

**LINGUISTIC POLITENESS AS A FACE THREAT MITIGATION TOOL IN
SELECTED POSTGRADUATE SEMINAR PRESENTATIONS IN THE
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN.**

BY

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**THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LITERATURE,
FACULTY OF ARTS,
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY, NIGERIA**

JULY, 2021

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**AN ESSAY SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND
LITERATURE, FACULTY OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY,
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REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTERS IN ARTS,
ENGLISH AND LITERATURE**

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CERTIFICATION

I certify that this study entitled **LINGUISTIC POLITENESS AS A FACE THREAT MITIGATION TOOL IN SELECTED POSTGRADUATE SEMINAR PRESENTATIONS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF BENIN** was carried out by **Precious Oisadare, UADIA (Miss)** with the Matriculation Number **PG/ART1614639** in the Department of English and Literature, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria, under my supervision.

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Date

Dr. A.P. Mamudu
(Ag. Head of Department)

Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my grandmother, Mrs. Bridget Akevbo Uadia, for being an embodiment of love and selflessness to me. Those sleepless nights, you had in different hospitals and clinics, with me, are tattooed in my heart forever. Thank you MUMMY!

I also want to dedicate this thesis to the Almighty God for preserving me, and for placing people in strategic positions to render help to me at every turn in this programme.

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LIST OF SYMBOLS

The table below shows the Jeffersonian transcription notation, which is used in this study.

Symbol	Name	Use
[text]	Brackets	Indicates the start and end points of overlapping speech.
=	Equal Sign	Indicates the break and subsequent continuation of a single interrupted utterance.
(# of seconds)	Timed Pause	A number in parentheses indicates the time, in seconds, of a pause in speech.
(.)	Micropause	A brief pause, usually less than 0.2 seconds.
. or ↓	Period or Down Arrow	Indicates falling pitch.
? or ↑	Question Mark or Up Arrow	Indicates rising pitch.
,	Comma	Indicates a temporary rise or fall in intonation.

-	Hyphen	Indicates an abrupt halt or interruption in utterance.
>text<	Greater than / Less than symbols	Indicates that the enclosed speech was delivered more rapidly than usual for the speaker.
<text>	Less than / Greater than symbols	Indicates that the enclosed speech was delivered more slowly than usual for the speaker.
°	Degree symbol	Indicates whisper or reduced volume speech.
ALL CAPS	Capitalized text	Indicates shouted or increased volume speech.
underline	Underlined text	Indicates the speaker is emphasizing or stressing the speech.
:::	Colon(s)	Indicates prolongation of an utterance.
(hhh)		Audible exhalation
? or (.hhh)	High Dot	Audible inhalation
(text)	Parentheses	Speech which is unclear or in doubt in the transcript.
((italic text))	Double	Annotation of non-verbal activity.

ABSTRACT

This research examined how face threatening acts (FTAs) are mitigated with politeness strategies and mitigation devices during postgraduate seminar presentations in the University of Benin. The data for this study were collected using field notes, and an audio recorder to capture the seminar presentations in five faculties. These faculties were randomly sampled from the fifteen faculties in the University, and they include Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Physical Science, Faculty of Pharmacy, Faculty of Management Sciences, and Faculty of Engineering. From these five faculties, the following departments were selected: English and Literature, History, Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics, Accounting, Business Administration, Mass Communication, Production Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Pharmacy, Banking and Finance, Economics, Marketing, Statistics, and Linguistics. Also, the data for the study are analysed using the Brown and Levinson Politeness Theory.

Focusing on four types of politeness superstrategies and mitigation devices, the study has found that regardless of the power-distance relationship between students and lecturers, lecturers tend to be cognisant of the face wants of the presenters as evidenced by the use of negative politeness and off record superstrategies, which both occur as the most used face threat mitigating strategies in the postgraduate seminar presentations.

LINGUISTIC POLITENESS AS A FACE THREAT MITIGATION TOOL IN SELECTED POSTGRADUATE SEMINAR PRESENTATIONS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF BENIN.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the purpose of this study, the research methodology, the review of related scholarship, the justification of the study, and the thesis statement.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

This study investigates the linguistic politeness strategies employed in mitigating Face-Threatening acts (FTAs) that occur in the Question and Answer session of postgraduate academic seminar presentations in the University of Benin. The purpose of this study is to analyse how those who assume the speaker role per time, are able to mitigate the face threat inherent in their utterances using some linguistic politeness strategies and mitigation devices such as hedges, indirect speech act, minimal imposition, praise-criticism/criticism-praise, criticism-suggestion/praise-suggestion, epistemic verbs, and downtoners to maintain comity among academics during the presentation.

1.2 Scope of Study

This study is limited to academic postgraduate seminar presentations in the University of Benin. There are fifteen (15) faculties in the University of Benin; from which five faculties were selected: Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Physical Science, Faculty of Pharmacy, Faculty of Management Sciences, and Faculty of Engineering. From these five faculties, the following departments were selected: English and Literature, History, Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics, Accounting, Business Administration, Mass Communication, Production Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Pharmacy, Banking and Finance, Economics, Marketing, Statistics, and Linguistics. Seminar presentations are carried out via the spoken mode of communication. Thus, live recordings of on-going seminar presentations were taken, in order to capture the conversations as they occurred.

1.3 Research Methodology

This study adopts the qualitative research method. Babbie Earl describes this method as a “scientific method of observation to gather non-numerical data” (303). This form of research focuses on the characteristics, meanings, and descriptions of phenomena, paying apt attention to the ‘hows’ and ‘whys’ rather than ‘counts’ and ‘measures’ or frequencies (Bruce and Howard 3). Greenhalgh and Taylor affirm that “Researchers who use qualitative method seek a deeper truth, aim to study things in their natural setting, and attempt to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (703). It is an unfolding model that occurs in a natural setting enabling the researcher to develop a level of detail from high involvement in the actual experience (Creswell 234).

The researcher plays a key role in the entire process of data collection and analysis, as he/she is being able to explore and understand the complexity of a phenomenon; unlike the quantitative method, where the researcher is strictly outside the phenomena being investigated. This methodology is selected for the actualisation of the purpose of this study, which is to analyse the face threatening acts that occur during academic seminar presentation. The data were selected using a sampling technique, which allows for the elimination of bias.

1.3.1 Method of Data Collection

Seminar presentations provide naturally-occurring data that are transmitted via the spoken means of communication. They are therefore captured for analysis through audio and video recordings or a combination of both forms. The data for this study were collected using field notes, and an audio recorder to capture the seminar presentations. The seminar coordinators granted us permission to record, and this helped in identifying the speakers and listeners at all times

1.3.2 Sampling Method

The study adopts the systematic sampling technique (SST). This is a kind of random sampling technique which samples members from a larger population according to a random starting point, but with a fixed, and periodic interval. This interval, called the sampling interval, is calculated by dividing the population size by the desired sample size (Bajpai 257). In the case of this study, we listed the total number of faculties and every third one was selected, making a total of five faculties as shown below:

Faculty of Agriculture

Faculty of Education

Faculty of Arts ●

Faculty of Environmental science

Faculty of Law

Faculty of Engineering ●

Faculty of Life Science

College of Medical Sciences

Faculty of Pharmacy ●

School of Dentistry

School of Medicine

Faculty of Physical Science ●

School of Basic Med. Science

Faculty of Social Sciences

Faculty of Management Science ●

It is important to note that the selection of samples via this sampling technique is void of personal bias, as the researcher does not exercise his discretion of preference in choosing the items.

1.3.3 Method of Data Analysis

The form of analysis of any data is determined by the specific qualitative approach taken. This research employs field study. Therefore, the data are field notes and audio recordings. These are carefully listened to, and inductive inferences are drawn from the data distinguishing the signal (the phenomenon of interest i.e. the mitigation of Face-Threatening Acts) from the noise present in the data (Shamoo and Resnik, 3). The data are transcribed from the spoken mode into the written mode of communication using the Jeffersonian Transcription Notation, so that every shift in pitch, stress patterns, tempo (fast/slow) recorded in the audio version are captured and reflected in the written mode. The study makes use of Excerpts to indicate speaker's utterances, and 'X' for names withheld, while L1, S1, and P1 are used to indicate utterances by Lecturers, Students, and Professors respectively.

1.3.4 Research Question

The following questions are the basic premises of this study:

1. What Face preservation techniques do speakers (those asking questions, making contributions, and correction) employ during the question and answer sessions of the postgraduate seminar presentations in the University of Benin, and why?
2. What Face-threat avoidance techniques do speakers employ to avoid face threat during the question and answer sessions of the postgraduate seminar presentations in the University of Benin, and why?
3. Why will speakers suspend attention to the face wants of the addressees under this face threatening circumstance?

1.4 Theoretical Background

This study employs the pragmatic theory of politeness and the 'Face-saving theory' to account for the degree of face threat mitigation, the avoidance of Face threat, and the choice

of politeness strategies employed by the speakers during the question and answer session of these seminar presentations.

1.4.1 Definition of Concepts

1.4.1.1 Pragmatics

Pragmatics, as a subfield of linguistics, is concerned with the intended meaning of utterances. It includes speech act theory, conversational implicatures and many more approaches to studying language behaviour. It also focuses on how the conveyance of meaning is dependent on both the structural and the linguistic knowledge of the addresser and addressee, as well as the context of the utterance, and the shared knowledge between those involved. Simply put, pragmatics is looking from what is being said to what is being conveyed.

1.4.1.2 Politeness

Several scholars in pragmatics and sociolinguistics have studied the concept of politeness from different angles, thus, proposing and recording different frameworks and models. Watts, et al. are the earliest to distinguish between first and second order politeness (otherwise known as Politeness 1 and Politeness 2 according to Eelen Gino in 2001). They define first-order politeness as “the various ways in which polite behaviour is perceived and talked about by members of a sociocultural group” (3). This refers to the lay notion or common-sense notions of the concept of politeness, that is, how members of a group have agreed to interpret politeness, for example how the use of “please”, “thank you,” and “I’m sorry” in some contexts is associated with politeness in the English language. The second-order politeness is “a term within a theory of social behaviour and language usage” (3). This accounts for the scientific conceptualisation of the first order politeness (politeness1). An article was recently published in the British weekly, *The Economist*, explaining the actual status of politeness as an area of research sitting midway between lay and academic concerns (618).

Politeness 2 is said to be more inclusive than Politeness 1 because it accounts for the whole gamut of behaviours and linguistic forms; whereas the latter is limited or restricted to only a subset of these. Eelen notes that theorists have failed to analyse this distinction or, at least, do so consistently. (48-75). It can, however, be agreed that drawing a definitive line between first order and second order politeness poses a risk; as there could be a loss of the connection and similarity that they share, an example of which is 'normativity'. Contrary to initial assumption, politeness 2 is as normative as politeness 1 being that it also engenders a comparison of alternative ways of 'doing the same thing.' Marina Tekourafi, in the Cambridge Pragmatics Handbook, opines that:

such comparison presupposes the categorisation of human behaviour into distinct and recognisable classes – not only into what constitutes politeness or less so ways of performing a compliment, a promise or a refusal, but also into what constitutes a compliment, a promise or a refusal in the first place - a categorisation which is in turn enabled by agreement within a community or group viz. by shared norms. It is precisely this normative character that enables politeness (in both the everyday and the technical senses) to serve as a socialisation device. If politeness 1 is explicitly normative, Politeness 2 is merely implicitly so. It is important to study both orders of politeness hand in hand, as one provides a background for the other to emerge. (619)

Robin Lakoff has examined politeness from a pragmatic viewpoint; hinging her principles against the background of Grice's cooperative principles (CP). Lakoff integrates her rules of politeness into the Gricean's CP, and suggests that the maxims of the CP are subordinated to those of the Politeness Principle (PP). She also attempts to create pragmatic rules to align with the syntactic and semantic rules of Grice's CP which she refers to as 'rules of conversation.' This is rooted in the notion of pragmatic competence (Watts et al. 59). The

notion is based on the belief that when two speakers from a speech community converse, they adhere to cultural norms. The rule states that Speakers are to be Clear and Polite. This, thus, sets the base for the 3 principles of politeness which comprises “Don’t impose or Distance,” “Give option or Deference,” and “Make audience feel good or camaraderie” (292-305). Her view aligns with that of Brown and Levinson (see 1.5.4).

