



## Analyzing the Grammar and Ideology of Selected Verses from the English New Testament using Modality and Passivization

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**Key words:** Grammar, ideology, English New Testament, modality, passivization

**Abstract:** The aim of this study is to analyze the grammar and ideology of some verses in the English version of The New Testament from a critical discourse analysis point of view. Passivization and modality including truth, obligation, permission and desirability are used to uncover ideology of The New Testament through selecting some verses and analyzing them. The English version New International Version of The New Testament with Psalms and Proverbs is adopted as the data of this research, for it can well cover the topic under study. The study depends on Fowler's model of modality to show its uses in The New Testament and it also depends on Hart's views to deal with the grammar and ideology of The New Testament. The researchers conclude that the English New Testament is a good source of ideology that has its influence on people's behavior and that it is important to study and understand the grammar and ideology of the English New Testament.

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Page No.: 112-117

Volume: 16, Issue 6, 2021

ISSN: 1818-5800

The Social Sciences

Copy Right: Medwell Publications

### INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study is on The New Testament English version represented by New International Version of The New Testament with Psalms and Proverbs. This study deals with the grammar and ideology of The New Testament due to its great importance in human life and the way people think and act.

Bloor and Bloor<sup>[1]</sup> state that ideology refers to various views shared by persons of definite social group. Significantly, critical discourse analysts should remember that almost each discourse used by persons of a group has trend to be dependent on ideology.

Hart<sup>[2]</sup> states that grammar is adopted here as it is in linguistics where experts pay attention to characterize language instead of determining how people must use it.

And, as Langacker<sup>[3]</sup> puts it, "grammar is actually quite engaging when properly understood". According to this meaning, grammar is "the system or systems" that comprise portion of the ability of human language and the "theoretical models" that work toward expressing this "system"<sup>[2]</sup>.

Ideology can be seen in "a similarly broad fashion as something akin to perspective". When using language to adopt one viewpoint more than another, it is possible to look at language as ideological. As system, grammars generate ideology by means of the frequently impeded, options permitted by them for showing the identical physical attitude in various methods<sup>[4]</sup>.

As models, grammars, on the other hand, permit a "handle" on the ideological options exhibited in discourse. A grammar functions as a model to the specific

situations of “ideological reproduction in text and talk”. A grammar can present a program of possible uses and in turn, it is possible to understand and describe ideological variations obviously. A grammar can provide permission to compare a text with other possible texts instead of inevitably certified texts which is essential regarding the unavailability of rival discourses. Only in the field of critical discourse analysis, it is possible to examine the relation between grammar and ideology<sup>[2]</sup>.

Spiritual texts particularly of Christian tenet are naturally origin of ideology. They can be an origin of ideology but simultaneously are utilized to reproduce ideology. The epistles of the New Testament are certainly convincing and powerful publications and to a great extent formed the culture and history of Europe<sup>[5]</sup>.

It is possible to define language of religion or spiritual discourse as the sort of language used by “a speech community” to show its spiritual ideologies in general affairs<sup>[6]</sup>.

**Mystification analysis (Syntactic transformation):**

Hart<sup>[2]</sup> states that mystification analysis refers to the power of the sentence to hide appearances of the facts depicted in discourse to various ideological impressions.

**Passivization:** Toolan<sup>[7]</sup> states that text producers use passivization as a linguistic strategy to embellish “agency in actions” that might not suit easily inside the comprehensive ideological range of the discourse.

Hart and Cap<sup>[8]</sup> states that an individual could interpret, in the case of passivization, the elimination of the responsibility of agent in the clause’s semantic structure as the consequence of “a cognitive” restriction intended to reduce “the accessibility of the agentive role” in the depiction of the happening.

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Matthew 28). The translator used the passivization “has been given” to refer to the Jesus’s words revealing the power and authority given to Him by God. The translator wants to show that God is able to do everything and that His will is above all else, therefore, He raised Christ from death to make Him a sign for men and let down those who crucified Him. Although, the Lord had full authority, he spoke, here, of his authority as the head of the new creation. After his death and resurrection, the authority came to him to give eternal life to all whom God had given them. “Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made” (John 1: 3).

