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"Spoken and monologic": modelling oratory, past and present, through the framework of systemic functional linguistics

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Abstract: This article focuses on instances of spoken communication which qualify commonly as "oratory" and which can be modelled within the socio-semiotic of "spoken and monologic". This includes both "podium oratory", as exemplified by political speeches delivered from a stage to an audience that is physically present, as well as forms of "digital oratory" which have developed via the digital interface, including videos posted to social media. The study proposes to model both types of oratory with respect to a range of multimodal and linguistic resources. The study notably explores spoken and monologic discourse in regard to grammatical intricacy and lexical density, the two types of information packaging which respectively inform prototypical speech and writing. Digital oratory reflects trends associated with the technologisation of discourse, and its underpinnings as socio-semiotic. The discussion also makes the case that systemic functional linguistics (SFL) theory, via its articulation between system and function, provides an ideal lens through which these activities can be modelled, as well as their social role and the symbolic power attached to them.

Keywords: grammatical intricacy; interpersonal meaning; lexical density; multimodality; rhetorical figures; social media oratory

1 Introduction

The advent of the 21st century has coincided with a renewed interest in spoken communication, notably spoken presentations and speeches, which commonly qualify as "oratory". This has contributed to what has been described as a "talk renaissance" (Anderson 2016), or "a renewed confidence in the spoken word", which has led to a "cultural revolution" (Atkinson 2004: 369). Such a revival is a global phenomenon, and is noted by media from around the world. For instance, a 2018

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headline in a *French weekly* announced "The comeback of oratory".[1] Scholars in rhetoric refer to an "oratory boom", whereby oral communication is "returning to the centre of public life" (Kennerly and Pfister 2018: 4). The phenomenon can be linked directly to the new public speaking formats engendered by the digital medium, thanks to online video. These range from TED talks and three-minute-thesis presentations, to video content posted to social media, including social media accounts of politicians (Rossette-Crake 2022). These various formats play a role in the complex ecosystem brought about by the interactive internet (Web 2.0), which is transforming public speaking practice:

> Even public speech – for millennia the mode that separated public address from all the other fixed, more stable forms of writing and visual imagery – is no longer beyond the realm of the digital. Speeches are recorded; sliced and diced and mixed; uploaded to Facebook and YouTube; streamed in chunks or snippets on news sites and blogs; and bounced on waves via broadcasts or satellites. (Gurak and Antonijevic 2009: 497)

These speaking practices located in the contemporary context have attracted the interest of specialists of both rhetoric and digital studies. In contrast, they have received little attention from linguists. Indeed, engagement with any type of spoken presentation format remains relatively absent from the field of linguistics. This point was observed two decades ago by Ventola (2002: 17), who, in a volume on scientific conferencing, underlines that the fields of rhetoric and public speaking have "turned out numerous instruction books aimed at the general audience on how to construct speeches effectively according to the Aristotelian parameters", but that linguistic analysis is absent.

This article sets out to provide an initial modelling of oratory within a linguistic perspective. Thanks to its system of mode, its analysis of multimodal resources, as well as the more general impetus it places on discourse as social semiotic, systemic functional linguistics (SFL) offers an opportune lens through which we can both seize the specific status of spoken presentations compared to other types of written and spoken communication, as well as trace the changes that have occurred within the digital context. In what follows, the specific status of oratory and the problems it raises in terms of linguistic description are first discussed. The model of SFL and its specific "spoken and monologic" semiotic are introduced. This framework is then used to model oratory practice, both past and present. A section is devoted to multimodal resources, which are multiple (for example, body language, filming

1 Leslie Rezzoug. Feburary 5, 2018. Retour en force de l'art oratoire: "Parler, c'est affirmer sa singularité" [The comeback of oratory: "To speak is to assert one's singularity"]. *L'Express* [*French weekly*]. https://www.lexpress.fr/styles/bien-etre/psycho/retour-en-force-de-l-art-oratoire-parler-c-est-affirmer-sa-singularite_1978884.html (accessed 10 November 2023).

choices) and hold high stakes in the transition towards the digital interface. I then turn my attention to linguistic resources, and analyse examples of oratory that belong to the pre-digital era (Abraham Lincoln) and to the digital era (TED talks, video posted to social media). These case studies confirm trends underpinned by the technologisation of discourse that have been documented within a critical perspective, for instance by Fairclough (1993, 1994), and are informed by more general societal stakes.

2 The "spoken and monologic" semiotic in the contemporary context

2.1 "Spoken and monologic"

Oratory involves spoken language and, as such, poses important questions in terms of its status. It remains distinct from prototypical examples of spoken communication – namely, conversation. Differences between "speech" and "writing" have received considerable attention within linguistics (e.g. Biber et al. 1999; Halliday 1985; Tannen 1985). Discussions of this dichotomy have tended to bypass the activity of speech-giving, a practice which has existed since ancient times. One reason for this may well be because it challenges the dichotomy – and did so well before the advent of the hybrid forms brought about by the audio-visual and digital revolutions of the 20th and 21st centuries.

Differences between speech and writing, which relate innately to linguistic function, receive considerable attention in SFL. Within this framework, analysis is two-fold, focusing both on "text as object" and "text as instrument", offering two complementary perspectives which set out to explain the meaning of a specific text by "relating it to the linguistic system as a whole" (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014: 3). This point is foregrounded in the opening lines of *Halliday's Introduction to Functional Grammar* (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014), and, interestingly, to prove their point, the authors choose to begin with an excerpt of political oratory, taken from Nelson Mandela's inaugural speech as President of South Africa:

> Today all of us do, by our presence here, and by our celebrations in other parts of our country and the world, confer glory and hope to newborn liberty.[2]

2 https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/nelsonmandelainauguralspeech.htm (accessed 10 November 2023).

The authors compare this text with excerpts of spontaneous conversation and writing, and underline that Mandela's text "is more complex [than the excerpts of spontaneous conversation and writing]: it was probably composed in writing, perhaps with some spoken rehearsal; but it was written in order to be spoken, and to be spoken on an all-important public occasion" (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014: 4). Moreover, they point out that the text "constituted an important moment in modern human history, and may have left its imprint on the language in a way that only a very few highly valued texts are destined to do" (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014: 4).

Within the matrix of socio-semiotic activity types (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014: 39), based on the intersection of medium ("spoken"; "written") and type of turn ("monologic" and "dialogic"), Mandela's speech qualifies as an instance of "spoken and monologic". Like all speech-giving, it is realised via spoken language, but, unlike the prototypical form of conversation, which is dialogic (produced by at least two speakers), it is monologic (produced by only one speaker). A number of alternative terms exist elsewhere in the literature, such as "complex medium" (Crystal and Davy 1969: 70), or "admixing of modes" (McCarthy and Carter 2014: 4). The term "monologic, purely verbal, written-to-be-read-aloud mode" (Charles and Ventola 2002: 181) is used in the specific case of scientific conference presentations, which, moreover, have a "foot in both worlds" and "bridge the gap" between the informal discussions which take place between scientists in the lab, and the final published research article (Rowley-Jolivet 2002: 120). These multiple terms and descriptions point not only to the lack of consensus but also to the difficulty posed by the analysis of these types of activities.

