

# CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS ON LEADER STATEMENTS IN THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

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*This study complies with research and publication ethics.*

## Abstract

The primary purpose of this study is to examine the statements of the leaders of Russia and Ukraine about the war through critical discourse analysis. The research data were obtained from Anadolu Agency between February 24, 2022, and August 10, 2022. Data from secondary sources were analyzed within the framework of thematic analysis, situation analysis, word choices, and persuasion strategies. Research findings show that Putin preferred to use authoritarian language emphasizing "power" as it would determine the course of the war. Zelensky preferred a discourse emphasizing that the war continues on his land; therefore, Ukraine is "right".

**Keywords:** Russia-Ukraine War, leader statements, critical discourse analysis, media management, power, and hegemony.

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# LİDERLERİN RUSYA-UKRAYNA SAVAŐINA DAİR İFADELERİ ÜZERİNE ELEŐTİREL SÖYLEM ANALİZİ

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*Bu çalışma araştırma ve yayın etiğine uygun olarak gerçekleştirilmiştir.*

## Öz

Bu çalışmanın temel amacı Rusya ve Ukrayna liderlerinin savaşıla ilgili ifadelerini eleştirel söylem analiziyle incelemektir. Araştırmanın verileri, 24 Şubat 2022 ile 10 Ağustos 2022 tarihleri arasında Anadolu Ajansı'ndan elde edilmiştir. İkincil kaynaklardan elde edilen veriler tematik analiz, durum değerlendirme analizi, sözcük seçimleri ve ikna stratejileri çerçevesinde yorumlanmıştır. Araştırma bulguları, Putin'in savaşı seyirini kendilerinin belirleyeceği şeklinde "gücü" vurgulayan otoriter bir dili kullanmayı tercihi ettiği gösterirken Zelensky'nin ise savaşı kendi topraklarında sürdüğünü, dolayısıyla Ukrayna'nın her durumda "haklı" olduğunu vurgulayan bir söylemi tercih ettiğini ortaya koymaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Rusya-Ukrayna Savaşı, lider ifadeleri, eleştirel söylem analizi, medya yönetimi, güç ve hegemonya.

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## Introduction

Language is a means of communication, and this tool hides in discourse. Because of this secrecy, what is implied in language at first glance reveals itself only through analysis. Language and the elements in its structure are always the building blocks of relationships and communication. Critical linguistics is concerned with processing meanings in texts ideologically and politically, concerning their context. This shows that the discourse contains implicit information in all cases. It is essential to interpret the discourse in context because it contains implicit or implied information (Paltridge, 2006; Simpson, 1993, p. 5). Whatever the subject, 'language' is not a means of transmission without context, and it is not possible to talk about the use of language without context. The use of language includes a range of discourses that reflect the understanding of social systems and institutions. Language and ideological context are significantly used in the wars between Russia and Ukraine.

Words have a powerful effect on people's attitudes and behaviors, and which word is chosen and emphasized in a discourse is essential. People sometimes use words to explain the truth and sometimes to hide the truth. Language is used to direct people's thoughts and beliefs and control them (Wareing, 2004, p. 4; Jones & Peccei, 2004, p. 36). To understand the meaning of the words of the leaders, especially in extraordinary situations such as war, it is necessary to do the archeology of the language. With discourse analysis, while gaining information about what words mean, they also reveal their perspectives, intentions, and what they imply. Because political situations are not only reflected in the words of political actors but cognitive coordination is also established between current situations and speech, that is, the context (Van Dijk, 2006, p. 733). Therefore, in the discourse analysis process, paying attention to the expressions, patterns, concepts, and symbols in the discourses is essential in reaching the goal of the purpose. Linguistic analysis of political discourse and speech is essential in revealing linguistic intent.

In this study, it was preferred to use the critical discourse analysis technique suggested by Van Dijk since the subject is political, ideological, and political. In the study, the expressions of Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, presented by the Anadolu Agency, regarding the discourses during the war, were used as the unit of analysis. It has been tried to reveal hidden, implicit, connotative, and deep meanings in the leaders' discourses. In the analysis process, the thematic structure was examined under the macrostructure using Van Dijk's model for critical discourse analysis. Then the schematic structure is considered. Under the microstructure, the deep meanings of the expressions were tried to be revealed by considering the syntactic analysis, word choices, and rhetoric.

