

Exploring politeness strategies: A comparative study of speeches of American and Chinese Presidents at UNGA 78th session

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Abstract

Politeness is the practical application of good manners or etiquette to avoid offending others and putting them at ease. It is a culturally defined phenomenon; therefore, what is considered polite in one culture can sometimes be rude or simply eccentric in another cultural context. Brown and Levinson suggested four different politeness strategies that can help to make a successful conversation by avoiding face-threatening acts. The aim of the present study was to explore politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson in the speeches of the American and Chinese presidents at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) 78th session. The study was a comparative analysis of politeness strategies used by presidents in their speeches at UNGA. The study used a mixed methods research approach to analyse and compare politeness strategies in the speech. In the present study, both quantitative and qualitative analyses were used. Both speeches were analysed qualitatively by applying Brown and Levinson's politeness theory. Excel sheets were used to analyse data quantitatively. Findings showed that the American president used more politeness strategies 87 times in his speech as compared to the Chinese president, who is 35 times. The American president used positive politeness in 53% of the total, while the most used politeness by the Chinese president was bald on record at 40% in his speech. Negative politeness was the least used strategy by both presidents, which was 7% and 11%, respectively. It was also observed that cultural differences were the reason for the difference in the use of politeness strategies by American and Chinese presidents in their speeches.

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1 Introduction

According to Agustina (2017), a communication's success is determined by the speech, form aspect, and how it is disclosed, in addition to the actor, content, and message transmitted. Additionally, using inappropriate language gives the wrong impression and becomes a significant barrier to communication. The community and its users will experience disagreement, animosity, and conflict if the communication restriction is handled in a different way (Ma & Ma, 2023). According to the Oxford Dictionary, Shahrokhi & Bidabadi, the term 'polite' derives from the Medieval Latin, *Politus*, meaning smoothed and accomplished. In linguistics, the term polite refers to refined or polished so that a polite person can be defined as one with refined and courteous manners. Being courteous facilitates effective communication by keeping things flowing naturally. The most crucial component of politeness is "face," a courteous person avoids face-threatening behaviours (FTA) by being fully aware of other people's faces. The field of pragmatics in linguistics offers a means of analysing politeness strategies (Shahrokhi & Bidabadi, 2013). According to Yule (1996), understanding pragmatics is crucial since it helps people comprehend the implicit meanings, assumptions, objectives, and behaviours of others with whom they interact. The study of pragmatics looks at the connections between how language is used and its constructions. Through various politeness studies, the foundational sociolinguistic work of Algiovan (2022), on the significance of avoiding error in communication by displaying courtesy to other interlocutors is expanded. To understand how American and Chinese presidents, speaking on behalf of their nations, influence audiences to accomplish their objectives, this research aims to examine diplomatic techniques. The researcher uses the four-part politeness strategies theory by Brown and Levinson. (1) Bald-on-record: As per Algiovan (2022), this tactic is a straightforward approach to communicating ideas in a plain, succinct, unambiguous, and direct way that needs to be more angry without downplaying the issue. Positive politeness: the second tactic is typically observed in social situations involving groups of friends or individuals who share a certain social background and are reasonably acquainted with one another. Usually, it aims to reduce the gap between them by being amiable and showing a strong desire to comply with the address (minimise FTA). (3) Negative politeness: According to Algiovan (2022), it is a corrective measure aimed at the addressee's negative face, distinguishing between positive and negative politeness and requiring the addresser to give them unrestricted freedom of action and deliberation. (4) Off-record: According to Algiovan (2022), "The performer allows the audience to determine the meaning of their actions on their own." when using an off-record technique. The off-record it is a communication strategy that is designed to be ambiguous and unclear, making it difficult to discern the intended message or goal.

In English culture, there needs to be more specificity in addressing relatives, as siblings and similarly aged relatives can be referred to by their first names or nicknames without formal titles. In contrast, Chinese culture strongly emphasises clear and distinct titles that demonstrate respect for elders and affection for the young. For instance, the Chinese word "cousin" can refer to various relatives such as brother, sister, and sister's daughter, and Chinese students often address their teachers by their surnames followed by the honorific "teacher. In English, the term "teacher" is chiefly used as a specialized designation rather than as a form of address. Chinese culture uses more polite and formal address as compare to English culture. For example, in English, people often call names, regardless of age, which presents sympathy, but in Chinese culture, it is considered insolent or remote. In English, there is no habitual exercise of calling someone as "director" they only use "Mr." or "Ms." (Zheng, 2021).

Language is not just a tool of conversation but also a device for management, encouragement, and regulation. The analysis of political leaders' language reveals that through their language, ideologies and agendas can be identified. Familiarity with political language can be helpful as

nations hold their leaders accountable for their activities. Additionally, the learning of political language can also shed light on the part of language that plays a part in determining political individualities, social values, and traditional norms. It helps understand the role of language in supporting or contesting the prevailing power construction and promotion of societal justice and equality. Generally, knowledge of the language of politics is crucial for considering the complicated connection between language, politics, and society. Radical influences deeply depend on language because it has power-conversing capabilities and creates associations amongst its users through role division (Balogun & Murana, 2018). Language gives power and explains contacts between its users through its use. Politicians manipulate language's linguistic outgoing properties and exploit words according to their intents (Mey, 2001).

