

# **Modality in Donald Trump's Speech on Iran's Nuclear Deal**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper reports the study of Donald Trump's Speech on Iran's Nuclear Deal which focuses on the types of modality. In analyzing, the data are taken from Donald Trump's Speech on Iran's Nuclear Deal. This study employed the framework of modality proposed by Halliday and Matthiessen (2004). The results showed 30 clauses containing modality which may be classified into modalization and modulation. Modalization consists of probability and usuality, while modulation has obligation and inclination. The findings give an insight how a politician, such as Donald Trump applies modality in his speech.

**Keywords:** modality, modalization, modulation

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Trump's speeches as the president of the United States of America (USA) have become one of interesting topics studied by scholars. The speeches have been investigated from various perspectives, such as critical discourse analysis (Chen, 2018; Khandani et al., 2020; Lamont et al., 2017; Mohammadi & Javadi, 2017; Nguyen & Sawalmeh, 2020; Salayo, 2020), Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Nuraisiah, 2017; Umiyati, 2019), and modality (Yunisda & Firmansyah, 2019). Although (Yunisda & Firmansyah, 2019) investigated the modality of Donald Trump's speech, however, the data were taken from Trump's speech in Riyadh Summit, while this paper focuses on his speech on Iran's Nuclear Deal. Accordingly, an investigation of modality on Trump's Speech on Iran's Nuclear Deal has not been conducted yet. Thus, this study problematized what types of modality occur in Trump's Speech on Iran's Nuclear Deal.

The results of this study will implicate both linguistics theory and practical use. Theoretically, the results of the study will enhance the linguistic theory available, especially Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Practically, it also helps readers to understand how a politician builds a world view to influence his voters to be on his side.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Modality is a system in the clause as an exchange that occurs between Polarity. According to (Gerot, 1994) stated that modality represents the interpersonal meaning since it indicates the speakers 'judgment of the probabilities or the obligations involved in what he or she is saying. Moreover, (Eggins, 2004) said that modality is a complex area of an English grammar which investigates how to convey the message of the text, and how human express their attitudes and judgments through different ways. Furthermore, (Halliday, 2004) defined modality as the speaker's judgment, or request of the judgment of the listener, on the status of what is being said listed and classified it into two broad categories: Propositions (Modalization) and Proposals (Modulation) each of which possesses two sub-categories as seen in Figure 1.

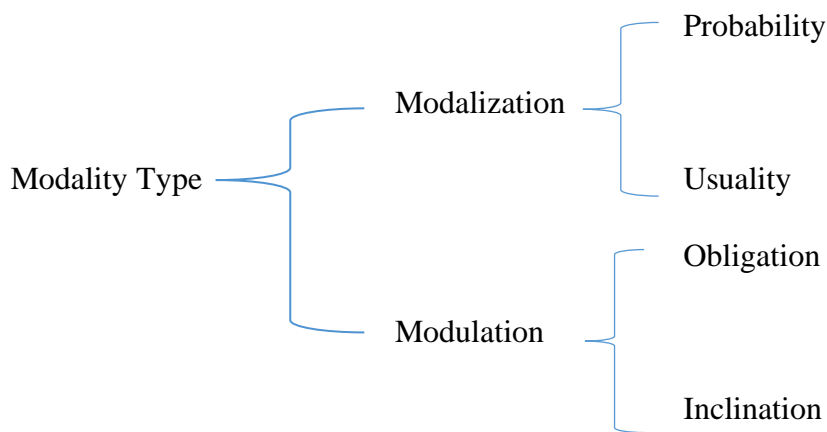


Figure 1. Modality Types and Sub-Types

### 1. Modalization

Modalization refers to modality when it is used to argue about the probability or frequency of propositions (Eggins, 2005). Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) classified modalization into two kinds: probability and usuality. Probability deals with where the speaker expresses judgments as to the likelihood or probability of something happening or being, while usuality concerns with where the speaker expresses judgments as to the frequency with which something happens or is. In line with Eggins and Halliday and Matthiessen, some examples of the modalization were given by Fontaine (Fontaine, 2012).

1. Perhaps I will go.
2. He could take my care.

Probability refers to how likely the information being exchanged is to be true, which can be represented either by will, could, or probably (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013).

Meanwhile, usuality may be expressed grammatically by a lexical word such as usually or seldom, as exemplified by Halliday and Matthiessen (2013).

3. He usually sits there all day.
4. It seldom works that day.

Usuality is about how the frequency of the information being exchanged is true, whose degree can also be shown by an adverb, such as always, seldom, and usually.

