

**POLITENESS STRATEGIES IN THE SELECTED SPEECHES OF
UNDERGRADUATES OF NNAMDI AZIKIWE AND MADONNA UNIVERSITIES IN
ANAMBRA STATE AND OLABISI ONABANJO UNIVERSITY IN OGUN
STATE**

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Abstract

Politeness is very paramount in Language use because everyone has a self-image (face) to protect. The paper investigated the politeness strategies and the extent of impoliteness (Face- Threatening Acts) employed by selected students of NnamdiAzikwe University and Madonna University in Anambra State and Olabisi Onabanjo University in Ogun State as well as the consequences of impoliteness found among them. The study employed Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of Face as its analytical tool. The general objective of the study was to carry out an investigative study into the politeness strategies employed by selected students of the universities. Specifically, the study aimed at determining how university students have been able to employ politeness in their daily interactions, Again, the study aimed at unraveling politeness as a useful conflict resolution strategy. Data for the study were elicited via an obstructive observation obtained without the participant's knowledge. The data were analyzed qualitatively using the adopted theoretical framework. The findings revealed that these students break the rules of politeness strategies basically out of fear and pure ignorance. Again, it was found that culture influenced significantly the exhibition of politeness (impoliteness) strategies in dialogic communications. Thus it was concluded that for us to achieve a peaceful coexistence in our universities, interlocutors should try as much as possible to avoid face-threatening Acts (FTAs) in their daily discussions. The researcher hereby recommends that politeness strategy be introduced as part of the courses done in our secondary schools and higher institutions in Nigeria.

Keywords: Politeness, Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs), Face wants, Utterances

Introduction

Most times, we think we know the full meaning of the word politeness or when we describe people's behaviour as being polite. However, when we are faced with the challenges of explaining the criteria by which we define politeness, we discover we are at a loss. We, therefore, resort to guess work or take refuge in some general statements of people around us. We might consider utterances like: 'He is very obedient and accommodating', 'He speaks gently', 'she is very respectful to elders', 'He always opens doors for ladies or helps them put on their coats', etc. Watts (2003:1), pictures this situation thus, 'most of us are fairly sure we know what we mean when we describe

someone's behaviour as polite. To define the criteria with which we apply that description, however, is not quite as easy as we might think'. This is as a result of the fact that a word viewed as polite by one may be seen as impolite by another. Some feel that • polite behaviour is tantamount to socially correct or appropriate behaviour, while others consider it to be the hallmark of the civilized man or woman. Some characterize a polite person as someone who is always considerate towards other people or one who is self-effacing. On the contrary, some people classify polite behaviour negatively, characterizing it with terms such as haughty, insincere, standoffish, etc.

Coining to the more specific area of polite language usage, Watts (2003:2), opines that one might resort to expressions like, the language a person use's to avoid being too direct, language which displays respect towards or consideration for others, language which contains respectful forms of address like 'Sir or 'Madam', language that displays certain polite formulaic utterances like please, thank you, excuse me or sorry, elegantly expressed language, etc..

Again, we could, encounter people who consider polite use of language as hypocritical, dishonest, distant, unfeeling, etc. We might also use terms like respectful, courteous, offhand, rude, cringing, pusillanimous, etc, depending on what our own personal notions of polite behaviour happen to be. Despite our views, of polite or impolite behaviour our personal assessments of them are expected to vary because of some obvious idiosyncrasies.

Again, what may be taken as polite in one culture may be viewed as grossly impolite in another culture. For instance, the word *Aboki*, meaning 'my friend' in Northern Nigeria is used in some instances as a word for insult in the Eastern part of Nigeria as it is used to refer to one as behaving in a foolish manner. Again, the word *Mgbeke* meaning a maiden born on an Eke market day in Igbo land is also used in the same Igbo land in a derogatory manner, portraying one as old - fashioned and outdated. More so, in the western world; a child can call his father by his name but this act is viewed as an insult in Africa.

Despite the above disparities, every language or culture or organization has its particular way of portraying proper manner, appropriateness and deference in language use. To this end. Adegbija (1989:58), maintains that 'Politeness is associated with situations in which one speaks or behaves in a way that is socially and culturally acceptable and pleasant to the hearer'. Leech (1983:82)

concludes by asserting that 'unless you are polite to your neighbor the channel of communication between you will break down and you will no longer be able to borrow his mower'.

Statement of the Problem

Enough attention has not been given to the subject of politeness in our school curriculum .both in the primary and post primary sectors of our educational system. As a result of this, there is this gross misrepresentation of politeness as a phenomenon. There is great abuse in the use of the word due to ignorance both in our institutions of learning and the outside world. This is as a result of the fact that our instructors, in this case, the teachers, do not know better as they lack the fundamental knowledge in the area. This has given rise to a lot of confusion and even strife as nobody will allow his self-image (face) to be threatened. The researcher, therefore, has delved into this topic of politeness so as to create an awareness of this problem and try to proffer solution to it.

