

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING
THE UNIVERSITY OF DANANG**

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**AN INVESTIGATION INTO LINGUISTIC
EXPERESSIONS OF INTERPERSONAL MEANING
IN ENGLISH AT GRADUATION CEREMONIES**

Major: The English Language

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**MASTER THESIS IN SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES
(SUMMARY)**

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- Information Resource Center, The University of Danang
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Language is a meaningful activity for social men, it is an important medium for interaction with others and establishing and maintaining certain relationship. Moreover, functional linguistics holds the view that apart from expressing the speaker's personal experience and inner activity, language can represent the identity, status, attitude, motivation and inference of things, namely the interpersonal function of language (Halliday[22]). The interpersonal function plays the role of setting up and maintaining social relations, and indicates the roles of the participants in communication (Halliday [23]).

Interpersonal meaning has recently attracted researchers' attention. Until now, there have been a significant number of researches on interpersonal meaning of different types on discourses such as political speeches, public speeches and advertisements. Among all those discourses, public speeches get a great of attention from public in nation and even in the world.

Public speeches are presented orally, which are often carefully prepared in writing for formal occasions. In a speech event, a text is captivating to seek the meanings beyond what the speaker says. It is because the speaker probably intends to put indirect meaning to what he says (Halliday & Matthiessen[20]). Thus, the speaker's intention is known as "the act of speaking". One of the ways to explore this "act of speaking" is using the analysis of Halliday's interpersonal meaning. The systematic functional linguist,

Halliday, pointed out that the interpersonal meaning covers three broad analyses of mood, modality and personal pronoun system. The analysis of interpersonal meaning mostly deals with the speaker's choice of words. The reason is that the speech would be delivered on formal occasions so that the speaker would have prepared the content of the speech beforehand. Furthermore, the speeches are mostly given by influential leaders regarding an important matter. Thus, the speech contents have to represent the speaker's view regarding the matter. This paper uses the speeches given by teachers and students in classroom as the samples. This paper uses these speeches as the sample texts and tries to make an analysis on how interpersonal meaning is fulfilled.

Therefore, in the hope of finding the answer to the problem above, the thesis "**An Investigation Into Linguistic Expressions Of Interpersonal Meaning In English At Graduation Ceremonies**" is chosen as my research paper

1.2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1.2.1. Aims

The aim of this thesis is to investigate linguistic expressions of interpersonal meaning in English speeches at graduation ceremonies.

1.2.2. Objectives

The main objectives are

- To investigate syntactic features of the linguistic expressions in term of interpersonal meaning realized in the speeches in English at graduation ceremonies

- To investigate semantic features of the linguistic expressions in term of interpersonal meaning realized in the speeches in English at graduation ceremonies

- To suggest some implications for teaching and learning English language

1.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To achieve these aims and objectives, the following research questions are raised:

1. What are syntactic features of the linguistic expressions in term of interpersonal meaning realized in the speeches in English in graduation ceremonies?

2. What are semantic features of the linguistic expressions in term of interpersonal meaning realized in the speeches in English in graduation ceremonies?

1.4. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The research is analyzed on English speeches at graduation ceremonies on the basic theory of Halliday on interpersonal meaning, the study will focus on the findings of the linguistic expressions of interpersonal meanings in these speeches.

1.5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The focus of the study not only lies in the theoretical findings, but it is hoped that it will also be applied in practical public speeches. Moreover, it is hoped to be useful for teaching and learning practical writing, and serving as a reference in ESL linguistic classes where Halliday's theory of SFG is introduced.

1.6. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The thesis includes five main chapters.

Chapter 1 Introduction

Chapter 2 Literature review and theoretical background

Chapter 3 Research methods

Chapter 4 Findings and discussion.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Thompson [46] summed that we also use language to interact with other people, to establish and maintain relations with them, to influence their behavior, to express our own viewpoint on things in the world, and to elicit or change theirs.

