

LINGUISTIC DEVICES OF STANCE AND DISAGREEMENT IN A POLITICAL INTERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

The specific objective of this study was to investigate linguistic device of stance and disalignment markers used by politician in a political interview. This study use a qualitative approach by employing discourse analysis methodology. Data for this study were collected using a transcribed political interview and analysed using the the conventions developed by Du Bois, Schuetze-Coburn, Cumming, and Paolino. The source material for this study consists of a video downloaded from YouTube, which has a total run time of 37 minutes and 54 seconds. The video displayed Jonathan Swan, an Australian political contributor for Axios, conducts interview with President Donald Trump touching various domestic issues in the U.S. The findings show that speakers predominantly express disagreement using negative stance markers ("no," "not," "never"), posing yes/no questions, introducing a third-party to justify a statement, and offering evasive responses. Additional finding is that when they are challenged, the politician tend to change his stance.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Political discourse played a very important role for politicians in presenting their perspective during political contact. Within the bound of media interviews, it is often recognized that a number of politicians avoid to voice their opinions explicitly.

This triggers an issue for journalists who attempt to figure out their utterances. Therefore, comprehending the stance of a speaker is a keypoint to uncover the political meaning. A speaker's stance, who can express approval or disapproval (Jaffe, 2009), serves as a means of access for examining closely the political interactions. Du Bois (2007) offers an in-depth perspective through his analysis of the stance triangle, stating that stance is vital in establishing value in a discourse, in building the speaker's self-position, measuring the level of consensus with other parties, as well as involving the socio-cultural dimension.

Although political stance revealed in interactions are often expected to be unambiguous (Behringer & Tracy, 2003), it is worth remembering that political views are considered a 'highly personal matter' when questioned in the public sphere. The dynamic interaction between journalists and politicians in a political interview can implicitly communicate alignment or disalignment of views. Reporters generally have a role to challenge political figures, especially those who are influential (Behringer & Tracy, 2003). While journalists typically seek to raise doubts about the reasons behind a statement or action, politicians tend to maintain it (Montgomery, 2011).

Thus, when interviewers structure discussions that include such challenges, politicians are expected to justify their responses (Ekstrom & Patrona, 2011). The main focus of this paper is to examine stance-taking and disalignment in the specific scope of

political interviews. This interest stemmed from observations of a number of news interviews in which journalists and politicians alike demonstrated their positions. This research will begin with a brief review of the concept of stance taking. Then, it will be followed by an examination of the theoretical framework relevant to the research and how the action takes a stance in a news interview. The third part will outline in detail the methodology used, while the fourth part will present the research findings. The conclusion will provide a summary of the work and propose areas for future research.

The study of how stance-taking works in discourse is growing and becoming important in various disciplines, especially discourse analysis (Gordon, 2015). Scholarly research on this topic has accentuate the extensive theoretical and definition of stances, which are often shaped by the particular concerns and theoretical backgrounds of the researchers (Englebretson, 2007). Although many definitions have been suggested for the term, this paper will use the definition proposed by Haddington (2007), which stipulate stance as "an intersubjective activity in which the parties to the dialogue collaboratively construct and take a position on an object of standpoint, by engaging themselves and building on the positions that their fellow participants have taken in the conversation moments before."

Stance taking is considered a inherent contributors inseparable in the actions shown throughout communication (Englebretson, 2019; Jaffe, 2009). When analyzing common usage of daily expression, Behringer & Tracy (2003) noted the benefits of stance indicators to observe the particular circumstance that the speaker takes in particular case. They also affirmed that individuals who express stance can use number of initiatives, such as choosing one particular communicative act over another, using intended phrases or words, modifying their manner of communication, or even deliberately withholding information. In the context of political conversation, verbal communication framework may involve rythim of activities that are both collaborative and consequential (Haddington, 2007), often characterized by a repetitive questioning (Nicola, 2006; Wooffit, 2005). Nevertheless, it is important to point out that during a televised interview, a representative is less hypothetically to be full disclosure about their true political thought. (Wooffitt, 2005). For this reason, politicians tend to use evasive tactics, giving incomprehensible answers and avoiding affirmative responses when faced with complicated issues (Haddington, 2007; Nicola, 2006). Therefore, the way the interviewer builds his position relative to the interviewee can be very important to dig up information in the interaction.

