

MODAL OPERATORS IN DISASTER-RELATED JOURNALISTIC DISCOURSE: A CORPUS-BASED STUDY OF THE UK PRESS

TÁC TỬ TÌNH THÁI TRONG DIỄN NGÔN THIÊN TAI:
TIẾP CẬN TỪ KHỐI LIỆU BÁO CHÍ VƯƠNG QUỐC ANH

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Abstract - This paper studies the use of Modal operators - *will/would*, *can/could*, and *may/might* in UK disaster journalism. Analyzing 70 texts from seven major news outlets, the study explores how these modals function semantically and pragmatically. Findings show that *will/would* expresses future predictions with varying levels of engagement, *can/could* balances natural possibility with journalistic judgment, and *may/might* signals degrees of likelihood-with *might* specifically acting as a mitigating tool in relief contexts. Quantitatively, modal auxiliaries dominate the corpus at 63.6%, while deontic modality accounts for 25.9%. Ultimately, the research highlights how the presence or absence of modality fundamentally shapes the articulation of disaster news.

Key words - Cosmetics advertisements; referential function; Jakobson's communicative functions; advertising discourse.

1. Introduction

In the digital age, the press both reports news and shapes public perceptions [1], [2]. In disaster news, UK journalism represents events through structured discourse [3], making it important for linguistic analysis. This construction is particularly delicate during crises, where journalists must balance the urgency of real-time reporting with the social responsibility of maintaining public calm. A key feature is modality, realized through modal operators, adverbs, and related expressions, which convey certainty, capability, obligation, and evaluative stance [4]. In disaster reporting, modal operators issue warnings, predict developments, and influence audience responses [5], [6]. Strong deontic forms may prompt action, while possibility markers encourage caution. Consequently, the deployment of these linguistic resources acts as a critical bridge between raw situational data and the collective psychological response of the community. This study examines epistemic and deontic modality in disaster news to support objectivity, reduce panic, and represent disaster severity accurately. By examining these choices, the research aims to uncover the subtle framing techniques that dictate how public emergencies are communicated. Two research questions guide the analysis:

1. What role do modal operators play in UK disaster-related journalistic discourse?

2. How do modal operators construct meanings at the lexicogrammatical level in this discourse?

Tóm tắt - Bài viết nghiên cứu việc sử dụng các tác tử tình thái *will/would*, *can/could* và *may/might* trong diễn ngôn thiên tai trên báo chí Vương quốc Anh. Thông qua phân tích 70 văn bản từ 7 cơ quan báo chí lớn, nghiên cứu làm rõ cách thức vận hành của các tác tử này trên phương diện ngữ nghĩa và ngữ dụng. Kết quả cho thấy *will/would* thể hiện dự báo tương lai với các mức độ cam kết khác nhau; *can/could* dung hòa giữa khả năng khách quan và nhận định báo chí; còn *may/might* biểu thị các mức độ khả thi khác nhau, trong đó *might* đóng vai trò là công cụ giảm nhẹ độ khẳng định trong ngữ cảnh cứu trợ. Về mặt định lượng, trợ động từ tình thái chiếm ưu thế trong ngữ liệu (63.6%), trong khi tình thái đạo nghĩa chiếm 25.9%. Nhìn chung, nghiên cứu nhấn mạnh vai trò cốt lõi của tình thái trong việc định hình cách thức truyền tải tin tức về thảm họa.

Từ khóa - Tác tử tình thái; diễn ngôn thiên tai; diễn ngôn báo chí; tình thái.

Overall, the study explores how journalists use modality to balance factual reporting with public persuasion in disaster-related journalistic discourse.

2. Previous Studies

Recently, modality has become central in journalistic discourse research, where it is viewed as a pragmatic resource for expressing certainty, capability, and writer stance. It is commonly examined through Systemic Functional Grammar, pragmatics, and stylistics.

From a Systemic Functional perspective, Zhai and Liu [7] show that journalistic discourse often relies on "modulation," using intermediate modals such as *will* and *should* to frame political scenarios rather than maintain strict objectivity. Mukhtarullina et al. [8] highlight "anonymous subjectivity," where modal adverbs like *certainly* and *perhaps* help writers build credibility and guide interpretation while reducing visible subjectivity. Tanirverdiyeva [9] finds that epistemic modality generally dominates journalism, although political discourse favors deontic modality and medical discourse more often uses dynamic modality. Similarly, Wu and Wang [10] show that climate-change reporting in *The New York Times* has increasingly emphasized calls for action, with the rising use of deontic *must* since 2020 reflecting journalism's growing social responsibility.

