Modalities as Persuasion Carriers in Political Discourse

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Abstract

This paper explores the persuasive weight of modalities as presidential meaning carriers in Egyptian political discourse. More specifically, it probes the extent to which modalities, which are linguistically manifested in obligation modals and need-statements, go beyond their ordinary semantic function of communicating obligation and commitment towards further persuasive functions that target the successful communication of particular presidential meanings in one of President El-Sisi's speeches. Two research questions are addressed in this study: first, to what extent are modalities employed as persuasion carriers in El-Sisi's speeches? Second, what are the presidential meanings carried by modalities in the selected data? The paper theoretically draws on various approaches to the concept of modality and its categorization. The study reveals two main findings: first, modalities in El-Sisi's speech go beyond their ordinary semantic function towards further pragmatic purposes that target the influence of the addressees' cognitive background in a way that serves to confirm specific existing beliefs or to change them totally to adopt the persuader's views. This, in turn, accentuates this paper's assumption that modalities are persuasion strategies with a speaker-benefit-oriented goal of communicating particular intended meanings. Second, in political speeches, modalities are often accompanied with other lexical and grammatical categories to intensify the persuasion process. The study recommends further discussions of grammatical categories other than modality, such as pronouns, to show their significance as persuasion strategies in political and critical discourse studies.

Keywords: modality, obligation, need-statements, persuasion, political discourse, pragmatics, presidential meanings, El-Sisi

1. Introduction

Linguistic studies conducted on the use of modality in political discourse have focused on the use of the term for specific semantic functions revolving around obligation, commitment, possibility, necessity, probability, etc. (e.g., Lyons, 1981, 1983; Palmer, 2001; Sinclair & Coulthard, 2002; Ryckebusch & Marcos, 2004; Martinez, 2011; Leech, 2014; Baicchi, 2015). Other studies have tackled the same linguistic phenomenon from different perspectives and in various discourse settings, by exploring the importance of the modality of certainty in political discourse (Simon-Vandenbergen, 1997), probing the extent to which modal verbs are employed as indicators of the cognitive context in discourse (van Dijk, 1997), investigating modalities as strategies of persuasion and manipulation in Canadian conservative discourse (Lillian, 2008), exploring the linguistic strategies employed to communicate both certainty and commitment, particularly strong epistemic modality in the parliamentary discourse in the United Kingdom (Vukovic, 2014), discussing the extent to which deontic and epistemic modals mirror power, ideology and manipulation in discourse (Yunisda & Firmansyah, 2019), and examining hedging communicated by modal auxiliary verbs in scientific discourse and the way gender differences play a crucial role in communicating the target meanings of this discourse genre (Schmauss & Kilian, 2023). However, the current study attempts to explore the extent to which modalities, whatever their linguistic realizations are, can go beyond their referential sense towards further pragmatic functions that target the influence of the addressees' cognitive background in a way that serves to confirm specific existing beliefs or to change them totally to adopt the persuader's views. This, in turn, accentuates this paper's assumption that modalities are persuasion strategies with a speaker-benefit-oriented goal of communicating particular intended meanings. In other words, this study attempts to prove that modality can strategically be used to communicate specific presidential meanings. Accordingly, the research gap identified in the current study manifests itself in the fact that much previous research on modality focused on the mere semantic function of the concept and neglected the pragmatic perspective that may be ascribed to its uses in discourse, particularly in light of specific contexts and within particular discourse settings.

According to Pardo (2001), persuasion occurs in interaction when language users manage to affect the beliefs, attitudes, and behavior of their recipients. For him, the term is fundamentally based on argumentation through the use of rhetoric. Persuasion is entirely based on the rhetorical dimension of power, that is, on the way of using language effectively to get others to adopt one's ideas and beliefs (Khafaga, 2023). It is therefore linked to some concepts, including power, ideology, discourse access, and authority (Fairclough, 1989). In consonance with Pardo (2001), Hirschberg (1999) argues that persuasion is entirely associated with rhetoric, which means the effective way of speaking or writing to communicate what the speaker or writer targets persuasively. Sometimes, persuasion is conveyed purely

through surface linguistic expressions, and at other times, it is communicated implicitly by targeting meanings that go beyond the mere linguistic structures (Khafaga, 2023). Further, Sornig (1989) postulates that the ultimate goal of persuaders is to make addressees give up their own viewpoints and embrace other attitudes that may run counter to the addressees' values and beliefs but, at the same time, fulfill the speaker's desires and expectations. In political discourse, persuasion has always been the core concern of politicians. They utilize various persuasive strategies not only to get their recipients to adopt what they want but also to control their cognitive unit of knowledge (Charteris-Black, 2005). Within the scope of politics, the process of influencing others' attitudes is intentionally based (Lu, 2021) in the sense that persuaders intentionally use various linguistic strategies and structures as well as different types of communication (verbal and nonverbal) in order to affect the attitudes and judgments of others in a way that serves their own goals.

The current study, therefore, attempts to extend the theoretical scope pertaining to the use of modality in discourse. This theoretical augmentation is expected to offer a further contribution to the linguistic studies conducted in the fields of both semantics and pragmatics. The paper also highlights the analytical integration between semantics and pragmatics in communicating meanings in discourse. The theoretical augmentation of the use of modality in this paper provides further insights into discourse studies in general and political discourse in particular. This paper further tries to investigate how particular presidential meanings are ingrained by connecting the denotative meanings explicitly conveyed by the semantic propositions of modalities (semantic) and the connotative meanings the same modalities communicate in context by an active process of cognitive inferences (pragmatic). This is conducted by demonstrating the extent to which obligation modality and need-statements are effective carriers of persuasion in the speech of President El-Sisi of Egypt.

