



يا صاحب القُبَّةِ البِيضاءِ

يا احب القُبَّةِ البِيضاءِ في النَّجفِ
مَنْ زارَ قَبْرَكَ واسْتَشْفى لَدَيْكَ شُفي
زوروا أبا الحَسَنِ الهادي لَعَلَّكُمْ
تُحْظُونَ بالأجرِ والإقبالِ والزُّلفِ
زوروا لِمَنْ تُسْمَعُ النَّجوى لَدِيهِ فَمَنْ
يَزُرُهُ بالقَبْرِ مَلهُوفاً لَدِيهِ كُفي
إِذا وَصَلَ فاحْرِمْ قَبْلَ تَدْخُلِهِ
مُلَبِّياً وإِسْعَ سَعِياً حَوْلَهُ وَطُفِ
حَتَّى إِذا طِفْتَ سَبْعاً حَوْلَ قَبْتِهِ
تَأْمَلِ البابَ تَلْقَى وَجْهَهُ فِقِفِ
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أهلِ السَلامِ وأهلِ العِلْمِ والشَرَفِ





فصلية تُعنى بالبحوث والدراسات الإنسانية والاجتماعية
السنة الثالثة شعبان ١٤٤٦ هـ شباط ٢٠٢٦ م العدد (١٠)

No.:
Date



ديوان الوقف الشيعي/ دائرة البحوث والدراسات

م/ مجلة القبة البيضاء

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته...

اشارة الى كتابكم المرقم ١٣٧٥ بتاريخ ٢٠٢٥/٧/٩، والحاقاً بكتابنا المرقم ب ت ٤ / ٣٠٠٨ في ٢٠٢٤/٣/١٩، والمتضمن استحداث مجلتكم التي تصدر عن دائرتكم المذكورة اعلاه، وبعد الحصول على الرقم المعياري الدولي المطبوع وانشاء موقع الكتروني للمجلة تعتبر الموافقة الواردة في كتابنا اعلاه موافقة نهائية على استحداث المجلة.

...مع وافر التقدير

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٢٠٢٥/٧ / ٢٠

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- الصادرة

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فصلية تُعنى بالبحوث والدراسات الإنسانية والاجتماعية
السنة الثالثة شعبان ١٤٤٦ هـ شباط ٢٠٢٦ م العدد (١٠)
تصدر عن دائرة البحوث والدراسات في ديوان الوقف الشيعي

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فصلية تُعنى بالبحوث والدراسات الإنسانية والاجتماعية
السنة الثالثة شعبان ١٤٤٦ هـ شباط ٢٠٢٦ م العدد (١٠)
تصدر عن دائرة البحوث والدراسات في ديوان الوقف الشيعي

العنوان الموقعي

مجلة القبة البيضاء
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دائرة البحوث والدراسات

الاتصالات

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دليل المؤلف.....

- ١- إن يتسم البحث بالأصالة والجدة والقيمة العلمية والمعرفية الكبيرة وسلامة اللغة ودقة التوثيق.
- ٢- إن تحتوي الصفحة الأولى من البحث على:
 - أ. عنوان البحث باللغة العربية .
 - ب . اسم الباحث باللغة العربية . ودرجته العلمية وشهادته.
 - ت . بريد الباحث الإلكتروني.
 - ث . ملخصان أحدهما باللغة العربية والآخر باللغة الإنكليزية.
 - ج . تدرج مفاتيح الكلمات باللغة العربية بعد الملخص العربي.
- ٣- أن يكون مطبوعاً على الحاسوب بنظام (office Word) (٢٠٠٧ أو ٢٠١٠) وعلى قرص ليزري مدمج (CD) على شكل ملف واحد فقط (أي لا يُجزأ البحث بأكثر من ملف على القرص) وتُرَوَّد هيئة التحرير بثلاث نسخ ورقية وتوضع الرسوم أو الأشكال، إن وُجِدَت، في مكانها من البحث، على أن تكونَ صالحةً من الناحية الفنية للطباعة.
- ٤- أن لا يزيدَ عدد صفحات البحث على (٢٥) خمس وعشرين صفحة من الحجم (A4).
- ٥ . يلتزم الباحث في ترتيب وتنسيق المصادر على الصيغة APA
- ٦- أن يلتزم الباحث بدفع أجور النشر المحددة البالغة (٧٥,٠٠٠) خمسة وسبعين الف دينار عراقي، أو ما يعادلها بالعملات الأجنبية.
- ٧- أن يكونَ البحثُ خالياً من الأخطاء اللغوية والنحوية والإملائية.
- ٨- أن يلتزم الباحث بالخطوط وأحجامها على النحو الآتي:
 - أ. اللغة العربية: نوع الخط (Arabic Simplified) وحجم الخط (١٤) للمتن.
 - ب . اللغة الإنكليزية: نوع الخط (Times New Roman) عناوين البحث (١٦) . والملخصات (١٢) . أما فقرات البحث الأخرى؛ فيحجم (١٤) .
- ٩- أن تكونَ هوامش البحث بالنظام التلقائي (تعليقات ختامية) في نهاية البحث. بحجم ١٢ .
- ١٠- تكون مسافة الحواشي الجانبية (٢,٥٤) سم والمسافة بين الأسطر (١) .
- ١١- في حال استعمال برنامج مصحف المدينة للآيات القرآنية يتحمل الباحث ظهور هذه الآيات المباركة بالشكل الصحيح من عدمه، لذا يفضل النسخ من المصحف الإلكتروني المتوافر على شبكة الانترنت.
- ١٢- يبلغ الباحث بقرار صلاحية النشر أو عدمها في مدّة لا تتجاوز شهرين من تاريخ وصوله إلى هيئة التحرير .
- ١٣- يلتزم الباحث بإجراء تعديلات المحكّمين على بحثه وفق التقارير المرسلّة إليه وموافاة المجلة بنسخة معدّلة في مدّة لا تتجاوز (١٥) خمسة عشر يوماً.
- ١٤- لا يحق للباحث المطالبة بمتطلبات البحث كافة بعد مرور سنة من تاريخ النشر .
- ١٥- لا تعاد البحوث الى أصحابها سواء قبلت أم لم تقبل.
- ١٦- دمج مصادر البحث وهوامشه في عنوان واحد يكون في نهاية البحث، مع كتابة معلومات المصدر عندما يرد لأول مرة.
- ١٧- يخضع البحث للتقويم السري من ثلاثة خبراء لبيان صلاحيته للنشر .
- ١٨- يشترط على طلبة الدراسات العليا فضلاً عن الشروط السابقة جلب ما يثبت موافقة الاستاذ المشرف على البحث وفق النموذج المعتمد في المجلة.
- ١٩- يحصل الباحث على مستل واحد لبحثه، ونسخة من المجلة، وإذا رغب في الحصول على نسخة أخرى فعليه شراؤها بسعر (١٥) الف دينار.
- ٢٠- تعبر الأبحاث المنشورة في المجلة عن آراء أصحابها لا عن رأي المجلة.
- ٢١- ترسل البحوث على العنوان الآتي: (بغداد - شارع فلسطين المركز الوطني لعلوم القرآن)
- أو البريد الإلكتروني: (off_research@sed.gov.iq) بعد دفع الأجور في الحساب المصرفي العائد إلى الدائرة.
- ٢٢- لا تلتزم المجلة بنشر البحوث التي تُخلُّ بشرط من هذه الشروط .



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السنة الثالثة شعبان ١٤٤٦ هـ شباط ٢٠٢٦ م



السنة الثالثة شعبان ١٤٤٦ هـ شباط ٢٠٢٦ م



٢٠٢

A pragmatic Study of Hinting Strategies in selected American Political TV Interviews

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فصلية تُعنى بالبحوث والدراسات الإنسانية والاجتماعية العدد (١٠) المجلد الأول

السنة الثالثة شعبان ١٤٤٦ هـ شباط ٢٠٢٦ م



Abstract:

This study analyzes linguistic hinting as a core strategy used by U.S. politicians in televised interviews (2020–2024) to balance transparency with tactical discretion. It addresses the problem of how strategic indirectness functions beyond simple evasion. The aim is to categorize hinting's pragmatic forms and functions. Using discourse analysis of 10 interview samples, the model applies frameworks like Gricean implicature and Politeness Theory. The Findings reveal hinting is an institutionalized tool for achieving “calculated ambivalence,” allowing politicians to evade accountability, launch indirect attacks, and signal allegiance while maintaining plausible deniability.

