



# Politeness Strategies Used by Trump and El-Sisi in Their Speeches at United Nations Assembly

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### Abstract

In this study, the researchers identified ways that politeness strategies are commonly employed in a speech. Specifically, this study aimed at exploring the politeness strategies used by Donald Trump and General El Sisi during their speech at the 75th session of the UN General Assembly. Both the similarities and the differences between Donald Trump's and General Sisi's use of politeness strategies and sub-strategies in their speeches were investigated. A qualitative research approach was conducted, and the theory of politeness strategies by Brown and Levinson was applied as the analysis framework. The research data was collected from the 57 utterances in Trump's speech and 79 utterances in General Sisi's speech. The analysis results showed that both Trump and El-Sisi applied bald on record, positive, and negative politeness. Specifically, the politeness strategies found in Trump's speech were 10 utterances of bald on record, 53 utterances of positive politeness, 8 utterances of negative politeness, and two utterances of off-record strategy. On the contrary, General Sisi's speech mostly contained negative politeness strategies. It was found that there were 70 utterances of negative politeness, 11 utterances of positive politeness, and 1 utterance of off-record strategy. These various politeness strategies used by Donald Trump and General Sisi could not be separated from their respective social positions, social distances, and cultural backgrounds.

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## INTRODUCTION

Politeness strategies can be examined in the domain of linguistics through a discipline called pragmatics. According to Yule (1996), understanding pragmatics is essential since it enables people to understand people's implicit meanings, presumptions, goals, and the kinds of activities they engage in when they interact. The study of pragmatics examines the relationships between language constructions and their use. Pragmatics, in addition to semantics and syntax, allows students to perform analysis (Yule, 1996). In addition, Yule stated that it is difficult to study human intents and acts using a hard and obvious objective technique.

Issues with pragmatics can be observed in both informal and formal discourse. It is possible to see the speaker paying attention to the language they use in a speech, which is encouraged by their environment and language usage. Without offering very clear linguistic evidence that we can cite as the explicit source of "the meaning" of what was communicated, two speakers in the same situation may choose different words and expressions. Consequently, from the perspective of pragmatics, speech is an interesting object to study. According to Pratama (2017), studying linguistics has always included pragmatic analysis. It is underlined in Pratama (2015), classic analysis of Leech's (1983) work that pragmatics can be defined as the study of how speech conveys meaning in a variety of contexts. The distinction between Semantics and Pragmatics using example questions from X is a simple illustration of Leech. scholars in the subject of pragmatics would question, "What do you mean by X?" if semantics scholars asked, "What does X mean?" The position of language users and their perception of language use using focused pragmatic linguistics are as Leech explains.

By using politeness in interpersonal communication, pragmatics plays a crucial role in the growth of social bonds. It determines the speaker's attitude toward the audience as well as the conventions of language that the speaker may employ to address, demand, blame,

contradict, interrupt, or apologize to other community members. According to Mujiyanto (2017), the socio-cultural context in which a courtesy act is used makes it mandatory and part of the norm.

People from similar and diverse cultural backgrounds attempt to communicate verbally with one another through oral communication. According to Kusuma (2014) and Renkema (1993), politeness is a strategy that is necessary for a conversation to flow smoothly. The desire to be "kind" to others in order to establish strong communication relationships can be viewed as being polite (Tretyakova, 2016). Both the phrase politeness in linguistic communication and the informal language used by members of a culture or community are not uncommon studies. There are professionals in the scientific field who have researched politeness and politeness techniques in language use and oral communication processes.

Being polite is an issue that all languages have their unique definitions for. This study of social and cultural values of specific individuals from various political and cultural backgrounds is particularly relevant to pragmatics. According to Yule (1996), being polite demonstrates awareness of another person's face, which is linked to social proximity or distance. Politeness is a highly crucial instrument when many people from extremely various social backgrounds with so many varieties of cultural behavior are communicating in one community or organization. When so many people from diverse cultural backgrounds are communicating at once, there will be many different ways to use a single language.

