

Pronouns, social actors, and modality types of politics: A corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis of General Prayuth Chan-o-cha's weekly addresses in times of political crisis

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Abstract

Political discourse analysis has attracted a great deal of scholarly attention in various fields of textual typologies and interdisciplinary foci. However, previous research has concentrated on studies of politicians' discourses from native English speaking countries. This study aims to investigate the linguistic features of pronouns, social actors, and the modality system employed in fifteen English-subtitled versions of the weekly addresses of General Prayut Chan-o-cha during his tenure as a head of the National Council for Peace and Order. Original broadcast data was downloaded from the official Thai government website at www.thaigov.go.th. This study is based on a corpus-assisted approach, Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis, the notion of pronoun analysis, social actors, and the themes of linguistic features in association with socio-political context, and the modality system based on Hallidayan Systemic Functional Linguistics. The findings indicate that pronouns, social actors, and modality types express different functions within a specific political situation. Obviously, the deployment of 'We' appears to be predominantly employed among other selected pronouns and social actors such as 'I', 'NCPO', 'Government', and 'Military'. Regarding the degrees of modalization (probability and usuality) and modulation (obligation and inclination), the findings suggest that inclination types of modality were predominantly employed with 'We'. The analysis shows that General Prayut Chan-o-cha's pronouncements employed pronouns, social actors, and a modality system to suggest his administration was creating a positive change in the political situation.

1. Background of the study

'...The language of politics... helps us to understand how language is used by those who wish to gain power, those who wish to exercise power and those who wish to keep power' (Beard, 2002, p.2).

A political speech is a type of discourse which can be employed to construct, determine, and manipulate certain value systems, adjust people's behavior, and influence the structure of society. Politicians throughout the ages have owed much of their success to their skillful use of rhetoric, whereby they attempt to persuade their audience of the validity of their views through their subtle use of elegant and persuasive language (Thomas, Wareing, Singh, Peccei, Thornborrow & Jones, 2004, p. 39). According to Schaffner (1997), this type of discourse has a particular function which depends on specific political activities and the purpose of the communication. Nevertheless, whatever the goal is, the major function of political speeches is to persuade the audience, and to attempt to make them believe what is being said, and hence act in a particular way.

Some authors argue that politicians actually 'do politics' through their discourse (Gadavani, 2002, p.1). It is generally acknowledged that language and discourse which appear in political speeches are utilized as the most powerful tools in persuasion. Political discourse is an important means through which politicians pass on their underlying ideologies, as well as their social and political views to citizens. Van Dijk (1995, 2006) asserts that a dominant

ideology embedded in political discourse is a powerful instrument to control the public's minds, beliefs, attitudes and actions.

During times of political crisis, people are overwhelmed with disbelief, astonished by the images and reportage on television and have a sense of insecurity of their living conditions. In such political instability, it is necessary for political leaders to reassure and encourage citizens, as well as provide solutions for the crisis. It can be argued that not only is mass media coverage a powerful device to persuade individuals towards certain socio-cultural practices, it is also specifically structured to grab the public's attention and lead them toward some form of action. Political speeches thus play a crucial role in not only providing information to the public but also an understanding of the government's direction and implied ideology.

A number of previous studies have focused on linguistics, such as the stylistics, pragmatic functions, and rhetorical strategies and devices used in political speeches of leading politicians who were elected and appointed by their citizens and which can be divided into three main categories.

Firstly, those based on former and current American presidents and British prime ministers and key political leaders, such as the George Bush administration's corpus of official governmental documents, political speeches and statements (Bhatia, 2009), Barack Obama's speeches (Wang, 2010), George Bush and Barack Obama's political speeches (Viberg, 2011; Biria & Mohammadi, 2012; Sarfo & Krampa, 2013), and corpus-based analysis of George Bush and Barack Obama's political speeches on warfare (Trailovic, 2014).

Secondly, the contrastive study of former and current key political leaders from the UK, USA, and various other countries, such as George Bush and Tony Blair's English language speeches, Saddam Hussein and Osama Bin Ladin's Arabic speeches (Balfaqeeh, 2007), and George W. Bush and Tony Blair's speeches on the "War on Terror" (Chantarawandi, 2010).

Thirdly, the study of former and current political leaders, and related studies of political speeches from other countries such as the Thai Parliament's no-confidence debates (Gadavanij, 2002), Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan's declaration (Kamalu & Agangan, 2011), and Malaysian Prime Minister Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's political speeches (David & Dumanig, 2011).

Almost all the past studies have been concerned with investigating the linguistic features conveyed in the speeches through the lens of CDA approaches or a combination of corpus-based methodologies and related linguistics theory. Almost all the politicians in previous studies are political leaders who were elected or appointed by their citizens through variants of democratic electoral processes. By contrast, the current government of Thailand, led by General Prayut Chan-o-cha, seized power by launching a military coup d'état on 22 May 2014. This was ostensibly done in order to control episodes of political unrest which had become rooted in Thai society. This unrest had caused political divisions, and public demonstrations between the 'Yellow' and 'Red' shirt supporters.

In order to raise the Thai and international audiences' awareness of ideologies, identities and power abuse hidden in political speeches, this current study intends to examine the use of five selected pronouns and social actors, namely 'We', 'I', 'NCPO', 'Government', and 'Military', as well as the modality system utilized in the weekly addresses of General Prayut Chan-o-cha. The focal point of this study aims at investigating the discursive representation of the identities and personal ideologies of General Prayut Chan-o-cha conveyed in the weekly addresses which were broadcast on the national television channels and officially published on the Thai government website during his tenure as head of the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO).

2. Objective of the study

To investigate the pronouns, social actors and relevant linguistic themes in relation with contextual factors, and the modality types and degrees in order to reveal the discursive representation of the identities of General Prayut Chan-o-cha conveyed in the weekly addresses during his tenure as the head of the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO), between May – September 2014.

3. Interrelatedness of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Corpus-based Methodology, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), Modality, Pronouns and Social Actors

This study combined Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with the assistance of Corpus Linguistic methodology for critical study of discourse through the application of Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), examining the use of the modality system in General Prayut Chan-o-cha's weekly addresses. Further, the analytical notion of selected pronouns and social actors as well as themes of linguistic features and specific political context were also the focal point of analyses. I then present an overview of how all these concepts, approaches, features, and methods relate to each other.

