

**IMPOLITENESS, POWER AND CULTURE: A CASE STUDY OF SELECTED
INTERPERSONAL INTERACTIONS IN BENIN CITY AND ASABA**

BY

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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LITERATURE

FACULTY OF ARTS

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JULY 2021

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**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LITERATURE
FACULTY OF ARTS
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN
BENIN CITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS
IN ENGLISH AND LITERATURE.**

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CERTIFICATION

We certify that this research was carried out by **Blessing OGBUMAH** in the Department of English and Literature, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, Benin City.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the Almighty God who inspired me to step up in my academics. He started the journey and faithfully brought it to an end. Also, to the memory of my loving mother, Esieghanu Margaret, who saw the beginning of my study but didn't see the end. I miss you.

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ABSTRACT

Impoliteness is believed to be pervasive in human interactions contrary to the claim of Geoffrey Leech that it is marginal (103). The aim of this study, therefore, is to examine the use of conflictive verbal illocutions in interpersonal interactions, particularly among couples and peer groups. The study also attempts to show the underlying forces of power and culture as two major factors that goad the enactment of negative behaviours in face to face communication.

Hinged on the theory of impoliteness, which encapsulates the intentional, incidental and accidental use of negative verbal illocutions to cause offence, the study equally draws on the fields of interpersonal pragmatics and interpersonal communication to show the relationship between these concepts and human interactions. The study adopts both qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis. Data collection is based on questionnaires that were administered to 200 undergraduate students in the University of Benin and 100 married individuals in Edo and Delta States. The questionnaires administered comprise both figures and written aspects. Quantitative analysis is used to account for frequencies of impoliteness perceptions by participants and the written aspects are analysed using impoliteness strategies.

Findings from the study reveal that cultural expectations constrain the action space of some participants in interaction while empowering others. It also demonstrates that in

asymmetric relationships, particularly, men freely employ conflictive linguistic strategies against their wives because they believe that they are the head of the home. The research also affirms the claim that men use more harsh remarks than women do. Finally, the study reveals that *complaint* is one of the major strategies used by interactants to damage the face wants of other participants in interaction.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to examine impoliteness in interpersonal relationships among couples and peers in order to show how it is influenced by power and culture. Impoliteness arises from the violation of expectations that are built on cultural practices, especially those shared by participants in both asymmetric and symmetric relationships. The study investigates how impoliteness occurs in these encounters and also, attempts to show how impoliteness functions in interpersonal communication and interpersonal pragmatics.

1.2 Scope of Study

This study is limited in scope to the use of negatively marked utterances in interpersonal interactions. To that effect, questionnaires were administered to 200 students in the Faculties of Arts, Management Sciences and Education in the University of Benin, while 100 questionnaires were given to some married persons in Benin City, Edo State and Asaba, Delta State. The study covers the use of offensive language among the specified population, namely young adults in both symmetric and asymmetric interpersonal relations.

1.3. Research Methodology

The method of data analysis in this study is two pronged: quantitative analysis and qualitative

analysis. According to Diane Larsen- Freeman and Michael, quantitative study is best typified by an experiment designed to test a hypothesis through the use of objective instrument and appropriate statistical analysis. While qualitative analysis has to do with an observation of the data available to the researcher without interference with the occurrence of the observed data (11). The combination of both methods is appropriate in this study because the questionnaires contain both figures and written aspects.

1.3.1. Data Collection

The primary data for this study are based on questionnaires that were administered to undergraduate students and married individuals. One out of every five faculties in the University of Benin was selected for the study, thus 200 students from three faculties namely: Arts, Education and Management Sciences were issued questionnaires. From this number issued, 192 were fully completed and returned. As for the married individuals, 100 questionnaires were administered but only 62 were returned.

The 200 questionnaires were administered by the researcher, under the aegis of her supervisor, to students in lecture halls at two different times. The purpose of the research was explained to the students and while they had the questionnaires already distributed to them, the questions were read out one after the other. The students were advised not to give fictitious information for the sake of authenticity of data results. Informants were used in the distribution of questionnaires to married individuals. As well, the purpose of the research was spelt out to them and where necessary, they were asked to fill in responses for respondents who could not do so themselves but answers were not to be manipulated by any means whatsoever.

1.3.2. Data Analysis

The information obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed using quantitative and qualitative methods. The questionnaires consist of two sections. One part is set on a five-point Likert scale of strongly agreed, agreed, strongly disagreed, disagreed and undecided. The percentage of respondents who agreed or disagreed is shown in a graph for ease of interpretation and explained under these sub-headings: reality of impoliteness (RI), degree of emotional injury (DE), intentionality (IN), withhold politeness (WP) and understanding of impoliteness (UI). While the second part which is written is analysed qualitatively.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

This study is essentially hinged on the theory of impoliteness as developed by Culpeper and Bousfield with an attempt to show its corresponding realization in the fields of interpersonal pragmatics and interpersonal communication.

1.4.1 Impoliteness Theory

The theory of impoliteness was propounded by Culpeper in 1996 in reaction to the politeness theory of Brown and Levinson. In their theory, Brown and Levinson focus on how participants in interaction deliberately employ linguistic strategies to save the *faces* of their interlocutors. *Face* in this regard is defined by Goffman as the 'positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact, an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attribute' (5). While Goffman conceptualized face to mean a 'loan' which society lends to an individual (10), Brown and Levinson construct it to be 'the basic wants of an individual which his/her interactants have

an obligation to protect' (62). As such they claim that the face wants of an individual are either positive or negative. Positive face wants speak of the desire to be admired, accepted and valued by others thus, criticism threatens a person's positive face, especially when the criticizer is not in a position to do so (66). On the other hand, negative face wants refer to an individual's need to be left alone or unimpeded in his/her actions or what O'Driscoll calls 'the desire to be independent or individuated'(14).

Based on this positive/negative polarization of face wants, Brown and Levinson propounded five superstrategies that interactants employ to mitigate face threat.

1. Bald, on-record strategy: According to Brown and Levinson, this strategy is employed for three basic reasons: first when there is little face at stake and not much harm may be done to the perceived values of one's interlocutor, this strategy may be used. In addition, during cases of emergency where consideration of face wants may lead to mishap on the part of the hearer, and when the speaker is in a position of power over his/her hearer (69).
2. Positive politeness: This strategy is deployed to protect the positive face wants of an individual so that linguistic strategies which purport to anoint and elevate the positive values of a person are used.
3. Negative politeness: It refers to an individual's desire to avoid as much as possible any infringement on the right of others
4. Off-record politeness: This embodies FTAs that are performed via implicature to the effect that the speaker cannot be held accountable for any form of impolite remarks

and the hearer is left to draw meaning through inference. Politeness in this regard becomes ambiguous.

5. Withhold the FTA: In cases where the face threat is seriously aggravating, Brown and Levinson advise that silence would be the better option. (60). FTAs, however are dependent on two basic criteria: the weight of the imposition and the relationship between participants.

This seminal work by Brown and Levinson has been the butt of several criticisms because, as sublime as it seems, it apparently makes some assumptions which are inadmissible as far as human communication is concerned. For instance, the theory claims that the positive/negative dichotomy of face wants have universal application which some researchers (Matsumoto 1988; Nwoye 1996; Spencer-Oatey 2008) have proven to be otherwise because the conceptualization of what counts as polite or impolite differs across cultures. Also, most of its references are based on strips of utterances and not whole conversations, while contending as well that politeness is the norm in every interaction. Leech also corroborates this assumption when he asserts that ‘conflictive illocutions tend, thankfully to be rather marginal to human linguistic behavior in normal circumstances’ (105). It is this claim that politeness is the norm in conversation and that conflictive talk (impoliteness) is almost infinitesimal in interaction that sparked off several reactions and one of which is the theory of impoliteness.

Focusing on the reverse side of politeness work, Culpeper contends that politeness functions in an ideal situation, all things being equal, but what obtains in practical reality is the use of linguistic strategies that are designed to intentionally aggravate the face of interlocutors as they engage in conversations. Apart from the fact that individuals engaged in

everyday conversation become conflictual in their use of words, impoliteness is sanctioned in certain activity types such as army training discourse, courtroom discourse and exploitative entertainment shows (Culpeper *et al.* 1545-1546). In fact, some television shows have become famous due to the extensive use of impolite remarks and emotional putdowns (Toddington 4). In his initial thinking, Culpeper describes impoliteness to mean a speaker communicating impoliteness without considering the reaction of the hearer, but in 2011 he expanded the theory to incorporate the action of the hearer. In this light he defines impoliteness thus:

impoliteness is a negative attitude towards specific behavior occurring in specific contexts. It is sustained by expectations, desires and/or beliefs about social organization, including, in particular how one person's or a group's identities are mediated by others in interaction.(23)

As an offshoot of politeness theory, impoliteness theory has five superstrategies which are the face-attack flip side of Brown and Levinson's theory (2005:14).

1. Bald, on-record impoliteness: performing the FTA in a direct, clear, unambiguous, and concise way even when face considerations are relevant.
2. Positive impoliteness: the use of impoliteness strategies designed to damage the addressee's positive face wants (to ignore, snub the other, exclude the other, dissociate from the other, be disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic, make the other feel uncomfortable use small talk, do not avoid silence, use taboo words, call the other names etc.)

3. Negative impoliteness: the use of strategies designed to damage the addressee's negative face wants (frighten, belittle, scorn, ridicule, invade the other person's space)
 4. Sarcasm or mock politeness: the use of politeness strategies that are obviously insincere, and thus remain surface realizations.
 5. Withhold politeness: keep silent or fail to act where politeness work is expected.
- (103)

Towing the same line of thought, Bousfield in 2008 built on the earlier works of Culpeper and defined impoliteness to mean:

the communication of conflictive verbal illocutions which are purposefully delivered:

1. *Unmitigated in contexts where mitigation is required and/or*
2. *With deliberate aggression, that is, with the face threat exacerbated, 'boosted', or maximized in some way to heighten the face damage inflicted. (72)*

Bousfield's model of impoliteness has successfully outlined several impoliteness outputs that are extensions to Culpeper's (1996) work. These outputs include:

1. criticize - dispraise h, some action or inaction by h, or some entity which h has invested face (125)
2. hinder/block- physically (block passage), communicatively (deny turn, interrupt) (127)
3. enforce role shift (131)
4. challenge (132)
5. mock impoliteness – banter: ostensibly appears to offend the face of the intended recipient, but which, in practice, serves to strengthen social bonds between the producer and intended recipient (136)

6. shouting (137)

7. emotive language vs strategic impoliteness (taboo language) the use of taboo language which may not be intentional on the part of the speaker to cause offence. (138)

He argues convincingly that the positive/negative dichotomy of impoliteness superstrategies is 'unsustainable' (94) as there often seem to be an overlap in their actual realizations. For instance, he observes that 'snub' which Culpeper categorizes as an output of positive impoliteness is actually double-edged in that while it shows disapproval, it also 'impedes the interactant from conversing with the snubber' (101) thus damaging his negative face wants. In this work, he also maintains that recipients of an offending event could either counter, that is, respond offensively or defensively to an impolite expression, accept the impolite remark and tender an apology or choose to remain silent (188).

Furthermore, he argues that the superstrategies given by Culpeper, should have been 'tactics' in the actual sense, submerged under two broad strategies which he termed on-record and off-record strategies. On-record strategy accounts for all impolite behaviours, linguistic or non-linguistic that are directly and deliberately communicated to cause offence, while off-record strategy encompasses conflictive verbal illocutions that are expressed by means of implicature. By this he means that the separation of positive/negative strategies is superfluous and unsustainable (94). While adopting a second order approach in his study of impoliteness, he makes it explicit that he takes into cognizance the layman's conceptualization of (im)politeness which is the ultimate goal of the first order approach to the study of impoliteness thus forming a bridge between the two approaches.

1.4.2 Interpersonal Pragmatics

The term 'interpersonal pragmatics' is used to designate the examinations of the relational aspect of interactions between people that both affect and are affected by their understandings of culture, society, and their own and others interpretation (Locher and Graham: 2). They define the concept thus: 'social actors use language to shape and form relationship in situ, that is, careful analysis of both the role of language in the creation of relationships and how those relationships affect language use in turn' (1). The two lay senses of interpersonal pragmatics are *context* and *process*. While the former entails shaping already existing relationships, the latter refers to the process of forming or creating new relationships.

Locher and Graham argue that Interpersonal Pragmatics is not and does not pose as one of the numerous theories of language fighting for acceptance in the field of study, rather it focuses on one of the multi-faceted aspects of Pragmatics which has to do with people's use of language to relate with one another and to form and maintain relationships (1). It further highlights the point that people choose the words they use depending on the relationship they share with the people they interact with and the context of the interaction based on their understanding of culture, society and their own and others' interpretation (2).

Also, they maintain that choice of lexeme is instigated by factors such as power, distance and closeness between participants and expectation about what is appropriate conduct linked to roles in particular situations even though the informational content remains the same in all cases (2). They also note that relational aspects of language use are not only conveyed in the use of lexical alternatives, but may also manifest themselves in syntactic and phonological choices. Participants in interaction use language to reveal their social status thus corroborating Gregory and Carroll's assertion that a person's peculiar use of language can be

thought of as his/her macro-linguistic identity defining him in terms of birthplace, class, education and age (12). Apart from language being used as a tool for defining social status, seminal work by psychologists have also studied the use of language in the explication of identities such that social actors with greater status express themselves with greater leverage than others in an asymmetric relationship, while people tend to use words freely with their peers of equal ranking in terms of age, education and socio-economic background.

Interpersonal pragmatics embodies both congenial and conflictive verbal illocutions as used by participants in communication. In addition, it investigates what Locher and Watts call 'relational work'. Relational work according to them 'refers to all aspects of the work invested by individuals in the construction, maintenance, reproduction and transformation of interpersonal relationships among those engaged in social practice'(96). Also, Arundale (quoted in Locher and Graham 137), argues that humans do not only use language in relating with one another but also to form and maintain their relationship. He goes further to define 'relating' as the establishing and maintaining of connection between two otherwise separate individuals.

Further, interpersonal pragmatics studies the use of language in specialized discourse communities such as courtroom, hospital, business place as well as the media. It attempts to evaluate the communicative strategies that are available to interlocutors (8).

Finally, the main concern in interpersonal pragmatics is naturally interpersonal relations which encompasses mutual social connections amongst people that are mediated by interaction, including power, intimacy, roles, rights and obligations.

1.4.3 Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal communication (henceforth IC) is the process of creating social relationship between at least two people by acting in concert with one another (Fisher and Adams 18).

Stewart argues that the main characteristics of interpersonal communication is that individuals involved are contacting each other as persons, where to treat others as persons is to treat them as a unique individual (not just role filler or cultural representative) (17). This means that IC focuses on the person (what s/he is made of) and not just his/her social role as buyer, seller or any other thing. It emphasizes the communicator's personal identities.

Hartley notes that IC encompasses the use of language, gestures and facial expressions in communication and outlined seven propositions about IC:

- (i) IC involves face to face meetings between two participants
- (ii) It involves two people in varying roles and relationships to one another.
- (iii) IC is ALWAYS two-way flow of communication.
- (iv) It does not simply involve the exchange of messages. It essentially involves the creation and exchange of meaning.
- (v) IC is partly or wholly intentional.
- (vi) It is an ongoing process rather than an event or series of events
- (vii) IC is cumulative over time, that is, if you are trying to understand communication between people who have communicated before, then you need to take into account the history of their relationships as this might well affect how they interpret each other's remarks at the moment (5-13).

1.5 Review of Related Scholarship and Justification of Study

The growing interest in impoliteness research has given rise to plethora of research works in the last two decades. The ubiquity of negatively charged utterances and the several metalinguistic labels associated with it have become an issue of academic investigation by many researchers.

For instance, Sarah Mills, in her seminal work on gender and impoliteness argues that gender and impoliteness are not concrete entities which can be traced in conversation but are elements which are worked out within the course of interaction (263). Mills emphasizes the need for all to see gender identity as constructed in slightly different ways in each interaction depending on assessments of the interactional history of particular Communities of Practice. She claims that our judgments about what is impolite most times are based on what we consider to be gender appropriate behavior. By way of illustration she states that the stereotypical feminine gender is largely constructed around notions of 'nice', 'supportive' and 'co-operative' (263). However, supportiveness as she points out may play a role in other interactants judgments of women's linguistic behavior and may result in assertiveness being categorized as impoliteness (263). She concludes by saying that an 'analysis of impoliteness should be concerned with analysis of the judgments made within particular Communities of Practice and it is important to see gender as a significant factor when considering how these judgments are made' (276).

Interestingly too, Jay and Janschewitz study the pragmatics of swearing using a cognitive psychological framework to account for swearing in a variety of contexts to provide a link to impoliteness research. From the study they are able to show that offensive ratings depend on gender (for native speakers) and English experience (for non-native speakers)

(267). According to them, people learn to judge when, where and with whom it is appropriate to swear, or where swearing would be offensive. Offensive judgments provide the basis for determining the extent to which speech is rude. They finally conclude that swearing is appropriate and not impolite amongst peers in casual settings but marked in formal contexts and with participants of unequal status. Sharing Mills' view, they note that gender plays a powerful role in swearing (286).

In a related study, Nasrullah and Nawal examine the occurrence of impoliteness in fictional texts. The aim of the study is to show a clear-cut difference between the phenomena of rudeness and impoliteness using an extract from Bernard Shaw's text entitled 'Pygmalion' written in 1913. According to them, the major difference between the two concepts is intentionality. As Terkourafi notes, the main difference is that impoliteness is sometimes intentional and sometimes accidental due to the hearer's linguistic competence unlike rudeness which is constantly intentional (195). Another minor difference is that impoliteness is used more in academia than rudeness. Nevertheless, Bousfield views rudeness as accidental and not intentional drawing from his definition of impoliteness which states that for impoliteness to be considered successful, the intention of the speaker to offend must be understood by the hearer(s). However, if the speaker does not intend face damage but the hearer constructs the speaker's utterance as being intentionally face damaging, then this could be '... accidental face damage which could be caused by rudeness (inadequate levels of politeness)' (202).

