



## Language Use as a Means to Construct Realities: Theme Patterns in Joe Biden’s Speech on the Anniversary of the Capitol Attack

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### Abstract

This research work aims at analyzing Joe Biden’s speech on the Capitol attack anniversary from a systemic functional perspective (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004) so as to decode the thematic choices made by the President to construct some realities through language use as a message. Actually, the article particularly focuses on the textual metafunction to highlight which meaning is prioritized and why. The quantitative and qualitative analyses of Theme patterns have revealed that topical Themes are dominant, followed by textual and interpersonal ones. The thematization of rioters and mob is aimed at emphasizing the actions, feelings and attitudes that have led to the attack and therefore menaced the American democratic system; whereas the use of Donald Trump, he, the former President in topical position has enabled the author of the speech to clarify the former President’s role or responsibility in this attack. As for Joe Biden, the American people and we, they are at the center of a message that restores democratic values. The speech also has an attitudinal connotation expressed through interpersonal Themes, which take the form of warnings against undemocratic practices and behaviors while marked Themes have underlined the gravity of the attack as regards the place and the time at which it took place. The realization of these meanings is achieved through a coherent arrangement of the message in terms of extension and enhancement. Thus, language use can construct any reality.

**Keywords:** Systemic functional perspective, textual metafunction, thematic Choices, American democracy, topical Themes

## Introduction

American democracy is rightly or wrongly considered as the best one and that is why it has often been exported or copied. This can be explained by the fact that it is the longest-lived constitutional democracy in the world (Fabbrini, 1999); thus, a lot of experiences in terms of democratic practices have been drawn from this longevity. Consequently, many peoples and Americans themselves take the American democratic system for granted. However, the system seems to suffer from incoherences. It threatens to go off the rails owing to costly government shutdowns, stolen Supreme Court seats, impeachments, mounting concerns about the fairness of elections, and of course a president who did not want to leave the Oval Office though he had been legally defeated at the polls in 2020 (American Educator, 2020).

On the anniversary (January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2022) of the Capitol attack, Joe Biden made a speech that basically emphasizes president Trump and his followers' responsibility in the violation of this symbol of the American democracy. This research work uses Systemic Functional Linguistics theory (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004) to analyze the discourse. The paper actually focuses on the textual meaning which is one of the functions of language as defined by Koussouhong & Dossoumou (2015: 24): "language is viewed as a network of systems or interrelated sets of options for making meanings". This approach fundamentally takes language as a means to construct social, political and economic realities through the use of specific linguistic tools.

The validity of such an approach has been demonstrated by many researchers through the analyses of profoundly written literary works and lyrics; for example, Koussouhon & Dadjjo (2015) thoroughly described textual elements in Flora Nwapa's *Never Again* and found out that the novel concentrates on the Nigerian civil war, the prevailing collective interest (fatherland), the limited power of women and the roles of women and children in our societies especially during wartime. Similarly, Firdaus (2013) concentrates his analysis on the textual metafunction to determine the occurrences of topical, textual and interpersonal themes. He concludes that the messages in the lyrics are basically about love which is divided into three aspects which are the question of love to an opposite sex, to a son, and to life.

More and more researchers contend that Systemic Functional Grammar can also be applied to real-life discourse, for instance newspapers, magazines articles, court verdicts, and presidential and/or political speeches. This article uses the above approach to analyze President Joe Biden's speech on the anniversary of the Capitol attack, focusing on theme patterns in the speech to understand the deep meanings of the message.

## **1. Theoretical Framework**

### **1.1. Systemic Functional Linguistics**

Systemic Functional Linguistics is a linguistic theory which adopts the structuralist approach coined by Ferdinand de Saussure (Schmid, 2012) to understand language. Indeed, it contends that language is a complex semiotic system structured to convey three distinct and complementary types of meanings: textual, interpersonal and experiential. While the interpersonal and experiential functions of language deal respectively with how culture influences language use and the different aspects of human experiences, the textual function of language is about the organization of these into message. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), the text or clause, in all languages, has some form of internal organization whereby it fits in with, and contributes to, the flow of discourse. This is realized through the thematic structure. The clause has two parts: Theme and Rheme. In English the Theme or the element which serves as the point of departure of the message is put first whereas the Rheme, which is the part in which the Theme is developed, comes after.

