Syntactic Means in Keir Starmer's Speeches on Climate Change: An Investigation of Dependent Clauses

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Key words:

dependent clauses,
climate change
discourse,
Keir Starmer,
syntactic means

Abstract

Whilst Keir Starmer, the current British prime minister, assumed office fairly recently, on 5 July 2024, he has nevertheless managed to express his views on the issue of climate change in a number of speeches. Due to the recency of his incumbency as a prime minister, however, Starmer's climate change discourse is fairly unexplored. The present paper seeks to offer a novel insight into the under-researched topic of Starmer's discourse on climate change by analysing syntactic means, such as dependent clauses, in a corpus of his speeches on the issue of climate change. The paper first presents an outline of the theoretical premises of the analysis, followed by the description of the corpus, the results of the analysis and their discussion. Special attention is paid to the frequency of the occurrence of dependent clauses in the corpus. The results of the corpus analysis indicate that the most frequently occurring dependent clauses in Starmer's speeches on climate change are adverbial, infinitive, and -ing clauses. These findings are amply illustrated and discussed in the article. *(примљено: 26. марта 2025; прихваћено: 25. маја 2025)*

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1. Introduction

In general terms, syntactic means in discursive contexts involve co-ordinate clauses, various types of subordinate clauses, embedded clauses, and different combinations thereof (Altshuler/Truswell, 2022). A subordinate clause, which can also be referred to as a dependent clause (Mithun, 2008), could be defined as "a clause that functions as subordinated to another grammatical unit" (Matthiessen/Thompson, 1988: 286). Dependent clauses are thought to play an important pragmatic role in political discourse (Chilton/Schäffner, 2011). To be more precise, it is argued in the literature on discourse and communication studies that dependent clauses are reflective of the syntactic complexity or a lack thereof in a political actor's discourse (Hart, 2014). Assuming that discourse and syntax, inclusive of dependent clauses, impose certain communicative constraints on the speaker's utterance/utterances (Ariel, 2009), it is quite logical to assume that some politicians would employ a syntactically rich repertoire of pragma-syntactic means that is characterised by a mixture of co-ordinate, complex and dependent clauses, whilst others would use a rather limited stock of, for instance, simple sentences (Benoit et al., 2019; Bischof/Senninger, 2018). In other words, there seems to be a contention in the literature that a political actor's discourse may be described in terms of syntactic complexity and syntactic sophistication that are strategically used by the political actor in order to suit their communicative purposes (Fløttum, 2018; Tolochko/Boomgaarden, 2018). In this light, dependent clauses may be regarded as the manifestation of an individual "made-to-custom" voice of the politician or, put differently, a recurrent syntactic pattern that may function as a discursive signature of the political actor (Fiammenghi/Pinnavaia, 2019; Kapranov, 2022; Tolochko et al., 2019). While similar views on the pragmatic use of dependent clauses have been extensively elucidated in the literature on academic writing (Fløttum et al., 2009; Malmström, 2008), little is known about their use in political discourse (Kapranov, 2016a), as well as in climate change discourse (Kapranov, 2017; 2018).

Given a paucity of studies on the pragmatic role of dependent clauses in political discourse on climate change, the present paper seeks to provide a novel insight into the occurrence and pragmatic roles of dependent clauses in Keir Starmer's (the current British prime minister) political speeches on this topic.

An important note should be made concerning the need to elucidate Starmer's discourse on climate change. Firstly, a rather obvious reason to examine this understudied aspect is rooted in purely scientific purposes. The second reason to examine Starmer's climate change discourse, inclusive of the pragmatic roles and occurrence of dependent clauses in it, can be accounted for by the following considerations: (i) the United Kingdom (the UK) is rightfully considered to be at the forefront of climate change mitigation and climate change awareness (Boykoff, 2011), (ii) the UK's legislation concerning the issue of climate change is deemed to be among the most encompassing and profound systems of laws and provisions that deal with the issue of climate change (Kapranov, 2016b), and (iii) the UK's political landscape is thought to be polarised by the issue of climate change

