

MODALITY USED IN THE INDONESIAN PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE: A CORPUS-BASED POLITICAL DISCOURSE STUDY

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Abstract

The language utilized by politicians during electoral debates encompasses linguistic strategies for persuading and influencing their target audiences. Broadcasted on Indonesian televisions in 2023-2024, the presidential candidates articulated their visions and presented persuasive arguments to win over votes. I observed that one of the language principles employed by the candidates in the recent electoral debate to convince prospective voters was linguistic modality. This research scrutinizes the type and function of modality used by these candidates. It is revealed that modality verbs which frequently emerged, such as 'bisa' (can), 'akan' (will), 'harus' (must), 'ingin' (want), 'mungkin' (may), and 'mesti' (should). After being transcribed, all data comprising a total of 40.239-word tokens or 8.982-word types were saved as plain text (.txt). AntConc 4.2.4 Software was used to import data and to automatically generate its frequency, concordance, collocation, and KWIC. The results indicate that epistemic modality is (48%), dynamic modalities (7.32%), intentional modality (11.4%), and deontic modalities (33.28%). The results obtained from this research may offer supplementary insights for discourse analysts and other linguists who have a similar interest in studying modality. This research suggests that politicians are more convincing if they use strong modalities in electoral debates.

Keywords: Corpus linguistics, Modality, Political Discourse Analysis

INTRODUCTION

Because of the Brexit debates, more people in Europe and entire the world learned about the structure authority and duties of the British parliament. The example of the Brexit debate shows how important legislative debates are in democracies. Similar to Indonesia, presidential debates during the election is an event to educate the citizen about democracy and encourage civic literacy. According to Bäck et al. (2021), there are many reasons why we should study presidential debates and why politicians engage in such debates. These include the possibility that they will have a substantial impact on future policy-making for the country's society. Moreover, the language employed by politicians in political debates is distinctive compared to the language used by citizens daily because it reflects ideology, authority, and power. Zuloaga (2024) stated one way of raising negative emotions in political debate is by discrediting opponents, attacking or mocking the facts and claims that they present. Gallardo (2022) found that debates are not often organised as an interchange of arguments and counterarguments because political discourse is no longer primarily argumentative but narrative, which becomes the center of political debates. Meanwhile, an aspect of presidential debates is how candidates use rhetorical devices and emotional appeals to influence undecided voters during a limited time frame. Therefore, debates can shape voter perceptions and even swing election outcomes.

According to Van Dijk (1997), political discourse is text and speech delivered by political figures. It ranges from candidates of parliamentary members, the prime minister, the presidents, the governor, to the district mayor. Speaking as an individual, a representative in parliament expresses their personal political views in a particular way and within a particular context. Therefore, many genres of political discourse, such as laws, international treaties, peace negotiations, propaganda, slogans, and parliamentary debates, are primarily characterized contextually rather than textually. Hence, studying debates reveals how language, tone, and non-verbal cues affect public trust and decision-making. It is especially engaging due to its measurable impact on voter behavior and opinion polls, offering insight into how political messages resonate with the public.

Political discourse also differs significantly from other types of discourse, such as that found in the classroom or conversational discourse, regarding its linguistic features. According to Boussofara-Omar (2006), politicians use language as a tool to promote, protect, and legitimize their power and voice of authority, and rationalize their visions of political order and their representations of social harmony. Political speeches are a critical locus for translating those visions and representations of reality into words.

In Indonesia, the presidential elections are conducted once every five years. The candidates for president and vice president must deliver their visions and missions for the future administration, followed by electoral debate sessions. This year, from December 23rd 2023, to February 4th 2024, five distinct debate sessions (three debate sessions for the presidential candidates and the other two sessions for the vice presidential candidates) were held by the Indonesian General Election Commissions and were publicly broadcast on televisions.

