



**POLITENESS STRATEGIES USED BY DONALD TRUMP AND JOE BIDEN IN THE U.S.
2020 FINAL PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE**

Nadia Rafika Putri*, Rosyida Ekawati
Universitas Trunojoyo Madura

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 23-01-2023

Accepted: 26-05-2023

Published: 29-06-2023

Keywords: Politeness Strategy, Presidential Debate, Donald Trump, Joe Biden, Sociological Variables

ABSTRACT

This study aims at determining the types of politeness strategies used by and the sociological variables influencing the candidates, Donald Trump and Joe Biden, in the U.S. 2020 Final Presidential Debate. This study also used the theory of Brown and Levinson (1987). This study used the U.S. 2020 final presidential debate video as the source of data. The video was uploaded on YouTube on October 22, 2020. The data were the speaker's utterances containing politeness strategies. The results of the study revealed that the two candidates used various politeness strategies in the debate. There were 42 data obtained from the statements of the candidates who used the politeness strategy. The most widely used strategy by the two candidates is positive politeness. Then, negative politeness, off record, and bald on record respectively. Meanwhile, the use of politeness strategy by the candidates is influenced by social distance (D) and absolute ranking (R) of impositions.

INTRODUCTION

Humans are social beings; they unable to live alone. They need communication to socialize. Communication is a form of conveying information or opinions by two or more people. According to Keyton in Lunenburg (2010), "Communication is a process of transmitting information from one person to another". Communication can help people exchange ideas or information, express themselves, influence, or entertain others.

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: nadiarafikaputri.9b28@gmail.com (Nadia Rafika Putri)

ISSN : 2597-7385 (Online) - ISLLAC : Journal of Intensive Studies on Language, Literature, Art, and Culture is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Communication is the most crucial part of human life. However, communication does not always run smoothly. Sometimes speakers or hearers feel uncomfortable with the communication that happens. It is because of several things, one of which is a face-threatening act (FTA). Face-threatening acts happen when someone threatens the face of other people. Therefore, when the speaker wants to express his desire but avoids FTA against negative or positive acts, he can lessen the threat by using a face-saving act. A way to minimize the occurrence of FTA is using a politeness strategy.

Politeness is an action to show awareness of another person's face. The speaker must respect the other person's face. They can use politeness strategies to less disrespect, demean, or threaten the hearer. Politeness is one of the crucial things in communication. Holmes (2013) states that politeness in speaking makes a social harmony. Politeness can keep the relationship harmonious and avoid problems. By applying politeness strategies in daily communication, people can respect each other and avoid unpleasant behavior.

Yule (1996) states that external and internal factors related to social distance and closeness influence interaction. Sociological variables such as proximity or distance between speaker and hearer affect their language choice. It influences the use of politeness. In 2013, Holmes states that politeness strategies are influenced by social factors, such as the closeness between speakers and hearers, their social roles, and the type of social context in which they interact. For example, if the speaker is an employee and the hearer is the boss, the speaker must be a subordinate. Due to the gap in role status between them, the speaker then uses one of the appropriate politeness strategies when expressing his wants. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), the sociological variables that influence the use of politeness strategies are the 'social distance' (D), the 'power' (P), and the absolute ranking (R) of impositions.

Most daily activities use communication, and therefore politeness strategies are necessary. One of the activities that need understanding about politeness strategies is debate. A debate is an activity carried out by a person or group to discuss an issue with factual arguments. "Debating is an interactive and representational argument to persuade judges and audiences" (Alasmari & Ahmed, 2013). Even though it seems harsh, the debate must remain polite. Debate contains structure and ethics that must be adhered to, so the debate runs according to the topic of discussion (www.detik.com). There are different kinds of debates. However, the presidential debate is the most popular one.