1.1 Research Questions

The paper seeks to answer the following two research questions:

RQ1. To what extent are modalities employed as persuasion carriers in El-Sisi's selected speech?

RQ2. What are the presidential meanings communicated by modalities in the selected speech of El-Sisi?

The answer to these research questions serves to accentuate the core concern of the current study, namely, to explore the linguistic weight of modality as persuasion carriers in Egyptian political discourse and to test the hypothesis that modality, which is linguistically manifested in obligation modals and need-statements, goes beyond their ordinary semantic function of communicating obligation towards further pragmatic functions that target a successfully persuasive communication of particular presidential meanings.

1.2 Research Objectives

This study has three main objectives:

1. To explore the extent to which modalities are carriers of persuasion in political discourse.

2. To shed light on the persuasive weight modality has in political discourse and to show the integration between the different linguistic fields (i.e., semantics and pragmatics) in communicating particular meanings in political discourse.

3. To demonstrate the various presidential meanings communicated by modality in El-Sisi's selected speech.

The current study, therefore, offers a new perspective on the study of modality in political discourse. This is conducted by providing new analytical strands that serve to clarify the pragmatic functions of modality that go beyond their ordinary semantic functionality. The paper also functions to extend the theoretical framework pertaining to modality and its uses in discourse. Consequently, it can be said that this study is anticipated to contribute to the field of political discourse studies theoretically and analytically by providing a further pragmatic dimension to the study of modality in political discourse settings.

In the following sections, the paper reviews the theoretical background concerning modality and its uses in discourse in general and political discourse in particular. Section 3 provides the methodology of the study by presenting data collection and description, as well as the analytical procedures utilized in this paper. Section 4 offers the analysis of the selected data and demonstrates the results arrived at by the analysis. Section 5 is confined to the discussion of the results by comparing and contrasting them in terms of previous literature. Section 6 concludes this study and provides some relevant recommendations for further research.

2. Literature Review

The term 'modality' has been the subject of numerous linguists and philosophers (e.g., Palmer, 2001; Halliday, 2002; Cameron, 2007; Endley, 2010; von Fintel & Iatridou, 2017; Saito & Cook, 2018; Yunisda & Firmansyah, 2019; M ǵuez, 2022; Xu et al., 2022; Schmauss & Kilian, 2023, among others), whose contributions offer a variety of taxonomies, from the meaning of a single modal phrase to the contextual elements that contribute to its entire creation and meaning in discourse. According to Endley's (2010), modality describes the stance a speaker takes on a certain issue that is conveyed through speech. As a result, the speech pattern conveys the speaker's perspective on the subject matter. According to Cameron (2007, p. 75), modality is a tool that writers and speakers use to stake claims to knowledge since it enables them to express their level of commitment to various claim types, such as views, assertions, and guesses.

Some scholars investigate modality from a semantic point of view (e.g., Lyons, 1983; Fowler, 1985; Walton, 1991; Garcia, 2000; Palmer, 2001), contending that there are two kinds of modality: epistemic and deontic. In contrast to the latter, which includes the realms of duty, permission, and/or choice, the former pertains to the semantic connotations of necessity, possibility, and/or prediction. Crucially, much research focuses on the function of speakers during interaction by means of modality. According to Lyons (1983), this function is known as 'subjectivity,' meaning the speaker's commitment to himself or herself in the delivered type of discourse. Lyons (1983) maintains that

modality has various grammatical and semantic functions, including obligation, necessity, certitude, etc. These semantic functions are perceived as ordinary when modality is used superficially in discourse. In other discursive situations and contexts, speakers use modalities with the intention to convey further pragmatic purposes, which is analytically perceived by discourse analysts as ideological in nature; that is, modalities are intentionally utilized in discourse to communicate particular pragmatic functions rather than their semantically based ones.

According to Garcia (2000), there are two meanings associated with modality: the first is a systematically-based meaning, and the second is a pragmatically-based meaning, which encapsulates the reciprocal relationship between a modality's typical semantic function and the interpersonal role it might play in communication. The mutual relationship between the semantic and pragmatic functions proves useful in the interaction process since it aims to convey both the surface semantic meaning and the intended pragmatic meaning. Garcia (2000) maintains that the regularly systematic meaning ascribed to modality in discourse alludes to the overall meaning offered by a modal's many uses, along with the various meanings arrived at contextually and picked up by modals from their various discourse settings. The pragmatic meaning is mainly concerned with intentionality on the part of speakers, or, in other words, with the invisible meaning discourse participants derive from the linguistic and paralinguistic components of discourse (i.e., the verbal and the nonverbal), or the utterance's context. Here, it is worth mentioning that the contextual circumstances wherein discourse is delivered play a fundamental role in deriving and maintaining the pragmatic meanings pertaining to modality. Furthermore, the discourse participants and their political and ideological agendas are of great importance in ascribing specific meanings to modality in discourse, particularly in political settings.

Although modalities have a generic, semantically based meaning, Walton (1991) argues that they constantly require a contextual framework that expands and permits new meanings to their semantic and pragmatic nature. According to von Fintel and Iatridou (2017), this context-based perspective on modality implies that modals communicate different meanings that can be best perceived by observing the contextual environment in which they are employed. This diversity of meanings associated with modalities is significant because it supports their various categorizations both in grammar and in semantics. This, in turn, permits further dimensions of them, notably the cognitive dimension. Accordingly, the cognitive dimension of discourse and the cognitive background of discourse participants are active elements in modality interpretation. What is meant here by the cognitive background of discourse participants is their schemata, or unit of knowledge, that directs them towards a particular pragmatic interpretation of modality. Such a pragmatic interpretation is shaped by their beliefs, values, and ideologies, which are also shaped, acquired, and shared by the speech community where they live.

