

**POLITENESS AND POWER DYNAMICS IN LECTURER-STUDENT  
WHATSAPP DISCOURSE**

**BY**

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THE  
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## **CERTIFICATION**

I certify that this study was carried out by Comfort Idongesit OFFINSON (Miss) in the Department of English and Literature, University of Benin, Benin City, under my supervision.

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**DR R. N. CHIKOGU.**

**(Supervisor)**

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**DATE**

## **DEDICATION**

This book is dedicated to God Almighty, The one that rules the affairs of the whole world for His saving, sustaining, supplicating and sufficient grace in my life. Also to my articulate, indefatigable, dedicated, caring and ever-loving parents, Mr Edet and Mrs Gloria Offinson.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study explores the use of politeness strategies in lecturer-student interactions on WhatsApp, guided by Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory. The research aims to analyze how power dynamics, academic contexts, and institutional hierarchies influence the employment of politeness strategies on the WhatsApp platform.

With the employment of qualitative methodology, it is conducted to identify positive and negative politeness strategies evident in the discourse. Guided by Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory, the research aims to analyze how power dynamics, academic contexts, and institutional hierarchies influence the employment of politeness strategies on the WhatsApp platform.

The research underscores the importance of politeness strategies in facilitating effective communication, maintaining social harmony, and promoting an inclusive learning environment, even in digital contexts.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### **1.1 Purpose of Study**

The main purpose of studying is to understand how the power relationship between lecturers and students is reflected, and negotiated through their use of language and communication. We aim to analyse the specific politeness strategies, analyse how factors such as academic context, social norms, and institutional hierarchies influence the use of politeness. It examines how the affordances and constraints of the WhatsApp platform shape the way lecturers and students navigate power relations and politeness in their online interactions.

### **1.2 Scope of Study**

This study aims to explore the dynamics of politeness and power in lecturer-student WhatsApp discourse. The scope of the study includes analyzing the challenges faced by educators and students in terms of communication ethics on WhatsApp. In order to conduct this study, data will be collected from various sources using University of Benin as a case study

### **1.3 Methodology**

The method used in this research study is qualitative method. The data is in the form of written messages exchanged by students and their lecturers during conversation on WhatsApp messenger.

### 1.3.1 Data Collection

The primary source of data for this study will be WhatsApp social media platform. The data were collected from WhatsApp conversations and will be presented in written texts. A total number of 18 chat events was gathered, and will be included as illustrative examples.

### 1.4 Theoretical Background

The theoretical background of this study is hinged on Politeness Theory. According to Brown and Levinson (1978), this theory examines how individuals use linguistics strategies to maintain face (positive and negative), and manage social relationships. Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, first proposed in 1978, and expanded upon in 1987 book "Politeness; Some Universals in Language Usage", is one of the most influential and widely studied frameworks for understanding politeness in human communication. The core premise of their theory is that all competent adult member of a society have a "face"- a public self-image or sense of emotional, and social standing that they want to maintain and protect interaction with others. They argue that there are two key aspects of face;

**Positive Face:** The desire to be appreciated, liked, and approved of by others. This is the need to be accepted, and seen in a positive light. It refers to an individual's desire for their wants to be desirable to others, essentially their wish to be liked, and valued. It is about connection with others, and includes the desire to be seen positively, and to have one's self-esteem boosted by others.

**Negative Face:** The desire to be autonomous, unimpeded, and free from imposition by others. This is the need for freedom of action, and freedom from constraints. In social interactions, when

we respect someone's negative face, we are careful not to impose or intrude on their personal space or freedoms. This can involve being indirect or using polite requests to avoid pressuring the other person. For example, instead of directly asking someone to do something, which might be seen as an imposition, we might phrase it as a suggestion or a question to give them the option to decline.

According to Brown and Levinson, many everyday speech acts (e.g requests, criticisms, disagreements) inherently threaten the face needs of the speaker, the addressee, or both. They call these "Face-Threatening-Acts"(FTAs). To navigate FTAs while maintaining face, Brown and Levinson propose that speakers employ various politeness strategies

**a. Bald on-record**

Doing the FTAs directly and unambiguously, with no effort to minimize the threat to face. This is used in urgent situations or with intimates.

**b. Positive Politeness**

Emphasizing the addressee's positive face by expressing solidarity, complimenting, offering, or claiming common ground. This softens the FTA.

**c. Negative Politeness**

Recognizing and respecting the addressee's need for autonomy by being indirect, differential, and avoiding imposition. This also mitigates the FTA.

**d. Off-record**

Hinting or implying the FTA rather than stating it directly. This leaves the speaker plausible deniability.

The specific politeness strategies used depend on the perceived weightiness or seriousness of the FTA , which Brown and Levinson argue is a function of the three factors:

1. Power differential between speaker and addressee
2. Social distance between them.
3. Degree of imposition of the act.

In summary, Brown and Levinson's detailed framework provides a robust model for analysing how people navigate the competing face needs and the complex web of social considerations that shape polite linguistic behaviour across cultures.

## **1.5 Literature Review**

### **1.5.1 WhatsApp application**

WhatsApp as one of the social media nowadays is widely used for socializing purposes as well as for delivering messages both personally and in group discussions (Indriyant, 2023). Users can make calls, and send pictures, messages, voice messages, and documents. WhatsApp is an internet-based application that is one of the most popular impacts of the development of information technology. Information sharing, learning and communication are made effective through WhatsApp. Users interact and communicate with each other, and can be used as a discussion forum and dissemination of learning materials, and voice notes. In communication on WhatsApp, people may choose a kind of language to pass across their message, there are also rules that govern the actions, the use of language, and the interpretation of the actions' and utterances' meaning.

Among the rules in communication, is politeness and it is found in all daily communications. Politeness plays an important role in communication. It is an aspect of

interpersonal relations that facilitates interaction by minimizing the potential for conflict and confrontation inherent in all human communication.

### **1.5.2. Politeness Strategies**

Brown and Levinson (1987)'s positive politeness strategies relate to the positive face of interlocutors, whereby speakers and hearers save each other's positive face. Through this technique, both speaker and hearer do not threaten one another's positive face. With regard to communication, positive politeness strategies are commonly about the notion of familiarity and closeness where addressers treat addressees like friends and families in an informal manner as they support each other. Interestingly, as discovered by Heriyanto and Ananda (2014), familiarity and closeness goes beyond well-established relationships and intimacies as they found that anonymity diminishes the role of social gaps and distances and opens the opportunity for honest opinion exchange. This increases the sense of connection and closeness. A study by Karappan (2016) also confirmed that individuals are willing to go to a great length in accommodating and preserving the reputation of others. This shows the significance of face-saving behaviour in social interactions. Meanwhile, the notion of a negative face is related to the affairs of one's freedom. It is closely related to one's freedom in actions. For example, when a person is currently speaking, that particular person would never want others to interrupt while he/she is speaking. Thus, that person is applying a negative face which is also known as the freedom of personal rights (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Hence, with reference to being polite, in order to be concerned with an addressee's face as well as protecting one's own rights, an individual needs to take into account both strategies of saving face by conducting positive and negative politeness strategies when necessary. Negative politeness strategies differ from positive

politeness strategies to such a degree that negative politeness strategies are conducted in order to perform a deference circumstance and save a speaker's negative face. It can occur when an interlocutor does not interfere with the addressee's freedom and action. Thus, this helps in minimising Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) towards the hearer which indirectly proposes the importance and relations between face and FTAs (Ismail, 2017). For instance, Al Afnan (2014) stated that this can commonly be seen in the workplace setting where professionalism is given a strong emphasis since hierarchy plays a vital role in communication. Wang Yue (2022) reiterates that both positive and negative politeness strategies can mitigate face-threatening acts and promote social harmony. The conversations gathered are analysed according to the strategies of positive and negative politeness proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987).

