



TYPES OF POLITENESS STRATEGIES IN JOE BIDEN'S CAMPAIGN SPEECH

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ABSTRACT

Politeness is a ways how individuals utilize language to uphold positive social relationships, preserve face, and navigate the intricacies of social interaction. The research aims to explore and understand the politeness strategies employed by Joe Biden in his campaign speeches using the politeness theory proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987). In his campaign speech, Joe Biden employed politeness strategies to foster trust and belief in his words, reflecting a deliberate selection of language in accordance with English rules. Moreover, the perception of politeness may vary across different cultural and environmental contexts. The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative through practical explanation of theory and research through descriptive narratives. The results the study identified a total of 154 instances of politeness strategies, with a predominant use of bald-on-record strategies 66 instances, followed by positive politeness strategies 63 instances. The lesser use of off-record 13 instances and negative politeness strategies 12 instances.

Keywords: *Campaign speech, Politeness Factors, Politeness strategies.*

INTRODUCTION

Language is a fundamental tool for communication, enabling individuals to share information, ideas, and emotions. It functions through a structured system of words and sentences, facilitating the exchange of understanding and knowledge. Cameron (2001:17) explains that language serves diverse functions depending on individual needs, acting as a medium for self-expression, communication, social adaptation, and social control (Keraf, 1997:3).

One specific form of communication is speech, where an individual speaks continuously without interruptions, requiring the audience to absorb the content as it is delivered. Each speech has a particular purpose, and as noted by Nofrion (2018), speeches are intriguing because they convey ideas and concepts to large audiences, unlike films or novels that often require repeated engagement to fully grasp the message.

In the context of political speeches, language plays a key role in large-scale recruitment, particularly during campaigns that rely on electronic media, print, and direct interaction with the public. Candidates for political positions—such as mayor, governor, or president—seek to present themselves as appealing figures, often through direct speeches to their constituents. As Santoso (2003:1) points out, language in these contexts serves as a political tool, which is referred to as political language.

According to Hahn (2003), in elections, campaign speeches are vital for creating identity and building connections with voters. Candidates aim to persuade

the electorate by showing that they understand their concerns and needs. By shaping their discourse and identity, politicians can effectively persuade voters that supporting them is in their best interest (Pearce, 2001).

Political discourse has long been a significant area of research, given its complexity and impact on society. It involves the strategic use of language to influence public opinion and behavior. Political speeches are particularly important for maintaining social ties, expressing emotions, and promoting ideas or policies. From a pragmatic perspective, one essential concept in speeches is politeness strategies, especially when addressing individuals of higher status or older age.

Pragmatics, the study of meaning in context, considers various factors such as the speaker's intent, the context, and the timing of the speech. Leech (1983) notes that speakers typically deliberate over their intended meanings before speaking. Studying pragmatics allows one to analyze implied meanings, understand the speaker's intentions, and interact appropriately with others. As Yule (2006) explains, pragmatics explores concepts like deixis, implicature, presupposition, speech acts, and politeness.

Politeness, according to Brown and Levinson (1987), plays a crucial role in maintaining cooperative interactions and avoiding face-threatening situations. It involves levels of formality and reflects individuals' character traits. In his campaign speeches, Joe Biden used politeness strategies to build trust and credibility, carefully choosing his words in line with cultural expectations. The perception of politeness, however, can vary across different cultural contexts. Therefore, this research aims to analyze Joe Biden's campaign speech to explore the intricacies of his politeness strategies.

Joe Biden, born on November 20, 1942, in Pennsylvania, is the 46th president of the United States. He won the 2021 election, defeating Donald Trump by a significant margin. Biden holds a degree in history and political science from Delaware University and is a member of the Democratic Party. He served as the 47th vice president from 2009 to 2017 under Barack Obama and represented Delaware in the U.S. Senate from 1973 to 2009. On January 5, 2024, Biden launched his campaign, focusing on threats to U.S. democracy and aiming to motivate voters by raising concerns about a second Trump presidency. His campaign, particularly in Pennsylvania, is driven by this focus.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In conducting this research, the writer benefits significantly from previous studies, which serve as important references. Several previous studies focused on politeness strategies, though they differ in the objects and data they examined. Here are a few key studies referenced:

The first study, conducted by Purba, A., Nasution, T., Matondang, M. K. D., Zulkarnain, and Purba, R. (2023), titled *Application of Brown and Levinson's Model on Joe Biden's Victory Speech: A Case on Politeness Strategy*, analyzed the politeness strategies used in Joe Biden's victory speech. The study employed Brown and Levinson's theory, revealing that the most dominant strategy used was positive politeness.

