Positive Politeness Strategies in the 2020 US Candidate Presidential Debate: Factors Influencing Their Use

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Abstract

The United States presidential debate has gained global attention as a critical moment for both candidates to gain support from their electorates. One effective way candidates follow to attract voters is to use positive politeness strategies, which help create a positive impression. Drawing on Brown and Levinson's theory, this study examines the positive politeness strategies used by presidential candidates Donald Trump and Joe Biden during the final presidential debate at Belmont University in 2020. The data for this study were extracted from a video of the debate that was uploaded on YouTube by 'USA Today.' The results of this study indicate that both candidates employed positive politeness strategies to varying degrees. These strategies included increasing the interlocutor's interest, using identity markers to establish a sense of belonging, seeking agreement, offering eager audience promises, being optimistic, involving both speakers and the pro-active audience in an interactive discourse, providing or asking for reasons, and giving a positive vibe to the audience. The study revealed that the use of these strategies was influenced by various factors such as the relative power of the interlocutors, social distance, and the level of imposition.

Introduction

The 2020 US presidential election received a significant amount of global attention due to the country's influential role in politics, economics, and military affairs globally (Al Syahrin, 2108; Djuyuandi et al., 2021; Hussein, 2013; Sahide, 2019). This election has far-reaching implications for international relations and global policies. The debates between presidential candidates were a pivotal moment during the campaign, where they needed to communicate their vision, plans, and political promises to the people and a worldwide audience through various media outlets. However, the debates were notorious for the use of harsh language, insults, and frequent interruptions, earning it the moniker of "the nastiest presidential campaign" (Bond et al., 2022). To win public support and create a positive impression, candidates had to employ courteous language tactfully and efficiently. In a heated and pressure-filled discussion, positive politeness is a crucial communication technique, and the candidates use courteous, kind, and helpful language as a critical strategy to project a favorable image and win popular support (Achmad et al., 2020). Additionally, the ability to use positive means to persuade the audience played a crucial role in winning the debate and improving the candidates' public image (Dalimunte & Wen, 2022).

In presidential debates, candidates often use positive politeness strategies, which stress the significance of speaking politely and showing respect for opponents, even when there are serious disagreements. During the debate at Belmont University, both candidates exhibited positive politeness, acknowledging each other's viewpoints and concentrating on the country's policy issues. The presidential debate was not only notable for its high tension but also for the elucidation and argumentation that could shape political outcomes (Felmlee et al., 2023). This event was crucial, as it served as a focal point for both candidates' campaigns, making it highly significant. The presidential election debate ultimately became a determining factor for predicting an election's outcome. Consequently, understanding the effective communication strategies employed by presidential candidates in important public situations such as the 2020 United States presidential debates was crucial. Previous studies have examined the politeness strategies used in debates (Abudayeh & Dubbati, 2020; Ayuningrum et al., 2018; Azizi, 2023; Batubara et al., 2022; Candra et al., 2022; Dalimunte & Wen, 2022; Fracchiolla, 2011; Gustiani et al., 2022; Hinck & Hinck, 2002; Sibrani & Marlina, 2018; Sihite et al., 2021; Kwak & Lee, 2020), but only a limited number have explored the factors influencing the use of these strategies. To address this gap, this study examines the positive politeness strategies and factors influenced by presidential candidates Donald Trump and Joe Biden during the final presidential debate at Belmont University.

This study has significant implications for future political campaigns and public debates as it aims to identify specific communication strategies and factors that influence their use. The insights gained from this study can be applied to other contexts, including business or interpersonal relationships, to improve communication and persuasion strategies. Additionally, understanding the importance of positive politeness in public debates contributes to a more civil and respectful political culture, ultimately improving the political discourse.

Research on Politeness Strategies in Debate

The study of politeness strategies in debates has been the subject of significant attention over time. Prior research has explored the use of politeness strategies in various settings including political campaigns, speeches, and debates. For example, Ayuningrum et al. (2018) found that positive politeness strategies were most commonly used in debates where participants had close relationships with each other. Similarly, Sibarani & Marlina (2018) investigated Donald Trump's use of politeness in the Republican debate and found that positive politeness strategies were the most frequently employed. Nurramah et al. (2020) discovered that most student and academic debaters utilized positive politeness strategies to present their arguments effectively, employing four types of politeness strategies. Indonesian debaters frequently use sub-strategies of positive politeness to maintain positive relationships with their hearers, express their opinions clearly, and persuade opposition and proposition teams to agree with their perspectives.

