

## The Study on the Interpersonal Meanings of Modality in Micro-blogging English News Discourse by the case of “Donald Trump’s Muslim Entry Ban”

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### ABSTRACT

News is a kind of writing style, which is so valuable that many linguists choose it to study. This thesis aims to conduct a systemic analysis of modality type, value and orientation under the framework of Halliday’s Systemic-functional Grammar in order to explore the interpersonal meanings of modality in English news discourse. The research data is drawn from micro-blogging official platforms, among which 20 pieces of news discourse in all are selected to establish a small type of corpus. All the 20 pieces of news discourse are taken from the micro-blogging in 1.20 to 2.20 of 2017. All the news is about “Donald Trump’s Muslim Entry Ban” (A ban made by Donald Trump, which claimed that Muslim can’t enter America). Meanwhile, both qualitative and quantitative research methods are adopted to discover the distribution of modality in micro-blogging news discourse and its interpersonal meanings, and hence to deepen people’s cognition and understanding on micro-blogging news discourse. Through a detailed analysis, the study has a lot of findings. We found that modality language is widely used in micro-blogging news. From the perspective of modality type, reporters prefer to use finite modal adjunct such as *will* in the type of modulation to show their emotional attitude of the target thing. From the perspective of modality value, we can see that median value is the most popular among three values for reporters, and “will” and “would” are the most popular expressions that express the speaker’s expectations, willingness and determination or the reporter’s views, attitudes on the possibility of a certain event. Meanwhile, from the perspective of modality orientation, the speaker or writer tends to use implicit objective orientation in order to show objectiveness of the news discourse and get rid of writers’ responsibilities. This paper attempts to analyze modality in micro-blogging English news discourse from the perspective of interpersonal functions which aims to provide a new method for discourse analysis and acts as a beneficial complementary to modality language analysis.

### INTRODUCTION

With the developing of the internet technology, the communication distance and velocity among people all over the world have been greatly optimized. Traditionally, we have newspaper, television news and broadcasting news. But now, we have our micro-blogging news (also named Twitter in foreign countries), the role of news on internet would become more and more important in ordinary life. For the sake of record and analyze the changes of human language, we choose micro-blogging news as the research target, which should be very convenient to analyze, since it is highly restricted with rules. For the sake of reader’s understanding of the change and influence of micro-blogging news, a detailed explanation will be carried out with guidance of Systemic-functional Grammar. The theory was proposed by Halliday(1994) who defined the metafunctions of language as interpersonal, ideational and textual.

### Significance of the Research

This thesis has both theoretical and practical meaning.

First of all, micro-blogging news is a brand new thing. This research will make a comprehensive and through analysis on them. In the modern world, news is the main channel that provides information for all people. Because of news, the relationship between people all over the world becomes increasingly close. As a matter of fact, it also helps shape people’s cognition and ideology. However, to some extent, news is not such objective as people have imagined. It is an indirect expression of attitudes or opinions representing the reporters and their authority behind them.

Secondly, this paper will also improve the efficacy of Systemic-functional Grammar in discourse analysis. It has provides discourse analysis with a theoretical framework. Moreover, a large number of researchers have analyzed different kinds of news in the framework of Systemic-functional Grammar and gained a lot of achievements. Theoretically, by analyzing modality in news discourse, its interpersonal meanings in this genre can be reflected.

## **Objective of the Research**

Through sample analysis, this thesis is going to find out how modality is used in micro-blogging English news discourse and what interpersonal meanings does modality serve in micro-blogging English news discourse.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The word "news" comes from Greek, which refers to fresh report in Oxford dictionary. It can be explained from the aspects of a broad sense or a narrow sense. The latter one means the "hard news", which contains events, discovery report and so on. And the "soft news" means reports about finance, sports, art, science, entertainment and other comments, micro-blogging news are belong to this one. According to Liu Jianming (2003), news is a type of writing, which introduces the latest things or phenomena to the most widely area of people in the shortest time.

The micro-blogging ("Xin Lang micro-blogging") is also named "Twitter" abroad. The users of micro-blogging can receive or send messages within 140 characters. They can also organize discussion among other people and share pictures, video, music and so on. When a client updates or sends a message, the message will be displayed on his page and theoretically every client can see it immediately, although the client could set up a message visible range control: only good friends can see. Clients can get or subscribe anything they are interested in from micro-blogging, and have their followers to communicate with each other.