There are three types of themes: topical, interpersonal and textual:

- A Topical Theme is the constituent of the clause which has a Transitivity function such as actor, behavior, senser, carrier, circumstantial elements (place, time, etc.);
- An Interpersonal Theme is the element of the message to which a Mood function can be assigned: finite (in interrogative mood) and adjuncts (vocative, mood, comment, polarity);
- A Textual Theme is a component of the clause which has a cohesive function such as Continuity Adjuncts and Conjunctive Adjuncts.

In addition to this categorization, there is another level of the thematic structure referred to as markedness and unmarkedness. An unmarked Theme is defined by Eggins (1994) as a “typical” or “usual” Theme while a marked Theme means simply “atypical” or “unusual”.

- An unmarked Theme is a Theme which conflates with the Mood constituents such as Subject, Finite, Predicator, WH elements.
- A marked Theme is a Theme which conflates with any other constituents from the Mood system, the usual type of marked Theme being circumstantial elements.

The textual meaning or metafunction is defined by Eggins (1994) as the enabling metafunction in that it is essential for the realization of the other meanings, notably the experiential and interpersonal meanings. Actually, the

thematic organization of the message helps express the other meanings coherently.

## 2. Methods

This paper adopts the mixed method which consists in combining qualitative and quantitative findings in order to get more insights. The assumption is that the qualitative approach or the quantitative approach alone may have limits that can be filled by the integration of both qualitative and quantitative results (American Psychological Association, 2020; Creswell, 2015). Thus, the text or the speech has been divided into clauses and the various themes have been identified quantitatively; whereas the analysis has been carried out both on the quantitative and the qualitative bases. Actually, the quantitative analysis focuses on what is thematized while the qualitative analysis emphasizes the meaning of such a thematisation.

## 3. Results

The occurrence of the themes is summarized in table 1 below:

N°	THEME			
		Textual	Interpers.	Topical
1	MADAM VICE PRESIDENT, MY FELLOW AMERICANS: TO STATE THE OBVIOUS, ONE YEAR AGO TODAY, <b>in this sacred place</b>	-	+	+
2	<b>[The will of the people</b>	-	-	+
3	<b>[THE CONSTITUTION — our Constitution</b>	-	+	+
4	OUTNUMBERED <i>and</i> <b>in the face of a brutal attack</b>	+	+	+
7	<i>And</i> <b>We the people</b>	+	+	+
8	<b>For the first time in our history,</b>	-	-	+
9	<b>[he</b>	-	-	+
10	- <b>[a violent mob</b>	+	-	+
11	<i>But</i> <b>they</b>	+	-	+
12	- <b>[They</b>	-	-	+
13	<b>and on this day of remembrance</b>	-	-	+
14	- <b>that such an attack</b>	+	-	+
15	<b>[I</b>	-	-	+
16	<b>[This</b>	-	-	+
17	- <b>[where the House of Representatives</b>	+	-	+
18	<b>[This</b>	-	-	+
19	<b>on this floor</b>	-	-	+
20	- <b>[A YOUNG CONGRESSMAN OF ILLINOIS, Abraham Lincoln</b>	-	+	+
21	<b>Above him</b>	-	-	+
22	<b>[In her hands,</b>	-	-	+
23	<b>[Clio</b>	-	-	+
24	<b>[as she</b>	+	-	+
25	<b>[She</b>	-	-	+
26	<b>what</b>	-	-	+
27	<b>[The real history</b>	-	+	+
28	THE FACTS AND THE TRUTH <i>that</i> <b>Vice President Harris</b>	+	+	+
29	<i>and that</i> <b>you and I and the whole world</b>	++	-	+
30	<b>[The Bible</b>	-	-	+
31	<b>[that</b>	-	-	+
32	- <b>and the truth</b>	+	-	+
33	<b>[Clio</b>	-	-	+
34	<i>Well,</i> <b>here</b>	+	-	+