Purpose of the Study

Politeness is an obvious mark of the educated and civilized man in any society.. With a study of this nature, our knowledge or understanding of politeness, as it affects ethics and etiquette, will be greatly enhanced through the various observations discussed in the paper. The researcher believes, therefore, that the findings of this study will constitute an important resource material for our instructors, the curriculum planners, the textbook designers, future researchers, as well as those who may use the findings and results in the future for various educational purposes.

Aim & Objectives

The general aim of this study is to carry out an investigative study into the politeness strategies employed by selected students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Madonna University and Olabisi Onabanjo University, and to show how the findings will aid in achieving a harmonious peaceful co-existence among individuals through the observance, of others' face wants during discussions.

The objectives of the study are to:

1. Observe the extent to which the students in the selected universities have been able to employ the use of politeness in their daily interactions
2. Identify the similarities and differences in the strategies employed by students of the selected universities in their interactions.

3. See politeness as a useful conflict resolution strategy.

Scope of the study

This study is limited to Nnamdi Azikwe University, Madonna University and Olabisi Onabanjo University. Only the faculties of Arts and Social Sciences will be used in this study because it is assumed that these two faculties will provide a wide range of the knowledge of our subject matter, "politeness.

Research Questions

The following research questions guide the study.

1. Can politeness be seen as a useful conflict resolution strategy?
2. To what extent have the students in the selected universities been able to employ politeness strategies in their daily interactions?
3. Are there similarities and differences in the strategies employed by students of the selected Universities in their interactions?

Method of Data Collection

The methods of data collection used here is non-participant observation strategy. The researcher silently and secretly watches the discussants as they engage in their discussion exercises, gathers vital information and makes use of writing materials to note down some of the conversations.

The Concept of Politeness

Different scholars have given their varied definitions of the word politeness. Wikitionary defines it as 'the practical application of good manners or etiquette'. It sees politeness as a culturally defined phenomenon, and therefore what is considered polite in one culture can sometimes be quite rude or simply eccentric in another cultural context. Eyisi (2003:431) confirms this when she explains that in most societies, there are particular ways of behaving and speaking which are considered to be polite, but are not the same in all societies. Forms of behaviour and language which are considered to be polite in one society can sometimes seem strange, insincere, or even rude in another. When learning a new language, it is often necessary to learn new ways of expressing politeness. She explains that English sometimes expresses politeness in ways which are not common in other languages. For example, speakers of British English often use indirectness or

tentativeness in order to be polite in situations where other languages are more direct, like speakers of American English. Again there are ways speakers of British English say 'Thank You' for small or unimportant things in situations where speakers of other languages would not consider it necessary. For example, when a shop assistant is giving change to a customer, both of them will say 'thank you'. Speakers of American English do not usually do this. On the other hand, in some situations, it is possible in British English to make no reply when somebody thanks you, but in American English as in some other languages, it is necessary to respond, for example by saying, 'You're Welcome'.

Furthermore, English sometimes does not use forms of politeness which are common in other languages, especially in African languages where for instance, it is polite to respond to a compliment by refusing to accept it, and by saying something bad about yourself or the thing which has been complimented. In English, although it is possible to hesitate a little before accepting, it is usually considered impolite to reject-a compliment too strongly.

The Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2010:1095), defines politeness as "behaving in a way that is socially correct and shows understanding of and care for other people's feelings'. From the foregoing, when one behaves or talks in a way that shows that he cares about other people's feelings, such a person is taken to be polite.

The term politeness came into prominence during the 'Enlightenment Era', via a self-conscious process of imposing norms and behaviour to serve as a symbol of being a gentle member of the upper class. They were preoccupied with precise rules of etiquette, such as when to show emotion, the act of elegant dress and graceful conversation and how to act courteously, especially with women.

The philosopher, Lord Shaftesbury, in, the early 18th century,(qtd. in Klein 1994:24) defines politeness as 'a dexterous management of our words and actions, whereby we make other people have better opinions of us and themselves'. He views politeness as being pleasing in company. In addition, Ide (1993:7), opines that 'politeness is behaviour without friction'. He conceives politeness as a cover term for behaviour which one puts up so as to avoid friction in language use. Nwoye (1992:31), also maintains that being polite is ' . . . conforming to socially agreed codes of

good conduct'. From his view, when one says what is socially correct and acceptable by other people in the same linguistic community, such a one is taken to be polite, Nwoye's position seems to be in line with Lakoff(1975:53), who posits that 'to be polite is saying that socially correct thing'.

Furthermore, Fraser and Nolen(1991:96), vehemently state that 'to be polite is to abide by the rules of the relationship. The speaker becomes impolite just in case where he violates one or more of the contractual terms'. For them, violation of the rules governing a relationship is viewed as impoliteness. Leech in Watts (2003:50), defines politeness as 'strategic conflict avoidance, which can be measured in terms of the degree of effort put into the avoidance of a conflict situation and the establishment and maintenance of comity'. He maintains that the avoidance of conflict is as a result of a conscious effort on the part of the person being polite since it is strategic.

