

## COMMUNICATION ACCOMMODATION STRATEGIES IN JOE BIDEN'S ELECTION ACCEPTANCE & VICTORY SPEECH

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**Abstract:** This study is entitled COMMUNICATION ACCOMMODATION STRATEGIES IN JOE BIDEN'S ELECTION ACCEPTANCE & VICTORY SPEECH. The aims is to identify the types of communication accommodation strategy are used by Joe Biden in his election acceptance & victory speech and the reason behind the usage of each strategies based on theory by Giles about Communication Accommodation Theory. The data was taken Joe Biden's Election Acceptance and Victory Speech. The data was collected by documentation method. In analyzing data, the method applied is qualitative method. The data was presented in the form of sentence using descriptive method. The results show that there were nine divergence strategies and twelve convergence strategies being used in Joe Biden's speech. Convergence in Joe Biden's speech is mainly used when he seek for the approval from his audiences, such as addressing his supporters by each social groups that they're in, and using certain expressions in delivering his message to relate to the people. Meanwhile, by using divergence, Biden created a situation where people would listen to him mentioning about the achievements, the hardwork, and the pledge that he and the other notable individuals have under their name.

**Keywords:** *communication accommodation theory, communication accommodaiton, Joe Biden's Election Acceptance & Victory Speech*

### I. INTRODUCTION

On November 7th 2020, Joe Biden delivered a speech, addressing the nation after his victory in the 2020 United States presidential race. In his speech, Biden addressed how americans were deeply divided as a nation especially after a long and fierce battle of presidential election. He delivered his victory speech with a spirit of compromise, calling on all americans to unite once again in order to reach for a better future. In such speech where a person has just been elected to rule a diverse nation, there are many notable points that can be analyzed further in order to get more meanings and intentions behind them. As a speech which addresses a nation full of diversity, expecially after a battle between two sides of political parties and their supporters, it is important that Biden as a new leader of America has to ensure that the citizens will believe him especially with his

promise of leading the nation to unity. Biden's speech is a great example on how communication accommodation strategies are applied in a public speaking situation. In this study, researcher intends to study how Joe Biden applied his communication strategies in delivering his first speech as a President-elect of the United States of America as a nation full of diversity. Every aspects of communication is significant to be understood, in order to avoid misinterpretation, especially when the communication occurs in a diverse environment. Study on communication accommodation strategy is needed to learn more about how people communicate when they are faced with differences and how the communication strategies used affects human's social relation. Therefore, researcher believes that it is important to see how Joe Biden cope with the diversity in the nation that he will soon lead, by looking at his communication accommodation strategies in his first speech after being elected.

This study will also be interesting because this study has never be done before and it is hoped that this research

will contribute to a deeper understanding of about communication accommodation. This will also gives us the opportunity to advance the understanding of several on going issue in our society that is based on diverse communication, especially the data that will be taken from Joe Biden's first speech after being elected is still very recent and worth to be discussed.

Communication accommodation theory (CAT) is a theory that helps us understand the motivations for why we communicate the way we do with others, the nature of our communication choices, and the relational, identity, and evaluative outcomes of these choices. (Soliz & Giles 2012, p. 158). Communication accommodation theory elaborates the tendency to adjust one's behaviour while interacting. The reason behind it is because of the needs to adjusts the social differences that exists between one and another.

According to Giles (1987), accommodation consists of two main strategic forms of communication, convergence and divergence. Accommodation on its own refers to changing one's communicative behavior to appear similar to others, i.e. by lowering one's voice to match the recipient's style of speech. Although convergence and divergence represent the opposite ends of the accommodation phenomenon, they are both used to convey attitudes toward others and as a result they can serve as an indicator of the level of social distance between individuals. They are often strategically applied, either semi-consciously or intentionally, to gain social rewards or to signal distinctiveness.

### Problems of the Study

Based on the background above, there are two problems that can be formulated as follows:

1. What types of communication accommodation strategy are used by Joe Biden in his election acceptance & victory speech?
2. Why does Joe Biden use accommodation strategy in his election acceptance & victory speech?

### Aims of the Study

Based on the problems of the study above, the aims of study are formulated as follows:

1. Types of communication accommodation strategy are used by Joe Biden in his election acceptance & victory speech and also
2. To find out the reason behind the usage of the strategies being applied.

## II. RESEARCH METHOD

The research method covers data source, method and technique of collecting data, method and technique of analyzing data, and method and technique of presenting analysis.

### Data Source

The data source of this study was taken from the video documentation and transcript of Joe Biden's election

acceptance & victory speech in Wilmington, Delaware on November 7 after winning the 2020 presidential race. Joe Biden is set to become the 46th president of the United States. Researcher is interested in using Joe Biden's speech as the object of research because the speech addresses some social differences that exists in USA and this is a great indicator of the usage of communication accommodation strategies. It is a crucial moment for Joe Biden to lead such a huge country so researcher believes that the context of the speech is important to be learnt.

