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MODALITY AS A MEANS OF MODIFYING
THE ILLOCUTIONARY FORCE OF UTTERANCES
IN POLITICAL INTERVIEWS

Participants in a conversational exchange may express their viewpoints in a number of ways, or put more precisely, they use various ways of expressing their viewpoints. When employing phrases such as *It is likely that ..., perhaps ..., actually ..., it is possible that...,* and *I think that* ..., etc., speakers modify the meaning, or the illocutionary force, of the utterances they make. This feature, which has been called 'modality', is present, among others, in the genre of political interview and serves various functions. The present contribution offers an inquiry into the linguistic means that politicians utilize to modify their involvement in, or their detachment from, the proposition and in this way they alter the meaning of their statements.

1. Introduction

When communicating, speakers or writers frequently convey not only bare facts, but also their own attitude towards the proposition expressed, which is a natural phenomenon and a feature of any conversational exchange. The concept of modality may be found in almost all uses of language, ranging from face-to-face conversation to public debate.

The description of various linguistic means and markers utilized to modify the illocutionary force of utterances and alter their meaning by showing the speaker's or the writer's involvement in, or detachment from the proposition, is central to all theories dealing with the concept of linguistic modality. Modality has been acknowledged as a distinct linguistic category, in recent times. It has been defined and described from various viewpoints and it has also been contrasted with the related notions of mood and evidentiality (cf. Hoye (1997), Palmer (2001), Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 172-208).

This study aims to acquaint the reader with various types of modality which occur most frequently in the genre of political interview and to investigate the

linguistic means employed by British and American politicians to express modality and, thereby, modify the illocutionary force of their utterances. Modality and gender-specificity will be examined from both a quantitative and a qualitative perspective.

2. Theoretical framework of the study

2.1. Modality and its delimitation

Modality is a category of meaning rather than a part of grammar as mood is, a concept with which modality is frequently contrasted. It is a very broad area which has not been precisely delimited and categorized. Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 173) assert that "modality is centrally concerned with the speaker's attitude towards the factuality or actualization of the situation expressed by the rest of the clause". A similar standpoint is taken, e.g., by Palmer (2001).

Since modality is broad in scope and various disciplines have approached it from different angles, no agreement has been reached as far as the number and type of modalities are concerned. An early attempt to define types of modality is Jespersen's classification (1992 [1924]) containing twenty subcategories of modality. Jespersen himself concedes that "the categories frequently overlap, and some of the terms are not quite unobjectionable" (1992 [1924]: 320). Nevertheless, his classification is significant because it distinguishes two principal types of modality, "containing an element of will" and "containing no element of will" (Jespersen 1992 [1924]: 319-320), which corresponds to the core distinction between deontic and epistemic modality.

2.2. Epistemic and deontic modality

There have been several attempts to define various types of modality. As mentioned above, some linguists describe about twenty categories, but there are also classifications with fewer categories which are widely accepted. Nevertheless, the basic division into epistemic and deontic modalities is primary and common to most classifications. The present paper does not deal with dynamic modality because this type of modality does not express a modification of illocutionary force and hence it does not involve the speaker's attitude to the proposition.

Epistemic modality "is concerned with matters of knowledge or belief on which basis speakers express their judgements about states of affairs, events or actions" (Hoye 1997: 42). In other words, "it concerns the speaker's attitude to the factuality of past or present time situations [...]" (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 178). A similar view to epistemic modality is taken by Coates (1983), who states that this kind of modality "is concerned with the speaker's assumptions or assessment of possibilities and, in most cases, it indicates the speaker's confidence (or lack of confidence) in the truth of the proposition expressed" (Coates 1983: 18).

In Palmer's classification of modality (2001: 8ff), epistemic modality, together with evidential modality, are two main types of propositional modality. The main reason for this categorization is that they are both related to the "speaker's attitude to the truth-value or factual status of the proposition" (Palmer 2001: 8). In addition, Palmer divides epistemic modality into three types: speculative, deductive and assumptive.

