

TACKLING THE COVID-19 IN INDONESIA THROUGH DISCOURSE: THE REVIEW OF MODALITY IN NEWS

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Abstract: Employing the data from selected English news from the official website of Cabinet Secretariat of The Republic of Indonesia (www.setkab.go.id), we analyzed the use of modal verbs as the indicator of modality. The findings show four modal verbs that indicate epistemic modality and deontic modality. For epistemic modality, we found the function of expressing possibility or probability which is signed by the use of modal *will* and *can*. Meanwhile, for deontic modality, the functions that we found are obligation and permission. Obligation is expressed by the use of *must* and *should*, meanwhile for permission, it is signed by modal verb *can*.

Keywords: discourse, media discourse, news, modality.

Abstrak: Menggunakan data dari berita berbahasa Inggris terpilih dari situs resmi Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia (setkab.go.id), peneliti menganalisis penggunaan kata kerja modal sebagai indikator modalitas. Temuan menunjukkan empat kata kerja modal yang menunjukkan modalitas epistemik dan modalitas deontik. Untuk modalitas epistemik, ditemukan fungsi untuk menyatakan kemungkinan yang ditandai dengan penggunaan modal *will* dan *can*. Sedangkan untuk modalitas deontik, fungsi yang kami temukan adalah kewajiban dan izin. Kewajiban dinyatakan dengan penggunaan *must* dan *should*, sedangkan untuk izin ditandai dengan *can*.

Kata kunci: wacana, wacana media, berita, modalitas

A. INTRODUCTION

There is always something to recognize more when we discuss about discourse. Broadly, Bhatia (2004) defines discourse as the language use in institutional, professional or more general social contexts. Discourse involves a message to be delivered from sender to receiver and has both a pragmatic and a semantic dimension in which pragmatically, a text or speech represents a complex action of a joint action to be realized with the participation of the hearer. Meanwhile, semantically, a text creates a developing representation of states of affairs which have truth in some possible world (Rocci, 2009)

Since the use of discourse involves wide area of language use, there is specific term of discourse, that is media discourse. According to Fairclough (1989), media discourse is designed for mass audiences and as a result, there is no way that the producers of the media can even know who the audience is. As the result of this situation the producers let the various audiences to have their own interpretation to the media discourse. In addition, Fairclough suggests that mass-media discourse is interesting because the nature or the power relations performed in it is often not clear.

As a result, there can be reasons for checking whether it contains hidden relations of power.

To understand about the hidden power, some studies analyzed the modality in the text such (Winter & Gärdenfor, 1995; Jacobs, 2010; Yuliana & Imperiani, 2017; Jannatussholihah & Triyono, 2020). In general, Saeed (2003) defines modality as devices which allow speakers to express various level of commitment to, or belief in, a proposition or intention. According to Griffiths (2006), modality gives opportunity to language users to express their attitudes whether a proposition relates to an obligatory situation or permissible one, or somewhere in between. Thus, modality is categorized as the group of meanings that emphasize on the ideas of necessity and possibility which are related with obligations to make a situation come about, indications of whether or not the situation is permissible or reasonable, and the speaker's confidence about the knowledge of the situation. Downing and Locke (2006) construct the definition of modality as the semantic category by which speakers express two different kinds of attitude towards the event. The first attitude is that the speakers enable to comment on and evaluate an interpretation of reality and this involves modal certainty, probability or possibility and it roles as epistemic (or extrinsic) modality. On the other hand, the second attitude is that the speakers enable to give intervention or propose changes in events which involves obligations or giving permission and it roles as deontic (or intrinsic) modality. Richardson (2007) proposes that modality refers to judgment, comment, and attitude in text and talks, and specifically the degree to which the speakers or writers are committed to the claim they are making which is usually indicated by the use of modal verbs, their negations, or through adverbs. Related to modal verbs as the indicators of modality, Kreidler (2002) states that to know the use of modality expression in English, one need to concentrate on modal verbs. Therefore, it is easier to focus on the use of modal verbs to understand modality that express certain attitude or meaning.

As the whole world now is taking every steps very seriously to overcome the COVID-19 Pandemic, there is a rise of discourse that includes statements and news released by the stakeholder related to the effort of defeating the pandemic. In Indonesia, since the first case of Covid-19 was found around March 2020, the government of Indonesia has released various statements and news in mass-media that are especially intended to encourage their people to obey the health protocols. There is no doubt that when releasing such discourse with specific intention, careful choice of language must have been made previously. It is because the discourse can become the source of people's action in facing the pandemic and having awareness to follow health protocols.

