



## TRANSLATING AND INTERPRETING MODALITY IN PRESIDENT PAUL BIYA'S END-OF-YEAR SPEECHES

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### **Abstract:**

End-of-year speeches are one of the most important communication tools President Paul Biya has used throughout his reign. Due to their importance, their impact and their nature, they attract both national and international attention. However, despite their crucial role in the political welfare of the country, very few studies venture into these speeches, not even to highlight their merits. This paper is an analytical study of the translation and interpretation of modality, a central feature of the speeches, alongside others. The study intends to shed light on the translation and interpretation methods used in translating and interpreting modality as used in the President's end-of-year speeches. It is a corpus-based study with a qualitative research design where the Descriptive Translation Study (DTS) was used to analyse the data. Findings reveal that the corpus includes epistemic, deontic, and dynamic modalities, expressed conveyed through modal verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, lexical verbs, and modalising expressions. The employed method involved the following micro-strategies: literal translation, modulation, reformulation, transposition, and omission. Two macro-strategies were used, domestication and foreignization, with the former being the dominant.

**Keywords:** modality, political discourse, end-of-year speeches, translation, interpretation, corpus

### **Résumé :**

Les discours de fin d'année constituent l'un des outils de communication les plus importants utilisés par le Président Paul Biya tout au long de son règne. En raison de leur importance, de leur impact et de leur nature, ils attirent l'attention tant sur le plan nationale qu'internationale. Cependant, malgré leur rôle crucial dans le bien-être politique du pays, très peu d'études se penchent sur ces discours, même pour en souligner les mérites. Cet article est une étude analytique de la traduction et de l'interprétation de la modalité, une caractéristique centrale des discours, parmi tant d'autres. L'étude vise à élucider les méthodes de traduction et d'interprétation utilisées pour traduire et interpréter la modalité telle qu'elle est employée dans les discours de fin d'année du Président. Il s'agit d'une étude basée sur un corpus et

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suivant la méthode de recherche qualitative, où l'étude descriptive de la traduction (DTS) a été utilisée pour analyser les données. Les résultats révèlent que le corpus comprend des modalités épistémiques, déontiques et dynamiques, exprimées par des verbes modaux, des noms, des adjectifs, des adverbes, des verbes lexicaux et des expressions de modalisation. La méthode employée impliquait les micro-stratégies suivantes : traduction littérale, modulation, reformulation, transposition et omission. Deux macro-stratégies ont été utilisées, la domestication et l'étrangéisation, la première étant dominante.

**Mots-clés :** modalité, discours politique, discours de fin d'année, traduction, interprétation, corpus

## 1. Introduction

Mr. Paul Biya, president of the Republic of Cameroon, like most Heads of State, is known for his annual end-of-year speeches, which provide a summary of the country's progress and outline future goals. These speeches serve as a crucial communication tool between the president and the Cameroonian people, providing insights into the government's plans and policies. As such, understanding the nuances of translating and interpreting modality in these speeches is essential for effective communication and accurate representation of the president's intentions.

Translating and interpreting modality involves conveying the speaker's attitude, certainty, and commitment towards the expressed ideas. Modality plays a significant role in shaping the meaning of a message, and accurately capturing it in translation and interpretation is essential to ensure that the intended message is conveyed to the target audience.

President Biya's end-of-year speeches are characterized by their strategic use of modality in tandem with other features of political discourse. As such, translating and interpreting these speeches requires careful consideration of both the linguistic and cultural aspects, as well as an in-depth understanding of the political context in which they are delivered.

## 2. The Problem

The problem this study seeks to address is that the complexity of modality markers, which are both polysemous in most languages and do not always have a one-to-one correspondent in all languages, constitutes a significant challenge in translation and interpretation. This challenge gets even worse when the markers in question are used in a political discourse. In fact, taken individually, translating and interpreting modality markers and political discourse is a hard nut to crack that gets even harder when co-occurring in a single translation and interpretation project. If tackled inappropriately, that is, if modality markers used in political discourse are mistranslated, under-translated or even over-translated, they may result in inaccuracy of the target text. This, in turn, can lead to a potential sociopolitical crisis, given the stakes of the speech in question.

## 2.1 Objectives

The objectives of this paper are:

- to identify instances of modality markers in President Paul Biya's end-of-year speech (from 2018 to 2022), and
- to determine the inherent constraints, as well as the techniques and strategies used to translate modality markers in President Paul Biya's end-of-year speech from 2018 to 2022.

## 3. Political Discourse

To understand the concept of political discourse in relation to this study, we will first define it, then present its features and highlight the difficulties it poses to translators. This discussion mainly draws material from researchers such as Newmark (1991), Chilton (2004) and Sakwe (2017).

From a simplistic point of view, Chilton (2004) defines the term politics as "*the actions or activities concerned with achieving and using power in a country or society*". Sakwe (2017) is certainly of the same opinion when he says that political discourse as a social phenomenon can be defined as the discourse of politicians, that is, their text and talk and their professional activities. However, even though some scholars believe that it is notoriously difficult to define the notion of political discourse since it has a broad range of meanings, others argue that it has to do with anything said in public in relation to the political sphere (Adulhaim, 2019). To Chilton and Schäffner, it "*is viewed as cooperation, as the practices and institutions that a society has for resolving clashes of interest over money, influence, liberty, and the like*" (2004:3). For its part, the notion of speech refers to the meaning denoted by the etymology of the word i.e. the set of activities that are associated with making decisions in groups, or other forms of power relations among individuals, such as the distribution of resources or status.

