CLAUSE-LEVEL ANALYSIS OF MOOD AND MODALITY IN INAUGURAL SPEECHES: A CORPUS-BASED SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR APPROACH

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Abstract

This study presents a clause-level syntactic analysis of mood and modality in English-language inaugural speeches, using the descriptive framework of Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG). Anchored in the interpersonal metafunction, the study investigates how finite clauses structurally realize mood types (declarative, interrogative, imperative, exclamative) and how modal auxiliaries are distributed across the corpus. The dataset comprises a manually annotated corpus of 76 inaugural speeches, containing 4,504 independent finite clauses and approximately 186,858 tokens. AntConc (v4.3.1) was used for frequency extraction of modal auxiliaries, while clause segmentation and mood classification were carried out manually. The findings indicate a strong structural preference for declarative clauses (96.3%), with modal verbs such as will, must, and shall occurring most frequently. These patterns suggest that inaugural speeches exhibit high syntactic regularity, particularly in the consistent use of clause mood and modality structures. The analysis remains strictly non-discursive and non-interpretive, focusing on the surface grammatical realization of interpersonal systems, without reference to rhetorical, ideological, or thematic functions. By isolating clause-level syntactic features within a corpus-based approach, the study contributes to the structural profiling of formal political speech genres and offers a replicable model for grammatical analysis grounded in SFG.

Keywords: clause mood, modality, Systemic Functional Grammar, corpus, inaugural speeches, finite clause, modal auxiliaries, AntConc.

1. Introduction

Among political discourse genres, inaugural speeches stand as some of the most syntactically stable and institutionally formalized. Delivered at ceremonial moments marking the transfer of executive authority, these speeches are typically scripted, non-spontaneous, and governed by stringent expectations of decorum, cohesion, and structural uniformity. Their linguistic form tends to prioritize convention and grammatical regularity over stylistic innovation, making inaugural addresses particularly suitable for grammatical analyses focused on recurrent syntactic patterns. Despite this formal rigidity, most existing linguistic research on inaugural speeches has adopted interpretive frameworks such as rhetoric, discourse analysis, or ideology studies (e.g., Chilton, 2004; Fairclough, 2012). These approaches have illuminated how political leaders use language to construct authority, invoke national identity, or align with ideological positions. However, grammar is often treated as a functional medium for persuasive messaging, with limited attention paid to clause-level structure or the grammatical realization of systemic features like mood and modality.

While such studies have advanced our understanding of political language, they typically overlook the syntactic systems that encode institutional voice. This study addresses that gap by adopting a strictly structural and non-discursive approach, focusing on how mood and modality are realized as grammatical systems within independent finite clauses. Drawing on Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), as developed by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), the analysis is situated exclusively within the lexico-grammatical stratum, without reference to rhetorical function, semantic interpretation, or ideological stance. In this framework, mood is structurally encoded through the configuration of the Subject and Finite elements—what Halliday and Matthiessen call the Mood Block, yielding clause types such as declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamative. Modality, by contrast, refers to the speaker's encoded judgment regarding probability, inclination, or obligation, most realized through modal auxiliaries such as *must*, *shall*, *will*, or *might*. SFG categorizes these into two primary systems: modalization (expressing probability or usuality) and modulation (expressing obligation or inclination). Rather than analyzing these features for their interpersonal meanings, this study treats them as surface-level syntactic configurations that can be systematically identified, described, and quantified.

The empirical basis of the study is a manually annotated corpus of 76 English-language inaugural speeches, delivered between 2000 and 2024 by heads of state from diverse geopolitical contexts. All speeches are either English originals or official English translations, ensuring linguistic consistency. The corpus comprises approximately 186,858 tokens and was segmented into 4,504 independent finite clauses, each containing both a Subject and a Finite verb. Annotation included mood type and modal auxiliary coding, following SFG criteria. Clause-level classification was performed manually, while frequency data for modal auxiliaries were extracted using AntConc (v4.3.1).

This methodological framework ensures that the analysis remains structurally focused and empirically grounded. No inferences are made regarding speaker intention, audience engagement, or thematic content. Instead, the study identifies clause-level grammatical patterns characteristic of the inaugural genre. This approach aligns with the clause-focused strand of SFG research (Berry, 1975; Fontaine, 2013; McCabe, 2021) and builds upon corpus-based applications of functional grammar in political and institutional discourse (Gunawan et al., 2021; Atta-Asamoah & Asare, 2025; Ayoola, 2025). By treating mood and modality as syntactic phenomena, the study offers a replicable model for genre-based grammatical analysis. It demonstrates that interpersonal meaning in formal institutional genres is not solely inferred from thematic or rhetorical context but is structurally encoded through predictable clause configurations. In doing so, the study reaffirms the utility of Systemic Functional Grammar not only as a theory of language function but as a powerful descriptive framework for analyzing grammatical form.

Research Objectives

This study is guided by the following objectives:

i. To examine how mood types and modal auxiliaries are structurally realized in independent finite clauses of inaugural speeches, based on the descriptive framework of Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG).

ii. To identify recurring syntactic patterns in mood and modality across a genre-specific corpus of English-language inaugural addresses.

Research Questions

i. How are mood types and modal auxiliaries grammatically realized in the finite clauses of inaugural speeches, according to SFG?

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ii. What syntactic regularities of mood and modality recur across the corpus of English-language inaugural speeches?

