

## **An Appeal to the People: Politeness Strategies in the Malaysian Prime Minister's Maiden Speech**

**Nadia Anuar<sup>1</sup> & Nurizah Md Ngadiran<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Akademi Pengajian Bahasa, Universiti Teknologi MARA Shah Alam, Malaysia  
[nadiaanuar@uitm.edu.my](mailto:nadiaanuar@uitm.edu.my)

<sup>2</sup>Centre for Language Studies, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia  
[nurizah@uthm.edu.my](mailto:nurizah@uthm.edu.my)

*Article history:*  
*Received: 30 March 2021*      *Accepted: 20 May 2021*      *Published: 31 May 2021*

### **Abstract**

The use of politeness strategies has received increasing attention in the political discourse as a powerful persuasion tool. These strategies became critical for the newly appointed prime minister of Malaysia, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, to convince Malaysians that he is qualified to lead the country during political upheaval and global pandemic. Thus, the objectives of this paper are to identify the types and frequency of the politeness strategies used by Muhyiddin Yassin in his maiden speech as the eighth prime minister of Malaysia. Two categories of politeness strategies based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) were examined, which are negative strategies and positive strategies. The speech text was obtained from the official website of Prime Minister's Office and was translated to English for analysis. The translated speech was subsequently checked for validity. Document analysis was used to analyse the translated speech text to determine the types and frequency of the politeness strategies. The analysis revealed that positive politeness strategies were significantly used (88%) compared to negative politeness strategies (12%). The most dominantly used positive politeness strategy was "notice and attend to the receiver's need, interest, or want" while "use of exaggeration", "seek agreement", and "avoid disagreement" were the least used strategies. In contrast, "question" and "giving deference" were identified to be the most frequently used negative politeness strategies. The present study extends our knowledge on the use of politeness strategies in a political speech in an Asian setting, which is notably lacking in the literature.

**Keywords:** *face-saving, politeness strategies, positive strategies, political speech, prime minister, negative strategies*

### **Introduction**

The year 2020 was eventful for Malaysia. The shocking resignation of the then prime minister, Tun Mahathir Mohamad, on 24 February 2020, stunned many and stirred political upheaval in Malaysian politics. A ripple effect of the resignation was the coalition of former minister of home affairs, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, which gained the majority support of the parliamentary members. After a detailed review of the potential candidates for the prime minister's position, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin received assent from the King of Malaysia, Yang di-Pertuan Agong Al Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin Al-Mustafa Billah Shah, to be elected as the prime minister. On February 29, the Comptroller of the Royal Household, Datuk Ahmad Fadli Shamduddin, confirmed that Muhyiddin Yassin (hereafter referred to as TSMY) will be sworn in as the eighth minister of Malaysia on March 1, 2020, at the Royal Palace of Malaysia, as decreed by the King of Malaysia (Prime Minister's Office, 2020).

The official appointment of TSMY as the prime minister (hereafter referred to as PM) received widespread media attention and public scrutiny as his official appointment was not a product of a general election. The extensive local and international attention was partly due to the curiosity on how the newly elected prime minister would address the rapidly rising first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout the political turmoil in building a new cabinet of ministers, Malaysia was defending itself against the biggest COVID-19 cluster at the time known as the *tabligh* cluster. This cluster was formed by an astounding 16,000 members who attended a religious gathering where they shared food and did not practise social distancing, hence intensifying virus transmission (New Straits Time, 2020). The increased number of COVID-19 cases from this cluster also created a wave of panic among Malaysians, as members of the *tabligh* gathering travelled to different corners of the world during that time.

Thus, TSMY needed to persuade and convince Malaysians that he was qualified to be the leader that Malaysia direly needed. TSMY must also assure Malaysians that he was capable of mitigating the worsening pandemic that adversely affected the Malaysian economy. Thus, on March 2, 2020, a day after his official appointment, TSMY stood in front of millions of Malaysians to deliver his first speech as the eighth prime minister of Malaysia. The speech was broadcasted live on various platforms, such as television channels, radio, and social media platforms, the purpose being to reach all Malaysians.

As the main objectives of political speeches are to communicate with the people and develop trust, pragmatics is an important component to consider in the development of a political speech. Pragmatics assesses the understanding process of written or oral words articulated by a speaker to how they are interpreted by the receiver. The criticality of well-written speeches has been extensively highlighted as speech is a powerful tool for building a political leader's credibility. To illustrate the importance of pragmatics in political speeches, Wahyuningsih (2018) examined the use of pronouns in the inaugural speech of former US President, Donald Trump. The finding revealed that the use of the pronouns "I" and "me" was an excellent strategy adopted by Trump to relate with the audience. The strategy contributed to an increase in his approval ratings as highlighted by Wahyuningsih (2018).