Keywords: Hinting, Interviews, Politicians and Discourse analysis.

المستخلص:

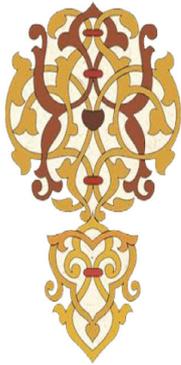
تتناول هذه الدراسة التلميح اللغوي كاستراتيجية أساسية يستخدمها السياسيون الأميركيون في المقابلات التلفزيونية (٢٠٢٠-٢٠٢٤) لموازنة الشفافية مع التكتيك والتحفظ. وتتناول الإشكالية المتعلقة بكيفية عمل الانزياح الاستراتيجي بما يتجاوز التملب البسيط. ويهدف البحث إلى تصنيف الأشكال والوظائف التداولية للتلميح. وباستخدام تحليل الخطاب لعشرة نماذج من المقابلات، يطبق النموذج أطراً تحليلية مثل تضمينات غرايس التخاطبية ونظرية الجمالة. وتكشف نتائج الدراسة إلى أن التلميح أداة مؤسسية لتحقيق «الغموض المحسوب»، تسمح للسياسيين بتجنب المساءلة وإطلاق هجمات غير مباشرة والإيحاء بالولاء مع الحفاظ على قابلية الإنكار المعقولة. الكلمات المفتاحية: التلميح اللغوي، المقابلات التلفزيونية، السياسيون، تحليل الخطاب.

السنة الثالثة شعبان ١٤٤٦ هـ شباط ٢٠٢٦ م

I. Introduction

The essence of political communication is inherently strategic in nature, as it is always a case of there being a tension between the need to be transparent with the people and the need to be tactical. This is because in such an environment political players are involved in an endless game of persuasion, image control and in many instances, strategic avoidance. These pressures are concentrated into a high-stakes publicity arena through the televised political interview, especially in the American media environment. In this case, journalists are institutionalized opposing actors, who have a duty to draw direct responsibility. Meanwhile, politicians have to survive the interrogative procedures that attempt to reveal inconsistencies or vulnerabilities and do so under the gaze of a mediated community.

The politicians often resort to practical indirectness to strike a skillful balance between these conflicting needs that must seem both forthright and cooperative without making any concrete pledges or harmful admissions. Among such strategies, linguistic hinting can be considered one of





the fundamental and advanced strategies. The hinting works within the intentional gap between saying and meaning, where a speaker can forge an idea, make an accusation or merely give an indication of loyalty but not take the full responsibility of saying it outright. It is a means of accomplishing calculated ambivalence, which allows managing multiple interpretations of the audience and retaining the vital resource of plausible deniability within the very turn of the response.

A hint is usually divided in existing work but might not entirely slice down into the detailed linguistic processes, the rhetorical questions, strategic presuppositions, and affective labels, which constitute a hint and distinguishes it a hint versus a refusal or topic shift. Thus, the necessity to list and strictly evaluate these forms and accurately identify their specific communicative roles in the specific power relations of the modern political interview is evident.

This research paper attempts to fill this gap. Its main aim is to discover, classify, and examine the practical forms and functions of hinting strategies utilized by U.S. politicians in some selected televised interviews. Three research questions have been used to guide this investigation: What are the most common linguistic and pragmatic ways in which hinting is achieved? Which main communicative tasks, e.g. evasion, indirect attack, conditional bargaining, or face-saving are these hints executing? Besides, what do interviewers pragmatically respond or resist such strategies and thus, what is the sequential outcome of the exchange?. The importance of this question is threefold. Theoretically, it will add to discourse analysis and political pragmatics by extending, potentially, to a strategically non-cooperative context, frameworks like Gricean implicature and Politeness Theory. In practice, it provides an understanding of the dynamics of media-political power relations in the present moment, showing the weaponization of language in the act of gaining narrative control.

II. Literature Review:

2.1 Theoretical Framework: Pragmatics

A. Grice's Cooperative Principle and Conversational Implicature

The analysis of indirect communication, which contains hinting, is based on the works of the philosopher H.P. Grice. According to the best-known lectures, Grice (1975, p.46) suggested that human conversation is dictated by a central, mutually implied Cooperative Principle (CP): «Contribute

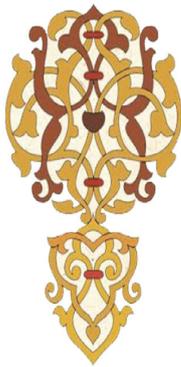


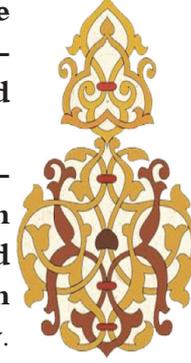
conversationally to the extent which is necessary, at the point at which it is so contributed, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are involved in. This principle is developed in the form of four maxims categories:

- 1) Maxim of Quantity: Be as informative as required, but not more.
- 2) Maxim of Quality: Do not say what you believe to be false or lack adequate evidence for.
- 3) Maxim of Relation: Be relevant.
- 4) Maxim of Manner: Be perspicuous—avoid obscurity, ambiguity, and unnecessary prolixity.

Grice showed an important point on the fact that in most cases, speakers do not ensure the following maxims, i.e., they blatantly do not satisfy them, and in this regard, they encourage the listener to choose some other meaning, besides what was literally said. Such inferred meaning is a conversational implicature. Supposing that the speaker is actually being cooperative on a more fundamental level, the listener determines what was intended basing on (1) the traditional meaning of the utterance, (2) the CP and its maxims, (3) the context and (4) shared background knowledge. The CP is a political battlefield within the American political TV interviewing context. This institutionalised adversariality of the genre implies that the formal aim posited is the sharing of information and accountability but the participants will be pursuing divergent and incompatible objectives (Clayman and Heritage, 2002). A politician can break the Maxim of Relation by giving a response that appears to be unrelated to the question, therefore, implicating a wish to redirect the conversation to a better message. Likewise, a breach of the Maxim of Quantity as, by providing a noticeably inadequate or excessively wordy answer, may cause one to be caught committing evasion or trying to confuse an absence of clear information.

As an example, a politician, when directly asked a policy question, yes / no, will give a lengthy and vague answer (violating the principles of Manner and Quantity) and will compel the listener to read between the lines, which is, possibly, I do not want to make a definite statement / the honest answer would hurt. This renders the framework provided by Grice invaluable in the process of unpacking hinting strategies because a hint is simply an intentional violation of the maxims to create a specific impli-





capture, without creating an implausible deniability (Thomas, 1995). The politician does not collaborate at the facade of the direct information exchange but at a deeper level of strategic self-presentation and agenda management.

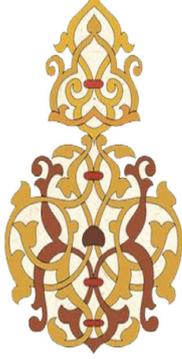
On the other hand, the CP needs to be used critically in the political discourse. The expectation of optimal relevance, rather than cooperation in the sense that it is referred to by Grice, controls all communication and does not necessarily do so through cooperation, as later theorists, such as Sperber and Wilson (1986/1995) suggested in their Relevance Theory. When there is a lot of conflict in the interview, the main aim of a politician might not be to cooperate but to win the discursive battle. Therefore, this seeming flout may be a tactic in another type of game, a face-management game or persuasion game (Bull and Mayer, 1993). However, the model developed by Grice gives the necessary diagnostic instruments to determine the disconnect between what is being said and what is at stake, where the politically strategic hint lies.

2.2 Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson) and Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs)

The analysis of hinting in adversarial situations is based on the Gricean framework but requires the interpretation of the social relations and interpersonal risk. This critical framework is given by the seminal Politeness Theory, which was proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987). Their model focuses on the notion of face, a notion based on Goffman (1967), which they define as the public self-image all competent adult members of society profess to have. They divide the face into two wants which are connected to each other:

- 1) Negative Face: The want for autonomy, freedom from imposition, and the right to act unimpeded.
- 2) Positive Face: The desire for approval, to be liked, respected, and for one's wants to be desirable to others.

