the theme create a framework for readers to understand the speaker's position and the presumed shared facts about the issue. The rheme functions to provide the core information which frequently consists of a result or evaluation or particular information that finishes the statement. The combination of modality with thematic organization enables political writers to offer multiple interpretative approaches while preserving rhetorical adaptability for the

purpose of speculating, maintaining distance or emphasizing certain points based on their communication objectives.

B. Modality and Information Structure in Financial News

Financial news is significant in influencing the public's understanding of the economy and shaping readers' perceptions. Modality and information structure are analyzed as means in financial news express prediction, possibility, and necessity about developments in the economy. By understanding these forms of meaning, it becomes clear how journalists guide readers' interpretations of the economy with their language choices.

Example 1: CNN, 16 April 2025

“The level of the tariff increases announced so far is significantly larger than anticipated,” Powell said at an event in Chicago. “The same is likely to be true of the economic effects, which will include higher inflation and slower growth”.

In the news excerpts “The same is likely to be true of the economic effects, which will include higher inflation and slower growth,” the modal phrase “is likely to be” in the sentence predicts an uncertain future event through epistemic possibility. The wording indicates an anticipated result emerging from knowledge or evidence which has not yet been proven as a factual occurrence. The speaker indicates an upcoming economic situation that shows similarities to the tariff increases but it still remains uncertain about its outcome.

The first part of the sentence “The same is likely to be true of the economic effects” establishes the main topic that the speaker believes requires audience attention. The speaker utilizes the modal phrase within the theme to present economic effects as an actual occurrence which should be given proper consideration.

The specific details of the economic effects emerge in the rheme. The writer uses the modal verb “will” to express epistemic modality about the economic results which include higher inflation and slower growth. The writer presents both outcomes as anticipated certainties instead of mere possibilities. The decision to put “will include” in the rheme position changes the sentence from a cautious probability statement to a clear projection that makes the information more impactful. The writer uses the shift from probability to certainty in this sequence to lead the reader toward

accepting the forthcoming economic challenges as both believable and likely to happen which strengthens the authoritative nature of the report.

The interplay between modality and information structure enables readers to transition from potential outcomes to definite anticipations. The epistemic modal “is likely to” in the theme establishes a cautious tone, while “will” in the rheme delivers a firm prediction. This structure helps frame the unfolding economic scenario as both credible and consequential, steering how the reader processes and prioritizes the information.

Example 2: BBC News, 11 April 2025.

“We must go further and faster to kickstart economic growth, provide security for working people and put more money in their pockets,” chancellor Rachel Reeves added”.

The modal verb “must” in a statement demonstrates strong deontic necessity which means the action must happen immediately. The speaker uses “must” to demonstrate that the proposed action is fundamental and thus it needs to be completed.

The statement “We must go further and faster” functions as an opening theme that establishes both the direction and mood of the communication. Through the strategic placement of the forceful modal “must” in the theme section the speaker creates an impression that the necessity is universally recognized thus turning it into a community-wide obligation. The speaker uses this approach to create a mutual understanding with listeners which leads them to support the speaker's objectives.

The rheme “to kickstart economic growth, provide security for working people and put more money in their pockets” reveals specific information. Through the explanation of these purposes, the text shows the intended outcomes of the necessity. The message uses this pattern of moving from necessity (theme) to purpose (rheme) for effective persuasion.

The theme position of “must” shows that both the speaker and audience recognize the obligation equally while the rheme reveals the specific objectives which need to be achieved. The combination of modality with information structure enhances the message through its ability to connect pressing needs with direct and understandable results.

Example 3: The Standard, 26 February 2025

“BP's decision to reduce capital expenditure on renewables and double down on its fossil fuel assets will be shocking but not surprising to investors focused on sustainability.”

The news excerpt uses “will be,” epistemic modality to show that BP's decision will certainly produce an emotional response among investors who care about sustainability.

The theme of sentence focuses on BP's choice to decrease funding toward renewable projects and strengthen its investment in traditional fuel resources. The headline sentence establishes the main subject in the theme to show readers how they should understand the information provided.

The speaker's point of view appears in the rheme of sentence in “will be shocking but not surprising to investors focused on sustainability.” The expression “will be” establishes a predetermined emotional response that minimizes possible objections. Through this phrasing the writer hints at readers to share their personal evaluation.

