

# From Courtroom to Newsroom: Linguistic Framing of Donald Trump's Trial in Legal and Media Discourse

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## Abstract

This paper investigates the linguistic framing of U.S. President Donald Trump's trial in two distinctive discourse settings: courtrooms and media. The paper employs a qualitative method manifested in two analytical strands, linguistic framing and critical discourse analysis, to analyze the transformation in the legal discursive practice mediated by the news narrative. The main objective of the paper is to highlight the differences between the discursive practice in courtroom transcripts and its transformation in the news coverage to expose the differences in the use of lexicalization, agency, and modality, which mirrors the reciprocal connection between the micro-linguistic realization of meaning and the macro-level power structures that shape the public interpretation of Trump's trial. The analysis shows that while legal discursive practices are primarily procedural and authoritative, news discursive practices are strategically personalized to background and foreground the actors' agency. The paper has three findings: first, courtroom discourse is represented by procedural lexicalization, modal caution, reduced emotive expressions, and common backgrounding through passivation and/or nominalization, which contributes to maintaining institutional objectivity. Second, media discourse is characterized by value-loaded lexicalization, increased use of modality, agency activation, and the strategic deployment of emotive lexis, which enables the construction of the criminal trial as ideologically political. Third, the shift from courtroom to newsroom is not only a shift in genre but also a site of ideological struggle where legal authority, political power, and public opinion intersect and also demonstrates the power of linguistic framing in mediating legal events for the public.

**Keywords:** courtroom discourse, media discourse, linguistic framing, Donald Trump, lexicalization, agency, modality, CDA

## 1. Introduction

The trial of U.S. President Donald Trump offers a historically unprecedented convergence of law, politics, and media events. While proceedings are channeled into a codified, regulated, and structured environment of the courtroom, they are concurrently mediated and reframed by media channels for public consumption (Rossetti & Zaman, 2023). This shift from courtroom to news media poses a critical concern: namely, the possibly disparate relationship between linguistically framing events and their reception. While legal discourses are mediated by categorized rules of evidence, objectivity, and discursivity, media discourses may simplify and, sometimes, politicize such cases to engage audiences more effectively (Supardi, 2016). The problem, therefore, lies in identifying where this linguistically mediating discursivity privileges or downplays significant aspects of these trials and the pragmatic purposes beyond their surface linguistic expressions.

The legal trial of Donald Trump (2024) is arguably one of the most significant trials of recent American legal history, as it involves a series of prominent trials that have polarized American public opinion and attracted significant attention from the media (Schneider & Eitelmann, 2020). In New York, Trump was tried on 34 counts of criminal offenses, including charges of falsification of business records concerning hush money payments to Daniels, with significant testimonial and documentary evidence presented during his trial between April and May 2024 (Al-Sabbagh et al., 2025). This trial has been characterized by Trump's alleged intent to sway the 2016 election, including charges of falsification of records and concealment of payments, while at the same time providing a unique blend of criminal law and politics, with civil and appellate actions challenging financial sanctions linked to fraud charges against Trump, including his attempt to regain office (Rossetti & Zaman, 2023). The current study, therefore, attempts to investigate how Trump's trial is linguistically framed in two distinctive discourse settings: courtrooms and media.

Courtroom discourse differs from media discourse in its linguistic characteristics, functions, and communication settings, as it is entirely institutionalized and subject to procedural rules (Heffer, 2005). It is a site where language is persuasively used to communicate specific meanings and reflects the different power relations between discourse participants. According to Karaia (2020), courtroom discourse is characterized by technical terminology used to assign dominance, build arguments, and manage participation through turn-taking and interrogative devices. Media discourse, on the other hand, for O'Keeffe (2006), is mainly concerned with the public communication domain where the structure, simplification, and rewording of language take place. This results in the use of simple language that replaces complex words used in the courtroom by utilizing evaluative framing devices, lexical selection, and narrative structuring. While the use of

language in the courtroom targets accuracy, validity, and persuasion, it is contextualized in media discourse to interpret the same events to build significant narratives that serve news values and shape public understanding of law through general lexical bundles and framing (Matsumoto, 2025). Such differences in language use are, therefore, a manifestation of the institutional goals of the contexts, namely, decision-making-oriented in law versus public-communication-oriented in media (Khafaga, 2023b).

Linguistic framing constitutes the dexterous use of linguistic strategies to frame the perception, interpretation, and judgment of matters, actors, and events presented to the audience (Entman, 1993). This is subject to the foundation of cognitive linguistics, sociology, and critical discourse analysis since it entails strategies such as lexicalization through the use of word choice, the application of metaphors, sentence structure, agency, modality, and evaluative language. According to Hart (2023), the strategies employed to linguistically frame any discourse aim to distract audiences' attention away from certain features of the world while directing their attention to other features. Thus, framing incorporates the employment of interpretation templates to create an influence on audiences' perception of causality, responsibility, morality, and significance without necessarily convincing them (Zhang & Borden, 2024). Under a political, legal, and media connotation, linguistic framing is a very powerful phenomenon because it can make a viewpoint seem natural and self-evident. Some previous studies (e.g., Goffman, 1974; Entman, 1993; Fairclough, 2003; Lakoff, 2004; Hart, 2023) have suggested that linguistic framing is not simply a matter of style; rather, it is a cognitive process that represents ideology and functions as an effective means by which discourse sustains social power relations.

This study is significant because it sheds light on how language affects the public's perception of important political and legal developments and shows how media framing and legal rhetoric interact to create social reality. By analyzing linguistic choices in courtroom transcripts and media reports, discourse analysts can identify how discourses are constructed, how actors (e.g., defendants, prosecutors, journalists) are positioned, and how evaluative language influences perceptions of legitimacy, bias, and fairness (Khafaga, 2023a). This line of inquiry contributes to interdisciplinary research in sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, and media studies, as it demonstrates how framing strategies, including lexicalization, agency, and modality, influence the pragmatic interpretation of discourse not only in two different discourse genres but also in two different polarized contexts (Entman, 1993; van Dijk, 1998). Given the unprecedented media attention on Trump's legal proceedings, examining linguistic framing helps expose how legal institutions and news outlets each perform sense-making roles that impact the pragmatic perception of discourse (Gitlin, 1980; Lakoff, 2010). The study, therefore, outlines the use of language within the courtroom and media settings by exploring its use and/or misuse to achieve specific pragmatic and interpretative significations. Moreover, it is anticipated to contribute to legal and media linguistics by revealing the differences in linguistic framing between courtroom and media discourse, and thus, it offers useful insights into broader debates about the power of language in shaping political discourses within two distinctive discourse settings: courtrooms and media.

