THE USE OF MODALITY IN BIDEN'S DNC SPEECH 2020: AN INTERPERSONAL METAFUNCTION ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This study is aimed to describe interpersonal meaning of Biden's DNC speech in 2020. From the perspective of interpersonal meaning, the users of language establish and maintain their position in the social relationship. This study focuses on the analysis of the usage of modality and the value of modality in expressing interpersonal meaning. This study was conducted by using qualitative method. The theory applied in this study is Interpersonal meaning from the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) by M.A.K. Halliday and supported by other Systemic Functional Linguists' theories. The results of this research showed that the high value of modality is applied in the texts in order to convince the listeners to vote for him, and to show status, power, relationship among them.

Key words: interpersonal meaning, modality, SFL(Systemic Functional Linguistics), DNC (Democratic National Committee)

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan makna interpersonal pidato DNC Biden pada tahun 2020. Dari perspektif makna interpersonal, pengguna bahasa membangun dan mempertahankan posisinya dalam hubungan sosial. Penelitian ini berfokus pada analisis penggunaan modalitas dan nilai modalitas dalam mengungkapkan makna interpersonal. Penelitian ini dilakukan dengan menggunakan metodologi kualitatif. Teori yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah Makna Interpersonal dari Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) oleh M.A.K. Halliday dan didukung oleh teori Linguis Fungsional Sistemik lainnya. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa nilai modalitas yang tinggi diterapkan dalam teks untuk meyakinkan pendengar untuk memilih Biden juga untuk menunjukkan status, kekuasaan, hubungan di antara mereka.

Kata kunci: makna interpersonal, modalitas, SFL (Systemic Functional Linguistics), DNC (Komite Nasional Demokrat)

1. Introduction

Interpersonal meaning in speech is used to change the views and behavior of listeners, to express their opinions on something, and to change the listeners' minds so that they have the same understanding as the speakers. It also refers to how to establish and maintain relationships and interactions between those who make and deliver speeches and their audiences. They communicate interpersonal meanings through language. Halliday

(2004) asserts that language sustains our social connections. Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) theory describes language as a system that is based not only on sentence structure but also on the selection of words that are interrelated to create meaning that can be understood by others (Emilia, 2014; Halliday, 1994). Additionally, SFL discovered that language creates three meanings at once, which are referred to as metafunctions. According to Halliday (quoted in Emilia, 2014, p. 65), "three fundamental human requirements, which are thought to be represented in terms of metafunctions, are the reasons why language has developed". Ideational (representing experience), interpersonal (bargaining and maintaining relationships with others), and textual (ordering language to form related and coherent speech) are the three types of metafunctions. (Martin, 2014; Emilia, 2014).

Language users engage in the interpersonal metafunction, which is concerned with clause as trade, through establishing communication with people, negotiating relationships, and expressing thoughts and attitudes. Interpersonal meanings are defined as meanings that communicate a speaker's attitude and judgment, according to Gerot and Wignell (1994, p. 13). In accordance with this, Eggins (2004) states that this meaning conveys the writer's attitude toward the topic matter as well as their relationship with the reader. From the standpoint of SFL, there are three things to take into account when analyzing interpersonal intentions: mood (concerns with the topic of information or service, whether it is giving or demanding, and the tenor of the relationship between the interactant), modality (a speaker's/writer's/narrator's attitude toward and opinion about the events and situations around him/her), and personal pronouns (represent the speaker's perspective on the world). The author of this study exclusively used the speech's modalities while analyzing the interpersonal meaning of the acceptance speech.

An acceptance speech, which is a formal public launch of a political campaign following the appointment of the political party to represent the party, is given by each presidential candidate at the national convention of their respective party. It lays out the state of the nation and the nominee's plans for resolving the most pressing and significant issues, which the candidate can provide to win the support of the majority of voters.