Using “will be” in the rheme section helps the writer control the audience's reaction to the sentence's main topic. The sentence creates a sense of certainty while also evaluating the situation to guide readers into believing that the future will reflect current sustainability standards.

Modality holds a significant place in financial reporting by shaping thematic elements while helping readers understand content. Economic predictions receive different certainty levels when authors use modal verbs in the theme. The location of modal verbs alters the reader's interpretation of information by presenting it as either definite statements or potential concepts or alerts. The rheme delivers specific quantitative results or consequences which provide additional information. Financial reporting uses modal variation to maintain reader interest while achieving a balance between authoritativeness and warning and influencing expectations regarding financial developments and risks.

C. Modality and Information Structure in Health News

Health news frequently relays risk, recommendations, and uncertainty to the public. This study investigates modality and information structures in health news that convey prediction, possibility, and necessity in relation to health outcomes and treatment. The examination of these linguistic features assists in revealing how media shapes public consideration of health and medical guidance.

Example 1: CNN Web December 11 2024

“Certain foods may disrupt your body’s fight against cancer cells, study say”.

The phrase “Certain foods may disrupt your body’s fight against cancer cells” contains a modal verb which demonstrates epistemic probability that the cancer cell response to foods remains theoretically possible rather than absolute. The statement takes a moderate position because it highlights careful approach and scientific uncertainty that scientists commonly maintain in their research.

The theme, “Certain foods,” announces established knowledge that readers should understand and recognize as the primary topic of discussion. The theme serves to focus the reader’s mind on the specific cause that scientists are investigating. The writer uses this structure to both maintain scientific caution and engage the reader’s interest by combining modality with information flow. The use of the word “may” allows readers to analyze the claim while avoiding overwhelming them with definitive statements.

The word “may” helps the speaker or study establish distance from their claims which enhances credibility and trust through the acknowledgment of unknown information.

The rheme, “may disrupt your body’s fight against cancer cells,” introduces the new and significant information about food-related health risks. The sentence uses the modal verb in this position to demonstrate the study’s findings regarding possible outcomes instead of definitively stated facts.

Example 2: ALJAZEERE. 24 September 2024

“AMR threatens to unwind a century of medical progress, and could return us to the pre-antibiotic era, where infections that are treatable today could become much harder to treat and grow.

The news piece employs modality as a tool to balance the intensity of danger against cautious handling. The verb “threatens” establishes AMR as an urgent and critical threat which sets up the important subject in the beginning. The epistemic modal “could” presents the return to pre-antibiotic conditions as a theoretical situation which reduces the certainty of this outcome without denying its importance.

The theme starts by explaining the actual danger that AMR presents to people which establishes the core problem for readers. The rheme continues by explaining how currently curable infections

might develop into untreatable conditions. The text uses a shift from direct warnings to speculative outcomes to direct readers from current risks towards potential future scenarios.

The news piece establishes a balance between concrete danger and possible outcomes which effectively draws readers into the matter through a thoughtful approach that maintains both credibility and issue importance.

Health news relies on modality for expressing uncertain statements as well as warning readers about potential situations and possible outcomes. Writers can present risks without absolute statements through the use of modal verbs such as *may* and *could* along with the expression *threatens to*. This use of modality allows the reader to consider the seriousness of a situation before making their own interpretation.

D. Modality and Information Structure in Sport News

Sports news exists between certain predictions and possible outcomes because athletics generate unpredictable results. Information structure becomes crucial in media through modality because it generates predictions and evaluations of athletic events. Understanding modal structures within sport reporting allows us to know how media influences our expectations along with our reactions.

Example 1: AZERTAC, 24 December 2024

“I should also note that Azerbaijan finished third among Muslim countries. Considering that there are about 60 Muslim countries in the world, this is a great and truly historic achievement. Our team has once again raised the sporting glory of our country to new heights by winning seven medals: two gold, two silver, and three bronze.”

The news excerpt uses modality to determine how readers interact with the presented information. A sentence that starts with “*should also note*” demonstrates deontic modality which requires an obligation or recommendation. The message on the theme line alerts the audience about essential information that the speaker wants them to focus on.

