

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 The Background of the Study

The International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses officially defines COVID-19 as SARS-CoV-2, a highly contagious pandemic. It spreads through breathing and close contact (Wang, Di, Ye, and Wei, 2021). In serious cases, it leads to acute respiratory distress syndrome and death (Torales, O'Higgins, Maia, and Ventriglio, 2020). The disease was initially diagnosed in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China in December 2019 before becoming a pandemic on 11 March 2020 (WHO, 2020). It spreads to almost all countries, including Indonesia (Djalante, 2020).

Some unprecedented containment measures have been done to limit the spread of pandemic, focusing on identifying, treating, and isolating infected individuals and promoting preventive behaviours among the general population, such as social distancing and lockdowns in the most affected countries (Qian, Wu, Wu, Hou, Liang, Kaolin, and Yu, 2020). To support it, the Indonesian government has issued policies related to social distancing, physical distancing, and working from home (WFH), which have to be implemented in all sectors.

The COVID-19 pandemic brings dramatic changes to many aspects of daily and professional life (Shin, 2020). It does not only affect health adversely, but also affect socio-economic activities in countries around the world, including automobiles, electricity and energy, electronics, travel, tourism and transportation, agriculture and education (Nayak, Mishra, Naik, Swapnarekha, Cengiz, and

Shanmuganathan, 2021 ). It is in line with Dhawan (2020) saying that the pandemic shakes the education sector, a concern that may resonate across the global education sector, including Indonesia.

In relation to the physical distancing policy, the Indonesian government suspends the activities of all educational institutions from pre-school to higher education institutions from 17 March 2020. For that reason, offline teaching process has to be adapted to the online learning environment (Arribathi, 2021). Under this policy, teachers have to teach at home by optimizing the use of information and communication technology (ICT).

Online learning can be defined as learning experience by using varied devices (for instances: cellular phones, laptops, etc.) to access the internet in a synchronous or asynchronous settings. In these settings, students study and talk independently with teachers and other students (Singh and Thurman, 2019). Time zone, location, and distance are not issues in online learning. In asynchronous online learning, students can access online materials any time, while synchronous online learning allows real-time interaction between students and teachers.

However, many teachers are not familiar with online learning and they have difficulty to develop technical skills and ensure teaching resources to transfer offline teaching into an online setting. Furthermore, with insufficient resources, teachers and students are forced to settle problems related to limited internet infrastructure and resources (Shin, 2020). This is also consistent with some previous studies conducted during forced online learning period, namely: Azhari and Fajri (2021); Kruszewska et al. (2020); and Dhawan (2020). In

addition, depression and stress are also major predictors of online teaching satisfaction (Truzoli, Pirola, and Conte, 2021).

Modality is the speaker's judgment or request of the judgement of the listener on the status of what is being said (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014). Modality deals with likely or unlikely for a proposition and desirable or undesirable for a proposal. The position of the modality system is to explain the uncertainty region between "yes" and "no". Between the certainties of "they are" and "they are not" there are respective probabilities of "they need", "they will" and "they might". Likewise, between the definitive "do!" and "don't!" there are optional choices "they have to", "they ought to" and "they can".

Halliday's modality system consists of varied grammatical subsystems which express the speaker's judgment about the probability or obligation involved in the utterance (Chen, 2016). Halliday differentiates modalization and modulation. Modalization deals with the scale of probability and usuality, while modulation deals with the scale of obligation and inclination (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014). Modalization deals with what the case is and modulation deals with what the case should be (Fairclough, 2003). Modality can be realized in the form of modal operators, modal adjuncts, interpersonal metaphors, and predicator constituent. In addition, the value of modality can be classified as low, median or high depending on the strength of the assessment.

Furthermore, there are four factors affecting the realization of modality, namely: status or power, formality, affect, and contact. Status or power deals with the situations in which people play roles of equal or unequal power. Formality deals with formal or informal situations involved. Affect deals with the extent to

which people are emotionally engaged or committed in a situation, whether positive or negative. Contact deals with the situations in which the roles people are playing are those that bring them into frequent or infrequent contact.