In any interaction, certain communicative acts intrinsically threaten (face-threatening acts or FTAs) either the hearer's or the speaker's face. A direct question, for example, threatens the hearer's negative face by imposing an obligation to respond. A criticism threatens the hearer's positive face. In the arena of political TV interviews, FTAs are not merely incidental; they are the institutional *raison d'être*. Journalists design questions that



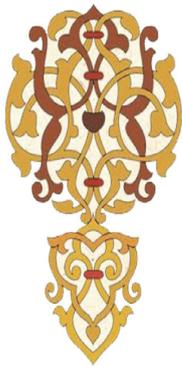
are inherently face-threatening, demanding accountability (threatening negative face) or challenging a politician's record or credibility (threatening positive face) (Clayman & Heritage, 2002).

Brown and Levinson's core contribution is their taxonomy of strategic choices for performing an FTA, arrayed along a continuum of politeness or redressive action. A speaker can:

- 1) Perform the FTA Bald-on-record, without redressive action (common in emergencies, or where the power differential is excellent).
- 2) Perform the FTA with Positive Politeness, using strategies that attend to the hearer's positive face (e.g., claiming common ground, using in-group markers, offering compliments).
- 3) Perform the FTA with Negative Politeness, using strategies that mitigate the imposition on the hearer's negative face (e.g., being conventionally indirect, hedging, minimising the imposition, apologising).
- 4) Perform the FTA Off-record, by employing indirectness (e.g., hinting, presupposing, understating) so that the act is deniable.
- 5) Don't perform the FTA at all.

It is within off-record politeness strategies that hinting finds its most explicit theoretical home. A hint constitutes the prototypical off-record FTA: it allows the speaker to convey a critical or imposing message while providing plausible deniability, thereby shielding both parties' faces. For a political interviewee, hinting becomes a master strategy. For example, instead of directly accusing an opponent of dishonesty (a bald-on-record FTA damaging to the interviewer's positive face and the speaker's own face for appearing aggressive), a politician might say, «Some people might find it interesting to compare the two sets of figures,» implicating a discrepancy through an off-record hint (Gricean flout of Relevance/Manner).

In such a way, politeness theory reconstructs hinting as not a conversational implicature anymore, but as a basic face-management device. Hinting in the politically-focused and publicly-examined environment of a political interview has also created a way to negotiate a double bind: to be hostile or evasive enough to achieve strategic objectives, and still appear to be courteously conversational and civil interaction. Nevertheless, politeness, as scholars such as Locher (2004) and Watts (2003) have pointed out, is not necessarily being so nice;





it entails the negotiation of relational work on a case of given power relations. In political interviews off-record hinting is a weaponised politeness, a means to attack, whilst making a calculated avoidance of the responsibility that would be incurred by direct speech (Harris, 2001). This renders the model given by Brown and Levinson especially the calculus of strategy choice grounded on the variables of Power (P), Distance (D) and Ranking of Imposition (R) as an important element in comprehending how often and in what shape hinting strategies were employed in chosen confrontation encounters in selected media.

2.3 Speech Act Theory (Austin & Searle), Focusing on Indirect Speech Acts

In order to see to full the mechanism of a hint, one must go beyond the implied meaning (implicature) and social management (face) and look at the action taken by the utterance itself. This is where Speech Act Theory comes in, whose contribution was made by J.L. Austin (1962), and which was developed in detail by John Searle (1969). Their work diverts the analytic attention of what language says to what it does.

The basic observation of Austin was that actions of speakers were taken by utterance which he referred to as speech acts. He identified three acts that occur at once:

- 1) Locutionary Act: Making a meaningful linguistic articulation (the literal, propositional meaning).
- 2) Illocutionary Act: The action that is taken when saying something (e.g. making assertions, promises, questioning, warning). This has the illocutionary force.
- 3) Perlocutionary Act: This is the act of saying something, and its resultant consequence to the feelings, thoughts, or actions of the hearer (e.g. persuasion, intimidation, deceiving, etc.).

Later, Searle (1969) categorised the illocutionary acts (e.g. assertive, directives, commissive, expressive, declarations) and formulated the condition of felicity, a condition of the situations in which a speech act is said to have succeeded and not abnormally silent.

The most important development to be taken into consideration when studying hinting is the concept of the indirect speech act introduced by Searle (1975). This is when the literal illocutionary force (based on sentence form) is not the same as the primary illocutionary force that was intended.

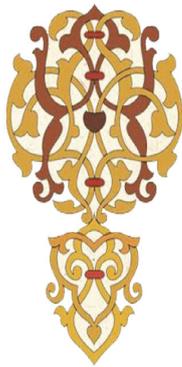


As an illustration, one can say the statement Can you pass the salt? has the literal meaning of a question (a command on knowledge about ability) yet is actually traditionally a command on action. The significance, which is intended is interpreted by the hearer through finding out the intended meaning by the literal meaning and the context as well as the background knowledge which is shared such as the principle of the Gricean.

Indirect speech acts are not a mere facility of conversation and they are foremost tools in the strategic milieu of a political TV interview. A commentary made by a politician such as, I am certain that the committee will investigate that issue fully, said in reaction to an outright request to take personal action, is a multifaceted indirect talk. Restatement Literally, it is a statement concerning a future event. The main illocutionary effect of it, though, is probably a commissive (a mild promise to make things happen) or, more frequently, an evasive command (not to do something with my own hands but look like you are cooperating). The distance provides a buffer opportunity and the speaker attempts to do a dispreferred act (denial, evasion), alleviating its intensity.

Hinting is a strategic and very particular form of indirect speech acts in which the illocutionary force is obscured deliberately, and that the illocutionary force is highly context-dependent. As compared to conventionalised indirect requests (e.g., Can you...), Political hints tend to be non-conventional, and it takes more interpretation work, and can be denied more strongly. Indirectness is also a technique that an interviewer could employ when hinting at a scandal by asking indirect questions based on presupposition where the interrogator does not state the fact, but suggests it, and in the process, makes an accusatory assertion within the formal frame of information seeking (a directive). In this way, the action-oriented grammar needed to break the hinting strategies down is offered by Speech Act Theory.

It empowers the analyst to see the conflict between literal and intended force, chart the explicit illocutionary goals (e.g. to accuse, to promise indirectly, to avoid indirectly, indirectly, indirectly, indirectly, indirectly, indirectly), and assess the felicity conditions that a hint aims to take advantage or to evade. By hinting, a politician will then be creating an indirect form of speech act, whose flawed or fake felicity conditions would be too obvious under a direct form; this is the use of linguistic





structure to deal with political risk (Vanderveken, 1990). This paradigm is thus essential in classifying and interpreting the pragmatic activities that have been achieved by hinted discourse in adversarial contexts.

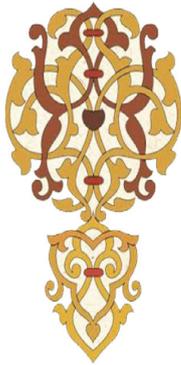
2.4 The Concept of «Strategic Ambiguity» in Political Discourse

Although pragmatic theories show the roles of indirectness, the Strategic Ambiguity concept offers the political and rhetoric justification of the intentional use of indirectness. This model moves the analysis away from the level of the utterance to that of calculated political strategy, where ambiguity is not a failure of clarity, but a potent tool of operating in complex constituency, risk management, and agency in the future.

Strategic ambiguity is the intentional application of ambiguous, equivocal, or polysemous language to fulfil certain political agenda. Its usefulness is that it has the ability to generate a veil of interpretative flexibility (Eisenberg, 1984, p. 230) which will enable many audiences to find the similar meaning in the same message and thus form coalitions and reduce immediate resistance. This can be defined in a political communication theory in terms of managing a coalition and conserving options (Shepsle, 1972).