An epistemic modal stance begins with the word “*Considering*” which directs the reader to think about the fact that there are about 60 Muslim countries worldwide. The initial explanation in the theme section provides a background context which helps readers grasp Azerbaijan's important achievement.

The country secures third place while also obtaining the highest medal count, according to the rheme which asserts the evaluation with confidence. The expression “a great and truly historic achievement” serves as an epistemic modal statement to demonstrate the speaker's unwavering confidence and sense of accomplishment.

The integration of deontic modality in the theme and epistemic modality through the “considering” function in the theme and rheme sections helps readers move from acknowledgment to contextualization to a definite and proud assessment. The structured approach enhances reader involvement through a blend of respectful directives and expert analysis alongside pertinent background information.

Example 2: NBC NEWS, 16 November 2024

“I tried to give the best fight I possibly could but when someone’s just surviving in the ring basically, it’s hard to make it exciting,” Paul continued. “I couldn’t really get him to engage me or slip shots and do something super cool or whatever.”

The analysis demonstrates how information structure along with modality function to direct personal evaluation through news content reflections. The verb phrase “tried to” functions as a dynamic modality by showing the speaker’s attempt and will to achieve something. This element of the theme serves as a joint starting point which leads the readers to feel compassion for the speaker because of their effort.

The modal phrase “possibly could” establishes epistemic uncertainty regarding the action’s outcome. The speaker introduces new evaluation information through the rheme which reveals their self-perceived boundaries. The phrase “couldn’t really get him to engage me” demonstrates epistemic inability through the rheme to show how resistance from others remains a significant obstacle.

The narrative structure consists of two main parts which focus on the speaker’s intentions and efforts in the theme and their encountered obstacles in the rheme. News writers employ modal expressions to manage their personal perspective and their responsibility through subjective account presentation to keep their news stories both credible and reader-friendly.

Example 3: Fox News, 17 June 2024

“Boston was able to keep defense at the forefront of the entire series. They only let Dallas surpass 100 points once in the series and kept the Mavs at bay for most of Game 4. The team was 11-of-37 from 3-point range.”

Modality expressions of ability serve as a tool to create favorable assessments regarding team performance according to this excerpt.

The term “was able to” stands for dynamic modality in the sentence which represents the team's capability. The early position of this expression within the theme enables the statement to establish defensive success at Boston as widely recognized information. Through this deliberate choice of position the statement in theme leads readers to understand defensive control as the primary message.

The rheme, “keep defense at the forefront of the entire series,” delivers the new, evaluative content. The ability definition gets expanded through specific performance outcomes which establish a clear connection between capacity and actual accomplishments. The combination of ability presentation in the theme with performance outcome presentation in the rheme establishes a statement as both factual and praiseworthy.

Modality serves two purposes in this context by both reporting ability and emphasizing achievement thus influencing the reader's perspective through a subtle approach. The sports news reporting alongside other journalistic fields employs dynamic modality in constructing stories about effective performance and team capability while sustaining their objectivity.

Sports news utilizes dynamic and epistemic modality to convey effort, talent, and unachieved potential, frequently mirroring the personal experiences of athletes. Information is generally presented from familiar performance to novel explanation, enabling audiences to make sense of outcomes through judgments instead of stable facts.

E. Modality and Information Structure in Tech News

The way we understand technological possibilities and advancements depends on modality in the tech world. Modality shapes both the presentation and understanding of information through its

influence on predictions about future innovations and assessments of new technologies. The study of modality in tech news reveals its effects on our societal expectations regarding technology.

Example 1: The Guardian, 22 September 2024

“Murilo Martins of DeepMind believes robotics is critical to achieving artificial general intelligence (AGI). He reasons that an AI can only really understand our world if it has a physical form”.

Murilo Martins of DeepMind states that robotics is critical to achieving artificial general intelligence (AGI). The phrase “is critical to” uses deontic modality, expressing necessity—robotics is presented as an essential requirement for AGI. The word “critical” acts as a modal evaluation emphasizing the indispensable role of robotics.

In terms of information structure, the sentence begins with the theme, “Murilo Martins of DeepMind,” which establishes the source of the claim and grounds the information. The rheme contains the new and evaluative information that robotics is necessary for AGI. Placing the modal evaluation in the rheme highlights the speaker’s strong stance and draws the reader’s attention to the core argument.

