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A Comparative Study on the Use of First-Person Pronouns in Ten International Diplomatic Speeches

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores how world leaders use first-person pronouns in diplomatic speeches as a case study on how stance is communicated in high-stakes situations. The dataset comprises ten speeches to security and the economy given by heads of state/governments to their counterparts at international conferences/summits. The data were analysed from a quantitative/corpus-linguistic perspective using AntConc (Anthony, 2021) to summarise general patterns of personal pronoun use and then from a qualitative/discourse-analytical perspective, identifying specifically related examples for more detailed interpretation in context. The contextual features considered for the critical discourse analysis were gender, ideology, and the political systems of the speaker's country. The results showed that most lead favoured the plural first-person pronoun "we" over the singular "I". This was especially marked for the Middle Eastern leaders in the sample. The plural form was used for two main functions: (i) audience-inclusivity, referring to the audience of delegates/attendees, and (ii) audience-exclusivity, referring to the nation represented by the speaker. The distribution of these functions in the individual speeches varied greatly, ranging from extreme inclusive use (85%; Temer [Brazil]) to extreme exclusive use (65%; Putin [Russia]); this was largely predictable based on the speaker's role at the event (e.g., facilitator vs dissenter from a consensus view) and the level of perceived national power. "I" was found to be used mostly at the beginning of the speeches to extend gratitude to the organisers. However, it was often deployed to increase the speaker's self-dedication throughout an address. Similarly, whereas deployed throughout the speeches to establish a sense of communal rapport between the audience and the speaker. The evidence does not suggest any major differences in the usage of first-person pronouns based on gender, as shown by similarities in the speeches of German Chancellor Merkel and Bangladeshi Prime Minister Hasina.

1. Introduction

Diplomacy is the only means to tackle problems between countries peacefully. Bull (1977: 156) defined diplomacy as "the conduct of relations between sovereign states […] by official agents and by peaceful means." Diplomacy is the art of pursuing one's country's national interest vis-à-vis other countries. It can be described as mediation between countries, sometimes including the application of tactics and intelligence to further (mutually) beneficial official relations through communication.

Communication is vital in diplomacy, as it is the primary means of resolving conflicts in domains such as trade, security, and territorial integrity. The purpose of communication is fulfilled when the listener understands the inference of an utterance (Bach & Harnish, 1982). In the communication process, speakers may explicitly articulate any utterance; however, if they think that verbal language is inadequate for inferring correct meaning, they may apply nonverbal communication, such as gestures. Both verbal and nonverbal means of communication are important in diplomacy, as nonverbal language can reveal the immediate displeasure of a negotiating partner. Accordingly, the most critical aspect of diplomacy is the use of language acceptable to the host country's people, society, and culture. In some cultures, directness can adversely affect interpersonal and even diplomatic relations:

> *When a diplomat says yes, he means 'perhaps'*
> *When he says perhaps, he means 'no'*
> *When he says no, he is not a diplomat.*
>
> (Voltaire as cited in Escandell, 1993: 15)

This quotation from Voltaire provides insight into how language is used by diplomats, even roughly 250 years after his death. Diplomatic practitioners may not communicate explicitly, and they may use nuanced language. More specifically, diplomatic language is distinguished by various linguistic markers of indirectness, including ambiguity, euphemism, implicitness, and vagueness (Na, 2012).

Language plays an essential role in shaping international relations. Diplomatic language is a social dialect that furthers the successful pursuit of international relations and is used by individuals in diplomatic capacity. [1] The subtlety of diplomatic language is frequently a product of the complexities of working in or with cultures that differ from those of the diplomatic agent. Consequently, the efficient use of diplomatic language demands that its practitioners understand the core values of the culture(s) in/with which they work (Kealey, 1996: p. 145-146; Kealey & MacDonald, 2004, p. 441). The intentional use of language in negotiations and speeches indicates how culturally competent a leader or negotiator is, as well as how cooperative the speaker is.

Thousands of bilateral visits, conferences, and summits occur worldwide annually between state and non-state actors. International summits, conferences, forums, or conventions are sites where negotiations are conducted, discussions take place, and deals are made, albeit often behind the scenes rather than in public (Pokhrel, 2020, p. 182). Leaders use such international and regional platforms to seek cooperation with other countries in areas of interest, and their speeches are expected to conform to the ideal values of diplomacy. A haphazard method of addressing high-ranking dignitaries cannot produce positive results; diplomatic speeches follow a set protocol and style established throughout years of practice. According to Burahanudeen (2006, p. 39), speeches delivered at international summits usually contain four main sections: (a) the opening salutation, (b) an expression of appreciation or admiration for the host nation or organization, (c) a discussion of the issues of concern (a summoning of cooperation), and (d) closing remarks.

In the salutation, leaders generally greet the distinguished guests attending the event. In the appreciation portion, they express their appreciation of the host city and nation and convey messages from their people to the people(s) of the host nation(s). The third section, in which leaders request cooperation from other countries and delegates in domains such as trade or security, is the most important in terms of the issues discussed. It contains the most explicit use of the conventional language of rhetoric and persuasion. In the last section, the leaders thank the organizers and attendees of the summit or conference.

A variety of linguistic devices can be used to establish and maintain individual and group identities, as well as to signal dissociation or affiliation among political actors. These devices range from the purposeful selection of register-specific words to the use of terms of address (Chilton, 2003, p. 107). Pronouns serve to enact indexicality and act as important framing devices in diplomatic discourse. The present study aims to uncover the use of first-person pronouns in diplomatic discourse, the section of the speech in which they occur, and for what purpose they are used.

There are numerous studies on pronoun use, most of which are based on political speeches. However, these studies fail to adequately consider aspects such as culture, gender, religion, and ideology, which can significantly influence language use and, consequently, the use of pronouns. This study attempted to address these pitfalls by selecting speeches delivered by heads of state and government with different cultural, religious, and ideological backgrounds in diverse settings. In addition, the use of pronouns may differ depending on the gender of the speaker, so the discourse of female leaders was also analyzed and compared with that of male leaders.

2. Literature Review

Language constructs relationships. From writing scientific papers to teaching, from diplomatic to political speeches, pronouns are an essential part of daily life.[2] Pronouns are a natural part of language and have always impacted language, especially in how they signify the nature of interpersonal relationships (Greene, 2021, p. 2).

Halmari (2004, p. 5-8) explained how personal pronouns are a creative way to guide an audience's thoughts. Diplomacy requires a variety of persuasive strategies, and pronouns are used as a strategy to direct an audience's perceptions. Pennycook (1994) argued that the selection and use of pronouns reflect power relations. Among the many types of pronouns (demonstrative, indefinite, interrogative, personal, possessive, reciprocal, reflexive, and relative), *personal pronouns* refer to the people or things a speaker is talking to or about, as well as to themself. Within this category, there are subjective and objective pronouns. Beard (2000, p. 43) stated that pronominal choice massively influences the overall effect of communication. In the context of this study, the same logic was applied to diplomatic speeches.

Brown and Gilman (1960, p. 255–56) indicated that a speaker's cultural background and the relationship between the speaker and the listener determine pronoun use. To explain the relationship between speakers and listeners, they provide examples

[1] Social dialect refers to a specific form of language used by a particular social class or occupational group. In the context of this work, social dialect is associated with the specific language pattern used by diplomats in their diplomatic capacity.

