



## Modality and Self-Positioning in Instagram Posts: A Semantic–Pragmatic Analysis of Interpersonal Meaning in Digital Personal Branding

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**Abstract** This study examines the use of modality in Instagram posts to express interpersonal meaning and self-positioning in the context of digital personal branding. Based on Palmer's (2001) theory, this study aims to identify the types of modality and their functions in conveying speakers' attitudes, beliefs, obligations, and abilities. The data consist of 30 modal expressions analyzed using a qualitative semantic–pragmatic approach. The analysis reveals three types of modality: deontic, epistemic, and dynamic, with deontic modality as the most dominant (11 data/36.67%), followed by epistemic (10 data/33.33%) and dynamic (9 data/30%). Deontic modality is used to express obligation and social norms, for example through the use of *harus* and *tidak boleh*; epistemic modality expresses belief and degrees of certainty, such as *mungkin* and *pasti*; while dynamic modality indicates ability and intention, such as *ingin* and *mau*. These findings demonstrate that modality plays an important role in constructing interpersonal meaning and speaker positioning in digital discourse, particularly on Instagram.

**Keywords:** Digital Personal Branding; Instagram Posts; Interpersonal Meaning; Modality; Semantic–Pragmatic Analysis.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary digital era, social media platforms have become important spaces where individuals communicate, interact, and construct their identities within public discourse, and among various platforms Instagram has emerged as one of the most influential media for self-expression and digital personal branding because it allows users to share visual and textual content simultaneously while interacting with a wide audience through captions, comments, hashtags, and other interactive features, making language a crucial component in shaping how users present themselves and how their messages are interpreted by followers, since linguistic choices in captions often reveal not only information about events or experiences but also the attitudes, beliefs, intentions, and perspectives of the users themselves, and therefore language in Instagram posts does not merely function as a tool for conveying information but also as a strategic resource through which individuals position themselves socially and construct particular identities in the digital (Anam & Istifadah, 2025) (Jannah, 2026) environment.

One of the most important linguistic devices that reflects a speaker's stance and interpersonal meaning is modality, which in linguistic studies refers to the grammatical and lexical expressions used to indicate the speaker's attitudes, judgments, or evaluations toward a proposition, particularly concerning possibility, probability, necessity, obligation, or ability, and according to Palmer (2001) modality represents the linguistic encoding of a speaker's

subjective attitude toward the content of a statement, emphasizing that modality functions as a central element in the expression of interpersonal meaning because it allows speakers to qualify their statements rather than presenting them as absolute facts, and Palmer further argues that modality reflects how speakers conceptualize reality through language by expressing varying degrees of certainty, commitment, or obligation within communication, making modality a crucial element in discourse analysis since it reveals how speakers negotiate meaning, authority, and perspective within interaction. Palmer categorizes modality broadly into two major domains, namely propositional modality and event modality, where propositional modality concerns the speaker's judgment regarding the truth value of a proposition and typically includes epistemic meanings such as possibility, probability, or inference, while event modality relates to the conditions surrounding an event and includes meanings associated with obligation, permission, ability, or volition; within this framework, epistemic modality expresses the speaker's degree of certainty or belief about a statement, deontic modality relates to social rules, duties, and permissions, and dynamic modality refers to the subject's internal capacity or willingness to perform an action, illustrating how language can encode both cognitive evaluations and social expectations in communication (Roslinda et al., 2025).

(Amalda et al., 2025) In the context of social media communication, particularly on Instagram, modality plays a significant role in shaping how individuals construct their online identities and interact with their audiences because captions often contain modal expressions that reveal personal reflections, motivations, possibilities, and obligations, which allow users to present themselves as confident, reflective, inspirational, or authoritative depending on the communicative intention of the post, and this linguistic strategy is closely related to the concept of digital personal branding, which refers to the process through which individuals intentionally manage and promote a particular image of themselves in online environments by highlighting certain values, lifestyles, achievements, or beliefs that they wish to associate with their identity, making Instagram posts not only a medium for sharing experiences but also a platform for constructing self-positioning in relation to audiences, and therefore analyzing modality in Instagram captions through a semantic–pragmatic perspective becomes essential for understanding how language functions to express stance, negotiate interpersonal relationships, and construct meaning in digital discourse where personal expression, audience engagement, and identity construction are closely intertwined (Ulya & Sofa, 2025) (Efendy & Hikam, 2025).

## 2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design to investigate the use of modality and its role in expressing interpersonal meaning and self-positioning in Instagram posts within the context of digital personal branding. Qualitative research is considered appropriate for this study because it focuses on interpreting linguistic meaning, contextual relationships, and discourse functions rather than measuring numerical variables, and according to Creswell (2014) qualitative research aims to explore and understand how individuals construct meaning through language and social interaction, making it particularly suitable for discourse-based studies that analyze how language is used to convey attitudes, beliefs, and perspectives in social contexts. In digital communication environments such as social media, language does not merely function as a tool for transferring information but also serves as a medium for expressing stance, identity, and interpersonal relationships. Therefore, a qualitative approach allows the researcher to examine in depth how modal expressions appearing in Instagram captions reflect the users' attitudes, judgments, and positioning toward the content they communicate and toward the audiences who interpret their posts.