In recent years, the use of politeness strategies by political figures has received much scholarly attention. This can be accredited to the fact that the knowledge of politeness strategies facilitates comprehending not only what is being said but also what is being implied (Kuzhevskaya, 2019). Megah and Soframi (2020) examined the use of politeness strategies by Donald Trump in a debate at Capitol Hill on January 21, 2017. Despite Donald Trump's brash and blunt image reported by international media (Colarossi, 2020; Collinson,

2020; Dunham, 2020), their study identified that the former US President used significantly more positive strategies than negative strategies. They described that the only negative politeness strategy adopted by Donald Trump was the use of threat in his debate speech. Sibarani and Marlina (2018) also focused on the politeness strategies used by Donald Trump in a Republican debate and established that his speech contained more than 55% of positive politeness strategies to establish solidarity with other candidates. However, the study did not specify the politeness strategies employed by Donald Trump. The findings of Kusuma (2014) also note that the former US president, Barack Obama, utilised positive politeness strategies in his speech at the Democratic National Convention in 2012 as he was mindful of the audience who needed empathy and admiration.

Thus, the central objective of this study is to identify the politeness strategies used by TSMY in his maiden speech as the eighth prime minister of Malaysia. The politeness framework by Brown and Levinson (1987) was extended in this political discourse, which addresses the gap in the literature. The literature has primarily established that political leaders prefer to employ positive politeness strategies in their speech, particularly in the Western setting. Therefore, the analysis would deepen the literature as minimal studies have investigated the use of politeness strategies by political leaders in the Asian setting. This study also provides an exciting opportunity to examine if the use of politeness strategies differs in an Asian setting, which is characterised by “face-saving” in the collectivist culture (Tao, 2017). Also, this study is unique in that it analyses the first maiden speech delivered by a prime minister during a concurrent global pandemic and government turnover. This study, therefore, can serve as an avenue to advance our knowledge on suitable politeness strategies that can be used by leaders to assure the public during a global pandemic and local political instability.

## **Research Objectives**

This study aims to achieve the following two objectives:

- 1) To identify the positive and negative politeness strategies used in TSMY’s maiden speech.
- 2) To determine the frequency of positive and negative positive strategies in TSMY’s maiden speech.

## **Research Framework**

### **Politeness Theory**

The theory of politeness was initiated by Goffman in the 1960s and has since been extended and developed by numerous scholars. The essence of this theory is the concept of face, which refers to a self-image that an individual tries to protect (Abdurahman & Manaf, 2019; Alavidze, 2018; Brown & Levinson, 1987; Maros

& Rosli, 2017). The theory of politeness can also be traced to the cooperative principles designed by Grice (1975), which is one of the earliest frameworks that explain politeness strategies. The theory of politeness has received significant attention from many scholars and is regarded as the dominant theory in pragmatics. Four conversational maxims were presented in this framework: Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner. Leech (1983) defined politeness as a form of behaviour to create and maintain harmonious interaction. The politeness principle based on Grice's was also developed by Leech (1983), which includes (1) tact, (2) generosity, (3) modesty, (4) approbation, (5) sympathy, and (6) agreement. The works of Grice (1975), Leech (1983), and Brown and Levinson (1987) are viewed as fundamental in linguistic politeness.

Kuzhevskaya (2019) postulated that politeness facilitates positive relationships and prevents potential conflicts. Brown and Levinson (1987) conceptualised that politeness strategies are developed to save the hearer's face, which can be categorised into two types: positive face and negative face. A positive face refers to an individual's desire for himself, what he has, and what he believes is considered good by others. A negative face refers to one's desire to be left free to do whatever he likes or he is freed from various obligations. Brown and Levinson also stressed face-threatening acts (hereafter referred to as FTA), which are based on the "face" concept. To avoid FTAs, specific strategies must be employed by a speaker to minimise the threat according to a face risk evaluation. Both positive and negative politeness strategies require a "redressive action", which refers to an action taken to "give face" to the receiver to counterbalance the expected face damage of the FTA (Culpeper, 2011).

Politeness strategies have generated extensive research in the pragmatics and sociolinguistics fields. Ahmad Kamil and Shamsul Bahrn (2020) analysed TSMY's address on the Movement Control Order and identified that the suffix *lah* was used extensively in his speech. The suffix was found to be used dominantly in his speech and is strongly linked to politeness (hence the need for further examination). Prasetyo (2019) identified that positive politeness strategies were predominantly used by an Indonesian presidential candidate, Prabowo Subianto, in his winning declaration. This study highlighted that *including both speaker and hearer in the activity* was the most popular positive strategy used to obtain audience support. In contrast to Prasetyo (2019), Alavidze (2018) established that negative politeness strategies were also popular in the political discourse, as demonstrated by former US President, Donald Trump. The former president preferred to be blunt by providing direct factual statements (*nominalisation*). After using the specific negative politeness strategy, the former president then included a positive strategy (*include the speaker and hearer in the activity; offer goods to the hearer*) by proposing a solution for the statement, which boosted his leadership credibility (Alavidze, 2018).