This study raises three research questions: first, how do courtroom discourse and media discourse employ linguistic framing to represent Trump's trial? Second, what are the linguistic strategies and manifestations characterizing the representation of Trump's trial in the two discourse settings? Third, what are the discourse functions and the framing effects communicated by the linguistic framing of Trump's trial in the two discourse genres? The answer to these questions constitutes the objectives of the study: to compare and analyze how media discourse and courtroom discourse linguistically frame the context for Trump's trial, to demonstrate the core linguistic features distinguishing courtroom discourse from media discourse, and to show the impact of reframing by the media on the general public's understanding of legal procedures in high-profile political trials. These objectives are pursued within a qualitative method represented by two analytical models: critical discourse analysis (CDA), as introduced by Fairclough (2010), van Dijk (1998), and Wodak and Meyer (2016); and linguistic framing, as discussed by Goffman (1974), Fillmore (1982), Entman (1993, 2004), Fillmore et al. (2003), to investigate the transformation in the legal discursive practice mediated by the news narrative and to demonstrate the differences between the discursive practices employed in courtroom discourse and its representation in media discourse.

The remainder of this study is structured as follows: Section 2 provides the theoretical preliminaries of the study, in which detailed discussions on courtroom discourse, media discourse, and how linguistic framing is used in courtroom and media discourses are presented. This section also provides some previous and related studies relevant to the topic under investigation. Section 3 is the theoretical framework, which offers discussions on CDA, linguistic framing, and Entman's (1993) model of framing. Section 4 is the methodology of the study, wherein data collection, description, rationale, and the analytical procedures adopted in the analysis of the selected data are presented. Section 5 is dedicated to analyzing the selected data. Section 6 discusses the findings of the study. Section 7 is the conclusion, which ends with some recommendations for future research.

## **2. Theoretical Preliminaries and Literature**

### *2.1 Courtroom Discourse and Media Discourse: Two Distinctive Discourse Genres*

Courtroom discourse and media discourse are widely recognized in linguistics as distinct genres of discourse, each shaped by its institutional goals, constraints, and communicative functions (Yang & Wang, 2024). Courtroom language, as a form of institutional legal discourse, is defined by its procedural setting, highly regimented norms, and specialized legal vocabulary. It produces and negotiates legal facts, enforces procedural rules, and facilitates judicial decision-making that reflects and upholds legal authority and power relations. Research across forensic linguistics and systemic functional linguistics (e.g., Gibbon, 2003; Susanto, 2016; Coulthard et al., 2016) argues that courtroom discourse deploys technical lexicon, argumentation strategies, and interactional modalities designed to persuade a judge or jury within a restricted institutional framework that reflects unequal power relations. Furthermore, courtroom discourse functions to

demonstrate the strategic ways in which legal practitioners draw upon structures such as transitivity and modality to negotiate narratives of guilt, credibility, and causation, thereby highlighting the formal and argumentative nature of legal interaction as a genre of communication with normative constraints (Liu, 2021).

Media discourse, on the other hand, is influenced by the goal of public communication and meaning-making among large and diverse publics rather than the negotiation of legal claims (O’Keeffe, 2006). Media discourse involves the construction of meaning via the strategic selection of lexical features and frames that position events and participants towards examination and interpretation by a larger public (Khafaga, 2023b). Karaia (2020) highlights the significance of media discourse to the formation of beliefs and social attitudes as a simplification strategy based on complex events as well as the employment of evaluative language. Media discourse is therefore less formal and more adaptive compared to courtroom language, as it abounds in rhetorical and stylistic elements such as headlines, lead sentences, and quotations in service of appealing to and aligning different types of audiences and may also employ conversational or social elements in broadcast and digital genres that conceal institutional boundaries with everyday communicative norms (O’Keeffe, 2006). Furthermore, genres within media discourse, such as hard news and news reports, demonstrate how media language does not adhere to strict procedural norms but instead orients to communicative principles of relevance and narrative coherence. Accordingly, both courtroom discourse and media discourse are socially prominent but linguistically and functionally different genres, with the former being entirely embedded in institutional/legal practice, accuracy, and procedure, and the latter being more public-oriented, structurally diverse, and focused on communicative impact.

### 2.2 *Linguistic Framing in Courtroom and Media Discourse: From Courtroom to Newsroom*

According to Entman (1993), linguistic framing refers to the way language is strategically used to present information from a particular perspective, thereby shaping how audiences interpret events, issues, or social actors. Linguistic framing is an essential determining factor for the framing of Trump’s trial. In the courtroom, linguistic framing is governed by the conventions of legal discourse in which truth, accuracy, and adherence to evidentiary standards dominate (van Hulst et al., 2024). Here, language is employed for purposes of truth-finding, blame attributions, and exercise of institutional control through largely impersonal forms (Suwandi & Thoriqussuud, 2021; Prihantoro & Gillings, 2025). Media discourse, however, reframes the same events in more accessible, evaluative, and emotive terms better conveyed for public consumption and opinion forming. The shift from legal technicality to media condensing requires a modality shift (i.e., from legal tentativeness to assertiveness by journalists), an agent shift (i.e., from institutional representatives to individuals), and a voice shift (i.e., from procedural voice to narrative voice) (Wang, 2024). Moreover, ideological framing manifests in the media in the form of lexical selection and selective sources in favor of political conformity or mass opinion. Crucially, critical discourse analysis reveals how this reframing distorts courtroom language in favor of larger political meta-narratives. The shift from a courtroom setting to a news desk reveals how linguistic framing not only reports legal events but also builds competing worlds around truths, justice, and power positively (Matin, 2024).

### 2.3 *Previous and Related Studies*

Numerous previous studies have investigated courtroom discourse, media discourse, and linguistic framing from different linguistic perspectives. Some of these studies analyze Trump’s trial by focusing on the discursive construction of his political persona, media representation, and public rhetoric rather than on the courtroom-newsroom interface itself. For instance, Philips (2023) explores the “Trump era” by highlighting the ways in which media discourse recreates the phenomenon of ideological polarization with regard to lexical choices, evaluative naming, and intertextual references. In the context of political communication, qualitative discourse analyses reveal that media texts dealing with Trump events divulge particular features, such as adversarial framing, emotional intensification, and strategic bias, which influence the audience’s perception (Prahallad & Mamidi, 2025). In the context of legal discourse, some studies (e.g., Phillipson, 2008; Baird & Gangl, 2006) examine the media narratives surrounding well-known trials and aim to explore the ways in which media discourse shapes the phenomenon of “trial by media,” where the particular features of discourse practice reconstruct presumptions of guilt, legitimacy, or victimization prior to the judicial outcome and, thus, influence public opinion and the sociopolitical meaning of the legal event. Nevertheless, there is no study that systematically explores and compares the linguistic realization of framing in courtroom discourse and media discourse in Trump’s trial, the core concern of this study.