Epistemic speculative modality is expressed by *may* which conveys "a possible conclusion" (Palmer 2001: 25). This modality indicates the speaker's uncertainty about what is said. Epistemic deductive modality is expressed by *must* conveying "the only possible conclusion". The speaker is certain and makes "a firm judgment, on the basis of evidence" (2001: 25). Epistemic assumptive modality is expressed by *will* which indicates "a reasonable conclusion", as in *John will be in his office*. The assertion stems from the facts that are generally known about John; for example, he always starts his work at a particular time, he is a workaholic, etc. (Palmer 2001:25).

Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 178ff) describe epistemic modality in a similar way but use a different terminology. They distinguish two types of epistemic modality: epistemic necessity (or strong modality) and epistemic possibility (or weak modality). Strong modality is what Palmer calls deductive type of epistemic modality and weak modality corresponds to Palmer's speculative modality.

"Deontic is derived from the Greek for 'binding', so that here it is a matter of imposing an obligation or prohibition, granting permission, and the like. [...] The person, authority, convention, or whatever from whom the obligation, etc., is understood to emanate we refer to as the deontic source" (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 178). Consequently, Huddleston and Pullum distinguish between two types of deontic modality. Similar to epistemic modality, they designate them as strong and weak: strong obligation (or deontic necessity), with *must* and weak deontic modality (or deontic possibility) expressed by *may*.

Palmer (2001) employs a somewhat detailed classification. He states that "deontic and dynamic modality refer to events that are not actualized. These are events that have not taken place, but that are merely potential, and may, therefore, be described as 'event modality'" (Palmer 2001: 70).

Coates (1983) finds the term 'deontic' inappropriate since "it refers to the logic of obligation and permission" (1983: 20-21). She prefers the term "root modality" for all other types, including dynamic modality. She substantiates her view by appealing to the fact that common root modals express a variety of meanings, obligation and permission being only the core. She holds, too, that the division of modality into deontic and dynamic overlooks the fact that all non-epistemic uses of *must,* for example, are interconnected and lie on a continuum ranging from strong obligation to weak obligation. Nevertheless, she is well aware of the fact that a deontic explication is more appropriate in contexts where "the authority structure is well-defined" than in less clearly defined contexts (1983: 21).

3. Corpus description

This study analyses a corpus of political interviews with several British and American politicians released between 2006 and 2008. As for interviews with British politicians, interviews with two male and two female politicians have been chosen: Tony Blair, ex-Prime Minister, David Miliband, former Secretary of State, Harriet Harman, Deputy Leader of the Labour Party, and Hazel Blears, MP. As for interviews with American politicians, interviews with two male and two female politicians have again been chosen: George W. Bush, ex-President, John McCain, US senator from Arizona, Condoleezza Rice, former Secretary of State, and Janet Napolitano, ex-Governor of Arizona. The topics discussed in these interviews cover foreign affairs, the Iraq War, home politics, and issues concerning the EU.

4. Quantitative analysis

This paper presents an analysis of six interviews with male politicians and five interviews with female politicians, amounting to a total of 31,684 words. Out of this number, 15,262 words were uttered by male politicians and 16,422 were uttered by female politicians. Since the extent of male and female interviews is almost identical, it is possible to use raw counts when comparing them. This has also been confirmed when the frequency of modal expressions per 10,000 words has been counted. Table 1 summarizes all types of modality analysed in the corpus, the number of occurrences by males, females and by both genders together,

Table 1. Types of modality, number of occurrences and frequency of modal expressions

Type of modality	Males (raw counts)	Males (frequency)	Females (frequency)	Total (raw counts)	Total (frequency)
epistemic possibility	182	119	105	354	112
deontic necessity	41	27	65	147	96
epistemic attitudinal	46	30	37	106	33
circumstantial possibility	21	14	21	56	18
epistemic necessity	13	9	10	30	9
deontic possibility	5	3	2	8	3

and the frequency of modal expressions per 10,000 words. Table 2 sums up the total number of all modal expressions used in the corpus, i.e. modal verbs, modal adverbs and adjectives, and pragmatic particles.

