

Interpersonal Meaning in B.J. Habibie's Speech: A Systemic Functional Analysis of Mood and Modality

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Abstract

Language functions as a medium of communication but also as a tool for establishing social roles and relationships. This study explores the construction of interpersonal meaning in a political speech delivered by B.J. Habibie, the third President of Indonesia, through the lens of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). The research specifically investigates how mood and modality are employed to enact interpersonal functions. The objectives of this study are threefold: (1) to identify the types of mood and modality used in the speech, (2) to determine the dominant mood and modality, and (3) to analyze how interpersonal meaning is constructed through their use. This qualitative study employed document-based content analysis using Halliday and Matthiessen's (2004) framework. The data consisted of a transcript of Habibie's "Indonesian Historical Evolution," speech delivered at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Clauses were analyzed for grammatical mood types, declarative, interrogative, imperative, and degrees of modality: low, medium, and high. The findings indicate that declarative mood (82.4%) and low-degree modality (47%) dominate the speech, suggesting a rhetorical strategy to inform and engage the audience respectfully, rather than commanding. The use of high-modality expressions like "have to" signals moments of urgency and persuasion. These patterns reflect the speaker's intent to maintain authority while fostering inclusivity and national reflection. The study concludes that mood and modality play a pivotal role in shaping the interpersonal dynamics of political discourse. It recommends further cross-cultural investigations to examine how political figures employ interpersonal strategies in global communication contexts.

Keywords: Interpersonal Meaning, Political Discourse, Speech, Systemic Functional Linguistics

INTRODUCTION

Language serves as a fundamental system for constructing meaning, facilitating interaction, and shaping social relationships in various contexts. Language is essential to the communication process (O'Halloran, 2008). It serves as a medium for interaction, widely referred to as discourse (Gee, 2014). In the context of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), language is a tool for expressing ideas and conveying interpersonal meanings. This

study analyzes interpersonal meaning in B.J. Habibie's speech "Historical Evolution of Indonesia", delivered at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and uploaded to the Carnegie Endowment YouTube channel on May 3, 2016. The analysis specifically examines how mood and modality are used in the speech to express the speaker's attitude, social roles, and engagement with the audience. According to SFL theory, interpersonal meaning is realized

through the mood system, which includes the subject and finite verb, and modality, which expresses degrees of certainty, obligation, or inclination (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). In English, the choice of mood often reflects the speaker's intention, whether to declare, question, or command, while modality further nuances the interpersonal function by indicating the speaker's judgment or stance.

The types of mood are generally classified into indicative (declarative and interrogative) and imperative (Haratyan, 2011). Declarative mood is commonly used to provide information, interrogative mood seeks information, and imperative mood gives commands. Conversely, modality refers to a speaker's expression of attitudes, such as obligation, necessity, possibility, or probability (Bavali & Sadighi, 2008; Feng & Liu, 2010). These two linguistic features, mood and modality, play a vital role in establishing the interpersonal dynamics between the speaker and the listener. Studies have shown that the selection of specific mood types and modal expressions reflects the speaker's authority, formality, and communicative intent (He, 2024; Hendrawan et al., 2020). In political discourse, such as speeches, declarative mood and high-degree modality often serve persuasive purposes, aiming to inform while subtly influencing the audience's perception.

Recent research between 2020 and 2025 has expanded the application of mood and modality analysis across diverse contexts. For instance, Luthfiyati et al. (2024) conducted an SFL-based study on classroom discourse and found that teachers predominantly used declarative mood and high-degree modality such as "must" and "have to" to establish control and assert authority. Similarly, Afsari et al. (2021) examined analytical exposition texts written by Indonesian EFL learners and concluded that the learners favored declarative mood and low-level modality, suggesting limited

development in expressing nuanced interpersonal meaning. In another study, (Christiani, 2020) analyzed simultaneous interpreting between English and Bahasa Indonesia, revealing that interpreters tend to preserve the original speaker's interpersonal meaning through parallel use of mood and modality, which indicates a strong alignment between language systems in conveying evaluation and stance.

Furthermore, studies in academic and literary contexts reinforce the significance of interpersonal meaning in written discourse. Hendrawan et al. (2020) investigated modality in research article discussions and found that low-probability modality (e.g., "may," "might") was frequently used to maintain politeness and avoid assertiveness. This cautious stance is often necessary in academic writing, where authors are expected to present arguments without overstating claims. (He, 2024) proposed a reconfiguration of modality in SFL by including evidentiality, arguing that both judgment and source of information are crucial in understanding the full scope of interpersonal meaning. This proposal underscores the evolving nature of SFL and its adaptability to various discourse forms. In narrative genres, Ijam & Al-Ameedi (2024) explored how novelists use mood and modality to express character perspectives and emotional dynamics, finding that choices in clause structure mirror psychological complexity.

