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MODAL AUXILIARIES IN SELECTED NEWSPAPER EDITORIALS ON MEDICAL BRAIN DRAIN IN NIGERIA

Abstract: This paper explores the conscious deployment of modal auxiliary verbs by the media to project stances and opinions on the topical issue of medical brain drain in Nigeria. Data, which comprised a total of 12 editorials on the issue of brain drain in the Nigerian health sector, were sourced from four Nigerian newspapers (Punch, The Guardian, Daily Trust, The Sun) published between 2018-2022. The identified modal verbs were categorised based on Palmer's (1986; 1990) classification of modality: deontic, epistemic and dynamic. The modal auxiliaries are used to stir up the emotion of concern, project the duty of government and predictions about doctors' exodus attempts, and communicate the disposition of the government towards the issue. The editorials are marked with modal auxiliary verbs intended to draw the attention of the public to the responsibilities of the government and the possible outcomes of taking (or not) necessary actions to tackle the menace of medical brain drain.

Keywords: modality, newspaper editorials, brain drain, media discourse, deontic modality, epistemic modality, dynamic modality, modal auxiliary verbs.

1. Introduction

The media, through the instrument of language, have created awareness and kept the people informed about issues and happenings within and beyond relative spaces (Sunday and Fagunleka 2017; Olorunsogo and Akinade 2020). Media establishments often claim to be objective and transparent in their reportage by posturing as unbiased facilitators of public debate and non-partisan reporters of

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public issues (Wodak and Meyer 2001). However, these claims of neutrality and independence by the media are false, as language use or discourse and ideology are inextricably intertwined. This is because discourse is shaped by ideology, which in turn is molded and projected through discourse (Jäger 2001). Newspapers have been used not only to inform and attract public attention to social issues but also to mould people's attitudes, opinions, beliefs, thoughts and inputs in matters of social relevance.

Language is not limited to structures that are independent of contextual relevance, but is also used as means of social interaction (Halliday 1994) and a social instrument for human communication (Crystal 1985; Olorunsogo 2021). Expressing content, enacting the social world and constructing discourses become achievable through the functionality of language (Eggins 2004; Halliday and Matthiessen 2004) which are evident in newspapers. Also, in the transmission of ideologies, language plays a crucial role as the primary medium (Carter and Nash 1990, Olorunsogo and Ige 2022). For example, an issue, subject or topic is perceived by the public based on the manner in which it is presented through discourse even in newspapers.

Newspaper editorials, like other sub-genres of the newspaper discourse, are instrumental to the formation of public opinion, in influencing social debate and decision-making, and other forms of social action and setting political agenda (van Dijk 1996). Through linguistic features such as modality – a type of interpersonal function of language – media establishments make known their perspectives and stances on the validity of a proposition in a social event or national issue. One of such issues of national concern is the emigration of health workers in Nigeria and its implication on the society. While extant studies on newspaper editorials have focused on the structure of editorials (Sunday and Fagunleka 2017), style (Bakuuro and Diedong 2020), ideology (Mahmood et al. 2018; Khan et al. 2020), discourse representation (Osisanwo 2022), modality (Bonyadi 2011; Alfred 2021); studies on the deployment of modality in newspaper editorials to project stances and opinions on topical issues are limited. This study is therefore aimed at engaging newspapers editorials on medical brain drain in Nigeria with the purpose of investigating the use of modal auxiliaries in stance taking.

1.1 Medical Brain Drain in Nigeria

Medical brain drain alludes to the mass relocation of skilled and trained health experts (nurses, midwives, and doctors among others) from low pay to major league

salary nations as a result of unfavourable everyday working environments and rising enlistment exercises of rich countries (Kollar and Buyx 2013). Since oil market prices got affected in the 1980s, health-worker migration has been an issue in Nigeria (Cowell 1982). This decline in financial fortune brought about the mass departure of numerous experts and educated Nigerians, who went to seek greener pastures abroad. In the past forty years, this pattern has persisted, with the health sector being one of the most impacted areas. The number of health professionals seeking relocation increased from 656 in 2014 to 1,551 in 2018 (Punch Editorial Board 2020). The United Kingdom was a beneficiary of the migration of about 12 doctors per week from Nigeria between 2017 and 2018 (Mwiti 2018). In 2019, the Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) reported that between 10,000 and 15,000 Nigerian doctors (90 per cent of them were trained in Nigeria) worked outside the shores of the country. Also, no less than 2,000 specialists leave Nigeria yearly for Europe, South Africa, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Australia, Canada, United States and United Kingdom (Punch Editorial Board 2019). The main challenges prompting medical doctors to move abroad include low work satisfaction, deduction from salary, high taxes, huge knowledge gap, poor salaries and emoluments, general insecurity, high cost of living, lack of good opportunities and basic tools, personal well-being and future of children, underfunding of the health sector and corruption (Adebayo and Akinyemi 2022; Nigeria Health Watch 2018; Ramalan and Garba 2021).

