

Linguistic markers of modality in Ghanaian Presidential Independence Day speeches

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Abstract

Using Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) theory and modality framework, this study investigates linguistic markers of modality in Ghanaian Independence Day speeches. Eight speeches from John Dramani Mahama (JDM), the eleventh president of Ghana, and Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo (NADAA), the twelfth president of Ghana, were sampled. The analysis revealed that the top five linguistic indicators for modal meanings were modal auxiliary verbs, lexical verbs, adverbs, lexico-modal items, and subjunctive mood. The presidents used modal verbs to state their certainty

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about their propositions, awareness of some factuality, ability to execute an action, probability of the occurrence of some events, and desire to see a change. JDM mostly described himself as an agent central to completing an action. On the other hand, NADAA mostly used modal auxiliary verbs to state the confidence and certainty of the truth value in his propositions. These findings affirm the unrestricted semantic (modal) values of modal auxiliary verbs. This study provides evidence for modality use in Independence Day speeches. It advances modality beyond the static grammatical category by illustrating its dynamic and context-dependent use in political speeches. This paper also enriches theoretical frameworks for analyzing political/ceremonial discourse as a site of strategic meaning-making.

Keywords: modality, linguistic markers, Systemic Functional Linguistics, Independence Day speeches, ceremonial/political discourse, Ghana

Introduction

Political actors use language to maintain, control, and win the support of their populace. This is evident in their ability to use their speeches to persuade and influence their audiences (Saville-Trokie, 2003; Vadai, 2016). Through their speeches, politicians maintain a positive connection with the public. They employ language not only to establish authority, but also to authenticate their obligation and commitment to various actions and assertions. Kiratli (2016) asserts that the projection of power is fundamentally dependent on certain linguistic features and expressions. These linguistic expressions, such as modality, project authority and authenticate assertions in political speeches (Ekawati, 2019; Kareinen, 2019). Bramley (2001) and Nartey and Yankson (2014), who studied political interviews and texts, respectively, conclude that modality, along with other linguistic items, is strategically and pragmatically used in political discourse to persuade electorates.

The concept of modality has been defined differently in the literature with no precision. According to Halliday and

Matthiessen (2014), “The speaker’s judgement, or request of the judgement of the listener, on the status of what is being said... What the modality system does is to construe the region of uncertainty that lies between ‘yes’ and ‘no’” (p. 176). Halliday views modality as the judgement of factuality or otherwise of a proposition. Saeed (2016) defines modality as an umbrella term that encompasses all language strategies that allow speakers to convey various levels of commitment to, or confidence in a claim. Modality signals different degrees of certainty that speakers attach to the utterance they make or write, and the degree or sort of commitment, responsibility, or obligation they show to what they say.

In political discourse, modality reflects the viewpoints of political actors and shows the degree of obligation and responsibility attached to the message they deliver in their speeches. Kantorgorje, Israel, and Mwinwelle (2021) aver that political speeches are noted for their prime focus on informing, persuading, and inspiring the populace to take certain actions. Modality has been effective in projecting and asserting power and dominance in the political space.

Over the years, the use of modality as a linguistic resource to (de)legitimize assertions has been an interesting research focus for language researchers. These include studies from the United Kingdom (Xu, 2015; Zeng & Wang, 2019), the United States of America (Pham, 2010; Shayegh & Nabifar, 2012), Indonesia (Ekawati, 2019; Jannatussholihah & Triyono, 2020), Canada (Kareinen, 2019), Russia (Nemickienė, 2019), and Ghana (Aning, 2020; Israel & Botchwey, 2017; Kantorgorje et al., 2021; Nartey & Yankson, 2014; Opeyemi & Ajoke, 2019). In the Ghanaian context, Aning (2020) studied the semantic values of modal verbs in the New Democratic Congress’ (NDC) 2016 manifesto, while Kantorgorje et al. (2021) studied epistemic modality in selected inaugural speeches of presidents in the fourth republic. Nartey and Yankson (2014) also studied modal verbs in the New Patriotic Party’s (NPP) 2012 manifesto,

while Opeyemi and Ajoke (2019) studied linguistic modality in Akufo-Addo's inaugural speech.

It is more intriguing to note that Independence Day speeches, to the best of our knowledge, have garnered no attention in modality studies. Edu-Buandoh and Nkansah (2018) found that commemorative speeches, such as Independence Day speeches, provide a site for leaders to accentuate their commitment and (de)legitimize their actions in projecting individual and social identities. Alameda-Hernández (2008) indicated that a functional linguistic examination of commemorative speeches highlights presidents' commitment and obligation to preserve the nations' continual freedom from imperial rule and their use of language to persuade the citizenry towards an action. Therefore, this study seeks to expand the literature on how Ghanaian presidents mark modality in their Independence Day speeches. The objectives are to:

- i. determine which linguistic markers of modality are present in Ghanaian presidential Independence Day speeches.
- ii. examine the communicative function of modals in Ghanaian presidential Independence Day speeches.

