

THE UNIVERSITY OF DANANG  
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**XA THỊ THU HIỀN**

**A STUDY ON EXPRESSIONS OF POLITENESS STRATEGIES  
IN BARACK OBAMA'S 27 GREATEST SPEECHES  
INTRODUCED IN THE BOOK 'WE ARE THE CHANGE WE  
SEEK: THE SPEECHES OF BARACK OBAMA'**

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1. RATIONALE**

With the fast development of society in the age of globalization, there is a higher demand for English proficiency. This means that speakers of English need to have a well-versed English and proficient communication skills. One of the essential helps to this is the use of politeness strategies. Thus, studying about politeness strategies brings valuable significances to the language learners.

#### **1.2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

##### **1.2.1. Aims**

This study aims to investigate the expressions of politeness strategies used in Barack Obama's 27 greatest speeches with the hope of finding significant help about politeness strategies in particular and communication skills in general for English language learners or those who need to use English effectively in interaction with others.

##### **1.2.2. Objectives**

To obtain the aim of the study, the following objectives should be achieved:

1. To identify and analyze positive and negative politeness strategies on common expressions used by Barack Obama in the investigated speeches.
2. To draw the significances of those politeness strategies on the samples
3. To point out what politeness strategies are most frequently used by Barack Obama in the investigated speeches.

#### **1.3. SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

In this study, the researcher focuses on analyzing expressions of politeness strategies in Barack Obama's 27 greatest speeches selected and introduced by columnist E.J. Dionne and MSNBC host Joy-Ann Reid in the book 'We Are the Change We Seek: The Speeches of Barack Obama' under the light of Brown and Levinson's theory of

politeness (1987). Specifically, the data is analyzed based on the two theories: Positive politeness and Negative politeness.

#### **1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

To fulfill the objectives mentioned above the study seeks the information for the following specific questions:

1. What negative and positive politeness strategies are used by Barack Obama on common expressions in the investigated speeches?
2. How do the politeness strategies contribute to the success of the investigated expressions?
3. What politeness strategies are most frequently used by Barack Obama in the investigated speeches?

#### **1.5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

It is very important to conduct this research because it analyses about the reality of communication. The result of this study is expected to be able to give valuable contributions for further researchers, students, and readers.

#### **1.6. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY**

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

#### **2.1. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The following international and national studies are as the references of the study.

First and foremost, Muhammad Fauzi (2010), a student of English Letters Department, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta had a study of '*A Politeness Strategy Analysis on the Main Characters' Dialogues of the Movie Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest*'. This research concluded that it has four politeness strategies utilized with positive politeness (ten expressions) as the most used strategies, bald on record (four expressions) and followed by negative politeness (three expressions), and off-record as the last and the rarest strategies

with one expression.

Then, Septy Tantriati (2014) from English Letters Department at the same university as Fauzi had a research named '*An Analysis of Politeness Strategy in The Transcript of Pink Panther 2 Movie*'. This research give conclusion that the characters used different types in using politeness strategy and doing FTA. The speaker and the hearer sometime do an FTA in their communication. And the character used politeness strategies in order to decrease the FTA and to make a good conversation.

Third, Azmi Irhas (2018) conducted the study '*Politeness in Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton's First Presidential Election Debate*'. The researcher concluded that Hillary Clinton make a good sense to hearers and want to create amity with hearers. On the contrary, Donald Trump usually uses ambiguous sayings to the listeners.

In Vietnam, there have been some related researches about politeness strategies in different investigated data listed below:

Đặng Thị Chung Thuỷ (2011), a student from the University of Danang – University of Foreign Language Studies, employed a study named '*Politeness Strategies for maintaining English and Vietnamese Conversation*' by a quantitative method. The writer analyzes the answers from the questionnaires to give conclusion about some similarities and differences between the two people Vietnamese and English. In terms of similarities, both groups prefer positive politeness strategies in speaking. Whereas, the difference is the English likely uses more in-group identity markers than the Vietnamese.

Another referential source for the study is '*A study on politeness strategies in requests by the characters in the novel 'Twilight' by Stephenie Meyer*' conducted by Trần Thị Phuong Linh (2012), University of Languages and International Studies, VNU, Hanoi. In terms of S-H relationship, the findings show that people who have close relationship tend to be direct.

## **2.2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

## **2.2.1. Face and Face Threatening Acts**

### **2.2.2. Politeness Strategy**

Politeness strategies are methods of communication used to avoid or minimize the Face Threatening Act (FTA) that speaker makes (Brown and Levinson, 1987). There are certain conventions which both speaker (S) and hearer (H) must understand. People use politeness strategies in order to get their conversation run well and go smoothly.

Brown and Levinson (1978: 65) present four strategies to face “threatening face”. However, this study is conducted based on two types of politeness strategies only which are Negative Politeness and Positive Politeness.

#### ***2.2.2.1. Positive Politeness***

Positive politeness is redress directed to the addressee’s positive face, his perennial desire that his wants (or the action/acquisition/ values resulting from them) should be thought of as desirable (Brown and Levinson 1987:101). By using positive politeness strategies, the speaker conveys that they are co-operators with the addressee and that they have a common ground.

#### **Claim Common Ground**

Strategy 1: Notice, attend to H (his interests, wants, needs, goods)

Strategy 2: Exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with H)

Strategy 3: Intensify interest to H

Strategy 4: Use in-group identity markers

Strategy 5: Seek agreement

Strategy 6: Avoid disagreement

Strategy 7: Presuppose/raise/assert common ground

Strategy 8: Joke

#### **Convey that S and H are cooperators**

Strategy 9: Assert or presuppose S’s knowledge of and concern for H’s wants

Strategy 10: Offer, promise

Strategy 11: Be optimistic

Strategy 12: Include both S and H in the activity

Strategy 13: Give (or ask for) reasons

Strategy 14: Assume or assert reciprocity

Strategy 15: Give gifts to H (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation)

#### ***2.2.2.2. Negative Politeness***

Brown and Levinson (1987: 129-130) defined negative politeness as the action to maintain the addressee's negative face: his wants to have freedom of action unhindered and his attention unimpeded.