These preliminary studies confirm that modality's influence extends beyond mere information delivery to

shape political, policy, and social realities. Consequently, researching journalistic language, specifically disaster discourse highlights the media's growing social responsibility. Against this background, the present study elucidates how journalists employ modal operators to construct disaster discourse, generating far-reaching societal impacts. To address this gap, the present study employs a focused analytical approach and a larger dataset to examine modal operators across both the lexicogrammatical and discourse-semantic strata. It focuses on six modal operators *will*, *would*, *can*, *could*, *may*, and *might*. Although Phan et al. [11] explored modality in UK disaster journalism, their analysis was limited to the discourse-semantic stratum and did not examine the functions of individual modal operators. Although Phan et al. [11] investigated modality in UK disaster journalism, their analysis was confined to the discourse-semantic stratum and did not specifically address the functions of individual modal operators. Moving beyond a broad treatment of modality, this study investigates how these operators shape disaster narratives and identifies the functional distinctions within each corresponding modal pair.

3. Theoretical Framework for Modality in Linguistics

Modality is a key linguistic category for expressing attitudes, judgments, certainty, obligation, and possibility. Early studies linked it to the truth value of propositions, specifically necessity, reality, and possibility, known as alethic modality [12]. More recent research views modality as a semantic, pragmatic, and discursive resource that helps speakers convey attitudes and manage social relations [13]. Two main approaches dominate: formal studies treat modality as a grammatical category [14], while semantic studies examine how forms encode modal meanings [15]. Palmer [16] distinguishes propositional modality from event modality, while Cervoni [17] separates core modality (e.g., clauses and modal operators) from non-core modality (e.g., lexical verbs, adjectives, mood, and speech acts).

Despite classification debates, English modal operators are commonly grouped into dynamic, deontic, and epistemic modality [18], [19]. Dynamic modality expresses ability or capacity with limited subjectivity [20], as in “That kid can sing like Frank Sinatra” or “Pete is able to solve this problem” [19]. Deontic modality concerns permission, obligation, and desirability based on speaker judgment or authority [21], ranging from necessity to unacceptability [22], as in “We must find a way to show our gratitude” [19]. Epistemic modality expresses the speaker's assessment of likelihood or truth [16] and supports hedging or boosting [23], [24], as in “That will be John” or “Maybe some more light can help” [19].

4. Research methodology

4.1. Research Design

Using a mixed-methods quantitative–qualitative approach based on Palmer's framework [16], this study investigates six modal operators (*will*, *would*, *can*, *could*, *may*, *might*) in UK disaster-related journalistic discourse. The analysis focuses on their semantic and pragmatic roles

in expressing certainty, stance, responsibility, and persuasion.

4.2. Data Collection and Corpus Building

A purposively sampled corpus was constructed from 70 articles (10 per outlet) published between 2010 and 2025 across seven UK news outlets: London Bangla, The Daily Telegraph, The Asia Today, The Guardian, News Metro, Camden New Journal, and The Sun. Selected articles contained disaster keywords- spanning atmospheric, hydrological, *geological*, and *climate events*- in both the headline and body, with no length restrictions. Raw texts were cleaned, standardized with metadata (headline, text, URL, date), and saved as.docx files, yielding a final corpus of 33,593 words.

4.3. Data Extraction and Analysis

The collected data were processed using UAM CorpusTool 6.2, a text-annotation software common in Systemic Functional Linguistics [25]. The tool enabled hierarchical annotation, automatic parsing of the target modals, and statistical analysis under Palmer's framework [16].

4.4. Validity and Reliability

To address semantic ambiguity in automated tagging [26], inter-coder reliability was assessed by having a PhD researcher and a linguistics graduate student independently annotating 20% of the corpus (14 articles).

5. Findings and Discussion

The findings cover two main aspects: the sentence-level functions of six modal operators and their broader role in constructing discourse and shaping public cognition. Additionally, the study explores how these operators articulate modal meaning and convey functional intent within English utterances.

