Original Paper

Analysis of the Interpersonal Meaning in the Teacher Discourse in Competition Videos

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Abstract

This study, grounded in Systemic Functional Linguistics, examines the form and distribution of mood and modality in English classroom discourse by the winner of the Special Prize at the 12th "Foreign Language Teaching Society Cup" National College Foreign Language Teaching Competition (English Major Group). It reveals how interpersonal meaning is realized in the teacher's discourse and explores teacher-student relationships. The analysis shows a predominant use of the declarative mood, followed by interrogative and imperative moods. This balance reflects the teacher's dual role as both knowledge disseminator and facilitator of student participation, steering away from a wholly authoritative position. Minimal use of the imperative mood suggests discussions are mainly informational, reducing student pressure and promoting an equal and harmonious classroom atmosphere. Declarative moods serve multiple functions, whereas interrogatives stimulate student engagement. Modal preferences indicate a balance between directive and facilitative communication, emphasizing low modal values to foster respect and a student-centered approach. This strategy illustrates the teacher's respect for students, embracing roles such as guide and observer, and offers insights for creating inclusive and effective university English classrooms.

Keywords

Interpersonal meaning, mood, modality, teacher discourse, case study

1. Introduction

Teacher discourse is a critical medium for conveying interpersonal meaning in English language teaching. Different choices in teacher discourse can convey varying interpersonal meanings, which influence the interaction between teachers and students, the classroom atmosphere, and, ultimately, the effectiveness of classroom activities. Poor discourse usage can result in miscommunication, reduced classroom interaction, and lower student participation, thereby impacting the overall quality of

teaching.

In university-level English classrooms, interaction between teachers and students, particularly in guiding students toward English language output, is more emphasized compared to secondary school settings. Thus, examining teacher discourse from an interpersonal meaning perspective is crucial for fostering democratic, equal teacher-student relationships and creating a relaxed learning environment.

Previous research on teacher discourse has primarily focused on discourse features, effectiveness, and methodological approaches. However, studies that investigate the functions and impacts of teacher discourse remain limited. This study draws on Halliday's theory of interpersonal meaning to analyze teacher discourse in award-winning videos from the 12th "Foreign Teacher Cup" National College Foreign Language Teaching Competition (English major group), particularly focusing on the mood and modality systems. The analysis aims to reveal how teachers convey interpersonal meaning through discourse choices and how these choices facilitate teacher-student interaction, thereby building an efficient learning-oriented classroom environment.

From a theoretical perspective, this study explores the interpersonal meaning of teacher discourse through the lens of functional linguistics, specifically Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG). It validates the application of interpersonal meaning theory in analyzing teacher discourse and contributes to the development of functional linguistics in educational contexts.

From a practical standpoint, this research examines the classroom discourse of award-winning teachers in the "Foreign Teacher Cup" competition. The competition videos, while similar to typical university English classrooms, also exhibit unique features in terms of discourse strategies and teaching design. By analyzing these videos, the study offers valuable insights for improving teacher discourse in regular university English classrooms, providing a reference for university English teachers aiming to enhance classroom interaction and teaching effectiveness.

2. Literature Review

Teacher discourse refers to the language used by teachers during classroom instruction and plays a crucial role in shaping classroom dynamics and influencing student learning outcomes. In foreign language teaching, it serves a dual role as both the medium of instruction and a model for students' language use (Walsh, 2011). The term "Discourse Analysis" gained prominence following the publication of Harris's (1952) seminal paper, "Discourse Analysis." This work catalyzed scholarly interest, leading many researchers to delve into and expand the field, thereby continuously exploring and broadening the scope of discourse analysis. Since then, significant strides have been made in understanding teacher discourse, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s when scholars began integrating discourse analysis into language teaching. Research in this area provides insights into how teacher discourse affects various aspects of education, from classroom management to student engagement and understanding.

One of the fundamental aspects of teacher discourse is its role in facilitating classroom interaction.