In their presentation of the activity matrix, Halliday and Matthiessen (2014: 38) express the hope "that systemic overviews can be presented in further publications" of the socio-semiotic activities which still await description. These include the spoken and monologic mode, which receives far less attention from scholars than spoken language in its prototypical, dialogic form, such as that of casual conversation (e.g. Eggins and Slade 1997).

More generally, the texts (written record/transcript) of speeches provide objects of study not for the sake of the communication practice *per se* but for phenomena relating to lexico-grammar or textual organisation. For instance, Halliday and Webster devote the third and final part of their 2014 book to case studies of the texts of several U.S. Presidential inaugural addresses, church addresses, and commencement address, analysing them in terms of their transitivity, interpersonal resources and theme, as well as lexical patterning and clause combining. Similarly, Deroey (2021) draws on a corpus of university lectures in order to study forms of metadiscourse. However, as noted by Ventola (2002: 17) quoted above, linguists rarely engage with monologic speech as an activity type *per se*.

If we are to discuss and model within the contemporary context the activity of speech-giving as a prototypical instance of the spoken and monologic socio-semiotic, we also need to take account of the new forms of public speaking which have developed due to digital technology. These new forms present further challenges for linguistic modelling, and raise a number of interesting issues in terms of social analysis.

2.2 Oratory and digital oratory

If, from the point of view of linguistic theory, Mandela's speech exemplifies spoken and monologic mode,[3] it also qualifies more commonly as an instance of political oratory. Oratory, an activity which not only requires skill – it is defined as "skilful and effective public speaking" (*Cambridge English Dictionary*)[4] – but also implies a certain formality – it is "the art or practice of *formal* speaking in public" (*Oxford English Dictionary* – my emphasis)[5] –, constitutes a self-conscious communication practice in which participants actively engage. As a prototypical form of rhetoric, it corresponds to "controlled interaction" (Cockroft and Cockroft 2005: 5–6), and can result – as pointed out by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) in the case of Mandela's speech – in "highly valued texts".

Mandela's speech was delivered from a podium, and, if it was televised and broadcast to a remote audience, Mandela addressed an audience that was physically present. As such, the speech represents a typical example of "podium oratory". However, in the contemporary context, political oratory – like speeches produced within other social fields of activity – cannot be reduced to this albeit prototypical setup.

For instance, we can cite the numerous iconic addresses delivered via the interface of social media by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, beginning with the short video filmed in the streets of Kiev on the evening of the first day of the war between Russia and Ukraine on February 24, 2022. The video, which was posted to social media, was the first of hundreds of addresses delivered by digital means that were to follow, as Zelensky worked to harness international support and propel a message of resistance to his fellow citizens and to Russia. Such digitally-mediated addresses correspond to new forms of public speaking which, it can be argued,

3 The term "mode" is used here in a more general sense than the way it is used in SFL modelling (see Section 2.1).

4 https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/oratory (accessed 10 May 2023).

5 https://www.oed.com/search/dictionary/?scope=Entries&q=oratory (accessed 10 May 2023).

renew the tradition of podium oratory, and qualify as "digital oratory" (Rossette-Crake 2022).

In the case of digital oratory, speakers are forging new multimodal and lexico-grammatical norms. Instead of speaking "in public" to a physically-present audience, they are reaching a wider, potentially limitless, audience of Internet viewers. The podium is replaced by the interface of the dematerialised "digital floor" of the screen. And if the technology promotes less formality, speakers nevertheless enact staged performances to pursue a serious message and contribute to public debate. Importantly, these speakers include not only political leaders and political activists, but also a far wider range of social actors, particularly members of the younger generations. True to the participatory and social impetus of Web 2.0, digital oratory reflects the way that, now, "everyone has a voice" (Winstead 2021). This points to changes at the social level. For instance, these new activities arguably confirm the status of speech as an ever more central "bearer of cultural value" (Halliday 1985: 98). At the same time, the monologic mode confers on the spoken semiotic a symbolic power typically attributed to writing (Halliday and Martin 1993) and which, in the case of digital oratory, is benefitting an ever-extending number of social actors.

3 Modelling oratory within the "spoken and monologic" semiotic

3.1 Towards a definition of oratory

Even if oratory challenges the dichotomy (and precisely because it does), the distinction between spoken and written language is a useful place to start if we are to attempt to model oratory within the spoken and monologic semiotic.[6] The modelling of spoken and written language is located within the "mode" component of register (e.g. Eggins 2004; Halliday 1985; Halliday and Martin 1993), which, alongside the components of field and tenor, not only "resonate" (Halliday 1978) within the SFL metafunctions (ideational, interpersonal, textual) to condition the lexico-grammar, but also inform, in subsequent modelling, and at a more abstract level, genre (Martin 1992; Martin and Rose 2008).

Within the system of mode, spoken discourse is for instance defined by opposition to writing in that: (i) it requires two or more participants; (ii) it takes place face-

6 This study is concerned uniquely with speech-giving (according to the definition of oratory developed here), which is perhaps the most obvious but not the only type of spoken and monologic activity. Other spoken and monologic activities which lie outside the scope of this enquiry include for instance conference presentations or university lectures.

to-face, with participants sharing the same place and same time; (iii) it is based on spontaneous production (Eggins 2004: 92). Moreover, spoken language: (i) is based on turn-taking and is open-ended – unlike the "monologic" and "synoptic", finite organisation of written language –; (ii) contains everyday lexis and non-standard grammar; (iii) is characterised by "grammatical intricacy" (in the form of chains of finite clauses, including iterative clause complexes), while writing is characterised by lexical density and grammatical metaphor (Eggins 2004: 93; Halliday and Martin 1993).

Mode, defined notably by "the role language is playing in an interaction" (Eggins 2004: 90), can be mapped according to the parameter of experiential distance, that is, the distance between language and the social process (Martin 1984, taken up by Eggins 2004: 91). For instance, spoken discourse is intrinsically dynamic and is typically used to accompany some other social process, while written discourse itself constitutes the social process, and exemplifies language as reflection.