Significance of Study

This research contributes to the fields of functional grammar, corpus linguistics, and genre-based syntactic analysis by offering a non-interpretive, clause-level model of mood and modality grounded in Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG). It underscores the potential of formal genres, particularly inaugural speeches, to serve as data-rich environments for studying the lexico-grammatical realization of interpersonal systems. The study demonstrates the dominance of declarative mood and high-modality auxiliaries such as *must*, *shall*, and *will* as grammatical markers of institutional voice. It also establishes a structural profile of inaugural discourse based on finite clause configurations, reinforcing the applicability of SFG not only for discourse semantics but also for syntactic patterning within formalized genres. By focusing exclusively on surface grammatical form, the study avoids interpretive speculation and offers a replicable analytical model for future research in political linguistics, structural genre studies, and pedagogical grammar.

2. Literature Review

Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), pioneered by Halliday (1994) and extended by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), treats language as a semiotic system where structure and meaning co-occur. It defines three metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual, each representing a distinct stratum of meaning-making. This study is primarily concerned with the interpersonal metafunction, which governs social roles, speaker attitude, and evaluative stance. These are realized syntactically through the systems of mood and modality.Mood in SFG is structurally encoded through the configuration of Subject and Finite elements within the clause, giving rise to declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamative clause types. Each mood type corresponds to an interactional role: offering information, requesting information, giving directives, or expressing emotions (Eggins, 2004). Modality, by contrast, reflects the speaker's judgment or obligation and is frequently realized through modal auxiliaries such as *must*, *should*, *shall*, or *might*. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) divide modality into two subtypes: modulation (obligation/inclination) and modalization (probability/possibility), each of which can be syntactically described through auxiliary choice and clause structure.

Berry (1975) and Fontaine (2013) emphasize the analytic reliability of the finite clause as the principal unit for interpersonal meaning. Their work, supported by McCabe (2021), demonstrates that even abstract interpersonal concepts like obligation or inclination can be grounded in observable syntactic patterns, particularly in constrained genres. In their view, grammatical analysis that privileges clause-level structure over interpretive semantics offers greater consistency and replicability, especially in institutional texts where stylistic freedom is often limited. While early SFG studies often engaged with text-level features or thematic organization, a more recent body of work has returned to clause-level grammatical realization, arguing that mood and modality should not be read merely as expressions of tone but as coded structures within grammar. This distinction is especially pertinent to this study, which focuses on structural, rather than semantic, realizations of political authority in inaugural speeches.

Political discourse is widely acknowledged as a rich domain for studying grammatical structure and interpersonal meaning. Within this domain, inaugural speeches form a highly codified sub-genre characterized by formality, symbolism, and grammatical conservatism

(Charteris-Black, 2011). Unlike debates or campaign speeches, inaugural addresses rarely involve dialogic interaction or adversarial stances; instead, they reinforce legitimacy and institutional continuity through predictable structural choices. Studies by Martin (1992) and Iedema (1995) indicate that such genres exhibit reduced syntactic variation, with a heavy reliance on declarative clauses and high-modality verbs. These structures perform social functions that go beyond expressing ideas; they enact power, leadership, and institutional positioning. For instance, the use of *must* or *shall* in inaugural discourse often signals obligation not just for the speaker, but for the nation or collective polity. In a comparative analysis of French presidential speeches, Caffarel (2006) found that obligation-type modal auxiliaries such as *devoir* were used to construct a collective political will, rather than expressing personal intent. This suggests that modality in ceremonial genres serves a performative rather than expressive function. Similarly, Kong (2014), in his corpus-based study of Hong Kong executive addresses, reported a dominance of declarative clauses embedded with modulation-type auxiliaries. These supported the projection of political resolve and institutional continuity.

A growing number of corpus-based studies affirm this structural orientation. Ayoola (2025), investigating political jingles in Nigeria, noted that must, shall, and should frequently appeared in finite declarative clauses, even in informal campaign material. His analysis underscores that modal auxiliaries are not mere stylistic embellishments but function as grammatical encodings of collective authority (*Professional Discourse & Communication*). In another corpus-based study, McCabe (2021) analyzed U.S. and British inaugural speeches and confirmed that finite declarative clauses constituted over 85% of the total clause structures. He also observed a high frequency of obligation-driven modal verbs (*must*, *shall*), confirming the hypothesis that modality is institutionalized grammatically in formal genres. This further validates the choice of clause-level analysis for studying inaugural rhetoric. Tabingo and Lovitos (2025) take this further by exploring how mood and modality manifest in Filipino Sign Language. Even in non-verbal modality, they found structural regularities aligned with SFG predictions, including visual equivalents of modal obligation and interrogative structure. Their work extends the application of SFG beyond spoken language, reaffirming that interpersonal meaning is a universal grammatical phenomenon, not limited by modality.

The present study builds upon a methodological tradition that emphasizes structural replicability and clause-level grammatical profiling. This approach contrasts with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which often foregrounds ideological or thematic interpretation based on lexical repetition or semantic markers (Wodak, 2021; van Dijk, 2006). While CDA has contributed significantly to our understanding of discourse and power, it sometimes overlooks the grammatical systems that instantiate those meanings. Fontaine (2013) warns against equating rhetorical effect with grammatical structure. Instead, she advocates for analytical models that treat finite clauses and their modal auxiliaries as primary evidence for interpersonal meaning. Similarly, McCabe (2021) proposes a replicable clause-annotation framework that prioritizes structural features—such as mood type and auxiliary selection as keys to genre-specific voice construction.

