

Muhammad Dalimunte

**Introduction to
ENGLISH
MODALITY**

**Perpustakaan Nasional: Katalog Dalam Terbitan
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Preface

This is an introduction to English modality for readers who concern with the field of semantics. The aim of this book is not to propose a new theory of English modality, but it exposes how the English modals give meaning in sentences both in written and spoken language, typological modality in English, the value of English modality in communicational interaction, people use modals in their expression, the modals express modality and the modality denotes how the speaker's attitude to propositions. This book also gives explanation about the function of English modals in sentences in conversation interaction in terms of improving the capability of the English language learners in mastering the rules of English modals in English. Based on These discussions this book becomes crucial to possess. This book is hopefully to be one of the hand book for the students of English department of State Institute For Islamic Studies of North Sumatra. It will lead the students to use modals base on context. If they read this book, it's

hoped that they can understand the use of modals in both written and spoken language.

The theories of modality in this book are adopted from well known linguists who concern with the field of semantics. The linguists give the notions about modality in same perspective. They state the modal expresses modality, and modality is concerned with the attitude of the speaker to propositions. In communicational interaction the process of convincing the addressee is how a speaker can create a good sense of utterance and making the addressee pleased. Making a good impression in utterances and making the addressee feels pleased can be made by using modals in a good way, the ideas can be delivered politely. If it is done the process of two way communications will be gained. It's stated that the use of English modals in speaking affects the harmony of communication because it can give sense of politeness in utterances.

Finally, this book still needs constructive critics from the readers to be better in the next

publishing. This book is dedicated to my beloved wife Surawati AMd. and our children: Hasbul wafi Dalimunte, Nadila Fitri Dalimunte, Mhd. Farhan Dalimunte, Yazied Rahman Dalimunte whom become special spirit in my life.

Medan, April 2014

Muhammad Dalimunte

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1 **Modal and Modality**

1.1 Concept of Modal and Modality

Semantics is the study of meaning communicated through language. This book gives the description about modality in English. Modality of this language is discussed in perspective of semantics, how it gives meaning in utterances whether in written and spoken language. It has been known that language functions as the medium of communications and characteristic of an ethnic group or a country. With language people can interact to state view, ideas and attitude to propositions. Modals as modality markers (MMs) are often used by speakers to express their attitude to the proposition.

Linguists generally define semantics as the study of meaning. The field of semantics describes the meaning in natural languages (Jackson, 2000:4). The field of semantics has become a crucial subject in communication either spoken or written language. The meaning exists in the expression, the meaning must exist in every sentence, clause, phrase, even word. The study of linguistic meaning is generally divided into two main discussions namely semantics and pragmatics. Semantics deal with the literal meaning of words and the meaning, they are combined which taken together from the core of meaning, or the starting point from which the whole meaning of particular utterances is constructed. Pragmatics deals with all the

ways in which literal meaning must be refined, enriched or extended to arrive at an understanding of what a speaker meant in uttering a particular expression (Kearns, 2000:1). Regarding modality, the following are the theories from linguists.

Palmer states modality is concerned with the 'opinion and attitude of the speaker (Palmer, 1986: 15, 1990:2,). The meaning of the opinion and attitude of the speaker to the propositions are expressed by modal verbs. In his book, Palmer divided the modality into three kinds; epistemic modality, deontic modality and dynamic modality (Palmer, 1990:2). Palmer also says the study of modality considers not only about the ways of speakers express their attitude and opinions, but also the ways in which others may report their expression of them , for example; (i). *He may be here*, (b). *John thought he was there*. (Palmer, 1983:15), in the other book he says modality concerns with the status of the proposition that describes an event (Palmer, 2001), Hermeren in his research on modality in English semantic perspective, organized the English modalities into three scales of modals meanings, which are called the scaled of internal, external and neutral modalities. The first scale includes determination, intention willingness and ability. The second contains necessity, suggestion, appropriateness, want, hope and permission. The third contains the epistemic senses of modals: certainly, prediction, probability and two types of possibility (Hermeren,1981: 360).

