Article

A study on epistemic modal elements expressed in the selected State of the Nation Address of Ghana

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Abstract: This study addressed the frequency of occurrence of the epistemic modal elements that the Ex-president prefers to express in the selected State of the Nation Addresses of Ghana. The study adopted a qualitative approach. Purposively, the two addresses selected for the study are State of the Nation Address: 16th February 2001 and State of the Nation Address: 14th February 2008. The selected addresses are a good starting point for determining tendencies in the meaning expressed by the selected modal categories. The focus is on the semantics of the epistemic category of modality and other related variables within the contexts in which they are used. The data were analysed based on specific epistemic modal meanings and the modal elements expressed. It was observed that there were more expressions of certainty during the 2008 State of the Nation Address than the first one delivered by the Ex-president. Additionally, it is observed that the selection of a particular modal element in a particular context is primarily influenced by the interplay of the speaker and the participants involved. Therefore, an epistemic modal element used in a different linguistic environment may have a different contextual meaning from another. The lower expressions of uncertainty during the last State of the Nation, which ended the tenure of office of the ex-president, show that he was sure he had performed well and was bold enough to make categorical statements. The study exhibited some occurrences of expression of tentativeness with the use of modal verbs alone. All the categories recorded any instance of tentativeness. It is also recommended that politicians, spokespersons, and speech writers be cautious when indicating their information sources and how they obtain them. This helps maintain political credibility, which is the dominant index of the electorate's quest for people who know the conditions and problems prevailing in the country and their solutions.

Keywords: Frequency, epistemic, modal elements, State of the Nation, Address

1. Introduction

Epistemic modality can be put into some subtypes. These are the modalities of evidentiality and judgment modality. Evidentiality, which indicates the source of the information upon which a proposition is based, is considered a type of epistemic modality. In contrast, judgment modality is a subtype based on the speaker's judgment [1]. Some linguists, however, feel that evidentiality is distinct from and not necessarily related to modality and that some languages even mark evidentiality separately from epistemic modality'' [2]. A writer states that the semantics of epistemic modals consist of an evidential component, which signals a source of information, and an epistemic component, which reflects the speaker's assessment of the source of information. This may assist in understanding the speaker's choice of epistemic modals in an utterance and the difference in strength between epistemically modalised sentences and unmodalised ones [3].

Generally, modality can be expressed through several linguistic categories: modal auxiliaries, semi-auxiliaries, modal lexical verbs, modal adjuncts, imperative mood, subjunctive mood and non-linguistic cues [4, 5]. Epistemic modal variants can construct social reality, including a speaker's identity, speaker-listener relations, certainty or otherwise. If a speaker, for example, does not have sufficient evidence justifying a 'bare' indicative sentence and wishes to mitigate his or her claim for other reasons, say, politeness, he or she can weaken the degree of commitment by 'modalizing' the statement in some way, for instance, with a modal auxiliary such as 'must' or 'may'   For example, if one says, 'The doctor is sleeping,' one is committed to the truth of utterance. If the doctor is, in fact, not sleeping, one would be regarded as insincere. Suppose a speaker does not have sufficient evidence justifying a 'bare' indicative sentence as in the example given or wishes to mitigate his or her claim for other reasons, say, politeness. In that case, he can weaken the degree of commitment by 'modalising' the statement in some way, for instance, with a modal auxiliary such as 'must or may':

- The doctor *must* be sleeping.

- The doctor *may* be sleeping.

These two examples with 'must' and 'may', make weaker claims than the first non-modalised, declarative one, without modal verbs; the usage of 'must' or 'may' indicates that the information provided is not based on direct evidence but on beliefs or inferences This is because epistemic modal markers are used for two types of reason: 'content-oriented caution', which means, a speaker is not sure and 'addressee-oriented caution' which means speaker does not wish to appear bold or boastful [6]. Thus, it intends to leave room for other opinions and so on. The use of modal verbs to show evidentiality, which is an entity that marks the speaker's attitude towards his or her knowledge of reality. Using modal verbs to code evidentiality is also called epistemic modality [7]. A writer asserts that various devices are available to refer to how certain the speaker or writer feels about the content of his or her utterance. Even though modal auxiliaries are still regarded as the prototypical realisations of epistemic modality, several lexical verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs and multi-word units can express epistemic modality associated with some discourse functions [8].

