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A Systemic Functional Linguistics Analysis of Mood and Modality in Anies Baswedan's Speech at Oxford University

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Abstract

This study presents an analysis of mood and modality in Anies Baswedan's 2023 speech at Oxford University on ASEAN through the lens of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Although previous SFL studies have analyzed mood and modality in political, literary, news, and educational discourse, few have jointly analyzed mood, modality type, temporal orientation, and judgment in an international academic speech delivered by an Indonesian political figure. This study addresses that gap and offers novelty by linking grammatical choices to diplomatic self-positioning in ASEAN discourse. The study focuses on interpersonal meaning as realized in the speaker's grammatical choices, especially declarative, imperative, and interrogative mood, as well as modality types that indicate probability, obligation, and inclination. A qualitative descriptive design was employed. The data source was a video recording of the speech, while the primary data consisted of the speech transcript. Data were collected through non-participant observation and note-taking, then analyzed by segmenting the transcript into clauses and identifying the mood structure and modality of each clause. The findings show a strong dominance of declarative mood, indicating that the speech is primarily informative and explanatory. Modality is dominated by probability, which reveals the speaker's cautious optimism and diplomatic stance. Overall, the speech constructs Anies Baswedan as knowledgeable, careful, future-oriented, and persuasive in presenting Indonesia and ASEAN in an international academic forum. The study contributes theoretically by extending SFL interpersonal analysis to Indonesian international political speech and practically by informing political communication and language teaching.

Keywords : Systemic Functional Linguistics, mood, modality, interpersonal meaning, politics speech

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INTRODUCTION

Political speech is not only a medium for delivering information. It is also a strategic linguistic performance through which speakers build authority, display stance, and manage relationships with audiences. Halliday and Matthiessen (2013) explain that Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) views language as a system of meaning that works in relation to context. SFL is useful for examining how people use language to perform social functions in real communicative situations (Eggins, 2004). Grammar is also understood as a resource for expressing meaning rather than only as a formal system (Gerot & Wignell , 1994). This view is further developed by Thompson (2014), who emphasizes that functional grammar connects linguistic form with

communicative purpose in context. One of the central concerns in SFL is interpersonal meaning. Interpersonal meaning explains how speakers enact social roles, express attitudes, and negotiate relationships with listeners. Interpersonal meaning can be examined through appraisal resources as well as through mood and modality (Martin & White, 2005). Mood and modality also help reveal how speakers or characters express stance and relationship in discourse (Martin & White, 2005; Yatsmikasari & Nurrachman , 2019). Therefore, the analysis of mood and modality is useful for understanding not only what a speaker says, but also how the speaker positions himself in relation to the audience.

Mood is closely related to clause structure, particularly the relationship between subject and finite. Syamsidar et al. (2019) show that mood analysis can reveal how political speakers construct statements, questions, and commands in public speeches. Modality expresses the speaker's judgment, including probability, certainty, obligation, and inclination. Modality is important in political discourse because it shows the speaker's attitude toward the truth, possibility, or necessity of a proposition (Setiawan et al., 2018). This understanding is consistent with broader studies of modality as a resource for expressing epistemic and deontic meaning (Palmer, 2001; Bybee et al., 1994; Coates, 1983; Nuyts , 2001). Muhaimi and Sribagus (2019) highlight that modality can indicate the degree of commitment expressed by a writer or speaker.

Previous studies have applied SFL to various forms of discourse. Yatsmikasari and Nurrachman (2019) analyzed mood and modality in Soekarno's 1955 speech and showed how grammatical choices construct political authority. Mood systems in graduation speech can also be connected with speech quality (Wani et al., 2021). Ijam and Al- Ameedi (2024) used mood and modality analysis in literary discourse, showing that these features can reveal interpersonal positioning across different genres. Mood and modality also contribute to the construction of meaning in educational texts (Indriyani et al., 2023).