Table 2. Total number of modal expressions

Males	Females	Total number of modal expressions
308	393	701

5. Classification of modality in this study

The classification of modality proposed in this study follows the traditional division into epistemic and deontic modality and their subtypes. The terminology used rests partly on Palmer's division of modality, partly on that of Huddleston and Pullum's. It must be stated, however, that Palmer's categorization of modality is, in some respects, problematic and simplistic. As a result, the classification of a number of uses of the modal verb *can* found in the corpus cannot be based on Palmer. Consider:

(1) RICE: Now, I think you might have seen Gordon Brown gave a speech very recently and David Milliband, they're talking about a similar kind of capacity. And you <u>could</u> imagine that you would have a kind of network of these capacities from various different countries that <u>could</u> go in. (Rice 2008)

(2) QUESTION: You're set to leave office in about six months or so, maybe a little longer. Do you think we'll know if we're on the path to success or failure when you leave?
BLAIR: Well, I hope so. I mean, I think what is important is that we make sure that nothing is left undone that <u>could</u> be done to achieve that success, because if we do succeed, I think, in the end, the whole of the region will change and for the better, and if we fail, the consequences are very serious. (Blair 2006)

The use of *could* in the above mentioned examples falls neither into the category of deontic possibility nor into dynamic abilitive modality. In concrete terms, *could* expresses circumstantial possibility (cf. Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 197).

Furthermore, a new category of modality is proposed in this paper, namely, the category of epistemic attitudinal modality. This type of modality is expressed by the modal adverbs *actually* and *really*. These adverbs are invariably used epistemically because they express the speaker's stance to the proposition and hence they modify the illocutionary force of the utterance. However, it is not possible to categorize these adverbs as instantiations of epistemic modality as they express neither possibility, necessity nor assumption. To illustrate:

(3) I mean you've got to understand, when you've been Prime Minister for ten years, you – I mean I'm not a different human being from what I was ten years ago, but I'm a different type of politician and in the last few years I've tried to do what I <u>really</u> think is right, take difficult decisions on behalf of the country, that I think are in the country's long-term interests and in the end, that is, I'm content to be judged in the long term, and we'll just wait and see and whatever remarks people make at the moment, they can make. It's not, it's not something for me to go and comment on. (Blair 2006)

(4) JON SOPEL: I don't want to get hung up on the titles, but there was a time when a Labour person would have been thrilled to be described as Blairite, because it – you know they were being associated with the winning team. I just wonder whether it is seen a bit more maybe as a handicap now?
HAZEL BLEARS: Well I, I think it's <u>really</u> dangerous erm if we actually distance ourselves from what we've been doing over the last ten years. (Blears 2007)

Modality is expressed not only by modal verbs, but also by various lexical means, e.g., by the modal adverbs *perhaps, probably, possibly, really, certainly*, etc., modal adjectives such as *sure, possible,* etc., and pragmatic particles such as *I think* and *I mean*.

6. Discussion of the results

Epistemic possibility is the most frequently used kind of modality in the corpus, as demonstrated in Table 1. It is expressed by the modal auxiliary *may*, its preterite form *might*, by the lexical modals *perhaps, possibly, probably* and *maybe*, and also by the pragmatic particles (Aijmer 2002, Holmes 1995) *I think, I don't think* and *I mean*.

Of all these means, the most frequent expression is the discourse marker *I think* (242 occurrences in total) followed by *I mean* (47 occurrences) and *I don't think* (24 occurrences). As regards epistemic possibility conveyed by the modal verbs *may* or *might*, the number of occurrences is much lower when compared to the pragmatic particles; there are a mere seven cases of the use of *may* and 16 occurrences of the use of *might*. Finally, as regards lexical modals, they show a similar number of occurrences as modal auxiliaries. In concrete terms, there are 18 appearances in the corpus.

In Example 5, David Miliband is uncertain about his statements and so he uses *I think* to weaken the illocutionary force of his utterances. The use of *I think* in this context may be considered as a face-saving strategy of the speaker:
(5) JON SOPEL: You talk about malign neglect of the government. Until now, there seems to have been a reticence on this government's part to criticize the Burmese authority – maybe making the calculation that frankly, that will help the aid flow more quickly if we don't get in to a political fight with them.