Some researchers on political discourse in Ghana have also done some studies on deontic notions inherent in only modal auxiliary verbs. For example, research on modality in the New Patriotic Party's manifesto (which is also a political discourse) reveals that modal auxiliary verbs were used extensively in the manifesto to give the message a sense of **intention**, **promise**, **obligation** and **necessity** in a conscious and strategic attempt to persuade the electorate [9]. It appears that more is left to be done in exploring the semantic implications of modal auxiliary verbs and other modal elements, such as modal adjuncts, lexical verbs and so on, in other political genres, especially State of the Nation Address. There should be adequate studies that reveal not only 'intentions', 'promises', and 'obligations' but also an epistemic sense of politicians' judgments, opinions, commitments, certainties or uncertainties, which are woven into speeches either implicitly or explicitly. It is in this regard that this study is timely.

The types of epistemic devices and their frequency used in speech, for example, when analysed, may provide cues or indications to the implicit thought and purpose of a politician the electorate needs to know to accept or reject his stance. Research in this direction will also fill the vacuum of political discourse, where there is a lack of study on how to interpret political speeches and evaluate speakers' stances. The purpose of this study was to address the frequency of occurrence of the epistemic modal elements that the Ex-president prefers to express in the selected State of the Nation Addresses of Ghana, examine the epistemic meanings that are expressed by the modality elements in the State of the Nation address of Ghana and the communicative purposes they have in the selected

speeches of the political discourse. The study addressed the following research question: What is the frequency of occurrence of the epistemic modal elements that the Ex-president prefers to express in the selected State of the Nation Address of Ghana?

1.1. Modality

"modality comes from the Latin word 'modus', which means measure, shape or method, and it may be defined as the speaker's assessment of or attitude towards the potentiality of a state of affairs.'' Modality is subjective and concerned with utterances of a non-factual kind because it expresses the opinion and attitude of the speaker. In general, modality is related to the speaker's or writer's ''opinion or attitude towards the proposition that the sentence expresses or the situation that the proposition describes'' [8]. Looking at modality from a semantic point of view, some scholars frequently refer to aspects of modality as speaker and addressee involvement in the situation described by the modally modified proposition [10]. This means that modality indicates the degree to which a person is committed to a statement, whether it is confirmed or not, possible, probable, likely, specific, permitted, or prohibited. In short, modality refers to assessing a sentence's truth, considering situations other than the present one.

1.2. Expression of Modality

A variety of linguistic devices usually expresses modality. Modal auxiliary verbs are the best-known means of expressing modality in English [2]. Indeed, the early literature on English modality has mainly been concerned with using modal auxiliary verbs such as **may, must, can, could, will, would**, and so on. Other linguistic categories used to express modality include modal adjectives such as **possible, likely, probable, confident, sure,** etc.; modal adverbs which include **perhaps, indeed, possibly, probably**; and some main verbs of modality like **allow, permit, oblige,** and so on'' (Huddleston, 1988). ''Modality in English has traditionally been interpreted in terms of modals, although this is not the only resource available to express this notion" [11]. Indeed, there is a broader range of other linguistic resources available for modality expression because there are various meanings that modality elements express in sentences. This study, however, focuses on the expression of certainty, uncertainty and tentativeness through modal auxiliary verbs, semi-auxiliary verbs, modal lexical verbs and modal adjuncts, as well as their effects on the texts of two selected State of the Nation Addresses to be discussed in this study.

It is said that "the modal auxiliary verbs are the devices mostly used to express modality; however, other known language resources are used for this [12]. This study, in particular, looks at modal auxiliary verbs, semi-modal, modal adjuncts and modal lexical verbs in expressing epistemic modality of certainty, uncertainty and tentativeness and their communicative purposes in this work. Writers make a significant contribution to the functional paradigm of modality. They believe modality is a form of participation by the speaker in a communication process. This social function and the meaning resources of modality make their work very relevant to this study. In sum, modality expresses different semantic implications and performs different communicative acts within sociocultural contexts [13].