Halliday and Mattheiessen [20] see “whenever we use language to interact, one of things we are doing with it is establishing a relationship between us: between the person speaking now and the person who will probably speak next.” According to Mattheiessen [33] the interpersonal meaning is considered to be “a resource for enacting social roles and relationships between speaker/writer and listener/reader.”

In connection with those previous researches above, the study carries out an investigation into linguistic expressions in the English speeches at graduation ceremonies on the basic theory of Halliday on interpersonal meanings.

2.2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.2.1. Halliday’s meta-functions of grammar

Halliday [22] proposed that language has three meta-functions, the ideational, the interpersonal and the textual. The interpersonal function plays the role of setting up and maintaining social relations, and indicates the roles of the participants in communication. Relating to interpersonal function, the function approach to language developed by M.A.K. Halliday [21] has been

influential in a diversity of discourse analytic approaches to modality. Halliday [21] looks at language from the point of view of the functions it serves, and he explains its structure on this basis. The three functional components he has distinguished in the development of his theory are “ideational, interpersonal, and textual”.

In the study, I base on the theory of Halliday on interpersonal meanings, I will focus on the findings of linguistic expressions in the English speeches at graduation ceremonies on the basic theory of Halliday on interpersonal meanings.

2.2.2. Linguistic expressions of Interpersonal meaning

Halliday [21] mentions that the interpersonal function is mainly expressed in terms of mood, modality and person.

a. Mood

In SFG, the structure of the declarative, interrogative and imperative clauses is expressed by the presence and ordering of Subject and Finite. According to Halliday [21] the presence of the Mood element consisting of Subject plus Finite, realizes the feature “indicative”.

Declarative is realized through the typical structure of Subject preceding Finite.

Declarative clause

Petter	Is	Reading	Newspaper
Subject	Finite	Predicator	Complement
Mood		Residue	

The typical structure of an interrogative clause consists of two main types:

Polar interrogative (yes/no question type) with the order of Finite before Subject

Yes/no interrogative clause

Is	Petter	Reading	Newspaper?
Finite	Subject	Predicator	Complement
Mood		Residue	

Wh-question with the order of Subject before Finite if the Wh-element is the subject and the order of Finite before Subject otherwise.

Wh-element interrogative clause

<i>When</i>	<i>Did</i>	<i>He</i>	<i>Leave?</i>
<i>Adjunct / Wh-</i>	<i>Finite</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Predicator</i>
	<i>Mood</i>		
<i>Residue</i>			

<i>What</i>	<i>happened?</i>		
<i>Subject/wh-</i>	<i>Finite</i>	<i>Predicator</i>	
<i>Mood</i>			<i>Residue</i>

Mood element in Imperative clauses includes Finite plus Subject(i); or Finite only(ii); or subject only(iii); or no Mood element at all(iv)

b. Modality*** Definition and types of modality**

Halliday and Matthiessen [20] state that modality is a degree between the positive and negative poles reflecting the speaker's judgments. What the modality system does is define the region of uncertainty that lies between "yes" and "no".

In SFG, modality is categorized into modalization and modulation. This division proceeds from the distinction between

proposition (information, i.e. statements and questions) and proposals (goods and services, i.e. offers and commands).

*** Realization of modality**

c. The person system

In traditional grammar, the person system is concerned with the quality and quality of participants in a specific situation. However, since the introduction of discourse analysis and sociolinguistics in the 1980s, personal pronouns have been viewed from the approach of social linguistics. In SFG, Halliday [23] states that the person system, both as pronouns (person as thing, e.g. she, you) and as possessives (person as deictic, e.g. her, your) can also be used to express the interpersonal meaning.

2.3. SUMMARY

In conclusion, this chapter has a revision about the previous studies relating to this study. It has also introduced general notions in term of interpersonal meaning based on the theory of Halliday which will all be the foundation for the analysis of linguistic expressions of interpersonal meaning in the speeches given by David Forter Wallace, J.K. Rowling, Paul Hawken, at graduation ceremony at Commencement Address.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS

3.1. RESEARCH METHODS

To find out the linguistic expressions of interpersonal meaning in the speeches given by teachers and students in classroom, I decide to choose descriptive and qualitative research methods in this study. The descriptive method is used to describe the interpersonal meaning in these speeches. Besides, the qualitative research method was also conducted to study the frequency and effectiveness of words, phrases and grammar used to express interpersonal meaning in the speeches. To get the data, purposive sampling method was used as the way to accomplish this study.

