

## **The Language of Engagement: Speech Functions and Mood in the Berkeley Exec Ed Podcast**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper investigates the interpersonal functions in the discourse of the Berkeley Exec Ed podcast, specifically the episode "The Science of Happiness & the Greater Good," using the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) framework. It explores how language functions in interaction, conveys information, and entertains the audience by applying speech functions and mood types. A qualitative approach is used to analyze clause separations in the podcast transcript, which are then categorized based on speech functions—such as statements, questions, commands, and offers—and their corresponding moods: declarative, interrogative, and imperative. Most of the interactions (58.1%) are realized through statements using declarative moods. This trend indicates that the hosts aim to present information in a manner that is authoritative and informative, thereby building credibility and trust. Other functions include questioning (11.6%) and inviting (16.3%), which utilize interrogative and imperative moods, respectively, to encourage audience participation and engagement. This strategic interplay of linguistic elements demonstrates how speech functions and mood types contribute to the dynamism, interactivity, and effectiveness of the podcast discourse. The study highlights the crucial role of interpersonal language functions in fostering meaningful connections and maintaining audience interest in podcast formats. It also offers insights that can inform broader practices in media communication and content creation.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Language is a great tool for human connection, it's through language that people get to share ideas, emotions, and experiences. We build relationships, communities, and understanding through various forms of communication. And in this digital age, podcasts have really become a special medium that crosses borders and allows intimate conversations and knowledge-sharing in the most consumable way. The Berkeley Exec Ed Podcast is one example, offering insights into leadership and business practices through engaging discussions between experts and practitioners.

Contemporary theories of communication and relational studies provide schematics that are desired in the analysis of the dynamics operating within podcasts. For example, Relational Dialectics Theory (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996) identifies those imminent tensions in relationships as reflected in the complexity between hosts and guests. Communicative Action Theory places a great emphasis on dialogue in coming to mutual understanding and respect, in dialogues, open communication builds collaboration (Habermas, 1984). Additionally, Transformational Leadership Theory places significant focus on the importance of sound interpersonal relationships in inspiring and motivating others, and this is typically observed in the dynamics of interactions in the podcast (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

In Systemic Functional Grammar, according to Halliday, grammatical phenomena are based on three broad metafunctions, which are the ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions. Primarily, these metafunctions allow for the specification of how language operates in both written and spoken texts across different contexts and social settings. Each of the metafunctions is directed toward a particular aspect of use and communication (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004).

The ideational metafunction is about how the language represents the ideas and experiences. It covers the expression of concepts, events, and phenomena that enable the speaker/writer to talk about the world. This metafunction is concerned with the content of the message, inclusive of what is going on, who is involved, and under what circumstances. In reality, this materializes through clauses and their structures expressing the goings-on relationships between participants, processes, and circumstances. Where the interpersonal metafunction is concerned, it is about interaction: speaker/listener or writer/reader. It represents the use of language in the expression of attitude, the establishment and negotiation of relationships, and conducting social exchanges. Modality, which indicates the degree of certainty or obligation by the speaker, and mood, showing the intention of the speaker—for example, if the speaker is making a statement, asking a question, or giving a command—are just some of the elements that involve this metafunction. Textual metafunction maintains the articulation of information flow in a text; it describes the formation of the message and how it would be projected to the audience. Coherence, cohesion, and flow of discourse are some of the features that realize this metafunction. It lays down the prescription on the combination of sentences and clauses into a coherent flow that will narrate or argue meaningfully and guide the reader through what is intended.

Each of these metafunctions interacts in providing a complete explanation of the language use. For instance, the ideational metafunction may provide the content that the interpersonal metafunction communicates, while the textual metafunction sets this content into a message that can be communicated. Through these different metafunctions, researchers and linguists are able to look more deeply into the complexity of the communication and uncover how meaning is constructed and given off in various contexts.

The framework of meta-functions is, in short, a very strong theoretical scaffold upon which one could analyze language. To put it in another way, researching the ideational, interpersonal, and textual parameters of communication would enable us to better understand how language is used to represent ideas, socialize, and present discourse with effectiveness. This multifaceted aspect of analysis allows for an enriching analysis of text and spoken interaction in a multidimensional perspective for an overall understanding of language as dynamic and functional.

The interpersonal function is the way through which language serves in establishing and handling relationships. This function is crucial in facilitating communication and interaction among people in terms of showing emotions, negotiating meanings, and fulfilling social needs. Language is needed for human beings as social creatures not only to provide information but to connect them to others and to make them define their social identities.