1.3. Previous Studies on Political Speeches

The language used in political discourse, such as speeches, manifestos and other political texts, is associated with different rhetoric and figurative expressions like irony, symbolisms, innuendos, euphemisms, and metaphors [14]. Other writers also observe that one of the apparent features of a language is its persuasive quality. That language can influence people's political views by exploring how politicians can use language to their

advantage. This is one of the reasons underlying politicians' use of epistemic modality in political speeches [15].

In his research work entitled *Our Democracy has been Tested to the Utmost Limit - An Exploration of the Use of Assertive in Ghanaian Presidential Inaugural Addresses*, the author, for example, observes that Ex-president Kufuor's second inaugural is overwhelmingly dominated by assertives (judgment that a speaker draws from occurrences). The writer further conjectured that this high frequency of assertiveness may be due to the president's drive to use his second inaugural to characterise Ghanaian politics with much attention to the conditions which prevailed in Ghana after independence. He adds that the president allows a great space in his inaugural performance of this role, hence the dominance of assertiveness [16].

A writer investigates how linguistic expressions of deontic modality make the audience's participation possible in standpoints defended in political speeches while drawing on a functionalist theory. The findings reveal that politicians use *must* to consolidate their obligations and, when necessary, strategically distance themselves from established deontic values [17]. Conversely, this study focuses on epistemic modality in the selected State of the Nation Addresses. A writer researches modality in political discourse. He analyses Ashley Mote's political speeches and finds that the speaker's use of modal verbs contributed to the mitigation or aggravation of the illocutionary forces instigated by the speech acts he speaks of. Boicu affirms that modal verbs, depending on their contextual usage, are inclined to lessen or worsen the proposition of an utterance [18].

Another author also focuses mainly on the syntactic and semantic properties of modality in "Yes We Can", a catchy expression used by Barack Obama, president of the United States of America. This is very relevant to this study. Bista notes that the phrase "Yes, We Can" represents various forms of meaning - challenge, possibility, ability, permission and opportunity - in social, political and linguistic domains. As a popular repetitive expression in Obama's speeches, he concluded that the phrase supposedly "highlights his political will, temerity and boldness in addressing an alleged despondent American citizenry. It aimed to inspire and motivate the Americans along the tangents of progress and prosperity" [19]. The present work is also a political discourse but differs from Bista's work. The semantic implications of epistemic modality in the selected State of the Nation Addresses of the Ex-president Kufour are yet to be studied even though such epistemic modality category has the propensity to reveal very subtle meanings of the nature of political discourse. This work, therefore, fills a gap in the investigation into meanings and communicative purposes of epistemic modal elements in the selected State of the Nation Addresses of Ghana.

A writer studies a rhetorical study of selected political speeches of prominent African leaders of five major countries of Africa to see how these leaders persuade their people about the expediency and urgency of their policies, plans and actions. He concluded from his analysis that African leaders are preoccupied with the political and socio-economic problems of the continent and the need for change. He also observed that those leaders, primarily Ghana's ex-president Mills, mainly used their political speeches' epistemic modal elements and personal pronouns to express their opinions, perceptions, and judgments. According to the writer, Ex-president Mills, in his Acceptance Speech as the president-elect of Ghana, persuaded all Ghanaians to welcome and support his emergence as the president as an opportunity for transformation and change in Ghana [20]. A similar study investigates the linguistic and pragmatic features of modality markers in political speeches by United States presidents. He examines the linguistics and pragmatic characteristics of modal expressions in political speeches by United States presidents. He suggests teaching and studying English concerning modality markers used in political speeches. His work has prescriptive and didactic purposes, so bearing in mind that modal expressions are used to signal the interpersonal meaning associated with the content of

the message, he adds that his non-native Vietnamese target population was somehow ignorant of it. He states in the rationale for the study that the research was for the maximal benefit of the second language learners in the context of cross-cultural communication and that more attention should be paid to ways of expressing their knowledge, judgment and attitude towards the content of their speeches. The author believes that in that sense, second language learners could be equipped with insights into the more profound and subtler understanding of the meaningful patterning of organising thought, ideas, and judgment in the source language and target language [21]. His study primarily deals with the grammatical and lexical means of modal expressions.