In their part, Brown and Levinson also in Watts (ibid), view politeness as, 'a complex system for softening face-threatening acts'. For them, politeness is- an evaluative measure to avoid face-threatening. Toeing the same line of argument, Kasper, in Watts (2003:51), who based her work on Brown and Levinson's approach to politeness, maintains that 'communication is seen as a fundamentally dangerous and antagonistic endeavour. Politeness is therefore a term to refer to the strategies available to interactants to defuse the danger and to minimize the antagonism'. Here politeness is given the job of defusing and minimizing the danger and antagonism inherent in some communications. Again Arndt and Janney, as quoted in Watts(ibid), see politeness as 'interpersonal supportiveness'. Here again, we can note that politeness is viewed from a normative perspective, since normal behaviour implies that we give one another mutual support in social interaction. More so, Hill et al, in Watts(2003:51), define politeness as 'one of the constraints on human interaction, whose purpose is to consider others' feelings, establish levels of mutual comfort and promote rapport'. This definition sees politeness as a set of constraints in the form of both normative and prescriptive rules on how to interact with others which aims at establishment of mutual comfort and promotion of rapport.

Byram(2000:473)expresses a similar position with Watts in the way he views politeness in language use when he remarks that 'linguistic politeness may be encoded in formulaic expressions which occur in greetings, partings, please, thanks, excuses, apologies and small talks'. Although,

Watts and Byram attribute the use of formulaic utterances to politeness; it is the context of their use in utterances that actually depicts the level of politeness or impoliteness. Lakoff(1975:910,) again explains politeness as 'what we think is appropriate behavior in particular situations in an attempt to achieve and maintain successful social relationships with others'. Thus Sifianon as quoted in Watts (2003:5f), summarizes these definitions in the following words:

People tend to be considerate because this repays them with a pleasant feeling of satisfaction; furthermore, they receive consideration in return and at the same time satisfy the needs of others. This obviously does not mean that they behave in the way that they do because they have any ulterior motives [although this may be true in a few cases], or that they expect any tangible reward. It simply means that they have internalized the fact that in order to live in a harmonious society you give and take and thus participate in maintaining the necessary equilibrium of relationships.

This quotation recognizes the 'give-and-take' of interactions. It is not focused entirely on speakers, but indicates that politeness is a joint social venture in pursuit of a harmonious [blissful] peaceful co-existence.

Looking at the above definitions, one can confidently infer that linguistic politeness is the conscious use of language to enhance smooth communication between interactors based on the norms of social interaction and a conscious effort to show consideration for each other's feelings. On the other hand, politeness is all about maintaining good rapport with your audience. To achieve this, one should endeavour to mellow down what one says to his hearer so as not to appear too direct or forceful [hedges] and show them that he values and respects them. For instance, in asking someone to have a seat, it may be too direct to say 'take that seat and sit down. It will be more polite perhaps, to say 'have a sit please, if you don't mind'. Again, it will be considered impolite when an interviewer starts by asking his interviewee, 'what is your name?' It will be more polite to start with, 'can you tell me your name, please'.

However, in considering the term politeness, Holmes (1995:14), advised that three important points should be considered. First, the social distance between the speaker and the hearer. This is considered in terms of level of closeness. She opines that people who are very close do not really

pay much attention to polite usages, rather, polite usages are noticed more often among strangers or people we do not know well. Second, there is need to consider the relative power or hierarchical status between the speaker and the hearer. Here, Holmes (1995:16), opines that, 'Power refers to the ability of participants to influence one another's circumstances'. She further comments that:

The distribution of power in a particular context may be derived from a variety of sources- money, knowledge, social prestige, role and so on. The power of an older child over a younger child or male over a female are further culturally constructed sources of power in many communities. Whatever the source, high power tends to attract deferential behaviour, including linguistic deference or negative politeness. We generally avoid offending more powerful people, and the way we talk to them often expresses respect.

Lastly, the context of situation plays a key role in the use of polite behaviours in terms of formal or informal situations. In a formal setting such as law courts, schools, ceremonial occasions, speakers tend to focus more on transactional roles rather than personal relationships. They respect each other's right and strictly maintain polite behaviours. Holmes (1995:19), observes' that 'Brothers who are barristers will refer to each other in court as my learned colleagues'. Also, the imperative form [direct form] may be used at home among family members and friends, but may be considered impolite when used outside the family circle. For example; a family member may say to another member, 'give me a cup of tea', or 'what is the time?' Such request may be considered impolite when used outside the family setting. It is more polite to say, 'could I have a cup of tea, please?' or 'would you mind telling me the time, please?'

