

Modal Operators and Personal Pronouns in Roosevelt's Inaugural Addresses

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Abstract—This paper tries to apply the interpersonal function of Halliday's systemic functional grammar to analyze the interpersonal meanings of modal operators and personal pronouns in Roosevelt's four inaugural addresses, that is, the dynamic and close relationship between the speaker and the hearers. By means of statistic method and stylistic analysis, this paper takes Roosevelt's four inaugural speeches as objects of study, and mainly explores the interpersonal meanings of modal operators or linguistic forms so as to bring home Roosevelt's linguistic techniques and stylistic effects. Roosevelt shows great interest in modal operators and personal pronouns to appeal to his audience's emotional responses, to strengthen his in-group intimacy, and to convince his audience of his political purposes.

Index Terms—modal operators, personal pronouns, interpersonal function, Roosevelt's four inaugural speeches, emotional appeals

I. INTRODUCTION

Presidential inaugural address is a special sub-genre of public speech and a heated topic for those scholars of text analysis, but there is scant literature dealing with this topic from functional stylistics. Recently, the author has got some 1665 results by retrieving the keyword "public speech" in CNKI (Chinese National Knowledge Infrastructure), but few of them are discussed from functional linguistics. Inaugural address is delivered by the president-elect on the inauguration day, in which the speaker tries to not only present himself as the highest authority of the country but also mitigate his power to some extent in order to establish an affable or rapport relationship with the audience. On one hand, mood and modality are the linguistic realizations of the interpersonal relations between the speaker and hearers; on the other hand, the interpersonal meanings can also be realized through the system of personal pronouns. Our research data include 4 Franklin D. Roosevelt's inaugural addresses: his 1933 inaugural address in Great Depression(Text 1), 1937 inaugural address just after Great Depression(Text 2), 1941 inaugural address calling for domestic safety(Text 3) and 1945 inaugural address for peace(Text 4). By means of statistic method and stylistic analysis, this paper takes Roosevelt's four inaugural speeches as objects of study, and mainly explores the interpersonal meanings of modal operators or linguistic forms so as to bring home Roosevelt's linguistic techniques and stylistic effects.

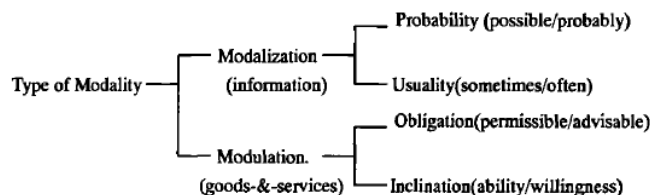
II. MODALITY SYSTEM

According to functional linguistics, broadly speaking, our language perform three key metafunctions, i.e. ideational function, interpersonal function and textual function. For ideational function, we mean that by means of language, may talk about the external world around us, including discussing the things, events, qualities around us, or describe our internal world such as our thoughts, feelings, beliefs, etc. The ideational function is best represented by transitivity system or material process, i.e. whether the verb is transitive or intransitive, material process or non-material one, and physical actions are typical examples of material process, such as *running*, *throwing*, *cooking*, *sitting down*, etc.

For interpersonal function, it means that we also use language to interact with other people, to establish and maintain relations with them, to express our attitudes, views, feelings and emotions; For textual function, it means that we use some typical words or phrases to organize our messages in a cohesive, logical way.

Interpersonal function is to establish and maintain appropriate social relationships by exchanging information among people in various ways. Thompson argued that we also use language to "interact with other people: to establish and maintain appropriate social links with them." (2000, p. 44) It also expresses the speakers' attitudes, judgments, demands, expectation and their inference of the matters. It is mainly realized by the system of mood system and modality system. In addition, there are some other linguistic sources which also carry some rich interpersonal functions, such as various sentence types(declarative clauses, interrogative clauses, tag questions, exclamatory clauses, imperative clauses), personal pronouns, most adjectives, some notional words, some adverbs, etc.

