

Mariam D. Saffah

Justification. A Pragmatic Perspective

A Study of Some Selected British and American
Decision-Makers' Political Speeches

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JUSTIFICATION: A PRAGMATIC PERSPECTIVE

By

MARIAM D. SAFFAH

and

HAMEED HASOON AL- MAS'UDI (SUPERVISOR)

TO MY MOTHER,

*A STRONG AND GENTLE SOUL WHO TAUGHT
ME TO HAVE TRUST IN ALLAH, BELIEVE IN HARD
WORK AND THAT SO MUCH COULD BE DONE
WITH LITTLE. SHE, FROM AN EARLY AGE, GAVE
ME THE CONFIDENCE TO DO ANYTHING I SET MY
MIND TO.*

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Abstract

Justification may be a prerequisite for any claim that is made, whether the claim is about a weather forecast by a meteorologist, an accusation of negligence by an employee against his or her employers, or a doctor's diagnosis. Justification denotes a communicative act which is meant to compensate for the violation of a certain norm or to enable recipients to understand better something unpredicted or disputed.

Although justification is ubiquitous in everyday life, it has so far remained relatively unexplored in general and in the political domain in particular. Therefore, this study examines its pragmatic aspects in some selected British and American political speeches. It sets itself the task of fulfilling the following aims: (1) finding out the various criteria of justification resorted to by British and American decision-makers and discovering the most frequent criterion; (2) detecting the types of justification that are most recurrently used by British and American decision-makers in the data under study ; (3) identifying the pragmatic structure of justification employed by British and American decision-makers shedding some light on its most basic structural components; (4) finding out the different pragmatic strategies employed by British and American decision-makers to justify their decisions and detecting the most frequent ones; (5) identifying the similarities and differences between British and American decision-makers regarding the use of the criteria, types, strategies and basic structural components of justification ; (6) specifying the role played by strategic maneuvering in justification; (7) designing an eclectic model for data analysis; (8) shedding some light on the different approaches proposed to account for the complex nature of justification.

In relation to the foregoing aims, the following hypotheses are tested: (1) justifications produced in the data under study are grounded on diverse criteria;

(2) correction constitutes the most recurrent type of justification resorted to by British and American decision makers; (3) different types of justification require different situations; (4) no intra- or interlines of demarcation can be drawn between British and American political speeches concerning the pragmatic structure of justification; (5) some justification strategies occur with higher frequency than others in British and American decision-makers' political speeches; (6) speech acts such as stating and telling are the most basic structural components of the justifications produced in the data under study; (7) certain structural components function as initiators of justifications in British and American decision-makers' political speeches; (8) differences can be found between British and American decision-makers regarding the use of justification strategies; (9) British decision-makers employ more justification strategies than their American counterparts; and (10) sometimes, and in order to justify their decisions, British and American decision-makers resort to derailment of strategic maneuvering producing fallacies of various types.

To achieve the aims of the study and assess the validity of its hypotheses, a number of procedures are followed: (1) reviewing the literature relevant to justification and enhancing its pragmatic nature; (2) developing an eclectic model to be used in analyzing the data under study through surveying the relevant pragmatic theories; (3) randomly selecting data as representative examples for both British and American political speeches and analyzing them by means of the model developed for this purpose; (4) conducting a statistical analysis to support the findings of the pragmatic analysis; and (5) Conducting a comparison between the strategies of justification used by the British and American decision-makers.

The findings of data analysis demonstrate that while the first, the fourth, the fifth, the sixth, the seventh, the eighth, the ninth, and the tenth hypotheses are confirmed, the second and the third hypotheses are rejected.

LIST OF ABBRIVIATIONS

CP	Cooperative Principle
CS	Concluding stage
H	Hearer
IS	Initiation stage
S	Speaker
SS	Subsequent stage

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Problem

According to Orsolini (1993: 281), in a conflictive talk, speakers assume two interactional roles: denying the addressee's position and supplying some support for their own. Arguments that they employ as support normally indicate that speaker's position is grounded on underlying norms and rules that are expected to be held by all participants. Thus, in a conflictive talk, supplying justifications means producing arguments that are able to render the speaker's position less disputed by the recipient.

In this regard, Sinnott-Armstrong and Fogelin (2010: 3) assert that one of the most salient uses of arguments is that of justifying a disputed claim. Thus, justifications are meant to provide reasons to accept their conclusions. These justifications have the effect of altering the addressee's thinking by making him/her believe a conclusion that he has doubted before.