Politeness and modality

Modal verbs, especially the past forms of the modal verbs, can, may, shall and will (could, might, should and would) tend to show more politeness and are less direct when used by speakers in performing speech acts. Eyisi(2003;445), writes that when the speaker does not know whether an offer will be acceptable, especially if the speaker and the hearer do not know each other very well, the modal verbs can be employed.

She cites these examples:

May I give you a hand with the dishes?

Would you like me to bring any food to .the party?

I was wondering whether you'd like me to check the figures with you.

It is true that these past forms of modal verbs are useful in showing politeness but there are instances where they just would not work. For example, Eyisi (2003:446), argues that the expression 'would you like me to pay for this?', may suggest that the speaker does not really want to pay. In this situation, it is much better to say 'I'll pay for this' or 'let me pay for this'.

Furthermore, Carter et al. (2011:338), suggest that in speaking, we often use 'if followed by will, would, can, or could to introduce a polite request'. For them, it will be more polite to say:

If we can move on to the next point of view of discussion [more polite than, can we move on ...]

If I could just say one more thing ... (more polite than, listen to me, I want to say something.) If you will follow me, please ... [more polite than, follow me, please].

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is 'Face theory' by Anthropologist Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson who derived their theory from the original work of sociologist Ervin Goffman on 'Face'. They describe politeness as showing concern for people's face. Politeness according to Brown and Levinson (1987:129), is of two different types: 'negative politeness' and 'positive politeness'. They define negative politeness as 'a repressive action addressed to the addressee's negative face: his want to have his freedom of action unhindered and his attention unimpeded'. According to them, examples of negative politeness are seen in the indirect ways of making request or of using honorifics conventionally. While positive politeness is seen as 'redress directed to the addressee's positive face, his perennial desire that his wants should be thought of as desirable'. Positive politeness strategies include exaggerated elements or elements of insincerity, and that separates a positive politeness strategy from ordinary daily conversation. Some of the typical examples of positive politeness strategies are complimenting, joking, responding emphatically and using nicknames.

Brown and Levinson (1987:61), also define 'Face' as the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself, and also claim that 'people cooperate [and assume each other's

cooperation] in-maintaining face interaction'. They then divided the 'face' into two; 'negative face', the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, right to non-distraction, and 'positive 'face', the positive consistence of self-image or 'personality' [crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved] derived by interactors. When people interact, they use politeness strategies to soften the threat to each other's face. This is seen when a speaker expresses warmth toward the hearer in order to show solidarity or friendliness. Wardhaugh (2010:292), puts it succinctly in these words:

When we interact with others, we must be aware of both kinds of face and therefore have a choice of two kinds of politeness. Positive politeness leads to moves to achieve solidarity through offers of friendship, the use of compliments, and informal language use: we treat others as friends and allies, do not impose on them, and never threaten their face. On the other hand, negative politeness leads to deference, apologizing, indirectness and formality in language use: we adopt a variety of strategies so as to avoid any threat to the face others are presenting to us.

Toeing the same line of argument, Tracy(1990:210), explains that positive face Concerns 'the desire to be appreciated and approved of by selected others while negative face concerns a person's want to be unimpeded and be free from imposition'. Holmes(1995:5), recapitulates thus, 'everybody has face needs'. The term "face' is a technical term in this approach. While it is based on everyday usage of 'losing face' and 'saving face', it goes beyond the ordinary face that we see. It goes further in treating almost every action (including utterances) as a potential threat to someone's face. It is in line with this concept of face that this seminar paper is conceived.

In. conclusion, so far, two types of politeness have been distinguished by Brown and Levinson- Positive and Negative Politeness. Both types of politeness involve maintaining or redressing threats to positive and negative face, where positive face is seen as a person's desire to be appreciated and liked and negative face as the desire to have freedom and not be imposed upon. It is of paramount importance though to point out that people are not born with politeness; rather, it is something they have to learn and be socialized into. Interestingly, every system,

language/culture has a way of expressing politeness in order to avoid misunderstandings and frictions in interactions.

Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs)

According to Brown and Levinson(1987:70), 'Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs) is an act which challenges the face wants of an interlocutor'. For them, when an act of communication, whether verbal or non- verbal goes contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/or the speaker, it is seen as a face-threatening act. In other words, when a speaker utters something that causes damage to the addressee's self-image (face) or to **himself**, it is described as a face-threatening act. Brown and Levinson (1987:65). Describe face-threatening acts (F.T.As) based on two basic parameters:

- 1.F.T.As which threaten positive and negative face.
- 2.F.T.As which threaten the hearer's and the speaker's face.