Nasrullah and Nawal conclude their study by pointing out the fact that impoliteness sometimes emerges as a reaction to a rude behavior. More so, they show that impolite/rude

behavior is used as a form of attack on an individual's status. In fictional texts, characters of high status often use impoliteness as a tool to denigrate characters of low social significance thus surging the plot forward (205).

In addition, Jannegad et al investigate the use of impolite remarks in family discourse among irreconcilable Iranian couples. In this study they discover that 'women insult themselves twice more compared to their husbands and insult their spouses five times more, while men's insult were directed at their wives' family 2.3 times more compared to the other way round' (19). They also hypothesized that men used impoliteness more than women did, but findings revealed that out of 175 impoliteness examples, 93 cases were utilized by women and 82 by men.

Utilizing both qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis, they are able to show the actual impoliteness strategies that were employed by the couples and the number of times these strategies were used and conclude by saying that 'women in order to save their face, were normally more conservative in verbal communications in different contexts in society and thus appeared polite than men but tended to be more impolite in family discourse' (40).

Focusing on movies, Furman studies impoliteness and mock-impoliteness. The general aim of the study is to offer an empirical analysis of impoliteness and mock impoliteness in colloquial Russian conversation by examining the ways in which interactants produce and display an orientation to impolite and mock-impolite utterances. Utilizing both first and second order approaches, Furman analyzes the specific ways that mock-impoliteness turns are designed both linguistically (through lexical items, structure and prosody) and

para-linguistically (through laughter, pauses, body language) and examines how mock impolite turns are discursively co-constructed by the interactants.

Data collection for the study are got from recorded 'naturally' occurring Russian talk-in-interaction in the Russian reality TV show tagged 'Dom 2'. Furman finds out that 'mock impolite utterances do not exhibit an escalation in conflict. Also, mock impolite utterances can contain laughter and can also be used to signal solidarity' (18).

Also investigating impoliteness phenomenon in movies, Wicaksono studies impoliteness used in action movies. The result of the study shows that bald, on-record, positive and negative impoliteness strategies are the most frequently used strategies (1). The study also reveals that the use of impoliteness is influenced by the social aspect of the speaker and stresses the fact that context plays a major role in interpreting (im)politeness because the study of impoliteness is submerged in the study of pragmatics which deals with the study of meaning in context. Finally, the researcher points out that impoliteness is not only used to frighten or threaten, but also to express the feeling of the speaker (23).

Also, Toddington's study on impoliteness as a vehicle for humour delivery attempts to show the relationship between impoliteness and humour. By incorporating Goffman's Facework and Discourse Architecture into an approach which also combines humour theory and impoliteness theory, she tries to show the ways in which we are influenced so that we interpret offence as funny. Using the fictional movie 'As Good as it Gets' as a case study, she explains how a socially unacceptable behavior displayed by the main character Melvin Udall becomes entertaining instead of provoking censure by viewers. By taking the three traditional approaches to explain why we laugh and applying them alongside impoliteness research,

especially its entertainment function, she demonstrates that the two entities actually overlap and as viewers we are predisposed to laugh at Melvin's behavior because we are metaphorically distant and hence 'safe' from his conflictive verbal attacks (171).

One of the major functions of impoliteness is to entertain. Al-Dilaimy and Khalaf investigate the pragmatics of impolite interruptions of selected debates in the opposite direction of Al-Jazeera Channel by drawing a conversational sketch of impoliteness strategies as employed by interlocutors in the show. They contend that 'in the heat of discussion, interlocutors resort to certain aggressive strategies to attack each other's face in an attempt to get the floor and instigate the other interviewee to react in a more offensive manner' (1570). The study highlights the point that impoliteness is a tool that triggers excitement in some entertainment shows by revealing that 'the more offensive the debate is, the more interested the viewers will be' (1570).

The study also reveals that the major strategy deployed by the interviewees is interruption which doubles as on-record and off-record strategy. As an on-record strategy, it is used deliberately and often out of spite to damage the face of an interlocutor, while as an off-record strategy, it constrains the space of the interlocutor. The study shows that due to these interruptions, the norms of turn-taking strategies are violated thus leading to highly sensitive verbal escalations (1576). One major hallmark of the study is that it clearly ascertains the workability of Culpeper's (1996) model of impoliteness. According to them, 'the strategies the model encompasses have proved useful in analyzing impolite exchanges. Both interviewees and interviewer have resorted to various strategies of impoliteness in the model to achieve particular communicative effects' (1577).

Keckes' study on the relationship between impoliteness and culture reveals that impoliteness may work differently in intercultural interactions than L1 communication (43). In this study, Keckes argues that interpretations as to what is (im)polite may not be based on contexts or situations where interlocutors use not their L1 but another language as the medium of communication (43). In addition, he expresses the fact that if interlocutors are familiar with an impolite formulae in English and one of them uses it, then most of the time no problem occurs. But the reverse could be the case if one of the interlocutors is not familiar with the impolite load of a formulae. In summary, Keckes opines that individual evaluation of impoliteness in intercultural interactions depends to a great extent on the compositional meaning of the utterance. As a result, the impolite or polite load of the expressions or utterances may be lost or an evaluative function may emerge where it should not (46).

Another study which borders on impoliteness and culture is Mugford's research work which focuses on teaching impoliteness in the second language classroom. In this study, Mugford moves away from the pleasant side of English Language teaching which is based on such ideas as friendship, relating experiences and politeness in general. He looks at the everyday communicative realities of rudeness, disrespect and impoliteness as experienced by L2 users (381). By using 84 L2 users in Mexico, Mugford identifies impolite situations encountered in second language interactions and argues that practitioners of EFL should teach both politeness and impoliteness to L2 users so that they can express themselves appropriately in difficult situations to avoid domination by TL users (383).

In a related study, Chang explores variables in perceptions of impoliteness in an intercultural apology focusing on culture and gender differences. The study shows that

cultural factor is more influential in the perception of impoliteness than the gender factors (59). Chang's study is relevant in intercultural communication as it aptly shows that differences in the perception of impoliteness may lead to communication breakdown. He applies both quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis using questionnaires issued to both 20 Australian and 20 Tawanese speakers comprising ten males and ten females for each group. Qualitative data were got from interviews of six informants from each cultural group made up of three males and three females respectively. Based on the empirical data from the native informants, the study concludes that the perception of (im)politeness is culturally determined, indicating the significance of the appreciation of cultural differences in order to avoid communication breakdown (59).

Investigating the relationship between impoliteness and power, Khosravi analyses the realization of impoliteness in reply articles published in academic journals in the field of applied linguistics as an instance of academic journals. He argues that authors of the reply articles reveal a strong preference for using on-record impolite behaviours while responding to comments by other scholars in the field on their previously published articles (224). The results of the study show that the authors who make such impolite remarks are usually of higher status than the commentators who said what they seemed to disagree with in their (the authors') previous work (229). This clearly indicates the role of power in communication.

Similarly, Kuntsi investigates the politeness and impoliteness strategies used by lawyers in the courtroom. The study shows that lawyers use both polite and impolite linguistic strategies when communicating with their colleagues, the judge and the witnesses, and that there are more occurrences of polite linguistic strategies than impolite strategies in

the courtroom. Using both qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis, Kuntsi discovers that politeness strategies were found in 128 percent of all the sentences uttered by the lawyers and 1.5 percent of impoliteness strategies (32). This study further underscores the argument of Culpepper and Bousfield who maintain that both politeness and impoliteness can co-occur (136).

Also, Oboko and Ikechukwu examine the face threatening and impoliteness strategies employed by postgraduate students and administrative staff at Nnamdi Azikiwe University. Findings show the extent of polite and impolite language used by the postgraduate students and administrative staff. The study reveals that the administrative staff that were understudied employed bald on-record strategy, ignoring, shouting, indirectness among others to attack the faces of postgraduate students. On the other hand, the postgraduate students use interruption, negative impoliteness, positive impoliteness and shouting as tools to threaten the faces of the administrative staff (73-74). They also maintain that not all postgraduate students and administrative staff are impolite and conclude that there is need for orientation on language use among postgraduate students and members of the administrative staff in Nnamdi Azikiwe University (98).

Furthermore, Chioma Onwubiko focuses her study on the facebook posts of Nigerians over the supreme court's ruling on the 2019 Imo State governorship election. She finds out that the most used strategy is bald on-record impoliteness. She also asserts that men are more forceful and direct in their use of impolite remarks. Also, she maintains that people react more impolitely when they communicate online than when they speak face to face with the political authorities whom they attack (16).

Investigating impoliteness in religious gatherings, Sharafudeen examines the use of (im)politeness in muslim sermons. She maintains that in order to impart religious information on their congregations without evoking ill feelings, religious teachers, especially Imams, deploy various polite linguistic strategies. However, some Imams employ impoliteness strategies, when necessary, to communicate truth to their members (13). By including data from the sermons of Yoruba-speaking Imams, she affirms that the Yoruba culture impacts greatly on the linguistic choices of these Imams. They are seen to be more respectful and tactful in their use of verbal illocutions to protect the face wants of their members. She concludes the study by asserting that Imams deploy more politeness strategies, especially in their Friday sermons (20) and the Yoruba Imams investigated did not preach violence, hate or tribalism which are metaimpoliteness (32).

Busayo Ige also explores gender and impoliteness. The study investigates the complexity used in a multicultural community through the lenses of identity, gender and impoliteness (17) and reveals that differences in the perceptions of and responses to impoliteness impact greatly on the ability of individuals to communicate effectively. She discovers that impoliteness can also be an instrument employed to gain power and express negative feelings and the protection of identity is a core motive for impolite behaviour (263). Furthermore, the data presented show that gender plays a crucial role in male judgement of impoliteness. Males based their judgement on their socio-cultural and gendered expectations of the situation while females judged the instances on the basis of the offence and not of the gender of the offender (265).

In the same vein, Aremu and Babatunde's study on the impoliteness strategies in Obasanjo's appeal letter to former Nigerian president, Goodluck Jonathan, *Before it is Too Late* (BITL) reveal that the letter is characterized by face threatening acts with redress, bald on-record politeness, face saving acts, mock impoliteness as well as positive and negative impoliteness strategies. They maintain that Obasanjo uses dysphemisms and expletives as tools to mock Goodluck Jonathan while also using face saving acts to exonerate himself from the alleged 'misrule' of the subject. They conclude that only the understanding of cognition, discourse and context interface could be used to infer the meaning, construction and comprehension of the author's intention from the text of BITL (1).

In addition, Ayantayo Akintola focuses her study on the increasing rate of impoliteness and hate speech among online interlocutors who respond to President Buhari's speech on facebook. Data for the study were collected from the facebook page of President Buhari. The study reveals that readers did not respect each other's public image in their responses (1). She outlines the impoliteness strategies that are employed by the readers as: bald on-record impoliteness, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, sarcasm and withhold politeness (6-8). She concludes that impoliteness is a dangerous weapon that can lead to chaos in the society (11).

Still on impoliteness, Ajayi and Bamgbose investigate the manner in which language is deployed by Nigerians in ethno-religious conflicts on issues of national interest in the country using critical discourse analysis and impoliteness theory. Data collection for the study is based on online comments and reactions of Nigerians to four national issues- Apostle Suleiman's alleged sex scandal, the Southern Kaduna killings in Kaduna, the Yoruba-Hausa

crisis in Ife, Osun State and the arrest of Nnamdi Kanu. They assert that online ethno-religious conflicts have a lot of implications for the continued existence of Nigeria as a united state (19). Also, the combination of both theories in the study help to reveal how linguistic tools are employed by different groups: ethnic, political and religious, in Nigeria to construct identities and ideologies on major national issues (21).

In a related study, Igwebuike and Eburuaya examine the use of impoliteness strategies for critiquing societal ills in satirical songs. The study reveals how Falz, a popular Nigerian musician used his song, *This is Nigeria* to decry the social maladies bedeviling the nation (2). The study demonstrates that Falz deploys all the impoliteness superstrategies except withhold politeness to attack the face of the Nigerian government, police, pastors and selected Nigerian youths(3). They conclude that protest music assists in the interrogation of a society's moral compass and in turn questions some convictions through pragmatic language use (4).

In an attempt to show the manifestation of impoliteness in computer mediated communication (CMC), Dalton takes a deeper look at the roles and pragmatic functions that antagonistic behavior plays in negotiating the social and cultural norms of an online community. Using online public discussions from MSN.com and recorded voice chats in pre- and post-game lobbies found within the competitive online multiplayer portion of the video game 'Halo 3', argues that speech acts of (im)politeness in online discourses do play a role in negotiating cultural and community norms (4). As well, he opines that instances of flaming or trolling are not simply unmotivated acts of aggression, but are methods of expressing solidarity with others of particular ideological stances, means of establishing a makeshift pecking order between interactants,

indicators of discourse community membership based on levels of enculturated discourse competence, or are similarly used for fulfilling the personal face wants for one's own self-gratification at the expense of others (4).

Halim also studies impoliteness strategies used in a politician's facebook. The study aims at investigating the types of impoliteness strategies used by facebookers in a politician's facebook and to determine the factors that may contribute to impoliteness among the facebookers in CMC. Data sets are got from 151 comments in a politician's facebook and are analysed using Culpeper's (2011) impoliteness strategies in order to identify the different strategies used by the participants. According to her, the three main factors that contribute much are 'anonymity, lack of non-verbal cues and emotion'. (5)

One of the significant findings that emerges from the study is the use of insult which according to her is the most common strategy used and the most common word used to insult was 'stupid'. Also, some words that did not appear regularly in Culpeper's work but emerged frequently in the study are 'shame/shame on you' which appeared 29 times and 'puui' and 'hak tuii'. This phrase shows the act of spitting and it appeared 3 times. In conclusion, she notes that anonymity, emotions such as flaming, gesture and verbal strategy are the keys that may lead to impoliteness on facebook. (6)

These reviews have been able to explore the relationship between impoliteness and several concepts such as: power, culture, computer mediated communication, entertainment, family discourse and gender thereby proving the pervasiveness of the concept. This present study, however, explores the enactment of impoliteness in both asymmetric and symmetric relationships with an attempt to show the underlying influence of power and culture as two powerful tools that

trigger its occurrence in interpersonal interactions. In this light, the study contributes to knowledge in impoliteness research.

1.6 Thesis Statement

Impoliteness manifests in various aspects of human endeavours. However, this study focuses on the realization of impoliteness in interpersonal relationships: asymmetric interactions, symmetric relations and the influence of power and culture.

CHAPTER TWO

IMPOLITENESS IN ASYMMETRIC (MARITAL) RELATIONSHIP

2.0. Introduction

Vangelisti opines that ‘hurt’ which is an impoliteness metalinguistic label is bound to be a part of any close relationship (121). It is common to find impoliteness strategies being deployed by couples during conflicts or arguments over certain issues. Although Leech contends that such conflictual expressions in intimate relationships would amount to banter which is seen as communicative strategies designed to attack face in order to promote solidarity (101), Jannegad et al. have shown that communicative strategies that are designed to denigrate the social value a partner places on himself/herself with the intent of causing harm are pervasive in marital relationships (19). This is realized in various ways as men and women use different tactics to carry out face threatening acts.

2.1 Impoliteness Strategies Used by Men

As observed by Jay Williams, ‘men use more offensive words than women’ (1). This assertion is clearly seen from the data report got from the questionnaires that were administered to 62 couples comprising 26 men and 36 women. Men were observed to have deployed on-record strategies more than women which are grouped under the impoliteness outputs below. Here, the speaker is the husband while the addressee is the wife.

2.1.1 Bald, on-record Strategy

Text 1

[Context: The husband utters this statement when the wife talks too much (to him) or when she says something he disagrees with or is uninterested in.]

Speaker: Quiet!

Addressee: Sometimes I'm quiet, at other times I say I will finish before I keep quiet.

By issuing this command, the husband powerfully exerts his authority over the wife and automatically limits her space in the discourse. She is forced to keep quiet regardless of the fact that she may still have some things to say and her response clearly depicts that. By halting her, he strategically blocks and constrains her space by denying her her turn on the conversational floor (Bousfield 128). Obviously this is an impoliteness strategy that does not purport to save the face of the wife in any way. It could possibly be deduced that the husband commits the face threatening act as a way of abdicating his responsibility and by insisting on the wife being quiet, he may be evading a vital issue which is of topmost priority.

The wife's response to this face attack is worth expatiating on. First, she says 'sometimes I'm quiet'. This may be because the stringent finality with which the command is made possibly has an auditory effect on her; it comes at first as a shock which immediately gags her and leaves her bereft of words (Bousfield 188). Also, the African setting does proscribe certain behaviours in marital relationships such as wives shouting at their husbands. Second, she says 'I will finish before I keep quiet'. One of the major achievements of Bousfield's model of impoliteness is that it does not tack the use of impoliteness strategies to the speaker alone. It successfully incorporates the action of the hearer in the interaction and one of the ways the hearer responds to impoliteness is by being offensive. So by choosing to reply she reacts offensively to her husband's impolite remark.

2.1.2 Positive Impoliteness Strategy

Some of the outputs of positive impoliteness are: make the other feel uncomfortable, avoid agreement/seek disagreement, use taboo language, use inappropriate identity markers, call h names.

2.1.2.1 Make the other feel uncomfortable

Text 2

[Context: *There was a conversation on phone between this couple and the wife tried to compare him with his friends and also ended the call deliberately.]*

Speaker: You are still a child, immature and also naïve. You are very stubborn and still needs to grow and started recalling my (wife's) past actions.

Addressee: Hmm! Well I respect you because you are the head in this relationship and most of the times I tend to tell him who he is. And I tell him not to talk to me and that I need a break.