Modality is considered as a chief exponent of the interpersonal function in Halliday's systemic functional linguistics. What the modality system does is to construe the region of uncertainty that lies between 'yes' and 'no'. Generally, there are two types of modality: modalization and modulation, as is shown in Table 1.

TABLE I.
TYPES OF MODALITY

There are two types of modalization: i) degrees of probability and ii) degrees of usuality.

Modalization consists of probability and usuality. Probability means how likely it is to be.

Modalization refers to different degrees of likelihood between Yes and No. It consists of two sub-categories: probability and usuality. Some typical words on the probability scale are: *may/might, can/could, will/would, should, must, possibly, probably, certainly, perhaps, maybe*. Usuality, which means how frequency it is true, is equivalent to both *yes* and *no*, that is, the answer may be sometimes *yes*, sometimes *no*, with different degrees of oftenness attached. On the usuality scale, some typical words include *may/might, can/could, will/would, should, must, usually, sometimes, often, always, never, ever, seldom, rarely*.

Modulation refers to the speaker's obligation or inclination towards the statement or proposal, or the speaker's judgment of the desirability of the proposal. Some typical examples to show obligation are: *may/might, can/could, should must, definitely, absolutely, at all costs, by all means*; some typical examples to show inclination are: *may/might, can/could, will/would, should, must, willingly, readily, gladly, certainly, easily*.

Halliday argues that value is attached to the modal judgment. He distinguishes some three basic values of modality: high, median and low. (1994, p. 358) In our daily conversation, we may express a higher or lower degree of certainty about the validity of a proposition (*it will/may rain*), or a higher or lower degree of pressure on the other person to carry out a command (*you must/should leave*). Please observe the following table:

TABLE II
THREE MODAL VALUES (HALLIDAY, 1994, P. 358)

	Probability	Usuality	Obligation	Inclination
High	certain	always	required	determined
Median	probable	usually	supposed	keen
Low	possible	sometimes	allowed	willing

Both types of modalization can be expressed in the same three ways: (1) by a finite modal operator in the verb group, e.g. that *will* be Mary, she *'ll* be happy again; (2) by a modal adjuncts, e.g. That's *probably* Mary, she is *usually* very happy; (3) by both together, e.g. that *will probably* be Mary, she will usually sit there all day.

III. MODAL OPERATORS AND PERSONAL PRONOUNS IN ROOSEVELT'S ADDRESSES

A. Modal Operators

As is discussed above, modality in clause can be realized through several ways. But it can be seen that modality is mainly realized by finite modal operators in our texts. Finite modal operators are called modal auxiliaries in their traditional term, such as *will, would, can, could, may, might, shall, should, have to, ought to* and so on. For their interpersonal function, they may show some possible hearer--speaker relations, ie, the interaction between the speaker and the hearers. Finite modal operators may show different degrees of meanings to unmodified utterances. In addition, these modal operators may suggest some different degrees of the speaker's feelings, emotions and attitudes towards his audience. As the newly- elected president, it is quite natural for Roosevelt to establish his a close relationship by using some typical modal operators.

Generally, modal operators can be classified into three kinds of values: high, median and low. Table 3 shows that median value accounts for the largest proportion taking up 46.43%, low value covers 37.5%, and high value only 16.07%.

TABLE III.
DISTRIBUTION OF FINITE MODAL OPERATORS IN FOUR ADDRESSES

Modal operators Text No.	Low			Median				High		
	may	can	could	will	would	shall	should	must	need	Have to
1	8	12	0	10	3	7	0	8	1	1
2	0	8	1	8	2	5	0	2	0	0
3	1	4	1	1	1	1	1	4	0	0
4	1	4	2	6	0	7	0	2	0	0
Total Frequency	10	28	4	25	6	20	1	16	1	1
Percentage	8.93%	25%	3.57%	22.32%	5.36%	17.86%	0.89%	14.29%	0.89%	0.89%

