Examining The Speech Act of Warning by President Donald Trump to Russia and Iran

Assistant Professor Dr. Mushtaq Abdulrazzaq Abdulzahra

University of Al-Qadisiyah, College of Education for Women

sharqawi.mushtaq@qu.edu.iq

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Abstract

Pragmatics is central for decoding what someone actually means with his or her words in any political context. This study aims at investigating (1) the use of Speech Act (SA) of warnings employed by Donald Trump in his talks toward Russia and Iran from a pragmatic perspective; (2) the Illocutionary Acts (IAs) within the framework of Speech Act Theory (SAT), and (3) the linguistic aspects, including modality, hedging, and repetition. Regarding methodology, SAT, Politeness Theory (PT), and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) were used in an integrative way. The study found that Trump's warnings fluctuate depending on the country. His messages to Iran are direct, conditional, and politically loaded. By contrast, his warnings to Russia are much more hedged, conditional, and strategically gray. These contrasting warnings proved that Trump performs code-switching of his language features depending on the nations' identities and diplomatic relations. Finally, the study provides recommendations for future research on warning discourse in broader cross-national political contexts.

Keywords: politeness, political discourse, pragmatic, speech act, warnings

الخلدراسة افعال كلام التحذير في تصريحات الرئيس ترامب تجاه روسيا وايران

ا.م.د. مشتاق عبد الرزاق عبد الزهرة

جامعة القادسية , كلية التربية للبنات

sharqawi.mushtaq@qu.edu.iq

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الخلاصة

يُعد علم اللغة التداولي محور اساسي لفك شفرة المعنى الحقيقي الذي يقصده المتحدث من كلماته في أي سياق سياسي. يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة: (١) استخدام أفعال الكلام المتمثلة في التحذيرات التي وظفها الرئيس دونالد ترامب في خطابه الموجه نحو روسيا وإيران من منظور تداولي و(٢) الأفعال القصدية ضمن إطار نظرية أفعال الكلام و(٣) الجوانب اللغوية، بما في ذلك تراكيب الافعال الناقصة، وأساليب التحوط اللغوي والتكرار. وفيما يتعلق بالمنهجية، تم توظيف كل من نظرية أفعال الكلام، ونظرية الأدب/اللباقة ، وتحليل الخطاب النقدي بشكل تكاملي. وقد خلصت الدراسة إلى أن تحذيرات ترامب تتفاوت باختلاف الدولة المعنية؛ إذ تتسم رسائله الموجهة إلى إيران بالمباشرة والارتباط بشروط محددة والمشحونة بدلالات سياسية، في حين تتسم تحذيراته لروسيا بقدر أكبر من التحوط والاشتراط والغموض الاستراتيجي. وتُظهر هذه التحذيرات المتباينة أن ترامب يعمد إلى التبديل الأسلوبي في خصائصه اللغوية بناءً على هوية الدول وطبيعة العلاقات الدبلوماسية معها. وأخيراً، تقدم الدراسة توصيات للبحوث المستقبلية حول خطاب التحذير في سياقات سياسية أوسع نطاقاً وعلى مستوى العلاقات بين الدول.

الكلمات المفتاحية: نظرية الادب، الخطاب السياسي، علم اللغة التداولي، افعال الكلام، التحذيرات

1. Introduction

In politics, language is not only a necessary tool for devising policies, but also an effective means of exercising power (coercion and persuasion). In a world in which nuances of wording can shape the fate of talks between nations, political rhetoric becomes an action (Hobbs, Li, Huang and Desmoulins, 2025). According to Kahn (2017), warnings are important practices of political SAs in an age of escalating antagonism or war. The idea here is that such statements, while being descriptive of power on one level, are designed to elicit specific behavior from others. In this respect, language theory and the use of power are closely inter-related in their study in political warnings (Samir 2012). Since the return of Donald Trump to the presidential office in 2024, foreign policy has undergone a clear transformation in relation to how political speeches are structured and articulated in the United States. The idiosyncratic mode of communication of Donald Trump, which is characterized by being confrontational, decisive, and more personal, has also reappeared on the world political scene (McMahon, 2024).

Thus, Trump's public statements offer valuable material for pragmatic analysis during a period of heightened global tensions, notably with Russia and Iran. Trump's political speeches exhibit rich material for pragmatic analysis. Trump's warnings, according to McMahon (2024), are frequently expressed through campaigns, presidential talks, and social media posts. These warnings are not only rhetorical adornments; they are also complex SAs that are anticipated to convey power, establish legitimacy, discourage aggression, and issue threats.

The breakout of the 2025 U.S-Iran war has increased global fear of the exertion of military powers and the strategic utterance deployed by the world leaders, to justify it (Bibi, Qias, and Hayat, 2025). In the realm of international politics, Ünlü (2024) claims that warnings are used as tools for both coercion and deterrence within the domain of diplomatic messaging. Being so, this means that issuing a warning is never a neutral or isolated occasion. In sociopolitical linguistics, SAs of warning are robust performative utterances that demonstrate the speaker's intention to influence or prevent a forthcoming action of danger from another party. According to Qadus, Imran and Gul (2025), and in terms of pragmatics, SAs of warning can be determined by the point at which they include multiple meanings with assumptions relating to power, in addition to expectations of conformity. The warnings that presidents have issued, notably by those who are viewed as extraordinary, like Trump, have been attached to the contexts of both political and language worlds. Besides their linguistic domains, examining SAs of warning helps inform how linguistic choices function not only to define the type of foreign policies but also to influence both diplomatic relations and international reactions (Qadus, Imran, and Gul, 2025).

