
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Epistemic Modality through the Use of Adjectives in George W. Bush in Selected Speeches: Urging Countries around the World to Join the War in Iraq

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| ABSTRACT

This study provides a detailed analysis of George W. Bush's speeches during the Iraq War, with a focus on his use of epistemic modal adjectives to influence the international community's support for the war. The study draws on a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to analyze the epistemic modality in six of Bush's speeches, including The State of the Union Speeches and The War Speeches. By utilizing Biber et al.'s (1999, p.5-6) categories of epistemic modality, the study categorizes the adjectives into "Certainty" and "Likelihood" and examines their underlying functions in persuading the public about the Iraq War. The findings highlight that the adjectives served five distinct functions, namely "assertion," "assumption," "conviction," "hedging," and "likelihood/possibility," which were strategically employed by Bush to promote his policy and agenda towards the Iraqi government. The study emphasizes the crucial role of epistemic modality in political speeches and its potential impact on shaping public opinion.

| KEYWORDS

Political discourse, Epistemic Modality, Epistemic Modal Adjectives, George W. Bush, Iraq War 2003, Saddam Hussain

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1. Introduction

1.1 EMs in Political Discourse

Epistemic modality in Political Discourse refers to the use of language to express uncertainty or probability regarding a certain issue or statement. In Political Discourse, Epistemic modality is employed to convey the level of certainty or likelihood of a particular assertion or claim through linguistic means. According to Priyantha et al. (2019, p.2), the utilization of epistemic modality is a primary linguistic strategy in political discourse that aims to influence and persuade audiences. Epistemic modality (EM) is defined as an individual's level of conviction or assurance towards a statement or proposal (Coates, 1983). Since the main objectives of political speeches are to educate, motivate, convince, and inspire the audience to act, epistemic modality is used to showcase the speaker's level of certainty in their knowledge of the proposition. Vukovic (2014, p.1) contends that political speech is characterized by a robust epistemic modality that empowers politicians to demonstrate a high level of commitment to the truthfulness of their statements. Essentially, EM represents the speaker's attitude (Hoye, 2009, p.100) and constitutes an essential component of persuasion with the goal of constructing a competent, trustworthy, and influential professional identity that may influence deliberative and decision-making processes (Vasilescu, 2010, p. 371).

Moreover, the choice of EM may also convey a low degree of assertion (Brogaard & Gatzia, 2017, p.5) or indicate the speaker's lack of confidence in the statements expressed. This is because epistemic modal markers, which are representatives of epistemicity, are used for two distinct reasons: "content-oriented caution" and "addressee-oriented caution" (White, 2003). While "content-oriented caution" refers to a speaker's uncertainty regarding the substance of their speech, "addressee-oriented caution" refers to a speaker's hedging for pragmatic reasons. The linguistic categories commonly utilized to convey the concept of epistemic

modality include epistemic modal nouns, modal verbs, lexical verbs, modal adjectives, and modal adverbs (Biber, 2006, p.92-93; Ho, 2018, p.1; Quirk et al., 1985, p.221; Simon-Vandenberghe & Aijmer, 2007, p. 84).

Thus, Hardjanto and Mazia (2019, p.2) suggest that by using epistemic modality, the speaker cannot be entirely committed to their statements and, therefore, cannot be blamed if their claim is incorrect. In this sense, epistemic modality refers to the various degrees of conviction or commitment along the belief or trust continuum of a proposition. The current study focuses specifically on epistemic modal adjectives (EMAdjs).

EMAdjs serve as indicators of the extent to which politicians convey their judgments of probability, certainty, and uncertainty in their discourse. These linguistic markers are believed to reflect the intent of the politician and may express a range of functions, including but not limited to assertion, prediction, assumption, avoidance, trickery, and incitement. Ultimately, EMAdjs play a crucial role in political persuasion, as they enable politicians to communicate their intended message effectively to the public.