## 2. Modulation

Modulation is defined as a way for speakers to express their judgment or attitudes about actions and events. When someone is acting on or for other people, he or she does not only have the dogmatic choices of do or do not do, but I will give you this or I will not give you this. Nevertheless, between these two poles of compliance and refusal as she or he can express degrees of obligation and inclination. As a part of interpersonal realization, modulation always deals with demanding, direction, advice, permission, undertaking, or capability (Eggins, 2005). Further, Eggins (2005) stated that modulation deals with the expression of asking, directing, or expression of our willingness to get somebody to do something. These can be realized by asking for someone, offering declarative statements, advising statements, or even directing imperative statements. Like modalization, modulation also possesses two sub-categories: inclination and obligation.

Inclination refers to a speaking's willingness or readiness to fulfill an offer. In an offer, the degrees of inclination can be represented by will, would, wants to, willing to, determined to, anxious to, and so on as seen in the examples from Halliday and Matthiessen (2013).

5. I want to lend you The Bostonians
6. I'd like to lend you the Bostonians
7. I'm willing to lend you the Bostonians

The clauses above are ways of giving goods and services, each is functioning as an offer, but the clauses are declarative.

Obligation involves the responsibility or pressure imposes on the addressee to meet the addresser's demand. It represents the tendency of the speaker in doing something and the capability from his or her feeling. In inclination, the speaker may signal ability, willingness, and determination. In a command, the degrees of obligation are delivered by should, must, allowed to, required to, and so on. Halliday and Matthiessen (2013) exemplified obligation in the clauses below.

8. You should know that.
9. He ought to be going.
10. He could take my car.
11. He is probably taking in car.

The clauses above have the meaning of commands, goods and services, and do not have the grammatical structure of imperative instead. The clauses are declarative.

### **3. Modal Values**

The finite modal operator can express modalization or modulation. According to Thompson (2013), it is the most obvious and one of the main structural justifications for including modality as a function of the mood in English. Mao et al. (2014:72) also state that the modality is closely connected to the mood verb, which has always been an important method to achieve the modality and one of the most common and simple retrieval items for investigating the interpersonal meaning.

The finite modal operator that can be used in modalization are can, could, may, might, need, will would, and so on. While in the modulation, the finite modal operator can be must, should, ought to, have to and so on. Considering the intermediate stages served by the modality, the discussion is often in terms of the degree or scale called the modal values. Halliday & Matthiessen (2013: 180) proposed three stages of values in modality, which the choice of modality can be expressed, and this can reflect how much the speaker is certain or uncertain about what he is saying or suggesting whether in proposition or proposal. There are three stages of values in modality: low, median, and high. These values are realized when the speaker or writer may, for example, signal a higher or lower degree of certainty about the validity of a proposition, or higher or lower degree of pressure on the other person in the proposal as stated by Halliday (1994) in (Gerot, 1994; Thompson, 2013). To sum up, the modal values expressed by the finite

verbal operators are listed in Table 2.

Table 2. Modal Values

Low	Median	High
can, may, could, might, (dare)	will, would, should, is to, was to	must, ought to, need, has to, had to

## METHOD

This research was conducted by using the descriptive-qualitative method. The data were the scripts of Donald Trump's speech released on May 9<sup>th</sup> 2018. They were taken from the White House official website ([www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov)). In analysing the data, the Systemic Functional Linguistics framework was applied.

The analysis followed several steps. First, the clauses found in the speech were categorized into two types of modality: modalization and modulation. After that, the classified data were divided according to each modality type. The last, the analysis was conducted based on the framework presented above.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Results

Figure 1 shows that the number of clauses containing modulation is greater than modalization. Besides, the data of probability which is one type of modalization is greater in number than those which contain usuality, another type of modalization as illustrated in Figure 2.

