

LINGUISTIC MANIFESTATION OF MODALITY IN DUL JOHNSON'S *ACROSS THE GULF*

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Abstract

The novels by Dul Johnson have been populated in the largest part by reviews that provide valuable, informative and critical summary of the texts as well as evaluate his prowess as a writer by considering his creative ability to foreground pertinent issues in the Nigerian social, political, economic and religious space. However, the few studies on the language of these novels have focused more on their general stylistic features and some aspects of their pragmatic underpinnings than on the discourse significance. Thus, this study, analyzes the discourse roles of linguistic modality in Dul Johnson's *Across the Gulf*. Twenty (20) excerpts from the text were purposefully chosen and examined using Simpson's (1993) conceptual framework on linguistic modality. The intention is to identify the categories of modality used in the text, their discourse functions as well as the core themes which they have been used to convey. The different types of modality that were discovered include deontic modality, to communicate anxiety, frustration, and rejection; buolomaic modality, to signal supplication, expectation, and tendency; epsitemic modality, to relay information, resolution, and realization; and perception modality, to express assumption, evaluation, and deduction. The author used modality as a discourse technique to highlight the major themes of betrayal, fate, deceit, murder, infidelity, and the quest for identity. Modality depicts the real state of the Nigerian society fictionalized in the text. This study advances knowledge on the English modal verbs and offers a framework for understanding the meaning of literary dialogue.

Keywords: Buolomaic Modality, Deontic Modality, Epistemic modality, Perception Modality

Introduction

Dul Johnson is undoubtedly one of the major figures in contemporary Nigerian literature. This credence is supported by the historical accuracy and all-encompassing scope of his literary works, which span all genres (Mamudu, 2017; C.P & Agofure, 2019; Aluya & Edem, 2020). In essence, it stems from the caliber and quantity of criticisms that these works have elicited. For many years, Dul's creativity has been manifested in an unbroken stream of works, and it has been distinguished by the continuous growth of his idiom, which is today recognised as distinctive. Although his works have made significant contributions to the sociopolitical growth of Nigeria, little systematic research has been done on them from a linguistic perspective. Therefore, the current study aims to broaden the linguistic exploration of the author's *Across the Gulf* by applying Simpson's (1993) framework on modality. The intention is to determine the categories of modality used in the text, their discourse functions as well as the main themes which the system of modality has been used to convey.

Conceptual Framework

The interpersonal meta-function of language is concerned with the orientation, shaping, and evaluation of utterances as discourse. The grammatical system of modality, one of the key tools for constructing interpersonal meaning, serves as the primary means of conveying this function. Clark (2007) defines modality as the way that speakers and writers use language to comment on or express attitudes and views, as well as to portray their points of view. To Norgaard et al., (2010), modality is the capacity of language to convey the speaker's or writer's attitude toward the proposition being made. According to them, "attitudes" refers to a variety of speaker responses, ranging from desire to obligation and duty, certainty or uncertainty regarding the likelihood of the propositional content of the utterance. In a similar vein, Wales (2011) asserts that modalities are related to speakers' attitudes and perspectives regarding the propositions they communicate. The foregoing expositions indicate that modality is that part of language

which helps in understanding how meanings are encoded at the interpersonal level. Grammatically, it is most commonly realised through modal auxiliary verbs, lexical verbs, adverbs and adjectives (Clark, 2007).

The taxonomies of modality have received a lot of linguistic commentary. For example, Quirk et al., (1985) distinguish between intrinsic and extrinsic modality. Permission, obligation, and volition are examples of terms with intrinsic meanings that suggest some degree of internal human control over the course of events. Conversely, the extrinsic deals with those meanings such as 'possibility', 'necessity', and prediction' which do not primarily involve human control of events, but do typically involve human judgment of what is or is not likely to happen. Some logicians and linguists replace the terms 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic' with further denominations, the most common being 'deontic' (Lyons, 1977; Perkins, 1983; Allan, 2003) or 'root' (Coates, 1983) for the former, and 'epistemic' (Lyons, 1977; Palmer, 1986, 1990, 2001; Perkins, 1983) for the latter.