Other scholars continue the trend of studying politeness from the angle of a non-imposing and camaraderie tool that oils conversations. According to Leech, politeness is “strategic conflict avoidance” which “can be measured in terms of the degree of effort put into the avoidance of a conflict situation” (103). His approach to politeness somewhat differs from Lakoff’s, in the sense that, his does not focus on pragmatic competence, but on interpersonal and textual rhetoric. Leech’s approach merges both Gricean’s CP and Lakoff’s PP to constitute the interpersonal rhetoric which has 7 maxims: maxim of tact, maxim of generosity, maxim of approbation, maxim of modesty, maxim of agreement, maxim of sympathy and maxim of consideration (Leech 105). Leech’s PP is based on a cost-benefit scale of politeness which involves maximising benefit and minimising cost to speaker/hearer:

(1) The Tact Maxim:

- Minimise cost to the speaker
- Maximise benefit to the hearer

(2) The Generosity Maxim:

- Minimise benefit to self (benefit to the S)
- Maximise cost to self

(3) The Approbation/Praise Maxim (it is oriented toward the H):

- Minimise dispraise of the H
- Maximise praise of the H

(4) The Modesty Maxim:

- Minimise praise of self (S)
- Maximise dispraise of self (S)

(5) The Agreement Maxim:

- Minimise disagreement with the H
- Maximise agreement with the H

(6) The Sympathy Maxim:

- Minimise antipathy towards the H
- Maximise sympathy towards the H

(7) Consideration Maxim:

- (1) Minimise the hearer's discomfort/displeasure
- (2) Maximise the hearer's comfort/pleasure (Leech 105).

Fraser and Nolen in their own study consider politeness to be a 'Conversational Contract' (CC), one wherein there are fixed set of rights and obligations which each interlocutor has to follow. They believe that when people enter into a certain conversation, each interlocutor brings a set of rights and obligations that determine what they can expect from each other. This interpersonal 'contract' is not frozen, but can be revised in the course of the time. It is also established on 4 dimensions: conventional, institutional, situational, and historical. According to them, being polite is abiding by the rules of the contract. Politeness may therefore be considered as adherence to the rules or terms of the conversation, and not necessarily a strategy of making a hearer feel good. They also opine that no linguistic form or verbal choice is intrinsically polite or impolite, although it is agreed that some linguistic forms convey politeness because of their intrinsic meanings (*sir, I'm sorry, would you please, etc.*) (qtd. in Fauziati 88).

Central to the classic and postmodern approaches to politeness is the concept of ‘face’ which is primarily based on Erving Goffman’s approach to the concept. In his work *Interactional Ritual*, he describes face as being:

[...] the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. Face is an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes – albeit an image, others may share, as when a person makes a good showing for his profession or religion by making a good showing for himself (5).

1.4.1.3 ‘Face-Saving’ Theory of Politeness

It is almost impossible to discuss the theory of politeness without making reference to Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson (henceforth B&L). B&L based their teachings and understanding of politeness on the concepts of face, face-threatening act, and mitigation. Their definition of Face is similar to that of Goffman Erving in 1967, who described Face as “the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself [or herself].” B&L propose a model of politeness based on two assumptions. The first assumption is related to the idea of a Model Person (MP). They describe Model Persons as rational agents, with the ability to rationalise from communicative goals to optimal means of achieving those goals. In doing these, the MP has to assess the dangers of threatening other participants’ (and ergo his/her own) face, as well as choose the appropriate strategies in order to reduce any threat to face that may be inherent in the communicative goal (Brown and Levinson 64).

The second assumption is related to Goffman’s notion. B&L believe that “face is something that is emotionally invested, that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and that must be constantly attended to in interaction” (61). Generally, people cooperate and assume others’ cooperation in maintaining face in interaction. This cooperation is based on the ‘mutual vulnerability’ of face (61). They opine that the notion of face is highly abstract, and

consists of two specific kinds: the negative and positive face (61). They assert that the negative face is “the want of every ‘competent adult member’ that his action be unimpeded by others” (62). It represents the person’s desire to be independent and free from imposition of others. The positive face is “the want of every ‘competent adult member’ that his wants be desirable to at least some others” (62). It is a representation of the person’s desire to be liked and appreciated by others.

Certain kinds of acts intrinsically threaten face, especially those acts which by nature run against the face want of the speaker or the hearer. By ‘act’ B&L refers to what is intended to be done by a verbal or non-verbal communication (65). When a verbal or non-verbal act is contrary to the hearer’s or the speaker’s face wants, the act is named “face threatening act” (FTA) (Brown and Levinson 65). “Those acts that primarily threatens the addressee’s (H’s) negative face wants, by indicating (potentially) that the speaker (S) does not intend to avoid impeding the H’s freedom of action, include:

- (a) “Orders and requests (S indicates that he wants the H to do, or refrain from doing, some act A).
- (b) Suggestion, advice (S indicates that he thinks H ought to (perhaps) do some act A).
- (c) Reminders (S indicates that H should remember to do some A).
- (d) Threats, warnings, dares (S indicates that he- or someone, or something- will instigate sanctions against H unless he does A” (66).

(ii) “Those acts that predicate some positive future act of S toward H, and by so doing, put some pressure on H to accept or reject them, and possibly incur a debt include:

- (a) Offers (S indicates that he wants H to commit himself to whether or not he wants S to do some act for H, with H incurring a possible debt).
- (b) Promises (S commits himself to a future act of H’s benefit)” (66).

(iii) “Those acts that predicate some desire of S towards H or H’s goods, giving H reason to think that he may have to take action to protect the object of S’s desire, or to give it to S:

- (a) Compliments, expressions of envy or admiration (S indicates that he likes or would like something of H’s).
- (b) Expressions of strong (negative) emotions towards H such as. hatred, anger, lust (S indicates possible motivation for harming H or H’s goods)” (66).

“Those acts that threaten the positive-face want, by indicating (potentially) that the speaker does not care about the addressee’s feelings, wants, etc. include:

(i) Those that show that S has a negative evaluation of some aspect of H’s positive face:

- (a) Expressions of disapproval, criticism, contempt or ridicule, complaints and reprimands, accusations, insults (S indicates that he doesn’t like/want one or more of H’s wants, acts, personal characteristics, goods, beliefs, or values).
- (b) Contradictions or disagreements, challenges (S indicates that he thinks H is wrong or misguided or unreasonable about some issue, such wrongness being associated with disapproval)” (66).

(ii) “Those that show that S doesn’t care about (or is indifferent to) H’s positive face:

- (a) Expressions of violent (out-of-control) emotions (S gives H possible reason to fear him or be embarrassed by him).
- (b) Irreverence, mention of taboo topics, including those that are inappropriate in the context (S indicates that he doesn’t value H’s values, and doesn’t fear H’s fears).
- (c) Raising of dangerously emotional or divisive topics e.g. politics, race, religion. Women’s liberation (S raises the possibility or likelihood of face-threatening acts (such as the above) occurring; i.e. S creates a dangerous-to-face atmosphere).

- (d) Blatant non-cooperation in an activity. E.g. disruptively interrupting H's talk, making non-sequiturs or showing non-attention (S indicates that he doesn't care about H's positive or negative face wants).
- (e) Use of address terms and other status-marked identifications in initial encounters (S may misidentify H in an offensive or embarrassing way, intentionally or accidentally)" (66-67).

B&L indicate that there may be an overlap in the classification of FTAs, because some FTAs intrinsically threaten both negative and positive-face (e.g. complaints, interruptions, threats, strong expression of emotion, and requests for personal information) (67). The second distinction is between threat to the H's face and threat to the S's face. These include:

- (i) "Those that offend the S's negative face:
 - (a) Expressing thanks (S accepts a debt, humbles his own face).
 - (b) Acceptance of H's thanks or H's apology (S may feel constrained to minimise H's debt or transgression, as in 'It was nothing, don't mention it').
 - (c) Excuses (S indicates that he thinks he had good reason to do, or fail to do an act which H has just criticized. This may constitute in turn a criticism of H, or at least cause a confrontation between H's view of things and S's view).
 - (d) Acceptance of offers (S is constrained to accept a debt, and to encroach upon H's negative face).
 - (e) Responses to H's *faux pas* (if S visibly notices a prior *faux pas*, he may cause embarrassment to H; but if he pretends not to, he may be discomfited himself).
 - (f) Unwilling promises and offers (S commits himself to some future action although he doesn't want to; therefore, if his unwillingness shows, he may also offend H's positive face)" (67-68).
- (ii) "Those that directly damage S's positive face:

B&L propose “two major ways of classifying FTAs (by whether S’s face or H’s face is mainly threatened, or by whether it is mainly the positive face or negative face that is at stake) and it gives rise to a four-way grid which offers the possibility of cross-classifying at least some of the above FTAs” (68).

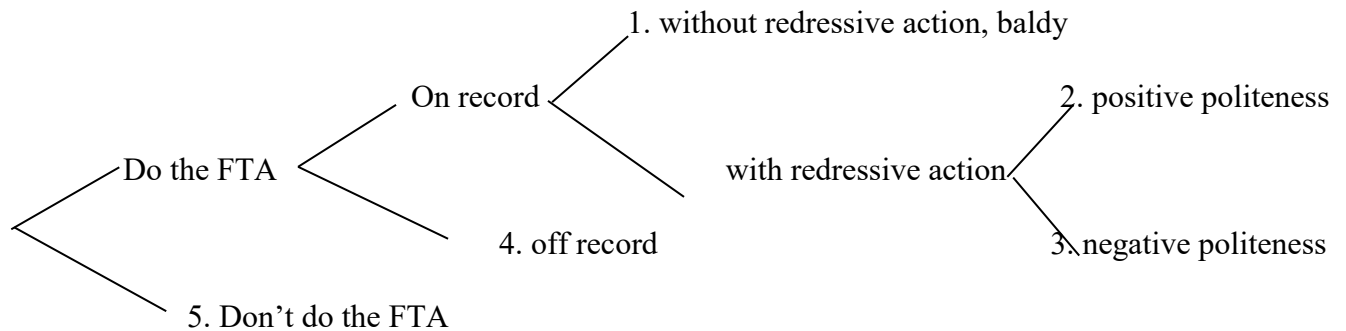


Fig 1. Possible strategies for doing FTAs. (Source: Brown and Levinson, 69).

(a) Apologies (S indicates that he regrets doing a prior FTA, thereby damaging his own face to some degree - if the apology is at the same time a confession with H learning about the transgression through it, and the FTA thus conveys bad news).

(b) Acceptance of a compliment (S may feel constrained to denigrate the object of H’s prior compliment, thus damaging his own face; or he may feel constrained to compliment H in turn).

(c) Self-humiliation, shuffling or covering, acting stupid, self-contradicting.

The possible sets of strategies are schematised sufficiently in Fig. 1. In this schema they bear in mind the following definitions

An actor goes **on record** in doing an act if his communicative intentions are clear and unambiguous. The S is said to have adhered to the Gricean maxim of manner, as B&L

consider the bald on-record strategy to be speaking in conformity with Grice's maxims (Brown and Levinson 68-69). When a speaker's utterance attracts more than one clear communicative intention, he is said to have gone **off record** in doing A. Linguistic realisations of off-record strategies include metaphor and irony, rhetorical questions, understatement, tautologies, and all kinds of hints, so that the meaning is to some degree negotiable (68-69). It is considered the most face-repressive strategy.

