

## Linguistic Features and Discursive Strategies in Liberia's President Dr. George Manneh Weah's Closing Presidential Campaign Speech

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### ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the linguistic features and discursive strategies that Liberia's President Dr. George Manneh Weah (henceforth, the speaker) deploys in his closing presidential campaign speech delivered on October 8th, 2023, in Monrovia, Liberia. Anchored on the theoretical insights from Systemic Functional Linguistics (henceforth, SFL), Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth, CDA) and the descriptive mixed-method research design, the study specifically examines how the speaker employs linguistic features and discursive strategies in his speech to encode ideological power relations. The findings reveal that he uses, in varying proportions, such linguistic features as Transitivity, Theme, Modality and Vocative features in his speech. That is, each linguistic feature subsumes sub-types, which are deployed, in varying proportions, in the text. For instance, the analysis of Transitivity shows that the speaker selects all the 6 types of process, the dominant type being Material process. Likewise, he deploys the 3 types of Theme, the main type being Topical Theme. As the analysis further shows, 23 Topical Themes are marked. Again, it indicates that the speaker employs the 2 types of Modality, the predominant type being Modalization. It exudes too that the speaker uses the 2 types of Vocative, the predominant type being Familiarizers. Moreover, the findings indicate that the speaker employs such discursive strategies as Actor Description, Comparison, Examples and Illustrations, Number Game, Simile, Allusion, Hyperbole, Personification, Anastrophe, Repetition/Anaphora/Epistrophe, Parallelism, Schemes, Use of Personal Pronouns, Use of Modal Verbs and Modal Adjuncts, Foregrounding, Passivization, and Neologisms and Acronyms in his speech. The study concludes that the speaker intentionally deploys all the aforementioned linguistic features and discursive strategies to encode ideological power relations with a view to persuading or/and manipulating the electorate to vote for and elect him as a president for a second term on October 10th, 2023.

**Keywords:** CDA, discursive strategies, ideological power relations, presidential campaign speech, electoral period

### INTRODUCTION

On October 8th, 2023, Liberia's President Dr. George Manneh Weah (henceforth, the speaker) delivered a speech in Monrovia to mark the end of the campaign activities of the presidential and legislative elections scheduled for October 10th, 2023. According to the *2023 Campaign Guidelines*, the campaign activities which had run from August 5th through October 8th include six key points:

1. Campaign rallies;
2. Holding a march, parade, or other assemblies for the purpose of soliciting votes and/or promoting an individual aspirant or candidate by way of speech, billboards, pictures, banners, posters, placards, or any printed materials that tend to promote an individual aspirant or candidate for an elective public office;

3. Posters, handbills, and house-to-house contact with voters;
4. Publishing or distributing campaign literature, posters, flyers, buttons, T-shirts, caps, or other promotional items designed to support the election of any aspirant/candidate for elective public office;
5. Making contact with voters using print and electronic or social media or radio/TV interviews;
6. Forming of an association, or others for the purpose of soliciting votes and/or promoting an individual aspirant or candidate by way of speech, pictures, banners, posters or any other printed materials that tend to promote an individual aspirant or candidate for an elective public office.

As it can be noticed, the abovementioned campaign activities are political activities meant to be deliberately pre-arranged, structured and most importantly ideology-laden. And the use of language is not excluded here. In point of fact, language is central to politics, and so it is not an exaggeration to assert here that none of the above-listed political activities can be realized without (the use of) language.

As at the time of the delivery of the speech under study, there were two contesting parties on Liberia's political arena, namely: the Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC) and the Unity Party (UP), each with its own underlying political agenda or/and ideological orientation. The speaker actually belongs to the CDC, the ruling party then. Hence, when he addressed his fellow citizens, he did so with only one objective in mind: *convince them to cast their votes for him at the expense of his challenger or opponent, Mr. Joseph Nyumah Boakai*. To reach his goal, we presuppose that the speaker would ideologically use language to appeal to potential Liberian electors and win their heart. In other words, he would purposively employ linguistic features and discursive strategies to persuade them to act in a desired way. In his attempts to persuade voters to elect him for a second term, we presuppose too that the speaker would say only good things about himself, his regime, political party, partisans and friends whereas he would represent his predecessor and his opponent and his party in negative terms.

The current paper analyzes the linguistic features and discursive strategies that the speaker deploys in his speech. Drawing its theoretical insights from Systemic Functional Linguistics (henceforth, SFL), Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth, CDA) and the descriptive mixed-method research design, it specifically examines how the speaker employs linguistic features and discursive strategies to encode ideological power relations. This study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What linguistic features and discursive strategies does the speaker deploy in his speech?
2. To what extent do these linguistic features and discursive strategies encode ideological power relations in his speech?

Before answering the questions above, it is expedient to clarify the theories this paper applies.

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As mentioned above, this paper draws its theoretical insights from SFL and CDA. In the literature, SFL is considered as a functional-semantic approach to the study of language (Eggins, 2004) in that it views language as a social semiotic or as a meaning-making resource (Halliday and Hasan, 1985/1989; Eggins, 2004; Halliday and Webster, 2009; Fontaine, 2013). This simply implies that when people use language, they use it to exchange meanings, and these meanings are influenced by the sociocultural context in which they are exchanged. SFL also posits that language is used to encode three simultaneous strands of meaning: Ideational, Interpersonal and Textual.

Ideational meaning, by definition, is a meaning about how language is used to construe (human) experience. In other words, “ideational meanings are meanings about how we represent reality in language” (Eggins, 2004, p. 206). Ideational meaning is sub-divided into two components: Experiential and Logical. The component which this study explores in the speaker’s speech is Experiential meaning. According to Fontaine (2013, p. 73), this meaning refers to the (representational) content of the text, and it includes the participants, the goings-on or processes and the circumstances encoded in the clause. Ideational/Experiential meaning is realized by the system of Transitivity or process type, with the choice of process implicating associated participant roles and configurations (Eggins, 2004, p. 206). Unlike the foregoing, Interpersonal meaning is a meaning about how language is used to encode interpersonal or social relations. In point of fact, systemic linguists view Interpersonal meanings as meanings which express a speaker’s attitudes, judgments, opinions, perceptions, biases, etc. Interpersonal meaning is realized by the system of Mood. Mood, by definition, refers to the mood types of indicative (declarative and interrogative) and imperative (Eggins, 2004). In this perspective, Halliday and Matthiessen (2004, p. 114) posit that Mood is “the grammatical category that is characteristically used to exchange information”. Mood comprises three constituents: Mood, Modality and Adjunct (Eggins, 2004). This paper analyzes Modality in the speech. Modality “is concerned with the speaker’s attitude with regards to the content of the proposition stated” (Léon, 2004, p. 74). It is sub-divided into two types: Epistemic modality or Modalization and Deontic modality or Modulation (Eggins, 2014; Fontaine, 2013).

Another Mood element (or Adjunct type, to be precise) that this study examines in the speech is Vocative. Matthiessen, Lam and Teruya (2010, p. 239) use the term “Vocative” to denote an “Interpersonal element of clause identifying the addressee of the clause as a move in dialogue.” In the same vein, Sonnenhauser and Hanna (2013, p. 1) functionally view Vocatives as “forms and structures used for direct address”. Some linguistic scholars simply consider them as names or labels, titles of address or address terms. An address term is called (a) social deixis in Pragmatics (Levinson, 1983; Yule, 1996). According to Levinson (1983, p. 63), “social deixis concerns the encoding of social distinctions that are relative to participant-roles, particularly aspects of the social relationship holding between speaker and addressee(s) or speaker and some referent.” Concurring with the foregoing, Matthiessen, Lam and Teruya (2010, pp. 239-240) claim that “Speakers use Vocatives to enact the participation of the addressee(s) in the exchange, very often to mark the interpersonal relationship, calibrating the relationship between themselves and the addressee(s) in terms of power (status), familiarity (contact) and affect.” Based on this, systemic linguists consider Vocatives as “a very potent area for the realization of interpersonal meanings”. They also posit that the choice of a Vocative depends on or is motivated by such contextual variables or tenor dimensions as power, contact and affective involvement. Given this, we can distinguish between two types of tenor: formal and informal. We can distinguish too between two types of Vocative: honorifics and familiarizers. While the former are associated with formal tenor, the latter indicate informal tenor.

