

Modality and Point of View in Presenting Cultural Displacement in Ahdaf Soueif's "Sandpiper" and Jhumpa Lahiri's "Mrs. Sen's": A Comparative Stylistic Analysis

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1. Introduction

In a modern globalized world, the concept of "displacement" from one's country or culture to a new one has gained momentum in literary works. One of the common themes of modern literature is "cultural displacement" which entails being displaced from one's culture to a new culture, or what is known as crossing cultures, where one struggles with loneliness, poor adjustment, feelings of not belonging, and sometimes an identity crisis. It entails an attempt to develop and grow through pursuing a career or studying abroad, etc. Megan and Cohen (2010) describe the experience as "traumatic". In a post-colonial world, literary works gained interest in highlighting people's feelings of alienation, loss, and bewilderment, especially when they are displaced from their culture to a new one where they struggle to fit in (Hafsi 2017). Choudhary and Srivastava (2023) state that:

Displacement, whether voluntary or involuntary is not a smooth process for a particular individual or even a group. It is like leaving our current existence to become a new person and with time it involves leaving behind a part of our individuality [...] Certainly, moving out from a certain society where we belonged to, leads us to many sufferings, especially mental and emotional pain [...] The effect of displacement is alienation in individuals towards society and even with self, at times. (68-69)

Both Ahdaf Soueif's "Sandpiper" and Jhumpa Lahiri's "Mrs. Sen's" are short stories that revolve around female protagonists in the modern world who have to leave their countries and native cultures and move to a foreign one where they struggle with nostalgic feelings for their homeland. On the one hand, Soueif's protagonist is an American who is displaced from her Western culture when she settles with her Egyptian husband in Egypt. On the other hand, Lahiri's protagonist is an Indian who is displaced from her Eastern culture when she moves with her Indian husband to the United States of America. The fact that both heroines suffer from cultural displacement draws a question regarding how feelings of displacement

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may be manifested across different cultures. Both writers utilize various stylistic tools to convey the heroines' suffering from displacement and alienation. The present study examines one of these stylistic tools which is modality.

1.1. Aim of the Study

This study seeks to unravel how modality is utilized in short stories to highlight the writers' point of view regarding the concept of cultural displacement. This is achieved through analyzing the frequency and use of different types of modality by Ahdaf Soueif in "Sandpiper" and Jhumpa Lahiri in "Mrs. Sen," two short stories which delineate the theme of cultural displacement and alienation of two unvoiced diasporic female subjects. The study applies Simpson's (1993, 2005) framework of modality and point of view to determine the most prominent types of modality employed and eventually the narrative shade of the short stories, whether positive, negative or neutral.

1.2. Research questions

The study attempts to answer the following research questions:

- 1) How are different types of modality used in Ahdaf Soueif's short story "Sandpiper" to highlight the concept of cultural displacement?
- 2) How are different types of modality used in Jhumpa Lahiri's "Mrs. Sen's" to highlight the concept of cultural displacement?
- 3) What are the similarities and differences between the function and frequency of modality choices in Ahdaf Soueif's "Sandpiper" and Jhumpa Lahiri's "Mrs. Sen's"?
- 4) How do the modal choices reflect the narrative shadings in the two short stories?

1.3. Significance of the Study

This research attempts to fill in the gap in the existing literature as it examines the function of different types of modality employed in short stories, a relatively understudied genre in fictional prose to express narrators' and authors' attitude and point of view regarding characters' feelings of cultural displacement, an area which has received little attention in the literature. Therefore, this research contributes to the existing literature on stylistic studies of modality. The short stories follow two protagonists who suffer from a sense of alienation and loss when displaced from their cultures. Therefore, the study should add insights into comparative stylistic research which delves deep into comparing and contrasting the use of stylistic tools, such as modality in the present study, to express attitude and point of view regarding displacement not just in the East, but also in the West. This eventually highlights whether the two authors express characters' displacement from the East and the West similarly or differently.