The addresses of two Ghanaian presidents, John Dramani Mahama (JDM), the eleventh president of Ghana, and Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo (NADAA), the twelfth president of Ghana, were studied. These two personalities have been at the forefront of the Ghanaian political scene. They have received the most attention in all political discussions. Their speeches have become an appropriate corpus for many linguistic studies (see Addae, Danquah, Hamidu & Adjei-Yeboah, 2023; Asante, Addae & Danquah, 2024; Agbesi, Sarpong & Ashon, 2023; Dickson, 2023; Doku, Antwi-Boasiako & Amponsah, 2024; Fenyi & Sapaty, 2021; Logogy, 2021; Naaikur & Akapule, 2024; Opeyemi & Ajoke, 2019). This informed the decision to examine the addresses of these personalities.

Theoretical framework – Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)

This study adopts Halliday's SFL theory. SFL delves beyond the mere structure of language and ventures into the realm of how language functions to create meaning in social contexts. It explores how language functions as a meaning-making tool in various social situations. Halliday (1994) explains that language is a system of choices, with each selection influencing the overall meaning conveyed. SFL relies on two principles: systemic and functional. The "systemic" aspect views language as a network of interconnected choices. Each word, grammatical structure, or phrase selection has meaning in relation to the other possibilities within the system. The 'functional' aspect emphasizes the social purpose of language (Halliday, 1994). Every utterance serves a function: whether it is informing, persuading, entertaining, or simply building relationships. SFL analyzes language using three interrelated metafunctions. These are ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) explain that ideational metafunction focuses on how language represents our experience of the world, encompassing elements such as participants, processes, and circumstances. Interpersonal metafunction explores how language enacts social relations, reflecting the roles and relationships between speakers and listeners (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Finally, textual metafunction examines how language structures a text for coherence and cohesion, ensuring that the message is clear and flows smoothly (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). This study is situated within interpersonal metafunction, which, according to Halliday (1994), involves employing language to encode interactions, permitting us to connect with people, play roles, and communicate and comprehend assessments and sentiments. The encoding of interactions is realized through MOOD and RESIDUE. In the words of Flowerdew (1998), "The interpersonal function is concerned with the writer's attitude to the message and is typically realized through modal verbs (e.g., should, may)

and various types of modal adjuncts (e.g., probably, obviously)” (p. 543).

Modality

Halliday (1994) examines the concept of modality as an addendum to his investigation of mood, which covers the four main sentence forms. He defines modality as an option in language that falls between two polarities: yes and no. It includes all intermediate degrees as well as the many types of indeterminacy that exist between these two distinct binary alternatives. Eggins (2004) concurs with Halliday (1994) in that there are several paths from yes to no poles. As a result, modality must consider the contrast between propositions and proposals. Eggins (2004) refers to the meaning of the negative and positive poles in claiming and denying as a proposition. Palmer (2001) asserts that modality is a concept of semantic significance that deals with the representation of likelihood and certainty. As a linguistic strategy, modality is also defined by Aboh (2012) as a major exponent of the interpersonal function of language, which explains the attitude of speakers and writers toward the situation or event expressed in a sentence or utterance. Saeed (2016) also defined it as reflecting how speakers assert their viewpoints and thought processes about a particular phenomenon within a given discourse. Modality signals different degrees of certainty that speakers attach to the utterance they make or write, and the degree or sort of commitment, responsibility, or obligation they show to what they say. Modality is expressed through various linguistic items, including modal verbs, modal adjuncts, lexical verbs, lexico-modal auxiliaries, adjectives, and adverbs (Halliday, 2005; Kantorgorje et al., 2021). Adding to these linguistic strategies for marking modality, Saeed (2016) mentions embedding a sentence under a higher clause with an adverb or adjective that expresses modality and inserting a verb into a higher clause to describe the extent of speakers' beliefs.

Literature review

Modality has been extensively examined in the literature, particularly in political discourse. These studies have explored how political actors use modal markers to project their stance and position in their speeches. Zhang (2019) and Kantorgorje et al. (2021) explained that although other grammatical categories are used to show modality, modal verbs remain the primary sources for marking modality. This assertion was evident in the studies of Xu (2015) and Sharififar and Rahimi (2015), who found that modal verbs were predominantly used in presidential speeches to mark modality. For example, Sharififar and Rahimi (2015) explained that the modal verb ‘will’ was frequently used to show presidents’ future capabilities in ruling their nation. Xu (2015) also ranked the modal ‘will’ as the top modal marker for epistemic and volitional modality in the presidential speeches of Obama, Blair, and Ahmadinejad. Among the ten top-modal markers found by Xu (2015) were ‘can’, ‘would’, ‘could’, ‘may’ and ‘might’. Lillian (2008) comparably found high use of deontic modals in Canadian conservative discourse. She observed that deontic modals were highly marked using the following modal verbs: ‘will’, ‘have to’, ‘must’ and ‘can’. Similar to previous studies, Koussouhon and Dossoumou (2015) in Nigeria found that President Muhammadu Buhari used more of ‘will’, ‘have to’, ‘must’, ‘could’, ‘should’ and ‘shall’ in his inaugural speech. Similar to what previous studies had found, the modal verb ‘will’ had a high occurrence in President Buhari’s speech. Likewise, Jannatussholihah and Triyono (2020) reported that the modal verb ‘will’ was highly used in Joko Widodo’s 2019 inaugural speech. Other modal markers found in the text were ‘can’, ‘must’, ‘should’, ‘sure’, ‘believe’, ‘definitely’, ‘confirm’ and ‘aware’. Aning (2020) similarly ranked the modal verb ‘will’ as the most-used modal marker in the 2016 political manifesto of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) party in Ghana. Quirk and Greenbaum (1973) and Zhang (2019) shared that modal ‘will’ conveys a high certainty value. It communicates the

