

## **Power and Politics of Language Use: A Survey of Hedging Devices in Political Interviews**

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### **Abstract**

One tactful strategy in political rhetoric is hedging which is associated with vagueness and innuendos. Despite the studies that address hedging in academic discourse and conversation analysis, studies that investigate hedges in relation to political power, face, and politeness are tremendously few. To this aim, four political interviews were selected from CNN and BBC websites on the basis of the diversity of topics and the popularity of the interviewees and analyzed following a combination of the existing taxonomies of hedges. The results of this analysis revealed an inverse relationship between the frequency of downtoners and the degree of political power. The use of hedges in political interviews also contributes to the implementation of positive as well as negative politeness strategies.

**Keywords:** hedging, political rhetoric, face, politeness

### **1. Introduction**

Politicians can achieve their own political aims, that is, constraining the mass action-environment through physical coercion. However, there is another means, which is more tactful, hence strategic to this end: using

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evolutionary, recently (from the 1950s on) the encounters have grown much more hostile especially in American presidential press conferences. To be unbiased, may categorize interviewees in a way which makes it easier for interviewers to exercise some ideological bias (ibid).

In studying political interviews, Chilton (2004) introduces the linguistic structures on which political discourse relies. His analysis illustrated how nominalization, agentless passives, and pronouns with ambiguous antecedents are useful for implying politically motivated propositions without stating them explicitly. Bull (2008) reflected on followed by a reflection on the studies he conducted to present the reconceptualization of his theory in terms of face to face management in political interviews. He argued that equivocation is, to a great extent, the face management can prove applicable to the analysis of equivocal as well as non-equivocal political discourse. Fetzer (2008) examined expressions of commitment, focusing on such cognitive verbs as *think* and *believe*, taking into consideration their perlocutionary effects with respect to the expressions of epistemic, emotive, and social commitment. Verbs may boost or attenuate epistemic commitment.

Focusing on linguistic strategies adopted by politicians in political interviews to evade explicitly stating their ideas and to camouflage their ideas, another linguistic strategy which is frequently and strategically exploited by politicians to cover up their ideas.

Hedging has been investigated in conversation analysis where informal expressions such as *I think*, *sort of*, *maybe*, and *possibly* are frequently used to create vitality, facilitate discussion, indicate politeness, and lubricate phatic communication (e.g. Coates, 1987; Holmes, 1982, 1984). It is also considered as a means of achieving the distance between

a speaker and what is said (e.g. Prince, Frader, & Bosk, 1982; Skelton, 1988).

Hedges are considered as positive or negative politeness strategies that serve the function of reducing threat to the addressees' negative face by mitigating the claims and giving the addressees the freedom of judgment or showing "solidarity with the (discourse) community by exhibiting responses that assume shared knowledge and desires" (Myers, 1989, p. 8). Hedges can be used as shields to protect the addresser, who anticipates possible negative consequences of being proved wrong, from criticism. In so doing, the cautious addresser reduces the commitment to the proposition.

Hedges not only fulfill the function of avoiding face-threatening-acts (Banks, 1994, as cited in Salager-Meyer, 1994), but they may also be the result of a speech style, or as Crompton (1997) assumes, "a product of social forces" (p. 275), or devices that give life to language (Skelton,

7 KHUHTM QW HRIKIG HVKIVEHQ UFSR WGDVUHM WQJ IQ VRHO attractiveness (Parton, Sitanen, Hosman & Langenderfer, 2002) and SRVYH DWXGF WZDG WKFRQWRI WHP HMDH & UPRH 9 DQGH . RSSH 7 KHHRH IRORZIQ WH VRHO QRE'V QHFMWVW employing a definite degree of hedges.

7 KHERYFWLHV WRXK UHYHQQJ IQ WHURZ QZD V GRQRWTHU clues as to the fuzzy or bold and ostentatious nature of the language used by politicians in interview settings. On the other hand, the issue of hedging is a subject which has been challenged by researchers in various contexts including conversation analysis and phatic communication (e.g. Coates, 1987; Holmes, 1982, 1984; Prince, Frader & Bosk, 1982; Skelton, 1988), scientific or academic discourse (e.g. Butler, 1990; Clyne, 1991; Crompton, 1997; Hyland, 1994, 1998, 2000; Jalilifar, 2007a & b; Markkanen & Schröder, 1989; Meyer, 1997; Myers, 1989; Salager-0 H HU 9 DWWD DQGXIQFWW W %ORRU %ORRU 1993; Donohue, 2006; McLaren-Hankin, 2008; Pindi & Bloor, 1987). A very rare example of studies that trace hedges in powerful and powerless speech styles is Parton, et al.'s (2002) study in job interviews, which

found that more frequent use of hedges and hesitation markers, characteristic of powerless speech style, resulted in negative attribution of employability and competence. In contrast, the powerful speech style, with less hedges and hesitations, attracted higher evaluations of competence but not of social attractiveness.