2. Literature Review

Language plays a crucial role in shaping point of view in a text (Simpson 2005). Language in literature, for instance, is utilized in ways to enable writers to express their perspectives and voice their view point, attitude, and opinion regarding several issues (Palmer 2001). One of the stylistic tools employed to reflect point of view is the type(s) of modality employed in a text. Modality is the speaker/writer's voicing of their point of view or attitude regarding a situation or an event (Simpson 1993, 2005; Trimarco 2021). Modality is manifested in the use of modal verbs (may, might, will, would, can, could, shall, should, must, have to, ...etc.), modal lexical verbs such as (appear, seem, hope, wish, want, regret, ...etc.), modal adverbs such as (hopefully, regrettably, ...etc.), and modal adjuncts such as (probably, perhaps, certainly, unlikely, ...etc.) (Fowler 1985; Lillian 2008).

Simpson (1993, 2005) divides modality into four categories: Epistemic, Deontic, Boulomaic, and Perception. The types of modality employed define the narrative shading (Simpson 2005) in prose fiction, whether positive, negative or neutral. The narrative shading functions in different ways. According to Trimarco (2021):

Where a narrator uses deontic and boulomaic modality, the discourse is said to be binding, obligatory, and assertive and is considered positive shading. With such shading the expression of wishes, obligations and opinions are foregrounded. Where a narrator uses epistemic perception modalities, the discourse reflects a lack of confidence, denoting alienation and uncertainty and is described as negative shading. This type of shading is epistemic in that it involves the narrator's questioning of his or her knowledge, and at the same time it involves perception related to this knowledge or lack of knowledge. (1)

The use of different types of modality to express writers' point of view has been investigated in different genres such as autobiographies (Siddique et al. 2020, 2022), newspapers and editorials (Ali 2017; Iwamoto 1998; Sadia and Ghani 2019; Qun 2010), policy texts (Ademilokun 2019; Torres 2021), and Ted Talks (Nhat and Nguyen 2019) among other examples.

Some scholars have conducted stylistic studies to examine how modality is employed in literary texts/ narrative prose fiction to convey the writers' point of view. For instance, Jeyanthi et al. (2018) examines the use of modality in *The Hunger Games*, a novel by Suzanne Collins. The study concludes that the novel is foregrounded in negative shading due to the reliance on epistemic modality which accentuates the feelings of alienation in the text. Abdulla (2018) examines the function of different types of modality in *The Rosie Project*, a novel by the Australian novelist, Graeme Simsion. The study concludes that epistemic modality is predominantly used to express the character's lack of assertion and lack of confidence.

A few studies have examined the use of modality and point of view in short stories as a literary genre. For example, Trimarco (2021) investigates the use of modality and negative shading narration in Edgar Allan Poe's short stories. The results reveal that Poe relied on negative shading narration in his adventure stories more than his Gothic ones. Abood (2018) investigates the use of modality in three short stories: Gustave Flaubert's "A Simple Heart," Ernest Hemingway's "The Last Good Country," and Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher." The first was found to have a neutral shading with categorical assertions and little use of modality. The second was found to have a positive shading with an abundance of deontic and boulomaic modality that are employed to focus on the narrator's wishes, desires, and sense of obligation. The last was found to have a negative shading with plenty of epistemic and perception modality employed to express the narrator's uncertainty and doubt about certain events. Omar and Hussain (2018) examine how modality is used in the short story "The Judgement" by Franz Kafka to express the writer's point of view regarding the concept of escapism. The study concludes that modality contributed to the writer's point of view.

Abdullah and Abood (2016) apply Simpson's (1993) model of modality and point of view to analyze three short stories: Poe's "The Black Cat," Wilde's "The Happy Prince," and Saki's "The Open Window," along with two novels: Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* and Charles Dickens' *Hard Times*. The study concludes that epistemic modality was the most prominently used type of modality to convey characters' feelings of uncertainty. Parina and de Leon (2014) examine the frequency and function of different types of modality in the short story "Things You Don't Know" by Filipino writer Ian Rosales through applying Simpson's (1993, 2005) modality framework. The results reveal that the short story has a negative shading as the writer heavily relies on epistemic modality to highlight the narrator's uncertainty and doubt about his current state.

