



Politeness in Political Speech: Exploring Donald Trump's 2017 and 2025 Inaugural Addresses

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Abstract

Through the guidance of Fairclough's model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), this descriptive qualitative research analyzes Trump's politeness strategies in realizing his speech acts. The analysis of Trump's inaugural speeches revealed that he used a combination of positive politeness and bald-on-record strategies. Moreover, Trump dominantly utilized inclusive lexical markers such as the pronouns "we" and "our" to initiate both strategies. These markers create a unifying effect between the government and its people. Consequently, they realize most of Trump's assertive and commissive acts. Trump's assertive statements are used to portray himself as a compassionate leader who prioritizes the interests of his people. This goal is achieved by promoting solidarity through positive politeness. Through these results, Trump's rhetorical style is concluded to be anti-government and pro-people, highlighting the idea that he brings change to all Americans. It is recommended that future studies focus on the audience's reaction to Trump's political discourse to confirm whether his communicative goals are achieved.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

The President of the United States of America (USA), Donald Trump, is known for being a straightforward, blunt, and provocative communicator. This is the reason why he is very popular not only in the USA but also worldwide (Venizelos, 2022). He was given several opportunities to deliver different speeches across his country during his presidency. The first time he delivered a speech as the President of the USA was in 2017 when he delivered his inaugural address. This inaugural speech is described by Ali and Ibrahim (2020) as a discourse that is focused on American ideologies, power, and values.

On the other hand, Gill et al. (2025), focusing on the technicalities of the speech, described it as formal, clear, and persuasion-directed discourse. These results seem to agree with what the rhetorical analysis of Rong (2024) found. The analysis suggests that Trump portrayed himself in his inaugural address in 2017 as "high-ranking, diligent, people-loving, and guardian of the people".

Trump's diction in different political discourses has led different researchers to compare him and his successor, former USA President Joe Biden, who delivered his inaugural address in 2021. The inaugural speeches of both presidents are found to be promoting a sense of unity among all Americans. However, Trump's speech in 2017 was found to have provided some highlights of the shortcomings of the previous administration (former President Obama). Also, his speech portrayed Americans as prey to "political elites", while Biden's speech was focused on addressing political division and upholding values aligned with a democratic country (Raza et al., 2024; Gill et al., 2025). In terms of the linguistic styles of both presidents during the 2020 presidential elections, it was documented that Trump uses

positive and negative emotive words more (Körner et al., 2022), as Biden mostly uses “symbolic” and “achievement” terms (Savoy & Wehren, 2022).

1.2. Trump's Discursive Identity

The studies cited above explained Trump's communicative image portrayed in his political speeches. This motivated different researchers to study his discursive habits to a deeper level. In a critical stylistic analysis done by Alaghbary (2022), it was revealed that Trump uses “naming and transitivity” patterns whenever he directs his utterance to his political opponents inside and outside the USA, which portrays his rivals negatively. This agrees with the euphemistic and dysphemistic analysis of Kafi and Degaf (2021). This paper revealed that Trump uses dysphemistic expressions in insulting, ridiculing, and denoting dislike of a threatening entity. On the other hand, he uses euphemistic expressions in showing respect, concern, and sympathy for things related to himself and the US government.

Focusing on Trump's social media discourse, it was found that his tweets use language rhetorically to separate Muslim people and other ethnicities from native Americans by creating an image of Muslims as invaders of America. This is done by Trump along with the portrayal of himself as the “American Hero” (Khan et al., 2021). This result complements the critical discourse analysis of Kadim (2022), which explained that Trump uses different pragmatic strategies, such as implication, presupposition, hyperbole, metaphor, etc., manipulatively and persuasively to create a negative portrayal of Muslims and other ethnicities living in the USA to achieve his political goals.

According to Derakhshani et al. (2021), this “cynical” discourse of Trump towards other countries and ethnicities is intentionally “engineered” to influence the listeners and viewers, resulting in an increased popularity. This is the reason why, despite the provocative discourse of Trump, he was still able to maintain his political popularity. This is proven by a study that explained that his “habitus” aligns with his supporters', which creates a sense of “community”. It is explained that Trump speaks the thoughts of his supporters, which played a vital role in maintaining his popularity. Trump's “politically incorrect and vulgar discourse and awkward mannerisms” oppose the elitist discourse. Therefore, his discourse got the attention of those belonging to the lower level of the social hierarchy (Venizelos, 2022). The paper of Hamza and Nordin (2023) agrees with these results by revealing that Trump has deviated from the politeness principles of Leech (1983) to ruin the image of his political rivals and create a positive portrayal of himself and his political allies.