3.2. RESEARCH PROCEDURES

For conducting the research, the following steps were carried on

- Identifying the research topic after reviewing the previous studies
- Collecting samples of the linguistic expressions of interpersonal meaning in these speeches
- Grouping and analyzing the linguistic expressions of interpersonal meaning in these speeches

3.3. DATA COLLECTION

The data of this study were collected by doing the following steps:

- Finding out the data at [www. Youtube.com](http://www.Youtube.com)
- Downloading the data
- Downloading the video transcriptions

The data that has been selected belongs to the genre of discourse specifically four speeches, relating to graduation ceremonies. All four transcripts were chosen due to their uniqueness, which includes the choice of participants and their social positions as well as the topic of the discussion. This forms the basis of an investigation into the interpersonal meanings. As such, the diversification of the data will bring out the interpersonal relationship through the Mood, Modality choices made by these different individuals in speeches at graduation ceremonies.

3.4. DATA ANALYSIS

The steps in analyzing the data are as follows :

- Describing data
- Identifying the Mood choices
- Categorizing the Mood choices
- Identifying the Modality choices
- Categorizing the Modality choices

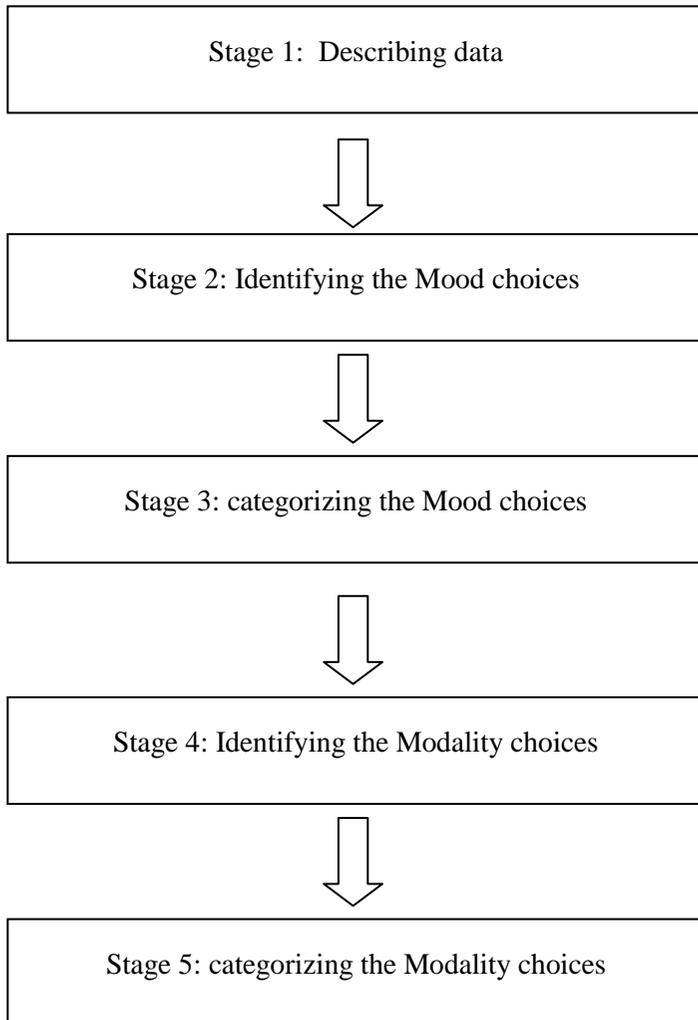


Figure 3.1. Stages in data analysis

3.5. CODING CATEGORIES

Based on the descriptions of the data of the study, a set of coding categories is formulated. The various coding categories for the analysis of the interpersonal resources in the data are shown in table 3.1.

