

Interpersonal functions in greta thunberg’s “civil society for rEUnaissance” speech

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Abstract – Greta Thunberg delivered a speech entitled “You’re Acting Like Spoiled, Irresponsible Children” to influential figures in Europe through “Civil Society for rEUnaissance” event, in which she was personally invited by the president of the organizer, Luca Jahier. Through her speech, she managed to convince the European Union to pledge spending billions of Euro to combat climate crisis. This study aims to discover how interpersonal metafunction is used in the speech and what functions are revealed through Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis and Hallidayan Systemic Functional Grammar. The data, consisting of seventy-one independent clauses, were taken from Thunberg’s book which consists her speech transcription, titled “No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference”. The research discovers that through the use of mood, modality, and pronouns, Thunberg conveys her view on her relationship with the audience as victim and perpetrator, and the one who holds responsibility and takes blame.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis, Greta Thunberg’s speech, interpersonal metafunction

1. Introduction

On February 21, 2019, Greta Thunberg, a young climate activist, delivered a speech, entitled "You're Acting Like Spoiled, Irresponsible Children" in the event "Civil Society for rEUnaissance" of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC). She was invited by the EESC President, Luca Jahier, to inspire representatives of organized civil society and awaken their conscience (European Economic and Social Committee, 2019). In her speech, Thunberg criticized the political leaders, mentioning that they have wasted decades on inaction and denial of climate change. In the very same speech, she also mentioned and refuted the conspiracy theory that she and the other children that are climate activists are puppets. The speech was delivered in a room full of European Union Policy Makers. In response to her speech, the chief executive of the European Union made a pledge to spend hundreds of billions of euro to combat climate change (Roth, 2019). Her speech was, later on, compiled and released as a book, titled "No One is Too Small to Make a Difference" and awarded her "Author of the Year" title by Waterstones.

Thunberg has a purpose in using language in the form of a speech as language serves as the place where the concepts of right and duty are created, the creator of power, and the location where power is performed (Wareing, 2004). She uses speech as a tool to influence the audience at the conference as she imposed her value, belief, way of thinking, and point of view. The speech will involve the speaker's ideology as the use of language in speech tends to imply rhetoric contribution to succeed in the speaker's goal (Jones & Peccei, 2004).

Critical Discourse Analysis is an analytical framework to analyze the relation between power, language, and ideology, this study utilizes it to discover ideologies in Thunberg's speech. Fairclough (1995) argues that his critical discourse analysis follows Hallidayan SFG in assuming that language functions ideationally, interpersonally, and textually in the representation of experience, social interaction. Hallidayan SFG supports Critical Discourse Analysis through three dimensions which require three analytical processes, text analysis through the description of metafunction which Thunberg employed, processing analysis through the interpretation of the functions, and social analysis through explaining the functions in relation to the event "Civil Society for rEUnaissance". Thus, this study focuses on the interpersonal metafunction of Hallidayan Systemic Functional Grammar which treats clauses as an exchange through the mood, modality, and pronouns.

Analysis of speech using Critical Discourse Analysis through the interpersonal metafunction of Systemic Functional Grammar has been done by researchers before. Surjowati (2016) explored the manifestation of power and ideologies through modality choices used by Sidney Morning Herald, an Australian newspaper. To answer the research questions, the researcher used Fairclough's CDA and Bybee's, et al and Frawley's concept of modality. From the ninety-eight data of modality expressions, the Australian newspaper employs the same frequency of both epistemic and deontic modal. Modality expressions are utilized to represent SMH's interests in exposing the quality of the legal process in Indonesia and the inferiority of the JIS and its staff.

Investigating the mood, epistemic, and deontic modality patterns in an extract taken from *Yellow-Yellow* by Kaine Agary, Koussouhon, and Dossoumou (2015) discovered that the choices of mood and modality that is used show some kind of power and hierarchy relations and conflicting ideologies between Sisi, Lolo, Zilayefa and Admiral. Through employing the Critical Discourse Analysis and womanist theory, the study found the covert ideology of the author behind Kaine Agary's fictional text. The ideology is geared towards a more balanced African society through pro-women social change.

