

## Threats as Illocutionary and Perlocutionary Acts: A Case Study of Biden's Threats on Russia-Ukraine Crisis

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أفعال التهديد الكلامية كغرض وأثر: دراسة حالة لأفعال التهديد عند بايدن إزاء الأزمة الروسية الأوكرانية

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### المستخلص

يسعى البحث الحالي إلى تحديد الخصائص التداولية لفعل التهديد الكلامي، كما يسعى إلى تحديد ما إذا كان فعل التهديد الكلامي ينتمي إلى لازم المعنى أو الغرض أم إلى الأثر، وذلك من خلال تحليل أفعال التهديد الكلامي في خطاب بايدن (الرئيس الأمريكي) في الخامس عشر من فبراير ٢٠٢٢ للرئيس الروسي (بوتين) إبان الأزمة الأوكرانية الروسية. كما تم دراسة ردود أفعال بوتين على تهديدات بايدن من خلال تحليل خطاب بوتين في الحادي والعشرين من فبراير ٢٠٢٢. وأشارت النتائج إلى أن أفعال التهديد الكلامية لا تنتمي بشكل مطلق إلى لازم المعنى (غرض المعنى) كما أوضح أوستن وسيرل ولا تنتمي بشكل مطلق إلى أثر المعنى كما أوضح نيكولوف، ولكن أفعال التهديد الكلامي هي أفعال ذات طبيعة خاصة تجمع في خصائصها بين لازم المعنى وأثره في نفس الوقت.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الفعل الكلامي، التهديد، الغرض، أثر المعنى

### Abstract

The current research sought to explore the pragmatic characteristics of the speech act of threatening. Additionally, it sought to determine whether the speech act of threatening is a perlocutionary act, as suggested by Nicoloff (1989), rather

than an illocutionary act, as suggested by Austin (1975, 107) and Searle (1968), in light of the speech acts of threatening used by the American president, Biden, and directed at the Russian president, Putin. To achieve these purposes, the illocutionary characteristics of Biden's speech acts of threatening in his speech on February 15, 2022, were examined. Similarly, the perlocutionary characteristics of Biden's threats are traced back in Putin's speech on 21 February 2022. The results indicated that the speech acts of threatening are not merely illocutionary and are not solely perlocutionary. Threatening is a unique species of speech acts, which is not similar to any other speech act. Both the illocutionary and perlocutionary characteristics of speech acts are present in this act at the same time.

**Keywords:** *speech act, threatening, illocutionary act, perlocutionary act*

## 1. Introduction

Threats from the US president warning the Russian president of the repercussions of the Russian invasion of Ukraine have been repeatedly made in various ways. However, Russia went on to invade Ukraine, starting one of the largest wars in the twenty-first century. This raises the question of whether or not the threats made by the American president could be deemed ineffective. To answer this question, threatening as a speech act is to be analyzed to find out how the speech act of threatening could be considered

sincere and cooperative, and to find out whether this speech act is locutionary or perlocutionary. The current research seeks to answer this question.

## 2. Theoretical framework

Austin, in his speech act theory, differentiates between three acts: the locutionary act, illocutionary act, and perlocutionary act (Searle, 1968). The locutionary act is the act of uttering something with a certain meaning (Allott, 2010, 91). In this definition, Austin does not explain the difference between meaning and sense. Therefore, language philosophers tend to alter the notion of locutionary act with the propositional act (Sbisà, 2013) as propositions are related to the semantic properties of the utterance (Johnston, 2009; Sbisà, 2013). These semantic characteristics are linked to the temporal, demonstrative, and descriptive aspects of the propositional act (Johnston, 2009). Thus, compared to Austin's locutionary act, the propositional act is more precise and thorough. Consideration of the viewpoint that such acts are propositional rather than locutionary is therefore more suitable.

The second act in the speech act theory is the illocutionary one which is defined as the act of performing an utterance (Allott, 2010, 90). It is noted that the same locutionary or propositional acts could, with the same sense and reference, have different illocutionary forces. For example, the same utterance could have the illocutionary

force of a congratulation, a promise, a prediction, a threat, and so forth (Searle, 1968).