### 3.1 Characteristics and Linguistic Features of Political Speeches

For Adulhaim (2019), political speeches are commonly characterized as sophisticated, impressive, and ambiguous language because they have cultural and ideological elements. Like other disciplines, the language of politics is rich in many terms, jargon, and slogans that may vary in meaning from one country to another, which is a technique used to achieve specific political aims. Moreover, a very crucial feature in political speeches is the tendency to use rhetorical language. Woodward and Denton Jr (2013) describe this particular characteristic as the type of language that defends the attitudes, beliefs and values of the politician, which, to Beard (2000), is the art of persuasion through language in a written or a spoken form, rhetorical language. It is, therefore, common among politicians and the writers of political speeches to utilize a range of powerful techniques such as allusion, metaphor and repetition in their speeches (Atkinson, 2005).

#### 3.1.1 Linguistic Features of Political Discourse

In his literature review, Sakwe (2017) comments that Newmark (1991) devotes an entire chapter to [...] political language, with a focus on lexical aspects. He characterizes political

concepts as *"partly culture-bound, mainly value-laden, historically conditioned and [...] abstractions despite continuous efforts to concretize them"* (p. 149). The latter mentions pronouns, political jargon, euphemisms, metaphors, neologisms, acronyms and euphony, and collocations as characteristic features of political language. Below are other linguistic features recognizable to political speeches.

### **1) Lexical Choice and Register**

The lexical choice in political speeches is carefully considered to convey specific meanings and evoke desired emotions. Politicians may employ formal or informal language depending on the context, audience, and intended effect. Additionally, using specialized political jargon and terminology establishes credibility and signals expertise.

### **2) Syntax and Sentence Structure**

Political speeches often employ specific sentence structures and syntactical devices to control the speech's rhythm, pace, and emphasis. Techniques such as parallelism, balanced sentences, and periodic sentences enhance the persuasive impact by enhancing clarity, coherence, and memorable delivery.

### **3) Rhythm and Cadence**

The rhythm and cadence of a speech play a crucial role in capturing the audience's attention and maintaining engagement. Politicians utilize pacing, pauses, and strategic variations in pitch and tone to create a captivating delivery that enhances the rhetorical impact of the speech.

### **4) Repetition and Parallelism**

Repetition is a powerful linguistic feature used in political speeches to reinforce key ideas, emphasize important points, and create a sense of unity and conviction. Parallelism, a specific form of repetition, involves the repetition of grammatical structures or patterns, enhancing the coherence and persuasive effect of the speech.

### **5) Modality**

Modality is understood as the attitude towards reality in the representation of the speaker. His evaluations of the semantic content of his statement in terms of reality/unreality, possibility, necessity or desirability, the degree of certainty of the reported thing, and qualitative estimation of the content of statements are characteristics that apply not only to the participants of the discourse, but to the discourse as a whole.

### **6) Intertextuality and Allusion**

Political speeches often make use of intertextuality and allusion, referring to historical events, famous quotes, or cultural references to establish credibility, evoke emotions, and tap into shared cultural knowledge. These references connect the speaker, the audience, and broader cultural and historical contexts.

### 3.2 Problems Related to the Translation and Interpretation of Modality

The use of modal verbs is one of the most problematic areas of English grammar. Modal verbs have more than one meaning, and there is a wide range of ways to use them. Furthermore, the meanings of a modal verb can be expressed in a number of different ways involving other grammatical and lexical elements. When translating and interpreting modality markers from French into English, there are several problems that can arise due to differences in grammar structure, vocabulary, and cultural nuance. Here are a few common challenges:

When translating and interpreting modality markers, such as words or phrases that express possibility, necessity, or uncertainty, there can be several constraints or difficulties to consider. Here are a few examples:

#### 1) Cultural Differences

Modality markers can vary across languages and cultures, making it challenging to find exact equivalents. Different languages may express modality in different ways, and some markers may not have direct translations.

##### Example:

In English, the phrase 'I suppose' is commonly used to express a degree of uncertainty or speculation. However, in French, a direct translation and interpretation like 'Je suppose' may not capture the same nuanced meaning. Instead, a more culturally appropriate translation and interpretation might be 'Je présume' or 'Je pense' to convey a similar sense of uncertainty.

- French: 'Il se peut que' (it's possible that);
- English: 'It might be that'.

#### 2) Linguistic Nuances

Modality markers often carry specific linguistic nuances that may not easily transfer between languages. These nuances can include degrees of certainty, specificity, or subjective interpretations, which may require careful consideration during translation.

##### Example:

The French word 'peut-être' translates to 'maybe' or 'perhaps' in English. However, 'peut-être' carries a slightly more tentative and cautious tone, while 'maybe' can be used in a broader range of contexts. Translators need to be aware of these nuances to choose the appropriate modality marker in the target language.

- French: 'Probablement' (Probably)
- English: 'Likely'

#### 3) Contextual Ambiguity

Modality markers rely heavily on context to convey their intended meaning. Translating and interpreting them accurately requires understanding the context in which they are used, including the speaker's intentions, cultural references, or implied information.

##### Example:

The French word 'tout de même' can be translated as 'anyway' or 'still' in English, depending on the context. For instance, 'Je l'ai fait tout de même' can be translated as 'I did it anyway' or

'I still did it,' depending on the intended meaning. Translators must consider the broader context to accurately capture the intended modality.