The translator used the passivization “were made”, “was made” and “has been made” to refer to St. John’s words showing the greatness of Lord, the Creator who made everything and without Him nothing can be made. Only Lord is able to create because he has the power and authority to do this which reflects and reinforces Lord’s

ideology, His superiority to everything created by Him. Everything was in Christ, he himself was not a created being but was the Creature of everything including mankind, animals, planets of heaven, angels, what is seen and what is not seen. Without him, nothing was and as the Creator, he is, without doubt, superior to anything he made.

“But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that, it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God” (John 3).

The translator used the passivization “may be seen” and “has been done” to refer to St. John’s words showing that those who like the truth, they also like the light because they believe that all their deeds are done and achieved by God only. Here, passivization is used to emphasize the object of God’s authority and influence over everything and everything done by people is clearly the God’s will. As every person checks his misery and sinful condition and he is truly sincere will come into the light, that is, to the Lord Jesus. Then he will accept the Savior for himself and thus be born again by faith in Christ.

“Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil” (Matthew 4:1). The translator used the passivization “was led” and “to be tempted” to refer to St. Matthew’s words showing that there was a great power represented by ‘the Spirit’ that drove Jesus to the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. The focus, here, is on Jesus himself and the way of his temptation in the desert not on the Spirit that led him to the wilderness or on the devil who tempted him there. This experience was necessary to show Christ’s mortal competence to do the work for which He came into the world. The first Adam proved that he was not worth of the Sultan when he met the enemy in the Garden of Eden and here the last Adam, Jesus, meets with Satan in a face-to-face challenge and comes out of it unscathed without any sin.

“Do not judge and you will not be judged. Do not condemn and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give and it will be given to you” (Luke 6: 37-38) .

The translator used the passivization “will not be judged”, “will not be condemned”, “will be forgiven” and “will be given” to refer to Jesus’s teachings through St. Luke’s words. Here, Jesus gives people some tips on how to behave towards each other advising them not to judge and condemn each other but He advises them to forgive and give each other.

The concentration, here, is on the receiver of the action not on the doer of it to show that the man cannot be judged and condemned if he does not do so. On the contrary, the man can be forgiven and given if he does so. There are two things that love does not do: it does not condemn and does not judge. First, people should not condemn the motives of each other because they are

unable to read hearts and they do not know the reason behind the behavior of each other. Then, believers must not condemn each other for their agency or service, because God remains the only condemner in all these matters. On the other hand, people, need, in general, not to take into account the critical spirit because this spirit which has been filled by mistakes, breaks the law of love. Love appears through giving and the Christian service is a service of giving and sacrifice. Those who give generously, their reward comes generous.

“Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much,....” (Luke 16: 10). Christ tells his disciples that whoever is faithful in a few, money, will be faithful in many, the spiritual blessings and the translator used the passive expression “can be trusted” twice to express Christ’s ideology in this respect. This ideology indicates that the spiritual blessings lead humans to salvation and everlasting life with God, spirituality surpasses materialism in Christianity. Using passive voice, this verse focuses on trust and honesty rather than on who can give this trust. On the other hand, that a person who is traitor in his use of the money that God has entrusted to him is also a traitor in regard to great considerations.

“Do not get drunk on wine which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5: 18).

Here, there is a command from St. Paul to the Ephesians not to be drunk with alcohol because that leads to sexual immortality and disobedience to God. He commanded them to be filled with the Spirit instead of drinking wine and be drunk, because this will lead to the emancipation from Hell and Satan and obtaining the contentment of God Almighty. Two contrasting things are put before people, one that differs from the other clearly: drunkenness by wine and fullness of spirit. A person who is drunk with alcohol becomes a person other than his true personality, for he utters words and does things that he cannot utter or do in his natural state because it is the spirit of intoxicants that dominates him and this is not appropriate for the true believer.

**Modality:** Fowler<sup>[9]</sup> states that opinions can be referred to by modal terms with regard to truth, likelihood, desirability; additional modal uses require obligations and giving permission. He adds that it is possible, informally, to look at modality as “comment” or “attitude”, attributable clearly through definition to text’s origin, also in the linguistic attitude, explicit or implicit, adopted by the speaker or writer.

