



## Realization and functional use of modality in Marhata Sinamot texts

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### Abstract

This scientific research article deals with the realization and functional use of modality in Marhata Sinamot (MS) events. Due to the limited amount of time and fund, there were three MS events recorded and used as the source of data in this research. The languages used in these MS events characteristically belong to three distinctive regional dialects called Samosir, Toba, and Humbang. The types of modality in each MS events were all identified, tabulated, and used as data in this research. The data analysis was carried out by using SFL theory (Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) and the flow model of the qualitative data analysis theory (Miles and Huberman, 1984). It was found out that modality in each MS event was realized by modal, mood adjunct, and comment adjunct; and a specific realization of modality was functionally used either to express the concept of pure probability, dynamic probability, intentional probability, usuality, or obligation. The variants of modality in each MS events characteristically vary from those in the others.

**Keywords:** modality, functional use, marhata sinamot, and toba batak

### 1. Introduction

Modality is an important linguistic device that is functionally used to signal both the speaker's opinion or knowledge about the world and the speaker's commitment or attitude in doing something to the others. A study on the Toba Batak modality was conducted recently, but the data used in the previous research articles were taken randomly from various descriptive texts and informal daily communications (Napitupulu, 2008 and Sinurat, 2011/2014) [11, 20, 21].

*Marhata Sinamot* (MS) is a cultural communication that is specifically intended to discuss the dowry (marriage price), location, the convenient time, and everything required in a wedding party. This cultural communication is usually held at the house of the bride's parents one or two weeks before a wedding party is held. A wedding party in Toba Batak society is possibly held either at the house of the bride or the groom's parents, but the location is always decided in accordance with the agreement or decision made by the parents of the bride and the groom. If a MS is held at the house of the bride's parents, then the wedding party is usually held at the house of the groom's parents, or the reverse.

There are three MS events selected purposely as the source of data in this research, and the interactants in each MS event apparently use different regional dialect and custom. Each cultural communication, as a matter of fact, is conducted formally between people of different sociocultural strata, and the types of modality expressed by the key speakers characteristically differ from one another. Therefore, further research is apparently required in order to find out the specific realization and functional use of modality especially in MS event. Besides, the typology of the psychological characteristics of the interactants in expressing their opinions or commitment can also be identified based on the frequency

distribution of modality in each MS event.

Toba Batak is one of the ethnic groups who live in the northern part of Sumatera-Indonesia. The term Toba Batak (TB) in this research is henceforth referred to both the Toba Batak people and the language they use (Vergouwen, 1964 and Sinaga, 2010) [23, 17].

### 2. Theoretical Review

Theoretically every language has its own modality (Halliday, 1994:354; Fasold, 2006:154) [6, 4]. Modality is an important linguistic device that allows a speaker to express both his opinion about the world, and his personal commitments or attitudes towards other people (Halliday, 1994:88) [6]. From the perspective of Semantics, it is differentiated into epistemic modality and deontic modality. Epistemic modality is functionally used to signal the degrees of a speaker's knowledge or opinion, while deontic modality is functionally used to signal the speaker's commitment or attitude based on the social factors of obligation, responsibility, and permission coded in his expression. From the perspective of SFL, epistemic modality is referred to the concept of probability and usuality called as Modalization, while deontic modality is referred to the concept of obligation and inclination called as Modulation.

Modality can be realized either by modal, comment adjunct, modal adverb or modal verb as mood adjunct (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014:693) [7]. Based on the theory explained by Alwi (1997), the concept of probability can be differentiated into three types, namely: pure probability, dynamic probability, and intentional probability. Pure probability (PP) is referred merely to the concept of probability; and dynamic probability (DP) is referred to the concept of both probability and ability; while intentional probability (IP) is referred to the

concept of probability, hope and desire. (2014) [21] and Bloner (2016) [1], can be drawn as in the following figure.

