



Analysis of Linguistic Manifestation of Modal Verbs in Pakistani English Newspaper Editorials—A Corpus Based Study

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Abstract

The aim of this research paper is to investigate linguistic manifestation of modal verbs in the editorials of Pakistani English newspapers i.e. The Dawn, The Nation and The News. The paper first focuses on which modal verbs are more frequently used by editorial writers and which modal verbs are less frequently used by editorial writers. Secondly, it also focuses on the linguistic manifestation of frequently used modal verbs. Thirdly, it deals with how modal auxiliaries are used by editorial writers to shape and reshape readers' opinions towards specific issues. To fulfill above research objectives a corpus of 25 editorials of month of March 2019 from Pakistan's wide read newspapers i.e. The Dawn, The Nation and The News has been collected. For analysis AntConc 3.4.4 version is used and for the interpretation of modality (Halliday, 2004) functional approach has been employed. Finding of the research reveals that editorial writers have used the most the low value modal auxiliaries and auxiliaries of possibilities, permission and ability (i.e. can, could, may, might) in order to create politeness within the text. On the other hand, modal verbs of prediction or and modal verb of necessity are less frequently used. The Nation is more occupied not only in the use of modal verbs but also in the use of less frequently used modal verbs as compared to The Dawn and The Nation.

Keywords: Corpus; Editorial; Modal Verbs; Manifestation.

1. Introduction

Corpus linguistic is a scientific approach which deals with the language in use the language which has been collected and analyzed in the corpora. The word corpus has been derived by a Latin word which refers the collection of text in machine readable form. Corpus is a large body of text that is readable in machine readable form. The paper employs a corpus linguistic analysis for investigating modal verbs in Pakistani English newspaper editorials. Corpus linguistic analysis is a set of procedure that uses techniques for analysis such as corpus compilation, parts of speech tagging, annotation and parsing.

Newspaper is a way of exchanging information. It is an influential and leading genre. Basically through newspapers public remain aware of the current situation and current affairs. Newspaper are the best ways government as well as for the owners of newspaper and editors to spread a favorable and unfavorable bias among masses. And in this modality plays an important role.

Modality is the real value of an idea or proposition by logicians. Modality evaluates the state of affairs. Modal verbs "refer to aspect of meaning which causes sentence to be about the non-factual, that is, about the alternative possibility for how things could be" (Fasold and Connor-Linton, 2006). Being a special type of modal verb modality is a linguistic device. Modality or modal verb are alternatively called "helping verbs" (Quirk *et al.*, 1985) "modalauxiliary" (Palmer, 2001; Quirk *et al.*, 1985).

According to Palmer (2001) "certain principal feature in which it significantly differs from the full verb and also form its relative, the primary auxiliary verb. Those features are the both morph syntactic and semantic levels". Modal verbs not only define the foundation of main verbs but also are used to create different meanings in different context and different situation.

As Palmer (2001) defines modality as the "manner in which the meaning of the clause is qualified so as to reflect the speaker's judgement of the likelihood of the proposition it expresses" and "Modality is a kind of mood that the modals helps to create together with the main verb in order to change the communication function".

1.1. Kinds of Modality

Huddleston (2002), modal differ according to the communicative function they perform. On the basis of communicative function there are the following three type of modal verbs.

- 1: Epistemic Modality shows likelihood, certainty and the theoretical possibility of any idea and proposition and give the conclusion about the proposition being true or false.

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2: Deontic Modality is used in the term of possibility, necessity, permission and duty.

3: Dynamic Modality shows a person's own ability and willingness towards an action.

In other word modality describe how a speaker make perception of the world around him. So the study aims to:

1: Investigate the use of modality in Pakistani English newspapers- Dawn, The Nation and The News International.

2: Investigate various aspect of modal verbs and their interpretations in Dawn, The Nation and The News.

3: Give a description how modal verb are intentionally used to mould the story style and to reshape readers' opinion.

The research focus on the following questions:

1: Which modal verbs/verbare/is more pervasively used in Pakistani English newspaper?

2: Which modal verb/verbs is/are less frequently used in Pakistani English newspaper?

3: What are the frequency differences of modal verbs in Pakistani English newspaper – Dawn, The Nation and The News?

4: Are modal verbs a source for editor to manipulate readers' opinion and to influence their mind?

2. Literature Review

Any investigation about modal verbs requires a definition and a list of modal verbs, their semantic implications, linguistic attributes, relative frequencies and general capacities in different settings and context. [Kelling and Thomas \(2018\)](#) define as an institutional voice. Similarly, [Gajevic \(2016\)](#) define it organizational stance.