The next sentence states that an AI “can only really understand our world if it has a physical form.” Here, the modal “can” reflects dynamic modality, indicating the AI’s capability or limitation—AI’s genuine understanding depends on having a body. This modal expression presents a conditional capability, reinforcing the necessity introduced earlier.

From an information structure perspective, the rheme contains fresh information about the condition for AI’s understanding, reinforcing the main argument. The conditional clause “if it has a physical form” logically links embodiment as a necessary condition, making the argument clear and structured.

Together, these modality choices—deontic necessity (“critical”) and dynamic capability (“can only”)—guide the reader through the text by first establishing robotics as a must-have condition and then clarifying the specific functional limitation of AI. This progression from source to necessity to conditional ability shapes the reader’s understanding and emphasizes the importance of robotics in AGI development.

Example 2: EURO NEWS,17 October 2024

“The Integral E foreshadows a new regional airline where “low carbon” lines will open up between smaller cities and areas that are otherwise not serviced by plane or train, the website said”.

The future possibilities and reader expectations receive their structure from the way modality functions in this news excerpt. The term “foreshadows” demonstrates epistemic modality that predicts or expects the likely result. The word demonstrates partial certainty while allowing space for future events to occur thereby showing a forward-thinking perspective.

The thematic structure identifies “The Integral E” as the central idea thus making it familiar and understood by readers. This establishes the necessary background for making predictions. The theme contains an implicit modal concept of foreshadowing which readies readers to obtain fresh details.

The theme about connecting small cities and unserved areas by train and plane through low carbon lines generates a strong prediction through the usage of “will” which represents high certainty about future developments. The development of the theme into a rheme represents growing epistemic assurance which directs readers from general predictions toward specific and detailed understanding of the proposed transformation. The textual description explains the projected development through its focus on airline innovation and environmental sustainability which demonstrates both technological progress and regional connectivity.

The arrangement of this theme from general statements toward specific consequences serves two main purposes: improving text unity and establishing the source as forward-thinking and authoritative. The author enhances reader engagement through strategic placement of diverse modality elements in the theme and rheme which gradually build certainty without making exaggerated claims. The combination of modality factors with information structure demonstrates how media organizations present conjectural technological advancements as both legitimate and impactful in broader environmental and technological contexts. The specific modal functions together with thematic development create a balanced approach that represents both knowledge and speculation which aligns with ethical journalism practices when covering new developments.

Modality in tech news shows how certain or necessary a development is. It helps readers see what might happen in the future and what is considered essential for progress.

3.2 Quantitative Analysis: Frequency and Distribution of Modality Across News Categories

A quantitative research method analyzes how modal expressions appear across different news categories following qualitative information structure investigations of news discourse. This study applies corpus data analysis to measure modal verbs and expressions statistically in order to establish modality patterns that explain journalistic methods for expressing linguistic duty, certainty, and potential claims. The quantitative research findings strengthen original qualitative discoveries to establish a comprehensive view regarding how modal language shapes news delivery and reader understanding.

The news categories demonstrate widespread usage of epistemic modality as their primary modality type. Economy and politics demonstrate high frequency of such language since writers must convey different degrees of certainties and doubts in their statements. These categories frequently exhibit analytic sections and future predictions as well as explanations of intricate events. Political news contains deontic modality at a high frequency because laws and formal decisions and rules are typical elements in this field. The highest usage of dynamic modality exists in health news coverage because reports center on abilities and possible effects alongside conditions while exploring treatments and patient outcomes. The different news fields adopt modality to match their specific content frameworks and objective styles. (See Table 1)

Table 3.2.1. Modality Distribution Across News Categories

News categories	Epistemic		Deontic		Dynamic		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Economy	76	29.8	7	13.0	9	16.1	92
Health	32	12.5	7	13.0	26	46.4	65
Politics	74	29.0	21	38.9	7	12.5	102
Sport	58	22.7	11	20.4	9	16.1	78
Technology	15	5.9	8	14.8	5	8.9	28
Total	255	100.0	54	100.0	56	100.0	365

The frequency data for epistemic, deontic, and dynamic modals appears in this table across five news categories: economy, health, politics, sport, and technology. The frequency and percentages of modality in the categories indicate which types of modality are more common in different news topics. Epistemic modality is the most prevalent across all news categories, representing 255 out of 365 modality instances, suggesting that news often concerns itself with certainty, possibility,

and evidence. Dynamic modality is the second most common (56 instances), indicating that news frequently focuses on abilities and actions. Deontic modality is the least frequent, appearing 54 times, and primarily expressing obligations and rules.

