

# A Comparative Analysis of American and Vietnamese Presidents' Speeches: A Systemic Functional Grammar Perspective

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**Abstract**—This study presents a comparative analysis of the inaugural speeches of U.S. President Joe Biden and Vietnamese President To Lam, utilizing Michael Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) framework. By examining the Ideational (Transitivity), Interpersonal (Modality), and Textual (Texture and Cohesion) metafunctions, the study reveals how each leader's linguistic choices mirror the distinct political and cultural contexts of their respective nations. Joe Biden's speech underscores the urgency of immediate action and crisis management, employing Material Processes to stress the importance of unity and national recovery. Conversely, To Lam's speech is rooted in long-term nation-building and the leadership of the Communist Party, with a focus on Relational Processes to reinforce collective responsibility and national unity. The Modality analysis demonstrates Joe Biden's use of High Modality to convey decisiveness and transparency, aligning with American expectations for solid and clear commitments. In contrast, To Lam emphasizes collective duty and the Party's enduring leadership, reflecting Vietnam's socio-political ethos. Additionally, both speeches use Theme-Rheme structures and lexical repetition to ensure textual cohesion, though their cultural and ideological differences lead to distinct rhetorical approaches. By deepening our understanding of how political leaders use language to shape identities, communicate visions, and influence public perception, this study contributes to the broader field of political communication, offering insights into the strategic use of language across different cultural contexts.

**Index Terms**—comparative analysis, Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), transitivity, modality, texture

## I. INTRODUCTION

Presidential speeches, especially inaugural addresses, are significant moments in political discourse. These speeches are potent tools for leaders to communicate with their nations and the world, reflecting national values, aspirations, challenges, and political and cultural identity. This paper aims to conduct a contrastive analysis of the inaugural addresses of American President Joe Biden and Vietnamese President To Lam using Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) to uncover the linguistic strategies employed in their speeches.

Systemic Functional Grammar, developed by Michael Halliday, offers a unique framework for analyzing language within social contexts. SFG views language as a social semiotic system, emphasizing three key metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. The ideational metafunction examines how language represents the speaker's experiences and logical relations. The interpersonal metafunction explores the speaker and listener interaction, revealing social relationships and power dynamics. The textual metafunction focuses on the organization and structure of the text, ensuring cohesion and coherence.

The choice to analyze the inaugural addresses of Joe Biden and To Lam stems from the contrasting political and cultural contexts these leaders represent. Inaugural speeches are pivotal, as they set the tone for a leader's administration and articulate their vision for the nation. Delivered at the start of a leader's term, these speeches provide insights into their priorities, strategies, and rhetorical tools to inspire or mobilize their people.

Joe Biden's inaugural address, delivered on January 20, 2021, was particularly significant. It occurred during profound national crises in the United States, including a global pandemic, racial tensions, economic instability, and political polarization. Joe Biden's speech emphasized unity, democracy, resilience, and collective action, seeking to bridge divides and restore faith in democratic institutions during turbulent times.

In contrast, To Lam's address is deeply embedded in Vietnam's historical and socio-political fabric, celebrating national unity, past leaders' legacies, and aspirations under socialist doctrine. His speech underscored Vietnam's journey through

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historical struggles for independence and ongoing efforts to build a socialist-oriented market economy. It reaffirmed the values of the Communist Party, emphasizing collective effort, national pride, and the continuity of socialist ideals.

By applying SFG to these speeches, this study seeks to uncover both leaders' underlying ideologies, communicative goals, and stylistic nuances. The contrast between Joe Biden's focus on immediate crisis management and unity and To Lam's emphasis on long-term nation-building and ideological continuity highlights the differing priorities shaped by their respective political and cultural contexts. This study contributes to a broader understanding of political communication and the strategic use of language in influencing public perception and guiding policy. Additionally, it sheds light on how language is tailored to resonate within specific cultural and political environments, offering valuable insights into the global practice of leadership through discourse.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. *Previous Studies on Presidential Speeches*

Research on presidential speeches is well-established, with scholars exploring how these addresses reflect national values, assert leadership, and address socio-political challenges. Campbell and Jamieson (2008) highlight that inaugural speeches are crucial in setting the tone for new administrations, often employing rhetorical strategies to unify the nation and establish the president's vision, particularly during crises.

Lim (2012) examines American presidential rhetoric from Franklin D. Roosevelt to Obama, noting shifts in themes and stylistic approaches in response to changing political landscapes. However, Lim's focus on American presidents leaves a gap in understanding how leaders in different cultural and political contexts, such as Vietnam, use rhetoric in their speeches.

Hart (2020) discusses the role of metaphors in shaping public perception, arguing that metaphors are essential for framing political issues. While Hart's analysis is insightful, it primarily addresses U.S. presidents and does not consider how cultural differences might influence rhetorical devices in other political contexts, such as Vietnam.

