

A Pragmatic Study of the Stability of Meaning of Modality Markers in American and British Selected Political Speeches

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ABSTRACT

This research investigated the pragmatic analysis of modality markers in selected political speeches from closely related cultures: American and British. It addresses the issue that modality markers do not have a fixed meaning but rely on the listener's interpretation of the speaker's attitude, which can often be ambiguous because it is a psychological process. In addition, modality markers are highly varied in form and many markers represent the same meaning depending on the situation or the context which adds to the ambiguity. This research aims to examine the linguistic environment where modality markers change meaning based on context and culture. Additionally, it uses qualitative analysis to provide insights into the contextual variables that affect the use of modality markers, revealing the change in meaning that occurs after adding these variables into the interpretation process. The findings revealed that the different patterns in meaning change between the two cultures highlight differences in what is expected of the listener. In American speeches, the listener is expected to interpret the speaker's intention, while in British political speeches, the listener is expected to add more information than what is explicitly stated.

Keywords: modality markers, political speeches, pragmatic analysis.

دراسة تداولية لثبات معنى دلالات الموقفية في خطابات سياسية مختارة أمريكية و بريطانية

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المخلص

حقق هذا البحث في التحليل التداولي لدلالات الموقفية في خطابات سياسية مختارة من ثقافات وثيقة الصلة: أمريكية وبريطانية. وهو يتناول مسألة أن دلالات الموقفية لا تحمل معنى ثابتاً ولكنها تعتمد على تفسير المستمع لموقف المتكلم، الذي يمكن أن يكون غامضاً في كثير من الأحيان لأنه عملية نفسية. وبالإضافة إلى ذلك، فإن دلالات الموقفية تختلف اختلافاً كبيراً في شكلها، كما أن العديد من الدلالات تمثل نفس المعنى تبعاً للحالة أو السياق مما يضيف إلى الغموض. ويهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة البيئة اللغوية التي يوجد فيها تغيير في معنى دلالات الموقفية استناداً إلى السياق والثقافة. وبالإضافة إلى ذلك، يستخدم التحليل النوعي لتقديم معلومات عن المتغيرات السياقية التي تؤثر على استخدام دلالات الموقفية، مما يكشف عن التغير في المعنى الذي يحدث بعد إضافة هذه المتغيرات إلى عملية التفسير. وكشفت النتائج عن أن الأنماط المختلفة في التغير في المعنى بين الثقافتين تبرز اختلافات في ما هو متوقع من المستمع. في الخطب الأمريكية، يتوقع من المستمع أن يفسر نية المتكلم، بينما يتوقع من المستمع في الخطب السياسية البريطانية أن يضيف معلومات أكثر مما هو مذكور بشكل صريح.

الكلمات الرئيسية: دلالات الموقفية، الخطب السياسية، التحليل التداولي.

1. Introduction

Modality markers have been studied as the area where semantics and pragmatics interface, this can lead to difficulties in comprehending the utterance (Papafragou, 2003). Palmer in (Facchinetti et al., 2003, p: 16) explains that the interpretation of sentences with modality markers is somewhat challenging due to the ambiguities of modal expressions "This is not a matter of any kind of grammatical or logical system. It is rather that there are pragmatic ways of ruling out possible ambiguities and misunderstandings. Understanding the grammar, complex though it may be, is still not enough". This indicates that the semantic meaning of a modality can change due to the influence of the pragmatic variables. This ambiguity that is held in the system of modality can be harnessed by participants of speech to manipulate or evade a certain situation or ideology. As proven by many previous studies, one particular group of

participants that can be guilty of manipulating speech is politicians. Therefore, this research tries to answer the following questions:

1– How can a listener or reader interpret ambiguities in the modality markers' meaning?

2– How does culture effect the meaning change of modality markers?

This can be done by investigating the different linguistic environments of modality markers that are found in selected American speeches, analyzing their meaning before and after the pragmatic input such as context, shared knowledge, and other linguistic variables, and comparing the results with the results of the analysis of modality markers found in selected British speeches.

2. Literature Review

This section puts forth the main concepts that are necessary for the analysis to answer the questions that have been introduced in the introduction, these concepts are:

1– Pragmatics and Modality: Yule (1996) defines Pragmatics as the study of the speaker's meaning and the interpretation of that meaning by the listener. He adds that it has a high consideration to the context and its effect on the meaning. In Kroeger's (2019) study, the American writer Mark Twain's quote "a good man in the worst sense of the word" is brought up to emphasize the importance of pragmatic investigation in understanding words. In this quote, the word "good man" is not interpreted in its conventional meaning, but it is interpreted by adding the meaning of the words "in the worst sense" to mean "a wolf in sheep's clothing", (p.3). Twain's quote suggests that sometimes words can have different meanings depending on the context they are used in, and this highlights the need for a deeper understanding of their pragmatic functions. Kroeger uses this insight to argue that language learners need to focus on developing their pragmatic competence to correctly interpret the meaning of words in different contexts. By

stressing the significance of pragmatic investigation, he aims to help language learners become more effective communicators.