Both economic and political news contain epistemic modality at comparable levels, as its 29.8% frequency in economic news closely matches 29.0% in political news, reflecting the need for expressions of certainty and probability. Meanwhile, deontic modality reaches 38.9% in political news, due to the category's normative and policy-based content, where obligation and necessity are emphasized.

Health news constitutes the field with the highest occurrence of modality across the analyzed corpus. Dynamic modality appears in 46.4% of health media reporting, as statements regarding ability and potential outcomes hold significant importance in this reporting style. Across all categories, modality serves a vital function in structuring news content, guiding interpretation, and shaping audience perception according to the intended communicative purpose.

The statistical analysis shows that various text categories select particular modalities as per their intended communication objectives. The presentation of predictions and obligations in political and economic news relies on epistemic and deontic modality, however, health news mainly uses dynamic modality to address risks and capabilities. Analysis of news content through quantitative data verifies that modality functions as an organizational system which supports each news category based on its intended communicative role.

News writers base their use of modality according to what they write about and what purpose their articles serve. News sectors use distinct modalities for highlighting either upcoming developments or essential current demands. Economic news reports heavily use prediction because they cover both upcoming developments and anticipated results. The field primarily uses possibility as a primary modality while necessity remains less common. Health news categories present possibility to their audience more frequently than prediction and necessity appears in the lowest numbers. The political news sector displays an even distribution of modality interpretations although necessity remains its primary semantic orientation because political content focuses on regulatory standards. In the sport news domain necessity emerges as the primary modal force with minor occurrences of prediction and possibility. Analysis reveals technology news dominates the use of possibility with prediction happening second and necessity occurring the fewest times in its content. The news

categories show distinct choices for modality meanings which align with their material needs and goals. (see Chart 1)

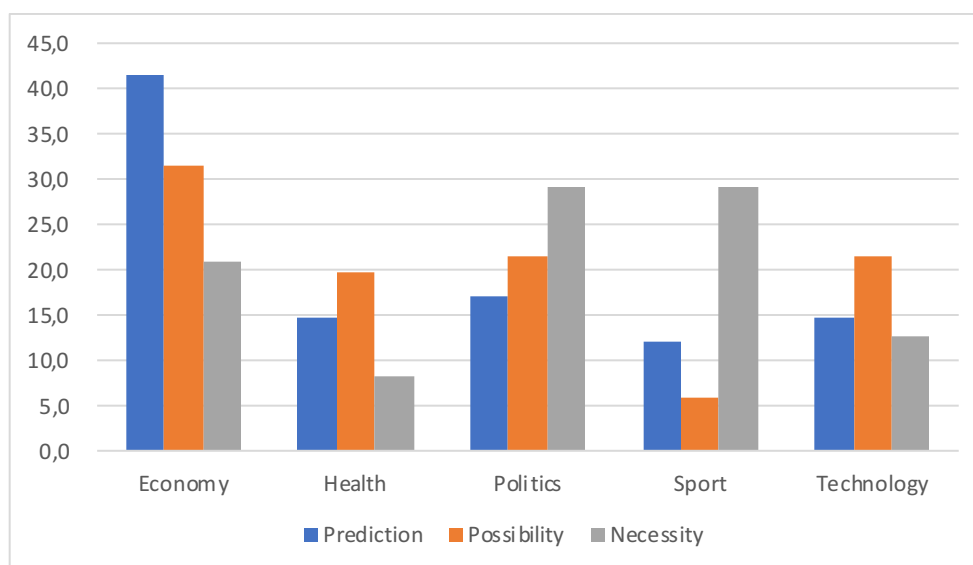


Chart 3.2.1. Use of Modality Meanings in Different News Fields

Compared across the five categories of news presented in the chart the proportion of different modalities reveals that news categories employ modality distinctively to fulfill their objectives and design their reception by readers.