Some analysts distinguish between distinct forms of politeness. Lakoff, Fraser, Brown, Levinson, and Leech are the experts. Both theories are essentially based on the same observation, notably Grice's theory that speakers do not always act by the cooperative principles of quality, quantity, and relationship in actual communication. According to Lakoff, politeness was developed by the community in order to reduce (differences of opinion in personal interaction. According to him, there are three

rules that must be obeyed to apply politeness, namely formality, hesitancy, and similarity or equality. Meanwhile, Fraser explains politeness as basic strategies than as a rule, which means that Fraser only distinguishes politeness from respect (Hartini et al., 2017). Moreover, Leech believes that politeness is an important quality that should never be neglected because it affects how speakers and listeners interact throughout conversations. Six maxims, the maxims of wisdom, generosity, appreciation, simplicity, consensus, and sympathy, are suggested for a study of politeness principles in pragmatics, according to him.

The two main components of Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, which was published in 1987, are now widely acknowledged in the literature. Their fundamental theory regarding the idea of "politeness" and how it functions in encounters is explained in the first part. A list of politeness strategies is provided in the second section. The bald on-record strategy promotes a lack of effort to reduce dangers to the interlocutor's honor. The speaker uses positive politeness strategies while taking into account that the relationship is close and that the other person should be respected. Negative politeness is a strategy used by the speaker when they are aware that the listener needs to be respected and are making an effort to do so. The Off-Record Strategies is a politeness technique that involves avoiding any phrase or behavior that could make the other person feel embarrassed.

Politeness is required in all speech engagements, not just those between two people. This is necessary in the field of public speaking as well. Speech is a type of communication categorized as public speaking. According to Kusuma (2014), Brown and Yule (1986) found that people cooperate on basic speech mechanics. Considering that public speaking is defined as an activity with a multi-person audience, this is the case.

For example, this research is intended to explore the distinctive techniques of using the English language by national leaders for giving their addresses at the 75th United Nations

General Assembly. Most nations in the world gather yearly to attend the general assembly of the United Nations, which is a worldwide organization. The primary decision-making body of the UN is the General Assembly (UNGA). It establishes a distinctive setting for multilateral discussion of significant global issues covered by the UN Charter. Each Member State is represented. Each of the United Nations' 193 member states has an equal vote. The Assembly convenes in regular sessions from September through December each year, as well as whenever necessary after that. It establishes a distinctive setting for multilateral discussion of significant global issues covered by the UN Charter. Each Member State is represented. The 193 member nations of the United Nations each have one vote. The Assembly meets in regular sessions from September through December each year, as well as whenever necessary after that. With dedicated agenda items or sub-topics, it addresses specific concerns and develops some remedies.

The 75th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA 75) begins on September 15, 2020, and runs through September 29, 2020, with the High-Level General Debate taking place from September 22 to September 26. Under the theme "The future we want, the United Nations we need: reaffirming our collective commitment to multilateralism, resolving COVID-19 via effective multilateral action," the General Assembly conducted a high-level meeting on September 21 to commemorate the United Nations' 75th anniversary. The session featured a high-level ceremony to commemorate the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action's 25th anniversary, during which world leaders are anticipated to take concrete action. General Abdel Fattah El Sisi, the sixth president of Egypt, and Donald J. Trump, the 45th president of the United States, both gave special presentations at this conference.

This study will look at how the 45th US President, Donald Trump, and the 6th Egyptian President, General A.F. El Sisi, applied Brown and Levinson's civility techniques in their

speeches at the 75th UN General Assembly (UNGA). The United Nations General Assembly is a prominent international gathering in which all UN members from all over the world take part. On January 20, 2017, Donald Trump was inaugurated as the 45th President of the United States. Trump was elected as the official Republican candidate to take against Democrat Hillary Clinton in the 2016 presidential election. Trump was also a businessman and real estate developer who owned, ran, or had his name attached to a number of hotels, casinos, golf courses, resorts, and residential properties in and around New York City. Donald Trump studied at Fordham University in the Bronx from 1964 to 1966, the elite boarding school New York Military Academy from 1959 to 1964, and the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Finance and Business from 1966 to 1968, where he earned a bachelor's degree in economics.

