

A Linguostylistic Analysis of Trump's Spontaneous Foreign-Policy Remarks During the Merz Meeting: A Case Study

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Abstract. This article presents a case study examining the linguostylistic features of Donald Trump's spontaneous foreign-policy remarks during his Oval Office meeting with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz on March 3, 2026. The meeting addressed sensitive topics, including Iran, trade, NATO burden-sharing, and relations with European allies, making it a substantive example of contemporary presidential political discourse. Employing qualitative discourse analysis and linguostylistic interpretation within a single-text case study design, the study identifies the main stylistic devices observed in Trump's remarks, including evaluative vocabulary, repetition, contrast, intensification, colloquialism, threat rhetoric, parallelism, and metaphor. Particular attention is given to the Spain-related segment, where evaluative language, binary opposition, and coercive framing co-occur. The analysis indicates that Trump's spontaneous discourse is characterized by emotional directness, simplified syntactic organization, and strong persuasive framing. Unlike scripted presidential speeches, these remarks exhibit a more immediate and interactional rhetorical style, yet they appear to perform identifiable ideological and strategic functions. As a single-case analysis, the findings are not intended to be generalized beyond the analyzed text; rather, the study contributes to a growing body of research suggesting that spontaneous presidential discourse warrants focused scholarly attention for its capacity to reveal how stylistic choices operate in real-time political communication.

Keywords: political discourse, linguostylistics, Donald Trump, foreign-policy rhetoric, stylistic devices, case study

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"Tramp–Merz görüşü zamanı Trampın spontan xarici siyasət bəyanatlarının linqvostilistik təhlili: nümunə tədqiqatı"

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Xülasə. Bu məqalə Donald Trampın 2026-cı il mart ayının 3-də Almaniya kansleri Fridrix Merts ilə Oval Kabinetdə keçirdiyi görüş zamanı səsləndirdiyi spontan xarici siyasət çıxışlarının linqvostilistik xüsusiyyətlərini araşdıran bir hal tədqiqatı (case study) təqdim edir. Görüşdə İran, ticarət, NATO yük bölgüsü və Avropa müttəfiqləri ilə münasibətlər kimi həssas mövzular müzakirə olunmuşdur. Tədqiqatda keyfiyyət diskurs təhlili və linqvostilistik interpretasiya üsullarından istifadə edilmişdir.

Trampın çıxışlarında müşahidə olunan əsas üslubi vasitələr, o cümlədən qiymətləndirici leksika, təkrar, kontrast, intensivləşdirmə, danışiq üslubu, təhdid ritorikası, paralelizm və metafora müəyyən edilmişdir. Təhlil göstərir ki, Trampın spontan diskursu emosional birbaşalıq, sadələşdirilmiş sintaktik təşkil və güclü inandırıcı çərçivələmə ilə səciyyələnir. Bir hal tədqiqatı olaraq, nəticələr təhlil edilmiş mətnin hüdudlarından kənara ümumiləşdirilmək üçün nəzərdə tutulmamışdır; əksinə, tədqiqat spontan prezident diskursunun real vaxt siyasət kommunikasiyasında üslubi seçimlərin necə işlədiyini aşkar etmə potensialına malik olduğunu göstərən artan elmi ədəbiyyata töhfə verir.

Açar sözlər: siyasət diskursu, lingvostilistika, Donald Tramp, xarici siyasət ritorikası, üslubi vasitələr, hal tədqiqatı

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Introduction

Political discourse analysts emphasize that spontaneous speech by leaders can reveal pragmatic and ideological functions not always visible in scripted addresses (Chilton, 2004; van Dijk, 1997; Wodak & Meyer, 2023). The March 3, 2026 Oval Office meeting between U. S. President Donald J. Trump and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz provided a compact corpus of unscripted presidential foreign-policy discourse. According to news accounts, this meeting took place against the backdrop of U. S. –Israeli strikes on Iran and rising international trade tensions (Bose et al., 2026). In off-the-cuff remarks captured on the official White House video and transcript (Trump, 2026; The White House, 2026), President Trump addressed issues such as NATO burden-sharing, the use of Spanish military bases for Iran operations, and recent tariff policies.