predictability of the speakers' stance. Aning (2020) described the modal verb 'will' in political manifestos as expressing strong certainty, intentions, promises and determination. These results match those observed by Nartey and Yankson (2014) in the 2012 political manifesto of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) in Ghana. The latter study found the use of 'will', 'can', 'shall', 'must' and 'would' in the political manifesto of the NPP. Contrary to what these studies have observed, Shi and Zhong (2020) did not report a preponderant use of the modal 'will' in the inaugural speech of António Guterres, the ninth UN Secretary-General. Rather, modal adjuncts 'must', 'need to' and 'has/had to' were observed in the text. These linguistic items expressed a high-value modality in secretary-general's inaugural speech. Kantorgorje et al. (2021) affirmed the high frequency of modal verbs in marking stances in political speeches. They observed a high frequency of this linguistic item as marking epistemic modality in selected Ghanaian presidential inaugural speeches. This is followed by lexical verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. For Jannatussholihah and Triyono (2020), the use of all modal verbs and other modal markers helps speakers (political actors) convey their strategic plans, connect with their citizenry, and build relationships and a positive self-image. Simon-Vandenberg (1996) held that politicians use modality to build a positive self-image. As noted by Xu (2015), modality, which is a stance marker, is used to enact 'negative other' views and delegitimize others' views. This assertion was agreed to by Yunisda and Firmansyah (2019), who observed that President Donald Trump had used modality in his Riyadh Summit 2017 speech to build a positive self-image and delegitimize 'their' bad acts. The above review provides evidence of the linguistic markers of modality in political discourse and their communicative intent.

Methodology

This study was a descriptive inquiry using a qualitative approach. Eight Independence Day celebration speeches were used in the

analysis. It included four speeches by NADAA (2017–2020) and four speeches by JDM (2012–2016). All the speeches were delivered during the first tenure of the presidents. Therefore, they were sampled purposively. The speeches included those delivered at the 56th, 57th, 58th, 59th, 60th, 61st, 62nd and 63rd Independence Day celebrations, respectively. Speeches in text format were downloaded from the official website of the President of the Republic of Ghana (<https://presidency.gov.gh/index.php/briefing-room/speeches>). They are accessible to the public without restrictions. The speeches were assigned unique code. The label ‘IDC’ (independent day speech), including the number of speeches, was used in the coding. Thus, code 56IDC is interpreted as the 56th Independence Day Speech. Speeches made by JDM include those coded as 56IDC, 57IDC, 58IDC, and 59IDC, whereas those made by NADAA include those coded as 60IDC, 61IDC, 62IDC, and 63IDC. Table 1 lists the textual spaces of the speech.

Table 1: Textual space of speeches

	Speech	Code	Word Count	Sentence Count
JDM	56 th Independence Day Celebration	56IDC	2,198	94
	57 th Independence Day Celebration	57IDC	2,609	145
	58 th Independence Day Celebration	58IDC	1,963	85
	59 th Independence Day Celebration	59IDC	1,584	73
NADAA	60 th Independence Day Celebration	60IDC	2,971	130
	61 st Independence Day Celebration	61IDC	4,634	202

	62 nd Independence Day Celebration	62IDC	3,051	115
	63 rd Independence Day Celebration	63IDC	2,760	120
TOTAL			21,770	964

Speeches were subjected to sentential sorting through a close reading. A prelist of linguistic forms used as modality markers from previous literature was prepared to form the basis of searches in the corpora (Ekawati, 2019; Halliday, 1985; Holmes, 1988; Kantorgorje et al., 2021; Ngula, 2015; Saeed, 2016). The modality marking devices were grouped under their lexical categories as either modal/semi-modal verbs, lexical verbs, adverbs, adjectives, nouns, conditional clauses, or a combination of modals and adjuncts. The texts were read thoroughly to identify modality forms that may not have been included in the prelist of modality markers. A prelist was used to address the proposed research objectives. Linguistic examples from the data were used to support this discussion.

Findings and discussion

Presidents use various linguistic markers for modal meanings. These include modal auxiliary verbs, semi-modal verbs, modal plus semi-modal verbs, lexical verbs, adverbs, nouns, adjectives, lexico-modals, clauses with past participles, and subjunctive and indicative moods. Table 2 presents the linguistic markers employed for the modal meanings.

Table 2: Linguistic markers of modality

Category	Linguistic markers
Modal auxiliary verb	<i>Can, will, would, could, must, might, may, should, shall</i>

Semi-modal verb	<i>Have to, able to, want to, need to, going to</i>
Modal plus semi-modal	<i>Should be able to, will want to, will have to</i>
Lexical verb	<i>Wish, appeal, urge, remained, want, knew, know, calling, required, pledge, expect, assured, call, expected, willing, dare, ask, demanded, intend, hope, hoping, believe, need, continues, known, know, assuming</i>
Modal Adverb	<i>Still, indeed, likely, especially, precisely, yes, often, absolutely, perhaps, seemingly, certainly, probably, truly, undoubtedly, invariably, justifiably, hopefully, irrevocably, of course</i>
Modal Noun	<i>possibility, responsibility, recommendations</i>
Modal Adjective	<i>Possible, impossible, certain, willing, confident, assured, sure, hopeful, keen, determined, predictable</i>
Lexico-modal item	<i>Still true, will still, will always, have always, will surely, want to believe, would have, would still, would want, never voluntarily, must have, would like to, would certainly, will doubtless, can safely, must certainly, can certainly, will probably, surely must, certainly must</i>