Palmer (1987, 1990) divides modality into subtypes; that is, epistemic, deontic, and dynamic. Epistemic modality is the speaker's perspective on the proposition's veracity. Deontic modality refers to the speaker's or writer's attitude and active participation in events, whereas dynamic modality is concerned with the participant's responsibilities. He contends that epistemic and deontic modals—which have illocutionary force—are the actual modals.

Simpson (1993) defines four unique types of modality as deontic, boulomaic, epistemic and perception. He adopts and reviews these categories from the two denominations that Quirk et al. and Perkins had previously developed. Boulomaic modality refers to the concepts of "desires" and "will," whereas epistemic modality shows speakers' confidence, or lack thereof, in the truth of the statement. Perception modality is a sub-system of epistemic modality that refers to human perception.

Fowler (1996) lists truth, obligation, desirability, and permission as the four components of modality. Truth denotes a

commitment to the veracity of any assertion made or a forecast of the possibility of a specific outcome. He notes that this modality is present whenever the speaker or writer states a prediction about what will, could, would, or ought to occur. The range of truth modalities includes complete certainty introduced by "will" and uncertainty introduced by "could". The same thing could be implied by modal adjectives like "likely" and "unlikely," as well as adverbs like "certainly." "Desirability" relates to when the speaker or writer expresses approval of the state of affairs being communicated; "obligation" refers to when speakers and writers express an opinion on what ought to or should happen; while "permission" is about speakers and writers granting permission for a certain action and is signaled by "may" or "shall". As opposed to "must," which is more definitive or even necessary, an auxiliary in this context may imply a degree of caution or hedging.

Halliday (2004) splits modality into modalisation and modulation. "Modulation" describes the level of willingness, readiness, and/or inclination of proposals as well as offers or willingness to do or give, whereas "modalisation" relates to the validity, likelihood, and/or certainty that a speaker attaches to his ideas or observations. Speakers can make claims about likelihood, regularity, duty, or inclination by using modalisation and modulation. These statements are "probability" signals, which denote that which is certain, probable, or possible; "usualness" denotes that which is customary, constant, or occasional; "obligation" denotes that which is demanded, presumptively permitted; and "inclination," which denotes resolve, keenness, or willingness.

To analyse the levels and scales of modality, Halliday (1994) identifies three fundamental values that are connected to modal judgment. These are of high value (expressed by the verbs "must", "ought to", "need," "has," or "is to"); medium value (expressed by the verbs "will," "would," "shall," or "should"); and low value (expressed by the verbs "may," "might," "can," or "could"). Additionally, he argues that how explicitly speakers wish to commit themselves to the statement or suggestion depends on the orientation of the modality, which can be either subjective or objective. The term objective denotes the absence

of such involvement, while subjective denotes the speaker's active participation in the action or event. Speakers choose options in the modality system to modalise a message. These decisions include the modality to use, the message's type of value, and the modality's orientation. The statement or strategy is more useful as a result of these decisions.

From the explanation above, it is clear that linguistic modality is a reliable tool for assessing how speakers and writers feel about their subject. This study will employ Simpson's (1993) model to analyse Dul Johnson's *Across the Gulf* for the sort of modality used, their discourse functions, and the primary themes which modality has been used to express.

Methodology

Dul Johnson's *Across the Gulf* served as the source of the study's data. Short (1996) observes that the novel is perhaps the most problematic genre to investigate linguistically owing to its length. Thus, he advises that in order to conduct a thorough examination, only a few excerpts should be chosen. This concept served as the foundation for the twenty (20) narrative conversations that were purposefully chosen from the text. The analysis is guided by Simpson's (1993) modality framework.

To conduct the investigation, the narrative dialogues were isolated and examined along the four categories of modality (deontic, buolomaic, epistemic and perception modality) as proposed by Simpson (1993). In this case, the textual dialogues of the narrative fiction were scrutinized in detail to identify the linguistic items that were categorized as the items of modality. The description, explanation and interpretation of the categories of modality were carried out using Halliday's (1994) parameters for analyzing the degrees and scales of modality. Since the presentation of results of the analysis is descriptive, the research method for this paper belongs to the qualitative type.

