



## THE INTERPERSONAL MEANING ANALYSIS OF *MICHELLE OBAMA'S* SPEECH

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### Abstract

*This study analyzes the interpersonal meaning in the Michelle Obama's speech on Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School of Islington in 2011. The purposes of this study are (1) to analyze speech functions, mood types, and modalities in Michelle Obama's speech; and (2) to describe the dominant type in the speech. This study uses a qualitative method. The data source used is a transcript of Michelle Obama's speech while the data used is the clause in the speech. The results in this study indicate that of 71 data, based on speech functions Michelle Obama uses 62 Statement clauses, 1 Question clause, and 8 Command clauses. Whereas based on Mood Types, there are 67 Declarative clauses, 1 Interrogative clause, and 3 Imperative clauses. In modality, there are 4 clauses that is categorized as low degree of modality, 3 clauses that is included in medium degree of modality, and 6 clauses have the highest level of modals. Based on the results, Michelle Obama dominantly used statement in speech function, and declarative in the mood types, and*

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## INTRODUCTION

This analysis is carried out based on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) approach which is introduced by Halliday in 1961. There are three metafunctions of language, namely ideational, textual, and interpersonal. In this research, the writer is only focusing on speech functions, mood types, and modality of interpersonal meaning. People use this in communicating their ideas, emotions, feeling, and desires to the other person. In this analysis, clause is considered as a piece of interaction between the speaker and the listener (audience). The writer chooses Michelle Obama's speech because her speech is one of ways of people to communicate to another people. How she can deliver her ideas, and how she can influence or motivate other people.

Many researchers have done the same research in this field. One of them was the research conducted by Yuliana and Imperiani in 2017. The title of their journal is *The Realization of Interpersonal Meaning in Course Newsletters: A Systemic Functional Linguistic Perspective*. The research investigated the realizations of interpersonal meaning in newsletters offering online courses by general and Islamic educational institutions, and whether the realization of this strand of meaning by the two groups of institutions is similar. Twelve newsletters from six educational institutions offering online courses were used as the data. Using Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) grammar of interaction, the research found some similarities and differences in the realization of interpersonal meanings in the two groups of newsletters. Regarding the mood types, both institutions mostly used declaratives realizing the speech function of statement. Following this was imperative that is frequently employed to make offer and, in fewer frequency, command.

The second journal was made by Shakila Nur (2015). Journal entitled *Analysis of Interpersonal Metafunction in Public Speeches: A Case Study of Nelson Mandela's Presidential Inauguration Speech* (2015) tried to conceptualize how interpersonal

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metafunction within the theoretical framework of Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) investigates into a language from a social semiotic approach. The analysis involved differences in the distribution of mood, modality, personal pronoun and other lexical features. The findings revealed that the architecture of Mandela's speech achieved his political purpose as well as fulfilled its interpersonal meaning not only by corresponding with its lexicogrammar but also by considering the contextual factors such as the need to reflect the economic and socio-political situation of the country at that time.

The last previous research is that will be mentioned is *Application of Interpersonal Meaning in Hillary's and Trump's Election Speeches* by Kuang Ping and Liu Lingling (2017). This journal focused on the use of interpersonal meaning in political speeches. The nine texts selected from the Internet were analysed from the perspectives of mood, modality, personal pronoun and tense system. It aimed to study the way how interpersonal meaning was realized through language by making the contrastive analysis of the speeches given by Hillary and Trump. The result of this research was for mood, Trump and Hillary mainly employed the declarative to deliver messages and make statements, and imperative was used to motivate the audiences and narrow the gap between the candidates and the audiences, and interrogative was to make the audiences concentrate on the content of the speeches. The modality system, the medium modal operator held the dominant position in both Trump's and Hillary's speeches to make the speeches less aggressive. In this aspect, Trump did better than Hillary. In regard to personal pronoun, the plural form of first personal pronoun was mainly employed by the two candidates to close the relationship with audiences. Regards to tense system, simple present tense was mostly used to establish the intimacy of the audiences and the candidates.

The interpersonal meaning has two components, they are mood element and residue element. The mood element consists of subject and finite; while the residue consists of predicatore, complement, and adjuncts (Eggins, 2004).

The subject and the finite are included in mood element. A nominal group is known by the subject whereas the finite is part of a verbal group expressing tense and modality (Halliday, 2014).