The presidential debate aims to define the vision and mission of the presidential

candidates to the public. It also helps to know the candidates' responses to the issues previously in the country. In the presidential debate, there are two performances: the moderator and the candidates. The moderator will ask questions in several sessions, and then each candidate will respond to it. The candidates must provide correct and factual answers to the audience in answering the questions. Benoit (2000) states, "Unlike speeches or TV spots with scripts, candidates are not usually permitted to bring notes to debates. Thus, voters may obtain a somewhat more spontaneous and accurate view of the candidates in debates" (p. 1). In presidential debate does not use scripts such as movies or novels, so the concern is based on fact. The writer chooses to use presidential debate rather than movies and novels.

The presidential debate becomes a place for the candidates to argue and influence voters to vote for them. The presidential debate greatly influences the audience's decisions. Benoit (2000) finds that several studies state that presidential debates influence many voters. Therefore, the candidates must be competent in processing language to lure the voters. The presidential debate also portrays the real faces of the candidates. The candidates' interaction affects the impression of the candidate's face on the audience. When debating, the candidates show their image to the public. To reduce the threat to the opponents and maintain their image, they must show their good image. Therefore, candidates must be more mindful in voicing their thoughts to avoid hurting their self-image. Therefore, voters can choose them. The use of politeness strategies is one way to see the image of candidates, opponents, and values to be conveyed to the public. It is because politeness strategies will show the way the speaker talks. Using the politeness strategy means that the speaker respects other people. They also care about what their hearers think of them. Sometimes, some of the FTA's actions can be harsh when they do not use a politeness strategy. Therefore, when someone uses the politeness strategy, the hearer can know the speaker's attitude. The use of politeness strategies in a presidential debate is very interesting.

As one of the most influential countries globally, America also conducts presidential debates. This debate has always been the centre of the world's attention, including Indonesians. This debate is fascinating. Many things can be good research in Linguistics in this debate, including how the candidates speak. The majority of Americans use English to communicate. English is the world language. Many Indonesians are second language learners and are interested in using an American accent. Therefore, the American

presidential debate can use to learn about English America. They can learn to use language in context through this debate. Besides that, there are differences in communication styles for the two countries. It may be due to cultural differences. Indonesia and America have contrasting cultural differences. Indonesia is Asia with eastern culture, while America is with western culture. Americans place a high value on honesty. It causes Americans to be more to the point in saying something. Indonesians often use indirect when speaking. Therefore, the author considered the presidential election debate in America interesting.

From the above rationale, it is worth conducting the study in particular the politeness strategies used by Donald Trump and Joe Biden in the U.S. 2020 Final Presidential Debate and to elaborate the sociological variables that influences the candidates to use the politeness strategies.

METHOD

The study was conducted using a qualitative method because the data were in the form of words. Creswell (2014) states that qualitative research is framed using words. This study focused on the words or utterances uttered by a person. This study used the U.S. 2020 final presidential debate video as the source of data. The video was uploaded on YouTube on October 22, 2020. The duration of this video is 1 hour and 59 minutes. This video is accessed through the YouTube platform on the NBC News channel (<https://youtu.be/UCA1A5GqCdQ>). Meanwhile, the data were the speaker's utterances containing politeness strategies.

There were several stages in collecting the data in this study. First, watching the debate video, and reading the video transcript for more accurate data. To confirm the data, it was also used the complete version of the transcription available in USA Today (<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/elections/2020/10/23/debate-transcript-trump-biden-final-presidential-debate-nashville/3740152001/>). For more accurate data, then reviewing the transcription used Listen & Write App. Selecting the candidate's utterances was also conducted. After that, identifying the data that are used politeness strategies by Brown and Levinson. Next, classifying the data based on Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies i.e. bald of record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off record. Then, putting the data into the table to assist in collecting the data and data coding is used to facilitate the analysis. Each data will be given a name containing data/name of candidate/type of strategy used/time. For example, the most

frequently used strategy is positive politeness. Then at 2.30 minutes, Donald Trump used the strategy, and then the name would be 01/DT/PP/2.30. Finishing all those steps, then explaining the data based on the theory and drawing conclusion.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

Politeness Strategies Used by Donald Trump and Joe Biden in the U.S. 2020 Final Presidential Debate are shown in the following table 1.

