

A SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF HONORIFICS IN ISOKO LANGUAGE

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DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS STUDIES

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**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS STUDIES,
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APPROVAL PAGE

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DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to God Almighty and to my parents, Mr. & Mrs. Edheluebo.

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Firstly, I wish to express my gratitude to God Almighty who has granted me strength and guided me through this journey.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates honorific titles in the Isoko language, examining their meaning and usage within the cultural context of the Isoko community. Utilizing Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory as a theoretical framework, the research employs a qualitative approach, analyzing linguistic data collected from existing articles, literature and research studies on the Isoko language. The findings reveal that Isoko honorifics serve as a crucial politeness strategy, fostering social harmony, promoting community development, and preserving cultural heritage. The study identifies and categorizes various types of honorifics, including traditional titles, occupational titles, community leader titles, spiritual leader titles, and honorary titles. These titles underscore the Isoko community's emphasis on skills, hard work, and contributions to communal well-being, highlighting their role in maintaining social order and preserving cultural identity.

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Language transcends its function as a mere tool for information transmission, serving as a vital instrument for expressing social values and maintaining interpersonal relationships. This broader significance is particularly evident in how cultures utilize language to navigate social dynamics and reinforce cultural norms.

Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory provides a framework for understanding this phenomenon, highlighting the strategic use of language to mitigate face-threatening acts and uphold social harmony. This is especially pronounced in cultures that employ honorifics, specialized linguistic forms designed to convey deference and respect. These linguistic markers serve as a crucial mechanism for navigating social interactions.

The Isoko language, spoken in Nigeria's Delta State, provides a compelling example of this practice. Isoko possesses a rich inventory of honorifics, which are meticulously employed to demonstrate deference to elders, individuals of high status, and those deserving of esteem. These linguistic markers are not merely superficial; they are integral to social interaction, reflecting and reinforcing the core cultural norms and values of the Isoko people.

This research undertakes a detailed semantic analysis of honorifics within the Isoko language, aiming to explore the intricate ways in which language conveys respect. The study examines the diverse forms of honorifics, including specialized address terms, and investigates the nuanced strategies through which Isoko speakers navigate social hierarchies and express deference.

1.1 The Isoko People, Language and Culture

The Isoko people are located in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, specifically in the Isoko Local Government Area of Delta State. They speak the Isoko language, which is a member of the Edoid language family and is closely related to other Edoid languages such as Urhobo, Edo, and Ora.

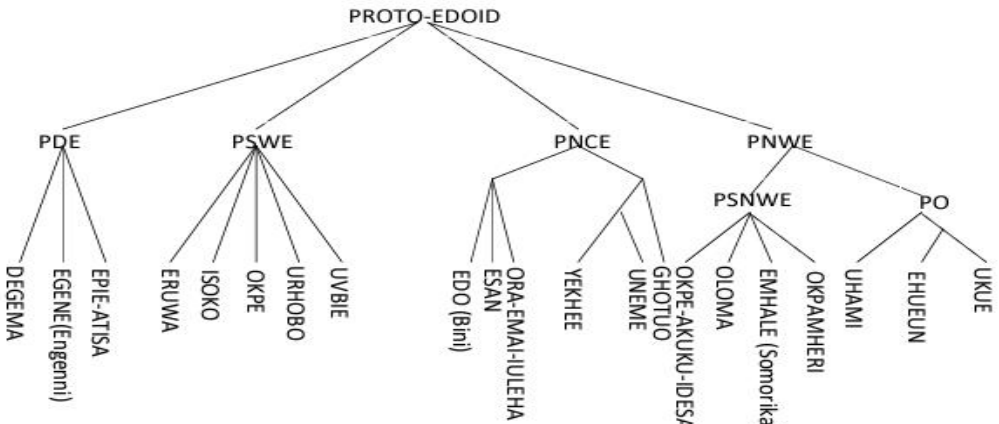
The Isoko people are a distinct ethnic nationality group comprising 19 subcultural units that share a common ancestry, migration stories, totems, customs, and traditions (Uwomano, 2020). With a population of over 750,000 people (2001 census), they occupy an area of 1,200 square kilometers. They are known for their peaceful nature, with no recorded history of major conflicts or wars with neighboring communities. Isoko land is divided into 17 clans; Aviara, Ellu, Emede, Emevor, Enwe/Okpolo, Erowha/Umeh, Igbide, Irri, Iyede, Ofagbe, Oleh, olomoro, Okpe, Owhe, Oyede, Ozoro, Uzere.

The traditional ruler of the Isoko people is the Odiologbo, who is assisted by a council of elders and chiefs. This traditional system of government has been in place for centuries and has helped to maintain social order and stability.

The figure below presents the Edoid language family tree, while figure two shows the map of Delta state showing the Isoko speaking areas within the state.