However, political discourse analysts usually investigate text using only qualitative methods. Whereas, by using the corpus linguistics approach, it is expected to increase objectivity and reliability. McEnery & Brenzina (2023) proposed some principles of corpus linguistics method such as; first, corpus linguistics, especially in the form of corpus annotation, is an area where the ontological presuppositions of linguistics become clear. Second, by studying corpora, that is, finite samples of language, we can make general claims about language itself; these claims are probabilistic in nature. Third, corpus linguistics inclines to *scientia realis*—it is the study of observable language. Lastly, fourth, corpus linguistics promotes and is based upon an intersubjectively observable approach to language in which results are repeatable and replicable. Mcenery & Hardie (2012), in summary, claim that completed accountability to the available data guarantees that their claims meet the standard of falsifiability; complete accountability to additional data during the process of checking and double-checking guarantees that they meet the standard of replicability; and the combination of falsifiability and replication can increase our level of confidence in the legitimacy of corpus linguistics as an empirical, scientific endeavor. The distinctive language characteristics of political discourse lead me to consider it an appealing subject. Additionally, there were numerous studies about political discourse analysis, yet only a few researchers investigate modality as one of the main aspects of political debates. Because the presidential election debate was recently conducted in Indonesia and the theory of modality in this study is hardly implemented in Indonesia, I decided to uplift this research topic.

Five years ago, Randour et.al. (2020) conducted a systematic literature review of political discourse analysis. They collected 164 articles from the Scopus database. The

findings show that political discourse is generally limited to the discourses of (institutionalized) political elites and most specifically to oral monological speeches, and they discover that politicians use a variety of genres, platforms, and events to spread their ideas and draw attention from the public. These genres and platforms of political discourse include: diplomatic condolences, graffiti, campaign posters, monological speeches, parliamentary debates, presidential debates, citizen forums, tweets, and press articles. Such political discourse analysis will aid this research in revealing the extent to which presidential and vice presidential candidates' claims, assertions, and denials during five debate sessions in Indonesia reflect candidates' political ideologies, authority, and attempts to influence potential voters.

Kenzhekanova (2015) summarizes language features of political discourse, including: the image of the author, intentionality, addressee ability or factor of addressee, informational content, estimation, conventionality, emotiveness or expressivity, modality, intertextuality, sociocultural context, form of communication, and means of communication. Modality is the speaker's attitude regarding the situation, reality, or truth. It also means the speaker's evaluations of the content of expressions in terms of reality or unreality, possibility, necessity, or desirability, the degree of certainty, and qualitative estimation of the content of statements are features that apply to the discourse as a whole in addition to the participants. Modality also suggests a level of assurance in the speaker that will show the depth of understanding from which the addressee's political performance will be judged in terms of its seriousness. I will provide further explanation of linguistic modality in the following section.

Nakayama (2021) stated that, unlike written communication, where authors have particular long periods of time to reflect and review what they want to convey through the email or a sheet of paper, participants in oral communication are required to immediately reply to what interlocutors said previously. Especially in presidential candidate debates where they are required to talk in more convincing manners and to appear more confident, speakers use modality such as “can”, “may”, “will”, “shall”, “must”, and their corresponding forms. From the standpoint of discourse analysis, Fairclough (1995) proposed a definition of modality as the formation of social relationships that can interpret attitudes and power. As an illustration, consider the usage of modalities in leadership discourse and the definitions of commands and requests, such as will, can, should, must, and need, or in Indonesian are translated into “akan”, “bisa”, “mesti”, “harus”, “perlu”, and “hendaklah” (Alwi, 1992). According to Fowler (1985), modality is expressed linguistically in various ways. These include the auxiliary verbs may, shall, must, require, and others; phrase adverbs like probably, absolutely, and regretfully; and adjectives like necessary, unfortunate, and certain.