After President Mohamed Morsi was ousted by the military in July 2013 as a result of sizable protests against his rule, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, a military officer in Egypt, assumed control as the country's de facto leader. After earning his degree from the Egyptian Military Academy in 1977, Sisi served in the infantry. Sisi was first elected president in May 2014, and was re-elected in March 2018 for a second term.

Trump and Sisi come from very different social backgrounds and cultures, which is the primary justification for using their speeches as research subject. Given that Donald Trump is an American native, He speaks English as a first language. General Sisi, who hails from Egypt, is a non-native speaker in the meantime. We can infer from their disparate backgrounds that they have employed various politeness strategies in the same formal setting.

## METHOD

This study applied a qualitative research approach. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001), the main objective of qualitative research is to understand social

processes from the researcher's point of view. This study used the video of Donald Trump's and General A.F. El Sisi's speech to the 75<sup>th</sup> United Nations General Assembly as the source of research data. The video was accessed through the YouTube platform. In relation to that, the data were the speakers' utterances containing politeness strategies. Moreover, the study used Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness strategies to analyze the research data.

Several stages of data collection were 1) watching and listening to the speech, 2) transcribing the speech, 3) reviewing the transcriptions, and 4) selecting the speakers' utterances. Furthermore, the data analyses were 1) identifying the utterances by using Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness strategies, 2) classifying or grouping the utterances based on the types of politeness strategies, 3) frequency analysis, 4) data interpretation, and 5) drawing a conclusion. As aforementioned, the classification of research data was based on the types of politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson, including bald of record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The present study aimed at investigating the politeness strategies used by Trump and General Sisi in their speeches. By using Brown's and Levinson's theory of Politeness Strategies, four types of politeness strategies were identified. The findings are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Politeness Strategies Used by Trump and General Sisi

Politeness Strategies	Speakers		Total
	Trump	General Sisi	
Bald on Record	10	-	10
Positive Politeness	53	11	64
Negative Politeness	8	68	76
Off Record	2	1	3
Total	73	70	153

### **Politeness Strategies Used by Trump**

Bald on record

Positive Politeness

Negative politeness

Off record

There are 57 separate utterances from Donald Trump's address put down into a table for analysis. Based on a theoretical framework that describes Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness tactics, the analysis was carried out. In this study, researchers discovered that Trump's speech contains four different types of politeness strategies as well as a number of sub-strategies. The politeness strategies in Donald Trump's speech are bald on record in as many as 10 utterances, positive politeness occurred in 53 utterances, negative politeness in 8 utterances, and off-record strategies only in 2 utterances.

There are several utterances that have been confirmed as bald on record that suggest disagreement and warning/threatening sub-strategies happened. Trump's utterances as Bald on Record strategies occurred 10 times. The warning and threatening sub-strategies are used in the 10th, 11th, and 12th utterances; two utterances use "showing disagreement" sub-strategies (13th and 14th); and the last three utterances are thanking and praying. There is an imperative form used by Trump when addressing the participants of 75th session of United Nations General Assembly in utterance number 52.

Noticing, exaggerating, intensifying interest in the interlocutor, using in-group identity marker, seeking agreement, being optimistic, including both parties in an activity, assuming and asserting reciprocity, and giving gifts to the interlocutor are some sub-strategies that Donald Trump uses in his speech that have been analysed as positive politeness. Within various sub-strategies, 53 utterances were assessed as positive politeness strategies, and they are listed as follows: One sentence serves as a notice (attend to hearer), 17 sentences employ exaggeration, and 11 sentences use Intensify the interlocutor's interest, use two in-group identity markers, seek agreement, be optimistic, include both parties in an activity in 16 utterances, give

the interlocutor gifts in one utterance, and assume and assert reciprocity three times.