3.6. SAMPLING

Basing on the definition of interpersonal meaning of Halliday, linguistic expressions of interpersonal meaning including words, phrase and sentences are chosen as the samples of the study.

More four hundred examples containing linguistic expressions are collected as samples of the research.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the overall findings of the study as well as a through discussion relevant to the findings. The theoretical framework of Halliday's SFL is used as a basis for the discussion, focusing on the interpersonal aspect of language use. The main findings of the present study are presented to answer research questions of the study.

4.1. FINDINGS

This section focus on the findings of syntactic and semantic features of expressions in the speeches in English at graduation ceremony

Halliday, MAK [20] stated that "a language is a system for making meanings: a semantic system, with other systems for encoding the meaning it produces". This finding takes an important part to research and analyze the language system, especially semantic system.

George Yule [56] semantic is a study of the relationship between linguistic forms and entities in the world, which is how words literally connect to things and how words functionally express its meanings to things and others.

4.1.1. The syntactic features of expressions in the speeches in English at graduation ceremony.

We use language to *enact* our personal and social relationships (*the interpersonal metafunction*), to *construe* our experience and our consciousness (*the experiential metafunction*), to *organize* discourse and *create* continuity and flow in our texts (*the*

textual metafunction) (Halliday and Matthiessen [20]). Each function has its own role in texts or in making meanings corresponding with their functions.

a. Declarative mood

It was found that the declarative mood is used abundantly in all the speeches. Table 4.2 below shows the distribution of declarative mood choices found in all the speeches in terms of percentage:

Table 4.2. Distribution of declarative mood choices

Transcript	Occurrence	Percentage [Occurrence/ Total clauses x 100]
J.K. Rowling	216	98,2
Paul Hawken	145	91,7
David Foster Wallace	156	97,5
George Saunders	137	78,3

The findings show that the declarative mood is the most used mood choice with the percentage of more than 70% in almost all four of speech.

b. Interrogative mood

It was found that the interrogative mood is used in the speeches. Table 4.3 shows the distribution of the interrogative mood choices found in all the speeches in terms of percentage:

Table 4.3. The distribution of the interrogative mood choices

Transcript	Type	Occurrence	Percentage [Occurrence/ Total clauses x 100]
J.K. Rowling	Yes/ no	0	
	Wh-	3	1,4
Paul Hawken	Yes/ no	1	0,7
	Wh-	3	2,07
David Foster Wallace	Yes/ no	0	
	Wh-	2	0,76
George Saunders	Yes/ no	8	4,6
	Wh-	9	4,63

c. Imperative mood

An imperative sentence, according to Cao Xuan Hao [58], is the sentence that has illocutionary value, affects second person, and requires this person to make a unilateral or a co-operating action. Imperative sentence is also a mean to order, request, or require someone to do something. When using imperative sentence, the speaker expects that the hearer will obey.

Beside the basic use, the imperative sentence is also used to advice, instruct, allow, wish, invite and suggest informally, or warn (Eastwood [13])

According to Murcia and Freeman [39], it seems that we quite surprise when we find out that imperative sentence does not have subject or, in other word, there is no obvious subject noun phrase. The basic form of imperative sentence is the base form of the

verb. It is a second- person form. In English, when we see imperative sentences without subject like “ be quite!” or “don’t do that again”, we all know clearly that the speaker (first person) is directing to the listener (second person) who is standing in front of him. It means that although there have no subjects, both speaker and listener understands who is the person mentioned in the sentence.

