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ABSTRACT

The controversy surrounding the justification for the Iraq War has sparked numerous political and linguistic studies to explore the issue of Iraqi war and analyze how George W. Bush convinced the world to remove the Iraqi government. This study focuses on the Iraq War and analyzes the use of epistemic modal nouns in political speeches, specifically The State of the Union Speeches and The War Speeches, which were chosen due to their significance in persuading the public about the war. Quantitative and qualitative methods were used to analyze epistemic modal nouns based on Biber (2006), Varttala (2001) and Vukovic (2014) framework. The findings show that George W. Bush relied heavily on 10 functions of epistemic modal nouns in both genres, including anticipation, contemplation, conviction, desire, likelihood/possibility, making decisions, prediction, and tricky/elusiveness. These modal nouns were intended to persuade the public rather than inform them about Bush's actions and objectives to resist and eliminate Saddam Hussein's regime. Additionally, the study highlights that explanations beyond the use of epistemic modal nouns generated public agreement and support, reassured the public, and reduced concerns raised by the opposition. This study has implications for linguistics educators.

Keywords: Political discourse; Epistemic modal nouns; George W. Bush, Iraq War 2003; Saddam Hussain

INTRODUCTION

Epistemic modality serves as a discursive strategy in political speeches, allowing speakers to assume the role of standard-setters by asserting norms to be followed. This strategy enables politicians to maintain a sense of flexibility and avoid explicit commitment when these norms are violated or not adhered to. According to Martín de la Rosa and Domínguez Romero (2021: 2), the use of epistemic modality in United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs) often results in vague language that sacrifices clarity in order to allow for less committed positions among the signing Member States. Similarly, Hardjanto and Mazia (2019: 10) note that epistemic modality is commonly employed in presidential speeches as a rhetorical device to persuade the public and project authority while maintaining plausible deniability. This approach allows presidents to appear humble and avoid dogmatic statements or offending their audience, while also managing expectations and hedging against potential criticism.

In addition to reflecting a discursive strategy, epistemic modality also serves as a tool for conveying information in political speeches. As Zheni (2018: 1) argues, epistemic modality can reveal whether the information presented in a speech is factual or ideological. It serves as an indicator of the knowledge, belief, and truth of a politician's stance on specific events. Zheni's article, "Factive vs Ideological Knowledge in Political Discourse," analyzes Hillary Clinton's use of epistemic modality and concludes that it reveals Clinton's political speech to be a collection of personal knowledge based on individual mental models or first-hand experiences regarding particular situations. Thus, epistemic modality in political speeches has the potential to extract the private knowledge, mental states, beliefs, truth, and ideology of politicians and communicate them to the public or community.

Moreover, Epistemic modal Nouns (EMNs) convey the probability, certainty, and uncertainty of politicians' judgments in their speeches, indicating their intended purpose, which could serve various functions, such as hedging, evasion, persuasion, intention, and decision-making for the public.

The present study aims to explore the use of epistemic modality (EMNs) in relation to President George W. Bush's speeches on the Iraq War 2003. The study draws upon two distinct perspectives. Firstly, EMNs are

considered a crucial linguistic tool that allows speakers to express their evaluation and judgment regarding the degree of certainty in their knowledge. The significance of EMNs lies in their ability to reveal the epistemic meaning behind presidential speeches, thereby having a powerful impact on the audience and persuading them to accept logical deductions based on facts and truth. Secondly, the functions of epistemic modality in political speeches need to be more comprehensively understood, particularly in cases where political decisions and actions have high stakes and may involve the lives of many people, such as the decision to go to war. Therefore, the study aims to investigate the use of epistemic modality Nouns in GWB's speeches on the Iraq War 2003, with a focus on their semantic and discoursal behavior.