- French: 'Peu importe' (no matter);
- English: 'Regardless';

#### 4) Idiomatic Expressions

Modality markers are sometimes embedded within idiomatic expressions or collocations. Translating and interpreting these expressions accurately can be challenging as a literal translation and interpretation may not capture the intended meaning.

##### Example:

The French expression 'avoir la tête dans les nuages' literally translates to 'to have one's head in the clouds'. It is used to express someone being absent-minded or daydreaming. Translating and interpreting this idiomatic modality marker requires finding an equivalent expression in English, such as 'to have one's head in the clouds' or "to be lost in thought".

- French: 'Ça va mal tourner' (it will go bad);
- English: 'It will end badly';

#### 5) Language Structure

Some languages have different grammatical structures or word order, which may impact the placement or form of modality markers in a sentence. Adapting these structural differences during translation and interpretation can be complex.

##### Example:

In French, modality markers are often placed in front of the verb. For instance, 'Il faut que tu viennes' translates to 'You must come.' Translators need to adapt the word order and sentence structure to convey the same modality marker placement in English, such as 'You need to come.'

- French: 'Je dois partir' (I must leave)
- English: 'I have to leave'

#### 6) Lack of Direct Equivalents

Some modality markers may not have direct equivalents in other languages. Translators may need to use a combination of words, phrases, or alternative strategies to convey the intended modality accurately.

##### Example:

The French word 'donc' is a modality marker that can express logical consequence or inference. It doesn't have a direct translation and interpretation in English, but it can be substituted with expressions like 'so,' 'therefore,' or 'thus' depending on the context and intended meaning.

- French: 'Apparemment' (Apparently)
- English: 'Seemingly' or 'It seems'

### 7) Subjectivity and Register

Modality markers can reflect the speaker's subjective viewpoint or the formality level of the discourse. Translating and interpreting such markers requires a deep understanding of the target language's nuances and appropriate register choices.

#### Example:

In French, the phrase 'Il est important que tu assistes à la réunion' conveys necessity in a formal register. In a less formal register, a translation and interpretation like 'Tu devrais vraiment venir à la réunion' expresses the same modality but with a different tone. Translators need to choose expressions that match the desired register and convey the intended modality in the target language.

- French: 'Il est préférable de' (it is preferable to)

- English: 'It is advisable to'

These examples highlight the challenges faced when translating and interpreting modality markers between French and English, including cultural differences, linguistic nuances, idiomatic expressions, word order, lack of direct equivalents, and register choices. Translators must carefully consider these factors to ensure an accurate and effective translation and interpretation of modality markers.

When translating and interpreting modality markers from French into English, it's crucial to consider the context, sentence structure and intended meaning in order to accurately convey the modality of the original statement. Additionally, consulting native speakers or experienced translators can be helpful in overcoming these challenges.

### 3.3 Modality

The notion of modality features among the most complex linguistic phenomena across languages. Throughout the years, scholars have tackled it from different perspectives: philosophical, pragmatic, semantic and linguistic. According to Lyons (1977), modality is a linguistic system by which speakers express non-factual, non-referential meaning relating to possibility, necessity, likelihood, and the speaker's attitude towards the proposition being made. This definition implies, as Coates (1988) explains, that modality refers to the means whereby speakers indicate their attitude to the factuality, desirability, or feasibility of the proposition. In this vein, modality is a linguistic concept that plays a crucial role in expressing various meanings and perspectives in language. It is the grammatical category that speakers have at their disposal to take a stance alongside the proposition they are making.

Sweetser (1990) describes this concept as the way in which speakers mark their commitment or lack of commitment, their orientation, or their stance towards states of affairs. Furthermore, according to Palmer (2001), modality provides a way to express subjective viewpoints by modifying the proposition's truth value, thus reflecting the speaker's attitude and evaluation. Discussing the notion of modality, Halliday and Hasan state that "*the speaker's judgement, or request of the judgement of the listener, on the status of what is being said... What the modality system does is to construe the region of uncertainty that lies between "yes" and "no"*" (2014: 176).

### 3.3.1 Types of Modality

As seen above, modality, a fundamental aspect of language, allows us to express various attitudes, beliefs, obligations, and abilities. Throughout the years, linguists have offered various classifications in the study of modality. In this section, each type will be explored in detail with examples for proper illustration.

#### 1) Epistemic Modality

Epistemic modality refers to the speaker's assessment of the value of truth in terms of knowledge, belief, or uncertainty. It deals with probabilities, possibilities, and confidence levels associated with propositions. Examples include 'She might be at home' (possibility), 'He must be tired' (certainty), and 'I don't know if it will happen' (uncertainty).

Epistemic modality pertains to the expression of subjective judgements, beliefs, or uncertainty. It focuses on the speaker's perspective and the degree of certainty or probability associated with a statement. Epistemic modality deals with expressions of knowledge, belief, doubt, and certainty. It allows speakers to convey their opinions, assumptions, or evaluations about the likelihood or truthfulness of a proposition. Epistemic modality often involves modal verbs such as 'might,' 'may,' 'could,' 'must,' and adverbs like 'probably,' 'possibly,' and 'certainly.'

Examples of epistemic modality include:

- a) It may rain later today (Expressing a possibility).
- b) He must be tired after such a long journey (Expressing a high degree of certainty).
- c) I think she might have forgotten her keys (Expressing a tentative belief).
- d) There's a chance they could win the competition (Expressing a likelihood).
- e) It is inconceivable that she would betray her friends (Expressing an extreme unlikelihood).

