Threatening Stances: A corpus analysis of realized vs. non-realized threats

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Abstract. *Stance provides a link between individual performance and meaning (Jaffe, 2009); affective and epistemic markers of stance, in particular, serve to demonstrate the stance-taker's perceived level of emotion towards and commitment to the mentioned proposition. As such, these markers are oftentimes used by law enforcement practitioners to help determine a threatener's commitment to carrying out their threatened action. Yet, previous research has revealed that stance markers do not always function in expected ways (e.g., Conrad and Biber, 2000). Thus, through a corpus analysis of 104 authentic threats, this paper examines the distribution and function of grammatical stance markers within threats that were carried out vs. those that were not. Specifically, it is argued that the social sanction (Martin and White, 2005) against carrying out threats, i.e., arrest, prosecution, and jail time, may socially affect the ways in which writers use grammatical markers of stance that demonstrate their level of perceived emotion and commitment, thus blurring the lines between threats that are realized and those that are not realized. The results demonstrate how ideologies about threatening language frequently conflict with authentic language practices and create "a totalizing vision" of threatening language, rendering any linguistic features and functions not consistent with the ideologies invisible (Irvine and Gal, 2000: 38).*

Keywords: *Stance, Systemic Functional Linguistics, corpus analysis, realized vs. non-realized threats, threatening language ideologies.*

Resumo. *O posicionamento proporciona uma ligação entre o desempenho individual e o significado (Jaffe, 2009); os marcadores de posicionamento afetivos e epistemológicos, em particular, permitem demonstrar o nível de emoção percecionado do sujeito do posicionamento relativamente ao seu empenho na proposta referida. Estes marcadores são, por isso, frequentemente utilizados pelos profissionais de justiça para ajudar a determinar o grau de empenho de um responsável pela ameaça para com a própria ação da sua ameaça. Contudo, estudos anteriores mostram que os marcadores de posicionamento nem sempre funcionam do modo esperado (e.g., Conrad and Biber, 2000). Neste contexto, recorrendo à análise de um corpus de 104 ameaças reais, este artigo investiga a distribuição e a função dos marcadores de posicionamento gramatical nas ameaças que foram concretizadas*

face às ameaças que não foram. Defende-se, especificamente, que a sanção social (Martin and White, 2005) da concretização das ameaças (i.e., detenção, condenação e pena de prisão) pode afetar socialmente a forma como os autores das ameaças utilizam os marcadores gramaticais de posicionamento que revelam o seu nível percecionado de emoção e empenho, dissipando assim as fronteiras entre as ameaças que são concretizadas e aquelas que não o são. Os resultados mostram de que modo as ideologias sobre a linguagem das ameaças se encontram, frequentemente, em conflito com as práticas linguísticas autênticas, criando "uma visão totalizadora" da linguagem das ameaças e tornando quaisquer funções e características linguísticas inconsistentes com as ideologias invisíveis (Irvine and Gal, 2000: 38).

Palavras-chave: *Posicionamento, Linguística Sistémico-Funcional, análise de corpora, ameaças concretizadas vs. não concretizadas, ideologias da linguagem das ameaças.*

Introduction

The FBI defines a threatening communication as a "verbalized, written, or electronically transmitted statement that states or suggests that some event will occur that will negatively affect the recipient, someone or something associated with him/her, or specified or non-specified others" (Fitzgerald, 2005: 2); each year, countless numbers of these potentially harmful threats are received by law enforcement agencies for assessment. In 2003 alone, over 400 individual threats were investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), which handles only those cases that are deemed the most dangerous to national security and safety, and the number has steadily increased each year since (Fitzgerald, 2007). Investigators follow a general protocol when analyzing threats; this includes determining if the communication is an actual threat, assessing how dangerous the threat may be, and judging how likely it is that the threat will be carried out. In order to make these assessments, investigators examine a host of social, behavioral, and linguistic factors related to the threat (e.g., the victim's background, the frequency with which the threatener communicates with the victim, and the inclusion of strengthening or mitigating language).

With respect to the linguistic factors, particular markers that suggest a link between individual performance and meaning (Jaffe, 2009) are highlighted as serving as indices of authorial positionality, i.e., how certain a speaker or writer is perceived to be about a proposed or implicit threatening act. Specifically, threats are commonly categorized as low risk when they contain, among other things, lexically-mitigated or conditional language (e.g., "I may get…", "perhaps I will…"), whereas threats are commonly categorized as high risk when they contain more decisive, strengthening language (e.g., "I will find him…", "I will shoot him…") (Napier and Mardigian, 2003: 18).

However, despite the fact that there has been an increase in psychological and criminological studies attempting to hone language that may be used as an indicator of a threatener's intent to harm, the most fundamental component of the research—an empirical understanding of what threatening language actually is—is missing (see e.g., Gales, 2010). Instead, studies have focused on such meta-linguistic features as the mode of communication (e.g., email vs. telephone), the method through which the communication was created (e.g., handwriting vs. computer), and the inclusion of an authentic return address (Smith, 2006); and on thematic features such as the repeated mention of "love,

marriage, or romance" (Smith, 2006: 81) and the thematic content of grammatical clauses (Gottschalk, 1995). But because the act of threatening is a social practice (van Leeuwen, 1993, 1996), wherein the act endows one actor with power over the other (Bourdieu, 1991), it is essential to understand threatening language as a socially-constructed genre (Martin, 1997), since it is from the combination of the linguistic structures and social contexts of a genre as a whole that we can *empirically* construct our impressions, interpretations, and expectations of its use (Christie and Martin, 1997; Martin, 1997).

Without a foundational knowledge of what threatening language is, threat assessors are ultimately left to rely on their own folk linguistic impressions (Preston, 2007) of threatening language. These ideologies are built upon each individual's schema—knowledge of past experiences that one uses to actively construct a current understanding and representation of events and to make predictions about new information, events, and experiences (Bartlett, 1932; Ross, 1975). And while the experiences and intuitions of law enforcement officers unquestionably play a vital role in their ability to assess and mitigate the danger of threats (Mardigian, 2008, p.c.[1]; Smerick, 2009, p.c.), it has been well-established in corpus linguistics that we tend to notice unusual language patterns as opposed to noticing more normative patterns that are found within a particular register or genre (Biber *et al.*, 1998). Through the iterative process of constructing our schema, then, these unusual language patterns become associated with characterological figures in a particular language variety through the process of enregisterment, "whereby distinct forms of speech come to be socially recognized (or enregistered) as indexical of speaker attributes by a population of language users" (Agha, 2005: 38) and these enregistered "patterns of role alignment are potentially overdetermined in subsequent construal" (Agha, 2007: 177). Thus, when using language for such important purposes as threat assessment, we "cannot rely on intuition or anecdotal evidence" (Biber *et al.*, 1998: 3), since the schema upon which law enforcement officers base their assessments will not always mirror those of the threatener, potentially leading to a false assessment of a potentially volatile situation.