1.1.1 THE EDOID FAMILY TREE

FIGURE 1: The Edoid Language Family tree



KEY:
 PDE: PROTO DELTA EDOID
 PSWE: PROTO SOUTH WESTERN EDOID
 PNCE: PROTO NORTH CENTRAL EDOID
 PNWE: PROTO NORTH WESTERN EDOID
 PSNWE: PROTO SOUTH NORTH WESTERN EDOID
 PO: PROTO OSSE

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEMS

1. The Isoko language lacks documentation. As a result, researchers have not analyzed the respect words they use or when people use certain words depending on their position.
2. There needs to be a better understanding of how honorifics are used differently in Isoko culture. More work needs to be done to learn all the subtle ways that honorifics change meaning based on context in Isoko language and culture.
3. Comparative analysis of honorific usage in Isoko and other Nigerian languages is lacking, hindering understanding of respect expression among Isoko people.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the different types of honorifics used in the Isoko language (e.g., titles, vocabulary variations, sentence structures)?
2. How does the use of honorifics differ based on the age difference between the speaker and the addressee?
3. How does the social status of the speaker and addressee influence the choice of honorifics used?
4. Is there a generational shift in the usage of honorifics in Isoko communication? How does this impact the transmission of respect traditions within the Isoko community?

1.4 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The overall aim of this project is to gain a comprehensive understanding of how honorifics function within the Isoko language.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To examine the various types of honorifics employed in Isoko speech (e.g, titles)
2. To examine the social contexts in which honorifics are typically employed, such as when interacting with elderly individuals, people of higher status, or guests.
3. To asses different honorific Titles based on some selected factors like age.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

This research explores the use and significance of honorifics in the Isoko language, focusing on their structure, functions, and cultural significance. It examines the definition and importance of honorifics, explaining their role in communication and why they are essential in Isoko society. The study identifies different types of honorifics, including traditional titles such as, Odiologbo and Okpako-Orere, respectful address forms used for elders, chiefs, and in-laws, as well as kinship-based honorifics in family interactions. It also analyzes the contexts in which honorifics are used, including formal settings like traditional meetings, daily conversations, and ceremonies.

1.6 METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

The method of data collection employed in this research involves a dual approach, combining both primary and secondary methods to gather comprehensive and accurate data.

The primary data collection method involved consultations with competent native speakers of the Isoko language, who are residents of Isoko North Local Government Area. These participants were carefully selected based on their age, ranging from 40 to 65 years, to ensure that they possess a deep understanding of the language, its cultural nuances, and its traditional usage.

The secondary data collection method involved a review of existing articles, literature, and research studies on the Isoko language. This included examining published works, academic journals, and online resources.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the data, two competent speakers of the Isoko language were consulted to verify the appropriateness of the collected data

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This project will create an important list of honor words in the Isoko language. Linguists studying Isoko can use this list to learn how the language is changing over time. The list may help people understand how cultures use language to show respect and add to knowledge about respect across languages. The list will provide insight into how Isoko

society views respect, leadership, and social ranking by examining the words used to discuss these concepts.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews studies on honorifics. It covers the conceptual review, past research and the concerns for the present study

2.1 CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

This section explains the key concepts related to the project. They include honorifics, Address terms and pronouns.

2.1.1 HONORIFICS

Honorifics are linguistic elements used to convey respect, esteem, or deference towards individuals or groups, often based on social hierarchy, age, gender, or family relationships. These elements can be categorized into various types, including titles, honorific pronouns, formal address forms, and polite language.

Titles such as Mr., Mrs., Dr., and Professor are used to show respect and deference, while honorific pronouns like Sir, Madam, and Your Excellency convey respect and esteem. Formal address forms, including formal greetings, farewells, and introductions, are also used to demonstrate respect and politeness.

Polite language, encompassing phrases and expressions used to show respect, is another important aspect of honorifics. This can include phrases like "please," "thank you," and "excuse me," which are used to convey respect and courtesy.

Overall, honorifics play a crucial role in shaping social interactions and relationships, and their use can vary significantly across cultures and languages.

Brown and Levinson (1987) explain how people use honorifics to show politeness and respect. They believe that politeness is a key part of communication, stating that "politeness is a fundamental aspect of human communication" (Brown & Levinson, 1987:1).

Honorifics help maintain social relationships and prevent situations where someone might feel uncomfortable or disrespected. As they explain, "the use of honorifics is a way of showing respect and deference to others, and of avoiding direct or blunt language that could threaten their face" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 70).

According to Brown and Levinson, people have two types of "face", positive face, which is the desire to be liked and appreciated, and negative face, which is the desire to have personal freedom and not feel pressured. They describe positive face as "the desire to be liked, admired, and approved of," while negative face is "the desire to be free from imposition and to have one's autonomy respected" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 61). Honorifics help with both by showing respect and avoiding direct language that might make someone uncomfortable.

Brown and Levinson also identify different types of honorifics. As they mention, "honorifics can take many forms, including titles, verb forms, and suffixes" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 129). They also discuss how people use indirect language to sound more polite, like making requests instead of giving direct commands, and how avoiding impolite language can help maintain respect in conversations.

Erving Goffman's Face Theory, introduced in his 1967 book *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior*, looks at how people present themselves in social situations. He describes "face" as a person's social image and argues that people work hard to protect it. As he puts it, "the individual's face is a sacred thing, and he will go to great lengths to maintain it" (Goffman, 1967: 5). Honorifics play an important role in this because they help maintain or repair face by showing respect. Goffman explains, "the use of honorifics is a way of showing respect and deference to others, and of avoiding direct or blunt language that could threaten their face" (Goffman, 1967: 56).

