



## CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF DISCURSIVE STRATEGIES OPERATED IN DONALD TRUMP'S WARSAW SPEECH (2017)

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### Abstract

*This study conducts a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of President Donald Trump's 2017 Warsaw speech, employing Teun A. van Dijk's (1998) theoretical framework to examine the discursive strategies used to construct in-group legitimacy and out-group delegitimization within political discourse. This study employs a qualitative research design, using purposive sampling to select Donald Trump's Warsaw speech. The findings reveal the use of discursive strategies such as topicalization, number game, polarisation, illustration/example, victimisation, lexicalization, populism, metaphor, modality, evidentiality and authority, comparison, national self-glorification, and presupposition. These strategies serve to reinforce positive self-presentation of the in-group (the West, Poland, and the United States) while simultaneously challenging the legitimacy of various out-groups. The study demonstrates how Trump's rhetoric draws on historical references, shared values, and collective memory to foster unity, resilience, and moral superiority, thereby shaping audience perceptions and advancing specific political narratives. The research contributes to the understanding of contemporary political discourse by highlighting the role of language in constructing social identities and power relations.*

**Keywords;** Critical Discourse Analysis, Political Speech, US Vs THEM dichotomy, Van Dijk (1998) Framework, Donald Trump's Warsaw Speech

### 1.1 Overview

Language is a fundamental means by which humans communicate thoughts, emotions, and intentions, serving as the primary channel for constructing meaning and engaging with others (Ojha, 2022; Raza et al., 2024). In the realm of politics, language is not only a medium of communication but also a strategic tool for persuasion, narrative construction, and the consolidation of power (Dunmire, 2012). Political discourse has attracted significant scholarly attention for its role in shaping public opinion, legitimizing authority, and reinforcing ideological positions. Through carefully chosen linguistic strategies, political figures craft messages that foster group solidarity, establish legitimacy, and marginalize opposition (Chilton, 2004). Discourse analysis, particularly in political contexts, reveals how language is used to construct identities, delineate boundaries between in-groups and out-groups, and influence societal perceptions and policy debates. Rhetorical devices such as polarization, metaphor, and presupposition are frequently employed to legitimize the in-group while portraying out-groups as threats or obstacles to national interests. This interplay between language and power underscores the importance of examining political rhetoric to understand the mechanisms through which authority and ideology are maintained and challenged. This study employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine Donald Trump's 2017 speech in Warsaw, Poland, utilizing van Dijk's Ideological Square (1998) as the theoretical framework. The research focuses on identifying the discursive strategies Trump uses to construct the legitimacy of the in-group (the West, Poland, and the United States) and to delegitimize the out-group. By analyzing the linguistic and rhetorical elements of the speech, the study uncovers the



ideological structures embedded within Trump's discourse and explores how his language choices contribute to an "us versus them" narrative, emphasizing themes of Western civilization, security, and sovereignty. This approach highlights the critical role of language in shaping political realities and influencing collective identities.

### **1.2 Problem Statement**

Donald Trump delivered his speech in Warsaw, Poland, on July 6, 2017. However, existing studies often lack a systematic and comprehensive approach that integrates rhetorical strategies with sociocultural dimensions of discourse. Political elites are acutely aware of their ideological positions and employ a range of frameworks, tactics, and persuasive techniques to protect their interests (Van Dijk, 2006). Political speeches, in particular, have drawn the attention of linguists seeking to understand how language is manipulated to shape public opinion in various sociopolitical contexts (Van Dijk, 2005; Chilton, 2004). This study addresses the gap by using van Dijk's ideological square (1998) as the analytical framework to examine the discursive strategies employed by Trump. It seeks to uncover how his language constructs in-group legitimacy while challenging the out-group's credibility, offering a nuanced perspective on the interplay between ideology, discourse, and power in political communication.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

- What discursive strategies does Donald Trump utilize in his 2017 Warsaw speech?
- In what ways do the discursive strategies in Donald Trump's Warsaw speech establish legitimacy of in-group and challenge legitimacy out-group.?

### **1.4 Research Objectives**

- To explore the discursive strategies operated by Donald Trump in his 2017 Warsaw speech.
- To assess how Donald Trump's Warsaw speech, establish legitimacy of in-group and challenge legitimacy of out-group.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

The linguistic aspect of political discourse plays its role in shaping public opinion, constructing ideologies, and reinforcing power dynamics. Analyzing the discursive strategies employed in Donald Trump's 2017 Warsaw speech, this study contributes to the field of Critical Discourse Analysis by uncovering how political language is strategically used to establish legitimacy of in-group and challenge legitimacy of out-group. This research highlights the linguistic choices and rhetorical strategies that create persuasive narratives, unite supporters, and marginalize opposing groups. The study reveals how linguistic elements and lexical choices are used to construct and perpetuate power relations and ideological control. Furthermore, given the global influence of Donald Trump's rhetoric, the research offers a framework for examining similar discursive strategies in other political contexts, contributing to comparative political linguistics. This study not only advances the field of Critical Discourse Analysis but also provides valuable insights for scholars, educators, and students in linguistics, communication studies, and Applied linguistics. This research enhances our understanding of how discourse functions as a powerful tool for persuasion and the construction of power in the political arena.