3. Methodology

3.1. Data

The data covers two short stories: The first is Ahdaf Soueif's "Sandpiper" from her short stories collection *I Think of You* (1996). The second is Jhumpa Lahiri's "Mrs. Sen's" from her collection of short stories *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999). Even though both heroines in the short stories represent and belong to different cultures, the West vs. the East, they suffer from feelings of estrangement and alienation that result from their displacement. Both Soueif and Lahiri descend from Eastern cultures (i.e. Egypt and India respectively). However, both writers have experienced cultural displacement themselves when they emigrated to foreign countries: Soueif, an Egyptian writer, settled in England and currently holds dual citizenship, while Lahiri settled in the United States of America and became an Indian-American writer. In the present study, having the two protagonists belong to two different cultures; one belonging to the West and the other to the East, is vital to

determine whether there are differences in the authors' modal choices to portray the concept of cultural displacement in the West vs. the East.

3.2. Research Design

This study applies both quantitative and qualitative approaches. It examines the frequency and function of different types of modality in both short stories using Simpson's (1993, 2005) framework of modality and point of view to determine the percentages of using each type of modality in each short story to highlight the protagonists' feelings of cultural displacement. The analysis also examines the most prominent types of modality that are utilized and foregrounded by each writer to determine the narrative shade, whether positive, negative or neutral. This analysis is carried out using ATLAS.ti, a data analysis software, to enhance the reliability of the findings.

3.3. Analytical Framework

Modality refers to the speaker's stance regarding a situation. It encompasses the methods used by a speaker to convey opinions or attitudes. It serves as a broad term encompassing various linguistic devices that enable speakers to convey various levels of conviction or belief in a statement (Saeed 1997, 125). Modalities encompass a range of linguistic elements related to evaluating events or individuals, indicating the speaker's level of certainty regarding the truth of their utterance, such as expressing possibility and prediction, and indicating varying degrees of authoritative influence over others, such as obligation and permission.

Simpson (1993, 2005) structures modality into four categories: epistemic, deontic, boulomaic and perception. Each type of modality represents different functions in how people think and act in different situations. Firstly, epistemic modality is related to "the speaker's confidence or lack of confidence in the truth of a proposition expressed" (Simpson 1993, 48). The degree of epistemic modality affects people's view of states of affair. It could vary from complete certainty to absolute doubt or uncertainty (Gavins 2007). It allows speakers to indicate their degree of confidence, belief, or doubt regarding the information they are conveying. Epistemic modality assists in highlighting whether a person is confident, hesitant, careful or responsible, etc. It entails using modal auxiliaries such as "*could, may, might, would*" etc. as in "*He could be sick,*" in addition to modal lexical verbs, adverbs, and adjectives like "perhaps, possibly, certainly, probably, think, suppose, believe, doubt, certain, etc." Therefore, it is considered by Simpson as the most significant type of modality when it comes to point of view.

Secondly, deontic modality is different from epistemic modality. It comprises lexical items that highlight a speaker's attitude towards the degree of obligation or duty related to performing specific actions. According to Simpson (1993), deontic modality is "a continuum of commitment from permission through obligation to requirement" (48). It includes expressing social rules, duties, and responsibilities comprising expressions of obligation, necessity, permission and prohibition. Deontic modality is conveyed through modal auxiliaries like "*must, should, ought to, have*

to, may, might, can, etc.,” and through expressions such as “*it is necessary, it is obligatory, it is essential, it is permissible, it is allowed and it is forbidden,*” as in as in “*It is essential that she attends,*” or “*They are allowed to join us.*” Deontic modality is therefore significant in expressing point of view regarding rights and responsibilities.