**Positive Politeness Strategies:**

1. Notice/attend to hearer's wants
2. Exaggerate interest/approval
3. Intensify interest
4. Use in-group identity markers
5. Seek agreement
6. Avoid disagreement
7. Presuppose/assert common ground
8. Joke

9. Assert knowledge of hearer's wants
10. Offer/promises
11. Be optimistic
12. Include both speaker and hearer in the activity
13. Give (or ask for) reasons
14. Assume/assert reciprocity
15. Give gifts to hearer

**Negative Politeness Strategies:**

1. Be conventionally indirect
2. Question, hedges
3. Be pessimistic
4. Minimise imposition
5. Give deference
6. Apologise
7. Impersonalise
8. State the imposition as a general rule
9. Normalize

10. Go on record as incurring a debt

### **1.5.3 Power Dynamics**

The power relationship between lecturers and students is a critical factor influencing communication strategies. Lecturers typically hold more power, which can affect the level of directness or indirectness they employ in their messages. Conversely, students often use more polite forms to show respect and deference to their lecturers' higher status. Digital communication platforms, such as WhatsApp, have become increasingly prevalent in educational settings. These platforms provide opportunities for enhanced communication and collaboration between lecturers and students. By analyzing the power dynamics within the WhatsApp discourse between lecturers and students, we can gain insights into how this mode of communication shapes the relationship between them and how it influences the distribution and exercise of power. Understanding the power dynamics in lecturer-student WhatsApp discourse is crucial for uncovering potential implications for teaching and learning. Furthermore, it can help identify any power imbalances or inequalities and inform strategies for creating a more equitable and inclusive learning environment. Additionally, examining the power dynamics within lecturer-student WhatsApp discourse can shed light on how communication technology impacts the traditional roles and authority of lecturers and students, as well as the negotiation of knowledge and expertise within the educational context.

### **1.5.4 Cultural Considerations**

Cultural factors play a significant role in shaping communication practices. In some cultures, the use of honorifics and formal language in lecturer-student communication is expected, while in

others, a more casual approach may be acceptable. The literature suggests that cultural norms significantly influence the choice of politeness strategies in WhatsApp interactions.

### **1.5.5 Non-Verbal Communication**

The use of emoticons and other non-verbal cues in WhatsApp messages can also convey politeness and affect the tone of the discourse. These cues can soften requests, show enthusiasm, or provide emotional support, thereby enriching the communication experience.

## **1.6 Thesis Statement**

This study explores how politeness strategies are employed within the power dynamics of lecturer-student interactions on WhatsApp, examining the ways in which these strategies facilitate or hinder effective communication and the maintenance of social harmony in an academic setting. It encapsulates the focus of the research on communication strategies and the balance of power in educational interactions through WhatsApp. It also implies an analysis of the effectiveness of these strategies in maintaining positive relationships between lecturers and students.

## CHAPTER TWO

### SITUATION REPORT AND FEEDBACK

#### 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we examine and analyse instances of situation report and feedback in lecturer-students WhatsApp communication. This chapter will be broadly divided into two parts: Situation Reports and Feedback. In each section, texts will be provided and analysed to ascertain politeness and power dynamics of selected screenshots through lexical and semantic analysis.

#### 2.2 Situation Report

A situation report refers to an analysis or examination of the politeness strategies used by both lecturers (teachers) and students when exchanging text messages via WhatsApp.

##### 2.2.1 Data Presentation And Analysis

*Student: good evening sir. Trust you are doing great this evening (9:30 PM)*

*Student: here is the situation report from today. Well, we started . the turn up wasn't really impressive sha. But a few persons came around. (9:31 PM)*

*Student: sir, the network here is quite unimpressive. I really apologize. (9:47 PM)*

*Lecturer: from the feedback I got you did great. (9:54 PM)*

*Lecturer: we will talk more by tomorrow. (9:55 PM)*

*Student: oh thank you. (10:12 PM)*

## **Background Information**

This is a conversation between a student and a lecturer, taking place late in the evening. The student initiates the conversation with a polite greeting and proceeds to provide a report on an event that occurred earlier that day. The student mentions that the attendance (“turn up”) was not as high as expected, but notes that some people did attend. Additionally, the student apologizes for the poor network quality, which may have affected communication or the event itself. The lecturer responds positively, acknowledging the student’s efforts and indicating that they have received good feedback about the student’s performance. The lecturer suggests a follow-up discussion the next day, likely to debrief the event in more detail and perhaps to discuss the network issues mentioned by the student.

## **Analysis**

### **Positive Politeness Strategies:**

The student greets the lecturer with *"Good evening sir"* (9:30 PM), showing respect and establishing a friendly tone.

The student uses an in-group marker *"sha"* (9:31 PM), indicating solidarity and closeness with the lecturer.

The lecturer praises the student, saying *"You did great"* (9:54 PM), giving a positive face to the student.

### **Negative Politeness Strategies:**

The student hedges the negative feedback by saying "*The turn up wasn't really impressive*" (9:31 PM), minimizing the face threat.

The lecturer uses an impersonal construction "*From the feedback I got*" (9:54 PM) to indirectly convey the positive feedback, reducing the imposition.

The student apologizes with "*I really apologize*" (9:47 PM), acknowledging the inconvenience caused to the lecturer's negative face.

### **Power Dynamics:**

The lecturer assumes a more authoritative stance by providing feedback and stating "*We will talk more by tomorrow*" (9:55 PM), exercising their institutional power.

However, the student feels comfortable enough to share candid feedback and use informal language like "*sha,*" suggesting a relatively casual rapport.

### **Face Concerns:**

The student's positive face is maintained through the lecturer's praise and willingness to discuss further. The student's use of apology and hedging, as well as the lecturer's indirect feedback, aims to respect the other's negative face by minimizing imposition.

The interaction showcases the use of politeness strategies by both individuals to manage their social roles and ensure a smooth exchange of information. These strategies foster a positive

relationship and help prevent any negative impact on each other's social standing during their conversation on WhatsApp.

## **Data 2**

*Student: good morning sir. (8:48 AM)*

*Student: pls sir, I am working on this now and I have a few questions. Should I use excel to do analysis or I should arrange them in excel for SPSS later? (8:49 AM)*

*Lecturer: good morning Victory. I think SPSS would be better. (9:00 AM)*

*Lecturer: will you be in school today? If yes, kindly let me know when you arrive. So I could install the SPSS software. (9:02 AM)*

*Lecturer: however, if you have the graph pad prism you can go ahead and use it (9:03 AM)*

## **Background information**

This is a conversation between a student and a lecturer conducted over WhatsApp, discussing the best approach for data analysis in the student's ongoing work. The student greets the lecturer and asks for advice on whether to use Excel for data analysis or to prepare the data in Excel for later use with SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). The lecturer responds by recommending SPSS as the better option for analysis and offers to install the software for the student if they will be on campus that day. Additionally, the lecturer suggests that if the student

has access to Graph Pad Prism, a scientific graphing, curve fitting, and statistics software, they can proceed to use it for their analysis.

## **Analysis**

### **Positive Politeness Strategies:**

The student greets the lecturer with "*Good morning sir*" (8:48 AM), displaying respect and acknowledging the lecturer's higher status.

The lecturer reciprocates by addressing the student as "*Victory*" (9:00 AM), using their first name to establish a friendly tone.

### **Negative Politeness Strategies:**

The student hedges their request by saying "*Pls sir, I am working on this now and I have a few questions*" (8:49 AM), minimizing the imposition on the lecturer.

The lecturer uses consultative devices like "*I think SPSS would be better*" (9:00 AM) and "*However, if you have the graph pad prism, you can go ahead and use it*" (9:03 AM), giving the student options rather than direct orders.

### **Power Dynamics:**

The lecturer initiates directives like "*Will you be in school today*" (9:02 AM) and "*If yes, kindly let me know when you arrive*" (9:02 AM), exercising their authority over the student's actions.

However, the student feels comfortable enough to ask follow-up questions like *"Will you be in school today"*, suggesting a relatively casual rapport.

### **Face Concerns:**

The lecturer's suggestions about using SPSS software and the student arriving at school show concern for the student's positive face (desire to be approved of) by providing guidance and accommodating their needs.

The student's hedging and polite language like *"Pls sir"* aim to respect the lecturer's negative face (desire for autonomy) by not imposing too much.

The conversation between the student and lecturer on WhatsApp is a clear example of how both parties tactfully use politeness strategies to respect each other's social roles and maintain a harmonious interaction, despite the power imbalance inherent in their relationship.

