

A Pragmatic Concepts of Threatening in Trump's Tweeting Towards Iran

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دراسة تداولية لمفهوم التهديد في تغريدات الرئيس الأميركي السابق

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الباحث

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Abstract:-

The present study is an attempt to investigate Trump's threats towards Iran in terms of pragmatic analysis. Trump tended to utilize threatening in order to intimidate the Iranian administration or to influence their decisions as well as the American people minds and the international community before and during his era as a president of the USA. The current study also tries to identify the pragmatic concept of threatening that Trump resorts to them to convey his message of threatening to Iran. Thus, the study attempts to identify and investigate the concepts of threatening which Trump tends to employ throughout his tweets. Moreover, the study adopts (Muschalick, 2018) framework as a model of analysis for the data at hand.

Keywords: Threatening, Pragmatic Concepts, Iran, tweets, Muchalick.

المخلص:-

تتناول هذه الدراسة ظاهرة (التهديد) من وجهة نظر تداولية في تغريدات الرئيس الأمريكي السابق (ترامب) الموجهة إلى الحكومة الإيرانية بخصوص الملف النووي الإيراني ، علاوة على ذلك تستكشف الدراسة الأساليب المتنوعة المستعملة للتهديد من قبل (ترامب) كما تعنى بالرسائل المبطنة للشعب الأمريكي والحكومة الإيرانية على حد سواء.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التهديد، مفاهيم واقعية، إيران، تغريدات، متوشليك.

1. Threatening: Definition

On the first impression, threatening might be easily defined by language users, but on the empirical level, most researchers have stated that verbal threats cannot be described straightforwardly due to the diverse in their syntactic forms and indefinite semantic contents (Limberg,2009:1378).

According to The Oxford English Dictionary (second edition, 1989) (as cited in Limberg,2009:1378) a threat utterance is defined as "a declaration of hostile determination or of loss, pain, punishment, or damage to be inflicted in retribution for or conditionally upon some course". While Muschalick (2018) considered Merriam -Webster's dictionary as an inclusive one which explained the meaning of the verb" threaten" as " to say that you will harm someone or do something unpleasant or unwanted, especially, in order to make someone do what you want" (Merriam-Webster "threaten", v., own emphasis as cited in Muschalick,2018:14)

Other definitions depicted "threatening" as an act of "menace", "manipulate" or "impose" via menace. For example, Hepburn& Potter identified threats as "intensified form of attempted behavioral influence" (Hepburn & Potter 2011: 99) and suggested that "The basic structure of the threats uses a conditional logic: *if* the recipient continues problem action/does not initiate required action *then* negative consequences will be produced by the speaker" (Hepburn& Potter, 2011: 99). Likewise, Beller (2002:113) illustrated that threats are "speech acts [...] uttered by a person to manipulate an addressee's behavior".

Defining the speech act of threatening always has been one of the difficult issues for most researchers but ultimately, verbal threat constitutes a linguistic strategy that is used to manipulate or even coerce the addressee into (not) doing something which has an undesirable outcome for him/her. In case of the addressee's non-compliance, the threatener may initiate negative consequences directly or indirectly as a kind of punishment for non-cooperation (Limberg,2009:1378).

Moreover, most of the earlier studies have failed to provide a context-independent definition of a threat. These studies have used

approaches which were described as "armchair " and philosophical approaches that "do not analyze actual language data but work with reflections on language" (Jucker,2009:1615) and discussed introspective reflections of fabricated examples which were used to suggest rules of performing a speech act (Jucker,2009:1615) and followed Searle's felicity conditions.

2. Types of Threats

2. 1 Direct Threats

On the basis of structure, Yule (1996:54) has classified three types of speech acts: declaratives, interrogatives, and imperatives which are the three basic sentence types. The relationship between these sentence types and their functions (statement, question, command/request) respectively is the key-classification of the direct and indirect speech act. In other words, a direct speech act is that in which there is a correlation between its form and its function or the form of the sentence corresponds with the purpose or the intended force of the utterance(Kroeger, 2005:196). For example:

1. I have a pet. (declarative/statement)
2. Do you have a pet. (interrogative/question)
3. Take the pet. (Imperative/command)

In these three examples, it is found that their forms are declarative, interrogative, and imperative respectively which correspond to the functions statement, interrogative, and imperative respectively. Accordingly, direct threats are those in which the expected correspondence is preserved such as:

4. One more step and I'll shoot you.

2.1.1 Performative Threats

Threats are labeled as a kind of commissives (Leech,1983) because they are speaker oriented and show the speaker's commitment to an act (Gales,2011:28). In the following example the speaker is making a commitment to a future course of action:

5. I will shoot him in the head.

In addition, threats are considered as performative speech acts. Performative utterances are actions denoted by verbs and they

could not be true or false. According to Vanderveken & Kubo (2001:86), Austin was the pioneer in introducing the notion of performatives vs. constatives. Performatives are actions, such as making a threat or giving an order while constatives are sayings, such as making a statement or giving a description. Austin (1971:13-22) noted that "speakers do not utter true or false statements but they may engage in the very acts designated by their words". For example:

6. I threaten you with dismissal.

Furthermore, Austin (1962:53-66) demonstrated that performatives have some features. In a performative utterance the verb should be in the present simple, the subject should be in the first person, and the utterance should be oriented to an expressed or hidden second person. Moreover, performatives are classified into implicit and explicit.