The second study, by Fitriana, L. N. A. (2023), titled *The Politeness Strategy in Joe Biden's Speech About Russia-Ukraine War at G20 Summit in Bali, Indonesia, 2022*, aimed to uncover the President's use of politeness and political diplomacy strategies during a press conference at the G20 Summit. Like the

previous study, it used Brown and Levinson's theory and found that positive politeness strategies were most frequently employed by Joe Biden.

The third study, by Nurdiansyah, D. (2021), titled *Politeness Strategies in the US President-Elect Joe Biden's Victory Speech*, focused on identifying the politeness strategies in Biden's victory speech. This research, like the others, found that positive politeness strategies were the most prominent.

Building on these studies, the writer is interested in analyzing politeness strategies in a different context of Joe Biden's speech. While previous studies focused on victory or press conference speeches, this research will explore a campaign speech, which serves a persuasive purpose. According to Monroe, A. H. (1949), persuasive speaking involves advocacy, where the speaker works to influence the audience's beliefs or actions. Unlike informative speeches, persuasive speeches aim to convince the audience to take a particular stance or action. Therefore, this research will focus on the politeness strategies Biden uses in his campaign speeches to achieve these persuasive goals.

METHODOLOGY

This research utilized a qualitative research design, focusing on the analysis of excerpts from campaign speeches as the main data source. The aim of the study is to explore and understand the politeness strategies employed by Joe Biden in his campaign speeches, using the politeness theory developed by Brown and Levinson. The data consists of selected excerpts from Biden's campaign speeches, which are analyzed to identify how he uses mitigation techniques and addresses face-threatening acts to shape audience perceptions. This approach seeks to reveal communication patterns that demonstrate Biden's efforts to build a positive image and reduce conflict, especially in the highly competitive political arena.

The study follows a commonly used qualitative research approach, specifically a descriptive methodology. Moleong (2010:6) defines descriptive qualitative research as an approach aimed at gaining a comprehensive understanding of phenomena such as behaviors, perceptions, motivations, and actions. The findings are presented in the form of words and sentences. In this research, a descriptive qualitative method was applied to address the research questions. The study began by identifying the politeness strategies in Joe Biden's campaign speech titled "Remarks by President Biden on the Third Anniversary of the January 6th Attack and Defending the Sacred Cause of American Democracy," which was broadcast live on ABC News's YouTube channel.

Following this, the collected data were analyzed to classify the politeness strategies based on Brown and Levinson's framework. As Burns and Grove (in Haradhan 2018) explain, qualitative research uses a systematic and subjective approach to interpret everyday life experiences, aiming to give them meaningful significance. Furthermore, Punch (1998:29) emphasizes that qualitative research is not dependent on numerical data and often begins with broader research questions and methodologies that become more focused as the study progresses.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Result

After analyzing the data, the researcher discovered that Joe Biden used a total of 154 politeness strategies. Specifically, 66 instances involved bald on record strategies, 63 instances employed positive politeness strategies, 12 used negative politeness strategies, and 13 were categorized as off record strategies. No instances

of the No FTA strategy were identified. Additionally, the explanations for these data were further categorized into sub strategies for each type of politeness strategy, as detailed below.

Table 1. Tables of politeness strategies used by Joe Biden.

No.	Type of Politeness Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Bald on Record	66	42.8%
2.	Positive Politeness	63	40.9%
3.	Negative Politeness	12	7.7
4.	Off-Record	13	8.4%
Total		154	100%

The table above presents the frequency and percentage distribution of the different types of politeness strategies used in Joe Biden's campaign speeches. The four categories of politeness strategies—Bald on Record, Positive Politeness, Negative Politeness, and Off-Record—are analyzed based on their occurrence in the speech excerpts.

This strategy is the most frequently used, appearing 66 times (42.8%) out of 154 occurrences. Bald on Record involves direct and clear communication without mitigating the impact of the speech, suggesting that Biden often chooses to be straightforward in his campaign speeches, especially in contexts where clarity and urgency are required.

Positive politeness strategies, appearing 63 times (40.9%), are nearly as frequent as Bald on Record strategies. These strategies focus on building rapport and emphasizing shared values with the audience. Biden uses this approach to create a sense of solidarity, highlight common goals, and foster a positive connection with his listeners.

