
Modality in Admission Documents of Public Medical Institutions in Punjab: An SFL-Based Study

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Abstract

The process and debate around medical admissions are also contentious in terms of power dynamics in Punjab. This paper examines the modality system used in the admission documents, policy notification, and application form of public medical universities of Punjab (Pakistan). The study examines the linguistic construction of institutional authority and applicant obligations in the study's light of Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) with a particular focus on the interpersonal metafunction. This study uses a corpus approach by using 5 official documents from the institution, such as the University of Health Sciences (UHS), Services Institute of Medical Sciences (SIMS), Sargodha Medical College (SMC), Faisalabad Medical University (FMU), and the overall policies of the Government of Punjab, to identify the dominant modal operators. The results show that high value modulation (deontic modality) is massively used, especially with modal operators like 'shall' and 'must', as well as negative polarities. This linguistic approach is to produce an authoritative, monologic discourse which places the institution as an unchallengeable gatekeeper, and the prospective student as a subservient actor who has non-negotiable legal obligations. The study draws attention to the impact of the social dimension of the debates on the admission notices in education. It states that these texts are not only sources of information but are also good tools of control. The study also examines the normalisation process of exclusion of candidates in terms of objective and clear language. his perspective enables them to perceive institutional rejection not only as just exclusion but as an automatic reaction, related to language. Finally, in this detailed analysis, there is a clear argument that language understanding is an important way to understand the workings of power in post-colonial educational systems in which the academic futures of students are determined by bureaucratic inertia. The study implies that the language used in medical admission policies in Punjab functions as a powerful institutional mechanism that legitimizes authority, normalizes exclusion, and restricts applicants' agency through highly authoritative and obligation-centered discourse.

Keywords: Medical admissions, Power dynamics, Systemic Functional Linguistics, Modality system, Institutional authority, Public medical universities

1. Introduction

Language is hardly a neutral medium. It is not just a restatement of the world around us, but also a creation of social realities, a management of relations with interlocutors, and a negotiation of power relations. In the

institutional discourse, all the texts created by institutions carry a lot of ideological undertones and power asymmetry. One of the last areas in which students have no control over their future careers is education, especially at highly competitive institutions like medical schools. The admission process of public medical universities is undoubtedly one of the most competitive academic competitions in the context of the province of Punjab, Pakistan. Tens of thousands of candidates compete for a limited number of seats every year in the prestigious institutions. The power gradient is always imbalanced: what the universities have is power; what the applicants have is a petition, which can be treated with an iron fist. This extreme rivalry fosters a sociological situation conducive to the absolute rule of the bureaucracy, which is carefully regulated and sanctioned in its language.

When the student comes to the public medical university, the first formal contact between the student and the University is through the document for admissions, the policy notification and the application form issued by the University. These documents may seem like basic information at first glance, detailing eligibility requirements, cost details, and deadlines. But a more linguistic reading of these texts suggests that the texts are more fundamentally regulatory and disciplinary. Not just asking for the applications, they are making it a rule. This authority is embedded in the very text and must be analyzed in terms of the lexicogrammatical decisions of the authors of these documents. The Modality system, following Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), is one of the most revealing linguistic systems to reveal such dynamics. Suggestions, requests, or commands made to applicants by an institution reflect a linguistic indicator of the underlying power balance.

In a general sense, modality is the area in language between absolute truth and absolute falsehood or between a definite command and a definite refusal. The words 'must' and 'shall not' are used in forms by institutions to assert that the form must be completed and that the institution will dominate the situation. The main purpose of this paper is to break down the discourse of admissions used at the public medical universities of Punjab through the lens of SFL. This study attempts to uncover the invisible structure of power that is entrenched within the educational discourse of the bureaucracy through the reading of texts from the University of Health Sciences (UHS), Services Institute of Medical Sciences (SIMS), Sargodha Medical College (SMC), Faisalabad Medical University (FMU), and in the overall policies of the Government of Punjab. We will look at how these institutions make administrative processes irrefutable, legalistic, and binding, thus turning the applicant into a compliant citizen of the medical-educational apparatus of the state.