The present investigation will concentrate on two principal genres, namely the State of the Union speeches and War Speeches associated with the Iraqi regime. The selection of these genres is motivated by their pivotal role in convincing the Congress and the global community about the necessity of the Iraq War. Scholars such as Hart and Fuoli (2020) pointed out that presidents usually utilize epistemic modality in speeches related to high stakes, such as war speeches, to enhance their persuasive and diplomatic abilities. Specifically, this study will center on the speeches of President George W. Bush and aim to discern the meanings and functions of epistemic modal nouns employed in the two genres. The significance of the two genres lies in their role in instigating the invasion and overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime. As Jamieson and Campbell (2017) contended, the war speech implies legislative action, with presidential speeches attempting to persuade audiences about the necessity of conflict. For instance, George W. Bush cited various justifications for the Iraq War, such as the Iraqi government's alleged involvement in the 9/11 attacks, Saddam Hussein's regime's support for terrorist organizations, and Iraq's purported possession of chemical weapons that could harm civilians. The current study aims to achieve two objectives: firstly, to identify the frequency of epistemic modal nouns, and secondly, to determine the meanings and functions for using these nouns in the two genres.

Further, presidents utilize the State of the Union Address to communicate to the public about significant threats, which can be political, economic, or otherwise, as demonstrated by George W. Bush's emphasis on terrorism following the 9/11 attacks (Shogan, 2015: 7). Additionally, the address covers critical issues contributing to the economic collapse while informing the public of the reforms being implemented for the country's welfare (Ibid: 14). On the other hand, in the context of war, presidential speeches serve as a persuasive tool to convince the audience about the necessity of the war, as the war speech implies legislative action, as noted by Jamieson and Campbell (2017: 13). George W. Bush's speeches on the Iraq War offered multiple justifications to gain authorization for waging war, such as Iraq's alleged involvement in the 9/11 attacks, support for terrorist organizations, and possession of chemical weapons that could harm civilians.

The present study aims to achieve three objectives. Firstly, it seeks to identify the frequency of epistemic modality markers in President Bush's speeches about the Iraq War in the State of the Union and War genres. Secondly, it intends to examine the meanings of epistemic modality in these speeches. Finally, the study aims to specify the discourse functions of epistemic modality as observed in President Bush's speeches about the Iraq War in the State of the Union and War genres.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

In various fields of linguistics, it is crucial to consider how words and categories are presented and processed in written or spoken events, such as politics. Nouns and verbs are fundamental word types in language and differ significantly on various language levels, such as semantic, syntactic, and discourse (Xia et al., 2016: 1; Xia et al., 2022: 2). EM nouns, in particular, have been categorized into different types based on their level of tentativeness and uncertainty. For instance, Varttala (2001: 140) identifies three general types of EM nouns: non-factive assertive nouns, tentative cognition nouns, and tentative likelihood. Non-factive assertive nouns describe one's views or findings with varying degrees of tentativeness, while tentative cognition nouns are based on subjective views, limited knowledge, and rationale reasons. Tentative likelihood nouns, on the other hand, convey less confidence or uncertainty about the proposition made by the speaker (Mur-Dueñas, 2021: 10). Conversely, Vukovic (2014: 12) identifies the strong epistemic nouns, which convey factuality and certainty, such as fact, confidence, argument, claim, evidence, truth, knowledge, certainty, belief, assertion, judgement, and proof.

Further, Van Linden and Van de Velde (2014: 10) have classified modal nouns into four categories, namely epistemic, certainty, evaluative, and affective constructions. Epistemic nouns such as chance are used to express uncertainty, while certainty nouns such as necessity and obviousness convey a sense of assurance or conviction. Evaluative nouns imply a proposition presented from the speaker's standpoint, such as regret, pity, bad luck, and coincidence. Finally, affective constructions indicate psychological states, such as sorrow and anger. Understanding these different categories of modal nouns is crucial in comprehending the various nuances and implications that they bring to language use, particularly in the field of politics and other related linguistic domains.

Upon investigating the functions of epistemic modal nouns, it is apparent that there exist different types of nouns depending on the context or situation. These include factive nouns, non-factive certainty nouns, tentative

cognition nouns, and likelihood nouns. Biber's et al, (1999) classification of epistemic nouns incorporates all of these categories of epistemic modality, dividing them into certainty and likelihood. However, it is essential to modify this classification based on the nouns' functions. For instance, while both fact and allegation imply certainty in the speaker's proposition, there is still some ambiguity between them. The term fact denotes "factivity and certainty," while EM noun allegation indicates non-factive assertive nouns. Thus, the present study is purported to categorize epistemic modal nouns into four parts, as per Biber et al.'s taxonomy, along with additional contributions from Varttala (2001) and Vukovic (2014) (see Table 2.9).

