

# **‘I May Sound Adversarial but I am being Polite’: (Im)politeness Strategies and Tactics of Self-Presentation in Electoral Concession Speeches**

**Christiana Hammond**

Department of Communication and Media Studies  
University of Education, Winneba – Ghana

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## **Abstract**

*A concession speech is considered the closure and final swan song of every campaign. As a of democratic dispensations, a defeated candidate in an election is expected to convert combative imageries of defeat into linguistic patterns and periphrasis to an audience as a sign of acceptance of defeat and rally support for the winner in the contest. Such speeches could be skilfully woven to either ‘save’ or ‘threaten’ the face of both the speaker and the target audience. Literature suggests a series of ‘self-presentation’ and impression management strategies are negotiated and enacted through the rhetoric of a concession speech in significantly different ways in varied contexts. This paper presents a corpus-assisted analysis of the post-election concession speech of John Dramani Mahama (JDM) of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) after the 2016 Presidential elections in Ghana. It explores (im)politeness strategies of the speech through the lens of Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory, and further examines the tactics of self-presentation’ through Leary’s strategies of ‘self-presentation and impression management. The data are descriptively analysed and thematically presented to reveal how linguistic elements could be used to signal instances of positive, negative, off-record, and bald-on-record (im)politeness. The findings showed that JDM in salvaging his political persona may have sounded adversarial but was excessively polite. The findings also indicate that JDM through the speech negotiated and enacted a series of self-presentation and impression management tactics such as self-descriptions, social associations, and attitude statements among others. The study contributes to literature on (im)politeness and impression management by concluding on the assumption that words could be manipulated politely or impolitely to illuminate a self-creation of an ‘ideal identity’ or ‘front stage persona’ as well as a ‘real identity or ‘back stage persona’. The paper recommends a re-definition of the space and context for a formal concession speech in an era of post-election social media rantings from defeated candidates.*

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**Keywords:** *(im)politeness strategies; tactics of self-presentation; concession speech; face-saving acts; face-threatening acts.*

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## **1.0 Introduction**

The rhetoric of concession speeches has received increased scholarly attention in recent years, especially, in an era of mass communication overflow where users of social media are creators and sharers of contents comprising emoticons and messages purported to be emerging from electoral campaigns of candidates in contemporary democratic dispensations. Recent happenings in the global media, especially after the 2020 US elections have presented opportunities for researchers of political communication to redefine the outpour of emotions through emoticons and messages which flood the social media perceived to be coming from candidates, especially contesting in presidential elections. The literature has suggested scholarly efforts at redefining concession speeches to include the outpour of emotions and social media rantings on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram as worthy of

consideration in future researches (Enache & Militaru, 2019). Neville-Shepard (2014) has noted that some electorates in their quest to show disdain towards a particular candidate, are unable to hide their scorn, prejudice or hatred and would create emoticons: memes, tik tok videos and caricature images to ridicule the already distraught aspirant. The cyber trolling and mockery are heightened if the losing candidate is an incumbent. A case in point is the 2020 USA elections where memes, emojis and Tik Tok videos of different forms were created to cyber troll Candidate Donald Trump. In spite of the cyber trolls, Candidate Trump was expected to ignore the despoliations of his private and public honours, and still present a concession speech. He did not concede defeat and also did not present any form of a concession speech. Although the focus of this paper is not to analyse social media rantings as concession speeches, the paper contends that the content and delivery of formalised and structured post-election concession speeches are integral to contemporary democratic dispensations and are worthy of scholarly attention.

Corcoran (1994) asserts that concession speeches have become institutionalised public speech acts integral to the democratic life and legitimacy of authority for every candidate vying for a position of high office. He describes the concession speech as ‘a ritual with little scope for complex or expansive rhetorical aims, perceived to be consistent and important for electoral processes; a violation of which is interpreted as a disruption in the transition processes of democracy’ (p.115). It has been noted by Neville-Shepard (2014) that the delivery of a concession speech marks the end of the electoral battle and it is considered as the final ‘swan song’ to all the pre-election and election activities. Although never a desirable speech act but out of courtesy for the winner, a candidate would concede defeat publicly immediately after polls and declaration of results to reassure the electorate of his/her unwavering support for the winner. A delay in the performance of this onerous act could be interpreted as a contention of the results of the polls, usually shrouded in claims of electoral irregularities including gerrymandering and voter intimidation (Qi, 2017).

Studies (see Enache & Militaru, 2019; Neville-Shepard, 2014; Willyard & Ritter, 2005) have shown that concession speeches are carefully crafted in six main thematic strands, each with a particular communicative mandate. First, the introduction of the speech should call attention to the declaration of defeat and proceed to congratulate the winner. Corcoran (1994) also adds that this part of the speech is profoundly important, after contentious elections, especially, for a country or constituents with a history of mistrust and issues of electoral irregularities. Special mention at this point could be made of singular individuals, organisations or bodies for their enormous support for the candidate. The second strand of the speech should call for national unity from the electorate and where the speaker emphatically rallies support for the winning team. Neville-Shepard (2014) avows that the choice of words and intensity in the call for support from supporters of the opposition is largely dependent on the margin of defeat in the results of the polls. Thus, if the margin is large, the call for unity is not sounded loud enough but shrouded in expressions seeking the opposition to be resolute in the propagation of their ideologies until the next opportune time. On the other hand, if the margin is slim, the speaker would insinuate election malfeasance as the cause of defeat and would usually hint at the probability of contesting the election results if enough evidence could be gathered to do so. This portion of the speech is purposefully crafted with a view to drawing public sympathy from the electorates in future elections (Neville-Shepard, 2014).

The third theme argues on the merits of the campaign message of the losing team in spite of their failure to clinch victory and urge their followers to be relentless in their quest to access power in the nearest future. This is to urge party faithful to remain relevant even in opposition so they are not easily forgotten. Theme four articulates the goals of the immediate future of the opposition and declares the willingness to transition from an ‘adversary contender’ to a ‘supportive opposition’. The fifth theme is a catalogue of the admittance of

some avoidable mistakes which should be taken in their strides as significant lessons. The speaker at this point apologetically draws on pathos-laden expressions to simply rally support from followers and demand of them to see their loss as ‘victory in disguise’ until the next emphatic victory in the next polls. Corcoran (1994) refers to this aspect of the concession speech as oratory acts of ‘converting defeat into trooping of colours for future victory’ (p. 127). Finally, the sixth theme should show appreciation to the teaming supporters, as well as family for their immeasurable sacrifices in the face of all situational constraints.

