Mood, Pronouns, and Modality in Selected Self-Help Books: A Genre-Based Interpersonal Analysis

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Abstract

This research investigates the usage and distribution of mood types (declarative, interrogative, and imperative) and pronouns, as well as the role of modals in expert- and non-expert-authored self-help books. Grounded in Halliday's (1994) interpersonal metafunction, the study explores how these linguistic choices shape the author-reader relationship, reflecting differing levels of authority, engagement, and persuasion strategies. The study employs a quantitative approach, utilizing data analysis tools like Excel and Python to process and analyze the compiled data. Advanced formulas are used to identify trends and measure patterns in mood types, pronoun usage, and modals across a dataset of 265 body chapters (1,683,545 word tokens). The research aims to answer the following questions: What is the dominant mood type in expert- and non-expert-authored self-help books? How do pronouns (first-person, second-person, and third-person) influence the tone and engagement strategies in these books? What are the frequencies and occurrences of declarative, interrogative, and imperative moods in both categories? Additionally, how are modals used to express ability, possibility, and necessity in these texts? The findings show that expert-authored books rely heavily on declarative moods, emphasizing structured, informational content that reinforces a formal, authoritative stance. In contrast, non-expert-authored books incorporate more second-person pronouns and imperatives, fostering a motivational and conversational tone that encourages direct reader engagement. Moreover, modals like "can" and "will" are frequently used in expert-authored books to convey empowerment and certainty, while non-expert books make more use of softer modals like "might" and "could," reflecting

a more empathetic and flexible approach. By applying Halliday's interpersonal metafunction, this study demonstrates how mood, pronouns, and modals function as key linguistic tools in shaping the interaction between authors and readers, ultimately influencing the tone, persuasion strategies, and communicative purpose of self-help literature. The findings highlight the distinct ways in which expert and non-expert authors construct engagement, build credibility, and guide their readers toward self-improvement.

Keywords: Self-Help Books, Halliday's Interpersonal Metafunction, Genre Analysis, Motivational Writing, Linguistic Engagement

مستخلص البحث:

تُعد كتب المساعدة الذاتية من أكثر الأنواع الأدبية تأثيرًا في حياة الأفراد، حيث تقدم استراتيجيات لتحسين الأداء الشخصي والعاطفي. ونظرًا لشعبيتها وتأثيرها العميق، فإن تحليل الأساليب اللغوية المستخدمة في هذه الكتب يُسهم في فهم كيفية تفاعل المؤلف مع القارئ. لذا فإن هذه الدراسة تهدف إلى تحليل الأنماط اللغوية في كتب المساعدة الذاتية وفقًا لهوية مؤلفيها، سواء كانوا خبراء في مجالات علم النفس، مثل علم النفس الإكلينيكي أو العلاج النفسي، أو كانوا غير متخصصين مثل الصحفيين، المتحدثين العامين، أو المؤثرين في وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي. ولتحقيق ذلك، تم اعتماد منهج كمي يستخدم أدوات تحليل متقدمة مثل بايثون وإكسل لتحليل الوظيفة التعالقية (بين الشخصية) وفقا لهاليداي (١٩٩٤)، مما يُتيح تتبّع الأنماط اللغوية وقياس تكرار الجمل والضمائر والأفعال المساعدة بدقة. وقد شمل التحليل ٢٦٥ فصلًا من كتب المساعدة الذاتية، بلغ مجموع عدد الرموز النصية فيها ١,٦٨٣,٥٤٥ رمزًا، مما يُوفِّر قاعدة بيانات واسعة تمكِّن من إجراء مقارنات دقيقة بين الفئتين. تسعى الدراسة للإجابة على أسئلة رئيسية مثل: ما أنواع الجمل الأكثر شيوعًا في كتب المساعدة الذاتية التي كتبها الخبراء مقارنة بتلك التي كتبها غير الخبراء؟ كيف يؤثر استخدام الضمائر الشخصية على العلاقة بين المؤلف والقارئ؟ وكيف تُستخدم الأفعال المساعدة للتعبير عن القدرة والإمكان والضرورة؟ أظهرت النتائج أن كتب الخبراء تتبع أسلوبًا علميًا مستندًا إلى الأدلة، مما يعزز مصداقيتها، بينما تتبنى كتب غير الخبراء أسلوبًا تحفيزيًا يشجع القراء على التغيير العملي ويعتمد على الضمائر والجمل الأمرية. وتؤكد الدراسة أهمية الأساليب اللغوية في تشكيل العلاقة بين النص والقارئ، حيث تعكس طبيعة المؤلف الاستراتيجيات اللغوية المستخدمة، مما يؤثر

على مستوى التأثير والإقناع، ويسهم في فهم أعمق لديناميكيات الخطاب في كتب المساعدة الذاتية وفقًا لخلفية مؤلفيها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تحليل النوع، كتب المساعدة الذاتية، الوظيفة التعالقية (بين الشخصية) لهاليداي، الكتابة التحفيزية

1. Introduction

This research paper explores the use of mood, pronouns, and modals in expert- and non-expert-authored self-help books, focusing on how these linguistic elements engage readers and convey messages. The study is based on Halliday's interpersonal metafunction, which examines how language reflects social interactions and communication between the speaker and the audience. By analysing these linguistic features, the paper investigates how authors use mood, pronouns, and modals to shape meaning and connect with readers.

This study compares the strategies employed in expert- and non-expert-authored self-help books. Through the analysis of 265 body chapters (1,683,545 word tokens), it explores the use of declarative, interrogative, and imperative moods, as well as first- and second-person pronouns and modals like "can," "will," and "might." Using quantitative tools such as Excel and Python, this research highlights how these elements influence reader engagement and help authors achieve their communicative goals, offering insights into how language builds rapport, provides guidance, and motivates action in self-help literature.

2. Significance and Scope of the Research Paper

This research paper holds significant value in the field of self-help literature by providing a comprehensive linguistic analysis of mood usage, pronouns, and modals in both expert- and non-expert-authored books. By examining these elements, the study compares both authorial approaches revealing how tone, linguistic choices, and engagement strategies shape a book's effectiveness. Ultimately, the findings contribute to understanding the evolution of self-help

literature and the adaptive strategies authors use to meet readers' expectations.

3. Research Questions

The research attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What is the dominant mood type in expert- and non-expert-authored self-help books? What are the frequencies and occurrences of declarative, interrogative, and imperative moods in both categories?

2. How do pronouns (first-person, second-person, and third-person) influence the tone and engagement strategies in these books?

3. How are modals used to express ability, possibility, and necessity in these texts?

4. Theoretical Framework

This study applies Halliday's (2004) concept of "clause as exchange" to explore how mood, pronouns, and modals are used in self-help books to engage readers. By focusing on these linguistic features, the study investigates how authors structure their communication to create a relationship with the reader, whether through providing information, asking questions, or motivating action. In Halliday's theory, "clause as exchange" refers to how a sentence (or clause) functions as an interaction between the writer and the reader. Every time a writer communicates, they are engaging in an exchange of meaning with the reader. A clause is not merely a statement or piece of information; it functions as a way to connect with the audience, whether by giving information, asking a question, or making a request.

The mood structure in a clause is a crucial element of this interaction. It consists of the subject and the finite verb, which together represent the writer's choice of interaction with the reader. These choices can vary depending on the type of communication the writer wishes to establish. For instance, when a writer makes a statement, they are delivering information, often using declarative mood. When they ask a question, they seek a response, involving the reader more directly with an interrogative mood. Conversely, when a writer gives a command or issue instructions, they use the imperative mood, directing the reader's actions. The mood system includes three main types of clauses: declarative, interrogative, and imperative. Declarative clauses are typically used to convey information. These clauses reflect the writer's aim to inform or explain. Interrogative clauses, on the other hand, invite the reader to engage by responding or reflecting, thus fostering a more interactive and dynamic relationship. The imperative mood, however, is primarily used to issue commands or provide instructions.

Another significant element of the interpersonal metafunction is modality, which influences the writer's attitude toward the proposition and the level of certainty. Modality is realized through modal verbs like "can," "will," "might," "should," and "must," which adjust the degree of necessity, possibility, or permission in the communication. For example, the modal "must" indicates a strong sense of obligation or certainty, while "might" suggests possibility or uncertainty. By using different modals, a writer can shape their message to reflect the level of certainty or suggestion they want to convey to the reader. This allows the writer to either assert a firm position or invite the reader to consider

alternatives, depending on the desired tone and the purpose of the communication.

