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FACULTY OF LETTERS**

**VERBAL AND NON-VERBAL CARRIERS OF  
MODAL MEANINGS**

**Doctoral Thesis**

**ABSTRACT**

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**Keywords:** modality, mood, epistemic modality, deontic modality, dynamic modality, alethic modality, boulomaic modality, modal verbs, modal adverbs, modal expressions, non-verbal modal elements, linguistic classes, obligation, necessity, possibility, indeterminacy, subjectivity, speech acts, discourse analysis, royal speech, political discourse, epistemic markers, deontic markers.

### ABSTRACT

The concepts of *mood* and *modality* may very well be traced back to Aristotle and Greek philosophy. Human beings frequently categorise their thoughts and experiences in terms of how things could or must be, might have been or must have been, rather than how they are or were. The concept of modality was studied even before linguistics was established as a separate field of research.

Therefore, the motivation that conducted me to explore the domain of modality, particularly of verbal and non-verbal carriers of modal meanings, was made considering its effects on everyday life. Moreover, when speaking about *modality* one may think that it refers exclusively to modal verbs. Indeed, at first glance, the majority of linguistic studies relate to them and offer complex understandings from different perspectives such as grammatical, semantic or pragmatic. Still, the modal domain's complexity seems limitless due to its linguistic aspects which complete the modality's background.

The necessity of focusing on modal components seems to be more obvious after multiple readings on the concept of modality. Through the process of modal categorisation and meaning exploitation, it was found that modality had not only been successful in obtaining examination at the practical level but had also been controlled rather poorly.

Still, there is no question that experts in this field including Halliday (1970), Hoyer (1997), and Coates (1983) have attempted to disclose many study methodologies, but not all of them appear to be as successful as wished. They pay less attention to other modal components and concentrate more on the general category of modality and modal verbs. Because of this, this thesis seeks to investigate how modal elements about different linguistic classes together with modal attitudes are represented in discourses and speeches.

As it is well known, when speaking about modality, the first thing that comes to mind is the linguistic category of modal verbs. However, there are other linguistic classes with modal meanings, but the primary literature concerning modality has briefly mentioned their existence. Therefore, these aspects that are not so well developed require more attention and study. In this sense, I intended to investigate verbal and non-verbal carriers of modal meanings to see if indeed those non-verbal elements can be considered to be part of the category of modality from a pragmatic point of view.

Taking into account the power of the language not only in the written texts, on which there are some works analysing modality from literary texts such as novels but again, focusing mainly on the modal verbs, I consider that an innovation within this domain would be the investigation of both verbal and non-verbal elements in discourses.

My prior objectives before starting the research for this thesis were to establish exactly:

1. the mapping paradigm of modality alongside its importance from the very beginning to the present moment.
2. the general picture of modality, comprising all its types, with pertinent and clear explanations, since this domain is a challenging one which requires very clear definitions to undertake further investigations.
3. the viewpoints put out by academics to determine, at the end of my thesis, if one of these methods applies to my study as well.
4. the types of modal meanings, which I assume can be both verbal and non-verbal, with dual applicability in theory and practice.
5. how modality applies in discourses alongside an analysis of the linguistic tools through which it is expressed.
6. how both verbal and non-verbal modal meanings shape the entire picture of modality, by showing the frequency of these elements in the selected speeches.

As a result of a careful analysis of modality and modal meanings, the material was distributed into two sections: a theoretical part and an applicative part that comes to prove that the elements proposed can be applied both theoretically and practically.

## **THE STRUCTURE OF THE PAPER**

### **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTORY ELEMENTS WITHIN THE AREA OF MODALITY**

The first chapter of the thesis shows that the paradigm mapping of the history of mood and modality is crucial to understanding that in linguistics dealing with these notions is not a novelty. These elements existed from early times and developed from multiple perspectives. Not only this but also the importance and the focus of modality play their role by underlying the challenging part of what are in fact meanings.

Then, it is presented the fact that modality cannot be labelled to pertain just to the linguistic domain. It is analysed from other angles too, becoming throughout time a multilateral domain which is present almost everywhere, regardless of the area in which it is used. Therefore, it was necessary to continue with the core of modality, represented by the modal verbs, with the mentioning that there are also other elements which fit within this category. Finally, the chapter aims to illustrate the impact of modality as a crucial concept in the study of meaning because it underpins one of the most

important aspects of human language: the ability to communicate information about objects and occurrences that are displaced not just in time and space but also in actuality.