35	[Close	-	-	+
36	[Go back	-	-	+
37	[What	-	-	+
38	[Rioters	-	-	+
39	[that	-	-	+
40	Event during the civil	+	-	+
41	But	+	-	+
42	-[What else	-	-	+
43	-[A mob	-	-	+
44	[American flags	-	-	+
45	[Fire extinguishers	-	-	+
46	A crowd	-	-	+
47	Over 140 police officers	-	-	+
48	[We	-	-	+
49	[who	-	-	+
50	-[that	-	-	+
51	[what	-	-	+
52	[One officer	-	-	+
53	/-andthathe	++	-	+
54	/thanhe	+	-	+
55	[They	-	-	+
56	[How	-	-	+
57	[they	-	-	+
58	[We	-	-	+
59	[Rioters	-	-	+
60	[Butwhat	+	-	+
61	[We	-	-	+
62	[who	-	-	+
63	[aspolice	+	-	+
64	[This	-	-	+
65	[This	-	-	+
66	[They	-	-	+
67	[They	-	-	+
68	[They	-	-	+
69	[They	-	-	+
70	[They	-	-	+
71	[They	-	-	+
72	[They	-	-	+
73	[This	-	-	+
74	[This	-	-	+
75	[the past	-	-	+
76	[That	-	-	+
77	[They	-	-	+
78	[This	-	-	+
79	[Sounds	-	-	+
80	-butthat	+	-	+
81	[They	-	-	+
82	[We	-	-	+
83	[MY FELLOW AMERICANS.in life	+	+	+
84	-and, TRAGICALLY, there	+	+	+
85	[We	-	-	+
86	[what	-	-	+
87	-andwhat	+	-	+
88	-Andhere	+	-	+
89	[The formerpresidentof the United States of America	-	-	+
90	and, TRAGICALLY, there	+	+	+
91	-[becausehe	+	-	+
92	-becausehe	+	-	+
93	and becausehisbruised ego	+	-	+
94	[He	-	-	+

95	<u>EVEN THOUGH</u> that	-	+	+
96	<u>what</u> 93 United States senators, his own Attorney General, his own Vice President, governors and state officials in every battleground state	+	-	+
97	<u>He</u>	-	-	+
98	<u>That</u>	-	-	+
99	<u>What</u>	-	-	+
100	<u>-as</u> you	+	-	+
101	<u>He</u>	-	-	+
102	<u>what</u> topresident in American history	+	+	+
103	<u>He</u>	-	-	+
104	<u>-/Whilesome</u> courageous men and women in the Republican Party	+	-	+
105	<u>TOOMANY</u> others	-	+	+
106	<u>They</u>	-	-	+
107	<u>/But</u> WHATEVERmy other disagreements	+	+	+
108	<u>who</u>	-	-	+
109	<u>They</u>	-	-	+
110	<u>/Because</u> ifwe	+	-	+
111	<u>/then</u> anything	+	-	+
112	<u>/And so, at this moment</u>	+	-	+
113	<u>What</u> kind of nation	-	-	+
114	<u>[ARE</u> we	-	+	+
115	<u>[ARE</u> we	-	+	+
116	<u>[where</u> we	+	-	+
117	<u>[ARE</u> we	-	+	+
118	<u>[a</u> nation	-	-	+
119	<u>[We</u>	-	-	+
120	<u>[The</u> way forward	-	-	+
121	<u>[The</u> Big Lie	-	-	+
122	<u>[who</u>	-	-	+
123	<u>[Think</u>	-	-	+
124	<u>[IS</u> that	-	+	+
125	<u>[IS</u> that	-	+	+
126	<u>[when</u> you	+	-	+
127	<u>[Taking</u>	-	-	+
128	<u>[IS</u> that	-	+	+
129	<u>[you</u>	-	-	+
130	<u>[Or</u> DIDyou	+	+	+
131	<u>[you</u>	-	-	+
132	<u>[The</u> former presidentand his supporters	-	-	+
133	<u>[They</u>	-	-	+
134	<u>[and</u> the riot	-	-	+
135	<u>[CAN</u> you	-	+	+
136	<u>[I</u>	-	-	+
137	<u>[Here</u>	-	-	+
138	<u>[The</u> election of 2020	-	-	+
139	<u>[MORE</u> OFyou	-	+	+
140	<u>[OVER</u> 150 million Americans	-	+	+
141	<u>[They</u>	-	-	+
142	<u>[RIGHT</u> NOW, in state after state	-	+	+
143	<u>[but</u> becausethe former president	+	-	+
144	<u>[INSTEAD</u> OF LOOKING AT THE ELECTION RESULTS FROM 2020 AND SAYINGthey	-	+	+
145	<u>[the</u> former president and his supporters	-	-	+
146	<u>[It</u>	-	-	+
147	<u>[It</u>	-	-	+
148	<u>[And</u> FRANKLY, it	+	+	+
149	<u>[The</u> second Big Lie being told by the former President and his supporters	-	-	+