This research is important because it looks deeper than just the surface of academic policies. It explores the specific language choices that shape how applicants react to these policies. Many people discuss the stress and anxiety of taking medical entrance exams (MDCAT) in Pakistan, but little has been written about the formal language that officially begins this process. These documents are more than just statements of facts; they actually create a situation where applicants are in a less powerful position. This study thoroughly applies Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to uncover the grammatical structures medical colleges use to manage a group of eager and willing applicants.

2. Research Questions

This study is guided by the following primary research questions, designed to unpack the complex layers of institutional discourse:

1. How is the Modality system (encompassing both modalization and modulation) linguistically deployed in the admission documents and policy documents of public medical universities in Punjab?
2. What do the specific choices of modal operators (such as 'shall', 'must', 'will', 'may') and their respective values (high, median, low) reveal about the asymmetric power dynamics and social relations between the medical institutions and the prospective applicants?
3. To what extent does the institutional discourse transition from informational exchange (epistemic

modality) to regulatory command (deontic modality) to enforce disciplinary control over the admission process?

4. How do these institutions utilize implicit and explicit orientations of modality to obscure human agency and present their authority as an unassailable, objective reality?

3. Literature Review

3.1 Theoretical Undercurrent: Systemic Functional Linguistics and Modality

This study is based on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), which was developed in the late 20th century, particularly by Michael A.K. Halliday. SFL differs from previous formal linguistics that have tended to consider language as a set of cognitive structural rules functioning in isolation, in that it considers language as a 'social semiotic'. Is a system of meaning-making that is embedded in the social, cultural and historical context where it takes place. According to Halliday, language had to develop this way because it has to fulfill certain functions in human society. Thus, each use of language, each clause, both spoken and written, serves three modes of Metafunctions – the Ideational, the Interpersonal, and the Textual.

The Ideational metafunction deals with our experience of the outer and the inner world: it involves the logical relations between these experiences (who did what to whom, in what circumstances). The packaging of the message as a text is concerned by the Textual metafunction that deals with the organization of the message, its coherence and cohesiveness within the broader context. But the key is the Interpersonal metafunction of this study. The Interpersonal metafunction is used to express the speaker's or writer's feelings and attitudes, to create a social relationship, and to define the role the writer or speaker is playing, such as informing, asking a question, giving an order, or offering. The Interpersonal metafunction is mainly manifested in the Mood block (Subject + Finite) and the Modality system within the clause grammar.

Modality is the midpoint between the positive and negative extremes of a proposition or a proposal, according to Halliday (1994, 2004). Modality deals with the large gray zone between the statement of fact ('The university is open') and the absolute denial ('The university is not open') of that fact. Modality is a linguistic means that allows speakers to express their judgments or requests. It falls into two different groups according to the type of communicative exchange: Modalization and Modulation.

The function of modalization is associated with propositions, namely, information exchange. Its main focus is on 'Probability' - the chances of a statement being correct - possibly/probably/certainly. Also addresses 'Usuality,' which is the frequency of an occurrence, sometimes, usually, always. If a university prospectus claims something like 'A clinical rotation is likely to start in the third semester,' the author is using the modal to mean something like 'has a very high chance of starting in the third semester'. Modalization is the opinion about the validity of the speaker.

Modulation, however, is related to proposals, which are exchanges in goods and services (commands and offers). It addresses 'Obligation' (necessity/demand/allowed to/should/could/must), ranging from 'allowed to' to 'should' to 'required to/must'. It also addresses 'Inclination,' which relates to the desire to carry out an action - from 'willing' to 'anxious' to 'determined'. The category of Modulation (a sub-category of Obligation) is at its apex in the context of documents like admission policies, application forms, etc., which are bureaucratic or legalistic. It is the main language in which institutions set boundaries, rules and dictate behavior.

In addition, Halliday classifies modal operators into three different values: High, Median, and Low, representing the strength or intensity of the modality. High-value modals (must, ought to, need to, has to, shall) have a high degree of certainty, absolute truth, or obligation. Modals that have a median value (like will, would, should, is to) indicate that something is probable or necessary, but not quite certain. Low value modals (may, might, can, could) indicate possibility, option, or permission. In institutional texts, there is never a moment of accident in the selection of value; it is a clear expression of the power that the institution wants to assert itself.