### Method and Technique of Collecting Data

Documentation method was applied for collecting the data in this study where Joe Biden's speech and body language from the video documentation and speech transcript was observed to get more information on the whole context of the speech. There are several steps of collecting data:

1. Researcher downloaded Joe Biden's election acceptance & victory speech and its transcript from the internet
2. The researcher watched Joe Biden's election acceptance & victory speech video documentation repeatedly
3. The researcher took a note for the utterances which indicates the usage of communication accommodation strategies.

### Method and Technique of Analyzing Data

The data obtained from Joe Biden's utterances which has the aspect or component of accommodation strategies is analyzed using descriptive qualitative method with symbolic interaction approach, which aims to describe the communication accommodation process and the forms of accommodation strategies that occur in the speech, based of the types and purposes following the theory by Soliz & Giles (2012). The data which derived from the video documentation and transcript of Joe Biden's speech was observed in the level of word, phrase, and sentence. Then, the data that indicates the usage of accommodation strategies was identified and classified into each types. Then the data was analyzed further by reviewing the motives of each accommodation strategies to find out the reason in the usage of accommodation strategies in Joe Biden's speech.

### Method and Technique of Presenting Data

The data analysis was presented in a form of sentences and descriptions. The extracts taken from Joe Biden's utterances in his speech were classified into the types of accommodation strategies and then each analysis of the extracts were described in textual method that involves detailed description about the findings.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### COMMUNICATION

### ACCOMMODATION

## STRATEGIES IN JOE BIDEN'S ELECTION ACCEPTANCE & VICTORY SPEECH

This chapter is concerned with the analysis of the communication accommodation strategies in Joe Biden's election acceptance and victory speech, followed by its types and purposes based on Communication Accommodation Theory developed by Howard Giles (1970). The data analysis is presented in extracts, categorized by each types of Communication Accommodation Strategies. In order to give a clear answer of the research problems, the presentation of the data analysis also includes the identification of communication accommodation strategies applied in each extracts of the speech and the and the analysis of the purpose of each strategies being applied.

### EXTRACT I – CONVERGENCE

#### a. Fellow Americans

This data is taken from the first line of Joe Biden's speech, where he addressed the audiences and his supporters.

"Hello, my fellow Americans and the people who brought me to dance, Delawareans."

In this data, Biden applied Convergence strategy that can be seen from the way he addresses the audience as Fellow Americans. The term Fellow Americans is a common remarks used to establish credibility and connection with American audiences, used mostly by US politicians in their speeches. It gives a welcoming and unity spirit in Biden's speech.

Biden also addressed the Delawareans as his main supporters from his hometown in order to give them his appreciation for the votes that they gave him in the election. Just like that, Biden has successfully gained the attention of the audiences and send the unifying message through his opening remarks.

The utterance "who brought me to dance" is also interesting to look at, as it contains a similar message of the proverb "dance with the one that brought you" which means to be considerate and loyal to the one who has been supportive, attentive, or helpful to you. Politicians often use such linguistic features in order to make their words more meaningful and so the audience can relate to what they're saying. The usage of convergence in his sentences became more effective with the support of the linguistic feature he applied in achieving a good first impression in front of his audiences.

#### b. We the people

Joe Biden expressed the victory of him being elected as the president as everybody's victory.

"Anyway, folks, the people of this nation have spoken. They've delivered us a clear victory, a convincing victory, a victory for we the people. We've won with the most votes ever cast for a presidential ticket in the history of the nation, 74 million."

Here, once again Biden applied Convergence in his utterances. In this extract, Biden called the audience and his supporters as one unity under the name of "**we the people**". This way, he's able to make his audience feel the sense of winning alongside him in the election and so, they will continue providing their support for him. This is an important thing to do as a politician because in every steps that will come next, Biden will surely need the support of the people.

#### c. Choice We Make

Biden addressed both parties who had been going against each other in the election period

"The refusal of Democrats and Republicans to cooperate with one another is not some mysterious force beyond our control, it's a decision, a choice we make. If we can decide not to cooperate, then we can decide to cooperate."

In this part of speech, Biden used convergence in emphasizing the relations between Democrats and Republicans. He stated that the refusal of both parties's cooperation is "A choice we make" which simply means that both parties's disagreement in cooperating with one another can be changed if both sides decides to do so. The usage of convergence here is suitable to create an approach to the other party who had been fighting against him in the election and indirectly asked them to cooperate with him for the country.

Moreover, he even used the phrase "mysterious force" to emphasize his point that agreement is not something that is impossible to achieve. Therefore, Biden clearly desired an approval from the other party and as stated by Gallois, C., Ogay, T., & Giles, H. (2005), convergence allows the speaker to achieve this purpose.

#### d. We Will Lead

Biden appealed his view of America as a nation that receive worldwide attention.

"Tonight, the whole world is watching America, and I believe, at our best, America is a beacon for the globe. We will lead not only by the example of our

power, but by the power of our example.”

