

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING
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**AN INVESTIGATION INTO
MODALITY MARKERS USED IN
POLITICAL SPEECHES
BY US PRESIDENTS**

**Subject area: The English Language
Code: 60.22.15**

**M.A. THESIS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE
(SUMMARY)**

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. RATIONALE

For the maximal benefit of the second language learners in the context of cross - cultural communication, more attention should be paid to ways of expressing their knowledge, judgment and attitude towards the content of their speeches. In this sense the second language learners can be equipped with insights into and deeper and subtler understanding of the meaningful patterning of organizing thought, ideas, judgement in the source language and target language.

When reading or listening to a political speech, the Vietnamese students may not pay sufficient attention to the modal expressions used to signal the interpersonal meaning associated with the content of the message. More often than not, they just focus on the ideational meaning rather than the subjective meaning transmitted by the speaker.

For these reasons, I would like to choose “*An investigation into Modality markers used in political speeches by US Presidents*” as my study with the hope of attempting to consider problematic aspects of modal meaning with respect to the distinctive features of political speeches in terms of a discourse analysis.

1.2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.2.1. Aims

This study aims to investigate the linguistic features of modality markers in political speeches by US presidents, and provide learners of English practical knowledge in using these modal devices effectively.

1.2.2 Objectives

- to examine semantic characteristics of modal expressions in political speeches by US presidents;

- to examine the pragmatic characteristics of modal expressions in political speeches by US presidents;

- to offer some suggestions for teaching and studying of English concerning modality markers used political speeches.

1.3. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

- 1) What types of modality markers are used in political speeches by US presidents?
- 2) What are the linguistic features of the modality markers used in political speeches?
- 3) What values of engagement strategies can be described from the analysis of the modality markers used in the political speeches of the US presidents?

1.5. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study investigated a wide range of modal expressions used in all the inaugural speeches of the US presidents. The study dealt with the grammatical and lexical means of modal expressions.

1.6. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Literature review and theoretical background

Chapter 3: Methodology of Study

Chapter 4: Linguistic Features of Modality Markers in Political Speeches

Chapter 5: Conclusion and implications

Chapter 2
LITERATURE REVIEW
AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Much of the literature in modality (Coates 1983, Perking 1983, Lyon 1977, Palmer 1986, Chafe and Nichols 1986) often assumes that the sole function of modals is to reveal the speaker's/ writer's state of mind or knowledge, to indicate that the speaker/ writer is uncertain or tentative and is not committed to the truth value of the propositions. Lyons (1977) points out two kinds of modality: 'epistemic' and 'deontic'. In his view, epistemic modality is related to issues in terms of knowledge, belief or opinion rather than fact while deontic modality refers to matters in terms of "the necessity or possibility of acts performed by morally responsible agents"

In his contrastive study "Lexical and Grammatical Modality Devices Expressing Epistemic Modality in English and Vietnamese", Ngũ Thiệu Hùng (2004) dealt with the linguistic features of a wide range of lexical and grammatical devices to signal epistemic modal meaning in these two languages in the perspective of relevance theory by Sperber and Wilson.

In a discourse of analysis of political speeches, Ngo thi Thanh Mai (2007) studied some discourse features of political speeches in English and Vietnamese. The master candidate pointed out the similarities and differences of some discourse features of political speeches in English and Vietnamese.

2.2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.2.1. Modality and Related Terms

Traditionally, modality is defined in terms of possibility and necessity. The two notions are interdependent: either one can be defined

with the help of the other. In logic as well as linguistics several types of modality are distinguished. In the linguistic literature epistemic modality is contrasted with deontic (root) modality. Epistemic modals take scope over whole proposition while root modals modify the predicate of the sentence. From the point of view in syntax the two modality is based on the speaker's knowledge, deontic modality, on the other hand, on physical or mental states or outer circumstances. Formally epistemic necessity can be construed as logical entailment and epistemic possibility as logical compatibility.