Also, it is possible to express modality in differing orientations, which is important for an understanding of bureaucratic avoidance of responsibility. The modality is subjective or objective and explicit or implicit as per the orientation. The phrase 'I think you should submit the form' is explicit and subjective, meaning that it is clear that the speaker intends for action. 'You must submit the form' is subjective and implicit, which puts the responsibility on the listener, but hides the speaker's responsibility. Objective explicit: It is required that the form be submitted; this is now presented as a natural law. Bureaucratic discourse is strongly biased towards the objective and implicit, which conceal the personal author behind the impersonal authority of the 'institution', the 'policy', or the 'committee'.

3.2 Survey of Literature: Institutional Power, Ideology, and Bureaucratic Discourse

The institutional discourse study has long noted that there is a lot of power content in bureaucratic texts. Within a tradition that builds on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), scholars such as Norman Fairclough have applied SFL tools extensively to demonstrate the encoding of power and ideology in everyday texts that are in institutional contexts. Fairclough (1989, 1992, 2003) suggests that language is a social practice that is constructed and constrained by broader social practices. The education discourse created by universities is not only a product of university administration, but also a mechanism of proactive reproduction of its social authority and maintaining the status quo.

The language of university prospectuses, admission rules, academic policies and government policy statements often makes mention of the highly skewed character of this communication, as found in previous literature. It is a monologic institution; the institution speaks, the applicant list remains silent and listens. There is very little room for discussion, discussion, or discussion. It has been noted by different linguists that the use of the 'shall' is a peculiar one in legal and administrative contexts. In the everyday conversation of English, 'shall' is now used more or less exclusively to indicate the future tense (and is largely superseded by 'will' or 'going to' in this function), but 'shall' remains very powerful and specialised in legalistic contexts. These formal documents use 'shall' as a high value deontic modal, meaning a binding obligation, command or an absolute rule that cannot be negotiated. It conveys solemnity, continuity, and finality to law. A Government document which says a candidate 'shall be rejected' is not predicting the future, it's exercising legislative power.

Additionally, educational discourse has been the subject of research that overlaps with the philosophical concepts of Michel Foucault (1977), such as those of disciplinary power, surveillance, and governmentality. Universities document the subject of the applicant, making him/her 'calculable' and 'docile' with application forms, behavioural rules, and criteria of eligibility. The strict use of conditions, supported by high-value modulation, provides a linguistic gateway. If a candidate does not have exactly the skill/ability contained within the 'must' or 'shall,' then they are automatically rejected. This is not done physically, but rather by excluding people through some kind of bureaucratic process, a cleaner and more sanitized power that renders the institution's hands "clean."

Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) were also very relevant to this context, and it is the work of Louis Althusser (1971). The most prominent of the ISAs in modern capitalist societies is the educational system. Medical universities, in fact, choose students, and they establish the rules by which they will be chosen: with strict, modulated language, they begin the process of ideological subjugation, teaching the future doctors that absolute adherence to the hierarchy of the institution will be the number one condition of success.

However, in medical university admissions in Punjab, Pakistan, a detailed SFL-based modality analysis of this discursive phenomenon is lacking, despite numerous studies that have focused on the discursive dynamics in Western educational settings, such as the universities marketing themselves or controlling students' behaviors. It is important to understand this cultural context because the title of 'Doctor' is very significant socially and there is a great deal of interest in the nation in securing a public seat. The purpose of

this study is to fill this gap by providing a localized, textually-based examination of the operation of power in these particular admission documents and policies, demonstrating how language is a key element in sustaining administrative hegemony.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Tools and Analytical Framework

The design of this study is descriptive research and the approach is qualitative research that is in the tradition of critical discourse studies in text analysis. Modality is the main analytical tool employed, which is derived from the theory of Systemic Functional Language (SFL) of M.A.K Halliday (2004). The analysis also requires the careful, systematic classification and categorisation of the modal operators (auxiliary verbs: shall, must, will, may, can, modal adjuncts: certainly, purely, strictly) that occurred in the texts chosen.

