

On the Death of bin Laden: Construing Meanings behind Obama and Trump's Speech

Yuwanda Auliya Akbar¹, Arona Kamelia Hani², Gifary Muhammad Gilang R.³,
Nadya Umami Azizah⁴, Riskia Setiawati^{5*}, Nurhadianty Rahayu⁶, Supiastutik⁷

^{1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7}Universitas Jember

Corresponding author: supiastutik.sastra@unej.ac.id

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Abstrak

Penelitian mengenai wacana yang disampaikan Obama dan Trump sudah banyak terdistribusi di ruang publik. Namun demikian, tiap penelitian memiliki fokus dan perspektif yang unik. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk membandingkan pidato Trump dengan Obama terkait wafatnya bin Laden. Penelitian ini menganalisis tiga metafungsi bahasa yang ditawarkan Linguistik Fungsional Sistemik (LFS) pada pidato-pidato tersebut. Data yang dikumpulkan berisi ujaran yang dilontarkan pada pidato dua presiden Amerika Serikat yang berbeda dan sangat fenomenal: Barack Hussein Obama dan Donald John Trump. Data didapat melalui rekaman pidato yang dipublikasikan di situs siaran video populer, Youtube. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengungkap makna dari pidato yang dibawakan oleh Barack Obama dan Donald Trump dan untuk mengidentifikasi berbagai strategi linguistik melalui kerangka teori yang digunakan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Trump cenderung mengafirmasi, alih-alih memberikan arahan, sementara Obama lebih banyak menyebarkan informasi dan instruksi. Temuan ini juga mengindikasikan bahwa tiap orator menampilkan kuasa dan makna dengan cara yang berbeda, dan pilihan mereka dapat memiliki peran dalam membentuk cara pemirsa melihat isu yang dibawakan dan siapa saja yang terlibat di dalamnya.

Kata kunci: wacana, deklaratif, imperatif, metafungsi, linguistik fungsional sistemik

Abstract

Research on discourses by Obama and Trump are abundant. However, each research has distinguished focuses and perspectives. This article aims to compare Trump's speech to Obama's on the Death of bin Laden. This article uses three metafunctions of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to analyze the data. The data collected comprise utterances in each speech delivered by two different and phenomenal presidents or at least president candidates of the United States: Barack Hussein Obama and Donald John Trump. The data was obtained by downloading the data from the popular video streaming website Youtube. The purpose of this article was to decipher the meanings of the speech delivered by Barack Obama and Donald Trump and to identify different linguistic strategies through the theory that has been used. The finding is that Trump was inclined to give affirmation, instead of giving direction, meanwhile Obama was found to spread information as well as to compel instruction. It also indicated that each speaker brought each power and meaning in a different way, and their choices help shape how the audience sees the event and the people involved.

Keywords: discourse, declarative, imperative, metafunctions, systemic functional linguistics

INTRODUCTION

Research articles exploring the speech of Barack Obama and Donald Trump using Systemic Functional Linguistics are abundant. Proliferation of research on the meanings, styles, rhetoric of either Obama and Trump as phenomenal president candidates or during their presidency ruling the superpower state in the world, the United States of America has captured attention of researchers around the globe. Ye (2010), for instance, investigated the rhetorics of Obama in persuading and building rapport with the audience during the victory speech. Enriching the literature, Farid & Shakur (2022) examined how the paradigms of peace were constructed by Trump and Obama. In terms of ideological messages implied in Trump's speech, Wibowo (2018) investigated the metafunctions of a selection of lexicogrammar uses in it. Such discourse practice within socio political contexts cannot be separated from the power the discourse maker has. It is important, hence, to look at how power enacts social roles that establish authority and enforce hierarchy and also produce a particular rhetoric of a speaker. In this article, social roles, hierarchy and rhetoric are not pinpointed, but these are subtly implanted in the practice of linguistic structure and of meaning making. It is due to the fact that the framework of systemic functional linguistics can be employed as a tool for understanding any semiotic resources within diverse communicative events. Unlike other mainstream of Grammar theories, this approach works on semantic stratum, enabling it applicable to operate on text in social context (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, Tallapessy, 2015).

Communication in politics can shape public opinion, frame issues, and create identities (Rahmani & Saeed, 2024). Public figures' political communication offers many examples of how speakers, usually government figures, mobilize linguistic choices to set authority, control public understanding, and position themselves in relation to the society. Considering how power dynamics are at play in political communication, this article examines the implied meanings expressed through intentional linguistic strategies in the speech delivered by Barack Obama and Donald Trump. In accommodating this, we analyze a selected speech between Barack Obama and Donald Trump employing Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) tools. The speech between Barack Obama and Donald Trump is important to explore because both of them are highly influential, if not phenomenal, presidents (candidate). It implies that political leaders can influence discourse or public perception to get their goals (Raza et al., 2024). This research break down the analysis following Halliday's three metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. We dismantle how both figures selected particular lexicogrammatical elements in their speeches, and closely observe how meanings and purposes are constructed there. This analysis aims to identify how Barack Obama and Donald Trump show different linguistic strategies through the three metafunctions of SFL to achieve their political goals. By comparing these patterns, we attempt to reveal how each political figure accentuated their power, constructed meaning, and subtly positioned themselves within the audience in particular, and within society in general.

