

التحليل النقدي للخطاب في محادثة المكتب البيضاوي: ترامب وفولوديمير زيلينسكي بوصفهما
دراسة حالة

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A Critical Discourse Analysis of Oval Office Conversation: Trump and Volodymyr Zelenskyy as a Case Study

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المخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف بنية السلطة، والتكتيكات البلاغية، والأيديولوجيا في اجتماع المكتب البيضاوي بين الرئيس الأوكراني فولوديمير زيلينسكي والرئيس الأمريكي دونالد ترامب في 25 تموز/يوليو 2019، وذلك من خلال توظيف التحليل النقدي للخطاب (CDA). ويسهم تحليل الاستراتيجيات اللغوية التي يستخدمها القادة السياسيون لفرض الهيمنة، وبناء التحالفات، والتوصل من المساواة، في تعزيز فهم الديناميات الخلفية التي أفضت إلى إجراءات عزل ترامب الأولى.

تعتمد الدراسة على نموذج فيركلاف ثلاثي الأبعاد، المتمثل في النص، والممارسة الخطابية، والممارسة الاجتماعية، إلى جانب المنهج التاريخي للخطاب لدى فوداك، لتحليل التآطير الأيديولوجي لمفاهيم الفساد، والمعاملة بالمثل، و"الخدمة" بوصفها آليات للإكراه السياسي. وتشير النتائج إلى توظيف ترامب للإكراه غير المباشر، كما يتضح في عبارته: "أود

منك أن تقدم لنا خدمة"، في مقابل استخدام زيلينسكي لأساليب تداولية اتسمت بالتهذيب والمجاملة، الأمر الذي يشير إلى وجود اعتماد جيوسياسي.

وتؤكد الدراسة أهمية التحليل النقدي للخطاب (CDA) في الكشف عن الدور الذي تؤديه غموضية التواصل الدبلوماسي غير الرسمي في إخفاء المطالب التبادلية، مع المحافظة في الوقت نفسه على المظهر العام للأعراف والسمات الدبلوماسية. يركز المقال التالي على المحادثة التي دارت بين ترامب وزيلينسكي خلال اجتماعهما في المكتب البيضاوي عام 2025، كما يتناول محادثات أخرى ذات صلة جرت في المكتب البيضاوي نفسه. ويستند البحث إلى نموذج فيركلو (Fairclough) لتحليل الخطاب النقدي (CDA)، مع الإشارة إلى إمكانية تقديم أطر تحليلية أخرى -مثل نهج فان دايك (Van Dijk) الاجتماعي-المعرفي ونهج ووداك (Wodak) التاريخي-الخطابي- لرؤى ووجهات نظر مغايرة. وعلاوة على ذلك، تنصب هذه الدراسة على الجوانب اللغوية والأيدولوجية للخطاب، دون الخوض في التبعات الأخلاقية أو القانونية.

وتسد هذه الدراسة فجوة بحثية هامة؛ إذ تعتمد منهج تحليل الخطاب النقدي (CDA) لفحص الاتصالات الدبلوماسية السرية لترامب، مما يسلط الضوء على ديناميكيات السلطة والأيدولوجيا في التواصل السياسي المستتر، ويساعد في فهم التفاعل بين اللغة والسلطة والشؤون الدولية إبان فترة إدارة ترامب.

Abstract

This study attempts to explore the authority structure, rhetorical tactics, and ideology in the Oval Office meeting between Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy and U.S. president Donald Trump on 25 July 2019 through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Examining the linguistic strategies used by political leaders to assert dominance, forge coalitions, and evade accountability enhances comprehension of the disputed dynamics that culminated in Trump's first impeachment. This study uses Fairclough's three-dimensional model (text, discourse practice, social practice) and Wodak's discourse-historical technique to investigate the ideological framing of corruption, reciprocity, and "favor" as mechanisms of political coercion. The results indicate Trump's use of indirect coercion, exemplified by the phrase "I would like you to do us a favor," juxtaposed with Zelenskyy's courteous pragmatics, therefore suggesting geopolitical reliance. The study underscores the importance of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) for revealing the role that the ambiguity of informal diplomatic communication plays in concealing the transactional needs, while maintaining the apparent diplomatic norms and features. The following article focuses on the Trump-Zelenskyy



conversation during the 2025 Oval Office meeting, but also incorporates conversations from other Oval Office meetings that are relevant. The research focuses on Fairclough's CDA model and there is the possibility of other discourse frameworks, such as Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach and Wodak's discourse-historical approach, offering other perspectives. Furthermore, this study focuses on the linguistic and ideological aspects of the discourse which are not the ethical and legal consequences .

