

A Grammatical Analysis of Modality and Ideological Representation in News Text on Islamic Boarding School in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the use of modality as a linguistic mechanism for ideological representation in Indonesian news texts concerning Islamic boarding schools. Drawing upon Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (2013) and Fairclough's framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (2010), the research explores how epistemic, deontic, and dynamic modalities are employed to construct authority, moral legitimacy, and national identity. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the study analyzed selected news reports issued by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The data were collected through documentation and analyzed using interpretative linguistic analysis. The findings reveal that epistemic modality, particularly through the consistent use of will and would, reinforces state confidence and transforms policy aspirations into unquestionable commitments. Deontic modality, expressed through moralized terms such as spiritual calling and vital role, legitimizes government initiatives by embedding them in religious and ethical narratives. Meanwhile, dynamic modality projects Indonesia's readiness and capacity to assume global leadership in Islamic education, reversing the traditional hierarchy of knowledge between the Middle East and Southeast Asia. To sum up, the research finds that modality in the analyzed texts plays the role of not only a grammatical category but also an ideological strategy that incorporates linguistic certainty, moral obligation, and institutional power to maintain the state's image of religious and national authority. One of the implications of this study is that the use of language in media discourse can act as a powerful means to influence the ideological perception and to justify the state policy.

INTRODUCTION

Achieving competence in English grammar stands as a critical requirement within the contemporary digital landscape. Proper grammar can enhance the quality of both oral and written communication, advance knowledge exchange, and increase the respect for subtleties of differing views of the world (Murti et al., 2024). Discourse analysis shows the actual power of language to construct meaning, negotiate power, and construct identity. It examines the content and style of communication, and the overarching social, cultural, and political contexts that organize communication (Saidah et al., 2025). Religious discourse creates understanding, addresses common challenges, and promotes tolerance, all of which work toward a more peaceful and inclusive world. Interreligious dialogue spearheaded by the state, religious leaders, and individuals instills values of collaboration, respect, and coexistence. The persuasive power of discourse is far-reaching, meaning can be conveyed, both explicitly and implicitly (Oghiator, 2022). Discourse creates the ability for the world to come together idiosyncratically through religious differences (Daud, 2012).

Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) have been around in Indonesia for the longest time, and they have been a major factor in the nation's character development. They integrate education in all aspects; hence, spirituality, morals, and intellect are the core areas of, in some cases, the

entire education process. In addition, they bring the education of people living in rural or inaccessible areas closer to them, who, in most cases, might not have been able to reach formal schools (Muhidin et al., 2025). There are more than 34,000 Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) in Indonesia as of 2024, which are attended by millions of students (Bakri et al., 2025). The alumni of tens of millions of pesantren are great contributors to the economy of the country as they occupy positions in all sectors. East Java alone has about 4,000 pesantren (Saidah et al., 2025). Even though Islamic boarding schools primarily aim at educating, they also serve as outreach platforms where the community is involved and both religious and social issues are touched upon. This wider role, which is sometimes referred to as *da'wah bil hal*, is a demonstration of calling for goodness by means of practical actions, thus fortifying their holistic view of education (Herningrum et al., 2021). The Media has pointed out the potential of Islamic boarding schools in character development that is positive, as well as the moral values that are good (Ruslan & Maftuhah Imam, 2022). On the other hand, some reports have mentioned problems of bullying in these schools, which could result in mental health issues for the students (Wijayanto, 2025). This dissemination of information has gained its characteristics through particular linguistic and grammatical practices, particularly through the application of modality to express attitudes, certainty, and power (Mawaddah, 2022).

Previous studies have examined grammatical issues in the Qur'an concerning human creation, often emphasizing an in-depth and holistic understanding of the Qur'an and its connection to scientific knowledge. This study aims to specifically explore the relationship between Qur'anic narratives of creation and modern scientific findings, as well as to compare these narratives with those in other religious texts (Akzam & Yaacob, 2024). While Akzam and Yaacob's study focused more on theological and linguistic interpretations within religious contexts, other research has explored grammar learning from a pedagogical perspective in formal education settings. For example, a study by Mukri and Yunus investigates the impact of grammar-focused extracurricular activities on the language proficiency of students at Darun-Na'im Yapia (DNY) Modern Islamic Boarding School in Parung, Bogor. The findings show that such activities improved students' grammatical knowledge, which they applied more effectively in daily communication. A primary challenge identified is the limited access to adequate digital learning resources (Mukri & Yunus, 2025). Building upon this educational dimension, Azzurah's research focused on creating "grammar root" media for teaching grammar to students at Islamic boarding schools. This approach emphasized basic methods for learning foreign languages using instructional media. However, these tools have not always improved students' understanding and speaking skills. They are also seen as less effective in building communicative competence (Azzurah et al., 2024).