**Table 1.1 Subject and Finite**

We Subject	Can Finite
Mood Element	

The other component is called as the residue element. It consists of Predicator, Complement and Adjunct. The complement is typically realized by nominal groups. The predicator is the non-tensed (or non-finite) element or elements of the verbal group. The Adjunct is an adverbial group or prepositional phrase. Adjuncts have some sub types as well namely circumstantial, mood, polarity, comment, vocative, conjunctive and continuity.

Interpersonal meaning has some branches, but this research only take took three of them, namely speech functions, mood types, and modality. (Halliday, 2014) states that speech function is used as the medium exchange of their experiences. The speech functions of clauses are determined by the basic types of speech roles and the commodity exchanged. Halliday claims that there are two types of specific role, they are giving and demanding. Meanwhile, the commodity exchange can be either goods and services or information.

**Table 1.2 Giving or demanding, good-&-service or information  
(Halliday, 2014: 136)**

Speech Role	Commodity Exchange	
	Information	Good and Service
1. Giving	Statement <i>He's giving her the teapot.</i>	Offer <i>Would you like this teapot?</i>
2. Demanding	Question <i>What is he giving her?</i>	Command <i>Give me that teapot!</i>

Mood types depend on the position of the subject and the finite in the clause. There are two main categories in mood types: indicative (declarative, interrogative) and imperative (Gerot, 1994). Indicative mood is used to exchange information (Halliday, 2014). Indicative mood is realized by the features subject + finite. In the declarative mood, the subject is followed by finite. Declarative clauses can be identified as clauses in which the structural element of subject occurs before the finite element of the clause. While interrogative clauses are different from declarative, the one that make it different is interrogative clauses are realized by finite is followed by subject. In imperative the mood element may consist of subject + finite, subject only, finite only, or they may have no mood element. Imperative mood can be in the form of command or offer; however, there is no any grammatical rule restricted respectively.

A position that are not limited and intermediate degrees, between the positive and negative poles, are known collectively as modality (Halliday, 2014). Modality can be categorized into three degrees: high, medium, and low. The higher level indicates to the positive pole, and vice versa.

**Table 1.3 Degree of Modality  
(Halliday, 2015)**

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

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research used qualitative method. (Semiawan, 2010) says that qualitative is usually in the form of words or text. The writer described the interpersonal meaning in the Michelle Obama's speech that realized in the system of speech function, mood and modality without use any statistic procedures. In this research, the source of data was the transcript of Michelle Obama's speech in the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School of Islington, North London (The White House, 2011) and the data of this research were some clauses that found in the data source.

The process of determining or selecting the sample in a research was called sampling technique. This research was using *purposive sampling technique* to be the basis in data selection. This technique was used to select and determine the data used in the study according to the research objectives and leaving the unneeded data.

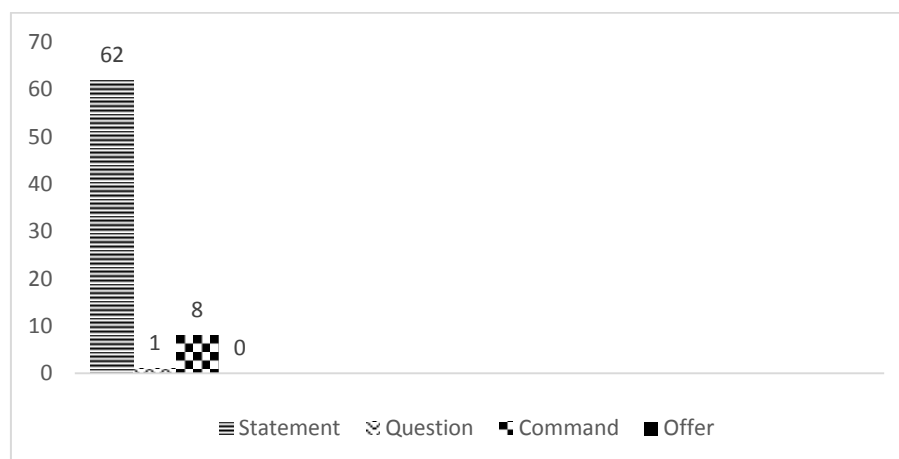
The data of this research were collected from the transcript of the speech itself. In applying documentation method, the writer looked for the data about things or variables which are in the form of notes, transcription, book, etc. In collecting the data, the writer chose in the internet and read the complete transcript to understand the content. This method was applied because it was considered as the suitable method in collecting the data because the source of data based on the spoken text of the speech.