(Unsworth/Fielding, 2014). In light of this information, it seems to be of paramount importance to find out more about Starmer's climate change discourse and the way he uses dependent clauses in it. Accordingly, the study that is further presented and discussed in the present paper seeks to answer the following **research question** (**RQ**): What are the most frequently occurring types of dependent clauses and their pragmatic roles in Keir Starmer's speeches on climate change? It should be specified that the RQ is based upon prior research (Fairclough, 2003) which contends that political discourse may involve a range of dependent clauses that could perform a number of pragmatic roles. Furthermore, the RQ in the study takes into account the fact that Keir Starmer is a well-educated professional politician, who studied at the University of Leeds and the University of Oxford, worked as the Head of the Crown Prosecution Service and Director of Public Prosecutions (Clarke, 2024), and held several highly prestigious positions that normally would be associated with the ability to use complex and specialised language (Ashcroft, 2021). Arguably, it is not precluded in the study that Starmer's speeches on climate change could be reflective of a degree of syntactic complexity and sophistication that is manifested by a range of dependent clauses. In this regard, it seems pertinent to note that the study is informed by the classification of dependent clauses that is outlined in the publications by Dypedahl and Hasselgård (2018), and Hasselgård (2017). Their classification is summarised further in the article.

Guided by the RQ, this paper is organised in the following manner. First, the theoretical considerations of the paper will be given in section 2. Second, the present study will be described and discussed in detail. Third, an outline of the major findings and their implications to the study of political discourse on the issue of climate change will be provided in section 3. Additionally, the paper will conclude with an overview of the limitations of the study and potential directions for future research that might stem from it.

2. Dependent clauses in political discourse: Some theoretical considerations

Prior to elucidating the basic theoretical considerations that underlie the use of dependent clauses in political discourse, it seems relevant to specify the definitions of (i) discourse and (ii) political discourse. In general terms, discourse may be conceived of as "the particular view of language in use [...] – as an element of social life which is closely interconnected with other elements" (Fairclough, 2003: 3–4). Similarly, Chilton (2004) indicates that discourse involves:

coherent chains of propositions which establish a 'discourse' 'world', or 'discourse ontology' – in effect, the 'reality' that is entertained by the speaker, or meta-represented by speaker as being someone else's believed reality. There are various meaning ingredients that go into these discourse realities, but the essential one is the projection of 'who does what to whom, when and where'. (Chilton, 2004: 54)

We may argue that, according to Chilton (2004), political discourses are seen as a way of organising different types of politics-related talks and/or texts, be it a political speech, a political debate, a political interview, or a policy document. In this light, political discourse can be defined as the pragmatic use of words and phrases, syntactic means, and stance in order "to either hide or distribute responsibility in certain ways, or designate specific individuals or groups as belonging to categories that may serve particular political purposes" (Wilson, 2015: 781–782).

Commensurate with the political as well as pragmatic purposes, political discourse may involve pragmatically appropriate forms, means, and meanings (Fairclough, 2003; Kapranov, 2016c), including syntactic means (Wilson, 2015). In this regard, Wilson (2015: 783) argues that "it is accepted that choices at various grammatical levels may be made for specific representational purposes". Wilson's (2015) contention seems to be, at least partially, based upon Fairclough (2003), who emphasises that the pragmatic choices of a certain syntactic means, inclusive of dependent clauses, critically depend upon meaning and context. Particularly, Fairclough (2003: 12–13) demonstrates the involvement of (dependent) clauses in political discourse by stating that nominal constructions, noun-like entities, as well as clauses and sentences with verbs, permeate the current British political discourse. Furthermore, the strategic choices of deploying dependent clauses are systematic in the sense that they are reflective of the available pragma-syntactic means within the grammatical system of a language (Fairclough, 2003; Wilson, 2015). This contention resonates with McCarthy (1998: 75), who suggests that dependent clauses help relate and recount the events in a particular macro-discursive situation. The aforementioned suggestion is further developed by Wilson (2015), who demonstrates that pragma-syntactic choices are conducive to specific representational purposes, for instance:

> If I say, "soldiers shot at rioters," as opposed to "rioters were shot at by soldiers," I may wish to emphasize one group rather than the other. However, the way a soldier or rioter interprets these sentences may be unaffected by the structure, since both possess the same grammatical system and may convert passive sentences into active sentences, or active sentences into passive sentences. Equally, in an "agentless" sentence such as "taxes will be raised from next year," one could say responsibility is being avoided since there is no subject who is seen as carrying out the actions. On the other hand, in real texts sentences do not occur in isolation, and the agent or subject could be interpreted via previous claims, or be inferred logically from the aims of the text [...]. (Wilson, 2015: 783)