The theoretical framework of this research is primarily grounded in Palmer's theory of modality, which provides one of the most influential classifications of modality in linguistic studies. Palmer (2001) defines modality as the grammaticalization of speakers' subjective attitudes and judgments toward propositions or events, emphasizing that modality allows speakers to qualify their statements in terms of possibility, probability, necessity, obligation, or ability rather than presenting them as absolute facts. According to Palmer (2001), modality plays a central role in expressing interpersonal meaning because it reflects how speakers evaluate the truth value of statements and how they position themselves in relation to the information being communicated. Palmer distinguishes two main categories of modality, namely propositional modality and event modality. Propositional modality concerns the speaker's judgment about the truth value of a proposition and typically includes epistemic meanings related to possibility, probability, and inference. Event modality, on the other hand, relates to the conditions affecting the realization of an event and includes meanings associated with obligation, permission, ability, or volition. Within this framework, the present study focuses on three types of modality that frequently appear in everyday discourse: epistemic modality, deontic modality, and dynamic modality, which represent different dimensions of how speakers express stance and interpersonal meaning through language.

Epistemic modality refers to the speaker's evaluation of the likelihood, certainty, or probability of a proposition based on knowledge, evidence, or inference. According to Palmer (2001), epistemic modality expresses the speaker's degree of commitment toward the truth of a statement and is often indicated through modal verbs, adverbs, or expressions such as *may*, *might*, *probably*, or *perhaps*. Lyons (1977) similarly explains that epistemic modality represents the speaker's judgment about the truth value of a proposition, reflecting the degree of certainty or uncertainty associated with the statement. In discourse, epistemic modality allows speakers to present information as speculative, tentative, or strongly believed depending on the communicative intention of the speaker. In the context of social media discourse, epistemic modality often appears in captions where users express opinions, reflections, or interpretations of their experiences, thereby revealing personal attitudes and beliefs toward the content of the message. In addition, epistemic modality also plays an important role in managing interpersonal relationships because it allows speakers to soften claims, reduce the force of statements, or signal openness to alternative interpretations (Coates, 1983).

Another important type of modality analyzed in this study is deontic modality, which relates to obligation, permission, prohibition, and social norms that regulate behavior in particular contexts. According to Palmer (2001), deontic modality expresses the necessity or permissibility of actions based on external authority, rules, or moral principles, and it is commonly realized through modal verbs such as *must*, *should*, *have to*, *may*, or *must not*. Lyons (1977) explains that deontic modality is closely associated with social authority and normative expectations because it reflects how speakers impose obligations or grant permissions within interaction. Similarly, Coates (1983) states that deontic modality expresses the speaker's authority or social position by indicating what actions are required, permitted, or forbidden in a given situation. In digital communication contexts such as Instagram, deontic modality may appear when users express advice, encouragement, moral judgments, or social expectations directed toward their followers, thereby reflecting the speaker's values and positioning within the online community.

The third type of modality examined in this research is dynamic modality, which refers to the subject's internal ability, willingness, or intention to perform an action. According to Palmer (2001), dynamic modality differs from epistemic and deontic modality because it does not involve evaluation of truth or external obligation but rather focuses on the internal capacity or volition of the subject. Dynamic modality is often expressed through modal verbs such as *can*, *be able to*, *want to*, or *intend to*, which indicate ability, potential, or personal motivation.

Coates (1983) explains that dynamic modality reflects the subject's capability or willingness to perform an action, highlighting the role of personal agency in discourse. In the context of Instagram communication, dynamic modality frequently appears in captions where users express aspirations, personal goals, motivations, or experiences of self-development, making it closely related to the construction of identity and self-presentation in digital environments.

In addition to Palmer's modality framework, this study also draws upon Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), particularly the concept of interpersonal metafunction, which emphasizes that language functions not only to represent experiences but also to enact social relationships between speakers and listeners. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) explain that language simultaneously performs three metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. The interpersonal metafunction is concerned with how speakers express attitudes, negotiate roles, and establish relationships with their audiences. Within this metafunction, modality functions as a key linguistic resource that allows speakers to express degrees of certainty, obligation, inclination, or probability. By using modal expressions, speakers can adjust the strength of their statements and position themselves in relation to their audience. In the context of Instagram posts, modality becomes an important indicator of how users negotiate interpersonal relationships with followers and how they construct their digital identities through language.

The data used in this research were collected from Instagram posts, particularly focusing on captions that contain modal expressions related to epistemic, deontic, or dynamic meanings. Instagram captions were selected as the primary data source because captions represent the textual component of Instagram posts where users articulate their opinions, reflections, motivations, and personal narratives. The process of data collection involved identifying Instagram posts that include modal expressions indicating possibility, certainty, obligation, permission, ability, or intention. The selected captions were documented and compiled into a corpus of textual data that was subsequently analyzed using semantic-pragmatic analysis in order to identify patterns of modality usage and interpret their communicative functions within the context of digital personal branding.

The analysis of the data was conducted through several stages. First, the researcher identified modal expressions appearing in the Instagram captions. Second, these modal expressions were categorized according to Palmer's classification of modality, namely epistemic, deontic, and dynamic modality. Third, each modal expression was analyzed semantically to determine the meaning encoded in the linguistic structure and pragmatically to interpret how the expression functions within the communicative context of the Instagram post.

Finally, the researcher examined how the use of modality contributes to the construction of self-positioning and interpersonal meaning, particularly in relation to digital personal branding where users strategically craft their language to present particular identities, values, and perspectives to their audiences.