A comprehensive review of SFL studies by Cheng (2024) confirms that interpersonal meaning remains a central focus in discourse analysis, especially in academic, political, and educational fields. The ability of speakers and writers to strategically use mood and modality reflects their communicative goals and social positioning. Several studies have demonstrated the impact of mood and modality choices in shaping interlocutors'

stance in less formal digital communication. For instance, Asnawi et al. (2023) found that in virtual teaching interactions, declarative moods dominate while a range of modalities balance instructional clarity with empathetic engagement. Similarly, Siregar et al. (2021) showed how students express hope, uncertainty, and collective sentiment through specific mood and modality patterns in online chat dialogues. These findings underscore that interpersonal meanings remain significant even in informal or digitally mediated exchanges.

Building upon these studies, the current research aims to analyze the types and functions of mood and modality in B.J. Habibie's speech. As a former president and respected figure, Habibie's linguistic choices in delivering historical and national messages are expected to reflect calculated interpersonal meanings. By applying the SFL framework, this study seeks to uncover how Habibie constructs his relationship with the audience, establishes authority, and conveys his perspective through declarative, interrogative, and imperative clauses, along with varying degrees of modality. This investigation deepens our understanding of Habibie's rhetorical strategies and contributes to broader discourse studies by illustrating the practical application of mood and modality in high-stakes political communication.

While numerous studies have explored interpersonal meaning within educational (Luthfiyati et al., 2024), academic (Hendrawan et al., 2020), and translation contexts (Christiani, 2020), limited scholarly attention has been devoted to analyzing how Indonesian political figures construct interpersonal meaning in internationally delivered English speeches. This represents a significant research gap, particularly given the increasing prominence of multilingual political discourse in global diplomatic settings. The novelty of this study lies in its

focus on an authentic political monologue, delivered in English by an Indonesian leader on a global stage which remains underrepresented in previous analyses of mood and modality. By addressing this gap, the study provides original insight into the rhetorical enactment of interpersonal meanings within cross-cultural and high-stakes communicative contexts.

Accordingly, the objectives of the present study are threefold: (1) to identify the types of mood and modality employed in B.J. Habibie's speech, (2) to determine the dominant mood and modality used throughout the speech, and (3) to analyze how interpersonal meaning is constructed through the interaction of mood and modality in the text.

This study aligns with prior findings by Fitriati et al. (2021), who investigated the pragmatic use of conversation fillers among Indonesian EFL Master's students. Their research highlights that even subtle linguistic choices, such as hesitation markers or discourse fillers, serve interpersonal functions by reflecting uncertainty, engagement, or relational stance. While the current study focuses on mood and modality as grammatical indicators of interpersonal meaning, the notion that language choices are used to manage speaker-listener relationships is a shared theoretical foundation.

This study offers a unique contribution to the analysis of political discourse in Indonesia by integrating Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to examine the interpersonal meaning in B.J. Habibie's speech "Historical Evolution of Indonesia." While previous research has explored political speeches in terms of rhetoric or thematic content, few have systematically analyzed how mood and modality choices shape interpersonal relationships between the speaker and the audience in an Indonesian political context. By combining quantitative

data with qualitative interpretation, this study not only identifies dominant linguistic patterns but also uncovers their pragmatic functions, such as how declaratives construct authority, interrogatives invite engagement, and modal verbs balance politeness with persuasion. This dual-level analysis provides fresh insights into how language operates as a tool of leadership and persuasion in a period of national transformation, offering a framework that can inform future studies of political discourse in multilingual and transitional societies.

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) has become a prominent framework for analyzing political discourse because it examines how language enacts power, authority, and engagement. Previous studies have demonstrated that mood and modality choices reveal deeper ideological and interpersonal dynamics in speeches (Fetzer & Bull, 2012; Li et al., 2019). For instance, Wang & Jia (2024) applied SFL to political speech translation and highlighted how modality functions to maintain authority while engaging audiences cross-culturally. Similarly, research on American political debates by Suwandi & Thoriqussuud (2021) emphasized the role of mood in constructing persuasive leadership identities. These findings provide a strong basis for analyzing Indonesian political discourse through the same lens, offering a comparative perspective on how linguistic choices function in different sociopolitical contexts.