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Through effective discourse, teachers can establish a communicative environment that encourages student participation and fosters an inclusive learning atmosphere. For instance, Mercer and Dawes (2008) highlight that dialogic teaching, which prioritizes open-ended questions and collaborative dialogue, enhances student critical thinking and comprehension. This approach contrasts with monologic teaching, where the teacher dominates the conversation, often limiting student engagement (Alexander, 2008).

Moreover, teacher discourse is pivotal in modeling language and thinking processes for students. Studies by Wells (1999) indicate that the way teachers frame their questions and responses can significantly influence how students articulate their thoughts and engage with the subject matter. By adopting a scaffolding approach, teachers can progressively develop students' cognitive abilities, guiding them toward independent learning (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976).

The cultural and linguistic diversity present in many classrooms today further underscores the importance of adaptable teacher discourse. Cazden (2001) emphasizes that teachers need to be sensitive to the linguistic backgrounds of their students to facilitate effective communication and cultural inclusivity. This sensitivity is crucial in multilingual settings where language barriers may pose significant challenges to learning and participation.

Additionally, research by Nassaji and Wells (2000) suggests that teacher feedback is an integral component of effective discourse. Constructive feedback, characterized by specificity and encouragement, can motivate students and provide clear guidance on how to improve. Conversely, negative feedback or vague comments can deter student motivation and hinder learning progress.

Technology's integration into education has also impacted teacher discourse. The use of digital platforms and resources requires teachers to adapt their communication strategies to engage students effectively in virtual environments. According to Laurillard (2013), technology-mediated discourse offers opportunities for personalized learning and increased student interaction, although it also demands new skills from teachers to manage these interactions effectively.

In conclusion, teacher discourse is a multifaceted construct that plays a pivotal role in shaping educational experiences. Its strategic use not only facilitates content delivery but also fosters a learning environment that promotes student interaction and engagement. Continued exploration in this area, particularly through diverse theoretical lenses and in varied classroom settings, will further illuminate the complexities and potential of teacher discourse. Additionally, previous studies often focused on teacher discourse in actual English classrooms, with little analysis of teacher discourse in teaching competitions. Therefore, this paper employs Systemic Functional Linguistics to explore the interpersonal meaning in teacher discourse within competitive contexts.

3. Research Design

3.1 Research Subject

This study focuses on Hu Xiaoran, a teacher from Beijing Normal University, who won the Special

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Prize in the 12th "Foreign Language Teaching Cup" National College Foreign Language Teaching Competition (English Major Group). The research data is derived from the teaching competition video and its transcribed material, where Hu Xiaoran was awarded the Special Prize. The video was obtained from the official account of Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press Co., Ltd., which is certified by the Bilibili platform. The total duration of the video is 25 minutes, with 20 minutes dedicated to the actual teaching content after excluding the introduction by the participating teacher to the judges and the comments from the professional judges. This study will only analyze the transcribed text materials from the formal teaching segment.

3.2 Research Questions

In contemporary English language teaching, particularly within university settings, the classroom dynamic has evolved beyond a teacher-centered approach. Successful classes hinge on two-way interaction between the instructor and students, with the teacher's language playing a pivotal role in facilitating these exchanges. It not only imparts knowledge but also aids students in developing critical thinking, responding to questions, and engaging in English communication with the teacher. The concept of interpersonal meaning examines teacher-student interactions, highlighting how specific language choices lead to effective communication. This study addresses the following questions:

1. How does the teacher convey interpersonal meaning through mood choices?

2. How does the teacher convey interpersonal meaning through modality choices?

3.3 Research Methods

Nvivo 11 software was utilized to transcribe the video into text for analysis, with revisions and improvements made alongside the video content. Given that this study focused solely on the textual mode, non-verbal elements such as pauses, gestures, and body language from the competition video were excluded from the sample data. The software facilitated an in-depth discourse analysis of the transcribed material. This process involved coding relevant elements of teacher discourse in the English class during the competition through the lenses of mood and modality, followed by comprehensive quantitative statistics. Finally, specific instances of teacher discourse were thoroughly analyzed to illustrate how interpersonal meaning is conveyed and its impact on teaching quality, teacher roles, and teacher-student relationships.