The United Nations (UN) is a universal association devoted to shielding human rights. The chief body in charge of decision-making within the UNGA. It assists as a medium for discussions on critical international matters that fall within the horizon of the UN Charter (Azzahra et al., 2023). Each participant state has a demonstrative, and every state brings an equal significance to voting staples. Fundamentally, the UNGA offers a podium for multifaceted negotiations among nations regarding important worldwide concerns that the UN Charter covers. The Assembly happens annually from September to December and whenever essential after that (United Nations, 2023). In 2023, the 78th session of the UNGA will take place at the UN headquarters in New York from September 18-19. The themes for the debate during this session are "Rebuilding trust and reigniting global solidarity: Accelerating action on the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals towards peace, prosperity, progress, and sustainability for all" (United Nations, 2023). During this UNGA session, Joe Biden delivered a speech as the sitting President of the United States. Biden is a political figure who belongs to the Democratic Party and previously held the position of Vice President under President Barack Obama (Duignan, 2023). In contrast, this year, the President of China could not attend the UNGA session; instead, Vice President Han Zheng represented his country at the forum. Han was recently elected as the Vice President of China during the opening session of the 14th National People's Congress, succeeding Wang Qishan. As Vice President, Han has participated in diplomatic activities (Ma & Ma, 2023).

1.1 Rationale of the study

Much research has been conducted on linguistic politeness in various contexts, such as political, academic, and cross-cultural, but there was no comparative analysis in terms of politeness in American and Chinese presidents' speeches. Moreover, there were few researches in the context of UNGA. This study comparatively explores the politeness strategies of Brown and Levison in speeches by American and Chinese presidents at the UNGA 78th session.

1.2 The Significance of the study

This study is significant as few researches have been conducted on politeness strategies on UNGA speeches. Most studies have been conducted on electoral speeches by different politicians. This study has done comparative analysis of American and Chinese president's speeches, it would be helpful for the future researchers who want to analyze politeness in cross cultural discourse. The study highlights the distinct politeness strategies in American and Chinese cultures, which are influenced by the differences in their communication. This can be useful for individuals from diverse cultures to understand these differences in political and diplomatic conversations. Analysing the various approaches to politeness used by leaders in their speeches highlights how these strategies shape diplomatic interactions between nations. By comparing the politeness strategies used by American and Chinese Presidents during the 78th UNGA session, we can better understand the impact of these differing communication styles on the overall diplomatic context. Consideration of context in the study of politeness strategies is important. By examining the

cultural, historical, and political aspects of speeches, we can better comprehend the intended message and influence of the politeness used within them. This study's results can contribute to producing cross-cultural communication programs for diplomats, politicians, and other professionals involved in international affairs.

1.3 Research Objectives

The study aims

- To explore and compare the politeness strategies used by American and Chinese presidents in their speech at UNGA
- To examine differences in the nature and frequency of politeness strategies used by American and Chinese presidents.
- To analyse the impact of cultural differences and other factors on the linguistic politeness of presidents.

1.4 Research Questions

1. How do American and Chinese presidents differ in their use of politeness strategies in their address at the UNGA 78th session?
2. What is the impact of the cultural difference on the linguistic politeness of American and Chinese presidents?
3. Who uses relatively more politeness strategies in speech?

2 Literature Review

According to Levinson, cited in Widyastuti (2019), Pragmatics is the field of linguistics that focuses on the meaning behind spoken or written language, taking into account non-linguistic knowledge, the context, and the social world (Widyastuti, 2019). It goes beyond just language structure and explores how language is used in real-life situations. Pragmatics also examines the principles of language use and how they contribute to effective conversation communication. Speakers and hearers must be careful with their words to ensure successful communication, as the hearer's interpretation will depend on the context of the situation (Widyastuti, 2019). Pragmatics is the study of communicative actions in their social and cultural context, as explained by Palmer, (2010). Context is crucial to understanding the correct meaning of the message. Bunt (2000), defines setting as the total set of conditions that influence understanding. Speech act theory, introduced by Weisser (2020), is significantly applied in pragmatics.

In similar and diverse cultural contexts, individuals communicate verbally through spoken words. Politeness is crucial for a smooth conversation flow, as highlighted by Kusuma (2014). Politeness is employed to be kind to others and foster strong communication relationships. Learning politeness in verbal conversation and familiar language used by participants of a shared communal is rare in the scientific field. Professionals in this area have investigated politeness and politeness tactics in language use and spoken communication procedures (Tretyakova, 2016). Yasmeen et al. (2014) found that Pakistani politicians often employed the "bald on record" politeness approach in their speeches throughout 2008-2013 in the Punjab Assembly. This approach makes explicit declarations without supplementary politeness indicators, a signal of assurance and regulation. The study also exposed that politicians compensated little care to reserve. In an isolated study by Kousar (2015), the emphasis was on verbal politeness in regrets, precisely with social status. The findings showed that negative politeness strategies were used when addressing individuals of high and low social status. On the other hand, positive politeness techniques were employed when apologizing to individuals of equal social status. Khokhar (2017) examined linguistic politeness in friendly interactions between married couples in urban Pakistani society using four politeness models to determine which best describes this phenomenon in intimate relationships. His findings suggest that an eclectic approach is necessary as none of these models can fully capture linguistic politeness in interpersonal relationships. While politeness is essential in all communication,

including public speaking, as noted by Kusuma (2014).

The idea of face, introduced by Goffman (2017), revolves around the concept of "face." Brown and Levinson later adopted this concept. Thomas (2014), explains that the term "face" has been commonly used to refer to one's reputation and good name, as seen in phrases like "losing face" and "saving face." Wijaya (2009) explains that "face" refers to the self-respect and esteem individuals strive to maintain in social interactions to avoid losing face. This concept is crucial for both speakers and listeners. Algiovan (2022) further elaborates on politeness strategies, which include four categories: a) record, b) Bald-on-Record, c) positive politeness, and d) negative politeness. These strategies help individuals navigate social situations with politeness and respect for themselves and others. Politeness is a crucial aspect of communication that is achieved through the appropriate use of words and utterances in different social contexts.

