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Mitigating Face Threatening Acts In Political Interview : A Discourse Analysis Study

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ABSTRACT

The study investigates a theoretical background about media discourse in general, it deals with all the available techniques used in such a discourse for the purpose of mitigating face threatening acts between both the interview and interviewee. Since in most cases they (the interviewer and interviewee) are from different social states, so there is a cautious speech from both sides and still there is a persistent need for clinging to certain techniques and ways that play a crucial role in mitigating face threatening acts, seven of these techniques have been mentioned through all the research, how they are used and to what extent they are so influential in the fulfilment of the desired goals.

Turn talking, turns, conversations and conversation analysis, all these subjects are shown within the theoretical side of the research. Checking of the chosen date and searching for these techniques and their importance though all the political interview are shown within a discrete section of analysis. Finally, there are conclusions for their uses, effects and ratios of use to show their importance in developing the political speech and interviews.

Keywords: *Discourse, Face, Politeness, Media, Conversation, Vocative, Conversation Analysis.*
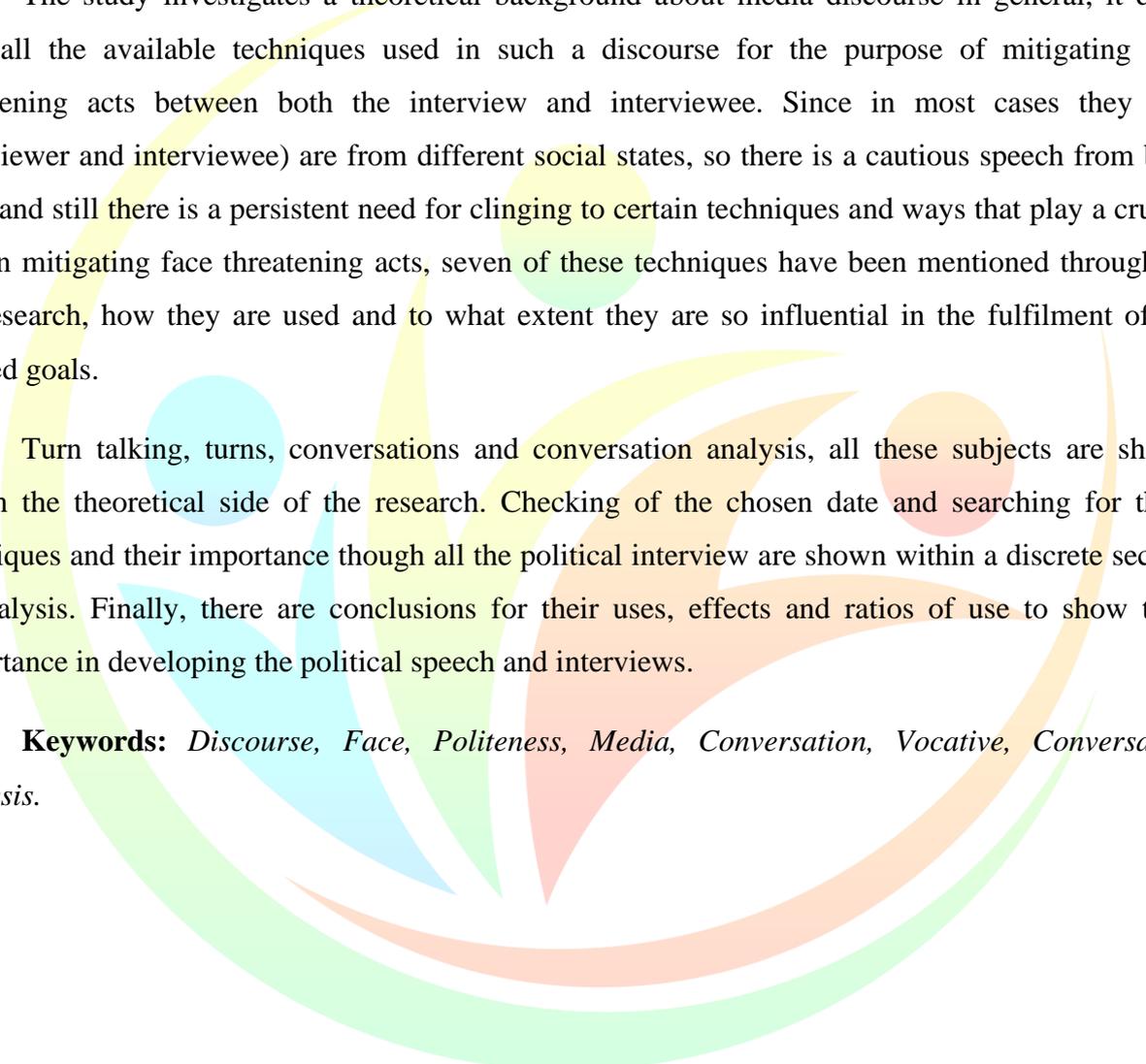
MEDIA DISCOURSE