Strategy 1: Be conventionally indirect

Strategy 2: Question, Hedge

Strategy 3: Be pessimistic

Strategy 4: Minimize the imposition

Strategy 5: Give deference

Strategy 6: Apologize

Strategy 7: Impersonalize S and H

Strategy 8: State the FTA as a general rule

Strategy 9: Nominalize

Strategy 10: Go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebting H

## **CHAPTER THREE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1. METHODOLOGY**

This is a qualitative and quantitative descriptive research which the main instrument is the researcher herself. It means that qualitative and quantitative methods are mix-used for this study and the researcher directly involves in collecting and analyzing data, and discussing the findings to have statistics about the politeness strategies used by Barack Obama to discover his trend in using politeness strategies when delivering public speeches.

The procedures of doing the research are included in details as follow:

- First of all, positive and negative politeness strategies used by Barack Obama are classified and identified from the investigated data based on Brown and Levinson's theory of Politeness strategies.
- Besides, the researcher gives explanations to those strategies and provides the significance of them to the speeches.
- Finally, the researcher synthesizes research data and tabulates comparative figures.

The study is conducted by specific steps below:

1. Determining the topic of the research, and finding and study the related theories to solve the research problems.
2. Reading the chosen speeches as the research data from the book 'We Are the Change We Seek: The Speeches of Barack Obama'
3. Synthesizing all positive and negative politeness strategies on politeness expressions used by Barack Obama from the data by note taking techniques.
4. Analyzing and explaining some samples of politeness expressions from the investigated data under the light of Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness strategy.
5. Synthesizing research data and tabulating comparative figures.
6. Presenting the research findings, discussions and implications.

### **3.2. RESEARCH DESIGN**

### **3.3. RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY**

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

#### **4.1. FINDINGS**

At first, some samples of expressions on politeness strategy of the very common expressions which was selected from 27 speeches are analyzed to show how the researcher conducted the research and to let the readers have the overview about the analysis. For each sample, a description of the speech's context is introduced to help the readers understand clearly about the context of the investigated

utterances. This is followed by an insightful analysis to further clarify the speaker's politeness strategy usage. The data are analyzed for clarifying the types of strategies and showing the function and significance of each strategy in some sample expressions. At the end of this chapter, tables which supplies statistics about the number of strategies in each speech and the percentages of each strategy in the whole data, will be provided to prove the tendency in using politeness of the speaker.

#### **4.1.1. Samples of common expressions on politeness strategy of the investigated speeches**

##### **Sample 1**

*“Good afternoon. Let begin by saying that although this has been billed as an anti-war rally, I stand before you as **someone** who is not opposed to war in all circumstances.”*

*(Speech: “What I Am Opposed to Is a Dumb War”, p. 1)*

In this expression, Obama started the speech with a very humble beginning. He was addressing as a young Illinois state senator standing in front of millions of people when he said that he was as “*someone* who is not opposed to war in all circumstances”. This clearly shows that he was humble and showed deference to the hearers. This negative strategy (strategy 5: give deference) helped Obama get closer to the hearers just in seconds at that time. Everybody was silent and paid much attention to his speech with high concentration.

##### **Sample 2**

*“The Civil War was one of the bloodiest in history, and yet it was only through the crucible of the sword, the sacrifice of multitudes, that we could begin to perfect this union, and drive the scourge of slavery from our soil.”*

*(Speech: “What I Am Opposed to Is a Dumb War”, p. 2)*

Here, the inclusive ‘we’ was appropriately used to obtain the speaker’s purpose. It can be seen that Obama regularly uses this

powerful word in his public speaking. The purpose of using inclusive ‘we’ in this expression is to call upon the cooperation, response, or support from the masses with the issue that Obama is trying to persuade or discuss about since this ‘we’ referred that both the speaker and the hearers together do the activity. Specifically, by using this positive politeness (strategy 12: Include both S and H in the activity), Obama wanted to indicate that all the Americans were sharing the independence together from the sacrifice of multitudes in the Civil War. Also, he confirmed that if there was a war against the peace of American independence, Obama hoped that everyone would share the same viewpoint as his. That he wasn’t opposed to all wars, what he was opposed to was a dumb war.

### **Sample 3**

*“My grandfather signed up for a war the day after Pearl Harbor was bombed, fought in Patton’s army. He saw the dead and dying across the fields of Europe; he heard the stories of fellow troops who first entered Auschwitz and Treblinka. He fought in the name of a larger freedom, part of that arsenal of democracy that triumphed over evil, and he did not fight in vain.”*

*(Speech: “What I Am Opposed to Is a Dumb War”, p. 2)*

Using gossips or small talks about irrelevant topics is also a common way that Obama used in his speeches. In this case, he tried to intensify interest to H by telling a story about his grandfather who used to fight for a large freedom, part of that arsenal of democracy that triumphed over evil. He used this story to involve H to his point of view that he did not oppose all wars. Otherwise, it was a war for a worse life, he would be opposed to it.

It can be clearly seen that this is positive politeness (strategy 7: Presuppose/raise/assert common ground) according to Brown and Levinson’s theory. Also, this is one of the very common strategy used by Obama in his speeches. It means that he usually tells stories or gives some small talks while giving speeches to raise common ground at the

hearers.

#### **Sample 4**

*“So, for those of us who seek a more just and secure world for our children, let us send a clear message to the president today.”*

*(Speech: “What I Am Opposed to Is a Dumb War”, p. 3)*

In this statement, Obama raised common ground by merging ‘I’ and ‘you’ to be an inclusive ‘we’. This brought a great effect since it let the hearers think that they had a good fellow, who shared the outstanding desire which is to help their children have a secure world.