This study aims to find out the how President Trump has employed his warnings to address two key opponents, one from Asia, i.e., Iran, and one from Eurasia, i.e., Russia. Iran and Russia have been the focus of the US policy narratives for a long time. This antagonism was initially caused by their opposition to American political interests, nuclear concerns, and military acts exhibited recently in the Middle East. In addition to being frequent, Trump's warnings to these nations are also rich in rhetorical devices and are expected to end up with a wide range of real-world effects. Therefore, such utterances constitute an example of a connection between linguistic strategies and foreign policies, whereby the form of language and socio-political contexts of every SA of warning are important to determine the nature of the connection. This study is significance because it provides a comprehensive pragmatic

perspective of the warning strategies issued by the most controversial president of the US (Donald Trump) to the most contesting states, Russia and Iran. It is worthy to mention that the US tensions with Russia and Iran are now ubiquitous and much-discussed world-wide.

To analyze these warnings pragmatically, there is a need to look at the specific strategies at the production level. The strategies are categorized into: the degree of directness of warnings, conditionality or contingency that is suggested, the existence or absence of the mitigating devices, and finally, the threat that is stated implicitly or explicitly. The degree of directness can influence the perceived intensity of a warning, whereas conditional remarks may provide diplomatic flexibility or restraint. The use of mitigation strategies, such as hedge, ambiguity, or appeals for assistance, can weaken the illocutionary force (IF) of a SA of warning (Thaler 2012). These aspects in combination define what is called the perlocutionary effect of a SA, which is an aspect of anticipated addressee response such as opposition, deterrence or compliance.

Scholars like Mammadov and Isgandarli (2023) noted that Trump's rhetorical style is transactional, hyperbolic, and populist. Some of those attributes undoubtedly have a bearing on the manner in which he sounds these warnings. And the credibility and importance of Trump's warnings have been conditioned by his past interactions with institutions like the Pentagon, State Department, and intelligence community. Moreover, due to the strategic nature of his warnings, they spread through global media networks fast, where a single utterance often becomes a widely-spread political message.

The objective of this study is to analyze how pragmatics and rhetoric are used by Donald Trump in his warning statements toward Russia and Iran. The study treats these warnings as Illocutionary Acts (IAs) based on SAT. It also examines linguistic features such as modality, hedging and repetition. In order to achieve the three objectives. The researcher poses three research questions:

1. How do discourse features of Trump's warnings differ from Russia to Iran?
2. What pragmatic strategies are employed in Trump's warning SAs directed towards Iran and Russia?
3. How do Trump's warnings serve as IAs in his political discourse?

2. Literature review

2.1 SAT and SA of warning

SAT originated from the works of the Oxford philosopher of ordinary language John Langshaw Austin (1911-1960). Thus, SAT, first introduced by Austin (1962) and later formalized by Searle (1969), constitutes the basis of this study. Austin thinks that what we say can do things. In other words, any utterance is not only a means of conveying information but also of performing actions. Searle expanded Austin's perspective by distinguishing between five types of IAs: expressives, directives, declaratives, representatives, and commissives (Dörge, 2004). In SAT, warning is a SA in which the speaker alerts the hearer of an impending danger, negative consequence, and undesirable future action. Based on Searle (1969) taxonomy, warning is generally regarded as a directive SA because the speaker tries to get the hearer to do or not do something in future. For instance, when one says: 'Do not get closer to that dog; it is dangerous', the speaker not just providing information, but performing a warning with the intention of to preventing harm.

According to Norrick (2015), in sociolinguistics and communication pragmatics, a warning is classified as a directive speech act whose primary function is to influence the listener's future actions to avoid a negative outcome. Direct warnings are the literal types such as 'I warn you', 'Do not do that' or 'Be careful'. Indirect warnings, however, may appear as advice, reminder, prediction, or conditional structure, such as 'You may regret this action' or 'If you continue in this manner, the consequences will be serious'.

In politics, warnings become effective pragmatic tools because it is frequently employed by political leaders, governments and institutions to sway people's opinion, justify policies, put pressure on rivals or prevent actions. In this context, political dialogue frequently relies on IAs to have a real effect, for instance, to establish authority or deterrence (Searle, 1969). As Balogun and Murana (2018) have argued, political discourse is an arena in which SAs like warnings are strategically functionally rather than just communicative. Presidents frequently construct their SAs to wield power and influence public opinion to achieve their institutional responsibilities. In Trump's situation, these SAs are frequently meant to generate power and reduce uncertainty in the part of his audience.

2.2 Trump's warnings in political discourse

In contrast to directives, the SAs of warning, according to Tang and Zhang (2024), are categorized into directive IA that aims to persuade the hearer not to do something. Nevertheless, warnings frequently include a conditional nature that makes them both threatening and preventive. Perlocutionary intent is also subtly associated with warnings, which are projected to induce deterrence, fear, or cooperation without necessitating threat-based action. In this context, IAs in diplomacy were examined by Anderson and Ishido (2018), who observed that SAs of threat and warning tend to become blurred when political pressure is applied, particularly during times of crisis. He adds that political warnings frequently contain both main IF (as advice) and other meanings (as a threat). Such a duality is often noticed when Trump is issuing warnings to Russia, Iran, or even China. Due to the performative aspect of such warnings, they are not only assessed from a pragmatic point of view but also from the angle of political strategy. This creates a need for politicians to strategically use pragmatic markers to handle the intensity of a warning.