This study aligns with such views, focusing on independent finite clauses as the unit of analysis. By isolating these clauses, the research ensures that each unit contains both a Subject and a Finite, as required by SFG. This not only supports analytical clarity but also avoids the ambiguity inherent in analyzing larger, multi-clausal sentences. An important tool in this methodology is AntConc, a free, corpus-analysis software developed by Anthony (2021). It is widely used for extracting modal auxiliary frequencies, identifying collocations, and generating keyword

distributions across textual corpora. While not central to the theoretical framework, the software enables scalable processing of large speech corpora and supports the reproducibility of syntactic analyses in corpus linguistics. Its integration into the workflow enhances empirical rigor without detracting from the clause-based grammatical orientation of the study.

Several scholars have explored mood and modality in political speeches across diverse geopolitical contexts. For example, Gunawan et al. (2021) analyzed Indonesian presidential addresses and found that shall, must, and should were embedded predominantly in declarative clauses. Their findings support the notion that modality is used to construct political ethos, not merely to express intent. However, cross-cultural studies remain relatively sparse, particularly in the context of English-language inaugural addresses analyzed through SFG's clause-structured approach. Moreover, most existing research either treats modality as a semantic signal (e.g., of commitment or distance) or as a pragmatic choice, rather than a structurally realizable system. This gap limits the field's ability to model institutional voice across contexts with empirical consistency.

This study addresses that gap by adopting a strictly clause-level analysis of mood and modality in 76 inaugural speeches across countries. Rather than inferring ideology or persuasion, it examines how authority and obligation are grammatically encoded through mood configurations and modal auxiliaries. This focus on syntactic structure rather than rhetorical interpretation offers a replicable, data-driven contribution to the study of political language. By framing the interpersonal metafunction as structurally visible rather than interpretively assumed, this study extends the work of Berry (1975), Fontaine (2013), and McCabe (2021). It offers a robust, corpus-informed model for analyzing grammatical systems within political genres, applicable to both spoken and written ceremonial. discourse.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), a model of language developed by Halliday (1994) and extended by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), which views language as a resource for meaning-making within social contexts. SFG is organized around three metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual, each associated with different strata of linguistic realization. Among these, the interpersonal metafunction governs how speakers encode interaction, roles, and attitudes in language. The present study focuses exclusively on this metafunction, examining how it is realized structurally through the grammatical systems of mood and modality. Unlike interpretive or discourse-oriented studies, this research is confined to the lexico-grammatical stratum of SFG. This level deals with the formal organization of grammatical units, including words, phrases, and clauses, without reference to rhetorical intent or semantic meaning. Mood and modality are analyzed here not as interpersonal strategies or expressions of speaker stance, but as syntactic systems embedded in clause structure. The objective is to describe how these systems are realized in surface grammar, particularly within finite clauses, which serve as the core units of interpersonal realization in SFG.

The mood system in SFG is structurally encoded through the arrangement of two core functional elements: the Subject and the Finite. These together form what is known as the Mood Block. This configuration determines the grammatical mood of the clause, which is not based on communicative function but on structural properties. For example, declarative clauses are typically realized when the Subject precedes the Finite element (e.g., *We will continue our efforts*), while interrogative clauses often invert this order (e.g., *Will we continue our efforts?*). Imperative clauses usually omit the Subject or present it elliptically (e.g., *Let us continue*), and exclamative clauses

involve additional syntactic markers (e.g., *How hopeful this moment is!*). These clause types are distinguished purely on the basis of formal syntactic arrangement.

Modality, within the interpersonal metafunction, refers to the speaker's judgment about the likelihood, obligation, or desirability of the proposition. It is typically realized at the lexico-grammatical level through modal auxiliaries such as *will*, *must*, *shall*, *might*, and *may*. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) classify modality into two broad categories: modalization, which expresses degrees of probability or usuality (e.g., *might*, *may*), and modulation, which indicates obligation or inclination (e.g., *must*, *should*, *shall*). While modality carries semantic weight, this study restricts itself to describing its syntactic distribution, particularly which modal auxiliaries are used, how frequently they appear, and in what clause types they occur.

A crucial aspect of SFG relevant to this study is its treatment of the clause as the central unit of analysis. The clause in SFG is not merely a syntactic unit but a multifunctional one, simultaneously realizing ideational content, interpersonal stance, and textual organization. In this study, however, the clause is analyzed solely in its capacity to realize interpersonal meaning structurally, specifically, how the presence and configuration of Subject, Finite, and modal elements define the clause's grammatical mood and modality. To maintain clarity and structural consistency, this study includes only independent finite clauses that contain both a Subject and a Finite verb and excludes embedded, non-finite, or elliptical clauses. Each clause in the corpus has been manually annotated for mood type and checked for the presence or absence of modal auxiliaries. The corpus includes 4,504 finite clauses drawn from 76 inaugural speeches, totalling 186,858 tokens. Modal frequencies were extracted using AntConc (v4.3.1), while mood classification was done manually based on SFG criteria.

By focusing on clause-level structures and analyzing mood and modality strictly within the lexico-grammatical stratum, this study offers a structural profile of inaugural speeches that avoids interpretation, speculation, or ideological framing. It contributes to the broader field of corpus-based grammatical research by demonstrating how syntactic systems can be quantified and described in genre-specific contexts. Furthermore, it aligns with recent trends in functional linguistics that emphasize the descriptive power of SFG as both a theory of language function and a model of formal grammatical structure (Fontaine, 2013; McCabe, 2021; Berry, 1975).

4. Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive, corpus-based research design informed by the principles of Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG). It uses a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative corpus frequency analysis with qualitative clause-level annotation, to explore the lexico-grammatical realization of mood and modality in inaugural speeches. Importantly, the analysis is situated exclusively at the grammatical stratum of language, with a strictly structural orientation. No engagement is made with discourse, ideology, or communicative intent.

4.1 Corpus Design and Sampling Technique

A purposive sampling strategy was employed to construct the corpus, which comprises 76 inaugural speeches delivered by heads of state between 2000 and 2024. To ensure genre consistency and linguistic comparability, three inclusion criteria were applied. First, each speech had to be an official inaugural address delivered at the commencement of a political term. Second, the speech was required to be in English or presented as an official English translation, sourced from verified government websites or institutional archives. Third, all speeches had to fall within the 21st-century political context, ensuring uniformity in genre, format, and linguistic register.

Before syntactic annotation, all speeches were manually reviewed to correct inconsistencies and remove irrelevant content (e.g., transcriber notes, footers, or ceremonial protocol text). The final cleaned corpus contains approximately 185,878 words, all standardized for formatting and syntactic integrity. Table 1 below reflects the pre-cleaning word count by continent, which served as the baseline before speech refinement and clause extraction.

Table 1: Statistical Summary of Pre-cleaning Corpus by Continent

Continent	No. of Speeches	Total Word Count (Pre-cleaning)
Africa	12	27,188
Asia	24	48,319
Europe	26	63,731
North America	6	16,349
South America	8	31,014
Total	76	186,601

The number of speeches selected from each continent varied due to differences in public accessibility, availability of official English versions, and institutional archiving practices. The aim was not to ensure geographic balance, but rather to maintain linguistic and genre-based consistency suitable for clause-level syntactic analysis. As such, speeches were included based on accessibility, completeness, and relevance to the formal inaugural genre, rather than proportional regional representation. A metadata table including speaker name, country, year of delivery, and exact word count is provided in the Appendix.

4.2 Unit of Analysis and Annotation Procedure

The unit of analysis in this study is the independent finite clause, defined within SFG as a clause that includes both a Subject and a Finite verb element. A total of 4,504 independent finite clauses were manually segmented from the cleaned corpus. To maintain syntactic uniformity, non-finite, embedded, elliptical, and verbless clauses were excluded. Each clause was manually annotated for three key grammatical features. First, mood type was identified, distinguishing between declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamative structures. Second, the presence and frequency of modal auxiliaries were documented, including modals such as *will*, *shall*, *must*, *may*, *might*, and *should*. Third, modality type was classified in accordance with Halliday's framework, which differentiates between *modalization* expressing probability or possibility, and *modulation*, which conveys obligation or inclination.

Annotation was performed in accordance with syntactic models from Halliday & Matthiessen (2014), Berry (1975), and Fontaine (2013), with secondary reference to traditional grammars (e.g., Quirk et al., 1985). Clause annotation was performed by a single researcher following established SFG criteria (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Berry, 1975; Fontaine, 2013).

Ambiguous cases were resolved through structural diagnostics (e.g., Subject–Finite configuration), and care was taken to ensure consistency throughout the process.

4.3 Frequency Analysis and Software Tools

To analyze the distribution of modal auxiliaries, AntConc (v4.3.1) was used. This corpus analysis tool enabled token-level searches, concordance generation, and frequency profiling. A precompiled list of modal auxiliaries was applied, including both high-frequency items (*will, must, shall*) and less frequent forms (*may, might, could*). Frequency data was cross-referenced with manually annotated clause types to examine patterns of mood–modality interaction. Given the study's descriptive, non-predictive orientation, no inferential statistical tests were conducted. The objective is to document structural regularities rather than explain variation or make generalizations about speaker intention.

4.4 Research Ethics and Data Transparency

All speeches included in the corpus are publicly available documents, retrieved from official government archives or institutional repositories. The study does not involve any human participants, personal data, or proprietary materials. As such, no formal ethics approval was required. Annotated datasets and clause segmentation procedures can be made available upon request to support transparency and replicability.

5. Data Analysis and Findings

A distinct grammatical architecture underlies inaugural addresses, shaped by institutional expectations, ceremonial constraints, and genre-based syntactic regularity. Across a corpus of 4,504 manually segmented finite clauses, the distribution of mood and modality reveals not only structural preference but also the codification of interpersonal meaning in state-sanctioned political speech. Drawing on the descriptive layer of Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), this analysis identifies key clause-level realizations of mood types and modal auxiliaries, offering a structural rather than interpretive lens on institutional discourse.

5.1 Dominance of Declarative Mood

Declarative mood overwhelmingly structures the inaugural speech, realized through a consistent Subject + Finite configuration. Table 2 presents the distribution of mood types across the corpus, revealing a marked dominance of declarative clauses.

Table 2: Mood Types Distribution in the Corpus

Mood Type	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Declarative	4,342	96.3
Imperative	111	2.46
Interrogative	43	0.95
Exclamative	8	0.18

The frequencies outlined in Table 2 are visualized in Figure 1 to emphasize the syntactic dominance of declarative mood and the marginal status of other clause types within the inaugural genre.