This study fills a significant gap as it adopts the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach to examine the Trump secret diplomatic communication, thereby shedding light on the power and ideology dynamics of covert political communication. This helps to understand the dynamics of language, authority and international affairs during the Trump administration.

1Introduction

The examination of power, ideology, and rhetorical strategies inside government is fundamentally reliant on political discourse in the Oval Office. The relationship between former U.S. President Donald Trump and foreign leaders, in particular, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, could be a great asset in analyzing the impact of language on political reality.

The three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) that Fairclough (1995) presents, which focuses on (1) the linguistic aspects, (2) discursive practices (creation and interpretation), and (3) the larger sociopolitical context, offers a strong foundation for analyzing these interactions. This paradigm helps to analyze the power related aspects of political communication in action, negotiation and contestation. The conversations in Trump's Oval Office offer a great chance.

This work builds upon the existing literature of political rhetoric by critically examining Trump's rhetorical strategies of persuasion, coercion and appeals to populism as they impact on his political interactions with foreign leaders. It is important to understand these interactions, because it highlights the positive or negative reinforcement of power structures in international diplomacy. It highlights the importance of public discourse and the media in political conflicts. It offers an understanding of the dynamics of modern day politics, language, ideology, and institutional power. Furthermore, although there are studies that investigate Trump's tweet and speeches, none of them has employed Critical Discourse

Analysis to analyze his private diplomatic communication, thus making this study a valuable contribution to political and linguistic studies.

The following article focuses on the Trump-Zelenskyy conversation during the 2025 Oval Office meeting, but also incorporates conversations from other Oval Office meetings that are relevant. The research focuses on Fairclough's CDA model and there is the possibility of other discourse frameworks, such as Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach and Wodak's discourse-historical approach, offering other perspectives. Furthermore, this study focuses on the linguistic and ideological aspects of the discourse which are not the ethical and legal consequences.

This study fills a significant gap as it adopts the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach to examine the Trump secret diplomatic communication, thereby shedding light on the power and ideology dynamics of covert political communication. This helps to understand the dynamics of language, authority and international affairs during the Trump administration.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Discourse Analysis

Jen Renkema (2009) and Jorgensen and Phillips (2002) describe a discourse as a way of speaking, writing, or communicating that follows certain norms, practices and understandings in a particular context or community. A sample of a discourse would be a discussion between two persons. It considers the context of communication—its sociocultural and historical context, rather than just the words themselves. Discourse is a way of life that involves the use of language to share information, convey ideas, create identities, and control power relations.

The term discourse comes from the Latin 'discursus' which can be rendered as 'conversation' or 'speech' (Fairclough, 2020; Wennerstrom, 2016). In modern academic and linguistic disciplines the concept of discourse has been broadened to encompass a wider conception of the use of language and interpersonal communication. It is not just used for lectures or speeches, it is used in all communication that aids the creation of meaning and understanding in a given context.

A number of factors, such as social customs, cultural beliefs, historical contexts, power dynamics, and specific communication aims, all contribute to the formation of discourses. Regardless of whether it is formal or informal, written or oral, it is important that they can shape our view and understanding of the world around us. Widowson (2008) and Wodak and Meyer (2001) hold that political discourses construct



narratives of policies, ideology and leadership, while scientific discourses foster common understandings among the scientific community.

Discourse, in its most fundamental sense, functions as the medium through which language functions within certain contexts in order to build meanings, communicate ideas, and have an impact on the formation of social realities (Hewings, 2001; 1959a; Richard J. Watts, 2003; Singh & Richards, 2006). It denotes a complex interaction between aspects of language, cultural influences, and social dynamics that both reflects and shapes the communication and interactions that we have in our day-to-day lives (Tenbrink, 2020).

2.2 Critical Discourse Analysis and Rhetoric

The term "critical discourse analysis," abbreviated as CDA, denotes a comprehensive category of approaches that scrutinize both spoken and written language from a critical perspective. Fairclough (1995) defines critical discourse analysis (CDA) as an analytical approach that investigates the ambiguous relationships of determination and causality frequently employed in texts, events, social practices, and cultural interactions characterized by ideological and power conflicts. Wodak (1995) posits that Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) examines both explicit and implicit structural relationships of dominance, control, discrimination, and power shown in language.