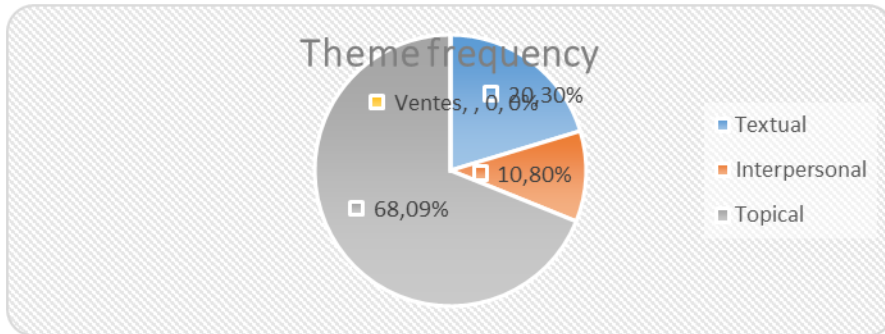
150	[ <u>that</u> the results of the election of2020	+	-	+
151	[ <u>The truth</u> 152	-	-	+
152	[ <u>that</u> NO ELECTION — NO ELECTIONin American history	+	+	+
153	[ <u>EVERY</u> legal challenge	-	+	+
154	[ <u>that</u>	-	-	+
155	[ <u>Recounts</u>	-	-	+
156	[ <u>GEORGIA — Georgia</u>	-	+	+
157	[ <u>Phony partisan audits</u>	-	-	+
158	[ <u>None</u>	-	-	+
159	[ <u>And in some of them,</u>	+	-	+
159	[ <u>the margin of victory</u>	-	-	+
160	[ <u>the margin of victory</u>	-	-	+
161	[ <u>So, let's</u>	+	-	+
162	[ <u>what</u>	-	-	+
163	[ <u>Even</u> BEFOREthe first ballot	+	+	+
164	[ <u>the former president</u>	-	-	+
165	[ <u>He</u>	-	-	+
166	[ <u>It</u>	-	-	+
167	[ <u>He</u>	-	-	+
168	[ <u>He</u>	-	-	+
169	[ <u>He</u>	-	-	+
170	[ <u>There</u>	-	-	+
171	[ <u>the election results</u>	-	-	+
172	[ <u>IN FACT, in every venue</u>	-	+	+
173	[ <u>the former president</u>	-	-	+
174	[ <u>Just</u> think	+	-	+
175	[ <u>The former presidentand his supporters</u>	-	-	+
176	[ <u>how</u> they	+	-	+
177	-[ <u>that</u>	-	-	+
178	[ <u>elections</u>	-	-	+
189	[ <u>They</u>	-	-	+
180	[ <u>The President's name</u>	-	-	+
181	[ <u>then</u> we	+	-	+
182	[ <u>SOMEHOW, those results</u>	-	+	+
183	[ <u>but</u> the presidential race	+	-	+
184	[ <u>And on the same ballot</u>	+	-	+
185	[ <u>The only difference:</u>	-	-	+
186	[ <u>he</u>	-	-	+
187	[ <u>that</u>	-	-	+
188	[ <u>FINALLY, the third Big Liebeing told by a former President and his supporters</u>	-	+	+
189	[ <u>that</u> the mob	+	-	+
190	[ <u>IS</u> thatwhat	+	+	+
191	[ <u>when</u> you	+	-	+
192	[ <u>Patriots</u>	-	-	+
193	[ <u>Not in my view</u>	+	-	+
194	[ <u>TO ME, the true patriots</u>	-	+	+
195	[ <u>who</u>	-	-	+
196	[ <u>the election workers</u>	-	-	+
197	[ <u>and</u> the heroes	+	-	+
198	[ <u>You</u>	-	-	+
199	[ <u>ONLY</u> whenyou	+	+	+
200	[ <u>You</u>	-	-	+
201	[ <u>when</u>	-	-	+
202	[ <u>You</u>	-	-	+
203	[ <u>You</u>	-	-	+
204	[ <u>when</u> you	-	-	+
205	[ <u>Those</u>	-	-	+
206	[ <u>and</u> thosewho	+	-	+
207	[ <u>and</u> thosewho	+	-	+

