



Mood and Modality in Teacher-Student WhatsApp Interaction: An SFL Approach

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026-06-25 Revised: 2026-07-03 Accepted: 2026-09-21 Keywords: <i>Systemic Functional linguistics; WhatsApp; mood and modality</i> DOI: 10.24256/ideas.v14i2.11461 Corresponding Author: Masayu Bunga Kinasih 221063106004@student.unsika.ac.id English language Education, Universitas Singaperbangsa Karawang	<i>This research investigates how mood and modality systems are realized in teacher–student interactions during the teaching–learning process on WhatsApp, with the aim of explaining their contributions to discourse analysis and the implications for digital academic communication. Grounded in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) as proposed by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), this study examines how mood (declarative, interrogative, imperative) and modality (probability, obligation, permission, willingness) function as central elements of the interpersonal metafunction of language, enacting roles such as giving or demanding information and services. While previous studies have analyzed mood structures in classroom discourse and WhatsApp messages, few have examined modality alongside mood to explain how interpersonal meanings, politeness, and power relations are negotiated in teacher–student WhatsApp interactions. This integrated analysis therefore provides a more comprehensive understanding of interpersonal meaning in digital academic communication. Data were collected from five purposively selected authentic WhatsApp conversations involving academic communication between lecturers and students. The selected conversations represent common academic interactions, including requesting information, giving instructions, responding to messages, and providing clarification. Each clause was analyzed using the SFL framework to identify its mood type and modality. The findings reveal that declarative mood is most frequently used, especially by students, often to express politeness and cooperative responses. Interrogative moods, typically accompanied by modal expressions such as may, are used mainly by students for clarification and to show respect. Imperative moods appear exclusively in teachers' messages, reflecting their authoritative role in giving instructions. Modality of permission and willingness is prominent in student messages, whereas teachers tend to use modality of probability and obligation. These results demonstrate that even short, informal digital texts encode structured interpersonal meanings and reflect institutional roles through linguistic choices. The findings provide practical insights for teachers and students to develop clearer, more respectful, and more effective communication practices in digital academic environments.</i>

1. Introduction

In today's educational landscape, digital communication technologies have become an integral part of teacher–student interaction, enabling learning to continue beyond the physical classroom. Among various communication platforms, WhatsApp has emerged as one of the most widely used applications for educational purposes due to its accessibility, affordability, and user-friendly features. As noted by Goh et al. (2023), WhatsApp has become a popular communication medium among university students and is increasingly used to support collaborative learning in higher education. Its educational role became even more prominent during the COVID-19 pandemic, when face-to-face communication was replaced by online interaction.

Studies have also demonstrated that WhatsApp contributes positively to students' learning motivation and facilitates effective communication between teachers and students (Susilawati & Supriyatno, 2020). Furthermore, its features—including instant messaging, group chats, voice notes, and file sharing—make it an effective platform for delivering learning materials and maintaining continuous academic interaction (Bouhnik & Deshen, 2014; Tait & Rautenbach, 2022).

The increasing reliance on WhatsApp has transformed teacher–student communication from predominantly face-to-face classroom interaction into brief, text-based exchanges conducted in digital environments. Unlike spoken classroom discourse, WhatsApp communication lacks non-verbal cues such as facial expressions, gestures, and intonation, making linguistic choices the primary resource for expressing interpersonal meanings. Consequently, understanding how participants negotiate social relationships, authority, and politeness through language has become increasingly important. These interpersonal meanings can be systematically examined through the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), particularly the interpersonal metafunction, which explains how speakers enact social roles and relationships through linguistic resources such as mood and modality (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

Previous studies have consistently demonstrated the usefulness of SFL in analyzing interpersonal meaning in educational discourse. Research by Ofillyta Hersafanti (2021), for example, showed that declarative mood dominated lecturer–student WhatsApp interactions, reflecting information exchange and polite positioning. Similarly, Mulatsih and Sunardi (2021) found that declarative clauses were predominantly used in classroom teacher talk to deliver knowledge, while Tyas and Widhiyanto (2019) reported that both declarative and imperative moods were employed to facilitate instruction and classroom participation. Collectively, these studies suggest that mood choices are closely related to communicative purposes and institutional roles in educational settings. However, they primarily focus on identifying mood types in spoken classroom discourse or educational communication without thoroughly examining how modality contributes to the construction of interpersonal meaning.

