

**IMPOLITENESS STRATEGIES IN FOOTBALL-RELATED DISCOURSE
AMONG FANS OF EUROPEAN FOOTBALL IN NIGERIA**

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the use of impolite language within the context of football-related discourse among fans of European football in Nigeria. European football, particularly leagues like the Champions league, English Premier League (EPL), Spanish LaLiga, among others, has gained immense popularity in Nigeria, leading to passionate and often heated discussions and interactions among fans. This study is aimed at creating awareness and broadening our understanding as to how and why impoliteness occurs as well as its impact on communication, in this context. The study further provides insights on the various forms of impolite language such as insults, swearing, verbal abuse and other offensive language and seeks to provide analysis on their functions, intentions, effects and consequences.

1.2 Scope of Study

This study focuses specifically on football discourse among fans of European football in Nigeria and aims at identifying and categorising impoliteness strategies employed by the fans. The scope of this study covers off-field contexts among fans on various social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. As it is depicted in this study, these impoliteness strategies may include but are not limited to insults, derogatory language, personal attacks and aggressive discourse.

The study aims at exploring the intensity and context of these strategies as well as the motivations and intentions behind their usage. The study further investigates the functions of

impoliteness in football discourse and also assesses the role of social media platforms in facilitating impoliteness through anonymity and distance. It further explores how impoliteness is used to assert dominance, express frustration or disappointment, display loyalty to a particular team and engage in rivalry, as well as how it affects the formation of alliances and the exclusion or inclusion of certain individuals or groups. Participants in the data are not limited to only one gender as recent times have seen the active participation of women in football too. However, the study does not encompass other aspects of football fandom such as fan behaviour during matches. Theoretically, the study will be centred on impoliteness strategies propounded by Jonathan Culpeper, with additional references to theories from other linguists such as Brown and Levinson, Erving Goffman, among others.

1.3 Methodology

This study is within the field of impoliteness in socio-pragmatics. Socio-pragmatics is a branch of linguistic pragmatics and a field that blurs into several others, but most notably communication studies and interactional sociolinguistics (Culpeper 5). Given that most research on politeness stems from the socio-pragmatics field, it is logical to assume that its apparent opposite would also have relevance in this domain. This section provides an insight on the processes and research methods utilised as well as problems encountered during the course of this research.

The methodological approach employed in this study is the qualitative approach. This approach is concerned with the analysis and interpretation of non-statistical data, such as words, images and observations in order to gain insights on human experiences, perspectives and behaviours. The qualitative approach utilises diverse techniques for gathering data, such as conducting interviews, engaging in focus group discussions, making observations, and analysing

documents and textual materials. This approach is useful in investigating topics for which the quantitative approach may be limited or insufficient, and is very flexible in nature.

1.3.1 Method of Data Collection

The datasets used in this study are comments made by football fans on football-related discussions which are taken from the comment sections of various social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. These comments constitute the primary data of this study because they are first hand, original pieces of information that have not been altered or interpreted by anyone else before. These comments are also a representation of the participant's thoughts, opinions, perspectives and expressions.

1.3.1.1 Sampling Method

Sampling is the practice or method of choosing a suitable sample. Sampling helps the researcher decide what is necessary and what is unnecessary for the research area. The sampling method employed in this study is the purposive sampling. Purposive sampling, also known as selective sampling, is a sampling technique used in research to select specific materials that possess certain characteristics or qualities relevant to the research objective. This study adopts the purposive sampling method because the contents of the data selected are not randomly selected, but are deliberately chosen as they suit the purpose of this research. A total of one hundred and forty seven (147) screenshots of comments were taken and only forty (40) were purposely selected as they suit the objective of this research.

1.3.2 Method of Data Analysis

This study uses data such as comments of fans taken from social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. Owing to the fact that the nature of the data comes in the form of screenshots, they are transcribed from visual (image) mode to textual mode for analysis. The

method employed in the analysis of the data is thematic, as it is a flexible method that can be applied in the analysis of various types of qualitative data such as interviews and other text-based data.

1.3.3 Limitations of the study

When conducting a research, researchers are bound to experience some hitches, whether major or minor. This research was in no way different. First is the issue of ethical considerations. Ethical aspects such as confidentiality, consent and privacy are to be considered. Since the participants whose online comments form part of the data for the study are anonymous and farther in locations or have their personal pages on private mode, it was impossible to reach these participants to seek consent in using their comments and responses to form the data for the study, thus constituting a problem for this research. In a bid to tackle this problem, labels will be used in place of their online names.

Another problem experienced is regarding the voluminous nature of the data. Football data can be quite voluminous and diverse, especially in online contexts. When a post is made either by a football club, player or journalist, the comments such posts generate can be voluminous in a limited period that comments made previously are suppressed to give room for incoming comments. Thus, this makes the search for data that will be useful to the research very difficult as the researcher would have to refresh the comment section continuously. Also, some social media platforms like Facebook filter the comments and only leave the comments they consider “relevant” and these “relevant” comments may have no relationship with the research area, constituting a research problem.

1.4 Theoretical Background

The theoretical foundation upon which this study is built is Jonathan Culpeper's theory of impoliteness. Impoliteness theory is rooted in the broader field of politeness theory, proposed by Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson. Politeness theories focus on how communicative strategies are employed to promote or maintain social harmony in interaction (Culpeper 349). However, in interactions, there are instances where people often attack one another and use derogatory and demeaning terminologies. We can therefore classify these attacks and derogatory terminologies as impolite behaviour. The concept of impoliteness has been defined by different linguists and scholars but this study is centred around the explanations of impoliteness by Jonathan Culpeper. It can be said that impoliteness occurs when a speaker deliberately speaks in a manner intended to offend the listener. Impoliteness is a kind of parallel but opposite to politeness theory. Culpeper refers to impoliteness as the "parasite" of politeness (355). Culpeper posits that impoliteness is not solely a linguistic matter. He argues that it is a multifaceted field of study that can be examined from various perspectives, such as social psychology (with a focus on verbal aggression), sociology (particularly in the context of resolving verbal conflicts), literary studies, and more (3). In essence, he summarises that the concept of impoliteness can be approached from a range of disciplines and angles, each with its own terminology and insights. In providing a definition for impoliteness, he says,

Impoliteness is a negative attitude towards specific behaviours occurring in specific contexts. It is sustained by expectations, desires and/or beliefs about social organisation, including in particular, how one person's or a group's identities are mediated by others in interaction. Situated behaviours are viewed negatively- considered "impolite" when they conflict with how one expects them to be, how one wants them to be and/or how one thinks they ought to be. Such behaviours always have or are presumed to have emotional

consequences for at least one participant, that is, they cause or are presumed to cause offence. Various factors can exacerbate how offensive an impolite behaviour is taken to be, including for example, whether one understands a behaviour to be strongly intentional or not (Culpeper 23).

Culpeper's work on impoliteness can be viewed as a kind of counter to the view on politeness. While politeness theory focuses on the positive face needs of individuals which include the desire to be liked, respected and have one's social identity affirmed (Brown and Levinson 62), impoliteness theory seeks to understand and explain instances of verbal behaviour that violate the norms of politeness in social interactions, providing a background for examining how and why people use language to express negative attitudes, challenge or threaten others and engage in face threatening acts (FTAs). Culpeper's impoliteness theory complements politeness theory by addressing the negative face needs of individuals, which involve the desire for autonomy, freedom of action and protection from imposition (Brown and Levinson 62). Impoliteness theory explores the strategic use of impolite language to challenge or threaten others, show authority, express disagreement or engage in other behaviours that undermine positive face needs. However in his paper "Towards an Anatomy of Impoliteness", Culpeper presents the different forms impoliteness can take to include Inherent Impoliteness and Mock Politeness, which is in contrast to the politeness forms, Relative and Absolute politeness proposed by Leech (350-353). While Inherent impoliteness aims at attacking face, Mock impoliteness does not seek to cause offence. In this same paper, Culpeper does not just develop his theory on impoliteness but proposes five (5) super-strategies of impoliteness which are employed by speakers for the purpose of attacking face (355). These super strategies, although related to the politeness strategies, should not be mistaken for the politeness strategies introduced by Brown and Levinson, as they are in contrast with the politeness

strategies and perform different functions in interactions. While Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies are proposed to "enhance or support" face and account for harmony in communication, Culpeper's impoliteness strategies are proposed for the communicative strategy of "attacking face". The impoliteness super strategies are listed below:

- Bald on record impoliteness: here, FTA is performed in a direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way in circumstances where face is not irrelevant or minimised. This strategy, however, is different from Brown and Levinson's Bald on record where little face is at stake and only occurs in specific circumstances or in a situation where there is no intention to damage the face of the hearer.
- Positive impoliteness: the use of strategies designed to damage the addressee's positive face wants.
- Negative impoliteness: the use of strategies designed to damage the addressee's negative face wants.
- Sarcasm or mock politeness: the FTA is performed with the use of politeness strategies that are obviously insincere, and thus remain surface realisations.
- Withhold politeness: the absence of politeness work where it would be expected. For example, failing to thank somebody for a present may be taken as deliberate impoliteness (Culpepper 356).

It is however pertinent to note that these super strategies rarely occur singularly but are more commonly combined. The super strategies were originally developed using Brown and Levinson's politeness framework as a model with the exception of "sarcasm or mock politeness" which is not considered the equivalent of off-record politeness. Sarcasm is inspired by Leech's 1983 conception of irony which can be seen as a meta-strategy for using politeness for impoliteness (42). Culpeper,

in “Impoliteness and Entertainment”, proposes an additional category for his impoliteness model: off-record impoliteness, where the face threatening act (now FTA) is performed by means of an implicature but in such a way that one attributable intention clearly outweighs any others (44). This model takes the place of sarcasm.

1.4.1 Key Concepts/Notions in Impoliteness

This section highlights some key concepts upon which the theory of impoliteness revolves. These concepts include face, intention(ality), FTAs, among others, and they will be listed and analysed below:

1.4.2 The Notion of Face

The term "face" was initially introduced by Erving Goffman in 1967 and gained prominence through Brown and Levinson's politeness theory. Face as used in politeness study does not pertain to a person's actual facial features or physical appearance, but rather an image or identity an individual assigns to themselves. Brown and Levinson's notion of face is derived from that of Goffman and from the English term “losing face” which equates to the feeling of being embarrassed or humiliated. Thus, face is something that is emotionally invested and that can be lost, maintained, threatened or enhanced and must be constantly attended to in interaction (Brown and Levinson 61). Goffman defines face as “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact” (5). It is a self-image that is defined in terms of acceptable social characteristics and encompasses all the things that a person identifies with, such as family, school, possessions, etc. It is not limited to the direct components of a person's self, such as abilities, disposition, or appearance (Goffman 25). Goffman asserts that regardless of age, race, gender, culture, religion, or social standing, everyone desires to safeguard their public image or "face". He further posits that this concept of "face" is not an

individual's personal possession but a universal phenomenon lent to them by society. In essence, it is a social construct rather than something owned by any one person. It is however important for participants to cooperate in maintaining face in interaction because of the mutual vulnerability of face (Brown and Levinson 68). What this means is that it is in the best interest of participants to maintain each other's face since people can defend their face if threatened and can in turn threaten the other's face. When participants act in line or are cautious of the assumptions regarding face, we can say that face is maintained or enhanced. Face, however, consists of two aspects: positive and negative face and they will be discussed under the following heading.