1.3. Inaugural Addresses as a Foundation of Governance

Inaugural speeches signal a shift in the political face of a sovereign country. Therefore, this is a political discourse where the emerging leaders of different countries will first extend their political ideologies, personality, and governance to the citizens (Garifullina, 2023). It is also the venue where a country's emerging leader can establish authority as the new leader. Specifically, inaugural speeches are delivered by newly elected leaders to inform the public about the political perspectives and principles that a country will embrace during the leadership of the elected president (Chukwu & Olorunsogo, 2024). This means that inaugural speeches are prone to utilizing different linguistic strategies to effectively influence the citizens of a country (Garifullina, 2023). According to AlAfnan (2022), the inaugural speech of Donald Trump in 2017 centered on informing Americans about his vision, goals, and plan for the country in the succeeding years. It is specified that these are emphasized using the word “will”. On the other hand, Joe Biden's inaugural speech in 2021 mostly used “low certainty modals” to extend his vision to his country. Collectively, AlAfnan (2022) asserted that the speech of Biden suggests “weak leadership” and “lack of confidence” when compared to Trump's.

Focusing on the inaugural speeches delivered outside the United States, the former president of Liberia, George Weah, was observed to have expressed in call for “gratitude, promise, and national unity” using imperative and declarative sentences. It was also documented that he frequently uses the personal pronoun “we” to establish inclusivity and belongingness among the citizens (Salami et al. 2022). Furthermore, the former president of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari, was observed to have used the pragmatic strategies of “revealing intentions, admitting and appreciating, identifying, describing, appealing, reminding, and calling” to establish authority, specify the priorities of his government, and ask for the support of the Nigerian citizens (Jegade & Lawal, 2023).

1.4. Politeness in Political Discourse

It is observed that politicians in global politics often use positive politeness to influence and persuade public opinion and express their criticisms to their respective governments (Mardiana et al., 2025). As a result, the use of politeness strategies such as positive politeness helps these politicians to shape their political portrayals in different political activities (Dalimunte & Wen, 2022). Studying the politeness strategies in the presidential debate between Donald Trump and Joe Biden, it was revealed that both Trump and Biden use positive politeness to provide a promise, be optimistic, and initiate a sense of belonging (Ayunikmah et al., 2023). Looking at Asian politics, it was documented that the Malaysian Prime Minister uses positive politeness more than negative politeness. Specifically, the Prime Minister uses positive politeness to make the public feel that he knows and will attend to their “need, interest, or want”. On the other hand, he uses negative politeness to establish deference (Anuar & Ngadiran, 2021). In a political talk show in Indonesia, the study of Haryanto et al. (2024) revealed that positive politeness and bald-on-record strategies were used by the politicians during the interviews. The paper specifies that politicians use positive politeness to demonstrate an understanding of the listeners’ needs. On the other hand, they use a bald-on-record strategy to show disagreement and to warn the public.

The studies mentioned above evidenced that politeness strategies are powerful and effective tools to persuade the masses and influence them regarding politicians’ different political goals (Anuar & Ngadiran, 2021). Therefore, these strategies may be used by a politician to create a positive political image and ruin another politician’s public image (Dalimunte & Wen, 2022). However, Mardiana et al. (2025) suggest that politicians should serve as the epitome of adhering to the principles of politeness and maintaining social order.

1.5. Speech Acts in Political Discourse

The politeness strategies used by politicians in different countries are the tools that they use to realize their communicative intentions, which may be categorized through speech acts. In addition, different studies proved that politicians diversely utilize these speech acts depending on the political situation. Focusing on American politicians, a well-known democrat, former US President Barack Obama dominantly used the commissive act in his speeches to deliver his promise and assurance to the American citizens. It is concluded that this speech act brings a hopeful and inspiring effect to the listeners (Rakaj, 2022). During the inaugural address of another democratic president, Joe Biden, it was revealed in the study by Ahmed and Amir (2021) that he mostly used the directive speech act. This is used by Biden to ask the people to perform an act for the betterment of their country collectively. It is also specified in the same paper that these directives were the result of Biden’s assertions. This means that Biden complementarily used the directive and assertive speech acts (Al-Shboul et al., 2024). Focusing on the republican president, Donald Trump. The paper of Ashfira and Dwi Harjanto (2020) stated that Trump uses assertive speech acts to allege, affirm, and assert something. This paper explains that Trump uses this speech act to make the listeners believe that his policies are the best for their country. However, Trump used the expressive and commissive acts dominantly during his victory speech in 2016 to thank the Americans and assure them of his commitment to their country (Mulyana, 2021).

Looking at Asian politicians, during the Indonesian presidential election debates, it was narrated that candidates consider different circumstances in using the expressive act, such as complaining, criticizing, agreeing, disagreeing, and expressing optimism (Abbas et al., 2021). However, the Japanese Prime Minister used commissive acts dominantly as analyzed in his speeches related to COVID-19 (Kartika et al., 2023). On the same matter, former Philippine President Duterte has used the assertive act more during his press briefings about the COVID-19 situation in the Philippines (Gelilang et al., 2021).

