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DISCURSIVE POWER AND PERSUASION IN INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION: A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF DIPLOMATIC COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT

International relations diplomatic communication is not just the reflection of events; it is the crafty way of making what becomes acceptable reality, responsibility, and reasonable next action. However, the practical technologies by which discursive power turns out to be convincing leverage are underexplained in most studies of conflict-discourse. The paper is an exploration of how discursive power and persuasion can be exercised in conflict-resolution diplomacy directed at the public, and the differences in strategies depending on the role of the speaker and the stage of the negotiation process. A qualitative pragmatic discourse analysis with a corpus aid was applied to 12 official texts (Ukraine and Gaza cases) based on the UN remarks, multilateral declarations, mediator statements, and third-party releases of the government. Mitigation/facework have been coded speech acts, analytics windows (N = 12; 1,836 words total; range = 81-295 words per text) were divided into diplomatic moves and analytics windows. In both instances, the focus of escalation texts was on high-force directive packages (e.g. condemnation combined with demands/calls) and legal authorization, which reduced interpretive space. Power in UN and mediator texts more frequently involved deontic norm-setting and procedural framing, which entails pressure and face-safe routes of compliance. The comparisons of roles and phases demonstrate that there is a systematic change: international organizations presuppose the foregrounding of obligation and humanitarian warrants, mediators presuppose the foregrounding of process ownership and urgency, without direct blame, third-party states swing between the frames of coalition alignment and supportive compliance. Discursive power in diplomacy is the constraint management: pragmatic decisions manage the obligation, accountability, and alignment, thus, guiding the uptake towards de-escalation or settlement.

KEYWORDS: diplomatic discourse; pragmatics; discursive power; persuasion; speech acts; modality; strategic ambiguity; conflict resolution.

1. INTRODUCTION

The language of diplomacy is important in conflict management because it is not always descriptive, it is an actual action taken in the circumstances when false calibration of the conditions may lead to outbreaks of violence, failure of negotiation, or the increase of the entrenchment of the positions. In serious war, one formulation can service many different audiences of adversaries, mediators, domestic constituency, allied state, and international institution with varying expectations regarding legitimacy, blame, and acceptable results. The outcome is a communicative environment where lexical choice, modality and framing are resources of consequence in the management of obligation, accountability and alignment. Current, practical studies on diplomatic mediation demonstrate that institutional discourse is institutionally constrained and patterned: mediatory intervention is based on familiar configurations of speech acts and interactional routines, which strike a balance between force and procedural impartiality.

Meanwhile, institutionalisation of diplomacy rewards restraint, and discipline, and punishes commitments that are untimely. The concept of strategic ambiguity has received a second wave of operationally relevant focus in the study of political communication as an effective way to preserve coalitions, postpone conflicts, and leave bargaining room without necessarily indicating where to go. This ambiguity, in a diplomatic environment, may be sought pragmatically by the use of implicature, extreme cautiousness, and process-based descriptions that do not necessarily attribute agency or intent to anyone. Deictic options are also important: corpus-based exercises of person deixis in the context of diplomatic debate have shown how the patterns of we/they and footing switches may assign blame, seek to enlist, or reframe printers and representatives, and in this way constitute the ways in which policy can be held publicly responsible.

Material power cannot therefore reduce discursive power in conflict resolution. It is performed in and through linguistic decisions which legitimise a given interpretation as valid, natural or even inevitable. A pragmatic approach to power emphasizes the way power may be played out by designing directives, by setting the stance, and by structuring normativity, by making contested preferences binding, by creating Charter- and law-based formulations. Recent writing that directly takes a position in favor of the capturing of power dynamics within a diplomatic discourse on a pragmatic basis, highlights the fact that power may be followed in the interactional institution of mediation and the subsequent outcome, as opposed to deduced on the basis of institutional position. Lastly, more recent studies also reveal that the even face-threatening resources like coercive impoliteness can be used as a bargaining tool in the asymmetric diplomacy, again confirming the previous assertion that pragmatic design is one of the key mechanisms that govern the use and implementation of power and the acquisition of persuasion.

1.1. Problem statement

Although conflict discourse has been extensively studied, two limitations persist. First, work in Critical Discourse Analysis has provided sophisticated accounts of **legitimation, ideology, and power**, yet it often under-specifies the *micro-pragmatic mechanisms* speech-act force, implicature, stance calibration, facework through which legitimacy is interactionally produced and made persuasive in particular moments. Second, pragmatic studies frequently offer fine-grained analyses of politeness, modality, or deixis in institutional talk, but they do not always connect these mechanisms to a systematic model of **macro-level discursive power** (agenda-setting, reality definition, authorization) and to role/phase constraints in conflict resolution. Recent scholarship calling for pragmatically grounded approaches to power in diplomacy and corpus-informed work on deictic positioning both point to the need for integrated models that link institutional power effects to observable pragmatic design choices.