Mention could be made of individuals or institutions that have contributed immensely in diverse ways to the losing team. The speech at this point could also be used to advise or caution the winning team on some taken-for-granted election irregularities that had favoured them to clinch power and not necessarily their campaign strategies or message. Neville-Shepard (2014) adds that the sixth stage is core to the entire rhetoric of the entire concession speech because some signature issues in the election manifesto of the losing candidate could be reiterated for the electorate to still think about until the next elections. Pathos laden expressions are once more very significant at this part of the speech because the speaker expects a corresponding positive response in action in the next election.

### **1.1 Rationale for the Study**

Some studies have been conducted on presidential speeches as a genre of political communication from diverse perspectives. Some of these studies have focused on inaugural speeches (Adjei-Fobi, 2011; Jegede, 2020), independent day speeches (Mensah, 2014), and addresses on the state of the nation (Adjei & Ewusi-Mensah, 2016) among others. A review of the literature on the notion of (im)politeness further suggests that some scholarly attention has also been given from diverse perspectives (see Ademilolun, 2010; Afful, 2017; Agbara, 2018; Anurudu & Oduola, 2017; Maskuri, Tarjana, Djatmika & Purnanto, 2019; Miller, 2010; Mwinwelle, Adukpo & Motey, 2019; Thompson & Agyekum, 2016; Sifianou, 2012). For instance, Afful (2017) through the lens of Brown and Levinson’s (1987) bald on-record politeness strategy, analysed political impoliteness strategies of four hosts of adversarial political discussion programmes on radio in Ghana. The findings revealed that although the bald on-record strategy is a well-thought-out impoliteness strategy in varied communicative contexts, it is perceived as excessively polite in the context of political talk shows because they are useful for managing confrontations and optimising information for the perceived target audience of the radio programmes. The findings of Afful’s (2017) study are consistent with some other studies (see Enache & Militaru, 2019; Hammond, 2017a) which also postulate that the bald on-record politeness strategy is excessively impolite and face-threatening by virtue of its bluntness, directness and compulsion which are interpreted as adversarial in varied contexts.

Similarly, Saleem and Alattar (2020) in a comparative pragmatic study of political blame for offensive and defensive situations in the British and Iraqi parliament debates employs the Gricean cooperative maxims (Grice, 1975), Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory, and Culpeper’s model of impoliteness (1996) to interrogate (im)politeness communicative behaviours in parliament. The authors conceptualise politeness as a common-sense notion which is rendered unconsciously in linguistic behaviours albeit the provisions of the ‘Standing Orders’ of parliament. The paper concludes that both the British and Iraqi parliamentarians violate the cooperative maxims in distinctively similar ways. Thus, whereas the British parliamentarians violated all the maxims especially, in the fabrication of statements of defence against offensive acts targeted at their person, the Iraqis exploited the maxims for purposes of ‘blame avoidance’ especially, on the use of the maxim of quality. Saleem and Alattar (2020) therefore, recommend further empirical studies into the rhetoric of

other forms of political communication. This recommendation is the motivation for this study and hence, the attempt to contribute to knowledge sharing through this current study.

Closely linked to studies on (impoliteness) as a folk notion rendered through face-saving acts (FSA) is the idea of impression (mis)management through interactions or communicative performativities (Rosenberg & Egbert, 2011). Literature suggests that the issue of self-presentation through talk has become a discursive phenomenon from diverse perspectives including the utility of personality traits and secondary goals as predictors of self-presentation by Facebook users (Rosenberg & Egbert, 2011). Other studies have examined strategies of self-presentation in computer-mediated environments (Zhao, Grasmuck & Martin, 2008) as well as affinity-seeking strategies of impression management (Bell & Daly, 1984) among others.

Similarly, some studies have also focused on the rhetoric of concession speeches (see Corcoran, 1994; Enache & Militaru, 2019; Neville-Shepard, 2014). However, an analysis of politeness strategies in the rhetoric of an electoral concession speech is relatively inadequate (Jegade, 2020). Specifically, no study has examined (im)politeness strategies as well as tactics of self-presentation in a presidential electoral concession speech. Therefore, this study seeks to fill the identified research gap by arguing that since the concession speech is a settled conversion in the dramaturgy of the contest for power (Enache & Militaru, 2019), it could be examined from the linguistic (im)politeness perspective as an indispensable adornment of human language in action. Therefore, first, I set out on the assumption that the deliverer of a concession speech could convert combative imageries of defeat into periphrasis of adversarial linguistic expressions which are face-threatening and still sound polite or face-saving in order to achieve a certain effect. Second, I review the literature on the concept of impression management and self-presentation (i.e., using them interchangeably) as a domain of human communication and interpret the phenomenon of (im)politeness strategies from diverse linguistic viewpoints. Third, underpinned by the tenets of the politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987) and the tactics of self-presentation (Leary, 1996), I employ the AntConc as a tool for analysis to qualitatively content analyse the 2016 concession speech of Candidate JDM. Fourth, I proceed to thematically present the findings using pictorial charts and provide thick rich descriptions and interpretations on themes which emerged from the data. Fifth, I end this paper on recommendations for a reorientation on what constitutes a concession speech in an era of post-election social media rantings by candidates.

## **1.2 Election 2016 and the Relevance of a Concession Speech**

The governance system of Ghana since 1992 has been through multi-party democratic elections. A multi-party system is a political system in which multiple political parties or candidates run for elections and compete for the highest seat of the government (Keman, 2011). Power in multi-party regimes reside in the hands of the electorates and every citizen of voting age has the right to participate and influence the compositions and policies of government. The 1992 Constitution of Ghana on the role of political parties in Article 55 (10) stipulates that 'subject to the provisions enshrined in the Constitution, a political party is free to participate in shaping the political fortunes of Ghana and every candidate has a reasonable chance of forming the next government' (1992 Constitution of Ghana). Although Ghana is considered a multi-party state, the reins of power shuffle have since 1992, been between the two largest political parties: National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP), (Appiah-Adjei, Hammond & Amo-Mensah, 2012). The other parties as well as independent candidate(s) in each election year have been perceived as 'third parties or third-party candidates' (i.e., a term coined by Neville-Shepard, 2014) who have been noted to participate in elections to entrench the ideals of multi-party democracy and not to access power (Appiah-Adjei et al, 2016).