Thirdly, boulomaic modality pertains to voicing wishes, desires, wills, goals, aspirations, preferences, intentions, and regrets regarding future contexts. It involves “the degree of the speaker’s (or someone else’s) liking or disliking of the state of affairs” (Nuyts 2005). It highlights peoples’ behavior and attitude as it reflects their preferences, intentions, goals, and the thing which affects people’s choices and actions. Boulomaic modality is expressed through modal lexical verbs like “hope, wish, regret, etc.” and modal adverbs like “hopefully, unfortunately, regrettably, etc.”

Finally, perception modality is related to the speaker’s degree of truth to a proposition. It is related to conveying subjective sensory experiences. It involves the use of verbs, adjectives and adverbs such as “*see, look, hear, feel, smell, etc.,*” in addition to expressions like “*it seems like, it looks like, it feels like, etc.*”

Therefore, Simpson's modal system provides a detailed structure for grasping the various manners in which people perceive, think, and behave in their surroundings. It covers a range of modalities including how we know things, what we ought to do, what we desire, and how we perceive things. These modalities serve specific functions in cognition, impacting our beliefs, standards, wants, and sensory perceptions, all of which together shape how individuals behave and comprehend the world around them. Simpson (1993) highlights the significance of writers’ choices of modality:

Much of the ‘feel’ of a text is attributable to the type of point of view it exhibits, and, therefore, generalizations can be made about the ways in which writers consistently draw on particular points of view. [...] Modality thus became the criterion against which different styles of writing could be measured, and different genres identified. (77)

In Simpson's modal framework of narrative perspective (2005), stories adopting a particular viewpoint are classified into distinct shades: positive, negative, and neutral. Narratives abundant in both deontic and boulomaic modalities fall under the positive shade, characterized by discourse that is binding, assertive, and forceful, as highlighted by Iwamoto (2007). Positive narratives typically feature evaluative language, such as happily, terrible, and hopeless, along with expressions of obligation, desire, duties, and opinions (e.g., you should..., you must..., I want..., they hope..., she wished for...), as well as feelings, thoughts, and perceptions (e.g. feel, suffer, etc). Conversely, negative narratives are dominated by epistemic and perception modalities, indicating the narrator's uncertainty or lack of confidence in the events or characters. These modalities are signaled by modal auxiliaries, adverbs,

and lexical verbs (e.g., I wonder..., I suppose...), along with adverbs (e.g., evidently, apparently, perhaps) (Simpson 2005).

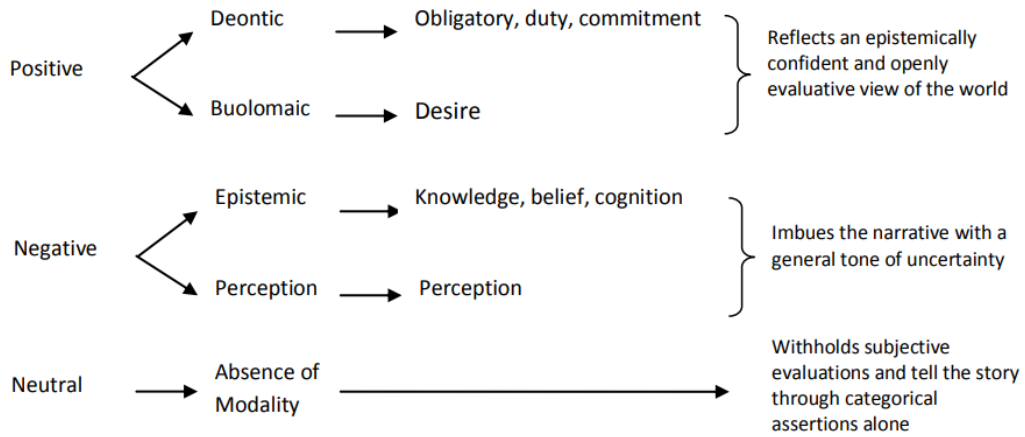


Figure 1. The relationship between modal system, shade, represented concepts, and prominent features (Adopted from Parina and Leon, 2014).