It was found that the imperative mood is used abundantly in the speeches. Table 4.4 below shows the distribution of the imperative mood choices in terms of percentage:

Table 4.4. The distribution of the imperative mood choices

Transcript	Occurrence	Percentage [Occurrence/ Total clauses x 100]
J.K. Rowling	1	0,5
Paul Hawken	7	4,8
David Foster Wallace	2	1,3
George Saunders	21	12

4.1.2. The semantic features of expressions in the speeches in English at graduation ceremony.

Halliday [20] stated that every lexicogrammatical system realizes some systemic features. For example, the grammatical system of mood realizes the semantic system of speech

Metaphors of modality realize non-congruent ways of speech function (Halliday [21]). Alternatively, speech function can be realized within the *modality system* through projecting clause complexes consisting of mental and idea clauses, e.g. “I think...”, “I

believe” (explicit subjective) or objectively such as “It is possible to argue that...” (explicit objective). Therefore, there are three types of Modality choices discuss in the study. The types of Modality choices are Modal Finites, Mood Adjuncts and Metaphors of Modality.

Modality refers to the degree of certainty and truth of statements about the world. It is the general term for all signs of speakers’ opinion. This means that modality can demonstrate to the audience how certain or uncertain a writer is in regards to the message it is presenting. It is also one of the most obvious ways of introducing subjectivity into a text, allowing writers to comment and express opinions. It is the general term for all signs of speakers’ opinion and attitude

Modality consist of modalisation realized by modal verb operators such as may, will, must, should, can, etc. modality can also be expressed through Modal Adjuncts. Unlike other types of Adjuncts, Modal Adjuncts occur with the Subject and Finite in the MOOD. They express modality elements of probability, degree, intensity and more.

In between the polar opposites of ‘yes’ and ‘no’, there are varying degrees of probability, usuality, obligation and inclination (Eggins [14])

The probability and usuality have to do with the exchange of information: how likely the information is to be true and how frequently it is true, which can be expressed through modalization.

Usuality (frequency) can be compared to likelihood where likelihood expresses judgments how probable a state of affair is, frequency expresses judgments about how usual a state of affair is.

a. Modal Finites

There are different ways of expressing Modality and one of them is through Modal Finites. There are three points on the scale of commitment for Modal Finites which high, median and low (Droga & Humphrey [11]).

Thompson [46] defines modal commitment as the speaker's degree of commitment towards the validity of what is being spoken. He further added that the different areas of text analyses resulted in speakers having varying degree of modal commitment in order to avoid pressuring the other person involved in the interaction. The low value of modalization and modulation signal a clause is for negotiation.

It was found that the Modal finites are employed in all the speeches. Table 4.5 shows the distribution of Modal Finite choices in terms of percentage:

Table 4.5. The distribution of Modal Finites choices

Transcript	Occurrence	Percentage [Occurrence/ Total clauses x 100]
J.K. Rowling	46	20,91
Paul Hawken	23	15,86
David Foster Wallace	40	15,15
George Saunders	35	20

b. Mood Adjuncts

Mood Adjuncts may also signal Modality. They can be divided into nine categories, such as probability, usuality, readiness, obligation, time, typicality, intensity, and degree.

It was found that Mood adjuncts are employed in all of the speeches. Table 4.5 shows the distribution of Mood Adjunct choices found in all the speeches in terms of percentage:

Table 4.5. Distribution of Mood Adjuncts choices

Transcript	Occurrence	Percentage [Occurrence/ Total clauses x 100]
J.K. Rowling	14	6,4
Paul Hawken	12	8,3
David Foster Wallace	47	17,8
George Saunders	8	4,84

c. Metaphor of Modality

Interpersonal metaphor is a fairly undeveloped area in Systemic Functional Language, but Halliday [21] has prepared the ground for further investigation on the topic. According to the two theorists, interpersonal metaphors arise from the Mood and Modality system of language. Halliday defined interpersonal meaning is one kind of grammatical metaphor, in the expression of mood and modality related to the speaker's opinion. Modality, in English, is also considered as an aspect of interpersonal metaphor based on the semantic relation of projection.

Apart from Modal Finites, Mood Adjuncts and the combination of Modal Finites and Mood Adjuncts, there is another way of expressing Modality which is called Metaphor of Modality. The distinction between Metaphors of Modality and other ways of expressing Modality is that through these metaphors, the speaker's

opinion is expressed as metaphorical realizations instead of in the usual or congruent way which through Modal Finites and Mood Adjuncts (Droga & Humphrey [11] . In other words, they signal the degree of responsibility that the speaker is willing to accept for the attitude being expressed (Thompson [46]).