1.2 Newspaper Editorials

Newspaper editorial articles are generally regarded as a sub-genre of the large class of opinion discourse (van Dijk 1996). In a newspaper, an editorial is an article that expresses the publisher's or editor's opinion on a news or topic (Marques and Mont'Alverne 2019). It is a presentation of fact and opinion in a pleasing, logical and concise manner for the sake of interpreting significant news or influencing opinions of average readers (Elyazale 2014; Ogunwale 2008). The topics of editorials revolve around issues of national significance which may be cultural, socio-political or economic in nature. Where necessary, in a bid to proffer solutions, editorials evaluate and comment on what has already been reported as news (Marques and Mont'Alverne 2019).

The length of newspaper editorials is between 700 and 1000 words and they are located at a fixed place in the newspaper (van Dijk 1996). They are devoid of the singular personal pronoun *I* and are usually dotted with subjective markers to reflect

the opinions of the newspaper. The opinions and stances presented in an editorial do not belong to an individual, rather, they are collective views shared among and between management and editors of a media institution. The main objective of an editorial is to influence readers to see issues from the perspective of the writer, thus helping the reader to make up his mind about the events of the world (Marques and Mont'Alverne 2019). Editorials are different from other newspaper genres in the selection of lexical items, syntactic structures and modes of argumentation (van Dijk 1996). Modality, a linguistic concept helps to achieve the objective of an editorial - which is to convey a communicator's attitude or opinion about the truth of a proposition or towards a particular situation or event in a way in which the speaker's point of view can be detected in an utterance.

2. Modality: functional categorisation

The opinions and judgement of a writer or speaker on the necessity or possibility of propositions are represented through modality, which is a linguistic category that deals with meaning. (Hatzidaki 2011; Rui and Jingxia 2018). Simpson (1993: 47) defines modality as “a speaker's attitude towards, or opinion about the truth of a proposition expressed by a sentence” as well as “their attitude towards the situation or event described by a sentence”. These attitudes may be expressed through modal auxiliary verbs. Modal auxiliary verbs express modality in terms of possibility, necessity, permission, obligation, volition, and ability. They give more information about functions of the main verbs that follow them. Quirk et al. (1985) identify nine modal auxiliaries as ‘central’. They are: can, could, may, might, shall, should, will, would and must (Quirk et al. 1985). These central auxiliary verbs are the concern of this paper in relation to modality.

Palmer's (1986; 1990) typology of modality is adopted in this paper because it suits the evaluation and understanding of modality in the second language usage context. Though the classification naturally positions modal auxiliaries into fixed categories, in this study, the positioning is integrated in the light of context (being the functional usage of the modal auxiliary verbs). According to Palmer (1986), the subjective characteristic of an utterance is the concern of modality, and is therefore defined as the grammaticalisation of the speaker's or writer's subjective opinions or attitudes. Palmer (1990) subdivides modality into three main categories: epistemic, deontic and dynamic.

Epistemic modality (Greek episteme, meaning ‘knowledge’) is defined as “language as information” and is concerned with what is possible or necessary

given what is known and what the available evidence is. It has to do with the speaker's assessment of validity of the proposition in terms of "possibility" and "necessity" (Palmer 1986: 121). Judgements about the necessity and possibility of propositions is achieved through the use of epistemic modality (Palmer 1986). Epistemic modality can be said to be subjective in nature because the assessment of validity is ultimately derived from the speaker's or writer's commitment to the proposition in the act of communication (Funamoto 1999; Palmer 1990). Deontic modality (Greek *deon*, meaning 'duty') is defined as "language as action" and is equivalent to Halliday's concept 'of modulation' (Palmer 1986: 121; Halliday 1994). Deontic modality concerns what is obligatory, permissible, or necessary, based on a set of moral principles. It is dependent on some kind of authority, that is, permission granted by some authority (speaker/writer) influences the ability of the occurrence of events (Palmer 2003).