Epistemic modality involves expressing degrees of certainty, belief, or knowledge. It reflects the speaker's evaluation of the truth or likelihood of a proposition. According to Palmer (2001), epistemic modality is concerned with the speaker's view of the possibility, probability, or necessity of a proposition being true.

#### 2) Deontic Modality

Deontic modality encompasses expressions related to obligations, permissions, prohibitions, and freedom of action. It is concerned with norms, rules, and duties. Examples include 'You should study for the exam' (obligation), 'You may leave now' (permission), and 'You must not enter without permission' (prohibition). Deontic modality refers to the expression of moral obligation, permission, prohibition, or necessity. It focuses on normative judgements regarding what is required, allowed, or forbidden. This modality type deals with expressions of necessity, obligation, permission, and prohibition. It is commonly used to convey directives, rules, and social norms. Deontic modality often involves modal verbs such as 'should,' 'must,' 'ought to,' 'have to,' and adverbs like 'necessarily,' 'obligatorily,' and 'permissibly.' Eg: You **must** submit the report by tomorrow. This sentence expresses a high level of obligation. The interlocutor is obliged to submit the report.

Examples of deontic modality include:



- a) You should apologize for your behaviour (Expressing an obligation).
- b) He must not enter the restricted area without permission (Expressing a prohibition).
- c) Students are required to attend the seminar (Expressing a requirement).
- d) You may borrow the book from the library (Expressing permission).
- e) It is necessary to submit the application before the deadline (Expressing necessity).

From the above examples, it is evident that the deontic modality involves expressing permission, obligation, or necessity. It reflects the speaker's evaluation of what is allowed, required, or mandated. According to Coates (1988), deontic modality concerns the speaker's evaluation of the desirability or obligation of an action.

### 3) Dynamic Modality

Dynamic modality focuses on expressions related to ability, willingness, intention, and necessity regarding actions. It deals with the capability or inability to perform certain acts. Examples include 'I can swim' (ability), 'They intend to attend the conference' (intention), and 'He has to work on the project' (necessity). Dynamic modality refers to the expression of ability, willingness, intention, or capacity. It focuses on the potential of an individual or entity to perform an action. This modality type deals with expressions of capability, permission, intention, and potential. It allows speakers to indicate what they or others can or cannot do. Dynamic modality often involves modal verbs such as 'can,' 'could,' 'may,' 'might,' 'will,' 'would,' and adverbs like 'possibly,' 'probably,' and 'definitely'. For instance, he can swim. This sentence expresses ability. In fact, the speaker is referring to his ability to swim.

Examples of dynamic modality include:

- a) She can play the piano beautifully (Expressing the ability).
- b) I cannot solve this complex math problem (Expressing the inability).
- c) We could go for a walk in the park (Expressing a possibility).
- d) They might finish the project ahead of schedule (Expressing a potential outcome).
- e) It is impossible for humans to fly without assistance (Expressing an impossibility).

From the above examples, it is clear that dynamic modality involves expressing ability, capability, or possibility in performing actions. As Rijkhoff (2005) puts it, dynamic modality conveys the speaker's assessment of the feasibility or possibility of an action. It reflects the speaker's evaluation of what can or cannot be done.

#### 3.3.2 Linguistic Means to Express Modality

Halliday (1985) argues that there are several ways and means to express modality. One can use:

##### 1) Modal verbs

Modal verbs include can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will, would, etc. They have syntactic and morphological properties, which distinguish them from primary auxiliaries and full verb. Halliday (1985) lists the most important differences.

- Modals occur as the first element of the verb phrase, as in: It may have been being cleaned.
- Modal verbs do not have -s form, as in: \* He musts go.

- Unlike other auxiliaries, modal verbs have only finite forms, as in: \*John has **musted** play the piano.
- Modals cannot co-occur, as in: \*He **may will** come.
- Modal verbs do not occur in the imperative, as in: Can open the door.

Irrespective of the systems of classification developed by linguists through out the years, they agree that there are a number of modal auxiliaries at the core of modality. These are called the central or core modal auxiliaries (cf. Biber, 2004; and Aarts, 2014). Central modal auxiliaries include the following auxiliary verbs: can, could, may, might, shall, should, will, would and must.

On the other hand, marginal auxiliaries are verbs with a much lower degree of the qualities of modal auxiliaries. To Aarts (2014), this class includes dare, need, and ought (to). In fact, 'dare' is seen to instantiate dynamic modality, but it lacks definite modal meaning. 'Need', although clearly modal by meaning, cannot be included as a full modal auxiliary as it has no past tense, while ought cannot be included since it is syntactically followed by 'to'.

## 2) Compound Modal Verbs

Compound modal verbs express perfect aspect of events and actions. In the English language, these constructions consist of a modal verb + have + past participle. Since French does not have direct equivalent for modal verbs, compound modals obviously do not exist; they are usually equivalent to a French verb in a perfect tense or mood plus an infinitive.

### ○ **Could have**

May have and might have are used to express possibility or doubt about an action or an event in the past.

E.g. He could have been right. I could have driven there.

### ○ **May have/Might have**

May have and might have are used to express possibility or doubt about an action or an event in the past.

I may/might have left too early. She may/might have been right.