Two important features in Metaphors of Modality are 'objective' and 'subjective'. Metaphors of Modality is considered as 'objective' in nature when it is used to refer to the way the speaker objectivizes their point of view by making it appear to be a quality of the event itself (Thompson [46]). In this case, the Modality is expressed in such a way that it disguises the speaker's personal assessment, making it distant from either the speaker or negotiation (Martin et. al.[36]). Metaphors of Modality can also be 'subjective' in nature. This term signals the proposition being made as part of the speakers' assessment, making them responsible for that assessment (Thompson [46]). They are often expressed through first person, as well as mental processes of cognition and affection (Martin et. al. [36]). According to Thompson [46], the term 'explicit' is used when it is expressed in a separate clause.

As such, the term 'Explicit Subjective' show that the speaker is willing to take responsibility for the attitude being expressed while the term 'Explicit Objective' signals that the speaker has low degree of responsibility for the attitude expressed, as the source of the Modality or the speaker remains unrevealed. Metaphors of Modality are represented as scales of modal responsibility

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

5.1. CONCLUSION

In this study, I have paid much attention to collect data, classify, analyze and illustrate the main problems and concern with my thesis.

My thesis is about an investigation into linguistic expressions of interpersonal meaning in English at graduation ceremonies consists of four chapters.

Chapter 1, is about the introduction of the study, the scope of study, the research questions and organization of the study.

Chapter 2, reviews the theoretical background and some previous studies in terms of interpersonal meaning.

Chapter 3, represents the research methods of the thesis including aims and objectives.

Chapter 4, the most important chapter in the thesis, is the discussions and findings of the study in the view of interpersonal meaning.

From what has been analyzed and present in the foregoing chapters, the following findings are figured out:

Linguistic expressions of interpersonal meaning in the speeches at graduation ceremony are found out and they are realized by the use of different types of Mood and Modality.

By using different types of Mood, the speakers take the role of information processor and deliverer. In Declarative Mood, a few of declaratives are not only demanding and giving information but also demanding and giving goods and services. The Imperative Mood

is realized by verbs in the base form. The interrogative Mood is employed to ask for information, and show emotional state of the speaker.

By using different tenses, present tense used in current actions, present perfect tense is used for what happened from the past to the present and related to the future. Speaker employed the past when telling stories.

By using Modality in many ways which are through Modal Finities, Mood Adjuncts and Metaphor of Modality, speakers make speeches more diverse and attractive. Besides, speaker can use the scale of commitment for Modality to avoid pressuring audiences.

Interpersonal grammatical metaphors have a great effect in showing the speaker's opinion.

5.2. LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

Firstly, owing to limited of time and resources of materials relating to problem under investigation, there are some unavoidable weaknesses in this study such as the shortage of examples.

Secondly, being less personal experience of knowledge of functional grammar, the study was not focused deeply and thoroughly into semantic, syntactic features although I spent a lot of time trying to find out their out their linguistic features.

5.3. IMPLICATIONS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

As mentioned in the introduction, the thesis not only aims at theoretical findings, but also more importantly, draws some suggestions to apply in reality. The following are some implications:

For teachers and learners:

First, English teachers and learners can be provided with an

overview of linguistic expressions of interpersonal meaning in English. They can know and understand some features of a writing text, hence, they can understand writing texts better.

Second, students can develop their language skills, they can have better understanding of logical and semantic relation between elements in a clause complex, and broader.

Finally, English teachers will be more aware of the importance of functional grammar (especially interpersonal meaning) in understanding a language. As a result, they can teach English more actively and they make their learners know how to use English more effectively to express their feelings and opinions.

5.4. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study has just touched the problem of linguistic expressions of interpersonal meaning in speeches at graduation ceremonies. Future researches might focus on ideational meaning and textual meaning.