Pronouns also play a pivotal role in the interpersonal metafunction. The use of personal pronouns such as "I," "we," "you," and "they" helps define the relationship between the writer and the reader. First-person pronouns like "I" and "we" bring the writer into the discourse, creating a personal connection and engaging the reader through shared experiences or perspectives. Second-person pronouns like "you" directly address the reader, fostering a sense of involvement and personal engagement. Third-person pronouns, by contrast, distance the writer from the reader, often used to refer to external entities, subjects, or groups. These pronouns help control the tone and establish the dynamics of the interaction, whether by positioning the writer as a personal guide, a neutral observer, or an authoritative source.

Together, mood, modality, and pronouns form a cohesive system within Halliday's interpersonal metafunction, through which the writer engages with the reader. These elements go beyond merely conveying information; they structure the communication and social roles, guiding how the reader interprets the message and their relationship to the text. By analysing these features, we gain insight into how language not only conveys content but also reflects and constructs social interactions, shaping the communication process and ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of the writer's message.

5. Literature Review

Numerous studies have explored how Halliday's interpersonal metafunction operates across various genres, emphasizing how language shapes social interactions and conveys meaning. For instance, Koussouhon and Dossoumou (2015) examined mood and modality in literature, demonstrating that these choices reflect underlying power dynamics and social hierarchies. This aligns with the view that the interpersonal metafunction is key to understanding social structures in texts.

Shifting focus to different types of discourse, Ayoola (2013) examined political advertisements, showing how subtle lexical and grammatical choices convey the speaker's attitudes and opinions. This finding further underscores the importance of context in interpreting linguistic choices. Additionally, Noor et al. (2015) extended this analysis to religious discourse, specifically the final address of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). By studying the mood and power dynamics, the research demonstrated how interpersonal language contributes to the enduring relevance and universal appeal of religious texts across cultures and time periods.

In the realm of public speaking, Saghir et al. (2020) analysed Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, focusing on mood, modality, and personal pronouns. Their study revealed how these features of language shape the persuasive power of the speech, driving social movements and mobilizing action. Genre-based studies, such as those by Ventola (2005), Flowerdew and Dudley-Evans (2002), and Bhatia (2008), also highlight the role of interpersonal strategies in various forms of writing. These studies

emphasize how language structures adapt to different communicative functions, whether in academic writing, business communication, or service encounters.

However, despite the wide application of interpersonal analysis in different genres, there has been limited research on how self-help texts, as a distinct genre, use interpersonal elements. Previous studies, including those by Hyland (2002), focused more on style, lexis, and rhetorical features. Recently, there has been a shift towards analysing interpersonal elements alongside traditional genre analysis. As Flowerdew and Wan (2006) and Muntigl and Gruber (2005) suggest, this shift helps deepen our understanding of genres as dynamic, context-driven forms of communication. This research aims to bridge this gap by examining how mood, modality, and pronouns in self-help books are used to engage readers and motivate action, offering fresh insights into the unique communicative strategies within the genre.

6. Analysis and Discussion: Linguistic Features Analysis

6.1 Analysis of Mood: Expert-Authored Books

Analysing the mood across 142 expert-authored body chapters reveals key trends in the use of declarative, interrogative, and imperative moods. These trends show how expert-authored self-help writings have evolved to balance reader engagement with achieving the informational goals of the texts.

The declarative mood is the most frequent across the analysed books, with frequencies ranging from 33.39 to 57.92 per 1,000 words. *Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook* (2008) leads with 57.92, providing straightforward explanations and instructions. *The Highly Sensitive Person*

(1996) also uses a high frequency of declaratives (51.01), reflecting its descriptive style. In contrast, *Emotional Intelligence* (1995) has the lowest frequency (33.39), suggesting a more balanced approach that combines declaratives with other moods, like interrogatives, to keep readers engaged. Overall, declaratives are crucial for informing, explaining, and guiding readers.

Interrogatives are used less often than declaratives, with frequencies ranging from 0.4 to 4.59 per 1,000 words. *How to Stubbornly Refuse to Make Yourself Miserable About Anything* (1988) has the highest frequency (4.59), reflecting its conversational tone that encourages thought and self-reflection. Books like *I Heart Me* (2015) and *Toxic Stress* (2024) also use interrogatives moderately, promoting a reflective, dialogic approach. *Emotional Intelligence* (1995) shows the lowest frequency (0.4), likely due to its focus on scientific explanations using mostly declarative mood. Interrogatives are mainly used to encourage readers to consider how the content applies to their lives.

Imperative mood is rarely used in expert-authored body chapters, with frequencies ranging from 0 to 0.32 per 1,000 words. *How to Stubbornly Refuse to Make Yourself Miserable About Anything* (1988) and *The Highly Sensitive Person* (1996) have the highest use of imperatives (0.32 and 0.26, respectively), indicating some instructional or motivational guidance. In contrast, books like *I Hate You, Don't Leave Me* (1989) and *Think Again* (2021) either avoid imperatives or use them sparingly, reflecting the expert style that favours indirect guidance and persuasion over direct commands.

The analysis shows trends in mood usage over time. Books from the 1980s and 1990s, like *How to Stubbornly Refuse to Make Yourself Miserable About Anything* (1988), use more interrogatives, which give a conversational feel. They also use more imperatives, suggesting a direct approach to motivation. In contrast, modern books from 2015 to 2024, like *Toxic Stress* (2024) and *I Heart Me* (2015), also use more interrogatives, but they focus on engaging readers in a reflective way. However, the use of imperatives remains minimal, showing a shift toward a more collaborative tone and less directive tone.

The analysis of mood usage in expert-authored self-help books reveals important trends. The declarative mood is the most common, as it helps explain and inform. Interrogatives are used less but encourage reflection, while imperatives are rare, favouring indirect guidance. Over time, self-help books have moved from a direct style to one that is more engaging and reflective, meeting readers' needs for interaction.

The table below provides a detailed analysis of mood usage in expert-authored self-help books, specifically focusing on their body chapters. It shows the occurrences and normalized frequencies of declarative, interrogative, and imperative moods for each book. By analysing these frequencies, the table uncovers patterns in mood usage and gives a clearer understanding of the tone and style in expert-authored self-help chapters.

Table 1:

Mood Usage Analysis in Expert-Authored Self-Help Books:
Occurrences and Normalized Frequencies

Category	Book Title	Year	Declarative Mood	Declarative per 1,000	Interrogative Mood	Interrogative per 1,000	Imperative Mood	Imperative per 1,000	Word Tokens
Expert-Authored	How to Stubbornly Refuse to Make Yourself Miserable About Anything	1988	2,973	47.38	288	4.59	20	0.32	62,743
	I Hate You, Don't Leave Me	1989	3,085	41.87	57	0.77	0	0	73,688
	Emotional Intelligence	1995	4,259	33.39	51	0.4	1	0.01	127,568
	The Highly Sensitive Person	1996	4,679	51.01	226	2.46	24	0.26	91,719
	The Anxiety and Phobia Workbook	2005	10,518	48.56	447	2.06	33	0.15	216,609
	Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook	2008	7,631	57.92	359	2.73	14	0.11	131,717
	I Heart Me: The Science of Self-Love	2015	3,158	52.93	230	3.85	8	0.13	59,665
	Good Vibes, Good Life: How Self-Love Is the Key to Unlocking Your Greatness	2018	2,461	51.49	85	1.78	5	0.1	47,807
	Think Again: The Power of Knowing What You Don't Know	2021	3,218	47.09	112	1.64	1	0.01	68,359
	Toxic Stress: The Science of Resilience	2024	3,499	37.59	261	2.8	3	0.03	93,077

6.2 Analysis of Mood: Non-Expert-Authored Books

The analysis of mood usage in non-expert-authored self-help books reveals key patterns in how declarative, interrogative, and imperative moods are used. These trends show how the different moods help engage and guide readers, serving the main purpose of the genre.

Firstly, declarative mood is the most common in non-expert-authored self-help books, with frequencies ranging from 3.4 to 64.5 per 1,000 words. This indicates a strong focus on clear explanations and instructions. For example, *Codependent No More* (1986) has the highest frequency at 64.5, reflecting its instructional style. Similarly, other books like *Atomic Habits* (2018) and *Stop Walking on Eggshells* (1998) also use declaratives frequently (55.7 and 50.6, respectively), demonstrating their practical, advice-driven nature. However, *Unlimited Power* (1986) stands out with a much lower frequency (3.4), suggesting that it may rely more on other moods. Despite this, declarative mood remains dominant, reinforcing the genre's goal of offering clear guidance and instructions to readers.