### ○ **Must have**

Must have is used to express an obligation in the perfective aspect.

He must have forgotten. I must have tripped.

### ○ **Shall have/ Will have**

Shall have and will have plus a past participle both express the future perfect.

E.g. We shall have overcome! I'll have left by 2 pm. .

### ○ **Should have**

Should have is used to form the independent clause in the third the conditional sentence to express regret about a past action or inaction.

E.g. You should have studied more. We should have tried again.

○ **Would have**

Would have equals the French conditional perfect.

I would have liked to see it. You would have gotten sick.

**3) Nouns**

In speech, the use of nouns such as obligation, necessity, possibility, chance, hope, expectation, intention and determination, clearly indicates the speaker's position as to the content of his/her utterance. Here are some examples: My buying a new car in July is a **possibility**. The interns have the **ability** to give 100% results due to their hard work and dedication.

**4) Adjectives**

Certain adjectives like possible, necessary, probable, certain, likely, and impossible can express modality when used to modify nouns or noun phrases such as conceivable, possible, likely, obvious, appropriate, sure, surprise, able, willing, doubtful and certain, as in: - It is **possible** that I will buy a new car in July.

**5) Adverbs**

Moreover, modal adverbs are also used to convey speakers' attitudes. They include adverbs such as possibly, certainly, perhaps, definitely, probably, maybe, such as hardly, evidently, assuredly, fortunately, regrettably, surprisingly, which all convey modality by modifying the proposition as in: **Perhaps** I will buy a new car in July.

**6) Lexical verbs**

Some lexical verbs have modal properties. When used in a sentence, such verbs modify the main verb to convey modality such as 'doubt', 'think', 'believe', 'predict', 'suggest', 'want', 'prefer', 'desire', 'permit', 'forbid', etc. as in: I **doubt** that he will win.

**7) Modal phrases or constructions**

Some phrases or constructions, such as 'it's possible that,' 'it is necessary to,' 'it seems,' 'it appears,' 'in my opinion,' etc. convey modality by indicating the speaker's subjective evaluation of the rest of the sentence in which they are used. E.g. **It seems** the economy is bad.

**8) Subjunctive mood and some lexical expressions**

In some languages, the subjunctive mood is used to express modality by indicating doubt, possibility, or hypothetical situations. The same applies to some words and expressions, such as 'want', 'wish', 'hope', 'believe', 'doubt', 'fear', and 'expect', can also express modality when used in context.

**3.3.3 Modality in Political Discourse**

According to Sinclair and Coulthard (1975), politicians often employ modal expressions to convey certainty, uncertainty, obligation, necessity, possibility, and probability. Modal verbs, such as 'can,' 'could,' 'may,' 'might,' 'shall,' 'should,' 'will,' and 'would,' are frequently used to indicate different levels of commitment and certainty. Additionally, adverbs and adjectives

with modal-like properties, such as 'likely,' 'possibly,' 'surely,' 'certainly,' 'probably,' 'necessary,' and 'essential,' contribute to the expression of modality in political speeches.

Modality, as a linguistic construct, plays a significant role in political discourse. It refers to the expression of attitudes, opinions, beliefs, and evaluations by speakers/writers. In the context of political speeches, modality allows political leaders to persuade, motivate, and influence their audience. The study of modality in political discourse has received considerable attention in the field of linguistics, translation and interpretation studies.

Modality plays a pivotal role in communication, enabling speakers to express their subjective viewpoints, attitudes, and evaluations. It encompasses different types, such as alethic, epistemic, deontic, and dynamic. Linguistic means such as modal verbs, adverbs, adjectives, modal phrases, subjunctive mood, and lexical expressions are utilized to express modality and communicate the nuances of speakers' perspectives effectively. Furthermore, modality is crucial in political discourse for its role in persuasion, argumentation, and identity construction. The studies reviewed highlight the widespread use of modals and their influence on audience perception and responses. The complexities of translating and interpreting modality and achieving equivalence across languages are also emphasized.

#### **4. Methodology**

This section discusses the research design, data collection instruments and data analysis procedures.

##### **4.1 Research Design**

This is an analytical corpus-based qualitative study. As such, it offers a comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon under investigation; casing point, the translation and interpretation of modality markers in President Paul Biya's end-of-year speeches. The research was based on a parallel corpus made up of source text (ST) segments (French) with their equivalent target text (TT) segments (English) of modality markers in President Paul Biya's end-of-year speeches. After analysing the corpus, instances of modality markers were identified, classified, and the strategies used were determined. This was achieved through scrutiny at the macro and micro textual levels, using Tourey (1995)'s DTS, through a nine-entry analysis grid designed and propounded by Losenje (2022).

##### **4.2 Instruments**

In this research data were collected through two main instruments, namely observation and systematic documentary research. Through both intensive and extensive reading, the researcher could go through various materials and sift out relevant information.

##### **4.3 Data Analysis**

To analyze the data, Tourey (1995)'s DTS was used through a nine-entry analysis grid designed and propounded by Losenje 2022. The first three entries of the grid represent Tourey's Identification phase, where the source text segment is presented, the element of interest highlighted, and the modality expressed determined. Two entries are allocated to the

Description phase. Here, the possible translation and interpretation constraint is stated, and the target segment is presented. Concerning the analysis phase, the last four entries respectively present the micro strategy, the macro strategy, the translation and interpretation theories at play and the researcher's appraisal of the translation and interpretation methods adopted.