With respect to the various aforementioned parameters, the spoken and monologic semiotic can be analysed as a hybrid. In the case of oratory, it does not generally accompany any other social process or activity, but constitutes the main social process, and exemplifies language as reflection – to borrow a term used in rhetorical scholarship, it is "thesis-driven" (Lind 2012).[7] At the same time, speech-giving is a dynamic process, involving paralinguistic and multimodal resources (e.g. body language), which, moreover, represent specific pedagogical stakes. This point is underlined by Ventola (2002) with respect to the other spoken and monologic activity of conference genres, which,

> particularly because of their nature as primarily spoken and often spontaneous or quasi-spontaneous events, are essentially dynamic in their unfolding, and in some respects therefore relatively unpredictable. […] This dynamism poses specific challenges for conference participants, particularly those who are novices or non-native speakers (or both). (Ventola 2002: 10)

One other important feature is that oratory appears closer to the preparation inherent in writing (cf. "more planned" language). Unlike speech, where "we usually act spontaneously, so that our linguistic output is unrehearsed" (Eggins 2004: 92), speech-giving resembles writing activities, which "call for rehearsal: we draft, rewrite and finally re-copy our essay" (Eggins 2004: 92), and typically mobilises the written medium in the form of a written script, engendering "spontaneous, edited speech" (Fries personal communication), or a "falsely spontaneous" style, and language that is "monitored" as opposed to "unmonitored" (Halliday 1985). This mode of production will hence have an impact on the lexicogrammar. Indeed, oratory negotiates in some quite distinctive ways the language of speech and the language of

7 Lind (2012) uses this concept to identify instances of "digital oratory" within online content.

writing, notably in terms of the distinction drawn between grammatical intricacy and lexical density, a point that will be taken up specifically below.

Finally, because it is monologic, oratory is the product of an asymmetrical, typically "one-to-many" relation between participants. The podium places the speaker in an elevated position which confers authority and power. The podium provides a bird's-eye view of the audience, and speakers are endowed with the assurance that they hold the floor and cannot be interrupted. They have "speaking rights" (Kress 1982: 20), are masters of a considerable span of (synoptic) text, and, akin to the case of academic conferences, make different types of language choices compared to those made in conversation: "a speaker with power, speaking to a large number of addressees (a lecture, typically) will tend to use language which has fewer interactive forms, becomes more planned, and therefore begins to have some of the features of the written language" (Kress 1982: 20).

The spoken and monologic semiotic of oratory can hence be defined according to the following criteria, which draw on considerations within mode (criteria number 1–4), in addition to a 5th criterion relating to the social dimension and context:

1) It is realised via speech (phonic material) as opposed to writing (graphic material), as well as multimodal resources (e.g. body language, slideshow);
2) It is monologic and is instantiated by a speaker who speaks to multiple addressees;
3) It is prepared/rehearsed and monitored, and hence corresponds to a specific negotiation between the prototypical languages of speech and writing;
4) It constitutes the main social process, and reflects language as reflection;
5) It draws its meaning from some type of institutional context and is therefore governed by certain norms.

3.2 Digitalised forms of oratory

The definition of oratory given above aims to be general, and can be extended to apply to new, digitalised forms. Technical mediation, be it via electronic or digital means, introduces new parameters within the system of mode. A particularly pertinent parameter is again identified by Martin (1984) and taken up in Eggins (2004: 91), that of spatial and interpersonal distance, which determines the possibilities of immediate feedback between participants. A cline is established based on two criteria: (i) type of feedback (aural, visual); (ii) the imminent degree of the response (immediate, rapid, or delayed). This is also referred to as "the complementary monologue-through-dialogue cline", which is "sensitive to the effects of various technologies of communication on the kind of interactivity that is facilitated" (Martin and White 2005: 28). For example, (casual) conversation incorporates visual

and aural contact as well as immediate feedback, while email lacks visual or aural contact but allows for rapid feedback. In between each of these formats is located for instance telephone communication, which benefits from aural contact and faster (that is, immediate) feedback, but lacks visual contact.

If we are to locate oratory along such a cline, we can posit a similar position to that of conversation, or a position immediately to the right of conversation, in that it combines visual and aural contact. However, this position can only be applied to face-to-face (podium) oratory. Oratory can be disseminated electronically (broadcast on television and radio) and digitally (via the Internet). Both electronic and digital dissemination introduce a new level of complexity in the form of composite audiences. And further complexity is created by digital dissemination in terms of feedback.

Since the advent of radio, and then television, much political oratory no longer addresses simply a face-to-face audience (allowing for visual and aural contact and immediate feedback) but also a remote audience, who are not physically present and who either watch or listen to the speech thanks to technological mediation. This creates a composite structure based on a two-tiered audience. In some cases, when the speech is performed uniquely for broadcast (for instance, King George VI's radio address that was fictionalised in the film *The King's Speech*), there is no face-to-face audience. Remote audiences can be further divided into those whose attendance is synchronous to the moment of delivery (the audience watches or listens to the speech in real time), and audiences whose attendance is asynchronous (audiences watch or listen to the speech at some point after the moment of delivery).

If the status of the audience conditions the type of feedback – and, importantly, lexico-grammatical and multimodal choices –, further complexity is provided by digital formats and social media. For instance, audiences can provide either rapid or delayed feedback by "liking" or adding a comment in the comment box. And online video and video conferencing also allows for a setup involving a remote speaker in the case of a speaker who addresses members of an audience who are physically assembled together in the same space. This was for instance the case when Volodymyr Zelensky spoke from his (solitary) position in his presidential office in Kiev, during the many addresses he made to national parliaments and assemblies gathered at various diplomatic and cultural events around the world, as he attempted to rally support in the early months of the Russia-Ukraine war in 2022.

Combining the parameter of technical mediation with multimodal and staging considerations allows for further modelling within mode. To account for current practice, we will distinguish between the following sub-categories of oratory:

- **podium, lectern oratory** (referred to here as "podium oratory"): it is delivered from a podium (a stage), and from behind a lectern; it implies a face-to-face audience and allows for immediate feedback;
- **the New Oratory** (Rossette-Crake 2019): it corresponds to the first generation of digitally-mediated oratory, and is delivered to both a face-to-face *and* a remote audience; it brings together a number of formats that developed simultaneously (notably between 2006 and 2008), such as the emblematic TED talks; these formats share a number of features (e.g. informal linguistic choices, informal dress code, inclusion of a slideshow, shorter formats) which, taken together, imposed a new type of public speaking practice for the new millennium;
- **social media oratory**: it is delivered to a remote audience by a speaker who posts a video to a social media platform; in its most typical form, it is enacted via a selfie video (i.e. it is filmed by the speaker using a mobile filming device).

4 Multimodal resources

If we are to model oratory within the system of mode and the role language plays in the interaction, specific attention needs to paid to multimodal resources. Indeed, oratory inherently enacts speech through the mode of performance (cf. the component "actio" in classical rhetoric). As such, it brings into play a vast number of multimodal resources and provides the analyst with some quite emblematic corpora via which their interplay can be studied. In addition to body language and the other paralinguistic resources that characterise podium oratory, the era of digital oratory has seen the introduction of new resources such as slideshows, projections on big screens of the image of the speaker, and use of holograms and immersive experiences (Rossette-Crake 2022). In the specific case of social media oratory, another interesting phenomenon is that of "captions". The term has been adopted by social media platforms to refer to the built-in option that provides a textual display of an automatically-generated transcript of what is being said by the speaker; catering to the practice of social media users who have developed the habit of viewing videos without the sound (which is now an account's default setting), such captions result in a rather unusual mixture of "language for speaking" and "language for seeing" (terms borrowed from Kress (1982: 67). Because space prevents me from focusing on multimodality *per se* within the examples discussed in the sections below, I will briefly mention here two closely-related phenomena that call for further study, and which both arise from the introduction of technological mediation: (i) the different degrees to which the body is used as a semiotic resource; (ii) the typical choices made and the meanings that are construed when the performances are filmed for digital dissemination.