208	[ <b>They</b>	-	-	+
209	[ <b>They</b>	-	-	+
210	-[ <b>Thosewho</b>	-	-	+
211	[ <b>who</b>	-	-	+
212	[ <b>Burtheir plot</b>	+	-	+
213	[ <b>CONGRESSMEN — Democrats and and Republicans</b>	-	+	+
214	[ <b>SENATORS, REPRESENTATIVES, STAFF — they</b>	-	+	+
215	[ <b>They</b>	-	-	+
216	[ <b>LOOK, FOLKS, now</b>	-	+	+
217	[ <b>That promise</b>	-	-	+
218	[ <b>that</b>	-	-	+
219	[ <b>Make</b>	-	-	+
220	[ <b>We</b>	-	-	+
221	[ <b>Both at home and abroad,</b>	+	-	+
222	[ <b>From China to Russia and beyond</b>	-	-	+
223	[ <b>thatdemocracy’s days</b>	-	-	+
224	[ <b>They</b>	-	-	+
225	[ <b>democracy</b>	-	-	+
226	[ <b>Andthey</b>	+	-	+
227	[ <b>They</b>	-	-	+
228	[ <b>America</b>	-	-	+
229	[ <b>They</b>	-	-	+
230	[ <b>thatAmerica</b>	+	-	+
231	[ <b>I</b>	-	-	+
232	[ <b>That</b>	-	-	+
233	[ <b>who</b>	-	-	+
234	[ <b>That</b>	-	-	+
235	[ <b>who</b>	-	-	+
236	[ <b>Andthat</b>	+	-	+
237	[ <b>who</b>	-	-	+
238	[ <b>OUR FOUNDING FATHERS, as imperfect asthey</b>	-	+	+
239	[ <b>that</b>	-	-	+
240	[ <b>Here in America</b>	-	-	+
241	[ <b>power</b>	-	-	+
242	[ <b>Andthey</b>	+	-	+
243	[ <b>that</b>	-	-	+
244	[ <b>that</b>	-	-	+
245	[ <b>YES, in America</b>	-	+	+
246	[ <b>We</b>	-	-	+
247	[ <b>that ifyou</b>	++	-	+
248	[ <b>I</b>	-	-	+
249	[ <b>ifyou</b>	+	-	+
250	[ <b>I</b>	+	-	+
251	[ <b>ifI</b>	+	-	+
252	[ <b>I</b>	-	-	+
253	[ <b>THE FORMER PRESIDENT, who</b>	-	+	+
254	[ <b>andthe mob</b>	+	-	+
255	[ <b>They</b>	-	-	+
256	[ <b>orthey</b>	+	-	+
257	[ <b>what</b>	-	-	+
258	[ <b>WHAT — andwhat</b>	+	+	+
259	[ <b>Andwith rights</b>	+	-	+
260	[ <b>MAYBEwe</b>	-	+	+
261	[ <b>butthey</b>	+	-	+
262	[ <b>the responsibility to accept defeat</b>	-	-	+
263	[ <b>the responsibility to see</b>	-	-	+
264	[ <b>Aswe</b>	+	-	+
265	[ <b>the lies</b>	-	-	+
266	[ <b>we</b>	-	-	+
267	[ <b>They</b>	-	-	+



268	[So, we	+	-	+
269	[Some	-	-	+
270	[Jill and I	-	-	+
271	[who	-	-	+
272	[and a second time	+	-	+
273	[We	-	-	+
274	[who	-	-	+
275	[DON't kid	+	+	+
276	[The pain and scars from that day	-	-	+
277	[I	-	-	+
278	[andit	+	-	+
279	[thanwhen	+	-	+
280	[We	-	-	+
281	[A battle	-	-	+
282	[Believe	-	-	+
283	[I	-	-	+
284	[how difficult	-	-	+
285	[AndI	+	-	+
286	[ButI	+	-	+
287	[that our darkest days	+	-	+
288	[From the death and destruction,	-	-	+
289	[in Pearl Harbor	-	-	+
290	[From the brutality of Bloody Sunday on the Edmund Pettus Bridge	-	-	+
291	[So, now	+	-	+
292	[I	-	-	+
293	[but I	+	-	+
294	[I	-	-	+
295	[I	-	-	+
296	[And I	+	-	+
297	[We	-	-	+
298	[the will of the people	-	-	+
299	[that the ballot	+	-	+
300	[that authority in this nation	+	-	+
301	[I	-	-	+
302	[DEEP in the heart of America	-	+	+
303	[This	-	-	+
304	[We	-	-	+
305	[Here in America	-	-	+
306	[andtheir will	+	-	+
307	[So, let us	+	-	+
308	[TOGETHER, we	-	+	+
309	[God	-	-	+
310	[MAY God	-	+	+
311	[AndMAYGod	+	+	+
TOTAUX		92 (20,30 %)	49( 10,80%)	312( 68,09% )