4. Theoretical Framework: The Interpersonal Meaning in Systemic Functional Grammar

Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) is a grammar framework developed by English linguists-Halliday. SFG categorizes the meaning expressed by semantics and grammar into ideational meaning, interpersonal meaning, and textual meaning. Interpersonal meaning focuses on how individuals use language to express their views and attitudes in communication, aiming to resonate with the listener and achieve communicative goals. According to Halliday, interpersonal meaning is "meaning as a form of action: the speaker or writer doing something to the listener or reader by means of language" (Halliday, 1978, p. 53). Mood and modality are considered the main means of expressing interpersonal

meaning.

4.1 Mood System

SFG posits that communication between speakers and recipients involves two basic tasks: offering and demanding. The objects of communication can be goods, services, or information. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004, p. 119) identified four main speech functions that reflect communicative roles and exchanged objects: offer, command, statement, and question. The declarative mood is associated with statements, used to express opinions, facts, and provide information. The interrogative mood is associated with questions, used to seek information. The imperative mood is associated with commands, while the offer can be expressed through different moods (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 114). The study of mood is crucial in analyzing interpersonal meaning in a text, as different moods convey different functions of the words used by characters, providing insights into their inner world. Figure 1 presents the mood system in English.
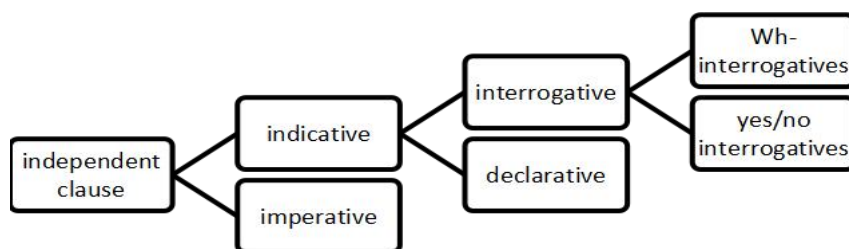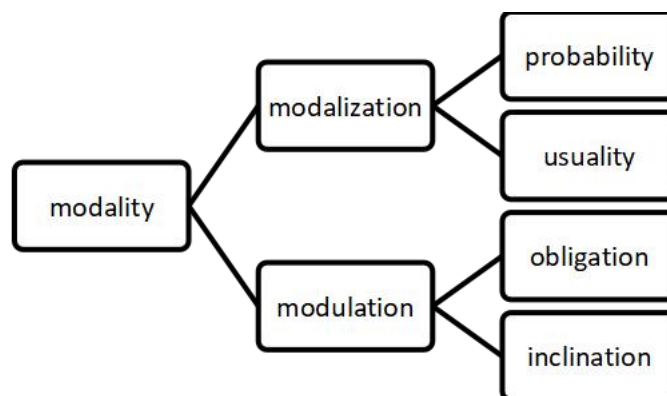

Figure 1. The Mood System in English

4.2 Modality System

Modality is an important component of interpersonal meaning, encompassing the speaker's judgment on the success and effectiveness of the proposition being spoken, the obligations imposed on the addressee in commands, or the personal desires expressed in proposals (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 147). Modality meaning is mainly conveyed through modal verbs ("should," "will," etc.), modal adverbs ("probably," "usually"), and extended elements of predicates ("be supposed to," "be required to"). Interpersonal metaphors ("I think," "I believe") can also be used to express modality meaning (Thompson, 2013, pp. 73-74).

The broad modal system includes modalization and modulation. Modalization can indicate probability ("certainly," "possibly") and usuality ("sometimes," "always"), which can also be expressed using modal verbs. Modulation includes obligation and inclination. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) establish three basic values on the scale: high, median, and low. Figure 2 gives a system of modality in English.