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Givon says modality expresses the speaker's attitude towards a proposition, this attitude concerns two types of judgment: (a). Epistemic judgments of truth, probability, certainty, belief or evidence. (b). Evaluative judgments of desirability, preference, intent, ability (1993:169). Further it is stated that modality expressed logically in terms of possible worlds (certainty and probability) has been extended in order to interpret obligation/permission (*deontic logic*), and knowledge/belief (*epistemic logic*); all these different logical models account for the opposition realis / irrealis which use to denote a characteristic features of modality (Givon, 1993: 72). Halliday in his notions stated that modality is an expression of the speaker's opinion as: *that will be John* 'that's John, I think'; whereas in a question it is a request for the listener's opinion: *will that be John?* 'is that John d' you think?' (Halliday, 2004:147). The other linguists also give similar notions about modality as Perkins states the central of modality are the notions of necessity, possibility and impossibility, this concept is the basis of modal logic (Perkins, 1983:6), Reed in Aarts and McMahon (2006: 269) said that the term of modality is a cover term for a range of semantic notions such as ability, possibility, hypotheticality, obligation, and imperative meaning. The other view is Lyons's notions, it is said that modality is concerned with the opinion and attitude of the speaker on a proposition. The attitude could be like sure or lack of confidence on a stated proposition (Lyons, 1977:452),

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Downing and Locke (2002:382) state modality is to be understood as a semantic category which covers such notions as possibility, probability, necessity, volition, obligation and permission. Kreidler (1998: 239-241) states when somebody talks about the possible truth and not, something might happen or not, and what something should happen or not, these are the pictures of modality usage.

The discussion about modality is also exposed by Kearns (2000), it is stated that modality expresses necessity, possibility. All these theories give the comprehension that modality is expressed by modals which the modality exposes the attitude of speakers to a proposition. In daily life, people think something might be, or might have been, other than what actually are or were. These phenomena are expressed by modals either in spoken or written language. In English there are modals verbs *used shall, should, can, could, may, might, would, must*, and sometimes *will* is expressed by using *possibly, may be, perhaps, and necessarily* (Kearns, 2000: 52-53). It has been known that modals express modality; that is, they are used to qualify a proposition, to indicate that the speaker is less assured than in sentences without a modal (Collins, 2009: 42-43). The modals have a significant role in expressing ideas whether in spoken or written language, the speakers use them to express their degree of commitment on a proposition. The use of modals by speakers generally depending on (a) The type of knowledge they have, or do not have, concerning the situation which is submitted to the

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modal judgment, and (b) on the type of knowledge the hearers is assumed to have or not to have (Salkie, 2009:9). Halliday says modality is an expression of indeterminacy that falls between, such as 'sometimes' or 'maybe', the intermediate degrees between the positive and negative poles. What the modality system does is to construe the region of uncertainty that lies between 'yes' and 'no' (Halliday, 2004:147).

The other linguist, Kress discusses the modal function in perspective of ambiguity of the proposition that one sentence sometimes gives more than one meaning. It is of course depending on the context. It is stated that modality generally establishes the degree of authority of an utterance. The modal auxiliaries (*may, must, can, etc.*) perform this function, but they contain systematic ambiguity about the nature of authority, whether it is based primary on knowledge or on power. Let's see the example, *she can talk* means either *she is able to talk* (responding the speakers' knowledge about her capacities) or *She is allowed to talk* (indicating the speaker's permission). Similarly *she must talk* indicates either the speakers' prediction or an expression of compulsion, *she may talk* either give permission or suggest a possibility (Kress, 1979:122).

The following examples denote how modality expresses the meaning of propositions (1a) and (1b), compare these examples:

(1a) *It is your duty to visit your ailing parents* (Kress, 1979:124)

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The following examples denote how modality expresses the meaning of propositions (1a) and (1b), compare these examples:

(1a) *It is your duty to visit your ailing parents* (Kress, 1979:124)

(1b) *You ought to visit your ailing parents* (Kress, 1979:124)

These sentences are almost paraphrases, *you visit your ailing parents* and they make equivalent statement about that proposition: *your duty = what you ought to do*. Other examples can be seen in (2a) and (2b).

(2a) *John is possibly at home now* (Kress, 1979:124)

(2b) *John may be at home now* (Kress, 1979:124)

Here, too, there are nearly synonymous sentences containing the same proposition and making equivalent statements about the proposition: sentences in (2a) and (2b) are about possibility. The modalities involve obligation or possibility. In (1a) and (1b) obligation is centered on the subject, *you*; the sentences tell what is necessary for *you* to do. But in (2a) and (2b) the possibility is not centered on the subject *John*, it applies to the whole proposition, *John* is being at home now. So it can be recognized the distinction in modality. It may center on some entities, typically denoted by the subject of the sentence.