5.1. The Role of Modal Operators in Shaping the Characteristics of Disaster-Related Journalistic Discourse

Discourse analysis examines spoken and written language in real-world contexts [27], drawing on linguistics, sociology, psychology, and communication studies [28]. By extending beyond clause-level grammar to larger stretches of text, it reveals how participants negotiate and maintain interpersonal relationships [29]. This study applies this framework to explore how modal operators in disaster-related journalistic discourse express stance and shape meaning.

The findings show that verbal modality dominates UK disaster news, accounting for 84.3% of instances, compared with 15.7% for nonverbal modality. Modal auxiliaries are most frequent (63.6%), expressing certainty, obligation, and likelihood, while lexical verbs (10.6%) and semi-modals (10.1%) add semantic nuance (see Table 1). In this study, these modal auxiliaries are conceptualized as modal operators.

Conversely, nonverbal modality is limited, with adjectives and adverbs accounting for 14.4% and 1.3%, respectively, suggesting a tendency to avoid ambiguity and subjectivity. Overall, UK disaster news favors direct and explicit linguistic resources to ensure accuracy, transparency, and communicative effectiveness.

Table 1. Modality types in disaster-related journalistic discourse

MODALITY-TYPE	N	%	Per1000Ws
verbal-modality	452	84.3	14.5
nonverbal-modality	84	15.7	2.7
Total	536	100	17.2
VERBAL-MODALITY-TYPE			
modal-auxiliary	341	63.6	11
semi-modal	54	10.1	1.7
lexical-verb	57	10.6	1.8
Total	452	84.30	14.5
NONVERBAL-MODALITY-TYPE			
adjectival-modality	77	14.4	2.5
adverbial-modality	7	1.3	0.2
Total	84	15.70	2.7

(N: occurrences; %: percentage)

Table 2 records 237 modality items, representing 44.2% of the corpus, mainly deontic modality (25.9%), followed by likelihood (11.2%) and dynamic modality (7.1%), emphasizing obligation, requirements, and recommendations.

Table 2. Semantics of modality in disaster-related journalistic discourse

MODAL-SEMANTICS	N	%	Per1000Ws
likelihood	60	11.2	1.9
requirement	139	25.9	4.5
volition	38	7.1	1.2
TOTAL:	237	44.20%	7.6
LIKELIHOOD-TYPE			
certainty	25	4.7	0.8
probability	1	0.2	0
possibility	30	5.6	1
improbability	1	0.2	0
impossibility	2	0.4	0.1
uncertainty	1	0.2	0
TOTAL:	60	11.20%	1.9
DEONTIC-TYPE			
obligation	115	21.5	3.7
advisability	21	3.9	0.7
permission	3	0.6	0.1
not-necessary	0	0	0
TOTAL:	139	25.90%	4.5
DYNAMIC-TYPE			
ability	31	5.8	1
willingness	1	0.2	0
intention	6	1.1	0.2
TOTAL:	38	7.10%	1.2

(N: occurrences; %: percentage)

In the likelihood group, possibility (30) and certainty (25) dominate, while uncertainty-related meanings occur rarely, suggesting limited uncertain information. Deontic modality is led by obligation (115) and advisability, showing the press’s action-guiding role, while permission is marginal (3). Dynamic modality is less frequent, mainly expressed through ability (31), with little focus on intention or willingness. Overall, UK disaster-related journalistic discourse emphasizes obligation, action, and clarity.

Frequent modals such as *will*, *can*, *could*, and *would* support prediction, possibility, and cautious reporting.

Table 3. Modal Auxiliaries in Disaster-related journalistic Discourse

Modal Auxiliaries					
Wording	Counts	Frequencies	Wording	Counts	Frequencies
will	90	0.2639	couldn't	8	0.0235
can	73	0.2141	can't	7	0.0205
could	53	0.1554	'd	6	0.0176
would	48	0.1408	wouldn't	1	0.0029
may	20	0.0587	shouldn't	1	0.0029
should	12	0.0352	won't	1	0.0029
might	10	0.0293	'll	1	0.0029
must	10	0.0293			

(N: occurrences; %: percentage)

Conversely, strong deontic forms like *must* and *should* are rare, reflecting a preference for objectivity over obligation. This focus on clarity and efficiency via modal operators shapes public perception and behavior during emergencies.