According to Halliday (2002), modality includes much more than only the use of overt modal auxiliaries like may, can, could, will, would, should, and must. Modality, on the other hand, refers to the writer's or speaker's attitude towards and/or confidence in the argument being made. Modality is largely found in the interpersonal component of Halliday's language, and decisions made in this component are unrelated to those made about transitivity in other components, such as the ideational component. According to Fowler (1985), modality can be expressed by using certain auxiliary verbs, adjectives, sentence adverbs, and specific nominalizations. Despite the fact that there are variances in the manner in which modalities are defined, linguists agree on a few major categories of modalities. For instance, Jesperson (1924) categorizes modalities broadly into two groups: those that contain an element of volition and those that do not. Georg von Wright, a philosopher, proposed four modes in 1951: existential (universal, existing, and empty), epistemic (proved, undetermined, and falsified), deontic (obligatory, permitted, and indifferent), and alethic (necessary, possible, contingent, and impossible). Palmer (2001) focuses on modalities that are essentially equivalent to Jesperson's two categories: deontic and epistemic. Palmer (2001), on the other hand, rearranges the modality categories so that propositional modality, which encompasses both epistemic and evidential modality and event modality, which contains both deontic and dynamic modality, make up the first division. Propositional modality is concerned with the speaker's attitude toward the proposition's truth value or factual status, whereas event modality relates to events that have not yet occurred but are only potential (Palmer, 2001).

Moreover, Fowler (1985) provides five modality types that characterize the attitudes that authors or speakers have toward the claims they make. The attitudes can be classified into six categories: obligation (where the speaker feels that another person must take a certain action), permission (where the speaker allows the addressee to do a certain action), desirability (where practical, moral, or aesthetic judgments are made), predictability (where the speaker expresses greater or less confidence in the veracity of the proposition), and validity (where the speaker expresses greater or less confidence in the veracity of the proposition). According to Fowler (1985), the use of language is a crucial part of the strategies employed to convey legitimate authority and make regular, self-assured claims of validity, predictability, and (un)desirability.

Discursively, for Palmer (2001), modality can be employed to maintain obligation, permission, desirability, etc. However, in particular contexts and settings, it can be utilized to convey specific pragmatic functions, such as persuasion. Modality, therefore, is a way of expressing thoughts and ideas in a persuasive manner. Such a persuasive function pertaining to modality serves to augment its theoretical and analytical functions in discourse. Modalities are perceived as persuasion strategies. Such a persuasive task pertaining to modality lies in their function as carriers or conduits of particular meanings. Once the various forms of modality influence a shift in the recipients' attitudes, then they can be claimed to have an ideological weight in discourse, which is manifested in their persuasive power as persuasion strategies.

In light of Ervin-Tripp's (1976) categorization of modality, it is divided into many types that are linguistically realized in various structures. In this study, two types of modality are the focus of the analysis. These are (i) the obligation modality and (ii) the need-statements. Both types are dexterously employed in this study as conduits of persuasion that convey specific pragmatic purposes.

These two types of modality are the core concern of the current study. They will be analytically discussed in terms of their ideological significance as persuasion strategies used to achieve particular pragmatic purposes in political discourse.

Previous research demonstrates that modality has been tackled from several angles, both inside and beyond the realm of political discourse. For instance, pragmatically, modality is discussed in relation to a number of concepts, including the way through which modality is used to mirror politeness and impoliteness in the communication process between discourse participants (Blum-Kulka, 1990). Modality is also investigated in terms of the notion of turn-taking sequences in discourse by demonstrating the extent to which discourse participants use the various forms of modality in a number of their conversational turns (Goldschmidt, 1998). Concerning power relations among conversationalists, modality is further discussed in terms of clarifying the extent to which power is reflected by the particular use of modals in discourse and the way power is practiced and maintained by means of modality (Blum-Kulka, 1990). Modality is further tackled with regard to the relationship between gender and power by showing the way gender influences the way of selecting and employing specific types of modals (Vine, 2014). In terms of directivity and within workplace settings, modality is also investigated in light of the reciprocal relationship held between the use of the different forms of modals and the concepts of power, gender, politeness, and identity. This is carried out by highlighting the directive mode utilized in workplace settings to maintain various pragmatic functions pertaining to modality (Saito & Cook, 2018), examining modality in classroom interactions to highlight different modality sequences used in faculty meetings at secondary schools in Japan (Naomi, 2018), and showing how different pronouns are used in directive forms in oral discourse during college laboratory sessions (Tapper, 1994).

Furthermore, other studies have focused on modality as one of several speech acts within the context of political discourse and according to the speech acts theory. For instance, examining the ways in which modality conveys impoliteness in parliamentary debates (Dontcheva-Navratilova, 2015), investigating the function of modality in voter-targeted public service advertisements (Mbisike, 2018), and examining the use of modality in political speeches (Dylgjeri, 2017). Despite the fact that these studies contributed to the pragmatic dimension of modality, they only focus on certain pragmatic concepts without showing the extent to which modality can be perceived as persuasion strategies in political discourse, which represents the main idea discussed in this paper.

Obviously, previous research has focused on the semantic use of modality in various discourse settings, with little attention paid to the pragmatic dimension of the term when employed in a particular political context. Arguing from this position, this study attempts to investigate the role of modality as a carrier of pragmatic meanings. More specifically, it focuses on the role of modality, linguistically realized by the obligation modals and the need-statements, as persuasion strategies in political discourse. This in turn emphasizes, as mentioned before, the ideological weight this grammatical category (i.e., modality) has in political discourse studies.

