



**Ukrainian-Russian Conflict and Its Influence on The Political Speeches: A Discourse Analysis Study Of The Use of Interpersonal Elements**

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**Abstract**

On the 24<sup>th</sup> February 2022, President Vladimir Putin ordered Russian troops to conduct "Special Military Operations" aimed at the territory of Ukraine. A decision that marked the declaration of war between Russia and Ukraine. This has drawn criticisms, reactions, and condemnations from world leaders. One of them was reaction from President Macron as a leader of one of big countries. As a means to inform and influence society, the President's speech has a great role in stating the nation's position related to major global issue. In this regard, it is fascinating to observe the President's speech deploying interpersonal resources of language about Ukrainian-Russian conflict. Adopting Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) framework of interpersonal meaning analysis, this paper highlights the interpersonal elements occurring in President Macron's Speech. This study analysed French texts which are taken from President Macron's speech remarks on official website of French President on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2022 related to Ukrainian-Russian conflict. The analysis was done to reveal the quantitative profiles of different speech functions and Modality element choices made in the texts. Then it goes further in analysing qualitative elaboration of the choices and how these choices affect the overall construction of Ukrainian-Russian Conflict's language of authority during this time of crisis. The study found that the rhetoric of political leaders mirrors ideologies that align with national, regional, and international frameworks. It also emphasized that grammar in political speech serves beyond syntactic correctness, it plays a crucial role in organizing discourse and conveying ideological messages.

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## INTRODUCTION

*Critical Discourse Analysis and Systemic Functional Linguistic* Functional Linguistics (SFL) is one of the CDA approach that sees language is a verbal social process containing socio-cultural norms and values represented by regarding language as a system of social sign. In SFL, linguists and sociologists work together to analyze social phenomena within discourse, acknowledging that intricate social realities correspond to equally complex linguistic systems. SFL defines language as a verbal process rooted in social interaction and considers it a semiotic system representing socio-cultural values and norms. Socio-cultural frameworks provide meaning resources, while language facilitates the creation of meaning.

In Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), language is regarded as a social semiotic system, positioning grammar as a mechanism that supports interaction and meaning-making in relation to human experiences. As its founder, Halliday explains that language offers people the means to construct mental representations of reality, to comprehend what occurs around and within them, and to make sense of these phenomena. Since language is a structured system of communication, it provides a system of choices. The speaker can select from the resources of language system to express their experiences of the world, their attitudes, expectations etc.

The term of Systemic Functional Linguistics itself constructed from *system* and *functional* (Wiratno, 2018). *System*, adopted from Firth – Halliday's teacher, *refers* to a system of choices provided by a language, paradigmatically, people can select from the resources of the language system to make meanings which fits to the social context, which constrains the choices that are made from the linguistic system. The term "functional," originating from linguistic anthropology, emphasizes that language is inherently a social phenomenon. A "systemic functional" perspective views language as a system aimed at generating meaning. Its core function is to facilitate communication, with the meanings selected by users being influenced by the situational and cultural contexts in which the language is used (Thompson et al., 2019)/

Technical terms of a context of situation and culture in SFL are known as genre and register. Halliday and Hasan states that *genre* is a text type, whereas *register* is a configuration of meaning in a social context containing a unit of meaning called *metafunction* consisting of field, tenor, and mode. Field is associated with the main topic of the text. The one which deals with the relationship between speaker/writer and listener/reader is called *tenor*. Mode refers to how a text (either in written or spoken) constructed with cohesive and coherence in order to make the meaning.

According to Halliday, those three functions are very crucial for achieving meaning-making potential and do not stand independently. Language serves to express experiential and logical meanings via its ideational function, social relationships and interactions through its interpersonal function, and semiotic reality through its textual function. To make it simpler, a unit of language, for instance a clause contains all three functions. It conveys an experiential and logical meaning, a social reality, as well as a semiotic reality at the same time.

