

INTERPERSONAL MEANINGS IN DIPLOMATIC DISCOURSE: SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTIC (SFL) ANALYSIS OF TRUMP'S 2025 SPEECH IN SAUDIA

Mareen Tahira

Department of English, University of Sialkot, Sialkot, Pakistan

Email: mareentahira68@gmail.com

Muhammad Sabboor Hussain

Department of English, University of Sialkot, Sialkot, Pakistan

Email: dr.muhammadsabboorhussain@uskt.edu.pk

Iram Rubab

Department of English, GC Women University of Sialkot, Sialkot, Pakistan

Email: iramrubab@gmail.com

Abstract

This study investigates the interpersonal and ideological positioning constructed in Donald J. Trump's 2025 speech in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) served as the primary framework to examine interpersonal meta-function, focused on mood, modality, appraisal and pronoun, while as a supportive tool, Socio-cognitive Model (SCM) was incorporated to interpret the underlying ideologies and cognitive strategies of discourse. Qualitative methodology was used under the interpretivist paradigm. The research identified five prominent themes: respect and alliance, shared values and partnership, framing terrorism and closing appeal to unity. Findings of the study revealed that Trump used dominantly declaratives along with imperatives, modality and evaluative strategies to negotiate solidarity, equality, and partnership. Yet, he asserted authority, legitimized US political dominance, while SCM analysis revealed that cognitive schemata and ideology are used to answer how asymmetrical power relations are maintained subtly, where partnership and equality are staged. Under the umbrella of CDA, the study combined SFL's rigour with SCM to present a holistic and instructive perception of political discourse. It encapsulates the inseparable link among language, ideology and diplomatic positioning in communication on internationally high-stakes.

Keywords: *interpersonal meaning, diplomatic discourse, systemic functional linguistics, socio cognitive, trump's speech, saudi arabia, SFL, SCM*

INTRODUCTION

In this study, it is examined how in talks of diplomats, power plays and how with the use of language, they share power diplomatically despite their ideological, cultural and personal differences. As the USA and Saudi Arabia don't share values (Marshall & al-Twaijri, 1996). Saudi Arabia is an Islamic country, and the USA is a secular state; ideologically, both states are different. In history, both had many ups and downs in their relations. Soon after the end of World War II, the USA and Saudi Arabia had a contract on the Suez Canal, which lasted for decades. Still, in 1973, Arabs started a war with Israel to expel it from the region, which was the strongest ally of the USA. Both states came into conflict on the battlefield. Saudi Arabia had an oil boycott with the USA, and then it had to intervene militarily in Saudi Arabia. The tension heightened, but again, both came to the diplomatic table. Besides this, the diplomatic ups and downs continue, but both countries have developed a relationship of hard interests (Cook & June 2022).

The study is focused on Trump's speech delivered in Saudi Arabia in 2025 during his visit as the representative of the country. In this address, it has also been observed that Trump has good ties with the crown prince of Saudi Arabia, Muhammad Bin Suleman, who is known as MBS. One point which caused this study was when the crown prince stood up to honour the president during the speech, which is unusual with other presidents (Altalahin, Farghal & Alfawareh, 2025). It shows Trump's mastery of language skills, which forced MBS to stand up for him and the whole auditorium stood up after him. Although both the leaders have good personal

ties (*Cato Institute, 2020, Nov 27. Pariah or Partner*), the diplomacy works behind. This study is to investigate the use of language and the manifestation of power by using it.

Statement of the Problem

The problem is not only understanding the meanings of political speeches but also exploring how political speeches manage relationships in high-stakes and cross-cultural settings with the strategic use of language. This study aims to examine Donald Trump's interpersonal strategies in his Middle East diplomacy in 2025. To reveal the interpersonal meanings that shape one of the most strategic relationships in global politics, this study uses Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday 1985), and in the background, the Socio-Cognitive Model is consulted for a better understanding of the social & cognitive dynamics.

Aim of the Study

This study aims to utilize the SFL theory as a tool to examine the surface as well as hidden meanings of Trump's speech, which he delivered in Saudi Arabia (2025) as a representative of the USA. This approach delves into the intricate relationship of language, society, power dynamics, superiority, and prejudice. As the study is focused on interpersonal interpretation, the communicative role will be studied by focusing on the usage of modal, modality and appraisal. So that the readers will be able to understand how two different cultures get together and practice power, superiority, prejudice, and achieve their political goals.

Objectives of the Study

Objectives of the study are:

1. To investigate interpersonal meanings in Trump's 2025 speech by using SFL?
2. To explore discourse strategies which express power and diplomacy?
3. To analyze how interpersonal features reflect US-Saudi political dynamics through CDA.

Research Questions

1. How does Donald Trump construct interpersonal meanings in his speech delivered in Saudi Arabia in 2025?
2. What are the strategies used to build personal diplomacy, power relations and political positioning?
3. How are ideological positioning and asymmetrical relations revealed between the United States and Saudi Arabia by interpersonal features?