The research aims to reveal the intention and primary purpose behind the political discourse used by the leaders of Russia and Ukraine during the war. For this purpose, a critical discourse analysis of the language of the pol-

itics carried out during the war was made. Throughout the study, leader expressions were interpreted with layers of sides and deep meanings beyond their actual meanings. For this purpose, language has been interpreted from a political perspective, different from discourse and communication. In this way, it is aimed to describe the relations between discourse, language, social practices, and the social world (Luntz, 2007, p. 49; Beard, 2000, p. 2). In the research, critical discourse analysis was preferred because the statements of the leaders of Russia and Ukraine provide a suitable framework for analysis through macro and microstructures. Another reason that critical discourse analysis was preferred was because of the timeliness and importance of the subject. The research aimed to answer the fundamental question of “how is the reflection of the war between Russia and Ukraine on the expressions of the leaders” and the following sub-questions:

- Do leaders emphasize righteousness or strength in the war process?
- How does the anxiety of being persuasive manifest itself in the leader’s statements?

## **Conceptual Framework**

### **Propaganda as a tool for psychological superiority in war**

Propaganda in war is carried out to demoralize the target audience, destroying their determination to fight and weakening their beliefs. Psychological activities influence and direct the target audience’s emotions, thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors. Propaganda in war is deliberate and misleading rumors made to divert attention, show oneself strong and the enemy to be weak, and distort the enemy’s people and army intellectually (Brown, 2012, p. 69). Propaganda is a psychological warfare tactic and a convenient tool. Propaganda is the influencing of the desired ideas and opinions of the public through different words, writings, pictures, movies, and radio news to reach the determined goal. Propaganda effectively transmits an idea, prejudice, emotions, images, slogans, and symbols to the target audience. Propaganda, if done by the enemy, is deceptive; if a state does it, it is protective and convincing. The arsenal of propaganda is words and words. Goethe said, “The most powerful weapon is an idea whose time has come” (Güner, 2018, p. 83; Pratkanis & Aronson, 2008, p. 13). Propaganda is not random words. It is an activity that is well thought out, time and space are well calculated, shape and size are determined correctly, and the target audience is pre-selected. Propaganda emphasizing Putin’s power and Zelensky’s righteousness continued throughout the war.

Propaganda can be applied as internal propaganda and external propaganda. Internal propaganda aims to keep the feeling of trust in the country vital and alive and the belief that the war will result in victory. Putin constantly uses this tactic against his people in the war. Because Ukraine has not been

able to convince its people enough about the causes of the war, this type of propaganda is primarily defensive, and Putin cannot convince his people that Russia is under significant threat. Putin revealed that he aimed to destroy Ukraine from within by giving weight to foreign propaganda during the war. Calling the Ukrainian army to revolt against Zelensky, he resorts to foreign propaganda tactics. According to another classification, the propaganda source is divided into white propaganda, gray propaganda, and black propaganda. In other classifications, propaganda is tactical propaganda, strategic propaganda, and occupation propaganda (Pratkanis & Aronson, 2008, p. 13; Tarhan, 2006, p. 49). The source of white propaganda is clear, and accuracy is valued. If false words are used, it undermines trust. The goal set in white propaganda is repeated thousands of times. Gray propaganda, on the other hand, is blurred, and the source is unclear.

Another type of propaganda is black propaganda, which seems to come from a familiar source, but the reality is the opposite. In the black propaganda method, deception, intrigue, lies, slander, sedition, and false evidence are used. It aims to change facts, shake beliefs, and confuse public opinion. Since the material of black propaganda is lies, slander, sedition, and unfounded claims, it is tried to be shown as if it has something that is not in this type of propaganda. Those who apply this method are used as propaganda material without moral and conscientious responsibility (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2012, p. 21). Both states constantly resort to black propaganda, primarily to hide their losses in the war. Strategic propaganda is long-term propaganda. This propaganda starts very early and continues without interruption. Russia is making strategic propaganda to convince its people that war is inevitable for Russia's future. Tactical propaganda, on the other hand, is a little repetition of strategic propaganda and is applied for short-term results. The enemy's past defeats, mistakes, and weapon-material deficiencies are used for propaganda. Soldiers at the front are targeted, and bad news from behind the lines is widely used. Russia put forward tactical propaganda, suggesting that the Ukrainian army and people should disobey the Kyiv regime.

The history of psychological warfare in human history is as old as war. In his book "The Art of War", Tzu said that two thousand years ago, military operations had no definite form and were conducted by deception. Tzu stated that it is impossible to control the enemy without cheating and strategy and that cheating is necessary to defeat the enemy. That accuracy is necessary to manage a group (Barlas, 2008, p. 211). Psychological warfare, conversely, influences people's perceptions of winning or losing the war and maintaining sustainable superiority after the war (Tarhan, 2006, p. 1). Psychological warfare, psychological operations, and covert operations are intertwined concepts that are often used interchangeably. Psychological warfare is actions aimed at removing the nation/army being fought from as an opposing force, making it compatible and dependent, or destroying it (Ganor, 2005, p. 38). By nature, the desire to dominate and keep control is either through actual or

psychological warfare. In psychological warfare, it is the planned transmission of information and news to the relevant target audiences to affect the emotions of the target audiences.