The area of pragmatics has a high subjectivity and textuality influence because it is not rule-based but controlled by principles that are in turn motivated by conversational goals, (Leech, 1983). This subjectivity is evident in the subject of modality. Modality is defined in many linguistic works as the speaker's or writer's attitude toward the proposition that is indicated through several linguistic features in the sentence such as verbs, adverbs, etc., (Moskowich et al., 2019). It is also defined as "the linguistic phenomenon whereby grammar allows one to say things about or on the basis of situations which need not be real", (Portner, 2009, p.1). To sum up the relationship of pragmatics and modality, Nuyts (2006) states that "by using modal forms speakers can add their own or other people's psychological or mental states regarding the proposition", (Frawley, 2008, p.141). This statement refers to the pragmatic side of modality and how Pragmatics is intrinsic for the use and interpretation of modality.

2- Modality Markers' Definition: Any linguistic form that is considered to have a modality feature to it, such as (prohibition, permission or obligation), is referred to as modal. Even if this form is something other than the modal verb group (De Haan, 2006). Frawley (2008) explains that modality or any other aspect of language depend on the semantic meaning in their typology, this indicates that if a morpheme has a modal meaning then it is considered as a modal in its classification. Therefore lexical, morphological and syntactic categories can express modality meanings and in turn, are considered to be modality markers.

Palmer (2001) states that modality of the English language can be expressed by different morphological syntactic and lexical categories:

a– Modal auxiliary verbs: Modality can be expressed by *will, shall, may, can, must, ought (to)*, and, to a lesser extent, *need* and *dare* (includes *might, should, could, and would*). (Frawley, 2006)

b– Mood: Mood can be regarded as a morphological verbal category carrying the modality of the sentence “the grammaticalized expression of modality”, (De Haan, 2006, p.33).

c– Lexical modality: in the English language, there are also some lexical items that express modality such as adverbs, adjectives, verbs. (Frawley, 2006)

d– Modal Particles: there are words such as ‘too’ and ‘so’. These modal markers are deemed more popular in American English than in British English. (De Haan, 2006)

e– Double modals: “a linguistic construction in which two modal auxiliaries are used in a succession to introduce two separate modalities into a sentence...” for example “... I might be able to jump over the bush” (Michieli, 2016).

f– If–clause or conditional clause: the intrinsic meaning of this marker is to create a possible world. (Bybee et al., 1994).

3– Categorization of Modality Markers: There is a conflict of opinions among the linguists about the characterization of modal categories regarding which semantic notion they fall under, what are the precise boundaries of distinct categories and the features that are considered during the grouping of these categories under the notion of modality (Palmer, 2001). Therefore, the researcher puts forth the common grounds for this categorization that is found among the linguists among them are Nuyts (2005) Palmer (2001), Van Der Auwera and Plungian (1998), Bybee et al. (1994), and Lyons (1977):

1. Propositional: This category expresses an attitude towards the truth or factuality of the proposition, (Hegarty, 2016).

A – Epistemic: It indicates an estimation of the probability of the state of affairs and includes Counter Factual, Possibility, Probability, and Inferred Certainty starting from the least probable to the most probable. (Bybee et al., 1994)

B – Evidential: It refers to how certain a source of information is (the proof for the assertion), which can be presented as if the speaker witnessed the incident directly or indirectly received the knowledge from another person(s), (Frawley, 2008).

2. Event: This category refers to events that are not actualized but has a potentiality of being actualized in the future as it is illustrated in (Table 3). (Palmer, 2001) It includes:

A – Dynamic: it is sometimes referred to as “facultative modality” or “inherent modality”, it expresses a situation in which the subject is the one who has control on the performance of the action expressed by the main verb, (Nuyts, 2001). Palmer (2001) observes that this type of modality includes *ability* (internal enabling conditions), *necessity* (external compelling conditions) and *need* which is referred to by Bybee et al. (1994) as *Desire* (internal volitional conditions).

B – Deontic: It is referred to as *speaker-oriented* modality by Bybee et al. (1994). It conveys that the enabling condition is the speaker, i.e. the speaker enables someone to something such as Obligation or Permission. (Coates, 1983)

3. Bouloimaic: This category expresses the degree of liking or disliking the state of affairs in the proposition just like epistemic and deontic modality it is scalar ranging from positive to negative pole; therefore, it is also called (emotional attitude). (Frawley, 2008)

4- The Speech Acts Theory: This theory was developed by Austin (1975), posits that a speech act is an action performed by saying something. It was then developed by Searle (1979) who proposed a different classification from Austin's classification, focusing on assertive,

directive, commissives, expressives, and declaratives. Assertives hold the speaker to the truth of the state of affairs, directives attempt to make the listener do something, commissives bind the speaker to a future state of affairs, expressives express the speaker's psychological states, and declaratives affect the world.