This paper aims to explore the role of epistemic modal adjectives (EMAdjs) in George W. Bush's speeches about the Iraq War in 2003. EMs are essential tools for speakers to demonstrate their level of confidence and commitment to a proposition, which can significantly influence the audience's perception and understanding. Therefore, analyzing the use of EMAdjs can provide insight into the speaker's intention and the functions of their statements, particularly in political discourse where the stakes are high. By investigating the use of EMAdjs in Bush's speeches, this research aims to contribute to a better understanding of the role of EMs in shaping political discourse.

The present study will focus on two primary genres, namely the State of the Union speeches and War Speeches related to the Iraqi regime. The rationale for selecting these genres stems from their crucial role in persuading Congress and the global community about the necessity of the Iraq War. Scholars such as Hart and Fuoli (2020) have noted that presidents typically employ epistemic modality in speeches with high stakes, such as war speeches, to enhance their persuasive and diplomatic abilities. Specifically, this investigation will center on President George W. Bush's speech and seek to establish the meanings and functions of epistemic modal adjectives utilized in the two genres. The significance of the two genres lies in their influence in instigating the invasion and overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime. As Jamieson and Campbell (2017) have argued, the war speech implies legislative action, with presidential speeches seeking to convince audiences about the necessity of conflict. For instance, George W. Bush offered several justifications for the Iraq War, including 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: first, to identify the frequency of epistemic modal adjectives, and second, to determine the meanings and reasons for using these adjectives in the two genres.

2. Literature Review

According to Bosanquet (1924, as quoted in Lewis 2020), adjectives are the "sugar of literature." Lewis (2021:2) notes that in contemporary times, adjectives have become increasingly important in written and spoken English. In fact, adjectives are now considered essential components of modern English usage. Their strategic use can add depth, nuance, and vividness to language, making it more engaging and compelling. As such, understanding the proper usage of adjectives is critical for effective communication, whether in written or oral contexts.

Biber et al. (2021:66) identify three key characteristics of adjectives. Firstly, adjectives possess morphological characteristics that allow them to be inflected in comparative and superlative forms, as in the examples "dark, darker, darkest." Adjectives can also be complex and formed from multiple words, such as "colour-blind, home-made, ice-cold," or derived from participles, such as "surprised" or "interesting." Secondly, adjectives have syntactic characteristics that allow them to function as the subject of adjective phrases, as in "very dark" or "guilty of a serious crime." Adjective phrases are also commonly used as premodifiers or postmodifiers in noun phrases and as subject or object predicatives. Further details can be found in Table 2.14 of Biber et al.'s work (2021:106). Understanding the morphological and syntactic features of adjectives is essential for constructing clear and effective sentences in written and spoken English. Further details can be found in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Syntactic Functions of Adjective Phrases

Syntactic roles of adjective phrases	Sentences
1. <i>Premodifier of noun</i>	He writes catchy tunes with lavish pop hooks and huge slices of melody.
2. <i>Subject predicative</i>	He's totally crazy.
3. <i>Postmodifier of noun</i>	Diana was ready to tell the other three people present .
4. <i>Object predicative</i>	He considered it more dangerous than any horse he had ever ridden.

Source: Biber 2021

The third characteristic of adjectives is Semantic, whereby adjectives are often used to describe the characteristics of people, objects, and situations, such as "heavy box," "he is guilty," or "the situation is serious." Adjectives are a crucial component of language and play a significant role in both written and spoken communication. Understanding the various characteristics of adjectives is essential for effective communication and language proficiency.

Furthermore, Varttala (2001: 135-128) argues that adjectives can be classified into four distinct levels, namely probability adjectives, adjectives of indefinite frequency, adjectives of indefinite degree, and approximative adjectives (refer to Table 2.2 for more details). These different types of adjectives play a significant role in conveying meaning and expressing nuances in language, and understanding their usage can greatly enhance one's ability to communicate effectively.

Table 2.2 General Categories of Adjectives

Probability adjectives	Adjectives of indefinite frequency	Adjectives of indefinite degree	Approximative adjectives
includes the kinds of device most typically mentioned in connection with epistemic modality (e.g. <i>possible, probable, likely</i>)	subtype includes items to do with indefinite frequency (e.g. usual, common)	express indefinite degree (e.g. <i>slight, fair, considerable</i>)	those in the fourth subcategory have to do with approximation (e.g. <i>approximate, virtual</i>).