Doing an act **baldly, without redress**, involves doing it "in the most direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way possible" (Brown and Levinson 69). This may occur if the S does not fear retribution from the H. Foreexample, in circumstances where (a) S and H tacitly agree that the relevance of face demands may be suspended in the interest of urgency or efficiency; (b) where the danger to H's face is very small, as in offers, requests, suggestions that are clearly in H's interest and do not require great sacrifices of S (c) where S is vastly superior in power to H, or can enlist audience support to destroy H's face without losing his own (Brown and Levinson 69). It is safe to assert that redressive action gives face to the addressee, that is, it attempts to neutralise potential face damage in an FTA by doing it in such a way that indicates that the threat is not deliberate. Such redressive action takes one of two forms, depending on the aspect of face (**Negative or positive**) being stressed (Brown and Levinson 70).

Positive politeness is a superstrategy employed by an MP to minimise the threat to the H's face by focusing on the H's satisfaction and conviction, rather than his desire to do the FTA. B&L describes it as a strategy 'oriented towards the positive face of H, the positive self-image he claims for himself' (70). Also, "positive politeness is approach-based. It anoints the face of the addressee by indicating in some respect, S wants H's wants" (Brown and Levinson 70). This strategy is usually employed to minimize the potency of an FTA and to create a kind of social and intimate relation between the S and the H.

Negative politeness is “oriented mainly towards partially satisfying (redressing) H’s negative face, his basic want to maintain claims of territory and self-determination. Negative politeness, thus, is essentially avoidance-based, and realisations of negative-politeness strategies consist of assurances that the S recognises and respects the addressee’s negative-face wants, and S will not (or will only minimally) interfere with the addressee’s freedom of action” (Brown and Levinson 70). It is characterised by “self-effacement, formality and restraint, with attention to very restricted aspect of H’s self image, centering on his want to be unimpeded” (Brown and Levinson 70).

Negative politeness is a redressive action marked by expressions of formality, restraint and distancing (Brown and Levinson 129). It is often used to interact with the H in a non-imposing manner. It is a strategy largely oriented towards the addressee’s negative face and emphasises avoidance of imposition from the addresser. It is safe to assert that negative politeness is a politeness strategy for self-protection, is specific and focused, and performs the function of reducing the particular imposition that the FTA unavoidably effects (Brown and Levinson 129). This form of politeness corresponds with Geoffrey Leech’s Politeness Principle, which suggests that the illocutionary function of an utterance is competitive i.e. a competition between Speaker’s wants and what is ‘good manners’. The politeness needed is ‘negative’ as its purpose is to reduce the discord (Brown and Levinson 84).

Negative politeness can be realised by – conventional indirectnesses, hedges, questions, communicating S’s want to not impinge on H (apologies, admittance of impingement, reluctance to impinge on the H’s want), pessimism, among others. Addressers who choose the negative politeness strategy may not have done so solely because they care about the damage their FTA effects, rather, it may be a function of the payoff attached to negative politeness strategy. A speaker is said to benefit in the following ways, should he go *on record* with negative politeness: he can pay respect, deference to the H in exchange for the

FTA, and can thereby avoid incurring (or can thereby lessen) a future debt; he can maintain social distance, and avoid the threat (or potential face loss) of advancing familiarity towards the addressee; he can give a real ‘out’ to the addressee (for example, with a request or an offer, by making it clear that he doesn’t really expect H to say ‘Yes’ unless he wants to, thereby minimising the mutual face loss incurred if H has to say ‘No’); and he can give conventional ‘outs’ to the addressee as opposed to real ‘outs’ (that is, pretend to offer an escape route without really doing so, thereby indicating that he has the other person’s face wants in mind) (Brown and Levinson 72).

“Don’t do the FTA” strategy is performed when the risk of threat to face is very severe, thereby, the S keeps silent without using any speech act despite its importance. There are so many factors that influence an MP’s choice of strategy. Firstly, the payoffs: by going *on record*, a speaker can potentially enlist public pressure against the H or in support of himself, he can get appreciated for honesty, outspokenness; he can avoid the danger of being misinterpreted or being perceived as a manipulator. By *going off record* the S can be perceived as being tactful, non-coercive, and nice, as he can give the H an opportunity to be seen as caring for S, and he can also cleverly avoid being misinterpreted to have said something face damaging or insensitive (Brown and Levinson 71). When the S chooses to go on record with *positive politeness*, he can actually reduce the potency of a face threat by assuring the H that he regards him to be of ‘the same kind,’ and that he likes and wants whatever the H wants (Brown and Levinson 70). Thus, a criticism may lose its sting in a friendly context. As for going on record with *negative politeness*, a speaker can get any of the following advantages: he can be considered respectful, he can give deference to the H in return of the FTA, and he can also lessen a future debt. Finally, in the ‘Don’t do the FTA’ strategies, the S may fail to achieve his desired communication, yet he has politely avoided

the FTA which could be a pointer that he cares for the H's negative and positive face. It may be asserted that:

- (a) "The more dangerous an FTA is based on the S's evaluation, and the more he will tend to choose the higher numbered strategy" (Brown and Levinson 73).
- (b) "The positive politeness strategy precedes negative politeness in the continuum of FTA danger because it redresses by fulfilling the H's wants. The strategy demands that the S assumes the H is a member 'of the same kind' and the efficacy of his redress is totally vulnerable to the H's concurrence in this assumption" (Brown and Levinson 73).
- (c) "Negative politeness is directed at generalised desire for freedom of action" (Brown and Levinson 73).
- (d) "Actors or speakers will not always go off record even though it has maximum insurance policy. This is because it leads to too many ambiguities and unclarities, as well as because of the tension that exists between an actor's negative-face wants and his positive face wants, since the H can simultaneously want to both be undisturbed and admired" (Brown and Levinson 73).

B&L, thus, conclude that "it is safer to assume that H prefers his peace and self-determination than he prefers your expressions of regard, unless you are certain of the contrary" (Brown and Levinson 74). But most importantly, being that all participants in the conversation share knowledge of the mutual vulnerability of face, they will constantly pay attention to each other's face wants. There are some sociological circumstances, in perhaps all cultures, that elicit particular FTA minimising strategies. B&L argue that the assessment of the seriousness of an FTA involves the following factors in many and perhaps all cultures:

- (i) The 'social distance' (D) of S and H (a symmetric relation)
- (ii) The relative 'power' (P) of S and H (an asymmetric relation)

- (iii) The absolute ranking (R) of impositions in the particular culture.

They opine that the distance, power, and absolute ranking of impositions are factors that determine the choice of strategy (and by implication choice of words which may include boosters and hedges), that any ‘competent adult member’ of that society may adopt. The seriousness or weight of a given FTA x is compounded of both risk to the H’s face and risk to the S’s face, in a proportion relative to the nature of the FTA. Therefore, confessions are essentially threats to the S’s face; criticism, correction, advice, and orders are basically threats to the H’s face, while offers and requests are likely to threaten the face of both interlocutors. However, the degree of seriousness of an FTA is weighed as:

$$W_x = D(S, H) + P(H, S) + R_x$$

Where W_x is the numerical value that measures the weightiness of the FTA $_x$, $D(S, H)$ is the value that measures the social distance between S and H, $P(H, S)$ is a measure of the power that H has over the S, and R_x is a value that measures the degree to which the FTA x is rated an imposition in that culture (Brown and Levinson 76). The P/D/R variables may be regarded as parallel to M.A.K Halliday’s concept of field, mode and tenor of discourse in his description of Register. He opines that the topic or purpose of a discourse, the personal relationship between the interactants, and the channel of production will determine the choice of language. The tenor of discourse “refers to the type of role interaction, and the set of relevant social relation among the participants (qtd in Brown and Levinson 22). There might be a specific hierarchy between the interlocutors.

B&L assert that the distance and power difference between participants in a conversation can lead to the suspension or suppression of FTA, as well as exaggeration and overestimation of FTA. The damage to face caused by mockery or jest may lose its sting in a friendly context, and may be taken very seriously in a case where participants are total strangers (76).

The ranking of imposition is measured by the degree in which they are considered to interfere with an agent's wants of self-determination or of approval (his negative- and positive-face wants). In general, there are probably two such scales or ranks that are empirically identifiable for negative-face FTAs: a ranking of imposition is proportion to the expenditure (a) of services (including provision of time) and (b) of goods (including non-material goods like information as well as the expression of regard and other face payments). These intra-culturally defined costings of impositions on an individual are, in general, constant only in their rank order from one situation to another. However, even the rank order is subjected to a set of operations that shuffle the impositions according to whether the actors have specific rights or obligations to perform the act, whether they have specific reasons (ritual or physical) for not performing them, and whether actors are known to actually enjoy being imposed upon in some way" (Brown and Levinson 77).

These sociological variables are contextual, taking P as an extended example. It can be safely asserted that individuals are given an "absolute value on this dimension that measures the power that each individual has relative to all others. Thus, a bank manager might be given high rating, and a lowly worker a low one. But when the worker pulls a gun, or sits on a jury trying the manager, or represents his union, the power may be reserved" (Brown and Levinson 78). P is a value attached not to the individuals at all, but to roles or roles-set. Hence, in the role-set, such as manager/employee, or parent/child, is asymmetrical power built.

1.5 Review of Related Scholarship

The study of politeness has gained more scholarly attention in recent times, and it owes to the fact that, interlocutors, regardless of their race, will always opt for options that aid social harmony throughout their conversations. This has led to ground-breaking research and findings virtually everywhere around the world. However, the area of Face and Face

threatening acts cannot be said to have received the same amount of attention. Although there have been a good number of studies on face threatening acts in academic, non-academic, written, and spoken discourses.

Following the work of Myers in 1989, there has been an awakened interest in the study of politeness in written texts such as scientific texts, business letters, feedbacks etc. The result of Myers' research shows that in writing articles, researchers make use of FTAs to claim and reject the claims of others. He affirms that these researchers, therefore, use both positive and negative politeness strategies in minimising the effects of the FTAs. The findings also show that pronouns and certainty modifiers are used as positive politeness strategies, while discourse devices, including hedges, are used as negative politeness strategies (Myers 33).

Jo Roberts carried out a quantitative research to determine how often the faces of teachers are threatened by their supervisors, if the threats are mitigated, and what strategies are utilised in the mitigation. A total of four supervisors are examined, and the results show that a total of 154 face threatening acts (FTAs) are performed in seven instructional conferences. These acts include 17 orders, 10 demands, 75 requests (of which 52 were indirect requests for action), 21 suggestions, 5 imperatives, and 25 loaded questions. The frequency of these kinds of FTAs ranges from 4 to 51 per conference, with a mean of 22 per conference. Collectively, the supervisors were equally likely to threaten negative face (88 FTAs) as against positive face (66 FTAs). They also use relatively less polite strategies when performing the FTAs (i.e. face threatening acts in these conferences tended to be balder and less redressive). The most frequently used negative politeness strategies are hedging, questioning, not assuming, willingness to comply, minimising the imposition on the teacher's self-determination, and stating the FTA as a general rule to soften the offence. The most frequently used positive politeness strategies are exaggerating approval, avoiding

disagreements by hedging, and using inclusive forms to include both teacher and supervisor in an activity” (9).

Katrina Pariera examines the use of politeness strategies in email discussions of taboo topics. A computer-mediated communication like electronic mail (email) exposes how social relationships are built and maintained in an environment devoid of the necessary rules of conduct during face-to-face conversations. The study examines the variation in politeness strategies used by native speakers when communicating about taboo subjects with interlocutors of high and low levels of intimacy. This is aimed at determining if the strategies conform to the speech-based politeness theory of Brown and Levinson in 1987 (9). The study records that people use more of the off-the-record strategy when conversing with close friends than they did with strangers, there is an abundant use of non-committal stance markers to distant the speaker from their claim, and there is the use of euphemisms and dysphemisms to describe taboo words. All of these politeness strategies are deployed for the common goal of mitigating any face threat (10-11).

