

**THE GARDEN PARTY WILL GO ON OR NOT?
WHO PERSUADES WHOM? : A MODALITY ANALYSIS OF MANSFIELD'S "THE
GARDEN PARTY"**

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ABSTRACT: *This paper seeks to analyze the modality in the interactive exchanges of language as the vehicle of persuasion amongst three characters –Laura, Jose and their mother Mrs. Sheridan- over the question ‘whether or not the garden party goes on’ in the legendary short story ‘The Garden Party’ by Katherine Mansfield. Laura’s strong impulse, on an ethical ground, to put off the party following an impecunious neighbor’s coincidental demise is asserted largely through ‘modality of desirability’. Nonetheless, in the realm of reality, their high ranking whereabouts in societal structure, trepidation of losing face to the already invited visitors, Mrs. Sheridan’s and Jose’s views on Laura’s proposition are outright negative and their reinforcement on the ongoing of the party is essentially demonstrated through their predominant choices of ‘modality of validity’ dedicated in their utterances. Ergo, the garden party does not correlate with the impoverished fellow’s death and it goes on. Fowler’s (1985) proposed modality categories have been followed in examining how modality makes sense of ‘persuasion’ in terms of the characters’ conversations in the cited text. The outstanding excerpt from the aforesaid text that involves the argument over the settlement of either continuation or discontinuation of the party has been exploited as the data for this modality analysis and a purposive sampling of the data has been adopted.*

KEYWORDS: Modality, persuasive, The Garden Party, ideology, power relationship, social class

INTRODUCTION

Laura: “Of course, we can’t have our party, can we?”
Mrs. Sheridan: “we should be having party, shouldn’t we?”
- The Garden Party

Modality is an opportune and functional linguistic tool which is extensively instrumental in expressing the speakers’ notion or attitude towards an event or a proposition put up in sentences (Halliday, 1994). In Mansfield’ masterpiece ‘The Garden Party’, the investigation and illustration of modality in the utterances of the three more engaged characters are interesting in terms of conceiving of their attitude, feelings and views towards a certain event of a man’s death and their perspective on the materialization of the garden party representing their regard and

disregard to the death of a human being in parallel to the emphasis of the garden party. The modality content in Laura's utterances, during her dialogues with Jose and Mrs. Sheridan, concerns her humanistic philosophy towards the pathetic incident of Mr. Scott's death. Laura's point of view makes good sense that it is a heartless act to do all that merriment and jinks at the party with a corpse in the immediate vicinity. So, Laura's commitment taken up by the support of modality as the evidential marker of her overt desirability is that her language encodes desirability force for cancellation of the party. Laura being much unsophisticated, artless and gullible got impotently convinced contrariwise by the modal operators in conversation opted by the interlocutors- Jose and Mrs. Sheridan- who share the uniform appraisal towards Mr. Scott's class, homogeneous compos mentis, identical perception as to their own social standing.

Modality

'Modality' is a concept pre-eminently colligated with philosophy and linguistics. In linguistics, modality is such a linguistic notion within a text -written or spoken- that suggests the 'truth value of propositions' (Sulkunen and Torronen, 1997). At different levels of linguistics, studies of modalities have been executed over time. At the morphological level, modality involves in the lexical accounts of language. At syntax level, modality is manifested in the description of complex syntactic configurations. At semantics level, modality is surveyed while exploring the meanings of language expressed phonologically, morphologically, syntactically and pragmatically. Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) propounded by Halliday (2002a:200) sites modality in interpersonal grammar which identifies mood and modality in a text. Modality is usually understood through the overt modal auxiliaries viz. may, might, can, could, will, would, shall, should, must, and ought. However, modality, apart from modal auxiliaries, encompasses certain main verbs, nominalizations, attributives, adjuncts as well. Fowler (1985) came up with a brief list of modal categories which we might further subdivide into two major groups:

- (1) **Modal auxiliaries:** can, could, may, might, shall, should, will, would, must, ought etc.
- (2) **Lexical modals:**
 - (a) Sentence adjuncts: probably, unfortunately, certainly, surely, etc.
 - (b) Attributives: (un)necessary, (un)fortunate, (un)certain, (un)sure etc.
 - (c) Lexical verbs: permit, predict, prove, ensure etc.
 - (d) Nominalization: obligation, likelihood, desirability, authority etc.