Strategic ambiguity in the context of a political TV interview is the general logic of politics of employing certain hinting strategies. Ambiguity is a device that is used by a politician in a hostile interviewer or in a polarised public to serve a number of important functions:

- 1) Coalition Building and Broad Appeal A statement of a divisive topic, worded vaguely, permits both progressive and moderate viewers to project the desired image onto the candidate, and this line of action has been much studied in political campaigns (Jamieson, 1992; 2013). To take the example, a mere suggestion that it requires supporting common-sense solutions suggests various policies to varying audiences, and will have greater appeal and less concrete commitment.
- 2) Deniability and Accountability Avoidance This is the defensive analog to coalition-building. A politician can establish plausible deniability by suggesting a stance or assaulting a rival in an indirect way. When they are criticised, they will have the opportunity to fall back to the literal meaning of their words that is less controversial. This, as Farnsworth (2009) notes in presidential rhetoric, enables figures to suggest a policy hint or attack, and then denounce it in case the reaction of the population is negative.



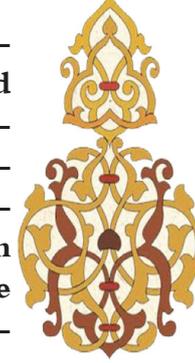
3) Conflict De-escalation and Face-Saving: The direct and unambiguous statements during the adversarial interviews can produce binary losers and losers. Strategic ambiguity adds a buffer, in which both the interviewer and the interviewee can evade a decisive battle which may hurt the political image of the politician or the perceived objectivity of the journalist. It turns a possible FTA into a bargainable innuendo.

4) Agenda Control and Framing: Subtle Reframing may be an instrument of ambiguity. Answering a direct question on policy failure, a politician shifts the discursive frame of accountability to that of visionary leadership by giving an ambiguous hint at future solutions or more systemic issues. The strategic ambiguity must be differentiated with the evasion or confusion. It is an ambitious, rhetorically constructed phenomenon. As it has been revealed in the discussion of diplomatic and organisational communication, the success of diplomatic communication is dependent on a calculated balance: it should be imprecise to suit its strategic needs but precise enough to ensure the consistent portrayal of a public image and avoid the perception of incompetence (Krebs, 2015).

Thus, the analysis of the hinting strategies in chosen interviews should consider not only the repetitions in the frames of implicature, face, and indirect speech acts but in the frame of the strategy too. A hint is seldom merely a tactful evasion, but rather it is a micro-tactical use of a macro-political tactic of indeterminacy, a calculated destruction aimed at negotiating the institutional level of the media interview, and at serving political interests long-term. This idea directly connects the micro-pragmatics of discussion to the macro-principles of surviving and coalition politics.

2.5 Studies Related to the Study

Television interviews with the politicians are not a casual chat but highly institutionalised system of speech exchange, which has definite norms, roles and limitations. Classic studies by Clayman and Heritage (2002) set up the modern news interview as an adversarial genre, unlike the more deferential ones of the past. This institutional character has some main distinguishing signs which are: a strict turn-taking system that is mediated by the journalist, an initial questioner/answerer format, and an auditors' decent group to whom the talk is mostly presented. The interviewer becomes a professionalised representative of the general populace who is supposed to draw out accountability where the interviewee tries to con-



trol impressions and promote policies (Greatbatch, 1988).

This antagonism is carefully manufactured by the strategies of questioning. Interviewers use formulative questions, hostile presupposition, and contrast structures to criticize the position of the politicians and they establish what Bull and Mayer (1993) describe as an accountability environment. The fact that the conventions allow the level of bluntness and challenge that would otherwise be put in an otherwise natural conversation underline the fact that the genre provides a good playground where the defensive, pragmatic, defensive strategies can be put into practice, including hinting at. It is the institutional frame of the interview that therefore avails the required contextual level over which the micro-pragmatic struggle of meaning, face as well as accountability is waged.

One of the key questions of the political interview research is the way in which political personalities evade direct answers. Evasion, or the inability to answer the question that was put across to one, and the linguistic version, equivocation, the use of ambiguous linguistic content to obscure a stance; is not seen as incompetence but rather as a strategic role-playing to communicative fights.

Theories Inventory: To explain political reaction, Bavelas et al. (1990) Theory of Equivocation was built by them on the premise that when someone gets asked a question whose all potential direct answers have bad implications, they respond with equivocation. This was worked out by Bull (2003) into the Political Interview Coding System which recognized certain types of equivocation including disregarding the question, attacking the question, or providing an incomplete response. Harris (1991) also associated evasion to face work by stating that a politician is supposed to weigh the threat of face created by the question, and the threat of face created by an answer that is equally damaging.

The literature has a direct impact on the research of hinting. A hint may be an advanced equivocation; it is receptive and inter-professional (in this way it preserves positive face) and yet enables the speaker to evade the substantial commitment that would be involved in a direct response. Evasion has been shown to be most widespread in conflictual interviews, with high stakes, which is the exact situation that has been chosen as the case of the current study where the accountability pressure is in the peak (Clayman et al., 2007).



Political interview is the art of negotiation, which is symbolic power all the time. Although the interviewer has the capacity of exercise the interactional power in charting the topic agenda, turn-taking and posing the questions, the politician also has a good capacity of having the institutional and informational power, such as having access to knowledge on policies and the powers inherent in his/her office (Montgomery, 2007).

This is a tension of dynamic nature. The influence by the interviewer is done by designing questions: making presuppositions that can prove the refuted facts to be true; stating earlier statements of the politicians in a disastrous way; using the so-called tough sequences of questioning. The source of power of the interviewee is response design: rejecting the agenda set out by the interviewer, reframing the agenda of the question (or, most importantly), being indirect and hinting to gain control over the narrative without losing a cooperative attitude.

Research into power shows that hinting is one of the main resources the interviewee bases his struggle on. It enables them to withstand the controlling frame of the interviewer without getting involved into a bald-on-record refusal which may be construed as being obstructive. Through hinting, the politician applies some form of covert resistance as he indirectly contests the interviewer in their description of the situation and yet still maintains their own image as a person capable of being reasonable and responsive. The problem of power relations is thus needed to be analyzed instead to comprehend under which circumstances and why hinting strategies are resorted to because they are an imperative tactic of the asymmetrical battle of the political interview (Hutchby, 2006).

It is important to have a definite conceptual demarcation. Although allied, hinting is one of the pragmatic categories. The concept of hinting can best be explained as a strategically incomplete utterance containing a small part that is aimed at inducing an inference in the listener and leaving the speaker plausibility deniable about this inference (Thomas, 1995). Its central feature is strategic opaqueness, which is the deliberate lack of explicit propositional information.

The studies on the professional scenes show that indirectness and hinting are not the deficiencies but effective means of dealing with the relation- and institution-related limitations. Their functional versions in taxonomies are:



1) Relational Maintenance: During medical communication, doctors rely on indirectness and suggestions (e.g., Some patients find it helpful to reduce salt) as a way of maintaining patient autonomy and minimizing the face threat of telling them directly what to do (Lingard and Haber, 1999).

2) Negotiation and Diplomacy: Direct speech acts and masked threats are also preconditions in diplomacy since one can indicate stance, check response, and reserve the right to abandon without a word (Cohen, 2001). Here is all strategic ambiguity in its simplest form.

3) Hierarchy Management: Subordinates in organisational contexts tend to apply hinting to their superiors in an upwards manner which enables them to escalate certain sensitive matters (e.g. ethical concerns, failure of operations) without being perceived as disobedient and offensive (Waldron, 1991).

4) Conflict Avoidance: Indirectness is one of the major conflict avoiding strategies used by different cultures to maintain peace in a group, and the avoiding of a direct conflict through cross cultural pragmatics (Wierzbicka, 2003).

These studies all show that indirectness has fundamental roles of diffusing threat and maintaining optionality, and controlling social rank – roles that are multiplied exponentially in the high–stakes, social media–based political arena.

Despite robust bodies of work on political interviews and on indirectness generally, a significant interdisciplinary gap remains. Existing research has produced:

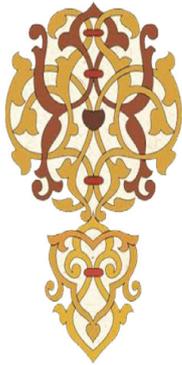
1) Macro–analyses of evasion that code for non–answers but often lack the fine–grained pragmatic lens to distinguish between a blunt refusal, a topic shift, and a sophisticated hint (e.g., coding systems like Bull’s, 2003).