Dynamic modality according to Palmer (1990: 7) is 'concerned with the ability and volition of the subject of the sentence.' The dynamic meaning identified by Palmer covers the other subclasses of meanings (circumstantial, neutral and external necessity) that fall under the unclear boundaries tagged as non-epistemic and non-deontic (Depraetere 2015).

Alfred's (2021) investigation of modality in Nigeria's newspaper editorials on security challenges reveals that media institutions present unbiased opinions through the use of modality in editorials. However, s/he maintains that the kind of modal markers utilised are informed by the regional identities of individual institutions. Through the examination of modality in the editorials of two Nigerian newspapers (*Punch* and *Tribune*), Lawal (2015) explains that the use of modal verbs presents writers with esoteric positions of authority and confident prediction. He concludes that newspaper editorials are not subject to the ideological inclination of editors but driven by the ownership of the newspapers, hence, editors may not be sincerely committed to the propositions made in the editorials. In a comparative study of the use of modality in the editorials of an American newspaper and a Persian newspaper, Bonyadi (2011) concludes that culled editorials from the two newspapers contain more of epistemic modals that perform predictive functions. This paper contributes to the study of modality in newspaper editorials and its focus is on the occurrences of central modal verbs in selected newspaper editorials on medical brain drain in Nigeria's health sector.

3. Method

A total of 12 editorials – three from each of four selected Nigerian newspapers namely *The Guardian*, *Punch*, *The Sun* and *Daily Trust* – form the data for this study. These four selected newspapers tilted towards libertarianism, and this motivates them to challenge the government and its officials on national policies (Fagunleka 2021). These newspapers are not owned by the government; they present issues from a position that is devoid of government’s influence and control (Abubakre 2017), as a result, they have often been tagged as “anti-government”. *The Punch* has been criticised by the Federal Government for publishing ‘inciting, reckless and inflammatory’ editorials (Presidency attacks Punch Newspaper – *Premium Times*, Sept. 5, 2018).

Data was gathered from editions of the selected newspapers published between 2018 and 2022; a period when the country recorded a notable increase in the rate of emigration of health workers to seek greener pastures in foreign countries (See Adebayo and Akinyemi 2022; The Guardian Editorial Board 2022). The emigration which is on progressive increase has, according to Akinwumi et al. (2022), reached an alarming rate. While there are over 10 news reports on doctors’ emigration in each newspaper, the nature of editorials is responsible for the limited number. The selected newspapers are national newspapers and are notable for their wide readership across Nigeria. Therefore, their opinions about national issues have the tendency to influence a large number of readers. Using both quantitative and qualitative methods, a total of 141 modal verbs were identified in the editorials, and they were analysed in line with Palmer’s (1986; 1990) typology of modality (epistemic, deontic and dynamic) and in line with their functions in the data. The verbs were in turn analysed within these categories in order to discuss their functions and implications.

4. Results and Discussion

In line with Winiharti’s (2012) assertion on the contextual influence of modality, the context of usage determines the functions of the modal auxiliaries in the selected editorials. Out of a total of 141 modal verbs, *Might(not)* and *ought(not)* to have the least appearance with 0.7% each. *Should(not)* has the highest occurrence with 30.5%. *Will(not)*, *can(not)*, and *must(not)* has 24.8%, 19.9% and 7.8% respectively. These were followed by *would(not)*, *could(not)* and *may(not)* with 6.4% and 2.8% respectively. *Shall(not)* does not appear at all in the editorials. The deontic modal, *should* is the most prominent in the editorials and is used to express obligation

and necessity in the discourse. It is also used as a modal of advice and suggestion. This is followed by the epistemic modal, *will*, which is used to express prediction. *Can(not)* functions as an epistemic modal as well as a dynamic modal, and is used to depict possibility/ability/inability in the discourse. Because of the need to draw the government's attention to its responsibility of ensuring that the country is made in a way that will make doctors want to remain in the country and practice their profession, the editorials are predominantly labeled with deontic modal verbs.