A writer presents a critical discourse analysis of modality in the political discourses of Barack Obama and Martin Luther King. Drawing on a combined framework of Hallidays' Systemic Functional Grammar and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) theory, the author's study shows that both speakers preponderantly use the modal *will* as a means of insisting on the validity of information in terms of probability and usuality [22]. In a related study, other authors demonstrate that Barack Obama uses modality, among other linguistic resources, to create positive or negative power in his interviews [23]. Shayegh's work is relevant to this study since it looks at modality in the political discourse even if 'can' is specifically of deontic type [22]. In Ghana, there are some studies on modality in some genres other than a political discourse that specifically involves State of the Nation Address. The focus of our local linguists has, for the most part, been constructions and the expressions of modality in manifestos, inaugural addresses and so on. Some of the studies include [9, 16-24]. So far, no literature has been found on epistemic modality in State of the Nation Addresses of 2001 and 2008 by Ex-president John Agyekum Kufour of Ghana. In a search for comprehensive semantic implications of epistemic modality in the State of the Nation Addresses, the researcher observes a gap in this kind of information. This study, therefore, seeks to explore the frequency of distribution, meaning and communicative purposes of epistemic modality through some selected modal markers in the speeches.

A writer analyses the use of 'metaphors' and 'modality' in Ghana's political speeches. He examines metaphors in Ghanaian political discourse. He examined the "tenant and the landlord metaphor" of the former president of Ghana, Flt. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings, during the June 4th celebration, 2011 [24]. Again, whilst this present study may relate to the works examined above regarding political discourse analysis, it is uniquely different. For instance, a similar study used assertiveness through modal elements in Ex-president Kufuor's second inaugural address [16].

On the other hand, the present study studies the frequency, meanings and communicative purposes of epistemic modality used in 2001 and 2008 State of the Nation Addresses by Ex-president Kufour. The present study is also based on Ghanaian political discourse. However, it only discusses the frequency of epistemic modality used in two selected State of the Nation Addresses in Ghana by Ex-president Kufour. These examples, among others, therefore, show a gap that this study aims to fill by exploring, specifically, the use of modal elements such as modal verbs, semi-modal verbs, modal adjuncts and modal lexical verbs as they expressed certainty, uncertainty and tentativeness in the selected State of the Nation Addresses. Various theoretical frameworks have been employed to analyse epistemic notions of modality in political speeches and many other genres. Two theories were used in this study. Context Dependency Theory and Specialisation and Modal Taxonomy [25, 26]. These authors say that ''language is a resource for making meaning, and that meaning resides in the systemic patterns of choice.'' Modal Taxonomy is mainly used to explain and describe the organisation of these ''meaning-making resources,'', as they function in sentences. It is used to analyse epistemic modality elements such as modal verbs, modal adjuncts and modal lexical verbs in clauses or sentences of the selected State of the Nation addresses.

For example, "the modal adjuncts express the speaker's judgment regarding the message's relevance" [26].

An adjunct can be circumstantial, conjunctive, or modal, and these adjuncts are respectively related to the ideational, textual, and interpersonal meta-functions of language…'' They add that ''modal adjuncts involve the judgment of the relevance of a message; they are important for stylistic analysis'' [26]. For example, adjunct items such as 'always' and 'seldom' would be interpreted as expressions of 'usuality'. Others like 'surely' and 'clearly' will mean 'obviousness' (of certainty). The modal verb 'will' can express prediction of certainty in some contexts, while 'might' could express uncertainty, and so on. This study is also analysed within a linguistic context based on the Context dependency and Lexical Specialization theory [25]. It discovers the contextual meanings inherent in epistemic modal utterances within the political discourse. Another writer agrees that modal meanings should be conceived as the product of "context-dependency." This means that modal elements are skeletal out of context. Whether they are epistemic or deontic depends mainly on the linguistic environment. Thus, a grammatical category can realise different semantic sub-types depending on the linguistic environment or context. Units within one grammatical model can realise different modal meanings in different situations [27].