#### **Sample 5**

*“On behalf of the great state of Illinois, crossroads of a nation, Land of Lincoln, let me express my deepest gratitude for the privilege of addressing this convention.”*

*(Speech: “The Audacity of Hope”, p. 6)*

In the utterance, Obama was giving the speech on behalf of the great state of Illinois. He was, however, humble in using “let me” to raise the admiration to the H. He considered the position of the hearers were higher than him so he asked for a permission from them.

Under the light of Brown and Levinson’s theory, it can be seen that he used successfully this negative politeness (strategy 5: Give deference) to make the hearers feel that they were respected by a powerful politician. As a result, the hearers felt pleasant with the speaker and welcome the speaker’s speech with a courtesy.

#### **Sample 6**

*“My father was a foreign student, born and raised in a small village in Kenya. He grew up herding goats, went to school in a tin-roof shack. His father -- my grandfather -- was a cook, a domestic servant to the British.*

*But my grandfather had larger dreams for his son.....While studying here, my father met my mother..... -- They imagined me going to the best schools in the land, even though they weren’t rich, because in a generous America you don’t have to be rich to achieve your potential.”*

(Speech: “*The Audacity of Hope*”, p. 6)

From the utterances, it can be seen that a quite long gossip about the big dreams of Obama’s parents and his grandparents was to show his point of view about a great America. Specifically, America is highly praised as a country of fair freedom and opportunity for everyone. Wisely, he explained his African first name “Barack” as “blessed” with the hope of his parents that a tolerant and generous America will give him no barrier to success.

Based on the theory, the speaker uses a positive politeness strategy by expressing an appreciation of the interlocutor’s self-image. The function is to satisfy the hearer’s positive face, which automatically make them happy and directly catch the attention of the audiences. It helps him run well with a successful and smooth communication.

### Sample 7

*“They stand here, and I stand here today, grateful for the diversity of my heritage, aware that my parents’ dreams live on in my two precious daughters. I stand here knowing that my story is part of the larger American story, that I owe a debt to all of those who came before me, and that, in no other country on earth, is my story even possible.”*

(speech: “*The Audacity of Hope*”, p. 7)

Obama repeated many times the words ‘*stand here*’ to confirm that he was there telling his own story, and everybody worldwide under the sky can have alike story about success as his one. His words encouraged people a lot since they gave them great motivation to believe in beautiful things which will come to them like they had already come to him. Obviously, Barack Obama can be easily considered as a successful speaker as he knows how to meet the needs of others, how to inspire others when it is necessary.

The last word ‘*possible*’ in the utterances evidently showed Obama’s positive attitude about the successful possibility to all people over the world. Also, this word surely gave the hearers a great optimistic perspective about their life. This ‘be optimistic’ strategy helped Obama

obtain his purpose easily that he gained much admiration, respect, and trust from the addressee.

### **Sample 8**

*“Tonight, we gather to affirm the greatness of our Nation -- not because of the height of our skyscrapers, or the power of our military, or the size of our economy. **Our** pride is based on a very simple premise, summed up in a declaration made over two hundred years ago: **We** hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”*

*(Speech: “The Audacity of Hope”, p. 7)*

Reasonably, applying the ‘include both speaker and H in the activity’ strategy, Obama used many inclusive ‘we’ and ‘our’ in the utterance indicating that the hearers were in a right place together, shared the same interest and same idea *“that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”*. It effectively helped Obama attain more support and trust from the massive. Consequently, the hearers would vote for Obama and would be with him anytime when he needs their hands.

### **Sample 9**

*“That is the true genius of America, a faith -- a faith in simple dreams, an insistence on small miracles; that we can tuck in our children at night and know that they are fed and clothed and safe from harm; that we can say what we think, write what we think, without hearing a sudden knock on the door; that we can have an idea and start our own business without paying a bribe; that we can participate in the political process without fear of retribution, and that our votes will be counted -- at least most of the time.”*

*(Speech: “The Audacity of Hope”, p. 7)*

In these statements, Obama shared the common concerns and

common attitudes with the people by talking about the heated topics in America – the ones which every single American wished to own them and such issues needed finding solutions by joined hands of all Americans. It can be obviously seen that ‘asserting common ground’ strategy was used effectively in this expression.

### **Sample 10**

*“This year, in this election **we** are called to reaffirm our values and **our** commitments, to hold them against a hard reality and see how we're measuring up to the legacy of our forbearers and the promise of future generations.”*

*(Speech: “The Audacity of Hope”, p. 8)*

From the statement, the actions would be accomplished by Obama and his partners; however, he used ‘we’ and ‘our commitments’ to show the cooperation between the government and the audiences. Actually, this was a prudent way to call up support for the election when Obama included the addressee, whom the benefits were come to, in the activities were not done by them.

### **Sample 11**

*“And **fellow** Americans, Democrats, Republicans, Independents, I say to you tonight: **We** have more work to do -- more work to do for the workers I met in Galesburg, Illinois, who are losing their union jobs at the Maytag plant that’s moving to Mexico, and now are having to compete with their own children for jobs that pay seven bucks an hour; ....”*

*(Speech: “The Audacity*

These utterances show that ‘use in-group identity markers’ strategy was applied to stress common membership in a group or category of all Americans without dividing into Democrats, Republicans or Independents. This strategy really helped Obama in getting attentions of all Americans and earning support from them. Besides, an inclusive ‘we’ in the speech strongly raised the common and add more agreement between Obama and the hearers.