2) Theoretical pragmatics (Grice, Brown & Levinson) applied to political discourse, but often in a broad, illustrative manner rather than through a systematic, empirical analysis of a curated interview corpus.

3) Genre studies of interviews that expertly describe adversarial questioning and accountability structures but less frequently focus on the nuanced response repertoire beyond «equivocation.»

Methodology:

The methodology employs a qualitative, discourse–pragmatic analysis of ten purposively selected interview segments from major U.S. news pro–



grams. The core unit of analysis is the «hinting sequence», the interaction containing a journalist's question and a politician's indirect response. Selection criteria ensure data richness: interviewees are sitting U.S. politicians discussing high-stakes, controversial topics where accountability pressure is intense, making strategic hinting likely.

Procedure analysis is done through hybrid coding scheme. First, it determines formal means of linguistics (e.g., rhetorical questions, presuppositions, metaphorical language, unclear phrasing). Second, it decodes the strategic role of every hint (e.g. avoidance of responsibility, indirect accusation, conditioning support). These micro-theories are informed by overriding pragmatic theories (Grice, Brown and Levinson, Searle) and always put in its proper perspective within the macro-context of the interview, such as network ideology and immediate political events. This methodical one connects the linguistic form and the political plan in a systematic manner.

Data Analysis:

Sample (1)

- Interviewer (Jake Tapper): «What evidence is there that it came from a lab?»

-Interviewee (Sen. Marco Rubio): «The Chinese Communist Party has not been transparent. They've lied about it from the beginning. They've blocked access. If it was a pure zoonotic transmission, why wouldn't they allow that investigation to move forward freely? That's the real question here.»). (Rubio on COVID-19 Origins (CNN, May 23, 2021 <https://www.cnn.com/videos/politics/2021/05/23/marco-rubio-covid-origins-lab-leak-sotu-vpx.cnn>))

The reaction that Senator Rubio provides uses the types of language well to avoid a direct demand to provide evidence and, at the same time, moves a politically charged story. He also makes use of a strategic presupposition when he says that they have been lying about it since the very first time, which assumes that there was a secret truth. His reply itself is dominated by a rhetorical question (Should it have been a pure zoonotic spread, why should they not have been permitted to do that investigation?), which is intended to do nothing but discuss very strongly a lab point of origin, given that the coverage of China is designed as an indication of its culpability. Such machines are supported by appeal to emotional branding (lied, not



transparent), in that these portray the Chinese Communist Party as purposely disruptive. It is a linguistic constructions like these that enable him to subvert the direct question of the interviewer, replacing a logical and political supposition by the factual evidence demanded.

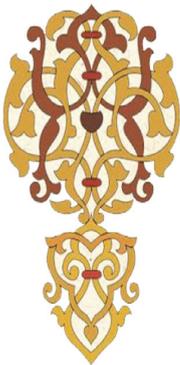
The main political role of this hinting is the accusation with a denying meaning. Rubio gets an air strike delivering an indirect attack, referencing the lab-leak hypothesis, and pointing the cover-up up at the CCP, but never includes a single, on-record assertion to anything. This would grant him plausible deniability since he can back down to only pointing out a lack of transparency. The chain effectively puts an end to the oppositional mode of inquiry by changing the paradigm of assessing literal evidence into negotiating the behaviour of the Chinese. In the end, the plan will enable him to send a signal of alignment to a controversial political story, mobilize his supporters against an enemy in geopolitical terms, and leave the reader with a doll in the mind- but without having to assume the responsibility that would come with making a direct argument.

Sample (2):

- Interviewer (Chris Wallace): «You are not saying, are you, that this election was stolen?»

- Interviewee (Sen. Mike Lee): «Allegations of fraud, if true, are serious. And they deserve to be heard... What I'm calling for is an emergency audit.» (Lee on Election Certification (Fox News, Jan 3, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0UABJh5tC-w>))

The response of Senator Mike Lee uses a calculated combination of hinting forms to wade the direct binary question. His major tool is institutional and procedural vagueness, which is present in his request to the emergency audit. It is an opaque term that does not have a specific legal or procedural definition and can mean some kind of urgent or corrective action without explaining what that action involves or what kind of standards would be identified as satisfying it. This ambiguity is informed by a strategic assumption in the term «Allegations of fraud, if true» in which the idea of fraud is introduced as a valid object of consideration on the assumption that its assertions are believable built up in the context of a different situation where such assertions are credible. In addition to this, his commentary employs affective and evaluative labeling, where he labels the allegations as being serious and he thinks such allegations should



be given a hearing, which makes the demand to have an audit more of a democratic concern than a partisan debate. All these forms enable him to escape the yes/no paradigm of the question.

The instrumental role of this response is two-fold and it functions as an evasion via implied relevance as well as in-group alignment. Lee also violates the Maxim of Relation because he does not say yes or no to the question of whether the election was stolen; but rather changes the frame to the action of dealing with allegations. This is to evade having to honestly support a stolen-election claim, but denying him the opportunity to disavow it, keeping matters strategically ambiguous. At the same time, the use of the language of fraud, emergency and auditing is an in-group alignment and indicates that one is in alignment with a base who believes that the election was not legitimate. And since he concentrates on the procedural hint, he authenticates their concerns and sets himself out as a supporter of investigation without needing to legally or factually justify the very essence, the accusation of theft, which is stolen.

Interactional negotiation shows that a hinting was effectively used to manage the sequence. The question raised by Chris Wallace is a straight forward questioning style, which aims at getting out of an unambiguous, responsible position on the main accusation. Lee alludes to this obscurity on procedural level, which is an interviewer accommodation or a drop: by failing to directly repeat his question or question the muddled terms, he accepts the implicit change of frame and ends the line of questioning, on the conditions required by Lee. The logical result is that the harming dichotomous decision is shunned. There is no compulsion to direct and false crime of stolen election and there is no compulsion to minimize his base by discarding their narrative wholesale. The implicature that it was wrong enough to require an emergency response cannot be disputed by the audience, attaining the political purpose of giving a signal of allegiance and maintains procedural deniability.

Sample (3):

- Interviewer (Chuck Todd): «Why has he not had a press conference?»
- Interviewee (Jen Psaki): «He's done more interviews than his last predecessors... He engages with all of you, respectfully, on a regular basis. I think the American people would rather hear him talk about the work he's doing...» (Psaki on Biden's Press Conferences (NBC, March 21, 2021, <https://>



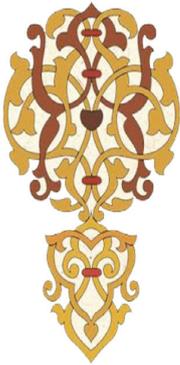
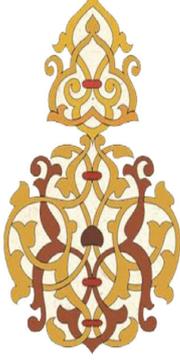
www.youtube.com/watch?v=YIuJk0vFcA8)

In this interaction, the White House Press Secretary, Jen Psaki employs certain rhetorical strategies to avoid the criticism of the accessibility in President Biden. She mostly uses conditional and analogical framing hinting, as in the comparative statement, «He has conducted more interviews than his past predecessors have done before him have done it before him at all. This creates an implicated, reformulated measuring rod of presidential involvement, moving the meter of formal press conferences to a more generalized, unspecified group of interviews. This is in conjunction with a strategic presupposition in the statement, I think the American people would rather hear him talk about what he is doing, which presupposes the preference of the people and the fact that press conferences do not relate to answering questions about his job. The wording makes the question of the journalist seem to be concerned with a frivolous format rather than the content.

The primary practical role in this case is evasion by implication. Psaki actually violates Grice Maxim of Relation when he does not clarify the reason why no press conference has been given. Rather, she offers a topical proximity answer regarding other types of interaction and assumed general opinion, thus denying the assumption of the query. It also plays a subtle role of indirect criticism, with the emphasis placed on the press conference ritual by the media being seen as a practice that is not relevant to the interest of people. Interactionally, the hinting cycle results in interviewer accommodation or drop; providing a refined, principle-driven rebuttal, Psaki manages to end the confrontational type of line of questioning. The subsequent consequence exempts the re-framing of the White House, which is that Biden is approachable in better ways, to pass without challenge, shielding the President to a story of not answering, and indirectly mocking the priorities of media.