Ghana has continued to uphold the traditions of peaceful elections and regime-change since 1992 when President Jerry John Rawlings of the NDC won the presidential elections. The NPP led John Agyekum Kufuor (JAK) won the general elections in 2000 and reigned until 2008 when they conceded to the NDC again. The 2012 presidential election comprised the incumbent John Dramani Mahama (JDM), Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo (NADAA)-leader of the main opposition New Patriotic Party (NPP) who was hoping to be third time lucky and eight other aspirants (Electoral Commission of Ghana, 2012; Kelly & Bening, 2013). Prior to the election, the NDC had been elected into office for two terms since 1992 when an appointment to the high office of the presidency was done through the ballot box. All these elections were purported by the NPP to have been won through controversial circumstances (i.e., what the NPPs called 'The Stolen Verdict' or 'The Bought Elections'). The NPP won the 2004 and 2008 presidential elections respectively. After the polls on December 7, 2012, the incumbent Candidate JDM was declared the winner with a narrow win of 50.7% as against 47.7% of the total valid votes cast (Aryee, 2017). After the declaration of results by the Electoral Commission of Ghana, there was no concession speech by the main opposition party because they were main opposition party was contesting the candidature of JDM at the Supreme Court (SC) for various electoral irregularities. For eight months, the entire court proceedings were telecast live on radio and television stations from where novel expressions such as 'on the face of the pink sheet', 'you and I were not there', 'election is won at the polling station', and 'any idiot can go to court' among others became household names in Ghana. On August 29, 2013, the SC dismissed the case and upheld Candidate JDM as the legitimately elected president. After the determination of the case, the defeated candidate NADAA for the first-time conceded defeat and publicly declared that "although he was not happy with the ruling of the SC, for the sake of peace and in the interest of the country, he will not seek a review of the verdict" (Concession Speech, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, August 2013).

On December 7, 2016, 15 million Ghanaian electorates again went to the polls to elect their president as well as their lawmakers. In a highly charged political environment where public confidence in the electoral systems had been tested during the protracted petition challenging the 2012 results, the political stakes were widely perceived to be higher in the 2016 elections. All the electoral processes by the Electoral Commission had been disputed and heavily politicised including claims of perceived lack of neutrality and administrative lapses. The already politically charged atmosphere was further deepened by negative media frames of electoral irregularities, and heightened intimidation of the electorates engaging in their civic rights of the various electoral processes (Aryee, 2017). After the polls, media reports from both local and international communities indicated that the organisation and management of the 2016 elections had been free, fair and largely successful. The main opposition party had won and unlike the 2012 elections, the results were not contested in court. Given the situation at hand, all 'eyes' were on the conceding candidate and his line of action. The delivery of the concession speech was imminent and symbolic of closure to all the electoral campaign battles. It was simply a must listen-to-presentation for every electorate. On December 9, 2016, Candidate JDM duly delivered his concession speech.

As if history was repeating itself, after the 2020 presidential elections in Ghana, which was won by the incumbent NPP, there was no concession speech from Candidate JDM who was once again contesting on the ticket of the opposition NDC. The results of the polls were contested on grounds of electoral irregularities including gerrymandering in favour of the incumbency. Therefore, just like the 2012 elections, there was no concession speech after the 2020 general elections. This absence of the speech unequivocally, presents the 2016 concession speech as the most current and justifiably, the most appropriate to resonate with the focus of the current study.

## 2.0 Theoretical Consideration

This section of the paper discusses the theoretical considerations of the study. First, I examine the phenomenon of (im)politeness through the lenses of the politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987) and interrogate each of the tenets, namely, positive politeness, negative politeness, off-record politeness, and bald on-record politeness. Second, I interrogate four (attitude statements, self-descriptions, social associations, and non-verbal behaviours) of Leary's (1996) techniques of self-presentation and evident in the text.

### 2.1.1 The Politeness Theory

According to Al-Duleimi, Rashid and Abdullah (2016), although several theories exist on the subject of 'face' and (im)politeness, the explications of Brown and Levinson (1987), Leech (1983), Mills (2003), Ting-Toomey (2015), and Locher and Watts (2005) are the most widely used from diverse perspectives. Brown and Levinson (1987) in the politeness theory asserts that the concept of (im)politeness is a universal phenomenon. Central to this theory is the concept of face which is defined as the public self-image every individual claim for himself/herself (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 61). The theory posits that the 'notion of face' is an emotional investment which is maintained, enhanced or lost and should be constantly attended to during interactions. Using a model human being endowed with rationality and face, the theory presents face-threatening acts (FTA) that inherently threaten the face of interlocutors. It also provides face-saving acts (FSA) considered as polite strategies for both the hearer and speaker for purposes of protecting their 'face'. The theory further posits that the (im)politeness strategies are categorised into positive politeness, negative politeness, off-record politeness, and bald on-record politeness in contexts.

Brown and Levinson (1987) assert that the enactment of positive politeness strategies primarily focuses on the need to protect the positive face needs of the hearer as well as the positive self-image that both the speaker and the hearer claim for themselves. The positive politeness strategies are aimed at general expressions of solidarity, shared values and the protection of the common goals of interlocutors. Brown and Levinson, thus, outline sub-themes of the positive politeness strategy to include the use of in-group identity markers, repetition, a statement of promises, a show of optimism, and attendance to the hearer's wants during the enactment of speech acts (p. 128). Negative politeness is considered a redressive action to the hearer's negative face including his/her desire to unhindered or unimpeded attention (Ting-Toomey, 2015). It comprises communicative strategies comprising the use of taboo words, vilifications and name-calling, threats, hedges, request forms of compulsion and demands, pluralisation, and being considered deferent, pessimistic, apologetic or conventionally indirect with no regard for the hearer's face needs.

Further, as asserted by Brown and Levinson (1987), the off-record politeness strategy is evident in speech acts seek to eschew the use of direct face-threatening acts by resort to linguistically indirect use of implicatures of allusions, proverbs, metaphors, presuppositions, understatements, association clues and hints, and ellipsis among others (p. 211). Finally, the bald on-record politeness strategy which is considered the worst form of (im)politeness by virtue of its level of directness or bluntness, involves linguistic choices of direct imperatives including the issuance of instructions and directives in clear unambiguous ways to save and protect the face of both the speaker and hearer (p. 69).

Brown and Levinson (1987) further contend that 'certain speech acts are intrinsically either face-threatening or face-saving due to variables such as power, social distance and rank (p. 69). Power in this sense; refers to elements of control, influence and supremacy dynamics which exist between the speaker and hearer in routine discourses. Social distance is in

reference to the social gap existing between interlocutors. It emphasises the influence of relationship and context on the sharing of meaning where the element of rank would accentuate the order and level of sensitivity that interlocutors could attach to their interactions.