Although previous research has successfully described mood patterns in educational discourse, relatively little attention has been given to the interaction between mood and modality in digital academic communication, particularly in teacher–student WhatsApp conversations. Modality, which expresses meanings such as probability, obligation, permission, and willingness, plays an important role in conveying politeness, authority, certainty, and interpersonal stance. Examining mood without considering modality provides only a partial understanding of how interpersonal meanings are negotiated in online communication. Therefore, the combined analysis of mood and modality remains an underexplored area within SFL studies of digital educational discourse.

This study seeks to address this gap by integrating the analysis of mood and modality in authentic teacher–student WhatsApp conversations. Unlike previous studies that primarily focused on mood structures or classroom discourse separately, this research investigates how both linguistic systems work together to construct interpersonal meanings, negotiate power relations, and express politeness strategies in asynchronous digital communication. By analyzing the distribution of mood types (declarative, interrogative, and imperative) alongside modality types (permission, obligation, probability, and willingness), this study extends the application of Systemic Functional Linguistics to digital discourse analysis and contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of interpersonal communication in technology-mediated educational contexts.

2. Method

This study employed a qualitative approach grounded in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) as proposed by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014). A qualitative design is suitable for exploring how interpersonal meaning is realized through language use in natural communication settings. Rather than quantifying data, this approach aims to interpret and describe the functional use of language, specifically mood and modality, in WhatsApp conversations between teachers and students. The focus is on understanding the communicative roles, social dynamics, and interpersonal strategies encoded in text messages.

The research uses discourse analysis as its primary method, particularly drawing from the interpersonal metafunction in SFL. This method involves analyzing clauses in the data to identify mood types declarative, interrogative, and imperative and examining the use of modality, including expressions of permission, obligation, probability, and willingness. The analysis pays attention to how grammatical choices reflect roles (teacher vs. student), intentions (requesting, instructing, informing), and levels of politeness or authority. Each chat is treated as a data unit and analyzed structurally and functionally in terms of its interpersonal meaning.

The data for this research consists of WhatsApp chat transcripts exchanged between English education students and their lecturers from University of Singaperbangsa Karawang, English Education Department, specifically from class C, semester 6. The researcher selected five purposively sampled WhatsApp conversations that focused on academic communication related to the teaching–learning process, such as giving instructions, asking questions, clarifying assignments, confirming schedules, and responding to academic information.

These conversations were selected because they represented common interactional patterns between teachers and students and provided sufficiently rich data for an in-depth analysis of interpersonal meaning. Since this study employed qualitative discourse analysis, the emphasis was placed on obtaining information-rich cases rather than achieving statistical generalization through a large sample. The chats were collected purposively based on their relevance to classroom communication for example, asking questions about assignments, giving instructions, or clarifying exam schedules. Only educationally related messages were selected, and informal or off-topic messages were excluded to maintain focus on academic interaction.

The data collection process followed these steps:

- Gathering screenshots or exported text files of teacher-student WhatsApp chats.
- Transcribing the messages into clause-level units for analysis.
- Anonymizing the data to protect the identity of both teachers and students.

Prior to the analysis, permission was obtained from the participants to use the WhatsApp conversations for academic research purposes. To maintain confidentiality, all personal names and identifying information were replaced with pseudonyms or removed from the dataset. The collected data were used solely for research purposes and stored securely throughout the study.

For data analysis, each clause was segmented and labeled based on its mood structure:

- Subject (S),
- Finite (F),
- Predicator (P),
- Complement (C),
- Adjunct (A).

Mood types were then classified as declarative, interrogative, or imperative, while modality expressions were categorized according to Halliday's classification: modalization (probability, usuality) and modulation (obligation, inclination).

To facilitate the analysis, the data were organized in a table containing the speaker (teacher or student), the full clause or sentence, the identified mood type, the mood structure (subject and finite elements), and the modality type where applicable. This table provided a systematic overview of the linguistic features analyzed in the WhatsApp conversations.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the analysis, the coding of mood structures and modality types was reviewed through peer checking with a fellow researcher who had prior knowledge of Systemic Functional Linguistics. Any differences in coding or interpretation were discussed until agreement was reached by referring to the analytical framework proposed by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014). This process helped improve the consistency and credibility of the findings.