Additionally, methodological fragmentation remains common: many studies focus on a single conflict, one genre, or one actor type, limiting comparative insight into how persuasive strategies shift between mediators, international organizations, and state actors, and across escalation versus settlement phases. The present study addresses this gap by combining a transparent coding protocol with corpus-assisted pattern checks to connect pragmatic form, legitimation framing, and interactional outcomes within comparable official diplomatic genres.

1.2. Aim and contribution

The purpose of this paper is to describe the role of discursive power in persuasive leverage in the context of political communication in diplomatic affairs when it comes to resolving international conflict. It plays a theoretical role in furthering an operative model, which links macro-legitimation (authorization, moralization, rationalization) with micro-pragmatic procedures (Speech acts, modality/stance, facework, implicature, alignment deixis). Methodologically, it shows how a qualitative

inference using corpus-assisted pragmatics can be reinforced on a small, high-control data through the combination of interpretive move analysis and distributional tests of pragmatic indicators. It empirically provides a role- and phase -sensitive comparison of two high salience conflict situations (Ukraine and Gaza) in which how mediators, international organizations and state actors systematically re-calibrate directive force, ambiguity and alignment to control accountability and uptake. The strategy is based on new pragmatics-oriented studies of diplomatic mediation, deictic positioning and strategic ambiguity, and its expansion to a combined power-persuasion explanation.

1.3. Research questions

RQ1 asks how discursive power is enacted through pragmatic choices in diplomatic communication.

RQ2 asks which persuasion strategies particularly mitigation/facework, stance and modality, positioning, and implicature/strategic ambiguity recur across negotiation phases.

RQ3 asks how these pragmatic strategies shift by speaker role (e.g., mediator vs. conflict parties vs. third-party states) and by interactional goal (e.g., de-escalation, blame allocation, settlement closure).

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research design

This study adopts a **corpus-assisted qualitative pragmatic discourse analysis** design. The central analytical logic is qualitative and interpretive because the research questions concern *how* discursive power and persuasion are enacted through context-dependent pragmatic choices such as indirect directives, mitigation, stance positioning, and strategic ambiguity that cannot be validly inferred from frequency alone (Verschueren, 1999; Kádár & Haugh, 2013). At the same time, the study is **corpus-assisted** in the sense used within corpus-assisted discourse studies: quantitative patterning (e.g., modality, alignment pronouns, lexical cues to speech acts) is used to (i) guide qualitative attention, (ii) check for systematic recurrence across roles and phases, and (iii) improve transparency by showing distributional evidence alongside close reading (Baker, 2006; McEnery & Hardie, 2012; Partington, Duguid, & Taylor, 2013).

It has a sample size of 12 formal diplomatic documents (Ukraine and Gaza cases) selected on the basis of roles (international organization, mediators, third-party states, multilateral actors) and phases (escalation/condemnation; de-escalation/pause implementation; implementation dispute; settlement/bridging). To maintain genre comparability and prevent distortion of page scaffolding, the analysis is performed on analytic windows which are cut in each document in particular, the main argumentive paragraphs in which policy positioning, norm claims and negotiation pressure are most articulate. This practice is a standard practice on small, high control type of corpora in which interpretive richness is values but still pattern checks are required (Biber, Conrad, and Reppen, 1998; Baker, 2006). Quantitative outputs are hence approached as descriptive and diagnostic as opposed to inferential, as they expound assertions regarding patterned pragmatic design in the sampled texts, but are not expected to generalize statistically.

2.2. Unit of analysis

The diplomatic move is the main component of qualitative analysis. A diplomatic move can be defined as a constrained portion of discourse (usually one sentence, complex of clauses, or brief paragraph) that achieves a dominant interactional objective despite institutional constraints, such as (a) criticizing and delegitimizing a course of action, (b) making directives, (c) encouraging de-escalation, (d) proposing a mediation channel, or (e) elaborating humanitarian requirements. It is preferable to turns since official statements and press releases are not two-way turn-taking processes, but often bundle several pragmatic acts into one paragraph (e.g., evaluation - directive - warrant - face-saving acknowledgment). The move unit does not also undergo over- fragmentation that may arise due to the sentence-only fragmentation, particularly in diplomatic texts whereby modality, stance, and justification are shared among the next clauses (Sinclair, 1991; McEnery and Hardie, 2012).

Moves are segmented using pragmatic criteria: a boundary is set when there is a clear shift in (i) illocutionary orientation (e.g., from condemnation to proposal), (ii) stance or footing (e.g., from "we" alignment to legal attribution), or (iii) legitimation warrant (e.g., from humanitarian necessity to authorization by international law). Each move is then coded at two layers: **micro-pragmatic action** and **macro-legitimation framing**.

2.3. Coding scheme and operational definitions

Coding proceeds with a structured codebook that operationalizes (A) **micro pragmatic mechanisms** and (B) **macro legitimation**.