### **2.1.2 Tactics of Self-Presentation**

Attrill-Smith, Fullwood, Keep and Kuss (2019) have emphasised the existence of a motive or intention behind every strategy for self-presentation including the desire for social acceptance and maintenance of a relationship. The 'self' is a curious 'creature' that comprises all the psychological and physiological features which come together to give an individual an identity. It includes how a person feels, thinks, interprets, reacts to and behaves in diverse situations (Attrill-Smith et al., 2019). Goffman (1959) presents a theory of self-presentation and posits that the world is nothing other than a stage on which humans as actors play roles of everyday life on a constantly changing stage. Individuals thus, manipulate this stage through interactions as they create, shape, and present impressions of themselves as well as the 'other' in a self-image that is acceptable by all. Metaphorically, Goffman (1959) through this dramaturgy, compares the impression management of the 'self' to a dramaturgical theatre of 'back stage' and 'front stage' identity performances and negotiations. Hammond (2017b) refers to the front stage identity as the ideal identity, and the backstage as the real identity by reiterating Faquhar's (2012) postulations on real and ideal identities as constructed on Facebook by social media users.

Leary (1996) reiterates Goffman's dramaturgies into six tactics of self-presentation, namely, attitude statement, self-description, social association, conformity and compliance, aggression and risk-taking, and non-verbal behaviour that every speaker enacts as a form of impression management. The theory emphasises varied behaviours for significantly different situations for different audiences (Fullwood, 2007). However, only four of the tactics (i.e., self-description, attitude statement, social associations, and non-verbal behaviours) resonates with the focus of this study. Each of them is duly explicated in the analysis section of this paper.

### **3.0 Methodology**

The methodology of this paper is argued from two angles. First, through a qualitative content analysis of the 2016 concession speech of Candidate JDM, I draw out the manifest and linguistic choices signalling (im)politeness. Second, through Leary's (1996) strategies for self-presentation, I purposively interrogate how Candidate JDM negotiates his identity and constructs the 'self' in the thematic strands of the concession speech. The rationalisation of the qualitative content analysis as both a research design and a data collection method are in tandem with Creswell's (2013) assertion that the approach provides an understanding of how individuals rationalise and ascribe meanings to any social phenomenon in terms of how they are rendered. It is also an affirmation of Fernandez-Ardevol, Daba-Buzoina, and Ivan's (2016) avowal that the qualitative content analysis has become a dominant methodology in communication researches since it is considered a feature of the epistemology traditions of communication and very useful for the interpretation of data.

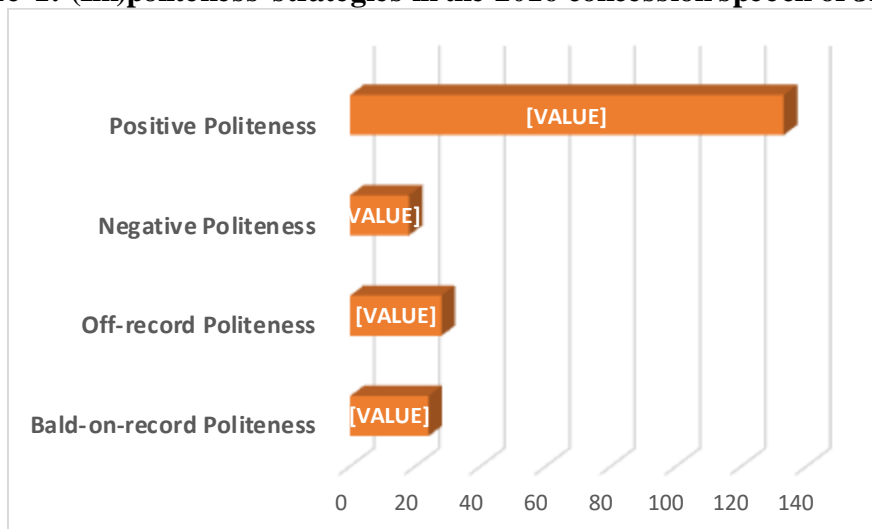
Candidate JDM's concession speech is couched in fourteen (14) paragraphs of seventy-one (71) sentences comprising one thousand, three hundred and sixty-two (1,362) words. The unit of analysis is a paragraph. Therefore, following the principles of the corpus assisted qualitative content analysis approach as suggested by Sarfo-Kantankah, (2018), my first line of action for the data collection was to iteratively read the text. Thereafter, through open coding and assistance from the AntConc-text mining corpus analysis toolkit (specifically, PubMed's list of 132 stop-words), I inductively developed validated coding

schemes to test, clarify and categorise the consistency of patterns of clusters, the frequency of the patterns as well as their sequences of organisation and occurrence and then categorised them using the tenets of the two theories underpinning the study. In all the data processing activities, I resorted to ‘winnowing’ (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012) where I identified the relationship between the themes and emerging sub-themes and thereby merging all the recurring patterns. I then deleted repeated patterns of similar thematic ideas and subjected the main themes to conceptual categories. This was done to increase data precision and validity. Consequently, I provided a simplified understanding of the processed data by providing pictorial charts and figures on the data using simple frequencies and percentages. The identified themes were then subjected to thick rich descriptions. To ensure the credibility and dependability of the study, which are considerations established in qualitative researches, the data was subjected to some verification processes proposed by Creswell (2014) comprising triangulation of theory, member-checking, reflexivity, adequacy of data, and thick rich description of the data.

#### 4.0 Results and Discussions

This section of the study is divided into two parts. First, I present results on the elements of (im)politeness in the concession speech under four main themes: positive politeness, negative politeness, off-record politeness, and bald-on record politeness. Second, I explore tactics of self-presentation and impression management as evident in the speech under these themes: self-description, statement attitude, social associations and non-verbal behaviours. The two parts are complementary because whilst the first part sets the background for the use of the (im)politeness strategies (i.e., adversarial, polite etc.), the second part explores the strategies of impression management as adopted by the speaker to save both his face and persona as well as his target audience to cumulatively fulfil the focus of the study. Discussions on each of the themes are supported with excerpts from the data (i.e., using the word ‘para’ to refer to the exact paragraph of reference) sound arguments and to reiterate the findings. Figure 1 is a presentation of the kinds of (im)politeness strategies identified in the 2016 concession speech of JDM.

