Athens Journal of Politics & International Affairs 2026, 2: 1-24
https://doi.org/10.30958/ajpia.X-Y-Z

Slava Ukraini Evolving: A Psychobiographical Longitudinal Analysis of Zelenskyy's Public Diplomacy Discourse, 2023–2026[1]

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Between the NATO summit of July 2023 and the trilateral talks of 2026, the subject of Ukraine's diplomacy moved from the conduct of the war to the terms of its end, and from 2025 it ran increasingly through U.S.-led efforts to negotiate a settlement. This article examines whether President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's public voice changed along with it. It scores 1,443 official English-language speeches published from January 2023 to October 2026 with Leadership Trait Analysis and the LIWC-22 text-analysis program, divides them into five consecutive periods whose boundaries follow dated events in the war and in U.S. policy that coincided with shifts in his nightly language, and compares each period with the average trait profile of 113 world leaders. The results show that Zelenskyy's profile moved closer to that average, by more than random resampling of the speeches can explain, in a decline across 2024–2025 that leveled off from mid-2025, the months of the Alaska summit and the talks on security guarantees. His speeches expressed less distrust of others and more attention to tasks, while a strong attachment to the national group and a categorical description of politics remained distinctive against the cohort, and his language grew plainer.

Keywords: *Volodymyr Zelenskyy; leadership trait analysis; psychobiography; public diplomacy; LIWC-22.*

Introduction

Volodymyr Zelenskyy, elected President of Ukraine in 2019 and its leader since Russia's full-scale invasion of February 2022, closed many of his wartime speeches with the salute Slava Ukraini, "Glory to Ukraine," and in July 2023 he took Ukraine's case to Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania, to ask the leaders of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the transatlantic defense alliance, for a timetable for Ukraine's membership. The allies stated that an invitation would follow "when allies agree and conditions are met," and Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg confirmed that no timetable had been set (Associated Press, 2023a; Reuters, 2023c). Zelenskyy called the absence of a time frame "unprecedented and absurd" (Reuters, 2023b). He returned home with a joint declaration in which the Group of Seven (G7) leading democracies undertook to negotiate long-term bilateral security commitments

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[1]This article extends and updates a 2023 doctoral dissertation on Zelenskyy's public diplomacy discourse, whose results for 2019 to 2022 serve as a descriptive baseline; the analyses of the 2023 to 2026 corpus are new.

with Ukraine (Group of Seven 2023), and he presented it as "a security foundation for Ukraine on its way to NATO." The question Vilnius left open, what would protect Ukraine while its membership remained deferred, stayed at the center of his diplomacy for the next three years.

Over the following year the course of the war made that diplomacy depend on decisions taken in Washington. On November 1, 2023, Ukraine's commander-in-chief, General Valerii Zaluzhnyi, described in The Economist a move toward positional, attritional warfare (Economist 2023). By the spring of 2024 a supplemental aid package that the U.S. Senate had passed more than two months earlier still awaited a vote in the House of Representatives. The House is the lower chamber of Congress, and federal spending requires its approval as well as the Senate's. President Joe Biden and the Senate Republican leader, Mitch McConnell, urged the Speaker of the House, Mike Johnson, to bring the package to a vote (Reuters 2024a). Zelenskyy said on April 14 that Ukraine had "been waiting for months for a vital support package." When the House passed it on April 20, with about $61 billion for Ukraine, he called it "a life-saving decision" and thanked Johnson personally, and Biden signed it into law on April 24 (Reuters 2024a, U.S. Department of Defense 2024). In the president's own account, Ukraine's capacity to sustain a war of attrition now turned on the procedures of the American legislature.

The U.S. election of November 2024 changed Ukraine's counterpart in Washington. Ukrainian forces had crossed into Russia's Kursk region on August 6 (Reuters 2025a), and Donald Trump, who had said during the campaign that he could settle the war in a day (Associated Press 2025b), won the presidency. After a telephone call with Trump on November 6, Zelenskyy wrote that the two leaders had agreed "to maintain close dialogue" (Reuters 2024b). In his address that evening he expressed the hope that Trump's phrase "peace through strength" would become "the policy principle of the 47th President of the United States." From then on his appeals to Washington addressed the terms of an end to the war as well as the means of fighting it.

Trump's second administration took office on January 20, 2025 (Reuters 2025h). That evening Zelenskyy said that Ukrainians were ready to work with Americans to achieve "peace, true peace," calling it "an opportunity that must be seized." Five weeks later the relationship was in crisis. On February 28 a meeting in the Oval Office with Trump and Vice President JD Vance ended in a public confrontation, and the planned signing of an agreement on Ukraine's mineral resources was called off (Associated Press 2025a, Reuters 2025b). On March 4 Zelenskyy said that "we can only regret what happened at the White House instead of our negotiations." At talks in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on March 11, Ukraine expressed readiness to accept a U.S. proposal for an interim 30-day ceasefire, subject to Russia's acceptance and concurrent implementation. The United States undertook to lift its pause on intelligence sharing and resume security assistance (U.S. Department of State 2025). That evening Zelenskyy thanked Trump "for the constructive nature of the dialogue" and said that the United States "needs to convince Russia." The acceptance of a ceasefire thus restored American support and placed the next step with Moscow. On May 16

Russian and Ukrainian delegations met directly in Istanbul and agreed to exchange 1,000 prisoners each, without agreeing to a ceasefire (Reuters 2025c).

From the summer of 2025 the question left open at Vilnius returned in a new form. On June 1 the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) struck Russian strategic bombers at their bases with drones hidden in wooden sheds on trucks, an operation it called Spider's Web. The next day the two delegations met again in Istanbul (Reuters 2025f, 2025g). Trump met the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, in Alaska on August 15. In an address that day, hours before the meeting, Zelenskyy said that Ukraine counted on "a strong position from America." Three days later Trump received Zelenskyy at the White House with European leaders including French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, and NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte. Trump ruled out Ukraine's membership in NATO while expressing support for security guarantees (Associated Press 2025b, Reuters 2025d). The security commitments first offered at Vilnius alongside a path to membership were now discussed in its place.