### **Data 3**

*Lecturer: will you be in s if yes, kindly let me know when you arrive so I can install the SPSS software. (9:02 AM)*

*Lecturer: however, if you have the graph pad prism you can go ahead and use it (9:03 AM)*

*Student: no I won't (replies 9:02 AM) (9:19 AM)*

*Student: my graph pad prism software is somehow faulty (9:19 AM)*

*Student: I'd just arrange it down for SPSS when I get to school tomorrow, you'd install the software for me, and I'd continue with it. (9:20 AM)*

*Lecturer: ok (9:40 AM)*

### **Background information**

This is a conversation between a lecturer and a student, focusing on the logistics of data analysis software installation and usage. The lecturer offers to install SPSS, a statistical analysis program, for the student if they are going to be on campus. They also suggest an alternative, Graph Pad Prism, which is another software for scientific graphing and statistics. The student responds that he will not be on campus and mentions an issue with his Graph Pad Prism software. They propose to prepare their data for SPSS and request the lecturer's assistance with the software installation the following day. The lecturer acknowledges this plan with a simple affirmation.

### **Analysis**

#### **Positive Politeness Strategies:**

The student uses an in-group identity marker by addressing the lecturer as "*Mr Asemota*" (9:02 AM, 9:03 AM), conveying a sense of familiarity and closeness.

#### **Negative Politeness Strategies:**

The lecturer uses consultative devices like "*However, if you have the graph pad prism, you can go ahead and use it*" (9:03 AM), giving the student options rather than direct orders, minimizing imposition.

The student hedges their response by saying *"My graph pad prism software is somehow faulty"* (9:19 AM), providing a reason for not using the software, rather than a direct refusal.

The student states *"I'd just arrange it down for SPSS"* (9:20 AM), leaving the decision up to the lecturer to install the software, avoiding presumption.

### **Power Dynamics:**

The lecturer initiates directives like *"Will you be in s"* (9:02 AM, likely short for "school") and *"If yes, kindly let me know when you arrive"* (9:02 AM), exercising their authority over the student's actions.

However, the student feels comfortable enough to provide a negative response *"No, I won't"* (9:19 AM), indicating a relatively casual rapport.

### **Face Concerns:**

The lecturer's suggestions about software options show concern for the student's positive face (desire to be approved of) by providing guidance and accommodating their needs.

The student's hedging and indirect refusal aim to respect the lecturer's negative face (desire for autonomy) by not imposing too much.

The interaction described utilizes a combination of positive and negative politeness strategies by both the lecturer and the student. This approach helps them manage the power imbalance between them, maintain a good relationship, and respect each other's social dignity, all within the context of digital communication on WhatsApp.

## 2.3 Feedback

Feedback refers to the information exchanged between lecturers (teachers) and students regarding their performance, understanding, or progress.

### 2.3.1 Data Presentation and Analysis

*Student: good morning Sir*

*Lecturer: Goodnews, good morning. Are we not suppose to meet today by 10AM?*

*Student: no sir, you didn't tell me.*

*Lecturer: I replied your message. Oh! It didn't send. The devil is a liar. Hope you know by Friday next week you have to submit your work?*

*Student: yes sir*

*Lecturer: tell the eight of you that by Monday, they should submit their work. Completely typed. We meet on Monday by 10AM to read it and do corrections and write abstract. Monday is okay right?*

*Student: yes sir. Should we type it or we should come with soft copy?*

*Lecturer: I cannot read from your phones na. Type completely and print it. I'll just be doing one or two corrections.*

*Student: okay sir. Thank you sir.*

*Lecturer: how is your spiritual life?*

*Student: we thank God sir.*

*Lecturer: well done my daughter.*

*Student: thank you sir. Bye.*

### **Background information**

This is between a student and a lecturer, discussing the scheduling and submission of academic work. It begins with a misunderstanding about a supposed meeting at 10 AM, which the student was unaware of due to an undelivered message from the lecturer. The lecturer then reminds the student of an upcoming deadline for work submission and instructs the student to inform their peers of the same. The lecturer specifies that the work should be typed and printed for review and correction during their next meeting. The lecturer also inquires about the student's spiritual well-being, to which the student responds positively. This part of the conversation indicates a personal rapport and concern for the student's overall well-being beyond academic performance. The lecturer's closing remark, "*well done my daughter,*" suggests a nurturing and supportive relationship.

## **Analysis**

### **Positive Politeness Strategies:**

The student addresses the professor as "*sir*" throughout the conversation, showing deference and respect.

The professor calls the student "*my daughter*," indicating closeness and in-group membership.

### **Negative Politeness Strategies:**

The student uses "*should*" rather than an imperative when asking about submission format, mitigating the imposition.

The professor uses "*we*" when discussing meeting times, reducing the force of the directive.

The professor provides explanations, such as "*I cannot read from your phones na*," to justify the requirement of typed and printed work.

### **Off-Record Strategies:**

The professor uses an idiom, "*The devil is a liar*," which is an off-record way of suggesting the student's earlier message didn't send successfully.

Additionally, the professor's question about the student's spiritual life seems to serve as a positive politeness strategy, establishing common ground and showing interest in the student's well-being beyond academics.

In summary, both individuals use different forms of politeness to keep their interaction respectful and friendly as they discuss and clarify the expectations and requirements of an assignment.

## **Data 5**

*Lecturer: here is the LIS 312 material. This will serve as a guide.*

*Student: ok Sir.*

*Student: good afternoon Sir... been a while sir. Sir, we will be having ur paper by 8AM tomorrow sir. (12:42 PM)*

*I would have scheduled a time for tutorial but I don't know how busy u would be. Please sir, we humbly asked for AOC in this regard sir. (12:44 PM)*

*Or is tutorial still feasible today? So I can organize a class? (12:45 PM)*

## **Background information**

This extract depicts a communication between a lecturer and a student regarding an academic course, LIS 312. The lecturer shares course material with the student, indicating that it should be used as a guide. The student acknowledges this and then proceeds to address the lecturer with a series of requests related to an upcoming examination. The student greets the lecturer and mentions that it has been some time since their last interaction. They inform the lecturer about the scheduled time for the lecturer's paper (exam) and express a desire to organize a tutorial session. The student is unsure about the lecturer's availability and is seeking the lecturer's Area of Concentration (AOC) or input on whether a tutorial session is possible before the exam. The student is willing to arrange a class if the tutorial is feasible on the same day. The conversation reflects the student's respect and formality in addressing the lecturer, as well as their proactive approach to organizing a study session for the benefit of themselves and possibly their peers.

## **Analysis**

### **Positive Politeness Strategies:**

The student addresses the professor as "*sir*" multiple times, showing deference and respect.

The student uses the informal greeting "*Good afternoon sir...Been a while sir*" to establish a friendly tone and indicate they have an ongoing relationship.

The student uses emojis and expresses gratitude "*Please sir, we humbly asked for AOC in this regard sir,*" indicating appreciation for the professor's consideration; attending to the other's interests, needs, and wants.

### **Negative Politeness Strategies:**

The student uses modals like "*would*" and "*can*" when making requests, mitigating the imposition.

The student asks "*Or is tutorial still feasible today? So I can organize a class?*" instead of directly requesting a tutorial, avoiding presumption.

The professor provides a detailed material in PDF form, which can be seen as providing reasoning for their requirements.

### **Off-Record Strategies:**

The student uses the expression "*Been a while sir*" as an off-record hint that they haven't been in touch recently

Additionally, the student's mention of "*we*" when discussing the paper submission suggests they are representing a group, which could be seen as a positive politeness strategy of including both

the speaker and the addressee in the activity (positive politeness strategy 6 - including both speaker and hearer in the activity).

Overall, both parties employ various politeness strategies to maintain a respectful and cordial relationship while discussing academic matters and making requests.