It is impossible to have a complete discussion on the semantics of modal verbs in this study. This study gives only a concise review of the forms, meanings, functions and frequency of different modal verbs, Pakistani newspaper editorials. According to [Quirk et al. \(1985\)](#), modality can be defined as "the manner in which the meaning of a clause is qualified so as to reflect the speaker's judgment of the likelihood of the proposition of the sentence being true" Modal verbs generally are defined as can and could, will, would, may and might, shall, should, ([Biber et al., 1999](#)). [Quirk et al. \(1985\)](#), classify modal verbs into three categories. These categories are:

1) Permission, ability, possibility: can, might, could, may

2) Necessity, obligation: should, must

3) Prediction, volition: shall, would, will

[Halliday \(1976\)](#) gives some feature and on the basis of these features modal verbs differ from lexical verbs: (1) There is no need for a third person singular 's', for instance, 'She cans';(2) Modal verbs can be used as 'code verbs' in ellipsis. Such as when two comparable clauses, utilize a modal there is no need to repeat the lexical verb in the second clause such as in 'He can swim so can I'. The second modal axillary 'can' represents the lexical verb 'swim'; (3) modal verbs neither combine with one another nor co-occur in a clause (except in few nonstandard clauses like 'We may could swim'. (4) without any addition and extension we can change the form of modal verb into negative and interrogative forms that means there is no need to add and include 'to be' or 'to do' with modal verbs when interrogative or negative sentences are to made. such as 'he cannot' or 'would she be able to jump?' in spite of this 'would he say he is can go? and 'she doesn't can' and so on (5) there is no use of finite forms with modal verbs, such as -ed, -ing, etc. for instance 'to may, maying'; (6) we can reduce the negative forms of the modal verbs such as in 'He can't swim in the river' or 'They won't have the capacity to drive a bike'

According to [Biber et al. \(1999\)](#) we cannot clearly differentiate some lexical and modal verbs as some lexical verbs also play the role modal verbs these lexical verbs are of two types. The first category or type carries auxiliaries such as 'need to', 'use to', 'dare to', and 'ought to'. The second type is called semi or quasi modals which includes; 'be going to', 'be supposed to', 'have got to', and 'had better' etc. These verbs mark modality rather the aspect of tense. [Indarti \(Biber et al., 1999\)](#).

[Gotti \(2003\)](#) while working on the Helsinki Corpus of English Texts, find that shall was mostly used in prose text as compare to scientific text. [Smith \(2003\)](#), conducted the research on the use of 'have to' and find that this feature is mostly used in the literature and mass media. [Vine \(2004\)](#), conducted a research on the use of modal verbs and marginal auxiliaries in Newzealand English directives. In the research the focus is on directives and the conclusion of the research is that modal verbs were frequently used directives. The modal verb will is the most frequent modal verbs in English but in the present research, there is less use of will. Whereas, need to has a high frequency in the directive data.

[Palmer \(2007\)](#), opines epistemic modality is used to depict the speaker's "conclusions about the genuine position of the proposition", whereas evidential modal verbs are used to show "the evidence" which the speaker has for its "factual status". Epistemic modality which also known as 'inference' in cognitive sense is used to show the inevitability of a problem. And for "obligation or permission" deontic modality is used deontic modality is linked with external world, and for "one's inner ability and readiness" is described though dynamic modality.

[Bonyadi \(2011\)](#), conducted a comparative textual analysis of editorials published in American and Persian English newspapers. The results of the study illustrate that Persian newspaper writer mostly used the modal verbs of necessity with great frequency and the American editorial writer used the modal verbs of prediction with great frequency. The study defines modality as an instrument which can be used to create a favorable or unfavorable bias or to manipulate and shape the opinion of receiver and readers.

[Mahmood et al. \(2013\)](#), conducted a corpus based comparative analysis of modal verbs in Pakistani and British English Fiction. They conducted comparative stylistic analysis on the use of modal verbs in Pakistani and British fictions. For this purpose, a corpus of Pakistani and British fiction was collected. It consists of one million words. For analysis CLAWS tags set C7 and POS tagging have been used. The research the idea that has been conveyed

through the use of modal verbs and also focus on stylistic interpretations. The findings include that BEF display the elements of gloom and pessimism. It depicts the elements of depression due to the lack of strong family relation and isolation. On the other hand, there is a division of classes and common moral deterioration are found in PEF.