F.T.As which threatens the hearer's positive face includes those acts where the speaker displays his non-support or approval of the hearer's self image (positive face). In other words, he uses expressions that negatively evaluate the hearer's self-image. Such expressions may include disapprovals, criticism, accusations, interruptions, complaints, insults, disagreements, etc, as well as expressions that show that the speaker does not care about the hearer's self image, such as expressions of violent emotions, taboo topics, bad news, emotional topics, and interruptions, etc. Such acts automatically constitute damage to the addressee's self-image (positive face). Examples are as shown below:

Criticism: 'I think your report was not concise enough'.-The hearer's positive face is threatened because he is blamed for having done something badly, i.e., his self-image is negatively evaluated.

Expression of emotions: 'You're feeling sad because of your ex-boyfriend, aren't you?', —> The speaker addresses a topic which involves a state of emotional weakness on the part of the hearer, i.e., the speaker does not care about the 'public self-image' of the hearer, thus threatening his face. FTAs that threaten the hearer's-negative face are those acts, capable of restricting his personal freedom like:

- i. Acts predicating a future act of the hearer. e.g. orders, requests, suggestions, advice, reminders, threats, warnings etc
- ii. Acts predicating a future act of the speaker towards the hearer, e.g. offers, promises, etc and
- iii. Acts expressing a desire of the speaker towards the hearer or his goods, e.g. compliments, expression of emotions, etc. Examples:

Order: 'Please give me that book', — The speaker expresses an anticipation of some future action of the hearer and thereby restricts his personal freedom.

Promise: 'I promise I will come by tomorrow', — The speaker states a future action in which the hearer should be involved.

Compliment: 'I really like you', —> The speaker expresses positive emotions towards the hearer which may involve an anticipation of a positive reaction by the hearer (giving thanks/expressing positive emotions towards the speaker).

FTAs threatening the speaker's self-image (positive face) include apologies, acceptance of a compliment, breakdown of physical / emotional control, self-humiliation, confession, etc. Example:

Apology: 'I think I made a huge mistake', —> The speaker makes a statement about his own positive self-image/face.

FTAs threatening the speaker's personal freedom (Negative face) include expression of thanks, acceptance of thanks/ offers / compliments, apologies, excuses, etc. Example:

Expression of thanks: 'Thank you so much for your help', —>the speaker expresses thanks because he feels obliged to do so. His freedom of actions is thus threatened in the moment of speaking.

Fasold (1990:161), affirms that 'a speaker's positive face could be threatened in the face of confession, that is, where the speaker confesses to what he has done, admission of guilt, where the speaker is admitting that he/she has done something not expected (or not done something that is expected of him)'".

An Analysis of some Politeness Strategies observed in the three Universities. Use of Honorifics

When we use address forms and honorifics, deference is displayed. Honorifics here portray a term of respect or respectful language while deference refers to great respect shown to people by virtue of their status, influence and age. It is the opposite of familiarity. This is mostly applied by students in the different Universities via the use of address forms like Professor, Sir, Doctor, Madam, Reverend, etc. They are used to express negative politeness. Example:

Student: Good afternoon. Prof.

Prof.: Yes, good afternoon.

Prof.: Can I help you?

Student: I came to check if our result is out sir.

Prof: Check in two days time.

Student: Thank you Prof.

Indirectness

Indirectness is mostly used by speakers to avoid FTAs and its consequences from the hearers. In other words it is used to avoid causing damage to the hearer's self image.

Student: Excuse me sir.

Lecturer: Yes, any problem?

Student: Please sir, I want to make use of my biro, sir.

Lecturer: I see! I'm with your pen.

Student:.. (No response)

Lecturer: Okay! You can have it.

Student: Thank you sir.

The discussion here begins with the formulaic 'excuse me' and an honorific marker 'sir'. Nevertheless, we noticed that instead of telling the lecturer starkly to give him back his pen, the student used an indirect means to let him know that he needed his pen back.

Apology

Most times apology is used to restore the relationship between the speaker and the addressee. Brown and Levinson (1987:187), maintain that 'an apology is an attempt by the speaker to make up for the previous action that interfered with the addressee face wants'. Example:

Student: Good morning sir.

Lecturer: Good morning.

Student: Please sir, we came to apologize for our inability to submit our assignment on time, which made you to be angry with us.

Lecturer: Why did you not submit then?

Student: Sir, many of the students brought theirs late, but sir, -we are very sorry, it won't repeat itself.

Lecturer: Okay! Drop them on the table over there.

Student: Thank you very much, sir.

In the above discussion, apology was used to restore the positive face between the students and their lecturer.

Softening Words (hedges)

Hedges are mostly used to soften the effect of what the speaker says to the hearer so as not to be too direct or forceful.

Prof: You said you submitted your assignment to Dr. Kalu? I have not seen the scores yet.

Student A: Yes Prof., you know it takes Dr. a lot of time to finish his assignments. He is rather too slow for my liking.

Student B: I think Dr. is a serious minded lecturer only that as a highly meticulous person he takes his time to do things perfectly.

In the above discussion, one will notice that there is the possibility of a character threat from student A which student B tries to soften given the fact that the person referred to is higher both in rank and status (lecturer).