In relation to position-setting, reporters specifically seek to make inquiries into provoking the disclosure of politicians' sentiment (Haddington, 2007). In addition, determining the interviewer's

position involves designing questions that may deliberately raise issues for the interviewee in responding. It should be noted that journalists often use a very similar set of investigative techniques when interviewing politicians, as they do in other political interactional contexts (Clayman & Romaniuk, 2011). In his study of the function and nature of journalism on interview news programs in the United States, Clayman (1988) identified several methods that reporters used to structure their questions. He specifically observed that asking questions in a confrontational manner is one of the tactics used by journalists to provoke responses from sources.

Similarly, Haddington (2007) documented the use of such antagonistic questions on CNN's Larry King Live show. Therefore, challenging questions are often utilized as the primary journalistic tool to elicit the desired attitude of those interviewed (Kampf & Daskal, 2011; Ekstrom & Patrona, 2011; Wooffitt, 2005). Regarding the response of the speakers, political figures who participate in political exchanges often present an abundance of information and express their views extensively (Heritage, 2003).

There is also the view that politicians may seek to maintain the reporter's sense of neutrality while at the same time trying to undermine the implications of the questions asked (Clayman, 1988; Smedt & Vandenbrande, 2011). Given this context, both journalists and politicians use various methods in their alignment activities, especially when expressing disagreement on a particular subject. In terms of indicators to express disagreement, Keisanen (2007) suggests that several cues can be used to identify when participants take a disagreeing position. It has been established that hesitation, pause, or delay by speakers in composing their answers might be indicated as ambiguities. Keisanen also suggests that the formulation of questions as a yes/no or interrogative-wh form (questions with a question word) can be alternative approach to show inconsistency.

Through careful consideration of positioning and alignment, Haddington (2007) argues that activities particularly those involving disagreement, can be detected in different approaches. He specifically identified markers of negative stances, the use of cognitive verbs, and self-repair in journalist conversation. Similarly, Karkkainen (2007) noted that speakers use phrases such as 'I think' to hint at their misalignment in the discussion of political circumstances. Overall, this research group showed that speakers utilized wide selection of plans to show stances and disagreements. The main objective of this study was to test stance and inconsistencies as demonstrated by politicians in a political engagement. To achieve this goal, the current research seeks to answer the following research questions: a) What methods do participants use to signal their denial? b) Does a participant's

position shift when they are confronted by the interlocutor?

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The authentic source for this study is in the form of video recordings obtained from YouTube, with a whole duration of 37 minutes and 54 seconds. The video features Jonathan Swan, an Australian political journalist for Axios, interviewing US President Donald Trump on domestic affairs the US. The study selected two different excerpts from the video for thorough examination. The first primary concern is on the controversy surrounding Russian bounties, and the second discusses the subject of COVID-19 testing in the United States.

To begin the analysis process the specific segments that address the target issues are identified. The first extracts analyzed ran from the 16:28 to 18:50 minutes, while the second extract covered the time range 09:25 to 11:37. Once these samples are selected and collected, the recordings are processed using the ELAN application. Once the sample has been successfully extracted, the next important step is to segment and annotate the data for transcription purposes. Finally, the results of the transcripts were carefully analyzed to observe the examples of attitude-taking and expressions of inconsistency shown by the participants.

For the transcription process, this study uses a convention developed by Du Bois, Schuetze-Coburn, Cumming, and Paolino (1993). This conventions is widely regarded in creating highly trustworthy transcripts. The accurate transcript is crucial to accurately track the aligning activities and specific stance enunciated throughout the conversation

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

To answer the initial research question, an examination of the first transcript was conducted, which primarily centered on the "gift" controversy. As the excerpt below shows, the reporter contested the President regarding a concerned report that Russia presumably offered or paid money to "fighters" for the killing of U.S. troops

- 1 Joe: Mr President .. hm .. different subject,
- 2 It's been widely reported that US has intelligence indicating
- 3 that Russia paid bo:unties ... or offered to pay bounties.. to
- 4 tell fighters to kill [American soldiers],
- 5 Trump: [Right uhum]
- 6 Joe: .. You had a phone call .. with Vladimir Putin on July 7
- 7 23rd,
- 8 Joe: .. Did you bring up this [issue?]
- 9 Trump: [No, it was] a phone call to ..
- 10 discuss other things, and ^frankly (H).. that's an issue that
- 11 uh ... many people said it was fake news, [(X X)]
- 12 Joe: [Who said it was

- 13 fake news?]
- 14 Trump: I think a <HI lot of people HI>, uh ... if you look at some
- 15 of the ... wonderful folks from the Bush administration (H)
- 16 .. some of em .. not any friends of mine (H)... were saying
- 17 that's a fake issue (H), .. but < HI a lot of people HI>
- 18 said it was a fake issue,

The interaction begins with the reporter setting stage (lines 2-4) by referring to established attachment on the issue of "rewards" prior to requesting a direct yes/no question (line 8). The President showed immediate refusal on the premise, using the negative attitude marker "no" (line 9) and labeling the story as false information. This refusal served to distance the president from the reported "gifts" talk with Putin, stating that their conversation instead engaged in different matter. To strengthen his negation, the president then introduces a third-party viewpoint that supports the "fake news" claim (line 11).