## **2. Literature Review**

The study of political discourse has a long and evolving history, rooted in the recognition that language is a powerful tool for shaping social realities, constructing identities, and exercising power. Early scholarship in discourse analysis, such as the work of Halliday and Hasan (1976), laid the foundation for understanding how cohesion and coherence in language contribute to



meaning-making in both every day and institutional contexts. Over time, the field has expanded to include critical approaches, with scholars like Fairclough and van Dijk emphasizing the ideological and socio-political dimensions of discourse. These critical frameworks have enabled researchers to uncover the ways in which language is used to legitimize authority, propagate ideologies, and reinforce or challenge social hierarchies.

In recent decades, the focus on political discourse has intensified, particularly in the context of American presidential rhetoric. Researchers have increasingly turned to corpus-based and critical discourse analysis (CDA) methods to examine how political leaders employ language to construct narratives, mobilize support, and delineate in-group and out-group boundaries. For example, Gill et al. (2025) and Raza et al. (2024) compare the inaugural speeches of Trump and Biden, revealing distinct rhetorical strategies: Trump's discourse is marked by assertive information delivery and audience invocation, while Biden's rhetoric centers on empathy, unity, and democratic values. Both leaders, however, utilize devices such as lexicalization, victimization, populism, metaphor, and modality to shape their public personas and policy agendas.

Further empirical studies have delved into the nuances of self-presentation and opposition in political speech. Raza et al. (2024b) and Imran et al. (2024) highlight Trump's use of divisive rhetoric, nationalism, and authoritative claims, contrasting with Biden's emphasis on resilience and constructive leadership. The analysis of hedges and boosters by Raza et al. (2025c) underscores the difference between Trump's confident, urgent tone and Biden's more inclusive, cautious approach.

Beyond inaugural addresses, research has explored the broader ideological and linguistic strategies in Trump's discourse. Chen (2018) and Rohmah (2018) demonstrate how Trump manipulates transitivity, modality, pronouns, and repetition to transmit ideologies and foster in-group unity. Studies by Quinonez (2018) and Khan et al. (2019) focus on Trump's negative portrayal of immigrants and Muslims, revealing the use of demagogic language, metaphor, and referential strategies to reinforce polarization and in-group/out-group distinctions.

The intersection of political discourse and media representation has also been a subject of scholarly attention. AlAfnan (2020) and Dezhkameh et al. (2021) examine how media outlets employ language to construct ideological perspectives and biases, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. These studies, using frameworks such as van Dijk's ideological square and Fairclough's three-dimensional model, highlight the role of metaphors, lexical choices, and narrative framing in foregrounding certain ideologies while marginalizing others.

Collectively, these empirical studies underscore the centrality of discursive strategies in shaping political realities, constructing legitimacy, and mobilizing support. While much research has focused on American presidential inaugurals and media discourse, there remains a gap in the analysis of Trump's international speeches and their role in constructing in-group and out-group legitimacy on the global stage. Addressing this gap, the present study applies van Dijk's (1998) Critical Discourse Analysis framework to Donald Trump's 2017 Warsaw Speech, examining the discursive strategies used to legitimize the in-group and delegitimize the out-group within an international context.

### **3. Research methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This study adopts a descriptive research methodology with a qualitative approach, aimed at analyzing speech delivered by Donald Trump. A qualitative approach allows for an exploration



of the language, ideologies, and rhetorical strategies embedded in political speeches (Rasheed et al., 2024). The researcher employ purposive sampling to select specific speech delivered by Donald Trump in Warsaw on July 6, 2017. Purposive sampling is an appropriate method for selecting a specific set of speeches based on their significance to the research question and the insight they offer into the political strategies employed by the speaker. The analysis will draw on Dijk's Ideological Square (1998), a theoretical framework that provides a lens through which to examine how language reflects and constructs ideologies in political discourse.

### **3.2 Data Collection**

The data for this study is President Donald Trump's speech delivered in Warsaw, Poland, on July 6, 2017. This speech has been selected through purposive sampling due to its strong emphasis on nationalism and Western values, making it relevant for the analysis of ideological discourse. The selected text will serve as the primary source for critical discourse analysis.