As previously discussed, CDA based research methodology places more emphasis on investigating linguistic features and discursive strategies employed in discourse linked to the related social context. In order to examine the discursive strategies that text producers utilise to accomplish their goals, this present study was based on Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis as the underpinning conceptual framework. Fairclough's (2010) three-dimensional framework of critical study of discourse utilized as the theoretical framework comprises (1) textual identification, (2) text production and interpretation, and (3) explanation of its relationship to social structure.

However, it seems that Fairclough's (2010) three-dimensional framework of CDA is based on the view that language is social practice and can be considered as a central element in social life. Hence, analyses discourse is undeniable to make a connection with the wide social and historical context in which discourse occurs. As the CDA is based on the notion that language plays a central role in social life, it seems that this well-established linguistic paradigm lacks its own linguistic tools which can be employed for analyses of text property. In this line, the present paper explores the contribution of SFL to discourse studies because this analytical approach views language as a means of making meanings and functions, particularly, lexico-grammatical choices. Compatibly, SFL provides the appropriate grounds for a kind of linguistic analysis, synergizing its analytical framework for critical study of discourse in association with contextual factors. It has already been pointed out, 'SFL can be said to be the main contributor of analytical tools for the kind of analysis carried out by CDA[;] there are many other grammatical aspects upon which critical analysts can and do rely' (Alameda-Hernández, 2014, p. 162). Recently, a number of scholars have offered analytical and theoretical application of CDA-SFL connection in their studies (Martin, 2000; Young & Harrison, 2004). Importantly, applying a SFL analysis to CDA helps to increase the strengths of its detailed and rigorous analysis properties of texts and ultimately the SFL-CDA connection-based method helps to preserve the interpretation from ideological bias of discourse as well.

Specifically, this paper attempts at applying Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) modality system of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to reveal how General Prayut Chan-o-cha's representation or identity was discursively constructed in the weekly addresses. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), the second component of language meaning is based on interpersonal metafunction which takes place when listener and speaker use language for communicative purposes. This function can be elaborated on through the analysis of mood and modality. It has been pointed out that modality is the semantic domain pertaining to

elements of meaning that language expresses (Bybee & Fleischman, 1995). The notion of modality includes any unit of language that expresses the speaker's or writer's personal opinion or commitment to what they say, such as hedging (I believe/think/suppose), and the use of modal verbs, adjectives and their adverbial equivalents (Fairclough (1992, 2003). The modality system indicates the way that people's judgment of probabilities and obligations signals factuality, certainty and doubt are conveyed through their use of language. In addition, linguistic modality shows the ways used in everyday language to express levels of commitment to what the communicator intends to do or not do.

Further, I emphasise the analyses of pronoun choices, particularly the uses of the pronouns 'I' and 'we' in order to see to what extent General Prayut Chan-o-cha refers to commitments as indicating to himself as personal statements or he tends to reinforce the idea of unity with potential audiences during times of political upheaval. It has been pointed out that pronoun choices play an important role to be utilised persuasively and strategically in political speech. By this means, Pearce (2001) points out that the way politicians discursively represent their identities, by referring to themselves, to their opposition and to their audiences can effectively be employed as a persuasive mechanism. Particularly, the choice of the pronouns 'I' and 'We' can be employed either to foreground or to obscure responsibility and agency.

Lastly, the corpus linguistic approach has its own role to indicate the overall frequency of linguistic devices. Corpus linguistics provides a strongly data-driven approach of a way in viewing discourse. This paper employs the corpus-assisted approach to develop a coding system at the initial phase of data compilation. To synergize Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Corpus Linguistics (CL), this perspective combines both qualitative and quantitative methods with results that can then be easily quantified, which in turn increase credibility, validity and reliability of the findings. The procedures of the corpus-aided approach for discourse analysis appeared to be replicable, which consequently increases the scientific value of discourse. Thus, it should be noted that Corpus Linguistics (CL) contributes to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) because its role allows the researcher to deal with a large amount of raw data, reduce the researchers' subjectivity and strengthen the credibility of the analysis and interpretation processes.

In this present paper, I put an emphasis on the focal in-depth analyses of the selected pronouns and social actors comprising of 'We', 'I', 'NCPO', 'Government' and 'Military' as well as the wordlist frequencies derived from a sporadic assisted corpus approach and the themes of linguistic features in association with the socio-political context for critical study of discourse through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis and the modality system based on Hallidayan Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) as well as the notion of pronoun analysis in order to reveal how General Prayut Chan-o-cha's representation was discursively constructed in the weekly addresses.

4. 'Political' discourse and identity

The term 'discourse' has been defined broadly in a range of disciplinary fields of study across the humanities and social sciences, and clearly does not limit itself solely to the spoken and written aspects of language, but covers a broader range of communication, social practice, actions and situations in everyday life activities of human beings, as well as non-linguistic features and all visual means of communication (Hyland, 2013; Johnstone, 2008; van Dijk, 1997). In addition, Fairclough (1992) brought Foucault's concept of discourse together with the theory of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and asserted that the term "discourse" is more than just language, written or spoken, but can be seen as a type of social practice which implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and social structure. In relation to the linguistic characteristics of 'political discourse', there is a similarity to the

linguistic features of advertising which aim to persuade people to purchase a particular product or service (Woods, 2006, p.50).

Identity is a term which refers to both a reflective view and other people's perceptions of one's self-image. Further, Joseph (2004), states that language and identity are 'ultimately inseparable'. It is language which is central to the human condition and can be considered as the communication tool which distinguishes humans from other living species. Thus, it is mandatory to put language into consideration when the term 'identity' is being studied (Edwards, 2009, p. 20). Clark (2013) points out that the notion of identity, as expressed through language, is manifested through a complex process of individuals or communities selecting characteristics of a language that together comprise a unique set of features through which identity can be expressed.

5. Brief overview of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an interdisciplinary analytical tool used in mainstream humanities and social science research and based on a combination of social theories and background knowledge of social context. It was developed from the notion of Critical Linguistics by a prominent group of linguists at the University of East Anglia (Fowler & Hodge, 1979). CDA's approach to the study of language is to view language as a tool of power which mediates political and social affairs. Further, CDA was employed as a tool for discourse analysis based on Hallidayan Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), a socio-cultural theory of language investigation (Halliday, 1994; Halliday & Hasan, 1989). According to this theory, language only exists in context. Context is comprised of cultural and social aspects that influence how language is constructed to make a semiotic system (Eggins, 2004).