The third strand of meaning that this paper examines in the speech is Textual meaning. It is a meaning about how language is used to create text. Textual meaning is realized by the system of Theme. Fontaine (2013, p. 139) states that Theme is the main resource for creating text. It includes two functional components: Theme (the point of departure of the message) and Rheme (the part of the clause in which the Theme is developed). There are three types of Theme: Topical or Experiential, Interpersonal and Textual (Eggins, 2004; Fontaine, 2013).

In addition to SFL, this paper applies CDA. According to van Dijk (2001, p. 352), “Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and

resisted by text and talk in the social and political context.” There are three major brands of CDA, namely: Fairclough’s socio-cultural approach, Wodak’s discourse historical approach and van Dijk’s sociocognitive approach (Datondji and Amoussou, 2019, p. 70). This study specifically draws on van Dijk’s socio-cognitive approach to CDA. This approach is a mainstream multidisciplinary theory of ideology which is presumed to be “located in the conceptual and disciplinary triangle that relates *cognition*, *society* and *discourse*” (van Dijk, 2000a, p. 5). As it appears, in this approach, ideology functions as “the interface between the cognitive representations and processes underlying discourse and action, on the one hand, and the societal position and interests of social groups, on the other hand” (van Dijk, 1995b, p. 18). Ideology can be simply glossed as the social representations shared by members of a group (van Dijk 2000a, p. 8). Elsewhere, van Dijk (1995b, pp. 17-18) states that “ideologies are the basic frameworks for organizing the social cognitions shared by members of social groups, organizations or institutions. In this respect, ideologies are both cognitive and social.” He further claims that “Ideologies are expressed and generally reproduced in the social practices of their members, and more particularly acquired, confirmed, changed and perpetuated through discourse” (van Dijk, 2006a, p. 115).

As it is obvious in the definitions above, central to van Dijk’s socio-cognitive approach to CDA is the view that discourse does an ideological work. In an attempt to emphasize the role of discourse as a form of reproduction and interaction, van Dijk (1995b, p. 17) states that “discourse plays a prominent role as the preferential site for the explicit, verbal formulation and the persuasive communication of ideological propositions.” To unearth the hidden ideologies in discourse, the critical discourse analyst is expected, in this perspective, to examine the discourse structures or/and strategies deployed therein. However, a mere description or identification of the discourse structures or/and strategies employed in discourse cannot be considered as an ideological discourse analysis. In other words, if the analyst limits his/her analysis to the (description or identification of the) structural features in a text or talk, s/he will surely leave out the socio-cognitive dimensions which motivate or underlie (the choice of) these features. In fact, without the socio-cognitive dimensions, the analysis will fail to figure out the ideological power relations encoded in the text or talk, for instance. Concurring with the foregoing, van Dijk (2006a, p. 115) holds that “Although general properties of language and discourse are not, as such, ideologically marked, systematic discourse analysis offers powerful methods to study the structures and functions of ‘underlying’ ideologies.” He further claims that every text or talk follows a clear strategic pattern: US versus THEM or in-group versus out-group (van Dijk, 1995a), suggesting thus that the ideological polarization between in-groups and out-groups is a prominent feature of the structure of ideologies (van Dijk, 2006a). The subsequent analysis will linguistically explore this claim. But before doing that, let us review some works anchored on CDA.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Critical discourse analysts or critical linguists have recently explored how linguistic features or/and discursive structures or/and strategies are deployed in political discourse (Sharndama, 2016; Amoussou and Aguessy, 2020; Osisanwo, 2020; Fawunmi and Taiwo, 2021; Addae, Alhassan and Kyeremeh, 2022 and Allagbé, 2024a) and media discourse (Sadeghi, Hassani and Jalali, 2014; Igwebuike, 2018; Purwanto, 2017; Mayoyo, Khaemba and Simiyu, 2020 and Raj and Ahembe, 2021) to encode ideologies or hidden meanings, power abuse and dominance. For instance, Sharndama (2016) studies the discursive strategies in political inaugural speeches of six governors of Nigeria selected from the 2015 inaugurals on May 29, 2015. Using Critical Discourse Analysis as a theoretical framework and the qualitative method, the paper examines the discursive strategies the governors employ to appeal to the attitudes and emotions of their target audience. The findings exude that the

governors deploy such discursive strategies as macrostructures (opening remark, content/body and closing remark), pronouns and propaganda. Surprisingly, these strategies are the same in/across the selected speeches, denoting thus that inaugural speech is persuasive in nature. As the scholar further notes, “However, persuasion in inaugural speech is not aimed at convincing or making the audience to do what they have not wanted to like in campaign speeches. It is aimed at enticing the audience to build hope in the new administration” (p. 25). This clearly suggests that language is ultimately used in politics to persuade and manipulate people.

Amoussou and Aguessy (2020) explore the foregoing inference in a speech delivered by Donald Trump on March 11, 2020. Drawing on Critical Discourse Analysis and the qualitative method, the study precisely unpacks or deciphers the ideologies behind the speech on the one hand, and to reveal how it contributes to manipulating the public opinion through structural and contextual features of power and control, on the other. It reveals that Trump deploys in his speech such discursive strategies as implicature, generalization, positive self-presentation, negative other-presentation, membership categorization device, blaming the victims, humanistic strategy, etc. These strategies, the researchers conclude, help him act on his recipients’ minds so as to make them accept, appreciate and endorse his worldviews or ideologies. In the same vein, Addae, Alhassan and Kyeremeh (2022) study the role of language in creating ideology and sustaining power as well as ideological discursive structures in five speeches by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. Employing Critical Discourse Analysis, the qualitative research approach and textual analysis, the study specifically investigates the linguistic resources which carry ideological colorations in the speeches. From the analysis, the researchers find out that the speaker employs such discursive structures as evidentiality, pronouns, agency, metaphor, intertextuality, rhetorical question, and strong modals of obligation to encode ideologies. They emphasize too that the speaker deploys these structures to produce and sustain power and unequal power relations between himself and his audience.

Likewise, Allagbé (2024a) examines the relations between discourse structures and ideologies in Nigeria’s President Bola Ahmed Tinubu’s inaugural speech. Drawing its theoretical underpinnings from Critical Discourse Analysis and the descriptive qualitative research method, the study definitely analyzes the discourse structures and strategies the speaker deploys and demonstrates how they encode his ideologies about the issues he (re-)presents in his speech. The findings reveal that the speaker deploys, at the level of meaning, situation description, implications and presuppositions, paraphrase, positive self-presentation, and display of power. They also indicate that he employs, at the level of argumentation, evidentiality, authority and comparison. Again, the findings exude that the speaker uses, at the level of rhetoric, alliteration, assonance, gradation, idiom, hyperbole, imagery, repetition/anaphora, parallelism, personification, ellipsis, substitution, etc. The scholar concludes that the aforementioned features jointly interact to encode the speaker’s personal political beliefs. In fact, these beliefs point to the attitudes or ideologies of his political party, the All Progressives Congress (APC): communitarianism, socialism and democracy.

Unlike the foregoing, Fawunmi and Taiwo (2021) examine rhetoric, ideology and power in two open letters written by Olusegun Obasanjo: “Before it is too late” and “Points for Concern and Action”. The scholars argue that understanding such letters demands investigating the underlying beliefs, knowledge, attitudes, ideologies, values, and social norms that play out in their production. Hinging on Critical Discourse Analysis and the qualitative method, the study analyzes the discursive strategies the writer employs to encode ideological meaning and power relations in his letters. The findings show that Obasanjo deploys such discursive strategies as Actor Description, Authorization, Evidentiality, Comparison, Illustration, Implication, Lexicalization, Populism and Metaphorization in his letters. They also indicate that the aforementioned strategies are deeply rooted in the socio-

cognitive system of Nigeria. Similarly, Osisanwo (2020) examines the use of political campaign songs in southwestern Nigeria with a view to identifying the discursive strategies deployed to persuade the electorate. Using Critical Discourse Analysis and the qualitative method, the study investigates eleven (out of over seventy) political campaign jingles used in the southwestern region of Nigeria during the 2011, 2015 and 2019 general elections in Nigeria. The findings reveal the use of eight discursive strategies in the political campaign songs: allusion (historical, religious/biblical, socio-cultural), propaganda, indigenous/native language usage and code alternation, reference to collective ownership, figurative/proverbial expressions, adaptation of common musical tune, and rhythmicity. The researcher concludes that Nigerian politicians and political contestants use the aforementioned discursive and rhetorical strategies in their political campaign songs to open the door to the heart of the electorate.