Muhammad Lodhi et al. carry out a study on the effect and levels of the utilisation of politeness strategies during doctor-patient communication. The study shows that majority of the doctors (45.38%) exhibit power and dominance over patients during consultations, and constantly stuck to using the ‘Bald-on-record’ politeness strategy. Also, while 31.09% utilise the negative politeness approach, 19.33% use the positive politeness approach, leaving the off-record strategy as the least used at 4.20%. They believe that the use of bald-on-record strategy creates an atmosphere where the patients and clients feel unwelcomed, and are therefore unable to properly discuss their health concerns. The study recommends that the Pakistani government incorporates a legal and moral code in the health department to check the politeness levels of the doctors during consultation (18-20).

Alex Dzameshie examines how Face Threatening acts are mitigated with politeness strategies in Christian sermonic discourse. He argues that ministers use politeness strategies as strategic rhetorical moves aimed at achieving favourable hearing for their messages. The result shows that the most significant speech act is admonition because of its illocutionary implication – to move hearers to perform one moral/social/spiritual duty or another, and to cultivate appropriate Christian character (211). Some other major findings include:

1. Ministers use mitigated FTAs more frequently than they use unmitigated ones
2. In the commission of FTAs, ministers use inclusive pronouns as the most frequent positive politeness strategy in each sermon.
3. In the commission of FTAs, ministers use point-of-view distancing (i.e quotations) as the most frequent negative politeness strategy.
4. Increase in the number of FTAs performed by a minister in a sermon is associated with an increase in the number of politeness strategies (211).

Amalia Kithure examines the face-threatening acts and politeness strategies employed by Kenyan Televangelists. The aim of the study is to find out the face-threatening acts inherent in televangelists' discourse, the politeness strategies employed by the televangelists in mitigating the threat, and the factors influencing their choice of politeness strategies. The act of preaching entails convincing, criticism, and correction which inherently threatens the face of the H. Consequent to this, the televangelist therefore seeks to mitigate this threat by all the means available. The study reveals that the televangelists make use of devices like: inclusive 'we', questions, hedges, impersonalising the S and H, bald-on-record strategy, off record strategy, ambiguity etc. to achieve face threat mitigation. These choices of politeness strategies are influenced by the need of any rational agent to avoid face threats, to aid face maintenance of both S and H, and of course the pay-offs attached to the use of these strategies (Kithure 95).

In another study, Ana Kedves studies the face-threatening acts and politeness strategies in summer school application adverts, in order to, firstly, determine the quality and quantity of FTAs in such texts; and, secondly, to analyse the use of politeness strategies in the minimisation of face damage in cases where it occur. Data are sourced from specialised summer schools web-sites or universities and educational institutions web sites. The study presents a total of 197 FTAs, which reflected an average of 3.28 FTAs per CFA. The isolated FTAs are categorised as positive or negative, and as aimed towards the hearer or the speaker. The study also indicates that negative FTAs occur more frequently, and the vast majority of FTAs pose a threat to the hearer's rather than the speaker's face. The investigation goes a step further to determine if the quantity of FTAs is a function of the participant's national origin, the location of the school, or the fee. The study reveals that the overall distribution is fairly even and there is no significant difference in frequency of FTAs regarding the location of summer school. However, CFAs from UK, Ireland and Sweden show slightly increased average FTA occurrence; and the correlation between daily fee (participation fee/number of days) and FTA number is r (per diem, N) ≈ 0.0452 . The analysis also shows that FTA occurrence is followed by the deployment of politeness strategy. There is the predominate use of positive politeness strategies, especially expressions containing in-group identity markers to enhance solidarity or amendments, while negative politeness strategies include the use of indirect obviate expressions (431, 442-443).

Giuliana Diani examines the use of criticism and politeness strategies in English and Italian academic reviews. This comparative study centers on determining the mitigation strategies used to neutralise the effect of criticism in English and Italian academic reviews in the field of linguistics. The study attempts to contribute to the "cross-cultural research on reviewing practices by exploring how criticisms are managed in a somewhat neglected review genre in academic discourse studies – the book review article" (60). "The mitigation

strategies identified in both language corpora mainly involve the use of sequences of speech acts such as praise-criticism, criticism-praise, criticism-suggestion, praise-suggestion, and hedging” (60). The study shows that differences exist in the two languages. While praise is preponderantly used in both English and Italian book review articles, Italian-speaking linguistics reviewers utilise a lower proportion of hedges than their English-speaking colleagues and are found to most likely select suggestions as a form of indirect criticism (60).

The results show that:

- (i) “Linguistics reviewers writing in English and Italian deploy a considerable range of linguistic devices when expressing mitigated criticism of peers. Their use and distribution are discussed in relation to national/cultural writing conventions, but also differences between “large” and “small” disciplinary cultures” (60).
- (ii) “The amount of criticism is five times greater in English book review articles - in normalised terms per 100,000 words, 177 vs 34 acts” (74). This is also confirmed by the general preference for English-speaking reviewers to use direct criticism (58%), whereas Italian-speaking reviewers show a clear preference for mitigated criticism (65%) (74).

Kunyarut Getkham carries out a quantitative research to determine the politeness strategies in Thai graduate research paper discussion. This paper analyses the use of politeness strategies in 32 discussion sections drawn from research papers produced by Thai graduate students at Bangkok, Thailand. The study adopts Brown and Levinson’s and Myers’ models of politeness strategies. The aim of this research is to identify what politeness strategies are mostly used in the whole corpus, whether differences exist in the use of these politeness strategies and how politeness strategies are employed. The analysis of the data reveals that these student researchers rarely employ politeness strategies in their discussions. However, they employ the negative politeness super strategy than the positive ones, and the

differences in the use of these two strategies are highly significant. The raw frequency of each device is normalised following Biber's method which divides the raw frequency count by the number of words in the text, and multiplies the result by 1000. Thereafter, the normalised frequency of each device is recorded, and the normalised frequencies of devices in positive strategies and negative strategies are added to produce the total positive strategies and the total negative strategies respectively. The frequencies of all devices in each sub-strategy are also added to produce frequencies of sub-strategies. Furthermore, descriptive statistics are calculated to find the averages of positive and negative politeness strategies and sub-strategies" (Getkham 165). It is safe to draw the following conclusions from the findings of the study:

- (i) The student writers' use of politeness strategies signals an urgent need for instruction in certain rhetorical structures, since academic/research writing is beyond mere presentation of a collection of facts; as it also presents writers' views and demonstrates their manners.
- (ii) Negative politeness strategies, especially impersonality devices and hedges, are the most used strategies by these student writers. This indicates a preference to mitigate their commitment to propositions. The results show that impersonal constructions are mostly used. (Getkham 165).

Jing Deng investigates the politeness strategies deployed in Chinese internet relay chat communication. The data for the study are collected from some Chinese QQ chat groups, which are considered as the most versatile instant messaging apps in China. The members of such groups are said to be anonymous strangers with very high social distance. The study reveals that because the interlocutors in this chat groups are "physically isolated and visually anonymous," the positive politeness strategy is employed to cater for the addressee's positive face want, thereby, fostering a highly sociable environment. The main positive strategies

adopted in public Chinese QQ chat groups include the use of solidarity in-group identity markers, asserting common ground, including both speaker and hearer in activity, avoiding disagreement, and complimenting. The interlocutors employ some negative politeness strategies as well as bald-on-record and off record strategies to cater for the negative face wants of interlocutors, who desire to be free from imposition. The sub strategies employed include being conventionally indirect, minimising the imposition, showing deference, being pessimistic and stating the general rule etc. The study contributes to the better understanding of the affordance of politeness, interpersonal relationship formation, and maintenance in anonymous and public computer-mediated-communication context of non-western language and culture.

There have been numerous studies on politeness strategies in Nigeria, comprising both spoken and written discourses in academic and non-academic fields respectively. Emmanuel Adedun and Olajumoke Mekiliuwa investigate the spoken discourse of Nigerian church sermons. The study shows the use of face threatening acts which take the form of direct imperatives, orders, requests, admonitions and criticism. These FTAs threaten the negative and positive face wants of the addressees. However, the preachers attempt to mitigate these face threats via the use of face saving acts such as rhetorical questions, politeness markers, solidarity forms, inclusive pronouns, code switching, and Nigerian English expressions. They also affirm that the last two face saving acts perform pragmatic functions in the discourse (15).

A seemingly parallel study is carried out by Sharafudeen Kareem on the face threatening acts that occur in Muslim Friday sermons. The study is restricted to Yoruba Imams. The assessment shows that Yoruba Imams are more considerate and respectful, because of their Yoruba cultural demands. The Imams employ nine face-threat mitigating strategies in mitigating the potential face threats to their audience, such as Bald on-Record

(BR), Off-Record (OR), Bald on-Record mitigated with Positive politeness (BPP), Bald on-record mitigated with negative politeness (BNP), Off-Record enhanced with positive politeness (OPP), Off-Record enhanced with Negative Politeness (ONP), Positive Politeness, Negative politeness, and Negative impoliteness. The study recorded the high usage of the BPP strategy by the Imams during the avoidance of sensitive topics, berating etc. This is because of the polite nature of the Yoruba culture (2376-78).

Akin Odebunmi investigates the politeness strategies employed by interviewers in political newspaper interviews. This study shows that most of what transpire between participants in political interviews are informed and influenced by previously and spontaneously conceived opinions which are put forward directly using polite and impolite expressions. Also, because politics is an ‘aggressive’ game by its nature, the use of harsh and rude expressions is far from marginal. The interviewers are therefore careful of their linguistic choices, and constantly opt for hedges (21).

Akin Odebunmi carries out another research to determine the actual use of linguistic politeness strategies in ‘Selected Independence Anniversary Speeches of Nigerian Heads of Government.’ This study shows that although the Heads of Government employ politeness strategies, they do not do so because they really care about the face wants of the addressees. It may be for other reasons which may or may not include their want to be considered friendly, grateful, appreciative and hopeful. However, the fact remains that the adoption of these politeness strategies by political leaders satisfies their needs rather than the hearers/Nigerians’ (302).

Ndubuisi Ahamefuna studies the politeness strategies employed by the characters in the fictional world created by Krisagbedo in *A Darkling Plain*. Characters in the novel used various politeness strategies to achieve their aims at different times. They may sometimes use a strategy to threaten a H’s face or to lessen a threat to a H’s face. A character like Onyinye

constantly uses the bald-on-record strategy when conversing with Patrick about Mmeso, Deborah, and their entire family and village, since she has no intent of mitigating the face threatening effect of the derogatory terms she uses in describing them. The paper concurs with the theory of politeness which demands that in all communication, there is need to not only save one's face but to save the face of others, and that those truths or facts about a person or race that are open secrets and are sensitive should be played down on or avoided altogether (12).

T. Ajayi and A. Tella carry out an investigation to determine the politeness strategies utilised in telecommunications network providers' unsolicited SMS in Nigeria. The study rests on Brown and Levinson's Politeness and Arundale's Face Constituting theories. The data for the study are drawn from the fifteen unsolicited messages purposively selected from the numerous unsolicited messages from MTN and Airtel. The data include messages sent between 2015 and 2016, and they are said to be representative of the numerous unsolicited messages sent by the selected network providers, considering their generic features. Sixty-seven percent (67%) of the messages analysed in this study are from MTN, while the remaining thirty-three percent (33%) are from Airtel. This study reveals that positive, negative and bald on record politeness strategies are persuasive marketing devices employed by the network providers to woo and win the hearts of their customers, to avoid imposition of any kind, and to mitigate any potential threat/damage to face (36-49).