Collectively, the studies mentioned have outlined the critical role of politeness strategies in influencing a speaker's credibility and self-image. Hence, this research employed Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies which encompass bald-on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record politeness strategy to fulfil the research objectives. Although their framework has received criticism for poor consideration of cultural differences in the face-saving concept (Tao, 2017), it is internationally recognised as a reliable and relevant framework (Najeeb et al., 2012). This study will examine TSMY's maiden speech text for the use of positive and negative politeness strategies.

## Positive Politeness Strategies

Positive politeness refers to the

redress directed to the addressee's positive face, his perennial desire that his wants (or the actions/acquisitions/values resulting from them) should be thought of as desirable. Redress consists in partially satisfying that desire by communicating that one's own wants (or some of them) are in some respects similar to the addressee's wants (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Positive politeness strategies are employed to save the hearer's positive face by treating the receiver as a member of an in-group; the strategy assures that the FTA is not understood as a negative evaluation of the receiver's face (Bensch, 2010). Positive face is saved by establishing closeness, friendship, and common ground. Several examples of positive politeness strategies illustrated by Maros and Rosli (2017) include the use of an inclusive form "we" in "we are not feeling well" and the use of first or family names to establish familiarity, such as "Hey Bud, do you have a minute?". Table 1 illustrates frequently adopted substrategies to save positive face.

**Table 1: Positive Politeness Strategies**

Strategies	
1.	Notice and attend to the receiver's request/need/interest
2.	Use of exaggeration (gain approval, show sympathy) to receiver
3.	Intensify interest to receiver
4.	Utilise in-group identity markers
5.	Seek agreement
6.	Avoid disagreement
7.	Establish disagreement
8.	Use jokes or humour
9.	Assert speaker's knowledge and concern for receivers' needs
10.	Make offers or promises
11.	Be optimistic
12.	Include both speaker and receiver
13.	Provide or inquire for reasons
14.	Assume or assert reciprocity
15.	Offer presents to the receiver (sympathy, understanding, cooperation, goods)

Source: Maros and Rosli (2017)

## Negative Politeness Strategies

Negative politeness refers to the

redressive action addressed to the addressee's negative face: his want to have his freedom of action unhindered and his attention unimpeded. It is the heart of respect behaviour, just as positive politeness is the kernel of "familiar" and "joking" behaviour (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Negative politeness strategies are established by maintaining a distance between the speaker and the receiver's negative face. In Abdurahman and Manaf's (2019) study, they investigated the influence of negative politeness strategies in learning processes and found that negative politeness strategies were employed to reduce the burden on the receiver. These strategies often contribute to the speaker's feeling imposed on the receiver and to show humility. Examples shown by Maros and Rosli (2017) include "I am sorry to bother you, but.." and "Can I have a little bit of your time?" Maros and Rosli further indicated that apologising is a very popular negative politeness strategy as it avoids the receiver from feeling imposed by the speaker. Table 2 depicts the substrategies that are inclined toward the receiver's negative face.

**Table 2: Negative Politeness Strategies**

Strategies	
1.	Be conventionally indirect
2.	Questions and hedge
3.	Be pessimistic
4.	Minimise imposition
5.	Give deference
6.	Apologise
7.	Impersonalise speaker and receiver
8.	State the FTA as a general rule
9.	Nominalise
10.	Go on record as incurring debt or as not indebting receiver

Source: Maros and Rosli (2017)

## Methodology

This study analysed the text that was delivered by TSMY in his first maiden speech on March 2, 2020, a day after his official appointment as Malaysia's prime minister. The Malay version of the speech text was retrieved from the official website of the Prime Minister's Office to assure the authenticity of the text. The speech was then translated into English by a certified translator. A forward translation method was used in the translation of the speech text (Sousa & Rojjanasrirat, 2011). The translated text was then checked by two language experts to establish the content validity of the English speech text (Chai et al., 2020). Table 3 provides the details of both the English and Malay versions of the speech text.

**Table 3: Speech Details**

Speech Text Language	Number of Sentences	Number of Words
Malay (Source Text)	75	1006
English (Translated Text)	75	1155

A qualitative research design was adopted in this study. Document analysis was used to identify the politeness strategies employed by TSMY in his maiden speech. Bowen (2009) defined document analysis as a systematic process that examines and assesses either online or printed materials. Document analysis was viewed to be appropriate for the present query as the method is efficient for eliciting meaning, improving comprehension, and developing empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The technique requires a document to be evaluated objectively and with sensitivity to obtain a comprehensive analysis (Bowen, 2009). Each phrase in the speech text was scrutinised to identify positive and negative politeness strategies based on the politeness framework developed by Brown and Levinson (1963). From the 75 sentences in the text, 37 were extracted for further analysis of positive politeness strategies, while 5 were extracted to further identify negative politeness strategies. The analysis was cross-checked to ensure that the justification of the analysis was valid. Subsequently, the frequency and percentage of each politeness strategy were calculated to fulfil the second research objective.