Unlike the foregoing, Sadeghi, Hassani and Jalali (2014) investigate the discursive strategies of legitimation two news agencies (VOA and Fars News) employ to represent Egyptian Revolution as a legitimized action and Hosni Mubarak's regime as a delegitimized party. Using Van Leeuwen's discursive categories of (de)legitimation (2008) and the quantitative and qualitative methods, these scholars randomly select forty news articles from the news agencies, twenty from each, and analyze them. The findings reveal news articles from VOA put less focus on legitimizing Egyptian revolution compared with those from Fars News. Moreover, they indicate that these agencies are similar with the way they deploy discursive strategies like 'authorization', for instance. In the same token, Igwebuike (2018) studies the salient discursive strategies deployed by Nigerian and Cameroonian newspapers to represent socio-political ideologies in their reports on the Bakassi Peninsula border conflict. Employing Critical Discourse Analysis and the descriptive qualitative method, the study selects two newspaper reports published between August 2006 and August 2010 from each country and describes the discursive strategies deployed therein. The findings reveal that the reports employ discursive strategies like slanted headlining, negative labeling, evidentiality, number game, hyperbolism, victimization and depersonalization. The strategies, the researcher observes, embody ideological prejudices of positive self- and negative other-representations. In addition, Raj and Ahembe (2021) examine how linguistic resources or discursive strategies overtly or covertly project certain discourse issues based on the ideological leanings of their proprietors (or existing media frames on a news event). Anchored on Critical Discourse Analysis and the qualitative approach, the study investigates the linguistic resources or discursive strategies in 10 online news articles on farmer-herders' conflict in Nigeria purposively selected between January 2017 and December 2018. The findings exude that the news articles deploy seven discursive strategies: Metaphor, Generalization, Actor Description, Implication, Authority, Negative Other-presentation and Number Game. The researchers conclude that these strategies encode discourse issues like legitimization of hate speech, commonization of death, politicization of criminality and radicalism, existential contestation, securitization and glocalization of an international malaise.

In the same vein, Mayoyo, Khaemba and Simiyu (2020) analyze the linguistic devices and discursive strategies used in Kenya's Citizen TV ads which pattern men and women differently according to gender well-being. Using Critical Discourse Analysis theory and a qualitative case study research design, the research examines a corpus of fourteen adverts sourced from one mainstream media station called Citizen TV. The scholars report from their investigation that the ad creators cleverly deploy linguistic devices and discursive strategies like implicatures, lexical choices, syntactic structures, turn-taking, topic choice, connotations, presuppositions and rhetorical devices to represent gender ideologies. They also highlight that the way the ad creators use language reproduces the extant feminine and masculine gender

identities in the Kenyan society, reinforcing thus dominant patriarchal ideologies. Purwanto (2017) too looks at the discursive strategies on Ridwan Kamil's status updates (written expressions). Anchored on theoretical insights from Critical Discourse Analysis, media and discourse studies and quantitative and qualitative approaches, the study examines the discursive strategies the writer deploys to construct social identities and power relations. The findings indicate that he uses such discursive strategies as referential/nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivation and intensification. They also show that he employs a combination of referential/nomination and intensification strategies termed the referential-intensification strategy. The scholar concludes that the writer deploys these strategies for different functions ranging from shaping public opinions, positioning himself and others to exercising power as a Mayor.

From the above reviewed works, it is obvious that CDA has been applied to a range of data, namely: political speeches, open letters, political campaign songs, newspaper reports, news articles and status updates. While the ongoing study applies CDA like these works, it differs from them in that it examines the linguistic features and discursive strategies in a different corpus; a closing presidential campaign speech delivered by Liberia's President Dr. George Manneh Weah.

### METHODOLOGY

The speech under scrutiny was downloaded from the official website of the Liberian government (<https://www.emansion.gov.lr>) on November 11th, 2023. Notice that this speech was officially delivered on October 8th, 2023. It was purposively chosen for this investigation for one basic reason. The reason is that the speech was generically written to mark the end of the electoral campaign launched in Liberia on August 5th, 2023. Given that the speaker (speech-writer) is a presidential candidate, it goes without saying that the content of his speech will go beyond the function of a speech merely dedicated to closing remarks, as its title implies.

The study draws on the descriptive mixed-method research design; i.e. quantitative and qualitative methods. Combining this with the theoretical perspectives from SFL and CDA, it specifically examines how the speaker employs linguistic features and discursive structures or strategies in his speech to encode ideological power relations. The quantitative analysis consists in identifying, classifying and quantifying the linguistic (Transitivity, Theme, Modality and Vocative) features employed in the speech. The linguistic findings are then discussed and interpreted qualitatively. Unlike the quantitative analysis, the qualitative analysis only comprises a close reading of the speech with a view to identifying, discussing and interpreting the discursive strategies deployed therein. Due to space limitations, the analyzed speech is not given here.

### ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The analysis first and foremost begins with the identification of the linguistic (Transitivity, Theme, Modality and Vocative) features and discursive strategies deployed in the speech. Then it demonstrates how these features and strategies encode ideological power relations therein.

#### Identification of Linguistic Features in the Speech

The linguistic (Transitivity, Modality and Vocative) features, in the speech are identified by means of the key below. The identified features are quantified and tabulated accordingly. Recall that Transitivity comprises three components, namely: Process, Participant and Circumstance. While the three components are duly identified in the speech, only process-types are quantified and tabulated here.

**Key:**

**Transitivity:** P=Process (in bold), Pm=material, Pme=mental, Pb=behavioural, Pv=verbal, Pe=existential, Pi=intensive, Pcc=circumstantial, Pp=possessive, Pc=causative. A=Actor, G=Goal, B=Beneficiary, R=Range S=Senser, Ph=Phenomenon. Sy=Sayer, Rv=Receiver, Vb=Verbiage. Be=Behaver, Bh=Behavior. X=Existent. T=Token, V=Value, Cr=Carrier, At=Attribute. Pr=Possessor, Pd=Possessed. C=Circumstance, Cl=location, Cx=extent, Cm=manner, Cc=cause, Ca=accompaniment, Ct=matter, Co=role. Ag=Agent.

**Theme:** Marked/Thematized/Foregrounded circumstance is underlined. Conjunctive Theme is italicized. Dependent clause as Theme: whole clause in bold. Mn = Minor clause.

**Modality:** Ms=Modalization, Ml=Modulation, Modal adjunct=Ma.

**Vocative:** Hon=Honorific, Fm=Familiarizer.

The process-types identified in the speech are tabulated below.

**Table 1: Process-types in the speech**

Process-type	Material	Mental	Behavioral	Verbal	Relational	Existential
Frequency	95	27	01	15	35	01
Percentage	53.67	15.25	0.56	8.47	19.77	0.56
Ranking clauses	174					
Minor clauses	03					
Total no. of clauses	177					

As Table 1 clearly shows, the speaker selects **177** ranking clauses in his speech: **174 (i.e. 98.31%)** major clauses and **03 (i.e. 1.69%)** minor clauses. As it appears in the foregoing, major clauses outnumber minor clauses. This denotes a written mode. On the contrary, the presence of minor clauses in this speech indicates a spoken mode. It is obvious in the table too that the speaker deploys all the six process-types. However, he uses these process-types in varying proportions. The subsequent discussion will only revolve around the first three most frequently used process-types in the speech.