LITERATURE REVIEW

CDA is a field of high interest for linguists and interdisciplinary researchers, mainly for those who investigate language, power, and ideology (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). CDA is a shared outlook to decode linguistic features, semiotic choices and overall discourse. It is not a single theory, school or paradigm but a heterogeneous discipline. It implies methods of discourse analysis (DA) as well as of linguistics, but is different in being critical. It shares methods of discourse, whether it is written or spoken, and one of these is critical linguistics. It studies spoken and written text in political, cultural, historical or social context to identify inequality, bias, attitude, dominance, power and ideology. (Van Dijk (1993, 1995, 1997, 1998, 2001)). Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) backs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to analyze discourse in context. Fairclough (1992, 1995, 1998) highlighted three analytical dimensions which he named as the text, the discourse practice and intertextuality. Fairclough (1993, 1995, 2003, 2005) used Halliday's (1985) Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) theory to carry out the textual analysis. Halliday (1985) founded SFL on functional grammar, not on formal grammar. It functions to interpret the texts, the system, and linguistic patterns. Halliday called three analytical dimensions "meta-function" (1985). Marin and Rose (2003) say that these three meta-functions are "interwoven with each other" (p.6). Halliday's (1985) main intention behind SFL was to investigate "meaning as a choice". He argues that language is a socializing system

and meanings are contextually structured. Moreover, “semiotic system” can be analyzed in terms of “network of interlocking options”

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is a broad field recognized by different researchers within CDA as a framework for exploring the interplay between language and meaning in academic, social, political, and professional contexts. Within this paradigm, research rigorously and consistently emphasizes the functional nature of language, revealing how discourse simultaneously incorporates ideational, interpersonal and textual meaning strategically. In 2016, Herdisa conducted a study on English writings of pre-service teachers to investigate the subject matter knowledge competence by the use of cohesive ties. Herdisa Dewi found that the teachers were able to form a theme and thematic progression. Complementing this contribution, Szenes (2020) drew attention to the fact that through macrogenres alone, complex tertiary assignments cannot be explained adequately. This reiteration highlighted the structural sophistication needed in extended student writing, although findings revealed that academic complexity mostly arises from the layering of smaller genres. Moreover, Mena Niman, E. & Canggung, D. conducted a study on dialogues in an elementary EFL Textbook in Universitas Katolik Indonesia Santo Paulus Ruteng. The study aimed to examine the three meta-functions in the dialogues. The findings revealed that the relational process was most dominant in use. In June 2018, Fatima, Ahmad and Hussain conducted research on the coverage of suicide attacks in Pakistan after 9/11. The researchers sampled three news agencies, two from Pakistan (Dawn & The News International) and one from New York, USA (The New York Times). Transitivity methods were investigated by using SFL theory, and the focus was on how much difference there was in the coverage and which technique was dominant. The research examined this descriptively, but for a quick understanding, the percentage was calculated of each process (verbal & material), including *say*, *sayer*, *receiver*, *actor*, *goal*, etc. The time period was between 2009-2015 suicide attacks in Pakistan because it was the period when the ratio of the attacks increased dramatically. The study found that there were huge differences among the newspapers in respect to lexical choices, voices and fronting of themes, which diversifies the impact on the receivers. The conclusion was that The New York Times was more tilted to personal perceptions and meaning by using cognitive, affective and perception processing, while both the Pakistani newspapers were close to objectivity by using material process rather than the mental process.

SFL’s lexico-grammatical lens, combined with CDA, also revealed the ideological work of rhetorical strategies in political speeches. Al-Badri and Al-Janabi’s (2022) study on Boris Johnson’s first COVID-19 address to the nation revealed how mood, transitivity, and modality manage public emotions, construct alliance and enact authority and solidarity. Declarative stance (to inform and confirm) along indirect commands (by using “we”, “together”) to soften power-play. High probability modality for certainty and resolution, and material process to perform competence, together foregrounded in governmental actions. Van Dijk’s Socio-cognitive CDA, coupled with this study, appeals to authority and gives explanation, counterfactuals, evidentiality, number game, generalization, and legitimate policies. When SFL (Systemic Functional Linguistics) and SCM (Socio-Cognitive Model) are taken together, the findings show, “*How meaning making in any context is talked*” mapped by SFL, and “*why the ideology and power effects of those choices.*”

Research Gaps

In CDA, huge work has been done on discourse, whether that is formal and informal conversations and communications, or political speeches and media conferences. Critical Discourse Analysis, with all its dimensions including systemic functional linguistics (SFL), is a field of interest for researchers. But still, there is a dire need to explore language by using systemic functional linguistics, with its interpersonal meta-function, particularly SFL analysis

of international leaders' speeches in the Middle-East context. Trump's political speech also remained of great interest for researchers, but mostly the ideational & textual decoding of the speeches was tried. Few studies focused on interpersonal features, but none in the Middle-East context with respect to the USA-Saudi Arabia relationship.