Modality refers to speakers' attitudes toward or opinions about the veracity of the propositions they communicate, and Halliday (2004) suggested that modality is one of the most crucial components of interpersonal meaning. It also includes the speakers' perspectives on the circumstances or events they discuss. Then, modality is separated into two groups. Modalization, or epistemic modality, is the first category. Modalization is the

use of a modality to debate the likelihood that something will occur or exist, as well as the frequency or regularity of the proposition (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004; Fairclough, 2003; Eggins, 2004). Modulation, also known as deontic modality, is the second category. Deontic modality demonstrates consent, capacity, and duty (Fairclough, 2003, p. 165). The importance of one's appraisal and commitment, which might be low, median, or high and have either a positive or negative polarity, is illustrated by these two sorts of modalities (Emilia, 2014, p. 133). There are a number of modality markers, including modal operators or modal auxiliaries like "will," "can," and "may," as well as "really."

Table 1. Values of Modality

	Probability	Usuality	Obligation	Inclination
High	certain	always	required	determined
Median	probably	usually	supposed	keen
Low	possible	sometimes	allowed	willing

Three values of modality adapted from Halliday (1985, p. 337)

Table 2. Semantics Distinction of Modal Auxiliaries According to Their Values

High	must	ought to	need	has/had to
Median	will	would	shall	should
Low	may	might	can	could

Adapted from Halliday (2004, p. 116)

The following research aims were addressed in this study with relation to the previously specified background: to find out how the modalities are employed in Biden's DNC speech in 2020 and to analyse the functions of the modalities found in the speech.

2. Research Method

This study employed the qualitative techniques. Creswell (2009, p. 4) argues that qualitative technigue is "a mean for exploring and understanding the meaning individual or group ascribe to a social or human problem". It involved data collection procedures which are mainly in non-numerical data (Dornyei, 2007, p. 24).

The data of this study Joe Biden's acceptance speech delivered on August 20th in Democratic National Convention which lasted from August 17th-20th, 2020 consisted of 3213 words. The data was derived from https://edition.cnn.com/2020/08/20/politics/biden-dnc-speech-transcript/index.html. The writer employed literature technique in collecting the data. Then it is followed by listening to the spontanous language expression and then take

some notes. The writer observed the data by reading the speech transcript, then the writer continued to note and observed the data based on modality uses and values.

3. Findings and Discussion

Modality is employed by the speaker to show his or her judgments and opinions about the topic being discussed. Through the use of modality, we are shown how much a statement is true and how committed the speaker is. Halliday (2004) proposed three basic values to codify the modals judgment: "high, median, and low" (p. 149). Modality with the values of low, middle, and high is utilized in Biden's acceptance speech. In the statistical table of the use of modality (see Table 3) below Biden use all types of modality in his 72 clauses speech. The inclination modality, which is used in 27 clauses, or 37.4% of Biden's speech, is used most frequently in the top three places. Probability is ranked second with 17 clauses, or 22.2%. And with 13 clauses, or 19.1%, Biden chose potentiality or ability in third place. Based on Table 3 below, the two lowest percentages of modality adopted in Biden's are usuality (9 clauses, or 8,5%) and modality of obligation (7 clauses, or 9,8%).

Table 3. Types of Modality in Biden's DNC /Acceptance Speech 2020

Types of Modality	Frequency			Percentage		
	High Level	Median Level	Low Level	High Level	Median Level	Low Level
Probability	2	11	4	1.4%	15.2%	5.6%
Usuality	9	-	-	12.5%	-	-
Inclination	22	5	-	30.5%	6.9%	-
Obligation	2	1	4	2.8%	1.4%	5.6%
Potentiality / Ability	9	4	-	12.5%	5.6%	-
TOTAL	41	23	8	59.7%	29.1%	11.2%
	72			100%		

The value of modality is another way to recognize that the speaker is using a modality, aside from the forms of modality that are used. According to Thompson (2000), since modality is thought of in terms of scales and degrees, people can indicate a higher or lower degree of certainty regarding the availability of a proposition or a higher or lower degree of pressure on other people to follow a command. The strength of the speaker's commitment and the clarity of their statement are demonstrated by the value of modal expression. Table 3 demonstrates how Biden employs the value of modal expression; of the 72 modal verb sentences, 41 have a high value, 23 have a medium value, and 8 have a low value.