1.6. Research Gap

The studies cited above evidenced the link between pragmatic concepts of politeness and speech acts and political communication. However, it is observed that the reviewed pieces of literature related to President Trump only dwelled on the lexical markers used by Trump in his political speeches to pragmatically discuss his message (Kadim, 2022; Alaghbary, 2022; Kafi & Degaf, 2021). Therefore, it can be inferred that most of the reviewed literature on Trump only did a stylistic analysis of his speeches

without focusing on the politeness strategies he used to realize his communicative intentions (Kafi & Degaf, 2021; Venizelos, 2022; Hamza & Nordin, 2023). In addition, the paper of Ashfira and Dwi Harjanto (2020) only focused on the assertive acts of Trump in his presidential speeches, and discussing the politeness strategies used by Trump to realize these assertive acts was not a part of the study's scope. In contrast, the study of Ayunikmah et al. (2023) only discussed the positive politeness strategies of Trump in political activity. It did not document the other politeness strategies he used in such political discourse. This means that there is a need for a study that will focus on documenting the politeness strategies used by Trump in his political activity and specify the illocutionary acts of Trump being realized by these politeness strategies.

To address this gap, the present study has described the politeness strategies employed by President Trump during his 2017 and 2025 inaugural addresses. Also, this paper has documented the lexical politeness markers he used to initiate these politeness strategies. This paper has contributed to the existing knowledge related to pragmatics, as the present study highlights the realization of the Speech Act Theory of Searle (1969) through the Politeness Theory of Brown and Levinson (1987). It is argued in the paper of Anuar and Ngadiran (2021) that using politeness strategies can be an advantageous tool for politicians to persuade and influence the political beliefs of the masses. Therefore, this paper is significant to communication students, linguistics researchers, politicians, and voters, as this study presents the politeness strategies used by Trump to influence his listeners, which can be used as a reference on how he uses these strategies to persuade the American people toward his political objectives.

1.7.Statement of the Problem

This paper describes the different politeness strategies employed by Donald Trump during his 2017 and 2025 inaugural addresses. Specifically, this study answered the following questions:

1. What politeness strategies are employed by Donald Trump to realize his speech acts during his 2017 and 2025 inaugural addresses?
2. What lexical politeness markers are used by Donald Trump to employ these politeness strategies?
3. How do these politeness strategies portray the political image of Donald Trump?

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1.Politeness Theory

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), as documented by Jaworski and Coupland (2006), all “competent adults” who initiate or engage in communication have two faces that can be maintained, lifted, or even threatened. These are the interlocutor's positive face and negative face. It is explained that a *positive face* is the interlocutor's desire to be acknowledged, included, liked, and appreciated by others. On the other hand, a *negative face* is the interlocutor's desire that his/her freedom is unimpeded by others. Moreover, a negative face is one's need to be free from obligations. Furthermore, Brown and Levinson argued that a communicator uses politeness strategies to mitigate the initiation of their Face-Threatening Acts (FTA). These are the implementations of positive politeness and negative politeness.

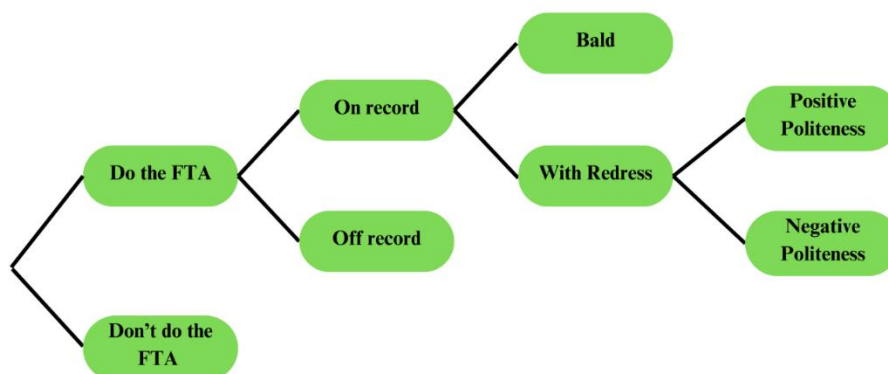


Figure 1. Brown and Levinson's (1987) Strategies for initiating FTAs

Figure 1 shows the path that an interlocutor makes whenever he/she decides to communicate an FTA to the hearer or listener. *Positive politeness* and *negative politeness* are categorized as redressive actions of going on record. This is because both positive and negative politeness are used by an interlocutor to manage, maintain, and somehow lessen the impact of an FTA. These are contrary to the *bald on record* where an FTA is directly stated without any mitigation. Moreover, positive politeness creates a sense of shared values, beliefs, and interests by using words that promote solidarity. On the other hand, negative politeness is used to minimize or avoid any discomfort by creating a communicative environment free of imposition.

2.2. Speech Act Theory

The successful use of politeness strategies is the realization of different illocutionary acts. According to Searle (1976), an interlocutor's communicative intentions may be categorized into five (5) types of illocutionary acts, which are assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives. First, *assertive* acts show the intention of the speaker to state factual utterances. The utterances of claiming, stating, and alleging are examples of this act. Second, *directives* are the attempts of the speaker to make the hearer do an action. The statements of request, command, and advice fall under this illocutionary act. Third, *commissives* are the illocutionary acts that intend to show the commitment of the speaker to doing an action in the future. These can be observed whenever someone is promising or pledging. Fourth, *expressive* acts intend to express the intrapersonal state of the speaker about a phenomenon. This may be realized through apologies, praises, and congratulatory messages. Lastly, *declarations* are utterances aimed at expressing changes. These statements often require specific context and authority.