The discussion on interpersonal meaning in President Olusegun Obasanjo's "the New Dawn" and Alhaji Shehu Shagari was conducted by Ezeifeke (2014). The study focuses on aspects of the Mood structure of the clause; the Subject and the speech functions of the clause as propositions or proposals and vocatives. The selected clauses from the two speeches are analyzed using Halliday's systemic functional grammar and critical discourse analysis. The findings show rhetoric by the deliberate use of subject that in turn seems to take credit for positive achievement and divest responsibility for negative representations. To assert solidarity, to ostensibly gain rapport, and help to legitimize the power and hegemonic regime, the speakers employ vocatives. The high number of propositions against proposals gives the impression of more words and less action. The study concludes that instead of making propositions that serve purely informative functions, commitment to the proposal that offers commodity and services to their subjects should be done more by Nigerian politicians.

Nur (2019) conducted research to analyze the historic 7th March 1971 speech of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Through the three analytical frameworks of Critical Discourse Analysis, the study identified multiple linguistics features such as personal pronouns, mood blocks, modality, and tense in ninety-four clauses from the speech. The ideological patterns, strategies, depiction of power relations of the speaker and the audience, and reference of the socio-political situation at that time are revealed through the explanation of the relation between the discursive and social processes. The findings of the study reveal Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's leadership ingenuity and his rhetoric skill.

The high number of studies using Systemic Functional Grammar to be utilized in Critical Discourse Analysis proves that this method is highly suitable to analyze texts and discover the relations between language, power, and ideology. The previous studies analyze political speeches, news, or literary text. This study takes a different angle from the previous studies in the sense that this study analyzes a speech, not from politicians, news, or literary text. Despite being less viral compared to her speech at the United Nations Climate Actions Summit, her speech at EESC directly addresses the conspiracies, insults, disapproval of some adults and politicians, making this speech unique since it is taken from the perspective of the "oppressed" side. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, none of the studies before have analyzed the interpersonal meaning in Thunberg's *You're Acting Like Spoiled, Irresponsible Children*.

In relaying her message, Thunberg has been doing her research and deliver her points so that the audience can understand. Through Critical Discourse Analysis and interpersonal metafunction of Systemic Functional Grammar, the researcher identifies the interpersonal metafunctions that are used in the speech and discover the ideologies

that are revealed by the use of interpersonal metafunctions in Greta Thunberg's speech. The followings are the research questions that guide this study.

- (1). How are interpersonal metafunctions used in Greta Thunberg's "Civil Society for rEUnaissance" speech?
- (2). What interpersonal functions are revealed in the speech?

2. Method

This section consists of two parts of the methodology; data collection and data analysis.

2.1 Data Collection

This study used a descriptive qualitative method to examine and reveal the complexity in the text, that is, the connection between the linguistic and ideological contexts. Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis was employed to find out the ideologies in the speech. Fairclough's CDA (1995) conforms to Hallidayan SFG in assuming that language represents experience, social interaction, and coherence in the situational context through ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions. The object of this study was Greta Thunberg's "Civil Society for rEUnaissance" speech, entitled "You're Acting Like Spoiled, Irresponsible Children". Its transcription was taken from Greta Thunberg's book "No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference". The data of this research were the independent clauses in Thunberg's speech, with a length of 1083 words. Seventy-one independent clauses are found in the speech.

2.2 Data Analysis

To get the data, the researcher examined the text and treated it as a discourse. The independent clauses from the speech were scrutinized to find out the interpersonal metafunction used through the mood system, thus enabling the revelation of covert ideology in the speech. The mood system consisted of mood, modality, and personal and possessive pronouns analyses. Following Hallidayan SFG (2014), the mood was identified by the subject-finite order, categorized into declarative, interrogative, or imperative. Concerning modality, the identification of modal auxiliaries and modal adjuncts were distinguished into two types; modalization and modulation (Eggin, 2004). The analysis of mood and modality determined the speech function. The personal and possessive pronouns were evaluated through their use as the subject in the text. The interpretation from the interpersonal function was utilized to explain the ideological context.