To enhance the credibility of the findings, this research applied theoretical triangulation, which involves examining the data through multiple theoretical perspectives including semantic analysis, pragmatic interpretation, and interpersonal meaning within Systemic Functional Linguistics. According to Denzin (2012), triangulation strengthens qualitative research by enabling researchers to analyze data from different conceptual perspectives, thereby increasing the reliability and validity of the interpretation. By integrating Palmer’s modality theory with Halliday’s interpersonal framework and semantic–pragmatic analysis, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how modality functions as a linguistic strategy in Instagram discourse and how modal expressions contribute to the construction of interpersonal meaning and self-positioning in digital personal branding practices.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1.** Classification of Modality Expressions.

No	Modal Expression	Example Sentence	Type of Modality	Meaning
1	harus	harus tetap didampingi orang tua	Deontic	Obligation
2	jangan	jangan berbicara sembarangan	Deontic	Prohibition
3	tidak boleh / nggak boleh	nggak boleh nonton filmnya nanti pas tayang	Deontic	Prohibition
4	perlu	kita perlu menjaga sikap terhadap jenazah	Deontic	Obligation / Necessity
5	sebaiknya	kita sebaiknya tidak berbicara sembarangan	Deontic	Recommendation

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6	wajib	setiap anggota wajib mengikuti aturan yang berlaku	Deontic	Strong Obligation
7	diperbolehkan	peserta diperbolehkan bertanya setelah selesai	Deontic	Permission
8	dilarang	pengunjung dilarang melakukan hal tersebut	Deontic	Prohibition
9	hendaknya	kita hendaknya menjaga sikap	Deontic	Recommendation
10	diwajibkan	anggota diwajibkan mengikuti aturan	Deontic	Obligation
11	dipersilakan	pengunjung dipersilakan masuk setelah acara dimulai	Deontic	Permission
12	untungnya	untungnya masuk epistemic	Epistemic	Evaluation
13	mungkin	mungkin ketemu aktor	Epistemic	Possibility
14	memang	karena memang aku pertama kali pacaran juga sama dia	Epistemic	Certainty / Affirmation
15	pasti	pasti tanya ke aku dulu	Epistemic	Strong Certainty
16	pantas	value yang aku pantas untuk dapatkan	Epistemic	Evaluation / Judgment
17	tidak tahu	aku gak pernah tahu kondisi politik	Epistemic	Lack of knowledge

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18	sepertinya	sepertinya itu tugasku	Epistemic	Inference
19	aku pikir	aku pikir itu lucu	Epistemic	Opinion
20	barangkali	barangkali dia sudah mengetahui hal itu	Epistemic	Possibility
21	tampaknya	tampaknya situasi ini tidak mudah	Epistemic	Inference
22	bisa	bisa pacaran gitu	Dynamic	Ability
23	mau	buat seorang anak kecil yang mau akting	Dynamic	Willingness
24	ingin	lagi ingin belajar hal baru	Dynamic	Intention
25	penasaran	aku penasaran untuk challenge diri	Dynamic	Curiosity
26	maunya	aku maunya nemuin pasangan sesuai standar	Dynamic	Desire / Preference
27	pengen	gue malah pengen slow down	Dynamic	Desire
28	mampu	aku mampu atau nggak	Dynamic	Ability
29	berniat	dia berniat mencoba hal baru	Dynamic	Intention
30	tertarik	aku tertarik mempelajari dunia akting	Dynamic	Interest

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The table above presents the classification of modal expressions identified in the data based on Palmer's (2001) theory of modality. In this analysis, the modal expressions are categorized into three main types of modality, namely deontic modality, epistemic modality, and dynamic modality. Each type of modality reflects a different aspect of the speaker's attitude

toward a proposition or action and contributes to the expression of interpersonal meaning within discourse. Deontic modality is associated with obligation, prohibition, permission, and recommendation that regulate behavior within a social context. In the data analyzed in this study, deontic modality is represented by expressions such as *harus*, *jangan*, *tidak boleh*, *perlu*, *sebaiknya*, *wajib*, *diperbolehkan*, *dilarang*, *hendaknya*, *diwajibkan*, and *dipersilakan*. These expressions demonstrate how speakers evaluate actions based on social norms, moral expectations, or institutional rules. For instance, expressions such as *harus*, *wajib*, and *diwajibkan* indicate strong obligation, suggesting that a particular action is necessary or mandatory. Meanwhile, expressions such as *tidak boleh*, *jangan*, and *dilarang* represent prohibition, indicating that certain actions are restricted or not permitted. In addition, expressions such as *diperbolehkan* and *dipersilakan* convey permission, showing that an action is allowed under certain conditions, while *perlu*, *sebaiknya*, and *hendaknya* indicate recommendation or suggestion, reflecting a softer form of obligation. Through these modal expressions, speakers position themselves as individuals who regulate behavior, emphasize social norms, or provide guidance regarding appropriate conduct.

Epistemic modality, on the other hand, reflects the speaker's evaluation of the truth value of a proposition and indicates different degrees of certainty, possibility, or inference. In the data analyzed in this research, epistemic modality is represented by expressions such as *untungnya*, *mungkin*, *memang*, *pasti*, *pantas*, *aku gak pernah tahu kondisi politik*, *sepertinya*, *aku pikir*, *barangkali*, and *tampaknya*. These expressions illustrate how speakers present information not as absolute facts but as interpretations, beliefs, or assumptions based on their personal knowledge or perspective. Expressions such as *mungkin* and *barangkali* indicate possibility, suggesting that the speaker considers a particular situation plausible but not certain. Meanwhile, *pasti* and *memang* express a higher degree of certainty or affirmation, showing the speaker's strong belief in the truth of the statement. Expressions such as *sepertinya* and *tampaknya* represent inference, meaning that the speaker draws conclusions based on observation or reasoning rather than direct evidence. Similarly, the expression *aku pikir* indicates personal opinion, highlighting the subjective nature of the statement, while *pantas* reflects evaluative judgment regarding what is considered appropriate or deserved. In addition, the expression *aku gak pernah tahu kondisi politik* reflects a lack of knowledge, which also represents the speaker's epistemic stance toward the proposition being expressed.