DAVID MILIBAND: No, I think that Douglas Alexander and myself and the Prime Minister have spoken very plainly about this. We've been clear that we're not interested in a political game; what we're interested in is saving lives. It's the humanitarian issue that is at hand and ironically, it's been the government in Rangoon, that's pursued the constitutional referendum that was held yesterday, bizarrely, I think to many of us and no doubt to many of your viewers, that a constitutional referendum could go ahead in those circumstances that we've seen on the television. (Miliband 2008)

In the following extract, Tony Blair employs several lexical means expressing epistemic possibility. They indicate doubt and uncertainty about his assertions. As Example 6 shows, modal expressions may very often be combined at the beginning of an utterance. The reason is that speakers have to formulate their answers very quickly, which may be difficult. They need some time to prepare their reply and thus they utilize the linguistic means in question:

(6) JON SOPEL: Let's just talk about your position here in these sort of final few weeks. Norman Lamont memorably said of John Major that he was in office and not in power. Isn't that your position now?
TONY BLAIR: No, I mean I think the interesting thing is that the media has always wanted to get to the point, once I say, well I'm not going to fight a 4th election, of saying, okay, well your authority has gone, you can't do anything. You look back in the last two years and I think this has been probably the most energetic time for us, in terms of domestic policy, of the ten years we've been in government. (Blair 2006)

Example 7 demonstrates other instances of epistemic possibility in the corpus. Apart from the discourse marker *I think*, the speaker uses the lexical modal *maybe* to hedge her statements and show assumption:

(7) JON SOPEL: Okay, now let's talk about the Membership because you've talked about them feeling overlooked. What does that mean.
HAZEL BLEARS: Well I think if you haven't got a Labour MP and you're in a constituency, maybe you haven't got very many Labour councillors, then the only information that you tend to get about the Labour Party is maybe from the newspapers or on the television, and I think there's a big job of work to do for all of us as Minister and MPs, to go out to those places where members are, you know they're flying the Labour Party flag, sometimes in very difficult circumstances, and when you're in your third term and you are doing some difficult things, then explaining and having a dialogue with members is really important. (Blears 2007)

One attribute that is closely connected not only with epistemic modality is subjectivity (on subjectivity as a signal of the speaker's involvement see, e.g., Daneš 1994 or Kudrnáčová 2000). This is true not only for *I think* and *I mean*, but also for the modal auxiliaries *may* and *might*. This can be explained by the fact that the speaker is not certain about the truth value of the proposition so s/he presents it as

a mere possibility. This assumption has been confirmed by Hoye (1997: 43-45), who asserts that "subjectivity can certainly be regarded as an essential feature of epistemic modality since the speaker is expressing judgements in accordance with his own (subjective) set of beliefs" (1997: 43).

Deontic necessity is the second most frequent type of modality in the corpus (41 occurrences by male politicians, 106 occurrences by female politicians). It is expressed by the modal auxiliaries *must*, *should* and the 'quasi-modal' *have to* (Coates 1983: 31). The occurrence of these means is shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Deontic necessity

Modal verb	Males	Females	Total
must	2	2	4
have to	24	67	91
should	11	28	39
ought to	5	9	14

The deontics *must* and *should* are used to impose an obligation. Note, however, that the obligation laid by *must* is stronger than that laid by *should*. In Example 8, the speaker is aware of the fact that some issues should have been discussed several years ago. *Should* indicates her dissatisfaction with the course of past events. On the contrary, the modal auxiliary *must* used in Example 9 shows strong determination of the speaker to succeed:

(8) CAVUTO: All right. Well, let me ask you, Governor, let me ask you, if – if the president`s supposed to be a multitasker, why can`t Congress be? I mean, they have shelved any – any energy vote, drilling vote, because they say they`re – they`re going to be focusing like a laser beam on this. So, the president has to multitask. Why can`t these guys? And by the way, I apply the same to Republicans and Democrats.
NAPOLITANO: Well...(laughter) Congress is beyond me sometimes. I think there are a number of these things that should have been being debated and decided over the last several years, and they haven`t been. Things have been allowed to fester. And – and now, of course, this is the central thing on their plate. But, again, with 40-some-odd days before the presidential election, I think Senator Obama has been very clear about where this economy needs to go, how he wants to lead this country. (Napolitano 2008)