Fairclough's (2010) Critical Discourse Analysis is used as the theoretical background to this study. More specifically, this present study employs the three-dimensional framework for critical study of weekly addresses of General Prayuth Chan-o-cha as follows:

- a linguistic description of the language text,
- interpretation of the relationship between productive and interpretative discourse processes and the text, and
- an explanation of the relationship between the discourse processes and the social processes (Fairclough, 2010, p. 132-133).

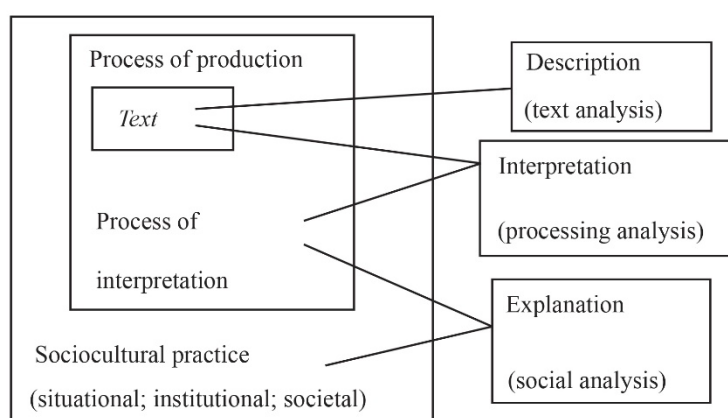


Figure 1. Fairclough's (2010) Dimensions of Discourse Analysis

6. Analytical frameworks of critical study of discourse

6.1 Pronoun and social actor analysis

Personal pronouns are words that are used to refer to participants that are judged by the speaker to be already present or active in the mind of the audience (Payne, 2011, p. 123).

Trailovic (2014) states that one of the most frequent and prominent linguistic items encountered in political speeches are pronouns. According to Allen (2006), personal pronouns chosen can be used to refer to themselves or to others, and to evoke multiple identities of themselves and others, presented from a range of perspectives. The pronominal choices politicians make serve persuasive and strategic political functions.

The pronoun ‘We’ has a referent range from we (self + one other), to we (self + humanity), to the collective identity or group membership in a political context (Inclusive we) or the separation “We”, for example as between two political groups or parties (Exclusive we) (Pennycook, 1993; Beard, 2000).

Similarly, the pronoun ‘I’ can be considered as the referent which is employed by politicians to express their identity and position as an individual. It is used as a means of establishing rapport with the audience and showing a degree of personal involvement and commitment (Beard, 2000, Bramley, 2001; Kuo, 2002). Furthermore, the three selected nouns which potentially play a role as social actors include ‘NCPO’, ‘Government’, and ‘Military’ and were analyzed by grouping into themes.

6.2 Modality system in framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)

In the modality system of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) identify two types of modality based on the polarity of yes (Positive) and no (Negative). As the differentiation relies on the meaning of the positive and negative poles, Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) propose the modality types be termed modalization and modulation. These two types of modality can be distinguished into subtypes as presented in Thompson’s (2014) work which is influenced by Hallidayan Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL).

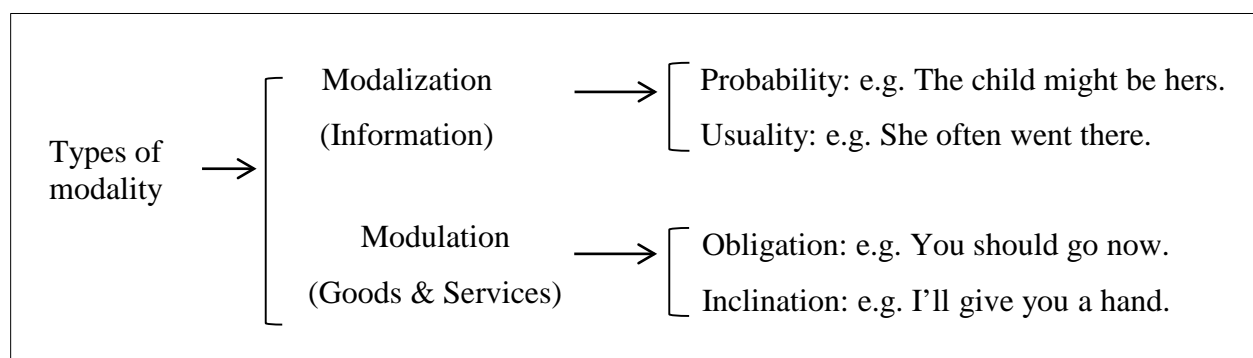


Figure 2. Types of Modality and Sub-Categories (adopted from Thompson, 2014, p. 71)

6.3 Degrees of modalization and modulation

The degrees of modalization and modulation can be categorized in accordance with the value of its “strength” into high, median, and low (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). In order to distinguish the degrees of modalization and modulation based on the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis, I then adopted the degrees of modality values based on the Systemic Functional Grammar (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, 2014), presented in Table 1 and Table 2 below.

Table 1. Degrees of Modalization (Halliday & Mattheissen, 2004, p. 618-624; 2014, p. 189 & pp. 694-696)

| Types of Modalization | Degrees of Modalization | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| | High | Median | Low |
| Probability | certainly, definitely, must, can't | probably, will be, won't | possibly, perhaps, maybe, hardly, may, can, needn't |
| Usuality | always, never | usually | sometimes, occasionally, seldom, rarely |

Table 2. Degrees of Modulation (Halliday & Mattheissen, 2004, p. 618-624; 2014, p. 189 & pp. 694-696)

| Types of Modulation | Degrees of Modulation | | |
|---------------------|---|---|---|
| | High | Median | Low |
| Obligation | must, required to, have to, ought to, can't | should, shall, supposed to, shouldn't | can, could, may, might, allowed to, needn't |
| Inclination | determined to, need to | keen, will, would, want to, won't, wouldn't | willing, can |

7. Research methodology

7.1 Data collection

The data of this present study is based on the English subtitled weekly public announcements of General Prayuth Chan-o-cha. The data was downloaded from the official Thai government website at www.thaigov.go.th. The total number of public announcements downloaded during General Prayuth Chan-o-cha's tenure as the head of NCPO (30 May – 5 September 2014) was 15 with a total word count of 95,581.