In terms of the use of linguistic framing to analyze texts and talk, previous literature (e.g., (Entman, 1993; O’Keeffe, 2006; Wang, 2024) has shown that meaning is not inherent in events but is created through patterned language use, which foregrounds and backgrounds particular interpretations of events. In the context of media discourse, linguistic framing has been shown to occur through headlines, modality, metaphor, transitivity, and evaluative language, which all contribute to the construction of ideological positions and audience positions. Studies of legal discourse (e.g., Gibbons, 2003; Heffer, 2005) have similarly shown that legal language constructs notions of agency, responsibility, and evidence through its grammatical and lexical choices, creating authoritative versions of reality that are institutionally sanctioned. From a cognitive linguistic perspective, Lakoff (2004) argues that frames activate social knowledge structures that guide interpretation and judgment, especially in politically sensitive discourse. In this regard, Cotter (2012) argues that linguistic framing has been shown to play a role in the transformation of legal argument into accessible public narrative, often involving the introduction of elements of dramatization, personalization, and conflict structures.

As for the incorporation of CDA into the study of linguistic framing in courtroom and media discourses, previous studies (e.g., Fairclough, 2010; van Dijk, 1998) show that CDA provides the most appropriate framework for studying the relationship between language, power,

and ideology in legal and media institutions. This is because CDA views discourse as a social practice that reflects and enacts power relations and would thus be most appropriate for studying legal authority and media influence linguistically. For instance, in courtroom discourse, CDA reveals how legal rules and linguistic forms construct asymmetrical power relations between judges, lawyers, and defendants (Heffer, 2005). In media discourse, it uncovers how news organizations legitimize particular interpretations of legal events while marginalizing others through selection, emphasis, and evaluative language (Richardson, 2007). Importantly, CDA's three-dimensional model, which refers to text, discursive practice, and social practice, allows discourse analysts to trace how courtroom discourse is contextualized into media narratives and how this transformation contributes to broader political and ideological struggles. Despite this significant amount of research, little has been given to the way in which the very same legal proposition is linguistically reframed as it moves from the courtroom into the newsroom, especially in relation to micro-linguistic features such as modality, agency, and lexicalization. By integrating CDA with linguistic framing, the present study can account for both the micro-linguistic realization of meaning and the macro-level power structures that shape the public understanding of Trump's trial.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

#### 3.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a multidisciplinary approach to the study of language, which focuses on the ways in which discourse contributes to the construction, maintenance, and subversion of power relations in society (Fairclough, 2010; van Dijk, 2008; Wodak, 2001). According to Fairclough (2010), CDA perceives language not only as the neutral medium of communication but also as the social practice shaped by ideological structures and institutional contexts. CDA examines linguistic features such as the choice of words, transitivity, modality, presupposition, and intertextuality in order to reveal the ways in which dominance, authority, and inequality are constructed through discourse. CDA is also underpinned by the basic premise that discourse reflects and shapes social reality; for this reason, legal discourse and media discourse are analyzed as the arenas where power relations are negotiated and legitimized (Fairclough, 2003). CDA focuses on the connection between the micro level of linguistic choices and the macro level of social structures. It is, therefore, relevant to the study of courtroom and media discourse because they constitute institutional contexts in which power, authority, and legitimacy are linguistically constructed and negotiated (Khafaga, 2022). In these contexts of institutional discourse, CDA allows its practitioners to critically analyze how linguistic practices in courtroom and media discourse reinforce institutional power and authority, construct defendants and victims, shape public opinion, influence attitudes, and create legal truth as a product of discursive struggle and contestation. By critically studying courtroom and media discourses from a CDA perspective, one can reveal how these discourse genres not only enact the law or direct public opinion but also instantiate social ideologies about class, belief formation, gender, ethnicity, social attitudes, and power relations.

#### 3.2 Linguistic Framing

Goffman (1974) and Fillmore (1982) are acknowledged as the pioneering contributors to the linguistic concept of framing, as they provided the theoretical bases that helped in understanding the concept of structured meaning through language. Goffman's (1974) influential publication *Frame Analysis* introduced the idea of frames as cognitive and social constructs in terms of which people try to make sense of things. His sociological theories on the subject emphasized that frames play a crucial role in influencing the process of perception and meaning in society. Fillmore (1982), on the other hand, developed the idea of "frame semantics" through complementary cognitive principles, which stated that words are understood in terms of structured background knowledge or frames that trigger specific roles and relationships in one's mind. Fillmore's (1982) argument is that the linguistic choice always gives rise to frames that determine how a situation should be conceptualized. The contributions of both Goffman's interactionist approach and Fillmore's cognitive linguistics laid the founding concepts of framing studies and provided the foundational concepts on which later studies of media framing theory and critical discourse analysis are founded.

Furthermore, linguistic framing is perceived as the strategic use of linguistic elements to influence the way in which an event, a problem, or a social actor is received and interpreted by an audience. Linguistic framing is theoretically underpinned by the concept of framing theory (Entman, 1993) and is extended and developed by CDA (e.g., Fairclough, 2010; van Dijk, 2008). Entman (2004) argues that linguistic framing is realized through the use of specific words, metaphors, modalities, and transitivity structures that highlight some aspects of a social reality and background others. The use of specific words, for example, such as "reform" and "intervention," and the structuring of agency in a discourse can influence the way in which a social reality is perceived and interpreted. Linguistic framing, thus, is not only a matter of style but also ideology (Entman, 2004). For Fillmore et al. (2003), linguistic framing is also linked to power and institutional interests, and, therefore, it is crucial in the fields of law, media, and politics and plays a vital role in social cognition.