Figure 2. The Modality System in English

5. Results and Discussion

This section examines the teacher's discourse in English classrooms during the National College Foreign Language Teaching Contest, using it as a focal point to elucidate the specific realization pathways and linguistic expressions of interpersonal meaning in teacher discourse. This examination is conducted through three aspects: mood and modality system. The research data presented in this section consist of transcribed textual materials, aiming to explore the interpersonal meaning conveyed in teacher discourse. Additionally, it aims to showcase the teacher's role and the interactive relationship between teachers and students in English classrooms.

5.1 Mood System in Teacher Discourse

Three typical mood types are declarative mood, interrogative mood, and imperative mood, which are manifested as declarative sentences, interrogative sentences, and imperative sentences, respectively, in syntax. Teachers can select different moods to assume various speech roles for themselves and their students, such as giving information or requesting action. This section examines the interpersonal meaning implied in different mood types of teacher's discourse in English classrooms during the National College Foreign Language Teaching Contest. Through quantitative analysis of the collected data, the distribution and frequency of mood structures in the teacher's discourse are revealed.

Table 1. Distribution and Frequency of Mood Structures in Teacher's Discourse

Mood structure	Declarative	Interrogative	Imperative	Total
Number	57	51	11	119
Percentage	47.9%	42.9%	9.2%	100%

According to Table 1, the proportion of mood structures in the teacher's discourse is clearly outlined. The declarative mood, used most frequently, accounts for 47.9% of the total, followed by the interrogative mood at 42.9%, and the imperative mood, with the least usage, at 9.2%. Declarative

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sentences primarily function to provide information, whereas interrogative sentences aim to elicit information. The similar frequency of declarative and interrogative moods suggests that teachers provide information nearly as often as they seek it from students. This indicates that teachers serve not only as knowledge providers but also as facilitators, encouraging active student participation. Moreover, the minimal use of imperative mood highlights that classroom interactions focus mainly on information exchange rather than commands. Consequently, it can be concluded that the teacher plays the role of an information provider in the English classroom without exerting complete dominance in the classroom. The significant presence of the interrogative mood further implies that teachers allocate substantial classroom time to students, fostering effective teacher-student interaction.. Interrogative sentences not only stimulate learners' thinking but also encourage them to produce more English output. The infrequent use of imperative mood alleviates learners' sense of pressure and eases linguistic stress in the classroom, thereby creating an equal and harmonious teacher-student relationship. In the following sections, we will analyze in detail the interpersonal meaning conveyed by the three mood structures in the teacher's discourse.

5.1.1 Declarative Mood in Teacher's Discourse

Referring to Table 1, it is evident that the declarative mood predominates among all mood types, suggesting that the teacher primarily acts as an information provider in the English classroom, supplying more information than soliciting it. In line with Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar theory, the declarative mood can facilitate interpersonal interactions aimed at delivering goods and services or transmitting information. An analysis of the declarative sentences within classroom discourse reveals that their use by the teacher serves a variety of interpersonal functions, contingent on the nature of the information shared. One primary function is to provide pertinent information about the teaching content, such as introducing the course, offering guidance for subsequent teaching activities, or elaborating on specific knowledge areas. For example:

(1) T: Okay, welcome to this class. We're going to talk about ambition in this unit and especially in this very first article. So first of all let me ask you some questions.

S: goal getter.

(2) T: it's a go getter, right? it's an informal and colloquial expression. but it is really vivid. it means someone who's always going to get something it's a go getter.

Example (1) consists of the teacher's introductory remarks at the beginning of the class, which include welcoming the students, stating the theme of the class, and posing introductory questions to engage the students' attention from the outset. Example (2) involves the teacher providing an explanation for the synonym "goal-getter" related to the word "ambition," thereby aiding students in comprehending and internalizing the meaning of the term.