The aforesaid line of reasoning has contributed to problematising syntactic means and, more specifically, dependent clauses as an invaluable means of structuring a number of discourses, including political discourse and discourse on the issue of climate change (Chilton, 2004; Chilton/Schäffner, 2011; Kapranov, 2022). In this regard, Chilton (2004) encapsulates the relationship between (political) discourse and syntactic means in the following manner:

In language use the speaker postulates discourse referents with different thematic roles. The roles are defined by the relations between the discourse referents. How do these abstract meaning schemata map onto language in use? The prototype is the clause, with (in English) its subject-verb-object structure. However, argument-predicate structure, along with their relations and roles, pops up in other forms – inside some noun phrases, in subordinate clauses in which some arguments might be implied, and in the semantic phenomenon of presupposition which is triggered by various syntactic and lexical structures. (Chilton, 2004: 54)

In particular, syntactic structures in the sense postulated by Chilton (2004) have been found to contribute to organising the discursive space of climate change narratives (Fløttum, 2018; Fløttum/Gjerstad, 2017) and the discourse associated with climate change protest movements (Kapranov, 2022). To be precise, Fløttum and Gjerstad (2017) argue that syntactically simple structures of sentences facilitate the focusing of the reader's attention on the parts of the climate change-related narrative, whilst syntactically complex sentences tend to condense the narrative associated with climate change. Furthermore, Kapranov (2022) has established that the frequent use of non-finite -ing clauses in climate change discourse forms a recurrent syntactic pattern, which contributes to the creation of an effect of timelessness of the issue of climate change as seen by the climate change protesters. Concurrently, however, the frequent occurrence of the non-finite infinitive clauses in the context of climate change protest movement seems to play the role of a rhetorical device that is utilised in order to portray the climate change protest agenda as a so-called "to-do" list of measures, which need to be undertaken by the protesters (Kapranov, 2022).

It is evident from prior studies (Fløttum, 2018; Fløttum/Gjerstad, 2017; Kapranov, 2022) that dependent clauses perform a series of critically important rhetorical and pragmatic functions in climate change-related discourses. However, there is insufficient research on the pragmatic use and frequency of occurrence of dependent clauses in political discourse on climate change. The aforementioned observation is especially applicable to Starmer's political speeches on the issue of climate change, which remain, essentially, unexplored in the literature. Further, in section 3 of the article, a study is presented that aims to bridge the current gap in knowledge.

3. The present study: Its corpus and methodology

As previously mentioned, the present study is justified by two critical considerations, namely (i) the relevance of British climate change-related discourses, which influence the way the issue of climate change is perceived by the general public and political elites in the UK, and (ii) the lack of research on the topic of Keir Starmer's political discourse on climate change. With this in mind, the study aims to examine how Starmer uses dependent clauses in his speeches on climate change (see the RQ given in the introduction).

Guided by the RQ, the study involves the following research tasks: (i) to collect a corpus of Starmer's political speeches on the issue of climate change and (ii) to analyse the corpus quantitatively and qualitatively in order to establish the most frequently occurring types of dependent clauses and their respective pragmatic roles. In terms of corpus collection, the official website of the British government (Gov.uk, n.d.) was accessed and searched for such keywords as *anthropogenic climate change, climate change, climate change adaptation, climate change demonstration, climate change event, climate change mass media coverage, climate change mitigation, climate change policy, climate change protest, climate risk/risks, CO2 absorption, CO2 capture and storage, CO2 emission/emissions, CO2 emission reduction/reductions, extreme weather event/events, extreme drought, extreme rain/rainfall, global warming, green energy, greenhouse gasses/GHG, green technology, Keir Starmer, net zero, rise in sea level/levels, speech, wind energy, wind farm, the consequences of climate change,* and *(the) health effects of climate change.* The search for the keywords was based upon the literature (Fløttum, 2019; Fløttum/Gjerstad, 2017; Fløttum et al., 2016; Kapranov, 2016b; 2017; 2018) that reported similar keywords in the context of climate change discourses. The search procedure resulted in 11 speeches delivered by Starmer within six months, from 5 July 2024, i.e. the day he assumed office of the prime minister, to 5 January 2025. The official transcripts of the speeches were downloaded and processed in the computer program Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 20.0 (IBM, 2011), in order to calculate the descriptive statistics of the corpus, which were summarised in Table 1.

