

MEANS OF EXPRESSING MODALITY AND DOUBLE MODALITY IN DIGITAL DISCOURSE

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Abstract. *This paper examines the expression of modality and double modality in digital discourse. As digital technologies and online communication advance rapidly, traditional linguistic categories undergo significant transformations. Modality, as a semantic and pragmatic category, is no longer expressed solely through grammatical means, but also through multimodal elements such as emojis, abbreviations, and graphic markers. Special attention is paid to the phenomenon of double modality, which involves the coexistence of multiple modal components within a single utterance. In digital communication, this phenomenon becomes more complex, combining verbal and non-verbal elements. The study applies methods of discourse analysis, corpus linguistics, and pragmatic analysis to investigate modal expressions in social media texts. The findings demonstrate that digital discourse enhances the variability and expressiveness of modality, contributing to the emergence of new communicative strategies.*

Keywords: *modality, double modality, digital discourse, pragmatics, corpus linguistics*

Introduction

In recent decades, the rapid development of digital technologies has significantly influenced the nature of human communication. The emergence of social media platforms, instant messaging, and other forms of computer-mediated communication has led to the formation of a new type of discourse commonly referred to as digital discourse. This environment is characterized by speed, informality, and the integration of verbal and non-verbal elements, which in turn affect the structure and functions of language.

One of the linguistic categories that has undergone notable transformation in digital discourse is modality. Traditionally, modality is understood as a semantic and pragmatic category expressing the speaker's attitude toward the proposition, including notions such as possibility, necessity, probability, and evaluation. It is typically realized through grammatical and lexical means, such as modal verbs and modal adverbs.

However, in digital communication, modality extends beyond purely linguistic forms. Emojis, abbreviations, punctuation, and other graphical elements play an increasingly important role in conveying modal meanings. As a result, modality in digital discourse becomes multimodal in nature, combining verbal and non-verbal resources.

Particular attention should be given to the phenomenon of double modality, which involves the coexistence of two or more modal components within a single utterance. In digital discourse, this phenomenon becomes more complex and frequent, as different

layers of modality—lexical, grammatical, and visual—interact with each other to produce nuanced meanings.

Therefore, the study of modality and double modality in digital discourse is of great importance for understanding contemporary linguistic processes. It allows us to reveal how traditional categories adapt to new communicative environments and how new expressive means emerge in response to the demands of digital communication.

The following examples illustrate how modality and double modality are expressed in digital discourse through a combination of linguistic and non-linguistic means. Traditionally, modality is expressed by modal verbs such as *may*, *can*, *must*, *shall*, *will*, etc.

He may come later.

She must be at home now.

They will probably finish the task.

In these examples, modality is expressed through modal verbs (*may*, *must*) and modal word (*probably*), which indicate possibility and certainty.

Double modality in standard English can be expressed by a modal verb+modal word:

He may probably come later.

She must surely know the answer.

They might possibly finish the work.

Here, two modal elements co-occur within the same sentence:

modal verb (*may*, *must*, *might*)

modal adverb (*probably*, *surely*, *possibly*)

This combination intensifies or nuances the speaker's attitude.

Double Modality in Digital Discourse is expressed through:

lexical markers (*maybe*, *I think*, *I guess*)

modal verbs (*might*, *must*, *will*)

pragmatic markers (*lol*)

emojis (😄)

Maybe he might come later lol

I think she must be joking 😄

He will probably come, I guess

Multimodal (Triple) Modality is typical of digital discourse. Here, modality operates on three levels:

1. grammatical (modal verb: *might*, *must*)

2. lexical (*probably*, *actually*)

3. visual/pragmatic (emoji, *lol*)

He might actually be right ☐

She will probably come haha 😄

This must be true lol 😄

This creates a **multilayered modality**,

The examples demonstrate that digital discourse significantly expands the means of expressing modality. Double modality becomes more frequent and complex due to the interaction of linguistic and extralinguistic elements, resulting in a highly expressive and nuanced communicative system.

Theoretical Background

Modality has long been considered a central category in linguistic theory, reflecting the speaker's attitude toward the propositional content of an utterance. It encompasses such semantic notions as possibility, necessity, probability, and evaluation. In modern linguistic studies, modality is viewed not only as a grammatical category but also as a functional-semantic and pragmatic phenomenon.

Recent studies have demonstrated that modality is a complex and multilayered category that can be expressed through various linguistic means. In particular, the phenomenon of **double modality** has attracted increasing scholarly attention. Double modality refers to the co-occurrence of two or more modal elements within a single utterance, forming a layered structure of meaning.

According to Səadət Nuriyeva (2019), double modality in Modern English can function as a lexical-grammatical means of expressing future reference, where modal verbs and additional modal markers interact to convey nuanced temporal and attitudinal meanings. As the author notes, "*qoşa modallıq gələcək zamanın ifadəsində əlavə semantik çalarlar yaradır*" (Nuriyeva, 2019, p. 58).

Further developing this idea, Səadət Nuriyeva (2023) emphasizes the importance of a **componential approach** to the analysis of double modality. In this framework, each modal element contributes a specific semantic feature, and their interaction results in a complex modal structure. The author points out that "*qoşa modallıq komponentlərinin qarşılıqlı təsiri nəticəsində çoxqatlı semantik struktur formalaşır*" (Nuriyeva, 2023, p. 108).