Based on these examples it can be seen that modality can be expressed in nouns like *duty*. Beside that the other nouns also can express modality such as; *obligation, probability, likelihood*: in adjective like *necessary, possible, likely*, in adverbs such as *obviously, probably, perhaps* (Kreidler, 2007:240).

1.2 An Analytical Modality

Modality refers to both semantic and grammatical notions. It can be expressed in a number of ways, but the most common ways are through verb inflection (mood) and through modals verb and particles. Within the field of modality, there are whole sets of concepts and terms, but there is not always consensus as to which term should be used for the notion. Modality includes terms such as the declarative, indicative, subjunctive, realis, irrealis, conditional, interrogative, imperative, prohibitive, epistemic, evidential, deontic, dynamic (Nordstrom, 2010:16). Palmer (1990:36) clearly categorized the modality into three types, they are Epistemic modality, Deontic modality and Dynamic modality.

Epistemic modality reflects the speakers' judgment on a proposition, for example, a weak epistemic possibility *that may be Wafi*, epistemic necessity *that must be wafi* = "it is necessary that (*that is wafi*) is true" and *that can't be wafi* = 'it is necessary that (*that is not Wafi*) is true.

Root modality reflects the speaker's judgments about factors influencing the actualization of the situation referred to in the utterance. Within root modality we also find root possibility, root necessity and two categories that are normally treated separately within root modality, namely ability and volition. Cutting across the root necessity and root possibility categorization is the category

of deontic modality, which includes obligation as a type root necessity and permission as a type root possibility.

Deontic modality typically refers to the necessity or possibility of acts performed by morally responsible agents (Lyons, 1977:823). Further deontic modality also implies an authority or deontic source which may be a person, a set of rules, or something as vague as a social norm responsible for imposing the necessity (obligation) or granting the possibility (permission), so *Wafi must go home* means a deontic (obligation) statement like "it is necessary for Wafi to go home" plus, for instance, "I oblige Wafi to go home", and *Wafi can go home*, means on a deontic (permission) reading, "it is possible for Wafi to go home" and for example, the rules permit *Wafi to go home*.

Non-deontic root possibility (sometimes simply referred to as root possibility) (*you can get coffee from this machine*) and non-deontic root necessity (the fish have to be fed everyday) concern possibility and necessity that arise, not via a particular authority but due to circumstances in general. They can be paraphrased simply it is possible (for...) and, for necessity, "it is necessary (for ...) to or even just it is important to". Note that non - deontic root possibility differs on the other hand from epistemic possibility and on the other hand (though more arguably) from ability. It differs from epistemic possibility in that it does not imply a speaker's evaluation of how possible it is that some proposition is true but rather refers to the effect of circumstances on the possibility of actualization of some

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situation; 'it differs from ability in that it refers to possibility arising out of enabling or disabling circumstances outside the subject referent, as opposed to enabling or disabling factors that are entirely internal to the subject referent. The non deontic root possibility meaning of "can you come tomorrow?" "can" is paraphrased by "is it possible for you to come tomorrow?" plus *are there any external circumstances preventing you or do external circumstances allow you to do so?*

The use of modal 'can' also expresses *ability* and *volition*, these ability and volition combine the meaning of possibility with the notion of specific factors affecting that possibility. The ability meaning of "can you climb over that wall?" can be paraphrased by "is it possible for you to climb over that wall?" "plus" "do you have the physical abilities / or skills to make it possible?". The volition meaning of "I'll help you" can be paraphrased by "it is possible for me to help you and "I am willing and intend to do so". Further Halliday proposes a system of types of modality as below:

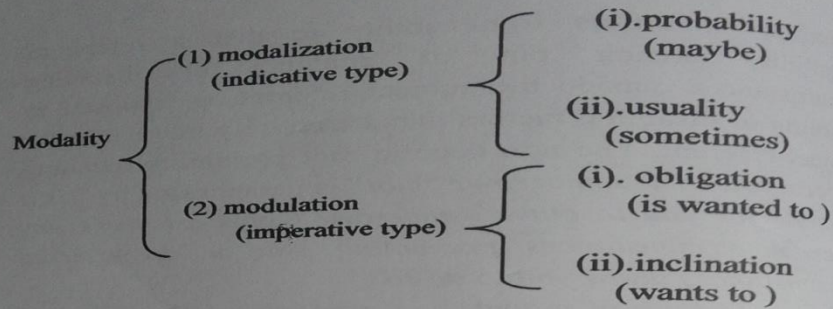


Figure 1 System of types of modality (Halliday, 2004: 618)

The example of the four types are as follows:

1. i [probability] There can't be many candlestick-makers left.
1. ii [usuality] It will change right there in front of your eyes.
2. i [obligation] The roads should pay for themselves, like the railways.
2. ii [inclination] Voters won't pay taxes any more.

