Critical Discourse Analysis of U.S Vice President Kamala Harris' Press Remarks during Official Visit to Vietnam in 2021

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Abstract: The purpose of this research is to investigate the ideology of the U.S Vice President Kalama Harris' press remark during her official visit to Vietnam in 2021. The research adopts Norman Fairclough's framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the main theoretical approach. Thus, the authors strictly followed Fairclough's model with its three stages, i.e., textual description, interpretation, and explanation, which are carried out simultaneously. Moreover, qualitative and quantitative research methods were employed for this research. The findings of the study show that Vice President Harris aims at affecting Vietnam's approval for Joe Biden's administration's plans and foreign policy, improving bilateral relations between the U.S and Vietnam, cooperating to deal with crises such as climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic, and committing to securing a stable, peaceful Indo-Pacific and Southeast Asia region.

Keywords: CDA, Norman Fairclough, ideology, discourse, political discourse.

Subject classification: Linguistic

1. Introduction

Since its establishment in the 1970s, the CDA has been recognised as a relatively new study subject, not only in Vietnam but also in many other nations across the world. The CDA is a type of analytical discourse model that primarily studies the ways of social power abuse, dominance, and inequality, and how these are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and speech in the social and political context. Nowadays, the CDA has become a significant approach to language analysis. In light of the CDA, ideological assumptions and the relationships between language, power, ideology, and society can be uncovered, especially by Norman Fairclough's theoretical CDA model. In addition, within

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globalisation, international relationships among countries around the world are remarkably strengthened in many fields such as political geography, economy, and defence. The relationship between the U.S and Southeast Asia is not exempted from globalisation. Although suffering significantly under the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S under President Joe Biden's administration has still been developing its relationships with Southeast Asia through many foreign affairs activities such as Vice President Kamala Harris' remarks during the press conference during her official visit to Vietnam in 2021. Thus, when she delivered her remarks, it became clear that people have the desire to understand the power and ideologies behind the discourse as a language is a useful social tool to exercise power and reflect ideologies.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Definition of CDA

According to Van Dijk (1993, pp.249-250), the CDA framework is concerned with studying and analysing written texts and spoken words to reveal the discursive sources of power, dominance, inequality, and bias, as well as how these sources are initiated, maintained, reproduced, and transformed within specific social, economic, political, and historical contexts. Fairclough (1989, p.43), asserted that the CDA helps to clarify the relationship between the use of language and the exercise of power and ideologies. Its principal aim is to look at the influence of ideologies and power relations on the content and structure of discourse. Fairclough also paid attention to the theoretical basis of the discipline and is influenced by the concept of order of discourse developed by Foucault. The latter is well known for his three-dimensional concept: text, discourse, and social practices. In *Discourse and Social Change* (1992, p.6), and *Critical Discourse Analysis* (1995, pp.3, 96, 219, 224), Fairclough emphasises the social changes and has carried out research on globalisation, political discourse, language, and education.

2.2. Ideology

Ideology is the core concept of the CDA framework. Ideologies are formulated in forms of action and interaction, and their reproduction is usually embedded in the organisational and institutional environment. Among the many forms of reproduction and interaction, discourse plays a prominent role as a place for clear expression and persuasive communication of ideological propositions. The purpose of ideology in speech is used to organise individual cognition along specified lines of reasoning. Such ideological viewpoints can be communicated through the manipulation of language as a method of engendering cognition to follow patterns of common sense that are unlikely to lead to subversive consequences. Kress (1985, p.18) states that "the grammar of a language is its theory of reality". In terms of the

Hallidayan view of language, grammar is undoubtedly manipulated to shape ideological arguments and presuppositions for social construction based on experience. Individuals who introduce ideological statements for reproduction control not only the grammar and the representations within ideology, but also the messages contained within the grammar and experiences (Stubbs, 1996, p.60).

Thomson (1996, p.245) defines the term "ideology" as the meaning of serving power. What he means is that ideological research investigates the ways in which various symbolic forms construct and convey meaning. As for Fairclough (1989, p.85), he believes that ideology is universal in language and should be one of the themes of modern social science. It is essentially related to power relations and is understood as establishing and maintaining unequal power relations. Fairclough's view is very much a Marxist one in which he regards ideology as a distorted representation of the reality of social relations (Fairclough, 1995, p.17).