The following introduces the previous studies related to this research, and is divided into two parts. The first part introduces the research on modality system. The second part will give a summary about previous studies of news discourse.

### **Overview of the Research on Modality**

It is universally believed that the study of modality can be traced back to about two thousand years ago, the age of Aristotle. Originally, Aristotle discussed the interrelationships between necessity and possibility (Perkins, 1983). A large number of scholars had committed their work on it during their study of modality. Modality is an extremely complicated notion in various sciences. In linguistics, it can be generally seen from two perspectives as traditionally and systemic-functionally.

#### ***Previous Studies of Modality Abroad***

On the basis of generative grammar, Barbiere (1995) and many other researchers explore the syntactical characteristics of modality. From the angle of semantics, Lyons (1977) was the first person to define modality as a speaker's opinion or attitude on a statement or the situation described by a statement. Meanwhile, he emphasized the important role of subjectivity in language study and proposed the concepts of subjective modality and objective modality. On the basis of Lyons' definition, Palmer (1986) made a more comprehensive elaboration to modality who argued that modality is the grammaticalization of a speaker's subjective attitude.

By placing modality on an axis, he thought horizontally modality can be divided into four types: epistemic, deontic, evidential and dynamic modality. Besides, Coates, Levinson, Quirk, Sweetste and many other scholars interpreted modality and its meaning from the angles of corpus, pragmatics, traditional grammar and cognitive linguistics, etc. Consequently, many linguists have not reached an agreement.

The study of modality from the perspective of Systemic-functional Grammar mainly involves Halliday and western countries. Halliday (2002) studied modality from the dimension of meaning and discussed it under the interpersonal meaning of language, displaying the relationship among people.

#### ***Previous Studies of Modality at Home***

In China, Zhang Zhenbang, Zhang Daozhen and many other grammarians concentrated on the classification of modals and their distinctions. On the other hand, others believed that traditional approach put too much emphasis on modality form, logic, concept and other relevant problems so as to ignore the language itself that those aspects derive and survive (Li Jie, Zhong Yongping, 2002). Since the year of 1989 when Hu Zhuanglin, a professor from Peking University, launched the first national seminar on Systemic-functional Grammar, the development of Systemic-functional Grammar in domestic academy field is flourishing. In China, the study of modality chiefly concentrates on theoretical study. Theoretical study mainly refers to grammatical study and comparative study. In terms of theoretical study, Li Zhanzi advocated that modality understanding should be expanded from lexical level to discourse in his *Interpersonal Meaning of Utterance* (Li Zhanzi, 2002). In recent years, many pieces of master-degree thesis also concentrate on modality in discourse analysis as well as to make a comparative study of modality of two languages in various genres of discourse, which involves advertisement, literary works, book review, news discourse, utterances in films and famous speeches and so on.

In this thesis, modality will be discussed from systemic-functional approach.

### **Overview of the Research on News Discourse**

#### ***Previous Studies of News Discourse Abroad***

News discourse, as a part of discourse analysis, is a very important specialized discourse study. The study of news discourse abroad started earlier, and some of more influential works is van Dijk's *News as Discourse* and *Racism and News Reports*.

Van Dijk is a famous scholar in the field of discourse analysis, whose research achievements have a significant effect on the development of discourse linguistics, especially his theory of macro structure. Van Dijk applied his macro theory to the study of news discourse and specially expounded the general and thematic structure of news, news schema and micro structure of news utterances (Tai Qingyan, 2014).

The study of media discourse abroad involves general linguistics and sociolinguistic that explores the linguistic feature of

the media discourse and the syntactical features of newspaper titles in particular. In the field of semiotics, the media text is considered as the key part of media culture. Discourse analysis aims to investigate how inferred meanings are produced and interacted as well as to explore ideology hidden in the media symbol.

When it comes to the functions of news discourse, Pana and Kosickib (1993) points out that news discourse about public issues is constructed. At the same time, it plays a very important role in constructing public policy issues. So news discourse is considered to be a socio cognitive process, it includes three members: journalists, sources, and audience. They also believe that news discourse operates in the idea by summing up that the mass media has the following five functions: explanation, surveillance, cultural, transmission of values and linkage. It's easy to see that the mass media can help the governing class to maintain the social order and system.

### *Previous Studies of News Discourse at Home*

In China, journalism started late and the study of news language is also lagging behind. Until the late 80s and early 90s of the twentieth century, the study of news language flourishes in the world.

