



# An SFL Analysis of Interpersonal Metafunction in Constructing President Prabowo's Moral Authority at the UNGA

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Article Info	Abstract
<p>Received: 2026-05-22 Revised: 2026-06-09 Accepted: 2026-06-10</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Discourse Analysis, The Interpersonal Metafunction, Speech</p> <p><b>DOI:</b> 10.24256/ideasv14i1.9126</p> <p><b>Corresponding Author:</b> Rafiq Al Indra rafiqalindra27@gmail.com Tadris Bahasa Inggris, Pascasarjana Universitas Islam Sultan Syarif Kasim</p>	<p><i>This study presents an SFL (Systemic Functional Linguistics) analysis of the Interpersonal Metafunction in President Prabowo's UNGA speech, focusing on the Mood and Modality systems to uncover the rhetorical strategies used in constructing his moral authority and negotiating Indonesia's role as a committed global actor. The analysis finds that while the Declarative Mood dominates to establish credibility, strategic shifts to the Interrogative Mood and the inclusive Imperative Mood ("We must...") are employed to actively engage the audience, demand moral reflection, and construct an accountable solidarity. The most significant finding is the dominance of High Value Modality, particularly the high frequency of High Deontic Modality ("must"), which linguistically elevates propositions such as the Two-State Solution to non-negotiable moral and political mandates. This choice is further reinforced by High Value Capacity/Willingness Modality, asserting Indonesia's credibility and agency. Overall, this sophisticated interpersonal strategy successfully positions President Prabowo as an authoritative and highly moral leader, linguistically imposing the highest level of conviction and demand for action upon the international community.</i></p>

## 1. Introduction

President Prabowo's speech delivered at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) is not merely a diplomatic routine, it is a rich and highly significant linguistic artifact within the global political context. This text serves as a strategic

instrument designed to achieve three main objectives: to project an image of Indonesia as a global actor committed to peace, to negotiate Indonesia's stance on urgent issues like the Two-State Solution in Palestine, and to actively influence global opinion while urging action from the international community. Given the considerable weight of its context, persuasive goals, and political implications, the speech demands a deep linguistic analysis to uncover the rhetorical strategies underpinning these diplomatic objectives.

To comprehend the functional layers of language in such a political text, this research adopts the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), a revolutionary grammar theory developed by M.A.K. Halliday. SFL views language not as a static set of rules but as a resource that has evolved to serve social needs. Halliday identifies that language functions simultaneously through three Metafunctions: The Ideational Metafunction (language as representation of experience), the Textual Metafunction (language as text organization), and, the primary focus of this study, the Interpersonal Metafunction.

The Interpersonal Metafunction is the dimension of language concerned with social interaction. In the context of a public address, this metafunction is the linguistic mechanism by which the speaker (President Prabowo) constructs the relational dynamic with his audience (the UNGA delegates), negotiates social roles (e.g., the role of a demanding moral leader, or a partner offering contribution), and, most crucially, expresses personal assessment, attitude, and opinion regarding the issues at hand. This injection of attitude and judgment is vital in persuasive communication to elevate neutral propositions into statements imbued with urgency or conviction.

The scientific foundation of this analysis is reinforced by the thoughts of key SFL figures. M.A.K. Halliday and Christian Matthiessen (2014) in their fundamental work, *Halliday's Introduction to Functional Grammar*, state that the Interpersonal Metafunction "is concerned with the clause as an exchange a linguistic act of communication between a speaker and a listener. It realizes the roles speakers take up for themselves and assign to others, and the way they express their attitudes and judgments." This citation validates the premise that every clause in Prabowo's speech can be seen as part of an ongoing process of role and attitude negotiation.

Grammatically, the Interpersonal Metafunction is realized primarily through two key systems: the Mood System and the Modality System.

1. The Mood System: This system is responsible for regulating the linguistic exchange, determining whether the speaker is *giving* (information or goods & services) or *demanding* (information or goods & services). The choice of Mood (Declarative, Interrogative, Imperative) is a social act that alters the roles of the participants. Suzanne Eggins (2004), in *An Introduction to Systemic Functional Linguistics*, emphasizes that the Mood system "is concerned with what the clause is doing as an exchange" and how it realizes basic speech functions such as offering, commanding, stating, and

questioning. In a diplomatic speech, a strategic shift from a statement (Declarative) to a rhetorical question (Interrogative) or a command (Imperative) is a deliberate strategy to actively engage and challenge the audience.

2. The Modality System: This system allows the speaker to intrude their assessment, expressing the degree of certainty (epistemic probability) or necessity/obligation (deontic obligation) they hold toward a proposition. In the context of diplomatic negotiation, Modality is a powerful persuasive tool. David Thompson (2014) asserts that Modality functions as "negotiating the common ground between speaker and listener, expressing shared opinion concerning probability, willingness, or necessity." The choice of high-value modality, such as the recurrent use of the word "must," is a linguistic marker indicating that the proposed course of action is an absolute necessity. An intensive analysis of Modality will reveal the degree of compulsion and conviction President Prabowo seeks to impose upon the UNGA delegates, presenting his stance not merely as an opinion, but as a strong moral imperative.