3. Results and Discussion

There are seventy-one independent clauses that were found in Thunberg's "Civil Society for rEUnaissance" speech. The clauses are analyzed to find the interpersonal metafunctions, namely mood, modality, and pronouns. Through the analysis and interpretation of the findings, the covert ideology of the speech can be discovered.

Mood and Speech Function

Following Hallidayan SFG, there are two types of mood, namely indicative, which is further divided into declarative and interrogative, and imperative. The indicative mood can be found in clauses in which the subject precedes the finite,

while the imperative mood is the opposite. Mood carries a vital role in the exchange of either information or goods and services.

Table 1 Summary of Mood

Function Mood	Statement		Offer		Command	
	freq.	percentag e	freq.	percentag e	freq.	percentag e
Declarative	55	77,5%	1	1,4%	11	15,5%
Imperative	-	-	2	2,8%	2	2,8%
total	55	77,5%	3	4,2%	13	18,3%

There are sixty-seven clauses that classify as declarative clauses, presented in 94,4% of the data and four imperative clauses that present 5,6% of the data. However, none of interrogative clause can be found in the speech. The mood types are further divided based on their speech functions in exchanging information or good and services. Below is an example of declarative clause functioning as statement.

Table 2 Declarative Clause as Statement

My name	is	Greta Thunberg
Subject	Finite	Complement
Mood		Residue

In the example, the order is Subject “My name” precedes Finite “is”. The structure S[^]F marked it as declarative clause. The complement “Greta Thunberg” is realized as noun phrase (NP) and residue as its presented Greta Thunberg as the name of the speaker. The declarative clause makes an exchange by giving information on the speaker’s name, thus the clause above is categorized as declarative functioning as statement. Despite the high number of declarative clause functioning as statement, it can function as command and offer, as presented in Table 3 below is an example of declarative clause functioning as command.

Table 3 Declarative Clause as Command

We	must	stop	competing	with each other
Subject	Finite	Predicator	Complement	Adjunct
Mood			Residue	

The order of Subject “We” and Finite “must” in the example above is the same as the previous example, by the structure S[^]F. Thus, the clause is also marked as declarative clause. The residue is realized in the form of predicator, complement, and adjunct. The adjunct answers the question who. The speech function in the clause is command as the clause demands services, asking the audience to stop competing with each other. Below is another example of declarative clause functioning as offer.

Table 4 Declarative Clause as Offer

We	suggest	that you take our place in the streets striking from your work
Subject	Finite	Complement
Mood		Residue

The example above shows the order of Subject precedes the Finite, realized by Subject “We” precedes Finite “suggest”, creating a structure of S^F. The rest of the clause is the suggestion to take the speaker’s place in the streets by striking from their work, and is realized as complement and residue. The clause makes an exchange of giving services, thus marking it as an offer.

The imperative clause is marked by the Finite preceding the Subject, making a F^S structure, although in some other cases it is marked only by the Finite or Predicator. As seen from Table 1 above, imperative clause occupies four clauses out of seventy-one clauses, presented in only 5,6% of the data. Despite the low number, imperative clauses are important in carrying the exchange in interpersonal function. In this data, the imperative clauses functions as command or offer. Below is the example of imperative clause functioning as command.

Table 5 Imperative Clause as Command

Listen to	them	because we are just repeating what they are saying and have been saying for decades.
Predicator	Complement	Adjunct
Mood	Residue	

The above example consists of Predicator, with the absence of Subject and Finite in the clause. The Predicator “Listen” to represent the Mood, while the rest of the clause act as the residue and realized in the form of complement and adjunct. The adjunct answers the question why and the complement answer the question who. The clause is categorized as imperative clause functioning as command since it makes an exchange through demanding service or action from the audience to listen. As mentioned before, another function of imperative clause in this data is offer. Below is another example of imperative clause functioning as an offer.

Table 6 Imperative Clause as an Offer

Or better yet,	join	us	so it can speed up the process
Conjunctive A	Predicator	Complement	Adjunct
Residue	Mood		Residue

The same as the example before, the Finite and Subject is absent in this clause, instead the Mood only realized by the Predicator “join”. The Residue is realized by the rest of the clause in the form of complement and two adjuncts. The first adjunct serves as conjunctive, while the second adjunct answers the question of why. The complement explains the question of who the audience should join. The imperative clause functions as an offer since it exchanges commodity in terms of giving invitation to join the in the speaker’s movement.