### B. *Previous Research on Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) and Its Application in Political Language Analysis*

Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) has proven to be a powerful tool for analyzing language within social contexts, particularly in political discourse. SFG, developed by Michael Halliday, focuses on language's ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions, revealing how linguistic choices construct social realities (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

Recent studies, such as those by Li and Zhu (2019), demonstrate the effectiveness of SFG in political discourse analysis, showing how linguistic choices can reveal underlying ideological stances. However, these studies often focus on single-nation contexts, highlighting the need for comparative research to understand differences in political rhetoric across diverse cultures. Kranert (2019) uses SFG to analyze the political discourse of Tony Blair and Gerhard Schröder, exploring how grammatical and semantic elements reflect and reinforce ideologies, cultural values, and power structures. In Vietnam, Nguyen Thi Minh Nguyet (2023) emphasizes that Vietnamese political discourse predominantly employs linguistic strategies to reinforce the Communist Party's leadership role and encourage public participation. Nguyen Thi Minh Nguyet's study highlights the importance of rhetorical devices and linguistic structures in maintaining social stability and national unity. Similarly, Nguyen Thu Hanh and Nguyen Tien Lam (2021) analyzed Barack Obama's speech in Vietnam, finding that using declarative clauses, modal auxiliaries, and personal pronouns helped establish equality and trust between the U.S. and Vietnamese audiences. Their study aligns with Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) findings on the role of grammatical structures in shaping interpersonal relationships in political discourse.

While numerous studies have utilized the Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) framework to analyze the political discourse of leaders from various countries, there remains a gap in comparative research on the inaugural speeches of leaders from culturally and politically distinct contexts, such as the United States and Vietnam. Specifically, more studies need to focus on how leaders use language to reflect and shape power and construct political identity in their inaugural addresses. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by analyzing and comparing the discourse of Joe Biden and To Lam using Halliday's SFG framework.

### C. *Comparative Studies on Language Across Different Cultures*

Comparative linguistic studies emphasize the significance of cultural context in understanding language use. Wierzbicka (2014) argues that understanding cultural scripts is essential for interpreting language nuances across different societies. Her research underscores that language can only be fully understood by considering the cultural values and norms that shape it. However, Wierzbicka's work primarily focuses on everyday language, leaving a gap in applying these insights to political rhetoric.

Ma (2016) conducts an intercultural analysis of meta-discourse markers in Chinese and American political speeches, highlighting distinct rhetorical styles that reflect each country's cultural and political environments. The study reveals that American speeches emphasize individualism and direct communication, while Chinese speeches prioritize collectivism and a more indirect approach.

Gonzalez-Ramos (2023) compares U.S. and Mexican presidential rhetoric, highlighting differences in formality, directness, and rhetorical strategies. This research extends the comparative analysis to an Asian context, examining how

cultural and political differences between the U.S. and Vietnam are reflected in the inaugural speeches of Joe Biden and To Lam.

### III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### A. Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG)

Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), developed by Halliday (1994), is a comprehensive model of grammar that views language as a social semiotic system. SFG posits that language's primary function is to make meaning, and it operates within the contexts of culture and situation. Unlike traditional grammar, which focuses on form, SFG emphasizes the functional aspects of language and how linguistic choices serve different communicative purposes - Language as a social tool for meaning-making (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

SFG is built on three metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. Each metafunction serves a distinct role in the construction of meaning. The ideational metafunction deals with the expression of content and the representation of the external world. It encompasses two main components: the experiential function, which represents events and participants involved, and the logical function, which deals with the relationships between different propositions (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). In other words, it includes transitivity, the system that analyzes processes (Material, Mental, Relational, etc.), participants, and circumstances. Transitivity helps determine how language expresses actions (material), thoughts (mental), or states of being (relational). In political speeches, the transitivity helps analyze how leaders depict events, issues, and policies. For example, the use of material processes (actions) emphasizes a proactive approach, while a relational focus in other speeches could signify ideological positions. (Egins, 2004).

The interpersonal metafunction focuses on the interaction between the speaker and the listener. It concerns the social roles, attitudes, and relationships established through language (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). This function examines aspects such as mood (declarative, interrogative, imperative), modality (degree of certainty, obligation), and appraisal (evaluation of people, events, and things). In political discourse, the interpersonal metafunction can examine how politicians establish authority, express commitment, and engage with their audience. For instance, modality can indicate the speaker's confidence or uncertainty about certain statements, revealing how they position themselves about their audience (Thompson, 2014).

The textual metafunction relates to the text's internal organization and communicative nature. It ensures that the language is cohesive and coherent, making it comprehensible (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). This metafunction investigates themes (what is being talked about), rhemes (what is being said about the theme), and cohesion (lexical and grammatical links). Analyzing the textual metafunction in political speeches can reveal how information is structured to emphasize specific points and guide the audience's understanding. Choosing themes and cohesive devices can highlight critical messages and create a persuasive narrative (Egins, 2004).

#### B. Application of SFG in Political Language Analysis

SFG provides a robust framework for analyzing political language by uncovering how linguistic choices reflect and shape social and ideological contexts. Applying SFG in political discourse analysis involves examining the three metafunctions to understand the multifaceted nature of political communication.