Source: Varttala 2001

According to Varttala's (2001) classification of adjectives, Table 2.2 highlights that only two categories relate to epistemic modal adjectives, namely probability adjectives and indefinite adjectives. These adjectives convey a sense of uncertainty and employ pending claims that lie between yes and no. They are often used for hedging, mitigation, and to avoid committing to a particular stance, thus contributing to formulating cautious statements (Mur-Dueñas, 2021:10). On the other hand, Vukovic (2014:11) identifies a different set of adjectives that are strong epistemic adjectives, such as clear, sure, true, impossible, evident, obvious, certain, and evident. These adjectives are commonly found in copulative structures with impersonal subjects and are used to persuade and increase self-assurance in critical issues like the Iraqi War (Zuczkowski, 2021:16-17). Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the adjectives "sure" and "certain" are predominantly used in copulative structures with the first-person personal pronoun.

Biber (2006: 92) explains that there are two groups of epistemic modal adjectives. The two groups suggest certainty and include words like apparent, certain, clear, confident, convinced, correct, evident, false, impossible, inevitable, obvious, positive, right, sure, true, and well-known. The second group indicates likelihood and includes words such as possible, doubtful, likely, probable, and unlikely. For instance, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau employs two types of epistemic modal adjectives, confident and possible, in examples (a) and (b).

(a): And I'm **confident** that our new Minister of International Trade, François-Philippe Champagne, will be a strong voice for Canada on the world stage over the coming years.

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In this example, Trudeau expresses his certainty or belief that François-Philippe Champagne will be successful as Canada's Minister of International Trade. By using the adjective "confident", he is projecting an image of certainty and assurance to the listeners, even though there is no guarantee that Champagne will indeed be successful.

(b): Canadians know that better is always **possible**

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Unlike example (b), Trudeau uses the epistemic modal adjective "possible" to convey a sense of likelihood. This suggests that while something may be possible, it is not necessarily guaranteed to happen. The use of the ELV "know" in conjunction with the EMadj "possible" indicates a high degree of certainty about the possibility. The phrase "better is always possible" suggests that there is room for improvement or progress, but it does not make any categorical assertions. Thus, this use of the EMadj "possible" emphasizes the idea that there are opportunities for change and improvement, but these outcomes are not predetermined. To summarize, examples (a) and (b) demonstrate how epistemic modal adjectives can be used with varying degrees of certainty. While (a) uses the EMadj confident to express a high level of assurance, it does not guarantee that the outcome will occur. In

contrast, (b) uses the EModj possible with a low degree of confidence, indicating that the outcome is not guaranteed but is still likely to happen. Biber's taxonomy of epistemic modal adjectives, as shown in Table 2.3, provides a comprehensive and specific framework for understanding how these adjectives are used in context. Therefore, the current study adopts this classification of epistemic modal adjectives.

Table 2.3 Epistemic Modal Adjectives based on Biber (2006)

Certainty	Likelihood
<i>Apparent, certain, clear, confident, convinced, correct, evident, false, impossible, inevitable, obvious, positive, right, sure, true, well-known.</i>	<i>Doubtful, likely, possible, probable, unlikely.</i>

3. Methodology

The current research employs a concurrent mixed-method approach to identify Epistemic Modal Adjectives (EMAdjs) in six speeches delivered by George W. Bush. The data analysis involves careful and detailed descriptions, as the qualitative study aims to account for "description and themes using text analysis and interpreting the larger meaning of the findings" (Creswell, 2012, p.16). Conversely, the quantitative study relies on a statistical analysis of numeric data (Creswell, 2012, p.13). To analyze the linguistic texts and extract EMAdjs, the researcher utilizes software packages such as AntConc version 3.5.9 (updated on Dec. 2020), and manual extraction is also employed, as some EMAdjs are context-dependent. To ensure the representativeness of the data analyzed, Biber et al.'s taxonomy (1999, p.5-6) is used as a framework. The three stages of analysis include identifying the types and frequencies of EMAdjs, examining their syntactic and semantic features, and finally, revealing their functions in George W. Bush's speeches.