According to Van Dijk (1995, p.248), "ideologies are basic frameworks of social cognition, shared by members of social groups, constituted by relevant selections of socio-cultural values, and organised by an ideological schema that represents the self-definition of a group". In other words, ideologies are situated between social institutions and social members' mental structures. As a result, social actors may readily actualise their social qualities, thanks to their knowledge and beliefs, which serve as tangible models of their daily lives. Ideologies influence how individuals plan and comprehend social behaviours, as well as the patterns of text and speech, in an indirect way. It is thought that a person's ideology is primarily conveyed and learned via the use of his or her language, whether spoken or written. The discourse dimension of ideologies describes how ideologies affect our daily texts and conversations, how we comprehend ideological speech, and how we respond to ideological discourse.

In summary, it has been considered that any person's ideology is mostly expressed and gained as through their use of language, whether spoken or written. The ideological discourse dimension addresses how ideologies influence our daily texts and conversations, how we interpret ideological discourse, and how speech is used to reproduce ideology in society.

2.3. Political discourse

According to Van Dijk (1993, p.263), Fairclough (1995, p.77), Schaffner (1996, p.201), and Bello (2013, p.86), political discourse is concerned with the production or reproduction of political dominance, political hegemony, power abuse, and legitimisation or de-legitimisation of social phenomena (political events are included in this category). Politicians aim to gain power in order to accomplish their objectives, establish social ideas, and secure regulatory control over resource allocation and decision-making (Bayram, 2010, p.29). Thus, politicians need to retain their ideological system for gaining advantages in ideological conflicts. Van Dijk (2005, p.732) contends that "if the political field is thoroughly ideological, then so are its political practices, and hence its discourses". Accordingly, political ideologies and political

discourses have a bilateral connection in which political discourses are not only the outcome of political ideologies, but also important to their production or reconstruction. Van Dijk (2005, p.731) and Ghazani (2016, p.632) stated that ideologies pervade all political actions, including political campaigns, demonstrations, and elections, and are primarily represented indirectly through speech.

Political discourses are frequently prepared and produced in such a way that they may be uttered without being read. That is to say, discourse is prepared yet presented in a style that resembles spontaneous conversation. Furthermore, some political discourses are completely extemporaneous, while others are thoroughly planned but not delivered straight from the script (Bloor & Bloor, 2013, p.115). Fairclough (2012, p.17) states that political discourse analysis is defined as the critical examination of political discourse with an emphasis on the reproduction and contestation of political power by means of language.

Political discourse is deemed so, if two criteria exist. First and foremost, it must be functional. This implies that it emerges through politics, within certain historical and cultural contexts. Secondly, it must be thematic and relevant to politics (Schaffner, 1996, p.2). For Van Dijk (1998, p.196), political discourse is "a socially constituted set of genres, associated with a social domain or field". Politicians utilise the art of effective language in order to attain their desired political benefit. Furthermore, Bello (2013, p.86) asserts that "the connection between language and politics is strong as political action itself is carried out through language".

Fairclough (2006, p.1) emphasises features of language in politics: "[language can] misrepresent as well as represent realities, it can weave visions and imaginaries which can be implemented to change realities and, in some cases, improve human well-being, but it can also rhetorically obfuscate realities, and construe them ideologically to serve unjust power relations". Fairclough (2012, p.18) argues that political discourse is linked to political officials in the institutional contexts, which includes individuals, political institutions, and organisations, i.e., contexts enable performers to assert their agency and consolidate their authority to construct the guidelines in which they are interested. And finally, Van Dijk (2005, p.732) states that "it is largely through discourse that political ideologies are acquired, expressed, learned, propagated, and contested".

2.4. Norman Fairclough's theoretical CDA model

2.4.1. Description

The description phase of the CDA model aims to analyse the features of a text discretely, which is taken from a range of data sources (vocabulary, grammar, and textual structures, etc.). To decode the hidden meanings, embedded messages, and the speaker's ideological features reflected in the text, these considerations must be interpreted and analysed with a critical mind - "critical" here means taking into account what other options might have been made, i.e., the systems of options in the discourse types from which actual

features arise. The procedure of textual description follows the 10-question model of the description stage (Fairclough, 2001, pp.92-93) as follows:

* In terms of vocabulary:

Question 1: *What experiential values do words have?*

- What classification schemes are drawn upon?