TABLE 1  
APPLICATION OF SFG IN POLITICAL LANGUAGE ANALYSIS

<i>Metafunction Analysis</i>	<i>Examples</i>	<i>Insight</i>
<i>Ideational</i>	Examining material processes in Joe Biden's inaugural address can reveal an emphasis on action and change "We will rebuild", "We must end this uncivil war" (Li & Zhu, 2019).	This analysis shows how leaders construct their vision for the future, depict challenges, and propose solutions.
<i>Interpersonal</i>	Analyzing modality in the Vietnamese President's speech might reveal levels of certainty and obligation when discussing national policies "We must", "It is crucial" (Kranert M., 2019)	This helps in understanding how politicians express authority, build rapport with their audience, and position themselves relative to their listeners.
<i>Textual</i>	Examining thematic structures in both speeches can reveal how each leader prioritizes information. Joe Biden's speech might frequently foreground unity and democracy, while the Vietnamese President might emphasize historical legacy and socialist values. Nguyen Thi Minh Nguyet (2023) discusses how Vietnamese political discourse is deeply embedded in the country's socio-cultural and ideological context, often highlighting themes of national identity, historical continuity, and collective values. Her research demonstrates that these themes are crucial in understanding the rhetorical strategies employed in Vietnamese political discourse, contrasting with the more individualistic and direct approaches often found in American political rhetoric. This comparison underscores the importance of cultural and political contexts in shaping both nations' thematic priorities of political discourse. (Nguyen Thi Minh Nguyet, 2023)	This analysis highlights how coherence and emphasis are achieved, contributing to the overall persuasive effect of the speech.

By applying SFG to political speeches, researchers can gain deeper insights into how language functions as a tool for political leaders to construct identities, convey ideologies, and influence public opinion. This theoretical framework enhances our understanding of political communication and provides a systematic approach to dissecting complex rhetorical strategies.

#### IV. METHODOLOGY

##### A. Data Collection

This study analyzes two inaugural speeches: the inaugural address of U.S. President Joe Biden, delivered on January 20, 2021, and the inaugural address of the President of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, delivered in its original Vietnamese version. The decision to use the Vietnamese version of To Lam's speech while the English version of Joe Biden's is intentional and rooted in the desire to preserve each language's linguistic nuances, cultural connotations, and rhetorical strategies. This approach allows for a more authentic analysis of how each leader uses language to communicate with their respective audiences, which is critical when examining speeches deeply embedded in distinct cultural and political contexts.

While comparing texts in different languages presents particular challenges, including differences in syntax, idiomatic expressions, and cultural references, this study mitigates these challenges by employing translators proficient in both languages to ensure that critical phrases, terms, and concepts are accurately understood and compared. Additionally, the analysis will consider the potential effects of translation on meaning and interpretation, especially when examining linguistic features such as modality, metaphor, and idiom.

##### B. Analytical Framework: Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG)

Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) is employed as the primary analytical framework for this study. SFG is particularly suitable for cross-linguistic analysis, focusing on how language operates within its social context. It allows for a nuanced examination of how leaders use language to achieve their communicative goals. The framework will be applied to English and Vietnamese texts, examining the inherent language structure and cultural expression differences. The following table illustrates the analysis of the metafunctions.

TABLE 2  
ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

<i>Metafunction Analysis</i>	<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Methods</i>
<i>Ideational</i>	To explore how each leader uses language to represent reality, considering processes (actions, events), participants (people, institutions), and circumstances (contexts, reasons) within the speeches.	The analysis will involve breaking down the speeches into clauses and identifying types of processes (material, mental, relational), participants, and circumstances. The analysis of the Vietnamese text will include an exploration of culturally specific concepts and how they are expressed through language, which may differ significantly from English expressions.
<i>Interpersonal</i>	To explore how the leaders establish relationships with their audiences, express attitudes, and build solidarity or authority.	The analysis will focus on mood structures (declarative, interrogative, imperative) and modality (expressing certainty, obligation, inclination). Given the linguistic and cultural differences, special attention will be paid to how modality is expressed differently in Vietnamese compared to English and how these differences might influence the perception of authority and engagement.
<i>Textual</i>	To analyze how the speeches are organized and how coherence and emphasis are achieved.	Thematic analysis will be conducted to identify thematic progression, including how themes and rhemes are structured. In the Vietnamese text, this will also involve understanding the cultural significance of specific thematic structures that may not have direct equivalents in English.

##### C. Comparative Analysis

The final step involves a comprehensive comparative analysis of the findings of both speeches from the SFG analysis. Despite the differences in language, this comparison will provide insights into the similarities and differences in how each leader strategically uses language to achieve their communicative goals. The analysis will focus on several key aspects. First, in terms of Themes and Ideological Constructs, the analysis will examine how each speech reflects their respective countries' ideological stance and national values. Special care will be taken to account for how these themes are expressed differently in English and Vietnamese due to linguistic and cultural variations. Regarding the Audience Engagement, the differences in how each leader interacts with their audience, whether by fostering a sense of solidarity or asserting authority will be highlighted. The analysis will consider how pronouns, modality, and rhetorical strategies differ between the languages and what implications these differences might have for audience perception. For Textual Structure, the analysis will focus on how information is organized, presented, and emphasized, considering the linguistic differences between English and Vietnamese that influence the overall persuasive impact of each speech.

This methodological approach, deeply rooted in SFG, allows for a nuanced understanding of the linguistic strategies employed by both leaders. It offers valuable insights into the broader socio-political contexts and cultural narratives that shape these significant political discourses. By engaging with existing literature and applying SFG across languages, this

study contributes to cross-linguistic discourse analysis. It deepens our understanding of how language reflects and shapes political power across cultures.