In point of fact, material process ranks first in the speech with a number of **95/177 (i.e. 53.67%)**. This suggests that the speech is mainly concerned with tangible and concrete actions. Surprisingly, all the material clauses but five (21ii; 42; 43; 59ii and 60ii) are active. In other words, clauses (21ii; 42; 43; 59ii and 60ii) are passive or *agentless passives* in Fairclough’s terms (Fairclough, 1989, p. 125) in that the agents therein are either suppressed or backgrounded or deemphasized. Moreover, the Actor and Beneficiary/Goal roles in the material clauses are played by “I” (2i; 2ii; 6iii; 10i; 15ii; 19ii; 44i; 44ii; 44iii; 47i and 47ii), “we” (3i; 4i; 4v; 5i; 5ii; 6v; 16i; 18; 21i; 21ii; 24ii; 25i; 25ii; 28; 29ii; 29iii; 29iv; 30i; 30ii; 31i; 32i; 33i; 33iii; 33iv; 33v; 34i; 34ii; 34iii; 34iv; 35i; 35ii; 36i; 36ii; 37i; 37ii; 40ii; 40iv; 46i; 46ii; 46iii; 48ii; 49i; 50i; 50ii; 51i; 51ii; 52ii; 53; 54iv; 55ii; 55iii; 61i; 61iii; 65i; 67i; 67ii and 69i), “a journey that” (3ii), “some special groups who” (10iii), “your votes” (14ii), “those who once” (15iia&b; 17ia&b and 19ii), “our goal” (31iii and 31iv), “that (free college tuition)” (32ii), “our government” (32iii), “schools” (33ii), “my goal for the second term” (41iii), “my second term” (42), “Every county capital” (43), “Most of these jobs” (45), “development” (56), “that (the recent incident)” (57iv), “The government” (58ii), “(this) justice” (59ii and 60ii), “you” (62ii; 62iii; 64i; 64ii; 64iii; 65ii and 65iii), “Our detractors” (63i and 63ii), “the ones who” (65iva&b) and “a Liberia that” (67iv). As it is obvious, the three major Actor and Beneficiary/Goal roles in the speech are performed by the personal pronouns “we” (fifty-seven times), “I” (eleven times) and “you” (seven times). It can be argued at this stage that the speaker deploys these pronouns to encode socio-political ideologies (Ali, Christopher and Nordin, 2017). We shall prove this argument very soon.



Next to material process comes relational process. It counts **37/177 (i.e. 19.77%)**. This indicates that the speech is not only concerned with describing the actions that participants perform but it also defines and describes them (the participants). The Carrier, Token and Possessor roles in the relational clauses are played by “I” (2iii and 9i), “Your unwavering support” (9i), “your tireless efforts and commitment to our cause” (11), “You” (12i and 16iv), “your participation in this democratic process” (13iii), “Your voices” (14i), “Your presence” (16i), “those who” (19i), “The previous government” (20i), “the results” (20ii), “It” (29i and 54i), “(we)” (30iii; 40i; 40iii; 63iii and 65iv), “salary” (30iv), “our goal” (31ii), “my goal for the second term” (41ii), “which (more electricity)” (46iv), “this” (47iii and 54iii), “which (the Liberian Anti-Corruption Commission)” (49ii), “The journey over the last six years” (52i) and “our world” (55iv). Some examples of the Attributes, Values and Possessed in the relational clauses are “overwhelmed” (2iii); “deeply grateful” (9ii), “the backbone of our movement” (12i), “a testament to the strength of our democracy” (13ii), “its time” (20i), etc.

The third most frequently used process-type identified in the speech is mental process with a rate of **27/177 (i.e. 15.25%)**. This implies that the speech, in addition to describing participants and the actions they perform, encodes physiological and psychological actions. The Senser roles in the mental clauses are performed by “(we)” (4iv; 17ii; 48i; 55i and 67iii), “I” (6i; 6ii; 6iv; 6v; 10i; 10iii; 13i; 15i; 16ii; 39; 41i; 57i; 60i and 61ii), “You” (24i and 65iv), “The Government” (58i), “Our international partners” (59i) and “Liberians throughout the country” (63iv). As it is obvious in the foregoing, the personal pronouns “I” and “we” are the participants that perform most of the Senser roles in the speech. The use of these pronouns is not neutral. In fact, it has an ideological implication. We shall come back to this very soon in the next sub-section.

The Theme types identified in the speech provided in Table 2.

**Table 2: Theme types in the speech**

Theme type	Topical	Interpersonal	Textual
Frequency	168	01	55
Percentage	75	0.45	24.55
Unmarked	145		
Marked	23		
Interpersonal element as theme	01		
Dependent clause as theme	03		
Ranking clauses	174		
Minor clauses	03		
Total no. of clauses	177		

Table 2 shows that the speaker selects, like process-types, the three Theme types. Likewise, he employs the Theme types unevenly. In effect, the table indicates that the speaker deploys a total number of **224** themes. As it further proves, Topical Themes come first with a figure of **168/224 (i.e. 75%)**. This suggests that most of the Topical Themes in the speech are unmarked, suggesting thus that the speaker deliberately places the subjects in the clauses in their usual/normal slots. Note that 145 out of the 168 Topical Themes are unmarked. Stated differently, only 23 Topical Themes (2i; 4i; 5i; 8i; 11; 13i; 17i; 18; 19i; 24ii; 25i; 26; 29iii; 31i; 41i; 48i; 55iv; 56; 60i; 61i; 64i; 67i and 69ii) are *marked* in the speech. Besides, 3 of the marked Themes are Dependent clauses (31i; 41i and 61i). By placing Dependent clauses in Thematic position, the speaker, as Eggins (2004, p. 339) notes, neutralizes the distinction between spoken and written language in the text.

The remaining 20 marked Themes (2i; 4i; 5i; 8i; 11; 13i; 18; 17i; 19i; 24ii; 25i; 26; 29iii; 48i; 55iv; 56; 60i; 64i; 67i and 69ii) are surprisingly circumstances. According to Thompson (2004, p. 109 cited in Fontaine, 2013, p. 79), circumstances “encode the background against which the process takes place”. By placing circumstances in Thematic position in the clauses, the speaker intentionally foregrounds them. In this sense, Eggins (2004, p. 339) observes that the use of foregrounded Themes in a text shows “one realization of a careful written mode, in which the writer has planned the rhetorical development of the text to allow the foregrounding of Circumstantial information”. Textual Themes follow Topical Themes with a figure of **55/224 (i.e. 24.55%)**. This indicates once again that the speaker structures his speech textually and rhetorically. Again, the only Interpersonal Theme (**i.e. 0.45%**) identified in the speech proves that the speaker encodes an interpersonal meaning therein.

The Modality types identified in the speech are tabulated below.

**Table 3: Modality types in the speech**

Modality type	Modalization	Modulation
Frequency	26	02
Percentage	92.86	7.14
Ranking clauses		174
Minor clauses		03
Total no. of clauses		177

As Table 3 indicates, the speaker deploys **28** Modality features in his speech. A close look at the table further shows that **26 (i.e. 92.86%)** out the 28 features are Modalizers. In other words, only **2 (i.e. 7.14%)** features are Modulators. The prevalence of Modalizers over Modulators overtly denotes that the speech contains a less authoritarian or balanced tenor. Surprisingly, 24 out of the 28 Modality features are verbal realizations. The remaining four Modality features are Mood adjuncts. The identified Modalizers are encoded in four modal verbs: *will* (14ii; 29iii; 31ii; 42; 44i; 45; 46i; 47iii; 50i; 51i; 55iv; 56; 58ii; 60i and 67i), *can* (16i; 65iva&b and 67iii), *may* (70i and 70ii) and *should* (29i), and four Mood adjuncts *once* (15i), *of course* (37i), *In fact* (54i) and *even* (65iv). As it is obvious, the speaker deploys the modal verb *will* more than *can* and *may*. In fact, he uses this verb to encode a range of meanings: certainty, ability, futurity, desire, confidence and promise. In addition, the speaker employs the modal operators *can*, *may* and *should* to respectively express ability, prayer and possibility or certainty. In the same token, he deploys the Mood adjuncts *once* and *of course* to encode respectively temporality and probability. But he uses the Mood adjuncts *In fact* and *even* to realize intensity. Unlike Modalizers, the Modulators in the speech are realized by only one modal operator: *must* (43 and 55i) and it is used to express obligation. Let us bear in mind that all the Modality features in this speech, like personal pronouns, are ideologically motivated or marked. We shall demonstrate this in the next sub-section.