1.4.2.1 Face As Wants

The notion of face consists of two aspects which members are aware of and which is in the interest of every member to satisfy. These aspects include positive and negative faces. According to Brown and Levinson, positive face refers to "the want or desire of every member that his wants be desirable at least to some others, while negative face includes the wants of every "competent adult member" that his actions be unimpeded by others" (62). This implies that in society, adults who value their personal freedom do not want others to impose on them, while those who care about their reputation want their actions to be liked and approved by others. However, both the positive and negative faces of an individual's face can be threatened or lost especially in situations where face is not put into consideration. Brown and Levinson list out actions that can threaten both the positive and negative face of an individual. Actions such as orders and requests, suggestions, threats, warning dares, offers, etc, can threaten the hearer's negative face, while actions (in this case speech acts) such as expressions of disapprovals, criticisms, contempt, ridicule, complaints, insults, reprimand, and disagreement can threaten an individual's positive face (Brown and Levinson 65-66). It is worthy to note that there are acts that threaten both the speakers and hearers'

faces. Such acts include expression and acceptance of thanks, unwilling promises and acceptance of offers (67).

1.4.3 Face Threatening Acts (FTAs)

Certain kinds of acts threaten face, as these acts run contrary to the face wants of the hearer and/or of the speaker (Brown and Levinson 65). The term “act” encompasses both verbal and non-verbal modes of communication. FTAs are acts that are capable of threatening or causing damage either to the speaker’s or hearer’s face (65). The analysis of face threatening acts can be approached from two angles: determining whether it is the speaker’s or the hearer’s face that is at risk, and identifying whether it is a positive or negative face that is being threatened (Brown and Levinson 65). The acts that threaten the hearer’s positive face include those acts in which the speaker shows that he/she does not approve or support the hearer’s positive face (66). These acts include expression of disapproval, contempt, ridicule, complaints, reprimands, criticisms, accusations, insults, mentioning of taboo topics, and so on (Brown and Levinson 66-67). In these instances, if a hearer is being insulted or criticised, it will be said that the hearer’s positive face has been threatened. Conversely, the hearer’s desire for autonomy and freedom can be jeopardised when he/she is being ordered, warned, advised, dared or threatened. In these instances, if the hearer is warned sternly or is threatened, his negative face has been threatened. In a similar vein, the speaker’s positive face can be threatened when such a speaker confesses to any act of wrong doing, admits guilt, renders apologies, self humiliation or accepts compliments. Acts that can likewise threaten the speaker’s negative face include expression of gratitude, acceptance of a thank you or an apology, acceptance of an offer, and making promises and offers unwillingly (Brown and Levinson 66-68).

In a bid to mitigate FTAs, Brown and Levinson provide a list of five (5) strategies: performing an FTA without redress (bald-on record), performing an FTA with redress (positive politeness), performing an FTA with redress (negative politeness), performing an FTA using off-records politeness and finally, do not perform FTA (69). According to them, the first four are to be performed, while the fifth strategy is adopted as a super strategy which may be used if the speaker decides not to perform any of the acts, in essence, saying nothing (Brown and Levinson 69).

1.4.4 Intention(ality)

Intention(ality) is another concept to be considered when discussing impoliteness. Haugh considers intention as a post-facto construct that is explicitly topicalised in accounting for actions including violations of norms or other interactional troubles explicitly invoked in other subtle ways through interaction (101). The presence of “post-facto” in the statement gives the impression that something is constructed or interpreted after an action has taken place. When we consider the notion of intention, we gain a deeper understanding regarding human actions and the motivations behind them. In conversations, the role of both the speaker and hearer are important. According to Locher and Watts, the interactants perceptions of communicator’s intentions rather than the intentions themselves determine whether a communicative act is taken to be impolite or not, that is, the uptake of the message is as important if not more important than the utterers original intention (80). Being aware of the intentions of the speaker is a very important factor in identifying impoliteness, and the hearer’s understanding of the speaker's intentions.

Intentionality is sensitive to the kind of offence and depends on context (Culpeper 53). According to Mullany, there are instances where face attack happens intentionally on the part of the speaker but the hearer does not perceive it as face attack or conversely, the speaker’s intention is not to attack the hearer’s face but the hearer constructs intentional face attack (qtd. in Locher

and Bousfield 234-235). Although (full) intentionality is not an essential condition for impoliteness (Culpeper 52), it is important that both the hearer and speaker have an understanding of interactional cues (verbal or non-verbal behaviours such as facial expressions, body language, eye contact, tone of voice, intonation, touch, silence and pauses, used to communicate and convey meaning during social interactions), as this understanding will determine if an act should be considered intentional or not.

1.4.5 Misconceptions About Impoliteness (What Impoliteness Is Not)

Culpeper, in his paper “Impoliteness and Entertainment”, proposes a new definition of impoliteness and goes further to revise his model of impoliteness. The phenomenon of impoliteness has to do with how offence is communicated and taken (Culpeper 36). In this paper, Culpeper addresses the misconceptions surrounding impoliteness and proposes four things to which impoliteness is not.

First, according to Culpeper, “impoliteness is NOT incidental face threat” (36). The purpose of the capitalisation of not is to show emphasis. In order to establish this point, Culpeper makes reference to Goffman where he states “[t]here are incidental offences; these arise as an unplanned but sometimes anticipated by-product of action- action the offender performs in spite of its offensive consequences, though not out of spite” (14). This simply means that some impolite acts are not performed out of spite. Culpeper goes further to present the example of tutors who give critical comments to students in a bid to stress this point. Although these comments may have potentially offensive consequences, the primary aim of the tutor in this case is simply to help the students improve and not to actually cause offence to the student.

Another misconception about the notion of impoliteness is that “impoliteness is NOT unintentional” (37). Again, to address his point here, Culpeper makes reference to Goffman where

he points out that the offending person “may appear to have acted innocently; his [sic] offence seems to be unintended and unwitting [...]” (14). Such threats to face are known as accidental offence and examples include faux pas, gaffes, boners or bricks (Goffman 14). Accidental offence has a sub-type known as “failed politeness” and Culpeper uses this concept to stress his point, and gives an instance where an interactant fails to acknowledge how much politeness work is required in a particular situation and thus cause offence (for example a participant failing to appreciate the efforts of the other person in acquiring a gift and fails to thank the giver appropriately). As one of Culpeper’s super strategies, this situation is a perfect example of “withhold impoliteness”.

Furthermore, Culpeper maintains that “impoliteness is NOT banter” (37). Culpeper proceeds to draw from Leech in distinguishing between “mock impoliteness” from “genuine impoliteness”. Banter is mock politeness and it remains on the surface because it is understood in particular contexts not to be true. Leech argues that banter reflects and fosters social intimacy, as well as shows solidarity with the hearer, by saying something which is obviously untrue and obviously impolite to the hearer (144).

Finally, Culpeper maintains that “impoliteness is NOT bald-on record politeness” (37). Culpeper et al. elaborate on Brown and Levinson’s definition of bald-on record politeness which states that bald-on record is direct and occurs in specific contexts like emergency situations, when the face threat is small and when the speaker has great power (69). This definition, however, is not in line with their notion of impoliteness, as it does not adequately describe the variety of phenomena, including impoliteness phenomena that have been placed within it (Culpeper et al. 1548). The point made by Culpeper et al. here is that the definition of bald on record politeness needs to be more inclusive and flexible to accommodate both polite and impolite communication

patterns, as it is a strategy that can be employed in both ways, depending on the context and possibly the relationship between the interlocutors.

1.4.6 Impoliteness in Football on Social Media

Impoliteness in football can manifest itself in various social media platforms as well as offline interactions, where fans engage in discussions and debates about the sport. While social media has provided an avenue for football fans to connect and share their passion, it has also unfortunately become a breeding ground for impoliteness, insults and abusive behaviour. Text-based computer mediated communication (CMC) modes of communication usually give room for anonymity in interaction (Herring 622). As a result of this, it has become much easier for people to criticise and use impolite language without fear or remorse. Some common examples of impoliteness in football on social media include: insults and personal attacks, trolling, cyber bullying, peddling of rumours and misinformation, disrespectful comments towards match officials, etc. When fans exhibit such behaviours, they create a toxic environment that can discourage healthy and harmless discussions and may further ignite resentment and hostility.

1.4.7 Functions of Impoliteness

Culpeper dedicates almost the entirety of chapter seven in describing the functions of impoliteness. Although there have been few scholarships on impoliteness functions, scholars like Kasper makes an attempt to identify functions of linguistic impoliteness, proposing that there are three (3) kinds of function for motivated rudeness, namely rudeness resulting from a lack of emotional control, deliberate strategic rudeness and rudeness expressed ironically (193-218). Likewise Beebe, after examining more than six hundred (600) instances of what is considered rude, argues that there are two main functions of rudeness: to get power and to vent negative feelings (154-168). However, Culpeper proposes three functions of impoliteness. They include affective, coercive and

entertaining functions of impoliteness (221). These functions have a relationship with the impoliteness super strategies proposed by Culpeper. Impoliteness functions are not mutually exclusive, as a single instance of impoliteness can serve multiple functions simultaneously. What this means is that when a speaker employs any of the super strategies, he/she achieves one or more of these three functions. The three impoliteness functions will be analysed below:

1.4.7.1 Affective Impoliteness

Research has shown that when people react in an aggressive manner, it is a sort of “angry response” to a frustrating or a provocative situation. Affective impoliteness thus involves the “unrestrained expression of emotion, particularly in contexts where it is not licensed” (Kasper, 209-210). According to Culpeper, “affective impoliteness is the targeted display of heightened emotion, typically anger, with the implication that the target is to blame for producing that negative emotional state” (223). There are instances where affective impoliteness can be strategic or instrumental as well as impulsive or reflexive, with certain prosodic features such as tempo, a higher and wider pitch range, etc, being attributed to the participant who produces an impolite utterance.

1.4.7.2 Coercive Impoliteness

Culpeper describes coercive impoliteness as “the impoliteness that seeks a realignment of values between the producer and the target such that the producer benefits or has their current benefits reinforced or protected” (226). It involves coercive action that is not in the interest of the target and involves both the restriction of a person's action-environment and results in a clash of interests. Tedeschi and Felson define a coercive action as “an action taken with the intention of imposing harm on another person or forcing compliance” (168). Coercive impoliteness relates to Beebe's function of "getting power" and getting power is a matter of exercising power in order to appear

superior, to get power over actions and to get power in conversation (159-163). This type of impoliteness is most likely to occur in situations where there is an imbalance of power or social status. In such situations, individuals with significant power can behave impolitely because they have the means to limit the ability of less powerful individuals to respond in kind, by controlling the conversation or interrupting, and can also threaten more severe consequences if the less powerful individual responds impolitely (Culpeper 228).

1.4.7.3 Entertaining Impoliteness

Impoliteness can be entertaining. This third function of impoliteness is described by Culpeper as “one that involves exploitative entertainment- it involves entertainment at the expense of the target of the impoliteness” (233). This type of impoliteness involves a victim or at least a potential victim. In entertaining impoliteness, the target is aware that he or she has become a target of the impolite utterance made by the speaker (134). Culpeper, in this impoliteness function, shows the connection between impoliteness and entertainment and proposes five sources of pleasures involved in entertaining impoliteness. They include emotional pleasure, aesthetic pleasure, voyeuristic pleasure, the pleasure of being superior and the pleasure of feeling secure (234-235). In entertaining impoliteness, the other person aside the target can be entertained by the impoliteness performed towards the target if it can give pleasure, irrespective of if the target is aware of the impoliteness or not.