#### 3.3 Entman's (1993) Model of Framing

The concept of "framing," based on Entman's (1993) model, suggests that it is a key communicative process through which language mediates interpretation by emphasizing some aspects of reality while hiding others. Entman (1993) maintains that linguistic framing involves selecting elements of perceived reality and making them more salient in communicative texts to advance definitions, causes, evaluations, and remedies to particular problems. Linguistic framing, therefore, occurs through systematic selection at different levels, such as lexical, syntactic, and discourse levels, which affect audience interpretation of particular events, actors, and outcomes (Su et al., 2024). In discourse, frames are constructed by lexicalization, metaphors, agents, evaluations, and salience, which do not need argumentation (Entman, 2004). The Entman's (1993) model has been perceived to be useful in the context of legal and media discourse, particularly in

terms of the different ways in which the same event can be represented in different contexts. Whereas courtroom discourse casts emphasis on the accuracy of the procedures, the evidence, and the impartiality of the text from an institutional perspective, media discourse reframes the same events in terms of narrative, personalization, and evaluative emphasis, which convert the judicial process into a moral or political controversy. Entman's (1993) model has also shown promise in terms of the ways in which the frames that are created define the problem (criminal activity vs. political persecution), the ways in which they establish the cause (individual agency vs. institutional bias), and the ways in which they establish the morality of the situation (legitimacy vs. injustice).

Furthermore, Entman's (1993) model of framing coheres with the CDA approach to discourse analysis in that it also focuses on the issues of power and ideology. In the context of discourse analysis, frames are cognitive and social constructs that link text to ideological formations. Entman (2004) argues that the model of framing posits that power networks are the sites where the ability to impose meaning is distributed unequally, with powerful actors such as political and media institutions having a greater ability to impose their own preferred meaning. In the context of courtroom discourse and media discourse, the model allows for a comprehensive analysis of the ways in which the meaning of the law is constructed in the courtroom but contested in the media. Therefore, Entman's (1993) linguistic model of framing has the potential to be a powerful tool in analyzing the ways in which the reality of the law is contextualized and transformed from the courtroom to the newsroom.

#### **4. Methodology**

##### *4.1 Data: Collection, Description, and Rationale*

This study uses two different corpora, which are relevant to the legal discourse and media discourse of Trump's trial. The legal corpus includes the official documents released by the court, which involve indictments, court judgments, transcripts of court hearings, and court briefs, and these documents are collected from the publicly available court records. On the other hand, the media corpus constitutes the news reports, editorials, and opinion articles published by prominent news agencies around the world related to Trump's trial. The resulting corpus is a product of institutional discourse, in which linguistic expressions are subject to specific professional values and communicative goals. The language used in courtroom discourse is characterized by a formal legal style and evidentiality, while media discourse is featured by various degrees of narration and ideological meanings (Khafaga, 2023b). Significantly, the linguistic strategies analyzed include lexicalization, agency, and modality.

A qualitative critical discourse analysis approach is adopted to uncover how power, ideology, and institutional authority are discursively negotiated in representations of Trump's trial. CDA is particularly suited to examining high-stakes legal and political discourse, where language reflects and reproduces social power relations (Fairclough, 2010). Linguistic framing theory complements CDA by enabling systematic analysis of how events are selectively emphasized or interpreted for different audiences (Hart, 2023). By integrating CDA with framing analysis, the study captures both the structural constraints of legal discourse and the interpretive flexibility of media discourse, revealing how the same judicial event is contextualized as either a procedural legal matter or a politicized public discourse.

Three reasons constitute the rationale for this study. First, the discourse of Trump's trial comprises legal acts that are discursively transformed from a purely evidentiary and rule-based courtroom to a more interpretive and audience-based mediatized domain. Second, the selected data is relevant to the integration of the fields of linguistic framing and CDA, which is conducted by carrying out a micro-linguistic examination of modality, agency, and lexicalization, thereby linking the micro-text to the macro-discourse and the macro-discourse to the wider social and ideological context. Third, the study responds to the increasing sociopolitical significance of mediatized justice and the need to understand the mechanisms by which media discourse shapes public opinion and the legitimacy of the law.

##### *4.2 Analytical Procedures*

The analytical procedures followed in this study were structured in three stages, each of which was designed to fit within established methodologies of CDA and linguistic framing. The first stage was a textual and linguistic analysis and involved a systematic analysis of all legal and media texts to identify key linguistic features in terms of lexicalization, agency, and modality. The second stage encompassed the analysis of the discursive practices and frames, in which the key linguistic features were interpreted in relation to dominant frames such as legality, criminality, politicization, victimization, and legitimacy. This stage also involved analysis of how courtroom discourse constrains meaning in terms of procedural neutrality and how media discourse contextualizes legal events in terms of narrative structuring and ideological positioning. The third stage constituted social and ideological interpretation and linked discursive practice to wider socio-political contexts in terms of power relations between legal institutions, the media, and public opinion. This stage also involved analysis of how different representations of Trump's trial might position power and authority and how different representations might position different ideological stances. Crucially, these three stages allowed for a comprehensive analysis of how legal events are linguistically framed and how they are subject to ideological interpretation as they are contextualized from courtroom to newsroom.

#### **5. Analysis**

This part presents three framing strategies that are strategically employed to present Trump's trial in both courtroom and media discourse. These are lexicalization, agency, and modality.

##### *5.1 Lexicalization as a Linguistic Framing Strategy in Courtroom and Media Discourse of Trump's Trial*

Lexicalization is central to the construction of Trump's trial because the choice of legal, political, and evaluative words influences the mental representation of actions, agents, and events (Fowler, 1996).

Excerpts 1:

1(a) The defendant unlawfully retained highly sensitive national security documents.

1(b) The president’s personal records were stored in a secure location.

In the courtroom discourse of the trial of Trump, 1(a) reveals the process of lexicalization as a framing device used by the prosecution to emphasize the severity of the crime. In the nomination, the suppressed political identity of the accused shifts the location of the defendant entirely into the juridical world, where he is treated as a common subject of penal law rather than a former president (Khafaga, 2023b). The use of the verb "retained" modified by the adverb "unlawfully," communicates a sense of violation, suggesting the defendant's controlled and continuous handling of the documents. Also, the combination of the lexical items in "highly sensitive national security documents" is a process of overlexicalization, which increases the degree of danger and the severity of the crime, transforming it from a violation of storage practices to a violation of the nation's security. This combination of lexical items invokes a frame of legal and national security, in which the issue is not the practice of storing the documents but rather the nation's security, which increases the legitimacy of the attribution of guilt.