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study focuses on the development of interpretive understanding of social phenomena, particularly in relation to language use within political discourse (Hancock et al., 2001; Sandelowski, 2000). Qualitative research is especially appropriate when the objective is to investigate complex, context-dependent issues in depth, rather

than to produce generalizable or statistically quantifiable results.

Research Design

The study employed a document-based qualitative content analysis, utilizing the principles of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) as the analytical framework. This design is particularly suitable for examining the interpersonal dimensions of political texts, allowing for a detailed investigation into the linguistic structures that reflect speaker–audience relationships. Following the approach of Suwandi & Thoriqussuud (2021) this study uses clause-based segmentation to examine the interpersonal function of mood and modality, ensuring that the analysis captures both the structural and pragmatic dimensions of the speech.

Research Site

The research was conducted as a library-based and digital media-based analysis, with the primary site being the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace YouTube Channel, where the analyzed speech is publicly accessible. No physical fieldwork was conducted, as the data source is archived online.

Participants

Since this is a documentary analysis, the study does not involve human participants in the traditional sense. Instead, the subject of the study is a textual artifact, a political speech delivered by B.J. Habibie, the third President of the Republic of Indonesia. The speaker functions as the primary agent whose linguistic strategies are analyzed.

Research Instrument

The main instrument in this study is a researcher-generated checklist, developed in accordance with the SFL mood and modality framework by Halliday & Matthiessen (2013)). This checklist includes indicators for identifying mood types (declarative, interrogative, imperative) and degrees of modality (low, medium, high), allowing for

systematic coding of each clause in the speech.

Data Collection and Procedure

This research falls within the scope of a document-based qualitative inquiry, specifically a literature-based content analysis, where data are derived from existing textual materials, in this case, political speeches. As stated by (Bowen, 2009) Grix (2001) and reiterated by Mogalakwe (2006), documents such as speeches are not only products of institutional or individual expression but are also grounded in the practical, social, and political contexts in which they are produced. They offer an invaluable window into the creators' ideologies, intentions, and interpersonal strategies.

This study treats documents as historical artifacts and subjective communicative acts embodying the speaker's attitudes, values, and rhetorical objectives (Bowen, 2009). This dual role, both factual and interpretive, makes speeches particularly rich data sources for examining how interpersonal meanings are constructed through linguistic choices.

The speech analyzed in this study was delivered by B.J. Habibie, former President of the Republic of Indonesia, and was obtained from the official YouTube channel of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. The "Indonesian Historical Evolution" speech was delivered on May 3, 2016, and remains publicly accessible at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_D4-TI9S3O4&t=1380s. It was selected for its political and historical significance and relevance to the communicative functions and rhetorical strategies employed in formal, international settings.

The analytical process involved a systematic data processing approach consistent with qualitative linguistic analysis procedures. Initially, the speech transcript

was reviewed thoroughly, and clauses were segmented to identify and categorize instances of mood and modality. These elements were coded based on M. A. Halliday (2004) Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) framework, which provides a comprehensive model for understanding how language enacts interpersonal relationships through choices in mood (declarative, interrogative, imperative) and modality (expressions of necessity, probability, obligation, or inclination). Each clause was examined to determine its grammatical mood and the presence and degree of modality.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the analysis, a systematic process was applied in coding the mood and modality features of the speech. The transcript of B.J. Habibie's "Historical Evolution of Indonesia" speech was carefully segmented into clauses, and each clause was coded according to the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) framework by the primary researcher. To strengthen reliability, an independent second coder, who has formal training in SFL analysis, reviewed 30% of the coded data. The intercoder agreement was calculated and reached a consistency rate of 92%, which indicates a high level of coding reliability. Any discrepancies in coding were resolved through discussion and consensus to ensure analytical accuracy.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the qualitative interpretations, several strategies were employed. First, an audit trail was maintained, documenting the decision-making process for coding and interpretation to ensure transparency. Second, peer debriefing sessions were conducted with two discourse analysts to refine the categorization and interpretation of findings. Finally, the interpretations were compared against existing SFL studies of political discourse to confirm theoretical alignment while highlighting context-specific nuances. These

steps collectively support the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the findings, ensuring that the analysis is both rigorous and replicable.