These markers include modal verbs such as 'must', 'will', and 'can', conditional structures such as 'if...then', hedging devices such as 'could' and 'might', in addition to mitigation devices. The use of these modal verbs goes in line with Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory (PT), which defines the manner in which FTAs, such as warnings, are shaped with politeness strategies to moderate the harm, in addition to preserving assertiveness. Ashfira and Hardjanto (2020), in their study of Trump's political speeches, shed light on the presence of directive and assertive acts, in addition to the use of repetitive constructions and metaphorical expressions. Trump consistently goes for maximum clarity and intensity in his statements, avoiding indirection whenever possible. These constitute the characteristics that support the IF of his warnings.

Ramadhani and Indrayani (2019) claim that Trump's style shows a characteristic approach of warnings. They say that Trump usually favors a straightforward and warlike style with personal emotional assertiveness. Such a type style splits from the formal diplomatic normative speech. It also adds moderation, emphasis, and ambiguity in most cases. Ramadhani and Indrayani (2019) discussed that despite a speculative manner, his discourse

only serves as deliberative assertiveness in much more trading terms, while it always renders into an overt threat at the end of the speech.

Currently, warnings can gain additional practical importance when amplified by media platforms. Concerning the impact of the media, Xu (2022) demonstrates the way evidentiality influences political speeches. Their demonstration illustrated how both the source and medium of a warning influence its credibility and importance. As far as Trump's warnings, media agencies like Truth Social and broadcast media serve as essential tools in amplifying the persuasive impact of his warnings. Thus, due to their ability to shape interpretation, these media channels transform pragmatic acts into social events.

With the aim of highlighting the research gap, six pertinent previous studies have examined the relationships between SAT, political discourse, and Donald Trump's rhetorical strategies. Every study brings a unique methodological or theoretical perspective to the table, which serves to develop the investigation that is currently being conducted.

The first investigation was carried out in 2018 by Balogun and Murana. They studied Trump's inaugural speech's politeness strategies and presuppositions. They based their pragmatic investigation on the PT and noted that Trump regularly violates politeness norms to assert his power, particularly by making overt warnings and exaggerated facts about outside dangers.

In their 2019 study, Ramadhani and Indrayani conducted a pragmatic investigation of IAs in Trump's campaign speeches. They stated that his preferred strategies include repetition, directness, and explicit threat. Such strategies were often used in reference to foreign policy opponents, with Iran being a specific example.

Away from the PT, a primary study of Trump's presidential discourse features was conducted by Ashfira and Hardjanto (2020). Based on Searle's (1969) taxonomy of SAs, they found that Trump repeatedly employs directive, commissive, and assertive acts, respectively, to show confidence and power. Their study places a strong emphasis on Trump's deliberate application of assertiveness as a medium of highlighting political stances and influencing worldwide views.

In his study, Xu (2022) investigated the concept of 'evidentiality' in the US presidents' speeches. Xu evaluated the ways in which various presidents construct their warnings by utilizing intelligence or external sources. In his speech, Trump was found to disregard the institutional sources in favor of personal belief, which heightens the apparent confidence of his warnings and creates the impression that they are generated solely by his own.

Like Balogun and Murana's (2018) study, which focuses attention on Trump's usage of SA of warning. Oraibi (2022) investigates the dynamics of power observed in political discourse in the US speeches. Their findings indicate that Trump's warnings serve to provide justifications for imposition of sanctions or protective military operations, in addition to being signs of poltical authority that serve to preserve the dominance of the US.

The most recent study was conducted by Tang and Zhang (2024). It was a comparative study in which the Chinese and the US political warnings were analyzed using SAT. Tang and Zhang found that speeches delivered by the US figures was characterized by the adaption of a combative tone with high IF and low mitigation. This was noticed particularly in scenarios

related to North Korea or Iran during the administration of Donald Trump. Here is a table showing the focus, method, and results of each study.

Table 1. The recent studies on Trump's SAs and Warnings

Study	Main focus	Method	Results
Balogun and Murana (2018)	The use of politeness strategies and presupposition in Trump's inaugural speeches.	Pragmatic framework and PT	Trump violated the diplomatic politeness norms in order to strengthen his warnings which were perceived as power-oriented.
Ramadhani and Indrayani (2019)	The presence of the IAs in Trump's campaign speeches.	Pragmatic model following Searle's taxonomy.	The overuse of directness, repetition and threat is common in Trump's campaign speeches.
Ashfira and Hardjanto (2020)	The presence of directives and assertives in Trump's speeches.	Qualitative method. Analysis of discoursal features.	Trump demonstrates certainty and authority through the employment of assertiveness.
Xu (2022)	The IF and evidentiality in US presidents' speeches including Trump's.	Pragmatic analysis of discoursal features.	Trump tends to foreground his personal assertions as opposed to explicit references to political institutions, reinforcing the power of his warnings.are
Oraibi (2022)	The dynamics of power and positioning in US figure's discourse including Trump's.	The analysis of socio-pragmatic features.	He tried to rationalize sanctions and defensive military actions as marks of ultimate power to uphold the US dominance.
Tang and Zhang (2024)	The comparison between China and the US figure's warnings.	Analyzing and comparing SAs.	In contrast to China's warnings, Trump's warnings are often marked by a low degree of mitigation and a high degree of threat.