**Truth:** Fowler<sup>[9]</sup> argues that it is always a must for a speaker or writer to connote an obligation to the veracity or to each utterance he makes or to a forecast that reaches the level of likelihood of a happening depicted occurring

or having occurred. “When ..., an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream”. “Get up”, he said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him” (Matthew 2: 13).

The translator used the future form “going to” to refer to the fact that there is a real danger concerning the child and therefore, it is necessary to take him away from Herod who wants to kill him. This saying expresses that the speaker is completely sure of what will happen in the near future but as Christ walks according to the will of God cannot die before completing his work.

“Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink or about your body, what you will wear” (Matthew 6: 25).

Here, the translator used the future form “will” to reveal the fact that God is capable of everything and He can take care of everyone. Thus, one should not worry about his eating, drinking and wearing because God is present and He is able to feed all creatures, especially human beings because they are God’s finest creatures. These are future plans and God is responsible for achieving them.

“The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him and after three days he will rise” (Mark 9: 31). The translator used the future form “is going to” to indicate the fact, real danger, that Jesus Christ would be delivered into the hands of men to kill Him in the near future. Also, another fact is reported through this verse by using the future form “will” that Christ will rise from his tomb on the third day. Christ is able to predict things that have not yet happened and this is a fact in itself because He is provided by God, with the ability to know all things that are visible and unseen. Jesus predicts what will happen soon and also what will happen later in the distant future.

“The most important one”, answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one’” (Mark 12: 29).

The truth modality is expressed here by the adjective “important” with the superlative form “most”. The translator used this modality to reveal the Christian ideology represented by the most significant commandment which is the Lord our God is one Lord. The ideology that affirms the oneness of God in Christianity.

“Do not be afraid, Mary, you....You will be with child and give birth to a son and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end” (Luke 1: 30-33).

These verses talk about the fact that the angel Gabriel told the Virgin Mary that she would conceive and give birth to a son and call him Jesus even though she was not

married. The translator used the future form “will” to refer to this fact of the birth of Christ and also through this form, he gave a true description about the child “great” and “the Son of the Most High”. Again, the translator used the future form “will” to point to the fact that Jesus will be given “the throne of his father David” and that Lord God promised, through Gabriel, to the Virgin Mary that his kingdom would have no end. Through the use of the modal “will” here, the prediction of what will happen in the far future is presented. “If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection” (Romans 6:5).

Here, the translator expressed the truth modality by the modal auxiliary “will” and the adverb “certainly” to say that if people be dead with Christ, they believe that they shall also live with Him. As Christ died for humanity and they were sinners, so, they will be with Him in His resurrection as they are righteous. Christ died for the sins of mankind and rose from the dead on the third day, since, death has no authority over Him and we will also be resurrected after death. “It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father’s wife” (1 Corinthians 5: 1).

There is a truth modality in the verse above expressed by the adverb “actually”. The translator used this adverb to assert that what was stated in St. Paul’s first Epistle to the Corinthians concerning “sexual immorality” is a clear and unquestionable fact. The truth that the speaker is absolutely certain and that the Corinthians cannot deny it.

**Obligation:** Fowler<sup>[9]</sup> states that the speaker or writer, in this respect, prescribes the contributors in a statement to carry out the works defined in the statement. This meaning can be achieved by such modal auxiliaries as “must”, “should” and “ought to”.

“God is spirit and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth” (John 4: 24). Here, John ibn Zechariah, the Baptist, tells his followers that they are obliged to worship God “in spirit” and “in truth” because He is spirit. The translator used obligation modality as tool of persuasion and power exercised by John to order his people to worship God in this way. God is spirit and is not seen while He is present in all places simultaneously, just as He is all-knowing and all-powerful. He is perfect in all of His ways, so those who worship to Him, with spirit and truth, should worship.

“The man with two tunics should share with him who has none and the one who has food should do the same” (Luke 3: 11).

