Pragmatic Analysis of (Im)politeness in the USA Presidential Speeches in Pre- and Post-Election Campaign

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Abstract

This study aims at investigating linguistically from a pragmatic perspective the (im)politeness of political speeches of the US presidential campaign . There is relatively little literature tackles the shift from politeness to impoliteness or vice versa in the political speeches before and after the election camping. This study tries to shed light on these linguistic shifts between politeness and impoliteness in the political speeches in accordance with particular pragmatic theory. Leech's principle of politeness is the pragmatic theory that is used to analyze these data of the current study. The data are taken from different election campaign by different presidents like Doland Trump and Joe Biden. The extracts chosen are analyzed in detail so as to find out the shift from politeness to impoliteness or vice versa in the speeches committed by the politicians. This study ends with some conclusions that show the politicians' language has a considerable change before and after election concerning one issue,

this shift in their speeches refers to the fact that politician always go after their benefits.

Keywords: leech's principle of politeness, politeness, impoliteness.

1.1 The concept of politeness

Linguists have different perspectives on politeness. Crystal (1997: 297) claims that politeness is a term in Sociolinguistics and Pragmatics that refers to linguistic features associated with social behavior norms, in relation to concepts such as courtesy, rapport, deference and distance. Such features involve the usage of specific discourse markers (please), suitable tones of voice, and tolerable forms of address (e.g. the choice of intimate v. distant pronouns, or of first v. last names).

 Watts (2003: 85) states that the first theory of linguistic politeness made by Brown and Levinson appeared in 1978 and it is called 'face-saving' theory of politeness. Brown and Levinson (1987:1) view politeness " as a complex system for softening face threats". They drew their own definition on Goffman's face theory.

Watts (2003: 12) states that Brown and Levinson view politeness as an idealized concept , they call for the university of politeness that means all languages have the means to express politeness , however Watts criticizes their concept of universality because languages have different linguistics structures to express politeness , and it needs a shift of interest from the linguistics politeness to the social interaction and the ways in which politeness determines it since what is considered as polite behavior for one group may be not for another.

While according to Watts(2003: 9) the theory of politeness should concern itself with the discursive struggle over politeness, which means that what can be considered as polite behaviour is determined by the lay individuals

and not by the social scientists who theorizes about politeness away from everyday discourse , he (١٩٨٩:135) defines politic behavior as :"socio culturally determined behaviour directed towards the goal of establishing and/or maintaining in a state of equilibrium the personal relationships between the individuals of a social group".

Similar to Brown and Levinson, Yule also focus on the concept of face in his definition of politeness (1996) he defines it as an individual's awareness of the another person's self-image. According to his definition, politeness takes place "in situations of social distance or closeness" (p.60).

 For Leech (1983: 81), politeness principle suggests that one has to 'maximize the expression of polite beliefs, minimize the expression of impolite beliefs'. He divides them into six maxims: tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy. He views politeness as a complementary concept to the cooperative principle. Furthermore, he (2014) looks at impoliteness as "communicative altruism," in which the individual speaks or does something respectfully to the audience in return for a reward (p.3). It might be stated that the speaker says or does something that benefits the listener rather than himself/herself.

Similar to leech, Lakoff relates politeness to the Grecian cooperative principle, she defines politeness as "[…] a system of interpersonal relations designed to facilitate interaction by minimizing the potential for conflict and confrontation inherent in all human interchange" (Lakoff, 1990, p.34 cited in Eelen, 2001, p.2). For Eelen (2001), politeness is a phenomenon that is related to the relation holding "between language and social reality" (p.1)

In addition to the previous definitions, Spencer-Oatey (2000, pp.13-15) proposes another notion for her studies of politeness which is rapport

management, "the management of social relations". Rapport management is realized through two alternatives, namely face management and sociality right management, she considers Brown and Levinson''s negative politeness as part of the management of sociality rights and has nothing to do with face want.