### **Data 6**

*Lecturer: congratulations my people... (3:38 PM)*

*It's only Ibeh that have requested me to sign on his shirt today... (3:39 PM)*

*Let's hope for good results... congratulations once again. (3:40 PM)*

*Student 1: where are you Sir (3:44 PM)*

*Lecturer: office as usual (3:49 PM)*

*Student 2: thank you so much our daddy (9:42 PM)*

### **Background information**

The conversation is a celebratory exchange between a lecturer and students, likely occurring after a significant academic event, such as the completion of exams. The lecturer expresses congratulations to the students and mentions a specific student, Ibeh, who has asked for a signature on their shirt, which is a common tradition in some cultures during celebratory academic events. The lecturer's message implies a sense of camaraderie and pride in the students' accomplishments and a hopeful outlook for their results. Student1 inquires about the

lecturer's whereabouts, possibly to join in the celebration or to get their own shirt signed, to which the lecturer responds that they are in their office. Student2 expresses gratitude later in the evening, referring to the lecturer affectionately as "*our daddy*," which suggests a close and respectful relationship between the students and the lecturer. This exchange highlights the positive rapport and mutual respect between the lecturer and the students.

## **Analysis**

### **Positive Politeness Strategies:**

The lecturer named "*Dr Wisdom Animal Science*" uses the phrase "*Congratulations my people...*" repeatedly, expressing in-group membership and claiming a common ground with the recipients, which is a positive politeness strategy.

The use of the term "*Sir*" when addressing the person named ["~*COIN*"] is a form of exaggerated approval and respect, another positive politeness strategy.

Edmond's message "*Thank you so much our daddy*" expresses appreciation and endearment, which falls under the positive politeness strategy of making the recipient feel part of an in-group.

### **Negative Politeness Strategies:**

The use of indirect language like "*Let's hope for good results...*" avoids imposing directly on the recipient, employing a negative politeness strategy.

The question "*Where are you Sir?*" from ["~*COIN*"] is a polite way of requesting information rather than making a direct demand, exemplifying a negative politeness strategy.

Off-record Strategies: The statement "*It's only Ibeh that have requested me to sign on his shirt today...*" is ambiguous and does not directly convey the purpose or context, employing an off-record strategy to avoid imposing on the recipients.

## CHAPTER THREE

### REQUESTS AND INFORMALITY

#### 3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we examine and analyse instances of requests and informality in lecturer-students WhatsApp communication. This chapter will be broadly divided into two parts: Requests and Informality. In each section, texts will be provided and analysed to ascertain politeness and power dynamics of selected screenshots through lexical and semantic analysis.

#### 3.2 Requests

Requests refer to expressions where one party asks the other to perform an action, provide information, or fulfill a need. Politeness in requests involves framing the request in a respectful and considerate manner.

##### 3.2.1 Data Presentation and Analysis

*Student: good morning, Sir. My name is Goodness. One of the project student of Prof. Enofe. He referred me to you for the supervision of my project. (11:11 AM)*

*Student: good evening, Sir. (7:48 PM)*

*Lecturer: I will be in school tomorrow. See me by 9AM (8:52 PM)*

*Student: okay sir. (12:03 AM)*

*Student: good morning, Sir. I'm at your office but it's locked. (9:34 AM)*

#### Background information

The conversation is between a student named Goodness and a lecturer. It begins with Goodness introducing themselves as one of Professor Enofe's project students and stating that they have

been referred to the lecturer for project supervision. This indicates that the lecturer is to take over as the supervisor for Goodness's project. Goodness follows up in the evening with a polite greeting, to which the lecturer responds by setting up a meeting for the next day at 9 AM. The student acknowledges this late at night, showing their commitment to the project and respect for the lecturer's time. The next morning, Goodness arrives at the lecturer's office for the scheduled meeting but finds the office locked. A message is sent to inform the lecturer of their arrival and to seek further instructions since the lecturer is not present as expected. This exchange showcases the formalities of academic communication and the importance of punctuality and reliability in student-lecturer interactions.

## **Analysis**

### **Positive Politeness Strategies:**

Use of honorifics like "*Sir*" conveys respect and attends to the positive face wants of the addressee.

Stating one's name "*My name is Goodness*" helps establish common ground and openness. Greetings like "*Good morning*" and "*Good evening*" signal friendliness and attend to positive face.

### **Negative Politeness Strategies:**

Impersonalizing through using passives like "*I will be in school tomorrow*" and "*See me by 9am*" rather than direct demands avoids bluntness.

Explaining the purpose "*He referred me to you for the supervision of my project*" provides reasons to minimize imposition.

Vague language like "*See me by 9am*" rather than more imposing imperatives reduces face threats.

The student employs various positive politeness tactics like honorifics, greetings, and stating their name to establish rapport and show respect. This attends to the lecturer's positive face desires.

The lecturer uses impersonalizing language, explanations, and hedging to reduce the imposition of their directives on the student's negative face - the desire to not be imposed upon.

In the interaction between the student and lecturer, each employs distinct courtesy tactics as described by Brown and Levinson to ensure the exchange proceeds seamlessly, honoring the social needs of the other. Employing respectful language is key to fostering a harmonious rapport, which is vital for effective academic guidance.

## **Text 2**

### **Background Information**

This conversation is between a student and a lecturer, where the student greets the lecturer in the morning, and the lecturer responds in the evening. The lecturer expresses gratitude to the student, named Ify, for some pictures, related to a personal event, and offers a blessing. The lecturer then shares personal news about attending a family wedding in Uyo, detailing the schedule of the marriage events, including the introduction ceremony, traditional rites, and church wedding. This sharing of personal information suggests a close relationship between the lecturer and the student. Finally, the lecturer inquires about the student's exams, indicating concern for the student's academic progress. This part of the conversation reflects the lecturer's role as a mentor and their

interest in the student's well-being beyond the classroom. This exchange showcases the many-sided nature of lecturer-student relationships, where academic and personal spheres often intersect, especially in settings where communication extends beyond formal educational contexts.

### **3.3 Informality**

Informality refers to the degree of casualness or relaxed language use in interactions between lecturers (teachers) and students. It contrasts with formal language and reflects the level of familiarity and comfort between the parties involved.

#### **3.3.1 Data Presentation and Analysis**

*Student: good morning Sir (7:18 AM)*

*Lecturer: good evening Ify. Thank you so much for the pictures and God bless you (7:14 PM)*

*Student: amen you're welcome Sir (7:15 PM)*

*Student: how was the journey Sir? (7:15 PM)*

*Lecturer: it went well by God's grace. Currently in Uyo now for the marriage of my cousin we just finished the introduction not quite long. We shall have the traditional rite tomorrow while the church wedding is slated for Saturday (7:18 PM)*

*Lecturer: I trust that your exams are going on fine (7:18 PM)*

#### **Analysis**

**Opening greetings:** the use of "Good morning Sir" and "Good evening [name]" shows positive politeness by attending to the addressee's positive face (the desire to be appreciated).

**Expressing gratitude:** *“thank you so much for the pictures and God bless you”* demonstrates positive politeness by showing appreciation and approval towards the addressee.

**Use of religious expressions:** phrases like *“God bless you”* and *“by God’s grace”* may be seen as positive politeness strategies, involving claims of common ground (shared religious beliefs) to attend to the addressee’s positive face.

**Offering explanations:** providing context about the journey and upcoming marriage ceremony unprompted can be seen as a negative politeness strategy, attending to the addressee’s negative face (desire for freedom of action) by giving reasons and avoiding coerciveness.

**Inquiring about the addressee:** the question *“how was the journey Sir?”* shows positive politeness by attending to the addressee’s positive face through expressing interest in their well-being.

**Expressing concern:** *“I trust that your exams are going on fine”* demonstrates positive politeness by attending to the addressee’s positive face, showing interest in their affairs.

The dialogue overall utilizes a combination of affirmative and defensive courtesy methods to uphold a respectful and polite demeanor. The application of titles (“Sir”), expressions of appreciation, and questions regarding the other’s welfare cater to affirmative social requirements, whereas justifications and the absence of pressure cater to defensive social necessities.

#### **Text 4**

##### **Background Information**

The conversation you’ve provided is between a student and a lecturer, focusing on the process of selecting a project topic. The student greets the lecturer in the morning and later inquires about how to find project topics. The lecturer responds with a term of endearment, indicating a friendly

rapport, and advises the student to look for topics in academic journals and online resources, specifically mentioning Google as a tool for research. This exchange highlights the mentorship role of the lecturer in guiding students through the initial stages of academic research. It also reflects the common practice of using scholarly journals and internet searches as starting points for finding suitable research topics.