Positive politeness was the dominant strategy used by both deliverers and participants. Kwak et al. (2020) found that Clinton overwhelmingly used positive politeness strategies, while Trump used a small margin less and preferred bald on record as the second most commonly used strategy. Both candidates utilized questions and hedges as negative strategies, whereas overstates were frequently used in off-record

strategies. As politically damaging information was revealed before the debate, both candidates resorted to face-threatening acts to attack their opponents' public image. Sihite et al. (2021) examined the politeness strategies used by Indonesian presidential candidates in the 2019 presidential debates and found that positive politeness was the dominant strategy used by the candidates to convey their campaign messages and choose their words carefully. Similarly, Dalimunte & Wen (2022) found that offers and promises, including both speaker and hearer in the activity, and hedges were the most commonly used positive politeness strategies in shaping political image in presidential debates.

On the other hand, Batubara et al. (2022) studied the politeness strategies used by Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton in the 2016 presidential debate and found that 34% of their utterances were negative politeness. Meanwhile, Al-Haboobi & Al-Rikabi showed that politicians are conscious of their audience's positive and negative faces when committing fallacies, and that they use different linguistic means of positive and negative politeness to prevent imposing on their audience and reduce distance. These studies demonstrate that both positive and negative politeness strategies are essential to political discourse. Moreover, politicians strategically choose their words and utilize different politeness techniques to foster positive relationships with their audience and effectively convey their messages to wider public and worldwide viewers of the debate.

Research Objectives

Based on the research gap, this research examines the positive politeness strategy and its influence during the US presidential election. The objective of this study is specifically elaborated below:

1. To investigate the positive politeness strategies Donald Trump and Joe Biden used during the US presidential debate at Belmont University.

2. To determine the factors influenced the use of positive politeness strategies by Donald Trump and Joe Biden during the US presidential debate at Belmont University.

Thus, the research questions (RQs) this study aims to answer are:

1. What strategies did Donld Trump and Joe Biden use to display positive politeness during the 2020 US presidential debate at Belmont University?

2. What factors did coerce Donld Trump and Joe Biden to use positive and negative politeness strategies during the 2020 US presidential debate at Belmont University?

Method

The present study focused on analyzing positive politeness strategies in the final presidential debate held in the United States of America in 2020. The debate featured two of the most prominent candidates, Donald Trump and Joe Biden, who contested for the presidency. The video of the debate was extracted from the widely used video sharing platform, YouTube, which was uploaded by USA Today. The

researchers used the data extracted from the video to identify positive politeness strategies used by the participants during the debate. The main reason for selecting this particular data source was due to the nature of political debates, which often feature the use of harsh language and criticism that can be threatening to the opponent's face. The main data of this study were utterances containing politeness from three participants of the event, they are Donald Trump, Joe Biden and the moderator, Kristen Welker.

Figure 1

Presidential Debate of Donald Trump and Joe Biden
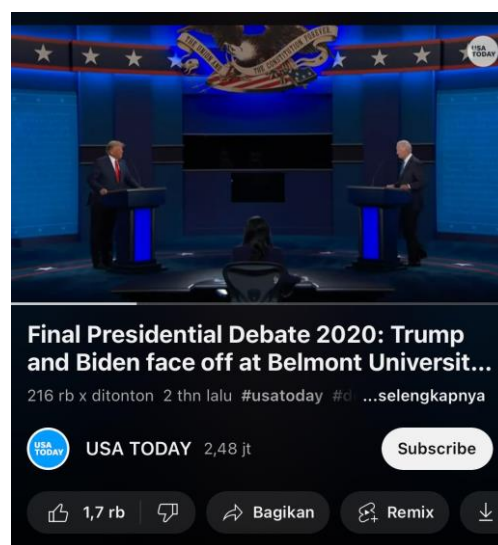
This study employed positive politeness strategy proposed by Brown & Levinson (1978). Using this approach, the study aimed to identify positive politeness strategies and their influence on presidential debate. The analysis consisted of four steps. First, the researchers watched the debate video on YouTube and took note of the transcript. Second, the researchers identified politeness utterances found in the debate. Next, we categorized the utterances into 14 politeness strategies. Finally, the researchers coded, categorized, and analyzed the utterances to investigate the factors of political politeness on the stage of a formal political debate.