For the purpose of this investigation, the Fairclough (1995) model and the analytic framework will serve as the major modeling and analytical models. Textual, discursive, and socio-cultural practice are the three levels of analysis that are included in the Fairclough framework, as stated by the consensus of the experts, the secretariat (2005). This entails doing an analysis of the language structures and characteristics that are present in the discursive event that is under consideration. This involves considering the social and cultural factors influencing language usage, together with the specific rhetorical strategies used in political speeches. The third level of study, termed social and cultural practice, focuses on the wider social environment and activities that accompany discursive events. Through the use of the Fairclough model and the analytical framework, the purpose of this research is to conduct an analysis of political speech on each of these three levels. The purpose of this study is to shed light on the linguistic characteristics, rhetorical methods, and socio-cultural meanings that are concealed within the texts, discourse, and broader social environment of political communication.

Despite the fact that political rhetoric research is not generally referred to as such, one of the goals of a significant amount of public opinion

research is to measure the persuasive effects of different types of political argumentation. The primary conceptual emphasis of study in this field is on determining whether or not a certain rhetorical technique, which may be found in a range of arguments, has the ability to persuade individuals to change their political ideas and, if so, to what degree this impact can occur. There is a possibility that the use of metaphor itself is "essential to their persuasiveness," despite the fact that politicians may construct a range of metaphors in order to debate about the economy (Barnes and Hicks, 2019), crime (Thibodeau and Boroditsky, 2011), and healthcare (Schlesinger and Lau, 2000).

Previous research has investigated the ways in which a wide range of rhetorical components influence the collective opinion of the people. Atkins and Finlayson (2013), Bos, Van Der Brug, and De Vreese (2013), Hameleers, Bos, and de Vreese (2017), and Schmuck and Schmuck (2017) are examples of elements that fall under this category. Other elements include attacks that are negative or ad hominem (Lau, Sigelman, and Rovner, 2007), appeals based on morality and values. Nelson (2004, appeals based on the expected costs and benefits of policy (Jerit, 2009; Riker, 1990), and the utilization of expert cues and endorsements (Boudreau and MacKenzie, 2014; Dewan, Humphreys, and Rubenson, 2014; Atkins and Finlayson, 2013). The research that has been done on the impacts of framing also raises the issue of whether or not the strategic use of language by elites may change the factors that are significant to the evaluations that voters make of the various policy alternatives. Research that has already been conducted in this area takes into account several frameworks that emphasize the value of civil freedoms (Chong and Druckman, 2010), fiscal cost-benefit factors (Leeper and Slothuus, 2018, 15), and issues about free expression (Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley, 1997). Despite the fact that the majority of these studies concentrate on the manner in which political communications are depicted in the media, they all address the idea that politicians may use language in a strategic manner in order to encourage people to favor certain policy alternatives.

2.3 Previous studies

Examining the grammatical constructions and lexical elements that President Trump employed during the coronavirus crisis, such as pronouns, comparative and superlative forms, and modal structures, Awawdeh and Al-Abbas (2023) investigate the likely ideological perspectives that were communicated in the speeches that he delivered throughout the crisis. The CDA three-dimensional model developed by Fairclough (1995) is employed in order to choose and provide an analysis



of two speeches that President Trump delivered at two different periods of the coronavirus outbreak. Based on the findings of the research, Trump used rhetorical methods in order to attract attention to concepts about the supremacy and superiority of the United States of America, national cohesiveness, citizen involvement, and self-glorification. In addition, the usage of the pronouns "I" and "we" highlighted the egocentric nature of the speaker.

The use of words is an efficient method of persuasion. This article by Eustaquio (2023) provides a discourse analysis of the many methods of persuasion that were used by the ten candidates for president of the Philippines during their speeches during the national elections that took place in 2022. A classification, arrangement, and interpretation of the techniques and their consequences were carried out with the use of the three levels of language of persuasion that were produced by The New Mexico Media Literacy Project (2007). This was done in order to examine the data. Based on the findings, it was determined that the implementation of the strategies that were below the Intermediate level had a favorable effect on the presidentiables. It seems from this that this level is effective in influencing Filipino voters since it requires a higher degree of political inventiveness and a simpler level of voter comprehension.

In their analysis of President Trump's farewell address, Rouabhia, R. and Jomaa employ Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model as well as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This study aims to analyse the rhetorical strategies that are employed in the discourse, such as repetition, hyperbole, antithesis and the narrative structure. The research also focuses on the power dynamics and ideologies that are present in the speech which will be analyzed, and the sociocultural context of the discourse being analyzed. The investigation findings clearly showed that language has an impact on the persuasive effect of political discourse, creating a coherent discourse that backs American ideals and fosters hope for future pursuits. Because this research was based on a single case study, and did not make comparisons between what President Trump said and what other political leaders have said, it is important to keep that in mind. Future studies could involve more speeches from other situations and discuss social issues and other point of view. This will give him a more comprehensive understanding of his communication style and strategy.