(9) PELLEY: You actually thought about that?
BUSH: Of course I have. I think about it a lot, about different options. Listen, I've sat down with a lot of members of Congress, both parties, good decent people, who've said, "Start withdrawing now." I've thought about that, and my attitude

is if we were to start withdrawing now, we'd have a crisis in our hands in Iraq. And not only in Iraq, but failure in Iraq will embolden the enemy. And the enemy is al-Qaeda and extremists. Failure in Iraq would empower Iran, which poses a significant threat to world peace. Failure in Iraq would provide safe haven, and the extremists still want to attack us. In other words, there's a lot of reasons that I know we <u>must</u> succeed. And so I thought long and hard about would withdrawal cause victory or cause success. And the answer is I don't believe so, and neither do a lot of experts. And so then I began to think, well, if failure's not an option and we've gotta succeed, how best to do so? And that's why I came up with the plan I did. (Bush 2007)

The difference between *must* and *have to* is again the question of subjectivity, i.e. the speaker's involvement in or detachment from the proposition. "Prototypical deontic modality is subjective, with the speaker as the deontic source, the one who imposes the obligation or grants permission. But it can also be objective, most obviously in reports of rules and regulations" (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 183). They add that "with objective necessity there is a tendency to use *have, have got,* or *need*, rather than *must* [...]" (2002: 183).

This contrast between the subjective *must* and the objective *have to* explains a much higher occurrence of the latter form in political interviews. It may be interpreted as an attempt of the speaker to gain detachment from the proposition. Politicians do not want to take responsibility for the obligation imposed, which can be regarded as a face-saving strategy. When the speaker uses the form *have to*, it is a signal that s/he is not involved (or does not want to be involved) in what they are saying. Consider Example 10:

(10) KING: In "Hard Call" you quote Fred Wyand, a veteran of Korea and Vietnam – I want to get this right. Here's what you say: "The American Army really is a people's Army in the sense that it belongs to the American people." Do you think that sense of belonging holds with an all volunteer Army, when such a tiny percentage are really serving?

MCCAIN: I do. I do because they're our sons and daughters and all of us are committed to them and proud of the best, the very best of America. I think what Fred was saying there was that if the American people no longer support an enterprise in which our military is engaged, then it's a matter of time before we <u>have to</u> withdraw. And that's why this coming debate in the middle of September is so important, because I believe those of us who believe that we are succeeding <u>have to</u> convince the American people of it. Larry, I read the polls, just like you do. And we're going to <u>have to</u> show success and we're going to <u>have to</u> show the American people the benefits of success and the consequences of failure. And it's going to be a tough fight. (McCain 2007)

As concerns the form *ought to*, most sources agree on its interchangeability with *should* (cf. Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 186, Palmer 1979: 100, Hoye 1997: 109). Hoye adds that *should* is "much more common in both speech and writing

and, stylistically, is perhaps the more felicitous expression of the two" (Hoye 1997: 109). *Should* and *ought to* occur 53 times in the whole corpus compared to 91 occurrences of *have to*. This can be explained by the effort of politicians to be directive and detached rather than responsible for their claims. Consider the following two illustrative examples:

(11) JON SOPEL: Are people taxed too highly?
HARRIET HARMAN: I think at a time when people are feeling the pinch then that's why the question of the 10p was a particular problem and we <u>have to</u> do as much as we can to help people who are struggling, low income families – certainly, yes of course we do. (Harman 2008)

(12) QUESTION: Madame Secretary, another topic, please. Presidents Reagan and President H – President H. Walker Bush both supported boycotts of the 1980 Olympics. France is now threatening to boycott the Beijing Olympics. Tell us why the U.S. shouldn't boycott and the President should not boycott the –
QUESTION: Or at least the Opening Ceremony.
SECRETARY RICE: Yeah. Well, my view of this is that we all knew that when the Olympics was awarded to Beijing, that there were any number of issues that needed to be dealt with because of the nature of the regime in Beijing. The Chinese at the time said that they – they almost took a pledge that they were going to be open to discussions about these issues. I think we <u>ought to</u> take them up on it. I think that we <u>should</u> engage them on Tibet. We <u>should</u> engage them on Taiwan. We <u>should</u> engage them on all of these issues that are critical – human rights. But frankly, it's a sporting event. And if you go there, I do think you have an obligation before, during, and after to continue to engage the regime about troublesome policies. But I don't see the benefit of boycotting. I do not – (Rice 2008)