In the Indonesian research context, Ghani et al. (2022) examined schematic structure, transitivity processes, and modality in news items. Their study is relevant to the present article because it shows how modality helps organize information, certainty, and stance in discourse. However, previous SFL studies have not sufficiently examined how mood and modality jointly construct the interpersonal positioning of an Indonesian political figure in an international academic forum. Studies on political discourse have largely focused on critical discourse analysis and manipulation (Fairclough, 2013; Chilton, 2004; Van Dijk, 2006), while SFL studies on mood and modality have often concentrated on literary texts, news, graduation speeches, or educational materials. This leaves a research gap regarding the combined analysis of mood, modality type, temporal orientation, and judgment in a speech about ASEAN delivered at Oxford University. Anies Baswedan's speech at Oxford University in 2023 on ASEAN offers a compelling case for analysis because it was delivered in an international academic setting and discussed Indonesia's and ASEAN's roles in regional and global cooperation. The novelty of this study lies in its joint analysis of mood and modality and its attempt to connect grammatical choices with diplomatic self-positioning in ASEAN discourse.

In such a context, the speaker needs to sound knowledgeable, persuasive, careful, and diplomatic. These communicative demands are likely to be reflected in his use of declarative, imperative, and interrogative mood, as well as in modal

expressions such as *will, can, could, must, may, would* , and *probably* . The significance of this study is both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, it extends SFL-based interpersonal analysis to Indonesian international political speech. Practically, it can inform political communication, discourse analysis teaching, and language education by showing how grammatical choices construct stance and credibility. Therefore, this article aims to identify the types of mood and modality used in the speech and to explain how they contribute to the construction of interpersonal meaning.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design. This design was used because the research aimed to describe and interpret linguistic phenomena in Anies Baswedan's speech rather than test a statistical hypothesis. The analysis was based on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), particularly the interpersonal metafunction proposed by Halliday and Matthiessen (2013). Within this framework, the study focuses on mood and modality as grammatical resources that realize interaction, attitude, and speaker positioning. This focus follows previous SFL-based research on mood and modality in educational texts (Indriyani et al., 2023). It also relates to SFL research on interpersonal positioning across different genres (Ijam & Al-Ameedi, 2024). The study also draws on functional and discourse-analytic perspectives that treat grammar as socially meaningful (Eggins, 2004; Thompson, 2014; Fairclough, 2013).

Population and Sample

The population of this study consisted of all clauses found in the transcript of Anies Baswedan's 2023 speech at Oxford University on ASEAN. The sample was selected through total sampling, meaning that all relevant clauses in the transcript were included in the analysis. The unit of analysis in this study consists of speech transcripts, rather than a human population. Consequently, "total sampling" here refers to the inclusion of every clause within the speech transcripts—each serving as an analytical unit—without any sampling process. In total, 164 clauses were analyzed for mood, while 21 modal items were identified and analyzed for modality. The speech was chosen because it was delivered in an international academic context and contains clear examples of interpersonal meaning through mood and modality.

Data Collection Procedure

The data were collected through non-participant observation and note-taking. First, the researcher watched the video recording of Anies Baswedan's speech carefully. Second, the speech was transcribed into written form to serve as the main data. Third, the transcript was read repeatedly to ensure accuracy and to identify clause boundaries. Fourth, each clause was recorded and classified according to its mood type, namely declarative, imperative, or interrogative. Finally, modal expressions such as *will, can, could, must, may, would* , and *probably* were identified and categorized according to modality type, time orientation, and speaker judgment.

Clause segmentation was carried out by identifying each ranking clause that contains a Finite element and a Subject. Clause complexes were split into their

constituent ranking clauses. Embedded clauses were not counted as separate mood clauses unless they functioned as independent ranking clauses. Minor clauses without a Finite element were excluded from the mood count. The researcher also checked punctuation and intonation cues in the video to support decisions about clause boundaries. This procedure ensured that each clause could be analyzed consistently in terms of Subject and Finite.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed by applying the SFL framework. The mood analysis was conducted by identifying the subject and finite elements in each clause and then classifying the clause into declarative, imperative, or interrogative mood. Constituent order is important for understanding clause organization as a foundation for linguistic analysis (Arafiq et al., 2023a). The modality analysis was conducted by identifying modal items and classifying them into probability, obligation, or inclination. The frequency of each category was calculated using the formula f/N × 100%, where f is the frequency of a category and N is the total number of clauses or modal items. Percentages were rounded to two decimal places. The results were then interpreted qualitatively to explain how mood and modality contribute to the construction of interpersonal meaning in the speech. The references Arafiq et al. (2023a) and Arafiq et al. (2023b) maintains two distinct articles, both of which have been consistently included in the Bibliography.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Use of Mood and Modality in Anies Baswedan's Speech

The analysis identified 164 clauses and 21 modality items in Anies Baswedan's speech. The mood analysis shows that declarative mood is overwhelmingly dominant, followed by imperative and interrogative mood in very limited proportions. The modality analysis also reveals a clear preference for probability, with medium and high speaker judgments prevailing. These patterns indicate that the speech is carefully designed to inform, persuade, and project a measured future-oriented vision.