There are some types of modality according to discourse analysts and linguists. Rescher (1968) divided modality into eight categories include; (a) alethic modality, which is related to the idea of truth itself; (b) epistemic modality, which is related to knowledge and belief (c) temporal modality, which is related to time; (d) associated boulomaic modality, which is related to desire/desire; (e) deontic modality, which is related to obligations (duties) or permission of acts and is connected to intention, desire, and will; (f) evaluative modality; (g) causal modality, and (h) likelihood modality. Palmer (2001) elaborated on types of modality; deontic and dynamic modality that is related to the speaker's "obligation or permission" and "ability or “willingness” that are further distinguished by epistemic modality, which deals with the speaker's attitude toward and assessments of the proposition's factual

reality. Alwi (1992) stated that there are four types of modality in Indonesian, namely deontic modality, dynamic modality, intentional modality, and epistemic modality. Intentional modality, which is goal intention, as the name implies, for instance, in the phrase "I hope you will succeed." Deontic modality also includes the negation cannot, and should not, such as "can" and "may," which denote permission. Therefore, the definition of deontic modality is based on permissions and duties. It typically does not have to be on the speaker's behalf, but rather expresses the state's degree of modal desire as communicated in speech. Since it entails determining the degree of moral acceptability of various judgments of conduct, the expression of responsibilities, permits, and prohibitions might be seen as more complex. The definition of a dynamic modality is a perceived ability or competence. This category is limited to ability alone and includes a list of the participants' requirements or musts. It encompasses the speaker's own context as well as that which is established by regional factors like capability, aptitude, potential, and needs; in Indonesian, these factors are referred to as "bisa", "dapat", and "mampu".

From the typification of modality above, it can be inferred that there are many linguists who have different concepts about how many types of modality, yet they have a similar idea on the definition of modality and major types of modality that frequently emerge on each linguist. Li et.al., (2016) made a table that aided the language researchers and discourse analysts in illustrating more effectively types of modality according to previous linguists' ideas. Here, I add one other classification based on research conducted by Indonesian linguist, Alwi (1992) who researched types of modality in Indonesian, because verb modality that appeared in the current research are also in Indonesian.

The following table demonstrates the types of modality adapted from Li et al (2016):

Wright (1951)	Quirk et al (1985)		Lyons (1977)	Palmer (1990)	Coates (1983)	Palmer (2001)		Halliday (1994); Halliday & Mathiessen (2004); Halliday and McDonald (2004)		Alwi (1997)
Alethic	Extrinsic	Possibility Necessity Prediction (future)	Alethic		Epistemic (logic necessity/confident inference, possibility, prediction, predictability, tentative assumption, futurity)	Propositional modality	Epistemic	Modalization	Probability (/Epistemic)	Intentional
Epistemic			Epistemic	Epistemic						
Deontic	Intrinsic	Permission Obligation Volition	Deontic (evaluative)	Deontic	Root (obligation, permission, volition)	Event modality	(Evidential) Deontic	Modulation	Usuality, Obligation (/Deontic)	Deontic
				Dynamic			Dynamic		Readiness, Inclination, Ability	Dynamic
Existential										

Table 1. Types of modality (adapted from Li et.al., 2016)

The emergence of corpora began before the global internet's penetration. It was a technique for collecting information into a library's cards that were kept on the drawers. Due to its ability to reduce bias in social science research, corpus linguistics has developed and has been used in a number of research during the past two decades. The quantity of concordances, or the pair of collocations on specific keywords, improves the research objectivity. McEnery & Wilson (2001) defined corpus linguistics as the study of language based on examples of real-life language use. Working with incredibly huge datasets, McEnery & Hardie (2012)

said, due to time saving, without a corpus would take a human analyst or team of analysts to scan through the material. Words can be examined in context based on their concordances. Both of the analysis types—quantitative and qualitative—that are equally significant to corpus linguistics are best illustrated by concordances and frequency statistics, respectively, and efficiently. Therefore, the research questions posed in this study are to investigate the types of modality used by presidential and vice presidential candidates in Indonesia in the last debate sessions.