This impolite metapragmatic expression is heavily loaded with inherent metalinguistic labels that are strategically designed to make 'h' feel uncomfortable. By calling her 'a child', he clearly affirms that their relationship is highly asymmetric and also flouts Grice's maxim of quality. He reinforces this statement by asserting that she is 'immature and naïve'. These impolite labels have the negative effect of attacking her positive face which seeks to be appreciated and position her in an insignificant part in their marital affair. He attacks her relational identity face as he constitutes her most 'significant other' (Chen et al. qtd in Culpeper 6) in this intimate relationship. This idea of insignificance is further exacerbated by recalling her past. Recalling her past flouts Grice's maxim of relevance because it deviates

from the present discourse. These verbal put downs couched in derogatory labels are more than necessary.

In deference to him the wife responds thus ‘hmmm, well I respect you because you are the head in this relationship and most times I tend to tell him who he is and tell him not to talk to me and that I need a break’. By commencing with the hedge ‘hmmm’ she expresses her desire to protect his face despite his unwarranted abuse and ‘well I respect you because you are the head in this relationship’ clearly indicates that she accords him respect sometimes but also react impolitely at other times.

2.1.2.2 Avoid agreement/seek disagreement

In cases of intimate relationships such as marriage, impoliteness could be a ready tool wielded by couples to either avoid agreement or seek disagreement on sensitive issues relating to the home. From the example cited in bald, on-record strategy (*Text 1*), the husband avoids agreement with the wife, so he shuts her up and immediately brings the conversation to an abrupt end to the wife’s detriment. When the wife insisted on completing her statement, he did not speak again. For him ‘quiet’ meant end of conversation.

2.1.2.3 Use taboo language (swear, be abusive, express strong views opposed to h’s)

Text 3

[Context: There was an issue with finance between this couple when the utterance was made.]

Speaker: Foolish woman.

Addressee: Wicked man

Marital relationship usually is formed by participants of unequal status in terms of age, finance and responsibility as the man is unarguably the head in the home. Based on this fact, men tend to be more vulgar as reports from the data show. This participant wrote that in the course of an argument, the husband called her ‘foolish woman’. This is a direct attack on the woman’s quality face because by calling her a fool, he implies that every positive aspect which constitute her face such as prestige, reputation, self-esteem, social status, intelligence are worthless (Culpeper 15). This kind of verbal abuse is captured under the group of inconsiderate and hurtful in impoliteness metadiscourse because it pertains to family members in private situations (Culpeper 100).

The gravity of this offence is measured as (4 which is Agreed) on a five-point Likert scale. The woman also affirmed that it was highly intentional. Considering the issue under discussion which the woman stated as ‘financial’, it could be safe to say that the husband became extremely abusive so as to shift focus from the matter and to force the wife to respond to his verbal attack instead of concentrating on the issue. Bousfield affirms that a speaker can actually enforce role-shift by constraining the hearer to speak concerning a topic for which he/she may not be interested in (131). By attacking her face instead of the issue, he compelled her to respond by attacking his own face when she called him ‘wicked man’ instead of addressing the financial issue at hand.

Text 4

[Context: Whenever the husband fails to reply to the wife’s question about what to do and the wife fails to do anything, he gets angry that the wife didn’t do anything.]

Speaker: Isi gi odimma? [Are you mentally alright?]

Addressee: Sorry sir.

This question is not usually delivered with a high rising tone which would have indicated a mere inquiry. Rather, it is rendered calmly with a low falling pitch and gestures to indicate foolishness, thereby implicating the impolite belief that the woman is stupid. When asked how bad the behavior made her feel, she said: ‘very bad’ indicating the intense emotional injury the remark inflicts on her. Despite the gravity of the offense measured as (4:Agreed), she still responds politely by saying ‘sorry sir’ thus affirming her respect for his authority as the head and her loyalty to cultural expectations.

2.1.2.4 Use inappropriate identity markers

Husbands in some cases use inappropriate identity markers as a weapon to attack their wives’ positive faces. *Text 2* shows the use of this impolite output by a man to denigrate his wife. These conventionalized impolite labels ‘immature’ and ‘naïve’ connote senselessness and lack of experience. By saying that she is immature, he implies that she is not emotionally, physically and psychologically fit for marriage; she is not fully developed for the relationship in which she now finds herself. And being naïve means that she lacks good judgment. These diminishing remarks have the ability to dampen a partner’s ego and leave them emotionally wounded.

2.1.3 Negative impoliteness

Frequent outputs for negative impoliteness include: condescend, scorn or ridicule; blocking/hindering, explicitly associate H with negative aspects-personalise, use pronouns ‘I’ and ‘you’, challenge, criticism

2.1.3.1 Explicitly associate H with negative aspect- personalise, use pronouns 'I' and 'you'.

Of the 36 women who were interviewed, 14 of them reported that their husbands actually used the pronouns 'you' as a way of referring specifically to them when directing their impolite remarks.

Text 4

[Context: On a particular occasion, there was an argument between this couple because the wife acted like a child.]

Speaker: You see your life?

Addressee: Angry, but quiet!

This is a corrective statement delivered as a strong criticism. He threatens her negative face by associating her entire reputation with a negative aspect. Though the context of the impolite verbal behavior had faded from her memory as she reported, the face threatening act still remained indelible because of the weightiness of the words. Her response was 'silence' because in that instance she confessed to be 'angry but quiet', thus withholding the FTA. Brown and Levinson maintain that in situations where the FTA seems seriously face aggravating, the politeness strategy to be employed is 'withhold the FTA' (60). In this case, responding with a counter FTA would have proven disastrous leading to verbal aggression. This also underscores the fact that women sometimes ward off impolite remarks by being silent.

Text 5

[Context: Once there was an argument between this couple and the husband responded in anger.]

Speaker: YOU ARE MY PROBLEM

Addressee: WHAT! HOW DARE YOU SAY SO, EVEN IN ALL MY
CONTRIBUTIONS TO SEE US GROW?

By saying ‘YOU’ the husband means his wife precisely and no one else, possibly there were others (maybe the children) who were present at the time the incident occurred. To emphatically call her his ‘problem’ is to arrogate all his misfortunes in life to her, thus implying that without her his life would have been better. Vangelisti notes that ‘hurt and intimacy are intrinsically linked- that intimacy requires a degree of vulnerability and that the vulnerability associated with intimacy leads people open to being hurt’ (121). The husband in question catches in on the vulnerability of his wife in an outburst of anger and to state that his wife is his problem is to be inconsiderate. As Culpeper opines, ‘in contexts such as family relationships there are stronger expectations of consideration given that the interactants know each other well and consideration seems to involve a stronger emphasis on sociality rights’ (95). Though angry he should have been more considerate knowing full well that his wife has been instrumental in building the home as seen from her response. Her reaction depicts utter amazement at the comment of her husband which she could not have imagined. She begins with an emotive emphasis ‘What!’ to show her disappointment at his impolite verbal behavior and as if she has got control of her emotions, she fights back by deploying a bald, on-record strategy when she says ‘How dare you say so’. She lashes out without

consideration in order to jostle the relationship back to normalcy and make him understand that impoliteness strategies are available to the speaker as well as the hearer. Her final statement, ‘even in all my contribution to see us grow?’ sounds more like a rhetoric lamenting how badly the husband has disregarded her tireless efforts to see that the family is in order and the terrible pain his remark has inflicted on her. When asked how bad the behavior made her feel, her comment was ‘very touchy and sad’. It is obvious that the last statement she made ‘even in all my contributions to see us grow’ bears this undertone of sadness and she described the husband’s behavior as ‘embarrassing’ which falls within the purview of impolite metalinguistic labels. It should also be noted that by uttering the statement he infringes on her sociality right given the context of the situation. To further foreground the intensity of the emotional consequence of the impolite remark, the lady reported the incident in bold letters. According to Simpson, ‘the visual organization of the text in particular, serves to manipulate the perceptual strategies, creating cognitive maps which influence the way we process and assimilate information’ (33). Thus the graphological shouting voice makes the injury marked.

Text 6

[Context: A misunderstanding transpired between this couple.]

Speaker: Are you stupid?

Addressee: No I am not.

Culpeper states that ‘one of the top thirty words sharing the same corpus-based thesaurus category with rude is stupid’ (83) and the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary defines stupid as, ‘slow to learn or understand things, not clever or intelligent’. In this conversation

the husband outrightly claims that the wife is not clever or intelligent, thereby flouting Grice's maxim of quality. He also damages her quality face by implicating the impolite belief that her evaluation of her own mental ability is defective. Her response which is, 'No I am not' is an offensive retaliation to his attack because she feels the need to uphold her face given that her perception of herself, identity and personal qualities, as far as she is concerned, is correct. She equally acknowledged that the words made her seriously angry at that moment and as for intentionality, she claimed that the words were deliberately used by her husband to offend her. When asked how she felt about the behavior, she recorded that she felt unhappy at that moment. It should be noted that her unhappiness was only momentary because she was able to prove by her response that the husband's assertion about her was untrue thereby releasing negative feelings that could have been bottled up leading to further aggravation.

Text 7

[Context: Whenever the children misbehave and the husband scolds them in a wrong way, he feels angry when the wife tries to tell him that he is wrong in his approach.]

Speaker: You be fool. [You are a fool.]

Addressee: Silence.

The expletive 'fool' used by the husband is actually a swear word that is highly proscribed in the African context. To use such an abominable word on a wife is to reduce her to the least. The expression 'You be fool' meaning 'You are a fool' is an abuse of power. As Culpeper puts it 'a powerful participant has more freedom to be impolite because he/she can reduce the ability of the less powerful participant to retaliate with impoliteness' (352). The statement carries an undertone of severe threat that the wife has no other option but to remain silent.

When we consider the context which she described as ‘when our children misbehave and he scolds them in a way then I try to correct him’, the husband clearly depicts a dictator who is ruling over his family with a high hand; bullying the wife and the children. He attacked her negative face by restricting her freedom of action and trampled on her equity right. This is also a case of coercive impoliteness which is seen as using impoliteness to reduce the target’s relative symbolic power. Therefore, the woman becomes completely helpless in saving their children from his tyranny, so her roles as wife and mother are greatly undermined by the husband. Due to power differences, men seem to be more vulgar in their choice of words as it proves that they are in charge in their marital relationship with women.

2.1.3.2 Challenge

Labov and Fanshel consider challenges to be ‘requests for action or information which are critical’ (13). On three occasions that had to do with women intervening or correcting their children because they misbehaved, the husbands seemed to be unhappy with the act so they challenged their wives for it. However, only one is reported here.

Text 8

[Context: Their child misbehaved and the wife scolded the child for it, but the husband didn’t seem to be comfortable with the way she handled the issue.]

Speaker: What is your problem?

Addressee: You are my problem.

Here, the husband insinuates that the wife has a problem because she beat up their child. When her right to chastise the child was questioned by this challenge, ‘What is your problem?’, the wife felt slighted and responded negatively by saying, ‘You are my problem’.

As far as she is concerned, if there was a problem with her exercising her equity right over the child, then the husband was certainly the problem. Schegloff and Sacks rightly state that the first speaker in a sequence organization automatically conditions the response of the next speaker (364). By confronting the wife with an impolite challenge, 'What is your problem?' he strategically conditions her to respond in an impolite manner. Another reason for this retribution is the fact that sensitive values which the wife has attributed to herself have been questioned and as such negative emotions were triggered. Culpeper observes that '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). When she says 'you are my problem', she directly attacks his negative face by using the pronoun 'you', thus stating categorically that the husband is the one who is actually wrong in this situation to have assumed that she had no right to correct their erring child.

2.1.3.3 Criticism

Brown and Levinson note that one of the major threats to our face is criticism, as it seeks to seriously examine the rationale behind our actions thus invading our space or imposing on us actions we would normally not want to carry out (66). Although criticism could play a vital role in tutor-student relationship, it is essentially marked in intimate relationships because it could serve as a weapon of authority over a less powerful participant. Husbands who are incontrovertibly the head in a marital relationship may feel more at liberty to use this tactic in the home as a way of asserting their authority. Criticism that is spiced with suspicion stands the chance of inflicting chronic emotional injuries on the target.

Text 9

[Context: The lady here returned home and told the husband about her promotion at her place of work.]

Speaker: I hope that you didn't get to that position through crooked means? (referring to sleeping around and lobbying)

Addressee: Haven't you known my capabilities till now?

Bousfield defines criticize as 'dispraise h, some action or inaction by h, or some entity in which 'h' (hearer) has invested face' (126). First of all, it should be noted that this is a spoken text so, extra-linguistic markers such as facial gestures, voice tone and body language all form the background of this conversation. Even though the husband's statement does not seem to contain any conventionalized impoliteness formula, we can tell that the utterance is heavily laden with impolite implicatures. The wife made it clear when she defined 'crooked means' to mean sleeping around and lobbying. Insinuating that his wife might have been lobbying and sleeping around is to infer that she is promiscuous to the point that he has come to accept it as her way of life and dispraising her and her promotion in which she has invested so much face becomes an avenue to fight back. By this criticism we can deduce that the relationship they share lacks trust. This is a severe attack on the woman's negative face because by using this impolite remark, the husband creates a psychological barrier in his wife's ambition to rise to the peak of her career. That apart, by insinuating that she has attained the position by crooked means we are moved to think that the wife in question is an adulteress and one that is continuously in the act thereby attacking her quality face. This is evident in her response, 'Haven't you known my capabilities till now? Meaning that her

reputation, capabilities and achievements which she believed that the husband should have valued are actually worthless to him; he holds them in the lowest esteem. Furthermore, her relational face has been attacked too because as her husband he stands in the position of her most 'significant other' whom she can trust and rely on. But his response is backstabbing and totally disappointing. Not left out in this devaluating situation is her social identity face which is the value she attaches to herself in relation to others who do not constitute her 'significant other'. This has also been threatened by his critical remark as the image she has of herself before her colleagues is a far cry from what the husband thinks about her. As far as he is concerned he thinks she is a flirt when she is with her colleagues which may not be the case.

Men have also been observed to criticize their wives by overtly passing judgments on their behavior. For example, a man told his wife that she is too lazy in carrying out her domestic chores.

Text 10

[Context: The house was a bit untidy and the husband attacked the wife for not keeping it clean.]

Speaker: You are too lazy.

Addressee: I am not a lazy woman.

What this simply means is that he has seriously examined her and has come to the conclusion that she is lazy. If this were an incidental threat to her face we would have known that the aim would be to correct, but the wife's response, 'I'm not a lazy woman' shows that it was performed out of spite. This derogatory comment could have been deployed for the following

reasons: to cause harm and to enforce compliance as Felson stated for coercive action (168). First, the husband dispraises his wife in order to make her responsible for whatever blame that might be given in the event that any domestic mishap may occur. Also, he tries to enforce compliance by making the wife work beyond her capability by carrying the weight of the household duties alone. As the report shows, the wife's response is highly antagonistic because she thinks that she is doing well enough and will not accept any blame whatsoever for any problem that may arise as far as domestic matters are concerned. Also, by reacting vehemently she is deliberately rejecting any perceived burden that the husband may be trying to place on her, thus refuting the impolite remark and the attendant stress associated with the speech act.

Destructive criticism as the term suggests has debilitating effects on its targets because it affects their morale and has the capability to impede their actions. When a man goes on-record baldly to criticize his wife, he succeeds in using a double edged sword to pierce her emotionally.

Text 11

[Context: The wife was given some money to keep. When it was time to use the money, she could not recollect where she kept the money.]

Speaker: You are forgetful and have been corrected severally.

Addressee: I cannot kill myself. Nobody is perfect.

Here there is no intention on the part of the speaker to protect the face of the hearer at all.

What we see rather is an overt impolite remark that has been qualified with the adjunct

'severally' to indicate the high frequency of the action. To say 'You are forgetful' is to

explicitly associate the wife with a negative aspect reinforced by the pronoun 'you' tacked to the face threatening word 'forgetful' implicating the impolite belief that the wife lacks the ability to recall. This assertion flouts Grice's maxim of quality. The presence of the coordinand 'and' goes further to imply that much more than this is the fact that she had been corrected severally and we could add 'yet to no avail' because it is exactly what the statement implies. The lady stated that she 'felt bad' because the husband was 'not appreciative enough'. Being less appreciative indicates that expectations have not been fully met and it becomes more face damaging when the expectations are somewhat unrealistic. This woman felt that the husband was demanding much more from her than she could deliver so in response to his face attack she said 'I cannot kill myself. Nobody is perfect'. It is crystal clear from what she said that she acknowledged the fact that she is possibly not measuring up in this aspect which the husband knows too well so attacking her weakness is even more painful because he ought to have shown a level of consideration for her. By saying 'I cannot kill myself' we can safely assume that she has been trying to work on herself but has still not measured up to his demand which is becoming unbearable and beyond her capacity to handle. This response therefore sounds more like a resolution and a warning to have her space uninvaded anymore. In addition, by saying that 'nobody is perfect' she is informing the husband that he has his own weaknesses too which may just be being excessively demanding, unappreciative and inconsiderate.

2.1.3.4 Complaints

Results from the data report show a different kind of negative impoliteness output not found in Culpeper and Bousfield's models. The feedbacks got from the questionnaires show that

complaint is one of the strategies that men use sometimes to damage their wives' faces. From the field of psychology, Drigotas et al. explain that 'complaining is described as individual responses to dissatisfaction in interpersonal relationships' (597). This view is also supported by Day (3) who argues that 'dissatisfaction serves as the motivation for complaint behavior.' The keyword in all these arguments is *dissatisfaction*. Complaint, therefore, as a negative impoliteness output could be conceptualized as 'expressing dissatisfaction at h's action or inaction or with h as a person and everything that constitutes h's face'. This negative impoliteness output manifested in some of the reports.

Text 12

[Context: Whenever the children or the wife's siblings offended the husband he would lash out on the wife.]

Speaker: I don't know why God gave me this kind of bad wife.

Addressee: Silence.