[2] For recent research on pronoun use in writing scientific papers, see Harianja et al. (2020); for pronoun use in the classroom, see Norris and Welch (2020).

of rulers and common people of Medieval Europe, arguing that pronoun selection was directed by personal attributes such as age, birth, profession, sex, and wealth. People with a higher status were consistently found to use fewer first-person singular and more first-person plural pronouns. High-status individuals' more frequent use of *we* reflect that they are often more group-oriented (Kacewicz et al., 2013, p. 13). The aforementioned research aimed to identify pronoun choice according to social hierarchies. Due to their profession, political leaders or diplomats have a higher social rank; thus, this research is relevant in analysing the pronouns used by leaders in diplomatic discourse.

Research concerning the use of personal pronouns in political contexts has gained significant attention in recent years. However, more research needs to be conducted in the diplomatic context. As the diplomatic and political fields are similar, reviewing the literature exploring the political context is relevant. For example, Karapetjana (2011, p. 43) examined pronoun choice in political interviews and concluded that the ways politicians present themselves form part of their personalities. The use of self-referential pronouns can create both positive and negative images of a politician. Karapetjana's findings were based on an analysis of the discourse of two Latvian politicians' public interviews using Goffman's (1981, p. 124-29) participation framework.[3] Her research also suggests that the first-person singular pronoun implies authority, commitment, involvement, and personal responsibility.

Various other researchers have also investigated the use of personal pronouns in the political domain. Håkansson (2012) and Laukkanen (2019), for example, studied the selection of personal pronouns in speeches delivered in the State of the Union address by various American presidents, noting that context plays an essential role in determining their use. Indeed, most of the literature on the use of personal pronouns has used American presidents as exemplars.[4] In a diplomatic context, Wageche and Chi (2016) considered pronoun use in international platform speeches by Presidents Barack Obama and Xi Jinping, which was of particular interest to this thesis.

2.1. Modal verbs

Coates (1983) classified the functions of modal verbs into categories, including capacity, deontic, epistemic, and logical. While several other modalities exist, these four are the most common. A *capacity* modal verb expresses an ability to perform certain tasks and reflects capability and credibility. An *epistemic* modal refers to assertions and indicates whether the speaker is committed to the truth of the content (Bybee et al., 1994, p. 179). In a review of Coates (1983), Houston (1984, p. 277) suggested that the meaning of epistemic modal verbs is traditionally associated with the theory of possibility. When a modal verb affects a situation, it is called a *deontic* modality, indicating obligation and permission. Chrisman (2015) suggested that a deontic modality concerns what is necessary or possible according to various rules, such as the norms of morality, practical rationality principles, or certain countries' laws. In using deontic modals, a speaker potentially forwards an obligation, gives permission or shows commitment to ability and intention.

Jacobs (1995, p. 217) argued that the mismatch between the form and function of modal verbs creates difficulties for non-native speakers. He indicated that most modals initially had the same qualities, but due to the changing nature of usage, they have developed into specific categories with distinctive features and functions. The fact that most speakers chosen for the present research were from linguistic groups other than English (i.e., English was their second or third language) may have impacted their use of modal verbs.

2.2. Male vs. Female Pronoun Use

Language is a social construct with various purposes depending on the place of use, such as high-context culture (HCC) and low-context culture (LCC), and local parametric conditions. Hall (1976, 1990) described the communicative cultures in Australia, New Zealand, the US, Canada, Germany, and Scandinavia and categorized them as LCCs. In contrast, he labelled cultures across Asia and the Middle East as HCCs. According to Hall, speakers of HCCs often hide behind objective factors, such as the environment, their identity, or their profession, to maintain harmony while communicating. They convey context-dependent information, and the other party must decode and comprehend their intentions.

In contrast, in LCCs, people encourage individualism and tend to express information more directly, and language rather than objective circumstances determine communication content. Lakoff (1975) described how female language differs from male language in terms of linguistic features, such as the frequency of polite forms, question tags, and rising intonation in the declarative. She asserted that the differences between men's and women's

[3] Goffman's "participation framework" is a tool for analyzing the interactional role exhibited by different people of a group of any particular place. For details see Goffman (1981, 124–59).

[4] For more recent studies on the use of personal pronouns, see Alavidze (2017) and Dahnilsyah (2017).

language mirror societal differences rather than being a primary problem. Similarly, Xia (2013, p. 1485) suggested that language reflects, records, and transmits social differences. She argued that women appear nonassertive when speaking because many societies have long branded them inferior to men. However, this misconception has been changing recently due to increased educational awareness and women's active participation in trade and industry.

In studies of language use by gender, results differ widely according to context, society, country, and culture. In some languages, vocabulary or grammar features may be entirely determined by the speaker's gender. For example, Shibatani (1990) found that the words used by males and females in Japan differed, even though they carried similar meanings. More often, however, gender is expressed in different frequency or use preferences. Ishikawa (2015, p. 598) found that women tended to use more pronouns in argumentative essays. Similarly, Anderson (2012) examined the pronoun choices of male and female editors and discovered that female editors used more personal pronouns. Dong (2014, p. 96) concluded that "the gender difference phenomena in language reflect that the cultural psychology and social value orientations of language users are affected not only by social and environmental stress but also family culture and experience."

Brownlow et al. (2003, p. 129–130) documented that women use more singular pronouns than men in unscripted television interviews and attributed this to being more self-focused. In contrast, Fatemeh (2016, p. 172) suggested that men use first-person plural pronouns more frequently than females. Ahmad and Mehmood (2015, p. 12) also found that men use the first person singular pronouns more than women, concluding that this was a means to exhibit dominance.

These discrepancies may be partly reconciled by noting that Ishikawa (2015) and Anderson (2012) conducted research in relatively open societies (i.e., where women position themselves as equal to men), whereas Fatemeh (2016) examined more religious and conservative societies. In many societies, religion is an important part of people's lives and strongly influences how many speak. In strict Islamic societies, for example, where women are required to have a male chaperone to go about their day-to-day activities, there is no freedom of speech. Hence, it can be concluded that male and female languages differ due to culture and religion. The present study explores female language in diplomatic discourse based on the above-mentioned literature.

3. Method

The present research adopted a mixed methods approach, using both corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis (CDA) to explore the use of personal pronouns in 10 international speeches. First, the speeches were analyzed as a corpus to identify the frequency and distribution of pronoun use. Second, CDA was performed to examine the functions of the first-person singular and plural pronouns used by world leaders in the data. CDA is "a type of discourse analysis research that primarily studies the way social abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in social and political contexts" (Van Dijk, 2004, p. 352). This method aspires to understand how ideological presuppositions influence language choice in text and speech.

3.1. Data

The ten addresses selected for the analysis encompassed a culturally diverse range of speakers and target audiences, from secular democratic Western nations (such as the US) to conservative authoritarian states (such as Qatar and Iran). As such, the speeches were delivered by representatives of different political systems ranging from democratic to authoritarian and monarchic to nominally communist. The speeches selected for this study were delivered between 1989 and 2019.

The transcripts of these speeches can be found on the homepages of the respective countries' foreign ministries, except those of the Emir of Qatar and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. The Emir's speech is available on the Group of 77 (G77) homepage. In contrast, Prime Minister Abe's speech is available in English on the website of the Japanese Graduate School of Public Policy (GRIPS). Since the speeches were retrieved directly from official homepages, they can be considered primary data.