2. Materials and Methods

The study adopted a qualitative approach. Purposively, the two addresses selected for the study are State of the Nation Address: 16th February 2001 and State of the Nation Address: 14th February 2008. The selected addresses are a good starting point for determining tendencies in the meaning expressed by the selected modal categories. These periods were chosen not for any socio-political or other reasons. The focus is on the semantics of the epistemic category of modality and other related variables within the contexts in which they are used. The modal elements examined are of different categories, which can have varying epistemic meanings such as certainty, tentativeness and uncertainty based on the context of texts. After reading the speeches, the data was collected using sentences containing modal auxiliaries expressing epistemic notions of certainty, uncertainty, and tentativeness. The modal auxiliary verbs extracted from the speeches include **would, could, should, may and might.** Modal adverbs (adjuncts) such as **likely, likely, possibly, and indeed** were identified in the various sentences and highlighted and copied onto cards. If a sentence contained two or three of these modality forms, or if the same form occurred two or three times, they are copied on two, three or more different cards highlighting the epistemic modal elements that occurred in the data. The data were analysed based on specific epistemic modal meanings and the modal elements expressed.

3. Finding and Discussion

For this research work, the data is limited to the State of the Nation Address (SONA) of 16th February 2001 and the State of the Nation Address (SONA) of 14th February 2008. The sentences that contain the modal elements needed for this work are selected for the analysis. In other words, the modal forms are quoted with the sentences and then analysed together for their epistemic meanings. The unit of analysis was generally a sentence. However, complex sentences were split into two or more simple sentences if each simple sentence expressed a different idea qualified by a distinct epistemic modal marker. This was to help analyse the modal element within respective contexts. The remainder of this section presents the findings and the epistemic meanings of the modal elements in the speeches.

Moreover, modal adjuncts are also studied here for their epistemic quality. The data of the distribution of the epistemic modal elements of this work is presented in tabular

forms and then analysed. A separate table (Table 1) shows modal adverbs (adjuncts) and modal auxiliary verbs, while another shows modal adjuncts of temporality and intensity. This is done to avoid a mix-up of figures for the comparative frequency count between modal auxiliary verbs and modal adjuncts. The tabular presentation helps one to see which particular epistemic modality elements have a high or low frequency of occurrence and how such elements fare in the data. It should be noted that there was no modal lexical verb or semi-modal verb that specifically expresses the epistemic modality of certainty, uncertainty or tentativeness.

Even though there were numerous expressions with dynamic and deontic notions through modal lexical verbs and semi-modal verbs, they need to be presented in the tables and analysed because such an effort may not help to achieve the objective or fall within the scope of this study. The following statement, which contains semi-modal, '**is to'** for instance, expresses the notion of 'intention', which is of dynamic modal type rather than epistemic one that this study focuses on:

> *Our party's policy **is to** liberate the people's energies for the growth of a property-owning democracy in this land, with the right to life, freedom and justice as the principles to which the government and the laws should be dedicated. (SONA, 16-02- 2001)*

Another expression which contains a lexical verb, **'require'**, does not express epistemic sense but obligation or requirement, and in that sense, has a deontic notion rather than an epistemic one:

> *Mr. Speaker, law and order also **require** enforcers to have the correct numbers proportional to the population. In 2001, the Police Service stood at 15,983. It has since gained an additional 10,132. (SONA, 14-02- 2008).*

Table 1 presents the results obtained from the frequency count and the corresponding epistemic meaning of the modal elements in the investigation. The modal auxiliary verbs and modal adjuncts are analysed in the left-hand column. In the second column, we record several times when a particular modal element has been used to express certainty in the data. Column three also shows the frequency of modal elements to express uncertainty. Column four shows the frequency of occurrence of the modal elements to express tentativeness. Column five presents the total number of frequency occurrences of the categories, and column six shows the percentage level of frequency occurrence of each modal element. Table 1 shows the frequency distribution of the epistemic modal categories of modal adjuncts (modal verbs only) and modal auxiliary verbs and their corresponding epistemic meanings.