4.1 The body as a semiotic resource

The first generation of formats of digital oratory (the New Oratory) saw the removal of the lectern. This choice has been significant in several ways. First of all, foregoing the lectern has affected the mode of production: because there is no longer anywhere to place a written script from which a speaker could read, speakers rely instead on prompters, and/or need to commit their speech to memory. But perhaps even more noteworthy is the extra focus that has been placed on the body as a semiotic resource. Rather than speaking from behind a lectern, speakers of TED talks, three-minute thesis presentations or corporate keynotes (e.g. Steve Jobs unveiling Apple's digital products) stand with their entire bodies in full view of the audience. Speakers not only use a wide variety of hand/arm gestures, they are also free to move about the stage. Delivery requires managing the space on stage, and the body is exploited for its full semiotic potential.

Whatever its form, digital oratory promotes the general awareness of body language as a meaning-making resource. However, this potential translates in different ways. Unlike the New Oratory formats, social media oratory, which is generally filmed as selfie-videos, entail close-up shots which frame the speaker's face and not the whole body. Interestingly, such examples resort (back) to the model of the "talking heads" of the electronic era (Hall Jamieson 1990). Close framing is characteristic of other types of digitalised speech, such as video conferencing. Both digitalised oratory and video conferencing constitute new, digital "embodied modes" (Jones and Hafner 2021: 123), where "the way people use their bodies to communicate is very different from the way they do in face-to-face interaction" (Jones and Hafner 2021: 126); if filming with mobile devices allows, in some contexts, for more freedom (e.g. mobility), it also provides more control over what is displayed and, in the case of certain platforms (e.g. Zoom), produces "two-dimensional bodies shrunk to the dimensions of a computer or mobile phone screen […] [which] are much more restricted in the ways they can express meaning" (Jones and Hafner 2021: 126).

4.2 Filming

Indeed, how much of the body is displayed to a remote audience is conditioned by framing choices made when filming, which participate in the construal of interpersonal meaning (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996). In the case of the New Oratory formats, which are filmed at the same time as the speaker addresses a face-to-face audience, speakers rarely engage directly with the remote audience by looking

directly at the camera. The speech act construes not a "demand" but an "offer".[8] Moreover, the speaker is filmed from an oblique angle rather than frontally, which increases the sense of detachment for the remote audience. Of course, it can be argued that New Oratory speakers do not look straight at the camera for the good reason that they direct their eye contact towards the face-to-face audience. Importantly, the face-to-face audience is included in a number of the shots, which constructs the speaking event as a narrative, as an unfolding action to which the remote audience is privy. As in other narrative representations (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 67), we can identify a vector, which construes a reactional process, for the shots which include the speaker's gaze that is directed at the audience.

Interestingly, TED conferences impose "multicamera shooting" (the talks must be shot simultaneously from at least two angles), and, once edited, the online videos are composed of a mixture of close-angle shots (representing the head and shoulders of the speaker), medium shots (full figure) and long shots (the figure occupies no more than half the size of the frame). Such editing therefore combines different types of social distance: "intimacy", "social distance", and "impersonal distance". However, according to TED guidelines, the most important shot is the close-up, which "helps connect the viewer to the speaker through the small screen".[9] Similarly, editing combines a mixture of eye-level, low-angle, and high-angle shots, which alternatively confer symbolic equality, speaker power, and viewer-power. TED refers to the eye-level shot as representing the speaker as "your best friend".[10] Similarly, there is more asymmetrical framing of the speaker, which contributes to a sense of equality, compared to shots in which s/he occupies a central position within the frame, which confers speaker power.[11]

Compared to the New Oratory formats, social media oratory brings into play a different configuration of choices in filming. Taken together, these choices construe a strong sense of direct engagement with the viewer. First, the speaker directs his/her gaze straight at the camera, establishing contact with the viewer and construing a "demand", whereby "the participant's gaze […] demands something from the viewer, demands that the viewer enter into some kind of imaginary relation with

8 The analysis in this section is based on Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996, 2006) seminal work of the visual semiotic.

9 https://pb-assets.tedcdn.com/system/baubles/files/000/004/585/original/CameraPlaybook-2012-Small.pdf?1484062157 (accessed 1 November 2023).

10 https://pb-assets.tedcdn.com/system/baubles/files/000/004/585/original/CameraPlaybook-2012-Small.pdf?1484062157 (accessed 1 November 2023).

11 Space prevents me from discussing differences in meaning that resulted from choices made when, during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2022), these formats were forced to forego the face-to-face audience and instead adopt a fully-digitalised setup.

him or her" (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 118). This interpersonal meaning is enhanced by the speaker's body, which is positioned frontally rather than obliquely, and by an eye-level angle, which construes equality. The speaker's face is framed vertically, according to the portrait format which increases the personal emphasis with respect to the speaker.[12] And most often, the video is filmed as a close shot. This is because most social media oratory is filmed as a selfie video, with the speaker often holding the mobile filming device. Sometimes, the shot is very close, and the speaker's face, or only part of the face, takes up the entire frame.

Just like selfie photographs, selfie videos can be analysed in terms of the phatic function they fulfil, and the way they construe freshness and authenticity (Gunthert 2015). In addition, the interpersonal meanings that are realised via the variables of angle and framing highlight the new types of spatial relations (proxemics) which are promoted by these new forms of oratory. If a close shot construes intimacy, a very close shot can produce a type of distorted intimacy, presenting a speaker who (symbolically) enters the viewer's intimate space and creating the impression that the speaker is as it were "in our face". By adopting very close framing, social media oratory promotes a contraction of social space, with the speaker entering the viewer's space but also the viewer entering the speaker's space. Indeed, such framing combines with the adoption of private spaces, which have replaced the public stage as the setting of delivery (e.g. speakers speaking from their homes, including their bedrooms). Taken together, these phenomena reflect the new, "private" dimension of "public" speaking in the contemporary context.

5 Approaching the language of podium oratory

In the following two sections, I adopt a qualitative approach in order to explore some aspects of the lexicogrammar of the spoken and monologic mode of oratory. Beginning with political, podium oratory, I investigate some of the "complexity" that Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) evoke in relation to the excerpt from Mandela's inaugural address. Such complexity can be partly attributed to the mode of production of oratory, which involves either reading from a written script, or a performance that relies on some preparation that generally implies the written medium (cf. Section 2.1). In this, it can be posited that the language of oratory corresponds to a specific negotiation between the language of speech and writing respectively.

12 One exception to vertical framing is provided by Volodymy Zelensky's group selfie videos filmed at the beginning of the Ukraine war (cf. Ch. 11).