2.1 Political speech

Political events significantly influence a nation's course since the government controls most of its resources. Therefore, political leaders and administrators must be able to manage the country effectively. Political speeches are important for politicians as they aim to accomplish their objectives by delivering them. Every speech a politician delivers carries an intention, as it propagates or promotes specific ideas (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2012). In essence, politicians can manipulate and persuade people through their speeches. Studies have examined the use of metaphors in politically related discourse. Widiana and Yustisiana (2015) also investigated the occurrence of metaphors in the media related to politics. They discovered that politics is compared to a wide range of things and argued that political metaphors are highly persuasive. Interestingly, they found that even if the readers were not particularly interested in political news, they could still understand the message conveyed through political metaphors. Two studies have been conducted on Donald Trump's speeches. The first, by Yuliana et al. (2018), examined the transitivity system and ideology in Trump's campaign speeches. The second study by Wahyuningsih (2018) focused on using personal pronouns in Trump's inauguration speech. The findings revealed that Trump applied pronouns to present himself and others, signifying that this was a method he used to keep positive communication with his listeners during his speeches.

2.2 Politeness in political speeches

Lately, political figures have been growing interested in politeness strategies, as knowledge of these approaches can help decode what they say and identify what is obscure (Kuzhevskaya, 2019). Megah (2020) analysed the applicability of politeness tactics used by Donald Trump during a debate at Capitol Hill on January 21, 2017. Conflicting with the image depicted by international media, which represents Trump as dull and slapdash, this study exposes that politeness is a societal behaviour that is recognised through agreement within society, taking form in distinct routines or customs, can be described this way: it a type of social conduct that's moulded and agreed upon by a specific community, and is articulated through certain procedures or habits. In essence, "politeness" denotes following the recognised norms of common behaviour that are suitable and expected in a particular culture or society. This is a social protocol that persons are likely to adhere to sustain social accord and avoid causation of wrongdoing. Leech (2014) describes politeness as a struggle to foster common trust and minimise the expression of negative opinions by adhering to six principles. These principles are (a) the Tact principle, which expresses beliefs that benefit others while minimizing beliefs that cost others. (b) the Generosity principle, which minimizes beliefs that benefit oneself and maximizes beliefs that cost oneself. (c) Praise principle: minimize expressions of criticism towards others and maximize expressions of approval towards others. (d) Modesty principle: minimize self-praise and maximize self-criticism. (e) Agreement principle: minimise disagreements with others and maximise agreements with others. (f) Sympathy principle:

minimise antipathy towards others and maximise sympathy towards others. The use of politeness strategies has been extensively studied in pragmatics and sociolinguistics. A recent analysis by Ahmad and Shamshul (2020) found that the Malay suffix "lah" was used frequently in a speech by Malaysian Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin during the Movement Control Order. This suffix is linked to politeness and was used extensively in the speech. Alavidze (2018) argued that negative politeness strategies were also prevalent, particularly in the case of former US President Donald Trump. Trump preferred direct and factual statements instead of using indirect and polite language (nominalisation). However, after employing negative politeness strategies, Trump followed up with positive strategies by proposing solutions that involved both the speaker and hearer (including the speaker/hearer in activity and offering goods), which enhanced his leadership credibility.

Reviewing the existing literature highlights that it focuses on politeness strategies in different contexts such as literature, academic, social and political. However, through the investigation of existing literature, it is found that very few research studies focus on diplomatic and cross-cultural contexts. Only a few researches have been conducted in the context of UNGA. No study is found that addresses the comparative analysis of American and Chinese presidents specifically. So, the present tries to fill this gap by conducting a comparative analysis of the speeches of these presidents. The present study analyses the speeches in qualitative and quantitative ways, which has yet to be conducted before.

2.3 Theory of politeness

The politeness theory, projected by Algiovan (2022), serves as a foundation for this research. Politeness has gained significant popularity in language research due to its increasing relevance. Cooperative Principles (Chen & Chen, 2007). The acquisition of politeness strategies is essential to learning L2 pragmatics in second or foreign language attainment studies (Algiovan, 2022). More broadly speaking, this has increased interest in politeness in language learning research and sociolinguistics (Chen & Chen 2007). In the background of language study, politeness denotes two primary features: (1) how languages govern the societal distance between orators and their parts, and (2) how people in a language community go about protective face or side-stepping situations that could cause awkwardness or irrespective, during talks. The notion of politeness in English is contained by someone who is well-mannered, has good behaviours, and acts appropriately in social circumstances without being discourteous. The face theory projected by Ambarwati and Kuncorohadi (2023) is a noteworthy input to the study of politeness, as it helps to explain how people make polite desires and avoid beginning offence in speech acts. This theory has been significant in analysing speech acts by scholars such as Hobbs (2003). Brown and Levinson's theory of face advocates that every person has a public representation, known as face, which they want to preserve. This face consists of two requirements: negative face, which states the need for individual space, authority of performance, and independence from obligation, and positive face, which refers to the requirement for an optimistic self-representation and endorsement from others. In conversation, there is a possibility of threatening the face by violating negative or positive face. These face-threatening acts (FTAs) are responsible of undesirable social consequences such as clashes, and this can be overcome by using different politeness approaches (Dridi, 2021)

Politeness Strategies

Salman and Betti (2020) classify four politeness methods that an individual may use to lessen potential face-threatening acts: bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness and off record. These approaches aim to lessen the possibility of facing threats that leave a negative impression on an individual's social image. The details of each approach are discussed below.