Theoretical Framework

The author has tried to depict the use of language to negotiate the power and to build ideological alignment in a certain context, in the speech Donald Trump delivered in 2025 Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. This study has adopted Halliday's (1985, 2003) *Systemic Functional Language Theory (SFL)*. Halliday has done commendable work on explaining the conscious structuring of language and its deliberate use to achieve certain results. This lens is most appropriate to explore Trump's choices in his speech, whether those are structural choices or word choices. This study uses interpersonal meta-function in the core because of its focus on the cultural differences of both states. The Socio-Cognitive Model is also in play, along with the Interpersonal meta-function, to interpret the socio-cultural dynamic.

Systemic Functional Language (SFL)

SFL theory is about to examine the language use to understand the power play and interpersonal tenors (Halliday, 1985). There are three meta-functions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. Ideational is about the field of discourse, which is the subject matter. Interpersonal is about the relationship of the participants, also mentioned as self-others dynamics. iii) Textual is about the mode of discourse. It deals with the management of the flow of information to make extended discourse coherent and cohesive (Accurso & Gophrd, 2020). Interpersonal meta-function, which is in use as a primary tool for the analysis of the study, focuses on how language shapes social relationships and manages interpersonal engagement between speaker and audience. It includes the mode system, modality system and appraisal resources.

The mood system refers to the grammatical organization of clauses into declarative, imperative and interrogative. Declarative mood is used to construct facts and to give information. Imperative mood is used to ask something to do by ordering, requesting or advising. Interrogative mood is used to engage or to get verification by asking.

The modality system captures the degree of certainty, obligation and inclination towards a proposition in the speaker's discourse. It is captured by tracing modal verbs (must, should, might), modal nouns (certainty, likelihood, possibility), and modal adverbs (maybe, likely, absolutely). Categorization of degree includes low, medium and high. Degrees of possibility can be shown by might (low degree), medium (medium degree) and must (high degree), and the same with the rest of the constructs of modality.

The appraisal resources (Martin & White, 2005) deal with the evaluative dimension of language. It includes **attitude** (judgment, appreciation, feelings), **graduation** (intensifying or downplaying meanings) and **engagement** (inclusion or exclusion of other voices). Speakers, through appraisal resources, build solidarity and alignments and express approval or disapproval.

Socio-Cognitive Model (SCM)

The scope of the study is also to understand the underlying ideology and cognition of the president. To accomplish this, the study is also applying the Socio-cognitive Model (SCM) proposed by Van Dijk (1998, 2004, 2006). This analytical framework goes beyond counting words or extracting content objectively from the text to interpret meanings, themes, and patterns (Safro & Kampa, 2013), which build solidarity, authority, and negotiate power and relationships with the audience. Yet, SCM integrates society, cognition and text to uncover the ideological intentions and mental model guiding the discourse.

This model includes the macro-strategies of, positive in-group (Self/US) presentation and negative out-group (others) presentation, and alongside its 25 (micro-level) discursive devices,

including *actor description, authority, categorization, consensus, burden, disclaimer, evidentiality, euphemism, counterfactuals, irony, implication, hyperbole, generalizations, illustration, number game, norm expression, national self-glorification, polarization, populism, lexicalization, metaphor, presupposition, vagueness, victimization*. Each device decodes implicit meaning, strategic framing and ideological persuasion.

Analytical Framework

This study is using Systemic Functional Language (SFL) Theory (Halliday 1985) with particular emphasis on Interpersonal meta-function as the primary analytical framework and Socio-Cognitive Model (SCM) as a supportive framework to understand the ideological intentions and mental model guiding discourse. Interpersonal meta-function with three dimensions, *mode, modality, and appraisal*, investigates the linguistic resources and provides insight into how President Trump negotiates power, solidarity, and evaluation in his diplomatic discourse. While SCM will explain *why specific choices are made, what is the underlying understanding of the context and the audience?* Interpretation of these features will be through *contextual model* (speaker and audience relation, situational framing), *cognitive operations* (emphasis and presupposition framing) and *ideological strategies* (self-others representation).