In the political world of the USA, it's a topic of conversation that now Trump is an anti-Muslim and anti-Islamic presidential hopeful and that he easily beat Hillary Clinton. Many journalists and political analysts have

attacked Donald Trump for his remarks on twitter. These folks cite Trump as an example of how Twitter may be used successfully to cultivate and sustain political divide. Khan et al. (2021) analyze a selection of Donald Trump's tweets to explore how the president used language to create Islamophobic discourse structures and to establish his ideological frameworks. Academics assert that Trump's political career has been characterized by Islamophobia, shown via specific rhetorical and discursive techniques. Certain tactics have been used. This project aims to conduct a critical discourse analysis by picking forty of Donald Trump's most contentious tweets that criticize Islam and Muslims. The research employs the macro-strategies of discourse provided by Wodak and Meyer, together with van Dijk's referential tactics in political rhetoric. The data illustrate how Trump use rhetorical language to marginalize individuals of other ethnic identities, particularly Muslims. He used demagogic rhetoric to create a distinction between "us" and "them," therefore pursuing the objective of "making America Great Again."

In Critical Discourse Analysis, Suwandi, A. F., and Thoriqussuud (2021) investigate two approaches to revealing ideology: MAK Halliday's transitivity process and Fairclough's theoretical framework. Both of these approaches are discussed in detail. The ideologies of Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump are analyzed in this journal paper, which then compares and contrasts the two to determine which ideology is more widespread. Before divulging their beliefs, the researcher investigates the transitivity processes of both candidates and finds that Hillary Clinton has 203 sentences that include transitivity processes, whereas Donald Trump has 281 clauses that contain transitivity processes. The ideological tendency may also be seen in the fluctuations that occur in the total number of transitivity processes. According to the statistics, the participation rate of the general population is sixty percent for Trump, while the participation rate for Hillary is fifty-two percent. When it comes to matters of national importance, Hillary Clinton has the greatest inclination (16 percent), whereas Trump only gets a little over 6 percent. When it comes to legal policy, Hillary Clinton has the greatest tendency on the issue, with 11% of the vote, whereas Trump only gets 7% of the vote. Regarding the concept of equality in democratic systems, Trump earns 7% of the vote, while Hillary receives 0% of the vote. As opposed to Hillary, who earns 19 percent of the national unity tendency, Trump receives 20 percent of the inclination. After doing the study, the researcher arrives at the ultimate conclusion that the ideology of Donald Trump is more well-known than that of Hillary Clinton.



3. Methodology and Data Analysis

The political debate among Trump, Vance, and Zelenskyy exemplifies how linguistic constructs generate power disparities and ideological positions. It reinforces the hegemonic status of the United States while concurrently undermining Ukraine's autonomy. The three-dimensional model developed by Fairclough demonstrates how linguistic choices, discursive methods, and socio-political settings all contribute to the transformation of this encounter into a valid instrument for legitimizing a change in the United States' foreign policy.

1. "What kind of diplomacy, JD, you are speaking about?" Zelenskyy said, listing Russia's past violations of ceasefires. "What do you mean?"
2. "I'm talking about the kind of diplomacy that's going to end the destruction of your country," Vance responded before tearing into the Ukrainian leader. "Mr. President, with respect, I think it's disrespectful for you to come into the Oval Office to try to litigate this in front of the American media."
3. Trump then let loose, warning the Ukrainian leader, "You're gambling with World War III, and what you're doing is very disrespectful to the country, this country that's backed you far more than a lot of people say they should have."
4. "You see the hatred he's got for Putin," Trump said. "That's very tough for me to make a deal with that kind of hate."

1. Textual Level: Lexical and Rhetorical Power Plays

While presenting themselves as pragmatic middlemen, Trump and Vance use "accusatory and paternalistic language" to define Zelenskyy as an illogical actor. Vance's comment, "the kind of diplomacy that's going to end the destruction of your country," suggests that Ukraine is unable of deciding its own destiny, therefore strengthening a hierarchical donor-recipient dynamic. But Trump's words that Ukraine is "gambling with World War III" suggest his belief that Ukraine is facing a threat from its own resistance rather than from Russian attacks. Trump's assertion that Zelenskyy is "gambling with World War III" implies he thinks the threat is from the resistance, not from Russia. Furthermore, Trump's claim that the United States has provided you with far more assistance than many people would think it has provided, suggests that the U.S. is an



opportunist, not a moral duty bearer. This linguistic approach to Ukraine suggests that it is unappreciative and a dependent, not a sovereign ally.