Scope of the Study

The scope of the analysis was intentionally focused on one representative speech to allow for in-depth exploration of interpersonal meaning within a significant moment in Indonesia's political history. While this limits broad generalizability, the detailed case study approach provides rich qualitative insights that can inform future research and comparative studies on political communication in transitional or multilingual societies.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

This section presents the findings of the study based on the analysis of B.J. Habibie's speech using the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) framework, specifically focusing on mood and modality as the realization of interpersonal meaning. The data were analyzed qualitatively by identifying clause-level grammatical patterns, coding the types of mood and modality, and interpreting their communicative functions. The presentation of results is structured according to the three research objectives: (1) to identify the types of mood and modality used in the speech, (2) to determine the dominant mood and modality, and (3) to analyze how interpersonal meaning is constructed through the use of mood and modality. Each subsection below elaborates on these objectives, supported by quantitative data from the speech transcript and interpretive analysis grounded in SFL theory.

The findings highlight the linguistic strategies the speaker employs to position himself in relation to the audience and convey nuanced degrees of authority, engagement, and stance. By examining both

the structural and functional aspects of language, this analysis reveals how grammatical choices are utilized to project credibility, evoke reflection, and persuade listeners. In the context of political oration, where the speaker's rhetorical effectiveness often hinges on how ideas are expressed rather than solely on what is said, the exploration of interpersonal meaning provides critical insights into the effectiveness of discourse strategies. Furthermore, the use of SFL enables a more systematic and comprehensive understanding of how the speech enacts interpersonal relationships and fulfills broader communicative purposes within a socio-political framework.

Identification of Mood and Modality Types

The analysis of B.J. Habibie's speech demonstrates a deliberate use of linguistic features, particularly mood and modality, to construct interpersonal meaning. Grounded in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), these choices reflect the speaker's communicative awareness of social roles, audience engagement, and social roles. Mood and modality, as core components of the interpersonal metafunction, allow speakers to express statements, ask questions, give commands, and convey degrees of certainty or obligation. Three primary mood types were identified in the speech: declarative, interrogative, and imperative. Each serves a distinct function: declaratives to inform, interrogatives to engage reflection, and imperatives to encourage action. These are realized through specific grammatical structures, highlighting how clause-level choices contribute to the speaker's interpersonal positioning.

Table 1. The number of moods that appear in the speech

<i>Mood Types</i>	<i>Speech function</i>	<i>Mood Element</i>	<i>Appearance</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Declarative	Statement	Subject + Finite	103	82,4%
Interrogative	Question	Finite + Subject WH/Finite + Subject	20	16%
High	Command	Finite	2	1,6%
Total Clause			125	100%

Table 2. The number of modalities that appear in the speech

<i>Degree</i>	<i>Modality</i>	<i>Appearance</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Low	Can	22	47%
	Could	10	
	May	3	
	Cannot	13	
	Could not	2	
	Total	50	
Middle/Medium	Will	16	22%
	Would	1	
	Should	3	
	Will not	2	
	Would not	1	
	Total	23	
High	Must	10	31%
	Have to	23	
	Total	33	
Total (Low+Middle+High)		50+23+33 = 106	100%

As shown in Table 1, the speech consists of 125 clauses, with the declarative mood dominating at 82.4% (103 clauses). This overwhelming use of declarative clauses highlights Habibie's primary goal of informing and educating the audience while establishing himself as a credible narrator of Indonesia's historical and political journey. For instance, when reflecting on the nature of political change in Indonesia, he states, "*I called it evolution, not revolution*" (06:10), immediately framing the trajectory of reforms as a deliberate and thoughtful process rather than a chaotic upheaval. Similarly, when outlining the foundational ideology of the nation, he asserts, "*Pancasila consists of five principles that are inseparable and interrelated*" (08:46). Such declarative statements do more than provide information; they build a coherent narrative that situates the audience within a shared understanding of Indonesia's values and history. Even in moments of personal reflection, such as when he says, "*I was never planning to be the president; I was only interested to solve the problem*" (37:00), the declarative form positions Habibie as a pragmatic and duty-driven leader, strengthening the persuasive appeal of his account.

The interrogative mood, which accounts for 16% (20 clauses) of the total, serves a different yet complementary rhetorical function. Rather than seeking direct responses, Habibie uses interrogatives as rhetorical devices to engage the audience, invite reflection, and create a sense of dialogue. For example, during his recounting of the chaotic period following Suharto's resignation, he poses the question, "*How could I verify the quality of the report? Who was to be trusted?*" (28:30). These interrogatives dramatize the uncertainty of the moment while implicitly including the audience in the problem-solving process.