3. Methodology

3.1 Data

One lengthy speech by El-Sisi from his first term as president of Egypt serves as the basis for the data analysis in this paper. This speech was delivered on April 13, 2016 to the community representatives. The selected speech is 7996 words long, delivered in colloquial Arabic, and it can be downloaded from the Almenassa Media Center (https://almanassa.com/ar/story/1505).

The rationale for choosing this speech among El-Sisi's previous spontaneous speeches was made for three reasons. First, this speech is distinguished by a heavy use of modality. Second, the recipients of these presidential speeches are more able to internalize linguistic meanings because, according to Sager et al. (1980), in a discourse that employs various types of directives, including modality, the speaker is supposed to be superior to his or her addressees, which allows him or her to use modality in a persuasive way. Third, the speech may be seen as linguistic proof of Hyland's (2002) and Povoln ás (2018) claims that modality forces addressees to engage in cognitive activity. Such a cognitive activity directs them to adopt a specific pragmatic interpretation that, in most cases, serves the benefits of the speaker.

3.2 Procedure

Three analytical phases are adopted in this study. The first stage is intended to identify the various modalities used in the selected speech. In the second analytical stage, the various pragmatic purposes maintained by the modalities used in the speech are highlighted and linguistically investigated to show the way they are persuasively communicated to addressees. The third stage is dedicated to considering how these modalities are structured in a way that shows the ideological and political presuppositions, which in turn serves to activate the process of meaning communication in discourse. After implementing the three procedural stages, results are obtained and then discussed in detail in terms of their correlation and/or deviation from previous studies conducted on the same topic. Also, an appendix of the phonetic symbols used in the transliteration system of the Arabic text is provided at the end of this study.

4. Analysis and Results

This part presents an analysis of the two forms of modality employed in El-Sisi's speech. This part is divided into two subsections: the first offers a linguistic analysis of the obligation modalities, and the second provides analysis for need-statements. Before embarking on the analysis of modalities as carriers of persuasion in El-Sisi's speech, it is important to show the total occurrences of the two manifestations of modalities in the selected speech, as is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Types of modality and their total and indicative occurrences in El-Sisi's speech

Type of modality	Linguistic manifestation	Operator	Total occurrence	Indicative Occurrence
Deontic modality	Obligation modals	La:zim لازم [should]	22	22
	Need-statements	miħtagi:n محتاجين [we need]	10	10
Total	2		32	32

Table 1 clarifies that there are two linguistic realizations of deontic modality used in El-Sisi's speech: obligation modality manifested in the modality operator 'la:zim', the Arabic equivalent of the English 'should', and need-statements represented by the expression 'miħtagi:n', the Arabic equivalent of 'we need'. The former has a total frequency of 22, whereas the latter has a total frequency of 10. All occurrences of the two manifestations of deontic modality employed in the selected speech are indicative in their functions as persuasion carriers that serve to communicate specific presidential meanings.

4.1 Obligation Modalities as Persuasion Carriers

The Arabic colloquial modal لازم la:zim, which is the semantic counterpart of the English obligation modal 'should', is not explicitly used to communicate a meaning of obligation and commitment on the part of addressees, as is the case for its ordinary semantic function. However, the modal لازم la:zim is employed as a persuasion carrier that targets the communication of specific presidential meanings. This pragmatic augmentation of the Arabic obligation modal لازم la:zim serves to create a cognitive activity that results in a thorough comprehension of the conveyed arguments in a certain way that aims at achieving persuasion on the part of the addressees. The Arabic obligation modal is linguistically structured in El-Sisi's speech in two forms: the first is realized through a dexterous combination with the second-person plural انتوا ?intu [you], and the second is manifested in a structure comprising a combination of both the modal and the first-person plural احنا ?iħna [we]. Consider the following extracts:

Extracts (1)

(1a)

(لازم نكون فاكرين ومش هننسى إن فكرة المؤامرة على الأقل من أهل الشر... ولازم إحنا نبقى منتبهين ليها.)

[We should remember and we will never forget that the notion of conspiracy exists, at least from the villains. We should pay our attention to this.]

(1b)

(لازم نتحمل تكلفة هذه المناعة. لازم نعرف كدا إنه مش كل حاجة بنتمناها بنعرف نعملها.)

[We should afford the cost of this immunity. We should know that not all that we wish can be realized.]

(1c)

(لازم نحافظ على النسيج دا.)

[We should keep and maintain this unity.]

As mentioned before, the use of the Arabic obligation modal لازم la:zim [should] in the above extracts functions to stimulate a cognitive activity on the part of El-Sisi's addressees rather than to create a commitment towards an action in the future. El-Sisi focuses on two meanings in the above extracts: the challenges that face Egypt due to the conspiracies, from his point of view, made against Egypt by the Muslim Brotherhood movement, and the importance of keeping the unity of all the Egyptians against such conspiracies, whatever this costs them. Here, it is obvious that what the president intends to communicate is not to tell them that there is an inside enemy plotting against the country and tending to destroy the country. On the contrary, El-Sisi attempts to communicate the idea of a competent president who knows what is going on around Egypt, and he also tries to persuade them that any hardships the Egyptians face should be endured in order to face the difficulties that Egypt faces after the 30th June revolution. This, of course, will be achieved in two ways: first, as long as he is still president; and, second, no objections to any of the government decisions in order to keep and maintain Egypt's unity.