These identified modal instances are separated and studied by four primary parameters:

- **Type:** Modalization (exchanging information) or Modulation (exchanging goods/services)?
- **Sub-type:** Does it relate to Probability, Usuality, Obligation or Inclination?
- **Value:** Does the force of the modality present in the text have a High, Median or Low value?
- **Orientation:** Is it Subjective (based on personal feelings and opinions) or Objective (facts and information without personal feelings or opinions)? Is it Explicit or Implicit?

This detailed analysis is not simply a counting of verbs, but a foundation for a deeper qualitative analysis of the interpersonal power interactions and ideological stances of the institutions in the second step of the analysis. Knowing the grammar of the clauses, the sociology of the institutions can be understood.

4.2 Data Collection Procedure

For this study, purposeful and criterion-based sampling was adopted to secure a representative sample of medical institutions' discourse from public medical institutions in Punjab for the upcoming academic year (2023-2024 and 2024-2025). The documents are from the macro-level (government notifications) to the micro-level (application forms). Five different documents were chosen for detailed analysis:

1. The Services Institute of Medical Sciences (SIMS), Lahore, has released the Admission Notification for 1st MBBS 2024-25. This is the last offer provided to a successful applicant.
2. Admission Criteria (Undergraduate and Postgraduate Programs): Admission Criteria (Undergraduate and Postgraduate Programs) are taken from Sargodha Medical College (SMC). This is the rulebook, intended for the public-facing, for potential applicants.
3. Program Introduction and Fee Structure (BS Biomedical Sciences) published by the University of Health Sciences (UHS), Lahore. This is the promotional but also regulatory terminology in which the main university in the province, which is admitting and examining students, does so.
4. Faisalabad Medical University (FMU), Faisalabad, has published the Application Form for Diploma Courses 2025-26. This text offers a glimpse into the imperative nature of the procedures; the language of checklists and declarations.
5. Official Admission Policy 2023-24 & Admission Seats Allocation: It is an extensive official notification published by the Government of the Punjab, Specialized Healthcare & Medical Education Department. This is the most important institutional authority that gives the normative framework for all the sub-institutions.

These documents have been selected as they are able to cover different stages, layers and levels of the admission process. A macro-level analysis of provincial policy making (Government of Punjab) is complemented by a micro-level analysis of the program outlines of the university (UHS) and the procedural forms (FMU application checklist), as well as the final conditional acceptance letters (SIMS). The texts were examined manually, processed digitally and, for detailed SFL analysis, the clauses with important modal operators were systematically extracted.

5. Data Presentation and Analysis

This section presents a highly detailed analysis of selected excerpts from the data corpus. By examining the lexicogrammatical realization of modality in these specific clauses, we can decode the underlying interpersonal relationships and the architecture of power established by the texts. The analysis is categorized by the overarching functional strategies employed by the institutions.

5.1 The Dominance of High-Value Modulation in Provincial Policy (The Use of "Shall")

The document governing the entire medical admission landscape in the province is the Admission Policy issued by the Specialized Healthcare & Medical Education Department. As a macro-level legal document, its discourse is heavily saturated with high-value modulation, specifically relying on the archaic but powerful operator 'shall'.

Extract 1:

“University of Health Sciences (UHS), Lahore, “Admitting University, shall conduct admissions to MBBS/BDS courses of public and private sector Medical and Dental Institutions in Punjab for the Session 2023-2024. (Govt of Punjab Policy)

Analysis: The modal operator in this basic clause is 'shall'. The present tense 'shall' in modern conventional English is frequently used as a simple future tense (which is classified as median probability modalization). But in the law and bureaucracy, it works in a completely different way. Here, the "shall" is a high-value implicit objective modulation (obligation). The Punjab government is putting an absolute, uncompromising requirement on the University of Health Sciences. It does not require any discretion, debate, or refusal from UHS and the admissions are required to be made under provincial law. This creates a very strict hierarchy with everyone dependent on each other, including the main admitting university, which is subordinate and carries out directives from the governmental authority.

