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Ideological Inferences of Deictic Expressions in Mahamudu Bawumia's 2024 Concession Speech

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ABSTRACT

In Ghana's evolving democratic landscape, concession speeches play a vital role in stabilising political emotions, legitimising electoral outcomes, and maintaining national unity. However, such speeches remain underexplored, particularly with regard to how deixis functions as an ideological and cognitive resource. This study, therefore, examines the types of deictic expressions and the ideological inferences embedded in Mahamudu Bawumia's 2024 concession speech, focusing on how linguistic choices shape political meaning during electoral transitions. Adopting a qualitative, text-based approach, the study applies Critical Discourse Analysis by integrating van Dijk's (1998) socio-cognitive model with Levinson's (1983) deixis typology. The findings reveal that personal, social, temporal, and discourse deixis are strategically deployed to assert political maturity, reinforce democratic norms, construct group identity, and manage the relationship between the speaker and the audience. The analysis further demonstrates how deixis shapes public perception by framing the election outcome as legitimate and facilitating emotional transition from contestation to acceptance. The study advances scholarship on

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political discourse by demonstrating that deixis functions as an ideological resource in concession speeches, while also offering practical insights into how political communication can be used to manage legitimacy and emotional transition during periods of democratic change.

Keywords: *Critical Discourse Analysis, Deixis, Concession speech, Ideology, Political discourse*

INTRODUCTION

Political communication is a specialised domain of discourse in which language is used to construct power, negotiate identities, and mobilise public sentiment. As Paltridge (2012) argues, political speeches require attention to social, cultural, and historical contexts. Wilson (2015), by contrast, emphasises the structural features of political language that achieve persuasion, legitimation, and ideological framing. In this sense, language does not merely reflect politics; it performs it. Wodak (2011) maintains that the relationship between language and power is central to political life, as linguistic choices often reinforce dominance, establish authority, and shape social realities. Beard (2000) and Asare et al. (2025) further argue that political speeches succeed not only through factual accuracy but also through their persuasive, emotive, and linguistic features.

Within this broader context of political discourse, deictic expressions represent a subtle yet powerful linguistic resource through which political actors situate themselves, their audiences, and political events. Deixis provides spatial, temporal, personal, social, and discursive anchoring for political messages, allowing speakers to project authority, construct collective identities, and frame political transitions through context-dependent meaning-making (Levinson, 1983; Chilton, 2004). This makes deixis salient in concession speeches—emotionally charged moments where politicians must acknowledge defeat while preserving legitimacy, unity, and future political relevance.

In Ghana's Fourth Republic, concession speeches have played a pivotal role in consolidating democratic stability. Ayeomoni and Akinkuolere (2012) explain that

electoral defeat is often emotionally and politically fraught; however, concession rhetoric can facilitate peace by affirming democratic values and redirecting public sentiment. Ademilokun (2016) similarly argues that concession speeches serve as sites of ideological work, where politicians manage their image, reaffirm institutional trust, and negotiate their place in the political landscape. Despite their importance, concession speeches within the Ghanaian political landscape have received limited scholarly attention, specifically with respect to how politicians employ deixis to construct ideological meaning while delivering such speeches.

Thus, this study addresses how deictic expressions function as ideological tools in Ghanaian concession speeches, especially in the contemporary Ghanaian political landscape. Although previous studies in Ghana (e.g., Asare et al., 2025; Djabetey, 2013; Mwinwelle et al., 2019) have examined pronouns in political discourse, they have not provided a comprehensive five-category deictic analysis within a socio-cognitive framework. Deictic expressions are identified using Levinson's categorisation of deixis, while van Dijk's socio-cognitive framework is employed to interpret the ideological meanings associated with these deictic choices.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), drawing on van Dijk's (1998, 2001, 2006) socio-cognitive model and Levinson's (1983) typology of deixis. CDA conceptualises language as a social practice. It views language as both reflecting and shaping power relations and ideological processes (Fairclough, 2001; Wodak, 2007).

Levinson's typology provides a systematic descriptive framework for identifying person, temporal, spatial, and social deixis. When integrated with van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach, these linguistic categories are reinterpreted as

ideological cues. They activate shared mental models, group schemas, and evaluative frames (van Dijk, 1998, 2006).

Through this integration, the analysis moves beyond linguistic classification. It shifts toward explanatory interpretation by showing how deictic choices guide audience understanding. These choices regulate processes of inclusion and exclusion. They also legitimise particular representations of political reality (Chilton, 2004; van Dijk, 2001). By embedding pragmatic categorisation within a socio-cognitive account of ideological processing, the study highlights the dual function of deictic expressions. They operate as structural features of text. At the same time, they serve as mechanisms through which political meanings are cognitively organised and socially shared in high-stakes communicative contexts (Fairclough, 2010; van Dijk, 2006).

