CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.0   INTRODUCTION

The use of epistemic linguistic devices in the interview of the five politicians indicate low levels of commitment from them regarding issues they discussed which, in this meeting is the war in Iraq America is fighting. The speakers have used strategies which competent users of the English Language tend to use to beat round the bush and avoid making truthful comments which might affect them. Each speaker was annotated or marked with a symbol. The speakers in the interview are identified by initials and are listed below.

- G or Sen. Graham
- C or Mr. J. Carville
- N or Mr. Newt Gingrich
- P or Mr. P. Buchanan
- M or Ms. Matalin

5.1   REVIEW OF RESEARCH

The instrument used in this research is the categorization model designed by Victoria Rubin, Liddy E. and Noriko Kando in 2006 which created an organized space and a list of criterion for a grammatical analysis of the discourse. The frequency count of auxiliary modals and lexical predicates were done using the Compleat Lexical Tutor which is a language analysis software. Based on the frequency count, a table of the modals used according to their frequency was tabulated. The sample was divided into sentences which showed notions of modality.

5.2 Conclusions derived from analysing speaker 1 to 5

Table 5.1 is derived by doing a frequency count of auxiliary modals on the transcript of the five speakers using the language software Compleat Lexical Tutor which carried out a concordance exercise on the target output.

Table 5.1: Frequency of modals found in interview excerpts

	can	could	may	might	shall	should	will	would	must	Total
Buchanan (B)	2	3	0	0	0	2	1	6	0	14
Gingrich (N)	2	0	0	1	0	2	3	7	0	15
Matalin (M)	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	4
Graham (G)	2	1	0	0	0	4	3	6	0	16
Carville (C)	5	1	0	0	0	0	2	4	0	12
Total	12	5	0	1	0	8	10	25	0	61

Table 5.2 was derived after a frequency count was done on the number of lexical

predicates found in the transcripts of all the speakers.

Lexical Predicates used	Number
I Think	35
I believe	5
I say	1
I report	1
Certainly	2
Absolutely	1
The fact is	2
I assume	1
Possibly	2
Probably	2
Well	2
apparently	1
Sure	1
Frankly	1
Total	57

Table 5.2 Frequency of lexical predicates found in interview excerpts

Table 5.3, Table 5.4, Table 5.5 and Table 5.6 below show frequency counts of lexical predicates in the discourse transcripts of the speakers. However only four speakers are shown as the fifth speaker did not use any lexical predicates.

I think	I reported
4	1

Table 5.3: Frequency count of lexical predicates used in discourse text for speaker G.

I think	I assume	I expect	well	sure	probably	possibly
17	1	1	1	1	2	2

Table 5.4 Frequency count of auxiliary modals in speaker C 's transcript

I think	I said	I believe	I think absolutely
9	1	1	1

Table 5.5 Frequency count of lexical predicates used in discourse text for speaker N

I think	I believe	certainly
5	4	2

Table 5.6: Frequency count of lexical predicates used in discourse text for speaker P

Based on Table 5.1, 61 auxiliary modals have been used in the interview of which 25 were **would**, 1 was **might**, 5 were **could** and 8 were **should** indicating utterances of low certainty. Table 5.2 shows that the speakers have also used the lexical predicate **I think** which acts as an epistemic device 35 times indicating they were not committed to their utterances or truth propositions. Karkkainen says that the lexical predicate "**I think**" is used as a politeness strategy, a face saving strategy

or a persuasion and manipulation strategy. Chafe says that when **"I think"** is used the utterance becomes hypothetical which in this research is considered low certainty or low factuality. There are discrepancies which vary according to different linguists and this is what Palmer (1990) called vagueness in modality.

Based on the frequency count done on the interview, it is discovered that G used 16 modal auxiliaries and four lexical predicates in his utterances throughout the interview. Refer to Table 5.1.Out of the 16 modal auxiliaries, he used the dynamic modal auxiliary **can** two times and the modal **will** of volition once. G used very low certainty modals **could** and **would** in seven instances. This indicates that G is uncertain or not willing to commit to the expressions of his truth propositions.