The selected speeches included HCC and LCC speakers from various linguistic backgrounds. All speeches are publicly available in English; however, video evidence shows that some leaders delivered their speeches in their native languages, such as President Xi (Chinese) and Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei (Persian).

English was a second or third language for almost all the leaders selected, the only exception being President Donald Trump. As discussed, with those speaking a second language, it was clear that inherited culture and its characteristics would be reflected as people construct their worldviews based on their inherited cultures. Table 3.1 provides a detailed overview of each summit/conference/visit, speaker, location, and speaker's position.

Leaders' speeches are prepared in advance by professional members of the government who consider the audience and the purpose of the speech. Therefore, it can be assumed that these writers are intentional regarding pronominal address choices. In ongoing research by the author, one foreign minister stated that

professionals are involved in writing leaders' international speeches; however, he noted that political leaders sometimes disregard the written content. Thus, it can be safely assumed that all ten addresses were prepared in advance.

Table 3.1 List of speeches, leaders, countries, and summits

Year	Summit/Conference	Speaker	Name of Country	Position/Title
1989	9th Non-Aligned Movement Summit	Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev	Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal (Kingdom of Nepal)	Head of state/King
2005	2nd South Summit of Group 77 and China	Sheik Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani	State of Qatar	Head of state/ Supreme Leader
2012	16th Non-Aligned Movement Summit	Sayyid Ali Hosseini Khamenei	Islamic Republic of Iran	Head of state/Emir
2014	Visit to African Union Headquarters	Shinzo Abe	Japan	Head of government/Prime Minister
2017	Arab–Islamic–American Summit	Donald John Trump	United States of America	Head of state/ President
2017	Arab–Islamic–American Summit	Sheik Hasina	Peoples Republic of Bangladesh	Head of state/ Prime Minister
2017	Summit of Heads of State of Mercosur and Associated States	Michael Temer	Federative Republic of Brazil	Head of state/ President
2017	World Economic Forum Annual Meeting	Xi Jinping	Peoples Republic of China	Head of state/President
2018	10th Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa (BRICS) Summit	Vladimir Putin	Russian Federation	Head of state/President
2019	55th Munich Security Conference	Angela Dorothea Merkel	Federal Republic of Germany	Head of government /Chancellor

3.2. Data Analysis

The corpus data from the speeches in Table .31 were extracted using AntConc. AntConc helps analyze extensive corpora datasets.

All speeches (data) were converted into separate plain-text files and imported into AntConc. Data retrieval was performed via a group search of the text files for all speeches simultaneously, with the filenames indicating the source speech for each token. Sets of pronoun tokens in context (concordances) were retrieved with the regular expression search patterns [^a-zA-Z](I|me|[mM]y|[mM]yself|[mM]ine)[^a-zA-Z] for first person singular pronouns, and [^a-zA-Z]([wW][eE]|[Uu]s|[Oo]ur|[Oo]urselves)[^a-zA-Z] for first person plural pronouns. for first person plural pronouns. Concordance plots were also obtained, summarizing the token distribution within each file.

Frequencies were then normalized for text length to calculate relative frequencies of pronoun use per thousand words, which formed the basis for the empirical analysis and comparison (Wegeche & Chi, 2016, p. 33). Due to a large number of pronouns, not all tokens were considered in the functional analysis, but representative examples were selected based on a random sampling of concordance lines. To cross-check the reliability of the data results obtained from AntConc, the search function of Microsoft Word was applied alongside an extensive reading of the data.

4. Findings

The findings and discussion are divided into multiple sections. First, the widespread use of first-person singular and plural is discussed, followed by an in-depth analysis of the first-person singular and plural pronouns. The concordance plots obtained from AntConc are also discussed.

4.1. Overview of first person singular and plural pronoun use

Table 4.1. Use of singular pronouns vs. plural pronouns

No	Speaker	Summit/Year	I	%	we	%
1	King Birendra, Nepal	NAM Summit, Belgrade/1989	9	19	36	81
2	Emir Bin Khalifa, Qatar	South Summit of the Group 77 and China, Doha/2005	9	29	21	71
3	Supreme Leader Khamenei, Iran	NAM Summit, Tehran/2012	7	11	51	89
4	President Trump, USA	Arab–Islamic–American Summit, Riyadh/2017	33	25	95	75
5	President Putin, Russia	BRICS Summit, Johannesburg/2018	8	24	26	76
6	President Temer, Brazil	Mercosur Summit, Brasilia/2017	9	14	55	86
7	Prime Minister Abe, Japan	African Union, Addis Ababa/2014	41	69	20	31
8	Chancellor Merkel, Germany	Munich Security Conference, Munich/2019	79	28	198	72
9	President Xi, China	World Economic Forum, Davos/2017	8	7	87	93
10	Prime Minister Hasina, Bangladesh	Arab–Islamic–American Summit, Riyadh/2017	21	51	18	49
	Total / Average percentage		**224**	**27**	**607**	**73**

Table 4.1 shows the number and percentage of first-person pronouns used by all ten leaders, including both singular and plural forms. The speeches contained 831 first-person pronouns, 607 (73%) of which were first-person plural.

A clear distinction can be made regarding using singular and plural pronouns. A prime objective of diplomatic speeches is to gather the international community's support and establish oneself as a responsible figure in world politics. As the function of plural pronouns is to create a collective identity among participants, their use serves the primary objectives of diplomatic speeches. In observing and reading the speeches in question, it was noted that the leaders focused their international addresses on general themes, such as development, terrorism, and world peace, regardless of the summit's concrete theme.

Table 4.1 indicates that most leaders were highly inclined toward using first-person plural pronouns, meaning that they self-identified as a part of a group or institution. Conversely, some leaders (Prime Ministers Abe and Hasina) sought to establish themselves as individuals, disregarding the collective nature of their respective summits or conference. Table 4.2 provides a general image of the pronouns used; a more detailed discussion of the use of "I" and "we" follows.

4.2. The use of first person singular pronouns

Table 4.2 presents both the absolute number ("Total") and the relative frequency ("Per 1000w") of first person singular pronouns in each speech. A wide range was observed, from 2–31 tokens per 1,000 words.

Table 4.2 First person singular pronoun occurrence

No	Speaker	Summit/Year	*I*	*my*	*me*	*myself*	*mine*	Total	Per 1000w
1	King Birendra, Nepal	NAM Summit, Belgrade/1989	7	1	0	1	0	9	6
2	Emir Bin Khalifa, Qatar	South Summit of the Group 77 and China, Doha/2005	8	0	1	0	0	9	6
3	Supreme Leader Khamenei, Iran	NAM Summit, Tehran/2012	6	1	0	0	0	7	2
4	President Trump, USA	Arab–Islamic–American Summit, Riyadh/2017	23	6	3	0	1	33	10
5	President Putin, Russia	BRICS Summit, Johannesburg/2018	7	0	1	0	0	8	8
6	President Temer, Brazil	Mercosur Summit, Brasilia/2017	7	2	0	0	0	9	9
7	Prime Minister Abe, Japan	African Union, Addis Ababa/2014	29	6	5	1	0	41	15
8	Chancellor Merkel, Germany	Munich Security Conference, Munich/2019	61	9	8	1	0	79	17
9	President Xi, China	World Economic Forum, Davos/2017	6	0	2	0	0	8	2
10	Prime Minister Hasina, Bangladesh	Arab–Islamic–American Summit, Riyadh/2017	12	6	1	2	0	21	31
	Total		**166**	**31**	**21**	**5**	**1**	**224**	**106**

Shorter speeches contain an exceptionally high rate of first-person pronoun use compared to longer addresses. Scrutiny of Prime Minister Hasina's short speech showed that she concentrated on current world issues, from the refugee crisis to her country's policy toward terrorism. In short speeches, leaders want to be heard regarding the things they are talking about and therefore try to be more assertive by using more personal pronouns. The total number of singular pronouns recorded was 224 across all the speeches.