Underpinning the Frameworks: Van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Model and Levinson's Typology of Deixis

van Dijk's socio-cognitive theory conceptualises ideology as a system of socially shared mental representations. These representations mediate between discourse structures and social practices (van Dijk, 1995, 2006). Rather than treating ideology as merely reflected in language, the model explains how linguistic choices shape potential audience interpretation. It shows how discourse activates shared knowledge, group schemas, and evaluative frames. In this view, discourse functions as a cognitive interface through which political actors attempt to guide how events, actors, and outcomes are understood as legitimate, acceptable, or inevitable.

Within this framework, deictic expressions are analysed as more than contextual pointers. They function as cognitive anchors that position speakers, audiences, and events within shared mental spaces. Person, temporal, spatial, and social deixis operate as discourse cues. These cues regulate proximity and distance, construct in-group and out-group relations, and stabilise collective interpretations of political outcomes (van Dijk, 2006; Chilton, 2004).

However, in the absence of audience reception data, this study does not claim to empirically verify how audiences actually interpreted or emotionally responded to these deictic cues. Its claims are therefore limited to discursive affordance. This refers to how deictic choices make particular readings of legitimacy, emotional transition, and democratic closure cognitively available and socially plausible within a shared ideological environment. In concession speeches, such cues function as anticipatory framing devices. They invite audiences to construe electoral defeat as democratic, orderly, and socially meaningful. Whether these invitations are accepted or resisted lies beyond the analytical scope of this text-based study.

Levinson's (1983) categorisation of deixis (personal, temporal, spatial, discourse, and social) provides the linguistic architecture for identifying these cues. While Levinson's framework is primarily descriptive, its integration with van Dijk's socio-cognitive model enables the analysis to move beyond classification. Levinson's categories allow for precise identification of deictic forms. Van Dijk's framework explains how these forms activate shared cognitive models and generate ideological effects.

The integration of the two frameworks ensures that ideological interpretation remains grounded in observable linguistic patterns. At the same time, it accounts for their cognitive and social consequences. Deictic expressions are therefore analysed not only in terms of grammatical function. They are examined in terms of how they structure audience understanding, emotional alignment, and acceptance of the electoral outcome.

RESEARCH METHODS

The analysis is grounded in a constructivist epistemology, which posits that meaning is socially constructed and can be best understood through interpretive engagement within discourse. Given this epistemological orientation, a qualitative

research design was adopted. Qualitative inquiry is appropriate because it enables rich and contextualised interpretations of linguistic phenomena in political discourse where meaning is layered and ideologically charged (Fairclough, 1992; Marianne & Louise, 2012). Following Kaswan and Suprijadi (2016), the study focuses on a purposefully selected text to enable an in-depth examination of the communicative strategies embedded in it.

Data Source and Sampling Procedure Method

The dataset comprises Mahamudu Bawumia's 2024 concession speech, retrieved from a publicly available online source. Although focusing on a single text limits population-level generalisability, the study adopts a socio-cognitive discourse-analytic orientation that prioritises analytical and theoretical generalisability. The analysis, therefore, aims to show how deictic patterns activate shared cognitive models and ideological functions within Ghanaian political discourse, rather than reflecting speaker-specific idiosyncrasies.

The speech was purposively selected for three main reasons. First, concession speeches constitute high-stakes political discourse. They are delivered at moments of electoral defeat and require speakers to acknowledge loss while reaffirming democratic legitimacy. In this study, references to public perception and emotional transition are treated as discursively constructed orientations. This approach shows how language use makes particular interpretations of legitimacy, acceptance, and political transition available. These references are not treated as empirical indicators of audience response. For this reason, the exclusion of audience reception data limits the analysis to discursive potential rather than social uptake.

Second, Bawumia's concession speech is significant within the context of Ghana's Fourth Republic. The scale and circumstances of his electoral defeat mark a notable moment in the country's democratic trajectory. Unlike previous electoral

losses by major candidates, the outcome of the 2024 election placed heightened discursive pressure on the losing candidate. The speaker was required to manage legitimacy, closure, and national cohesion through language use. Third, this exceptional post-defeat context provides a rich analytical site for examining how deictic expressions are mobilised. These expressions help negotiate ideological tensions between contestation and acceptance, individual loss and collective national interest, and political discontinuity and continuity (van Dijk, 1995).

The focus on a single speech is methodologically justified in qualitative discourse analysis. Such approaches prioritise analytical depth over textual volume, especially in high-stakes political contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Fairclough, 2010). The analytical adequacy of the dataset does not lie in its length. Instead, it lies in the ideological density and rhetorical significance of concession speeches. In such texts, meaning-making is compressed and strategically organised (van Dijk, 1997, 2006). The study does not aim for statistical representativeness or population-level generalisability. Its contribution lies in offering in-depth insights into how ideological meanings are constructed in concession contexts. These insights are theoretically transferable to comparable moments of democratic transition.

