



**MODALITY ON PRESIDENT TRUMP’S SPEECH  
ON CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC**

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*Submitted September; Accepted October; Published December*

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**ABSTRACT**

This study investigates modality used in the Trumps’ speech on coronavirus pandemic addressed in the types of modality, value of modality and the explanation on the modality context. This study was analyzed qualitatively. The data of this study is the clause that consists of modality on President Trump’s speech, and sources of data is taken from [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com). The data collected by applying a documentary technique. The finding reveals that the speakers use modalization of probability in their speech. The use of modality realized by modal auxiliary that commonly used by the speaker in the speech is sub modalization–probability. The reason that the speakers use modality is typically the modalization used to convey/persuade the listener of the speaker talk about the future political event that have not happened yet and unpredictable things.

***Keywords:*** *Systemic Functional Grammar, Modality, Modalization, Trumps’ Speech*

***How to Cite:*** Matondang, Syafrida. (2022). Modality on President Trump’s Speech on Coronavirus Pandemic. *Jurnal Linguistik Terapan Pascasarjana Unimed*, 19 (3): 236-243.

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**ISSN: 2407-7410**

**INTRODUCTION**

Fowler (1997:76) explained that modality is the simplest sense, indicates a speaker’s or writer’s special way of conceptualizing a world view or ideology. It means that language does not allow us to say something without conveying an attitude to that something. In other words, hardly one can find a piece of written and spoken text as purely, objective, neutral, or value-free. It is basically the speakers’ point of view, angle of telling, or authorial interest that determines

the essence of speech style and that provides the speech with its particular feel and color. Li (1999: 21) defined modality as the degrees between right or wrong. It is a significant in the expression of argument and opinion by employing modality, people are free to express ideas that are not facts with various degree of certainty.

The types of modality used in Trump's speech that is assumed to explain American citizen about corona virus pandemic need to be revealed and to be convinced. It is necessary to know the systematic use of the type to help more people to consider speech contents. Moreover, the writer views that analyzing Trump's speeches can create the validity of future plan that how can we prepare toward 2020. Based on the corpus, this paper employs the theories of modality in systemic-functional linguistics to analyze modality in speech to reflect complex semantic connotations and their functions, attempting to reveal how speakers convince their audiences through modality. The objectives of the study are to identify the dominant modality used on Trump's speeches on Coronavirus Pandemic and to contextualize the use of the dominant type of modality used on Trump's speech on Coronavirus Pandemic.

Theoretically, the findings enrich the discussion about the application of systemic functional grammar in concluding people utterances and speeches. Practically, the findings of modality are expected to be useful for the students and the teacher with a required knowledge in doing another research especially in modality investigating relevant topic with politic, bilateral, and mass media. This study also assists politician, journalist, and speaker to enhance the development of logic ideas and organized expression of speech or debate.

Systemic Functional Grammar is a grammar model developed by Halliday (1994) which takes a functional approach to grammar, analyzing language as a social-semiotic of communicative meaning making. Systemic Functional Linguistics (often abbreviated to SFL) is defined "not as a set of structures but as a network of systems, or interrelated sets of options for making meaning" (Halliday, 1994:15, upper case in original). This means that SFL is necessary to recognize and interpret the description strategic of language framework to produce meaning. The systemic approach to language is functional in two main respects (Eggins, 2004:3):

Moreover, there are three 'metafunctions' formulated by Halliday (1994) which form the basic foundation on which Systemic Functional Grammar is based. These 'certain basic functions' are the three metafunctions: the ideational, the interpersonal and the textual. The ideational metafunction is concerned with 'the speaker's experience of the real world' (Halliday in

Teich1999: 15). Within the ideational, there is a subdivision into experiential and logical. The experiential refers to prepositional content encoded as processes, events, the participants therein and the accompanying circumstances, the types of objects referred to and their qualities. The interpersonal metafunction encodes speakers' attitudes and evaluations and relates to the contextual parameter of tenor. One of Halliday's definitions of the interpersonal metafunction in relation to grammar is the following: the grammar of personal participation; it expresses the speaker's role in speech situation, his personal commitment and his interaction with others. (Halliday in Teich 1999:21).