Crucially, the employment of the obligation modal لازم la:zim is very significant as a conduit that communicates a state of persuasion on the part of addresses. Such a process of persuasion is heightened by associating the modal with verbs that carry the meaning of awareness and understanding, together with the activation of the deictic roles of personal pronouns attached to the whole linguistic structure. Thus, El-Sisi's employment of نعرف ni3raf [we know], فاكرين fakri:n [we remember], نتحمل nitħammil [we endure], منتبهين muntabihi:n [we are aware of], and نحافظ niħā:fiz [we keep] with the obligation modal لازم la:zim [should] and the first-person plural pronoun 'we', which is communicated latently in the verbs, serves to convey a dexterous process of semantic relativity, in which various grammatical and lexical categories are incorporated into one linguistic structure to communicate a particular presidential meaning: presidential competence of El-Sisi. This semantic relativity also functions to activate the process of persuasive inculcation related to the intended meaning, which can be obviously noticed from the semantic propositions communicated by the verbs 'know' in نعرف ni3raf" [we know], of 'remember' in فاكرين fakri:n [we remember], and of 'understand' in منتبهين muntabihi:n [we are aware of], which, in turn, are discursively perceived as rudiments of an instruction discourse, whose fundamental goal is to inculcate particular meanings persuasively.

Macro-propositionally, there are three main meanings El-Sisi tries to communicate to his addressees by means of the obligation modality. First, in (1a), the president attempts to communicate that there are constant plots against Egypt, and these conspiracies are intentionally made by what he describes as أهل الشر ?ahl iʃ-ʃar [the villains]. Crucially, El-Sisi's intended meaning carries an implicit reference to the Muslim Brotherhood movement, whose members, from his point of view, are always conspiring and scheming against Egypt and its security. El-Sisi's expression و مش هننسى wi miʃ haninsa [and we will never forget] is an attempt to take his addressees back to the revolutionary events of Rabia, which in turn serves to summon a cognitive image of what happened at that time. Second, in (1b), El-Sisi tries to persuade his addressees that the difficulties his presidency will bring about should not be underestimated by the Egyptian people, who should also accept that not all of their hopes will come true. El-Sisi makes issues public in an attempt to dissociate himself from criticism. Third, in (1c), it is implied that Egypt and, naturally, the president do not endure any more demonstrations or revolutions, and that Egyptians should uphold their unity against any attempt that would weaken them. Significantly, the three macro-propositions intended by El-Sisi are motivated linguistically by the obligation modality he uses, the employment of the inclusive 'we', and the selection of specific lexical and grammatical words associated with the whole expression targeting the persuasion of his audiences.

Further, the obligation modal لازم la:zim [should] is utilized in combination with the second-person plural pronoun 'you' to persuade his audience of further presidential meanings, as is demonstrated in the following extracts:

Extracts (2)

(2a)

(لازم تكونوا عارفين إن مش ممكن الناس دي تيجي هنا إلا لما يتوفر حاجتين.. أمن واستقرار.. ثم بنية أساسية متطورة.)

  [You should know that it is difficult for those persons to come to Egypt unless there are two things: security and stability, and an advanced basic infrastructure.]

(2b)

(دا تخطيط. صدقوني.. دا تخطيط.. وأدواته جوه مصر.. و بره مصر، جوه مصر و بره مصر..لازم تكونوا فاهمين كدا.)

  [Believe me; this is a plan whose tools are inside and outside Egypt. You should understand this.]

The same obligation modal لازم la:zim [should] is skillfully employed in (2a) and (2b) in combination with the second-person plural pronoun 'you' to persuade addressees of two basic meanings: the first is that foreign investment necessitates a high degree of security and stability, which is guaranteed by El-Sisi's presidency. Once more, the president tries to persuade his audience and, of course, all Egyptians that the infrastructure projects he is establishing throughout Egypt are a prerequisite for attracting successful foreign investment. The second meaning is that there are inside and outside enemies who are plotting against Egypt. Here, El-Sisi's intended meanings in (2a) and (2b) render him a competent and knowledgeable president, respectively. Such presidential meanings are persuasively targeted by means of a directive mode manifested in the latent meaning of 'be' communicated by the expressions لازم تكونوا عارفين la:zim tuku:nu 3arfi:n [you should know] in (2a) and لازم تكونوا فاهمين la:zim tuku:nu fahmi:n [you should understand] in (2b). Accordingly, associating the second-person plural pronoun 'you' with the obligation modal has two pragmatic purposes: first, El-Sisi is competent and knowledgeable enough to lead Egypt in this period of time. Second, Egyptians should support him in front of the inside and outside enemies of Egypt. Furthermore, the dexterous employment of the request صدقوني Sadda?u:ni [believe me] and the repetitive expression أدواته جوه مصر وبره مصر ?adawatuh guwwa maSr wi barra maSr [whose tools are inside and outside Egypt] indirectly communicate an image of a president who is sufficiently informed and competent to reveal any intrigues inside and outside of Egypt.

4.2 Need-Statements as Persuasion Carriers

Another way of using modality as a persuasion carrier in El-Sisi's speech is linguistically manifestated in need-statements. Consider the following extracts:

Extracts (3)

(3a)

(إحنا محتاجين دايما نحافظ على الكتلة ديت.. كتلة المصريين.)

  [We always need to keep this unity; the Egyptian unity.]

(3b)

(دايما محتاجين نفتكر الأحداث بتاعة تلاتين يونيو.)

  [We always need to remember the events of June 30th.]

(3c)

(ومحتاجين دايمًا نقف ورا الجيش والشرطة في الحرب دي.)