In a way or another it cannot be denied that everyone is affected by media. If we looked deeply, we see that media handles everything starting from pictures, videos and finally to the word which is the main power that affects others, and it is the core point to judge any media person, the word in media plays a chief role in constituting people's realities or hiding some of these realities as well as ideas when they want to hide.

Investigating media discourse tackles with the spoken interaction in the media such as chat shows, celebrities' interviews, political interviews with leaders, using the corpus of radio and television extracts from around the English-speaking world (O'Keeffe, 2006: 1).

We dig in deep through the field of media since all available media forms like television, have a great role in mediating society to itself (Matheson, 2005: 9).

Macarro (2002: 13) also referred that with the exposure to the media, we are influenced, our thoughts shaped, reinforced and changed. So, it establishes our view to the world with its different layers, the hands of media can reach easily to our thoughts and altering them unconsciously.

CONVERSATION & CONVERSATION ANALYSIS

Firstly, conversation is the clearest human language use and the most prominent one, it is an engaging in a linguistic communication form that push participants to develop and save their relationships with each other (Liddicoat, 2007: 1-3).

(Molder and Potter, 2005: 2) have defined it as the investigating of natural talk as a mean for interaction and action. A large number of studies from a conversation analytic perspective have been done on institutional and everyday talk.

Conversation Analysis is an approach which is developed out of Ethno methodological tradition in sociology by the studies of Harold Garfinkel (1964), who studies the social structure of everyday conversations to maintain a conceptualizing that everyday activities are natural and spontaneously created and maintained (Garfinkel, 1967: 35 – 6).

Also, Erving Goffman referred that CA is concerned with talk in interaction, it's main focus is how conversations are designed and ordered, it takes a (bottom – up) approach to the study of the social organization of the conversation, he focused on natural daily activities as an important subject for studying and social interaction (Goffman, 1981: 55).

Scannell (1998), explained that the goal of study for conversation analysis is social communication than language itself.

McCarthy (1998) referred CA how speakers specify themselves toward others within interaction. Conversation analysis is a discipline that concerned with use of language, we are engaged with media face to face conversation which is our main point, since it has a main effect on people and their reaction to what they see or hear.

To sum up the concept of conversation, we borrow Yule's definition of it as "an activity in which two or more people take turns at speaking" (Yule, 2014: 143).

TURN-TAKING

There are different ways and manners to participate in any conversation, one of these strategies is holding the floor, which is usually applied by redundant speakers or those who used to elaborate things and situation in details (Yule, 2014: 143).

Another important strategy is "keeping the turn", using "pause" which is an important marker at the end of the sentence that reveals speaker's wish to end his/her turn, "keeping the turn" can be done by making the sentence runs by using connectors like (so, and, but, if so and if not ...), (em, ah, uh) are used the message is still not finished in order to fill the gap with hesitations.