Modality refers to the area of meaning that lies between yes and no-the intermediate ground between positive and negative polarity (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 617). What implies more specifically will depend on the underlying speech function of the clause. (1) If the clause is an 'information' clause (a proposition, congruently realized as indicative), this means either (i) 'either yes or no', that is, 'maybe'; or (ii) 'both yes and no', that is, 'sometimes'; in other words, some degree of probability or of usuality. (2) If the clause is a 'goods-&-services' clause (a proposal, which has no real congruent form in the grammar, but by default we can characterize it as imperative), it means either (i) 'is wanted to,' related to a command, or (ii) 'wants to', related to an offer; in other words, some degree of obligation or of inclination. . Similar definition also stated by Saragih (2005:21) that modality defines as personal judgment on, opinion, 'flavor' or 'seasoning' to an experiential context or a speech function by the addresser.

Furthermore, Halliday divided modality into 2 types, they are modalization and modulation. Modalization is the expression of the speaker's attitude towards what s/he's saying. It is the way the speaker gets into the text, expressing a judgement about the certainty, likelihood or frequency of something happening or being (Eggs 2004:174). It is always expressing the implicit judgement of the speaker. But, because people play with language, modalization can also be realized explicitly. Speakers can make it quite obvious that it is their judgement that is being expressed as Halliday and Matthiessen (2004:147-50 and 617-21), presents it modalization involves the expression of two kinds of meanings:

- a) probability: where the speaker expresses judgements as to the likelihood or probability of something happening or being;

b) usuality: where the speaker expresses judgements as to the frequency with which something happens or is.

The area of modality refers to meaning which lies between positive and negative polar of the mood. The area contains consideration, perspective, attitude and personal judgment of the addresser to the information or good and service being exchanged in the interaction. There are four basic of speech function, they are: statement, question, offer and command. Each of the four types may come either in positive and negative polar as shown in the figure below. Modality hence lies between two sides of positive and negative polar.

## METHODOLOGY

The study used a descriptive qualitative method. The data of this study is the clause that consists of modality on President Trump’s speech. Bogdan and Biklen (1992:106) state that the term data refers to the rough material researchers collect from the world they are studying; they are the particulars that form the basis of analysis. The data source taken from <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/11/us/politics/trump-coronavirus-speech.html>. The speech was held on speaking from the Oval Office, Mr. Trump announced a suspension of travel from Europe for 30 days, starting on Friday. The data are the fifteen speeches transcriptions. The data collected by applying a documentary technique.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data obtained from Trump’s speech, the number of modality in the speech transcriptions is 159 which divided into two sub modalization of probability and usuality and modulation of obligation and inclination. The two of sub modalization and modulation are displayed on the Table below.

Table 1. Types of Modality

Speech	Types of Modality							
	Modalization				Modulation			
	Probability	%	Usuality	%	Obligation	%	Inclination	%
	26	70.57	2	5.88	4	11.76	2	5.88

The table presents the occurrence of Modalization–probability is used with 26 occurrences found (70.57%). The speech is becoming the dominant using probability. Here are the data:

(24) *“We will significantly reduce the threat to our citizens and we will ultimately and expeditiously defeat this virus.”* (speech 1).

(34) *I am sure that it will have a beneficial effect on the territorial side of the questions as well.*(speech 3)

(40) *I shall be responsible for the government, I have decided to move the Japan-US relations which seemed to be on somewhat awkward ground, to more firm ground.* (speech 3)

Those sentences use “will” and “shall” in the clause that is understood to show the probability of something to be happened in the future. The speakers use “will” to indicate the foreign investment for economic activity. As the ideas shared to the listener, the speaker set “will” derive foreign investment and economic. This can be inferred that speaker give more chances to the listener in considering the foreign investment. Concerning to use the modal verb “will”, the speaker also use “shall” to convince listener toward future plan as shown in the third example by whom the speaker focused on the Japan–US relationship. Moreover, the probability is also emphasized through adjunct with a high value makes the listener become eager to go on the speaker’s statement. He emphasized the probability with the certain degree as there is no hesitation to which statement shown as the examples:

(27) *“It will certainly be good for prosperity back home in Australia”.*(speech 1)

(31) *“The new rules will go into effect Friday at midnight.”*

On these data the speaker use for the future plan.