According to this literature review, previous studies have investigated aspects of politeness strategies, illocutionary acts, presupposition, assertiveness, evidentiality, power relations and the general use of SA of warning in politics. However, these studies were primarily a broader analysis of Trump´s rhetorical style and did not treat warning as an individual SA with relevant pragmatic strategies, illocutionary functions and linguistic markers. Moreover, the majority of the studies focused on Trump's first presidential terms or campaign speeches and rather little has studied his SA of warning in the current 2024-present administration especially the accompanying new geopolitical tensions.

In addition, earlier studies did not offer a systematic comparison of Trump's warnings directed at different international targets, most importantly, Russia and Iran. Most studies relied principally on qualitative description, in general without providing quantitative data about the frequency and characteristics of warning strategies. Thus, this study intends to

bridge this gap by conducting statistical procedures using formal SAT (2) extends the time scope to the 2024-2025 presidency, and finally (3) compares country-specific warnings uttered by the same speaker. In doing so, it presents an analytically and methodologically novel perspective to the developing discipline of pragmatics.

3. Theoretical framework

In order to establish the conceptual foundations for analyzing President Donald Trump's warning SAs from 2024 to the present, this study sets the framework to analyze the strategic and communicative functions of Trump's warnings to Iran and Russia. This is achieved through the combination of linguistic models with political pragmatics, based on SAT, PT, and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

3.1 SAT

SAT is employed as the basis of this investigation. Austin's theory differentiates between locutionary 'what is said', illocutionary 'what is meant/intended', and perlocutionary 'what is accomplished' acts. The IF is what matters particularly in political SAs of warning, as they communicate intent such as coercion, condemnation, or deterrence. Searle's taxonomy categorizes SAs into five types: declaratives, directives, expressives, assertives, and commissives. Although warnings frequently contain commissive sense, such as promises of retribution or implied threats, they fall under the category of directives because their purpose is to affect the future actions of the hearer.

Within this context, the assertion "Iran will pay a heavy price if it continues its nuclear aggression" possesses dual If: the first is a directive act (meaning 'to cease action'). Moreover, the second is a commissive act, meaning to 'promise to retaliate'. SAs rely heavily on Searle's felicity conditions for successful SAs, which include the authority upheld by the speaker, the relevance of context, and the seriousness of intent. In order to meet these conditions, the study examines how Trump establishes his authority and context, and in the SAs of warning to Iran and Russia.

3.2 PT and Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs)

In order to conduct a more in-depth analysis of the pragmatic dynamics of warnings, this study employs Brown and Levinson's (1987) PT, in which language is conceptualized in terms of FTAs. An act of warning is built to threaten the negative face (NF) of the hearer, the wish to be unimpeded in action, as well as the positive face (PF), especially if delivered with either accusations or moral judgments.

In his speech and in terms of PT, Trump tends to violate the conventions of politeness by opting to employ 'bald-on-record' strategies. For instance, he resorts to the direct threat "You will be destroyed" in favor of more indirect strategies. According to Brown and Levinson, there are four politeness strategies for minimizing face threat: hedging, conditionality, indirect speech, and deference. The degree to which Trump employs or opposes these strategies will reveal his position on diplomacy as opposed to harsh language, and this is what this study will reveal. This theoretical approach is especially relevant and will be utilized when comparing his warning remarks towards Iran and Russia.

3.3 CDA

CDA stands for Critical Discourse Analysis, an interdisciplinary and qualitative approach in linguistics that studies how power relations, dominance, and social inequalities are constructed, reinforced, or challenged through language, text, and talk (Wodak, 2014). This

study employs elements of the CDA model by Van Dijk (1997; 2006) to categorize these SAs within wider political and ideological contexts. Thus, the use of language is not only regarded as neutral by the CDA model; it is a rather social use that is dependent on ideologies and power. CDA in this restricted sense highlights how discourse empowers, legitimizes and shapes identities as well as power relations. Warnings are not merely pragmatic strategies but performative articulations of the state's power. Drawing from CDA, this study analyzes the ways in which Trump 1) constructs a narrative of U.S. superiority; 2) frames adversaries as existential threats; and 3) deploys national security discourse to justify aggressive rhetoric.

3.4 Pragmatic markers and strategic framing

The analysis model of this paper provides political and theoretical frameworks for insights, which are specifically tied to four pragmatic markers designed to mirror intention, tone, and stance. These markers are:

1. Conditional expressions with 'if-then' structures, which help create and sustain deterrence, such as 'if X, then Y'.
2. Modal verbs indicating likelihood or obligation, such as 'may', 'will', and 'must'.
3. Use of evidence that supports national interest, authority, or empirical data.
4. Repetition and metaphor are used as instruments for reinforcing ideology and evoking emotional appeal.

The linguistic markers mentioned above are necessary in defining the pragmatic power and degree of the warnings. For instance, warnings spoken with the modal verb 'will' as opposed to those spoken with 'might' trigger dissimilar implications as they indicate significant disparity in their IF.