### Sample 12

*“Go into the collar counties around Chicago, and people will tell you they don’t want their tax money wasted, by a welfare agency or by the Pentagon. Go in -- Go into any inner-city neighborhood, and folks will tell you that government alone can’t teach our kids to learn; ...”*

*(Speech: “The Audacity of Hope”, p. 8)*

In these statements, Obama did not want to impinge on H; therefore, negative politeness strategy ‘impersonalize S and H’ is applied here. By omitting the agents of the statements, Obama could refer to not only the hearers but also all people who will listen to his speech. As a result, his strategy was successful beyond expectations, and the listeners expressed their support with a great applause.

### Sample 13

*“People don’t expect government to solve all their problems. But they sense, deep in their bones, that with just a slight change in priorities, we can make sure that every child in America has a decent shot at life, and that the doors of opportunity remain open to all.”*

*(Speech: “The Audacity of Hope”, p. 9)*

From the utterances, it can be clearly seen that by focusing on expectations of the American, Obama definitely satisfied the hearers’ wants by showing that he understood them and he cared about what they desired to have. This ‘give gift to H’ strategy was successfully used in this case in particular and in his speeches in general. Moreover, the utterance ‘we can make sure that every child in America has a decent shot at life, and that the doors of opportunity remain open to all’ showed that Obama skillfully applied ‘offer, promise’ strategy here in order to get the support and trust from the hearers. By giving a promise to open the door of opportunity for every American child, Obama successfully obtained the trust and admiration from the audience when they showed their all expectations on the noisy shouts and applause.

### Sample 14

*“I believe that we can give our middle-class relief and provide working families with a road to opportunity.*

*I believe we can provide jobs to the jobless, ...*

*I believe that we have a righteous wind at our backs and that as we stand on the crossroads of history, we can make the right choices, ...”*

*(Speech: “The Audacity of Hope)*

Obviously, Obama repeated the word ‘believe’ many times to express his optimistic belief about solutions for many problems facing Americans. In addition, these words also expressed Obama's interest in American problems and their desires. Therefore, when he indirectly makes these statements of hope, they are also the one of promise, promising solutions that he would help his people to deal with. This proved that Obama is very sophisticated in integrating politeness strategies in communication.

#### **Sample 15**

*“It's an honor to be here tonight to celebrate one of the most courageous and compassionate Americans of our time. Happy Birthday John.”*

*(Speech: “How Far We've Come”, p. 14)*

This is the first statement on the speech where Obama gave words of admiration and respect to John. He was very clever in both showing his humility by saying that he was honored to speak at the party and flattering the owner of the party – John Lewis, who had a great effect on inspiring the rise and confidence to have any dreams of African Americans. In this case, it can be seen that negative politeness strategy 5 was used to give respect to the hearer, John Lewis.

#### **Sample 16**

*“When I was first asked to speak here, I thought to myself, never in a million years would I have guessed that I'd be serving in Congress with John Lewis.*

*And then I thought, you know, there was once a time when John Lewis might never have guessed that he'd be serving in Congress. And there*

*was a time not long before that when people might never have guessed that someday, African-Americans would be able to go to the polls, pick up a ballot, make their voice heard, and elect that Congress.”*

*(Speech: “How Far We’ve Come”, p. 15)*

From the utterances, it can be comprehended that Obama led the listeners into his speech with a very clever start. He expressed his honored feelings when having opportunity to give remarks at John Lewis’s Sixty-fifth Birthday Gala. He started his talk with an interesting story saying that he had never dared to think about one day he could have chance to stand in front of millions of people like that. John Lewis as well, he had never thought that one day he, an African American, would be socially accepted and get a high social position in the society. That meaningful story made Americans in general and African Americans in particular be very attentive to the rest part of his speech.

Next, the utterance “*you know*” is kind of rhetoric question, the question that delivered by Obama doesn’t need an answer and it is used to make the audiences pay attention to him. Obama successfully let the hearers be right into the middle of the events. Besides, John Lewis was also proud of what he did from the difficult beginning till that time when he was listening to those words from Obama. By using some exaggerations, Obama brought good mood to the audience in general and John Lewis in particular.

### **Sample 17**

*“But today I’d like to talk about the connection between religion and politics and **perhaps** offer some thoughts about how we can sort through some of the often-bitter arguments that we’ve been seeing over the last several years.*

*I do so because, **as you all know, we can** affirm the importance of poverty in the Bible; and we can raise up and pass out this Covenant for a New America. We can talk to the press, and **we can** discuss the religious call to address poverty and environmental stewardship all we want, but it won’t have an impact unless we tackle head-on the mutual*

*suspicion that sometimes exists between religious America and secular America.”*

*(Speech: “We Cannot Abandon the Field of Religious Discourse”,  
p. 22)*

In the first statement, Obama used the hedge ‘perhaps’ to be vague about his own opinion to soften FTA of suggesting. Whereas, ‘as you all know’ and ‘we’ in the following sentence performed different functions. While ‘as you all know’ illustrated that the audiences there had the common ground to the speaker about the discussed topic, ‘we’ indicated the cooperation between the speaker and the hearers. To sum up, they are all positive politeness strategies, such as, ‘avoid disagreement’, ‘assert common ground’, ‘include H and S’, and ‘be optimistic’ in those utterances.

### **Sample 18**

*“And that night, before I went to bed, I said a prayer of my own. It's a prayer I **think** I share with a lot of Americans. A **hope** that we can live with one another in a way that reconciles the beliefs of each with the good of all...”*

*(Speech: “We Cannot Abandon the Field of Religious Discourse”,  
p. 37)*

From the utterances, Obama started by using ‘*I think*’ which showed that he was trying to avoid disagreement from the audiences about what he was saying. Also, it is clear that Obama used an ‘optimistic’ strategy when expressing that he was sharing a common view with all Americans, religious America and secular America. That was a hope for the American’s better future, a hope that everyone prays every single night before going to bed. This is the conclusion of his speech, which is also the most meaningful appease to all Americans. Whoever they were, whether they were religious or non-religious, whether they were black or white, as long as they were American citizens, working or studying, living in the United States, will have a common desire that was to live in a free, independent, fair, developed and prosperous America.