However, as Fraser (2010, p. 201) claims, very few, if any, studies seem to be dedicated exclusively to the study of hedges in political interviews, nor has the previous research linked the concept of hedging to the degree of political power and face exclusively. With the dearth of research in this area, the present study takes a critical approach to investigating hedging in political discourse, specifically in interviews aiming to gain a better understanding of hedges, one of the many strategies politicians draw upon to influence the masses, from a functional perspective since this, in turn, can provide insights into the

to reflect on the following questions:

1. Does any relationship exist between the degree of political power and the degree of toning down?

2. Do the politicians use hedges for the purpose of politeness and face?

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Materials

We aimed to demonstrate the functions that hedges have in political context. 7KHGIDMHWX HG IRU WKV W \ FRQWRI WQYUSWRI IRXU lengthy interviews downloaded on November 5, 2008 from BBC and CNN websites (George W Bush:news.bbc.uk/2/hi/americas/7245670.stm; Jimmy Carter:www.bbc.co.uk/hardtalk; Sarah Palin:articles.cnn.com/2008-10-21/politics/; David & R W Z Z E E F F R X K I D M O N 7 K H M D Q Y U S W R I the full interviews were analyzed in terms of hedges since we needed as much material as possible in order to arrive at some sound conclusions UHJ DG QJ WKFH S R O F D Q V K I G I Q J S D W L Q V I Q W K D V F R Q M W 7 K H interviewees were prominent political figures, namely George W. Bush

(the U.S. President), Jimmy Carter (the U.S. former President), David  
& R. W. D. V. Q. R. U. P. H. P. E. H. U. R. I. = H. P. E. D. Z. H. I. V. P. D. I. Q. R. S. S. R. I. Q. J. S. D. W. V. K. H.  
0 R. Y. H. H. Q. W. I. R. U. ' H. P. R. I. U. M. F. & K. I. Q. J. H. D. Q. G. 6. D. U. K. 3. D. D. Q. 0 F. & D. I. Q. V. Y. E. H.  
S. U. M. G. I. Q. W. 7. K. H. Z. H. H. I. Q. W. Y. E. Z. H. G. I. Q. ) H. E. X. D. U. ' H. F. P. E. H. U.  
2 F. W. R. E. H. U. D. Q. G. 2 F. W. R. E. H. U. U. H. S. H. F. W. Y. I. Q. 7. K. H. U. H. D. R. Q. Z. H. F. K. R. M.  
almost synchronic politicians was the concern we had over fluctuations  
in the use of such attitudinal devices as hedges over time, as genres are  
prone to change. With this in mind, even politicians belonging to, for  
H. I. P. S. O. I. V. R. R. U. P. R. U. G. H. H. D. G. F. V. D. R. O. N. H. / K. I. W. K. H. U. R. U. \* D. Q. G. K. E. G. Q. R. W. H. P.  
to be suitable substitutes for Sarah Palin, for instance, who belongs to  
D. O. P. R. W. K. H. V. I. P. H. F. R. Q. M. W. W. K. H. R. V. K. H. L. Q. W. Y. E. Z. H. M.