3.5 Integrative approach

This study utilizes a three-dimensional integrative method because it combines three levels of analysis: (1) SAT, (2) PT, and (3) CDA. Using this analytical framework helps to investigate the form and function of Trump's SAs of warning. Employing SAT in this study is useful for demonstrating a pragmatic viewpoint of the warnings. PT identifies the pragmatic norms of politeness in language. CDA analyses the ways in which social meanings are established and how political ideas are reflected. Thus, jointly, the three dimensions supply an exhaustive analysis of the application of language in the organization of the international vision, along with the use of power in policy.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research design

Thus, jointly, the three dimensions supply an exhaustive analysis of Trump's wording and the organization of the international vision, along with the use of power in policy. Quantitative procedures are employed systematically in order to define numerical patterns, including frequencies, percentages, and Chi-square Tests. Then, qualitative methods are employed to facilitate the examination of the contextual and strategic functions of SAs in political speech. The study employed multi-dimensional coding. Each warning utterance was treated as a single unit of analysis and could be coded with multiple codes across the analytical dimensions. More about coding is explained in sub-section 4.4.

4.2 Source and collection of data

The study's data were obtained from three widely accessible sources through which Donald Trump sends out both official and unofficial messages. These sources are: (1) Social media

posts from 'Truth Social' and presidential campaign outlets, (2) presidential speeches posted by Fox News, CNN, and White House website, and finally (3) transcripts of rallies and the private as well as mainstream media interviews from LexisNexis.

The basic online search included the word 'Russia' and 'Iran' in the domains of the above-mentioned platforms. Warnings found in other websites were included after being verified for existence in the above-mentioned platforms

4.3 Corpus size and inclusion criteria

Regarding corpus size, a total of 60 examples of SAs of warning have been selected; 30 messages directed to Iran, and other 30 messages directed to Russia. Regarding the inclusion of data, the study sets these criteria:

1. The data were drawn from either official sources and verified news transcripts.
2. The data included only the direct and indirect warnings directed towards Iran or Russia
3. The data were relevant to the period starting from January 2024 to the till the end of 2025.

4.4 Data coding

Searle's (1969) classification of IAs serves as the basis for the categorization process in this study. Additionally, supporting principles from Brown and Levinson's (1987) PT are utilized to provide a politeness perspective.

A multi-dimensional coding was used in this study where each warning utterance was treated as a single unit of analysis and could be coded with multiple codes across the analytical dimensions. In relation to directness dimension, the categories direct and indirect were mutually exclusive (i.e., each utterance was assigned to only one category). The features high modality, conditionality, mitigation, and moral/religious appeal, on the other hand, might co-occur in the same warning and were coded separately in terms of present-or-absent binary feature. Since one warning might perform both directive and commissive function at the same time, the illocutionary functions were also coded non-exclusively. As a result, the total number of the coded features may be greater than the utterances. As such, frequency values represent the number of utterances containing each feature instead of mutually exclusive category totals. Regarding the inferential analysis, the study applied a 2 × 2 chi-square test of independence on each feature separately between Iran and Russia sub-corpora. The variables listed below are used to code warnings:

4.4.1 IA Type

In this coding, three acts are identified:

Table 2: SAs with examples

	Coding	Description	Real examples
1	DIR	Directive	"They have to stop now," or "Accept the deal."
2	COM	Commissive	"We will act," or "It is our job to do that."
3	EXP	Expressive	"The US has a very powerful war capability."

4.4.2 Pragmatic strategies

In this analysis, four pragmatic features are identified:

Table 3. Linguistic features of Trump's speech

Feature		Description	Real examples
1	Mitigation	using vague threats, conditional language or hedging.	"They have to act or there will be us." "Iran might want to think twice about their recent activities. Maybe they'll back off, maybe they won't." "We might have to take a look at what Russia is doing. Maybe they'll reconsider if I'm in office."
2	Directness	using imperatives, modals, and agentive verbs	"Stop bombing the Ukrainians." "They will have to pay for our protection." "He should thank me for saving his life."
3	Evidentiality	Reference to intelligence, data, allies	"According to our intelligence, Russia is planning something big. We know it, they know it."
4	Conditionality	"If...then" structures indicating potential outcomes	"If Iran attacks any Americans, we will respond immediately and decisively."

The NVivo software was utilized to code each act of warning. Then, the results were cross-validated to ensure inter-coder reliability. Refer to sub-section 4.5.

4.4 Analytical techniques

Being a mixed-mode study, two primary modes of analysis were used. The following table gives accounts for the analytical processes.

Table 4. Stages of analysis

Stage 1 Quantitative Analysis		Stage 2 Qualitative Analysis
Steps	Counting frequencies of IAs by country.	Finding thematic patterns in speech framing (e.g. religion, security or global order)
	Counting and dividing warnings into direct and indirect.	Analyzing repetition, metaphor and deixis.
	Identifying modality and Conditionality	Comparing Trump's attempts to construct national identity versus opponent image.
	Applying Chi-square tests to decide whether or not there is a statistically significant difference between Trump's warning to Russia and Iran.	

4.5 Tools of analysis

Three software applications were used in this study:

1. SPSS software version 28 was used for performing chi-square tests for independence.

2. AntConc software was used to analyze lexical items via frequency and concordance. It is an easy-to-use software which enables the researcher to handle large collections of text for word patterns without requiring a knowledge of programming like SPSS.

3. NVivo software version 14 was utilized for qualitative coding and annotations. NVivo is a software for analyzing qualitative data to help researchers organize, classify information like interviews, focus groups, surveys, audio and social media. NVivo is a computer software program that allows researchers to manage, analyze, and visualize qualitative data and documents systematically and individually (Dhakal, 2022).