## **Findings**

### **Research Objective 1**

The first research objective of this study was to identify the positive and negative politeness strategies used in TSMY's maiden speech text. Table 4 enlists the positive strategies while Table 5 enlists the negative politeness strategies used by the newly-elected prime minister.

Table 4: Analysis of Positive Politeness Strategies

Strategy	Source Text (Malay)	Translated Text (English)	Explanation
Notice and attend to receiver's re-request/need/interest	Saya sedar saudara dan saudari sudah letih dan la'ih dengan kemelut politik yang berlaku.	I understand that you are tired and weary of the political turmoil.	The speaker, TSMY, used "I understand" to demonstrate his awareness that Malaysians are exhausted by the political instability of Malaysia.
	Saya juga sedar bahawa apa yang rakyat mahu ialah sebuah kerajaan yang bersih, berintegriti dan bebas rasuah.	I am also aware that what the people want is a government that is clean, with integrity and free of corruption.	The use of "I am also aware that what the people want" indicates the speaker's consciousness of the people's needs, which is a functional government and is directly acknowledging it.
	Saya juga faham bahawa apa yang rakyat mahu ialah sebuah kerajaan yang prihatin dan cekap dalam menyelesaikan permasalahan rakyat.	I also understand that what the people want is a government that is caring and efficient in solving the problems of the people.	In this sentence, TSMY reiterates that he is acknowledging the people's desire for an effective government by using "I also understand".
	Saudara memerlukan wang untuk membeli barang keperluan harian, membeli buku dan keperluan sekolah untuk anak-anak, membayar bil air, elektrik dan sewa rumah, membayar pinjaman kereta dan kediaman, serta lain-lain keperluan untuk menyara kehidupan sekeluarga.	You need money for your daily necessities to buy books and your children's schooling necessities, to pay your water and electric bills and your house rental, to cover your car and housing loans and other needs of the family.	The use of the phrase "you need" and the list of examples show that TSMY is aware of the necessities of his people.
	Saya juga tahu bahawa antara perkhidmatan yang paling perlukan oleh saudara dan saudari ialah perkhidmatan kesihatan yang berkualiti dengan kos yang berpatutan.	I also know that among the services most needed by you are quality and affordable healthcare delivery services.	The speaker, TSMY, recognises that the ultimate concern that needs to be addressed is the increasing cost of healthcare, as implied by the phrase "I also know".



Strategy	Source Text (Malay)	Translated Text (English)	Explanation
Notice and attend to receiver's request/need/interest	Saya juga sedar saudara dan saudari juga mahu pendidikan yang berkualiti untuk anak-anak.	I am also aware that you want a quality education for your children.	"I am also aware" demonstrates that the speaker, TSMY, recognises the criticality of high-quality education needed for the children of Malaysia.
	Saya tahu bahawa saudara-saudari mahu sebuah negara yang stabil, aman dan makmur.	I know all of you want a country that is stable, peaceful and prosperous country.	The adoption of "I know" illustrates that the speaker is mindful of what is the people's primary need which is a harmonious nation.
	Saya tahu saudara-saudari tentunya mahu negara kita kembali berada di landasan yang betul.	I know that all of you certainly are aspired to steer the country back on track.	The use of "I know" shows that the speaker, TSMY, takes notice of the people's wants.
Assert speaker's knowledge and concern for receiver's needs	Usaha ini telah pun saya mulakan dahulu.	I have already initiated this effort in the past.	This sentence indicates that speaker, TSMY, is experienced in managing one of the people's concerns and is working towards addressing it.
	Jika saya terus menyokong Tun Dr Mahathir, kemelut politik akan berpanjangan.	If I continue to support Tun Dr Mahathir, the political crisis will continue.	This speaker, TSMY, implies that he possesses sufficient knowledge to predict that "the political crisis will continue" if he participated in the support which shows his concern for the people's need for political stability.
	Dengan pengalaman selama 6 tahun menjadi Menteri Pendidikan, saya berjanji akan berusaha untuk melonjakkan lagi kualiti pendidikan negara.	With my six-year experience as Education Minister, I promise to strengthen the country's quality of education.	The use of "six-year" helps boost the speaker's capability to fulfil his promise to enhance the quality of Malaysian education.