2.3.1. Micro pragmatic mechanisms.

First, speech acts are coded by dominant illocutionary force. The codebook distinguishes directive and commissive pressures that are central to

conflict-resolution discourse, including *condemn* (verdictive/evaluative act that delegitimates), *demand/call on* (directives that reduce optionality), *urge/encourage* (directives with softened force), *expect* (normative pressure framed as expectation), *welcome* (face-supporting evaluation that may co-occur with pressure), *agree/agreement* (procedural commitment), and *propose/proposal* (agenda-setting move) (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1976). Where the illocutionary force is realized indirectly (e.g., "It is time…"), the coding relies on contextual criteria: whether the construction functions to impose a course of action, tighten the timeline, or constrain permissible delay.

Second, **mitigation and facework** are coded when a move reduces imposition or protects face through conventional devices such as hedges, epistemic downtoners, indirectness, depersonalizing syntax, and institutional footing (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Kádár & Haugh, 2013). In diplomatic texts, mitigation is treated not as politeness alone but as a persuasion resource that enables agreement without public humiliation, particularly in settlement or pause-implementation phases.

Third, stance marking is marked with the help of epistemic commitment (certainty vs. caution), evidential positioning (attribution to law, institutions or common facts), and evaluation (moral/affective appraisal) based on stance and appraisal traditions (Biber et al., 1999; Martin and White, 2005). It is possible to compare, for example, deontic closure (must) with the design of cautious openness (may/might/could) as variants of persuasion.

Fourth, the coded implicature and strategic ambiguity are the meanings where the meaning is reliant upon the implications of a message but does not necessarily imply explicitly what the message says. These can be indicated as under-specification of agency (all parties), temporally open-ended process formulations (efforts are ongoing), the presence of presupposition triggers (definites, factive predicates), and even euphemistic or technicalized wording, in a way that the statement could be read by any of numerous audiences without compelling them to immediate commitments (Grice, 1975; Levinson, 1983; Stalnaker, 1974). The discourse of mediation considers strategic ambiguity as functional: it can leave space to manoeuvre, maintain coalitions and avoid commitment traps.

Fifth, the operationalization of alignment and positioning is achieved by using deictic decisions and naming, that is, an inclusive vs. exclusive WE, constructions of collective responsibility, THEY/ othering, footing shifts, which shifts responsibility to the institution (the Council, the international law, the Charter) and not to an individual speaker (Goffman, 1981; Levinson, 1983). These indicators are construed as micro-realizations of discursive power: they determine who should be permitted to talk, who should be responsible, and what kind of actions should be challenged.

2.3.2. Macro legitimation framing

A CDA-informed layer of legitimation codes the discursive power at the macro-levels. Based on van Leeuwen, (2007), each move is tagged as either authoritative (to the institution, appeal to law, Charter, resolutions) or moral (values of humanitarianism, protecting civilians, urgency), and rational (logic of means and ends, predicted consequences like food security). The legitimation description in the political discourse, presented by Reyes (2011) helps to determine the most common warrants and their order (e.g., moral urgency, followed by a procedural closure). This two-layered strategy renders the power-persuasion relationship operational: macro legitimation is considered the result of framing, and pragmatic mechanisms are considered the linguistic tool to achieve it.

2.4. Corpus-assisted quantification (supporting layer)

In order to substantiate the qualitative analysis, descriptive count of selected pragmatic indicators is calculated with regard to each analytic window. The calculation of word tokens is carried out after very little cleaning (removal of navigation menus/headers; preservation of the argument core). The sets of indicators measured are as follows: (i) obligation modals (e.g., must, should, shall, need), (ii) openness modals (e.g., may, might, could), (iii) alignment pronouns (WE/OUR/US vs. THEY/THEIR/THEM), and (iv) hedge cues (e.g., hope, aim, efforts, seek, encourage) as resources of stance softening (Baker, 2006; McEnery and Hardie, 2012). Besides that, distributional supports of the illocutionary force cues (e.g., condemn, demand, call on, urge, welcome, expect, agreement, proposal, prepared) are also counted as illocutionary force cues to the speech-act coding. Quantitative checks are not substitutes of the interpretive coding, but serve as a transparency tool and a triangulation mechanism (Partington et al., 2013).

2.5. Reliability and validity

Reliability is dealt with by using a progressive coding process in line with the qualitative content-analysis standards. Codebook (definitions, inclusion/exclusion rules, and borderline examples) is tested on a sub-sample of texts; coding

disagreements help to modify operational rules, and would improve category boundaries (Krippendorff, 2018; Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, 2014). A second coder is then coding a significant number of moves (20-30% of the data). The agreement is then computed by the use of a chance-corrected coefficient that suits the type of coding (e.g., Cohen kappa when nominal categories are being used and alpha when distributions of categories are skewed) and disagreements are resolved by discussion and reference to the codebook (Krippendorff, 2018; Lombard, Snyder-Duch, and Bracken, 2002). The trail of audit is ensured through the storage of the segmented moves, assigned codes and rationale of revisions.