Dynamic modality focuses on the subject's internal ability, willingness, intention, or motivation to perform an action. Unlike deontic modality, which is based on external rules or authority, and epistemic modality, which concerns the evaluation of truth, dynamic modality

emphasizes the subject's internal disposition or personal agency. In the analyzed data, dynamic modality is represented by expressions such as *bisa*, *mau*, *ingin*, *penasaran*, *maunya*, *pengen*, *mampu*, *berniat*, and *tertarik*. These expressions demonstrate how speakers describe their capabilities, desires, interests, and intentions when discussing actions or experiences. For example, *bisa* and *mampu* indicate ability or capability, suggesting that the subject possesses the capacity to perform a particular action. Expressions such as *mau* and *ingin* express willingness or intention, reflecting the speaker's desire to engage in certain activities. Meanwhile, *pengen* and *maunya* indicate personal desire or preference, showing that the action is motivated by internal inclination. In addition, expressions such as *penasaran* and *tertarik* reflect curiosity and interest, which represent psychological motivations that encourage the subject to explore new experiences or opportunities. These modal expressions highlight the role of personal agency and internal motivation in shaping actions and decisions within discourse.

the classification presented in the table demonstrates that modal expressions function as important linguistic resources for expressing different types of meanings in communication. Through deontic modality, speakers regulate behavior and emphasize social norms; through epistemic modality, they express beliefs, interpretations, and degrees of certainty regarding propositions; and through dynamic modality, they highlight personal abilities, motivations, and intentions. The presence of these three modality types illustrates how speakers negotiate meaning and position themselves within discourse. In the context of digital communication such as Instagram posts, these modal expressions also contribute to the construction of speaker stance and interpersonal meaning, as they allow individuals to present themselves as knowledgeable, responsible, or motivated participants in social interaction.

The findings indicate that modality plays an important role in expressing interpersonal meaning within the analyzed discourse. The dominance of deontic modality suggests that speakers tend to emphasize obligations, rules, and social expectations when communicating their ideas. At the same time, the presence of epistemic modality shows that speakers also express beliefs, assumptions, and personal evaluations regarding certain situations. Meanwhile, dynamic modality highlights the speaker's internal ability, intention, and motivation to perform particular actions. These results demonstrate that modal expressions function not only as grammatical elements but also as important linguistic resources that allow speakers to express their attitudes, negotiate social relationships, and position themselves within communication, particularly in the context of digital discourse such as Instagram posts.

### Distribution of Modality Types

This section presents the findings of the study concerning the use of modality in the analyzed data. Based on the analysis, three types of modality were identified, namely deontic modality, epistemic modality, and dynamic modality. The categorization of modality types in this research follows Palmer's (2001) framework, which explains that modality reflects the speaker's subjective attitude toward a proposition or event. Through the analysis of the utterances contained in the dataset, a total of 30 modal expressions were identified and classified according to their semantic and pragmatic meanings. The distribution of these modal expressions demonstrates that the three modality types appear with relatively balanced frequencies, although one category shows slightly higher dominance than the others.

The findings frequency distribution suggests that the speakers tend to express meanings related to obligation, permission, and prohibition slightly more often than meanings related to belief or internal capability. This pattern reflects how speakers position themselves within discourse by emphasizing normative expectations and behavioral guidance while still allowing room for subjective evaluation and expressions of personal ability.

**Table 2.** Frequency and Percentage of Modality Types.

Type of Modality	Frequency	Percentage
Deontic Modality	11	36.67%
Epistemic Modality	10	33.33%
Dynamic Modality	9	30.00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>

As shown in Table 1, deontic modality accounts for 36.67% of the total data, making it the most dominant type of modality identified in the study. This is followed by epistemic modality with 33.33%, while dynamic modality represents 30.00% of the total data. Although the difference between the categories is relatively small, the dominance of deontic modality suggests that speakers often use language to express obligation, prohibition, or permission when communicating their ideas or experiences. Such expressions typically reflect normative meanings and indicate that the speaker is evaluating actions based on social expectations or rules.

From a semantic perspective, the distribution demonstrates that modal expressions function not only as grammatical markers but also as indicators of interpersonal meaning in discourse.

Deontic modality reflects normative evaluation, epistemic modality reflects belief and certainty, and dynamic modality reflects internal ability or intention. The presence of these modal categories highlights the ways in which speakers position themselves within discourse by expressing authority, uncertainty, or personal agency.

### **Deontic Modality**

Deontic modality represents the most dominant category in the data, appearing 11 times or 36.67% of the total occurrences. According to Palmer, deontic modality relates to obligation, permission, and prohibition that regulate behavior within a particular social context. This type of modality typically involves expressions that indicate what actions are required, permitted, or forbidden. In discourse, deontic modality often reflects the speaker's attempt to regulate behavior, establish norms, or provide advice regarding appropriate conduct.