3. Result

The results of this study are presented in Table 1. The table summarizes the mood types and modality expressions identified in the WhatsApp conversations between teachers and students, together with their mood structures and communicative functions based on the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) framework. The frequencies and percentages reported in this study were calculated based on the total number of analyzed clauses, with each clause treated as one unit of analysis.

Table 1. Complete Mood and Modality Analysis in Teacher-Student WhatsApp Conversations

No	Speaker	Chat	Mood Type	Mood Structure	Modality Type
1	Student	Assalamualaikum sir, I sincerely apologize for disturbing your time.	Declarative	I (S), sincerely apologize (P), for disturbing your time (Adjunct)	-
		May I ask whether the midterm exam for the SFL course in class 6A will be conducted offline or online?	Interrogative	May (Finite), I (S), ask (P), whether... (Complement)	Modalization: Medium (Permission – “may”)
	Teacher	Thank you in advance, Sir.	Declarative	(I) (S), thank (P), you (C)	-
		Walaikumsalam. Probably online.	Declarative	Probably (Modal), online (P)	Modalization: Low (Probability)

No	Speaker	Chat	Mood Type	Mood Structure	Modality Type
2	Teacher	Malem neng	Declarative	(Implied S), Malem (P)	–
		punteun pisan neng. Besok diubah jadi online ya	Declarative	(Implied S), diubah (P), jadi online (C), besok (Adjunct)	-
		Lewat zoom. Link dari saya. Mulai pukul 08.30 ya	Declarative	(Implied S), lewat zoom (Adjunct), link dari saya (C), mulai pukul 08.30 (Adjunct)	-
		Malam Mrs, Terima kasih atas infonya	Declarative	(I) (S), terima kasih (P), atas infonya (Adjunct)	-
3	Teacher	Make a group work containing 3 or 4 members... (and other instructions)	Imperative	Make (P), a group work... (C)	Modulation: High (Obligation – <i>imperative</i>)
	Student	Okay, I will inform my friends	Declarative	I (S), will inform (P), my friends (Adjunct)	Modalization: Medium (Willingness – <i>will</i>)
		When is the final submission deadline, Sir?	Interrogative	When (Adjunct), is (Finite), the final submission deadline (S)	-
	Teacher	Next week	Declarative	(Implied S), next week (Adjunct)	-
	Student	Thank you, Sir	Declarative	(I) (S), thank (P), you, Sir (C)	-
4	Teacher	Hi Eko. Which room is for ELA?	Interrogative	Interrogative	
	Student	3.32 Miss	Declarative	3.32 (S), miss (Adjunct)	
5	Teacher	The test will be started at 7pm	Declarative	The test (S), will (Finite), be started (P), at 7pm (Adjunct)	Modalization: High (Probability – <i>will</i>)
	Student	For the final term, sir?	Interrogative	For the final term (Adjunct), (implied S & F)	-
	Teacher	Yes	Declarative	Implied Subject & Predicate.	-

Note: S = Subject, F = Finite, P = Predicator, C = Complement, A = Adjunct.

The analysis of five WhatsApp conversations between teachers and students from the English Education Department, Class C, Semester 6, reveals distinct patterns in the use of mood and modality. Declarative clauses are the most frequently occurring mood type, comprising 64.1% of all analyzed clauses. This predominance is especially marked in student messages, where declaratives are used to convey information, respond to instructions, and express politeness or gratitude. For instance, students often reply with statements such as “Thank you, Sir” or “I have submitted the assignment,” which serve both to inform and to maintain a respectful tone.

Imperative clauses, making up 10.3% of the data, are found exclusively in teacher messages. These are used to issue instructions or assign tasks, such as “Please submit your work by Friday” or “Make a group of three or four members.” The exclusive use of imperatives by teachers reflects their authoritative role in managing classroom activities and guiding student behavior. This pattern aligns with Tyas & Widhiyanto (2019), who noted a similar distribution of mood types in classroom discourse.