### Sample 19

*“But the question you’re going to have to ask yourself when you caucus in January and you vote in November is, “What’s next for America?” We are in a defining moment in our history. **Our** nation is at war. The planet is in peril. The dream that so many generations fought for feels as if it’s slowly slipping away. We are working harder for less...”*

*(Speech: “What’s Next for America?”, p. 39)*

From these words, it is easy to see that Obama is using the 'include S and H' strategy to call up Americans together to find answers for the pressing issues facing the United States. Besides, he also expressed a deep understanding with the American people about losing confidence in American leaders that they could do better things to help improve the situation in the United States. It means that positive strategy 15, give gifts as sympathy and understanding, was cleverly applied to win the hearts of the listeners in this situation.

### Sample 20

*“I am in this race to tell the corporate lobbyists that their days of setting the agenda in Washington are over. I have done more than any other candidate in this race to take on lobbyists -- and won. They have not funded my campaign, they will not get a job in my White House, and they will not drown out the voices of the American people when I am President.”*

*(Speech: “What’s Next for America?”, p. 41)*

In the statements, Obama made a commitment to Americans that means when he becomes President, he will not let another side drown out the voices of the American people. Or it can be understood that, when he was president, Obama would listen to the opinions and aspirations of the American people. It was the promise of him that he would serve the needs and desires of the American citizens who supported him to let him represent the American in stating their desires and make them come true.

### Sample 21

*“I’m in this race to take those tax breaks away from companies that are moving jobs overseas and put them in the pockets of hard-working Americans who deserve it. And I won’t raise the minimum wage every ten years -- I will raise it to keep pace so that workers don’t fall behind.”*

*(Speech: “What’s Next for America?”, p. 41)*

In the above utterance, Obama as the speaker Obama was in the campaign to call up the support of the American, so he was giving the speech with many gifts to fulfill the hearers’ wants. He gave the reasons why he was in the race for president. Also, those reasons were what the American currently needed. This is also the most common strategy used in this speech.

In the statement *‘I will raise it to keep pace so that workers don’t fall behind.’*, Obama used ‘offer, promise’ strategy to please the hearers and fulfill the hearers’ wants by making a promise with all workers that he would raise the minimum wage more often than every ten years to make sure that the workers could live on.

### **Sample 22**

*“As President, I will end the war in Iraq. We will have our troops home in sixteen months. I will close Guantanamo. I will restore habeas corpus... And I will send once more a message to those yearning faces beyond our shores that says, “You matter to us. Your future is our future. And our moment is now.”*

*(Speech: “What’s Next for America?”, p. 43)*

From the utterances, it is easy to see that Obama continually made promises to the American about what he would do when he was elected as president of the United States of America. Those commitments definitely pleased the audiences.

### **Sample 23**

*“You know, Michelle and I are only here tonight because we were given a chance at an education. And I will not settle for an America where some kids don’t have that chance. I’ll invest in early childhood*

*education. I'll recruit an army of new teachers, and pay them higher salaries, and give them more support...*"

(Speech: "What's Next for America?", p. 45)

There are many strategies applied in these utterances. Foremost, Obama got the audiences' attention by using 'you know'. Next, he gave the reasons why he and his wife, Michelle, could be there for the speech (positive politeness: strategy 13). Then in the next statements '*I'll invest in early childhood education. I'll recruit an army of new teachers, and pay them higher salaries, and give them more support*', Obama made commitments about a lot of things that he promised to do for America, which satisfied the hearers a lot. Obama understood what the American wanted and he wisely took the chances to meet their needs at the right time. Finally, the last statement with the conditional clause '*If you commit to serving your community or our country, we will make sure you can afford a college education.*' showed that was calling up the cooperation from the American. It means that Obama and his partners would try them best to bring all the best things on different fields for Americans as long as there were support from them. Those commitments definitely pleased the audiences.

#### **Sample 24**

*"Well, first of all, I want to congratulate Senator Clinton on a hard-fought victory here in New Hampshire. She did an outstanding job. Give her a big round of applause."*

(Speech: "Yes, We Can", p. 47)

From the first statement, it can be seen that Obama used an exaggerated intonation and the expression 'outstanding job' to complement Senator Clinton. This positive politeness strategy 2 could definitely help him get the success in making Senator Clinton pleased. For the next utterance, Obama skillfully hidden the addressees of the expression "*Give her a big round of applause*". Actually, it indicated all the audiences who Obama wanted to give a big applause for the woman.

#### **Sample 25**

*“And when I am President of the United States, we will end this war in Iraq and bring our troops home.*

*We will end this war in Iraq. We will bring our troops home. We will finish the job -- We will finish the job against Al Qaida in Afghanistan. We will care for our veterans. We will restore our moral standing in the world.*

*(Speech: “Yes, We Can”, p. 47)*

By producing this utterance Obama wants to build the optimism and confidence in front of American people, he shows that he is able to be their leader to make America better than before. So, in this case Obama uses two strategies.

For the first strategy he uses the group identity marker which belongs to positive politeness, we can understand it from the word “America” and “ours”. By using those words, he wants to be close and friendly with the audience, and also to establish that he has the same goal with them when he becomes the president/of America. The next strategy is positive politeness which Speaker and hearer are cooperator. We can see it when Obama says “yes, our road is longer, but we travel it together”, in this utterance he includes the hearer in the activity. The function of this strategy is he wants to ask people to work together in making America forward.