In the dataset analyzed in this study, deontic modality is represented by several modal expressions such as *harus*, *jangan*, *tidak boleh*, *perlu*, *sebaiknya*, *wajib*, *diperbolehkan*, *dilarang*, *hendaknya*, *diwajibkan*, and *dipersilakan*. These expressions clearly indicate that the speaker is evaluating actions based on social rules or expectations. For example, the utterance “*harus tetap didampingi orang tua*” contains the modal marker *harus*, which expresses obligation. The use of this modal marker indicates that the action being discussed is considered necessary or mandatory. In this context, the speaker is not simply describing an event but is also emphasizing a normative expectation regarding appropriate behavior.

Another example can be observed in the utterance “*nggak boleh nonton filmnya nanti pas tayang.*” The modal expression *nggak boleh* functions as a prohibition that restricts a particular action. In semantic terms, this expression indicates that the action is not permitted. From a pragmatic perspective, the use of this modal marker positions the speaker as someone who imposes a rule or restriction regarding the activity being discussed. Such expressions demonstrate how deontic modality allows speakers to regulate behavior and establish normative boundaries within discourse.

Similarly, the utterance “*setiap anggota wajib mengikuti aturan yang berlaku*” illustrates a strong form of obligation through the modal marker *wajib*. The expression indicates that compliance with rules is mandatory for all members. The use of this modal marker reinforces the authoritative tone of the utterance and highlights the speaker's emphasis on discipline and adherence to regulations. In discourse analysis, such expressions are often associated with institutional or social authority because they indicate that the speaker is referring to established rules or expectations.

Other examples of deontic modality in the data include expressions such as “kita perlu menjaga sikap terhadap jenazah,” “kita sebaiknya tidak berbicara sembarangan,” “peserta diperbolehkan bertanya setelah selesai,” and “pengunjung dipersilakan masuk setelah acara dimulai.” Each of these utterances contains modal markers that indicate different levels of obligation or permission. For instance, *perlu* and *sebaiknya* express recommendations or suggestions, while *diperbolehkan* and *dipersilakan* indicate permission. Despite their differences in strength, all of these expressions fall under the category of deontic modality because they involve normative evaluation of actions.

The dominance of deontic modality in the data suggests that the speakers frequently express their attitudes toward behavior and social norms. In other words, the discourse tends to focus on regulating actions and emphasizing appropriate conduct rather than merely describing events. From an interpersonal perspective, the use of deontic modality allows speakers to establish authority, provide guidance, or express moral evaluation. As a result, this type of modality plays an important role in shaping interpersonal relationships within discourse.

### **Epistemic Modality**

Epistemic modality constitutes the second most frequent category identified in the data, appearing 10 times or 33.33% of the total occurrences. Epistemic modality refers to the speaker’s evaluation of the likelihood, certainty, or probability of a proposition. According to Palmer (2001), epistemic modality belongs to the category of propositional modality because it concerns the speaker’s judgment about the truth value of a statement. Similarly, Lyons (1977) explains that epistemic modality expresses the speaker’s degree of commitment to the truth of a proposition, ranging from strong certainty to weak possibility. In discourse, epistemic modality therefore functions as an important linguistic resource that allows speakers to present their ideas as beliefs, assumptions, or interpretations rather than as objective facts. By using epistemic modal expressions, speakers can indicate whether they consider a proposition certain, probable, possible, or uncertain. In the data analyzed in this study, epistemic modality is represented by ten expressions: *untungnya*,  *mungkin*, *karena memang aku pertama kali pacaran juga sama dia*, *pasti*, *value yang aku pantas untuk dapatkan*, *aku gak pernah tahu kondisi politik*, *sepertinya*, *aku pikir*, *barangkali*, and *tampaknya*. These expressions demonstrate how speakers position themselves cognitively toward the information being conveyed.

The first epistemic expression found in the data is “*untungnya* masuk epistemic.” The word *untungnya* reflects the speaker’s evaluation of a situation from a positive or fortunate perspective. In this case, the speaker interprets the event as beneficial or advantageous.

Although the expression does not explicitly indicate probability, it still reflects epistemic meaning because it expresses the speaker's assessment of the situation based on personal judgment. Such evaluative expressions demonstrate how epistemic modality can also function to highlight the speaker's interpretation of events rather than merely indicating certainty or uncertainty.

Another example of epistemic modality is the utterance “ *mungkin ketemu aktor.*” The modal marker  *mungkin* clearly signals possibility. In semantic terms, this expression indicates that the speaker considers the event possible but not certain. The use of  *mungkin* shows that the speaker is making a speculative statement about a potential outcome rather than asserting a definite fact. From a pragmatic perspective, this type of modal expression also serves to soften the statement, allowing the speaker to express an assumption without appearing overly confident. This demonstrates how epistemic modality can function as a strategy for managing interpersonal relationships in communication by presenting ideas as tentative rather than absolute.

The third example appears in the utterance “ *karena memang aku pertama kali pacaran juga sama dia.*” Although this expression does not contain a typical modal verb, it still reflects epistemic meaning because it presents a personal interpretation based on experience. The phrase indicates that the speaker is explaining a situation from their own perspective, suggesting that the interpretation is grounded in personal knowledge or belief. In this sense, the expression demonstrates how epistemic modality can also be conveyed through contextual reasoning rather than through explicit modal markers.

Another example can be seen in the expression “ *pasti tanya ke aku dulu.*” The modal marker  *pasti* indicates a strong level of certainty. Unlike expressions such as  *mungkin* or  *barangkali*, which signal possibility,  *pasti* expresses high confidence that the event will occur. This example demonstrates that epistemic modality exists on a continuum ranging from weak possibility to strong certainty. In discourse, expressions such as  *pasti* allow speakers to present statements with a high degree of conviction while still framing them as personal judgments rather than objective facts.