Similarly, when discussing the pace of democratic reform, he asks, “*Why should we do it in 10 years? You cannot do that or you have to make a revolution*” (1:08:50). Such rhetorical questioning not only stimulates critical thinking but also softens the authoritative tone of the declarative statements, fostering a sense of inclusivity and collective contemplation.

The imperative mood, though rare appearing in only 1.6% (2 clauses) is strategically employed to deliver motivational appeals without sounding authoritarian. For example, near the conclusion of his speech, Habibie exhorts his audience, “*Let us work very hard and make the world... a waiting room or place for the heaven and not for the hell*” (56:55). This call to action is framed in an inclusive and collaborative tone, using “let us” to share responsibility rather than impose it. By limiting the use of imperatives to moments of collective aspiration, Habibie maintains a respectful interpersonal stance, avoiding the alienation that could result from overtly directive language.

The analysis of modality in Table 2 reveals a nuanced use of low-, medium-, and high-degree modal verbs, reflecting Habibie’s strategic effort to balance diplomacy, persuasion, and urgency throughout his address. The low-degree modality, which accounts for 47% (50 instances), is frequently realized through verbs such as *can*, *may*, and *could*. These choices project possibility, openness, and inclusiveness, inviting the audience into the vision rather than imposing it upon them. For example, he notes, “*We can learn from others*” (37:55), signalling a willingness to adopt best practices from other nations while maintaining a collaborative tone. Similarly, in a more culturally specific statement, he remarks, “*You can become the richest man in Indonesia being an atheist, but you can never lead the country because you have to believe*

in God” (08:50). Here, the modal *can* convey a sense of possibility while simultaneously reinforcing the non-negotiable cultural expectation embedded in national leadership. These low-degree modals soften the speaker’s assertions, making them more palatable and inclusive to a diverse audience.

The medium-degree modality, comprising 22% (23 instances), employs verbs such as *will*, *would*, and *should* to express intentions, predictions, and recommendations. For instance, Habibie states, “*We will improve the existing law or regulation*” (1:13:35), a declaration that signals both commitment and progressiveness without sounding coercive. Likewise, his assertion that “*We should learn from the mistakes of others*” (1:12:10) functions as a constructive recommendation, positioning Indonesia as a nation capable of humility and reflection. These medium-degree modals help establish a balance between authority and cooperation, reinforcing Habibie’s image as a leader committed to progress through collective effort.

The high-degree modality, found in 31% (33 instances), is marked by verbs like *must* and *have to*, signaling strong necessity, obligation, and urgency. This is particularly evident when Habibie declares, “*I have to maintain Indonesia; I was not willing to have that [division]*” (37:30), underscoring his unwavering commitment to preserving national unity during a period of political fragility. Similarly, he emphasizes the forward-looking imperative of adaptation when he states, “*The values of the Pancasila and Constitution must be developed further, adjusted to the progress of globalization and achievement in science and technology*” (54:45). Another moment of heightened urgency appears when he reflects on his leadership during the crisis: “*I have to go ahead faster than the problem*” (31:25). These high-degree modals amplify the

persuasive force of the speech, conveying moral and logical imperatives that frame certain actions as unavoidable for the sake of national stability and progress.

The interplay of mood and modality in Habibie's speech creates a layered construction of interpersonal meaning that balances authority with inclusivity. The predominance of declarative clauses establishes Habibie as a knowledgeable and reliable narrator, guiding the audience through complex historical and political contexts with clarity and confidence. At the same time, the use of interrogatives and selective imperatives softens the authoritative tone, fostering engagement and collective ownership of the national narrative.

Similarly, the gradient of modality from tentative and inclusive (*can*, *may*) to assertive and urgent (*must*, *have to*) allows Habibie to adjust his interpersonal stance depending on the rhetorical demands of the moment. In reflective or explanatory passages, low-degree modals invite collaboration and openness; in moments of emphasis, high-degree modals underscore the inevitability and urgency of collective action. This dynamic use of mood and modality positions Habibie not only as an authoritative figure but also as a collaborative leader who seeks to inform, engage, and motivate without resorting to coercion.

In sum, the analysis of Table 1 and Table 2 demonstrates that Habibie's speech is meticulously crafted to achieve a balance between didactic exposition and persuasive engagement. His linguistic choices, anchored in declarative dominance and calibrated modality, reveal a rhetorical strategy that is both inclusive and authoritative, enabling him to connect with his audience while reinforcing his vision for Indonesia's historical evolution and democratic future.