#	Descriptive Statistics	Value
1	The total number of speeches	11
2	The total number of words	14,330
3	Mean words	1,302.7
4	Standard deviation words	699.9
5	Maximum words	2 767
6	Minimum words	460
7	The total number of sentences	726
8	Mean sentences	66.0
9	Standard deviation sentences	53.7
10	Maximum sentences	186
11	Minimum sentences	15

Table 1. The descriptive statistics of the corpus

The methodology of the corpus analysis was based upon the definition and typology of dependent clauses found in Dypedahl and Hasselgård (2018). The choice of their approach to dependent clauses was motivated by its logical presentation and clarity, as well as by the fact that it corresponded to a substantial number of studies on dependent clauses in various types of discourses (Hasselgård, 2004; 2014; 2017). Particularly, Dypedahl and Hasselgård (2018: 187) defined dependent clauses in the following manner: "A dependent clause must be attached to a main clause, because it cannot function as a complete sentence, and because it does not convey a complete message on its own". Dypedahl and Hasselgård's (2018) typology of dependent clauses is summarised in Table 2 below.

#	Types of Clauses	Definition
1	Adverbial clauses	"An adverbial dependent clause has the same kinds of syntactic functions as an adverb phrase, typically a circumstantial adverbial in another clause; more rarely a modifier of an adjective or adverb" (Dypedahl/Hasselgård, 2018: 188).
2	Indirect questions	"Indirect questions are introduced by a question word such as where, when, why, how or whether. [...] indirect questions imply that a piece of information is missing. This information is represented by the question word. Indirect questions introduced by if and whether correspond to yes/no questions, while the others correspond to wh-questions. Indirect questions typically function as direct objects [...]" (Dypedahl/Hasselgård, 2018: 196–197).
3	Infinitive clauses	Infinitive clauses are non-finite dependent clauses that contain a verb in the infinitive form and can function as postmodifiers of nouns, modifiers of adjectives, a direct object, subject predicative, subject, and form part of subject predicative (Dypedah/Hasselgård, 2018: 198–200).
4	-ing clauses	-ing clauses are non-finite dependent clauses that contain an -ing form of the verb and can function as subject, the complement of a preposition, a direct object, subject predicative, and adverbial (Dypedahl/Hasselgård, 2018: 189).
5	Nominal relative clauses	"Nominal relative clauses are introduced by a wh-word (pronoun or adverb): what(ever), who(ever), where(ever), etc. [...] nominal relative clauses do not have an antecedent. However, the pronouns that introduce this type of clause may be replaced by a noun like the people/thing(s) plus a relative pronoun" (Dypedahl/Hasselgård, 2018: 196).

6	Past participle clauses	Past participle clauses are non-finite clauses that contain a verb in the past participle form that can function as postmodifiers of nouns, perform adjectival and adverbial functions, but cannot have nominal functions (Dypedahl/Hasselgård, 2018: 200–202).
7	Relative clauses	"Relative clauses are introduced by a relative pronoun [...] in English we have who, which, whose, whom or that. [...] A relative clause refers back to an antecedent in the main clause. The antecedent is typically the head of the noun phrase where the relative clause is a postmodifier. In the relative clause itself, the relative pronoun represents the antecedent and has the same syntactic function as a full noun phrase would have in its place" (Dypedahl/Hasselgård, 2018: 190).
8	Sentential relative clauses	"Sentential relative clauses are used to convey comments on facts or situations. [...] Such relative clauses have the entire main clause as their antecedent, and are therefore called sentential relative clauses. [...] Since sentential relative clauses are not part of a noun phrase and typically convey the speaker's or writer's comment, they can be analysed as stance adverbials" (Dypedahl & Hasselgård, 2018: 194).
9	That-clauses	"That-clauses are associated with the nominal functions. [...] This means that they do the same sort of work in the clause as noun phrases do. [...] That-clauses are introduced by the conjunction that, that can be omitted. That-clauses typically function as (extraposed) subject or as direct object. They can also accompany nouns with general meanings (such as idea, objection and rumour), in which case they function as apposition" (Dypedahl/Hasselgård, 2018: 195–196).
10	Verbless clauses	Verbless clauses are dependent clauses that lack a (finite) verb. Whereas they lack the verb, they modify the main clause and can perform syntactic functions that are equivalent to adjectival and/or adverbial functions (Dypedahl/Hasselgård, 2018: 189).