7. K. H. V. O. F. W. R. Q. R. I. V. K. H. I. Q. W. Y. E. Z. V. Z. D. V. D. O. R. P. R. Y. I. M. G. E. V. K. H.  
I. Q. M. Y. E. Z. H. M. | S. R. O. N. F. D. O. F. K. E. Y. H. P. H. Q. W. D. Z. H. O. D. V. K. H. G. Y. H. M. W. R. I. V. K. H. R. S. E. V.  
W. D. W. F. R. O. G. E. H. U. L. V. H. G. I. Q. W. H. U. I. Q. W. Y. E. Z. V. 7. K. H. F. R. P. S. U. M. G. V. K. K. W. H. P. H. V. D. V.  
the possibility of *Zimbabwe's Opposition's* having what it takes to  
mobilize the masses; George W. Bush's foreign policies in Africa, Iraq,  
and Afghanistan, the possibility of the Nobel committee's playing  
policies with the prize and Jimmy Carter's encouraging it, and Sarah  
3. D. D. Q. V. I. W. H. S. O. Q. V. D. V. D. 5. H. S. K. O. I. F. D. Q. Y. E. H. S. U. M. G. I. Q. W. K. H. G. Y. H. M. W. R. I. V. K. H.  
topics lent themselves to different types of hedges, and this is exactly  
what reveals the nature of hedges, that is highly-context-sensitive. What  
seems to be of paramount importance is the general context (political)  
V. K. U. F. G. E. H. Z. H. Q. D. O. V. K. H. I. Q. W. Y. E. Z. H. M. 7. K. H. I. V. H. I. D. F. W. Z. K. I. D. V. 6. I. P. R. Q.  
9. D. Q. G. E. H. H. Q. : K. M. M. D. Q. G. \$ I. M. H. U. F. R. Q. M. G. H. F. G. D. V. K. I. I. F. H. Q. W.  
F. U. I. M. I. R. Q. W. E. D. H. V. K. H. L. Z. R. U. N. R. Q. Z. K. I. Q. W. K. H. V. I. G. 7. K. H. S. U. R. J. U. P. V. V. K. I. D. H. D.  
number of features, including that the protagonists are politicians, that  
the topics are political issues, and hence that these are interactions which  
all fall under the heading of political discourse" (p. 37).

All the titles, Website addresses, dates, and the interviewers' turns  
were deleted so that the computer word count would show the exact  
number of the words uttered by each interviewee (2421 words for George  
W. Bush, 2607 words for Sarah Palin, 2678 words for Jimmy Carter, and  
2385 words for David Coltart). In so doing, it became possible to make

interpersonal comparisons among the interviewees in regard to their use of hedges. In each transcript, occurrences of hedges were underlined and then categorized. The number of hedges in each category and in each transcript was counted and the percentage of hedged words was calculated. Since the study was based on the transcripts of the interviews, we attempted to compensate for the missing contextual clues by relying on the contextual as well as the textual organization of the written discourse.

## 2.2 Analytical procedure

Some studies in political discourse start with a formal linguistic device and explore its discursive functions (e.g. Fetzer, 2008; Fraser, 2010; others use a function to form approach, departing from discursive goals, strategies and tactics, and exploring their realizations in context (e.g. the first group. It aims to explore the functions a linguistic device, a hedge in our case, has in the face-to-face context of televised interviews.

Hyland (1996) asserts that hedges are *polypragmatic*; that is, they convey multiple meanings simultaneously. In the same vein, Holmes (1988) has identified over 350 markers of mitigation in conversation. A hurdle for us was to interpret hedges in the context in which they are employed and then fit each hedging item into a neat scheme of discrete terms of hedging devices, drawing upon the works of different scholars in this field, to come up with our own classification of hedges which is a combination of the existing taxonomies of hedges. We conducted the analysis separately by the two of us (a Ph.D. holder in applied linguistics and an

M.A. student) and alpha reliability of analysis computed was 0.9. A & RKEV. DSSD WAWDOR UHYHOG IQWUDMUUHDEIOW RI P RUI WKIQ Having negotiated the minor differences on the categorization of hedges, we continued analysis of the other interviews and the whole process was UFSHMG ZIK D WP HIQWYDRI DERWRQH P RQW 7 KM J X UDQWGR XU FRGH UHDEIOW RI DQDQV 7 KHDQDQV IQ RQ W \ ZHH P RUI TXDMMYHWIQ TEQMMYH 7 KDWLV ZK ZH GG QRVSHURP IIQH statistical computations. Instead, we tended to show the differences by using as many examples from the interviews as possible, and in each example we tried to pinpoint the function the hedging device played in the context of use.

### 3. Results

7 KHW RQP\ RI KIGHVDGRSNQIQ WKM W \ DQG WSHHFQW HVRI WH occurrence of hedged words in relation to all the words in each of the WQVUSWQGHUWKHW \ DHVKRZQIQ 7 DEI 7 DEI GH P RQWDMV the percentages of different categories of hedges in relation to all the KIGJG ZRIGVQ HFK WQVUSW 7 KHWYQK EHURI KIGJG ZRIGVQ the word count are also given.