In psychological warfare and propaganda techniques, suggestions filled with false statements are persistently repeated to break the enemy's war determination and resistance. The enemy is discouraged by arousing a sense of fear. The tactical objectives, which are short-term than psychological warfare, are to increase the sense of obedience in society, mislead the international public opinion, and open the gap between the public and the administration. The target of psychological warfare is the people and the soldiers fighting; therefore, the psychological state of the people is exploited. Psychological warfare is a combat technique that requires deep expertise in human psychology. While the United States was developing psychological warfare, it benefited from social anthropology and contributed to the development of this science. During the Second World War, the U.S. Army used the well-known anthropologist Ruth Benedict to conduct propaganda against the Japanese. This scientist was asked to study Japanese culture. As a result of this examination, the work titled *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, which is still among the major works of cultural anthropology, emerged (Tarhan, 2006, p. 2; Yalçın, 2006, p. 32). Psychological warfare is used for offensive and defensive purposes, and in long-term strategic psychological warfare, friend or foe is manipulated. Especially white propaganda is preferred. In this method, credibility increases as the news turns out to be true. Russia is trying to give psychological warfare on all fronts by emphasizing constant power and Ukraine on self-defense during the war.

### **Critical discourse analysis of war and propaganda**

Language alone means nothing; the real meaning emerges with the social and cultural context in which it is located. Language, which is at the center of social life, has a feature that creates life. Language explains the social world and is established through language (Potter & Wetherell, 2001, p.199; Wood & Kroger, 2000, p. 163). As the statements of the leaders of Russia and Ukraine show, it is understood that the language reaches its original meaning through discourse. It is seen that Putin preferred to use the language in an ideological context by expressing that he started the war to rid Ukraine of "military and neo-Nazis". Although the war continued in a bloody and destructive way, Putin's preference for the concept of 'military operation' instead of the concept of 'war' shows that the discourse is used for manipulative purposes. During the war, the two countries' leaders make their statements to their citizens and other people in an ideological context through the media.

The discourse analysis of the language can be used functionally in terms of revealing the intended use of the language and the implied meaning. Lan-

guage analysis helped reveal language's intention and implied use (Trudgil, 1992, p. 44; Holmes, 2001, p. 344; Tutar & Erdem, 2020, p. 397). Discourses showing the purpose of using language can sometimes be used to show power, sometimes to use knowledge, and sometimes to criticize. The speaker expresses the ideological content of the text as well as the linguistic form of the text. Choosing a linguistic form may not be a lively process for the individual speaker. Texts, the embodiment of language, are syntactic forms arranged regarding the content structure and ideological background. Political discourses can be in the form of functional and thematic discourses.

Discourse is used in many senses, such as point of view to events and facts, way of expression, ways of emphasizing, the way of expression of ideology, the way of expression of oral or written texts, style, language, and views. Therefore, it can be said that discourse is related to all aspects of life, such as social, political, cultural, and economic fields (Kocaman, 2009, p. 5; Sözen, 1999, p. 91). Discourse is also considered as all speaking and writing acts. Discourse is the derivative of the speech network. Discourse as a meta-action; includes processes related to language practices that turn into action through knowledge, dialogue, expression style, power, and power relations (Sözen, 1999, p. 91). Discourse analysis is necessary for reading and examining the details of the text (Fairclough, 1989, p. 24; Kocaman, 2009, p. 25); Critical discourse analysis aims to reveal the implications of ideology and hidden intentions in texts that ordinary people cannot detect (Van Dijk, 2001). The primary purpose of critical discourse analysis is to reveal and make explicit the hidden intentions, mental backgrounds, and implied purpose in words, texts, and all forms of expression (Fowler, 2013; Fairclough, 1993; Batstone, 1995). Critical discourse analysis asks: "Why was this text constructed this way?", "Who is the addressee of the word?", "Does the speaker have ulterior motives?". It is tried to reveal the mind map of the speaker by emphasizing elements such as "What are the deep and connotative meanings of the text?", "What are the unsaid things hidden behind what is said?" (Trask, 2007).