- Are there words which are ideologically contested?

- Is there rewording or overwording?

- What ideological significant meaning relations (synonymy, hyponymy, antonomy) are there between words?

Question 2: *What relational values do words have?*

- Are there euphemistic expressions?

- Are there markedly formal or informal words?

Question 3: *What expressive values do words have?*

Question 4: *What metaphors are used?*

* In terms of grammar:

Question 5: *What experiential values do grammatical features have?*

- What types of processes and participants dominate?

- Is the agency unclear?

- Are processes what they seem?

- Are nominalisations used?

- Are sentences active or passive?

- Are sentences positive or negative?

Question 6: *What relational values do grammatical features have?*

- What modes (declarative, grammatical question, imperative) are used?

- Are there important features of relational modality?

- Are the pronouns we and you used and if so how?

Question 7: *What expressive values do grammatical features have?*

- Are there important features of expressive modality?

Question 8: *How are (simple) sentences linked together?*

- What logical connectors are used?

- Are complex sentences characterised by coordination or subordination?

- What means are used for referring to inside and outside the text?

* In terms of textual structures:

Question 9: *What interactional conventions are used?*

- Are there ways in which one participant controls the turns of others?

Question 10: *What larger-scale structures does the text have?*

The description stage is concerned with the text's formal qualities and focuses on the three aspects vocabulary, grammar, and textual structures (Fairclough, 2001, p.21). Moreover, Fairclough includes three distinct values in the description stage and distinguishes between the several sorts of values that may be represented through word choice and syntax, depending on how the text's producer presents themself or society. The first value is *experiential value,* which expresses how the text producer believes in something without stating his own opinion. The second is *relational value*, which is the component of a text that expresses social relationships. The last one is *expressive value,* which occurs when a text producer expresses themself as a subject with a place within society's social connections by presenting their own appraisal of some aspect of reality.

In terms of *vocabulary*, the answers to given questions are to be found in smaller questions for realising experiential and relational values. For *experiential values,* CDA analysts should try to determine the scheme's categorisation; words which are ideologically contested; rewording or overwording; meaning relations such as synonym, hyponymy or antonym, and use of metaphor. For *relational values,* it should be focused on the exploration of euphemistic expressions and formal or informal words. In terms of the *grammar aspect,* the expressions of *experiential values* are identified through types of processes and participant predominance, agency, nominalisations, active or passive sentences, and positive or negative sentences. *Relational values* are investigated through modes of sentences, features of relational modality and the use of pronouns *"we"* and *"you".* Also, grammatical characteristics use expressive modality to convey expressive values. Additionally, the utilisation of logical connectors, coordination or subordination, and ways of referencing inside and outside the text determine how phrases are connected together.

To summarise, the first three inquiries address the experiential, relational, and expressive meanings of textual lexical characteristics, in that order. Question 4 is mainly concerned with metaphor, whilst questions 5, 6, and 7 are engaged with the experiential, relational, and expressive meanings of grammatical characteristics. The last three questions 8, 9, and 10 are about grammatical relations, i.e., "cohesion" and structures rather than the contents of texts.

2.4.2. Interpretation

The interpretation stage is concerned with discourse processes and their reliance on assumptions, as well as what is in the text and what "in" the interpreter is used to produce interpretations. Textual characteristics function as "cues", activating components of interpreters' and members' resources (MR). The dialectical interaction between clues and MR is considered to be the source of interpretations. Fairclough (2001, p.114) often called background knowledge interpretative procedures.

Fairclough (2001, pp.119-120) guided CDA analysts to focus on some main tasks in the interpretation of the situation: *What is going on? Who is involved? What relationships are*

at issue? And what is the role of language in what is going on? In dealing with interpreting the intertextual context, *presupposition* should be brought into focus. Accordingly, he proposes the four remaining aspects of MR that serve as interpretative methods connected to the text. Conventions of phonology, grammar, and vocabulary are sources of information that generate processes for comprehending the surface of discourse. Semantics, pragmatics, and cohesion are further types of resources that give techniques for evaluating the meaning of an utterance and its local coherence. Resources are schemata which give the processes for interpreting the structure and global coherence of a text. To summarise, the interpretation stage plays a significant part in interpreting the discourse process as well as its reliance on preconceived ideas of MR.