**Table 1:** Theme occurrence



**Grah1:** Theme frequency

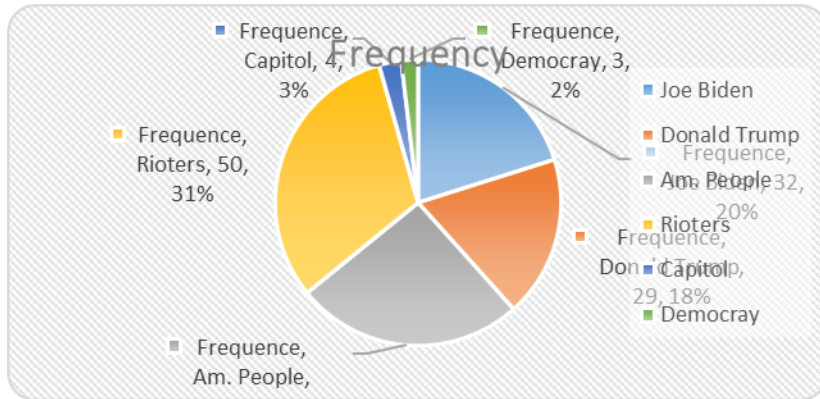
While table 1 summarizes the occurrences of Theme types, Graph 1 gives an exact quantitative representation of the three types of Themes: topical, interpersonal and textual. In fact, 68.09% of the Themes are topical, meaning that the speech is essentially concerned with carriers, actors, sensors, behavers sayers, agents, behavers, etc. which stand for *they, you, we, I, America, Democracy, the rioters, Biden*, in clauses (12, 15, 38, 59, 82, 83, 94, 97, 225, 230) This is the main focus of the message. Interpersonal Themes represent 20.30%. This implies that the text contains an attitudinal connotation, that is, the speaker has expressed some judgements about the meaning of the attack or its consequences on the American democratic system through the use of modal adjuncts or modulated finites (maybe, finally, can, well, my fellow Americans, etc.) in clauses (34, 83, 90, 135, 148, 188, 194). As for the textual Themes, they have served not only to realize cohesion but also to give the text its written character, that is, language is being used to reflect on experience rather than to enact it (Eggins, 1994). Therefore, a lot of textual Themes (20.30%) such as *but, so, and, or, if, that* are used in clauses (226, 247, 251, 256, 261, 268).

### 3.1. Topical Themes Analysis

Table 2 recapitulates the distribution of topical Themes among the participants whereas graph 2 highlights this distribution.

Participants	Frequency	Percentage
Joe Biden	32	20,10%
Donald Trump	29	18,20%
American People	41	25,80%
Rioters mob violence	50	31,40%
Capitol	04	02,50%
Democracy	03	02%
Total	159	100%

**Table 2:** Topical Themes distribution



**Graph 2:** Topical Theme frequency

As it can be noticed in table 2 and graph 2, *rioters*, *mob* and *violence* occur 50 times as Theme, corresponding to 31.40% and occupying the first position; whereas *American People* is thematized 41 times with a percentage of 25%, followed by *Joe Biden* or *I used* 32 times as Theme in the speech, representing 20.10%, just a little bit more than *Donald Trump* which occurs 29 times as Theme, that is, 18.20%. This highlights the central message in terms of actions, feelings, behaviors, which constitute the main experiences related to the Capitol Attack.

### 3.2. Marked and Unmarked Theme Analysis

The last Theme elements which require attention are Marked and Unmarked Themes. The occurrence of Marked and Unmarked Themes is summarized in the table below:

Theme	frequency
Marked	24 (07, 70%)
Unmarked	288 (92, 30%)
Total	312 (100%)

**Table 3:** Marked and Unmarked Themes frequency

Table 3 shows that 288 Themes [92.30%] are unmarked whereas 24 Themes [7.70%] are marked, which means that there is a high level of preparedness for communication on the part of President Joe Biden. Additionally, the use of circumstantial elements of place, time, and manner in thematic position situates the message in a specific context, clarifying the setting of the event which is the focus of the communication: the Capitol Attack.