### **Data 3**

*Student: good morning Ma (11:43 AM)*

*Lecturer: good morning/afternoon (2:55 PM)*

*Student: please ma I will like to know how project topics are gotten (7:15 PM)*

*Lecturer: okay love (10:13 PM)*

*Lecturer: from journals and from online...Google (10:14 PM)*

### **Analysis**

#### **Positive Politeness Strategies:**

Both individuals use polite greetings like "*Good morning ma*" and "*Good morning/afternoon*" to attend to each other's positive face needs of being appreciated and respected.

The use of endearments like "*love*" can also be seen as a positive politeness strategy to establish rapport and indicate closeness.

#### **Negative Politeness Strategies:**

The use of "*please*" in "*Please ma, I will like to know how project topics are gotten*" is a negative politeness strategy to mitigate imposition and show deference.

Providing an explanation ("*From journals*" and "*And from online... Google*") is another negative politeness strategy, giving reasons to avoid seeming too direct or presumptuous.

### **Power Dynamics:**

The use of "*ma*" by one party suggests a potential difference in status or age, where they may be showing deference to the other person. However, the dynamics are not entirely clear from this limited context.

The use of the endearment "*love*" could indicate a closer relationship or familiarity, suggesting membership in the same in-group and reducing the need for extreme formality.

This conversation employs positive and negative politeness strategies, with some indication of differing power dynamics or age/status differences based on the use of "*ma*." The endearment "*love*" also suggests a level of closeness or solidarity between the individuals within their shared in-group context.

### **Text 4**

**Background Information:** This conversation features a student and a lecturer exchanging greetings and personal updates. The lecturer initiates the conversation with a friendly and informal greeting, asking about the student's well-being. The student responds with a correction to a typo, affirming that they are fine, and then remarks on the time that has passed since their last interaction, inquiring about the lecturer's well-being in return. The lecturer replies with an informal and colloquial tone, indicating that she is fine and currently waiting for a supervisor to review work and provide feedback for corrections. This suggests that the lecturer is involved in a

supervisory or collaborative role, possibly related to academic research or project work, and is in the process of refining this work based on feedback. This reflects a casual and friendly rapport between the student and the lecturer, with the student showing concern for the lecturer's well-being and the lecturer sharing a brief update on their professional activities.

## **Data**

*Lecturer: Good morning Bro how are you doing? (9:30 PM)*

*Student: good morning ma i'm very mine (11:48 AM)*

*Student: \*fine (10:21 PM)*

*Student: Ma it's been a while (10:21 PM)*

*Student: I hope you've been fine? (10:21 PM)*

*Lecturer: yes ooo! Waiting for supervisor to read the work and send for corrections (10:52 PM)*

## **Analysis**

**Positive politeness strategies:** used to show friendliness and attend to the other's positive face include:

Using informal greetings like "*Good Morning Bro*" to establish a casual, friendly tone.

Inquiring "*How are you doing?*" to show interest in the other person's wellbeing.

Using simple agreements like "*I'm very mine*" and "fine" to align with the other.

**Negative politeness strategies:** to avoid imposing or being too direct include:

The vague statement "*Ma it's been a while*" rather than directly questioning the delay or absence.

The polite hope "*I hope you've been fine!*" rather than aggressively demanding an explanation.

There are also some signs of positive impoliteness or banter allowed between close relations, such as the casual "*Bro*" greeting and brief responses that assume shared understanding.

The interaction aims to maintain face needs through casual greetings, inquiring about well-being, and avoiding overly direct questioning - politeness strategies fitting for an informal, friendly exchange where the speakers have an established rapport.

## **Text 5**

### **Background Information**

This is between a student and a lecturer discussing the student's research project. Initially, the student submits chapter 2 of their work to the lecturer for review. The lecturer provides feedback, pointing out that the student has used a list format in the literature review section, which is generally discouraged. The lecturer instructs the student to correct this and submit the first three chapters for further review.

On the following day, the student inquires about the possibility of using both primary and secondary data for their research. The lecturer advises against it, suggesting that at the student's current academic level, it may not be appropriate to use both types of data. The student acknowledges this guidance with a simple "*okay sir.*" This highlights the guidance process in academic research, where students seek approval and advice from their lecturers on methodological approaches. It also reflects the hierarchical nature of the student-lecturer relationship, where the lecturer's expertise and experience guide the student's work.

## Data

*Student: good afternoon sir, this is my chapter 2 (1:18 PM)*

*Lecturer: in section 2.11 and some others, I observed you are itemizing/listing items in the review of literature. Please, this is not encouraged in review of literature. After effecting necessary corrections in the chapter 2, submit chapters 1,2 and 3. (2:37 PM)*

*Student: okay sir (5:32 PM)*

*The next day...*

*Student: Good evening sir can I use both primary and secondary data for my research sir (4:32 PM)*

*Lecturer: at this your level I will say no (4:58 PM)*

*Student: okay sir (5:18 PM)*

## Analysis

**Positive Politeness Strategies:** The student opens with "*Good afternoon sir, This is my chapter 2*" - a polite greeting and clear statement, showing deference to the professor's higher status through the nominal "*sir*".

The professor responds with feedback, including "*In section 2.11 and some others, I observed you are itemizing/listing items in the review of the literature. Please, this is not encouraged in review of the literature.*" This direct criticism could be seen as a face-threatening act towards the student's positive face (desire to be approved of).

However, the professor mitigates this by using *"Please"* and providing an explanation, as well as giving the student clear instructions to *"submit chapters 1, 2 and 3"* after corrections. This helps soften the face threat.

The student acknowledges the feedback politely with *"Okay sir"*, maintaining deference.

Later, the student initiates with *"Good evening sir, Can I use both primary and secondary data for my research sir?"* This repeats the polite greeting and nominal, seeking permission.

The professor's response *"At this your level I will say no"* is quite direct and could threaten the student's negative face (autonomy), as it curtails their freedom to utilize data sources.

However, the professor does not provide an explanation, hedge or polite mitigation of this directive refusal, which heightens the face threat.

The student simply responds *"Okay sir"* again, accepting the professor's decision without dispute to maintain deference and avoid greater face threats.

In essence, the student regularly uses courteous politeness tactics such as salutations and titles to acknowledge the professor's superior rank. Conversely, the professor's approach is a blend of tactful criticism and potentially discourteous directness. Offering critiques with reasons helps maintain dignity, yet outright rejection without reasons may jeopardize the student's need for respect. Given the disparity in status, it is often expected that those in higher positions bear a greater responsibility to be polite.

## Text 6

**Background Information:** This interaction is an academic exchange between a student and a lecturer regarding the student's research project. The lecturer provides guidance on what the student should use for their Chapter 3 and requests the submission of the work by the evening. The student acknowledges this directive and greets the lecturer, indicating that Chapter 3 is already completed and that they are currently making corrections to Chapters 1 and 2. The lecturer advises the student to use the provided information to make modifications to their work before submitting it and emphasizes the importance of referring to a specific resource or guideline, which is not disclosed in the extract. The student confirms understanding and agreement with a simple "*alright sir.*"

This showcases the typical mentorship process in academia where lecturers provide students with instructions and resources to aid in the completion of their research projects. It also reflects the iterative nature of academic work, where drafts are reviewed and revised multiple times before final submission. The lecturer's responses guide the student in refining their work, and the student's responses show respect and compliance with the lecturer's advice

## Data

*Lecturer: use this for your chapter 3 (10:44 AM)*

*Lecturer: submit your work this evening. (10:46 AM)*

*Student: alright sir (11:30 AM)*

*Student: good morning sir (11:30 AM)*

*Lecturer: good morning. (11:35 AM)*

*Student: Sir, I've done my chapter 3 already. It's just my chapter 1&2 i'm trying to correct sir (11:39 AM)*

*Lecturer: use that, to make modifications to it, before you send it. (11:40 AM)*

*Lecturer: refer to this please (11:41 AM)*

*Student: alright sir (11:41 AM)*

*Lecturer: yeah... (12:10 PM)*

## **Analysis**

### **1. Identify the face-threatening acts (FTAs):**

The student is asking for help with revising a chapter (threat to the teacher's negative face - imposing on them)

The teacher is providing directives to the student, like "*Use that to make modifications*" and "*Focus on the four first...*" (threat to the student's negative face - constraining their actions)

### **2. Determine the weightiness of the FTAs based on three factors:**

a) Social distance between participants - They seem to have a teacher-student relationship, indicating some social distance.

b) Relative power - The teacher likely has more power/authority in this academic context.

c) Ranking of the imposition - Revising work and following directives can be seen as moderate impositions.