In linguistics, the interpersonal function can be analyzed at two levels, which are discourse semantics and lexicogrammar, specifically through the concept of mood. Mood in a clause plays an important role in the realization of interpersonal functions and includes elements such as the subject and the finite verb. At the semantic level, individuals enact two major roles: "Giving" and

"Demanding". Commodity in such exchanges may be further divided into two categories: "Information" a category that describes what we know or think, and "Goods" and "Services" what we have to offer or can do for others.

Following Halliday's views, there are two basic contrasts in interactive language use. One such distinction is between language used for exchange and language used for command. This underscores the duality of language in both informing and seeking action from others. For example, when a host in the Berkeley Exec Ed Podcast invites a guest to share their insights, he engages in an information exchange, it therefore enhances rapport and understanding. Meanwhile, when the host of the show asks the guest to elaborate on something, he uses language to demand elaboration; this therefore enables deepening of subject exploration (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004).

The interpersonal function can be actualized in various interactional modes such as assertions, questions, commands, and invitations. Each of these interactional modes does something different in a communication, for example *Assertions* are declarative utterances. For instance, a radio host may say, "Effective leadership involves clear communication." The assertion spreads information and simultaneously constructs the speaker as knowledgeable about the topic. Questions are the interrogative forms invite a response and stimulate the listeners into involvement. A host may pose, "What were some of the challenges you experienced as a leader?" This invites reflection by the guest on his personal experiences, which would help in giving a better understanding to the audience. Commands are the imperative forms direct or request action. A possible example in this content is when a host may ask, "Share with me your top three leadership tips." This commands the response of the guest and leads to dictating the flow of conversation. Invitations are these are bids for involvement and engagement. For instance, a host may say, "I'd love to hear your thoughts on this." These kinds of invitations build rapport that is inviting to open discussion.

Apart from this, other contextual variables may refer to things like social hierarchy, relationships between interlocutors, and cultural norms. For instance, in a professional podcast setting, the kinds of relationships that take place usually between hosts and guests often determine the language used. Informal tone may then be employed for building rapport, while the use of formal language may denote authority or show expertise.

By combining these theories with an interpersonal function analysis of the Berkeley Exec Ed Podcast, we can shed light on how language is used to create rapport and carry compelling messages. This research tries to identify the different interpersonal functions operating, such as requesting, advising, or motivating, and assess if they are impactful enough to attract and retain the audience's attention. With the growing popularity of podcasts as a medium of sharing knowledge and seeking dialogue, understanding the intricacies of interpersonal functioning becomes second nature to any creator seeking a connection with their listeners. Based on the above discussion, the research questions for this study are stated as given, What kinds of interpersonal functions have been used in the Berkeley-executed podcast? And What is the most common form of interpersonal function identified in the podcast conversations?

The focus of this research will, therefore, lie with selected episodes from the Berkeley-executed Podcast in order to analyze the interpersonal functions present in the conversations. This study tries to contribute toward drawing a deeper insight into how the interpersonal functions operate within the podcasting realm and what kind of influence they might have on audience engagement. These findings emphasize the role of interpersonal communication in relationship building and, by extension, offer important lessons for podcasters and communicators in general who want to improve their skills related to holding an audience. In this paper, therefore, we hope to open avenues of further investigation on interpersonal meaning in other spoken discourses and contribute to a broader understanding of communication dynamics within today's media.

As conceptualized within SFL, the interpersonal metafunction is one that provides a sound

theoretical framework in the endeavor to analyze how language instantiates and co-constructs social relationships and enables the exchange of meanings between the participants in discourse. Recently, scholarly investigations with regards to the realization of interpersonal meaning across various discourses have been highly carried out, especially on discourse domains that pay great attention to the ways mood, modality, and personal pronouns are systematically employed in order to achieve certain communicative goals.

## **METHOD**

Functions in the Berkeley-executed podcast episode entitled "The Science of Happiness & the Greater Good.". The focus of this episode, utilizing a framework grounded in Relational Dialectics Theory, Communicative Action Theory, and Transformational Leadership Theory, is the reason it was selected. The current study will look at how hosts, guests, and listeners use language in relationship-building and involvement. Wellness, generosity, and community involvement are the subjects. The thematic focus of this episode and the conversational structure provide a rich source of data for examining informational and relational language functions representative of the broader communicative patterns of the series.

The selection of this particular episode is a function of purposeful sampling, undertaken in order to capture conversational dynamics relevant to interpersonal communication. It features the hosts and guests from the Greater Good Science Center discussing happiness science in ways that are deliberately crafted for both entertaining and educating the listeners. The targeted selection thus allows for a deeper analysis of the functions of speech. Though limited to just one episode, this approach allows taking up a focused investigation of the communicative patterns that characterize this podcast series. This article uses Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar as the coding framework, though it has been narrowed down to speech functions and moods. The transcript was segmented into clauses, and each one was coded for speech function—such as asserting, questioning, commanding, and inviting and also for mood types such as declarative, interrogative, and imperative (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004).