## **CHAPTER 2: TYPES OF MODALITIES**

The second chapter concentrates on the types of modalities, illustrating that the most important is the well-known epistemic and deontic, but also offers a brief presentation of other types which may represent a fruitful area for future studies and research, such as dynamic, alethic, boulomaic. Moreover, the modality domains cannot work individually, they are closely interconnected with other elements which as will be seen, are intended to expose that the domain of modality cannot function by itself, it must be accompanied by several semantic elements. To illustrate the diversity of modality, Perkins (1983:10) states that “The number of modalities one chooses is to some part a matter of different methods of slicing the same cake”.

This fact comes also to prove the importance of multi-disciplinarity to the entire picture of what constitutes modality and how the characteristics are illustrated. In the last decades, the opinions of scholars discussed within the current thesis are divided regarding this aspect, since they tend to consider that actually, all the types of modalities have equal importance, even if the above-mentioned ones have gained more terrain. However, my attention went particularly towards epistemic and deontic modalities since I considered that these two types of modalities help me better to highlight also the existence of non-verbal elements of modal meaning.

## **CHAPTER 3: TYPOLOGIES OF MODALITY**

Modality is interpreted as a grammatical category in some cases, purely semantic in others, and a combination of both in still others and so on. Except for those that are entirely syntactic or strictly semantic, most approaches discussed appear to deal with the same set of variables that are reshuffled in terms of varying degrees of emphasis. The presence and importance of form, meaning, and context as broad categories appear to be recognised by most techniques of analysis. Furthermore, despite certain similarities, each approach claims complete independence from previous ones. They do, however, all have theoretical and practical limits in common.

Twaddell (1960) and Palmer (1974, 1986), for example, do not give much thought to meaning and they often target just and only modal auxiliary verbs. The less the function of meaning is recognized in these stories, the more restricted they are. The same sort of debate confronts primarily semantic methods as that of Perkins (1983), who attempts to account for a link between form and meaning. Although there are some discernible correlations and patterns between structure and meaning, the worth and utility of accounting for them are called into question because of the numerous exceptions that may exceed these consistencies. In all circumstances, the presence of so



many exclusions serves as a continual reminder that there is no one-to-one association between form and meaning.

On one hand, Joos' (1964) and Coates' (1983) monosemantic approaches are sufficiently wide to ensure that a modal's domain of meaning is covered. However, the more general they are, the less accurate the meaning is. On the other hand, Marino's (1973) and Halliday (1970)'s approaches give attempt to cover all the potential meanings of each usage of a modal. These concerns are challenging in the sense that meaning is never isolated from readings, and different readers might dispute the meaning of the same modal in the same utterance. More adaptable techniques rely more overtly on context for modal interpretation, as the functional approaches of Halliday (1970) and Johannesson (1978). Another interesting approach is that offered by Ehrman (1966) who is the first to use a corpus within the analysis done. However, these were just some examples of approaches tackled in the research, since they appear to give a modality description that is not just universal, but also somewhat customised and partially subjective.

Primarily, I based my assumption on Hermeren (1978)'s approach, which starting from a semantic perspective has shown that modality can be expressed by both verbal and non-verbal elements or by a combination of these two. Secondly, for the practical part of my thesis, I based my research on Ehrman (1966)'s style of work, who was the first to use a corpus to point out exactly the applicability of modal elements. Therefore, the practical part of my thesis follows Ehrman (1966)'s study concerning the use of the corpus, but I intertwined this method with Hermeren's (1978), to achieve a complex picture of the great subdivision of the modal meanings.

#### **CHAPTER 4: KINDS OF MODALIZERS**

This chapter exposes a detailed analysis of each of the linguistic elements carrying modal meanings. It is important to mention here that the same linguistic class may be used within different types of modalities, namely epistemic and deontic, but definitely with a change in meaning depending on what it is meant to convey.

Therefore, my task became complicated since it was quite challenging to offer clear explanations of why we can use the same element within the two types of modalities. Hence, it was essential to point out each linguistic category and its modal characteristics to see if modality can be analysed in the chosen texts through these.

Consequently, I found out that despite the well-known category of modal verbs (*can, may, must, will*), there are also other linguistic classes with modal values such as modal adverbs (*definitely, indeed, undoubtedly*), expressions incorporating non-verbally derived adjectives-these expressions contain the structure *be...to* accompanied by a modal adjective, used attributively-(*be sure to, be likely to, be possible to*), epistemic and deontic past participles expressing different acts or states-these

expressions contain the structure *be...to* used predicatively-(*be assumed to, be ordered to, be commanded to*), modal nominal expressions (*affirmation, declaration, doubt*), lexical verbs (*declare, ask, promise*). Besides, there are also other elements such as tense (*past tense*), aspect, evidentiality, negation or modal particles (*if*) which can very well be included in the modal category due to the characteristics that they possess and which make them belong to the modal domain.