### **3. Politeness Strategies:**

Positive Politeness Strategy - Use of respect markers like "*Sir*" by the student. The use of positive politeness strategies like emojis helps maintain a friendly tone despite the potential face threats.

Negative Politeness Strategy - Indirect language like "*Refer to this please*" instead of a direct command.

Hedging language like "*I know...*" and "*Will do that...*" to soften directives

### **4. Evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies:**

The frequent use of "*Sir*" and other respect markers indicates the student is oriented towards the teacher's positive face and power differential. The teacher employs more direct language, reflecting their higher power status, but still uses some indirectness and hedging to mitigate face threats.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FACE CONCERNS

#### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we examine and analyse instances of face concern in lecturer-students WhatsApp communication. In this section, texts will be provided and analysed to ascertain politeness and power dynamics of selected screenshots through lexical and semantic analysis.

#### 4.2 Face Concern

Face refers to an individual's social identity, self-image, and the desire to maintain positive interactions. Face concern involves being mindful of how our words and actions affect others' face needs. In teacher-student interactions, power imbalances exist due to the teacher's authority. Teachers hold institutional power (grading, evaluation) and social status

##### Text 1

**Background Information:** This conversation is between a lecturer and a student, who seems to hold a representative role, indicated by the term "Mr Rep." The lecturer inquires about the student's health, suggesting that the student was previously unwell and is expressing hope that the student's condition has improved. The student responds affirmatively, indicating his is feeling better but still plan to continue with their medication. This demonstrates the lecturer's concern for the student's well-being and the student's respect in updating the lecturer about their health status.

#### **4.2.1 Data Presentation and Analysis**

*Lecturer: Mr Rep, how are you now? Hope you are feeling better (9:01 AM)*

*Lecturer: Morning (9:01 AM)*

*Student: Morning sir (9:08 AM)*

*Student: I am feeling better sir (9:09 AM)*

*Student: but would still use the drugs I got (9:09 PM)*

#### **Analysis**

##### **Positive Politeness Strategies:**

Both parties use polite greetings like "*Morning sir*" to attend to each other's positive face needs of being respected and appreciated.

##### **Negative Politeness Strategies**

There are some attempts to mitigate imposition or discomfort, such as using the hedging phrase "*would still*" when mentioning using drugs.

##### **Power Dynamics**

One person is addressed as "Mr. Rep" while the other is addressed more formally as "sir," suggesting an imbalance in power or authority levels that impacts the politeness strategies employed.

### **In-Group Markers:**

The parties seem familiar, addressing each other informally which reduces the need for extreme formality.

### **Face-Saving Strategies:**

Mentioning getting drugs could be seen as a potential face-threatening act, but it's mitigated slightly by adding "*I got*" rather than owning full responsibility directly.

There are some polite greetings, minor hedging, and avoidance of directly stating sensitive topics overtly - common strategies people use to negotiate face needs and potential threats during conversations involving imbalances of power or delicate subjects.

### **Text 2**

**Background Information:** This is between a student named Monday Ogbagiri and a lecturer. The student identifies themselves as a student of Prof. Omoregbe and is seeking to know the lecturer's availability for the following day. The lecturer responds by instructing the student to send their work online, indicating that he will not be available in school the next day. The student acknowledges this and asks for confirmation if they can send their work through the current communication channel, presumably WhatsApp. The lecturer affirms this, asking the student to proceed with sending the work. This conversation highlights the use of digital platforms for academic communication, allowing for flexibility in how and when academic work is submitted and reviewed. It also reflects the evolving nature of lecturer-student interactions, where physical presence is not always necessary, and the importance of clear and timely communication in managing academic responsibilities.

## **Data**

*Student: good evening sir; it's Monday Ogbagiri, Prof Omoregbe student. I don't know if you'll be available tomorrow. (7:24 PM)*

*Lecturer: send your work to me online (10:02 PM)*

*Lecturer: I won't be in school tomorrow (10:02 PM)*

*Student: alright sir (10:02 PM)*

*Student: can I send it here? (10:03 PM)*

*Lecturer: pls do sir (10:04 PM)*

*Student: alright sir (10:05 PM)*

## **Analysis**

### **Positive Politeness Strategies:**

The student uses positive politeness strategies to attend to the professor's positive face (desire to be appreciated) by showing deference:

*"Good evening sir"*

*"Alright sir" (repeated twice)*

*"Pls do sir"*

### **Negative Politeness Strategies:**

The student also uses negative politeness strategies to attend to the professor's negative face (desire for freedom of action and non-imposition):

Asking for permission: "*Can I send it here?*"

Using hedge "*I don't you if...*" to soften the request.

### **Off-record Politeness:**

The message "*I won't be in school tomorrow*" is an off-record way of implying the professor shouldn't expect the student's work submission on that day without directly stating it.

### **Power Dynamics:**

The professor holds a position of authority and higher power over the student, which affects the level of politeness employed by the student to show respect and deference.

The student uses various politeness strategies to mitigate potential face threats to the professor, demonstrating an understanding of the power dynamic and the need to attend to both positive and negative face wants in this academic context.

### **Text 3**

**Background Information:** The student is expressing gratitude to the lecturer for his assistance with academic work. The student mentions having successfully presented at a pre-data seminar, which seems to have gone well. The lecturer responds positively, sharing that he had just returned from the hospital where he was previously admitted. Despite the personal health challenge, the lecturer expresses gratitude for the student's successful presentation.

The student, upon hearing about the lecturer's hospitalization, expresses concern for the lecturer's health and offers a sympathetic response. The student also affirms his belief in God's

faithfulness, in relation to the success of the seminar. This conversation demonstrates the mutual respect and concern that can exist in the student-lecturer relationship. It also highlights the personal nature of communication that can occur within academic settings.

## **Data**

*Student: good evening sir; thank you for all your contributions to my work!! I have presented the pre-data seminar and was amazing... (6:00 PM)*

*Lecturer: good to hear (7:23 PM)*

*Lecturer: I just home from the hospital (7:24 PM)*

*Lecturer: I was on admission before (7:24 PM)*

*Lecturer: thank God for the success (7:24 PM)*

*Student: ohhh; sorry sir, hope you're better now? (7:26 PM)*

*Student: yea; God is faithful. (7:26 PM)*

## **Analysis**

### **Positive Politeness Strategies:**

The student attends to the professor's positive face (desire to be appreciated) through expressions of gratitude and acknowledging the professor's contributions:

*"Good evening sir; thank you for all your contributions to my work!!"*

The student reciprocates by showing interest and concern for the lecturer's well-being:

*"Ohhh; sorry sir, Hope you're better now?"*

**Off-record Politeness:**

The lecturer's message "*I just got home from the hospital*" and "*I was on admission before*" are off-record statements implying health issues without directly stating them, potentially to avoid imposition or discomfort.

**Power Dynamics:**

The student continues to use "*sir*" and polite language to show respect for the professor's authority, while the professor's tone is more relaxed, suggesting a closer relationship or reduced power distance in this particular context.

**Solidarity and In-group Markers:**

Both parties use religious expressions like "*Thank God*" and "*God is faithful,*" indicating shared beliefs or cultural backgrounds that contribute to a sense of solidarity and rapport.

**Face Concerns:**

The professor's expression of concern ("*Hope you're better now?*") demonstrates an effort to attend to the student's face wants, specifically their desire to be cared for and have their well-being considered.

This exchange exhibits a mix of positive politeness strategies, in-group markers, and expressions of concern, reflecting a closer relationship or shared context where extreme formality may not be necessary. The power dynamic is still acknowledged through some deferential language, but the tone is more relaxed and focused on mutual well-being.