The use of first-person singular pronouns in diplomatic speeches can be interpreted as a discourse strategy to present ideas and convey personal viewpoints and feelings to the audience, as can be seen in the following example:

1. "*I feel the pain of refugee, as I myself had been a refugee*." (Prime Minister Hasina, 2017)

Prime Minister Hasina shared her story highlighting the international refugee crisis sparked by global terrorism. Storytelling international events using the first person singular pronouns might spark a sense of urgency among the participants to collaborate on the discussed issue. A common stereotype is that undemocratic leaders use more singular pronouns to show the power of their positions; however, the results in Table 4.3 show otherwise. Prime Minister Hasina tops the list, with a normalized rate of 31 tokens per 1,000 words. Chancellor Merkel and Prime Minister Abe, democratically elected leaders, uttered 17 and 15 first-person singular pronouns for every 1,000 words, respectively. These findings indicate that these leaders felt personally involved in the conference or summit. It was remarkable to discover that President Trump, President Temer, President Putin, King Birendra, and Emir Bin Khalifa used 10, 9, 8, 6, and 6 first-person singular pronouns per 1,000 words, respectively. Given President Trump's image as a self-centred former businessman (Rucker & Leonnig, 2020, p. 7), it is surprising that among all the speeches analyzed, he

used the first-person singular pronoun at an average rate compared to some other leaders. The Arab Islamic American Summit was his first overseas trip as US president; the findings here demonstrate that leaders are often forced to change their tone after being elected, or at least when speaking to an international audience.

Leaders who were not democratically elected such as President Xi (leader of the Communist Party of China [CPC] and President of China) and Supreme Leader Khamenei of Iran, who were elected by the National People's Congress (China) or an assembly of "experts" (Iran)—used a negligible number (2, 2) of first-person singular pronouns. There are two possible interpretations of this result. First, they were both already the undisputed leaders of their home countries and did not want to be seen as self-centric in the international arena. Second, they wanted to save face and appear inclusive on the global stage.

Similarly, the Emir of Qatar and King Birendra of Nepal used low numbers of first-person singular personal pronouns. The phenomenon of *pluralism majestatis* may explain such low usage by royalty, also referred to as "the royal we." Ernest Satow (1932, p. 37) noted that royals often use "we" and "our" rather than I" and "my" in his seminal work, *A Guide to Diplomatic Practice.*[5]

Even the democratically elected but authoritarian Russian President Putin did not use many first-person singular pronouns to appear inclusive on the world stage. The limited use of "I" by leaders who were not democratically elected (or who were in office due to extraordinary circumstances, such as, in the case of Brazil'sBrazil's President Temer, the impeachment of a president) suggests that they are less likely to present themselves as individuals at international diplomatic events. This reality may have caused President Temer to use few first-person singular pronouns.

A remarkable similarity between the two female leaders in this group of 10 speakers can be seen. Prime Minister Hasina and Chancellor Merkel used the most first-person singular pronouns, although they belong to completely different cultures, regions, religions, and societies. Bangladesh is a predominately Islamic country where women often find themselves comparatively disadvantaged in all aspects of society, such as education and work. In contrast, Hasina's frequent use of singular pronouns shows her authority and power in her home country. This might also be interpreted as Hasina wanting to show her authority because women are underrepresented at the leadership level, and she was the only female leader participating in the conference.

In her speech at the 2019 Munich Security Conference (MSC), Chancellor Merkel told the story of international relations through her personal history.[6] As a result, she used more singular pronouns than her male counterparts. At the conference, Merkel was one of the longest-serving heads of government, which may have played a role in her uttering this group's second-most first-person singular pronouns. Women avoid aggressive and threatening language regardless of their position (Mahartika & Hanafiah, 2019, p. 231). The female leaders recounted personal experiences in diplomatic speeches, which may explain their frequent use of the first-person singular pronoun.

Japanese Prime Minister Abe's use of more singular pronouns can be attributed to the fact that he was on a bilateral visit to the African Union (AU), not a summit or conference. Throughout his speech, Abe made promises regarding the development of AU economies, either in the form of official development assistance (ODA) or investment; thus, he wanted to demonstrate authority as the leader of a developed nation and show personal commitment by using "I."

4.3. Distribution of first person singular pronouns

The concordance plot in Figure 1 was generated in AntConc using a regular expression search pattern [^a-zap-Z](I|me|[mM]y|[mM]yself|[mM]ine)[^a-zA-Z] for the first person singular pronouns “I,” “me,” “my,” “myself,” and “mine.” The concordance plot view allowed us to map the usage distribution of the first person pronouns throughout the 10 international speeches scrutinized.

[5] The use of “royal *we*” is also found in the speech of Léopold Louis Marie, King of Belgium, in an address in Congo in 2022. For full text of the speech, see, https://www.monarchie.be/en/agenda/speech-by-his-majesty-the-king-university-of-lubumbashi

[6] Please refer to example 3 below for the evidence of personal experiences she was sharing in her speech.