The communicative functions particular to each news category explains why the usage of modality differs among these categories. The prediction and evaluation of future market trends require possibility-oriented language to examine economic market forecasts in news publications. The nature of political news reporting about governmental laws and policies creates frequent use of necessity when expressing obligations and authoritative statements. The prevalence of necessity in sport reporting describes either official competition rules or the assessment of athletic results. The coverage of health-related information leans toward using possibility when describing medical treatment recommendations together with newly discovered scientific information that contains ambiguous or conditional statements. Depending on innovation and change the focus of technology news makes possibility and prediction crucial for showing upcoming developments and potential directions. Modality selection by news writers follows no aimless process because this choice assists content presentation that corresponds with the topic's subject matter and teaches audience comprehension methods.

The analysis of functional distribution must be accompanied by an examination of how modal expressions integrate with information structures in news discourse. Through the analysis of how modality structures function in news text, researchers can gain valuable insights into how different categories organize information and assign foreground status to specific elements. The position of modalized clauses as either Theme or Rheme elements reveals valuable information about information organization and foregrounding in different categories. The table below shows the occurrence rates of Theme and Rheme elements in five news categories which establishes essential details about how information is structured in various categories.

Table 3.2.2. Theme Rheme Distribution across News Categories

News categories	Theme		Rheme		Total
	N	%	N	%	
Economy	63	28.4	29	20.3	92
Health	41	18.5	24	16.8	65
Politics	56	25.2	46	32.2	102
Sport	41	18.5	37	25.9	78
Technology	21	9.5	7	4.9	28
Total	222	100.0	143	100.0	365

The five different news categories present their information through Theme-Rheme patterns that exhibit major structural distinctions. The table presents a total of 365 cases where the Themes make up 60.8% and Rhemes contribute 39.2%. The news categories related to Economy, Health and Technology place their emphasis on Themes to present facts which have already been established. The news category prefers establishing background details as a primary step before advancing to new claims in its structure. Politics and Sport news maintain a higher Rheme proportion showing their dedication to bring forward new and significant information. Political news leads all news categories with 32.2% Rhemes since it demonstrates a lively and argumentative character. The way information is structured follows established category patterns which reflect the news category's communication goals. The distribution of modal expressions in news categories directly matches the distribution of Theme and Rheme patterns: News categories which use Themes primarily rely on epistemic and deontic modes for established or inferred information, while Rheme-dominated categories use predictive and necessity modality to emphasize potential outcomes and time-sensitive needs.

Key Findings

News discourse uses modality as a primary tool to organize information in ways that help readers understand text meaning. News writers intentionally use modality to fulfill specific communication objectives which are unique to their chosen categories. Political and economic articles use epistemic modality to indicate probability along with speculation and certain understanding while health journalism employs dynamic modality to show ability and future developments. The sports domain uses both dynamic and epistemic modality to present predictions about both capability and competitive outcomes. The presentation of technological news maintains an even distribution of epistemic and deontic modalities to communicate both expected outcomes and speculative predictions.

The examination process in this study integrated both numerical data analysis and case study methods to establish modal patterns and their associated discourse roles. The analysis of political and economic texts revealed that modal verbs such as *must*, *should* and *need to* served as common indicators of deontic modality to express necessity and obligation. The Rheme part of sentences received these modal expressions to perform the role of New information within the Theme–Rheme structure as predicted by Communicative Dynamism theory. The framework establishes that Rheme components achieve higher communicative dynamism since they bring new data which transforms the message structure.

Health and technology publications used modal verbs to introduce statements that showed different degrees of certainty. The presence of modals in the Rheme position showed that these statements communicated new, progressive or expert-supported information. News reports about sports and health use dynamic modality to present procedures and physical capabilities that demonstrate both possibility and thematic progress.

The research shows that news discourse employs modality through two separate functions: it serves as a linguistic tool for expressing epistemic, deontic and dynamic attitudes and functions as a tool for organizing information. Authors use modality together with Theme-Rheme structure to guide public attention while controlling perception and implementing category-based communication techniques.