Temitope Ajayi analysed face management and speech acting in police-suspect interaction in Nigeria, using the face theory of Brown and Levinson, and Searle's model of Speech Act. The data for the study are collected from the State Criminal Investigation Department (S C I D), Oyo State, Nigeria, between 2013 and 2015; and they comprise six interactions – three apiece respectively between IPOs and HPSs, and between IPOs and LPSs. These cases include threat to life, land dispute, forgery, and fraud. The study shows that

treatments got by high-profile and low-profile suspects are different. For example, IPOs' use of directive, assertive, declarative and commissive acts is loaded with acts that constitute threats to the positive and negative faces of low-profile suspects. The Low-profile suspects, on the other hand, employ responsive acts as a strategy to appeal to the positive faces of IPOs. Although high-profile suspects are also addressed with some acts observed in cases involving low profile suspects, there is however a difference, as the acts employed by IPOs have face-saving strategies. In particular, IPOs deploy the acknowledgement sub-act of commissive act in interactions with high-profile suspects as a face-saving strategy. High-profile suspects deploy assertive acts to project their negative faces in police-suspect interaction (21).

Romanus Aboh also draws insight from Brown and Levinson's Face theory in his research on "Euphemistic Choices: Face-saving Strategies and Sexual Discourse in Selected Nigerian Novels." The study aims to analyse the use of euphemism as one of the politeness strategies that speakers employ in mitigating the face threatening effect of expressions. The data of the study are drawn from Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel*, Vincent Egbuson's *Love My Planet*, Abimbola Adelakun's *Under the Brown Rusted Roofs*, and Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain*. The analysis indicates that euphemism is a strong discourse strategy that can tone down the effect of an expression on hearer. It is also a linguistic modality which discourse participants explore basically for politeness reasons. We find that these writers carefully describe sex in ways that it loses its vulgarity. It is described as a 'movement/journey,' and 'biological process of tracking maturity,' while the sexual organ is described as an object. The use for this alternative description is to tone down the vulgarity that accompanies the use of the word in the fictional world of the text –as it may be regarded as a 'taboo topic'. It can therefore be surmised that euphemism is a politeness phenomenon that helps to preserve, and make conversation appealing to discourse participants (Romanus 44).

Beverlyne Ambuyo et.al.' examine the face-threatening acts and standing orders in the question time discussions of the Kenyan Parliament. The study shows that, although the Question time is highly aggressive and marked by numerous FTAs, the parliamentarians are however "constrained to produce parliamentary language required by the standing orders of 2008, thus, politeness strategies become the only linguistic device to the realisation of fruitful political discussions" (Ambuyo et.al 210). The data are drawn from live televised question time sessions in the month of April and May 2009. The data are analysed using the Brown and Levinson's face theory, which encompasses positive, negative, and image repair politeness strategies. The findings show that certain strategies are used to mitigate FTAs, thus, enhancing effective communication; others are a ritual requirement by the standing orders and a result of mere politics between the different political factions" (Ambuyo et.al 213).

Moreover, the paper investigates and analyses how negative and positive politeness strategies are employed during question time discussion in the Kenyan Parliament. It is apparent that politeness influences both the relational and content dimensions of communication. This is because the MPs construct their communicative acts based on each other's response as they all struggle to maintain, save and repair their faces once encountered with an FTA. From the above analysis, some politeness strategies are used as a ritual requirement by the Standing Orders of the Kenyan Parliament, which dictates behaviour and the language that is acceptable in parliament. Other strategies are used as a way of doing FTAs. The whole genres of Question Time are full of FTAs i.e. criticisms, requests, accusations, blames, complains, reproaches, rebukes, objections, embarrassments among others. This is a way of exemplifying the manifestation of power relations evident among the MPs. Therefore, politeness strategies are used interchangeably to ensure continuity and enhance fruitful communication in the Kenyan Parliament (Abuyo et.al 214-215).

Jane Ifechelobi examines politeness among undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The study centers on the model of politeness proposed by Brown and Levinson. The findings of the studies show that undergraduate students are by norm (and by the power distance that exist between them and their L1s) expected to be polite to their L1s. They, therefore, use hedges, positive politeness sub-strategies, negative politeness sub-strategies, deference, and indirect questions to present their requests or opinions. The findings also record instances of communication breakdown which stems from students' failure to show enough power-distance that exist between them and their L1s.

Jane Ifechelobi summarily posits that "in social interactions people must constantly make different linguistic choices of what they want to say, how we want to say it, and the specific sentence types, words or sounds that best unite the what with the how" (68). Correct choice of appropriate linguistic forms is important in achieving politeness. The strategies examined in this study is an evidence that "a harmonious and peaceful co-existence is achieved through the use of positive polite utterances" (68). Impolite or face threatening acts must be avoided, as they lead to impolite responses, misunderstanding, friction and conflict. It was also discovered that some students do not fully understand the correct strategies to employ in certain situations and unknowingly threaten their addressee's face (68-69).

1.5.1 Justification of Study

Although there are numerous studies aimed at explicating the politeness strategies employed in minimising face threats that occur in both written and spoken discourses, these studies mainly focus on non-academic endeavours rather than on the academic field. Most of these studies that are concerned with academics focus on: article writing, text writing, feedbacks, dissertation writing, and replies to articles. They do not examine one of the most confrontational social interactions in the academic community - seminar presentations. In this respect, the aim of the study is to contribute to knowledge by investigating the linguistic

politeness strategies employed by academics involved in seminar paper criticism, in the University of Benin, noting their most preferred mitigation devices and the reason for the choice. This therefore provides a safe ground for the justification of this study.

1.6 Thesis Statement

In evaluating postgraduate seminar presentations in the University of Benin, academics deploy negative politeness, positive politeness, bald on-record and off-record politeness strategies to mitigate face-threatening acts of their utterances.

CHAPTER TWO

NEGATIVE POLITENESS IN SELECTED POSTGRADUATE SEMINAR PRESENTATION IN THE UNIVERSITY OF BENIN

2.1 Introduction

This section examines the various negative politeness strategies employed by those in the addresser's role. Politeness strategies are used to prevent the infringement and/or violation of the hearer's face wants. These strategies serve as cushion for the illocutionary force of utterances, thereby, reducing the face threat inherent in such utterances. The face threatening act (FTA) inherent in seminar presentation is the kind which threatens the face of the presenter, as he is constantly reminded of the gaps and loopholes in his research; corrected, criticised, and given suggestions. These actions bring the entirety of the research findings into question, and thus, reduce the work to a seemingly 'inadequate' one. Those in the addresser role recognise these face threat, thus, they use the best politeness strategies to mitigate the impending threat. This, however, solely depends on the S's discretion, as he/she can go on/off record for reasons ranging from the social distance between H & S, the power relations between H & S, and of course the weight of his imposition on the H.

2.2 Data Presentation and Analyses

During postgraduate seminar presentations in the University of Benin, the addressers most often use the redressive form of negative politeness, largely because of the nature of criticism. Criticising a thing, a place, a person or a seminar paper, is an illocutionary Speech Act that results in damages to the addressee's face. Also, being that the model person (MP) will always seek out the best strategy to minimise threat to face, the addresser chooses the negative politeness strategy. The following are examples of the strategies employed by academics in selected departments of the University of Benin.

2.2.1 Hedging Opinions

The rule of negative politeness suggests that speakers should rather question or hedge than assume that the H is able/willing to do any acts predicated of him. It is the product of the want not to presume and the want not to coerce the H. “A ‘hedge’ is a particle word, or phrase that modifies the degree of membership of a predicate or noun phrase in a set. It presents the membership that is *partial* or true only in certain respects”. (Brown and Levinson 145) To hedge an opinion is to basically soften the illocutionary force of a given Speech Act in an utterance. Hence, hedging on Gricean maxims or on illocutionary forces is the most vital resource for the realisations of politeness strategies.

Ordinary communicative intentions are often considered potential threats to cooperative interaction, and are also regulated and encoded in Speech Acts. One has to therefore look at the conditions on the felicitous use of Speech Act for the source of the actual threat to be clear. For instance, to ask someone to do something, is to presuppose that they can, and are willing to do it, and have not already done it. Hedging these forms of assumptions is a primary and fundamental method of disarming routine interactional threats. It is vital to note that the semantic operations of hedging can be achieved in indefinite numbers of surface forms, and these forms are not restricted to only negative and positive politeness usages (Brown and Levinson 145). Hedging can be achieved by prosodics, particles, lexical items, parentheticals, full adverbial clauses (*IF* clauses), and embedded complements of expression such as *I guess that, I suppose that*. Some even involved basically predictable usages of structural phenomena, for example, ‘I don’t know for sure, but I think...’ suspends the felicity condition on assertion and achieves its goal by virtue of what it literally means.

Excerpt 1

The following was gotten from a postgraduate seminar presentation in the faculty of pharmacy. L1 will refer to a Lecturer, and S1 will refer to a student:

(1) L1: “ I think this your title should be worked on (0.1) and then this YOUR referencing method, you could perhaps change it” (Pharmacy 2019)

(2) L1: “it is like this additional paragraph talking about () in the abstract is not necessary maybe you should remove it”. (Business Administration 2019)

In example (1) and (2) above the addressers acknowledge their H’s want to be free from imposition, and also assume the H may or may not be willing/able to do X, they therefore suggest to the hearers to ‘change the topic’ or ‘remove specific paragraph’ respectively, other than coercing them to effect their suggestions. This chosen strategy is beneficial to both the S and H as those occupying the Speaker role in this context will be perceived as polite, since they offer an out to Hearers through the level of polite pessimism displayed (realised with the modal auxiliary verb ‘could’ and ‘should’) and the service given to the H’s face. This is linguistically realised by the modal auxiliary verb ‘could’ and ‘should’, and the particle ‘perhaps.’

Excerpt 2

(3) L1: “I don’t think slide one is necessary (.) try to remove IT” (Physics 2019)

(4) L1: “ I don’t know, but I think this reference is too old (.) I mean nineteen sixTY three” (Pharmacy 2019)

In example (3) and (4) we find that both Speakers hedge their opinions with the clause ‘I don’t know.’ On the one hand, this expression suspends the felicitous condition on assertion, and on the other, it presents them as ‘non-imposers’ as well as upholders of the face saving rule. However, the speaker in example (4) may be considered more polite than the

speaker in example (3), because the former goes *off record* while suggesting his opinion; and the latter (3) goes unambiguously *on record* to make his opinion known. So, the speaker in example (4) who uses both the negative politeness strategy of hedging as well as going *off record* has the following benefits: he is perceived as being tactful, non-coercive, and nice, because he is said to have given the H an out, and he can also cleverly avoid being misinterpreted to have said something face damaging or insensitive. However, the S in example (3) gets some benefits for going *on record*, as he can get appreciated for honesty, outspokenness, and can avoid the danger of being misinterpreted or being perceived as a manipulator.

Excerpt 4

- (5) L1: “The first line represented in your materials and method is not ACTually materials and method (0.1) it should probably:: have been in your introduction (.) or maybe justification of study (.) >I don’t really know though” (Engineering 2019)
- (6) L1: “I don’t know if you actually went far to know the educational level in this town to know if it is actually a FACTOR that affected >you know the differences in this er < difference in male/female visitation in the hospital” (Pharmacy 2019)
- (7) S1: “That paragraph needs to be restructured (.) You can probably break it into smaller ones” (Accounting 2019)

The use of the adverbs of uncertainty such as “actually”, “probably” are evidences of the length the S has gone to soften the illocutionary force of the Speech Act of correction/criticism. Firstly, the S has cushioned the effect of the illocutionary force of the Speech Act, and secondly, the speaker has successfully suspended the sincerity condition (that is to follow utterances as suggested by the Gricean quality maxim) in his bid to not

impose his views on the H and to maintain face. ‘Quality hedge’ or hedge on the quality of a Speech Act suggests that the addresser is not taking full responsibility for the truth of his utterance or that alternatively, he is stressing his commitment to the truth of his utterance. The former appears to be the case in example (6).