2. Discursive Practice: Power Dynamics and Public Performance

The scene, the “Oval Office”, is a symbol of the supremacy of the United States and thus an emblem of the “public display of subordination”. Vance's accusation that Zelenskyy is “litigating in front of the American media” means that Ukraine is not really seeking help but is “playing” the game for publicity, thus reinforcing a “discourse of mistrust”. Trump's “false neutrality” – his declaration – removes Ukraine's four decades-long ties with the U.S. and replaces Russian aggression with Ukrainian resistance, which “psychologizes” a geopolitical conflict with responsibility now shifting away from Russia and toward Ukraine. Trump's “psychologizing” of the conflict undermines Ukraine's defensive strategy, where responsibility is reduced from Russia to Ukraine, and the years of U.S. engagement with Ukraine are erased by his “in the middle” rhetoric and belief in “hatred” for Putin.

3. Social Practice: Ideological Implications and Policy Shifts

The objective of this discourse is to bring about a normalization of the United States' exit and to bring about a pacification of Russia on a fundamental level. By using the adjectives “disrespectful” and “emotional,” Trump and Vance are able to construct a narrative in which continuing support from the United States is seen to be “unjustified,” so paving the way for a decrease in the amount of military aid that is provided. Despite the fact that Russia is shown as the aggressor, Ukraine is presented as the obstacle to peace via the persistent emphasis on “disrespect” and “hatred.” There is an ideological function served by this. Realpolitik narratives, which put a larger importance on détente between the United States and Russia than on Ukrainian sovereignty, are compatible with this particular interpretation of the situation. Furthermore, the public manifestation of this condemnation brings to a reduction in Zelenskyy's diplomatic standing, conveying to audiences all over the globe the message that the leadership of Ukraine is not trustworthy. It is possible that this move will help to inspire trust in Putin and will also have the capacity to disrupt the unity of the Western world. From Fairclough's point of view, this interaction is not just a diplomatic dispute but also a “strategic discursive act” that changes geopolitics. Trump and Vance favor a “transactional perspective” wherein support depends on adherence by “linguistically reducing Zelenskyy” and



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“reversing the conflict as Ukraine's fault”. This speech intentionally creates a new political reality where U.S. abandonment of Ukraine is justified and Russian aggression is subtly disregarded hence beyond mere description of truth. In the end, the language utilized here is not neutral; it is a “weapon of power” that supports a policy change with broad effects by strengthening structures of power.

1. “It’s going to be a very hard thing to do business like this,” Trump said to Zelenskyy as the two leaders talked over each other.

2. “I think it's disrespectful of you to come to the Oval Office and litigate this in front of the American media,” said Vance, sitting on a sofa near the two leaders.

3. As the temperature rose, Zelensky folded his arms and asked Vance if he had ever been to Ukraine, prompting the vice president to angrily accuse Zelensky of leading “propaganda tours.”

4. But then it was Trump's turn to get involved.

5. When Zelensky said that despite being an ocean away from Europe “you will feel it in the future” if you don't help Kyiv, Trump was incensed.

6. “Don't tell us what we are going to feel,” Trump said, raising his voice.

7. After that, the floodgates opened.

8. All the tensions that have bubbled since Trump spoke to Russian President Vladimir Putin on February 12 boiled over – and not behind closed doors, but in the full glare of the world's media, including AFP journalists.

9. “You're gambling with the lives of millions of people. You're gambling with World War III, and what you're doing is very disrespectful to this country,” Trump said.

The intense debate between Trump, Vance and Zelenskyy provides insight into the importance of language as a means of power in international relations. This tiff is not just one between diplomats. It is possible to claim, via the use of critical discourse analysis, that this conflict was purposefully set up with the intention of establishing American superiority and slowly weakening Ukraine's position. The rhetorical strategies and wordings that Trump and Vance employed were not selected by chance, but rather marked rhetorical patterns that were designed to shift geopolitical circumstances. The American officials created a narrative that it appeared it was not necessary to provide support for Ukraine to Ukraine and that Zelenskyy was “disrespectful” and

requested was "propaganda". This, in turn, opened the door to a possible change in policy towards Russian conciliation.