1.2 The concept of impoliteness

Watts states that the term of (im) politeness is controversial, a term that is struggled over at present, has been struggled over in the past and will, in all probability, continue to be struggled over in the future." (2003: 9).

Bluefield (2008:72) focuses on intentionality and the notion of face in his definition of impoliteness, he defines it as " constitutes the communication of intentionally gratuitous and conflictive verbal face-threatening acts which are purposefully delivered: 1) unmitigated […], and /or (2) with deliberated aggression […]".

Similar to Bousfield, Cuppler focuses on the perceptions of speaker's intention. Culpeper's (2005: 38) definition involves both the speaker's and the hearer's perceptions of intention: Impoliteness comes about when: " (1) the speaker communicates face-attack intentionally, or (2) the hearer perceives behaviour as intentionally face-attacking, or a combination of (1) and (2) ". Cuppler (2008) adds that Impoliteness " involves communicative behavior intending to cause the "face loss" of a target or perceived by the target to be so" (36).

Sarah Mills looks at the notion of impoliteness from the dimension of community of practice, she states that "Impoliteness can only be understood and analyzed pragmatically when considered in relation to group/community understanding of utterances, and also in terms of the long-term discourse strategies of the interlocutors" (2003:139). She claims

that there are many factors that influence our perception of whether the person can be judged as impolite or not. These factors are gender, race, ethnicity, etc.

Social norms play a vital role in the studies of impoliteness, Holmes (2008) et al. emphasize the importance of social norms and the perception of the hearer while disregarding the role of intentionality. They define verbal impoliteness as " linguistic behavior assessed by the hearer as threatening her or his face or social identity, and infringing the norms of appropriate behavior that prevail in particular contexts and among particular interlocutors, whether intentionally or not"(2008:196).

 Terkourafi (2008) looks at impoliteness as unintentional while rudeness is intentional. She says that "in impoliteness the face-threat is taken to be accidental, i.e. attributed to the speaker's ignorance or incompetence, for instance, in cross-cultural communication – whereas in rudeness the face-threat is taken to be intentional." She states that impoliteness and rudeness can be distinguished through an inferential process in order to recognize the speaker's intention. So when the hearer knowns the speaker's intention , he understands that it is not face-threatening intention, conversely in rudeness proper the opposite occurs as the hearer realizes the existence of the speaker's face-threatening intention (pp.61- 62).

 In contrast to Terkouafi, Culpeper regards (2008) rudeness as "unintentional face-attack", but impoliteness is "intentional face-attack". According to him, impoliteness is conveyed by impolite person himself who is responsible for causing other offence, while in rudeness the behaviour itself not the person is regarded as impolite. He consider rudeness as "unintentional relational mismanagement", whereas impoliteness as "intentional negatively-oriented relational management" (pp.32-33)

Some scholars, like Schnurr, etal. (2008:216-228) ,foucus on the cruial role of context in perceiving the impolite behavior. According to them there are two types of discourse moves of impolite behavior:"1- "discourse moves which appear superficially polite or politic but which convey a very impolite, contenstive , or subversive message[s]…which seem to be polite in their form,but …express impolite or rude content." 2-"discourse moves , which appear inherently impolite, but …on closer examination … [are] characterized as politic behavior."(ibid: 216) .The second category highly depends on the social context where what is seen impolite in certain social context is polite in another.

1.3 Political context

Chilton &Schaffner (2002:5) define politics into two different ways, "as a struggle for power, between those who seek to assert and maintain their power and those who seek to resist it", and oppositely "as cooperation, as the practices and institutions a society has for resolving clashes of interest over money, power, liberty and the like". The first definition explains the violent aspect of politics, whereas the second explains the peaceful side.

According to Van Djik (2006), political situations do not simply force political actors to speak in certain ways; rather, there is a necessity for a cognitive collaboration between events and talk or text that is a context (p.733). These political contexts shape how people believe, interpret, and describe the political reality that is important to them.