To extend the discussion beyond the pedagogical and theological aspects of language, several studies have also focused on how linguistic structures shape ideology, identity, and power relations in discourse. A study conducted by Sabillawati & Putra (2023) investigates the role of a nationally adopted English textbook in Indonesia in promoting inclusivity and multiculturalism. The textbook contains a variety of pictures and illustrations that represent the various peoples of the English-speaking world, drawing attention to similarities and differences in the areas of skin color, jobs, and cultural as well as religious identities. The authors of the research study mainly the religious discourse, excluding Islamic boarding schools. Due to the background of religious and cultural struggles in Indonesia, teachers have to take into account these contextual factors when employing the use of foreign-published textbooks for the purpose of promoting inclusive values and teaching English (Habib et al., 2025). The process of creating religious discourse in news is composed of microstructural features, among them the use of certain religious vocabulary that not only reinforces but also directs the understanding of recent happenings (Yuliyanto et al., 2024). The implications cover a number of major factors, such as the impact of the media and the use of language in shaping people's views about religion, as well as the growing consciousness of the construction of religious communication (Oghiator, 2022). In Islamic boarding schools, students believe that there is a blessing or benefit for themselves when they behave obediently and submit to the kyais. According to him, the relationship between students and kyais is two-

way: an ethical relationship and a theological one. This research discusses violence against students in Islamic boarding schools (Ulum, 2021). Islamic boarding schools are distinct in that students are not supervised by their parents and instead depend on the boarding school leadership and senior students for daily guidance. Students are expected to live independently and resolve their own challenges within the community (Nadzifah, 2025).

Extending the linguistic perspective further, several scholars have also examined how language reflects ideology, power, and evaluative meaning in discourse. Chalimah and Sumarlam (2017) conducted a study focusing on how political speakers construct their self-image and authority through the use of transitivity and modality within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics. Their study revealed that linguistic structures expressing obligation, probability, and action can subtly influence how readers understand and interpret power relations in political communication. Later, Chalimah et al. (2021) extended this line of research to the field of media language, investigating how modality and affective language are employed to strengthen or weaken ideological positions in news texts. Their findings demonstrated that the selection of evaluative expressions and modal elements can shape readers' perceptions and attitudes toward social issues, showing how language functions as a tool to express and sustain ideology. These studies provide important insights into how language choices at the semantic and functional levels contribute to the construction of meaning, cohesion, and ideological stance in various types of discourse.

While past research has provided important insights into grammar teaching, religious discourse, and the sociocultural life of pesantren (Islamic boarding schools), none has yet examined the operation of grammatical modality as a vehicle for ideological representation in media representations of these institutions. Most recent work has tended to focus on teaching language or the interpretation of the Qur'an, or the portrayal of religion in textbooks and everyday life, and the extent to which ideologies are linguistically constructed through grammatical choices in public discourse is still largely uncharted territory.

In considering the previous works, the current research is focused on the issue of the use of grammatical modality in news about Islamic boarding schools in the Indonesian language. The research intends to reveal the ideological aspects hidden in modal expressions and to illustrate the role of these linguistic characteristics in shaping the media narratives that locate pesantren in the larger socio-religious context of Indonesia through an extensive linguistic analysis. In recent years, it has gradually been realized by scholars that language plays a central part in determining religious and moral consciousness, especially in regard to the pesantren tradition.

Grammatical modality, which encompasses linguistic expressions of obligation, possibility, and certainty, constitutes a subtle but powerful instrument of social communication in the conveying of attitudes, authority, and ideological systems. In fact, modal verbs such as "must," "should," "may," and "might" are very commonly used to express notions of moral obligation, discipline, and humility in the Islamic boarding schools. Despite the evident ideological value of modality in the channels of religious communication, scant attention has been paid to how modality works in the journalistic representation of pesantren. The present study seeks to correct this deficiency through a study of the grammatical modality of Indonesian news texts dealing with the subject of Islamic boarding schools. A detailed linguistic analysis allows analysis not only of the moral and ideological tendencies inherent in these texts, but it also serves to illuminate the ideological areas that modality helps to establish in the construction of media narratives, which position pesantren within the larger socio-religious world of Indonesia.