Questioning (indirect)

Indirect questioning is used in order to appear more polite and formal in discussions as using direct questioning is more or less considered very rude and quite inappropriate, especially when discussing with a person of higher social ranking.

Student: Good afternoon Dr.

Lecturer: Good afternoon. .

Student: Sir, please we wanted to know if you would be in school tomorrow. Lecturer: What for?

Student: Sir, we wanted to know if we could come for the make-up quiz tomorrow. Lecturer: No!

Tomorrow will not be convenient for me; let's meet on Wednesday. Student: Okay sir, thank you, sir.

In the above discussion, the student started the request with polite markers and also made use of indirect questioning to ascertain whether the lecturer would be in school the following day. It would have been very rude if the student had used the direct form of questioning, thus; 'Will you be in school tomorrow?'

Use of formulaic/ mitigating Methods

Formulaic /mitigating methods are devices employed in form of words to soften the mood of Impositions. They include expressions like 'please', 'thank you', 'I am sorry', 'Excuse me', 'I beg your pardon', etc. They help to sustain the positive self-image of the hearer and lighten the burden of imposition.

Student: Good morning, Father.

Lecturer: Good morning.

Student: Sorry for bothering you father, but can we come for the Phonetics lesson tomorrow at the language laboratory?

Lecturer: I'm very sorry; I won't come to school tomorrow. Let's have it on Tuesday.

Student: Ok, thank you, father.

In the following two tables, five measuring options are adopted to determine the level of politeness and impoliteness exhibited by the undergraduates of the three selected universities-

Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Olabisi Onabanjo University and Madonna University. These measuring options are: very high, high, average, below average and nil

Table 1- Students Vs Students

Politeness Strategies	Nnamdi Azikiwe University	Olabisi Onabanjo University	Madonna University
Honorifics	Nil	Below average	Nil
Indirectness	Nil	Nil	Nil
Apology	. Average	High	High
Hedges	Below Average	Average	Average
Indirect Questioning	Nil	Nil	Nil
Formulaic Method	Average	High	Average
Modality	Average	High	High
Order	Nil	Nil	Nil
Compliments	Average	High	Average
Expression of Thanks/gratitude	High	Very High	High
Criticism	High	High	High
White Lies	High	Very High	High
Banter	High	High	High
Euphemism	Average	High	High
Verbal Aggression	Very High	High	High
Respect	Below Average	Average	Average
Greetings	Average	High	Average
Formal/correct use of grammar	Below Average	Below Average	Below Average

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From the above table, it was observed that most students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University do not make adequate use of the politeness strategies enumerated in the table above in their

Interpersonal relationships. The researcher feels that this might be as a result of infiltrations from the culture inherent in the environment, which is Igbo culture. The researcher is made to understand that the Igbo culture, though polite, does not make politeness its major priority or focus. The culture more or less imbibes in their individuals that sense of self esteem, sufficiency and ability to do virtually all things given the necessary opportunity. This gives rise to self-intoned egotism which suppresses the need for politeness. Though there are students from other ethnic groups like Yoruba, Hausa, Urhobo, Benin, etc, in the school, given the fact that this is a federal University, but culture has a way of influencing others both positively and negatively and making them tilt towards it.

The researcher also noticed that students of Madonna University made more considerable use of actually operating within two cultures, which are traditional and religious. The school being a private University under the Roman Catholic mission felt a high standard disciplinary measure of the institution which imbibed politeness into the students.

However, the researcher again observed that students of Olabisi Onabanjo University made a higher use of the politeness strategies enumerated in the table. This, the researcher discovered is as a result of influence of the Yoruba culture inherent in the environment. Politeness is highly emphasized and embedded in the Yoruba culture which is uncompromisingly inculcated into the individuals and which is also reflected in their behaviours toward one another during interpersonal relationships.

Table 2- Student Vs Lecturers

Politeness Strategies	Nnamdi University	Azikiwe	Olabisi University	Onabanjo	Madonna University
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Honorifics	High	Very high	Very high
Indirectness	High	Very high	Very high
Apology	High	Very high	Very high
Hedges	High	Very high	Very high
Indirect questioning	High	Very high	Very high
Formulaic methods	High	Very high	Very high
Modality	High	Very high	Very high

Order	Nil	Nil	Nil
Compliment	High	Very high	High
Criticism	High	Very high	High
White lies	High	Very high	High
Banter	Average	Average	Average
Euphemism	High	Very high	High
Verbal aggression	Nil	Nil	Nil
Respect	High	Very high	Very high
Greetings	High	Very high	Very high
Formal/correct use of grammar	High	High	High

From this table it was observed that generally, students from the three universities observed the rules of politeness strategies when interacting with their lecturers, except on very rare occasions. The few anomalies the researcher observed is mostly done out of fear or pure ignorance of the rules guiding politeness strategies. For instance, let us look at some of the observations on impoliteness strategies displayed by some of the students:

Observation-1

Student: Good Afternoon, sir.