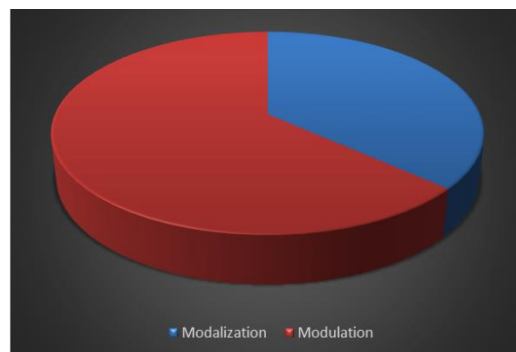


Figure 1. The comparison of modalization and modulation

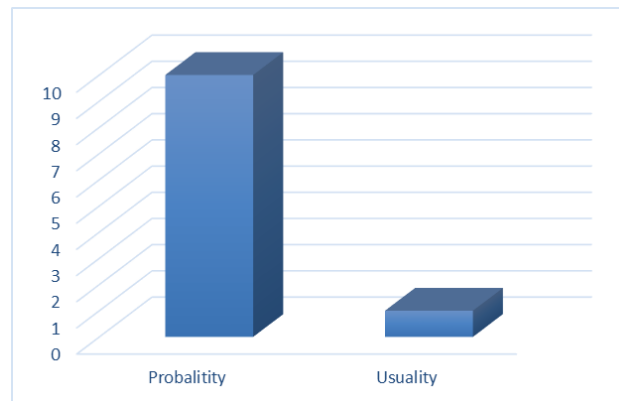


Figure 2. Modalization and its sub-types

Whereas the data containing modulation, the number of inclination found are more significant than the number of obligations. This can be seen in Figure 3.

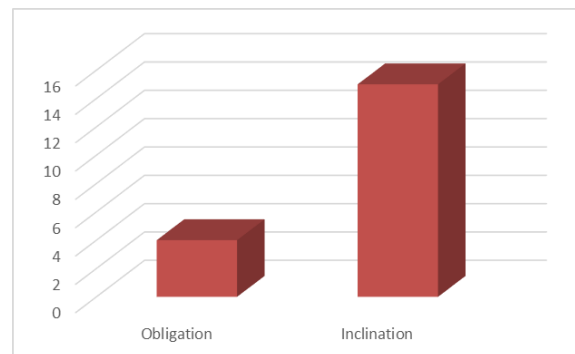


Figure 3. Modulation and its sub-types

## 2. Discussion

### Modalization: *Probability*

- 1) A constructive deal *could* easily have been struck at the time, but it wasn't.
- 2) The regime *can* still be on the verge of a nuclear breakout in just a short period of time.
- 3) If I allowed this deal to stand, there *would* soon be a nuclear arms race in the Middle East
- 4) Iran's leaders *will* naturally say that they refuse to negotiate a new deal.

The type of modality in (1), (2), (3), and (4) are modalization. The context of the clauses indicates that it is categorized as probability where the speaker here expresses judgments as a probability of something happens. The modal *could*, *can*, *would*, and *will* are as the probability. All clauses are declarative, which shows the speaker's opinion

about the situation. The clauses indicate one of the roles in the clause as an exchange, which is giving information. The information, as the commodity that is being exchanged, is the form of a statement. It can be said that the clause in (1) indicates the purpose of the speaker that is Trump, which is to give information to the audience about this deal can be struck at the time. The clause (2) indicates the purpose of the speaker that is Trump, which is to give information to the audience about the regime that can still be on the verge of a nuclear breakout if Iran complies with the deal. The clauses (3) indicates the purpose of the speaker that is Trump, which is to give information to the audience if he lets the nuclear deal stand, then there will be a nuclear war. The clause (4) indicates the purpose of the speaker that is Trump, which is to give information to the audience about Iran's leaders probably will refuse the new deal.

The finite modal operator *could* and *can* represent the low scale of modal commitment. It signals a low degree of certainty about the validity of a proposition. Therefore, it is categorized as a low probability. Moreover, the finite modal operator *will* and *would* represent the median scale of modal commitment, and it signals a median degree of certainty about the validity of a proposition. Therefore, it is categorized as a median probability.

### **Modalization: Usuality**

5) It didn't bring calm, it didn't bring peace, and it never *will*.

The type of modality in (5) is modalization. The context of the clause indicates that it is categorized as usuality where the speaker here expresses judgments as to usuality of something happens. The clause is a declarative clause that indicates one of the roles in the clause as an exchange, which is giving information. The information, as the commodity that is being exchanged, is the form of a statement. It shows the speaker's opinion about a predicated situation in which the nuclear deal did not bring calm and peace. A consideration for categorizing the modal as indicating usuality is that in the event of a deal situation, as a predicted situation, the event where the one-sided deal did not bring calm and peace can be interpreted as something that sometimes happens which indicates usuality, rather than something that merely may happen which indicates probability instead. It makes clear that the modal *will* in the clause suggest that it did not bring calm and peace is something that usually happens certain situation.

The finite modal operator *will* represents the median scale of modal commitment; it signals a median degree of certainty about the validity of a proposition. Therefore, it is categorized as a median usuality. This value of the modal in (5) indicates that the speech asks the audience for their attention, that the one-sided deal did not bring calm and peace.