Politeness Strategy	The Speaker		Total
	Donald Trump	Joe Biden	
Bald on Record	1	3	4
Positive Politeness	11	7	18
Negative Politeness	12	2	14
Off Record	2	4	6
	Total		42

Table 1. Politeness Strategies Used By Donald Trump And Joe Biden In The U.S. 2020 Final Presidential Debate

After reviewing the 2020 Final Presidential Debate video and reading the transcript, several statements were found to have used a politeness strategy. The findings data covered all types of politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987): bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off record. The two candidates, Donald Trump and Joe Biden have used all four types of politeness strategies by Brown and Levinson (1987). There are 42 data in the utterances of the candidates using politeness strategies. The most frequently used strategy is positive politeness. Both candidates used this strategy 18 times. The following strategy is negative politeness as much as 14 times. The two candidates also used the off-record strategy 6 times. Finally, the bald-on-record strategy was used at least 4 times.

After analyzing the data, it was found that Donald Trump used all types of politeness strategies. The most common strategy is negative politeness, with twelve usages. Then there is the positive politesse with eleven times use. Then he used off-record twice. Finally, the least used is the bald strategy on record with only one use. Meanwhile, Joe Biden also used every kind of polite strategy. The most frequent strategy is positive politeness, with seven usages. Then there is off-record politeness with four usage times. The following strategy is bald on record strategy with three uses. The last one is a negative strategy with two uses.

The findings of an analysis of the sociological variables that influence the candidates used the politeness strategies are shown in the following table 2.

Sociological Variables	The Speaker		Total
	Donald Trump	Joe Biden	
Distance (D)	14	14	28
Power (P)	-	-	0
Absolute Ranking (R)	12	2	14
Total			42

Table 2. The Findings Of Sociological Variables That Influence The Candidates Used The Politeness Strategies

The sociological variables that influence the candidates using the politeness strategy in this study are social distance (D) and absolute ranking (R) of impositions. There are 28 data that are affected by social distance. Data that is affected by social distance is data that uses positive politeness, bald on record, and off record. When presenting their arguments for public, the candidates use positive politeness. It is used to build closeness with the hearers. Meanwhile, in using negative politeness when talking to Kristen Welker, the moderator, the candidates are influenced by the absolute ranking of impositions. Both candidates used more subtle words when asking Kristen Welker for extra time. There are 14 data that are affected by the absolute ranking of impositions.

Discussion

Politeness Strategies Used by Donald Trump and Joe Biden in the U.S. 2020 Final Presidential Debate

There are six major topics in the 2020 final presidential debate: Trump and Biden on Covid-19, national security, economy, immigration, race in America, and climate change. From the existing data, 42 data used politeness strategies. The most frequently used strategy is positive politeness. Both candidates used this strategy 18 times. The following strategy is negative politeness as much as 14 times. The two candidates also used the off-record strategy six times. Finally, the bald-on-record strategy was used at least four times. These results are in line with the three studies that were done by Ayuningrum et al. (2018), Maharani (2018), and Rosyidah (2021). In their study, the most frequently used strategy is positive politeness. The studies that Maharani did (2018) that used the same data source as this study, the second presidential debate by Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, showed that Donald Trump was dominant in using the bald-on-record strategy. However, in this

study, he was dominant in using negative politeness.

In the topic of Covid-19, the two candidates used various politeness strategies. However, the two candidates rarely use positive politeness on national security, economy, race in America, and climate change. Especially on the topic of immigration, the two candidates never used the politeness strategy. Instead, they only focus on each other's arguments and sometimes attack each other. The use of negative politeness is also only used when the candidates want to ask the moderator for additional time to respond to the opponent's argument. The following are the results of the analysis found. The data is sorted according to the type of politeness and the most widely used strategy.