Therefore, this paper examines markers of interpersonal stance—a speaker or writer's personal feelings, opinions, and attitudes about a person or proposition (Biber, 2006). In particular, overt grammatical markers of stance—markers that are oftentimes used by law enforcement practitioners to help determine a threatener's level of commitment to carrying out their threatened action—will be examined, specifically since previous research has revealed that stance markers do not always function in expected ways. According to Conrad and Biber (2000), for example, markers of epistemic stance—those that demonstrate commitment to a proposition—have been found to perform various social functions that are separate from their traditional epistemic roles. In their analysis of spoken language, they found that the high frequency of stance adverbials marking 'doubt' (e.g., "perhaps", "maybe") oftentimes served the additional role of 'suggesting,' and adverbs traditionally marking the stance of 'actuality' or 'reality' (e.g., "really", "actually") were also found to "soften disagreements" (Conrad and Biber, 2000: 73), thereby demonstrating how language "gains its semiotic value only within the sociocultural context in which it is used" (Bucholtz, 2009: 165).

Therefore, informed by previous studies on stance (e.g., Biber *et al.*, 1999; Conrad and Biber, 2000; Martin and White, 2005; Biber, 2006; Gales, 2010, 2011, 2015), this research investigates the distribution and function of overt grammatical stance markers within

threats that were carried out vs. those that were not. Specifically, I hypothesize that grammatical stance markers, which have been shown to function in various ways when used for different "communicative purposes" (Conrad and Biber, 2000: 73), may function in yet another new way in this socially-defined genre that do not necessarily adhere to expected categories of threatening language use. It is arguable that the social sanction (Martin and White, 2005) against carrying out threats, i.e., arrest, prosecution, and jail time, may socially affect the ways in which writers use grammatical markers of stance to demonstrate their perceived commitment level, thus blurring the lines between threats that are realized and those that are not, thereby requiring new interpretations of the relationship between language forms and language practices.

The remainder of this paper outlines the ways in which threatening language has been characterized by researchers and threat assessment practitioners, provides an overview of overt markers of grammatical stance—those commonly used by law enforcement practitioners in their assessments of the dangerousness of threats—and then, through a corpus analysis of 104 authentic threats, reveals the ways in which these stance markers actually do manifest and function within two categories of threats: those that were realized vs. those that were not.

Characterizations of threatening language

Descriptions of threatening language in scholarship and threat assessment protocols are limited in nature; however, there are some generalizations that can be drawn about how language has been used to assess how likely it is that a threat will be carried out.

First, sociologists and behavioral psychologists have examined the pragmatic and social nature of threats (e.g., Kent, 1967; Milburn and Watman, 1981), organizations such as the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health have conducted studies on workplace violence (e.g., National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, 1992), and federal investigators have composed detailed protocols to assess the level of potential danger in threats (e.g., Rugala and Fitzgerald, 2003). This compilation of work claims that the more detail or specificity used in a threat, the higher its level of dangerousness; conversely, the more general or vague the language of the threat, the lower the level of potential danger (Jenkins, 1996; Davis, 1997; Turner and Gelles, 2003). Specifically, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime, "the more direct and detailed a threat is, the more serious the risk of it being carried out" (Rugala and Fitzgerald, 2003: 780).

Second, threat assessment researchers and practitioners have cited general "language features" that can be used as indicators of potential violence (Smith, 2006: 81). For example, Smith found that threats that repeatedly mention themes of "love, marriage, or romance" can help determine the level of intent to harm an intended victim (2006: 81) and Turner and Gelles (2003) stated that language inclusive of the following themes can be used as measurements of potential violence: hopelessness, violent behavior, fantasies, suicide, profanity, intimidating claims, obsessions about the object of desire, weapons, a description of the assault on person or property, a deadline in which the threat will be carried out, racism, behaviors for which the victim needs to be punished, and a focus on self as the victim of some wrongdoing. When these indicators were exemplified in the literature, the linguistic features included obscenities (e.g., "bigot"), adverbials of time

(e.g., "soon", "now"), verbs of harm (e.g., "punish", "judge"), second person pronouns (e.g., "you"), and first person pronouns (e.g., "I", "me") (Turner and Gelles, 2003: 95-98).

Finally, and most widely cited in research and practice and thus the focus of this study, scholars and practitioners have noted features that can be categorized as grammatical markers of stance in their assessments of potential levels of violence[2]. For example, behavioral psychologists have drawn upon the work of Weintraub (1981, 1989, 2003) and Hermann (2003), who attempted to isolate the grammatical aspects of personality traits such as spontaneity, deception, decision making, emotional expression, and intimacy by linking verbal habits and behaviors of former national leaders such as Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, and Bill Clinton. For instance, Weintraub measured the level of a leader's decisiveness by the occurrence of what he called qualifiers (e.g., "I think", "kind of", "what you might call"); these grammatical features can be linked to threatening behavior by Smith's (2006) claim that an examination of a threatener's level of decisiveness can lead to an assessment of how prepared a threatener is to carry out an act. That is, a lack of mitigating qualifiers, which can be classified within the category of stance adverbials, signals a more serious threatener.

Similarly, from Hermann's (2003) seven dimensions of personality, the categories of "belief in one's own ability to control events" and "need for power and influence" aptly fit the profile of a threatener (Shuy, 1993; Fraser, 1998). Hermann found that a person with these traits "proposes or engages in a strong, forceful action, such as an assault or attack…", "attempts to regulate the behavior of another person or group", "tries to persuade, bribe, or argue with someone else…", "and is concerned with his or her reputation or position", all of which are grammatically conveyed by the use of highly descriptive verbs (2003: 190). In terms of threatening language examples, these verbs are frequently coupled with modals of prediction, which are also categorized as markers of stance, that signal the time frame in which the descriptive actions will occur (e.g., "you will be punished" (Turner and Gelles, 2003: 98)), making the threat appear more detailed, direct, and viable.

Furthermore, the protocol followed by many investigators when assessing how likely it is that a threatener will act upon a threat (i.e., a high, moderate, or low level of probability), requires consideration of seven equally-weighted social, psychological, and linguistic factors: degree of anger expressed, level of personalization, level of specificity, evidence of technical knowledge, evidence of commitment, existence of ancillary incidents, and level of escalation, if multiple texts or events exist (Rugala and Fitzgerald, 2003). In general, analysts consider low-level threats as those that appear to pose little risk. This can be signified by lexically-mitigated or conditional language (e.g., 'perhaps I might…'), implausible actions (e.g., 'I will blow up every building at the same time…'), and/or a lack of detail as to the time, place, or person targeted (e.g., 'You better watch out or else…') (Napier and Mardigian, 2003). Moderate-level threats are those that are more believable, but still suggest some doubt in terms of the person or place targeted or the plausibility of fulfillment; these usually demonstrate a certain level of forethought in their description of how the threat will be carried out and provide more descriptive language about the target of the threat (Napier and Mardigian, 2003). Finally, high-level threats are those that are highly credible and whose stated facts can be readily verified. These typically contain detailed descriptions of and commitment to how the threat will

be carried out, who or what is targeted, how the threatener will reach that target, and the time frame in which the threat will occur (Napier and Mardigian, 2003).