**Figure 1: (Im)politeness strategies in the 2016 concession speech of JDM**

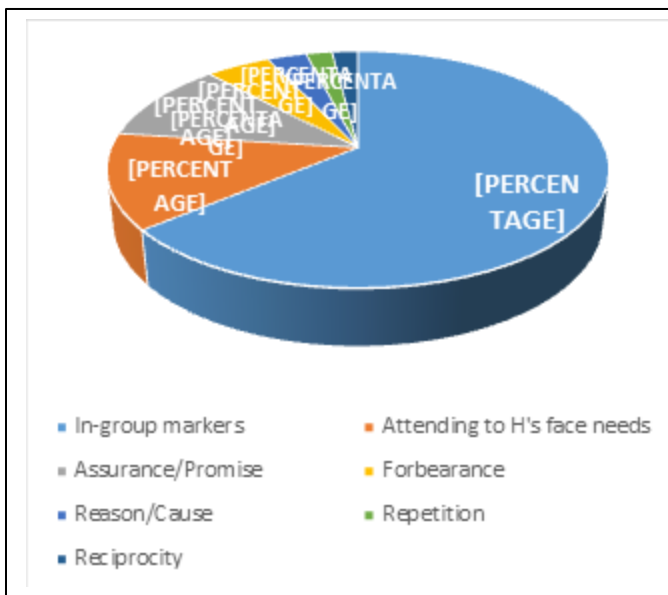


Linguistic forms are interpreted differently to serve varied communicative purposes including social cohesion. In-group markers are used in a text to create a sense of camaraderie (companionship, belongingness) between a speaker and a hearer in most contexts (Gareth, 2013). The art of speech making, is therefore, integral to political communication and elements of the appropriate linguistic elements are often used in the rhetoric of speech to

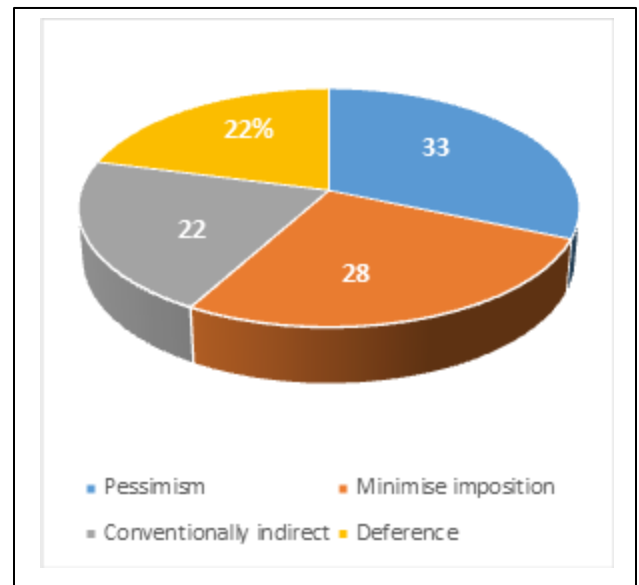


mark instances of (im)politeness. Figure 1 is a pictorial representation of the frequency of occurrence of the 1362 words constituting the 2016 concession speech of Candidate JDM. It could be seen from Fig. 1 that 133 manifest words are used to mark positive politeness strategies; 18 words to mark negative politeness strategies; 28 words to signal off-record politeness strategies; and 24 words to signal bald on-record politeness strategies. Each category of the four themes is further sub-categorised into subthemes as shown in Figures 2, 3, 4, and 5 respectively.

**Fig 2: Positive politeness strategies**



**Fig 3: Negative politeness strategies**



As already indicated, it is evident from Fig. 1 that 133 words are devoted to positive politeness strategies of face-saving endeavours. Therefore, Figure 2 sets out subcategories of words marking instances of positive politeness as identified in the text. Out of the 133 words, 64% are lexical items of ‘in-group identification’; 13% are words targeted at ‘attending to the hearer’s face needs’; 11% are words of ‘assurances or promise’; 3% are words on ‘forbearance’; 2% are words to ‘give reason for a cause’; 2% are words devoted to ‘formulaic structures of repetition’; and 3% are words on ‘statements of reciprocity’. Particularly, the in-group words of identification constitute the largest chunk of the words signalling positive politeness, specifically, for purposes of social identification and the activation of social cohesion. Thus, through the use of in-group markers, the speaker appears to be seeking affinity or acceptance of a self-image of common grounds with the citizenry. He resorts to the use of first-person pronouns (i.e., which have been italicised in this paper) of inclusivity throughout different portions of the speech such as “*my* fellow countrymen and women” (para 1); “*our* parliamentary candidates have suffered” (para. 2); “*I* will not do anything to undermine ‘*our*’ democracy or threaten the peace *we* enjoy” (para. 3); “I think ‘*we*’ lost because ‘*our*’ time was simply up, and no amount of deceptive campaign promises could keep ‘*us*’ in power” (para. 5); “who ‘*we*’ politicians exploit for ‘*our*’ selfish gain” (para. 7); “*Fellow* Ghanaians, before *I* end, *I* will like to wish ‘*our*’ President-elect” (para. 11); “This is ‘*our*’ country and its fortunes lie solely on ‘*us*’. ‘*Let’s*’ all stand up and be counted” (para. 13); “God bless ‘*our*’ Homeland Ghana and make ‘*our*’ nation great and strong” (para. 14). The speaker through the use of the first-person pronoun of inclusivity to acknowledge the fact that ‘*we*’ are together even in our diversity of ideology and party colour and continues to convey a message embedded with a sense of equity and respect to all people irrespective of

their party colour. The speaker publicly intimates his membership of the social group by the prototypical usage of pronouns for deictic and social purposes. The pronominal usage is thus, to provide a strong approach in establishing and reinforcing his social identity. This is in line with Lakoff (1990, p. 75) that the use of personal pronouns by speakers could work subliminally on their audiences by establishing solidarity and entrenching social cohesion.

Further, the speech commences with a phatic communion of greetings in the words; “*Good evening fellow Ghanaians*’ where the speaker proceeds to concede defeat by declaring, “I phoned Nana Addo to congratulate him’. Although the speaker’s facial expression posturing as depicted in the orthographies video was intense and calm, his demeanour and sunken eyes reflected pain and displeasure as he continuously employed intensifying words of in-group identification, perhaps, to seek acceptance from the electorates as he sinks into opposition and coerces the citizenry never to give up on him or despise his party’s ideologies. This alluring attitude of forbearance and promise might have paid off and perhaps accounted for his marked improvement in performance in the December 2020 elections where he polled 6, 242,889 representing 47.36%, as against the 44. 40% garnered in the 2016 general elections (Electoral Commission, Ghana, 2020). The speaker who is seen to be ‘attending to the hearer’s face needs in an anticlimactic reset to a prior heated campaign where he had called the bluff of his opponent through the use of denigrating metaphors and name-calling of his opponent as ‘incompetence’, ‘sick’, and ‘corrupt’ among others, through forbearance and assurance of promise ‘congratulates his opponent and wishes him well in his tenure as president. This revelation is consistent with the affirmations of Jensen (2011) that the use of negative political rhetoric of ‘othering’, identity formation and agency during electoral campaigns are ephemeral in spite of their damning consequences since political opponent are usually quick to turn round and resort to the use of words of impression management and damage control whilst conceding defeat in the post-election era. The tactics of regressive actions are often to establish and maintain social cohesions and promote a sense of sociability between the speaker and his audience (Jensen, 2011).