Chilton (2004:80) claims that Context is very important to the analysis of political discourse. Their importance spring from the fact that contexts refers to the knowledge that helps to define the world to the speakers in the discourse.

1.4 Leech's principle of politeness

Leech proposes the principle of politeness that is comparable to Grice's cooperative principle. According to him pp is considered as a constrain to manage communication between people, it means avoiding communicative discord or offensive and supporting communicative concord or comity. By communicative discord, he means that two persons in a given situation try to achieve their goals that are incompatible by using different forms of threat like verbal aggression or physical conflict. Differently concord meant that participant try to fulfill each other goal in explicit or implicit way. Leech's approach to politeness is goal oriented, he assumes that there are two types of goals, the illocutionary goals that refer to illocutionary acts we use in linguistic communication like asking permission and social goals that refer to the goal of being polite, leech's princilpes of politeness consists of six maxim(1883) :

1. Tact maxim: It maxim refers to minimize cost to other and maximize the benefit to other.

2. Generosity maxim: It refers to minimize benefit to self and maximize cost to self.

3. Approbation maxim: It refers to minimize dispraise of others and maximize praise of others.

4. Agreement maxim: It refers to minimize the expression of disagreement between the self and the others and maximize the expressions of agreement between the self and the others.

5. Sympathy maxim: It refers to minimize the antipathy between the self and the others and maximize the sympathy between the self and the other.

6. Modesty maxim: It refers to minimize praise of the self and maximize dispraise of the self.

2. Method and Analysis

2.1 Data and Method

The data of this study are basically extracts taken from two American presidents in pre- and post their election campaign. The researcher selects ten extracts each two extract tackle one issues in contrasting way in terms of politeness and impoliteness to fulfill the aims of this study. The researcher analyses the data pragmatically depending on Leech's theory of politeness. The reason behind choosing it is because the flexibility of Leech's six maxims of politeness to analyze both politeness and impoliteness speeches.

2.3 Data Analysis

.Extract 1

The presidential candidate Joe Biden said: "I would make it very clear we are not going to in fact sell more weapons to them, we are going in fact make them pay the price, and make them in fact the pariah that they are, there is very little social redeeming value in the present government in Saudi Arabia."

In this extract, Biden is discussing the relation between the USA and Saudi Arabia. He promises to stop supplying Saudi Arabia with weapons if he becomes the president because they break human rights in their war upon Yemen. Biden uses impoliteness while speaking about Saudi Arabia. First, there is the violation the **tact maxim** of politeness which refers to how the speaker maximizes benefits to others and minimizes cost to others. This violation is found in Biden's minimization of benefit to Saudi Arabia by

asserting that the USA will stop supplying them with weapons. Second, there is the violation of **approbation maxim** which refers to how the speaker maximizes praise of others and minimizes dispraise of others. This is expressed by referring to Saudi Arabia as "pariah."

Extract 2

The president Joe Biden said: "At the same time, Saudi Arabia faces missile attacks, UAV strikes, and other threats from Iranian-supplied forces in multiple countries. We are going to continue to support and help Saudi Arabia defend its sovereignty and its territorial integrity and its people."

After being the president, Biden's policy towards Saudi Arabia becomes different. Unlike the preceding extract in which Saudi Arabia is described as "pariah", here Biden considers Saudi Arabia as a victim, he talks about the different forms of attacks that Saudi Arabia faces from Iran. In this extract **sympathy maxim** is employed with which Biden maximizes sympathy between USA and Saudi Arabia by showing them as a victim of the Iranian threats. This contradicts the first extract where he asserts they lack the social redeeming value and they do not deserve help. There is also the **Generosity maxim** which is used by maximizing cost to USA policy that they will help and support Saudi Arabia against Iranian attacks, this is totally different from the first extract where he states they will stop selling weapons for them.