1.3 Modal Strength

The dimension of modal strength is defined by Huddleston and Pullum (2002:175) as 'the strength of commitment (prototypically the speaker's commitment) to the factuality or actualization of the situation'. They want to expose the distinction between the modal concept of necessity (where the commitment is strong) and possibility (where it is weak). They are logically related to their

interaction with negation, Let's see the examples in (3) and (4). The example in (3) expresses epistemic modality (note that *mustn't* is not possible for all speakers), while the example in (4) expresses non-epistemic meanings. Here it is used abbreviation '*poss*' stands for '*possible*' and '*nec*' for *necessary*.

(3) *It can't be true [not-poss] = It mustn't be true [nec not] It may not be true [Poss not] = It needn't be true [not nec]*

(4) *You can't go [not poss] = you mustn't go [nec not] You can not go, if you wish [Poss not]= you needn't go [not nec.]* (Huddleston and Pullum, 2002:175)

Huddleston and Pullum (2002:177) identify an intermediate category on the strength continuum which they call 'medium modality', associated with *should* and *ought*, and lexical modal expression such as *likely*, *probably* and *seem*. Consider the effect of substituting epistemic *should* or *may* for *must* in the following example.

(5) *He must be making an absolute killing.* (Huddleston and Pullum, 2002:177).

In English "*should*" would be weaker in strength than "*must*". *Should* on the other hand, is stronger than *may*, as suggested by the contrast between the acceptability of "*He may be making an absolute killing, but it's not likely*" and the unacceptability of "*He should be making an absolute killing, but it isn't likely*" (Huddleston and Pullum, 2002:177).

When we talk about field of semantic, it is of course the
(5). The negation here is internal, paraphrasable as;

(6) *It is not likely that it will be very hard,*
which is pragmatically equivalent to *it is likely that it will not be very hard*
(Collins, 2008:27).

In the theory of Halliday described that the use of modals operators and non modals (lexical) define the degree of modality value in the propositions. The value of modality is attached to the modal judgment: *high, median and low*. The following is Halliday's notions draw the level of modality as in the following table (Halliday, 2004:620).

Table 1 Three Values of English

Modality

	Probably	Usuality	Obligation	Inclination
High	certain	always	required	determined
Median	probable	usually	supposed	keen
Low	possible	sometimes	allowed	willing

Further Halliday categorizes the modal operators in to three levels *high, median, and low*: **high**: must, ought to, need, has/have to, is to, **median**: will, would, shall, should and **low**: may, might, can, could (Halliday, 2004:624). The categories of modal operators are used by language users to express the attitude towards the proposition. In order to get more understanding how the modal operators express the value of modality, the following figure (2) will illustrate it:

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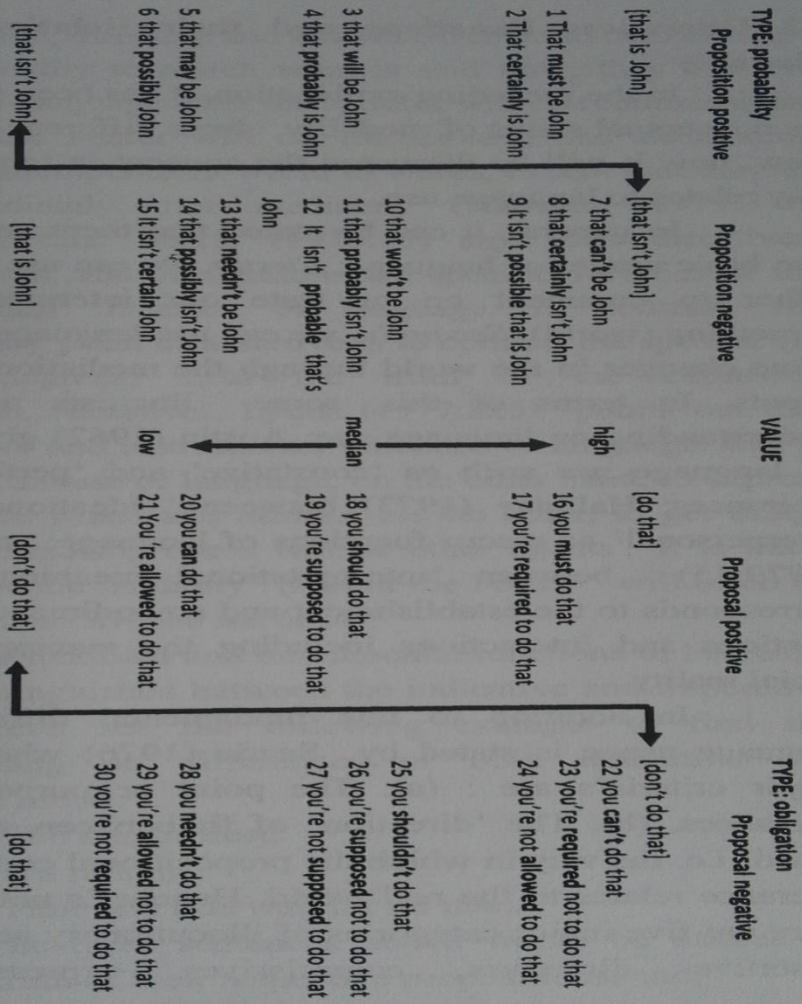


Fig.2 Probability and obligation with positive and negative proposition and proposals (Note: No. 22 is now more commonly *mustn't*, from the direct negative *must not*.)

1.3 Utterances Functions and their Relationship to Modality

In the preceding explanation, it has been discussed the conceptual status of modality from different linguists' view, now it will be discussed the concept in terms of the way relates to language use.

In general, it can be stated that there are at least two basic usages of language: *Firstly*, we can use language either to comment on or state our interpretation of something (world). *Secondly*, we can use language to effect some changes in the world through the mediation of other agents. In terms of this, some linguists note their understanding on language use; Austin (1962) gives terms of language use such as 'constative' and 'performative' utterances; Halliday (1973) between 'ideational' and 'interpersonal' as macro functions of language; and Davies (1979:15) between 'interpretational meaning', which corresponds to the establishment and embodiment of social relations and interactions including the manipulation of social reality.

In addition to this fundamental difference of language usage is stated by Searle (1976) who has two major criteria's are : (a). The point or purpose of an utterances, (b). The 'direction' of fit between words and world' i.e. the way in which the propositional content of an utterance relates to the real world. Hancher's notion sated, there are five major categories of illocutionary act- namely 'assertive, directives, commissives, expressive and

declarations', directive and commissives undertake to shape a future reality to match what is said now; they work to control in language what the speaker will do (commissives) or what the hearer will do (directives), and declaration similarly attempts to fit world to words, except that they do so immediately, not mediately (Hancher, 1979:3-4). Regarding this, Searle (1976:10) says that directives, commissives, and declarations are specific varieties of the 'instrumental' function of language. In contrast, the illocutionary point of assertive is to commit the speaker (in varying degrees) ...to the truth of the expressed proposition. Moreover, Lyons (1977:826) points out that desiderative and instrumental functions of language: that is to say, ...the use of language, on the other hand, to express or indicate *wants* and *desires*, on the other, to get things done by imposing one's will or other agents'. It is latter called "deontic modality" (*I want the book* will often be interpreted as *Give me the book*).

The representational and instrumental functions of language can be distinguished between the indicative and imperative moods. Let's see the following example to find the understanding on differences of both indicative and imperative mood:

- a. The king is dead.
- b. It's raining.
- c. Time and tide wait for no man.

The three sentences above would be uttered to assert the truth of their respective propositions, and:

- d. Pass the sugar.
- e. Be reasonable.
- f. Stop it (Lyons, 1977:745).

According to Lyons, the statement in (d), (e), (f) would be typically be uttered with the intention of bringing about the event referred to in their propositional content. None of the proposition expressed in (a) to (f) is modalized, and thus (a), (b), and (c) may be regarded as 'categorical' assertive or assertions and (d), (e), and (f) as categorical directives (Lyons, 1977:745). When we add a modal expression to the sentences of course it will give difference meaning, the following are modalized sentences:

- (1) The king must be dead.
- (2) Perhaps it is raining.
- (3) It's conceivable that time and tide wait for no man.
- (4) You must pass the sugar.
- (5) I order you to be reasonable.
- (6) It's necessary for you to stop it (Perkins, 1983:16).

