

**MITIGATION AND HEDGING IN IKA THEN AND NOW**

**BY**

**UGBEBOR PROMISE MIRACLE**

**ART1801625**

**DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS STUDIES  
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN,  
BENIN CITY, EDO STATE.**

**AUGUST, 2023.**

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**A LONG ESAAY SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF  
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**APPROVAL**

I approve that the project work was carried out by UGBEBOR PROMISE MIRACLE (Mat No: ART1801625) in the department of Linguistics, University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State.

.....  
UGBEBOR PROMISE MIRACLE  
Author

.....  
Date

.....  
Supervisor  
Dr. Mrs. O.V Evbayiro

.....  
Date

.....  
Head of Department (H.O.D)  
Dr. M.S Agbo

.....  
Date

## **DEDICATION**

I am dedicating this project to God almighty, who has brought me this far, and I'm forever grateful. I also dedicate this project to my late Dad, Mr. Sunday ChukwukaUgbebor. To my awesome Mum, Mrs. Blessing Ugbebor, who has been so supportive and still supporting me.

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## ABSTRACT

*This project examined the, Mitigation and Hedging in Ika, then and now. Ika is spoken in Agbor, located in the southern part of Nigeria, Delta state. It can also be included as a local language study, in various academic institutions in Agbor, Delta state. The native speakers of the Ika reside in Agbor, Delta state, and are also fluent in Standard English. The Objective of the study is to know how mitigation and hedging is used, and how it is important in Ika. Mitigation has to do with lessening the gravity of an offence or a mistake. It is important to mitigate during a conversation, especially when talking to older people, so it does not look offensive to him/her. Hedging is a type of Mitigation that makes communication polite and successful. The theoretical framework used in this research study was that of Ethnography of community. This theory was able to analyze the communication within the sociocultural setting of Ika community. The SPEAKING model was employed to analyze the speech event within the Ika cultural context. The method of data collection used, to collect and analyze the data for this research work was, Qualitative method of data collection, as it involves interviews, audios, and video recordings. This was collected from competent/native speakers of Ika. The method of data analysis was the use of SPEAKING model from Ethnography of communication, which was proposed by Dell Hymes in 1962.*

*The major findings of this work are, the researcher was able to know how Ika speakers mitigated and hedge then and now, and also the importance of mitigation and hedging in Ika. The researcher recommends that, the competent speakers and aged ones should make out time to school the younger, and non-competent speakers of Ika, to be cautious of the use of offensive words in the community. By so doing, it will curb the use of unpleasant or unfavorable words.*

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **0.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, the Researcher will be dealing on the background of the study, that is; the location, occupation of the speakers of Ika. Statement of problem, aim/objective of the study, research questions, significance of study, scope of the study, need of study, purpose of study.

### **1.1 Background of the study**

Mitigation and Hedging is seen as a linguistic tool to lessen the offensive words used by Ika speakers, especially when conversing with the elderly ones. Ika is a dialect spoken by the Agbor people of Delta state, located in the southern part of Nigeria. Most of the Ika speakers are majorly farmers, just few are civil servants. The dialect is related to the Igbanke speakers of Edo state, which is an affiliation to the Ika dialect, Delta state. It can also be included as a local language study, in various academic institutions in Agbor, Delta state. In the communicative system of today, researchers have been finding some linguistics terms to make communication easy, for both the young and old. Researchers make use of hedging as an important strategy which allows them to mitigate the strength of scientific claims in order to reduce the potential threat that new claims make on other

researchers (Myers, 1989), and also to gain acceptance from communities, for a contribution to disciplinary knowledge by showing that they are conversant with the discourse conventions of the academic communities (Hyland, 1994, 1998). Myers (1989) made use of Brown and Levinson's (1989) model to a corpus of biology research articles (RAs) and discovered some polite strategies that are used in conversations which can be extended to scientific texts. He also pointed out that in scientific discourse the making of claims, and mere act of presenting one's findings, becomes a threat to other researchers. In this case, the use of politeness strategies is constant in a bid to mitigate harsh and unfavorable utterances, in any social interactions, between the speaker and listener.

Hedging is a type of mitigation that makes communication smooth and polite. It is important to mitigate in the Ika because, it makes communication polite and successful. Mitigation and hedging serve as strategies in the reduction of harsh expressions in Ika, while conversing, to avoid being offensive to the listener, and also avoid the use of taboo words. For example, when saying someone is mad, in Ika, the direct expression of that statement cannot be used, but can be substituted with a mild word. Example, "This person is mad", in Ika "*ishiezuzini*", meaning that, "the person's head is not complete", instead of using "*onye era*" as the direct word. This shows that the expression has been mitigated or hedged. The reason for this is to ensure that expression sounds pleasant to the listener's ear during an interactive session. Mitigation then in Ika was as a result of concealing some expressions that seem unfavorable. Then, mitigating an expression was so unclear

for the younger generations to comprehend, except for the competent/native speakers. Also, the non-competent speakers take it as a literal meaning instead. Now, there is less or no mitigation, because of the ambiguity that comes with it. The native/competent speakers try to break down the expression, before it can be understood. The older generations are the ones that mitigate now, because they are from the ancient generation, and can understand themselves.

Hedges protect writers from pronouncing false statements by indicating either a lack of absolute commitment to the true value of a proposition, or a choice of not expressing that commitment at all. Hedges, for Salager-Meyer, 1994: 151, can be seen as “ways of being more precise in reporting results”. Over ten years ago, an increasing interest in cross-cultural studies has been ongoing, which have analyzed the phenomenon of hedging in academic texts. Ventola and Mauranen (1990) discovered that “Finns writing in English” appears less variation in expressions of epistemic modality than the English native speakers. Clyne’s (1991) interlanguage study of German scholarly writing in English revealed that German writers hedge more, both in their native language and in English, than English native speakers do.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Mitigation means, lessening the gravity of an offence or a mistake. Hedging on the other hand is a type of mitigation that makes interaction polite and successful. By mitigating in Ika, it conceals the truth value of an expression, and

also does not give understanding to the non-competent speakers of the language. Mitigation becomes ambiguous for both the non-competent speakers, and the younger generations to comprehend. The non-competent speakers take it as a literal meaning of such expression. For example, “*njokoazuolo*” (I want to defecate), literal meaning, “I am going to the backyard”. Ambiguity has always been a problem for the non-competent speakers, which is why there is less or no mitigation in Ika language now.

### **1.3Need of study**

This study is needed to create awareness to people who alter unpleasant words without filtering it, i.e. concealing some part that will be a threat to the listener or hearer. It is also needed to ensure that the Ika speakers makes use of mitigated and hedged terms while speaking to both the old and young.

### **1.4Objective of the study**

The objective of this study is to know how rude/blunt words are mitigated and hedged. The researcher tends to achieve a pleasant expression, through mitigation and hedging. For example, “*orijuguefo*” (she’s pregnant), “she is overfed” (literal meaning). Also, the researcher is interested in knowing how mitigation is used and how it is important in Ika.