The category of epistemic attitudinal modality is somewhat special, but quite frequent in the corpus – it is the third most frequent kind of modality in the interviews under analysis. It is expressed, for instance, by the pragmatic particles *really* and *actually,* which are expressions of epistemic stance since they convey the speaker's attitude to the truth of the proposition and in this way modify the illocutionary force of the utterance.

The main reason for using *really* and *actually* is to show the speaker's involvement. They are used by politicians quite often, which may be ascribed to the fact that politicians, in spite of the fact that they show detachment from what they say and that they do not want to lose face in front of their audience, try to show their involvement in what they are saying. (It should be added that the category of epistemic attitudinal modality can also be expressed by other means, e.g. by expressions such as *just, frankly, kind of* and *sort of*. Owing to space limitations these expressions are not taken into consideration in the present paper.)

Consider the following two examples involving epistemic attitudinal modality:

(13) JON SOPEL: Is this a referendum on your time in charge?
TONY BLAIR: You know, when you've been Prime Minister for ten years, and when you're a third term government, I mean in a sense everything, everything that happens is a referendum on your time in charge. On the other hand, I <u>actually</u> think in respect of Scotland and Wales particularly, then the question will be, who offers the best future for both of those two countries inside the UK and the most important thing to realise and I've visited both Wales and Scotland in the last week, is that if you look at the economy there it's strong. There's huge investment in public services and in both Wales and Scotland, crime is significantly down. (Blair 2007)

(14) JON SOPEL: So you would be happy to be described as a Blairite candidate.
HAZEL BLEARS: Well I supported the Prime Minister who I thinks been a fantastic Prime Minister. I work very closely with Gordon Brown. I work with the whole of the Cabinet. I've always felt that the Labour Party is not a one man or a one woman band; the Labour Party is a brilliant team of people and I think in this Deputy Leadership contest, you will see that there are half a dozen people with skills and talents in our Party, that we can showcase over the next few months, and I think that will give us a real spring board for future success, I <u>really</u> do. (Blears 2007)

In Example 13, Blair tries to show his involvement with the problems in Scotland and Wales by using *actually*, which stresses the content of his message. He tries to be closer to the people who are concerned with these issues and to assure them that he will deal with these problems. A similar instance is Example 14. Hazel Blears wants to persuade the potential voters that the Labour Party is a strong team which will assert their requirements. By using *really*, she assures the people about that.

Circumstantial possibility is the fourth most frequent type (56 occurrences in total). It is expressed by the modal auxiliary *can* both in its present and past tense. Surprisingly enough, this group is not mentioned by Palmer. In actual fact, the corpus involves many instances of the use of *can/could* which are unclassifiable according to Palmer's categorization (cf. the discussion in Section 3).

The reason why politicians use the modal verb *could* with this reference may again be underlain by their desire to signal their detachment or to show lack of commitment. Moreover, the frequent use of *could* may be judged as a face-saving strategy. Politicians are not sure if the particular event will happen or not, hence they present it as a mere potential. To illustrate:

(15) DAVID MILIBAND: No, I think that Douglas Alexander and myself and the Prime Minister have spoken very plainly about this. We've been clear that we're not interested in a political game; what we're interested in is saving lives. It's the humanitarian issue that is at hand and ironically, it's been the government in Rangoon, that's pursued the constitutional referendum that was held yesterday,

bizarrely, I think to many of us and no doubt to many of your viewers, that a constitutional referendum <u>could</u> go ahead in those circumstances that we've seen on the television. (Miliband 2008)

(16) PELLEY: Instability in Iraq threatens the entire region?
BUSH: If the government falls apart and there is sectarian enclaves and violence, it'll invite Iran into the Shia neighborhoods, Sunni extremists into the Sunni neighborhoods, Kurdish separatist movements. All of which would threaten moderate people, moderate governments, and all of which will end up creating conditions that <u>could</u> lead to attacks here in America. (Bush 2007)

The occurrence of epistemic necessity (or strong modality) is similar to circumstantial possibility (30 appearances in total). This type of modality is typically expressed by the auxiliary *can* (in its non-assertive use) and by the auxiliary *must*. However, *must*, utilized as a strong modal, does not occur in the corpus at all. Epistemic necessity can also be expressed by the adjectives *certain* and *sure* and by the adverb *certainly*, which all appear in the interviews under analysis.