  [We always need to support the army and the police in this war [against terrorism]

The above extracts show the use of need-statement, which is linguistically realized by the structure محتاجين miħtagi:n [we need]. As is noticed, the first-person plural pronoun احنا ?iħna [we] and the verb يحتاج yaħta:g [need] form the structure of need-statements in the speech. The inclusive 'we' is employed to include both speakers and addressees and serves to communicate the meaning of the in-group

as opposed to the out-group discourse (Fairclough, 1989; van Dijk, 2014). Such an atmosphere of inclusion and solidarity, which is communicated by احنا محتاجين ?iħna miħtagi:n [we need], functions to convey further pragmatic meanings, including the importance of upholding Egyptians' unity in (3a), of recalling the events of the 30ᵗʰ June revolution in (3b), and of supporting both the army and the police in (3c). Crucially, the persuasion process is further supported by other linguistic components manifested in the employment of the frequency adverb دايما dayman [always], which modifies the need-statements in the above three extracts. Furthermore, El-Sisi attempts to define the political climate in Egypt in (3c) by using the lexeme الحرب il-ħarb [war] in an attempt to extend the image of a military president who stands as a gallant warrior on the battlefield and the idea that Egypt confronts numerous difficulties after the 30ᵗʰ June revolution. In all their uses, need-statements are intended to be persuasion carriers, not obligation motivators. They are not intended to create a sense of commitment on the part of discourse recipients but to convey particular presidential meanings in a persuasive way.

In the same vein, need-statements are also used as persuasion carriers when they are employed in combination with the second-person plural pronoun أنتوا ?intu [you], as is shown in the following extracts:

Extracts (4)

(4a)

(طمس الحقيقة وتزييف الواقع، ودا اللي إنتو محتاجين يا مصريين دايما تنتبهوا ليه.)

[Blurring the truth and falsifying reality are the two things you, Egyptians, need to be always attentive to.]

(4b)

(ناس كتير مش كويسين .. محتاجين إن هم يتوقفوا ويشوفوا هم فين من بلدهم.)

[There are many bad people. They need to stop and rethink their relation with their country.]

In the above extracts, El-Sisi combines the need-statements with the second-person plural pronoun انتوا ?intu [you] in (4a) and with the third-person plural pronoun هم humma [they] in (4b) to communicate the presidential meanings he attempts to persuade his addressees with. The need-statements are not intended to convey obligation or commitment to a future action, but they are intended for further persuasive goals. The president tries to attract his addressees' attention and motivate their cognitive unit of knowledge in order not to be deceived by the lies launched every now and then. The message being sent to the recipients is that Egyptians shouldn't believe any material that is prejudiced against their nation or president.

Likewise, the third group addressed in (4b) by the third-person plural pronoun and the need-statement in محتاجين ان هم يتوقفوا miħtagi:n ?in humma yatwaqafu: [they need to stop] functions to direct the addressees' cognitive wheel towards the meaning of the conspiratorial enemy who always plots against Egypt (the Muslim Brotherhood). Crucially, bringing to mind the concept of the outside enemy is one of the fundamental ploys of manipulation used by politicians (Khafaga, 2017). Here, an additional implicit meaning is intended to be ingrained. It refers to a president who is level-headed, tolerant, and willing to lend a hand to those in need. The usage of the euphemistic expression مش كويسين mish kuwayysi:n (not good) rather than سيئين sayy?i:n (bad) to characterize people scheming against Egypt heightens the image of a tolerant climate linguistically.

Table 2. Modality, their linguistic manifestations, and targeted meanings in El-Sisi's speech

Persuasion strategy	Linguistic manifestation	Modality operator	Pronominal variation		Freq	Total	Targeted meaning
Modality	Obligation modals	la:zim لازم	?intu 'you'	overt	13	22	El-Sisi's competency as a president
				latent	0		
			?iħna 'we'	overt	2		
				latent	5		
			humma 'they'	overt	2		
				latent	0		
	Need-statements	miħtagi:n محتاجين	?iħna 'we'	overt	4	10	
				latent	2		
			?intu 'you'	overt	3		
				latent	0		
			humma 'they'	overt	1		
				latent	0		

Table 2 demonstrates how the obligation modal لازم la:zim [should], with a total frequency of 22, is used in accompany with three pronouns: انتوا ?intu [you], with a frequency of 13; احنا ?iħna [we], with a frequency of 7; and هم humma [they], with a frequency of 2. The table also shows how need-statements, represented by the informal Arabic obligation phrase محتاجين miħtagi:n [we need], are employed as persuasion carriers in El-Sisi's discourse, with a total frequency of 10. The table further displays that the pronouns used in combination with modality have been manifested in two ways: covertly and latently. In both cases, the whole structure is intended not only to create a sense of obligation and commitment but also to motivate a cognitive activity that serves to direct addressees towards particular meanings targeted by El-Sisi. Significantly, using more than one deictic role through the employment of various pronouns indicates that El-Sisi attempts to convey his intended meanings through various pronominal variations, which aims to highlight intentionality beyond meaning communication.

Crucially, associating the various pronoun forms with the various forms of modalities in the selected speech correlates with what von Fintel (2006) refers to as the interaction of various compositional meanings in discourse, which, in turn, indicates that modalities interact with other linguistic expressions in the same construction, contextually and compositionally, to delineate a comprehensive interpretative picture of the whole discourse.