Data analysis will, therefore, allow the statement of relative frequency and contextual use of each speech function and mood type, particularly with regard to how language choices reflect communicative intentions of hosts and guests. The interpersonal function will be analyzed in context to bring into focus relational dynamics and engagement strategies distinguishing the podcast's discourse through, for instance, a comparison of directives targeting audience engagement against statements that inform. This focus on the interactional patterns within the episode highlights some of the specific linguistic features that support relationship-building and the doing of effective communication with listeners.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **FINDINGS**

Interpersonal Function has two major parts, namely Speech Function and Moods. Still on the Speech Function in the Berkeley Exec Ed Podcast, various types are identified to include Asserting, Questioning, Commanding, and Inviting. Each of these functions has some different ways in which a speaker may communicate ideas, engage an audience, and develop relationships.

Asserting provides the backbone of the discussion, in asserting, the speaker is able to give information and beliefs with much certainty: statements of happiness, the mission of the Greater Good Science Center, and insights gained through scientific research. The function of questioning, though less used, is meant to get people contemplating critical themes down to discussion of their personal beliefs and experiences. This function provides stimulation for critical thinking and creates an avenue for interaction.

The commanding functions are things that the audience can do to apply these ideas in everyday life, for example, visiting the Greater Good website or engaging in gratitude practices. Invitational language invites the audience to join the initiatives being addressed and points out the

collective nature involved in creating happiness and wellness. We can categorize utterances as speech functions such as asserting, questioning, commanding, and inviting. The total number and a percentage of each speech function were analyzed and summarized in the table below.

**Table 1. The total Speech Functions in the Barkeley Exec Ed Podcast**

Speech Function	Total Number	Percentage (%)
Asserting	25	58.1
Questioning	5	11.6
Commanding	3	7.0
Inviting	7	16.3
Expressing Emotion	3	7.0
Total	43	100

Table 1 reveals the overall speech functions found in the Barkeley Exec Ed podcast. Asserting accounts for 58.1% or 25, Questioning has 5 or 11.6%, Commanding with 3 instances or 7.0%, while Inviting has 7 or 16.3%. There are also 3 instances of Expressing Emotion at 7.0%. These speech functions are realized by the different moods that carry out these functions. By contrast, the moods for our purposes here are of three broad types: declarative, interrogative, and imperative. It would appear that the speech function of inviting shares some characteristics with the imperative mood, while asserting usually corresponds to the declarative mood. There is, however, no correspondence between any of the moods and a distinct offering function. Following is the table for types of moods present in the podcast analysis.

**Table 2. The total Mood Type in the Barkeley Exec Ed Podcast**

Mood Type	Total Number	Percentage (%)
Declarative	25	58.1
Interrogative	5	11.6
Imperative	10	23.3
Expressive	3	7.0
Total	43	100

Table 2 shows there are 25 total numbers of declarative moods (58.1%, 5 total numbers of interrogative moods (11.6%, and 10 total numbers of imperative moods (23.3% making a total of 43 moods identified in the Barkeley Exec Ed Podcast. It also presents a total of 3 instances categorized as expressive moods 7.0%. This distribution shows how declarative moods dominate the information-delivery and assertion functions, while interrogative moods are asking and reflective, the imperative moods call for action and participation, a sign that the speaker wants the audience to join actively in the discussion. This table shows in different ways how moods are employed to establish communication and rapport within the podcast. After analyzing the speech functions and moods used in the Barkeleyexecuted podcast, the findings can be presented as follows:

All types of speech functions and moods were found across the selected podcast excerpts. The speech function of asserting appeared with a high percentage, as did the declarative moods. The percentages of the speech functions were 58.1% for asserting, 11.6% for questioning, 7.0% for commanding, and 16.3% for inviting. The percentages of moods were 58.1% for declarative, 11.6% for interrogative, and 23.3% for imperative, along with 7.0% for expressive moods.

The host predominantly used the type of asserting in the podcast with a percentage of 58.1%, which aligns with the high occurrence of declarative moods at 58.1%. This indicates a strong focus on conveying information and sharing insights.

Although assertive and declarative moods were the most common, there were instances where the dominant speech function was not assertive and the predominant mood was not declarative. For example, certain sections featured more commanding speech functions and imperative moods, suggesting that the host tailored the communication style based on the context

and the nature of the discussion.

## DISCUSSION

The most frequent are the Asserting and Declarative Moods, according to an analysis of the "Science of Happiness & the Greater Good" podcast episode. From a linguistic point of view, this phenomenon suggests that the hosts and their guests are ardently committed to the truths they reveal with the purpose of doing more than just informing listeners but rather persuading, entreating, and inspiring them on happiness and well-being, as championed by the Greater Good Science Center. The high number of assertive functions carried by the declarative moods point to the intention of establishing credibility and building trust, which are indeed very crucial elements when discussing personal and social welfare.