Table Error! No text of specified style in document..1:Epistemic Modal Nouns based on Biber (2006), Varttala (2001) and Vukovic (2014)

Factivity and certainty nouns	Non-factive certainty nouns	Tentative cognition nouns	Tentative likelihood nouns
assertion	contention	assumption	Likelihood
belief	suggestion	presumption	Possibility
claim	opinion	notion	doubt
conviction	<i>feeling</i>	observation	
fact	<i>idea</i>	realization	
knowledge		hypothesis	
statement			
<i>conclusion</i>			

When presidents deliver speeches, epistemic nouns serve several functions, such as hedging, evading, persuading, and influencing the audience. In one of his speeches, Obama uses the tentative cognition noun "assumption." To fully comprehend the intended meaning of such phrases, it is essential to examine the context surrounding them. For instance, in one of Obama's press conferences:

What is a fair criticism is *my assumption* that *if* we had checks and balances from the courts and Congress, that traditional system of checks and balances *would be* enough to give people assurance that these programs were run properly.

August 9, 2013

President Obama uses the tentative cognition noun "my assumption" in his speeches to establish a plausible barrier and distance himself from direct involvement in the work of the court and Congress. By placing the responsibility on the shoulders of these institutions, Obama employs this linguistic device to hedge against potential criticism. The use of "assumption" in this context represents a theoretical formulation of a consequential conditional, or an if-then statement, that could provide individuals with a degree of certainty regarding the sustainability of monitoring programs. Contextual analysis is crucial to understanding the underlying meaning and implications of such linguistic devices in presidential addresses.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts a concurrent mixed-method design to identify Epistemic Modal Nouns (EMNs) in six speeches delivered by George W. Bush. In order to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation, both qualitative and quantitative methods are employed. The qualitative component involves a meticulous and thorough textual analysis, aiming to provide a detailed account of "description and themes using text analysis and interpreting the larger meaning of the findings" (Creswell, 2012, p.16). On the other hand, the quantitative component relies on statistical analysis of numeric data (Creswell, 2012, p.13). To extract EMNs from the linguistic texts, the researcher utilizes both software packages such as AntConc version 3.5.9 (updated on Dec. 2020) and manual extraction as some EMNs are context-dependent. To ensure the representativeness of the data analyzed, Biber (2006), Varttala (2001) and Vukovic (2014) are used as a framework. The analysis involves three stages, which include identifying the types and frequencies of EMNs, examining their syntactic and semantic features, and finally, revealing their functions in George W. Bush's speeches.

4. DESIGN AND DATA

The data for the present study were gathered from the website presidentialrhetoric.com, which is a reputable source for analyzing the rhetoric of the presidency. The sample consists of six speeches from two genres: The State of the Union Speeches and the War Speeches, selected for their relevance to the establishment of a Counter-Terrorism Committee following the 9/11 attack (Martín de la Rosa & Domínguez Romero, 2021, p. 1). The selection of these speeches was based on their suitability for manual analysis, specifically in the field of discourse studies (Angermüller, 2015; Alkhawaldeh, 2018). In the analysis section, examples from the two genres of Bush's speeches are used to accomplish three primary objectives. The primary objective of this study is to assess how often epistemic markers are used in the chosen speeches concerning the Iraq War. Additionally,

the study seeks to analyze the significance of epistemic modality in the speeches given by President Bush regarding the Iraq War. Lastly, the study aims to identify the specific roles and functions of epistemic modality within the discourse of President Bush's speeches on the Iraq War in both genres.

5. FINDINGS

The frequency of EMNs in the two genres of Bush speeches reveals some interesting insights about the use of EMNs. The total frequency of EMNs in the two genres is high, with 95 occurrences recorded in Table 5.1. Table 5.2 shows that the EMN noun "*evidence*" is the most commonly used modal noun to convey certainty, with a frequency of 6 in the two genres. Moreover, the analysis reveals that certain EMN nouns, such as "*hope*," were frequently used to suggest non-certainty in both genres. For instance, "*hope*" was used with a frequency of 8 in the State of the Union speeches and a frequency of 5 in the War speeches, as shown in Table 5.3. The EMN noun "*choice*" was also frequently used in both genres, with a frequency of 4 in the State of the Union speeches and a frequency of 6 in the War speeches