The stylists attempt to associate language forms with language functions instead of simply describing language phenomenon. Huang Kuangyu's TV news linguistics (2000) divided TV news language into figurative language symbol and abstract language symbol from the perspective of semiotics. Li Yuanshou and Bai Ding (2001) employed the principles of journalism and linguistics to discuss some regular problems about the use of news language, such as, the stylistic features of the news, word use, the styles of the language, the structure of the discourse and some other aspects. Zhang Jian (1990) studied the news discourse from the perspective of informational function, and divided news into two parts: the background information and the body of the report. He particularly studied on the stylistic features, the tenor and sources of the news discourse on the air and in the newspapers. He discussed about the social and psychological contexts of the news discourse but not enough. Zhang Delu (1998) conducted a functional of the situational context which forms the semantic system, the lexical features, the minor sentence patterns and the text structures of the news. Shan Shengjiang (2011) discussed the analysis of news discourse by critical discourse method and lists the relative example. Wang Tianhua (2012) focuses on the logogenetic analysis of covert evaluation from the logogenetic and the dynamic perspective. Xu Guohui (2010) analyses news reports under the guidance on the appraisal theory based on Systemic-functional Grammar. Li Qingming and Huang Lirong (2009) study the application of grammatical metaphor theory in the news discourse analysis.

As for the micro-blogging English news discourse, few people have researched this area.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Halliday's Metafunctions of Language**

Influenced by Firth's theory in the London School, Halliday developed Systemic-functional Grammar. It is a kind of di-

rected social linguistic theory, which is also the most important theory of applied linguistics in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

This theory involves systemic grammar and functional grammar and it is based on two facts: it has internal relations; users are trying to get different semantic functions in social interactions. Halliday came up with three metafunctions which are the general roles that language plays. The three metafunctions consists of ideational, interpersonal and textual function.

In Halliday's Systemic-functional Grammar, interpersonal function is described as any function that makes people interact with each other through language. That is, language is organized to express a certain interactive event that involves speaker/writers and listeners (Halliday, 2000). In fact, the language function served as the interactive form between speakers and listeners is called interpersonal function, and in this way language is used to establish and maintain appropriate relationships among people (Thompson, 2000). In particular, interpersonal meaning not only identifies speakers but also expresses the speaker's attitudes, motivation and so on. Through interpersonal function, social groups are separated to differentiate from each other; individuals can express and identify themselves, strengthen their relationships with others as well as attempt to influence others' behavior and attitude.

The ways to realize interpersonal meanings are varied, such as, mood and modality in Halliday's systematic functional linguistic. As a matter of fact, mood and modality system play a major role in realizing interpersonal meanings. On the one hand, the role of different speech can be realized by the choice of types of mood, which indicates the interpersonal meanings between people; on the other hand, similarly, modality system expresses a speaker's attitude and opinion that help people to have a better understanding towards the interpersonal function so as to correctly express what they want to express. The two approaches can help interpret attitude and judgment, intimate and alienated relations, even power and ideology, etc.

### **Modality System**

#### *Modality and Polarity*

In Systemic-functional Grammar, the definition of modality is closely associated with polarity. Halliday argued that "modality was the area of meaning that lays between positive and negative polarity, generally the intermediate ground of meaning between yes and no" (Halliday, 1994). Polarity refers to the choice made between positive and negative (is/isn't, do/don't) (Halliday, 2004).

Why does modality can be seen as the intermediate area of meaning between the two polarities? From the perspective of verbal communication, in the proposition sentence, what both sides negotiate is the information. Therefore, the meanings of positive polarity and negative polarity equal to absolute assertion and denial. Since it is so, positive polarity means "it is so", while negative polarity means "it isn't so". Between assertion and denial of a proposition sentence, a speaker can express her/his possible judgment, namely, to what degree the information may be so. The semantic mean-



ing of such clauses that contain modality of probability is always expressed between absolute assertion and denial. While in the proposal sentence, we negotiate about acts or events, and about something that happens or does not happen. Thus, the meanings of positive polarity and negative polarity are regulation and prohibition. By that what positive polarity means is “do it”, negative polarity is “don’t do it”. In this way, a speaker exerts different degrees of obligation on a hearer, making the hearer do something or express his or her willingness to do something. All such clauses containing the meaning of obligation and willingness of modality are also always expressed between the two polarities: “do something” and “do not do something”.