Sample (4):

- Interviewer (George Stephanopoulos): «Can you do your job as leader?»
- Interviewee (Sen. Mitch McConnell): «My doctor, Brian Monahan, said I'm 'medically clear to continue with my schedule'... He referred to me having 'moments of lightheadedness'... I think we've had a pretty good year in the Senate.» (McConnell on His Health (ABC, Sept 24, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=15fWft7sTDk>)



Senator Mitch McConnell uses layered hinting strategy in this dialogue to avoid answering a straightforward question whether he can lead or not. The main tool he uses is a strategic presupposition, which can be seen with his appeal to a statement of his doctor that he is medically clear to continue. This entrenches the medical view of authority as an assumed and adequate response to the question of job performance based on the assumption that being health cleared is being able to act as an impaired leader. And then, instantly, comes evasion by implied relevance, him turning to the subject of the legislative production: I believe we have had a good year in the Senate. This is an outright violation of the Maxim of Relation where the frame makes a shift of his personal well-being and ability to the institutional performance. The delicacy with which she admits to incidents of lightheadedness relies on conditional framing in order to pay respect to the observable episode as well as down-playing it as a transitional, non-disabling case.

The pragmatic role generally is a twofold escape: the first is of the desired individual measurement, and the second is of the political susceptibility. Replacing a decision of a medical authority and measure of Senate productivity, McConnell does not have to issue any direct, evaluative judgment regarding his own fitness, a thing that can be politically harmful in case, in the future, it is rejected by the development of events. The hinting also serves to embed institutional authority and legitimacy, by cigarette smoking success, the hinting is projected as a normative aspect that the interviewer wants or suggests, and the drop or accommodation of the interviewer. Compelled to declare a definite medical quotation and the transition to substantive Senate success, the interviewer is logically tied to the wall; to go any further will be tantamount to declaring the medical examination negligible or to claim that the health and the work performance cannot be separated, which may be perceived to be too pushy. In this way the punch has been effective in shutting the line of inquiry and the implied point by McConnell of being medically fine and effective can be left unchallenged.

Sample (5):

- Interviewer (Shannon Bream): «What tangible changes is the U.S. demanding to protect civilians?»
- Interviewee (Jake Sullivan): «We are having intensive consultations



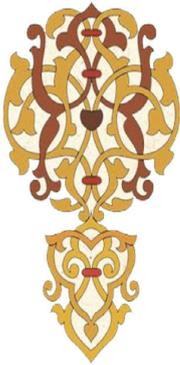
with the Israeli defense establishment... We are making our points clear through working level channels... It is a priority and we will continue to make it one.» (Sullivan on Israel-Gaza Strategy (Fox News, Oct 29, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wY5AZMRwhII>)

Here we can trace an example of institutional and procedural vagueness as a main hinting form as the National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan provides a response of textbook application. The wording of his text is full of the convoluted, process-oriented jargon: intense consultations, clarifying our points, working-level channels. These expressions connote hard work, behind-the-scenes operation but carefully spared oneself of any concrete details, the nature of what is points, what alterations are required, and what repercussions may ensue. This amorphousness is contextualized by affect and judgmental epithets and in the context of civilian protection, this term is dubbed a priority which speaks of moral seriousness but being strategically disconnected with specific quantification and /or time. The building produces an impression of involved diplomacy and it tells nothing of what is in it.

The central pragmatic role played in this context is the evasion in the form of connotationally relevant action and action. Sullivan goes against the Maxim of Relation directly since he does not identify the actual changes that are required. Rather than describing a process and emphasis, he replaces the frame of definite results, with the continuous interaction. That way, he can get off the potentially divisive or unmet demands, and leave the picture of a well-functioning, 24/7 government business without making any claims, which can be quantifiable. This sort of bureaucratic vagueness usually creates interviewer accommodation or drop in an interactive sense. With a wall of formal, procedural verbiages that cannot be readily punctured to obtain classified information, the interviewer is practically summarized. The progressive result of this is that the narrative preferred by the administration that it is handling a complex situation in a responsible and quiet way never gets challenged, and the absence of concrete demands or expression through the masses remains hidden behind the veil of the so-called working-level channels.”

Sample (6):

- Interviewer (Dana Bash): «Do you believe this impeachment inquiry is legitimate?»

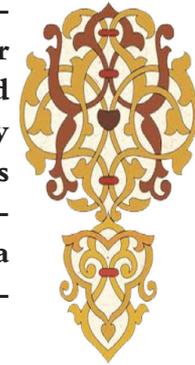
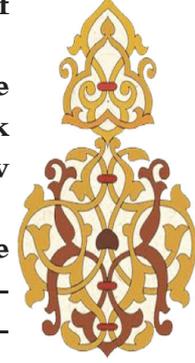


– Interviewee (Rep. Nancy Pelosi): «This is a diversionary tactic... And it's no coincidence that it's connected to Russia... They're using it as a political tool.» (Pelosi on GOP Impeachment Inquiry (CNN, July 2, 2023, <https://www.cnn.com/videos/politics/2023/07/02/nancy-pelosi-republican-impeachment-inquiry-sotu-vpx.cnn>)

This interaction is a direct expression of the strategies of presupposition as practiced by Representative Nancy Pelosi where both affective and evaluative labelling to redefine the question altogether are present. She makes two highly controversial statements which she presents as unquestionable truths when she states that the impeachment investigation is a divergent move and claims that it is no accident that the investigate is linked to foreign hostile interests. This evaluative framing has been further strengthened by the terming of it as a political means which imposes malicious intent on the actions of the opposition. Such a collection of machines enables her to escape the two-polar product legitimate or not of the question replacing a decision as to its nature and provenance instead.

The major practical use in this is the accusation with deniability and in-group identification. The accusation that Pelosi makes is biting, multifaceted, and indirect: she is suggesting that the investigation is not only a domestic political mockery but also foreign influence. This makes her be able to delegitimise the process and retain a level of deniability aggressively– she is not legally ruling on its legitimacy but is merely implicating its nature and building up to its relationships. At the same time, the reference to Russia can be viewed as a highly effective in-group identification, which triggers an old familiar story of her partisan supporters making the opposition out to be weakened. This is an effective framing seizure on the interactional level. The confrontational nature of the question posed by Dana Bash is avoided by the dramatic reframing of Pelosi, which can make the interviewer either adopt the new subject (alleged political and foreign sources of the inquiry) or seek to redirect to the initial question, which is often hard when such an accusatory and presuppositional answer is delivered. The resultant effect is that the suggestion prevails and Pelosi fulfills political scores and gathers her fans and inoculates a controversy seed without ever justifying the procedural details of the validity of inquiry.

Sample (7):



- Interviewer (Kristen Welker): «You've been a strong supporter of Ukraine aid. Now you're voting against it?»

- Interviewee (Sen. Lindsey Graham): «I want to help Ukraine, but we need conditions... We need a plan. What I won't do is write a blank check while our own border is a disaster.» (Graham on Ukraine Aid (NBC, Nov 19, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=obqMLzoZx5M>)

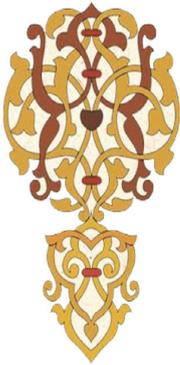
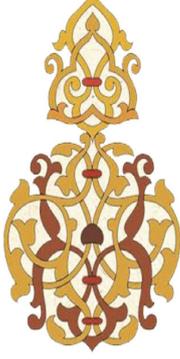
In this exchange, the reaction of Senator Lindsey Graham is based on the framing of conditions and analogies along with the affective and evaluative labeling. His opposition is not a withdrawal of support, but on conditional terms as he structures them, the conditional structure: I want to help Ukraine, but there has to be conditions... This is enhanced by the fact that the metaphorical term of blank check is very strong, which denotes little to no responsibility in the future spending and the affective term of disaster to describe the U.S. border, by creating a graphic comparative priorities portrayal. There is no direct yes and no to the query how to explain that he is voting against aid and these gadgets enable him to reinvent his role as a negotiator of principled nature and not an opponent.