The writer analysed the data using the flow of the data analysis. In general, this is divided into four stages, namely domain, taxonomy, componential analysis, and finding cultural theme (Santosa, 2001). Domain analysis is used to find the social domains found in the research location. In this research, the cultural domain refers to as interpersonal meaning while its related parts or elements are speech functions, mood types, and modality. Taxonomy shows more of a relationship amongst the things inside the cultural domain. In this research, the writer uses speech functions, mood types, and modality as the natural categories of taxonomy analysis based on theory. The next step is componential analysis. Componential analysis is basically linking between components or aspects that have been done on the domain analysis and taxonomy (Santosa, 2001). The last stage is finding cultural theme. It is elements in the patterns that make a culture or behavior. This assists the writer to conclude how interpersonal meaning is realized and whichever is dominant appears in a speech.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

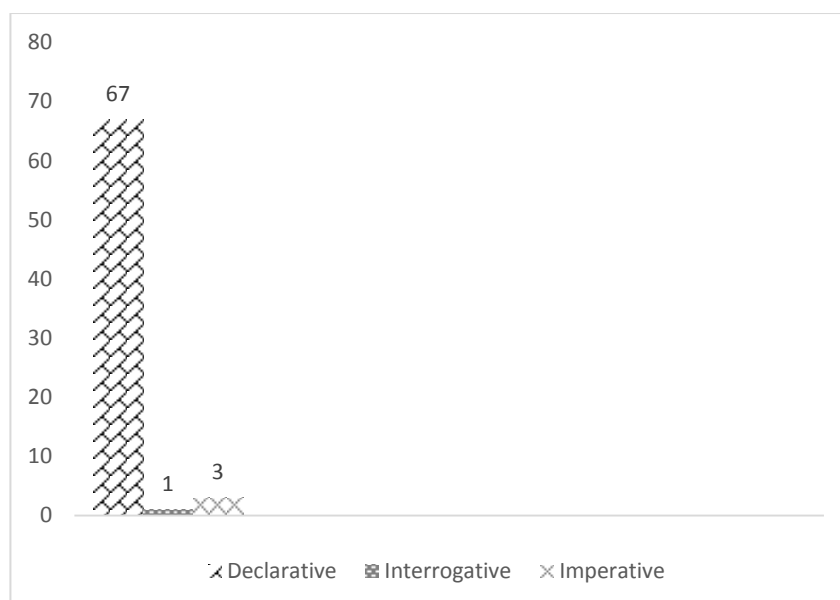
### 1. Speech Functions and Mood Types

In the Michelle Obama's speech, based on the interpersonal meaning through the speech functions, it is found that from 71 clauses, statement gained 62 clauses, question gained 1 clause, and command gained 8 clauses. The statement is the one that most appears from all clauses which means that Michelle Obama wanted to share her ideas or information to the audience through her speech.



**Figure 1.1 Speech Functions**

Depending on the position of the Subject and the Finite in the clause, through the mood types in the interpersonal meaning, it can be found that from 71 clauses, there are 67 declarative clauses, 1 interrogative clause, and 3 imperative clauses. From the findings we all know that almost all clauses in the speech are declarative.



**Figure 1.2 Mood Types**

The speech functions appear because there are specific activities from the speech roles and commodity exchanges, which cause four basic moves: Statement, Question, Offer, and Command. In Michelle Obama's speech, it is found some basic types of speech functions. They are Statement, Question, and Command.

#### 1. Statement

Statement has a purpose to give information in speech functions. It is used to express the speaker's ideas and the audience receive that information. Statement can be positive and negative; it is usually beginning with subject and followed by finite (verb or auxiliary verb) and ended by full stop.

Data 1: *I am beyond thrilled to be back in the United Kingdom*

I	am	beyond thrilled to be back in the United Kingdom
Subject	Finite	Residue

This clause belongs to the speech functions of statement because the clause is filled with information that Michelle Obama is very happy to be able to come back to the United Kingdom.

Data 2: *You all put on a performance for me at the drop of a hat*

You all	put on	a performance for me at the drop of a hat
Subject	Finite	Residue

This clause is included in the speech functions of statement because this clause carries out the information about the female students of Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School who presented the show to Michelle Obama well even if only with limited preparation time.