According to the above, modality represents a speaker’s judgment and opinions on the possibility or necessity of a certain proposition or proposal, the intermediate ground of meaning lying between absolute assertion and denial, regulation and prohibition, which is called a modal space.

### Types of Modality

When classifying modality, Halliday (1994) first made a distinction between proposition and proposal clauses, which is discussed in the previous section. The speaker conveys different kinds of “commodity exchanged” and gives various “speech roles” to both sides during the verbal communication. “Among which, the most basic speech roles are giving and demanding, and the commodity exchanged are mainly goods and services. In this regard, Halliday generalized primary language functions as offer, command, statement and question.” (Hu Zhuanglin, 2010:295). The relationships among them are shown in Table 3.1.

According to Halliday, “if the modality exchanged in a clause is information (statements and questions), it is defined as proposition; if the modality exchanged are goods & services (offer and command), it is a proposal” (Halliday, 2000:88).

In addition, based on the distinction between proposition and proposal, Halliday classified two major types of modality correspondingly: modalization and modulation. Modality involving the validity of information is modalization; modality associated with the willingness of a speaker in offer and the responsibility on the hearer or reader in command is modulation (Chen Pei, 2014). In this regard, modalization can be further divided into probability/possibility and usability. Probability refers to how likely the information being exchanged is to be true. The degree of probability can be represented in such adverbs like *probably*, *may*, *possibly*, *certainly*. Usability is about how frequently the information being exchanged is true, whose degree can also be shown by a group of adverbs, such as, *always*, *usually*, *sometimes*, *often*. In terms of modulation, there are two sub-categories in it: inclination and obligation. Inclination refers to a speaker’s willingness or readiness to fulfill an offer. Obligation involves the responsibility or pressure imposed on the addressee to meet the addresser’s demand. In an offer, the degrees of inclination can be represented by *will*, *would*, *wants to*, *willing to*, *determined to*, *anxious to* and so on. In a command, the degrees of obligation are delivered by *should*, *wanted to*, *allowed to*, *required to*, etc.

### Values of Modality

Base on the classification of modality, modality is further given three values: high, median and low, which is shown in the following Table 3.2.

Generally speaking, all modal expressions are able to convey different degrees of modality meaning. In terms of values of finite modal operator, it is much clearer to observe in the Table 3.3.

For the above two figures, for example, when expressing the meaning of “permission”, “can” and “may” are the low value in the obligation type of modality, which is represented by “be allowed to”. Accordingly, “will” and “should” express the median value of this type, which is then represented by “be supposed to”; while if high value of this type is conveyed by “must” and “ought to”, it can be represented by “be required to”.

### Orientation of Modality

Halliday argued “the basic distinction that determined how each type of modality will be realized is the orientation” (Halliday, 2000, 357). In communication, when modality is used to demonstrate a speaker’s attitude or willingness, and the possibility or necessity of some physical reality, the modality orientation is thereby divided into subjective and objective orientation (Ge Xiulan, 2010). And sometimes people may express themselves or state the objective facts directly or indirectly, therefore, the explicit and implicit trends arise. In this way, there are four kinds of modality orientation: implicit subjective, explicit subjective, explicit objective and implicit objective. However, it does not mean it has absolute four categories. Similar to the modal space, there is also an intermediate ground that more variations may exist. Then, Figure 3.1 shows the orientation of modality.

Within the four types of modality orientations, explicit objective orientations and explicit subjective orientations are represented by a clause, while implicit subjective and implicit objective are merely expressed by finite modal operators and modal adverbs.

## INTERPERSONAL MEANINGS OF MODALITY IN MICRO-BLOGGING ENGLISH NEWS DISCOURSE

This part will give a comprehensive and explicit explanation on the data of news corpus from micro-blogging platform so

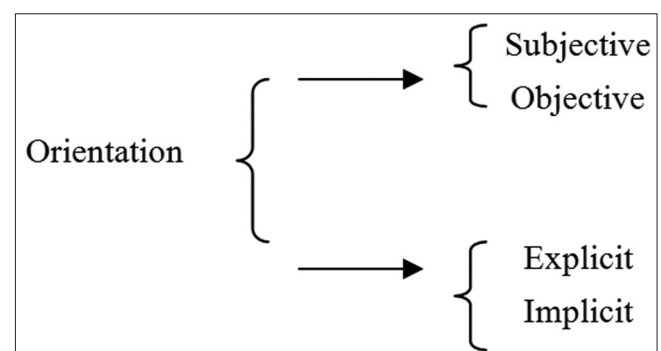


Figure 3.1. Orientation of Modality (Halliday, 2000: 358)

as to find out the research results. Firstly, the frequency of modality from type, value and orientation perspective will be explained respectively and the features of distribution will also be revealed. Then, the interpersonal function reflected by the modality and possible factors which affect the use of modality will be explored.