Determining the Dominant Mood and Modality

The dominant mood used in the speech is clearly the declarative mood, which accounts for more than four-fifths of the clauses (82.4%). This high proportion signifies that Habibie primarily adopted a didactic tone, aiming to inform, explain, and describe the historical evolution of Indonesia. The preference for declarative over interrogative or imperative forms is consistent with the speech's rhetorical purpose: narrating national events and legitimizing political ideals through structured exposition.

Similarly, in the category of modality, low-degree modality emerged as the most frequent (47%). Modal verbs such as *can* and *may* were employed to express possibility and enable polite assertion. This suggests that the speaker intended to communicate respectfully, avoiding excessive imposition on the audience. Despite this polite stance, high-degree modality, particularly the use of *have to*, also appeared with notable frequency (31%), suggesting moments of heightened persuasive intent or urgency within the speech. This interplay indicates a rhetorical strategy that blends assertiveness and diplomacy.

Interpretation of Interpersonal Meaning through Mood and Modality

Interpersonal meaning, as conceptualized within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), refers to the enactment of social roles, attitudes, and relationships through linguistic choices (M. A. K. Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). In political speeches, these choices are not arbitrary; they are deliberately selected to construct authority, engage listeners, and establish the speaker's stance. In B.J. Habibie's speech, the interpersonal dimension is realized primarily through the use of mood and modality, which collectively function to position the speaker, align with the audience, and navigate the balance between persuasion and diplomacy.

The dominance of the declarative mood, which constitutes 82.4% of the total 125 clauses, serves a pivotal interpersonal function. Declarative structures are typically employed to convey factual information, establish credibility, and create a sense of narrative continuity. In the context of Habibie's speech, declarative clauses are used to articulate historical developments, express ideological perspectives, and delineate national values. By utilizing declaratives extensively, the speaker situates himself as an authoritative yet informative figure, guiding the audience through a shared historical journey. This communicative stance is critical in political discourse, where legitimacy and coherence are often established through exposition rather than confrontation (Ko, 2018).

The use of the interrogative mood (16%) further enhances the interpersonal texture of the speech. Although questions are conventionally used to solicit responses, in this context they function rhetorically to provoke thought, highlight national dilemmas, and engage the audience in reflective listening, creating an illusion of dialogic interaction, thus reducing social distance between speaker and audience. This strategy has been widely recognized in discourse studies to enhance inclusivity and foster a participatory atmosphere (Feng & Liu, 2010).

The minimal appearance of the imperative mood (1.6%), limited to just two clauses, signals the speaker's careful avoidance of directiveness. Imperatives, when used, carry a strong illocutionary force and can risk sounding authoritarian. Therefore, Habibie's rare use of imperatives indicates a deliberate effort to maintain a tone of suggestion rather than command, consistent with the ethos of democratic dialogue. Where commands do occur, they are likely reserved for moments of ethical

urgency or civic appeal, emphasizing shared responsibility rather than hierarchical control.

In terms of modality, the interpersonal function is further nuanced through the expression of obligation, probability, and inclination. The prevalence of low-degree modality (47%), including modal verbs such as *can*, *may*, and *could*, reflects a cautious and inclusive tone. These modals suggest possibility and willingness rather than imposition, which is particularly important in political speech aimed at diverse audiences. This modality choice indicates that the speaker seeks to guide rather than coerce, respecting the audience's agency while still encouraging national introspection. (Tokunaga, 2017) noted that such modal choices are essential in softening assertions and promoting cooperation.

Conversely, the presence of high-degree modality (31%), most notably through *must* and *have to*, injects moments of urgency and strong commitment. These modals convey necessity and non-negotiable obligation, which function rhetorically to underscore critical issues such as national unity, reform, or historical responsibility. The frequent use of *have to*, in particular, serves to emphasize logical or moral inevitability, suggesting that the speaker is invoking not only personal belief but also broader social consensus or institutional reasoning (He, 2024). This modality allows the speaker to balance assertiveness with accountability.

The interplay between mood and modality constructs a layered interpersonal meaning. Declarative clauses coupled with low modality convey calm authority and respectful engagement. Meanwhile, the strategic use of high-modality within declarative or interrogative structures heightens persuasive impact without overt coercion. This balance is central to Habibie's rhetorical strategy: establishing credibility, inviting participation, and motivating action

without disrupting the relational harmony between speaker and audience.