The perlocutionary act is the third one in the speech act theory. This act is concerned with the effects brought about by means of the utterance on the addressee(s) (Allott, 2010, 138). Qiang (2013) referred to the criticism directed to Austin's theory from Searle and Grice because of focusing on the illocutionary act and ignoring the effects of this act on the addressee(s). However, Qiang noted that Austin distinguished two perlocutionary effects of an utterance: achieving a perlocutionary purpose or producing a perlocutionary reaction.

The speech act of threatening (SAT) is one that could take place in a vast array of contexts (Kelly, 2018). However, this speech act receives little attention when compared to other speech acts (Gingiss, 1986). This could be attributed to the complexity of the SAT and the controversy about this speech act. It is noted that there is no consensus on the definition of SAT as it could be analyzed from different perspectives such as pragmatic (e.g., Fraser, 1998), sociolinguistic (e.g., Appiah and Bosiwah, 2015), diplomatic (e.g., Reichenberg and Syse, 2018), legal (e.g., Yamanaka, 1995), political (e.g., Firdaus, Indrayani, and Soemantri, 2020), philosophical, (e.g., Walton, 2000, 104–118) and/or logical (e.g., Casey, 2022) viewpoints. So, it is defined differently based on the scope of the study. Also, the

linguistic characteristics of this speech act are difficult to be pursued because they are not specified (Kelly, 2018). Additionally, there is disagreement about whether this speech act should be communicated directly or indirectly (e.g., Walton, 2014). Likewise, there is a dispute about the classification of the speech act of threatening as being illocutionary or perlocutionary (Searle, 1965; Searle, 1968; Nicoloff, 1989; Fraser, 1998; Walton, 2000). So, the following section focuses on illustrating the definition of the SAT and its characteristics.

### **2.1. Definition of the speech act of threatening**

A threat is the expression of a clear intention to harm someone physically or in some other way (Amjad, Ashraf, Zhila, Sidorov, Zubiaga, & Gelbukh, 2021). Fraser (1998) defined a SAT as the expression of an intention to cause or be responsible for causing what the addressee believes to be unfavorable. In other words, threats refer to the speaker's intentional acts that force the addressee to do something which is not favorable for the addressee (Sami, 2015). Reichenberg and Syse (2018) described a SAT is a special species of speech acts in which the threatener (A) warns the target (B) that if the action (p) is not carried out as desired by A, A will deliberately harm B (or let it to happen).

### **2.2. Sincerity and credibility of the Speech act of threatening**

A speech act is considered sincere if, only if, it conveys accurately the speaker's state of mind (Searle, 1969, 65).

When a speaker expresses a state of mind, it does not mean the speaker is speaking truly but he/she is sincere (Gibbard, 1990, 84). Walton (2000, 120) identified three factors that make a threat credible. First, the addressee must believe that the threatener has the potential to punish him/her. Second, the addressee must believe that the threatener has the probable intent to punish him/her for noncompliance and forgoing punishment for compliance. The third factor is the surveillance, the threatener's capability to continuously monitor the addressee's doing. In addition to the previous factors, Walton specified some elements that make a threat more effective like the negative consequences of the threatened act is great, the threatener has carried out his/her threats in the past, the severity of the threatened punishment is greater than the loss that will result from compliance, and the addressee's belief that his/her freedom is restricted without compensation due to the threatened act.

Kreckel (1981, 64) and Walton (2000, 113-114) adopted Searle's conditions for the speech act of warning with some modifications. According to Kreckel and Walton, the first condition is the preparatory condition, in which the addressee believes that the event will take place, this event is not in addressee's interest, and the speaker is able to bring about this event. The second condition is the sincerity condition, in which the speaker and the addressee believe that the event is not in addressee's interest and the addressee

would like to avoid it. The third condition is the essential condition, in which the speaker is making a commitment that if the addressee does not comply with the speaker's demand, the speaker is demonstrating a readiness to bring about the event that is not in the addressee's best interest.