On the other hand, 1(b) illustrates the defensive lexical strategy where the same material reality is changed in a new light through mitigation, legitimacy, and authority. The change of the noun "defendant" to "president" adds the element of politics and authority. The noun phrase "personal records" replaces the noun phrase "classified documents," removing the legal and security implications and recasting the material reality within the domain of personal ownership. Further, the passive voice in "were stored" removes the human subject of the action, reforming the action of storing the documents in a neutral light (Fowler, 1996). The noun phrase "secure location" is an evaluative expression with positive connotations that foregrounds the legal and procedural correctness of the action. Accordingly, the outcome of the trial is determined not only by the legal evidence but also by the way the material reality is cognitively framed as an act of national security violation or an act of personal record management (Entman, 1993).

Lexicalization is also employed as a linguistic framing strategy in the representation of Trump's trial in media discourse. Consider the following:

1(c) Trump faces federal charges in the classified documents case.

1(d) A historic legal showdown that could reshape the 2024 race.

In 1(c), the use of institutional and procedurally neutral lexicalization constructs the event primarily as a legal process. The use of the proper noun "Trump" rather than referring to him by his legal position as "the defendant" or "the former president" grounds the news story in the logic of news values, where recognition and public relevance are keys (Fairclough, 2003). The employing of the verb "faces" is a standard journalistic lexicalization that constructs legal confrontation without implying guilt and thus maintains the standard of objectivity while at the same time emphasizing the gravity of the situation. The noun phrase "federal charges" grounds the news story in the highest level of legal procedure in the United States, which carries a sense of authority and legitimacy. Also, the use of the legalistic expression "the classified documents case" is a categorizing device that constructs a complex series of legal accusations into a legal file that allows the audience to construct the trial as a legal process rather than a political one.

Likewise, 1(d) changes the lexical frame from a juridical process to a political spectacle and electoral campaign. To clarify, the adjective "historic" gives the event a broader scope beyond the routine legal process, making it a moment of exceptional and lasting importance. Moreover, the metaphor in "legal showdown" carries the connotative meanings of conflict and competition that serve to shift the trial into a dramatic conflict. This lexicalization obscures the distinction between law and politics and stimulates the audience to consider the trial from the logic of political campaign strategy and power struggle rather than evidentiary process. Furthermore, the verb phrase "reshape the 2024 race" contextualizes the trial from the political campaign process and accentuates the political impact of the trial. In the overall framing, the lexicalization reconfigures the hierarchy of relevance and makes the legal process relevant only to the extent it has political impact. Significantly, the lexicalization constructs Trump’s trial as a legal process in the first example but as a significant moment in the general media discourse of the presidential campaign in the second one. In light of CDA's analytical agenda (Fairclough, 2003; van Dijk, 2008), lexicalization in both courtroom and media discourse plays a significant role as a framing mechanism that influences the interpretation of Trump’s trial. In courtroom discourse, specific legal and evaluative words focus on agency, responsibility, and criminality, whereas in media discourse, lexicalization creates a specific narrative around attitudinal perceptions and politics. Lexicalization, therefore, helps to influence audience perception and frames the interpretation of the trial.

Table 1. Lexicalization as a framing strategy in courtroom vs. media discourse

Discourse type	Examples of lexical choices	Discourse function	Framing effect
Courtroom (prosecution)	Defendant, unlawfully retained, highly sensitive, national security documents	Highlight criminality and legal responsibility	Frames Trump’s actions as intentional, severe, and a threat to national security
Courtroom (defense)	President, personal records, secure location	Mitigate responsibility and emphasize procedural propriety	Frames Trump’s actions as lawful, administrative, and non-threatening
Media (hard news)	Trump, faces, federal charges, classified documents case	Present legal process objectively and formally	Frames the trial as a legitimate judicial procedure, emphasizing institutional authority
Media (opinion/analysis)	Historic, legal showdown, reshape the 2024 race	Dramatic and evaluative commentary	Frames the trial as political event, emphasizing electoral consequences

Table 1 mirrors the strategic use of lexicalization in the interpretation of Trump’s trial. The table clarifies that in courtroom discourse lexicalization emphasizes legal responsibility or mitigates blame, while in media discourse it presents the situation as either procedural or dramatic. In other words, lexicalization affects the audience’s interpretation by emphasizing, downplaying, or dramatizing the trial according to the type of discourse.

5.2 Agency as a Linguistic Framing Strategy in Courtroom and Media Discourse of Trump's Trial

Agency also plays a crucial role in the discourse of Trump's trial, as it helps to specify who is portrayed as performing actions and who is portrayed as affected by actions. The employment of agency in courtroom discourse helps to highlight or background responsibility, whereas in media discourse it helps to frame Trump as either reactive to events or a strategic actor.

Excerpts 2:

2(a) The defendant deliberately removed documents from the storage facility.

2(b) The documents were handled according to staff guidance.

In 2(a), the use of agency serves to allocate responsibility and create intentionality in the courtroom discourse. To clarify, the use of the active voice in "the defendant deliberately removed documents" places Trump as the key agent in the sentence, carrying out the specific action of removing documents from the storage facility. The adverb "deliberately" adds to the emphasis of agency in the sentence by highlighting the intentionality of the action. From a CDA point of view (Fairclough, 2003; van Dijk, 2008), the specific use of agency in the sentence places "the defendant" as morally responsible by allocating agency to them in the discourse. In this regard, Barnes (2000) argues that the use of specific words and syntax in the sentence reduces the scope of interpretation by the jury in that there is no room for doubt in terms of intent and the direct relationship between the agent and the outcome.

Conversely, in 2(b), the defense uses the passive construction in "the documents were handled according to staff guidance" to background Trump’s agency and bring the focus back to the intermediaries involved in the process. The lack of an explicit subject in the passive construction serves to diffuse blame from Trump to the process itself, and the addition of "staff guidance" helps to frame the action in terms of process and not individual action and decision-making, effectively mitigating the blame in the process. From a linguistic framing perspective (Entman, 1993, 2004), the absence of actor prominence and the emphasis on context in the construction of the passive voice can be seen to be a strategic re-creation of the scene to frame Trump in a more cooperative light, and the two constructions of agency are discursively amalgamated to foreground and background the issue in the process of legal interpretation and jury perception.

Agency is further employed as a linguistic framing strategy of the representation of Trump's trial in media discourse, as in the following examples:

2(c) Trump faces allegations after classified materials were discovered in his office.

2(d) Trump orchestrated a legal strategy to challenge the charges in court.