Within systemic functional theory, the difference between the languages of speech and writing is notably informed by the division of labour between grammatical intricacy and lexical density. Grammatical intricacy is characteristic of speech, while lexical density is characteristic of writing:

> The complexity of the written language is static and dense. That of the spoken language is dynamic and intricate. Grammatical intricacy takes the place of lexical density. The highly information-packed, lexically dense passages of writing often tend to be extremely simple in their grammatical structure, as far as the organisation of the sentence (clause complex) is concerned. (Halliday 1985: 87)

Intricacy and density hence form a dichotomy: one "takes the place" of the other depending on the mode (speech or writing). Information packed tightly in writing contrasts with that which is strung out over a higher number of clauses in speech. This is illustrated in the following pair (borrowed from Halliday 1985: 79):

(1) Violence changed the face of once peaceful Swiss cities.
(2) The cities in Switzerland had once been peaceful, but they changed when people became violent.

Example (1) is taken from a written text and has been reworked for speech in Example (2). Information in Example (1) is more tightly packed, due to the adjectival phrase in pre-modifier position ("once peaceful Swiss"), and the presence of the abstract noun "violence" that fulfils the role of agent of the process "change" ("Violence changed […]"). In Example (2), the information is strung out over three clauses. Complexity at phrase level in Example (1) contrasts with that at clause level in Example (2).

It can be argued that Examples (1) and (2) correspond to two extreme prototypes which require nuancing as soon as we turn to authentic corpora (for instance, depending on the context, a piece/section of discourse may display certain types of lexical density and/or grammatical intricacy). However, when examining the complexity of spoken and monologic mode, considerations in terms of information packaging offer a useful place to start. Issues of information packaging and information processing are important in this mode. Compared to writing, monologic speech, due to the synchronicity of the processing, presents a higher risk of placing the addressee in a position of cognitive overload (this point has important pedagogical implications), and this partly accounts for the delicate nature of the linguistic negotiation that is required. In the case of oratory, information packaging is conditioned by the overarching patterning of certain types of rhetorical figures. These participate in the construal of interpersonal meaning, and rhythmically inform this activity as a mode of performance.

5.1 The example of the Gettysburg Address

The address that President Abraham Lincoln delivered at Gettysburg on November 19, 1863, is considered a benchmark for modern-day English-language oratory.[13] It marked a move towards more "vernacular rhythms", and ushered in a new, "lean" style (MacArthur 1996), which hence begs linguistic analysis. Well before the oratory performed via the "video shorts" of 21st-century social media, it offered an unprecedented example of concision (it is composed of a mere ten clause complexes).[14]

5.1.1 Information packaging

In the address, instances of nominalised processes (grammatical metaphor) are limited. However, examples of tight information packaging appear in the form of adjectives in premodifier position within the nominal group (e.g. "these *honored* dead").[15] These adjectives are often either composed of only one syllable ("*brave* men"; "*poor* power"; "*last full* measure of devotion"; "a *new* birth of freedom"), or belong to a concrete rather than a poetic register ("a *final* resting-place"; "a *larger* sense"; "the *unfinished* work"; "*increased* devotion"). The adjective "*great*" is used in three instances, each time in association with a different head noun ("*a great civil war*"; "*a great battlefield*"; "*the great task*"). Interestingly, modifiers are listed among the characteristics of formulaic "oral mentality" (Ong 1982), whereby the addition of an adjective within the nominal group facilitates retrieval as well as guaranteeing rhythmic weight. In the Gettysburg Address, tight information packaging can also be traced to post-modifiers, via prepositional phrases (e.g. "government *of the people, by the people, for the people*") or participial phrases ("The great task *remaining before us*").

These types of heavy nominal groups appear in specific parts of the discourse, namely the second half of the clause complex. Similarly, participial clauses, of which the content could have been "strung out" via finite clauses, are limited to the second half of the clause complex, as exemplified by the second utterance of the address:

> Now we are engaged in a great civil war, *testing whether that nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure*.[16]

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13 President John F. Kennedy asked his speech writer to study the Gettysburg Address before writing his inaugural address (Clarke 2011).

14 Transcript reproduced in Wills (1992: 263), from which quotes are taken.

15 The address features one modifying adjective per 19 words, which is a relatively high rate compared to earlier examples of political oratory (Rossette 2015).

16 https://usa.usembassy.de/etexts/speeches/getty.htm (accessed 10 November 2023).

Here, the participial clause ("testing whether […]"), which itself contains modification within a nominal group ("any nation *so conceived and so dedicated*") qualifies as an instance of right-branching, as it is placed to the right of the main (finite) clause. Compared to left-branching, where dependent elements are placed to the left of the main clause, right-branching makes for a more addressee-friendly structure, as the addressee is not kept waiting for the main clause (Cockroft and Cockroft 2005: 180). Therefore, if the Gettysburg contains examples of tight information packaging, they appear restricted to the second half of the clause complex. In contrast, there seems to be a preference for "lighter" information packaging in the first half of the clause complex, which is also evidenced by the higher frequency of simple themes compared to multiple themes. In this, the Gettysburg contrasts with speeches that precede it, in which heavier groups and tight information packaging (as well as parentheticals) are distributed throughout the utterance, including early in the clause complex (Rossette 2015).[17]

As previously mentioned, instances of nominalised processes (grammatical metaphor) are limited in the Gettysburg Address; rather, prominence is given to verbs rather than nouns, as exemplified by the following clause complex, which contains four finite processes (and no modifiers):

> The world *will little note nor long remember* what we *say* here, but it can *never forget* what they *did* here.[18]

The information is strung out over four clauses, realising grammatical intricacy. Elsewhere in the speech, other types of grammatical intricacy include embedded relative and complement clauses, which outnumber circumstantial adverbials.

However, if the Gettysburg Address displays examples of both grammatical intricacy as well as tight information packaging (restricted in position), both appear to be conditioned by recurrent types of overarching patterning in the form of certain rhetorical figures. For instance, the grammatical intricacy in the example just quoted realises accumulation or "heaping up" (*synathroesmus*) built on a network of three overlapping pairings of processes informed by syntactic parallelism (*isocolon*) and repetition (as well as semantic contrast): "little note"/"long remember"; "what we say here"/"what they did here"; "long remember"/"never forget".[19] Similarly, repetition of the auxiliary verb gives rise to a stringing out of processes in the following line:

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17 In Rossette (2015), I compare texts of speeches delivered before and after Lincoln, such as speeches by William Pitt (1759–1806) and Robert Peel (1788–1850).

18 https://usa.usembassy.de/etexts/speeches/getty.htm (accessed 10 November 2023).

19 See classification provided in Cockroft and Cockroft (2005: 178–183).

> But, in a larger sense, we *cannot dedicate – we cannot consecrate – we cannot hallow this ground.*[20]

And returning to the question of modifiers, these often appear in paired structures which inform accumulation and syntactic parallelism, sometimes in association with repetition. This is the case in the previously-quoted second utterance of the address, which contains a pair of modifiers in the nominal group ("any nation *so conceived and so dedicated*"), just like the pair of modifiers in the address's opening utterance (again, participial clauses: "a new nation, *conceived in liberty and dedicated to* […]."):

> Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.[21]

5.1.2 Interpersonal meanings

Since ancient times, rhetorical figures such as repetition and syntactic schemes constitute staples of rhetoric. However, it is their very high density that sets apart the Gettysburg, in which every utterance contains several overlapping types of figures.