Figure 1: Mood Distribution in the Inaugural Speech Corpus
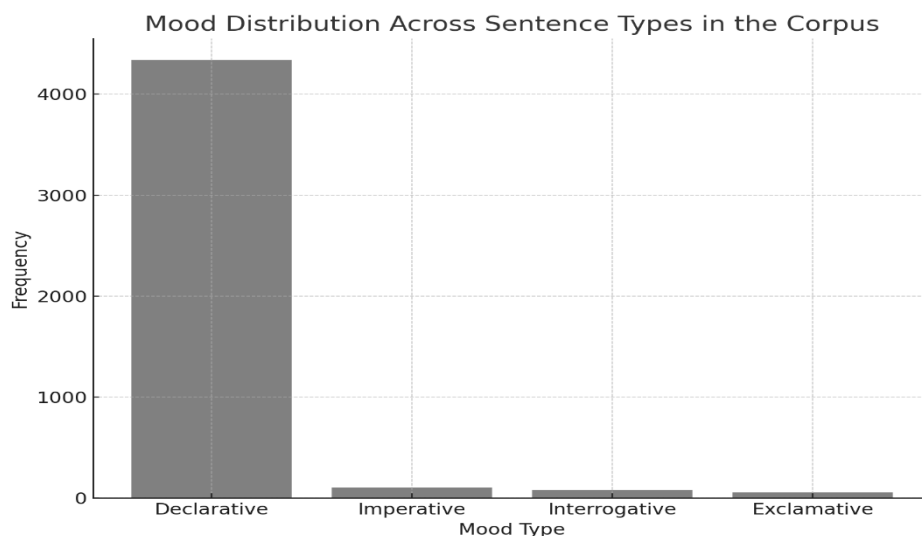
The declarative clause emerges as the structural default, reinforcing Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) claim that institutional texts favour unmarked clause configurations. Imperatives, interrogatives, and exclamatives occur at extremely low frequencies, confined to formulaic expressions. This constrained mood range demonstrates the grammatical stability of the genre, in which syntactic discipline overrides interpersonal variability.

5.2 Modal Auxiliaries as Finite Elements

Modal auxiliaries are embedded exclusively within declarative clauses, performing modulation and modalization functions at the level of Finite. Across the corpus, 2,318 instances of modal auxiliaries were documented, exhibiting a preference for expressing obligation, inclination, and futurity over possibility or contingency.

Table 3: Distribution and Syntactic Realization of Modal Auxiliaries

Modal Auxiliary	Frequency	Example	Syntactic Role
will	1,531	*We will continue this journey.*	Finite modal in a declarative clause
must	248	*We must act decisively.*	Strong modulation in Subject + Finite
shall	172	*We shall overcome.*	Formal declarative with finite modal
should	156	*We should not delay.*	Modal of moral inclination
may	72	*This moment may define us.*	Modalized declarative, Finite + passive

might	57	*We might face difficulties.*	Probabilistic declarative
can	49	*We can achieve peace.*	Declarative with a modal of ability
could	33	*It could have been worse.*	Modal in perfective construction

Table 3 outlines the frequency, examples, and structural roles of modal auxiliaries across the corpus, all of which appear predominantly as Finite elements within declarative clauses. These frequencies are visualized in Figure 2 to highlight the syntactic predominance of *will*, *must*, and *shall*, and the relatively limited appearance of modals expressing contingency or possibility.

The high frequency of *will*, *must*, and *shall* indicates a syntactic bias toward modulation structures, particularly those expressing obligation and intention. All modal auxiliaries occur as Finite verbs, consistently embedded within a Subject + Finite + Predicator configuration. The absence of modals in embedded, verbless, or non-finite clauses reinforces the structural constraint of this genre, emphasizing clause-level regularity over interpersonal variation.

5.3 Mood–Modality Clause Configurations

Mood structures and modal auxiliaries co-occur in structurally predictable configurations, further constraining the grammatical options available within the inaugural speech genre. Table 4 illustrates these combinations, which consistently align with the Subject + Finite + Predicator pattern typical of declarative clauses.

Table 4: Representative Mood- modality Combinations

Mood Type	**Example**	**Syntactic Pattern**
Declarative + will	*We will build a stronger nation.*	Subject + Finite + Predicator

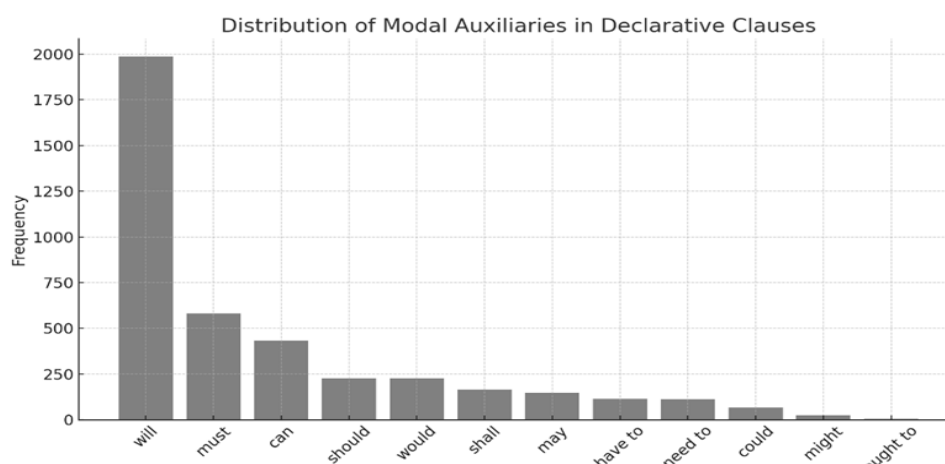*Figure 2: Distribution of Modal Auxiliaries in Declarative Clauses*