The expression “ *value yang aku pantas untuk dapatkan*” also reflects epistemic meaning because it expresses the speaker's belief about personal worth or entitlement. Although the utterance does not contain a typical modal verb, it still conveys a subjective evaluation. The speaker is presenting a judgment regarding what is deserved or appropriate, which indicates an epistemic stance toward the proposition. This example illustrates that epistemic modality can

also be expressed through evaluative statements that reflect the speaker's beliefs or expectations.

Another epistemic expression in the data is “aku gak pernah tahu kondisi politik.” This utterance indicates a lack of knowledge regarding a particular situation. In epistemic terms, statements about knowledge or ignorance also reflect the speaker's stance toward the truth value of a proposition. By stating that they do not know the political situation, the speaker signals uncertainty and acknowledges a limitation in knowledge. This type of expression demonstrates that epistemic modality is not restricted to modal verbs but can also appear in lexical expressions that refer to knowledge or awareness.

The expression “sepertinya itu tugasku” provides another example of epistemic modality. The word *sepertinya* indicates inference or subjective interpretation. The speaker suggests that the statement is likely to be true but does not claim absolute certainty. Such expressions are commonly used in discourse to indicate that a conclusion is based on perception or reasoning rather than direct evidence. In pragmatic terms, the use of *sepertinya* also functions to reduce the assertiveness of the statement, allowing the speaker to present an interpretation without sounding overly authoritative.

Similarly, the utterance “aku pikir itu lucu” reflects epistemic modality because the phrase *aku pikir* marks the statement as a personal opinion. By explicitly stating that the evaluation is based on personal thought, the speaker indicates that the proposition is subjective rather than universally valid. This type of epistemic expression highlights the speaker's role as the evaluator of the situation. In discourse analysis, such expressions are often interpreted as markers of stance because they explicitly signal that the statement reflects the speaker's viewpoint.

Further examples of epistemic modality can be found in the expressions “barangkali dia sudah mengetahui hal itu” and “tampaknya situasi ini tidak mudah.” Both expressions indicate speculation and inference. The word *barangkali* suggests possibility, indicating that the speaker considers the proposition plausible but not certain. Meanwhile, *tampaknya* indicates that the speaker is drawing a conclusion based on observation or contextual clues. These expressions demonstrate how epistemic modality allows speakers to interpret situations and present conclusions without asserting absolute certainty.

The presence of these ten epistemic expressions demonstrates that speakers frequently rely on subjective evaluation when communicating their ideas. By using expressions such as *mungkin*, *sepertinya*, *aku pikir*, *barangkali*, and *tampaknya*, speakers indicate varying levels of confidence in their statements. Some expressions signal strong certainty, such as *pasti*, while

others indicate weaker possibility or inference. This range of expressions illustrates that epistemic modality operates along a continuum of certainty, allowing speakers to adjust the strength of their statements depending on their level of confidence.

From a discourse perspective, epistemic modality plays an important role in shaping interpersonal meaning. By presenting statements as beliefs or interpretations rather than absolute facts, speakers create a communicative environment that allows for negotiation and interpretation. This function is particularly important in everyday discourse because it enables speakers to express opinions while maintaining openness to alternative viewpoints. As a result, epistemic modality serves as a crucial linguistic resource for expressing cognitive stance and managing interpersonal relationships within communication.

### **Dynamic Modality**

Dynamic modality constitutes the third category identified in the data, occurring 9 times or 30.00% of the total modal expressions found in the dataset. Although this category appears slightly less frequently than deontic and epistemic modality, its presence remains analytically important because it reflects the speaker's internal capacity, willingness, intention, and personal motivation toward performing particular actions. According to Palmer (2001), dynamic modality refers to the subject's inherent ability or volitional disposition rather than external obligation or epistemic evaluation of truth. In other words, dynamic modality focuses on what the subject is able to do, wants to do, or intends to do. This type of modality is therefore closely associated with personal agency, as it highlights the role of the individual in initiating and controlling actions.

In the dataset analyzed in this study, dynamic modality is represented by nine expressions, namely *bisa*, *mau*, *ingin*, *penasaran*, *maunya*, *pengen*, *mampu*, *berniat*, and *tertarik*. These expressions indicate the speaker's internal orientation toward actions or experiences. Unlike deontic modality, which reflects external rules or authority, and epistemic modality, which reflects judgments about the probability or certainty of events, dynamic modality emphasizes the subject's internal state, including capability, desire, and intention. Through these expressions, speakers portray themselves as active participants who possess control over their actions and decisions.

The first example of dynamic modality can be observed in the expression “*bisa pacaran gitu*.” The modal marker *bisa* indicates capability or possibility based on the subject's ability. In semantic terms, *bisa* signals that the action being described is feasible because the subject possesses the necessary capacity to perform it. From a pragmatic perspective, the use of *bisa*

also reflects the speaker's perception of personal capability or opportunity. By using this modal marker, the speaker frames the action as something achievable rather than hypothetical or obligatory.

Another example can be found in the utterance "buat seorang anak kecil yang mau akting." The modal marker *mau* expresses willingness or intention. In this context, the expression indicates that the subject has a desire to participate in acting. The modal meaning therefore originates from the subject's internal motivation rather than from external pressure or obligation. Similarly, the expression "lagi ingin belajar hal baru" demonstrates dynamic modality through the modal marker *ingin*, which reflects a strong personal desire to engage in a learning process. This type of expression highlights how dynamic modality frequently appears in contexts related to self-development and personal aspiration.