The types and values of the TB modality, according to Sinurat

**Table 1:** Types and Values of Modality in TB

Types of Modality	Value		
	High	Medium	Low
Probability	pasti (do) ‘certain’ hampir pasti ‘certain’	hupingkir ‘I think’; huhilala ‘I think’; di rohangku ‘I think’; menurut ahu ‘according to me’; boi sajo ‘probably’; mungkin ‘probably’; suman ‘likely’; tagamon do ‘probably’	(olo do) ra ‘maybe, perhaps’
Usuality	holan ‘always’ maos ‘always’ ganup ari ‘every day’ ganup tingki ‘frequently’ jotjot ‘frequently’ somal ‘usually’	hea ‘ever’; antar somal ‘rather frequently’; antar jotjot ‘rather frequently’	sipata/sasahali ‘sometimes’, ndang hea/so hea ‘never’
Obligation	Ingkon ‘must’	dumenggan (do) ‘It’s much better’ or ‘had better’	denggan (do) ‘It’s better’ or ‘would better’
Inclination	Ingkon ‘must’	dumenggan (do) ‘It’s much better’ or ‘had better’	denggan (do) ‘It’s better’ or ‘would better’

Speakers in any TB cultural communication, as a general rule, consist of *Suhut* ‘the family who is in charge of the party’, *Dongantubu* ‘the brothers of the family, and one of them is always appointed as the Spokesman who act on behalf of *Suhut*. *Boru* ‘the daughters or sisters of the family’, *Hulahula* ‘the wife-giving family or the bride’s parents’, and *Tulang* ‘the brother of one’s mother, who also belongs to the group of *Hulahula*. These three interactants (*Hulahula*, *Dongantubu*, and *Boru*) are known as the components of the Adat Dalihan Natolu (ADN) ‘the three fundamental bases of the TB culture’ in addition to the Village elders, who act on behalf of the people in the village.

*Hulahula* has a superior power than *Boru*, but the power of a speaker in each group (*Hulahula*, *Dongantubu*, or *Boru*) is usually determined by the age or seniority of the speaker himself. Speakers who always get involved in a MS event can be differentiated into the bride’s parents (BP), the speaker of the bride’s parents (SBP), the groom’s parents (GP), the speaker of the groom’s parents (SGP), the brothers of the bride’s father (BBF), the brothers of the groom’s father (BGF), *Tulang* of the bride’s father (TBF), Bonatulang of the bride’s father (BtBF), *Boru* of the bride’s parents (BoBP), *Boru* of the groom’s parents (BoGP), the bride’s *Amangboru* (BA), the groom’s *Amangboru* (GA), brothers of the groom’s father (BGF). Village elders (VE), and audience (A). *Bona Tulang* is the *Tulang* of one’s father, and *Amangboru* is the husband of the sister of one’s father, and *Namboru* is the sister of one’s father who is also called as *Parorot* ‘baby sitter’, and *Bona ni ari* ‘Tulang of one’s grand farther’ (Panggabean, 2007; Siahaan, 1982) [13, 16].

**3. Research Methodology**

As has been mentioned previously, there were three MS events used as the source of data in this research; and each of them belonged to distinctive regional dialect called Samosir, Toba, and Humbang. These MS events were all recorded by using a video camera, and the expressions uttered by the key speakers were all transcribed and validated through an interview with some TB cultural experts.

The transcription of each MS event is called MS text (MST). MST that is referred to Samosir dialect is called MST1; and MST that is referred to Toba dialect is called MST2; and MST that is referred to Humbang dialect is called MST3. Clauses

that contain modality in each MST are all identified and tabulated, and they are all used as data in this research. After the data condensation it is found out that 35 clauses are found in MST1, and they are coded 1.1 through 1.35; 33 clauses are found in MST2, and they are coded 2.1 through 2.33; and 26 clauses are found in MST3, and they are coded 3.1 through 3.26.