## **CHAPTER 5: A PRACTICAL ACCOUNT OF VERBAL AND NON-VERBAL CARRIERS OF MODAL MEANINGS**

Chapter five targets an all-encompassing issue of modality and modal elements which find their applicability in the selected corpus. The primary goal of this analysis is to arrive at a clear stance if there are non-verbal elements with modal meanings too and how they can be effectively accounted for in light of the discourses and speeches. This chapter centres on the analysis of each modal element which is classified according to the meaning transmitted so that a proper analysis of the modal elements is made.

The modal elements were first categorized into epistemic or deontic modalities, depending on how they were articulated. Then, using the theoretical chapters previously presented as a framework, I grouped the modal elements according to their linguistic class. Finally, I examined each grouping in light of the meaning that was conveyed in the royal speeches or political discourses. It is important to mention here that the same linguistic class may be used within different types of modalities, namely epistemic and deontic, but definitely with a change in meaning depending on what it is meant to convey.

By this, it is intended to expose the complexities of modality as a concept, as well as the challenge of accounting for it in a methodical and tidy way. In line with the view adopted by this thesis, the speeches of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and the discourses of some of her most representative prime ministers are foregrounded to show that the modalizers explained in the previous chapter found their applicability in the discourse analysis and not necessarily on the domain of literature, where they seemed to count more.

As a result, along with the modal verbs, additional components started to emerge that sophisticatedly shaped the whole picture of modality, as displayed by Theresa May, Boris Johnson, Margaret Thatcher, and Queen Elizabeth. Their steadfast stance on the policies that must be put into effect, as well as their love and devotion to the British people, are highlighted in each of the selected speeches, enhancing the fact that the format is as elegant as their words. My main objective was to shatter the modal marker types into the basic modality types in the selected discourses and to closely examine each modal component in a pragmatic functional framework. This was successfully achieved considering the analysis undertaken that shows that in royal speeches and political discourses, there

are both verbal and non-verbal elements with modal meanings.

## CONCLUSIONS

The elements containing modal meanings are important tools because it is not possible to communicate effectively in the English language without frequently using them. Their importance is crucial when transmitting messages despite the speaker or the message transmitted. These elements become part of our daily usage without very much attention being paid to them. Even if we speak about modal verbs, modal nouns, modal adjectives, and modal expressions, all these carry with them important meanings that are indispensable not only for linguists but also for people who normally use these.

Modality was seen from the standpoint of this thesis as an essential concept since it embodies and reconciles those essential qualities characteristic of a pragmatic-functional approach to critical analysis. First, a speaker's modality essentially represents the speaker's subjective interference in what was stated. To put it another way, it denotes the speaker's subjective role in transmitting attitudes and ideologies.

Second, the modality is also typically ambiguous or indefinite, providing the speakers with some freedom and allowing them to be less explicit about their ideological commitment. From the reader's perspective, this point is more important. Because of its ambiguous character, modality allows for a wide range of interpretations, which reflects the varied but at the same time constrained options for understanding the perspectives presented in a text. Here, the reader's subjectivity can be captured while avoiding the possibility of the process devolving into chaos thanks to the permissible variety in interpretation.

In other words, the idea of modality serves the pragmatic nature of the language quite fine. Both the speaker/writer and the hearer/reader are metaphorically given a limited amount of room to express/interpret utterances, and it functions at both the level of expression and the level of interpretation. In this sense, the ideological convictions of the speaker, writer, and reader are afforded an equal amount of room for expression and interpretation.

The image painted by my research may appear to be quite conclusive based on these justifications, analyses, and findings. Not at all. The reader's involvement in interpreting modality and the variances in these interpretations are only two examples of the many areas that require more clarification, elaboration, and—most importantly—empirical support. Further group sub-divisions within what — forms the notion of the reader — must be taken into account to assist and be more precise in niching down the variances in reader interpretations.

There are, in essence, many opportunities for additional research on the subject and my thesis is only one of many such approaches. The contrasts between spoken and written speech are not

considered, nor are cross-linguistic issues examined, both of which would be highly helpful from a theoretical standpoint. By comparing how second language learners and native English speakers perceive modality, for instance, it may be easier to draw cross-linguistic connections between the many manifestations of the idea of modality.

The research undertaken in this thesis serves as a strong starting point for the subsequent need for a more empirical examination. It represents a change in focus from more theoretical to more practical, from more exclusive to more inclusive. In other words, it constitutes a big step forward in the pragmatic tendencies of speech and discourse analysis and examination of modality.

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