4. Design and Data

The data for this study were obtained from the website presidentialrhetoric.com, which offers a collection of written and spoken speeches by George W. Bush and is a reputable resource for those interested in the rhetorical study of the presidency. The website was created by Martin Medhurst, a Distinguished Professor of Rhetoric and Communication at Baylor University, and Paul Stob, a professor at Vanderbilt University's Department of Communication Studies. (The sample for this study comprises six speeches from two genres: The State of the Union Speeches and the War Speeches, which were chosen for their relevance to establishing a Counter-Terrorism Committee after the 9/11 attack (Martín de la Rosa & Domínguez Romero, 2021, p. 1). These speeches were chosen because they can be easily analyzed by hand, particularly in discourse studies (Angermüller, 2015; Alkhalaf, 2018). In the analysis section, the current study draws examples from the two genres of Bush's speeches to achieve three main objectives. Firstly, the study aims to identify the frequency of occurrence of epistemic markers in the selected speeches about the Iraq War. Secondly, the study seeks to examine the meaning of epistemic modality in Bush's speeches about the Iraq War. Finally, the study aims to specify the discourse functions of epistemic modality observed in Bush's speeches about the Iraq War in the two genres.

5. Findings and Discussion

According to Tables 5.1 and 5.2, an examination of George W. Bush's speeches has revealed a total of 77 occurrences of EMAdjs in two distinct genres. Among these EMAdjs, "clear," "true," and "possible" are the most frequently used modal forms of adjectives. Specifically, the State of the Union speeches contained 5 occurrences of "clear," while the war speeches featured 4 occurrences of this EMAdj. The EMAdj "true" appeared solely in the State of the Union speeches, with a frequency of 5. Additionally, the State of the Union speeches displayed 6 instances of the EMAdj "possible," whereas the war speeches had only two occurrences of this EMAdj "possible".

Table 5.1: EMAdjs in Bush's speeches

Two Genres	ENADVs		Total
	The State of the Union Speeches	The War Speeches	G1 & G2
Total	48	29	77

The second research objective of this study is to investigate the semantic meanings of EMAdjs in George W. Bush's speeches, particularly in relation to the Iraq War. The analysis of the data reveals that EMADJs were used by Bush to convey a sense of

certainty and likelihood regarding various controversial matters related to the Iraq War. This suggests that EMADJs played a crucial role in shaping the audience's perception of the issues and influencing their attitudes towards the war. The study also highlights the potential impact of EMADJs on the persuasive power of political speeches, particularly in contexts where certainty/confidence and confidence are key factors in influencing public opinion.

The analysis of the data reveals specific EMADjs used in Bush's speeches to convey a sense of certainty and likelihood. In the State of the Union speeches, EMADJs such as "aware of," "certain," "credible," "crucial," "committed," "determined," "firm," "impossible," "profound," "real," "resolute," "stronger," "unchanging," and "understandable" were employed. Meanwhile, EMADJs used in War speeches were relatively fewer, with words such as "committed," "consistent," "firm," "not possible," "proven," "sobering," "strongest," "strong," and "unknown" used to convey a sense of certainty. In the State of the Union speeches, the EMADJ "clear" appeared five times, while the EMADJs "strong," "sure," and "confident" were used three times. The EMADJ "true" also appeared five times, emphasizing certainty in Bush's speeches. War speeches contained less frequent occurrences of EMADJs, with the EMADJs "certain," "confident," "determined," "only," and "true" appearing twice and "clear" appearing five times (refer to Table 5.2). These findings indicate that EMADJs are employed in strategic ways to convey different shades of meaning in political speeches, and the specific EMADJs used can contribute to shaping the audience's perception of the issues presented.