By adding modal expression to the sentences (1), (2), and (3) will be uttered as modalized statement where the speaker's commitment to the truth of the proposition expressed in his utterance is qualified. In utterances (4), (5), and (6), things are not quite so clear. Although they could be uttered as modalized directives-i.e., the speaker's commitment to the actualization of the state affairs referred

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to in the propositional content of his utterance is qualified – this does not have to be the case. (4), (6), and even (5) could, in fact, also be uttered as assertions (Perkins, 1983:15-16). Those examples above show the different sense of utterances when they use modal or unmodalized utterances.

2

Epistemic Modality

Epistemic is one of the modalities recognized by logicians. It is quite relevant to language in general and regarding the speakers' assumption of possibilities on truth of statement. The term *epistemic* is derived from *episteme*, the Greek word for knowledge; however the key concept which underlines modality seems to be the state *lack of knowledge* (Perkins, 1983:10), it is similar to the view of Coates (1983:18) is stated that the Epistemic indicates the speaker's confidence (or lack of confidence) in the truth of the proposition expressed. Further Palmer said, Epistemic modality indicates the status of the proposition in terms of the speakers' degree of commitment to it (Palmer, 1986: 54-55), Cook says Epistemic modality modifies a sentence and deals with the truth value of that sentence; root modality relates to an activity and deals with permission, obligation and ability (Cook, 1978:6), while Halliday says that [epistemic modality]... is the speaker's assessment of probability and predictability. It is external to the content, being a part of the attitude taken up by the speaker: his attitude, in this case, towards his own speech role as 'declarer' (Halliday, 1970:349).

The other view of stated that epistemics are clausal – scope indicators of a speaker's commitment to the truth of proposition (Bybee *et al.*, 1995:6). Modality used in a statement can affect the sense of proposition stated by speaker. Briefly it can be stated that the epistemic modality

shows an evidence of utterances and it measures the confidence or knowledge of speaker on his utterances. The utterances can be high, diminished, or low that reflected by modals used in the proposition.

The epistemic modality expresses the confidence measures of the speakers' utterances. It is similar to the sense of evidentiality that represents a diminished belief in the truth of the statement, in terms of this discussion, Palmer (1986) mentions that evidentiality is part of the epistemic modal system. He explores a large discussion and sums up by stating both evidentiality and epistemic modality deal with the degree of commitment on the part of the speaker to the utterances. Regarding the possible truth of speakers' utterances, Palmer denotes there are at least four ways in which a speaker may indicate that he is not presenting what she is said as a fact, but rather:

- a. that he is speculating about it.
- b. that he is presenting it a deduction.
- c. that he has been told about it.
- d. that he is a matter only of appearances , based on the evidence of possible senses (Palmer,1986:51).

All the four points above indicate the speaker's lack of commitment or lack of confidence in the truth of the proposition being expressed. According to Palmer's thought, type (a) denotes pure epistemic modality, while (b, c, and d) deal with evidentiality, namely inference, hearsay, and sensory evidence. Another view about epistemic in the notions of Bybee, *et al.* (1994:180) correlates with indirect

3 **Deontic Modality**

In the preceding part, it has been discussed about epistemic modality, in this section deontic modality will be discussed deeply. To make it more clear of both epistemic and deontic modalities, here it is described the distinction of both terms. Lyons recognizes the epistemic modality refers to “ the speaker’s opinion or attitude towards the proposition (Lyons,1977:452), and in another description stated that Epistemic modality as concerned with matters of knowledge or belief, and deontic modality is concerned with the necessity or possibility of acts performed by morally responsible agent (Lyons,1977:823). The other explanation of deontic modality stated by Halliday, it is stated that deontic modality calibrates the meaning lying between yes or no / do it or don’t do it (Halliday: 1983). It denotes what is necessary, permissible, or obligatory given a body of law or set of moral principle.

3.1 Deontic Necessity

The important point in necessity is that deontic necessity usually implies that the speaker is in a position to lay the obligation and is thus in a position of an authority. In English deontic necessity can be denoted by *must*, *should*, *ought to* and *have (got) to* expressing command.