Strategy	Source Text (Malay)	Translated Text (English)	Explanation
Intensify interest to the receiver	Hampir seminggu negara kita menghadapi kemelut politik yang membimbangkan. Kemelut ini berlaku apabila mantan Perdana Menteri meletakkan jawatan.	For almost a week, our country has faced a worrying political crisis. The crisis erupted when the former prime minister stepped down.	This strategy is accomplished by the speaker using the “vivid present” technique. This technique pulls the receivers into the middle of the event being discussed to attract their interest.
	Ini menyebabkan jawatan Perdana Menteri kosong dan perlu diisi.	This left the post of prime minister vacant and had to be filled.	
Use of exaggeration to receiver	Saya tawarkan jiwa dan raga saya untuk negara.	I offer my heart and soul for the nation.	The use “offer my heart and soul” demonstrates the speaker's ambition to do the best for the country.
Utilise in-group identity marker	Wahai saudaraku rakyat Malaysia yang dihormati	My respected fellow Malaysians.	The speaker used the “fellow Malaysians” marker to connect and close the gap between him and Malaysians. The speaker stressed that he is also a Malaysian to establish a common ground.
	Saudara dan saudari rakyat Malaysia yang saya hormati,	My respected fellow Malaysians.	
	Saya adalah Perdana Menteri untuk semua rakyat Malaysia dari Perlis hingga ke Sabah.	I am the prime minister for all Malaysians from Perlis to Sabah.	The speaker established mutual confidence as the prime minister for Malaysia (13 states and 3 federal territories) by using the marker “all Malaysians”.
	Baik saudara orang Melayu, saudara orang Cina, saudara orang India, Sikh, Iban, Kadazan, Dusun, Murut, orang asal, atau apa jua kaum dan etnik, saya adalah Perdana Menteri saudara.	Whether you are Malay, Chinese, Indian, Sikh, Iban, Kadazan, Dusun, Murut, natives or whichever ethnic group, I am the prime minister for all.	The identity marker of races was used as these are unique to Malaysia. The speaker established that he is the prime minister who does not take into account one's race, emphasizing that he is the leader for everyone.
Sama ada saudara adalah petani, saudara nelayan, saudara peniaga, saudara penjawat awam, saudara pekerja swasta, saya adalah Perdana Menteri anda.	Whether you are a farmer, a fisherman, a businessman, a civil servant, or a private sector employee, I am your prime minister.	The speaker used the citizens' occupation as an identity marker to reinforce his position as the prime minister.	

Strategy	Source Text (Malay)	Translated Text (English)	Explanation
Seek agreement	Saudara-saudari pastinya tidak mahu negara kita diheret ke dalam kemelut politik yang lebih besar.	All of you certainly do not want our country to be dragged into a great political crisis.	The prime minister was indirectly seeking agreement from the people by stating “certainly do not want”.
Avoid disagreement	Saya tidak berniat untuk menimbulkan konfrontasi dengan sesiapa. Saya cuma ingin memberikan sedikit penjelasan mengenai perkara yang sebenarnya berlaku supaya keikhlasan saya tidak dipersoalkan.	I have no intention of provoking a confrontation with anyone. I just wish to provide a little clarification on what has actually happened so that my sincerity is not questioned.	“No intention of provoking” and “provide a little clarification” were articulated by TSMY in the speech text to offer an explanation and express his perspective to Malaysians.
Make offers or promises	Buat permulaan ini, saya berjanji akan melantik anggota Jemaah Menteri dari kalangan individu yang bersih, berintegriti dan berkaliber.	For a start, I promise to appoint Cabinet members of calibre who have integrity and a clean track record.	The prime minister was aware of the need of Malaysians for leaders with integrity by employing the phrase “I promise”.
	Kerajaan pimpinan saya juga akan memberi keutamaan kepada usaha-usaha untuk meningkatkan integriti dan tadbir urus kerajaan yang baik.	The government that I lead will also prioritise efforts to enhance integrity and good governance.	The word “will” in both sentences demonstrates that the speaker is completely convinced of his ability to fulfil his promises he made to Malaysians.
	Ini juga akan menjadi keutamaan saya	This will also be my priority.	
	Dengan pengalaman selama 6 tahun menjadi Menteri Pendidikan, saya berjanji akan berusaha untuk melonjakkan lagi kualiti pendidikan negara.	With my six-year experience as Education Minister, I promise to strengthen the country’s quality of education.	The speaker used “I promise”, which indicates that he had the intention to fulfil the people’s desire for holistic education.

Strategy	Source Text (Malay)	Translated Text (English)	Explanation
Make offers or promises	Saya akan pastikan anak-anak kita mendapat taraf Pendidikan yang standing dengan negara-negara maju.	I will ensure that our children will receive an education which standards are on par with developed nations.	The PM would like to highlight that he had initiated the effort to provide children with education that is in-line with other developed countries.
	Insyallah ianya akan diperkukuhkan lagi pada masa hadapan.	God willing, it will be reinforced and strengthened further.	This aspect will be continuously supported by him as observed from "I will ensure" and "will be".
	Kerajaan pimpinan saya akan memberi tumpuan kepada pelaksanaan Wawasan Kemakmuran Bersama 2030 yang akan melonjakkan pertumbuhan ekonomi negara dan merapatkan jurang ekonomi dalam masyarakat.	The government I lead will give emphasis to the Shared Prosperity Vision 2030 to propel the country's economic growth and narrow the economic gap in society.	The PM makes some promises based on the needs of Malaysians (a country that is stable, peaceful and prosperous, as well as a country that offers a better life for Malaysians).
Include both speaker and receiver	Dalam menghadapi wabak coronavirus pada masa ini, sama-samalah kita jaga kesihatan.	In facing the current coronavirus pandemic situation, let us all ensure we take care of our health.	The PM asked Malaysians (together with him) to take good care of health amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, as identified from the phrase "let us all".
	Sebuah negara yang menawarkan kehidupan yang lebih baik untuk kita semua.	A country that offers a better life for all of us.	"All of us" shows that the prime minister aims to gain the people's trust by including himself in the narrative.
	Ayuh, bersatulah kita demi tanah air tercinta.	Let us unite for the sake of our beloved country.	The PM asks Malaysians to stick together for the future of Malaysia by using the phrase "let us unite".