1.5 Review of Related Scholarship

The concept of politeness and impoliteness are studies within the field of pragmatics, and are more of contextual than mere linguistic phenomena. Although a great number of studies have been conducted in the field of politeness, impoliteness on the other hand just recently had scholars paying attention to the field. However, before we delve into the field of impoliteness, we shall first

examine the study of politeness. Politeness studies focus on strategies which are used in communication to promote social harmony. Developed by Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson, politeness theory aims at explaining how individuals can mitigate potential threats to social interaction through the use of polite language. According to Lakoff, politeness can be defined as “a means of minimising confrontation in discourse- both the possibility of confrontation occurring at all, and the possibility that a confrontation will be perceived as threatening” (102). Thus, politeness seeks to reduce the likelihood of conflict or disagreement in conversation, such that if a confrontation does occur, it is less likely to be seen as a threat. Based on Grice's cooperative principle, the primary concern of communication is that the interactions need to be cooperative (Grice 49). People cooperate and assume each other's cooperation in maintaining face in interaction, as such cooperation is based on the mutual vulnerability of face (Brown and Levinson 68). This means that everyone's face depends on everyone else's being maintained since people can defend their faces if threatened. According to Brown and Levinson, research on politeness supports the claim that three sociological factors are crucial in determining the level of politeness and they include relative power, social distance and the ranking of the imposition involved in doing FTA (15).

1.5.1 The Concept of Impoliteness

The concept of impoliteness was initially regarded as "pragmatic failure that was not worthy of consideration" (Culpeper 6). It was until recent times that scholars began to pay attention to the study of impoliteness. Scholars like Locher and Bousfield (2008), Culpeper (2005, 2011), Culpeper et al. (2003), Terkourafi (2008) and others have worked on impoliteness. Usually, interactions are considered impolite when they run contrary to the face expectations of the hearer and are capable of causing conflicts and breakdown of communication (Culpeper 65). Impoliteness

has been viewed by many scholars from different perspectives. According to Culpeper et al., impoliteness is "communicative strategies designed to attack face, and thereby cause social conflict and disharmony" (1546). Similarly, Culpeper posits that impoliteness comes about when the speaker communicates face attack intentionally or the hearer perceives and/or constructs behaviour as intentionally face attacking or a combination of both (28).

In the same vein, Bousfield states that "impoliteness is the broad opposite of politeness, in that, rather than seeking to mitigate FTAs, impoliteness constitutes the communication of intentionally gratuitous and conflictive verbal FTAs which are purposefully delivered: (1) unmitigated in contexts where mitigation is required and/or (2) with deliberate aggression, that is, with the face threats exacerbated, boosted or maximised in some way to heighten the face damage inflicted" (72). Impoliteness is a negatively marked behaviour that is geared towards causing and aggravating verbal offence. The intention to cause offence, that is the intention to either support or attack face is what distinguishes politeness from impoliteness. Holmes et al. state that "verbal impoliteness is the use of language that a listener interprets as harmful to their image or social identity, while also going against the established norms of appropriate behaviour within specific contexts" (196). Leech in *The Pragmatics of Politeness* notes that impoliteness can be seen in how people interact during conversations (227). Specifically, he mentions that asking personal questions like someone's age, number of children, or income, unless you are very familiar with them, is often viewed as breaching conversational etiquette and violates the tact maxim (Leech 227-228). The phenomenon of impoliteness alongside its strategies have been studied thoroughly across different contexts ranging from political discourse to films, advertisements, songs, comedy, courtroom discourse etc. As regards football discourse, a number of studies have been conducted to address this topic especially from different perspectives.

In a study conducted by Roger Penn, the study analyses the correlation or the relationship between football and language from a sociological perspective. The findings of the study challenge the widely accepted belief that talk-in football is majorly characterised by terminologies which are considered negative because they are grounded in racism, sexism and homophobia (“Football Talk” 1). According to Penn's findings, football discourse is characterised by positive terminology which play a unifying role, act as a lingua franca among those interested in the game and functions as a language code that is both inclusive and exclusive (1). This discourse serves as some sort of contradiction to the claims of those who view it as primarily negative.

In the study conducted by Radek Humpolik, the study portrays football commentary as a specific and independent register and examines the language found in English football commentary, specifically hinging on its linguistics and literary characteristics (6). The study serves as an important source for understanding the rationale behind certain commentaries, as the findings of the study give an insight on the use of linguistic features such as the use of modifiers, the use of simple present tense as well as the construction of both simple and complex sentences (40). It also examines the use of literary techniques such as metaphorisation and metonymy as they are commonly employed or used in football commentary (43). The study however is restricted only to football commentaries made by professional football commentators and does not account for the linguistic behaviours of football fans.

Another study carried out by Roger Penn examines the relationship between football and globalisation specifically in England and Italy within the period of 1930-2010. The study focuses on three aspects, namely the nationalities of the players, the country of origin of the coaches and the aspect of club ownership. The findings reveal that during this period, England majorly featured English players and British managers (“Football, Nationalism and Globalisation” 345). This is as

a result of the strict immigration rules which were implemented after the First World War. In a similar manner, the Italian Serie A exhibited the same pattern, having the Italian league dominated by Italian players for the majority of the time (345). This is attributed to the prohibition or ban of non-Italian players in the Italian league between the period of 1965 and 1980, despite the provisions for the free movement of labour in the Treaty of Rome 1957, as highlighted by Penn. However, in terms of coaches and club ownership, there was a rush of foreign coaches from countries such as Hungary, Austria and Yugoslavia between the period of 1940 and 1950 in both England and Italy. Club ownership on the other hand was retained strictly by the natives to each country during this period (345). This study however, focuses strictly on globalisation in football and does not include other aspects such as the linguistic attitudes of fans of the sport.

Kuntjara K. and Wibowo G.P. investigate the linguistic impoliteness used in online football comments in an Indonesian football website called *Okezone* (166). The study examines how computer mediated communications (CMC) has revolutionised linguistic and social interactions. The findings from the research show how four out of the five impoliteness strategies proposed by Jonathan Culpeper are used by the Indonesian participants while giving online comments. The findings further reveal that the website is an asynchronous computer mediated communication (CMC), as it does not imply the real spoken interaction (172). The study does not discuss polite discussions in CMC situations and does not imply that all communication is carried out in impolite ways. The study is aimed at creating an understanding of the impoliteness phenomenon in the Indonesian context.

Marcin Lewandowski's study explores the use of language in online sports commentary, and examines this from a comparative standpoint. The study specifically examines the linguistic style utilised in online sports commentary (OSC) in contrast to the style observed in written sports

commentary (WSC) and the language used by sports announcers (65). The research findings stress on the notion that digital sports commentary language is a blend of both spoken and written language (65). The findings further highlight the disparities between registers in OSC, WSC and SAT in varieties such as spelling, punctuation, etc (74). The study however does not examine the linguistic and non linguistic behaviors of football fans.

The study conducted by Jonathan Rosén offers insights into the relationship between impoliteness, gender and social media. The study examines the occurrence of impolite language in Twitter comments related to the Most Valuable Player (MVP) award announcements in both the National Basketball League (NBA) and the Women's National Basketball League (WNBA), comparing impoliteness based on gender. The study investigates the frequency and nature of impolite interactions directed at athletes on social media platforms (1). The findings of the study indicate that a significant portion (45.4%) of primary comments directed at athletes on Twitter exhibit impoliteness. Additionally, the study highlights that the type of impoliteness observed in comments about male and female athletes differs substantially (23). For instance, female athletes receive drastically more positive impoliteness aimed at alienating them from the sport, while the male athletes are more likely to receive bald on record impoliteness, questioning their awards and rankings in the NBA (23).

Within the Nigerian scholarship context, a considerable number of studies have equally paid attention to sports and football discourse.

Michael Temitope Ajayi's study examines the use of language within football rivalries. The study sheds light on the perspective of face and politeness (59). It specifically investigates how two renowned European football coaches namely Jose Mourinho and Josep (Pep) Guardiola employ face threatening acts in shaping their professional rivalry. The findings of the study show how

Mourinho uses language in waging war against his rivals by threatening both their positive and negative faces, while promoting his own positive face (69). The study basically presents an interesting analysis of the role of language in football rivalries.

Akinbiyi Adetunji adopts a sociolinguistic approach to the analysis of the nicknaming of well known players of the English Premier League (EPL) by Nigerian supporters of the league (1). The study focuses on the strategies and criteria employed in the process of creating these nicknames and further highlights linguistic mechanisms such as borrowing, analogy and semantic transfer in the formation of these nicknames. Additionally, the findings of the study also show how certain important factors such as performance, role, age and physical appearance are taken into account when assigning these nicknames to players (1). The findings also depict the slangy coinages of these names and how the names mostly comprise Yoruba expressions to reflect the social and cultural view of Nigerian fans (17). The study provides useful data on the linguistic behaviour of Nigerian EPL fans.

In a recent study conducted by Michael Temitope Ajayi alongside two other Nigerians, Temidayo Akinrinlola and Daniel Ajayi, the study investigates fandom discourse as it relates to linguistics practice of English Premier League (EPL) supporters in Nigeria. The study employs a range of relevant theories such as Brown and Levinson's concept of face, Culpeper's perspective on impoliteness and Odebunmi's contextual belief theory, in analysing a variety of online interactions on platforms like Facebook and offline interactions particularly those relating to sports/football radio discussions and presentations (1). The study examines the prominence of banter throwing among EPL club fans in Nigeria. The findings of the study reveal a list of pragmatic-linguistic practices employed by these fans, such as personalisation of club's activities/affairs (through personal and possessive pronouns), distortion of rival club logo, name calling and

distortion of club name and direct and indirect jocular mockery majorly for amusement purposes, which helps to foster and maintain an atmosphere of camaraderie among supporters (24). Basically, the study investigates the discourse techniques employed by Nigerian fans of EPL teams when engaging in banter during football-related discussions, aiming to describe how this banter affects the way language is used among Nigerian fans. However, this study only attempts an analysis of fandom discourse in Nigeria and does specifically account for how language is used to cause conflict or disharmony in discourse.

Buiké Oparaugo's study assesses the impact of televised European football matches on Nigerian football as well as Nigerian youths. The study investigates the degree of support European football clubs receive from Nigerian fans, gauges the extent to which Nigerian youths watch televised European matches and assesses the influence and effects of televised European matches on Nigerian youths and in extension, Nigerian football (1). It addresses the positive and negative influence of European football on Nigerian youths. The positives include the inculcation of the spirit of oneness, a bond of brotherhood, love etc, while the negatives include the influence on the academics of Nigerian youths to include the ineffective use of time, poor academic results due to deliberate skipping of classes, betting or gambling, leading to social vices like stealing when the gambler runs out of cash (11-13). The study also exposes the lack of support for local teams thus leading to the decline in the growth of local teams. The study, however, does not include an analysis of language used among fans and majorly addresses the impact of European football on Nigerians.

In the study conducted by Sade Olagunju, she explores the impact of lexical connections in specific football discussions found in Nigerian newspapers like *Sporting Star*, *Soccer Life* and *Complete Sports* ("Functional Implications" 25). Using the framework of Systemic Functional

Linguistics (SFL) by M.A.K Halliday, the study shows how words in a text aid in comprehending football discourse effectively (28). The study also highlights the unique language and registers associated with football as a distinct subject in the broader realm of sports. The study, however, does not investigate aspects relating to fan discourse or fan behaviour.

Similarly, in another study conducted by Sade Olagunju, she investigates the evaluative register found in football text within Nigerian dailies, that is, how Nigerian dailies/newspapers frequently include the use of both positive and negative evaluative contents (“Investigating Evaluative Register” 66). Although this study shares a similarity with her previous work, the difference is that the previous study is hinged on the framework of SFL and basically establishes the relationship between how words in a text are used in comprehending football discourse, while this study deals with the evaluation of the use of positive and negative registers in football discourse.