The realization and functional use of modality in each MST are all identified, tabulated, and analysed in accordance with SFL theory (Hallidaay and Matthiessen, 2014) [7] and the flow model of qualitative data analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1984). In order to find out the regular patterns on the realization and the functional use of modality in each MST, the interactants and the interacting pairs are all identified, and so is the mood of the each clause in each MST. Then the conclusion is drawn through a comparative analysis between the realization and functional use of modality within these three MSTs. While the interpretation on the way how the speakers express their opinions or commitments to the others is based on the frequency distribution of modality in each MST.

**4. Findings and Discussion**

After analyzing all MS events, it was found out that each of them lasted for about half an hour. Referring to MST1, it was found out that there were 85 speech turns and 12 kinds of interactants and 10 interacting pairs; and after the data condensation it was found out that there were 35 clauses containing 14 variants of modality (3 modals, 7 mood adjuncts, and 4 comment adjuncts). Besides, a few types of modality were recurrently used, and the total occurrences of modality in this text were 39 times. The concept of pure probability was realized by mood adjunct *haroa* ‘perhaps’<sup>(1.21, 1.24)</sup> and comment adjuncts (*n*)*inna rohangku* ‘I think’<sup>(1.18, 1.34)</sup>, *inna roha nian* ‘I think’<sup>(1.22)</sup>, *Huhilala* ‘I feel or I think’<sup>(1.20)</sup>; the concept of dynamic probability was realized by modal *boi* ‘can’<sup>(1.4, 1.7, 1.12, 1.19, 1.23, 1.26, 1.28)</sup>; the concept of intentional probability was realized by mood adjuncts *sai* ‘may’<sup>(1.2, 1.4, 1.5, 1.9, 1.10, 1.11, 1.12, 1.13, 1.14, 1.29, 1.30, 1.31, 1.35)</sup>, *sai anggiatma* ‘may’<sup>(1.3)</sup>, *sai anggiatma tutu* ‘may’<sup>(1.8, 1.17)</sup>; the concept of usuality was realized by mood adjuncts *biasa* ‘usually’<sup>(1.27)</sup>, *biasana tutu* ‘usually’<sup>(1.1)</sup>, *sai* ‘always’<sup>(1.6)</sup>; the concept of obligation was realized by comment adjunct *Hami mandok* ‘We dare

say<sup>(1.25)</sup>, modals *ndang boi* ‘should not’<sup>(1.25)</sup>, and *ingkon* ‘ought’<sup>(1.15, 1.16, 1.32, 1.33)</sup>; and the concept of inclination was realized without using any modality.

Referring to MST2, it was found out that there were 89 speech turns and 12 kinds of interactants and 7 interacting pairs. Through the data condensation it was found out that there were 33 clauses containing 20 variants of modality (4 modals, 9 mood adjuncts, and 7 comment adjuncts). A few types of modality were also recurrently used, and the total occurrences of modality in this text were 41 times. The concept of pure probability was realized by mood adjuncts *antar* ‘possibly’<sup>(2.27)</sup>, *manang antar songon diape* ‘possibly’<sup>(2.9, 2.13)</sup>, and *ra* ‘perhaps’<sup>(2.15, 2.32)</sup>, and comment adjuncts *inna roha nian* ‘I think’<sup>(2.14)</sup>, *Huhilala* ‘I feel or I think’<sup>(2.24)</sup>, *didok rohangku* ‘I think’<sup>(2.22)</sup>, *di rongku* ‘I think or in my mind’<sup>(2.28, 2.33)</sup>, *didok rohanami* ‘We think’<sup>(2.29)</sup>; the concept of dynamic probability was realized by modals *tolap* ‘can’<sup>(2.9)</sup> and *boi* ‘can’<sup>(2.1, 2.2, 2.6, 2.13, 2.15)</sup>; the concept of intentional probability was realized by mood adjuncts *sai* ‘may’<sup>(2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.8, 2.26, 2.34)</sup>, *anggiatma tutu* ‘may’<sup>(2.16, 2.18)</sup>, *sai anggiatma tutu* ‘may’<sup>(2.17)</sup>, and *anggiatma antong* ‘may’<sup>(2.7)</sup>; the concept of usuality was realized by mood adjuncts *biasa* ‘usually’<sup>(2.25)</sup> and *biasana* ‘usually’<sup>(2.20)</sup>; the concept of obligation was realized by comment adjuncts *Hami mandok* ‘We dare say’<sup>(2.23)</sup> and *Ianggo pangidoannami* ‘What we want’<sup>(2.11, 2.31)</sup>, and modals *tung* ‘ought’<sup>(2.19)</sup> and *ingkon* ‘ought’<sup>(2.10, 2.11, 2.12, 2.14, 2.23, 2.30, 2.31)</sup>; and the concept of inclination was realized without using any modality.