While previous analyses have predominantly focused on formal speeches such as inaugural addresses and joint sessions of Congress (Charteris-Black, 2011; Fairclough, 1995), the Trump–Merz exchange is valuable precisely because it is interactional and extemporaneous. As reported by Reuters, Trump threatened to terminate trade relations with Spain after its refusal to allow U. S. use of its bases (Bose et al., 2026). The present study seeks to answer the following research question: What are the prominent stylistic devices in Trump's March 3, 2026 Merz-meeting remarks, and how do they function rhetorically?

Based on prior scholarship, the analysis anticipates observing frequent evaluative adjectives, repetition, and informal language consistent with Trump's established rhetorical persona (Charteris-Black, 2011; Fairclough, 1995; Wodak, 2011; Breeze, 2021). The study further examines how these devices may contribute to the expression of authority, persuasion, and ideological positioning (Beard, 2000; Chilton, 2004; Hart, 2021).

It is important to note that this study constitutes a single-case analysis based on one transcript. Accordingly, the findings are descriptive and exploratory in nature and are not intended to be generalized beyond the analyzed text. The study is framed explicitly as a case study designed to illustrate how linguostylistic methods can be applied to spontaneous political discourse.

Literature Review

The linguistic study of political discourse has a long and well-established tradition. Van Dijk (1997) defined political discourse analysis as the examination of text and talk in political contexts,

emphasizing that political language performs both ideological and strategic functions. Chilton (2004) extended this framework by proposing that political discourse operates along axes of coercion, legitimization, representation, and misrepresentation. These foundational works have informed subsequent research on how leaders employ language to construct authority and manage public perception.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), as developed by Fairclough (1995) and systematized in subsequent methodological guides (Wodak & Meyer, 2023; Flowerdew & Richardson, 2023), provides the analytical tools for examining the relationship between language, power, and ideology. In CDA, linguistic features such as evaluative vocabulary, modality, and presupposition are understood as discursive strategies that enact social relations. Machin and Mayr (2023) further operationalized CDA methodology by offering practical frameworks for identifying how lexical choices, transitivity patterns, and rhetorical structures encode power relations in public discourse.

Within the specific domain of political rhetoric, Beard (2000) examined the “language of politics” and identified patterns of evaluation, persuasion, and condemnation that recur across political speech genres. Charteris-Black (2011) focused on the role of metaphor in political persuasion, demonstrating that figurative language serves to simplify complex policy positions and construct emotionally resonant narratives. More recently, Cap (2022) developed proximization theory, which explains how politicians use spatial, temporal, and axiological strategies to construct perceived threats and justify policy responses.

Research specifically addressing Trump’s discourse has grown considerably. Breeze (2021) analyzed populist rhetorical positioning across political parties, identifying patterns of binary framing and anti-elite sentiment. Hart (2021) examined metaphorical framing in political discourse, demonstrating how figurative language shapes audience perception of social groups. Sclafani (2018) provided a comprehensive analysis of Trump’s linguistic style, noting the prevalence of evaluative adjectives, hyperbole, repetition, and colloquial register as defining features of his rhetorical identity.

Linguostylistic analysis, drawing on foundational work by Leech and Short (2007) and further developed in Jeffries and McIntyre (2010), offers a complementary approach to CDA by focusing on the formal properties of style—such as lexical choice, syntactic patterning, and figurative language—and examining how these properties create meaning in context. This approach is particularly suitable for analyzing the aesthetic and performative dimensions of political speech, including spontaneous discourse where the absence of scripted polish reveals a speaker’s default stylistic preferences.