METHOD

This research data includes five consecutive electoral debate sessions of two-hour duration which consisted of three presidential candidate debate sessions and two vice presidential candidate debate sessions. They were broadcasted on national television; therefore there is an adequate amount of data accessible. The only language modality the researcher takes into account while recording speakers' thoughts and attitudes about the proposition—or, in the event of a debate, the questions raised—is modal verbs. Here I put the links into an artificial intelligence website namely <https://kome.ai/> to get automated transcription from YouTube (MetroTV). Then all raw collected data was rechecked manually before it could be imported into the AntConc Software. The candidates' profiles and thoughts were publicly tested in five televised presidential debates, which included two vice presidential rounds and three presidential rounds. Those five debate sessions held on 12 December 2023 raised issues of governance, law, human rights, eradicating corruption, building democracy, improving public services, and communal harmony. On 22 December 2023, issues were raised on finance, taxation, investment, trade, infrastructure, urban affairs, APBN-APBD (State Budget-Regional Revenue and Expenditure Budget) management, infrastructure, people's economy, and digital economy. On 7 January 2024, the debates issued defense, security, international relations, and geopolitics. On 21 January 2024, the debate issued sustainable development, natural resources, environment, energy, food, agrarian affairs, indigenous peoples, and villages. Lastly, on 4 February 2024, the debates issued social welfare, culture, education, information technology, health, employment, human resources, and inclusion.

To collect the data, the five consecutive election debate sessions were transcribed automatically using AI and were reorganized manually. All data was then imported to AntConc Software 4.2.2 and the data collection resulted in 40.239 word tokens and 8.982 word types. The token is an occurrence of a word at a particular spatiotemporal location (e.g., a sequential position in a text, an utterance event at a time and space).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The five consecutive electoral debate recordings and transcription data analysis revealed seven modal verbs (as can be seen in Table. 3 below) that were expressed by the candidates for president and vice president last February. Modality in these political discourses not only represents the speaker's attitude towards propositions, but also reflects the candidates' intention and political promise. The data collection which consisted of 40.239-word tokens and 8.982-word types was presumably hard to classify as corpora. However, in this research, the use of corpus machine-readable data is used to count the word frequency, especially modal verbs, collocation, and concordance to acquire more reliable data effectively. The following table shows the most frequently used words in the debates. I present this table to

increase the transparency of this research and to show that there is a potential investigation into this data by other researchers.

AB	Freq	(%)	MI	Freq	(%)	PS	Freq	(%)	GRR	Freq	(%)	GP	Freq	(%)	MMD	Freq	(%)
yang	392	4.29	yang	241	4.67	kita	358	5.13	kita	172	3.54	yang	337	3.91	itu	218	3.96
kita	229	2.51	kita	220	4.26	saya	227	3.25	yang	114	2.35	kita	290	3.37	yang	169	3.07
itu	192	2.1	dan	100	1.93	yang	226	3.24	dan	111	2.28	dan	201	2.33	ini	106	1.9
di	179	1.95	ini	94	1.82	dan	166	2.38	ini	96	1.97	ini	157	1.82	saya	105	1.9
dan	175	1.91	di	76	1.47	harus	114	1.63	di	69	1.42	saya	152	1.76	di	100	1.81
ini	140	1.53	itu	76	1.46	di	107	1.53	untuk	68	1.4	itu	151	1.75	dan	89	1.61
tidak	120	1.31	tidak	72	1.39	itu	101	1.44	itu	66	1.36	bisa	131	1.52	kita	86	1.56
untuk	103	1.12	dan	60	1.16	untuk	93	1.33	saya	66	1.36	tidak	124	1.44	ada	75	1.36
dengan	102	1.11	harus	55	1.06	tidak	92	1.31	juga	62	1.27	maka	113	1.31	tidak	55	1
ada	96	1.05	menjadi	55	1.06	jadi	82	1.17	harus	55	1.13	di	110	1.27	kulau	53	0.96
word types	1886		word types	1251		word types	1434		word types	1186		word types	1825		word types	1400	
word tokens	9119		word tokens	5160		word tokens	6971		word tokens	4849		word tokens	8508		word tokens	5531	

Table 2. Top ten highest-frequency words

Seven modalities were mentioned in the last electoral debates, including “harus” (must), “bisa” (can), “akan” (will), “ingin” (want), “perlu” (need), “mungkin” (may or presumably), and “mesti” (should or ought to). Among seven modalities, only “mesti” or ‘should’ is employed the least and only conveyed by Candidate GP. Additionally, the modality “harus” is the most frequently mentioned by all candidates, except Candidate GP, who used “bisa” more intensely. From those modalities and theoretical review, the modal verbs were classified into four types: epistemic, dynamic, deontic, and intentional modality, which was theorized by Alwi (1992) because he wrote the concept of modality and its samples in Indonesian, which is relevant to this study. Therefore, to acquire more comprehensive and contextual meaning, I used the literature from Alwi’s concept of modality. The data visualization of this research can also be viewed through this link https://bit.ly/chart_modality.