Linguistically, it is suggested that these factors manifest themselves to varying degrees according to the strength of a threatener's expressed level of conviction through the use of profanity or other emotionally intensified language; second person pronouns, proper names, and home addresses; adverbs that bolster the threatener's commitment to the act; verbs that exemplify the violent action that will be taken; time frames in which the threat will occur; and modals of commitment and intent such as "must", "have to", or "will" (Baker, 2008, p.c.; Mardigian, 2008, p.c.). Thus, aside from emotionally intensified language, which has been demonstrated *not* to play a defining role in threatening language (Gales, 2010), and the use of pronouns, which have been equated with threatening language, *in general* (Gales, 2010), the remaining categories addressed fall broadly within those marking grammatical stance—specifically those that are used to strengthen, in the case of a more dangerous threat, or weaken, in the case of a less dangerous threat, the claims made by the threatener.

Demarcating stance

There is definitely a possibility that I will be killed in my attempt to get Reagan.[3]

This utterance, taken from John Hinckley's final threat letter to Jody Foster before his attempt to kill President Ronald Reagan in 1981, displays a variety of manifestations of grammatically-realized interpersonal stance—a speaker or writer's personal feelings, opinions, and attitudes about a person or proposition (Biber, 2006). Situated within the theoretical framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Halliday, 1978), language is viewed as social practice and is a result of the interplay between its two fundamental aspects—its systematicity and its functionality (Martin, 1997), the latter of which is reflected in discourse through a language's internal grammatical structure. That is, the functions of language provide the motivations for language form and structure (Halliday, 1978). Within SFL, meaning is created as a function of the larger human experience and is encoded in language in three interconnected layers—language (grammar and discourse), social context, and genre (Martin, 1997).

One of the general functions for which we use language is the interpersonal, which serves "to enact our social relationships" (Martin and Rose, 2003: 6)[4]. Stance is central to this aspect of language and is manifested through linguistic markers that are strewn throughout a text, "forming a 'prosody' of attitude"—or discourse cohesion (Halliday and Hasan, 1976)—that reflects interpersonal meaning (Martin and Rose, 2003: 27). When viewed across a text, indices of stance can significantly influence the emotions and reactions of the audience as well as demonstrate the stance-taker's perceived level of commitment to the mentioned proposition. Furthermore, they can serve the purpose of aligning or disaligning the stance-taker with another person or proposition or of reproducing and reinforcing a socially-situated ideology, thereby making stance an extremely powerful construct (Biber, 2006; du Bois, 2007; Martin and White, 2005).

As such, stance has been widely studied in a range of linguistic contexts. For example, Biber *et al.* (1999), Conrad and Biber (2000), Precht (2000, 2003), Scheibman (2002), Kärkkäinen (2003), and Wu (2004) examined grammatical features of stance in conversation; Biber *et al.* (1999), Conrad and Biber (2000), and Bednarek (2006) looked at stance or evaluative language in newspaper discourse; Biber *et al.* (1999), Conrad and Biber

(2000), Charles (2004), Martin and White (2005), and Biber (2006) studied stance or appraisal in academic registers and genres; Hoey (2000) and Johnstone (2009) provided an examination of stance in the rhetoric of prominent individuals; Goźdź-Roszkowski (2011) examined stance in legal language; Fuoli (2012) examined stance or appraisal in corporate social reports; and Gales (2015) investigated stance in threats to stalk vs. threats to harass; all ultimately demonstrating that "some forms of speech and writing are more stance-saturated than others" (Jaffe, 2009: 3). Threatening language, I argue, is a form of language that may be equally, if not more highly, saturated with features of stance, since threats are proffered under times of great emotional stress or excitement and must demonstrate relatively high levels of commitment in order to be interpreted as real threats. Yet, threatening language has received little attention in stance research (see e.g., Gales, 2010, 2011, 2015).

In this study, overt markers of grammatical stance (Biber *et al.*, 1999)—those that carry interpersonal meaning across whole sections of text (Channell, 2000)—are examined in threats that were carried out vs. those that were not. Paralinguistic markers of stance, such as capitalization (e.g., 'I'm SO HAPPY'), lexical variations (e.g., 'r' for 'are'), acronyms (e.g., 'brb' for 'be right back'), and emoticons (e.g., '☺') (Park, 2007), and lexical markers of stance, such as affective words like 'sad', 'disappointed', and 'thrilled', are not examined since the meaning of these items is "carried by individual lexical items" or "semi-fixed expressions" as opposed to whole sections of text (Channell, 2000: 39) and the meaning is largely dependent on context (Biber *et al.*, 1999). Grammatical stance, on the other hand, is composed, to varying degrees, of two linguistic elements—"one presenting the stance and the other presenting the proposition framed by that stance" (Biber *et al.*, 1999: 969). For example, in the utterance "I hope that you will take care of this matter immediately" (DEF)[5], stance is expressed grammatically through the combination of the main stance verb "hope" and the complement clause "that you will take care of this matter immediately", which is framed by the hopeful stance of the speaker. This form of stance, which allows speakers and writers to demonstrate their feelings about or level of commitment toward a proposition, is overtly manifested in English through three main categories[6]: adverbials, *that* and *to* complement clauses, and modals and semi-modals (see Biber *et al.*, 1999 for a complete overview).

Adverbials are manifested through five grammatical constructions. These include single adverbs and adverb phrases (e.g., "unfortunately", "quite frankly"), hedges (e.g., "kind of", "sort of"), prepositional phrases (e.g., "in fact", "without doubt"), adverbial clauses (e.g., "as one might expect", "to be honest"), and comment clauses (e.g., "I guess", "I think") (Biber *et al.*, 1999: 969-975).

Complement clauses, like adverbials, consist of two components—the stance marker and the proposition framed by that stance. These clauses consist of those controlled by a verb (e.g., "I hope that…"), a noun (e.g., "The fact that…"), an adjective (e.g., "I'm happy that…"), and "extraposed structures" (e.g., "It's amazing that…") (Biber *et al.*, 1999: 969-970).

Finally, while modals and semi-modals such as "can, may, might" and "have (got) to", respectively, cannot be as explicitly divided into two components—stance marker and proposition (Biber *et al.*, 1999: 970), the "modal verb (as stance marker) is incorporated into the main clause (expressing the framed proposition)" (Biber *et al.*, 1999: 970). For example, in the utterance "I don't think she would be missed…" (OTH), "would"

functions as a marker of the author's predictive stance about the proposition that "she" will "be missed".

Through these grammatical expressions of stance, language, as meaningful social practice, can be seen as a manifestation of interpersonal, dialogic interaction that strengthens and weakens a writer's individual positioning (du Bois, 2007). Therefore, the remainder of this paper will identify frequently occurring forms of grammatical stance and investigate how they manifest in threats that were realized vs. those that were not realized.

Data collection and methodology

This study draws on data from a larger examination of the ways in which stance manifests in threatening discourse as opposed to non-threatening discourse (Gales, 2010). The Communicated Threat Assessment Reference Corpus (CTARC) is comprised of 470 authentic threats and was compiled over a one-year period at the Academy Group, Inc., a private behavioral analysis and threat assessment firm located in the Washington D.C. area.

All texts in CTARC are from written rather than spoken registers[7] and primarily consist of personal emails and business-style letters, with a small sampling of work/school-related blog postings and handwritten notes. Upon being entered into the corpus, all texts were marked up with XML headers that included meta-data such as threat type (i.e., direct, conditional, veiled), date of receipt by the victim, and mode of transmission (e.g., personal email, U.S. Postal Service, etc.).