Analysis and Discussion

From the foregoing preliminary discourse, Dul Johnson's *Across the Gulf* will now be analysed. The analysis will foreground the types of modality used, their discourse functions as well as how the systems of modality have been used to relay the central themes in the text. The analysis begins with deontic modality.

Deontic Modality for Apprehension, Frustration and Rejection

Hardly any of the excerpts selected for study is crafted without deontic modality. Consider the following examples:

Excerpt 1

The sound of these explosions reverberated and **rolled** like a physical thing riding the waves of a wind, like something that **would crush** them under its sheer weight. (10)

This is a narrative where the action is relayed using deontic modal expressions. So much is obvious, but it is the manner in which this action is relayed that is rather more significant here. The narrator relates the theme of war and uses the dynamic verbs, *reverberated* and *rolled* to depict the commotion that accompanies it. He refers to Ofala and Ifunanya who were eye witness to these explosions. The modal, *would*, as well as the dynamic verb, *crush*, are of deontic meanings indicating possibility; that is, the likelihood of the explosions subduing Ofala and Ifunanya under their sheer weight. Throughout, descriptions are offered as to how the events in the text occur. Besides indicating possibility, the modal, *would*, according to Halliday (1994) shows that the narrator attaches a medium value to the modal judgment and is not actively involved in the event.

Excerpt 2

He closed his eyes again and tried but the words **would not** form. I **cannot** pray, father, I **cannot** pray. (31)

Excerpt two embodies a particular type of modal framework which in narrative discourse is marked by certain key expressions. The narrator refers to Kalu who clearly expresses his own duty in relation to the circumstance surrounding his family. Modality which expresses duty according to Simpson (1993) is known as deontic modality. It is captured in the expression, *I cannot pray, father, I cannot pray*. The modal, *can*, with the negative polarity, *not*, in the expression, ... *I cannot pray*... are utilised to indicate Kalu's inability to discharge his duty. The duty here is self-imposed by Kalu who believes that as the priest of his family, it is his responsibility to pray for them. However, besides indicating inability, the modal aids in unveiling Kalu's confusion and frustration due to the sudden disappearance of his daughter. It is this situation that affects his emotion thereby precluding him from discharging his duty. The orientation of modality in this narrative is subjective; implying that Kalu is actively involved in the action described.

Excerpt 3

I'm afraid that what I was running away from **might happen** and I **will have** myself to blame. (47)

Excerpt three is marked by what Simpson (2004) citing Ukpensky (1973) calls *verba sentiendi* (that is, verbs of perception). It is crafted with lexical items denoting feelings as embodied in the mental process like, *I'm afraid*. Overall, the excerpt is dominated by clearly articulated descriptions of Ifunanya, the protagonist of the novel. Here, the narrator makes sense of the world around the protagonist who expresses apprehension over her too much reliance on Jambut, the medical officer. This apprehension is relayed with the lexical verb, *afraid*. Note that the modals, *might* and *will*, as well as the dynamic verb, *happen*, are deontic in nature conveying different meanings. Whereas, *might* together with *happen* indicate possibility, *will* on the other hand signals prediction and futurity. Prediction in this context implies what the protagonist envisages might occur if she fails to take precaution. Though Ifunanya attaches a low value to the modal judgment in this

proposition, the orientation of modality indicates her active participation in the action being relayed by the narrator.

Excerpt 4

The child **cannot** grow under my roof and I **would not** show affection. (112)

Halliday (1994) submits that speakers use language as the expression of their comments, attitudes and evaluations. This submission is evident in excerpt four where the key marker of deontic modality is expressed through the simple present tense. It allows the narrator to confidently represent the happenings around the character in this text. The modals, *can* and *would*, both with negative polarity are of deontic interpretations. These modal markers are complemented with the phrasal verb, *grow up*, and the lexical verb, *show*, in order to perfectly relay the speaker's proposition. *Cannot* expresses impossibility while *would not* denotes intention. However, whereas *cannot grow* in this context indicates Ofala's resentment and rejection of Ifunanya's child owing to the fact that he is not the biological father, *would not* reveals his intention concerning the child.