The talks turned to written terms at the end of October 2025, when Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner met the Russian envoy Kirill Dmitriev in Miami and drafted the framework that became the 28-point peace plan (Reuters 2025i). Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Andriy Yermak, head of Zelenskyy's office, revised it in Geneva on November 23 into an "updated and refined" framework (Reuters 2025e). Trilateral talks in Abu Dhabi, in the United Arab Emirates, ended without a deal in January 2026 and with an agreement on a prisoner exchange in February (Reuters 2026a, 2026b). On October 23, 2026, in an address to the Hudson Institute in Washington, Zelenskyy called for further trilateral talks (Hudson Institute 2026). By then the conditions of a settlement had become the main subject of his diplomacy.

Throughout these years he made Ukraine's case to foreign publics in speeches that his office publishes in English. This is the public diplomacy (Cull 2008, Nye 2008) that earlier work has studied in Ukraine's coordination of narrative and social media in its own defense (Brittain-Hale, 2023c). This article analyzes 1,443 of the 1,448 English-language speech texts collected from the President of Ukraine's website from January 1, 2023, to October 24, 2026, and it cites the addresses quoted above by date. It asks whether the leader changed along with his diplomacy, which matters to governments and analysts who use leader profiles to anticipate how a state will negotiate. Actor-specific foreign policy analysis places the individual decision maker at the center of explanations of state behavior (Hudson & Day 2019). Most applications treat a measured trait profile as fixed or compare a leader at a few points in time (Cuhadar et al. 2017, Dille & Young 2000), whereas this record allows repeated measurement across one war. The article also extends an earlier study of Zelenskyy's speeches from 2019 to 2022 with the same source and instruments (Brittain-Hale 2023a).

The speeches are divided into five phases, consecutive periods whose boundaries are the dates of events in the war and in U.S. policy. Each phase is compared with the mean profile of 113 world leaders in the Psychological Characteristics of Leaders (PsyCL) data set (Schafer & Lambert 2022). Against

that cohort, the earlier study found low task focus, very low conceptual complexity, high in-group bias, and a high need for power in his speeches through November 2022 (Brittain-Hale 2023a). His six-trait distance from the cohort mean fell from 5.21 in the first phase to 4.02 in the fifth. The difference of −1.19 has a 95% interval of −1.56 to −0.81, estimated by a bootstrap that resamples the speeches within each phase. Distrust of others fell from above the cohort mean to below it, while conceptual complexity remained far below the mean and in-group bias well above it.

The article argues that Zelenskyy's public voice grew less distrustful and more attentive to tasks as his diplomacy turned toward a settlement, while the traits that set it apart before 2023 remained distinctive. The article begins by reviewing existing research on leadership traits and speech as a form of public diplomacy, followed by a description of the corpus, analytical phases, and methodological measures. The findings are then presented and discussed in relation to their implications for Ukraine's diplomacy and the broader study of political leadership. Finally, the article presents its conclusions.

The Leader in Wartime Foreign Policy

Leaders, Traits, and State Behavior

Foreign policy analysis that begins with the decision maker treats the leader's dispositions as one source of what a state does, and it treats the language of political leaders as evidence about how they decide (Hudson & Day 2019). Leadership Trait Analysis (LTA) applies that premise to measurement. It infers seven traits from a leader's words and links them to how leaders respond to constraints, process information, and relate to others (Hermann 1980, Hermann et al. 2001). Brummer and Oppermann (2024) present the approach as a framework of seven traits, three general questions, and eight leadership styles, and they call for further research on whether traits are stable across issue areas and over time. Automated coding with Profiler Plus has allowed the method to be applied to large bodies of text (Levine & Young 2014). The PsyCL data set gives researchers a common reference of world leaders' scores against which a single leader can be placed (Schafer & Lambert 2022), and an LTA study of 12 female Euro-Atlantic leaders in the war compared them with that cohort after adding Zelenskyy's scores (Brittain-Hale 2025).

Can a Measured Profile Change?

Dille and Young (2000) examined the conceptual complexity of Presidents Carter and Clinton for temporal stability and source bias. Cuhadar et al. (2017) compared Turkish leaders across institutional positions to ask whether role or personality accounted for their scores. Integrative complexity research has a longer record of longitudinal designs, covering foreign policy rhetoric over time (Tetlock 1985), crisis and war (Suedfeld & Tetlock 1977, Wallace et al. 1993, Suedfeld & Leighton 2002), a leader's career (Suedfeld & Rank 1976), and an

enduring rivalry (Suedfeld & Jhangiani 2009). Conway et al. (2018) describe a strategic communication account of complexity that bears on speeches for foreign audiences, and automated scoring has shown modest agreement with human scoring (Conway et al. 2014, Suedfeld & Tetlock 2014). Integrative complexity and LTA conceptual complexity are distinct measures, however. Within LTA, Foster and Keller (2023) found in time-series analyses of the rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union that greater interactive conceptual simplicity between the two sides' leaders predicted more frequent militarized disputes, so trait scores computed over time can be related to changing conditions.

Speech as Public Diplomacy

Public diplomacy concerns a government's communication with foreign publics (Cull 2008, Nye 2008). Strategic narrative research examines how states construct accounts of the international system, identity, and policy to influence others (Miskimmon et al. 2014, Roselle et al. 2014). Studies of Zelenskyy's discourse have compared his moral rhetoric with that of other wartime leaders (Murray et al., 2024), examined his war rhetoric alongside Putin's (Chiluwa & Ruzaite 2025), analyzed changes in the sentiment of his speeches (Maia Polo et al. 2024), and examined his wartime use of Instagram (Battista 2025). A conference paper addressed English, Russian, and Ukrainian speeches through May 2023 and the use of code-switching (Brittain-Hale 2023b).

Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) counts words in psychologically meaningful categories. It reports summary variables for analytic thinking, clout, authenticity, and emotional tone (Tausczik & Pennebaker 2010, Boyd et al. 2022), and its analytic thinking index derives from work on function words in written text (Pennebaker et al. 2014). Jordan et al. (2019) reported long-term changes in political language, including declining analytic thinking. A comparison of Zelenskyy's Twitter posts with those of eight female European leaders found higher Analytic and Tone scores in the testing sample (Brittain-Hale 2024).

Psychobiography applies psychological theory to an individual's life and work, and its methodological literature addresses data selection, theory, and the ethics of studying living subjects (Schultz & Lawrence 2017, Ponterotto & Reynolds 2017). Here one leader's public speech record is measured repeatedly and set beside dated events, with no clinical claim about the president. Three expectations follow. Measured traits may differ across phases, changing genre composition may account for some differences in language, and distance from the cohort mean supplies a common summary, since small score differences make nearest-leader rankings unstable.

The Speeches, Phases, and Measures

The Speeches and the Phases

The corpus includes the English-language speech texts listed in the speeches section of the President of Ukraine's official website (Office of the President of Ukraine n.d.) from January 1, 2023, through October 24, 2026. It excludes interviews, question-and-answer exchanges, and non-English versions. Speeches quoted by date are cited to this corpus, that is, to the president's website, with their row identifiers listed in Supplement S1. The section records what the president said, posted after delivery, in transcripts of his video addresses, speeches to summits and parliaments, and statements at press conferences. These keep remarks addressed to the audience in the hall, such as his question "How many people are in this hall today?" on May 5, 2023. The corpus therefore includes delivered remarks as well as prepared texts, and like the earlier study it treats the published speeches as covering "spontaneous and planned presidential communication" (Brittain-Hale 2023a, p. 24).

Most texts are English versions of remarks delivered in Ukrainian. For the earlier record, official staff transcribed the president's video addresses and translated them for official use (Brittain-Hale 2023a, p. 156). This study keeps that study's source, its English-language rule, and its two instruments, so that the two records can be compared, and it treats the published English text as the unit of measurement. Of 1,448 collected texts, 1,443 were analyzed, totaling 1,063,244 words after removal of the website header and license footer. Five texts were set aside, and a joint address with the First Lady, Olena Zelenska, is scored as published (Appendix C.4). The earlier corpus, May 1, 2019, to November 25, 2022, is a descriptive baseline that is not rescored here (Brittain-Hale 2023a). The tables call it File A and the 2023–2026 corpus File B.

Each speech is assigned by date to one of five phases, labeled B1 to B5 (Table 1), and each boundary is the date of a documented event in the war or in U.S. policy. The counteroffensive period (B1) opens the record on January 1, 2023. The attrition period (B2) begins on November 1, 2023, the date of General Zaluzhnyi's essay in The Economist on positional warfare (Economist, 2023). The transition period (B3) begins on January 1, 2025, in the month Donald Trump's second administration took office (Reuters 2025h). The period of security guarantees and the Alaska summit (B4) begins on June 1, 2025, the date of the SBU's Spider's Web operation and the day before the second round of direct talks in Istanbul (Reuters 2025f, 2025g). The negotiation period (B5) begins on November 1, 2025, the first day of the month after the Miami meeting at which the 28-point peace plan was drafted (Reuters, 2025i). The boundaries were placed where these events coincided with change points in the monthly means of 14 open word-list rates in the nightly addresses, among them pronouns and references to the United States, Europe, negotiation, and sanctions. Change points were estimated with penalized, binary-segmentation, and dynamic-programming searches in the ruptures package (Truong et al. 2020), which

placed breaks at October 2023, January 2025, June 2025, and November 2025, and no LIWC-22 or LTA score entered the selection.

The transition period is the shortest phase and has the widest distance interval. Moving all speeches dated within seven days of a boundary to either side of it changes no phase's six-trait distance by more than 0.11 at any of the four boundaries. Under those shifts the step from B3 to B4 ranges from −0.88 to −1.08 (−0.89 as defined), so the size of the step into the Alaska-summit period does not depend on the exact date of its boundary (Appendix C.3). Because the boundaries were partly chosen from the same speeches, a boundary-free check moved the cut between B3 and B4 to the first day of each month from February to October 2025. The six-trait step is negative at all nine cut points (−0.12 to −1.12), the June step is not the largest, and under a permutation of ten-speech blocks no single cut point stands out (maximum-statistic p = .19). The record therefore shows a decline during 2025 without fixing its month (Supplement S1).

Table 1. *File B Phases*

Phase	Label	Dates	Speeches	Words	Mean words per speech
B1	Counteroffensive Period	Jan 1 to Oct 31, 2023	393	299,060	761
B2	Prolonged Attrition	Nov 1, 2023 to Dec 31, 2024	466	311,120	668
B3	Transition to the Trump Administration	Jan 1 to May 31, 2025	118	70,183	595
B4	Security Guarantees and the Alaska Summit	Jun 1 to Oct 31, 2025	155	119,326	770
B5	Negotiation Period	Nov 1, 2025 to Oct 24, 2026	311	263,555	847
Total			1,443	1,063,244	737

Note. Word counts exclude the site header and license footer.
Source: Author's calculations from File B.

Measures

Each speech was scored with LTA-Classic in Profiler Plus (Social Science Automation, n.d.; Levine & Young, 2014), using Hermann's (1980, 2003) seven traits: distrust of others (DIS), task focus (TASK), belief in ability to control events (BACE), in-group bias (IGB), self-confidence (SC), conceptual complexity (CC), and need for power (PWR). A score is high indicators divided by high plus low indicators, and phase profiles pool the indicator counts of all speeches in the phase. Pooled scores were standardized against the 113 PsyCL leaders reproduced in the dissertation, with Zelenskyy removed (Schafer & Lambert 2022). The headline measure is the Euclidean distance from the cohort mean across six standardized traits, and seven-trait distance is a sensitivity measure. Self-confidence is left out of the headline because of the way the baseline aggregated it, and intervals come from 2,000 speech-level resamples within each phase.