Clause with past participle	<i>Has been established, have always wanted, have been engaged, have always been, have already been</i>
Subjunctive mood	<i>If-clause, wh-subordinate clause, adverbial clause</i>
Indicative mood	<i>Compound sentences, complex sentence</i>

After identifying the linguistic markers that encoded the modal meanings, there was a need to further account for the rate of recurrence. This was performed by counting the concordance of each linguistic item identified in the category of modality markers. The recurrence rate for each item was recorded and reported as frequency values and percentages.

Table 3: Rate of recurrence of modal markers

Modal marker	JDM	NADAA	TOTAL
Modal auxiliary verb	119 (51.1%)	84 (43.1%)	203 (47.4%)
Lexical verb	35 (15.0%)	24 (12.3%)	59 (13.7%)
Modal Adverb	22 (9.4%)	25 (12.8%)	47 (11.0%)
Lexico-modal item	13 (5.6%)	20 (10.3%)	33 (7.7%)
Subjunctive mood	18 (7.7%)	11 (5.6%)	29 (6.8%)
Semi-modal verb	4 (1.7%)	13 (6.7%)	17 (4.0%)
Modal Adjective	8 (3.4%)	8 (4.1%)	16 (3.7%)
Clause with past participle	8 (3.4%)	--	8 (1.9%)
Indicative mood	1 (0.5%)	7 (3.6%)	8 (1.9%)

Modal Noun	2 (0.9%)	3 (1.5%)	5 (1.2%)
Modal plus semi-modal	3 (1.3%)	--	3 (0.7%)
TOTAL	233 (100.0%)	195 (100.0%)	428 (100.0%)

Modal auxiliary verbs

Modal auxiliary verbs dominated the list of modal markers used in the speeches. The incidence of this category of modal markers was 203, representing 47.4% of the total incidence of modal markers. This occurred 119 times in JDM's speeches and 84 times in NADAA's speeches. It is inferred from this observation that modal auxiliary verbs are readily linguistic items that are used to express various modal meanings. It offers a wide opportunity for language users to communicate several intentions and assess their proposals. The dominant use of modal auxiliary verbs could also be attributed to the fact that the items are not absolute with respect to their use. A modal item can be used to express various discourse functions. Ngula (2015) and Nartey and Yankson (2014) agree that modal verbs are involved in several grammatical expressions and are predominantly used to express modal values. Similarly, Kantorgorje et al. (2021) observed that modal verbs were the highest lexical items used in marking modality in Ghanaian presidential inaugural speeches.

In the speeches, both presidents expressed their commitment to and knowledge of their propositions using modal auxiliary verbs. From the data, nine auxiliary modal verbs were used to express modal meanings. These include *can*, *will*, *would*, *could*, *must*, *might*, *may*, *should*, and *shall*. These linguistic items express ability, necessity, certainty, and obligation. Both presidents used *can* and *could*, for instance, to state their beliefs in their assertions. This is illustrated in Examples 1(a) and 1(b).

Example 1:

- a. “The re-formatting of this year’s parade means that we *can* think outside the box and change things for the better” [58IDC]
- b. “Even though we maintained, in 1897, the continuing and inalienable rights to our lands, we remained a colony and *could* not govern ourselves.” [60IDC]

In 1(a), JDM used the modal marker to express his knowledge of the citizen’s ability to develop a behavioral change. The linguistic marker embodies the idea of ability. Similarly, in 1(b), NADAA used the modal marker to indicate his certainty of the factuality of his proposition.

Example 2 (a-d) also illustrates the presidents’ use of other modal auxiliary verbs.

Example 2:

- a. “A successful execution of this project *will* be key in moving Ghana Beyond Aid, as *will* be the successful exploitation of our iron ore and manganese deposits to build a steel industry for our country and the region.” [61IDC]
- b. “We *would* have all our human foibles, but we *would* operate within the agreed perimeters of our society.” [62IDC]
- c. “*May* God continue to bless our beloved homeland, and may Ghana remain free forever.” [59IDC]
- d. “I urge those who live in the big cities, in particular, to get around the country a little. It just *might* change their outlook and make them a little more tolerant of the difficulties that we need to overcome.” [62IDC]

NADAA stated his certainty about the essence of a national project in moving the country forward. The use of modal *will*

in extract 2(a) indicated NADAA's certainty about the efficacy of the project he spoke about. In 2(b), a modal marker *would* was used to indicate the idea of probability. NADAA states the probability of operating within the perimeters of society. In 2(c), the modal *may* is also used. JDM employed a modal marker to proffer blessings on the country. He called for blessings and good wishes to the country using modal marker *may*. The concept of probability is also shown in 2(d). The president used the modal marker *might* to show the likelihood of surmounting our challenges when citizens living in urban areas could occasionally visit the hinterlands.