4. Analysis and Findings

After conducting a quantitative analysis of modality choices in both short stories, the results reveal both writers’ tendency to employ epistemic modality as shown in tables 1 and 2, as it has the highest number of occurrences in both “Sandpiper” and “Mrs. Sen’s” compared to the other three modalities with 55% and 62% occurrences respectively. This is followed by deontic modality with 22.07% occurrence in “Sandpiper” and 26.82% in “Mrs. Sen’s.” In the third place comes boulomaic modality with a percentage of 14.28% in “Sandpiper” and 6.09% in “Mrs. Sen’s.” Finally, perception modality is the least frequent type of modality employed in both plays with a percentage of 7.79% in “Sandpiper” and 4.87% in “Mrs. Sen’s.”

As shown in tables (1) and (2), it is evident that negative shading is the most dominant shading in both short stories as both are foregrounded in epistemic modality. This creates a general sense of uncertainty of the protagonists’ beliefs, a sense of disorientation and perplexity. As Simpson (2004) explained, it enhances the point of view of the narrators’ confusion and bewilderment.

Table 1. Results of Analysis based on shadings and modality in Soueif’s “Sandpiper”.

Modality	Positive shading				Negative shading			
	Deontic		Boulomaic		Epistemic		Perception	
	n	%	N	%	n	%	n	%
	17	22.07%	11	14.28%	43	55.84%	6	7.79%
Total	28 (36.35%)				49 (63.63%)			

Table 2. Results of Analysis based on shadings and modality in Lahiri’s “Mrs. Sen’s”.

Modality	Positive shading				Negative shading			
	Deontic		Boulomaic		Epistemic		Perception	
	n	%	N	%	n	%	n	%
	22	26.82%	5	6.09%	51	62.19%	4	4.87%
Total	27 (32.92%)				55 (67.07%)			

4.1. Soueif’s “Sandpiper”

As shown in Figure 2 below, Soueif’s “Sandpiper” has a first-person narrator who relies heavily on epistemic modality as in “I *suppose*,” “I *thought*,” “It *would*,” “It *could*,” and “*possibly*.” Soueif’s protagonist expresses doubt and lack of certainty through the epistemic modality as in “I *suppose* I should have seen it coming. My foreignness, which had been so charming, began to irritate him” (Soueif 2007, 5). She doubts her decision of staying with her husband in his Eastern hometown as she suffers from feelings of alienation away from her Western culture, just as her foreignness started to annoy her husband. She employs “thought” and “as though” as in “I *thought* about our life in my country before we were married: [...] I *thought* of those things and missed them. It was *as though* they were all there to be called upon” (Soueif 2007, 2). She is not sure if she still maintains the same emotional relationship that she used to have with her husband when they were still in her country. This emphasizes her feelings of estrangement and uncertainty. She is frustrated in this Eastern culture with everything, including the hot weather. The narrator utilizes the verb “try,” “thought,” and “couldn’t” as in “I looked out to sea and, now I *realize*, I was *trying to* work out my coordinates. I *thought* a lot about the water and the sand. I *tried* to understand that I was on the edge, the very edge of Africa; my mind *could not* grasp a world that was not present to my senses” (Soueif 2007, 2). She is confused in this new culture and feels that she is far away from home at the edge of the world. She is present in a place where due to her foreignness, people sometimes try to take advantage of her. “If I tried to do the shopping the prices trebled” (Soueif 2007, 3). This enhances her feelings of being lost in a new culture where she is trying to work out her priorities. However, the only thing she is sure of is her feelings of bewilderment as this is the thing that she “realizes.” She is yearning not just for home, but for “a time that was and [she] *can never* have again” (Soueif 2007, 5). She is certain that this alienation and displacement can never be healed. “I *never see* my lover now. I see a man I *could* yet *fall* in love with, and I turn away” (Soueif 2007, 5). She is confronted with a sense of loss, dis-orientation, and alienation, but she is certain that her displacement has destroyed her love.