Trump's statements for the negative politeness utterances are including giving deference, going on record as incurring debt, and stating FTA as general rule. Based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness strategies, this study identified eight utterances in which Donald Trump employs negative politeness. They consist of three giving deference in utterances number 1, 15, and 21; three utterances of going on as incurring debt in utterance number 18, 36, and 45; and two times of stating FTA as general rule in the utterance number 37 and 38.

The indirect language used in off-the-record methods eliminates the speaker's capacity to come out as dominant. To make the speaker's point obvious, it involves saying something ambiguous or otherwise different from what the speaker truly implies, depending on the listener's interpretation. This study founded Off-record Strategies occurred twice in the utterances number 42 and 43.

### **Politeness Strategies in General Sisi Speech Transcripts**

The General A.F. Al Sisi speech transcript contained a total of 79 utterances, all of which were examined using Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness strategies. General Sisi's statements contain three different types of politeness methods: positive politeness in 11 utterances, negative politeness in up to 68 utterances, and off-the-record strategies in just one utterance.

When a speaker wants to build a relationship with the other person or purposefully wants to project a positive image of the other person, they utilize positive politeness. Although Brown and Levinson (1987) outline fifteen sub-strategies for describing positive politeness, the researcher has discovered that General Sisi only employs a select handful of these in his speeches, they are intensifying interest to the interlocutor and involving both parties in the activity. Exaggerating or overstating the circumstance or the

situation may be used to convey interest to the interlocutor. General Sisi used this sub-strategy once in his speech, that is in the utterance number 31. The speaker makes an effort to get the speech partner involved in group projects. The act of welcoming is one that enhances the positive perception of others. The other party experiences consideration and humanization. In General Sisi's speech, the strategy of including both party in activity appears nine times.

The negative politeness strategies are known for being specific, indirect, and typically articulated in complex phrases. General Sisi's negative politeness has been identified as using the following sub-strategies: being conventionally indirect occurred in eight (8) utterances, giving deference happens in 28 utterances, impersonalizing speaker and interlocutor in six (6) utterances, stating the FTA as a general rule as much as 16 utterances, nominalizing in 10 utterances, and going on record as incurring a debt founded in four (4) utterances.

Off-the-record strategies is the reverse of bald-on record strategies. Its attributes are typically ambiguous and indirect, requiring the hearer to interpret what the speaker is saying in order to understand their main intention (Brown and Levinson, 1987). The off-record strategies only used once in General Sisi's address, and that was in utterance number 15.

### **Differences and Similarities Between Trump and Sisi Politeness Strategies**

The distinctions and similarities in how politeness strategies are used in the speeches of Donald Trump and General El Sisi can be inferred from the analysis. Their use of positive politeness, negative politeness, bald on record, and negative politeness within give deference as its sub-strategies in the introduction of their speeches are similarities between their speeches.

Because their speech patterns are differed, diversity in their politeness strategies is found more frequently than their similarities. Trump's politeness style is dominated by bald on record and positive politeness strategies. Trump's

speech is dominated by positive politeness strategies in 53 of his 57 total utterances, according to data. From the total number of 53 utterances that are classified as positive politeness, Trump uses of exaggeration sub-strategies as much as 17 times, how Trump dared to include both parties in activity occurred 16 times, and intensifying interest to the interlocutor occurred in 11 times. The three sub-strategies clearly show that Trump has a strong and dominant position in the UN forum and dares to speak vulgarly, to the point, and even exaggerates the facts of the situation to win dominance in the forum.