Extract 2:

“The candidate must have fulfilled the mandatory eligibility criteria as stipulated by the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council.” (Govt of Punjab Policy)

Analysis: This clause contains the modal operator 'must,' the most typical linguistic sign of high-value subjective/implicit obligation. The word 'must' is more forceful than 'shall' and places a strong obligation on the human actor (the candidate) rather than on an objective and detached legal obligation. This sentence is especially interesting in the grammatical expression of the ‘must have fulfilled’, which makes use of the perfective aspect. This refers to an obligation which is not an obligation to do, but an obligation to be, which is resolved in the past before any action (such as the application process) can begin in the future. The dynamics are clear and it is made clear that the candidate has no option but to go ahead unless he has fully accepted the will of the Council.

Extract 3:

“A college, not included in the preference list of students, shall not be considered for the grant of admission.” (Govt of Punjab Policy)

Analysis: This excerpt uses negative wording along with strong modulation ('shall not'). It also makes effective use of the passive voice ('be considered'). The interpersonal effect is striking and manipulative. The institution removes itself as the one making the rejection. The text does not say 'We will not consider you' or 'The committee will reject you.' Rather, it posits the rejection as an automatic, systematic, and natural impossibility and only because the student failed to put the college on their list of choices. The institution has no psychological responsibility for the correctness of the applicant, and gives them total power to reject.

Extract 4:

“Only those candidates shall be considered as admitted candidates who will 'join' the program by (a)

depositing the prescribed fee... and (b) reporting (in writing) to their respective colleges by due date.” (Govt of Punjab Policy)

Analysis: This complicated sentence layers elements to form a tight checkpoint. The word "shall" is used with high modulation in the passive voice in "Shall be considered". It demonstrates the strict criteria that the institution has for being "admitted. Nothing but actions and money are required to attain this status. The clause mandates certain practices, like money deposits and written reports. This process effectively turns admission into a commodity and surrounds it with strict conditions.

5.2 Disciplinary Modality in Admission Notifications and Procedural Checklists

Once candidates understand the broader provincial policy and are tentatively chosen, they face admission notifications and application forms at each university. These documents change from vague legal requirements to specific instructions on how to behave.

Extract 5:

“You have been selected for admission... purely on a provisional basis, subject to the following terms and conditions. You have to submit the following documents in original, two attested & three additional copies of each document, in the College office.” (SIMS Admission Letter)

Analysis: Sentence 2 starts abruptly with the second-person pronoun 'You'. It uses the semi-modal verb 'have to' for modality expressing high-value necessity. Curiously, corpus analyses reveal that 'have to' tends to connote external, objective force (rather than speaker internalised subjective necessity expressed by 'must'). By choosing to use 'have to', the Principal of SIMS casts submission of papers (original + 2 attested + 3 additional copies) as something that is not simply their own desire but an inevitability from outside the candidate's control. Also note that what precedes this imperative ('purely on a provisional basis') carries a veiled disciplinary warning stating that the agency remains completely with the institution until you completely comply with what is demanded of you.

Extract 6:

“Admission is also liable to be cancelled/changed if any error or omission is detected at any stage.” (SIMS Admission Letter)

Analysis: Modalisation is achieved with the adjective phrase 'liable to'. Strictly speaking, this counts as modalisation (Probability), but in context here, it actually has the force of a high-value institutionalised threat. Passive voice ('be cancelled/changed', 'is detected') again hides the human enforcers who will do the detecting and cancelling. The institution constructs its disciplinary intervention as an automated response to the 'error or omission'. With the temporal modifier 'at any stage', the institution reserves the right to monitor and discipline into the indefinite future.

Extract 7:

“INCOMPLETE APPLICATION WILL NOT BE ENTERTAINED” (FMU Application Form)

Analysis: Beyond the lexicogrammar, this clause takes advantage of the visual modality of all caps to make the command on the page visually overpowering. The modal will with the negation not is typically median to high probability. In this clause, however, will not be entertained is an explicitly performative refusal that appears to set a standard of institutional behavior (the institution will refuse to process the application), but its illocutionary force is to control the behavior of the applicant (the applicant must make a perfect application). It is a blunt and menacing statement of the asymmetrical institutional reality, where the institution alone has the unquestioned power to reject the applicant for any technical violation of the bureaucracy.