### Interpersonal Meaning from the Perspective of Modality Type

As is discussed in Part Two, Halliday put modality into two sub-types: modalization and modulation, which is based on the distinction between proposition and proposal. Modalization is about the validity of information in a proposition clause (statements and questions) which can be divided into probability and usuality. While modulation is about the willingness of a speaker in an offer (proposal clause) and the responsibility on the hearer or reader in a command (proposal clause) which can correspondingly divided into inclination and obligation.

Since the Chinese government put forward the reform and opening policy, China has experienced great changes in many fields, and we became more care about the things happening on the whole world. After Donald Trump claimed the "Entry Ban", there is much news about this issue. According to the corpus, the author made a statistics. Table 4.1 shows the distribution of each type of modality in the news corpus.

The distribution of each type of modality is clearly shown in the above figure. According to Halliday (1994:68), the interpersonal function of language is "the interaction between the addressee and addresser in a discourse and the addresser's attitude towards what he says." In news discourse, modality, an indispensable use of language, helps the reporter or writer to take an approximately objective point of view or his own personal position to make the news reporting more acceptable and believable to the readers. Based on the truth of events, the writer or reporter more or less reports the event sometimes subjectively or represents the authority behind him. In this regard, modality meaning has the interpersonal meanings.

As is shown in Table 3.1, the percentage of modulation is far more than modalization because I just choose the "Entry Ban" thing as our example. Many people care about big things in country in such an open environment. They all want to show their views about this issue. In modalization, it can be seen that usuality is rare when compared with probability. It is because reporters do not frequently report how often the event happened unless the utterances are quoted from somebody. In modulation, it can be seen that inclination is rare when compared with obligation. Since the viewpoint expressed by the reporter in news should be objective or at least seems to be objective superficially, the reporters' personal inclination is prohibited.

In order to show how modality is realized in news reports, some news examples are shown below:

#### Example 1:

*The United Nations has said that it hopes the US ban on the entry of refugees into the country "will be lifted as soon as possible." UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric made this*

**Table 3.1.** Primary language functions (Halliday, 1994: 69)

Commodity exchanged speech roles	Goods & services	Information
Giving	"Offer" Would you like this dictionary?	"Statement" He is giving him the dictionary
Demanding	"Command" Give me this dictionary	"Question" What is she giving him?

**Table 3.2.** Values of modality (Halliday, 2000:358)

	Probability	Usuality	Obligation	Inclination
High	Certain	Always	Required	Determined
Median	Probable	Usually	Supposed	Keen
Low	Possible	Sometimes	Allowed	Willing

*remark at a daily news briefing on Tuesday, days after Trump signed an executive order that halted travel to the US by people with passports from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen for 90 days, and stopped the resettlement of refugees for 120 days.*

(From CGTNOfficial (CGTN: China Global Television Network), February. 1, 2017)

#### Example 2:

*I am encouraged by yesterday's decision on @POTU's #MuslimBan. We will keep fighting for our country's values.*

(From Bill Foster, February. 11, 2017)

#### Example 3:

*"We Will Fight It". Top White House Aide Defends Trump Immigration Order.*

(From NYC Informer, February. 13, 2017)

From the three examples, it can be seen that both three are the expressions of inclination. However, usually, the writer attempts to quote somebody's utterances either in a direct speech or indirect speech, which increases the validity of the news and avoids personal opinions or attitude towards the event.

In Example 1, the finite modal adjunct "will" expresses United Nations' eager willingness to find out measures to solve the problem of "entry ban", which adopts a third person as subject. And the Example 3 is just the same situation. NYC Informer quotes the words of Top White House Aide to indicate his angry towards the "entry ban". While in the second example, "will" is embedded in a direct speech, with the first-person plural "we" adopted as subject, which also give rise to the objectivity of news. Consequently, "we will" enhances the resolution of country to take more measures to solve the problem of ban. In addition, as a businessman representing the 11<sup>th</sup> Congressional District of Illinois, Bill Foster of course felt "be encouraged" by Trump's decision. It shows the authority behind the news. He is one of the followers of Donald Trump, so he needs to show his loyal to his leader.