Although this complaint seems to be directed at God whom he claims to have given him a wife that is bad, it is in actual fact targeted at the wife because the veracity of the claim- to be given a wife by God is highly questionable. What is actually obtainable is the fact that he meant to say that his wife is not good at all. This face attack is grossly unfair because the action that led to it is not in any way stemming from the wife. The perpetrators of this offensive act are only related to his wife as much as they are related to him, so one would have expected that he would lash out on the offenders and not the innocent wife. To express dissatisfaction at his wife who has done nothing wrong is hurtful as he has not shown any form of consideration for her feelings nor regard for her personality. On a five point likert

scale the wife strongly agreed that the words made her seriously angry and she felt ‘very bad’ at the time that this unpalatable situation occurred.

Her equity right has also been trampled upon because of the high degree of unfairness that the husband had exhibited. To say that the wife is bad because their children offended him is to cleverly pass the buck of every misbehavior displayed by the children to the wife and exonerate himself. And to insult the wife for her siblings misconduct is also to express dissatisfaction at her family who are her ‘significant others’ and constitute an important part of her face. The wife’s response at this impolite verbal remark is ‘silence’ which could be interpreted as a surprise because the act completely grates her sensibility leaving her emotionally wounded and dumbfounded.

Text 13

[Context: The wife averred that the domestic chores are being left for her alone and the husband still expects her to do extra work besides the house work while he sits doing nothing.]

Speaker: What have you been doing? (Meaning, I was supposed to have done what he wanted me to do)

Addressee: I’ve been sleeping (ironically).

This woman remarked that her husband complained about her inability to meet up with the demands of domestic duties and others which seemed too laborious for her. In her words, ‘when the house chores is being left for me alone and he still expects me to do extra work apart from the house work while he sits doing nothing’. From this context, it is glaring that the dissatisfaction expressed at the wife’s inability to meet up with the numerous

responsibilities that she has been saddled with is uncalled for and to ask her ‘What have you been doing?’ when it is obvious that she has been working tirelessly is an undeserved reward for labour. The tone is that of oppression because the wife claimed that while she was busy working, ‘he sits doing nothing’ not lending a helping hand in any way is bad enough but to add complaint to it is seriously infuriating. The lady confessed that she felt ‘very bad to the extent that I would feel there is no love until he renews the promise’. As the less powerful participant she finds it hard to respond directly so she goes off record. Her sarcastic response ‘I’ve been sleeping’ is a form of a reprisal attack to his impolite behavior.

2.1.3.5 Blocking/hindering

According to Bousfield, ‘blocking or hindering means constraining the space of your interlocutor(s) by denying them their turn on the conversational floor or from withdrawing from a conversational exchange’ (127). From *Text 1*, we can deduce from the context that whenever there was a heated conversation between this couple and the husband felt the need to opt out irrespective of the fact that his wife may desire the discussion to be mutually concluded, the husband only needed to block her instead of politely asking for the issue to be revisited at a more convenient time. He halts the wife by commanding her to be ‘quiet’ thus powerfully bringing the conversation to an abrupt end. This act is tantamount to slamming the door on someone who is standing at the entrance about to get into a place. It is not only impolite but also demoralizing as the target gets the feeling that what he/she has to say is of little or no importance. From the context we can identify three reasons why the husband chooses to constrain the space of his wife and deny her her turn on the conversational floor.

First, the woman claimed that ‘it occurs when I talk too much (to him)’. Talking too much in this context may not be all that gibberish because as couples they need to communicate. Effective communication has to be done on regular basis as maintained in this argument but if the husband feels the regularity of the communication is too frequent, he could communicate with his wife about it instead of hushing her and as such attacking her face.

Also, it is decipherable that the husband uses this imperative phrase to avoid agreement with the wife as contained in the words ‘or when I am saying something he disagrees with’. Avoiding agreement or seeking disagreement is an attack on her positive face because her desire that what she wants should be desirable to him is repudiated thus making her feel unaccepted. Finally, by saying ‘quiet’ he is obviously uninterested in what she has to say. This is also another positive impoliteness output which shows that he is unconcerned or unsympathetic about his wife’s desires which may even be for their collective benefits. ‘Quiet’ therefore becomes a double edged sword that attacks the wife both positively and negatively.

The lady in question described the behaviour as ‘uncaring of the other person’s reaction before use’. Uncaring here perfectly describes his behavior as it shares the same metalinguistic meaning with blocking.

2.1.3.6 Condescend, scorn or ridicule (use diminutives)

Using impolite remarks on people is just one way of showing superiority because impolite remarks are basically employed to diminish others and make the offender feel more important. As Jay observed “men use more offensive words than women” (78) to exert their authority and to display chauvinistic tendencies over their wives. Thus in marital relationships we find

this concept playing out repeatedly among couples. Men often use diminutives to prove their superiority over women. In *Text 4* the husband shows utter contempt and disregard for his wife because by asking if she is mentally sound, he implicates the impolite belief that she is mad. This statement could be rightly interpreted as male chauvinism because he sees the woman as a minion that could be abused or ridiculed. To blatantly ask the wife if her head is correct is highly diminishing.

Also, the diminishing labels used by the man in *Text 2* to attack his wife's positive face depict abysmal scorn and disregard for her. These diminutives imply that the wife is still a baby, incapable of handling anything that is important and unripe for the relationship that they share.

2.1.3.7 Shouting

Shouting flouts the maxim of manner with respect to volume which creates an interpretable implicature (Bousfield 137).

Text 14

[Context: He wanted to go out but could not find his key because the children misplaced it.]

Speaker: Please don't scatter my things again, allow me to arrange it by myself. And he shouted angrily.

Addressee: I am sorry.

But for the clause, 'he shouted angrily' one would have thought that by commencing with the hedge 'please' followed by the appeal 'don't scatter my things again' he was showing an intention to mitigate any face threat, but this final clause gives an indication to the contrary.

To have shouted angrily flouts Grice's maxim of manner which relates to how what is said is said. Shouting involves the use of a raised tone of voice which clearly makes it known to the hearer that the speaker is angry. It has the capacity to block an interactant in a conversation or deny them their turn on the conversational floor. It could also bear an undertone of threat thus instilling a belief in the hearer that action detrimental to him/her may occur. Of course the wife's response shows that as she quickly says "I am sorry". By apologizing she attests to the fact that any further argument might lead to more aggravation. She also reported that she felt embarrassed by his behavior because a raised voice in a supposedly cordial interaction is marked as it makes the other feel uncomfortable.

2.2 Impoliteness Strategies Used by Women

The reports that were got from the data revealed that although women use impoliteness strategies just as men, they are not as vulgar as men. The speaker here is the wife while the addressee is the husband. The major impoliteness strategies used by women include the following:

2.2.1 Complaints

As manifested in the data, women seemed to resort to complaint when there is a breakdown in communication between them and their spouses or when their husbands failed to meet up with their responsibility of providing for the home.

Text 15

[Context: There was a lack of communication between this couple which led to a feeling of neglect on the part of the wife.]

Speaker: You value building materials to human being.

Addressee: I told her sorry for not telling her that I want to buy building materials.

The wife's statement is a conspicuous expression of dissatisfaction at her husband's inability to communicate properly. She explicitly associates her husband with negative aspects when she says that he values building materials to human being and implicates the impolite belief that he is treating her as a spook. This remark also makes it obvious that she has been excluded from his activity which is an attack on his positive face. By complaining, she performs an FTA that is both positively and negatively charged.

He reported that the words made him 'feel so bad'. The intensifying adjunct 'so' shows that the remark was absolutely painful and undeserving because the act was something of negligence and nothing of purpose. On a five point likert scale, he strongly agreed that the words seriously made him angry. In addition, his response which was "I told her sorry for not telling her that I want to buy building materials" proves that he had no intention of excluding her from his activity as the wife already claims. We are moved to pity him more when he agreed that the words were deliberately uttered to make him angry yet he chose to apologize all the same.

Text 16

[Context: There was a break in communication between this couple]

Speaker: You don't care about me and my contribution in the family.

Addressee: I told her that she is everything to me and her contribution for the family is very impressive which she needs to keep on.

The wife's expression of dissatisfaction at his perceived neglect of her role and input in the family is clearly an attack on his positive face. It implicates the impolite belief that her

interests and needs are not being attended to by him and her contribution towards the progress of the family is not valued. This proves that he is unconcerned and unsympathetic thereby making her feel uncomfortable. This FTA is heavily bedecked with positive impoliteness outputs that purport to make a monster of the husband. Incessant complaints certainly have the potential of evoking negative feelings in its recipient and paint a wrong picture of the object before others. By complaining as well, she becomes contemptuous thereby attacking his negative face and exerting her verbal power over him.

When we juxtapose the husband's innocuous response with the wife's tirade, we discover that this is an FTA that is performed out of spite to inflict emotional injury on the husband. According to him, his response was "I told her that she is everything to me and her contribution for the family is very impressive which she needs to keep on". This response proves beyond reasonable doubt that the plethora of allegations levelled against him are unfounded; as far as he is concerned she is highly esteemed and her contributions are invaluable.

Text 17

[Context: The husband came home late as a result of traffic congestion and he tried to explain to the wife why he got home late.]

Speaker: I was told not to marry from your family because the men in your family are not satisfied with one woman.

Addressee: I was warned not to marry you too.

The wife's reply is a slap on his quality face and an attack on his association right. First, she attacks his quality face by insinuating that he is a flirt. This flouts Grice's maxim of quality

and relevance at the same time because her response is not in any way related to the issue at hand. Also, the reply she has given does not provide a suitable pair in the conversation because her husband's assessment of the delay is hinged on traffic which she is possibly aware of. What is expected of her is a positive assessment which is the norm and would have constituted an appropriate adjacency pair. But she fails to do this as her reply obviously deviates from the conversational expectation thereby enforcing a role shift on the part of the husband whom we expect to initiate a repair. Now instead of doing so, that is initiating a repair, he attacks his wife's negative face by saying that "I was also warned not to marry you too". This shifts focus from the issue to the people involved in the conversation and by extension attacking their personalities (faces).

When she says that "the men in your family are not satisfied with one woman" she succeeds in attacking his negative and relational face. She associates him with negative aspects and indirectly uses derogatory nominations. His relational face is affected when she attributes negative aspects as well to his family members, thereby stating, by way of implicature, that his family members are also not left out in this suspected infidelity. The husband agreed that the words seriously made him angry and they were used intentionally to cause offence.

2.2.2 Explicitly associate 'h' with negative aspect

To associate one's interlocutor with negative aspects in an interaction where so much face is at stake and the speaker has less power compared to the hearer, is an instance of impolite behavior that is highly marked. However, we see this scenario consistently playing out in family discourse as wives who are supposedly on the lower echelon of power throw caution

to the wind and go on-record baldly to use abusive words on their spouses in times of heated verbal exchanges.

Text 18

[Context: The husband refused to be involved in domestic work.]

Speaker: You dey craze (You are crazy).

Addressee: If you cannot change, you leave.

The presence of the vocative ‘you’ makes it explicitly clear that the wife is referring to no other person but him. Also, she outrightly calls him a ‘madman’ by that statement which implicates the impolite belief that the husband in question is mentally deranged thus flouting Grice’s maxim of quality. In an African context, such blatant use of expletives by a wife on her husband shows utter disregard for culture which places high value on wives showing respect for their husbands. As cultural boundary has been exceeded, the husband reacts by telling the wife to leave the home if she cannot change. He tries to affirm his authority because he feels threatened by the wife’s leverage in using such an abusive word on him which automatically places both of them on the same level of power. Asiyanbola clearly opines that “the Nigerian society is clearly defined on male and female responsibilities in the family. The task of overseeing domestic chores is exclusively reserved for the woman” (3) and this husband understands this role division too well, so his wife’s insistence on his execution of domestic duties is an invasion into his privacy and his desire to be unimpeded. In addition, by constantly demanding his involvement in domestic duties, the wife tries to enforce a role-shift and reverse their responsibilities which the spouse is not prepared for.

By being abusive, the wife as well attacks his positive face which seeks to be admired and respected. To call him a madman is to use a derogatory nomination which debunks every positive value that he has ascribed to himself and as such inflicting emotional injury on him. He feels slighted because his ego is affected and his greatest desire which is to be respected by his most 'significant other' has been unsatisfied, thereby punching his relational face. This FTA is hydra-headed as it seeks to diminish the spouse not only emotionally but also mentally, and threaten his masculinity. He noted that the words seriously made him angry because they were deliberately spoken to offend him.

Text 19

[Context: The wife felt that the husband is inconsiderate when dealing with visitors, friends and relations and he does not carry others along in what he does.]

Speaker: You are very proud and wicked.

Addressee: That is why am different cause I have my life to live.

The context of this verbal abuse is worth careful investigation because it contains impolite metalinguistic insinuations that may have formed the wife's opinion and concomitant use of derogatory labels such as 'proud' and 'wicked' on her own husband. First, she feels the husband does not carry people along which implicates the impolite belief that the husband is selfish or more like an opinionated fellow who does things without respect for the feelings or ideas of others. In another light, this may just be the husband's way of expressing his desire to be unimpeded in his actions which pertain to his negative face. So to 'feel' and therefore interpret this trait in her husband as 'selfishness' is a gross attack on his negative face. This accusation of calling him a 'proud person' flouts Grice's maxim of quality as it may not be

the reality. Second, she also ‘feels’ that he is ‘inconsiderate’ and according to Culpeper, “inconsiderate as an impoliteness linguistic label seems to involve a stronger emphasis on sociality rights” (95) which borders on the value we claim for ourselves in relation to others. This is further elucidated when he mentions the category of persons who are affected namely: ‘visitors, friends and relations’. For being inconsiderate the wife calls him ‘wicked’ which shows that he has displayed less affection for others where more was needed. The husband’s response is totally defensive: “That is why am different cause I have my life to live”. This response makes it obvious that what the wife interprets as pride and wickedness, the husband sees as being unique which we are more disposed to believe because everyone has his/her individual differences and peculiar way of behaving towards others. Associating his peculiarity with negative aspects therefore, is seriously infuriating and he confessed that his wife’s verbal behavior made him ‘just furious’ which is expected.

Text 20

[Context: They had an argument over the children’s school fees.]

Speaker: Don’t give me your bad luck.

Addressee: I felt bad that I had to leave the house.

This text is another instance worth mentioning because the husband documented that the wife’s use of language to cause offence was completely intentional; performed out of spite to inflict serious emotional injury on him. The wife’s actual words were “don’t give me your bad luck”. The impolite load conveyed by this statement is pitifully demoralizing because by this assertion, the wife implies that she has observed over the years that the husband’s presence in the home portends evil which she completely dissociates from when she says

“don’t give me your bad luck”. In fact, it would not be too much to say that this perceived belief in the assumption that the husband brings ill luck to the family may just be the singular reason why they are having this financial challenge in paying the children’s school fees. The presence of the pronoun ‘you’ also lends credence to the fact that the ill luck is a feature pertaining to the husband alone and it is not shared by any other member of the family, thus attacking his negative face and by dissociating from him she attacks his positive face which seeks to be appreciated and accepted.

In response to this abusive remark, the husband said that he felt so bad that he had to leave the house. The pragmatic implication of the statement was correctly understood by the husband, because what the wife actually meant was that the husband’s presence in the home spells doom for the family and by implicature she subscribes to fact that he leaves the home so that there would not be any more sinister feelings.

2.2.3 Blocking/hindering

While every other maxim relates to ‘what is said’, the maxim of manner sheds light on ‘how’ what is said is said. Men pick offence at their wives’ illocutions most of the time not because their wives said something wrong but because they said it in a way that seemed to dent their ego.

Text 21

[Context: There was a disagreement between this couple.]

Speaker: If you don’t know what to say on this matter, please you better keep quiet.

Addressee: I just kept quiet because I don't like talking when angry so that I will not say what I will regret later

Looking at the wife's words superficially, nothing seems abusive in them at all. First, the presence of the conditional marker 'if' tells us that the woman is not telling the husband not to say anything but like a counsellor, she seems to be advising him to choose between available options of either speaking or staying silent. Also, if we consider the entire clause: "if you don't know what to say on *this* matter" it goes further to buttress the point that she feels the onus is on her as a good wife to advise her husband to be careful on 'this matter'. She tells him that 'this matter' is crucial so rather than saying what would worsen this issue consider your words carefully. This infers that in other matters you are free to say what you like, but *this matter* requires serious consideration. Looking at the superordinate clause, "please you better keep quiet" we see that she begins with the hedge 'please' showing an intention to mitigate face threat. Then she goes further to give her admonition; "on this matter I seriously advise that it is better for you to keep quiet, even though I gave you options of choosing between whether to speak or not, it is my honest opinion that you remain silent". It is this impression of a mother counselling her teenage son that triggers ill-feelings in the husband. According to Pelt, "when a woman acts like a mother and treats her man like a little boy... or corrects him and gives him directions on how to do something... she is not respecting his abilities as an adult" (41). This lack of respect is a big blow on the husband's negative face as it belittles him and portrays him as an adult that is incapable of making his own decisions.

Moreover, if we consider the fact that the issue may be a paramount one that requires the man as the head of the home to make a final decision, we find that her words of admonition have succeeded in pushing him aside and places her at the decision making end of the discussion. Also, by suggesting that he should keep quiet, she has implicitly blocked him and denied him his turn on the conversational floor thereby acting as a dictator with excess power over her subject, which is not the case as she is supposed to be at the lower hem of affairs in this relationship. It is also worthy of note that the presence of the formulaic adjunct 'please' does not in any way mitigate the face threat because it is employed sarcastically to heighten the face damage on her husband as it is rendered in an off-hand manner.

The pragmatic import of the statement which is to shut the husband up is successfully enacted by the husband who responded by saying that, "I just kept quiet because I don't like talking when angry so that I will not say what I will regret later". His response clearly indicates that the manner in which the wife uttered those words really made him angry and according to him, the behavior of the wife in the conversation made him 'feel bad and very sad at that moment'. The booster 'very' in his response equally shows the depth of the face damage of the wife's comment.

Text 22

[Context: There was a disagreement on a particular issue.]

Speaker: I have heard you.

Addressee: Are you talking to me like that?