2.1.2 Explicit Performatives of Threat

According to Lyons (1981:175) explicit performatives are these utterances which point out obviously to the kind of the act performed. While Thomas (1995:47) suggested that explicit performatives are utterances with performative verbs which enables the speaker to prevent any possibility of misunderstanding the force behind an utterance. In the following example, the illocutionary force that the speaker wants to convey is expressed obviously by using the verb (threaten):

7. I threaten you with punishment if you do not do your homework.

In addition to that, the adverb (hereby) might be used in an explicit performative utterance to indicate that an action is being uttered (Yule, 1996:51), such as:

8. I hereby threaten you to kidnap your daughter if you do not bring our money.

However, the use of explicit performative by threateners seems to be controversial. Pearsall (1998:1930) suggested that the use of the word (threat) fulfills the act of threatening. Likewise, Tsohatzidis (1994:195) added that "When people use explicit performatives, they do so, presumably, because their illocutionary attempts might not

succeed without the help of a device for making them evident". In contrast, some linguists claimed that the verb (threaten) is rarely used in performative acts. While Austin (1962:131) stated that in some contexts, the verb (threaten) might be used in its performative sense in order to frighten the addressee.

Moreover, many linguistic constructions can achieve the speech act of threatening explicitly among which are if-constructions (Hamblin 1993:34), such as:

9. If you hurt them, I'll sue you.(Hernandez, 2001: 287)

In addition, the modal verbs (shall and will) usually are used to perform the act of threatening explicitly and both of them can be used in if-constructions of threats (Hornby, (1968: 207). For example:

10. I will kill you if you move.

11. He shall be punished if he comes late.

2.1.3. Implicit Performatives of Threat

An implicit performative speech act can be recognized on the basis of not having a performative verb in an utterance: Parker and Riley (2005:18) have stated that "Any utterance not containing a performative verb used in its performative sense is "non-explicit" or "implicit". In other words, a hidden explicit performative verb is what an implicit performative has. Also, an implicit performative utterances follow the deep structure: I (hereby) Vp you (that) S. For example:

12. I'll beat you if you make noise .

According to Lyons(1981:176), no expression denotes that this is a threat explicitly, for example:

13. I will send you to hell.

Also Mey (1993:136) stated that threatening can be performed implicitly by denying the act of threatening. For example:

14. I'm not threatening you, but if you do not leave now, I'll call the police.

Moreover, threatening can be done through other kinds of speech acts such as requestives and directives (Wunderlich,1979:279). The

following examples represent requestives and directives speech acts and they perform the act of threatening in specific situations :

15. I advise you to get out of here. (Threatening by advice).

16. If you don't fix my car, you won't get your money. (By request)

Furthermore, Allan (1986:195) noted that the word "promise" can serve the function of threatening when it is used ironically to indicate unpleasant event. For example:

17. I promise I'll punish you if you do not go.

Also, Leech (1983:104) maintained that , in some cases, the speaker cannot do the act of threatening while he is giving the addressee a choice. Consequently, the following utterance will be pragmatically unacceptable.

18. He shall be in trouble if he does not mind.

In some utterances, the act of threatening might be ambiguous (Hurferd et al, 2007:290). The following sentence can perform both the acts of threatening and promising:

19. Tomorrow, I'll come back and see this man.

It is worth noting that explicit performatives exhibit much more seriousness than implicit ones (Yule, 1998:52). This can be true for all performatives including threat utterances.

3. Indirect Threats

An indirect speech act results from " an indirect relationship between structure and function" (Yule,1996:54). In other words, when sentence structures (declarative, interrogative, and imperative) serve functions other than (statement, question, and command) respectively, then an indirect speech act will exist. Indirect speech act of threatening depends mainly on the addressee's interpretation of the speaker's intents and the context in which the utterance is said (Tsohatizidis, 1994:17). For instance, in the following example, the speaker does not intend to ask his addressee whether he knows that the speaker's gun is loaded or not, therefore, the utterance can be considered as indirect speech act of threatening since the form does not match to the function (Parker & Riley,2005:19):

20. Don't you know that my gun is loaded?

Thus, the context which can be defined as a set of inferences and reasoning assumptions play a decisive role in interpreting an utterance (Seperber and Wilson,1995:15-16). In the example below the utterance which is said by the mother to her son might be interpreted as a threat If her son had done something wrong or as an order to her son to be ready to go out with his father:

21. Your father is coming.

To sum up, in indirect speech acts, the speaker says something and means another or according to Horn and Ward (2006) there is what is called "non-literality"(Horn and Ward, 2006:468). Finally, Any speech act to be performed there should be the appropriate felicity conditions.