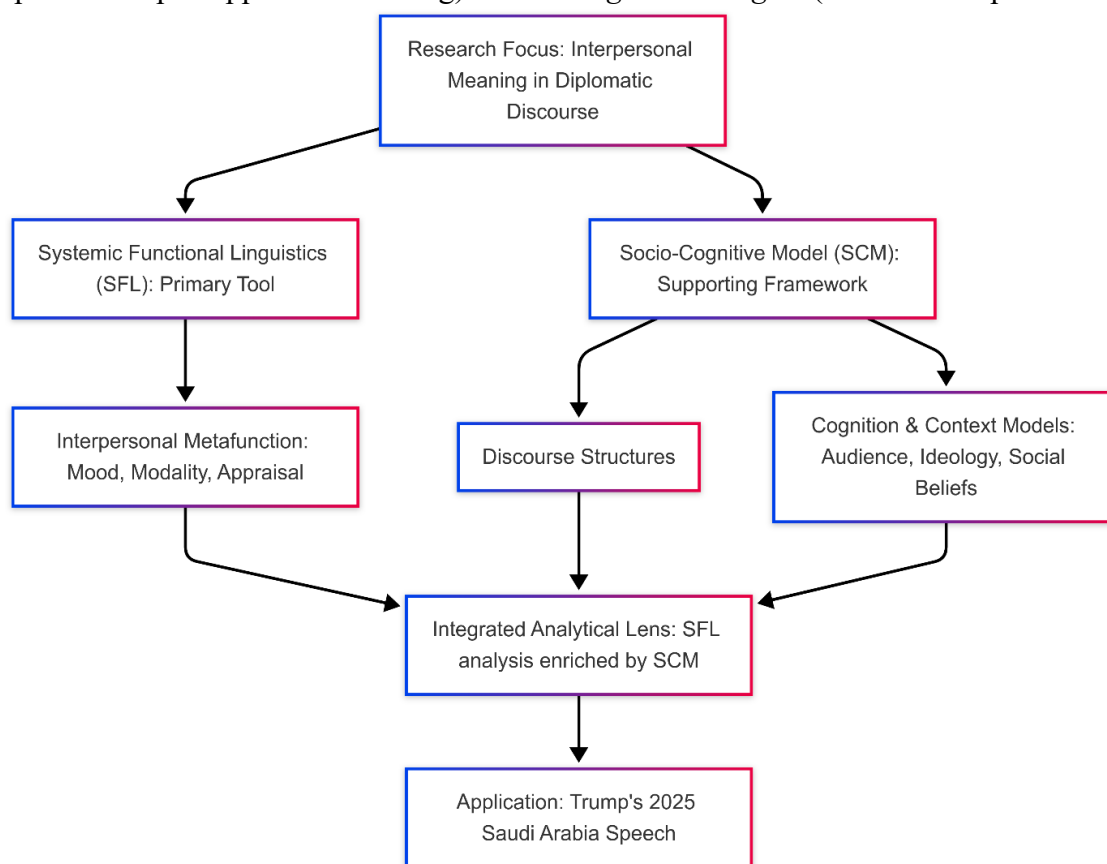


Figure: Analytical Framework of the Study

In the present study, the process of data analysis was carried out with the help of a practical online qualitative data analysis tool, “**Taguette**.” This software has been employed due to its efficiency and simplicity in use. Moreover, it allows manual thematic analysis, which made emergent categories and themes well-founded in our data. To use it, firstly, the researchers got registered and uploaded the document of the data, then by highlighting the meaningful portions, assigned the tags and lastly organized these codes into themes. These highlighting and tagging functions allow for precise identification of mood, modality, and appraisal. Taguette exported

tagged data into structured output and made it easy to trace and link them back to the theoretical framework. In the research, the use of the online analysis tool is very significant because the process of coding is reliable and consistent. It increases accuracy and strengthens the overall validity of the data analysis.

Rationale of Combining SFL Theory & SCM

The study is integrating Systemic Functional Language Theory (Halliday 1985) and Socio-Cognitive Model (Van Dijk 1998, 2004, 2006) for a methodologically complementary approach to discourse analysis. SFL dissects the grammatical and semantic structures. That identifies and categorizes interpersonal meanings through mood, modality and appraisal resources, revealing details of the *form* and *function* of language, but it does not fully report the forces that shape those linguistic choices. Those forces are cognitive and ideological, which work behind the production of discourse. SCM addresses this interpretive gap. It uncovers a socio-cognitive perspective that answers how discourse connects with the cognitive model and ideological aims. In this study, these theoretical frameworks together offer a comprehensive method for analyzing how diplomatic language is constructed as well as strategically deployed.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research approach using the critical discourse analysis tools to examine how Trump constructs interpersonal meanings in his speech, delivered in 2025 in Saudi Arabia. The speech was available on an accessible and credible YouTube channel, *Fox 35 Orlando*. The video was transcribed manually to capture spoken features relevant to the analysis.

The study has used Systemic Functional Language (SFL) theory by Halliday (1985) as the primary analytical framework, particularly focusing on interpersonal features. The study is focused on mood type, modality, vocabulary, and speech roles which assist in understanding diplomacy and power through language. Moreover, the Socio-cognitive model (SCM) by Van Dijk has been used as a secondary analytical framework to examine the cognitive and social positioning.

This study employed manual thematic analysis on Taguette, which allows a deep insightful understanding of the data. It has been performed intentionally to avoid the highly automated rules that could restrict covering of subtle courses of contextual meanings. This approach helped the researcher to imperatively deal with every segment and reveal the implied meaning of the discourse.