METHOD

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) concerns with the constituents or the structure (Halliday & Mathiessen, 2004, p. 29). It sees language as a social semiotic system that functions as a meaning-making resource (Gerot & Wignell, 1995, p. 5). SFL proposes text analysis through three metafunctions that are concomitantly being

expressed to mediate the text-producer's social purposes. Rather than comparing structures, SFL focuses on how the meaning of a text is being realised in ideational, interpersonal, and textual (Gerot & Wignell, 1995, p. 11) realms.

The three metafunctions work together as in making sense of the human experience. The first one being the ideational metafunction, serves as a representation of human experience and how parts of the lexicogrammar are used to express this function (Halliday & Mathiessen, 2004, p. 29), as a phenomenon of things (Gerot & Wignell, 1994). This metafunction is presented in the clause in the form of transitivity which describes how a clause represents the process, participants, and circumstances in realising human experience. The second is interpersonal metafunction that expresses meaning through social interactions in the way that language is enacting relationships with people around us, therefore the clause is representing what is being done, who is doing it, and who can say certain (Halliday & Mathiessen, 2004, p. 30). This function particularly in declarative mode indicates presenting information (Halliday & Mathiessen, 2004; Diana, et al., 2019). This way this metafunction is arranged in SFL is through the system of Mood where each clause can constitute of mood and residue. Mood comprises of (without 'of') the subject + finite, while residue consists of predicator, complement, and adjunct. By rearranging these elements, speaker can realise different moods which gives enabling him/her to give different speech function such as giving information (declarative), asking information (interrogative), and asking someone to do or to give something (imperative). The third is textual metafunction which serves as a way for linguists to organize message so that they can make sense and integrate the clause as a part in a larger text or the environment in either verbal or non-verbal form.

As the data are the US presidents' speech, a qualitative approach is incorporated since it provides non numerical data (Denscombe, 2010). The data were collected using documentation technique (Blaxter, et al. 2010), that is collecting the speeches published on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=niGjflZ3nXo>. Since the data was in the form of moving images and audio of a formal speech of Obama and Trump, the transcription of the data to a written form is required and it should be prudent to break down them into several utterances which were categorized and coded (BO 1 for Barack Obama's utterance no 1, etc and DT 3 for Donald Trump's utterance no 3) based on relevant meaning to carefully ensure ease of conducting analysis. Then, they were analysed following Halliday's systemic functional linguistics tool to unearth the implied meanings through the expressions of ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analyses of the metafunctions of each utterance that contains interconnected clauses are displayed based on thematic division. First is Obama's utterance on a particular theme, then it is followed by Trump's utterance on the similar theme, or a theme that is close to Obama's related utterance. This way of analysis is repeated under different themes, until the data are completed.



RESULTS

The speech delivered by Obama and Trump were analysed according to ideational metafunction, through transitivity analysis, interpersonal metafunction, through mood analysis, and textual function.

“Tonight, I can report to the American people and to the world that the United States has conducted an operation that killed Osama bin Laden, the leader of alQaeda.”

- Barack Obama
(BO 1)

[[Tonight, I can report to the American people and to the world]]

	Tonight,	I	can	report	to the American people and to	that the United States has conducted an operation ...
Ideational	Circumstance: time	Sayer	Process: verbal		Circumstance: receiver	verbiage
Interpersonal	Adjunct	Subject	Finite	Predicator	Adjunct	Complement
	Residue	Mood: declarative		Residue		
Textual	Theme:	Theme:	Rheme			
	Circumstantial	Topical				

[[that the United States has conducted an operation]]

	that	the United States	has	conducted	an operation
Ideational		Actor	Process: material		Goal
Interpersonal		Subject	Finite	Predicator	Compliment
		Mood: declarative		Residue	
Textual		Theme:	Rheme		
		Topical			

[[that killed Osama bin Laden, the leader of alQaeda.]]

	that	killed		Osama bin Laden, the leader of al-Qaeda	
Ideational	Actor	Process: material		Goal	Attribute
Interpersonal	Subject	Finite	Predicator	Complement	
	Mood: declarative			Residue	
Textual	Topical	Rheme			
	Theme				

“Abu Bakr alBaghdadi is dead. He was the founder and leader of ISIS.”

-Donald Trump (DT

1)

[[Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is dead.]]

	Abu Bakr alBaghdadi	Is	Dead
Ideational	Carrier	Process: relational: attribute	Attribute
Interpersonal	Subject	Finite	Complement
	Mood: declarative		Residue
Textual	Topical	Rheme	
	Theme		

[[He was the founder and leader of ISIS]]

	He	was	the founder and leader of ISIS
Ideational	Token	Process: relational: identifying	Value



Interpersonal	Subject	Finite	Complement
	Mood: declarative		Residue
Textual	Topical	Rheme	
	Theme		

“It was nearly 10 years ago that a bright September day was darkened by the worst attack on the American people in our history. The images of 9/11 are seared into our national memory.”