Modal auxiliaries	<i>The Guardian</i> Editorials	<i>Punch</i> Editorials	<i>The Sun</i> Editorials	<i>Daily Trust</i> Editorials	Total	%
Can(not)	5	6	11	6	28	19.9
Could(not)	3	3	1	2	9	6.4
May(not)	1	1	2	0	4	2.8
Might(not)	0	0	1	0	1	0.7
Will(not)	12	3	11	9	35	24.8
Would(not)	5	4	0	0	9	6.4
Shall(not)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Should(not)	7	15	10	11	43	30.5
Must(not)	6	0	4	1	11	7.8
Ought(not) to	0	0	1	0	1	0.7
Total	39	32	41	29	141	100

Table 1: Frequency of occurrences of the modal auxiliaries in the selected editorials

Implications of deontic modality

Deontic modality expresses the obligation or necessity to perform or not to perform an action in a particular way (Kreidler 1998). The deontic modals, *should* and *must* are used to express obligation (necessity) and advice in the editorials. *Should* is the most significantly used deontic modal in the discourse. The deontic modal verbs are used to project the obligations of the government (and in some instances, the people) as touching how to act or behave in certain ways to bring an end to the trend of medical brain drain. The excerpts below show the instances of the deployment of *should* as a mild deontic modal auxiliary expressing obligation and necessity in the discourse of medical brain drain in the selected editorials.

[1] It *should* be worrisome that an old story of how so many developed and developing economies have been gaining brains from our brain drain in the health sector is still a recent discussion point by the Nigerian Medical Association

(NMA). Our leaders *should* stop lamentation, but act now to reverse this ugly trend. (*The Guardian*, 26 September 2019)

[2] Therefore, the government *should* wake up to this reality and work hard to change the depressing narrative. (*The Sun*, 10 May 2019)

[3] Aside from the fact that he is Minister of Labour and as such *should* have statistics in the country... he is also a medical doctor and has a good idea of the state of the nation's hospital (*Daily Trust*, 29 April 2019)

In excerpt [1], there is the attempt to whip up the emotion of fear in the readers. This is attributed to the state of the health sector in the nation, how both developed and developing nations have been and continue to benefit from brain gain at the nation's expense. The doctors who receive their medical training in Nigeria keep emigrating because of the impression that the grass is greener on the other side. The editorial gives the impression of a collective loss which should be a cause for concern as the development has lingered and features as a topical issue in the discussions of the Nigerian Medical Association, the umbrella body of medical doctors. Through the use of *should* the nation leaders are admonished to stop complaining about the exodus of health practitioners but to take necessary actions to change the trend and put an end to medical brain drain. In *The Sun* newspaper, which is notable for its criticism of government actions and inactions, the government is addressed like someone in a state of inertia or slumber as far as the issue of doctors' exodus is concerned. The exodus of doctors is not decreasing; this suggests that the government is indifferent. The use of *should* in [2] creates the impression that the government seems to be unaware of the gravity of the problem at hand and that there is a need for it to come to the understanding of the situation. The newspaper calls on the government to make strong efforts to change the negative situation which medical brain drain has caused. The focus in [3] is on the attitude of the Minister of Labour and Employment to the problem of doctors' exodus. He had claimed that the country has more than enough doctors. In [3], the NMA president refutes the claim and admonishes the Minister, who is responsible for labour administration, labour protection and productivity improvement in the country, on his claims and disposition to the issue of doctors' exodus, being a medical doctor himself. He condemns his seeming ignorance of the statistics of medical doctors in government hospitals and the state of the nation's hospitals. Through the use of *should*, there is the projection of a negative image of the government as the pronouncement of the Minister shows that the government seems to be in denial of the true situation of affairs in the health sector.

While it is believed by the newspapers, according to the political realities of Nigeria, that government officials are concerned with retaining political power at the expense of economic development, the modal auxiliary, *must*, expresses strong deontic modality. The use of *must* in the discourse indicates what the priorities of the Nigerian government and African leaders are expected to be, towards ending the menace of doctors' exodus or medical brain drain.