Conditional bargaining and setting the agenda is the main pragmatic approach and in-group alignment plays a weak secondary role here. Graham provides the hint to float a political trade-off, literally coupling Ukraine assistance with the non-linked topic of border security. This contextualizes his vote as not an antagonistic action but as an element of deceit to pressurize on a fundamental conservative issue. The wording of blank check and disaster both done at the same time is an indicator that it relates with a base that remains solidly dissatisfied with the idea of spending on the outside borders as well as being worried about the issue of domestic border policy. Interactionally, this alluding makes escape by evasion of implied relevance; he avoids personal inconsistency expressed in the question by putting the policy trade-off on a wider scale. The resultant effect of this is that the preoccupation of the interviewer in his personal support is effectively extended into a discussion on the state of legislative affairs in such a way that Graham is able to legitimize himself as a strategist and a domestically oriented individual instead of a policy schizophrenic.

Sample (8):

Interviewer (Jake Tapper): «Why sound this public alarm?»

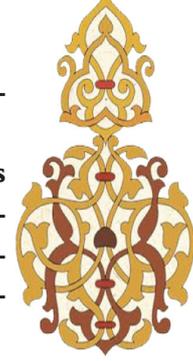
Interviewee (Rep. Mike Turner): «This was a Biden administration de-



cision to keep this information from Congress for months... They were basically sleepwalking. Now we have to wake them up.» (Turner on National Security Threat (CNN, Feb 25, 2024, <https://www.cnn.com/videos/politics/2024/02/25/mike-turner-serious-national-security-threat-sotu-vpx.cnn>)

Two main types of hinting are used by Representative Mike Turner in his response to explain his alarm that is openly justified. The former is affective and evaluative labelling which describes the alleged failure of the administration as the labelling of the delay and the metaphoric language of conditions and analogical labeling by stating that they were basically sleepwalking. Now we have to wake them up.» This metaphor of sleep walking is an excellent way to portray the administration as an inactive, ignorant person and to make the own, rather controversial public statement of Turner a needed, corrective move. Not only that, but his introductory sentence makes use of strategic presupposition, which positions the argument that the Biden administration was intentionally withholding information to Congress as self-evident, thus stating the culpability of the executive branch in the very first sentence of his argument before he even gets to the issue of why he did it.

The innermost utilitarian role, in this case, is accusation and deniability and scattering responsibility. Turner fails to explicitly give the reason as to why he used a public alarm instead of inside channels. Rather, he makes an indirect yet harsh attack on administrative incompetency and hindrance (sleepwalking, secretiveness of information). This will enable him to maneuver the premise of the question asked by Tapper, which implicitly attacks the judgment of Turner by turning it around and saying that it was all the administration and nothing to do with the question of why. The allusion is also in-group alignment that reports to a hawkish base that he is willing to take on a Democratic administration on issues of national security. This interactional framing seizure is successful. Turner makes the administration on the defensive by switching straight to an attack. The sequential outcome compels the interviewer to decide either to oppose the presupposition facts of administrative secrecy or to attack the metaphorical critique of Turner. This serves to effectively put an end to the initial questioning regarding his identity in terms of choice of actions, and thus, trafficking the implicature that his dramatic point of warning was



not only warranted, but also needed by the audience.

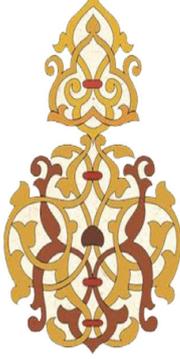
Sample (9):

Interviewer (Shannon Bream): «What is the U.S. prepared to do if American troops keep getting attacked?»

Interviewee (Sec. Antony Blinken): «We've responded, including just this past week... We've been very clear about our red lines. That's a conversation we're having in another channel.» (Blinken on Middle East Diplomacy (Fox News, Feb 4, 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zR-KMhsKvqw>)

Secretary Blinken, in his response, draws on a conventional definition of institutional and procedural vagueness as his main hinting tool. His use of another channel is a deliberate opaqueness, meaning, serious, confidential diplomatic or military communications, and telling neither what they contain or whom they address or what is expected as the result. This is combined with narrow viewing in the claim, We header had been very clear about our red lines that assumes that there are well-articulated lines and that hostile actors recognize such lines, which in turn frequently receive criticism themselves. This first statement, We have delivered, even this very week, uses affective labeling in that it uses the verb responded, which signifies action and resolve, but does not specify it, is left as an empty signifier of posture instead of one of policy.

The practical value of this created vagueness is evasion in the form of implication of action and deterrence. Blinken directly contravenes the Maxim of Relation by failing to provide an answer on what is the message that the U.S. will do in the future. In their place, he focuses on the previous activity and obscured current discussions, replacing a visage of domineering, dictatory deliberation with a proclaiming promise of the future. This will enable him to not box the administration into a particular, escalatory threat in trying to portray strategic deterrence. Interactionally, this type of high-level procedural language typically forces an interviewers accommodation or drop. Faced with the shield of classified "channels" and the assertion of established "red lines," the interviewer has little discursive material to press against without appearing to demand the compromise of sensitive operations. The sequential outcome is that the administration's ambiguity is preserved. The hint successfully terminates the line of questioning, allowing the audience to infer robust behind-the-scenes



resolution without the administration being accountable for any specific, unmet promise of future action.

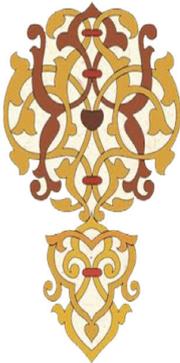
Sample (10):

Interviewer (Margaret Brennan): «Will you support more funding for Ukraine?»

Interviewee (Sen. JD Vance): «If the President wants a package for Ukraine, he should be willing to negotiate on real border security measures for the United States... That has to be part of the conversation.» (Vance on Ukraine Aid & Shutdown (CBS, Oct 1, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZqazSfWf44I>))

In the last sample, the response by Senator JD Vance will be framed in the context of clear conditional and analogical framing which means that the connection between issues is uncompromising. The very basis of his reply is the face of the hypothetical: If the President desires a package to Ukraine, he must be prepared to trade on veritable border protection. This framing changes the debate about support into one of contingent negotiation with an express quid pro quo of supporting foreign policy as a matter of principle. The term real border security measures also incorporates a strategic presupposition, which entails stating that existing measures are inadequate or lack seriousness as part of the inalienable assumption of the discussion. He has to say, That has to be part of the conversation, indicating an institutional vagueness as to what a conversation is, but establishes furtively the conditions of his engagement.

The non-ideological role is absolutely conditional bargaining and agenda-setting, and the second influence softening in-group accordance. Vance does not directly answer yes and no on the Ukraine funds, but circumvents the question by saying his assistance will be subject to an unknown domestic priority. This is a strategic reposition of his stand as a victim of isolationism to a zealous negotiation, whereby the foreign policy is used to pursue a domestic agenda towards his political platform. Real border security language is a direct indication of alignment to in-group among voters who are more concerned with immigration control. In the interactional manner, this conditional cue causes a successful framing seizure. The direct question by Margaret Brennan is diverted to the background when Vance rudely combines two independent policy agendas. The stages result in him being neither stuck on the issue of Ukraine itself, nor





does it present the impression of a practical negotiator holding the line on one of the principal conservative requests, which leaves the political responsibility to make a failed Ukraine aid package on the willingness of the President to compromise.

Discussion:

The discussion of these ten interview samples shows that there is an organized and advanced application of linguistic hinting by the political leaders on both sides of the partisan divide. These procedures are not occasional escapes, but a grammar, institutionalized grammar, of politics in the contemporary media of adversarial politics.