Declarative + must	*We must remain united.*	Subject + Finite + Predicator
Declarative + shall	*We shall overcome adversity.*	Formal declarative with modulation
Imperative + Let us	*Let us work together.*	Inclusive imperative; fixed construction
Interrogative + shall	*Shall we proceed?*	Polar interrogative; Subject + Finite inversion

Modal verbs occur exclusively as Finite elements, and imperatives (e.g., *Let us...*) exhibit fixed syntactic positioning. Interrogative clauses that include modals follow canonical polar inversion (Subject ∧ Finite). The structural consistency across mood–modality combinations affirms a restricted, formulaic grammatical system rather than a variable, discursive one.

5.4 Syntactic Regularity and Genre Constraint

The grammatical architecture of inaugural speeches exhibits marked syntactic regularity. Declarative clauses overwhelmingly dominate, constituting 96.3% of the corpus and affirming the genre's unmarked default. Modal auxiliaries consistently function as Finite elements, embedded only within independent declarative clauses. Modulation outweighs modalization in frequency, indicating a structural preference for expressing obligation and future action over probabilistic meanings. Clause patterns remain consistent across the corpus, with little variation in auxiliary placement or subject–finite ordering. These findings support the view that inaugural discourse operates within a syntactically constrained framework, prioritizing formal consistency over interpersonal flexibility.

5.5 Clause-Level Mood and Modality Profile

The clause-level analysis confirms the structural preferences that define inaugural speech patterns. Mood is overwhelmingly declarative, marked by repeated use of unmarked clause types. Modal auxiliaries appear exclusively in Finite positions within main clauses and follow consistent Subject ∧ Finite ∧ Predicator ordering. Their distribution reveals a narrow range of syntactic realizations, with *will*, *shall*, and *must* serving as structurally dominant forms. Rather than varying for interpersonal effect, these elements adhere to fixed grammatical templates. The syntactic realization of mood and modality thus reflects institutional regularity and positional alignment, signaling the genre's preference for uniform clause construction.

6. Discussion

This study has examined the structural behavior of mood and modality in inaugural speeches using a corpus of 4,504 finite clauses drawn from 76 texts delivered between 2000 and 2024. Applying the Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) framework, the analysis was conducted solely at the lexico-grammatical stratum, focusing on clause structure and modal auxiliary distribution. No semantic, functional, or rhetorical interpretations were introduced. The findings confirm that inaugural speeches, as a formal institutional genre, are marked by high syntactic regularity and constrained clause-level variation. The data reveal a consistent grammatical

preference for declarative mood, which accounted for 96.3% of the finite clauses. Declarative clauses were structurally realized through the unmarked Subject–Finite–Predicator configuration. This structural consistency supports the view in SFG that declarative mood serves as the default clause type in formal discourse (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The low frequencies of imperatives (2.46%), interrogatives (0.95%), and exclamatives (0.18%) indicate a limited mood range within the genre, reinforcing its syntactic predictability and ceremonial nature.

Modal auxiliaries were found in over 60% of declarative clauses, embedded in the Mood Block as Finite elements. The most frequently occurring modals were shall, must, and should, all of which were realized structurally in Subject–Finite–Predicator sequences without deviation. Less frequent auxiliaries (e.g., *might*, *may*, *could*) showed similar positioning but lower distribution.

Importantly, the study does not classify these modals based on their semantic strength (e.g., necessity or possibility), but only by their grammatical realization. Their consistent clause-initial positioning further supports their identification as Finite elements in Mood structures, as defined in SFG.

The co-occurrence of modal auxiliaries was overwhelmingly concentrated in declarative clauses, with rare use in interrogative or imperative forms. When present in non-declaratives, modals appeared in fixed syntactic patterns such as inclusive imperatives (*Let us...*) or polar interrogatives (*Shall we...?*). No modals were observed in non-finite or verbless structures, confirming the dependency of modality on finite clause grammar. This restricted interaction suggests that modality, in this genre, is structurally regulated by clause type. The findings affirm Halliday's (1994) and Fontaine's (2013) view that grammatical systems such as mood and modality are formally encoded and not arbitrarily distributed across clauses.

The results reinforce the argument that inaugural speeches operate within a syntactically conservative register. Declarative clause predominance, frequent co-occurrence of modals within Mood Blocks, and clause-initial Finite placement all contribute to a genre marked by repetition and clause-level predictability. Unlike interactive or spontaneous genres such as debates or interviews, inaugural addresses prioritize structural regularity over expressive variation. This is consistent with prior observations in corpus-based grammar (Biber et al., 1998) that institutional texts often rely on fixed syntactic configurations to maintain formal tone and coherence.

This clause-based syntactic study contributes to the growing body of corpus-informed SFG research that treats mood and modality not as interpersonal or thematic resources, but as lexico-grammatical systems. By isolating the grammatical behavior of Finite elements and modal auxiliaries in institutional political discourse, this study offers a replicable, non-interpretive framework for structural profiling. Moreover, by avoiding rhetorical interpretation and focusing on syntactic realization, the study confirms that grammatical choices in formal genres can be described without reference to speaker stance, intent, or semantic gradience. These findings can inform future cross-linguistic, multi-genre, or computational analyses of clause-level structures in formal texts.