Referring to MST3, it was found out that there were 85 speech turns and 5 interactants, and 6 interacting pairs. After the data condensation it was found out that there were 26 clauses containing 14 variants of modality (3 modals, 6 mood adjuncts, and 5 comment adjuncts). A few types of modality

were recurrently used, and the total occurrences of modality in this text were 28 times. The concept of pure probability was realized by mood adjuncts *antar* ‘probably’<sup>(3.3, 3.21, 3.22)</sup>, *ra* ‘probably’<sup>(3.6)</sup> and *hira-hira* ‘probably’<sup>(3.16)</sup>, and comment adjuncts *inna rohangku* ‘I think’<sup>(3.25)</sup>, *Huhilala* ‘I feel or I think’<sup>(3.7, 3.15, 3.18)</sup>; the concept of dynamic probability was realized by modals *tolap* ‘can’<sup>(3.4, 3.10)</sup> and *boi* ‘can’<sup>(3.5, 3.9, 3.12, 3.17, 3.20, 3.23, 3.24)</sup>; while the concept of intentional probability was realized by mood adjunct *sai* ‘may’<sup>(3.1, 3.2, 3.14, 3.26)</sup>; the concept of usuality was realized by mood adjunct *biasa* ‘common’<sup>(3.22)</sup>; the concept of obligation is realized by comment adjuncts *ahu mandok(kon)* ‘I dare say’<sup>(3.6, 3.8)</sup>, *nahudok disi* ‘What I want to say’<sup>(3.11)</sup>, *pangidoannami* ‘What we want’<sup>(3.5)</sup>, modal *ingkon* ‘ought’<sup>(3.19)</sup>, *sandok* ‘apparently’<sup>(3.13)</sup>; and the concept of inclination was realized without using any modality.

In line with the above data analysis, the realization of modality in MST1, MST2, and MST3 can be displayed as in Graph 1 below; while the frequency distribution of the functional use of modality is displayed respectively in accordance with the number of the interacting pairs in each MST as in Graph 2, Graph 3, and Graph 4 below.

It has already been mentioned that modality in MS event is realized either by modal (M), mood adjunct (MA), or comment adjunct (CA); and each of them is functionally used either to express the concept of pure probability (PP), dynamic probability (DP), intentional probability (IP), usuality (U), and obligation (O). The functional use of modality in each MS event is tallied or coded with (√). Based on the above data, the realization and functional use of modality in these three MS events can be displayed as in the following tables.

**Table 2.** Realization and Functional use of Modality in MST1

Realization	No.	Types of Modality	PP	DP	IP	U	O	I
M	1	<i>boi</i> ‘can’		√				
	2	<i>tolap</i> ‘can’						
	3	<i>ndang boi</i> ‘should not’					√	
	4	<i>ingkon</i> ‘ought’					√	
MA	1	<i>biasa</i> ‘usually’				√		
	2	<i>biasana tutu</i> ‘usually’				√		
	3	<i>haroa</i> ‘perhaps’	√					
	4	<i>sai</i> ‘may’			√	√		
	5	<i>sai anggiatma</i> ‘may’			√			
	6	<i>sai anggiatma tutu</i> ‘may’			√			
CA	1	( <i>n</i> ) <i>inna rohangku</i> ‘I think’	√					
	2	<i>ninna roha nian</i> ‘I think’	√					
	3	<i>Huhilala</i> ‘I feel or I think’	√					
	4	<i>Hami mandok</i> ‘We dare say’					√	