Modality

Out of seventy-one clauses in the data, only ten clauses contain modality. Modality has to do with the speaker’s commitment, attitude, and judgement, indicated by the use of modal adjuncts and modal auxiliaries, and divided into two types general type; modalization and modulation. Modalization argues on the frequency and the probability of prepositions, while modulation argues on the inclination and

obligation of proposal. Other than the types, modality is also evaluated on its value, whether it is high, median, or low.

Table 7 Summary of Modality

Value Modality	Low		Median		High	
	freq.	percenta ge	freq.	percenta ge	freq.	percenta ge
Probability	1	10%	4	40%	1	10%
Obligation	-	-	-	-	3	30%
Usuality	-	-	-	-	1	10%
Total	1	10%	4	40%	5	50%

Based on the table above, there are six clauses classified as probability, presented in 60% of the data. The obligation modal presents in three clauses, making it 30% of the data, while usuality only presents in one clause, presented in 10% of the data. In this data, there is no inclination modality that is found.

Probability is the modal that show the possibility of something happening, and is indicated by either modal adjuncts or modal auxiliaries. The probability is further divided by the value of the modal. From Table 2, probability of median value dominates the data by occurring four times. There are only one clause using prability of either low or high value. Below is the example of clause with probability modal of median value.

(1) And they **will** be remembered as the greatest villains of all time, because they have chosen not to listen and not to act.

In the clause, the probability modal that is employed is “will”, followed by verb “be”. The subject of the clause is “they”, referring to the political leaders. Modal “will” is considered of median value, showing the speaker’s judgement of the information happening is quite certain. Through the clause, the speaker informs the audience of her judgement of the political leaders’ remembrance as the greatest villains for their inaction and denial of climate change.

Usuality is the modal that shows the frequency or repetition in the exchange of information. The same as probability, usuality is also divided based on its low, median, or high value. In this study, usuality only happens once out of the ten data, using the modal always of high value. The next example is clause with modality in the form of usuality modal.

(2) People **always** tell us that they are so hopeful.

The modal that is used in the clause above is “always”. The modal “always” means that something frequently happens or have high repetition of happening, thus the value is high. In the clause, the modal is followed by verb “tell” and have “people” as the subject. The high value of the modal shows the surety of the speaker and the high occurrence of people telling the speaker that they are so hopeful.

The last modal that exist in the data is obligation. It is the modal that deals with the exchange of goods and services, enabling the speaker to rule, demand, or command. The obligation is presented by 30% of the data. All of the modal happens to be of high value, using modal auxiliaries such as must and can’t. Below is an example of clause containing obligation modal.

(3) That **must** come to an end.

The modal that is used in this clause is “must”. The modal is immediately followed by verb “come” and the subject “that”, which refers to cheating to win and for power. The modal “must” shows the speaker’s certain attitude and judgement towards the clause, obliging the audience to follow what the clause demanded. In the clause example above, the use of modal of high value means that the speaker demand certainly that the cheating which has been done to come to an end.

Pronouns

Other than as substitution to avoid monotone repetition, the use of pronouns reveals the speaker’s view on the relation between them and the listener and who held responsible for the proposal or proposition in the clause. Out of seventy-one clauses, thirty-seven clauses use pronouns.

Table 8 Summary of Pronouns

Pronoun	Frequency	Percentage
We (Speaker and other as Subject)	12	32%
They	9	24%
We (Speaker and Audience)	8	22%
You	5	14%
I	2	5%
My	1	3%
Total	37	100%

Table 8 above shows the summary of Pronouns that are used in the speech. As can be seen, the pronoun exclusive “we” is ubiquitously expressed in the speech, presented by 32% of the data. It is followed by the use of “they” and inclusive “we”, each contributed 24% and 22% of the data. The use of “you” directly addresses the audience is presented in 14% of the data. The use of “I”, and “my” is less significant, offered in 5% and 3% of the data.