The Vocative types identified in the speech are given below.

**Table 4: Vocative types in the speech**

Vocative type	Honorific	Familiarizer
Frequency	03	17
Percentage	15	85
Ranking clauses		174
Minor clauses		03
Total no. of clauses		177

Table 4 exudes that the speaker uses **20** Vocative types: **17 (i.e. 85%)** Familiarizers and **3 (i.e. 15%)** Honorifics. As it appears, Familiarizers outnumber Honorifics. This indicates an informal tenor. The Familiarizers in the speech are “(My) FELLOW PARTISANS” (1; 23 and 38), “our Campaign Team” (7), “all of you who have been a part of this extraordinary campaign” (7), “the countless volunteers, the tireless foot soldiers, the dedicated party members” (8i), “our first-time voters” (13i), “those who (A) once **left (Pm)** our party, the Coalition for Democratic Change (G), // **and have now (Cl) returned (Pm)**” (15ii), “**those who (A) have left (Pm) their various parties (Cl) [to join (Pm) us (G)] (Cc)**” (17i), “**those who (Cr) remain (Pi) undecided (At)**” (19i), “(My fellow) CDCians” (23; 38 and 61i), “(My fellow) Weahcians” (23; 38 and 61i) and “LIBERIANS” (38). It is obvious in the foregoing that the identified vocatives are of two structural categories: noun phrases (e.g. “Our Campaign Team”) and clauses (“all of you who have been part of this extraordinary campaign”, for example). While the speaker deploys these vocatives to call or summon different types of participants, he actually addresses his supporters more than any other thing else.

Unlike Familiarizers, the presence of the 3 Honorifics in the speech exudes a formal tenor. The 3 Honorifics in the speech are “DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN” (1), “the First Lady of the Republic, Madam Clar Marie Weah” (7) and “the Vice President of Liberia, Madam Jewel Howard-Taylor” (7). Notice that (1) is an Honorific simply. However, the other two vocatives form this pattern: honorific + title + first name (FN) + last name (LN). Besides, the first Honorific is more generic compared to others as it is used to summon all the participants indiscriminately. On the contrary, the 2 Honorifics (“the First Lady of the Republic, Madam Clar Marie Weah” (7) and “the Vice President of Liberia, Madam Jewel Howard-Taylor”) are more specific than “DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN” in that they are used to address some particular participants. Note that these Honorifics express higher status (Yule, 1996, p. 10). Note too that the Honorific “DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN” (1) and the Familiarizer “LIBERIANS” (38) are ideologically close in meaning. Likewise, the Familiarizers “(My) FELLOW PARTISANS” (1; 23 and 38), “(My fellow) CDCians” (23; 38 and 61i) and “(My fellow) Weahcians” (23; 38 and 61i) are directed at the same addressees. What the foregoing observation suggests is that the speech is marked by the ideologically biased US and THEM polarization.

### Identification of Discursive Strategies in the Speech

The speaker deploys such discursive strategies as Actor Description, Comparison, Examples and Illustrations, Number Game, Simile, Allusion, Hyperbole, Personification, Anastrophe, Repetition/Anaphora/Epistrophe, Parallelism, Schemes (Alliteration and Assonance), Use of Personal Pronouns, Use of Modal Verbs and Modal Adjuncts, Foregrounding, Passivization, and Neologisms and Acronyms to represent status, social relations, group relations (power), identity and most especially ideologies in his speech.

#### *Actor Description*

Actor Description is one of the prominent discursive strategies deployed in the speech under study to emphasize in-group and out-group polarization. In fact, the speaker categorizes the social actors in his speech into two groups: in-group members and out-group members. The in-group members naturally include himself, his government, his partisans or supporters and partners whereas the out-group members are the past government (or his predecessor) and his political opponents. Consider how he does so in the subsequent examples from the speech:

- (1) 10i. I (S) want (Pme) [10ii. to take (Pm) a moment (G) 10iii. to acknowledge (Pme) [some special groups (Ph) who (A) have played (Pm) pivotal roles (G) in this campaign (Cl)] (Ph)] (Ph).
- (2) 11. To our auxiliaries (Fm) (Cl), your tireless efforts and commitment to our cause (Cr) **have been (Pi)** truly remarkable (At).
- (3) 12i. You (T) **are (Pi)** the backbone of our movement (V), 12ii. and I (Sy) **salute (Pv)** your dedication (Vb).
- (4) 24i. You (S) **are all aware (Pme)** [24ii. that in 2018 (Cl), we (A) **inherited (Pm)** a broken economy (G).
- (5) 25i. Nevertheless, in the five and a half (5½) years since then (Cl), we (A) **have managed (Pm)** [25ii. to place (Pm) our economy (G) back on the track of progress and growth (Cl)] (Cc).
- (6) 59i. Our international partners (S/Cr) **are (Pi) seriously (Cm) concerned (Pme/At)** [59ii. that justice (G) be done (Pm) to the victims and their families (B)] (Ph).
- (7) 60i. As President (Co) I (S) **will (Ms) ensure (Pme)** [60ii. that this justice (G) is done (Pm)] (Ph).
- (8) 63i. Our detractors (A) **have tried to use (Pm)** lies and propaganda (G) [63ii. to destabilize (Pm) our Government (G)] (Cc), 63iii. but we (Cr) **stood (Pi)** strong (At) 63iv. and Liberians throughout the country (S) now (Cl) **see (Pme)** the results of the hard work of our Government (Ph).

In the examples above, it is noticed that the speaker emphasizes his group's values and properties by ascribing positive actions, attributes, values and tokens (e.g. "want to take a moment to acknowledge" and "have played" in (10i; 10ii and 10iii), "truly remarkable" in (11), "seriously concerned" and "be done" in (59i and 59ii), etc.) to himself and his in-group members. This suggests positive self-presentation. Likewise, by representing out-group members with lexical choices like "a broken economy" in (25i) and "Our detractors" and "lies and propaganda" in (63iv), the speaker encodes the ideological semantics of negative Other-presentation in the text.

### **Comparison**

Another prominent discursive strategy employed in the speech to represent in-group and out-group polarization is comparison. For instance, in his argumentation, we notice that the speaker discursively represents himself as a developer or nation-builder as opposed to his predecessor (see 24 and 25 above-cited). We also notice that he portrays himself as a legalist, pacifist, unifier, compassionate and hardworking person as opposed to his "detractors" whom he plainly depicts as advocates of lies, propaganda and destabilization (see 60 above-cited).

### **Examples and Illustrations**

In a bid to evidence that his regime has done far better than the one of his predecessor, the speaker makes recourse to the priced discursive strategy of examples and illustrations. In point of fact, he consistently provides an example for each claim or argument that he puts forth in favor of his group. For example, in (24), he claims "that in 2018 (Cl), we (A) **inherited (Pm)** a broken economy (G)." He then adds that his regime has tried to place the economy back on the track of progress and growth. To illustrate this assertion, he gives an example in (26) which overtly indicates an economic growth of more than 4 percent in the five and a half years of his governance. Likewise, in (30), he asserts that they have reformed government systems to ensure a fair and equitable redistribution of national wealth. To prove this claim too, he employs (31); a commissive speech act. In this speech act, he unflinchingly mentions the government workers of the key sectors (health, education and local government) who will benefit from a salary increase if he is re-elected. The speaker's mention of the aforementioned sectors is not innocent. In fact, it has an ideological implication.