The reporter, identified here as "Joe," furthered asked with the question wh—"who said it was fake news?" (lines 12-13)—challenging the president's strives to avoid. The President responded by using first-person markers and cognitive verbs ("I think") to frame his disapproval and introduce comments from the Bush administration (line 15) that were in compliance with his point of view. By introducing these external sources, the president aimed to create his argument that the issue was generally regarde "fake." Joe continues to be persistent in his quest to confess the secret. When the president asserted that he had never spoken to Putin where this is concerned, reporters strayed from the point, prompting the president to contemplate his belief in intelligence briefings. The choice of the word "especially" (line 32) highlights the journalist's overarching principle about the president's attitude toward intelligence finds, as shown below.

- 24 Trump: something and so would I (H),.. we discussed numerous things
- 25 and we did not discuss that, [no].
- 26 Joe: [And] you've never discussed it with
- 27 him?
- 28 Trump: I've never discussed with him.
- 29 Trump: [We would] have no ^problem [with it]--
- 30 Joe: [we got-] [But you don't] believe the
- 31 intelligence
- 32 Joe: Especially you don't believe the intelligence, that's why
- 33 Trump: uh ... everything --
- 34 You know it is interesting, Nobody ever brings up China,they
- 35 always bring Russia Russia Russia,.. If we can do something

36 with Russia in terms of nuclear proliferation
[which] is

37 Joe:

[right]

38 ^very big problem,

The reporter hints at his disagreement with the president by using the negative stance marker "no" in the phrase, "especially you don't trust intelligence" (line 32). In response, Trump aimed to circumvent the core issue by switching the conversation to another country, China, as the reason (line 34). However, the president's hesitation in being straightforward about Joe's basic assumptions was evident in his delivery. This hesitation is in reference to conspicuous pauses and truncated units of intonation, most notably when he says, "uh... all of them, you know are interesting" (lines 33-34). During the dialogue, Trump often used negative stance markers to decline reporters' assertions. The transcript further shows that the president maintained this avoidance behaviour.

53 Trump: if it reach my desk, I would have done something about it

54 .. it never reached my desk [because]--

55 Joez [Do you read] your recent brief

56 Trump: I [do]

57 Joe: [Do you?]

58 Trump: I read a lot, I [read a lot]

59 Joe: [Really?]

60 Trump: I'd like to say .. I really read a lot

61 Trump: uh [I comprehend extraordinary well]

62 Joe: [You read your daily recent brief?]

63 Trump:.. probably better than anybody you've interviewed in a lo:ng

64 time. Uh.. I read a lot, I spend a lot of time with .. at

65 meetings.. so usually it's once a day or .. at least two or

66 three times a week [intelligence talking about India]

The president introduced a conditional sentence (line 53) to provide the reasoning, implying that his perception of the subject was incomplete or based on insufficient information. He then instantly used another negative marker, "never" (line 54), to unequivocally oppose the journalist's underlying assumptions. The interviewer responded by expressing preserved uncertainty and contested the president with the question, "did you read your brief recently?" (line 55). This was swiftly followed by a second "branching question" (line 57) to emphasize journalists' doubtfulness about the president's coordination with the intelligence bodies. Despite this pressure, the president strongly enshrined his actions, first with the self-assured language "I did it" (line 56) and then by claiming a strong belief that he read every brief report that came to him, using a phrase that emphasized "extraordinarily good" (line 61). He argued that the specific issues raised by the reporter never reached his desk at all. To conclude

his defense of intelligence reporting, Trump reiterated the use of negative attitude markers, echoing previous denials, as shown in a later transcript