The use of pronoun “we” is divided into exclusive and inclusive “we”. The exclusive “we” that dominates the data are used twelve times in the speech, while the use of inclusive “we” occurs eight times. Both the use of “we” happen twenty times out of thirty-seven clauses, making them the most utilized pronoun in the text. Below is the example of the pronoun exclusive “we”.

- (4) **We** know that most politicians don’t want to talk to us.
- (5) Good, **we** don’t want to talk to them either.
- (6) **We** want them to talk to the scientists instead.

The pronoun exclusive “we” is exercised to refer the speaker and other people, namely other children that are also climate activist as the subject, or any other audience that may feel included as a climate activist. The use of inclusive “we” refer to a whole different group of people. Below is the example of the pronoun inclusive “we” in the speech.

- (7) **We** need to cooperate and work together and to share the resources of the planet in a fair way.
- (8) **We** need to protect the biosphere, the air, the oceans, the soil, the forests.

(9) **We** need to focus every inch of our being on climate change, because if we fail to do so then all our achievements and progress have been for nothing

As seen from the above example, the use of inclusive “we” refers to the speaker and the audience, particularly the participant of the event Civil Society for rEUnaissance and all listener in general. Other than the use of “we”, the other most frequently exercised pronoun choice is “they”. Below is the example of the use of “they” in the speech

(10) **They** don’t want to talk about it because they know they cannot win this fight.

(11) And **they** will be remembered as the greatest villains of all time, because they have chosen not to listen and not to act.

(12) Once again, **they** sweep their mess under the carpet for our generation to clean up and solve.

The use of “they” refers to the generation older than the speaker, the politician, or the people who choose not to care about climate change. The other pronoun that is frequently used is “you”. Below is the example of the use of “you” in the speech

(13) **You** unite behind the science

(14) **You** cheat when you can, because all that matters is to win, to get power.

(15) **You** don’t seem to understand that hope is something you have to earn.

The use of “you” as the subject mainly refers to the audience, who is the participant of the event. However, it also relates to any audience.

As mentioned before, the interpersonal function carries the exchange involving the speaker and audience. From the metafunctions that were found in the speech, three functions are revealed, to present the speaker’s view on her relationship with the audience, to present responsibility, and to present blame.

Interpersonal Function to Present Speaker’s View on Her Relation with Audience

From the findings, the high number of declarative clauses functioning as statement shows that Thunberg intends to impart information about climate change, its danger, and prevention since she assumes that the audience hasn’t done their homework in collecting information on climate change. In the study conducted by Firmansyah et al (2019), declarative clauses function is more than just info-giver since it can have a wide variety of purposes. Thunberg’s vast number of declarative clauses also act as a reminder of the world-leaders part in the climate-crisis, their responsibility, and their supposed action. She gives facts on what the politicians or world leaders have been doing in the response to this global problem, which is inaction and denial. The use of interrogative and imperative creates a chance of dialogue between the speaker and audience, and the lack of them is designed to construct distance (Leonard et al, 2015). The low number on both interrogative and imperative mood makes it less communicative and creates distance between Thunberg and the audience. Thus, the distance separates Thunberg from the whole room full of European Union Policy Makers, showing the position of Thunberg as the victim and the one that suffers from their negligence. Ye (2010) argues that the use of clauses that interrogative clauses make the speechless solemn, less persuasive, and less convincing. Thus, the lack of interrogative clauses indicates that Thunberg needs no information since she and the other children have already done the research, therefore makes Thunberg’s speech more convincing.