Note that the sectors mentioned provide services to Liberians. According to a recent two-round survey (the School-to-work transition survey [SWTS]) conducted by the International Labour Office (ILO) Work4Youth project in 2012 and 2014 (June-August, both surveys) and published in form of a note online in January 2017, “Unlike many other sub-Saharan African countries, more youth[s] are employed in the services sector in Liberia than [in] the agricultural sector. The distribution of employment by broad sector in 2014 was 60.4 per cent in services (up from 55.0 per cent in 2012), 30.6 per cent in agriculture and 8.2 percent in industry”. From this, we can understand that these sectors truly constitute a potential electorate for the speaker, and that’s why he mentions them in his speech. Like in (24) and (30), in (32), the speaker claims that they have provided free college tuition across Liberia and subsequently states some examples to illustrate its impact on Liberians.

- (9) 24i. *You (S) are all aware (Pme) [24ii. that in 2018 (CI), we (A) inherited (Pm) a broken economy (G). 25i. Nevertheless, in the five and a half (5½) years since then (CI), we (A) have managed (Pm) [25ii. to place (Pm) our economy (G) back on the track of progress and growth (CI)] (Cc). 26. For example, over the last two years (CI), economic growth (T) has averaged (Pi) more than 4 percent (V).*
- (10) 30i. *We (A) have also reformed (Pm) our government systems (G) [30ii. in order to give (Pm) our government workers (B) their fair salary (G) 30iii. and to make (Pi) sure (At) 30iv. salary (Cr) is (Pi) fair and equitable (At) across the government (CI)] (Cc). 31i. As we (A) improve (Pm) the government pay system (G), 31ii. our goal (T) in the years ahead (CI) will (Ms) be (Pi) [31iii. to continue (Pm) 31iv. to increase (Pm) the salary of government workers (G) in key sectors such as health, education, and local government (CI)] (V).*
- (11) 32i. *We (A) have provided (Pm) free college tuition (G) 32ii. that (A) has impacted (Pm) more than 27,000 Liberians (G), 32iii. and our government (A) has paid (Pm) the WASSE fees of more than 207,000 high school graduates (G).*

#### **Number Game**

In (26) and (32) quoted above, the speaker recursively uses the discursive strategy of numbers and figures to further enhance the credibility and truthfulness of his claims or arguments. In the first case, for instance, the figure (**4 percent**) provided is meant to sustain the thesis of economic growth the speaker ascribes to his regime. In the same way, the numbers (**27000** and **207000**) in the second case aim to factually prove that the speaker’s administration has positively impacted the life of Liberians. There are three other instances of number game in the speech:

- (12) 28. *We (A) have also increased (Pm) our domestic revenue (G) by more than 3 percent of GDP (Cm).*
- (13) 35i. *We (A) have given (Pm) electricity (G) to about 1 million Liberians (B) since 2018 (CI), 35ii. and have brought (Pm) the cost of electricity (G) down from 35 cents per kilowatt hour to around 22 cents per kilowatt hour for businesses and to 18 cents per kilowatt hour (Cx) for some of our very vulnerable households (Cc).*
- (14) 37i. *And of course, we (A) have built (Pm) more community roads than any government (G) in history (CI) 37ii. and have built (Pm) more than 347 kilometers of primary roads (G) over the past 5 and half years (CI).*

As it appears, in (28), the speaker provides a numerical precision (**more than 3 percent of GDP**) which clearly expresses the economic growth the speaker’s government has made. Likewise, in (35), he first gives the number of Liberians (**about 1 million Liberians**) that his regime has impacted by providing them with electricity. Next, he emphasizes the cost (**from 35 cents per kilowatt hour to around 22 cents per kilowatt hour for businesses and to 18 cents per kilowatt hour (Cx) for some of our very vulnerable households**). While the foregoing representation illustrates the progress the speaker’s administration has made in

terms of energy production, it basically positions him as a credible person. In the same vein, in (37), the speaker's use of the numerical figure “**more than 347 kilometers of primary roads**” is meant to project him as a credible leader.

#### **Simile**

In the same token, in (37), the speaker deploys the discursive strategy of simile. Indeed, in this clause complex, he attempts to convince his addressees by means of a similitive expression. This expression unfailingly shows that his government outperforms any other government when it comes to the construction of roads.

#### **Allusion**

Remember that we mentioned earlier that the speaker compares his regime with that of his predecessor (25i). However, he does not say what he means directly. In other words, he couches his intention by simply making use of the lexical term “a broken economy” which unmistakably alludes to the Ellen Johnson Sirleaf administration. In fact, before employing the discursive strategy of allusion, this is how he depicts the Sirleaf regime:

(15) 20i. *The previous government (Pr) had (Pi) its time (Pd), 20ii. and the results (Cr) were (Pi) lacking (At).*

#### **Hyperbole**

The speaker also employs the discursive strategy of hyperbole to exaggerate meaning about the issues he represents in his speech. In point of fact, his representation shows that he uses hyperbolic expressions to ideologically polarize US and THEM. For instance, in (5), he exaggerates meaning about the efforts his electoral campaign team has made during the campaign. Likewise, in (25), he enhances meaning about his (government's) past achievements. Again, in (42) and (44), he amplifies meaning about his future achievements. On the contrary, in (24), he magnifies meaning about the negative action of his predecessor. As it appears, the speaker only says good things about himself, his electoral campaign team and his government while he depicts his predecessor negatively.

(16) 5i. *During this campaign (Cl), we (A) did not rest on (Pm) our laurels (G); 5ii. instead, we (A) crisscrossed (Pm) the nation (G) out of respect for every voter (Cm).*

(17) 24i. *You (S) are all aware (Pme) [24ii. that in 2018 (Cl), we (A) inherited (Pm) a broken economy (G).*

(18) 25i. *Nevertheless, in the five and a half (5½) years since then (Cl), we (A) have managed (Pm) [25ii. to place (Pm) our economy (G) back on the track of progress and growth (Cl)] (Cc).*

(19) 42. *For example, my second term (G) will (Ms) be dedicated to (Pm) completing Liberia's road infrastructure (G).*

(20) 44i. *I (A) will (Ms) also continue (Pm) [44ii. to grow (Pm) our economy 44iii. in order to provide (Pm) more jobs (G) for Liberians (Cc)] (Cc).*

#### **Personification**

Next to hyperbole, the speaker deploys the discursive strategy of personification to express metaphorical meanings in his speech. There are two cases of personification (66 and 68) in the speech. In (66), for example, he ascribes the human attribute of speaking to “actions”. In the same token, he attributes human characteristics (unwavering support, dedication and faith) to “Liberia”. He employs this discursive strategy, as we can observe, to appeal to his audience.

(21) 66. *Let (Pc) our actions (Sy) speak (Pv) volumes (Vb) about the unity and strength of our movement (Ct).*

(22) 68. *Thank (Pv) you (Rv), Liberia (Vb), for your unwavering support, your dedication, and your faith in our vision (Cc).*

**Anastrophe**

Another discursive strategy the speaker employs in his speech is anastrophe. Earlier on in the preceding sub-section, we stated that 20 (2i; 4i; 5i; 8i; 11; 13i; 18; 17i; 19i; 24ii; 25i; 26; 29iii; 48i; 55iv; 56; 60i; 64i; 67i and 69ii) out of the marked Themes identified in the speech are circumstances. The foregoing are actually instances of anastrophe. The use of anastrophe clearly indicates that the speaker deliberately alters the usual **SVO** word order to evoke strong emotions or create emphasis and rhythm in his speech. Consider how he does so in the following examples:

- (23) 2i. Today (Cl), as I (A) stand (Pm) before you (Cl) [2ii. to close (Pm) our campaign (G)] (Cc)...
- (24) 4i. From the bustling streets of Monrovia to the serene villages nestled in the heart of our motherland (Cl), we (A) have traversed (Pm) the 15 counties (G), 4ii. embraced (Pme) the spirit of each electoral district (Ph)....
- (25) 17i. [For those who (A) have left (Pm) their various parties (Cl) [to join (Pm) us (Fm) (G)] (Cc), 17ii. we (S) appreciate (Pme) your trust and faith in our vision for Liberia (Ph).
- (26) 56. Without peace (Cm) development (A) will (Ms) NOT happen (Pm).

In the examples above, it is evident that the anastrophes deployed in the speech are of two types: single-word (e.g. **Today**) and multiple-word (**Without peace**, for instance). Again, it is obvious that the type of anastrophes mostly used in the speech is multiple-word anastrophes.