Triangulation is used to enhance the validity by method triangulation and comparative triangulation. Triangulation of methods is reached through aligning close pragmatic reading with corpus assisted marker distribution where interpretive claims do not start and end with individual quotations but overall patterned design across texts (Baker, 2006; Partington et al., 2013). Systematic comparison (i) of genres (multilateral statements vs. mediator joint statements vs. UN remarks), (ii) of roles (international organization vs. mediator vs. third-party states) and (iii) of phases (escalation, de-escalation, settlement) is used to obtain comparative triangulation. Lastly, negative-case analysis is employed: when a predicted tendency (e.g., the obligation modality in UN discourse) is not present in a text, the analysis provides a reason why such deviation happened by referring to role, audience design, or constraints of a specific phase, thus narrowing down the conditions in which a certain pattern of persuasion strategies is repeated (Miles et al., 2014; Yin, 2018).

3. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This section integrates **qualitative pragmatic discourse analysis** with **corpus-assisted checks** to show how **discursive power** (agenda control, reality definition, legitimation) is enacted through **speech acts, modality, stance/hedging, implicature/strategic openness, and alignment deixis**. The corpus consists of **12 official diplomatic texts** across two cases (Ukraine; Gaza), sampled to represent **escalation**, **de-escalation/pause implementation**, and **settlement/bridging** phases (Table 3.1). Quantification focuses on *interpretable pragmatic indicators* (obligation modals; openness modals; WE/THEY pronouns; hedge cues) and *surface realizations of illocutionary force* (e.g., condemn/demand/call on/urge/welcome/expect; agreement/proposal).

Table 3.1: Corpus sample (N = 12) and analytic windows

ID	Case	Text/Genre (issuer)	Role	Phase	Date	Words (analytic window)
U1	Ukraine	EU declaration (Council of the EU)	Multilateral (EU)	Escalation / condemnation	2022-02-24	295
U2	Ukraine	EU statement on BSGI termination (Council of the EU)	Multilateral (EU)	De-escalation / implementation dispute	2023-07-17	141
U3	Ukraine	G7 joint statement (EEAS Delegation to Egypt)	Multilateral (G7)	De-escalation / implementation dispute	2023-08-20	166
U4	Ukraine	Operational update (UNOG / UN Coordinator)	International organization (UN)	De-escalation / implementation dispute	2023-07-17	139
U5	Ukraine	UK UNSC statement (GOV.UK)	Third-party state (UK)	Escalation / condemnation	2024-09-24	135
U6	Ukraine	UN SG remarks to UNSC (UN Ukraine)	International organization (UN)	De-escalation / peace framing	2024-09-24	148
G1	Gaza	UN SG remarks (OCHA oPt)	International organization (UN)	De-escalation / pause implementation	2023-11-29	157
G2	Gaza	Press release (Türkiye MFA)	Third-party state (Türkiye)	De-escalation / pause implementation	2023-11-22	99
G3	Gaza	MOFA announcement (Qatar)	Mediator (Qatar)	De-escalation / pause implementation	2023-11-30	81
G4	Gaza	Leaders' joint statement (Egypt Presidency)	Mediators (Egypt/US/Qatar)	Settlement / bridging proposal (leaders)	2024-08-08	182
G5	Gaza	Joint statement (Egypt Presidency)	Mediators (Egypt/US/Qatar)	Settlement / bridging proposal (technical)	2024-08-16	166
G6	Gaza	UN SG remarks (OCHA oPt)	International organization (UN)	Escalation / regional de-escalation framing	2024-04-18	127

Note: "Words" = tokens in the analytic window extracted from the argumentative core of each text.

3.1. Macro-discursive power moves

In the two instances, macro power is executed by use of agenda setting, reality definition and legitimation (van Leeuwen, 2007). The agenda control of the Ukraine escalation texts is the transformation of a disputed fact by the EU declaration into a narrative of a norm-breach: it combines verdictive

assessment (condemns... in the strongest possible terms) with high-force commands (We demand... withdraw...), and an appeal to law (flagrant violation of international law). This conglomeration constricts the interpretive space, making illegality a closed case and legitimizing future policy options (sanctions and "massive consequences") as the logical extensions and not the policy decisions.

On the same note, the UK UNSC statement de-legitimates by the use of a contrastive structure (Russia sits on this Council). But... and repetitive invocation Charter, establishing a moral order where the invoker of norms takes the role of norm guardian and the actor being invoked assumes the role of norm breaker. In this case, discursive power is enacted through the category control (who is legitimate) and presuppositional closure (Charter principles discussed as foundations that cannot be challenged).

In the Gaza mediation texts (G4-G5), macro power changes its opposition form towards process ownership as opposed to blame assignment. The statement of the leaders jointly states that there are only the details of the implementation that are left, and the mediators are being empowered to be the definers of what is left as the gaps, and the repetitive It is time... construction re-constructions delay as illegitimate. This is power in the procedural framing sense the mediators do not simply suggest, they establish the point of the negotiation, a time frame, and the set of reasons that are justifiable.