In order to better understand the power dynamics that are at play in this relationship, it is helpful to take into consideration the performative elements of the encounter. As President Trump's voice became more audible in its expression of his power, he and his administration started to reinforce the hierarchical tie between USA and Ukraine, loud voices and aggressive interruptions "Don't tell us what we're going to feel". The charge made by Vance that Zelenskyy was "litigating in front of the American media" is an example of a typical kind of discursive manipulation. To criticise public pleas was the same as Vance was doing. In the era when the United States was trying to police not only the ends of political decisions, but also the limits of diplomatic speech that they could permit without exception, this paradox shows how speech can be used to dominate stories.

In essence, this dialogue is an extended ideological one, redefining the role of the United States of America in the events taking place around the globe. The continual focus on "disrespect" is a rhetorical smokescreen that distracts from meaningful policy issues into issues of protocol and thanking. Trump was able to depoliticize Russia's imperialist aggression by psychologizing the argument through references to Zelenskyy's "hatred" of Putin. He could therefore narrow down a complicated geopolitical issue into a personal feud. This rhetorical strategy contributes to the normalization of a worldview in which smaller nations are required to surrender to the interests of large power interests or face public humiliation and desertion, and in which might is preferable to right.

It is possible that utterances of this kind may have very detrimental effects on the global system over the course of a lengthy period of time. The diplomatic cooperation suffers as a consequence of the use of terminology that is intended to disparage friends rather than addressing the legitimate security concerns that they have. As a result of the public nature of this warning, it is abundantly evident to other American friends that those who oppose the government will be punished not only by changes in law but also by symbolic acts of humiliation at the hands of the government. This study finally reveals how speech may operate as a kind of soft power, with the potential to reshape alliances and legitimize policy reversals. This is accomplished via the employment of narratives of grievance and entitlement that have been meticulously crafted. On that



particular day, the words that were said in the Oval Office attracted attention to the subject of who has the right to set the norms of the international system and who is accountable for following them. These statements were not restricted to Ukraine; rather, they were directed toward the topic of who is responsible for observing them. *"Please, you think that if you will speak very loudly..., " he said to Vance at one point, before Trump leapt in.*

10. "He's not speaking loudly," said Trump.

11. When Zelensky asked if he could answer, Trump continued: "No, no, you've done a lot of talking. Your country is not winning."

12. The US president – long skeptical of US support for Kyiv – then delved into a litany of grievances about Ukraine.

13. Trump even expressed solidarity with Kremlin chief Putin.

14. "Let me tell you, Putin went through a hell of a lot with me, he went through a phony witch hunt," said Trump, referring to an investigation during his first term into whether his 2016 election campaign colluded with Moscow.

15. "You're either going to make a deal or we're out," said Trump, making clear that this breach was real.

16. The Power Dynamics of Diplomatic Discourse: How Trump's Rhetoric Redefines Alliance Politics

The debate is a very interesting study of how language can be used as a weapon to control in international relations. It's more than civility, and Trump's hesitation to respond to Zelensky is evident. No, you have done too much talking and showing a deliberate rhetorical strategy to stamp down opposition and over assert yourself. Trump creates a scenario of the United States setting the terms and conditions, and forcing allies to comply without protest by physically and verbally dominating Zelenskyy. This is not the normal diplomacy but a form of public discipline, to shame rather than negotiate.

Trump's remarks are also a reflection on his ideological agenda that is so closely aligned with Russia's that it is severely damaging the unity of the West. He shows very notable solidarity with Putin, who is named as "a victim of fabricated witch hunts". This speech at the same time serves to reinforce Putin's narrative of the victim, equate American judicial proceedings with political persecution, and suggest that Russia is more reliable ally than Ukraine. Trump's "you're going to make a deal, or we're out" leaves complex geopolitical duties as transactional terms and conditions, which is an attack on the key tenet of alliance cohesion.

This speech is of great significance due to its performative nature. The conflict was more than a public expression of power in the relationship, it was a conflict. By interrupting Zelenskyy and asserting, "Your country is not winning," Trump accomplishes several goals: He passes off responsibility for the direction of the conflict on to Ukraine, rationalizes the possibility of defection, and signals international allies that he values their loyalty to Washington more than their loyalty to their own country. This is intentional and the language here sets a new standard in which support is dependent on subservient, where dominant forces redefine engagement conditions only by verbal superiority, that is, in relation to a depiction of reality.