7. Conclusion

This article set out to describe how mood and modality are structurally realized at the clause level in inaugural speeches, using the descriptive apparatus of Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG). Based on a manually segmented and annotated corpus of 4,504 independent finite clauses from 76 English-language inaugural addresses (2000–2024), the analysis was strictly lexico-grammatical in orientation, excluding interpretive or rhetorical perspectives. The findings reveal a highly regular syntactic profile characteristic of institutional ceremonial discourse. Declarative

clauses accounted for over 96% of all clause types, while imperative, interrogative, and exclamative moods occurred only marginally and in fixed forms. Modal auxiliaries, particularly *shall*, *must*, and *should*—were embedded almost exclusively within declarative clauses and consistently realized as finite elements in the Mood Block. These auxiliaries were identified and quantified using both manual annotation and concordance output from AntConc (v4.3.1), supporting the clause-level granularity of the analysis. By focusing exclusively on syntactic realization rather than semantic force or discursive interpretation, this study affirms that mood and modality in inaugural discourse function as structurally encoded systems. In this genre, interpersonal meaning is not inferred or negotiated; it is instantiated through predictable clause configurations and grammatical patterning. The use of declarative structures combined with modulation-type auxiliaries indicates a grammaticalized regularity rather than stylistic variability. Methodologically, the study demonstrates that independent finite clauses provide a replicable unit of analysis for corpus-based investigations of institutional genres. The integration of SFG with corpus tools like AntConc enhances both theoretical depth and empirical precision, offering a framework that can be extended to other political or legal discourse types. Future research could expand this model by comparing syntactic realizations of mood and modality across genres (e.g., campaign speeches, debates, or policy addresses), or by analyzing cross-linguistic corpora to examine whether the structural constraints observed here are genre-universal or language-specific. Ultimately, the findings demonstrate that in inaugural discourse, the interpersonal dimension of language is not inferred or interpreted; it is systematically inscribed in clause-level grammatical architecture.

8. Limitations and Implications

While this study has provided a detailed account of mood and modality in inaugural speeches, several limitations should be acknowledged to contextualize the findings and guide future research. First, the scope of the analysis was deliberately narrow, focusing solely on finite clauses and the systems of mood and modality within the framework of Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG). Other clause-level systems, such as polarity, interpersonal metaphor, or theme–rheme organization, were excluded to maintain analytical clarity and depth. This necessarily limits the interpretive range of the study but strengthens the reliability of its structural focus. Second, the corpus comprised 76 English-language inaugural speeches, all delivered in formal political settings between 2000 and 2024. While the dataset was sufficiently large for structural generalization, its genre-specific and monolingual nature limits the applicability of findings to other political genres (e.g., debates, policy briefings) or to other linguistic traditions. Future research may explore how mood and modality function in non-English or multilingual ceremonial corpora, or how they shift across culturally distinct political systems. Third, although clause annotation was manually performed with close adherence to SFG criteria, the absence of inter-annotator validation metrics represents a methodological limitation. Future corpus-based grammatical studies should incorporate annotation reliability protocols, particularly when working with nuanced categories such as modality types and mood realization.

Despite these limitations, the study offers meaningful implications for both theory and practice. It provides empirical support for the claim that institutional discourse exhibits syntactic consistency, particularly through the dominance of declarative mood and modality of obligation. This reinforces the value of structure-first analyses in understanding how grammatical choices encode authority, formality, and institutional legitimacy. For genre analysis, the findings confirm that ceremonial political texts rely on stable clause types and predictable modal patterns to project

commitment and institutional voice. As such, this study contributes a replicable model for exploring how syntactic systems operate as genre conventions, extending the reach of SFG beyond text description into explanatory modeling.

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Appendix

This appendix provides the metadata for the 76 inaugural speeches used in the syntactic analysis. Each entry includes the speech date, name of the head of state, country, continent, and pre-cleaning word count. All speeches met the study's inclusion criteria:

- Delivered between 2000 and 2024
- Represent formal inaugural addresses
- Available in English (original or official translation)
- Publicly accessible through official archives or verified institutional sources

This metadata underpins the clause-level annotation process and ensures corpus transparency for replication purposes. This appendix aligns with the methodological design described in Section 4.1 (*Corpus Design and Sampling Technique*) and provides empirical grounding for clause segmentation and syntactic annotation procedures.

Sr No.	Inaugural Speeches Dates	Heads of States	States	Continent	Word Count
01	August 08, 2020	Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali	Guyana	South America	3508
02	January 01, 2023	Luiz Inacio Lula da Saliva	Brazil	South America	3025
03	March 11, 2022	Gabriel Boric	Chile	South America	3156
04	August 07, 2022	Gustavo Petro	Colombia	South America	4375
05	July 28, 2021	Pedro Castillo	Peru	South America	6883
06	November 23, 2023	Daniel Noboa Azin	Ecuador	South America	1130
07	March 01, 2020	Luis Lacalle Pou	Uruguay	South America	2319
08	December 11, 2019	Alberto Fernandez	Argentina	South America	6618
09	January 20, 2021	Joseph R. Biden, Jr	United States	North America	2376
10	August 16, 2020	Luis Abinader	Dominican Republic	North America	5060
11	October 01, 2024	Claudia Sheinbaum	Mexico	North America	4481
12	June 20, 2001	Parvez Musharraf	Pakistan	Asia	921