The findings rest on these phase-level aggregates, and the PsyCL documentation states that "for valid estimates of psychological traits, any word count under 4000 is unreliable" (PsyCL n.d.), and Hermann (1999, p. 3) reports that an adequate profile can rest on 50 interview responses of 100 words or more. Each phase pools at least 118 speeches and between 70,183 and 311,120 words (Table 1), 17 to 78 times the PsyCL minimum, so the length of single speeches does not limit the phase profiles. Hermann (1999, p. 3) also cautions that speeches are often written by staff and prefers interviews, so the scores describe the published presidential record. Per-speech scores, from texts averaging 737 words, serve only as units for resampling and for testing differences between phase means.

The 1,443 cleaned speech files were processed individually with LIWC-22 (Boyd et al. 2022). The 21 analyzed variables comprise Analytic, Clout, Authentic, Tone, two structural measures, and fifteen content and function categories (Appendix A), and means describe per-speech scores unless otherwise labeled. A title rule assigns seven genres: 1,029 nightly or national addresses, 268 summit, forum, or event speeches, and 146 speeches in the other five genres. The models for the summary variables include genre and log word count to control for the mix of speech types and lengths.

Phase differences were examined with Welch's ANOVA as the primary test, because group sizes and variances differ, together with one-way ANOVA and Kruskal–Wallis tests (Welch 1951, Kruskal & Wallis 1952). Adjacent phases were compared with t-tests, Mann–Whitney tests, and bootstrap resamples of pooled trait differences. Each LIWC summary variable is regressed on phase, genre, and log word count with HC3 robust standard errors (Long & Ervin 2000). Findings reported as significant survive Holm correction across all 204 tests in six families (Holm 1979), and results that are significant only within one family are identified as such. Appendix C gives the full battery, software, baseline values, and robustness checks.

Collection and AI Disclosure

The speeches were collected in three stages: the first produced 1,355 texts dated through June 24, 2026, and one later item, a July 11 readout excluded under the scoring rule, and the second added 80 speeches dated July 15 through October 24, 2026, and the third added the 12 speeches listed for June 26 to July 11, 2026, which had fallen between the first two. The website lists none for July 12 to 14 in English or Ukrainian. Monthly corpus counts for the whole window are given in Supplement S1 for comparison with the website's listing. A final-file check found no repeated URLs, date-and-title pairs, or texts, and the speech index in the replication package records the collection stage of every text and the reason each excluded text was set aside.

The use of AI assistant tools in collecting and verifying the corpus is described in the Declaration of Generative AI Use.

Findings: From Counteroffensive to Negotiation

A President Moving toward the Cohort Mean (Six-Trait Distance)

Over the course of the war Zelenskyy came to sound more like the average head of government in the cohort. The movement was a decline across 2024–2025 that leveled off from mid-2025, when his diplomacy turned to security guarantees and the terms of a settlement. Measured across six traits, his distance from the cohort mean moved from 5.21 in the counteroffensive period to 4.02 in the negotiation period (Table 2). The endpoint difference is −1.19 (95% CI −1.56 to −0.81), and the seven-trait measure moved in the same direction (−1.16, CI −1.51 to −0.77). On the six-trait measure, the step between the first five months of 2025 and the period from June to October 2025 is the only adjacent step whose interval excludes zero (−0.89, CI −1.50 to −0.29). The intervals for the earlier adjacent steps include zero, and the change into the last phase was +0.11 (CI −0.33 to 0.53), consistent with a leveling off (Figure 1). B4 has the lower point estimate on this measure, but B5 is lower on the seven-trait, nightly-only, and press-conference-removed measures, so the two phases cannot be ranked.

Every phase of the later record lies closer to the cohort mean than the 2019–2022 profile, whose six-trait distance is 6.77 (Brittain-Hale 2023a). The comparison is descriptive, since the earlier values have no interval and the corpora were prepared differently.

Higher task focus, a narrower gap in conceptual complexity, and lower in-group bias moved the profile toward the mean, in that order, with a smaller contribution from need for power. Distrust of others contributed in two ways. Its early decline brought the profile toward the mean, and its further decline after crossing the mean moved that trait away from it. The distance therefore summarizes change across traits without implying convergence in every trait or a change in leadership style.

These distance results remain under the robustness checks in Appendix C, and under the most conservative specification the endpoint difference remains −1.19 (95% CI −1.68 to −0.75). With the 1,029 nightly and national addresses alone, the B3 to B4 step is −0.81 (95% CI −1.44 to −0.16), and a Mahalanobis distance that allows for correlated traits keeps the endpoint decline but spreads it across B2 to B4 (Appendix C.3).

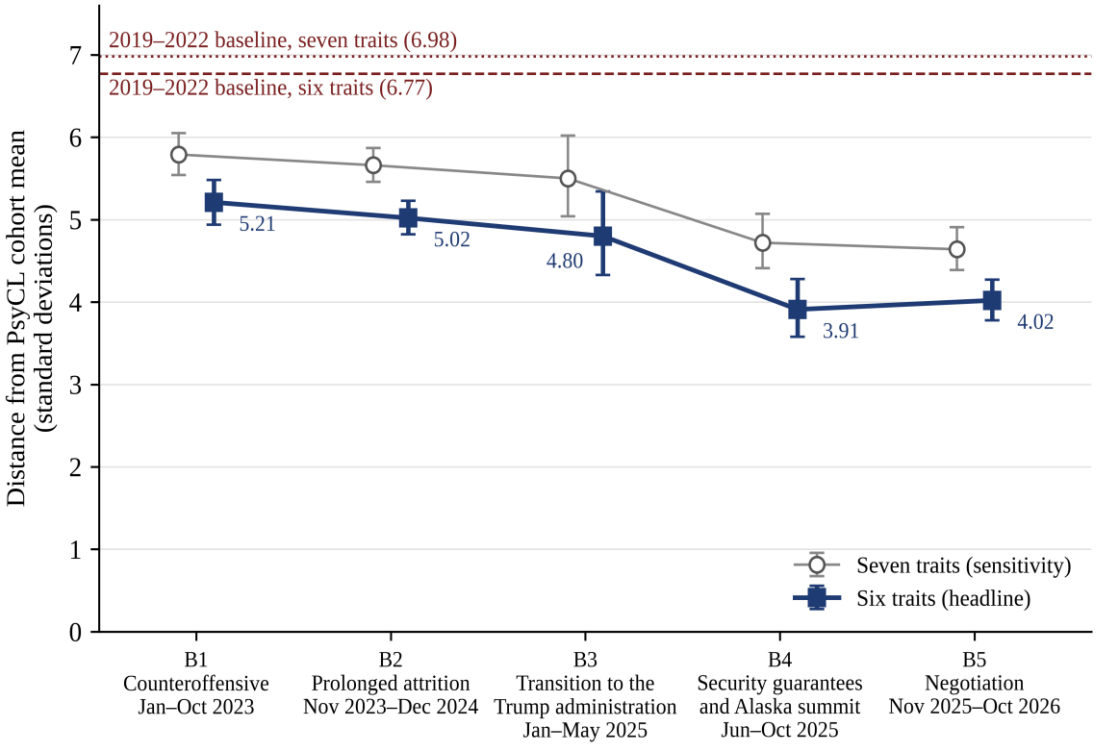
Table 2. *Distance from the PsyCL Cohort Mean, with 95% Intervals*