In addition, interrogatives are used less often than declaratives, with frequencies ranging from 0 to 4.2 per 1,000 words. At the higher end, *Little Things: Your Positive Toolkit* (2024) and *Codependent No More* (1986) show the highest frequency of 4.2, reflecting a conversational tone meant to prompt reflection and engage readers. On the other hand, books like *Unlimited Power* (1986) and *Chicken Soup for the Soul* (1993) do not use interrogatives, suggesting that they focus more on directive or narrative styles. Despite their rarity, the presence of interrogatives in modern non-expert authored self-help books like *Little Things* (2024) indicates a

growing trend toward reflective questioning. This trend highlights how non-expert authors are adapting to meet contemporary readers' expectations by encouraging introspection and engagement.

Finally, the imperative mood is used much less frequently across non-expert-authored self-help books, with frequencies ranging from 0 to 2.5 per 1,000 words. *Stop Walking on Eggshells* (1998) has the highest frequency of 2.5, reflecting a more direct and action-oriented style. In contrast, books like *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*ck* (2016) and *Blink* (2005) either use imperatives minimally or avoid them altogether, opting for a more suggestive and less commanding tone. Therefore, the low frequency of imperatives suggests that non-expert authors generally prefer indirect persuasion and guidance. However, when imperatives are used, they serve to highlight important actions or directions, particularly in books focused on motivation or prescriptive advice**.**

Earlier works, especially from the 1980s and 1990s like *Codependent No More* (1986), often have higher frequencies of declarative mood, reflecting the instructive and informative style of that time. However, there is some variation, as seen in *Unlimited Power* (1986), which uses fewer declaratives. This contrast shows the range of approaches, from direct instruction to more unique ways of engaging readers. In comparison, modern non-expert-authored self-help books from the 2010s to 2020s, such as *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*ck* (2016) and *Atomic Habits* (2018), adopt a more balanced mix of moods. While declarative mood remains dominant, these books also use interrogatives and imperatives strategically to boost engagement and motivation.

Non-expert-authored self-help books show clear patterns in how mood is used to engage and guide readers. Like expert-authored books, the declarative mood is the most common. This mood focuses on giving clear instruction and practical advice, which helps make the message more accessible and actionable for readers. Authors rely heavily on declaratives to ensure their readers understand and can easily follow the guidance.

Although declaratives are the most frequent, interrogatives play an important role, particularly in newer non-expert-authored self-help books. For example, *Little Things* (2024) uses more interrogatives to encourage readers to reflect. These questions prompt readers to think critically and connect the content to their own lives, creating a more conversational tone. Despite their lower frequency, interrogatives in modern books signal a growing trend toward fostering deeper thinking and engagement, encouraging readers to reflect more on their own experiences.

The imperative mood, on the other hand, appears less often. This suggests a preference for indirect persuasion rather than direct commands. This approach fits well with the style of non-expert authors, who guide readers without being too forceful. However, books like *Stop Walking on Eggshells* use imperatives more effectively to provide clear, direct advice, emphasizing important actions that need to be taken.

Overall, non-expert self-help books have evolved to adopt a more balanced approach over time, combining declaratives with well-placed interrogatives and occasional imperatives. This shift helps engage readers more actively and creates a more reflective, conversational experience. As the genre continues to adapt to meet reader expectations, this

blend of moods allows authors to combine clear instruction with reader engagement, ultimately guiding readers on their personal growth journeys.

The table below presents the number of occurrences and normalized frequency of declarative, interrogative, and imperative moods in each book of the non-expert-authored category. By analysing these frequencies, the table offers a deeper understanding of the tone and style of non-expert-authored self-help body chapters, while also highlighting trends in mood usage.

Table 2:

Mood Usage Analysis in Non-Expert-Authored Self-Help Books: Occurrences and Normalized Frequencies

Category	Book Title	Year	Declarative Mood	Declarative per 1,000	Interrogative Mood	Interrogative per 1,000	Imperative Mood	Imperative per 1,000	Word Tokens
Non-Expert-Authored	Codependent No More	1986	5418	64.5	350	4.2	22	0.3	84,068
	Unlimited Power	1986	467	3.4	0	0	13	0.1	138,013
	Chicken Soup for the Soul	1993	542	9.3	0	0	5	0.1	58,311
	Stop Walking on Eggshells: Taking Your Life Back When Someone You Care About Has Borderline Personality Disorder	1998	4179	50.6	210	2.5	210	2.5	82,548
	Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking	2005	3979	47.8	301	3.6	4	0.1	83,230
	The Dip: A Little Book That Teaches You When to Quit (and When to Stick)	2007	834	51.4	53	3.3	1	0.1	16,216
	The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*ck: A Counterintuitive Approach to Living a Good Life	2016	3171	49.9	136	2.1	2	0	63,508
	Atomic Habits:								

6.3 Mood Analysis: Expert vs. Non-Expert-Authored Body Chapters Across Categories

The analysis of mood usage in expert- and non-expert-authored self-help books reveals clear distinctions in how each category engages with its readers. Both use declarative statements heavily, but expert-authored books rely on them more, with 46.75 occurrences per 1,000 words. This reflects their primary focus on providing structured information, explanations, and guidance. The heavy use of declaratives emphasizes their authoritative and fact-based approach, ensuring that the content is perceived as credible and informative. Non-expert-authored books also use declaratives, but at a lower frequency of 38.94 occurrences per 1,000 words, indicating a more conversational and approachable style, helping authors connect with readers on a personal level.

Questions, or the interrogative mood, are less common in both types of books. Expert-authored books use them at 2.17 per 1,000 words, while non-expert-authored books use them slightly more at 2.21 per 1,000 words. The minimal difference suggests that, regardless of expertise, authors use questions occasionally to engage readers, prompt reflection, or introduce new concepts. However, questions serve as a secondary tool in both cases, with the main focus being on delivering structured knowledge or maintaining a conversational tone.

The real difference arises with the use of commands, or the imperative mood. Non-expert-authored books use imperatives much more frequently, at 0.41 occurrences per 1,000 words, compared to just 0.11 occurrences in expert-authored books. This stark contrast

highlights the differences in tone and approach between the two categories. Non-expert-authored books often take a directive and motivational approach, using imperatives to offer actionable advice or encourage immediate action. This approach aligns with their aim to inspire readers and foster personal growth. On the other hand, expert-authored books tend to avoid direct commands. They prefer to present solutions indirectly or suggestively, helping maintain a professional tone while focusing on deeper analysis and reflection rather than immediacy.

The word count of the books also influences these patterns. Expert-authored books, with nearly one million words, have more space to explore in-depth topics, allowing for more declarative statements and fewer imperatives. In contrast, non-expert-authored books, with a lower word count, tend to vary their style more. They balance declaratives with a higher frequency of imperatives to keep the tone engaging while making sure the content is accessible and impactful.

In conclusion, the analysis shows that expert-authored books focus on providing informative and structured guidance, using declaratives to convey facts and explanations, while avoiding excessive use of imperatives. This reflects their goal of informing readers rather than instructing them directly. Non-expert-authored books, in contrast, adopt a more personal and motivational approach, using imperatives more frequently to encourage readers to take action and engage directly with the material. These differences highlight the distinct priorities of each category: experts aim to inform and guide, while non-experts seek to inspire and offer actionable advice. The varying linguistic choices demonstrate

how each category tailors its style to meet the needs of its intended audience, with experts prioritizing structured guidance and non-experts focusing on relatability and motivation.

The tables below summarize the results. Table 3 lists the total occurrences of each mood type across both categories of texts, while Table 4 shows the normalized frequencies per 1,000 words, offering a clearer comparison of mood usage.

Table 3:

Total Occurrences of Mood Types in Expert-Authored and Non-Expert-Authored Body Chapters

Category	Declarative Mood	Interrogative Mood	Imperative Mood	Word Tokens
Expert-Authored	45,481	2,116	109	972,952
Non-Expert-Authored	27,667	1,570	291	710,593

Table 4:

Normalized Frequencies of Mood Types per 1,000 Words in Expert-Authored and Non-Expert-Authored Body Chapters

Category	Declarative per 1,000	Interrogative per 1,000	Imperative per 1,000
Expert-Authored	46.75	2.17	0.11
Non-Expert-Authored	38.94	2.21	0.41

After the tables, a visual representation shows the key trends in mood usage, making the data easier to understand. The visualization highlights the differences in how declarative, interrogative, and imperative moods are used in expert-authored and non-expert-authored texts, helping to spot patterns and differences quickly.