Figure 1: Interpretation
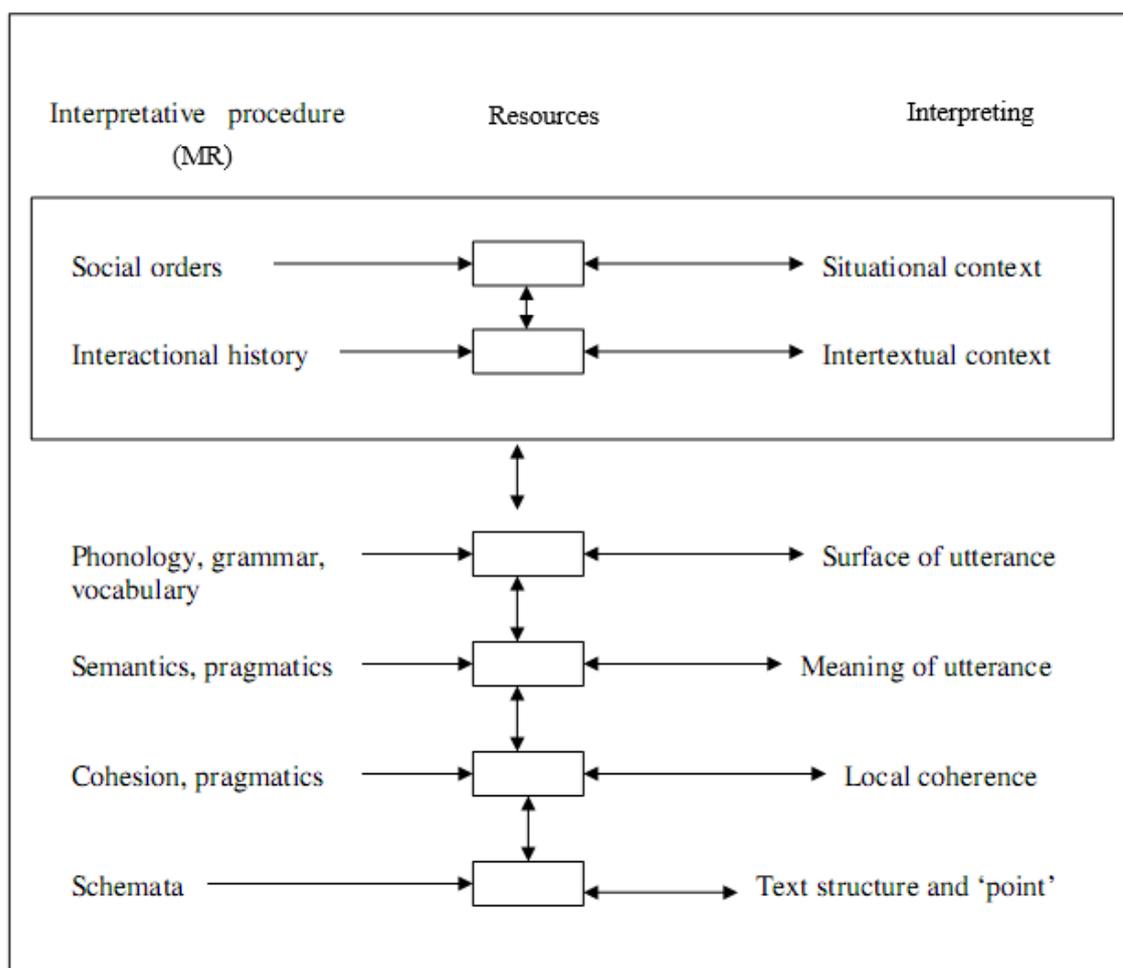
Source: Fairclough, 2001, p.119.

2.4.3. Explanation

This stage aims at portraying a discourse as part of a social process, as a social practice, showing how it is determined by social structures, and what reproductive effects discourses can cumulatively have on those structures, sustaining them or changing them. These social determinations and effects are mediated by MR. Fairclough (2001, p.138) elaborates on the aspect that the social structures shape MR, which in turn shape discourse; and discourses sustain or change MR, which in turn sustain or change structures. That is a two-way relationship. It is very clear that both social effects and social determinants of discourse undergo three levels of social organisation: the societal, the institutional, and the situational level.