The translator used obligation modality “should” twice in the verse above to express John’s, the Baptist, mild obligation represented by the instructions to his followers that it is good for a man who has two garments to give one to another man who has not and that who has

food should give who has not. Again, by using the modal “should” the translator reveals John’s endeavor to advise and persuade his people to do so. This is the ideology of social solidarity in Christianity and to love for your brother what you love for yourself.

“Peter and the other apostles replied”: We must obey God rather than men! (Acts 5: 29). The translator used the modal “must” to express strong obligation in Peter’s reply to the high priest that it is a must to obey God’s orders not men’s ones because God is above all. St. Paul and the other apostles use the modal “must” and the inclusive “we” to say that all people including Him and the apostles are obliged to submit to God’s will, not humans because He has the highest power and authority.

“For man did not come from woman but woman from man; neither was man created for woman but woman for man. For this reason and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head” (1 Corinthians 11: 8-10).

The translator used the modal “ought to” to express mild obligation represented by St. Paul’s advice to the Corinthians, especially women to cover their head when they pray. He reveals his ideology saying that there is a difference between men and women and that God gave authority to men over women because men are the image and glory of God. God created Adam first and then Eve, so, the authority is for the man and the woman must obey him in a way that meets God’s will.

“Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak but must be in submission as the law says” (1 Corinthians 14: 34).

The translator used the modal “should” supported by the expression “not allowed to” to express mild obligation to refer to St. Paul’s Epistle to the Corinthians. He advised women not to speak in the churches but be silent to express obedience and reverence for God. Then, the translator used the modal “must” to express strong obligation and the ideology and command that St. Paul gave to women to keep subordination and obedience in the presence of the Lord.

**Permission:** As Fowler<sup>[9]</sup> puts it the permission is given by the speaker or writer to do something on the contributor(s). What is interesting here is that the auxiliaries utilized have an additional equal application “under truth or prediction: ‘may’, ‘can’”. “... he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will but as you will” (Matthew 26: 39).

The translator used the permission modal “may” to express Matthew’s ideology regarding the relationship between Christ and God when Christ asks His Lord to keep him away from the cup of suffering and death. He asks for God’s permission, according to God’s will not His will, indicating that God is the supreme authority and

power because He is the deity and Christ is the worshiper. Jesus' prayer was rhetorical in its style, meaning that its goal was not to obtain a response from God as much as teaching people a spiritual lesson and show Jesus' submission and obedience to the will of God.

"You may ask me for anything in my name and I will do it" (John 14: 14). The translator used the modal "may" to express permission in the fourteenth chapter of St. John's Gospel when he referred to the words of Christ addressing the Jews. Christ said that everyone is allowed to ask Him what he wants in His name, indicating that He has the power and authority that God has given Him to do anything. This shows the divinity of Christ as being equal to the Heavenly Father in essence and also shows that God and Christ is one. The great work of the Lord Jesus was accomplished not in his life on earth but in his death and resurrection. The request in the name of Christ includes the use of authority of his name, value and dignity with the father in making requests.

"I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing..." (John 5: 19). The translator used the modal "can" to express permission which is given to Christ to do things. Jesus is not permitted to do anything on his own but only that God shows him to do. Only God can show the Son what he must do. Here, Christ reveals the authority and power of God over him and that he must obey God and take His permission in doing everything, God has dominance over Christ. The Lord Jesus clearly wanted to get the Jews to think of him as equal to God. He declares to see what the father does and not only that, he attributes to himself the ability to do the same tasks that he sees the Father does. This, of course, a confirmation of Christ's equality with God.

"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters yes, even his own life he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14: 26-27).

In the example above, the translator used the modal "can" in its negative form to express permission. He referred to the words of Christ talking to the crowds showing that Christ said that no one is allowed to be His disciple unless he hates his father, mother, wife, children, brothers and sisters even himself. The translator used the modal "can" in its negative form again to refer to Jesus's words saying that no one is allowed to be His disciple unless he carries his cross and follow Him. Here, Christ is the dominating figure since He is the one who determines the characteristics of His disciples, He sets conditions for whoever wants to be His disciple.