7 DEI Frequency and percentage of hedged words in the four interviews

7\SH	*FRUH: Bush	Sara Palin	Jimmy Carter	David Coltart
	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)
MCH	2(0.08)	4(0.15)	4(0.15)	4(0.16)
CH	4(0.16)	49(1.88)	170(6.34)	116(4.86)
MI	32(1.32)	30(1.15)	50(1.86)	23(0.96)
CCon	10(0.41)	18(0.69)	30(1.12)	25(1.04)
CCI	47(1.94)	115(4.41)	119(4.44)	167(6.99)
P	1(0.04)	3(0.11)	0	0
39				
9 -				
7 -				
M	1(0.04)	4(0.15)	6(0.22)	11(0.46)
FS	11(0.45)	22(0.83)	59(2.20)	38(1.58)



7\SH	*FRUH: Bush	Sara Palin	Jimmy Carter	David Coltart
SIP	49(2.02)	30(1.15)	53(1.98)	57(2.39)
FPPP	56(2.31)	60(2.31)	11(0.41)	45(1.88)
7RWD hedged words	268(11.04)	392(15.00)	573(21.37)	534(22.32)
7RWD words	2421	2607	2678	2385

MCH. Markers of conventional hedge

CH. Compound hedges

MI. Markers of imprecision/ approximators (of degree, quantity,

IUTM QF «

CCon. Concessive conjuncts

CCl. Conditional clauses

P. Particles

39 3 DWYFYREH

9 - 9 DM MEJ P HQW

7-7 UWKMEJ P HQW

M. Modifiers

FS. Framing statements

SIP. Sentence introductory phrases

FPPP. First person plural pronoun

7KH IROZIQJ WED GIP RQWDM WKHSROWIDQJ JHQHDO WQGQF

towards using specific hedging strategies rather than others. It indicates that conditional clauses are used the most (25.35%) in the whole interviews. Next comes compound hedges (19.18%) followed by "passive voice" (10.86), "sentence introductory phrases" (10.7%), "first person plural pronoun" (9.73), "markers of imprecision" (7.64), "framing statement" (7.36), "concessive conjuncts" (4.7), "truth judgment" (1.92), "modifiers" (1.22), "markers of conventional hedges" (0.8), "value judgment" (0.28) and finally "particles" (0.22) down the hierarchy.

7 DEOH Frequency and percentage of hedging categories in all hedged words

7\SH	George W. Bush	Sara Palin	Jimmy Carter	David Coltart
	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)
MCH	2(0.75)	4(1.02)	4(0.70)	4(0.75)
CH	4(1.50)	49(12.50)	170(29.67)	116(21.72)
MI	32(11.94)	30(7.65)	50(8.72)	23(4.31)
CCon	10(3.73)	18(4.60)	30(5.24)	25(4.68)
CCI	47(17.54)	115(29.34)	119(20.77)	167(31.27)
P	1(0.37)	3(0.76)	0	0
39				
9 -				
7 -				
M	1(0.37)	4(1.02)	6(1.05)	11(2.06)
FS	11(4.10)	22(5.61)	59(10.30)	38(7.12)
SIP	49(18.30)	30(7.65)	53(9.25)	57(10.67)
FPPP	56(20.90)	60(15.31)	11(1.92)	45(8.43)
7 RWD hedged words	268(100)	392(100)	573(100)	534(100)

7 KHSRQNFIDQVDUHDUDQJHG IQ WHDERYHWEONDFRIGQJ W WHGHUHH of hedged expressions they used, with George W. Bush exploiting the least number of hedges, on the left side of the tables, and David Coltart WHPRWRQKHUIKRIKHMEON 7KIDV' DYG&RQWVX HRIKIGJHV ZDV PRUHWQ GHOH WHQR EHU XHG E\ \*HRUH : %XK 7KH language used by Jimmy Carter and David Coltart, however, was close to one another in terms of mitigating devices. George W. Bush's most IDYRUMKHF IQIGHMFFHZHH) 333DQG6,37 KIMKHVHP WREHYHU skillful at the rhetorical use of pronouns and introductory phrases, as shown below:

- (1) Interviewer: I mention the genocide thing also because your predecessor, President Clinton, says that the one thing-one of the key WQJVKIDNHSVKE X DWQLKVVWIKKHGGQWGRHQKJKRYHDW

Rwanda to stop the killing there. Is it possible that Darfur might become your Rwanda?