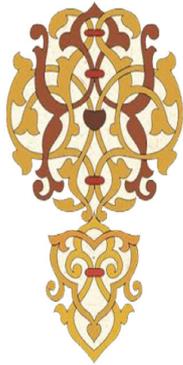
A. Interpretation of the Findings

1. Hinting as Tools for «Calculated Ambivalence»

Calculated ambiguity is a survival and influence mechanism in a hyper-polarised environment where any candid utterance may be turned against an opponent or alienate members of a coalition. The hinting tactics identified are the major tools of accomplishing this. Binary Traps Evasion: Yes/no questions that are direct and render responsibility. The speaker may escape the binary constraints of the question through the use of such strategies as procedural vagueness (Samples 2, 5, 9) and conditional framing (Samples 7, 10). Instead of taking the position deemed required, they initiate a debate on process, requirements, or irrelevant matters. Also, Signalling Without Stating: Strategic presupposition (Samples 1, 4, 6, 8) and affective labelling enable such figures as Rubio, Pelosi, and Turner to institute accusatory stories (e.g., «lab cover-up», «Russian connection», «administration sleepwalking») as structural background. This gathers the base and strikes back against the opponents but keeps it plausible deniability. Dealing with Conflicting Audiences: Politicians have to address the conflicting parties on the media interlocutor, partisan base, and the general public simultaneously. This dual coded communication is made possible by hinting. The base can decipher a reply such as that one by Mike Lee (Sample 2) or JD Vance (Sample 10) as one that strongly endorsed their own opinions (the election was fraudulent, border over Ukraine) and to the interviewer and the neutral observers as a demand to the process or to a negotiation based on principles.

2. Interplay with the TV Interview Genre

The TV interview is a show business that bears certain requirements:



that it appreciates confrontation, brevity of soundbites, and the illusion of power being put to the test. Hinting techniques are masterly adapted to the genre. To begin with, Controlling the Sequential Flow: Suitable hinting, which occurs in almost all the samples, results in an interviewer accommodation or drop. This is a given to the interviewer, a polished usually principle-based response which is hard to dispute without themselves being perceived as rude, obsessively procedural, or dismissive of the alleged facts (a doctor note in Sample 4 or a set of channels in Sample 9). This will enable the politician to put a stop to the confronting line of questioning in their own terms. Second, Performing Competence and Control: Vagueness about process, which includes intensive consultations, another channel) executes the image of industrious back-of-the-scenes governance. Future shift to legislative success (McConnell, Sample 4) or comparative indicators (Psaki, Sample 3) are effective. Even the suggestion itself is a display of tactical astuteness and verbal discipline. Finally, Generating Shareable Content: The emotive terms (disaster, sleepwalking, blank check) and the incisive questions (Rubio, Sample 1) are meant to generate powerful and emotionally evoking soundbites that leave the interview and create partisan media cycles and interactions on the social media.

Table 1: Frequency of Primary Hinting Strategies Across Samples

Primary Hinting Strategy	Definition	Example Samples	Freq.	100%
Strategic Presupposition	Treating a debatable claim as an established fact.	1, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10	6	60%
Institutional/Procedural Vagueness	Using opaque, process-oriented language to withhold specifics.	2, 5, 9, 10	4	40%
Conditional & Analogical Framing	Reframing an answer as dependent on unmet conditions or via metaphor.	3, 4, 7, 8, 10	5	50%
Affective & Evaluative Labeling	Using charged language to assign moral/emotional value.	1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9	7	70%

B. Theoretical Implications

1. Extending Implicature and Politeness Theory

The old Gricean implicature is aimed at cooperative dialogue. Political interview hinting is an implicature of non-cooperation. Politicians violate the Maxim of Relation (relevance) and Quantity (informativeness) systematically however, not in order to break down, but as an intentional



act of power to capture the conversational frame.

Likewise politeness theory (Brown and Levinson) will have to be implicitly thrust in order to explain face–work via mediation. The face that is under protection belongs not only to the personal dignity of an interviewee, but also to his/her political plausibility, party affections, and party agenda. The innuendo of hinting enables them to intimidate the face of their enemies (by imputation) or the media (by directing their question as insignificant) without putting theirs at risk.

2. The Institutionalisation of Hinting

This discussion implies that hinting is institutionalised as a characteristic of political speech rather than merely a fluke of rhetoric. It is a professional skill, which communications teams would probably develop, supported by rewards of the media ecosystem. The uniformity in patterns among people, parties and issue areas (foreign policy, elections, health, procedure) indicates the existence of communicative repertoire which characterizes elite political talk. Such institutionalisation is a transformation of political language as an instrument of clarity of the position, to an instrument of negotiating ambiguity, of going through the accountability, and of group loyalty.

C. Practical and Sociopolitical Implications

1. Accountability and Transparency in the «Hinting» Era

The administrative use of these approaches is a major problem to democratic accountability and transparency. To begin with Accountability Evasion: Direct Accountability Direct accountability needs explicit testable statements. Hinting provides a shield. This is because a politician will only be held accountable to what they actually stated (I called for an audit), rather than the incriminating implicature their followers heard (the election was stolen). Secondly, The Illusion of Transparency: Joinder of Procedural vagueness (Blinken, Sullivan): The illusion of transparency: This kind of response consists of description (consultations, channels) and obfuscation (substance). The masses get exposed to the buzzing of the government without being able to assess its course and effectiveness. In conclusion, Erosion of the Factual Baseline: Strategic presupposition represents an action of active corrosion of a shared factual ground. Using disputed statements as assumed initial points to be discussed precludes the possibility of a reasonable argument since it is the situation with Samples 1



(lab leak) and 6 (Russian connection).

2. Public Decoding and Media Literacy

The effects on the general knowledge are immense.

a) Asymmetrical Decoding: Hinting is dependent on asymmetrical decoding. Partisan listeners, having been primed by their media ecology, have a great skill in receiving the intended accusatory or in receiving the alignment implicature. Weakly or uninvolved audiences might only hear an empty answer or a promise of going through the motions and start to become disoriented or exasperated.

b) Requirement on Media Literacy– The citizens are no longer expected to be able to know what is being said. Critical media literacy now entails hinting literacy or the aptitude to examine non-literary discourse, recognize tactical assumptions, realise pivots and differentiate action being acted and actionable information.

c) The Dilemma of the Journalist: Interviewers are in a structural dilemma. Conceding the hint tolerates the evasion; though vigorously demanding it might create the effect that someone is being aggressive, or more likely in to engage in a meta-debate on the process of interviewing itself. New interview strategies might be needed to put presuppositions in their place and insist on concretisation of unclear procedural statements.

Conclusion:

This paper has found that linguistic hinting has now emerged as a tactic of rhetoric on occasion to become a systematic and institutionalised grammar of political communication. Politicians of both poles consistently resorts to a toolkit of non-literal rhetoric plans, or strategic presupposition, procedural vagueness, conditional framing, and affective labeling, to pursue ambivalence calculatedly in this adversarial field of contemporary media. The essence of such plans is two-fold: these are aimed at avoiding fundamental responsibility and promoting political discourse. They enable their speakers to purposefully violate communicative ideals of relevance and volume not to communicate poorly, but rather as a tool of frame management. This allows politicians to get out of binary traps, indicate loyalty to their base by use of implicature, attack adversaries with plausible deniability, and demonstrate an image of competence– all within the limited medium of a televised interview.

On the one hand, such a phenomenon puts a strain on and develops



more traditional approaches to implicature and politeness, indicating a non-cooperative application of strategy in which ambiguity as a professional resource. In practice, the widespread adoption of hinting presents a powerful sociopolitical problem: it attacks the principle of democratic accountability by cutting of the connection between statement and responsibility, generates an impression of transparency in procedural circumlocution, and destroys a common factual ground by encoding disputed assertion into commonplace. Finally, institutionalisation of hinting signifies change of political discourse tool to explain positions to be an instrument to control perception, manoeuvre risk and do tribal adjustment. It is a challenge which requires a commensurate change in media literacy because it is the responsibility of both the public and the journalists to cultivate what will be termed as hinting literacy the skill of criticalizing the strategic omissions, presuppositions, and affective cues which now form the bulk of most elite political discourse. This formidable, yet so frequently veil of communicative layer, depends upon the recognition and interrogation of that layer to ensure the honesty of the popular discourse.

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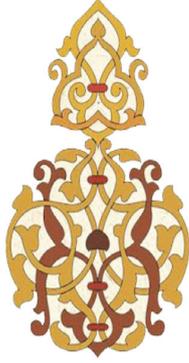
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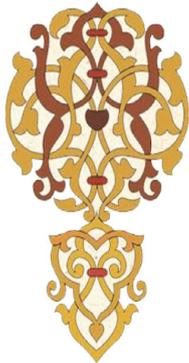


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