## Method

### Research design

As a research method in social sciences, discourse analysis is one of the research and interpretation methods. In discourse analysis, the unit of analysis can be any form of expression, whether word or text. Discourse analysis encompasses text, critical, social, and sociolinguistic study. The main elements of discourse analysis are speech analysis, political power relations, institutional connections, and discourses (Elliott, 1996, p. 54-65; Sözen, 1999; p. 108). As a qualitative research method, discourse analysis is widely used to analyze messages, texts, social phenomena, and discourse practices in language. In discourse analysis, the text is not divided into parts but examined as a whole. Discourse analysis is used to understand, interpret, and reveal side and deep

meanings. The primary purpose of discourse analysis is to unmask the artificial meaning and to reveal the hidden and implied meaning by interpreting the text. In discourse analysis, a bridge is established between the text and the interpreter, as it clarifies the interpretation that people want to say. The primary purpose of discourse analysis is to reveal the expression's implicit and implied meaning through the language's archeology (Taylan, 2011, p. 66). Discourse analysis tries to reach the intended message's real meaning through context. The context is all the social, cultural, historical, and linguistic elements from which the discourse emerges.

### **Macro structures**

#### ***Thematic analysis***

The main subject is examined under the heading of macrostructures. There are macro structures such as the main title, preface, and chapter titles (Ülkü, 2004, pp. 382-383; İnal, 1996, p. 34). The subject is a basis for the examination is directly examined in the introduction-development-result sections. Since the critical discourse analysis of news texts consists of discourses with social messages, they do not have a macrostructure, such as section titles and entries. Here, since the macrostructure is placed in the thematic scheme, the macrostructure's real meaning is revealed (Van Dijk, 2015, pp. 42-43). This method emphasizes how the process develops by giving the direct starting point of the event. Accordingly, how the war process started regarding the Russia-Ukraine war is reflected in Putin's discourse as follows:

Putin: I decided to organize a military operation. The purpose of the operation is to protect people subjected to abuse and genocide by the Kyiv Regime for eight years. We will strive to clean Ukraine from Nazism and militarism and bring to justice those who committed numerous bloody crimes against civilians, including citizens of the Russian Federation.

As stated above, the primary purpose and intention expressed in the discourse are different. Putin here is trying to shed the blame for the war by saying that although it is very destructive, he has decided on the operation based on more justified reasons, not the war. On the other hand, he prefers not to mention the name of a state officially recognized by the United Nations and prefers to use the term Kyiv Regime. In his rhetoric here, Putin implies that he does not recognize the Ukrainian state. Although Putin says he decided on the operation intending to protect people subjected to abuse and genocide and claims he did not target civilians in Ukraine, there is clear evidence of the opposite. Russian forces have repeatedly attacked Ukrainian cities' densely populated residential areas with missiles, aerial bombs, and artillery (Rudenko, 2022).





Putin is using the mask of justice to hide that he is waging war according to the laws of war. However, the situation is exacerbated by using the U.S. controlled Ukrainian government as a dagger against Russia, harming millions of Ukrainians. On the other hand, Ukraine's lawlessness, corruption, and aggressive nationalism should not be ignored, which justifies Putin's "we will strive to rid Ukraine of Nazism and militarism" (Lendman, 2019). Putin argues that ideologies such as Nazism and militarism dominate Ukraine to justify his military operation.

The following words of the President of Ukraine, Zelensky, show that the real reason for the war is not what Putin has stated but other reasons. Here again, humanity is faced with the fact that there are no facts; there are interpretations. Zelensky: "If our lives, our freedom, our children are attacked, we will defend ourselves, we will not attack, we will defend ourselves". Selected here, asserting that all kinds of struggles for concepts such as life, freedom, and children have their rights, he repeats that Ukraine is correct in every situation and is leading the war following the law. Ukraine, which has conflicted with Russia since 2014, strengthened its army and prepared for an invasion movement. Ukraine has one of the largest armies in Europe, with 170,000 active military units, 100,000 reservists, and regional defense forces comprising at least 100,000 veterans and thousands of civilians who were conscripted for this war (Sharma, 2022; Schmitt et al., 2022).

On the other hand, Ukraine is fighting against Russia with billions of dollars in military aid from more than 30 countries during the war. In this process, the USA provided two million dollars of military aid to Ukraine (Sharma, 2022; The White House, 2022). Although this situation shows that the warring parties are Russia and Ukraine, Russia is fighting on the territory of Ukraine against all anti-Russian opponents. While Zelensky tries to justify himself with sentences based on defense without responding to the ideological rhetoric used by Russia, he adopts a defensive, not an offensive, stance. Since Ukraine regained its independence in 1991, it has been an excellent partner to the United States on issues critical to U.S. foreign and security policy. It is also essential for its European position (Pifer, 2017).



Putin aimed to take the initiative to eliminate this threat to prevent the USA from achieving its goals to ensure its national security, which is concerned about using Ukraine against Russia for a reason unrelated to the Ukrainian people or the country itself. Although Putin said that “it is connected with the protection of Russia from those who take Ukraine hostage and those who try to use it against our country and its people”, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR] announced that as of May 9, 2022, Russia’s military campaign against Ukraine confirmed that a total of 3,459 civilians died during the attack, of whom 238 were children. In addition, it is not enough to hide that 3 thousand 713 people were injured (Statista, 2022).