Table 2. Distribution of Modality Types by Speaker Role

Modality Type	Teacher	Student	Total	Function
Modalization				
Permission	0	1	1	Polite Requesting
Probability	2	0	2	Expressing Uncertainty
Willingness	0	1	1	Showing cooperation
Modulation				
Obligation (Imperative)	1	0	1	Giving instructions
Inclination (Modal particles)	2	0	2	Softening directives
Total	5	2	7	

Regarding modality, the data show that students predominantly use expressions of permission and willingness, such as “May I join the group?” or “I will try to finish the task,” which indicate a polite, cooperative attitude and a willingness to participate. In contrast, teachers more frequently use modality of probability and obligation, for example, “You must submit the assignment by Friday” or “Probably we will have the exam online”. These choices reflect the teacher’s responsibility for setting expectations and managing uncertainty in the learning process.

1. Student Communication Patterns

The analysis shows that students consistently employ polite communication strategies throughout the WhatsApp conversations. Their messages typically begin with formal greetings, such as “Assalamualaikum, Sir,” followed by apologetic expressions like “*I sincerely apologize for disturbing your time.*” When requesting information, students commonly use permission-seeking expressions, for example “*May I ask whether...*”, which soften their requests and demonstrate respect toward the teacher. Gratitude is also frequently expressed through responses such as “*Thank you in advance, Sir*” and “*Terima kasih atas infonya.*”

Furthermore, most student interrogative clauses function as requests for clarification regarding academic matters and are generally accompanied by respectful forms of address such as “Sir” or “Miss.” Students also demonstrate compliance through declarative responses, for instance “*Okay, I will inform my friends,*” indicating their willingness to follow teachers’ instructions.

2. Teacher Communication Patterns

Teacher messages display clear patterns of authority while maintaining positive interpersonal relationships with students. Imperative clauses are used exclusively by teachers to assign tasks and provide instructions, as illustrated by *"Make a group work containing 3 or 4 members."* Teachers also employ modality of probability to communicate uncertain situations, for example *"Probably online,"* and use future-oriented statements such as *"The test will be started at 7pm"* to announce scheduled academic activities. Alongside these instructional functions, teachers maintain rapport by occasionally code-switching into Indonesian through expressions such as *"Malem neng"* and *"Punteun pisan neng."* The use of the modal particle *"ya"* further softens directives and encourages agreement, while short responses such as *"Next week"* and *"Yes"* demonstrate efficiency in responding to students' questions.

Cross-Linguistic Features

The WhatsApp conversations also reveal several linguistic characteristics associated with bilingual digital communication. Code-switching between English and Indonesian frequently occurs, with Indonesian expressions such as *"punteun pisan"* functioning as markers of cultural politeness. Similarly, the modal particle *"ya"* serves to soften directives and seek agreement, reflecting local pragmatic conventions in teacher–student interaction. The data also demonstrate the influence of digital communication through the frequent use of ellipsis and concise responses. Messages such as *"3.32 Miss"* omit grammatical elements that can be inferred from the preceding context, yet the intended meaning remains clear. Despite the brevity of these exchanges, students continue to employ formal and respectful language, while teachers balance efficient communication with interpersonal relationship maintenance. These patterns indicate that even short WhatsApp messages effectively convey interpersonal meaning through appropriate mood choices, modality, and context-dependent interpretation.

Regarding modality, the data show that students predominantly use expressions of permission and willingness, such as *"May I join the group?"* or *"I will try to finish the task,"* which indicate a polite, cooperative attitude and a willingness to participate. In contrast, teachers more frequently use modality of probability and obligation, for example, *"You must submit the assignment by Friday"* or *"Probably we will have the exam online."* These choices reflect the teacher's responsibility for setting expectations and managing uncertainty in the learning process.

Overall, the distribution of mood and modality in these WhatsApp conversations demonstrates that even brief, informal digital messages encode complex interpersonal meanings. The patterns observed suggest that traditional classroom dynamics such as respect for authority, politeness, and clear role differentiation are maintained in digital communication. These findings support previous research while also highlighting the importance of linguistic awareness for both teachers and students in fostering effective and respectful online academic interactions.