Again, in one of the studies conducted by Sade Olagunju, the study draws on the framework of Generic Structure Potential (description of the obligatory and optional elements) analytic tool developed by Ansary and Babai in a bid to present the discourse structure of football texts in newspapers and its arrangements, highlighting the presence of obligatory and optional elements within the sequencing of football texts (“A Discourse Analysis” 1). The study sheds light on how the understanding and interpretation of media texts and football reports are mainly centered on reported speeches (13). It can be deduced that most of Olagunju's work centres on conducting investigations of football-related text in newspapers, and not on other aspects of the sport such as fan behaviour or fan language.

Ayodeji Mohammed Ademilokun’s study examines the non-verbal communication pattern among the student soccer fans at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria (1). The study

observes how students use familiar speaking codes in football discussions, which occur in various locations across the school's campus but are predominantly concentrated in viewing centres (2). The study further examines the use of visual artifacts in the students discourse such as jerseys, belts, head warmers, hand bands and gestures, and how these visuals are as effective as verbal language in human communication because they effectively communicate a wide range of meanings and messages. The findings of the study also show how these artifacts increase fan support and the growth of the sport (7).

In another study conducted by Dogari K.A., Apuke O.D. and Idi S., they examine the perceptions and encounters of European football fans specifically at television viewing centers in Nigeria. The study is situated within the field of peace and conflict studies. The study aims at determining if football serves as a form of leisure, escape, solace and the integration of diverse individuals, or if it contributes to conflicts within Nigerian societies (1). The findings of the study show how European football in television viewing centers are effective points of socialisation, bringing people from diverse linguistic, ethnic and religious backgrounds together, as well as its potential to generate conflicts if it is not effectively managed (1). Another finding of the study is that disagreements and discussions between fans typically do not escalate into physical fights or larger conflicts where weapons are used. This challenges previous studies and reports that suggest European football fanaticism frequently results in physical and armed confrontations among supporters (8). The study also shows how football fanaticism often leads to intra-personal conflicts such as a state of bitterness, unhappiness, sleeplessness and psychological instability in individual fans (1).

Although these scholarly works give a brilliant analysis of the various perspectives to which they examine sports and football, little or no attention has been paid to how football fans employ

impoliteness strategies in expressing their frustrations regarding football-related matters especially in the online space or in face-to-face interactions. This study, therefore, is aimed at investigating the impoliteness strategies that characterise football-related discourse.

1.6 Thesis Statement

European football fans in Nigeria use the bald on record, off-record, positive and negative impoliteness strategies to achieve the affective and entertaining functions of impoliteness in football-related discourse in online interactions.

CHAPTER TWO

BALD ON RECORD AND OFF RECORD IMPOLITENESS STRATEGIES IN SELECTED ONLINE FOOTBALL-RELATED DISCOURSE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to explore two out of the five impoliteness strategies proposed by Jonathan Culpeper, which are the bald on record and off record impoliteness strategies respectively. In order to have a proper understanding of these super strategies, we must first understand that these super strategies are originally modeled on the politeness counterpart introduced in Brown and Levinson's politeness framework. The impoliteness strategies proposed in Culpeper 1996 and slightly revised in 2005, to an extent mirror the politeness strategies. While Brown and Levinson's strategies account for politeness events, Culpeper revises and restructures these strategies without altering their names, in order to account for impoliteness (356-357).

In this chapter, focus shall be on the observation and description of two out of the five major super strategies- the bald on record and the off record impoliteness strategies- and how they are employed by Nigerian football fans during football-related discussions on social media platforms. Due to ethical considerations, tags and labels such as R1 (where R stands for reaction), C2 (where C stands for comment), S3 (where S stands for Speaker), F4 (where F stands for fan), etc, will be used in place of the actual names of these participants to protect them from further attacks.

2.2 Bald On Record Impoliteness Strategy

The bald on record impoliteness strategy is one in which language is used in a clear, direct, unambiguous and concise way, where there is much face at stake. Here, the message is conveyed

in an explicit manner, as face attack is very explicit and direct. It should however not be confused with Brown and Levinson's bald on record. For Brown and Levinson, bald on record is a politeness strategy which occurs in fairly specific circumstances like emergencies or when the threat to the hearer's face is very small. For example "come in" or "do sit down" (69). In such cases, little face is at stake and more importantly, it is not the intention of the speaker to attack the face of the hearer. However, Culpeper et al. argue that this definition of bald on record contradicts the notion of impoliteness phenomena, as it does not adequately account for instances of impoliteness that may also be expressed in a bald on record manner. The point made by Culpeper et al. is that the definition of bald on record politeness needs to be more inclusive and flexible to accommodate both polite and impolite communication patterns, as it is a strategy that can be employed in both ways, depending on the context and possibly the relationship between the interlocutors.

Bald on record impoliteness is typically deployed where face is not irrelevant and where there is an intention on the part of the speaker to attack the face of the hearer (356), as it does not take into account the potential negative impact it may have on the feelings of the other participant. During FTA, the speaker is very much concerned in achieving a higher degree of FTA rather than maintaining any face wants. The anonymity and distance provided by social media platforms tend to motivate participants to directly and deliberately attack other participants without fear or remorse.

2.2.1 Data Presentation and Analysis

Text 1

Background Information: A post made by renowned football journalist Fabrizio Romano, congratulating Manchester City on winning their first ever UEFA Champions League Cup, thanks

to a 1-0 win over Internazionale in the 2022/23 Champions league season held on June 10, 2023, in Istanbul, Turkey. The post was greeted by many fans and likewise rivals, with different comments and reactions that directly or indirectly stated that Manchester City were undeserving of the win. Below are some of the comments generated from the post:

Excerpt 1

C1: They literally cheated to win the treble.

C2: Poor officiating. All odds were against Inter Milan. Pre-determined match by all standards.

C3: Dark day for football. Oilchester City finally bought the Champions league.

In C1, there is outright use of the bald on record impoliteness. Winning a treble in sports refers to winning three major titles or competitions in the same season, which is a rare and remarkable accomplishment. The speaker's use of the word “cheated” is used to directly attack and criticise Manchester City on winning the treble. The term implies that they gained an unfair advantage or broke the rules to achieve their success, clearly accusing the team or players of dishonesty and unsportsmanlike behaviour. The word “literally” also intensifies the accusation, emphasising that the speaker believes the cheating to be absolutely true and not just a mere assumption or suspicion.

In C2, there is also evidence of bald on record impoliteness, particularly towards the officiating and Manchester City. The phrase “poor officiating” can be seen as a direct criticism of the match officials, implying that they did a bad job and were not competent in executing their duties. The statement “all odds were against Inter Milan” suggests that Inter Milan faced unfavourable circumstances or unfair treatment during the match. It implies that external factors, possibly including the match officials, conspired against Inter Milan, thereby tainting the integrity of those involved in the match. The comment further attacks City again, accusing the match of

being “pre-determined”, insinuating that the outcome was fixed or manipulated in some way, in favour of City. Such an accusation can be perceived as highly offensive and disrespectful to the players, officials and probably the sport itself, as it questions the fairness and integrity of the game.

In C3, there are also traces of bald on record impoliteness. The phrase “dark day for football”, is a negative expression. Calling it a “dark day” implies that something terrible has happened and this can be seen as an attempt to undermine City’s achievement. The referral of Manchester City as “Oilchester City” further denotes the bald on record impoliteness. This name is an intentional derogatory nickname that is used to attack the club’s ownership and financial backing. The speaker combines “oil” to imply that the club’s success is majorly due to huge investments from an oil-rich owner, with “Chester” to emphasise the idea of a club that has lost its identity and is being shaped by the influence of wealth, suggesting that the club’s achievements are solely as a result of huge financial prowess and are not earned through sporting merit. The use of the word “bought” finally heightens the attack on the club, suggesting that the victory of City in the Champions League was not earned through teamwork or fair competition, but rather achieved through financial means, implying corruption or unfair play. This outright accusation undermines the legitimacy of the team’s success, implying that the success is not as a result of their skills or merit as a team; it is not genuine or deserved.

Excerpt 2

C4: City played so bad... And let’s not talk about this ref. DISGRACE!

C5: How the hell did Inter reach the final? They can’t even beat City who was not at the top of their form. Onana touched the ball more than the whole Inter team, they thought by playing backwards they will win the game, LMFAO. Inter is the worst finalist ever.

C6: Football officially dead. Final nail in the coffin. Corruption and oil money wins.

In C4, there are elements of bald on record impoliteness embedded in the statement directed towards City, their performance and the referee. Outrightly stating that Manchester City played so bad depicts the speaker's strong negative judgement about City's performance. The use of the intensifier "so" is used to show the seriousness of City's poor performance. The phrase "let's not talk about" is a dismissive way of suggesting that the referee's performance was very terrible or controversial that the speaker doesn't even want to talk about it, implying a certain level of dissatisfaction or frustration with the referee's decisions. The capitalisation of the word "disgrace" is used as another way to project the frustrations of the speaker, suggesting that both City's performance and the referee's decisions were shameful and unacceptable.

Likewise in C5, the use of language is very clear and direct. The comment is embedded with derogatory remarks and offensive language in criticising Milan's performance. The phrase "how the hell" is a rude and aggressive way of expressing shock or disbelief and frustration of the speaker, who is left wondering how Milan are unable to defeat City, whom the speaker classifies as a club not in their form. The speaker expects Milan to have defeated City who are classified as vulnerable and out of form. The use of "can't even" is dismissive, implying that Milan's performance was disappointing. The speaker further demeans the players and the overall team's performance in the statement that the Milan goalkeeper Onana, touched the ball more than the whole team. This statement belittles the abilities of the players and the team as a whole, implying that the goal keeper was the only one contributing, making the rest of the team seem inefficient or lazy. Once again, there is the use of capitalisation in a comment to show emphasis and also express the inner frustrations of the speaker that are unseen. The capitalisation of LMFAO (an acronym for laughing my fucking ass off) further emphasises the attacking tone of the speaker; the speaker is deep in laughter ridiculing the tactics (playing backwards) and decision making of Inter Milan.

The final statement “Inter is the worst finalist ever”, is an assertion that directly insults Inter Milan, labeling them as not one of the worst, but the actual worst finalist in the history of Champions league. This disregards any positive aspect of the club likewise their previous achievements.

Finally, in C6, the comment is not devoid of bald on record impoliteness. The speaker uses negative language to vent their frustration and dissatisfaction with City winning the Champions League. The expression “football officially died” is an exaggeration to the claim that football as a sport, is now completely ruined or destroyed due to City winning the Champions league. The phrase “final nail in the coffin” is an idiomatic expression used to suggest that something has been doomed beyond recovery. In this context, what the speaker means is that the “corruption” and “oil money” behind City’s victory has completely damaged the integrity and reputation of football. The speaker further launches an attack on City, by outrightly accusing City of achieving their victory through unethical means, undermining the team’s actual potential to achieve this feat through fair play and talent, but rather through schemes and financial advantages.

Text 2

Background Information 1: Manchester United’s goalkeeper David De Gea announces his exit from the club after failing to agree a new deal. The Spain international goalkeeper joined Manchester United from Atletico Madrid in the 2011/12 season, spending a total of twelve years, with 545 appearances for the club. Although many of the fans expressed nothing but genuine love and gratitude for the goalkeeper, the following comment in the comment section expressed a different view:

Excerpt 3

S7: One of the worst, if not the worst goalkeeper in the modern football era

The speaker in this comment launches a direct attack on De Gea by referring to him as “the worst”. The first phrase “one of the worst” suggests that De Gea is among the least competent goalkeepers in modern football. The addition of “if not the worst” intensifies the speaker's negative evaluation about the goalkeeper, implying that he might even be the absolute worst. The speaker then proceeds to add some more specificity to the criticism; referring to De Gea as the worst goalkeeper “in the modern football era” highlights the time period, specifying that the criticism is related to De Gea’s performance in contemporary football. This adds a certain level of specificity and directness to the attack.