A second function of declarative sentences is restating or enriching students' answers. On one hand, this practice serves to affirm and validate students' responses, and on the other hand, it aims to refine and elaborate on their viewpoints, offering a deeper understanding. In the classroom setting, learners often

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experience pauses, redundancies, or inaccuracies in their speech due to nervousness or limited English speaking abilities. In such instances, the teacher's repetition of students' answers accomplishes dual purposes: it positively acknowledges their contributions while simultaneously enhancing their expression. This process not only supports learners in noticing and correcting language errors and deficiencies but also builds their confidence in using the language more accurately and fluently. For instance:

S: I think yes, I think yes, because I think I have many goals and I have a strong desire to achieve them.

T: Okay, so you think you have the desire to achieve your goal. So you do believe you're an ambitious person.

In this example, the teacher restates the student's answer, rendering it more complete and specific. On one hand, this action affirms the student's response, signaling that the teacher acknowledges and understands the student's grasp of the question. By employing this approach, the teacher not only affirms the student's comprehension but also demonstrates respect and politeness towards the learners, thereby conveying a willingness to be their attentive audience. In such a supportive environment, students often feel that their genuine thoughts are understood by the teacher, which in turn boosts their confidence to actively participate, fostering a more lively and focused classroom atmosphere. By adopting a straightforward tone, the teacher effectively assumes the roles of both listener and helper.

The third function of declarative sentences in the classroom is expressing emotions and opinions. In this context, the teacher provides comprehensive evaluations of the figures discussed in the lesson, particularly those mentioned in the accompanying video material. This evaluative commentary not only enriches the learning content but also models critical thinking skills for the students. For example:

S: Steve Jobs.

T: Yes, I think these figures are very similar to the examples that you just gave, because these people have all made their own achievements in their respective fields, whether it is in the political world, the sports world, or the business world. They are, of course, very ambitious because they want to change the world in their own way and they certainly have the ability to achieve their ambitions.

A further function involves providing feedback, which is typically directed at students' responses and is generally positive in nature. For instance, expressions such as "very interesting answer," "Good answers," and "Right on point" serve to offer constructive feedback. Such positive reinforcement stimulates learners' positive emotions and attitudes, encouraging continuous engagement and active participation in the learning process. Through these various uses of declarative sentences, the teacher creates a dynamic and supportive classroom environment conducive to effective learning.

In conclusion, the teacher employs the declarative mood to express various interpersonal functions, which include providing relevant information about the teaching content, restating or enriching students' responses, expressing emotions and opinions, and giving positive feedback. By utilizing the declarative mood in these ways, the teacher effectively fulfills multiple roles within the classroom setting. For instance, as an information provider, the teacher conveys essential knowledge and

contextual details, ensuring that students have a clear understanding of the subject matter. As an organizer, the teacher structures classroom activities and discussions in a coherent and logical manner. As a guide, the teacher restates or enriches students' responses, thereby affirming their contributions and facilitating deeper comprehension. In the role of an evaluator, the teacher offers both positive and constructive feedback, which helps to encourage student engagement and bolster their confidence.

Through the realization of these interpersonal functions, the teacher adeptly switches between the roles of information provider, organizer, guide, and evaluator to engage in effective and dynamic interactions with students. This multifaceted interaction not only enhances the learning experience but also fosters a classroom environment that is both supportive and intellectually stimulating. Such an environment is conducive to active participation, critical thinking, and the overall academic development of the students. Consequently, the teacher's strategic use of the declarative mood plays a vital role in the successful execution of classroom activities and the academic advancement of learners..