Excerpt 5

(8) S1: “please can you go to that slide = because we have a new publication in 2019 and we have a different (project) (.) so:: we’d like for you to update to what obtai::ns now in Nigeria” (Accounting 2019)

(9) S1: “another observation noted is on pages eleven and sixteen (0.3) I don’t know if MLA 8 accounts for that” (English 2019)

The power relation between the addresser and addressee remains a factor when choosing a strategy to perform an FTA. Student – student relation is that of social equals. Thus, they can speak to each other in a manner different from how they will speak to those in a higher status (L1s) – *on record/off record*, or with more or less regard to face. But in this instance, the student first puts into consideration the fact that this social equal has his want to be free from imposition of opinions (especially from him); and in order for the S to benefit from the payoffs attached to negative politeness, maintaining a stance of not coercing the H is paramount. Hence, the speaker in example (8) chooses to hedge his opinion by, first, being indirect in presenting a request in the form of a question:

“Please can you go to that slide”,

And secondly, by using the inclusive ‘we’ in:

“We’d like for you to update to what obtains now in Nigeria”

Excerpt 6

- (10) L1: “Your standard deviation was higher than your mea::n and you are getting about thir::ty so (.) what could be responsible for such wide variation in standard deviation I think you should explain that for us (.) if you can” (Banking and Finance 2019)
- (11) L1: “If you can (.) And if it is not already too late please change ‘this your topic’ *e no gel*” (Economics 2019)
- (12) L1: “Go on and explain this Ghanaian author you keep referencing (.) if you can (0.4) [presenter doesn’t respond] I expected this” (Business Administration 2019)

The adverbial clause of condition ‘*IF*’ plays a major role in achieving negative politeness. Leech’s Politeness principle (PP) perceives ‘politeness’ as a tool for rescuing the Cooperative Principle (CP) when it breaks down. He believes that the Politeness Principle is to maintain social equilibrium and friendly relations (Leech 83). This is the aim of the addresser as he maintains social equilibrium and friendly relation. Searle describes felicity condition as one of the real-world conditions that must be met by aspects of the communicative order for a particular speech act to come off as intended. The felicity condition is suspended in the above example through the deployment of the conditional adverb ‘*IF*’. The rule of a felicity dictates that an addresser must be sure that an addressee is capable of carrying out the ‘performative’ verb in an utterance, for that utterance to be considered felicitous. In the H’s bid to be polite, the cooperative principle is crashed, as the S successfully hedges his opinion by turning his suggestion into a request with the ‘*IF*’ clause, thus, granting the H a big out and saving his Face.

Excerpt 7

- (13) L1: “On the empiriCAL result (0.1) not so much was done there.” (Pharmacy 2019)

The ‘diminutisation’ adverbial phrase of quantity, ‘not so much,’ is being used by the speaker in the example (13) to tone down the face damaging effect of his opinion to the speaker’s research prowess. The phrase doubles as both a ‘diminutizing’ adverb of quantity, and as an understatement. If the S had said:

‘On the empirical result, no work was done’

His utterance will be interpreted as an impolite assertion, same goes for:

“On the empirical result, so much work was done’

It would have been considered ‘overpolite’ in this context

The S, thus, finds a balance which helps in the preservation of his and the H’s face, and to politely present his opinion, earning him a payoff.

Excerpt 8

- (14) L1:” < The abstract as I see:: it is fairly too:: long and I have in my copy specified the things that are to be removed< (0.2) he was writing about spee::d in his abstract and I fail to see the need for that” (Mathematics 2019)

- (15) L1: “if you ask me (.) the topic has nothing to do with ownership structure” (Accounting 2019)

- (16) L1: “in my own opinion (0.2) as far as I know (.) I don’t think we’d need to change the subsidiaries to law” (Accounting 2019)

- (17) L1: “In my general observation I think your work lacks structure, please restructure it” (English 2019)

Examples (14-17) are instances of speakers hedging their opinions by turning their assertions about the researches into suggestions that are solely based on their personal views. This implies that the H may or may not adhere to what they have suggested, as they are not imposing these opinions on them. This act is due to their respect for the H's face wants and desire.

2.2.2 Indirect Speech Act

Searle posits that the kinds of things that can be *done* by means of utterances are strictly limited, and that sentences carry in their structures indications of their paradigmatic use or 'illocutionary force'. Hence, syntactic questions are paradigmatically used to request information, assertions are used to make statements of facts, imperatives to make commands, etc. It is, however, safe to assert that such paradigmatic or *direct* uses are not the only ones. Others include rhetorical questions used to make assertions, imperatives used to make offers, and assertions used to make commands (Brown and Levinson 132),

Excerpt 9

(1) L1: "Can you please explain this topic" (Mechanical Engineering 2019)

(2) L1: "Please can you look at page ninety-one it is supposed to be per::centage extraction oil" (Mechanical Engineering 2019)

The above examples can be considered an indirect request (and not conceivably a question about the explaining abilities or sight of the addressees)

Excerpt 10

(3) L1: "I will Advi::se that you exPUNGE this diagram < (0.2) because:: (.) I fail to see its necessity".

The S in the above example is aware of how a direct command (or imperative) will affect the face of his addressee, so he cushions the effect of the FTA inherent in the illocutionary act through the use of an alternate speech act which will present his idea as polite, in this case as a question. He achieves this by being imperative instead of outrightly commanding the H. He also uses the verb 'fail' to further prove that he is in no way undermining the H (as his opinion is merely based on his own inadequacies), and as such is giving him an out. He indirectly presents the imperative speech act in the form of a suggestion. This is to enable him present his idea politely, following the suggestion-criticism mitigation sequence.

Excerpt 11

- (4) L1: "What < can we even say you even mean by decomposition of hydro::gen = hydrogen cannot be decomposed please" (Production engineering 2019)
- (5) L1: "if you wish to focus on metronidazole (.) don't you also think we should move that next line into the table" (Pharmacy 2019)
- (6) L1: "CAN you <look at your reference (.) Please what type of method is this (Mathematics 2019)
- (7) L1: "This topic is on tax ratio (.) >can we please look at the possibility of changing the topic to economic performance or economic ratio or factors and localize it to just Nigeria" (Accounting 2019)
- (8) L1: "*per capita* is a Greek word (.) Don't you think it should be italicized, >we should have it italicised" (Accounting 2019)

From examples (4–8) the speakers choose to present their suggestions in form of questions to give the H an 'out', and also to create a common ground with the H, by

including them in the utterances. All these are linguistically achieved through the use of the inclusive ‘we’ pronoun, the modal auxiliary verb ‘can’, the particle ‘please.’ The indirect speech acts in these utterances are also functioning as hedges.

2.2.3 Communicating Speaker’s Want to Not Impinge on the Hearer

One way to partially satisfy the H’s negative face demands is to prove that the S is aware of them and takes them into account in his decision to communicate the FTA. This implies that any infringement on the hearer’s territory is recognised and as such is not taken lightly. There are two ways to achieving this strategy. The first is a “straight-forwardly” apology for the impingement; and the other is to “implicitly convey reluctance on the part of S to impose on H. B&L propose that speakers can dissociate themselves and the hearers from the FTA, by conveying the fact that the FTA is but someone else’s or that the FTA is not on the given addressee, but on some people in general. Given that the S bothers to carry out these steps, he conversationally implicates his reluctance to impinge, and his concern for the H’s face (187).

2.2.3.1 Apologise and Indicate Reluctance

Brown and Levinson affirms that apologising for doing an FTA involves the speaker indicating his reluctance to impinge on the H’s negative face, thereby, he partially redress that impingement (188). This apology can be conveyed by admitting the impingement on the H’s wants, and not necessarily restricted to being sorry.

Excerpt 12

(1) L1: “I’m sure this work must have taken more than a year (0.2) but I don’t think this figures tally (.). The statistics is really off” (Economics 2019)

“I’m sure this work must have taken more than a year” is the addresser’s way of reflecting how uncomfortable he is with the FTA inherent in the speech act he is about to communicate. This is a way of admitting reluctance over the incoming impingement and

imposition on the hearer's wants. The addresser sympathises, hedges suggestions, and then criticises the presenter.

Excerpt 13

(2) P1: "I hope I won't be dampening the atmosphere with my odd question (h) (0.2)

where did you learn chemistry (.) Is this truly a MASTERS work" (chemistry 2019)

Secondly, the S can actually also convey his apologies by sufficiently and evidently showing his RELUCTANCE to impinge. This can be achieved through the use of hedges.

Excerpt 14

(3) P1: "...I truly hope you don't mind me saying this (0.2) I expected a mo::re thorough

work from a PhD student" (Mathematics 2019)

(4) S1: "Good morning, the Dean, professors, L1s, and my colleagues (0.2) I know it's

not REALLY in my place to make this kind of remark < but we think our colleague should recalculate his ratios< (.) so many of them do not add up (0.1) or could this be a typographical error" (Accounting 2019)

Those in the speaker role in the above examples have sufficiently reflected how reluctant they are to communicate the FTA. This is either because there exist power relations between them and the Hearer, or because of the weight of the FTA. This also reflects their adherence to the rule of negative politeness that suggests that speakers have to always assume that their addressees may/may not be willing/able to do X.

2.2.4 Being Pessimistic

This strategy magnifies the speaker's doubt about the success of an FTA as a means of offering the addressee an 'out' and lessening the risk of face loss or damage. It is often encoded in indirect requests with negated probability.

Excerpt 15

(1) L1: “I don’t suppose you could effect these changes < and have them ready by the next faculty defense” (faculty defense of management science 2019)

(2) P1: “You couldn’t perhaps STOP this attitude of padding a work (.) it is fast becoming an issue” (Mathematics 2019)

(3) L1: “I don’t suppose there is a possibility to < have it tested on an animal (opium) so that we’d see the () of the drug on the animal not on a human o (h)” (Pharmacy 2019)

In the above examples, it is obvious how superficial the indirectness of these forms is in relation to the particular task requested of the H. B&L opine that negative interrogatives encode polite pessimism (178).

2.2.5 Minimise the Imposition of the FTA

According to B&L, the choice of a strategy encodes the perceived danger of the FTA. However, it does not of itself reflect which of the social factor D, P, or R is most responsible in determining the value of the imposition (176). One way of mitigating the FTA is to suppress the intrinsic seriousness of an imposition. This can be achieved by a number of expressions which attempts to minimise the threat to a Hearer’s face. The italicised words in the following examples are instances of this minimised FTAs recorded in postgraduate seminar presentation in the University of Benin.

Excerpt 16

(1) L1: “I *just* want to ask (.) (h) where did you graduate from (.) your pronunciation is so ba::d” (Chemistry 2019)

(2) L1: “I *simply* think you should change the entirety of this work (.) We cannot present this at the faculty defense’ (Production Engineering 2019)

- (3) L1: “I *just* want to note that even when I did my masters there was NO activity as well (.) so< no activity is acceptable (.) but that doesn’t mean you should relent (0.1) you can still take more time to watch out for activity (Pharmacy 2019)
- (4) L1: “Can you *at least* test this process with orange seeds too (.) not to rule out your watermelon seeds O” (Production engineering 2019)
- (5) P1: “This work is near perfect, but *just* needs *a little* restructuring of chapter two” (Mathematics 2019)
- (6) L1: “A *little* more corrections to your analysis and this work is ready” (Business Administration 2019)

In these examples, the intended imposition is minimised to mitigate the threat to face that is in the communicated speech act. Although the speakers go on record to make these utterances, they still get the benefit of being perceived as ‘non-coercive,’ ‘tactful,’ and being seen as giving their addressees a non-overtly ‘out.’ They can get credit for being honest, outspoken, and unambiguous.

2.2.6 State the FTA as a General Rule

Addressers may do well to save the face of the addressee in instances where the face is at risk, by stating the FTA as a general rule that applies to more than just the addressee alone. Some L1s sought out this strategy to convey their FTA because of its *off record* nature and the payoff attached to it.