Khalid (2013), investigates presence of authorial subjectivity in Scottish English newspaper articles. And the findings of research reveal that modals play the role of indicators of possibility ability, permission, and through the Scottish newspaper article the writers use modals to add and infuse their voice into the text, they also used modal verbs to maintain authorial presence within the text and editorial and to establish and maintain contact with their receivers and readers.

Ntsane (2015), through the study investigated the way of communication between an editorialist or writer and his readers and the main focus of the study is to know how the editorialists engage his reader in the argument when he establishes and maintains the authoritative persona. And also pay the attention towards the question. Results reveal that the editorialists utilize modality to establish their authority and interaction or engagement with readers.

Sadia and Ghani (2018), investigated modality in their article “Modality in Editorials of Pakistani English Newspapers: A Corpus Based Study”. They analyze the nature and function of modal verbs in two Pakistani Newspapers Dawn and The News. The focus was on what modal verbs are pervasively used in both newspapers and how they are used by their editors in order to shape the opinion of their reader. The findings reveal that predictive “will and would” the predictive modal auxiliary were commonly used as compare to the other types of modal. The editor of The Daily Dawn more focused on solution “what should be done”. And while comparing the auxiliary of prediction The News more focused on the prediction “what will/what would happen”.

Ahmad et al. (2019), investigated modal verbs in English Pakistani newspapers Dawn, The News International, The Frontier, The Express Tribune. Results revealed that characteristic features of Pakistani English newspaper editorials are possibility necessity and prediction. Results also show that the main focus of Pakistani English newspapers’ editorials is on depicting ‘what will happen’, ‘what may happen’ and ‘what is needed to happen’.

Above literature leads to form a general view that editorials are an important part of the newspapers which present editors’, newspapers’, institutions’ or organizations’ stance and thus, are subjective. Being significant grammatical feature modality is widely used in Pakistani English newspaper. Editors of these newspapers use modality first to shape and mould reader’s opinion second to create favorable and unfavorable bias towards a specific issue. Through modality editorial writer infuse their intension and voices in the written medium. They also create a connection between their readers and themselves and also establish authorial persona. The main significance of the study is that it explores the modality as stance maker in the freshest data of editorial from The News, The Nation and Dawn dating from 01-Mar-2019 to 31-Mar-2019. No research work has been conducted on this data. However, it is the limited amount of data we can’t analyze modality as linguistic feature in a genre. The previous editorial data also need researchers’ attention for the analysis of modality

3. Methodology

3.1. The Nature of Study

The nature of the research is descriptive it is a corpus based study of modal verbs. The research utilizes qualitative and quantitative paradigms a mix method for analysis of modal verbs in Pakistani English newspapers – Dawn, The Nation and The News.

3.2. Length of Data and Data Distribution and Compilation

For analysis a corpus has been compiled which comprises of 25 editorial of the month March 2019 from Pakistan’s wide read English newspapers – Dawn, The Nation and The News. The length of corpora is 61514 words. The first step is the compilation of data of editorial march 2019. After compilation the data has been tagged using UCREL Claws Tagger Tag set C7.

3.3. Turning Procedure

Then for the analysis of linguistic features, AntConc 3.4.4 version has been used within text. To answer the quantitative research questions concordance tool has been employed. Concordance tool helps to give the frequency of explored linguistic features and to know about the total number of words in a corpus key word list is used. Table 1 contains the said expressions.

Table-1. Turning Procedure of Modal Verb

Function/Expression	Modality/Modal Verbs
Possibility	can could may might
Prediction	will would
Necessity	must should

3.4. Modal

Modal has been employed for the analysis and interpretation. For analysis AntConc 3.4.4 version is used. Halliday (2004), functional approach has been used for the interpretation of modal verbs in the data which not only interpret the modal verbs but also define the relationship between the modal verbs. Such as between epistemic and deontic modality and gives description between of 1) high, 2) intermediate and 3) low.

4. Results

The results of the study are as follows.

4.1. Modal Expression in the Nation

Table-2. Modality via modal verbs in editorials of The Nation

Modal Verbs	Numbers	Percentage
Necessity (must, should)	77	24.21%
Prediction (will, would)	107	33.64%
Possibility (can, could, may, might)	134	42.13%

Results reveals that editors of Pakistan’s widespread newspaper The Nation have used modal verbs pervasively in their editorials. Modal verb of necessity “should” is used 41 times, “must” has been repeated 36 times. Modal verbs of prediction “will” is used 64 times and “would” is used 43 times. Total 107 times prediction modal verbs are used. And the modal verbs which indicate possibility are used 134 times.