Interaction Between Modality and Information Structure

Research findings establish a direct connection between how news information gets structured and the modality of that information. The writer uses modality to express their attitudes toward events through indications of obligation, possibility and likelihood while the organization of clauses through the Theme–Rheme structure and the Given–New information structure determines information presentation and interpretation. Both Theme and Rheme typically follow the pattern that given information links to Theme and new information connects to Rheme but this relationship changes depending on the particular circumstances.

Political news maintains an equal combination of thematic development and given-new information distribution by unifying historical context with emerging stories. Technology news emphasizes new and rhematic information because its coverage centers on fresh developments in the field.

Health news mostly presents rhematic information together with new content that emerges from updated expert advice and ongoing research. Sports articles combine dynamic modality with rhematic placement of capability-based claims whereas economic texts use a format that resembles political discourse by combining established context with potential future developments.

The discoveries indicate that modality together with information structure jointly affect meaning creation while directing how readers understand the content. News writers achieve effective information management through their selection of modal expressions and strategic arrangement of given/new and thematic/rhematic elements which help them highlight essential points based on the category's communicative goals.

Implications for News Writing and Reader Engagement

The research results demonstrate that modality functions as a crucial factor which determines how readers interpret news content. The strategic implementation of epistemic, deontic and dynamic modalities allows journalists to modify certainty, obligations and ability declarations in their reports. The findings demonstrate Halliday's interpersonal metafunction of language through modality which functions as a tool to shape authorial stance and influence reader perception and signal degrees of commitment, doubt, or authority. News text organization uses the Theme-Rheme structure to direct reader comprehension through the linguistic tool of modality. Journalists use

strategic modal expressions to fulfill their communication objectives by maintaining reader attention on key information points through the expression of certainty and obligation and ability.

In news discourse, the Theme establishes either context or authorial stance by presenting information that readers already know, while the Rheme conveys news updates or fresh statements. New information within the Rheme section receives qualification through the presence of modal verbs and adverbs which establish epistemic certainty (e.g., may, could, possibly), deontic obligation (e.g., must, should, need to), or dynamic ability (e.g., can, able to). Through this placement, evaluative and modalized content within the Rheme position gains attention which makes the communication more dynamic and better reaches readers.

Political and economic news stories frequently use deontic modality in their Rheme positions to emphasize duties and policy imperatives which create an authoritative tone that supports institutional objectives and encourages compliance.

Health and technology journalism uses epistemic modality as a primary method to communicate about research uncertainty and expert opinions together with evolving field characteristics. The sports news industry frequently uses dynamic modality to present athletes' potential actions and abilities that readers in this industry expect to discover during their reading experience.

Journalists successfully control information flow and reader attention by incorporating modality into the Theme–Rheme structure. The Rheme part of a sentence that contains modal verbs delivers more meaningful information by presenting interpretive statements that shift understanding and emotional response. The purposeful application of modality strengthens the category-specific information delivery while building reader confidence through a careful mix of direct claims and cautious statements.

The essential function of modality within news writing emerges through its interaction with information structure. The linguistic marker of stance operates simultaneously with the text organizing capabilities which help readers navigate complex information to achieve both clarity and coherence along with emotional impact. Journalists can create better news stories through this understanding which leads to ethical news production that matches audience interests while creating informed interactions.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This study examines information structure and modality patterns in news discourse while experiencing several research constraints. The analysis uses a small sample size of twenty news articles drawn from five categories which creates a challenge for making broader conclusions. Researchers need to collect more extensive and varied datasets for their future explorations. Manual human analysis of modal expressions and Theme–Rheme structures could create subjective interpretations thus automated corpus tools should be implemented to enhance both consistency and objectivity. The study analyzes written news but excludes the examination of video, audio and social media formats that future research needs to investigate. The study lacks information about audience reactions to different modal expressions which would enhance comprehension of credibility and engagement effects; researchers should include reader response studies to achieve this goal. Research should extend its analysis beyond modality to examine how tense and aspect and voice work together to organize information in news discourse.

CONCLUSION

This study explores how different news categories use modal expressions to structure information while presenting their perspective. This research applied mixed methods through qualitative and quantitative approaches to discover how modality types of epistemic, deontic and dynamic functions affect information structure and reader involvement in political, health, sport, economic and technological news categories.