#### 4.4 Presentation of Results

The results of the study are presented in grids where each of the research objectives is clearly highlighted.

### 5. Epistemic Modality Markers in President Paul Biya's End-of-Year Speeches

As indicated earlier, epistemic modality is concerned with expressing degrees of certainty or knowledge regarding a proposition. It reflects the speaker's subjective beliefs or opinions rather than objective facts. Epistemic modality allows speakers to convey their certainty or uncertainty, speculation, probability, or doubt about a given statement. It represents the speaker's viewpoint or perspective on the likelihood of an event happening.

Below are some epistemic modality markers found in President Paul Biya's end-of-year speeches. They include a variety of markers including modal verbs, double modals, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, some lexical verbs and modal expressions.

#### 5.1 Modal Verbs

In the corpus, several modal verbs are used to indicate epistemic modality. They include:

##### Excerpt 1

A. Identification		
a.	Source text	Nous <u>devons poursuivre</u> les réformes structurelles engagées dans le cadre du programme économique et financier conclu avec le Fonds Monétaire International et les autres partenaires au développement (2022 : 6).
b.	Element (s) of interest	Nous <u>devons poursuivre les réformes</u>
c.	Modality expressed	The necessity to continue implementing structural reforms
B. Description		
d.	Possible Translation and interpretation Constraint(s)	Difference in language structure
e.	Target text	Ongoing structural <u>reforms</u> under the economic and financial programme concluded with the International Monetary Fund and other development partners <u>must be continued</u> . (2022: 6)
C. Explanation		
f.	Translation and interpretation technique	Modulation
g.	Translation and interpretation strategy	Domestication

h.	Translation and interpretation theory	Linguistic theory
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### 5.1.1 Value

The modality expressed in this excerpt is the **necessity** to continue implementing structural reforms. The difficulty involved here is on the difference in the structure of the SL and the TL. The translator used the linguistic theory via the modulation technique to successfully convey the idea of necessity across, while adhering to the structure of the TL.

#### Excerpt 2

A. Identification		
a.	Source text	Comme <b>vous avez pu le constater</b> , notre pays, comme tant d'autres, a continué de faire face, en 2022, à des chocs exogènes (2022 : 2).
b.	Element(s) of interest	<b>vous avez pu le constater</b>
c.	Modality expressed	possibility for the audience to note an issue
B. Description		
d.	Possible Translation and interpretation Constraint(s)	Difference in language structure
e.	Target text	<b>You must have noted that</b> in 2022, our country, like so many others, continued to face exogenous shocks (2022: 2).
C. Explanation		
f.	Translation and interpretation technique	Modulation
g.	Translation and interpretation strategy	Domestication
h.	Translation and interpretation theory	Communication theory

### 5.1.2 Value

The modality expressed in this excerpt is the **possibility for the audience to note an issue**. The difficulty involved here lies on the difference in the structure of the SL and the TL. The translator used the linguistic theory via the modulation technique to successfully convey the idea of possibility across, while adhering to the structure of the TL. A different technique, if poorly handled especially, could have resulted in an inaccurate translation.

#### Excerpt 3

A. Identification		
a.	Source text	Cependant, il est de plus en plus évident que notre pays, comme bien d'autres en Afrique et ailleurs, <b>ne pourra pas</b> indéfiniment échapper à un réajustement des prix des produits pétroliers [...] (2022 : 5).
b.	Element(s) of interest	<b>ne pourra pas</b>
c.	Modality expressed	Unlikelihood of Cameroon averting a petroleum products price adjustment
B. Description		

d.	Possible Translation and interpretation Constraint(s)	Difference in language structure
e.	Target text	However, it is becoming increasingly clear that Cameroon, like many other countries in Africa and elsewhere, <b>will not be able</b> to indefinitely avert a petroleum products price adjustment (2022: 5).
<b>C. Explanation</b>		
f.	Translation and interpretation technique	Modulation
g.	Translation and interpretation strategy	Domestication
h.	Translation and interpretation theory	Communication theory

### 5.1.3 Value

In this excerpt, the modality expressed is **unlikelihood** on the part of Cameroon to avert a petroleum products price adjustment. The difficulty involved here is on the difference in the structure of the SL and the TL. The translator used the linguistic theory via the modulation technique to successfully convey the idea of possibility across, while adhering to the structure of the TL. A different technique, if poorly handled especially, could have resulted in an inaccurate translation or a wrong modality.

## 6. Deontic Modality Markers in President Paul Biya's End-of-Year Speeches

As presented in the literature review, deontic modality expresses obligation, permission, or necessity in relation to norms, laws, moral principles, or social expectations. It deals with what is required or permitted. Deontic modality is primarily used to convey directives, permissions, or prohibitions. It expresses the speaker's assessment of what should or should not be done based on norms, rules, or societal standards. In President Paul Biya's speech from 2015 to 2022, deontic modality is marked by modal verbs, double modals, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, some lexical verbs and modal expressions.