Any speaker to participate in a dialogue is using "Back-channels", they are not expressive, but they have a socially important in order to avoid silence and pauses

for making others feel comfort (Cutting, 2002: 22).

POLITENESS

Any pragmatic theory has a crucial role and provide an instructive framework for the study of language and different ways in which it is used. (Chilton) referred that the politeness is centred on the interaction of pragmatics with sociolinguistics and with sociology more generally, he referred that what is called "politeness theory "has a great relation with speech act theory, the relation is obvious because implicature is concerned with the ways in which we send a message indirectly without being clumsy, so there is a relation with Grice's account of conversational implicature (Chilton, 2011: 132)

It would be mistaken to believe that politeness is simply to study of why people say (thank you) and (please) or when they avoid using taboo offensive words.

Politeness is used to give a description of behaviors that show consideration and respect to others. (Lakoff,1973 :296), suggests that there are two main rules of pragmatic competence which are "be clear" and "be polite", these two terms come into struggle, since to be so clear will not be able to be polite so much.

The first words that come to mind when there is a view of politeness, is being so friendly and nice to others, linguistically

(Politeness) is so related to the term (face), which is a term introduced by (Brown & Levinson) into politeness theory.

Face is "the public self-image", so politeness falls in the circle of showing awareness and consideration of other person's face (Yule, 2014: 132).

Saying something that is a threat to another person's face (public self-image), that is called (face threatening act), when you utter something that helps to lessen the probable threat to the face of others.it can be called as "face – saving – act" (Yule, 2014: 132).

"Face threatening act" depends on the cultural background of the speakers, in certain speech community what is considered as a "face threatening act", maybe it is not so in others.

Robin Lakoff (1975, 2004) identified three rules of Raport that speakers try to follow when they interact:

1- Don't impose
2- Give options
3- Maintain the camaraderie

Following on these rules of Rapport leads to many styles of saving face act (Connor – Linton & Fasold, 2014).

For example:

If you asked someone (would you like me to give you a ride), and he replies (No, thank you), although that he is so in need to ride, so

he is applying the rule number (1), but when he replies (oh thank you, I can walk), he is applying rule number (2), while if he replies (oh yes, have you got nice songs to listen), he is applying rule 3 (Maintain the camaraderie).

These rules will be different from culture to another, depending on the speech community itself or cultural background.

TECHNIQUES FOR MITIGATING FACE THREATENING ACT

In everyday speech we often have to ask for favors, issue demands and make promises, as well as carry out an array of other communicative tasks which involve making face-threatening acts (Woods, 2006: 14):

Request

In everyday speech we often have to ask for favors, issue demands and make promises, as well as carry out an array of other communicative tasks which involve making face-threatening acts (Woods, 2006: 14):

Indirect Speech

In everyday speech we often have to ask for favors, issue demands and make promises, as well as carry out an array of other communicative tasks which involve making face-threatening acts (Woods, 2006: 14):

311

Directives and Honorific Titles

(O'Keeffe, 2006: 26) refers that interviewer choses quite a direct syntactic form which begins with directives like "tell me, explain, talk about ..." and might be followed by Dr, Professor… etcetera.

Vocatives

(Leech, 1999: 107) points out that the first name is invoked sometimes to invoke a pseudo- intimate relationship, although in certain context a directive would be face-threatening act, they are also related to forms endearment like "Johnny" "the first name is John".

Inclusive Pronouns

(Penny cook) notes that inclusive pronouns (We, us, ours, ourselves) are used to evoke a sense of commonality and rapport between a speaker and his or her audience, it can aim exclusions and to construct others in media. They can help in creation and sustaining interpersonal relation among strangers.

Agreements

Brown and Levinson refer to the strategies of positive politeness by showing consent and avoiding disapproval, the speakers show agreement to mitigate face threatening act.