Fairclough (2001, p.138) also proposes three inquiries, each with certain key indicators, for eliciting an explanation for a specific topic. CDA analysts should evaluate whether power relations at the situational, institutional, and societal levels assist create discourses to identify social determinants. It is claimed that in order to reveal hidden ideologies in texts, researchers investigate parts of MR that have an ideological nature. Finally, for comprehending the effects of those determinants in discourse, CDA analysts should consider how the discourse is positioned in relation to struggles at the situational, institutional, and societal levels, and whether these struggles are explicit or implicit in the normative discourse, sustaining or transforming existing power relations. One of the aims of discourse is to demonstrate how language works and in what context it is being used. That is the reason why Fairclough (1992, p.28) states that "discourse is more than just language use: it is language use seen as a type of social practice".

Figure 2: Explanation
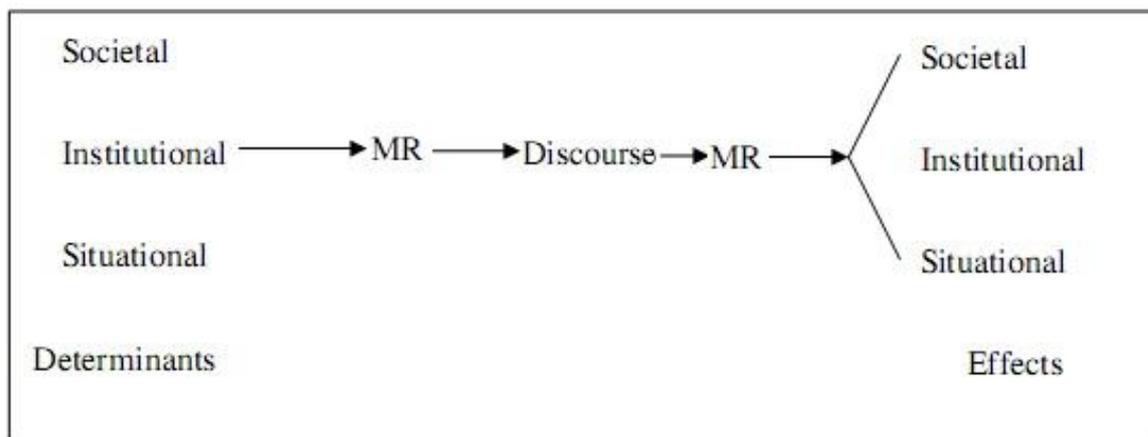
Source: Fairclough, 2001, p.136.

3. Findings and discussion

The following is an example of the application of Fairclough's theoretical CDA model in analysing the press remarks of U.S Vice President Kalama Harris on her official visit to Vietnam in 2021. Due to length limitations, the article only focuses on some salient features of her remarks on lexical elements, metaphors, pronouns, and modality, thereby giving a comment on her ideology in this speech.

3.1. Vocabulary

According to Fairclough (2001, p.96), *"overwording shows preoccupation with some aspect of reality - which may indicate that it is a focus of ideological struggle"*. Thus, as a rhetorical device, overwording or the repetition of vocabulary refers to the use of a word, a phrase or a full sentence repeated to emphasise its significance in the entire text. The repetition of vocabulary that Vice President Harris used in her remarks is expressed as follows:

Table 1: Repetition of Vocabulary in U.S Vice President Kalama Harris' Press Remarks during in Official Visit to Vietnam in 2021

Aspects	Repetition of vocabulary	Occurences
1. The relationship between Vietnam and the United States	*Vietnam*	28
	The United States	14
	Partnership	11
	Relationship	11
	Leaders	08
	Strengthen	07
2. Concerns of the United States	*Region*	10
	Crisis	08
	Security	07
	Covid-19	06
	Climate	06
	South China Sea (i.e East Sea)	04
	China	04
3. Fields of developing bilateral relationship	*Vaccines*	04
	Mekong	03

Source: Author.

In the speech, Vice President Harris utilises repetition of vocabulary in order to not only convey, enhance, and emphasise but also to strengthen her ideology which represents the ideology of President Joe Biden's administration. Remarkably, there are some notable themes mentioned in her speech: The relationship between Vietnam and the United States, concerns of the United States, and fields of developing the bilateral relationship.