3.2. Pragmatic mechanisms of persuasion

Table 3.2: Core pragmatic markers (modality, alignment deixis, hedging)

ID	Words	Obligation modals (raw)	Openness modals (raw)	WE pronouns (raw)	THEY pronouns (raw)	Hedge cues (raw)	Obligation/1k	Openness/1k	WE/1k	THEY/1k	Hedge/1k
G1	157	8	0	1	3	0	50.96	0.00	6.37	19.11	0.00
G2	99	0	1	3	0	4	0.00	10.10	30.30	0.00	40.40
G3	81	0	0	0	0	2	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	24.69
G4	182	0	0	4	1	1	0.00	0.00	21.98	5.49	5.49
G5	166	0	0	1	0	5	0.00	0.00	6.02	0.00	30.12
G6	127	3	0	0	0	4	23.62	0.00	0.00	0.00	31.50
U1	295	0	0	8	0	4	0.00	0.00	27.12	0.00	13.56
U2	141	1	0	0	0	2	7.09	0.00	0.00	0.00	14.18
U3	166	1	0	5	0	5	6.02	0.00	30.12	0.00	30.12
U4	139	0	0	0	0	1	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	7.19
U5	135	1	0	4	0	0	7.41	0.00	29.63	0.00	0.00
U6	148	2	0	5	0	3	13.51	0.00	33.78	0.00	20.27

Modality and evidential authority. The most densely obligatory modality (G1: 50.96/1k) is in the Gaza remarks of the UN Secretary-General, which is in line with the persuasion through norm enforcement. The repetitive must phrases (Civilians... must be safeguarded... international humanitarian law must be observed... etc.) are acts of deontic closure: the speaker casts adherence to his (or her) moral assertions in an inadmissible form, thus turning moral statements into institutional duties. There is an analogous deontic pattern in the April 2024 statements (G6) with Charter words ("must be respected... in accordance with international law) which serves to stabilize the legitimacy criteria in case of escalation risk.

Mitigation and face-saving. Conversely, third party and mediator texts in Gaza have increased hedge density (G2, G5, G6) and less intense markers of commitment. Turkiye's "We expect..." plus "We hope..." pressures but allows face saving compliance (pressure without overt confrontation). The actions of Qatar were continuing... with an intention... foregrounds is a continuity based processing as opposed to coercion, preserving the credibility of mediators without making binding commitments that may bind the future bargaining process.

Strategic ambiguity/implicature. The leaders of the mediators (G4) put the statement under strong urgency (It is time... no further time to waste) without heavy modal auxiliaries. This is also a major diplomatic appeal: the writing generates high-pressure illocutionary force through temporal framing and moralized urgency, which implicitly lays the blame on procrastination but is actually non-accusatory.

Alignment strategies. The highest density of WE-pronouns occurs in U6 and U1 (Table 8.2) and serves other purposes. We in the EU declaration (U1) brings together coalition power and in U6, projects resolve (the EU will remain... united), is meant to recruit wide alignment instead of polarise with an institutional appeal to collective action (Let us intensify our efforts...).

Table 3.3: Surface cues of illocutionary force (raw counts)

ID	Condemn	Demand	Call on	Urge	Welcome	Expect/expectations	Prepared	Agreement	Proposal
G1	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
G2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	0
G3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
G4	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	3	1
G5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	2
G6	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
U1	2	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
U2	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
U3	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
U4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
U5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
U6	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0

Table 8.3 clarifies how persuasion is packaged as action. In U1, the clustering of **condemn + demand + call on** is typical of escalation diplomacy where the speaker seeks to constrain response options and distribute responsibility. In G4–G5, the clustering of **agreement/proposal/prepared** indexes settlement-stage persuasion: instead of demanding compliance directly, mediators frame the negotiation as nearly complete and offer a "bridging proposal," a strategic move that pressures parties while preserving mediator neutrality.

3.3. Role-based comparison

Table 3.4: Role-level averages (per 1,000 words; marker means across documents)

Role	docs	words	obligation_per1k	openness_per1k	we_per1k	they_per1k	hedge_per1k
International organization (UN)	4	571	25.40	3.94	10.04	9.84	14.74
Mediator (Qatar)	1	81	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	24.69
Mediators (Egypt/US/Qatar)	2	348	0.00	0.00	13.99	2.74	17.80
Multilateral (EU)	2	436	3.55	0.00	13.56	0.00	13.87
Multilateral (G7)	1	166	6.02	0.00	30.12	0.00	30.12
Third-party state (Türkiye)	1	99	0.00	10.10	30.30	0.00	40.40
Third-party state (UK)	1	135	7.41	0.00	29.63	0.00	0.00

The role patterns are theoretically coherent. **International organizations (UN)** rely more heavily on **obligation modality** and legal anchoring, reflecting persuasion through *normative authority* rather than partisan coercion. **EU and G7** texts combine coalition "we" with policy legitimation authority is constructed through collective voice and norm framing ("international law," "rules-based order," food security). **Mediators** show comparatively higher alignment ("the three of us") and procedural vocabulary (agreement/implementation/bridging), consistent with persuasion through *process control* and face-saving closure rather than direct condemnation. Türkiye's text exhibits strong hedging and "hope/expect" framing, indicating a supportive third-party stance that encourages compliance while maintaining diplomatic tact.