Results

The results of this study emphasize that the positive politeness strategies used by both Trump and Biden during the presidential debate were positive but at times of some heated arguments the candidates, specially Donald Trump, took resort to negative and, some time, direct attack form of negative strategies. These strategies are identified as showing interest in the interlocutor, using identity markers within a group, seeking agreement, offering and promising, being optimistic, including both speaker and interlocutor in an activity, giving or asking for a reason, and rewarding

interlocutors. Additionally, study identifies four factors that influence the use of these strategies, including payoff and relevant situations such as social distance, relative power, and absolute ranking of imposition.

Positive Politeness Strategies Used by Donald Trump and Joe Biden during the USA Presidential Debate

During the 2020 United States presidential debate, candidates used various positive politeness strategies to convey their visions and missions to the whole of America and the wider world. These included increasing the interest of the interlocutor, using identity markers within the group, seeking agreement, offering promises, being optimistic, and involving both the speaker and the audience in the very important political discourse concerning not only the future of the US but also the future of world politics. The discourse, or debate, provided audience opportunities to ask questions, comment, or pass an opinion, and the presidential candidates a fair chance to put forward their arguments, missions, and visions to lead the US into a better situation nationally and globally in the next four years. The table below provides further explanation of the positive politeness strategies used in famous presidential debates.

Table 1

Positive Politeness Strategies

Positive Politeness Strategies	Donald Trump	Joe Biden
S1 Attention	-	-
S2 Exaggeration	-	-
S3 Increasing the interest toward the interlocutor	21	4
S4 Using identity markers within the group	19	3
S5 Seeking agreement	1	-
S6 Avoiding Disagreement	-	-
S7 Implying/ highlighting /asserting similarity	-	-
S8 Joking	-	-
S9 Asserting or implying the speaker knowledge	-	-
S10 Offering, promising	17	33
S11 Being optimistic	15	3
S12 Including the speaker and hearer in an activity	16	7
S13 Giving or asking reasons	1	1

Table 1 (Continued)

Positive Politeness Strategies	Donald Trump	Joe Biden
S14 Assuming or Implying Reciprocity	-	-
S15 Giving gifts to the hearer	1	1
Total	91	55

Based on Table 1 above, it can be seen that the United States presidential candidates, namely Donald Trump and Joe Biden, used almost similar strategies but with different proportions. It was found that the total speech in positive politeness strategies used by Donald Trump was 91 data, while the total strategies used by Joe Biden were 55 data. In other words, Donald Trump used more positive politeness strategies than Joe Biden. Additionally, it was found that in this data analysis, strategies 3 (increasing the interest of the interlocutor), 4 (using identity markers within the group), 5 (seeking agreement), 10 (offering promises), 11 (being optimistic), 12 (involving both the speaker and hearer in an activity), 13 (providing or asking for reasons), and 15 (giving gifts to the hearer) were used by both presidential candidates.

Although both candidates used almost similar strategies, there were several strategies that were different and not used by both of them. Donald Trump used more of strategies 5 and 15. The positive politeness strategies used by Donald Trump consisted of strategy 3 with 21 data, strategy 4 with 19 data, strategy 10 with 17 data, strategy 12 with 16 data, strategy 11 with 15 data, strategy 5 with 1 data, and strategy 15 with 1 data. Meanwhile, Joe Biden used positive politeness strategy number 10 with 33 data, strategy 3 with 8 data, strategy 12 with 7 data, strategy 4 with 3 data, strategy 11 with 3 data, and strategy 13 with 1 data. Thus, Donald Trump used 8 positive politeness strategies, while Joe Biden used 3.

In Table 1 above, the pattern of the order of positive politeness strategies used by Donald Trump and Joe Biden can be seen. The most commonly used strategy is strategy 10 with 50 data, followed by strategy 3 with 29 data, strategy 12 with 23 data, strategy 4 with 22 data, strategy 11 with 18 data, strategy 13 with 2 data, strategy 5 with 1 data, and strategy 15 with 1 data. When viewed based on the number of uses per speaker, Donald Trump used strategies in 91 data, while Joe Biden used 55 data. Therefore, it can be concluded that Donald Trump used more positive politeness strategies than Joe Biden.

The Influenced Factors of Positive Politeness Strategies Used by Donald Trump and Joe Biden during the USA Presidential Debate

The use of politeness strategies by the US Presidential candidates is influenced by several factors, including, payoff, social distance, relative power, absolute raking of imposition. The following are example of each factor found in the US candidate presidential debate.

Payoff

"Payoff" to the benefits or gains expected or obtained by a speaker in a particular communication situation. In the context of positive politeness strategies, speakers use language or actions that aim to maintain social relationships with the interlocutor, avoid conflict, and uphold a positive self-image.