The table 2 shows that the modal verbs which indicates necessity are used 24.21% of the total modal verbs. And modal verbs of prediction are used 33.64%. The modal verbs of possibility are used the most 42.13% as these modal verbs are used more pervasively which indicates that to gives ideas and the opinions on possibilities is the basic interest of the editors and is the main feature of this genre of The Nation which is realized through the modal verbs of can, could, may and might. Here are some excerpts of the modality in The Nation.

- 1: And still, I **will** only have touched upon the myriad of aspects of democracy, and how to get more of it.
- 2: That means one to two billion people **would** die of starvation.
- 3: This is the sort of issue that **should** concern all statesmen in times of war.
- 4: It is important that the capitalists understand how they are part of a land that **shall** benefit all, not only themselves as companies and capitalists.
- 5: Everywhere, politicians **must** work for those who need help rather than those who can look after their own interests themselves.
- 6: We **could** have had a somewhat better sense of security.
- 7: Only DHA gets free land no one else **can**, was his remark.
- 8: Modi **may** be driven by the memory of Indira Gandhi, who went to war with Pakistan in 1971, won, and held elections in 1972.
- 9: One problem has been that the tactic **might** now be suffering from over use.

In the following examples taken from the editorials of The Nation, editors not only provide information but also give their own thought and attitudes towards particular events through the use of modality. In the instance no: 1 and 2, editors using modality give their own ideas about the prediction of future with the help of modal auxiliary will and would. The excerpts 3 and 5 the necessity of some action is presented such as “concern all statesmen in times of war”, “work for those who need help”. And at the last four examples writers give the possibility of something through the help of can, could, may and might. These modal verbs are used more pervasively which indicates that to gives ideas and the opinions on possibilities is the basic interest of the editors and is the main feature of this genre of Dawn which is realized through the modal verbs of can, could, may and might. Here are some excerpts of the modality in Dawn.

4.2. Modal Expression in Dawn

Table-3. Modality via modal verbs in editorials of Dawn

Modal Verbs	Numbers	Percentage
Necessity (must, should)	60	20.27%
Prediction (will, would)	98	33.10%
Possibility (can, could, may, might)	138	45.94%

In the table 2 findings show that in the editors of Dawn in their editorials of march have used must and should 60 times which is 20.27% of the total modal verbs and will and would are used 98 times which is 33.10%. Similarly, the modal auxiliaries of possibilities can, could, may and might have been used the most 138 times which make 45.94% of the total modal auxiliaries.

- 1: Some reports suggest that ACWA Power **will** develop these projects in Balochistan.
- 2: Against this backdrop, I **would** leave it for the government to account for these challenges.
- 3: The sum of these pockets **should** be able to often play a decisive role in keeping a war-happy leader out of power.
- 4: These regional varieties of thinking **must** be asserted to influence and defeat pro-war emotions in the country.
- 5: The US in particular **can** be expected to press for several of India’s demands.
- 6: It **could** not achieve militarily.
- 7: The prospects of such a peace plan may not be very bright while Modi and the BJP rule in India.
- 8: The continuing coldness between Pakistan and Bangladesh might gain from a reconciliation process initiated by women.

In the excerpts 1 and 2 modality will and would indicates the predictions about “what would happen?”. And should and must indicates the necessity showing “what is the need of the hour?”. Modal verbs of possibilities are used the most which indicates “what is/is not going to happen?” such as *not achieve militarily*.

4.3. Modal Expression in the News International

Table-4. Modality via modal verbs in editorials of The News International

Modal Verbs	Numbers	Percentage
Necessity (must, should)	24	10.90%
Prediction (will, would)	83	37.72%
Possibility (can, could, may, might)	113	51.36%

The above table 3 displays that editors of The News have used the modality in their editorials. They have used the modality of possibility the most 51.36% then the modality of necessity and prediction. As prediction about “what will happen?” and “what is needed to happen?” are not the main focus of editors. The main focus of the editors is to reshape the reader’s opinions and views by convincing them “what can happen?” Though the use of modality of possibilities can, could, may and might the editors reshapes the readers’ mind towards more possibilities. Here are the following excerpts taken from the editorials of The News as examples.