By integrating the theoretical SFL framework reinforced by the views of Halliday, Eggins, and Thompson the main goal of this article is to systematically identify and interpret the linguistic choices in President Prabowo's UNGA speech that realize the Interpersonal Metafunction. This research seeks to uncover how the leader constructs collective solidarity ("we"), projects Indonesia's image as a capable and committed actor, and demands global justice through the grammatical tools of Mood and Modality.

## **2. Method**

This study adopts a qualitative-descriptive approach based on the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) framework pioneered by M.A.K. Halliday. This methodology is selected because SFL provides detailed analytical tools to systematically link grammatical choices (realizations) to the social functions (metafunctions) of a text.

### *1. Data Corpus and Unit of Analysis*

- Primary Data Source: The complete official transcript of President Prabowo's speech delivered at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).
- Unit of Analysis: The fundamental unit of analysis used for the Interpersonal Metafunction is the clause, as the clause serves as the main linguistic structure where interpersonal meaning, particularly the systems of Mood and Modality, is realized and negotiated.

### *2. Analytical Procedures*

The analysis was conducted through three main, systematic stages:

Stage 1: Segmentation and Initial Coding

1. **Clause Segmentation:** The entire speech text was exhaustively divided into its constituent clauses, ensuring each functional unit was isolated for analysis.
2. **Metafunction Identification:** Each clause was reviewed to identify the grammatical features relevant to the Interpersonal Metafunction, specifically the Mood system and the Modality system.

#### Stage 2: Mood System Analysis

The analysis of the Mood System focuses on the structural configuration of the *Finite* element and the *Subject* within each clause, leading to the following categorization:

1. **Declarative Mood:** Characterized by the grammatical order of *Subject* followed by *Finite* (e.g., "We are here"). Its primary function is giving information (stating).
2. **Interrogative Mood:** Characterized by the inversion of the *Finite* and *Subject* (e.g., "Can we remain silent?"). Its primary function is demanding information (asking), though in the context of a public address, it often functions rhetorically to challenge the audience.
3. **Imperative Mood:** Characterized by the omission of the *Subject* and *Finite* (containing only the Predicator). Its primary function is demanding goods & services (commanding), or in this diplomatic context, urging collective action.

#### Stage 3: Modality System Analysis

The analysis of the Modality System focuses on the linguistic markers that realize the speaker's personal assessment, classified by both type and value:

1. **Classification by Modality Type:**
  - **Epistemic Modality (Probability):** Expresses the speaker's belief or likelihood (e.g., *maybe, might*).
  - **Deontic Modality (Obligation/Necessity):** Expresses the degree of requirement or demand (e.g., *must, should, prepared to*).
2. **Classification by Modality Value:** Each instance of modality is rated based on its force (High, Median, Low Value). Markers such as "must," "will" (certainty), and "confident" are categorized as High Value, as they indicate the highest level of commitment and conviction on the part of the speaker, aligning with the strong demand's characteristic of persuasive political discourse.

#### 3. *Data Interpretation*

Both quantitative data (frequency of Mood and Modality choices) and qualitative data (the functional meaning of specific clause choices) were used to interpret President Prabowo's persuasive strategy. This interpretation connects the grammatical choices found to the rhetorical goals of the speech, specifically how the speaker negotiates roles, constructs solidarity, and linguistically imposes

demands for action upon the UN audience.

### 3. Result

#### ***Realization of the Mood System: Negotiation of Roles and Moral Demands***

The analysis of the Mood System reveals President Prabowo's strategy in using grammar to negotiate social roles and create moral urgency. Although the speech predominantly uses the Declarative Mood which functions as the social act of giving information (propositions) regarding Indonesia's position, history, and policy achievements (e.g., food self-sufficiency, net-zero commitment) the true rhetorical effectiveness lies in the strategic insertion of other Mood types.

The first significant shift is the use of the Interrogative Mood (rhetorical questions, e.g., "*Can we remain silent?*" [41], "*Who will save the innocent?*" [40]) which, while not demanding factual answers, linguistically demands moral reflection and accountability from the audience. As SFL expert Suzanne Egging (2004) explains, the *Mood* system directly "is concerned with what the clause is doing as an exchange," and in this context, the rhetorical questions functionally transform the UN delegates' role from passive listeners into parties being held accountable for global inertia. The second shift occurs through the forceful Imperative Mood (commands), often presented inclusively with the subject "we" (e.g., "*We must reject this doctrine,*" [17] "*We must act now*" [42]). These collective imperatives are effective linguistic tools to bind both the speaker and the audience into a singular mandate and shared moral obligation, thus functionally constructing accountable solidarity.

#### ***Realization of the Modality System: Assertion of Absolute Conviction***

The core function of the speech the expression of judgment and demands is fully realized through the *Modality* system, which is dominated by High Value Modality, underscoring the speaker's absolute level of commitment, certainty, and insistence. Central to the speaker's moral demands is the high frequency of High Deontic Modality (Absolute Obligation), manifested through the repeated use of the word "must." This use of *must* asserts that the central issues of the speech, such as support for the Two-State Solution and global justice, are not mere suggestions but non-negotiable political and moral necessities (e.g., "*We must have an independent Palestine...*" [49]).

