

## POLITENESS STRATEGIES FOR THE SPEECH ACT OF JOE BIDEN ON CNN

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### ABSTRACT

This research aimed to describe the types of politeness strategies and how politeness strategies are realized by Joe Biden's speech act when delivering the content of his speech. This research used descriptive qualitative. The data source of the data was done collect from <https://youtu.be/15j7ORIdfM>. The data of the research of qualitative method consisted of data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The approach for analyzing the politeness strategies is based on Brown and Levinson's Theory of Politeness. There are four politeness strategies that are mentioned by Brown and Levinson, they are Bald on Record, Positive Politeness, Negative Politeness and Off Record. The data of politeness strategies utterances that have been analyzed are 24 utterances which are politeness strategies used in Joe Biden's speech. The politeness strategies contained in Joe Biden's speech consist of 4 Bald on Record utterances, 10 Positive Politeness utterances, 8 Negative Politeness utterances, and 2 Off Record utterances.

**Keywords:** politeness strategy, qualitative, Joe Biden's speech



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Politeness is the greatest and best ethic, expressed as the practical application of manners or ethics that everyone especially a state leader should possess. A person, particularly a state leader, who behaves politely toward others is not only respected but also loved. People will speak well of such a person on all occasions. Politeness toward others reflects that we are civilized and cultured. In contrast, rude individuals cannot be called cultured, as they often offend others through improper behavior. A polite person, however, will always please others with courteous conduct.

Politeness is a moral value that everyone must have, especially the head of state. The head of state exerts a significant influence on society, particularly through the delivery of speeches. When a head of state delivers a speech, it is essential to pay attention to politeness in speech, as it affects public perception and reaction. Politeness strategies are speech behaviors that express concern for others and minimize threats to self-esteem within a specific social context. Moreover, politeness in communication is necessary for everyone, as it requires adjustment depending on to whom one is speaking.

It is essential to study the content of a president's speech because presidential speeches in various countries have a great influence on their people. Speeches are vital in building public trust—both from economic and social perspectives contributing to the welfare of the people. A president's speech mirrors his or her thoughts and reflects leadership qualities (Megah & Soframi, 2020).

One of the data sources from the politeness approach was taken from Donald Trump's address at the Capitol Hill building in Washington, D.C., on January 21, 2017. This study employed the politeness theory of Brown and Levinson (1987), particularly the positive and negative politeness methods. The research identified 30 instances of positive politeness strategies in Donald Trump's speech and only one instance of negative politeness strategy. The study concluded that Trump frequently employed positive politeness

strategies because he aimed to win over American audiences by making promises and pleasing them to gain their support in the upcoming presidential election (Megah & Soframi, 2020).

Speech acts are utterances that contain specific intentions aimed at influencing the listener. According to Yule (1996), speech acts are actions in the form of apologies, compliments, or requests made through speech. Speech acts are divided into three categories: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts (Haucsa et al., 2020). By conveying the content of a speech, the speaker indirectly affects the audience. Therefore, speech acts play a crucial role in influencing listeners.

Brown and Levinson (1987) state that positive politeness strategies seek to fulfill the interests, needs, and desires of the hearer. Positive politeness addresses the positive face of the interacting person. According to Brown and Levinson, positive politeness is considered less formal than negative politeness. An important function of positive politeness is to establish familiarity and solidarity with the listener (Rosari, 2017).

In some cases, people believe that using polite language is only appropriate in specific settings, such as the workplace, or when interacting with older individuals. This reflects how society today tends to disregard politeness in language. Politeness is often seen as something that should only be used in formal situations, such as giving a speech, and not in everyday communication.

People must recognize that civility is a significant aspect of identity. Morals provide insight into a person's character and emotions. Since polite language helps individuals manage emotions, it can improve their moral character. Furthermore, polite communication facilitates problem-solving and fosters positive relationships.

A phenomenon observed in the study by Gomez and Manuel (2022), which analyzed the politeness strategies used by President Duterte in his speeches, revealed that Duterte employed all types of politeness strategies on-record, negative, positive, and off-record (indirect) strategies. The findings also showed that the audience perceived Duterte's speeches as engaging and emotionally appealing, as he managed to attract participation and elicit appropriate responses from his listeners. From this, it can be concluded that heads of state tend to employ politeness strategies carefully when delivering speeches to maintain rapport and positive reception.

Therefore, this research focuses on President Joe Biden's speech titled *"Ukraine Will Never Be a Victory for Russia"* delivered on February 22, 2023. The study examines Joe Biden's speech because, as the President of the United States a superpower country his words carry global influence. Thus, this research aims to investigate the politeness strategies found in Joe Biden's speech, particularly identifying the most dominant and frequently used strategies within the speech text.

## 2. METHOD

### A. Research Design

This research employed a qualitative method because the data were collected in the form of sentences and analyzed from audio-visual materials. It described the types and applications of politeness strategies found in Joe Biden's speech aired on CNN YouTube Channel. The data were obtained from Joe Biden's short speech on Ukraine, and the qualitative method was used to analyze the politeness strategies conveyed throughout the speech.