The theory of SFL has been largely applied to analysis any kind of texts, such as translation analysis (Dorri, 2020; Vatandoost & Anvarhagigi, 2020), pedagogic text analysis (LIU Sha & YE Feifei, 2021; Rose, 2018), political text analysis (Chen, 2017, 2018; Hoko, 2006; Nuraini, 2019; Rizky & Suaib, 2021; Yipei, 2013) and so on. Nowadays, as stated by (Koussouhon & Dossoumou, 2015) modern studies in SFL has been enormously applied in the political text/discourse.

This study employs SFL theories to analyzes President Macron's speech of Russian and Ukrainian conflict focusing on interpersonal elements are realized in that speech. Speech is chosen as the object of this study since speech reflects many interpersonal elements choices of the speaker.

Interpersonal meaning refers to the meaning expressed by the speakers' attitudes and judgement that are realized through Mood and Modality of the clauses.

**Table 1.** Typical Mood of Clause and Its Speech Functions

<b>Mood Types</b>	<b>Speech Functions</b>
Indicative mood	Statement
Inquisive mood	Question
Imperative mood	Command
Modulated imperative mood	Offer

*Source: Eggins, 2004*

The mood elements consist of two elements i.e. subject and the finite element, subject is expressed through a nominal group, while the finite element is part of verbal group. Any remaining elements in the clause, if present, are referred to as the Residue. According to (Halliday et al., 2014)), the subject functions as the reference point for affirming or denying a proposition. Similarly, (Eggins, 1994) describe the subject as the central of participant in a clause, the person or entity the proposition is about, and emphasize that without subject, no argument or negotiation can take place.

The second key component of the mood element is the finite element. As noted by Halliday and Matthiessen (Halliday et al., 2014), finite anchors the preposition by reference of time, meaning it expresses tense, whether past, present, or future. The finite is always realized as a part of verbal group, which refers to a sequence of words that indicate the process, action, or state in which the subject is involved.

Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) classify Finite Verbal operators into two types, i.e.: Temporal Finite Verbal that links the preposition to specific point in time by expressing tenses; Finite Modal Operators expressing modality which reflects speakers' assessment of probability, certainty, and obligation related to the proposition. In addition to the mode components (subject and finite), the remaining parts of the clause are referred to residue. The residue is typically consists of three components: the predicator, complement, and adjunct/

Example:

*Le chat a attrapé une souris dans la cuisine*

<i>Le chat</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>attrapé</i>	<i>une souris</i>	<i>dans la cuisine</i>
<b>subject</b>	<b>finite</b>	<b>predicator</b>	<b>complement</b>	<b>adjunct</b>
<i>Mood</i>		<i>Residue</i>		

Speech functions related to the exchange information (propositions) and those concerning the exchange of goods and services (proposals) are associated with different types of modalities. Specifically, modalization which includes probability and usuality, relates to the proposition, while modulation includes obligation and inclination, relates to proposals.

Modalization, also referred to epistemic modality, conveys the speaker's or writer's degree of certainty or estimation regarding the likelihood of a statement. As described by Halliday and Matthiessen, modalization includes two types of meaning, i.e., (1) probability expresses how likely the speakers believes an event or state to be. (2) usually expresses how often the speaker believes an event typically occurs.

In contrast, modulation, also known as deontic modality, refers to meaning related to duty, permission, willingness, or ability. While both modalization and modulation are types of connotative meaning, they serve different communicative functions. Modality is typically realized within the mood structure of a clause, either through the finite element or via mood adjuncts.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study applies a qualitative approach to analyze the data. The object of the study is interpersonal elements in the President Macron's speech of Russian and Ukrainian conflict. According to Thomson (2014) in interpersonal analysis, the analysis is mainly focused on the independent clauses. The clauses are divided into five elements i.e., Subject, Finite, Complement, and Adjunct.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Mood types	Declarative	Interrogative	Modulated Interrogative	Imperatives	
Frequency	94	00	00	02	
Percentage	98 %	00 %	00 %	2 %	
Modality types	Epistemic (Modalization)			Deotic (Modulation)	
	2			12	
	0.14 %			0.86%	
Reference	Je	Vous	Il/elle	Nous	Ils/elles
Frequency	19	5	12	32	4
Percentage	26 %	7 %	17 %	44 %	6 %

*Mood Types*

Based on the finding, it revealed that the dominant mood used in the President Macron's speech is declarative mood.