7.2 Translation issue

In order to lessen criticism of the translation issue, I asked an expert from a public university who specialized in the field of translation studies for identification of translation types of the English subtitled weekly addresses. The conclusion from this analysis was that the technique of non-literal translation was predominately utilised throughout the 15 addresses, whilst the technique of free translation was also partially found in some paragraphs of the speeches (Pinmanee, 2012).

7.3 Corpus-based methodology

To access the corpus, the concordance software AntConc 3.4.4 w (Windows) 2014 was employed in this present study (Anthony, 2005).

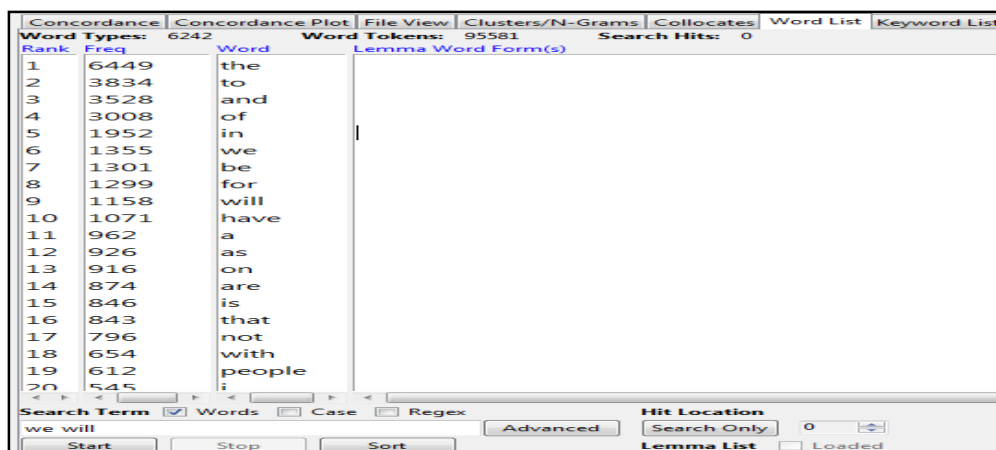


Figure 3. Screenshot of AntConc for the search-target word output of ‘we’ in word frequency list view

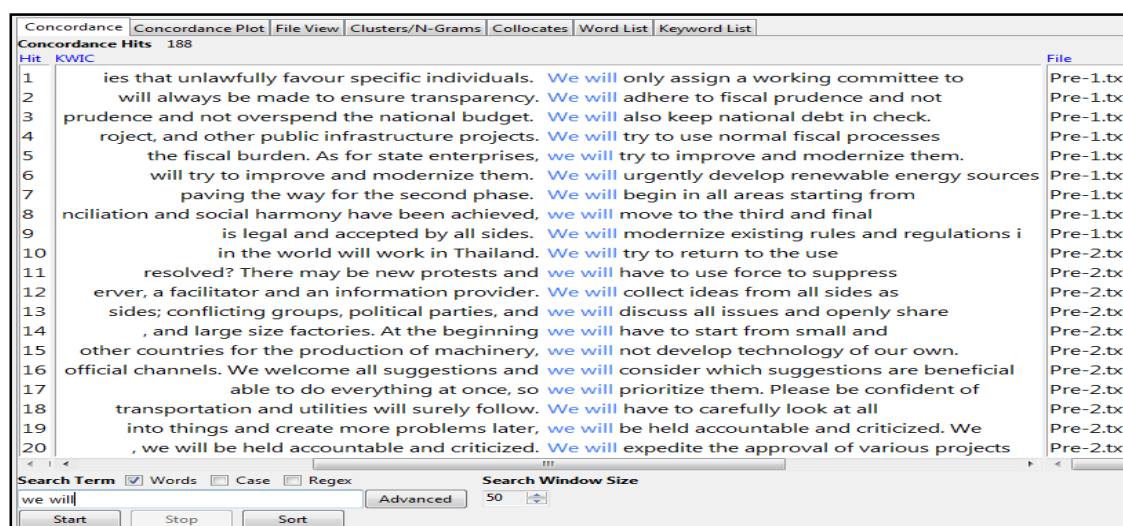


Figure 4. Screenshot of AntConc for the search-target word output of ‘we’ in KWIC and concordance line

7.4 Inter-coder reliability check

The reliability or consistency of the identification for modality types and degrees based on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) was re-assessed by an expert who is an academic at a public university in Thailand. 25% of the whole corpora were randomly selected for re-assessment—197 out of the 790 full expanded sentences. The result highlighted that the inter-rater agreement of the reliability check procedure was high, indicating 94.42 percent of agreement. In this process, any disagreements regarding identification for modality types and degrees were discussed between the inter-coder and the researcher until a satisfactory level of consensus was attained.

7.5 Research design and data analysis

Following Fairclough’s (2010) three-dimensional model for Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), dataset was stored and generated by concordance software namely AntConc in order to determine the selected pronouns and social actors, and to develop the manual coding systems based on the concept of a modality system in the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) for the initial stage of textual identification. In the stage of text production, the excerpts appearing in this present paper are taken directly from the transcript of the weekly addresses downloaded from the official Thai government website at www.thaigov.go.th. It also

has been pointed out that the weekly addresses produced by the Division of Public Relations and Information, Government Spokesman Bureau under the Secretariat of the Prime Minister of Thai Government House.

On the subject of text interpretation, the pronoun choices were analysed based on the notion of pronoun analysis. Further, the selected social actors and their fully-expanded sentences were critically read and manually selected into three themes indicating positive self-image, asking for supportive cooperation and understanding from the public, and being enthusiastic for national administration in association with the socio-political context. Additionally, the modality types and degrees were manually coded and were analysed through the notion of modality system based on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL).

With reference to explanation of the relationship between discourse and its social context, I thoroughly investigated the personal pronouns, social actors and relevant themes, and the modality system through the perspective of SFL-CDA connection in relation to the social context of political upheaval and insurrection in which discourse occurs. In order to reveal the discursive construction of the identities of General Prayut Chan-o-cha, I also adopted Bramley's (2001) model analysis of being a good politician and Sriwimon's (2015) summaries of discursive representations of roles allocation of Yingluck Shinawatra to reveal how General Prayut Chan-o-cha discursively constructed his representation of the identities in the selected weekly addresses.