	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	2019–22[a]	2019–22[b]
Six traits (headline)	5.21 [4.94, 5.48]	5.02 [4.82, 5.23]	4.80 [4.33, 5.34]	3.91 [3.58, 4.28]	4.02 [3.78, 4.27]	6.77	6.79
Seven traits	5.79 [5.54, 6.05]	5.66 [5.46, 5.87]	5.50 [5.04, 6.02]	4.72 [4.41, 5.07]	4.64 [4.39, 4.91]	6.98	6.79

Note. Percentile intervals use 2,000 within-phase speech resamples, seed 20261025. a. Brittain-Hale (2023a), pooled counts (primary baseline). b. Brittain-Hale (2023a), rounded profile printed in Appendix S of the dissertation. The 2019–2022 distances have no interval because the baseline rests on four combined files.

Source: Author's calculations from the 1,443-speech corpus and the PsyCL cohort (N = 113).

Figure 1. *Distance of Zelenskyy's Trait Profile from the PsyCL Cohort Mean by Phase*



Note. Euclidean distance is computed from pooled phase z-scores against 113 leaders; six traits omit SC (headline) and seven traits are a sensitivity measure. Error bars are the 95% intervals in Table 2. Horizontal lines mark the 2019–2022 baseline with pooled counts (Brittain-Hale 2023a).
Source: Author's calculations from the 1,443-speech corpus and the PsyCL cohort (N = 113).

Less Distrust, More Attention to Tasks (Distrust of Others, Task Focus)

In 2023 Zelenskyy's speeches expressed more distrust of others than those of the average leader in the cohort. Distrust of others showed the largest phase effect of any trait. Pooled distrust stood at .234 in the counteroffensive period, about two-thirds of a standard deviation above the cohort mean, and at .104 in the negotiation period, more than one standard deviation below it. Phase accounts for about 15% of the per-speech variance (Table 3). Most of the change came at the first transition, where the bootstrap difference in pooled distrust between the counteroffensive and attrition periods is −.073 (95% CI −.092 to −.054), and the per-speech Welch test for the same pair survives correction. A smaller decline followed between the attrition period and the first months of 2025 (−.040, 95% CI −.063 to −.016), although it does not survive correction across all tests (Appendix C).

Task focus rose as distrust fell, moving from .473 in the counteroffensive period to a peak of .586 in the months of the Alaska summit before easing to .557 afterward. Its clearest steps were the first transition (+.056, CI .035 to .077), which survives correction across all tests, and the step into the Alaska-summit

period (+.057, CI .022 to .092), which is significant within the trait bootstrap family. In-group bias fell at that same step (−.039, CI −.063 to −.016). The drop remains significant within the trait bootstrap family in both programs and under all ten bootstrap seeds, and the omnibus Welch test for in-group bias survives correction across all tests (adjusted p = .015), also with Newey-West errors over ten lags (adjusted p < .001; Appendix C.2). Need for power declined steadily from .345 to .305. It has no significant single step and its omnibus test falls short of the threshold across all tests, so its decline is reported as a fragile result.

Table 3. *Pooled LTA Scores and Cohort Reference*

Trait	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	PsyCL M (SD)	Welch F	η²
DIS	.234	.161	.120	.107	.104	.186 (.074)	64.33*	.154
TASK	.473	.530	.529	.586	.557	.637 (.073)	26.06*	.067
BACE	.324	.306	.339	.310	.320	.320 (.068)	1.57	.004
IGB	.218	.211	.219	.180	.184	.141 (.038)	5.99*	.015
SC	.122	.115	.109	.112	.142	.354 (.092)	0.37	.001
CC	.395	.381	.399	.415	.416	.575 (.046)	11.12*	.028
PWR	.345	.333	.322	.309	.305	.277 (.044)	4.54	.012

Note. * indicates omnibus Welch p < .05 after global Holm correction, not an adjacent-phase result. Per-trait N = 1,432–1,443.
Source: Author's calculations from the 1,443-speech corpus and the PsyCL cohort (N = 113).

What Stayed Distinctive (Conceptual Complexity, In-Group Bias)

The two traits that most set Zelenskyy apart before 2023 were a strong attachment to his own national group and a tendency to describe the political world in few categories. Both changed in level across the phases, and both kept him far from the cohort mean throughout. Which traits remained distinctive is determined by the scores against the cohort and was not set by the researcher. Conceptual complexity rose from .395 to .416, and its omnibus test is significant (Table 3), also with Newey-West errors, although none of its adjacent steps is. It stayed between 3.5 and 4.2 standard deviations below the cohort mean in every phase, and because the cohort varies little on this trait it accounts for more than half of the squared six-trait distance in every phase. In-group bias fell from .218 to .184, a significant decline, and its point estimate stayed more than one standard deviation above the cohort mean in every phase, although the B4 interval reaches below that level (z = 1.04, 95% interval 0.67 to 1.38).