5.1.2 Interrogative Mood in Teacher Discourse

From Table 1, it can be observed that the interrogative mood in the teacher's discourse is nearly equal in proportion to the declarative mood, accounting for almost half of the mood structures. Through analysis of the textual material, it is found that the teacher's questions fall into two distinct categories: yes/no questions, comprising 32 sentences and accounting for 62.74% of the interrogative mood, and wh-questions, comprising 19 sentences and accounting for 37.26% of the interrogative mood. The data indicates that, compared to wh-questions, the teacher employs yes/no questions more frequently. Yes/no questions serve to check students' understanding or to provide clues and guidance for answering more challenging wh-questions, thereby offering students both support and inspiration. Wh-questions, on the other hand, are designed to effectively stimulate learners' cognitive processes and foster critical thinking skills. This distribution demonstrates a robust and interactive classroom environment. The predominant use of yes/no questions strategically guides students' thinking, providing clear pathways for their thought processes when confronted with relatively difficult questions.

According to Halliday's systemic functional grammar, the interrogative mood also serves various interpersonal functions in the classroom, including asking for information, requesting goods and services, giving commands, making requests, offering suggestions, extending invitations, and engaging in persuasion. Through the data analysis, it can be observed that the main interpersonal functions of the interrogative mood in the classroom discourse include asking for information, stimulating student thinking, encouraging student responses, and confirming or verifying information to students.

Firstly, in this English class, asking for information is the most frequent interpersonal function realized through the interrogative mood, encompassing both yes/no questions and wh-questions. For example:

(1) T: Now let's look at these pictures. Do you know these people? Do you think they're ambitious? Who are they?

(2) T: Okay, so tell me, what are their views on ambition? What does ambition mean to them respectively?

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Examples such as (1) in English class illustrate general yes/no questions, strategically crafted to guide students in processing the class material. These questions are relatively simple and serve as precursors to more complex, open-ended questions, thereby facilitating a transition in students' cognitive processing from basic comprehension to a more sophisticated level of analysis. In contrast, example (2) involves an open-ended wh-question posed after students have engaged with a video. This type of question is designed to prompt deeper reflection and elicit detailed responses, encouraging students to expand on their initial observations. For relatively straightforward topics, the teacher employs wh-questions to directly draw out specific information, nurturing a more interactive and dynamic classroom atmosphere. This deliberate use of varying question types aids in progressively challenging students' thinking, fostering both understanding and critical engagement with the material.

Next, the interrogative mood is also used for confirming or verifying information to students, for example:

(1) T: Yes, and also probably willpower, right?

(2) T: Of course, Mike Coney is an ambitious person, right?

(3) T: It's a go-getter, right? It means someone who's always going to get something, a go-getter. But in the third paragraph, he also mentions his father, right?

(4) T: Okay, finished?

In situations where the teacher is uncertain about students' comprehension, adopting yes/no questions can effectively confirm or verify their understanding. These questions can also ascertain whether students have completed a given task. Such expressions are systematically integrated into classroom discourse, indicating the teacher's active role as an observer who attentively monitors students' thoughts and emotions while valuing their feedback on the educational content delivered. This approach underscores the teacher's commitment to creating a responsive and engaging learning environment that prioritizes student engagement and the accurate assimilation of knowledge. By incorporating these techniques, the teacher not only assesses comprehension but also fosters a supportive atmosphere conducive to active learning.

Furthermore, the interrogative mood is employed to encourage students to respond to questions, for example:

(1) T: Determination. Okay, I don't have enough space. So yes, I think it's kind of closer to these. Anything else?

(2) T: Okay, so anything else? Any specific things that he's striving for?

(3) T: Right. what about you, absolutely?

The teacher employs phrases such as "Anything else?" and "What about you?" to actively invite students to respond to questions, thereby facilitating meaningful teacher-student interaction. This strategy serves as an essential method to encourage active participation and the expression of personal opinions among students. By adopting this approach, the teacher provides ample opportunities for students to engage in speaking the target language, ensuring their involvement in the classroom

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process.