**Repetition/Anaphora/Epistrophe**

Just like anastrophe, the speaker uses the discursive strategy of repetition/anaphora/epistrophe in his speech to evoke strong emotions and drive emphasis. Notice how he does so in the following examples:

- (27) 50i. We (A) **will (Ms) empower (Pm) this new LACC (G)**...
- (28) 51i. We (A) **will (Ms) empower (Pm) the GAC, the IAA and the LACC (G)**...

**Parallelism**

The above-cited examples (50i and 51i) form a parallel structure: Subject + Verb + Object. Again, there are other parallel structures identified in the speech: Adjunct + Subject + Verb + Object (4i and 5i); Direct Object + Verb + Indirect Object (43 and 59ii), etc. As it is evident, these parallel structures are deployed in the speech to produce rhythmical or sound effects.

- (29). 4i. From the bustling streets of Monrovia to the serene villages nestled in the heart of our motherland (Cl), we (A) have traversed (Pm) the 15 counties (G)....
- (30) 5i. During this campaign (Cl), we (A) did not rest on (Pm) our laurels (G)...
- (31) 43. Every county capital (G) must (Ml) be connected to (Pm) the next county (B) by a paved road (Cm).
- (32) [59ii. that justice (G) be done (Pm) to the victims and their families (B)] (Ph).

**Schemes**

Like parallelism, the speaker deploys the discursive strategy of phonological schemes (alliteration and assonance) to create rhythmical or sound effects in his speech. When we look at the above-cited examples (50i and 51i), for instance, we notice that the speaker forms an alliterative pattern with the consonant /w/ (*We* and *will*). We also notice that he forms an assonantal pattern with the vowel sound /i/ (*We*, *will*, *this* and *the*).

**Use of Personal Pronouns**

Recall we said in the preceding sub-section that the speaker employs three major personal pronouns in his speech. The pronouns are “we”, “I” and “you”. We argued too that these pronouns are deployed in the speech to encode socio-political ideologies (Ali,

Christopher and Nordin, 2017). Let us demonstrate this argument here. First of all, we will start with “I” and its variants “me” and “my”. Consider the examples below, for instance:

- (33) 2i. Today (Cl), as I (A) stand (Pm) before you (Cl) [2ii. to close (Pm) our campaign (G)] (Cc), 2iii. I (Cr) am (Pi) overwhelmed (At) with gratitude and pride (Cm).  
 (34) 7. **Let (Pc) me (Sy) express (Pv) my heartfelt thanks and appreciation (Vb)...**  
 (35) 44i. I (A) will (Ms) also continue (Pm) [44ii. to grow (Pm) our economy (G) 44iii. in order to provide (Pm) more jobs (G) for Liberians (Cc)] (Cc).

As it appears, in the examples above, the speaker uses the first-person singular pronoun to refer to himself as a speaker or as a person vested with power and authority. The representation clearly indicates an unambiguous status, identity and ideological power relation. In the examples below, on the contrary, he deploys the first-person plural pronoun “we” and its variants to encode varying social identities or shifts in perspective. In (3), for example, the pronoun “we” and its variant “us” are employed. This pronoun is inclusive here in that it is used to refer to the speaker, his partisans and Liberians. In (67), though the use of this pronoun is inclusive, it is employed in such a way that excludes Liberians from the group. In other words, the pronoun only points deictically to the speaker and his supporters (variably labeled partisans, CDCians and Weahcians in the speech). Unlike in the foregoing, the use of the pronoun in (2) is exclusive. It only refers to the speaker. This exudes the discursive structure or strategy of display of power.

- (36) 3i. **We (A) have come (Pm) to the end of a remarkable journey together (Cl)**, 3ii. a journey that (A) has taken (Pm) us (G) to every corner of this great nation (Cl).  
 (37) 67i. Together (Cm), we (A) will (Ms) continue (Pm) [67ii. to build (Pm) a Liberia (G) 67iii. that (Ph) we (S) can (Ms) all be proud of (Pme), 67iv. a Liberia that (A) stands (Pm) as a beacon of hope and progress (Co) in Africa (Cl)] (Cc).  
 (38) 21i. **We (B) were given (Pm) the opportunity (G)**, 21ii. and we (A) have done (Pm) our best (G).

Like “we”, the speaker deploys “you” and its variant “your” to construct different social identities and signal shifts in perspective. For instance, in (6), he uses the pronoun “your” to refer to all Liberians. However, in (9), he employs the same pronoun to refer “8i. To the countless volunteers, the tireless foot soldiers, the dedicated party members (Fm), and all those who (S) believed in (Pme) our cause (Fm) (Ph) (Rv)...” Similarly, in (11), the speaker uses it to point anaphorically back “To our auxiliaries”. In the same way, in (14), the speaker uses the same pronoun to refer “13i. To our first-time voters (Fm) (Rv)...” In (16) too, he deploys “you” to refer to those who once left CDC and have now returned. Again, in (17), he uses the pronoun “your” to refer to those who have left their various parties to join CDC. Finally, in (24), he employs the pronoun “you” to refer to his fellow partisans, CDCians and Weahcians.

- (39) 6iv. because I (S) believe in (Pme) the power of your choice (Ph)..  
 (40) 9i. **Your unwavering support (T) has been (Pi) the driving force behind our campaign (V)**, 9ii. and I (Cr) am (Pi) deeply grateful (At) for your commitment to Liberia (Cc).  
 (41) 11. To our auxiliaries (Fm) (Cl), your tireless efforts and commitment to our cause (Cr) have been (Pi) truly remarkable (At).  
 (42) 14i. **Your voices (Cr) matter (Pi)**, 14ii. and your votes (A) will (Ms) shape (Pm) the future of our nation (G).  
 (43) 16iv. that you (T) are (Pi) now in very good hands (Cl)] (Cc).  
 (44) 17i. [For those who (A) have left (Pm) their various parties (Cl) [to join (Pm) us (Fm) (G)] (Cc)], 17ii. we (S) appreciate (Pme) your trust and faith in our vision for Liberia (Ph).  
 (45) 24i. **You (S) are all aware (Pme)** [24ii. that in 2018 (Cl), we (A) inherited (Pm) a broken economy (G).



**Use of Modal Verbs and Modal Adjuncts**

In the previous sub-section, we stated that the speaker employs 28 Modality types in his speech: 26 Modalizers encoded in four modal verbs: *will* (14ii; 29iii; 31ii; 42; 44i; 45; 46i; 47iii; 50i; 51i; 55iv; 56; 58ii; 60i and 67i), *can* (16i; 65iva&b and 67iii) and *may* (70i and 70ii) and *should* (29i) and four Mood adjuncts: *once* (15i), *of course* (37i), *In fact* (54i) and *even* (65iv), and 2 Modulators realized by only one modal operator: *must* (43 and 55i). As it appears, the speaker deploys more Modalizers than Modulators, suggesting thus that the speech contains a less authoritarian or balanced tenor. We also added that the Modality features in the speech are ideologically motivated. This is to say, the speaker deploys the identified Modality types to express hidden ideologies in his speech. Consider how he does so below:

- (46) 14ii. *and your votes (A) will (Ms) shape (Pm) the future of our nation (G).*  
 (47) 15i. *I (S) also want (Pme) [15ii. to extend (Pm) a warm welcome (G) [to those who (A) once (Ma) left (Pm) our party (Fm), the Coalition for Democratic Change (G)....*  
 (48) 16i. *Your presence (T) is (Pi) [a testament to the belief that we (A) can (Ms) achieve (Pm) greatness (G) together (Cm)] (V)...*  
 (49) 29iii. *and together (Cm), we (A) will (Ms) continue (Pm)...*  
 (50) 31ii. *our goal (T) in the years ahead (Cl) will (Ms) be (Pi)...*  
 (51) 70i. *May (Ms) God (Sy) bless (Pv) you all (Rv),...*  
 (52) 55i. *We (S) must (Ml) all cherish (Pme) this peace (Ph)*

As it is obvious in the clauses above, the speaker deploys Modality features to express his attitudes, judgments, opinions, perceptions, biases, etc., in the speech. Specifically, in (14ii), he encodes a degree of certainty about (the attitudes of) his first-time voters. Unlike the foregoing, in (15i), he deploys the Mood adjunct *once* to mark (a remote) time with regards to the attitudes of his returning party members. In (16i and 29iii), he further represents his perception of (the behavior) of these returnees and the possibility (for them) to work together in a nearest future. He mostly foregrounds futurity in (31ii). Moreover, in (70i), he expresses a prayer. Finally, in (55i), he encodes necessity or obligation.