4. Felicity Conditions of Threatening

Felicity conditions are the collection of constitutive rules that govern the effective production of actions (Hepburn& Potter, 2011: 102). According to Aronoffand Rees-Miller (2003:433) "Utterances cannot be assessed in relation to truth and falsity; instead, they only be assessed in relation to the necessary and sufficient conditions known as 'felicity conditions'. For each speech act to be counted as (felicitous), there should be a group of felicity conditions that must be satisfied. Otherwise, this speech act will be considered as (infelicitous). For instance, the speaker who says to his addressee:

22. I sentence you to six months in prison.
(Yule,1996:50)

The performance of his utterance will be infelicitous if that speaker is not a specific person in a special context (a judge in a courtroom)(Yule,1996:50). Both Austin (1962:14-15) and Searle (1972:147-154) have suggested felicity conditions of the speech act of promising that can be applied to other speech acts with readjustment. For a threat to be real (felicitous) and not counted as empty or bluff (infelicitous) , It requires the satisfaction of the following conditions:

(1) There has to be a sentence used with the 'propositional content' of a threat (propositional content condition).

- (2) The threat must be (a) of some consequence that is detrimental to the recipient and (b) that detrimental consequence would not have happened anyway (preparatory conditions).
- (3) The speaker who issues the threat must have the intention to issue such an action (sincerity condition).
- (4) The speaker who issues the threat must be aware that they are under an obligation (or at least there is an expectation) that they will follow through the threatened action and have the power to effect that action (essential condition). (Hepburn & Potter, 2011: 103)

5. Form of Threats

The form of a threat refers to the lexico-grammatical properties or linguistic structure of a threat such as sentence type or specific elements which were summarized in Milburn and Watman's (1981:8) they define a threat as " some variation of the following formula: : 'If you do A, I will do B,' where 'A' is detrimental to the threatener and 'B' is detrimental to the target."

This definition includes the common features of a threat: an expression of conditionality, and expression of futurity, a verb that lexicalizes some detrimental action, and references to both the speaker/ threatener and the addressee/target. Furthermore, the use of 'some variation' permits a lot of utterances to be described with this formula and the use of swear words and/or mention of weapons can be described as modifications of the basic formula.

In the literature, these lexico- grammatical or structural features are characterized typically as formal elements of threats and describe the illocutionary point of a threat or in other words " 'who-does-what-to-whom' in a threatening scenario" (Muschalick,2018:14). In relation with indirectness which is one of pragmatic inexplicitness strategies that express the illocutionary point, the referent(s) and the propositional content(s) of a threat (Culpeper,2011:184) , If these variants of these forms appear in an utterance, this utterance is depicted as more explicit with regard to this feature. Alternatively, if no variants of these forms appear in an utterance, this utterance is depicted as inexplicit or more vague (Muschalick,2018:14).

It is worth noting that indirectness is characterized as non-categorical but gradable which goes in line with indeterminacy of the form and function of a threat.

5.1 Conditionality

In the literature of threatening, there is a widespread agreement that conditional expressions are one of the formal features of threatening language (Kent,1967:30, Limberg, 2009:1379). Harris (1984) and Limberg (2008,2009) have tackled conditional threats although they did not demonstrate whether this include all conditional expressions or only threats that contain conditional clauses. In English, the canonical syntactic form of conditionals are if-clauses (von Fintel,2011:1516), that's why most studies on threats have discussed examples of if-clauses that give the impression that typical threats only come in if-clause formula.

5.2 Futurity

In threats, the speaker often refers to a future point in time or expresses his intention (Benoit,1983: 306; Fraser,1998: 161) and this comes from " the conceptualization of threats as announcing an impending, i.e. not-yet-existing harm" (Muschalick,2018:15). According to (Salgueiro, 2010: 217), threatening is an announcement of "a future action or omission, or a sequence of such actions or omissions, by the speaker". Furthermore, Fraser (1998:168) stated that the use of future expressions such as will, am going to by the speaker in threats marks his intention, "the speaker expresses intention to perform the unfavourable act, typically signaling this intention by using will, am going to, and the like."(Fraser 1998).

In addition, the speaker's intentions can be expressed through a wide range of expressions, that's why Fraser referred to this as "the like". So, futurity can be considered as another structural feature of threatening language.

6. Conclusions

The study has come out with the following conclusions:

1. Trump has used both types of threatening : direct and indirect , though, he has employed indirect types of threatening more frequently than direct types of threatening.

2. It is revealed that Trump is intentionally utilizes threatening to convey a message for the in-group ,i.e., the American nation and the out-group that is the Iranian government.
3. Trump has employed specific types of micro speech acts to trigger threatening such as threatening, accusing, attacking, fabricating and the like.

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