Chen (2018) argues that the use of inclusive pronouns shortens the distance between the speaker and the audience. However, when Thunberg speaks about the facts and information, the high number of pronouns that are found is exclusive we and the use of “you” and “they”, which do not show the inclusiveness and unity between the speaker and audience, and further distinguish their standing. This deliberate subject choice is used to show that Thunberg and the children are different from the audience, in regards to power, age, and beliefs. The several clauses that function as command and offer consists of her demand and suggestion to take action fighting against climate change. These clauses are where she used the inclusive “we” the most to engage the audience, as in this part, she asks the audience to work together. The amount of modality in a text indicates the confidence of the speaker. The more modality a text has, the less sure the speaker is (Sunardi, 2016). In the speech, Thunberg utilizes ten modalities in the seventy-one clauses of the speech, showing her sureness of the facts and data that she presents. The modality of modulation shows the obligation or inclination of the speaker in exchanging goods and services (Eggin, 2004). The lack of modality in the form of inclination shows rather than proposing to deal with the climate problems together by communicating with the audience by using more command and offer; she utilizes statement confidently that makes her point across that makes her speech convincing.

Interpersonal Function to Present Responsibility

One of the declarative clauses use in Thunberg’s speech is to reveal the burden that the future generation has to shoulder as a result of the action not taken in this generation. She speaks strongly as the representation of future generation who has to bear the aftermath after the world leaders have selfishly shirked their responsibility. As established before, Thunberg appears assured and controlled in her speech by using less modality. Thus, Thunberg takes full responsibility for the clauses in her speech without being uncertain or unassured. It helps convince the audience to agree with her. Ezeifeka (2014) explained that the Subject choice of a clause denotes the one that is deemed responsible for the proposition or proposal. The use of pronoun inclusive “we”, meaning the speaker and the audience, show solidarity in taking the duty as a person living on the earth. The lack of pronoun “I” avoids personal stances and shows that in climate action, no one is alone as she repeatedly emphasizes that this is our shared responsibility and problem. The pronoun “they” and “you” in the clauses are used to show people of the older generation of leaders shifts the burden of the climate change to the speaker’s generation, shrugging off the warning from the scientists and choose to compete and fight for more power. Thus, the use of pronoun urges the audience to abide by what she’s been saying, taking the responsibility of taking care of the environment, preventing climate change.

Interpersonal Function to Present Blame

The use of obligation expresses Thunberg’s certainty and judgment of who takes the blame for the climates' problem so far. The use of the pronoun “you” refers to a room full of EU policymakers and shows that they are the ones who should take the blame. Their ignorance is the cause of the decline in the environment, and they should be held accountable for not taking action in handling the climate crisis.

Thunberg also points out that they are to blame as they remove the attention on climate problems and shift the responsibility to the future generation. The use of the pronoun “they” show the direct blame to the world leaders that will be written down as the worst villain for leaving this crisis for the future generation and disregarding the facts from science and scientist. By blaming the older generation in the speech, Thunberg intends to invoke guilt so they might do just as what Greta said to avoid being blamed for further damage. The position of Thunberg as a child here appeal to the room full of adults in term of making them feel like the younger generation is against or fighting them and their decision.

4. Conclusion

This study aimed to discover the interpersonal functions of Thunberg’s speech at “Civil Society for rEUnaissance” by employing Fairclough’s three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis and utilized an analysis of interpersonal metafunction through mood, modality, and pronouns. From the seventy-one independent clauses found in the speech, the declarative clause is expressed through 94,4% of the data, while the imperative clause is represented only in 5,6% of the data. The modality is presented by ten clauses which are dominated by the use of probability. The major pronoun that is used is exclusive “we”, followed by “they” and inclusive “we”. Through the processing and social analysis, this study concludes that the choice of mood, modality, and pronouns reveals Thunberg’s view on her relationship with the audience and presents responsibility and blame. Thunberg perceives and divides her relationship with the audience as the victim and perpetrator of the climate crisis. While in presenting blame, she claims that the world leaders in this generation have been taking no action in dealing with the climate crisis and focusing on shifting the attention from the climate crisis and competing to gain more power instead. She insists that the responsibility of taking action and preventive measures on climate crisis should be shouldered by everyone, this generation and future generation alike.

This study does not cover the analysis through ideational and textual metafunctions, which is a limitation of the study. As there are three metafunctions in Hallidayan SFG, this research suggests for future researchers to analyze through different metafunctions, such as ideational and textual functions. This research also suggests employing different approaches to Critical Discourse Analysis that can be provided through other analytical frameworks such as Van Dijk’s socio-cognitive approach or Wodak and Meyer’s discourse-historical method.

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