Regarding this function, David Thompson (2014) emphasizes that Modality serves as "negotiating the common ground"; therefore, the massive use of *must* indicates that the speaker is demanding an absolute consensus on these propositions. Furthermore, High Value Epistemic and Willingness Modality is employed to assert Indonesia's credibility and agency (e.g., "*Indonesia is prepared to deploy 20,000...*" [20], and "*we are confident we can achieve...*" [35]). As Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) confirm, High Value Modality (including *must* and certain *will* uses) functionally expresses "the highest degree of speaker intervention in the

narrated reality," indicating that Prabowo uses language to actively shape and dictate the desired global reality, reinforcing Indonesia's diplomatic persona as an authoritative and deeply committed actor.

#### 4. Discussion

The findings from the Interpersonal Metafunction analysis confirm that President Prabowo's speech at the UNGA was a highly calculated linguistic performance, designed to effectively negotiate Indonesia's role and assert its moral agenda onto the international community. This strategy is fundamentally centered on a blend of informative formality, realized through the Declarative Mood, with powerful moral compulsion, realized through the Modality system and strategic Mood shifts.

##### ***Negotiation of Roles and Solidarity via the Mood System***

The analysis demonstrates that the Mood System was employed sophisticatedly to shift the relational dynamic from a mere one way delivery of information to a demanding interaction. The dominance of the Declarative Mood initially establishes the speaker's persona as a credible and informative representative, providing historical context and national achievements.

However, the forceful shifts to the Interrogative Mood (rhetorical questions) at critical junctures particularly concerning the crisis in Gaza functionally alter the audience's role. Rhetorical questions, such as "*Can we remain silent?*" [41], serve as implicit demands for moral accountability, compelling the delegates to address their ethical positions. Within Eggins' (2004) framework, this shift is the speaker's means of altering the type of exchange taking place, actively engaging the audience in the responsibility at stake.

Furthermore, the consistent use of the Imperative Mood with the inclusive subject "we" is a tangible effort to construct accountable solidarity. Phrases like "*We must act now*" [42] are not just commands; they are collective calls to action that bind the speaker and the audience into a shared moral obligation. This positions Indonesia not merely as an observer or a critic, but as an equal participant shouldering responsibility and acting as an exemplar.

##### ***Assertion of Absolute Conviction via the Modality System***

The most significant finding is the dominance of High Value Modality, which explicitly signals the speaker's absolute level of certainty, commitment, and insistence. The high frequency of High Deontic Modality (Obligation), realized through the word "must," is the key linguistic marker of this strategy. The use of *must* elevates the status of the proposition from a policy suggestion to a non-negotiable political and moral mandate (e.g., "*We must have an independent Palestine...*" [49]).

This interpretation is scientifically supported by Halliday and Matthiessen

(2014), who explain that the choice of High Value Modality functionally expresses "the highest degree of speaker intervention in the narrated reality." In the diplomatic context, this implies that President Prabowo is using language to actively impose his view as a universal necessity, rather than just a subject for negotiation.

This strategy is further endorsed by Thompson (2014), who emphasizes Modality's role as a means for "negotiating the common ground"; by saturating the discourse with *must*, the speaker demands absolute consensus that justice is an imperative, not a choice.

### ***Construction of National Agency and Credibility***

Finally, the analysis of High Value Willingness/Capacity Modality (e.g., "Indonesia is prepared to deploy 20,000..." [20], "Indonesia will be the granary of the world" [30]) functionally works to build Indonesia's Ethos or credibility. By asserting Indonesia's capability and readiness to act (providing troops, finance, and solutions for food/climate), the speaker creates a powerful contrast: Indonesia is not only demanding moral action from others but is also offering substantial contributions itself. This assertion of agency lends undeniable weight to the moral demands being conveyed. Overall, this interpersonal strategy successfully positions President Prabowo as an authoritative, highly moral, and capable leader, which is vital in a forum where influence is often negotiated through a combination of tangible power and moral authority.

## **5. Conclusion**

The Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) analysis of the Interpersonal Metafunction in President Prabowo's UNGA speech unveils a highly sophisticated rhetorical architecture, designed to maximize persuasive impact and moral authority. The study concludes that the speaker effectively utilized strategic shifts in the Mood system (from Declarative to Interrogative/Imperative) to transform the audience's role into one that is morally accountable and bound to collective action.

In parallel, the dominance of High Value Modality (especially the word "must") served as the core persuasive instrument, establishing moral and political demands as non-negotiable mandates, further reinforced by High-Capacity Modality which confirmed Indonesia's credibility and agency. Overall, this interpersonal strategy successfully positioned Indonesia not merely as a participant, but as an authoritative, highly moral, and capable global actor, linguistically demanding that the international community achieve the same level of commitment to realizing global justice and peace.

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