This theory further suggests that language has three basic sentence forms that give specific functions:

- (F) You ate the pizza. Declarative —————> Statement
 (G) Did you eat the pizza? Interrogative —————> Question
 (H) Eat the pizza
 (please)! Imperative —————> Command/request (Yule, 1996, p.134)

He also explains that when the form matches its function the speech act is then considered a direct speech act, as in:

(I) Open that door for me.

The form here is (imperative __ command). However, when the form does not match the function then the speech act is considered an indirect one; as in:

(J) Could you open that door for me? (p.153)

The form in the latter example is (interrogative __ request).

3. METHODOLOGY

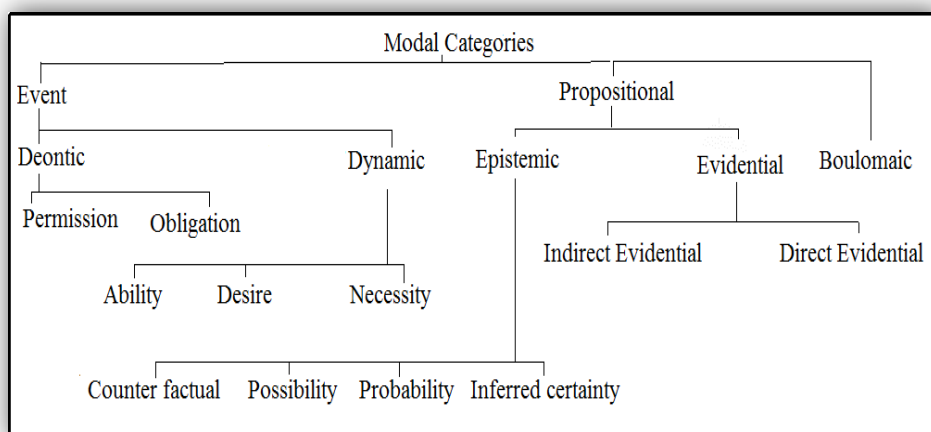
The qualitative approach focuses on defining the general concepts; in this case, the researcher searches for patterns of interrelationships among various general concepts that the researcher has already developed, (Brannen, 2017). This research applies this approach by analyzing the meaning of the extracted modality markers according to the adopted model before applying the pragmatic analysis and after applying it and identifying the change in the meaning if found.

Since this study is concerned with finding out the variation in modality markers' use, the data chosen are political speeches of American and

British parliament members because political context allows manipulation of language (Crespo Fernández, 2018). The research analyzes three speeches that belong to three different American Congress members and three speeches that belong to three different British Parliament members, they all belong to the time duration (2022–2023). The American speeches chosen are (Rand Paul's speech to the United States Senate in 2023 to obtain approval to withdraw US military forces from Syria, Nancy Pelosi's Speech in 2022 in Washington DC to express her gratitude to be representing San Francisco, and Mitch McConnell's Speech in Washington DC in 2023 to speak about the 7th of October incident). The British speeches chosen are (Theresa May's Speech in the Palace of Westminster 2022 to express her disapproval for the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill, Keir Starmer's Speech at Chatham House in 2023 to discuss the situation in the middle-east, and David Cameron's Speech in Washington DC in 2023 for the conference of the Aspen Security Forum).

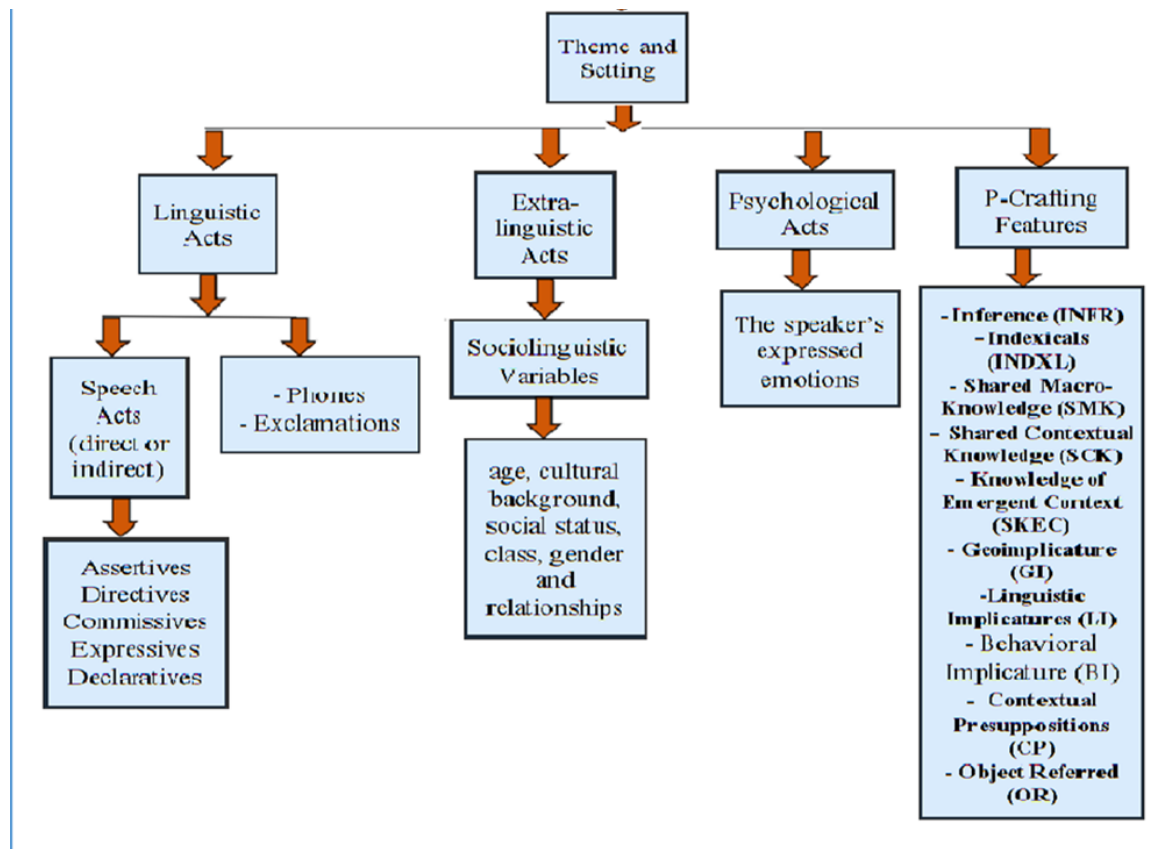
The model that has been chosen represents two levels, the semantic level of analysis where modality markers are analyzed based on their semantic meaning that has been mentioned in details in the Categorization of Modality Markers in Literature Review and is illustrated by Figure 1:

Figure 1 *The Semantic Categories*



At the pragmatic level, the focus is on exploring the various aspects of communication, including linguistic and non-linguistic elements (Acheoah, 2015). The Pragmatic level is illustrated by Figure 2:

Figure 2



The Pragmatic level

This level includes:

A – Setting and Theme: Setting represents the actual environment of the communicative act (the context of speech). Setting conveys two aspects of the communicative environment: the physical setting of time and place of the communicative act (Widdowson, 2007), or the social setting, (Acheoah, 2015). Theme stands in for the text's primary idea or message. Text can contain one or more primary messages, (Widdowson, 2007). The setting and theme of the communicative act are shared knowledge between the participants that can help the participants at conveying and interpreting the communicative act, (Acheoah, 2015).

B – Linguistic Acts: Acheoah (2015) explains that these are speech acts (including Direct and Indirect speech acts), Phones and Exclamations.

C – Extra Linguistic Acts: Acheoah (2015) explains that extra-linguistic acts are communicative features beyond language itself. They are represented by Sociolinguistic variables, such as age, cultural background, social status, class, gender, and relationships, influence language use.

D – Pragmatic Crafting Features: These features represent the mixture of pragmatic competence of the illocutionary force of an utterance that are referred to as P-crafting features, (Van Dijk, 1977). These features are:

1– Inference (INFR): This refers to the process of deducing certain logical information from previously existing linguistic and non-linguistic data, i.e. listeners use deductive reasoning to determine the speakers' intention (non-literal meaning) (Aronoff & Rees-Miller, 2017).

2– Indexicals (INDXL): These are grammatical expressions that connect language and situation. They add extra details to utterances (Acheoah, 2015). In English, there are various indexical expressions such as the pronouns 'they' and 'he', temporal and spatial such as 'tomorrow', 'now', 'here', and 'there'. (Levinson, 1983)

3- Shared Knowledge: Capone and Mey (2016) state that shared knowledge represent the common information between the participants of the communicative act. According to Acheoah (2015), it is of three types:

a- Shared Macro-Knowledge (SMK): This notion represents general information, knowledge that represents the global custom in different aspects of life.

b- Shared Contextual Knowledge (SCK): This is the type of information that only the participants of a certain context are aware of, in order for the communication to develop.

c- Knowledge of Emergent Context (SKEC): Occasionally discourse has an emergent context, this may lead to the eradication of the perlocutionary effects despite the fact that the situation and participants are appropriate for that perlocutionary effect, if this emergent context is known by the participants then it will also be regarded as shared knowledge.

4- Implicature: When a speaker says something, he/she sometimes express additional meaning that is no explicitly conveyed (Cruse, 2006). According to a study done by Acheoah (2015), implicature is expressed in three type:

a- Geoimplicature (GI): This notion refers to implicature that has geographical restriction regarding the people not the physical boundaries. This notion evolved from the words ‘geographica’ and ‘implicature’. These implicatures can be verbal and non-verbal. Geoimplicatures are not universal but they are practices that have high insights on cross-cultural pragmatics.

b- Linguistic Implicature (LI): Any meaning that is implied through the use of language is referred to as “Linguistic Implicature”.

c- Behavioral Implicature (BI): Meanings that are implied through acts such as extra-linguistic and psychological are behavioral implicatures.

5- Contextual Presuppositions (CP)

A presupposition is the assumption that is drawn by the hearer for the interpretation of an utterance, for example: if someone says

A- The king of France is bald.