G. W. B.: I don't think so. I certainly hope not. I mean, Rwanda was, you know, I think 900,000 people in a very quick period of time of just wholesale slaughter. And I, you know, I appreciate President Clinton's compassion and concern. And, you know, I'm comfortable with making a decision that I think is the best decision. And comfortable with the notion that once that decision is made we're keeping the world's focus as best as we can on that amongst other issues.

In regard to using FPPP, Sarah Palin is in line with George W. Bush. But her first highest hedging device was CCl. She mostly relied on CCl as a linguistic strategy to refer to hypothetical situations:

(2) Interviewer: Will you and John McCain appoint Democrats to cabinet positions?

S.P.: I don't know why you wouldn't, if they, if these Democrats are best suited to serve, and if they will not let obsessive partisanship get in the way of just doing what's right with a team effort, and support of the president to get this economy moving, and to win these wars, to meet these great challenges, I wouldn't have as my litmus test a party affiliation.

Jimmy Carter was also inclined to use CCl frequently, but mostly he tended to use CH; as the following example shows, this item is a combination of CCl and other items:

(3) J.C.: : H0 , GG WKHVP HWKQJ ZKI0 , ZDV3UHMGI0W7KHZDVD time when Israel was contemplating an invasion of Lebanon, and I went to Israel and confronted Prime Minister Begin about it, and I told him in effect that If US weapons were used in an invasion of Lebanon, that I would use my authority as President, which I had under the law, to declare that these weapons were being used improperly, and not for the defense of Israel, but for the attack of another country, and at that time Prime Minister Begin cancelled his decision to go into Lebanon.

&RPSDHFG W \* HRUH : %X K DQG6DUK 3DQ &DUMV X HRI 39 IV greater. He employed this type of hedging devices whenever he was not

inclined to reveal the agent(s) of the political actions. He was also the highest in using FS through which he expressed his doubt and uncertainty:

(4) J. C.: Well, I'm not sure that at this point, any member of the Security Council has seen the 11,000 pages of report, and all the information will eventually come out, not only for the members of the Security Council, but also for the public. I don't know how to make a judgment in advance.

David Coltart's mostly used type of hedging devices was CCl. Like Sarah Palin he had a great inclination to refer to hypothetical situations, thus using this hedging device. His next highest item was the use of CH, again a combination of CCl and other items. Compared to Jimmy Carter, Coltart showed more tendencies to use FPPP.

(5) Interviewer: Do you think that Mugambe is going to go before his term ends in 2008?

D.C.: I think if we are to stop the suffering of Zimbabweans, if we are to tackle the economy, he needs to have gone yesterday. But I think he is so fearful that he will hang on to the death.

#### 4. Discussion

6RPHSRONFLQ V VSHFKIYP RUISRZHIO KIQRWKHV DQGWK HURSIQRQ is taken to be more credible and authoritative than the opinion of others. 7KMIVUSUMQWG IQ KHLUXHRI P DM DIQJ GHYEV 7KHGND IQ KH present study enabled us to conclude that all the politicians except for George W. Bush polarized in favor of CCl, and the politicians who were still in power were inclined to use FPPP. Our speculation is that this choice of hedging expressions depends mostly on their professional power status at the time of the interview and the topic of the interview. 7KHUHWRI KLV W \ DOR W HWWKDWK HGHUHHRI SRONFOSRZHU has an inverse relationship with the frequency of hedges employed by a politician.

Being the president of the most powerful country in the world (at the time of the interview), George W. Bush can be considered the most

powerful politician. His power is most likely to give him the incentive to be more committed to his claims and, therefore, to be the least hedge user in the group of politicians under the study. He terminated his interview with a very great boost which shows his confidence in himself and his agenda:

\* (6) I'm not only happy to defend decisions, I'm confident that they will lead to a better tomorrow.

At the time of the interview, Sarah Palin was running campaigns for the Republican Candidate, John McCain. With this in mind, one might expect her to be positive. Still, she exercised greater reservations toward her speech whenever the need arose. Examples 2 and the following demonstrate this fact:

\*(7) Interviewer: Governor, is Barak Obama a socialist?