Cases were labeled as either realized or non-realized when the end result had been definitively confirmed. Realized cases were those wherein the threatener followed through on what he or she threatened to do or performed a related action that resulted in some kind of tangible harm to the victim or the victim's property. Non-realized cases were those wherein the writer, through arrest or voluntary admission, declared that he or she never had the intention, the means, or the commitment to carry out the threat. These threats were admittedly written for the purpose of instilling fear and/or panic in order to get revenge, regain control, or gain some kind of personal reward[8]. Table 1 shows that 22% of the threats (104/470) in CTARC possess a status in which the end result is definitively known.

Threat Realization Status	# of Texts	# of Authors	# of Words
Realized	67	14	13,778
Non-realized	37	16	11,736
Unknown	366	109	126,564
Total	470	139	152,078

Table 1. Breakdown of Threat Realization Status in CTARC.

And while the number of authors included in each of the known status categories is small, it has been found that as few as ten texts per category offer a representative sampling of variation across authors for most grammatical features (Biber, 1990; Biber *et al.*, 1998).

After the initial metadata markup, the texts were tagged with the Biber tagger (see e.g., Biber, 2006), which consists of approximately 150 tags. Afterward, the tags were

counted using Biber's Tag Count program and the stance tags were then hand-checked for accuracy.

Because the primary purpose of this research is to identify markers of authorial stance and describe the function of those markers within threatening communications in light of how threat assessment protocols describe threatening language use (i.e., the focus is on describing a social phenomenon within a particular group of texts rather than on describing the distribution and function of a single grammatical feature (Biber *et al.*, 1998)), the unit of observation is based on textual authorship; thus, each observation is a set of one or more texts written by a single author. Since counts for most common grammatical features "are relatively stable across 1000-word samples" (Biber, 1990, Biber *et al.*, 1998: 249), they were automatically normed to a rate of 1000 words, which corresponds to the length of most of the shorter observations by author count. Mean scores for the grammatical features were then computed and ANOVAs[9] were run to test for significance.

The resulting analysis is broken down into two analytically compatible parts (Kredens and Coulthard, 2012)—a corpus-based quantitative analysis of the significant and salient markers of grammatical stance and a corpus-driven qualitative analysis of the functional patterns revealed through the stance forms.

First, in order to identify stance functions frequently occurring in a particular threat category (realized vs. non-realized threats), a corpus-based quantitative analysis—a deductive approach used to test or support a pre-formulated theory (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001)—was performed. The first part of this quantitative analysis determined whether particular markers of grammatical stance—adverbials, complement clauses, and modals—occurred significantly more frequently in realized or in non-realized threats. Two of the categories of stance markers were found to be statistically significant ($p < .05$) to one of the two sub-corpora.

Through this initial quantitative analysis, it was revealed that the majority of stance features identified had large standard deviations, reflecting the fact that there is extensive variation for these features among the texts within each sub-corpus. However, there were also relatively large differences in the mean scores for many of these features between the sub-corpora, indicating that there are linguistic differences between the two despite the extensive range of variation among texts within each category. In order to capture these latter differences for the purpose of investigating all markers frequently occurring in one category or the other, a second quantitative measurement—salience—based on frequency was set (Biber, 2010, p.c.). Salient features occurred at least more than two times as often in one sub-corpus as in the other *and* occurred at least .5 times per 1000 words in one or both of the sub-corpora. Examining markers that were not significant statistically, but salient in the sense just described, can identify trends in stance markers that are used extensively by a subset of individuals in realized or non-realized threats—markers that may affect the level of dangerousness assigned to a threat by threat-assessment practitioners.

Second, a corpus-driven qualitative analysis—an inductive one used to explore a corpus for reoccurring patterns of language use (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001)—was performed since stance markers do not always function in expected ways (Conrad and Biber, 2000). And, when disputes in the interpretation of meaning arise in forensic contexts, such as

those of threatening language, consequences resulting from different intuitions about language use may be more significant (Kredens and Coulthard, 2012)—in this case, by having the potential to drastically affect the ways in which threat assessors interpret a threatener's intent to act. Therefore, using the concordancing program WordSmith 5.0 (Scott, 2010), a qualitative social constructionist approach was taken, which focuses "on finding patterns in the relationships between interlocutors, their relative status, and presentation of self" (Precht, 2003: 255), allowing patterns in the functions of the significant and/or salient stance markers to be more clearly revealed. Commonly occurring patterns (e.g., with pronouns marking the subject of the utterance, verbs denoting the proposed action, or pronouns marking the object of the propositions) were identified in order to provide a clearer picture of how the grammatical forms in threats interact with other lexical items and how they then function to construct and construe the interpersonal stances of the writer—stances that are found to vary from underlying ideologies of what appear to be committed intentions to act on a threat (Gales, 2010).

The results offer an empirically-grounded set of grammatically-based functions that broadly demonstrate the ways in which threateners take a stance towards their victims in order to negotiate power, instill fear, and mitigate responsibility for their actions.

Analysis

An overview of the grammatical stance forms that were found to be significant and/or salient to one of the threat realization categories is provided in Table 2. While the patterns cannot be taken as indicative of *all* realized or non-realized threats, the findings demonstrate discursive trends within each category. (Features labeled "ns" were salient, but not significant, to that category.)

Grammatical Category	**Threat Realization Category**
all modals	non-realized, $p < .05$
prediction modals	non-realized, $p < .05$
certainty adverbials	realized, ns
style adverbials	non-realized, ns
certainty verbs + *that* clauses	non-realized, ns
likelihood verbs + *that* clauses	realized, ns
speech act verbs + *that* clauses	realized, ns
causation verbs + *to* clauses	realized, ns

Table 2. Significant and Salient Grammatical Features Marking Stance by Threat Realization.

Since modals in the sub-corpus of non-realized threats are the only significant or salient grammatical category as a whole (Figure 1), section 5.1 begins with an examination of modals, highlighting the functions of significant and salient stance features within each threat realization category.

Functions of Modals by Threat Realization

Among the distribution of modal types within realized vs. non-realized threats (Figure 2), modals of prediction are the most frequent class of modals and are significant to the category of non-realized threats.

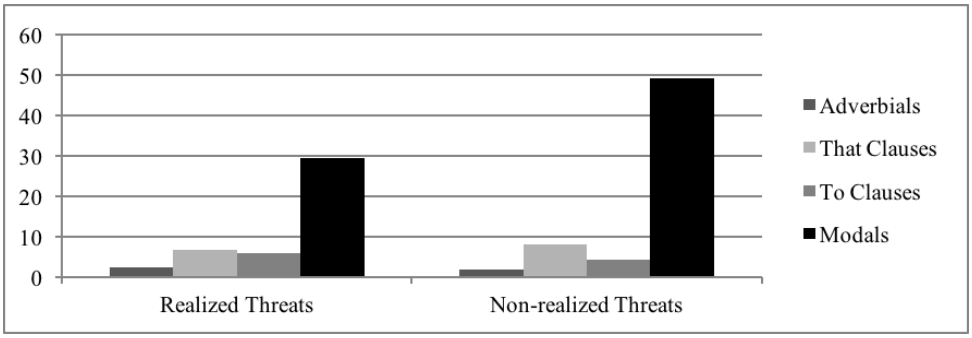

Figure 1. Distribution of Stance Categories by Threat Realization. Frequency per 1000 Words, $F_{(1,28)} = 4.42$, $p < .05$ (modals).