Otherwise, General Sisi's speech differs from Donald Trump's in terms of politeness characteristics. The data revealed that, of the 79 utterances entered into the table, 11 utterances used positive politeness, 70 utterances used negative politeness, one utterance was off-record, and there were no utterances classified as bald-on record. There are 35 statements made by General Sisi that are extended phrases that are classified as negative politeness. In utterances 2, 8, 10, 12, 14, 19, 20, 23, 26, 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, 39, 39, 44, 46, 48, 50, 53, 55, 57, 58, 60, 62, 63, 65, 66, 68, 69, 71, 72, 74, and 78, they can be noticed. Giving deference, which was mentioned in 28 utterances, Stating the FTA as a General Rule, which was mentioned in 14 utterances, and Nominalizing, which was mentioned in 10 utterances, make up the top three sub-strategies. Some of the negative politeness strategies employed by General Sisi have been scientifically linked to the Islamic faith, such as in utterances number one (1) and number eight (8).

### **CONCLUSION**

The speech analysis data from Donald Trump and General Sisi show significant variations. The most notable distinction is that Donald Trump's speech uses a lot more positive politeness than General Sisi does. In contrast, practically every sentence in General Sisi's speech contained examples of negative

politeness strategies. These various politeness strategies used by Donald Trump and General Sisi could not be separate from their respective social positions, social distances, and cultural backgrounds. This is confirmed by a study by Suwartama and Fitriati (2017), which found that social connection or distance can affect how individuals practice both positive politeness and negative politeness. Politeness is a concept employed in the pragmatic and sociolinguistic study of socio-communicative verbal interaction, according to El Mourad (2019).

Positive politeness strategies and bald on record are the trademarks of Trump's diplomatic style. Politeness of this kind makes it simpler for a politician to assume an intimate relationship with the other person and establish himself as the forum's main speaker. This study demonstrates Trump's desire to dominate, be appreciated, and be accepted as the concept of a positive face.

It is important to consider General Sisi's history as an Arab who supports a culture of religion, set politeness, and a method of speaking that is purposefully logical and thorough while discussing his speech. The argument that politeness is limited by social culture is supported by Mujiyanto's (2017) study, which compares the politeness components between New Headway Intermediate Student's Book and Bahasa Inggris SMA/MA/SMK/MAK. Sisi uses a lot of long, monotonous sentences in his speeches, rarely makes direct threats to the listener's face like Trump did when he named China specifically, and the majority of his utterances are categorized as using negative politeness. Because Islam is the predominant religion in the Arab world, it is also inseparable from Arab culture. According to a 2017 article by Brown, a professor of political science and international affairs at George Washington University, every Arab state has sizable, officially recognized Muslim religious institutions, which allow governments a significant influence over religious life.

The researcher expects that this study will be useful to readers, students, future researchers,

lecturers, and other academics. Theoretically, this study could add to the literature on pragmatics, particularly in regards to the use of politeness and diplomatic strategies in the speeches of prominent worldwide public figures and politicians. Politeness regulates the context and environment of communication between speaker and interlocutor since it is a crucial component of effective communication. If no politeness strategies are employed when the contact between the speaker and the interlocutor is occurring, a communication may be misread and misunderstood.

Knowledge of pragmatics is crucial to avoiding misunderstandings during interactions. The researcher believes that in addition to immersing students in structural and grammatical theories, English language instruction in Indonesia needs to pay more attention to how students are taught pragmatics. This work may serve as a source of inspiration for future researchers with an interest in the pragmatics and politeness fields. In a practical sense, this research helps EFL students by enhancing their discourse analysis skills and cross-cultural communication. Students are required to learn and understand English, as well as communicate more properly in English, through understanding the social element of language. Donald Trump, a former US president, and General Sisi, the president of Egypt, are the two different cultural speech producers discussed in this study. This clearly shows how their usage of politeness methods differs and is influenced by their respective cultures and systems of power.

For the pedagogical side, the researcher recommends that pragmatics instruction be introduced to the high school English curriculum. This instruction should focus on how to comprehend utterances in terms of politeness and how to create utterances using politeness tactics. Students' sociocultural competency and ability to open their minds to language use may both benefit from it. The study of politeness strategies by an international political figure in a global forum could help English teachers in Indonesia in their effort to

improve the atmosphere of classrooms and their knowledge of language usage.

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