5. Discussion

Based on the analysis of the selected data, it is obviously noticed that language is a powerful tool in the hands of politicians to communicate their intended purposes beyond their interactions with the public. However, to influence their public effectively, language users in general and politicians in particular have to employ language persuasively. Such a persuasive employment of language necessitates a dexterous use of rhetorical power, which, in turn, can be realized by going beyond the ordinary perceived usage of the linguistic expression towards further intended meanings. This is exactly what is done in El-Sisi's speech. The president skillfully uses modality not to communicate obligation and/or commitment but to persuade. Such a pragmatic extension to the functions of modality is a clear example of the persuasive use of the rhetorical perspective of power in political discourse. Indicatively, subjugating language to convey the targeted purposes of its users is the ultimate goal of persuaders. In this regard, this paper goes in the same direction with previous studies (e.g., Hirschberg, 1999; Charteris-Black, 2005; Lillian, 2008; Povolná 2018; Lu, 2021; Khafaga, 2021, 2023), which accentuate the fact that persuasion is entirely based on the rhetorical use of the word and basically target the influence of others' attitudes and beliefs to think and/or act in a way that aligns with the persuader's desires.

The analysis clarifies that modality, which is manifested in the obligation modals and the need-statements, is not employed to communicate obligation or express commitment in discourse; however, modality, irrespective of its linguistic realizations, is utilized as a persuasion strategy. Contrary to miscellaneous studies on modality (e.g., Lyons, 1977, 1983; Palmer, 2001; Sinclair & Coulthard, 2002; Ryckebusch & Marcos, 2004; Martinez, 2011; Leech, 2014; Baicchi, 2015), which perceive modality as a type of directives and contend that the primary function of modality is to initiate a specific type of obligation or responsibility on the part of addresses to implement a particular action, the current study shows that modality stimulates a cognitive activity in listeners instead of creating an obligation or commitment. They are employed to communicate persuasion; that is, El-Sisi is driven by his desire for his intended meanings to be readily received by his addressees to engage in this cognitive activity. He uses these modality expressions to persuade his addressees not to guarantee a commitment in the future on their part. This goes in conformity with Khafaga's (2023) assumption that lexical and grammatical categories, under specific contexts, go beyond their ordinary semantic function towards further pragmatic meanings. As such, El-Sisi deliberately uses the obligation modality and the need-statements as persuasion conduits that communicate particular political meanings with the aim of influencing an attitudinal and behavioral shift on the part of the public that permits the acceptance and adoption of the wished-for presidential meanings in a particular manner. Such a cognitive activity, which triggers a persuasive effect on the part of recipients, serves to augment Hyland's (2002) contention in terms of his consideration of the degree of imposition in the use of modality as one fundamental feature activated by the cognitive unit of discourse recipients. Modality, in light of this paper, not only creates a commitment or obligation towards a specific response but also instigates a type of persuasion motivated by a specific cognitive activity that is also activated by means of the linguistic expressions used in discourse.

The analysis shows that the obligation modality represented by the modal لازم la:zim, the semantic equivalent of 'should' in English, is often accompanied with the verbs, such as نعرف ni3raf, فاكرين fakri:n, and منتبهين muntabihi:n that carry the semantic propositions of 'know', 'remember', and 'understand', to create a kind of semantic relativity between the obligation modality employed and the intended presidential meanings. Such semantic relativity is considered a prerequisite of an educational type of discourse, wherein the instructional injection of particular presidential meanings is targeted. The connection between the obligation modals used in El-Sisi's speech and the above verbs that carry the semantics of intelligibility further functions to instigate a mental activity that guides the recipients to organize the information stored in their knowledge unit or schemata to perceive discourse in a specifiable way. This cognitive perception correlates with van Dijk's (2014) argument that cognition acts as a mediator between the micro and macro structures of discourse. Crucially, the cognitive model of discourse proposed by van Dijk (1997) offers an interdisciplinary method for studying discourse that is only focused on achieving particular socio-political objectives. This multidisciplinary approach has also been accentuated by van Leeuwen's (2009) assumption that discourses reframe social actions in new contexts, which further sheds light on the significance of both the political, social, and cognitive analyses in discourse. These social activities have a cognitive underpinning that influences how they are portrayed in language. Accordingly, El-Sisi's use of the obligation modals can be said to target a cognitive shift in his addressees' schemata to persuasively accept what he wants to communicate.

The analysis further demonstrates that El-Sisi has skillfully employed two different types of pronouns with the two linguistic manifestations of modality, i.e., obligation modality and need-statements. It is analytically clarified that the second-person plural pronoun 'you' is most frequently used with the obligation modal لازم la:zim (should), whereas the first-person plural pronoun 'we' is most frequently utilized with need-statement expressions. In both modality forms, the third-person plural 'they' is the least frequent one. The analysis shows that the use of these pronouns, either explicitly (overtly) or implicitly (latently), has ideological weight in El-Sisi's speech. This ideological weight is emphasized by Fairclough (1989), who argues that modality is one way of communicating ideology in discourse, and is also highlighted by Fowler's (1991) contention that language is an ideologically charged medium of expression. Further, the schematic connection between pronouns and modality in El-Sisi's speech shows the extent to which politicians use and articulate the pronouns to communicate various socio-political ideologies. Their ultimate goal in this case is to achieve persuasion on the part of their addressees. Consequently, selecting

specific pronouns and combining them with the two modality forms employed by El-Sisi functions to heighten the developmental progression of persuasion and facilitate it. This harmonious connection between two types of function words correlates with Khafaga's (2021) assumption that function words are ideology-loaded means of persuasion and also provide language users with affordances of meaning. Such selection and combination of the various linguistic devices accentuates Jakobson's (1997) argument that speakers usually tend to select and combine particular words in order to communicate their intended meanings, and it also correlates with Khafaga's (2023) contention that lexis are strategically employed in political discourse to convey precise political meanings. In the context of this study, El-Sisi combines particular pronouns and modals that are pragmatically cognate to persuade his addressees of the macro-proposition targeted by his speech: his presidential competency.