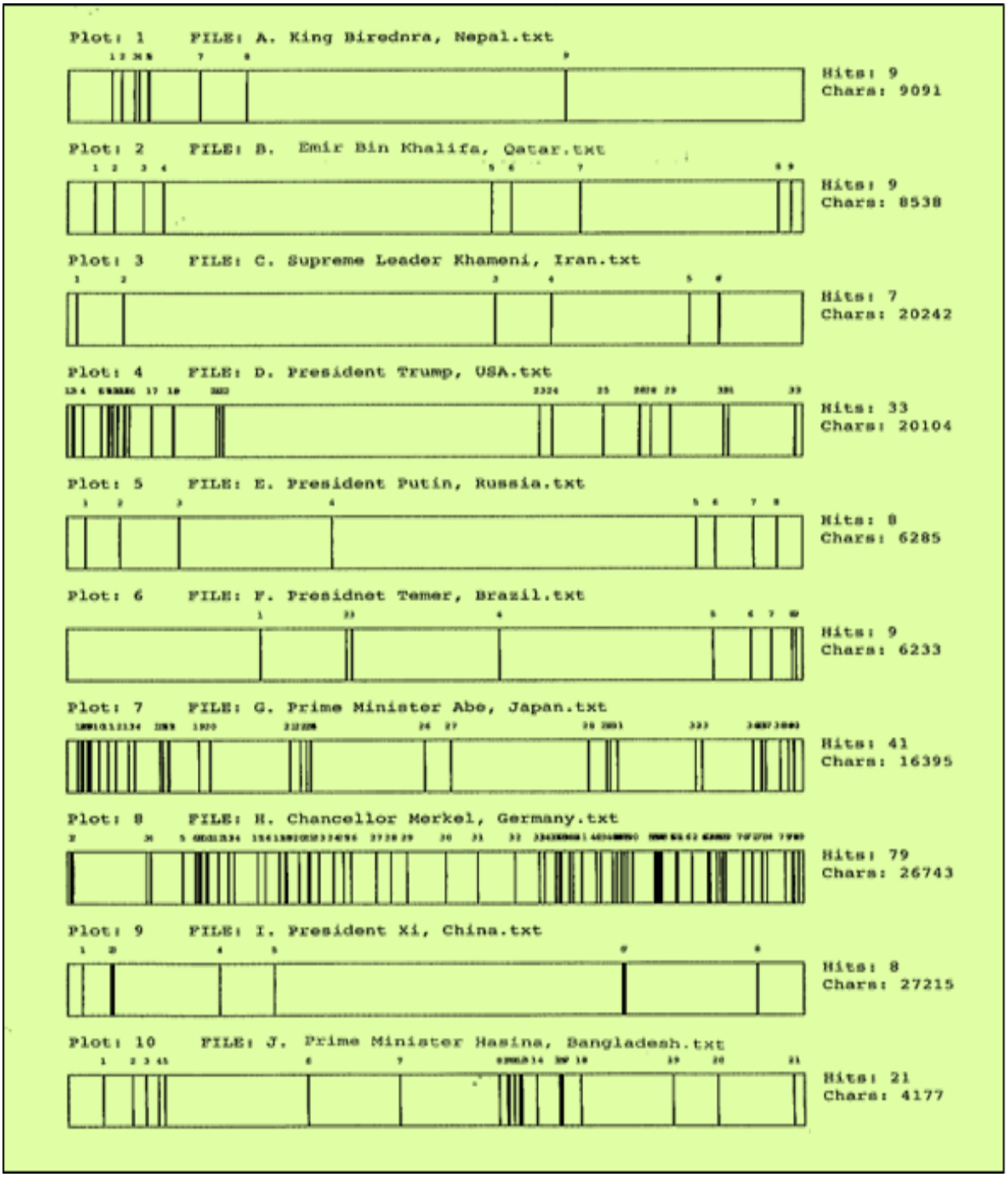

Figure 4.1 Concordance plot view of first-person singular pronoun tokens

The concordance plots show a vast disparity in the use of first-person singular pronouns. Reviewing the speeches showed that singular pronouns generally occurred most frequently at the beginning and end of each speech, though with some exceptions (most notably Chancellor Merkel and Prime Minister Hasina, whose usage pervaded the main content of their speeches).

As expected, singular pronouns were rarely used in the salutation section of these speeches. However, first-person singular pronouns were highly visible in the appreciation section of the speeches. This can be attributed to the speakers wanting to thank the organizers by showing their involvement and connecting with the audience. President Temer and Supreme Leader Khamenei were the organizers of the summits at which they spoke. Therefore, they did not offer appreciation to the organizers and the host country, which is reflected in the low number of first-person singular pronouns. Conversely, Emir Bin Khalifa, as summit organizer, extended appreciation to the distinguished guests for supporting Qatar in

organizing the conference using the first-person singular pronoun.

The middle section of the concordance plots ("summoning of cooperation") marks a significant decline in the use of first-person singular pronouns. However, at the end of the summoning section, first-person singular pronouns increased again because the leaders sought to ask for the cooperation policy they presented. Chancellor Merkel and Prime Minister Hasina were the obvious exceptions to this general finding. Below are three examples of the pronoun "I" used in the middle sections of these speeches:

2. "*I also applaud the Gulf Cooperation Council for blocking funders from using their countries as a financial base for terror and designating Hezbollah as a terrorist organization last year.*" (President Trump, 2017)
3. "*I have often talked with President Xi Jinping about how we can learn from one another with regard to what each of us does well.*" (Chancellor Merkel, 2019)
4. "*The image of 3-year-old Ayla lying lifeless on the seashore, or the image of blood-stained Omran in Aleppo, shake our consciences. I can hardly take in these images as a mother myself.*" (Prime Minister Hasina, 2017).

In the first example, President Trump used "I" to project himself as a dominant figure in the fight against terrorism. This implies that leaders use the first-person singular pronouns to construct a positive image of themselves if something is successful or projected to be successful. Similarly, in Example 3, Chancellor Merkel glorified her self-image. In this particular example, "I" was assertively inserted to portray Chancellor Merkel as one of the most active champions of global cooperation. However, this may have presented a negative image of others in the audience. Having already been German chancellor for 16 years, her ties with other leaders were significant.

It should be noted, however, that she spoke with President Xi as the chancellor of Germany, so "our" government would have been the more desirable phrase. In Example 4, Prime Minister Hasina uttered a statement of fact (i.e., a representative speech act) to project herself as a kind human being and politician by inserting a feminine touch into her statement. In doing so, she used the first-person singular pronoun to frame herself positively.

4.4 The Use of First-Person Plural Pronouns

Table 4.3 shows the general use of "we," "our," "us," and "ourselves" in the ten speeches. The total number of recorded first-person plural pronouns was 607, but after normalizing the pronouns per 1,000 words, 263 were found. As mentioned, the total number and the normalized frequency did not match; the latter formed the basis of the analysis.

Table 4.3. First-person plural pronoun occurrence

No	Speaker	Summit/Year	*we*	*our*	*us*	*ourselves*	Total	Per 1000w
1	King Birendra, Nepal	NAM Summit, Belgrade/1989	13	17	5	1	36	24
2	Emir Bin Khalifa, Qatar	South Summit of the Group 77 and China, Doha/2005	8	11	1	1	21	15
3	Supreme Leader Khamenei, Iran	NAM Summit, Tehran/2012	22	22	6	1	51	16
4	President Trump, USA	Arab–Islamic–American Summit, Riyadh/2017	50	38	7	-	95	28
5	President Putin, Russia	BRICS Summit, Johannesburg/2018	15	11	0	-	26	27
6	President Temer, Brazil	Mercosur Summit, Brasilia/2017	35	19	1	-	55	56
7	Prime Minister Abe, Japan	African Union, Addis Ababa/2014	14	4	2	-	20	7
8	Chancellor Merkel, Germany	Munich Security Conference, Munich/2019	140	33	22	3	198	43
9	President Xi, China	World Economic Forum, Davos/2017	62	14	9	2	87	20
10	Prime Minister Hasina, Bangladesh	Arab–Islamic–American Summit, Riyadh/2017	12	4	2	-	18	27
	Total		371	173	55	8	607	263

Table 4.3 depicts that President Temer used the highest proportion of first-person plural pronouns per 1,000 words, followed by Chancellor Merkel (56 and 43, respectively). President Trump, President Putin, and Prime Minister Hasina used 28, 27, and 27 plural pronouns per 1,000 words, respectively. In contrast, Prime Minister Abe used only 7 "we" pronouns for every 1,000 words. This matter can be interpreted as the speaker not wanting to create a group identity with the AU countries during his visit; rather, he wanted to be assertive because the African countries could provide nothing in return. Despite the branding of Japan as an HCC country where people work in groups, this seems to have been trumped by other considerations on the international stage. Hence, the notion of HCC and LCC may only apply in negotiations rather than speeches, presumably because speeches are made in public, whereas negotiations are not.