Table 2. The typology of dependent clauses based on Dypedahl and Hasselgård (2018)

Anchored in the typology of dependent clauses proposed by Dypedahl and Hasselgård (2018), the corpus analysis was conducted in order to (i) identify the types of dependent clauses, (ii) quantify them, and (iii) determine their respective pragmatic roles. The identification of the dependent clauses was carried out manually in each individual speech in the corpus. Thereafter, the occurrences of

dependent clauses in each individual file were merged and processed in SPSS (IBM, 2011) in order to compute the total number (N) of dependent clauses, their means (M), and standard deviations (SD). The results of the corpus analysis are further discussed in subsection 3.1 of the article.

3.1. Results and discussion
The results of the corpus analysis show that there are 257 dependent clauses in total (M 25.7, SD 23.1). Their descriptive statistics are given in Table 3 below.

#	Types of Dependent Clauses	Descriptive Statistics
1	Adverbial clause	Total N 44; M 5.5; SD 2.9
2	Indirect question	Total N 15; M 2.5; SD 1.5
3	Infinitive clause	Total N 80; M 8.9; SD 8.3
4	-ing clause	Total N 46; M 5.1; SD 2.5
5	Nominal relative clause	Total N 12; M 4.0; SD 3.6
6	Past participle clause	Total N 2; M 1.0; SD 0
7	Relative clause	Total N 24; M 2.7; SD 1.1
8	Sentential relative clause	Total N 1; M 0; SD 0
9	That-clause	Total N 19; M 3.2; SD 2.1
10	Verbless clause	Total N 14; M 3.5; SD 1.8

Table 3. The descriptive statistics of the types of dependent clauses in the corpus

In line with the RQ in the study, let us discuss the most frequently occurring dependent clauses presented in Table 3, including their pragmatic functions. As observed in Table 3, there are three types of dependent clauses, which Starmer employs rather frequently. They are infinitive clauses, -ing clauses, and adverbial clauses. Relating the present findings to prior research on syntactic means in the context of climate change discourse, it can be safely posited that the frequency of the occurrence of infinitive and -ing clauses lends support to the literature (Kapranov, 2022) which indicates that non-finite dependent clauses, in particular -ing and infinitive clauses, are among the most frequent dependent clauses used in the discourse of climate change.

As far as Starmer's frequent use of the infinitive clauses is concerned, it can be argued that he employs them in conjunction with a clearly defined call for action on climate change. Arguably, Starmer and, perhaps, his speechwriters are eager to harness the pragmatic potential afforded by infinitive clauses, which is manifested in the highest frequency of occurrence of this type of dependent clauses in the corpus, as exemplified by excerpts (1) and (2).

(1) Climate change causes extreme weather – such as the terrible floods that we saw in September – and drives down economic growth, conflicts drive up the prices of fuel, food and energy and threaten our stability and security and both are drivers of migration. **To serve the British people**, we must tackle these problems head-on, because they do not stop at our borders and that is the fundamental point. (Starmer, 2024a)

(2) Meanwhile climate change hits economic growth, leaves us exposed to catastrophic flooding and both of these forces drive unsustainable levels of migration. It all manifests in a feeling amongst very many people that the system isn't working for them. That it's time **to take back control of our lives, our borders, our livelihoods**. (Starmer, 2024b)

The pragmatic use of the infinitive clauses in (1) and (2), respectively, is strikingly reminiscent of the contention formulated by Biber, Conrad, and Leech (2002: 328), who posit that infinitive clauses are often employed in order to report intentions, desires, efforts, perceptions, and other actions. Indeed, Starmer seems to resort to the pragmatic use of infinitive clauses in both (1) and (2) with a clear intent to offer a programmatic climate change-related course of action. It is also evident from (1) and (2) that the declared course of action is presented in a rather general manner. This finding is in contrast to the study by Kapranov (2022) which established that climate change protesters appear to utilise infinitive clauses to express a very concrete action-oriented "to-do" list, characterised by infinitive clauses as openers that introduce a climate change-related activity.