4.6 Reliability and validity

Reliability is the capacity of a measurement instrument to produce consistent outcomes at each application instance, as well as the degree to which it reflects the subject matter and maintains the established standards (Arslan, 2022). To verify the reliability of coding in this study, a second qualified linguist from the Department of English, College of Education has independently coded 25% of the information, i.e., the dataset. After the analysis, Cohen's Kappa value of inter-coder reliability came up with a score of 0.71 which suggested good agreement with the researcher analysis. In order to enhance the validity of the analysis, warning SAs were only considered if they could be triangulated in at least two reliable sources (e.g., speech and media transcripts). By using multiple sources, it is possible to be confident that the utterance is an actual SA of warning rather than a paraphrase or misunderstanding.

4.7 Ethical terms

The study does not use human subjects and instead makes use of political discourse available in the public domains. Citations, however, adhere to correct attribution guidelines to avoid misrepresentation and manipulation. All analyses are limited to empirical data and discourse patterns, and no subjective commentaries are included.

5. Analysis and findings

In order to be systematic and precise, an in-depth analysis of President Donald Trump's 60 warning SAs towards Russia (with 30 warning instances) and Iran (with 30 warning instances) from 2024 to the present is provided, in accordance with the three research questions. Thus, the results are organized to address the research questions directly, which respectively emphasize pragmatic strategies (research question 1), the IF (research question 2), and the features of comparative discourse (research question 3).

5.1 Quantitative analysis of warning features

According to the theoretical framework, six features of warnings were coded as follows for both countries: (1) directness, (2) indirectness, (3) high modality, (4) conditional forms, (5) mitigation, and (6) moral/religious appeals. Refer to the next figure.

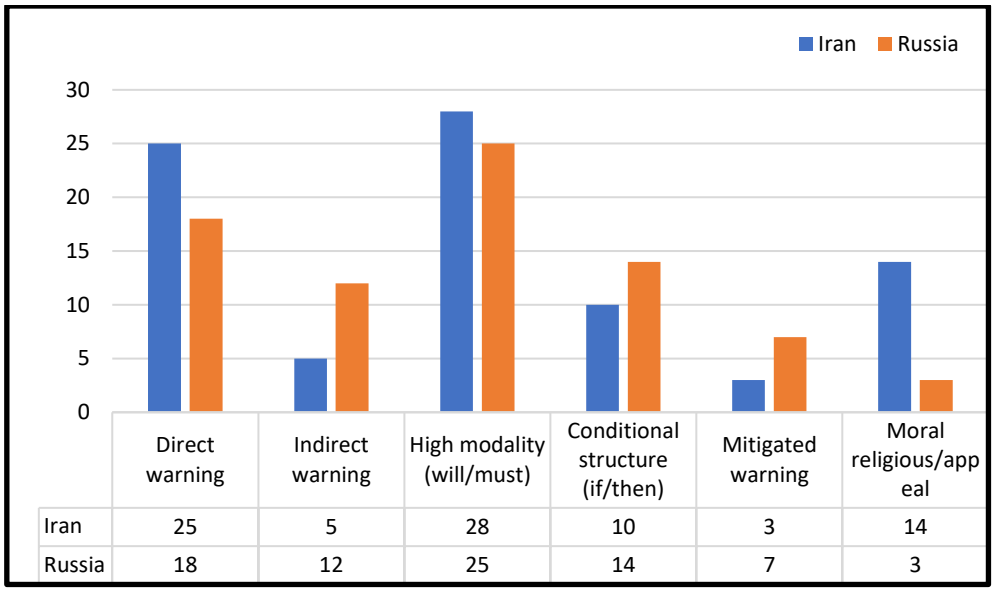


Figure. Features of Trump's warnings

This figure illustrates notable discrepancies in warning features between the two countries. It is important to note that Trump employs a substantially higher number of direct warnings on Iran than on Russia. It is worth noting that Trump uses. In contrast, his warnings on Russia are often more indirect and mitigated in form. The most noticeable disparity is evident in religious and moral appeals, which appear in about 50% of Iran-related warnings but are almost absent in those concerning Russia. Here are more details of the discourse differences.

Table 5. Features of Trump's warnings

Features of warnings		To Iran	To Russia
1	Tone	Moralistic, Emotional,	Formal, Strategic
2	Mitigation	Rare	Often Present
3	Structure	Often Imperative	Frequently Conditional
4	References	Terrorism, Religion, National Threat	Sanctions, NATO
5	Moral Terms	Frequent and Emphasized	Minimal
6	IF	Threat and Condemnation	Deterrence

Much of Trump's anti-Iran rhetoric is loaded with religious overtones and absolutism. Here is an example. "If you lead this country to war, it will be the end of your regime … God is watching." This case creates a dualism of good and evil. One is the divinely blessed US, while the other is a moral aberration called Iran. On the other hand, his warnings to Russia are often based on benefit and political realities. *"Russia knows that if it escalates further, NATO will not stand idly by."* This type of phrasing is more grounded in institutional context, less emotional, and carefully crafted in its rhetoric. He often employs external legitimizers such as 'NATO' and 'the international community' to support his SAs. This strategy enhances 'plausible deniability' and mitigates the seriousness of face-threatening scenarios. It is worth mentioning that the above differences are still trends or tendencies unless a statistical test is

performed. To this end, a Chi-square test of independence was carried out in order to ascertain whether or not these differences that were detected were statistically significant.