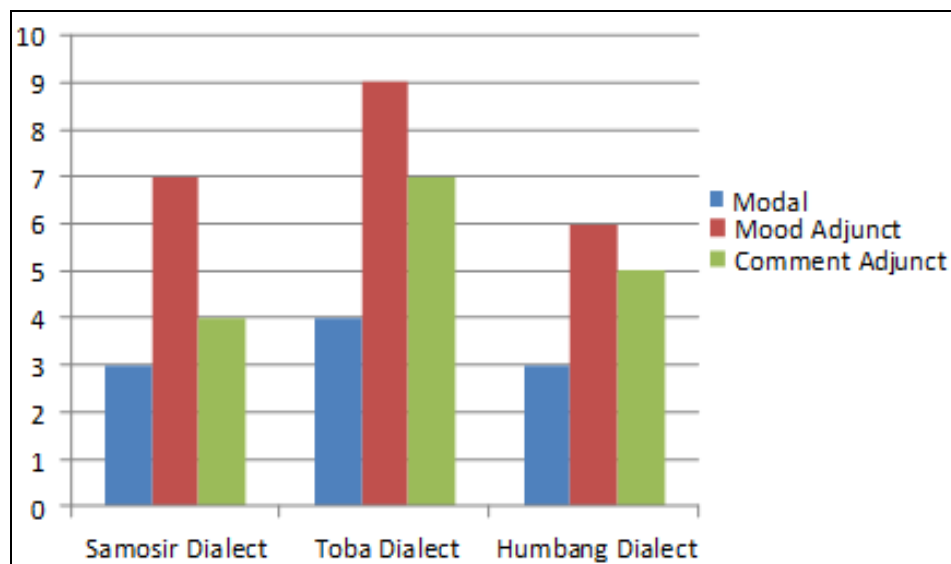
**Table 3:** Realization and Functional use of Modality in MST2

Realization	No.	Types of Modality	PP	DP	IP	U	O	I
M	1	<i>boi</i> ‘can’		√				
	2	<i>Tolap</i> ‘can’		√				
	3	<i>tung</i> ‘ought’					√	
	4	<i>ingkon</i> ‘ought’					√	
MA	1	<i>antar</i> ‘possibly’	√					

	2	<i>manang antar songon diape</i>	√					
	3	<i>ra</i> 'perhaps'	√					
	4	<i>biasa</i> 'usually'				√		
	5	<i>biasana</i> 'usually'				√		
	6	<i>sai</i> 'may'			√			
	7	<i>anggiatma tutu</i> 'may'			√			
	8	<i>anggiatma antong</i> 'may'			√			
	9	<i>sai anggiatma tutu</i> 'may'			√			
CA	1	<i>inna rohangku</i> 'I think'	√					
	2	<i>didok rohangku</i> 'I think'	√					
	3	<i>di rohangku</i> 'I think'	√					
	4	<i>Huhilala</i> 'I feel or I think'	√					
	5	<i>didok rohanami</i> 'We think'						√
	6	<i>Hami mandok</i> 'We dare say'						√
	7	<i>langgo pangidoannami</i> 'What we want'						√

**Table 4:** Realization and Functional use of Modality in MST3

Realization	No.	Types of Modality	PP	DP	IP	U	O	I
M	1	<i>boi</i> 'can'		√				
	2	<i>tolap</i> 'can'		√				
	3	<i>sai</i> 'may'			√			
	4	<i>ingkon</i> 'ought'					√	
MA	1	<i>antar</i> 'probably'						
	2	<i>ra</i> 'probably'	√					
	3	<i>hira-hira</i> 'probably'	√					
	4	<i>biasa</i> 'common'				√		
	5	<i>sandok</i> 'apparently'					√	
CA	1	<i>inna rohangku</i> 'I think'	√					
	2	<i>Huhilala</i> 'I feel or I think'	√					
	3	<i>nahudok disi</i> 'What I mean to say'					√	
	4	<i>Ahu mandok</i> 'We dare say'					√	
	5	Pangidoannami 'What we want'					√	