Background Information 2: Manchester United unveil former Chelsea star and England international Mason Mount as new signing. The former Chelsea star was signed for a fee of 60 million pounds on a five-year contract, during the summer transfer window of the just concluded 2022/23 football season. Mount was unveiled as United’s famous number 7 after Bryan Robson, George Best, Eric Cantona, David Beckham and five time ballon d’or winner Cristiano Ronaldo. The signing did not sit well with fans, especially Chelsea fans who consider him a traitor and United fans who consider him undeserving of being their 7. The following comments and reactions were selected:

Excerpt 4

S8: He downgraded

S9: United are FINISHED

S10: 60m for that □. Finished team

From the comment of S8, the word “downgraded” is a negative term that has a demeaning tone attached to it. It implies that Mount’s decision to leave Chelsea and join Manchester United is seen as a step down or downgrade in his career or status. The term is also used to attack Manchester

United as a football club, because it implies that they are a less prestigious club or they are less likely to achieve success. In football, player transfers between rival clubs can evoke strong reactions from fans. When a player leaves one club to join a rival team, it is perceived as betrayal hence the comment from this speaker.

Once more, we see a comment written in capital letters for emphasis and to express the frustrations of the speaker. From the comment of S9, we see how the speaker uses sweeping statements and capitalisation to vent their frustration. The statement “United are FINISHED” is a sweeping statement and a direct attack on the club, implying that the situation of the club is hopeless or irredeemable. It suggests that United has no chance of improving. By using such a statement, the speaker is not showing any respect or regard for the team or the club’s history, disregarding all achievements or accomplishments the club might have.

Also, from the comment of S10, we can see how the speaker combines direct offensive language and a skull emoticon in expressing anger. Referring to a (newly signed) player as “that” is dismissive and devalues the player’s worth. It implies that Mount is not even worth mentioning by name. The speaker, including the skull “☠” emoticon, further ignites the negative tone of the comment. It suggests that the player is a failure or will have a disastrous impact on the team. Referring to United as a “finished team” delivers a negative judgement about the team’s current state. It implies that the team has no potential for improvement and is destined to fail.

Excerpt 5

R11: Real waste of money. Nonsense player ☠

R12: ☠☠☠

R13: That number is cursed. The club is also cursed. You cannot succeed there no matter what.

From the comment of the speaker in R11, we can see how the speaker baldly projects his feelings about the signing and goes on to use direct and clear language to attack the player and well as the club in terms of investment. The speaker uses the intensifier “real” to show the severity of the situation. As can be seen, the speaker does not mention the name of the player but goes ahead to use invectives like “waste of money” and “nonsense player” in describing the player and projecting his feelings. The phrase “waste of money” is a direct attack on the player and the club, indicating that Mount is not worth the financial investment and that it was poor decision making on the part of the club to spend such an amount of money on the player. The use of the word “waste” is negative and suggests that the money could have been better spent elsewhere. The term “nonsense player” is a derogatory comment aimed at Mount, belittling the abilities and qualities the player possesses and to further indicate that the player is not talented or valuable to the team. The inclusion of the crying “😭” emoji emphasises a sense of disappointment or frustration of the speaker regarding the signing, adding an emotional element to the already impolite remark.

The reaction of R12 is a clear example of “emoticons speak louder than words”. Traditionally, we are acquainted with the saying “actions speak louder than words”, but here emoticons have taken the place of actions because the speaker does not utter a single word yet a glance at the emoticon in relation to the context conveys the emotions and feelings of the speaker effectively and directly. The use of the emoticon (a form of bald on impoliteness expressed through the visual language of emoji’s) “🙄🙄” as a reaction to the signing of Mount indicates disapproval or disgust towards the signing. However, the speaker using the emoji multiple times serves to intensify the expression of disgust and disapproval. By repeating the emoji, the speaker emphasises the magnitude of their negative reaction to the signing and each repetition reinforces the negative view,

making it more impactful and noticeable. Essentially, it can be seen as the speaker's way of saying "I REALLY don't like this signing!".

In R13, the speaker's use of the bald on record strategy is very pronounced. The phrase "that number 7 is cursed" directly attributes a curse to the number 7, asserting that the number 7 brings bad luck or misfortune. This kind of statement is not based on any factual evidence as the speaker uses superstitious or personal beliefs to project their feelings about Mount being Manchester United's new number 7. The assertion "the club is also cursed" suggests that the football club Manchester United, is doomed or is a magnet for bad luck. This negative assertion directly attacks the club, ridding it of any positive memory of its history and achievements. The speaker, clearly stating that "Mason Mount cannot succeed in the club no matter what" makes a definitive and negative judgment about Mount's potential success at Manchester United. It implies that Mount cannot succeed at Manchester United under any circumstances and dismisses any opportunity of him achieving success in the club, which is disrespectful to the player's abilities and potentials.

Text 3

Background Information: In an interview conducted by popular British broadcaster Piers Morgan with five time ballon d'or winner and ex Real Madrid legend Cristiano Ronaldo, the Portuguese international made headlines just days out from the 2022 World Cup by giving an in depth interview to break his silence about his situation at Manchester United which led to the club terminating his contract. The interview did not sit well with most Manchester United fans and the following comments were selected from the comments generated in the comment section:

Excerpt 6

S14: You are a disgrace to football and we made a huge mistake bringing him back to Man United

S15: Pathetic self-centered clown, the sooner he leaves the better. At least man united are playing well now as a united team without this man child and the stats are there to back it up

From the comment of S14, the speaker uses a strong invective to express disapproval towards Ronaldo's return to Manchester United after his departure from the club. Recall that the Portuguese international initially joined Manchester United in 2003 and left for Real Madrid in 2009, making a total of 196 appearances and scoring a total of 84 goals. The derogatory term "disgrace" is a personal attack directed at Ronaldo. It implies that the speaker holds a negative view of Ronaldo's action and uses it to express extreme disappointment as the speaker believes these actions have brought shame or humiliation to the club. By labeling someone a "disgrace to football" the speaker is asserting that these actions being criticised go against the core values and principles of the sport, suggesting that Ronaldo's behaviour is not only disappointing but also morally wrong. The additional statement "we made a huge mistake bringing him back to Manchester United" places blame and criticism on Manchester United and its management. The use of "we" suggests that the speaker includes themselves as part of the club and to emphasise the negative impact of the decision to bring Ronaldo back.

In the comment of S15, we can see that the speaker uses invectives to attack and demean Ronaldo, portraying him as someone of low worth, immature, foolish and unprofessional. By referring to Ronaldo as "pathetic", it suggests that the player is deserving of contempt, lacks skills and ability, and is used to undermine his talents and accomplishments. The speaker's classification of Ronaldo as "self-centered" implies that he is not a team player and is more concerned about his personal success than contributing to the team's success. Referring to Ronaldo as a "clown" is a direct attack on his character suggesting that he is a joke or someone not to be taken seriously. It

also implies that the player is incompetent and unable to perform at a professional level. The speaker's use of the derogatory term "man child" undermines the player's professionalism and implies that Ronaldo is irresponsible or unable to handle the responsibilities that comes with the profession . The phrase "the sooner he leaves the better" expresses the speaker's desire for Ronaldo to leave the team as soon as possible, implying that he is unwanted and has a negative impact on the team's performance as the team will probably do better without him. From the words used by the speaker it can be deduced that the speaker considers Ronaldo a hindrance to the growth and development of the club.

Text 4

Background Information: Reactions to Arsenal's signing of England midfielder Declan Rice from West Ham United for 105 million pounds on a five year contract with an option of a further year. The transfer fee sparked outrage among fans and the following comments were selected out the ones generated:

Excerpt 7

F16: Waste of money, 100+ million for this guy is so stupid

F17: Major flop incoming

From the comment of F16, we can see how the speaker baldly declares discontentment towards the signing of Declan Rice. The phrase "waste of money" is a direct criticism of the purchase of Rice for a high price, implying that spending such a significant amount on him is a foolish or unwise decision. It is also used to present the signing in a negative light as well as devalue the player, in the sense that the player's performance or potential does not merit or deserve such a substantial financial investment. The speaker referring to Declan Rice as "this guy" portrays the speaker's intention to portray Rice as someone without an identity, achievement, unimportant or

unworthy of attention, belittling Rice and suggesting that he is not worthy of the huge amount of money invested in his signing. The speaker's use of the impolite phrase "so stupid" is used to express disapproval for the signing, directly calling the decision making regarding the purchase of Rice as "stupid". This invective is outrightly used to insult the club's management, implying that they are incapable of making wise choices or decisions, especially when it comes to the signing of players.

In F17's comment, the speaker uses the derogatory term "major flop" to refer to Declan Rice. "Flop" here refers to significant failure or disappointment. By using the intensifier "major", the speaker amplifies the negativity in the comment, suggesting that Rice is not just going to be a regular disappointment but a crucial one. The speaker here makes harsh judgement and assumptions about Rice's abilities without giving him a chance to prove himself. The use of the word "incoming" further heightens the negative tone of the comment, implying that the player is inevitably bound to be a failure. This statement is embedded with so much negativity as it fails to consider the potentials and other positive contributions that Rice may bring to the team.

Text 5

Background Information: The commentary of Peter Drury, a British football commentator, in regards to AS Roma's comeback against FC Barcelona on April 10 2018, of the 2017/18 Champions League season. Drury is regarded as one of the greatest commentators in football and is known for his skillful use of language and metaphors in his commentaries. Apparently, not all football fans share this view, given the comment below:

Excerpt 8

F18: Peter Drury and his insufferable jabbering. Worst commentator ever.

The speaker in the above comment employs the use of the bald on strategy to directly attack Peter Drury as well as his profession. The speaker in expressing disapproval for the commentator goes ahead to use harsh words such as "insufferable", "jabbering", and "worst commentator ever". The word "insufferable" means something that is intolerable or difficult, suggesting that the speaker finds Peter Drury's commentary to be unbearable, irritating or annoying. "Jabbering" is a term used to describe rapid, incoherent or meaningless chatter. The speaker using this word implies that Drury's commentary lacks substance and coherence and that his speech is nothing more than gibberish and incessant talk without any logical meaning attached to it. The combination of "insufferable jabbering" can be seen as the speaker's impolite way of describing Peter Drury's commentary, implying that the speaker finds the commentary not only irritating but lacking in substance and quality. The use of the superlative "worst" indicates that the speaker perceives Peter Drury to be at the lowest level of all commentators; that there is no one worse than Drury in the profession. The addition of the intensifier "ever" further stresses the harshness of the comment, as it suggests that the speaker believes Drury's commentary is the worst they have ever come across, possibly across all matches or even in the entire history of commentary.

2.3 Off Record Impoliteness Strategy (Mock Politeness/Sarcasm)

The other super strategy to be discussed in this chapter is the polar opposite of the bald on record strategy, which is the off record impoliteness strategy. In the off record impoliteness strategy, language use is unclear, ambiguous and indirect, with the FTA performed with the use of politeness strategies that are obviously insincere and thus remains surface realisations (356). Initially, Culpeper classifies this strategy as "sarcasm" (mock politeness for social disharmony), which is clearly not the opposite of off-record politeness suggested in Brown and Levinson's politeness

framework. Sarcasm is inspired by Leech's conception of irony and is considered a meta-strategy, as politeness can be used for impoliteness. In the off-record impoliteness strategy, there is heavy reliance on conversational implicature and politeness is often used for impoliteness. Culpeper however, proposes an additional category for his impoliteness model: the off-record impoliteness, which takes the place of sarcasm. Here, the FTA is performed by means of an implicature but in such a way that one attributable intention clearly outweighs any others (44). What this means is that during an FTA, the speaker uses implicature (implied meanings) to convey a potentially offensive message rather than stating it directly or outrightly, with one particular intention being evident, overshadowing other possible intentions that can be inferred from the speaker's words.

