

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses five components of the research introduction, namely the background of the research, the statement of problems, the research purposes, the research significances, and the clarification of key terms.

1.1 Background of Research

The contemporary digital era has transformed the way communication operates across societies. Communication is no longer dominated solely by formal institutions such as governments or political leaders but has expanded into various cultural and symbolic platforms that reach global audiences (Castells, 2015). This shift shows that influence is constructed not only through authority, but also through performance, representation, and public visibility. As a result, the way messages are delivered becomes as important as the messages themselves, since communication involves both content and the strategic use of language to shape meaning, attitude, and social intention (Wardhaugh, 2006; Kondowe, 2014).

One cultural platform that clearly reflects this phenomenon is the international beauty pageant. Beauty pageants, particularly Miss Grand International (MGI), have developed beyond emphasizing physical appearance and now function as a space for advocacy, public speaking, and the expression of social values. Established in 2013 and headquartered in Thailand, MGI is one of the relatively recent yet rapidly growing global beauty pageants. The competition promotes the campaign “Stop the War and Violence,” which distinguishes it from other pageants through its explicit focus on peace advocacy. Contestants are evaluated not only based on appearance, but also on their ability to communicate ideas, express opinions, and respond to global issues.

At the final stage of the competition, selected contestants are placed in the Top 10 and are required to deliver short speeches before an international audience. These speeches are carefully constructed performances that reflect contestants’ perspectives, values, and awareness of global concerns. Therefore, beauty pageant

speeches, particularly in MGI, can be understood as a distinctive form of public discourse within popular culture.

The Top 10 Miss Grand International 2025 speeches, representing contestants from Colombia, the Czech Republic, Ghana, Guatemala, Mexico, the Philippines, Spain, Tanzania, Thailand, and Venezuela, provide a meaningful corpus for linguistic analysis. These finalists come from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds while responding to a shared global platform. Such diversity reflects the construction of a shared cultural space where universal values are negotiated through language (Bhabha, 2012). Although the speeches are relatively brief, each sentence is carefully selected to persuade an international audience, making every linguistic choice significant in shaping meaning, attitude, and positioning.

Beyond geographical diversity, the Top 10 finalists of Miss Grand International 2025 also demonstrate varied educational, professional, and advocacy backgrounds, representing fields such as media and journalism, psychology, performing arts, business economics, architecture, fine arts, and veterinary science. This diversity is important because it influences how each contestant constructs their speech, expresses attitudes, and engages with global issues. Their advocacy themes are equally varied, ranging from anti-corruption, mental health awareness, and digital literacy, to peacebuilding, environmental protection, and inclusive education. These differences shape how they construct meaning, express attitudes, and position themselves toward global issues. Therefore, their speeches provide a relevant and rich dataset for analysing interpersonal meaning within a global and performative context.

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) provides an appropriate framework to examine how meaning is constructed in these speeches. This approach views language as a resource for meaning making within social contexts rather than as a set of formal rules. Language simultaneously realizes three metafunctions: ideational meaning, interpersonal meaning, and textual meaning (Halliday and

Matthiessen, 2014). This study focuses on interpersonal meaning to explore how speakers position themselves, their audiences, and the issues they address.

Interpersonal meaning relates to how social relationships are created and maintained through language. Speakers use language to express attitudes, judgments, and degrees of commitment (Halliday, 2014). Within beauty pageant speeches, this aspect becomes especially important because contestants must persuade, inspire, and connect with a global audience within a limited time. Mood and modality are key elements in realizing interpersonal meaning. The mood system consists of declarative, imperative, and interrogative forms, which correspond to statement, command, question, and offer (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014). Modality expresses the speaker's judgment in terms of probability, obligation, or inclination, and can appear at different degrees (Eggins, 2004).