Bald on Record

As explained by Hutabarat (2021), Bald on record is an approach used in diverse circumstances

based on the speaker's aims of performing face-threatening acts. This tactic comprises direct and rude expressions, and there is no requirement for the speaker's effort to mitigate the effect of FTAs. Surprises, embarrassment, and the use of inconvenient acts for the listener are included in the bald category on record. Examples of bald on record are "Take some more coffee" or "Do sit down." Direct requests are also included in this approach, such as "Pass me the book." A record approach is used in conversations with close relations, such as family members and intimate friends. In summary, bald on record is a direct, authoritative sentence, a clear example of this communication approach.

Positive politeness

According to Kuzhevskaya (2019), positive politeness provides the listener with benefits, requirements, needs, and morals. The main focus of this approach is positive face, which refers to the need to maintain societal approval. Positive politeness is not as polite as negative politeness, but it helps build a relationship of understanding between the debater and the addressee. This approach is important as it lessens the threat to the hearer's positive face, which is their self-representation and societal identity. Positive politeness is an approach that pleases the addressee's self-honour rather than their liberation and gives value to the listeners by making them feel good about themselves. Examples of positive politeness are comments of friendship, unity, and greetings that avoid clashes and the intent to maintain the hearer's positive face.

Negative Politeness

Teitelbaum & Ben-Ze'ev (2023) suggest that negative politeness is an important feature of presenting admiration and is more particular and attentive than positive politeness. It includes refraining from interference in other individuals' space and lessening the inconvenience caused. Negative politeness tactics priorities the addressee's negative face, which refers to their need for self-sufficiency and individuality. For example, inquiring about someone in an indirect way rather than asking directly shows negative politeness. The negative politeness approach includes indirect ways of speaking, asking questions and using formal language. Negative politeness is all about giving respect to others and minimising FAT.

Off Record

Brown and Levinson (1987) argue that off-record is an approach that makes ambiguous statements with the intention of not taking actions responsible for FTA by allowing the listener to evaluate the meaning himself instead of the speaker's clear statement. The off-record approach includes indirect suggestions, hints, and statements that a hearer can infer differently. For instance, saying "I forgot my umbrella" could suggest that the addresser wants the addressee to lend them an umbrella without directly asking for it. The statements are implicit and leave the interpretation of meaning to the listener. In short, off record tactic is an indirect approach and permits the listener to interpret the meaning of the message. In this approach the possibility of face threatening in minimum.

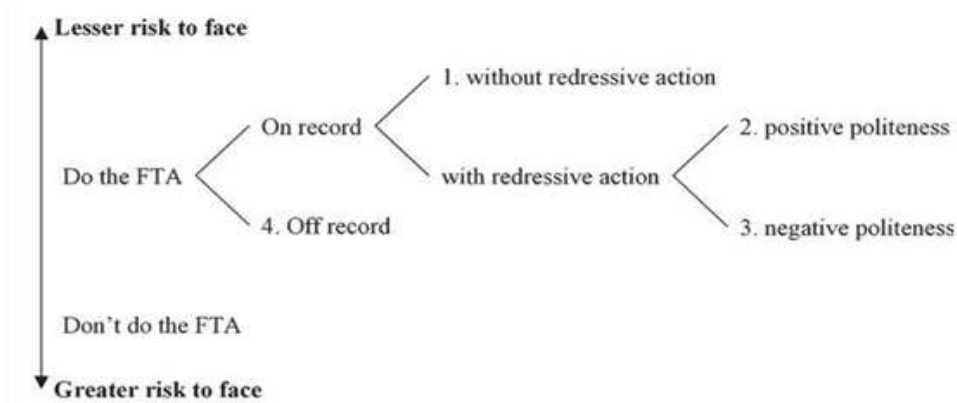


Figure 1: Brown and Levinson's strategies for doing an FTA

Alvarez and Wolfe (2024), characterized face-threatening acts (FTAs) on the basis of their degree of threat to a person's face. The most explicit and harsh FTA is performed in bald on record such as saying "You never listen to me." The minimum chance of FTA is the off the record, which includes implicit suggestions or requests, such as saying, "I'm not sure if we have any clean clothes." Some FTAs can threaten both positive and negative face simultaneously, for instance, gripes, disruptions, menaces, vivid displays of emotion, and demands for private data. This overlap occurs because these FTAs can challenge both the hearer's desire for autonomy and their desire to maintain a positive social image.

3 Material and Method

The study utilizes a mixed method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative analysis to examine linguistic politeness in political discourse. The researchers focused on speeches given by American and Chinese presidents at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) 78th session. The data was obtained from primary sources, such as the official website of Aljazeera, as well as secondary sources, including articles and books related to the topic. The speeches were transcribed and analyzed qualitatively using Brown and Levinson's politeness theory as a framework. The data was then analyzed quantitatively using statistical methods and Excel sheets such as frequency counts to compare the use of politeness strategies by both presidents. Findings were reported using tables.

Although the study focuses on the speeches of just two presidents, this limited scope might only partially represent the diverse political spectrum of each nation. This study is limited to textual analysis of the speeches, the non-verbal elements in communication such as tone, facial expression and body language are not included in the analysis. The study only focuses on American and Chinese culture, so its findings may need to be generalized to other cultural contexts. This study is time-specific as it only focuses on the 78th session of UNGA.