The term of modality, as defined by Nhr Ý et al [39] is "a lexicogrammatical category featuring the speaker's relationship with their utterance and the relationship between proposition and objective reality. Modality is one of language universals and falls into essential categories of natural languages. The propositions of utterances can be considered as factual or non - factual desirable or undesirable, possible or impossible, certain or contingent etc. Modality can be realized by grammatical or lexical devices".

According to Palmer [26, p.16] Modality in language, then, concerned with subjective characteristics of an utterance, and it could even be further argued that subjectivity is an essential criterion for modality. Modality could, that is to say, be defined as the grammaticalisation of speakers' (subjective) attitudes and opinions.

The study combining modality and speech - acts can be found in Palmer [26, p.14]. He states that the distinction between proposition and modality is very close to that of locutionary act and illocutionary act as proposed by Austin. In the locutionary act we are "saying something"- answering a question, announcing a verdict, giving a warning or making a promise. These ideas are at the basis of speech act theory.

2.2.2. Kinds of modality

Table 2.1: Categories of Modality by Von Wright

| | | | |
|------------|-----------|-------------|-------------|
| Alethic | Epistemic | Deontic | Existential |
| Necessary | Verified | Obligatory | Universal |
| Possible | | Permitted | Existing |
| Contingent | Undecided | Indifferent | |
| Impossible | Falsified | Forbidden | Empty |

Table 2.2: Categories of Modality by Nguyen Quang

| | | |
|--------------|-----------|---------------|
| Deontic | Epistemic | Dynamic |
| Obligatory | Epistemic | |
| Permitted | Possible | Able |
| Indifference | Probable | Dispositional |
| Forbidden | Falsified | Volitional |

In a different perspective, Martin [40] views modality as not a separate category in linguistics, but as a component in language system called appraisal.

a. Attitudinal - positioning

b. Dialogistic positioning

c. Intertextual positioning

2.2.3. Engagement and Dialogistic Positioning

Under the Appraisal framework, speakers and writers can adjust and negotiate the arguability of their utterance and wide ranges of semantic areas for this modulation are labeled as "Engagement"

Dialogistic resources are brought into play when the speaker/writer judges that some degree of difference or disagreement is likely with his/her actual or possible communicative partners.

2.3. THE SYNTACTIC REALISATIONS OF MODAL MEANINGS

(a) Lexical verbs such as allow, beg, command forbid, guarantee, guess, promise, suggest, and warm as performatives

(b) The verbs wonder and wish, which express doubt and wish, respectively.

(c) The lexico - modal auxiliaries composed of be and have, usually another element + infinitive (have got to, be bound to, etc.)

(d) The modal auxiliaries can, could, will, would, must, shall, should, may might, ought, and the semi - modals need and dare.

(e) Modal Disjuncts such as probably, possibly, surely, hopefully, thankfully, obviously

(f) Modal adjectives such as possible, probable, likely used in impersonal constructions such as It's possible he may come or as part of a Nominal Group, as in a likely winner of this afternoon's race or the most probable outcome of this trial.

(g) Modal nouns such as possibility, chance, probability, likelihood as in "There's just a chance he may come".

2.4. POLITICS AND POLITICAL SPEECH

2.4.1. Politics

New Shorter Oxford defines," *Politics is the art or science of government, dealing with the form, organization, and administration of a state, and with the regulation of its relations with other states*"

2.4.2. Political Speech as a Type of Discourse

Speech is defined as "*a formal discourse, oration, address*" by Webster's New Collection Collegiate Dictionary.

2.4.3. Political Speech as a type of Public Speaking

Political speech is considered as a type of public speaking for it meets the two major criteria that it is a kind of communication in which one person gives a speech to others and most often in public setting.

2.5. SUMMARY

This chapter has briefly reviewed the literature of studies of modality from different perspectives, especially in the classification of modality categories.

Chapter 3
METHODOLOGY

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

This is a descriptive study which seeks qualitative information from the analysis of the data collected from the political speeches.

3.2. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

3.2.1. Method of Study

A corpus-based method was used in my research to identify and collect instances of modality markers in political speeches.

3.2.2 Collecting Data

The collected speeches were all selected among the inaugurals to meet my setup criteria for the purpose of investigating modality markers used by the US presidents.