### **3.3 Data Analysis Procedure**

The data analysis procedure for my research involves several systematic steps to ensure a thorough and objective examination of the text. The following stages outline the process in detail:

1. The official transcript of Donald Trump's Warsaw Speech (2017) is obtained from a reliable source, such as the White House archives or reputable news outlets. The transcript is carefully reviewed to ensure accuracy and completeness.
2. The researcher reads and re-reads the speech transcript to become deeply familiar with its content, structure, and context. This step helps in identifying initial themes, patterns.
3. The data is analyzed to identify specific discursive strategies employed.
4. The identified strategies are interpreted in relation to the broader socio-political context of the speech.
5. The results of the analysis are organized thematically and presented with supporting examples from the speech. Each discursive strategy is discussed in detail, illustrating how it contributes to the overall communicative goals of the speech.

Through these steps, the data analysis procedure is carried out for critical discourse analysis of Donald Trump's Warsaw Speech.

## **4. Results and Discussion**

The following section provides a detailed analysis of the results obtained from the CDA of Donald Trump's Warsaw speech (2017). This analysis highlights the key discursive strategies identified in the speech and discusses their significance within the broader context of political discourse.

### **4.1 Topicalization**

In President Trump's speech in Warsaw, the technique of topicalization is effectively employed to emphasize key themes and ideas, guiding the audience's attention and framing the overall message. Throughout the speech, topicalization serves to highlight the significance of Poland and its people, with repeated references to Poland's historical struggles and triumphs. For example, by starting the sentence with "Poland lives, Poland prospers, and Poland prevails," Trump emphasizes Poland's enduring strength and resilience, reinforcing the nation's identity. Similarly, the phrase "We've come to your nation to deliver a very important message: America loves Poland, and America loves the Polish people," foregrounds the central message of friendship and solidarity between the United States and Poland.

The technique is also used to foreground the historical connection between the two nations, particularly in references to Poland's role as a symbol of hope for Americans. By stating, "For



Americans, Poland has been a symbol of hope since the beginning of our nation," Trump brings attention to the long-standing bond between the two countries. This use of topicalization highlights the shared values of freedom, independence, and courage. Moreover, topicalization is used to bring attention to the sacrifices made by the Polish people in their fight for freedom. Statements like, "For two centuries, Poland suffered constant and brutal attacks," serve to set the context for discussing Poland's history of oppression and eventual triumph.

Additionally, Trump uses topicalization to shift the focus from historical events to present challenges. The statement, "Today, the West is also confronted by the powers that seek to test our will, undermine our confidence, and challenge our interests," signals a transition from past struggles to current global threats, making the audience aware of the urgency of the situation. The repetition of key terms such as "Poland" and "America," as well as the placement of important concepts at the beginning of sentences, allows Trump to direct the audience's focus, creating a narrative that ties past resilience to present-day determination.

Furthermore, the technique is employed to underscore the values shared between the nations, as seen in the statement, "We are fighting hard against radical Islamic terrorism, and we will prevail." This draws attention to a significant issue and reinforces the commitment of the U.S. to global security. Overall, the strategic use of topicalization in the speech not only serves to highlight critical points but also shapes the audience's perception of the relationship between the United States and Poland, the shared values of freedom and resilience, and the collective commitment to defending democracy.

#### **4.2 Number Game**

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**Excerpt 1:** "In 1920, in the Miracle of Vistula, Poland stopped the Soviet army bent on European conquest. Then, 19 years later in 1939, you were invaded yet again, this time by Nazi Germany from the west and the Soviet Union from the east. That's trouble. That's tough."

**Excerpt 2:** "In 1944, the Nazi and Soviet armies were preparing for a terrible and bloody battle right here in Warsaw. Amid that hell on earth, the citizens of Poland rose up to defend their homeland."

**Excerpt 3:** "This monument reminds us that more than 150,000 Poles died during that desperate struggle to overthrow oppression."

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One of the prominent discursive strategies employed by Donald Trump in his 2017 Warsaw speech is the 'Number Game,' which involves the strategic use of specific numbers and dates to construct a persuasive narrative. This strategy is evident in Excerpts 1, 2, and 3, where Trump references key historical moments and quantifies the scale of Polish suffering and resilience. In Excerpt 1, Trump cites the years 1920 and 1939, as well as the interval of "19 years later," to anchor his account in concrete historical events, thereby enhancing the credibility of his narrative. Similarly, in Excerpt 2, the mention of "1944" situates the Polish resistance within a precise temporal context, reinforcing the legitimacy of the in-group by highlighting their courage during the Warsaw Uprising. Most strikingly, in Excerpt 3, Trump invokes the figure of "more than 150,000 Poles" who died, using this large number to underscore the magnitude of sacrifice endured by the Polish people. These numerical references serve to emphasize positive self-presentation of the in-group portraying Poles as heroic, resilient, and morally



legitimate while simultaneously implying negative other-presentation of the out-group, namely the Soviet and Nazi forces, as aggressors and oppressors. In line with the research objectives, the 'Number Game' not only explores the discursive strategies operated by Trump but also demonstrates how these strategies establish the legitimacy of the in-group and challenge the legitimacy of the out-group. By grounding his speech in quantifiable historical facts, Trump effectively legitimizes the Polish struggle and identity, while delegitimizing the actions and motives of their historical adversaries.