Data 3: *I was inspired by your passion and your energy.*

I	was	inspired by your passion and your energy
Subject	Finite	Residue

This clause belongs to speech functions of statement because the speaker wants to convey information about her feelings inspired by the audience.

Data 4: *You have everything you need to succeed at a place like this.*

You	have	everything you need to succeed at a place like this.
Subject	Finite	Residue

This clause become one of the speech functions of the statement because the speaker to convey information and encouragement to the audience that they can succeed in Oxford.

Data 5: *I look forward to seeing all of you fulfil whatever dreams you have*

I	look forward	to seeing all of you fulfil whatever dreams you have
Subject	Finite	Residue

This clause is included in the speech functions of statement because the speaker said that she hoped to see her audience reach what they dreamed of.

We can see that all clauses are statements, it can be recognized not only through their formulas that mostly done in Declarative Mood (Subject + Finite), but also through speech functions in which the writer has a tendency to give some information, ideas or facts which the writer realizes by doing declaration or statement.

## 2. Question

Question as a speech function has the purpose of asking something or an inquiry that asks for a reply or response from the other person. Question is a way of demanding information in the form of interrogative (Interrogative Mood). A question begins with auxiliary verb or WH-Question and will be ended with question mark (?).

Data 1: *How are you all doing?*

How	are	you all	doing?
WH-Question	Finite	Subject	Residue

The clause belongs to speech functions of question. Question occur when the speaker wants to demand information about something from the listener. From the data 1, the grammatical structure of question is in Interrogative Mood (Mood Type is Interrogative Mood) which functions to demand information. The speaker gives a question such as in clause 1 to request information about the feelings or health conditions of the audience.

## 3. Command

Command as a speech function has a purpose to demands goods or service. Command also is a way of demanding good and service in form of imperative statement

whether in the form of positive or negative command. In command sentences, the subject is sometimes omitted and usually, it is beginning with the finite.

Data 1: *You have to work hard.*

You	have to	work hard.
Subject	Finite	Residue

This clause is one of the speech functions of command. Command in this clause refers to when the speaker tells the audience to work hard to achieve their wishes.

Data 2: *Push yourselves.*

Push	yourselves.
Finite	Residue

This clause belongs to command because the speaker encourages the audience to push themselves. In this clause also starts with finite, and the absence of subject.

Data 3: *Believe in yourself.*

Believe	in yourself.
Finite	Residue

Same with data 2, this clause also starts with finite, that is word “believe”. In this clause the speaker continues to motivate the audience to believe in themselves, that is why it is included in the speech functions of command.

Data 4: *You don't have to wait until your big time.*

You	don't	have to wait until your big time.
Subject	Finite	Residue

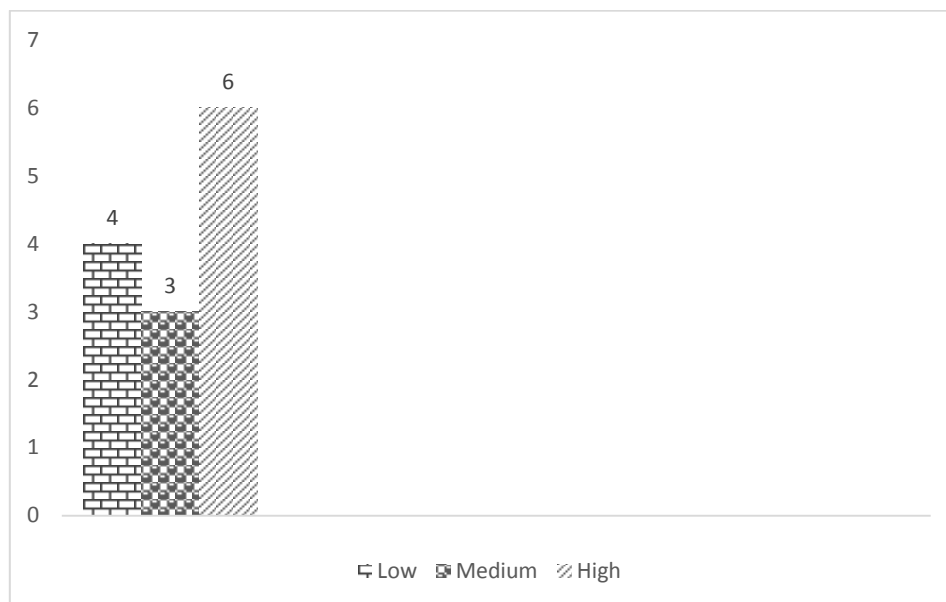
This clause is in the speech functions of command, but same with data 1 it has subject in it. The audience is given a boost as well as an order by the speaker to not have to wait for the right time to do something in their lives.