The analysis discovered that modality provides structure not only through grammar but also through its essential role in discourse organization. Modal verbs together with adverbs and other lexical constructions convey degrees of certainty as well as necessity and obligation. The theme-rheme structure of clauses functions in coordination with modal expressions to steer readers through the information. The established connection enables readers to recognize information as either established knowledge or new material which determines how meaning advances in the text. Journalists can discreetly show their position through modal expressions positioned in either Theme or Rheme sections which enable readers to notice the main points.

The examination identified specific patterns of modality which differ according to news categories. Political and economic reporting mainly used epistemic modality to discuss speculative content such as predictions and assessments of institutional declarations. The political domain displayed strong dominance of deontic modality as it emphasized both power and responsibility within policy discussions. Health and sport categories exhibited dynamic modality as their main characteristic which emphasized capability, necessity and ability in medical recommendations and athletic performance evaluation. The analysis proves that each news category establishes its modalities according to the intended communication objectives and rhetorical standards.

Modal expressions serve multiple functions according to research findings. The meaning of modal verbs varies between contexts because their functions change when used in different syntactic positions and in specific word combinations. Research data revealed that modal expressions function with other organizational methods which include evaluative stance and theme-rheme progression and foregrounding to improve textual coherence and reader participation. The essential relationship between elements shows that modal expressions perform a critical function to organize information in news reports.

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) alongside Critical Dynamism (CD) generated essential theoretical insights which enable examination of both dynamic and interpersonal aspects of modality. Interpersonal metafunction in modality was brought into focus by SFL because it deciphers the author-reader connection through attitude and judgment expression. The study of modality through Critical Dynamism revealed its nature as an adaptable communication tool which functions according to the changing requirements of digital media environments. Both frameworks verified that modality operates as an important social and rhetorical tool instead of functioning as an unbiased linguistic component.

The study analyzed journalistic ideological framing and institutional authority assertion together with interpretation control by using modality types and information status (new/given) in the analysis. Political and economic text analysis demonstrates how journalists use modality to influence reader perceptions by applying both information status (new/given) and three modality types—epistemic, deontic, and dynamic. The combination of modality analysis with theme–rheme structure evaluation shows how narratives develop while helping readers structure and assess information content. A limited corpus of nearly twenty articles formed the basis of this research yet it established a robust starting point for upcoming investigations. Future studies should expand the scope of their datasets by incorporating social media content and televised news together with reader-response data as part of their investigations into how modality affects credibility, emotional engagement and trust.

The study reveals modality as an essential linguistic and rhetorical tool that influences news construction by journalists and affects reader evaluation and processing. The study demonstrates the importance of modality in news communication through its ability to establish information structure particularly when establishing theme–rheme relations. Academic comprehension and public literacy can advance through knowledge of how language controls authority and stance as well as engagement in contemporary journalism through understanding modality functions.

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APPENDIX I

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the role of modality as a marker of information structure in English-language news discourse, with particular emphasis on the interaction between modality and the Theme–Rheme structure. The study investigates how modal expressions, such as modal verbs, adverbs, and lexical markers—are used not only to convey stance (e.g., certainty, obligation, or ability) but also to organize information flow within the clause. Drawing on a corpus of twenty news articles from a range of journalistic domains, the analysis combines qualitative and quantitative methods to examine how modality is distributed across information units, particularly in terms of new versus given information.

Findings reveal that modality frequently operates within the Rheme—the clause element that introduces new, unpredictable, or context-developing information. Modal verbs such as *may*, *must*, *can*, and adverbs like *possibly* and *likely* are commonly used to qualify or evaluate the Rheme, guiding the reader's interpretation and focusing attention on key assertions forward.

From a theoretical perspective, the study integrates insights from Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and Critical Dynamism to explain how modality and information structure co-construct meaning. This interaction enhances textual coherence, emphasizes discourse goals, and supports reader engagement.

Overall, the thesis demonstrates that modality is not only a marker of epistemic, deontic, or dynamic stance, but also a functional tool in the organization of information. By shaping how new information is introduced and evaluated, modality contributes to the rhetorical and communicative strategies of contemporary news discourse.

Keywords: Modality, Information Structure, Theme–Rheme, News Discourse, Systemic Functional Linguistics, Communicative Dynamism, Epistemic Modality, Deontic Modality, Dynamic Modality

APPENDIX II

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