While the words "I have heard you" are apparently polite, that is, not containing any form of impolite metalinguistic label, it is obvious from the husband's response, "are you talking to

me like that”, that the manner in which the wife spoke to him was denigrating and consequently it evoked negative reaction from the husband. This statement must have been issued with high rising tune which is marked for a declarative structure and said in an off-hand manner that showed complete disregard for his personality.

2.2.4 Challenge

Challenge as a negative impoliteness output is always issued in the form of an interrogative statement as “it questions h’s position, stance, beliefs, assumed power, rights, obligations, ethics...” (Bousfield 132).

Text 23

[Context: There was a time the husband was transferred from Kano

(Northern Nigeria) to Enugu (Eastern Nigeria) and the husband told the wife

that they should make Edo State (Southern Nigeria) their base and the wife

flared up.]

Speaker: This pit that has been dug how long will it take to fill it? Do you have enough money to do it?

Addressee: Violence

In this outburst of anger what follows is a double-barreled challenge that calls his decision to question. She responded by saying that, “This pit that has been dug how long will it take to fill it?” “Do you have enough money to do it?” The ‘pit’ referred to here, as the researcher personally gathered from the respondent, is the foundation of a building that he had laid. It is quite interesting to see that in anger the wife has deviated from the issue under consideration which is making Benin City their base, to the foundation of a building that the husband has

laid. This corroborates the fact that a challenge affects the totality of the hearer. It questions every move and decision of the hearer as the speaker seeks to discover the rationale behind the hearer's attitude and decisions. The first question challenges the husband's ability to complete the project that he has started. She attacks his ability to be proactive by insinuating that he lacks foresight. When she says "how long will it take to fill it?" she implicates the impolite belief that the 'pit' has taken more than the time necessary for its completion and as at the time of speaking she still believes that the project lacks a definite time for its execution. This question impolitely insinuates that the husband will not be able to finish the work that he has begun as he 'obviously' had not made enough preparation from the start.

The second question calls into account his financial ability in handling such a task. She seems to suggest that apart from the fact that the husband is not proactive, he is also not sensitive to the fiscal demands of the project that he has embarked on. The question, "Do you have enough money to do it?" does not intend to show concern for the husband in any way, rather it is an expression of doubt about his financial ability. The husband's response was "violence" because he had been punched on every side by these challenging questions. The wife had successfully ripped his manhood to shreds by attacking his perceived values of courage, strength and financial power in undertaking and completing a task such as building a house. This attack becomes more damaging because it emanates from his most 'significant other' whom he expects to protect his interest more than any other person.

2.2.5 Shouting

Apart from violating the maxim of manner with respect to volume, shouting can also constrain the action space of one's interlocutor and at the same time exert power over the

hearer. Shouting is therefore a tool in the hands of a speaker irrespective of the fact that he/she may not be the more powerful participant in the conversation, to enforce compliance and gain control of the conversational floor. It blocks interactants in a conversation and hampers the smooth flow of turn-taking.

Text 24

[Context: The husband returned late from a friend's house on a particular day and the wife began to raise her voice at him saying that she didn't like what he did.]

Speaker: (Shouting) I don't like what you did. What if you were attacked by someone?

Addressee: Lauging (laughing)

By raising her voice she makes it difficult for him to explain the circumstances surrounding his late arrival. We quite agree that his action of coming home late would have breached her expectation or an agreement that they both may have reached, but shouting clearly precludes him from speaking and it as well implies that his action was intentional. In his words "she was shouting at me and saying that what about you are attack by someone". Her intention is good but the manner is impolite. Shouting places her at a vantage position where she can exercise authority over him which makes him feel inferior. He described the behavior as 'embarrassing' because he felt 'disgusted' and his response was 'lauging' (laughing). We can interpret this laughter to mean repressed anger and an expression of disgust as it also indicates that he was shocked by the behavior which in actual fact made him speechless, thus constraining his space on the conversational floor.

The raising of voice can also be interpreted as a correction for a wrong that could have been avoided if the husband had been more reasonable. By this negative action, she implicates the impolite belief that the husband had acted like a child that needed to be corrected by a mother figure which makes the FTA more damaging and contemptuous.

2.2.6 Positive Impoliteness

Two notable cases of the use of positive impoliteness outputs from data results showed that women resort to verbal impoliteness as a way of asserting their rights in the home.

Text 25

[Context: The husband sent the wife on an errand.]

Speaker: I can't do it.

Addressee: I tried to force her.

The wife's flagrant disobedience according to the husband made him to feel "very bad". On a five point likert scale, he strongly agreed that the words made him seriously angry and he also averred that they were deliberately spoken to cause offence. This statement shows an outright disregard for her husband's personality and authority because it is a daring attack on his ego as it seems to suggest that there is nothing that he can do about her decision. In order to prove to her that this is not the case, the husband said that he tried to force her to do his bidding. This is a clear example of an on-record attack on his positive face because by the statement she seeks disagreement with the husband and equally fails to attend to his need. His negative face has not been spared either as the statement also reveals a high level of contempt for the husband and a blatant disregard for his authority.

Text 26

[Context: After the wife had washed the clothes in the house, the husband wanted her to also assist him to do another urgent task.]

Speaker: [I] am not your servant.

Addressee: I did not reply her.

She deliberately fails to attend to his need to be assisted even though she had washed the clothes. This failure on her part to be concerned about her husband's urgent desire is an attack on his positive face and by saying "am not your servant", she vividly paints a picture of a master-minion relationship in the marriage and as if to say that this time the master will not be served as usual. The husband recorded that he felt 'insulted' by the statement which makes it obvious that the verbal behavior was truly impolite.

Figures showing the effect of language, intentionality and degree of emotional injury

The following tables show how participants in interaction corroborate the fact that impoliteness can inflict emotional injury on them. Figure 1 below shows how language use can pose a serious strain in interpersonal relationship even among couples. The percentage indicates that both men and women strongly agreed that impolite use of words is not in any way related to banter.

Figure 1

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Language	Male	26	44.9
	Female	36	58.0
	Total	62	99.9

Figure 2 indicates the fact that impoliteness is usually intentional and not always accidental or incidental. The intention to hurt one's significant other in a relationship where both partners are highly vulnerable makes impoliteness even more exacerbating.

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Intentionality	Male	24	40.6
	Female	35	59.3
	Total	59	99.9

Figure 3 is a quantitative analysis of the degree of emotional injury that is inflicted on interlocutors in a marital relationship.

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Degree of Emotional Injury	Male	24	40.6
	Female	35	59.3
	Total	59	99.9

2.3 Conclusion

As clearly seen from the data analysis, impoliteness in marital relationship cannot be conceptualized as banter because couples intentionally use words to offend themselves and disrupt smooth communication in the home thereby leading to ill feelings and emotional breakdowns

CHAPTER THREE

IMPOLITENESS IN SYMMETRIC (PEER GROUP) RELATIONSHIP

3.0 Introduction

In order to account for the realization of impoliteness in symmetric relationship, we choose peer groups as a case study. However, defining symmetry as it relates to interpersonal relationship is fuzzy because people are not exactly the same. While two individuals may possess equal power in terms of age, sex, and academic status, they may differ considerably in behavior and socio-economic status such that when they engage in power tussle, one may be depending solely on the family buoyant economic status to the detriment of the other. That notwithstanding, as studies have shown, the peer group though disparate in some aspects, still reflects certain peculiarities that indicate symmetry.

From a sociologist point of view, the peer group is defined as both a social group and a primary group of people who have similar interests, age, background or social status and are likely to influence their beliefs and behaviours. Nevertheless, they contain hierarchies so that teachers cannot be peers with students even though they may be in the same learning environment (Wikipedia.com). From the field of personality development, Reitz *et al.* contend that members of the same classroom, community, work or sports team constitute important and highly salient peer group (3). They go further to assert that in younger life phases, peer groups tend to be homogenous concerning individual characteristics such as age, socio-economic status and ethnicity (3). But Feld argues that in adulthood, age homogeneity decreases with the decreasing influence of institution that create opportunities for contact

with peers of the same age such as school (qtd. In Reitz 6). The school setting therefore fuses individuals of discrete age range into peer groups as they become residents in particular hostels and course mates in the same departments. This sameness is still not able to capture the kind of symmetric relationship that we propose here because students in the same resident may not be in the same level. While those in the same level may have marked differences in age ranging from six to ten years if not more. In this case even though their relationship is identical in some ways, it is still unbalanced. Reitz *et al.* further state that unbalanced relationships are likely to be ended because imbalance impairs relationship satisfaction. Equality matching qualifies as a defining criterion of peer relationships (7). As a working definition, we define peer group as:

a group of individuals in a particular discourse community with similar interest, academic status (not more than one year difference), age (not more than three years difference) and varying socio-economic backgrounds.

This definition is still not all encompassing in terms of equal power relation because varying socio-economic backgrounds already connotes some form of asymmetric relations. However, this power as we contend here is external given that it does not stem from the participants themselves but from inequality in the distribution of wealth which is a universal phenomenon. With the notion of symmetry established, the following sections show the factors that trigger impoliteness in symmetric relations.

3.1 Factors that Trigger Impoliteness among Peers

Bousfield defines impoliteness as “constituting the communication of *intentionally* gratuitous and conflictive verbal face-threatening acts (FTAs) which are purposefully delivered:

- (i) Unmitigated, in contexts where mitigation is required and/or
- (ii) With deliberate *aggression*, that is, with the face threat exacerbated,

‘boosted’ or maximized in some ways to heighten the face damage inflicted. (77)

This definition presupposes that the occurrence of impoliteness depends on two caveats: aggression and intentionality, which are the major factors that trigger offence in peer relation.

3.1.1 Aggression

Aggression manifests both as physical violence or verbal put downs. The focus here is verbal aggression because it involves the communication of negatively charged utterances.

According to Hyden, “verbal aggression refers to a verbal act which has the intent (or perceived intent) to symbolically hurt or to threaten to hurt another” (qtd in Bousfield 76).

But Jay argues that it is an “offending event” which triggers such an offensive use of language. As he puts it:

The major elements of the offending event involve the person or event that evokes the anger and the social physical location of the event. These factors amount to the: who, what, where, and when of anger. What provokes anger can vary from person to person and from time to time. And the major elements of the offending event are the most important in determining how anger is expressed verbally. (98)

The first major element of an offending event is: the offender or the event or what Bousfield calls the “offending behavior” (56). The offender possesses several qualities that are capable of provoking offence such as age, gender, status, physical appearance etc. The salient ones manifested in the data are: sex (gender), status and physical appearance. This is not to say that the other factors did not play out, but for the sake of this work, we choose to focus on only three.

3.1.1.1 Sex (Gender)

The issue of marked disparity between the male and female gender dates back to centuries. For instance, Carmichael shows that male chauvinism is not a recent phenomenon but it manifests in varying degrees from one society to another (1). Jay also notes that “men use more vulgar language than women do” (79) so that in peer relations we still find males trying to exhibit egotistic tendencies over their female counterparts. This attitude is sometimes conceded by ladies but a times, it is met with reprisal attacks. The following datasets reveal how sex plays a major role in provoking offence in symmetric relationship.

Text 27

[**Context:** *A guy sent a message (possibly on social media), a strange someone I don't know and I didn't reply immediately so he got angry.*]

Speaker: Bitch

Addressee: Was too shocked to even retaliate.

As Jay notes, “one of the most powerful dimensions of human communication is the gender of the speaker or listener especially with respect to swearing and insulting behaviours. For example, the word ‘bitch’ is targeted at females and the phrase ‘son of a bitch’ at males” (qtd in Bousfield 79). This vulgar expression from the speaker was triggered by a delayed action on the part of the addressee. The social media is a platform that allows multiple users to gain access into a particular user’s account, and most of the time these online interlocutors could be strangers who may not have seen themselves before. Reitz notes that “peer relation could be intimate or casual as between acquaintances” (7). The way interactants choose words based on their relationship, social status and cultural expectations is the focus of interpersonal

pragmatics. So initiating a relationship between two strangers would require careful selection of diction because of cultural expectations, especially when the social status of the individuals involved is not clearly defined. Therefore, flouting the maxim of quality by referring to a total stranger as a 'bitch' is a marked verbal aggression that is highly infuriating.

The ideational function of this text is the establishment of personal contact, otherwise known as phatic communion. As Gregory and Carroll point out, "in Nigerian English, initial inquiries about the family are highly probable in establishing relationships" (22). The initial message which was sent to this lady that initiates this conversation is not known, but we can infer from the context that the girl's hesitation is mainly because the speaker is a stranger. Her hesitation could also have been necessitated by the speaker's use of language that deviates from the field of discourse. If as Gregory and Carroll point out about Nigerian English he had commenced with an introduction of himself and initial inquiries about her family, maybe the lady would have responded immediately. We also know that this is a computer mediated communication and a text that is written to be read which makes it difficult for the addressee to lash out on the speaker physically. As Dalton notes, "speech acts of impoliteness in online discourses are also used for fulfilling the personal face wants for one's own self-gratification at the expense of others" (5). This stranger has indeed employed a taboo expression for his own egotistic satisfaction.

In order to show the degree of emotional injury the comment inflicted on her, she noted that "she was too shocked to even retaliate". When the speaker uses the expletive 'bitch' he merely displays male chauvinism which makes men believe that every woman is at their beck

and call, and he should have been replied promptly.

Text 28

[Context: *We were having a heated argument where we were pointing out errors we have in relating to people and I was being looked down on because am female.*]

1. **Speaker:** You cannot stand where I spit.

Addressee: Why would I want to, you no reach (not up to my standard).

2. **Speaker:** Are you up to my last born at home?

Addressee: No am not, because am bigger than her.

3. **Speaker:** You too dey show yourself (you always flaunt your personality)

Addressee: You too, too dey notice me, mind your business. [You pay too much attention to what I do, just mind your business.]

4. **Speaker:** See this girl talking to me, you reach? [are you up to my level?]

Addressee: You are feeling superior because you are a man, don't try me oh.

In this verbal interaction, we see an obvious display of verbal put downs that are engendered by gender superiority complex. In the first turn, the speaker makes a very derisive statement by saying that the lady cannot stand where he spits meaning that the lady is tantamount to a worthless object. In the next turn, he makes an impolite comparison between the lady and his younger sister, asserting that the girl is inferior to his sister. Furthermore, he points out that the girl is proud and the final statement which sums it all is a self-revelation of the motive behind his action: "See this girl talking to me, you reach?". Here he employs two deictic markers: the directional deictic verb 'see' which draws attention to a particular person and the

demonstrative ‘this’ which specifies the referent as enumerable *thing* (Verschueren 123) and endophorically refers to the addressee.

The syntagmatic and paradigmatic structures of these derisive statements help to reinforce the impolite degradation of the lady. The first three turns occur separately but in the last turn the double defamatory statements occur simultaneously (Misra 26). According to Locher and Graham, “language use also signals the social status of interactants, this status therefore impact greatly on their choice of words and relational aspects could also be signaled by syntactic choices” (3). The lady responds offensively to his verbal degradation. Her final statement “you are feeling superior because you are a man” and the context “I was being looked down on because am female” serve as undeniable evidences that this young man is overplaying his status as a male.

Text 29

[Context: *My friend and I stood on a narrow path discussing. I did not see him coming because I was engulfed in the discussion. Suddenly, I felt a person’s shoulder brushed my arm and said those words.*]

Speaker: Get off the way bitch.

Addressee: I did not say anything. I just stared at him in anger and kept quiet in order to avoid a fight.

The speaker’s aggressive behavior manifest both physically and verbally. First, from the context, the addressee avers that his “shoulder brushed my arm” which would have happened forcefully. Then to boost the impolite behavior, he utters an impolite imperative “get off the way” which is further amplified by the effing remark “bitch”. The lady’s inability to respond

is informed by the fear of evoking a showdown which would be to her detriment. The speaker knowing full well that he possesses more physical power, utters these words with impunity, possibly anticipating a response that would enable him to prove his masculine superiority further.

This face damage is heightened because it is issued in the presence of an audience, the girl's friend who is a bystander. According to Bousfield, "bystanders are known by the speaker to be within earshot, they are not the target of the speaker's message but may affect the way the speaker speaks" (177). The speaker could also have behaved this way before the girl and her friend just to gain status as a superior breed. The fact that the addressee could not respond is really diminishing especially before a friend who may have expected her to at least say something. In order to avert more severe face damage she employs the stay silent strategy. She also noted that she felt very irritated and described the behavior as rude.

Gender superiority also manifests among ladies who use condescending utterances to show an aggressive side of the female gender as the following texts show.

Text 30

[Context: *There was a jean carnival the previous day but the speaker and her friends did not turn up early and the addressee was telling her that they were late for the carnival.]*

Speaker: You are a thief and if you mention my name again, I will slap you.

Addressee: I stood, shook my head and left.

Gregory and Carroll (28) stat that "personal letters (in this case verbal interaction) between friends are characterized by topic switches and occasionally by exophoric references that

sometimes make it difficult for a third person to understand fully”. The reason for calling him a thief cannot be inferred from the context. However, this name calling act tactfully shifts the ideational function of the language from a general topic to a personal denigration. It also moves the context away from the present, which is a friendly discussion, to an incident that may have occurred in the past. Bousfield claims that contexts are dynamic. They move from one course of event to another (179). Her derisive comment successfully shifts the context from a mere friendly conversation to a dressing down. Also, in making this derisive statement, the speaker purports to enforce a role shift on the addressee probably to elicit a response that would trigger another round of impoliteness which would further entangle them in a circle of verbal combat that could eventually lead to a physical combat. More so, the derogatory remark is tacked to an impolite conditional clause by a coordinand ‘and’. The subordinate clause “if you call my name again” is an addition to the first statement and the two are congruent (Quirk *et al.* 562). “I will slap you” would be the resultant effect if the condition of calling her name again was met.