Zelensky said, “We broke off diplomatic relations with Russia. Ukraine is defending and will not give up its freedom no matter what is thought in Moscow”, and his insistence that he continues the war following a legitimate aim and international law lays the groundwork for him to receive support from all over the world. Despite all these cries for freedom, Ukraine tripled its defense budget in real terms from 2010 to 2020. Ukraine has voluntary territorial defense units and approximately 900,000 reservists. Most adult men have at least basic military training. For this reason, it has been recorded that if Russia tries to seize and hold the region, it may face compelling and prolonged resistance (Reuters, 2022). All these figures show that Ukraine is also preparing for war. In addition, the military support it receives from the USA and many European countries show that the parties to the war are not only Russia and Ukraine (Reuters, 2022).

In one of his statements, Putin said, "I appeal to the soldiers of the Ukrainian Armed Forces. Do not allow neo-Nazis and Banderas to use your children, spouses, and elders as human shields". Take power into your hands, and we will quickly agree with you. Putin's neo-Nazi emphasis on Zelensky is essential. With these statements of Putin, he also refers to the Ukrainian nationalist and leader of the independence movement, Stepan Andriyovich Bandera. Since 2014, the United States has supported the Azov and Aidar Battalions, Pravy Sektor, and other neo-Nazi sympathizers of the Ukrainian armed forces, fighting Russia and waging war against separatists in Donbas for eight years. Several nationalist paramilitary groups espouse neo-Nazi ideology, such as the Azov movement and the Right Sector, which operate in Ukraine (St. Pete for Peace, 2022).



By provoking the Ukrainian armed forces against an elected government with 73% of the vote, Putin is demonstrating what his standards of democracy are. On the other hand, although Putin tried to show that he would not allow discussion of war power through over-the-top conversations, both sides lost a lot during the war. Russia lost as many soldiers in its three-month occupation of Ukraine as in the entire nine-year war in Afghanistan. The Soviet Union's losses in the Afghan war were approximately 15 thousand deaths, 35,478 wounded, and 311 missings (Ng, 2022). In addition, the demoralization of the Russian army and the lack of motivation to find a justification for the war caused some soldiers to refuse when the soldiers of an elite Russian army brigade were told to prepare for a second deployment to Ukraine. Some soldiers wanted to be dismissed or serve in a different region outside of Ukraine (Sauer, 2022). This shows that Putin could not persuade the Ukrainian army and even his army to go to war.



On the other hand, Zelensky, with the self-confidence of preparing for war for a long time, told the Russian army units, “Put your weapons and go. Do not believe your commanders, your propagandists. Just save your life” he did not only give morale to his people but also tried to gain a tactical advantage by responding to Putin’s propaganda and war strategies. In the presence of the commanders, he makes sarcasm that they are taking orders from the propagandists or being directed. He says he can get out of this business before it is too late just by saving their lives.



### ***Schematic analysis***

Since the discourses of the two countries’ leaders about the war are in the category of news discourse, the events should be analyzed in a functional context, such as cause-effect and condition-effect. A schematic analysis is suitable for generalization and customization and to reveal the schematic structure. In the concept of schematic analysis, attention is drawn to how reality is approached in news narratives of media messages and what is handled within the framework (Van Dijk, 2015, p. 43):

Putin: Do not follow his orders! I urge you to lay down your weapons and go home immediately. All soldiers of the Ukrainian army who fulfill this requirement will be able to leave the war zone and return to their families freely.

Zelensky: Together, we must save Ukraine.

While emphasizing that the Ukrainian soldiers should lay down their arms and that obeying the orders of the Ukrainian president would only have neg-

ative consequences, Putin aimed to create an environment of confidence that those who lay down their arms would be free and with their families. On the other hand, Zelensky emphasizes that the war's outcome can only end in one way and that Ukraine should be saved from this occupation. With the expression "together", the soldiers and the people should participate in this defense. According to Putin's statements, this war is inevitable; according to Zelensky, this war should only result in the liberation of Ukraine. It was emphasized that, according to what Putin said, Ukrainian soldiers who lay down their weapons and did not obey orders could return home freely. According to Zelensky, not only the soldiers but everyone could play a role in the liberation of Ukraine.

Putin: No matter how difficult it may be, I invite you to understand this and cooperate in turning this tragic page as soon as possible and move forward together, not allow anyone to interfere in our affairs and relations, and build our relations together independently.

Zelensky: Everyone is here, the army is here, the civilian population is here, we are all here, we protect and will protect our independence and our state.