- 1: War will not solve anything because war itself is a problem.
- 2: Cancer **would** be more common than the common flu.
- 3: Sanity **should** prevail.
- 4: we must remember that such hopes have always been dashed in the past.
- 5: By focusing on grassroots development, he **can** win the hearts of our impoverished millions at a reasonable cost.
- 6: But there has also been a tendency to do away with good practices which **could** improve the lot of the common man.
- 7: If left unchecked, it may turn out to be the foremost destabilizing factor in the enormous, multiethnic Indian society.
- 8: NSAs might have been assets once.

The following examples taken from the editorial of The News. Example number 1 and 2 editor gives the idea about prediction of “what will/will not happen?” such as “war will not solve anything” and “Cancer would be more common than the common flu”. And the instances number 3 and 4 show that something is the need of the hour. Modal verbs of prediction can, could, may and might give a view about possibilities this kind of modality is use the most.

5. Discussion

In the section of discussion here are the answers of research question stated above. As first question states “Which modal verbs/verbare/is more pervasively used in Pakistani English newspaper?” through analysis it is stated that the modal verbs of permission, ability and possibilities are more frequently used by the Pakistani English editorial writers of Dawn, The Nation and The News. This means that while discussing events and situation they more focused on the elements of possibilities, ability and permission. They are more concerned with “what can happen”. Past researches of Ahmad *et al.* (2019) and Sadia and Ghani (2018) reveal that Pakistani editorial writers have more used the modal verbs of prediction “what would happen” while this the present research reveals that Pakistani editorial writers have used the modals of permission, ability and possibility “what can happen” the most. According to the functional approach by Halliday and Hasan (1989) modal verbs are categorized into three categories according to their value i.e.

- 1) High modality (must, need to, ought to, have to) –impolite
- 2) Intermediate modality (will, would, shall, should,).
- 3) Low modality (can, could, may, might). –polite

It is examined that in past researches by Ahmad *et al.* (2019) and Sadia and Ghani (2018), Pakistani editorial writers have used the intermediate modality to avoid to infuse any kind of negative perception in the readers. While the results of this research shows that in current situation Pakistani editorial writers makes the use of low modality the most in order to create politeness within the text and to give the readers a positive perception and there is the minimum use of high and intermediate modality to avoid any kind of negative perception with in the text.

To answer the second research question “Which modal verb/verbs is/are less frequently used in Pakistani English newspaper?” The examination shows that modality of prediction or intermediate modality (will and would) and modality of necessity or high modality (must) is less frequently used.

To answer the third research question “What are the frequency differences of modal verbs in Pakistani English newspaper – Dawn, The Nation and The News?” Through analysis it is clear that the editors of The Nation have used modal verbs the most frequency of modal verb in The Nation is 320. As compared to The Nation, there is minimum use of modal verbs in Dawn and The News International. Frequency of modal verbs in the Dawn is 296 and in The News is 220. Editors of the Dawn have made the minimum use of modal verbs as compared to The Nation and The News.

The forth concern of the study is “are modal verbs a source for editor to manipulate readers’ opinion and to influence their mind?”. Any newspaper is greatly influenced with the economic, political and military factors and

these effects plays an important role in influencing the editorial writers' interest in this way they use modal verbs subjectively to infuse within the text their own ideology and through the use of modal verbs the editorial writers of Dawn, The Nation and The News have used modality to create a favorable and unfavorable bias towards an issue or event. According to Lyons (1977); Quirk *et al.* (1985) modality is sometimes considered as speaker's attitude towards an event and issue. But modality does not make judgement about any proposition to be true or false. As Papafragou (2005) states that "As modality expresses the opinion of the speakers and writers, it does not have any assurance of truth of the propositions".

6. Conclusion

To conclude that after analyzing modality in the selected editorials taken from Pakistan's wide read newspapers –Dawn, The Nation and The News International. It has been clear that editorial writers give not only information about the events but also gives their own judgement about the event and issues. They comment on particular under discussion issues in their own ways. Through the use of modality, they mould and reshape the story and give the story the "color" and "feel" of their own choice in this way they influence readers' view and shape or reshape their opinions. The use of modality is influenced by editors' and newspapers owners' interest.

A comparison of the published editorials in the three Pakistani newspapers –Dawn, The Nation and The News reveals that modal verbs of possibilities (can, could, may and might) are used the most other then modal verbs of necessity (should and must) and prediction (will and would) are less frequently used (table 2,3 and 4). As these modal verbs are used more frequently which shows that to give the descriptions about possibilities is the main interest of the editorial writers. And on the other hand, the auxiliaries of necessity (should and must) are less frequently used in the editorials of all newspapers. But through analysis it is suggested that The Nation is more occupied as compare to The News and Dawn and gives description about what should be done.

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