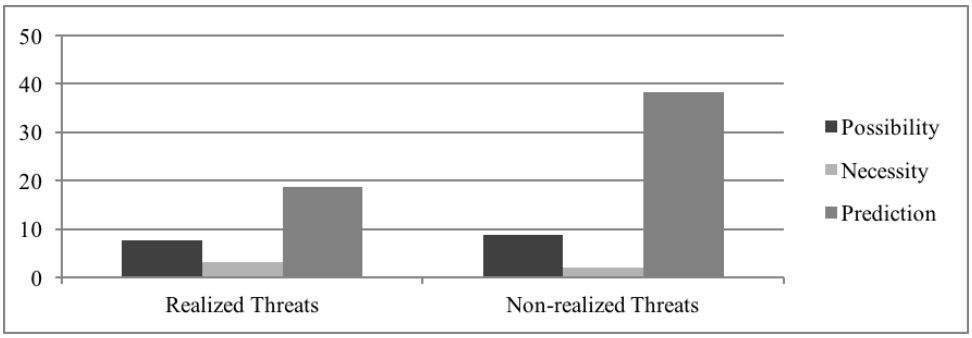

Figure 2. Distribution of Modals by Threat Realization. Frequency per 1000 Words, $F_{(1,28)} = 4.54$, $p < .05$ (prediction).

Within the prediction category, *will/be going to* and *shall* occur with more frequency in non-realized threats, whereas *would* occurs with about twice as much frequency in realized threats (Figure 3).

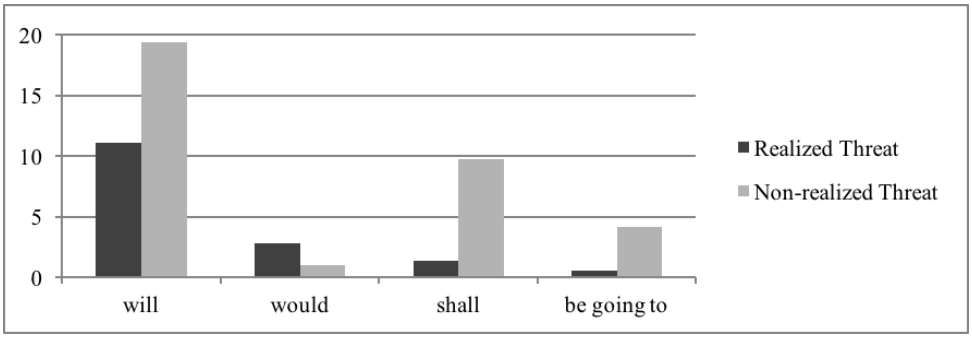

Figure 3. Distribution of Prediction Modals by Threat Realization. Frequency per 1000 Words.

In realized threats, where *will* makes up approximately 70% of the prediction category, *will* is frequently used in a conditional sense, which places emphasis on the threat type (i.e., whether it is direct, conditional, or veiled). In non-realized threats, on the other hand, where *will* comprises roughly 56% of the prediction modals, it more often functions in a strong directly declarative sense. Within these threats, *be going to* also functions in a similar manner to *will*.

Conditional *will/be going to* in realized threats

- *If you do not comply Smith's body will be displayed.* (OTH)
- *If I do not see this note in your paper, I will do something nasty, which you know I'm capable of doing* (VIOL)
- *Any delays will result in his automatic execution.* (OTH)
- *When taped ot a gun barrel, the bullet will strike exactly in the center of the black dot in the light.* (VIOL)
- *If you cops think Im going to take on a bus the way I stated I was, you deserve to have holes in your heads.* (VIOL)
- *I was going to take her away for a while there, but I don't know. I am so sick I can't even do that.* (STLK)
- *It's just gonna be insanity, if I even make it through the first few days.* (STLK)

Direct declarative *will/be going to* in non-realized threats

- *On that day a minimum of 20 people will die there.* (VIOL)
- *The explosions will be near simultaneous…* (VIOL)
- *This school will be Bombed November 12 (This is not a joke.)* (VIOL)
- *HUNDREDS WILL DIE. WE ARE INSIDE. YOU CANNOT STOP US.* (VIOL)
- *WHAT YOU JUST BREATHED IN WILL KILL YOU WITHIN 10 DAYS.* (VIOL)
- *IM GONNA BOMB this school* (VIOL)
- *Unfortunately, I found out that a group of people from Tijuana that I don't konw what cartel they belong to, have a family member that apparently hates you and they assured my friends that they are going to kill you…they are really going to give it to you.* (VIOL)

Would, which occurs more frequently in realized threats than in non-realized threats, functions in realized threats as an excuse or justification for the threatened action—weakening the threatener's stance as the action was one taken out of necessity rather than choice, which removes personal responsibility. In non-realized threats, *would* only occurs one time (*The 22nd of October will mark the final day of Ramadan as it would fall in Mecca.* (VIOL)). This usage is unusual since the fact, which appears to be hypothetical due to the use of *would*, was actually true; therefore, *would* could be removed completely from this utterance because it does not serve a comprehensible function.

Emphasis on threat justification in realized threats

- *Jodie, I would abandon the idea of getting Reagan in a second if I could only win your heart and live out the rest of my life with you, whether it be in total obscurity or whatever.* (STLK)
- *We had hoped that it would not be necessary to hold Martinez for a long period, but we may have been wrong.* (OTH)
- *I don't think she would be missed Im shure she wouldn't be missed.* (VIOL)
- *If you had followed the first directions Schwartz would have been home long ago. If you had followed the second he would have been released in conjunction with the end of the Earth Festival in Seattle.* (OTH)
- *Most people there are OK and I would never have a shoot 'em up there.* (OTH)

None of the other modal categories in Table 2 met the significance or salience criteria; Tables 3 and 4 in the Conclusion summarize the significant and/or salient uses of modals, specifically those of prediction, in realized and non-realized threats, respectively.

Functions of Adverbials by Threat Realization

Certainty adverbials in realized threats occur at four times the rate of the same adverbials in non-realized threats (Figure 4). Furthermore, style adverbials in non-realized threats occurred more than five times as often as those in realized threats. While these two categories are not significant to either realization category, they do meet the salience criteria.

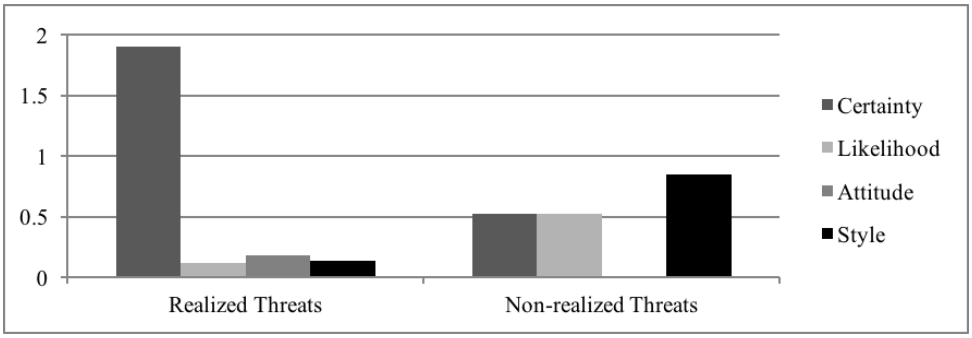

Figure 4. Distribution of Adverbials by Threat Realization.
Frequency per 1000 Words, $F_{(1,28)}$ = 2.04, ns (certainty), $F_{(1,28)}$ = 2.03, ns (style)

Within realized threats, *never* is the most frequently occurring certainty adverbial as it comprises over half of the adverbial tokens alone, and, in this category, it places emphasis on the certainty of the threat justification, thereby distancing the threatener from the action by demonstrating that he or she is not responsible because there is no other alternative. In contrast, *never* does not occur at all in this sub-corpus of non-realized threats.