Goffman also introduces the idea of "face-work," which is how people protect or fix their face in social interactions. He states, "face-work is the actions taken by individuals to maintain or repair their face in social interactions" (Goffman, 1967, p. 12). Honorifics are one way people do this, as they help maintain respect and prevent embarrassment.

Geoffrey Leech's Politeness Principle, from his 1983 book *Principles of Pragmatics*, also talks about how honorifics help people maintain social relationships and

avoid conflict. He explains that "the Politeness Principle is a fundamental principle of human communication, which involves being polite and considerate in social interactions" (Leech, 1983: 13). Honorifics are an important part of this because they serve as politeness markers that show respect. As Leech states, "honorifics are used to attend to the face needs of others, by showing respect and deference to them" (Leech, 1983: 146).

Like Brown and Levinson, Leech believes that politeness is essential in communication and that honorifics help people show respect while avoiding direct or harsh language. He explains, "politeness is a way of showing respect and deference to others, and of avoiding direct or blunt language that could threaten their face" (Leech, 1983: 157).

2.1.2 Address Terms

Address terms are an integral part of human communication, serving as a vital component of honorifics. These words or phrases are employed to address individuals, conveying respect, deference, and social hierarchy. The usage of address terms varies across cultures and languages, reflecting the complexities of social relationships and cultural norms.

Address terms can be categorized into various types, including titles, names, kinship terms, and honorific titles. Titles such as Mr., Mrs., Dr., and Professor are used to show respect and deference, while names are used to address individuals in a more

personal and familiar manner. Kinship terms, such as Mom, Dad, Brother, and Sister, are used to address family members and emphasize family ties. Honorific titles, such as Your Excellency and Your Honor, are used to address individuals of high social status or authority.

The functions of address terms are multifaceted. They are used to show respect, establish social hierarchy, build relationships, and maintain cultural norms. Using the right address terms can help build positive relationships, avoid conflict, and maintain social harmony. Address terms also reflect cultural values and norms, ensuring their continuation.

Cultures vary in their use of address terms, with some having complex systems of address terms with multiple levels of formality. In some cultures, kinship terms are used to address individuals, emphasizing family ties, while in others, titles are used to address individuals, highlighting social status or profession.

Brown and Levinson (1987) discuss how address terms are used to attend to the positive face needs of others, by showing respect and deference. This means that using the right address terms can help build positive relationships and avoid conflict.

In conclusion, address terms are a crucial aspect of honorifics, conveying respect, deference, and social hierarchy. Understanding the complexities of address terms across cultures and languages is essential for effective communication, building positive relationships, and maintaining social harmony.

2.1.3 Honorific Pronouns

Honorific pronouns are words used to refer to someone with respect, esteem, or deference. These pronouns play a crucial role in shaping social interactions and relationships, and their use can vary significantly across cultures and languages. Honorific pronouns can be categorized into formal and informal types. Formal honorific pronouns are used to address individuals with high social status, authority, or expertise. Examples of formal honorific pronouns include:

- Sir/Madam: Used to address someone with respect, especially in formal or professional settings.
- Your Excellency: Used to address high-ranking officials, dignitaries, or nobility.
- Your Honor: Used to address judges, magistrates, or other high-ranking officials.
- Your Majesty: Used to address monarchs or royalty.

Informal honorific pronouns, on the other hand, are used to address individuals with respect and familiarity. Examples of informal honorific pronouns include:

- Mr./Mrs./Ms./Dr.: Used to address someone with respect, especially in formal or professional settings.
- Uncle/Auntie: Used to address older individuals with respect, especially in African or Asian cultures.

- Elder: Used to address older individuals with respect, especially in indigenous cultures.

In conclusion, honorific pronouns are a vital component of respectful communication, conveying respect, esteem, and deference towards individuals or groups. Understanding the different types of honorific pronouns and their usage across cultures and languages is essential for effective communication and building positive relationships.

2.2 PREVIOUS STUDIES

Research on honorifics in Nigerian languages, particularly in Isoko, is limited. There are few studies that have investigated how Isoko employs honorifics and their meanings. In contrast, Ugorji's study (2022) on honorifics and humilifics in Ngwa-Igbo provided valuable insights into the socio-semantic significance of these linguistic elements. Ugorji used a qualitative approach and the ethnography of communication framework to analyze data from four elderly native speakers of Ngwa-Igbo.

From the analysis of Ugorji's study, it was found out that honorifics in Ngwa-Igbo convey respect, deference, and social status. Ugorji identified various types of honorifics, including verbal, behavioral, and material honorifics. For example, verbal honorifics like "Nná" (father) and "Nné" (mother) show respect and deference. Behavioral honorifics, such as standing up when an elder enters the room, demonstrate respect and humility. Material honorifics, like presenting kola nuts during traditional ceremonies, signify respect and hospitality. Ugorji's study highlights the significance of honorifics in Ngwa-

Igbo culture, maintaining social harmony, delineating social hierarchies, and reflecting cultural values. However, there are some limitations in the study, including a small sample size and a focus on elderly speakers.