The author discusses the modality types used in the clauses taken in this analysis. There are two different categories of modality. In terms of systemic functional linguistics, epistemic modality is also known as modalization as a sort of connotative meaning dependent on the level of assurance the speaker chooses to communicate about what she or he is talking about. It carries a variety of connotations that can indicate the speaker's evaluation of what they are saying. While in systemic functional linguistics, Deontic modality is also known as modulation (a sort of connotative meaning, but unlike modalization, it adds duty or permission as well as willingness and capacity). In this study the writer finds different types of modality were used as discussed below:

1) **Inclination**

The modality of inclination appears the most frequently in Biden's acceptance speeches. This particular modality focuses on how willing the speaker is to accept the offer. The strong desire to carry out the activity is demonstrated by the high level of inclination. A person's readiness to take action is indicated by their median level of inclination, and their capacity to make an offer is indicated by their low degree of inclination. There are 27 sentences that take advantage of the modality of inclination; 5 of them, or 22,7%, fall into the medium value, while 22 of them, or 81,5%, fall into the high value. In his speech, Biden used a low level of inclination. "Will" is the modal verb indicating inclination in both speeches. The word "will" has two meanings, according to Lyons (1981, p. 330). The first meaning is to provide information about what will happen in the future based on the speaker's prediction, beliefs, or intentions. The second meaning of will is used in sentences that use the "permissive" modal, in which the speaker presents himself as the guarantor of the accuracy or happening of the event he refers to. Examples of sentences from Biden's speech are provided below.

I will be an ally of the light not of the darkness.

The subject of the given data is I, which refers to Biden. Biden selects the will modal operator, which is classified as having a high amount of inclination. The verb in the sentence is "to be." Through this phrase, Biden conveys that he is steadfastly committed to supporting the light rather than the darkness. He employs light, which in the sight of God is a sign for reality, spirituality, and holiness. Another interpretation of light in this context is hope for the future. It implies that, if elected, he is genuinely committed to leading the country and the American people in line with Christian principles, the truth, and optimism.

I will stand always for our values of human rights and dignity.

In the aforementioned clauses, Biden also utilizes the modal word will, which is categorized as having a high level of inclination, and I as the subject of his sentences. A high level of inclination demonstrates a person's steadfast dedication to providing for others. The verb in that sentence is "stand," and it is always used with a circumstantial adjunct. According to the aforementioned paragraph, Biden is dedicated to standing up for everyone. No matter their color, ethnicity, class, age, social economic status, health, sex, political views, or religion, he believed that everyone had the right to the same treatment and the same rights.

2) **Probability**

In terms of most frequent occurrences, the second most frequent modality is one that displays likelihood. In contrast to the other probabilities, Biden frequently uses the median likelihood in his speeches. There are 4 sentences with low likelihood, 8 with median probability, and 4 with high probability. The speaker's information has a high level of probability, which means it is certain; a middling level of probability, which means it is probable; and a low level of probability, which means it may be possible.

Maybe George Floyd's murder was the breaking point.

Maybe John Lewis' passing the inspiration.

Biden employs the modal verb maybe, which is seen as having a low level of likelihood, in the aforementioned phrases. The murders of John Lewi and George Floyd are the topics of clauses, respectively. The two clauses' respective verbs are was. According to Biden, the murder of George Floyd, a 46-year-old black man, on May 25, 2020, and the passing of John Lewis, known as "Bloody Sunday," during the 1963 March on Washington movement that eventually led to the Civil Rights Act becoming law, are both expected to change attitudes toward the issue not only among black Americans but also among white Americans.

More mom and pop businesses will close their doors for good.

The verb close is used after the subject, which is more of a mom-and-pop enterprise. In this way, Biden also predicts what would occur if they continued to elect President Trump. Since Trump's policies and actions to address COVID-19 were, in Biden's opinion, unclear,

more mom-and-pop businesses are likely to close their doors permanently as a result of the issues mentioned in the clause, according to Biden. He also stated that "after all this time, the president still does not have a plan."

3) Usuality

It is known as "modalization," and it operates on propositions in the region between "it is" and "it isn't." There are "two kinds of intermediate possibilities: (i) degrees of probability [and] (ii) degrees of usuality" (Halliday, 2004, p. 147). Usuality is defined as "equivalent to both yes and no," that is, occasionally answering "yes" and occasionally "no," with varying degrees of frequency attached. Biden chose to use the modality of usuality with a high level value.