Emphatic certainty about the threat justification in realized threats

- *I know I will never enjoy life.* (OTH)
- *I've got a little list, of society offenders who might well be underground who would never be missed…* (VIOL)
- *My dad never (not once) talked to me or asked about my life's details and tell me what he knew.* (OTH)
- *Although we talked on the phone a couple of times I never had the nerve to simply approach you and introduce myself.* (STLK)

Style adverbials, which have been called "relatively rare overall" (Biber, 2006: 104), occur more frequently than any other adverbial category in non-realized threats (Figure 4). According to experienced threat assessors, one possible explanation for this rate of occurrence is that some threateners, especially those who may not have the means or intention of carrying out the threatened action, use particular language to bolster their credibility (Mardigian, 2009, p.c.); in this case, particular style adverbials such as 'honestly', 'genuinely', and 'truly' would serve that function. However, upon closer examination of style adverbials in non-realized threats, only one instance of these bolstering adverbials—*truly*—occurs. In this instance, as was documented in the case file upon arrest, the threatener did indeed wish to call attention to his earnestness, which was falsely expressed in order to mislead investigators. But unfortunately, because there was only one occurrence of these bolstering adverbs, we cannot further generalize the use of this function with style adverbials (i.e., the bolstering function may occur with other lexical or grammatical markers, but it is not frequently used with style adverbials in this corpus).

Bolstering of authorial intent or level of seriousness in non-realized threats

- *I AM* TRULY *SORRY THAT I HAVE RUINED DR. RAMOS' LIFE.* (OTH)

The remaining style adverbials in these two categories (e.g., *according to*, *mainly*, *usually*) did not present any further patterns of distinction; Table 3 in the Conclusion summarizes the forms and functions of certainty adverbials salient to realized threats.

Functions of Verbs controlling *that* Clauses by Threat Realization

In the category of verbs controlling *that* clauses (Figure 5), certainty verbs occur in non-realized threats more than three times as often as in realized threats; while likelihood verbs occur more than twice as often in realized threats, although with far less frequency than certainty verbs; and speech act/communication verbs occur in realized threats almost three times as often.

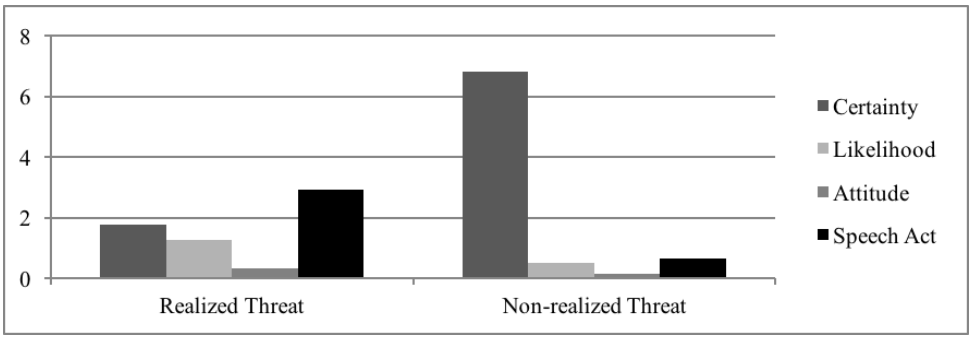

Figure 5. Distribution of Verbs Marking Stance + *that* Clauses by Threat Realization. Frequency per 1000 Words, $F_{(1,28)}$ = 1.23, ns (certainty), $F_{(1,28)}$ = 0.81, ns (likelihood), $F_{(1,28)}$ = 1.58, ns (speech act)

In non-realized threats, certainty verbs oftentimes collocate with some kind of grammatical or lexical negation (e.g., *unfortunately* or *not fortunate*, respectively). And while the pattern of negative polarity also occurs in realized threats with certainty verbs, it does not do so when certainty verbs are paired with *that* clauses—whether *that* is present or omitted—which is a necessary component in the grammatical marking of stance. In non-realized threats, this pattern indirectly mitigates the certainty of the threat, i.e., the certainty of its completion, the certainty of the threatener's desire to participate in the act, the certainty that the victim will fulfill his or her part of the plan—all of which are seemingly appropriate as this mitigating function occurs within threats that are *not* realized.

Mitigating the inherent certainty of the threat through negation in non-realized threats

- *Unfortunately, I found out that a group of people from Jalisco that I don't konw what cartel they belong to, have a family member that apparently hates you and they assured my friends that they are going to kill you.* (VIOL)
- *THEY COULD NOT EVEN FIGURE OUT THAT ALL OF THE ERRORS IN MY LAST LETTER WERE DELIBERATE TO HIDE MY IDENTITY.* (OTH)
- *yes i know that this proposal is incomplete.* (VIOL)
- *It's because they don't even know they are packing.* (VIOL)

Similar to verbs of certainty, verbs of likelihood demonstrate how likely a writer thinks a proposition is of occurring, but in this case, the verb indicates a lower level of certainty. According to Gales (2010), one of the most common functions of these verbs in threatening language, in general, is simply to lessen the possibility of a proposition in declarative statements such as: *You are not the only fat cat around so don't think that killing will be difficult.* (OTH) , wherein the verb offers room for other voices to comment on the likelihood of the proposition occurring. Likelihood verbs were also found to occur with relative frequency in threats in a more subjunctive, conditional sense, wherein questions, conditional clauses, and subjunctive modals, working in frequent conjunction with likelihood verbs, function as additional softening agents in that they add another layer of uncertainty to the proposition (e.g., *Did you ever think that what you were told to do could backfire on you?!* (STLK)). However, when examining these two functions in realized vs. non-realized threats, both functions occurred commonly in each realization category and no other distinctive functional patterns were found.

In the category of speech act verbs, while admittedly infrequent in comparison to some of the other identified functional patterns, an interpersonal pattern emerges in realized threats that presents the threat as more formal and declarative. In these cases, speech act verbs are frequently used to emphasize a claim, command, or request that was previously made by or at the bequest of the threatener(s) but, as understood through context, was either ignored or not carried out due to unforeseen circumstances. The verbs *tell*/*say*/*state* occur with fairly equal frequency with this function in realized threats, and they serve to support or ultimately strengthen the threatener's request or demand. In contrast to this finding, this function only occurs twice in non-realized threats and both occurrences were from the same author.