The addressee's response “I stood, shook my head and left” is phonologically cohesive. The long vocalic sound /u:/ in ‘stood’, rhymes with the sound in ‘shook’, while the short vocalic sound /e/ in ‘head’ correlates with ‘left’. This rhythmic cohesion achieved by careful selection of rhyming sound patterns indicate a careful analysis of this impolite challenge. Locher and Graham also mention that “relational aspects of language could also be signaled by phonological choices” (3). The fact that he stood meant that he was ruminating over the remark to decide whether or not to respond. Then he shakes his head which also shows that he felt hurt by the statement and then he decides to walk away. His actions are also

sequentially tied. When asked how the behavior in the conversation made him feel at the time it occurred, he noted that he felt very bad and belittled.

Text 31

[***Context:*** *There was an argument and I told her to stop disrespecting me.*]

Speaker: You are mad.

Addressee: Please, caution your words.

The statement “You are mad” damages the positive and negative face wants of the addressee. It implicates the impolite belief that the addressee is mentally deranged thus flouting Grice’s maxim of quality. As a negative impoliteness output it belittles the hearer as it ascribes superiority to the speaker. To mitigate this face threat, the addressee deploys the hedge, ‘please’ to protect his face and at the same time attenuate any face damage to the speaker. His preference for defensive mitigation indicates a decision not to react negatively to the impolite behavior. And when we juxtapose the lady’s impolite remark with his mitigating response we find two extremities.

3.1.1.2 Status

As I have mentioned already, status display in peer relation stems from power behind discourse which is not invested in the social actors themselves but in other persons that they are connected to either directly or indirectly. Such individuals may include family members or other people of high standing in the society.

Text 32

[***Context:*** *My brother was slapped unjustly by cultists and I tried to stand up for*

him.]

Speaker: I have killed a lot of people for the Governor and I am not afraid to kill you too before the end of your stay in Uniben.

Addressee: I am not afraid of you and I will see to it that you are seriously dealt With accordingly.

The power behind this discourse is signaled by an exophoric reference to a Governor whom the speaker is probably connected to and one that he claims he has done some form of business with. The actual person referred to as the Governor is not known, however we can infer that this personality wields some form of power or authority upon which the speaker depends. The courage displayed by the addressee who avers that the speaker is a cultist shows that they must be in a symmetric relation which gives her the leverage to stand up for her younger brother so to say. While the lady has confronted him as a unique individual, he has shifted the focus of the discourse to overplay his negative personality as a murderer.

When he says “I have killed a lot of people for the governor” he tries to laud his despicable practices in order to frighten the addressee. This face attack falls within the purview of negative impoliteness which means to instil a belief that action detrimental to the hearer will occur. In order to achieve this, he makes an initial disclosure of his personal undertakings as a hardened assassin before making it known to the addressee that the same fate awaits her before the end of her stay in the university. This life-threatening face damage also attacks her positive face because what she expects is a compensation in the form of an apology for her brother whom she claims has been unjustly attacked. By her response, “I will see to it that you are justly dealt with accordingly”, she is also relying on the power of justice, possibly from the school authority, to defend her against this ludicrous threat. Jay affirms that

“the verbal behavior may provoke immediate anger or delayed retribution through legal or officially sanctioned channels” (qtd in Bousfield 79).

Text 33

[**Context:** *The person took one of my shoes that he liked and we agreed on the price which is #3,500 but on disturbing him to give me my money, he changed it for me that the money will be [paid] next year.*]

1. Speaker: Do you know who I am?

Addressee: You are mortal.

2. Speaker: May thunder fire your father.

Addressee: Back to sender.

3. Speaker: I will deal with you.

Addressee: You can do nothing.

This is a heated impolite verbal aggression that is spiced with reprisal attacks successfully following every remark from the speaker. To understand this uncontrolled use of words, we must know that the setting is informal so that, such uncircumscribed use of words is not out of place. Prior to this conversation, there is an agreement that has been reached by both parties, that is the price for the shoe which is #3,500. For the speaker to have been disturbed implies a form of delay which the addressee is no longer comfortable with. Mazeland says that “preferred second pair parts to an initial assessment, which the participants are knowledgeable about, are delivered without delay and formulated in a frank, concise mode” (140). The delay on the part of the speaker is rightly interpreted as a dispreferred second which is marked. We can safely assume that this is necessitated by the fact that he believes

that he is connected to someone who is able to defend him in the event that there is any form of escalation. He reveals this when he says: “Do you know who I am?” This impolite rhetorical challenge leaves the addressee to paint a picture of an overblown personality that should be feared. As Bousfield maintains, “rhetorical challenges activate in the minds of the interlocutors what the given answer actually is” (241). But the addressee is not moved at all, she matches the challenge with a response “You are mortal”. This response too is marked as a dispreferred second because rhetorical questions are not answer eliciting when we consider preference organization from a structural point of view. But taking a socio-pragmatic view of preference organization, Bousfield argues that “in interactions, especially one that relates to impoliteness, the context and/or response of the intended recipient helps us as analysts to decide the type of challenge or preference organization and the expected answer” (244). So based on the context, we construct this challenge to be a type 2 response seeking challenge- a challenge that requires a damaging response from the hearer. But instead of damaging her own face, the addressee skillfully reverses the face attack to the speaker so that his intention to damage the face of his interlocutor ricochets and leads to another round of impoliteness in the next turn. Because his status has not been recognized by the addressee, he proceeds to attack her father, one of her significant other thus punching her relational face. But this impolite act does not succeed as the addressee defensively attacks his positive face by saying “back to sender” which means that the speaker’s father would be struck by thunderbolts and not hers. When this attack equally fails, he proceeds to frighten her by threatening to deal with her.

The reason for the various counter-reactions from the addressee is due to the fact that her

equity right, which entitles her to fair treatment, has been trampled upon. She has been emotionally wounded and she feels oppressed. So her actions have been triggered by the offending behavior of the speaker as such she cannot be blamed for reacting with impoliteness.

Text 34

[**Context:** *I had wanted a food/drink I preferred at a grand party not knowing they were, according to the server, not for 'any how people', a common man.*]

Speaker: No be for any how people [its not for commoners.]

Addressee: I no [don't] blame you. I blame the society.

The condescending statement “no be for any how people” implies that the addressee is of a lower status and the people that the requested food/drink are meant for are those of higher status. This verbal aggressive act is symbolically face damaging because of the setting in which it has been uttered. It is a grand party where there are many people, usually sitting close enough and within earshot. The audience comprise both bystanders and overhearers who may be acquainted with the addressee. To implicate the impolite belief that the addressee is of a low a status before this audience is to draw attention to him and temporarily shift the focus of these individuals to this ‘low-ranking addressee’. The server also performs this act indirectly to remind the addressee not to think too much of himself. This FTA is contemptuous because it forces the addressee into a sober mood so that a grand party which presupposes elation has turned sour for him.

The response he gives connotes self-pity and regret at societal factors which have placed him at the bottom where he has become unequal to the others whom the server refers. To

describe the degree of pain he felt, he noted that he pitied himself, the speaker, the society, human's present irrationality, religious incompetence and posterity which have all combined to relegate him to a low status for which he is now being insulted.

3.1.1.3 Physical Appearance

For physical appearance Jay states that any noticeable deviation from what is 'normal' in terms of body size, abnormal facial features, weight, deformities, and body movement or locomotor cover the majority of these angry insults" (qtd in Bousfield 79). While an offending behavior may provoke a speaker to make diminishing comments on their interlocutors, speakers may also verbally attack interlocutors who have done nothing to provoke them.

Text 35

[*Context: I was just passing by a street without saying a word and walked passed some strangers who were having a discussion.*]

Speaker: O girl see as you black.

Addressee: I kept quiet.

There seems to be an unusual blackness about this girl that the speaker could not overlook. But what makes this face attack really hurtful is that it is unprovoked. It is just an occasion of someone refusing to mind his business. This face attack is delivered unmitigated where so much face is at stake. Drawing attention to her skin colour in the midst of other hearers is an on-record strategy that pokes fun at her positive face. This is because he expresses strong views that are opposed to the addressee's who acknowledges that she is dark in complexion but not as much as the speaker makes us to believe. The expression also makes her

emotionally uncomfortable.

With regards to her negative face, what he successfully achieves is to associate her with negative aspects by amplifying the stative adjective ‘black’ as opposed to dark in complexion which would have described her better. The vocative and deictic pronoun ‘you’ which refer anaphorically to the addressee also draws attention to the fact that in the midst of the numerous people (many dark complexioned ones included) on the street, she is the particular person being referred to. The response she gives shows a defensive acceptance of the FTA. Her silence can be interpreted as a deliberate choice to avoid any argument that may ensue. It could also be a calm rejection of the statement given that there are other ‘black’ people around. She acknowledged that she felt ‘pretty bad’ and described the behavior of the speaker as ‘embarrassing’.

Text 36

[Context: *I approached this person as a fellow student to tell her that I didn’t like her actions towards me.*]

Speaker: Your face is like puff-puff (bloated)

Addressee: I was quite [quiet].

Whatever the offence that was committed by the speaker we cannot infer from the context or the co-text, but it is obvious that the speaker uses a context where an apology was needed as an occasion to further heighten the offence she had committed against the addressee. To say that her face is like ‘puff-puff’ is to flout the maxim of quality because ‘puff-puff’ is a local snack that is overblown due to the action of yeast. She also flouts the maxim of relation because what she said is not congruent with an apology which the addressee needed. It also

flouts the maxim of quantity because it is an overstatement of fact. Thus this FTA is performed out of spite to inflict emotional injury on the hearer.

Text 37

[Context: *My friend and I were dressing up for a dinner party and I wore my shoes but she feels she has a lot of good shoes and she is feeling that she is in the high class of people.*]

Speakers: This your shoe you are wearing is not good for dinner party (laughing).

Addressee: Why can't you say it politely to me instead of saying it and be laughing.

The speaker's feeling of superiority over her friend enables us to interpret her laughter as being sarcastic, otherwise her comment would have passed for a mere advise coming from a friend who truly cares. Although her statement contains no linguistic impoliteness marker, her laughter clearly flouts the maxim of manner. This face damage is hurtful because it emanates from a friend- one of the addressee's significant other. As Brown and Levinson maintain, this sarcastic criticism damages the addressee's positive face and at the same time imposes on her freedom of action (66). The addressee also maintained that she was so angry because according to her, "it's already time for the dinner party", which means that the speaker's 'advise was ill-timed.

We can infer from the addressee's response that this was a deliberate impolite remark delivered out of spite to cause offend. As Culpeper notes, sarcasm, which is an off-record impoliteness strategy causes as much face damage as on-record strategies (55). It is equally as hurtful as a direct attack even though it is performed via an implicature such that the speaker cannot be held responsible for his/her action. But for her laughter and the addressee's

response, it would have been a bit difficult to interpret the speaker's utterance as impolite.

Apart from the offender as the source of an offending behavior, there are events that could lead to verbal aggression.

3.1.2 Events

The event comprises nature of action or inaction on the part of the wrongdoer that offended the person. It could also be some type of behavior that was expected but not provided, some type of type of language or communication, or the manner in which the event occurred (Bousfield 79). For the event, we focus on behavior and language.

3.1.2.1 Behaviour

This could be unexpected, deviant, ill-mannered, aggressive, crude or vulgar (Bousfield 79).

Text 38

[Context: Someone I considered a friend, in fact one of my good friends was reporting a case to me about what happened between she and someone else [then] suddenly, [she] turned to me: That's why I don't have friends oh, because I know people..." I was like really? So what am I to you? She was dumb...]

Speaker: I don't have friends...

Addressee: Really? So what am I to you?

The speaker's behavior which is unexpected is what triggers offence in the addressee. All along, the addressee has lived in the make-belief that they are good friends so when the speaker made the statement, the addressee was stunned. She also explained that she felt "sad, angry and humiliated beyond words". Her feeling of humiliation is engendered by the fact that one she considers her significant other is dissociating from her. The FTA gratuitously

damages her relational face. The status of friendship that she has ascribed to herself has been denied, thereby punching her negative face. While the speaker performs the face threatening act of dissociating from her, she equally associates her with a bad group. As her comment reveals, “I don’t have friends” implies that because someone has offended her, therefore every other person is bad and no one is her friend. The ellipsis show that more face aggravating statements were made by the speaker to intentionally damage the face of the addressee. The statement is also an indirect way of telling the addressee that her friendship is not recognised and superfluous.

Text 39

[Context: It was a class that started at 10am and ended by 12pm and I came a minute past 10 and saw an empty chair in 1000LT [lecture theatre and venue for the class] and sat on it. 20 minutes to the end of the class, a girl came and the girl sitting close to me said, “this was the person that was here before and now she is back”. The words made no sense. She was expecting me to stand up for someone I didn’t meet her bag on the chair. It sounded absurd to me and it got me angry.]

Speaker: This person was the one sitting here before and now she is back.

Addressee: And so what? Do you expect me to now stand up?

The behavior of the speaker is uncouth because it violates social etiquette. The social-physical setting is a public gathering and because the venue is a lecture hall, no one can claim ownership over a public property meant for everyone. A close evaluation of the context of the message reveals that first, the class was to begin at 10am, which means that every serious student was already seated before the lecture commenced. The addressee,

though a minute behind schedule, still finds a place to sit while the lecture progressed. Also, someone who is coming in 20 minutes to the end of the class should not expect to find a convenient place to sit because of the crowd. Propriety demands that she either stand for the rest of the few minutes left or look for someone to pair with. This gross lateness also depicts a non-chalant attitude on the part of the girl. For the speaker to ask someone who has been sitting on a chair to stand up for a friend is embarrassing and humiliating because of the presence of the audience. Given that it is a public gathering, so much face is at stake. If she had acceded the impolite remark of the speaker, she would have damaged her own relational and sociality face. Her offensive response is the preferred answer.

She counters the impolite behavior by issuing two critical challenges. The first is a rhetorical challenge that leaves the speaker to re-evaluate herself and the comment that she just made. The second is a response-evoking challenge of the type 2 order, which means that whatever answer the speaker gives would be self-damaging. If she answers in the affirmative, it would reveal her as being uncultured, while a negative response would lead to another round of impoliteness.

3.1.2.2 Language

Besides physical action, what another person says or the manner in which the language is spoken may provoke another. The verbal behavior may provoke immediate anger or delayed retribution through legal or officially sanctioned channels (Bousfield 79).

Text 40

[**Context:** *We were having [possibly dance] rehearsal in church.*]

Speaker: I have never seen legs like these in my life. I wonder where you got them

from, na wa oh [wow].

Addressee: Silent

If they were having a dance rehearsal and the addressee was not getting it right, it may not be because her legs are deformed but maybe she just needs more time to practice before perfecting her steps. By her wrong use of words, she (the speaker) implicates the impolite belief that the addressee's legs are deformed and to wonder where she got them from is really annoying. The legs in question are not the product of the addressee's intention because she was born that way. To wonder where she got them from is to speak as if they were bought which implicates a deliberate choice. Also, we must note that a rehearsal at church involves more than two persons. This wrong use of language shifts the focus of the audience from their purposive roles to pay attention to the addressee's legs which in turn leads to public humiliation.

The addressee noted that "I felt incomplete as though I was not created perfectly". The FTA is performed to make the addressee feel uncomfortable, dissociate her from the others, associate her with negative aspects and belittle her. The language used here is heavily bedecked with FTAs targeted both at the positive and negative face of the addressee because it combines multiple outputs at the same time. Her silent response indicates that she has been plunged into regrets, discomfort and self-pity.

Text 41

[**Context:** *We had a little disagreement. I guess he had something in mind prior to the time that the situation occurred.*]

Speaker: You are just an empty head that will grow up and realize you have wasted

your life.

Addressee: Silent

The context shows that the speaker deliberately chose these words to offend the addressee. The restrictive adverb ‘just’ conveys unambiguously the interpretation of the corresponding form (Quirk *et al.* 433) as: You are JUST an empty head...which means that the addressee is nothing but a duns. This corresponds with the subordinate clause that follows: “that will grow up and realize you have wasted your life”. What the speaker has done is to use pejorative words to summarize the entire life of the addressee inculcating in her the belief that she is good for nothing. Also, the addressee’s comment about this verbal behavior reveals this fact: “I felt terribly hurt and [it] made me think less of myself”. She described the behavior as “wicked” because it symbolically inflicts so much emotional injury on her.

Statistical data also help to prove that the type of language used can cause serious aggravation in interpersonal relationship. This is shown in **Figure 4** below.

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Language	Male	44	22.9
	Female	148	77.0
	Total	192	100%

3.1.3 Intentionality

Jay posits that “intentionality influences the perception of a wrongful act. The more intentional the act appears to the speaker, the greater the justification for an angry response” (qtd in Bousfield 81). Also, Culpeper states that, “studies in social psychology have

repeatedly shown that aggressive behaviours perceived to be intentional are considered more severe and are likely to receive a strong response” (50). Nevertheless, Culpeper argues that intentionality does not always equate the offence. He asserts that even when the intention to cause offence is low, interlocutors still feel offended (52). He also states that intentionality is scalar ranging from low to high such that even low intentions may evoke serious offence for the addressee (52).

The datasets presented here show how intentionality whether high or low causes offence in peer relations.

Text 42

[***Context:*** *I entered my friend’s room and stepped on the cable and the electrical appliances turned off.*]

Speaker: Don’t you have eyes to know that there is a cable there.

Addressee: What do you mean by that?

The addressee noted that he “felt disappointed in the person because we were so close for him to behave so”. The closeness or assumed closeness between him and the speaker that the latter has failed to consider is what triggers the ill-feelings in the addressee. The text does not in any way show that the act of stepping on the cable is a deliberate one. As close friends, he expects his friend to have shown some level of consideration in his speech. But the speaker’s statement which is a rhetorical challenge, “don’t you have eyes to know there is a cable there?” actually doesn’t require any response because it is obvious that his friend has eyes. The pragmatic import however, is the impolite insinuation that his friend is not observant or that he is blind which flouts Grice’s maxim of quality. The response of the addressee is one

that seeks clarification. He desires to know what the friend actually means by his statement. Despite attesting to the fact that the offence seriously made him angry and describing the behavior as rude and embarrassing, the addressee still disagreed on a five-point likert scale that the act was intentional. This confirms Culpeper's assertion that intentionality is scalar (52). Whether an interlocutor constructs the action of the speaker as intentional or not, negative feelings of anger can still be provoked.