Sympathy

Brown and Levinson refer to the strategies of positive politeness by showing consent and avoiding disapproval, the speakers show agreement to mitigate face threatening act.
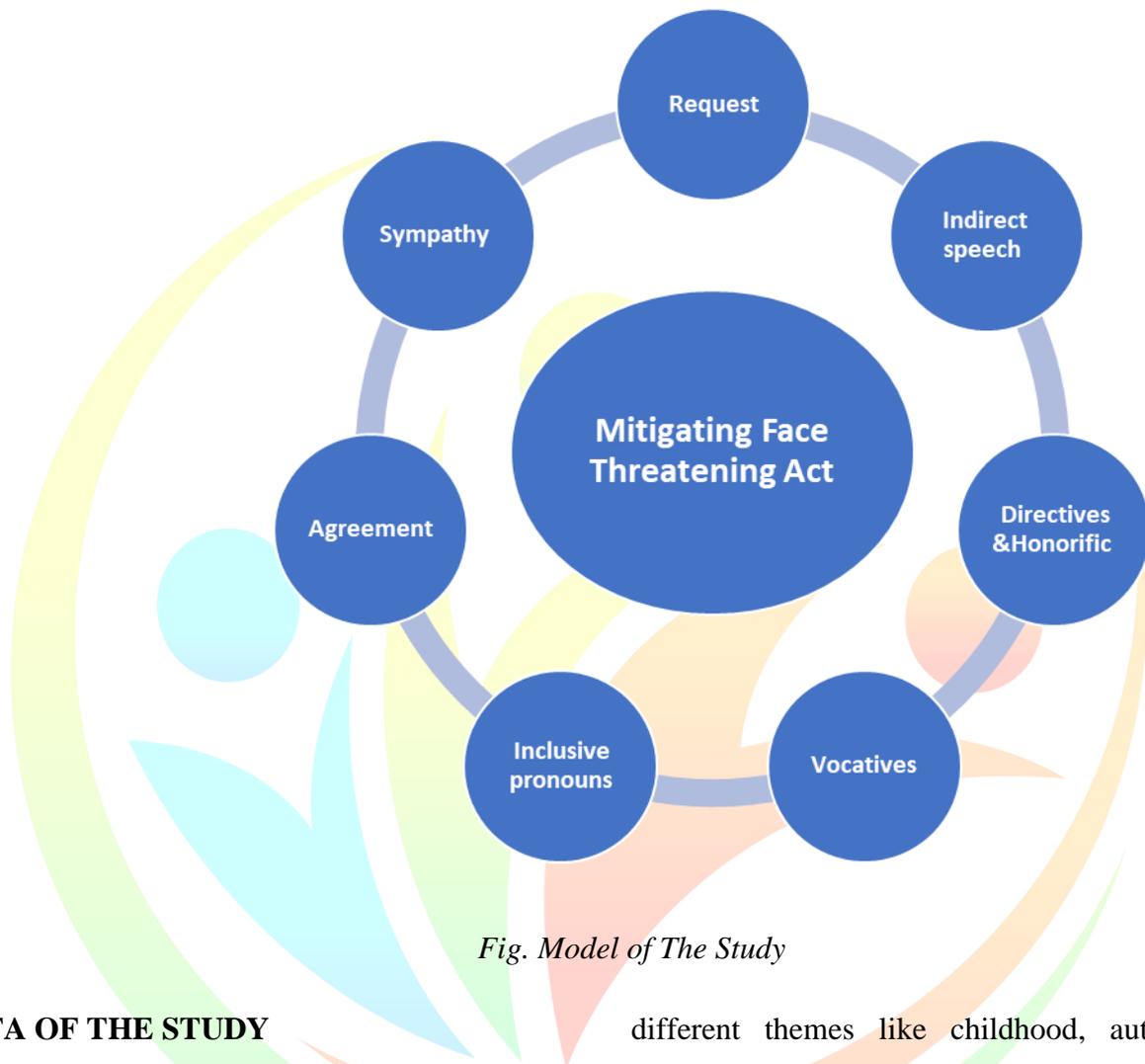
MODEL OF THE STUDY