Lexical verbs

Lexical verbs are the second most commonly used lexical items to encode modal meanings. Ngula (2015) also reported that lexical verbs are the second lexical item used to express modal values in research articles. In the present study, the incidence of this category was 59, representing 13.7% of the total incidence of modal markers in the data. While lexical verbs were the second most common modal item in JDM's speeches, occurring 35(15.0%) times, it was the third most common modal marker in NADAA's speeches, occurring 24(12.3%) times. Although the use of lexical verbs varied in the speeches of the two personalities; they were generally the second most common modal marker. This suggests that lexical verbs allow language users to present various concepts of their propositions. They were used by the presidents to authenticate their proposals, show their commitment to duty, and show their extent of confidence in various facts.

Some lexical verbs that express modal meanings include *wish, appeal, urge, remained, want, knew, know, calling, required*. The use of lexical verbs to express modal meanings is illustrated by the following extracts from the presidents' speeches:

Example 3:

- a. “I *urge* that we wear the accolade of being a Ghanaian with pride.” [60IDC]
- b. “Two months ago, at my inauguration on these grounds, I *demand*ed that we renew the sacred compact that comes with being able to call yourself a Ghanaian citizen.” [61IDC]
- c. “After many years of hesitation, we *intend* to bring a Bill again to Parliament, and work to get it passed into law before the end of this Meeting of Parliament.” [61IDC]
- d. “I *hope* it will spur on many people to get to know our country.” [62IDC]
- e. “I *wish* to invite you once more to join me in this venture of nation building by also pledging to believe, to sacrifice, and to work for the betterment of this nation – our nation.” [56IDC]
- f. “We *appeal* to your patriotism, and we urge everyone to demonstrate a commitment to collective responsibility.” [56IDC]

The extracts provided above illustrate the numerous modal meanings expressed by lexical verbs in the presidents’ speeches. In 3(a), the lexical verb *urge* is used to express admonition. The president used the verb to instruct and advise Ghanaians. NADAA used lexical verbs to advise Ghanaians to be proud of their citizenship. In 3(b), the lexical verb *demand*ed is used to communicate the president’s call to duty. The president used the verb to provide strong instruction to Ghanaians. He put forward an order for Ghanaians to live on national principles and values. The lexical verb communicated the order issued by the president to citizens. *Intend* was also used in 3(c). The president used a verb to express his government’s desire. In this utterance, the president makes known his government’s intent to put forward

a bill that was expected to contribute to national development. *Hope* was also used, as shown in 3(d). The lexical verb was used to state the president's desires and expectations. He noted that his government's plans and programs will increase the visibility of the country and attract the necessary developments. *Wish* and *appeal* were also used in 3(e) and 3(f), respectively, to express intention and admonition. These lexical verbs were used to show the president's knowledge and commitment to the propositions put forward in their utterances.

Modal adverbs

It was also observed that adverbs are used to encode modal meanings. The modal adverbs include *still*, *indeed*, *likely*, *especially*, *precisely*, *yes*, *often*, *absolutely*, *perhaps*, *seemingly*, and so on. The total incidence of this linguistic item was 47(11.0%). There were 22(9.4%) instances of this linguistic item in JDM's speeches and 25(12.8%) in NADAA's speeches. Extracts from the speeches using adverbs to express modal meanings are provided below.

Example 4:

- a. "All across Africa, and *indeed* the world, Ghana occupies a high place of respect and admiration among the comity of nations for its role in the liberation of the continent from colonial rule, as well as for its continuing influence in shaping the processes of world peace." [56IDC]
- b. "Yes, God has blessed Ghana richly with gold and bauxite and timbre and now, oil." [57IDC]
- c. "I am *absolutely* encouraged by this show of solidarity by our young politicians on the issue of national unity." [58IDC]
- d. "Soon thereafter, on 28th February 1948, the notorious and senseless killings of three ex-servicemen, Sergeant Adjetye, Corporal Attipoe and Private Odartey Lamptey

occurred, and sparked a nationwide revulsion against the colonial power, which, *undoubtedly*, quickened the pace of the independence movement.” [60IDC]

- e. “This is the day we *justifiably* celebrate the collective energies and sacrifices of our forebears that led to that joyous night, when our historic first leader, Kwame Nkrumah, uttered the immemorial words “Ghana, your beloved country, is free forever.” [62IDC]

As illustrated in 4(a), the modal adverb used is *indeed*. The lexical item is used to show the president’s level of certainty and awareness of his proposition. He explained that he was extremely sure that Ghana is highly respected and recognized at the world stage. JDM used the adverb *indeed* to affirm the truth of the proposition and reveal the extent of his belief in the proposition. Similarly, in 4(b), 4(c), 4(d), and 4(e), the modal adverbs *yes*, *absolutely*, *undoubtedly*, and *justifiably*, respectively, have been used to express certainty to the presidents’ propositions. In 4(b), for instance, the use of the modal adverb *yes* shows the certainty of JDM to the fact that Ghana is a blessed country. JDM expressed his absolute knowledge of the fact being put forward in his utterance. The same level of certainty and knowledge of the proposition are presented in 4(c). The president reckoned his extreme motivation for the contributions made by young politicians towards nation building. On the day of celebrating the achievements of the country, JDM expressed his encouragement of the inputs made by young politicians and their efforts in national cohesion. The adverb *absolutely* communicates the extent of certainty that JDM holds regarding the utterance he made.