In all the speeches, "we" was primarily used to share responsibility and create group accountability. The first-person plural can lead interpreters to conceptualize group identities, coalitions, parties, etc., as either insiders or outsiders (Chilton & Schäffner, 2002, p. 30). Depending on the objective, the usage of "we" functions differently, but in all instances, it is used to reduce subjectivity. In the ten speeches analyzed, whenever "we" represented an organization or global population, its function was associated with a shared cause, such as addressing global warming or terrorism. International or regional policies related to global concerns are usually sustained over the long term, but government leadership often changes due to elections or other reasons. When leaders use the first-person singular pronoun "I," other parties may be reluctant to work with them because when new leaders are elected, they may change their policies, necessitating renegotiation. Therefore, using "we" provides long-term assurance for the other party to the negotiation. Likewise, "we" was used to refer to regional issues that the speaker represented, such as the Middle East, the EU, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), or NATO, or most often, to refer to the speaker's country. However, royals use *pluralis majestitas* to conjure royal institutions. This fact was known to the author of this thesis, who grew up in a kingdom, but he was never aware of its significance.

Figure 4.2 presents a breakdown of the categories of referents for which the leaders used first-person plural pronouns in their respective speeches.

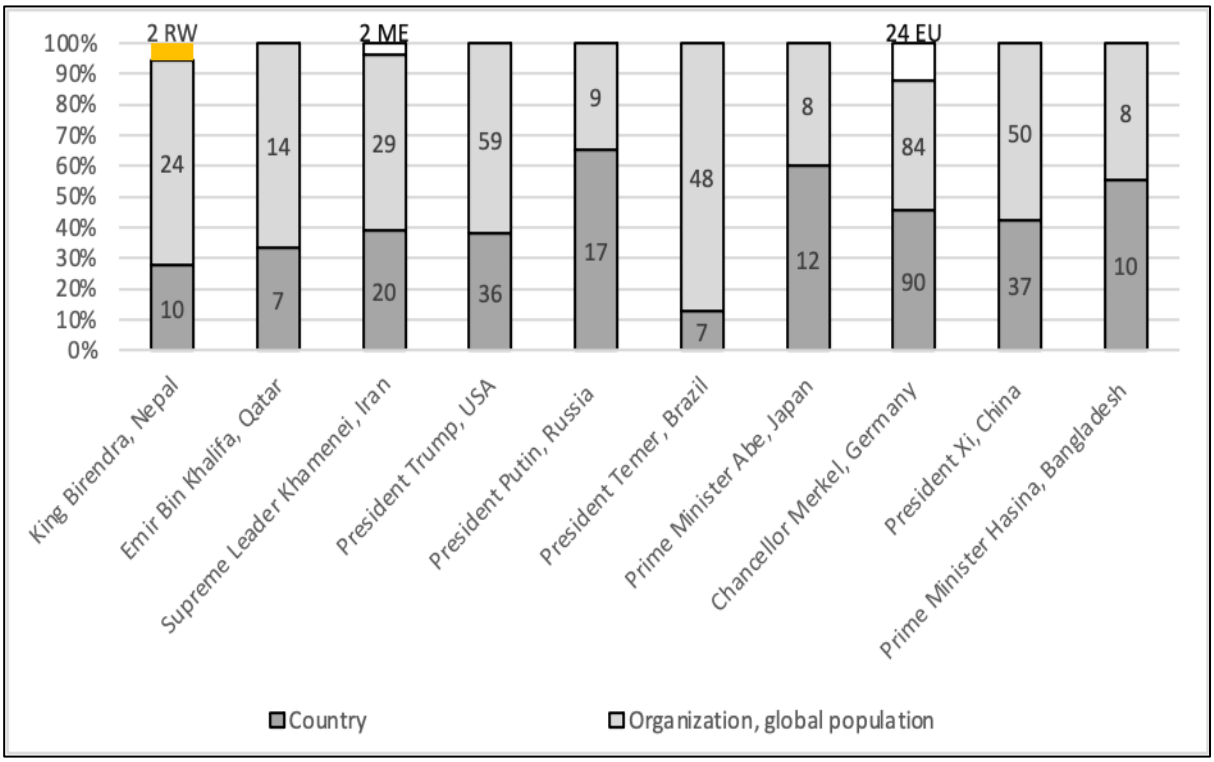

Figure 4.2. Distribution of first person plural pronoun use according to referent

Note: “ME” stands for the Middle East, and “EU” stands for the European Union. “Country” refers to the country the leaders represent, while “Organization” refers to the site of diplomatic gatherings, such as NAM, the UN, and SAARC. Finally, “global population” refers to humankind, while “RW” stands for “royal we.”

Figure 4.2 shows that most leaders used plural pronouns primarily to denote the host organization or the global population as a whole, with three notable exceptions. President Putin (65%), Prime Minister Abe (60%), and Prime Minister Hasina (55%) used the majority of their first-person plural pronouns to refer to their own countries. In contrast, President Temer used almost 85% of his first-person plural pronouns to refer to the host organization, Mercosur, and its allied states, which can be explained by the fact that he was the host of the summit. Likewise, the summit hosts Emir Bin Khalifa and Supreme Leader Khamenei also used about 66% and 55% plural pronouns, respectively, to refer to the organization and global population. Supreme Leader Khamenei, Chancellor Merkel, and King Birendra had a more comprehensive range of group referents in their speeches. They used a significant minority of plural pronouns for their regions when elucidating relevant challenges and opportunities for the Middle East and the European Union. Merkel addressed the conference not as a host but as the German Chancellor. King Birendra used the “royal we” to refer to the monarchy of Nepal; however, the analysis indicated that Emir Bin Khalifa chose not to reference *pluralis majestitas*.

The results indicated that “we” as a country was uttered in speeches when the speaker’s government had achieved something notable or they wanted to be seen as a positive force by highlighting policy achievements. Examples of the different functions of “we” are given below:

5. *“In spite of varying perspectives and orientations, we member states of this movement have managed to preserve our solidarity and bond over a long period of time within the framework of the shared values, and this is not a simple and small achievement.”* (Supreme Leader Khamenei, 2012)
6. *“We expect that the Digital Economy of the Russian Federation program we have launched will increase the productivity of labor 30 percent by 2024.”* (President Putin, 2018)
7. *“In 2014/2015, we conducted very intensive negotiations with Greece about remaining in the Eurozone. We then had to grapple with the refugee issue on a massive scale.”* (Chancellor Merkel, 2019)

In Example 5, “we” denoted the NAM movement and could be interpreted as inclusive. Supreme Leader Khamenei used the first-person plural pronoun to warn the West that the NAM had been working discerningly despite differences among its member states. This example shows that “we” is sometimes employed to create a sense of unity and thus sound powerful as a group. In Example 6, President Putin used “we” in an exclusive sense, referencing Russia or the Russian government. In contrast, in Example 7, Chancellor Merkel spoke on behalf of the EU when she used the pronoun “we,” implying the necessity of collective responsibility in the wake of financial and refugee crises. When using first-person plural pronouns in a speech, the level of subjectivity is lowered, providing a sense of collaboration to the listener. The possibility of misinterpretation of discourse is also reduced, ultimately lowering the chance of future conflicts.

Figure 4.3 presents the concordance plot for the distribution of first-person plural pronouns throughout the ten speeches.