Excerpt 5

You fool! You idiot! How **could** you be getting drunk and snoring away like a hog when a bastard son, born of some mercenary Awusa Soldier, is taking away your birthright from you? Eh, how could **you**? (184)

This narrative is characterised by a marked presence of deontic modality. It is constructed with dynamic verbs, that is to say, from raw propositions which have traces of explicit modal comments. Straightforward physical descriptions dominate the narrative dialogue where Ikenna vents his spleen on his son, Chinedu, for his unreasonable behaviour and nonchalance over the birthright saga between him and Nnna. The description here is aided through the

dynamic use of deontic expressions constructed with the modal *could*. *Could*, as used in this context, denotes the possibility of the proposition expressed by the speaker. This possibility is conveyed with his choice of the expressions, ...*getting drunk...*, *snoring away...* and so on used to foreground Chinedu's unreasonable behaviour and unseriousness. The reoccurrence of the modal, *could*, apart from denoting possibility is equally used to highlight the speaker's frustration and resentment over the situation. The orientation of modality in this discourse shows Ikenna's active involvement in the action described in the narrative.

From the foregoing analysis, it can be stated that apart from projecting meanings such as possibility, impossibility, inability, futurity and obligation, deontic modal markers were also employed to express apprehension as in the case of Ifunnaya, rejection on the part of Ofala, frustration by Kalu and resentment by Ikenna respectively. Also, deontic modality serves to indicate power relations between characters in the novel. For instance, power relation is exhibited between Ikenna and Chinedu (see extract 4, pg. 184), Ofala and Ifunnaya (extract 3, pg. 112) as well as Jambut and Ifunnaya (extract 2, pg. 47).

Buolomaic Modality for Supplication, Expectation and Inclination

Buolomaic modality are used by the narrator and characters to express their will and desire in relation to the central themes identified in the text. We provide examples below:

Excerpt 6

He still had a special private word with God before he stepped out. Only then did Nwamaka open her mouth to **wish** him special favour (35)

The overall interpersonal dynamics of this piece of narrative is captured through the narrator's choice of lexical verbs employed to unveil the adverse effect of war. Here, the narrator tries to conceptualise the world around Kalu and his family using the simple past tense. His account is marked by buolomaic modality which refers to the system of

modal markers used for expressing desire and will (Simpson, 1993). Buolomaic modality works principally in this text to foreground the narrator's description of Kalu who has made several efforts to locate his missing daughter. His fruitless search results in an acrimony between him and his wife, Nwamaka, who feels that he had not done enough to find their daughter. The choice of the buolomaic modal verb, *wish*, signals Nwamaka's desire for the return of her daughter. Besides expressing desire and will, buolomaic modality also indicates supplication as conveyed in the expression, *...open her mouth to wish him special favour*.

Excerpt 7

Ofala's head began to spin from the sting of the bitter truth. He quickly grabbed it in his two hands and tried to steady himself. He had **hoped** that Ifunnaya **would deny** what she had just said, **would claim** that it was a slip of the tongue or something. (90)

The lexical verb, *hoped* in excerpt seven is of buolomaic meaning. It is accompanied with the modal verb, *would*, and other verbs such as *deny* and *claim*. These modal markers are employed by the narrator to convey the theme of betrayal in the text. Given the context of the excerpt, Ifunnaya has just divulged a secret which she had kept to herself and Ofala feels displeased because he had been cheated by her. The choice of the lexical verb, *hoped*, indicates expectation. In this context, it shows Ofala's wish and what he had expected from Ifunnaya. Also, the verbs, *would deny* and *would claim*, are equally of buolomaic meanings expressing Ofala's disenchantment on hearing the bitter truth.

Excerpt 8

Ify, he called out gently. Saving lives is next to godliness. We **want to teach** you how to save lives. (39)

Excerpt eight is marked with buolomaic modal markers employed by the narrator to unearth Jambut's willingness to teach

Ifunanya how to save the lives of soldiers who were injured during the war. This necessitates the narrator's choice of the linguistic expression *We want to teach you how to save lives*. Note that the verb, *want*, in this excerpt is the marker signaling buolomaic modality. It is used by the narrator to describe the speaker's desire and willingness.