Negative politeness strategies, used 12 times (7.7%), involve showing respect for the listener's autonomy and minimizing imposition. Biden employs this strategy when addressing sensitive topics, ensuring that he acknowledges potential differences of opinion or respects the personal space of his audience.

Off-Record strategies, occurring 13 times (8.4%), are the least used. These strategies are indirect and allow the speaker to imply meaning without making explicit statements. This shows that while Biden occasionally prefers to be subtle or allow for interpretation, he generally favors more direct forms of communication.

In summary, the data indicates that Biden's campaign speeches primarily rely on Bald on Record and Positive Politeness strategies, emphasizing directness and connection with the audience, while Negative Politeness and Off-Record strategies are used less frequently, reflecting a balance between being assertive and considerate.

Discussion

The study's findings revealed instances of politeness strategies employed by Joe Biden in his campaign speeches, each serving distinct purposes. These strategies were used to build rapport with the audience, reduce social distance, mitigate potential conflicts, and establish trust. The researcher provided a detailed

analysis of these strategies, highlighting how Biden used them to connect with voters, emphasize shared values, and create a persuasive and respectful communication style. Each strategy was carefully examined to show how it contributed to Biden's overall objective of appealing to the audience while maintaining a positive public image.

1. Bald on Record

Data 18 (3:11-3:17)

“The choice is clear. Donald Trump’s campaign is about him, not America, not you.”

This utterance expressed strong criticism of Donald Trump and his campaign. Joe Biden made a direct claim that Trump’s focus was on himself rather than on the interests of America or its people. By framing Trump’s campaign this way, Biden challenged Trump’s motivations and contrasted them with the broader national and public interest. This criticism was bold and stark, emphasizing a clear difference between Trump and what Biden considered to be the right priorities.

The utterance implicitly suggested that the audience should reject Trump’s campaign because it didn’t align with their interests or the well being of the nation. By stating “the choice is clear,” Biden advised the audience to make a decision that prioritized America and their own interests over Trump’s personal agenda.

There was a subtle request present in this utterance. By declaring that the choice was clear and critiquing Trump’s campaign, Biden implicitly asked the audience to vote against Trump. The directness of the message served as a call to action, encouraging the listener to view Trump’s campaign as self serving and unworthy of support.

Biden also issued a warning, implying that a vote for Trump would be detrimental because his campaign was not focused on the interests of America or its people. The warning was indirect, but it suggested that failing to make the “clear” choice could lead to unfavorable outcomes for the audience and the nation.

In summary, this was a clear example of a bald on record strategy. It delivered a direct and pointed criticism of Donald Trump’s motivations, contrasting his personal agenda with the broader interests of both the nation and the audience. Although it didn’t explicitly advise the audience, it subtly suggested that they should reject Trump’s campaign because it did not align with their best interests. The message also functioned as an implicit call to action, likely urging a vote, and included an indirect warning about the potential consequences of supporting a self serving campaign. The directness of the statement reflected the urgency of the approaching decision, making it an effective rhetorical tool in Biden’s speech.

2. Positive Politeness

Data 1 (0:03-0:10)

“Today the topic of my speech today is deadly serious, and I think it needs to be made at the outset of this campaign.”

The phrase “deadly serious” continues to exaggerate the gravity of the topic, emphasizing its importance and potentially aligning with the audience’s concerns or expectations about the campaign’s seriousness. By stating that the topic “needs to be made at the outset of this campaign,” Joe Biden intensifies the urgency and importance of the issue, making it clear that it’s something the audience should be deeply concerned about from the very beginning. The repetition of “today” reinforces the importance of the present moment, subtly encouraging the audience to agree with the urgency of the topic. The reference to “this campaign” also serves

as common ground, assuming the audience shares an interest in the campaign's success.

The phrase "I think it needs to be made" softens the assertion slightly by attributing it to Biden's opinion, which can serve to avoid potential disagreement. This mild use of hedging makes the statement less confrontational and more about Biden's perspective. By referring to "this campaign" and the need to address serious issues "at the outset," Biden presupposes that the audience is involved or interested in the campaign, creating a shared context and common ground with the audience.

Biden assumes that the audience values transparency and readiness, expecting important topics to be addressed early in the campaign. By discussing "this campaign," Biden includes both himself and the audience in the shared activity of the campaign. His use of "I think" also invites the audience to consider his perspective, indirectly including them in the thought process. Biden provides a reason for discussing the topic because it "needs to be made at the outset of this campaign," explaining the timing and importance of the topic and making it clear why the audience should pay attention.