## **1.5 Method of Data Collection**

This is a research to examine the Mitigation and hedging of Ika, then and now. In the course of this study, there were several researches the researcher made, such as; searching for articles relating to the study, and what other researchers has done concerning this study. The methodology used in this research, is the Qualitative research methodology, as it deals with written and spoken data. Interviews, audio and video recordings were made for data collection. Those interviewed where the native speakers of the Ika language. This method of data collection was made for the successful compilation of this research.

## **1.6 Significance of the study**

In this study, the researcher is interested in how mitigation and hedging is used in an utterance. This study will help linguists develop new terms from Ika, and can be used for academic studies in any institution. It will also benefit the medical practitioners, when interacting with their patients, especially if the patient is going through an illness that is life threatening. This study will help the doctors to mitigate and hedge any form of harsh words, and also know the right words to say. For example, when a patient dies, instead of the doctor to say he/she is dead, he will mitigate it by saying “he gave up the ghost” or “he has passed on”. In Ika, “*o ghafeguo*” (he has passed).

## **1.7 Research questions**

This study will need suitable answers for the following research questions:

1. How do the Ika speakers mitigate then, and now?
2. Why is mitigation and hedging important in Ika?

## **1.8 Scope of the study**

The study is centered on one state, out of the thirty-six (36) states, in Nigeria. Agbor is the place where all Ika speakers are located, in Delta state. Also, they are situated in the southern region of the country. The focus is on the competent/native speakers of Ika. These speakers are also competent in English, and can also translate the language to English.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 0.2 Introduction

This chapter entails, literature review, that is, the previous works by different scholars, on this research study, and how it is relevant to the research. Conceptual review, that is, the key concepts, which includes mitigation and hedging, and politeness strategy. Also, the theoretical framework of this research study.

#### 2.1 Literature Review

Mitigation as a linguistics term began with the semantic study of Lakoff's (1972) hedges, which is known to be expressions that allow the formulation of *fuzzy* statements, in which the true value cannot be detected. Later, some developments pointed out the strategic possibilities of mitigation, that benefit the negotiation and communicative efficiency, which in this way, the scope of incidence of hedges was expanded to the interaction. Thus, this initial semantic phenomenon received pragmatic attention and the literature started, using the term "mitigation" (Fraser, 1980; Holmes, 1984; Haverkate, 1988; Meyer-Herman, 1988; Caffi, 1999, 2007; Puga, 1997; Briz, 1995, 2007; Sbisà, 2001; Douglas, 2007; Kaltenbock et al, 2010; Thaler, 2012, etc.). Generally, the pragmatic view of

mitigation explains the phenomenon as a reduction in the degree of illocutionary force of a speech act and/or the speaker's commitment to what is said.

The concept of mitigation has also been helpful in explaining a number of the uses of verbal politeness, since it is one of the most frequent used linguistic terms in protecting a face threatening act. Some early works (for instance, House and Kasper, 1981; Brown and Levinson, 1989; Haverkate, 1988) show a greater integration between the both concepts, mitigation and politeness, but in later studies, they are increasingly considered as different phenomena, although they both have similar features (Hernández-Flores, 2001; Bravo, 2002; Briz, 2007; Schneider, 2013; Villalba, 2017; Figueras, 2018 etc.).

The study of Vague language is another field, that is related to Mitigation and Hedging. Vague expressions are not considered to be intrinsically mitigating but majority of the authors seem to agree that, the frequent use of vague expressions, serves mitigating purposes, related to communication risks, to the protection of the interlocutors' faces and to the commitments of speakers to what they say. For example, Voghera, and Collu (2017: 375), who explain vagueness as a speaker's choice ("intentional vagueness"), point out that mitigation is one (although not the only one) of the functions of vague language (see also Cutting, 2015; Mihatsch, 2012; Ghezzi, 2013; Fiorentini and Sansó, 2017; Albelda, 2020, among others).

All these terms listed, that is: mitigation, hedging, politeness or vague language, have a lot of features in common, and also, they can be expressed by diverse linguistic means, depending on the context. It is clear enough that the boundaries between the terms mentioned above, have not yet been drawn in a straightforward manner and that even the expressions used to refer to them, are often interwoven. This latter fact contributing to generate more confusion. In this vein, one of the purposes of this research study is to define the notion of mitigation as a pragmatics phenomenon, and how it is related to other phenomena, such as, hedging and politeness.

### **2.1.1 Relevance of reviewed literature**

These reviews from different linguistic scholars are relevant to this study, in the sense that, they are all pointing at a particular concept, which is “politeness”, as the primary objective of Mitigation and Hedging. To mitigate an utterance or sentence is to filter some parts of the word in an utterance, that will be considered offensive to the listener. Hedging is a term in linguistics that makes conversation polite, subtle, and successful. In addition, the researcher will be dealing on ambiguity, in mitigated words or expressions. Ambiguity is a situation or statement that can be interpreted in more than one way. It is a common linguistic phenomenon that occurs when a word, phrase, or sentence has numerous meanings or interpretations. Although, ambiguity can be beneficial in certain contexts, it can

also pose challenges in communication, as in, misinterpretations, misunderstanding, and conflict. Ambiguity can be resolved, through clarification of the statement, further explanation, and the use of simplified terms, while communicating, for the benefit of the listener or hearer. Mitigated and Hedged expressions are said to be ambiguous, and difficult to comprehend, because it conceals the truth value of such expression. However, the researcher will be contributing to this study, by ensuring, Mitigation and Hedging seem less ambiguous, for the sake of the non-competent speakers of Ika.

## **2.2 Conceptual Framework**

Mitigation is the reduction of the gravity of words that serves as a threat to the listener or hearer. It is also referred to the measures taken, to reduce or manage harmful incidents that have already occurred. These measures to be taken are referred to as, replacing those harmful words with pleasant words, for the sake of the hearer or listener. Mitigation makes language more polite, i.e. direct, and less confrontational.

Hedging is the process of using words or phrases in a sentence to ambiguity, probability, caution, or indecisiveness about the remainder of the sentence, rather than full accuracy, certainty, confidence or decisiveness. It also protects writers or speakers from uttering false statement, to ensure polite and successful conversation.

Mitigation and Hedging are related, as both terms tend to curb words that serve as a threat to the listener, during conversations. They both involve the use of language to convey a degree of uncertainty or tentativeness, and serve as important social functions in communication. By using these strategies, speakers can avoid coming across as overly confident or aggressive, which can help maintain positive social relationship. Mitigation and Hedging are important tools for effective communication in academic and professional settings. In these contexts, it is often important to express ideas with precision and accuracy, while also acknowledging the limitations of one's knowledge or expertise. Through the appropriate use of mitigation and hedging, speakers can strike a balance between these two goals and communicate effectively with their audience. Also, Mitigation and Hedging is a linguistic strategy used in communication, especially when interacting to aged people, to avoid uttering taboo words, or words that sounds offensive or harsh. The aim of this study is to ensure that conversations are polite and successful.