The following table (Table 3) shows the frequency of modal verbs in five consecutive electoral debates. It can be seen that epistemic modality dominated the whole debate sessions, followed by deontic, intentional, and dynamic. This describes that, in the majority, the types of modality that were employed by the candidates were based on their subjective perception. On the other hand, the number of dynamic modalities, which is also called objective deontic, was under ten percent, which can be interpreted as only a small number of facts and objective arguments which were conveyed in the last electoral debate.

		Types of modality				Percentage
		Epistemic	Deontic	Dynamic	Intentional	
Modal verbs	harus	140	234	8	-	382 (29.2%)
	bisa	220	74	25	-	319 (24.35%)
	akan	156	32	63	102	353 (26.94%)
	mungkin	23	-	-	-	23 (1.75%)
	perlu	25	27	-	3	55 (4.19%)
	mesti	27	50	-	-	77 (5.87%)
	ingin	38	19	-	44	101 (7.7%)
Percentage		629 (48%)	436 (33.28%)	96 (7.32%)	149 (11.4%)	1310 (100%)

Table 3. Frequency of types and distribution of modal verbs

The chart below illustrates the modality distribution employed by the candidates of presidents and vice presidents. There were found seven modal verbs in Indonesian namely “harus”,

“bisa”, “akan”, “ingin”, “perlu”, “mungkin”, and “mesti” which are shown in this following chart that represents by whom they were expressed.

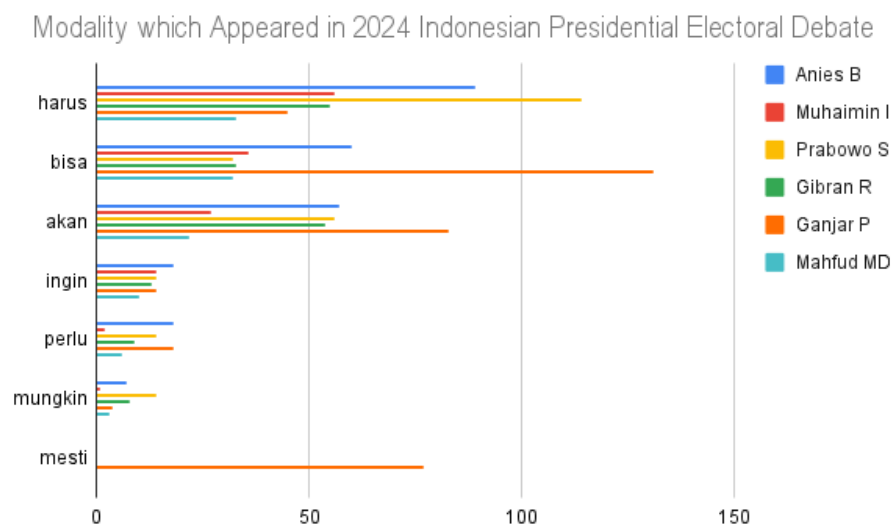


Figure 1. Modality expressed by president and vice presidential candidates

From Table 3, we can notice that from seven modal verbs expressed in the last electoral debates, only “*mungkin*” or “may” was the least mentioned in the debates. The word “*mungkin*” cannot be classified as a deontic modality, because deontic is identical to obligation either the speakers force themselves to follow the rule or oblige others to follow his/her rule as it can be seen in “*Kita harus melihat apa yang menjadi urgen hari ini*” (AB, *Harus* 84/1) means “We must see what is urgent today....” and “*Kita harus berbicara dengan stakeholder*” (AB, *Harus* 84/3) means “We must talk to stakeholders....”. According to Lilian (2008), after each modal had been classified, either epistemic or deontic modality, within the deontic category as conveying desirability, obligation, or permission, a tally of modal use was conducted.