Lexico-modals

Lexico-modals were also used to express various modal meanings in the analyzed speeches. Some of these linguistic

items, as found in the speeches, include *still true, will still, will always, have always, will surely, want to believe, would have, would still, would want, never voluntarily, must have*. NADAA's speeches had 20(10.3%) instances of lexico-modals used to encode modal meanings, while JDM had 13(5.6%) instances of this linguistic item. The following extracts were picked from the speeches to illustrate the use of lexico-modal verbs to express modal meanings.

Example 5:

- a. "There *will always* be those who want to maintain the status quo; even if they do not like the world they live in, it is easier for them to complain than to make the effort to change it. And then, there will always be those who want miraculous change..." [56IDC]
- b. "I *would like* to thank the good people of this country for always appealing to what is good and right in order to improve on what can be made or done better." [57IDC]
- c. "However, we should learn to count our many blessings and not talk ourselves down unnecessarily. It *surely must* count for something that our nation has been spared the ravages of civil war that have racked some of our neighbors and other nations on the continent." [63IDC]
- d. "My government is going to implement an alternative financing model to leverage our bauxite reserves, in particular, to finance a major infrastructure programme across Ghana. This *will probably* be the largest infrastructure program in Ghana's history, without any addition to Ghana's debt stock." [61IDC]

The lexico-modal item *will always* in 5(a) expresses the idea of certainty. JDM expressed his surety in the proposition that he put forward in his utterance. He uses a modal verb plus an adverb to show the extent of his knowledge and beliefs in his proposition.

Similarly, he used a modal verb, *would*, and a lexical verb, *like*, to express his intention to express gratitude to the people for their constant effort in ensuring national development (see Example 1b). The president's use of the frequency adverb, *always*, and lexical verb, *like*, was a politeness strategy. As a politeness strategy, the president gave citizens gentle reminders. He subtly stated his intention to show his appreciation to the people for their efforts to develop the country. Using this strategy, the president also created a cordial relationship with his audience, as he [the president] imposed his intentions on them [citizens]. In 5(c), NADAA used the expression *surely must* to communicate the certainty of the necessity for Ghanaians to acknowledge the many blessings enjoyed as people. He enjoins Ghanaians to be appreciative of the time and to establish a definite reason for which they ought to do this. In 5(d), he also indicated the probability of his government's program becoming the largest facility in the country's history. He communicated this idea using the expression *will probably*.

Subjunctive mood

The use of a subjunctive mood to express modal meanings was observed in the presidents' speeches. This included the use of various forms of conditional clauses such as if-clauses, wh-clauses, and other forms of adverbial clauses. The total number of these linguistic items was 29(6.8%). JDM used more of this linguistic item to encode modal meanings (18 instances) than NADAA did (11 instances). The following extracts from the speeches illustrate this.

Example 6:

- a. "When it rains, we call it showers of blessing. So, I want to believe that these showers that God has brought down today are a signal to us that He is continuing to bless Ghana, and blessing Ghana to move to the next level."
[57IDC]

- b. “You have to work for it. If *Nkrumah and the people of the Gold Coast had not stood up persistently* and revolted against the system, it would still be a colony under the British Empire. If Ghanaians could free themselves from colonial rule, then so too could the rest of Africa.” [57IDC]
- c. “In many parts of our country, our chiefs are the custodians of our lands, and their activities can be the spark for development or for disputes...The very survival of the institution is at risk *unless we get over the multiplicity of disputes.*” [62IDC]

In 6(a), JDM used the subjunctive mood to express a definite idea. The conditional clause, *When it rains*, expresses how certain the president is about the fact that the country should consider itself blessed because rains are symbolic of blessings. He used the clause to express the certainty of his knowledge. He also used the -if clause to indicate his conclusiveness in the contributions of Nkrumah and other people to the democratic freedom of the country (see Example 6b). Through a hypothetical statement, the president communicated his definite knowledge of what would happen if Nkrumah had not kept on with the fight for independence. In 6(c), NADAA also uses a subjunctive mood to communicate his confidence in his stated proposition. He used this expression *unless we get over the multiplicity of disputes*. The clause shows the president’s conviction of sustaining the institution of chieftaincy.

Semi-modal verbs

Modality was also expressed using semi-modals. The total number of these linguistic items was 17(4.0%). While there were four (1.7%) semi-modal verbs encoding modal meanings in JDM speeches, there were 13(6.7%) in NADAA speeches. These verbs include *have to*, *able to*, *want to*, *need to*, and *going to*. Some extracts illustrating the use of semi-modals in the

Independence Day speeches are given below.