### **2.2.1 The advantages of Mitigation**

1. It helps in the maintenance of social harmony and avoidance of conflict. By using mitigated language, speakers can show respect for their interlocutors and avoid causing offence or hurt feelings.
2. Mitigation builds rapport and establishes trust between speakers. This implies that, using language that is more tentative and less assertive,

speakers can signal that they are open to negotiation. This is mostly done in situations where there are competing interests or conflicting goals.

3. It helps in managing face-threatening acts. Face-threatening acts are actions or statements that threaten the positive face (the desire to be liked and respected) or negative face (the desire to be free from imposition) of the interlocutor. The use of mitigated terms enables speakers to reduce the threat, to their interlocutors' face, and also minimize the risk of conflict or misunderstanding.
4. It helps in calming down the tension of a particular situation. For example, instead of saying "the king is dead", it can be mitigated to "the mighty iroko tree has fallen". At that particular situation, the tension has been reduced, by using a more subtle or mild expression.

### **2.2.2 The Disadvantages of Mitigation**

1. It leads to ambiguity and vagueness in communication. When speakers use language to soften their statements, they may not convey their intended meaning clearly or directly. For example, in Ika, "*n jokoazunolo*" (I'm going to the backyard), which is the mitigated term for "I want to defecate", as in; "*n choninyunnsin*", in ika. This can result in misunderstanding and confusion.
2. It can undermine the authority and credibility of the speaker. When speakers use language to downplay the importance or severity of their statements,

they may come across as indecisive or uncertain. This can make it difficult for others to trust or rely on them, especially in professional or leadership role.

3. Mitigation can also perpetuate power imbalances and reinforce social hierarchies. For instance, in most cultures, women and other marginalized groups are socialized to use more mitigated language, than men or those in positions of power.

### **2.2.3 The Advantages of Hedging**

1. It allows writers to acknowledge the limitation of their claims and the potential, for alternative explanations. This means that, using languages that indicates a degree of uncertainty, writers can avoid making over confident or unsupported claims. This can assist in building credibility with readers, by demonstrating a nuanced understanding of the topic at hand.
2. Hedging can be used strategically to manage interpersonal relationships. By hedging, it softens criticism or disagreement; writers can avoid causing offense or damaging relationships with colleagues or peers.
3. It makes communication polite and successful.

#### **2.2.4 The Disadvantages of Hedging**

1. It can weaken the impact of a statement. When speakers or writers hedge their statements, they may come across as less confident or less authoritative statement.
2. Hedging also leads to ambiguity or confusion. When speakers use vague language or qualify their statements too much, it can be difficult for listeners to decode the meaning.
3. It is seen as a form of deception or manipulation. When speakers or writers hedge their statements, they may be trying to avoid taking responsibility for their words or actions. This may erode trust and credibility over time, making it more difficult to build strong relationships with others.

#### **2.3 Politeness Strategy**

Communication is not just by exchanging talks, but also about being polite, without offending the listener. It is also about choosing words that does not arouse abomination, wrath or dread. All Politeness can be viewed as deviation from maximally efficient communication; as violations (in some sense) of Grice's (1975) conversational maxims. To perform an act other than in the most clear and efficient manner possible is to implicate some degree of politeness on the part of the speaker. Politeness enables people to perform many inter-personally sensitive actions in a nonthreatening manner. Politeness strategies are used to formulate

messages in order to save the hearer's positive and negative face, when face-threatening acts are inevitable or desired.

The concept of politeness is applicable to mitigation and hedging because, it is an objective achieved at the end of a conversation.

### **2.3.1 Positive Politeness Strategy**

This is a strategy, which intends to avoid giving offense, by highlighting friendliness, solidarity, and empathy towards the listener. This type of politeness strategy aims to establish a positive relationship, between the speaker and the listener. These strategies include juxtaposing criticism with compliment, establishing common ground, and using jokes, nicknames, honorifics, tag questions, special discourse markers (please), and in-group jargon and slang. Positive politeness strategy can also be used to express gratitude or appreciation, such as, "thank you so much for your kind gesture" or "you look fabulous today".

### **2.3.2 Negative Politeness Strategy**

It involves using language that shows respect for the listener's autonomy and avoids imposing on their freedom. It is also a strategy used to avoid giving offense by showing deference. This type of politeness strategy aims to minimize the imposition on the hearer's time or resource. Examples of negative politeness strategy include indirect requests, hedging expressions, and apologies.

## **2.4 Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework to be used in this research study is Ethnography of communication. This theory will be used to analyze the Ika data. The reason for this theory is for the analysis of communication within the sociocultural setting of the Ika community.

### **2.4.1 Ethnography of Communication**

This theory is proposed by Dell Hymes, which was originally called “ethnography of speaking” in 1962, but was later modified in 1964. It is the analysis of communication, within the sociocultural setting. Also, it is an approach towards analyzing language patterns that are used in speech communities, to provide support for his idea of communicative competence. Ethnography of communication was formed to accommodate the non-vocal and non-verbal characteristics of communication, even though its researchers still tend to focus on speaking, as it is generally considered “to be a prominent – even primordial -means of communication”. It aims in describing the characteristics that an approach towards language, from an anthropological standpoint must take.

Ethnography of communication deals on both the communicative form, which may include, but is not limited to spoken language, and its function within the given culture. According to Dell Hymes, it must account directly for the use of language in contexts of situations, so as to discern patterns proper to speech activity and take as context a community, accounting for its communicative traits

as a whole. In other words, rather than separating linguistic form from its function, the analysis of a culture's or community's communication, linguistic and otherwise, in relation to the sociocultural context of its use and functions of the meanings conveyed.

Ethnography of communication views communication as an ongoing stream of information, rather than a series of separate message exchanges. Deborah Cameron further defines Ethnography of communication as the utilization of ethnographic approaches to study the communication behaviors within a specific group. Littlejohn and Foss mentioned Dell Hymes' concept that, different cultures have distinct communication styles, but all types of communication necessitate a common code, individuals who are familiar with and utilize the code, a means of transmission, a specific environment, a particular form of message, a subject matter, and an event triggered by the message being transmitted. Lindlof and Taylor describe "EOC studies" as in-depth examinations of communications codes and their immediate functions within different situations. In these analyses, when studying speech communities, it is important to focus on their ongoing and localized expressions of cultural and moral concerns. Utilizing Ethnography of communication provides a valuable approach to examine how individuals within a particular culture or "speech community" interact with each other. A speech community refers to a collective of individuals who develop and uphold their unique language patterns and standards of communication.

According to Gerry Philipsen, each community has its own set of cultural values regarding communication, which are connected to assessments of what is considered appropriate in different situations. The interpretation and significance of speaking, or the lack thereof, can differ across communities. To evaluate and comprehend the appropriateness of speech within particular communities, it is crucial to grasp the local cultural patterns and norms. Hence, the idea that the importance of communities varies across different social settings proposes an approach to investigate and depict differences in the significance of speech within various cultures or subcultures. Speaking, along with other symbolic assets, is assigned and distributed within social interactions based on unique cultural norms and practices. Hymes employed the concept of EOC to challenge the strong version of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which asserts that an individual's language dictates their cognitive capabilities. Hymes acknowledged that language does influence one's perspective on the world, but he contended that the magnitude of this influence relies on factors such as how the language is learned and its role within an individual's linguistic skills and the larger community.