## V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A. Ideational Metafunction - Transitivity Analysis

#### (a) Transitivity in Joe Biden's Speech

In Joe Biden's speech, the Transitivity analysis reveals a predominance of Material and Relational Processes. The transitivity verbs in Joe Biden's speech are predominantly action-oriented, reflecting his proactive stance as a leader committed to addressing the country's challenges. Verbs like *rebuild*, *repair*, *restore*, and *defend* convey a sense of urgency and determination, suggesting that his administration will take concrete steps to restore what has been lost or damaged—the economy, alliances, or democratic values. Verbs such as *heal*, *unite* and *confront* highlight Joe Biden's focus on mending the deep divisions within the country. These verbs are about addressing problems and bringing people together in a collective effort to overcome them. Using these verbs, Joe Biden positions his administration as one that will actively work to bridge divides and heal the wounds inflicted on the nation. The frequent use of *defend* and *secure* indicates prioritizing and safeguarding the nation's values and institutions. Joe Biden repeatedly emphasizes the need to protect the Constitution, democracy, and the future of America. This defensive posture is crucial given the context of his inauguration following the Capitol insurrection and reflects a commitment to preserving the nation's integrity. Verbs like *rise*, *overcome* and *celebrate* reflect Joe Biden's optimistic vision for the future. These verbs suggest that while the nation has faced significant challenges, there is hope and opportunity for renewal and progress. The choice of these verbs conveys confidence in the nation's ability to move forward and triumph over adversity. The use of *honour*, *commit*, and *teach* reflects the theme of collective responsibility. Joe Biden's speech often shifts from what his administration will do to what the nation as a whole must do. By emphasizing these actions, Joe Biden calls on all Americans to participate in rebuilding and healing the nation, reinforcing the idea that achieving progress is a shared responsibility.

This emphasis on material processes aligns with findings from Lim's (2012) and Halliday's (1994) study, which demonstrated that U.S. Presidents often use such processes to encourage action and propose concrete solutions to national issues and material processes are often used in political discourse to express action and intention, thus motivating collective action and support. However, Joe Biden's speech distinguishes itself by emphasizing unity and the collective overcoming of crises, reflecting the unique political and social context of the United States at the time. In addition to material processes, Joe Biden also strategically uses relational processes to build a more engaging and humane leadership image. This approach, in contrast to Hart's (2020) findings, suggests that U.S. Presidents typically focus on establishing a robust and authoritative image through language, emphasizing the collective nature of Joe Biden's leadership. For instance, Joe Biden's use of relational processes, such as "*we are a nation of...*" or "*our democracy is...*," reinforces a sense of shared identity and common purpose, thereby fostering national unity and solidarity. This dual focus on action and relationship-building not only reflects Joe Biden's immediate priorities but also aligns with his broader vision of leading the country through empathy and collective effort.

Overall, the transitivity verbs in Joe Biden's inaugural address are carefully chosen to convey a message of action, unity, defense, and renewal. They reflect his priorities as a leader who is focused not only on addressing the immediate challenges facing the nation but also on guiding it toward a brighter, more unified future. These verbs play a crucial role in setting the tone of the speech, emphasizing that the work ahead requires collective effort, resilience, and determination.

#### (b) Transitivity in To Lam's Speech

In To Lam's speech, Relational Processes are dominant, emphasizing the relationship between social components and the leadership of the Communist Party. To Lam uses numerous action verbs to emphasize his commitment to the specific activities he and his government will undertake. Verbs such as "*lãnh đạo*" (*lead*) "*Bảo vệ*" (*protect*), "*phát triển*" (*develop*), and "*xây dựng*" (*build*) not only reflect the tasks he will assume but also convey a clear vision of the concrete steps necessary to achieve these goals. (Sentences like "*We will build a rule-of-law state*" and "*I commit to developing the country in all aspects*" highlight specific actions and long-term plans, aligning with his role as a leader who actively manages and directs). Verbs like "*bảo vệ*" (*protect*), "*đấu tranh*" (*fight*), and "*triển khai*" (*implement*) appear frequently in the speech, indicating that one of To Lam's top priorities is protecting national sovereignty and defense. This not only reflects his role as a senior leader in the security apparatus but also underscores the importance of maintaining national stability and safety. ("*We must protect national independence and sovereignty*" and "*We will implement new security measures*" are sentences that emphasize the necessity of safeguarding and preserving the country's independence).

In addition, To Lam focuses on verbs such as "*phát triển*" (*develop*), "*xây dựng*" (*build*), and "*kiến tạo*" (*create*) to express his commitment to the comprehensive development of the country. These verbs reflect a vision of a modern, developed, and prosperous Vietnam, where all sectors, from the economy and culture to the legal system, are given attention and investment. (Sentences like "*I commit to developing the country in all aspects*" and "*We will build a rule-of-law state*" emphasize comprehensive and holistic development in economic terms and social and political aspects). Verbs like "*củng cố*" (*strengthen*) and "*nâng cao*" (*enhance*) highlight the importance of building and maintaining national solidarity, a crucial factor in achieving national goals. The emphasis on unity and the great national solidarity block shows

that To Lam views this as the foundation for Vietnam's development and prosperity. (Sentences like *"I will strengthen the power of the great national solidarity block"* and *"We will enhance the quality of life for the people"* demonstrate concern for social aspects, aiming to build a robust and cohesive community.) This linguistic strategy is consistent with previous studies on political language in Vietnam, where Party leadership and social cohesion are often emphasized. As Nguyen Thi Minh Nguyet (2023) highlighted, Relational Processes are frequently employed in political speeches to reinforce the Party's leadership role and its connection with the people.