-Barack Obama

(BO2)

[[It was nearly 10 years ago]]

	It	was	nearly 10 years ago
Ideational	Token	Process: relational: identifying	Value/Attribute
Interpersonal	Subject	Finite	Complement
	Mood: declarative		Residue
Textual	Topical	Rheme	
	Theme		

[[that a bright September day was darkened by the worst attack on the American people in our history]]

	That	bright September day	was	darkened	by the worst attack on the American people in our history	
Ideational		Goal	Process: material	Predicator	Goal	Circ: beneficiary
Interpersonal		Subject	Finite	Predicator	Adjunct	

		Mood: declarative	Residue
Textual		Theme:	Rheme
		Topical	

[[The images of 9/11 are seared into our national memory.

	The images of 9/11	are	seared into our national memory.
Ideational	Goal	Process: material	circumstance
Interpersonal	Subject	Finite	Complement
	Mood: declarative		Residue
Textual	Topical	Rheme	
	Theme		

“Capturing or killing Baghdadi has been the top national security priority of my administration. US Special Operations Forces executed a dangerous and daring nighttime raid. I got to watch much of it.”

- Donald Trump
(DT 2)

[[Capturing or killing Baghdadi has been the top national security priority of my administration]]

	Capturing or killing Baghdadi	has	been	the top national security priority	of my administration
Ideational	Token	Process: relational: identifying		Value	Circumstance: location: spatial
Interpersonal	Subject	Finite	Predicate	Complement	Adjunct
	Mood: declarative		Residue		



Textual	Interpersonal	Topical	Rheme
	Theme		

[[US Special Operations Forces executed a dangerous and daring nighttime raid.]]

	US Special Operations Forces	Executed	a dangerous and daring nighttime raid.
Ideational	Actor	Process: Material	Goal
Interpersonal	Subject	Finite	Predicator
	Mood: declarative	Residue	Complement
Textual	Topical	Rheme	
	Theme		

[[I got to watch much of it.]]

	I	got	to watch	much of it.
Ideational	senser	Process: mental: perception	Phenomenon	
Interpersonal	Subject	Finite	Predicate	Complement
	Mood: declarative	Residue		
Textual	Interpersonal	Topical	Rheme	
	Theme			

“On September 11, 2001, in our time of grief, the American people came together. On that day, no matter where we came from, what God we prayed to, or what race or ethnicity we were, we were united as one American family.”

- Barack Obama
(BO 3)

[[On September 11, 2001, in our time of grief, the American people came together.]]

	On September 11, 2001	in our time of grief	the America n people	Came	Together
Ideational	Circumstance : time	Circumstan ce: cause	Actor	Process: material	Circumstance : place/extent
Interpersonal	Adjunct	Adjunct	Subject	Finite	Adjunct
	Residue		Mood: declarative		Residue
Textual	Interpersonal	Topical	Rheme		
	Theme				

[[where we came from,]]

	where	We	came	From
Ideational	Circ: place	Actor	Process: material	Circ: source
Interpersonal	Subject	Finite	Predicate	Adjunct
	Mood: declarative		Residue	
Textual	Topical	Rheme		
	Theme			

[[what God we prayed to]]

	what God	we	prayed	To
Ideational	Phenomenon	Senser	Process: mental	Circumstance
Interpersonal	complement	subject	Finite	Predicate
	Residue	Mood: declarative		Residue



Textual	Topical	Rheme
	Theme	

[[what race or ethnicity we were]]

	what race or ethnicity	we	Were
Ideational	Value	Token	Process: relational
Interpersonal	Subject	Finite	Complement
	Mood: declarative		Residue
Textual	Topical	Rheme	
	Theme		

[[we were united as one American family]]

	we	were	united	as one American family
Ideational	Carrier	Process: relational	Attribute	
Interpersonal	Subject	Finite	Predicate	Complement
	Mood: declarative		Residue	
Textual	Topical	Rheme		
	Theme			

“He died after running into a deadend tunnel, whimpering and crying and screaming all the way. The compound had been cleared by this time, with people either surrendering or being shot and killed. Baghdadi in the tunnel, and he had dragged three of his young children with him. They were led to certain death.”

- Donald Trump (DT 3)

He died after running into a deadend tunnel, whimpering and crying and screaming all the way.

	He	died		after running into a deadend tunnel	whimpering and crying and screaming all the way
Interpersonal	Subject	Finite (past)	Predicator	Circ : adjunct	Circ : adjunct
	Mood declarative unmarked :		Residue		
Ideational	Actor	Material		Circ contingency :	Circ : manner
Textual	Theme	Rheme			

The compound had been cleared by this time, with people either surrendering or being shot and killed.

	The compound	had	been cleared	by this time,	with people either surrendering or being shot and killed
Interpersonal	Subject	Finite	Predicator	Circ : adjunct	Circ : adjunct
	Mood : declarative unmarked		Residue		
Ideational	Goal	Material	Circ time	:	Circ : Comitative
Textual	Theme	Rheme			



Baghdadi in the tunnel, and he had dragged three of his young children with him.

	Baghdadi in the tunnel, and	he	had	Dragged	three of his young children	with him
Interpersonal	Circ adjunct :	Subject	Finite	Predicator	Complement	Circ adjunct :
	Residue	Mood : declarative unmarked		Residue		
Ideational	Circ place :	Actor	Material		Goal	Circ : comitative
Textual	Theme		Rheme			
	Topical	Textual				

They were led to certain death.