- (1) *Des centaines de civils ukrainiens (S) ont (F) été tués (P).*
- (2) *Des centaines de milliers de réfugiés (S) fuient (F) vers la Moldavie, la Pologne, la Roumanie, la Hongrie, la Slovaquie et progressivement le reste de l'Europe.*

The two clauses in the excerpts above are defined by the placement of the **Subjects**, *Des centaines de civils ukrainiens* in S2 and *des centaines de milliers de réfugiés* in S5, which both appear before the Finite. This subject-Finite sequence is characteristic of declarative clauses, as observed in the works of SFL such as (Egins, 1994)

The majority of declarative clauses identified in the data functioned to convey statement and to give information to the audience. President Macron took on the subject position as a giver of information and the addressees' position was that of a receiver. In declarative sentences President Macron inform the condition of Ukraine after Russian invasion, the effect of this to France and also Europe and also, he made it clear that France and Europe are on the side of Ukraine. As a politician with defined political mission, it is about urgent and evident that the speaker must convey information and request action. On one hand, the speaker aims at deliver messages that reflect his political stance and underlying assumptions. On the other hand, he seeks to persuade and mobilize the audience to act in response to the illocutionary force of his statements. Consequently, the frequent use of complete declarative clauses emerges as a dominant and distinctive feature of political discourse, including in President Macron's speech.

- (3) *Dans cette épreuve sans précédent depuis nombre de décennies, nous (S) nous tenons (F) aux côtés de l'Ukraine (C).*

Imperative mood functions as a marker of authority, similar to exclamative mood, through its omission of the subject (agent/doer) and its reflection of the power dynamics or social relationship between participants in the discourse. However, in the political speech, the emphasis often shifts toward establishing a sense of solidarity and mutual engagement between speakers and the audience. According to Halliday (1985), imperative clauses serve two primary purposes: to commands or to extend invitations for joint action.

In the president Macron's speech, the use of "*Vive la France*" illustrates an imperative clause not employed as a direct order, but rather than as an expression of shared conviction, encouragement, and persuasive intent. Through this choice of language, Macron effectively reduced the social distance between himself and the audience, fostering a sense of collective identity and motivating them to face challenges together. In this context, the imperative forms in Macron's speech functioned as inspiration appeals rather than authoritarian directives, making them emotionally resonant and rhetorically powerful, as demonstrated in the following examples,

- (4) *Vive la République. Vive la France.*

With an imperative clause in the data, Macron maintained an equal and reliant or dependent relation with the audience which might be helpful in moving the audience with emotion.

#### Modalization

Beyond imperative instructions, another strategy to influence people's actions, whether to encourage and discourage them, is through the use of modality (see table 2). Modality plays a crucial role in realizing the interpersonal metafunction of language by indicating the speakers' level of commitment to the truth and the necessity of a proposition. It operates within the spectrum between affirmation and negation reflecting the speakers' assessment of like hood or obligation tied in proposition one of the most common ways modalities is expressed is through the mood system of a clause.

When modality is realized via modal verb operators, it evolves a gradation of meaning related to the strength or certainty of a statement, a concept referred to as a modal commitment. This idea aligns with prior studies suggesting that the text types are significantly shaped by the use of modality often regarded as a reflection of grammatical convention (Bao et al., 2018; Bu et al., 2020).

Based on the table 2, there were 14 modal verbal operators used by President Macron's Speech. The dominant modal verbal operators used is "pouvoir", followed by "devoir" "aller" and "vouloir".

In President Macron's speech, the use of the modal verb "pouvoir" serves a strategic interpersonal function: rather than asserting authority or issuing direct commands, it softens his stance and reduces the social distance between himself and the audience. This linguistic choice reflects a more collaborative and inclusive tone. Semantically, "pouvoir"—equivalent to "can" in English—denotes ability or possibility. Its repeated use throughout the speech functions as a rhetorical device to persuade the French public to support and defend Ukraine, to reject Russia's actions, and to encourage collective responsibility in mitigating the consequences of the Russia–Ukraine conflict. By framing these actions as things the nation can do, Macron positions them not as obligations, but as empowered choices, thereby fostering a sense of agency and national solidarity.