These figures contribute to interpersonal meaning. For instance, syntactic schemes are "instruments of thought and feeling", and, in many cases (e.g. syntactic parallelism), convey "deep feeling or conviction" (Cockroft and Cockroft 2005: 178). Similarly, repetition corresponds to the resource with "the closest affinity to the spontaneous expression of emotion" (Cockroft and Cockroft 2005: 182). These interpersonal meanings are conveyed via prosody: the figures play host to marked prosodic patterns, and hence constitute complex multimodal (verbal-vocal) constructions (Debras and Rossette-Crake 2019). They inform a language of performance, and highlight the sensory dimension of oratory. In addition, it can be argued that use of these figures eases the cognitive load associated with processing content received via the spoken and monologic mode.

In the address, other interpersonal resources are brought to the fore, namely those located within the systems of personal reference, some of which coincide with deictic reference. The first-person plural ("we", "us" or "our" – e.g. "our fathers", subject of the previously-quoted opening utterance) appears in all but one finite clause. In addition, the speech features use of demonstratives ("*this* continent"), including deictic use ("we cannot hallow *this* ground"), as well as eight instances of the adverb "here", seven of which appear in the last four clause complexes (including

20 https://usa.usembassy.de/etexts/speeches/getty.htm (accessed 10 November 2023).
21 https://usa.usembassy.de/etexts/speeches/getty.htm (accessed 10 November 2023).

two instances in the utterance quoted supra "The world will little note nor long remember what we say *here*, but it can never forget what they did *here*").

Via such markers, integration within the discursive context is realised exophorically – by direct reference to the context of communication (its participants, its setting) – rather than endophorically (i.e. construed within the text). Moreover, in this example of epideictic oratory, repeated reference to the setting of delivery – that is, the battlefield – induces pathos within the network of interpersonal meanings.

The final utterance of the address is emblematic in the way it interweaves personal reference ("us"; "we"), demonstratives ("these honoured dead"; "these dead"; "this nation") and spatial reference ("here") with both grammatical intricacy (cf. seven finite clauses, including the four subordinate *-that* clauses) and modification within the nominal group (e.g. "the *great* task"; "these *honoured* dead"; "*increased* devotion"; "the *last full* measure *of devotion*", etc.):

> It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us – that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion – that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain, that this nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth.[22]

Moreover, the famous line "government *of the people, by the people, for the people*" contains postmodifiers which give rise to accumulation, syntactic parallelism and repetition.

5.2 Towards a lexicogrammar of oratory

Space prevents a quantitative analysis with respect to the full text and macrostructure of the Gettysburg Address. However, the previous lines highlight syntactic and grammatical phenomena which, when interwoven, contribute to the complexity of the spoken and monologic mode of oratory which set apart the examples discussed above from conversational speech or writing.

These phenomena, which appear in very high frequency in Lincoln's speech, inform other landmark political speeches. For example, the utterance quoted from Mandela's inaugural address (cf. Section 2.1, and reproduced below) draws on personal reference ("us" + three instances of "our") and exophoric reference to the present moment ("today"); it also contains pairings of nominal groups and a premodifier (in italics), which result in a relatively high density of information, in a clause complex composed of only one finite clause (cf. verb "confer"):

22 https://usa.usembassy.de/etexts/speeches/getty.htm (accessed 10 November 2023).

> Today all of us do, by our presence here, and by our celebrations in other parts of *our country and the world*, confer *glory and hope* to *newborn* liberty.[23]

Similar accumulation of pairs of nouns (again, in italics), together with personal reference ("we"), feature for instance in the opening line of President Kennedy's "Moon speech" (Rice University, 1962), in which the President addresses U.S. ambitions in the space race:

> We meet in an hour of *change and challenge*, in a decade of *hope and fear*, in an age of both *knowledge and ignorance*.[24]

If these pairs result in a higher number of lexical items, they combine with parallelism and repetition ("in an hour of […]"; "in a decade of […]"; "in an age of […]"), which ease the density. This utterance contains only one finite verb ("meet"), unlike the utterances that immediately follow, which prove more grammatically intricate (finite verbs in italics), but also combine with a syntactic scheme (the parallelism "the greater […] the greater"):

> The greater our knowledge *increases*, the greater our ignorance *unfolds*. No man *can fully grasp* how far and how fast we *have come*. But *condense*, if you *will*, the 50,000 years of man's recorded history in a time span of about a half a century.[25]

Closer to the present day, the opening utterance of Barack Obama's "victory" speech, delivered the evening he won his first presidential mandate (Chicago, 2008), proves grammatically intricate in that it strings together eight finite clauses (finite verbs in italics):

> If there *is* anyone out there who still *doubts* that America *is* a place where all things *are* possible, who still *wonders* if the dream of our founders *is* alive in our time, who still *questions* the power of our democracy, tonight *is* your answer.[26]

This utterance is also anchored by the exophoric reference "tonight", subject of the final clause. Two utterances later, such anchoring is performed by interpersonal reference (cf. three instances of the pronoun "we"), and what is striking is the accumulation of pairs of adjectives, as well as a pair of nominal groups, all of which serve as post-modifiers (in italics) within nominal groups:

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23 https://www.rice.edu/kennedy (accessed 10 November 2023).
24 https://www.rice.edu/kennedy (accessed 10 November 2023).
25 https://www.rice.edu/kennedy (accessed 10 November 2023).
26 https://www.npr.org/2008/11/05/96624326/transcript-of-barack-obamas-victory-speech (accessed 10 November 2023).

> […] It's the answer spoken by *young and old, rich and poor, Democrat and Republican, black, white, Latino, Asian, Native American, gay, straight, disabled and not disabled* – Americans who sent a message to the world that we have never been a collection of *Red States and Blue States*: we are, and always will be, the United States of America.[27]

These pairings produce a relatively high degree of information packaging and lexical density. However, with its five finite clauses, this clause-complex also proves grammatically intricate. The above example epitomises the lexicogrammar of oratory, which negotiates density within the dynamic framework of spoken performance.

6 Approaching the language of digital oratory

6.1 The New Oratory

With the move to digitally-mediated formats, changes with respect to the general lexicogrammatical features outlined above can be observed. The language of digital oratory displays a similar complexity to that of podium oratory in that it continues to negotiate density within an overarching, dynamic template. At the same time, it bears a closer resemblance to prototypical spoken language by integrating certain elements of the spoken language. Among these elements, we will focus here on two aspects: the amplification of the interpersonal resources already present in podium oratory, as well as the introduction of additive syntax, both of which testify to the phenomenon of "conversationalisation" (Fairclough 1992, 1994). These differences can be linked to multimodal changes brought about by the change in format/medium with respect to podium oratory.