To a large extent, the speaker provides a ‘cause or reason’ for the defeat and presents himself as someone who still identifies with the electorates in spite of the rejection. This act affirms Corcoran’s (1994, p.110) assertion that the concession speech is a ‘painful ceremony’ for the speaker to test his/her ‘chivalry’ and convey a ‘rhetorical challenge’ where he/she publicly accepts defeat in an apologetic manner as a mark of honour and goes on to entrench his/her comradeship with the electorates in order to remain relevant even in opposition. Hence, Candidate JDM in congratulating the winner provides a hint on his readiness to relinquish power and authority to the winner; an uncommon situation in Africa and elsewhere where most leaders are sighted to tenaciously hold on to power as if their positions are conscripted personal entitlements. Notable of such dispositions are reported on a daily basis in the media where some incumbent presidential candidates refuse to concede defeat and allow hard-earned democratic dispensations in their countries to degenerate into needless deaths and wanton destruction of peace and property.

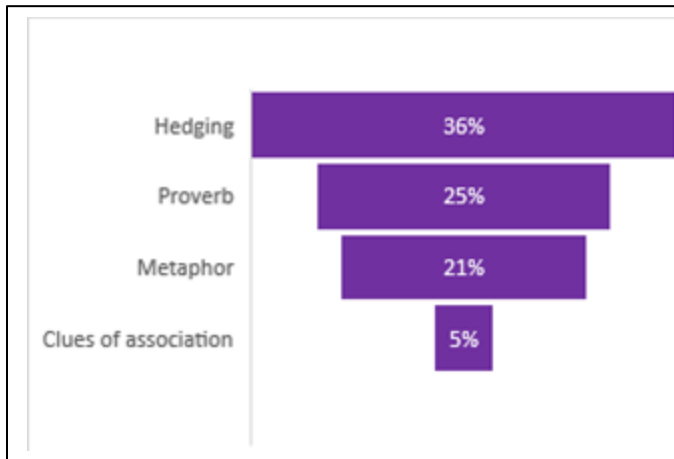
Again, the speaker reiterates his positive face of ‘assurance and promise’ when he indicates that “I am not going to impose myself on the electorates in any way... the people of Ghana have said emphatically that they are taking away their power...and I have no power to say no. Besides, I love the country that has given me the opportunity to serve in various capacities for nearly two decades and I will not do anything to undermine our democracy or threaten the peace we enjoy (para. 3). The speaker is thus, salvaging his persona and presenting himself as a polite person by employing words of reconciliation and impression management. These words are purposively selected because they are devoid combative imageries similar to perhaps the rhetoric of the campaign messages which had prevailed in the heat of the campaign period.

In Fig 1, 18 words are used to signal the theme of negative politeness. The details of the categories of negative politeness are parsed into categories and shown in Figure 3, where 33% of the words are observed to connote ‘pessimism’; 28% to ‘minimise the imposition of face threats’; 22% on ‘conventionally indirect strategies’; and 22% to mark ‘deference’ to both the speaker and hearer’s face needs. Negative politeness strategies are characterised by expressions of restraint, formality, and distancing (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 129). It is thus rated more polite and more face-redressive than even the positive politeness strategies because they are considered as being ‘too polite’. In order to reduce the threat of imposition to the hearer’s face, the speaker in the opening paragraph was pessimistic when he declares that “I called President-elect Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo of the New Patriotic Party to ‘congratulate him on his well-fought and well-deserved victory in Wednesday’s election’...The win has been emphatic and if anybody has reason to doubt the presidential results, the sheer magnitude of the defeat, which our parliamentary candidates have suffered, is the clearest indication that we have outlived our welcome” (para. 4). Clothed in the tendency to think negatively and focus on the unfavourable aspects of the campaign, the speaker in spite of the pessimistic disposition embraces his party faithful and does not mince words in accepting the defeat of his party and says; “Before I continue, permit me to *congratulate* the NDC family, *especially* my campaign team, for putting up such a spirited fight.” His open display of gratitude is an overt performance of his face needs which is targeted at his fraternity. He employs indirectness of politeness so he could be politely pessimistic and maintain some perceived norms and principles which may form part of the party’s social interactions. This finding which is a redressive action to the addressee’s negative face, is in line with Leech’s (1983) acknowledgement that instances of negative politeness could be targeted at ‘minimising the impoliteness of polite illocutions’ (p. 83). The speaker thus, recognises the need to coerce his hearers by giving ‘defence to his party faithful and mitigating the unavoidable face-threatening acts (FTA) which are imminent in the coming days of post-election narratives.

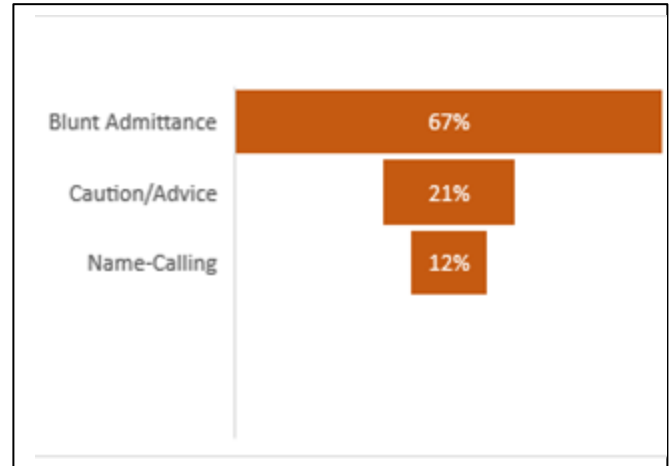
Further, it was evident from the data that the speaker employed words which are conventionally indirect which are used to hedge and reduce the effect of negative imposition on the hearer’s face needs. It was observed that the degree of (im)politeness to both the speaker and hearer face needs which were expressed through indirect utterances are calibrated by the compounding of hedges, indirectness and use of formulaic structures such as ‘please’ to increase the negative politeness endeavour of the speaker. The use of the words connoting conventional indirectness is thus a deliberate attempt to camouflage any form of unpleasant communicative behaviour which could arise from the turn of events. This finding is in tandem with Ting-Toomey’s (2015) suppositions on face negotiations of affections and endearment through indirectness as a form of face-saving to protect the face needs of both the speaker and hearer in challenging situations such as the delivery of a concession speech especially, from a hopeful incumbent. It is obvious the speaker is utterly disappointed at the turn of events. However, his choice of words is targeted at hedging his displeasure and indicative of the fact that he is fervently grateful for the support he had enjoyed thus far.

In Fig. 4 are the categories of words marking instances of off-record politeness strategies as observed in the 2016 concession speech of Candidate JDM. Off-record politeness occurs when utterances are influenced by different contexts and situations which rely on implications or implicature. Implicatures appear generally in the form of affirmations and are indirectly used to break down conversational norms in order to imply a recommended course of language action (Hammond, 2017a).