4. Discussion

The analysis of the WhatsApp conversations between teachers and students reveals how language choices reflect social roles, power relations, and communication goals in an educational context. Using the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) this discussion focuses on the distribution and function of three mood types declarative, interrogative, and imperative as well as the role of modality in shaping interpersonal meaning. Recent studies have shown that mood and modality serve as important linguistic resources for organizing classroom interaction and constructing interpersonal meaning

between teachers and students (Luthfiyati et al., 2024). According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), mood types in the interpersonal metafunction of language play a critical role in enacting speech roles such as giving information, demanding information, giving goods/services, and demanding goods/services.

The findings indicate that language used in WhatsApp communication continues to mirror traditional classroom hierarchies. Although the medium is informal and flexible, teachers and students still maintain formal boundaries through their linguistic choices. For example, students often use declarative moods not only to give information but also to express politeness, agreement, and gratitude such as "Thank you, Sir" or "I will inform my friends." These structures reflect the student's lower position in the academic hierarchy, where showing respect and deference to the teacher is expected. Declaratives also serve a double role: conveying information and maintaining social harmony.

The findings also reflect the influence of Indonesian cultural norms on teacher-student communication. Respect for teachers is deeply embedded in Indonesian educational culture and is reflected through students' frequent use of greetings, apologies, honorific forms of address, and indirect requests. Likewise, teachers occasionally soften directives using culturally familiar expressions and modal particles such as *ya*, allowing them to maintain institutional authority while fostering a supportive interpersonal relationship. These findings suggest that mood and modality choices are influenced not only by grammatical systems but also by sociocultural expectations.

1. Declarative Mood

Declarative clauses dominate the data, especially from students. This aligns with the role of students as information providers or responders, often used to offer information or to show politeness, particularly in student replies. Examples include: "Okay, I will inform my friends," "Thank you, Sir," and "Malam Mrs, Terima kasih atas infonya". This finding is consistent with Haq et al. (2022), who found that declarative mood was the most frequently used mood type in conversation because it primarily functions to convey information through statements. According to SFL theory, declaratives typically realize statements, and in this context, they also help construct respectful social relations.

These findings reflect how students position themselves as cooperative and deferential, typical in hierarchical educational interactions. Even in informal settings like WhatsApp, students' use of declaratives suggests that traditional classroom power dynamics are carried over into digital spaces. Unlike face-to-face classroom interaction, declarative clauses in WhatsApp communication appear to serve a dual interpersonal function. Besides conveying information, they compensate for the absence of non-verbal cues by explicitly expressing cooperation, gratitude, and respect.

This suggests that declarative mood in asynchronous digital communication operates not only as a grammatical resource for making statements but also as a pragmatic strategy for maintaining harmonious teacher-student relationships. Similar patterns have been observed in online learning interactions by Diana et al. (2022) where language choices continue to reflect institutional roles and teacher-student relationships despite the shift to digital communication platforms. Students' preference for declarative clauses may also reflect politeness strategies intended to maintain respectful communication and cooperative interaction with teachers (Ryesmi 2022).

This dual function of declaratives (sharing content and showing attitude/politeness) highlights their strategic use by students in maintaining harmonious interactions with authority figures. By choosing declarative clauses, students avoid confrontational or directive tones, opting for expressions that affirm their role as active but respectful participants. Phrases such as "I will inform my friends" or "Thank you for the information,

Sir” are not merely communicative acts but also social performances reinforcing values like obedience, gratitude, and responsibility within the academic culture.

Furthermore, declaratives in student messages often include modality elements that subtly express intention, willingness, or uncertainty, such as “I will try to submit the task tonight”. These clauses imply cooperation without direct commitment, creating space for flexibility while maintaining a polite tone, reflecting the speaker’s modulated stance as described by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014).

2. Interrogative Mood

The interrogative mood is commonly found in questions initiated by students, such as “May I ask whether the midterm exam...?” and “When is the final submission deadline?”. These questions show students’ need for clarification. Instead of asking directly, students typically use polite and indirect ways, often employing modal verbs like “may”. The use of “may” in “May I ask...” is an example of modality of permission, making the request sound more respectful and less demanding. This finding is consistent with Santoso and Indriani (2021), who found that students frequently employ politeness strategies in WhatsApp communication with teachers to show respect and maintain harmonious interpersonal relationships. Teachers also use the interrogative mood, but their questions are often more direct and focused, for example, “Which room is for ELA?”.