I use the concordance software version 3.0 to search for words and structures that signal the use of modality markers in the corpus.

3.3 Building Corpus

I started the process of building corpus of data from political speeches collected from the website “www.bartleby.com/124”.

3.4 Data Description and Analysis

I used a method of qualitative analysis in my research. Qualitative analysis of the research helped to indicate different strategies and expressions that the presidents actually used in their speeches.

3.5 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

The study used checklist, statistics, numerical scale and rating scale to eliminate irrelevant and unstable data.

Chapter 4
LINGUISTIC FEATURES OF MODALITY MARKERS
IN POLITICAL SPEECHES

This chapter presents and discusses the finding of the data analysis. The result of the analysis is accounted on the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic basis.

4.1 SYNTACTIC CHARACTERISTICS OF MODALITY MARKERS

This section shows the syntactic characteristics of modality markers in the clause structure such as their syntactic positions.

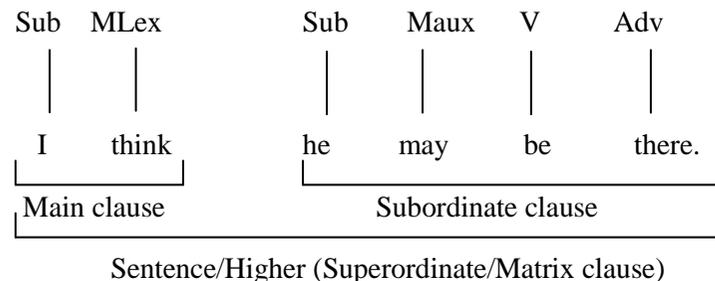


Fig. 4.1. Sentence and modality markers as clause elements

4.1.1. Syntactic Positions of Modality Markers

Modality markers are distinguished in four positions for the declarative form of the clause of a simple sentence as follows:

Table 4.1: Four positions for the declarative form of the clause of a simple sentence

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Initial position (I): | before the subject |
| Medial position (M): | M ₁ immediately before auxiliary M ₂ after auxiliary |
| Final position (F): | after an intransitive verb, an object or a complement |

4.1.1.1. Modal Auxiliaries

Modal auxiliaries (Maux) in English were frequently found in M position, which is characteristically their common place in the clausal structure, e.g.

(1) We *must* support our rights or lose our character, and with it, perhaps, our liberties. [90]

4.1.1.2. Modal lexical verbs

Modal lexical verb (Mlex) constructions in English were found to combine with the first personal pronoun I/we, e.g. *I think, I promise, I believe, I trust, I guess, I suppose...* English Mlex construction typically took I- position as a mother or matrix clause to introduce a proposition.

(1) I *believed* it a solemn duty fully to make known my sentiments in regard to it, and now, when every motive for misrepresentation has passed away, I trust that they will be candidly weighed and understood. [46]

However, in a larger extent of a superordinate or mother clause which can contain the clause with Mlex, the collocation I + Mlex can be found in the typical position of a parenthetical phrase in the middle of the utterance. My corpus has yielded instances of I + Mlex in the M-position.

(2) Now, that was what we took in. What did we do with this money? What do we have today to show for it? This will surprise you because it is so little, *I suppose*, as standards generally go of people in public. [95]

4.1.1.3. Suppressing the Subject with Mlex in Passivization Structure

In my corpus, I found a number of syntactic patterns built from the Mlex such as “say”, “believe” or “think” in forms of passive structures. These are the ones where the subject of the Mlex is suppressed and thus disappears from the mother clause.

- It be said/ believed... that P
- Subject + passive + that P/to infinitive

(3) If in any of the States the public security *is thought to be* threatened by ignorance among the electors, the obvious remedy is education. [74]

4.1.1.4. Subject Ellipsis in Mlex Constructions

In the corpus of this study, ellipsis of subject was found to be common in political speeches. This is typical of a imperative sentence which signals a request or command, especially in political speeches.

(4) So as we honor this past, we also recognize the future benefit that will come from a strong and vibrant Russia. *Think of* the issues that will define your lives . [101]

4.1.1.5. Modal Adverbs

In political speeches, modal adverb constructions (Madvs) were found to be highly mobile in clausal structure. They occurred in I-position, M-position and F- position. It is a typical thing that English modality adverbs appeared most frequently in I position and with a slightly less frequency in M position.