Vukovic (2016) classified deontic modality into strong, medium, and weak. In the Table. 3 there are six deontic modalities, and the modal “*harus*” is identified as the strongest deontic modality, while “*bisa*” and “*mesti*” are medium deontic modalities, and “*akan*”, meanwhile, “*perlu*” and “*ingin*” as a weak deontic modalities. This classification does not mean described independently and steadily, because it will change based on social context and collocation in between in the corpus. This is in line with the previous research conducted by Dontcheva-Navratilova (2009) who studied deontic modality within political discourse of legal documents, she found they are commonly expressed through deontic modality and are inevitably related to an ideological point of view that correlates with institutional beliefs and norms of conduct and a biased representation of a constructed discourse world in terms of ‘right’ and ‘wrong’. She then found that strong deontic modal verbs in the UK parliament include modal verbs such as need, have to, and must, while weak deontic modalities in the UK parliament were such as can, hope, could, may, would like, want, would be grateful, suggest, and suggesting, have suggested. Strong deontic modality seems to be more easily distinguished, whereas the latter end of the deontic spectrum, the end belonging to weak

deontic modality, is more of a grey area. One example of strong modality can be seen in the following excerpt:

Deontic Modality

(1) *'Nah, isunya adalah, kita harus (AB, Harus 84/1) melihat apa yang menjadi urgen hari ini, dan di situ harus (AB, Harus 84/2) berbicara dengan siapa? Berbicara dengan stakeholder. Negara punya kewenangan, tapi sekali lagi pengetahuan dan situasi di lapangan kita harus (AB, Harus 84/3) berbicara dengan stakeholder. Siapa itu? Asosiasi profesi, kemudian Kementerian Kesehatan, dinas di daerah, kemudian para aktivis, para pengamat, para pakar. (AB, Harus 84)*

'Well, the issue is, we must (AB, Harus 84/1) see what is urgent today, and there we must (AB, Harus84/2) talk to whom? Talk to stakeholders. The state has the authority, but once again with the knowledge and the situation on the ground we must (AB, Harus84/3) talk to stakeholders. Who's that? Professional associations, then the Ministry of Health, regional services, then activists, observers, and experts. (AB, Harus84)

Lilian (2008) argued that the more frequent expression of obligation is the result of the intention of the author to make the reader and listener or audience adopt his/her stance, and that this is a feature of propaganda. A fair degree of obligation is expected in a persuasive text. However, its overuse is frequently associated with manipulation. Strong modality in this research was frequently associated with the plural 'we' subject, to deflect responsibility onto the group rather than attach it to an individual, which would be the case with the subject as in (AB, Harus 84/1), (AB, Harus 84/2), and (AB, Harus 84/3) that is preceded by the pronoun "we".

Epistemic Modality

(2) *'Jadi, masalah-masalah yang kita miliki sekarang misalnya, ada puluhan ribu guru honorer belum diangkat jadi guru PPPK, ada 1,6 juta guru belum tersertifikasi, lalu beban administrasi. Itu semua bisa (AB, Bisa45/1) diselesaikan dengan prinsip tadi, bahwa kita harus (AB, Bisa45/2) bertanggungjawab atas kesejahteraan pendidiknya. Jadi program yang menurut saya harus dikerjakan, kita akan (AB, Bisa45/3) rencana kerjakan adalah percepatan sertifikasi guru, pengangkatan 700.000 guru honorer menjadi guru PPPK, kemudian beasiswa untuk anak guru dan anak dosen serta anak tenaga kependidikan.' (AB, Bisa45)*

'So, the problems we have now are, for example, there are tens of thousands of honorary teachers who have not been appointed as PPPK teachers, there are 1.6 million teachers who have not been certified, and then the administrative burden. This can all be (AB, Bisa45/1) resolved with the aforementioned principle, that we must (AB, Bisa45/2) be responsible for the welfare of our educators. So the program that I think must work on it, we will (AB, Bisa45/3) plan to work on accelerating teacher certification, appointing 700,000 honorary teachers to become PPPK teachers, then scholarships for children of teachers and children of lecturers and children of education staff.' (AB, Bisa45)