This type of question aims to elicit a clear and quick answer, reflecting the teacher’s role in efficient class management. Unlike students, teachers do not need to use polite modal verbs as frequently due to their position of authority; their questions tend to be short, simple, and straight to the point. In general, the use of interrogative mood reflects the different roles and power levels between teachers and students. Students tend to formulate questions more cautiously, whereas teachers often employ direct questions due to their institutional authority. This observation supports the findings of Mulyono et al. (2019), who found that power relations significantly influence the linguistic strategies used in teacher–student WhatsApp interactions.

The function of interrogatives in WhatsApp communication is amplified by the medium’s limitations. Without tone of voice or facial expressions, users rely heavily on linguistic choices like question forms, modal verbs, and punctuation to convey social meaning. A student’s use of “May I know...” not only shows politeness but also compensates for the absence of non-verbal cues that would normally signal hesitation or respect in face-to-face settings.

Additionally, some interrogative forms in the chats were indirect or embedded questions, such as “I just want to ask if the submission deadline is extended?”. These hybrid structures combine declarative and interrogative forms, subtly disguising a question within a statement, indicating a high level of politeness, caution, or even nervousness. Such indirect questioning strategies can function as face-saving devices that reduce the risk of appearing demanding when addressing someone with higher status (Lukman et al., 2024). Such linguistic choices further emphasize the asymmetry of roles and students’ need to navigate power delicately in written communication.

3. Imperative Mood

Imperative sentences in the chat data are found only in messages from teachers, such as “*Make a group work containing 3 or 4 members...*”. This highlights the teacher’s authority in managing class activities. Imperative clauses are typically used to ask someone to do something or provide a service, which in this context involves assigning tasks and directing students’ actions. Similar findings were reported by Mubarak and Sofwan (2021), who found that imperative clauses are frequently employed by teachers to direct learning

activities and manage classroom interaction. The use of the imperative mood in educational contexts therefore serves both pedagogical and interpersonal functions. Pedagogically, it organizes classroom activities and task flow, while interpersonally, it reflects the asymmetrical relationship between teachers and students.

Unlike face-to-face classroom interaction, however, imperative clauses in WhatsApp communication require teachers to balance authority with interpersonal politeness because written messages do not convey intonation, facial expressions, or other non-verbal cues. As a result, teachers in this study frequently embedded imperative clauses within longer messages that included greetings, explanations, or polite expressions. In written chats like WhatsApp, commands can appear more direct; however, the teachers' instructions in this study remained polite because they were accompanied by greetings, explanations, or the Indonesian discourse particle *ya*.

This finding is consistent with Chaidir et al. (2026), who found that teachers often use politeness strategies in imperative speech acts to balance authority and respect while maintaining positive teacher-student relationships. These findings suggest that imperative mood in digital academic communication functions not only as a grammatical resource for giving instructions but also as an interpersonal strategy for maintaining positive relationships while preserving institutional authority.

4. Modality

Beyond mood, the analysis of modality further illuminates the nuances of interpersonal meaning constructed in these WhatsApp conversations. Modality, referring to the speaker's judgment regarding the probability, obligation, permission, or willingness of a proposition, serves as a key resource in enacting social roles and expressing communicative intentions (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The distribution of modality types reveals distinct patterns between teachers and students, reflecting their differing positions and communicative goals within the academic hierarchy. Surjowati et al. (2024) argue that modality choices in classroom discourse often reflect institutional power relations and the social roles occupied by teachers and students.

As summarized in Table 2, students predominantly utilize modality of permission and willingness. Modality of permission is exemplified by the student's use of *"May I ask whether the midterm exam...?"* (Table 1, No. 1), which functions as a polite request. This choice demonstrates students' awareness of the social hierarchy and their strategic use of language to seek information or permission without appearing demanding, thereby maintaining respect. Similarly, the use of modality of willingness, such as *"Okay, I will inform my friends"* (Table 1, No. 3), signals cooperation and a readiness to comply with instructions, reflecting students' intention to maintain harmonious communication with their teachers. The findings also indicate that the asynchronous nature of WhatsApp communication encourages students to use modality more carefully than in face-to-face interaction. Because immediate verbal or non-verbal feedback is unavailable, students rely on permission and willingness to reduce the possibility of misunderstanding and to express politeness explicitly.