Must in its epistemic use "conveys the speaker's confidence in the truth of what he is saying, based on a logical process of deduction from facts known to him (which may or may not be specified)" (Coates 1983: 41). This use of *must* is subjective. Objective epistemic necessity "involves strict semantic necessity" (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 181). Coates, however, claims that objective epistemic modality, though present in natural language, is not very usual (1983: 18). The same standpoint is taken by Lyons, who points out that the division into subjective and objective epistemic modality is not "a distinction that can be drawn sharply in the everyday use of language; and its epistemological justification is, to say the least, uncertain" (Lyons 1977: 797).

Epistemic *must* is not utilized in the corpus at all. It sounds too authoritative and, as stated above, it communicates confidence of the speaker about what s/he is saying, which may be restrictive for the politician in that it does not leave them any space for mitigating the force of their utterances.

Modal adjectives and adverbs occur more frequently in the corpus than the epistemic modals *must* and *can't*. As for the modal adverb *certainly*, "it belongs with the strong modals but does not suggest any reasoning from evidence" (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 207). Its use focuses attention on the speaker's commitment "to the modalised propositions [...], implying direct knowledge, so that they are pragmatically stronger than counterparts that have *must* or are unmodalised" (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 207). Modal adjectives *sure* and *certain* are also used epistemically, frequently with future events (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 207).

Epistemic necessity is relatively infrequent in political interviews, which can be explained by the fact that when using *certainly, I am certain, I am sure*, etc., the speaker is confident about his/her statements, which may be restrictive for politicians in that these expressions do not leave them any space for modifying and changing their assertions. Consider Examples 17 and 18 below:

(17) SECRETARY RICE: Well, a relationship, of course, is going to depend on whether or not Syria actually carries out the objectives and the responsibilities that it says it needs to carry out. But this isn't a quid pro quo. This isn't somehow a favor for the United States. I can assure you that Syria, with extremists transiting through Syria, that the Syrians are going to find themselves in a situation in which that's destabilizing for Syria. And it <u>certainly</u> <u>can't</u> be very good for Iraq's neighbors to have a situation in which extremists are able to move across borders, to kill innocent Iraqis, to create large refugee flows – something that the Syrians complain loudly about. (Rice 2007)

(18) BLAIR: I think that the trouble is that in Darfur, the Africans, other countries don't want American, U.K., other European troops there. Now, the (inaudible) said it's a United Nations-African Union force. I don't think that's the issue. I think the issue is getting the force in there and I think that if, in the next weeks and next couple of months or so, the Sudanese government are not prepared to agree to the U.N. plan, then we've got to move to sanctions and we've got to move to tougher action. And I think we should <u>certainly</u> consider the option of a no-fly zone to help people in Darfur, because it's a very, very serious situation and it's now spilling into other countries next door. But this is not our military force, <u>certainly</u>, in terms of boots on the ground. (Blair 2006)

As shown in Table 1 above, deontic possibility (or permission) is not so frequent in political interviews. In the whole corpus this type of modality occurs eight times only. This low number of appearances may be explained by the genre of political interview itself since giving permission is not its typical feature. Needless to say, permission is frequently used in a casual conversation. The main reason why politicians resort to permission is to give explanations – cf. Example 19:

(19) RICE: But I want to just close with this little story because – maybe some of you've heard it. But – my grandfather, my father's father, was a sharecropper's son in Ewtah, Alabama – E-w-t-a-h, Alabama. And for some reason, he decided he wanted to get book learning. And so he would ask people who came through where <u>could</u> a colored man go to college. And they said, well, there's Stillman College, which is a little Presbyterian school about 60 miles from here, but you're going to have to pay to go there. So he saved up his cotton and he got enough money from his cotton to go to Stillman. He made his way to Stillman. He made it through his first year of school. And then the second year they said, okay, now where's your tuition for the second year? And he said, well, I've paid with all the cotton I had. And they said – he said, but – well, how are those boys going to school? They said, well, you know, they have what's called a scholarship. He said – and if you wanted to be a Presbyterian minister, then you <u>could</u> have a scholarship too. And my grandfather said, oh, you know, that's exactly what I plan to do. (Laughter.) (Rice 2008)

7. Conclusion

The aim of this paper has been to examine modality in a corpus of political interviews and to describe linguistic expressions which speakers make use of to modalise their utterances. Furthermore, this study attempts to identify various types of modality in political interviews and to find out their occurrence and influence on modifying the illocutionary force of utterances. In addition, the paper has analysed the differences in the use of various types of modality as employed by male and female politicians.

It has been shown that epistemic possibility is the most frequent in the corpus. Largely, it is due to the frequent use of the discourse marker *I think*. The linguistic means of expressing epistemic possibility (*I mean, I don't think, may, might, perhaps, possibly, probably, maybe*) modify the illocutionary force of these utterances in that they express uncertainty, assumption and doubt of the speaker. Epistemic possibility is frequent in the corpus also because politicians want to take into consideration their listeners and offer them a prediction or hope for the future. The use of linguistic means of epistemic possibility may also be interpreted as a face-saving strategy of the speaker.

Deontic necessity is the second most frequent kind of modality. In the majority of cases, it is expressed by *have to* in political interviews, much less by *must*. This may be attributed to the objective use of *have to* which shows detachment from the proposition. On the one hand, politicians do not want to be responsible for their statements; on the other hand, they would like to sound authoritative. That is why the form *have to* is more frequently used than the modal auxiliary *should*, which also belongs to the category of deontic necessity but is weaker than *have to*.

Epistemic attitudinal modality is the third most frequent type. Its main function is to express commitment of the speaker to the truth of the proposition. Politicians use the modal adverbs *actually* and *really* to stress important facts and to indicate what their listeners should concentrate on.

Circumstantial possibility is not as frequent as the previous category of modality. It expresses an event that is likely to happen or it is possible that it will happen under particular circumstances. Politicians show detachment from their assertions and uncertainty about them in this way.

Epistemic necessity occurs much less frequently in the corpus than epistemic possibility. It may be ascribed to the fact that epistemic necessity expresses confidence of the speaker about what s/he is saying. When using not so directive and strong expressions, politicians leave some space for changing their opinion, modifying their assertions and also for saving their face in case they are accused of lying.

Finally, deontic possibility is the least frequent kind of modality. As already suggested, this is due to the nature of this type of modality and to the nature of political interview as a genre because giving permission is not a frequent phenomenon in political interviews.

As regards gender-specificity and modality, it can be maintained that female politicians employ modal forms more frequently than male politicians. It may be connected with uncertainty and a vague and indeterminate way in which women express themselves. Another interpretation could be that female politicians do not want to sound too directive in front of their audience, hence they prefer to mitigate the force of their utterances instead, especially when using epistemic modal forms.

When female politicians use epistemic modal forms, they not only show their attitude to the proposition, but they also show their attitude to the listeners, which is more cooperative. In this connection, Coates (2003: 340) states that "[...] talk on sensitive topics is too difficult if statements are made bluntly: we all need to protect ourselves and each other from the naked force of such subjects". In my opinion, this is true not only for a casual conversation but also for a public debate.

To sum up, the present study shows that indeterminacy is a common feature associated with modality, which is further augmented by the fact that there are several modal forms which can express both epistemic and deontic modality. Furthermore, modality is connected with two other phenomena, namely, power and politeness. It is clear, however, that these issues require further investigation. What also remains to be studied in greater detail is the negation and the past of modal forms. It also appears that what is needed is a more detailed inquiry into expressions of modality used by individual politicians and into the cumulation of lexical means expressing modality. What also has to be taken into consideration is whether the political function they perform or the topic discussed have an effect on modifying the illocutionary force of their utterances.

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