Excerpt 9

Nweke **would not** deceive him. Nwamaka **would not** fail him. He **hoped** that Kalu had not sprung a surprise. (84)

The lexical items expressing buolomaic modality in excerpt nine are primarily introduced with the verb, *hoped*, as in *...he hoped that Kalu...* and the modal, *would*, as in *Nweke would not...* and *Nwamaka would not...* Observe the narrator's selection of dynamic verbs like, *deceive* and *spring*, they aid in conveying Ofala's suspicion regarding the subject matter being relayed by the narrator. These modal elements allow the narrator to refer to one of Ofala's experiences on the day of his wedding ceremony. The modal, *would*, with negative polarity, *not*, are of buolomaic interpretations. They are accompanied with active verbs like, *deceive and fail*. Also, these verbs in conjunction with the modal verbs with negative polarity are fused in order to perfectly relay the speaker's proposition. The modal, *would not*, is repeatedly deployed to express strong belief in the proposition uttered.

Excerpt 10

As always, she **was eager to escape** from what she had nicknamed *Nkporo-ulo-nso*, *Churchprison*, especially on evenings when her father was not in a prayer or some other meeting at the church. (9)

Excerpt ten is characterised by the presence of buolomaic modal markers used by the narrator to relay the theme of parental bondage. One word from the passage which vividly captures this theme is the coinage *churchprison*. The narrator refers to Ifunnaya in this narrative dialogue. The adjective, *eager*, as well as the dynamic verb, *escape*, are of

buolomaic meaning unveiling her inclination which is to be liberated from her parent's bondage. Here, bondage refers to Ifunanya being always compelled by her father to attend church services even when she is not willing to do so. From the foregoing analysis, it can be affirmed that besides expressing will and desire, buolomaic modality were used by characters to express supplication, indicate expectation and inclination.

Epistemic Modality for information, Resolution and Realisation

The following excerpts illustrate the narrator's and characters' use of epistemic modality and the meanings they convey. The excerpts below contains this:

Excerpt 11

What had **started** as the beginning of a blissful life **ended up** as the beginning of pains, sorrow and loss that **would** dog her all her life; the beginning of a ruined future of a family about to be born. (9)

The narrator in excerpt eleven provides a background information about Ifunanya. Epistemic modality in the narrative dialogue is introduced with the lexical verbs, *started* and *ended*, as well as the modal, *would*. The lexical verb, *had started*, foregrounds the blissful relationship that had commenced between Ifunanya and Ofala while the phrasal verb, *ended up*, signals its termination. Both verbs, that is, *had started* and *ended up*, denote epistemic certainty which implies what the state of affairs expressed by the narrator applies in the material world. This state of affairs refers to the blissful relationship between the protagonist and her fiancé as well as the termination. However, the modal, *would*, denotes prediction or the result of a possible situation and in this case refers to the outcome of the disruption of their wedding plan. Observe the narrator's choice of the expression, *...the beginning of a ruined future of a family about to be born*, it unveils the theme of fate in the novel thereby evoking a sense of pity for the protagonist in the reader.

Excerpt 12

He resolved that he would **tell** Maya everything about Ifunanya, but not just yet. (71)

Excerpt twelve adopts an epistemic modal framework to relay the theme of infidelity. Here, the narrator makes reference to Jambut who is willing to confess his past unfaithfulness to Maya, his wife. This willingness is exemplified with the lexical verbs, *resolved* and *tell*. The choice of *tell* denotes that the speaker (Jambut) judges the proposition expressed by the clause to be necessarily true. Observe the word, *everything*, in the expression ...*he would tell Maya everything*, it connotes the past infidelity which Jambut resolves to confess to her. More so, a close study of the modal, *would*, shows that it is predictive. What this implies is that though Jambut resolves to confess to his wife, the confession will not be done in the immediate.