The off record impoliteness is associated with two kinds of meanings- the denotative meaning which may seem polite and harmless on the surface and the connotative meaning, the underlying meaning which is left to the hearer to decipher. It is pertinent to note that the more indirect forms of impoliteness such as off-record impoliteness, should not be considered any less impolite than mere direct forms, as it can be argued that the indirect forms are believed to be or thought of as more offensive (Culpeper 44). The manifestations of off record impoliteness can come in the form of ironies, hints giving, vagueness, ambiguities, insinuations, exaggerations, among others.

2.3.1 Data Presentation and Analysis

Text 6

Background Information: Fans reaction to Napoli attacking midfielder and Georgian international Khvicha Kvaratskhelia winning the Serie A Most Valuable Player (MVP) award for the 2022/23 season. The Georgian international made a total of 34 appearances with 22 goals and assists (12 and 10 respectively). The award sparked an uproar among fans who felt that the player

was undeserving of the award, compared to the Nigerian and Napoli centre-forward Victor Osimhen, who made a total of 32 appearances, scoring 26 goals with 4 assists. Recall that Serie A rankings are drawn up taking into account the statistical and positional data of the player, as well as movements and player contribution to the technical and physical efficiency of the team. The following comments were selected from the heated comment section:

Excerpt 9

F19: Wow, I didn't know they gave out awards for participation in Serie A. Congrats on being the best of the average players

F20: Osimhen is BLACK. We understand

From the comment of F19, we can see how the speaker employs sarcasm to belittle the achievement of Kvaratskhelia in winning the Serie A MVP of the season over Victor Osimhen. The speaker uses a mocking tone to express disappointment over the decision, suggesting that Kvaratskhelia's award is undeserving as he only “participated” and did nothing major and that they consider him to be an average player. By saying "wow I didn't know they gave out awards for participation in Serie A" the speaker expresses a sarcastic tone of surprise using "wow". The statement sarcastically dismisses Kvaratskhelia's achievement and indirectly implies that the MVP award seems to be given on the basis of participation or simply being present in the league rather than on outstanding performance or merit. Additionally the phrase "congrats on being the best of the average players" further ignites the sarcastic tone of the comment. It mockingly acknowledges Kvaratskhelia's achievement while also suggesting that he is only the best among average players and is not as exceptional as Osimhen, who is considered to be way above average and outstanding.

In F20's comment, the speaker uses sarcasm to criticise the suspected bias in the voting process for prestigious awards like the Serie A MVP, where Osimhen, a black footballer, is

snubbed as the Serie A MVP. The statement implies that Osimehn's race should be irrelevant and not be the major deciding factor in him being recognised as the MVP, but should be judged solely on his qualities, performance and contribution to the team. By making the obvious statement "Osimehn is BLACK", the speaker hinges on the belief that racial factors play a major role in the selection process. This indirect snide remark is further used to attack Lega Serie A, the body in charge of awarding team and individual performances in the Serie A, indirectly accusing them of being racist, implying they are incompetent and biased in executing their duties.

Text 7

Background Information: Fan's reactions to football club Paris Saint Germain (now PSG) being crowned champions of the 2022/23 Ligue 1 season. PSG win the 11th Ligue 1 title of their history and is their 9th title since the 2012/13 season. Fans took to the comment section to express their "disbelief" and the following comments were selected:

Excerpt 10

R21: Omg the richest team in France won the league again, what a surprise ☐

R22: I really thought Brest with a budget of 20 euros would win it this year ☐

R23: Wow unbelievable, finally they won, been a long time coming, nobody would have thought in their utter dreams that PSG would do such a MIRACLE.... Thank you ☐

From R21, there is evident use of sarcasm in the speaker's comment to express frustration and attack PSG as well as the French league, by suggesting that the league is not competitive enough and is unfair, and that PSG's wealth gives the team an unfair advantage over the others. The speaker's use of the phrases "omg (oh my God/gosh)", "richest" and "again" in an exaggerated manner denotes sarcasm as the speaker actually finds it unsurprising and routine that the wealthiest team in France have been crowned champions once more. The presence of the word "richest"

implies that the team's wealth is the major reason for their success ignoring other factors such as skill, dedication or teamwork, while "again" hints that the team's chances of being crowned champions is so predictable and has become a sort of routine and is not worth being genuinely excited about. The speaker's addition of the laughing emoji "☹" adds to the mocking tone of the comment, to underrate PSG's achievement and also to possibly mock those who thought the outcome would be different.

The speaker, in R22, uses sarcasm to indirectly troll and launch a personal attack on both Stade Brestois (Brest FC) and PSG. Through the sarcastic phrase "I really thought", the speaker is being ironic by pretending to have truly believed in Brest having chances to win the league over PSG, even though in a realistic sense, they know it is very unlikely. The speaker goes ahead to mention Brest's budget for the season as merely 20 euros, to sarcastically belittle Brest's financial resources and to show the significant financial gap between Brest and PSG. In reality, football clubs have a substantial budget, but by reducing it to such an insignificant amount, the speaker humorously implies that Brest's budget is super low and thus cannot afford to build a proper team with it. The phrase "win it this year" is used sarcastically by the speaker to imply that no one sees Brest as a serious contender to win the league at any time, not just this specific year, once again taking a dig at the football club. By adding the sad face emoji "☹", the speaker expresses feigned disappointment at the expected outcome, implying that the speaker is not genuinely upset but is rather expectant of PSG's guaranteed victory.

From the comment of R23, we can see how the speaker uses sarcasm and exaggeration to express a sense of feigned disbelief and surprise at PSG's victory in Ligue 1. The use of "wow unbelievable" denotes a sense of ingenuine surprise or astonishment, as PSG's victory is an expected one. The phrase "been a long time coming" can be interpreted as sarcastic, as the speaker

mocks the idea that the victory was long overdue or that PSG had to wait a significant amount of time for it to happen, when in reality, they've had successive victories in over ten years. The capitalisation of "miracle" further exerts the sarcastic tone of the comment, portraying the victory as some sort of miraculous event, far beyond anyone's imagination. It dismisses the significance of PSG's victory as the speaker does not consider the win extraordinary or special. The "thank you" and smiling "😊" emoji continue the sarcastic tone, as it conveys insincerity and implies that the speaker is pretending to be happy with this victory when in reality they may be unsupportive of it or highly disappointed.

Text 4

Excerpt 11

R24: Basmati for 105m is crazy

R25: He has retired from winning trophies at a young age

In R24, sarcasm is used to negatively comment on the high transfer fee of Declan Rice, by humorously comparing him to a premium type of rice called "Basmati", reducing the professional footballer to a food commodity. In the comparison of a human being, in this case a skilled player like Declan Rice to a type of rice, the speaker's use of this derogatory comparison can be seen as an attempt to mock the player's value as well as emphasise disapproval of the huge amount of money being invested in the player.

In R25, the comment is aimed at attacking Rice's decision to join football club Arsenal. The speaker's use of the word "retired" denotes sarcasm. Naturally, retirement implies the end of a player's career after a long and successful run, but in this case, it suggests that Rice has prematurely given up on the possibility of winning trophies, even though he can still be in the football scene for many years. It is a sarcastic way of saying that Rice may not have made the best choice in

joining Arsenal. Although Arsenal has a name in the history books for being a prestigious club in Europe, they've recently been inflicted with some sort of trophy drought, which is why Rice's move to Arsenal is equated to him retiring as it is not seen as a wise choice for someone who is trophy-thirsty.

Text 2

Excerpt 12

R26: Wow, Mason Mount joining Man United? That's cute. I didn't know they were collecting average players now. Enjoy wasting 60m on a mediocre talent.

R27: I'm not hating but having THIS GUY with zero ball knowledge and zero creative ideas along with Bruno Fernandes is going to be a disaster class. Can't wait to see both players playing together. Exciting times ahead in two months. Fred-Mount-Fernandes combo! LMAO

The speaker's statement in R26 is embedded with sarcasm. The use of "wow" at the beginning is a sarcastic expression of mock surprise and astonishment at the news of Mount's arrival to Man United. It suggests that the speaker does not fancy the idea of Mount joining Man United as impressive but is rather being condescending. Referring to the transfer as "cute" downplays the importance of the news, implying that the transfer is not something serious or important. The statement "I didn't know they were collecting average players now" is indirectly used to attack both the club and the player. The speaker's use of "I didn't know" denotes sarcasm as the speaker is pretending to be ignorant or surprised. The speaker saying "collecting average players" implies that Man United is lowering their standards and settling for less by "collecting" average players and that Mason Mount is not a player with high quality and standard. The use of "enjoy" further emphasises the sarcastic tone of the comment. It implies that Manchester United will regret

spending such a significant amount of money on Mount and that the transfer will turn out to be a bad decision or move. The speaker referring to Mount as a "mediocre talent" shows that the speaker does not think Mount is deserving of the exorbitant fee attached to him and that the player's acquisition is not a smart and valuable investment for the club.

The speaker's use of the statement "I'm not hating" in R27 serves as a precursor to the criticism that comes next, in a bid to distance the speaker from being perceived as hostile, as well as to soften the impact of the impending attack. Referring to Mount as "this guy" depersonalises him and implies that the speaker does not consider him worth mentioning or recognised. The speaker further attacks Mount's creativity and skill by referring to him as having "zero ball knowledge" and "zero creative ideas". The speaker further uses a sarcastic tone to criticise Mount and involves two other of Manchester United's midfielders; Bruno Fernandes and Fred. The speaker uses sarcasm to mock the idea of a Fred-Mount-Fernandes combination, referring to it as a "disaster class". This implies that the pairing of Mount with these players will result in significant disaster or failure on the field, as the speaker thinks lowly of Mount's skills and is skeptical about pairing the three players, further amplifying the pessimistic tone of the comment. With the speaker's use of "exciting times ahead" and "LMAO", both phrases are used to sarcastically create a contrast between what the speaker perceives as anticipation for the upcoming season and their own negative assessment. The speaker's use of the word "exciting" denotes the use of irony in stating that the speaker does not share this eagerness or anticipation but is rather expectant of a negative outcome. Finally, the speaker's use of the abbreviated slang "LMAO", amplifies the sarcasm as the speaker finds the combination of Fred, Mount and Fernandes to be highly amusing, considering it as one that will have a disastrous effect on the team.

2.4 Functions of Bald On Record and Off Record Impoliteness Strategies

From the data analysed, it can be deduced that both impoliteness strategies are used by football fans on social media to achieve certain functions. We can see how the bald on strategy is used by these fans to achieve majorly, the **affective impoliteness function**, which addresses face concerns or the target. In the excerpt from **Text 1**, there are instances of bitter and angry reactions from fans directed at the football club Manchester City. These angry reactions question the club's integrity and projects them as undeserving of the title. Further reading also shows how these attacks are not just directed at the clubs, but at the players as well. In **Texts 2 and 3**, we see how fans use invectives and derogatory comments such as "worst player", "disgrace", "pathetic self centered clown", etc in describing the players. These insults can be seen as displays of heightened emotions in reaction to feelings of betrayal or hatred "caused" by these footballers.