Compared to Western leaders like Joe Biden, who predominantly uses Material Processes to drive immediate and concrete actions, To Lam's reliance on Relational Processes underscores a more strategic, long-term vision focused on maintaining stability and continuity in leadership. This approach reflects Vietnam's socio-political context, where the emphasis is on collective responsibility and the enduring role of the Party in guiding the nation's development. Such language reinforces the Party's authority and fosters a sense of unity and shared purpose among the Vietnamese people, further entrenching the Party's central role in the nation's political and social fabric.

### (c). Comparative Analysis

TABLE 3  
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF TRANSITIVITY IN JOE BIDEN'S AND TO LAM'S SPEECHES

<i>Ideational Metafunction Analysis</i>	<i>Similarity</i>	<i>Differences</i>
<i>Joe Biden's transitivity</i>	Both speeches use Material Processes to convey actions necessary for national development, but with different purposes. Joe Biden focuses on actions to solve immediate crises, while To Lam emphasizes building and protecting the country in the long term.	Joe Biden focuses on immediate actions and overcoming crises, which is consistent with previous studies on the leadership styles of US Presidents, such as Lim (2012) and Hart (2020). He uses Material Processes to encourage specific and strong actions, while using Relational Processes to build a positive and cohesive image for the United States.
<i>To Lam's transitivity</i>		To Lam focuses on social cohesion and the leadership of the Communist Party. Relational Processes prevail to emphasize the unity and leadership of the Party, while Material Processes are used to convey long-term strategic goals. This linguistic approach aligns with Nguyen Thi Minh Nguyet's (2023) findings, highlighting that Vietnamese political discourse is often shaped to emphasize leadership authority. By doing so, To Lam affirms the Party's leadership role and sets the direction for the nation's long-term objectives, consistent with the core values of Vietnamese political discourse."

The transitivity analysis of the two speeches highlights the differences in each leader's approach and reflects the differences in the political and social cultures of the United States and Vietnam. Joe Biden focuses on immediate action and unity to overcome crises, while To Lam emphasizes stable leadership and social cohesion under the Communist Party's guidance. These findings are consistent with previous studies but offer new insights into how language serves different political objectives in various national contexts.

### B. Interpersonal Metafunction - Modality Analysis

#### (a). Modality in Joe Biden's Speech

The analysis of modality in Joe Biden's inaugural speech reveals a strategic use of modal verbs to convey a blend of certainty, determination, and realistic expectations. The frequent use of the modal verb *will* underscores Joe Biden's strong commitment to future actions and his determination to address the nation's challenges head-on. (*"We will overcome this deadly virus."*). Additionally, phrases like *shall* reflect a high level of certainty and resolve, reinforcing the administration's unwavering stance on critical issues. While *will* and *shall* convey certainty, Joe Biden strategically employs modality verbs like *can*, *might*, and *could* to discuss possibilities and potential actions. (*"We shall write an American story of hope, not fear."*). These expressions acknowledge that while specific outcomes are hoped for, they are only guaranteed with collective effort and unity. Modals such as *must*, *need to*, and *have to* emphasize further the urgency and non-negotiable nature of addressing critical issues, such as ending division and combating the pandemic. (*"We need to be different than this."* or *"We have to be different."*). In his inaugural speech, Joe Biden frequently uses modality to express certainty and possibility. He uses *"can"* to emphasize the nation's potential: *"We can right wrongs"* and *"We can make America once again the leading force for good"*, portraying the U.S. as capable of change. Furthermore, Biden stresses necessity through *"must"*, as in *"We must set aside politics and face the pandemic as one nation"*, reinforcing urgent collective action. This blend of high and medium modalities reflects his strategic leadership during a crisis. Moreover, Joe Biden's use of hypothetical and conditional statements with modals *would* explore potential scenarios and consequences, suggesting what could happen depending on whether specific actions are taken. Though less frequent, modals expressing ability (*be able to*) and permission (*may*) also appear, indicating the capacity to act or the possibility of future challenges. Overall, this expanded analysis of modality in Joe Biden's speech demonstrates how he balances expressing certainty and determination with recognizing the complexities of potential challenges. (*"We will be able to face this pandemic together."* or *"We may face tough times ahead."*). These modal expressions help to convey the administration's commitment to action while setting realistic expectations for the nation's path forward.

This analysis aligns with previous studies on how U.S. Presidents use Modality to assert authority and persuade the public. Lim (2012) noted that American Presidents often use high-decibel language to build a strong leadership image. Joe Biden continues this trend but places a strong emphasis on unity, fostering a sense of connection among the American people and the need for immediate action, reflecting the specific socio-political context of the United States at that time. Furthermore, the combination of High Modality and Medium Modality in Joe Biden’s speech is consistent with Eggins’ (2004) studies on how language is used to create space for hope and future possibilities. This allows Joe Biden to demonstrate unwavering certainty in his commitments, providing the public with a sense of reassurance and confidence in the national recovery process. This is also consistent with Fairclough’s (1995) view that modality in political discourse is a tool for constructing identities and legitimizing actions.