5.2. The Role of Modal Operators at the Clause Level in disaster-related journalistic discourse

5.2.1. Modal Operators: Will/would

Consistent with Phan et al. [11], this study finds that *will* is the most frequent modal (90 occurrences), followed by *would* (48). While Phan et al. [11] argue that this pairing mainly constructs predictions and signals press urgency in disaster news, the present findings show a more nuanced pattern. Both forms express future-oriented meanings, but *will* carries two expressive functions. First, it creates a hypothetical future projection in which predictions, hopes, warnings, or commitments reflect the subject’s stance. In the example (1), *will* marks expected temperature rise, hope for improvements affecting 20,000 farmers, and intended policy guidance in the example (2), (3).

Examples:

(1) The Met Office expects 2026 *will* be between 1.34C and 1.58C hotter than the average from 1850-1900.

(Source: The Asia Today, *Hurricane Hits Haiti Hurricane Matthew has left thousands displaced in the most powerful Caribbean storm in a decade*, 05/10/2016)

(2) Islamic Relief hopes that this project *will* improve the lives of 20,000 farmers.

(Source: London Bangla, *Islamic Relief UK launches Ramadan appeal*, 22/04/2019)

(3) A council-led study highlights the watery dangers we face due to the climate crisis- and offers practical measures that *will* guide policy for the next five years.

(Source: The Sun, *Survivors of Chile blizzard that killed Cheryl Tweedy’s ex-aide say they were forced to become rescuers amid ‘failings’*, 23/11/2025)

Secondly, *will* expresses a presumptive future where events appear predetermined and highly reliable. Examples (4), (5), (6) illustrate this through a planned schedule, an inevitable obligation, and the “maximal authenticity” of a life-threatening flash flood forecast.

Examples:

(4) It was issued by the forecaster at 10am yesterday and **will** remain in effect until 7pm tonight.

(Source: The Guardian, *Met Office: 2026 will bring heat more than 1.4C above preindustrial levels*, 18/12/2025)

(5) If drought comes, the insurer **will** pay the costs of livestock feed, to keep animals alive.

(Source: London Bangla, *Islamic Relief UK launches Ramadan appeal*, 22/04/2019)

(6) Flash flooding in burn scars **will** be life-threatening.

(Source: Camden New Journal, *'Everyone notices the flooding here when it rains – apart from the council' Businesses have to clear the drains as South End Green is submerged again*, 02/11/2023)

When it comes to *would*, it shifts the frame of reference from objective reality to a retrospective or “time-delayed” space, where projected outlines overshadow factuality. In examples (7) and (8), *would* reports a past-framed warning and marks conditional consequences; example (9) further reflects high uncertainty, standing in contrast to *will*'s relative certainty.

Examples:

(7) The Philippine president, Ferdinand Marcos Jr, said on Monday that a “state of national calamity” declared over Kalmaegi and Fung-wong **would** be extended to a full year.

(Source: Metro, *Inside the dramatic rescue of three men stuck in rising waters of Yorkshire cavern*, 06/10/2025)

(8) As soon as she got her driving license, she **would** head straight into the storms.

(Source: The Guardian, *Lima's time bomb: how mudslides threaten the world's great 'self-built' city*, 20/06/2017)

(9) At this stage our initial investigations into the storms have not found any evidence of a failure that **would** have significantly contributed to the flooding. (Source: The Sun, *Meet the 'Tornado Queen' who has outrun world's deadliest storms & nearly been decapitated... but still goes back for more*, 14/12/2025)

Syntactically and semantically, *will* and *would* serve as modal operators managing future possibilities. In disaster news, *will* tends to support direct predictions and actionable plans to foster perceived readiness, whereas *would* accommodates hypotheticals dependent on external conditions and therefore improves discourse adaptability. Importantly, their meanings are not restricted to tense; Bonyadi [30] notes that in journalistic editorials, *will/would* help establish authority and assertiveness. Similarly, Zhai and Liu [8] show that both forms can provide strategic flexibility and “safe distance,” enabling reporters to communicate likelihood while mitigating responsibility for absolute accuracy.

5.2.2. Modal Operators: Can/could

Based on frequency, the modal operators *can/could* rank second only to the *will/would* group, reaffirming the pattern observed by Phan et al. [11]. This similarity is partly explained by shared properties of the research domain- journalistic (news) discourse.