[4] And as a matter of urgency, African leaders *must* instill confidence in and show willingness to improve healthcare services by enunciating necessary health laws that are capable of increasing funding for the sector and ensuring that the funds are properly managed. (*The Guardian*, 18 May 2018)

[5] The Federal and State Governments *must* do something urgently to stem the ugly tide of doctors' exodus. (*The Sun*, 6 October 2019)

[6] Besides substantially increasing the funding of Nigeria's health care delivery system, remunerations *must* also be improved upon by government. (*Daily Trust*, 26 December 2019)

The Guardian attributes medical brain drain in Africa to an inefficient public service which is characterised by poor salaries, corruption, poor resource management and use of obsolete materials among others. The modal auxiliary, *must*, is deployed to provoke and compel African leaders to prioritise engendering the people's trust in the public service and to display a readiness to bettering health care services to solve the problem of medical brain drain. The newspaper posits that these could be achieved through the articulation of laws that would enable adequate funding for the sector and by securing judicious management of the funds. In [5], *The Sun* through the modal *must* opines that curbing the negative trend of doctors' exodus is achievable if the two foremost tiers of government would take exigent actions. The use of the modal auxiliary in [6] accentuates the necessity of increasing the salaries and emoluments of workers in the health sector in addition to a significant increase in the funds allocated to the nation's health care delivery system.

Lillian (2008) points out that individual modals may function in more than one category. The context of use of a particular modal determines its use. The deontic modal auxiliaries *should* and *ought(not) to* are naturally used to express obligation and necessity but in these instances, they are deployed in a sense to make suggestions or to give advice.

[7] The Federal Government *should* frontally address the worrisome brain drain by increasing the welfare of Nigerian doctors and other health workers. It *should* also tackle medical tourism by retaining our doctors and adequately equipping our health facilities. (*The Sun*, 10 May 2019).

[8] If the government genuinely wants an end to the debilitating brain drain syndrome in the sector, it *should* take the bull by the horns by making the environment conducive for the practitioners. (*Punch*, 14 September 2021).

[9] If the government is concerned about boosting health care, then it has to recognise the fact that the country does not have enough doctors and efforts *should* be made to get more. (*Daily Trust*, 29 April 2021).

In [7], the editor's suggestions to ending medical brain drain are related through the use of the modal *should*. It is used to provoke the Federal Government to adopt a deliberate and direct approach to ending the disturbing and alarming trend. The increasing emigration of the nation's healthcare professionals could translate to more deaths and low lifespan and expectancy for the people. The newspaper, therefore, suggests that the welfare of the health workers could be improved to retain them. *Should* is also used to implicitly perform a persuasive role on the Federal Government to address the problem of medical tourism which is inextricably linked with medical brain drain by putting in place the necessary facilities to encourage the doctors to stay back in the country. *Punch* describes medical brain drain as a 'debilitating syndrome', that is, a weakening condition that is characterised by associated symptoms in excerpt [8]. The use of this metaphor implied that medical brain drain weakens the nation's health care system and is the culmination of symptoms such as low work satisfaction, a huge knowledge gap and poor salaries and emoluments, general insecurity, high cost of living, lack of good opportunities and basic tools, underfunding of the health sector and corruption among others. The newspaper employs a conditional sentence to drive home its recommendation on the issue of medical brain drain. It states a condition that has to be fulfilled to reach a particular outcome. The use of the conditional clause, *If the government genuinely wants an end to the debilitating brain drain syndrome in the sector* suggests that the government needs a willing and sincere attitude to solve the problem of medical brain drain. The newspaper uses the modal *should* to express its opinion on the necessary course of action to bring an end to the problem. The idiomatic expression, *take the bull by the horns*, was used to broach the approach that the government should adopt to end the syndrome; a quick and impactful approach. The newspaper strongly recommends that the government should put in place a

favourable work environment for health workers. Again, a conditional clause is employed to prescribe what the attitude of the government should be towards solving the problem of medical brain drain as indicated in excerpt [9]. It not only recommends an empathetic and willing attitude towards improving health care in the country but also an acknowledgement of the shortage of doctors in the country. This is against the backdrop of the claim by government officials that the country has more than enough doctors. It further recommends the recruitment of more doctors in the country.

Implications of epistemic modality

The epistemic modals, *will(not)* and *would* are prominent in the editorials and are used to show prediction and future time. In [10] – [13], the use of the epistemic modals *will* and *would* depicts what would happen in the future if some conditions are not met. Thus the certainty of the predictions is based on the fulfilment of certain conditions.