Putin shows how the "perception of military power" distracts him from reality by asking people who have not yet recovered from the trauma of Crimea to stop defending their lands. Their seemingly innocent statements that we should not involve others in our affairs and relationships are also far from convincing. Putin, who says let us not interfere with others in our affairs, not only interferes in Ukraine's affairs but also provokes an independent state's army against its administration, revealing a significant inconsistency. The people he invites to cooperate are the rebels he wants to oppose the legitimate government and the soldiers he provokes against the coup. If the situation turns out as Putin wants, Putin will show that he desires cooperation with illegitimate forces. On the other hand, after implying that Russia will be the absolute victor of the war due to its military power, it is a strategic manipulation to ensure that it can be agreed to direct communication without intervention.

### ***Situation analysis***

In situation analysis, discourse is evaluated regarding local and general consistency. The local and general context that creates the discourse, the place and time of the message, the communication with the listener and this audience, the social roles of the listeners, information on the subject, norms, values, and organizational or institutional structures are essential for the situation analysis (Feyzioğlu, 2012, p. 71). In the case section, it is examined according to which of the straight, parallel and chained narrative types the event is handled. In addition, attention is paid to the relationship between the speaker's purpose and the discourse. How the speaker draws a real plane to be convincing, and the social and ideological indicators of the messages are presented. In this research, while the situation analysis summarizes the events pattern of the leaders' statements in the war between Russia and Ukraine,

the war perceptions of both communities were evaluated together as in the examples below.

Putin: Modern Russia is one of the most powerful nuclear powers today, even after the collapse of the USSR and losing a significant part of its nuclear potential. It also has certain advantages in several areas regarding the latest weapon types. In this context, no one should doubt that a direct attack on Russia will lead to defeat and dire consequences for a potential aggressor.

These words emphasize that Putin is ready for anything for the country's security and strategic goals by improving the nuclear defense strategy of modern Russia.

Zelensky: Russian occupation forces are trying to seize the Chernobyl power plant, a declaration of war for all of Europe.

With this statement, Zelensky emphasizes the importance of Ukraine, especially for Europe, and states that he expects implicit support to prevent Russia from seizing Chernobyl. He also states that the capture of Chernobyl poses a threat to Europe. In this statement, Zelensky warns that Ukraine is a barrier to the entry of Russian forces into Europe, so this barrier must be protected.

Putin: Most importantly, this needs to be understood. What happened now was the precautions to be taken, and there was no other chance; all our attempts were in vain. The security risks for Russia were so high that we had no choice.

In the opening sentence, he emphasized that Putin draws attention and describes what happened at the beginning of the war as inevitable. Because of Ukraine's position and relations with the United States, Putin states that Russia sees the country's security under threat.

Zelensky: We must hold on tonight. The fate of Ukraine is now being determined.

This and similar statements of Zelensky frequently appear in the press. Zelensky, who insists on resistance, emphasizing righteousness, self-defense, and homeland defense, also shows his determination to fight with his military uniform. In this regard, Zelensky's statements in his address to the Ukrainian Armed Forces are similar: "Stand firm; you are the only thing we have; you are the only thing that protects our state; long live Ukraine".

### ***Comment***

The discourse that creates society and culture points to the social problems experienced. Since discourse is an intermediary between the text and society, it requires interpretation and explanation. Discourse analysis deconstructs the text by moving it beyond syntactic and semantic boundaries (Solak, 2011, p. 3). In the comment section; the main point is the effort to understand what the intention of the speaker, that is, the speaker, is:

Putin: Freedom is at the center of our policy. It is about the freedom of everyone to independently determine their future and their children's future. We consider it essential that this right, the right to choose, can be exercised by all people living in today's Ukraine.

The message the speakers want to give listeners in their discourse is clear, and the intention is understandable. Especially emphasizing the concept of "freedom", Putin emphasizes that freedom is valid for the people of Ukraine as it is for everyone. While doing this, he says they can make their own choices either to fight or for freedom, meaning that he offers a choice to the Ukrainian people, whom he has put under an obligation.

Zelensky: Ukraine did not choose the path of war, but Ukraine proposes to return to the path of peace.

In the above statement, Zelensky emphasizes the rightness of Ukraine by using the word "peace" frequently while saying that Ukraine is not pro-war. This emphasis on justification also means a call for support and help to the world. In the above statements of the leaders, it is seen that while Putin constantly emphasizes war, power, and destruction, and the results will be tragic, Zelensky emphasizes self-defense, protecting children and the homeland. In addition, for Putin, while it is emphasized that the results of the war will be devastating and aimed at changing the other side's intention, for Zelensky, a discourse of resistance and defense prevails in this war.