(5) *Surely* I do not misinterpret the spirit of the occasion when I assume that the whole body of the people covenant with me and with each other to-day to support and defend the Constitution and the Union of the States, to yield willing obedience to all the laws and each to every other citizen his equal civil and political rights. [94]

(6) We must support our rights or lose our character, and with it, *perhaps*, our liberties. [94]

My corpus also yielded instances of cases where Madvs assumed the final position in the clausal structure or structure of an utterance.

(7) Now, I'm sure that you must get discouraged at times, but there you've done better than you know, *perhaps*. [109]

4.1.1.6. Modal Adjectives

The political speeches were found to resort a number of English Modal adjective (Madj) constructions in I-position. The typical constructions found in the corpus are: *I am sure, I am certain, it's clear, It is possible...*

(8) *I am certain* that my fellow Americans expect that on my induction into the Presidency I will address them with a candor and a decision which the present situation of our Nation impels. [114]

4.1.1.7. Modal Nouns

The common position for modal noun (Mn) constructions are I-position and M-position. Let us consider the following examples

(9) *In fact*, I want to work together with Russia on a missile defense architecture that makes us all safer. [101]

(10) I don't condemn Mr. Stevenson for what he did, but until *the facts* are in *there is a doubt* that will be raised. [95]

Table 4.2. Syntactic position of modality markers in English

| Category | Position | | | |
|----------|----------|----------------|----------------|---|
| | I | M ₁ | M ₂ | F |
| Maux | - | + | - | - |
| Mlex | + | + | - | + |
| Madv | + | + | + | - |
| Madj | + | - | - | - |
| Mn | + | - | - | - |

Table 4.3. Typical Grammatical patterns of modality markers

| Modal Marker | Syntactic Pattern | Examples of modal markers |
|---------------------|--|---|
| Modal Lexical Verbs | I + Mlex + that P | (know, think, suppose, believe) |
| | It + Mlex (to me) that P | seem, appear |
| | NP + Mlex + that P | (seem, appear) |
| | It be + Mlex _{pp} + that P | (say, allege, expect, believe, suppose...) |
| | NP + be + Mlex _{pp} + to infinitive | (say, expect, believe, think...) |
| Modal Adjective | It + be + Madjs that P | (possible, certain, probable, likely, evident, obvious...) |
| | I + be + Madjs that P | (sure, certain) |
| Modal Noun | There is a Mn+ that P | (possibility, no doubt, no wonder, chance.) |
| | Mn inserted within P | (in fact, of course) |
| | I have a Mn (that) P | (feeling, hunch) |
| | In my Mn+ P | (opinion, viewpoint) |
| Modal Adverb | (Madv +) P / P (+ Madv) | (certainly, evidently, allegedly, maybe, perhaps, probably) |
| | Madv inserted within P | (perhaps, certainly, clearly) |
| Modal auxiliary | Subject + Maux + Verb | (Maux: must, may, might, would, could) |

Table 4.4. The actualization of personal subject in patterns with modality markers

| Category | The actualization of personal subject | | |
|----------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| | Passivization | Person Subject Ellipsis | Person Subject Suppression |
| Maux | + | - | - |
| Mlex | + | + | + |
| Madj | - | + | - |
| Madv | + | + | - |
| Mn | + | + | - |

4.2. THE SEMANTIC CHARACTERISTICS OF MODALITY MARKERS IN POLITICAL SPEECHES: DEGREE OF ENGAGEMENT

4.2.1. Modality Markers Expressing High Engagement

The analysis of instances of categorized statements has revealed that in many cases the presidents employed modality markers on high certainty scale to convey his high engagement to the proposition in his speeches. Let’s consider the examples below.

(11) *Indeed*, faith should bring us together. That is why we are forging service projects in America that bring together Christians, Muslims, and Jews. [99]

In (11) the proposition of the statement “... Faith should bring us together” was treated as a truth or a common sense that was widely accepted by the audience or American people.