Both *feasibility* and *conditioning*. Objectively, it presents contextual factors such as environment, context, or natural laws that allow an event to occur. Subjectively, it confirms that the relevant entity possesses the internal prerequisites (e.g., knowledge, skills, or physical capability) to perform an action. This aligns with Wu and Wang [10], who argue that *can* expresses ability/capacity grounded in existing knowledge and technological conditions. Consequently, *can* tends to carry a relatively affirmative tone, closely tied to reality and emphasizing actions or outcomes that are achievable under current circumstances.

Examples:

(10) Strong winds in rural areas can cause significant damage as many farms and homes are situated on higher ground and less protected by other buildings. Rural areas **can** also be prone to power cuts with lines brought down by high winds and fallen.

(Source: Metro, *Cars washed away in huge mudslides in LA just weeks after devastating wildfires*, 13/02/2025)

(11) Our independence means we **can** say what we want, report on who we want, challenge who we want, and stand up at a time when others are sitting down.

(Source: The Asia Today, *Nepal Earthquake*, 27/04/2015)

(12) Alternatively, you **can** follow and support the initiative via Instagram:

@BarkingAbbeyJLT

(Source: London Bangla, *Barking Abbey Students Walk to Raise Funds for Bangladesh Flood Relief*, 15/07/2025)

Procedurally, *can* authorizes or steers actions once prerequisite conditions are met. In example (10), it affirms feasibility based on environmental factors (high winds), while example (11) frames it through available competence. Example (12) uses *can* to specify actionable procedures, showing how goals become achievable when a sequence is followed.

Examples:

(13) The public has also been warned that the level of rainfall **could** cause landslides.

(Source: The Daily Telegraph, *Wear wellies in heavy rain, public told Met Office also advises people in areas under amber weather warning to pack a 'flood kit'*, 30/11/2025)

(14) This will prolong the risk of landslides and **could** hamper rescue efforts.

(Source: The Asia Today, *Hurricane Irma Destroys Sir Richard Branson's Island Home*, 12/09/2017)

As for *could*, it operates as a more indirect alternative: it balances possibility and authenticity while creating a gap in both time reference and the degree of affirmation. This is consistent with Seggewiß [31], who notes that *could* is undergoing a strong “modalization” process, shifting from past-ability uses toward hypothetical or cognitive nuances. Example (13) illustrates a backward step that yields a more cautious predictive warning, while example (14) combines *could* with *will* to express reduced likelihood and higher uncertainty regarding “the possibility of landslides.” Functionally, both *can* and *could* modify the main verb to indicate likelihood, while also reflecting the speaker's judgment capacity and commitment to the information.

5.2.3. Modal Operators: *May/might*

In addition to serving as a modal operator, *may* signals a prediction about an action, but differs from *will* in that it frames conjectures as grounded in objective evidence available at the present moment. Thus, the assessment that people's lives were "severely affected 'by this heartbreaking disaster'" is justified in example (15), because it is supported by an objective factual basis such as "a record-breaking storm."

Examples:

(15) The King added: "This most dreadful of record-breaking storms reminds us of the increasingly urgent need to restore the balance and harmony of Nature for the sake of all those whose lives and livelihoods **may** have been shattered by this heartbreaking disaster."

(Source: The Daily Telegraph, *At least 30 dead as Hurricane Melissa tears through Caribbean*, 30/10/2025)

(16) "You **may** need to amend or even cancel journeys if driving conditions are dangerous," the forecaster said.

(Source: The Daily Telegraph, *Wear wellies in heavy rain, public told Met Office also advises people in areas under amber weather warning to pack a 'flood kit'*, 30/11/2025)

May is also frequently used in conditional structures to express the likelihood that an event may occur. Unlike general forecasts, such conditional uses represent speculation tied to specific situations. In example (16), for instance, *may* allows a change or cancellation of travel when "driving conditions are dangerous." This parallels the future-assumption function of *will*, yet the use of *may* is consistently anchored in more realistic premises rather than purely projected expectations.

Building on Wu and Wang [10], *may* is often associated with contexts of uncertainty, particularly in discussions of climate-change consequences, where it functions as an effective hedge to preserve journalistic integrity when issues lack absolute commitment. However, this study further argues that *may* also carries a predictive role linked to concrete practical circumstances: it does not guarantee occurrence, but it still organizes interpretation around plausible, situation-specific outcomes.

Examples:

(17) It includes:

- Advice from Warwick York consultants on ways residents **might** protect their properties from flooding, based on surveys of eight local properties.