## **Microstructures**

### ***Sentence structures***

In the analysis of sentence structures, a functional language mechanism is emphasized, the speaker's mind map is drawn, and the subconscious is tried to be read. The emphasis in his discourse explains the speaker's attitude toward the sentence. This section examines determinants of discourse, sentence structures, dialogue sentences, active or passive sentence structures, the use of moods, and how propositions are formed at the micro-level. Sentence structures related to macro structures were analyzed through the following leader expressions.

Putin: These fundamental threats to our country, which are roughly created every year, step by step, by irresponsible politicians in the West, namely the enlargement of NATO, cause particular concern to us.

The dilemmas (step-by-step) and pauses (threats) in Putin's statement indicate his willingness to convey the message he wants to emphasize effectively.

Zelensky: Once again, I would like to address the President of Russia; there is a war going on all over Ukraine; let us sit at the negotiating table to stop the deaths.

It is seen that Zelensky is acting defiantly (stopping the deaths) with his calling sentence, trying to give an image of Ukraine that is resisting, rebellious, and not easy to bite. Expressions that have the meaning of a request but fall into an order sentence (negotiation table) can be seen as a reflection of the difficult conditions.

Putin: The western bloc is an empire of lies.

Putin wants to emphasize that the western bloc, which he expressed by referring to the countries that were in the bloc against the Soviet Union and allied with the USA and NATO during the Cold War, was an empire of lies and that Ukraine, which entered the war with their guidance and support, made a fundamental mistake. Dissatisfied with the attitude of the European countries and the USA during the war, Russia's negative statements against this bloc that formed an empire of lies are some of the statements that were put forward to persuade its own internal public opinion.

Zelensky: The Russian invasion of Ukraine is not just an invasion but the beginning of the war against Europe.

In Zelensky's statements, the occupation of Ukraine by Russia shows that Ukraine sees itself as a gateway to Europe and even as a part of Europe. Besides being a warning for Europe, Zelensky's discourse shows continuity in calls for help.

### ***Word choices***

The connotations and profound meanings of the words used in the discourse are of great importance in the method of critical discourse analysis. Word choices need to be understood; why that word or the other was chosen is crucial. The speaker tries to reveal his real meaning by emphasizing some words personally and willingly and loading meaningful and striking messages into his words. The listener also tries to reveal deep meanings and connotations from the associative meanings of the words chosen in the text context. Thus, the actual, implied information in the speaker's message is revealed. When the discourses by Putin are examined in terms of word choices; it is seen that words and concepts such as "Kyiv regime", "security", "Russia", "Neo-Nazi", "Western Bloc", "operation", and "threat" are frequently used. Zelensky frequently uses concepts such as "Ukraine", "war", "children", "defense", "non-surrender", "justice", "peace", and "negotiation" in his discourses. These concepts, which are especially emphasized, are of great importance in emphasizing the justification of the war for Ukraine. The common theme in the statements of Putin and Zelensky is that the war continues on Ukrainian soil. Another common theme is the destructiveness of war. While "security" is essential for Russia, it is reflected in the leader's statements that self-defense is necessary for Ukraine.



### ***Rhetoric***

In discourse analysis, the speaker's statements should also be examined regarding their rhetorical dimension. Considering the effect rate of speech and the motivating features of expressions, rhetoric, which has particular importance, is known as the art of speaking. Here, the extent to which the leaders attach importance to the artistic and literary aspects of the language in their expressions was analyzed through the leaders' expressions.

Putin:

American politicians, political scientists, and journalists write and speak for themselves that a real empire of lies has been created in the USA in recent years. It is hard to disagree with that.

We did not go a millimeter on security guarantees. We know what kind of world we live in and are prepared for sanctions.

I invite you to act by understanding what is going on and to work in solidarity with the government to find these tools that will support production, economy, and employment.

Nationalist elements embedded in regular Ukrainian units invite them to be armed resistance and play the role of barrier units.

In Vladimir Putin's discourses, he emphasizes the Western bloc, especially the USA, as an empire of lies. In addition, again touching on the issue of "security", Putin said that even a tiny step could not be taken on the measures and guarantees taken, and no progress could be made. He meant that he knew the current world order. While using the statements that they know our world, he emphasized that they are prepared for sanctions that will affect the economic and social life of the USA and European countries. He emphasized Russia's influence and contribution to the global economic order in another discourse. While saying he would be a part of this order, he emphasized continuing to make positive contributions. He explained the importance of cooperation while ensuring this order nationally and globally.

Zelensky:

I am sure you all see it; Europe sees it. Nevertheless, we do not see that you will do anything at all. How are you going to protect yourself while helping Ukraine so slowly?

What is this war against Ukrainian children in the nursery? Who are they? Are they Neo-Nazis too?