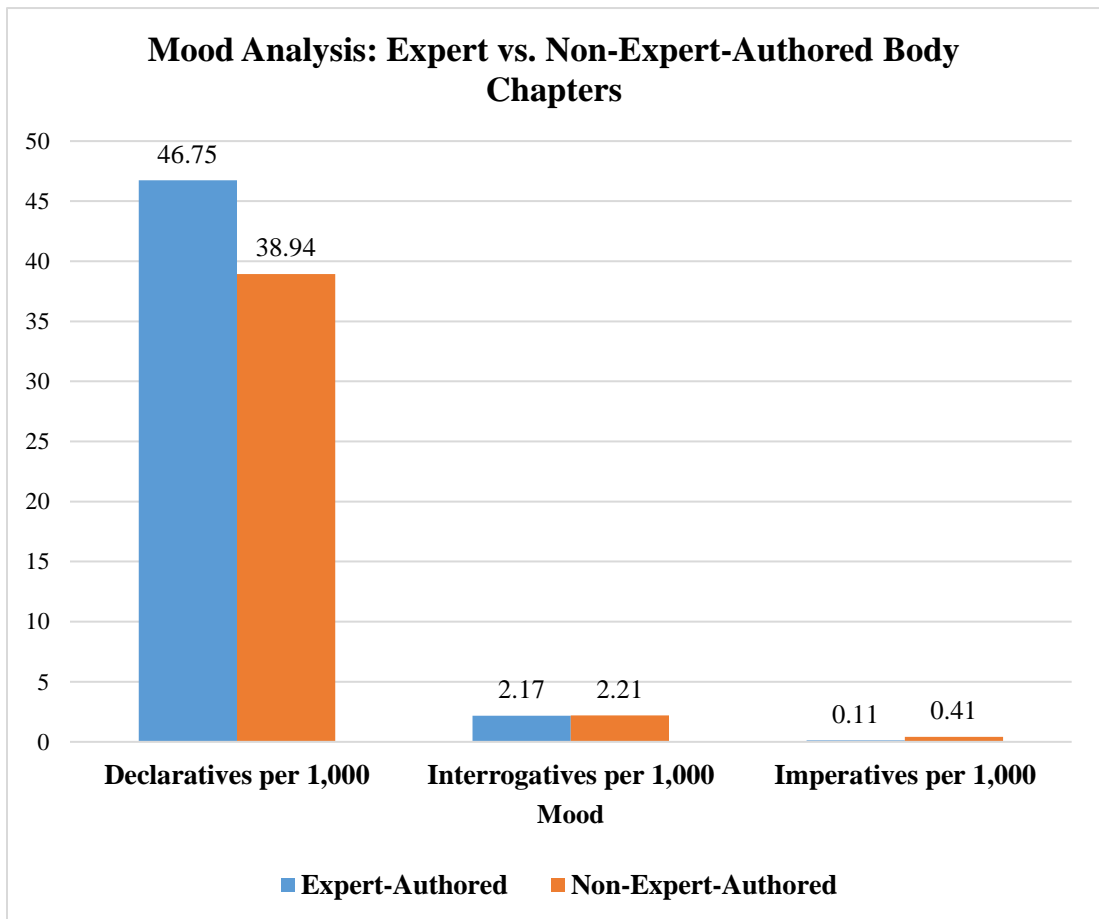**Mood Analysis: Expert vs. Non-Expert-Authored Body Chapters**

Mood	Expert-Authored	Non-Expert-Authored
Declaratives per 1,000	46.75	38.94
Interrogatives per 1,000	2.17	2.21
Imperatives per 1,000	0.11	0.41

Figure 1:

Visualization of Normalized Frequencies of Mood Types in Expert-Authored and Non-Expert-Authored Body Chapters

6.4 Analysis of Pronouns: Expert-Authored Books

Pronoun usage in expert-authored self-help books shows clear patterns. *I Heart Me: The Science of Self-Love* (2015) has the highest use of first-person pronouns, with 1,782 occurrences (29.9 per 1,000 words), reflecting its focus on personal stories and self-reflection. In contrast, *I Hate You, Don't Leave Me* (1989) has the lowest use, with 223 occurrences (3.0 per 1,000), suggesting a more detached tone that focuses on general ideas rather than personal experiences. On the other hand, modern books like *Good Vibes, Good Life* (2018) and *Think Again* (2021) show a more balanced approach. With 1,130 occurrences (23.6 per 1,000) and 1,154 occurrences (16.9 per 1,000) respectively, these books combine personal insights with broader themes, giving readers a mix of individual and universal perspectives. Overall, first-person pronouns make up 24.34% of total pronoun use (10,553 occurrences), highlighting their importance in creating personal and motivational content, as seen in books like *I Heart Me* (2015) and *Good Vibes, Good Life* (2018).

Second-person pronouns like "you" and "your" are used most in *The Anxiety and Phobia Workbook* (2005), with 5,355 occurrences (24.7 per 1,000 words). This creates a direct and instructional tone, making the writing feel more personal and engaging, as if the author is speaking directly to the reader. In contrast, *I Hate You, Don't Leave Me* (1989) uses second-person pronouns the least, with only 123

occurrences (1.7 per 1,000), suggesting a less personal tone that focuses more on general information. This shows that books meant to teach or inspire readers tend to use "you" and "your" more often. This helps create a sense of direct communication, where the author gives advice or instructions directly to the reader. For example, *Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook* (2008) also uses second-person pronouns heavily, with 3,313 occurrences (25.1 per 1,000), reinforcing this pattern. Overall, second-person pronouns make up 36.61% of total pronouns, emphasizing the importance of direct engagement, especially in instructional books like *The Anxiety and Phobia Workbook* (2005).

Third-person pronouns like "he," "she," and "they" are most common in research-based self-help books. For example, *Think Again* (2021) uses them a lot, with 2,163 occurrences (31.6 per 1,000 words). These pronouns help focus on third-party examples and case studies, giving a broader, more analytical view rather than personal experiences or direct advice. In comparison, *Good Vibes, Good Life* (2018) uses third-person pronouns less, with 1,223 occurrences (25.6 per 1,000), since it focuses more on a motivational and conversational tone. This shows that third-person pronouns are often used in books that emphasize research and examples. Overall, third-person pronouns make up 39.05% of all pronouns used, reflecting the analytical approach of expert-authored books like *Think Again* (2021) and *Emotional Intelligence* (1995).

Pronoun usage in expert-authored self-help books reveals how authors connect with readers. High use of second-person pronouns like "you" and "your" shows a focus on guiding and empowering readers, especially in

instructional books. This approach creates a sense of direct communication, making readers feel personally addressed and engaged. For example, *The Anxiety and Phobia Workbook* (2005) uses second-person pronouns frequently, strengthening its instructional tone.

In contrast, first-person pronouns like "I" and "we" are more common in books that aim to build a personal connection, using storytelling and sharing personal insights. This makes the content feel more authentic and emotionally engaging. Books like *I Heart Me: The Science of Self-Love* (2015) use these pronouns to create intimacy and connect emotionally with readers.

On the other hand, third-person pronouns like "he," "she," and "they" are mostly used in research-based books. These pronouns focus on case studies and external examples, giving a more analytical tone. *Think Again* (2021) uses third-person pronouns to present ideas with clarity and credibility.

Over time, there has been a shift in how these pronouns are used. Modern expert-authored self-help books often combine first-person pronouns for connection and third-person pronouns for depth, offering a mix of relatability and analysis. While the focus on second-person pronouns has slightly decreased, authors are now using a variety of strategies to engage readers. This change reflects the genre's ability to adapt to readers' evolving needs and expectations.

Pronoun usage in expert-authored self-help books has changed over time, reflecting shifts in tone and how authors engage with readers. In the 1980s and 1990s, books often balanced personal interaction with broader discussions. For example, *How to Stubbornly Refuse to Make Yourself*

Miserable (1988) used a lot of second-person pronouns like "you" and "your" (1,724 occurrences, 27.5 per 1,000 words), creating a personal connection while offering advice. In contrast, *I Hate You, Don't Leave Me* (1989) used third-person pronouns more (1,613 occurrences, 21.9 per 1,000 words), adopting a more detached tone focused on explaining concepts and case studies.

In the 2000s, self-help books increasingly favored second-person pronouns to create a closer connection with readers. For example, *The Anxiety and Phobia Workbook* (2005) used 5,355 occurrences of second-person pronouns (24.7 per 1,000 words), making the book feel more like a conversation. *Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook* (2008) also used second-person pronouns frequently, enhancing the personal connection and making the advice feel tailored.