Lecturer: Good afternoon.

Student: Sir, see my assignment.

Lecturer: No, I don't have time for it now.

The above request threatens the lecturer's negative face because it is an imposition on him. The student did not use the right register and did not show any respect for his lecturer. If he had employed the use of the modal 'could' and that of a mitigating device or formulaic like 'please', it would have displayed some politeness, e.g.

Sir, please could you have a look at my assignment?

Observation 2

Student: Good morning Dr.

Lecturer: Good morning.

Student: I want to check my result.

Lecturer: What is your registration number?

Student: SOC/26/1045

Lecturer: (Goes through the list) 36 f

Student: Hey! I did very well in the examination. I'm sure of that.

Lecturer: Leave my office!

(Student leaves).

The above discourse is a good example of a face-threatening act (impoliteness). None of the mitigating or formulaic devices was used by the student in his request. Again, the statements, 'I did very well in the examination' and 'I'm sure of that', threatens the lecturer's positive face.

Observation 3

Student: (Makes announcement in class). Someone stole my ENG 201 note book yesterday. If you are the one, kindly return it to me.

The above announcement portrays a negative impoliteness to other students. He would have made it look polite by employing a face-saving utterance like 'I misplaced.....or formulaic device like 'please'. Quirk and Greenbaum (1973:224), note that 'please, is very commonly used to tone down the abruptness of a command'.

Observation 4

Student: Good morning ma.

Lecturer: Good morning.

Student: I came to sign my course form.

Lecturer-: (Looks at the student, collects the form and signs).

The above request threatens the lecturer's negative face because it is imposed on her. Though she signs the course form, she displays the fact that she is aware of both the student's lack of respect and the impolite nature of his request but decides to ignore them by the way she looked at the student.

Observation 5

Student: Dr, Good afternoon sir.

Lecturer: Good afternoon.

Student: We have you.

Lecturer: You have me or you have Pragmatics.

Student: We have Pragmatics.

The above statement, 'We have you', shows a face-threatening act (impoliteness) on the lecturer's negative face. It is an imposition on the lecturer and suggests other meanings apart from what was actually intended. For instance, it could imply a threat on the lecturer by some students with evil intentions to harm him.

Observation 6

Student: Good day, sir.

Lecturer: Good day.

Student: Sir, I learnt you lost your car, I am very sorry.

Lecturer: Thank you.

Here we observed that the student employed the use of a mitigating, formulaic device 'sorry' but it is wrongly applied. It is used when the speaker is the actual cause of the incident in question.

Face Management Stage (positive and Negative Politeness)

It is observed that undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University use strategies like banter, exaggerations, address forms, slang, jargons, white lies and in-group language/dialect to show positive politeness. In addition, the students employ strategies like indirectness, use of formulaic devices, apologies, honorifics, questionings and hedging to show negative politeness. Similarly, the undergraduates of Madonna University employ strategies like the use of past-tense forms, compliments, formulaic, use of vocatives, apologies, jokes, slang, jargons and euphemism to show positive politeness. Again, the students also employ strategies like hedging, apology, in-directness, questioning, use of honorifics and formulaic to show negative politeness.

Furthermore, the students of Olabisi Onabanjo University employ strategies like address forms, white lies, in-group language/dialect, euphemism, .apologies, jokes to show positive politeness. Also the students use strategies like hedging formulaic devices, indirectness, honorifics, to show negative politeness.

Finally, the researcher observed that there is an overlap in the strategies that the undergraduates of the three universities employ in terms of positive and negative politeness, impoliteness and face threatening acts.

Impoliteness Strategies

The research shows how the undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, violate correct use of tact, modesty, approbation, interruptions, use taboo language, use' animal metaphors, sarcasm, insults and absolute refusal to engage in a conversation, to show impoliteness. The strategies are similar to the impolite strategies that Madonna undergraduates employ. These impolite strategies include abuse of generosity, tact, relation, approbation, agreement, modesty, sympathy, verbal aggression through the use of prosody, swear words and negative refusal

In addition, undergraduates of Olabisi Onabanjo University violate the correct use of tact, approbation, interruption, use animal metaphors, sarcasm, insults and promise.

Face Threatening Strategies

The researcher observed that through impositions, embarrassing remarks, disapproval, order, threat, mentioning of taboo topics, direct criticisms through the use of obligational modals, direct advice through the use of semi-modals 'had better', interruption and use of wrong address forms, Nnamdi Azikiwe University undergraduates threaten the positive and negative faces of their hearers. Similarly the Researcher noticed that students of Madonna University make use of disapproval, imposition, insult, direct request, accusations, wrong use of the present tense of verbs in requests, intrusion and direct criticisms to threaten the positive and negative faces of their hearers.