Despite the growing body of literature on political discourse, relatively few studies have examined spontaneous, unscripted presidential remarks as a distinct genre. Most existing research focuses on prepared speeches—inaugural addresses, State of the Union addresses, campaign rally scripts—which are designed and edited to achieve specific rhetorical effects (Charteris-Black, 2011; Flowerdew & Richardson, 2023). The present study addresses this gap by applying linguostylistic analysis to a single instance of spontaneous presidential discourse, framed as a case study to explore the analytical potential of this approach.

Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative case study design (Yin, 2018) focused on a single text: the official transcript of President Trump’s remarks during the bilateral meeting with Chancellor Merz on March 3, 2026 (Trump, 2026). Case study methodology is appropriate when the aim is to conduct an in-depth exploration of a bounded phenomenon within its real-world context (Yin, 2018). As this

analysis is based on a single transcript, the findings are understood as observations specific to the analyzed text and are not intended for generalization to other instances of presidential discourse.

3.2 Corpus Selection

The corpus consists of the official transcript covering all on-record verbal exchanges between Trump, Merz, and reporters. The analysis focuses specifically on Trump's turns, which account for approximately 80% of the total word count. Contextual reporting by Reuters (Bose et al., 2026), AP News (Hussein & Naishadham, 2026), and Euronews (Wright, 2026) was consulted to establish the situational context of the meeting. No additional data sources (e. g., audio recordings) were required for the purposes of this stylistic analysis.

3.3 Annotation Procedure and Coding Reliability

The transcript was read in full and annotated for occurrences of stylistic devices, informed by established categories in political discourse stylistics (Chilton, 2004; Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010; Leech & Short, 2007). Each clause was coded for the following features: evaluative adjectives, repetition of words and phrases, binary contrast structures, intensifiers, informal or idiomatic language, metaphors, parallel constructions, and threat-related statements. All coding decisions and category definitions were documented to ensure procedural consistency.

Given that coding was performed by a single researcher, the question of reliability warrants explicit discussion. Following Schreier (2012), who notes that in qualitative content analysis involving a single coder, consistency can be supported through theory-driven coding categories and systematic documentation, the present study employed coding categories derived directly from established theoretical frameworks: Chilton's (2004) categorization of political discourse strategies, Jeffries and McIntyre's (2010) stylistic analysis toolkit, and Leech and Short's (2007) framework for stylistic features. Each identified instance was cross-checked against the original transcript to verify accuracy. Where ambiguity arose regarding the classification of a given expression, the coding decision was resolved by reference to the theoretical definitions provided in the source frameworks. While the absence of inter-coder reliability measures constitutes a limitation, the use of theoretically grounded categories and transparent documentation supports the dependability of the analysis within the scope of this case study.

3.4 Analytic Framework

The analysis draws on linguostylistics and discourse analysis frameworks for political text (Beard, 2000; Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1997; Wodak & Meyer, 2023). The approach is qualitative with quantitative supplementation: devices were identified qualitatively, and their occurrences were subsequently counted. A simple coding scheme was employed in which each identified instance of a device type was tallied. Devices were coded as separate categories, permitting multiple codes per sentence.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

The data consist entirely of publicly available material (a presidential speech transcript and published news articles). No human subjects or personal data are involved. All quotations are properly cited.

Results

The coding procedure identified the following stylistic devices in Trump's Merz-meeting remarks. Each device is described below with illustrative quotations and frequency counts (Table 1). It should

be noted that the frequency values reported in Table 1 reflect exclusively the analyzed transcript and should not be interpreted as indicative of broader patterns in presidential or political discourse.

Evaluative vocabulary. Trump frequently employs positive adjectives for certain allies and negative ones for others. For instance, the Dutch Prime Minister and NATO head are described as “fantastic,” while Germany is characterized as “great” and “terrific” (Trump, 2026). By contrast, Spain is described as “terrible” and “unfriendly,” though Trump distinguishes between its people (“great people”) and its leadership (“not great leadership”) (Trump, 2026). This evaluative polarization functions to differentiate allies perceived as cooperative from those perceived as uncooperative. The analysis identified 18 evaluative adjectives and adverbs in the transcript.