Then the hearer would assume that France is ruled by a king. (Johnstone, 2008, p.275)

6– Object Referred: Words usually have equivalent objects in the real world, these are represented as the referents of an utterance. (Palmer, 1981)

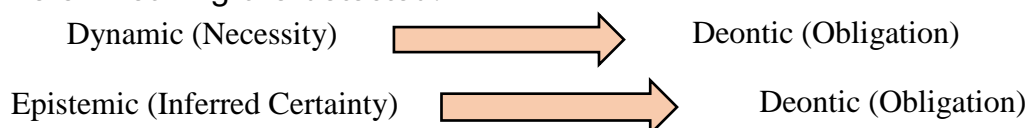
7– Operative Language: This notion refers to the actual language used to convey all the p-crafting features. It is important in the sense that language could be native or alien to the participants. (Acheoah, 2015)

4. The Findings

This section illustrates the comparison of the stability of the modality markers' meaning in the American and British political speeches.

4.1 Change in Meaning in American Speeches

In American political speeches the following changes in the modality markers' meaning are detected:



Both these changes are illustrated in (Utterance 1) In Rand Paul's speech where he says "The War Powers Act **requires** that upon a request from a member of the Senate or member of Congress that there **will** be a vote". In this statement, "requires" which indicates Dynamic (Necessity) and "will" which indicates Epistemic (Inferred Certainty) are both interpreted as Deontic (Obligation). This interpretation is influenced by the Indirect Directive Speech Act, which the utterance conveys, as well as the War Power Act, which is an obligatory law that obliges the Members of the Parliament to vote. Therefore, both requires and will are affected by these aspects to convey the meaning of obligation.



This change in meaning is illustrated in (Utterance 10) in Rand Paul's speech where he says "I fear they're merely a trip wire to a greater war or tragedy, **should** a terrorist attack occur." In this statement, the interpretation of "should" which is usually used to indicate (Obligation); is

influenced by the lack of a subject which implies that neither the subject nor the speaker are obliging the occurrence of the attack and the focus of the obligation is on the likelihood of the attack to occur. Furthermore, the psychological act of concern and the contextual presupposition convey that the MP is well informed on the subject to state a prediction of about the outcome. This interpretation raise the likelihood of the proposition which raises the position of the modality marker in the Epistemic scale to represent (Probability).


This change in meaning is illustrated in (Utterance 23) in Rand Paul's speech where he says "Those who vote against my motion will be voting to have troops in Syria, and it will be their responsibility **if** calamity occurs." In this statement, the modality marker "if" which represents Epistemic (Possibility), is influenced by the shared contextual knowledge that the events that are taking place there are dangerous this increases the likelihood of the calamity to indicate (Probability). Furthermore, the shared contextual knowledge repeated mention of the MP that it is a dangerous place, occurs with a modality marker that represents Inferred Certainty several times in the context which affects the likelihood of the calamity taking place in this utterance which identifies the modality marker's meaning as (Inferred Certainty). Therefore, the utterance can convey the meaning that it will be their responsibility when calamity occurs.

Dynamic (Necessity)  Epistemic (Possibility)


This change in meaning is illustrated in (Utterance 28) in Rand Paul's speech where he says "none of them are happy to have ISIS there if it **should** try to arise again." In this statement, "should" represents Dynamic (Necessity) is influenced by the modality marker "if" which represents (Possibility). This leads to the interpretation of the modality marker "should" as Epistemic (Possibility) rather than a (Necessity).

Dynamic (Ability)  Epistemic (Possibility)

This change in meaning is illustrated in (Utterance 31) in Rand Paul's speech where he says "They **couldn't** attack us, frankly, **if** we weren't there." In this statement, "couldn't" which represents a Dynamic (Ability), is influenced by the shared contextual knowledge that the radical group's ability to attack is possible due to external factors such as the existence in the same area with them. Therefore, it is not considered a general ability or inability but rather an Epistemic (Possibility).

Epistemic (Possibility)  Epistemic (Counter Factual)

In the same statement that is mentioned above, "if" which represents Epistemic (Possibility) by creating a possible world, is influenced by the shared contextual knowledge that the military groups aren't actually there, and by the linguistic implicature of the word were, which represents an imaginary scenario or a hypothesis. This changes the meaning of the modality marker to represent Epistemic (Counter Factual).

Deontic (Permission)  Epistemic (Probability)

This change in meaning is illustrated in (Utterance 31) in Rand Paul's speech where he says "So why would we plop Americans down in the desert within a few dozen miles of these folks and **allow** them to be attacked?". In this statement, the modality marker "allow", which represents Deontic (Permission), is influenced by the shared macro-knowledge of the world and the inference that there is no occasion where being attacked is required or is given permission for, which indicates that the meaning of the word "allow" is to make it probable for the attack to happen. Therefore, the modality marker represents Epistemic (Probability).