#### **2.4.2 The SPEAKING Model**

Dell Hymes created a model called the SPEAKING model, to serve as a framework for analyzing a speech event within its cultural context. This model comprises sixteen components that Hymes deemed essential for accurately and comprehensively describing any given speech event. These components include

message form, message content, setting, scene, speaker/sender, addressor, hearer/receiver/audience, addressee, purposes (outcomes), purposes (goals), key, channels, forms of speech, norms of interaction, norms of interpretation, and genres. These sixteen components are organized into eight divisions to form the acronym SPEAKING.

S - Setting and scene where the speech event is located in time and space.

P - Participants who takes part in the speech event, and in what role (e.g. speaker, addressee, audience, eavesdropper).

E - Ends what the purpose of the event is, and what its outcome is meant to be.

A - Act sequence what speech acts make up the speech event, and what order they are performed in.

K - Key, the tone or manner of performance (serious or joking, sincere or ironic, etc.)

I - Instrumentalities are what channel or medium of communication is used (e.g. speaking, signing, writing, drumming, whistling), and what language/variety is selected from the participants' repertoire.

N - Norms of interaction: what the rules are for producing and interpreting speech acts.

G - Genres are what ‘type’ does a speech event belong to (e.g. interview, gossip), and what other pre-existing conventional forms of speech are drawn on or ‘cited’ in producing appropriate contributions to talk (e.g. do people quote from mythology or poetry or scripture?)

Cameron advises that while the SPEAKING model holds significant worth for the EOC (ethnography of communication) and is widely employed as a descriptive framework, it should be approached as a guiding principle rather than a rigid template. This is because strictly adhering to the mode might result in constrained perspective on the subject being studied.

### **2.4.3 Relevance of the Theory**

In the application of ethnography and communication theory to the study of mitigation and hedging in Ika, enables the researcher to explore the cultural and social factors that influence these linguistic strategies. It helps in widening the existing cultural values, norms and social roles, that shape how speakers of Ika mitigate and hedge in their interactions. In the context of Ika dialect, studying mitigation and hedging practices, involves investigating how speakers use different linguistic tools and patterns, to achieve these communicative goals. By conducting ethnographic research, researchers can observe and analyze real-life communicative situations, collect data on language use, and gain insights into the social and cultural dynamics at play.

## CHAPTER THREE

### DATA PRESENTATION

#### 0.3 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher will be presenting the data that has been collected from the competent speakers of the Ika, for the successful compilation of this research study. The data will be presented in two forms: in a tabular form (which is the general data) and in excerpts, showing how the native speakers mitigate and hedge in Ika.

#### 3.1 The Ika Data

The Ika speakers are very conscious of their words while speaking. They make use of mitigated and hedged terms to avoid offending the hearer, and also to promote peace and unity among themselves. Below are the various mitigated and hedged terms used by the Ika speakers, presented in table.

Ika words	Mitigation/Hedging	Gloss
1. njokoazunolo	I am going to the backyard	I want to defecate
2. oken o shishiakpagi	The strong tree has fallen	The King is dead
3. i zooku ye ofia	To step foot in a bush	Promiscuous woman
4. i kerikpoonu	You will eat and spoil your	You will eat poison

	mouth	
5. do ye ekanti	Drag your ear	Warning
6. giokuwuehu	Bathe with words	Trouble maker
7. okpa ha naujuju	She plucked a leaf for him	Adulterous woman
8. nkpuniekpokoatoomi	The cup that was kept at the side of the well	The death of a child and mother at child birth
9. olazaejin	She's sweeping outside	She's menstruating
10. ozuzuehikeogboma	The hawk looks like a sorcerer.	Someone with an evil intension
11. egun e gbule boys	Boys shouldn't be hungry	Prostitute
12. omeehurukuruku	The body is fluffy and soft	She's fat
13. o rukaopu no gbo	The person works a lot, but cannot complete the work.	A lazy person
14. enyauku	Big eye	Greedy person
15. ogike	The person has enough (very buoyant)	A poor person
16. o ri e su e	His growing taller	His sick
17. onyeatutueka	A person who picks something with the hands	A thief
18. ishiezuzini	The person's head is not	A mad person

	complete	
19. onyeenyari le ninma	The person's eyes are not good	Mental disorder
20. ishiokpukpo	The head of a bone	An old person
21. o ranku	He drinks wood	Drunkard
22. eziokwuarionu	No truth inside the mouth	Liar
23. gialifuoyi	Use the ground to cover cold	Death
24. dike ewe obara agha enya	To rub blood on the eyes	War
25. onye we gi le niuche do be otume	A person, who they didn't apply wisdom to cut off the navel.	Lack of manners
26. onyehunemeniomarika	Someone that feels he/she knows everything.	Overstepping boundaries
27. onyewa le nienya	The person's eyes are not clear.	A foolish person
28. onye we le gberi	Someone that is been looked down upon.	Small but mighty
29. onyeihienkpaban	Someone that something entered.	To be possessed
30. o kuri e	He met her	To have sex

31. eka e wuni		His/her hands are not clean.	An evil person
32. rienyaianikwo mmai cha bani	don le	Careful now, don't let your beauty get to your head.	To be proud
33. emu rizeonu ma ri obi		Smile is in the face, but anger is in the heart.	Pretense
34. nkiteamariniferen		The dog does not know shame.	Bad character
35. ikenssi marieghogi	a	The anus does not know the price of yam	Wastage/to wasteful be
36. o ghafe		The person has passed	The person is dead
37. n choni n kwokpu		I want pour water	I want to bath
38. o ji e tugwo		She has dropped	She has given birth
39. buchegwoowaali	e	They have put the person on the ground.	They have buried the person
40. orijuguefo		She's overfed	She's pregnant

### 3.1.1 The Use of Mitigation and Hedging in Ika, Then (Excerpts).

Here, the researcher will be showing how the Ika speakers mitigate and hedge then, in conversations. Also, data will be presented to display how peer

groups, children, and aged people mitigate and hedge among themselves in conversations. Below is an excerpt showing how Ika speakers mitigate then.

1. Speaker A: oge fie okpoho'n

Time has passed this woman

(she's pregnant)

Speaker B: le keifon ole kori wan?

How many months gone?

Speaker A: o riifonebuo

She's two months gone.

2. Speaker A: onyewuhun?

Who is this?

Speaker B: o kpeekaali

He claps his hands on the ground

(he's a thief)

3. Speaker A: ki me olo'ni?

What happened to this house?

Speaker B: o woniishi

The house has no head

(the house is in disarray)

4. Speaker A: kiri e me ndi'n, ndi'nrigiraakwan?

Why are these people crying?

Speaker B: oyen agha fe

This person has passed

(this person is dead)

5. Speaker A: ele be onuejeazunolo?

Where is your backyard located?

(where is your toilet?)