Excerpt 13

He **knew** they **would come** for him, but that did not worry him. Even if he heard their footsteps he **would not** run and he **would not** turn. (208)

Epistemic modality works in excerpt thirteen to unveil the theme of murder. The narrative dialogue begins with Ofala who anxiously anticipates the arrival of the elders of Okigboli. Having committed murder, Ofala is prepared to face the consequence. The verbs, *knew*, *come* and the modal, *would*, are epistemic in nature. The choice of the verb, *knew*, conveys the speaker's knowledge of the factuality of his proposition. In other words, it implies that the speaker is absolutely sure of his proposition which relays Ofala's imminent arrest by the elders of Okigboli. However, the modal, *would*, is predictive and as such is used to forecast the future. The future here refers to the punishment for his crime. Note that the modal, *would*, with the negative polarity, *not*, in the expressions ...*he would not run...* and ...*he would not turn...* indicate typical behaviour. In this case, it depicts the speaker's

resolution to face the consequence of his crime. A close study of the dialogue shows that though the speaker attaches a medium value to the modal judgment in his proposition, he is involved in the event been relayed.

Excerpt 14

We **will** have all the time as a family to talk about that, and many other things, like your Awusa friend, he added. (66)

The pronoun, *we*, in excerpt fourteen signifies Ofala and Ifunanya. Considering her past unlawful relationship with Jambut while Ofala was away, Ifunanya had wanted to discuss her past with Ofala before their marriage but he shelved the discussion aside. His response to her is what forms the above dialogue. The modal, *will*, expresses epistemic predictability. It refers to the future. Apart from expressing epistemic prediction, it indicates Ofala's willingness to engage in the conversation.

Extract 15

He **killed** me, and then he **gave** me life. He **gave** me a new Life. (186)

Epistemic modality is expressed through lexical verbs in excerpt fifteen. It is configured in the simple past tense. The pronoun, *he*, represents Nnena who in this narrative piece articulates his personal experience in relation to his discovery of a new identity. To perfectly relay this discovery, he employs the lexical verbs, *killed* and *gave*, to depict the strong confidence which he places in the factuality of his proposition. Based on his personal lens, he is confidently certain about the truth of his utterance. The lexical verbs, *killed* and *gave*, are used to express epistemic certainty. Whereas the verb, *killed*, in the expression, *he killed me ...*, connotes the loss of the old identity, that is, the identity which he had carried from birth. *Gave* on the other hand indicates the discovery of a new one. The noun phrase, *new life* in the second clause, serves a complementary role in that it assists in depicting the new

identity being referred to by the speaker. From this analysis, it is glaring that besides indicating certainty, the lexical verbs were equally utilised to express epistemic realisation.

Perception Modality for Assumption, Evaluation and Deduction

Perception modality is employed by characters to signal certainty and possibility. The excerpts below illustrate this use in the text:

Excerpt 16

She **believed** that Ofala must **have heard** that his betrothed was flirting with a stranger, a Hausa soldier for that matter, but had decided – his way of showing maturity not to worry about it. (77)

Excerpt sixteen adopts a perception modal framework. The lexical items which illustrate this modal framework are the stative verbs, *believed* and *heard*. The narrative dialogue is introduced with the third person pronoun, *she*, and used to signify Nwamaka. To demonstrate the degree of commitment to the truth of the proposition, the speaker uses the modal *must*. The choice of *must* unveils her attitude toward her proposition and the extent to which she is committed to it. Whereas *must* indicates her attitude as that of certainty, it also shows that she is highly committed to her proposition. This commitment is exemplified with the modal, *must*, employed to indicate the high value which she attaches to the modal judgment. The stative verbs, *believed* and *heard*, are verbs of inert perception and cognition (Quirk and Greenbaun, 1973). Thus, both are equally of perceptive interpretations. They complement the modal, *must*, and serve in denoting certainty and deduction. The deduction is that besides Nwamaka, those who were privy to Ifunanya's secret affairs prior to her marriage must have informed her husband. From this analysis, Nwamaka hinges the validity of her proposition on the fact that Ofala must have been told about his wife's infidelity.