### **Modulation: *Obligation***

- 6) The fact is, this was a horrible, one-sided deal that *should* have never, ever been made.
- 7) I announced last October that the Iran deal *must* either be renegotiated or terminated.
- 8) I made clear that if the deal *could not be* fixed.
- 9) We are unified in our understanding of the threat and in our conviction that Iran *must* never acquire a nuclear weapon.

The type of modality in the clause (6), (7), (8), and (9) are modulation. It shows that the speaker expresses judgments as to the command of something that happens. Although the clauses are not in the form of imperative but in the form of declarative one, the meanings are to show the requirement. The clauses show the requirement of the speaker in demanding the hearer's response. This clause indicates one of the roles in the clause as the exchange, which is demanding information. The information as the commodity that is being exchanged is in the form of a command. The command clause here is delivered in order for the hearer to receive the information stated by the speaker. The clause in (6) indicates the purpose of the speaker, which is to give information about the condition from the one-sided deal, cannot be made by Iran. The clause in (7) indicates the purpose of the speaker, which is to give information about Trump's demands to Iran to terminate The Nuclear Deal. The clause in (8) indicates the speaker's purpose, which is to give information about Trump menaced to Iran if the nuclear deal could be fixed. The clause in (9) indicates the speaker's purpose, which is to give information about Trump's demands to Iran that Iran cannot get a nuclear weapon.

The finite modal operator *should* represents the median scale of modal commitment; it signals a median degree of pressure on the inclination or obligation of a proposal. Therefore, it is categorized as a median obligation. The finite modal operator *could not be* represents the low scale of modal commitment; it signals a low degree of pressure on inclination or obligation of a proposal. Therefore, it is categorized as a low



obligation. The finite modal operator *must* represents the high scale of modal commitment; it signals a high degree of pressure on the inclination or obligation of a proposal. Therefore, it is categorized as a high obligation.

### **Modulation: *Inclination***

- 10) Everyone *would* want their weapons ready by the time Iran had theirs
- 11) After these consultations, it is clear to me that we *cannot* prevent an Iranian nuclear bomb under the decaying and rotten structure of the current agreement.
- 12) We knows exactly what *will* happen.
- 13) In just a short period of time, the world's leading state sponsor of terror *will be* on the cusp of acquiring the world's most dangerous weapons
- 14) Any nation that helps Iran in its quest for nuclear weapons *could* also be strongly sanctioned by the United States.
- 15) America *will not be* held hostage to nuclear blackmail.
- 16) And with the help of China, South Korea, and Japan, a future of great prosperity and security *can be* achieved for everyone.

The type of modality in the clauses (10)-(16) are modulation. Considering to the context of these clauses indication, the modality type occurring in the clauses is categorized as inclination, where the speaker here as the first person expresses judgments as to the willingness of something to happen. As declarative clauses, the clauses show the willingness of the speaker to demand the hearer's response. The clause indicates one of the roles in the clause as the exchange, which is demanding information. It can be said that the clause in (10) indicates the purpose of the speaker, that is Trump, which is to give information to the audience about everyone (Middle East) want their weapons ready by the time Iran had theirs. The clause in (11) indicates the purpose of the speaker, that is Trump, which is to give information to the audience about Trump cannot restrain the nuclear deal. The clause in (12) indicates the purpose of the speaker, that is Trump, which is to give information that Trump knows what will happen if the nuclear deal still exists. The clause in (13) indicates the purpose of Trump is to give information that Iran will get the world's most dangerous weapons. The clause in (14) indicates the purpose of the speaker is to give information that Trump will give strong sanction if any nation helps

Iran with nuclear weapons. The clause in (15) indicates the purpose of the Trump is to give information that The United States will not be held hostage to nuclear blackmail. Furthermore, the clause in (16) indicates the purpose of the speaker is to give information that Trump also hopes with the help of China, South Korea, and Japan, a future of great prosperity and security can be achieved for everyone.

The finite operator *cannot*, *could*, and *can be* represent the low scale of modal commitment; it signals a low degree of pressure on the inclination or obligation of a proposal. Therefore, it is categorized as a low inclination. Moreover, the finite operator *would*, *will*, *will be*, and *will not be* represent the median scale of modal commitment; it signals a median degree of pressure on inclination or obligation of a proposal. Therefore, it is categorized as a median inclination.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion above, it could be concluded that both types of modality occur in the data. However, the clauses containing modulation tend to be dominant. Furthermore, the clauses using probability, a type of modalization, are found in more significant number compared to the ones having usuality. In addition, the clauses which own inclination, a sub-type of modulation, also possess a greater number than the ones which own obligation.

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