G also used the modal of duty and obligation four times, indicating he has the authority to command but does not demand full subservience, because **should** is not a mandatory modal signal. G used the lexical predicate **I think** in four instances to indicate uncertainty. However G used **I reported** once and this is indicative of a commitment to the truth proposition. Refer to Table 5.3 above.

C used 12 auxiliary modals (Refer to Table 5.1) and 26 lexical predicates. (Refer to Table 5.4). Of the 26 lexical predicates, C used 19 expressions of uncertainty. So C has 31 instances of modality in his utterances. C used the modal auxiliary **can** five times which is more than any of the other speakers indicating he had the authority to express his ability in issuing orders or carrying out an operation.

However C also used the highest number of lexical predicates, one of which, the lexical predicate **I think**, was used 17 times throughout his utterances. **I assume** and **well** were used once and these are also expressions of uncertainty but known as hedges or mitigating devices. C also uses 5 lexical predicates of high certainty indicating his commitment to his utterances and they are **probably, possibly** and **I expect.**

The frequency of modal auxiliaries used by N is 15.Refer to Table 5.1 above .N uses the modal of low certainty **would** seven times and this is about fifty percent of the total number of modals used in his text. **M**i**ght,** is a low certainty modal used only once by N and no one else had used this modal. The modal of obligation and duty **should** is used only two times indicating the speaker's authority to command but not at a mandatory level. Speaker N uses 12 lexical predicates of which 9 are of the **I think** type , 1 **I think absolutely** type , **I said** and **I believe** once each. (Refer to Table 5.5)

B uses 14 auxiliary modals and nine of them are modals of low certainty which are **could** and **would**.(Refer to Table 5.1) This indicates a low level of commitment by the speaker towards his utterances. B only uses the modal auxiliary **will** once and dynamic modal **can** two times. B uses 6 lexical predicates of high certainty and commitment by beginning his utterances with **certainly** and **I believe**. He uses the lexical predicate **I think** five times to indicate low certainty. (Refer to Table 5.6)

M has used the least number of modals and no lexical predicate indicating that M was being factual about actualities. She also used very rarely modal auxiliaries in her speech indicating that she was committed to every word she said**. M** used the modal **"will"** on a volitional basis indicating her knowledge and authority on the issue. M used 2 very low certainty modals of which one is used with the conditional "if", making the whole utterance unreal. M refers to her superiors and their ability when the dynamic modal **can** is used to express a situation. However M's discourse was very short and this may be due to the fact she is the spouse of C and had refrained to comment as much as her husband or any of the other speakers.

5.3 ISSUES PERTAINING TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Three research questions were identified to address the use of epistemic

modality in utterances at sentence level in an interview.

5.3.1 How many epistemic modals are used in a text where several people hold the floor in a forum?

According to the results in Table 5.1, a total of 57 lexical predicates and 36 modals were used. This indicated 95 modal expressions in a text where several people held the floor in a forum.

Auxiliary modals which were epistemic in nature were not common in all the texts of the five speakers, however lexical predicates acting epistemically were used more often. The auxiliary modals which are dynamic can and volitional will were more used than epistemic modals. Modals can and will were used to indicate the position the speakers held, in the eyes of the public which Aristotle calls the ethos. Since the speakers could issue commands to the audience or influence their audience with their power of persuasion, the modal should was also used to indicate duties and obligations which were not obligatory. The speakers did not want to force their listeners so they did not use the modal must which is a modal of duty and obligation.

5.3.2 What is the percentage difference between modalized statements of forum participants and unmodalized statements within the same interview?

According to the Table 4.1 in Chapter 4, 28% of sentences in the interview were modalized while 72 % of the sentences were unmodalized. The sentences discussing the war in Iraq were analysed for their use of modality and modality notions embedded within them. The modality signals were both of auxiliary modals and lexical predicates used to express different degrees of certainty as well as doubt. A larger number of unmodalized statements were used indicating convictions to the truth by the speakers but these statements were interspersed with modalized statements which indicated uncertainty. Refer to Appendix 2. So it is a situation of truth mixed up with unreal tentative explanations of the war by the speakers. So what

we have is a situation of real war and fighting between the allied troops and Saddam Hussein's men in Iraq but the politicians were not coming out to make claims of what they felt is the truth with their language choice during the interview. There seemed to be ambiguity and doubt when speakers used **I think**, **I believe** and then with the **if** conditional making it seem like no one is sure of anything. Since each person in the interview was an important person with the American government as well as parliament, the speakers showed restraint in their style of answering by using lexical predicates. According to Karkkainen, this is called politeness strategy. The profile of the speakers indicated a mix of Republicans as well as Democrat party members discussing the war in Iraq. So two other strategies were also used, which are face saving, persuasion and manipulation.