Research Paradigm

This study fits the critical interpretivist paradigm, also known as constructivism (Creswell, 2018). It emphasizes understanding subjective meanings and individual experiences. Its focus is on constructs of reality by individuals through the use of language rather than investigating objective truth. The paradigm questions the present value system to uncover underlying power dynamics. This approach makes it suitable for CDA, which aims to reshape the diplomatic work between nations.

Sampling

Since the study adopts a qualitative design, purposive sampling was employed. The study is using purposive sampling of the data as there were different agendas of Trump's speech according to the context and mental model. Only those paragraphs addressing diplomacy, partnership, terrorism, unity and economy. Certain paragraphs represent the overall interpersonal and ideological function of the speech. It is taken to stay focused, yet depth and manageability of the analysis.

Thematic Analysis

In this study, the researchers have used thematic analysis to uncover the power play, ideology, national interest and different diplomatic strategies within the president's speech. The process of thematic analysis follows Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step method, which includes:

- i. Familiarization with data.
- ii. Creating first-level codes (with CDA Taguette assistance)
- iii. Initial themes generation
- iv. Check and refinement of themes
- v. Description and labelling of themes
- vi. Final write-up

Thematic Structure of the Study

This study has focused on five purposive themes of Trump's speech, not arbitrary but closely aligned with both analytical frameworks, SFL & SCM. The focused themes of the study are:

- i- Respect & Alliance
- ii- Shared value & partnership
- iii- Framing terrorism
- iv- Economic cooperation
- v- Closing appeal to unity

Alignment with Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL-Interpersonal meta-function)

- i- **Respect & alliance** align with *mood* (declaratives of gratitude), *Modality* (use of politeness strategies), *Appraisal* (evaluation of host).
- ii- **Shared value & partnership** uncover *Mood* choices (use of pronoun), and *Appraisal* (solidarity and alignment) in discourse.
- iii- **Framing terrorism** reveals *modality* (obligation/necessity), and *appraisal* (good vs bad polarization)
- iv- **Economic cooperation** aligns with *mood* (assertions of achievement), and *appraisal* (self-others presentation)
- v- **Closing appeal to unity** aligns with *mood* (imperative, blessings), *modality* (certainty/obligations), and *appraisal* (looking forward to a better future).

Alignment with Socio-Cognitive Model (SCM)

- i- **Respect & alliance** align with the representation of self & others.
- ii- **Shared value & partnership** reveal consensus and actor description.
- iii- **Framing terrorism** uncovers polarizations by discussing us-USA & Saudi Arabia, and them-terrorists.
- iv- **Economic cooperation** reveals how number games function and the nation is glorified in discourse.
- v- **Closing appeal** aligns with moral obligations and collective struggle.

Inclusion & Exclusion Criteria

This study has included Trump's 2025 speech in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, after assuming the US presidency and excluded his other speeches. Five chunks have been taken from the speech, which obviously represent the five focused themes of the study. These themes are not only the discourse highlighters but are derived from the agendas that were focused on by the speaker. Moreover, linguistic investigation has been concerned without bothering informal remarks, press conferences, or off-the-record statements. Lastly, interpersonal meanings along with cognition and ideological understanding of the speech have been tried to interpret, while textual or ideational interpretations have been excluded.

DISCUSSION

In examining Trump's 2025 speech in Saudi Arabia, this paragraph discusses the findings of the data, which were dealt with dual theoretical lenses by combining SFL's interpersonal meta-

function with SCM's socio-cognitive insight for a nuanced understanding of how language functions to build interpersonal ties with a certain ideology and the cognition of audiences. This section explores how the structure of Trump's speech takes a stance in international stakes with differences in ideologies, values and cultures. Mood, Modality and Appraisal are the features which were deliberately enacted with the cognition of cultural contrast. All the focused themes have been discussed by integrating both frameworks to investigate the interpersonal meanings of the discourse with socio-cognitive commentary. Considering the research questions, interpersonal meanings, personal diplomacy, power relations, political positioning and ideological and asymmetrical relations of the states, the key results are presented in the following.

i. Respect and Alliance

To build up, predominantly declarative tone(mood) was used by the speaker, which is a dimension of SFL's interpersonal meta-function study. Declarative mood is not neutral but performs acknowledgement and gratitude, projecting humility and mediating social distance. The discourse structure shows humiliation but maintains the presidential authority, which shows deference and relational closeness, both. It functions to build respectful, diplomatic and deep-rooted relations of the states which, by the speaker, were deliberately employed. In the appraisal insight, positive evaluation permeates by using certain choices, "extraordinary generosity", "exceptional hostility", "great people". It emphasizes admiration and emotional resonance. Solidarity and moral significance were enhanced by intensified appraisal and making the audience experience the relationship as reciprocal. "I" and "us" were also the predominant pronouns, which show that the speaker has tried to embed his identity in exchange for diplomatic identity. The call of the name "King Salman, the Crown Prince" personalizes the interpersonal alliance by shifting from an abstract-level relation.