"For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him" (John 3: 2). The translator used the modal "could" to express permission. Here, Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council,

addresses Christ and acknowledges that Jesus comes from God because he has the authority to do great miracles that no one can do them without God's permission. Christ is allowed to perform signs and wonders by the permission, power and authority given to him by God.

**Desirability:** Fowler<sup>[9]</sup> states that the description of the happenings conveyed by a proposition can be accepted or not by the speaker or writer.

"You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all" (Mark 10: 42-44).

The translator expressed desirability modality using the adverbs "instead" and "first" and the adjective "great" to refer to the words of Christ in the verse above. Christ showed His rejection of the idea that the heads of nations prevail and that the great rule over ordinary people. On the contrary, He said that whoever wants to be "great" among his people must be their servant and that whoever wants to become "first" among his people must be a slave of all. "... you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord'. But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King" (Matthew 5: 33-35).

This is another example of desirability modality in which the translator used the coordinator "but" and the adverb "at all" when he referred to the words of Christ speaking to the crowds. Christ did not agree with what was said earlier regarding the oath because He absolutely rejects the idea of swearing "Do not swear at all". Christ refuses the idea that people should swear by the great or holy things because this reduces their value. Jesus forbids any form of oath in ordinary conversations and refers to any try to avoid swearing by the name of God by replacing him with another name as not only hypocrisy but also useless. Even swearing by the human head includes God as the Creator of everything.

"Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?' What did Moses command you? He replied. They said, 'Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away'. 'It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law', Jesus replied. 'But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female' (Mark 10: 2-6).

The translator expressed desirability modality using the adjectives "lawful" and "hard" and the noun "law" to refer to the words of Christ answering the question of the Pharisees. Jesus told the Pharisees that Moses allowed you to divorce your wives for the hardness of your hearts.

They wish to send their wives away giving them a certificate of divorce but Christ opposed this wish. Christ supports the continuation of marriage between a man and a woman without divorce as God first created them, male and female. God's will must prevail and continue and no other will can rise over it.

"I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing. I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God" (1 Timothy 2: 8-10).

The translator expressed desirability modality using the verb "want" to refer to the words of St. Paul to Timothy in which he expresses his desire that men everywhere pray with pure hands, without anger and contention. The translator used the verb "want" again to express desirability modality referring to St. Paul's desire for women to wear modest clothing with righteousness and sobriety, not with braids, gold, pearls or expensive clothes, professing godliness, with good works. The ideology that human beings should pray with absolute faith in and for God and be humbled in the presence of God.

### **CONCLUSION**

Passivization, in all its kinds, is used largely in The New Testament to focus on the speaker and reveal his influence or authority on the recipients more than whom gave this influence or authority to him. Passivization which has no clear reference to the actor, is used to refer to the greatness of Lord Jesus and the power given to him rather than focusing on whom gave it to him, because Jesus Christ and God is one according to the Apostle's ideology. Passivization with "get" is rarely used in this version of The New Testament.

Truth modality is expressed by "is going to", "will", the superlative adjective and the adverbs certainly and actually to refer to the true prediction and certainty expressed by Jesus Christ and his apostles.

Obligation modality is expressed by "must", "should" and "ought to" to refer to the superiority, great authority and position of the speaker, Jesus and his apostles. Obligation expressions also used to refer to strong recommendations and suggestions. Jesus and his apostles take their authority from above, from God himself, therefore the persuasion ideology in the New Testament come from higher authority.

Permission modality is achieved by "may", "can" and "could" to refer to the superiority, authority and power of God and that every permission to do something comes only from him, from above, from the source.

Desirability modality is expressed using some adjectives like "great", "lawful" and "hard" and some adverbs like "instead", "first" and "at all" and the verb "want" and the coordinator "but". It is used to refer to the rejection or acceptance regarding some matters in life according to Christ's ideology and his apostles and thus, according to the ideology of The New Testament.

### **SUGGESTIONS**

The New Testament deserves to be investigated more and more to reveal the deep ideology found in it. It is important, from a grammatical point of view, to analyze imperatives in The New Testament to uncover the real meanings available at them. From a discourse perspective, rhetorical structures presented in The New Testament are, also, very necessary to be analyzed to show their ideology.

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