Figure 4.3. Concordance plot view of first-person Plural pronoun tokens

Dense clusters of first-person plural pronouns can be observed in Figure 4.3. Intense use of these pronouns was found toward the end of the "summoning of cooperation" section of many speeches, especially in those by Supreme Leader Khamenei, President Trump, Chancellor Merkel, and President Xi. Collective pronouns may have been used intensively in the summoning section because continuous repetition of any word (in this case, the plural pronoun "we") can highlight the importance of the utterance. However, some researchers, such as Harris (2009, p. 15), have argued that continuously uttering the same word may sound bombastic and overly rhetorical, which could adversely affect the audience. It is precisely at this point that conventional diplomatic language comes into play

in the form of rhetoric and persuasion in speeches in international settings.

4.5. Use of modal verbs in conjunction with first person plural pronouns

When cross-referencing the concordance plot in Figure 4.3 with the actual speeches, it was found that verbs of necessity, intention, and ability were used. President Xi, Chancellor Merkel, and President Trump used the highest number of verbs of necessity, the majority of which were "must" and "should," followed by "need to." Moreover, the female leaders used an almost equal number of necessary verbs. These findings disprove the stereotype that female leaders are more inclined toward weak expressions of obligation. The female leaders used as many obligation verbs as their male counterparts.

The following section presents the statistical analysis of the first-person plural pronoun "we" and some examples of its usage in the middle of the speeches in connection with verbs of necessity.

Table 4.5. Verbs of necessity in connection with first person plural pronouns

No	Speaker	Summit/Year	we + must	we + should	we + have to	we + need to	Total
1	King Birendra, Nepal	NAM Summit, Belgrade/1989	-	1	-	-	1
2	Emir Bin Khalifa, Qatar	South Summit of the Group 77 and China, Doha/2005	-	-	-	1	1
3	Supreme Leader Khamenei, Iran	NAM Summit, Tehran/2012	-	4	-	2	6
4	President Trump, USA	Arab–Islamic–American Summit, Riyadh/2017	5	-	-	-	5
5	President Putin, Russia	BRICS Summit, Johannesburg/2018	-	-	-	-	0
6	President Temer, Brazil	Mercosur Summit, Brasilia/2017	2	-	1	-	3
7	Prime Minister Abe, Japan	African Union, Addis Ababa/2014	-	-	-	-	0
8	Chancellor Merkel, Germany	Munich Security Conference, Munich/2019	5	1	-	4	10
9	President Xi, China	World Economic Forum, Davos/2017	3	22	-	4	29
10	Prime Minister Hasina, Bangladesh	Arab–Islamic–American Summit, Riyadh/ 2017	2	-	3	1	6
	Total		17	28	4	12	61

Based on Table 4.5, it is clear that the leaders used a wide variety of modal verbs of necessity, with preferences for specific verb forms. In total, 61 necessity modals were observed across the ten speeches. The most frequently used modal verb in conjunction with the first person plural pronoun was "we should," followed by "we must." Chancellor Merkel, Prime Minister Hasina, Supreme Leader Khamenei, and President Trump used 10, 6, 6, and 5 modal verbs of necessity, respectively, while the other leaders used only a negligible number.

8."*We need to strengthen our determination; we need to remain faithful to our goals."* (Supreme Leader Khamenei, 2012)

9. *"As we deny terrorist organizations control of territory and populations, we must also strip them of their access to funds."* (President Trump, 2017)

10. *"We should commit ourselves to growing an open global economy to share opportunities and interests through opening up and achieve win-win outcome."* (President Xi, 2017)

From these examples, it can be surmised that every linguistic modality utilized in international addresses serves a specific goal and represents a notion meant to persuade the audience to concur with or adopt a particular position. The use of modalities in speeches may be influenced by potential judgments from the speaker's viewpoint, or it may account for the expressed evaluations, predictions, commitments, conditional consequences, abilities, encouragements, potential abilities, and preconditions. The involvement of plural pronouns makes a more interesting case, given that modal verbs are rarely observed alongside the singular pronoun "I."

These examples show that "we" at the end of the summoning section of the scrutinized speeches were mostly used to request cooperation by lowering subjectivity while reinforcing the power of the message through the use of modals and plural pronouns. In Example 8, Supreme Leader Khamenei used the

collective pronoun "we" and "need to" to convince the audience of the positive aspects of being faithful to their commitment to NAM. As Leech (1987: 101) noted, in terms of meaning, "need to" is halfway between "must" and "should"; it asserts obligation or necessity but without certainty. By using this middle-ground modal verb, Khamenei was not issuing an ultimatum that everyone must follow; rather, he wanted the high-level audience to judge for themselves in relation to the speaker's ideology.

In Example 9, the subjective modal "must" alongside the plural pronoun "we" represented a request—if not a duty—for all the Islamic state leaders to refrain from funding terrorists. President Trump used "must" as a deontic modality to illustrate a situation in which all participants were morally obliged. When the speaker cannot, or possibly even does not want to, ask for an actualization, such as when offering counsel, making requests, or issuing warnings, the deontic modal "must" is frequently utilized (Collins, 2009: 35).

Unexpectedly, President Xi used "we should" more often, which seems to be common in his speeches on other platforms (Wegeche & Chi, 2016, p. 40). He attempted to draw his audience closer by enriching his persuasion with modal verbs, such as "should" and "must," when highlighting the benefits of cooperation and the risks of non-cooperation, as illustrated in the example. In Example 9, "we" was used to refer to the global population, together with the modal verb "should" to convey obligation (albeit more weakly than "must"). Collins (2009: 45) described "should" as expressing a modality of medium strength. On an interesting global economic topic, President Xi committed to opening his country's economy to achieve a win–win for those involved. In this instance, the modal "should" express the desirability for this outcome.

Table 4.6. Verbs of intention, ability, and conditional sentences

No	speaker	summit/year	we + can	we + will	we + shall	we + would	If we + verb	Total
1	King Birendra, Nepal	NAM Summit, Belgrade/1989	-	-	-	-	2	2
2	Emir Bin Khalifa, Qatar	South Summit of the Group 77 and China, Doha/2005	-	-	-	-	-	0
3	Supreme Leader Khamenei, Iran	NAM summit, Teheran/2012	3	1	-	-	-	4
4	President Trump, USA	Arab–Islamic–American Summit, Riyadh/2017	1	9	-	-	6	16
5	President Putin, Russia	BRICS Summit, Johannesburg/2018	-	-	-	-	-	0
6	President Temer, Brazil	Mercosur Summit, Brasilia/2017	1	2	-	-	-	3
7	Prime Minister Abe, Japan	African Union, Addis Ababa/2014	2	3	1	-	1	7
8	Chancellor Merkel, Germany	Munich Security Conference, Munich/2019	13	6	-	2	10	31
9	President Xi, China	World Economic Forum, Davos/2017	-	14	-	-	-	14
10	Prime Minister Hasina, Bangladesh	Arab–Islamic–American Summit, Riyadh/ 2017	-	-	-	-	-	0
	Total		20	35	1	2	19	77

Table 4.6 showcases the verbs of intention and ability in connection with the first-person plural pronoun "we" In international diplomatic speeches, the most used intention and ability verbs are "will" and "can." Gardón (2006: 455) stated that when uttering the modal "will," the speaker communicates that the preposition expressed is potentially true without necessarily mentioning any evidence. Thus, "will" is an easy modal to utter in international speeches. Below are two nominal examples of ability modals:

11. "*In pursuing the strategy of innovation-driven development, we will bolster the strategic emerging industries, apply new technologies and foster new business models to upgrade traditional industries; and we will boost new drivers of growth and revitalize traditional ones.*" (President Xi, 2017)

12. "[…] *because we can overcome many of the inefficiencies that exist among the many member states that are in the European Union and in NATO* […]." (Merkel, 2019)

"Will" is a strong modal verb to express clear intentions, certainty, determination, and promise. The use of "will" reinforces the exact objective of a leader or country in international speeches. Example 11 illustrates President Xi's prediction for the future based on the current reality of a modernizing Chinese economy. His expression was not merely a prediction but a fact. Ekawati (2019: 23) stated that the modal

"will" is used to avoid the idea of dictating as if the speaker is asking the audience to agree with his or her idea. This does not show that the speaker and the audience are equal. Thus, it can be maintained that even speakers from communist countries do not want to dictate or enforce their ideas on others—at least not in speeches.