**Fig. 4: Off-record politeness strategies**



**Fig. 5: Bald-on-record politeness**



From Fig. 4, all the off-record words of implicature as exhibited in Candidate JDM's concession speech are calibrated into four categories out of which 36% are linguistic elements used to 'hedge'; 25% couched in 'proverbs and allusions'; 21% in 'metaphors' and 5% as 'words of associations'. In each instance, there is a profound use of hedging and indirectness to veil intentions where only the critically discern audience could make meaning from the import of the linguistic expressions used. For instance, as part of the speech, the speaker metaphorically recounts a story he had heard whilst growing up where spiritually powerful and dreadful cattle rustlers are alleged to have informed cattle farmers of their eminent presence before they swoop in to steal their animals (para. 4). The speaker alludes that this misconception was a convenient denial for the farmers not to be security conscious by leaving their fate to chance because the enemy was perceived to pre-announce his/her arrival. He adds that the reality is 'there is never an announcement preceding a defeat'. He suggests that pieces of advice shrouded in proverbs and witty saying purported to provide a hint of an imminent defeat perhaps had been ignored and a great lesson had been learnt. The speaker through series of proverbs such as "Our elders say a disease that will kill a man first breaks sticks into his ears" (para. 9); "It is said that a man may fail many times but he is not a failure until he blames others for his failures" (para. 10); "Our elders say God does not give us our friends; we choose our friends...who will bear the consequences of any choice we make" (para. 10); "the shea butter that is gloating over the ill-fated salt because of a heavy downpour should fortify itself with ice before the sun rises... What has befallen us can befall you if you allow the intoxicating effect of power to blind you" (para. 11). to play the didactic role of teaching wisdom and sagacity to the hearer (i.e., Candidate NADAA) and not be seen as imposing his decisions on the newly elected president. Thus, the proverbs are used as implicatures to minimise the imposition of requests, commands, and statement of wants.

Again, metaphorically, the speaker indirectly compares himself with "the wood insect that gathers sticks on its head" and adds that "I have brought this upon myself, and I will carry it alone" (para. 10). He continues on this tangent of forbearance and admittance in a seemingly jovial manner and accentuates that "We referred to the Volta Region as our World Bank, but they turned out to be a DKM Microfinance when it mattered most" (para. 12). This revelation is an unfortunate impression of the fact that the party had always considered the

people of their ‘world bank’ as loyal endorsers. Being mindful of the harrowing epic effect of the DKM Microfinance porn scheme saga in Ghana in the heat of the election campaigns, the speaker, perhaps inundated with disappointment from his party faithful in the Volta region, compares them to the ‘scammers’ of the DKN Microfinance scheme and lucidly declares; “In 2016, the NDC lost partly because our stronghold in the Volta Region taught us a lesson...We should begin to see them as human beings, and not ‘votes’...In the NDC, Volta Region sounded like ‘Voter Region’ and I have to forever live with this humiliation of first one-term president in the Fourth Republic” (para. 12).

Fig. 5 is a display of varied forms of bald-on-record politeness strategies comprising 67% of the words are used to signal ‘blunt admittance of mistakes and apologies’; 21% of words are on ‘caution or advice’; and 12% of the linguistic items are used to mark ‘name-calling or othering’. It could be seen from the distribution of the calibrated figures that a greater percentage of the speech was devoted to words marking ‘blunt admittance of mistakes where the speaker openly and apologetically admits to the mistakes of the NDC. The speaker apologetically proclaims; “But if I should ever make a comeback to politics, the lessons I have learnt from our defeat should serve as the moral code which will guide how I guide myself” (para. 6); “If I should ever return, I will not display a “dead-goat syndrome” towards disaffection of the masses” (para. 7). He describes the magnitude of his party’s defeat as humiliating and an indicative of the fact that the NDC has outlived their welcome. The speaker goes on to vilify his appointees and threaten their faces through express blunt statements of regret and dissatisfaction where he declares; “While Rawlings appointed the likes of Dr. Mohammed Ibn Chambas as Deputy Ministers, I made the mistake of giving that respectable position to the likes of John Oti Bless” (para. 9)...and the praise-singing sycophants who act on the dictates of their stomachs and are only specialized at telling us what you want to hear (para. 9). The explicit mention of particular names and derogatory commentary that characterised the name-calling of the appointees as “sycophants” is an affirmation of Enache and Militaru’s (2019) assertion that the use of invectives, name-calling and derogatory descriptions are characteristics of FTAs and a bald-on-record negative politeness strategy for ‘othering’.

Configurations in parallel structures or repetitions which functioned as cohesive devices to persuade and manipulate audiences to remember particular information were identified in the speech as signalling bald-on-record-politeness strategy of indirection. Murana (2011) describes a parallel structure as a linguistic feature used to corroborate indirection and states that ‘it is a form of tautology that does not lead to boredom but ensures communication efficacy’ (p. 260). Although at the sentential level parallel structures are noted to create a harmonious rhythm and balance within sentences, as a stylistic linguistic choice, they convey particular information or ideas in similar patterns for ease of remembrance by the audience. Politicians, therefore, rely on the linguistic repertoire of parallel structures of identical or equivalent constructions in corresponding clauses to express the same sentiments in varied ways. Candidate JDM aptly employs syntactic parallel structures where he emphatically states; “I think we lost because our time was simply up, ...no amount of ‘deceptive campaign promises’ could keep us in power...No amount of ‘monopolization’ of the media space could save us...No amount of money could stop our defeat... No amount of ‘local and international celebrity endorsements could help us, ...no amount of vote buying could stand the irresistible hurricane of change that shook our nation on Wednesday” (para. 3). Other examples in the speech include; “This election ‘has taught me that’ the hate of corruption can win...‘It has taught me that’ hate of incompetence... ‘It has taught me that’ hate of impunity...‘I have learnt that’ the obscene display of ill-gotten opulence wins...‘I have learnt that’ hate of mediocrity and deception’... definitely wins...‘I have learnt that’ hating evil will forever triumph over the love of evil” (para. 8)...‘I have

learnt that' the calls of the noisy minority cannot be ignored because they largely shape the opinions of the silent minority...our selfish gain" (para. 7). These repetitions catalogue pejorative discrepancies that favoured the opposition but needed to be emphasized as a form of caution to the president-elect. The speaker unequivocally advises the president-elect by saying; "I will like to caution the president-elect to be very careful in order not to repeat the mistakes I made in my administration" (para. 11); "I will urge civil society and the media to keep a critical eye on the new administration if our country can ever develop (para. 13). The use of all these parallel structures is to create a stylistic effect and a sameness of mood. It can also be argued that the rhetorical function of the parallelism is to linguistically strengthen, empower, emphasise, persuade and impact the audiences positively without a feeling of compulsion or imposition.