In addition, Fairclough (2003) points out that modality is the commitment people make when they state, ask questions, make requests or offers, with respect to what is true and what is necessary. The commitment people make in the text is an important part of how they identify themselves. The point is that there are different ways of doing each of these which make different commitments. This is consistent with the view of Williams and Watson (2004) in which the speaker's or writer's use of modality can express the power of their opinions or the degree of reflection in the report.

For example, the speakers or the writers make a statement on the reason for the success of online learning "Successful online learning enables teachers and students to access materials anytime and anywhere." They may say: "Successful online learning *seems* to enable teachers and students to access materials anytime and anywhere" or "Successful online learning *often* enables teachers and students to access materials anytime and anywhere", or "Successful online learning *may* enable teachers and students to access materials anytime and anywhere."

What they actually convey commits them to the truth of the proposition more than any of these alternatives. The differences between them are differences in modality. Modality is important in the texturing of personal and social identities, because what they commit is an important part of their identity. Therefore, modality choices in the text can be regarded as part of the process of constructing self-identity. Modality can be seen initially as "commitment",

“attitude”, “judgment”, “stance”, and therefore “identity”. Furthermore, it is also related to action and social relations and representation (Fairclough, 2003).

There have been some studies related to modality, for examples: Chen (2016) studied the construction of lexicographers’ identity by analyzing the usage notes in the Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture, a learner’s dictionary. Espindola and Wang (2016) analyzed three tenancy agreements, namely a bilingual text in Chinese and English and its comparable version in Brazilian Portuguese. In addition, Ahmad, Mahmood, and Farukh (2020) analyzed the use of modals as stance markers in newspaper editorials.

Based on the previous studies elaborated above, it can be concluded that the modality analysis has been conducted, but predominately in examining the written text, there are only few studies analyzed the spoken text. It is in line with Popping and Roberts (2009) stating that modality analysis has been conducted mostly to populations of newspaper and letters to the editor. For that reason, this study analyzed the modality in spoken text specifically in teacher-to-teacher talk of forced online learning. It was also conducted as a response to Kosko and Herbst (2012) stating that there is a need for further analysis of modality in teacher-to-teacher talk to gain useful facts related to the teaching practice and teacher’s perceptions.

As a matter of fact, modality is realized in their talks of forced online learning. It can be seen from some of the transcripts got from the previous studies (Kulal and Nayak, 2020; Mishra, Gupta, and Shree, 2020; and Prieto et. al., 2021).

The following is the teacher’s utterances when he/she was talking about the reasons for not conducting online class.

“*I believe* the traditional method of teaching is a better method for effective teaching. It is *highly impossible* to conduct an online class for my subject.” (from Kulal and Nayak, 2020)

Based on the utterances above, modality is realized when the teacher was talking about the reasons for not conducting online class. The realization of interpersonal metaphor “*I believe*” indicates the realization of modalization, medium probability. Then, the realization of modal adjuncts “*highly*” and “*impossible*” indicate the realization of modalization, high probability.

The following is the teacher’s utterances when he/she was talking about the needs for more technical preparedness during the online learning.

“Teachers and students are giving effort at the moment, and it is a new normal, which also *require* a learning process for both stakeholders. It is a very challenging task to accept the change, and it *will* take time from both sides to acquaint with new changes.” (from Mishra, Gupta, and Shree, 2020)

Based on the utterances above, modality is realized when the teacher was talking about the needs for more technical preparedness during the online learning. The realization of predicator “*require*” indicates the realization of modulation, high obligation. Then, the realization of modal operator “*will*” indicates the realization of modalization, medium probability.

The following is the teacher’s utterances when he/she was talking about the use of online learning through digital platforms.