### **2.3. Locutionary characteristics of the speech act of threatening**

Although, there is no specific linguistic features that characterize the speech act of threatening (Muschalik, 2018, 4), some linguistic patterns are considered indicators of threats. Firstly, the use of futurity, “modals of commitment and intent like “will”, “have to”, “be going to”, “present tense to express future” and “time expressions like “soon” and “next week”, could be indicative to speaker’s intention for harm (Muschalik, 2018,74; Gales, 2015). Secondly, the use of violent verbs like “kill”, “hurt”, “shoot”, and “blow up” could indicate threats. Lastly, the expression of speaker’s responsibility using personal pronouns like “I”, “you”, and “me” or the use of semi-modals like “need” and “want” reflect speaker’s intention to harm the addressee(s) (Bojsen-Møller, Auken, Devitt, & Christensen, 2020). Kelly (2018, 9) added some verbal clues that accompany the SAT like swearing, speaking loudly or yelling, using the threatening tone of voice.

Gales (2015) identified three categories of the speech act of threatening: direct, conditional, and veiled/indirect. Direct SAT shows clearly how the harmful acts will be

achieved (Fraser, 1998). For example, “stop chattering, or you’ll be punished”. In the previous example the unfavorable action is defined by referring to the punishment which could be physically or emotionally.

The second category is the conditional threatening, in which the threat is presented as a condition that leads the addressee to bring about the action (Gales, 2015) (e.g., “If you continue, you will be killed”). However, it is noticed that there is an overlap between direct and conditional threats as both inform the addressee of the unfavorable future if an action is not carried out (Abrams, 2019, 9). Similarly, Fraser (1998) assumed that all direct threats are conditional.

The last category is the indirect or veiled threatening, in which the context leads to the interpretation of the utterance as a threat (Abrams 2019, 9–10). For example, “How are you?” In the previous example, there is no reference to a threat, but the context could lead to its interpretation as a threat.

#### **2.4. Illocutionary and perlocutionary characteristic of the speech act of threatening**

Threats are frequently viewed as illocutionary acts and this view goes back to the conventional view of threatening represented by Searle and Austin (Nicoloff, 1998). Searle (1979, 11–20) classifies the illocutionary acts into five categories, assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, declarations. The conventional view of threatening considers



the SAT, the same as promise, a commissive speech act in which the speaker is obliged to perform the committed future action (Searle, 1979, 22). In contrast, other scholars classify threats as directives that push the addressee to fulfill a specific condition (Christensen, 2019; Misiukajtis, 2019). The main distinction between threats and promises is that a promise is doing something for the addressee, while a threat is doing something to the addressee, not for him/her (Christensen, 2019). In other words, promises imply that the speaker's future action is in the benefit of the addressee. There is no doubt that the promised action will be done, and what is promised is required by the addressee (Sami, 2015). Also, a speech act of promise is performed by the use of an explicit performative verb like "I promise", or by a primary performative like "I shall". On the other hand, there is no specific semantic or syntactic features of the speech act of threatening (i.e., If the SAT is in the obliging form, it can take the form of request, demand, ban, command .... etc., but if threats are in the non-obliging form, it can be in the form of advice, offer, request..... Etc.) (Misiukajtis, 2019). Nicoloff (1997) indicated that threats are neither commissives nor directives. Moreover, unlike the promises, warnings or any other speech act, threats are anti-cooperative. The threatening action is not in the Addressee's interest or benefit. Because the speech act of threatening appears to have several essential aspects in common with perlocutions, the relationship between threats and perlocution should be

further analyzed. The following section focuses on analyzing perlocutionary aspects of threats.

There is controversy over whether the SAT is an illocutionary act, the act of performing an utterance, or a perlocutionary act, the impact of the utterance on the addressee (Nicoloff, 1989). It should be noted that, the perlocutionary act is a troublesome speech act starting from Austin's speech act theory (Levinson, 1983, 236). Austin's theory did not clearly state who performs the perlocutionary act, the speaker, or the hearer (Allwood, 1977, 52-56). Therefore, the perlocutionary act should be clarified to find out which speech acts could be perlocutionary.