Firstly, the relationship between Vietnam and the United States is the key point of Vice President Harris. Her official visit to Vietnam was the first official visit of a vice president of the U.S to Hanoi. That's why Vice President Harris utilised amount of her specious time mentioning the relationship between the United States and Vietnam by repeating some referred words such as "*relationship*", "*partnership*" (11 occurrences each), "*leaders*" which refers to urge both the United States and Vietnam administration to endure and foster the bilateral relationship (eight occurrences), and "*strengthen*" (seven occurrences). As a result of the utilisation of the repetition of vocabulary, Vice President Harris was successful in attracting the audience's attention to her idea of stressing the sustainable relationship between the United States and Vietnam established in 1995.

Secondly, the ideology of Vice President Harris was presented by emphasising issues of concern to the United States such as "*region*" (10 times) when implying Indo-Pacific and Southeast Asia, "*COVID-19*" (six times) mentioned as "*the number-one issue*", "*crisis*" (eight times), and "*climate*" (six times), as well as the "*security*" (seven times) of the "*South China Sea*" (four times) or the Indo-Pacific region, which would be under threat by the rise of "*China*" (four times).

Lastly, Vice President Harris delivered the strong desire of strengthening the relationship with Vietnam by expanding and enduring commitment to many fields of cooperation such as "*vaccines*" (four times) support in order to cope with COVID-19 and sustain initiatives of the "*Mekong*" region (three times).

3.2. Metaphors

In order to achieve her goal of convincing people of her ideology, Vice President Harris made a good impression by using specific metaphorical expressions. First, the "*next chapter*" metaphor is exploited in Vice President Harris' remarks. The choice of the metaphorical expression "*next chapter*" conveys an expectation of foreseeable and potential contents of developing the bilateral relationship to the audience, such as: "*we were able to sign a lease for 99 years to establish the United States Embassy here in Hanoi*", "*...launched initiatives that will help Vietnam transition to a more digital economy*", "*...reaffirmed the commitment that the United States has to our common vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific*", "*...high-level security cooperation*", "*...strengthen this relationship strategically*", "*We're going to speak up when there are actions that Beijing takes that threaten the rules-based international order - again, such as activity in the South China Sea*".

By using these metaphorical expressions, Vice President Harris efficiently expressed her ideas in calling a collective action and effort of both countries, encouraging the bilateral

relationship to face, adapt, persist, and contribute to the prosperity of the two countries' people as well as the stability and security in the region including the Indo-Pacific, Southeast Asia, and the East Sea (i.e. South China Sea).

3.3. Pronouns

Fairclough (2001, p.104) asserted that pronouns such as *"we"* and *"you"* are important elements indicating the relational values of grammar and helping speakers convey their power and ideology through language. In Vice President Harris' remarks, the pronouns *"we", "you",* and *"I"* are exploited with the highest times of occurrences.

Table 2: Use of Pronouns in U.S Vice President Kalama Harris' Press Remarks during Official Visit to Vietnam in 2021

Pronouns	Occurrences
We	39
Our	19
I	35
You	17

Source: Author.

It is clear that the pronoun *"we"* is used the most in Vice President Harris' speech (39 times, plus 19 times of its possessive form "our"). Her use of "we" and "our" intends to create a feeling that Joe Biden's administration is pursuing the same direction of ideology as the audience or as Vietnam's administration. They share the same commitment of building a strong, grateful, and sustainable bilateral relationship between Vietnam and the U.S, as emphasised by "our cooperation", "our relationship", "our partnership", "our economic ties", "our initiative", "our common vision", "our high-level security cooperation", "our interests", and "our desire". In addition, Vice President Harris' remarks represent not only her own ideology but also Joe Biden's administration's ideology. Thus, it is understandable that Vice President Harris has to put more effort into bettering relations with the audience to gain public support for the future plans of improving the bilateral relationship and Joe Biden's administration's commitment to the relationship between the U.S and Vietnam. Her feelings and belief of the prospects of a strong and sustainable relationship between the U.S and Vietnam are clearly expressed through the utilisation of the pronoun "I" with 35 occurrences. The mentioning of "you" is also utilised by Vice President Harris with 17 occurrences in her

remarks. With the repetition of the pronoun "you", Vice President Harris mainly stresses the important role of Vietnam as well as the relation between the U.S and Vietnam in order to contribute to the global community.

