



Politeness Principles in President Kenyatta's 59th Madaraka Day Speech to Kenyans on 1st June 2022 at Uhuru Gardens, Nairobi, Kenya

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Abstract: Apart from transmitting information successfully, communication needs to be carried out in a way that creates solidarity and intimacy between the parties involved. Politeness is key in communication as it aids in achieving effective communication. This article examines the maxims of politeness principles in Kenyatta's last Madaraka Day speech on 1st June 2022. The analysis is based on Leech's (1983) theory of politeness. The data is sourced from the internet and the analysis is done by first, reading the speech, identifying the sentences in which the maxims of politeness have been used and describing them in the context of the speech. The findings revealed that being the last Madaraka Day during his tenure as president, the president intended to leave a legacy of the gains made during his 10-year reign. He used politeness maxims to effectively communicate the gains of his administration and appreciate the freedom fighters as well as create solidarity with Kenyans.

Keywords: Madaraka Day speech, maxims of politeness, politeness principles, politeness theory.

Abbreviations: EFL- English as a Foreign Language.

1. INTRODUCTION

This article carries out a pragmatic analysis of President Kenyatta's last Madaraka Day address. Effective use of language in politics is essential since every political action is prepared, accompanied, influenced and played by language. Politeness in the use of language is key for any effective communication. According to Yule (1996), "politeness in an interaction can be defined as the means employed to show awareness for another person's face." Face refers to our emotional and social sense of self that everyone has and expects everyone else to recognize. Leech (1983) states that politeness principle is based on the six maxims of politeness: tact maxim, generosity maxim, approbation maxim, modesty maxim, agreement maxim, and sympathy maxim. Each of these maxims is explained in the literature review section below. A political speech can be taken as a speech associated with either struggle for power or maintenance/control of it. It is diverse because it encompasses the different forms of speeches that the politicians deliver at political forums. An address by a president during a national day or holiday can be taken as an example of a political speech. The aim of such a speech may be to spell out the commitment of the government towards serving the people of the nation or spell out the gains made by the government. In a speech of this nature, the president uses politeness principles to create solidarity and intimacy. This speech was purposively chosen because it was the last national celebration before the expiry of the president's term in August of the same year. Therefore, he was expected to use the platform to detail the gains made in the last nine years of his tenure. This article aims at finding out the politeness maxims in President Uhuru Kenyatta's address during the last national holiday before the end of his term in office and how they affect his speech.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Susanti, R. et al. (2018) carried out a study on the politeness principles and strategies in language used by President Joko Widodo to Indonesian Citizens. They found out that the president used the

strategy of positive politeness. They concluded that the goal was to maintain harmony, politeness, and harmonious interactions with citizens to create a conducive, safe, and comfortable atmosphere.

Rohandi and Anwar (2019) reviewed the use of politeness strategies in the classroom context by English university students in Indonesia using Levinson's politeness theory. Their findings indicated that strategies were seen in the forms of greetings, thanks, address terms, apologies, fillers and vernacular language. They concluded that the idea of politeness in language can be applied in Indonesian EFL classrooms.

Santoso, D. et al. (2020) investigated types and forms of politeness principles that are frequently used by the teachers in English Language teaching. The result of this research showed that there are nine types of Leech's politeness principles: tact maxim, generosity maxim, approbation maxim, agreement maxim, sympathy maxim, feeling reticence maxim, opinion reticence, obligation of S to O, and obligation of O to S. The forms of Leech's politeness principle found in this study are declarative, interrogative and imperative.

3. THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

3.1. The Politeness Principle

Politeness principles are a series of maxims which Leech (1983) has proposed as a way of explaining how politeness operates in communication with others. Leech analyzed politeness using politeness principles that he described in six maxims, namely tact maxim, generosity maxim, approbation maxim, modesty maxim, agreement maxim, and sympathy maxim.

Tact Maxim: minimize cost to other, maximize benefit to other. The first part of this maxim aligns with Brown and Levinson's strategies of minimizing imposition, while the second part reflects the positive politeness strategy of attending to the hearer's interests, wants, and needs. For example: "Can you spare me just two minutes please."

Generosity Maxim: Minimize benefit to self; maximize cost to self. This maxim makes it clear that to express politeness in conversation, the speaker should put others first before him/her. For instance: "Don't worry, it's my pleasure to serve you." Or "Never mind, I'll do it."

Approbation Maxim: Minimize dispraise of other; maximize the expression of beliefs which express approval of other. This maxim implies that we should make others feel good by giving them complements and we should not praise ourselves, but rather allow others to do so. This also implies that we should as much as possible avoid disagreement with others. For instance: "I know you are good at electronics, can you check what the matter is with this tape recorder?"