Qiang (2013) categorized the perlocutionary act into four types. In the first type, the speaker's perlocutionary act was generated as the addressees fully comprehended speaker's intention and worked following this intention. In the second type, the speaker's intention is not fully comprehended and as a result the speaker did not get the desired action. In the third type, although the speaker's intention is fully comprehended, the addressees did not react as expected by the speaker. In the last type, the speaker's intention was not fully comprehended. However, by the interference of a third party in the communication, the expected perlocutionary act is realized. The threatening speech act may fall under any of these types.

As Grice identified four maxims (manner, quantity, quality, and relation) that speakers could use in forming their

utterances to be cooperative, get the maximum efficiency of language and show the illocutionary force of their utterances, and to get the required response from the addressees (Huang, 2014, 29; Leech, 2014, 80), Attardo (1997) identified three Perlocutionary Cooperative Principles. The first principle is providing someone with what they need or want. The second one is offering assistance to anyone accomplishing something. The last principle is providing others with what they need, even if they are unaware that they need it, by anticipating their needs.

A distinction is to be made between the perlocutionary act and the perlocutionary effect (Akhimien, 2010). A perlocutionary act is the process of bringing about some kind of effect on the addressee, while the perlocutionary effect is the consequences of the speaker's utterance on the addressees. In other words, perlocution is an act of the addressees' understanding of the speaker's illocutionary force as identified by the context (Akhimien, 2010).

Perlocutionary effects could be classified into *cognitive* (e.g., the addressee accepts the speaker's as being true), *motor* (e.g., the addressee is awakened by a loud voice produced by the speaker), and *emotive* (e.g., after processing the speaker's message, the addressee is terrified by being told that there is a snake in the room) (Gu, 1993). Also, the perlocutionary effect could be *negative* (e.g., the addressee stops a current behavior or avoids doing certain behavior), *verbal* (performing a speech act, e.g., the addressee answers the

speaker's question, or *physical* (performing a physical response, e.g., the hearer shoots a man as a response to the speaker's utterance "shoot him") (Gaines, 1979, 209; Gu, 1993).

So, unlike illocutionary acts, perlocutionary acts are not solely linguistic in nature because they can be accomplished without using any words at all. There is no linguistic convention (i.e., a performative verb) that determines the perlocutionary act (Searle & Vanderveken, 1985, 12). The perlocutionary effects are not unified but they are multiple.

Walton (2000, 113) and Nicoloff (1989) consider threatening, like frightening and amusing, a perlocutionary act rather than a perlocutionary one. The most important part in the SAT is the addressee's reaction (Nicoloff, 1989). Nicoloff noticed that there are different measures, which are not solely linguistic, that the addressee may adopt as a reaction to the threat. These measures could be emotional, mental, psychological, or behavioral. As a reply to a threat, the addressee may resort to different reactions. The addressee may make a counterthreat by the use of claiming to avoid the receipt of the threat, by developing relations with other people who could persuade the threatener decline his/her threat or protect the addressee from the threatener, by avoiding the association with the threatener, or by losing

interest in the principles underpinning the penalty (Walton, 2000, 121).

### 3. Statement of the problem

The speech act of threatening is a controversial one. There is no consensus on the nature of this speech act. Some scholars identify it as an illocutionary speech act, an act of performing an utterance like Austin (1975, 107), Fraser (1998), Searle (1968), and Verschueren (1980, 36). Others find it as a perlocutionary act, the effects brought about on the addressee, like Walton (2000) and Nicoloff (1989). So, more research is required to find out the whether the speech act of threatening is an illocutionary or a perlocutionary act. The perlocutionary and illocutionary characteristics of the threatening speech act are analyzed on the light of Biden's threats against the Russian president, Putin, regarding the Russia-Ukraine crisis.

### 4. Questions of the study

1. What are illocutionary characteristics of the speech act of threatening in the context of Biden's threats concerning Russia-Ukraine Crisis?
2. What are the perlocutionary characteristics of the speech act of threatening in the context of Biden's threats concerning Russia-Ukraine Crisis?
3. To what extent could the speech act of threatening be considered an illocutionary act in the context of Biden's threats concerning Russia-Ukraine Crisis?