Over and above, different linguists additionally categorize and classify modality. Fowler (1985), again, classified modality of five categories through which speakers' attitudes to the uttered proposition are reflected:

- (i) **Validity:** It connotes speakers' greater or lesser confidence in the truth of the proposition.
- (ii) **Predictability (Hypotheticality / volition):** It expounds how more likely or less likely it is that an event will come about in the future.
- (iii) **(Un)desirability:** It refers to the moral, practical or aesthetic judgments of the speakers.
- (iv) **Obligation:** It relates to the speaker's judgment that another character is obliged to do something.

- (v) Permission: It implies that the speaker gives permission or allows another character to do some action.

According to Fowler's (1985) assertion, through the modal meanings of 'obligation' and 'permission' an obvious power relationship between the interlocutors is exposed.

However, Wright (1951) categorizes 'validity' and 'predictability' as epistemic modality while 'desirability', 'obligation' and 'permission' as 'denotic' modality.

A review of related studies

Rose et al (2014) performed an analysis of modality in a short story called 'Things You Don't Know' by Ian Rosales and results conveyed that the epistemic variety of modal was preponderant and this type apparently allows the readers to feel the narrator's uncertainty in situations or events. Aidinlou et al (2012) vouchsafed in a study that modality in literary narratives is manipulated at the lexico-grammatical level of the linguistic rank scale and in a multifarious modes, of which the epistemic modals have high recurrence. On top of that, they uncovered four categories of ideology that modals construe- possibility, probability, inference and belief. Senft et al (2008) carried out an exploration of the strategies used by characters of different social ranks to mark deontic modality in a TV-serial *Downtown Abbey*. Iwamoto (2007) administered a research and extrapolated that modality as a linguistic and stylistics vehicle has a connection to the point of view in the domain of printed and spoken media texts. Papafragou (2006) re-investigated and came up with a discovery that epistemic modality, if truth be told, contributes to the truth conditions of the utterances albeit many hold that it communicates non-truth conditional content. Shiro's (2004) study discerned expressions of epistemic modality and the construction of narrative stance in Venezuelan children's stories. However, no linguistic analysis of modality has been accomplished so far in Catherine Mansfield's highly acclaimed short story 'The Garden Party'. The impetus for present study has been gleaned from that gap.

A brief introduction to Katherine's 'The Garden Party'

Katherine Mansfield's *The Garden Party* is one of her best known short stories published in the collection *The Garden Party and Other Stories* in 1922. Laura is the key character in the story. She belongs to an upper middle class family but she is not conventionally conscious of typical social hierarchy. She is very naive and innocent unlike her siblings and even sharply contrasts with her mother Mrs. Sheridan. Mrs. Sheridan throws a party in her garden. Arrangements are in progress. Right at that moment, there comes a bad tidings that their neighbor Mr. Scott passed away. Laura ponders but an alternative and that was the postponement of the party. She moves heaven and earth to coax her mom Mrs. Sheridan and her sibling Jose to defer the party. In an endeavor to cajole them, she points at the 'heartlessness' in the act of carrying on the party while it sounds more momentous to solace, condole and commiserate with the grieved family. Nonetheless, unconvinced, Mrs Sheridan and Jose overreact to Laura's stupid idea of canceling the party. They enticed Laura and ultimately the garden party goes on. The party being over, Laura visits the dead man's family with the leftovers.

FINDINGS OF MODALITY

An extract of the foregoing text has been picked out for modality analysis. This chunk is the episode that accommodates Laura's, Jose's and Sheridan's family confab about the resolving of the controversy over Mr. Scott's demise in the neighborhood and then the question of protraction or termination of the garden party. Modals in the utterances of Luara, Jose and Sheridan of the excerpt have been traced down as follows:

Table-1 : modality in Laura's utterances

Laura		
Desirability	6	42.85%
Predictability	4	28.57%
Validity	3	21.42%
Obligation	1	7.14%
Total= 14		

Table-2: Modality in Jose's utterances

Jose		
Desirability	2	18.18 %
Predictability	2	18.18%
Validity	6	54.54%
Ability	1	9.09%
Total= 11		

Table-3: Modality in Jose's utterances

Mrs. Sheridan		
Desirability	3	30%
Predictability	1	10%
Validity	3	30%
Permission	1	10%
Obligation	1	10%
Ability	1	10%
Total = 10		