Speaker B: ele e beni.

It's here.

### 3.1.2 The Use of Mitigation and Hedging in Ika, Now.

1. Speaker 1: nne Timothy e?

Where is mama Timothy?

Speaker 2: a za le ne ya, ogbomakowu.

Don't answer her, she's a witch

2. Speaker 1: onyewuhun?

Who is this?

Speaker 2: onye o hinro?

He's a thief

3. Speaker 1: ki me e be ni?

What happened here?

Speaker 2: i hianwuhunwo yah un

Somebody died yesterday

4. Speaker 1: o riime

She's pregnant

Speaker 2: ifon ole kori?

How many months gone?

Speaker 1: ifonebuo

She's two months gone.

### **3.1.3 The Use of Mitigation and Hedging by Children to Adults.**

1. Child: nne, n la zaejin  
Mummy, I'm sweeping outside  
(mummy, I'm menstruating)  
Mum: n do nwa'm  
Sorry my child
  
2. Child to Adult: i hienofe a riimeofen  
There is no soup stuff inside the soup.  
(no meat inside the soup)
  
3. Child: baba! n jokoazunolo  
Daddy! I'm going to the backyard  
(I want to defecate)

### 3.1.4 The Use of Mitigation and Hedging in Ika, Among Peer group

1. 1<sup>st</sup> speaker: nani! n chon ninyunnsi

Hey! I want to defecate

2<sup>nd</sup> speaker: o wunmma

Alright.

2. 1<sup>st</sup> speaker: anujuimeofen

There are a lot of meat in this soup

2<sup>nd</sup> speaker: e hen! neeyinri nu

Really! Let's eat then.

3. 1<sup>st</sup> speaker: okehen e hi keakpa

This man is too fat

2<sup>nd</sup> speaker: oluro nu

He eats too much, that's why.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA ANALYSIS

#### 0.4 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher would be explaining and analyzing the data presented in chapter 3. The analysis will be done using the SPEAKING model from Ethnography of communication, as the theoretical framework.

#### 4.1 Mitigation and Hedging in Ika, Then.

**Table 3.1:**

Ika words	Mitigation/Hedging	Gloss
1. njokoazunolo	I am going to the back of the house	I want to defecate
2. oken o shishiakpagi	The strong tree has fallen	The king is dead
3. i zooku ye ofia	To step foot in a bush	Promiscuous woman
4. i kerikpoonu	You will eat and spoil your mouth	You will eat poison

Mitigation and Hedging were often used in the olden days, by the Ika speakers. This is because; it serves as a politeness strategy, while speaking. It is a

form of respect among the speakers, and to avoid the use of taboo or unfavorable words, that would be unpleasant to the hearer. By so doing, the Ika speakers are promoting peace, unity and tranquility among themselves in the community. In the olden days, spilling taboo words is an offense, especially to aged people. Mitigation and Hedging are strategies, to curb the use of taboo expressions then, in the Ika speaking community. For example, when the obi (king) of Ika community dies, it is wrong to say “the king is dead,” as in, “*Obi a wunhungwo*”, but it can be mitigated as “the strong tree has fallen”, as in “*okenoshishiakpagi*”. The above data shows how Ika speakers mitigate and hedge then.

The data will be analyzed below, using the SPEAKING model.

**Analysis of Table 3.1 fig 1:**

S-setting: The setting of this statement is, the residence of one of the participants, living in the Ika community.

P-participants: The participants are two individuals, that are closely related.

E-ends: The speaker’s intention is to express their need to use the toilet. The phrase serves as polite way of conveying this message without being too explicit or offensive.

A-act sequence: This involves the speaker expressing their desire to use the toilet. It implies that they are seeking permission or indicating their intention to leave temporarily for this purpose.

K-key: The key used in this phrase is mitigated language. By using mitigated terms, the speaker aims to soften the directness of their request and maintain politeness within the conversation.

I-instrumentalities: The instrumentalities used in this phrase include the Ika dialect, and specific vocabulary related to using the toilet. The choice of language and vocabulary reflects cultural norms and linguistic conventions within the community.

N-norms: The norms associated with this phrase, involve maintaining politeness and respect within social interactions. In Ika culture, discussing bodily functions directly can be considered impolite or inappropriate. Therefore, using mitigated language helps adhere to these norms.

G-genre: This can be classified as an informative type of conversation, because the speaker is informing the hearer that his going to the backyard (I want to defecate).

**Analysis of Table 3.1 fig 2:**

S-setting: The setting of this phrase is the palace of king (obi), of the Ika community, where elders in council are seated.

P-participants: The participants are the elders in councils, which includes the chiefs and the prime minister.

E-ends: The purpose of this message, is to inform the elders in councils and also the members of the Ika community, about the death of the King, using mitigated expression to soften the impact of the news.

A-act sequence: The act sequence involves the Prime minister, delivering the message to the other elders in council, and the members of the community at large, who has assembled in the king's palace. The elders and members of the community receive and processes the information.

K-key: The key element in this message is the use of mitigated language, which indicates that the speaker intends to convey sensitive news in a less direct manner.

I-instrumentalities: The instrumentalities used in conveying this message include language, tone of voice, and non-verbal cues, such as facial expressions and gestures.

N-norms: The norms associated with this message involve cultural sensitivity and respect for traditional hierarchies within the Ika community.

G-genre: This message falls under the genre of communication related to significant events or news within the Ika community.

### **Analysis of Table 3.1 fig 3:**

S-setting: The setting refers to the cultural context in which the phrase is used. In this case, it is the Ika dialect of Delta state.

P-participants: The participants are speakers of Ika, who use this phrase to communicate. It consists of a speaker, who is describing a promiscuous woman, using mitigated or hedged terms, and a listener, who is interpreting the message.

E-ends: In this context, the goal is to describe or label a woman who engages in promiscuous behavior. It serves as a form of social control or moral judgement within the community.

A-act sequence: The act sequence is the specific actions or behaviors associated with using this phrase “*i zooku ye ofia*” to refer to a woman who is perceived as promiscuous.

K-key: The key used in this context is described as being in mitigated terms, suggesting that it can be used with some level of restraint or politeness.

I-instrumentalities: The instrumentalities refer to the linguistic and non-linguistic resources used to convey meaning. Here, the Ika dialect itself serves as the primary instrumentality for expressing this phrase.

N-norms: Norms are the social and cultural rules that govern language use within a community. The use of this phrase is influenced by norms related to gender roles, sexuality, and moral values within the community.

G-genre: The genre used in this context, falls under the category of labeling or describing individuals based on their perceived behavior.

#### **Analysis of Table 3.1 fig 4:**

**S-setting:** The setting is around a household, in the Ika community of Delta state.

**P-participants:** The participants are the persons involved in the communication, specifically the speaker and the listener.

**E-ends:** The speaker intends to convey a message to the listener, using mitigated language. The purpose is to warn or advise the listener about potential harm without causing offense.

**A-act sequence:** The act sequence in this case, involves expressing a future event (eating poison) and directing it towards the listener.