4. To what extent could the speech act of threatening be considered a perlocutionary act in the context of Biden's threats concerning Russia-Ukraine Crisis?

## 5. Methods

To answer the previous questions, Joe Biden's threats related to Russia-Ukraine Crisis in his speech on 15 February 2022 are collected and analyzed. The reactions of these threats on the addressee are traced in the official speech of the Russian president on 21 February.

Biden's speech is analyzed to find out the major propositional features, the type of the speech act of threatening, and the indicator of the speech act of threatening. Also, the illocutionary features, sincerity and cooperation of Biden's threats are explored. Similarly, Putin's speech is analyzed to trace the perlocutionary act of Biden's threats and to find out the cooperation of the perlocutionary act and the perlocutionary effects of Biden's threats on Putin as the addressee of the threats.

## 6. Analysis and discussion

By analyzing Biden's speech on 15 February 2022\*, it is found that about 18 utterances are considered speech acts of threatening (SAT). Table (1) presents the direct threatening speech acts used by Biden in his speech.

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\* Biden's speech is available online on:  
<https://www.cnbc.com/2022/02/15/watch-live-biden-addresses-nation-on-ukraine-russia-crisis.html>

**Table 1****Direct SAT in Biden's speech on 15 February 2022**

<b>Utterance</b>	<b>Type of SAT</b>	<b>Locutionary / propositional characteristics</b>	<b>Indicators of SAT (Violent expressions)</b>
1. We are ready for diplomacy, and we are ready to respond decisively to a Russian attack on Ukraine	Direct	A statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “Respond decisively”</li> <li>- The use of present to indicate future harm</li> </ul>
2. As long as there is hope of a diplomatic resolution that prevents the use of force....., we will pursue it	Direct	A statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “The use of force”</li> <li>- The use of the of “will”</li> </ul>
3. The United States and our Allies and partners will respond decisively	Direct	A statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “respond decisively”</li> <li>- The use of “will”</li> </ul>
4. The United States and our Allies and partners around the world are ready to impose powerful	Direct	A statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “impose powerful sanctions”</li> </ul>

sanctions on [and] export controls... We will put intense pressure on their largest and most significant financial institutions and key industries.			- “put intense pressure”
5. The United States will defend every inch of NATO territory with the full force of American power. An attack against one NATO country is an attack against all of us. And the United States commitment to Article 5 is sacrosanct	Direct	A statement	- “with the full force of American power” - “is an attack against all of us”

It was found that Biden used five direct SATs, all of which are statements. To describe the potential consequences that Putin may face if his hostile behavior continues, Biden used the present and future tenses. In addition, Biden used phrases like "respond decisively," "the use of force," "impose powerful sanctions," "put intense pressures," and "with the full force of American power" to convey threats and punishment. Along with that, to intensify his threatening, Biden highlighted the terrible repercussions Putin would experience if he launched a strike on a NATO member by treating such an action as an attack on all NATO members.

The results indicated that Biden in his speech, employed six conditional SATs. Conditional sentences are



used to introduce each of these SATs. These findings are summarized in table (2).

**Table 2**

**Conditional SAT in Biden's speech on 15 February 2022**

Utterance	Type of SAT	Locutionary/ propositional characteristics	Indicators of SAT (Violent expressions)
1. If Russia proceeds, we will rally the world to oppose aggression	Conditional	A conditional sentence	- "Rally the world" - "Oppose aggression"
2. These measures are ready to go as soon and if Russia moves. We'll impose long-term consequences that will undermine Russia's ability to compete economically and strategically	Conditional	A conditional sentence	- "impose long-term consequences" - The use of "will"
3. And when it comes to Nord Stream 2, the pipeline that would bring natural gas from Russia to Germany, if Russia further invades Ukraine, it will not happen.	Conditional	A conditional sentence	- "it will not happen"