Neither belief in ability to control events nor self-confidence shows a phase effect, and self-confidence stays more than two standard deviations below the cohort mean in every phase. That level may be partly an artifact, because the earlier printed self-confidence score incorporates a phase with no indicators that was assigned the cohort mean. The cleaned-text rerun finds 11,927 self-confidence indicators in the 1,443 analyzed speeches (1,452 high and 10,475 low), and the trait is reported descriptively and kept out of the headline distance.

A Plainer, Less Analytic Language (Analytic Thinking)

The president's language became plainer and less analytic from each phase to the next. Mean Analytic scores fell from 77.23 in the counteroffensive period to 64.40 in the negotiation period, the largest phase effect among the summary variables (Welch $F = 45.93$, $\eta^2 = .115$). With genre and log word count controlled, the B5 coefficient is −12.52 relative to B1. Among nightly addresses alone the means fell from 79.91 to 68.07, so changing genre composition alone does not explain the decline. No single adjacent Analytic step survives correction across all tests, so the change is cumulative across the record.

Clout and Authentic also retain corrected phase effects in the controlled models (Table 4). Tone, whose unadjusted controlled p is .003, whose p adjusted across all tests is .373, and whose omnibus tests survive only within their family (adjusted $p = .047$), remains descriptive. The content categories, which were not re-estimated with genre controls, describe the political side of this change. Negative emotion and conflict fell most sharply at the first transition, and negative emotion fell again between the attrition period and the first months of 2025. Positive emotion fell between the transition and Alaska-summit periods, and moral language declined across the whole record. Politics words rose to a mean of 2.50 in the Alaska-summit period and fell to 2.12 afterward, a step that survives Holm correction across all tests (Appendix C).

Table 4. *LIWC Summary Means and Genre-controlled Results*

Variable	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	Controlled $\chi^2(4)$	Global-Holm p	B5 vs B1, genre-controlled
Analytic	77.23	74.13	70.87	67.89	64.40	178.04	< .001	−12.52
Clout	84.61	86.36	85.67	83.90	82.29	28.31	.002	−3.71
Authentic	25.56	20.76	19.74	19.51	22.57	39.69	< .001	−2.06
Tone	60.26	64.33	65.42	59.04	60.19	16.01	.373	−3.42

Note. Controlled OLS models include phase, genre, and log word count with HC3 errors. χ^2 is a Wald statistic, not F. The p column reports Holm-adjusted values across all 204 tests for the controlled phase test. B5 vs B1 is the genre-controlled coefficient; the raw differences are Analytic −12.83, Clout −2.32, Authentic −2.99, and Tone −0.06.
Source: Author's calculations from the 1,443-speech corpus.

The Timing of Change, from Vilnius to Alaska (Phase Episodes)

The following analysis juxtaposes the events outlined in the introduction with the corresponding phase-level scores, placing the measurements in their temporal context without testing whether any event caused a change in scores.

The counteroffensive period (January to October 2023). Zelenskyy said on June 10, 2023, that "counter-offensive and defensive actions" were under way (Reuters 2023a). He spoke on NATO membership and security guarantees on July 10 and July 13, and on September 19 he addressed the 78th UN General Assembly, where he described Russian use of food, energy, and abducted children as weapons (United Nations 2023, Associated Press 2023b). This phase

records the highest distrust of others (.234), negative emotion, conflict, and moral language of the whole record, and the lowest task focus (.473).

The attrition period (November 2023 to December 2024). This phase contains the addresses around the House vote of April 2024 and the address after Trump's election. Pooled distrust fell to .161 and task focus rose to .530, and negative emotion and conflict language fell. Most of the decline in distrust over the whole record came at the transition into this phase.

The transition period (January to May 2025). The corpus has no transcript of the White House meeting of February 28. The joint statement after the Jeddah talks of March 11 said that Ukraine "expressed readiness to accept" an interim ceasefire, "subject to acceptance and concurrent implementation by the Russian Federation" (U.S. Department of State 2025). On May 16, the day of the Istanbul talks (Reuters 2025c), Zelenskyy addressed the European Political Community in a speech titled with a call for a "full, unconditional, and honest ceasefire." Tone (65.42), "we," and affiliation language are highest in this phase, while in-group bias (.219) stood at its 2023 level.

The Alaska-summit period (June to October 2025). The phase opens with the Spider's Web operation and the second Istanbul round and includes the Alaska summit and the Washington meeting of August 18. Task focus peaks at .586, in-group bias falls to .180, and the six-trait distance falls from 4.80 to 3.91, its lowest point estimate, statistically indistinguishable from B5. The decline across 2024–2025 in the president's measured profile thus levels off in these months.

The negotiation period (November 2025 to October 24, 2026). The phase spans the Geneva meeting and the two Abu Dhabi rounds (Reuters 2025e, 2026a, 2026b). After the Hudson Institute address of October 23, 2026, Reuters and Al Jazeera reported that Ukraine, Russia, and the United States had agreed to trilateral technical-level meetings in Abu Dhabi in November (Reuters, 2026c; Al Jazeera 2026). The six-trait distance stays at 4.02, near its value in the Alaska-summit period, and Analytic reaches its lowest mean (64.40). The profile measured in the second half of 2025 is thus also the profile of the negotiations.

Discussion: What the Change Means

For Ukraine's Diplomacy

Ukraine entered the negotiations of 2025 and 2026 led by a president whose public voice had become less suspicious of others and more concerned with tasks. It remained strongly attached to the national community and categorical in its descriptions, as it had been before 2023. The discussion that follows treats these co-occurrences as features of the profile that the published speeches present to foreign governments, without claiming that the profile caused any decision or outcome.