(b). *Modality in To Lam's Speech*

In To Lam’s inaugural address, the frequent use of the modal verb "sẽ" (*will*) underscores his strong commitment and certainty regarding future actions and goals. This consistent usage highlights his determination to achieve his objectives during his term. For example, in the phrase "Tôi sẽ bảo vệ Hiến pháp và pháp luật của nước Cộng hòa Xã hội chủ nghĩa Việt Nam" ("I will protect the Constitution and laws of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam"), To Lam demonstrates a high level of responsibility and decisiveness in fulfilling his duties. Additionally, the use of "phải" (*must*) and "cần phải" (*need to*) reflects the necessity and obligation associated with crucial tasks, particularly in areas like national sovereignty and public welfare. These expressions emphasize the non-negotiable nature of these responsibilities, with statements such as "Chúng ta phải bảo vệ nền độc lập và chủ quyền quốc gia" ("We must protect national independence and sovereignty") underscoring the imperative nature of these actions. Conversely, the expression "có thể" (*can*) introduces a sense of possibility and optimism, suggesting that significant goals are within reach with collective effort. To Lam also employs the modal "nên" (*should*) to offer recommendations, showing flexibility in approach while fostering creative solutions to strategic challenges. This is complemented by using "không thể" (*cannot*) to define clear boundaries and reinforce values that are considered non-negotiable. For instance, the statement "Chúng ta không thể để những thách thức làm suy yếu tinh thần đoàn kết" ("We cannot allow challenges to weaken the spirit of solidarity") highlights his resolve to maintain national unity despite ongoing difficulties. In To Lam’s speech, modality conveys a strong sense of commitment and obligation. The use of "sẽ" in "Tôi xin hứa sẽ thực hiện nghiêm túc đầy đủ nhiệm vụ..." illustrates his pledge to fulfil responsibilities with certainty. Additionally, "phải" in "Chúng ta phải bảo vệ nền độc lập và chủ quyền quốc gia" emphasizes non-negotiable national duties. Through "kính mong", as in "Tôi kính mong nhận được sự chỉ đạo..." he politely requests cooperation, demonstrating how politeness and obligation are central to his leadership approach. Together, these modal expressions create a comprehensive picture of To Lam’s leadership, blending firm commitments with realistic assessments and strategic advisories.

The analysis of To Lam’s speech is consistent with the findings of Nguyen Thu Hanh and Nguyen Tien Lam (2021), who explored the use of Modality in political speeches within the Vietnamese context. Their study reveals that Modality strengthens the Party’s leadership and encourages collective participation. The emphasis on responsibility and duty reflects the Vietnamese political system and aims to preserve social stability and national unity. In contrast to Western leaders like Joe Biden, who use Modality to assert personal authority and individual action, To Lam utilizes it to affirm collective leadership and shared duty, in alignment with Vietnam’s socialist ideology. This distinct use of Modality underscores the cultural and political differences in how leaders from Vietnam and the West approach governance.

(c). *Comparative Analysis*

TABLE 4  
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF MODALITY IN JOE BIDEN’S AND TO LAM’S SPEECHES

Interpersonal Metafunction Analysis	Similarity	Differences
Joe Biden’s modality	Both Joe Biden and To Lam use high modality to convey strong commitment and determination to act. This finding is consistent with previous studies by Lim (2012) and Nguyen Thu Hanh and Nguyen Tien Lam (2021), where Modality plays a crucial role in building a leadership image and persuading the public.	Joe Biden uses High Modality to emphasize immediate and decisive action in a crisis context, aligning with Lim (2012) and Eggins (2004) on leadership language in the United States. The use of high modality verbs asserts his personal authority and capability, positioning himself as a decisive leader who will take action on behalf of the people. Besides, Joe Biden combines High Modality with Medium Modality to balance capability and responsibility, reflecting the American expectation of strong, clear leadership during times of national difficulty, with an emphasis on unity and recovery.
To Lam’s modality		To Lam uses High Modality to emphasize collective responsibility and duty to the Party and the nation. His use of modality is less about immediate action and more about reinforcing long-term responsibilities and commitments reflecting the socialist ideology where the Party’s leadership is paramount, and the people are seen as integral partners in nation-building. The modality use here, thus strengthens the collective authority of the Party, emphasizing that political power is shared and that it is the duty of all citizens to contribute to the nation’s goals under the Party’s guidance. This difference highlights the distinct approaches to leadership and power in the two political systems.

The Modality analysis of the two speeches reveals how the leaders use language to convey commitment and responsibility while also reflecting their respective nations' cultural and political values. Joe Biden uses language to emphasize decisiveness and hope for national unity, whereas To Lam focuses on the Party's leadership and the people's collective responsibility. The differences in Modality usage between the two speeches reflect the differences in political systems and the cultural and social values of the United States and Vietnam, consistent with previous studies.