5.1.3 Imperative Mood in Teacher Discourse

The imperative mood is primarily employed to issue commands or instructions aimed at obtaining goods and services. As demonstrated in Table 1, the imperative mood constitutes the smallest proportion in the teacher's discourse samples. Excessive use of imperative sentences might generate a sense of oppression and tension among students, potentially inhibiting their engagement in classroom interactions. Consequently, teachers often prefer using declarative and interrogative moods when encouraging student participation in classroom activities. However, given the constraints of classroom time, a judicious use of imperative sentences can enhance teaching efficiency by streamlining instructions, thereby having a positive effect on classroom management and the overall learning experience. For example:

T: So now let's turn to the article, the text itself, to see what the author has to say about this topic of ambition and its relationship with success. Okay, first of all, I want you to spend some time, probably half a minute, to quickly read through paragraphs 1 and 2, and then I'm going to give you some questions.

5.2 Modality in Teacher Discourse

Modality, as an important component of interpersonal meaning, refers to the speaker's judgment on the success and effectiveness of the proposition they are making, the obligations they impose in commands, or the personal intentions they express in proposals (Thompson, 2013, p. 70). Modality is mostly expressed through modal verbs ("should," "will," etc.), modal adverbs ("probably," "usually"), and predicate extensions ("be supposed to," "be required to"). A kind of grammatical metaphors ("I think," "I believe") can also be used to convey modality (Thompson, 2013, pp. 73-74). The broad modality system includes both modalization and modulation. Modalization indicates probability ("certainly," "possibly") and usuality ("sometimes," "always"), both of which can also be expressed through modal verbs. modulation includes obligation and inclination. Below are the distribution and frequency of various modality structures in teacher discourse.

Table 2. Modality Structures in Teacher Discourse

Value	Modulation		Modalization		Total
	Obligation	Inclination	Probability	Usuality	
High			certainly (1)	always (1)	2
Median	will (1)		of course (2)		6
			should (1)		
			be supposed to (1)		
			probably (1)		
Low	may (1)		might (2)		20

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	can (12)		I think (5)		
Total	14	0	13	1	28

From Table 2, it can be observed that, in terms of modality, the teacher's use of modulation and modalization is distributed equally. This distribution indicates that whether the commodity exchanged by the teacher in the class is information or goods and services, both modalities have similar frequencies of use. When it comes to exchanged information, the teacher predominantly employs modalization to express probability. Conversely, for exchanged goods and services, the teacher prefers modulation to convey obligation. The modality structures used by the teacher are represented across all three values: high, median, and low. Among these, low-value modality structures hold the highest proportion, followed by median-value, and finally, high-value. Modality refers to the degree or scale of obligations, probabilities, or intentions of the communicative participants when exchanging goods and services. From the data in Table 2, it can also be seen that the teacher is more inclined to use obligation-oriented language to request students' participation in teaching activities.

In terms of modulation, the teacher rarely employs high-value and median-value words to request student participation in classroom activities. This suggests a "people-oriented" approach by the teacher. In the context of an English classroom, high-value modality words often indicate high coerciveness, which accentuates the inequality in the teacher-student relationship and may induce feelings of fear and unease among students. Such conditions are not conducive to fostering a relaxed and pleasant learning atmosphere. On the contrary, low-value modality offers students more options and choices. Requests or commands presented with low-value modality words reflect the teacher's respect and politeness towards students. Consequently, suggestions made by the teacher are often more readily accepted or rejected by students without imposing too much psychological burden or pressure. The frequent use of low-value words by the teacher reflects a softer tone, appearing more amiable, and providing students with greater autonomy. This approach is beneficial in guiding students to actively engage in classroom activities and voluntarily share their thoughts, thus promoting a more inclusive and participatory learning environment. For example:

T: You can think of your own synonyms, not in these two paragraphs.

T: And you can use specific examples in the first paragraph to illustrate your ideas. You can have a quick discussion with each other, and then we're going to share your answers with the rest of the class.

T: You may need to take some notes.