In the SCM lens, the words did more than communication; they structured thought, aligned perceptions of political and moral reality, which encoded alliance, admiration, humility, and diplomacy as ethical and cognitive truth. Positive others' presentation with gratitude and admiration framed the US-Saudi relationship as good and mutually reinforcing. It reduced scepticism, perceived imbalance and potential conflict in the alliance of both states. Moral legitimacy, rationale and inevitability of the relationship were boosted by certain choices of words and techniques to emphasize.

When the SFL and SCM implementations are synthesized, it is obvious that linguistic and ideological perspectives, in diplomatic discourse, performative, cognitive and ethical features were employed simultaneously. It demonstrated the interplay of language, cognition and ideology. The opening mood and appraisal were an action to enact alliance, diplomacy, moral universe, and construct emotions and perspective of the audience. It set the way of thinking for the audience by considering the socio-cognitive ideologies. So, in this theme, it has been found that language is a technology of relational reality and frames not only what people know but how they should perceive, interact and value.

ii. Shared Value and Partnership

The representative chunk of the theme from the speech revealed that again Declarative mood (SFL's interpersonal meta-function feature) was employed by the speaker, which constructs fact and states the truth with no confusion and does not demand verification, as the interrogative mood tries. The declarative mood asserted facts about the importance and historical continuity of the state's relationship. "We celebrate more than 80 years of close partnership" and "We reaffirm this important bond" are aligned with certainty and institutional authority. The mood shows confidence in the stability and endurance of the relations. Use of "we", "our" (1st person) plural pronoun builds shared identity and ownership of the achievement of this long-lasting stable relational bond. Language is not descriptive but constructive, which evaluates

partnership. Appraisal choices (SFL's interpersonal meta-function feature) "bedrock of security and prosperity", "closer, stronger, more powerful than ever before" were adjective degrees to emphasize strong emotive resonance that communicates admiration and ethical values of the partnership. A distinctive narrative of enduring collaboration was created by historical references to the states' relations. It embedded temporal continuity by linking the present with the past. The linguistic features of Mood & Appraisal create a sense of shared history, ongoing achievement and mutual achievement.

The speaker mentions Roosevelt's 1945 meeting with Saudi King Abdul Aziz for historical framing. It situates the long-term narrative of shared strategic interests of the partnership. The ideology behind the framing could be to construct a collective memory schema of both states, where these seem morally and politically invested in cooperation and coherence. The host state is located as strategic, honourable and reliable by positive and admiring others' representation, which hits the audience's cognition and captures its attention on mutual benefit and trustworthiness. Certain linguistic choices and strategies tried to frame the beliefs about ethicality, superiority, morality, and reliability and make the perception of loyalty as well as stability of the partnership. "We don't go in and out like other people" contrasts the US-Saudi commitment as a more transactional or opportunistic relationship and functions to keep the cognition of the decoder into a certain well of meaning.

This theme indicates that in diplomatic discourse, language, cognition, and ideology are inseparable. SFL & SCM features together provide the complete picture of diplomatic discourse, showing how interpersonal features build the stage for discussing shared values and how SCM strategies reveal the underlying ideology of the speaker and framing of the audience's cognition. Discursively, by using a declarative tone, with positive representations of others, it constructs it as morally and politically cherished and more stable than the relationships with other states. Moreover, the repetition of superlative appraisal and inclusive pronouns creates an architecture of relation and cognition and the audience is forced to look at themselves as co-participants in this morally grounded and enduring partnership of the US and Saudi Arabia.

iii. Framing Terrorism

Authority and certainty are the mode of choices, have been used by the speaker again by using declaratives, "The biggest and most destructive... is the regime in Iran", "which has caused unthinkable suffering...". Third party, Iran, comes on the scene and discursively it is transformed from a sovereign state (a UN member since 1945) into the embodiment of terror, by using interpersonal choices. Moreover, the "Orientalist Other" (Edward Said, 1978) strategy has been used here, that Iran has not been portrayed as a political opponent but as an embodiment of *chaos, destruction, and terror*. Additionally, *modality*, interpersonal feature, is dominant in this stance. High-level modality of certainty by using superlatives is obvious here. The speaker has used modality choices which create a non-negotiable stance-taking, leaving no space for questioning for the audience. Negative appraisal choices are also loaded for Iran, "biggest and most destructive", "unthinkable suffering", "agents of chaos and terror". On the other hand, positive appraisal is assigned to the audience "great people", "path you have pursued" to draw binary evaluative polarity in-group (Arabian Peninsula and US) vs. out-group (Iran). Repetition of the "we" pronoun for the in-group is a strategic choice to align the speaker with the audience as a collective agent, and "they" for the out-group, which constructs them as a threat to humans.