Modesty Maxim: Minimize praise of self; maximize praise of others. We should find opportunities to praise others, while we dispraise self. For example: "I'm so stupid, can you imagine that I forgot my pen. Do you have an extra one for this exam? I will get one immediately after the paper."

Agreement Maxim: Minimize disagreement between self and other; maximize agreement between self and other. This is in line with Brown and Levinson's positive politeness strategy. In expressing politeness in conversation, we should avoid disagreement with other people. For example: "I thought we agreed that you would have to call before setting out to see me."

Sympathy Maxim: Minimize antipathy between self and other; maximize sympathy between self and other. One way of expressing politeness is to identify with people by congratulating them, commiserating with them or expressing condolences when they are bereaved. These, according to Brown and Levinson shows that we are interested in the welfare of other people. For example: "I am sorry to hear about your mother's demise."

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The speech was analysed using a qualitative approach. The analysis was premised on Leech's (1983) politeness maxims: tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement and sympathy maxims. The analysis was based on the structure and content of the speech. The quoted parts in italics are excerpts from the speech verbatim.

4.1. Tact Maxim

'Your Excellency Julius Maada Bio, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone and the First Lady of the Republic of Sierra Leone, Hon. Speakers, Your Ladyship the Chief Justice, Leaders from across the entire spectrum of our Nation, Members of the Diplomatic Corps, Fellow Kenyans, Ladies and Gentlemen, Happy Madaraka Day!'

The opening remarks indicate tact in that the president maximizes the benefit to others by acknowledging their presence and wishing them a happy Madaraka Day. This implies that their presence is appreciated and helps create solidarity and intimacy. Among the audience are dignitaries who have travelled from outside Kenya to attend the celebration, leaders from Kenya and other Kenyans at large. They have set aside other commitments to attend the celebration, so it is important to acknowledge this. As the leader of the nation, he does not impose himself on the people. This is a way of achieving politeness in interaction.

'Madaraka Day is significant in our history because it is on this day in June 1963 that the Founding Fathers of our nation replaced the outgoing colonial government and formed the first indigenous Government of Kenya.'

The president minimizes benefit to self and maximizes benefit to others by acknowledging the work done by the Founding Fathers of the nation who fought hard to ensure freedom from colonial rule. As he explains the importance of this national holiday, he credits the Founding Fathers for the fruits enjoyed by the country due to their selflessness.

*'This act of raising our national flag was not an exercise in symbolism or a sheer sentimental exploit. It was a sign that we had achieved sovereignty as a Nation. But fundamentally, **it was a call to civic duty and responsibility to our people.**'*

The president maximizes cost to self by placing responsibility on the leaders for the benefit of all Kenyans. The benefit is maximized to others according to the tact maxim.

*'Why has my tenure in office seen so much emphasis on transformative programmes and reforms in healthcare, education, agriculture, energy, titling of land, housing, social protection, affirmative action, commerce and industry, and the ease of doing business? Why the Big Four Agenda? **We have done all this because they are interrelated aspects of our national life that are tied together by a singular golden thread; areas of challenges that can become the engines that drive Kenya into a more just and prosperous future.**'*

The president has minimized cost to others and maximized benefit to others by explaining the reason his government concentrated on the Big Four Agenda. The government was working hard to ensure a prosperous future for Kenyans (benefit to the people of Kenya). The cost is on the government but the benefit is to Kenyans.

'I looked at a Nation whose potential was being limited by road connectivity and I vowed to open up Kenya to ourselves and to the world. The result was that once sleepy villages and towns roared to life, becoming vibrant centres for economic and social activities.'

The president employed the tact maxim to relay the achievements in road infrastructure. He achieves politeness by spelling out that due to his intervention, Kenyans enjoy better road connectivity and expansion of economic activities. The word '**vowed**' expresses his commitment to take the cost upon himself to benefit Kenyans.

4.2. Generosity Maxim

'In our efforts to foster inclusivity and gender parity, the one thing I am proud of is how we have built women leadership and expanded their fields of participation in governance.'

The generosity maxim is employed by the president in stating his pride in the achievement of his government by ensuring women participation in leadership. The cost is maximized on the part of the president for the benefit of women in accordance with the generosity maxim which requires one to put others first.

'Of equal note, My Administration has fast-tracked the promotion of women to leadership in our security sector.'

Again, the president expresses more benefits to women by giving them leadership in the security sector, which is male dominated. The cost is on the president and his administration while the women benefit.

'I refused to delay the dream of world-class ports and fishing-support infrastructure because I wanted that fisherman in our oceans and lakes to be able to gain more from the sweat of their brow.'

The fisherman has been put first and is able to benefit from the opening of ports done by the president; the president has thus minimized benefit to self and maximized cost to self by putting others first and so implied benefit to others.