Table 5.1: Frequency of EMNs in Two Genres

The State of the Union Speech	The War Speeches
58	37

The second objective of this study was to examine the semantic meanings of EMNs in two genres of political discourse. The findings indicate a certain level of diversity in the meanings conveyed by EMNs across the two genres. Specifically, the State of the Union speeches tend to employ EMNs more frequently than the War speeches, indicating a wider range of Certainty EMNs being used. On the other hand, the War speeches tend to focus on a limited set of certainty nouns, such as "*belief*", "*confidence*", "*fact*" "*reason*", "*resolve*", "*trust*" and "*truth*," which only occur once in the data. In contrast, the analysis reveals that EMNs such as "*commitment*", "*evidence*", "*result*" and "*resolve*" occur multiple times in the War speeches.

Similarly, the State of the Union speeches show only one instance of EMNs such as "*commitment*", "*decision*", "*knowledge*" and "*trust*", but have multiple occurrences of other EMNs such as "*confidence*", "*conviction*", "*faith*," "*evidence*", "*fact*" and "*resolve*". Notably, all EMNs identified in Bush's speeches are found in the State of the Union speeches but not vice versa, as shown in Table 5.2. Overall, these findings suggest that EMNs are used differently in the two genres of political discourse, with the State of the Union speeches featuring a wider range of Certainty EMNs.

Table 5.2: Factivity and Certainty- EMNs

The State of the Union Speech	N	War Speeches	N
Evidence , Resolve	6	Evidence	6
Confidence	5	Commitment	4
Fact	3	Resolve, Result	2
Faith, Conviction	2	Confidence, Belief, Fact, Promise, Reason, Truth	1
Commitment, Decision, Decisive, Declaration, Determination, Discovery, Knowledge, Pledge, Promise, Right, Result, Statement, Truth	1		
Total	37	Total	20

In addition to their inherent meanings, EMNs are employed to give extra meanings in the two genres. For instance, the State of the Union speeches display eight occurrences of EMN *hope* and one occurrence of EMN *opinion* that convey non-factivity certainty. For Tentative Cognition, EMNs appear four times as *choice* and once as EM *expectation*. Tentative Likelihood nouns occur twice with EMN *possibility*, once with EMN *doubt*, three times with EMN *chance*, and once with EMN *reckon*. In the War speeches, non-factive certainty nouns represent five occurrences of EMN *hope* and one occurrence of EMN *view*. In addition, six occurrences of EMN *choice* are implied as Tentative Cognition. The Tentative Likelihood Noun, as shown in Table 5.3, features two occurrences of EMN *chance* and three occurrences of EMN *opportunity*.

Table 5.3: Other Semantic Meanings for EMNs

The State of the Union Speech		War Speeches	
Non-Factive Certainty Nouns	<i>N</i>	Non-Factive Certainty Nouns	<i>N</i>
Hope	8	Hope	5
Opinion	1	View	1
Tentative Cognition Nouns	<i>N</i>	Tentative Cognition Nouns	<i>N</i>
Choice	4	Choice	6
Expectation	1	-	
Tentative Likelihood Nouns	<i>N</i>	Tentative Likelihood Nouns	<i>N</i>
Chance	3	Chance	2
Possibility	2	Opportunity	3
Reckoning, Doubt	1	-	
Total	21	Total	17

The results reveal that EMNs are present in the two genres of Bush's speeches, conveying four distinct meanings, as indicated in Tables 5.2 and 5.3. These meanings include 57 instances of Factivity and Certainty, 15 instances of non-factive certainty nouns, 11 instances of Tentative Cognition Nouns, and 12 instances of Tentative Likelihood Nouns. The following discussion will explore the different meanings of the EMNs, along with their respective frequencies obtained from the current data, in order to illustrate the semantic significance of the EMNs in Bush's speeches."

1. Factivity and Certainty nouns

(a) September the 11th brought out the best in America and the best in this Congress. And I join the American people in applauding your unity and resolve.

P. 27-State of the Union, 29-Jan-02

(b) By the resolve and purpose of America and of our friends and allies, we will make this an age of progress and liberty.