This sentence effectively employs positive politeness with sub strategies such as exaggeration, intensifying interest, seeking agreement, presupposing common ground, and including both Biden and the audience in the activity. The use of "I think" serves to avoid disagreement, while the reference to the campaign creates a shared context. The sentence prioritizes the seriousness and urgency of the topic, engaging the audience by addressing their potential concerns and aligning with their expectations.

3. Negative Politeness

Data 24 (3:49-3:56)

"Three years ago tomorrow, we saw with our own eyes the violent mob storm the United States Capitol. It was almost in disbelief as you first turned on the television."

The phrase "almost in disbelief" was a hedge, softening the statement. This allowed the speaker to avoid making a firm, absolute claim about how people reacted to the event, introducing flexibility in the interpretation of the emotional response. Biden attempted to minimize the emotional imposition by speaking in general terms about the shared experience ("we saw with our own eyes"). Instead of directly attributing emotions to the hearer, he used "almost in disbelief" to reduce the potential emotional impact, making it less imposing on the listener. Biden used "we" and "you," personalizing the speaker hearer relationship. He involved himself and the listener in the shared memory of the event, rather than impersonalizing the interaction, so this strategy was not used.

Biden employed negative politeness strategies by using hedges, such as "almost in disbelief," to soften his statements and reduce the imposition on the listener. However, he did not employ strategies that impersonalized the interaction, opting instead to create a more personalized connection with the hearer.

4. Off-Record

Data 26 (4:27-4:34)

"Inside, they hunted for Speaker Pelosi of the House, was chanting, as they marched through and smashed windows, ("Where's Nancy?")"

In Biden's remarks, the chant "Where's Nancy?" was connected to destructive actions, such as "smashed windows," which linked the chant to the

rioters' lawless and threatening behavior. This association suggested an implied rule: the chant indicated dangerous intent. Biden's choice to mention this chant in the context of violence conveyed a sense of danger without directly accusing the rioters of intending violence. Instead, it implied that the audience would recognize the menace inherent in the chant, given the setting.

By stating that "they hunted for Speaker Pelosi," Biden presupposed that the rioters already knew who they were looking for and that their intent was harmful. The use of the verb "hunted" drew a comparison between the rioters and predators, portraying their actions as a deliberate and dangerous pursuit. This metaphorical framing amplified the perceived threat, emphasizing the predatory nature of the rioters' behavior. While Biden's language heightened the sense of danger, it did so without explicitly accusing the rioters of outright violence, allowing room for interpretation.

However, the term "hunted" could also be seen as an overstatement, suggesting a more violent pursuit than what might have actually occurred. The ambiguity of the word left the extent of the threat open to interpretation, as "hunted" could refer to both a literal and figurative search. In this way, Biden's language was intentionally non-specific, allowing listeners to infer varying levels of menace. Additionally, the phrase could be viewed as overgeneralizing, implying that all the rioters participated in the search for Pelosi, even though it may have been just a subset of the group.

In conclusion, Biden's sentence was mostly complete, but he chose not to delve into further details about what transpired after "Where's Nancy?" leaving some of the consequences or threats implied. This omission contributed to the rhetorical impact of his statement. Through this use of implication, Biden employed off-record politeness strategies, particularly through implicatures and metaphors. By not directly accusing the rioters of violent intent and leaving some aspects open to interpretation, Biden allowed his audience to draw their own conclusions about the seriousness of the threat, while still underscoring the gravity of the situation.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analysis of Joe Biden's campaign speech, the study identified a total of 154 instances of politeness strategies, with a predominant use of bald-on-record strategies (66 instances), indicating that Biden tended to express himself directly and assertively. This approach was closely followed by positive politeness strategies (63 instances), reflecting his efforts to build rapport and emphasize shared values with his audience. The lesser use of off-record (13 instances) and negative politeness strategies (12 instances) suggested that while Biden occasionally employed indirectness or mitigation, he primarily favored more straightforward communication methods.

Overall, the findings highlighted Biden's rhetorical style as primarily direct and engaging, aligning with Brown and Levinson's framework, where he effectively balanced assertiveness with politeness to connect with his audience. This study contributed to the understanding of how politeness strategies were utilized in political discourse, particularly in campaign settings.

In examining the factors that influenced politeness strategies in Joe Biden's campaign speech, the analysis revealed a nuanced approach to all politeness strategies. In Joe Biden campaign speech researcher identified four key elements: payoff, distance, power, and ranking of imposition. Each of these factors played a significant role in shaping his direct communication style.

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