Positive Strategies

Positive politeness is used to satisfy a positive hearer's face. Positive politeness shows the closeness between the speaker and the hearer. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), the strategies of positive politeness involve three broad mechanisms; claim common ground, convey that S and H are cooperators, and fulfills H's want for some X. There are eight sub strategies in claim common ground; notice or attend to H about his interests/wants/needs/goods, exaggerate the interest/approval/sympathy with H, intensify interest in H, use in-group identity markers, seek agreement, avoid disagreement, presuppose/raise/assert common ground, and joke. In convey that S and H are cooperators, there are six strategies; assert or presuppose knowledge of and concern for hearer's wants, offer and promise, be optimistic, include both S and H in the activity, give or ask for reasons, assert reciprocal exchange. Meanwhile in fulfills H's want for some X, there is only one strategy; give H's wish.

After analyzing the data, 18 data were found that the candidates used positive politeness. From the 18 data, various strategies are used. The most frequently used strategy in positive politeness is the intensify interest in H strategy. Both candidates used this strategy by sharing their personal experiences with the public. They did this strategy to make the hearers more interested in the statement that will be delivered. The next most frequently used strategy is the offer or promise strategy and the avoid disagreement strategy, both used three times. The next most widely used strategy is being an optimistic strategy, which is used twice. While the strategy of give H's wish, exaggerating the interest, approval, or sympathy with H, presuppose/raise/assert common ground, and include H in the activity is used once each.

In using positive politeness, Trump uses many strategies. The most widely used strategy in positive politeness is intensifying interest in H. In building his argument, Trump started his statement by telling about his personal experience. He did this strategy three times, in 01/DT/PP/1:03, 02/DT/PP/28.35, 03/DT/PP/29.46. The goal is to make the hearers feel interested, so the hearers will be more focused on listening to his argument. Another widely used strategy is being optimistic, with two times usage in 13/DT/PP/1:03 and 14/DT/PP/5:12. In using this strategy, Trump conveys his argument optimistically. The reason is that the candidates try to persuade the public to vote for them in the debate. Moreover, to persuade people, optimism and confidence are needed. Other strategies he used include making promises and offers, give gifts to H, exaggerating the interest/approval/sympathy with H, avoid disagreement, presuppose/raise/assert common ground, and include H in activities.

Meanwhile Joe Biden used every kind of politeness strategy. Biden is dominant in using positive politeness and off record. Biden uses positive politeness seven times. The most widely used strategy is intensifying interest in H. Just like Trump, Biden also used the intensify interest in H strategy three times. Biden builds on his argument by telling the story first. He wants to grab the hearers' attention and make the hearers pay more attention to him. He used this strategy in 05/JP/PP/39:15. . Biden also uses the avoid disagreement and promise or offer strategy twice. Biden uses an avoid disagreement strategy when he disagrees with the opinions of others. However, he expresses his disapproval implicitly. This strategy is found in 10/JP/PP/12:51 and 12/JP/PP/1.28.17. While the promise and offer strategy he uses when promising something to the hearers. He wants to tell the hearers that what the hearers need, he will support. This strategy is found in 08/JP/PP/3:12 and 09/JP/PP/1.32.00. He also used include H in the activity strategy in his last statement in 09/JP/PP/1.32.00.

Negative Strategies

Negative politeness is used to satisfy the hearer's negative face. This strategy is usually used for mutual respect rather than to be close with the hearer. Usually, this strategy is used if there are differences in social roles between the speaker and the hearer. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), the strategies of negative politeness involve five class; be direct, don't presume or assume, don't coerce H, communicate S's want to not impinge on H, and redress other wants of H's. The amount of strategies in these five types is ten

strategies. In the be direct type, there is one strategy, namely, be conventionally indirect. In the do not presume or assume type, there is also one strategy: do not presume or assume. While in do not coerce H, there are three strategies; be pessimistic, minimize the imposition, and give deference. In communicate S's want to not impinge on H, there are four strategies; apologize, impersonalize the speaker and the hearer, state the FTA as an instance of a general rule, and nominalize to distance the actor and add formality. And in redress other wants of H's, there is one strategy; go on record as incurring debt, or as not indebteding H.

After analyzing the data, it was found that eleven utterances from Biden and Trump used a negative politeness strategy. The most used strategy is the apology strategy. Trump widely uses this strategy when he wants to ask Welker time to respond to Biden's arguments. Then there is the do not presume or assume and be a conventionally indirect strategy, each of which is used twice. Last, there is a strategy to minimize the imposition with one time.