From Table 3, we can see that in our texts, three kinds of modal values—high, median and low, are distributed differently with low modal value taking up the highest percentage, high value the lowest percentage. For low value, *can* is the most frequently used modal operator and covers some 25% of the total modal operators, *may* 8.93%, *could* 3.57%; For median value, *will* takes up the highest percentage, 22.32%, *shall* 17.86%, and *must* 14.29%; For high value, *must* take up the highest 14.29%, *need* and *have to* the lowest. So *can*, *will*, *shall* and *must* are among the most frequently employed modals in Roosevelt's speeches. On the other hand, modality refers to "varying degrees" the addresser commits a proposition to truth. Clearly, Roosevelt inclines to avoid being too aggressive and radical when he intends to intrude his own ideas and attitudes towards his audience.

1. High-value Modal Operators

It can be seen from Table 3 that *must* appears most frequently for 18 times and takes up 14.29%. According to Halliday (1994/2000), *must* carries the highest degree of obligation in the sphere of modulation, which implies that the speaker is in a strong position to carry out his future policies. The newly-elected president tries to avoid giving some orders or making some requirements, which may hurt the audience. However, high value modal operators are quite necessary in some specific situations and contribute to the realization of interpersonal meanings in the addresses, e.g.:

(1) If I know aught of the spirit and purpose of our Nation, we *will* not listen to Comfort, Opportunism, and Timidity. We *will* carry on. (Text 2)

(2) A nation, like a person, has a body--a body that *must* be fed and clothed and housed, invigorated and rested, in a manner that measures up to the standards of our time. (Text 3)

(3) A nation, like a person, has a body--a body that *must* be fed and clothed and housed, invigorated and rested, in a manner that measures up to the objectives of our time. (Text 3)

Here, Roosevelt uses *must* to influence the audience's opinions and call them on into action. For one thing, he keeps his stand as the president of America by giving irresistible suggestion. For another thing, he avoids too direct ways by the 1st-person form *I* or *we* as subject. By doing that, he establishes a harmonious relation with his audience.

In conclusion, high value finite modal operators can be employed to call for action, but because of their heavy imposition on the audience, the addressers incline not to use them frequently.

2. Median-value Modal Operators

There are 25 instances of *will* in the texts, reaching 22.32% of the entire modal operators. We know, *will* is used to provide information about what will happen in the future and the statement made about coming occurrences that are based on the addressers' predictions, belief and intentions rather than on their knowledge of fact. Moreover, *will* can be used in sentences with an obvious modal use of permission. For examples:

(3) If I know aught of the will of our people, they *will* demand that these conditions of effective government *shall* be created and maintained. They *will* demand a nation uncorrupted by cancers of injustice and, therefore, strong among the nations in its example of the will to peace. (Text 2)

(4) This great Nation *will* endure as it has endured, *will* revive and *will* prosper. (Text 1)

(5) In this process evil things formerly accepted *will* not be so easily condoned. Hard-headedness *will* not so easily excuse hardheartedness. We are moving toward an era of good feeling. But we realize that there can be no era of good feeling save among men of good *will*. (Text 2)

In the above examples, Roosevelt employs 8 *wills* to show his predictions, intentions, beliefs and attitudes. He plans to tell the audience these *wills* are not his own but the entire Americans'. In a conclusion, these statements enhance his status as a president and enforce his will on the audience, too.

In a word, the median value modal operator *will* is often used to show a prediction and commitment. With the help of *will*, the addressers are confident in bringing the audience the benefits of the offer. As long as the audience is talked into accepting the actualization of the promise, the addressers achieve their interpersonal function.

3. Low-value Modal Operators

According to the study of the texts, low finite modal operators takes 37.5% of the total, among which *can* is used most frequently. The low finite modal operators are helpful for Roosevelt to intrude his attitude in more polite manner. Besides, *can* accounts for 25% and appears 28 times in all. Through the study of the texts, *can* is often applied to denote

three kinds of the meanings: possibility, ability and permission. They can be illustrated by examples in our texts.