8. Data analysis and discussion

8.1 Pronoun and social actor analysis

In the pronoun and social actor analysis, I firstly tabulated and investigated the use of the pronoun 'We' in the English subtitled weekly addresses. From the output of corpus tool, it was found that 'We' greatly outnumbered the other four pronouns and social actors. Put simply, 'We' appeared 1,355 times with a ranking of 6 in the 15 English addresses, whilst 'I' appeared 545 times, 'NCPO' 515 times, 'Government' 214 times, and 'Military' 104 times.

Table 3. The overall frequencies of the wordlist of selected pronouns and social actors in weekly addresses of General Prayut Chan-o-cha

| Pronouns and social actors | Weekly Addresses of the Head of the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) | |
|----------------------------|---|------|
| | Frequency | Rank |
| We | 1,355 words | 6 |
| I | 545 words | 20 |
| NCPO | 515 words | 21 |
| Government | 214 words | 55 |
| Military | 104 words | 118 |

8.1.1 Analysis of the Pronoun 'We'

The Inclusive pronoun 'We'

With regard to the overall usage of 'We' in the weekly addresses, it is predominantly the inclusive 'We' (including the reader/hearer). Below are instances of inclusive 'We' in the weekly addresses of the head of NCPO. In the following extracts, the groups represented by the use of 'We' are invariably Thai citizens or the Thai nation as a whole. The main rationale for utilizing this pronoun is emphasizing membership and belonging to the same group.

In his speeches, General Prayuth Chan-o-cha focuses on the issue of national reform and reconciliation, particularly the issue of national unity and stability in Thailand due to the political unrest and different points of view of Thai people. The statements below imply that all Thai nationals who have opposing viewpoints and perspectives must work together to achieve successful outcomes.

We try to create understanding and hold outreach activities for everyone to learn about each other.

We can have different opinions but we must live together in peace under social norms that are laws that enable society to live in safety and help develop the country.

Such a call for reform and reconciliation for national stability and unity of Thai nationals is evident in General Prayuth Chan-o-cha's speeches, where some ideological implications in his linguistic choices become evident, particularly through the use of pronoun markers. The use of pronouns, such as 'We', encompasses the audience thus making them participants in the discourse. Rhetorically, 'We' refers to the speaker and his constituents, who are the target audience. General Prayuth Chan-o-cha reiterates the phrase constantly to make his audience become part of the political discourse and in perceived agreement with his discourse.

we cannot stand alone..., we have never been colonized..., our pride and history..., we need to improve education..., we can have different views but we must be able to co-exist..., we need to talk to each other..., we may only achieve..., we can make more progress..., we can come together...

According to David and Dumanig (2011), what hearers assume in the use of pronouns such as 'We' is a transmission of the speaker's ideology to the hearers and eventually they become convinced of the speaker's arguments. The use of pronouns thus becomes a linguistics means of including, unifying and unifying the people. Obviously, General Prayuth has tried to employ the inclusive 'We' to forge a closer rapport or link between himself and the audiences by creating solidarity and unification of feeling between both parties.

Exclusive pronoun 'We'

General Prayuth differentiates the exclusive 'We' in 'We-NCPO' and 'We-Thai people' which can be seen in the following excerpt. The exclusive 'We' is employed to elaborate on the fact in relation to the NCPO's operation by raising its trustworthiness among people.

We will only assign a working committee to work alongside those in the agencies to move the work along effectively, expeditiously, transparently, in order to regain the trust of the people.

We are trying to increase the credibility of the national financial system in the eyes of the international community and foreign investors.

According to the excerpt given below, General Prayuth asks for empathy from the Thai populace to give time for the NCPO to take administrative action. Even though he employed

the strategy of the exclusive ‘We’ to the NCPO team, this allusion can have a positive effect on people’s feeling and perception towards the NCPO team. It is more likely that the exclusive ‘We’ is used to refer to the emphasis of the NCPO’s willingness, determination, and conviction to address the fundamental political issues and move the Thai democracy system to be more stable and reliable state.

We came in to make our country stronger, laying firmer foundations to prevent the structure from collapsing so that our country will be ready to move towards becoming a fully functioning democracy.

It can be concluded that the most motivating reasons for a politician to use the ‘We’ in political speech is to invoke a sense of collectivity and to share responsibility with their audiences. It is important to note that its meaning and inclusive and exclusive contribution play a vital role in General Prayuth Chan-o-cha’s weekly addresses. However, it also showed that he has a tendency to employ the inclusive ‘We’ more than the exclusive ‘We’ counterpart to evoke the sense of responsibility and commonality, and to build good rapport with the Thai people.

8.1.2 Analysis of Pronoun ‘I’

The pronoun ‘I’ can be considered as the referent which is employed by politicians to express their identity and position as an individual. They are used as a means of establishing rapport with the audience and to demonstrate a degree of personal involvement and commitment (Beard, 200, Bramley, 2001; Kuo, 2002).

To begin the analysis of ‘I’, I firstly investigated its frequency in the English subtitled weekly addresses — 545 occurrences and a ranking of 20 for the entire corpus. As discussed earlier, the most motivating reason for a politician to use ‘I’ in political speech is to put an emphasis on their being a good and responsible person in order to describe and to highlight their personal qualities in a positive way. In this part of the analysis, it is argued that ‘I’ is employed to express a discursive representation of the speaker’s identity in a positive light which somehow can be associated to the self-positive image, as can be seen in the excerpt below.

General Prayuth attempts to generalize that, as the representative of this interim government, he tries to do his personal best to govern the country effectively and prioritize which obstacles should be addressed or what policy should be implemented to strengthen all administrative tasks as a good role model and exemplar for the future established government. In the following extract, General Prayuth tries to express his conviction and determination in order to gain the credibility and trust from his audience due to the fact that there is a lot of the criticism of his role and the overall performance of this provisional government among both Thai and non-domestic global stakeholders.

I will mobilize and pass on these tasks to the new government which is about to be established in the near future.

I may have less knowledge than some of you but I am sincere and honest in administering the country and want to solve the problems.

It can be concluded that the use of pronoun ‘I’ plays a significant role for political leaders to refer to their positive self-image and to demonstrate their degree of personal commitment, determination, and willingness to overcome obstacles impeding national unity and stability.