4.2.2. Modality Markers Expressing Low Engagement

The corpus of study shows that the use of wide range of modality markers with different levels of certainty may reveal that sometimes they should show that they were certain of the validity of the information, and sometimes, on the contrary, they should sound less

asserted about some issues in a certain respect.

(12) There is another ground for the adoption of the veto principle, which had *probably* more influence in recommending it to the Convention than any other. [74]

In (12) the president actually used the Madv “*probably*” to signal low certainty and lack of commitment to the proposition which referred to the veto principle, a true power of a permanent member in the Security Council of United Nations.

Table 4.5. Degree of Engagement expressed by modality markers in political speeches by US presidents

| Scale | Modality markers | Specification | E.g. |
|-------------------|--|--|--|
| Strong engagement | <i>will, must, indeed, certainly, clearly, undoubtedly, surely, believe, know, fact, of course</i> | S is certain/sure P is highly likely to be true/valid | <i>I do believe</i> that a woman who is denied an education is denied equality. <i>It was certainly</i> a great error in the framers of the Constitution ... |
| Weak engagement | <i>may, seem, probably, maybe, perhaps, think, suppose,</i> | S is not certain/confident P is likely to be true/valid | A President <i>may</i> sense and proclaim that new spirit, but only a people can provide it. I have a right, I <i>think</i> , to insist that those who volunteer ... shall exercise consideration and fidelity. |

4.3. PRAGMATIC CHARACTERISTICS OF MODALITY MARKERS IN POLITICAL SPEECHES: STRATEGIES OF COMMUNICATION

4.3.1. Speaker-oriented Messages

(13) *I know* this is in our reach because we are guided by a power larger than ourselves who creates us equal in His image. [47]

In (13), the president showed himself as the true transmitter of the claim the information of which was treated as something presupposed under the force of the epistemic factive verb “know”.

Table 4.6. Personalized Strategies and Speaker-Oriented Messages

| Scale | Personalized Patterns | Ex. of Modality markers | Implication of messages |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|--|--|
| Strong Engagement | I + Mlex (factive) | I know, I trust, I frankly confess ... | I overtly verify that P is true/factive/presupposed |
| | I + Mlex (non-factive) | I believe | I overtly verify that P is highly likely to be true to my belief/knowledge |
| | I + BE + MAdj (non-factive) | I'm strongly convinced, I'm confident, I'm sure, | |
| | It BE + MAdj; | It's clear to me P, Let me be clear | |
| | MAdv + I | Surely/Certainly, I ... | |
| | I + Maux | I will/shall | - I overtly verify that P is likely to be true in an actual world - The realization of P in an actual world is my promise |
| Weak Engagement | I + Maux + MAdv | I will/ shall probably | - I overtly verify that P is neutrally likely to be true in an actual world - The realization of P in an actual world is my promise |
| | I + Mlex (non-factive) | I think | - I overtly verify that P is less likely to be true in an actual world |
| | I + Mlex + Madv | I think + possibly | |
| | I + Mlex + IT + BE + MAdj | I think it's possible | - P is just my assumption to be challenged |
| | IT + SEEM + TO ME | It seems to me | |

4.3.2. Content-oriented Messages

When delivering speeches, maybe one thing that the presidents should take into consideration at the first place is that the information he feeds the audiences will be reconsidered against its truth or validity. Thus, in this pragmatic dimension, the president's attitude is content-oriented and the message is shaped and sent to the audiences on the basis of the quality of the propositional content of claims or statements. (14) *Clearly* America *must* continue to lead the world we did so much to make. [60]

