

MODALITY IN GIVING ADVICE IN AN INDONESIAN EFL TEXTBOOK: INSIGHTS FROM SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS

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ABSTRACT

Modality plays an important role in expressing interpersonal meaning, particularly in giving advice within English language teaching materials. This study investigates the realization of modality in giving advice in the Indonesian EFL textbook Interactive English 2 and explores its pedagogical implications. The study employed a qualitative document analysis. The research corpus consisted of clauses realizing giving advice, identified from Unit 1 of the textbook after all instructional units had been systematically screened. The findings revealed that giving advice was predominantly realized through the modal operators should and shouldn't. The analysis showed that "should" occurred more frequently than "shouldn't," indicating the textbook's preference for positive recommendations over prohibitive advice. These expressions were integrated into listening dialogues, grammar explanations, reading passages, communication activities, speaking tasks, and evaluation exercises, allowing learners to encounter advice in meaningful communicative contexts. The findings suggest that the textbook presents modality not only as a grammatical feature but also as an interpersonal resource that supports communicative and pragmatic competence. The study concludes that integrating modality into contextualized instructional activities facilitates meaningful English language learning and provides practical implications for English teachers and textbook developers.

Keywords: EFL textbook, giving advice, modality, pedagogical implications, Systemic Functional Linguistics

A. Introduction

English has become a global language used for communication, education, science, and intercultural interaction (Crystal, 2003). In Indonesia, where English is taught as a foreign language (EFL), language instruction aims not only to develop grammatical knowledge but also to foster communicative competence,

enabling learners to use English appropriately in different social contexts (Harmer, 2007). Accordingly, English language teaching has shifted from emphasizing grammatical accuracy to promoting meaningful communication.

Communicative competence includes grammatical, sociolinguistic,

discourse, and strategic competence (Canale & Swain, 1980). Within this framework, pragmatic competence is essential because effective communication depends on learners' ability to use language appropriately according to context and communicative intention (Ishihara & Cohen, 2021). Learners who lack pragmatic competence may experience pragmatic failure despite producing grammatically correct utterances (Shu, 2018; Mokoro, 2024). Therefore, English instruction should integrate linguistic forms with communicative functions.

In Indonesian EFL classrooms, textbooks serve as the primary instructional resource for introducing language forms and communicative expressions (Cunningsworth, 1995). Since textbooks strongly influence classroom interaction, evaluating how they present language functions is essential. From the perspective of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), language is viewed as a resource for making meaning, and interpersonal meaning is realized through linguistic choices such as modality (Halliday, 1978; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). In classroom communication, modality

is frequently realized through expressions of giving advice, making it an important feature of English language learning.

Previous studies have examined modality and textbook representation from different perspectives. Gao (2024) investigated modal verbs in English textbooks, while Syafrayani (2025) analyzed modality in Indonesian EFL textbooks using the SFL framework. Abid et al. (2025) focused on multicultural representations in Indonesian EFL textbooks, whereas Shu (2018) and Mokoro (2024) emphasized the importance of pragmatic competence in language learning. However, limited studies have specifically explored how modality realizes the communicative function of giving advice in Indonesian EFL textbooks from the interpersonal perspective of SFL and discussed its pedagogical implications.

Therefore, this study investigates the realization of modality in giving advice in *Interactive English 2*, an Indonesian EFL textbook for junior high school students, using Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) SFL framework. The study also explores the pedagogical implications of the

identified modality patterns for English language teaching.

B. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research approach using document analysis as the research design. Qualitative document analysis enables researchers to investigate written documents systematically by interpreting linguistic features and their contextual meanings (Bowen, 2009). The present study focused on identifying and analyzing the realization of modality in giving advice within an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbook from the perspective of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) interpersonal metafunction was adopted as the primary analytical framework to classify modality and interpret its communicative function in the textbook.

Unlike quantitative approaches that measure statistical relationships, qualitative document analysis emphasizes the interpretation of textual data and the explanation of

linguistic phenomena occurring in authentic educational materials. Therefore, this design was considered appropriate because the research aimed to examine how modality was realized in giving advice and to explore its pedagogical implications rather than to test hypotheses statistically.