P.31-The War Speech -The Future of Iraq, 26-Feb-03

In sentence (a), President Bush employs the noun "*resolve*" to communicate a strong motivation for action, which can be interpreted in the context of epistemic modality. Specifically, it is part of the direct object that includes the coordinated nouns "*unity*" and "*resolve*". Conversely, in sentence (b), the noun "*resolve*" is synonymous with "*determination*" and conveys definitive expectations for the future. Therefore, it can also be said to express epistemic modality. Syntactically, "*resolve*" serves as the head of the preposition phrase "by the resolve," which functions as an adjunct manner. In both sentences (a) and (b), the determination expressed by the noun "*resolve*" may suggest that the speaker is seeking to motivate the audience to support or extend their administration, a characteristic of political speech according to Nurlaila (2013).

2. Non-factive certainty nouns

(a) Once again, we are called to defend the safety of our people and the hopes of all mankind. And we accept this responsibility.

P. 53-State of the Union 28-Jan-03

(b) Third, we are extending the peace by supporting the rise of democracy, and the hope and progress that democracy brings, as the alternative to hatred and terror in the broader Middle East.

P. 12-The War Speech 12-Jul-04

President Bush uses the non-factive certainty noun "*hope*" in different ways in his speeches. In sentence (a), "*hope*" represents a personal conviction and optimistic expectations for the future, whereas in sentence (b), it conveys an aspirational connotation aimed at inspiring the public. These uses of "*hope*" as a non-factive certainty noun serve as rhetorical strategies to capture the audience's attention and influence their perception of the speaker's credibility and authority. According to Neüff (2018), political leaders may employ a combination of rhetorical devices to gain support for their administration, including religion, myth, fear, hope, good, evil, certainty, and ambiguity.

3. Tentative Cognition Nouns

(a) By passing the No Child Left Behind Act, you have made the expectation of literacy the law of our country.

P.37- State of the Union 20-Jan-04

(b) So I had a choice to make: Either take the word of a madman or defend America.

P.21-The War Speech 12-Jul-04

In sentence (a), President Bush uses the EMN 'expectation' to refer to what is likely to happen based on presumption or hypothesis. Varttala (2001) notes that Tentative Cognition Nouns do not convey absolute certainty, and in Bush's utterances, they are based on rationality, limited information, and subjective opinion, thus having an epistemic modality functions as likely or possible to occur. Syntactically, 'expectation' serves as the head of a direct object noun phrase. In sentence (b), the noun 'choice' is used to convey the epistemic modality of possibility when it means 'alternative.' It is employed rhetorically to contrast between two possible realities and suggests decisions in a broader sense. Political leaders use rhetorical techniques to make valid and logical proposals in their speeches (Beard 2000; Hoffman 2011; La Torre et al. 2020; Lakoff & Johnson 1980).

4. Tentative Likelihood Nouns

(a) America is the land of the second chance, and when the gates of the prison open, the path ahead should lead to a better life.

P.37- State of the Union 20-Jan-04

(b) America will seize every opportunity in pursuit of peace. And the end of the present regime in Iraq would create such an opportunity.

P.31-The War Speech -The Future of Iraq, 26-Feb-03

In his speeches, President Bush uses Tentative Likelihood Nouns to convey a sense of possibility while maintaining a level of uncertainty. The EMN "chance" in sentence (a) represents an opportunity and possibility, contrasting with "rejection" and "denouncement," and expressing hope for the future with an epistemic modality of probability. Similarly, in sentence (b), the noun "opportunity" has a future reference that suggests a possible state of affairs different from the current one. These linguistic devices reflect the rhetorical strategies employed by political leaders to persuade and inspire their audience while leaving room for interpretation and negotiation. The use of Tentative Likelihood Nouns allows political leaders to convey a sense of possibility and influence the audience's perception of their credibility and authority, indicating a less confident or certain proposition (Biber, 2006; Varttala, 2001; Vukovic, 2014).