### Interpersonal Meaning from the Perspective of Modality Value

Thompson (2000) deemed that since modality is considered with degrees and scales, people could mark a higher or lower degree of certainty on the availability of a proposition; or a higher or lower degree of pressure on the other people to carry out a command. Then, Halliday further divided modality into three values: high, median and low. That is to say, modality value is established between the intermediate grounds from high degree to low degree. Theoretically, all the modal expressions can be categorized by modality value from high to low. Modal expressions can be categorized into different types of values according to how strongly they express their modal meaning. Different degrees of value could convey news writer's different degrees of inclination and attitude. Table 4.2 will clearly show their distribution:

From the table, it can conclude that median value takes the largest proportion in news, high value the less and low value at the least. The words "will" and "would" are frequently used in news. In news discourse, "will" and "would" are the most popular expressions that express the speaker's expectations, willingness and determination or the reporter's views, attitudes on the possibility of a certain event.

There are some examples listed subsequently.

Example 4:

*In an exclusive interview with CGTN, spokesman for China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Lu Kang commented on Donald Trump's entry ban on people from seven Muslim-majority countries. He said China believes that it is the sovereign rights of each government to design and adjust its immigration policies and policies on passport control. But when dealing with such policies, governments need to bear in mind the legitimate concerns of all the other relevant countries.*

(From CGTNOfficial, February. 3, 2017)

In news discourse, modal expressions with high value are less employed for its more responsibility bearing by the news writer. In most cases, the speaker tends to use the subject "we" not "I". It is because that "we" weakens the tone of language and balances the responsibilities between the two parties, which is easier for the readers to accept the opinion. Besides that, "we" could unite the writers and readers as a whole to express their common sense or interests so as to establish an "equal" relationship.

Therefore, in Example 4, Lu Kang uses "China", almost the same meaning of "we", not "I". It means that actually it is not his own opinion, but on behalf of a country, on behalf of people. In addition, "need to" emphasizes that legitimate concerns is very important in the international relationship. To some extent, it also expresses the writer's personal attitude towards the "entry ban".

Example 5:

*I have the responsibility to keep Americans SAFE and I will big league! Man dangerous dudes out here!*

(From Donald J. Trump, February. 4, 2017)

In this example, the median value "will" makes a prediction on the development trend of the writer's career, which may influence the readers so as to resonate with the readers—the people of United States.

Example 6:

*The US Federal Appeal Court has rejected the Justice Department's request to immediately restore President Donald Trump's Muslim ban late on Saturday. The appeal was challenging a temporary nationwide halt of Trump's entry restrictions which was introduced by Seattle judge James Robart on Friday. The court has asked both sides to file legal briefs before Monday. Trump signed an executive order on January 27, banning citizens from seven mainly Muslim countries for 90 days and indefinitely barring Syrian refugees from entering the United States.*

(From CGTNOfficial, February. 5, 2017)

In this example, news writer employs the low value "indefinitely" to express the uncertainty of the Muslim ban. To some extent, the news writers bear less responsibility on the happened event. Superficially, low value modality seems to weaken the intensity of the discourse, while actually by which news writers could reserve a possible negotiable space and safeguard the news' authority. It also enables the public to have a wider thinking space to express their own opinion which is conducive to adjust relationship between two sides. But meanwhile, it also show that the news reporters lack confidence in what is reported. In this case, the news media would be virtually weakened its strength in reflecting and guiding the public opinion.

### Interpersonal Meaning from the Perspective of Modality Orientation

The part of theoretical framework has presented a clear map of the modality orientation which consists of four factors: explicit subjective orientation, implicit subjective orientation, explicit objective orientation, and implicit objective orientation. It is true that modality orientation can not work without modal expressions. Explicit subjective orientation is realized by clause and modal full verbs; explicit objective orientation is realized by clause and nominal modal expressions; while implicit subjective orientation is through finite modal operator and comment adjuncts and implicit objective orientation is through mood adjunct and passive verb predicator. Here, clause is projecting clause that is called modality metaphor previously. Table 4.3 shows the distribution of each kind of modality orientation.