All the clauses in this part belong to speech functions of command. Command appeared when the speaker wants to demand goods or services about something from the listener or audience. The grammatical structure of command is not definite. For the data no. 2 and no. 3, it can be seen that the grammatical structure of commands is in Imperative Mood (Mood Types is Imperative Mood) where the clauses are started with a verb (finite), but many of commands may occur in Declarative Mood. For data no. 1 and no. 4, it can be seen that the grammatical structure of commands is in Declarative Mood (Mood Types is Declarative Mood) where the clauses are started with subject and finite.

## 2. Modality

According to the interpersonal meaning through the modality, only few modalities are found in the Michelle Obama's speech and all of them are in the form of modals finite. From 71 clauses only found 4 modals that is categorized as low degree of

modality, 3 modals that is included in medium degree of modality, and 6 modals that is belong to high degree of modality.



**Figure 1.3 Degree of Modality**

Modality is showing the speaker's judgments of the probabilities or the obligations involved in what she is saying. In this analysis, there is three degree of modality.

Data 1: *those qualities **will** help you succeed in school and in life.*

Modal *will* can be used as a modal verbal to show a wish strongly as if to make happen. It is categorized as medium in the degree of modality. Through *will*, the speaker implicitly motivates the audience so that they are more enthusiastic in achieving success.

Data 2: *That **can** be hard sometimes.*

Modal *can* represent a low degree of modality. On the other hand, the meaning of *can* is having the ability to do something. In this clause, speakers want to convey information and a little warning to the audience that in order to achieve their respective goals, it is likely they will find obstacles or difficulties.

Data 3: *You just **have to** work hard.*

Modal *have to* can be a signal of pressure on the other person to carry out a command, because it is representing the high degree of modality. In this clause, the speaker does tell the audience to work hard to get through the difficulties they encounter later.

The results of the research have been presented in the first part and based on these results it can be seen that statements in speech function and declarative in the mood types most often appear in a speech. This can be compared with previous research, *Application of Interpersonal Meaning in Hillary and Trump's Election Speeches* by Kuang Ping and Liu Lingling in 2017, that in their research it was also found that Trump and Hillary mainly employ expressed the declarative to deliver their ideas or messages. They pointed out that there are two factors that influence Trump's and Hillary's language use, "One is their different backgrounds and the other is that they try to become closer to the voters so that they can get more support."



Not only a speech, in their research on the newsletter entitled *The Realization of Interpersonal Meaning in Course Newsletters: A Systemic Functional Linguistic Perspective*, Yuliana and Imperiana (2017) also found that declarative of mood types and statement of speech functions also became the dominant or most found. Because “The dominant use of declaratives to realize this speech function suggests that one popular strategy used by most of the newsletters in their course offer is providing information about the courses.”

But unlike the case with modality, the results of this research indicate that the degree of modality that leads is the highest degree. This is different from the results of the Ping’s and Lingling’s research which showed that Hillary and Trump were dominant in using the medium degree. This shows that in this speech, Michelle Obama was more aggressive in encouraging her listeners to reach their dreams.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the interpersonal meaning in the Michelle Obama’s speech, in the speech functions, Statement gained 62 clauses, Question only gained 1 clause, Command gained 8 clauses, while there is no Offer. That means Statement is predominantly used in this speech.

In the mood types, the results of the analysis show that in Michelle Obama’s speech she collected 67 clauses that met the requirements as Declarative, 3 clauses that showed Imperatives, and only 1 clause that acted as Interrogative. It can be seen that Declarative become the most frequently used by Michelle Obama. From the results of speech functions and mood types that only contained one question/interrogative clause, Michelle Obama does not really like building interactions with her audience by giving a question.

In the modality, it is divided into three degrees, namely low degree, degree medium, and high degree. Based on the results of the analysis, Michelle Obama uses more of a high degree to share her ideas and to support her audience. In more detail, she uses 4 modals including the low degree, 3 modals of medium degree, and 6 modals of high degree. It can be said that she included being aggressive in giving speeches or motivating people.

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