Following the most frequently used infinitive clauses, Starmer appears to avail himself of -ing clauses quite generously (see Table 3), which is evident in excerpts (3) and (4).

(3) The way I see it, there are two paths ahead. One, the path of inaction and delay, **leading to further decline and vulnerability**. **Warming above 1.5 degrees** will expose hundreds of thousands more people in the UK to flood risk, greater economic instability and national insecurity. (Starmer, 2024c)

(4) And I'm pleased to tell you that, yes, we will meet our Net Zero target, backed up with an ambitious NDC at COP29, consistent with **limiting warming to 1.5 degrees**, and we'll support others to do the same. I know that finance is at the heart of this. So the UK will continue to be a leading contributor to international climate finance. That includes **supporting nature and forests** because this is vital for biodiversity and **reducing emissions**, and it includes **funding for climate adaptation**, because those who did not cause this crisis should not be left to cope with the consequences. (Starmer, 2024d)

Based on (3) and (4), as well as other instances that are similar and/or identical to them, it can be argued that Starmer's use of -ing clauses is accounted for by

the pragmatic strategy of developing and enhancing the message. This observation is in line with the argument put forward by Downing and Locke (1992), as well as Granger (1997), who posit, quite unanimously, that the -ing clause is involved in the writer's and/or speaker's strategy of developing the message. Whilst these scholars build their argument on data derived from academic writing, it could be stated that the -ing clause is involved in clarifying and expanding upon the message that is associated with climate change in terms of climate change mitigation and amelioration (see excerpts (3) and, particularly, (4)). However, the present findings concerning the frequency and use of -ing clauses are in contrast to the results reported by Chafe and Danielewicz (1987). Specifically, the frequency of the occurrence of -ing clauses in Starmer's speeches on climate change (see Table 3) does not support Chafe and Danielewicz (1987), who note that genres and registers other than academic writing do not seem to employ -ing clauses profusely.

Following -ing clauses, adverbial clauses are the third frequent type of clauses in the present corpus (see Table 3). Starmer's typical use of adverbial clauses in his speeches on climate change is further illustrated by excerpts (5) and (6).

(5) We launched Great British Energy – A clean British Energy company to improve our energy resilience, bring down people's bills, and create the next generation of good, well-paid jobs. We set up the National Wealth Fund to invest in tomorrow's key industries, to build the infrastructure – the wind farms, solar farms, the grid infrastructure to power and connect our country for decades to come. **Because make no mistake**, the race is on for the clean energy jobs of the future. (Starmer, 2024c)

(6) I want work together on the huge challenges before us, like conflict and climate change, **because these forces work against everything we want to achieve**. They destroy economic growth, undermine security and opportunity, and generate migration at a level that we can't sustain. But **if we can find solutions to these problems, then there are also real opportunities here for growth and for investment.** (Starmer, 2024e)

Notably, in (5) we observe the sentence-initial position of the adverbial clause "Because make no mistake…", whilst in (6) the adverbial clause is utilised in a more prototypical position after the main clause, e.g. "I want work together on the huge challenges before us, like conflict and climate change, because these forces work against everything we want to achieve". The sentence-initial position of the adverbial clause in (5) can be treated as a case of foregrounding that is intentionally employed by Starmer and/or his speechwriters in order to draw the listener's focus to the ongoing race for clean energy jobs. Such pragmatic use of the sentence-initial position of the adverbial clause is in line with the literature (Hasselgård, 2017) which demonstrates that the pragmatic role of foregrounding the message is often manifested by the sentence-initial position of the adverbial clause. The pragmatic role of the foregrounding of an adverbial clause does not, however,

constitute a consistent strategy, as evident from excerpt (6), in which the adverbial clause "because these forces work against everything we want to achieve" is used after the main clause, i.e. in its prototypical and pragmatically unmarked position. Furthermore, the conditional subtype of the adverbial clause in (6) "… if we can find solutions to these problems, then there are…" also appears to follow the unmarked "if…then" pattern, which is prototypical both syntactically and pragmatically (Diessel, 2001; 2005; 2008).