**K-key:** The key here, is the use of mitigated or hedged language, which implies that the speaker is using softer or less direct term to communicate a potentially negative outcome.

**I-instrumentalities:** The instrumentalities involve the use of words from Ika, to convey the message.

**N-norms:** Norms are the sociocultural norms that influence communication. It is a norm within the Ika community to use mitigated or hedged language, when discussing sensitive or potentially harmful topics.

**G-genre:** Genre is the type or category of communication being used. Here, it is classified as a warning or cautionary statement.

### **Excerpt 3.1.1:**

1. Speaker A: *oge fie okpoho'n*

Time has passed this woman

(She's pregnant)

Speaker B: *le keifon ole kori wan?*

How many months gone?

Speaker A: *o riifonebuo*

She's two months gone.

The above excerpt is also an example of how Ika speakers mitigate then. As seen, it is used in daily conversation among the Ika speakers. The data to be analyzed in the above excerpt is "*oge fie okpoho'n*" meaning "time has passed this woman", that is, "she's pregnant" (direct meaning). The setting of this statement is, the Ika community, and the participants are two speakers, who are members of the Ika community.

### **Analysis of Excerpt 3.1.1 fig 1:**

S-setting: The setting is within the Ika community. The language and setting reflect the cultural norms and values, surrounding pregnancy and how it is discussed.

P-participants: The participants in this communication act are two speakers, and members of the Ika community. The speaker is someone who is discussing with another person, about a pregnant woman, in the same community with them.

E-ends: In this case, the ends refer to using mitigated terms to convey pregnancy, and resulting to maintaining privacy, showing respect for cultural sensitivities, or avoiding directness in discussing personal matters.

A-act sequence: The act sequence describes the structure of the communication act. In this case, it involves a speaker conveying information about someone's pregnancy, using a specific phrase in Ika.

K-key: The key refers to the tone or manner in which the communication act is performed. The use of mitigated term here, is a desire to soften or downplay the directness of stating that someone is pregnant.

I-instrumentalities: The instrumentalities used in this phrase are that of verbal communication between the speakers, in the form of spoken language, which is used to convey the message.

N-norms: In the Ika culture, discussing pregnancy using mitigated terms is considered more appropriate or respectful than using direct language.

G-genre: The type of communication act used in this case, is classified as informal conversation or gossip, where individuals share information about others in a less direct manner.

#### 4.1.1 The Use of Mitigation and Hedging, Now.

##### Excerpt 3.1.2:

1. Speaker 1: nne Timothy e?

Where is mama Timothy?

Speaker 2: a za le ne ya, ogbomakowu.

Don't answer her, she's a witch.

2. Speaker 1: onyewuhun?

Who is this?

Speaker 2: onye o hinro?

He's a thief

In this present age, there is less or no use of mitigated or hedge terms. This is because; this present generation find it ambiguous and difficult to understand. Currently, the Ika speakers make use of clearer terms while conversing; or rather give the direct meaning of that expression. For example, in Ika “*ogboma*”, is a direct meaning for “a witch” now, but then, it is mitigated as “*oyenekawu le ni*”, meaning, “a person that the hands are not clean”. Also, it is difficult for non-competent speakers of this present generation to understand. Another example, when a mitigated expression such as; “*orijuguefo*”, is used in this present time, the

non-competent speaker would see it as a literal meaning, that is, “she’s overfed”, but the direct meaning is “she’s pregnant”.

The excerpt above shows how Ika speakers mitigate and hedge now. In the first excerpt, the data to be analyzed is “*ogbomakowu*” meaning “she’s a witch”. The setting of the first excerpt (excerpt 3.1.2 fig 1) is within Ika community, and the participants are two members of the community, discussing about a woman, who is witch”. In the second excerpt, the data to be analyzed is, “*onye o hinro*” meaning “he’s a thief”. The setting of the second excerpt (excerpt 3.1.2 fig 2) is the village square of the Ika community, and the participants includes an individual and the Ika community youths.

### **Analysis of Excerpt 3.1.2 fig 1:**

S-setting: The setting refers to the cultural context in which the phrase is used. In this case, the setting is in the Ika community.

P-participants: The participants involved in the communication, are two speakers of the Ika community, which includes the speaker and the listener.

E-ends: The ends refer to the goals or intensions of the speaker in using this phrase. Here, it’s expressing a belief or accusation about someone being a witch.

A-act sequence: This has to do with the sequences of actions or events that occur when this phrase is used. In this situation, it involves the speaker uttering the phrase and the listener interpreting its meaning.

K-key: The key used to deliver this message, is that of seriousness, accusation and fear.

I-instrumentalities: The instrumentalities used in conveying this message, is that of verbal communication, using Ika, to pass the information to the hearer.

N-norms: In Ika community, using words without mitigating or hedging is considered offensive, as the community is known for promoting peace and unity.

G-genre: The genre used in this expression is classified as an accusation and judgement.

### **Analysis of Excerpt 3.1.2 fig 2:**

S-setting: The setting is, the village square of Ika community, where a thief was caught by the youths of the community.

P-participants: The participants are the speaker and the community youths, that caught the unfortunate thief.

E-ends: The ends of this expression, is to see that the accused is been punished, and to serve as a lesson to others who are also indulge in such act.

A-act sequence: The act sequence of this phrase involves making an accusation of theft. The accuser uses the phrase “*oyen o hinro*” to label the person as a thief.

K-key: The key used in phrase is that of a harsh tone, because of the gravity of the offence committed by the individual.

I-instrumentalities: The instrumentalities used in this phrase include language and speech. The accuser utilizes language to express their accusation.

N-norms: In Ika culture, theft is generally considered a negative behavior that goes against societal norms. Accusing someone of being a thief without evidence or due process may also be seen as inappropriate or disrespectful.

G-genre: This phrase is classified as an accusatory statement or an assertion of belief regarding a person's character.

#### **4.1.2 The Use of Mitigation and Hedging in Ika, by Children to Adults.**

##### **Excerpt 3.1.3:**

1. Child: nne, n la zaejin  
Mummy, I'm sweeping outside  
(Mummy, I'm menstruating)  
Mum: n do nwa'm  
Sorry my child
  
2. Child to Adult: i hienofe a riimeofen  
There is no soup stuff inside the soup.  
(No meat inside the soup).

Mitigation and Hedging is very essential, especially when speaking to Adults or aged people. As earlier said, the Ika speakers are often conscious of the

words they use while speaking. This is also applicable to children and young people, especially when it comes to discussing with Adults. It is important for children to mitigate or hedge the words they use while speaking, to avoid being offensive to the Adult. This is because, it will be seen as the child did not get proper training from his/her parents, and it may result to the child being punished.

The above excerpt is how Children mitigate and hedge in conversation when speaking to Adults. The data to be analyzed are “*n la zaejin*”(excerpt 3.1.3 fig 1) meaning “I’m sweeping outside”, that is, “I’m menstruating”(direct meaning) and “*i hienofe a riimenofen*” (excerpt 3.1.3 fig 2) meaning “there is no soup stuff inside the soup”, that is, “no meat inside the soup” (direct meaning). The setting of the first excerpt (excerpt 3.1.3 fig 1) is a residence in Ika community, and the participants are a child and the mother. The setting of the second excerpt (excerpt 3.1.3 fig 2) is a conversation done during meal preparation, in a household. The participants include a child and the mother.