## Text 4

### Background Information

The message from the lecturer is a heartfelt plea to their students, emphasizing the importance of completing administrative tasks such as paying school fees and registering for the academic session. The lecturer warns against relying on late or “*backend*” registration, highlighting that failing to register on time could have serious consequences, potentially jeopardizing the students’ academic progress. The lecturer’s tone is caring and concerned, yet firm in the urgency of the message, and it’s clear they want to prevent any negative outcomes for their students. The responses from the students show appreciation and affection in return. Student1 expresses gratitude and hope for financial provision, while Student2 reciprocates the lecturer’s love.

### Data

*Lecturer: Happy Sunday to you guys, I would like to plead and beg you people to please utilize this extension period and pay your school fees, and get registered. It is no longer business as usual that you will do backend registration. It will be painful if my beloved students fall victim to turning their academic session they’ve laboured for to leave. A word is enough for the wise. Love you guys! (10:01 AM)*

*Student1: alright.... thank you Sir God will provide (10:02 AM)*

*Student2: we love you too sir (10:02 AM)*

## **Analysis**

### **Positive Politeness Strategies:**

Use of endearment and in-group identity markers like *"you guys"*, *"my beloved students"*, *"Love you guys!"* - These convey closeness, approval, and inclusion.

Optimism and encouragement with *"God will provide"*, *"I wish you all success...best of God!"* - Shows care for the students' wants/well-being.

### **Negative Politeness Strategies:**

Hedging with *"I would like to plead and beg you people to..."* - Mitigates the force of the request through tentativeness.

Impersonalizing with *"It will be painful if my beloved students fall victim..."* - Avoids direct statement like *"You will suffer if..."*

Using plural pronouns like *"you people"*, *"you all"* - Avoids singling out individuals and reduces threat.

Giving deference with *"Thank you Sir"* - Shows respect towards the professor's higher position.

The lecturer employs positive politeness to build rapport and closeness with students, while negative strategies reduce imposition and potential face threats from directives. Judicious use of both allows delivering important information comfortably.

The student responses like *"God will provide"*, *"We love you too sir"* reciprocate the positive face needs, indicating the politeness strategies are effective for this context.

In essence, the lecturer leverages various politeness tactics suggested by Brown and Levinson to get the message across while attending to the students' face wants and power dynamic. This illustrates applying the theory's principles for smooth classroom communication.

### **Text 5**

**Background Information:** The student sends a polite reminder to the lecturer about a class scheduled for the next day at 10 AM, expressing gratitude and respect. The lecturer replies in the morning, informing the student that the class will not take place due to two meetings scheduled for the same time. The student acknowledges the lecturer's message in the afternoon, indicating they have received and understood the update.

### **Data**

*Student: Good morning, Dr ma'am. I kindly want to remind you of our class tomorrow by 10AM.*

*Thanks ma'am. (8:14 AM)*

*Lecturer: Good morning. Please our class will not hold. I have two meetings tomorrow (10:58 AM)*

*Student: okay ma (3:12 PM)*

### **Analysis**

#### **Positive Politeness Strategies:**

Greeting with "*Good morning Dr. ma'am*" to show respect and establish a friendly tone.

Using the honorific "*Dr. ma'am*" frequently to show deference and attend to the recipient's positive face wants.

### **Negative Politeness Strategies:**

Using "*kindly want to remind*" rather than a direct imperative when mentioning class, minimizing the imposition.

Providing explanations like "*I have two meetings tomorrow*" for changing class plans, rather than an abrupt statement.

Using "*please*" as a mitigating softener when informing about the class cancellation.

The use of honorifics, greetings, minimizing imposition through phrasing, and giving reasons help maintain politeness and show respect for the lecturer's face needs within this educational context.

### **Text 6**

**Background Information:** The conversation you've shared is between a student and a lecturer, where the student initiates contact, possibly to discuss a project, but the interaction takes an unexpected turn. The student greets the lecturer in the afternoon and identifies themselves, which is a common practice for students when they want to discuss academic matters. The lecturer acknowledges the student's message with a brief "ok," indicating that they have read the message. The student asks about the lecturer's well-being, a question that might be considered informal or personal in some academic contexts. The lecturer expresses disapproval of the

student's casual inquiry, suggesting it's inappropriate given their relationship. The student quickly apologizes, clarifying their role as the lecturer's project student, perhaps to justify the personal nature of their question. The lecturer continues to express disapproval, indicating that being a project student does not warrant such personal questions. The student apologizes again, showing respect and acknowledging the lecturer's perspective. The lecturer instructs the student to meet them at the department at 10 am the following day, likely to discuss the project or the student's conduct.

This exchange highlights the importance of understanding the boundaries of formal communication in academic settings, especially regarding the student-teacher dynamic. It also underscores the need for clear and respectful communication from both parties.

### **Data**

*Student: Good afternoon sir This is [name] (1:09 PM)*

*Lecturer: ok (2:46 PM)*

*Student: how is everything sir? (4:47 PM)*

*Lecturer: why asking me such derailed question (7:43 PM)*

*Student: so sorry sir (7:45 PM)*

*Student: am your project student sir (7:46 PM)*

*Lecturer: and u think that should give u reasons to be asking me such question (7:48 PM)*

*Student: am so sorry sir (7:49 PM)*

*Lecturer: meet me by 10am at the dept tomorrow (9:59 PM)*

## Analysis

Arowosegbe Henry greets with *"Good afternoon sir"*, which is a polite opener employing positive politeness by showing respect and deference. However, Henry then asks *"How is everything sir?"*, which seems fairly innocuous but sets up an expectation of polite small talk before getting to the point of the interaction.

The professor's response of *"Why asking me such derailed question"* is quite impolite. It flouts the theory by not answering the expected greeting question. It threatens the student's positive face want to be approved of by dismissing the polite attempt at conversation.

Henry responds with *"So sorry sir"* and *"Am your project student sir"*, employing positive politeness strategies like apologizing and claiming the professor's higher in-group status. However, the professor again responds discourteously with *"And u think that should give u reasons to be asking me such question"*, which condescendingly questions Henry's face wants and flouts the theory again.

Henry apologizes again with *"Am so sorry sir"*, trying to restore the professor's positive face that was threatened by the student's perceived impolite questioning.

Finally, the professor issues the very impolite directive *"Meet me by 10am at the dept tomorrow"* without any polite mitigation or face-saving attempt. This is a risky face-threatening act to the student's negative face want for autonomy.

Overall, the professor violates several key tenets of Brown and Levinson's politeness theory by frequently threatening the student's positive and negative face wants without any apparent attempt at polite mitigation or redress. The student tries to employ positive politeness strategies

but fails to satisfactorily restore politeness in this awkward interaction lacking mutual face-saving attempts.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSION**

This paper explores how politeness strategies are employed in lecturer-student interactions on WhatsApp, examining the dynamics of power and the maintenance of social harmony within an academic context. The theoretical framework is based on Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory, which analyzes how individuals use linguistic strategies to maintain face (positive and negative) and manage social relationships.

The research methodology involved collecting data from WhatsApp conversations between lecturers and students at the University of Benin. A qualitative analysis was conducted on 18 chat events to identify the use of positive and negative politeness strategies, as outlined by Brown and Levinson.

The literature review covers key concepts such as the affordances of the WhatsApp platform, power dynamics in academic settings, and cultural considerations influencing politeness norms. It highlights the role of politeness strategies in mitigating face-threatening acts (FTAs) and promoting social harmony.

The data analysis provides insights into how lecturers and students navigate power imbalances and face needs through their choice of language and communication strategies on WhatsApp. Several examples illustrate the use of positive politeness tactics, such as expressing solidarity,

attending to the other's interests, and claiming common ground. Negative politeness strategies, such as hedging, being indirect, and minimizing imposition, are also observed.

The findings reveal that both lecturers and students employ a range of politeness strategies to maintain a respectful and harmonious relationship. Students often use honorifics, greetings, and deferential language to attend to lecturers' positive face needs, acknowledging their higher status. Conversely, lecturers may use indirectness, explanations, and consultative devices to mitigate face threats when making requests or providing feedback.