I am here, and we will not lay down our arms. We will defend our state because our weapon is the truth. Our truth is that this land, country, and children are ours. We will protect all of them.

For this reason, a decision was made that was not easy morally but beneficial for our defense. War-experienced Ukrainian prisoners will be released and able to make up for their crimes in the hottest spots of the war.

No one will be able to interfere with our freedoms. No one will crush us. We are strong.

With his preferred rhetoric about his preferred victim position, Zelensky is trying to convince the world that he is right and Ukraine is victimized. He is trying to convince Europe that they cannot protect themselves with the war help Ukraine needs. Zelensky tries to frustrate Putin's moves by arguing that the children in the nursery who were killed are the victims of the war to convince him that he is right and to object to Putin's "Nazis" analogy. Zelensky uses strong rhetoric by implying that their gun is the truth and that they are determined to protect their truth. Some of the rhetoric used by Zelensky is as follows: "Silent Europe, we do not see that you will do anything", "what is this war against Ukrainian children", "our weapon is truth", and "this land is our truth". In these statements, Zelensky prefers to use imaginary and metaphorical language as a man of letters rather than military jargon.

### **Conclusion and Discussion**

Examples of the importance of discourse, rhetoric, and rhetoric in politics are common in the history of the world war. In this research, the discourses of the two leaders were tried to be revealed with their implied and connotative meanings beyond their real meanings using critical discourse analysis. Critical discourse analysis, used to interpret relations with social practices, offers evergreen techniques in analyzing the Russia-Ukraine War. In this research, where there is an analysis preference within the framework of critical discourse analysis, the statements of Putin and Zelensky were analyzed according to Van Dijk's critical discourse analysis model. With the start of the military operation called Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, the statements of the two countries' leaders were decisive in determining the course of the war. In the reflections of each leader's rhetoric on the media, it is seen that both sides consider each other's statements. In their speeches, it is seen that the leaders follow a tactic and strategies like chess moves.

In this research, leader statements were examined under macro structures, together with the dimensions of schematic analysis, situation analysis, and interpretation, after thematic analysis. On the other hand, under the microstructures, after the sentence structures, word choices and rhetoric were taken into consideration. The research results show that the leaders' statements and discourses have been constructed within a strategy's framework since the war's first days. It should be underlined that Putin addresses the Ukrainian people and soldiers and ignores the head of the elected legitimate government. On the other hand, it is understood that Zelensky developed a system in his rhetoric that he would not surrender to Russia with his uniform in the face of those who ignored him. While Putin emphasizes Nazism primarily because of the Azov battalion in his rhetoric, Zelensky insists that the Azov battalion is the militia and heroes of his country.

Mass media, which are used to inform people, are often instrumentalized to raise awareness in line with political goals. In Bourdieu's words, symbolic power is an effort to create a reality, to construct the world through discourse. The meanings produced by the power of discourse are structured by the ideology and power structure of the social order. While the media produces ideological discourse, it aims to gain economic gain on the one hand and to consolidate power on the other. People learn the reality produced by the media through symbols and discourses (Bourdieu, 1987, p. 204). One of the most effective mechanisms to ensure the legitimacy of power is the discourses produced and circulated in the media. Political and economic elites simultaneously use these discourses as a means of legitimation. Governments use the media to create a positive image for themselves, to explain their policies, and to justify themselves (Bourdieu, 1987, p. 203).

The media, which produces cultural codes, highlights the views that the political elites want to emphasize and gives them legitimacy. Putin's calling the war an operation stems from the concern of producing discourse and creating legitimacy. In addition, the hegemony one group wants to build on the other is established and legitimized through discourse (Aksu, 2019, p. 493; Kocaman & Gölcü, 2021, p. 202). Media is a discourse and image production tool that legitimizes the power of administration for the power. For this reason, it is tough for people to obtain impartial information about military conflicts in such processes. While reporting on a military conflict, the media tries to create an audience that empathizes and supports the determined hero by producing discourses according to its attitude. As this research shows, despite all the destructiveness of war, the power of discourse in the media is used to manipulate the reality of war. Similar disinformation and manipulation processes were used during Russia's annexation of Crimea. In a study on how the Russian media reflected the occupation of Crimea, it was found that Russia resorted to ways such as narrowing the news coverage and presenting incomplete or out-of-context information to legitimize its action (Kavoğlu, 2020, p. 97).

Seeing Putin's true intentions, Zelensky seems to have replaced the "peace" discourse he insisted upon with the "resistance" theme. In his patriotic discourse, Zelenskiy can understand from the above statements that the country's security can be ensured by the devotion of all the people and the soldiers. Again, it is understood from their statements that both leaders developed a discourse showing that they took into account the results of the war and the reactions of other countries over time.

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