Epistemic (Probability)  Epistemic (Inferred Certainty)

This change in meaning is illustrated in (Utterance 1) in Mitch McConnell's speech where he says "she documented what **would** be the last moments of her own life". In this statement, the modality marker "would", which represents Epistemic (Probability), is influenced by the shared contextual knowledge that the NP is narrating a prediction of the future from a past perspective. This indicates that the statement conveys Epistemic (Inferred Certainty).

4.2 Change in Meaning in British Speeches

In British political speeches the following changes in the modality markers' meaning are detected:

Epistemic (Possibility)  Boulomaic

This change in meaning is illustrated in (Utterance 3) in David Cameron's speech where he says "but I **couldn't** be more delighted to be in this job at this time because there are so many difficult issues that we **have to** get to grips with". In this statement, the modality marker couldn't is influenced by the following expression, which is "be more delighted". This conveys a linguistic implicature that the MP is enthusiastic or very happy. In this case, the modality marker represents Boulumaic.

Epistemic (Possibility)  Dynamic (Necessity)

This change in meaning is illustrated in (Utterance 12) in David Cameron's speech where he says "I **think** it is really important to do that because, at this time, it's never been more important to strengthen our defenses, to harden and protect our systems". In this statement, the modality marker "think", which represents Epistemic (Possibility), is influenced by the following words. It is really important. This allows the linguistic implicature that believing something is important is equivalent


to believing in its necessity. Therefore, it represents Dynamic (Necessity).

Epistemic (Possibility)  Epistemic (Probability)

This change in meaning is illustrated in (Utterance 17) in David Cameron's speech where he says "We **will** only be strong internationally if we can be strong and prosperous domestically.". In this statement, which is a conditional clause, "will" represent Epistemic (Possibility). However, it is influenced by the following word "only", which conveys a sense of assertiveness that the speaker. Here, the MP believes that there is no other way. It is the only way. This raises the certainty level that is conveyed by the modality marker to represent Epistemic (Probability).

Dynamic (Ability)  Epistemic (Possibility)

In the same statement, the modality marker "can", which represents Dynamic (Ability), is influenced by the context that suggests that being strong and prosperous is not an ability that is controlled by the speaker since the context suggests that the MP means for the country to be strong and prosperous. Through the betterment of economics, social stability, infrastructure, etc. This allows the interpretation of the modality marker as Epistemic (Possibility).

Epistemic (Possibility)  Epistemic (Inferred Certainty)

This change in meaning is illustrated in (Utterance 18) in David Cameron's speech where he says "That's why I **think** it doesn't matter whether you're Democrat or Republican, Conservative or Labour; we've all got to meet those domestic challenges in order to engage,. ". In this statement, the modality marker "think", which represents Epistemic (Possibility), is influenced by the preceding words "That's why". This

indicates that there is a detective process which happened that enabled the MP to reach a certain belief. This linguistic implicature indicates the meaning of Epistemic (Inferred Certainty), rather than Possibility.

Epistemic (Probability)  Epistemic (Counter Factual)

This change in meaning is illustrated in (Utterance 26) in David Cameron's speech where he says "I **would** just make this point that we need Britain and America and the countries that believe in democracy and freedom. We need to offer other countries an alternative to China." In this statement, the modality marker "would" represent Epistemic (Probability). However, the linguistic implicature suggests that the MP proceeds to make his point, and therefore the indication of probability of making a point, is contradictory. Therefore, an alternative interpretation is understood which is the probability to respond in a hypothetical situation. This conveys the meaning of Epistemic (Counter Factual).

Epistemic (Possibility)  Epistemic (Counter Factual).

This change in meaning is illustrated in (Utterance 33) in David Cameron's speech where he says "The first thing you hear is: "It's failing, it's not working.", I think that is nonsense. **If** you look at what the Ukrainians have done, they have taken back half of the territory that Russia stole." In this statement, the modality marker "if" represent Epistemic (Possibility). However, taking the context into consideration, a previous statement about the person who is addressed indicates that he is doing the opposite. This allows the interpretation of the modality marker as Epistemic (Counter Factual).

Epistemic (Possibility)  Deontic (Permission)

This change in meaning is illustrated in (Utterance 24) in Kier Starmer's speech where he says "The supply of basic utilities like water,

medicines, electricity and yes, fuel to civilians in Gaza **cannot** be blocked by Israel.”. In this statement, the modality marker “cannot”, which represents Epistemic (Possibility), is influenced by the shared macro-knowledge of the world that the supplies are actually blocked from Gaza which eliminates the interpretation of Possibility. Furthermore, the MP is against Israel's actions towards the innocent civilians as it is shown by the contextual knowledge. This allows the interpretation that the MP does not allow Israel to block the supplies, which indicates the meaning of Deontic (Permission).

This change in meaning is illustrated in (Utterance 25) in Theresa May's speech where he says “As a patriot, I **would not want to** do anything to diminish this country in the eyes of the world.” In this statement, the modality marker “would” represents Epistemic (Counter Factual) as the hypothetical scenario of being a patriot. However, the shared contextual knowledge and the shared micro-knowledge of the world indicates that the MP is actually a patriot and advocating for what's best for the country. This disallows the interpretation of a counterfactual situation and conveys the interpretation of Epistemic (Probability). However, this probability is meant to be indirect and polite in expressing a directive act for the government.