**Foregrounding**

In a bid to enhance positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation, the speaker intensively deploys the discursive strategy of foregrounding. This is to say, he foregrounds positive actions, attributes and values when he represents his group members but he foregrounds the negative deeds of others. Consider how he does this in the examples below:

**Self-presentation**

- (53) 32i. *We (A) have provided (Pm) free college tuition (G) 32ii. that (A) has impacted (Pm) more than 27,000 Liberians (G), 32iii. and our government (A) has paid (Pm) the WASSE fees of more than 207,000 high school graduates (G). 33i. We (A) have built (Pm) schools (G) 33ii. where schools (A) did not exist (Pm) since our country's founding (Cl); 33iii. and we (A) continue (Pm) [33iv. to work (Pm) 33v. to improve (Pm) our education system (G)] (Cc). 34i. We (A) have built (Pm) hospitals (G) [34ii. to increase (Pm) access (G) to health (Cl) for all our people (Cc)] (Cc) 34iii. and are working (Pm) [34iv. to improve (Pm) the quality of healthcare delivery (G)] (Cc). 35i. We (A) have given (Pm) electricity (G) to about 1 million Liberians (B) since 2018 (Cl), 35ii. and have brought (Pm) the cost of electricity (G) down from 35 cents per kilowatt hour to around 22 cents per kilowatt hour for businesses and to 18 cents per kilowatt hour (Cx) for some of our very vulnerable households (Cc).*  
 (54) 36i. *We (A) have also built (Pm) markets (G) for all our market people (Cc) 36ii. and we (A) have also built (Pm) housing units (G) for some Liberians (Cc). 37i. And of course, we (A) have built (Pm) more community roads than any government (G) in*

history (CI) 37ii. and **have built (Pm)** more than 347 kilometers of primary roads (G) over the past 5 and half years (CI).

*Other-presentation*

(55)20i. The previous government (Pr) **had (Pi)** its time (Pd), 20ii. and the results (Cr) **were (Pi)** lacking (At).

(56)63i. Our detractors (A) **have tried to use (Pm)** lies and propaganda (G) [63ii. **to destabilize (Pm)** our Government (G)] (Cc), 63iii. but we (Cr) **stood (Pi)** strong (At) 63iv. and Liberians throughout the country (S) now (CI) **see (Pme)** the results of the hard work of our Government (Ph).

In the examples above, one can overtly notice that the speaker makes a deliberate effort to persuade and manipulate the public. To reach his goal, he actually chooses to represent only the positive deeds of his group and only the negative ones of others with a view to getting his audience to act in a desired way: **to vote for him.**

#### **Passivization**

Like foregrounding, the speaker uses the discursive strategy of passivization for persuasive and manipulative reasons. In fact, there are five passivized clauses in the speech:

(57)21i. We (B) **were given (Pm)** the opportunity (G)...

(58)42. For example, my second term (G) **will (Ms)** be dedicated to (Pm) completing Liberia's road infrastructure (G).

(59)43. Every county capital (G) **must (Ml)** be connected to (Pm) the next county (B) by a paved road (Cm).

(60)[59ii. that justice (G) **be done (Pm)** to the victims and their families (B)] (Ph).

(61)[60ii. that this justice (G) **is done (Pm)**] (Ph).

As it appears, in (21i), the speaker intentionally suppresses the agent of the action. The plausible agent here is "The people of Liberia" as the country practices democracy. Likewise, in (42), the speaker deletes the agent of the action. And the deleted agent therein is "I" (the speaker himself). Again, in (59ii) and (60ii), the speaker suppresses the agent of the actions. The deleted agent in the two clauses is obviously "the judiciary (system)". On the contrary, in (43), the speaker backgrounds the agent "a paved road". As it appears, the speaker obviously suppresses or deemphasizes the agents in the aforementioned clauses in order to give focus to other structural elements or simply conceal the identity of the agents from his audience.

#### **Neologisms and Acronyms**

Like foregrounding and passivization, the speaker draws on the discursive strategy of neologisms to appeal to his partisans. In point of fact, he invents two new words in his speech: CDCians (23; 38 and 61i) and Weahcians (23; 38 and 61i). As it appears, morphologically, these words are formed by means of affixation (precisely suffixation). The root morphemes in the two words respectively are: CDC (Coalition for Democratic Change) and Weah (the speaker's last name) and the suffix is "[c]ians". These invented words both actually have a nominative and stylistic function undergirded by a given ideology. The ideology is nothing else but the social representations shared by members of a group (van Dijk 2000a, p. 8). In addition to these invented words, the speaker employs some acronyms that deserve mentioning here: WASSE (West Africa Senior School Certificate Examination) (32iii), LACC (Liberian Anti-Corruption Commission) (49i and 51i), GAC (General Auditing Commission) (51i) and IAA (Internal Audit Agency) (51i). While the speaker obviously mentions what LACC means in his speech, he intentionally leaves out what WASSE, GAC and IAA stand for therein. This too is ideologically underpinned.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has analyzed the linguistic features and discursive strategies that Liberia's President Dr. George Manneh Weah (henceforth, the speaker) deploys in his closing presidential campaign speech delivered on October 8th, 2023, in Monrovia, Liberia. It has drawn its theoretical insights from SFL, CDA and the descriptive mixed-method research design. With this, it has specifically examined how the speaker employs linguistic features and discursive strategies in his speech to encode ideological power relations. The analysis has yielded some important findings.

The findings exude, for example, that the speaker uses, in varying proportions, such linguistic features as Transitivity, Theme, Modality and Vocative features in his speech. That is, each linguistic feature subsumes sub-types, which are deployed, in varying proportions, in the text. For example, the analysis of Transitivity shows that the speaker selects all the six types of process: Material, Mental, Behavioral, Verbal, Relational and Existential, the dominant type being Material process. In the same token, he employs the three types of Theme: Topical, Interpersonal and Textual, the main type being Topical Theme. As the analysis further shows, 23 of the Topical Themes are marked. While 20 marked Themes are circumstances, 3 are Dependent clauses. This proves that the speech is rhetorically well-structured or organized, on the one hand, and bridges the gap between spoken and written language, on the other. In addition, the findings indicate that the speaker uses the two types of Modality: Modalization and Modulation, the predominant type being Modalization. This suggests that the speech contains a less authoritarian or balanced tenor. The findings further reveal that the speaker selects the two types of Vocative: Honorifics and Familiarizers, the predominant type being Familiarizers. This denotes an informal tenor. Again, the findings signpost that the speaker employs such discursive strategies as Actor Description, Comparison, Examples and Illustrations, Number Game, Simile, Allusion, Hyperbole, Personification, Anastrophe, Repetition/Anaphora/Epistrophe, Parallelism, Schemes (Alliteration and Assonance), Use of Personal Pronouns, Use of Modal Verbs and Modal Adjuncts, Foregrounding, Passivization, and Neologisms and Acronyms in his speech.

It follows from this analysis to emphasize that the aforementioned linguistic features and discursive strategies are undergirded by a given ideology. The ideology highly features the positive self-presentation and negative Other-presentation. In other words, the speaker polarizes the social actors involved in his speech. In fact, he classifies them into two categories: in-group members and out-group members. The in-group members include the speaker himself, his party members, supporters or partisans and partners. The out-group members comprise the past government or the speaker's predecessor and his opponents. As the analysis unfailingly unveils, in an attempt to persuade or/and manipulate the electorate to vote for and elect him as a president for a second term on October 10th, 2023, the speaker emphasizes the positive deeds of his group while he emphasizes the negative deeds of others.

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