Context: The debate between Joe Biden and Donald Trump related to health insurance and providing affordable options for people.

Joe Biden: "[...] We have to provide health insurance for people at an affordable rate, and that's what I do."

Donald Trump: "[...] And by the way, so far, I respect very much the way you're handling this, I have to say. ...."

In the speeches above, Both Joe Biden and Donald Trump were motivated to achieve a specific outcome during their debate speeches, which influenced their level of politeness. They aim to enhance their image and gain electoral support by utilizing effective strategies while maintaining a polite demeanor. Positive politeness strategies were evident in their speeches. First, they strive to save face by conveying their opinions politely and showing their awareness of public welfare. Secondly, Biden's use of hedges clarify in the phrase 'that's what I do' indicate politeness and avoidance of directly claiming superiority. This shows a sensitivity towards maintaining a balanced interaction with his opponent. Third, Trump acknowledges Biden's efforts in handling public health issues, showing respect and appreciation for his opponent, which is considered a polite gesture in debate interactions. Lastly, Trump's use of phrases such as 'by the way' and 'I have to say' may indicate an attempt to ease the tension and stiffness in his interaction with his opponent while enhancing the level of politeness.

Social Distance

"Social Distance" refers to the difference in status or relationship between speakers in an interaction. In interactions involving three individuals with different social distances, speakers usually employ positive politeness strategies to maintain or enhance good relationships with other speakers. Here is an example of social distancing in a presidential debate.

Context: The debate between Joe Biden and Donald Trump related to tax policy and transparency in financial disclosures.

Biden: "Why do he — He's been saying this for four years. Show us. Just show us. Stop playing around. You've been saying for four years you're going to release your taxes. Nobody knows, Mr. President, they do know is you're not paying your taxes or you're paying taxes that are so low. When last time he said what he paid, he said, 'I only pay that little because I'm smart. I know how to game the system.' Come on, come on, folks."

Trump: "I guarantee you, if I spent 1 million on you Joe, I could find plenty wrong, because the kind of things that you've done and the kind of monies that your family has taken — I mean, your brother made money in Iraq, millions of dollars. Your other brother made a fortune, and it's all through you, Joe. And they say you get some of it. And you do live very well. You have houses all over the place. You live very well."

During the debate, both candidates maintained social distancing as a factor of positive politeness. Biden used polite and formal language when commenting on Trump's tax policy, and requested financial transparency. He addresses Trump as "Mr. President" to show respect during the conversation. Conversely, Trump attacked the Biden family and directly mentioned their wealth. Despite this, he referred to his opponent as "Joe", indicating that he was still maintaining social distancing. This positive politeness allowed candidates to display effective public-speaking skills and uphold ethical standards during the debate. The social distance between candidates in the debate was primarily due to their political positions and debate etiquette rather than their past personal relationships. Although Trump and Biden were former US leaders, they were competing with political opponents during the debate. Therefore, their polite discourse was an attempt to maintain ethical standards during the debate and to create a positive impression on the audience. Additional examples of social distancing include the following:

> Context: The final presidential debate between Donald Trump and Joe Biden about immigration policy and the separation of families at the border.
>
> Trump: You don't know the law, Joe.
> Welker: Vice President Biden, your response.
> Biden: I know the law. What he's telling you is simply not true.
> Trump: They don't come back.
> Biden: Check it out.

There was distinct refusal act from Trump toward Biden through his statement "You don't know the law, Joe". This refusal act showed that Trump had a higher relative social distance than Biden, because he refused the claim or opinion stated by Biden. The first statement from Trump showed degradation toward Biden, and he stated that he knew better than Biden. However, Biden used a positive politeness strategy by giving a polite response and did not offend, but rather he clarified Trump's statement by saying "What he's telling you is simply not true' and invited Trump to check the truth of his claim by saying "Check it out". The positive politeness strategy used by Biden can reduce social distance and intensify the audience's positive impressions.

Relative Power

"Relative power" refers to the level of power or authority held by each speaker in an interaction. In this context, relative power influence how speakers employ politeness strategies in communication.

> Context: the presidential debate between Donald Trump and Joe Biden about North Korea.
>
> Welker: All right, let's talk about North Korea.
> Trump: Excuse me, no, I have to respond to this.
> Welker: OK, very quickly and then we're gonna have [...].