These elements are illustrated in some examples of an iconic New Oratory format, TED talks. Let us begin with a speaker who previously belonged to the political sphere, former politician and U.S. vice president Al Gore, who has delivered several TED talks to raise awareness about climate change. His recent talk, entitled "How to make radical climate action the new normal", delivered in 2021, includes for instance the following extract:

> When the world's leading scientists are setting their hair on fire to get our attention, should we listen to them? Check. Can our interconnected global civilization suddenly be turned upside down? Check. Are the poor and marginalised populations of the world the most affected? Check.

27 https://www.npr.org/2008/11/05/96624326/transcript-of-barack-obamas-victory-speech (accessed 10 November 2023).

> Can science and technology give us nearly miraculous solutions in record time? Check. Will we deploy those solutions in time? That is the question.[28]

This extract contains nominal groups which, due to modification, prove lexically dense ("the world's *leading* scientists"; "our *interconnected global* civilisation"; "the *poor and marginalised* populations *of the world*"; "*nearly miraculous* solutions"; "*record* time"). It also features parallelism, accumulation and repetition, which inform a series of four direct interrogatives, each of which is followed directly by the same, one-word answer ("Check"). In addition to the series of direct interrogatives, impetus is placed on the first-person plural ("our"; "us"; "we"). Together, these elements foreground interpersonal meaning and enact "dialogic staging", a specific setup within monologic mode which produces a heightened sense of interaction (Rossette-Crake 2019). Dialogic staging confirms, in the specific case of oratory, the trend towards the "conversationalisation" of public discourses that Fairclough (1992, 1994) associates with the "technologisation" of discourse, or digitally-mediated communication, and that he defines as "the simulation in institutional settings of the person-to-person communication of ordinary conversation" (Fairclough 1993: 141).[29]

Another element of conversationalisation is "synthetic personalisation" (Fairclough 1993: 141), realised for instance by the inscription within the lexicogrammar of the first-person singular. At the macro level, the first-person singular informs personal storytelling, which is characteristic of the New Oratory, particularly TED talks. For instance, in a much-watched talk, writer Elizabeth Gilbert shares her experience of success and the effect it has had on her inspiration. The talk opens with the following lines, which contain, in addition to the repetition at the end of the passage (the past participle adjective "doomed" is pronounced three times), 13 references to the first-person singular ("I", "my", "me") (in italics):

> *I* am a writer. Writing books is *my* profession but it's more than that, of course. It is also *my* great lifelong love and fascination, and *I* don't expect that that's ever going to change but, that said, something kind of peculiar has happened recently in *my* life and in *my* career which has caused *me* to have to sort of recalibrate *my* whole relationship with this work. And the peculiar thing is that *I* recently wrote this book, this memoir called "Eat, Pray, Love" which, decidedly unlike any of *my* previous books, went out in the world for some reason, and became this mega-sensation,

28 The extracts quoted here are reproduced from the transcripts provided online, next to the video, available at: https://www.ted.com/talks/al_gore_how_to_make_radical_climate_action_the_new_normal/transcript?language=en (accessed 10 November 2023).

29 An early example of this in the context of technically-mediated political oratory is provided by President Franklin Roosevelt's "fireside chats" of the 1930s. In these radio addresses, characteristic of the age of electronic eloquence (Hall Jamieson 1990), the American president engaged with his audience of listeners as if he were having a direct conversation (or "chat") with them.

> international bestseller thing. The result of which is that everywhere *I* go now, people treat *me* like *I*'m doomed. Seriously doomed, doomed.[30]

The passage includes other items which relay interpersonal meaning, such as the adverbial "of course", and the discourse markers "kind of" and "sort of". Discourse markers are specific to spoken language and as such, they echo the language of conversation; in addition, the two markers pronounced here intimate speaker-addressee solidarity, just like the use of the demonstrative reference here ("this book, this memoir"; "this mega-sensation"). Informal register, which can also be considered another feature of (casual) conversation, and therefore an element of conversationalisation, is also present (cf. "thing"). Informality is also reflected by multimodal factors such as dress code. These choices reflect a horizontal speaker-addressee relationship, according to another characteristic of technologised discourses, which, in terms of socio-semiotic, enact the move from hierarchical to horizontal relations and the decline of relationships based on authority (Fairclough 1994). In terms of speaker-addressee positioning, this is far removed from the asymmetrical relation and construal of speaker power identified by Kress (1982 – quoted supra) in the context of the public address exemplified by podium oratory.

The passage above also features additive clause linkage, realised via coordination ("and"; "but"), additive adverbials ("also") and non-restrictive *which*-clauses. These reproduce the linear structuring that characterises speech as opposed to writing (cf. "speech, typically, consists of chains of co-ordinated, weakly subordinated and adjoined clauses" [Kress 1982: 33]), which facilitates processing for the addressee.[31] Because it reproduces the syntax of spoken discourse (i.e. conversation), additive clause linkage can be analysed as another element of the conversationalisation of public address. It informs the template of Al Gore's talk, and is illustrated in the following excerpt, where the coordinator "and" links 7 of the 10 non-embedded, finite clauses of the sequence:

> […] Sea level rise is also contributing, *and* of course, 93 % of the extra heat is absorbed in the oceans, *and* the ocean temperatures are reaching record levels as well. *And* that means more water vapor comes off the oceans, *and* the warmer ocean temperature makes the cyclonic storms, like hurricanes and typhoons, much stronger. Hurricane Ida struck the Gulf Coast as a category four, *and* as is so often the case, communities of colour and poor people were

30 This first TED talk by Gilbert, delivered in 2009, intitled "Your elusive creative genius", had received, by June 2023, 22.9 million views. During her talk, the speaker utters numerous fillers ("um"; "er"), which do not appear in the transcript from which the quote is taken: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=86x-u-tz0MA (accessed 10 November 2023).

31 Similarly, Biber et al. (1999: 1068) describe "the 'add-on' strategy": "the utterance neatly divides into a linear sequence of finite clause-like units, which follow in line without overlap or interruption […] the syntactic processing required is simple".

> disproportionately victimised. This storm continued on, north and northeast across North America to New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, killed a lot of people *and* dropped rain bombs. *And* in New York City some basement apartments were flooded.[32]

In this passage, additive clause combining provides a dynamic template in which a high density of information is communicated. It can be posited that the additive syntax combines for instance with other multimodal means (e.g. the content is also relayed via the visual mode of the slideshow, screening at that moment of the delivery), in order to ease for the addressee the information load, and facilitate processing.

6.2 Social media oratory

If the first generation of digital oratory, the New Oratory, marks a move towards the adoption within monologic mode of certain characteristics prototypical of spoken language, it can be argued that this move has been accelerated by fully-digitalised oratory (i.e. delivered uniquely to an online audience), such as that disseminated via social media.