3.4. Phase-based comparison

Table 3.5: Phase-level averages (per 1,000 words; marker means across documents)

Phase	docs	words	obligation_per1k	we_per1k	hedge_per1k
De-escalation / implementation dispute	3	446	6.73	6.02	17.16
De-escalation / pause implementation	3	337	16.99	12.22	21.70
De-escalation / peace framing	1	148	13.51	33.78	20.27
Escalation / condemnation	2	430	3.71	28.38	6.78

Escalation / regional de-escalation framing	1	127	23.62	0.00	31.50
Settlement / bridging proposal (leaders)	1	182	0.00	21.98	5.49
Settlement / bridging proposal (technical)	1	166	0.00	6.02	30.12

The escalation phase (U1, U5) is characterized by **evaluative condemnation** and **directive closure** persuasion is oriented to delegitimation and coalition mobilization rather than mutual face preservation. In the pause-implementation phase (G1–G3), **obligation modality** rises (particularly in UN discourse), consistent with the institutional task of enforcing minimum humanitarian norms while acknowledging partial cooperation ("welcome… but… must…"). In settlement/bridging texts (G4–G5), persuasion shifts to **deadline framing** and **technicalization** ("implementation issues," "bridging proposal"), which pressures parties while limiting public face threat by avoiding explicit blame.

one short coded excerpt per sample

Table

ID	Illustrative excerpt	Pragmatic interpretation (coded)
U1	"We demand… withdraw…"	High-force **directive** + **delegitimation**; minimal mitigation; power via norm-closure.
U2	"Russia must cease… allow freedom of navigation…"	**Obligation modality** + legal/rights frame; coercive persuasion without explicit threat.
U3	"We share… regret… we must all strive…"	Alignment stance + **collectivized obligation**; persuasion via shared responsibility and consequence framing.
U4	"Applications have not been approved by all parties."	Institutional **procedural reporting**; implicature of blockage without naming blame (face-sensitive neutrality).
U5	"Russia sits on this Council. But…"	Contrastive delegitimation; moralized stance; persuasion through audience alignment.
U6	"They all must stop immediately."	Deontic closure; universalization reduces partisanship while maintaining pressure.
G1	"Civilians… must be protected."	Norm enforcement + humanitarian legitimation; coercive deontics framed as universal obligations.
G2	"We expect… We hope…"	**Soft directive** + facework; encouragement + compliance framing.
G3	"Efforts were ongoing… aim of reaching…"	Strategic openness; non-commitment stance preserves mediator flexibility.
G4	"It is time… no further time to waste…"	Urgency framing as indirect directive; high pressure with low blame attribution.
G5	"Bridging proposal… bridges remaining gaps…"	Technicalization; mediators claim process competence; persuasion via inevitability/implementability.
G6	"must be… in accordance with international law"	Legal anchoring under escalation risk; obligation modality stabilizes legitimacy criteria.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1. Answering the research questions directly

The results demonstrate that the desired discursive power is achieved in the form of recurrent macro-micro couplings: by integrating legitimation frames (law/Charter, humanitarian necessity, procedural power), with micro-pragmatic forms, which restrict the interpretive space, speakers are able to control the agenda and define reality. Verdictive evaluation and directive closure (e.g., condemn, demand, call on) are forms of power used in escalation texts which creates illegitimacy as something assumed and reduces the possible options of reaction. In mediation and UN texts power is considered to be implemented not through overt blame but rather through deontic norm-setting (must) and procedural construction of what has to be regarded as remnant issues and what has to be regarded as progress (van Leeuwen, 2007; Reyes, 2011).

In both instances, persuasion is strongly based on (i) modality-based pressure (obligation vs. openness), (ii) facework and mitigation that makes it possible to comply with the law without humiliating of a person, (iii) strategic ambiguity (process-oriented, under-specified formulations that retain manoeuvrability), and (iv) alignment work with deictic options (inclusive we, appeals to shared values). That is supported by the patterns provided by the corpus: UN windows have higher modal obligation (deontic sequences of must) and mediator windows have lower modal auxiliaries but more frequent dependency on constructions of urgency and the language of processes- an indirect but powerful design of persuasion (Grice, 1975; Brown and Levinson, 1987; Kadar and Haugh, 2013).