### 6.1 Nouns

In the corpus, several nouns are used to indicate epistemic modality. They include:

#### Excerpt 4

<b>A. Identification</b>		
a.	Source text	En tant que Nation, <b>nous avons le devoir</b> et l'occasion de rappeler au monde que nous sommes un peuple uni et indomptable [...] (2021 : 10)
b.	Element(s) of interest	Nous avons <b>le devoir</b> et l'occasion
c.	Modality expressed	Obligation
<b>B. Description</b>		

d.	Possible Translation and interpretation Constraint(s)	Linguistic nuance
e.	Target text	As a nation, <b>we have the duty</b> and opportunity to remind the world that we are a united and indomitable people [...] (2021: 9).
<b>C. Explanation</b>		
f.	Translation and interpretation technique	Literal translation
g.	Translation and interpretation strategy	Domestication
h.	Translation and interpretation theory	Linguistic theory

**6.1.1 Value**

This excerpt expresses the obligation, as a nation, to protect the image of the country. This excerpt is particularly challenging to render because the choice of a wrong TL equivalent will result in an inaccurate translation. To overcome that, the translator used the linguistic theory, through literal translation and interpretation to choose a term that best captures the speaker's mind in a clear way. This technique is effective because the meaning conveyed is the same both in the ST and in the TT.

**Excerpt 5**

<b>A. Identification</b>		
a.	Source text	Ce redressement doit être pour nous <b>une ardente obligation</b> qui mobilisera toutes nos énergies (2019 : 3).
b.	Element(s) of interest	nous <b>une ardente obligation</b>
c.	Modality expressed	Obligation
<b>B. Description</b>		
d.	Possible Translation and interpretation Constraint(s)	Linguistic nuance
e.	Target text	We must consider such recovery <b>an overriding obligation</b> that will mobilize all our energies (2019: 2).
<b>C. Explanation</b>		
f.	Translation and interpretation technique	Literal translation
g.	Translation and interpretation strategy	Foreignization
h.	Translation and interpretation theory	Linguistic theory

**6.1.2 Value**

This excerpt expresses the obligation that the recovery represents for the people. This excerpt is particularly challenging to render because the choice of a wrong TL equivalent will result in an inaccurate translation. To overcome that, the translator used the linguistic theory, through literal translation and interpretation to choose a term that best captures the speaker's mind in a clear way. This technique is effective because the meaning conveyed is the same both in the ST and in the TT.



## 7. Dynamic Modality Markers in President Paul Biya's End-of-Year Speeches

Dynamic modality conveys the ability or willingness to perform an action. It deals with an individual's capacity, capability, or intention to carry out a specific action. Dynamic modality focuses on the feasibility of an action and represents the speaker's perception of whether someone can or wants to perform a particular task. In President Paul Biya's speech from 2015 to 2022, dynamic modality is marked by modal verbs, double modals, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, some lexical verbs and modal expressions.

### 7.1 Lexical Verbs

In the corpus, several modal verbs are used to indicate epistemic modality. They include:

#### Excerpt 6

A. Identification		
a.	Source text	notre pays est désormais <b>capable</b> d'offrir des soins de qualité dans des domaines particulièrement pointus, tels que la chirurgie cardiaque ou la transplantation rénale [...] (2022 : 8).
b.	Element(s) of interest	pays est désormais <b>capable</b> d'offrir des soins
c.	Modality expressed	Ability
B. Description		
d.	Possible Translation and interpretation Constraint(s)	Linguistic nuance
e.	Target text	Our country is now <b>capable</b> of providing quality healthcare in highly specialized fields such as cardiac surgery and renal transplantation [...] (2022: 8).
C. Explanation		
f.	Translation and interpretation technique	Literal translation
g.	Translation and interpretation strategy	Foreignization
h.	Translation and interpretation theory	Linguistic theory

#### 7.1.1 Value

This excerpt expresses the ability of the country to provide 'quality healthcare in highly specialized fields such as cardiac surgery and renal transplantation'. Here, the difficulty resides in rendering the modality in a way that respects the culture of the TA. That is why the translator, relying on the linguistic theory, used literal translation and interpretation to capture the meaning of the ST. This technique is effective because, the meaning conveyed is the same.

#### Excerpt 7

A. Identification		
a.	Source text	L'accès aux intrants a été garanti, <b>permettant</b> ainsi de poursuivre les activités de production et de réduire le risque d'insécurité alimentaire (2022 : 3).

b.	Element(s) of interest	<b>permettant</b> ainsi de poursuivre
c.	Modality expressed	Possibility
<b>B. Description</b>		
d.	Possible Translation and interpretation Constraint(s)	Linguistic nuance
e.	Target text	Access to inputs was secured, thus <b>helping</b> to maintain production activities and to mitigate food insecurity risks (2022: 3).
<b>C. Explanation</b>		
f.	Translation and interpretation technique	Modulation
g.	Translation and interpretation strategy	Domestication
h.	Translation and interpretation theory	Linguistic theory

### 7.1.2 Value

This excerpt expresses the ability to maintain production activities with the help of ‘access to inputs’. Here, the challenge lies in rendering the modality in a way that respects the TL norms. That is why the translator, relied on the linguistic theory, using modulation to convey the meaning of the ST in a clear way. This technique is effective because, even though there is the change in perspective in the TT, the meaning expressed is the same.