Extract 3

The presidential candidate Joe Biden said "Doland Trump painted a dark, bleak picture of our country... we now have more mass shootings in the year 2019 since January than we had day's the past since January one 2019,... according to the data from the gun violence archive, there have

been 255 mass shootings in the first 217 days of this year,....., if we give Doland Trump four more years, this will not be the country envisioned by Washington and Adams and Jefferson."

In his election campaign, Joe Biden relies heavily on criticizing Trump and his policy in USA during his reign. In this criticism, Biden focuses on the social and political security of the country. Impoliteness employed by Biden while criticizing Trump's policy during his reign. First, there is the violation of **approbation maxim** which refers to how the speaker gives more attention to the good tails of others and avoid their faults. This is expressed by stating that Trump leads America to "dark" and "bleak" future.

Extract 4

The president Joe Biden said " for all of those who voted for president Trump, I understand the disappointments tonight. I have lost a couple of times, but now let's give each other a chance. It is the time to put away the harsh rhetoric, lower the temperature, see each other again… we have to stop treating our opponents as our enemies, they are not our enemies, they are Americans. They are Americans".

In this extract Biden presents his victory speech to the audience after his winning the election in 2020. After being the president, his speech about Trump becomes totally different. Unlike the preceding extract, here he intends to build a new positive relation with the other party (the Republic party). He uses politeness in order to convey his message, he uses **sympathy maxim** when he says "I understand the disappointment tonight, I have lost a couple of time, but now let's give each other chance", he asks to give chance for each other in order to work and build their country.

Extract 5

The presidential candidate Joe Biden said: *"people who have only known America as their home. And permanent protection for immigrants who are here on temporary protected status and came from countries beset by man-made and natural made violence and disaister.as well as a pathway for citizenship for frame workers who put food on our table, immigrants have done so much for America ,the country supports immigrants reform"*.

In this extract, Biden tackles the subject of immigrants. In his election campaign Biden looks at immigrants as victims, he focuses on the positive role that immigrants play to build USA. He uses **approbation maxim** with which he maximize praise of immigrants. This is obvious in his statement "immigrants have done so much for America" which means that immigrants work hardly to build and develop America. **Sympathy maxim** is employed when Biden shows his sympathy with immigrants by saying *"people who have only known America as their home. And permanent protection for immigrants who are here on temporary protected status and came from countries beset by man-made and natural made violence and disaster"* , here Biden looks at immigrants as a victim of manmade and natural violence, he uses the word "home" to describe America as a shelter of immigrants. He uses the **generosity maxim** when he says, "the country supports immigrants reform", here he maximizes the cost to America that is they will support the rights and supply the needs of immigrants.

Extract 6

The president Joe Biden said: "I *can say quite clearly do not come over. And the process of getting set up, and it is gonna take a whole long time, is to be able to apply for asylum in place. So do not leave your town or city or community.*"

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After being the president of USA Biden's speech about immigrants becomes different. In contrast to the previous extract in which he support immigrants and considers them as victims, here he is against the coming of immigrants. The president's refuse of new immigrants, this refusal highlights the use of impoliteness, this is clear when Biden says "I can say quite clearly do not come over", here he violates the **generosity maxim**, by asking them to stop coming to USA, he maximizes benefit and minimize burden on America.

Extract 7

The presidential candidate Doland Trump says "*Hillary Clinton who, as most people know, is a world class lair- just look at her pathetic email and server statements, or her phony landing in Bosnia where she said she was under attack but the attack turned out to be young girls handing her flowers, a total self-serving lie… I am running for president to end the unfairness and to put you, the American worker, first. We are going to put America first and we are going to make America Great again…. If I am elected president, I will end the special interest monopoly in Washington,D.C. . The other candidate in this race has spent her entire life making money for special interest and taking money from special interests*".