Extract 8:

“The Candidate Must Tick The Documents Which Are Attached with the Application” (FMU Application Form)

Analysis: This is a classic, very standard high-value modulation (obligation). The bolding of "Must"

enhances the value and urgency of the command even more. The shape is dictating microphysical actions, telling the candidate exactly what to do physically with the paper (check boxes). This micro-management is typical of bureaucratic disciplinary power, where conformity and total obedience of the applicant pool is expected.

5.3 Coerced Consent and the Illusion of Agency

One of the most insidious uses of modality in these texts occurs in the 'Declarations' sections, where institutions force applicants to consent to their own potential punishment.

Extract 9:

"I also agree that after attending the course for three months, if I do not show satisfactory progress, my admission in the course may be canceled." (FMU Application Form - Declaration)

Analysis: It is a very interesting excerpt from a critical SFL point of view. The word for 'you' changes to 'I', as if the applicant is now being made active and assumes control. But it is a forced expression; the applicant has to sign this declaration in order to go ahead with the application. In the case of the cancellation of admission, the low value probability operator 'may' is used. The institution brilliantly hides its coercive force behind the necessity to repeat 'may be canceled' at the end of 'my admission...'. It is presented as an eventuality of which the applicant has voluntarily accepted the risk, and has been considered a realistic possibility. It establishes a false sense of agreement between two equals—it's a very one-sided imposition on the 'satisfactory progress' it sets.

5.4 Establishing Boundaries and Epistemic Supremacy

Finally, modality is used extensively to set absolute boundaries around eligibility and to establish the institution's supreme authority over truth, medical facts, and final decision-making.

Extract 10:

"Age limit shall be 17 to 25 years." (SMC Admission Criteria)

Analysis: Once again, 'shall' is deployed as a high-value deontic modal. It does not mean that the applicant's age will naturally fall into this range in the future; rather, it is a strict, impenetrable boundary condition. It is an unyielding institutional wall built with high-value modulation, immediately filtering out those who do not comply without the need for human intervention or context.

Extract 11:

"The decision of selection board / committee of respective institution will be final." (SMC Admission Criteria)

Analysis: The modal operator 'will' here functions as high epistemic certainty (modalization). It preemptively shuts down any avenues for appeal, grievance, questioning, or negotiation. The institution uses this specific modality to declare itself the ultimate arbiter of fate, effectively immunizing its decisions from external scrutiny, legal challenge, or candidate objection.

Extract 12:

"The threshold of disability will be judged by the Medical Board, according to a pre-defined, structured criterion." (Govt of Punjab Policy - Quota section)

Analysis: Similar to Extract 11, the phrase 'will be judged' shows complete certainty about what the institution plans to do. It suggests the Medical Board is the final authority on what counts as true. The candidate's own experiences, personal history, or outside medical records about their disability are treated as less important and not enough. The only truth that matters is the judgment made by the board itself. This language takes away the candidate's control over their own medical story, giving the power to define it entirely to the bureaucratic system.

Extract 13:

"No nomination shall be accepted by the Government of the Punjab after the cut-off date." (Govt of Punjab

Policy)

Analysis: The use of "No" alongside "shall" sets an unyielding deadline. The passive construction "shall be accepted" removes the specific human agent responsible for rejecting submissions. Thus, both the established timeline and the precise wording function as mechanisms of exclusion.

Extract 14:

"The admission process shall be conducted through an online portal." (Govt of Punjab Policy)

Analysis: The modality in this case (shall be conducted) demands a certain technological interaction. High-value obligation is further removed from the applicant physically and emotionally by requiring that the applicant open an online portal. The applicant has to respond to an interface, dictated by immutable code, to follow the immutable nature of the modal 'shall'.

Extract 15:

"Students admitted against these reserved seats... will be required to submit a Surety Bond... and with an undertaking that he/she shall serve in his/her district of domicile for at least five years..." (Govt of Punjab Policy)

Analysis: The language used is strongly intended to bind students for a long time, as seen in this text. Example: Requires students to sign a bond immediately, as in "will be required. Next, the word "shall" tells students where they will go, live and work for 5 years after they leave school. Therefore, the admission document isn't all about entry to an education program. It is a kind of binding agreement, which means that it obligates students to serve the state, by its wording.