#### Excerpt 8

<b>A. Identification</b>		
a.	Source text	<b>Les efforts</b> considérables qui ont été jusqu’à présent accomplis par la communauté scientifique et les États <b>n’ont pas encore permis d’enrayer cette maladie</b> (2021 : 1).
b.	Element(s) of interest	<b>Les efforts... n’ont pas encore permis d’enrayer cette maladie</b>
c.	Modality expressed	Ability
<b>B. Description</b>		
d.	Possible Translation and interpretation Constraint(s)	Linguistic nuance
e.	Target text	The disease has not been eradicated despite significant efforts by the scientific community and governments (2021: 1).
<b>C. Explanation</b>		
f.	Translation and interpretation technique	Deletion
g.	Translation and interpretation strategy	Domestication
h.	Translation and interpretation theory	Linguistic theory

### 7.1.3 Value

This excerpt expresses the ability to eradicate the disease through the efforts of the scientific community and governments. Here, the difficulty resides in rendering the modality in a way that respects the culture of the TA. That is why the translator, relying on the linguistic theory, used deletion without betraying the meaning of the ST. This technique is effective because, even though there is no modality in the TT, the meaning conveyed is the same.

#### Excerpt 9

A. Identification		
a.	Source text	D'autre part, des mesures seront prises dans les meilleurs délais possibles pour accorder aux collectivités territoriales de notre pays les compétences <b>qui leur permettront de prendre</b> une plus large part dans la gestion des affaires locales (2018 : 3).
b.	Element(s) of interest	les compétences <b>qui leur permettront de prendre</b> une plus large part
c.	Modality expressed	Ability
B. Description		
d.	Possible Translation and interpretation Constraint(s)	Linguistic nuance
e.	Target text	On the other hand, measures will be taken as soon as possible to give the local communities of our country the powers <b>that would enable them</b> to play a greater role in the management of local affairs (2018: 3).
C. Explanation		
f.	Translation and interpretation technique	Literal translation
g.	Translation and interpretation strategy	Foreignization
h.	Translation and interpretation theory	Linguistic theory

### 7.1.4 Value

This excerpt expresses the ability of local communities to play a greater role. Here, the difficulty lies in rendering the modality in a way that respects the norms of the TL. That is why the translator, relying on the linguistic theory, used literal translation and interpretation to maintain the meaning of the ST. This technique is effective because in the TT, there is no loss of meaning.

#### Excerpt 10

A. Identification		
a.	Source text	Je <b>voudrais</b> m'y attarder un peu (2022 : 3).
b.	Element(s) of interest	Je <b>voudrais</b> m'y attarder
c.	Modality expressed	Permission

<b>B. Description</b>		
d.	Possible Translation and interpretation Constraint(s)	Idiomatcity
e.	Target text	I <b>would like to</b> dwell on this for a moment (2022: 4).
<b>C. Explanation</b>		
f.	Translation and interpretation technique	Modulation
g.	Translation and interpretation strategy	Domestication
h.	Translation and interpretation theory	Linguistic theory

**7.1.5 Value**

In this excerpt, the modality expressed permission. Here, the difficulty lies in rendering the modality in a way that respects the culture of the TA. That is why the translator, relying on the communicative theory, used modulation without betraying the meaning of the ST. This technique is effective because the meaning conveyed is the same in both the SL and the TL.

**Excerpt 11**

<b>A. Identification</b>		
a.	Source text	Nous <b>avons voulu</b> en faire un grand moment de fraternité (2021 : 9).
b.	Element(s) of interest	Nous <b>avons voulu</b> en faire un grand moment
c.	Modality expressed	Volition
<b>B. Description</b>		
d.	Possible Translation and interpretation Constraint(s)	Difference in language structure
e.	Target text	We <b>want</b> it to be a great moment of brotherhood (2021: 9).
<b>C. Explanation</b>		
f.	Translation and interpretation technique	Literal
g.	Translation and interpretation strategy	Foreignization
h.	Translation and interpretation theory	Linguistic theory

**7.1.6 Value**

This excerpt expresses the volition of the speaker’s wish as far as organizing the 2021 AFCON is concerned. Here, the difficulty lies in rendering the modality in a way that respects the

structure of the TA. That is why the translator relied on the linguistic theory and used the transposition technique without altering the meaning of the ST. This technique is effective because, even though there is no modality in the TT, the meaning conveyed is the same.

## 8. Conclusion

This paper analysed the methodology adopted in the translation and interpretation of modality in President Paul Biya's end-of-year speeches. It was motivated by the fact that the highly polysemous nature of modality, which usually misleads inexperienced translators with false cognates and tricky nuances, is a fertile ground for translation and interpretation errors. Thus, the urgent need for an analytical paper that offers an illustration of the mechanism and expertise required in the process.

Studying how modality markers are translated in President Paul Biya's year-end speeches can offer insights across fields such as translation and interpretation studies, political discourse analysis, linguistics, and cultural studies and allow for translation and interpretation quality assurance.

Studying the translation and interpretation of modality markers offers a deeper understanding of how languages and cultures convey modality, certainty, likelihood, permission and ability. This exploration uncovers subtle nuances and linguistic differences in expressing attitudes and epistemic viewpoints.

Examining the translation and interpretation of modality markers raises awareness of the cultural complexities that arise when translating and interpreting speeches. It highlights the significance of preserving the speakers' intentions and style while ensuring accessibility for cultural audiences.

Analyzing the translation and interpretation of modality markers in speeches provides opportunities for professional translators, revisers and proofreaders specializing in political translation. It helps them hone their abilities to convey nuances related to attitude and certainty in the target language while staying true to the essence of the source text. Likewise, exploring how modality markers are translated into political discourse enhances language professionals' skills in cultural communication. It deepens their understanding of variations and allows them to express modality and certainty, thereby enhancing their capacity to bridge cultural gaps through their translation and interpretation works.

## Conflict of Interest Statement

This article is the original work of the authors. It has not been published before.

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