Emphasis of previous claim or request in realized threats

- *We again advised that the police and press involvement was Counterproductive and the speculation linking your husbands Disappearance to an environmental group was irresponsible.* (OTH)
- *Certain instructions were given and we said that we would contact them soon with delivery instructions…* (OTH)
- *If you cops think Im going to take on a bus the way I stated I was, you deserve to have holes in your heads.* (VIOL)
- *AFTeR FiVE MiNUTE I SEND A TEXT MASSAGE TO THEM I SAiD I WiLL CALL THE POLiCE…* (OTH)
- *Probably 99% of the people who know me well don't even think I was this crazy. Told by at least 100 girls/women over the years I was a "nice guy".* (OTH)
- *As we previously told you we are organized so that the various units are unknown to each other.* (OTH)

In sum, certainty verbs, which were found to mitigate the level of certainty about a threat, occurred in non-realized threats, while likelihood verbs did not reveal distinctive functions. Speech act verbs, which are salient to the category of threats, placed emphasis on a threatener's previous claim or request. The salient forms and functions of verbs marking stance + *that* clauses are summarized in Tables 3 and 4 in the Conclusion below.

Functions of Verbs controlling *to* Clauses by Threat Realization

Causation verbs plus *to* clauses are the only class of verb in this grammatical category that is salient to one of the categories under investigation—in particular, to realized threats, occurring nearly three times as often in realized threats than in non-realized threats (Figure 6).

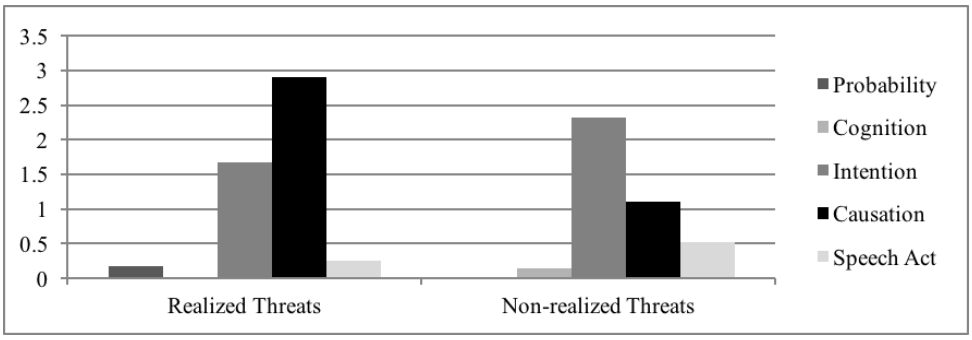

Figure 6. Distribution of Verbs Marking Stance + *to* Clauses by Threat Realization. Frequency per 1000 Words, $F_{(1,28)}$ = 1.33, ns (causation)

In the sub-corpus of realized threats, causation verbs add an interpersonal layer of conditionality that accompanies the directive nature of the threats. In these instances, while other verbs are also utilized (e.g., *fail*), the verb *try* is found in almost half of the occurrences. In contrast, while these conditional directives are observed in non-realized threats, they occur with far less frequency overall and occur on par with unconditional directives (e.g., *THE LORD ORDERED ME TO HARVEST THE WICKED RACIST ONES OF THIS TOWN.* (OTH)); additionally, the verb *try* is not found at all with this functional use in non-realized threats.

Conditional directives involving the threatened action in realized threats

- *You stand a 99% chance of killing your daughter if you try to out smart us.* (OTH)
- *Try to catch us withdrawing at least you will have less body bags.* (VIOL)
- *He better not try to smile; lest his face might crack.* (OTH)
- *In avoiding death you are forced to conform, if you fail to conform, you suffer mentally and physically.* (OTH)
- *We hope that you will cooperate and allow us to release him, but you must make full payment and comply fully with our instructions.* (OTH)

Within the grammatical category of stance verbs controlling *to* clauses, then, only causation verbs occur with salience to the threat realization categories—specifically to realized threats. Functionally-speaking, while many of the verbs with *to* clauses served strictly literal purposes, those in realized threats were also utilized in a conditional manner, offering a new interpersonal element to the threat. The salient function of verbs marking stance + *to* clauses is summarized in Table 3 in the Conclusion below.

Conclusion

It's not really the words, but how the words are used that is interesting.

–R. Stephen Mardigian, Vice President[10], the Academy Group, Inc. (2008)

As "speakers ultimately make linguistic choices in order to take stances" (Kiesling, 2009: 179) and an examination of the *function* of language form has been shown to be highly valuable to the study of human behavior (Pennebaker and Niederhoffer, 2003), the two tables below present the functions and corresponding forms found to be significant and/or salient to either realized (Table 3) or non-realized (Table 4) threats. When taken as a collective description of the ways in which grammatically marked stance functions in threats, two broad interpersonal sets of functions arise—one that strengthens the threatener's perceived level of commitment towards, role in, or responsibility for the threatened action and one that weakens each of those interpersonal functions. Specifically, functions that placed an emphasis on the level of certainty of the threat, demonstrated implicit or explicit control, and placed either the threatener and/or the victim in an active role were considered strengthening; those that mitigated the threatener's role or responsibility in the threat by focusing on the threat justification, demonstrated a lack of control, emphasized conditional or hypothetical actions, and utilized polite, face-saving language were considered weakening. These functional divisions are based upon Givón's (1990) linguistic devices for weakening manipulative strength (e.g., the use of subjunctive modals to emphasize hypothetical actions); Biber's (2006) discussion of polite language, which oftentimes serves to soften potentially face-threatening requests; and Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal framework, which, among other functional distinctions, calls upon Bakhtin's (1981) notion of dialogic interaction, whereby heteroglossic utterances are either contracted and closed to further negotiation or expanded and open to further debate and interpretation—the former serves to strengthen the threatener's stance, while the latter functions to weaken the stance, by leaving room for other voices to vie for control.

These two tables demonstrate that first, all evaluative language is context-dependent, i.e., as hypothesized and evidenced in other contexts of language use, there is not a one-to-one correspondence between linguistic form and language function, as highlighted by the occurrence of *will/be going to* in both the strengthening and weakening categories. In the first instance, *will/be going to* can be used to mark conditionality, signaling that the threatener is open to negotiation; whereas in the second instance, when used in a declarative sense, *will/be going to* marks firm commitment to the action, disallowing for debate. Moreover, just as there is no one-to-one correspondence between form and function, there is also no correspondence between linguistic form, language function, and threatener behavior, supporting Lord et al.'s (2008: 375-376) findings on the language of sex offenders:

> Just as there is no one-to-one correspondence between any single feature of language, including those language features indicating a particular stance with the presence of deception, there is no similar correspondence between any single feature of language or shift in stance with rapist behaviours.

And while more corpus work is called for to further examine the trends found in this study between language function and threatener behavior, it is clear that forms without reference to their contextual functions cannot provide an accurate correspondence between threatener language and behavior.

Stance Function	**Grammatical Category**	**Lexical Marker**	**Strengthening/ Weakening**
Emphasis on threat justification	prediction modals	*would*	Weakening
Emphatic certainty about the threat justification	certainty adverbials	*never*	
Emphasis of previous claim or request, strengthening demand	speech act verbs + *that*	*tell*/*say*/*state*	Strengthening
Conditionality Conditional directives involving the threatened action	prediction modals causation verbs + *to*	*will/be going to* *try*	Weakening

Table 3. Summary of Stance Forms and Functions Significant and/or Salient to Realized Threats.