[10] Until Nigeria places the highest premium on healthcare, the exodus of doctors *will not* stop. (*The Guardian*, 26 September 2019)

[11] With the mass exodus of doctors fleeing an increasingly hostile work and economic environment, if care is not taken, there *will* be nobody to consult at the decayed “clinics” again. (*Punch*, 14 September 2021)

[12] If Nigeria decides to graduate 3,000 doctors every year without the doctors leaving the country, it *will* take us 25 years to meet the WHO estimate of one doctor to 600 patients. (*Daily Trust*, 26 December 2019)

[13] Medical experts opine that it *will* take Nigeria about 100 years to produce the number of doctors needed by its citizens, even if no doctor leaves the country after training. (*The Sun*, 3 August 2020)

[14] No sound governance in Africa *would* be achieved without strong public services and health care delivery. (*The Guardian*, 18 May 2018)

[15] If Nigeria can improve the funding of the health sector for doctors to be able to practice their trade with self-fulfillment and satisfaction, many of the fleeing doctors *would* return and enrich the country with the knowledge they have acquired abroad. (*Punch*, 3 October 2019).

In [10] – [13], the modal auxiliary, *will*, communicates the newspapers’ predictions on the problem of medical brain drain. The choice of a high degree

predictive modal auxiliary shows that the newspapers are confident that if proposed conditions are fulfilled, doctors' exodus would be halted. The conditional clause in [10], *Until Nigeria places the highest premium on healthcare*, indicates the condition that is attached to the newspaper's prediction towards the exodus of doctors. *The Guardian* projects a negative prediction concerning the emigration of doctors as indicated by the negation of the modal auxiliary *will not*: the exodus of doctors would continue for as long as the government continues to neglect health care in the country. The nonfulfilment of the prediction is dependent on the condition that the Nigerian government makes health care a major priority. The prediction of *Punch* newspaper in [11] is a gloomy one; health care centres would be without doctors completely if the issue of doctors' exodus is not addressed by the government. The description of the nation's health care centres as *decayed 'clinics'* paints the picture of a health care system in a state of deterioration and deficiency which the government has refused to tackle.

Excerpts [12] and [13] put a spotlight on what would happen in the future if the nation fails to curb doctors' exodus. *Daily Trust* uses *will* in [12] to make the assertion that the nation would require a quarter of a century to meet the World Health Organisation's (WHO, 2006) estimate that one doctor should cater for 600 patients. The newspaper also asserts that even if the nation's medical schools turned out 3,000 doctors annually, it would still not meet the WHO's estimate if the emigration of doctors is allowed to continue. In [13], the position of *The Sun* newspaper on what would happen in the future is presented through the lens of medical experts with the prediction that the nation would require about a century to meet its requirement of doctors even in the absence of the exodus of doctors.

The Guardian in [14] makes use of the modal *would* to predict the outcome of lack of virile public services and health care delivery. It is of the opinion that the brain drain in the health sector is a consequence of inefficient public services in Africa. The implication of this is that good governance is possible if African leaders would pay attention to strengthening and making efficient public services and health care. *Punch* predicts the return of the emigrating doctors in [15] using the modal auxiliary, *would*. The newspaper speculates that funding the health sector and making work conditions conducive for the doctors such that they find job satisfaction would make many of the emigrating doctors return to improve the quality of health care in the country with their acquired skills.

Implications of dynamic modality

The modal auxiliary, *can(not)* is deployed to express ability and volition, and it is used to communicate likely or possible actions that the government could undertake to halt or sustain medical brain drain in the country in the sample editorials as indicated in excerpts [16] and [17].

[16] If Nigeria *can* improve the funding of the health sector for doctors to be able to practice their trade with self-fulfilment and satisfaction, many of the fleeing doctors would return and enrich the country with the knowledge they have acquired abroad. (*Punch*, 3 October 2019).

[17] The best way to redress this problem is for governments at both the national and sub-national levels to find the political will to change the sad narrative in the health sector. This *can* be done by substantially cutting the cost of governance and using the savings to resuscitate the health sector. (*The Sun*, 6 October 2019).