Modulation has to do with demanding, direction, advice permission, undertaking or capability. Modulation expresses the speaker’s willingness to get the listener to do something. It can be represented into asking for someone, offering declarative statement, advice statement, or even direct imperative statement. It is used to realize the function of a clause as a proposal in an exchange of goods and services. It is realized through an imperative clause, which means either related to a command “is wanted to” or related to an offer “wants to”.

The table also defines that the speaker tends to use obligation which offers the listener to convince the cooperation to what he wants to implement. Here there are shown some examples about the obligation that has happened in the speech. By using modal “must” it shows the obligation as in the clauses:

(11) “*The elderly population must be very, very careful.*”.

Table 2. Modality Indicators

Modalization				Modulation			
Probability		Usuality		Obligation		Inclination	
Indicators	%	Indicators	%	Indicators	%	Indicators	%
Will	38.23	Always	5.88	Should	2.94	Can	5.88
Will be	20.58			Must	5.88		
Will not	8.82			Must be	2.94		
Will never	2.94						
Total	70.57		5.88		11.76		5.88

Based on result of data analysis, the findings of this study are the uses of modality–modalization of probability with 70.57% and usuality with 5.88% and modulation of obligation with 11.76% and inclination with 5.88% were found. The use of usuality were found only 2 occurrences (5.88%). The dominant of probability was conveyed. Then, followed by modulation as obligation with using medium value leading to the second dominant uses with 11.76%. This indicated by the use of *must*, *must be* and *should* to cover the use modal verbs. This obligation is also mostly used as the speech is derived to deal with the ability to be more assertive in the future event.

As seen in Table 2 the use of modalization probability “will” has the highest percentage (38.23%). In concerning to the use of modal auxiliaries, the speakers tend to use “will” as they generally refer their ideas in the future. The speakers dealt the topic aimed at discussing the opportunity in a head. Therefore, the speakers choose to use will as median judgment. In other words, the use of “will” is more favored than the other indicators in realized the modulation and modalization. The most dominant value of modulation in the speech is medium that is realized by modal will. The main functions associated with will are those of showing ability and prediction and volition which are closely related to the future concept. This is in line with that

the most of ideas discussed about the topic or political events that have not happened yet or will be happened in the future.

The speeches tend to use modality using probability as the dominant and the inclination. The target of the modality is to covers the degree of possibility and speakers' attitude while conveying their ideas. Besides, there are many strong reasons of using modality speech as the way of the speakers to infer the events which happened in the future. The presence of using modality in their speech is to negotiate the audience perception in determining the choices. In political field, people habitually equivocate, showing high degree of tentativeness and uncertainty. It means there are many unpredictable things if it is talked about political events. So rather than to say something certainly the speaker tend to convey the listener by making prediction or guessing about what will happen next but still they pay attention to the existing fact. On the other hand, though the speech content tried to show their stance in an unambiguous way, they did not intend to offend readers. Using modality, the question of the writer' opinion can be investigated: the degree to which the writer commits himself to the validity of what he is saying.

## **CONCLUSION**

The finding of the study shows that the speakers use modalization of probability in their speech. The use of modality realized by modal auxiliary that commonly used by the speaker in the speech is sub modalization–probability that is where the speaker expresses judgments as to the likelihood or probability of something happening/being or how likely it is to be true. The reason that the speakers use modality is typically the modalization used to convey/persuade the listener of the speaker talk about the future political event that have not happened yet and unpredictable things. Then, it was how likely the information is to be true and how frequently it is true which can be expressed through modalization. The exchange of goods-and-services: how obligated the other person is to perform the command and how willing the speaker is to fulfill an offer, which can be expressed through modulation. This concept is the idea of modal commitment, which is the degree to which a speaker is committed to the validity of his or her utterance.

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