Strategy	Source Text (Malay)	Translated Text (English)	Explanation
Include both speaker and receiver	Bersatu teguh, bercerai roboh.	United we stand, divided we fall.	Proverbs that have the connotation of “we” were used by the speaker to demonstrate the inclusion of the receiver, TSMY. This was done to persuade Malaysians to unite and entrust him with the prime minister position.
	Bulat air kerana pembentung, bulat manusia kerana muafakat.	<i>Bulat air kerana pembentung, bulat manusia kerana muafakat.</i>	
Be optimistic	Berilah saya peluang untuk memanfaatkan 40 tahun pengalaman saya dalam politik dan kerajaan untuk mengemudi Malaysia ke arah kegemilangan.	Give me a chance to utilize my 40 years of experience in politics and government to steer the nation towards greater glory.	The phrases “greater glory” and “set the direction of the government and nation” indicate the speaker, TSMY, was positive and confident in his ability to maximise his political experience to fulfil the people’s needs. This strategy was to assure the people that he is a capable leader in accomplishing this.
	Berikan saya sedikit masa untuk menetapkan garis-garis utama hala tuju kerajaan dan negara di bawah pentadbiran baharu ini yang insyaAllah akan saya jelaskan kepada rakyat dalam masa terdekat.	Give me some time to set the direction of the government and nation under this new administration which I will explain to the people as soon as possible, God willing.	
Provide reason	Saya hanya tampil untuk menyelamatkan keadaan apabila kedua-dua calon Perdana Menteri tidak mendapat sokongan majoriti ahli-ahli Dewan Rakyat.	I only came forward to save the situation when both candidates for prime minister did not get majority support from the members of the Dewan Rakyat.	The speaker justified his action of accepting the nomination as the prime minister as illustrated in his phrase “with that support obtained” from the former prime minister, Tun Mahathir Mohamad.
	Dengan sokongan itu, saya telah menerima percalonan saya sebagai Perdana Menteri.	With that support, I have accepted my nomination as the prime minister.	

Table 5: Analysis of Negative Politeness Strategies

Strategy	Source Text (Malay)	Translated Text (English)	Explanation
Question	Apa pilihan yang saya ada?  Terus menyokong Tun Dr Mahathir yang tidak mempunyai sokongan majoriti atau menerima pencalonan sebagai Perdana Menteri?	What options do I have?  Continue to support Tun Dr. Mahathir who does not have the support of the majority or accept the nomination as the prime minister?	These two sentences assist the speaker to establish to the people that he was forced into a corner and had no other option but to accept the prime minister position.
State the FTA as a general rule	Menurut Perkara 43 Perlembagaan Persekutuan, Duli Yang Maha Mulia Seri Paduka Baginda Yang di-Pertuan Agong boleh melantik seorang Perdana Menteri bahary yang mendapat kepercayaan majority ahli-ahli Dewan Rakyat.	According to Article 43 of the Federal Constitution, His Majesty the Yang di-Pertuan Agong can appoint a new prime minister who has the confidence of the majority of the members of the House of Representatives (Dewan Rakyat).	This strategy is used by the speaker, TSMY, to highlight to the people of Malaysia that his official appointment as the prime minister was forced by circumstance, as stipulated in the constitution.
Giving deference	Oleh yang demikian, DYMM Seri Paduka Baginda Yang di-Pertuan Agong telah mengambil keputusan yang bijaksana dengan menjemput ketua-ketua parti mengemukakan seorang calon lain yang berkemungkinan mendapat kepercayaan majoriti ahli Dewan Rakyat.  Ketika itulah nama saya sebagai calon Perdana Menteri telah dikemukakan oleh ahli-ahli Dewan Rakyat daripada parti BERSATU dan ketua-ketua parti yang lain.	Therefore, DYMM Seri Paduka Baginda Yang Di-Pertuan Agong has taken a wise decision by inviting party leaders to nominate another candidate who is likely to gain the trust of the majority of Dewan Rakyat members.  It was then that my name as the prime minister candidate was proposed by the members of Dewan Rakyat from BERSATU and leaders of other parties.	In these sentences, the speaker, TSMY, named "DYMM Seri Paduka Baginda Yang di-Pertuan Agong", "members of Dewan Rakyat from BERSATU", and "leaders of other parties" to explain the background story of his official appointment as the prime minister and humbling himself. The use of this strategy in these sentences assisted the speaker, TSMY, to establish his credibility and justified his appointment and helped gain the people's trust simultaneously.