2(c) demonstrates how agency is backgrounded to provide a neutral frame for the trial in media discourse, as it focuses on the discovery of the documents instead of the actions of Trump himself, thus providing a focus on the occurrence of the event. The use of agency in this way provides a form of journalistic objectivity and does not assume guilt on the part of the subject (O’Keeffe, 2006). From a CDA point of view, the backgrounding of agency in this way provides a form of evaluative judgment that contextualizes the trial in terms of the evidence presented to the public, providing a form of narrative objectivity.

Conversely, the use of agency in 2(d) centers Trump’s action, focusing the audience’s attention on the level of planning and control. The verb "orchestrated" suggests Trump was strategically involved in the legal process. This centers the action of the trial and the legal process as a site of contestation. This form of representation shifts the focus of the legal trial to a dynamic process (Wang, 2024). From the perspective of linguistic framing, the representation of Trump is not only engaging the legal trial but also involving the media’s framing of Trump in a particular way. This representation is consistent with the media’s framing of Trump in terms of his competence, his ability to cope with the situation, or his level of engagement in the legal trial.

Table 2. Agency as a framing strategy in courtroom vs. media discourse

Discourse type	Lexical/grammatical example	Discourse function	Framing effect
Courtroom (prosecution)	“The defendant deliberately removed documents from the storage facility.”	Foreground Trump as the active agent responsible for actions	Frames Trump’s actions as intentional and culpable, emphasizing legal responsibility
Courtroom (defense)	“The documents were handled according to staff guidance.”	Background Trump’s agency and highlight procedural intermediaries	Frames Trump’s actions as compliant, guided, and non-criminal, reducing perceived responsibility
Media (news report)	“Trump faces allegations after classified materials were discovered in his office.”	Background Trump’s agency; focus on events	Frames Trump as subject to legal processes rather than the instigator, maintaining neutrality and objectivity
Media (opinion/analysis)	“Trump orchestrated a legal strategy to challenge the charges in court.”	Foreground Trump’s agency and strategic action	Frames Trump as proactive and politically engaged, emphasizing influence and maneuvering in the trial

Table 2 indicates that agency is crucial in the distribution of responsibility and the interpretation of the discourse in the context of Trump’s

trial. The table displays how agency is dexterously employed in the representation of Trump's trial in both courtroom and media discourse to frame Trump as an agent by emphasizing his legal responsibility or to frame him as subject to legal processes rather than the instigator, which, in turn, functions to maintain neutrality and objectivity.

### 5.3 Modality as a Linguistic Framing Strategy in Courtroom and Media Discourse of Trump's Trial

A further strategy of linguistic framing in Trump's trial is modality. This strategy is differently used to linguistically frame Trump's trial, both in the courtroom and in media discourse. Consider the following extracts:

Excerpts 3:

3(a) The defendant must have been aware of the classification markings on the documents.

3(b) The defendant may have relied on legal advice when handling these materials.

The above excerpts of the representation of Trump's trial mirror how modality is employed as a linguistic strategy of framing that serves to communicate particular meanings (Fowler, 1991). In 3(a), the use of the high-value epistemic modality in "must have been" serves as a significant framing strategy by the prosecution, as it carries a high level of inferential certainty, which transforms the legal interpretation of the evidence into a cognitively convincing logical necessity (Prihantoro & Gillings, 2025). This bridges the evidential gap between the circumstantial evidence and the factual knowledge, thereby constructing Trump's awareness as the only logical conclusion available to the jury. In the context of courtroom discourse, modality of this kind is generally associated with the prosecution's efforts to create a sense of guilty knowledge, in which the available evidence is used to create a compelling cognitive narrative of intent. Such intentionality to communicate guilty knowledge is emphasized by the use of the modal "must," which is then stabilized in time by the use of the perfect tense in "have been aware" to retrospectively fix Trump's mental state at the moment of action. In the discursive representation, the use of modality limits the dialogic possibilities (Palmer, 2012) and, therefore, marginalizes the defendant's explanations, thereby aligning the jury with the prosecution's version of events. In the legal representation of Trump's trial, the modality acts as a significant framing strategy to enhance the evidential coherence, the defendant's agency, and the institutional authority of the prosecutorial voice, which ultimately leads to the legal interpretation of the trial. In the context of CDA (Fairclough, 2003), the use of modality in 3(a) creates a high level of speaker commitment and authority, wherein the proposition is represented as common sense and difficult to argue against. In terms of the linguistic framing of the clause, it creates a strong sense of agency and responsibility by locating the inference of the defendant's awareness as the only reasonable conclusion based on the available evidence (Zhang & Borden, 2024). Further, the clause has a persuasive function in relation to the jury, in which the use of high levels of modality creates a sense of proximity between inference and fact, which encourages the jury to interpret the defendant's behavior as having intent rather than being accidental. In this sense, the use of the modal "must" creates a powerful tool of epistemic control.

Similarly, in 3(b) the use of the low-value epistemic modal in "may have" functions to construct possibility rather than certainty, which is a typical defensive strategy for introducing reasonable doubt (Palmer, 2012). The modal weakens the level of speaker commitment to the truth of the proposition and opens an interpretive space in which the defendant's actions can be understood as compliant with legal counsel rather than willfully unlawful. The use of the perfect tense in "may have relied" situates the claim in the past, but it does not pinpoint a definitive version of what happened; instead, it spawns numerous possible scenarios. This is what discursively mitigates agency because responsibility is distributed in part to an external authority figure (the legal advisors), thus recasting the defendant's actions as procedurally guided rather than personally intentional. As a linguistic framing strategy, low epistemic modality mitigates intentionality, recasts the defendant's actions as procedurally guided rather than personally intentional, and prompts the jury to consider the evidence in an inconclusive manner (Entman, 2004). As a framing strategy, the modal "may" constructs epistemic uncertainty that directly challenges the certainty of the prosecution's discourse. In light of CDA's analytical framework, low epistemic modality indicates lower speaker authority but higher dialogic openness (Martin & White, 2005), thus allowing the defense to position themselves in a collaborative and rational manner while strategically subverting the opposing claim. In other words, the modal "may" is used persuasively by changing the frame of reference from criminal intent to procedural legitimacy while also shifting the cognitive model of the defendant's actions.

In media discourse, modality is used to communicate different framing effects, as is shown in the following examples:

3(c) Trump could be convicted if the jury accepts the prosecution's timeline.

3(d) This must be the most significant legal threat to his [Trump] campaign.