2.2 Research Object and Data Source

The object of this study was Interactive English 2, an EFL textbook for Grade VIII junior high school students developed under the Merdeka Curriculum. The textbook was written by Gumanti Ning Rahayu, S.Pd.Ing., published by Yudhistira, and first published in 2022. It consists of ten instructional units covering various communicative functions and language features.

The data consisted of clauses containing modality functioning as giving advice. These clauses were identified from dialogues, reading passages, grammar explanations, speaking activities, and other instructional texts presented in the textbook. The unit of analysis was the clause because it represents the

smallest linguistic unit capable of expressing interpersonal meaning through modality.

2.3 Corpus Selection

Prior to data collection, all ten instructional units contained in Interactive English 2 were systematically screened to identify clauses representing modality in giving advice. This screening process was conducted to ensure that the research corpus accurately reflected the objectives of the study rather than being selected based on convenience.

The screening demonstrated that explicit realizations of modality functioning as giving advice were systematically presented only in Unit 1 (Stay Healthy). Although modal operators such as can, may, and will appeared in several other units, these expressions primarily represented ability, permission, willingness, or possibility rather than advice. Consequently, they did not correspond directly to the research focus.

For this reason, Unit 1 was selected as the primary research corpus because it contained sufficient and relevant

clauses representing the realization of modality in giving advice. Nevertheless, Units 2–10 remained part of the document screening process and served as supporting documents for comparison. Their examination confirmed that no additional clauses fulfilling the research criteria were overlooked, thereby strengthening the credibility of the corpus selection.

2.4 Data Collection

The data collection process consisted of four stages. First, the researcher conducted a comprehensive reading of the entire textbook to familiarize themselves with its instructional content and communicative functions. Second, all instructional units were screened to identify clauses potentially containing modality. Third, clauses corresponding to the research focus were extracted and compiled into a preliminary corpus. Finally, each clause was coded according to its unit, text type, and sequence number to facilitate systematic analysis.

The coding system was designed to maintain consistency throughout the analytical process. For example, the

code U1-LD01 refers to the first clause identified in the listening dialogue of Unit 1. Similar coding procedures were applied to all selected clauses included in the research corpus.

2.5 Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed using Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) Systemic Functional Linguistics framework, particularly the interpersonal metafunction. The analysis consisted of several stages. First, the selected clauses were classified according to the type of modality, including modalization and modulation. Second, modal operators expressing giving advice were identified and interpreted according to their interpersonal meanings. Third, the findings were interpreted to explain how modality functioned in realizing giving advice within the textbook. Finally, the pedagogical implications of these findings were discussed in relation to English language teaching.

To enhance the credibility of the analysis, the coding procedures, corpus selection, and preliminary interpretations were continuously

reviewed throughout the academic supervision process. Feedback provided by the research supervisors was incorporated into the final analysis to ensure consistency between the research objectives, the analytical procedures, and the interpretation of the findings. This supervisory review contributed to strengthening the trustworthiness of the research.

C. Results and Discussion

3.1 Distribution of Giving Advice across the Textbook

Table 1. Distribution of Research Corpus by Instructional Section

Instructional Section	Number of Clauses	Purpose
Listening Dialogue	2	Introducing advice through authentic conversation
Grammar Example	1	Introducing modal operator
Grammar Practice	5	Controlled practice
Practice	3	Guided practice
Reading	2	Contextual reinforcement
Exercise	1	Written practice
Communication Steps	7	Functional communication practice
Speaking	4	Oral communication

Evaluation	12	Assessment of advice expressions
Total	37	

The document analysis revealed that expressions of giving advice were systematically distributed throughout Unit 1 of *Interactive English 2*. Rather than presenting modality only in grammar explanations, the textbook integrates advice expressions into listening dialogues, reading passages, speaking activities, communication practices, and evaluation tasks. This distribution demonstrates that the textbook adopts a contextualized approach to language learning, allowing students to encounter advice expressions repeatedly across different learning activities.

The highest concentration of advice expressions was identified in the Evaluation section, followed by the Communication Steps and Grammar Practice sections. This finding suggests that the textbook gradually scaffolds learners' understanding by first introducing modal expressions, providing guided practice, and subsequently encouraging learners to apply them independently in communicative situations. Such progression reflects the pedagogical

principle of moving from controlled language input to meaningful language production.