5.3.3 How many sentences in the interview reflect commitments of truth by the speaker?

There were a total of 357 sentences in the interview out of which 103 were modalized or marked sentences. A marked sentence is a sentence which carries an epistemic device whereas an unmarked sentence is a truth proposition as there is no doubt present about the occurrences of events and their certainty levels. Even though the marked sentences carried notions of what a truth proposition should be, the selection of the proper linguistic device to indicate the absolute truth were missing as very weak modals and lexical predicates were used. Appendix 2 indicates marked sentences as well as unmarked sentences. The unmarked sentences were sentences which used the present and the past tense with the indication of truth uttered by the speakers in the interview. These types of sentences are classified as high factuality or high certainty sentences. This study is only focusing on the sentences which are epistemic in nature which are indicating statements of high certainty.

Out of the 103 modalized statements, 61 sentences were epistemic expressions, but most of the sentences used lexical predicates (see Appendix 2). Truth propositions which are epistemic in nature were used in most of the marked sentences which were analysed indicating the speakers knew what was going on and what was going to happen, yet none of the speakers wanted to admit the absolute truth. Epistemic lexical predicates were clues in the sentences uttered that the speakers knew the absolute truth based on facts but deliberately avoided making a stand. The sentences using **I think** ……. could all be stated without the **I think** expression making the sentences absolute truths. For example, one speaker said 'I think the war is a mistake". Why didn't he just say 'The war is a mistake. Using **I think** places a doubt in his audience's mind which might indicate he is not so sorry there is a war. It is also a way of agreeing yet disagreeing with views held by opposing parliamentarians discussing the war. This can be called a face saving strategy where direct conflict is avoided among the speakers in a television programme which is broadcasted to a world-wide audience. The speakers were trying to be nice to their fellow interview participants instead of agreeing or disagreeing with the issues discussed.

The sentences which are interspersed between utterances of high factuality all of a sudden became utterances of moderate or low factuality. When a sentence is supported with facts from experts or from reports, the sentence becomes objective and it is the objectivity of the statement which proves its standing as a high factuality statement. A high factuality statement is then classified as a statement with a truth commitment by the speaker.

The auxiliary modals **may, shall** and **must** are not used by any of the five speakers in the sample analyzed. **Must** and **shall** are modals which are used in truth propositions about obligations and duty. None of the speakers used these modals to stress and emphasize commitment indicating that whatever is uttered is not forced

upon the listener as mandatory actions. **May** is epistemic in nature when it is supported by knowledge of truth propositions but the speakers do not use the modal auxiliary **may** to indicate notions of the truth.

Of the modals used, the most common is **would** indicating remote chances of things occurring according to the speakers, indicating a very low commitment to the truth. But every event that was being discussed had already happened during or before the speech act participants met.

None of the speakers used the modal **must** which is a modal of obligation and commands, from people of superior position to their sub-ordinates and avoidance of using this modal indicates that they are not in control of the events around them.

Sensitive topics, which potentially involve the speaker talking about him /her and/or controversial points of view, are probably correlated with high usage of epistemic modals. Hypothesis Two was tested and it proved to be partially correct, because the epistemic expressions were made by lexical predicates and not epistemic modals. War is a sensitive topic and when men are asked to comment about these issues which involve the lives of many individuals, speakers tend to be on the defensive and so they use all the tactics they know how to mitigate the answers.

M did not use any lexical predicate indicating M did not use any of the strategies the other speakers used. None of the speakers used the modal **must** which is a modal indicating statements of obligations or commands from a superior to a subordinate indicating they are all not in power to do so. The modal **would** is used 19 times indicating very low certainty while talking about events.