	They	were	led	to certain death
Interpersonal	Subject	Finite	Predicator	Circ : adjunct
	Mood : declarative unmarked		Residue	
Ideational	Actor	Material		Circ : destination
Textual	Theme	Rheme		

“Today, at my direction, the United States launched a targeted operation against that compound. A small team of Americans carried out the operation with extraordinary courage and capability. No Americans were harmed. After fire fight, they killed Osama bin Laden and took custody of his body.”

- Barack Obama
(BO4)

Today, at my direction, the United States launched a targeted operation against that compound.

	Today, at my direction	The United States	Launched	a targeted operation	against that compound
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Interpersonal	Circ adjunct : Subject	Finite (past)	Predicator	Complement	Circ adjunct :
	Residue	Mood declarative unmarked	Residue		
Ideational	Circ time :	Actor	Material	Goal	Circ location :
Textual	Theme		Rheme		
	Topical	Textual			

A small team of Americans carried out the operation with extraordinary courage and capability.

	A small team of Americans	carried out		the operation	with extraordinary courage and capability
Interpersonal	Subject	Finite (past)	Predicator	Complement	Circ : adjunct
	Mood : declarative unmarked		Residue		
Ideational	Actor	Material		Goal	Circ : manner
Textual	Theme	Rheme			

No Americans were harmed.

	No Americans	were	Harmed
Interpersonal	Subject	Finite	Predicator
	Mood : declarative unmarked		Residue
Ideational	Goal	Material	



Textual	Theme	Rheme
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They took care to avoid civilian casualties.

	They	took	care	to avoid civilian casualties
Interpersonal	Subject	Finite	Predicator	Complement
	Mood : unmarked	declarative	Residue	
Ideational	Actor	Material		Circ : purpose
Textual	Theme	Rheme		

After fire fight, they killed Osama bin Laden and took custody of his body.

	After fire fight,	they	Killed		Osama bin laden	and took custody of his body
Interpersonal	Circ adjunct :	Subject	Finite	Predicator	Complement	Circ adjunct :
	Residue	Mood declarative unmarked :		Residue		
Ideational	Circ time :	Actor	Material		Goal	Circ matter :
Textual	Theme	Rheme				

“He ignited his vest, killing himself and the three children. His body was mutilated by the blast. The tunnel had caved in on it, in addition. The thug who tried so hard to intimidate others spent his last moments in utter fear, in total panic and dread.”

- Donald Trump
(DT 4)

He ignited his vest, killing himself and the three children.

	He	ignites	his vest,	Killing himself and the three children
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Interpersonal	Subject	Finite	Predicator	Complement	Circ : adjunct
	Mood : declarative unmarked		Residue		
Ideational	Actor	Material		Goal	Circ : consequences
Textual	Theme				Rheme

His body was mutilated by the blast.

	His body	was	mutilated	by the blast
Interpersonal	Subject	Finite	Predicator	Complement
	Mood : declarative unmarked		Residue	
Ideational	Goal		Material	Actor
Textual	Theme		Rheme	

The tunnel had caved in on it, in addition.

	The tunnel	had	caved	in on it,	In addition
Interpersonal	Subject	Finite	Predicator	Complement	Circ : adjunct
	Mood : declarative unmarked		Residue		
Ideational	Actor	Material		Goal	Circ : conjunct
Textual	Theme	Rheme			

The thug who tried so hard to intimidate others spent his last moments in utter fear, in total panic and dread.

	The thug who tried so hard to intimidate others	spent	his last moment	in utter fear, in total
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					panic and dread
Interpersonal	Subject	Finite	Predicator	Complement	Circ : adjunct
	Mood : declarative unmarked		Residue		
Ideational	Actor	Material		Goal	Circ : manner
Textual	Theme	Rheme			

“The death of bin Laden marks the most significant achievement to date in our nation's effort to defeat alQaeda.”

- Barack Obama
(BO 5)

[[The death of bin Laden marks the most significant achievement to date in our nation's effort to defeat alQaeda.]]

	The death of bin Laden	marks		the most significant achievement to date in our nation's effort to defeat al-Qaeda.
Ideational	Token	Process : Relational Identifying		Circumstance
Interpersonal	Subject	Finite	Predict	Complement
	Mood : Declarative		Residue	
Textual	Theme	Rheme		

“We were in the compound for approximately two hours. We took highly sensitive material and information.”

- Donald Trump
(DT 5)

[[We were in the compound for approximately two hours.]]

	We	were	in the compound	for approximately two hours.
Ideational	Carrier	Attributive Circumstance	:	Circumstance
Interpersonal	Subject	Finite	Adjunct	
	Mood : Declarative		Residue	
Textual	Theme	Rheme		

[[We took highly sensitive material and information.]]

	We	took		highly sensitive material and information
Ideational	Actor	Process : Material		Goal
Interpersonal	Subject	Finite	Predicator	Complement
	Mood : Declarative		Residue	
Textual	Theme	Rheme		

“Yet his death does not mark the end of our effort”

- Barack Obama
(BO 6)

[[Yet his death does not mark the end of our effort.]]

	Yet	his death	does not mark	the end of our effort
Ideational		Token	Identifying :	Value



Interpersonal	Conj. Adjunct	Subject	Finite	Predicator	Complement
	Residue	Mood : declarative		Residue	
Textual	Theme		Rheme		

“These savage monsters will not escape their fate.”