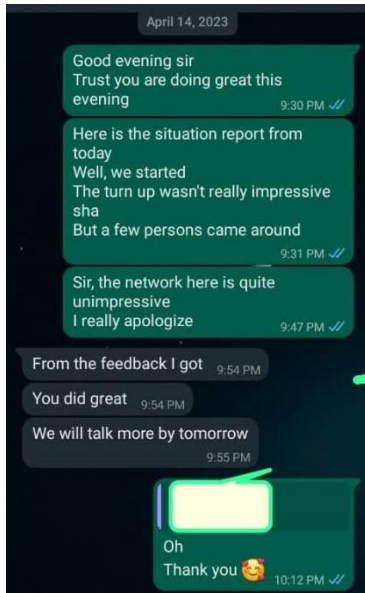
The study also explores how power dynamics and contextual factors, such as academic context, social norms, and institutional hierarchies, influence the choice and intensity of politeness strategies employed. It highlights the delicate balance between attending to face needs and exercising authority within the educational setting.

Furthermore, the analysis sheds light on the role of non-verbal cues, such as emoticons and the use of informal language, in conveying politeness and fostering rapport within WhatsApp interactions.

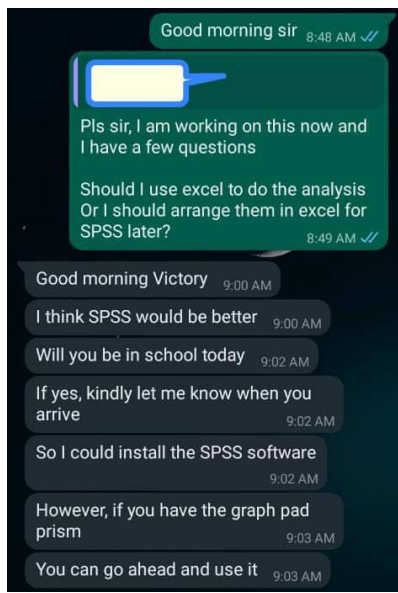
The research underscores the importance of politeness strategies in facilitating effective communication and maintaining positive relationships between lecturers and students, even in digital environments. By employing appropriate linguistic strategies, both parties can navigate potential face threats and promote an inclusive and respectful learning environment.

Overall, this study contributes to our understanding of the intricate interplay between politeness, power dynamics, and the use of technology in academic contexts. It provides valuable insights for educators, students, and policymakers seeking to enhance communication practices and foster a positive educational experience.

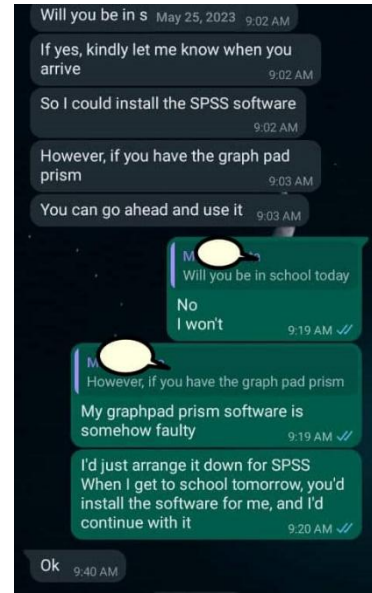
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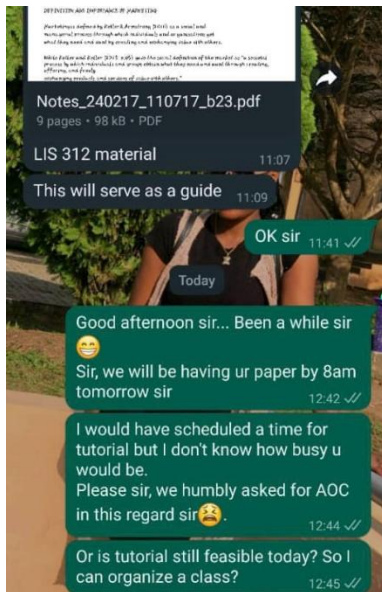
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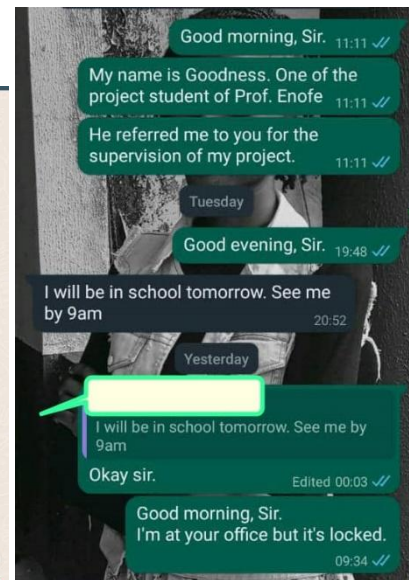
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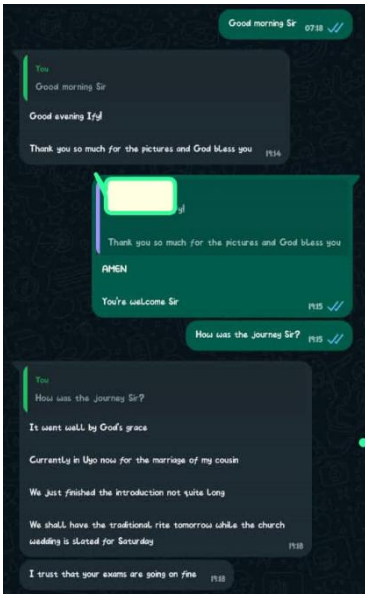
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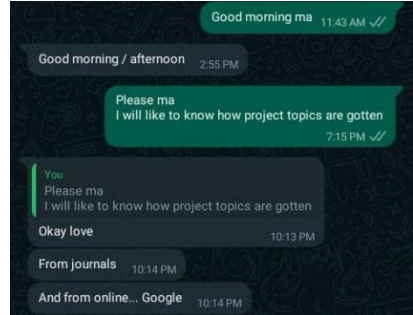
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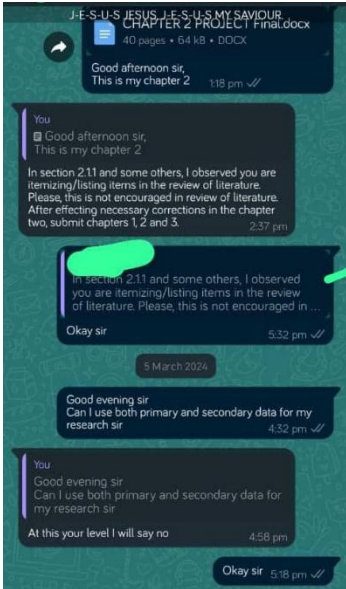


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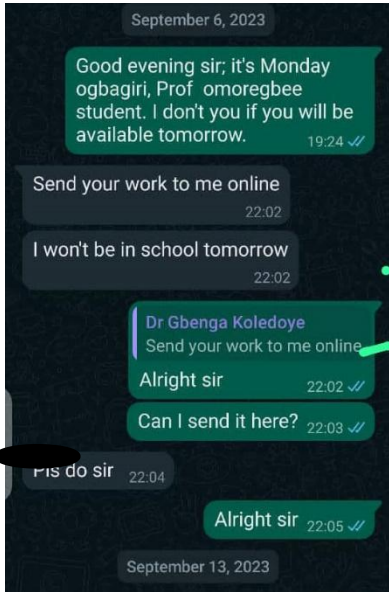
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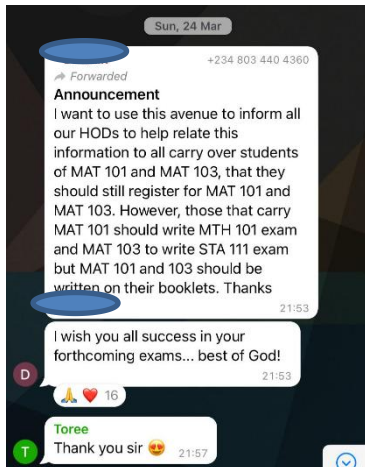
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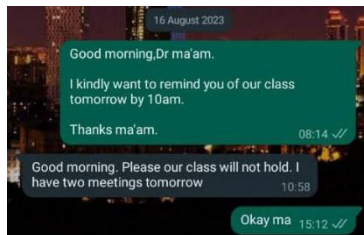
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