<p>4. And if Russia invades, we will take further steps to reinforce our presence in NATO, reassure for our Allies, and deter further aggression</p>	<p>Condition al</p>	<p>Conditional sentence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “Further aggression”</li> <li>- The use of the “will” to show future harm</li> <li>- the use of the personal pronoun “we” to express speaker’s responsibility</li> </ul>
<p>5. And if Russia attacks the United States or our Allies through asymmetric means, like disruptive cyber-attacks against our companies or critical infrastructure, we are prepared to respond</p>	<p>Condition al</p>	<p>Conditional sentence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “Attack”</li> <li>- “cyber-attacks”</li> <li>- “Prepared to respond”</li> </ul>
<p>6. But let there be no doubt: If Russia commits this breach by invading Ukraine, responsible nations around the world will not hesitate to respond.</p>	<p>Condition al</p>	<p>Conditional sentence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “Commits this breach”</li> <li>- “Will not hesitate to respond”</li> </ul>

Biden employed "if" sentences to express the bad future that awaits Putin unless he stops his aggression. Biden, also,

demonstrated his accountability for carrying out the threatened punishment by using the pronoun "we." Conditional sentences included phrases like "impose long-term consequences," "we're prepared to respond," and "we won't hesitate to respond" to convey a bad future for the threatened party.

The findings also illustrated that Biden employed seven indirect SAT whose sense of threatening could be inferred from the context. These indirect SATs are expressed through statements. Table (3) illustrates these results.

**Table 3**

**Indirect SAT in Biden's speech on 15 February 2022**

Utterance	Locutionary/ propositional characteristics	Indicators of SAT (Violent expressions)
1. Today, our NATO Allies and the Alliance is as unified and determined as it has ever been. And the source of our unbreakable strength continues to be the power, resilience, and universal appeal of our shared democratic values.	A Statement	- unbreakable strength, power, resilience”
2. we have supplied the Ukrainian military with equipment to help them defend themselves. We	A Statement	- the use of the personal pronoun “we” to express

Utterance	Locutionary/ propositional characteristics	Indicators of SAT (Violent expressions)
have provided training and advice and intelligence for the same purpose.		speaker's responsibility
3. Already, in response to Russia's build-up of troops, I have sent additional U.S. forces to bolster NATO's eastern flank.	A Statement	- Additional forces" - the use of the personal pronoun "I" to express speaker's responsibility
4. Several of our Allies have also announced they'll add forces and capabilities to ensure deterrence and defense along NATO's eastern flank.	A Statement	- "Add forces" - The use of the "will" to show future harm
5. We are not seeking direct confrontation with Russia, though I have been clear that if Russia targets Americans in Ukraine, we will respond forcefully.	A Statement	- "Direct confrontation" - "Respond forcefully"
6. We're moving in lockstep with our NATO Allies and partners to deepen our collective defense against threats in cyberspace	A Statement	- "Collective defense against threats" - the use of the personal pronoun

Utterance	Locutionary/ propositional characteristics	Indicators of SAT (Violent expressions)
		“we” to express speaker’s responsibility
7. Two paths are still open. For the sake of the historic responsibility Russia and the United States share for global stability, for the sake of our common future — to choose diplomacy	A Statement	- “Share for global stability”

As Biden used some signs for terrible future in the direct and conditional SATs, he applied similar markers in the indirect SATs to emphasize the idea of bad future and punishment. For example, Biden used the modal "will" to indicate the bad future. Similarly, Biden used the personal pronouns "I" and "we" to convey his responsibility for carrying out the threatened punishment. Additionally, Biden used phrases like "unbreakable strength, power, resilience," "additional forces," "direct confrontation," "respond forcefully," and "collective defense against threats" that suggest a dismal future for the threatened party.

An analysis of the data in tables (1), (2), and (3) shows that Biden used direct and conditional SATs eleven times to make the threatened action and the negative effects clear. In

addition, Biden used indirect SATs seven times in his speech, but he also made overt signs of threats to make sure the unfavorable outcomes for the party under threat are not obscured.