8.1.3 Analysis of the Social Actors: ‘NCPO’, ‘Government’ and ‘Military’, and relevant themes

In order to analyze the role played by the social actors ‘NCPO’, ‘Government’, and ‘Military’, I firstly re-read and selected the prominent sentences, which refer to the discursive representation of the identities of General Prayuth. I then categorized the linguistic features into three themes of discursive representations of identities, comprising (1) those indicating positive self-image, (2) those asking for supportive cooperation and understanding from the public, and (3) those demonstrating enthusiasm for the national administration.

Indicating positive self-image

In the following excerpts, General Prayuth utilized the social actor ‘NCPO’ as one of his referential choices when referring to his identity construction for a positive self-image. Most of the selected sentences use provoking and stimulating words to express the willingness and enthusiasm of the NCPO to tackle the problems that the state has encountered as the time of political crisis. In addition, there were many harmonious, positive, and motivational words and phrases used to evoke audiences’ feelings, perceptions, and attitudes towards national unity and citizen reconciliation. For example: *‘moving the country forward’, ‘creating an atmosphere of unity’, ‘create a conducive atmosphere for exchanging and sharing opinion’, ‘to create a peaceful society and an environment conducive to the development of the country’, ‘the reform and development of proper and sustainable democracy’, ‘working with fairness and only wishes to find ways to make our nation secure and sustainable’, and ‘have an interest in the well-being of the nation’.*

These provoking words and phrases were designed to strengthen the NCPO’s positive self-image and heighten its legitimacy, determination, and credibility for governing the country.

The NCPO received exceptional cooperation from the general public and the private sector in creating an atmosphere of unity.

The NCPO has been working with fairness and only wishes to find ways to make our nation secure and sustainable.

The government and I will do our very best to perform our duties for the benefit of all citizens, using measures that are appropriate, transparent and effective.

General Prayuth refers to himself as one of the military personnel who aim at pushing forward national reform and solving the country and people’s problems through thorough planning and policy development in order to rapidly bring back happiness to all Thai people and national stability.

*Please have confidence that though we are **military**, we have the utmost sincerity in taking the country forward without seeking personal gain. We are committed to eliminate corrupt practices.*

Asking for supportive cooperation and understanding from the public

In order to gain the support or cooperation from the public, General Prayuth aims at using the social actor, the ‘NCPO’, as a mechanism to energize and persuade his audiences,

both individuals and specific groups in society. For example, he explicitly proscribes group gathering, for political discussion, of more than five people during times of political instability. As can be seen in the following example, he also requests the participation and support from all sectors and parties to cooperate in the reconciliation, reform, and collaboration in the administration of the country.

Regarding the prohibition of political gatherings of more than 5 people, this also is necessary. Because we are in the initial phase of our operation, the NCPO cannot allow any group to create untoward incidents that may affect the stability of the country.

Being enthusiastic for national administration

In the following extracts, General Prayuth seemingly attempts to invoke military principles of discipline and order as the appropriate solutions in addressing the problems, arising from the political crisis. He refers to the well-disciplined rules and organizational culture the military is conversant with and how it can be adapted and adopted in establishing national unity and lasting peace, and in addressing the challenges which the state is facing.

The military does not resort to the use of weapons as the only means.

*The military is resourceful and has been involved in the operations from the beginning, so **military personnel** know how to carry out their tasks in terms of development, politics, creating understanding and discussions to find solutions – recommendations put forth by **the military**.*

8.1.4 Summary of pronoun and social actor analysis, and relevant themes

As previously discussed, the pronoun ‘We’ was the most frequently used. The findings suggest that the use of the inclusive and exclusive ‘We’ is designed to evoke a sense of both collectivity and exclusion. In other words, ‘We’ plays a crucial role in invoking the potential audiences’ feelings, perception, attitudes, and belief in having the same political values and sharing responsibility with the politician. It can be concluded that General Prayuth alludes intentionally to the feasible establishment of a truly effective democratic system by the resurrection of electoral normality within the near future.

8.2 Modality analysis

In this part of the analysis, I adopted the interpersonal meaning of modality systems based on the values and degrees of modality types, namely modalization (probability and usuality) and modulation (obligation and inclination) based on the analytical framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (Thompson, 2014; Halliday & Mattheissen, 2004, 2014). As there are no usuality modals found in the entire corpus, this type of analysis was not pursued for further analysis and interpretation. Hence, the three modality types of probability, obligation, and inclination were taken into account for analyses in this paper.

8.2.1 Probability

Table 4. The frequency of probability expressions found in the NCPO weekly addresses

| Degrees | We | | I | | NCPO | | Government | | Military | | Total Modality Degrees | |
|---------|----|--------|---|--------|------|------|------------|------|----------|------|------------------------|------|
| High | 1 | 8.33% | 0 | 0% | 1 | 25% | 0 | 0% | 2 | 100% | 4 | 16% |
| Median | 2 | 16.66% | 1 | 33.33% | 0 | 0% | 2 | 50% | 0 | 0% | 5 | 20% |
| Low | 9 | 75% | 2 | 66.66% | 3 | 75% | 2 | 50% | 0 | 0% | 16 | 64% |
| Total | 12 | 100% | 3 | 100% | 4 | 100% | 4 | 100% | 2 | 100% | 25 | 100% |

We can see in the corpus analysis above that the pronoun ‘We’ occurred most frequently, 12 times in all three degrees of modality. On closer examination of different types of modality, “we” occurred most frequently with ‘may’ (see below), whilst the probability modals which collocated with ‘I’, ‘NCPO’, ‘Government’, and ‘Military’ seem to be only sporadically found in the entire corpus. The word ‘may’ is categorized as expressing low speaker commitment and regularly used as a permission auxiliary (Hoye, 1997). General Prayuth uses the word when referring to the possibility of making positive changes, which contribute to peace within the context of the political crisis in Thailand. In other words, cooperation and peace between the two opposing groups might (“may”) be the best solution.

| | |
|---|--|
| 1 | reform council. Many people are concerned that we may be rushing through the process. I |
| 2 | ve protest movements. If these movements persist, we may pursue legal proceedings. To our younger |
| 3 | can live together in peace even though we may have different views. We need to |
| 4 | quite easy. There are no fences. So we may have to consider erecting fences or |
| 5 | changes. What will become of Thailand then? We may become an underdeveloped country and foreve |
| 6 | those of you who are government officials, we may not have large amount of budget |
| 7 | or in the transition period. For instance, we may have to amend regulations, selection proces |
| 8 | to swiftly make improvements on this matter. We may need to form groups and rely |
| 9 | less and less areas by the year. We may need to use both political science |