In this regard, the study does not claim to capture the full emotional or ideological spectrum of the electoral event. Rather, it focuses on how such meanings are linguistically embedded. It also examines how these meanings are made available for public interpretation through deictic choices. While triangulation with audience reception data could have enriched the analysis, it falls outside the scope of this study. The same applies to media framing and multimodal features such as delivery, gesture, and prosody (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; Forceville, 2020). The analysis is therefore limited to a text-based examination of how ideological meanings are encoded in language.

Analytical Frameworks

The analysis employs two complementary analytical models: Levinson's (1983) deictic typology and van Dijk's (1998) socio-cognitive model. Levinson's five-part categorization—personal, temporal, spatial, discourse, and social deixis—provides the structural foundation for identifying deictic expressions in the speech. This framework enables systematic categorization of context-dependent linguistic items. It also highlights how deixis encodes power, alignment, stance, and social relations.

To extend the analysis beyond identification, van Dijk's (1998) socio-cognitive model is applied. This framework conceptualizes discourse as a mediating link between social structures and mental representations. It therefore supports an understanding of how linguistic choices both reflect and shape ideological beliefs. As Min (1997) explains, the socio-cognitive model bridges the external expression of ideology and its internal cognitive effects on audiences.

This approach is particularly suited to the analysis of concession speeches. Such speeches are strategic attempts to influence national sentiment and political interpretation. Integrating the two frameworks provides a coherent analytical lens. Levinson's model is used to identify how deixis is linguistically deployed. Van Dijk's model explains how these linguistic patterns generate ideological meanings.

Procedure of Analysis

The analysis proceeded through several stages. First, the speech was read repeatedly to gain familiarity with its content, rhetorical structure, and communicative manner. All deictic items—personal, spatial, temporal, discourse, and social—were then identified and coded. Each sentence was assigned a numerical label (e.g., line 1, line 2, line 3) to allow for precise reference during analysis.

Using van Dijk's socio-cognitive model, the ideological implications of the identified deictic expressions were interpreted. Particular attention was paid to how these expressions construct political identity, manage relationships between the speaker and the audience, negotiate power dynamics, and frame electoral defeat. Insights from the linguistic level (deixis) and the ideological level (socio-cognitive interpretation) were then integrated. This process generated a unified account of how Bawumia's speech constructs ideological meanings through deictic strategies. Overall, this approach ensures a systematic, theoretically grounded, and contextually sensitive analysis of the ideological work performed by deictic expressions in the concession speech.

Combining van Dijk's socio-cognitive model with Levinson's deictic typology enables a multi-layered analysis. At the micro level, Levinson's framework reveals how deixis structures reference and positioning. At the macro level, van Dijk's model explains why these structures matter ideologically and how they shape audience cognition.

To address the subjectivity often associated with Critical Discourse Analysis, the study follows a staged analytical procedure. This includes the identification of deictic forms, categorization by type, interpretation within their discursive context, and explanation through socio-cognitive constructs such as mental models, group schemas, and ideological framing. Ideological inferences are therefore not treated as researcher-imposed meanings. Instead, they are analytically motivated interpretations. These interpretations are supported by recurring patterns of deictic usage and their alignment with established socio-cognitive theory.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the analysis and discussion of the ideological meanings of deictic expressions in the speech. Levinson's (1983) typology of deixis is used to identify and categories deictic expressions in the text. Van Dijk's (1998) socio-

cognitive framework then guides the interpretation of the ideological meanings associated with these categories. The analysis begins with the presentation of the frequency and percentage distribution of the deictic categories. It then examines how each category functions as an ideological resource. Specifically, the discussion shows how deixis is used to construct political identity, manage relationships between the speaker and the audience, legitimise the electoral outcome, and frame the national moment of transition. Table 1 presents the frequency and percentage distribution of the deictic categories identified in the speech. This quantitative overview provides an empirical basis for the subsequent interpretive analysis. Through this dual-level approach, ideological interpretations are anchored in identifiable linguistic features. As a result, the interpretations remain analytically grounded rather than researcher-imposed.

Table 1. Frequency of Deictic Expressions in Bawumia's 2024 Concession Speech

Types of Deixis	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Person	84	62
Temporal	4	3
Social	40	30
Discourse	7	5
Total	**135**	**100**

Types of Deictic Expressions in the Speech

This section addresses the first objective of the study: to identify the types of deictic expressions present in Bawumia's 2024 concession speech. Drawing on Levinson's (1983) classification, deixis comprises five major categories: personal, spatial, temporal, social, and discourse deixis. The analysis, however, revealed only four of these categories in the speech. These were personal, temporal, social, and discourse deixis. Spatial deixis was notably absent (see Table 1).

