

Extract from Trump's speech during a campaign rally
in South Carolina on July 21, 2015:

Look, having nuclear — my uncle was a great professor and scientist and engineer, Dr. John Trump at MIT; good genes, very good genes, okay, very smart, the Wharton School of Finance, very good, very smart — you know, if you're a conservative Republican, if I were a liberal, if, like, okay, if I ran as a liberal Democrat, they would say I'm one of the smartest people anywhere in the world — it's true! — but when you're a conservative Republican they try — oh, do they do a number — that's why I always start off: *Went to Wharton, was a good student, went there, went there, did this, built a fortune* — you know I have to give my like credentials all the time, because we're a little disadvantaged — but you look at the nuclear deal, the thing that really bothers me — it would have been so easy, and it's not as important as these lives are (nuclear is powerful; my uncle explained that to me many, many years ago, the power and that was 35 years ago; he would explain the power of what's going to happen and he was right — who would have thought?), but when you look at what's going on with the four prisoners — now it used to be three, now it's four — but when it was three and even now, I would have said it's all in the messenger; fellas, and it is fellas because, you know, they don't, they haven't figured that the women are smarter right now than the men, so, you know, it's gonna take them about another 150 years — but the Persians are great negotiators, the Iranians are great negotiators, so, and they, they just killed, they just killed us.

Initial analysis of an extract from Trump’s speech during a campaign rally in South Carolina on July 21, 2015:

Look,	Condescending address to invoke listener’s attention.
having nuclear —	Introducing apparent topic , but veering off to another
my uncle was a great professor and scientist and engineer,	Digression to educated uncle to borrow status for himself
Dr. John Trump at MIT;	Giving name and credentials in support
good genes, very good genes, OK, very smart,	Expansion to suggest genetic similarity with his uncle
the Wharton School of Finance, very good, very smart—	Unexplained digression to another institution, claiming quality
you know,	Filler to enlist listener’s solidarity
if you’re a conservative Republican,	Setting out to elicit sympathy for prejudice about Republicans - and invoke recognition of easier position for liberals
if I were a liberal,	
if, like, OK,	Series of false starts hedging way to subsequent claim
if I ran as a liberal Democrat,	Re-introducing circumstances public view more favourably
they would say	Reference to unspecified people at large. The public? Experts?
I'm one of the smartest people anywhere in the world—	Unmitigated claim of intellectual supremacy
it’s true!—	Asserting veracity of this claim, with no hedging
but when you're a conservative Republican	Re-statement of circumstances tending to evoke criticism
they try—	2 nd ref to unspecified people at large. The public? Critics?
oh, do they do a number—	Exclamation + colloquial ref to critical comments
that’s why I always start off:	Explanation & justification for self-publicising stance he adopts
<i>Went to Wharton,</i>	Brief summary of his educational & professional background, - superficially self-deprecatory, but ending with proud statement of his weighty commercial success
<i>was a good student,</i>	
<i>went there, went there, did this, built a fortune—</i>	
you know	Filler to enlist listener’s solidarity
I have to give my like credentials all the time,	Excusing <i>need</i> to flaunt his credentials, mitigating with “like”
because we’re a little disadvantaged—	Claiming excuse, using “we” for “I”; & mitigating disadvantage
but you look at the nuclear deal,	1 st return to apparent topic – but what exactly is the “deal”?
the thing that really bothers me—	1 st mention of concern about nuclear power, never specified
it would have been so easy,	Unexplained speculation: what is “it”?
and it’s not as important as these lives are	Unexplained expansion; is this the same “it”? And whose lives?
(nuclear is powerful;	Ah! Back to topic . Is this the “it” referred to above?
my uncle explained that to me many, many years ago,	Revealing his limited ‘uncle-led’ grasp of Nuclear power
the power	Re-introduction of topic
and that was 35 years ago;	Re-iteration & clarification of time frame “many, many years”
he would explain the power of what's going to happen	Expansion of uncle’s prediction; details left entirely vague
and he was right—	Asserting veracity of claim, with no hedging
who would have thought?),	Conversational invocation of shared surprise
but when you look at what's going on with the four prisoners—	New topic, unexplained. Which 4 prisoners? What is going on?
now it used to be three, now it’s four—	Modification of details, with implied indifference re number
but when it was three	Beginning explanation, never completed
and even now, I would have said it's all in the messenger;	When is “now”? What is “it”? Who is “the messenger”?
fellas,	Direct address to audience as “fellas”, i.e., male addressees
and it is fellas	Recognising but justifying sexist implication of “fellas”
because, you know,	Starting to explain, & appealing for understanding & agreement
they don't,	False start, referring to unspecified people at large.
they haven’t figured	Rephrasing, still without explanation of “they”
that the women are smarter right now than the men,	Bid to regain PC face; but which ‘defined’ women, which men?
so, you know,	Pseudo link via “so”; appeal for understanding & agreement
it’s gonna take them about another 150 years—	Unclear prediction: 2 vague referents: “it”& “them”; to do what?
but the Persians are great negotiators,	New topic: apparent praise for the Persians’ skill as negotiators
the Iranians are great negotiators,	Re-stated with more PC up-to-date term, “Iranians”
so,	Pseudo link, left dangling, superseded by following “and”
and they, they just killed, they just killed us.	Apparent conclusion: but who are “they”? The Iranians? The men? The women? “Just” in which sense? Recently? Or simply, merely? Which “us” did they kill? The American People? The 3 or 4 prisoners, taken as representing the American people?...