4.3 Discussion of the Results

In discussing the results of the pragmatic analysis, it is important first to mention the similarities between the changing meanings between the two cultures to understand more about how pragmatics effect the meaning of modality markers in both cultures.

The path of meaning that a modality marker takes after a pragmatic interpretation is abiding by Bybee et al. (1994) Paths of modality development where the meaning of a modality marker changes from a more general to a specific meaning. This means that an agent-oriented modality meaning can develop into either a speaker-oriented modality,

an Epistemic modality, or both in a subordinate clause. For example, an (Ability) holds an ambiguous meaning which means that it has the possibility of becoming either an agent-oriented modality, speaker-oriented modality, Epistemic modality, or a modality in a subordinate clause. Here, the speaker will use some strategies to enable one of the interpretations rather than the other these strategies are either the use of linguistic implicature which can be done by the use of a modality marker that may belong to more than one category of modality meaning, the use of a dummy subject which such as (it or there) to eliminate the agent-oriented interpretation or the use of the context to advocate for one meaning rather than the other. for example, taking David Cameron's statement which is indicated in utterance (22):

A– "there **can** never be a two state solution".

In this statement, the modality Marker (can) has the possibility of conveying either (Ability) or (Possibility). (Ability) is an agent-oriented modality meaning meanwhile (Possibility) is Epistemic. However, the interpretation of this utterance is clear since it represents (Possibility) rather than (Ability) the speaker has done that by using a dummy subject which is the word "there", by that he is eliminating an agent-oriented modality meaning and conveying an Epistemic meaning.

Considering the same utterance, it can be transformed into an ambiguous utterance where it tolerates both interpretations for example:

B– Netanyahu can propose a two-state solution.

By bringing back a clear subject, this utterance becomes ambiguous depending on the context if the speaker was mentioning Netanyahu's jurisdiction then the modality Marker would mean a Dynamic (Ability), however, if the speaker is adding the following words "in the following negotiations, Netanyahu can propose a two States solution" and the context suggests that the speaker is mentioning an intended course of action should Netanyahu does so, then the agent-oriented modality

meaning is eliminated and a more Epistemic modality interpretation is advocated. Furthermore, there are some shared paths of meaning change in both cultures. Figure 3 below:

Figure 3

Epistemic Path of Meaning Change

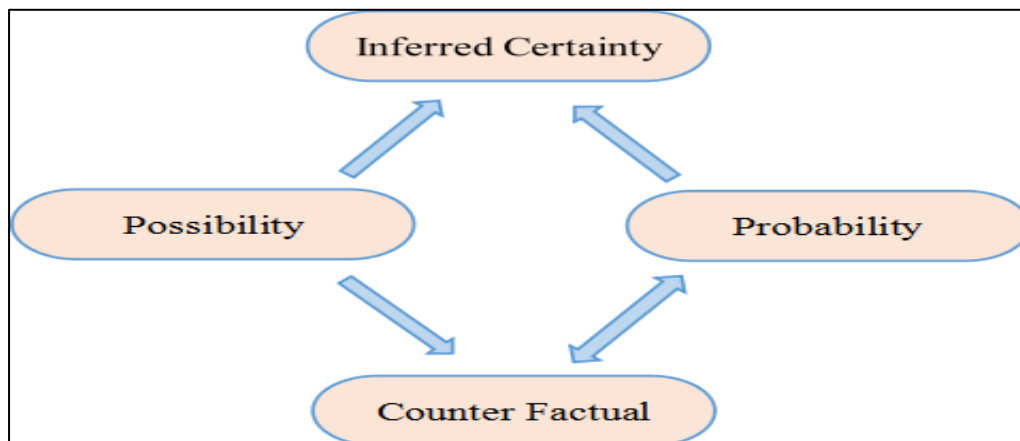
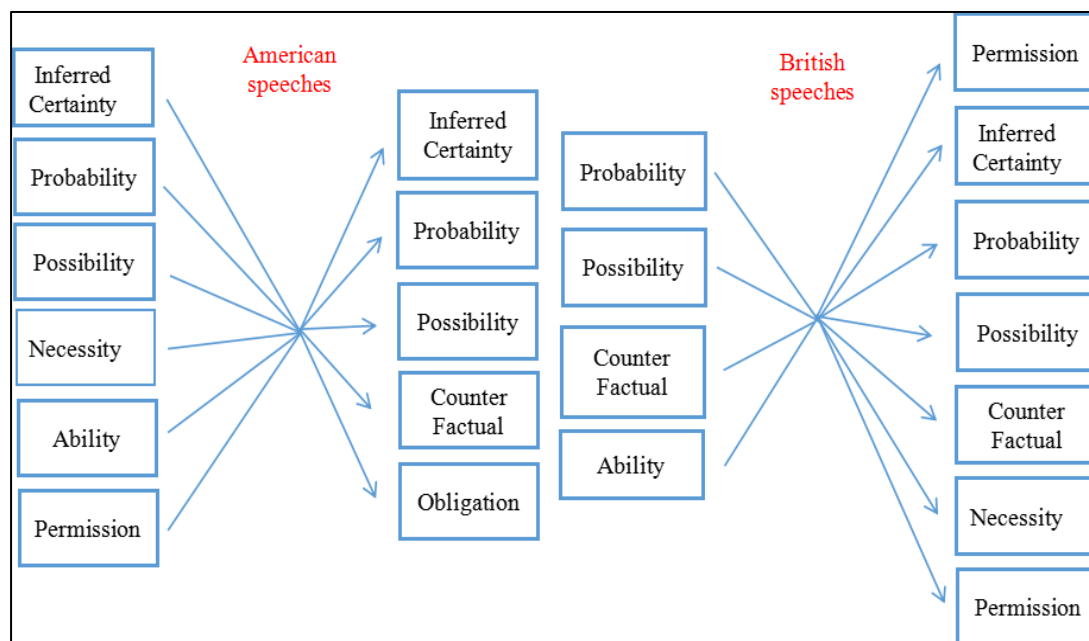