Despite these limitations, Ugorji's study provides valuable insights into the importance of honorifics in Ngwa-Igbo culture. The research suggests that honorifics are essential in Ngwa-Igbo communication, closely tied to social status, respect, and deference. The study's findings have implications for language teaching, language planning and cultural exchange program. By understanding the significance of honorifics in Ngwa-Igbo culture, language educators and practitioners can develop more effective language instruction and cultural orientation programs.

Odebunmi (2008), a Nigerian linguist, conducted a seminal study on Yoruba honorifics, examining their forms, functions, and cultural significance. This study is grounded in the theoretical framework of Politeness Theory, developed by Brown and Levinson (1987). Odebunmi's study draws on Politeness Theory to examine how honorific language is used to convey respect, deference, and social identity in Yoruba culture. The primary objectives of Odebunmi's study are to examine the forms and functions of honorifics in Yoruba language, investigate the role of honorifics in maintaining social relationships and reinforcing cultural values in Yoruba society, and identify the linguistic and cultural factors that influence the use of honorifics in Yoruba language. Odebunmi's study addresses the research problem of how Yoruba speakers use

honorific language to convey respect, deference, and social identity, and what linguistic and cultural factors influence the use of honorifics in Yoruba language.

The study reveals that Yoruba speakers use a range of honorific titles and address terms to show respect and deference to elders, leaders, and individuals of high status. They also employ polite language and verbal deference to maintain social relationships and avoid conflict. Additionally, Yoruba speakers use non-verbal honorifics, such as gestures and body language, to convey respect and deference. The use of honorifics in Yoruba language is influenced by linguistic and cultural factors, including social hierarchy, age, and status. Odebunmi's study provides valuable insights into the complex and nuanced ways in which Yoruba speakers use honorific language to convey respect, deference, and social identity.

Turn-Taking and Honorifics as Politeness Strategy in Communication: The Case of Parliamentary Discourse" by Keziah Jonah Pam is a thought-provoking study that delves into the intricacies of communication in parliamentary settings. The research explores how turn-taking and honorifics are employed as politeness strategies to facilitate effective communication among parliamentarians. The study's focus on parliamentary discourse provides valuable insights into the ways in which language is used to negotiate power, establish relationships, and maintain social harmony. By examining the role of turn-taking and honorifics, the research sheds light on the complex dynamics of communication in formal settings.

One of the key contributions of this study is its illumination of the ways in which honorifics are used to convey respect, deference, and politeness. The research demonstrates how honorifics can serve as a vital tool for managing social relationships and avoiding conflict in parliamentary discourse. The study's exploration of turn-taking as a politeness strategy highlights the importance of sequential organization in communication. By examining how parliamentarians take turns in speaking, the research reveals the intricate mechanisms that underlie effective communication in formal settings. Pam's study is a significant contribution to the field of linguistics and communication studies. Its findings have important implications for understanding the complexities of communication in formal settings and for developing effective communication strategies in a variety of contexts.

Abdulazeez and Anka's research offers a nuanced examination of the intricate relationship between language, culture, and social interaction within a bilingual community. By employing Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory as its analytical foundation, this study delves into the pivotal role of honorifics in maintaining social harmony and expressing respect among Hausa-English speakers in Zamfara State. Through meticulous participant observation conducted across four strategically selected local government areas, the study undertook a detailed analysis of 40 distinct honorifics. This comprehensive approach enabled the researchers to uncover the complex ways in which honorifics function as integral components of social interaction, fostering social

cohesion, enhancing politeness, and preserving deeply rooted cultural norms within the community.

The findings of this research reveal that honorifics transcend mere superficiality, serving as vital tools for managing social relationships and reinforcing established social hierarchies. By examining the sophisticated strategies employed by Hausa-English bilinguals to navigate social interactions, this study demonstrates how honorifics are utilized to manage 'face' and maintain social harmony. Published in the Federal University Dutsin-Ma Journal, this study provides invaluable insights into the sociolinguistic complexities inherent in multilingual societies. The research underscores the profound cultural significance of honorifics and their critical role in shaping interpersonal relationships in Zamfara State. Furthermore, it highlights the importance of cultural preservation in an increasingly globalized and bilingual world, emphasizing how language continues to serve as a vital repository of cultural identity and social values. This study contributes significantly to our understanding of the complex interplay between language, culture, and social interaction in bilingual communities. The findings have important implications for language education, cultural preservation, and social cohesion in multilingual societies.

2.3 CONCERN OF THE PRESENT STUDY

This study explores the meanings of honorific terms in the Isoko language. It has four main objectives:

1. To document Isoko honorific terms, preserving the language and culture for future research.
2. To understand the meanings of honorifics, including their literal definitions and social implications.
3. To examine how honorifics reflect and reinforce Isoko societal values on respect, deference, and social status.
4. To learn if expressing respect has universal characteristics across cultures or unique features specific to Isoko.