Furthermore, the researcher discovered that students of Olabisi Onabanjo University make use of wrong address forms, interruptions, use of semi-modals 'had better,' direct criticisms, impositions, embarrassing remarks, direct requests, accusation, intrusion, wrong use of the present tense of verb in request and insult to threaten the positive and negative faces of their hearers.

Difference in Address Forms

The major difference that exists in the politeness and impoliteness strategies of the undergraduates is mainly in the use of address forms. At Madonna University, whenever the address forms-'father', 'sister' and 'brother' are used, they usually refer to the ordained priests, sisters and brothers respectively who are working in the university. Whereas, at Nnamdi Azikiwe and Olabisi Onabanjo universities, address forms such as 'father', 'sister' or 'brother' may be used freely for people who are not ordained. For example, the word father may be used for generous and kind male students. It may equally be used to address a likeable male student, male executive of various associations on campus and, often times, fat male students. Again, a word like 'sister' is used for female students who belong to same religious group on campus. In the same way, the word 'brother' is used among male students who belong to the same Christian or any other group on campus.

Besides, at Nnamdi Azikiwe and Olabisi Onabanjo Universities, the ordained priests and pastors are often times not addressed as 'fathers' and 'pastors' except for students who know them already. The reason is that the priests working at Nnamdi Azikiwe and Olabisi Onabanjo Universities do not always dress in their cassocks that could suggest to a new student or a visitor that they are ordained priests and pastors. Therefore, they are mainly addressed as

Professors and Doctors by the students. Most times they are greeted with* the honorific, "Sir¹, as in 'good morning sir', except for the students who know them. This is unlike at Madonna University where the priests are always dressed in cassocks and are always noticed by new students and visitors alike and are greeted with the honorific, 'father', as in 'good morning father' and may even bow as a mark of honour to them. Although a disparity exists in the use of address forms in the three universities in this regard, the position is acceptable by the various universities given their peculiar nature.

Face threatening Acts (Impoliteness)

It will be grossly inconclusive to treat the subject of politeness without any mention of impoliteness. In politeness, the speaker wishes his face and that of the addressee to be saved but in impoliteness the speaker does not want to protect the face of the recipient but wants to attack it. It may be seen as the opposite of politeness. Some scholars see it as the speech acts that attack the face of another. Culpeper (2011:38), captures the situation when he recapitulates impoliteness as "those occasions when (1) the speaker communicates face-attack intentionally, or (2) the hearer perceives and/or constructs behaviour as intentionally face-attacking, or a combination of both¹. He conceives impoliteness as the use of intentionally face-threatening acts and also as the parasite of politeness. However, a speaker, by the degree of social distance between him and his interlocutor might be compelled to speak with a degree of unrestricted directness such as in giving

advice, warnings, threats, orders, directives, etc, without any considerations for his addressee's face and still not be considered as impolite. Consider the following expressions from a lecturer to his student, thus;

'Mind the door' (caution)

'Leave my office' (command)

'Complete your assignment' (order)

'Be more serious with your studies' (advice)

'If I don't get your assignment you will fail the exam (threat)

The lecturer can use the above expressions on the students not minding their face, yet the expressions are not seen as impolite because of the social distance between them. On the contrary, a student dares not address his lecturer in such terms without serious redress because he is the lecturer's subordinate both in power and social status.

Consequences of Impoliteness

From the above discussions, it is observed that impoliteness poses so many consequences like conflicts, misunderstandings, impolite responses, frictions, etc. It was also observed that most of the students do not know the right strategies to use in a particular situation while others who thought they were being polite never-knew they had ended up threatening their listeners' faces negatively.

Conclusion

Politeness as conceived in this paper in the language a person uses to avoid being too direct as he tries to consider the other person's face. 'Face', here is a technical term based on everyday usage of 'losing face' and 'saving face', not the ordinary face we see. In other words, it is the self-image everyone wants to protect. People who appreciate politeness encourage its existence -by avoiding evidences of face-threatening Acts (FTAs), like disrespect of all sorts such as infringement of people rights, impositions, intimidations, etc. This is achieved through the use of softening words like hedges, honorifics, formulaic, apologies, etc and again using positive polite utterances like greetings and compliments .This paper examines the politeness and impoliteness strategies exhibited by selected Nnamdi Azikwe university students. The theoretical frame work adopted in

analyzing the students' discourse is that of Brown and Levinson (1987), called 'Face theory'. The paper discovers that most times, students do not realize that their utterances threaten the faces of their listeners which may lead to some ugly repercussions. The paper concludes by suggesting that for us to achieve a peaceful co-existence in our universities, interlocutors should try as much as possible to avoid face-threatening Acts (FTAs) in their daily discussions.

Recommendation

The researcher hereby recommends that politeness strategy be introduced as part of the courses done in our secondary schools and higher institutions in Nigeria so as to achieve an enhanced peaceful co-existence among the citizens.

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