Starting in the 2010s, self-help books began to use pronouns in more varied ways. *I Heart Me* (2015) used a lot of first-person pronouns like "I" and "we" (1,782 occurrences, 29.9 per 1,000 words), making it feel more personal and focused on personal growth. On the other hand, books like *Think Again* (2021) used third-person pronouns (2,163 occurrences, 31.6 per 1,000 words), reflecting an analytical tone that focused on data and research rather than personal stories.

In conclusion, pronoun usage in expert-authored self-help books has evolved over the decades. Earlier books balanced direct engagement with general discussions, while the 2000s focused more on personal interaction. More recent books have mixed approaches, using first-person pronouns for relatability and third-person pronouns for research-based

depth. These shifts show how authors adapt to meet changing reader expectations.

The following tables show the raw occurrences and normalized frequencies of pronouns in the 142 expert-authored body chapters. They highlight how expert authors' approaches have changed over time, from personal engagement (first-person) to a more direct tone (second-person) and objective analysis (third-person).

Table 5:

Pronouns Usage Analysis in Expert-Authored Self-Help Books: Occurrences

Category	Book Title	Year	First-Person	Second-Person	Third-Person	Word Tokens
Expert-Authored	How to Stubbornly Refuse to Make Yourself Miserable About Anything–Yes, Anything!	1988	1,540	1,724	1,460	62,743
	I Hate You, Don't Leave Me	1989	223	123	1,613	73,688
	Emotional Intelligence	1995	471	291	2,211	127,568
	The Highly Sensitive Person	1996	1,062	1,845	1,899	91,719
	The Anxiety and Phobia Workbook	2005	1,228	5,355	2,696	216,609
	Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook	2008	1,118	3,313	1,706	131,717
	I Heart Me: The Science of Self-Love	2015	1,782	938	1,637	59,665
	Good Vibes, Good Life: How Self-Love Is the Key to Unlocking Your Greatness	2018	1,130	1,429	1,223	47,807
	Think Again: The Power of Knowing What You Don't Know	2021	1,154	420	2,163	68,359

Category	Book Title	Year	First-Person	Second-Person	Third-Person	Word Tokens
	Toxic Stress: The Science of Resilience	2024	845	434	1,314	93,077
Total			10,553	15,872	17,922	972,952

Table 6:

Pronouns Usage Analysis in Expert-Authored Self-Help Books: Normalized Frequencies

Category	Book Title	Year	First Person Pronouns per 1,000	Second Person Pronouns per 1,000	Third Person Pronouns per 1,000
Expert-Authored	How to Stubbornly Refuse to Make Yourself Miserable About Anything–Yes, Anything!	1988	24.5	27.5	23.3
	I Hate You, Don't Leave Me	1989	3.0	1.7	21.9
	Emotional Intelligence	1995	3.7	2.3	17.3
	The Highly Sensitive Person	1996	11.6	20.1	20.7
	The Anxiety and Phobia Workbook	2005	5.7	24.7	12.4
	Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook	2008	8.5	25.1	13.0
	I Heart Me: The Science of Self-Love	2015	29.9	15.7	27.4
	Good Vibes, Good Life: How Self-Love Is the Key to Unlocking Your Greatness	2018	23.6	29.9	25.6

Category	Book Title	Year	First Person Pronouns per 1,000	Second Person Pronouns per 1,000	Third Person Pronouns per 1,000
	Think Again: The Power of Knowing What You Don't Know	2021	16.9	6.1	31.6
	Toxic Stress: The Science of Resilience	2024	9.1	4.7	14.1

6.5 Analysis of Pronouns: Non-Expert-Authored Books

First-person pronouns like "I" and "we" help create a personal, relatable tone in non-expert-authored self-help books. *Codependent No More* (1986) stands out with 3,506 occurrences (41.7 per 1,000 words), using personal stories to engage readers. *Little Things* (2024) follows this trend with 1,940 occurrences (31.3 per 1,000 words), reflecting a modern focus on personal content. In contrast, *The Dip* (2007) uses first-person pronouns the least, with only 108 occurrences (6.7 per 1,000 words), focusing more on practical advice than personal connection. Overall, first-person pronouns account for 15,297 occurrences (21.52 per 1,000 words) or 25.1% of all pronouns. They are most common in books that emphasize personal connection and relatability, like *Codependent No More* and *Little Things*, showing how effective they are in engaging readers.

Second-person pronouns like "you" and "your" are important for creating a direct and engaging tone in non-expert-authored self-help books. For example, *You Will Get Through This Night* (2021) uses these pronouns the most, with 1,912 occurrences (33.0 per 1,000 words), reflecting its

supportive and conversational style. Likewise, *Unlimited Power* (1986) features 3,596 occurrences (26.1 per 1,000 words), focusing on motivation and encouraging action through direct address. On the other hand, books like *Blink* (2005) and *Codependent No More* (1986) use second-person pronouns less frequently, with 658 occurrences (7.9 per 1,000 words) and 633 occurrences (7.5 per 1,000 words), respectively. These books focus more on narrative explanations and personal reflection rather than directly addressing the reader. Overall, second-person pronouns account for 13,148 occurrences (18.50 per 1,000 words) or 21.6% of total pronouns. They are especially common in instructional and motivational books, playing a key role in engaging readers and encouraging action, as seen in *You Will Get Through This Night* and *Unlimited Power*.

Third-person pronouns like "he," "she," and "they" are commonly used in non-expert-authored self-help books, mainly for storytelling and giving examples. *Unlimited Power* (1986) has the most, with 4,024 occurrences (29.2 per 1,000 words), followed by *Chicken Soup for the Soul* (1993) with 1,956 occurrences (33.5 per 1,000). These books use third-person pronouns to tell stories and provide examples to support their points. On the other hand, *Little Things* (2024) uses fewer third-person pronouns, with 1,109 occurrences (17.9 per 1,000 words). This shift shows a preference for personal stories and direct interaction with the reader rather than relying on outside examples. In general, third-person pronouns make up 18,277 occurrences (25.71 per 1,000 words) or 53.3% of all pronouns, making them the most used category. They are especially common in books that include case studies or examples. However, their use has decreased in

more recent books, as non-expert authors now prefer personal anecdotes and a more direct style.

Pronoun use in non-expert-authored self-help books has shifted over the years, showing changes in style and tone. In the 1980s and 1990s, books like *Codependent No More* often used first-person pronouns (3,506 occurrences; 41.7 per 1,000 words), focusing on personal reflection and storytelling. Similarly, *Unlimited Power* used second-person pronouns (3,596 occurrences; 26.1 per 1,000), addressing readers directly with motivational content. In the 2000s, there was more variation in pronoun use. For instance, *The Dip* used second-person pronouns (400 occurrences; 24.7 per 1,000) to give clear, straightforward instructions. On the other hand, *Blink* used third-person pronouns (2,579 occurrences; 31.0 per 1,000), focusing on examples and case studies to provide a more factual, analytical approach. By the 2010s, books began mixing their use of pronouns more. *You Will Get Through This Night* frequently used second-person pronouns (1,912 occurrences; 33.0 per 1,000 words), offering a friendly, engaging tone. In comparison, *Little Things* used first-person pronouns (1,940 occurrences; 31.3 per 1,000 words), combining personal narratives with practical advice. This shift makes the non-expert authored self-help content more relatable and connects more directly with the reader.

Pronoun usage in non-expert-authored self-help books shows important trends and shifts. For example, second-person pronouns are crucial in instructional and motivational texts, as they create direct communication with readers. This is clear in books like *You Will Get Through This Night*, which engage readers with a supportive and conversational tone. On the other hand, first-person pronouns

help create a personal connection and make the content more relatable. Books like *Codependent No More* and *Little Things* use personal stories and reflections to draw readers in and make the content feel more intimate. In addition, third-person pronouns are often used in books that include case studies and examples to support their points. However, their usage has decreased in more recent books, as authors now prefer direct and personal communication with the reader. Overall, modern self-help books have moved towards balancing first- and second-person pronouns. This shift shows a growing focus on content that's relatable and reader-centered, with less emphasis on third-person narratives and external examples.

The tables below provide a detailed overview of both raw occurrences and normalized frequencies of pronouns in the 123 body chapters authored by non-experts. These data reveal patterns that highlight the different strategies used by authors to engage their readers, including personal connection through first-person pronouns, directive communication with second-person pronouns, and analytical perspectives using third-person pronouns.