In conclusion, this study seeks to document, analyze, and interpret the social and cultural significance of Isoko honorifics, illuminating the complex relationship between language, respect, social norms, and cultural values.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the theoretical framework for this study, which is Politeness Theory (PT) by Brown and Levinson (1987). PT explains how people use language to maintain social relationships and avoid conflict, focusing on face, face-threatening acts, and politeness strategies. This chapter will outline the key concepts of PT, discuss its strengths and weaknesses, and explain its relevance to the current study on honorifics in Isoko.

3.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter presents the theoretical framework that guides this study, the Politeness Theory proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987). This widely accepted framework provides a nuanced understanding of the role of language in social interactions, offering valuable insights into the use of honorifics in Nigerian languages.

At its core, the Politeness Theory revolves around three fundamental concepts: face, face-threatening acts (FTAs), and politeness strategies. These concepts are intertwined, and understanding their relationships is essential for grasping the complexities of polite communication.

FACE

In sociolinguistics, "face" refers to an individual's self-esteem or emotional needs during social interactions. Brown and Levinson (1987) identify two aspects of face, which are crucial for effective communication and social harmony.

Positive Face

Positive face refers to the desire to be liked, appreciated, and approved by others. This aspect of face reflects an individual's wish for their self-image to be acknowledged and valued. Positive face is closely tied to an individual's need for social acceptance and belonging.

Negative Face

Negative face, on the other hand, refers to the desire for autonomy and freedom from imposition. This aspect of face represents an individual's wish to act without being impeded or imposed upon. Negative face is closely tied to an individual's need for independence and self-determination.

Maintaining face is essential for effective communication and social harmony. Speakers and listeners work collaboratively to uphold each other's face needs during interactions. This collaborative effort involves using language in a way that balances the need to maintain social relationships with the need to assert individual autonomy.

By understanding the concept of face and its two aspects, we can gain valuable insights into the use of honorifics in Nigerian languages. Honorifics play a crucial role in maintaining social harmony and avoiding conflict, and the Politeness Theory provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing their use in social interactions.

FACE-THREATENING ACTS (FTAS)

Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs) are communicative actions that risk damaging the speaker's or listener's face, potentially disrupting social harmony. These acts can be verbal or non-verbal and may be intentional or unintentional. FTAs can threaten either the speaker's or listener's positive face, negative face, or both.

FTAs include actions such as making requests, giving orders, offering criticism, providing unsolicited advice, expressing disagreement, showing disapproval, making complaints, and providing negative feedback. These acts can impose on an individual's autonomy, threatening their negative face, or challenge an individual's desire for acceptance, threatening their positive face.

Recognizing the potential for FTAs is essential in social interactions. By acknowledging the risks associated with FTAs, individuals can choose appropriate strategies to mitigate these threats and maintain social harmony. This can involve using politeness strategies, such as phrases like "please," "thank you," and "excuse me," to soften the impact of an FTA. Indirectness, hedges, and apologizing can also be employed to reduce the force of an FTA.

Understanding FTAs and employing strategies to mitigate their impact is crucial for effective communication and social interaction. By being mindful of the potential risks associated with FTAs, individuals can navigate social interactions more effectively, maintaining harmony and avoiding conflict. This is particularly important in multicultural contexts, where different cultural norms and values may influence the perception and use of FTAs.

POLITENESS STRATEGIES

In the Politeness Theory, Brown and Levinson (1987) identified four main politeness strategies that people use to maintain social harmony and avoid conflict. These strategies are:

1. Bald-on-Record

This strategy involves direct and clear communication without trying to soften the message. It's like saying exactly what you mean without beating around the bush. This strategy is often used in situations where efficiency and clarity are more important than being polite.

2. Positive Politeness

This strategy focuses on building rapport and establishing a positive relationship with the other person. It's like trying to be friendly and nice to someone. Examples of positive politeness include:

- Using in-group identity markers (e.g., "we're all in this together")
- Exaggerating interest or enthusiasm (e.g., "I'm so excited to hear about your trip!")
- Avoiding disagreement (e.g., "I completely agree with you!")

3. Negative Politeness

This strategy prioritizes respect, deference, and avoidance of imposition. It's like trying to show respect and deference to someone. Examples of negative politeness include:

- Using honorifics or titles (e.g., "Mr./Ms./Mrs./Dr.")
- Apologizing or showing regret (e.g., "I'm so sorry to bother you")
- Using indirect language or hedging (e.g., "Could you possibly...?")

4. Off-Record

This strategy involves indirect communication, relying on inference and implication. It's like hinting at something without directly saying it. Examples of off-record politeness include:

- Using irony or sarcasm (e.g., "Oh great, just what I needed, another bill to pay")
- Making indirect requests (e.g., "It's getting a bit chilly in here, isn't it?")
- Using vague language or ambiguity (e.g., "I'll try to get it done ASAP")

These politeness strategies are not mutually exclusive, and people often combine them to achieve their communicative goals. By understanding these strategies, we can use

language more effectively to build relationships, avoid conflict, and maintain social harmony.

3.2 STRENGTHS OF POLITENESS THEORY AS A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Politeness Theory has several strengths that make it a valuable framework for understanding language use in social interactions.