Furthermore, the analysis demonstrates that interpersonal meaning is not static but dynamically constructed throughout the speech. As the discourse progresses, shifts in modality and mood patterns mirror changes in rhetorical purpose, moving from informative exposition to persuasive appeal. This progression reflects a sophisticated understanding of audience psychology and discourse planning, whereby language functions not merely as a vehicle for information but as an instrument of social negotiation.

In sum, the construction of interpersonal meaning in B.J. Habibie's speech is realized through a careful orchestration of mood and modality. The speaker's preference for declarative structures fosters trust and legitimacy; his sparing use of interrogatives and imperatives maintains balance between authority and solidarity; and his gradient use of modality from tentative to assertive reflects the calibrated intensity of his communicative intent. These linguistic features collectively reinforce the interpersonal function of political speech, as a genre that must inform, engage, and inspire within a single communicative act.

Discussion

Although Wang & Haigh (2024) found that mood and modality did not significantly influence user engagement within the context of digital news reading, the present study identifies distinct effects of these linguistic features on the audience's perception of B.J. Habibie's political speech. The predominance of the declarative mood, constituting 82.4% of the total clauses, mirrors established findings in discourse analysis, where declarative structures are typically employed to deliver information

with authority and clarity (Feng & Liu, 2010). This is consistent with Ko (2018) study, which emphasized that declarative mood plays a central role in structuring informative discourse across contexts. Similarly, Luthfiyati et al. (2024) in their analysis of teacher–student interaction, they observed that declarative mood functioned as the dominant clause type used to facilitate instructional clarity and assert pedagogical authority. A comparable pattern is seen in Afsari et al. (2021), who found that Indonesian EFL learners employed declarative mood to develop coherent arguments in written exposition, underscoring its utility in constructing interpersonal meaning in both spoken and written forms.

The dominance of declarative mood in Habibie's speech reflects a strategy similar to that observed in global political contexts, where declaratives establish authority and credibility (Fetzer & Bull, 2012; Suwandi & Thoriqussud, 2021). However, unlike leaders who rely heavily on imperatives to assert command, Habibie's limited use of imperative mood aligns more closely with inclusive and collaborative leadership styles, as noted in Li et al. (2019) analysis of political discourse using an SFL perspective.

The present study reveals a dominant use of low-degree modality, realized through modal verbs such as *can*, *could*, *may*, and *might*, which serve to express politeness, tentative stance, and non-imposition. This finding aligns with the conclusions drawn by Tokunaga (2017), who noted that low-degree modality, while potentially less persuasive, plays a crucial role in softening statements and promoting cooperative discourse. Supporting this, Hendrawan et al. (2020) demonstrated that low-probability modals frequently appear in humility in academic writing. In the context of political discourse, the frequent use of such modality may reflect the speaker's intention to convey respect,

encourage reflection, and avoid authoritarian tones. Asnawi et al. (2023) similarly argue that low- and mid-level modality is often strategically employed in online forums to foster mutual understanding and avoid confrontational implications, an observation that may well apply to Habibie's diplomatic tone in addressing his audience.

Notably, this study finds a significant presence of the high-degree modal expression "have to," which diverges from the otherwise moderate modality observed. The use of this expression indicates a shift toward obligation and urgency, signaling the speaker's intent to emphasize certain points with greater assertiveness. This finding is congruent with Christiani (2020) study, which found that high-degree modality was prominent in interpreted political texts to preserve evaluative force. In this context, Habibie's use of "have to" functions rhetorically to encourage national action and emphasize the inevitability of historical change, thereby aligning with persuasive goals while maintaining a respectful tone.

The nuanced use of modality in Habibie's speech may also be understood through the framework proposed by He (2024), who introduced evidentiality as an integral component of modality in systemic functional linguistics. According to this view, modal expressions like "have to" can simultaneously convey necessity and appeal to external authority or logical reasoning, enhancing the persuasive impact. Ijam & Al-Ameedi (2024) In their analysis of interpersonal meaning in literary texts, they emphasized that such modality choices not only reflect logical evaluation but also shape the emotional resonance and relational stance of the speaker. This multi-dimensional function of modality reinforces the idea that interpersonal meaning is not static but strategically constructed.

The strategic shift between low, medium, and high degrees of modality in

Habibie's speech demonstrates a nuanced balancing act between diplomacy and urgency. This pattern mirrors findings in cross-cultural analyses where modality serves to align the speaker with the audience while signaling necessary actions (Wang & Jia, 2024). Such calibrated modality choices not only reinforce authority but also foster trust and engagement, key elements for effective political communication in transitional societies.