### **Sample 26**

*“Let me begin by thanking Harris Wofford for his contributions to this country. In so many different ways, he exemplifies what we mean by the word “citizen.” And so, we are very grateful to him for all the work he has done; and I’m thankful for the gracious and thoughtful introduction.”*

*(Speech: “A More Perfect Union”, p. 52)*

As can be seen that, the sentence “Let me begin by thanking Harris Wofford for his contributions to this country” was employed by Obama to save his interlocutor’s positive face. At the beginning of the speech Obama wants to appreciate Harris Wofford. It was an intelligent way to

catch the attention of the audience. Besides, the speaker used many exaggerated words such as ‘gracious’ or ‘thoughtful’ in the utterance giving thanks to Harris Wofford when introducing him to the audiences.

Based on the theory, the speaker used positive politeness by expressing an appreciation of the interlocutor’s self-image. The function is to satisfy the hearer’s positive face which automatically make them happy and directly catch the attention of the audiences to run well smooth communication.

### Sample 27

*“... I chose to run for President at this moment in history because I **believe** deeply that we cannot solve the challenges of our time unless **we** solve them together, unless we perfect **our union** by understanding that we may have different stories, but **we hold common hopes**; ...”*

*(Speech: “A More Perfect Union”, p. 53)*

As can be seen from the statements, the purpose of producing the utterances above is that the speaker tried to eliminate the social status among the people, it would make him closer to the listeners. We can understand it from what he said, he used the words ‘we’ and ‘our’, and those two words can make the audiences think that there is no different social status level among them. Also, in this utterance the speaker doing claim common ground, we can see it clearly from the words ‘our union’ or ‘we hold common hopes’. Clearly, Obama wanted to confirmed that he had the same goals to make America forward and he would like to finish it together all the American.

This strategy is classified into positive politeness which the speaker conveys some wants that hearers are also interested in. This strategy can happen when the speaker and hearer have the same knowledge (claim common ground), then the communication flows well.

### Sample 28

*“**America**, now is not the time for small plans. Now is the time to finally meet our moral obligation to provide every child a world-class*

*education, because it will take nothing less to compete in the global economy.”*

*(Speech: “Change Happens”, p. 79)*

Pay attention to first sentence of this paragraph, Obama used the group identity marker America to implicitly claim the common ground with the audiences. By using the word “America”, Obama wants to be close with the people without any consideration about power and status difference. After that Obama continued with delivering his vision in the next sentence in the paragraph above. Based on the theory of Brown and Levinson, that utterances categorized into positive politeness which belongs to ‘optimistic’ strategy.

Barack Obama as the speaker wants to commend the American people as the hearer who waited and voted for the election. In the sentence *“they believed that this time must be different, that their voices could be that difference”*, Obama makes FTA by complimenting the hearer for his chance to vote the election.

### **Sample 29**

*“Furthermore, America -- in fact, no nation -- can insist that others follow the rules of the road if we refuse to follow them ourselves. For when we don't, our actions appear arbitrary and undercut the legitimacy of future interventions, no matter how justified.”*

*(Speech: “A Just and Lasting Peace”, p. 156)*

For the first strategy he used the group identity marker which belongs to positive politeness, we can recognize it from the word “America” and “ours”. By using those words, he wanted to be close and friendly with the audience, and also to establish that he had the same goals with the American when he was the president of America. The next strategy is positive politeness which is ‘speaker and hearer are cooperator’. We can see it when Obama says *“For when we don't, our actions appear arbitrary and undercut the legitimacy of future interventions, no matter how justified.”*. In this utterance he included the hearers in the activity. The function of this strategy is to ask people

to work together in making America forward.

### Sample 30

*“Together, we determined that a modern economy requires railroads and highways to speed travel and commerce, schools and colleges to train our workers. Together, we discovered that a free market only thrives when there are rules to ensure competition and fair play. Together, we resolve that a great nation must care for the vulnerable and protect its people from life’s worst hazards and misfortune.”*

*(Speech: “We, the People ...”, p. 202)*

In these utterances, the speaker used positive politeness, by repetition the word “together” he wanted to emphasize the topic to the audiences. Also, by producing these statements speaker tried to involve the audiences in his opinion about taking actions to bring a better future to America. This kind of strategy can be classified into seek agreement. The function of it is to get the attention from the audiences and to get closer with them.

### Sample 31

*“This generation of Americans has been tested by crises that steeled our resolve and proved our resilience... My fellow Americans, we are made for this moment, and we will seize it -- so long as we seize it together.”*

*(Speech: “We, the People ...”, p. 203)*

Pay attention to last sentence of this paragraph, the speaker uses the group identity marker ‘my fellow Americans’. The speaker implicitly claimed the common ground with the audiences, by using the word “fellow Americans” Obama wants to be close with the people without any consideration about power and status difference.

Based on the theory of Brown and Levinson, that utterances categorized into positive politeness which belongs to claim common ground (strategy 4: group identity marker).

**4.1.2. Statistics of Positive politeness strategies and Negative politeness strategies in each speech**

Table 4.1. Numbers of politeness strategies, positive politeness strategies, and negative politeness strategies in each speech

<b>27 Speeches</b>	<b>Positive Politeness strategy</b>	<b>Negative Politeness strategy</b>	<b>Total politeness strategy</b>
“What I Am Opposed to Is a Dumb War”	32 94.1 %	2 5.9 %	34 100 %
“The Audacity of Hope”	35 85.4 %	6 14.6 %	41 100 %
“How Far We’ve Come”	33 82.5 %	7 17.5 %	40 100 %
“We Cannot Abandon the Field of Religious Discourse”	75 97.4 %	2 3.6 %	77 100 %
“What’s Next for America?”	43 95.6 %	2 4.4 %	45 100 %
“Yes, We Can”	44 88 %	6 12.0 %	50 100 %
“A More Perfect Union”	68 91.9 %	6 8.1 %	74 100 %
“Change Happens”	56 88.9 %	7 11.1 %	63 100 %
“This is Your Victory”	36 97.3 %	1 3.7 %	37 100 %
“A New Era of Responsibility”	43 93.4 %	3 6.5 %	46 100 %
“Open Hearts. Open Minds. Faired-minded Words”	67 93.1 %	5 6.9 %	72 100 %
“A New Beginning”	83 92.2 %	7 7.8 %	90 100 %
“The Happy Warrior”	36 90.0 %	4 10.0 %	40 100 %
“A Just and Lasting Peace”	73 86.9 %	11 13.1 %	84 100 %
“Justice Has Been Done”	34 94.4 %	2 5.6 %	36 100 %