### **Analysis of Excerpt 3.1.3 fig 1:**

S-setting: The setting is a residence in Ika community

P-participants: The participants are a girl child and her mother. The girl child is the speaker and the one menstruating, and the mother is the listener.

E-ends: The ends refer to the goals or purposes of the communication. The speaker aims to achieve a positive response from the mother, and also solicits for help from

her mum. In the other hand, her mum will be rendering help, by getting the necessary things needed for her (the child).

A-act sequence: The act sequence involves the speaker (the child) stating that she's menstruating, by mitigating it as "*n la zaejin*" to communicate their menstrual status, and the hearer (the mother) responding accordingly.

K-key: In this case, the key is the mitigated term. By using a mitigated term, the speaker adopts a more polite and indirect approach to discussing menstruation.

I-instrumentalities: The instrumentalities encompass the specific linguistic features and strategies used in communication. Here, verbal communication is used to convey the message.

N-norms: In Ika culture, discussing menstruation openly is considered inappropriate. Therefore, using mitigated or hedged terms allows individuals to adhere to these norms while still conveying the intended message.

G-genre: The genre used in this expression is classified as personal or informal communication between individuals who are familiar with each other.

### **Analysis of Excerpt 3.1.3 fig 2:**

S-setting: The setting refers to the context in which the communication takes place. Here, it's a conversation in a household during meal preparation.

P-participants: The participant involves a child, which is the speaker, that discovered there's no soup stuff inside the soup (meat), and the hearer is the mother, whom she's (the child) relating the message to.

E-ends: The speaker's (the child) goal is to inform or express that there is no soup stuff (meat) inside the soup. Also, it's serving as a request for the hearer (the mother) to add meat to the soup.

A-act sequence: In this situation, the structure or sequence of actions within the communication, it involves stating the absence of meat in the soup.

K-key: The mitigated expression used, serves as the tone or manner in which the message is conveyed. In the sense that, "*i hienofe a riimeofen*" is indicating a polite or softened approach, rather than being direct or confrontational.

I-instrumentalities: The instrumentalities here, is the use of Ika, and specific structures unique to the dialect.

N-norms: In Ika, it is considered impolite or offensive to directly state that there is no meat in the soup. Therefore, using mitigated terms helps maintain politeness and respect.

G-genre: The genre used in this case, is a statement or request within casual conversation or meal preparation.

### 4.1.3 The Use of Mitigation and Hedging in Ika, among Peer Group.

#### Excerpt 3.1.4:

1. 1<sup>st</sup> speaker: nani! n chon ninyunnsi.

Hey! I want to defecate

2<sup>nd</sup> speaker: o wunmma.

Alright.

2. 1<sup>st</sup> speaker: anujuimeofen

There is a lot of meat in this soup

2<sup>nd</sup> speaker: e hen! neeyinri nu

Really! Let's eat then.

3. 1<sup>st</sup> speaker: okehen e hi keakpa

This man is too fat

2<sup>nd</sup> speaker: oluro nu

He eats too much, that's why.

The conversation among peer group is different from that of children to Adults. Peer group see themselves as age mates, and do not require a formal way of speaking. They speak freely to themselves, even without mitigating or hedging

their utterances. This implies that, conversations among peer group are always plain and direct, without any formal way of speaking, or using linguistic strategies such as mitigation and hedging. This is because, they see themselves as one, and could relate freely with one another. The above excerpts show how peer group mitigate and hedge during conversations. The data to be analyzed in the first excerpt is “*n chon ninyunnsi*”, meaning “I want to defecate”. The setting of this excerpt is a public restroom, and the participants are, two speakers that are of the same age bracket. In the second excerpt, the data to be analyzed is “*anujuimeofen*”, meaning “there is a lot of meat inside this soup”. The setting of the excerpt is a conversation over meal, in a household, and the participants are the speaker and the listener, who are both set to have a meal. In the third excerpt, the data to be analyzed is “*okehen e hi keakpa*”, meaning “this man is too fat”. The setting of this excerpt is the Ika community, and the participants consist of two individuals, the speaker referring to a man as being fat, and the hearer, who is listening.

#### **Analysis of Excerpt 3.1.4 fig 1:**

S-setting: The setting is where the act of defecation is relevant, such as a home or public restroom, in the Ika community.

P-participants: The participants include two speakers that are of the same age, as in peer group. One of the speakers is stating the need to defecate, while the other speaker is the listener.

E-ends: The speaker's intention in uttering this phrase is to communicate their psychological need to defecate. The end goal is to inform the listener about their current state and potentially seek assistance or permission to use a suitable facility for defecation.

A-act sequence: The act sequence involves the speaker expressing their desire to defecate through the phrase "*n choninyunnsi*". This act sequence can be seen as a request for acknowledgement and understanding from the listener.

K-key: The key aspect of this phrase lies in its directness and clarity. The speaker uses straightforward language to convey their need without any ambiguity or mitigation and hedging.

I-instrumentalities: The instrumentalities used in this phrase are Ika. The specific words chosen within this language effectively communicate the speaker's intention.

N-norms: In Ika culture, discussing bodily functions like defecation is generally considered a private matter. However, within close relationships or in situations where immediate action is required, it is acceptable to express such needs openly.

G-genre: The genre is classified as an informative statement or a request for assistance. It serves the purpose of conveying a specific message to the listener and potentially eliciting a response or action.

### **Analysis of Excerpt 3.1.4 fig 2:**

**S-setting:** The setting of this phrase is a conversation over meal, in a household in Ika community.

**P-participants:** The participants are two individuals, who are set to have a meal, where the speaker is informing the hearer about the quantity of meat in the soup.

**E-ends:** The purpose of using this phrase is to convey the abundance of met within a particular soup. It serves to express satisfaction and excitement about the quantity of meat resent in the dish.

**A-act sequence:** The act sequence in this expression involving describing the presence of met within the soup. It implies that the speaker has observed or tasted the soup and is now sharing their observation with the listener.

**K-key:** The key element in this phrase is the word “anu”, which means “meat”. It is the central focus of the statement and conveys the main message.

**I-instrumentalities:** The instrumentalities used here, include the language and non-verbal cues. Ika is employed as the primary means of communication, while non-verbal cues such as facial expressions and gestures, accompanies the spoken words to enhance understanding.

N-norms: The norms associated with this phrase are cultural convention related to food appreciation and sharing experiences. In Ika culture, it is common to express enthusiasm for well-prepared meals and to share such experiences with others.

G-genre: The genre here is classified as an informative statement or an expression of satisfaction. It provides information about the content of the soup while also conveying a positive sentiment towards it.

**Analysis of Excerpt 3.1.4 fig 3:**

S-setting: The setting where this communication took place is in the Ika community, which is made up of Ika speakers in Delta state.