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Deontic modality of command shows the speaker's attitude toward the actualization of command. Modal *must* as a deontic modality has command sense. In this case the speaker is a deontic source who gives command. Coates stated that the use of *must* in a proposition shows speaker's wish in his command to be actualized by addressee (demanded action) as in (69).

(69) *You must go home now.*

Must in (69) shows deontic meaning, it uses social law (K) that denotes social relationship between the speaker and the addressee. C denotes as deontic source (speaker) who gives order. In terms of this Perkins (1983:37) formulated the the deontic modality of *must* below :

MUST : K (C entail X)

K = Social Law/relational laws (typically)

C = Deontic source/evidence (typically)

X= The occurrence of evidence / the truth of proposition

The expression of command can be stated without modal auxiliary, for instance, *get out from this house*. The sense of this sentence denotes the speaker's angeriness to the addressee. The other way of creating command sentence, it also can be made by using modal *can*, modal auxiliary is used to express an impolite kind of command. Example;

(70) *You can go away from this house and never come back.*

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The example above is similar to what Palmer said that *can* is often used to convey a command, often of a brusque or somewhat impolite clear kind as

(71) *Oh, you can leave me out, thank you very much*
(Palmer, 1990:71).

In the other case, modal *may* is used to express deontic modality which is used to denote a command as:

(72) *You may take it from me.*

May is an extended meaning from permission usage. It is also used to indicate that the speaker wants the action to be performed. The example (72) denotes the speaker wants the listener "to take it" from him. However the use of *can* in (71) and the use of *may* in (72) is different from the use of *must*. By contrast the use of *can* and *may* merely make very confident, and in the case of *can*, sarcastic suggestions. The modal *must* has an implication of authority on which the speaker relies, or at least the implication that can impose his authority as in the example (73 and 74).

(73) *You must tell me how to get to it*

(74) *You must play this ten times over.* (Coates, 1983:34)

The modal *must* has an implication of authority on which the speaker relies, or at least the implication that he can impose his authority. By contrast the use of *can* and *may* merely make very confident, and in the case of *can*, sarcastic suggestions, further in (73,74) the term performative have been used for sentences with a modal verb that contain a agentive infinitive and that have the illocutionary force of a directive because the speaker has

4 **Dynamic Modality**

Dynamic modality discusses about the speaker's attitude on the actualization of an proposition/event, it is also discussed in deontic modality. The distinction between those terms is in dynamic modality the actualization of an event is defined by circumstances (Alwi,1992:233). According to Perkins (1983:10-11), the actualization of the event defined by laws of nature, but in deontic modality defined by social laws.

4.1 Dynamic Possibility

Modal "*can*" can express the possibility (Coates, 1983, Perkins 1983). The modal *can* gives more as dynamic possibility in proposition, It is caused, in expressing the possibility *can* is not same with *may*. Perkins (1983:101) said that "*can*" expresses possibility based on natural law which explains an event probably take place. The following notion will see describe the modal.

a. The Modal *can*

In dynamic possibility we find two modals *can* and semi modal *be able to*, but the difference between neutral and Subject oriented possibility is not directly related to the difference between the uses of those terms,

Although many grammars of English refer to ability which is essentially subject oriented possibility. This does not characterize either *can* or *be able to* as distinct from the other. They do not differ very markedly in meaning at all, although there are a number of factors involved in their relative likelihood of occurrence (Palmer, 1990:83).

The use of *can* in a sense of neutral possibility indicates that an event possible takes place, as in the example (97, 98).

(97) *Patience is the only thing you can do*

(98) *Who knows, I can do either way*

In (97) *The patience can be done* denotes there is no other choice to be done instead of being patient, while the second sentence refers to future alternative possibility. These examples denote the degree or extent that an action is possible, it is called dynamic possibility. In terms of this, we can take Ehrman's view that the basic meaning of *can* is that there is no obstruction to the action of the lexical verb. (Ehrman, 1966:12). In this case when a speaker's utterance is modalized with *can* in positive form this denotes that the speaker has a good commitment to the proposition and it is subjective judgment of the speaker, on the contrast when it is a negative form the proposition will not take place without any obstruction.