“I Am Here to Say They Are Wrong”	48 94.1 %	3 5.9 %	51 100 %
“Newtown, You Are Not Alone”	35 89.7 %	4 10.3 %	39 100 %
“We, the People ...”	43 89.6 %	5 10.4 %	48 100 %
“Now We Need to Finish the Job”	86 91.5 %	8 8.5 %	94 100 %
“Trayvon Martin ... Could Have Been My Son”	28 96.6 %	1 3.5 %	29 100 %
“Put on Love”	37 92.5 %	3 7.5 %	40 100 %
“For We Were Born of Change”	46 90.2 %	5 9.8 %	51 100 %
“Amazing Grace”	51 92.7 %	4 7.3 %	55 100 %
“A World That Is Worthy of Our Children”	31 91.2 %	3 8.8 %	34 100 %
“You See, Change Requires”	76 92.7 %	6 7.3 %	82 100 %
“We Must Go Forward”	63 85.4 %	11 14.9 %	74 100 %
“What Our Democracy Demands”	83 90.2 %	9 9.8 %	92 100 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,385</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>1,518</b>
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>91.2 %</b>	<b>8.8 %</b>	<b>100%</b>

From the statistics, it can be clearly seen that Barack Obama applied politeness strategy very often in his speeches. However, there is no balance in the use of them, specifically, positive politeness is applied more superior than negative politeness. This is understandable since the investigated data are speeches, not interactive conversations. Therefore, positive politeness strategies are better suited to the nature of this form of communication compared to negative ones.

### 4.1.3. Positive Politeness

In this research this strategy is dominant used by Obama in delivering speech. Obama uses Positive Politeness to give praises, understand, sympathy to his audience as the hearer. He shows his optimistic attitudes and minimizes the distance between him and his audience.

Table 4.2. Positive Politeness

<b>Positive Politeness Strategy</b>	<b>Times</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Strategy 1	45	3.3 %
Strategy 2	87	6.3 %
Strategy 3	33	2.4 %
Strategy 4	34	2.5 %
Strategy 5	68	4.9 %
Strategy 6	102	7.4 %
Strategy 7	129	9.3 %
Strategy 8	7	0.5 %
Strategy 9	4	0.3 %
Strategy 10	114	8.2 %
Strategy 11	195	14.1 %
Strategy 12	297	21.4 %
Strategy 13	39	2.8 %
Strategy 14	78	5.6 %
Strategy 15	153	11.0 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,385</b>	<b>100 %</b>

Table 4.2. shows the detailed frequency and percentage of each positive politeness strategy used by Barack Obama in the investigated speeches. It is clear that the largest proportion of positive politeness strategy, which makes up 21.4 % (297 times), go on ‘include both speaker and hearer in the activity’. On the other hand, the strategy of ‘asserting or presupposing S’s knowledge of and concern for H’s wants’ has the lowest percentage in the table at 0.3% with the total number of 4 times. ‘Be optimistic’ and ‘fulfilling H’s want for some X’ are the next popular positive politeness strategy used at 14.1% (195 times) and 11.0

% (153 times) respectively.

As can be seen from the above table, there are two other positive politeness strategies which are the next commonly used. Those are ‘presuppose/raise/assert common ground’ with 129 times (9.3%) and ‘offer, promise’ with 114 times (8.2%). Whereas, other strategies, such as, ‘joke, ‘intensify interest to H’, ‘use in-group identity markers’, and ‘notice, attend to H’ account for far less of the total strategy with the proportion from 0.5% to 2.5% with the number of 7, 33, 34, and 45 times respectively.

In summary, all types of positive politeness strategy are used in the researched speeches with different frequencies covering from 4 to 297 times.

#### 4.1.4. Negative Politeness

Table 4.3. Negative Politeness

<b>Negative Politeness Strategy</b>	<b>Times</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Strategy 1	21	15.8 %
Strategy 2	17	12.8 %
Strategy 3	8	6.0 %
Strategy 4	6	4.5 %
Strategy 5	56	42.1 %
Strategy 6	5	3.8 %
Strategy 7	17	12.8 %
Strategy 8	0	0 %
Strategy 9	3	2.3 %
Strategy 10	0	0 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>100 %</b>

Table 4.3. gives information about the detailed frequency and proportion of every single negative politeness strategy used by Barack Obama in the investigated data. As is presented in the table that the biggest amount of negative politeness strategy with 56 times, which makes up 42.1%, go on ‘include both speaker and hearer in the activity’. In contrast, the strategy of both ‘state the FTA as a general rule’ and ‘go

on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebted H' have the lowest ratio in the table at 0%.

It is explicitly observed that, 'be conventionally indirect' is the next commonly used with 21 times at the ratio of 15.8%. Next, 'impersonalize S and H' and 'question, hedge' are both with 17 times becoming the next popular negative politeness strategy used at 12.8%.

As can be apparently seen that, the rest strategies, including 'nominalize', 'apologize', 'minimize the imposition, R<sub>x</sub>', and 'be pessimistic' account for with the figure being significantly lower with the number of 3, 5, 6, and 8 times respectively (from 2.3% to 6.0%).