Therefore, the main objective of this research is to analyze how grammatical modality functions as a linguistic mechanism for constructing ideology within Indonesian news discourse about Islamic boarding schools. Specifically, this study aims to uncover how modal expressions convey attitudes, authority, and power relations that shape media representations of pesantren in Indonesia's socio-religious context.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative descriptive approach and took the form of a case study. The main aim was to explore how grammatical modality was used in a news article to express certain ideas and shape ideological meaning. The data came from *The Jakarta Globe*'s news article titled "Indonesia Breaks Ground on Global Islamic Boarding School." The report told about the establishment of *Pesantren Istiqlal Internasional Indonesia (PIII)* in Depok. It was chosen because the topic is closely related to issues of Islamic education, moral development, and global interfaith understanding.

In examining the text, the analysis focused on two main aspects. The first concerned the way modality appeared and the types that were used. The second examined how these grammatical forms contributed to the construction and representation of ideology in the discourse. The analysis was supported by Halliday's (2013) idea of Systemic Functional Grammar, particularly the interpersonal metafunction, which discussed how language conveyed attitude and relationships. To some extent, the study also followed Fairclough's (2010) view in Critical Discourse Analysis, where language was not neutral but part of social practice that carried power and ideology. The data were gathered through purposive sampling. They consisted of clauses and sentences that contained modal verbs. Each modal form was classified according to its type: deontic, epistemic, or dynamic. After that, the meaning of each was examined within its sentence context.

The analysis was conducted descriptively. The researcher identified, grouped, and interpreted the modal expressions found in the text. Short excerpts were placed in simple tables to show the modal verb, its grammatical function, and the message or ideology that could be interpreted from it. In other words, this study tried to show how something as small as a modal verb could reveal deeper ideological positions and how language subtly shaped the way readers viewed Islamic education in Indonesia.

FINDINGS

The results of the analysis demonstrate the presence of various modal and quasi-modal expressions found in *The Jakarta Globe*'s news article titled "Indonesia Breaks Ground on Global Islamic Boarding School." The identified modalities were systematically classified according to the Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) framework (Halliday, 2013). Table 1 presents the complete set of modal expressions and their corresponding ideological functions based on their grammatical categories.

Table 1: Comprehensive Analysis of Modal Expressions and Their Ideological Implications

No	Excerpt (Source Text)	Modal Verb/Expression	SFG Function	Ideological Implication
1.	PIII will serve as a hub for global Islamic scholarship.	<i>will</i>	Epistemic: High Certainty/Prediction	Constructs the vision as an assured future success; asserts the state's confidence.
2.	The school would invite scholars... to help shape a model...	<i>would</i>	Epistemic: High Probability/Intention	Presents the global collaboration as an established plan; minimizes uncertainty about resources.
3.	PIII and UIII would produce a new generation...	<i>would</i>	Epistemic: High Probability/Hope	Functions as a linguistic guarantee, linking the process to the intended high-value outcome.