2.3. Three-Dimensional Model

Fairclough (1985) claimed that critical discourse analysis must be done by going through three (3) dimensions, which are Description, Interpretation, and Explanation. Fairclough explains that the first dimension (description) is the close analysis of the linguistic features (phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics) of the corpus. The second dimension (interpretation), on the other hand, is how the language is produced and consumed. Simply, the second dimension examines the discursive practice reflected in the corpus. Lastly, the third dimension (explanation) unravels an understanding of how socio-cultural factors affect discourse. Therefore, this dimension seeks to understand the ideologies, power dynamics, and social structures behind a discourse.

Overall, the theories discussed above align with the general objective of the present study, which is to analyze the realization of President Trump's communicative intentions through the politeness strategies he utilized following Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory. These communicative intentions are also categorized based on the Speech Act Theory of Searle (1976). As guided by Fairclough's (1985) Three-Dimensional Model, the present study, based on the first dimension, has also analyzed the lexical markers chosen by Trump to initiate the politeness strategies he used. Aligned with the second dimension, the documented politeness strategies and lexical markers are also interpreted to unravel the ideological structure of Trump's inaugural addresses. Lastly, following the third dimension, the present study has explained how Trump's politeness strategies shaped his political image.

3. METHODOLOGY

This portion of the present study discusses the methodology followed by the researcher to address the research gap established in the previous chapter. Specifically, this chapter discussed the paper's research design, sampling technique, data gathering procedure, and data analysis.

3.1. Research Design

This study utilized a *descriptive qualitative* research design to analyze the politeness strategies used by Trump in his 2017 and 2025 inaugural addresses. This research design is also followed to document the lexical markers chosen by Trump to initiate these politeness strategies. Atmowardoyo (2018) defined *descriptive research* as an attempt to discuss the characteristics of an entity, object, or discourse. On the other hand, Lindlof and Taylor (2002), as cited by Chesebro and Borisoff (2007),

defined *qualitative research* as the analysis and preservation of a social phenomenon's content. This means that this research design is suitable for the overall concept of this paper, which is to document and analyze the politeness strategies and lexical markers employed by Trump and use these as the lenses in explaining his political stance.

3.2.Sampling Technique

The present study employed a *purposive sampling* technique in choosing the research corpus used to analyze the politeness strategies employed by President Trump and the lexical markers he chose to initiate these strategies. According to Campbell et al. (2020), purposive sampling allows the researcher(s) to choose the samples or participants of a study. As a result, this sampling technique increases the reliability of the research results by having the researcher accurately match the research corpus and research objectives. As the variables suggest, the present study treated the official transcriptions of Trump's 2017 and 2025 inaugural addresses as the primary data source of this paper. These transcriptions, which are extracted from the official website of the White House, allowed the researcher to read and analyze the utterances of Trump closely when he delivered these speeches. Based on the specified research objectives, it is believed that the analyses of these transcriptions have provided a valid and reliable result to bridge the knowledge gap established in the previous chapter of this paper.

3.3.Data Gathering Procedure

As mentioned, the transcriptions of President Trump's inaugural addresses, which served as the corpus of this study, were collected from the official website of the White House. The researcher opted to extract the corpus from the said website to ensure the reliability of these transcriptions. The extraction of these transcriptions followed two (2) phases: the *preparation phase* and the *verification phase*.

During the preparation phase, the transcriptions of Trump's 2017 and 2025 inaugural addresses are transferred from the official website of the White House to two separate Microsoft Word documents to exclude the website features and other unrelated parts of the website that may affect the analysis of the transcriptions. Proceeding to the verification phase, the prepared corpus is compared to Trump's actual delivery of his 2017 and 2025 inaugural addresses that are uploaded on the YouTube channel of the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) News. This is done to ensure that there are no modifications or omissions to the actual discourse of Trump while delivering these speeches.

3.4.Data Analysis

The analysis of Trump's 2017 and 2025 inaugural addresses followed the coding cycle of Corbin and Strauss (1990) as documented by Seidel and Urquhart (2013). This is a three-cycle coding process that follows the following steps: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. The first coding cycle, which is *open coding*, was done to categorize the discourse of Trump into different politeness strategies and identify the lexical markers he used to initiate these strategies. During the *axial coding* (second coding cycle), the researcher drew the relationship between these politeness strategies and gained an understanding of the pattern of how and when Trump uses these politeness strategies. Lastly, the third cycle, or the *selective coding*, was implemented to develop a unified portrayal of Trump's political stance through the politeness strategies he employed.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter of the present study discusses the general findings, conclusions, and recommendations revealed and contemplated after the analysis of the research corpus. The scrutiny of data, after implementing the coding cycle of Corbin and Strauss (1990), revealed that President Trump mostly used bald-on-record during his 2017 inaugural address to realize assertive acts. On the other hand, he dominantly used positive politeness during his 2025 inaugural address to express commissive and assertive acts. Moreover, the analysis also revealed that President Trump mostly used inclusive lexical pragmatic markers in employing these strategies to lessen the impact of direct statements and to create a sense of shared goals with the listeners.