Figure 4. Screenshot of AntConc for the search-target word output of ‘we may’ in KWIC and concordance lines

8.2.2 Obligation

Table 5. The frequency of obligation expressions found in the NCPO weekly addresses

| Degrees | We | | I | | NCPO | | Government | | Military | | Total Modality Degrees | |
|---------|-----|--------|---|--------|------|------|------------|--------|----------|----|------------------------|--------|
| High | 110 | 58.51% | 3 | 42.85% | 2 | 50% | 6 | 85.71% | 0 | 0% | 121 | 58.74% |
| Median | 59 | 31.38% | 3 | 42.85% | 1 | 25% | 1 | 14.28% | 0 | 0% | 64 | 31.07% |
| Low | 19 | 10.10% | 1 | 14.28% | 1 | 25% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 21 | 10.19% |
| Total | 188 | 100% | 7 | 100% | 4 | 100% | 7 | 100% | 0 | 0% | 206 | 100% |

It can be seen that the high obligation modals of ‘have to’ and ‘must’ were exploited most with the first highest frequency of occurrences, when collocated with ‘We’, amounting to 110 occurrences (58.51%). However, the median obligation expressions, when collocated with ‘We’, appeared as the second highest frequency of occurrence, 59 mentions (31.38%). In addition, this obligation modal rarely emerged in association with ‘I’, ‘NCPO’, and ‘Government’, and never with “Military”.

It should be noted that the high percentage of high obligation modals seeks to demonstrate General Prayuth’s strong commitment to take control of the violent situation in order to solve urgent national crises and move the country forward. Furthermore, the modal auxiliary verb ‘have to’ is employed to express a strong obligation, mandatory requirement,

and logical necessity (Leech, pp. 78-80). In the corpus of this study, the modal ‘have to’ juxtaposes frequently with ‘We’ which General Prayut Chan-o-cha tended to employ for inclusiveness and togetherness among people as seen in the following sentences.

*We **have to** address the problems gradually and make plans carefully.*

*We **have to** resolve these problems through law enforcement and law amendment.*

With regards to the modal auxiliary verb ‘must’, its high obligation modality carries the highest degree of obligation, indicating the speaker’s position in establishing obligation and conveying authority (Leech, 1987, p. 77-78). In other words, ‘must’ has a varied meaning signifying the expression of obligation and a sense of inner compulsion of what is necessary from the speaker’s perspective.

In the corpus of this study, the frequency of the verb ‘must’ is ranked seventh. It occurred highly with ‘We’, occurring 41 times. It was used to emphasize a sense of inner compulsion, expressing the speaker’s intention that he and the administration team would perform their duty with a sense of dedication and concern of the well-being of the Thai populace. This can be seen in the following sentences.

*We **must** devote and dedicate ourselves more for the Thai people.*

*We **must** solve problems in a more sustainable way.*

At the time of political crisis, governmental measures to control political rallies and incidents, which might harm national security, were orchestrated through NCPO orders and announcements. Thus, the verb ‘must’ seems to become an important linguistic feature signifying the order or command of the spokesperson for achieving political calm.

8.2.3 Inclination

Table 6. The frequency of inclination expressions found in the NCPO weekly addresses

| Degrees | We | | I | | NCPO | | Government | | Military | | Total Modality Degrees | |
|---------|-----|--------|-----|--------|------|--------|------------|------|----------|------|------------------------|--------|
| High | 155 | 38.94% | 4 | 3.70% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 159 | 28.49% |
| Median | 197 | 49.50% | 101 | 93.51% | 46 | 95.83% | 2 | 100% | 1 | 50% | 347 | 62.19% |
| Low | 46 | 11.56% | 3 | 2.77% | 2 | 4.16% | 0 | 0% | 1 | 50% | 52 | 9.32% |
| Total | 398 | 100% | 108 | 100% | 48 | 100% | 2 | 100% | 2 | 100% | 558 | 100% |

It was the median inclination modal which collocated most frequently with ‘We’ at 197 occurrences (49.50%), followed by the high inclination modal with 155 occurrences (38.94%). It is a similar scenario with ‘I’, where the median inclination modal has, by far, the highest frequency of occurrences within its group and third overall at 101 mentions (93.51%). A further interesting finding to emerge from concordance lines in this specific-context discourse is that the median inclination modal which collocated with ‘NCPO’ appeared to be the fourth overall highest frequency of occurrences, accounting for 46 mentions (95.83%), whilst the inclination expressions seem to be rarely found in collocation with ‘Government’ and ‘Military’.

It can be observed from the entire corpus that median inclination modality was mainly demonstrated through auxiliary verbs such as ‘will’, ‘would’, and ‘want’. According to Leech (1987), ‘will’ conveys meanings of prediction/predictability, intention, willingness, and insistence. Looking closely at the concordances, it can be seen that it was the median inclination

modals which collocated most frequently with the five selected pronouns and social actors, accounting for 347 mentions (62.19%).

General Prayuth employed the modal verb ‘will’ to bring extra emphasis to what he was trying to convey to his potential audiences. His apparent aim is to emphasize his personal conviction and certainty whilst taking responsibility for his endeavor to reform the democratic process and legal system, and form national unity. This is seen in the following extracts:

*The NCPO **will** act as an observer, a facilitator and an information provider.*

*We **will** accelerate the reform process in order to make Thailand a fully functioning democracy.*

With regards to ‘can’, this auxiliary modal verb is categorized as low inclination modality; its function expresses the ability and permission of the spokesperson in particular circumstances (Leech, 1987). In the extract below, ‘can’ is utilized to express the ability of the administration to solve the national crisis, resolve existing conflicts among different protest groups, and establish stable democratic principles.