In the above utterance, Trump uses relative power to refuse to follow the topic proposed by the moderator of North Korea. He insisted himself to give respond toward the claim or opinion stated by his opponent, so that he asked permission to give respond by stating "Excuse me, no, I have to respond to this." This act showed that Trump positioned himself as stronger or having greater power than the moderator and showed that he would not give up on the questionable claim without responding to it. However, the moderator maintains control of the debate by giving a limited time for Trump to give a response. In this case, the positive politeness strategy was not clear because Trump used relative power to push his position in the debate.

> Context: The 2020 United States presidential debate between Joe Biden and Donald Trump about the country out of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic crisis.

> Welker: "OK, former Vice President Biden, to you, how would you lead the country out of this crisis? You have two minutes uninterrupted."
> Biden: "I would make sure that we set up national standards as to how to open up schools and open up businesses so they can be safe, and give them the wherewithal and financial resources to be able to do that."

There was a factor of relative power that influenced the politeness strategy used by welkers when asking a response from Biden. As a moderator, Welker might not have equal power with Biden as president candidate, so she used a positive politeness strategy by using more formal sentences and honorific "former Vice President Biden." The welker used high respect toward Biden because of politeness norms in the context of the conversation. The moderator of presidential debate should maintain neutrality and provide equal respect to both presidential candidates. Furthermore, Welker also used an interrogative mark in her question, which showed respect for Biden's expertise and authority in handling the coronavirus crisis. The politeness strategy used by welkers can help maintain a good relationship with Biden and strengthen the positive impressions of audiences. Moreover, Biden used a positive politeness strategy by giving a concrete solution and the impression that he had the ability to cope with cirii. This positive politeness strategy could increase voters' trust in Biden and showed that he had the leadership quality needed to overcome the current crisis.

> Context: The presidential debate between Donald Trump and Joe Biden on race.

> Welker President Trump, I want to stay on the issue of race. We're talking about the issue-
> Trump: It's the laptop from hell. The laptop from hell.
> Welker: President Trump, we're talking about race right now and I do want to speak on the issue of race. President Trump---
> Biden: Nobody-- Kristen, I have to respond to that.
> WELKER: Please, very quickly.

In the above utterances, there was a relative power factor that influences the positive politeness strategy used by the welker as a moderator. The welker, as a

moderator, had the power to control the process of debate and ensured the topics discussed. However, President Trump at that time seemed to be more interested in discussing laptop issues rather than racial topics. This showed that Trump tended to ignore the relative power of the welker as a moderator. However, welker still used a positive politeness strategy by asking President Trump to go back to the race topic by saying "President Trump, we are talking about race right now and I do want to speak on the issue of race". After that, when Joe Biden wanted to respond to Trump's statement about the laptop, Welker politely asked Biden to give a response slightly by the sentence "Please, very quickly." Therefore, the positive politeness strategy used by Welker was an effort to protect her relative power as a moderator and to rectify the conversation so that it remained on topic. Although Trump made efforts to change the conversation, Welker still used a positive politeness strategy to bring the conversation back to the current topic discussed.

Context: The conversation is a dereference to previous moment in the debate where Trump claimed he had done more for the Black community.

Trump: He made a reference to Abraham Lincoln. Where did that come in? I mean—
Biden: You said you were Abraham Lincoln.
Trump: No, no. I said not since Abraham Lincoln has anybody done what I've done for the Black community. I didn't say 'I'm Abraham Lincoln'. I said, 'Not since Abraham Lincoln has anybody done but what I've done for the Black community'. Now you have done nothing other than the crime bill, which put—
Biden: Oh, God.
Biden: I have never said I oppose fracking.
Trump: You said it on tape.
Biden: I did? Show the tape. Put it on your website.

In the above utterance context, the relative power factor seemed to influence the use of the positive politeness strategy by both candidates. Trump, as president at the time, held a stronger political position than Biden, who was the president candidate. Hence, Trump tends to use rhetorical tactics by asserting his power as the leader and attempts to show Biden's weakness using the proposed policies. On the other hand, Biden who was president candidate who has weaker relative power, tend to use positive politeness strategy by responding with uttering "Oh, God" and against Trump to show his claim proof about himself who against fracking with polite method and avoid direct confrontation.

Absolute Ranking of Imposition

The absolute ranking of imposition refers to the importance of avoiding direct confrontation or showing respect for the interlocutor in certain communication situations. This factor can be influenced by various factors, such as the position of the speaker, theme, topic of conversation, and the cultural or social context of the communication situation.

Context: The presidential debate between Donald Trump and Joe Biden about Plans for the environment and energy.