P-participants: The participants consist of two individuals who include the speaker who is referring to a person as being fat, and the hearer, who is listening.

E-ends: The ends refer to the goals or intentions of the communication. In this situation, the speaker's intention is to express their opinion about the man's weight and convey a message about his physical appearance.

A-act sequence: The act sequence is the structure of the communication. Here, it is a simple statement expressing an observation or opinion about the man's weight.

K-key: The key used in this expression is that of being judgmental and scornful, which was displayed by the speaker in conveying the message.

I-instrumentalities: The instrumentalities refer to the language and non-verbal cues used in communication. In this case, the researcher is analyzing a specific phrase in Ika. The choice of words and grammar used in this phrase reflects the linguistic characteristics of that language.

N-norms: Norms refer to the social and cultural rules that govern communication within a particular community or group. In Ika culture, it is important to be mindful of how one speaks about others' physical appearance as it can be considered impolite or offensive.

G: genre: The genre used in this expression, is a statement, and observation about a man's physical appearance.

In the analysis done above, the researcher has been able to show how mitigation and hedging in Ika, is been analyzed using the SPEAKING model. This model has been able to provide holistic approach to the analysis of language use in specific contexts. It emphasizes that language is not only a system of formal rules but is deeply embedded in cultural and social contexts. Each component of the SPEAKING model helps to understand different aspects of language use and the social dynamics involved.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

#### 0.5 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher will be giving a total summary and conclusion of the previous chapters studied. Also, findings, which include answering the research questions in alignment with the objective of the study.

#### 5.1 Summary

Mitigation and Hedging are linguistic strategies used to soften or weaken the impact of speech acts, making them less direct or assertive. In Ika, these strategies are employed to make conversations subtle, less offensive and pleasant, among the Ika speakers. Mitigation and Hedging plays a crucial role in maintaining social harmony and avoiding conflict. The Ika speakers value politeness and indirectness in communication, and these linguistic strategies help achieve those goals.

As earlier said, the main objective of this research study is, to know how Ika speakers mitigate and hedge in their conversations, and its importance. Another objective of this study is, to show how pleasant expressions are achieved, through mitigation and hedging. The main problem of this research study is ‘ambiguity’ and ‘false expression’. This implies that, by mitigating and hedging, it conceals the true value of such expression and this expression becomes ambiguous for the non-competent speakers of Ika, to understand. In this present generation, the Ika

speakers no longer mitigate because of the issue of ambiguity and false expressions.

The theoretical framework used for this research work, enables the researcher to explore the sociocultural factors that influences mitigation and hedging. Ethnography of communication broadens the existing cultural values, norms and social roles, that shape how speakers of Ika speakers mitigate and hedge in their interactions. The SPEAKING model is a framework for analyzing the speech event within the Ika cultural context. Before analyzing the data using the SPEAKING model, the data was first presented in a tabular form, and in excerpts. The data presented shows how the Ika speakers mitigate and hedge in their conversations then and now. Also, the presentation showed how children mitigate while communicating with adults, and how peer group also mitigate in their conversations.

## **5.2 Findings**

This research has been able to find out the meaning of mitigation and hedging, the objective, and its importance. In addition, the researcher will be answering the following research questions:

1. How do the Ika speakers mitigate then and now?
2. Why is mitigation and hedging important in Ika?

### **5.2.1 How do the Ika speakers mitigate then and now?**

In the ancient times, mitigation and hedging is a necessity among the Ika speakers. They believe that it's an avenue in promoting peace and unity among themselves. The way of speaking then is different from now. Then, the Ika speakers make use of subtle words and expressions that will be pleasant to the hearer, without being offensive. For example, then, to address someone as a thief, it's, "*oyen a tutu eka*", meaning, "someone that picks hand". The reason for this is to reduce the tension in the atmosphere, and also not to sound rude/blunt.

In this present time, there is less or no mitigation and hedging. This is because; the new generation finds it archaic and ambiguous. Language is dynamic that changes over time. Now, mitigation and hedging are seen as ambiguous for the new generation because, it is difficult to comprehend, and also conceals the true value of an expression. They rather make use of direct expressions to portray their messages to the listener or hearer. For example, now, to address someone as a thief, it's, "*oyen o hin*", the direct meaning of "a thief".

### **5.2.2 Why is Mitigation and Hedging important in Ika?**

Mitigation and Hedging are important linguistic strategies in Ika dialect. These strategies play a vital role in maintaining social harmony, managing interpersonal relationships, expressing politeness, and avoiding potential conflicts or misunderstanding in communication. Through the use of mitigated and hedged language, the Ika speakers can avoid causing offense or appearing arrogant or

boastful. This is especially important in situation where there is power imbalance or when addressing individuals of higher status. Mitigation and Hedging allows speakers to show deference and respect towards others, thereby maintaining positive social relationships within the community. In managing interpersonal relationship among the Ika speakers, the use of mitigation and hedging is important; to enables the speakers express empathy, understanding, and solidarity with their interlocutors. This helps to foster a sense of closeness and mutual support within the community.

Mitigation and Hedging play an important role in expressing politeness in Ika communication. Politeness is highly valued in Ika culture and is seen as an essential aspect of social interaction. Through the use of these strategies, Ika speakers can demonstrate their respect for others' face needs (the desire to be respected and valued) and avoid threatening their positive social identity. These linguistic strategies also help to manage expectations and avoid potential misunderstandings. Ika speakers can signal that their statements are not intended as definitive or absolute truths, by using mitigated or hedged language. The enables flexibility in interpretation and reduces the risk of miscommunication or false assumptions. Mitigation and Hedging allows Ika speakers to navigate complex social dynamics and power structures. This implies that, speakers can show deference towards those of higher social status or authority without explicitly challenging their views or positions. This help to maintain hierarchical relationships and avoid potential conflicts or power struggles.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

Mitigation and Hedging are important linguistic strategies used in communication to weaken the impact of a statement, express uncertainty, or indicate politeness. The use of mitigation and hedging in the Ika is influenced by cultural norms and values. In Nigerian culture, politeness and respect are highly valued, and directness can be seen as confrontational or impolite. Therefore, speakers of Ika often employ these strategies to maintain social harmony and avoid causing conflict. The mitigation and hedging in Ika dialect study, can contribute to a deeper understanding of the specific linguistic features and cultural context in which these strategies are employed. It can shed light on the frequency and distribution of mitigation and hedging devices, as well as their pragmatic functions.

### **5.4 Recommendation**

The Ika speakers have a strict policy, when it comes to their mother tongue. It is said that, it's a means of identification, as a Delta breed. The speaking of impolite and unpleasant words, especially to the elderly ones, is highly prohibited. The competent speakers and aged ones should make out time to school the younger and non-competent speakers of Ika, to be cautious of the use of offensive words in the community. By so doing, it will curb the use of unpleasant or unfavorable words. This is where mitigation and hedging come in. Mitigation and Hedging

should be employed to all the Ika speakers, for peace and tranquility to be sustained.

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