According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), interpersonal meaning develops through repeated opportunities to negotiate social relationships using language. Therefore, presenting advice expressions across multiple instructional contexts enables learners not only to recognize the grammatical structure of modality but also to understand its interpersonal functions in authentic communication. The repeated exposure identified in this study indicates that the textbook attempts to support communicative competence by embedding advice expressions within meaningful classroom activities rather than treating modality as isolated grammar content.

This finding also aligns with Cunningsworth (1995), who argues that effective language textbooks should integrate linguistic forms with communicative functions through varied learning activities. Likewise, Harmer (2007) emphasizes that language learning becomes more meaningful when learners encounter

target language forms in realistic contexts instead of memorizing decontextualized grammatical rules. Consequently, the organization of advice expressions throughout Unit 1 demonstrates an instructional design intended to promote both grammatical knowledge and communicative language use.

3.2 Distribution of Modal Operators Realizing Giving Advice

Table 2. Distribution of Modal

Modal Operator	SFL Classification	Interpersonal Function	Frequency	Percentage
should	Modulation (Obligation)	Giving Advice	29	78.38%
shouldn't / should not	Modulation (Obligation)	Giving Advice	8	21.62%
Total	-	-	37	100%

The analysis of the research corpus revealed that **37 clauses** realizing giving advice were identified throughout Unit 1 of *Interactive English 2*. As presented in Table 2, the modal operator "**should**" occurred **29 times (78.38%)**, whereas "**shouldn't**" or "**should not**" appeared **8 times (21.62%)**. These findings indicate that the textbook predominantly employs positive recommendations rather than prohibitive advice when introducing interpersonal meanings related to giving advice.

The predominance of "**should**" suggests that the textbook encourages learners to recommend appropriate actions instead of merely warning against inappropriate behavior. Most occurrences of "**should**" appeared in health-related contexts, such as advising someone to get enough rest, visit a doctor, take medicine, drink hot milk, wear warm clothes, or adopt healthier lifestyles. In contrast, "**shouldn't**" mainly function to discourage unhealthy or undesirable actions, including going to school while sick, eating excessive candy, sitting too close to the television, carrying heavy bags, or consuming unhealthy food.

Within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics, Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) classify **should** and **shouldn't** as expressions of **modulation**, specifically **obligation**, because they negotiate proposals concerning actions rather than exchange information. Unlike commands expressed through imperatives, these modal operators realize **median obligation**, enabling speakers to provide recommendations politely while preserving interpersonal relationships. Therefore, the

dominance of **"should"** indicates that the textbook introduces advice through moderate interpersonal meanings rather than strong authority.

Eggins (2004) further explains that interpersonal meaning is realized through speakers' linguistic choices when negotiating social relationships. Similarly, Thompson (2014) argues that modality allows speakers to position themselves between certainty and uncertainty while expressing attitudes toward actions and behaviors. The present findings demonstrate that the textbook consistently utilizes **"should"** to construct polite recommendations, thereby encouraging learners to communicate advice appropriately in everyday situations.

These findings support previous studies on modality in English language teaching. Gao (2024) argues that modal verbs constitute essential interpersonal resources for developing communicative competence among EFL learners. Likewise, Syafrayani (2025) found that medium-value obligation was the most frequently employed modality in Indonesian EFL textbooks, with **"should"** functioning as the primary

realization of giving advice. Furthermore, Shu (2018) emphasizes that pragmatic competence develops when learners encounter language forms embedded in meaningful communicative contexts rather than isolated grammatical explanations. The present study extends these findings by demonstrating that *Interactive English 2* systematically integrates advice expressions across dialogues, grammar explanations, speaking activities, communication practices, and evaluation tasks, thereby providing repeated exposure to authentic interpersonal language use.

Overall, the findings indicate that the textbook presents modality not merely as a grammatical feature but as an interpersonal resource for negotiating advice in socially appropriate ways. This integration enables learners to understand both the linguistic structure and the communicative function of **should** and **shouldn't**, contributing to the development of grammatical knowledge as well as pragmatic competence.