Table 4.7. Impersonalized Strategies and Content-Oriented Messages

| Scale | Impersonalized Patterns | Ex. of Modality markers | Implication of messages |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| Strong Engagement | IT + BE + MAdj + speech act Verb | <i>It is absurd to suppose</i> | - I covertly verify that P is impossible to be true in an actual world - The actualization of P is absurd/implausible |
| | IT+ Copula V + MAdj | <i>It may seem strange that</i> | - I covertly verify that P is true in an actual world - The actualization of P is surprising to me |
| | Mn + BE + Strong MAdj | <i>the fact is clear that</i> | I covertly verify that P is true/presupposed |
| | IT + BE + (MAdv) + Strong Mlex | <i>It is confidently believed</i> | - I covertly verify that P is highly likely to be true in an actual world |

| | | | |
|------------------------|---|------------------------|---|
| Weak Engagement | Non-Personal Subject + Weak Maux | <i>may</i> | - I covertly verify that P is less likely to be true in an actual world |
| | Non-Personal Subject + Weak Maux | <i>might</i> | |
| | Non-Personal Subject + Weak Maux + MAdv | <i>might perhaps</i> | |
| | IT + BE + Speech act V | <i>It is said that</i> | - P is uncertain to be true in an actual world - P is transmitted by indefinite source |
| | Non-Personal Subject + Weak Mlex | <i>S seems</i> | I covertly verify that P is less likely to be true in an actual world |

4.3.3. Hearer-oriented Messages

It is strange that few instances of modality markers used with the second person subject were found in my corpus.

(15) *You see*, during your lives, something fundamental has changed. And while this crisis has shown us the risks that come with change, that risk is overwhelmed by opportunity. [100]

In the example mentioned above, the American people as second person were named in the utterance and thus were involved in the political messages by the US presidents .

Table 4.8. Personalized Strategies and Hearer-Oriented Messages

| Scale | Personalized Patterns | Ex. of Modality markers | Implication of messages |
|---|--|---------------------------|--|
| Strong Engagement | 2 nd Person Subject + Strong Maux | <i>you must</i> | thing mentioned in P is your obligation/duty |
| | | You can | - thing mentioned in P is your ability - thing mentioned in P is your permission |
| | | You will not | your involvement in thing mentioned in P is highly predicted |
| Weak Engagement | If + 2 nd Person Subject + Maux | If you can | - your ability in P is conditioned |
| | 2 nd Personal Subject + Mlex cognitive | You see | Your cognitive state is appealed |
| | MAdv + 2 nd Personal Subject | Perhaps, you | P is less likely to be true in an actual world where you are involved |
| Strong Engagement | 1 st Plural Personal Subject+Strong Maux | We must | Your and my Obligation is appealed in P |
| | | We will | - your and my involvement in thing mentioned in P is highly predicted - You and I are involved in the promise mentioned in P |
| | | We can | thing mentioned in P is your and my ability |
| | Strong MAdv + 1 st Plural personal Subject | Of course/Indeed we | P is very likely to be true in an actual world where you and I are involved |
| 1 st Plural personal Subject + BE + MAdj | We are confident | | |

4.4. SUMMARY

This chapter has presented the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic characteristics of modality markers in political speeches by US presidents such as their syntactic position in clausal structure, their value of certainty or engagement on the scale, their interpersonal roles in the multi-dimensional message realized with the actualization of person subject in the syntactic patterns to target at one of these orientations: speaker, content or hearer.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1. CONCLUSION

In brief, here are the conclusions from the analysis of modality markers in political speeches by US presidents.

1. Syntactically, except for the *Maux* which was restricted to their fixed position right before a lexical verb or at the initial position in a question and the scarcity of modality markers at final position, the other modality markers such as *Mn*, *Mlex*, *Madv*, *Madj* were seen to be more mobile in the structure of the superordinate clause or utterance in the initial, middle and occasionally final position. Apart from this, political speeches by US presidents were laden with instances of the actualization and non-actualization of the subject of *Mlex*, *MAdj*, *Mn*.

2. Semantically, regarding the scale of certainty, modality markers functions as to convey the addresser's high engagement to the proposition and to the addressee in categorized statements in presenting the proposition as a fact, highly likely to be realized in an actual world, or with low engagement towards the propositional content the state-of-affairs of which are less likely to be realized. The levels of engagement can be modulated due to the nature of information of the proposition content: desirable or undesirable.

3. Pragmatically, in communicating his message, the president's implication may be aimed at a targeted pragmatic dimension in a multi-facet interaction: speaker-oriented, content-oriented and

hearer-oriented. This can be achieved by the application of the subject actualization strategies as follows.