4.1.Research Question 1: Politeness Strategies Employed by Trump

In the analysis of Trump's inaugural addresses, the dynamics of his politeness strategies differ from each other. In 2017, the unmitigated bald on record was mostly used by Trump over the redressive strategies of positive and negative politeness. Also, he used this strategy to deliver most of his assertive

acts. However, during his inaugural address in 2025, it is evident that Trump has dominantly used positive politeness to realize most of his commissive and assertive acts. These are evident in the table presented below.

Table 1. Politeness Strategies in President Trump's Inaugural Addresses

2017 Inaugural Address			2025 Inaugural Address		
	f	%		f	%
Positive	35	37.23	Positive	119	65.75
Commissives	15	15.96	Commissives	55	30.39
Assertives	8	8.51	Assertives	35	19.34
Declarations	8	8.51	Declarations	16	8.84
Expressives	4	4.26	Expressives	13	7.18
Negative	12	12.77	Negative	4	2.21
Commissives	9	9.57	Assertives	2	1.10
Assertives	3	3.19	Commissives	1	0.55
Bald	47	50.00	Directives	1	0.55
Assertives	34	36.17	Bald	58	32.04
Declarations	6	6.38	Assertives	26	14.36
Commissives	5	5.32	Commissives	23	12.71
Expressives	1	1.06	Declarations	7	3.88
Directives	1	1.06	Directives	2	1.10
Total	94	100	Total	181	100

4.2. Politeness Strategies in Trump's 2017 Inaugural Address

The table above presents how President Trump used politeness strategies during his 2017 and 2025 inaugural speeches. Focusing on Trump's inaugural speech in 2017, the table reveals that Trump mostly used a bald-on-record strategy with 47 statements, which is 50 percent of the whole inaugural speech. Trump uses this strategy to deliver most of his assertive acts, which are composed of 34 statements and comprise 36.17 percent of the inaugural speech. Positive politeness follows the earlier strategy with 35 statements. This is 37.23 percent of the inaugural speech. Mostly, this strategy was utilized by Trump to realize a bulk of his commissive acts, having 15 statements which are 15.96 percent of the inaugural speech.

It is observed that Trump employed a bald-on-record strategy during his 2017 inaugural address to express his criticisms of the government of his predecessor, Former President Obama. This can be seen based on the sample statements of Trump during his inaugural speech below.

"For too long, a small group in our nation's Capital has reaped the rewards of government while the people have borne the cost."

"Washington flourished – but the people did not share in its wealth."

"Politicians prospered – but the jobs left, and the factories closed."

It is clearly stated in the quotations above that Trump expresses different assertions. All these points point to the criticism that only the government and its officials have benefited during the previous administration, and not the American people. This seems to agree with the paper of Garifullina et al. (2021), which described the 2017 inaugural speech of Trump as a criticism of the "politicians" and of the former government.

After criticizing the preceding government, Trump's assertions also made strong claims that the center of his government is the American people. This complements the study of AlAfnan (2022). This study reveals that Trump's political discourse focuses on "jobs, wealth, and borders," which will benefit the citizens of America. This point can be observed through the excerpts quoted below.

"January 20th, 2017, will be remembered as the day the people became the rulers of this nation again."

"The forgotten men and women of our country will be forgotten no longer."

"At the center of this movement is a crucial conviction: that a nation exists to serve its citizens."

Trump's statements above specify the difference between his upcoming administration in 2017 and the previous administration of Obama. As discussed, Trump claimed in 2017 that the American people did not benefit during the preceding administration. That is why he claims that his government will be different because it will prioritize the Americans in all its actions. This observation, therefore, proves that Trump establishes a persuasive claim that his administration centers on the interests of its people (AlAfnan, 2022; Lacatus, 2021).

To prove his assertion about the centrality of the American people in his government, he specified, through his commissive acts, several changes and actions of his government. This speech act is realized through positive politeness. This strategy is used by Trump to create a sense of shared plans and interests between him and the American people. This can be confirmed through the sample statements below.

"We are one nation – and their pain is our pain. Their dreams are our dreams; and their success will be our success. We share one heart, one home, and one glorious destiny."

"We will bring back our jobs. We will bring back our borders. We will bring back our wealth. And we will bring back our dreams."

"We will build new roads, and highways, and bridges, and airports, and tunnels, and railways all across our wonderful nation."

"At the bedrock of our politics will be a total allegiance to the United States of America, and through our loyalty to our country, we will rediscover our loyalty to each other."

It is noticeable from the statements above that Trump uses positive politeness whenever he expresses his promise and optimism toward the American citizens. Therefore, these excerpts prove the studies of Batubara et al. (2022) and Ayunikmah et al. (2023), which documented that Trump's political discourse uses a positive politeness strategy when the subject involves the Americans. Putri (2022) agreed with this and explained that positive politeness is employed by Trump when his communicative goal is to focus on the needs of the listeners. This means that the application of such a politeness strategy in a political discourse creates an inclusive environment between the politician (Trump) and the listeners (American people). Overall, Trump's 2017 inaugural address uses a combination of bald on-record and positive politeness strategies to realize his assertive and commissive acts. This creates a portrayal of Americans as citizens who are neglected by their government (Raza, 2024).