Example 7:

- a. “I *want to* use this occasion to appeal to all Ghanaians to embrace the wind of change.” [56IDC]
- b. “Even the display by the security services has been more exciting and given us a glimpse into what they *have to* go through to defend the territorial integrity and the safety and security of our nation.” [58IDC]
- c. “...We are *going to* demonstrate to the world, to the other nations, that we are prepared to lay our foundation—our own African personality.” [59IDC]
- d. “We should not forget that the police need help and support from the community to be *able to* do their work.” [61IDC]
- e. “It just might change their outlook and make them a little more tolerant of the difficulties that we *need to* overcome.” [62IDC]

In 7(a), the president’s use of *want to* is meant to express a desire. JDM used the semi-modal to indicate his desire to call Ghanaians to embrace change. He used a semi-modal verb to present his intention and wish, as indicated in the proposition he put forward. In 7(b), the semi-modal verb *have to* is used to show the obligation placed on security services at the parade grounds. The modal shows the duty of security service personnel to which JDM reiterated in his speech. In 7(c), the semi-modal verb *going to* is used to express the modal meaning. JDM expressed the intentions of the people. On behalf of the people, the president communicated the country’s intent. He [the president] used the occasion to re-echo the goals of the country to project its African identity on a global stage. The use of a semi-modal verb was also evident in extract 7(d). In this extract, *able to* expresses modal meaning. NADAA communicated the police service’s ability to discharge its duties. He [the president] showed the capability

of the police, which is tied to the citizenry's cooperativeness. A semi-modal verb was also used in 7(e) to indicate necessity. The expression *need to* is used by NADAA in 7(e) to reckon that there are challenges that ought to be overcome.

Modal adjectives

Modal meanings were also expressed using adjectives. The total number of these linguistic items was 16(3.7%). Interestingly, both presidents used an equal number of modal adjectives to state their knowledge of the factuality of their propositions and made pledges to their assertions. The adjectives used to carry modal meanings in the presidential speeches were *certain*, *willing*, *confident*, *assured*, *sure*, *hopeful*, *keen*, *determined*, *possible*, *impossible*, and *predictable* (see Table 1). Some extracts to illustrate the use of modal adjectives from the speeches are given below.

Example 8:

- a. "They wanted Ghana to succeed, and I am all but *certain*, they prayed that we would make it a nation whose place of greatness in the world would be timeless and meaningful, not temporary and mediocre." [56IDC]
- b. "We are *willing* to go the full distance in the protection of our country, and in the service of our dreams...We are *willing* to work to make it happen." [57IDC]
- c. "After germination, you are expected to blossom into responsible men and women prepared to take over the affairs of this great land long after we, your parents and grandparents, have departed this earth...I am *confident* you will rise to the challenge." [58IDC]
- d. "Since I became President, I have been advocating for a Ghana, indeed, an Africa, Beyond Aid, and I am *keen* to have the support of all of us in this enterprise." [61IDC]

In 8(a) and 8(c), the modal adjectives *certain* and *confident* are used by JDM to show his level of certainty regarding the proposition being stated. In 8(c), for instance, JDM's use of *confident* showed his belief that Ghanaians will live up to expectations and be responsible citizens, discharging their duties as expected of them. In 8(b), JDM also uses *willing*. The modal adjective has been used to show the president's intent and preparedness to safeguard the nation. He projected himself as eager and ready to do what it takes to protect the peace and freedom the country has attained. In 8(d), NADAA made use of *keen*. The adjective indicates the intense desire of the president to provide an independent country. Stating what he intended to do, the president used the modal adjective *keen* to show his desire to achieve the proposition stated in his utterance.

Clause with past participle

In the speeches, modal meanings were conveyed using past participle verbs. Clauses with past participle forms were employed to convey modal meanings. These verb forms included *has been established*, *have always wanted*, *have been engaged*, *have always been* and *have already been*. These structures were only found in JDM's speech. The incidence of these structures was eight (3.4%). Some extracts from the speeches used to illustrate this are provided below.

Example 9:

- a. "For nearly six decades, regardless of the difficulties we were having within our own borders, Ghana remained an example of peace and progress. This is because Ghanaians *have always wanted* the best for Ghana." [56IDC]
- b. "Ghana has never cut off its own nose to spite its face; Ghanaians have always been able to see that tomorrow is not the only day the future holds for us...We cannot go back and fight battles that *have already been won*." [56IDC]

- c. “Even after a goal *has been established* by a designated leader, it takes the dedication, focus and work of millions before movement and progress can take place.” [56IDC]
- d. “The reason Ghana is seen the world over as Africa’s shining star is because while other nations *have been engaged* in ethnic warfare and endless battles for power between opposing political parties, tearing away at their people’s morale and crumbling what little security was left in their societies.” [56IDC]

Past participle forms were used in the speeches of JDM to communicate certainty about his propositions. The verb form *have always wanted* is used in 9(a) to communicate the president’s certainty about what Ghanaians always wanted. He signalled that the people desired to see the best of the country, and that he was certain. The verb form *have already been* communicated certainty (see Example 9b). In his utterance, JDM put forward the inevitability of some challenges already surmounted. For that, he indicated that it is not necessary to face past battles; rather, focus on what lies ahead of the country. The president also used expressions *has been established* and *have been engaged* in 9(c) and 9(d), respectively, to communicate his certainty to his propositions. The president ascribed reasons to his propositions, for which he appeared certain and knowledgeable.

An observable phenomenon concerning clauses with past participle was the use of adverbs in addition to verb forms. The adverbs *always* and *already* were used together with the verb forms. The adverbs appeared medially. It followed the auxiliary verb *have* and preceded either the inflected form of ‘be’ or the past participle verb ‘wanted’. The addition of adverbs to verb forms reinforced the president’s certainty of his proposition. He uses adverbs to intensify his proposition and show the perpetuality of the phenomenon spoken about.