Personal deixis emerged as the most dominant category, accounting for 62% of all deictic forms. Pronouns such as *I*, *we*, *you*, and *our* were used to assert agency, construct collective identities, and manage relationships between the speaker and the audience. This pattern underscores the central role of relational positioning and self–other representation in concession rhetoric. At the same time, reliance on frequency patterns alone risks oversimplifying interpretations of political maturity, unity, and democratic legitimacy. High pronoun use may also reflect conventional expectations of concession speeches as a political genre. In such speeches, acknowledging responsibility, addressing the audience, and signaling unity are normative practices. To mitigate this risk, the analysis moves beyond quantitative prominence. It examines how personal and social deixis are contextually patterned across critical moments of acceptance, reconciliation, and national address. It is within these strategically situated deployments, rather than in deictic density alone, that ideological meanings of inclusivity, collective ownership, and democratic accountability are enacted. Political maturity and legitimacy are therefore not treated as automatic outcomes of pronoun frequency. Instead, they are interpreted as discursively achieved through the calibrated alignment of deictic choices with shared democratic norms and expectations surrounding political transition.

Temporal deixis accounted for 3% of the deictic tokens. It was realized through markers such as *today*, *yesterday*, and the *future*. These lexical items anchored the speech within a specific moment of political transition. They also enabled the temporal framing of past efforts, present acceptance, and future national aspirations. This category includes only lexical temporal markers, since grammatical tense alone does not constitute temporal deixis (Levinson, 1983).

The absence of explicit spatial deixis is itself analytically significant. Rather than grounding meaning in physical space—such as *here*, *there*, or *this place*—the speech foregrounded temporal sequencing and social alignment. This pattern suggests that Bawumia framed the concession as a moment of democratic

continuity rather than as a geographically situated event. Although the absence of spatial deixis may be typical of nationally broadcast political speeches, its consistent exclusion in this case is noteworthy. The preference for temporal and social reference reinforces an ideological orientation toward institutional continuity rather than situational immediacy.

Social deixis accounted for 30% of all deictic forms. It appeared in titles, honorifics, and group labels such as *His Excellency*, *First Lady*, *MPs*, *Traditional Rulers*, and *rank and file*. These expressions indexed social hierarchy, institutional authority, and group membership. They reflect how political actors use language to enact respect, solidarity, and role relations. As with other deictic categories, the analysis distinguishes between conventional politeness norms in political address and strategic deployment. While such forms are common in political discourse, their cumulative use is analytically significant. The patterned accumulation of social categories constructs an image of political maturity. It also signals respect for institutional order and adherence to democratic norms.

Discourse deixis accounted for 5% of the dataset. It included metadiscursive markers such as *let me say*, *in the interim*, and *going forward*. These expressions guided the organization of the speech. They also signaled the speaker's stance toward the emerging narrative structure. Beyond their organizational role, these markers performed important ideological functions. They framed interpretation and directed audience attention within the unfolding rhetorical moment. Rather than treating discourse deictic markers as purely structural devices, the analysis examines how they shape emotional pacing. It also shows how they legitimize the transition from electoral contestation to democratic closure.

Considered holistically, the distribution of deictic expressions shows that the speech is not merely descriptive. It is strategically structured to influence how listeners perceive the political event, the speaker's identity, and the broader national moment (Chilton, 2004; van Dijk, 1998, 2006). The dominance of personal

and social deixis points to a deliberate emphasis on relational and hierarchical positioning (Fairclough, 2003; Wodak, 2009). Temporal and discourse deixis, by contrast, provide a framework for sequencing emotions, legitimizing political transition, and constructing narrative coherence (Cap, 2013). By distinguishing between genre-expected deictic practices and context-sensitive, patterned deployments, the study avoids attributing ideological intent to deixis per se. Instead, it focuses on how conventional linguistic resources are mobilized to generate meanings associated with political maturity, legitimacy, and the reinforcement of democratic norms. This categorization lays the foundation for the subsequent ideological analysis. It also aligns with van Dijk's (1998, 2006) socio-cognitive framework, which emphasizes how linguistic choices reinforce shared mental models of democratic legitimacy, leadership identity, and collective unity.

Ideological Inferences of Personal Deixis in the Speech

Van Dijk (1998) posits that ideologies are ingrained in mental models, which influence individuals' perceptions of events and social relationships. These models are both reflected in and shaped by discourse. In particular, personal deixis, especially within political discourse, serves as a vital linguistic mechanism for conveying ideological stances and managing relationships. Bawumia's frequent use of the first-person singular pronoun *I* reveals several strategic communicative intentions, one of which is to assert personal agency and responsibility. This is illustrated in the following extract:

Extract 1

*"**I** have just called His Excellency John Dramani Mahama to congratulate him as President-elect of the Republic of Ghana," (line 5)*

In the extract, Bawumia is depicted as an active and principled contestant in the democratic process. This portrayal not only highlights his role in facilitating a peaceful transition of power but also corroborates Van Dijk's (2006) assertion that speakers employ the pronoun *I* to direct self-presentation and social roles. In this

context, the pronoun presents Bawumia as a statesman dedicated to democratic principles. This instance of *"I"* simultaneously positions him as the legitimate guarantor of democratic stability, shaping audience cognition and frames his concession as a voluntary, morally grounded act rather than a forced response. Such framing reduces ideological space for contestation and enhances his credibility as a responsible national figure.