Prior to that, Kasachkoff (1988: 20-9) mentions that justifications and explanations serve diverse purposes. However, their purposes are recurrently mingled to the extent that they cannot be separated one from the other. Moreover, it is demonstrated that determining whether a given discourse is an explanation or a justification is not always an easy task to do and only will the context in which it occurs decide that. It will show whether the speaker is attempting to make the audience accept a particular fact or he/she concentrates on making the audience understand that fact.

In spite of the fact that justification is pervasive in everyday interactions, it has remained relatively linguistically, particularly pragmatically, unexplored. This study provides an investigation of justification as a communicative event from a pragmatic point of view. It is conducted in pursuit of redressing the balance, however slightly, with regards to studies concerned with refutation. It attempts to show that consideration of refutation can only be complete when justification is considered.

As for the realm of politics, it can be regarded as one of the main fields where justification is utilized. This is due to the fact that in politics, language use is categorized by employing specific strategies so as to be effective in conveying what politicians want to achieve and to create for themselves a positive image in order to accomplish their persuasive aims.

Nevertheless, it appears that the justificatory use of language in the political domain has not been given much attention, especially from a pragmatic perspective. Hence, the present study tries to pragmatically investigate this type of language use in political genres. These genres are represented by British and American political speeches.

According to Alo (2012: 88), political leaders and heads of nation states frequently resort to the oral word in the pursuit of swaying and rallying their supporters and persuading folks of the advantages that are possible to be gained from the formers' leadership. Hence, political speeches are stimulated via the wish to influence and persuade the nation and familiarize their audience with their socio-economic policies, plans and actions.

This study seeks to understand and account for the triggering, onset and the resolution of exchanges which can be characterized by the justification that takes place. Additionally, it endeavours to explore justification within the political context in which it appears.

Specifically, as regards British and American political speeches, the present study sets itself towards answering the following questions:

1. What are the criteria that the justifications produced in the data under study are grounded on?
2. What are the types of justification used in British and American decision-makers' political speeches?
3. What are the structural components of justifications produced in British and American political speeches?
4. What are the pragmatic strategies employed in the justification of British and American decision-makers?
5. What are the pragma-rhetorical strategies resorted to by British and American decision-makers to justify their decisions?

6. What are the pragma-dialectal strategies used in the justification by British and American decision-makers?
7. How often do British decision-makers employ justification strategies in comparison with their American counterparts?
8. What is the relationship between strategic maneuvering and justification?

1.2 Aims of the Study

The study attempts at answering the questions above through the following aims:

1. Finding out the various criteria of justification resorted to by British and American decision-makers and discovering the most frequent criterion.
2. Detecting the types of justification that are most recurrently used by British and American decision-makers in the data under study.
3. Identifying the pragmatic structure of justification employed by British and American decision-makers and shedding some light on its most basic structural components.
4. Finding out the different pragmatic, pragma-rhetorical and pragma-dialectical strategies employed by British and American decision-makers to justify their decisions and detecting the most frequent ones.
5. Identifying the similarities and differences between British and American decision-makers regarding the use of the criteria, types, strategies and basic structural components of justification.
6. Specifying the role played by strategic maneuvering in justification.
7. Designing an eclectic model for data analysis.
8. Shedding some light on the different approaches proposed to account for the complex nature of justification.

1.3 Hypotheses

It is hypothesized that:

1. Justifications produced in the data under study are grounded on diverse criteria.
2. Correction constitutes the most recurrent type of justification resorted to by British and American decision-makers.
3. Different types of justification require different situations.
4. No intra- or interlines of demarcation can be drawn between British and American political speeches concerning the pragmatic structure of justification.
5. Some justification strategies occur with a higher frequency than others in British and American decision-makers' political speeches.
6. Speech acts such as stating and telling are the most basic structural components of the justifications produced in the data under study.
7. Certain structural components function as initiators of justification in British and American decision-makers' political speeches.
8. Differences can be found between British and American decision-makers regarding the use of justification strategies.
9. British decision-makers employ more justification strategies than their American counterparts.
10. Sometimes, and in order to justify their decisions, British and American decision-makers resort to derailment of strategic maneuvering producing fallacies of various types.

1.4 Procedures

To achieve the aims of the study and to verify or refute its hypotheses, the following procedures have been followed:

1. Reviewing the literature relevant to justification enhancing its pragmatic nature.