#### Explicit Subjective Orientation

Explicit subjective orientation is used when speakers should like to highlight their own opinions or attitude which is realized through modality metaphor and lexical full verb. This orientation does not just list the facts but give personal expression.

From Table 3.3, explicit subjective orientation accounts for 27.8%, ranking the second place in realizing modality. The representation of explicit subjective orientation is often used in either direct or indirect speech to bring an opinion or attitude to the readers. There is an example listed below to show the orientation of explicit subjective.

Example 7:

*Trump's executive order barring citizens from seven Muslim-majority countries from entering the US and suspending*



**Table 3.3.** Values of finite modal operators (Halliday, 2000:76)

	High	Median	Low
Positive	Must, ought to, need, has/had to	Will, would, should, is/was to	Can, may, could, might (dare)
Negative	Needn't, doesn't/didn't need to, doesn't/didn't have to	Won't, wouldn't, shouldn't, isn't/wasn't	Mustn't, oughtn't to, couldn't, may not, mightn't, hasn't/hadn't to

**Table 4.1.** Distribution of each type of modality

Type	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Modalization		
Probability	18	23
Usuality	5	21.7
Modulation		
Obligation	28	51
Inclination	23	45.1
Total	74	

**Table 4.2.** Distribution of modal values

Modal value	Number	Proportion (%)
High ( <i>must, ought to, have to, I believe, There's no doubt</i> )	3	15
Median ( <i>will, would, should, I think, It is likely</i> )	15	75
Low ( <i>can, may, could, might, I guess, It is possible</i> )	2	10
Total number	20	100

*refugee resettlement has continued to prompt outrage across the world. The Dutch government said it rejected Trump's policy and asked the US for clarification. German Chancellor Angela Merkel added that the ban contrary to basic principles on refugees and interpersonal cooperation. Iraq's foreign ministry has also asked the US to reconsider the travel ban on its citizens, calling the decision wrong.*

(From CGTNOfficial, JAN. 30, 2017)

In this example, two same full verbs, "ask", conveys some country's angry attitude towards the policy such as Dutch and German. Therefore, the news writer aims to use full verb exercised by a speaker, always representing authority, to ensure the objectivity and credibility of the event.

### Explicit Objective Orientation

Explicit objective orientation is able to give readers a feeling that what they read is objective instead of something from the news writer. But in fact, it is difficult for the writer to report news in a completely objective way without any subjective factors. Therefore, this type of orientation is uncommon in micro-blogging English news discourse. From Table 3.3, we can see this phenomenon.

**Table 4.3.** Distribution of each type of modality orientation

	Number	Proportion (%)
Explicit subjective	15	27.8
Explicit objective	4	7.4
Implicit subjective	22	40.7
Implicit objective	13	24.1
Total	54	100

The below are typical examples that express explicit objective orientation.

Example 8:

*"There's no evidence citizens of countries singled out threaten US—but Islamophobic policies do"*

(From SPLC, February. 18, 2017)

In this example, the news writer employs a nominal modal expression "There's no evidence" to transmit the message explicitly to readers that there indeed exists something unreasonable in the Muslim-ban.

The modal expressions with explicit objective orientation, to some degree, show the news writers' viewpoint or attitude faintly and indirectly. Absolute objective does not exist. Therefore, the proportion of this type is rare. Explicit objective orientation also indicates that the writers do not want to assume any responsibilities, but just state the fact.

### Implicit Subjective Orientation

From Table 3.3, it clearly demonstrates that implicit subjective orientation takes first position which accounts for half of the modal expressions in micro-blogging English news. The use of this orientation shows a kind of implication that gives rise to different possibilities, usuality, inclination, obligation or evaluation on the event. By employing implicit subjective orientation, news writers imply viewpoint or attitude on the reporting events and try to affect readers' attitude and behavior towards the underlying trends of the happened events. There is a typical examples listed below.

Example 9:

*Predictably, they're smearing people for standing up to Trump's bigotry. This is gaslighting.*

(From Dr. DaShanne Stokes, February. 11, 2017)

This example uses comment adjunct "predictably" to make comments on the phenomena that most people will not support Trump's "entry ban" policy. This word hides the writer's subjective viewpoint and makes the proposition seem to be objective.

Although the news discourse emphasizes the objectivity of the reported event, subjectivity is also indispensable since

its intention of exerting influence on readers, which is regarded as the most significant modality orientation in news.