(6) Small wonder that confidence languishes, for it thrives only on honesty, on honor, on the sacredness of the obligation, on faithful protection, on unselfish performance; without them it *can* not live. (Text 1)

(7) If I read the temper of our people correctly, we *can* not merely take but we must give as well. (Text 1)

(8) There are many ways in which it can be helped, but it *can* never be helped by merely talking about it. We must act, we must act quickly. (Text 2)

In example (6), *can* is often employed to express possibility. Possibility carries a very low modal value among the three basic dynamic meanings of *can*. In this sense, *can* expresses a kind of potentiality, which helps to elicit and aspire hopes from the audience and put Roosevelt in a position of the authority to predict the future and thus obtain the audience's acceptance and identification. Example (7) uses *can* not to refuse to a grant permission. Roosevelt indicates that to build a strong nation, people need to devote themselves instead of taking from the country. Moreover, in example (8) Roosevelt employs *can* to express his determination to fulfill his presidential duty. Thus the use of *can* will bring more confidence and support for him from the audience.

In general, Roosevelt makes full use of low value finite modal operators to avoid being too aggressive and leave the audience room to decide by themselves. Therefore, a more comfortable atmosphere for communication has been set up.

B. Personal Pronoun System

As a grammatical category, person indicates the number and nature of the participants in a situation, and distinctions of person are usually marked in the verb and in the associated personal pronouns. Halliday holds that studying the interpersonal meaning of the pronouns in specific situation is possible and meaningful. A basic distinction is made into speech roles (*I, we, you*) and other roles (*she, he, it, they*). In effect, in a language address, the interpersonal metafunction is the interaction between *I* and *you*. They are the speaker and the hearer. Nevertheless, the nature of the address determines that they are a social-political role in a broader sense. When the speaker is given the role to deliver a speech, he is also endowed to suggest, to inform and to give orders. So personal pronouns are the reflection of the speaker's attitude and his social relationship to the hearers. Clearly, personal pronouns themselves are rarely "neutral" in their references. Please see Table 4.

TABLE IV.
DISTRIBUTION OF PERSONAL PRONOUNS IN FOUR ADDRESSES

Text No. \ Personal Pronouns	1st Person	2nd Person	3rd Person
1	40	1	18
2	80	3	7
3	41	0	2
4	18	1	4
Total Frequency	179	5	30
Percentage	83.64%	2.34%	14.02%

Table 4 illustrates that the first person is used most frequently, covering 83.64% of the total, the third person is 14.02%, taking the second place and the second person is the least one, only 2.34% of the total. Besides, after a careful examination, we can see that the first person *we* is used for 142 times, *I* 37 times, *they/he* 30 times and *you* 5 times. The uses of personal pronouns produce different scales of psychological effects between the speaker and the audience. We can find the reasons why the speakers tend to use more *we* than *you* in public speeches, which can shorten psychological distance between the speaker and the hearer. Therefore, the following section will put emphases on these personal pronouns.

1. First Person Pronoun

In political addresses, the plural form of the first person pronoun *we* is used widely by the speaker to achieve different interactive effects. Besides, Halliday claims that the use of the pronoun *we* can be either inclusive or exclusive. When it refers to both the speaker and the audience, *we* is inclusive. When it excludes the audience but only includes the speaker and his party or associates, *we* is exclusive. Identity marker *we* is a linguistic strategy to show the speaker's positive politeness by including both real and potential hearers in an activity of interaction.

(9) *We* face the arduous days that lie before *us* in the warm courage of the national unity. (Text 1)

(10) To *us* there has come a time, in the midst of swift happenings, to pause for a moment and take stock--to recall what *our* place in history has been, and to rediscover what *we* are and what *we* may be. (Text 3)

At the end of the first inaugural speech, Roosevelt describes the common adversity and purpose of the whole Americans. So In example (9), *we* refers to Roosevelt himself and all the Americans for the purpose of uniting people of America. At last, by applying *we* he places himself in the same stand as the audience and at the same time, he tries to mitigate his power to ask for their support. While in example (10), *we* is used to remind the American people of their glorious history and their urgent obligations as well. Here, *we* is inclusive and he wants to stress his status, which makes

the speech more convincing.