## Research Objective 2

The second research objective of this study is to determine the frequency of positive and negative politeness strategies used in TSMY’s maiden speech text. The analysis established that positive politeness strategies were used significantly more (88%) than negative politeness strategies (12%). Table 6 depicts the overall frequency and percentage of the politeness strategies adopted in the speech text.

**Table 6: Frequency of Politeness Strategies**

Politeness Strategy	Number of Sentences (n)	Percentage (%)
Positive	37	88
Negative	5	12
Total	42	100

Table 7 details the categories of the politeness strategies used in the speech text according to frequency and percentage. The analysis demonstrated that *notice and attend to receiver’s request/need/interest* was the most widely used positive politeness strategy. In contrast, *use of exaggeration*, *seek agreement*, and *avoid disagreement* were the least used positive strategies by TSMY. *Questions* and *giving deference* were the most popular negative politeness strategies used by the speaker while *state the FTA as a general rule* was only used once by the speaker.

**Table 7: Frequency of Politeness Strategies**

	Politeness Strategy	Number of Sentences (n)	Percentage (%)
	POSITIVE		
1.	Notice and attend to receiver’s request/need/interest	8	19.05
2.	Make offers/promises	7	16.68
3.	Utilise in-group identity markers	5	11.90
4.	Include both speaker and receiver	5	11.90
5.	Assert speaker’s knowledge and concern for receiver needs	3	7.15
6.	Intensity interest to receiver	2	4.76
7.	Be optimistic	2	4.76
8.	Provide reason	2	4.76
9.	Use of exaggeration	1	2.38
10.	Seek agreement	1	2.38
11.	Avoid disagreement	1	2.38
	NEGATIVE		
1.	Question	2	4.76
2.	Giving deference	2	4.76
3.	State the FTA as a general rule	1	2.38
	TOTAL	42	100

## Discussion and Conclusion

This paper sought to identify the type and frequency of politeness strategies used by the Malaysian prime minister in his maiden speech. An examination of the speech text indicates that the most popular positive politeness strategy used by the prime minister was to *notice or attend to receiver's interest, wants, or needs*. The prevalent use of this strategy was attributable to the speaker's aim to show to the people of Malaysia that he had high awareness of their wants. The strategy was also used by the speaker for him to be viewed as amicable, attentive, and having an earnest intention to satisfy the receiver's positive face and wants (Kuzhevskaya, 2019). This finding contradicts Prasetyo (2019), who identified *includes the speaker and receiver in the activity* as the most popular positive politeness strategy in the Indonesian political discourse. The next strategy used by TSMY was to *make offer/promise* (16.68%), particularly to illustrate his ambitions and to gain the trust of Malaysians (Yeoh, 2021). This strategy also helped the minister to establish harmonious communication and minimise the distance, particularly by showing that he shared the same wants as the people (Kusuma, 2014).

Negative strategies were also employed by TSMY, though markedly less than positive politeness strategies. This finding contradicts Alavidze's (2018) analysis, which concluded that negative politeness strategies are commonly used in political discourse. A plausible reason for the contradictory findings is the cultural differences of the receiver in the context of both studies. The receiver in the context of the current study is primarily Malaysians; therefore, the minister prioritised the face-saving concept so as to not provoke Malaysians' displeasure (Tao, 2017). As noted by Abudayeh and Dubbati (2020), cultural differences are a crucial component in political speeches; the Arabians did not positively receive Donald Trump's speech as the former president used expletives such as "we are losing our ass" and offensive language in "dumb as a rock," which are considered taboos in the Arabian cultural context (Abudayeh and Dubbati, 2020). In the case of TSYM, he dominantly employed positive politeness strategies to gain Malaysians' trust as his appointment process was not conventional (Ahmad, 2020). It was surprising that the apology strategy was not used at all as a politeness strategy in TSMY's speech text, despite the strategy being popular in human interaction (Maros & Rosli, 2017).

Thus, the objectives of this study are fulfilled. Findings from the empirical analysis have extended our understanding of the use of politeness strategies in political discourse. Taken together, the findings suggest that the appropriate use of politeness strategies is essential in establishing a speaker's credibility. This study also provides insight on the use of politeness strategies in saving face by an Asian leader, thus extending the existing literature which majorly focuses on leaders from Western countries. As such, the findings can be ben-



edited by different parties such as speechwriters, political figures, and scholars. Awareness of such strategies may help communicators to learn to adjust their speech behavior to ensure effective two-way communication.

Regardless, several limitations need to be noted. The minister's spoken speech was not analysed and therefore, any variations were not detected. This study recommends future studies to look into the factors that contribute to a particular use of politeness strategies. Also, future studies may examine the influence of gender differences on the use of politeness strategies, particularly the speeches of male and female political figures. A greater focus on the use of politeness strategies in political debates would also provide a better understanding of the subject.