1. Comprehensive framework: Politeness Theory provides a thorough understanding of how language works in social interactions, covering important concepts like face, face-threatening acts, and politeness strategies.
2. Universal applicability: This theory can be applied to various cultures and languages, showing its relevance and usefulness across different contexts.
3. Explanatory power: Politeness Theory clearly explains why people use language in certain ways to maintain social relationships and avoid conflict.
4. Predictive power: The theory helps researchers predict how people will use language in different social situations.

3.2.1 Weaknesses of Politeness Theory

While Politeness Theory has several strengths, it also has some weaknesses.

1. Cultural bias: Some critics argue that the theory is based on Western cultural norms and may not be applicable to all cultures.

2. Oversimplification: Others argue that the theory oversimplifies the complexities of social interaction and language use.
3. Lack of empirical support: Some critics argue that the theory lacks sufficient empirical support, particularly in non-Western cultures.
4. Difficulty in operationalizing: The theory's concepts, such as face and politeness strategies, can be challenging to measure and operationalize.

3.3 RELEVANCE OF POLITENESS THEORY TO THIS STUDY

The Politeness Theory provides a framework for understanding honorifics as a type of politeness strategy used to show respect, deference, and solidarity. In Isoko, honorifics are used to convey respect and deference to elders, leaders, and other individuals of high social status.

The theory highlights the importance of face in social interactions, including the use of honorifics. In Isoko, the use of honorifics is crucial in maintaining the positive face of the speaker and the hearer, as well as avoiding face-threatening acts. This understanding can help explain cultural differences in honorifics use in Isoko, particularly in relation to politeness strategies and face concerns.

Furthermore, Politeness Theory has implications for language education in Isoko, particularly in terms of teaching honorifics and other politeness strategies. By incorporating Politeness Theory into language curricula, educators can help learners develop appropriate language use skills for effective communication. Additionally, the

theory can provide insights into the social significance of honorifics in Isoko, including their role in maintaining social harmony, showing respect, and establishing relationships. Overall, Politeness Theory offers a valuable framework for understanding the complex dynamics of honorifics use in Isoko.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a detailed semantic analysis of honorifics in Isoko, it will explore the various forms of honorifics in Isoko, including, address term, to demonstrate how they function as politeness strategies to show respect, deference, and courtesy.

4.1 HONORIFICS IN ISOKO

Honorifics in Isoko are linguistic forms used to convey respect, deference, and politeness. They are essential in maintaining social relationships and avoiding conflict. This section examines the various forms of honorifics in Isoko, including:

4.1.1 Address Terms

In Isoko culture, using honorifics to address people is a significant way to show respect, reverence, and deference to superiors. Address terms are words, phrases, titles, or names used to address someone, and they play a crucial role in maintaining social relationships and hierarchy.

Table 1: Traditional Titles in Isoko

S/N	ISOKO	MEANING
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1.	Ovie	Title for King or Paramount Ruler
2.	Ikpahwo-esuo	Title for the prince
3.	ovie-aye	Title for the queen
4.	Ọmọṭẹ-Ovie	Title for the princess
5.	Ilori	Title for the chief
6.	Ogbөгwae	Title for the kings advisor
7.	Ereuku	Title for the heir to the throne

In Isoko culture, traditional titles play a significant role in signifying respect, authority, and hierarchy. The following titles are used to address members of the royal family, nobles, and other high-ranking individuals.

These traditional titles reflect the rich cultural heritage of the Isoko people and continue to be an essential part of their identity and social structure.

Table 2: Terms Used to Show Title

S/N	ISOKO	MEANING
1	Odio Uru	Title for Traditional Prime minister
2	Odio	Title for an elderly person.
3	Aruere	Title for Peace maker
4	Omonotomo	Title for the Youth
5	Odiologbo	Title for the most elderly within a big family/clan/community or village.
6	Okpako	Title for a senior
7	Ekpako	This is the plural form for elderly persons
8	ogbaemo	Title for a warrior
9	odibo	Title for servant

The Isoko people's system of titles is a reflection of their rich cultural heritage and social structure. Titles such as Odio Uru (Prime Minister) and Aruere (Peace maker) demonstrate the importance of leadership and harmony in their society.

The use of titles like Omonotomo (Youth) and Odiologbo (Elder) emphasizes the value placed on community, age, and experience. Occupational titles, including Ozuẹ (Hunter) and Ogbæmo (Warrior), highlight the Isoko people's strong connection to their land and history.

The title Odibo (Servant) indicates a social hierarchy with a defined class of servants. The Isoko title system provides a clear understanding of their culture, values, and social organization.

Table 3: Occupational and Skill-Based Titles

S/N	ISOKO	MEANING
1	Oghenekaro	The Oghenekaro title is given to individuals who are skilled artisans or craftsmen, such as blacksmiths, woodcarvers, or weavers. They are valued for their craftsmanship and contributions to the community's economy.
2	Ogharaowu	The Ogharaowu title is given to individuals who are skilled hunters or fishermen. They play a vital role in providing food for the community and are respected for their hunting or fishing prowess.
3	Orovwomovo	The Orovwomovo title is given to individuals who are skilled storytellers or oral historians. They are responsible for preserving and passing down the community's history, legends, and folklore through storytelling.
4	Owhorode	The Owhorode title is given to individuals who have excelled in traditional sports or competitions, such as wrestling or traditional dance. They are celebrated for their athletic abilities and contributions to the community's cultural heritage.
5	Ogri	The Ogri title is given to individuals who are skilled farmers or agriculturalists. They play a vital role in food production and agricultural development in the community.