In [16], *Punch* newspaper projects the possibility that doctors who had left the country for better work conditions and salaries could return of their own volition to improve the quality of health care delivery in the country with their acquired skills on the condition that the nation increases the funding of the health sector. The modal auxiliary, *can*, shows the possibility of ending doctors' exodus. In its own view, *The Sun* in [17] postulates that the most effective way out of the problem of doctors' exodus is the willingness of the government at different levels to demonstrate commitment towards tackling the problem. Again, *can* is used to highlight the capability of the government to end medical brain drain. This is encoded in a considerable reduction in the cost of governance and the allocation of the saved funds to revamping the health sector.

5. Conclusion

The study examined the use of modal auxiliary verbs in newspaper editorials to project the stance of Nigerian newspapers on the issue of medical brain drain in Nigeria. The modal auxiliary *should* is used to stir up the emotion of concern about the disturbing trend of medical brain drain in the people. *Should*, is used to project the government as ignorant and non-chalant about the issue. It also highlights the fact that reversing the trend of medical brain drain should be the duty of the government. The deontic modal *must* is used by the newspapers to foreground the requisite actions to ending medical brain drain. The epistemic modal *will* is used by the newspapers to project predictions about doctors' exodus attempts;

it draws attention to the probable negative long-term implications of medical brain drain. *Can(not)* is deployed to communicate the disposition and volition of the government towards medical brain drain in the country. The editorials are significantly marked with deontic modals because of the need to draw the attention of the government to expedient responsibilities on its part to ensure that the country is conducive, aiding the willingness of medical practitioners to remain and practice their profession in the country. The epistemic modals deployed in the editorials are chiefly channeled towards the projected possibilities if the government addresses the issues responsible for the exodus of health workers. This is in line with Bonyadi's (2011) claim that epistemic modality in editorials are dominantly predictive. As established by Alfred (2021) the editorials in this study present unbiased stances on topical issues. Therefore, if social key actors, specifically the Nigerian government, could pay attention to newspaper editorials, they may be able to favourably address the issues of medical brain drain in Nigeria and be able to achieve the possibilities predicted in the editorials.

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МОДАЛНИ ПОМОЋНИ ГЛАГОЛИ У ОДАБРАНИМ УВОДНИМ ЧЛАНЦИМА О ОДЛИВУ МОЗГОВА У ОБЛАСТИ МЕДИЦИНЕ У НИГЕРИЈИ

Резиме

Циљ овог рада јесте проучавање модалности у новинским уводним чланцима о одливу мозга у области медицине у Нигерији. Кроз лингвистичко истраживање утврђено је да је мишљење говорника или писца изражено кроз кориштење облика за изражавање модалности. Дакле, у раду се испитују ставови нигеријских гласила о овом друштвеном питању, одлив мозга у сектору здравља у држави, с циљем идентификације преовладавајућих облика за изражавање модалности те њихове функционалне импликације.

Корпус студије састоји се од 12 уводних чланака из четири нигеријска државна часописа: *Punch*, *The Guardian*, *The Sun* и *Daily Trust*. Ова четири часописа добитници су бројних награда и имају значајан број читалаца у земљи. Подаци су прикупљени из издања објављених у периоду од 2018. до 2022. године. С обзиром на то да се рад фокусира на облике за изражавање модалности, у чланцима је уочен укупно 141 такав облик. Идентификовани облици за изражавање модалности разврстани су према Палмеровом (1986; 1990) начину класификације на деонтичке, епистемичке и динамичке.

Резултати рада потврђују да употреба деонтичких облика за изражавање модалности превазилази употребу епистемичких модалних глагола у уводним чланцима нигеријских новина чија је тема одлив мозга у области медицине. Узимајући у обзир тематски фокус уводних чланака, нагласак је на деонтичким облицима за изражавање модалности којим се представљају обавезе власти да обезбиједи добро управљање и повољно привредно окружење. Деонтички облици користе се и за пројекцију потреба привредног окружења чије би испуњење умањило егзодус доктора медицине у европске земље. С друге стране, епистемички облици за изражавање модалности користе се за изражавање вјероватноће за реализацију одређених корака уколико власт преузме

одговорност да у земљи обезбиједи повољне финансијске услове за здравствене раднике.

► **Кључне ријечи:** облици за изражавање модалности, уводни чланци, одлив мозга, медијски дискурс, деонтички облици за изражавање модалности, епистемички облици за изражавање модалности, динамички облици за изражавање модалности, модални помоћни глаголи.

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