Second, Soueif’s choice of deontic modality revolves around her sense of obligation towards herself. The sense of necessity she employs in the use of “I *should* have gone,” “I *should* have turned,” and “I *should* have picked my child and gone”

shows that she regrets staying away from her culture after knowing that the relationship with her husband has changed (Soueif 2007, 2). She employs deontic modality to show that the new culture is enforcing new habits on her as in “I should have been sleeping. That is what they think I am doing. That is what we pretend I do: sleep away the hottest of the midday hours.” She pretends to be sleeping during the afternoons as this is what they do there. She pretends to act in a way that would make her fit in this new culture, but she still feels like an outcast. She is hanging between two cultures; her own and her husband’s which she fails to embrace.

Boulomaic and perception modality are rarely employed in Soueif’s “Sandpiper.” Boulomaic modality is used to reflect the protagonist’s wishes. She wishes she could still have the lost love between her and her husband, which seems to fade away by the negative impacts of feeling alienated in a culture that is not her own, where she constantly suffers from a sense of not belonging. Moreover, perception modality is used to show how she perceives her life. She sees her life away from home as a “mirage.” She states, “I saw it again. It’s hard to believe it isn’t there when I can see it so clearly” (Soueif 2007, 5). She complains of how her life “seems now to be losing the intensity of its glare.” She is confused, trapped, and even misunderstood. This reflects the impact of displacement on the protagonist’s identity.

Modality	Examples	
Epistemic Modality	<p>- I <i>suppose</i> I <i>should have seen</i> it coming. My foreignness, which had been so charming, began to irritate him. My inability to remember names, to follow the minutiae of politics; my struggles with his language.</p>	<p>- I looked out to sea and, now I <i>realize</i>, I was <i>trying to work out my coordinates</i>. I <i>thought</i> a lot about the water and the sand [...] I <i>tried to understand</i> that I was on the edge, the very edge of Africa; [...] my mind <i>could not</i> grasp a world that was not present to my senses.</p>
	<p>- I <i>thought</i> about our life in my country before we were married: [...] I <i>thought</i> of those things and <i>missed</i> them, but with no great sense of loss. It was <i>as though</i> they were all there to be called upon, to be lived again whenever we <i>wanted</i>.</p>	<p>- Yes, I am sick, but not just for home. I am sick for a time, a time that was and that I <i>can never</i> have again. A lover I had and <i>can never</i> have again [...] - I <i>never</i> see my lover now. I see a man I <i>could</i> yet fall in love with, and I turn away.</p>
Deontic Modality	<p>- I <i>should have gone</i>. [...] I <i>should have gone</i>. In that swirl of amazed and wounded anger when, knowing him as I did, I first sensed that he was pulling away from me, I <i>should have gone</i>. I <i>should have turned, picked up my child, and gone</i>.</p>	<p>What story can I write? I sit with my notes at my writing table and wait for Lucy. I should have been sleeping. That is what they think I am doing. That is what we pretend I do: sleep away the hottest of the midday hours.</p>
Boulomaic Modality	<p>It was as though they were all there to be called upon, to be lived again whenever we <i>wanted</i>.</p>	<p>I did not <i>want</i> one grain of sand, blown by a breeze I could not <i>feel</i>.</p>
Perception Modality	<p>I told him too about my first mirage, the one I <i>saw</i> on that long road to Maiduguri. And on the desert road to Alexandria the first summer, I <i>saw</i> it again. "It's hard to <i>believe</i> it isn't there when I can <i>see</i> it so <i>clearly</i>," I complained</p>	<p>Back in my room I stand again at the window, looking out through the chink in the shutters at the white that <i>seems</i> now to be losing the intensity of its glare.</p>

Figure 2. Modality in Soueif's "Sandpiper".