Table 1. Distribution of Epistemic Modality Categories and their Meanings

Epistemic Elements	Certainty Frequency	Uncertainty Frequency	Tentativeness Frequency	Total	Percentage 100%
Modal Aux. Verbs	7	0	7	14	60.87
Modal Adjuncts	7	2	0	9	39.13
Total	14	2	7	23	100.0

At a glance, there is a low margin between the uses of the two categories of modality, indicating the preferred category, with a higher frequency of occurrence, over the other. There are 14 and 9 occurrences of epistemic modality expressed through both categories of modal auxiliary verbs and modal adjuncts, respectively. The modal auxiliary verbs have the higher occurrences of 14, representing 60.87 per cent, while the modal adjuncts occur nine times, representing 39.13 per cent. It can also be observed from Table 1 that frequencies of occurrence of the certainty markers and other epistemic meanings differ from category to category. For example, under 'certainty', modal verbs and modal adjuncts have the same occurrence of 7. At the same time, under 'uncertainty', there was no occurrence of modal adjuncts expressing that epistemic notion even though two modal auxiliary verbs express that notion. The modal auxiliary verbs have higher occurrences of 7, which express 'tentativeness', but there was no occurrence of this modal group expressing the notion of 'uncertainty'. This study looks at the implications of such a situation in the selected speeches.

Two tables (i.e. 1 and 2) have also been generated to present the frequency distributions of the individual modal verbs since they have a higher occurrence. Table 3 presents the distribution of the individual modal verbs in the data, whilst Table 4 also presents the comparative frequency distribution of the modal auxiliaries. The data collected and analysed showed that the modal verbs - **will, would, should, may, and might**- are all present in the data examined. It is also observed from the data that some of the epistemic modal forms have a higher frequency of occurrence than others. Table 3 displays the total number of occurrences of each modal in the data in order of frequency, followed by its percentage distribution.

Table 2. Frequency of Distribution of Modal Auxiliaries in the Data

Modal Aux. verbs	Total number of occurrences	Percentage 0/0
Would	4	28.58
May	3	21.43
will	3	21.43
Might	2	14.29
Could	1	7.14
Should	1	7.14
Total	14	100.0

An attempt at charting a comparison of modal auxiliaries has also been made in Table 4 below. A broader data analysis would have included a comparison of the other categories of epistemic meaning that this study initially focused on. However, tables on modal auxiliary verbs and modal adjuncts with their respective meanings are those presented. This is because these modal categories are the ones that are used to express epistemic notions of certainty, uncertainty and tentativeness. The rest (modal lexical verbs and semi-modal verbs) mainly express intention, obligation, permission and ability that are outside the scope of this study.

It is observed from this study that modal auxiliaries pick up meanings according to the contexts in which they are expressed, and they have **communicative purposes** they serve. This is in line with Kratzer's theory [25].

Table 3. Comparative Analysis of Frequency Distribution of Epistemic Modality in the 2 Speeches

Modal Verbs & Elements	2001 Speech	2008 Speech	Total Occurrence

Would	Tentativeness 1	Tentativeness 3	4
May	--	Certainty 3	3
Will	Tentative 2 Certainty 1	-	1
Should	--	Certainty 1	1
Might	--	Certainty 2	3
Could	--	Tentative 1	1
Modal adjuncts	Certainty 2	Certainty 5 Uncertainty 2	7 2
Temporality	Certainty 9	Certainty 55	64
Mood adjuncts	Certainty 4	Certainty 21	25
Total	17	93	111

Table 3 above shows the comparative frequency occurrence of all the epistemic modal categories investigated in this study. Table 4 below also shows percentage distributions of certainty, uncertainty, and tentativeness as expressed by modal verbs and modal adjuncts in the two speeches investigated. It is analysed here to determine which year has the highest or lowest occurrence of the epistemic meanings under investigation. The conclusion will then be drawn from the analysis based on the theoretical framework guiding this study.

Table 4. Percentage Distributions of Certainty, Uncertainty and Tentativeness in 2001 & 2008 Speeches.