With this in mind, the dominant landscape of assertive and declarative moods is selectively directed by the use of other speech functions: questioning, commanding, and inviting. This makes the audience more inclusive and renders a dynamic and familiar conversational style that allows moments of reflection and prods listeners to consider the themes more deeply. This variability in speech functions reflects the natural flow of dialogue, designed by the social dynamics and context-specific factors of podcast discourse. This is in line with Baxter and Montgomery's Relational Dialectics Theory, which describes how communicative interactions balance tensions and negotiate meaning within relationships (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996).

Interestingly, at certain junctures, the commanding functions and imperative moods come to the fore, marking strategic shifts in language use. In so doing, they serve to cue listeners intentionally to actions or reflections that are in line with the messages of the podcast. As can be seen from the example below, hosts guide practices like gratitude or compassion through imperative forms, that is, with an intention of putting into practice what is learned from the podcast. This change in mood and speech function creates a subtle way of approaching the audience, where language is used not only to convey information but also for practical purposes, further increasing the episode's relevance and impact.

In all cases, the dominance of assertive and declarative moods reflects the hosts' commitments to the presentation of their views and the inspiration of listeners. In this way, it manifests a judicious balancing act: the dissemination of information opposed to communitarianism, illustrating how language can establish itself in the context of podcasting as a means of relationship-building. The framework of social context in language use by Halliday is aptly applicable here, the selection of linguistic structures reflects deliberate design aimed at cultivating understanding, connection, and shared values among listeners.

Finally, it is striking that moods associated with the speech function of offer are totally lacking. That absence sheds even more light on the interpersonal communication dynamics in this context and might suggest that the podcast's format is centered on authoritative statements and participatory engagement rather than transactional exchange. Foregrounding relational over transactional dynamics, then, the podcast creates a supportive and informative space that showcases its role as a platform for personal and community development.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study illustrates how interpersonal functions work within a podcast, in this case, an episode titled "The Science of Happiness & the Greater Good" from the podcast series of Berkeley Exec Ed. This study does indeed provide very important insight into the dominant use of assertive and declarative moods, which is indicative that podcast hosts can establish credibility and build trust with their audience through clear, authoritative statements. Such knowledge can lead the communicators to create messages that are both informative and inspirational to the listeners, especially regarding such issues of well-being and personal growth. The data from the Berkeleyexecuted Podcast enables one to make some conclusions based on the analyses of speech functions and moods. All types of speech functions were distinguishable: asserting, questioning,

commanding, and inviting. The moods identified in the podcast are declarative, interrogative, imperative, and expressive. The total number of speech functions analyzed is 43, which includes 25 for asserting, 5 for questioning, 10 for commanding, and 3 for inviting. The total number of moods identified was also 43, with 25 declarative, 5 interrogative, 10 imperative, and 3 expressive. The percentage of each type of speech function in the podcast is: 58.1% for asserting, 11.6% for questioning, 23.3% for commanding, and 7.0% for inviting. The percent of each type of mood is: 58.1% declarative, 11.6% interrogative, 23.3% imperative, and 7.0% expressive. The most dominant type of speech function identified in the Berkeleyexeced podcast was asserting at 58.1%, and the most frequent type of mood was also declarative at 58.1%. The present findings indicate that the hosts are informing and enlightening their listeners while entertaining them at the same time with various forms of communicative approaches.

The following research in the Berkeley Exec Ed Podcast points to implication of a few main areas: First, it serves as valuable insight into the studies of media and communication by evidencing how speech functions and moods drive engagement in digital media contexts-in this case, podcasts. This may then help motivate future study into audience reaction and refine certain media strategies that deepen listener interaction. More importantly, the results of this study will give an indication that in contents created, strategic uses of declarative moods and assertive languages instill a sense of trust and credibility in the listeners. Other content creators may, therefore, apply similar interventions in increasing audience engagement in productions. The research also applies in policy and educational settings. In this way, the research therefore suggests how educational establishments might make use of the results of investigations into speech functions to enhance communication courses with a view to encouraging confident and inclusive uses of language in both physical and online spaces. Finally, this study provides necessary interventions concerning community outreach programs related to wellness. Since the podcast covers happiness and wellness, analysis is underlined to show just how language may act as a catalyst in the encouragement of positive behaviors. The same discursive approaches might thus be taken up in organizational efforts to promote wellness and community engagement. These implications, therefore, give an idea of the wider implications of interpersonal communication in media-as indeed proposing practical applications in shaping future research and real strategies within media, education, and community development.

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