4 Qualitative Analysis

4.1 Politeness strategies used by Joe Biden in his speech

The analysis was carried out based on a theoretical framework that describes Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness tactics. In this study, researchers discovered that Biden's speech contains four different types of politeness strategies

Bald On Record

This strategy is used when the speaker wants to express his opinion in the most direct way, and the speaker needs maximum efficiency. President Joe Biden used the bald-on-record strategy in his speech multiple times. When he wants to tell the world leaders that his country has to lead them all, he uses the most direct and least polite strategy, which shows the authoritative and commanding attitude of the president. In his address, he said that as the President of the United States, I recognise my nation's responsibility in addressing the current urgent situation. Alternative expression: As the President of the United States, I comprehend my country's obligation to confront the pressing circumstances (Al Jazeera Staff, [2022](#)). In the statement above, no politeness is shown as the president is threatening the face of the audience by using the words lead and understand. He also said, "Countries can chart their course" (Al Jazeera Staff, [2022](#)). This is another example of bald-on-record politeness used by Mr Biden, which shows that he considers himself the authority to give orders to other countries. In the line above, the use of "can" seems to be permission and is also a face-threatening act (FTA).

He then said that the U.S. pursues a more protected, affluent, and equitable world for all people (Al Jazeera Staff, [2022](#)). In this line, the president used a declarative and direct way to tell the audience about his desires and what he wanted the world to do, which shows impolite behaviour. While talking about the institutions his country has built, he used direct ways, and he said that international organizations established after World War II have been a crucial foundation for our development, and the United States remains committed to preserving them. However, we recognize that these institutions and approaches require modernization to adapt to the new challenges of our times. We must incorporate more leadership and talent from underrepresented regions to promote inclusivity. The interconnected and complex nature of contemporary challenges demands that we address them in a more comprehensive manner.

As a result, we are pleased to rejoin UNESCO this year (Al Jazeera Staff, [2022](#)). Mr. Biden has praised his country as the USA now maintains the institutes made by collaborative effort. Here, he threatened the faces of other members by complaining that he did not help maintain the institutes. The word "proud" seems to have a negative impression, which is impolite. In the following lines, he is dictating the UN to continue its policies, saying that to overcome the frequent roadblocks that hinder advancement at the Council, we must increase the number of voices and viewpoints represented. The UN must continue to prioritize maintaining peace, preventing conflicts, and alleviating suffering among people (Al Jazeera Staff, [2022](#)). Here is another example of a threatening act (FTA) as Mr. Biden threatens the face of the UN by dictating what to do. The word "must" refer to the direct way of saying things. This also shows permission and authority.

We must address and fix the deficiencies and shortcomings of our current system brought to light by the pandemic. Additionally, we need to guarantee that women and girls can fully experience the advantages of our advancements. Furthermore, it is crucial to take further action to tackle the financial burden that restricts the development of numerous low- and middle-income countries (Al Jazeera Staff, [2022](#)). The above-mentioned statement is very impolite as it threatens the face of poor and under-developing countries. It refers to the drastic condition of poor countries as they get loans from the USA to maintain their budgets to survive. In a straightforward way, the president of the USA degrades the countries who are dependent on his country.

Mr. Biden becomes a bit harsh on the matter of Russia and Ukraine war as in the statement bellow. He said that Russia's recent actions, such as suspending New START and withdrawing from the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty, are causing great concern. These actions undermine the progress made under the Non-Proliferation Treaty and pose a threat to global security. Despite these irresponsible actions by Russia, the United States remains committed to reducing the threat

of weapons of mass destruction and will continue to lead by example in this regard, irrespective of other global developments (Al Jazeera Staff, [2022](#)).

This is also an example of an on-record politeness strategy, as he threatens Russia's face with disapproval and criticism. The use of the word "shredding" seems very harsh as it refers to violence. The comment he gave to Russia is impolite. Here, the determination of the US president is also evident in the last line and the use of "no matter what" shows his determination.

Positive politeness

Positive politeness is used when the speaker tries to minimise the difference between the listener and himself by demonstrative friendliness. The American president used positive politeness more than any other strategy in his speech, which shows he wanted solidarity with the audience and to be friendly with them. He started his speech by saying, "Mr. President, Mr. Secretary-General, and my fellow leaders" (Al Jazeera Staff, [2022](#)). This shows the friendly and polite attitude of Joe Biden. He wants to minimise the difference between his audience by saying "fellow leaders." He showed solidarity by saying that we are all being watched by the world's population at a crucial moment in global events. Let us join hands and embrace the potential that unites us all. Doing so can shape the course of history (Al Jazeera Staff, [2022](#)). Here is another example of positive politeness as the President focused on solidarity and collective work. Words like "common hope" and "all of us" show polite behaviour and reduce the chance of facing threatening acts (FTA). The word "my fellow leaders" occurs twice in this passage, which shows friendliness and is a face-saving act (FSA).

The statement highlights the significant progress made in education and healthcare through collaborative efforts. It mentions that millions of children have gained access to education, and tens of millions of lives have been saved from preventable and treatable diseases like measles, malaria, tuberculosis, and HIV/AIDS. The impact of these efforts is significant, with over 25 million lives saved due to PEPFAR's work in more than 55 countries. The statement emphasizes the importance of continuing these efforts and accelerating progress to ensure that no one is left behind, as too many people are still left out (Al Jazeera Staff, [2022](#)). In the passage above, the speaker tries to minimise the distance and wants to create a friendly environment. He said we have done many things together, such as providing education and saving people from disease. Here, the president also wants to give hope by saying that if we work together, we can achieve any goal and cope with any challenge, which shows the importance of working together. It is a clear example of positive politeness.