In Example 12, the modal "can" was used to indicate the ability of the EU and NATO to overcome the inefficiencies faced by both regional organizations. Chancellor Merkel tried to convince the high-level delegates, especially those from developed nations, by acknowledging shortcomings and proposing a way forward. In doing so, Chancellor Merkel used the ability verb "can" with a relatively high frequency. While ability verbs showcase the strength of leaders and their countries, they can also be viewed as rhetoric if continuously employed in diplomatic circles (Giannakidou & Staraki, 2013, p. 255).

In Table 4.6, it can be seen that the leaders used occasional conditional sentences along with plural pronouns. In total, 19 "if" conditionals were recorded in the ten international speeches. Among all the leaders, Chancellor Merkel and President Trump used conditionals 10 and 6 times, respectively. The use of conditionals helps a speaker maintain face while addressing potentially difficult topics.

13. "*If we do not confront this deadly terror, we know what the future will bring more suffering and despair.*" (President Trump, 2017)

In this example, the simple present tense was used to present a negative situation and propose what should be done in response. President Trump tried to imagine a future by inferring past terrorist events. Instead of uttering "I," as he generally did, he said "we" together with a conditional sentence to assure that he was speaking as an institution, not as a businessperson. Since his relationship with the Islamic world was rocky from the beginning of his term in office, the use of "we" was clearly aimed at portraying him as responsible and realistic.

This evidence suggests that leaders frequently hide behind the first-person plural pronoun "we." The comparison of modal verbs reveals an interesting conclusion: leaders of powerful countries typically use strong modal verbs, while those of developing countries use weak modal verbs. All types of countries (developed and developing) have their priorities and responsibilities, as shown by their leaders' semantic expressions of modal verbs.

5. Discussion

From the results and analysis, it can be asserted that diplomats use the first-person singular pronouns to appear collaborative, to present themselves positively in the international arena by avoiding self-referential pronouns as much as possible, and to point out personal qualities. In other words, they seek validation of their leadership from the international community. The personal qualities that politicians want to express may include principles, morals, and power, as well as the image of someone who is not afraid to take action when necessary (Bramley 2001, p. 28). This contention can equally be applied to the diplomatic speeches analyzed.

Bramley (2001, p. 27) demonstrated that politicians use the first-person singular pronoun "I" to display authority and explains that the usage of "I" generates compassion between the audience and speaker. Bramley's analysis was based on domestic politics. Because politicians mostly handle diplomacy, it can be asserted that Bramley's findings are also valid with regard to diplomatic addresses. Similarly, Beard (2000: 25) observed that "I" suggests a clear sense of personal involvement, particularly useful when conveying information beneficial to the audience. The use of "I" also indicates the relationship between the speaker and the political system of their home country. The author of the current study believes that diplomacy is politics but on the international stage, where strong leaders' pronominal choices affect other leaders' decision-making. As discussed, leaders use "I" to project themselves as responsible figures on the international stage. First-person singular pronouns continuously surfaced in the admiration section of the speeches, such as "I wish." Thus, it can be asserted that first-person singular pronouns are employed to state personal opinions and feelings on international stages.

In addition to these positive aspects, certain drawbacks must also be noted. First, the overuse of "I" may repel an audience, as it creates the impression that cooperation or teamwork with the speaker will be difficult. Excessive use of "I" may create an image of a leader as self-centric or power-hungry; it may also evoke a sense of inequality in the audience, implying that others are inferior (Beard, 2000, p. 45).

In international diplomatic speeches, leaders convey policy messages in international politics and diplomacy. When expressing these priorities, leaders often use "we" to indicate the support of their respective populations for their initiatives. Summits, bilateral/multilateral meetings, and conferences are a matter of pride and prestige for leaders and countries, and their success is measured by how any speech or policy initiated by a leader affects others. To successfully establish their agendas, leaders need to be inclusive and try to do so by frequently using first-person plural pronouns.

"We" is a collective pronoun denoting a speaker's country or organization while replacing the name of their country or organization in the discourse. The use of "we" creates an atmosphere of commonality, as opposed to the use of "I," which places the focus on the individual leader. Bramley (2001, p. 76) asserted that

the function of "we" in speeches is to create a group feeling when multiple parties are involved. Thus, leaders try to create like-minded groups at international conferences by using pronouns of collectiveness. The first-person plural pronoun "we" mainly occurs in the third section (summoning of cooperation) of speeches, indicating that leaders want to work collectively on international issues such as trade or security.

6. Conclusion

This study focused on identifying and using first-person pronouns in diplomatic discourse. The findings show that pronouns are an important linguistic device in diplomatic discourse. Both singular and plural first-person pronouns are used by leaders to persuade their audiences. Among the ten speeches analyzed, the leaders hailed from different cultural backgrounds, yet most repeatedly used the plural *we* more than the singular "I." President Xi almost exclusively used first-person plural pronouns (accounting for 93% of all pronouns), while Supreme Leader Khamenei, President Temer, and King Birendra used more than 80% of all types of pronouns. Chancellor Merkel also mostly used plural pronouns (72%). In contrast, the other female leader, Prime Minister Hasina, used an almost equal percentage of singular and plural pronouns. "I" was mostly found at the beginning of the speeches to extend personal gratitude to the organizers. Conversely, "we" was deployed throughout the speeches to establish communal relations between the speaker and the listeners. Prime Minister Abe used the most singular pronouns (69% in absolute numbers). Despite cultural, economic, religious, ideological, and political differences, these leaders endeavoured to show empathy for the betterment of the world through their use of collective pronouns.

A common stereotype is that leaders from authoritarian countries display their (internal) power through the extended use of singular pronouns on international stages, more so than leaders from democratic countries. However, the findings here suggest otherwise. The leaders of democratic countries used more first-person singular pronouns than those from undemocratic countries to indicate the power of the political systems they represented. Moreover, leaders do not want to intimidate other countries through language but instead use a language of peace and friendship in spoken discourse. The female leaders' language pattern was characterized by assertiveness, which suggests that societal position dramatically impacts how people speak. The findings regarding the language of the female leaders are conclusive, but a few speech samples may not paint a clear picture overall. In the ten scrutinized speeches, allusions to ideology were limited. Nevertheless, it can be maintained that leaders leaning toward a communist ideology used more collective pronouns to save face and not be branded as self-centric, thereby projecting themselves as inclusive. Future research on pronominal choice in diplomatic speeches may compare (1) speeches in venues such as the United Nations General Assembly and (2) speeches delivered in bilateral/multilateral venues. Such comparisons could provide insight into how the audience, the venue, and perceived national power influence pronoun choice.

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