They will always be with you.

In the above clause, Biden alludes to your loved ones by using they as the subject. Will is the modal verb used to demonstrate regularity, and it is followed by always to enhance the notion of regularity. In this phrase, Biden expresses his belief that even when our loved ones have passed away, they will always be with us through the memories we have and the imprints they have left on our hearts and memories.

We can never lose that.

The clause uses the all-inclusive subject we, which refers to Biden and every American, and the modal verb can, which is followed by never as an adverb of frequency to show regularity. Biden aspires for Americans to never lose their belief in their ability to restore the greatness of their country. He wants every American to have faith in themselves, their abilities, and the innate bravery that God has given them to face the challenges of today.

4) Obligation

Modality of responsibility the obligation-signaling modality only appears seven times in Biden's speech, which places it last or fifth overall. Biden prefers to employ the low-level value with four or five percent clauses, the high-level value with two or two percent clauses, and the median level value with one or one percent clauses. Biden utilizes could not, need, and don't need as the low-level values in his speech, should as the median level, and must as the high level. There are some uses of obligation modalities, such as when speakers attempt to project confidence and/or authority.

No rhetoric is needed.

Need is the passive form of the modal verb used by Biden in the clause. The low-level value of duty includes need. No occurs before rhetoric in the negative version of the sentence. Biden makes this claim in an effort to entice and convince listeners to cast a vote in the next presidential election. With this assertion, he implies that there is no requirement for inspiring and convincing language or elegant sentences. Listeners will consciously select a president in accordance with their conscience by considering the current circumstances, in his opinion.

We must be

The example above demonstrates the use of a high level of obligation. The topic is inclusive we, which refers to the speaker and the audiences. In this context, the speaker is convinced that everyone is ready to tackle the numerous problems and barriers that are happening today in their country and that may happen in the future. At the same time, he also provides motivation for the listeners and the speaker by saying that they can absolutely go through it all.

I won't have to do it alone

Biden is referred to as the clause's subject by the word I. In this sentence, there are two modal verbs: won't to indicate possibility and have to to indicate obligation. According to Biden, if he were to become president in the future, he wouldn't be working alone because, by law, the vice president would aid the president in carrying out his duties.

5) **Potentiality/ Ability**

According to Portner (2009, p. 135), a dynamic modality is one that conveys ability. The subject's ability to perform a task is demonstrated by their modality. The third-most frequent modal verbs are those that express potential or ability. There are 4 clauses in the median level and 9 clauses in the high level, with a total of 13 occurrences. Uses for the modal verbs include able, unable, and can.

And there has never been anything we've been unable to accomplish when we've done it together.

In the above example, there are two clauses. The independent clause is opened with the conjunctive adjunct and followed by there as the subject and the inclusive we, which refers to Biden and his listeners. The modal operator is un+able. The dependent clause,

which functions as a sentence that has a meaning as a prerequisite for the success of an activity, is likewise begun with the conjuctive adjunct when, and the subject is the exclusive we, which refers to Biden and his listeners. This remark is intended as an inspiring sentence that stimulates the listeners to retain unity since everything can be done if there is unity—the unity between the government and its population.

Together, we can, and we will, rebuild our economy.

Data above uses the inclusive we as the subject which refers to Biden and the listeners. In every sentence, there are two modal operators. The first modal operator is can to show ability and the second one is will to show inclination or strong determination. Biden emphasized the existence of unity between government and society which is implied by the use of word together. With the cooperation between the government and the community, the economic reconstruction will be carried out. In this context, Biden also strongly wishes that economic development becomes a joint work among the president, government and society.

4. Conclusion

This study reveals that Biden uses a variety of modalities in his speech, including modalization—a modality that conveys probability and regularity—and modulation, which conveys obligation, inclination, and capacity. The high-level value of the modality serves to both demonstrate the speakers' strong resolve and entice the listeners to share that resolve by joining them in taking action to achieve shared objectives. It also means to persuade or convince the audience. The modality's median value reflects the speakers' level of confidence in the information they present in their presentations. Additionally, it demonstrates the speakers' level of commitment to the promises made in their remarks. While the low modality value conveys the possibility of his statements and also to shorten the distance between the speakers and the audiences.

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