In this extract, Trump attacks his competitor candidate Hillary Clinton in order to persuade people that she does not deserve to be USA president. He causes her to be a liar and a person who exploits her location to achieve special interests. Trump's intention to persuade people about the invalidity of Hillary Clinton to be USA president, this gives hints about the use of impoliteness. Biden violates **approbation maxim** when he dispraises Clinton by describing her as a "world class liar", another violation of this maxim is when Trump causes Clinton to uses her location to achieve

special interests by saying " The other candidate in this race has spent her entire life making money for special interest". Trump maximizes praises himself through the whole extract especially when he says "I am running for president to end the unfairness and to put you, the American worker, first", this is considered as a violation of the **modesty maxim.**

Extract 8

The president Doland Trump says "*she congratulated us. It is about us. On our victory, and I congratulated her and her family on a very, very, hard-fought campaign. I mean, she fought very hard. Hillary has worked very long and very hard a long period of time, and we owe her a major debt of gratitude for her service to our country. I mean that very sincerely. Now it is time for America to bind the wounds of division, have to get together. To all Republicans and Democrats and in dependent across this nation, I say it is time for us to come together as one united people*".

This speech is presented by Doland Trump after his win of 2016 election against his competitor candidate Hillary Clinton. On contrast to the previous extract in which he attacks Clinton harshly and causes her of being a " liar" , in addition to that he claims that she uses her role to achieve special interest. In this extract he tries to relief the conflict between himself and Hillary Clinton. Trump's intention to relief the conflict with his competitor Hillary Clinton and to build a new positive relation with the other party. To achieve this goal, Trump relies on politeness. He praises Clinton by stating that " Hillary has worked very long and very hard a long period of time, and we owe her a major debt of gratitude for her service to our country", He congratulates her for being a person who is loyal and services her country, this is serves as a use of **approbation maxim**.

Extract 9

The president candidate Doland Trump says *"I think Islam hate us, there is tremendous hatred there, we have to be very vigilant. We have to be very careful. And we cannot allow people coming into this country who have this hatred of the United States."*

The subject of this extract is about Islam and Muslim. In an interview, Trump is asked by a journalist whether there is a war between Islam and the west. Trump answers that Muslim hate American. He speaks about Islam in general way without any distinction between the real Muslim and radical Islam. He considers Muslim as a threat that have to be faced. Impoliteness is employed by Trump while discussing the issues of Muslim immigrants. He violates the **approbation maxim** when he dispraises Islam and causes Muslim to be haters of USA. Trump calls to prevent Muslim who wants to entire USA by saying "we cannot allow people coming into this country who have this hatred of the United States." Hence he maximizes benefits and minimizes burden on USA, this serves as a violation of **generosity maxim**.

Extract 10

The president Doland Trump says *"I stand before you as a representative of the American People, to deliver a message of friendship and hope. That is why I chose to make my first foreign visit a trip to the heart of the Muslim world, to the nation that serves as custodian of the two holiest sites in the Islamic Faith…….. I also promised that America will not seek to impose our way of life on others, but to outstretch our hands in the spirit of cooperation and trust. Our vision is one of peace, security, and prosperity—in this region, and in the world."*

The subject of this extract is about Islam and Muslim. After being the president of USA, Trump make a visit to Saudi Arabia. He thanks king

Salman for his hospitality and the kindness of Muslim people. Unlike the previous extract in which he considers Muslim as a threat that has to be faced by imposing ban upon Muslim who want entire USA. Trump's intention to build a positive relationship with the Islamic world highlights his use of politeness. He uses **tact maxim** when he promises to give Muslim the freedom of religion by saying "America will not seek to impose our way of life on others",

Conclusion

According to the above analysis, the following conclusions are derived:

1. The analysis of the Americans presidents' contrast speeches in pre and post-election campaign shows the workability of Leech's (1883) model, since any violation of Leech's six maxims of politeness leads to impoliteness.

2. The American presidents' speeches and attitudes are characterized by instability because they always go after their benefits that is why their speeches change from politeness to impoliteness and vice versa before and after election campaign.

3. The American presidents relay heavily on impoliteness in criticizing their competitor candidate during their election campaign in order to persuade people about the invalidity of them to elect.

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