He has used positive politeness in the following passage. Collectively, we have the potential to significantly increase lending from the World Bank through reforms that enhance its efficiency and effectiveness. These multilateral development banks are highly regarded for their ability to facilitate transparent and high-quality investment in developing countries, making them a valuable resource. Implementing these reforms could significantly impact global economic progress (Al Jazeera Staff, [2022](#)).

The word "collectively" also refers to positive politeness and shows friendliness and solidarity. In collaboration with other world leaders, the United States strives to establish safety measures for artificial intelligence (AI) technologies before they become widely available to the public. The aim is to ensure that AI is governed by established rules and policies rather than allowing it to have an unchecked influence over people's lives (Al Jazeera Staff, [2022](#)). The president addresses the audience by calling them "leaders", which is very significant as it shows a persuasive attitude, and it is evident that he wants other leaders to assist him in strengthening the technology.

"We stand with the Ac- — with the African Union, ECOWAS and other regional bodies to support constitutional rule" (Al Jazeera Staff, [2022](#)). The president shows solidarity with the African

Union, which shows positive politeness. Regarding China: We aim for a responsible management of competition between our countries without causing conflicts. I have emphasised that we want 'de-risking' rather than 'decoupling' with China. We will challenge aggressive and intimidating behaviour while defending established norms such as freedom of navigation, overflight, and fair economic competition that has maintained stability for many years. However, we are also prepared to cooperate with China in areas where joint efforts are necessary, particularly in addressing the urgent issue of climate change (Al Jazeera Staff, [2022](#)). The president of the USA goes positively polite when he talks about China as he says it is a healthy competition between the two countries and it's not a conflict. He says that the United States is ready to work with China for the progress of the world and to elevate the global crisis. This shows that the USA wants friendly relations with China and wants to work together for their common benefits as well as global benefits. "Let's do this work together.... Let's deliver progress for everyone. Let's bend the arc of history for the good of the world because it's within our power to do it" (Al Jazeera Staff, [2022](#)). In the end of his speech, he uses positive politeness by using the words Let's multiple times. The word presents positive politeness as he speaks in a friendly and informal manner.

Negative Politeness

Negative politeness is used when the speaker wants to be formal and respectful. It is the politest strategy of the four strategies given by Brown and Levinson. President Joe Biden uses negative politeness a few times in his address. He wants to be formal in his speech by saying, "Let me repeat that again," as he is seeking permission from the audience to repeat what he said earlier, which shows negative politeness. At one point, he said, "I'd respectfully suggest the answer is no," which shows that he does not want to offend his audience with his statement, so he uses negative politeness. At another moment, he shows negative by saying, "Now, let me be clear" he repeats this many time in his speech as he wants to be formal. In the end of his speech, he also shows negative politeness by saying "let me close with this". His last remarks also show negative politeness: "Thank you for listening. You're kind" (Al Jazeera Staff, [2022](#)).

Off Record

Off record politeness is the indirect way of saying things. In this strategy there is the minimum chance of threatening the face of others American President Joe Biden uses, this strategy in his speech in the following way. A result of 50 years of dedicated efforts on both sides to overcome the painful aftermaths of conflict and to opt for collaborating towards peace and a brighter tomorrow (Al Jazeera Staff, [2022](#)). In the above statement the president indirectly tells the audience about the Vietnamese and American war and the destruction war brings to both countries. "But it's a powerful reminder that our history need not dictate our future" (Al Jazeera Staff, [2022](#)).

The above line shows off record politeness as the speaker gives hint that our history was full of wars and the future should not follow this legacy and we should work to maintain peace.

"And no nation can meet the challenges of today alone" (Al Jazeera Staff, [2022](#)). In this line the president uses in direct way as he wants to say the unity is the only solution for today's challenges and he wants to say to the audience that we should be united to fight with today's challenges. "The people of Haiti cannot wait much longer" (Al Jazeera Staff, [2022](#)). This line shows off record politeness as he wants to say that we all should help the people of Haiti as they have suffered a lot and the world should help them without any delay. "We need to be sure they are used as tools of opportunity, not as weapons of oppression" (Al Jazeera Staff, [2022](#)). Here, the speaker in directly suggests that advanced technology should be used in appropriate way and should not be misused.

4.2 Politeness strategies in the speech of Chinese vice president Han Zheng

Bald on Record

It is the most direct and less polite strategy in this strategy speaker does not care about the listener's face so in this strategy there is a greater chance of face threatening act (FAT). In the following passage, the vice president of China Han Zheng uses direct way of saying that partnership is better than alliance. As in his speech he said, the concept of shared, all-encompassing, collaborative, and sustainable security should be prioritized. This approach emphasizes communication over confrontation, cooperation over alliances, and mutually beneficial outcomes instead of a win-lose scenario (Jazeera, [2023](#)). On another point he used straightforward way and said, we need to acknowledge and tackle the valid security apprehensions of every nation, and seek a peaceful resolution to conflicts by engaging in open talks and consultation (Jazeera, [2023](#)). Here the speaker wants to say that we should resolve the conflict through dialogue in a peaceful way. The language is direct and the speaker does not care about the audience's face.

China endorses any actions that contribute to resolving the conflict in Ukraine peacefully and is prepared to actively participate in achieving a swift end to the conflict (Jazeera, [2023](#)). On the issue of Russia and Ukraine war he gave clear stance that China supports efforts for peace. "We should respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries and observe the purposes and principles of the U.N. Charter" (Jazeera, [2023](#)). This line also shows the clear and direct attitude of the speaker as he talked about the countries that we should respect it.