Table 1. Distribution of mood and modality in Anies Baswedan's speech

Category	Findings	Percentage (%)
Total clauses	164	100
Declarative mode	154	93.90
Imperative mode	8	4.88
Interrogative mode	2	1.22
Total modality items	21	100
Probability	19	90.48
Obligation	1	4.76
Trend	1	4.76

Mood Analysis

The dominance of declarative mood indicates that the speech is primarily structured as a series of statements, explanations, and assertions. Halliday and Matthiessen (2013) explain that declarative clauses typically serve to give information. Gerot and Wignell (1994) describe the relationship between subject and finite as an important element in realizing interpersonal exchange. Arafiq et al. (2023b) also

highlight the importance of subject position in clause interpretation. In this speech, declarative mood is especially important because the audience at Oxford University is an academic one, and the topic of ASEAN requires a clear, reasoned presentation. The speaker therefore uses declarative mood to construct an informative message while also reinforcing his intellectual authority. Rather than sounding overly political or confrontational, the speech adopts a reasoned and explanatory tone that supports credibility. Syamsidar et al. (2019) similarly found that declarative mood often dominates speeches intended to inform and convince audiences. Indriyani et al. (2023) also show that declarative mood contributes to the construction of meaning in educational texts.

Imperative mood appears in a small number of clauses. Although imperatives are often associated with commands, in public speech they may function more subtly as invitations, encouragements, or calls to collective action. In this case, the imperatives do not create a harsh instructional tone. Instead, they operate as polite and strategic prompts that encourage the audience to consider a shared direction or responsibility. The limited use of imperative mood suggests that the speaker avoids an authoritarian stance and prefers a diplomatic style. This is appropriate for a speech about ASEAN, where cooperation, consensus, and regional balance are key values.

Interrogative mood is the least frequent pattern. Its rhetorical role is not to request literal answers but to attract attention and stimulate reflection. In public discourse, interrogatives can interrupt the flow of exposition, create a sense of dialogic engagement, and direct the audience toward a particular issue. The small number of interrogatives in this speech suggests that such clauses are used selectively for emphasis rather than as a dominant interactional strategy. Their presence, however, is important because they contribute to the dynamism of the speech and help maintain audience involvement.

Modality Analysis

Modality provides a further layer of interpersonal meaning because it expresses the speaker's judgment, commitment, probability, obligation, and inclination toward a proposition. Halliday and Matthiessen (2013) explain that modality operates between positive and negative poles of meaning. Setiawan et al. (2018) show that modality is important in political discourse because it reflects the speaker's attitude toward certainty and necessity. The data reveals 21 modality items, with probability accounting for the vast majority. This indicates that the speaker frequently expresses likelihood, possibility, expectation, and future projection. Such a pattern is highly relevant to the content of the speech, which reflects on ASEAN's place in the future and Indonesia's role within it. By using probability, the speaker avoids absolute claims and instead frames his position as plausible, balanced, and prudent. This modality choice helps project optimism while retaining diplomatic caution. This finding supports the view that modality expresses degrees of commitment and epistemic stance (Palmer, 2001; Nuyts , 2001; Muhaimi & Sribagus , 2019).

The dominant modal items are *will* and *can* . *Will* appears eight times and strongly signals future orientation, commitment, and projection. It frames the speech as a forward-looking message rather than a retrospective description. Meanwhile, *can* appear seven times and expresses capacity, possibility, and potential. Together, these forms construct a discourse of optimism grounded in feasibility. They suggest that ASEAN, and Indonesia within it, can move toward a more influential and constructive

future. The speaker is not merely predicting outcomes; he is positioning them as achievable through collective effort and strategic leadership.

The dominance of *will* and *can* is also shaped by the socio-cultural context of the speech. An Oxford University forum is an international academic setting that values reasoned arguments, measured claims, and credible projections. In this context, *it will* allow the speaker to present a future vision without making rigid promises, while *it can* enable him to emphasize capacity and possibility without appearing coercive. Compared with *must* or *should* , which may sound more directive or moralizing , *will* and *can* help maintain a diplomatic tone. This choice is appropriate for ASEAN discourse, which emphasizes consensus, cooperation, and regional balance. It also positions Indonesia as a constructive actor that is capable of contributing to regional and global cooperation.