- Donald Trump
(DT 6)

[[These savage monsters will not escape their fate.]]

	These savage monsters	will not escape		their fate
Ideational	Actor	Process : Material		Goal
Interpersonal	Subject	Finite	Predicator	Complement
	Mood : Declarative		Residue	
Textual	Theme		Rheme	

“There is no doubt that alQaeda will continue to pursue attacks against us. We must and we will remain vigilant at home and abroad. As we do, we must also reaffirm that the United States is not and never will be at war with Islam.”

- Barack Obama
(BO 7)

[[There is no doubt]]

	There	is		no doubt
Ideational	Existential	Existent		
Interpersonal	Subject	Finite	Predicator	Complement

	Mood : Declarative	Residue
Textual	Theme	Rheme

[[that al-Qaeda will continue to pursue attacks against us.]]

	That	Al-Qaeda	will continue to pursue		attacks	against us
Ideational	Actor	Actor	Process : Material		Goal	Circm.
Interpersonal	Conjunctive	Subject	Finite	Predicator	Complement	Adjunct
		Mood : Declarative		Residue		
Textual	Theme		Rheme			

[[We must]]

	We	must
Ideational	Actor	Finite
Interpersonal	Subject	Finite
	Mood : Declarative	
Textual	Theme	Rheme

[[and we will remain vigilant at home and abroad.]]

	and	we	will	remain vigilant	at home and abroad
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Ideational		Carrier	Process Relational	:	Attributive	Circm.
Interpersonal	Subject	Subject	Finite		Predicator	Adjunct
	Mood : Declarative				Residue	
Textual	Theme		Rheme			

As we do,

[[we must also reaffirm]]

	We	must	also reaffirm
Ideational	Sayer	-	Process
Interpersonal	Subject	Finite	Complement
	Mood : Declarative		Residue
Textual	Theme	Rheme	

[[that the United States is not and never will be at war with Islam.]]

	That	the United States	is not	and never will be at war with Islam.
Ideational	Conjunction	Actor	Process : Relational	Circumstance : Manner
Interpersonal	-	Subject	Finite	Circ :adjunct
		Mood : declarative		Residue
Textual	Theme	Rheme		

“Baghdadi and the losers who worked for him, in some cases, they were very frightened.”

- Donald Trump
(DT 7)

[[Baghdadi and the losers who worked for him, in some cases, they were very frightened puppies.]]

	Baghdadi and the losers who worked for him	in some cases	They	were	very frightened
Ideational	Co-Reference	Circumstance	Carrier	Process : Relational Attributive	Attributive
Interpersonal	Complement	Adjunct	Subject	Finite	Adjunct
	Residue		Mood : declarative		Residue
Textual	Theme	Rheme			

[[In other cases, they were hardcore killers.]]

	In other cases	they	Were	hardcore killers
Ideational	Cirumstance	Carrier	Process : Relational Attributive	Atributive
Interpersonal	Adjunct	Subject	Finite	Adjunct
	Residue	Mood : Declarative		Residue
Textual	Theme	Rheme		



“And on nights like this one, we can say to those families who have lost loved ones to alQaeda's terror, justice has been done.”

- Barack Obama
(BO 8)

[[And on nights like this one, we can say to those families]]

	And on night like this one	we	Can	say	to those families
Ideational	Circ : time	Sayer	Process : Verbal		Receiver
Interpersonal	Circ : adjunct	Subject	Finite	Predicator	Adjunct
	Residue	Mood : Declarative		Residue	
Textual	Theme		Rheme		

[[who have lost loved ones to alQaeda's terror]]

	who	have lost	loved ones	to al-Qaeda's terror
Ideational	Senser	Process : Material	Goal	Circumstance
Interpersonal	Subject	Finite	Complement	Circ : adjunct
	Mood : Indicative		Residue	
Textual	Theme	Rheme		

[[justice has been done.]]

	Justice	has been		Done
Ideational	Goal	Material		
Interpersonal	Subject	Finite	Predicator	Complement

	Mood : Declarative	Residue
Textual	Theme	Rheme

“Baghdadi was vicious and violent, and he died in a vicious and violent way, as a coward, running and crying. This raid was impeccable and could only have taken place with the acknowledgement and help of certain other nations and people.”

- Donald Trump
(DT 8)

[[Baghdadi was vicious and violent]]

	Baghdadi	was	vicious and violent
Ideational	Carrier	Process: relational	Attribute
Interpersonal	Subject	Finite	Complement
	Mood: declarative		Residue
Textual	Topical	Rheme	
	Theme		

[[and he died in a vicious and violent way, as a coward, running and crying]]

[and he died in a vicious and violent way, as a coward, running and crying.]						
	And	he	died		in a vicious and violent way,	as a coward, a running and crying.
Ideational		Actor	Process: material		Circumstance: Manner	Circumstance: role Circumstance: Manner
Interpersonal		Subject	Finite	Predicate	Complement	
		Mood:		Residue		



		declarative	
Textual	Textual	Topical	Rheme
	Theme		

[[This raid was impeccable]]

	This raid	was	Impeccable
Ideational	Carrier	Process: relational	Attribute
Interpersonal	Subject	Finite	Complement
	Mood: declarative		Residue
Textual	Topical	Rheme	
	Theme		

[[and could only have taken place with the acknowledgement and help of certain other nations and people]]

	and	(this raid)	could only	have taken place	with the acknowledgement and help of certain other nations and people
Ideational		Actor		Process: material	Circumstance: Accompaniment
Interpersonal		Subject	Finite	Predicate	Adjunct
		Mood: declarative		Residue	
Textual	Textual	Topical	Rheme		
	Theme				

“Tonight, we give thanks to the countless intelligence and counterterrorism professionals who have worked tirelessly to achieve this outcome.”