Table 5.2 Semantic Meaning of EMADJs

The State of the Union Speeches		The War Speeches		The State of the Union Speeches		The War Speeches	
Certainty	N	Certainty	N	Likelihood	N	Likelihood	N
clear, true	5	clear	5	possible	6	Hopeful, possible	2
confident, sure, strong	3	certain, confident determined, only, true consistent, strong, firm	2	Candid, most suspected	1	Hopeless, likely	1
determined, only right	2	committed, proven, not possible, sobering, strongest, unknown	1				
aware of, certain credible, crucial committed, firm, impossible, real, profound, stronger, resolute, unchanging understandable	1						
Total	38	Total	24	Total	9	Total	6

In Table 5.2, further implications of using EMADJs in both genres of Bush's speeches are presented. For instance, in State of the Union speeches, EMADJs were used only once with the adjectives 'candid, most, and suspected'. Additionally, 'possible' was used six times to imply likelihood. In the War speeches, 'hopeless' and 'likely' were used once each to convey likelihood, while 'hopeful' and 'possible' were used twice. The current data provide some examples of how EMADJs were used in Bush's speeches to serve a semantic purpose.

1. Certainty –EMADjs:

- (a) Last January, Iraq's only law was the whim of one brutal man.

P.16 State of the Union 20-Jan-04

- (b) The United States, Great Britain, and many other nations are determined to expose the threats of terrorism and proliferation -- and to oppose those threats with all our power.

P.25-The War Speech 7-Oct-02

Despite not being classified as EMADJs in Biber's taxonomy (2006), the adjectives 'only' and 'determined' in Bush's speeches serve as epistemic modal adjectives in political discourse. These adjectives appear three times and two times, respectively, in the State

of the Union addresses, carrying the meaning of certainty. These words also reveal the level of confidence that Bush had in his statements. For example, the noun phrase 'Iraq's only law' in (1a) is modified by the adjective 'only,' which is synonymous with 'one' and implies exclusivity. The participial adjective 'determined' in (1b) conveys a strong resolution and stands for 'having taken a firm decision to do something.' It serves as the head of the subject complement realized through the adjective phrase 'determined to expose the threats of terrorism and proliferation.' According to Zuczkowski (2021), these strong epistemic adjectives are used to persuade the public and increase their confidence in key matters, such as the Iraq War.

2: Likelihood –EMADjs:

(a) The next priority of my budget is to do everything **possible** to protect our citizens and strengthen our nation against the ongoing threat of another attack.

P.30 State of the Union 29-Jan-02

(b) And there are **hopeful** signs of a desire for freedom in the Middle East.

P.18-The War Speech 28-Jan-03

In (2a), the non-finite clause 'to do everything possible' functions as the subject complement. The adjective 'possible' post-modifies the indefinite noun 'everything' and serves an epistemic function to suggest 'anything within my power.' EMADJs like 'possible' are used by Bush in both genres to convey likelihood, as demonstrated by its occurrence eight times. This is an example of epistemic modality, as noted by Zuczkowski (2021). On the other hand, Mur-Dueñas (2021) suggests that the use of EMADJs like 'possible' may be an attempt to exercise caution in declarations.

In (2b), the adjective 'hopeful' has been used to convey the likelihood of change. Semantically, it functions as an Epistemic adjective of possibility/likelihood. Syntactically, it serves as a pre-modifier to the head of the noun phrase 'hopeful signs' (pre-mod + head). However, it is not categorized as an EMADJ in Biber's (2006) taxonomy. Nonetheless, in the War speeches, 'hopeful' is used twice as an EMADJ, indicating its function in expressing the likelihood or possibility

The third research objective of this study is to analyze the functions of EMADjs utilized in George W. Bush's speeches, with a particular focus on the Iraq War. The findings of the current study demonstrate that in the State of the Union speeches, EMADjs were utilized for four main functions: 38 occurrences of assertion, one occurrence of conviction and assumption, and eight occurrences of likelihood/possibility. On the other hand, in the War Speeches, four functions were identified: 20 occurrences of assertion, one occurrence of hedging and conviction, and four occurrences of likelihood/possibility, as shown in Table 5.3. These results shed light on the diverse ways in which EMADjs were employed by Bush in his speeches to convey a range of meanings and nuances. The functions of EMADjs in two genres of Bush's speeches are exemplified below.