2. Second Person Pronoun

In common sense, *you* in discourse refers directly to the addressee. It both realizes its deictic function and indicates a certain interpersonal function between the speaker and the hearer. The use of *you* shows the lower status of the listener in comparison with the higher social status of the speaker. So often *you* is used less frequently in our texts, only 5 times. But the pronoun *you* is also an essential part of successful communication.

(11) I am convinced that *you* will again give that support to leadership in these critical days. (Text 1)

(12) If *you* and I, if we in this later day, lose that sacred fire--if we let it be smothered with doubt and fear--then we shall reject the destiny which Washington strove so valiantly and so triumphantly to establish. (Text 3)

In examples (11) and (12), *you* refers to not only the audience on the spot but those who are in other parts of the country. Roosevelt selects *you* to show his awareness of the potential audience. He hopes all the audience to realize his caring about them and expecting their support.

It can be seen that personal pronoun *you* achieves the effects to attract the hearer's attention fully, strengthen the interaction between the speaker and the hearers and maintain his status as the president of the USA. Generally, the 2nd person pronoun *you* is seldom used in Roosevelt's addresses.

3. Third Person Pronoun

Here, the third personal pronoun indicates the third party which is separated from the first and second forms. Adoption of third personal pronoun means that the speaker wants to project authority more than to keep equal relationship with the audience. By doing so, his remarks appear more formal and authoritative. Under such circumstance, the speaker puts more attention to the objectivity of his speech than the communication purpose with his audience.

(12) In such a spirit on my part and on yours we face our common difficulties. *They* concern, thank God, only material things. (Text 1)

(13) If I know aught of the will of our people, *they* will demand that these conditions of effective government shall be created and maintained. *They* will demand a nation uncorrupted by cancers of injustice and, therefore, strong among the nations in its example of the will to peace. (Text 2)

Roosevelt plans to provoke the audience to be aware of the serious problems. The existence of the third party can inspire the audience to stand with him. So, third person *they* drives the audience to turn to Roosevelt. As a result, the employment of *they* may strengthen affiliation between Roosevelt and the audience. A proper use of third personal pronoun can make the proposition objective and reliable, though too many third persons may leave the audience an impersonal impression.

IV. CONCLUSION

This paper tries to apply the interpersonal function of Halliday's systemic functional grammar to analyze the interpersonal meanings of modal operators and personal pronouns in Roosevelt's four inaugural addresses, that is, the dynamic and close relationship between the speaker and the hearers. By means of statistic method and stylistic analysis, this paper takes Roosevelt's four inaugural speeches as objects of study, and mainly explores the interpersonal meanings of modal operators or linguistic forms so as to bring home Roosevelt's linguistic techniques and stylistic effects. Modalization consists of probability and usuality, which may best show the speaker's attitudes, emotions and stances towards his audiences. Our four tables and rich examples show that Roosevelt shows great interest in modal operators and personal pronouns to appeal to his audience's emotional responses, to strengthen his in-group intimacy, and to convince his audience of his political purposes. We may see that three kinds of modal values—high, median and low, are distributed differently with low modal value taking up the highest percentage, high value the lowest percentage. From those modal values, we find that Roosevelt inclines to avoid being too aggressive and radical when he intends to intrude his own ideas and attitudes towards his audience. In addition, the first person plural *we* is used widely by the speaker to achieve different interactive effects, which is a linguistic strategy to show the speaker's positive politeness by including both real and potential hearers in an activity of interaction. As a useful technique for the newly-elected president, the personal pronouns mainly consist in its reflection of the relationship between the participants in the interaction. Through our careful study, we may conclude that the personal pronouns carry some strong interpersonal meanings and they are conducive both to building a strong in-group relationship between the speaker and his participants and to convincing them of his political ideas and his governing policies.

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