To achieve this third research objective, the present study aimed to analyze the functions of EMNs in George W. Bush's speeches, with a specific focus on the Iraq War. The researcher identified and classified EMNs used in both State of the Union speeches and War speeches. The findings of the current study demonstrate that in State of the Union speeches, EMNs was utilized for 10 main functions: Anticipation was observed once, Assertion was observed 29 times, Assumption occurred once, Contemplation occurred twice, Conviction was observed nine times, Desire was observed five times, Likelihood/Possibility was observed five times, making decision was observed four times, Prediction occurred once, and Tricky/elusiveness was observed once. On the other hand, in the War speeches, seven functions were identified: 3 occurrences of Anticipation, 19 occurrences of assertion, once of conviction, twice of desire, 6 occurrences of likelihood/possibility, 5 functions of making decision, once of prediction, and once of Tricky/elusiveness. These results shed light on the diverse ways in which EMNs were employed by Bush in his speeches to convey a range of meanings and nuances as shown in table 5.4. The functions of EMNs in the two genres of Bush's speeches are exemplified below.

Table 5.4: Functions of EMNs in two genres

Function	G1	G2	Total
Anticipation	1	3	4
Assertion	29	19	48
Assumption	1	0	1
contemplation	2	0	2
Conviction	9	1	10
desire	5	2	7
likelihood/Possibility	5	6	11
Making decision	4	5	9
Prediction	1	0	1
Tricky/elusiveness	1	1	2
Total	58	37	95

(a): Anticipation in EMNs

And it is tempting to believe that the danger is behind us. That hope is understandable, comforting -- and false.

P.8 State of the Union 20-Jan-04

The initial role of Epistemic Modal Nouns (EMNs) is to create an anticipation of future events, as exemplified by the term 'hope' within EMNs. In example (a), Quirk et al. (1985) consider 'hope' as a personal belief that signifies optimism for the future. In political discourse, 'hope' serves as one of the persuasion techniques through which epistemic modality is employed. Varttala (2001) categorizes 'hope' as a Tentative Cognition Noun that articulates cognitive propositions, which implies that it represents an idea that is not categorical and is based on

logical reasoning, restricted knowledge, and a personal perspective. Using this type of terminology aims to persuade the audience that the speaker's proposal has universal applicability. There were only three instances of 'hope' in War speeches, compared to one instance in the State of the Union Speeches, as shown in Table 5.5.

Table Error! No text of specified style in document..5:Anticipation in EMNs

The State of the Union Speeches	N	The War Speeches	N
hope	1	hope	3
Total	1	Total	3

(b) Assertion in EMNs

This conviction leads us into the world to help the afflicted, defend the peace, and confound the designs of evil men.

P.34 State of the Union 28-Jan-03

Another function commonly utilized in political discourse is assertion, which involves politicians directing the general populace's attention to a particular issue by exposing its consequences, causes, and commitments to convince others (Marsili, 2019; Miller, 2016). For instance, in example (b), the EMN 'conviction' reflects the speaker's strong 'confidence and assertion' in their ability to assist others, demonstrating the outcome of asserting and persuading others. The noun 'conviction' indicates a certain belief that reveals the assertion function. It is noteworthy that EMNs indicating the assertion function frequently appear in Bush's speeches, among other functions in the two genres. Table 5.6 indicates that EMNs asserting beliefs were used 30 times in the State of the Union speeches and 19 times in War speeches.

Table 5.6:Assertion in EMNs

The State of the Union Speeches	N	The War Speeches	N
evidence	6	evidence	6
Confidence, resolve	4	commitment	4
fact	3	resolve, result	2
faith	2	confidence, fact, promises, reason, truth	1
conviction, decision, decisive declaration, truth determination, discoveries, knowledge, result, statements	1		
Total	29	Total	19

(c) Assumption in EMNs

He has shown utter contempt for the United Nations and for the opinion of the world instead. The 108 U.N. inspectors were sent to conduct -- were not sent to conduct a scavenger hunt for hidden materials across a country the size of California.

P.60 State of the Union 28-Jan-03

The function of assumption in EMNs is not prominent in the two genres and occurs only once in the State of the Union speeches, with no mention in the War speeches. According to Biber (2006), Varttala (2001), and Vukovic (2014), the EMN '*opinion*' belongs to the non-factive certainty nouns category (cf. Table 5.3). In this particular example (c), the pronoun associated with the word '*opinion*' conveys the function of assumption. The noun '*opinion*' refers to 'thoughts or beliefs', and the pronoun '*He*' refers to Saddam Hussein. Thus, it is an epistemic possibility noun, as thoughts and beliefs are subjective. In this context, the EMN '*opinion*' depicts Bush's statement as having the capacity to explain political situations in a way that forces opponents to submit. This approach is known as manipulation, with the sole objective of winning, regardless of the consequences (Riker, 1986).