Table 7:

Pronouns Usage Analysis in Non-Expert-Authored Self-Help Books: Occurrences

Category	Book Title	Year	First-Person	Second-Person	Third-Person	Word Tokens
Non-Expert	Codependent No More	1986	3506	633	1998	84,068
	Unlimited Power	1986	1903	3596	4024	138,013

Category	Book Title	Year	First-Person	Second-Person	Third-Person	Word Tokens
	Chicken Soup for the Soul	1993	1963	836	1956	58,311
	Stop Walking on Eggshells: Taking Your Life Back When Someone You Care About Has Borderline Personality Disorder	1998	1248	1674	1826	82,548
	Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking	2005	1096	658	2579	83,230
	The Dip: A Little Book That Teaches You When to Quit (and When to Stick)	2007	108	400	469	16,216
	The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*ck: A Counterintuitive Approach to Living a Good Life	2016	1268	795	1660	63,508
	Atomic Habits: An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones	2018	784	1422	1337	64,779
	You Will Get Through This Night	2021	1481	1912	1319	57,931
	Little Things: Your positive toolkit for when life feels stressful	2024	1940	1222	1109	61,989
Total			**15297**	**13148**	**18277**	**710,593**

Table 8:

Pronouns Usage Analysis in Non-Expert-Authored Self-Help Books: Normalized Frequencies

Category	Book Title	Year	First Person Pronouns per 1,000	Second Person Pronouns per 1,000	Third Person Pronouns per 1,000
Non-Expert-Authored	Codependent No More	1986	41.7	7.5	23.8
	Unlimited Power	1986	13.8	26.1	29.2
	Chicken Soup for the Soul	1993	33.7	14.3	33.5
	Stop Walking on Eggshells: Taking Your Life Back When Someone You Care About Has Borderline Personality Disorder	1998	15.1	20.3	22.1
	Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking	2005	13.2	7.9	31.0
	The Dip: A Little Book That Teaches You When to Quit (and When to Stick)	2007	6.7	24.7	28.9
	The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*ck: A Counterintuitive Approach to Living a Good Life	2016	20.0	12.5	26.1
	Atomic Habits: An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones	2018	12.1	21.9	20.6
	You Will Get Through This Night	2021	25.6	33.0	22.8
	Little Things: Your positive toolkit for when life feels stressful	2024	31.3	19.7	17.9

To make these trends easier to interpret, a bar chart has been included in Figure 2. This visualization compares the normalized frequencies of pronoun types side by side for expert-authored and non-expert-authored texts, emphasizing the distinctions in communicative style.
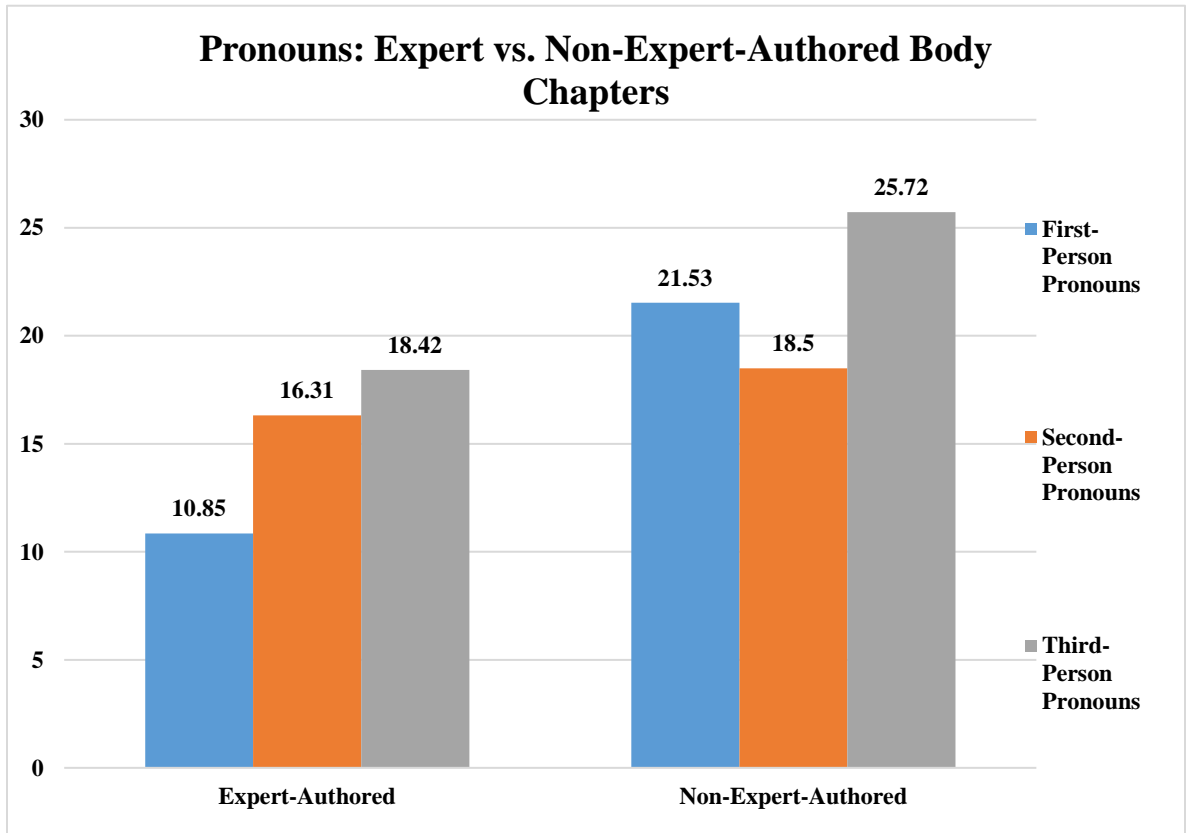

Figure 2:

Visualization of Normalized Pronoun Frequencies in Expert-Authored and Non-Expert-Authored Body Chapters

6.6 Analysis of Modality: Expert-Authored Books

The analysis of modals in expert-authored self-help books shows that "can" is the most frequent modal across all 142 body chapters, with frequencies ranging from 2.82 to 6.41 per 1,000 words. This modal emphasizes ability and practicality, which fits with the empowering tone of self-help books. For example, *How to Stubbornly Refuse to Make Yourself Miserable About Anything* (1988) uses "can" the most, at 6.41 per 1,000 words, highlighting its focus on giving practical advice. In comparison, *Toxic Stress: The Science of Resilience* (2024) has the lowest usage of "can" at 2.82 per 1,000 words, suggesting it uses other modals to express similar ideas of empowerment. Next, the modal "will" is the second most common, with frequencies ranging from 0.75 to 4.22 per 1,000 words. This modal is used to predict or assert, which matches the motivational tone of many self-help books. Modals like "may" and "should" also appear moderately. For example, *I Hate You, Don't Leave Me* (1989) has the highest frequency of "may" at 5.1 per 1,000 words, focusing on conditional advice. Similarly, *How to Stubbornly Refuse to Make Yourself Miserable About Anything* (1988) uses "should" most frequently, at 1.43 per 1,000 words, showing its emphasis on giving advice based on social norms.

The modals "would" and "could" are used moderately in expert-authored body chapters. These modals often relate to hypothetical or conditional situations and add a reflective or empathetic tone to the writing. For example, *Good Vibes, Good Life* (2018) uses "could" the most, with 2.09 instances per 1,000 words, fitting its focus on optimism and possibilities. The modal "might" also varies in frequency but peaks in *I Heart Me* (2015) with 1.83 per 1,000 words,

offering gentle encouragement. In comparison, "must" appears moderately often, with its highest frequency in *How to Stubbornly Refuse to Make Yourself Miserable About Anything* (1988) at 3.51 per 1,000 words, reflecting urgency. On the other hand, "shall" and "ought" are used less frequently. *How to Stubbornly Refuse to Make Yourself Miserable About Anything* (1988) is the only book where "shall" appears noticeably (0.26 per 1,000), while "ought" is rare, showing up less than 0.1 per 1,000 words.

Core modals like "can," "will," and "may" remain common across all decades, highlighting abilities, predictions, and permissions. However, in newer expert-authored books from 2015 to 2024, there is a shift toward more personalized encouragement. This is seen with an increase in the use of "might" and "could," as in *I Heart Me* (2015) and *Good Vibes, Good Life* (2018). More recent expert-authored self-help books, like *Think Again* (2021), use fewer assertive modals like "must" or "shall," showing a shift to a more flexible, less prescriptive tone. In expert-authored books, high frequencies of "can" and "will" show the authors' focus on empowering readers by highlighting their abilities and positive outcomes. At the same time, the moderate use of "should," "must," and "ought" balances obligation with flexibility, guiding readers without being too strict. Additionally, the use of "might," "could," and "would" shows a shift toward offering personalized support and connecting with readers empathetically. These modals suggest that different outcomes are possible depending on each reader's unique situation, rather than giving a one-size-fits-all solution. The strong use of "can" and "will" reflects the expert authors' goal of empowering readers to take action and trust their abilities. Meanwhile, "might" and "could" create a softer

tone, especially in more recent books, offering a more empathetic approach. The moderate use of "should" and "must" indicates the authors' desire to guide readers without overwhelming them. Lastly, newer works show less use of assertive modals, signaling a shift toward more collaborative and open approaches in expert-authored self-help books.