In the extract above, I found an interesting phenomenon that there were three modalities within one utterance by a speaker AB namely can, must, and will which indicate different types of modality. "This can all be resolved with the aforementioned principle...." as in (AB, Bisa45/1) is an epistemic modality. This is in line with Taylor (2018) that epistemic modality is concerned more with predictions and the likelihood of an event occurring, which

is also suitable with Palmer (2003) that epistemic modality is used to exact judgments in the possibility or necessity of an entire proposition. Again Taylor (2018) stated that epistemic modality indicated a high certainty, which can bode well for persuading the reader to believe the outcome, for example, “It must rain tomorrow,” which indicates that the speaker has a strong desire for rain or has made an inference with a lot of certainty. Romadhlani & Hardjanto (2024) classified epistemic modality into epistemic certainty (high) which consists of must, have to, need to, cannot, and may not; epistemic probability (median) which consists of will, should, be going to, ought to; and epistemic possibility (low) which consists of can, could, may, might, be able to.

In (AB, Bisa45/2) “... that we must be responsible for the welfare of our educators...” is identified as a deontic because the speaker obliges himself and his future administration to take responsibility towards the educators’ well-being. Bonyadi (2011) stated that deontic modality is primarily concerned with obligation and permission which is usually expressed in imperative form. It focuses more on exacting judgment on the necessity or permissibility of a future event or action.

Meanwhile, an intentional modality is represented as in (AB, Bisa45/3) “... we will plan to work on is accelerating teacher certification, appointing 700,000 honorary teachers to become PPPK teachers,” because it tells about the plan and in political discourse moreover electoral debates and campaign, plans are closely related to political promises used as propaganda tools to convince audiences.

(3) *‘Infrastruktur yang disampaikan Pak Gibran menjadi bagian dari yang perlu disediakan. Tapi infrastruktur sosial atau infrastruktur kerakyatan, pada dasarnya kita bisa (MI, Bisa12/1) melibatkan semua pihak untuk hadir dan memberikan solusi. Contohnya infrastruktur gedung-gedung sekolah yang memberikan kesehatan, kecerdasan bagi masa depan anak didik kita. Apa yang bisa (MI, Bisa12/2) kita lakukan, misalnya kita bebaskan pajak buat seluruh penyelenggara pendidikan, supaya fiskalnya terpenuhi, supaya pendidikan bisa (MI, Bisa12/3) terjangkau, sehingga semua bentuk pendidikan, semua bentuk yang berkaitan dengan pencerdasan kehidupan masyarakat kotanya, maka dibebaskan pajaknya. Ini seperti yang sudah dilakukan di Jakarta--yang ini bisa (MI, Bisa12/4) kita tarik ke tingkat nasional, infrastruktur sosial tercipta dengan pemerintah memberi fasilitas yang memadai.’ (MI, Bisa12)*

The infrastructure that Mr. Gibran conveyed is part of what needs to be provided. But social infrastructure or people's infrastructure, basically we can (MI, Bisa12/1) involve all parties to be present and provide solutions. For example, the infrastructure of school buildings provides health and intelligence for the future of our students. What can (MI, Bisa12/2) we do, for example, make it tax-free for all education providers, so that the budget is met, so that education can be (MI, Bisa12/3) affordable, so that all forms of education, all forms related to the intelligent life of the city's people, are exempt from tax. This is like what has been done in Jakarta--we can (MI, Bisa12/4) take (28) this to the national level, social infrastructure is created by the government providing adequate facilities.' (MI, Bisa12)

From the excerpt above, (MI, Bisa12/1), (MI, Bisa12/2), (MI, Bisa12/3), (MI, Bisa12/2) expressed the same modality, namely “bisa” or “can” that differed in context from one another. For example, in (MI, Bisa12/1) “... we can involve all parties to be present and provide solutions.”, this is categorized as deontic because it is associated with an obligation to

take action by involving all parties in providing solutions. Also in (MI, Bisa12/4) “... this is like what has been done in Jakarta--we can take this to the national level, social infrastructure is created by the government providing adequate facilities” is classified as deontic modality because it also involves obligation. This modality “can” has a different context from Palmer’s (2001), the modal “can” conveys permission in the sentence, “John can come in now”, but conveys ability in the sentence, “John can speak French”. It is therefore necessary to consider the context in which each modal appears in an attempt to interpret which possible meaning is the most likely. The difference between “can” for obligation and “can” for giving permission is from the candidate's authority. In the last debate, all candidates were not current office holder; therefore, even though their expressions of language contain obligation, it is still the speakers’ self-assessment of their future perception.