3.4. Modality

There are different ways of expressing modalities such as by modal auxiliary verbs, adverbs, and tense. In this article, the authors will only focus on the frequency of used modal auxiliary verbs in Vice President Kalama Harris' remarks. The auxiliary verb *"will"* (24 occurences) was a preferable choice of the speaker with the same number of times of occurrences in Harris' remarks. "*Will*" was mainly employed to express the possibility of the development of the bilateral relationship of the U.S and Vietnam. Her use of "*will*" in the remarks not only expresses her vision for Joe Biden's administration's interests and foreign policy but also the commitment to pushing back any threats to the security of the Indo-Pacific and Southeast Asia, especially the South China Sea. She strongly believes that *"Together we will take on the traditional issues and challenges, and we will take on those of the future", "we will be with you as you battle this surge"* (COVID-19 surge), *"the United States will continue our high-level security cooperation", "we will continue to work with Vietnam to push back against threats to freedom of navigation and the rule-based international order".*

Moreover, the second top choice of modal auxiliary used in Vice President Harris' remarks is "*can*" (15 times). Nevertheless, there is no utilisation of its negative form "*cannot*" in the remarks. "*Can*" was mainly used to show ability, capacity or inability, and incapacity of what Joe Biden's government would implement, as mentioned in the remarks such as by *"in the years ahead... with the spirit of understanding.... there is much that we can do together", "the issue of COVID… what we can do together to join forces to not only deal with the current moment...", "can have a global impact on economies but also the workforce", "can do together that's both about an investment in innovation and technology", "can grow our economies", "we can make sure that we stay committed to our partners and our allies on these important kinds of issues".* The modal verb "*can*" helps to express the power and support of the U.S, encouraging the belief and confidence of the U.S's allies when dealing with *"actions that Beijing takes that threaten the rules-based international order - activity in the South China Sea"* as well as other regional issues.

3.5. Realisation of Vice President Harris' ideology

The aim of the official visit to Vietnam was to build relations and upgrade their bilateral relationship to a strategic partnership. Harris' visit was historic – the first time a US vice president has visited Vietnam since the end of the war. Harris referenced the progress by telling Vietnam's government, that *"this trip signals the beginning of the next chapter in*

the relationship between the United States and Vietnam". As a result of many commitments delivered in Vice President Harris' remarks, Joe Biden's administration is clearly looking to quash concerns that the U.S does not take the region seriously enough, or sufficiently engage. Moreover, the remarks also expressed the ideology of the Biden administration which has shown its determination to enhance economic and security relationships with partners in Asia-Pacific. While Harris has emphasised that her visit to Southeast Asia, including Vietnam, is intended to foster a positive relationship with countries in the region and expand U.S cooperation and involvement, she also spent the visit ramping up the Biden administration's rhetoric towards China, issuing repeated warnings to the country to end its aggression in the disputed South China Sea, as mentioned by the *"threats to freedom of navigation and the rule-based international order".* In addition, Joe Biden's administration cannot achieve its goal of maintaining a favourable balance of power in the Indo-Pacific region without engaging more deeply all across Southeast Asia, not just with a few U.S-friendly capitals. Southeast Asia's size and strategic geography, especially Vietnam - as well as the fluidity of countries' alignment decisions - make it the region where U.S - Chinese competition for influence is most intense. Nevertheless, the official visit to Vietnam by Vice President Harris was still overshadowed by conflicts between the necessity for U.S policy to reflect the needs and perspectives of potential partners like Vietnam and the fundamental goal of engagement: countering China's growing influence.

4. Conclusion

The results of the study of Vice President Harris' speech to the press during her official visit to Vietnam in 2021 show that her ideology has been effectively expressed through the use of repetition, vocabulary, (lexical) metaphor, pronouns, and modality (grammar) strategies to serve the purpose of gaining the support of the Vietnamese people as well as the consensus of Vietnam's government for the foreign policy plans of the Joe Biden's administration. In addition, Vice President Harris also expressed her personal thought in improving the bilateral relationship between the United States and Vietnam, cooperating to deal with crises such as climate change and the Covid-19 pandemic, and committed to securing a stable and peaceful Indo-Pacific and Southeast Asia region.

Note: Translator: Phạm Hiển. Language editor: Etienne Mahler.

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