Dynamic modality is also evident in the utterance "aku penasaran untuk challenge diri." The expression *penasaran* indicates curiosity and a desire to test one's own abilities. In discourse analysis, curiosity is often interpreted as a motivational state that drives individuals to explore new experiences. The presence of this expression suggests that the speaker is motivated by internal interest rather than external demands. Similarly, the utterance "aku maunya nemuin pasangan sesuai standar" contains the expression *maunya*, which indicates preference or personal expectation. In this case, the modal meaning reflects the speaker's personal standards and desires regarding relationships.

Another expression illustrating dynamic modality is "gue malah pengen slow down." The modal marker *pengen* indicates a personal intention to reduce the pace of activity. Unlike deontic modality, which would imply obligation, the expression *pengen* highlights a voluntary decision made by the speaker. The utterance therefore emphasizes the speaker's autonomy in choosing how to manage their actions. Likewise, the expression "aku mampu atau nggak" contains the modal marker *mampu*, which refers to ability or capability. In this case, the speaker is evaluating their own capacity to perform an action, which is a characteristic feature of dynamic modality because the modal meaning originates from the subject's internal evaluation.

Dynamic modality also appears in the expression "dia berniat mencoba hal baru." The modal marker *berniat* indicates intention or determination. This expression suggests that the subject has consciously decided to attempt a new activity. In discourse analysis, intention often reflects planning and goal orientation, indicating that the speaker is describing purposeful action rather than accidental events. Similarly, the expression "aku tertarik mempelajari dunia akting" demonstrates dynamic modality through the modal marker *tertarik*. This expression

indicates interest and attraction toward a particular field, highlighting the role of internal motivation in shaping actions and experiences.

Taken together, these nine expressions illustrate how dynamic modality functions as a linguistic device for expressing personal agency and internal motivation. The expressions *bisa*, *mau*, *ingin*, *penasaran*, *maunya*, *pengen*, *mampu*, *berniat*, and *tertarik* represent different aspects of internal disposition, including ability, curiosity, desire, intention, and interest. These modal markers collectively demonstrate that speakers frequently refer to their own psychological and cognitive states when describing actions or experiences.

From a semantic perspective, dynamic modality encodes meanings related to ability and volition. However, from a pragmatic perspective, it also plays a role in constructing the speaker's identity within discourse. When speakers use expressions indicating ability or intention, they portray themselves as individuals who possess control over their actions and decisions. This creates a discourse in which the speaker's identity is closely linked to personal agency and self-development. For example, expressions such as *ingin belajar hal baru* or *tertarik mempelajari dunia akting* portray the speaker as someone who is motivated to explore new opportunities and expand personal capabilities.

Another important aspect of dynamic modality is its relationship with self-expression. Because this type of modality emphasizes internal motivation, it often appears in contexts where speakers describe their personal aspirations or experiences. Expressions such as *penasaran*, *pengen*, and *tertarik* reflect emotional and psychological states that influence the speaker's actions. These expressions demonstrate that dynamic modality can convey not only physical ability but also emotional inclination and intellectual curiosity.

Although dynamic modality appears slightly less frequently than the other categories, its presence remains significant because it reveals how speakers describe their own potential and aspirations. The analysis shows that the discourse does not solely focus on external rules or beliefs but also includes expressions that emphasize individual agency and personal motivation. In other words, speakers use dynamic modality to highlight their roles as active participants in shaping their experiences.

From an interpersonal perspective, dynamic modality contributes to the construction of a more personal and reflective tone in discourse. While deontic modality often conveys authority and epistemic modality conveys belief or uncertainty, dynamic modality highlights the speaker's personal experiences and intentions. This creates a discourse that emphasizes

individuality and self-awareness. By expressing abilities, intentions, and interests, speakers present themselves as individuals who are actively engaged in shaping their own paths.

The presence of dynamic modality in the data therefore demonstrates that discourse involves not only the regulation of behavior or the evaluation of truth but also the expression of personal capability and motivation. Through these modal expressions, speakers communicate their aspirations, interests, and self-perceptions. Consequently, dynamic modality serves as an important linguistic resource for representing the speaker's internal perspective and constructing a sense of personal identity within discourse.

The analysis shows that the modal expressions identified in the data represent three main types of modality: deontic modality, epistemic modality, and dynamic modality. Each type of modality is represented through different linguistic forms that convey specific interpersonal meanings in the discourse. Deontic modality is represented through expressions indicating obligation, prohibition, permission, and recommendation, such as *harus*, *jangan*, *tidak boleh*, *wajib*, *perlu*, *sebaiknya*, *diperbolehkan*, *dilarang*, *hendaknya*, *diwajibkan*, and *dipersilakan*. These expressions function to regulate behavior and emphasize normative expectations within communication. Through these modal forms, speakers position themselves in relation to rules, responsibilities, and appropriate conduct. For example, expressions such as *harus*, *wajib*, and *diwajibkan* indicate strong obligation, suggesting that certain actions are considered necessary or mandatory. Meanwhile, expressions such as *tidak boleh*, *jangan*, and *dilarang* represent prohibition, indicating restrictions on particular actions. In addition, expressions such as *diperbolehkan* and *dipersilakan* convey permission, while *perlu*, *sebaiknya*, and *hendaknya* express recommendation or suggestion. These forms illustrate how deontic modality is used to construct meanings related to authority, guidance, and social norms within discourse.