*We **can** have different opinions but we must live together in peace under social norms which are laws that enable society to live in safety and help develop the country.*

The modal auxiliary verb ‘need to’ has high inclination modality which is worth closer examination. According to the data in Table 5, ‘need to’ has the highest frequency of occurrence, which when collocated with ‘We’ occurs 155 times. It is employed with the intent of expressing the determination and objective of General Prayuth to inspire Thai people regarding the reform which will be introduced to resolve existing conflicts with solutions that are dependent on the situation and universal cooperation.

| | |
|----|---|
| 1 | in terms of people, form and method? We need to solve many issues; from administration |
| 2 | to the people and the problems that we need to overcome. We have to look |
| 3 | Technology, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We need to prepare ourselves for the three |
| 4 | will not develop technology of our own. We need to be self-reliant. It is |
| 5 | . I take full responsibility for this matter. We need to find new measures to support |
| 6 | ntries. But we have budget constraints. Therefore we need to enlist the help of the |
| 7 | scale permanent structures that have no use. We need to build quality human resources before |
| 8 | not meet the needs of the people. We need to be moderate. People have to |
| 9 | d reinforce conscience and social responsibility. We need to encourage our citizens, children, gover |
| 10 | generates tremendous income for the country so we need to push forward. On the disbursement |
| 11 | external sources. Everyone had their own reasons. We need to talk and resolved the problems |
| 12 | makes it difficult for me to explain. We need to dedicate and sacrifice to resolve |

Figure 5. Examples of expanded concordances of the high inclination modal ‘need’ found in co-occurrence with ‘We’

8.2.4 Summary of modality analysis

In the analysis, it is important to observe that the modal auxiliary verbs of inclination (558 occurrences) and obligation (206 occurrences) appear to be widely used throughout the entire corpus. In contrast, the modal auxiliary verbs of probability (206 occurrences) and usuality (0 occurrence) as a category of modalization are rarely utilized.

This difference might be due to the fact that the speeches were delivered during a time of political crisis. Hence, the usage of modal auxiliary verbs such as ‘will’, ‘need’, ‘would’, ‘have to’, ‘should’, and ‘can’, which are all in the category of obligation and inclination, plays a crucial role in representing the determination of the spokesperson, as the head of state, to emphasize the validity of their proposition to potential audiences.

9. Conclusion

Utilizing Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis approach as the underpinning theoretical framework, this current study aims to contribute to the critical study of political discourse by employing the notion of pronoun and social actor for creating the thematic analyses, and the modality system based on Hallidayan Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). It analyses the weekly addresses of General Prayut during his tenure as head of the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO). As previously mentioned, the focal point of the analysis in this study is to investigate the pronouns, social actors leading for thematic analyses, and modality system used in order to reveal the discursive construction of the identities conveyed in specific-context discourse. A brief summary of the discursive representation of the identities of General Prayut can be seen in the following table. The excerpts below are taken directly from the transcripts of the weekly addresses downloaded from the official Thai government website at www.thaigov.go.th. The selected pronouns and social actors are specifically highlighted in boldface type and modal auxiliary verbs are also underlined in each excerpt.

Table 7. Discursive representation of the identities of General Prayut Chan-o-cha viewed from a thorough investigation of the personal pronouns, social actors, and modality system as displayed in the following tables with samples of linguistics features

| Discursive representation of the identities of General Prayut Chan-o-cha | Samples of linguistics features |
|---|---|
| Being an active and ambitious person or being enthusiastic for national administration (making promise or prediction) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We <u>must</u> devote and dedicate ourselves more for the Thai people. - We <u>need</u> to solve many issues; from administration to budget system, corruption, and even the starting point of democracy itself – the election. - The NCPO <u>will</u> continue to work on, in order to create a peaceful society and an environment conducive to the development of the country in various areas, including the reform and development of proper and sustainable democracy. - The government and I <u>will</u> do our very best to perform our duties for the benefit of all citizens, using measures that are appropriate, transparent and effective. |
| Being involved to show strong will in tackling the country’s problems | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The government <u>must</u> now continue to build on this foundation, so that our country remains peaceful, develops and prospers. |
| Being a responsible and compromising person | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I <u>will</u> be responsible for moving the country and the people forward and working together in national development for the benefit of all. - We <u>can</u> have different opinions but we must live together in peace under social norms which are laws that enable society to live in safety and help develop the country. |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We <u>can</u> have different views but we must be able to co-exist. - We <u>should</u> refrain from sharing unverified information to avoid incitement. - We <u>should</u> refrain from talking about problems on persisting conflicts. |
| Having the role of a powerful agency or an official authority as the head of the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The NCPO <u>cannot</u> allow any group to create untoward incidents that <u>may</u> affect the stability of the country. - The NCPO <u>will</u> take appropriate legal measures against any group that violates this law. |
| Being a person of principles to govern the country | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We <u>will</u> try to return to the use of normal laws as soon as possible, but people have to respect the law. - We <u>will</u> accelerate the reform process in order to make Thailand a fully functioning democracy. - We <u>should</u> be able to proceed as planned, with the formation of an interim government within September to drive the country forward. - Therefore, we <u>should</u> look at this root cause and understand and find those who caused such chaotic situations. - We <u>have</u> to resolve these problems through law enforcement and law amendment. - After we have achieved our mission, the military <u>will</u> go back to our national defense duties, and look after the country and the people, and to ensure long-lasting happiness. |

It might be observed from the summaries, that the discursive representation of the identities of General Prayut as the head of the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) elevated his positive self-image through the weekly addresses he delivered. It can be argued that the NCPO plays a crucial role in enacting political reform, promoting national reconciliation, and restoring democracy. In this regard, the pronouns, social actors, and modality systems represented by the NCPO play a significant role in representing the personal determination and enthusiasm of General Prayut to find an urgent solution for the national crisis and ultimate goal in creating a sense of oneness and comradeship among Thai citizens.

It is generally accepted that the language or discourse conveyed by a spokesperson can reflect his/her personal identities at a certain level. This is compatible with the claim made by Pearce (2001) who states the way politicians discursively represent their identities, by referring to themselves, to their opposition and to their audience can effectively be used as a means of persuasion. Hence, General Prayuth, as a producer of discourse, can use persuasive linguistic functions to emphasize his personal strong intentions, determination, certainty, and positive self-image, which emerges in his public announcements. In addition, as head of the NCPO, he can ascribe similar characteristics to the organization which, as he is its head, by definition reflects his personal viewpoint. On the one hand, he might know well how to spin the mass media through the delivery of the public announcements in a more positive manner to keep possession of his positive self-image to strengthen credibility as a powerful agency or an official authority to govern the country during times of political instability and insurrection.

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