

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of five sub-chapters. These include the background of the study, which provides the reasons for choosing this topic. The research questions specify the core inquiries to be addressed. The objectives of the study describe the intended goals. The significance of the study, which highlights the theoretical and practical contributions, and the scope and limitations of the study, which define the boundaries and constraints encountered during the research.

1.1 Background of the Study

Language is a social sign system that enables people to communicate, think, and maintain their culture, functioning not only to transmit information but also to reflect shared experiences, values, and social identities (Korneeva et al., 2019). In everyday interaction, language is used to express ideas, feelings, and knowledge through activities such as speaking, listening, reading, writing, and thinking, allowing individuals to understand others and participate in social life (Nasution & Tambunan, 2022). Language also plays a crucial role in connecting people, sharing knowledge, expressing emotions, building relationships, and influencing others' actions, making it central to human interaction and communication (Apriyanto, 2020). As humans are social beings, language becomes essential for fulfilling social needs and expressing personal thoughts and emotions within a particular community (Budiyo et al., 2021).

In addition, the functional study of language is explained through Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), a theory introduced by Halliday & Matthiessen (2004). Within the SFL framework, language operates through three metafunctions, namely ideational, interpersonal, and textual. The ideational metafunction represents experience and reality, the textual metafunction organises messages into coherent discourse, and the interpersonal metafunction enacts social relationships between speakers and audiences. In this perspective, grammar is viewed as a system

of meaning-making choices rather than a set of prescriptive rules, allowing language to be analysed in relation to its social context (Caffarel-Cayron, 2008).

In particular, the interpersonal metafunction becomes the central focus of this study because it concerns how language is used to enact social relationships and express attitudes between speakers and listeners. Halliday & Matthiessen (2014) explain that this metafunction involves the exchange of meaning through roles such as giving or demanding information and expressing judgments. The interpersonal metafunction is realised through grammatical systems such as mood and modality.

According to Halliday & Matthiessen (2014), mood functions as a grammatical system that organises the exchange of meaning between speakers and listeners. Following mood, the interpersonal meaning of a clause is further refined through modality, which plays a crucial role in expressing the speaker's attitude toward the validity of a proposition. Modality covers meanings between absolute affirmation and negation, such as degrees of possibility, probability, obligation, and inclination (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Through modality, speakers express confidence, doubt, and authority, allowing them to negotiate relationships and influence audiences. For this reason, modality becomes a crucial linguistic resource in political discourse, where speakers must carefully manage stance and authority (Amalia et al., 2018).

Given this interpersonal function of modality, speech becomes a particularly relevant domain for examining how such meanings are constructed in real communication (Nistiti, 2021). Speech not only conveys information but also functions as a persuasive medium that reflects the speaker's ideology, intention, and authority. Through linguistic choices, including the use of modality, speakers can motivate, persuade, and shape audience responses, particularly in social and political contexts (Simanjuntak et al., 2022).

Political speech is viewed as a form of public communication delivered by political leaders to persuade audiences, construct authority, and legitimise political positions (Khamrakulova, 2022). The meaning of political speech is closely connected to the speaker's identity and political objectives, making language choice a central element in shaping audience alignment (Wodak & Forchtner, 2018). From

a linguistic perspective, political speech is rich in interpersonal meaning because speakers must negotiate power, express a stance, and build relationships with their audiences. Within the framework of SFL, these interpersonal meanings are primarily realised through modality, which enables political speakers to express degrees of certainty, obligation, and intention in exercising influence (Darong, 2021).

Political speech is selected as the object of analysis because it provides an authentic context for examining how interpersonal meanings operate in political communication. Political speeches are produced with clear communicative goals, such as persuasion and the negotiation of authority, making them particularly suitable for analysis within the SFL framework. Unlike everyday discourse, political speech is deliberately constructed to influence public attitudes, allowing linguistic choices to be examined systematically. Therefore, political speech offers a focused and relevant site for applying interpersonal metafunction analysis to uncover how language functions as a strategic resource in shaping social relations and political legitimacy (Megah et al., 2023).