Epistemic modality, on the other hand, is represented through expressions that indicate belief, certainty, possibility, and inference, including *mungkin*, *memang*, *pasti*, *pantas*, *sepertinya*, *aku pikir*, *barangkali*, and *tampaknya*. These modal expressions reflect the speaker's evaluation of the truth value of a proposition and demonstrate how speakers present statements as interpretations, assumptions, or beliefs rather than absolute facts. Expressions such as *mungkin* and *barangkali* indicate possibility and suggest that the speaker considers a situation plausible but uncertain. Meanwhile, expressions such as *pasti* and *memang* indicate a higher degree of certainty or affirmation, reflecting strong confidence in the statement being expressed. Other expressions such as *sepertinya* and *tampaknya* signal inference, meaning that the speaker draws conclusions based on observation or contextual reasoning. Similarly, the

expression *aku pikir* indicates personal opinion, while *pantas* reflects evaluative judgment regarding what is considered appropriate or deserved. Through these forms, epistemic modality allows speakers to express subjective evaluation and negotiate the level of certainty within communication.

Dynamic modality is represented through expressions indicating ability, willingness, intention, and personal motivation, such as *bisa*, *mau*, *ingin*, *penasaran*, *maunya*, *pengen*, *mampu*, *berniat*, and *tertarik*. Unlike deontic modality, which is related to external rules, and epistemic modality, which concerns judgments about truth, dynamic modality emphasizes the subject's internal disposition toward performing an action. Expressions such as *bisa* and *mampu* indicate ability or capability, suggesting that the subject possesses the capacity to carry out a particular action. Meanwhile, expressions such as *mau* and *ingin* represent willingness and intention, reflecting the speaker's internal motivation to perform certain activities. Other expressions such as *pengen* and *maunya* indicate desire or preference, while *penasaran* and *tertarik* reflect curiosity and personal interest. These modal expressions highlight how speakers express their internal motivations and personal aspirations when describing actions or experiences.

In terms of distribution, the findings indicate that deontic modality appears as the most dominant type, accounting for 36.67% of the total data, followed by epistemic modality with 33.33%, while dynamic modality constitutes 30% of the data. Although the difference between these categories is relatively small, the dominance of deontic modality suggests that the discourse tends to emphasize meanings related to obligation, prohibition, and social expectations. This indicates that speakers frequently position themselves in relation to normative rules and behavioral standards when communicating their ideas. At the same time, the presence of epistemic modality demonstrates that speakers also express personal beliefs, interpretations, and degrees of certainty regarding particular situations. Meanwhile, dynamic modality reflects the speaker's internal motivations, intentions, and abilities, which highlight the role of personal agency in discourse.

these demonstrate that modality functions as an important linguistic resource for expressing interpersonal meaning within digital communication. Through the use of different modal expressions, speakers are able to regulate behavior, express beliefs, and highlight personal motivations when presenting their messages. In the context of Instagram discourse, these modal meanings also contribute to the construction of speaker stance and self-positioning,

as individuals strategically use language to present themselves as knowledgeable, responsible, or motivated participants in social interaction.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine how modality functions in Instagram discourse from a semantic–pragmatic perspective and how modal expressions contribute to the construction of interpersonal meaning and self-positioning in digital communication. Through qualitative discourse analysis, the research analyzed modal expressions found in an Instagram post related to personal This study aimed to analyze the use of modality and its role in expressing interpersonal meaning within the selected discourse by applying Palmer’s (2001) framework of modality. The result reveal that three types of modality are present in the data, namely deontic modality, epistemic modality, and dynamic modality, each of which reflects different aspects of the speaker’s attitude toward the propositions expressed in the utterances. Based on the analysis of 30 data, it was found that deontic modality appears most frequently with 11 occurrences (36.67%), followed by epistemic modality with 10 occurrences (33.33%), while dynamic modality appears 9 times (30%), making it the least dominant category in the dataset. The dominance of deontic modality indicates that the discourse tends to emphasize expressions related to obligation, prohibition, permission, and normative expectations, suggesting that speakers frequently position themselves in relation to rules, responsibilities, and appropriate conduct within communication. Meanwhile, the presence of epistemic modality demonstrates that speakers also express personal beliefs, assumptions, and evaluations when presenting their statements, allowing them to convey varying degrees of certainty or uncertainty. In addition, dynamic modality reflects the speakers’ internal abilities, intentions, and motivations, which highlight the role of personal agency and individual inclination in discourse. Taken together, these findings demonstrate that modality plays a significant role in shaping interpersonal meaning because modal expressions allow speakers to convey attitudes, negotiate social relationships, and position themselves within communication.

Based on these result, it can be concluded that the analysis of modality provides valuable insights into how speakers construct meaning and express their stance in discourse. Modal expressions function not only as grammatical elements but also as important linguistic resources that enable speakers to regulate behavior, express opinions, and highlight personal capabilities. Therefore, understanding modality is essential for analyzing how language reflects social interaction and interpersonal relations. However, this study is limited to a relatively small dataset consisting of 30 utterances, which means that the findings may not fully represent the

broader patterns of modality usage in other forms of discourse. For this reason, future research is recommended to expand the scope of analysis by examining larger datasets or by exploring modality in different types of discourse such as social media communication, interviews, political speeches, or digital narratives. In addition, further studies could combine semantic and pragmatic approaches with other linguistic frameworks, such as Systemic Functional Linguistics or discourse analysis, in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of how modality contributes to the construction of meaning, identity, and interpersonal relationships in various communicative contexts.

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