## References

- Abdurahman, A., & Manaf, N. A. (2019). Realization of Negative Politeness Strategy on Speech Act of Questions and Answers in the Learning Processes. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research, September*. <https://doi.org/10.2991/icla-18.2019.103>
- Abudayeh, H., & Dubbati, B. (2020). Politeness strategies in translating Donald Trump's offensive language into Arabic. *Perspectives: Studies in Translation Theory and Practice*, 28(3), 424–439. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0907676X.2019.1709514>
- Agus Prasetyo, S. (2019). Positive politeness strategies in Prabowo's winning declarations as an Indonesian president candidate. *International Journal of Scientific and Technology Research*, 8(10), 3075–3078.
- Ahmad Kamil, M. binti, & Shamsul Bahrn, F. F. (2020). A Speech Act Analysis of the Prime Minister's Speech Pertaining to the Movement Control Order (MCO) to Address the COVID-19 Pandemic in Malaysia. *International Journal of Modern Languages And Applied Linguistics*, 4(4), 1. <https://doi.org/10.24191/ijmal.v4i4.10888>
- Ahmad, S. (2020). How Malaysians view Muhyiddin. *Focus Malaysia*.
- Alavidze, M. (2018). Politeness in President Donald Trump's Speeches. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Thought*, 7(3), 119–126.
- Bensch, G. (2010). *The Influence of Culture on the Perception of Politeness : An Investigation of front-line Staff at a mid-priced Hotel Chain in New Zealand*.
- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27–40. <https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027>
- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage (Studies in Interactional Sociolinguistics 4). In *Cambridge University Press*. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3587263>

- Chai, L. S., Siop, S., Putit, Z., Lim, L., Gunggu, A., & Tie, S. F. (2020). Translation, adaptation, and validation of the malay version of the cardiac rehabilitation barriers scale. *Journal of Nursing Research*, 28(1), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1097/jnr.0000000000000328>
- Colarossi, N. (2020). 11 times Trump has lashed out at reported during COVID-19 Briefings. *Business Insider*.
- Collinson, S. (2020). Trump turns angry and defensive as evidence contradicts his coronavirus narrative. *CNN*.
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2008). Basics of Qualitative Research (3rd ed.): Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory. In *Thosand Oaks; SAGE Publications Inc*. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452230153>
- Culpeper, J. (2011). Politeness and Impoliteness. In *Handbooks of Pragmatics* (Vol. 5, pp. 391–394). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003010043-5>
- Dunham, W. (2020). Brash and pugnacious , Trump has presided over a tumultuous presidency. *The Star*.
- Grice, H. P. (1975). *Logic and Conversation* (pp. 41–58). New To.
- Kusuma, A. (2014). *Politeness Strategies in Barack Obama's Speech in Democratic National Convention 2012*.
- Kuzhevskaya, E. B. (2019). Politeness strategies in business english discourse. *Training, Language and Culture*, 3(4), 36–46. <https://doi.org/10.29366/2019tlc.3.4.4>
- Leech, G. N. (1983). *Principles of Pragmatics*. London:Essex:Longman.
- Maros, M., & Rosli, L. (2017). Politeness strategies in twitter updates of female english language studies Malaysian undergraduates. *3L: Language, Linguistics, Literature*, 23(1), 132–149. <https://doi.org/10.17576/3L-2017-2301-10>
- Megah, S. I., & Soframi, G. P. (2020). Trump's strategies in his speech: A politeness strategies approach. *Cahaya Pendidikan*, 6(1), 1–12. <https://www.journal.unrika.ac.id/index.php/journalcahayapendidikan/article/view/2348>
- Najeeb, Z. M., Maros, M., & Mohd Nor, N. F. (2012). Politeness in e-mails of Arab students in Malaysia. *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies*, 12(1), 125–145.
- Prime Minister's Office. (2020). *Muhyiddin Yassin Appointed New Prime Minister - Istana Negara*. <https://www.pmo.gov.my/2020/02/muhyiddin-yassin-appointed-new-prime-minister-istana-negara/>
- Sibarani, J. G., & Marlina, L. (2018). Politeness Strategy used in Republican Debate by Donald trump. *E-Journal of English Language & Literatyre*, 7(4), 531–535. <http://ejournal.unp.ac.id/index.php/ell/article/view/102007>
- Sousa, V. D., & Rojjanasrirat, W. (2011). Translation, adaptation and validation of instruments or scales for

use in cross-cultural health care research: A clear and user-friendly guideline. *Journal of Evaluation in Clinical Practice*, 17(2), 268–274. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2753.2010.01434.x>

Tao, L. (2017). Face Perception in Chinese and Japanese. *Intercultural Communication Studies*, 26(1), 151–167.

Wahyuningsih, S. (2018). A Discourse Analysis Personal Pronouns in Donald Trump's Inauguration Speech. *2nd English Language and Literature International Conference (ELLiC)*, 2, 346–350. <http://103.97.100.145/index.php/ELLIC/article/view/3553>

Yeoh, M. (2021). PM has to focus on 4 key tasks. *New Straits Times*.