Hypothesis One said that when speakers evaluate a situation, epistemic modals are used extensively and this hypothesis has also been proven partially correct as more than sixty percent of the sentences, all unmarked unmodalized sentences were truth bearing statements which were not analysed. Among the 28 percent of modalized

statements, there were about ten percent sentences with differing levels of certainty, and the remainder either ambiguous or confusing.

The following explanation provides an insight and difference into what constitutes factual or high certainty expressions. The study of non-scientific interactive or pragmatic events like an interview and the study of empirical scientific experiments differ. Science is empirical because it is based on experimental, mathematical and research based on facts and it cannot be subjective. Scientific enquiries require that all assertions must be supported by empirical evidence. If there is any disagreement in science or social science, it is called an empirical disagreement, and researchers must engage in an extensive empirical study which can prove the credibility of a factual judgment.

The participants of the speech act in the study did not base their comment on facts and figures because they expressed uncertainty with almost every statement using modals and lexical predicates which acted as modals. They are all people who knew exactly what was happening in their country, yet preferred to use strategies to "hide" their true thoughts about the topic in discussion, the War on Terror.

This research did not analyze the discourse of the hearer, in this case the interviewer. The research can be done by including the hearer in the interaction. Due to time constraints only one sample was analyzed after a random selection of a large number of samples.

5.4 CONCLUSION

The use of lexical predicates and modals of very low certainty indicated a subjective stance towards the topic discussed. Subjectivity is based on personal opinion and emotions about events so the speakers used polite and face saving strategies to manipulate and move round the topic concerned, and they were still

discussing true issues: issues which the whole world knew as true based on television news broadcasts. Celce- Mucia and Larsen-Freeman (1983) called the strategy as navigating away from situations which require human judgment in an event.

This study has revealed that a listener should listen carefully and analyze mentally the truth propositions expressed by others because their selection of the linguistic devices will actually reveal their attitudes. Chung and Timberlake (1985) described the use of epistemic modality as the mood of the speaker indicating the level of certainty.

Reid (1991) says that sign-based communication depended on the speaker's goal. It is clear in the interview that the choice of lexical and grammatical signs that were selected by the speakers were utterances selected by the speakers deliberately. The signs or linguistic devices selected were operating at the micro-level and they made a contribution to the communicative process. It is based on Saussurean's Sign Based Theory concept of language being made of signs, which, in this research are modals and lexical predicates acting as modals, and these signs are immutable over the centuries everywhere it is used. But there were instances in the research when the sentences were investigated to get the true meaning.

Subjectivity is part of expressions of speech acts in our daily life, and the choice of modality among individuals engaged in a communicative act determines subjectivity which in turn is determined by the individual's tact to either be specific, polite or blunt. Modality is defined as expressions of propositional attitudes and it covers a large group of linguistic elements which includes auxiliaries, modal adverbials, modal particles and parenthetical verbs. Kiefer (1987) classifies modality as expressions of possibility, necessity, propositional attitudes and the speaker's attitudes.

Plato and Aristotle (http://www.iep.utm.edu./truth/2004) say that truth is a relationship and for every truth there must be a corresponding fact. In the interview each speaker was trying to make a true event like the present war in Iraq as untrue, which contradicts the Correspondence Theory of Truth. This tactic or strategy is a "beating round the bush" strategy as Karkkainan (1992) called in her research. Truth bearing sentences were turned into tentative events because the speakers were very articulate in their presentations. By doing so they withheld full commitment to the truth. When politicians discussing controversial issues regarding the lives of thousands of people decide to be polite to each other's opinion by using epistemic expressions, then the truth can never be used to decide on an issue because the truth becomes cloudy.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Only one sample of a television interview was analysed to find out how much of the discourse used epistemic modals as well as lexical predicates acting as modals. It is suggested that more samples are analysed so that there is a wider cross section across a larger number of samples which covers a longer time span to find out how most of the speakers actually behave, especially linguistically when on stage discussing sensitive as well as controversial issues. Further research can encompass comparative studies between interviews of native and non-native speakers of the English Language using epistemic modality notions while discussing similar sensitive and controversial issues. Similar comparative studies comparing single person speeches to several speakers in a larger cross section of interviews, can also be an extended part of this research.