Off Record Strategies

Off-record is a strategy that regulates speakers to speak indirectly. Therefore, in using this strategy, the speaker must convey his wishes indirectly. This strategy allows the hearer to interpret the meaning of the sentence himself. There are two ways to use this strategy, namely invite conversational implicatures and be vague or ambiguous. In invite conversational implicatures, there are nine strategies. They are giving a hint or clue, give association clues, presuppose, understate, overstate, tautologies, contradictions, rhetorical questions, and be ironic. Meanwhile, in be vague or ambiguous, there are four strategies; use metaphor, over-generalize, displacement H, use incomplete, or use ellipsis. After analyzed the data, it was found that the two candidates used off-record strategies. The most widely used strategy is a rhetorical question three times. Then other strategies such as contradiction, metaphor, and displacement H are used once each.

In the use of off-record, Biden uses four strategies. Biden uses displace H strategy as in 35/DT/OR/3:12. This strategy is used to hide whom the target is talking about by S, but S hopes that the real target will notice. Biden also uses a contradiction strategy in 37/JB/OR/10:22. He conveyed his statement not clearly but through two contrary things. Also, Biden uses a rhetorical question strategy as in 33/JB/OR/10:22. Biden uses this strategy by asking questions to make a point. Then, he uses a strategy of metaphors as in

Bald on Record Strategies

Bald on Record is part of politeness strategies. However, this strategy is different from other strategies. This strategy prefers efficiency over satisfying the hearer. Using this strategy, the speaker conveys his wishes in a direct, clear, and unambiguous manner. This strategy is the same as the theory of cooperative principles by Grice (1975). However, this strategy can only be used in two cases; urgent or desperate and FTA-oriented bald on record usage.

In the existing data, it is found 4 data that used this strategy. 39/DT/BoR/12.26, 40/JB/BoR/29:12, 41/JB/BoR/1:11:29, 42/JB/BoR/1.28.31. The four data are equally used in a desperate position. The candidates used this strategy in an urgent situation. Like when the moderator wanted to change the question, but the candidates were not satisfied yet with the opponent's answer. So they used a bald on-record strategy to make it easy for the moderator to understand the intent of his wishes quickly.

Sociological Variables that Influence the Candidates Using Politeness Strategies

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), there are three sociological variables that influence someone to use politeness strategies. The three sociological variables that can influence the use of politeness strategies are social distance (D), relative power (P), and absolute ranking (R) of impositions.

After analyzing the type of politeness strategy used by Donald Trump and Joe Biden, the same data was then analyzed for sociological factors. It was found that both candidates using politeness strategies were influenced by two sociological variables, namely social distance and absolute ranking of impositions. As a result, 28 data from the politeness strategies used by candidates were found to be influenced by social distance. This factor affects the use of positive politeness, bald on record, and off record. Meanwhile, the other 14 data are influenced by the absolute rank of imposition.

Social Distance (D)

Social distance is the distance between the speaker and the hearer. The distance means the frequency of interactions between the two. If they never interacted before, it is called social distance. In this case, they must use politeness strategies. However, if the speaker

and the hearer have a high intimacy, it is called social closeness. If so, they rarely use politeness strategies.

The data shows that the candidates use a positive politeness strategy mostly when giving a public opinion. They use this strategy to build closer relationships with the public. There were 28 data, from data 1 to data 18, which used positive politeness due to this factor. Since this is a presidential debate, the candidates have understood the public's wishes. The candidates want to have a good intimacy with the hearer. They want the hearer to have the same understanding as to the candidates until they finally choose the candidates during the election. That is why they choose positive politeness as a strategy when stating a statement to the public.

Absolute Ranking (R) of Impositions

The absolute ranking of impositions relates to how difficult or important the situation is when conveying his wish. When the desire expressed is a big favor, then use politeness strategies. The speaker must use politeness strategies to avoid imposition to the negative face on the hearer. However, politeness strategies are rarely done if one wants to avoid imposition to the positive face on the hearer. In the use of negative politeness, according to Brown and Levinson (1987), there are two scales in absolute ranking of impositions; services, including the provision of time, and goods, including information.