(d) Contemplation in EMNs

Tonight, let us bring to all Americans who struggle with drug addiction this message of hope: The miracle of recovery is possible, and it could be you

P.3 State of the Union 28-Jan-03

Example (d) is not related to the Iraq War; however, it was found in the State of the Union speeches. The EMN '*hope*' belongs to non-factive epistemic nouns, and Biber (2006), Varttala (2001), and Vukovic (2014) suggest

that it serves the function of contemplation, in which the noun '*hope*' reflects the speaker's long-term thinking about something. Additionally, the use of EMN '*hope*' in this context may reveal the speaker's strong charisma and leadership, which are considered presidential attributes (Eshbaugh-Soha & Miles, 2011). It is utilized to express contemplation about something that has been long-awaited. The EMN '*hope*' appears only once in the war speeches (see Table 5.7).

Table 5.7:Contemplation in EMNs

The State of the Union Speeches	N	The War Speeches	N
hope	1		0
reckoning	1		
Total	2	Total	0

(e) Conviction in EMNS

September the 11th brought out the best in America and the best in this Congress. And I join the American people in applauding your unity and resolve.

P.27 State of the Union 29-Jan-02

The Epistemic Modal Noun (EMN) '*resolve*' is a strong expression of conviction for action and is categorized under the epistemic modality by Biber (2006), Varttala (2001), and Vukovic (2014). The use of '*resolve*' in this example highlights how Bush utilized the traumatic event of the 9/11 attacks to influence national policy and convince people. This reflects the speaker's subjective determination and their resolve to pursue a specific course of action, demonstrating the epistemic modality. Moreover, this sentence expresses a cause-and-effect relationship, indicating the function of persuasion. The total number of EMNs in the State of the Union speeches is seven occurrences, while in War speeches, it appears only once, as shown in Table 5.8

Table 5.8:Conviction in EMN

The State of the Union Speeches	N	The War Speeches	N
resolve	2	belief	1
commitment, conviction, confidence expectation, hope, pledge, right	1		
Total	9	Total	1

(f): Desire in EMNs

My hope is that all nations will heed our call and eliminate the terrorist parasites who threaten their countries and our own.

P.16 State of the Union 29-Jan-02

In accordance with Biber (2006), Varttala (2001), and Vukovic (2014), the noun '*hope*' (the subject of the first clause) denotes non-factivity and represents a personal belief in the possibility or likelihood of a particular event occurring. It serves the function of inspiring and motivating, utilizing the epistemic modality to express the possibility and probability of coming together to combat terrorism, thereby garnering support for the President's agenda. In example (f), the EMN '*hope*' reflects the characteristics of an ideal politician who is emotionally stable, conscientious, open, and trustworthy (Aichholzer & Willmann, 2020: 1). As demonstrated in Table 5.9, the State of the Union speeches comprise five instances of the EMN function of desire, whereas the War speeches have only two.

Table 5.9:Desire in EMNs

The State of the Union Speeches	N	The War Speeches	N
hope	5	hope	2
Total	5	Total	2

(g): Likelihood/possibility in EMNs

America is the land of a second chance, and when the gates of the prison open, the path ahead should lead to a better life.

P.64-State of the Union 28-Jan-03

The EMN "chance" suggests the likelihood or possibility of something occurring, according to Biber (2006). In this example, the function of EMN's "chance" is to inspire and motivate people by building rhetoric around the epistemic modality of expressing the possibility and likelihood of a better life. The noun "chance" represents an opportunity and possibility used to counter rejection and denouncement. The conveyed sense is hope for the future, reflecting the epistemic modality of likelihood. The strategy of using EMN's "chance" is to spark the audience's interest and to gain, provoke, persuade, and inspire the populace (Neale 1998). This function of likelihood/possibility in EMNs appears six times in the War speeches and five times in the State of the Union speeches, as shown in Table 5.1

Table 5.10: Likelihood/possibility in EMNs

The State of the Union Speeches	N	The War Speeches	N
Chance, possibility	2	Opportunity, chance	2
doubts	1	choice	1
Total	5	Total	5

(h): Making decision EMNs

The United States has no intention of determining the precise form of Iraq's new government. That choice belongs to the Iraqi people.