- Barack Obama
(BO 9)

Tonight, we give thanks to the countless intelligence and counterterrorism professionals who have worked tirelessly to achieve this outcome.

	Tonight,	we	give	thanks	to the countless intelligence and counterterrorism professionals who have worked tirelessly to achieve this outcome.
Ideational	Circ: time	Actor	Process: Verbal		Recipient
Interpersonal	Adjunct	Subject	Finite	Predicate	Complement
	Residue	Mood: declarative		Residue	
Textual	Circ.	Topical	Rheme		
	Theme				

"I want to thank the soldiers and sailors, airmen, and Marines involved in last night's operation."

- Donald
Trump (DT 9)

I want to thank the soldiers and sailors, airmen, and Marines involved in last night's operation.

	I	want	to thank	the soldiers and sailors, airmen, and marines involved in last night's operation
Ideational	Sayer	Process: Verbal		Receiver
Interpersonal	Subject	Finite	Predicate	Complement
	Mood: declarative		Residue	



Textual	Topical	Rheme
	Theme	

“Let us remember that we can do these things not just because of wealth or power, but because of who we are. One nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all. Thank you. May God bless you. And may God bless the United States of America.”

-Barack Obama (BO

10)

[[Let us remember]]

	Let	us	remember
Ideational	Process: material	Senser	Process: mental (cognition)
Interpersonal	Finite	Subject	Predicator
	Mood: imperative		Residue
Textual	Structural	Topical	Rheme
	Theme		

[[that we can do these things not just because of wealth or power, but because of who we are]]

	that	we	can	do	these things	not just because of wealth or power, but because of who we are
Ideational		Actor	Process: material		Goal	Circ: cause
Interpersonal		Subject	Finite	Predicate	Complement	
	Residue	Mood: declarative		Residue		
Textual	Structural	Topical	Rheme			
	Theme					

[[(it is) One nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all]]

	(It)	(is)	one nation	under God	indivisible	with liberty and justice for all
Ideational	Token	Process: relational	Value	Circ: location	Attribute	Circ: Accompaniment
Interpersonal	Subject	Finite	Comp.	Adjunct	Comp.	Adjunct
	Mood: declarative		Residue			
Textual	Topical	Rheme				
	Theme					

[[Thank you]]

	(I)	Thank		You
Ideational	Sayer	Process: verbal		Receiver
Interpersonal	Subject	Finite	Predicate	Complement
	Mood: declarative		Residue	
Textual	Topical	Rheme		
	Theme			

[[May God bless you]]

	May	God	Bless	You
Ideational		Actor	Process: Material	Goal



Interpersonal	Finite	Subject	Predicate	Complement
	Mood: imperative		Residue	
Textual	Interpersonal	Topical	Rheme	
	Theme			

[[And may God bless the United States of America.]]

	And	may	God	Bless	The United States of America
Ideational			Actor	Process: Material	Goal
Interpersonal		Finite	Subject	Predicate	Complement
		Mood: imperative		Residue	
Textual	Textual	Interpersonal	Topical	Rheme	
	Theme				

“He died like a dog. He died like a coward. The world is now a much safer place. God Bless America. Thank you.”

-Donald Trump (DT

10)

[[He died like a dog]]

	He	died	like a dog
Ideational	Actor	Process: material	Circumstance: manner
Interpersonal	Subject	Finite	Predicate
	Mood: declarative		Residue
Textual	Topical	Rheme	
	Theme		

[[He died like a coward]]

	He	died	like a coward
Ideational	Actor	Process: material	Circumstance: manner
Interpersonal	Subject	Finite	Predicate
	Mood: declarative		Residue
Textual	Topical	Rheme	
	Theme		

[[The world is now a much safer place]]

	The world	is	now	a much safer place
Ideational	Carrier	Process: Relational	Circ: Time	Attribute
Interpersonal	Subject	Finite	Complement	
	Mood: declarative		Residue	
Textual	Topical	Rheme		
	Theme			

[[God Bless America]]

	God	Bless	America
Ideational	Actor	Process: material	Goal
Interpersonal	Subject	Predicate	Complement



	Mood: imperative	Residue
Textual	Topical	Rheme
	Theme	

[[Thank you]]

	(I)	Thank		You
Ideational	Sayer	Process: verbal		Receiver
Interpersonal	Subject	Finite	Predicate	Complement
	Mood: declarative		Residue	
Textual	Topical	Rheme		
	Theme			

DISCUSSION

The transitivity analysis shows that both Obama and Trump used material processes way more compared to other processes. These processes explain participants who were depicted as actors and goals. According to the data, Obama used material process marginally more than Trump. Both of them also used the same number of relational process, assigning identity and quality into something that is done. The difference is that Trump often assigned circumstantial attribution to the person killed in the operations, and he mocked the way he died through this process (see DT 8). Even though they used almost the same numbers of both material and relational process, they used shared different participants (Actors, Goals, Tokens, Carriers)