Time orientation strengthens this interpretation. Most modality items are oriented to the present, followed by future orientation, while past orientation does not appear. The dominance of present orientation implies that the speaker begins from current realities and current responsibilities. Future orientation then extends that reality toward a desired horizon. The absence of past-oriented modality is also meaningful because the speech is not centered on historical narration; Rather, it is forward-looking and policy-oriented. Such a temporal pattern suits an address delivered in an international forum where strategic direction matters more than retrospective detail.

Judgment patterns further refine the picture. Most modality items fall into the medium category, followed by high, very high, and low, with very low absent. This distribution shows that the speaker generally maintains a balanced degree of certainty. He is neither excessively tentative nor excessively forceful. Instead, he uses a measured tone that supports credibility in a diplomatic setting. Such moderation is important in international political speech because it helps the speaker appear thoughtful, stable, and reasonable. The combination of medium and high judgments allows the speech to sound confident while still leaving room for nuance and negotiation. This pattern differs from more confrontational political speeches, which often rely on high or very high modality to assert authority (Yatsmikasari & Nurrachman , 2019). It also contrasts with literary discourse, where modality may be used to construct character positioning (Ijam & Al- Ameedi , 2024).

Interpersonal Meaning and Speaker Positioning

Taken together, the findings show that the speech is linguistically organized to present Anies Baswedan as a knowledgeable and diplomatic speaker. Declarative mood helps him deliver an informative message and establish authority. Imperative mood functions as polite invitation rather than command. Interrogative mood stimulates audience attention and reflection. Modality, especially probability through *will* and *can* , frames the speech as future-oriented, feasible, and cautiously optimistic. These features are consistent with Eggins' (2004) view that grammar is not merely structural but socially meaningful. They also support the argument that mood and modality can reveal interpersonal meaning in public texts (Yu, 2017; Martin & White, 2005). The speech thus enacts a careful balance between information, persuasion, and interpersonal positioning. Compared with previous studies on news items (Ghani et al., 2022) and educational texts (Indriyani et al., 2023), this study shows that similar grammatical resources can construct a more explicitly diplomatic and international

political identity. Compared with Yatsmikasari and Nurrachman's (2019) analysis of Soekarno's speech, the present speech relies far more on declarative mood and probability modality, reflecting a different communicative context: an academic forum rather than a revolutionary political address. These findings also align with functional and discourse-analytic views that grammatical choices are shaped by social context and communicative purpose (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013; Fairclough, 2013; Chilton, 2004; Van Dijk, 2006).

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that mood and modality play a central role in constructing interpersonal meaning in Anies Baswedan's speech at Oxford University. In answer to the first research question, the speech is dominated by declarative mood (154 of 164 clauses, 93.90%), followed by imperative mood (8 clauses, 4.88%) and interrogative mood (2 clauses, 1.22%). For modality, 21 modal items were found, consisting mainly of probability (19 items, 90.48%), with obligation and inclination occurring only once each. The most frequent modal items are *will* and *can* . The dominance of declarative mood shows that the speech is primarily informative and explanatory, while the limited use of imperative and interrogative mood adds persuasive and rhetorical force without undermining diplomatic tone. In terms of modality, probability dominates and is realized especially through *will* and *can* , indicating future orientation, possibility, and cautious optimism. The speech also shows a preference for present-oriented and medium-level judgments, which reinforces balance and restraint. In answer to the second research question, these linguistic choices collectively position Anies Baswedan as knowledgeable, careful, optimistic, and diplomatic in presenting Indonesia and ASEAN within an international academic context. The significance of these findings lies not merely in the frequency of grammatical categories but in how they construct credibility, restraint, and future-oriented persuasion in a diplomatic academic setting.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Future research may extend the analysis to the ideational and textual metafunctions in order to offer a more comprehensive account of the speech. Comparative studies involving speeches by other political figures would also be valuable for identifying different interpersonal strategies in public discourse. In addition, this study can be used as a teaching resource in discourse analysis and functional linguistics courses, especially to help students connect grammatical form with communicative purpose in authentic spoken texts. Further research could also examine how mood and modality differ across settings such as political rallies, parliamentary speeches, and academic lectures to better understand the role of context in shaping interpersonal meaning.

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