Table 6. SPSS Results of Chi-Square test

Statistics	Test values
Pearson Chi-square (χ^2)	13.26
Degrees of freedom (df)	5
P-value	0.0202

As indicated by the above p-value of being less than 0.05, the statistical difference in the distribution of warnings between Russia and Iran is significant. So, the selection of warnings by Trump is not random; rather, it is systematically dependent upon the country the warnings are directed at. Therefore, rather than being constant or random, the linguistic features used in these political warnings have been proven to be patterned and responsive.

Accordingly, and in relation to the research questions, it is now evident to claim that his warnings to Iran are more direct and religious in nature, whereas his warnings to Russia are more indirect and mitigated. Nevertheless, his rhetorical style is authoritative, as both countries are warned with high-modality language. It is speculated that this pattern is a reflection of differences in diplomatic approach, perceived audience, and broader concerns regarding foreign policy, which eventually answers the first research question.

5.4 Qualitative discourse analysis

In contrast to the statistical significance that is provided by quantitative patterns, a more profound level of interpretation is revealed by qualitative discourse analysis. The primary focus of this analysis is Trump's rhetorical framing, thematic patterns, and IF of his warnings.

A. Trump's discourse to Iran

"Iran the most destructive force… must choose between chaos and terror or pursuing peace". In this speech, the geopolitical realities are transformed into a compelling opposition by means of the rhetorical contrast between "chaos and terror" and "pursuing peace." This is a characteristic and classic example of ideological polarization in the context of political discourse.

"Make Iran great again and…. if the current Iranian regime is unable to… why wouldn't there be regime change?" Trump intends to reframe his well-known statement, "Make America great again," as "Make Iran great again." This most likely results in an ironic and controversial statement that fits with his rhetoric. Frequently, Trump's warnings to Iran are ideologically motivated. Trump adopts language that introduces the US as a moral authority, in opposition to Iran, which is characterized as an evil, terrorist-supporting, or rogue state. Here is an additional example: *If Iran continues its campaign of terror, we will wipe out its leadership."* The verb "wipe out" carries a strong and negative connotation, amplifying the warning's effect and reducing the possibility of negotiation. Here, the SA has both DIR (to stop a hostile action) as well as COM (to commit the US to an armed reaction) IFs.

B. Trump's discourse to Russia

"We are prepared to impose severe economic measures against Russia if it refuses to withdraw from occupied Ukrainian territories." On the other hand, Trump's warnings to Russia frequently include aspects of strategic calculation. They are less ideological and more centered around geopolitics, despite the fact that they continue to be assertive. By striking a balance between diplomatic restraint and assertiveness, the phrase "are prepared to impose" conveys a strong readiness without going so far as to commit completely.

Here is another example: "*Russia knows that if it escalates in Ukraine, consequences will be swift."* The warning is directed at "Russia" as a state actor rather than specific individuals, which reduces personal offense and adheres to international discourse rules. In both examples, although they maintain high modalities and conditional structures, the messages do not possess the emotional and moral tones that are present in warnings issued to Iran. In these warnings, depersonalization and reference to global standards lessen the FTA, which is consistent with Brown and Levinson's politeness concept of 'off-record strategy'.

"Should Russia continue its attacks near NATO borders, the United States will coordinate a stronger allied response." Thus, modality and assertiveness, depersonalization, conditional structure, geopolitical norms, and the absence of moral/ emotional tone are all clear in this example, like other examples. As a result, in regard to the second research question, it is now possible to state that the above differences in A and B indicate that Trump utilizes specific pragmatic strategies when engaging with the two opponents. First, Trump adopts explicit, 'bald-on-record' warnings on Iran, sometimes employing absolute modal verbs ('must' and 'will') alongside moral justification. These strategies minimize uncertainty and heighten the sense of danger levels. Second, warnings directed at Russia are more contextually complex, frequently using conditionality ('If...then') and mitigation ("We hope not to respond unless provoked"), indicating a knowledge of mutual dependency.

5.5 Illocutionary functions

Trump's SA of warning serves specific illocutionary functions in each speech corpus. The table below is expressive of the linguistic functions and their illocutionary functions as they were employed by Trump towards both countries.

Table 7. Trump's illocutionary function of warning

IA		Linguistic function	Pragmatic function by Trump	Example
1	DIR	Efforts to have someone do something.	directing the termination of aggressive actions.	"Stop your nuclear program."
2	COM	assures to take action in the future.	Pledging to take action if the behavior persists.	"We will retaliate."
3	EXP	expressions that describe psychological states.	Representing moral anger or disapproval, primarily in warnings centered on Iran.	"We regret this behavior."

When Trump's warnings are treated as IAs, the findings demonstrate his organized application of pragmatic strategies used to perform further political purposes. In his sentence "Stop your nuclear program", Trump employed the DIR function to perform an imperative order. This imperative order implies an intention to perform an urgent behavioral action. In this strategy, Trump's robust rhetorical style is evident. Again, he utilizes the power of language to display confidence and ensure that others follow his lead. DIRs, as utilized by Trump, are coercive SAs aiming to bind the action of the opponents, mainly when they are close or escalating dangers.

It is clear that Trump makes use of COM function of warning in an essential way with the intention of building trust and preserving deterrence. His repeated warning, "we will retaliate," is intended to demonstrate that the vows of taking action in the future are based on their continued conduct. These COMs are not only words of promise. In effect, they are supposed to be political instruments to portray Trump as a leader who takes action against threats. The use of COMs fits with his political approach that tries to have it both ways, preserving ambiguity while pretending the decision has been made already.