The following tables provide an analysis of modal usage in expert-authored self-help books. The first table shows the raw count of occurrences for different modals across 142 body chapters. The second table presents the normalized frequencies of modal usage, adjusted per 1,000 words, to make it easier to compare books of different lengths.

Table 9:

Modal Usage Analysis in Expert-Authored Self-Help Books: Occurrences

Category	Book Title	Year	may	should	can	would	could	will	might	must	shall	ought	Word Tokens
Expert-Authored	How to Stubbornly Refuse to Make Yourself Miserable About Anything–Yes, Anything!	1988	113	90	402	195	80	265	25	220	16	17	62,743
	I Hate You, Don't Leave Me	1989	376	82	221	176	102	125	42	84	3	0	73,688
	Emotional Intelligence	1995	144	52	437	126	85	157	85	26	10	0	127,568
	The Highly Sensitive Person	1996	222	76	475	187	127	265	90	62	1	9	91,719
	The Anxiety and Phobia Workbook	2005	807	175	1257	321	121	496	270	39	1	1	216,609
	Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook	2008	257	97	719	131	101	468	111	34	0	4	131,717
	I Heart Me: The Science of Self-Love	2015	28	20	214	172	98	103	109	3	1	0	59,665
	Good Vibes, Good Life: How Self-Love Is the Key to Unlocking Your Greatness	2018	68	68	252	83	100	169	84	47	0	0	47,807
	Think Again: The Power of Knowing What You Don't Know	2021	20	51	209	169	109	51	107	9	0	0	68,359
	Toxic Stress: The Science of Resilience	2024	108	24	263	81	132	110	42	14	2	0	93,077
Total			2143	735	4449	1641	1055	2209	965	538	34	31	972,952

Table 10:

Modal Usage Analysis in Expert-Authored Self-Help Books:
Normalized Frequencies

Category	Book Title	Year	May per 1,000	Should per 1,000	Can per 1,000	Would per 1,000	Could per 1,000	Will per 1,000	Might per 1,000	Must per 1,000	Shall per 1,000	Ought per 1,000
Expert-Authored	How to Stubbornly Refuse to Make Yourself Miserable About Anything–Yes, Anything!	1988	1.8	1.43	6.41	3.11	1.28	4.22	0.4	3.51	0.26	0.27
	I Hate You, Don't Leave Me	1989	5.1	1.11	3	2.39	1.38	1.7	0.57	1.14	0.04	0
	Emotional Intelligence	1995	1.13	0.41	3.43	0.99	0.67	1.23	0.67	0.2	0.08	0
	The Highly Sensitive Person	1996	2.42	0.83	5.18	2.04	1.38	2.89	0.98	0.68	0.01	0.1
	The Anxiety and Phobia Workbook	2005	3.73	0.81	5.8	1.48	0.56	2.29	1.25	0.18	0.01	0
	Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook	2008	1.95	0.74	5.46	0.99	0.77	3.55	0.84	0.26	0	0.03
	I Heart Me: The Science of Self-Love	2015	0.47	0.34	3.59	2.88	1.64	1.73	1.83	0.05	0.02	0
	Good Vibes, Good Life: How Self-Love Is the Key to Unlocking Your Greatness	2018	1.42	1.42	5.27	1.74	2.09	3.54	1.76	0.98	0	0
	Think Again: The Power of Knowing What You Don't Know	2021	0.29	0.75	3.06	2.47	1.59	0.75	1.57	0.13	0	0
	Toxic Stress: The Science of Resilience	2024	1.16	0.26	2.82	0.87	1.42	1.18	0.45	0.15	0.02	0

6.7 Analysis of Modality: Non-Expert-Authored Books

In non-expert-authored self-help books, "can" is often used to show readers' abilities. Its frequency ranges from 0.31 to 6.13 per 1,000 words. For instance, *Stop Walking on Eggshells* (1998) uses "can" the most, at 6.13, focusing on practical advice. In contrast, *The Dip* (2007) uses it the least, at 0.31, reflecting its more direct style. Therefore, "can" plays a key role in empowering readers, especially in books that focus on action and advice. Similarly, "may" is also used frequently, with counts ranging from 2.0 to 10.82 per 1,000 words. *You Will Get Through This Night* (2021) uses "may" the most, at 10.82, creating a supportive tone. On the other hand, *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*ck* (2016) uses "may" the least, at 2.0, offering more assertive and direct advice. This shows how "may" helps convey a tone of encouragement, while other books use it less to focus on clearer, more confident messages. Next, the modal "will" appears with frequencies ranging from 0.22 to 1.95 per 1,000 words. *Little Things* (2024) uses "will" the most, at 1.95, showing an optimistic outlook. However, *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*ck* (2016) uses "will" the least, at 0.22, focusing more on the present and avoiding predictions. Thus, the use of "will" reflects the tone of a book, either looking forward with certainty or focusing on the here and now.

Moving on, moderate-frequency modals like "should," "could," and "might" are used in different ways across the books. "Should," which gives advice, ranges from 1.36 to 3.81 per 1,000 words. *You Will Get Through This Night* (2021) uses "should" the most at 3.81, showing its supportive tone. In contrast, *The Dip* (2007) uses it the least, at 1.36, as its style is brief. Additionally, "could," which

suggests possibilities, is used between 0.48 and 1.4 per 1,000 words. *You Will Get Through This Night* (2021) has the highest frequency at 1.4, focusing on guidance. On the other hand, *Blink* (2005) uses "could" the least, at 0.48, focusing more on description than on possibilities. Finally, "might," which shows tentative possibilities, ranges from 1.05 to 3.91 per 1,000 words. *Chicken Soup for the Soul* (1993) uses "might" the most at 3.91, matching its reflective tone. Meanwhile, *The Dip* (2007) uses it the least at 1.05, as its style is more direct.

Turning to rare modals, "shall," "must," and "ought to" are used less in non-expert-authored self-help books. "Shall," for formal obligation, appears from 0.8 to 2.56 per 1,000 words. *Chicken Soup for the Soul* (1993) uses it the most, at 2.56, reflecting a traditional style. On the other hand, *The Dip* (2007) uses it the least, at 0.8, which shows its simpler, modern style. "Must," showing necessity, is used very rarely, with frequencies from 0 to 0.11 per 1,000 words. *Codependent No More* (1986) uses it the most, at 0.11, to emphasize necessity. In contrast, books like *Atomic Habits* (2018) don't use "must" at all, preferring a more flexible, non-prescriptive tone. Lastly, "ought to," which shows moral obligation, is extremely rare, ranging from 0 to 0.06 per 1,000 words. It appears only a little in non-expert authored self-help books like *The Dip* (2007) and *Blink* (2005), reflecting a traditional way of expressing moral obligation which is less common in modern non-expert authored self-help writing.

Over time, the use of modals in self-help books has changed. Earlier non-expert-authored self-help books like *Unlimited Power* (1986) used modals like "may," "should," and "shall," which gave them a more traditional and direct

tone. For example, *Unlimited Power* used "may" the most, with 7.04 per 1,000 words, focusing on conditional advice. This shows how the earlier books were more prescriptive in nature. In contrast, modern non-expert-authored self-help books from 2010 to 2024 prefer softer modals like "might" and "could." These modals create a more empathetic and less directive tone. For instance, *You Will Get Through This Night* (2021) shows this shift with high frequencies of "may" (10.82 per 1,000) and "should" (3.81 per 1,000), encouraging reader independence and personal choice. This shift reflects a move towards more reader-centred language.

In general, modal usage in self-help books shows clear patterns. The modal "can" is often used to highlight abilities and possibilities, especially in practical, action-focused books like *Stop Walking on Eggshells*. Recent books tend to use softer modals like "might" and "could," which offer a more empathetic, reader- centred approach. At the same time, traditional modals like "must" and "ought to" are used less, showing a shift toward more flexible and inclusive language. These trends in modal usage reflect the genre's ongoing focus on empowering readers. Modals like "can" and "may" are used often to help readers take action. Over time, the tone has shifted, with modern authors using softer modals like "might" and "could" to build a stronger connection with readers. While less common, modals like "should" and "will" are still important for giving advice and motivating readers to take action.