### C. Textual Metafunction - Texture and Cohesion Analysis

#### (a). Texture in Joe Biden's Speech

In Joe Biden's speech, the textual structure (texture) is coherently constructed and highly cohesive, creating a logical and easy-to-follow flow from beginning to end. Joe Biden employs various devices such as Theme-Rheme structure, repetition, and conjunctions to ensure the speech is well-integrated and easily understood. Concerning with the Theme-Rheme structure, Joe Biden frequently uses themes like "We," "Our democracy," and "Unity" at the beginning of sentences to introduce main ideas and then develops these themes through the theme of the sentence. This creates strong cohesion between sentences and helps the audience easily follow the logical flow of the speech. Besides, Joe Biden repeats words such as "unity," "democracy," and "hope" multiple times to emphasize critical themes and create continuity throughout the speech. This reinforces the message and generates a sense of consistency and coherence. In his speech, the use of conjunctions like "and," "but," and "therefore" links ideas and creates coherence in presenting arguments. This allows Joe Biden to guide the audience logically and smoothly through different parts of the speech.

Joe Biden's use of the Theme-Rheme structure aligns with previous studies on how U.S. Presidents use language to create cohesion in important speeches. For example, Hart (2020) found that leaders often use structural devices to reinforce their message and establish a logical flow in their speeches. Joe Biden's use of repetition and conjunctions also parallels what Eggins (2004) described about how linguistic devices are employed to create coherent and integrated texts. In the cultural context of the United States, coherence and clarity in message delivery are essential for building trust and connection with the public. Joe Biden's use of structural devices makes his speech easily understandable and creates a sense of consistency and reliability, which is crucial when the nation needs unity.

In Joe Biden's inaugural speech, cohesion devices are crucial in creating a unified and coherent message. He frequently uses conjunctions like "and," "but," and "because" to link ideas and establish logical connections between them. These devices ensure the smooth flow of the speech and reinforce the key themes. For instance, when Joe Biden states, "We must end this uncivil war that pits red against blue, rural versus urban, conservative versus liberal. We can do this if we open our souls instead of hardening our hearts," the use of "and" and "if" effectively connects contrasting elements and underscores the conditional nature of overcoming division. Additionally, the repetition of phrases like "We will" serves as an anaphoric cohesion device, enhancing the speech's rhythm and emphasizing Joe Biden's commitment to collective future actions as described by Wodak and Meyer (2016) to connect contrasting elements and emphasizes the conditions necessary for overcoming division. Additionally, the repetition of phrases like "We will" serves as an anaphoric cohesion device, reinforcing thematic continuity and rhythm, which aligns with Fairclough's (2015) analysis of how cohesion contributes to the overall structure and impact of political discourse. Besides, pronoun usage in Joe Biden's speech is instrumental in fostering a sense of inclusivity and collective responsibility. Frequently using the pronoun "we" is a deliberate choice to emphasize that the nation's challenges are shared, and the solutions require a united effort. Joe Biden employs "we" to refer to himself and his administration and include all Americans, creating a collective identity. For example, in the statement, "We will press forward with speed and urgency, for we have much to do in this winter of peril and possibility," Joe Biden uses "we" to draw everyone into the mission of rebuilding the nation. By consistently choosing "we" over "I," Joe Biden shifts the focus from individual leadership to a collective endeavour, reinforcing his message of unity and cooperation at a time when the nation is deeply divided.

#### (b). Texture in To Lam's Speech

In To Lam's speech, the textual structure also demonstrates a high level of cohesion and coherence, but it is tailored to Vietnam's cultural and political context. To Lam uses the Theme-Rheme structure to emphasize core values such as the leadership of the Communist Party and the unity of the people. In term of the Theme-Rheme structure, themes like "Communist Party," "Vietnamese people," and "Unity" are frequently used as the starting point in sentences, with the rheme often related to the nation's tasks and achievements. This creates a logical and focused flow, helping the audience grasp the critical points To Lam aims to convey. In his speech, To Lam frequently repeats words and phrases like "Party," "People," and "Unity" to emphasize the role of the Party and the unity of the people in building and protecting the nation. This repetition reinforces the message and creates strong connections between different parts of the speech. In addition, To Lam's speech uses conjunctions to link key arguments and create a coherent flow. Conjunctions like "and," "but," and "therefore" help guide the audience through different sections of the speech in a logical and unified manner.

In To Lam's inaugural speech, cohesion devices such as conjunctions and repetition create a clear and unified message. Conjunctions like "và" (and), "nhưng" (but), and "do đó" (therefore) effectively connect ideas, ensuring a logical flow within the speech. For instance, in the statement, "Dưới sự lãnh đạo của Đảng và sự đồng lòng của toàn dân, chúng ta sẽ cùng nhau vượt qua mọi thách thức" ("Under the leadership of the Party and the unity of the people, we will overcome all challenges together"), the use of "và" (and) links the leadership with the unity of the people, emphasizing their

combined strength. Additionally, the repetition of phrases like "*Chúng ta sẽ*" ("*We will*") reinforces the speaker's commitment to collective action, creating rhythm and emphasizing key themes.