Table 1. The Percentage of Processes applied by Trump and Obama

	Material	Relational	Mental	Verbal	Others (existential, behavioral)	Total
Trump	16 (57%)	8 (28%)	1 (4%)	3 (11%)	0 (0%)	28 (100%)
Obama	19 (59%)	8 (25%)	2 (6%)	2 (6%)	1 (3%)	32 (100%)
Total (n)						

The usage of mental processes is sparse compared to the total of the data, but Obama used more of it addressing the report of the national mission and the reason America is able to do the mission. On the other hand, Trump used this process to brag that he had access to the scenes of the operation and liked delivering comments on it and praising how successful the mission is than the operation itself. The verbal process tells a quite different story, even though it is still a small part of the dataset. Obama used this process to put highlight on victims or credit someone (how) through it and both also used it to thank the public. One process that is considered the “others” is the smallest data set containing one datum where Obama mentions the existence of threat from al-Qaeda.

Table 2. The Portion of the Types of Sentences used by Trump and Obama

	Declarative	Interrogative	Imperative	Total
Trump	27 (96%)	0	1 (3%)	28
Obama	30 (91%)	0	3 (9%)	33
Total				

From the data that show both speakers heavily relied on declarative mood, indicating that the speakers are the ones who have the power to inform. This is normal for political speech because declarative allows the speaker to give information, assert position and present argument. Obama's declarative mode was intended to frame his speech more about explanation of the event and shared his personal objective thoughts with the audience, whereas Trump shared his subjective evaluative personal thoughts despite sharing the clarity of the truth of the information about the death of Al Qaeda's leader with the audience.

In the data analysed, the interrogative function is absent, meaning that both speakers did not use any form of Interrogative mood in their speech. This indicates that both of the speakers intended to give information and explanation to the audience rather than to ask some questions to the audience. In addition, regarding the imperative mood, Trump used the imperative clauses one time (3% out of 100%) while Obama three times (9% out of 100%). The greater percentage of imperative function that Obama had than Trump did does not index to a notion that Obama is more direct to instruct or to urge the audience to do what was instructed, while Trump was less inclined to directly command the audience. The kind of imperative that Obama applied was more like a call to say prayer to God for the safety of the nation and a call to remind the audience about a matter to remember. These all signified the soul call, as part of Obama's empathy.

Overall, this pattern reveals how both speakers primarily communicated through declarative clauses, Obama using declarative and imperative more frequently, reflecting a style that combined informing and guiding his listeners. Trump's speech showed a near exclusive preference for declarative, suggesting an emphasis on assertion and statement making rather than direct instruction.

The following table shows how Obama and Trump delivered issues and their perspectives are observable to compare because the utterances of both are placed side by side, especially the selection of participants of processes each of them used, and the type



of sentences they employed, regarding the purposes of the language they shared with the audience.

Table 3. Obama and Trump's Statements Juxtaposed

The General Structure of the Speech by Obama and Trump	Barack Obama's Speech	Donald Trump's Speech
Introduction	"Tonight, I can report to the American people and to the world <u>that the United States</u> has conducted an operation that killed Osama bin Laden, the leader of alQaeda."	" <u>Abu Bakr alBaghdadi</u> is dead. <u>He</u> was the founder and leader of ISIS." Donald Trump
Body	"It was nearly 10 years ago <u>that a bright September day</u> was darkened by the worst attack on the American people in our history. <u>The images of 9/11</u> are seared into our national memory."	" <u>Capturing or killing Baghdadi</u> has been the top national security priority of my administration. <u>US Special Operations Forces</u> executed a dangerous and daring nighttime raid. <u>I</u> got to watch much of it."
	"On September 11, 2001, in our time of grief, <u>the American people</u> came together. On that day, no matter where we came from, what God we prayed to, or what race or ethnicity <u>we</u> were, <u>we</u> were united as one American family."	" <u>He</u> died after running into a dead-end tunnel, whimpering and crying and screaming all the way. <u>The compound</u> had been cleared by this time, with people either surrendering or being shot and killed. <u>Baghdadi</u> in the tunnel, and <u>he</u> had dragged three of his young children with him. <u>They</u> were led to certain death."
	"Today, at my direction, <u>the United States</u> launched a targeted operation against that compound. <u>A small team of Americans</u> carried out the operation with extraordinary courage and capability. <u>No Americans</u> were harmed. After fire fight, <u>they</u> killed Osama bin Laden and took custody of his body."	" <u>He</u> ignited his vest, killing himself and the three children. <u>His body</u> was mutilated by the blast. <u>The tunnel</u> had caved in on it, in addition. <u>The thug</u> who tried so hard to intimidate others spent his last moments in utter fear, in total panic and dread." Donald Trump
	"Yet <u>his death</u> does not mark the end of our effort"	" <u>We</u> were in the compound for approximately two hours. <u>We</u> took highly sensitive material and information."
	"There is no doubt <u>that alQaeda</u> will continue to pursue attacks against us. <u>We</u> must and <u>we</u> will remain vigilant at home and abroad. As <u>we</u> do, <u>we</u> must also reaffirm that <u>the United States</u> is not and never will be at war with Islam."	" <u>These savage monsters</u> will not escape their fate."
	"And on nights like this one, <u>we</u> can say to those families who have lost loved ones to alQaeda's terror, <u>justice</u> has been done."	" <u>Baghdadi and the losers who worked for him</u> , in some cases, <u>they</u> were very frightened."