On the other hand, the off record impoliteness strategy helps to achieve both the **affective and entertaining functions**, as it projects the frustrations of these fans as well as their intentions to mock their targets which in this case, are the players, clubs or football officials. In **Text 7**, we see how fans use sarcasm to express their frustrations about the lack of competitiveness in the French league as well as to mock PSG on their recurrent league wins, attributing the club's success to the wealthiness of its owner. Also in **Text 4**, we see how the comment of the speaker is derogatory and at the same time humorous because it downplays the qualities and skills of Declan Rice and mocks the players value by equating him to a brand of rice (Basmati)- an inanimate object.

2.5 Summary

From the data presented in this chapter, we can conclude that the comments and reactions of European football fans are embedded with both the bald on record and off record impoliteness strategies. Both strategies, in their opposite state, are deployed by fans to realise both the **affective**

and entertaining functions. These football fans use bald on record strategic tools like intensifiers, invectives, personal attacks and derogatory language to achieve the **affective functions**, as well as off record strategies like ironies, sarcastic emotions, exaggerations and indirect and insincere remarks in expressing their frustrations and at the same time to create humour (**entertaining functions**); with the bald on record strategy being the most prominently used strategy by these fans in attacking football clubs, footballers and sometimes the sport as a whole.

CHAPTER THREE

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE IMPOLITENESS STRATEGIES IN SELECTED ONLINE FOOTBALL RELATED DISCOURSE

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, we examined two of the five impoliteness super strategies namely the bald on record and off record (mock politeness) strategies and their various manifestations and functions. This chapter will see to the description and examination of two other communicative strategies- the positive and negative impoliteness strategies. These strategies will be used in the analysis of the data gotten from comments and reactions of participants from various social media platforms based on football related discourse. The tags used in the previous chapters in place of the participants remain the same.

3.2 Positive Impoliteness Strategy

Culpeper describes positive impoliteness strategy as "the use of strategies designed to damage the addressee positive face wants" (356). We see that this strategy basically addresses issues regarding face, in this case, the positive face wants of an individual. Earlier, we stated that the term "face" was first used by Goffman in 1967 and was then made popular by Brown and Levinson in their 1987 politeness work. While Goffman defines face as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact" (5), Brown and Levinson define face as "something that is emotionally invested and that can be lost, maintained, enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction" (61). Since positive impoliteness strategy addresses positive face wants, Brown and Levinson therefore describe

positive face wants as "the wants of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others" (61). In simpler terms, positive face wants can be described as the need to have one's personality "ratified, understood, approved of, liked or admired" (62). It also involves a person's desire to have his or her material or non-material things such as accomplishments, values, disciplines, etc, desirable and appreciated by other people. However, in an instance where language is used purposely to cause social disharmony and attack the positive face wants of an individual, we can say that the speaker has employed the positive impoliteness strategy. Culpeper proposes the positive impoliteness strategy as well as its output strategies for achieving positive impoliteness. They include (but are not limited) to the following:

- Ignore, snub the other - fail to acknowledge the other's presence.
- Exclude the other from an activity.
- Disassociate from the other - for example, deny association or common ground with the other; avoid sitting together.
- Be disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic.
- Use inappropriate identity markers - for example, use title and surname when a close relationship pertains, or a nickname when a distant relationship pertains.
- Use obscure or secretive language - for example, mystify the other with jargon, or use a code known to the others in the group, but not the target.
- Seek disagreement - select a sensitive topic.
- Make the other feel uncomfortable - for example, do not avoid silence, joke, or use small talk.
- Use taboo words - swear, or use abusive and profane language.
- Call the other names - use derogatory nominations (Culpeper 357).

3.2.1 Data Presentation and Analysis

Text 8

Background Information: Manchester United unveil former Atalanta striker and Denmark international Rasmus Højlund after signing the striker for a record fee of 72 million pounds (plus add ons), on a five year contract. Although some fans were ecstatic about the signing, others were not impressed and the following comments were generated from the comment section:

Excerpt 13

F1: Anything interesting? Wait is that a 20 year old striker? ☐

F2: Gonna be the flop of the season, big time flop

F3: Sorry who are you? Terrible signing

From the comment of F1, we see how the speaker employs positive impoliteness in projecting their feelings. The speaker begins with a rhetorical question- “anything interesting?”. This kind of statement projects a tone of disinterest on the part of the speaker as it shows the speaker’s way of snubbing the signing. Consequently, the statement implies that the news is not eye-catching or worthy of attention. Also, the speaker's reference to the age of the player is another strategy employed by the speaker to express their disapproval of the signing. The reference to age shifts focus from an important aspect of the player (in this case skill or talent) to a less important aspect, to render the signing insignificant or not a big deal and to also mean that one’s age does not necessarily qualify him as an accomplished player. The laughing emoji “☐” further sums up the disapproving tone, implying that the player and the signing is laughable and is not worth taking seriously.

In F2’s comment, the speaker uses derogatory language to express disapproval of the signing and the “fact” that Manchester United will be a significant failure (flop) by the end of the season

because they consider Højlund's signing to be one that is unsuccessful and would yield no positive impact on the team. The speaker's use of the emphatic language "gonna" is used to convey the strong conviction that the signing will lead to failure. Also, the speaker's use of the intensifier "big time" further intensifies the extent of the negative prediction, to imply that Højlund's failure will be something very significant and recognised. The speaker's repetition of "flop" again at the end of the statement is used to further re-emphasise the slight on the player's positive face; it is a reaffirmation of the speaker's disapproval of the player and an expression of their doubts about Højlund's abilities and potential contribution to the team.

In F3's comment, the speaker employs the combination of a dismissive introductory question and a negative characterisation of the player to illustrate their disinterest and unimpressed attitude towards Højlund's signing. The speaker begins the statement with "sorry who are you?", a snubbish rhetorical question. The rhetorical question contains the speaker's lack of recognition for Højlund. The speaker's use of "sorry" shows how they attempt to feign being polite, to signal the speaker's disinterest in knowing more about Højlund and that Højlund is not worth their attention. The speaker, in asking "who are you", questions the importance or relevance of Højlund, further contributing to the dismissive stance of the speaker. Referring to Højlund as "terrible" projects the speaker's negative judgment about the player, to mean that the signing is not only unimpressive but very bad. This highlights the disapproving tone of the speaker.

Text 9

Background Information: In a transfer rumour involving Brentford FC goalkeeper, David Raya, the keeper was rumoured to make a whooping transfer to Arsenal for 80 million pounds. There were mixed reactions concerning the keeper and the transfer fee. The following comment(s) were generated:

Excerpt 14

F4: I think I speak for every assna fan when I say we want him to replace scumsdale

The speaker in F4 uses derogatory alterations and inappropriate identity markers in projecting their dissatisfaction. First, the speaker inappropriately tampers with both the club's name (assna for Arsenal) and the club's goalkeeper Aaron Ramsdale (scumsdale for Ramsdale). The speaker's reference of Arsenal to "assna" can be seen as a deliberate distortion to mock and belittle the club. Also, referring to Ramsdale as "scumsdale", (a blend of "scum and "Ramsdale" to produce a derogatory nickname), can be seen as the speaker's way of criticising Ramsdale's performance as well as express frustration with the keeper's contribution to the team. This nickname threatens Ramsdale's positive face as it questions his abilities and his suitability for the position of goal keeper. Also, the speaker tries to generalise by "speaking on behalf of Arsenal fans", acting as if they alone know what is best for the club, likewise to show their desire for Raya to replace Ramsdale immediately, as they consider Raya a more suitable candidate for the goal keeper position, than the under performing Ramsdale.

Text 10

Background Information: Fans reaction to Chelsea player Reece James being unveiled as the club's new captain following the departure of former Chelsea captain Cesar Azpilicueta, after having joined the club as a six year old. However, some football fans were disappointed with the decision and took to the comment section to express themselves. The following comments were generated:

Excerpt 15

F5: Chelsea fell off so hard ☐ ☐ . How's obese James your captain?

F6: Captain of missing games, very disgusting decision..... Risk James. At least give someone reliable

F7: Finished and overrated, at least he will apply for more medical leave

The speaker in F5 uses derogatory language and expression to criticise and mock both the player and the club's decision on the choice of captaincy. The phrase "fell off so hard" is used by the speaker to vent their frustration at Chelsea's decision to promote James to the position of club captain. Since "fell off" means a decline in performance or success, the speaker's use of it in this situation is too serious because it is just their way of saying Chelsea have declined simply because they made James their captain. The crying emoji "☹☹" further adds to the emotional tone of the speaker to express disappointment at the club's "decline". The part "how's obese James your captain?" contains derogatory language as well as a derogatory nickname, because of the referral of James as "obese James". The term "obese" is disrespectful and body shames the player, as it shifts focus from his skills and abilities to his physical appearance. The phrase "how's" is a dismissive way of reflecting the speaker's disbelief because they find it weird that James of all players has been made club captain.

In F6's statement above, the speaker employs derogatory expressions to question James' ability to lead the team. First, the speaker launches a direct attack on James' positive face by using the statement "captain of missing games" to criticise the player. The statement highlights James' inconsistency in playing matches and also belittles his potential as club captain, suggesting his unreliability and lack of commitment to the team. The speaker in describing the decision to make James captain uses the invective "disgusting", to show the intensity of their anger towards the choice of James as club captain. The speaker further undermines James' role as a leader by nicknaming him "risk James". This derogatory alteration to the player's name could imply that

making James captain is a risky move and is thus not suitable for the position. This choice of word presents James in a negative light and weakens his suitability to lead the team effectively. The statement “at least give someone reliable” is an attack on James’ positive face because it presents him as an unreliable player and criticises his ability to lead the team properly. It implies that the speaker believes there are other dependable players who are better options for the position of captain.

The speaker in F7 uses derogatory expressions in attacking James and expressing frustration on James being appointed captain. The use of “finished” implies that the player's career is heading towards a decline and is coming to a devastating end, while “overrated” implies that his skills are exaggerated and is definitely far from being an exceptional player. Thus, the combination of “finished” and “overrated” paints James in an undesirable manner, downgrading his talents as a footballer and his overall contribution to the team. The phrase “at least he will apply for more medical leave” implies that James is not fit to lead the team because he will need more medical breaks than play time and leadership. It suggests that James is not up to the task of captaincy, denoting a lack of faith in his leadership abilities as he will resort to taking more breaks than leading the team effectively.

3.3 Negative Impoliteness Strategy

Culpeper describes negative impoliteness as “the use of strategies designed to damage the addressee’s negative face wants” (356). This strategy is a sort of opposite to the positive politeness strategy, which addresses an individual’s positive face wants- the desire to have one’s personality understood and desired by others (62). Negative face wants, in this case, is defined by Brown and Levinson as “the want of every competent adult member that his actions be unimpeded by others”

(62). Negative impoliteness concerns itself with an individual's need to be unrestricted in exercising his/her basic rights (right to freedom) and such rights include freedom of speech, basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction (freedom of action and freedom from imposition), etc (61). In an instance where language is used to impose or intrude the negative face of an individual, we can say that the negative impoliteness strategy has been employed. Culpeper also provides a list of possible output strategies for achieving negative impoliteness and they include the following:

- Frighten - instill a belief that action detrimental to the other will occur.
- Condescend, scorn, or ridicule - emphasise your relative power. Be contemptuous. Do not take the other seriously. Belittle the other (e.g. use diminutives).
- Invade the other's space - literally (e.g. position yourself closer to the other than the relationship permits) or metaphorically (e.g. ask for or speak about information that is too intimate given the relationship).
- Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect - personalise, use the pronouns "I" and "You".
- Put the other's indebtedness on record (358).