The analysis also highlights the dexterous connection between the modality expressions used by El-Sisi and the macro-propositions communicated in the speech. The obligation modals in extracts (1-2) are used to address specific macro-propositions, including the political, social, and economic challenges following the 30th June revolution and the conspiracy of the Muslim Brotherhood against Egypt, which functions to persuade the audience with the meaning of a well-informed leader, who is competent enough to lead the country. In the same vein, need-statements in extracts (3-4) are employed to convey further meanings, including the importance of keeping the unity of the Egyptians and the urgent need to incorporate efforts to help the police and the army sustain stability and security and to fight the evil forces, i.e., Muslim brotherhood members. Such a connection between the global and local propositions of discourse to communicate particular meanings reconciles with van Dijk's (1997) contention that the meanings intended to be communicated in discourse affect the way certain linguistic structures are selected for the process of meaning communication. To clarify, the macro-propositions in El-Sisi's speech have an impact on the selection and combination of the words that serve to convey such global meanings of discourse, which further reconciles with Khafaga's (2022) argument that micro-pragmatics and macro-pragmatics of discourse are incorporated to shape its final pragmatic interpretation. As such, for Levelt (1982), a reciprocal connection is achieved between mental images and word sequences in discourse, which also serves to stimulate the cognitive potential of recipients towards the ideas presented. According to van Dijk (1997, p. 25), this semantic interconnectivity is perceived as a particular form of contextualized ideological control over the meaning of text and speech, which is typified by a contextual monitoring of the discourse textual structures. Consequently, both the obligation modality and the need-statements are skillfully employed to communicate specific presidential meanings in a persuasive way. El-Sisi's premeditated selection of modality and the semantic combination created by the macro-propositions and activated by a skillful process of contextualization serve to shift the directive mode inherited in modality towards a persuasive mode targeting the successful communication of particular presidential meanings.

6. Conclusion

This paper provided a linguistic analysis of the use of modalities as carriers of persuasion in one of President El-Sisi's political speeches by adopting a pragmatic approach to the analysis of the selected data. The study investigated two types of modality that are employed in the selected data: obligation modality and need-statements. It is demonstrated that the two types of modality go beyond their ordinary grammatical function of commitment and obligation towards further pragmatic meanings targeting the persuasion of the addressees. The paper clarified that El-Sisi intentionally employed modality to communicate particular presidential meanings that revolve around one macro-pragmatic meaning: El-Sisi's competence as a president. This study also demonstrated that El-Sisi's employment of modality, irrespective of its linguistic manifestations, serves to undermine the pragmatic competence of the speaker. The analysis showed that the two types of modality target specific pragmatic goals in addition to their semantically-based roles. This is done skillfully through the instillation of meaning. Through a refined process of selection and combination, El-Sisi's presidential purposes have been contextually connected to the primary global meanings that make up the entire propositional image of the speech in order to emphasize his intended meanings. Thus, it may be claimed that El-Sisi's modalities cognitively go beyond their semantic functions towards particular pragmatic meanings. The analysis further clarified that modalities are not only intended to require physical or verbal reaction on the part of addressees; however, they are used to convey particular presidential meanings that lie beyond the surface semantic meaning communicated by the linguistic expressions. Modalities, within specific contexts, are strategically employed to influence a cognitive shift in attitudes. As such, modalities are employed as persuasion strategies that target a shift in the addressees' attitudinal behavior, which in turn serves as a speaker-benefit-oriented goal. Crucially, the new perspective pertaining to modality and its uses in discourse presented in this study serves to augment the theoretical and analytical frameworks pertaining to modality by offering new horizons to the use of the concept for further pragmatic purposes beyond its semantic functions.

Finally, this paper recommends further studies of other grammatical categories, such as pronouns, that are used in political discourse to show the extent to which these functional grammatical categories communicate further pragmatic purposes than their ordinary grammatical functions in discourse. Also recommended is an extensive study to compare the different linguistic ways of persuasion that can be communicated by lexical categories and grammatical categories to show which operates effectively as persuasion carriers in political discourse. In EFL settings, a further recommendation is to study modality as meaning inculcation strategies in classroom discourse, which in turn serves to show the extent to which modality is effective in obtaining better learning outcomes, particularly in terms of learners' self-efficacy and motivation.

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Appendix

List of the phonetic symbols used in the study and their description

1. Consonants:

Symbol	Phonetic description
b	voiced bilabial stop
d	voiced dental stop
D	voiced (emphatic) dental stop
t	voiceless dental stop
T	voiceless (emphatic) dental stop
k	voiceless velar stop
g	voiced velar stop
q	voiceless uvular stop
?	voiceless glottal stop
f	voiceless labiodental fricative
s	voiceless dental fricative
S	voiceless (emphatic) dental fricative
z	voiced dental fricative
∫	voiceless palatal fricative
3	voiced pharyngeal fricative
h	voiceless glottal fricative
ħ	voiceless pharyngeal fricative
x	voiceless uvular fricative
ɣ	voiced velar fricative
m	voiced bilabial nasal
n	voiced alveo-dental nasal
r	voiced alveolar trill
l	voiced alveolar lateral
y	voiced palatal glide
w	voiced bilabial glide

2. Vowels:

Symbol	Phonetic description
i	close-front short unrounded vowel
i:	close-front long unrounded vowel
a	half-front open short unrounded vowel
a:	front-open long slightly rounded vowel
ā:	back-open long unrounded vowel
u	half-close back short rounded vowel
u:	close-back long rounded vowel
ei	open-mid front to close-high front unrounded vowel