### **Implicit Objective Orientation**

From Table 3.3, we can see that implicit objective orientation also accounts for a big proportion in micro-blogging English news. Such as this example:

Example 10:

*The 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Screen Actors Guild Awards ceremony was held in Los Angeles on Sunday. Among the winners, many chose to use their acceptance speech to speak out against President Donald Trump's Immigration order. Their words varied from personal reflections to full-throated battle cries, but they were nearly unanimous in expressing support for the nationwide protests sparked by the ban, which will deny entry to the US for travelers from seven Muslim-majority countries.*

(From CGTNOofficial, JAN. 30, 2017)

This examples use a mood adjunct, "nearly", expressing the implicit objective orientation. It indicates the fact that most actors are against Present Donald Trump's travel ban policy.

### **CONCLUSION**

This thesis mainly focuses on investigating the interpersonal meanings of modality. As a typical discourse, micro-blogging English news report has its own characteristics in terms of modality and presents certain interpersonal meanings.

Through detailed analysis, we can see that modality in news discourse can helps to establish interrelationship between writers and readers. Only when interaction between writers and readers occurs, can the opinions or attitudes of writers be easily accepted by readers. The use of modality rightly contributes to this interpersonal function since it leaves a negotiable space for the writers and readers.

It is generally believed that modality system has great potential in realizing interpersonal function, based on the systemic analysis of 20 news samples from the aspects of modality type, value and orientation, several interpersonal meanings are explored and we also solved the problem about how modality is realized in micro-blogging English news discourse. It will be listed below.

From the perspective of modality type, we can see that reporters do not frequently report how often the event happened unless the utterances are quoted from somebody. In addition, since the viewpoint expressed by the reporter in news should be objective or at least seems to be objective superficially, the reporters' personal inclination is prohibited and the type of inclination is rarely used when compared to obligation. However, people prefer to use finite modal adjunct such as *will* to show their eager willingness of the target thing.

From the perspective of modality value, we can see that median value is the most popular among three values for reporters, and "will" and "would" are the most popular expressions that express the speaker's expectations, willingness and determination or the reporter's views, attitudes on the

possibility of a certain event. However, modal expressions with high value are less employed for its more responsibility bearing by the news writer. In most cases, the speaker tends to use the subject "we" not "I". It is because that "we" weakens the tone of language and balances the responsibilities between the two parties, which is easier for the readers to accept the opinion. Besides that, "we" could unite the writers and readers as a whole to express their common sense or interests so as to establish an "equal" relationship. In addition, low value expressions are rarely used by reporters owing to it shows that the news reporters lack confidence in what is reported. Although by using low value modal expressions, news writers could reserve a possible negotiable space and safeguard of the news' authority. It also enables the public to have a wider thinking space to express their own opinion which is conducive to adjust relationship between two sides.

From the perspective of modality orientation, we can conclude that the representation of explicit subjective orientation is often used in either direct or indirect speech to bring an opinion or attitude to the readers. And implicit subjective orientation is the most popular one in the choice of modality in news. The use of modality is considered to show objectiveness of the news discourse. News discourse is supposed to be objective, fair and convincing, but there is no absolute objectivity. Therefore, on the surface, it needs to employ modality as means to make the news seems to be objective. That is to say, news discourse needs to present facts and ideas in an objective way and without prejudices. In this regard, it is necessary for news writers to employ either explicit or implicit objective orientation to lay stress on objectivity. It is a fact that news discourse burdens the task of reporting events or certain situation objectively and fairly. However, subjectivity is inevitable for the purpose of influencing the ideology of readers. Thus, if a news writer wants to conceal his subjective consciousness and emotion, he can use various modal expressions so as to enable the provided facts looks more objective as possible as it seems to be. In this way, it can also increase credibility. The other interpersonal meaning reflected that the aim of using modality is to get rid of writers' responsibilities. The speaker or writer tends to use implicit objective orientation if he or she is unwilling to take more responsibility. From the previous analysis, modality is usually inserted in indirect speech to blur the boundaries between speakers and writers, whose purpose is to change the official viewpoint into public language so as to widely understood and accepted by the public readers. As for the modal expressions with explicit objective orientation, to some degree, shows the news writers' viewpoint or attitude faintly and indirectly. It is difficult for the writer to report news in a completely objective way without any subjective factors. Therefore, absolute objective does not exist.

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