		“ <u>Baghdadi</u> was vicious and violent, and <u>he</u> died in a vicious and violent way, as a coward, running and crying. <u>This raid</u> was impeccable and could only have taken place with the acknowledgement and help of certain other nations and people.”
	“Tonight, <u>we</u> give thanks to the countless intelligence and counterterrorism professionals who have worked tirelessly to achieve this outcome.”	“ <u>I</u> want to thank the soldiers and sailors, airmen, and Marines involved in last night's operation.”
Closing	“Let <u>us</u> remember that we can do these things not just because of wealth or power, but because of who we are. <u>One nation</u> under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all. Thank you. May <u>God</u> bless you. And may <u>God</u> bless the United States of America.”	“ <u>He</u> died like a dog. <u>He</u> died like a coward. <u>The world</u> is now a much safer place. <u>God</u> Bless America. Thank you.”

Both Obama and Trump, exert their ideological stance in their speeches through the intentional use of lexicogrammatical features. They elevate their powerful positionality, expressing political agenda that exert control over and organize other shared beliefs (Malkawi & Fareh, 2023) to the audience. In essence, linguistic strategy is carefully orchestrated to highlight the intricate dynamics that shape people's beliefs and worldviews (Malkawi & Fareh, 2023, p. 2), which in this context is about the national shared goals to combat the actor behind what-so-called terrorism.

CONCLUSION

This study shows how Obama and Trump used language in different ways when they talk about the death of bin Laden and Abu Bakr Al Baghdad, subtly indicating different intentions, characters or policy. Based on the analysis of three metafunctions, the data shows that both Obama and Trump used a lot on material processes to address actions and events. However, they shared different purposes and even characters or policy. Apart from identifying transitivity they applied, features like participants: *who did what*, or *who did what to whom*? *How it is labelled*? *What is valued*, *how it is valued*, are very pivotal. In the analyses, Obama used pronoun *we* to address Obama himself, audience, and the US, as well as the people of the US in general, very often, which all of these indicate Obama built a rapport. Pronoun *we* is reported to establish a relation (Darong, 2021). Whilst, Trump used participants, like Al Baghdadi as his enemy, or the enemy of the state, his family, his followers, more often than he addressed *we* as Obama did, which all of these indicate that he was more evaluative subjective person. Each pronoun signifies the people themselves, so it conceives a subtle message. A pronoun is used to address the identity of a speaker and its connection with others (Yule, 1996). In addition, this personal reference is meant to construct social power in the social structure,



indexing people and their competency or incompetency (Hansson, et al., 2022). From this, a conclusion can be drawn that by applying Halliday and Matthiessen's Systemic Functional Linguistics, reality described in the text and intentions subtly constructed by the speakers can be easily revealed.

By comparing both speeches using the three metafunctions of SFL, and the results show that both speakers used declarative and relational more than other processes imply their general purposes behind their speech that both intended to present information, or to spread news, that the death of Osama bin Laden or the death of Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi (the former leader of ISIS as the enemy of the US) were true. Then they shared their opinions. First is Obama's sounded objective because he shared facts and a call for the Americans to work together in response to the issue and potential threats may follow. Second, Trump's speech sounded subjective as he alluded Al Baghdadi, assigning him particular attributes and depicted the miserable, atrocious characters and the way Al Baghdadi died, implying a fact that Trump used more his personal judgment than facts. In terms of other processes, Obama applied more mental and verbal processes to show care, give credit, and guide the audience, while Trump used more direct statements to show strength and attack the enemy. Obama also used imperative forms more often to ask people to stay united, while Trump relied on firm declarative sentences to state his views. In relation to the textual analyses, Obama used more coherent text than Trump, that can be seen from the progression of Themes and Rhemes both used. Such distinguished narrations between these two US Presidents representing two different political parties: Democrats and Republicans, are by no means new. Maulidyah (2024) investigated the discourse depicting Biden's (Democratic Party) campaign video that showcased Biden's promising vision and mission for the country's better future while downgrading Trump (Republican Party) over his negligence of pandemic resolution. This demonstrates one strong relevant evident of similar comparison and competition among these two parties. Likewise, research conducted by Fajar (2022) showed the victory speech of Biden, which was also the victory of Democrats, was portrayed as a symbol of fixing the past failure made during the era of Trump (Republicans). In this way, discourse does not stand alone. Discourse does not only connect clauses within it, but it is intertextually coherent. In other words, discourses are interconnected. Discourse in communication is a continuous process that integrates the elements from the past and the present (Marino-Jimenez, et al., 2025)

This is all what can be obtained through the analyses of the three metafunctions of the speech, particularly in the sense of revelation of meaning construction of a discourse, by these phenomenal presidents of the superpower country, the US. This research is surely far from perfect. It is expected that the future research can give more in-depth analyses, especially in revealing the context: when the speech was given, in what event, who the audience were, etc. and in calculating the participants involved in both speech and how they were described in the processes, and the interconnection among the clauses used in the discourse.

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