Leadership Trait Analysis supplies a vocabulary for the combination of traits recorded here. Hermann (1999, p. 28) interprets in-group bias and distrust

of others together as a leader's motivation toward the world. In her scheme a leader high on both traits sees international politics as organized around adversaries whom there is a moral imperative to confront. A leader with high in-group bias and low distrust sees an essentially zero-sum system that is bounded by international norms. In that system adversaries remain threatening, and leadership works to limit the threat and solve problems. Hermann (1999, p. 32) classes as high or low a score that lies more than one standard deviation above or below the cohort mean. By that rule Zelenskyy's in-group bias was high in the first three phases, and his distrust moved from moderate in 2023 toward low, so his public profile moved toward the second combination. In B4 and B5 both traits are at or near the cutoff, with in-group bias z = 1.04 (95% interval 0.67 to 1.38) and 1.14 (0.90 to 1.40) and distrust z = −1.07 (−1.23 to −0.91) and −1.12 (−1.25 to −0.98), so the later profile is at or near the second combination. Task focus (Hermann 1999, p. 25) rose toward the cohort mean while remaining below it, and conceptual complexity (p. 22) stayed far below the mean.

For Ukraine's negotiating position, this combination describes a leader who engaged with the procedures of a settlement while stating the claims of the national community in fixed categories. The transition period of 2025 shows both elements, in the acceptance of an interim ceasefire at Jeddah and the call of May 16 for a "full, unconditional, and honest ceasefire". Interpreted through the profile, the lower distrust and greater task focus of the later speeches fit a government that presented Ukraine as available for negotiation. Persistent in-group bias and low conceptual complexity kept the public statement of Ukraine's aims in categorical terms that leave little room for graded positions.

For allied governments, the same profile has two implications. At Vilnius Zelenskyy spoke in the phase with the highest distrust of the whole record. By the Washington meeting of August 2025 his speeches recorded the highest task focus of the record and, after a decline across 2024–2025, a distance from the cohort mean that changed little afterward. The governments weighing what guarantees to offer thus faced a partner whose public voice had become less suspicious and more concerned with the content of agreements, and whose persistent in-group emphasis indicated that any guarantee would be judged by how far it protects the national community.

Washington and Moscow could interpret the same profile in different ways. For the Trump administration, which sought a framework to end the war, the later profile presents a counterpart whose speeches address tasks and terms. For Moscow, the measured traits show in-group emphasis staying above the cohort mean as distrust declined, so the president's public description of the conflict remained that of a leader defending a national community against an adversary. The outcomes of the Abu Dhabi rounds, no deal in January and a prisoner exchange in February (Reuters 2026a, 2026b), fit a profile in which engagement with the procedures of negotiation grew while the public statement of the national position stayed fixed. The speeches cannot show how either government interpreted them.

For the Analysis of Leaders

For analysts who build leader profiles to anticipate how a government will conduct a long war, this record shows that a trait profile measured early in a crisis may describe only one phase of a leadership. Profiles measured repeatedly and reported trait by trait as well as in summary are more informative.

The decline in analytic language agrees in direction with the long-term trend that Jordan et al. (2019) reported for political language. The earlier Twitter comparison (Brittain-Hale 2024) measured a different medium and period, so its cross-leader finding and the present decline address different questions.

What the Record Cannot Show

The findings concern the public profile of Ukraine's presidency as published in English on the president's website. The English versions may reflect translators and speechwriters as well as the president, and the published texts do not show whether a given version was checked against the Ukrainian original. The analysis makes no claim about private attitudes, clinical characteristics, the causal effects of particular events, or whether any ceasefire took effect. Dictionary-based values describe the scored text and require caution in the interpretation of psychological processes. The public diplomacy framework supplies no evidence of audience reception, persuasive effect, or policy influence, and these limitations apply to the interpretations presented in the discussion.

No reliability assessment was recorded for the genre rule across the full corpus, since the hand check covers only the 80 speeches added in the second collection stage. The joint address with the First Lady is retained, so its scores include her words. Adjacent speeches are not independent, and the transition period's smaller sample widens uncertainty, so the aggregate result does not identify when within those months the change occurred. Contrasts with the earlier corpus remain descriptive. Some test decisions depend on the correction family, seed, or corpus composition, with 65 results surviving correction across all tests after removal of press-conference statements, compared with 63 in the full corpus (Appendix C).

Conclusions

Across 1,443 official English-language speeches published from January 2023 to October 2026, Zelenskyy's measured profile moved toward the PsyCL cohort mean in a decline across 2024–2025. Distrust of others crossed below the cohort mean, conceptual complexity remained far below it, and analytic language declined with genre and length controlled.

Future work can rescore a sample of the earlier texts under the current preparation and scoring procedure to test the remaining differences between the

two corpora. It can also compare selected English and Ukrainian versions of the same speeches and extend the series with the same documented rules.

Between 2023 and 2026 the voice behind Slava Ukraini changed measurably as Ukraine's diplomacy turned from the conduct of the war to the terms of its end. For Ukraine's diplomacy, these findings describe a president whose published English speeches became less distrustful and more focused on tasks, while the in-group emphasis and low conceptual complexity recorded before 2023 remained distinctive. For the analysis of leaders, this extension of an earlier case study (Brittain-Hale 2023a) shows that repeated measurement against a common cohort can identify which traits of a wartime leader change and which stay distinctive.

Declaration of Generative AI Use

AI assistant tools supported the collection of the speech corpus from the President of Ukraine's website, the verification of the data against the source records, and independent reruns of the analysis code. An AI tool was used to assist with editing and formatting, and the author reviewed and takes responsibility for the final manuscript. LIWC-22 and Profiler Plus are not generative AI.

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Appendix A. Replication and Scoring Notes

Twelve speeches return no indicators on at least one trait and are excluded only from affected per-speech tests: SC N = 1,432; DIS, BACE, IGB, and PWR N = 1,442; TASK and CC N = 1,443. Available counts remain in phase pools.