The model of the study is an eclectic model comprises opinions and thoughts that are mentioned in the few previous pages, it is about Brown and Levinson's (Indirect speech, request , agreement and sympathy), Leech's (reference to vocative as a way for mitigating face threatening act, the note of Penny cook of inclusive pronoun as crucial technique that mitigates face threatening act, O'Keeffe indicates to the honorific and directives titles as two important strategies to lessen face threatening act. The following figure will show these techniques and strategies:

312

Fig. Model of The Study

DATA OF THE STUDY

The data for analysis will be concerned with an interview that is published written in Oprah Winfrey Magazine in which Oprah Winfrey interviewed Barack Obama, Firstly the talk would be with Barack Obama, then Michelle (Obama's wife) would join them at the end of the interview.

The interview consists of about 4200 words in 470 lines, the discussion revolved around different themes like childhood, authoring books, family and some political issues.

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

1. Request:

Oprah: Would you define what you're doing as a new kind of politics? I don't consider myself political, and I seldom interview politicians. So, when I decided to talk with you, people around me were like, ''What's happened to you?'' I said, ''I think this is

313

beyond and above politics." It feels like something new.

At the beginning of a long dialogue the interviewer tends to smash the borders between her (Oprah) and the president with a request to define himself.

2- Indirect speech

Oprah: You were so young when you wrote Dreams from My Father. Why did you decide to write a memoir at 33?

These two sentences are a kind of a double-edged sword, the first part of is an indirect way of saying "you were too young to write, so you are so smart", but if it was misunderstood by Obama that "I'm no longer young", Oprah here mentions the exact number of age 33 at that time, which is not the perfect age to gather memories and experiments within a published book, all in all it is a very smart way to be nice with others.

3. Directives and Honorific Titles:

Then Oprah shifts the talk to his achievements and asking him simply *"Oprah: How do you define yourself as a leader?",* the word leader "a clear honorific title" that was said indirectly to Barack.

4. Vocatives:

Barack: The best quote so far in the campaign was in **The New Yorker.** *The interviewer sat down with Michelle and said,*

"This must really be tough." She said, "This is crazy. He's never home, the schedule's terrible, and I'm raising two kids and working." Then Michelle pauses and says, "That's why he's such a grateful man."

Oprah: That's now my favourite Barack Obama quote!

Calling Obama by name is also used here to mitigate face threatening act.

5. Inclusive pronouns:

Barrack: " .... We're caught in that messiah mentality".

Here the interviewee uses an inclusive pronoun (We) within a reference to the effect of Christianity on his mentality, it is a simple way of sharing something with others, thereby reducing the barriers with the interviewer.

Barack: Fear. There's a sense in which we feel that the only way to assert strength is to push away from a society that says we're not as good.

Oprah: Do you think we've lost the belief that we can succeed? I was talking with Skip Gates [Henry Louis Gates,

Barack: We no longer operate that way,

Oprah: Let's go to the night of the 2004 Democratic convention

Barack: We won our primary in a way that shocked people

In these successive lines within the interview, the inclusive pronouns (we) and (us) are used in order to show belonging to persons and society and, using them serves the goal of mitigating.

Oprah: I thought, "We won."

Oprah using the inclusive pronoun "We" for the same purpose of mitigation.

Oprah: We Americans also suffer from an empathy deficit, because we often feel that the woman in Bosnia or Afghanistan who loses her child is somehow different from us.

Michelle: We're clear on the fact that we have to stay humble and prayerful. We have to dig down deep to our roots. When things come together, we know some of it is Barack, some of it is us—but a lot of it has nothing to do with either of us.

The same inclusive pronoun (we) is used three times in different ways, Oprah clearly shows (We Americans), a very clear hint of belonging to the country and the American one in front of her.

I thought I had something interesting to say about how our cultures collide as the world shrinks

Barack: Some of our leaders have been long on rhetoric, short on substance—power....