He further talked about terrorism and said, a selected group of nations have unlawfully implemented unilateral sanctions, significantly harming international relations by disrupting harmony and stability. The international community should unite in opposing these actions. China strongly endorses Cuba in their legitimate fight against external interference and blockade to safeguard their sovereignty. We commend Cuba's efforts in combating terrorism (Jazeera, [2023](#)). In the passage above the Chinese vice president shows his complete support to the Cuban people in their effort against terrorism. He also dictates the international community for the resistance of illegal acts. He is threatening the face of the international community by saying, we must ensure security not only in conventional areas but also in unconventional ones. It is crucial to prevent nuclear war and never utilize nuclear weapons (Jazeera, [2023](#)). In the above-mentioned passage he talks about the nuclear weapons that they should not be used. He is threatening the face of countries who use nuclear weapons against the opponent countries.

"Developed countries should do more to reduce emissions and provide developing countries with financing, technology and capacity building support" (Jazeera, [2023](#)). In the statement above Han Zheng is threatening the face of developed countries by saying that they should do more as he means that they are not doing enough for the developing countries.

The United Nations (UN) should make progress in all three areas of its mandate, which include security, development, and human rights, in a balanced and simultaneous manner. This means that efforts to promote security, development, and human rights should not be prioritized over each other. Instead, all countries should work together to ensure global security, share development achievements, and shape the future of the world. Major countries should set an example by upholding multilateralism and fulfilling their commitments to it (Jazeera, [2023](#)). In the above passage, the speaker is threatening the face of the UN that it should make advancement in the development zones and human rights which shows that he considers the existing policies not sufficient and they need improvement.

The vice president shows his power and threatening the audience's face by informing that China is strong enough to protect his country and no one dare to attack it. As he says in the following passage. The Chinese people possess an unwavering determination and unyielding spirit to defend

their sovereignty and territorial integrity against any challenge or threat. This fact should not be overlooked or underestimated by anyone or any force (Jazeera, [2023](#)).

Positive politeness

Positive politeness is used when the speaker wants to make an informal and friendly relation with the audience. In his speech at UN vice president Han Zheng uses positive politeness multiple times.

“We should pursue mutual benefit, deliver win-win outcomes and achieve development for all” (Jazeera, [2023](#)). The speaker uses positive politeness when he talks about mutual benefits and development which shows he wants friendly relations with the audience.

Countries and civilizations should work collaboratively towards mutual progress by recognizing and valuing each other's strengths, finding common ground, and avoiding disagreements. This can be achieved by promoting shared achievements and jointly safeguarding universal security, with major countries serving as role models and upholding the principles of multilateralism (Jazeera, [2023](#)). The vice president shows solidarity and politeness when he talks about “respecting each other” the word respecting itself shows the positive attitude of speaker. Here is another passage that shows positive politeness used by vice president he said that we aim to promote global security and progress in all three areas of peacekeeping missions (security), sustainable development (development), and human rights (human rights) simultaneously while encouraging all nations to collaborate in ensuring universal security, sharing development successes, and shaping the future of the world. Major countries should lead by example and fulfill their commitment to multilateralism.” Additionally, “We invite all countries to join us in reaping the opportunities and advantages brought about by China's growth (Jazeera, [2023](#)). This shows positive politeness as Han Zheng talks about the developments and positive attitude towards other countries. The use of word “welcome” suggests the positive politeness.

China will continue to be a part of the community of developing nations as it is the largest country in this category. Being a member of the Global South, China identifies with other developing countries and is interconnected with them. Its destiny is intertwined with that of other developing nations (Jazeera, [2023](#)). In the passage above the speaker maintains friendly relations with the developing as he refers his country the member of developing countries’ family it is the most evident example of this approach.

China will actively contribute to the creation of a world where all nations share a common destiny, fulfilling its role as a major power and taking on the responsibility of shaping humanity's future. China will collaborate with other countries dedicated to progress to bring about a brighter tomorrow for the world as a whole (Jazeera, [2023](#)). The words like shared future, together and brighter future used by Chinese vice president show positive politeness. He also ends his speech being positively polite by saying “Thank you”.

Negative Politeness

In his speech, the vice president goes formal by calling his audience “Colleagues” multiple times.

Off Record

The off-record politeness refers to the way in which the speaker gives hints. It is the indirect way of saying things.

“The safety of every nation is interdependent as one country's security can influence that of others. This interconnectedness highlights the importance of considering global security as a whole rather than just focusing on individual nation's safety” (Jazeera, [2023](#)). In the above statement, the vice president Han Zheng condemn war and wants to say that if one country attack other it will

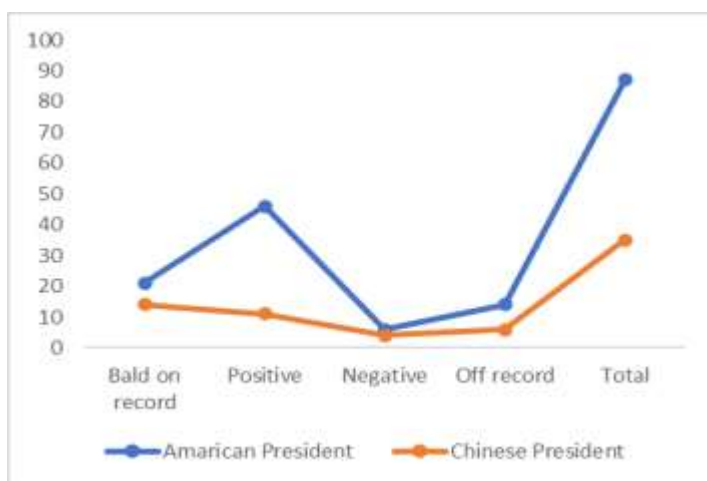
ultimately harm itself. This refers to off-record politeness. “China stays committed to safeguarding its sovereignty and territorial integrity” (Jazeera, [2023](#)). This line shows that China is strong enough to protect its territory.