In (MI, Bisa12/2) “What can we do, for example, make it tax-free for all education providers...” is an epistemic modality because it is concerned with the speaker’s (MI) perception. Coates (1983) contended that epistemic modality is concerned with the speaker’s assumptions or assessment of possibilities and, in most cases, it indicates the speaker’s confidence (or lack of confidence) in the truth of the proposition expressed.

From the extract above, in (MI, Bisa12/3) “... so that the budget is met, so that education can be (MI, Bisa12/3) affordable, so that all forms of education, all forms related to the intelligent life of the city's people, are exempt from tax.”, is categorized as an epistemic modality because as Lyons (1977) said that epistemic modality is concerned with matters of knowledge, belief, of opinion rather than fact. Epistemic modality is also expressed by some lexical verbs: believe, infer, know, adjectives: definite, probable, unlikely, adverbs: arguably, certainly, possibly.

According to the presidential election announcement and the number of modalities mentioned by the elected political figures to convince the prospective voters, it has been clearly shown that the stronger the modal verbs used in debate sessions, the higher the probability they were elected. An excerpt from PS who frequently used deontic modality in the sense of obligatory stance, seems to persuade audiences. Nevertheless, the analysis presented in this study is at best suggestive, not conclusive.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This investigative research into the types of modality used by presidential and vice presidential candidates in Indonesia in the last debate sessions reveals that there are four categories of modality, namely epistemic modality, deontic modality, dynamic modality, and intentional modality. I declare to use references from relevant literature by Alwi (1992) because his categorization is also in Indonesian. Nevertheless, I also drew on other linguists' concepts of modality to analyze the data in this study. The result indicates that candidates for president and vice president were more frequently mentioned in epistemic modality and deontic modality with their degree of certainty and subjectivity. It also reveals an insight into how candidates articulate their visions and persuade voters based on the collocation context from each modality. By employing various modal verbs, candidates express their intentions, obligations, and perceptions, pivotal role in shaping people's perception. The analysis of 40,239-word tokens demonstrates that modality is not merely a linguistic feature but a strategic tool that reflects the candidates' attitudes and promises. The findings indicate that

epistemic modality is the most prevalent, suggesting that candidates often rely on subjective perceptions to frame their arguments. This dominance of epistemic modality may imply a focus on personal beliefs and interpretations rather than objective facts, which could affect the credibility of their claims. In contrast, the lower frequency of dynamic modalities indicates a lack of objective arguments, highlighting a potential gap in the candidates' discourse.

The implications of this research extend beyond the immediate context of the debates. Understanding the use of modality can inform future political communication strategies, enabling candidates to craft more persuasive messages. Additionally, it encourages further exploration of modality in political discourse, particularly in regions where such studies are limited. By analyzing how candidates use modality to convey their messages, the research highlights the significance of language in shaping public perception and political outcomes. As political discourse continues to evolve, further investigation into modality will be essential for understanding the complexities of communication in democratic processes.

Based on this research, the researcher suggests that candidates should strive for a balanced use of different types of modalities in their speeches. While using epistemic modality indicates self-confidence and personal belief, incorporating more dynamic and deontic modalities can enhance the credibility of their arguments by grounding them in facts and obligations. When making promises or commitments, candidates should use clear deontic modalities (e.g., "must," "should") to convey their intentions and responsibilities. This clarity can help voters understand the candidates' positions and expectations, fostering trust and accountability. Candidates should be cautious about overusing epistemic modalities that imply uncertainty (e.g., "may," "might"). While it is important to acknowledge complexities, excessive uncertainty can undermine their authority and decisiveness, leading to voter skepticism.

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