### 4.3 Polarisation

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**Excerpt 1:** "We are fighting hard against radical Islamic terrorism, and we will prevail. We cannot accept those who reject our values and who use hatred to justify violence against the innocent."

**Excerpt 2:** "Today, the West is also confronted by the powers that seek to test our will, undermine our confidence, and challenge our interests."

**Excerpt 3:** "We urge Russia to cease its destabilizing activities in Ukraine and elsewhere, and its support for hostile regimes including Syria and Iran and to instead join the community of responsible nations in our fight against common enemies and in defense of civilization itself."

polarisation, which he employs to construct a clear dichotomy between the in-group (the West, its allies, and shared values) and various out-groups (radical Islamic terrorism, hostile regimes, adversarial powers, and even internal threats such as bureaucracy). This strategy is evident throughout the speech, as seen in Excerpt 1, where Trump draws a sharp line between "us," who defend values and innocence, and "them," who reject these values and justify violence, thus establishing a moral binary that legitimizes the in-group and delegitimizes the out-group. In Excerpt 2, the West is positioned as under siege by unnamed "powers," reinforcing a sense of collective identity and shared threat. Excerpt 3 further intensifies this division by urging Russia to abandon its "destabilizing activities" and join the "community of responsible nations," thereby casting Russia, Syria, and Iran as hostile out-groups in opposition to the civilized West. These polarising statements serve to emphasize positive self-presentation of the in-group portraying the West and its allies as virtuous, embattled, and resilient while accentuating negative other-presentation of the out-groups as threats, adversaries, or sources of weakness. In line with the research objectives, Trump's use of polarisation not only explores the discursive strategies at play but also demonstrates how these strategies work to establish the legitimacy of the in-group and challenge the legitimacy of the out-group, reinforcing a narrative of unity, moral superiority, and existential struggle.

### 4.4 Illustration/Example

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**Excerpt 1:** "For two centuries, Poland suffered constant and brutal attacks. But while Poland could be invaded and occupied, and its borders even erased from the map, it could never be erased from history or from your hearts. In those dark days, you have lost your land but you never lost your pride."

**Excerpt 2:** "So it is with true admiration that I can say today, that from the farms and villages of your countryside to the cathedrals and squares of your great cities, Poland lives, Poland prospers, and Poland prevails."



**Excerpt 3:** "You are the proud nation of Copernicus think of that Chopin, Saint John Paul II. Poland is a land of great heroes."

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Donald Trump's 2017 Warsaw speech makes extensive use of the illustration/example strategy, employing vivid historical references, notable figures, and specific events to concretize abstract values and ideals, thereby enhancing the persuasive power of his discourse. In Excerpt 1, Trump illustrates Poland's resilience by recounting its history of invasions and occupations, yet emphasizes that the nation's spirit and pride could never be erased, thus providing a powerful example of national endurance. Excerpt 2 further exemplifies this resilience by painting a picture of Poland thriving from "the farms and villages of your countryside to the cathedrals and squares of your great cities," using the country's diverse landscapes as illustrations of its ongoing vitality. In Excerpt 3, Trump invokes the legacy of iconic Polish figures such as Copernicus, Chopin, and Saint John Paul II, using them as embodiments of Polish greatness and pride. These illustrations and examples serve to positively construct the in-group by highlighting its historical achievements, moral virtues, and shared struggles, while implicitly contrasting these with the actions or failures of the out-group. In line with the research objectives, Trump's use of illustration/example not only explores the discursive strategies at play but also demonstrates how these strategies establish the legitimacy of the in-group by grounding abstract values in concrete, relatable examples and challenge the legitimacy of the out-group.

#### 4.5 Victimisation

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**Excerpt 1:** "For two centuries, Poland suffered constant and brutal attacks. But while Poland could be invaded and occupied, and its borders even erased from the map, it could never be erased from history or from your hearts. In those dark days, you have lost your land but you never lost your pride."

**Excerpt 2:** "Despite every effort to transform you, oppress you, or destroy you, you endured and overcame."

**Excerpt 3:** "In 1920, in the Miracle of Vistula, Poland stopped the Soviet army bent on European conquest. Then, 19 years later in 1939, you were invaded yet again, this time by Nazi Germany from the west and the Soviet Union from the east. That's trouble. That's tough. Under a double occupation the Polish people endured evils beyond description: the Katyn forest massacre, the occupations, the Holocaust, the Warsaw Ghetto and the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, the destruction of this beautiful capital city, and the deaths of nearly one in five Polish people."