4.3 Quantitative Analysis

Statistical analysis is carried out to find which politeness strategy is used more frequently by the presidents. The data were entered in excel sheet and percentage formula was applied through which the results are obtained. The follow findings obtained through statistical analysis. The results are represented in the form of table and graph.

Table 1: Politeness strategies used by American and Chinese Presidents

Politeness Strategies	American President	Percentage%	Chinese President	Percentage%
Bald on Record	21	24	14	40
Positive	46	53	11	31
Negative	6	7	4	11
Off Record	14	16	6	17
Total	87	100	35	100



Graph 1: Comparison of politeness strategies in American and Chinese presidents' speech

5 Findings and Discussion

5.1 American president politeness strategies

American president Joe Biden has used all four politeness strategies in his speech at UNGA 78th session, with different ratio. He used politeness 87 times in his speech out of which bald on record is used 21 times which is 24% of the total number while positive is used 46 times which makes 53% of total sum. Only 6 times negative politeness is used by Mr. Biden in his speech and makes 7% of the total. Off record politeness is used 14 times which is 16% of total.

5.2 Chinese president politeness strategies

Chinese vice President Han Zheng has used different politeness strategies in different number which is as follows. The total number of politeness strategies used by Han Zheng in his speech at UNGA 78th session is 35. Bald on record is used 14 times which is 40% of total, 11 times positive politeness is used and makes 31% of the sum. Negative politeness is used 4 times which makes 11% of the total. Mr. Zheng has used 6 times off record politeness which is 17% of the total number.

The analysis shows that the American president has used more politeness strategies than those of Chinese president as the ratio is 8:5. The American president has used positive politeness more frequently which shows the friendly attitude while Chinese president has used bald on record more frequently which presents his straightforward and clear stance. Negative politeness is used by both presidents which shows they want to be less formal and respectful as the audience are their colleagues and equals.

6 Discussion

In both similar and diverse cultural contexts, individuals engage in verbal communication through spoken words. Politeness is crucial for smooth conversation flow, as highlighted by Kusuma (2014). Politeness is a tactic employed to be kind to others and foster strong communication relationships. The study of politeness in linguistic communication and informal language use by members of a culture or community is not uncommon in the scientific field.

During present study, politeness theory proposed by Chen et al. (2021) is used to analyze the speeches of the American and Chinese presidents at UNGA 78th session. The present study reveals that the American president was more polite in his speech as compared to Chinese president. Numerous investigations have been carried out to analyze politeness in the speeches of political leaders as there has been a growing interest in the use of politeness strategies by political leaders; they use different politeness strategies to convey their meaning in a better way. Megah (2020), in his recent study, analyzed the application of politeness strategies used by Donald Trump during a debate at Capitol Hill on January 21, 2017. Which shows he mostly used positive politeness contrary to the image portrayed by international media, which depicts Trump as blunt and brash. This study also reveals that President Joe Biden in his speech at UNGA used positive politeness more frequently. In a recent analysis by Ahmad and Shamshul (2020), they found that the Malay suffix "lah" was used frequently in a speech by Malaysian Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin during the Movement Control Order. This suffix is linked to politeness and was used extensively in the speech. Similarly, Prasetyo et al. (2020), found that the Indonesian presidential candidate Prabowo Subianto predominantly used positive politeness strategies in his winning declaration. Present study also shows the use of positive politeness by both American and Chinese presidents in their speech. Contrary to this research, Alavidze (2018) argued that negative politeness strategies were also prevalent, particularly in the case of former US President Donald Trump. Instead of using indirect and polite language, Trump preferred direct and factual statements (nominalization). As this study finds less use of negative politeness by presidents.

According to Zheng (2021), Chinese culture places a strong emphasis on clear and distinct titles; on the other hand, American culture lacks specificity when it comes to title. The use of polite and elegant forms of address is more common in Chinese culture and language, which may seem impolite or abrupt in English. So, we can say that difference in the politeness strategies used by Chinese and American presidents is because of cultural difference.

7 Conclusion

The present study has explored politeness strategies used by American and Chinese presidents in their address at the UNGA 78th session. The data were analyzed by both qualitatively and quantitatively. The results show that American president has used more politeness strategies as compared to Chinese president. It is also found that cultural difference between the countries is one of the reasons of difference in politeness strategies. This study evaluates the four basic strategies of politeness. So, it is suggested that further studies can be held to analyze the sub-categories of politeness strategies suggested by Brown and Levinson. Another UNGA session can also be analyzed. Future researches can be conducted to analyze the speeches of the other members of UNGA. Studies could be conducted on a larger scale by including more countries and different

contexts and organizations. It could be enhanced by incorporating other data sources such as interviews and press conferences which helps to increase the validity of the study. Future researches can also add discourse analysis alongside the analysis of politeness strategies to get deeper insights. Future studies can also investigate the impact of other factors such as audience, political climate and status of the country on politeness strategies. A longitudinal study can also be conducted on the change in politeness strategies over time.

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