Interpersonal meaning has also been widely examined across literary and public discourse. Ijam and Al-Ameedi (2024) analyse interpersonal meaning within a psychological novel, examining 1,606 sentences from Gemma Metcalfe's *A Gripping Psychological Thriller: A Mother's Sacrifice*. They find that declarative clauses dominate the narrative with 1,370 occurrences (85.30%), compared to only 150 interrogative (9.34%) and 86 imperative clauses (5.36%), while modality appears 317 times (19.74% per sentence) with modalization (52.05%) slightly outweighing modulation (47.95%). Within modalization, the probability scale is overwhelmingly dominant (97.58%), particularly the certainty degree (41.62%), which expresses the protagonist's fear and doubt about losing her son; within modulation, the obligation scale prevails (65.13%), reflecting how external pressure and obligation shape the mother's choices throughout the sacrifice narrative. Likewise, Ashiq et al. (2021) show that declarative mood within political speeches functions to build credibility, analysing Imran Khan's 2019 address at the World Government Summit in Dubai through a mixed qualitative-quantitative Mood-system approach, finding that declarative clauses dominate to present factual claims and project authority, while modality reflects the speaker's stance through varying degrees of certainty and obligation. Studies on public speeches further confirm that

declarative mood and medium-degree modality help balance authority and inclusiveness (Nurani, Mulyadi, and Sari, 2022), whose analysis of Tim Cook's speeches found declarative clauses to dominate among the two mood types identified (indicative and imperative), with the modal auxiliary "would" as the single most frequent modality marker—indicating an unequal, hierarchic tenor and maximal social distance from the audience, realised through consistently formal expressions. Meanwhile, low-degree modality can promote solidarity and shared commitment (Syamsidar, Yatismikasari, and Nurraachman, 2019), whose study of Soekarno's speech at the first 1955 Asian-African Conference found declarative clauses to be overwhelmingly dominant, arguing that this mood choice enacts the conference's central theme of solidarity and brotherhood among newly independent Asian and African nations rather than asserting unilateral authority.

Similarly, several undergraduate studies have explored interpersonal meaning across various types of discourse. Hidayat, Sabrina Ainnur (2025) examines interpersonal meaning in social media captions, analysing 101 clauses drawn from 27 Instagram captions posted by the news account @Folkative between March 25–30, 2025. The study finds that declarative mood dominates with 72 clauses, followed by 15 imperative, 13 interrogative, and a single exclamative clause, showing that the account primarily functions to deliver statements of information while using interrogatives to invite readers' opinions and imperatives to prompt action fostering an interactive relationship visible in the comment section. Similarly, Ramdhan, Dede Ahmad (2024) investigates interpersonal meaning in digital video discourse, focusing on Felix Kjellberg's apology video "My Response," released after a Wall Street Journal accusation of antisemitism. Using a descriptive qualitative method with purposive sampling based on speech purpose, the study finds that Kjellberg combines declarative clauses with varying degrees of modality to narrate his side of the story, while interrogative and imperative moods are used to interact with and build closeness with his audience, ultimately serving to express commitment and gratitude and to reshape the audience's judgment of him.

Despite the growing number of studies on interpersonal meaning, research focusing on beauty pageant speeches remains limited. This gap is important because beauty pageants function as global cultural platforms that influence public perception. Therefore, examining beauty pageant speeches provides a relevant and underexplored area for understanding how language operates in contemporary public discourse. This study aims to analyse interpersonal meaning through mood and modality in the Top 10 Miss Grand International 2025 final speeches. By applying the Systemic Functional Linguistics framework, this research seeks to explain how contestants construct persuasion, express attitudes, and position themselves in relation to a global audience. The findings are expected to contribute to discourse studies by extending interpersonal meaning analysis into popular cultural contexts and by showing how language functions as a persuasive tool.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Miss Grand International features short speeches delivered by contestants as part of its competition. These beauty pageant speeches function as a distinct form of public performance, requiring participants to communicate ideas, project credibility, and engage audiences within a limited time. This study focuses on how such speeches are linguistically constructed as a specific genre of public discourse.