Furthermore, in terms of modulation, the teacher does not employ "inclination" but rather prefers "obligation." On one hand, using "obligation" is more direct, which is beneficial for saving time and enhancing classroom efficiency. On the other hand, the teacher does not position herself at the center of the classroom; instead, she prioritizes the students. Therefore, she is more inclined to use discourse that positions students as the primary actors in guiding classroom activities. This approach underscores the teacher's commitment to fostering a student-centered learning environment.

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In modalilation, the teacher places more emphasis on usuality rather than probability. Modalization expressing probability relates to the likelihood of a proposition being true. Despite the teacher's certainty about the teaching content, she still employs modal words such as "of course," "I think," and "probably." This usage makes the teaching content more flexible and open, providing space for students to accept, communicate, and interact. By incorporating these modal expressions, the teacher demonstrates a willingness to engage. For example:

T: They are, of course, very ambitious because they want to change the world in their own way and they certainly have the ability to achieve their ambitions.

T: Yes, I think these figures are very similar to the examples that you just gave, because these people have all made their own achievements in their respective fields, whether it is in the political world, the sports world, or the business world.

6. Conclusion

This study is grounded in systemic functional grammar theory and analyzes the form and distribution characteristics of English classroom discourse delivered by the winner of the Special Prize at the 12th "Foreign Language Teaching Society Cup" National College Foreign Language Teaching Competition (English Major Group). It aims to reveal the realization of interpersonal meaning in the teacher's discourse and explore the interpersonal relationships between teachers and students.

The study found that, in terms of mood structure, the teacher predominantly uses the declarative mood, followed by the interrogative mood, and lastly, the imperative mood. The frequency of providing information to students does not markedly differ from that of seeking information from students. This balanced approach indicates that the teacher not only serves as a knowledge disseminator but also actively encourages students to participate in the classroom, rather than adopting an entirely dominant role. Moreover, the minimal use of imperative mood implies that the classroom exchanges are primarily informational rather than service-oriented. The limited application of the imperative mood reduces students' sense of pressure and alleviates linguistic stress, thereby fostering an equal and harmonious teacher-student relationship.

Regarding mood structure, the declarative mood performs several interpersonal functions within the teacher's discourse, including providing teaching-related information, restating or enriching students' responses, expressing emotions and viewpoints, and offering evaluations. The interrogative mood is employed to request information, confirm or verify understanding, and encourage students to answer questions. The imperative mood primarily issues commands or instructions; its limited use can save time and enhance teaching efficiency while maintaining a supportive learning environment.

In terms of modality, the teacher's preference for using obligation to issue commands and probability to provide information suggests a balance between directive and facilitative communication. Specifically, the teacher tends to use low modal values when inviting students to participate in activities or provide information, demonstrating respect and politeness in alignment with the "people-oriented" concept.

This approach underscores a commitment to student-centered pedagogy, promoting student autonomy and engagement.

This study highlights that the teacher respects students, values teacher-student interaction, and endeavors to fulfill multiple roles, such as knowledge disseminator, classroom guide, and student observer. The teacher's strategic implementation of interpersonal meaning through mood and modality structures offers valuable insights and can serve as a reference for other university English teachers aiming to create an effective and inclusive classroom environment.

This study analyzed the competition video of a single award-winning teacher from the 12th "Foreign Language Teaching Society Cup" National College Foreign Language Teaching Competition (English Major Group), which limits its representativeness. Future research should aim to collect and analyze classroom data from a broader range of award-winning teachers to ensure the generalizability and robustness of the results. By expanding the sample size, future studies can provide more comprehensive insights into the dynamics of English classroom discourse.

This study focused exclusively on the interpersonal meaning of teacher discourse by examining mood structure and modality systems. However, other related theoretical frameworks, such as the appraisal system, also play a significant role in shaping teacher-student interactions. Future research should consider incorporating these additional theories to offer a more holistic analysis of teacher discourse. By integrating multiple theoretical perspectives, future studies can yield a more nuanced understanding of how various linguistic strategies contribute to effective teaching and student engagement.

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