- A link to Thames Water's London Flood Review reports into how the threat of flooding in the capital **might** be addressed.

(Source: The Sun, *Bert has taken three lives with the Met Office warning of more 70mph winds and travel chaos to come*, 25/11/2025)

(18) "If you are not flooded yourselves, please **might** you come to our rescue?"

(Source: The Sun, *Cyprus swamped by floods as storm batters holiday island leaving streets underwater and cars floating away*, 09/12/2025)

In turn, *might* is treated as the past-variant of *may*, commonly appearing in indirect speech or narrative reporting to express speculation about uncertain possibilities. As noted by Megat Khalid [32] *might* allows authors to embed subjective evaluations while avoiding absolute claims, a point also echoed by Seggewiß [31] regarding its tendency to replace *may* for stronger hedging. In example (17), *might* frames the possibility of people "protecting their property" following expert advice, while in example (18) it mitigates directives by converting a direct request into a more deferential appeal. Overall, *may* and *might* articulate evidence-based projections and cautious, low-imposition communication in disaster-related journalistic discourse.

Ultimately, this suggests that these modal operators may help journalists balance accurate reporting with risk warnings through two complementary groups: the factual group (*will, can, may*) appears to guide quick public action by outlining natural patterns and the capacity to respond (*can*), predicting the future based on facts (*will*), and making realistic guesses based on current situations (*may*); the hypothetical group (*would, could, might*) seems to reduce commitment by shifting the focus to future possibilities (*would*), making events seem less definite to avoid putting too much pressure on the narrative (*could*), and offering thoughtful, narrative-style speculations (*might*). Through these two groups, journalists are arguably able to not only warn readers about disasters but also inspire expectations, predictions, or calls to action, all while maintaining a balanced and objective voice in their writing.

5.3. Discussion

Bonyadi [30] identifies modal operators as key resources in journalistic discourse, especially predictive forms (*will/would*), which help establish authority and decisiveness in global issues. These verbs combine with modal adverbs, adjectives, and clauses to form an integrated modal system. In UK disaster news, verbal modality accounts for 84.3%, with modal operators representing 63.6% and mainly expressing certainty, obligation, and likelihood. Deontic modality, especially obligation and requirement, is the most frequent type (25.9%). These findings align with Phan et al. [11], confirming modality's strong role in disaster reporting. Overall, modality particularly deontic forms helps convey information, shape public perception, and guide behavior during crises.

Modality also varies across journalistic and political discourse according to communicative purposes. Iwamoto [33] shows that President Bush's Iraq speech uses high-value deontic modality and emotive language to project authority and influence public behavior. Similarly, Lillian [34] finds that two Canadian Conservative texts rely mainly on validity and predictability but differ in deontic meanings such as desirability, permission, and obligation. This suggests that modality adapts to specific topics and rhetorical goals.

Clause-level modality has also received attention. Shakeel and Sadiq [35], analyzing 4,504 clauses in inaugural speeches, identify *must, shall, and will* as key markers of commitment and institutional authority. Zhai and Liu [8] distinguish propositional and proposal clauses, showing that adverbial conjunctions dominate implicit

orientation (64.8%). Pham Hung Viet [36] notes that Vietnamese sentence-level particles function as modal markers of stance and interaction. In the present study, *may/might*, *can/could*, and *will/would* precede main verbs to mark certainty and epistemic status, with *may/might* and *can/could* mainly expressing probability, potentiality, and evaluative stance toward natural phenomena.

6. Conclusion

The findings demonstrate that the semantic and pragmatic functions of the target modal operators are foundational to how catastrophic events are represented, allowing reporters to structure both the factual delivery of information and the reader's interpretation of unfolding events.

The specific functions of these pairs vary: *will/would* predominantly encode future-oriented estimations and epistemic commitment, while *can/could* convey inherent possibility and serve evaluative or inferential roles. In contrast, *may/might* express likelihood but often act as mitigating devices to soften the force of disaster warnings and relief propositions, especially when compared to the higher certainty of *will*.

Quantitatively, modal operators are the most prominent expression of modality in the corpus, accounting for 63.6% of the data, with deontic modality making up 25.9%. Ultimately, these results highlight how modals encode informational stance and interpersonal positioning in journalism. Given the variation observed across genres, the study suggests that future research should explore a wider range of text types to provide a more comprehensive account of modal semantics in news reporting.

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