Analysis

In the interaction and expressions of the trio- Laura, Jose and Mrs. Sheridan- in the selected snippet, modality plays a vital role in exchanging the interlocutors' attitudes towards the proposition 'whether the garden party should go on or not'. The individual choices of modals – both auxiliaries and lexical- in the utterances of these three characters are not homologous and their respective choices of modality reveal their overt ideological and moral antithesis. Mrs. Sheridan's engaging modality meaning of 'obligation' and 'permission' leads to a comprehension that she holds ultimate power and authority in the family and eventually she will decide and determine the issue of the adjournment or proceeding of the garden party over the

unanticipated death of a poor neighbor, Mr. Scott. In the social and cultural context, Mrs. Sheridan's family belongs to upper middle class and she looks down upon the Mr. Scott's class of people who are exceedingly poor. The highest percentage of 30% of the modality in Mrs. Sheridan's interpersonal exchanges of expressions is 'validity' which offers 'greater confidence' of Mrs. Sheridan on the affair that the garden party should proceed and she dismisses every chance of Laura's proposition for the cancellation of the phenomenon. Mrs. Sheridan is phlegmatic, un-poised and confident that what Laura is doing is but to spoil everybody's hilarity and enjoyment by not being 'a useable identity' (Burgan, 1994) of her class and education. Another 30% modality employed By Mrs. Sheridan is of the connotation of 'desirability' and she wishes the low-born worker Mr. Scott did not die in the garden and if so, it does not concern the party and she is going to overlook the death incident. Mrs. Sheridan interacts with Laura on lucid articulation in dictating the demarcation of the desire of the lower class people, and enunciates that people of Mr. Scott's class do clearly warrant services from Sheridan' class. Sheridan's exploitation of 'modal progressive aspect' (We should be having the party) and the declarative 'tag' (shouldn't we?) and the topical inclusive theme 'we' very technically apprises us that the party is, point blank, going to continue and Laura has got social obligation to say 'yes' (shouldn't we?= Yes, we should) to Mrs. Sheridan's design. The dialogue between Jose and Laura admittedly affiliates Jose with her mother Sheridan in that Jose carries the ideology analogous with her mother's. All this is sussed through the analysis of the modality in Jose's language. She employs 54.54% of her modality of the meaning of 'validity' which devises Jose into a character having a lot greater conviction in discerning and positioning Laura's proposition to be unsound and inadmissible. This collectively bolsters Mrs. Sheridan's argument and disbands Laura aside. 18.18% of Jose's modality in meaning of 'desirability' escalates her negation to Laura's proposal for cancellation of the party and corresponds with Mrs. Sheridan's desirability that the phenomenon of the garden party is not deferrable due to a low-born's demise as Laura insists. Another 18.18% modality of the meaning of 'predictability' operates as the option for hypothesizing the context that Laura will undergo a very arduous life if she goes beyond her own society's convention and outweighs a lower class man's death than a garden party of an aristocrat. Furthermore, Jose's 9.09 % of modality of the meaning of 'ability' champions her persuasion of Laura by reminding her of 'ability' that she can't bring back a Mr. Scott by being sentimental. After all, this kind of choice of modality by Jose is, kind of, a mnemonic force to aid Laura to remember their 'way of looking at life' (Kaya, 2011). Laura's conversation both with Jose and Mrs. Sheridan incorporates 14 modality components. Laura's modality is predominantly the choice of 'desirability' which is 42.85 % of the total. Laura gets into the ways of persuading first Jose and then her mother Sheridan that it is intensely desired that the garden party be ceased with an inference from a very humanistic circumstance over the issue of a neighbor's death. 28. 57% of Laura's modality plays an important mantle in directing Laura's presaging of some phenomenally inhuman references to their continuation of the garden party. She predicts the band party is likely to sound egregious and brutal to the deceased's family whom Laura deems as nearly neighbors. 21.42% of her 'validity' category of modality strongly questions about the notion of continuation of the party just next to the house whereof a man has just died. But, when she finds that it is quite simply impossible to persuade either Jose or Mrs. Sheridan to drop the party, she quit arguing; however with a modality of 'volition' (predictability) that she will attend to the same phenomenon first having but a choice to let the garden party proceed. So, the final deal is that the garden party goes on.