Trump's use of EXP function further increases the emotional and moral significance of his language, especially as it points to Iran. And when he says, "we regret that this has happened," we can notice his psychology of opposition or anger. Hence, he is attempting to establish a moral context. His warnings to Iran predominantly include condemnations and emotional appeals. His warnings toward Russia, on the other hand, were found to focus mainly on strategic deterrence as a means of establishing political boundaries. This distinction in launching warnings indicates that Trump code-switches his IF to align with the country's identity and the conduct of the interlocutor. He intends to express moral disapproval and isolation policy against Iran, while he maintains careful power-balancing strategies against Russia.

Thus, to answer the third research question, it is now evident to say that the IF, in Iran, is largely reliant on threat and condemnation, whereas in Russia, it is reliant on strategic boundary setting and deterrence.

6. Discussion

The results of the current study, when discussed in relation to the previous literature, highlight both novel and parallel results to the body of the literature on Donald Trump's political SAs and warning rhetoric.

In agreement with a recent study by Balogun and Murana (2018), the findings support Trump's frequent employment of the 'bald-on-record' directives and high-modality warnings, especially in his language against Iran. These trends confirm the claim that Trump tries to establish authority through language and take control through confrontational behavior by means of warning. Thus, the current study and Balogun and Murana's (2018) study confirmed that Trump employs aggressive direct warnings with Iran.

Indirectly, this study confirms the claim by Bibi, Qias, and Hayat (2025). They claimed that the language that Trump uses appeals to the profound narratives in the American political tradition that revolve around the issues of manifest destiny, moral exceptionalism, and civilization versus barbarism. These histories have been repackaged into the current version that justifies war like policy among nations and prevents critical discussion.

Regarding PT and in line with the previous approach, Trump, from a pragmatic perspective, fails to maintain traditional politeness norms most frequently on unofficial platforms like 'Truth Social'. This is consistent with Oraibi's (2022) study, which shows that his criticizing language towards Iran frequently transgress face-saving norms, lending authority to the argument that rather than simply politely attempting to persuade, he attempts primarily to shock or polarize.

According to van Dijk's (1997) model of ideological triangle in CDA, the in-group (the USA) is always presented as rational and morally superior, whereas the out-group is either framed as an adversary of civilization (Iran) or a strategic actor to be managed (Russia). This divergence is consistent with van Dijk's model. Iran is 'othered' through the use of religious and existential language, but Russia is engaged through the use of interest-based reality.

Unlike previous investigations, which treated Trump's warnings as fixed rather than varying across issues, this research found that Trump's warning strategies change in terms of degree of directness across the two states Iran and Russia. For example, his warning messages to Russia are more mitigated, moderated, and indirect, which is indicative for pragmatic government context that has not been paid proper attention to by previous research.

7. Conclusion

The study conducted a systematic pragmatic analysis of Trump's SAs of warning from 2024 onward. It included his discourse addressed to Iran and Russia.

The study employed SAT, PT, and CDA to analyze how Trump's warnings work as both SAs and political devices for identity formation, ideological messaging, and deterrence.

The study concluded that Trump's warnings are not the same in terms of political discourse. They differ depending on the target country and Trump's political motives. Consistent with 'bald-on-record' strategies and religious appeals, Trump's warnings made to Iran were more deliberately direct, morally nuanced, and politically decisive. By contrast, his warnings to Russia were indirect and partly conditional, a mixture of strategic ambiguity and indecisiveness. This change in warnings exposed Trump's strategic language to preserve political equilibrium.

The findings indicated that Trump's discourse varied significantly, according to the Chi-square Tests of Independence which emphasizes that Trump's warnings are significantly context-dependent. The findings further showed that Trump's IAs of warnings are interlocutor and context-based since they serve different communicative goals, such as threat, judgment, and command.

8. Novelty and contribution

Unlike other previous studies, which were only qualitative, the present study adopted a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. Such a hybrid method brings rigor and systematicity to the process with practical, realistic, pragmatic results. It is worthy to mention that while the earlier studies have dealt with either moral discourse or strategic communication, the current study brings together the two components through CDA framing. Thus, it integrated moral and strategic framing to determine how Trump's speech, tailored to his political purpose and audience, conveys deterrent force while also constructing ideological opponents through his language.

9. Limitations and pathways for future research

While this study provides a rich foundation for examining the SAs of warning, there are three limitations to be acknowledged. First, the dataset only includes publicly available utterances, excluding classified or diplomatic cable content, whether leaked by the press or acknowledged by governmental figures. Second, political discourse is constantly developing in accordance with politics; therefore, trends may vary after analysis. Third, the study's emphasis on only two countries restricts its generalizability.

Hence, based on the above limitations, the study suggests that future studies consider broadening the sample time-wise to include discourse before 2024 or after 2025. It is also suggested to compare Trump's discourse with Biden's in terms of threats vs. promises. Furthermore, audience reception studies could be beneficial in comprehending the manner in which these warnings are perceived by various publics and policymakers.

10. Implications

Broadly speaking, the study's findings revealed the significance of examining how SAs can function differently depending on foreign contexts, namely the SA of warning. In addition to that, the study helps us broaden our understanding of the nature of political discourse under Trump's administration. The implications of the study are crucial for both discourse analysts and scholars who are interested in international relations, media communication, and security.

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13. Conflict of interest

I hereby declare that I have no professional, personal, or financial interest that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest regarding the independence and objectivity of this study.

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