4.	The school could become a center of excellence....	<i>could</i>	Dynamic: Capacity/Possibility	Highlights future potential while maintaining a slight degree of modesty/prudence.
5.	This initiative can serve as a powerful force for justice...	<i>can</i>	Dynamic: Potential/Capacity	Frames moderate Islam (Indonesia) as having the inherent capacity to provide global solutions.
6.	Play a vital role in strengthening Indonesia's...	<i>vital role</i>	Implicit Deontic: Necessity/Importance	Mandates the importance of the school's role; failure jeopardizes national diplomacy.
7.	It is now time for the Middle East to come to Indonesia...	<i>It is time to... (Implied Obligation)</i>	Deontic: Normative Reversal	Asserts the need for norm reversal; repositions Indonesia as the new intellectual center.
8.	Indonesia is ready to provide a safe... environment for Palestinian students.	<i>is ready to provide</i>	Dynamic: High Capacity/Willingness	Positions Indonesia as a capable, proactive, and humanitarian leader.
9.	This is part of our spiritual calling to be caretakers...	<i>spiritual calling</i>	Deontic: Moral Obligation	Elevates the initiative to a moral or divine mandate (Eco-theological ideology).
10.	Indonesia... has the foundational strength to lead...	<i>has the foundational strength</i>	Dynamic: Inherent Capacity	Asserts National competence; justifies leadership based on domestic stability.
11.	This marks a historic moment...	<i>historic moment</i>	Implicit Epistemic/Deontic	Affirms the absolute value and certainty of the event; mandates its recognition in history.
12.	...aimed at integrating Islamic education...	<i>aimed at</i>	Implicit Dynamic/Teleological	Indicates the specific, willful purpose (intention) of the institution for integration.
13.	...expressed hopes for Indonesia to become a new epicenter...	<i>expressed hopes</i>	Modality of Desire/Implicit Epistemic	Validates the vision by asserting desire and expectation from third-party international leaders.
14.	He highlighted the severe lack of	<i>highlighted the severe lack</i>	Implicit Deontic: Necessity	Creates a strong necessity/urgency that morally justifies

	educational access in Gaza...			Indonesia's humanitarian intervention.
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The data in Table 1 reveal that the Religious Affairs Minister's speech makes extensive use of modal and quasi-modal expressions to express different kinds of meaning. The most frequent types are epistemic and dynamic modalities, as seen in words such as *will*, *would*, *could*, and *can*. These words reflect confidence, certainty, and a strong sense of purpose. Through their use, the speaker presents the *Pesantren Istiqlal Internasional Indonesia (PIII)* project not as a distant plan but as something certain and achievable. The repeated appearance of these expressions shows that language is being used intentionally to build trust and to project the government's determination to succeed. They help shape the idea that the initiative represents a confident national vision for Indonesia's global role in Islamic education.

At the same time, the speech also uses deontic expressions that give it a moral and spiritual dimension. Phrases like *spiritual calling* and *vital role* emphasize duty and collective responsibility, framing the project as something that carries both ethical and religious value. These forms of language suggest that the initiative is not only about policy but also about faith and shared moral purpose. Overall, the table shows that modality in the speech serves as more than a grammatical choice. It becomes a way for the speaker to connect confidence, morality, and identity, presenting Indonesia as a capable and spiritually guided nation ready to lead on the global stage.

The present discussion addresses the research objective, which is to examine how modality in the Religious Affairs Minister's speech reflects ideological positioning within the *Pesantren Istiqlal Internasional Indonesia (PIII)* discourse. The analysis of the Religious Affairs Minister's speech reveals that modality serves as a conscious and strategic linguistic resource for influencing the PIII project. According to Systemic Functional Grammar (Halliday, 2013), modality goes beyond its linguistic function of expressing possibility or necessity and turns into a means of ideological persuasion. The consistent application of high-value epistemic terms like *will* and *would* shows that linguistic certainty is used to help create government trust, leaving no alternative but acceptance. These expressions transform the PIII project from a possible plan into a certain, almost unchangeable national vision. The repetition of clauses such as *would invite scholars* and *would produce a new-generation functions* as a rhetorical device linking proposed actions to guaranteed outcomes. In this light, epistemic modality not only describes expectations but performs ideological assurance; the government's authority is rendered as both prophetic and absolute.

Beyond epistemic projection, the discourse employs deontic modality to inscribe moral legitimacy into state policy. The minister's reference to a spiritual calling transforms the assignment from a bureaucratic task to a moral obligation based on religious values. Implicit deontic forms of language, such as the phrase *vital role*, suggest an assumed obligation of the moral kind, emanating from the understanding that is intertwined with the success of the project, which is the success of Indonesia's project and diplomatic responsibility. This finding supports Yuliyanto's (2024) study on Islamic discourse, which emphasized that moralized modality bridges spiritual conviction and institutional power. Similarly, Oghiator (2022) found that religious texts use modality to link moral authority with political legitimacy. The present findings expand these perspectives by showing how deontic modality in governmental speech recontextualizes theological obligation as a national moral mandate, transforming faith-based rhetoric into a legitimizing tool of state ideology.