CONCLUSION

The modality employed by Laura Jose and Mrs. Sheridan in their interaction carries an added value in the game of 'loss and gain' over the argument on the affair 'whether or not the garden party should go on' when the case is a neighbor has just died who once worked for the party thrower. Laura persists on calling off the party while Jose and Mrs. Sheridan are all for carrying on. Each- other's modality serves the purpose of persuasion by the ways of validating each – other's propositions, interpreting each-other's desirability, hypothesizing the moral, logical and social consequences of the either decision. Modality further makes notice of the power relationship among the participants in the dialogues and thus modality choices make Laura not persuade but be persuaded.

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my gratitude and indebtedness towards **Dr. Sarah Lee** who is my favorite teacher and from whom I gained an understanding of modality at The University of Nottingham.

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Appendices:

Laura:

Line No.	Sentence	Modal	Type of Modality
221	“However are we going to stop everything?”	are going to <i>1</i>	Desirability
223	“Stop the garden party, of course”	of course <i>2</i>	Desirability
227	But we can’t possibly have a garden –party with a man dead just outside the front gate”	can’t, <i>3</i> possibly <i>4</i>	Desirability
241	“And just think of what the band would sound like to that poor woman,” said Laura.	Would <i>5</i>	Predictability / hypotheticality
245	“Drunk! Who said he was drunk?”, Laura turned furiously on Jose”. “I am going straight up to tell mother”	Furiously <i>6</i> , am going to <i>7</i> ,	Validity, Predictability /volition,
248	“Mother, can I come into your room?”	can <i>8</i>	Desirability
256-258	“ Of course, we can’t have our party, can we? She pleaded. “ The band and everybody arriving. They’d hear us, mother; they are nearly neighbours”	of course <i>9</i> , can’t <i>10</i> , can <i>11</i> , would <i>12</i>	Validity, Desirability / obligation, desirability, predictability
266	“Mother, isn’t it terribly heartless of us?” She asked.	Terribly <i>13</i>	validity
283	“I’ll remember it again after the party’s over,” she decided.	will <i>14</i>	Volition / predictability

Jose:

Line No.	Sentence	Modal	Type of Modal
222	“ Stop everything, Laura!” cried Jose in astonishment.	in astonishment <i>1</i>	(Un)desirability
224	But Jose was still more amazed. “Stop the garden party? My dear Laura, don’t be so absurd. Of course we can’t do anything of the kind. Nobody expects us to. Don’t be so extravagant”	more amazed <i>2</i> , so absurd <i>3</i> , of course <i>4</i> , can’t <i>5</i> , expects <i>6</i> , so extravagant <i>7</i>	Validity, Validity, Validity, Validity, desirability, validity
243	“If you’re going to stop a band playing every time some one has an accident, you’ll lead a very strenuous life”	are going to <i>8</i> , will <i>9</i>	Predictability, Predictability

244	“You won’t bring a drunken workman back to life by being sentimental”, she said softly.	won’t <i>10</i>	Ability
247	“Do dear,” cooed Jose.	cooed <i>11</i>	Validity

Mrs. Sheridan:

Line No.	Sentence	Modal	Type of Modal
249	“Of course, child. Why, what’s the matter? What’s given you such a color?”	Of course <i>1</i> ,	Permission,
252	Not in the garden? Interrupted her mother.	(She hopes that) Not in the garden? <i>2</i>	Desirability
254	“Oh, what a fright you gave me” Mrs. Sheridan sighed with relief, and took off the big hat and held it on her knees.	with relief <i>3</i>	Predictability / volition
261	But, my dear child, use your common sense. It’s only by accident we’ve heard of it. If some one had died there normally- and I can’t understand how they keep alive in those poky little holes- we should be having party, shouldn’t we?	only by accident <i>4</i> , can’t <i>5</i> should <i>6</i> , shouldn’t <i>7</i>	Validity , ability, desirability, Obligation
273-275	“You are being very absurd, laura,” she said coldly. “People like that don’t expect scarifies from us. And it’s not very sympathetic to spoil everybody’s enjoyment as you are doing now”	Absurd <i>8</i> , expect <i>9</i> , not very sympathetic <i>10</i> ,	Validity, desirability, validity,