Trump: Would you close down the-- Would you close down the oil industry?
BIiden: I would transition from the oil industry. Yes.
Trump: Oh, transition.

The factor of absolute ranking of imposition influenced the use of a positive politeness strategy. Trump used rhetorical tactics by mocking or laughing at Biden's statement in the words "Oh, transition'. However, Biden still used a positive politeness strategy by expressing his opinion about the oil industry politely and avoiding direct confrontation. In this context, the absolute ranking of imposition seemed to be more influenced by the use of a positive politeness strategy than by a factor of relative power. The absolute ranking of imposition in this context refers to the recognized position or social role in the conversation and is the president candidate. Biden, as president candidate, had a higher absolute ranking of imposition in giving respect and maintaining politeness in the conversation. Even though Trump, as his political opponent, tried to mock and laugh at Biden's opinion, Biden still tried to use a positive politeness strategy to answer questions using polite and wise words. In this case, the higher absolute ranking of imposition had by Biden influenced his strategy to maintain politeness and avoid direct confrontation.

Discussion

The use of politeness strategies in political debates has become an increasingly important area of research in various languages and countries. However, this study seeks to specifically examine the use of positive politeness strategies during the 2020 United States presidential debate. Based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory, the study identified eight different positive politeness strategies employed in the debate and explored the factors that influenced their use. The identified positive politeness strategies included increasing the interlocutor's interest, using identity markers, seeking agreement, offering promises, being optimistic, involving both the speaker and hearer in an activity, providing or asking for reasons, and giving gifts to the hearer. The findings of this study were consistent with Oktaviani (2022) found that the most commonly used positive politeness strategies in classroom interactions were those involving both the speaker and hearer in an activity and offering promises. Similarly, Yoseka and Ambalegin (2021) identified the use of identity markers and the avoidance of disagreement as the most dominant positive politeness strategies in films.

Recent research has revealed how political candidates utilize positive and negative politeness strategies during debates, which can significantly impact their relationship with each other and the audience's perception. Oktaviani's study (2022), both Donald Trump and Joe Biden frequently utilized the positive politeness strategy of making promises during the presidential debate. Constructive politeness strategies like showing interest, seeking agreement, and making promises can enhance the audience's perception of the participants and foster a more cordial relationship between them. Conversely, negative politeness strategies like showing disapproval or disrespect can increase tension and create social distance among participants. In contrast, Batubara et al. (2022) revealed the negative politeness strategies used in the 2016 presidential

debate between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton. Negative politeness strategies aim to minimize harm to the interlocutor's self-esteem or autonomy through techniques like using indirect language, asking questions, and hedging.

In addition to personal preferences, research shows that external factors can affect the use of politeness strategies by US Presidential candidates. These factors include payoff, social distance between participants, relative power, and the absolute ranking of imposition. Susana et al. (2022). found that two key factors affecting positive and negative politeness strategies in films were payoff and situation, which encompassed relative power and the ranking of imposition. It is worth noting that these factors are not exclusive to debate situations. Noor & Prayitno (2016) found that factors that influenced the shift of positive politeness among secondary school students were social distance, context, the desire to excessively flatter, intentionally asking for reasons, unwillingness to be disadvantaged, and rejection of something. Overall, the use and influence of politeness strategies are shaped by various factors, including culture, context, interpersonal relationships, and communication objectives.

Conclusion

While examining the presidential debate between Donald Trump and Joe Biden in the United States, the current study identified eight effective strategies, which include: a) showing interest in the interlocutor, b) using identity markers within a group, c) seeking agreement, d) offering and promising, f) being optimistic, including both speaker and interlocutor in an activity, e) giving or asking for a reason, and g) rewarding interlocutors. Additionally, the study highlights four factors that influence the use of these strategies, such as payoff and relevant situations like social distance, relative power, and the absolute ranking of imposition. The results of this study have important implications for communicators and politicians. Based on the identified factors that influence the use of positive politeness strategies, it is recommended that they adjust their communication styles accordingly to achieve their desired outcomes. Moreover, individuals in positions of power can benefit from communication skills training to ensure that they effectively employ positive politeness strategies in their communication. However, this limitation of this study that it only analyzes the debate between Donald Trump and Joe Biden, without comparing it to previous debates from the same election. To address this limitation, future research should expand the sample of public debates analyzed to obtain more generalizable results that can be applied to other public communication situations. Additionally, future studies can explore how the identified factors interact with one another to affect the use of positive politeness strategies in public communication.

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