Additionally, the pronoun *I* fulfils an emotional function, as illustrated by the following extract:

Extract 2

*"...**I** know the feeling hurts, given that this is not the result we worked for."* (line 23)

In Extract 2, Bawumia effectively engages with the emotions of his party supporters, thereby acknowledging and validating their sense of disappointment. This confirms Van Dijk's (2008) findings that emotional appeals within political discourse can enhance group solidarity. By recognising shared grievances, Bawumia fosters a sense of unity and loyalty within the party, which is particularly vital following an electoral defeat. Here, the ideological work of *I* is to humanise the speaker and recast the loss as a shared emotional experience rather than an individual failure. This strengthens the mental model of a cohesive ingroup and prevents fragmentation, a crucial strategy during political transitions.

Moreover, the employment of the pronoun *I* serves to convey intent and offer reassurance. Extract 3 exemplifies this situation:

Extract 3

*"**I** assure His Excellency John Dramani Mahama of my full support in the transition process,"* (line 17)

In Extract 3, Bawumia projects an image of cooperation and institutional maturity. Van Dijk (2006) argues that such future-oriented expressions are ideologically significant, as they shape how a speaker is perceived with respect to trustworthiness and commitment to democratic norms. Bawumia's self-representation accentuates responsibility, magnanimity, and political civility in this

context. Importantly, by linking *I* with assurances, he positions himself as a custodian of stability, thereby influencing public cognition to interpret the transition as orderly and honorable. This mitigates potential anxieties and reinforces institutional trust.

Complementing the individual agency implied by the personal deixis, *I*, Bawumia's use of the first-person plural pronoun *we* reflects both group identity and ideological positioning. At times, *we* refers specifically to his political party, as illustrated in extract 4:

Extract 4

*"Ladies and gentlemen, **we** have conceded defeat like any consummate democrat would do."* (line 20)

As seen in Extract 4, Bawumia's construction establishes a collective responsibility for the party, rooted in democratic principles. This aligns with Adetunji's (2006) assertion that pronouns such as *we* foster in-group solidarity and emphasise shared values. It assures supporters of the party's moral integrity, even in the face of defeat. The pronoun *we* here also perform ideological repair work: it reframes concession not as weakness but as a principled democratic act, thereby sustaining the group's positive self-representation within the larger political landscape. In other contexts, *we* assumes a more inclusive, national reference, as illustrated in extract 5:

Extract 5

*"Ghana is important than our individual political ambitions and **we** must always put Ghana first,"* (line 12)

In Extract 5, the speaker broadens the in-group to encompass the entire citizenry, thereby temporarily dissolving partisan boundaries. This shift in referent exemplifies what Mwinwelle et al. (2019) characterise as the strategic use of pronouns to redefine social identities and realign group affiliations. Through this inclusive language, Bawumia constructs a unified national front that transcends electoral divisions, subtly implying that the democratic process is a collective

achievement. By expanding *we* to a national scale, the speaker ideologically reframes the election as a shared civic moment rather than a partisan loss. This rhetorical shift guides public cognition toward national cohesion and strengthens the legitimacy of the electoral process.

Equally significant is Bawumia's use of the second-person deictic pronoun *you*, which directly engages various segments of his audience. The speaker utilised this deictic expression as a general call to hopefulness, as elaborated in extract 6:

Extract 6

*"...I urge **you** all to look into the future with optimism and hope"* (line 26)

In Extract 6, Bawumia employs the pronoun *you* to encourage the general public to maintain hope amid the political transition. This inclusive address fosters a shared vision oriented towards the future and positions Bawumia as a persistent voice of influence and unity. Here, *you* functions ideologically to distribute responsibility for national healing among citizens. It positions the public as active participants in shaping the nation's future, thus reinforcing a collective cognitive schema of shared destiny and democratic resilience. Furthermore, Bawumia employs *you* in a more targeted manner, as demonstrated in extract 7:

Extract 7

*"To all Ghanaians who didn't vote for me and the NPP in this particular election, I thank **you** for considering my proposal even though **you** exercised your right to choose by settling on the eventual winner."* (line 37)

In Extract 7, Bawumia demonstrates respect towards his political adversaries and reinforces democratic tolerance. According to Kuo (2002), employing second-person references facilitates direct engagement, enabling the speaker to bridge partisan divides. By expressing gratitude to those who opposed or refused to vote for him, the speaker demonstrates ideological maturity and a reconciliatory approach. This positions the speaker as a unifier within a politically polarised environment. This strategic use of *you* ideologically disarms oppositional tensions and recasts political differences as legitimate participation in democratic

choice. By acknowledging his opponents with respect, Bawumia constructs an ideological model of inclusive democracy, thereby strengthening his ethos as a nationally oriented leader.