In comparative studies of English and Azerbaijani, Səadət Nuriyeva (2023) highlights both universal and language-specific features of modality, noting that while the core semantic functions remain similar, the means of expression differ significantly across languages.

Another important aspect of modality is its interaction with syntactic structures. Səadət Nuriyeva (2022) argues that inversion can serve as an additional means of expressing modality, particularly in emphasizing the speaker's attitude. Similarly, in later work, the author demonstrates that mood and inversion contribute to the formation of **layered modality**, extending the concept beyond traditional modal verbs (Nuriyeva, 2025).

The role of periphrastic modal verbs in the formation of double modality is also emphasized in Səadət Nuriyeva (2024), where it is stated that such constructions increase the expressive potential of modal meanings. In addition, ellipsis is identified as a syntactic mechanism that interacts with modal structures, allowing for more economical yet semantically rich expressions (Nuriyeva, 2025).

Furthermore, Səadət Nuriyeva (2025) points out that double modality is not limited to modal verbs alone, but also involves particles, mood, and other grammatical and lexical elements. This broader perspective is supported by the author's claim that "*double modality extends beyond traditional modal systems and includes various linguistic levels*" (Nuriyeva, 2025, p. 371).

Finally, in her recent study, Səadət Nuriyeva (2026) analyzes double modality within discourse, emphasizing its functional and pragmatic roles. The study concludes that double modality plays a crucial role in shaping meaning in real communicative contexts, particularly in dynamic environments such as digital discourse.

Corpus-based approaches play an increasingly important role in the study of modality, particularly in identifying patterns of usage in authentic language data. In this

respect, the study by T. Rudn (2020) provides valuable insights into the functioning of double modality in real discourse.

Analyzing corpus data, Rudn demonstrates that double modality frequently occurs in naturally occurring texts and is not merely a theoretical construct. The study identifies common structural patterns in which modal verbs co-occur with modal adverbs and other pragmatic markers. As noted in the article, “*double modality is often realized through the combination of modal auxiliaries and epistemic adverbs in authentic discourse*” (Rudn, 2020).

The findings also indicate that such combinations are particularly frequent in informal and semi-formal registers, which makes them highly relevant for the analysis of digital discourse. In many cases, double modality serves to mitigate the speaker’s commitment to the proposition, introducing shades of uncertainty, politeness, or subjectivity.

These observations support the conclusions of Səadət Nuriyeva (2025), who argues that double modality is a productive and dynamic phenomenon extending beyond strictly grammatical boundaries. Moreover, the corpus-based evidence confirms that layered modal structures are a natural feature of contemporary language use.

Abbreviations as Markers of Modality in Digital Discourse

In digital communication, abbreviations are not only used for linguistic economy but also function as important markers of modality. Due to the speed and informality of online interaction, speakers tend to replace full lexical units with shortened forms that convey both semantic and pragmatic meanings. These abbreviations often encode the speaker’s epistemic stance, attitude, or degree of certainty.

A significant group of abbreviations directly expresses modal meanings related to uncertainty, subjectivity, and evaluation. For example:

idk (I don’t know) → expresses epistemic uncertainty

idk, he might come later.

imo / imho (in my (humble) opinion) → indicates subjectivity

imo, she must be joking.

tbh (to be honest) → signals speaker’s evaluative stance

tbh, this could be true.

In these cases, abbreviations function as lexical modal markers that interact with grammatical modality (modal verbs such as *might, must, could*), resulting in **double modality structures**.

Moreover, abbreviations frequently co-occur with pragmatic markers and emojis, contributing to the formation of **multimodal modality**:

idk, he might be right lol

imo, this must be true 😊

u might actually be right ☐

Here, modality is expressed on multiple levels:

lexical (*idk, imo*)

grammatical (*might, must*)

pragmatic/visual (*lol, emoji*)

This interaction creates a layered structure of meaning, characteristic of digital discourse.

Examples from my students' messages:

Hello teacher how are u im going tmr.

In addition, reduced forms such as *u* (*you*), *r* (*are*), and *tmr* (*tomorrow*) contribute to the informal nature of communication, indirectly influencing modal interpretation by signaling a casual and non-committal tone:

u might come tmr

r u sure?

Such constructions demonstrate that abbreviations not only simplify linguistic expression but also participate in shaping the speaker's attitude and communicative strategy.

Thus, abbreviations in digital discourse function as significant markers of modality. They contribute to the expression of uncertainty, subjectivity, and evaluation, and when combined with other modal elements, they play a crucial role in the formation of double and multimodal modality structures.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates that digital discourse significantly transforms the expression of modality. Traditional grammatical means are complemented by lexical, pragmatic, and visual elements, resulting in multimodal communication.

Double modality emerges as a productive and widespread phenomenon, characterized by the interaction of multiple modal components. Its functions include mitigation, subjectivity, and expressive evaluation.

The findings confirm that modality in digital discourse is dynamic, multilayered, and closely connected with communicative strategies. This opens new perspectives for further research in discourse analysis, corpus linguistics, and pragmatics.

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