63 ,P QRWRQO FDOKE D VRHDDWEX, as Joe the plumber had suggested, in fact he came right out and said it sounds like socialism to him and he speaks for so many Americans who are quite concerned now, DVMKHUIQ IIQID Z KD% DUN2 EIP D\ VWI IQWQKQVUHZIK KMV and economic plan, and that is, to take more from small businesses, more IURPR I DP IDMD QGWHQHGMEXHWKIDDFRIGQJWKMSURUM

Although she did not explicitly call Obama a socialist, Palin relied on an external source (Joe the plumber) to imply that he is a socialist. She did so to reduce the responsibility for the utterance and thereby to shield herself from potential reactions to her claim. What is necessary to add DERX6DULK3DQIVKIDWKHX HG VR V\ \ NIKQIDP DQGKHZDVD79 news reporter for a while. Richardson (2004) considers journalism a SRZHIX JHQUHRI FRPP Q IFDWRQZIKFRQGHIDEQVRHDOHIFW 7KX the conclusion one may draw at this point is that Palin has got an expertise in the manipulation of language which helps her to express her opinions with a more domineering attitude.

Jimmy Carter, the next in the row, was in White House in early 80s. He is famous for his noteworthy foreign policy accomplishments during his presidency of the United States (Camp David Accord, the peace WHDW EHVZHQ ( J\ SWDQG , VUDH WKH6\$ / 7 ,, WHDW DQGD QRWP RUI

which made him worthy of receiving the Noble Peace Prize. After the HQRI KIVMP KHIRGIG 7 KH&DUMU&HQWUZ KEK DGGHWHVQDRQD and international issues of public policy. Considering his prosperous past and current stable status, Jimmy Carter is expected to be more powerful WQD' DYG&RQW7 KHUHFWRQRI KMSRZHURQKMVSHFK WOH P RH powerful with fewer hedges, proved this expectation to be plausible.

Although still in power, David Coltart used a less powerful speech style, with more hedges, than Jimmy Carter. But this is not a far fetched result considering his political status. David Coltart is a senior member of Zimbabwe's main opposing party, the Movement for Democratic Change 0' & 7 KMSDW IVVIG WEHSURHFXL HG ZIK IQWQDEEDWV DQG WHMEDWV DUHGXI W D VDMQ WHP RYH HQW7 KHSOWRIFK UHG IQ October 2005, when, as some claim, David Coltart and a member of his senior colleagues in the MDC decided it was right and proper to fight the Senate Elections that Mugabe had called for in November of 2005. 7 VUQ IUL WHODGHURI WHSDW WRXKWDVZ DVSDIQZURQ &RQW believes that the split occurred because of a difference in views as how best to tackle the regime, with some in favor of contemplating violent DWRQVQGRPH QRWSUHDHG W JR GEZ Q WDMRWH 7 KHHRUH KM volatile political status was realized in his less powerful language and inevitable downtoners.

7 KHUHW W HMG WHIP SRWWRGRI FROMWQ KISIQJ WH text and in deciding on the degree of mitigating language. Consequently, not only is power an important contextual variable and an incentive for the use of hedging devices but the type of questions raised by the interviewers can also have a great influence on the interviewees' speech style.

An important finding of this study was that the politicians whose interview scripts were under study, except for George W. Bush, polarized IQ IDYRURI WHX HRI &&O 7 KHXLTKW RI WVKIGIQ GHYEHFDQ EH indicative of another finding: CCl's can be a characteristic of political rhetoric. However, the motivation to rely on this device seems to be FROMWQH VYH7 KHGXV 6DUK3DQHP EDNIGRQQHFMVWMP DNQJ

claims about hypothetical conditions, and she, with an opaque view of her party's and her future political status, resorted to the use of CCl's words, in order to be on the safe side, she chose to answer the interviewer's questions with caution. Consequently, when asked about her future role as a vice president, she replied:

(8) Well, we've talked a lot about that, John McCain and I have, about the mission that I'll get to embark on if we are so blessed to be hired by the American people to work for them.

Lack of direct involvement in the current policies and inability to lay down rules, too, give Jimmy Carter the edge to rely heavily on CCl's agreement to give Russia a free hand in Chechnya, he answered:

(9) I would not have done it. I don't agree with that. *I think* that Russia should, if possible, negotiate the Chechen problem with mediation by an outside entity in order to resolve that problem peacefully, but to give them a so-called free hand, if the high British official was speaking with authority, would not be a means of excessive force exerted on the Chechen people.