In 3(c), the modal "could" serves to balance journalistic caution and news value by constructing Trump's trial as a legally relevant but ultimately undecided event. The medium-low epistemic modality of conviction as a possibility rather than an actual fact is well-suited to address the media's need to balance caution and newsworthiness while constructing audience expectations. The use of the conditional clause in "if the jury accepts the prosecution's timeline" places epistemic authority in the hands of the institutional process, thereby reinforcing the appearance of neutrality and objectivity in media discourse. At the same time, this construction places the greatest emphasis on the prosecution's narrative as the key interpretive framework that will decide the outcome of the trial (Supardi, 2016). From a framing perspective, this statement works to construct the audience's perception of the trial in terms of potential outcomes and strategic courtroom success and, thus, transforms the complex legal process into a scenario of risk that will unfold in the future.

In the same vein, the use of the obligation modal "must" in 3(d) functions to transform a political interpretation into what appears to be an

analytically inevitable conclusion about Trump’s electoral prospects. This form differs from the modality found in straight news reporting in its use of a more assertive modality (Liu, 2021). Here, the modality appears to project a high degree of certainty without any apparent evidence to support this claim. Also, the use of the superlative adjective in "the most significant legal threat" emphasizes the dramatic and historical nature of the trial, moving from legalistic issues to political consequences and media spectacles. This form encourages the reader to consider the trial in terms of its consequences for the electoral field rather than its juridical merits, which speaks to the media’s tendency to contextualize legal discourse in relation to issues of competition, crisis, and momentum. Consequently, modality does not simply express probability but works to reorganize the hierarchy of relevance to foreground the issue of campaign risk as the dominant interpretive frame for understanding the trial (Khafaga, 2023b). Therefore, modality in both courtroom and media discourse functions as an important framing strategy for the regulation of certainty, responsibility, and audience alignment, but whereas legal modality is preoccupied with the task of legal persuasion and the creation of admissible truths, media modality is concerned with the creation of legal narratives for the wider political and social arena.

Table 3. Modality as a framing strategy in courtroom vs. media discourse

Discourse type	Modality type	Discourse function	Framing effect
Courtroom (prosecution)	High epistemic (must, clearly, cannot)	Construct factual certainty and strengthens evidential authority	Frames defendant’s actions as intentional and legally accountable
Courtroom (defense)	Low epistemic (may, might, possible)	Introduce doubt and mitigates agency and responsibility	Frames events as ambiguous or misinterpreted
Courtroom (judge)	Deontic (must, should, are required to)	Regulate procedures and enacts institutional control	Frames legal process as objective and rule-governed
Media (news reporting)	Medium/low epistemic (could, likely, appears to)	Maintain neutrality and attribute claims to sources	Frames trial as developing and uncertain
Media (opinion/analysis)	High epistemic + evaluative modality	Express stance and guide audience evaluation	Frames trial as politically or historically significant
Media (evidential modality)	According to..., reportedly, is said to	Distance from claim and manage credibility and liability	Frames interpretation through selective sourcing

Table 3 shows that modality operates as a central epistemic control mechanism in courtroom and media discourses. High-value modals construct authority, certainty, and evaluative closure, whereas low and medium modals create contingency, neutrality, or doubt. It also illustrates how institutional discourse influences modality; that is, legal discourse employs modality in negotiating responsibility and evidence, whereas media discourse uses it in negotiating objectivity and news framing.

**6. Discussion**

The above analysis demonstrates that Trump's trial is linguistically framed in both courtroom discourse and media discourse by three main strategies: lexicalization, agency, and modality. The analysis shows that the use of these strategies serves different discourse functions and communicates different framing effects in the two distinctive discourse genres. The analysis confirms that discourse surrounding high-profile political-legal events is ideologically structured and that linguistic choices such as lexicalization, agency, and modality play a central role in constructing responsibility, legitimacy, and evaluative stance. This finding correlates with a number of previous studies (e.g., Fowler, 1996; Entman, 2004; Hart, 2023; Khafaga, 2023a), whose contributions emphasize the role of the strategic use of language in shaping and reshaping public opinion and demonstrate the extent to which such a dexterous use of language effectively contributes to achieving persuasion and/or manipulation on the part of discourse recipients. It also supports findings from media discourse research (e.g., Phillipson, 2008; Wang, 2024), which argue that news narratives tend to dramatize legal processes and contextualize them within broader political and electoral frames. However, unlike much of the existing literature (e.g., Cotterill, 2003; Heffer, 2005; Cotter, 2012), which typically examines either media representation or courtroom interaction in isolation, this study offers a comparative, cross-institutional analysis that traces how the same legal events are linguistically transformed as they move from a rule-governed judicial setting to an audience-oriented media environment. The analysis, therefore, provides a more integrated treatment of contextualization that entirely serves to illustrate how courtroom discourse aims to fix meaning through evidential certainty and regulated agency attribution and how media discourse reinterprets meaning through speculation, personalization, and conflict framing. Such an approach, therefore, fills an existing gap in terms of its methodological and analytical potential to link micro-linguistic features to macro-level sociopolitical functions.

The analysis of the selected data also reveals that the use of lexis in constructing the trial of Trump is of central significance, as it carries information about evaluation, categorization, and ideological perspectives. To clarify, the use of lexicalization in constructing courtroom discourse and media discourse reveals the ways in which Trump's trial is discursively constructed as a categorization that evokes different cognitive frames and ideological meanings. This finding reconciles with some previous studies (e.g., Fowler, 1991; Fairclough, 2003; Susanto, 2016; Khafaga, 2023b), which accentuate that the use of vocabulary is ideological in nature. That is, lexemes, within particular contexts, carry further pragmatic and ideological meanings than their ordinary semantic meanings. In this study, lexicalization contributes significantly to communicating specific meanings in the representation of Trump's trial, either in the courtroom or in media discourse. In the courtroom discourse of the prosecution, the categorization of Trump as a "defendant" strips him of his political identity and places him entirely within the criminal justice system, where equality before the law and individual responsibility are presupposed. The

categorization is further emphasized by the use of the lexical choice in "unlawfully retained," which carries information about intentionality and continuity of action, and the use of the overlexicalized expression in "highly sensitive national security documents," which carries information about the semantic field of state protection, risk, and threat. The significance of the lexical choices used is that they have the discourse function of foregrounding criminality and culpability, which frames the action as a breach with potential consequences for safety. The use of lexicalization, therefore, targets specific ideological meanings. Such an ideological weight of lexicalization in Trump's trial in both courtroom and media discourse goes in conformity with Supardi's (2016) and Wang's (2024) arguments that the use of specific lexemes within particular contexts contributes to the pragmatic interpretation of discourse. In light of this study, lexicalization plays a central role as a contextualization strategy, with courtroom discourse attempting to stabilize meaning by legal categorization and attribution/mitigation of responsibility, while media discourse either activates institutional neutrality or rewrites legal processes as a drama of crisis and transformation.