In contrast, teachers frequently employ modality of probability and obligation. For instance, the teacher's response *"Probably online"* (Table 1, No. 1) utilizes modality of probability, indicating a level of uncertainty or an unfinalized decision while still providing useful information. Another example, *"The test will be started at 7pm"* (Table 1, No. 5), uses *will*, which expresses a high degree of probability by indicating a planned academic schedule. Furthermore, obligation is strongly realized through teachers' imperative constructions, such as *"Make a group work containing 3 or 4 members..."* (Table 1, No. 3), directly conveying instructions and expectations for student action. These modality choices

enable teachers to communicate institutional expectations clearly while maintaining flexibility when academic decisions are still subject to change.

A particularly noteworthy finding is the teachers' use of the Indonesian discourse particle *ya*, which functions as both a politeness marker and a modality softener. In expressions such as "*Besok diubah jadi online ya*" and "*Mulai pukul 08.30 ya*", the particle reduces the force of directives by inviting agreement rather than imposing commands. This culturally embedded linguistic strategy reflects Indonesian communication norms, in which authority is often balanced with interpersonal harmony and respect. Consequently, teachers adapt their linguistic choices not only to fulfill instructional purposes but also to maintain supportive and respectful relationships with students in digital communication.

Overall, the varying distribution of modality types by speaker role underscores the underlying power dynamics and politeness strategies operating within teacher–student WhatsApp interactions. Students tend to employ modalities that mitigate imposition and demonstrate cooperation, whereas teachers more frequently use modalities that convey information, establish expectations, and provide direction. These findings extend previous studies by showing that modality choices in digital academic communication are shaped not only by institutional roles but also by the characteristics of asynchronous messaging and Indonesian sociocultural norms. Thus, interpersonal meaning in WhatsApp interactions emerges from the interaction between grammatical resources, technological affordances, and cultural expectations.

5. Conclusion

This mini research has explored the use of mood and modality in WhatsApp conversations between teachers and students, focusing on how language choices reflect interpersonal meanings, power relations, and politeness strategies in educational digital discourse. The analysis reveals that the declarative mood is most frequently used, especially by students, to provide information or respond politely. Interrogative mood appears mainly in students' inquiries for clarification, often with polite structures, while teachers use interrogatives in a more direct and practical way. The imperative mood, used solely by teachers, indicates their authoritative role in giving instructions and managing classroom tasks.

In terms of modality, students tend to use modality of permission (e.g., *may I*) and willingness (e.g., *I will*) to show politeness, respect, and intention to cooperate. Teachers, in contrast, use modality of probability (e.g., *probably*) and express obligation through imperatives and future constructions (e.g., *will be started*). These patterns reflect the asymmetrical power relationship between teacher and student, where teachers are decision-makers and students are responsive participants.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that even in brief digital messages, mood and modality serve as key resources for negotiating meaning, managing relationships, and maintaining politeness. WhatsApp, as an informal yet functional medium, still reflects formal structures and power dynamics found in traditional academic interactions. This suggests that the interpersonal metafunction of language remains crucial even in digital learning environments, where immediacy and brevity often take precedence. Despite the informality of the platform, users continue to carefully choose their grammatical structures and modal expressions to achieve communicative goals while adhering to social norms. In this way, WhatsApp does not erase academic hierarchies; rather, it adapts them into a written, text-based form where mood and modality function as social markers of respect, power, and intention.

Understanding these patterns is important not just for linguists, but for educators as well. As more learning shifts to online platforms, there is a growing need to raise awareness about digital language etiquette, especially in teacher-student interactions. Encouraging

effective, polite, and respectful communication can help foster a more inclusive and supportive learning environment, even through short digital exchanges. Therefore, mood and modality analysis offers not only theoretical insight but also practical tools for navigating academic discourse in modern, digital contexts.

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