3.3.1 Data Presentation and Analysis

Text 11

Background Information: Football club Paris Saint Germain have just completed the signing of Ousmane Démbélé from football club Barcelona for 50 million euros in the 2023/24 summer transfer window. The French international's move to Paris was greeted with the following reactions:

Excerpt 16

F8: I am surprised he successfully passed something. Medical tests of all things.

F9: All PSG does is to buy buy buy players, nothing to show for it. A club that couldn't win the CL with Messi, Neymar and Mbappe. Local champions

From F8's comment, we see how the speaker uses a ridiculing and scornful tone in expressing their disbelief or shock about Dembele passing his medical examination. Given the player's history of recurrent injuries, the speaker finds it unusual that Dembele manages to pass these tests. The mention of "medical tests of all things" highlights skepticism on the part of the speaker and adds to the tone of ridicule, implying that passing a medical exam should be a shocking achievement for Dembele, as a result of the player's proneness to injury.

The comment of F9 is a scornful reflection of the frustrations and disappointment of the speaker with the club's lack of success despite having a star-studded team with players like Neymar Jr, Messi, Mbappe, among others. This is evident in the speaker's repetition of the word 'buy' three times, for emphasis and as a way to vent their frustration. The speaker uses it to show how PSG is only focused on buying expensive players, ignoring other important aspects that can contribute to the team's success. The statement "nothing to show for it" is used by the speaker to show how PSG's outrageous investments have not yielded any significant achievement, particularly the Champions League title. This shows the wastefulness of the club in terms of their financial investments and also poses a question on the club's ability to harness the individual talents of the players to the club's advantage. The speaker's referral of PSG as "local champions" reduces the club to the position of domestic champions only and also rids the club of its achievements domestically. It further implies that their main focus should be on gaining more recognition and trophies internationally and not just in the domestic scene. Regarding the signing of Dembele, the speaker still continues in their scornful tone, as they classify Dembele as yet

another expensive acquisition, to mean that even with the presence of the skilled winger, the speaker is doubtful of PSG achieving success, especially with the champions league, in the coming seasons.

Text 9

Excerpt 17

F10: How do you spend 80 million on a keeper worse than Ulreich ☠

F11: Please post only big clubs

In F10's comment, the speaker uses a condescending and ridiculing tone to express their disbelief on the club's decision to sign Raya for 80 million. The phrase "how do you spend 80 million" is rhetorical, as the speaker finds it unbelievable that such an amount of money is invested in a player they consider to be substandard. The statement mocks the club's decision to sign Raya as the speaker cannot seem to understand the logic behind it. The speaker, classifying Raya as worse than Ulreich (Sven Ulreich, a German professional goalkeeper), a goalkeeper known for his under performance, implies that Raya's skill and abilities are substandard and not worthy of the exorbitant price tag. The statement implies that even a goalkeeper like Ulreich is a way better option, in this case, than Raya, further rendering his performance and professionalism irrelevant. The use of the skull emoji "☠" further heightens the speaker's disbelief and disapproval of the signing.

The speaker in F11 expresses his opinion about Arsenal and the current situation, which is the signing of Raya, in a ridiculing manner. The speaker in saying the poster should post only big clubs implies that Arsenal is not considered a big club, a club in the league of the "big 4", and that the actions or anything pertaining to the club are not worthy of mention. The word "only" implies

that only significant clubs should be posted or talked about, thus belittling and ridiculing Arsenal as well as their latest signing.

Text 10

Excerpt 18

F12: He wears bandages more than the armband

The speaker in F12 expresses disdain and dissatisfaction with Reece James being promoted to the position of Chelsea's captain in a condescending manner. The speaker, in doing so, juxtaposes the act of wearing bandages with wearing armbands, to disqualify James as being fit for the position of captain. The speaker implies that James is more used to getting injured frequently than actually being present to take on the responsibilities of a captain. This insinuation mocks the abilities of James and questions his readiness to lead the team. The statement undermines his leadership qualities and instead focuses on his appearance, portraying it as an important factor than his role as captain.

Text 12

Background Information: Barcelona midfielder Frenkie de Jong's stance to remain at the club despite interests from several football clubs, particularly Manchester United, especially during the summer '22 transfer window. The following comment was selected:

Excerpt 19

F13: Amrabat is a better midfielder than yourself boy. Sit down. You better stay there and retire there. Your rejection was a blessing in disguise

From F13's comment above, the speaker employs a condescending and scornful tone in expressing their anger on and criticising de Jong's decision to remain at Barcelona, despite interests from Manchester United. The speaker begins this attack with a comparative put down, by comparing de

Jong to Amrabat, implying that the latter is a superior and more talented midfielder. The establishment of such a comparison berates de Jong in terms of skill and achievements, insinuating that he does not come close to the likes of Amrabat. The speaker further refers to de Jong in a patronising and condescending manner by referring to him as “boy”. This implies that the speaker sees de Jong as subordinate, immature and an inexperienced player not worthy of being classified as a professional player. The speaker further puts de Jong’s negative face under threat when they warn the player and issue authoritative commands. The phrase “you better stay there” threatens the player’s negative face because it suggests that he better take the advice (to remain in Barcelona) or else it could result in an outcome (unnamed outcome in this case) that would possibly be unfavourable to the player. The authoritative commands “sit down”, “stay there” and “retire there” are deployed to establish some sort of dominance over de Jong. Here, the speaker’s intention is to silence him, that his opinions or ambitions are irrelevant in this case, and should remain docile and passive, and eventually end his career in his beloved Barcelona. The statement “your rejection was a blessing in disguise” mocks the player’s decision to remain at Barcelona, insinuating that he made a wrong and foolish choice. This statement projects the speaker as more knowledgeable than de Jong and that Manchester United barely showing interest in him is something he should be grateful for.

3.4 Functions of Positive and Negative Impoliteness Strategies

From the data analysed so far, it can be deduced that both the positive and negative impoliteness strategies are used to realise majorly, the **affective functions** of impoliteness, than the coercive and entertaining counterparts. We also see how these reactions from the fans are unrestrained expressions of the anger and frustrations they feel towards certain football events. For the positive impoliteness strategy, there is the use of positive impoliteness outputs like use of derogatory

nominations and expressions, disinterestedness and the use of inappropriate identity markers evident in the data analysed. In **Text 8**, the speakers possess an unconcerned attitude towards the signing of Højlund. They use derogatory nominations such as “flop” and “terrible”, in describing the player and also to vent their frustrations and disapproval of the signing.

Also, in **Text 10**, the speaker also uses derogatory language to attack Reece James and body shame him, classifying him as someone unreliable and unworthy to be called the club’s captain. The use of inappropriate identity markers is evident in **Text 9**, where the speaker uses derogatory alterations to defame the football club Arsenal and the club’s goal keeper Ramsdale, in expressing their anger and dissatisfaction.

Regarding negative impoliteness, the **affective functions** are also achieved through negative impoliteness outputs like warning, ridicule and scorn. In **Text 11**, the speaker uses a ridiculing and scornful tone in expressing their disbelief and shock at Dembele passing his medical examinations, due to the injury-prone nature of the player. Also, in **Text 9**, the speaker uses a condescending and ridiculing tone to express frustration on the club’s intention to sign Raya for 80 million. The speaker renders Raya’s professionalism irrelevant when they refer to him as a goalkeeper worse than Ulreich. In **Text 12**, the speaker addresses de Jong in a patronising and condescending manner. The speaker berates de Jong’s skill and achievement when they assert that Amrabat is a better midfielder than him. The speaker further threatens the player’s negative face by issuing a warning to him through the statement “you better stay there”, highlighting the insignificance of the presence of de Jong in London and that United merely showing interest in him is something he should be thankful for.

3.5 Summary

From the data analysed in this chapter, we can see that the comments of these football fans demonstrate both the positive and negative impoliteness strategies. Both strategies are used by the fans to realise mainly the **affective functions**. These football fans use the positive impoliteness outputs like derogatory nominations and expressions, show disinterest and use inappropriate identity markers to project their frustrations and disdain. They also employ the use of negative impoliteness outputs such as the use of condescension and ridicule in attacking the players and the use of warning. These football fans employ both strategies' output in classifying the players and in expressing their feelings of anger, disbelief or shock.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

4.1 Summary

This study focused on investigating and examining the impoliteness strategies employed by European football fans in football-related discourse on various social media platforms. In the first chapter, we examined the purpose of study and the scope which was limited to European football fans in Nigeria and their various comments and reactions on social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. The study further examined the methods of data collection and analysis as well as the limitations and problems encountered during the course of the study. In relation to the theory, Jonathan Culpeper's Impoliteness theory served as the framework or background for data presentation and analysis. Also, several brilliant literature relating to the study's theory and other works on impoliteness and social media were thoroughly reviewed, creating a pathway for further analysis.

The subsequent chapters focused on the analysis of four of the five impoliteness super strategies proposed by Culpeper. Chapter Two focused on two parallel strategies- the bald on record and the off record (mock politeness/sarcasm) strategies, while Chapter Three focused on another set of opposing strategies- the positive and negative strategies. The end of each chapter saw a concluding paragraph, as well as the identification and explanation of the functions each strategy performs or is used to achieve. Some of the various output strategies proposed by Culpeper to achieve certain functions include the use of derogatory language, invectives and intensifiers, personal attacks, inappropriate identity markers, ironies and exaggerations, indirect and insincere remarks,

disinterest, and condescension and scorn. These strategies combine to achieve majorly the affective and entertaining functions.

4.2 Findings

The primary goal of this study is to discover and examine the impoliteness strategies deployed in football-related discourse by European football fans particularly on social media platforms. The following findings were deduced after critical and thorough analysis of the data provided:

- From the five super strategies proposed by Culpeper relating to the analysis of impoliteness events, only four are used by these fans in several football-related discussions. They include the bald on record, off record, positive and negative impoliteness strategies. The fifth super strategy withhold impoliteness is barely used.
- European football fans in Nigeria employ bald on record impoliteness output strategies like the use of invectives, intensifiers, personal attacks and derogatory language to directly attack and criticise their target. They also use off record output strategies like ironies, exaggerations, and indirect and insincere remarks for entertainment and to sarcastically project their feelings while attacking their targets.
- Regarding the positive and negative strategies, fans use positive impoliteness output strategies like showing disinterest, the use of derogatory nominations and inappropriate identity markers to express their anger and disapproval towards certain football events. Also, they use the negative output strategies like condescension, issuing of warnings and ridicule to express shock, disbelief and disapproval and to mock their targets.
- These super strategies combine to perform certain impoliteness functions. Out of the three functions proposed by Culpeper, the affective is mostly used, followed by the entertaining function. The coercive function is rarely used.

- European football fans in Nigeria not only use comments in expressing their emotions but also employ the use of emoticons. Sometimes, they use only emoticons in expressing their feelings because merely casting a glance at such emoticons conveys their deep feelings about a certain event.
- European football fans in Nigeria employ the use of capitalisations to show emphasis and to further project very strong feelings.
- Although football serves a unifying purpose, certain fans abuse this sport by being impolite in order to gain more followers, forge alliances against rival clubs or for the purpose of trolling.

4.3 Conclusion

The findings of this study have in no doubt contributed to existing literature on impoliteness, especially impoliteness within the field of sports. This study however, has focused mainly on the use of impolite language by fans of European football. Further study can be geared towards investigating other aspects of impoliteness in football such as fans disrupting matches, racial and discriminatory chants, among others. In conclusion, this study shows how social media amplifies the various ways in which impoliteness manifests, from the use of derogatory language, personal attacks to the spread of wrong narratives. Through these actions, we are able to get a glimpse of the emotional investments fans have in their clubs as well as their loyalty to the teams. These actions however disrupt the spirit of sportsmanship and unity, which are some of the core values the sport represents.

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