Role contrasts are systematic: international bodies are oriented toward norm enforcement and humanitarian/legal legitimation, multilateral actors (EU/G7) are oriented toward coalitive power and framing suppositions as supportive deployment of other actors, mediators are oriented toward process ownership and face saving closure, third party states are oriented between alignment-building in relation

to moralization and supportive compliance in relation to framing. Phase contrasts are also patterned: escalation prefers delegitimation and directive closure; de-escalation prefers humanitarian warrants and pressure mitigation; settlement prefers technicalization ("implementation," "bridging proposal") and time-based pressure which puts a limit on delay without making overt threats (Partington, Duguid, and Taylor, 2013).

4.2. Interpretation: the power–persuasion link

The findings help to explain that power in diplomatic conflict discourse is not only present as a background condition, that is, an abstract concept; it is enacted and stabilized through pragmatic design. On the one hand, deontic modality is an essential mechanism that transforms the moral and legal claims into interactionally binding expectations. When UN voices make use of repetitive must constructions, they do not simply voice strong opinion: they put the quarrel into another regime of obligation, turning the negotiation of preferences into the negotiation of compliance with rules. Such a practical gesture achieves power by making the addressees have little to no room to make an inferential move: challenging the position of the speaker means challenging the normative order in which the specific policy assertion is made (international law/humanitarian principles), rather than merely the immediate policy claim (van Leeuwen, 2007). To this end, the obligation modality represents a language transgression between micro-form and macro-legitimation.

Second, speech-act packaging also deploys power by determining what is the next relevant move. Those forms of escalation that are descriptive and interactive are statements that combine condemnation and demands. The acceptance/rejection is a conditional response to a demand; condemnation places rebuttal in a morally insecure position. This persuasiveness is the property of illocutionary acts to organize the response possibilities and not the propositional content of the acts (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1976). The working of diplomatic power in this regard involves the practical architecture of action sequencing even in monologic forms of writing like press releases since even those writing still presuppose reception by various audiences.

Third, facework and mitigation are not just politeness, they are tools of strategic influence. The direct accusation is minimized by the fact that the process language used by mediators (implementation, remaining gaps, bridging proposal) helps parties to change position without directly admitting defeat. This implements power where the load towards adopting certain courses of action is made easier in the auditorium and pressure is maintained by creating a sense of urgency and procedural closure. The influence of the mediator is therefore facilitated through face-safe affordances: persuasion is made through the creation of a communicative channel to agreement (Brown and Levinson, 1987; Kadar and Haugh, 2013).

Fourth, strategic ambiguity is a power that implements flexibility and regulation of accountability. Notions like "efforts are ongoing" or reaching an aim do not simply leave out details; they handle the levels of commitment, enabling actors to boast of progress without having to close choices. This practicalizes the allocation of responsibility in the past and in the players and thereby minimizes exposure to subsequent criticism. This ambiguity is convincing as it allows keeping the coalition compatible and avoiding the trap of premature commitment, it works by the use of implicature but not outright assertion (Grice, 1975; Levinson, 1983). In general, the power-persuasion relationship can be best described as a relational process between legitimization frames and pragmatic processes that govern obligation, accountability, and alignment.

4.3. Contribution to theory

The research also leads to the contribution of pragmatics and diplomatic discourse study in three aspects. First, it clarifies the operation of discursive power in a pragmatic form. Instead of having power as only macro-structure (institutional position, geopolitical capacity), the results indicate that power can be empirically tracked in terms of recurrent micro-features particularly with deontic modality, indirect directive format as well as procedural technicalization and deictic alignment work that create measurable constraints on interpretation and uptake. This reinforces a methodological connection between pragmatic analysis and the use of CDA to understand legitimation in that legitimation is not merely a thematic pattern, but also an effect of systematic pragmatic decisions (van Leeuwen, 2007; Reyes, 2011).

Second, the findings contribute to the pragmatics of institutional persuasion because they demonstrate that in the context of diplomatic persuasion, persuasion not always happens through an explicit argument. According to the mediator and the UN sources, the persuasive power of a diplomatic language often consists in the way it restates the interactional level of policy positions that are arguable to commitments, blame to actionable steps, uncertainty to timelines that can be managed. This

justifies a perspective of diplomatic persuasion as management of constraints: by providing the audience with pragmatically constructed inferences and response options, as opposed to deliberation per se (Verschueren, 1999; Partington et al., 2013).

Third, the role- and phase-sensitive outcome is useful in refining the explanations of strategic ambiguity in high stakes institutional communication. The issue of ambiguity is frequently referred to as evasiveness; it comes up here as an effective tool associated with mediation conditions of success: it maintains flexibility, face-protection, as well as preservation of the coalition coherence but still indicates directionality. The methodology of the study is also innovative: it demonstrates how small, closely sampled corpora may be helpful in making strong interpretive arguments when distributional checks are treated as transparency instruments instead of substituting contextual analysis (Baker, 2006; McEnery and Hardie, 2012).