3.3 Interpersonal Meaning of Giving Advice

The analysis of the research corpus demonstrates that the interpersonal meaning of giving advice in *Interactive English 2* is primarily realized through **median obligation**, represented by the modal operators **should** and **shouldn't**. Within Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) Systemic Functional Linguistics framework, these modal operators function as expressions of **modulation**, enabling speakers to recommend desirable actions or discourage inappropriate behaviors while maintaining interpersonal politeness. Rather than imposing commands, the advice expressions identified in the textbook position the speaker as someone offering guidance and support, thereby preserving the listener's autonomy in deciding whether to follow the recommendation.

This interpersonal characteristic is consistently reflected throughout the corpus. Expressions such as "*You should go to the doctor*," "*You should get some rest*," "*You should drink some hot milk*," and "*You should take these vitamins*" demonstrate that the speaker intends to recommend

actions considered beneficial for the listener's well-being. Conversely, expressions including "*You shouldn't go to school*," "*You shouldn't eat so much candy*," and "*They shouldn't eat so much fast food*" discourage behaviors perceived as harmful or inappropriate. In both cases, the modal operators construct interpersonal relationships based on recommendation rather than authority.

According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), interpersonal meaning is concerned with how speakers negotiate attitudes, judgments, and social relationships through language. In giving advice, speakers do not merely exchange information but seek to influence another person's future actions. Consequently, modality serves as a linguistic resource for expressing different degrees of commitment while allowing advice to remain socially acceptable. The predominance of "**should**" identified in this study indicates that the textbook consistently introduces learners to moderate interpersonal meanings suitable for everyday communication.

Eggins (2004) similarly explains that interpersonal meaning is realized through the interaction between mood

and modality. While declarative mood provides the grammatical structure for presenting advice, modality determines the degree of obligation conveyed by the speaker. The clauses identified in the present study are predominantly declarative in form; however, their communicative function extends beyond simply stating information. Instead, they perform interpersonal acts of recommending, suggesting, and encouraging particular actions. This finding demonstrates that grammatical structure alone cannot fully explain communicative meaning without considering interpersonal functions.

Furthermore, Thompson (2014) argues that modality enables speakers to negotiate social distance and interpersonal commitment through varying degrees of obligation and certainty. The consistent use of **should** throughout the textbook reflects an appropriate balance between authority and politeness. Rather than employing imperatives such as *"Go to the doctor!"* or *"Drink more water!"*, the textbook prefers recommendations using **"should,"** thereby promoting cooperative communication. Such linguistic

choices are particularly appropriate for junior high school learners, who are expected to develop both grammatical competence and socially appropriate language use.

The present findings also contribute to the development of pragmatic competence. Ishihara and Cohen (2021) emphasize that effective communication requires learners to understand not only grammatical forms but also the interpersonal intentions underlying language use. Similarly, Shu (2018) argues that explicit instruction in pragmatic features helps learners avoid pragmatic failure when interacting in real-life situations. The repeated presentation of advice expressions in meaningful contexts enables students to associate modal operators with authentic communicative purposes rather than memorizing grammatical rules in isolation.

The findings are likewise consistent with Mokoro (2024), who highlights that pragmatic competence should become an integral component of English language teaching because successful communication depends on learners' ability to select language appropriate to particular contexts. By

embedding advice expressions within dialogues, reading passages, speaking activities, and communication practices, *Interactive English 2* exposes learners to interpersonal language use that reflects authentic social interaction. Such a contextualized presentation supports learners in recognizing when and how advice should be expressed politely.

Compared with previous studies, the present research offers a more specific perspective on the interpersonal realization of giving advice in Indonesian EFL textbooks. Gao (2024) investigated the sequencing of modal verbs across educational materials, whereas Syafrayani (2025) focused on the distribution of modality categories within Indonesian English textbooks. The present study extends these findings by demonstrating how the interpersonal meaning of advice is systematically realized through repeated use of **median obligation**, thereby emphasizing the communicative function of modality rather than merely identifying grammatical forms.