Excerpt 17

- (1) L1: “Students should give OUT their project (.) to to to:: other L1s to proof read too = to avoid blunDERS” (Banking and Finance 2019)

- (2) L1: “Presenters must at least be able to present without having to look at their books, what is in semantics (Linguistics 2019)
- (3) L1: “There is NO direction (.) NO GAP (.) NO NOTHING (0.2) please and please we should correct ALL these things at department level > before bringing them to the faculty” (Faculty defence management science 2019)
- (4) L1: “Please let us try to be speaking English = give your work out for proofreading” (Mechanical Engineering 2019)
- (5) L1: “YOU people don’t reference us (.) you want to stART from China < not even home < (0.2) later now (0.1) you will not fail in Jesus name o (Statistics 2019)
- (6) L1: “The departmental laboratory is here because of you use it and avoid bashing” (Pharmacy 2019)

2.2.7 Impersonalisation of Speaker and Hearer

This is a means of dissociating both the Speaker and H from infringement. It involves the purposeful replacement of the personal pronouns ‘*you*’ and ‘*I*’ with indefinite pronouns (one, none, anyone, each, few etc.) Baresova explains that the speaker seemingly imposes less on the hearer by avoiding the pronouns *I* and *you*. The imposition becomes agentless, and the hearer is not specified as the object of imposition (55). This strategy embraces the deletion of agents to avoid reference to the agents involved in the FTA.

Excerpt 18

- (1) L1: Why is this table labelled like this (.) < it is not possible to label it like this < = it is not allowed here in pharmacy” (Pharmacy 2019)
- (2) L1: “One should at least be mindful of plagiarism (.) the originality is in question” (Statistics 2019)

These two examples may be translated as follows:

- Why {did you} label this table like this? It is not possible {for you} to label the table like this. {We} don't allow it here in pharmacy
- {You} should be mindful of plagiarism. The originality {of your research} is in question

The speakers in the above examples resorted to agent deletion, and *off record* strategy to state their claims and observations, and to totally avoid direct reference to the H because of the weight of the FTA. This strategy is of benefit to the speakers, as they will gain the credits of being 'non-coercive,' tactful, and for giving the Hearer an out.

2.3 Conclusion

Negative politeness is a politeness superstrategy and a culturally conventionalised and approved way of interacting with people. It fosters comity amongst interlocutors, as well as preserving (respectful) distance among people. It ensures that speakers are conscious of face loss because of the payoffs attached to the strategy. Furthermore, it permits both on and off records utterances, and provides the balance between the speaker's need to respect the desires and wants of the hearer and to make a claim without damaging face.

This chapter found out that L1s are more drawn to the negative politeness strategy. This most likely owes to the fact that academics are very conscious of the negative face wants of the presenter, and are aware of the mutual vulnerability of face.

CHAPTER THREE

POSITIVE POLITENESS IN SELECTED POSTGRADUATE SEMINAR PRESENTATION IN THE UNIVERSITY OF BENIN

3.1 Introduction

This section examines the various positive politeness strategies employed by those in the addresser's role. It will consider speakers' approach to achieving the hearers' positive face wants as well as how speakers are able to successfully fulfil hearers' desires which include making the hearer feel good about their interests, possessions (intellectual possession in this case) and themselves in general. The face-threat in the speech act of criticism requires severe mitigation to avoid permanent face loss. B&L opine that positive politeness strategy is a strategy for doing an FTA with attention to the positive face of the H, ergo, and maintaining and mitigating impending face threats by means of claiming common ground. Maintaining and mitigating impending face threats by means of claiming common ground is achieved by the deployment of in-group identity markers, avoiding disagreement, exaggerating (interest, approval, as well as sympathy with the H), use of jargon or slang, seek agreement, hedging opinions, including both the S and H in the activity (the use of the inclusive 'we') etc. (Brown and Levinson). This chapter will highlight the selected positive politeness strategies as well as the mitigation devices.

3.2 Data Presentation and Analyses

3.2.1 Claim Common Ground

3.2.1.1 Exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with H)

These exaggerations are often signalled by intonation, stress and other aspects of prosodies, as well as intensifying modifiers like adjectives, adverbs, and even shouting. This view seems to correspond with that of Leech's maxim of generosity, which allows for the S to maximize cost and minimise benefits to him.

Excerpt 19

- (1) L1: “All protocols duly observed (.) Errm (.) Dr. X, I commend you for that wonderFUL and scholarly presentation, < even you will agree (h) it was good” (c)
- (2) L1: “ You did a very good job (0.2) your presentation was very very excellent” (Pharmacy 2019)
- (3) L1: “First of all (.) eh::I want to commEND the pre::senTER for the topic of (.) prese::nta::tion. The introdu::ction is FANTA::STIC! The:: subject matter (.) tro::piCAL. I like the fact that the:: work is on taxation (.) then the flow of language (0.1) the writing flow FANTA::STIC > but there are some things that were not there < but > the flow was BRILLIANT” (Banking and finance 2019)
- (4) L1: “First of all I (.) congratulate the presenter for (.) a detailed work done (.) to me:: (.) he did a sufficient work” (Statistics 2019)
- (5) L1: “I like how you punctuated this work (.) however (.) the ideas can be reconstructed< or what do you think (0.3) overall this is a beautiful work” (History 2019).

In the above examples, the addressers had to first commend and exaggerate their expressions towards the hearer’s possession (seminar paper) before stating their personal views - Praise-criticism. Those occupying the addresser role are cognisant of the face damage that is inherent in their criticisms, hence; they choose to mitigate this face threat via this method. This exaggeration is achieved by the utilisation of lots of prosodic elements like stressing of certain vowel sounds as well as consonants, and an increasing and decreasing in pitch at the beginning or end of some words, as well as, the use of adjectives that are rich in prosodic modulation.

3.2.1.2 Use of In-Group Identity Markers

B&L claim that there are several ways to convey in-group membership. They include in-group usages of address forms, language or dialect, jargon or slang, and ellipsis. Those in the S role

may choose to cushion the face threat inherent in their criticism, by first referring to the H by a title or a term of endearment, thereby, making the H believe the welfare of his face is of interest to the S.

Excerpt 20

- (1) L1: (*talking to a PhD student during his seminar presentation*) DO::CTOR
DO::CTOR I know it has not been an easy journey (h) (h) we ALL (.) know how it Is
(Business Administration 2019)
- (2) L1: “My dear, the font you used in this chapter (.) is very different from the others
(.) >you need to change it” (Marketing 2019)
- (3) L1: “See::(.) when I was going through your work last night (h) my brother I saw that
this your work needs work (h)” (Computer science 2019)
- (4) L1: <The:: pharmacist himself, I commend this your beautiful work” (Pharmacy 2019)
- (5) L1: “My dear, I think you nee::d to change this topic I don’t know of () domination ()
(Mathematics 2019)
- (6) L1: “My friend, you didn’t do an in-depth research” (English and Literature 2019)

The speakers’ interest in the positive face wants of the Hearer propels them to use endearment term to indicate that they belong in the same group as the Hearers. It gives the hearers a sense of belonging. This is one of the salient differences that exists between the negative politeness superstrategy and the positive politeness superstrategy. While the latter is avoidance and autonomy based, the former is geared towards acceptance and need to be desired. The speaker in (2) considered the weight of the FTA in the speech act he was about to communicate, hence, he mitigates the force of the face-threat with the term of endearment ‘My dear.’ This, thus, creates a calming effect on the H.

3.2.1.3 Seeking Agreement with the H Via Small Talks

Seeking possible ways to agree with the H is one way of claiming common grounds. This can be achieved via initiating small talks and safe topics. The FTA of making requests is preceded by small talks on safe topics which is usually a means of reassuring the H that one didn't come to just impose whatever their requests are on him but that the S is interested in maintaining a relationship with him. One can also seek agreement by finding aspects of a topic which is possible to agree on, and sticking to them. (Brown and Levinson 112)

Excerpt 21

- (1) L1: "Have you ever taught before (0.5) even during your NYSC::(.) I don't think you'd have made a fine teacher, (h) you were too fast in your presentation (h)" (Linguistics 2019)
- (2) L1: "Oh you must be:: the lady from NAFDAC = I think NAFDAC is to pay the University of Benin for this research (h) or what do you think (.) that said(.) I have a problem with the data" (Pharmacy 2019)
- (3) L1: "Although I have some issues <with your referencing (.) I think we can all agree that you are smartly dressed and it is contributing to your score (h) (computer science 2019)
- (4) L1: "We can hear you = you didn't need to scream over the public address system, you and I know that if you scream or not we will hear you because you are using a public address system. Your work is commendable and well presented (h) but for the shouting (h) (Economics 2019)

3.2.1.4 Hedging Opinions

This strategy is applicable in negative politeness as well as positive politeness. In the former, it is used to show that a S is not set out to impose his wants on the H, as a H's face want to be imposed on. Hedging is not only a property of negative politeness, it cuts across all the strategies especially positive politeness. It is most commonly achieved in this superstrategy by the use of

intensifying modifiers as communicative strategies for increasing or reducing the force of statements. An addresser may choose to be ambiguous about his own opinions, in order to avoid been perceived as disagreeing with the H. The nature of the Q&A session of a seminar presentation makes it a typical example of statements with face threatening acts. As a result, those in the addresser role strive to ensure that they cushion the landing of their opinions (threats). Hedged opinions can be framed into questions so as to tone down the face threat using a question. Even though rhetorical, sometimes, seem like they seek the H's opinion, ergo adherence to the rule of protecting each other's face.

Excerpt 22

- (1) L1: "...then for the first evaluation you did< I don't know but I think the reference was too old = nineteen si::xTY THREE".
- (2) L1: ">Is it possible to explain AGAIN why you chose this method of analysis (.)I mean (.) <it is not so appropriate for this type of data (.) it is numerical:." (Linguistics 2019)
- (3) L1: "I don't really know if I am correct (.) <but >shouldn't you change this topic altogether () (Mathematics 2019)
- (4) L1: "...so what could be responsible for such wide variation in standard deviation (.) I think you should explain that for us (0.2) I don't want to imagine it is forged figures" (Statistics 2019)
- (5) L1: "Thank you presenter (.) now in your conclusion you did say that two regime::nts < could be used side by side I don't re::ally know what you mean by side by side I don't really understand" (Pharmacy 2019)
- (6) L1: "...then in your < statisti::cal analysis > you say it is less than or equal to < 0.05 I think you will have to do the e::xperiment again because it is better you say it is less than 0.05" (Mechanical Engineering 2019)

(7) L1: “I will start with what Dr. X said (.) you will need to adjust your abstract because the > prevalence rate quoted in the abstract is incomplete (.) < so: you’d have to adjust that please” (Pharmacy 2019).

(8) S1: “This your eh eh... prevalence rate for HIV in Nassarawa state (.) you didn’t really state the year (.) you got that erm (.) figure = <you need to cite it (0.3) please can you go to that slide = because > we have a new publication in 2019 (0.3) so (.) we’d really like for you to update to what obtain::ns now in Nigeria (Pharmacy 2019)

Most of the speakers above employ the suggestion-criticism mitigation device sequence in mitigating the face-threat in their utterances. This ensures that the H realises that they do not mean to endanger their face.

3.2.1.5 Offer and Promise.

This strategy is one of such that permits the speaker to stress his cooperation with the hearer. He can claim that he also wants what the H’s desires, and as such, he is willing to help him obtain and achieve all these wants. Offers and promises are inevitable outcomes of this strategy. Even though they are false (I’ll read it next week), they reflect the addresser’s intentions to satisfy the addressee’s positive-face wants (Brown and Levinson 125). Baresova describes it as distracting the hearer from potential face threats, in order to demonstrate the speaker’s good will. This is said to take the form of promises, offers, or suggestions, and often with little sincerity of intended fulfilment (43).