13	March 13, 2021	Vahagn Khachaturyan	Armenia	Asia	2120
14	July 25, 2017	Ram Nath Kovind	India	Asia	1256
15	October 20,2019	Joko Widodo	Indonesia	Asia	1314
16	June 12, 2019	Kassym Jomart Tokayev	Kazakhstan	Asia	2522
17	July 07, 2021	Isaac Herzog	Israel	Asia	3066
18	November 17, 2018	Ibrahim Mohamed	Maldives	Asia	2012
19	July 10, 2021	Khaltmaagiin Battulga	Mongolia	Asia	584
20	June 30, 2022	Ferdinand Marcos Jr.	Philippines	Asia	2809
21	May 10, 2022	Yoon Suk Yeol	Korea Seoul	Asia	1569
22	May 20, 2022	Jose Ramos Horta	Timor Leste	Asia	3896
23	February 28, 2023	Mr. Nikos Christodoulides	Cyprus	Asia	4649
24	February 14, 2024	Ilham Aliyev	Azerbaijan	Asia	7082
25	November 17, 2013	Margvelashvili	Georgia	Europe	1589
26	December 21, 2023	Sheikh Meshal Al Ahmed Al Jaber Al Sabah	Kuwait	Asia	1033
27	October 31, 2016	Michel Aoun	Lebanon	Asia	1476
28	February 26, 2024	Sheikh Ibrahim Sultan	Malaysia	Asia	1723
29	January 11, 2020	Sultan Haith Bin Tarik	Oman	Asia	1029
30	January 23, 2015	King Salman	Saudi Arabia	Asia	448

31	September 14, 2023	Tharman Shanmugaratnam	Singapore	Asia	1423
32	October 30, 2020	Emomali Rahmon	Tajikistan	Asia	3202
33	July 13, 2022	Sheikh Mohamed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan	United Arab Emirates	Asia	1025
34	November 06, 2008	King Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck	Bhutan	Asia	865
35	March 13, 2023	Xi Jinping	China	Asia	1459
36	May 07, 2000	Vladimir Putin	Russia	Asia	836
37	April 01, 2018	Mr. Mokgweetsi E.K. Masisi	Botswana	Africa	2848
38	September 26, 2017	Jao Lourenco	Angola	Africa	1253
39	November 06, 2018	Paul Biya	Cameroon	Africa	1873
40	June 09, 2014	Abdel Fattah EI Sisi	Egypt	Africa	1076
41	January 07, 2017	Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo Addo	Ghana	Africa	2646
42	September 13, 2022	William Ruto	Kenya	Africa	3960
43	August 11, 2024	Paul Kagame	Rwanda	Africa	967
44	January 22, 2024	Joseph Nyuma Boakai	Liberia	Africa	908
45	August 24, 2021	Hakainde Hichilema	Zambia	Africa	2922
46	February 16, 2018	Cyril Ramaphosa	South Africa	Africa	5769
47	June 27, 2023	Julius Maada Bio	Sierra Leone	Africa	990

48	May 29, 2023	Bola Ahmed Tinubu	Nigeria	Africa	1976
49	November 24, 2017	Emmerson Mnangagwa	Zimbabwe	Africa	2976
50	December 21, 2014	Mr. Klaus Iohannis	Romania	Europe	2346
51	May 15, 2012	Francois Hollande	France	Europe	1113
52	February 13, 2022	Frank Walter Steinmeier	Germany	Europe	2316
53	February 03, 2015	Sergio Mattarella	Italy	Europe	2570
54	March 09, 2006	Anibal Cavaco Silva	Portugal	Europe	4505
55	January 26, 2017	Dr. Alexandar Van der Bellen	Austria	Europe	2175
56	March 01, 2024	Alexander Stubb	Finland	Europe	1576
57	November 11, 2018	Michael D. Higgins	Ireland	Europe	3055
58	August 06, 2015	Mr. Andrzej Duda	Poland	Europe	3014
59	June 15, 2019	Zuzan Caputova	Slovakia	Europe	2797
60	June 19, 2014	King Felipe VI	Spain	Europe	3007
61	May 20, 2019	Volodymyr Zelenskyy	Ukraine	Europe	1486
62	July 08, 2023	Edgars Rinkevics	Latvia	Europe	1826
63	May 31, 2022	Aleksandar Vucic	Serbia	Europe	6637
64	February 18, 2020	Zoran Milanovic	Croatia	Europe	1086
65	April 04, 2024	Myriam Spiteri Debono	Malta	Europe	3109
66	April 30, 2013	King William Alexander	Netherlands	Europe	1434

67	July 12, 2019	Gitanas Nauseda	Lithuania	Europe	1331
68	October 11, 2021	Alar Karis	Estonia	Europe	2526
69	March 09, 2023	Petr Pavel	Czech	Europe	1691
70	January 19, 2022	Rumen Radev	Bulgaria	Europe	3408
71	July 24, 2022	Bajram Begaj	Albania	Europe	1109
72	December 24, 2020	Maia Sandhu	Moldova	Europe	2189
73	May 14, 2022	Katalin Novak	Hungary	Europe	2860
74	November 30, 2021	Dame Sandra Mason	Barbados	North America	1281
75	July 26, 2021	Mary Simon	Canada	North America	1870
76	March 20, 2023	Christine Carla Kangaloo	Trinidad and Tobago	North America	1281