In Isoko culture, certain titles are bestowed upon individuals who excel in specific occupations or skills, contributing significantly to the community's well-being and economy. These occupational honorifics demonstrate the value Isoko culture places on skills, hard work, and contributions to the community's well-being.

Table 4: Community leader's Titles

S/N	ISOKO	MEANING
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1	Oghara	A respected elder who serves as a mediator in conflicts and disputes, known for their wisdom and impartiality.
2	Olorogun	A title given to individuals who have achieved prominence and leadership status in Isoko land, respected for their wealth, influence, and contributions to the community.
3	Oloko	A chief or titleholder who oversees specific aspects of community affairs, such as land allocation, agriculture, or religious ceremonies.
4	Ovie's Council	Members appointed by the traditional ruler to assist in governance and decision-making, representing various sectors of the community and providing advice and support to the Ovie.

In Isoko culture, certain individuals play important roles in guiding the community. These leaders are respected for their wisdom, integrity, and contributions to the community's well-being. For example, the Oghara is a respected elder who helps resolve conflicts and disputes, promoting peace and harmony within the community.

Together, these leaders work to maintain social order, promote community development, and preserve the cultural heritage of the Isoko people.

Table 5: Spiritual Leaders

S/N	ISOKO	MEANING
1	Ogbosere	A title given to individuals who are skilled in traditional medicine or healing practices, providing healthcare and spiritual guidance to members of the community.

2	Izere	A religious clergyman trained to perform services or sacrifices at a church or temple.
3	Epasto	The head minister or priest of a Christian church.
4	Usiwo Igbunu	A person skilled in a particular type of therapy.
5	Oghenevwogagan	A title bestowed upon individuals who serve as custodians of the community's spiritual or religious traditions, preserving and transmitting cultural and religious knowledge.

In Isoko culture, certain individuals are revered for their spiritual guidance, healing abilities, and preservation of cultural heritage. The Ogbosere and Usiwo Igbunu are skilled healers, providing traditional medicine and therapy to community members. The Izere and Epasto are religious clergy, performing sacred services and guiding their congregations. The Oghenevwogagan serves as a custodian of the community's spiritual traditions, preserving and sharing cultural and religious knowledge.

These leaders play a vital role in maintaining the community's spiritual and physical well-being, and are deeply respected for their wisdom, compassion, and dedication.

Honorifics in Isoko also includes words and phrases used to show respect, politeness, and courtesy. They include words for greetings, farewells, and expressions of gratitude.

Table 6: Terms of Greeting and Farewell in Isoko

S/N	ISOKO	MEANING
1	Dewo	A greeting (salutation) said when meeting someone or acknowledging someone's arrival or presence.

2	kode	A farewell remark
3	Merigwe	A greeting that is said when meeting or departing in the morning.
4	Ohiohe	A greeting said in the morning; good morning (informal)
5	Uvo	A greeting that is said when meeting or departing in the afternoon.
6	Owowo	A greeting that is said when meeting or departing in the evening.
7	Aso	A farewell said in the evening or before going to sleep.

In Isoko, greetings and farewells are an integral part of social interaction, acknowledging the presence or arrival of individuals. The various greetings and farewells used in Isoko include Dewo, a general greeting used when meeting someone or acknowledging their arrival or presence; Merigwe, a morning greeting used when meeting or departing; Ohiohe, an informal morning greeting equivalent to "good morning"

The use of these greetings and farewells demonstrates respect, courtesy, and social awareness, acknowledging the importance of social relationships and community bonds in Isoko culture. By using honorific vocabulary, individuals show deference and politeness, recognizing the value of respectful communication in building and maintaining positive relationships.

Table 7: Honorary Titles

S/N	ISOKO	MEANING
1	Oyibo	A title given to individuals who have returned from overseas, respected for their experiences and contributions to the

		community.
2	Oghenekevwe	A title given to individuals who have demonstrated leadership qualities and initiative in community development projects or initiatives.
3	Ogheneovo	A title given to individuals who have achieved success or recognition in their professional or academic endeavors, respected for their achievements and serving as role models.

In Isoko culture, honorary titles are bestowed upon individuals who have demonstrated exceptional achievements, leadership, and contributions to the community.

These honorary titles reflect the community's appreciation for outstanding contributions, achievements, and leadership, and serve as a motivation for others to strive for excellence.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the key findings and conclusions drawn from semantic analysis of honorifics in the Isoko language. The research explored the role of honorifics in shaping social relationships, conveying respect and politeness, and maintaining social balance in Isoko culture.

In this chapter, we will review the main discoveries of this study, highlighting the essential features and functions of Isoko honorifics. The implications of these findings will also be discussed, emphasizing the significance of honorifics in Isoko language and culture.