In this extract Trump seems unaware that he sees the world exclusively from his own deictic centre. We all do this at times, but usually follow the cooperative principle, which requires us to recognise when, where and how we need to adjust our speech to take the listener more fully into account. (Ref: *Pragmatics*, by George Yule, OUP)

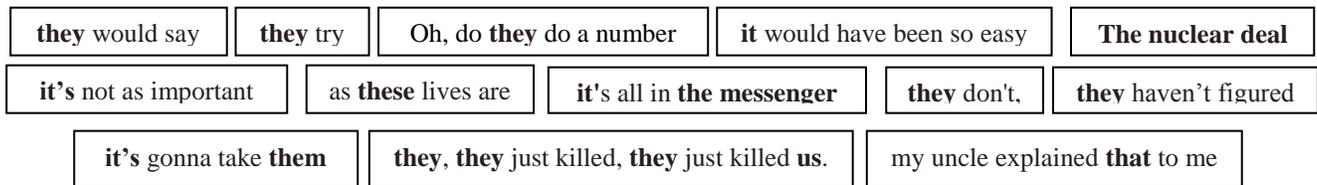
For example: (1) we consider whether the names and pronouns we use are clear from the context. If they are not, we explain them. (Pronouns typically refer to something already mentioned in the co-text, but may also refer to something about to be mentioned.). In many cases, Trump's pronouns (and some noun phrases) have **no discernible referent**. In a 2-way conversation, the listener can interject & seek clarification, but in a public address the audience has no such strategies available.

(2) We do not typically use long unconnected strings of **incomplete thoughts or sentences**. If we introduce a topic, we generally stick to it, and if we digress, we signal the digression and return to it soon enough for the listener to be able to follow the thread.