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Victimisation in Donald Trump's 2017 Warsaw speech, serving to construct a narrative of Polish suffering and endurance that both legitimizes the in-group and highlights the moral contrast with the out-group. Throughout the speech, Trump repeatedly references Poland's history of oppression and hardship, as seen in Excerpt 1, where he recounts "two centuries" of "constant and brutal attacks," invasions, and the erasure of borders, yet emphasizes that Poland's spirit could not be extinguished. This theme is reinforced in Excerpt 2, which underscores the persistent efforts to "transform, oppress, or destroy" Poland, and the nation's remarkable ability to endure and overcome. Excerpt 3 provides a detailed account of victimisation, listing the double invasions of 1939, the Katyn forest massacre, the Holocaust,



the destruction of Warsaw, and the staggering loss of “nearly one in five Polish people,” thereby foregrounding the immense suffering endured by the Polish population. victimisation serve to positively construct the in-group as enduring, heroic, and morally legitimate, while casting the out-group whether Nazis, Soviets, or oppressive regimes as perpetrators of immense suffering and injustice. In line with the research objectives, Trump’s use of victimisation not only explores the discursive strategies at play but also demonstrates how these strategies establish the legitimacy of the in-group by highlighting its capacity to withstand adversity, while simultaneously challenging the legitimacy of the out-group by foregrounding their role as oppressors and aggressors.

#### 4.6 Lexicalization

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**Excerpt 1:** "Poland lives, Poland prospers, and Poland prevails."

**Excerpt 2:** "Poland is the geographic heart of Europe, but more importantly, in the Polish people, we see the soul of Europe."

**Excerpt 3:** "Poland is a land of great heroes."

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Lexicalization in Donald Trump’s 2017 Warsaw speech, as he carefully selects and repeats specific words and phrases to construct and reinforce positive representations of Poland and its people. Throughout the speech, Trump employs lexical choices that emphasize resilience, heroism, and shared values, thereby shaping the audience’s perception of the in-group. In Excerpt 1, the repeated use of “Poland lives, Poland prospers, and Poland prevails” encapsulates the nation’s enduring vitality and triumph over adversity, while Excerpt 2 elevates Poland’s status by describing it as “the geographic heart of Europe” and, more importantly, “the soul of Europe,” thus positioning Poland as both a literal and symbolic center of the continent. Excerpt 3’s lexicalization of Poland as “a land of great heroes” ties national identity to a legacy of heroism, These lexicalizations serve to positively construct the in-group by repeatedly associating Poland with strength, hope, faith, and heroism, while implicitly contrasting these virtues with the out-group’s actions or values. In line with the research objectives, Trump’s use of lexicalization not only explores the discursive strategies at play but also demonstrates how these strategies establish the legitimacy of the in-group by embedding positive attributes in the very language used to describe Poland and challenge the legitimacy of the out-group, whose negative actions are set in relief against these celebrated qualities.

#### 4.7 Populism

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**Excerpt 1:** "The Poles have not only greatly enriched this region, but Polish-Americans have also greatly enriched the United States, and I was truly proud to have their support in the 2016 election."

**Excerpt 2:** "We are also pleased that former President Lech Walesa, so famous for leading the Solidarity Movement, has joined us today, also. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you."

**Excerpt 3:** "On behalf of all Americans, let me also thank the entire Polish people for the generosity you have shown in welcoming our soldiers to your country. These soldiers are not



only brave defenders of freedom, but also symbols of America's commitment to your security and your place in a strong and democratic Europe."

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Populism in Donald Trump's 2017 Warsaw speech, as he repeatedly appeals to the collective will, virtues, and experiences of ordinary people, both Polish and American, to foster a sense of unity and shared purpose. Throughout the speech, Trump foregrounds the contributions and values of "the people," positioning them as the true bearers of national identity and strength. In Excerpt 1, he highlights the enrichment brought by Poles and Polish-Americans, linking their support to his own electoral success and thus aligning himself with the people. Excerpt 2's acknowledgment of Lech Walesa and the Solidarity Movement further roots the speech in popular struggle and leadership emerging from the masses. In Excerpt 3, Trump thanks the Polish people for their generosity in welcoming American soldiers, framing this act as a people-to-people gesture that symbolizes mutual commitment to freedom and security. These populist appeals serve to positively construct the in-group as virtuous, resilient, and central to the nation's and civilization's survival, while implicitly contrasting this with the out-group, which is depicted as a threat to these popular values. In line with the research objectives, Trump's use of populism not only explores the discursive strategies at play but also demonstrates how these strategies establish the legitimacy of the in-group by elevating the people as the source of national strength and moral authority and challenge the legitimacy of the out-group, which is positioned as external or internal forces that threaten the will and values of the people.

#### 4.8 Metaphor

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**Excerpt 1:** "Poland is the geographic heart of Europe, but more importantly, in the Polish people, we see the soul of Europe."

**Excerpt 2:** "Your nation is great because your spirit is great and your spirit is strong."

**Excerpt 3:** "The triumph of the Polish spirit over centuries of hardship gives us all hope for a future in which good conquers evil, and peace achieves victory over war."