Ideological Inferences of Temporal Deixis in the Speech

Temporal deixis in Bawumia's concession speech is instrumental in narrating political events, influencing audience perceptions of time, and projecting ideological intentions. Temporal deictic expressions, such as *today*, past tense, and future-oriented references, are strategically employed to legitimise election outcomes, promote unity, and shape national consciousness. A prominent temporal deictic expression in Bawumia's speech is the use of *today,* which situates the speech within the immediate context of the election outcome. This is illustrated in extract 8:

Extract 8

*"**Today**, the people of Ghana have spoken"* (line 7).

In extract 8, *today* functions as a temporal marker and as a rhetorical device to present the election outcome as an indisputable and definitive fact. According to Levinson (1983), deictic terms such as *today* anchor discourse within a shared temporal context. This enhances the immediacy and perceived veracity of the speaker's message. This, ideologically, imparts an aura of legitimacy to the election results, presenting them as current, tangible, and widely accepted. Furthermore, the use of *today* emphasises a strategic focus on the present. This encourages the audience to concentrate on the current situation rather than dwell on the past or speculate about the future. This finding supports Chilton's (2004) assertion that temporal framing in political discourse often aims to influence audience emotions and direct public awareness toward particular ideological objectives, such as acceptance and transition. Framing the event in the present, Bawumia creates a shared temporal reality that promotes national unity and avoids disputes. Ideologically, this "present-anchoring" technique narrows alternative

interpretations of the election outcome by positioning the results as a collective temporal truth. By claiming the present moment as authoritative, the speaker controls the temporal frame through which citizens must evaluate political legitimacy.

In contrast, Bawumia employs past tense constructions when referring to the election campaign and party efforts, as illustrated in extract 9:

Extract 9

"...I know the feeling hurts given that this is not the results we worked for" (line 23).

Extract 9 acknowledges and validates the efforts of Bawumia's party and supporters through temporal framing, not lexical temporal deixis. It offers them symbolic recognition and closure. As Van Dijk (2006) notes, recounting past events in political discourse enables leaders to affirm a shared struggle and reinforce in-group solidarity. Furthermore, the use of the past tense serves to distance the speaker and, by extension, the audience from the emotional burden of defeat. By framing the campaign as a completed process, Bawumia creates narrative closure. He facilitates an emotional transition for his followers from loss to acceptance. This supports the discourse strategy of transitioning from conflict to resolution, a technique employed in political transitions to stabilise the post-election atmosphere (Chilton, 2004). Positioning the campaign and its associated disappointment firmly in the past also serves as an ideological means of managing emotions. It instructs supporters, at a cognitive level, to detach from the grief of losing and instead adopt the speaker's framing of the present as a moment for constructive acceptance. In this way, temporal narrative structuring sequences past struggle, present acceptance, and future hope so that the audience interprets the political moment as a natural democratic progression.

Finally, the speaker employs future-oriented expressions to signify a deliberate ideological shift from present disappointment to future possibilities.

Extract 10 further illustrates the use of future-oriented expressions in the discourse:

Extract 10

"I urge you all to look into the future with optimism and hope" (line 26).

In Extract 10, Bawumia transitions from expressing current dissatisfaction with the election outcomes to envisioning future possibilities. He expresses a forward-looking national vision aimed at uniting Ghanaians beyond partisan divisions. Van Dijk (1998) posits that ideological discourse frequently incorporates predictive elements that support positive values such as hope, peace, and progress. Bawumia's invocation of optimism constructs a prospective future where unity is attainable, even in the context of electoral defeat. Here, future deixis operates as an ideological instrument that redirects attention away from the emotional charge of the election results and toward a cognitively constructed horizon of renewal. This shift repositions the narrative from loss to potential, enabling the audience to transition psychologically to a forward-looking democratic mindset. Through future-oriented framing, the speaker shapes the collective imagination of what Ghana can become, thereby constructing ideological continuity despite political change.

Ideological Inferences of Social Deixis in the Speech

Social deixis in Bawumia's concession speech functions as a strategic linguistic resource to perform respect and reinforce ideological values such as hierarchy, solidarity, and national unity. Through titles, kinship references, and group-specific address terms, Bawumia constructs a discourse that elevates key figures, personalises the political experience, and stratifies his audience to advance various ideological aims.

A prominent feature of social deixis in the speech is the frequent use of honorifics and formal titles when referring to political figures, as illustrated in extract 11:

Extract 11

*"I have just called **His Excellency** John Dramani Mahama to congratulate him as **President-elect** of the Republic of Ghana."* (line 5)

In Extract 11, the formal title *His Excellency* and the role-defining phrase *President-elect of the Republic of Ghana* are used to mark social distance and institutional authority. Levinson (1983) suggests that such forms of social deixis show relative social status and role relations between interlocutors. Bawumia's use of these forms signifies his acceptance of political hierarchy and reinforces the legitimacy of democratic outcomes. This deferential stance also projects political maturity, lending credibility to the speaker's role as a responsible statesman in a delicate post-election moment. At an ideological level, this recognition of hierarchy serves to legitimise the opponent's authority while simultaneously constructing the speaker as a defender of democratic norms. According to van Dijk's (1998) ideological square, this positive representation of the political "other" indirectly strengthens Bawumia's own moral self-presentation, signalling a principled commitment to democratic continuity.