The speaker through bold-on-record politeness strategies is excessively blunt in administering his unfortunate reservations and concludes the speech by advising the president-elect by saying; "The future of our great party looks gloomy and we have to start work on how to get ourselves out of what appears like an eternal stay in opposition" (para. 6). The findings from data are consistent with the assertions of Brown and Levinson (1987) that although the enactment of advice may be adversarial and face-threatening the speaker could consider the face needs of the hearer and advice appropriately through hedging. This face-saving act is illustrative in the statement "I know better and so I should be the one advising you."

Attrill-Smith et al (2019) emphasise that every interlocutor has a motive for choosing any form of linguistic strategies for self-presentation for social acceptance and the maintenance of relationships. This section of the paper, therefore, discusses research question two which sought to explore how the speaker negotiates his identity and presents his 'self' through the series of tactics postulated by Leary (1996). Out of the 1362 lexical items constituting the speech, each of these identities was enacted through four dominant tactics of self-presentation, namely, attitude statement, self-description, social association, and non-verbal posited by Leary (1996).

The rhetoric of the speech was carefully woven into six thematic areas in conformity with the propositions of Corcoran (1994) and Fullwood (2007) on the structure of a concession speech. It was observed that each of these thematic areas contributed to creating two main identities or self-presentations: ideal and real. The real or front stage identity was noted in linguistic elements which portrayed the speaker as an acceptable member of the social group in spite of his party's 'humiliating defeat'. The speaker explicitly identifies with the electorates through inclusive pronominal words that places salience on his persona. The speech commences with a 'self-description' of himself as a peace-loving citizen who has conceded defeat and 'has phoned the president-elect to congratulate him' (para. 11). He employs a positive laden identity of acceptance of himself in "Fellow Ghanaians, before I end, I will like to wish our President-elect"... (para. 11)... "This is our country and its fortunes lie solely on us. Let's all stand up and be counted" (para. 13).

As a moral and cultural obligation and a kind of identity management strategy, the speaker acknowledges the support of some high-profile personalities and pays ever-glowing tribute to them to portray his 'ideal' persona. He does this through explicit mention of personalities including 'President Jerry John Rawlings, Dr. Mohammed Ibn Chambas, Mr. Ben Dotsei Malor and Dr. Raymond Atuguba' (para. 9). Cialdini and De Nicholas (1989) refer to this phenomenon of identity management and explicit acknowledgement of personalities in concession speeches as 'basking in reflected glory'. Leary (1996) argues that the explicit mention of individuals or organisations provides a hint on the speaker's network of social associations with some 'significant others'. Also, Candidate JDM through the tactics and manoeuvres of social associations, modestly, presents a 'real self or back stage identity'

which may be hidden. In this ‘real identity or front stage’ self-presentation, the speaker is seen as excessively polite, grateful and ready to take responsibility for his (in)actions. In populating a list of the loyal personalities, the audience is left in the dark regarding the kind of support purported to have been offered by these personalities. In spite of this public show of gratitude, the audience is manipulated to believe and consent to this appreciation and attitude statements which may sound overbearing or categorical and yet unsubstantiated as the perceived truth (Leary, 1996).

An orthographized video of the delivery of the 2016 concession speech revealed instances of non-verbal behaviours of self-presentation. The strategies were spontaneous and unrehearsed and difficult to veil. Fullwood (2007) categorises non-verbal behaviours identified in extemporaneous speeches into three distinctively interrelated categories comprising, the influence of the physical setting, use of emotional expressions, and gestures. For instance, the physical setting comprises the appropriateness of the environment of the speech. In the video, it was evident that Candidate JDM was affectionately surrounded surround by family and party stalwarts in his residence. The atmosphere was solemn and formal and devoid of inducing any form of psychological reaction, judgment or interpretation from both the speaker and audience. The speaker’s facial expression, body language and gesturing were suggestive of positive polite undertones which were complemented with FSA of both the speaker and hearers. This is finding corroborates the growing literature on the use of conventional wisdom in the rhetoric of political communication (Masahiko & Patterson, 2018; Mattes et al., 2010) which suggests that positive non-verbal communication influences voter decisions and help to improve electoral chances for competing candidates, especially, losing candidates in future elections. This study, therefore, argues on the assumption that the high turn-out threshold harnessed by Candidate JDM and the NDC during the 2020 elections is partly due to the sympathy votes polled from fleeting voters who were touched by the speaker’s emotional appearance and traits of humility exhibited whilst conceding defeat in the 2016 concession speech.

In the video, personal traits such as competence, deceitfulness, affectionate and vindictiveness, although difficult to measure through facial expressions were observable through the linguistic choices used. Indeed, Todorov, Mandisodza, Goren, and Hall (2005) contend that there is conservatively a positive correlation between positive competences from non-verbal behaviour judgments such as facial expressions and real election outcomes. This revelation in data thus affirms Masahiko and Patterson’s (2018) assertions of self-presentations through non-verbal communicative behaviours as gathered from the 2015 local elections in Japan, and the fact that positive facial expressions during speech deliveries have implications for positive impression management to lure fleeting voters to improve electoral fortunes.

## **5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations**

The purpose of this paper has been to examine how Candidate JDM in the 2016 concession speech employed (im)politeness strategies to ‘save or threaten’ his face and that of his target audience. Through the principles of Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness theory, the study concludes that the deliver or speaker of the employed varied forms of positive politeness, negative politeness, off-record, and bald-on-record politeness strategies to ‘save his face, that of his hearers’ and also ‘to threaten the face of his audience’. While it is a well-known fact that politicians propagate their ideologies and sentiments through concession speeches, this paper has demonstrated that self-presentations could also be enacted through series of tactics such as attitude statement, self-descriptions, social associations and the enactment of non-verbal communicative behaviours. Thus, I argue that through the linguistic choices of a concession speech, the speaker was able to construct a dual self-presentation; an

'ideal' or 'front stage' identity where he is excessively polite, apologetic and ready to take responsibility for his (in)actions, and a 'real identity' or 'back stage' identity where he is blunt, adversarial, blame-riddled and excessively face-threatening.

The study contributes to the literature on politeness, identity studies and the rhetoric of speech as a genre of political communication and concludes that a conceding candidate can construct varied forms of self-presentations as they propagate their ideologies through lexical items of (im)politeness. The paper concludes on the assumption that words, emoticons and other forms of non-verbal communications feed into self-creations which could also be manipulated for other forms of self-presentation. The paper recommends a re-orientation on what constitutes the rhetoric of a concession speech in an era of post-election social media rantings by losing candidates as part of deepening democracy.

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