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Metaphor in Donald Trump's 2017 Warsaw speech, used to evoke vivid imagery and emotional resonance, thereby reinforcing the legitimacy and unity of the in-group while highlighting the stakes of their struggle. Throughout the speech, Trump employs metaphors to personify nations, values, and historical experiences, making abstract concepts more tangible and relatable for his audience. In Excerpt 1, Poland is described as the "geographic heart" and the "soul" of Europe, metaphorically positioning the nation as both the vital center and the spiritual essence of the continent. Excerpt 2 continues this theme by attributing greatness to the "spirit" of the nation, a metaphor for the collective resilience and strength of the Polish people. The "triumph of the Polish spirit" in Excerpt 3 further personifies national endurance, suggesting that hope and goodness can conquer evil and war. These metaphors serve to positively construct the in-group by imbuing it with noble qualities, resilience, and a sense of destiny, while implicitly contrasting these virtues with the threats posed by the out-group. In line with the research objectives, Trump's use of metaphor not only explores the discursive strategies at play but also demonstrates how these strategies establish the legitimacy of the in-group by framing their struggle in heroic and existential terms and challenge the legitimacy of the out-group, which is cast as the adversary in a grand, morally charged narrative.



#### 4.9 Modality

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**Excerpt 1:** "The Polish spirit over centuries of hardship gives us all hope for a future in which good conquers evil, and peace achieves victory over war."

**Excerpt 2:** "Poland will never forget who they are."

**Excerpt 3:** "Europe must do more."

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Modality in Donald Trump's 2017 Warsaw speech, as it is used to express certainty, obligation, and possibility, thereby shaping the audience's perception of agency, inevitability, and collective responsibility. Through his use of strong modal expressions, Trump constructs a narrative of confidence and determination that legitimizes the in-group and its values. In Excerpt 1, the assertion that Poland's spirit employs a confident, optimistic modality, positioning Poland's historical endurance as a beacon for global triumph over adversity. Excerpt 2's statement that "Poland will never forget who they are" uses absolute modality to emphasize the unbreakable continuity of Polish identity, suggesting an invincible connection to national roots that cannot be erased by external forces. In Excerpt 3, the directive "Europe must do more" employs deontic modality, issuing a call to action and responsibility for European nations to strengthen their defense commitments, thus reinforcing the necessity of collective effort within the in-group. These modal expressions serve to positively construct the in-group by projecting certainty, unity, and moral fortitude, while implicitly challenging the legitimacy of the out-group by contrasting their perceived threats with the in-group's unwavering resolve. In line with the research objectives, Trump's use of modality not only explores the discursive strategies at play but also demonstrates how these strategies establish the legitimacy of the in-group by articulating a vision of inevitable endurance and responsibility and challenge the legitimacy of the out-group, which is positioned as ultimately incapable of undermining the in-group's values and identity.

#### 4.10 Evidentiality and Authority

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**Excerpt 1:** "Polish-Americans have also greatly enriched the United States, and I was truly proud to have their support in the 2016 election."

**Excerpt 2:** "These soldiers are not only brave defenders of freedom, but also symbols of America's commitment to your security and your place in a strong and democratic Europe."

**Excerpt 3:** "Poland is the geographic heart of Europe, but more importantly, in the Polish people, we see the soul of Europe."

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Evidentiality and authority in Donald Trump's 2017 Warsaw speech, as he grounds his assertions in historical facts, shared experiences, and his own presidential status to legitimize his claims and reinforce the in-group's moral and political standing. Throughout the speech, Trump draws on concrete evidence and authoritative references to establish credibility and foster trust with his audience. In Excerpt 1, he cites the contributions of Polish-Americans to the United States and their support in the 2016 election as factual evidence of the enduring relationship between the two nations, while also invoking his own authority as President to express pride in this support. Excerpt 2 further leverages authority by describing American soldiers in Poland as "brave defenders of freedom" and "symbols of America's commitment," with the speaker's presidential role lending weight to the assertion of strategic partnership. In



Excerpt 3, Trump's declaration that Poland is the "geographic heart" and "soul" of Europe is presented as a widely recognized truth, with his authority as a world leader reinforcing the symbolic importance of Poland. These uses of evidentiality and authority serve to positively construct the in-group by grounding their legitimacy in historical evidence, shared values, and authoritative leadership, while implicitly challenging the legitimacy of the out-group by contrasting their actions with the in-group's proven resilience and moral clarity. In line with the research objectives, Trump's deployment of evidentiality and authority not only explores the discursive strategies at play but also demonstrates how these strategies establish the legitimacy of the in-group by rooting claims in evidence and authoritative voice and challenge the legitimacy of the out-group, whose actions are measured against these established standards.

#### **4.11 Comparison:**

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**Excerpt 1:** "The Poles have not only greatly enriched this region, but Polish-Americans have also greatly enriched the United States..."