Repetition. Trump frequently restates ideas in slightly modified form. For example, the sequence “We could use their base... We could just fly in and use it” (Trump, 2026) repeats the modal structure to emphasize U. S. capability. Similarly, “They have great people... but they don’t have great leadership” (Trump, 2026) employs a parallel template. Such anaphoric repetition appears to function as a rhetorical reinforcement strategy. Approximately 4 instances of notable repetition or parallel phrasing were identified.

Contrast and binary opposition. The remarks construct clear oppositions: “fantastic” Germany is juxtaposed with “terrible” Spain (Trump, 2026); “great people” is contrasted with “not great leadership” (Trump, 2026); “helpful” European nations are set against those characterized as unhelpful (Trump, 2026). These binary structures appear to function as a mechanism for constructing in-group and out-group categories among allies. The analysis identified 6 contrastive pairs.

Intensification and hyperbole. Strong intensifiers and hyperbolic expressions are observable, including “absolutely nothing” (Trump, 2026), “massive amounts of ammunition” (Trump, 2026), “unlimited supply” (Trump, 2026), and “tremendous amount” (Trump, 2026). These expressions appear to function as amplifiers of evaluative and assertive statements. Five intensifiers and hyperboles were noted.

Colloquialism and informal register. The discourse contains informal and colloquial expressions, including characterizing adversaries as “lunatics” (Trump, 2026), describing policy decisions as “stupidly” executed (Trump, 2026), and employing vivid conversational imagery. Such register choices are consistent with patterns of informality identified in Trump’s discourse by prior scholarship (Sclafani, 2018; Breeze, 2021). Four colloquial or informal expressions were identified.

Threat rhetoric and coercive framing. Trump makes explicit statements of threatened political and economic action. Most notably, he states “we’re going to cut off all trade with Spain. We don’t want anything to do with Spain” (Trump, 2026). These statements function as coercive pressure directed at an ally perceived as non-compliant. Two instances of explicit threat rhetoric targeting Spain were identified.

Metaphor. A small number of metaphoric expressions were observed. The most notable is “They were the kings and fathers of the roadside bomb” (Trump, 2026), which personifies Iranian operatives through royal and paternal imagery to characterize their role in asymmetric warfare. Two metaphors were identified in total.

Parallelism. Parallel syntactic structures appear occasionally. For instance, regarding former Chancellor Merkel, Trump states “he’s pretty much the opposite of her on energy and the opposite on immigration” (Trump, 2026), employing a repeated “the opposite on...” construction. Two instances of clear parallel phrasing were identified.

Deixis and direct address. The transcript contains deictic references and instances of direct address. For example, “this is not Winston Churchill that we’re dealing with” (Trump, 2026) uses deictic “this” to reference the Spanish leadership situation. Two instances of notable deictic reference or direct address were identified.

Table 1
Frequency of Stylistic Devices Identified in Trump’s March 3, 2026 Merz Meeting Remarks

Device	Frequency
Evaluative adjectives	18
Repetition/Parallelism	4
Contrast/Opposition	6
Intensification/Hyperbole	5
Colloquialism/Informal register	4
Threat rhetoric	2
Metaphor	2
Deixis/Direct address	2

Note. Frequency counts reflect only the analyzed transcript (Trump, 2026) and are not generalizable to other instances of presidential or political discourse. Categories are not mutually exclusive; a single sentence may be coded under multiple device types.

To illustrate the co-occurrence of devices, the Spain-related passage merits particular attention: “Spain has absolutely nothing that we need other than great people. They have great people, but they don’t have great leadership... So we’re going to cut off all trade with Spain. We don’t want anything to do with Spain” (Trump, 2026). This passage exhibits evaluative vocabulary (“great, ” “leadership”), intensification (“absolutely nothing”), binary contrast (“great people” vs. “not great leadership”), repetition (“Spain” repeated four times), and explicit threat rhetoric (“cut off all trade”). The co-occurrence of multiple devices within a single passage suggests a pattern of rhetorical layering in which stylistic choices work in combination to construct political pressure.