5.2 SUMMARY

This study provides a detailed semantic analysis of honoros in Isoko language, utilizing the Politeness Strategy Framework by Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson. The framework posits that speakers employ politeness strategies to maintain social relationships and avoid face-threatening acts.

This research was specifically designed to explore the various honorific terms used in Isoko and how they are employed to showcase respect to superiors and referents, thereby highlighting the significance of linguistic politeness in Isoko communication.

This study explored the concept of honorifics in Isoko language and culture, examining their forms, functions, and significance. The research identified various types of honorifics used in Isoko, including:

Traditional titles and address terms, which reflect the rich cultural heritage of the Isoko people and continue to play a significant role in their social structure.

Occupational and skill-based titles, which demonstrate the value placed on skills, hard work, and contributions to the community's well-being.

Community leader titles, which play a crucial role in maintaining social order and promoting community development.

Spiritual leader titles, which reflect the importance of spiritual guidance and healing in Isoko culture.

Honorary titles, which recognize exceptional achievements, leadership, and contributions to the community.

The study found that these honorifics serve several functions, including; Maintaining social relationships and showing respect and deference, preserving cultural heritage and promoting community development and providing a means of identifying and recognizing individuals with exceptional skills, achievements, and contributions.

Overall, the chapter demonstrates that honorifics play a crucial role in maintaining social relationships, avoiding conflict, and promoting social harmony in Isoko culture.

5.3 CONCLUSION

This study explored honorifics in Isoko language using the Politeness Strategy Framework by Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson. The findings show that honorifics

are essential in Isoko communication, facilitating positive interactions, social bonds, and cultural values.

The study's implications are significant for language teaching, learning, and intercultural communication. Recognizing the importance of honorifics in Isoko language and culture can lead to more effective and respectful communication.

In conclusion, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between language, culture, and society, highlighting the vital role of honorifics in Isoko language and culture. Furthermore, this study demonstrates the importance of linguistic politeness in promoting social harmony and respect in Isoko-speaking communities.

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APPENDIX

1. **Ovie:** The **Ovie** is the traditional ruler or king of an Isoko community. They hold significant authority and are highly respected within the Isoko kingdom.

2. Oyise: This title is often given to the queen or wife of the Ovie, signifying her role as a prominent figure in the community.
3. Ologbotsere: The Ologbotsere is the traditional prime minister or chief adviser to the Ovie. They play a crucial role in advising the king on matters of governance and tradition.
4. Oghara: The Oghara is a respected elder in the community who serves as a mediator in conflicts and disputes. They are known for their wisdom and impartiality
5. Olorogun: Olorogun is a title given to individuals who have achieved prominence and leadership status in Isoko land. They are respected leaders known for their wealth,
6. influence, and contributions to the community
7. Oko Ovie: This title is given to the crown prince or heir apparent to the throne of the Ovie. They are groomed to take on leadership responsibilities in the future.
8. Oloko: The Oloko is a chief or titleholder who oversees specific aspects of community affairs, such as land allocation, agriculture, or religious ceremonies.
9. Oyibo: The Oyibo is a title given to individuals who have returned from overseas, often with wealth or knowledge gained from their travels. They are respected for their experiences and contributions to the community.

10. Odion: The Odion is a title given to a leader or chief within a particular Isoko clan or family. They may have responsibilities related to family affairs, land management, or cultural ceremonies.
11. Ogbosere: The Ogbosere is a title given to individuals who are skilled in traditional medicine or healing practices. They play a vital role in providing healthcare and spiritual guidance to members of the community.
12. Oghenevwogagan: This title is often given to individuals who are considered custodians of the community's spiritual or religious traditions. They play a vital role in preserving and transmitting cultural and religious knowledge.
13. Oma: The Oma is a title given to individuals who have achieved prominence and respect in the community due to their generosity, philanthropy, or acts of kindness towards others.
14. Oghenekaro: This title is often given to individuals who are skilled artisans or craftsmen, such as blacksmiths, woodcarvers, or weavers. They are valued for their craftsmanship and contributions to the community's economy.
15. Oghenekevwe: The Oghenekevwe is a title given to individuals who have demonstrated leadership qualities and initiative in community development projects or initiatives.
16. Ogheneovo: This title is given to individuals who have achieved success or recognition in their professional or academic endeavors. They are respected for their achievements and serve as role models for others in the community.

17. **Ovie's Council:** Members of the Ovie's council are appointed by the traditional ruler to assist in governance and decision-making. They represent various sectors of the community and provide advice and support to the Ovie.
18. **Ogharaowu:** The Ogharaowu is a title given to individuals who are skilled hunters or fishermen. They play a vital role in providing food for the community and are respected for their hunting or fishing prowess.
19. **Orovwomovo:** This title is often given to individuals who are skilled storytellers or oral historians. They are responsible for preserving and passing down the community's history, legends, and folklore through storytelling.
20. **Owhorode:** The Owhorode is a title given to individuals who have excelled in traditional sports or competitions, such as wrestling or traditional dance. They are celebrated for their athletic abilities and contributions to the community's cultural heritage.
21. **Ogri:** The Ogri is a title given to individuals who are skilled farmers or agriculturalists. They play a vital role in food production and agricultural development in the community.