By the speaker, terrorism is framed not only to discuss or reflect on but to demonstrate its existence in an authoritative way by using strategic use of language. The mental models and polarized schemata are concerned by SCM. In the discourse metal model, it is evident by the way of representation of the in-group and the out-group. "Achieved... strength at home and

abroad”, “working... with the vast majority who seek stability and calm” is a positive self-representation. Emphasis is on “our good actions” and mitigating “our bad actions” by representing the gain of power as a universal right. In contrast, emphasize on “their bad actions” and omission of “their good actions” is in a declarative and authoritative mood. The audience is primed to accept the contrast with the eye of the speaker. Self-others representation and authority over voice is the strategy of shaping the mental model.

By synthesizing SFL and SCM illustration, it is evident how language constructs meaning discursively, not empirically. The ambiguity occurs about the meaning of terrorism, whether it is an objective term or is a contingent label applied by those in power? But authority over voice enacts interpersonal power (through modality, appraisal, mood, pronouns) to situate the decoders with a certain cognitive model of the out-group (Iran) as terrorism embodied and a threat to the in-group (US-Arab Peninsula), particularly and for humanity in general.

iv. **Economic Cooperation**

This paragraph is about the most important agenda of the speech. With dominantly declarative tone along exclamative and vocative mood choices, the authority, power, diplomatic interests and attitude are established. Declarative dominates, “It’s going to get a lot higher”, “we have never had anything like this happen”, declares the speaker’s positive and futuristic approach and presents him as the authoritative predictor of economic success. “Never seen anything like it” is an exclamative mood choice, declares intense enthusiasm and aligns the audience effectively. Opening vocative mood choice, “so I want to congratulate everybody. So many great business executives,” hails the audience, positioning him as a leader among equals, while still maintaining hierarchy successfully. High modality predictions encode certainty and necessity “It’s going to get a lot higher”, “we have never had anything like this happen” are loaded with high modality, close space for doubt or alternative interpretation, extend confidence and work to domesticate his economic narrative. Judgement and amplification are appraisal features, inculcated to align positively with the audience and emotionally appeal to them to be investors and partners. Pronoun choice is mostly “we” (1st plural) for collective ownership, but “under a certain President, Donald Trump” re-centres agency to the speaker, anchoring progress and prosperity in his leadership.

Strategic perspective, with socio-cognitive framing, the speech acts as a discursive legitimization of US economic policy and an attractive partnership. Legitimization is channelled through authority, rationalization, moralization and persuasion. The speaker frames himself as a prophetic leader, “I told people five weeks ago, this is a great time to buy” (Authority channelled). Natural consequences of his policies, job creation, investment inflows and rising markets, are framed as self-evident truths and make the economic partnership seem rational and unavoidable (Rationalization channelled). “Never seen anything like it”, “explosion of investment” (moralization channelled) though is hyperbolic optimism, creates a shared vision of prosperity and provides emotional energy. To reduce social distance and foster alignment, congratulating executives positions them as partners in success rather than passive observers. (Persuasion channelled).

In a collective economic success story, the speaker constructs himself as a visionary leader and the audience as partners, legitimising his policy through authority, moral appeal, and rationalization, and deploys interpersonal and socio-cognitive strategies.

v. **Closing Appeal**

Foregrounding of interpersonal meta-function in closing is not ceremonial, it performs social work; affirming solidarity and strengthening diplomatic ties. Vocative and declarative mood choices are used strategically. “Muhammad”, “my respects to your father”, enact personalization and intimacy unlike the abstract “business executives” in economic cooperation. The speaker shifts the public tenor to interpersonal by naming the host. Authority

fused with reassurance signals through predominant evaluative declaratives “we are with you all the way”, “you have a tremendous future”, “the greatest nation in the world” (judgement/appraisal) is an implicit US moral-ethical stance and enhancing legitimacy. Appreciation “tremendous future” is for the host nation’s prospect and building optimism. Power asymmetry is softening relational warmth, and gratitude is shown by repeating “thank you”. Absolute modality “we are with you all the way” projects unwavering solidarity and relational commitment. Linguistically, it binds the speaker to the addressee’s future.

In SCM terms, the closing strategy of relational anchoring is represented in the last structural theme. Closing lines serve as a face-enhancing act (Brown & Levinson’s politeness framework could also support this), building goodwill and trust. Person-to-person relationship parallel to state-to-state relationship embedded by positioning himself as the representative of “great nation”, creating continuity between political authority and personal warmth. In Aristotelian rhetoric, closure appeal should be ethos and pathos, not logos. This closing ritual is followed by the speaker, which demonstrates humility while reinforcing identity. Anchoring diplomacy in the cultural-symbolic realm of family honour, sacralizing the interpersonal bond and relational reciprocity (respect offered and expect respect in return).

SFL & SCM integration shows the gratitude, certainty and evaluation with interpersonal strategies embedded in the underlying ideology and cognition of the audience, layering macro authority to micro intimacy creates both authoritative and affectionate closing appeal.