Barack: We are all connected as one people, and our mutual obligations have to express themselves not only in our families, not only in our churches, not only in our synagogues and mosques, but in our government, too.

Michelle: The first people we don't want to disappoint are our kids. Barack is a great father. Even when he's away, he calls every night. People will suck you dry, and they don't think about the fact that you have two kids. He has to go to the kids' ballet events and their parent-teacher conferences. And he enjoys that.

The use of inclusive pronouns (our) and (We) by the Obama and his wife for the purpose of showing that they belong to this country (America), which can be considered another way of mitigation.

6. Agreement

………….in South Carolina, and the teacher writes, "These kids would be so inspired if you came."

Oprah: My letters start out with, "Dear Oprah, we know you love children..."

Barack: Right now, I still have an excuse: I haven't been elected yet. After the election, handling the requests will require discipline….

Concerning the love of fans, both of them come to agreement at this point which is one the most effecting tools to mitigate face threatening act with others.

315

Oprah: In the book, you eloquently describe what it's like to be out playing basketball and talking about "white folks," then coming home to the white folks you lived with—the people who loved and cared for you. That must have been confusing.

Barack: It was

In these two lines there is a clear agreement between Oprah and Obama's Opinion (Agreement technique is used here).

Oprah: I think the name is working for you now.

Barack: Absolutely. Yours turned out okay for you, too.

Again, Barack Obama shows a clear agreement with Oprah.

7. Sympathy

- *Oprah: There's a line in The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman [a 1974 TV movie based on Ernest J. Gaines's novel] when Jane is holding a baby and asking, "Will you be the One?" While you were speaking, I was alone in my sitting room cheering and saying, "I think this is the One."*

Within the opening sentence of the conversation, Oprah pushes a great courtesy to Obama's speech that reflects an important sympathy at the beginning of the

talk show, she says her sentence "*You are the one*", that she borrowed from a based novel movie.

- *Barack: That's so nice*

Obama's reply another form of courtesy and compliment, he uses the technique of sympathy too.

Oprah: That's great.

Sympathetic and motivational phrases are used for compliment in order to serve the sympathetic tool.

Oprah: It was really smart to write it when it was flowing and hot.

Using the technique of sympathy, Oprah shows her compliment to Barack's writings.

Barack: That's great….

Barack: Your story about South Africa was terrific

The interviewee shows his compliment to the interviewer.

RESULTS

The following the table shows the occurrences of the techniques within the analyzed data:

Tool	Freq.	Ratio
Request	11	16%
Indirect speech	9	13.2 %
Directives and Honorific Titles	8	11%
Vocatives	9	13.2 %
Inclusive pronouns	15	22%
Agreement	10	14.7 %
Sympathy	6	8.8 %
Total	68	100%

According to the results, the most recurrent technique is (inclusive pronouns) as good technique that is used to mitigate face threatening act, while within such a formal interview discourse the less used technique is sympathy as a way to mitigate threatening acts between the speaker and the hearer.

CONCLUSIONS

The study summed up several techniques or ways that are used to mitigate face threatening act within the political interviews, through analyzing the long interview between Oprah Winfrey and Barrack Obama, the study concluded that the good and cultivated speakers involve these techniques within their speech. The study shows that the most used technique by both (interviewer and interviewee) is inclusive pronouns, especially the pronoun (we) that reflects relatedness and belonging as a felicitous way to mitigate face threatening act, on the other hand, the less used technique is sympathy as a way to lessen face threatening act, since it is not easy for the interviewer or interviewee to employ such a tool within a formal real discourse, though within a daily speech communication these techniques are used unconsciously and repeatedly to fill the gaps or shorten the distance among the speakers.

Concerning showing agreement, to some extent there is a reasonable number of uses throughout all the interview, both the speaker and the hearer tend to show agreement with each other as a good way to diminish the gap between them.

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