## 4. Discussion and Interpretation of the Findings

This section discusses the findings so as to give them a meaning, for language is not a simple exchange of words or sounds but actually a

contextualized and purposeful communication of experiences and attitudes. The thematic analysis of the speech reveals a high occurrence of topical Themes in the speech [60.09%]. The thematized topical elements *I, they, we, he, it, you* stand for *the attack, rioters, Joe Biden* himself, *American people* and *Donald Trump* or *the former President* in clauses (147, 146, 1665, 167, 168, 169, 198, 202, 249, 256, 261, 267, 273, 293, 294, 293, 297, 304). Some of the participants (*Donald Trump* and *the rioters*) constitute a dangerous threat against the American democratic system considered by the author of the speech as the best example and therefore needs to be protected by *Joe Biden* himself and by *the American people* or *the upholders of law and order*. Table 2 confirms this message in that *rioters* or *mob* (representing 31.40% of the Themes) manipulated by the president have taken actions, believed things or said things that are undemocratic or un-American. *American people, we, you, fellow or citizens* are used 41 times [25.80%] as topical Theme, for example in clauses (48, 58, 61, 140, 191, 198, 199, 200, 202, 203, 220, 246). This highlights the author's intention to warn his fellow citizens against lies which can construct perilous or menacing realities. Such realities are aimed at satisfying personal interests rather than serving the interests of the American nation. As for *Joe Biden* or *I*, it is thematized 32 times [20.10%], realizing basically mental or verbal processes aimed at restoring the democratic instinct ascribed to the American people as something ancestral or cultural.

Furthermore, Interpersonal Themes, which occur 49 times (10.80%), have emphasized the attitudinal meaning of the text through the use of modal adjuncts and modal operators such as *well, can, maybe, finally, my fellow Americans, to me, just, in fact, frankly, somehow* in clauses (34, 83, 135, 148, 172, 174, 182, 188, 194, 260, 275). President Joe Biden has expressed clear judgments about the attack, depicting it as the fruit of lies and inviting his fellow citizens to live by the fundamental values of freedom based on democratic principles.

Regarding textual Themes, they occur 92 times, corresponding to 20.30%. These textual elements express cohesive dimensions such as extension and enhancement. Extension elements (*and, but, or, both*) occur 44 times whereas enhancement (*so, as, if, because*) ones occur 48 times. Extension elements have been used to construct coherent facts aimed at convincing Americans to recognize lies elaborated by *the former President* while enhancement textual constituents organize the arguments logically in terms of time, cause and condition.

The speech also contains a significant number of marked Themes that highlight the circumstances of time and place at which the tragic event of the attack took place. Indeed, the analysis reveals that 24 thematic elements are marked, representing 7.70%. This has basically served to convey an important

message: America and especially the symbol of its democracy must not be violated by people who strive towards personal or selfish interests.

## Conclusion

The speech made by Joe Biden on the anniversary of the Capitol attack has been analysed on the basis of the Systemic Functional Linguistic theory, especially the textual grammar which defines language as a message organized through the system of Theme, that is, what meaning is prioritized and why. The analysis has revealed a high occurrence of topical Themes followed by textual and interpersonal ones. The distribution of topical Themes shows that *rioters* or *mob* occupy the first position as Theme. They are the actors, sensors, behavers, agents and carriers of undemocratic facts or feelings that have led to the attack of the Capitol, the symbol of the American democracy. The American people is used in thematic position to emphasize their role against such actions, which consists in understanding or making the difference between lies and truth in order to protect the American democratic system. Donald Trump or the former President is at the center of the undemocratic behaviors that have caused the tragic event of the attack whereas President Biden appears in thematic position as the protector of the American heritage which is democracy. Interpersonal Themes have expressed Biden's judgments related to the attack; they take the form of advice and warnings that are also conveyed through marked Themes, carrying the meanings of indignation regarding the place and the time at which the attack took place. Actually, the Capitol Attack has provided an opportunity for the Democratic Party represented by Joe Biden to demolish the Republican Party by constructing a favorable reality for his Party.

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