Text 43

[**Context:** *We were having a class so I was trying to contribute an idea.*]

Speaker: Shut up and sit down there!

Addressee: I would [will] not shut up! Do your worst!

The speaker's utterance is performed out of spite to cause disharmony in this gathering. By issuing a double imperative, he makes no attempt to show regard for the course-mate because he/she has publicly humiliated the addressee. Bald, on-record strategy as Lachenicht explains involves the issuance of imperatives that directly and unambiguously attack the face of one's interlocutor where so much face is at stake (619). The first command given by the speaker which is "shut up!" insinuates that whatever the addressee has to say is inconsequential. It is also an attack on her equity right because she has the right, like everyone else, to express her opinion about the issue of discussion. Furthermore, the imperative symbolically hinders the addressee on the conversational floor. While it attacks her positive face by making her feel uncomfortable, it at the same time impedes her action to make a contribution, thus punching her negative face.

The second imperative "sit down there" performs the same function as the first. In

addition it makes reference through the locative adverb 'there' to a particular spot so that it performs the act of confining the addressee to a specific place in the class. The speaker seems to imply that as long as you are here, you are not permitted to speak or go beyond 'there'. This impolite statement is highly coercive. According to Felson "a coercive action is an action taken with the intention of imposing harm on another person or forcing compliance" (qtd in Culpeper 226). By telling the addressee to 'shut up', he causes a psychological pain in her because he implies that her contribution does not make sense and it does not count. And by telling her to 'sit down', he/she tries to enforce compliance by restricting her action environment.

From the addressee's response 'do your worst' it seems the speaker wields a kind of authority, may be as the leader of the class, but whatever the speaker's status is, it is not known, and the addressee does not care to know either, so she fights back vehemently. She refuses to concede the FTA by insisting on maintaining her turn on the conversational floor thus self-selecting (Mazeland 135). On a five-point likert scale, the addressee agreed that the words were deliberately chosen to offend her. Her violent response is simply because she perceived the offence to be intentional. As social psychologists already point out that the more an act is perceived to be intentional the stronger response it would receive (qtd in Culpeper 50).

From the 192 questionnaires administered, all participants agree that intentionality is a variable that is almost always present in the enactment of impoliteness.

Figure 5

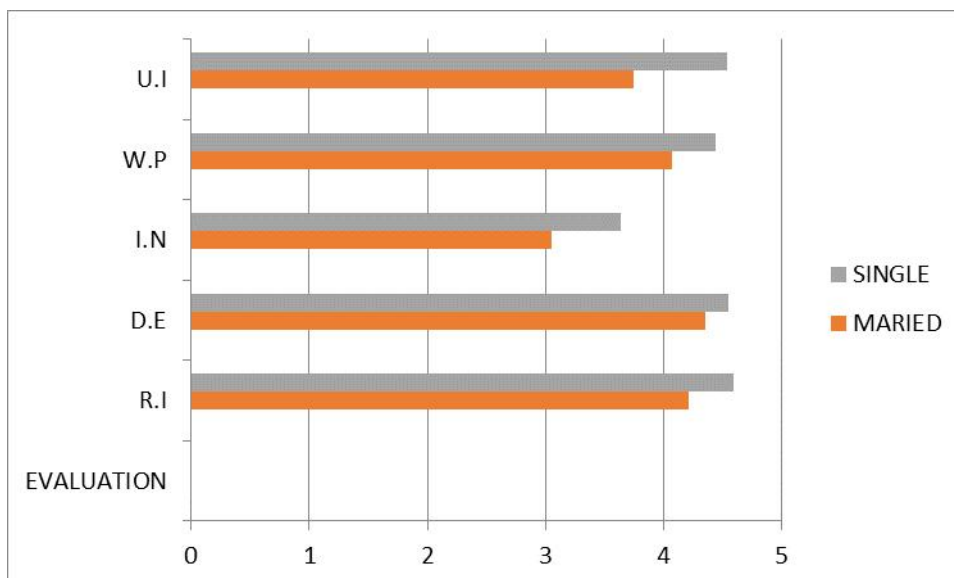
Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Intentionality	Male	46	23.9
	Female	146	76.0
	Total	192	99.9

In peer relations as well, impolite use of words still has serious emotional consequence for the victim(s).

Figure 6

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Degree of emotional injury	Male	46	23.7
	Female	148	76.2
	Total	194	99.9

Graphical illustration of the manifestation of impoliteness in asymmetric and symmetric relationship is aptly represented in the bar chart below.



MARITAL STATUS	MARRIED	SINGLE
EVALUATION		
R.I	4.21	4.59
D.E	4.35	4.55
I.N	3.05	3.64
W.P	4.07	4.44
U.I	3.75	4.54

Reality of Impoliteness (R.I)

The graph shows that both in marital relationship and casual friendly relations, impoliteness is a well-known phenomenon. Couples clearly distinguish banter from impoliteness. The graph equally reveals that R.I for students which is 4.59 is higher than that of couples which is 4.21. However, the ratio of participants for both spouses and students is 62:192 indicating that for couples 4.21 is rather high when compared with the number of students involved which amounted to 4.59. Impoliteness is high in marriage because of cultural constraints which restrict the action space of women and at the same time permit men to be vulgar on their wives.

Degree of Emotional Injury (D.E)

The margin between DE for both spouses and singles is not wide which corroborates the assertion that impoliteness always has emotional consequences for its victims. The graph reveals that people are emotionally hurt whenever impolite behaviours are displayed towards them, irrespective of their marital status.

Intentionality (I.N)

The degree of intentionality for couples is far lower than that of students. This strengthens the written claims made by some married individuals in the questionnaires that although they feel hurt, sometimes badly, by the impolite utterances of their spouses, they still think that such

behaviours are not always intentional. Some asserted that their spouses used such statements as a way of correcting them. For students, however, it is marked. Of all the categories, intentionality appears to be the least.

Withhold Politeness (W.P)

For both spouses and students, the figure shows that withheld politeness was constructed as impoliteness and it is remarkably high denoting the gravity of the negative effect it has on people whether they are married or not. Outright refusal or failure to show gratitude for an act of kindness ranks high as an impolite behavior which never goes unnoticed. Also, refusal to tender an apology for an offence that one has committed is seen as severe impoliteness.

Understanding of Impoliteness (U.I)

People do not only attest to the reality of impoliteness but also understand its manifestation in discourse. To account for this, several impoliteness metalinguistic labels such as rude, impolite, sarcastic, embarrassing, and humiliating were used on the questionnaires to test participants' understanding of the concept.

3.2 Conclusion

Both qualitative and quantitative data analysis show that symmetric relations, represented by peer group, though equal in status also exhibits some form of verbal aggression due to certain factors such as gender, behavior and intentionality which all constitute an offending event. While some interlocutors concede the face attack, others choose to be offensive and in some cases leading to severe damage to the faces of participants. Although status still plays a major role in causing offence in symmetric relations, datasets reveal that the power behind the discourse is not vested in the participants in the interaction themselves but on some other

individuals that they are affiliated to. The realization of impoliteness in symmetric relations corroborates Wattenberg's assertion that "impoliteness is an exercise of power as it has, arguably in some way, an effect on one's addressees in that it alters the future action environment of interactants" (85).

CHAPTER FOUR

IMPOLITENESS- ITS INTERFACE WITH POWER AND CULTURE

4.1 Impoliteness and Power

Impoliteness and power are co-terminous. The use of linguistic strategies to deliberately offend another presupposes a level of power on the part of the offender. As Culpeper rightly states, one of the basic functions of impoliteness is coercion. “Coercive impoliteness involves coercive action that is not in the interest of the target and hence involves both the restriction of a person’s action environment and a clash of interests” (226). Tedeschi and Felson assert that “coercive actions have two main goals: to cause harm on the target- which falls within the purview of impoliteness, or to enforce compliance” (168). The latter function of coercive action is prevalent in army training discourse and other activity types where impoliteness is legitimized (Culpeper *et al.* 2003). Thus, “committing serious FTAs becomes a powerful linguistic strategy to exercise power in order to engage an opponent in interaction” (Locher: 201). Suffice to say that power is pervasive. The exercise of power is not only evident in the use of linguistic strategies as there are obvious instances of people wielding unauthorized arms to dispossess their victims of their belongings. So, Watts’ claim that every interaction, polite or impolite, linguistic or extra-linguistic, is a struggle for power (10) is a truism worth reiterating here. In fact, there can and there is no communication without power. What then is power?

Watternberg defines power as: a social agent A has power over another social agent B, if and only if, A strategically constrains the action environment of B (85). This definition is completely in line with Culpeper’s assertion of coercive impoliteness that is, restricting a

person's action space. This restriction could be achieved by deploying both linguistic and extra-linguistic strategies. By whatever means this restriction is achieved, the point is that one participant in the interaction is obviously controlling the topic of the discourse and dominating the floor of the interaction through the exercise of power. Exercising power is not always detrimental. For instance, teachers often exert their authority over school children with the intention of influencing them to succeed (Bousfield and Locher 35). In this light, Wartenberg gives a threefold distinction of power: "force, which presupposes a physical action to restrict the addressee's action environment; coercive power requires both the force to affect the addressee as well as a threat with which the speaker's intention are revealed; and influence if neither verbal threat nor physical force is applied" (qtd in Bousfield and Locher 161-162).

Given that socio-discoursal roles of participants in interaction is a major determining factor of their linguistic rights, it therefore follows that interactants in a speech event consciously or tacitly act in accordance with their linguistic limits. In asymmetric relations where speaking rights are restricted for those in the lower rung of affairs, participants with more linguistic leverage most often manipulate the discourse because they feel more at liberty to use derisive comments to enforce their superiority. This leaves their interlocutor(s) with the constrained alternatives of either staying silent to avoid more severe face damage or choosing to respond within the limits of their linguistic rights (Bousfield 191-192). This claim supports Culpeper's prediction that "coercive impoliteness is more likely to occur in situations where there is an imbalance of social structural power" (227). However, Bousfield and Locher argue that "power is not a sacrosanct, concrete aspect of any one individual, in

any one role, in any one setting. Power is not static but highly dynamic, fluid and negotiable” (9). Also, Watts contends that "a notion of power based on status (a person’s position in the structure of social relationships) is not very helpful for the analysis of the exercise of power in face to face verbal interaction, particularly in the absence of overt institutionalized status differences” (56). On the contrary, it should be noted that there are hardly any interpersonal relations where status differences are not institutionalized whether overtly or covertly.

As Cashman has shown, even in children discourse there are evidences of strategic impoliteness and Culpeper (qtd in Bousfield and Locher, 39) also maintains that in asymmetric relationships, less powerful participants still engage in impoliteness in order to gain status within a less powerful group. Status projection, as I contend here is a major underlying motivation for impoliteness. More so, Bousfield notes that impoliteness is often triggered by an offending event which may or may not have been provoked by the hearer. But when a speaker communicates impoliteness, his/her action becomes another offending event which the hearer could build upon, if he/she chooses to, in order to challenge the power behind the discourse (187). The hearer who refuses to accept the impolite action of the speaker does so as a way of projecting his/her own status. In other words, whether asymmetric or symmetric relations, status plays a significant role in the communication of impoliteness among interlocutors. Even interactants who choose to accede to the condescending behaviour may be doing so to save their face: the social value which they have ascribed to themselves (Bousfield, 191-192). Saving one’s face is tantamount to protecting one’s status and power behind discourse, whether great or less, is what triggers power in discourse.

The following examples are cited from the dataset to indicate how status manifests even in peer relationship.

Text 44

[Context: A young boy was running on a rainy day without watching where he was and he splashed water on a lady.]

Speaker: Why did you splash water on me?

Addressee: Rain fall. Why did you walk beside water?

Speaker: Work on yourself; it is not every lady that would take such an arrogant answer from you.

This lady described the offender as a “young boy” probably younger than her. By age difference there overtly exists between them some form of disproportion in status. Also, in terms of academia, this lady is an undergraduate at the University of Benin, Nigeria, in her penultimate year. Therefore, it stands to reason that this “young boy” who was running speedily, if he was a student, would be in a lower level as it is not expected that in an academic setting like this a mature student would be running that way. For these obvious reasons, we can infer that the lady already has an edge over this young man in this discourse. And to prove her maturity, she politely stopped him to make him realize what he had done, but his response is seriously hurtful. First, he absolves himself of any blame by passing the buck to the rain. It should be noted that at the time of the incident, the rain had already stopped falling because the verb ‘fall’ is stative here and not dynamic. Next, he issues a very aggravating challenge to the lady by asking “why did I walk beside the water? As if to say that the lady was at fault. Affective impoliteness is always issued by an offender when he

believes that the offending event was triggered by the hearer and this automatically absolves him from taking responsibility for his action.

We see this young boy projecting his male status by refusing to simply apologize for his action. Everything else, the rain and the lady, is at fault but him. In a typical African setting, such display of arrogance is common among the men folk because of cultural stratification of society along gender lines. In this patriarchal part of the world, egotistic tendencies find practical expression among the male gender no matter the age. Though ‘younger’, he has apparently proven that his status, invested in him by culture, places him above the lady so apologizing, to him is self- effacement which he does not want to accept.

From the lady’s response, we can see that the lad’s attitude was really arrogant which on another occasion with someone else could serve as a stimulant for another round of impoliteness.

Text 45

[**Context:** A young man bumped into a lady on the walk way and he felt that the lady did it on purpose.]

Speaker: You no dey see? Shey you blind ni? Abi you no get sense?

[Can’t you see? You are blind, right? Or are you senseless?]

Addressee: Sorry (then I walked away).

This incident also paints a vivid picture of how impoliteness can be enacted based on power behind discourse. Considering the context, the lady noted that the boy in question “bumped into me on the walkway” and felt that she deliberately made herself available for this accident. Such scenarios are not difficult to find in a campus milieu because of large population.

Usually when such an incident occurs, we find that there is mutual apology from those involved. But in this case, what we discover is one partner defending himself and apportioning full blame to the other. He exacerbates the offence by issuing a tripartite challenge that is totally demoralizing. He flouts the maxim of quality by implicating the impolite belief that the girl is blind, and the maxim of quantity by using a three-fold parallel structure of abusive interrogatives which also serve as a booster to the impolite challenge.

The effect of the face damage caused by these words can be explained in two ways. First, the lady strongly agreed on a five-point likert scale that the words seriously made her angry. We can therefore, infer that she felt deeply hurt by the impolite remark. What she needed was a simple apology which would have soothed her pain, instead she gets a trident insult deliberately hurled at her to damage her positive face. Second, the use of the imprecation 'senseless' and the repetition of the vocative 'you' also damage her negative face as they successfully diminish her directly. This impolite behavior is amplified in several ways. First, the simultaneous declaration of the interrogatives without any turn allocation to the hearer tactfully denies her an opportunity to defend herself. Also, the foregrounded regularity of form displayed as repetition fused with the parallel structure in which the sentences are framed create a blocking effect in the sense that they build a wall of defense around the speaker so that the hearer is barred from gaining access into the conversation. His ability to maintain the norm he has set up in his style of speaking, that is, using interrogatives, can also be interpreted as a refusal to defer to the lady in any way even though he is at fault. Once this intention of his is achieved, the hearer becomes constrained to tender an apology for an offence that she is not guilty of. Her apology is actually an enactment of the illocutionary

meaning of this impolite verbal display.

Text 46

[Context: I came back to school after the holidays and brought some foodstuff. My friend who was squatting with me said she didn't like some of the foodstuffs I brought.]

Speaker: These foodstuff are too small. Why didn't you bring more? Besides, I don't like this brand of cornflakes.

Addressee: When have you ever brought foodstuff? If you don't like these things, I will give them to someone who does.

The action of the roommate, the one who is being accommodated, obviously shows that despite her status, as one who is at the receiving end in this relationship, she still commits serious FTA deliberately to attack her friend's face. Bousfield and Locher note that power is dynamic and participants who rank low in the hierarchy of power still confront their superiors with impoliteness (9). The offender here is apparently at the mercy of the friend who has the legal right to evict her from the room. To begin with, she uses the impolite strategy of complaint to express dissatisfaction at the quantity of the foodstuff. Next, she challenges her by asking for more. Also, she expressed dislike at the brand of cornflakes that was brought, knowing full well that she had never brought anything herself. The overall effect of this display of impolite verbal behavior is to make the friend in question feel uncomfortable. For someone whom she had not seen for a while, what propriety demands of her is a friendly reception and appreciation of her friend's kind gestures. This impoliteness is severely face aggravating because the friend has extended her arms so wide by not only accommodating

her, but also feeding her. So expressing dissatisfaction and ingratitude is very painful. This FTA falls within the purview of withhold politeness, that is, a deliberate refusal to express politeness when it is necessary to do so.

In conclusion, it is obvious that this squatted roommate is actually overplaying her status. When a participant in interaction exercises power in language, it is because he/she wants to foreground the power behind the discourse irrespective of the fact that the power may or may not be institutionalized.