Excerpt 17

His grandparents **must have known** something about the whole Saga! Why did they not let him into the secret? Or were they as ignorant as he was? (191)

Perception modality works in excerpt seventeen to foreground the theme of deception. It is exemplified with the stative verb, *known* (the past perfect of know). The narrator here refers to Nnnena who has just discovered a secret which his parents had concealed from him since birth. Coates (1983) and Huddleston and Pullum (2002) point out that the modal, *must*, is used to indicate a speaker's confidence in the factuality of the propositional content expressed. Thus, the use of *must* in this dialogue serves to express strong confidence. The verbs, *have known*, which accompany *must* indicate deduction. The deduction made by the speaker is hinged on the fact that besides his biological parents, some other persons (like his grandparents) could have been privy to this secret. The foregoing forms the basis for the speaker's deduction and the strong confidence which he expresses in this dialogue.

Excerpt 18

She knew that what he said was true. She **knew** what was happening with the other women, especially the young girls of Okigboli that were taken by the soldiers. (43)

Norgaard et al., (2010) submit that in addition to modal verbs, modality can also be conveyed by adjectival and participial constructions, modal lexical verbs, modal adverbs and modal nominal expressions. This submission influences the above narrative dialogue where stative verbs are employed to convey perceptive meaning. The dialogue is initiated by Ifunanya. She is introduced by the pronoun, *she*, while the pronoun, *he*, in the same text represents Jambut. The stative verb, *knew* (past tense of know), conveys the speaker's knowledge of the state of affairs. It denotes certainty and possibility and equally aids in evaluating the state affairs. The choice of *knew* indicates that the speaker

(Ifunanya) judges the proposition expressed by the clause to be necessarily true or at least to have a high likelihood of being true. Therefore, in this context, the speaker bases her confidence on the knowledge of the proposition expressed by the clause.

Excerpt 19

If the father was a true Christian, he **should see** the hand of God in what was happening. (51)

Perception modality is marked by the verb, *see* in the above narrative dialogue. It is accompanied with the modal verb, *should*. The modal, *should*, and the verb, *see*, are used to indicate logical necessity. Considering the financial and material aid which Jambut had offered to Ifunanya and her family, she expects her father to respond to this kind gesture by accepting him as her suitor in replacement of Ofala. Thus, the modal, *should*, in this context indicates Ifunanya's expectation.

Excerpt 20

I **think** that Ofala **may have been killed** on the night that Okigbo fell. (56)

Excerpt twenty captures a dialogue between two characters (Jambut and Ifunnaya). Perception modality works in this text to unfold the state of affairs in the material world. The state of affairs refers to the demise of Ofala. The first person pronoun, *I*, in the text introduces the speaker as Jambut. The text is constructed in the present perfect tense due to the speaker's choice of the verbs, *have been*. Modals and lexical verbs are the main carriers of perception modality in this dialogue. To convey a low degree of certainty and commitment on the speaker's part with regard to the propositional content, Halliday (1994) observes that the speaker employs lower value of the items of modality as captured in this dialogue. The modal, *may*, expresses possibility, a weak modality because the speaker attaches a low value to the modal judgment. The

orientation of modality in the text is objective implying that the speaker is not involved in the action relayed. The choice of *may* only gives a judgment that is possible from the speaker's own point of view, rather than the only possible conclusion. From his selection of the modal, *may*, it seems the speaker is not absolutely sure in his own assessment of the subject matter. From the foregoing, it can be argued that apart from expressing possibility, the modal *may* is used to indicate assumption.

Conclusion

This study has specifically explored the manifestations of modality in Dul Johnson's *Across the Gulf* from a linguistic perspective using Simpson's (1993) and Halliday's (1994) frameworks on modality which has afforded the opportunity of investigating the texts in an expansive way. The twenty (20) narrative dialogues analyzed have yielded four types of modality, namely: deontic modality (for possibility, impossibility, inability, prediction, and futurity), buolomaic modality (for expressing desire and will); epistemic modality (for indicating certainty, willingness, typical behaviour); and perception modality (for indicating certainty, necessity and possibility). Modality served as discourse strategies with which characters express apprehension, frustration and rejection in the case of deontic modality; indicate supplication, expectation and inclination in the case of buolomaic modality; relay information, resolution and realisation for epistemic modality; and to express assumption, evaluation and deduction for perception modality. Modality was also used to indicate power relations among characters in the novel. This work adds to the literature on the study of English modal verbs and provides a platform for understanding meaning in African literary works.

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