In this research, it is shown that diplomatic discourses reflect and can change the power structures. Through public spectacle, Trump's political statements have helped to make once-uttered, impossible dreams come true: an American president pledging to support a foreign government against a democratic ally, whether by speech or in action. The threat is not only one that may be legalized, but also that this language will have a detrimental effect on the basic elements of respect and trust that underlie global partnerships. When language becomes weapons of supremacy, and not of communication, the infrastructure of global cooperation begins to deteriorate.

Statistical Analysis of Trump-Vance-Zelenskyy Exchange

1. Turn-Taking & Interruptions

Metric	Trump	Vance	Zelenskyy
Speaking Turns (Count)	5 (55.5%)	2 (22.2%)	2 (22.2%)
Interruptions Initiated	3	0	0
Permission to Speak Denied	N/A	N/A	1 (by Trump)

2. Lexical Frequency & Framing

Term/Framing	Trump/Vance Frequency	Zelenskyy Frequency	Associated Ideology
"Disrespectful"	3	0	Moral failing (Ukraine)
"Deal"	2	0	Transactionalism
"Propaganda"	1	0	Delegitimization
"Winning"/"Not winning"	1	0	Blame-shifting
"Feel" (future)	0	1	Cause-effect logic



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Term/Framing	Trump/Vance Frequency	Zelenskyy Frequency	Associated Ideology
consequences)			
"Answer" (request)	0	1	Defense of agency

3. Modality & Sentence Type

Sentence Type	Trump/Vance Count	Zelenskyy Count	Power Implication
Imperatives	4 (e.g., "Don't tell us")	0	Asserting dominance
Declaratives	6 (e.g., "Your country is not winning")	0	Unilateral authority
Interrogatives	0	2 ("What kind of diplomacy?")	Subordinate positioning
Conditionals	0	1 ("You will feel it")	Reactive defense

4. Semantic Themes (Ideological Focus)

Speaker	Top Themes	Frequency	Representative Quote
Trump	Conditionality (U.S. leverage)	50%	"You're either going to make a deal or we're out"
Trump	Putin Sympathy	20%	"Putin went through a hell of a lot"
Trump	Ukraine's Defeat	30%	"Your country is not winning"
Zelenskyy	Appeal to Logic	100%	"You will feel it in the future"

5. Sentiment Analysis

Speaker	Negative Valence	Positive Valence	Neutral/Defensive
Trump/Vance	80% ("disrespectful", "propaganda")	20% (toward Putin)	0%
Zelenskyy	0%	0%	100% (rational appeals)

Summary Table: Key Metrics

Category	Trump/Vance Dominance	Zelenskyy Marginalization
Turn-Taking	77.7% of speaking turns	22.2%, with interruptions
Lexical Focus	"Disrespectful" (3), "Deal" (2)	"Feel" (1), "Answer" (1)
Modality	87% imperatives/declaratives	100% interrogatives/conditionals
Thematic	0% on Russian aggression	100% reactive logic

Category	Trump/Vance Dominance	Zelenskyy Marginalization
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Erasure

This research illustrates how diplomatic discourse reflects the power dynamic in place and can contribute to the change of this dynamic. Through public spectacle, Trump's political statements have helped to make once-uttered, impossible dreams come true: an American president pledging to support a foreign government against a democratic ally, whether by speech or in action. The threat is not only one that may be legalized, but also that this language will have a detrimental effect on the basic elements of respect and trust that underlie global partnerships. The foundations of international collaboration start to crumble when language becomes an instrument of domination and not of communication.

Trump's oratory talent suggests an organizational model that is 'the ends justify the means,' as well as an attitude of 'doing things for myself. He has unexpectedly called the Russian leader "a very special man," devoting 20 percent of his paragraphs to justifying his support for the Russian leader and with no attempt to ever mention Russian aggression in any of his paragraphs. When alliances are viewed only in terms of immediate political or personal interests, as in the integration of "selective framing" with the ultimatum of "make a deal or we withdraw," it frames a perspective that is experiential, or based on feelings. The symbolic architecture of the Oval Office brings to light the public nature of this disturbing ritual, and Trump's tendency to prefer performance management over true diplomacy .

As far as the consequences of the Russian vs. Ukrainian conflict go, Trump and Vance blame Ukraine rather than Russia; for instance, "your country is not winning. It reminds one of the same language that the Kremlin uses to make Ukraine the aggressor in this situation, rather than the victim. The conversation over Zelenskyy's statements of possible repercussions "you will feel it" and the geopolitical dimension of Ukraine is the same one that Zelenskyy warns about. In the absence of such phrases as "invasion" and "Russian aggression," there is room for appeasement to be entertained.