Concluding the present discussion, it seems reasonable to note that, judging from the results of the corpus analysis, Starmer and his speechwriters quite clearly prefer three types of dependent clauses, namely, (i) infinitive, (ii) -ing, and (iii) adverbial clauses, whilst he underutilises such types of dependent clauses as indirect questions, past participle clauses, relative clauses, that-clauses, and verbless clauses (see Table 3).

4. Conclusions

The present investigation sought to look into the frequency of the occurrence of dependent clauses and their pragmatic roles in the corpus of Keir Starmer's speeches on climate change. The corpus analysis revealed that Starmer's speeches on climate change were characterised by the following types of clauses: (i) adverbial clauses, (ii) indirect questions, (iii) infinitive clauses, (iv) -ing clauses, (v) nominal relative clauses, (vi) past participle clauses, (vii) relative clauses, (vii) sentential relative clauses, (viii) that-clauses, and (ix) verbless clauses. Guided by the RQ in the study, it was established that the most frequently occurring types of dependent clauses were adverbial, -ing, and infinitive clauses. Their frequent occurrence in the corpus was indicative of Starmer's pragmatic choices of syntactic means, specifically dependent clauses, which, arguably, were intentionally employed in order to convey a call for climate change-related action, as well as a pragmatic strategy of developing the climate change-related message.

In this regard, it could be concluded, in harmony with Fairclough (2003), that the frequency of the occurrence of adverbial, -ing, and infinitive clauses could be indicative of Starmer's strategic and, supposedly, systematically made choices of deploying several frequent types of dependent clauses in his speeches on climate change. Arguably, Starmer's strategic choices of the aforementioned clauses were made at the expense of de-emphasising a whole array of relative clauses, inclusive of nominal relative clauses and sentential relative clauses, as well as past participle clauses. The low frequency of the occurrence of the aforesaid clauses could be interpreted in the Faircloughian (2003) sense as a pragmatic strategy of creating the discursive image of a more approachable and less pompous politician, who would not overcomplicate his discourse by using relative clauses, or other types of clauses typically associated with the academic register of English, such as, for instance, past participle and verbless clauses (Chilton, 2004; Wilson, 2015).

In summarising the study, it is important to acknowledge its shortcomings and limitations. In this regard, it should be pointed out that the corpus of the study

was limited to 11 speeches. Obviously, a more representative corpus of Starmer's speeches on climate change would be desirable. Additionally, it would be beneficial to juxtapose the findings reported in the present study with future studies on the use of dependent clauses in Starmer's speeches on this and/or other topics.

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Sažetak

SINTAKSIČKA SREDSTVA U GOVORIMA KIRA STARMERA O KLIMATSKIM PROMENAMA: ISTRAŽIVANJE ZAVISNIH REČENICA

Iako je Kir Starmer, aktuelni britanski premijer, stupio na dužnost relativno nedavno, 5. jula 2024. godine, već je održao niz govora u kojima je izrazio svoje stavove o pitanju klimatskih promena. Međutim, Starmerov diskurs o klimatskim promenama je prilično neistražen. Ovaj rad nastoji da ponudi novi uvid u nedovoljno istraženu temu Starmerovog diskursa o klimatskim promenama analizom sintaksičkih sredstava, kao što su zavisne klauze, u korpusu njegovih govora o pitanju klimatskih promena. U radu je dat pregled teorijskih premisa analize, praćen opisom korpusa, rezultatima analize i diskusijom. Posebna pažnja u radu je posvećena učestalosti pojavljivanja zavisnih klauza u korpusu. Rezultati korpusne analize ukazuju na to da su najčešće zavisne klauze u Starmerovim govorima o klimatskim promenama priloške, infinitivne i -ing klauze. Ovi nalazi se opširno ilustruju i razmatraju u radu.

Ključne reči:
zavisne klauze, diskurs klimatskih promena, Kir Starmer, sintaksička sredstva