P.15-The War Speech 26-Feb-03

Example (h) features the EMN "choice", which implies the function of decision-making. Biber (2006), Varttala (2001), and Vukovic (2014) suggest that "choice" is a non-factive certainty noun. In this instance, the use of "choice" indicates that the United States will not interfere with the decisions of the new Iraqi government regarding its future. It also connotes that Iraq's new government will have the power to shape its own destiny. The EMN "choice" is utilized to gain the approval of the majority of Congress and the American people to carry out this challenging task (Shogan 2015). Therefore, the function of making a decision is conveyed by the EMN "choice", which is mentioned four times in the State of the Union speeches and five times in the War speeches, as presented in Table 5.11.

Table 5.11: Making Decisions in EMNs

The State of the Union Speeches	N	The War Speeches	N
Choice	4	Choice	5
Total	4	Total	5

(i) : Prediction EMNs

In all these days of promise and days of reckoning, we can be confident.

P.3-State of the Union 28-Jan-03

According to the analysis, the EMN "promise" was only found once in the State of the Union speeches, and it was not present in the War speeches. Its function is to express a commitment by showing confidence, persuading the public that what the speaker is saying is true. Additionally, it reflects the speaker's ability to create a clear and ideal image in people's minds when discussing a particular matter. This aligns with the findings of Ekawati (2019), who states that EMNs such as "promise" can be used to express predictions.

(j): Tricky/elusiveness in EMNs

Almost three months ago, the United Nations Security Council gave Saddam Hussein his final chance to disarm.

P.60-State of the Union 28-Jan-03

In this particular context, Bush utilizes the term 'chance' to illustrate the possible outcomes of disarming Saddam's weapons through diplomatic means. EMN's 'chance' is a persuasive technique that can sway the audience to believe that success or failure is equally likely in any given task. The term 'chance' refers to an 'opportunity,' indicating epistemic possibility (Biber, 2006; Varttala, 2001; Vukovic, 2014). Its function is to add a sense of ambiguity and elusiveness to the statement. The tricky or elusive function in EMNs is observed only once in the State of the Union speeches with EMN's 'chance' and once in the War speeches with EMNs' 'view'.

6. DISCUSSION

The study investigated the frequency, semantic meanings, and functions of EMNs in George W. Bush's political speeches. The findings reveal that EMNs are a crucial feature of political discourse, with a high frequency of 95 occurrences in both genres. The EMN noun "*evidence*" is the most commonly used modal noun to convey certainty, highlighting its significance in political discourse. However, certain EMN nouns such as "*hope*" were frequently used to suggest non-certainty in both genres, indicating the influence of context on the meaning of EMNs. The study identified four distinct semantic meanings conveyed by EMNs, including Factivity and Certainty, non-factive certainty nouns, Tentative Cognition Nouns, and Tentative Likelihood Nouns. Additionally, the study found that EMNs serve various functions in political discourse, such as assertion, anticipation, contemplation, conviction, desire, likelihood/possibility, making decisions, prediction, and tricky/elusiveness. The results demonstrate the strategic use of language in political discourse and emphasize the importance of understanding the nuanced meanings conveyed by EMNs.

7. CONCLUSION

The current study aimed to provide an analysis of the epistemic modal nouns that George W. Bush used in 2003 to persuade his audience to support the Iraq War. The study analyzed two genres of speeches, the State of the Union speeches and the War speeches, using Biber (2006), Varttala (2001), and Vukovic (2014) framework for analysis modality. The findings demonstrate that Bush relied heavily on 10 functions of epistemic modal nouns to persuade his audience, including anticipation, contemplation, conviction, desire, likelihood/possibility, making decisions, prediction, and tricky/elusiveness. The study reveals that these EMNs were used to convince rather than enlighten the target audience about Bush's actions and policies to oppose and demolish Saddam Hussein's government. Furthermore, the findings suggest that the use of these EMNs helped gain public agreement and assistance, assure the public, weaken the opponent's objections, and reflect a credible and respectable image. The study contributes to a better understanding of epistemic modal nouns in the literature on persuasion techniques based on actual data and provides new perspectives into the linguistic studies on political discourse. This work is expected to stimulate future research on epistemic modalities, as well as other linguistic concerns in political discourse.

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