Figure 3 illustrates the shared paths that are mainly a change of meaning between Dynamic (Ability) and Epistemic (Possibility) which can be attributed to the modality Marker (can) which has a shared usage with Epistemic (Possibility). In addition, there is a shared change of meaning between the subcategories of the Epistemic modality meaning and since the subcategories of Epistemic modality have a shared usage of modality markers, this emphasizes that the change in meaning can be highly attributed to the shared usage of modality markers and the high frequency of Epistemic modality markers in both cultures compared to other modality markers. Since this change of meaning between the subcategories of Epistemic modality is very prevalent in both cultures, it is considered the least stable category in all modality categories, therefore, it can make a general modality path of development concerning the English language since this research is concerned with the English language. Figure 4 below shows the difference in the change in meaning between American and British speeches.

Figure 4

Cross-Cultural Comparison of Meaning Change



In disregarding the paths of meaning change that connect certain modality meanings with others, it appears that in American political speeches (6) types which are Epistemic (Possibility), (Probability), (Inferred Certainty), Dynamic (Necessity), (Ability), and Deontic (Permission) are used to convey five types of modality which are Epistemic (Inferred Certainty), (Probability), (Possibility), (Counter Factual), and Deontic (Obligation); this indicates that there is a reduction in the variety of modality markers meaning and what is being said which is more complex is then streamlined by the interpretation process. This also indicates a strategy where American MPs depend on the listener to interpret the intention of what is being said.

In British political speeches, (4) types which are Epistemic (Probability), (Possibility), (Counter Factual), and Dynamic (Ability) are being used to express (7) types that are Epistemic (Inferred Certainty), (Probability), (Possibility), (Counter Factual), Dynamic (Necessity), Deontic (Permission), and Boulomaic. This shows an expansion in the variety of modality markers meaning and what is being said is less diverse and after the interpretation process, additional layers of modality meanings appear. This indicates that the British MPs depend on the listener to

seek additional information than what is being said rather than interpreting the intention. The differences in the paths of meaning change of modality markers between the two cultures proves the fourth hypothesis that there are variations of modality markers' meaning and use between the American and British speakers, however, the differences do not disclose any information about the British speakers adhering to rules of language or linguistic norms.

5. Conclusions

1. Acheoah's (2015) model of pragmatic analysis confirms successful in identifying the change of meaning in modality markers where the identified change is noted to be consistent with Bybee et al. (1994) Paths of modality development where the qualitative analysis reveals that the meaning of the modality markers before the pragmatic analysis is agent-oriented, while, the meaning of the modality markers after the interpretation is either speaker-oriented, Epistemic, or a modality in a subordinate clause. This is illustrated by the utterance "there **can** never be a two state solution" which is discussed previously in Discussion of the Results.
2. The identification of the change in the meaning of modality markers in both American and British political speeches is highly dependent on linguistic implicature and the context. This is illustrated by the same example that is mentioned in the discussion of the results.
3. Epistemic modality markers are observed to change meaning among the subcategories of this modality meaning in both cultures in a specific pattern. This supported by the qualitative analysis that detected a change in modality markers' meaning which is illustrated by Figure 3.
4. American MCs depend on the listener to interpret the intention of what is being said since the meanings of the modality markers are more merged and simplified after the interpretation. This is validated by the fact that six modality meanings before the interpretation developed into

five modality meanings. Whereas, British MPs depend on the listener to identify more than what is being said since the meaning of the modality markers after the interpretation is expanded with different variations. This is confirmed by the fact that four modality meanings before the interpretation became seven modality meanings.

5. In light of the mentioned conclusions, the pragmatic analysis of political speeches affects the interpretation of the modality markers and alters their position either among the main categories or the subcategories of their main category. Furthermore, culture has an impact on the patterns of meaning change which can indicate an impact on the interpretation process.

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