The 21 LIWC variables are Analytic, Clout, Authentic, Tone, words per sentence, seven-or-more-letter words, power, achievement, affiliation, risk, social referents, politics, morality, conflict, positive emotion, negative emotion, total pronouns, and first-person plural, first-person singular, second-person, and third-person plural pronouns. Distance intervals use 2,000 resamples and pooled-trait differences 20,000, seed 20261025. The analysis files, scripts, codebook, speech index, full tables, and Supplement S1 are in the replication package on Harvard Dataverse (Brittain-Hale 2026, https://doi.org/10.7910/ DVN/PETUPV). The speech texts are not redistributed under the source license, and the speech index lists the source URL of every text.

One 52-word statement (September 12, 2023) has no distrust or in-group bias indicators and is excluded from the DIS and IGB tests only, and it is the only analyzed speech shorter than 100 words.

A.1 Correction Map

The 204-test set comprises six families: 42 LIWC omnibus tests (21 variables × Welch and Kruskal–Wallis), 84 adjacent LIWC Welch tests (21 × four transitions), 8 LIWC summary-control tests (four controlled phase tests and four nightly-only Welch tests), 14 LTA omnibus tests (seven traits × two tests), 28 adjacent LTA Welch tests (seven × four), and 28 pooled-LTA bootstrap tests (seven × four). Global Holm correction applies across those 204 tests, within-family Holm results are labeled separately, and Bonferroni is a sensitivity comparison. Distance intervals, ordinary ANOVA, pooled-variance t-tests, Mann–Whitney tests, and Games-Howell comparisons fall outside that enumeration.

Appendix B. Text-Cleaning Audit

The Profiler Plus rerun on the cleaned texts changed the scores of 803 speeches (237 in B1, 347 in B2, 16 in B4, and 203 in B5). Each changed speech differs from its earlier file by the removal of the site header and license footer, apart from two speeches whose earlier files had also omitted short paragraphs, and no B3 scores changed because those source pages had no header or footer. The replication package records the saved and cleaned word counts of each speech and whether its saved source included the license footer.

Appendix C. Inference, Robustness, and Corpus Details

C.1 Test Battery and Software

Effect sizes are reported as η^2, ω^2, and ε^2, Games-Howell comparisons address pairwise differences (Games & Howell, 1976), and adjacent transitions use pooled-variance and Welch t-tests and Mann–Whitney tests with Hedges' g. Serial dependence is assessed with Newey-West errors over ten lags (Newey & West 1987). Analyses were computed independently in R 4.5.3 with sandwich 3.1.3 and in Python (R Core Team 2026, Zeileis 2004, 2006, Zeileis et al. 2020), LIWC-22 was run as version 1.3.0, desktop CLI, in word-count mode with its default dictionary, and Profiler Plus was run as version 7.3.23 in both scoring runs; comparisons with values from earlier software versions are descriptive.

C.2 Trait and Language Inference (Summary)

Supplement S1 reports the adjusted p values for every adjacent step, the Games-Howell comparisons, and the ten-seed checks. With Newey-West errors over ten lags in place of the Welch omnibus tests, DIS, TASK, IGB, and CC remain significant across all tests (adjusted $p < .001$) and BACE, SC, and PWR do not, so the count of 63 tests surviving global Holm is unchanged.

C.3 Robustness Checks (Summary)

R and Python agree (Supplement S1) on all 204 global-Holm decisions (63 significant), 60 Bonferroni decisions, and 81 within-family decisions. Removing the 54 press-conference statements gives six-trait distances of 3.95 in B4 and 3.93 in B5 and leaves 65 tests surviving global Holm. Date-ordered block and stationary bootstraps widen the confidence intervals, but those for B1–B5 and B3–B4 still exclude zero, with the most conservative approach yielding the interval reported in the results.

C.4 Genre Coding and Exclusions

Press-conference statements occur in B4 (9) and B5 (45), and a review of all 54 found no question-and-answer passages or speaker labels. The scoring rule retains speeches delivered by Zelenskyy or issued in his name and excludes texts dominated by another speaker, third-person readouts, or texts without speech content. The five excluded texts are a joint written statement by Sweden and Ukraine on Gripen procurement in the third person (May 28, 2026), a third-person news readout of the Ankara meeting with President Trump (July 11, 2026), a joint address with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in which about 450 of 727 words are Trudeau's (June 11, 2023), and two pages that contain only a two-word web-server code (January 29 and March 12, 2023); none is in the LTA or LIWC analyses.

The joint address by the President and the First Lady, Olena Zelenska, of September 22, 2023, in which she speaks first ("Volodymyr and I have never made such addresses before"), is retained and scored as published, because the office published it as a presidential speech and he is a speaker in it, so its scores include her words. The scoring runs are dated in Supplement S1.

Genres are assigned from title keywords applied in a fixed order, from press conferences, greetings, and parliaments through events and addresses to other speeches, and the keyword lists for each collection stage are in Supplement S1. Ceremonial addresses are coded as nightly or national addresses unless the title names a ceremony or event, following the dissertation rule (Brittain-Hale, 2023a), and a hand check of the 80 speeches added in the second collection stage changed two codes. In the third stage, the Constitution Day address of June 28, 2026, is coded as a national address, like those of 2024 and 2025, and the address of July 4, 2026, to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe as a speech to a parliament. B5 contains 197 nightly or national addresses, 56 summit, forum, or event speeches, 45 press-conference statements, 5 holiday greetings, 5 speeches to parliaments, 2 other speeches, and 1 press statement, 311 in all.

The replication row identifiers of the speeches cited by date are listed in Supplement S1.

C.5 Dissertation Baseline Values

The dissertation workbook contains four concatenated phase profiles, and the printed profile is their unweighted mean. The primary baseline pools their counts: DIS .150, TASK .329, BACE .308, IGB .209, SC .196, CC .357, and PWR .339, with distance 6.77 on six traits and 6.98 on seven, and the rounded profile printed in Appendix S of the dissertation has distance 6.79 on both. LIWC comparisons use the dissertation's printed Table 9 means, including Analytic 69.24, Tone 31.68, and words per sentence 10.91.