In the 2020 Final Presidential Debate, there are four parties: Donald Trump as the first candidate, Joe Biden as the second candidate, Kristen Welker as the moderator, and the public as spectators both in place and watching on television. Apart from that debate, Donald Trump served as president of the United States at that time. Joe Biden is a former vice president who served for two or eight years from 2009 to 2017. At the same time, Kristen Welker is an American television journalist working for NBC News. Outside of debate, Trump has more significant power than the other two. It is because he is still serving as president of the United States. However, in the debate, Trump and Biden are the participants, while Kristen Welker is the moderator. So, there is a status exchange between them. Beyond debate, both Trump and Biden will likely speak to Welker in a straightforward. However, because Welker has supreme power in this debate, Trump and Biden prefer to use more subtle language.

The use of politeness strategy because of this factor can be found when both candidates use negative politeness. Data 19 to data 32 contain the use of negative

politeness used when talking to Welker. 14 data used negative politeness and are affected by the absolute ranking of impositions. These negative strategies occur when candidates ask Welker for additional time. Since Welker is leading the debate, Welker has the right to decide the course of the debate. If she feels that one topic is enough, Welker has the right to switch to another topic in order to fulfill the limited time. Therefore, when the candidates asked Welker time to respond to the opponent's argument, they used negative politeness strategies.

Based on available data, when the candidates ask for service from the hearer, they use negative politeness. The service is mainly in the form of time to respond to the opponent's argument before moving on to the next question. So, all uses of negative politeness in this study are influenced by sociological variables, namely absolute rank of imposition.

Relative Power (P)

Relative power or P relates to the social role between the speaker and the hearer. When the hearer has less power than the speaker, they rarely use politeness strategies. On the other hand, if the hearer is more dominant in power, it must use politeness strategies. This factor was not found in the data. In the debate, the candidates do not use their power when arguing. It is because in the debate, their position is the same. Instead, the moderator has an essential role in the debate.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

After conducting the analysis, it can be concluded that both candidates used all four politeness strategies. The most frequently used strategy is positive politeness. Trump used this strategy eleven times, while Joe Biden used this strategy seven times. The following strategies are negative politeness off-record strategy, the bald on record respectively.

The sociological variables that influence the candidates using the politeness strategy are social distance and absolute ranking of impositions. When presenting their arguments in public, the candidates use positive politeness. It is used to build closeness with the hearers. Meanwhile, in using negative politeness when talking to the moderator, the candidates are influenced by absolute ranking of impositions. Both candidates used more subtle words when asking the moderator for extra time.

REFERENCES

- Alasmari, A. & Ahmed, S. S. (2013). Using Debate in EFL Classes. *English Language Teaching*, 6 (1).
- Ayuningrum, A., P., Rosnasari., S., Syahrizal. (2018). An Analysis of Politeness Strategies Applied by the Members of UKM Debat, the University of Bengkulu. *Journal of English Education and Teaching (JEET)*, 2 (4), 1-8.
- Benoit, W.L. (2000). Let's Put "Debate" into Presidential Debates. Retrieved from <https://www.uvm.edu/~debate/NFL/rostrumlib/Benoit%20May'00.pdf>.
- Brown, P. & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge: Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research Design Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches (3rd Ed.)*. California: Sage Publication.
- Holmes, J. (2013). *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics (4th Ed.)*. New York: Routledge.
- Lunenburg, F. C. (2010). Communication: The Process, Barriers, And Improving Effectiveness. *Schooling*, 1 (1), 1.
- Maharani, T. (2018). A Study of Politeness Strategies Used by Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump on the Second Presidential Debate [thesis, Sanata Dharma University].
- Rosyidah, R. H. (2019). Politeness As a Strategy of Attack in Presidential Debate in Indonesia 2019. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Learning (JETLE)*, 3 (1), 40-48.
- Yule, G. (1996). *Pragmatics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.