To sum up, not many types of negative politeness strategy are used by Obama in the investigated data.

## **4.2. DISCUSSIONS**

In this part of discussion, the researcher discusses about Barack Obama's tendency in using politeness strategies from the findings of the research compared to other previous studies.

According to the findings in the previous part, it can be clearly seen that positive politeness outweighs negative politeness due to their own purposes and uses in communication. We can understand this from the concepts of positive and negative politeness. Positive politeness is used to avoid or minimize the Face Threatening Act (FTA) that speaker makes (Brown and Levinson, 1987). People use politeness strategies in order to get their conversation run well and go smoothly. A polite person makes others feel comfortable. Being polite also involves speaking to people appropriately. The appropriate utterances are usually used to make a harmonious interaction. Unlike positive politeness, which functions to minimize the social distance, negative politeness is used to indicate social distancing. Therefore, in the situations of giving speeches to the mass like Barack Obama in the cases, positive politeness is an

obviously right choice.

Being similar to the previous studies of politeness strategies used by Barack Obama, this study has alike results in the tendency of using politeness of the speaker. However, those studies investigated on every single speech while this study is the result of an investigation on twenty-seven speeches. This can come to an inclusion that Obama tends to have the same style of speaking when giving his speeches.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

In the case of communication, for example conversation or speech, maintaining other's face is needed in order to make the communication runs well and smoothly. Applying a variety of politeness strategies in different situations is one of the common ways to save other's face and obtain effective communication results.

In this research, the researcher analyzes the speeches of Barrack Obama under the light of Brown and Levinson's theory on politeness. In analyzing the speech, the writer at first decides which strategy each utterance is and takes notes. Then the researcher draws tables, which supply statistics about the number of strategies in each speech and the percentages of each strategy in the whole data, are provided to prove the tendency in using politeness of the speaker. Finally, the researcher points out the speaker's tendency of using politeness strategy in his speeches.

After analyzing and interpreting the data, conclusions and suggestions are formulated. The conclusion is made based on the research questions to give some implications to the readers. Furthermore, some suggestions are given to the next researchers who have same interest field with this study. They are both included as below.

#### **5.1. CONCLUSIONS**

From the findings and discussions, it can be concluded from this research that positive politeness is mostly used in speech compared to negative politeness by Obama in the investigated speeches. Perhaps the speaker wants to maintain the positive face of addressees and satisfy what addressees' wants or maintain the solidarity and harmony between the hearers and the speaker in communication. Also, Obama used these strategies to minimize the distance between the interlocutors and to improve the friendliness. Moreover, this showed that he was aware of the audience's esteem which want to be liked, understood, admired, and sympathized. Then, the speaker described the optimistic feelings to blow up the spirit of the hearers. This sort of strategy includes give gift to H, exaggerate, be optimistic, intensify interest to H, include both S and H in activity, offer and promise, avoid disagreement, give (or ask for) reason, assert and presuppose S's knowledge of and concern for H's wants, and assume or assert reciprocity. Specifically, he used positive strategy 12, strategy 11, and strategy 15 the most commonly. This may be caused by the need that he desired to save the positive face of the addressees, also he must have been considered more polite and attained full supports from the hearers when delivering the speeches using those strategies.

Negative politeness is less applied compared to the positive politeness. In order to impede the negative face of the addressees, the speaker tends to be humble and give deference when delivering speeches. Negative strategies such as 'give deference', 'minimize imposition Rx', and 'using hedges' are the most common used for this type. Obama usually used these strategies to minimize the imposition on the hearers or motivate the addressee by showing his weakness in front of audiences although he was in a high social position. Usually in his speeches, Obama used this strategy by putting his position lower and raising the hearers higher to maintain the hearer's face and satisfied the

wants to be respected of the hearers. As a result, the hearers all gave their affection, admiration, and respect to Obama through his greatest speeches. However, negative politeness, compared to the positive one, were not used much by the speaker in the investigated data.

## **5.2. IMPLICATIONS**

The study has some implications for language teaching and language learning as follows:

Firstly, from understanding the theoretical contents and the analyzed examples presented in this study, teachers will somewhat get knowledge about the theory of politeness and politeness strategy. As a result, teachers can apply them to teaching as well as help their students to understand about the theory of politeness strategy and how to employ them well in communication so that they can communicate more effectively and successfully.

Besides, this research is very meaningful to readers in general and politicians in particular. In general, based on understanding the theory and the analysis of politeness strategy above about the use of politeness strategy of a successful politician, Barack Obama, a talented leader as well as a bright writer. Readers can learn how to use politeness strategy in communication to convey more skillfully and successfully. Especially, for the reader as a politician, he can learn the wisdom of Obama in using politeness strategy in his speeches. Consequently, readers can obtain success in political communication and in public relations with the public in general.

To sum up, the writer hopes this research will be useful, give benefits, and add more knowledge for all the readers and the future researchers who have interest in politeness theory and linguistic study or even the similar topic to analyze other factors.

## **5.3. LIMITATION OF STUDY AND FURTHER STUDIES**

Analyzing politeness strategies in politics is a complicated issue

since it is not only about the linguistic problems but also the knowledge about social and political situations. With the limited data for the analysis, there are certainly many other politeness strategies used in political speeches that the research cannot cover.

With those difficulties and limitation of personal ability of the author, sources of materials relating to the problem under investigation and other outside factors, some weaknesses are inevitable.

Furthermore, the study lacks deep and profound insight and explorations due to the author's limited learning aptitude. Expectedly, further studies on this field will be made to explore more comprehensively and profoundly and develop the study of public speech to a higher stage.

The writer suggests other researchers who are interested in researching politeness strategy in these speeches or any kind of corpus data to do researches under the light of variety of other politeness theories, such as theories of Ron Scollon and Suzanne Wong Scollon, Bruce Fraser, and others for the further research.