Discussion

The analysis illustrates how Trump’s extemporaneous remarks at the Merz meeting are characterized by a distinctly informal and confrontational style in comparison to what might typically be expected in a prepared address. The density of evaluative and coercive language is consistent with what Beard (2000) identifies as the “language of condemnation” in political rhetoric, wherein lexical choices function to construct and reinforce evaluative hierarchies among political actors.

Compared to formal speeches, spontaneous discourse appears to permit a greater degree of personal voice and colloquial register. The Merz meeting remarks contain incomplete sentences, colloquial characterizations, and direct asides that would be atypical in a carefully edited speech. This observation is consistent with findings by Chilton (2004) and Wodak (2011), who note that interactive political talk frequently foregrounds personal stance and communicative immediacy.

The observed patterns are consistent with documented features of Trump’s rhetorical style, including persuasive repetition, evaluative emphasis, and colloquial register (Sclafani, 2018; Breeze, 2021). However, in the analyzed transcript, these devices appear to be deployed in real time in response to contextual factors—specifically, the Iran conflict and journalist questions—rather than as elements of a preplanned rhetorical agenda. The discourse thus exhibits a mixed character, combining elements

of formal presidential communication (references to NATO goals, technical military details) with informal and occasionally colloquial expression.

It is important to exercise caution in interpreting these findings. The identified patterns represent observations within a single text and should be understood as associations between stylistic features and apparent communicative functions, rather than as causal claims about rhetorical intention. For example, while the evaluative and threatening language directed at Spain co-occurs with what appears to be a coercive communicative function, the present analysis cannot establish that the speaker deliberately selected these devices for that purpose. The relationship between linguistic form and pragmatic function in spontaneous speech is inherently complex (Chilton, 2004; Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010).

From the perspective of political communication, the analysis suggests that studying naturalistic interactions may offer insights into how political leaders communicate unscripted messages. As contemporaneous reporting indicates, these particular remarks generated substantial media coverage (Wright, 2026; Hussein & Naishadham, 2026). The linguistic features identified—vivid evaluative language and overt threat statements—are consistent with characteristics that tend to attract journalistic attention. For scholars of political discourse, this case illustrates that speech genre matters: an Oval Office bilateral meeting is neither a press conference nor a formal address, but an impromptu interactional event that can be productively analyzed for its stylistic properties.

The limitations of this study should be acknowledged. As a single-case analysis, the findings cannot be extrapolated to presidential discourse more broadly. The use of a single coder, while supported by theoretically grounded categories, represents a methodological constraint. Future research employing multiple coders and larger corpora would enhance the reliability and generalizability of similar analyses.

Conclusion

This case study has examined the linguostylistic features of Donald Trump's spontaneous remarks during the March 3, 2026 meeting with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz. The analysis identified a pattern of evaluative, repetitive, and confrontational stylistic devices, including evaluative adjectives, binary contrasts, intensifiers, colloquialisms, threat rhetoric, metaphors, and parallel structures. The frequency analysis (Table 1) indicates that evaluative and emphatic expressions are the most prominent features in the analyzed text.

The findings suggest that spontaneous presidential discourse is characterized by features that differ from those typically observed in scripted addresses, including greater informality, more direct evaluative language, and reactive rather than preplanned rhetorical strategies. As a single-case study, these findings are descriptive and exploratory; they are not intended to be generalized beyond the analyzed transcript. Nonetheless, the analysis contributes to a growing body of research indicating that spontaneous political discourse warrants focused scholarly attention for its capacity to reveal how stylistic choices operate in real-time communication.

Future research could extend this framework to other unscripted interactions, such as press events and bilateral meetings involving different political leaders. Comparative studies examining spontaneous discourse across different contexts, time periods, or political figures could contribute to a more systematic understanding of how personal style interacts with situational factors in political rhetoric. Additionally, combining qualitative linguostylistic analysis with corpus-based quantitative methods could offer a more comprehensive profile of stylistic patterns in presidential discourse.

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