It is analytically demonstrated that agency is dexterously employed as a linguistic framing strategy in Trump's trial. In the courtroom, agency is constructed in terms of transitivity, which is the representation of the doer of an action and the impact of the action. The analysis shows that agents are clearly identified in active sentences, whereas in passive sentences the agent is downplayed, which reduces the degree of blame or responsibility. This finding correlates with Barnes's (2000), Fairclough's (2003), and van Dijk's (2008) arguments that speakers tend to use passive construction to hide agency and to make responsibility unknown. The analysis further clarifies that agency in the media discourse of Trump's trial is communicated by the use of nominalization, in which the action is represented as an entity to downplay the agent's involvement in the event. Such discourse strategies contribute to the competing discourses of the prosecution and the defense, as they try to present the same event in different ways. From the perspective of CDA, the discourse strategies used in the courtroom are also seen as an expression of ideology, as they help in the construction of legal truth, which in turn is used to judge the causation and intentions behind the crime (van Hulst et al., 2024). Additionally, the discourse strategies of agency also represent the power relationship, as the legal professionals have more power in the narrative than the witnesses (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Heffer, 2005; Li, 2024). Consequently, the analysis of agency as a linguistic framing strategy in Trump's trial in both courtroom discourse and media discourse highlights the use of grammatical constructions as important persuasive strategies in the discourse of allocating blame or responsibility in the context of the crime and in the discourse of shaping or directing public opinion in the media context.

The analysis further shows that modality is another significant language feature of legal discourse, especially because it conveys different meanings of certainty, obligation, and probability, which influence the interpretation of the whole discourse. The analysis clarifies some points concerning the employment of modality as a framing strategy in Trump's trial. First, verbs, adverbs, and evidentials, such as "must have," "might," "it is clear that," "it is possible," etc., are used to locate one's position on a spectrum of speculation and facticity. Second, high-value modality is used to present one's arguments as objective, undeniable truths, which enhances the speaker's power and makes his or her narrative more believable. Third, in legal discourse, low-value modality is strategically used to discredit opposing accounts and witnesses. Fourth, deontic modality is used by judges to enhance their power. These findings go in the same direction with Fairclough's (2003) argument that modality is a reflection of the speaker's commitment to truth, which is related to his or her social power, making it a significant aspect of legal reality construction. This finding also reconciles with Palmer's (2001) and Tiersma's (1999) assumptions that through modality, speakers can frame interpretations of what happened, which influences the interpretation of what actually happened by the jury, thus establishing a link between language form and epistemological control. The same holds for media discourse; the analysis displays that modality, in media discourse, constructs the trial process from a range of certainties and speculations, depending on the level of certainty and speculation expressed. It is analytically evidenced that media discourse of Trump's trial uses low epistemic modality to show caution, high modality to show certainty, and evidential modality to show accountability. In all its uses in media discourse, modality is employed to influence the audience's interpretation and functions to shape public opinion (O'Keeffe, 2006). As such, and correlating with van Dijk's (2008) argument, through the strategic use of modality, the media constructs the legal process from a range of convictions and assumptions, which influences the audience's interpretation and thus their social cognition.

To recap, the analysis of the linguistic framing of Trump's trial in the discourse of the courtroom and the media reveals that the change from the discourse of the courtroom to the media discourse is not only a shift of summarization, as the discourse takes a different form, reflecting the purpose of the communication in the genre of discourse. While the discourse in the courtroom is used for the construction of events with highly controlled lexis, the discourse is reframed in the dominant media discourse with more evaluative lexis, reflecting the purpose of the media communication. Thus, the change from the highly controlled lexis of the legal discourse to the more evaluative lexis of the media discourse, the strategic use of agency, and the more frequent use of modal forms that reflect the speculations, certainties, and alignments of the audience all show the reframing of the discourse to reflect the purpose of the media communication. Thus, the shift in the discourse from the courtroom to the media discourse reveals the essential role of the linguistic framing in the course of power and ideology from one genre of discourse to another and from one context to another. Linguistic framing, thus, mediates the legal event for the public audience by reflecting the micro level of linguistic choices and the macro level of social structures that shape the legal, political, and public understanding of Trump's trial.

## 7. Conclusion

By integrating critical discourse analysis and linguistic framing, this paper examined the linguistic framing of U.S. President Donald Trump's trial in two distinct discourse settings, namely the courtroom and the media. The study offered a multidimensional model that connected the micro-linguistic level with macro-level power relations and sociopolitical effects, making a significant contribution to the

fields of forensic linguistics, media discourse analysis, and political trials. Furthermore, the study clarified that the transition from courtroom discourse to media discourse in the trial of Trump is not only a change in location but also a multifaceted process of discursive contextualization in which linguistic framing recasts legal reality for distinct institutional and communicational purposes and recipients. By identifying lexicalization, agency, and modality as linguistic framing strategies in Trump's trial in the two discourse genres, the study revealed that courtroom discourse appears to privilege stability in meaning by foregrounding evidential certainty, controlled attribution of responsibility, and legal categorization, while media discourse restructured the very same legal events in frames of objectivity, speculation, dramatization, and political consequence. Such a difference in linguistic framing can be seen to be accounted for in terms of the differing communicative goals of the two discourse settings, with adjudication and institutional legitimacy being the goals of the courtroom discourse, and accessibility, newsworthiness, and audience engagement being the goals of the media discourse. However, both discourse genres can be seen as involved in the larger struggle for legitimacy, responsibility, and meaning, which suggests that legal meaning is neither essential nor given but is negotiated in different discourse settings.

For future research, further studies could extend the current study by incorporating a multimodal discourse approach to examine a larger, multi-genre corpus of courtroom discourse, live media coverage, editorials, and social media discourse on Trump's trial to explore the linguistic framing of the event over time, genre, and ideological orientation. Also recommended is that a comparative cross-legal perspective involving other high-profile political trials could be conducted to see whether the linguistic framing strategies identified here are unique to this case or whether they apply to mediated legal proceedings more broadly. Methodologically, more extensive research could be achieved through the integration of CDA with corpus linguistics methods, whereas other studies could also explore the cognitive processing of the competing linguistic frames by different audiences and within different contexts.

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