4.3. Politeness Strategies in Trump's 2025 Inaugural Address

It is presented in Table 1 that Trump's inaugural address in 2025 is dominated by positive politeness, having 119 statements, which is 65.75 percent of the whole speech. This strategy is employed by Trump to realize most of his commissive acts (55 statements) and assertive acts (35 statements), which are 30.39 and 19.34 percent of the 2025 inaugural speech. This is followed by the employment of a bald-on-record strategy with 58 statements, which is 32.04 percent of the speech's totality. Trump used this strategy to deliver some of his assertive acts (26 statements) and commissive acts (23 statements), which are 14.36 and 12.71 percent of the inaugural address.

As in 2017, it is observed that Trump uses a positive politeness strategy to express parallelism between his plans and the American citizens' needs. Mulyana (2021) explained that Trump realizes this manner of communication through pledges and vows that fall under commissive acts. This can be seen in the following portions of his inaugural speech.

"We will bring prices down, fill our strategic reserves up again right to the top, and export American energy all over the world."

"We will tariff and tax foreign countries to enrich our citizens."

"We will restore fair, equal, and impartial justice under the constitutional rule of law."

It is evident in the statements quoted above that Trump expresses his plans for his country and its people in the form of pledges. This confirms the study of Jesudas and Mohammed (2025), which revealed that Trump communicates in a way that engages his audience towards his policy. Aside from pledges, Trump also realized most of his assertive acts through positive politeness to mention the

undesirable state of his country during the previous (Former President Biden's) administration and show optimism towards the future of his country under his leadership. These can be seen through the quotations below.

"We have a public health system that does not deliver in times of disaster..."

"We have an education system that teaches our children to be ashamed of themselves..."

"We will be the envy of every nation..."

"America will be a manufacturing nation once again..."

The statements above show the negative assertions of Trump about the status of America during the previous administration. Moreover, he uses these assertions to express and highlight his optimistic view toward the success of his leadership. This is complementary to the results of Kang's (2025) study, which revealed that Trump is somewhat pessimistic about the current capacity of his country in serving its people. Therefore, during his 2025 inaugural address, positive politeness is employed by Trump not only to establish a common goal but also to express a sense of change from the previous governance to the upcoming leadership.

For the same purpose, Trump also employed a bald-on-record strategy to deliver his assertive and commissive acts. However, it is noticeable that Trump uses such a strategy whenever his assertions pertain to an entity. This can be confirmed through the quoted statements below.

"We now have a government that cannot manage even a simple crisis at home while, at the same time, stumbling into a continuing catalogue of catastrophic events abroad."

"Our government confronts a crisis of trust."

"For many years, a radical and corrupt establishment has extracted power and wealth from our citizens while the pillars of our society lay broken and seemingly in complete disrepair."

It is seen in the quotations above that Trump directly pertained to entities he referred to as "government" and "corrupt establishment". It is inferred that his inaugural speech makes a positive portrayal of himself through his negative assertions toward an entity. Therefore, Trump uses this strategy for his assertive acts when he thinks that an entity needs to be blamed for matters related to the American people (Hamza & Nordin, 2023). This also confirms the study of Derakhshani et al. (2021), which concluded that Trump's cynical attitudes toward some entities are intentionally expressed to frame a negative image of them. On the other hand, the bald-on-record strategy is employed by Trump to realize his commissive acts when a future action only involves him. This is evident in Trump's statements below.

"I will, very simply, put America first."

"I will end the practice of catch and release."

"I will declare a national emergency at our southern border."

It is conspicuous in the statements quoted that Trump uses a bald-on-record strategy to express his commissive acts to pertain to future actions that only he can accomplish. The same strategy is also used to deliver his pledge to the American people. This shows that Trump intends to maximize his power as the American President while ensuring that the decisions his government will make center on the interests of the American people (Hidalgo-Tenorio & Benítez-Castro, 2021; Tian, 2021).

4.4. Research Question 2: Lexical Politeness Markers Used by Trump

The politeness strategies of Trump in his inaugural addresses in 2017 and 2025 are clearly and mostly initiated using inclusive terms as lexical markers. It is presented in the table below that both of Trump's inaugural addresses dominantly used inclusive terms to initiate redressive (positive and negative) politeness strategies. On the other hand, the lexical markers Trump used to initiate the bald-on-record strategy in 2017 are somewhat different compared in 2025. In 2017, it is evident that Trump used inclusive, referring, and metonymic terms. However, in 2025, the president used descriptive (modifying), inclusive, and metonymic terms. These lexical terms are used to either lessen or intensify the directness of his bald statements.