Table 5.3: Functions of EMADjs in two genres

Function	G1	G2	Total
Assertion	38	20	58
Conviction	1	4	5
Assumption	1	0	1
Hedging	0	1	1
likelihood/Possibility	8	4	12
Total	48	29	77

3. Assertion in EMADJ

We have sent this message in the **strongest** diplomatic terms, and we have acted where the action was required.

P.5 State of the Union 12-Jul-04

In example 3, the superlative form of the adjective 'strong' is used definitely. EMADJ 'strong' belongs to the certainty group, which conveys the assertion function (Biber 2006). It intensifies the meaning of the noun it modifies. It functions as a pre-modifier to the noun phrase 'diplomatic terms'. This utterance reveals a strong positive vocabulary, which contributes to the overall positive and

encouraging tone of the President's message or to persuading/increasing the self-assurance of the populace about critical issues (Zuczkowski 2021). From the perspective of political discourse, this function gains wider support for the President. Table 5.4 shows 39 instances of EMADJ in the State of the Union and 21 occurrences in the War speeches.

Table 5.4 Assertion in EMADJs

The State of the Union Speeches	N	The War Speeches	N
clear, true	5	clear	4
strong	4	certain, determined, only	2
sure	3	committed, confident, consistent, firm. not possible, proven, sobering. strong, strongest, unknown	1
confident, determined, only, right	2		
aware of, certain, committed, credible crucial, firm, impossible, profound real, resolute, stronger, unchanging understandable	1		
Total	38	Total	20

4. Assumption in EMADJs

All told, more than 3,000 **suspected** terrorists have been arrested in many countries. Many others have met a different fate. Let's put it this way -- they are no longer a problem to the United States and our friends and allies.

P.43 State of the Union 28-Jan-03

In this utterance, the participial adjective '*suspected*' has been used, which functions as a pre-modifier to the noun '*terrorists*' within the subject 'more than 3,000 suspected terrorists'. According to Biber's (2006) taxonomy, the EMADJ '*suspected*' belongs to the uncertainty group, which may refer to the doubtful belief of 3,000 terrorists in jail. Hence, EMADJ discloses the function of '*assumption*' without proof. Bush acknowledges that the vast majority of suspected terrorists have been imprisoned, and its meaning refers to a conclusion based on partial evidence or subjective belief. The assumption in EMADJs appears just once in the State of the Union addresses, and in the War speeches, it does not appear at all (cf. Table 5.2).

5: Conviction in EMADJ

Members of Congress are nearing a historic vote. I'm **confident** they will fully consider the facts and their duties.

P.45-The War Speech 7-Oct-02

From an epistemic modality perspective, '*will*' suggests that the speaker does not accept any possibility of the proposition not being true. This conclusion is supported by the adjective '*confident*' preceding the modal. The adjective '*confident*' conveys certainty (Biber 2006), further reinforced using the modal construction '*will*' (fully). EMADJ '*confident*' reveals a solid conviction to persuade the populace. In example (5), EMADJ's '*confident*' shows the persuasive power that considers the influence on people's ideas, thoughts, and conduct as a critical goal in delivering the speech (Lee 2021). The EMADJ's '*confident*' indicates that the logic behind conviction seeks to appeal to the mental models of the recipients so that their interpretations of the text are as similar as feasible to that desired by the political discourse (Minoo et al. 2018). Apart from that, EMADJ's '*confident*' is mentioned once in the State of the Union speeches (see Table 5.5).

Table 5.5 Conviction in EMADJs

The State of the Union Speeches - EMLVs	N	The War Speeches -EMLVs	N
candid	1	true	2
		confident, clear	1
Total	1	Total	4

6: Hedge in EMADJ

Iraq possesses ballistic missiles with a *likely* range of hundreds of miles -- far enough to strike Saudi Arabia, Israel, Turkey, and other nations -- in a region where more than 135,000 American civilians and service members live and work.