“We had a participation that we *never* had in face-to-face courses.”  
 “Before, you had the benefit that you *could* meet the students and now you *have to* imagine what they look like because I *can't* put faces with names.” (from Prieto, et. al., 2021)

Based on the utterances above, modality is realized when the teacher was talking about the use of online learning through digital platforms. The realization of modal adjunct “*never*” indicates the realization of modalization, low usuality.

Then, the realization of modal operator “*could*” indicates the realization of modalization, low probability. The realization of modal operator “*have to*” indicates the realization of modulation, high obligation. Then, the realization of modal operator “*can’t*” indicates the realization of modalization, low probability.

Moreover, based on the preliminary data got by the researcher, modality is realized in teacher-to-teacher talk when they are talking about forced online learning. It can be seen from the teacher’s utterances presented below.

“..... but, I *can’t* do that. He is my student and I am the homeroom teacher. I *have to* be responsible for him. I *have to* respond every report about him. Then, I called his mother, I *had to* text her. I said that the school has rules which *must* be obeyed. If it is not, I *will* report it. It means that you *will* talk to the headmaster .....” (a 31 year old female teacher)

Based on the utterances presented above, modality is realized. The teacher expressed how probable the information is valid (modalization/probability) by using the modal operators “can’t and will” “..... but, I *can’t* do that”, “It means that you *will* talk to the headmaster .....”. Then, the teacher expressed the obligation (modulation/obligation) by using the modal operators “have to, had to, and must” “I *have to* be responsible for him. I *have to* respond every report about him. Then, I called his mother, I *had to* text her. I said that the school has rules which *must* be obeyed.” Moreover, the teacher expressed the inclination (modulation/inclination) by using the modal operator “will” “I *will* report it”.

The teacher’s use of modality in the utterances above can express the strength with which she hold an opinion or report on the extent of a reflection. It can be measured by the value of modality realized. High value of obligation is realized when the teacher is talking about her responsibility as a homeroom teacher and school rules indicated by the modal operators have to, had to, and



must. The use of high modality by the teacher shows her beliefs and her commitment in taking the responsibility and obeying the rules.

The teacher-to-teacher talk analysis will give researchers useful facts about teachers' perceptions and values, their comprehension of the pedagogical and social aspects of teaching profession, and specific aspects of teachers discourse (Kosko and Herbst, 2012), especially on the topic of forced online learning. Furthermore, the analysis of teacher talks is a major resource for examining their work while reflecting and constructing teachers' identities and social relationships (Little and Little, 2008).

For that reason, the researcher considers that it is important to conduct a study related to modality in teacher-to-teacher talk of forced online learning. In this study, the researcher investigated the types of modality found, described the ways the modality is realized, and explained the reasons for the realization of modality in teacher-to-teacher talk of forced online learning.

## **1.2 The Problems of the Study**

Based on the background of the study elaborated above, the problems of the study were formulated as follows:

1. What types of modality are found in teacher-to-teacher talk of forced online learning?
2. How is the modality realized in teacher-to-teacher talk of forced online learning?
3. Why is the modality realized in teacher-to-teacher talk of forced online learning as the way it is?



### **1.3 The Objectives of the Study**

In relation to the problems of the study, the objectives of the study were:

1. To investigate the types of modality found in teacher-to-teacher talk of forced online learning
2. To describe the ways the modality is realized in teacher-to-teacher talk of forced online learning
3. To explain the reasons for the realization of modality in teacher-to-teacher talk of forced online learning

### **1.4 The Scope of the Study**

This study focused on the modality in primary teachers' talks of forced online learning during break time. It covered the types, processes, and reasons of modality realizations. The theory applied in this study was modality theory proposed by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014).

### **1.5 The Significances of the Study**

The findings of this study were expected to be useful theoretically and practically:

1. Theoretically, the findings were expected to strengthen or modify the theory of modality, especially in teacher-to-teacher talk and educational context.
2. Practically, the findings of this study were expected to be useful for:
  - a. Other researchers, in their attempt to conduct the study in the field of modality, especially in teacher-to-teacher talk and educational context.

- b. Government, in their attempt to make policies regarding the implementation of online learning in Indonesia.