The following tables present an analysis of modal usage in non-expert-authored self-help books. The first table shows the raw count of modal occurrences across 123 body chapters. Meanwhile, the second table provides the

normalized frequencies of modal usage, adjusted per 1,000 words, allowing for a more accurate comparison between books of different lengths.

Table 11:

Modal Usage Analysis in Non-Expert-Authored Self-Help Books: Occurrences

Category	Book Title	Year	may	should	can	would	could	will	might	must	shall	ought	Word Tokens
Non-Expert-Authored	Codependent No More	1986	321	72	414	118	78	226	30	45	9	5	84,068
	Unlimited Power	1986	242	96	971	379	247	395	130	82	1	3	138,013
	Chicken Soup for the Soul	1993	32	28	132	228	149	90	32	21	6	1	58,311
	Stop Walking on Eggshells: Taking Your Life Back When Someone You Care About Has Borderline Personality Disorder	1998	506	58	399	165	85	213	60	47	0	0	82,548
	Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking	2005	43	40	188	240	135	49	38	11	1	5	83,230
	The Dip: A Little Book That Teaches You When to Quit (and When to Stick)	2007	5	18	51	17	13	22	12	9	0	1	16,216
	The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*ck: A Counterintuitive Approach to Living a Good Life	2016	35	51	127	145	82	130	14	33	0	0	63,508
	Atomic Habits: An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones	2018	24	35	341	119	51	184	23	16	0	0	64,779
	You Will Get Through This Night	2021	168	81	627	73	64	221	68	14	0	0	57,931
	Little Things: Your positive toolkit for when life feels stressful	2024	88	33	400	97	101	176	121	13	0	0	61,989
Total			1464	512	3650	1581	1005	1706	528	291	17	15	710,593

Table 12:

Modal Usage Analysis in Non-Expert-Authored Self-Help Books: Normalized Frequencies

Category	Book Title	Year	Can per 1,000	Could per 1,000	May per 1,000	Might per 1,000	Shall per 1,000	Should per 1,000	Will per 1,000	Would per 1,000	Must per 1,000	Ought to per 1,000
Non-Expert-Authored	Codependent No More	1986	3.82	0.86	4.92	1.4	0.93	2.69	0.36	0.54	0.11	0.06
	Unlimited Power	1986	1.75	0.7	7.04	2.75	1.79	2.86	0.94	0.59	0.01	0.02
	Chicken Soup for the Soul	1993	0.55	0.48	2.26	3.91	2.56	1.54	0.55	0.36	0.1	0.02
	Stop Walking on Eggshells: Taking Your Life Back When Someone You Care About Has Borderline Personality Disorder	1998	6.13	0.7	4.83	2	1.03	2.58	0.73	0.57	0	0
	Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking	2005	0.52	0.48	2.26	2.88	1.62	0.59	0.46	0.13	0.01	0.06
	The Dip: A Little Book That Teaches You When to Quit (and When to Stick)	2007	0.31	1.11	3.15	1.05	0.8	1.36	0.74	0.56	0	0.06
	The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*ck: A Counterintuitive Approach to Living a Good Life	2016	0.55	0.8	2	2.28	1.29	2.05	0.22	0.52	0	0
	Atomic Habits: An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones	2018	0.37	0.54	5.26	1.84	0.79	2.84	0.35	0.25	0	0
	You Will Get Through This Night	2021	2.9	1.4	10.8	1.26	1.1	3.81	1.17	0.24	0	0
	Little Things: Your positive toolkit for when life feels stressful	2024	1.42	0.53	6.45	1.56	1.63	2.84	1.95	0.21	0	0

To further clarify these patterns, Figure 3 visualizes the normalized frequencies of modality types across the two categories.
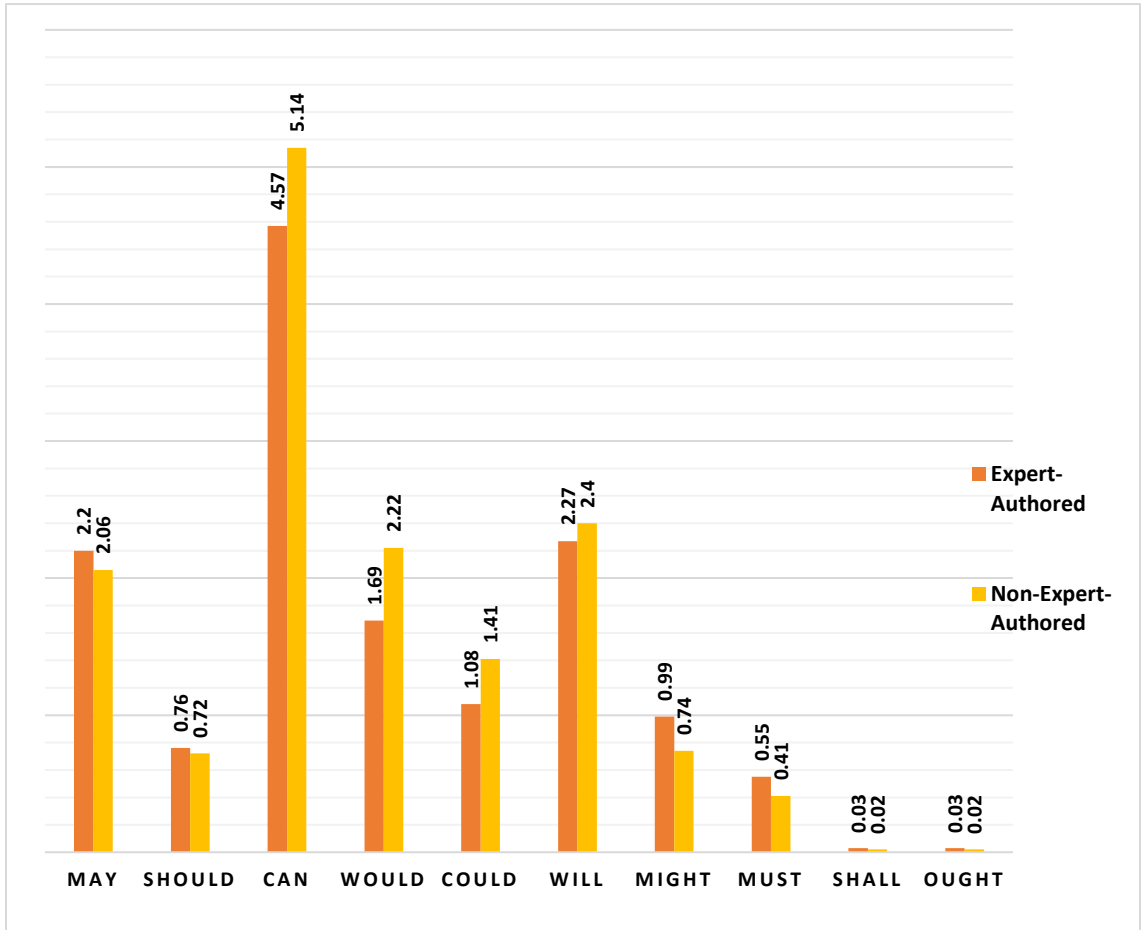

Figure 3:

Visualized Comparison of Normalized Frequencies of Modality Types in Expert-Authored and Non-Expert-Authored Body Chapters

7. Conclusion

This study highlights the important role that mood, pronouns, and modals play in shaping the tone and interaction between authors and readers in expert- and non-expert-authored self-help books. By applying Halliday's interpersonal metafunction, this research demonstrates how linguistic choices serve to establish relationships, convey authority, and foster engagement. Expert-authored books rely heavily on declarative moods, creating a structured, informative tone that aligns with their goal of providing clear, authoritative guidance. On the other hand, non-expert-authored books utilize a more diverse range of linguistic features, including second-person pronouns and imperatives, to engage readers in a more conversational and motivational manner.

The analysis of modals further underscores the differences between the two categories, with expert-authored books using modals like "can" and "will" to convey empowerment and certainty, while non-expert-authored books employ softer modals like "might" and "could," reflecting a more empathetic approach. This contrast illustrates the differing priorities of expert and non-expert authors, with experts focusing on providing structured information and non-experts aiming to inspire and motivate readers.

Through the use of advanced data analysis tools, this research provides a quantitative understanding of how different linguistic strategies shape reader engagement, motivation, and the effectiveness of self-help literature. The findings reveal how language shapes the overall purpose and tone of self-help literature, offering insights into how authors

craft their messages to meet the needs and expectations of their target audiences. This study not only contributes to a better understanding of language in self-help books but also provides valuable insights into how interpersonal communication functions in written discourse.

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