Overall, the analysis indicates that *Interactive English 2* successfully integrates interpersonal meaning into classroom language. Through repeated exposure to **"should"** and **"shouldn't,"** learners are encouraged not only to understand the grammatical realization of modality but also to develop sensitivity toward interpersonal relationships, politeness, and pragmatic appropriateness in giving advice. Consequently, the textbook contributes to the development of communicative competence by combining grammatical instruction with meaningful interpersonal interaction.

3.4 Pedagogical Implications

The findings of this study provide several pedagogical implications for English language teaching, particularly in Indonesian EFL classrooms. First, the predominance of **should** and **shouldn't** demonstrates that modality should not be introduced merely as a grammatical topic but as an interpersonal resource for meaningful communication. Teachers are therefore encouraged to explain not only the structural forms of modal

operators but also their communicative purposes and interpersonal meanings.

Second, the contextual presentation of advice expressions throughout Unit 1 indicates that integrating grammar with authentic communication facilitates more meaningful learning experiences. Instead of asking students to memorize grammatical rules, teachers may design classroom activities such as role plays, problem-solving tasks, pair discussions, and situational dialogues requiring learners to provide advice in realistic contexts. Such activities align with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which emphasizes language use rather than language knowledge alone.

Third, textbook developers should continue integrating modality into various instructional components rather than limiting it to grammar explanations. The findings indicate that advice expressions appear across dialogues, reading passages, speaking tasks, communication practices, and evaluation activities. This repeated exposure provides learners with opportunities to encounter similar language functions

in different contexts, thereby strengthening both grammatical competence and pragmatic awareness.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that the interpersonal dimension of language deserves greater attention in English language instruction. As emphasized by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), language functions not only to exchange information but also to establish social relationships. Therefore, grammar instruction should be accompanied by discussions concerning politeness, appropriateness, interpersonal distance, and communicative intention. Such integration enables learners to understand why particular modal operators are selected in different communicative situations.

The present findings are also relevant to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes meaningful communication, critical thinking, and contextual language use. By presenting advice through authentic situations familiar to students, *Interactive English 2* supports curriculum objectives encouraging learners to apply English in everyday interactions rather than

relying exclusively on grammatical accuracy. Consequently, English teachers may utilize textbook materials more effectively by highlighting the interpersonal meanings embedded within classroom communication.

Finally, this study contributes to the growing body of research advocating the integration of pragmatic competence into English language teaching. Consistent with Ishihara and Cohen (2021), Shu (2018), and Mokoro (2024), the findings indicate that learners benefit from explicit exposure to communicative functions realized through modality. Such exposure enables students to develop not only grammatical competence but also the pragmatic ability necessary for successful intercultural communication.

Unlike previous studies that mainly focused on the frequency or classification of modal verbs, the present study specifically demonstrates how modality realizes interpersonal meanings of giving advice within an Indonesian EFL textbook. Furthermore, the study highlights the integration of modality across multiple instructional sections

rather than limiting the analysis to grammar explanations. These findings provide empirical evidence supporting the integration of Systemic Functional Linguistics into textbook

D. Conclusion

The study concludes that integrating modality into contextualized instructional activities facilitates meaning. This study investigated the realization of modality in giving advice in the Indonesian EFL textbook *Interactive English 2* using Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) Systemic Functional Linguistics framework. The findings revealed that giving advice was predominantly realized through the modal operators **"should" and "shouldn't,"** which function as **modulation (obligation)** within the interpersonal metafunction. These modal operators were systematically integrated across various instructional sections, indicating that the textbook presents modality not only as a grammatical feature but also as an interpersonal resource for expressing advice in meaningful communicative contexts.

The predominance of **"should"** reflects the textbook's emphasis on positive recommendations expressed

through **median obligation**, enabling learners to communicate advice politely and appropriately. The findings support previous studies on modality in EFL textbooks while extending them by highlighting the interpersonal realization of giving advice from an SFL perspective. Pedagogically, the study suggests that English teachers and textbook developers should integrate modality into contextualized communicative activities to promote learners' communicative and pragmatic competence. Future research is recommended to examine modality across different textbook series, educational levels, and communicative functions using broader corpora and complementary analytical approaches. ngful English language learning and provides practical implications for English teachers and textbook developers.

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