Pronouns play a vital role in To Lam's speech, particularly the use of "*chúng ta*" (*we*), which fosters a sense of collective responsibility and unity. This inclusive "*we*" brings together the leadership and the people, emphasizing shared duties, such as in the statement, "*Chúng ta phải bảo vệ nền độc lập và chủ quyền quốc gia*" ("*We must protect national independence and sovereignty*"). The strategic use of "*chúng ta*" creates a collective identity, while occasional contrasts with "*Tôi*" (*I*) balance personal responsibility with collective action. This approach aligns with Fairclough's (2015) observation that shifting between "*I*" and "*we*" in political discourse effectively engages the audience in a shared mission.

The textual structure in To Lam's speech reflects a focus on national stability and unity, using structural devices to emphasize the role of the Communist Party and the solidarity of the people. In Vietnam's cultural context, emphasizing unity and the Party's role through structural devices like repetition and the Theme-Rheme structure helps create coherence. It strengthens the relationship between leadership and the people, fostering a sense of continuity and trust, which is crucial for maintaining national stability and development.

### (c). Comparative Analysis

TABLE 5  
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF TEXTURE IN JOE BIDEN'S AND TO LAM'S SPEECHES

Textual Metafunction Analysis	Similarity	Differences
Joe Biden's texture	Both Joe Biden and To Lam use Theme-Rheme structure and repetition to ensure their speeches have coherent and consistent structures. This aligns with previous studies by Hart (2020) and Eggins (2004), where leaders often employ linguistic devices to create integrated and easily understandable texts.	Joe Biden uses structural devices like conjunctions and the Theme-Rheme structure to create a logical and clear flow, fitting the cultural context of the United States, where clarity and consistency are crucial for effective communication.
To Lam's texture		To Lam's speech reflects Vietnam's unique political context, emphasizing national unity and stability. The use of repetition and the Theme-Rheme structure reinforces the role of the Communist Party and the unity of the people, which are central to Vietnam's political ideology.

The analysis of Texture and Lexical Cohesion underscores the diverse approaches of leaders in using language to reflect their nations' cultural and political values. Joe Biden's use of structural devices emphasizes the need for immediate action and national unity, while To Lam's speech, with similar devices, reinforces the role of the Communist Party and the unity of the people, in line with Vietnam's political and cultural system. These differences not only reflect variations in language use but also in the cultural values and priorities of each nation.

## VI. CONCLUSION

This study conducted a comprehensive analysis of the speeches delivered by U.S. President Joe Biden and Vietnamese President To Lam using Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) framework. The focus was on three core aspects: Ideational Metafunction through Transitivity Analysis, Interpersonal Metafunction through Modality Analysis, and Textual Metafunction through Texture and Cohesion. The analysis has revealed how each leader utilizes language to communicate their messages, highlighting the profound impact of their linguistic choices, which are deeply rooted in the distinct cultural and political contexts of the United States and Vietnam.

In the Transitivity Analysis, both Joe Biden and To Lam employ Material Processes to underscore the importance of action, yet they do so with different objectives. Joe Biden's speech is characterized by an emphasis on immediate actions aimed at addressing national crises, reflecting the urgent need for resolution and unity in the face of challenges. This approach is indicative of the American political environment, where quick and decisive action is often valued. In contrast, To Lam's speech focuses on long-term nation-building and the protection of national sovereignty. His use of Material Processes is more strategic, reflecting a commitment to the enduring stability and development of Vietnam. This difference in focus underscores the varying political and cultural priorities of the two nations, with Joe Biden's rhetoric geared towards crisis management and To Lam's towards sustained national development.

The Modality analysis further distinguishes the two leaders' linguistic strategies. Joe Biden frequently uses High Modality, employing strong modal verbs such as "will" and "must" to convey decisiveness and a firm commitment to resolving national issues. This linguistic choice aligns with the expectations of the American public, who often look to their leaders for clear, decisive action and transparency. Joe Biden's use of High Modality serves to reassure the audience of his capability and determination in addressing the country's challenges. On the other hand, To Lam's use of Modality is designed to emphasize collective responsibility and duty towards the Communist Party and the nation. His speech reflects Vietnam's political culture, where the leadership of the Party and the unity of the people are paramount. By using Modality to express obligation and duty, To Lam reinforces the importance of collective effort in achieving national goals, a theme central to Vietnamese political discourse.

Finally, the texture and cohesion analysis reveals that both speeches are constructed using effective linguistic devices such as Theme-Rheme structure and repetition, which contribute to the coherence and consistency of the textual structures.

Joe Biden's speech, however, places a stronger emphasis on clarity and coherence in delivering his message, ensuring that the audience can easily follow and engage with his vision for the nation. This focus on clear communication is particularly important in the context of the United States, where public engagement and understanding are critical to garnering support. Conversely, To Lam uses similar textual devices to reinforce the role of the Communist Party and the unity of the Vietnamese people. His speech is less about clarity for immediate comprehension and more about affirming the ideological tenets that underpin Vietnam's political system, thereby fostering a sense of unity and collective purpose among the listeners.

The findings of this study not only provide valuable insights into the linguistic strategies of these two leaders but also pave the way for further research. Future studies could explore additional speeches from leaders in different cultural and political contexts, expanding the analysis to include semantic and stylistic aspects. Examining the evolution of a leader's language throughout their political career offers another promising research avenue. Additionally, the use of modern linguistic analysis tools, such as big data analysis, could yield deeper and more nuanced insights into global political discourse, enriching our understanding of the intersection between language and politics.

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