Meaning	2001 Speech	2008 Speech	Percentage%
Certainty	15	88	79.28
Uncertainty	0	2	1. 80
Tentativeness	2	4	5.40
Total	17	111	100.0

Table 4 presents the frequency distribution of the modal categories between 2001 and 2008. It can be observed from Table 4 that there was a predominant expression of certainty through modal verbs and modal adjuncts in 2008, representing 88 as against 15, occurring in 2001, both of which sum up to 103, representing 79. 28 percent.

Table 4 shows two instances of uncertainty in 2008, but there was no occurrence of the same in 2001. Furthermore, there are eight occurrences of tentativeness. Again, from Table 4, 2 tentativeness occurred in 2001, while four occurred in 2008. Clearly, one can say that the tentative notion is not the preferable type expressed in the study and, therefore, quite negligible.

From the data, the Ex-president used more epistemic modality with an expression of certainty since that happens to be the highest or predominant between the two years. Again, modal adjuncts were used more in expressing certainty than the rest of the elements of modal verbs, recording as high as 18 in 2001 and as low as 7 in 2008, respectively. Moreover, comparatively, expression of uncertainty recorded the lowest occurrence with a total of 2 between the two years, as seen in Table 4. Furthermore, the Ex-president used more modal adjuncts to express certainty in 2008 than in 2001, with 29 and 73 adjuncts, respectively. This confirms that the former president largely avoided being seen as unsure as time passed, as shown by the vast difference of 45 between the two years. He instead appears to be a sure, reliable and factual person. In expressing certainty, he used more direct expressions of commitment through modal adjuncts rather than modal auxiliary verbs, which could make him appear more hedgy.

However, one can conclude that he was more specific, sure, and confident in his address in 2008 than in 2001 because the expressions of certainty were more predominant in that year than in 2001. He likely resorted to this strategy because he appears to have glaring records of performance upon which he exuded such confidence in 2008, after eight years of his tenure of office. However, as seen from the 2008 data in Table 4, he expressed more certainty as time passed. In 2001, he hesitated to express certainty because there were not enough inferences from known premises (performance records, for instance) in the speech. He had just assumed office, but there needed to be physical evidence of performance or enough information to express enough confidence and commitment. It was observed that he instead expressed more intentions, ability, willingness and promises in 2001, which are outside the scope of this study.

The deductions made in this chapter produce the findings and recommendations that are fully discussed in the chapter that follows. However, the total aggregate of the analysis shows that he was more certain of his statements, as both the auxiliary verbs and the adjuncts were mainly used to express the notion of certainty.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

It was observed that there were more expressions of certainty during the 2008 State of the Nation Address than the first one delivered by the Ex-president. He likely expressed more certainty in portraying a confident leader who was sure of his information about the economy and hopeful of the country's development. More importantly, in an election year, he wanted to win the electorate to his side by proving that he was on top of issues. Additionally, it is observed that the selection of a particular modal element in a particular context is primarily influenced by the interplay of the speaker and the participants involved. Therefore, an epistemic modal element used in a different linguistic environment may have a different contextual meaning from another. The lower expressions of uncertainty during the last State of the Nation, which ended the tenure of office of the ex-president, show that he was sure he had performed well and was bold enough to make categorical statements. Because he was confident that the electorate was aware that his tenure of office was ending on a good note, there was no need to be uncertain since his government would indeed be returned to power.

Tentativeness is the expression where the speaker is not straightforward. The study exhibited some occurrences of expression of tentativeness with the use of modal verbs alone. All the categories recorded any instance of tentativeness. The Ex-president intentionally appeared tentative to exhibit formality and politeness in his speeches to parliament through his use of some modal verbs and modal adjuncts, notably, the use of modal 'would' as he, for example, occasionally addressed the speaker when he wanted to draw attention to an issue. It is also recommended that politicians, spokespersons, and speech writers be cautious when indicating their information sources and how they obtain them. This helps maintain political credibility, which is the dominant index of the electorate's quest for people who know the conditions and problems prevailing in the country and their solutions. The semantic and pragmatic roles of epistemic modality in language classrooms should be taken seriously, especially at primary and secondary levels of education.

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