**Fig 3:** Realization of Modality in Samosir, Toba, and Humbang

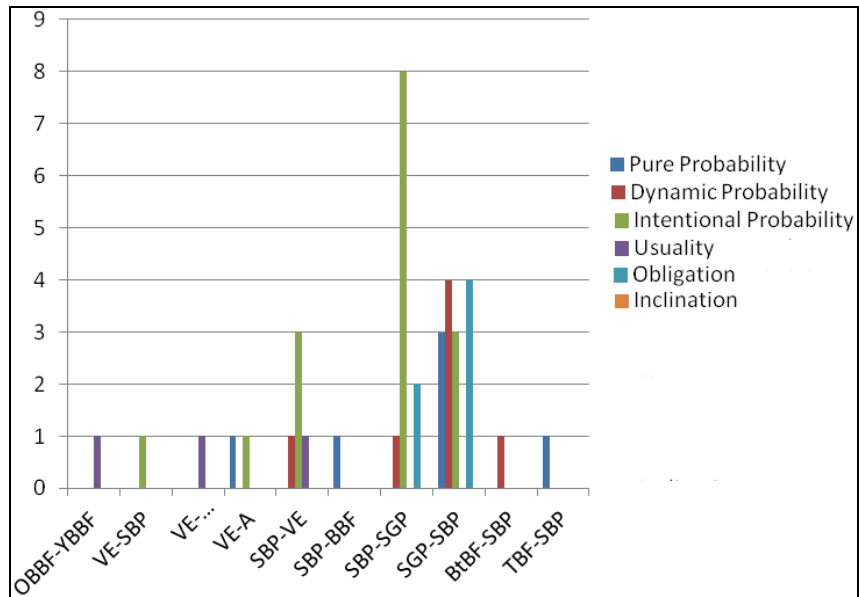


Fig 2: Frequency Distribution of Modality in MST1

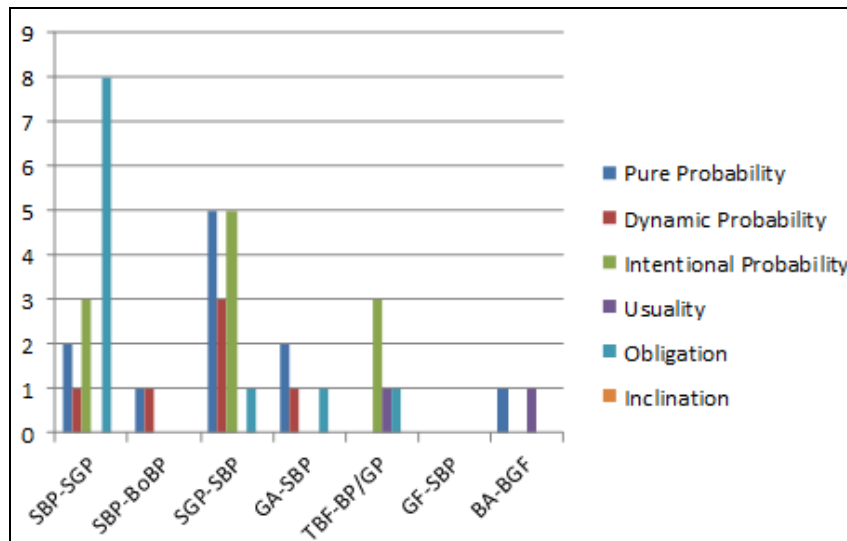


Fig 3: Frequency Distribution of Modality in MST2

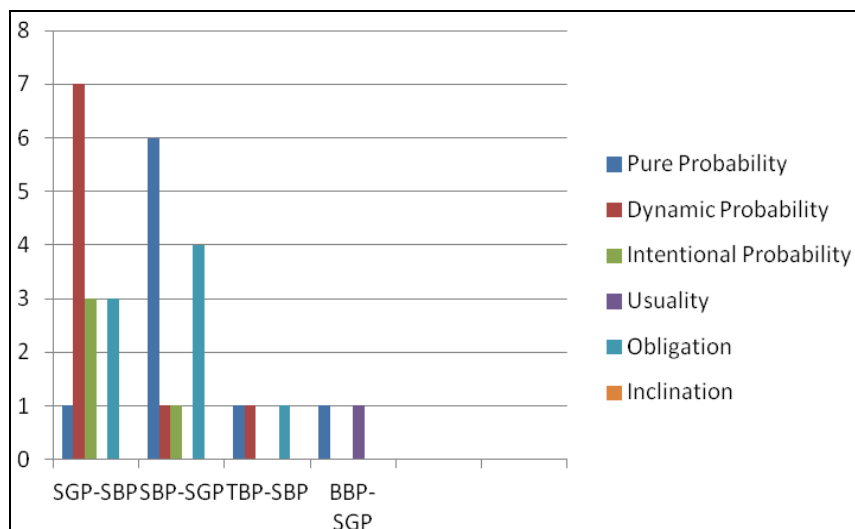


Fig 4: Frequency Distribution of Modality in MST3



After analyzing the above data, it is obviously seen that more variants of modality were used by the interactants in MST2 than those in MST1 and MST3. Modality in these MS events is evidently referred to both modalization and modulation. Modalization in MST1, as what the speakers usually believe in, is mostly used to express benedictory words that would bring good things or fortune to the bride and groom as well as their families. Modalization in MST2 is mostly referred to the concept of pure probability and intentional probability; while modalization in MST3 is mostly referred to the concept of pure probability. The expression that is referred to the concept of pure probability is mostly realized by comment adjunct or mood adjunct, which is functionally used to assert factual and cultural realities. Pertaining to the use of modulation, it seems that the speakers in MS event tend to be fond of making an obligation rather than an inclination. Since the data in this research are restricted to the realization and functional use of modality in MS cultural communications, further research is apparently required so as to find more evidences on the realization and functional use of modality in other kinds of speech events, as well as the aspects that potentially affect its translation from TB as the SL into English the TL.