Indicative mood

Modality was also expressed using indicative moods. The indicative mood is principally used to indicate what speakers know and declare true. Obeng-Appiah (2015) contends that the indicative mood, specifically the declarative mood, projects speakers as information givers based on the facts they exude. The total incidence of this linguistic item was eight (1.9%). NADAA's speech had seven (3.6%) instances, while only one (0.5%) instance of this linguistic item was found in JDM's speech. Some indicative moods in the presidents' speeches are as follows:

Example 10:

- a. "Today is the anniversary of an event that not only changed our country (Ghana) but also changed the world." [57IDC]
- b. "It took a long time for a consensus to emerge, but it did, and we all agreed that the form of government, within which we would want to conduct our affairs, should be a multi-party democracy, which, under the aegis of the 4th Republic, has provided us with the longest, uninterrupted period of stable, constitutional governance in our history." [62IDC]
- c. "There is one thing that any visitor here can be certain of – it is the cultural capital of our country." [63IDC]

Indicative moods in the extracts state facts. Presidents expressed their knowledge of the state of affairs. In 10(a), JDM categorically stated that independence transformed not only the country but also the entire world. He proposed this fact to show the essence of the event being celebrated. In 10(b), NADAA also stated the facts about which political system the country had chosen to practice. He detailed the state and nature of the political system operating in the country. In 10(c), President [NADAA] reckoned the cultural heritage and value of the country. He stated that this was a fact. The indicative mood used in the presidents' speeches

communicates their [the presidents] confidence in and sureness of the propositions made in their utterances.

Modal nouns

Nouns were also used to convey modal meanings in presidents' speeches. The modal nouns identified from the speech were *possibility*, *responsibility*, and *recommendations*. While there were three (1.5%) instances of nouns encoding modal meanings in NADAA's speech, the instance of this in JDM's speech was two (0.9%). Extracts from the speeches in which presidents used nouns to express modal meanings are given below:

Example 11:

- a. "The *recommendations* are for each one of us to practice basic, personal hygiene, and be extra careful with sanitation." [63IDC]
- b. "To countless people across the globe, that door was an opening to the *possibility* of their own freedom." [57IDC]
- c. "It is our *responsibility* to safeguard our independence so that the nation we leave for our children to inherit is also free, peaceful, and democratic." [59IDC]

In 11(a), the use of the noun *recommendations* conveys the modal meaning of admonition. The president used the lexical item to admonish citizens about the need to practice safe hygiene. NADAA used the occasion to instruct people subtly to ensure good health. Contextually, the 63rd Independence Day celebrations came at a time when the world was battling the pandemic. Hence, he used this occasion to reiterate the need for citizens to practice safe hygiene as one of the recommended measures in the fight against the pandemic. In 11(b), the noun *possibility* is also used to express modal meaning. The use of modal nouns conveys the notion of capability. JDM uses the noun to indicate the inevitability of his stated proposition. He

also uses the noun *responsibility* to express the modal meaning of obligation. In his speech (see Example 11c), he makes the admonition for citizens to consider it a duty to protect the independence of the country. Using the pronoun ‘our’, the president considered it a collective responsibility for which the citizens and he are obliged to.

Modal plus semi-modal verbs

There were instances in the speeches in which the presidents used modals together with semi-modals to express their knowledge and degree of assurance of their propositions. These structures included *should be able to*, *will want to* and *will have to*. The total incidence of this linguistic item was three (0.7%). Only JDM uses this linguistic item to encode various modal meanings. Extracts from the speeches to illustrate the use of these structures are provided below.

Example 12:

- a. “It was their vision that every Ghanaian *should be able to* live in dignity.” [57IDC]
- b. “I urge you all to reflect on how you *will want to* be remembered by the next generation.” [56IDC]

From the extracts provided, JDM used modals plus semi-modals to express modal meanings. In 12(a), the expression *should + be able to* was used to communicate a requirement. JDM reckoned that the forefathers of Ghana expected every citizen to live in dignity. The use of the modal and semi-modal helped the president remind Ghanaians of the obligation of living in dignity, a national value. Similarly, modal and semi-modal items are used to express the modal meaning in 12(b). JDM called on the people to bear in mind the need to live and reflect on the legacy they wish to be remembered for. The modal and semi-modal expression *will want to* expresses intention, a modal meaning. These expressions were used by JDM to reinforce

his propositions by drawing the people, who are his audience, towards a national action.

Conclusion

Modal auxiliary verbs are the most used linguistic markers for modal meanings in the speeches. The presidents used this linguistic marker to state their certainty about their propositions, show awareness of some factuality, express their ability to execute an action, indicate the probability of the occurrence of some events, and express their desire to see a change. This was followed by lexical verbs, modal adverbs, lexico-modal items, subjunctive mood, modal adjectives, semi-modal verbs, clauses with past participles, indicative mood, modal nouns, and modal-plus-semi-modal items. The unrestricted use of modal auxiliary verbs accounted for the item's dominant recurrence in the text. JDM mostly described himself as an agent central to completing an action. On the other hand, NADAA mostly used modal auxiliary verbs to state the confidence and certainty of the truth value in his propositions. JDM's focus on modals reflecting agency suggests a more action-oriented approach, one trying to present himself as someone who can get things done. NADAA's focus on certainty through modal auxiliary verbs indicates a strategy for building trust and confidence in his leadership. This study adds to our understanding of how politicians use modality in specific contexts. JDM and NADAA's contrasting styles highlight the nuanced ways in which modals can be employed to shape political messages.

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