6. Discussion

The results obtained from a detailed SFL analysis of the literature of public medical universities from Punjab (admission documents, admission forms and policy documents) indicate the presence of a clear, coherent and uncompromising language structure. Modulation is predominantly of a high value, with the use of the strong operators 'shall', 'must,' and 'have to'. If we read these lexicogrammatical decisions in the light of Halliday's framework, we get a very clear and uncompromising picture of institutional power. These are not texts that invite, persuade, gently guide, or even just inform: these are texts that are carefully crafted to filter, regulate, command, and discipline.

This interpersonal tenor, built by this modality system, is highly hierarchical and highly asymmetrical. The school is always the last, final word, the ultimate authority, the force of its own will, the one who rules the rules from above, the one who sets the rules that are not to be broken. The wide range of objective and implicit orientations (e.g., shall be finalized, must be fulfilled, shall be conducted) is important to the bureaucracy for two reasons. First, it gives off a tone of serious, uncompromising lawfulness. The rules are explained as if they were not man-made, but rather permanent and unalterable. Secondly, it protects the institutional actors from any personal liability or emotional work: the implementation of the 'policy' does not involve 'we', but only 'policy'.

On the other hand, the prospective students are consistently represented as subordinate objects with almost all their relations with the institution being controlled and micro-managed. They are the actors needed for 'submit', 'deposit', 'tick', 'qualify', and 'serve'. The section discussing what applicants should do (as opposed to can, may or should) does not provide any suggestions or options. In a more student-centric/fairness-centered system, you'd normally be able to find something like, "Please submit these forms early to prevent any delays" or "Please use the portal to keep an eye on updates. Rather, these are only hard rules, and no recommendations whatsoever. These are all negative phrases, like "shall not be valid," "will not be entertained," or "no nomination will be accepted" and they are strong enough to quickly close down any small deviation from the set rules.

Moreover, the study reveals the resourcefulness with which institutions can make use of forced statements

in order to consolidate their authority and to neutralise any opposition in advance. The institution's disciplinary mechanisms are validated by forcing the student to sign statements of potential punishment, including cancellation of admission. This is very close to Marxist theories of the ideological state apparatuses, in which subjects are indoctrinated to willingly accept and endorse their own subjugation. The institution conceals its force with the guise of a 'consensual agreement'.

The implications of these findings for the broader sociolinguistic picture are great. The discursive power of this extreme domination can easily flourish unchecked in the environment created in medical admissions in Punjab, where the demand for seats is far more than the supply. The institutions do not have any reason to tone down their language or to make their processes more humane, since thousands of desperate students are willing to accept any terms and conditions for a medical seat. The language of the texts is nothing but a formalization and codification of a hard reality: the institution has, and the applicant has, nothing but frantic hope for compliance. The case study demonstrates that administration does not happen as a by-product of language in these contexts, but rather as a way that administration exercises its supremacy.

7. Conclusion

The clear power of Systemic Functional Linguistics and in particular that of the Modality system to uncover and elucidate the power relations implicit in the day-to-day bureaucratic text has been illustrated in this study. A clause-by-clause examination of the language of the admission documents, application forms and policy notification of admission in public medical universities of Punjab makes it clear that language is one of the most powerful tools of their strict disciplinary control. There are pervasive constructions of 'high value' and 'authoritative' modalization (shall, must, have to, will be final, will be judged), which create a chilling framework of obligatoriness and epistemic predominance.

This study reveals that the institutional discourse discussed does not give room for negotiation, dialogue, and flexibility. Instead, it puts the medical university in a position of omnipotence as a gatekeeper, and the applicant in that of a well-regulated, predictable object that must submit to ever more stringent and structurally demanding linguistic directives or move out of the field. The widespread use of passive voice with high-value modals helps to naturalise the exclusionary power of the institution, rendering rejection not a choice, but an inevitability.

Finally, it is concluded that admission documents in the context of the medical education system in Pakistan do more than just provide information, but are a key concern in a competitive medical education system. They enact, codify and enforce a strict regime of institutional hegemony in a discursive manner. The grammar of these texts gives us insight into the way bureaucratic power is also exerted in the language that is used to herald candidates onto the doorstep. Further research needs to build on this by examining the discourse of the entrance examinations themselves, and continue to expose the linguistic architectures of educational power.

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