P.13-The War Speech 7-Oct-02

The EMADJ's '*likely*' indicates possibility (Biber 2006). It provides a hedging function to alert other nations and protect American civilians in these countries that Iraq has ballistic missiles with a likely range of hundreds of miles. EMADJ's '*likely*' may show (un)commitment to the anticipated result. In doing so, the word '*likely*' may protect Bush and his government from negative consequences. EMADJs' *likely* appeared just once in the War speeches, whereas the State of the Union speeches show no EMADJ as a hedging device.

7: Likelihood/possibility in EMADj

And there are *hopeful* signs of a desire for freedom in the Middle East.

P.18-The War Speeches 26-Feb-03

Based on Biber (2006), the adjective '*hopeful*' expresses the likelihood of eagerly awaited change, which builds on the epistemic modality of logical deduction while also functioning as a persuasion technique. Furthermore, Neüff (2018) states that '*optimistic*' is the primary technique used in presidential speeches to get people's attention. Hence, EMADJ's '*hopeful*' is utilized to capture the audience's attention by saying that there are signs that people in the Middle East want to be free. In EMADJs, the words '*likelihood*' and '*possibility*' appeared 5 occurrences in the State of the Union speeches and 3 in the War speeches (see Table 5.6).

Table 5.6 Likelihood/possibility in EMADJs

The State of the Union Speeches - EMLVs	N	The War Speeches -EMLVs	N
possible	6	hopeful	2
most	1	Hopeless, possible	1
Total	7	Total	4

6. Conclusion

The aim of this article is to examine the use of epistemic modal adjectives (EMAdjs) by George W. Bush in two different types of speeches, namely the State of the Union Speeches and The War Speeches, in terms of their frequencies, meanings, and functions. The analysis demonstrates that Bush employed a range of meanings in his speeches to express his judgments to the public about the Iraq War. The EMAdjs of certainty were commonly used by Bush to establish a confident commitment with his audience without raising their hopes. Additionally, Bush utilized EMAdjs to demonstrate his knowledge of the great danger posed by the Iraq regime, with the aim of gaining more support for the Iraq War. Furthermore, EMAdjs were used by Bush to make his perspective on the Iraq War understandable and plausible and to persuade his audience about critical issues. This aligns with the views of Coates (1983), Vukovic (2014), and Vasikescu (2010), who consider EMAdjs as components of persuasion, the speaker's attitude, and a person's level of confidence.

The current study also found that Bush used EMAdjs to convey the possibility of future issues in Iraq, indicating a level of caution to avoid criticism if something went wrong. This finding is consistent with the views of Brogaard & Gatzia (2017), who consider the use of EMs as a means of hedging or indicating a low level of confidence.

On a functional level, EMAdjs were found to be used for assertion, hedging, likelihood/possibility, and assumption functions. EMAdjs were used to present an incredible and reliable image in the eye of the audience through the assertion function. By using the conviction function, the speaker is attempting to create a sense of confidence and certainty in the minds of the listeners, which can help to influence their attitudes and behaviors. This can be especially important in political speeches, where the goal is often to rally support and convince people to take action or support a particular cause or policy. The hedging and likelihood/possibility functions were used to convey caution, while the assumption function was used to be more diplomatic in persuading the populace.

To sum up, the study highlights the importance of EMAdjs in shaping the audience's perception of critical issues and influencing their attitudes towards them. Epistemic modal adjectives (EMAdjs) have a significant impact on political speeches due to their meanings and functions. They demonstrate the speaker's sincerity, generating credibility with the audience. The use of EMAdjs is a common linguistic strategy in political discourse to influence and persuade listeners (Priyantha et al., 2019). Generally, EMAdjs are used to make the speaker appear less committed or to protect them from future blame if things go wrong. Therefore, EMAdjs are often seen as devices used by presidents to sound convincing (Hardjanto & Mazia, 2019).

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