4.4. Implications

To the mediators, the results support the idea that mediating success through diplomatic persuasion requires a balance between pressure and face-safe approaches to agreement. Urgency and procedural framing (implementation issues, bridging proposal) have the potential to augment pressure of commitment and reduce the effects of humiliation on the public, which is instrumental when parties have to explain concessions to local audiences. Mediator training can thus directly build dexterities in gradated indirect directions, ambiguity management and alignment format (inclusive framing, common-ground assertions) to maintain cooperation among several rounds (Kadar and Haugh, 2013).

In the case of diplomatic services and institutional communication units, the findings indicate that the audience can be influenced by making systematic decisions regarding modality and legitimation warrants. Repeated deontic formulations based on generally accepted models (international humanitarian law; Charter principles) enhance the perceived legitimacy where norms have to be implemented. In areas that have to be negotiable, hedging and process-based language can be used to maintain a manoeuvrable movement without indicating weakness. In the case of policy messaging, the analysis indicates that coherence and interpretive drift are enhanced when there is consistency between the macro frames (law, humanitarian protection, procedural competence) and micro decisions (speech-act force, stance, deixis).

4.5. Limitations

A small purposive corpus of 12 texts is a limitation on the scale of the study. Although sampling was formulated to allow role/phase comparability, the findings cannot be statistically extended to every diplomatic discursive and every conflict. Genre constraints are also of concern: press releases and official statements are institutionally revised and can be less reflective of spontaneous negotiation processes, repair and interactional escalation that are characteristic of talk behind closed doors. Also, despite the fact that the analysis has focused on official versions written in English, diplomatic communication is frequently multilingual, translation and recontext as such could influence the strength of stance, implicatures, and culturally situated facework. Lastly, the analysis is based on public facing texts and these might vary systematically when compared to those of private negotiations where the parties were allowed to apply more powerful threats, making unambiguous concessions, or making more direct blame attributions.

4.6. Future research

There are three ways through which future research can build on this framework. To start with, multimodal diplomacy (video statements, press conferences) would provide the ability to analyze prosody, gaze, gesture, and turn-management as the other resources of de-escalation and authority enactment. Second, social media diplomacy may challenge the existence of the same pragmatic processes acting within the constraints of platforms (brevity, virality, audience fragmentation) and the establishment of legitimacy being created differently using hashtags, tagging, and intertextual referencing. Third, longitudinal designs would be able to trace the changes in pragmatic strategies over months of the negotiation process and to attribute changes in modality, alignment and ambiguity to turning points, including the breakdown of ceasefire talks, the swap of mediators or significant battlefield-humanitarian incidences. In a methodological sense, this pragmatic model would be enhanced by using larger corpora and richer annotation (with stance and appraisal tagging) to facilitate more solid cross-case comparison and still be sensitive to interpretation.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper aimed at an explanation of the process of discursive power and persuasion through pragmatic decisions that may be observed in conflict-resolution diplomacy. The paper, based on a corpus-assisted qualitative pragmatic discourse analysis of twelve official diplomatic texts in the Ukraine and

Gaza cases, showed that the institutionally-based power in diplomatic communication is consistently being performed by the linguistic design particularly through the wrapping of speech acts, the control of stance and modality, the strategic invocation of ambiguity, and the accomplishment of alignment.

In both instances, the most obvious exercise of macro-discursive power was on the control of the agenda itself and the legitimacy: escalation statements paired with condemnation with directive closure, thus limiting interpretive options and making specific actions (withdrawal, compliance, cessation) conditional. Conversely, UN and meditator discourse tended to exert power in another channel, which is normative and procedural power. A deontic form of modality (must) transformed humanitarian and legal claims into binding agents, whereas statements of mediation made pressure possible without clearly feeling a coercive force by making negotiations seem to be technically solvable and time-limited. These trends indicate that persuasion in diplomacy is often constraint management that determines what can reasonably come to mind, what is progress, and what reactions is socially and institutionally responsible.

How persuasive tactics are systematically different was also elucidated through role- and phase-based comparisons. International agencies depended on obligation modality and humanitarian/legal legitimation most, multilateral actors embraced coalition we to prosanction collective position and delegitimation, mediators reduced blame and increased closure pressure by framing urgency and owning the process. Patterned phase shifts were also found: escalation also predicted delegitimation and directive force, de-escalation was based on mitigated pressure and humanitarian justification, and the settlement discourse also promoted procedural closure by proposing bridges and showing implementation framing.

The paper adds to the study of pragmatics and diplomatic discourse by providing an operational model between macro-legitimation with micro-pragmatic machineries and demonstrating how strategic ambiguity and facework are also facilitating conditions of agreement and not evasiveness. In practice, the results are that, good diplomatic communication in conflict resolution requires an establishment of the illocutionary force, pathways to compliance that are not face-threatening, and harmonious alignments between normative frames and pragmatic design in such a manner that it is adopted in the multiple audiences.

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