Social deixis also emerges in the expression of familial bonds, particularly through kinship references, as illustrated in extract 12:

Extract 12

*"My thanks also go to **my children, my brothers and sisters** and the entire Bawumia family for their support."* (line 32)

In Extract 12, Bawumia's reference to *my children*, *my brothers and sisters*, and *the entire Bawumia family* focuses on his intimate circle. Though these terms are literal, they also perform symbolic work by invoking values such as loyalty, care, and collective strength. In Ghanaian political rhetoric, such kinship references often function to humanise the politician and evoke cultural ideals of communalism (Yankah, 1995). Here, Bawumia draws on the family to present himself as a grounded, responsible, and emotional leader. He contrasts the formality of political competition with the warmth of personal affiliation. Ideologically, these kinship

references bridge the private and public spheres, allowing the audience to perceive the speaker as both authoritative and relatable. This reinforces cultural models of leadership rooted in familial responsibility, thereby strengthening his position within Ghana's socio-cultural expectations of political morality.

Social deixis is also apparent in the speaker's use of collective address forms, which categorise the audience by their roles or affiliations. Consider extract 13:

Extract 13

*"To the **rank and file** of the New Patriotic Party, I know the feeling hurts given that this is not the results we worked for."* (line 23)

In Extract 13, *rank and file* signals group membership and internal party hierarchy. It appeals to the grassroots level of the party structure, contrasting it implicitly with leadership or elites. This agrees with Chilton (2004), who observes that political language often uses metaphor and deixis to categorise audiences in ways that reinforce authority and maintain ideological unity. In line with Chilton's finding, Bawumia's use of *the rank-and-file metaphor invokes discipline and loyalty and constructs his party as an organised,* mission-driven institution. In a moment of disappointment, Bawumia also demonstrates empathy and solidarity, thereby maintaining peace and unity within the party. This stratified address is ideologically significant because it reassures the lower-ranking party supporters that their contributions are recognised, preventing fractures within the political group. It reinforces a cognitive hierarchy in which loyalty and unity are paramount, helping stabilise internal cohesion during a vulnerable transition.

Similarly, the form of address used at the beginning and middle of the speech, *Ladies and Gentlemen of the Media*, reinforces a formalised institutional communicative setting. This expression, as shown in extract 14, indicates a public ceremonial frame.

Extract 14

*"**Ladies and Gentlemen of the Media**, following yesterday's Presidential and Parliamentary elections, Ghanaians at home and abroad have been sitting on tenterhooks awaiting the outcome of the election."* (line 1)

The use of *"Ladies and Gentlemen" in Extract 14* is a formal vocative that elevates the tone of address in the public sphere, where rational-critical debate and democratic exchange occur. Addressing the media in such ceremonious terms, Bawumia emphasises the media's importance as conveyors of truth and stability during national transitions. He also reinforces the legitimacy of his message in the public eye. Ideologically, this address constructs the media as a trusted democratic intermediary and frames the concession speech itself as part of a transparent political process. This enhances institutional trust and signals that the transition unfolding is not only peaceful but accountable within the structures of democratic communication.

Ideological Inferences of Discourse Deixis in the Speech

Discourse deixis refers to expressions that indicate or refer to parts of the discourse itself, including the organisation of ideas, the speaker's stance, and textual transitions (Levinson, 1983; Hyland, 2005). In political communication, discourse deixis functions to manage coherence and cohesion, frame ideologies, assert authority, and structure discourse in ways that reflect the speaker's political stance and strategic intentions (Chilton, 2004). In Bawumia's concession speech, discourse deictic markers such as *Let me say*, *In the interim*, and *Going forward* serve significant ideological purposes.

Extract 15

*"**Let me say**, the data from our own internal coalition of the election results indicates that Former President, His Excellency John Dramani Mahama has won the Presidential election decisively." (line 2)*

In Extract 15, let me say functions as a metadiscursive device through which the speaker foregrounds his authority and control over the discourse. According to Hyland (2005), such expressions signal "writer visibility" and project authorial voice. Here, Bawumia employs a discourse deictic expression to frame the interpretation of electoral data and to claim a legitimate stance within the discourse. Ideologically, this functions to establish credibility and transparency and

affirm his democratic ethos. By pre-empting the official announcement of the results, Bawumia positions himself as proactive and sincere, thereby projecting an image of moral and political responsibility. This finding supports Van Dijk's (1998) position that discourse deixis can reflect internalised ideological models, particularly those concerning leadership, trust, and institutional respect. Moreover, this phrase pulls the audience into the speaker's interpretive frame, guiding them toward a preferred understanding of the results. It functions as a cognitive gatekeeping mechanism: by asserting let me say, the speaker directs the audience's attention to what he deems salient, thereby exercising ideological control over the flow and prioritisation of information.