Based on the idea of the function of modality in discourse and the fact that the government of Indonesia is trying to raise the implementation of health protocols within the society through mass-media, it is triggering to find out about the use of modality in the news related to health protocol implementation. Therefore, this paper focuses to answer the following research question: what are the types of modality found in the news presenting health protocol implementation? In line with the research question that we have been mentioned previously, hence this research aims to present the types of modality used in the news regarding health protocols implementation.

B. METHOD

Since the objective of this research is to gain deeper understanding about social phenomenon as the likely results of the use of language represented in a text, therefore this study belongs to qualitative research (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). It uses discourse analysis approach which focus on the type and function of modality in the text.

As there are many aspects of modality, yet we only focus our data which relate to modal verbs in English news related to the implementation of health protocol. The data were obtained in 2021 from the official website of cabinet secretariat of The Republic of Indonesia (setkab.go.id) as the source of the data.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After conducting the analysis on the modal verbs in the selected news, we found four modal verbs used in the news: *will*, *can*, *must*, and *should*. These modal verbs are used in reported and direct speech. In general, there are two types of modality: epistemic and deontic. In this research, we found both types in the selected news.

1. Epistemic modality

Epistemic modality is signaled by the modal verbs that involve certainty, probability, or possibility. In this research, we only found the modal verbs which show probability or possibility.

From the selected news, we found modal verb *will* that shows possibility and probability in direct speeches. These direct statements were delivered by the government of Indonesia represented by the minister of health, head of COVID-19 national task force, and minister of manpower.

The first direct statement was found in the news where the minister of health states that it is crucial to remain discipline following the government's rule related to mudik ban during Eid day. The following statement by the minister shows that if people remain discipline, then there will be possibility of no increase in the number of COVID-19 cases in Indonesia:

“If we remain disciplined, insyaallah, during this year's Ramadan and Eid Day, there will be not a spike in the number of COVID-19 cases just like in India,” Budi said. (Cabinet Secretariat of The Republic of Indonesia, 2021, Despite Vaccination, Stay Disciplined in Observing Health Protocols: Health Minister, para. 4)

In addition to the statement showing about possibility of no upsurge in COVID-19 cases in Indonesia, the minister also reminds people about what probably happens when people violate the government's rules. As in the following statement, the minister conveys that if society put no attention to the regulation of health protocol, it is possible that adding more hospitals for COVID-19 cure is useless:

“The addition of hospitals will never be adequate if we don't tighten up the upstream side. Therefore, President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo ordered the implementation of health protocols to be tightened. (Cabinet Secretariat of The

Republic of Indonesia, 2021, Implementation of Health Protocols Must Be Tightened, Minister Says, para. 2)

In line with the statement from the minister of health, the statement expressed by the head of COVID-19 national task force is also related to the possibility of improving the handling of COVID-19 through strong cooperation as he expresses in the statement:

“We hope that the handling of COVID-19 in the country will improve through cooperation with all components as the strength of the nation,” he said. (Cabinet Secretariat of The Republic of Indonesia, 2021, COVID-19 Task Force: Vaccination Must Be Implemented Parallel with Health Protocols, para. 14)

Taking part in the effort of handling COVID-19, the minister of manpower also expresses her view on the safety of workers amid the pandemic. The upcoming direct statement by the minister shows that there is a possibility to recover the business productivity which suffer loss during pandemic since the government also commit to prevent the spread of corona virus in the workplace:

“The Government prioritizes the safety of workers by preventing the spread of the corona virus in the workplace. By doing so, we hope that business productivity will gradually recover, and the national economy will also gradually return to normal,” she added. (Cabinet Secretariat of The Republic of Indonesia, 2021, Manpower Minister Tells Companies to Reinforce Health Protocols, para. 4)

It is not only modal verb *will* that shows possibility or probability, but it is also modal verb *can* that express the same function. Different with modal verb *will*, we found modal verb *can* both in reported and direct statements in the news. The statements are conveyed by the chairperson of COVID-19 task force, minister of health, and expert team coordinator and spokesperson of COVID-19 handling task Force. In the form of reported statement, the chairperson of COVID-19 task force expresses his view on activities among society in certain location that probably causes violation to the health protocols:

Ganip also underscored that the health protocols discipline is focused on activities carried out by individuals, communities, institutions, and the public in certain locations that can potentially trigger mass gathering and lead to health protocols violation... (Cabinet Secretariat of The Republic of Indonesia, 2021, COVID-19 Task Force Ordered to Intensify Dissemination on 3M Health Protocols, para.7)

Another crucial matter related to the handling of COVID-19 is vaccination. The government immensely conducts vaccination for those who are included in the appropriate category. Through direct statement in [20], the minister of health believes

that there is a possibility to convince the senior citizens to get vaccination after they see the public figures have been vaccinated safely, as he expresses through the statement:

“We hope that with them being vaccinated, it can help convince those who watch them, especially senior citizens, that vaccination is safe,” the Minister added. (Cabinet Secretariat of The Republic of Indonesia, 2021, Health Minister: Stay Vigilant, Disciplined in Observing Health Protocols, para. 5)

As people of Indonesia, especially Muslim, have *mudik* tradition during Eid day, thus the regulation related to this tradition was also proposed by the government. This regulation was released to prevent the spread of corona virus from one area to the other areas. The expert team coordinator and spokesperson of COVID-19 handling task Force stated that when people are disciplined with the regulation, it is possible for them to celebrate the usual Eid in 2022. His statement was reported in the following part of the news:

Therefore, he urged the public to be patient and delay their *mudik* plan, adding that Eid can be celebrated as it was before in 2022 if the policy is fully supported by the public. (Cabinet Secretariat of The Republic of Indonesia, 2021, COVID-19 Task Force: Mobility, Crowds to be Monitored More Strictly, para. 8)

2. Deontic Modality

Deontic modality is indicated by modal verbs that show obligation and permission. In this research, we found the expression of obligation through modal verbs *must* and *should*. Whereas we found modal verb *can* that shows permission.

The use of modal verb must was found in reported and direct statement. For example, in the following news, obligation is presented through reported statement that tells how the Head of the COVID-19 National Task Force urges society to maintain discipline towards the health protocols even though they have been vaccinated:

The COVID-19 vaccination program must be implemented in parallel with health protocols, Head of the COVID-19 National Task Force Doni Monardo has said. (Cabinet Secretariat of The Republic of Indonesia, 2021, Implementation of Health Protocols Must Be Tightened, Minister Says, para. 1)

The Head of the COVID-19 National Task Force also adds that it is not enough to be disciplined individually, thus he also reminds that it is the duty of all Indonesian people to stay disciplined as he delivers his statement in the subsequent part:

“All of us, the Indonesian people, must understand that the vaccines must be parallel with discipline and compliance. The discipline is not enough for ourselves only, it must be developed and spread to all those around us,” Doni

said (Cabinet Secretariat of The Republic of Indonesia, 2021, Implementation of Health Protocols Must Be Tightened, Minister Says, para. 6)

The obligation in tackling COVID-19 is also delivered by the President, as the highest leader in this country. The President invites the young generation who involves in Indonesia Scouts to be the pioneers of discipline in carrying out the health protocols. The following statement shows how the President conveys the obligation of being discipline in carrying out the health protocols:

“Indonesian Scouts must be the pioneers of discipline, especially discipline in carrying out health protocols: discipline to wear masks, discipline to maintain distance, discipline to wash hands at all times, and discipline to avoid crowds,” said the President during the virtual Commemoration Ceremony of the 60th Scout Day 2021, Saturday (14/8/), from the Bogor Presidential Palace, West Java Province. (Cabinet Secretariat of The Republic of Indonesia, 2021, President Jokowi Calls on Indonesian Scout to be Role Model in Enforcing Health Protocols, para. 3)

Since there is a tendency of increased cases in the workplace, the Minister of Manpower orders the companies to pay attention to the implementation of health protocols as the Minister expresses through the following reported statement:

Companies must continue to enforce strict health protocols in the workplace, particularly amidst the recent spike in COVID-19 cases in several regions, Minister of Manpower Ida Fauziyah has said. (Cabinet Secretariat of The Republic of Indonesia, 2021, Manpower Minister Tells Companies to Reinforce Health Protocols, para. 1)

In another matter, as the central authority that handles the COVID-19 cases, the Minister of Health keeps reminding all people in Indonesia about the key to prevent the spread of new variants of COVID-19. Therefore, through the following direct statement, he conveys obligation related to the discipline towards health protocols:

“We must be disciplined in adhering to the health protocols (wearing face masks, washing hands, maintaining distance). That is the most effective way to prevent the spread of new variants of COVID-19... (Cabinet Secretariat of The Republic of Indonesia, 2021, On New Virus Variants, Minister Calls on Public to Continue Implementing Health Protocols, para.2)

From our analysis on modal verbs in the selected news, we also found modal verb *should* that serve as obligation. When *should* is used as the signal of obligation, it is more about giving recommendation. In the following statements, the Chairperson of COVID-19 Task Force offers some recommendation that he thinks will help the handling of COVID-19 in Indonesia. He was also reported as giving another

recommendation to the authorized parties to keep reminding the society about the importance of following the health protocols as expressed in the following parts:

“Regional leaders, supported by the Indonesian National Defense Forces (TNI) and the Indonesian National Police (Polri), should make evaluation on the recent situation,” Doni said. (Cabinet Secretariat of The Republic of Indonesia, 2021, BNPB Head: Following Health Protocols Pivotal in Controlling Pandemic, para. 6)

Meanwhile, Doni as the Chairperson of COVID-19 Task Force also asks related elements to work together to handle the COVID-19 spread by promoting the health protocols massively through the statement “COVID-19 Task Force personnel, especially from elements of the TNI, the Polri, and the Local Public Order Agency (Satpol PP) should remind the public to comply with health protocols.” (Cabinet Secretariat of The Republic of Indonesia, 2021, BNPB Head: Following Health Protocols Pivotal in Controlling Pandemic, para. 7).

In line with the statement from the Chairperson of COVID-19 Task Force, the Expert Team Coordinator and Spokesperson of COVID-19 Handling Task Force also delivers recommendation to people to do virtual visits instead of doing mudik to prevent the spread of the virus that “...amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the method should be adjusted to virtual visits to prevent transmissions to the family in our hometown,” Wiku said. (Cabinet Secretariat of The Republic of Indonesia, 2021, COVID-19 Task Force: Mobility, Crowds to be Monitored More Strictly, para. 5)

Beside obligation, deontic modality is also indicated by modal verbs that show permission. In this research, we only found modal verb *can* which stand for permission as we found in the following parts of the news. The statements show that the government gives consent to certain sectors to operate by concerning the implementation of health protocols and giving statement that “... the Government has ensured that essential sectors can operate with strict health protocols.” (Cabinet Secretariat of The Republic of Indonesia, 2021, COVID-19 Task Force: Mobility, Crowds to be Monitored More Strictly, para. 9). In addition to this policy, “...tourist destinations in Red and Orange Zones are forbidden to operate, whereas those in Yellow and Green Zones can operate with a limited number of visitors, a maximum 50 percent of the capacity.” (Cabinet Secretariat of The Republic of Indonesia, 2021, COVID-19 Task Force: Mobility, Crowds to be Monitored More Strictly, para. 10)

The findings show that both epistemic and deontic modality are used in news. Epistemic modality in news show that the government and authorized parties are trying to give a clear viewpoint to the society about what possibly happen when people obey or disobey the government’s regulation related to the handling of COVID-19 especially the implementation of health protocols. The news that represent the epistemic modality can be taken as consideration by the people to take which action that will give them more benefit especially in the effort of tackling the COVID-19. Meanwhile, the findings that show deontic modality give us information that the government also tries to give intervention or propose changes in events to rule the people in facing the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia.

D. CONCLUSION

From the selected news that have been analyzed, we found various modal verbs that show different function. These different functions are categorized under two types of modality, those are epistemic and deontic. We found modal verbs *can* and *will* that represent epistemic modality since they both are used by the speaker either directly or reportedly to convey about possibility or probability. Meanwhile, for deontic modality, we found two functions, they are obligation and permission. For obligation, we found it by the use of modal verb *must* and *should*. For permission, we found it is indicated by modal verb *can* in the news.

Based on what we have conducted in our research, there are some suggestions for future researcher. First, since the statements were translated from Indonesian to English, the topics related to translation strategy would be appropriate with the discourse analysis. Second, the number of data can be expanded so it is possible to discover more pattern of modality in the selected case. Finally, it is recommended for the future researcher to analyze the possibility of different modality used by the speakers with different role or status as there may be influence of social status in interaction.

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