The previous SATs could be classified as commissives (Searle, 1979, 11) and directives (Christensen, 2019). These utterances are considered sincere as they reflect the speaker's state of mind, intention to direct a threat to the Russian president. Given the serious potential consequences of Biden's direct attack and economic sanctions, these threats could be regarded as successful. Additionally, Biden's threats could be considered effective as the American regime showed its capability of performing such threats in the past. For example, when the US Regime threatened the ex-Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, the American Regime fulfilled this threat with no reluctance. Similarly, when the US Regime threatened the Iranian government of severe economic sanctions, these sanctions were carried out with no compensation. So, it is obvious that the American regime, represented by Joe Biden, is credible and capable of accomplishing the threatened outcomes.

So, the illocutionary characteristics of the SAT in Biden's speech are reflected obviously. However, the responses of Putin, the addressee, through his speech on the 21<sup>st</sup> of February 2022 are not as expected. Putin on 21 February showed that he had perceived Biden's threats with

different reactions. At first, Putin employed claiming to ignore the threat. Putin in his speech\* claimed that Ukrainian treasures are originally Russian properties. Also, he claimed that Ukraine, through its alliance with the USA and the west, represents a threat to the Russian security. Moreover, he claimed that the civilians in the Ukrainian Donbas ask Putin for help as they are subjected to killing and abuse.

Secondly, Putin adopted a counterattack by using a conditional threat in his speech by saying: “If Ukraine acquires weapons of mass destruction, the situation in the world and in Europe will drastically change, especially for us, for Russia. We cannot but react to this real danger.” He also used a direct threat when he said, “we do not accept this behavior and will never accept it.”

Thirdly, Putin asked others to support him to face the consequences of the threat. Putin asked the Federal assemble to support him when he said, “I would like to ask the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation to support this decision and then ratify the Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Assistance with both republics. These two documents will be prepared and signed shortly.”

So, Putin did not accept the regulations of Biden’s threats. He tried to adopt counter measures to escape these threats. The perlocutionary acts of Biden’s SAT are of the

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\* Putin’s speech is available online on:  
<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67828>

type of the perlocutionary acts in which the speaker's intention is fully comprehended, but the addressee did not react as expected by the speaker. Although the illocutionary force was successfully delivered and the intentions are clearly declared, the perlocutionary effects are not as expected. Putin made the threats void through his verbal and physical responses. Putin replied verbally by claiming and making counter threats and he replied physically by invading Ukraine on the 24<sup>th</sup> of February 2022. These verbal and physical responses are not the expected outcomes of Biden's SATs.

Biden's SATs are considered cooperative based on Grice's maxims. Biden's utterances are clear, true, relevant, and informative. However, Putin's responses to these threats are uncooperative based on Attardo's cooperative principles. Putin did not provide what is needed and he did not offer any assistance to the threatener. Although, according to Searle and Vanderveken (1985, 12-13), Biden's SATs are sincere and are considered successful as the speaker has the institutional power to carry out his threat, the perlocutionary effects of these SAT are not as expected and are not realized as real threats by the addressee, Putin. In other words, Biden's SAT could be considered infelicitous as there is no interactional cooperation between the threatener, Biden, and the threatened, Putin.

So, SAT is a unique species of speech acts. This speech act is not merely illocutionary like promise and request. Also,



it is not merely perlocutionary as amusing and fearing as the addressee may respond to the threat by another threat making a perlocutionary sequel. Finally, it could be concluded that SATs are not merely illocutionary as Austin (1975, 107), Searle (1968), Verschueren (1980, 36), and Fraser (1998) believe and is not solely perlocutionary as Nicoloff (1989) and Walton (2000) think. The interactional cooperation is required for the success of communicating the SAT. However, despite the fact that the perlocutionary act is the most important act of the SAT, the illocutionary act could not be disregarded. To be successful, SAT should satisfy the preparatory and propositional conditions, sincerity condition, essential condition, and Grice's cooperative maxims. Similarly, the perlocutionary effects could not be overlooked. The counter measures that could be adopted by the addressee and the cooperative principles of the perlocutionary act should be considered for a successful threat to take place.

## **7. Further Research**

Further research could be performed by analyzing speech acts of threatening in different discourses to reach a decisive conclusion on the categorization of the speech act of threatening as being illocutionary and perlocutionary at the same time.

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