Table 2. Lexical Markers of President Trump's Politeness Strategies

2017 Inaugural Address			2025 Inaugural Address		
	<i>f</i>	%		<i>f</i>	%
With Redress	79	40.93	With Redress	222	67.47
Inclusiveness	65	33.67	Inclusiveness	144	43.76
Optimism	4	2.07	Optimism	24	7.29
Thanking	3	1.55	Thanking	23	6.99
Compliment	2	1.03	Compliment	17	5.16
Accountability	2	1.03	Accountability	12	3.64
Conditional Term	2	1.03	Euphemism	1	0.30
Euphemism	1	0.51	Promise	1	0.30
Bald	114	59.06	Bald	107	32.52
Inclusiveness	44	22.79	Modifier	36	10.94
Reference	35	18.13	Inclusiveness	33	10.03
Metonymy	23	11.91	Metonymy	28	8.51
Hypernym	7	3.62	Reference	6	1.82
Contrast	4	2.07	Modal	1	0.30
Metaphor	1	0.51	Hypernym	1	0.30
			Contrast	1	0.30
			Abbreviation	1	0.30
Total	193	100	Total	329	100

Table 2 shows that both Trump's 2017 and 2025 inaugural addresses used inclusive terms as lexical markers to employ his redressive politeness strategies. In 2017, the President used 65 inclusive terms, which is 33.67 percent of all the lexical markers used in such an inaugural speech. On the other hand, in 2025, he used 144 inclusive terms, which is 43.76 percent of all the lexical markers in such speech. It is observed that Trump dominantly uses inclusive terms such as "we" and "our" to establish a sense of shared ideology. This can be seen through the quotations below.

2017: "**We** will not fail. **Our** country will thrive and prosper again."

2017: "Together, **We** Will Make America Strong Again."

2025: "**Our** top priority will be to create a nation that is proud, prosperous, and free."

2025: "**We** will stand bravely, **we** will live proudly, **we** will dream boldly, and nothing will stand in **our** way because **we** are Americans."

The quotations above show that Trump's inaugural speeches intend to create an impression that his administration's plans and future actions are in the best interest of the American people. Also, the frequent use of the inclusive terms "we" and "our" promotes a sense of unity. These terms, therefore, made Trump closer to the American people (Tian, 2021). Similarly, these terms provide a suggestion for others to act (Prayitno et al., 2022) in accordance with the Trump administration's goals.

To employ a bald-on-record strategy, Trump's inaugural addresses used inclusive and metonymic terms. In 2017, Trump used 44 (22.79%) inclusive terms and 23 (11.91%) metonymic terms. In 2025, he used 33 (10.03%) inclusive terms and 28 (8.51%) metonymic terms. Based on the analysis, it is evident that Trump uses these lexical markers to lessen the impact of his bald statements. This is proven by the statements quoted below.

2017: "**Washington** flourished – but the people did not share in its wealth."

2017: "The **establishment** protected itself, but not the citizens of **our** country."

2025: "**Our** country can no longer deliver basic services in times of emergency."

2025: "**We** have a **government** that has given unlimited funding to the defense of foreign borders but refuses to defend American borders or, more importantly, its own people."

The quotations above show that Trump's use of plural personal pronouns "we" and "our" lessens the directness of his bald statements, as these terms create an ambiguous environment since these terms do not pertain to a direct subject. As a result, his direct statements come with a lighter impact. This proves the claim of Hernández (2021) that personal pronouns can sometimes be vague, and speakers resort to the use of these pronouns to enhance "expressivity" and "pragmatic meaning". This means that Trump's use of such personal pronouns creates a sense of mutuality and shared experience (Semana & Menggo, 2022).

In the same way, Trump uses metonymic terms to refrain from directly referring to the officials of the previous administration. Specifically, based on the quoted statements, he used the word "Washington" to pertain to the officials of the executive department. On the other hand, Trump used the words "country" and "government" to refer to the people and institutions that build the government, such as the politicians, cabinet members, and other federal agencies. Moisiuk et al. (2022) explained that a metonymic term's meaning can be drawn through "logically established connections" and is based on its "conceptual spheres". This means that Trump's use of metonymic terms also creates ambiguity since their understanding depends on how a listener will draw meaning out of them. As a result, the impact of Trump's bald statements is lessened (Carston, 2020).

The distinction between Trump's bald-on-record strategy in 2017 and 2025 inaugural addresses is made by using references (in 2017) and modifiers (in 2025) as lexical markers. Trump used exophoric references to create an ambiguous sense and lessen the impact of his direct statements. This can be observed through the statements quoted below.

"Their victories have not been your victories; their triumphs have not been your triumphs; and while they celebrated in our nation's Capital, there was little to celebrate for struggling families all across our land."

"We will no longer accept politicians who are all talk and no action – constantly complaining but never doing anything about it."

It is observed in the quotations above that Trump used the pronouns "their", "your", "they", and the noun "politicians", which have no direct reference within the inaugural speech. These terms create ambiguity since they are context-dependent terms. Sazonova (2021) explained that exophoric reference creates a "symbolic" sense that enhances the pragmatic understanding of discourse. However, Agha (2025) claimed that "over-reliance" on this reference may bring confusion to the hearers. Therefore, it is inferred that Trump's use of exophoric references decreases the directness of his bald statements. On the other hand, Trump used adjectives and adverbs to intensify the impact of his bald statements. This is confirmed in the quotations below.