74 Trump: ... We call up I get –

75 I see your 20 two soldiers were killed in India with Chine

76 fighting over the border (H), .. it's been raging for ^many

77 many decades (H),... and they've been fighting back and

78 forth,.. I I have so many briefings and so many different

79 countries(H).. but this one didn't reach my desk

The President drafted his answer by acknowledging the existence of many briefs, but insisted that detailed information relating to the disputed issue never reached his desk (lines 78-79). Trump deliberately pieced together his answer by repeatedly using negative notion markers to clearly convey his disagreed positions. This shows that the interviewee consistently shows his or her disagreement through the recurring use of these negative sign, similar to prior statements. Considering the overall structure of interaction across the transcript, both the interviewer and the interviewee repeatedly expressed their disagreement using a variety of figure of speech. In this analysis, expressions of misalignment were largely determined by the use of negative stance markers (such as "no," "not," and "never"), the interviewer's use of branched yes/no questions, the interviewer's use of first-person markers combined with cognitive verbs (e.g., "I think"). Incorporation of public opinion or third parties to justify a statement.

Research question two investigates whether the individual being interviewed alters their stated position when directly challenged. The second section of the transcript illustrates an exchange between the reporter (Joe) and the president concerning COVID-19 testing. Joe directly confronts Trump, pushing him to demonstrate a commitment to ensuring equal access to COVID testing for all Americans, mirroring the level of testing available to the president at the White House.

1 Joe: .. Whe:n can you commit .. by what date .. that every American

2 will have access to the same day testing that you got here in

3 the white house?

4 Trump:.. Well we have great testing,

5 we .. we doing and .. [and --]

6 Joe: [by what date]

7 Trump: Let me explain (H)... the testing (H),

8 .. We have tested .. mo:re people than .. any other

9 ^countries than <HI all of Europe HI> put together times

10 two(H), We have tested more people than anybody ever thought

11 of (H), India has 1.4 billion of people .. They've done 11

The provided transcript begins with the reporter, Joe, directly asking Trump to name a "specific" detail concerning equal testing access (lines 1-3). The president's initial response, marked by the adverb "well" (line 4), suggests that he is not going to answer the question directly. This lack of straightforwardness, along with a truncated intonation unit (line 5), indicates difficulty in formulating a response. Consequently, his subsequent statement (lines 7-11) avoids mentioning a specific date and instead attempts to redirect the focus by comparing U.S. testing to that of other countries. Despite this diversion, the president tries to project confidence using the word "great" in his claim, "we have great testing" (line 4). The remainder of the transcript shows the president continuing to elaborate on COVID testing statistics in the U.S. , while also claiming that the reporter is already aware of this data.

12 Trump: milion tests (H), ..
We've done 55 it will be close to <HI
13 sixty million tests 15 HI> (H), and you
know there are ^those
14 that say (H) ... you can test too much.
15 Trump: you do know that.
16 Joe: Who says that?
17 Trump: oh .. just [read] the manuals read [the
books]
18 Joe: [(X X)] [manuals?]
19 Trump: read [the books]
20 Joe: [what manuals?]
21 Trump: [<HI Read the books HI>],
22 Joe: [what books?]
23 Trump: what testing [to who – wait a minute, let
me]
24 Joe: [No, I'm sorry (X X)]
25 Trump: let me explain,
26 what testing does, it shows cases .. it shows where
there may
27 be cases,.. other ^countries test .. you know when
they test?
28 they test when somebody sick,.. that's when they
test(H),

The transcript revealed that the president was referring to a book and manual purportedly detailing how the U.S. conducts COVID testing. Interestingly, when reporters repeatedly urged him to provide details by asking "manual?" (line 18), "What manual?" (line 20), and "What book?" (line 22), the President failed to provide further information. Instead of providing details, he offers a vague statement of what the test accomplishes: "what the test does, it shows the case, it shows where there might be a case" (lines 25-28). This illustrates that the interviewee's responses tend to lead to avoidance and reflect the lack of specificity observed in previous answers. Reporters continue to challenge the president, persistently demanding a specific date

for when equal access to COVID testing will be achieved, as indicated in the ensuing dialogue.

52 Trump: [lets' say it today]
53 Joe: [it's difficult]
54 Trump: you know so [it's three] of five days,
55 Joe: [I understand]
56 Trump: there is nothing you do about that
57 Joe: But when do you think [we'll have it, what
date]
58 Trump: [I think that you will have] that
59 relatively soon, I [mean]
60 Joe: [what is] that mean?
61 Trump: you already have [half],
62 Joe: [yeah]

The transcript shows the reporter, Joe, repeating his question: "but when do you think we're going to have it?" (line 57). Trump responded by stating, "I think you'll have it relatively soon" (lines 58-59). This answer is characterized by an epistemic attitude, using "I think," and purposefully not binding with expressly referred "relative." The president clearly expressed a skeptical or vague roles by avoiding a exact date for the rollout of COVID testing. Therefore the use of the word "relative" in this statement indicates a repositioning by the president. In the following exchange, the president continues using the first-person subject aligned with cognitive verbs, as seen in "I guess" (line 69).