4.2. Lahiri's "Mrs. Sen's"

On the other hand, in "Mrs. Sen's," Lahiri employs a third-person narrator, Eliot, a young American boy whom Mrs. Sen looks after in the afternoons and who presents her sufferings from his perspective and from the direct speech used. Just like in "Sandpiper," Lahiri depends on epistemic modality to show her protagonist's feelings of being marginalized in a culture very different from her own. As shown in Figure 3 below, when Mrs. Sen asks Eliot if someone would come if she started screaming, Eliot hesitates and answers with "*maybe*" and "*might*" to show his

uncertainty that anybody would care and come. He belongs to the individualistic Western culture and knows that people might only come to complain of noise, unlike the Eastern collectivistic cultures where people tend to socialize more (Hofstede 2001). This sharply contrasts with Mrs. Sen's certainty of happily being unable to sleep because of the neighbors' noise in India when they come to celebrate a wedding. She says, "It is *impossible* to fall asleep" when the neighbors gather to celebrate an occasion in India, unlike her current state where she *cannot* sometimes sleep in so much silence." She constantly draws comparisons between her past life in her homeland, India, and her new life in the United States where she faces multiple challenges and suffers from dislocation and a language barrier as she can only speak her mother tongue with her husband. However, being dislocated now means she never celebrates a special occasion. She feels trapped in a dull life away from her family and friends. This is clear in the use of "never" in "It was *never* a special occasion, nor was she ever expecting company. It was merely dinner for herself and Mr. Sen, as indicated by the two plates and two glasses she set, without napkins or silverware" (Lahiri 1999, 4). Moreover, employing the epistemic verb "think" in "They *think* I live the life of a queen, Eliot...They *think* I press buttons and the house is clean. They *think* I live in a palace" (Lahiri 1999, 7), shows the contrast between how her Indian folks view her life in the United States and how she views it, which highlights her inner turmoil and that she is far from being happy after being displaced. She only wants company and desires anything that reminds her of her old good days at home.

Furthermore, deontic modality is employed to express her utter sense of obligation to follow the customs and traditions of her Indian culture as in "I *must* wear the powder every day for the rest of the days that I am married" instead of putting on a wedding ring (Lahiri 1999, 3). Deontic modality is also used to draw on the difference between her Eastern culture and the Western culture where she moved. She uses "*have to*" as in "At home that is all you *have to* do. Not everybody has a telephone. But just raise your voice a bit, or express grief or joy of any kind, and one whole neighborhood and half of another has come to share the news, to help with arrangements" (Lahiri 1999, 3). Once more, she compares her collectivistic Eastern culture to the individualistic Western culture that she lives in where she does not get company or feel the warmth of family and friends who used to share sad as well as happy occasions with her.

Lahiri also employs boulomaic and perception modality, but with less frequency. Boulomaic modality is used to show the protagonist's wants and desires. We get to know that she only wants company as in "Eliot knew she *wanted* him sitting beside her because she was afraid" (Lahiri 1999, 4). She "desired" everything that reminded her of her homeland as in eating fish which is a meal that people in her hometown of Calcutta, India eat regularly. Eating fish is symbolic of her life in India. "The other thing that made Mrs. Sen happy was fish from the seaside. It was always a whole fish she *desired*" (Lahiri 1999, 6). Perception modality is utilized to show how the narrator perceives the protagonist as we learn about her ordeal from his perspective. For instance, when she receives a letter from her family, her tone "*seems to shift*"

and her voice becomes louder which shows her excited mental and psychological state when she feels connected to her family.