"My recent election is a mandate to completely and totally reverse a horrible betrayal and all of these many betrayals that have taken place and to give the people back their faith, their wealth, their democracy, and, indeed, their freedom."

"The inflation crisis was caused by massive overspending and escalating energy prices, and that is why today I will also declare a national energy emergency."

Gunas et al. (2023) argued that pragmatic modifiers "enhance and modify" the employment of different politeness strategies. Therefore, this agrees that the adverbs "completely" and "totally" and the adjectives "horrible", "massive", and "escalating" intensify the directness of the quoted bald statements.

4.5. Research Question 3: Portrayal of Trump's Political Image

Through the lenses of Politeness and Speech Act theories, it is seen that Trump realizes his assertive acts through a bald-on-record strategy to specify the shortcomings of his predecessors in 2017 and 2025, as shown in the statements quoted below.

2017: "We've made other countries rich while the wealth, strength, and confidence of our country has disappeared over the horizon."

2025: *"The vicious, violent, and unfair weaponization of the Justice Department and our government will end."*

This agrees with the paper of Prusa (2022), which claimed that Trump intentionally portrays other politicians and former government officials as villains. This helps him set his political discourse, which aims to frame an image of an ideal and altruistic leader. This communicative goal is achieved through his commissive acts, which are realized through positive politeness. This is shown in the sample statements below.

2017: *"We will get our people off of welfare and back to work..."*

2017: *"We will seek friendship and goodwill with the nations of the world."*

2025: *"We will be working to meet every crisis with dignity and power and strength."*

2025: *"We will move with purpose and speed to bring back hope, prosperity, safety, and peace for citizens of every race, religion, color, and creed."*

The statements quoted above show that Trump's frequent use of the personal pronoun "we" indicates shared desires between him and the American people. Therefore, it is inferred that Trump uses positive politeness to extend a message that his plans and the citizens' desires are one. This creates an image of him as the representation of the American people's desires. This is affirmed by Trump's bald statement in his 2025 inaugural speech.

"My proudest legacy will be that of a peacemaker and unifier. That's what I want to be: a peacemaker and a unifier."

This confirms the study of Alaghbari (2021), which claimed that these dynamics of Trump's communicative style draw the listeners towards his ideological perspective. This means that President Trump's employment of different politeness strategies is meticulously conveyed to frame an image of him as the best President among all American Presidents (Hamza & Nordin, 2023). A President who brings change, unity, and harmony to the United States of America.

Overall, Trump's inaugural addresses in 2017 and 2025 portrayed him as a father figure and "superhero" who is committed to protecting his people (Hidalgo-Tenorio & Benítez-Castro, 2021). Moreover, through the combination of positive politeness and bald-on-record strategy, he has successfully imagined himself as someone who has compassion towards the current situation of the American people. Generally, he described himself as a president who maximized his power to better serve the Americans (Hidalgo-Tenorio & Benítez-Castro, 2021; Tian, 2021).

5. CONCLUSION

The present study analyzed the 2017 and 2025 inaugural speeches of President Trump and documented the politeness strategies he employed to realize his speech acts and the lexical markers he used to initiate these strategies. His frequent use of the bald-on-record strategy is concluded to be indirectly linked to the low-context culture of America (Shevchenko et al., 2021). Bald-on-record strategy, which he employed to criticize his predecessors, served as a precursor to the communicative goal of Trump, which is to portray himself as a President who serves the people wholeheartedly (Hidalgo-Tenorio & Benítez-Castro, 2021; Tian, 2021).

This portrayal is further realized through positive politeness. Trump utilized this strategy to establish a sense of unity through the frequent use of the words "we" and "our". Therefore, it is concluded that Trump employs positive politeness to develop a connection between himself and the American people, which promotes solidarity. On the other hand, he uses a bald-on-record strategy when he comes to the previous administration and other political rivals (Hamza & Nordin, 2023). Generally, Trump's rhetorical style can be described as anti-government and pro-people (Zhu, 2024). This means that Trump directly opposes the previous government, which reflects his supporters' sentiments. Trump draws solidarity through these sentiments by pledging to bring change to the American government. Furthermore, it is inferred that the combination of assertive and commissive acts, as realized by positive politeness and bald-on-record strategy, may be a powerful persuasive tool in a political discourse.

To elaborate on the discussion on this topic, it is recommended that future researchers conduct a comparative study between Trump and other American Presidents to have a holistic portrayal of

Trump and understand the distinction between him and other politicians. Second, the researcher also recommends an exploration of the other pragmatic markers used by Trump, since the present study is limited to lexical pragmatic markers. This leads to a further understanding of how Trump initiates different politeness strategies. Finally, the researcher recommends an analysis of the audience's reaction to Trump's political speech. This will reveal if Trump achieved his communicative goal after employing different politeness strategies.

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