The modal "Devoir" in French represents the highest level of modal commitment, indicating a strong degree of necessity or obligation. Its use places significant pressure on the listener to comply with the directive being issued. In political discourse, "devoir" is often employed when the speaker seeks to demonstrate firm resolve and to urge the audience toward collective action in pursuit of shared goals. In President Macron's speech, "devoir" is strategically used to urge the French people to support and defend Ukraine, to oppose Russia's aggression, and to mobilize the nation to seek alternatives and implement strategies to counter the negative impacts of the Russia–Ukraine conflict. This modal choice underscores a sense of urgency and duty, reflecting not just a political stance but a moral imperative. The following excerpt illustrates the use of "devoir" in President Macron's speech:

- (5) ... *nous nous devons de répondre par des décisions historiques.*  
(*must respond with historic decisions.*)
- (6) ...*nous devons promouvoir un nouveau modèle économique fondé sur l'indépendance et le progrès.*  
(*we will have to promote a new economic model based on independence and progress.*)

Regarding the use of "aller", it is adopted to predict the future or as being a marker of the future as shown in the following clauses.

- (7) ... *sanctions contre les dirigeants politiques et économiques de la Russie, soutien à la population ukrainienne (S) vont (F) ainsi se poursuivre (P) et s'intensifier (P) avec pour objectif d'obtenir l'arrêt des combats.*  
(*sanctions against the political and economic leaders of Russia, support for the Ukrainian population will thus continue and intensify with the aim of obtaining a cessation of fighting.*)
- (8) *Notre agriculture, notre industrie, nombre de secteurs économiques souffrent et vont souffrir,...*  
(*Our agriculture, our industry, many economic sectors are suffering and will suffer,*)

The use of "aller" in these clauses reflects a higher degree of modal commitment, indicating a strong sense of certainty regarding the validity of the proposition. In this context, President Macron employs "aller" to express a firm prediction about the anticipated negative consequences of the Russia–Ukraine conflict, particularly its impact on the agricultural, industrial, and economic sectors. This use

of modality reinforces the seriousness of the situation and underscores the urgency of anticipating and addressing these challenges.

#### Reference

From analysis of data, it was found that the personal pronoun *nous* was most dominant in the President Macron's speech, followed by pronoun *je*, *il/elle*, and *vous*. The use of pronoun *nous* indicated that Macron and French had the same objective, as shown in this clause:

(9) ....*nous nous tenons aux côtés de l'Ukraine*

In this respect, Macron successfully shortened the distance between him and the audience and maintained an equal and a reliant relationship. It greatly helped him to persuade an audience to take his side and support Ukraine.

Macron used pronoun *je* in order to show his position to support Ukraine as a French president holding the authority and speak his opinion or judgement as a French president towards Ukrainian-Russian conflict as shown in this following clause:

(10) *J'adresse au president Volodymir Zelensky le soutien fraternal de la France*

The use pronoun *vous* in the President's Macron speech is for maintaining the interaction between him and the audience. Here the example of the clause:

(11) *Vous le savez , j 'ai depuis 2017 conduit un dialogue exigeant et constant avec le Président POUTINE.*

## CONCLUSION

This study has examined President Macron's speech delivered on 24th February 2022 in response to the Russian military invasion of Ukraine, using the interpersonal meaning framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). The analysis revealed that Macron's speech was carefully crafted to convey France's political stance, foster solidarity, and mobilize national and international support. Through the strategic use of speech functions and modality choices, the President not only communicated information but also built alignment and emotional engagement with his audience.

The findings demonstrate that political discourse, especially in moments of global crisis, operates as a powerful vehicle for ideology. It reflects not only national values but also positions aligned with broader geopolitical narratives. Moreover, the study underscores the role of grammar in political speech—not merely as a matter of form, but as a tool for shaping meaning, reinforcing authority, and influencing public perception. In this context, Macron's linguistic choices illustrate how language can function as a form of action, particularly in articulating leadership, responsibility, and collective resolve during times of conflict.

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