Modality	Examples	
Epistemic Modality	<p>“Eliot, if I began to scream right now at the top of my lungs, <i>would</i> someone come?” “Eliot shrugged. “<i>Maybe</i>. They <i>might</i> call you,”. “But they <i>might</i> complain that you were making too much noise.”</p>	<p>“Whenever there is a wedding in the family or a large celebration of any kind [...] they sit in an enormous circle on the roof of our building, laughing and gossiping [...] It is <i>impossible</i> to fall asleep those nights, <i>listening</i> to their chatter.” “Here, in this place where Mr. Sen has brought me, I <i>cannot</i> sometimes sleep in so much silence.”</p>
	<p>“They <i>think</i> I live the life of a queen, Eliot...They <i>think</i> I press buttons and the house is clean. They <i>think</i> I live in a palace”.</p>	<p>It was <i>never</i> a special occasion, nor was she ever expecting company. It was merely dinner for herself and Mr. Sen, as indicated by the two plates and two glasses she set, without napkins or silverware.</p>
Deontic Modality	<p>- “I <i>must</i> wear the powder every day for the rest of the days that I am married.” - “Like a wedding ring, you mean?” “Exactly, Eliot, exactly like a wedding ring.</p>	<p>“At home that is all you <i>have to</i> do. Not everybody has a telephone. But just raise your voice a bit, or express grief or joy of any kind, and one whole neighborhood and half of another has come to share the news, to help with arrangements.”</p>
Boloumaic Modality	<p>Eliot knew she <i>wanted</i> him sitting beside her because she was afraid.</p>	<p>The other thing that made Mrs. Sen happy was fish from the seaside. It was always a whole fish she <i>desired</i>.</p>
Perception Modality	<p>She had brought the blade from India, where <i>apparently</i> there was at least one in every household.</p>	<p>Two things, Eliot learned, made Mrs. Sen happy. One was the arrival of a letter from her family [...] As she read her voice was louder and <i>seemed</i> to shift in key. Though she stood plainly before him, Eliot had the <i>sensation</i> that Mrs. Sen was no longer present in the room with the pear colored carpet.</p>

Figure 3. Modality in Lahiri’s “Mrs. Sen’s”.

5. Discussion

The analysis of the frequency and function of modality in Soueif’s “Sandpiper” and Lahiri’s “Mrs. Sen’s” reveals that both writers rely primarily on epistemic modality and negative shading narration. Presenting protagonists that employ modals such as “may,” “might,” “could,” “would,” “perhaps,” “probably,” and “doubt,”

which entail uncertainty, accentuates the protagonists' feelings of alienation, doubt and lack of confidence that resulted from their being displaced from their culture. Although Soueif's protagonist is portrayed as being displaced from a Western culture, while Lahiri's protagonist is displaced from an Eastern one, both writers employ the same modality to convey their protagonists' suffering from the psychological and mental pain that is associated with cultural displacement. The results of the current study coincide with findings of previous research that examined prose fiction, whether short stories or novels. Trimarco (2021) concluded that epistemic modality and negative shading are employed in Edgar Allan Poe's adventure stories to create a mood of uncertainty. The results also correspond with Abood (2016) and Parina and de Leon (2014) who concluded that various short story and novel writers, like Hemingway, Dickens, and Wilde employ epistemic modality to convey feelings of uncertainty and confusion.

6. Conclusion

This study has examined the frequency and function of modality choices employed by Ahdaf Soueif and Jhumpa Lahiri in their short stories "Sandpiper" and "Mrs. Sen's" respectively to highlight the concept of cultural displacement which both their heroines suffer from. The study has examined the cultural displacement and identity crisis experienced by unvoiced female subjects in a modern world. Both authors explore the feelings of displaced/ estranged female characters. They not only portray displaced females from the East, but also from the west. The results have revealed that both authors have employed all four types of modality. Epistemic modality is the most common type of modality employed in both short stories, followed by deontic modality, boulomaic modality, and perception modality respectively.

Both short stories have negative shading narration as they primarily rely on epistemic modality which is employed to convey the protagonists' doubt, hesitation, alienation, and lack of confidence when they are displaced from their cultures. Even though the protagonists exert effort to integrate themselves in their new cultures, they end up feeling their foreignness. Different types of modality are employed to convey their feelings of loneliness and alienation. They admit their feelings of otherness and their inability to blend in or to cope with the new culture as they fail to cope with the new norms, customs, and societal expectations. Therefore, comparing and contrasting the use of different types of modality in both short stories highlights the universality of feelings of displacement in a modern world, where not only Eastern women suffer, but Western women as well. The study covers the frequency and function of different types of modality in conveying feelings of cultural displacement and alienation in short stories, therefore, the researcher suggests examining the use of modality in other literary genres for future research.

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