Like Sarah Palin, David Coltart's prospect of success in the future can be a reason for his tendency to rely on the CCl's. In response to a question asking about the possibility of his being more pessimistic about Zimbabwe's short and medium term future he said:

(10) No, I'm not pessimistic surprisingly enough, because I study history and I realize that dictators come and go and they are often the authors of their own demise. So when one looks at Hitler in his final days, he became more extreme, more paranoid and I see the same thing happening to this regime. If anything I think the regime is speeding up its own demise and so in the context of this being a process, I see us nearing the end.

Reconsidering the results obtained reveals another important issue: Being retired or still in power has imposed specific speech styles, with different

hedges influenced by the degree of power but the quality is also affected. Jimmy Carter is not in power any more, and so this condition was probably a good reason for him to use statements expressing doubt and uncertainty (FS) more often than the rest of the politicians in this group. He was also the only politician who made the least use of FPPP. In this case, the lack of commitment was shown in the guise of expressions implying doubt and uncertainty, and this in turn is due to the lack of power and direct involvement in political issues. As a result, when Jimmy Carter was asked about the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and the British officials' opinion about this issue, he replied:

(11) I'm not aware that the British officials had access to the document but I don't know that my information is correct.

He consistently resorted to such statements whenever asked about matters he did not seem to be involved in directly any more.

Resorting to such mitigating expressions is also useful in the "minimization of negative reactions and attitudes" (Bhatia, 2006, p. 191). For instance, Jimmy Carter sidesteps a question regarding the possibility of his support of an American military action against Iraq in case there was no collusion with the Security Council. By resorting to a series of hedges (Well, I would wait, I think, until that time materializes, because I GRQWZDQWR VD ZKIV ZRKG or I would not do, if this or that might happen. I think , ODYRG KIDWSHNDNRQ -IP P \ &DUMUW FHGHG IQ not giving any lucid answer to that question in order to shield himself against any consequent brickbats either from the American government or from the public opinion.

Being retired, Jimmy Carter made a little use of FPPP. On the contrary, George W. Bush, Sarah Palin, and David Coltart relied heavily RQWKH HRI) 333 7KH VHP HG W EHP RUIFRQHQIG DERWVHNQJ solidarity, which leads us to the relationship between hedging, face, and politeness. Normally viewed as a negative politeness strategy (e.g. Hübler 1983), however, in political interviews, hedging seems also to be a P DWU RI IQW SHURQID SR VYH SRDMQFW 7KV FOIP KIV WR



VSRUWQJ IGHV 7 KHDGKHFQIHR I WKSROFIDQ VR WKHX HRI WKH) 333 reflects their concern for solidarity. When they refer to themselves as *we* instead of *I*, they try to involve others who may be other people, a group (say the government or a political party), the whole country, or the rest of the person, or the party who commits a certain action, and b) showing solidarity with their addressees.

Jones and Wareing (1999) recount a fragment of George W. Bush's explanation for Bush's shift from *I* to *we*: "it would be that President Bush uses *we* when the focus of his speech is relatively controversial, as it is unclear who *we* refers to, and *I* when he is on safer ground and wanting to claim responsibility for positive achievements" (p. 46). However, this claim is not always true, since in this study the second function seems to be more plausible. Bush sometimes accompanied the use of the FPPP with *you know*; in fact, he repeated this expression 30 times in his interview, and this shows that he was more concerned with positive politeness and solidarity.

(12) Can you honestly say, Mr. President, that today America still occupies the moral high ground?

\* : % \$EVROHO ± DEUROHO : H believe in human rights and human dignity. We believe in the human condition. We believe in freedom. And we're willing to take the lead. We're willing to ask nations to do hard things. We [firmly] believe that we are laying the foundation for peace. People have written off the Middle East. It's impossible to change the conditions there. Let's just ignore it. Or let's promote stability, which was part of the IRUHQSRQ RI WKSDDW <RXNQRZwe OYHIQ WKZRIGONH± DQG DOGM UHSHFW± WK KRQ QZV : H live in a world where everything's, like, instant. But, the work we SDWQH

Fetzer (2008) believes that expressions like *I think* are commonly

perspective toward the issue at hand" (p. 394). Sarah Palin was performing the same function through the use of FPPP:

(13) Interviewer: Let's talk about some of that, because, I mean, two months ago you were, where you were from and Wasilla, Alaska. I think, now it's just the economy. And you are the only person in this race with executive experience, who's taken over governments as mayor and governor. What will you do, day one, to tell the American people, things are changing for the better?