Social media oratory provides a platform for public discussion and debate for multiple social actors. It testifies to the democratisation of public address, where the metaphorical public speaking floor is no longer restricted to public figures, and everyone "has a voice" (cf. Section 1). For instance, it proves a means for activism and awareness-raising at a grassroots level, by speakers who are not politicians, and who, quite the opposite, see themselves as a type of counter-power to public authorities.[33] Moreover, when politicians take to social media, they generally do so in order to fulfil purposes that are quite distinct from those pursued when they take to the physical podium to practise podium oratory. And so, to meet such goals, different linguistic choices – just like different multimodal choices – are made. Another striking aspect of such videos is the variety and room for choice that the platform allows. For example, a glance at the videos posted to British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's Instagram account gives a sense of the variety of multimodal choices (and topics) made possible by the medium.[34] There is for instance a great variety in terms of setting – as well as dress code: the prime minister appears in most videos in a suit and tie, but others introduce formality, such as a video in which he appears in a

32 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=86x-u-tz0MA (accessed 10 November 2023).

33 See Rossette-Crake (2022) for a detailed discussion of social media activism, and its omnipresence, including cases of "influencers" and corporate social media accounts.

34 https://www.instagram.com/rishisunakmp/reels/ (accessed 10 November 2023).

sweatshirt (even though he addresses a serious topic – inflation and government measures to reduce the cost of living).[35]

Overall, compared to what is practised on the podium, social media oratory construes more informality, intimacy, and friendliness. This is illustrated by a selfie video posted by the then British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, recorded on a flight to Munich to attend international talks, in the week preceding the beginning of the war between Russia and Ukraine.[36] Social media oratory favours short formats, and so the entire transcript of his one-minute address is reproduced here (the text also appears simultaneously on the screen in "caption" form [cf. Section 3]):

> Good morning folks, I'm on the way to the Munich Security Conference, where I'll be urging unity in the face of potential Russian aggression in Ukraine, and that unity is absolutely vital if we are going to deter what I think would be an absolutely catastrophic act of aggression by Vladimir Putin. My message today is that there is still time to avert that disaster, that diplomacy can prevail. And that's the message I'll be taking to Munich.[37]

Here, the lexicogrammar bears a great resemblance to that of the dialogic speech of conversation. There are none of the rhetorical figures discussed above, nor heavy nominal groups containing modification. The first utterance of the post is a long clause complex that displays recursive levels of embedding and is grammatically intricate. The two instances of the coordinating conjunction "and" function in a way which is similar to its use as a discourse marker in speech (Rossette 2013), the second of which ("And that's the message I'll be taking […]") characteristically introduces an utterance that re-elaborates meaning, and serves to wind up a discursive move. The passage also features an informal greeting, with a specific time reference to the moment of delivery/filming ("Good morning folks").

This video provides an extreme example of a number of the aspects of technologised discourse identified by Fairclough, and illustrates the influence of medium (cf. the "social" – i.e. intimate – dimension foregrounded in the name "social media", as opposed to the "public" dimension of public address). While the speaker is dressed in a shirt and tie, the selfie video is filmed from a very close angle, marking a contraction of social space, and construing a sense of intimacy. This is echoed by the informality and dialogic staging ("conversationalisation") that inform the lexicogrammar. These choices construe a horizontal speaker-addressee relationship. Finally, synthetic personalisation is construed via 5 references to the first-person singular ("I"; "my"), including 3 in the position of grammatical subject of material or

35 https://www.instagram.com/reel/Crc_4V2OodF/ (accessed 10 November 2023).

36 https://www.instagram.com/tv/CaJ0t6SAqQU/ (accessed 10 November 2023).

37 Post on Instagram account "borisjohnsonuk", see https://www.instagram.com/tv/CaJ0t6SAqQU/ (accessed 19 Feburary 2022).

mental processes. Interestingly, in the current political landscape, focus on the person of the speaker, such as that provided by personal testimonials, together with "being passionate and sincere", are part of what has been qualified as the "new Gettysburg" or modern-day benchmark, for political speeches – whether they be delivered online, or from a podium (Perkins 2019).

7 Conclusion

This contribution has explored a number of aspects of the spoken and monologic mode of public address, past and present. The spoken and monologic semiotic has received relatively little attention in linguistic description and theory, a point that can be considered rather surprising, both in light of the numerous formats that have recently developed via the digital medium and have renewed public speaking practice, and also in light of the specific issues raised by spoken and monologic mode. These issues concern the modelling of oratory with respect to the dichotomy between spoken and written language, mixing of modes, multimodality, etc., as well as its description, for instance in terms of its lexicogrammar.

Because of the extensive and relatively unexplored nature of the object of study, this contribution, which draws on previous work by the author, has aimed to provide an overview of these various issues. These call for further enquiry, notably via quantitative analysis. This is particularly necessary in regard to lexicogrammar. For this special issue devoted to recent explorations within the field of SFL, I thought it pertinent to begin with the distinction drawn by Halliday between lexical density and grammatical intricacy, which informs his theory of written and spoken language. It is suggested that the move from podium oratory to digital oratory coincides with a move towards the "spoken" end of the lexicogrammar spectrum – and that this, in turn, is influencing current podium oratory. Other considerations, drawing on the fields of rhetoric, discourse analysis, cognition, and multimodality, quickly come to the fore, and testify to the fact that an appraisal of any type of contemporary communication practice, particularly those borne out of the digital medium, requires a multidisciplinary approach. Oratory enacts speech that is designed to be performed – and it is due to this performance that its lexicogrammar cannot be analysed within a vacuum and without taking account of multimodal and prosodic features.

This is notably why SFL offers an ideal framework for the study of oratory, which has, up until now, mainly been left to scholars of rhetoric. In addition to its theories of mode, speech and writing, and multimodality, its analysis of the social dimension of language, which extends to a critical discourse analysis approach, as borne out by work by Fairclough, proves particularly pertinent when examining the social implications of digitally-mediated communication. The applied dimension of SFL-based description also

responds to a clear pedagogical need in the case of public speaking practice and competence, for both native and non-native speakers, a competence which is now recognised in international syllabus, at a moment when many types of social actors now need to engage with one or several of the new public speaking formats.[38]

In regard to the social dimension, two interrelated issues raised by digital communication have not been developed here. These concern the question of context, and that of register and discursive genre. In a study entitled "The problem of context in computer mediated communication", Jones (2004) discusses the difficulty of adapting the notion of context as defined for instance by Halliday and Hasan's (1985) tripartite model of language, context, and text, to cases of digital communication, noting that the concept of context requires adapting due to the challenges posed by the digital medium. Because context informs register, which in turn informs genre (as "staged, goal-oriented social process" (Martin 1992: 505), these also prove difficult to model. This point is exemplified by the case of digital oratory, which testifies to the "decompartmentalisation of generic practices" (Rossette-Crake 2022: 167). Importantly, social media provides the speaker with more freedom and hence allows for greater variation – and this makes it problematic to model neat generic categories as the product of relatively finite and predictable choices within a system.

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38 In terms of international syllabus, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages for instance now identifies different spoken monologic activities for each level of competency, extending from "relating your weekend" and "presenting a project" at level A1, through to debates and round tables at level C1.

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