### B. Source of Data

The data were taken from YouTube, specifically from Joe Biden's speech titled *"Ukraine will never be a victory for Russia. Never: Hear Biden's full remarks in Warsaw"* uploaded by CNN on its YouTube Channel, available at <https://youtu.be/I5j7OR IdfM>. This video was used as the primary data source to support the research and provide a deeper understanding of the topic.

### C. Technique of Collecting Data

The documentation method was used to collect data. The steps included: (1) downloading Joe Biden's speech video from the CNN YouTube Channel; (2) watching the video as the main data source; (3) transcribing the speech by repeatedly listening to it; (4) re-watching the video while focusing on politeness strategies; and (5) identifying the types of politeness strategies used by Joe Biden in his speech.

### D. Technique for Analysis of the Data

The data were analyzed using qualitative analysis consisting of four stages: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Sugiyono, 2020). The researcher collected and explored the speech content from the CNN YouTube Channel, analyzed the politeness strategies used, determined the types of strategies applied, and identified the most dominant and frequently used strategies by Joe Biden. The analysis then led to the final results and conclusions of the study.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After identifying the data, the data were analyzed based on Brown and Levinson's theory and classified based on it. The analysis was done to answer the formulation of the problems, namely what type of politeness strategies are used in Joe Biden speech, what are the most dominant and most frequently that used politeness strategies by Joe Biden speech act of his speech.

The next data, **Data 19**, further strengthens the use of *Negative Politeness* through acknowledgment of another's authority and democratic legitimacy. Biden's phrase, "President Zelensky still leads a democratically elected government..." directly asserts respect for Ukraine's sovereignty while subtly criticizing Russian aggression. The politeness strategy "Be Direct with the Direct Question" here isn't confrontational; instead, it presents assertiveness softened by legitimacy an *assertive illocutionary act* wrapped in diplomatic courtesy.

**Data 20** and **Data 21** ("We're going to announce more sanctions..." and "We'll hold accountable those responsible...") follow similar pragmatic logic. Both are *commissive illocutionary acts* they commit the United States to future actions yet they still fit the *Negative Politeness* framework because Biden uses the inclusive pronoun *we*, signaling shared responsibility rather than unilateral authority. This mitigates imposition while maintaining firmness.

Meanwhile, **Data 22**, addressing the First Lady of Poland and other leaders, ("Madam First Lady, we love you. Thank you all") elegantly combines *Negative Politeness* ("give deference") with elements of *Positive Politeness* ("claim common ground"). This hybrid structure softens hierarchical distance while affirming emotional warmth. It's a rhetorical move that humanizes leadership and strengthens rapport through symbolic gratitude.

Finally, **Data 23** and **Data 24**, categorized as *Off Record Strategies*, display Biden's use of **indirect, evocative speech** the hallmark of political eloquence. For instance, "Kiev stands proud... it stands tall... it stands free," employs metaphorical amplification rather than explicit assertion. This allows listeners to infer strength and resilience, giving them interpretive agency. It's a *perlocutionary speech act* designed to inspire emotional response one that subtly empowers the audience to construct their own sense of pride and resistance.

Overall, the discussion reveals Biden's rhetorical agility: he doesn't simply follow Brown and Levinson's politeness taxonomy mechanically. Instead, he blends **positive rapport-building, negative deference**, and **off-record subtlety** to achieve diplomatic goals. His language simultaneously enacts leadership and humility, firmness and empathy precisely the linguistic balance expected of a global statesman addressing allies in a wartime context.

A deeper continuation of this analysis could explore how **contextual framing** such as the setting in Poland, proximity to Ukraine, and post-invasion geopolitical climate influences Biden's choice of politeness strategies. It would also be interesting to examine **audience reception**: whether these rhetorical moves strengthened perceptions of U.S. solidarity or served more as symbolic reassurance.

### 4. CONCLUSION

Researcher found the employment of politeness strategies, as was described in the data analysis part, there are 24 utterances from Joe Biden's speech on the CNN YouTube Channel were utilized as the data for the analysis of politeness strategy. There are 4 Bald on Record utterances, 10 Positive Politeness utterances, 8 Negative Politeness utterance, and 2 Off Record utterances are the outcomes. Of course, positive politeness strategies are the most often utilized kind of all utterances. 1) The Bald-on-Record Strategy is employed by speakers and interlocutors who are already acquainted with one another. The speakers believe that in order to express certain ideas clearly, there are specific situations in which they must talk candidly. 2) The utterances that establish a rapport between the speaker and the listener are those that fall within the category of positive politeness strategies. The goal of this kind of technique is to increase the level of familiarity between listeners who are not in close proximity to the speaker. 3) Negative politeness strategies include, but are not limited to, hedging, apologizing, attempting to demonstrate awareness of not being forced, and avoiding interfering with others' freedom of action. 4) Off-the-record politeness strategies, sometimes referred to as indirect or covert strategies, are used surreptitiously and lack a clear communication goal in their statements.

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