On the dynamic side, the conversation emphasizes Indonesia's potential as well as its preparedness for global leadership, through such phrases as *is ready to provide* and *has the foundational strength*. These phrases indicate skillfulness and active kindness, putting Indonesia in the position of a moral and intellectual leader in the global Islamic community. The expression *It is now time for the Middle East to come to Indonesia* reveals a considerable ideological shift, questioning the existing hierarchies of knowledge and proclaiming Indonesia's power in this

regard. Comparable patterns were observed by Ulum (2021) and Nadzifah (2025) in their analyses of pesantren discourse, where modality indexed obedience and institutional discipline. However, the current study demonstrates that the same grammatical system operates at a higher ideological register in state communication, redefining obedience not as submission but as collective empowerment and leadership.

By integrating epistemic, deontic, and dynamic modalities, the discourse achieves a coherent ideological synthesis. Linguistic certainty (epistemic), moral necessity (deontic), and national capacity (dynamic) converge to construct Indonesia as both divinely guided and globally competent. This synthesis transforms modality from a grammatical choice into an ideological apparatus mediating between belief, policy, and power. This analysis builds on the current scholarship and demonstrates that, in the context of religious-political discourse, the use of modality operates as more than just a semantic category but as a political self-representation of the nation.

As discussed previously, the modality system in the PIII discourse demonstrates an intentional linguistic strategy meant to authenticate the state's ideological position cloaked in religious discourse. It furthers the comprehension of how politically religious discourse operates to shape socially constructed realities, strengthen institutions, and assert Indonesia's ideological positioning in the world.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This study set out to address a critical gap in the discourse analysis of Indonesian media by exploring the role of grammatical modality in shaping the ideological representation of Islamic boarding schools within news texts. Through a qualitative, case-study analysis of a major news article concerning the establishment of the Pesantren Istiqlal Internasional Indonesia (PIII), the findings unequivocally demonstrate that modality functions as a core ideological apparatus, rather than a mere marker of linguistic uncertainty or probability.

The systematic deployment of modal expressions, classified under Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), reveals a cohesive strategy of persuasion and legitimation in the state-driven narrative. Specifically, the strong preference for high-value epistemic modals (e.g., will and would) effectively transforms the PIII initiative from a contingent plan into an assured national project, thereby neutralizing public uncertainty and solidifying governmental authority. This linguistic certainty operates as a form of ideological risk management.

Moreover, the conversation is powerfully influenced by deontic modality, particularly with the term "spiritual calling." Such a tactical decision raises the PIII's educational and diplomatic mission beyond a mere secular policy, presenting it as a moral and thus a theological imperative. By aligning the state's agenda with a collective spiritual duty, the discourse leverages moral authority to legitimize its ideological foundation. Finally, the analysis of dynamic modality (e.g., is ready to provide, has the foundational strength) serves to assert Indonesia's capacity for global Islamic leadership proactively. The most significant ideological move is the linguistic assertion, "It is now time for the Middle East to come to Indonesia," which enacts a powerful normative reversal, successfully repositioning Indonesia as a new intellectual and spiritual center in global Islamic scholarship.

In bridging the gap between existing studies on religious discourse and those on grammar-focused pedagogy in pesantren, this research makes a distinct contribution. It moves the conversation beyond micro-level student-teacher dynamics of obedience and duty, where modality has been previously studied, and demonstrates how the same grammatical system is scaled up to construct a macro-level national ideology in media discourse. The findings illustrate that linguistic choices are, in effect, deliberate instruments of political-religious rhetoric, textually realizing national vision, institutional legitimacy, and moral righteousness.

This research demonstrates the role of grammatical modality as an ideological mechanism in state religious discourse, but it is only based on one specific case, the news coverage of Pesantren Istiqlal Internasional Indonesia (PIII). More extensive research could be done in the future, which will lead to obtaining more generalized results by including not only multiple news

outlets but also different genres of religious-political texts in the dataset. Moreover, it is also advisable that future studies employ multimodal or corpus-based methods of analysis to discover how ideology is linguistically and visually encoded throughout larger datasets.

The research results have both theoretical and pedagogical implications. From the theoretical point of view, the study adds to the literature on Systemic Functional Grammar by showing that modality can be used as a link between phonetic expression and ideological intent. From the pedagogical angle, it gives the Indonesian English and media teachers a hint that the students, especially the ones studying religious subjects, critical literacy, and discourse interpretation, could be enhanced by modality awareness.

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