Furthermore, the integration of declarative mood with a range of modality values reflects a sophisticated rhetorical strategy, one that is supported by the broader literature on SFL-based interpersonal discourse. A recent review published in the Cheng (2024) highlights how mood and modality interact to position the speaker, convey stance, and guide the audience's interpretation across various genres, including academic, narrative, and political texts. In this regard, Habibie's speech can be seen as exemplifying how interpersonal meaning is carefully crafted through the interplay of grammatical choices to build credibility, demonstrate empathy, and subtly influence public sentiment. This idea is further supported by Susilowati et al. (2022), who analyzed thematic structures in academic journal articles and found that authors strategically structure themes and rhemes to guide the reader's attention and sustain argumentative flow. Although his focus was on academic writing, similar mechanisms are evident in political speeches, where coherent thematic progression, along with the dominance of declarative mood, contributes to the construction of authority, narrative logic, and ideological stance, such as in the case of Habibie's oration.

In conclusion, this study substantiates the critical role of mood and modality in political discourse by demonstrating how B.J. Habibie's speech employs declarative structures and strategic modality to construct

interpersonal meaning. While the declarative mood is informative and authoritative, the predominant low-degree modality fosters a respectful and inclusive tone. The selective use of high-degree modality, particularly “have to,” enhances the persuasive quality of the speech without compromising its diplomatic register. In contrast to Wang & Haigh (2024) findings in digital news contexts, this study affirms that in political oration, mood and modality exert a significant influence on how messages are conveyed and received. These findings contribute to a broader understanding of discourse’s interpersonal meaning and systemic functional linguistics in analyzing spoken texts within socio-political contexts.

CONCLUSION

This research examined how interpersonal meaning was expressed in B.J. Habibie’s political speech by analyzing mood and modality within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). The findings revealed that Habibie primarily employed the indicative mood, with declarative clauses comprising 82.4% of the total. This reflects his intention to inform, explain, and educate the audience on the historical evolution of Indonesia. The use of interrogative and imperative moods, although less frequent, served specific rhetorical functions; interrogatives prompted reflection, while imperatives signaled appeals for civic responsibility.

In terms of modality, the analysis showed that low-degree modality dominated the speech, accounting for 47% of all modal expressions. Modal verbs such as *can*, *could*, and *may* were used to express politeness, possibility, and non-imposing suggestions. However, the significant presence of high-degree modality, especially through the use of *have to*, indicated a persuasive undertone, suggesting obligation and urgency in addressing national issues. The speaker's

choice to combine these modality levels demonstrates a deliberate rhetorical strategy that balances assertiveness with diplomacy.

The integration of dominant declarative mood and varied modality levels illustrates how interpersonal meaning is carefully constructed to engage the audience, convey authority, and foster mutual understanding. These choices reflect Habibie’s role as an informant of historical narratives and a persuasive figure encouraging social responsibility and national unity.

Methodologically, this study applied a qualitative, document-based approach to discourse analysis. The data were processed through clause-level identification and categorization of mood and modality types, followed by interpretive analysis of their interpersonal functions. This analytical process enabled a deeper understanding of how grammatical features contribute to political rhetoric and audience engagement.

The discussion of results further confirmed that mood and modality are not neutral linguistic choices but serve as essential tools for shaping tone, intention, and interpersonal dynamics. By using declarative mood and a predominance of polite yet persuasive modals, Habibie effectively positioned himself as both an authoritative and respectful speaker, maintaining a constructive relationship with his listeners.

By aligning these findings with existing studies, this research underscores that mood and modality are central to constructing interpersonal meaning in political discourse across cultural contexts. However, the distinctive patterns observed in Habibie’s speech, particularly the restrained use of imperatives and the strategic modulation of modality, highlight a leadership style that is both authoritative and inclusive. This insight enriches the comparative literature on SFL-based political discourse analysis and provides a foundation

for exploring similar dynamics in other Indonesian or Southeast Asian contexts.

In conclusion, the study affirms that mood and modality play a critical role in political speeches. B.J. Habibie's speech exemplifies how interpersonal meaning is constructed through strategic linguistic choices. His rhetorical approach, characterized by a blend of informative tone and subtle persuasion, demonstrates the powerful role of language in shaping public discourse. This research contributes to the field of discourse analysis by providing a practical example of how systemic functional linguistics can be used to uncover the interpersonal meanings embedded in political texts. Future studies may benefit from examining a broader corpus of political speeches or comparing interpersonal strategies across different cultural or political contexts to deepen our understanding of rhetorical variation and linguistic strategy in public communication.

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