**Excerpt 2:** "Poland is the geographic heart of Europe, but more importantly, in the Polish people, we see the soul of Europe. Your nation is great because your spirit is great and your spirit is strong."

**Excerpt 3:** "For Americans, Poland has been a symbol of hope since the beginning of our nation. Polish heroes and American patriots fought side by side in our War of Independence and in many wars that followed."

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Comparison in Donald Trump's 2017 Warsaw speech, used to highlight similarities, contrasts, and hierarchies that reinforce the legitimacy and unity of the in-group while positioning Poland and the West as exemplary. Throughout the speech, Trump draws comparisons that elevate Poland's role in both regional and global contexts. In Excerpt 1, he compares the enrichment brought by Poles to their region with the enrichment Polish-Americans have provided to the United States, emphasizing the positive impact of the Polish people in multiple spheres. Excerpt 2 contrasts Poland's geographical centrality as the "heart of Europe" with its deeper symbolic role as the "soul of Europe," suggesting that the nation's spirit is even more significant than its location. In Excerpt 3, Trump draws a historical parallel between Polish heroes and American patriots, underscoring a shared legacy of fighting for freedom and hope. These comparisons serve to positively construct the in-group by highlighting shared achievements, values, and strengths, while implicitly contrasting them with the out-group, which is associated with threats, adversity, or a lack of such virtues. In line with the research objectives, Trump's use of comparison not only explores the discursive strategies at play but also demonstrates how these strategies establish the legitimacy of the in-group by positioning Poland and the West as exemplary and central to global progress and challenge the legitimacy of the out-group, which is depicted as either adversarial or lacking in the qualities that define the in-group's success and unity.

#### **4.12 National self-glorification:**

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**Excerpt 1:** "America loves Poland, and America loves the Polish people. Thank you."

**Excerpt 2:** "Poland is the geographic heart of Europe, but more importantly, in the Polish



people, we see the soul of Europe. Your nation is great because your spirit is great and your spirit is strong."

**Excerpt 3:** "Poland is a land of great heroes. And you are a people who know the true value of what you defend."

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National self-glorification in Donald Trump's 2017 Warsaw speech, as he repeatedly elevates both Poland and the United States through language that emphasizes pride, heroism, and mutual admiration. This strategy serves to construct a positive, almost celebratory image of the in-group, reinforcing its legitimacy and moral standing. In Excerpt 1, Trump positions America as a supportive and affectionate ally, stating "America loves Poland, and America loves the Polish people," which not only flatters the Polish audience but also frames the United States as generous and caring. Excerpt 2 glorifies Poland by describing it as the "geographic heart" and "soul" of Europe, attributing greatness to the nation's spirit and strength, and thus reinforcing a sense of national pride. In Excerpt 3, Poland is celebrated as a "land of great heroes," with its people depicted as those who "know the true value of what you defend," further constructing an image of valor and deep-rooted values. These instances of national self-glorification serve to positively construct the in-group by emphasizing its virtues, achievements, and foundational role in history, while implicitly contrasting these qualities with those of the out-group. In line with the research objectives, Trump's use of national self-glorification not only explores the discursive strategies at play but also demonstrates how these strategies establish the legitimacy of the in-group by celebrating its identity, resilience, and contributions and challenge the legitimacy of the out-group, which is left unmentioned or positioned as less central to the narrative of progress and unity.

#### 4.13 Presuppositions

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**Excerpt 1:** "The United States has many great diplomats, but there is truly no better ambassador for our country than our beautiful First Lady, Melania."

**Excerpt 2:** "The Poles have not only greatly enriched this region, but Polish-Americans have also greatly enriched the United States."

**Excerpt 3:** "For Americans, Poland has been a symbol of hope since the beginning of our nation."

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Presupposition strategy in Donald Trump's 2017 Warsaw speech, as it allows the speaker to present certain ideas as taken-for-granted truths, thereby shaping the audience's understanding and reinforcing the legitimacy of the in-group. Throughout the speech, Trump embeds presuppositions within his statements to naturalize positive representations of Poland, Polish-Americans, and the Western alliance, while also foregrounding shared values and achievements. In Excerpt 1, the assertion that Melania is "no better ambassador for our country" presupposes both her ambassadorial role and her beauty, presenting these qualities as self-evident and uncontroversial. Excerpt 2 presupposes that Polish-Americans have "greatly enriched the United States," framing their contribution as an established fact. In Excerpt 3, Trump's claim that Poland has been a "symbol of hope since the beginning of our nation" presupposes a longstanding, positive relationship between the two countries, positioning



Poland as integral to American identity. These presuppositions serve to positively construct the in-group by embedding favorable assumptions about their character, achievements, and relationships, while implicitly marginalizing or challenging the legitimacy of the out-group by omitting or downplaying alternative perspectives. In line with the research objectives, Trump's use of presupposition not only explores the discursive strategies at play but also demonstrates how these strategies establish the legitimacy of the in-group by presenting positive attributes and alliances as unquestionable truths and challenge the legitimacy of the out-group, whose perspectives and contributions are rendered invisible or secondary within the presupposed narrative.