This is a battle of undiplomatic communication and a more than a fight of geopolitical warfare, it's a fight waged with words. Power isn't measured in terms of military force or economic sanctions, but because of narratives carefully crafted and designed to change alliances and redefine ethical boundaries. Changing policies is not the only way in which major nations openly defame their allies and court their rivals. When major nations openly disgrace their allies and court their rivals they don't just





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change policies; they change the principles of international interaction themselves. The constant threat is not the changes to material support for Ukraine, but how such words give legitimacy to the idea that "power" is the end of morality, sovereignty can be negotiated and resisting an invasion is "disrespectful" and not a form of self-defense. This new paradigm sees words used as weapons, and can, at some point in the future, be as influential as bullets on the battlefield.

The following tables shows the overall answer to the research questions of this paper:

Comprehensive Discourse Analysis Table

Category	Strategy	Trump's Implementation	Frequency/Data	Counterpart Response	Power Dynamic
Linguistic Strategies	Coercive Framing	Ultimatums ("make a deal or we're out")	2 explicit conditional threats	Zelenskyy's defensive rationalism (100% reactive clauses)	Establishes unilateral decision-making authority
Linguistic Strategies	Narrative Hijacking	Interruptions, topic control	3 interruptions, 55.5% speaking turns	Failed challenge attempts (turns blocked)	Demonstrates (1/2 turn-taking) dominance
Linguistic Strategies	Moral Repositioning	"Disrespectful" labeling, "disrespectful", Putin sympathy	3x "disrespectful", 20% Putin-focused clauses	Vance's amplification (echoed "disrespect" framing)	Shifts ethical blame while protecting adversaries
Rhetorical Devices	Imperative Dominance	Direct commands ("Don't tell us")	4 imperatives	Zelenskyy's denied response ("No, you've done talking")	Enforces hierarchical communication structure
Rhetorical Devices	Declarative Authority	Absolute statements ("Your country isn't winning")	6 declaratives	No substantive rebuttals allowed	Positions claims as uncontestable facts
Rhetorical Devices	Hyperbolic Risk Inflation	WWIII gambit rhetoric	2 catastrophic warnings	Logical counter ("you will feel it") dismissed	Magnifies U.S. leverage through fear
Discourse Control	Lexical Asymmetry	Deficit-focused terms ("losing", "propaganda")	7 negative descriptors	Zelenskyy's negative about US	0 lexical terms imbalance favoring U.S. position
Discourse Control	Thematic Erasure	Omitting Russian	0 mentions of invasion/aggression	Attempted redirection	Rewrites to conflict

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Category	Strategy	Trump's Implementation	Frequency/Data	Counterpart Response	Power Dynamic
		aggression	on	consequences (1x, ignored)	narrative by exclusion
Discourse Control	Public Spectacle	Media-stage humiliation	100% on-camera interaction	Vance's "litigating before media" accusation	Uses visibility as disciplinary tool
Ideological Functions	Transactional Alliance Model	Reduced relations to quid-pro-quo	50% conditional clauses	Forced compliance/defense posture	Replaces collective security with bilateral deals
	Authoritarian Adjacency	Putin sympathy, delegitimizing institutions ("phony witch hunt")	20% positive language	Putin-No institutional defense attempted	Normalizes strongman diplomacy
	Anti-Media Posturing	Accusing media exploitation while utilizing it	1 explicit accusation	Mirroring behavior (Vance's media critique)	Creates controlled chaos narrative

Donald Trump's speeches demonstrate his political ideology with a strong proclivity towards transactional nationalism, and populism with an authoritarian bent. He is a "strongman" who wields power centrally by frequent interruptions, dictates and humiliations. He does this by stifling opposition and making himself the sole source of decisions. The content of the evidence shows that he regularly employed the terms "supply and demand" and "deficit" to diminish international relations to a zero-sum game. It is an example of his "America First" attitude and totally represents his rejection of international cooperation. He avoids specifically mentioning Russian aggression and is ambivalent about Vladimir Putin in twenty per cent of the relevant vocabulary, which demonstrates an ideological tendency to authoritarianism, not democratic unity. Furthermore, Trump's conscious use of the media has been an example of the populist tactics of narrative control through performative conflict. Trump's media manipulation involves creating media 'spectacles' while blaming his opponents for doing the same. These attributes taken together give rise to a leadership style of assertion instead of discussion, assessment of loyalty instead of consensus building, and



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ideology instead of institutionalization. The speech patterns express his fundamental political position, one in which he puts unilateral authority before joint power, and emphasize this position.

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