6 3 <RXNQRZ WIDWDJRRGSRQWERW WIDW SHIHQHDQZ H don't like to toot our own horn so we don't, I don't talk about my experience WDP K K « ZRNQI ZIK -RKQ F&DQ ZH will take on the special interests and we ZICFDQ X : DQ6WHWDQG « DQGZH do this HRQR IFDQ VSHNQI KHH E \ « QRWQRFHMQJ WHP DORZIQ RXU small businesses and our IDP IDHVW NHH P RUIRIZKIDWKH HDQ « Our VP DDEXIQFWM NHHSIQJ P RUIRIZKIDWKH HDQ « WIDWHVRM HRQRJR JRQJS URYGQJWRRO RIXU families, for our EXIQFWM But David Coltart was more concerned about the hiding agency.

(14) Interviewer: When I asked you about street protests, you couched your answer very carefully. Does that mean you have some doubts DEW WKGHLMRQIRUH IP SORIKH-IP EIEZH7 UGH8 QRQVJRIRU a series of mass action protests over the next few weeks and months we believe?

D. C.: No, I have no doubts at all. I commend, we commend, what the =IP EIEZH &RQUFW RI 7 UGH8 QRQVKID GRQ : H commend their bravery and the bravery displayed by other civic organizations such as WOZA and the National Constitutional Assembly. What we do say, however, is that this must be well organized and that it shouldn't be the only focus.

In this extract, the question is directed to David Coltart personally. 7 KMLVUHOFWGIQ WHIQWYHZ HUVIONKEFNROZKIDW DYG & RQUWKID MWWDG IQ WHIQWYHZ WHZD KHFREKIG KM DQZHU 7 KX WH interviewer wants a response anchored to the author, as Goffman (1981, p 144) puts it (referring to "someone who has selected the sentiments that

are being expressed and the words in which they are encoded") and thus acknowledgement of responsibility, but David Coltart does not comply. At first, he responds on the author level by *I have no doubts at all* and then, after a self repair, he shifts in footing from author to principal (Goffman, 1981, p. 144) terminology, as "someone whose position is established by the words spoken" which is accompanied by changing the self-reference from 'I' to 'we').

On the surface, David Coltart responds as requested in an author-anchored position when he expresses his attitude towards his SURSRMQRQV7KHSURSRMQRQVKRZHYHU UFFHYHDVKLWQIRRMQ IURP an author-based statement to a principal-based statement in an DUJX HQWYHMTXQIH 7KX VHP ØVD) HFG UHSRQMIURP KVRZQ personal attitude towards that of his party allows David Coltart to equivocate. Bull and Fetzer (2006) claim that various shifts in footing enable speakers to "distance themselves from what they are saying" (p. 9) and this shift in footing can be achieved through a "shift in pronouns" (p. 10).

Further support for hedging as a positive politeness strategy in political interviews comes from the fact that the interviewee is addressing the masses who are not supposed to be specialists like s/he is in politics. 7KVNQGR IQWDFWRQFDQ EHFRRQGHFG DV VSHIDOWWR Ø) SHURQV talk which needs a lot of manipulation of language on the part of the specialist, which is facilitated, to a large degree, through the use of hedges, and results in a care for managing the positive face of the addressees. Consequently, the face managed this way avoids making the interviewee (the specialist) appear unwelcome.

## 5. Conclusion

7KH IIQQQJV RI VKN VV \ QRZNVK WQQQJ IW ØP IVMRQV SURYGH evidence for the relationship between hedging and the degree of political power. It also sheds some light on the relationship between hedging patterns, politeness, and face. Both the quantitative and qualitative parts of this study point to an inverse relationship between the frequency of

suggests that the questions and the interviewer's behavior towards the interviewee can change the pattern of hedging on the part of the interviewee and that the degree of political power influences both the quantity and the quality of the hedging devices.

Being members of the same discourse community presupposes being own set of specialized terminology, vocabulary, and ways of communication (Swales, 1990). Political discourse, as Bhatia (1997) claims, enables politicians to achieve their desired communicative purposes while cultural impacts may cease to be the constraining factor on their wording. Instead, within the institutionalized genre-specific televised discourse, the various hedging preferences may, more likely, correspond with the fluctuations in the degree of the interviewees' political power. However, since we do not know exactly how and to what extent national identity and cultural forces might have a bearing upon linguistic choices, this can be the subject for further research in this area.

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