b. The Modal *may*

Dynamic possibility of *may* is a minor meaning but a major one is *can*. *May* can be used to express two

types of dynamic possibility. *First*, 'theoretical possibility' (a term suggested by Leech, 1971) involves a potentiality for action that resides in the external situation. In this use *may* is often associated with a greater degree of formality than *can*. Example;

(99) *The role of school principle is to direct the school activities so it may find the most efficient time and funds.*

Second use is 'dynamic implication' (a term suggested by Palmer in 1990), involves potentiality for action that is the basis for an implied directive speech act. This category differs from theoretical possibility to the extent that it requires an expansion of the semantic framework into pragmatics. The literal meaning of *may* in the following example is dynamic, but a more satisfactory interpretation requires reference to its directive illocutionary force, example:

(100) *you may remember that we bought this book in Australia 2009.*

4.2 Dynamic Ability

4.2.1 Dynamic Ability of Animate

Discussing about the modal *can*, we can take the perspective of Palmer, He distinguishes dynamic and deontic modality in terms of the notion of 'control' that is, who is the controller of event. In the case of deontic modality, he argues, 'the event is controlled by circumstances external to the subject of the sentence'

5

Politeness

5.1 Politeness in Discourse

There are two main approaches in the academic literatures regarding politeness in discourse. One approach is represented by Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) "politeness theory" which is categorized as the utterance-based perspective. The other approach, called the practice-based perspective, includes Watts' social model of politeness (2003), Locher (2004), and Locher and Watts' (2005) relational work model. While Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) politeness theory has been the dominant framework for decades. In contrast, Watts (2003), Locher (2004), and Locher and Watts (2005) take the emergent '*give-and take*' context into consideration. They are concerned about what is actually happening in an on-going in conversational interaction. Theories in the utterance-based perspective focus on the behavior that is valued positively (e.g., polite behavior), and there is no discussion about behavior that might be valued negatively (e.g., impolite behavior). For example, in Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, 'politeness' refers only to behavior that is valued positively and excludes behaviors that might be considered inappropriate for a given setting. Behaviors that are viewed as appropriate but not 'polite' enough to be called 'polite' does not concern the utterance-based perspective, either.

The other linguist Watt's (2003) social model of politeness, one of the representative theories in the practice-based perspective, offers a more comprehensive angle to look at (im)politeness which includes all behaviors from very rude and inappropriate, behavior that is valued negatively by most (e.g., impolite behavior), appropriate behavior in according with the social norms and conventions, and also behavior that is judged positively (e.g., polite behavior).

5.2 Utterance-based Perspective

The politeness theories of Brown and Levinson's have been the dominant and the most widely applied theory in the studying of politeness, to review the study of politeness, it is important to explore its roots in Grice's cooperative principle and Lakoff's rules of politeness.

5.2.1 Cooperative Principle

Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle and Lakoff's (1973, 1975) rules of politeness based on Eelen (2001), Lakoff (1973), who could be considered as the mother of modern politeness theories, shifts attention from traditional linguistics that focuses on, for example, syntactic structure to conversation in which people use language not only to communicate but, more importantly, to strengthen or sever interpersonal relationships. However, as Watts (2003) contends, Lakoff still adopts a formal linguistic approach to the study of conversation by constructing rules of pragmatic

competence (e.g., be clear and be polite). Therefore, while the purpose of politeness for Lakoff (1975:64) is to "reduce friction in personal interaction", politeness in language use is still rule-governed in her perspective.

Lakoff (1973) points out that the violation of syntactic rules and rules of conversation proposed by Grice (1967) would result in two different situations. For instance, the violation of syntactic rules creates a deviant sentence and people are thus unable to understand. On the contrary, when a pragmatic rule is violated, a sentence remains interpretable. Lakoff further states that a speaker violates a pragmatic rule to satisfy another one because the rule that is 'respected' is more important, and most of the time, it is the rule of politeness that outweighs the rule of clarity. The reason is because "actual communication of important ideas is secondary to merely reaffirming and strengthening relationships" in informal settings (Lakoff, 1973:297). From there, Lakoff finds there is a need of rules of politeness because interpersonal relationships, which are achieved through politeness, are often more highly valued than mere information exchange in conversation. Lakoff's (1973, 1975) proposal of politeness rules are motivated by Grice's (1975) four maxims of conversation that comprise what is called the cooperative principle (CP). CP is aimed at explaining what participants will do in order to attain an efficient and cooperative conversation. Grice's CP includes the following:

- (1) The maxim of Quality:

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