FINDINGS

The pathway to the findings emerged from reflective engagement with the text, and careful thematic mapping was integrated with interpretive analysis. The analytical trajectory proceeded by examining the surface structure of discourse, including mood, modality, appraisal and strategic use of pronouns and implicit philosophical undercurrents that sustain its persuasive force.

i. The Speech as Multifaceted Performance of Power

The speech is not simply informational but fundamentally performative. Upon the stage of each theme, sovereignty, alliance, respect, economic cooperation and closing appeal, political authority is enacted. The speaker, Donald J. Trump, positions himself not as an individual but as an embodiment of the United States by blending personal charisma with national identity. Self and nation fusion magnifies persuasive power, the nation’s supremacy legitimized the leader’s role and the leader’s triumph is employed as the nation’s triumph. Significantly personalization of power works as a persuasive discursive tool used successfully by the speaker.

ii. Respect and Alliance as Relational Power

Respect was not invoked as courtesy but as a form of recognition, acknowledging the other as *worthy partners*, binding both parties together through shared honour and mutual esteem. However, it is asymmetrical, yet the respect offered was simultaneously an invitation to come in alliance with American leadership. The rhetoric of respect functioned as *soft power cloaked in humility*, created an illusion of equality while strategically re-centring the US primacy. Key distinguishing feature of the speech’s diplomatic tone is the duality, mutual recognition vs. hierarchical positioning of both states.

iii. Sovereignty Framed as Security and Independence

Sovereignty was not articulated as something abstract but as a concrete condition of *security against terrorism*, in opposition to external threat, the speaker discursively constructs sovereignty as a *fortress*. The speaker rhetorically framed the perception that sovereignty would not stay stable if equally and constantly not defended and reaffirmed in partnership. It is a paradoxical finding, implying that two sovereign states must participate in collective

security to keep their own security stable against another sovereign state, Iran (a UN member since 1945), which, according by the speaker, with authority and certainty, declared a threat to the whole world.

iv. **Economic Cooperation as Rhetorical Optimism**

The unique blend of economic nationalism and global persuasion has been observed in this theme. There are two parallel ideas that come together, on one hand, the US was presented as the best place for investment, “no better place to make a future or fortune”, yet on the other, prosperity is offered to others to avail through cooperation. Discursively, an aura of inevitability was created and others were called to America’s natural, consistent, stable and universally beneficial economy. Linguistic discussion’s finding is that economic rhetoric functions prominently as prophecy, less as mere analysis. The inevitability and inclusivity transformed into a shared destiny.

v. **The Closing Appeal as Relational Humanization**

Lastly, the closing theme observed personalization of grand geopolitical discourse was narrowed down to interpersonal respect, stimulating strong diplomatic ties, reducing abstract political relations to familial gestures, functioned as a bridge between vast agendas (nations, future, and markets) and interpersonal intimacy (individuals, families, and gratitude). The finding is that the closing appeal was strategically implied with the Aristotelian principle of pathos. Discussion also revealed how modern rhetoric integrates relational intimacy with political gravitas and how they soften the sharp edge of power.

CONCLUSION

To synthesize, the study answered all three research questions by analyzing the interpersonal features and their function. Socio-cognitive Model (Van Dijk 1998, 2004, 2006) supports getting the answers by understanding the underlying mental modal behind constructing the discourse for such a high-stakes international stage, confronting an ideologically and culturally different audience. The analysis concludes that Donald J. Trump’s (2025) speech in Saudi Arabia constructed interpersonal meaning strategically through integrating rhetorical intimacy, symbolic alignment, and hierarchical reaffirmation. Concerning the first research question, Trump constructs interpersonal meaning by deploying personal address (“Muhammad”, “your father”) with political authority, loading linguistic markers of gratitude, respect, and inserting language of kinship to reduce cognitive distance but simultaneously enacting the authority of global power. In response to the second question, blended discourse of equality and superiority employed strategies to build personal diplomacy, power relations and political positioning. On one hand, he indicates equality, offers partnership (“we are with you all the way”), on the other, Trump simultaneously asserts America’s preeminence (“the greatest nation in the world”), a rhetorical double move secures relational warmth yet preserves geopolitical dominance. Finally, addressing the third research question, the study concludes that implicit hierarchy embedded in the speech reveals ideological positioning and asymmetrical relations. Interpersonal features, particularly honorific respect gestures blended with self-assertion, uncover entrenched ideology. Thus, the final remarks of the study are: interpersonal features functioned as a subtle but powerful mechanism that both diplomatically strong ties and were materially sustained by the US hegemony.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The present study meaningfully addressed the guiding research questions, demonstrated employed strategies of diplomacy and authority and unveiled nuanced insights into interpersonal meaning-making in political discourse. Building upon this, future researchers may consider the following directions for scholarly work.

Comparative expansion should be attempted by comparing political leaders' speeches across different geopolitical contexts to investigate whether similar interpersonal strategies emerge or diverge.

Methodologically multimodal analysis by incorporating tone, gesture, visuals, alongside the textual strategies for a comprehensive understanding of political discourse.

Longitudinal exploration of shifts in diplomacy, ideology and asymmetry between states in repeated engagements.

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