### **Discussion**

This research aims to examine the verbal tactics used by Donald Trump in his 2017 speech in Warsaw in relation to how these tactics are used to construct the legitimacy of the in-group and undermine the out-group. The discourse analysis undertaken in this research has shown that Trump's speech is a rhetorical spectacle, where language is employed in a calculated manner to construct, consolidate, and legitimize collective identities and political allegiances.

In the context of the first objective of the research, the analysis revealed the presence of many discursive strategies, among which are topicalization, number game, polarisation, illustration/example, victimisation, lexicalization, populism, metaphor, modality, evidentiality and authority, comparison, national self-glorification, and presupposition. Each of these strategies contributes in a specific manner to the discourse and shapes the audience's perception of the past, present, and future.

For example, topicalization and lexicalization emphasize core concepts like resilience, freedom, and togetherness, making sure that Poland, the USA, and the whole Western alliance are viewed in a positive light. The number game and illustration/example techniques provide the Trump's speech with a grounded historical and imaginative backdrop which adds value and emotion to his story. Poland and the West are metaphorically and comparatively elevated, scenically instrumentalizing them as the main defenders of civilization and metastasized principles.

Focusing on the second research objective, the analysis betrays that the focus of these discursive maneuvers have to do with defining the in-group as legitimate, and the out-group as illegitimate. Through the techniques of polarisation and victimisation, Trump portrays a vivid distinct line dividing the noble, beleaguered in-group (Poland, the USA and their allies) and the menacing, morally questionable out-group (historical oppressors, hostile regimes and ideological adversaries). Along with modality, which conveys logic and an unequivocal demand, and populism, which calls on the virtues and intentions of the lower classes, presenting them as the genuine owners of the identity, and moral compass of the nation, the aforementioned situation remains persistent.

Evidentiality, authority, and presupposition reinforce the legitimacy of the in-group by associating and framing alliances, and historical relationships as self-evident truths, all the while delegitimizing or marginalizing the out-group by omitting or downplaying alternative viewpoints. National self-glorification counterbalances the accomplishments by celebrating virtues of the in-group, fostering a sense of pride and unity which is juxtaposed to the out-group's perceived failures, or hostility.

The overarching findings of this case study demonstrate the ways in which Trump's Warsaw speech is layered with language to politically legitimize and construct an imagined identity. Through the systematic deployment of a range of discursive strategies, Trump honors and



empowers the audience while strengthening diplomatic ties and simultaneously, galvanizing support for a specific vision of Western unity and resilience against external threats.

In the broader context, the analysis reveals the need to understand how language is used by political leaders to shape collective memory, construct group identity, and legitimize action. Consequently, this study deepens the understanding of political legitimacy in framing contemporary discourse, as it illustrates the strategies through which political legitimacy is constructed and contested.

### 5. Conclusion

The critical discourse analysis of Donald Trump's 2017 Warsaw speech reveals a sophisticated deployment of discursive strategies aimed at constructing and reinforcing the legitimacy of the in-group namely, Poland, the United States, and their Western allies while simultaneously challenging and delegitimizing various out-groups. Through techniques such as topicalization, number game, polarisation, illustration/example, victimisation, lexicalization, populism, metaphor, modality, evidentiality and authority, comparison, national self-glorification, and presupposition, Trump crafts a narrative that foregrounds shared values, historical struggles, and collective resilience. The speech strategically employs historical references, numerical data, and vivid examples to anchor its arguments in concrete reality, thereby enhancing credibility and emotional resonance. Polarisation and victimisation are used to draw clear moral boundaries between the virtuous in-group and the threatening out-group, while populist appeals and national self-glorification foster a sense of unity, pride, and mutual admiration among the audience. Metaphors and lexical choices further elevate the in-group, imbuing it with qualities of heroism, hope, and moral fortitude. Moreover, the use of modality, evidentiality, and presupposition serves to naturalize the speaker's assertions, presenting them as self-evident truths and reinforcing the authority of the speaker and the legitimacy of the in-group's cause. Comparisons and illustrations not only highlight the achievements and virtues of Poland and its allies but also implicitly position adversaries as lacking in these qualities. Overall, the analysis demonstrates that Trump's Warsaw speech is a carefully constructed piece of political discourse that leverages a range of linguistic and rhetorical strategies to shape audience perceptions, legitimize the in-group, and delegitimize the out-group. These strategies are not only central to the persuasive power of the speech but also reflect broader patterns in political communication, where language is used as a tool to construct identities, mobilize support, and frame international relationships. In sum, the speech exemplifies how discourse can be harnessed to promote unity, resilience, and shared purpose in the face of historical and contemporary challenges.

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