

A Semantic Analysis of Modal Verbs in Barak Obama's 2012 Presidential Campaign Speech

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Abstract : This paper is a semantic analysis of the English modals in Obama's speech. The main objective of this study is to analyze selected modal auxiliaries identified in selected speeches of Obama's campaign based on Coates' (1983) semantic clusters. A total of fifteen speeches of Obama's campaign were selected as the primary data and the modal auxiliaries selected for analysis include will, would, can, could, should, must, ought, shall, may and might. All the modal auxiliaries taken from the speeches of Barack Obama were analyzed based on the framework of Coates' semantic clusters. Such analytical framework was carried out to examine how modal auxiliaries are used in the context of persuading people in Obama's campaign speeches. The findings reveal that modals of intention, prediction, futurity and modals of possibility, ability, permission are mostly used in Obama's campaign speeches.

Keywords : modals, meaning, persuasion, speech

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