63 Trump: uh ... I would much rather get back to
you,
64 [because I don't want]
65 Joe: [OK That's fine]
66 Trump: to have you right in [one month].
67 Joe: [that's fine]
68 Trump: I didn't make it,
69 I missed it by, I guess [a headline]
70 Joe: [Yeah I get it].

This last example shows that, when pressed by an interviewer on the issue of COVID testing, the president appeared to change his position. In short, when constantly confronted by journalists, Trump tends to shift his stance from a "convincing" tone to a "skeptical" tone, often preferring to change the subject rather than directly answer journalists' persistent questions. Thus, the president generally changes the position he declares when constantly challenged by journalists.

The main purpose of this study is to show the stance-taking method and how the speaker expresses disagreement or disalignment amidst a political interview. The study revealed that the participants used some specific linguistic features when negating their questioner. In answering the first research question, the study found that participants in news interviews expressed their disagreement in a variety of ways. The main linguistic features observed were negative attitude markers such as "no," "not," or "never". These observed attitudes are consistent with responses described by other scholars, such as Haddington (2007) and Harris (1991), regarding the

way politicians respond to questions in news interviews. A plausible explanation for this consistency is the counteractive purposes of speakers to convey wide differences with questions or statements put forward by the interviewer.

Furthermore, the study reveals that the use of yes/no questions and wh questions is inextricably linked to misalignment from interviewed. The transcript also notes the use of first-person pronouns combined with cognitive verbs (e.g., "I think") to show verbal altercation. These findings are consistent with the research of Clayman & Heritage (2002), Heritage (2002), and Keisanen (2007), which demonstrated the functional use of these types of questions in interactions. This association may be explained by the strong correlation between these linguistic markers and the concept of misalignment, especially in the confrontational environment of a news interview. In addition, the deployment of such questions seems to be a strategy to put the interlocutor in problematic argumentative context.

Regarding the second research question, the interviewee was observed to shift their stances from "convincing" to "skeptical." This response pattern shows similarities with the findings of Clayman (1988) and Haddington (2004) regarding shifts in attitudes in news interviews. The adjusted viewpoint may be due in part to information that is deemed insufficient regarding the subject being debated in the interview. The results of this study provide a detailed view of the language and communicative methods that speakers use to hint at disagreement. Its key findings highlight the repeated use of negative stance markers such as "no," "not," and "never." This simple choice of language serves as the primary evidence that the speaker is not in line with previous affirmations or statements. This reliance on negation terms shows a general inclination to choose an assertive rejection when contradicting arguments.

The use of yes/no questions simultaneously with reference to outside sources to reaffirmed consent indicates an interpretation that focuses on conflict reduction and mutual responsibility. Asking a question, for example, "Have you really seen X?," serves less as a question and more as a strategic objective that returns the perception necessity to the first speaker. This subtle approach allows the speaker to hold opposite view without having to claim full responsibility for the opposition. Similarly, citing an external influences shifts

disagreement outward. This tactic reframes challenges as a call to impersonal, verified data or accepted public conventions, rather than direct private disagreement.

The emerging of equivocal replies offers a particular viewpoint, underscoring a strong message to conflict preservation and social tranquility. Avoidance is seen not just as a refusal to respond, but as a intentional political spin decision. This behavior is understood as an expression of low-key conflict in which the

speaker judges that the relational price of immediate denial is too high. Such replies accentuate more about acknowledging the momentum of the conversation than explicitly stating defensive positions. This suggests that the speaker evaluate disagreement as something that can be considered on a continuum, with avoidance depicting most politically logical approach to object.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, key findings show that speakers mostly express disagreement by using: negative attitude markers ("no," "not," "never"), asking yes/no questions, introducing a third party to substantiate statement, and showing evasive responses. Another finding was that participants apt to change their stance when they were challenged. However, the results of the current study are conditional on limited data size. Therefore, future research is recommended to analyze a broader dataset to gain more extensive knowledge on how speakers behave inconsistently in news interviews. It is recommended that future studies investigate how other figurational sociology could affect speaker's shifting attitude.

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