Based on these considerations, this study focuses on Benjamin Netanyahu, the Prime Minister of Israel, as the subject of analysis due to his prominent role and influence in international political discourse. As a key political leader, Netanyahu frequently addresses global audiences on issues related to security, peace, and national identity, making his speeches highly relevant for linguistic analysis. His speeches are delivered within complex diplomatic contexts that require careful negotiation of authority, stance, and audience alignment. For this reason, analysing Netanyahu's political speech provides a valuable opportunity to examine how interpersonal meanings are constructed through linguistic choices, particularly through mood and modality, in international political communication (Saleem & Irshad, 2022).

Furthermore, the United Nations General Assembly 2025 provides a highly relevant international context for this research. As one of the most prominent global forums, the United Nations General Assembly allows political leaders to articulate national positions on critical international issues before a diverse global audience.

Benjamin Netanyahu's speech at the United Nations General Assembly 2025 holds significant diplomatic importance, as it requires careful linguistic choices to balance authority, persuasion, and diplomacy. In this setting, political speech functions not only as a policy statement but also as a representation of national identity and international legitimacy (Soukni, 2025). So, analysing Netanyahu's speech at the United Nations General Assembly 2025 offers valuable insight into how interpersonal meanings are constructed through language in global political communication.

This study employed the interpersonal metafunction within the SFL framework as its main analytical approach because it offers a systematic way to examine how language enacts relationships and expresses attitudes (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The interpersonal metafunction is realised through grammatical systems such as mood and modality. Meanwhile, this study focuses specifically on modality. Modality is central to revealing how Benjamin Netanyahu expresses certainty, attitude, and persuasion in his speech at the United Nations General Assembly 2025. Through modality analysis, this study seeks to uncover how authority, conviction, and power are linguistically constructed in an international political context (Eggins, 2004).

Previous studies on political speeches have demonstrated that modality plays an important role in expressing authority, commitment, and persuasion. However, most of these studies examine different political figures and contexts, rarely examining Benjamin Netanyahu's speeches through the interpersonal metafunction framework. In addition, modality is often discussed as a supporting feature rather than as the central analytical focus. Without a detailed analysis of modality in Netanyahu's speech at the United Nations General Assembly 2025, important insights into how interpersonal meanings are constructed in contemporary international political discourse may remain unexplored. Therefore, this study is necessary to provide a focused linguistic analysis of modality as a key resource for understanding how political leaders negotiate authority, stance, and persuasion on the global stage.

1.2 Research Questions

The researcher decides to analyse the modality of Benjamin Netanyahu's political speech at the United Nations General Assembly in 2025. In this research, the researcher will discuss the following problems:

1. What types of modality are found in Benjamin Netanyahu's political speech at the United Nations General Assembly 2025?
2. What interpersonal functions do those modalities serve in Benjamin Netanyahu's political speech at the United Nations General Assembly 2025?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Based on the research questions above, this study seeks to examine the use of modality in Benjamin Netanyahu's political speech at the United Nations General Assembly 2025. The specific objectives of this study are:

1. To identify the types of modality realised in Benjamin Netanyahu's political speech at the United Nations General Assembly 2025.
2. To explain the interpersonal functions of modality in constructing meaning in Benjamin Netanyahu's political speech at the United Nations General Assembly 2025.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to the field of linguistics, particularly SFL. Theoretically, it contributes to the application of Halliday and Matthiessen's interpersonal metafunction framework by providing a focused analysis of modality in an international political speech. This study offers empirical insights into how modality functions as a linguistic resource for expressing attitude, certainty, obligation, and persuasion in global political speech.

Practically, this study is expected to enhance readers' understanding of how language operates in political communication. By examining modality, the study may help students and researchers develop analytical and critical skills in interpreting political texts. The findings may also serve as a reference for courses such as Discourse Analysis, Functional Grammar, and Sociolinguistics. In addition,

this research may provide useful insights for professionals such as diplomats, policymakers, and public speakers in understanding how modality can be strategically used to express commitment, authority, and diplomatic stance in international communication.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope of this study is the analysis of modality found in the language used in Benjamin Netanyahu's political speech delivered at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) 2025. This study focuses exclusively on linguistic features within the speech text, particularly the use of modality, and does not examine non-linguistic aspects such as the situational context of the United Nations General Assembly event, audience reactions, gestures, facial expressions, or other extralinguistic elements. The study applies the SFL framework developed by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) and Eggins (2004) to identify and explain the types and functions of modality. The limitation of this study lies in its focus on a single speech and on modality as one component of the interpersonal metafunction.