This part of speech is rather ambiguous to be analyzed on its type of accommodation strategy, especially for those who are not a citizen of America. However, as Joe Biden’s speech is delivered to the people of America, it can be concluded that the accommodation strategy used here is Convergence. The phrase “We Will Lead” indicates that Biden applied convergence in appealing that him and all Americans is being watched by the whole world and that they will become a powerful example for the world. Such convergence allows the audiences to relate to him in having a fighting spirit to make America an even better nation.

He also stated that America is the Beacon for the globe, creating a metaphor of America being a role model for the rest of the world. According to Goatly (1997: 166) metaphor is used to make variations of a sentence. It can be used to reinforce the reader’s imagination. It is common for political speeches to have metaphor as it allows them to gain more attention and sympathy from the audiences.

### *EXTRACT II - DIVERGENCE*

#### **a. I Pledge**

Biden delivered his personal pledge as a president who will unite the people of United States under one flag.

“ I pledge to be a president who seeks not to divide but unify, who doesn’t see red states and blue states, only sees the United States, and work with all my heart, with the confidence of the whole people, to win the confidence of all of you. For that is what America, I believe, is about. It’s about people. And that’s what our administration will be all about.”

In this extract, Biden mentioned his pledge and vision of unifying the people of America that had been separated before, because of the election and several other issues. Normally, the strategy being applied in such statement is convergence because he wants the people to feel as one with no differences that can separate them again in the future. However, from the phrase “I Pledge” and later on he added “to win the confidence of all of you”, indicates that Biden used Divergence for this statement. By using divergence, he specifies his role as the one and only President of United States and even openly admitted that he wanted to win people’s confidence.

The motive for politician in using such divergence strategy is to highlight their identity so it will reinforce his social status by claiming that he’s the only one who has the capability in doing so. Biden’s status as a newly elected president is strengthened by his words and people may see as an icon of hope for the Americans. Therefore, audience’s perspective on this divergence will most likely to be positive even though divergence mostly draws negative feedbacks.

#### **b. I’m Jill’s Husband**

Biden introduced himself with his personal identity apart from his political persona

“Folks, as I said many times before, I’m Jill’s husband, and I would not be here without her love and tireless support of Jill, and my son Hunter and Ashley, my daughter, and all our grandchildren and their spouses and all our family. They’re in my heart.”

In the data shown above, Biden applied the divergence strategy in his speech. He specifically confirms about his personal identity in his daily life, not as a politician but as a husband and father. To highlight the divergence, he took a moment to pause himself while saying “I’m Jill’s Husband” and let the audience to cheer on his statement before he continued. Such divergence strategies makes his statement to be more personal so that the people can emphasize with him being a mere human. He also shown love for his family in this statement and of course, divergence helps to make his message to his family delivered.

#### **c. Kamala Harris**

Biden specifically addressed Kamala Harris who had just been speaking before him.

“I’ll have the honor of serving with a fantastic vice president. You just heard from Kamala Harris, who makes history as the first woman, first Black woman, the first woman from South Asian descent, the first daughter of immigrants ever elected in this country.”

The strategy being applied in this data is Divergence. In his sentences, divergence is shown when he addressed Kamala Harris and mentioned her achievements as the first black woman, the first South Asian descent, and the first daughter of immigrants to be elected as a vice president of America. In this case, divergence is applied to highlight something that has been achieved by a certain individual. According to Giles & Ogay (2007), divergence can be regarded as a very important tactic of displaying a valued distinctiveness from other. The motive behind this is usually to emphasize distinctiveness and giving a sense of appreciation towards the individual being

mentioned and to earn more respect from the audience.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The discussion throughout this study about Communication Accommodation Strategies in Joe Biden's Election Acceptance & Victory Speech is concluded in this chapter. Upon analyzing the data, researcher found 12 Convergence strategies and 8 Divergence strategies used in Joe Biden's speech. Convergence in Joe Biden's speech is mainly used when he seek for the approval from his audiences, such as addressing his supporters by each social groups that they're in, and using certain expressions in delivering his message to relate to the people. Convergence in Joe Biden's speech is also shown by some of his body language throughout the speech. This is interesting because such respectable usage of convergence is what a politician needed in order to tell the people that they're connected to each other. Meanwhile, the usage of divergence which is in a lesser amount in Joe Biden's speech turns out to be just as important as how convergence does. Even though divergence tends to make the speaker to be more distant from the recipients and may bring out negative outcomes, Biden has successfully utilized divergence to be beneficial for him. Divergence which has the power to distinguish certain individuals / groups in order to strengthen their social identity is used by Biden to address himself and certain individuals that has been very significant for him such as his wife, his vice president, the election officials, etc. By using divergence, Biden created a situation where people would listen to him mentioning about the achievements, the hardwork, and the pledge that he and the other notable individuals have under their name. This lead to the audience being able to understand that the people he mentioned are the figures that are so different from them. Strengthening social identities like this is very prominent for politicians because they need the people to be submissive in order to maintain their power.

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