Extract 16

*"**In the interim**, I urge you all to look into the future with optimism and hope." (line 26)*

In Extract 16, *the interim* marks a temporal transition and serves a discourse-organising function. As a deictic expression, it frames the current political state as temporary and anticipatory rather than final. According to Hanks (2005), such deixis contributes to the construction of shared situational understanding. Bawumia minimises the permanence of defeat and repositions the audience's attention towards renewal and future possibility. It creates a rhetorical buffer between loss and potential, stabilising party morale and affirming political continuity. Again, the use of the term *in the interim* softens the shock of electoral defeat and sustains the ideological commitment to national progress and democratic resilience. Ideologically, this expression reframes the aftermath of defeat as a transitional space rather than a terminal point. It creates cognitive breathing room for the audience by characterising the present moment as an interim phase preceding collective progress. This move prevents emotional stagnation and repositions the audience within a narrative of eventual forward movement.

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Extract 17

*"We will take stock of events and pick lessons to guide us **going forward**"* (line 25)

In Extract 17, the discourse strategy *going forward* directs attention to future political activity. It is "political futurity," in which political actors construct a sense of continuity despite setbacks. This expression reasserts agency, determination, and relevance. Bawumia reframes the post-election period as an opportunity for reflection and regrouping rather than a defeat. This kind of forward-looking deixis is commonly employed in concession speeches to perform the democratic value of perseverance and reinforce institutional legitimacy (Alexander, 2004). Through this deictic expression, Bawumia seeks to re-mobilise supporters, signal the party's resilience, and affirm its ongoing commitment to governance and reform. This marker also performs ideological work by shifting the mental frame from judging the past to constructing the future. It signals that the political narrative does not end with loss; rather, it evolves. In this way, *going forward* reinforces a cognitive schema of resilience and positions the speaker and his party as active contributors to Ghana's democratic trajectory, even in the absence of electoral victory.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the ideological meanings embedded in deictic expressions in Mahamudu Bawumia's 2024 concession speech. The analysis drew on Levinson's (1983) deictic typology and van Dijk's (1998) socio-cognitive model. Contrary to the full five-part typology, four categories of deixis were identified: personal, temporal, social, and discourse deixis. No clear instances of spatial deixis were found. This absence is analytically significant. It suggests that the speaker prioritised temporal framing and relational positioning over geographical anchoring, reflecting the rhetorical demands of a concession context.

Personal deixis emerged as the most dominant category. The strategic use of *I* and the inclusive *we* enabled Bawumia to assert personal agency, acknowledge

collective effort, and reinforce democratic accountability and national cohesion. Temporal deixis, realised through markers such as *today* and references to past and future moments, anchored the speech in a shared political timeframe. It supported a narrative movement from past effort to present acceptance and future-oriented optimism. Social deixis, expressed through honorifics, kinship references, and institutional identifiers, reinforced hierarchical relations while also humanising the speaker. These forms stratified the audience in ways that supported ideological alignment and social cohesion. Discourse deixis, realised through expressions such as *let me say*, *in the interim*, and *going forward*, enhanced textual coherence and guided audience interpretation. It also asserted discursive authority during a moment of political transition.

The findings again indicate that Bawumia's deployment of deixis was not merely referential. Rather, it functioned as a deliberate rhetorical strategy for shaping ideological perceptions during a sensitive democratic transition. Deictic expressions were used to construct political identity, legitimise the electoral outcome, and orient the audience's emotional and cognitive responses. The integration of Levinson's deictic framework with van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach demonstrates the value of linking micro-linguistic features to broader ideological and cognitive structures in political discourse analysis.

Although alternative frameworks—such as appraisal theory, positioning theory, the Discourse-Historical Approach, or multimodal discourse analysis—could offer complementary insights into evaluative stance, interactional positioning, historical interdiscursivity, or embodied meaning-making, the framework adopted here enables a systematic and text-based interpretation of ideological work in concession contexts. For example, a discourse-historical approach could situate the speech within longer trajectories of democratic transition, while a multimodal perspective might illuminate how gesture or prosody reinforces performances of restraint and statesmanship. These

perspectives may refine or extend the analysis. However, they do not undermine the study's central conclusions.

By foregrounding deixis and socio-cognitive processes, this study shows how ideological meanings are linguistically constructed and cognitively negotiated at the moment of concession. It underscores the relevance of socio-cognitive perspectives in political discourse analysis, particularly in transitional genres such as concession speeches. In such contexts, language plays a crucial role in managing uncertainty, restoring symbolic stability, and reaffirming democratic norms. The study therefore contributes to scholarship on political discourse and offers practical insight into how political communication sustains legitimacy, collective emotion, and democratic continuity during periods of electoral transition.

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