- The actualization of the 1st singular person subject in combination with a wide range of modality markers can enhance the positive public image or protect his face in the delivery of the message with a high level or low level of certainty. By asserting a claim overtly, the president can show his readiness in claiming his responsibility both in information and in the task and duty for the country.

- The suppression of the person subject in some modal constructions may reveal the pragmatic fact that the president should be cautious to the risky information that can do harm to his public image and his face. This non-actualization of person subject can serve to cast the responsibility to an indefinite agent of transmitting information in the content of the claim.

- The actualization of the 2nd person subject may help to mark the president's positive image in calling for solidarity and willingness in negotiation. Also, the use of 1st plural person subject can help contribute to the expanding of the notion of the hearer-oriented strategy by including the president as speaker in the agents who will fulfill the task and duty of American citizens.

5.2. IMPLICATIONS

5.2.1. Implications to the Vietnamese learners of English

So far, not many Vietnamese students of English have paid attention to the comprehension and evaluation of the language use in political speeches in English. One of the reasons for this may be the students are not interested in politics, or exactly, the political situations

in Vietnam as well as in the world, let alone that in USA. Another reason may be that little chance has been given to the students in approaching and evaluating discourses or texts of this genre. It seems that all their efforts are for the acquisition of knowledge from the other domains of English learning and language in general. Accordingly, the Vietnamese students fail to exploit a field rich in the language devices serving for the interpersonal purposes, namely political discourse. Maybe the students of English have been waiting for the teachers to invite them to work with discourses like this and assign them tasks so that they can have opportunity to work with the political speeches by US presidents. Such a passive learning style leads to the ignorance of the pragmatic knowledge concerning the use of a wide range of language devices that help convey the speaker's stance or attitude towards the content of what is said and towards the hearer or reader.

Thus, the Vietnamese learners of English should bear in mind that the study of the language use in political speeches is highly context-dependent, i.e. the semantic analysis of modality markers should be based on the socio-economic and political situations which are the setting of the evaluation of the language use. This implies that the use of a specific means of modality markers at a certain scale of certainty relies heavily on the nature of content of political claims. The positive or negative effects of delivering information involving political issues should be anticipated, which may lead to the modulation of the modality markers on an right scale and right forms.

Once the students are ware of the benefits of the master of modality markers both in everyday conversations and in political speeches, they can make good use of the language devices to enrich

their language competence and pragmatic competence concerning the political discourse.

5.2.2. Implications to the English Teaching

It is a common case that most teachers of English at tertiary level usually seek information or material somewhere else but for political speeches. Teachers of reading, for instance, may search for texts or passages relating to other fields of life, most of which can have a great appeal to students in learning. Accordingly, students are usually assigned tasks of reading with texts about social life or sometimes sports. The reason for this may be a fallacy that political speeches just offer nothing more than the boredom and this is a discrete genre that has nothing to do with the study of language use.

Even in the domain of translation, some teachers actually make use of political speeches, namely the inaugural addresses by US presidents as the material for translation. However, it is the case that most of them just focus on seeking the appropriate translational equivalents in Vietnamese. Such factors as political situations or affairs, the pragmatic factors that govern the selection of the language items that serve the transfer of information concerning the content and information concerning the speaker/writer's communicative goals.

Thus the students should be assigned work that connects the affairs in real life and the reflection of these in language use. In this sense, students should be furnished with pragmatic knowledge concerning modality markers to broaden their knowledge both in language and culture. Here, they should be given opportunity to know what contribute to the persuasiveness of political speeches, why

inaugural address and his political speeches by John F. Kennedy are so convincing and fascinating.

5.3. Limitations of the Study and Recommendation

The study has just investigated into a wide range of modality markers and their syntactic, semantic and pragmatic characteristics in terms of positions, scale of certainty and pragmatic strategies in the orientation of messages. Accordingly, such semantic issues such as:

- The harmony of many kinds of modality markers in the same clausal structure and utterance;
- The perlocutionary effect that a political claim laden with modality markers may bring to audience as interlocutors of political discourse should be the goals of a further study concerning the issues of modality markers.