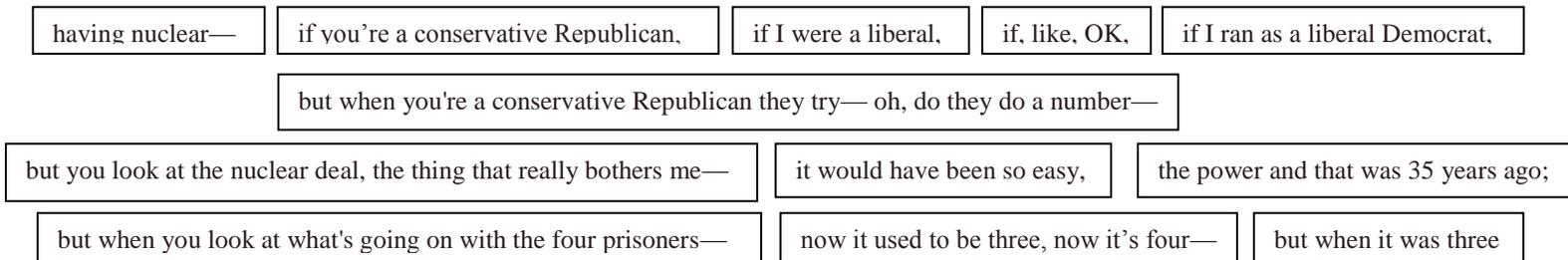
(3) Trump also reveals here is what is known as '*positive face*': the need to be accepted by others and to know that their wants are shared by others – the need to be connected. [This is in contrast to '*negative face*' (which is not a critical term – simply the polar opposite of positive face!) – the need to be independent and not to be imposed on by others]. Someone seeking to preserve their '*positive face*' will tend to use **solidarity strategies** such as including (a) **personal information**, (b) shared **colloquial expressions**, and (c) **inclusive terms** such as "we". (Yule, *op cit*.)

The following diagram illustrates the most common features of Trump's impromptu speaking style.

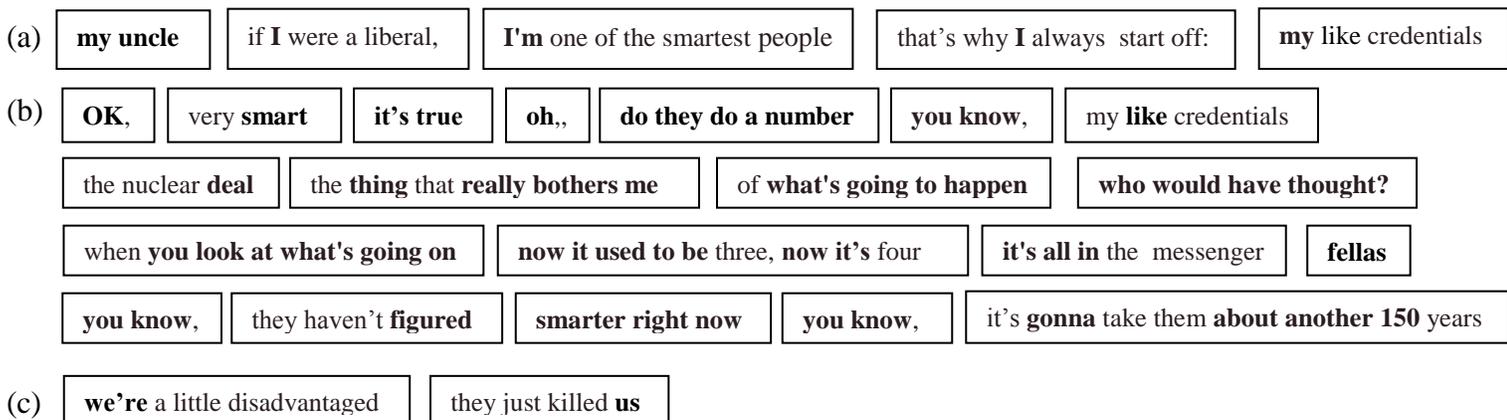
(1) Pronouns & noun phrases with no clear referent



(2) Unfinished thoughts or sentences



(3) Solidarity strategies to engage positive face



Analysis by Rosie McAndrew.

For a contrast with the spoken style of former President Obama, see my appreciation of an extract from his victory speech in 2008, presented in the form of a lesson for intermediate or advanced students (designed for Macmillan's onestopenglish.com): <http://www.onestopenglish.com/skills/listening/listening-lesson-plans/obamas-2008-victory-speech/156920.article>