These conditions make every linguistic choice more deliberate, as contestants must convey meaning while simultaneously positioning themselves in relation to a global audience. This highlights the importance of examining how language functions not only to deliver messages but also to construct interpersonal relations within a performance-based setting.

Using the Systemic Functional Linguistics framework of M.A.K. Halliday (2014), this research examines how interpersonal meaning is realized through mood and modality. Since beauty pageant speeches have received limited attention in interpersonal analysis, this study analyses the Top 10 Miss Grand International 2025 speeches to understand how contestants construct interpersonal meaning in this

performance-based context. Accordingly, the research questions of this study are formulated as follows:

1. What is the selection of mood and modality in the Top 10 Miss Grand International 2025 speeches?
2. How does this selection reflect each contestant's interpersonal meaning toward the subject matter?

1.3 Research Purpose

Based on the formulation of the problems above, the purposes of this study are as follows:

1. To identify the selection of Mood and Modality types employed by the Top 10 Miss Grand International 2025 contestants in their speeches.
2. To analyse how the selection of mood and modality reflects the interpersonal meaning enacted by each contestant toward the subject matter.

1.4 Research Significance

Theoretically, this study aims to contribute to the field of discourse analysis through the lens of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), particularly in deepening the understanding of how mood and modality construct interpersonal meaning in spoken discourse. Beyond reinforcing existing theoretical frameworks, this study extends their application to a relatively underexplored context beauty pageant speeches thereby bridging the gap between abstract linguistic theory and authentic language use. Additionally, the findings may benefit English language teaching by offering concrete examples of how mood and modality operate in real communicative settings, helping learners grasp how attitude and intention are expressed grammatically.

Practically, this study provides meaningful insights for multiple audiences. For general readers, it raises awareness of how linguistic choices shape the delivery and interpretation of public messages. For students, it serves as a practical reference

for developing more effective and persuasive communication, while also encouraging critical thinking in analysing everyday language. For future researchers, this study offers a foundation for further exploration within SFL, whether by applying alternative theoretical perspectives, expanding the analytical scope, or examining other discourse types. Ultimately, this study seeks to enrich ongoing developments in linguistic research and broaden the horizons of discourse analysis in contemporary contexts.

1.5 Clarification of Key Terms

This section clarifies the key terms that are frequently used throughout this research to avoid misunderstandings and ensure a shared understanding of the concepts discussed.

1. Systemic Functional Linguistics is a theoretical framework examining the relationship between language and its social functions, comprising three metafunctions: Ideational, Interpersonal, and Textual (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). This study adopts SFL as the overarching framework for analysing the language of beauty pageant speeches.
2. Interpersonal Meaning refers to the dimension of language enabling speakers to interact, express attitudes, and negotiate social relationships, reflecting the role relationship between speaker and listener (Eggins, 2004). In this study, interpersonal meaning is examined through the mood and modality choices of the Top 10 MGI 2025 finalists.
3. Mood is the grammatical system realising the clause as an interactive event, consisting of Subject and Finite, and determines whether a clause functions as a statement, question, command, or offer (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). This study applies mood analysis to identify how the finalists position themselves and their listeners through speech.
4. Modality refers to the grammatical resources expressing a speaker's assessment of probability, usuality, obligation, or inclination, situated between the positive and negative poles of a proposition (Halliday &

Matthiessen, 2014). This study analyses modality to uncover how the finalists express stance, persuasion, and social commitment.

5. Beauty Pageant Speech is a form of prepared public discourse through which contestants strategically use language to persuade, inspire, and advocate before a global audience, constructing ideals of femininity and social values (Banet-Weiser, 1999). In this study, the speeches of the Top 10 MGI 2025 finalists serve as the primary data source.
6. Miss Grand International (MGI) is an annual pageant founded in Thailand in 2013 with the advocacy mission "Stop the War and Violence," explicitly integrating peace-oriented themes into its judging criteria. The 2025 edition in Bangkok featured 77 countries, with Top 10 finalists delivering advocacy speeches that form the data for this study.