## 5. Conclusion

Based on the data analysis, it is found out that the number of interactants, interacting pairs, and the frequency distribution of modality in line with its functional use in each MS event evidently vary from one another. Modality in each of the above cultural communications is realized either by modal, mood adjunct, or comment adjunct; and a specific type of modality is functionally used either to express the concept of pure probability, dynamic probability, intentional probability, usuality, and obligation. Speakers in MST1 particularly used modality for the expression of the concept of intentional probability more than the other concepts; and those in MST2 equally used modality for the expression of the concept of pure probability, intentional probability and obligation; while those in MST3 mostly used modality for the expression of the concept of pure probability.

Based on the frequency distribution of modality in each MS event, it was found out that speakers in MST1 tend to be fond of giving fortunate or benedictory words either for the bride, the groom, and their families. The TB, as a matter of fact, ideologically hope that their descendants will be more successful than the parents themselves. Speakers in MST2 used modality for the expression of the concept of pure probability, intentional probability, and obligation equally. So it can be interpreted that speakers in this MS event are also fond of saying fortunate or benedictory words, telling factual or cultural realities, and making obligation to the people whom they speak to. While speakers in MST3 mostly used modality for the expression of the concept of pure probability on one hand and expressed the least concept of intentional probability on the other hand. Speakers in MST3 evidently did not frequently use modality in the expressions of fortunate or benedictory words, and it was obviously seen that they were all sure of the factual truth of what they expressed or hoped.

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