Stance Function	**Grammatical Category**	**Lexical Marker**	**Strengthening/ Weakening**
Direct declaratives	prediction modals	*will/be going to*	Strengthening
Mitigating the inherent certainty of the threat through negative polarity	certainty verbs + *that*	(neg) + certainty verb	Weakening

Table 4. Summary of Stance Forms and Functions Significant and/or Salient to Non-realized Threats.

Second, both threat realization categories function in ways that strengthen and, at times, weaken the threatener's overall stance. In the case of realized threats, the threateners strengthened their responsibility, role, or claim by highlighting a previously stated request, which demonstrated their commitment to fulfilling the request. At the same time, however, threateners who carried out their threats mitigated them by emphasizing the reason for the threat (i.e., they displaced personal responsibility for the action) and by using more hypothetical, conditional language, which ultimately detracted from the certainty of the threatened act and allowed room for negotiation and debate. By opening up the threatening space with less domineering language and room for interpersonal negotiation, the threatener adheres more closely to many socially-accepted norms of politeness (Brown and Levinson, 1987), weakening his or her position of absolute power. Similarly, in non-realized threats, threateners emphasized the threatened action through direct commands, strengthening their role by demonstrating unwavering commitment

to the act, while at the same time they mitigated the threat by negating some aspect of it, placing a level of uncertainty on their once strong claims.

This juxtaposition of strengthening and weakening functions is contradictory to how the language of realized vs. non-realized threats is expected to function and be expressed, according to prior literature and threat assessment protocols. The following examples are excerpted from Gales' (2010) community of practice surveys of threat assessment practitioners, researchers, and criminal justice students that addressed ideologies about and practices aimed at assessing language form, function, and threat realization status.

Realized/High-level Threats

- *Language (profanity and action verbs) is used to convey that the speaker is serious.*
- [Language] *to demonstrate that the speaker has more power and to assert their dominance so the other person will comply.*
- *Impolite language…*
- *The most serious level is when the threat is direct, specific, and credible.* [The threat] *establishes a time-certain deadline, specific detail, and a specific act to be undertaken.*

Non-realized/Low-level Threats

- *There is usually a lack of specific time because most threats are to illicit fear and action but don't actually want to be or are intended to be carried out.*
- *Generally fairly vague…*
- *Most threats are pretty veiled… it doesn't seem like the person making them intends to follow through.*
- *This level is guided by the threat's vagueness, usually signified by nonspecific language or the lack of detail to strengthen (i.e., weaken)… the threatener's credibility.… there will be an absence of any valid indication of follow through…*
- *Language will generally be included that weakens the seriousness of the threat.… characteristics of a low-level threat include… conditional phrases, the inclusion of 'may' (I may get) or 'perhaps' (perhaps we will).*

These ideologies present a clearly divided picture of threat realization categories. Realized threats, in sum, are thought to be serious, powerful, dominant, impolite, direct, specific, and detailed (i.e., strong); by contrast, non-realized threats are thought to be fairly vague, veiled, nonspecific, void of follow-through, conditional, and mitigated (i.e., weak). Yet, as seen in Tables 3 and 4, there is actually an interplay between functions that strengthen and those that weaken threats *within* both threat realization categories, presenting a picture that is far from dichotomous. However, because language ideologies are "a totalizing vision," the linguistic facts or sociolinguistic phenomena "that are inconsistent with the ideological scheme," those phenomena which are most oftentimes related to the 'other,' are rendered "invisible" (Irvine and Gal, 2000: 38). This process of linguistic 'erasure' can be applied here to threateners as the socially-deviant 'other.' By participating in this process of linguistic leveling, wherein our existing impressions about

threatening language continually mask, or erase, some of the ways in which threateners demonstrate intent, mitigate claims, and negotiate meaning in threatening language—i.e., the ways in which they ultimately present their stance—we face the risk of misunderstanding the writer's intended stance, and, in the case of threats, this misunderstanding may result in dire consequences.

Notes

[1]Personal communications (p.c.) were primarily gathered from interviews with active threat assessment practitioners during the data collection phase of this project at The Academy Group, Inc. (AGI).

[2]The one exception is profane language, which was cited by nearly all scholars and practitioners as being related to higher threat levels (see, e.g., Davis, 1997). However, previous research found that as few as 24% of the threats in CTARC possessed any kind of profane language (Gales, 2010); thus, it is not considered in this study.

[3]All threats are authentic; non-public identifying information has been changed, but all non-standard language use remains intact. Unless in the public domain or otherwise noted, threats are used by permission from AGI.

[4]The two additional meta-functions for which we use language are the ideational, which represents experience, and the textual, which organizes text (Martin and Rose, 2003).

[5]Threats in CTARC were categorized by type as assigned by the case analysts at AGI. Types are designated as: defamation (DEF), harassment (HAR), stalking (STLK), violence (VIOL), other (OTH). OTH includes threat types that did not fit within the general description of another category (e.g., weapons of mass destruction, political, religious).

[6]In Biber *et al.* (1999), there are two additional categories of grammatical stance markers: stance noun plus prepositional phrase and premodifying adverbs. However, the prepositional phrase following the stance noun cannot necessarily be argued to be a proposition and the adverb in the second category only marks stance towards that specific phrase (i.e., it is phrase internal) rather than marking stance towards a whole proposition (Biber *et al.*, 1999: 970). Therefore, these two grammatical stance categories were not examined here.

[7]While it is well-known within the field of linguistics that spoken and written language comprise separate registers with different linguistic markers, that differentiation is not made clear within the previous scholarly and practitioner discourse on threats. According to Smerick (2009, p.c.), the large majority of threats assessed by the F.B.I. are written due to their permanence (i.e., spoken language is rarely recorded and is thus only a second hand recalling of the threat). For this study, all texts analyzed were from the written register in keeping with the claim that the majority of threats assessed were written, but the potential discrepancy between spoken and written registers should be taken into consideration when interpreting the results against the threat assessment features discussed in prior research and threat assessment protocols.

[8]For the purposes of this study, threat cases were labeled as either realized or non-realized when the end result had been definitively confirmed and documented by the threat assessment practitioner in the case report. However, the study of threatening language may greatly benefit from further nuanced distinctions beyond this binary form of categorization. For example, in this study realized threats occurred along a continuum of negative behavior such as when the threatener followed through on what he or she had actually threatened to do or when he or she performed a related harmful action that was not part of the original threat. Nuanced differences in stance markers may be found if such threats are examined as separate categories of threat realization status (e.g., realized: the threat was successfully carried out as stated vs. realized: the threat was attempted as stated but was not completed due to outside forces vs. realized: a negative action was carried out that was not part of the original threat, etc.). As more threatening language research is performed, such nuanced categorizations should be taken into account in order to further our understanding of how interpersonal stance manifests along a continuum of threat realization statuses.

[9]Because this research stems from a larger project on threatening language where several different types of comparisons were investigated (e.g., stance features in Defamation vs. Harassment vs. Stalking vs. Violence vs. Other threat types (Gales, 2010, 2015)), there were five means that needed to be compared,

which required the use of ANOVA. Duncan Multiple Range Tests were then run to determine which of the threat type categories were significantly different from the others.

[10] As of January 1, 2010, Steve Mardigian was the President of the Academy Group, Inc.

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