4.3. Approbation Maxim

'Madaraka Day is significant in our history because it is on this day in June 1963 that the Founding Fathers of our nation replaced the outgoing colonial government and formed the first indigenous Government of Kenya.'

The president uses the approbation maxim by maximizing praise of the Founding fathers for their effort in fighting for the freedom of the country. Their fight gave the country the reason to celebrate Madaraka Day. This maxim ensures politeness since the speaker maximizes praise of others making them feel good. The president appreciates the work done by the founding fathers.

'My joy today is that My Administration has restored the sanctity and historical significance of Uhuru Gardens. Following many years of neglect, this historic site had become a den of thieves. In fact, it is on record that the 68 acres on which these sacred grounds sit had fallen into the hands of some unscrupulous individuals. My Administration had to reclaim the 'grabbed' site in 2019 and restore its dignity and purity.'

The president maximizes praise of others by praising his administration for restoring the dignity of Uhuru Gardens which had been neglected. He repeats this acknowledgment making his administration feel good due to his approval of their work.

'To our security officers, because of your commitment to defend our Nation and to squarely face new dangers, every citizen is able to participate in the socio-economic development of our Nation. You keep us free, preserve our way of life, and allow us all to enjoy the present as well as the better tomorrow that is upon us.'

The president expresses his approval of the work done by security officers to ensure the country is safe and the citizens enjoy safety and security. By appreciating the work of the security officers, he avoids dispraising others and maximizes praise for them.

4.4. Modesty Maxim

'If our women were part of the liberation struggle, advancing their course intentionally is a duty we owe them and ourselves as a country. And I am, indeed, proud to have been part of this push for women leadership in our Republic.'

The president employed the maxim of modesty by finding an opportunity to praise women and not himself, for their involvement in the liberation struggle. The sentence implies his approval of or admiration of the work done by the women who were involved in the liberation struggle. The use of the word 'owe' expresses the acknowledgement of the work done by the women and strengthens the need to involve them in leadership.

4.5. Agreement Maxim

'In our efforts to foster inclusivity and gender parity, the one thing I am proud of is how we have built women leadership and expanded their fields of participation in governance.'

The president employed the agreement maxim in the above sentence. He expresses pride in the inclusion of women in leadership. He provides a clarification on his opinion of women as leaders. He agrees with the view that women can participate effectively in leadership and governance and therefore should be given a chance. This enables him to maximize agreement between him and women.

4.6. Sympathy Maxim

'According to our Founding Fathers, therefore, our flag is not a sentimental piece of fabric decorated in ink. We must always remember that each time it flies, it is NOT blown by the wind. It is blown by the last breath of our liberators as they made their final bow to liberate Kenya.'

That the flag is blown by the last breath of our liberators, is an expression of sympathy towards those who suffered to the point of death to liberate the country. The liberators sacrificed their lives and the president maximizes sympathy between himself and the freedom fighters by identifying with their pain even in their absence. He shows politeness by commiserating with the liberators and by implication their families because they lost their loved ones in the fight for freedom.

'The second example of indignity we encountered was in the area of chronic diseases. For those suffering from kidney disease and in need of dialysis thrice a week, it used to cost them over Kshs. 100,000 a month. Families had to sell their ancestral land and disinherit their children to keep loved ones alive. Others had to migrate from their comfortable homes upcountry and live in informal settlements in the city where dialysis machines were available.'

'But in only 9 years, we have built 54 renal units located in the 47 counties and installed 360 state-of-the-art dialysis machines. Added to this, we have made dialysis free of charge so that families do not have to sell their land to save their loved ones.'

The president employed the sympathy maxim in the sentences above. He maximized sympathy between himself and those suffering from chronic diseases and their families. He felt sorry that the cost of treatment was so costly and some had to live away from their comfortable homes as they sought treatment in the few facilities that were far from them. The president expressed interest in the welfare of others and this led to a solution by his government as expressed in the second excerpt above. Sympathy enables one to appreciate another party by identifying with their feelings or emotional state.

5. CONCLUSION

The president's speech was mainly informative based on the context which was a celebration of a national holiday- Madaraka Day. Since it was the last national holiday under his tenure as president, he was expected to spell out the achievements of his government among other issues. The features of the speech can be summarized as follows: acknowledgment of the audience beginning with the dignitaries, the significance of the national celebration and acknowledgement of the founding fathers for their sacrifice in instituting such a day, the gains made by the administration in education, road infrastructure, agriculture, health and women leadership and the work the next administration needed to do to govern the country well.

The analysis was based on what was considered major parts of the speech that explicitly contained the politeness maxims. All the six maxims were found to have been employed by the president. The most prevalent maxim was the tact maxim which the president employed to communicate the gains made by his government for the benefit of Kenyans.

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