4.2 Impoliteness and Culture

If impoliteness must be communicated, it has to be done through signs and symbols, and codes which are located in cultures (Hill: 1). These cultures define, to a large extent, the behaviour and attitudes of people: prescribing and proscribing certain practices among their adherents. According to Spencer-Oatey, “culture can and does affect a variety of aspects of language use and is by no means limited to verbal (direct or indirect) verbalized references to group membership (4). If the assessment of what counts as impolite is to be judged on the basis of culture as asserted by Spencer-Oatey (1) and Mills who advanced the notion of community of practice which can also be referred to as corporate culture (qtd in Culpeper: 73), it becomes expedient to situate this discourse in a particular cultural context. Although Fraser and Nolan (96) have argued that no statement in itself is inherently polite or impolite, it is noteworthy that in the African context, it is common, if not normal to find members of the male gender use effing statements with impunity on the female gender, especially their wives. This is done to assert their authority under the auspices of culture. Spencer-Oatey defines culture this way:

Culture is a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, Beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by A group of people and that influence (but do not determine) each members Behavior and his/her interpretations of other people's behavior. (3)

From the above definition, we can deduce that culture usually is based on assumptions of what people think is right. These assumptions could be appropriate sometimes, just as virtually every culture proscribe vices such as murder and rape. On the other hand, a great proportion of these 'basic assumptions' could be biased but because they have long been entrenched in a society's code of conduct, they become accepted as norms. Norms of culture as Nyasami observed are:

Merely received but never subjected to the scrutiny of reason to establish their variability and practicability in the society...maybe it is because of this lack of involvement and personal scrutiny that has tended to work to the disadvantage of the Africans, especially women. (qtd in Ngubane 21)

According to Carmichael, "the position of women in a given society is, to a significant degree determined by cultural norms and associated institutional arrangements sometimes dating back to centuries" (28). In her study of the relationship between family systems, the position of women and development, she maintained that right from early times of human socialization, men are sensitized to believe that women are inferior and should be under their control. In contrast, women are socialized to over respect men and act submissively to them thereby creating a highly asymmetric relationship between the sexes. However, as civilization kept unfolding, such chauvinistic assumptions began to wane especially in North-West Europe when women had good access to the labour markets before the industrial revolution (28). Gaining access to the workforce meant greater freedom for women and a giant stride

towards an egalitarian society. The fact remains that male superiority assumption has been a universal phenomenon but the level in which it manifests differs from one society to another. This trend is further aided by family systems.

The way families are organized and the norms and values accompanying this can influence the amount of liberty a person perceives themselves to have (Carmichael 164). The communal lifestyle of Africans favours the extended family system where married couples have to live with other members of the family. These relations sometimes, are members of the husband's family who culturally have a stake in the home because the woman is traditionally believed to be a property of the husband and his family. This is the reason why some tribes in South-South Nigeria still believe that a man's wife should genuflect when she greets the siblings of her husband, whether they are older or younger than her. While developed nations are striving towards equal rights for men and women through the activities of women liberation movements and various legislations, it is pathetic to know that Africa is still clinging tenaciously to the system of patriarchy. As defined by Ayisanbola, "patriarchy is a system of social stratification and differentiation on the basis of sex which provides material advantages to males while simultaneously placing severe constraints on the roles and activities of females" (2). Also, Ngubane notes that, "African culture continues to promote patriarchy in many ways and this perpetuates subordination of women" (1).

In a study conducted in Ibadan, Western Nigeria, Ayisanbola found out that in all the residential areas from high density to low density, men are domineering. More men solely take decision on household residential location, but for daily household activities, women most often shoulder the responsibility unassisted by their husbands (11-14). He went further

to state that results from the study show that men generally, irrespective of their socio-economic status, are conscious and strive to live out their traditional roles. The system of patriarchy therefore, places a man on the pedestal in a marital relationship with the woman writhing in submission, with little or no rights allotted to her. Marital relationship in Africa with Nigeria in focus is highly asymmetric: it is like a master-minion relation that holds between husbands and wives.

The following data show how patriarchy manifests in marriages and how women are constrained by culture to defer to their husbands at all cost.

Text 47

[Context: The husband failed to reply his wife when she asked him what to do and she did not do anything so he got angry that she did not do anything.]

Speaker: “*Isi gi odimma?*” [Is the head correct?]

Addressee: Sorry sir.

Male dominance mentality could be one of the decipherable reasons for this depreciating remark. Peter Hartley asserted that interpersonal communication is cumulative over time. He stressed the fact that for proper understanding of people’s communicative behavior, we need to go back in time for analogous interactions sequel to the present conversation (13). The context already shows that there is a prior conversation which forms a part, though missing, of the co-text. But we can deduce from this same context that there was an inquiry for which a response was not given. According to Schegloff, in conversation analysis, when a speaker initiates a conversation and does not receive an appropriate response, he/she initiates a repair until the both participants get to a place of mutual understanding (qtd in

Mazeland 138). On the contrary, we see a kind of relationship that is governed by fear and subordination that the speaker, as long as she is not the man, is afraid to initiate a repair when the appropriate adjacency pair is not provided. Rather, she interprets his silence to mean inaction on her part. Bousfield noted that some interlocutors do assign meaning to silences and re(act) accordingly. In some cases, staying silent is rather fuzzy and difficult to interpret (191). It is possible to believe that her decision to do nothing must have been informed by the fear of making a mistake which could cost her severe face damage or result in domestic violence. The fact that he got angry because of her inaction plainly shows that any wrong action would have spelt doom for her. It also makes it obvious that as the lord of the home he feels despised.

Marital relationship is basically characterized by intimacy so that couples do not employ excessively polite remarks all the time. But to ask a partner, “is the head correct” possibly accompanied by gestures to demonstrate insanity is seriously denigrating. When we consider the fact that his silence is the reason underpinning her inaction but which he does not want to accept, we notice an overplay of male chauvinism in the home. To him keeping silent meant that she ought to know what exactly to do. The crucial question is: what if she had done the wrong thing, wouldn't that have meant more severe face damage for her? He may deny her certain rights because of that. The fear of offending a man whom culture has so powerfully sanctioned to act capriciously to her own detriment necessitated her inaction.

Subservience could be interpreted from her reply “sorry sir”. Here she does not only use the apologetic word ‘sorry’ but reinforces it with the deferential formal salutation ‘sir’. This apology is too formal as opposed to “I’m sorry” which is suitable in this context. “Sorry sir”

fits an organizational milieu that is formal and highly bureaucratic due to organograms that are highly structured and restricted intimacy that it permits. Apologizing reverentially indicates distance and a marked disparity in power.

Text 48

[Context: the house chores were left for this woman alone and the husband still expects her to do extra work apart from the house work while he sits doing nothing.]

Speaker: What have you been doing? (meaning, I suppose to have done what he wanted me to do.)

Addressee: I've been sleeping (ironically).

Domestic household activities as Ayisanbola noted is practically the domain of women in an African setting (15), that is why a man can “sit doing nothing” while the wife struggles with the herculean task of taking care of the home and the children, at the same time run errands for the husband. This arrangement is the norm in an average African family. Ayisanbola also noted that irrespective of the economic status of men, they are still affected majorly by cultural orientation especially in taking part in household activities (15). So that even in homes where women are the bread winners, their roles as mother and house keepers are not changed at all.

The question posed by this husband to his wife, “what have you been doing?” is an impolite challenge that is inconsiderate. If as the wife claims that “he sits doing nothing”, then the wife stands a better position to ask him that. But in order to show his superiority over his wife, he challenges her for not doing his bidding when it is quite obvious that she has

been working while he has been sitting idle and issuing commands to his servant-wife. The wife's ironic response, "I've been sleeping" could be seen as a strategic move to avoid direct confrontation capable of sparking off serious trouble for her.

Text 49

[Context: We were arguing about his (my husband's) nationality.]

Speaker: You bring confusion to this house.

Addressee: I was angry

The woman in this scenario is judged by the husband as a problematic property that he has acquired. The vocative 'you' makes it clear that the wife is the addressee even though there may be some hearers (probably the children) present at the time of the speech event. If this is true, then it would have meant severe face damage for the wife. Given that this derisive statement was issued in the heat of an argument, there are several points that could be factored in. First, during intense arguments, one finds that negative emotions are often triggered which could lead to abuses. Also, because of the missing co-text, we cannot categorically state the actual words that were used by the wife that provoked him. More so, his action has been invoked by an offending behavior stemming from his wife which to an extent absolves him of complete blame. But the reverse is also true. In this heated argument he must have also employed linguistic strategies to attack the wife's face as is evident in this offensive statement, "you bring confusion to this house". If his wife's offending behavior elicited an impolite remark such as this, then what effect did his offending behavior have on his wife? Culturally speaking, is she permitted to answer back?

Her response clearly shows that in marital relationships in Africa, impoliteness is

legitimized with more linguistic rights allotted to the man and limited rights to the woman. So when she is confronted with impoliteness in the home, she is constrained to either stay silent because of the unequal power relation or speak within her linguistic limits. The response, “I was angry” is rather emotional and not verbal just like army training discourse where recruits say little or nothing during dressing down.

Text 50

[**Context:** The wife was asking for assistance for the kids upkeep]

Speaker: You are not useful in this house.

Addressee: Thanks, I have to leave, since I am not useful in the house.

The remark, “You are not useful in this house” sounds like a man addressing a piece of furniture that he has acquired which has outlived its importance. Ngubane noted that the female child is often viewed as a property belonging first to her father and then her husband when she gets married (1). This means that whenever she loses her value in the sight of the husband, he has every right to discard her by returning the bride price, and pick up another lady of his choice. So when this man says that his wife is not useful, he insinuates that she is already depreciating and if provoked further, he would do the needful, that is, put her away.

From the context in which this statement is made, there is apparently no conventionalized impolite formula that could have triggered this stringent implicature. The lady was merely asking to be assisted to take care of the kids that they have together, but his response shows that he has abdicated this responsibility to his wife. Ngubane (3) argued that in homes where women have economic power just as men do, a greater percentage of their income is spent on the family while men spend theirs on themselves. As far as this man is

concerned, being useful means taking full responsibility for the wellbeing of the children. The wife has no right to ask for assistance otherwise she would be shown the way out.

Her response shows that the illocutionary import of the message is clearly understood and she purports to perform the perlocutionary act of leaving. The hedge, ‘thanks’ shows an intention on her part to absorb the impolite behavior and even mitigate any face threat that her response may have for her husband. This servility is further reinforced by the same hedge, ‘thanks’ which shows that she completely remembers and accepts the role that culture has spelt out for her.

Text 51

[Context: I told him something which he later denied I didn't tell him. I phoned someone who was there while I was telling him. He then said I wasn't suppose to call the person.]

Speaker: Don't you have sense, are you senseless?

Addressee: God will have mercy on you.

These words were used by the husband because he felt that his authority has been undermined by the wife. As the boss, he gives the directive on whom to call, so as long as the instruction to call a third party did not emanate from him, then the wife has overstepped her bounds. This feeling of superiority is the motivation underlying the impolite double-edged challenge: “don't you have sense, are you senseless?” This unfair challenge is amplified by the repetition of the imprecation ‘senseless’ and the double interrogative.

It is the wife's response that actually evokes pity. When she says “God will have mercy on you”, she makes a passionate appeal to a supernatural being, *deus ex machina*, to help her

in this predicament because she is completely helpless. She seems to suggest that this burden that has been placed on her by culture is too much for her to bear.

4.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, we find that cultural constraints on women have severely impacted on marital relations which should have been symbiotic even though asymmetric. At the same time, it has drastically reduced the agency which Carmichael describes as “the capacity for autonomous decision making” (23) of women to an infinitesimal degree that their fate is left in the hands of men to decide. This is not to say that there are no occasions that women do not fight back using on-record strategies to match impoliteness with impoliteness. But the general trend is that men’s power to diminish women is sanctioned by culture and any woman who chooses to be derisive is acting on her own accord and should be prepared for the consequences.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5.1 SUMMARY

This study has examined the use of conflictive verbal illocutions in interpersonal relationships with special reference to culture and power in an African context. One of my hypotheses was that the use of impolite remarks vary amongst disparate cultures. With Nigeria in focus, it finds more liberal expression because of cultural demands on both men and women. Cultural stratification of society along gender lines empowers men to be more assertive and authoritative and at the same time subjugates women to a subservient position where they are seen as properties belonging to men. This creates a marital relationship that is highly asymmetric. Also, the hypothesis that men use more impolite remarks on their wives because they feel superior as the head of the home was shown to be true from the results got from datasets. The study shows that men use more negative impoliteness strategies than women as a way of asserting their authority. This male superiority complex was also observed among peers when males used verbal put downs on females to make them feel inferior.

5.2 FINDINGS

The study shows that participants in interaction use impolite remarks because of the consciousness of the power they possess. Suffice to say that this power could be vested in the participants in interaction themselves or some personality they are connected to. In asymmetric relationships, more powerful participants use more impolite remarks. However, the study convincingly shows that even less powerful participants engage in impoliteness as a

way of gaining status or asserting their right to speak. On the other hand, the study reveals that women do not stay silent all the time when they are confronted with impolite remarks by their husbands. They equally employ impoliteness strategies (offensively or defensively) to ward off the derisive words. In some instances, women initiate impoliteness to constrain their husbands to act accordingly. Also, despite the cultural constraints on women, some still commit serious FTAs not minding the consequence. Among peers, the case is the same. Ladies who feel molested by the impolite verbal behaviours of their male counterparts respond with denigrating statements to combat the negatively charged behavior. There were instances too where impolite behaviours were initiated by ladies.

In addition, the study reveals that verbal aggression and intentionality are the two major factors that spark off impolite behaviours among peers, so that even when there is equal power relation, verbal conflicts still occur among peers. These conflicting behaviours may or may not be provoked by an offending event, yet they do occur and sometimes lead to a showdown among students. Interpersonal relations are thereby hampered by the use of impoliteness. Based on some phenomena such as appearance, behaviour and status, the study equally reveals that impoliteness manifests greatly among peers. This affirms the assertion that impoliteness is pervasive whether among people of equal or disparate status.

From the research, we found out that “complaints” is one of the major strategies used by both men and women involved in impoliteness. This could be a plausible extension to Culpeper’s negative impoliteness outputs. Also, the study affirms Bousfield’s stance that impoliteness strategies are equally available to the hearer as they are to the speaker. Results from data clearly show that participants in interaction (hearers especially) do not just remain

passive when confronted with impoliteness. They respond, most times offensively, thus leading to several rounds of impolite oracular combat. From a historical perspective, the study maintains that male dominance is a universal phenomenon but manifests in varying degrees among different cultures. While it has reduced to almost an infinitesimal degree in developed nations, it is still marked in Africa, subjecting women to degradation, especially in marriage. The study concludes that the use of impoliteness in an ESL context, especially in marital relationship, is marked mainly because of cultural sanctions which are firmly entrenched in our society. These constraints favour the use of impoliteness by some members of the society to the detriment of others.

5.3 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

This study has mainly touched on the use of impoliteness strategies in marital relationships and peer group using university students. Research on how impoliteness manifests in other human relationships such as commercial driver/passenger, lecturer/student, landlord/tenant, employer/employee and many others in third world countries would contribute immensely to the nascent field of impoliteness research.

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APPENDIX 1

QUESTIONNAIRE ON COUPLES' PERCEPTION OF IMPOLITENESS

A. Introduction:

This instrument is a part of an on-going research investigation on the use of conflictive verbal illocutions in interpersonal communication. The purpose is partly to determine what counts as impolite verbal behaviour among Nigerians in discourse situations. Please, kindly respond to the following questions.

B. Personal Data: (check (√) as appropriate, please)

Sex: Male []; Female []; Age: 17-25[]; 25-35[]; 35-45[]; Above 45[].

Education: Below degree level []; B.A/B.Sc []; Masters []; Ph.D [];

Others []

Occupation -----, Ethnicity ----- Religion

----- Marital Status: Married []; Single []

SECTION 1

1. Your spouse has certainly/definitely used language in a way that offended you.

Strongly Agreed [], Agreed [], Disagreed [], Strongly Disagreed
[], Undecided []

2. Please can you recall the exact words that were used?

3. Please, can you also recall your own response?

4. The word(s) seriously made you angry. Strongly Agreed [], Agreed [],
Disagreed [], Strongly Disagreed [], Undecided []

5. Your spouse used those words deliberately to offend you. Strongly Agreed [],
Agreed [], Disagreed [], Strongly Disagreed [],

Undecided []

6. Please kindly describe the situation that led to this wrong use of words:

7. How would you describe the your spouse's behaviour? rude[] embarrassing
humiliating [] sarcastic [] others _____
8. You felt bad/hurt when your spouse failed to express gratitude for something good
that you did for him/her. Strongly Agreed [], Agreed [], Disagreed [],
Strongly Disagreed [],Undecided[]
9. Please briefly describe how the behaviour made you feel at the time it happened

10. On one or many occasions you felt bad/hurt when your spouse refused to tender
an apology for what he/she did wrong. Strongly Agreed [], Agreed [],
Disagreed [], Strongly Disagreed [], Undecided []

APPENDIX 2

QUESTIONNAIRE ON STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF IMPOLITENESS

A. Introduction:

This instrument is a part of an on-going research investigation on the use of conflictive verbal illocutions in interpersonal communication. The purpose is partly to determine what counts as impolite verbal behaviour among Nigerians in discourse situations. Please, kindly respond to the following questions.

B. Personal Data: (check (√) as appropriate, please)

Sex: Male []; Female []; Age: 17-25[]; 25-35[]; 35-45[]; Above 45[].

Education: Below degree level []; B.A/B.Sc []; Masters []; Ph.D [];

Others []

Occupation -----, Ethnicity ----- Religion

----- Marital Status: Married []; Single []

SECTION 1

1. Some persons have certainly/definitely used language in a way that offended you.

Strongly Agreed [], Agreed [], Disagreed [], Strongly Disagreed

[], Undecided []

2. Please can you recall the exact words that were used?

3. Please, can you also recall your own response?

4. The word(s) seriously made you angry. Strongly Agreed [], Agreed [],

Disagreed [], Strongly Disagreed [], Undecided []

5. The person(s) used those words deliberately to offend you. Strongly Agreed [],

Agreed [], Disagreed [], Strongly Disagreed [],

Undecided []

6. Please kindly describe the situation that led to this wrong use of words :

7. How would you describe the person's behaviour? rude [] embarrassing []
humiliating [] sarcastic [] others _____

8. You felt bad/hurt when someone failed to express gratitude for something good that you did for him/her. Strongly Agreed [], Agreed [], Disagreed [], Strongly Disagreed [], Undecided []

9. Please briefly describe how the behaviour made you feel at the time it happened

10. On one or many occasions you felt bad/hurt when a person refused to tender an apology for what he/she did wrong. Strongly Agreed [], Agreed [], Disagreed [], Strongly Disagreed [], Undecided []