Excerpt 23

(1) L1: “I will make corrections of this work (.) you can have them by Thursday” (Economics 2019).

(2) P1: “Come by my office before the next presentation (0.1) I should have one or two books on metronidazole to give to you” (Pharmacy 2019)

The speakers go on record to incur debts on themselves in order to reflect the good intentions they have towards the hearers' desires. Although this promises or offers may or may not be fulfilled, the fact that they have gone on record to make the offer, earns them the benefit of being described as polite.

3.3 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated in great detail the different uses of the various positive politeness strategies. We found that Academics (occupants of the speaker role) are mindful and cognisant of the sensitivity of the Hearer's face want, hence, they appeal to their positive face by claiming common ground, exaggerating interest, small talks etc.

CHAPTER FOUR

BALD ON-RECORD STRATEGY AND OFF-RECORD POLITENESS STRATEGIES IN SELECTED POST GRADUATE SEMINARS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF BENIN.

4.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates the bald on-record and off-record politeness strategies used during postgraduate seminar presentations in the University of Benin. B&L define bald on record politeness strategy as one that involves doing the FTA to state something clearly without misinterpretations. It is the most direct strategy of carrying out an FTA as the S delivers their utterances without minimising the FTA. Culpeper argues that this strategy is used when the threat to the H's face is very minute, and in a situation where the S has more power than the H (356). The latter is the case in seminar presentation situations.

On the other hand, the speaker using the off record politeness strategy actually attracts the payoff of considering the face of the listener as he delivers the FTA indirectly. This strategy relies largely upon implication, and the listener's ability to decode and interpret the speaker's intended meaning.

4.2 Data Presentation and Analyses

4.2.1 Off-Record Politeness Strategies

When a speaker purposefully designs an utterance to come out as ambiguous, he is said to have made the utterance using the off record strategy. B&L opine that "a communicative act is done off record if it is done in such a way that it is not possible to attribute only one clear meaning to the act. In other words, the actor leaves himself an 'out' by providing himself with a number of defensible interpretations; thus, he cannot be held to have committed himself to just one particular interpretation of his act. Therefore, if a speaker wants to do an FTA, but wants to avoid the responsibility for doing it, he can do it off record and leave it up to the addressee to decide how to interpret it (Brown and Levinson 211). Off-record strategy can be realised via

indirect use of language, for example, stating something different from what the speaker truly means or intends or making an utterance that contains very little information so that it rules out fewer possible ‘state of affairs.’ The addressee will need to make some inferences to get the speaker’s actual intention. There is a two stage process that accounts for the comprehension (and thus the production) of indirect language. Firstly, there is the ‘trigger’ which acts as signal to the addressee that an inference is to be made from a given utterance (for example a noticeable violation of Gricean Maxim); and secondly, one can actually fetch the intention of an addresser, from the utterance itself. One means of deriving the inference will be to reconstruct the motive that inspired the S to be indirect in the first place. In the case of seminar presentation, it is face preservation. Off record strategy can be achieved by the following:

4.2.1.1 Giving Hints

The ‘trigger’ is a major assistance under this sub-strategy. If a speaker mentions a thing that violates, for instance, the maxim of relevance; the addressee takes it as an invite to search for inferences.

Excerpt 24

- (1) L1: “Normally:: there are statistical packages that I used < and then there is even a (boost up) > that you can use to compare so all you need do is to consult appropriate persons to help you with materials” (Pharmacy 2019)

(You have not done enough, I expected you to use more materials than you have, consult more people to help you with texts).

- (2) L1: “... (h) jokes aside (.) I nee::d to understand this methodology” (Mass communication 2019)

This implies that the student has not sufficiently explained how he utilises the research methodology in his work. Therefore, the speaker needs him to explain it better.

- (3) L1: “This topic needs flesh” (English and Literature 2019)

Example 3 implies this topic can be expanded further than you have tried to expand it.

(4) L1: “Reading the paper makes it appear more Difficult (Mass communication 2019)

Example 4 implies that I was already having problems with this paper, and was hoping if you clearly explained other than reading it, like you just did, I would have understood better}.

(5) L1: “So we have all expressed our opinions (h) let nobody fight me over mine (0.2) this is a PHD paper (.) I don’t believe in fishing hit the nail on the head” (Pharmacy 2019)

The goal of a speaker to minimise face threat to its barest minimum pushes him to choose the best strategy which helps achieve the goal. The speaker will prefer the to use hints and suggestions in order not to have any face damaging interpretation traceable to him. Thus, the meanings derived are listener-based, and he is free from any blame of face damage or imposition of any kind.

4.2.1.2 Presuppose

This strategy is mainly used in implied criticism (Brown and Levinson 217)

Excerpt 25

(1) P1: “I will have to say this again (.) Students should be inventive and not just innovative (Production Engineering 2019)

This example presupposes that the speaker should not have repeated this point if the addressee was attentive during the same or previous seminar presentations. ‘Again’ serves as a trigger in the above sentence for the addressee to search for interpretations.

(2) L1: “Biodiesel is a playground (.) I am convinced you can do better” (Mechanical Engineering 2019)

This utterance “biodiesel is a playground” presupposes the fact that the addressee may not have properly researched on biodiesel, as his research does not reflect an in-depth study of biodiesel. The speaker chooses this strategy to encode his FTA because a direct interpretation

cannot be ascribed to the utterance, and it almost does not infer any of the inference gotten from it.

4.2.1.3 Overstate and Understate

These two strategies involve the violation of Gricean Quantity Maxim. The understatement strategy has a lessening effect, while the overstating does the reverse. Conversational implicatures violate the Quantity maxim (which states that speakers are to say no more or less than is expected of them). B&L suggest that a very typical way of constructing understatement is to “choose a point on a scalar predicate (e.g. tall, good, nice) that is well below the point that actually describes the state of affairs or that hedges a higher state which will implicate the (lower) actual state of affairs. The direction of the implicatures (up or down) on the scale in fact seems to depend not only on whether the value is a desirable attribute or not, but also on whether expressing such a value at the top or bottom of a scale is clamped by the FTA characteristics of the particular speech act (218).

Excerpt 26

- (1) L1: “Quote me anywhere there are more than a million books on taxation here in Nigeria and beyond AFRICA” (Accounting 2019).
- (2) L1: “ALL of you keep making this same error (.) please we are not broken discs (.) ‘*abeg o*’” (History 2019)
- (3) L1: “In my opinion this paper is just there (.) it is not a bad work” (History 2019)
- (4) L1: “The paper is not all that (.) but you can pass (0.2) I wish you all will agree to really work (Economics 2019)

The speakers who chose to understate put the face of the hearer into consideration, as we find that they preferred to tone down the force of the utterance with the use of diminutive adverbs. On the other hand, the speakers who chose to overstate did so to probably sound

indirect, and to invite the H to search for inferences from their utterances. Both speakers are cognisant of the sensitivity of the face of the hearers and have such deployed this substrategy.

4.2.1.4 Use of Tautologies

Another means of inviting hearers to generate inferences from speech act is through the use of tautologies, which involves the violation of Quantity Maxim (that elicits speakers to say enough, no more, no less). It may be used to implicate disapproval. We found that speakers (or critics) during the Question and Answer session of postgraduate seminar in the University of Benin rarely utilised this means. Also, the only instance recorded was for disapproval.

Excerpt 27

- (1) L1: “metronidazole is metronidazole (.) I don’t know about making FLAGYL as gastric floating tablet” (Pharmacy 2019)

4.2.1.5 Use of Irony and Metaphors

Irony as a figure of speech is basically saying the opposite of what you mean. As a substrategy, it helps to lessen the face damage that the illocutionary act effects. Metaphors are utterances that are literally false. Both sub strategies are a violation of the Quality Maxim and an indirect use of language. They may be marked with hedging particles

Excerpt 28

- (1) L1: “This your topic is nice Q (h)” (Economics 2019)

(After being asked to change it by other Lecturers)

- (2) L1: “Dr. X for a PhD this calculations are really plenty” (Statistics 2019)

(Prior to this utterance, the Dean had asked that he applied another theory to help expand the paper).

- (3) L1: “Did you say you typed this (.) it is really a masters paper” (Business Administration 2019)

(This was said to a presenter whom other critics had complained about typographical errors).

4.2.1.6 Displace Hearer

B&L describes this substrategy as having a “S goes off record as to who the target for his FTA is, or he may pretend to address the FTA to someone whom it wouldn’t threaten, and hope that the real target will see the FTA is aimed at him” (226). We found that some Lecturers, in the bid to save the face of the hearer and theirs, minimize threats by directing their views and opinion to the supervisors of the researchers. The presenters therefore are invited by the Lecturers to take a hint.

Excerpt 29

- (1) P1: “Who supervised you (.) oh DR. Mrs. X (turns to her) mada::m did you agree to economic factors because I do not even see the correlation to this paper” (Faculty defense Management science 2019)
- (2) L1: “Is this a language work or a literature work (.) is this how to write in lan::guage” (English and Literature 2019)
- (3) L1: “Who says language research can only be qualitative” (English and Literature 2019)

4.2.2 Bald On-Record Politeness Strategy

According to B&L, bald on-record politeness strategy is a strategy of doing the FTA to state something clearly. The asymmetrical power-relation distance existing between students and lecturers gives leverage to the latter to go bald on-record during criticism of seminar papers.. Lecturers in the University of Benin are cognisant of the face wants of the presenters, hence, we only find few cases of the use of bald on-record superstrategy during postgraduate seminar presentations.

Extract 24

- (1) L1: “how do you not know when the () war () I will throw your paPER overboard next time (h)” (History 2019)

- (2) L1: “Everything on sample size you have to rework on it doesn’t make sense(0.2) you have to work on everything in your methodology because it < doesn’t make concise sense” (Economics 2019)
- (3) L1: “There is a problem from chapter one = even your tenses (.) comma *sef* you didn’t use properly” (English and Literature 2019)
- (4) L1: “Your structure is Defective (.) very very DEFECTIVE” (Mechanical engineering 2019)
- (5) L1: “For you to say you didn’t find any study on capital market means you have not done enough study (.) be::cause this is a playground” (Banking and finance 2019)
- (6) P1: “This work is very sha::llow (.) it is not sufficient (0.1) you are on your own” (Mass communication 2019)
- (7) L1: “Later now you will say you are looking for job yet you cannot draw (vinyl chloride) it is a shame” (Chemistry 2019).
- (8) P1: “This is what most of YOU DO (.) YOU WRITE A PAPER AND YOU DON’T SHOW IT TO US (.) TO:: CORRECT YOU (0.1) YOU END UP CALCULATING RUBBISH (Mathematics 2019)
- (9) L1: “The fact that you are telling us agriculture as a determining factor has been over flogged is NOT a < pro::per justification for this study (.) find something else” (faculty defense management science 2019).
- (10) L1: “I am very sure this is why you dodged pollination test (.) because it will show all these errors (0.1)” (Pharmacy 2019)
- (11) L1: “As the discussant said this work has a structural problem from chapter one to the end (0.2) it is ridiculous that you will start without introduction” (Statistics 2019)

(12) L1: “You can’t tell us the background to this study then the work is ZERO (0.3) you didn’t do an empirical work and it is not by mistake it is a deliberate dodge (.) your significance of study is not PROPER AT ALL (Accounting 2019)

(13) L1: “COME ON (.) you are a PHD student (.) there are CERTAIN ERRORS YOU ARE NOT EXPECTED TO MAKE (0.2) you are supposed to give to people to PROOFREAD (.) so help us to help you (.) if you don’t help us (.) next time < I will also not help you” (Mass Communication 2019)

The prime reason for bald-on record usage may be stated simply as whenever S wants to do the FTA with maximum efficiency *more than* he wants to satisfy H’s face, even to any degree, he will choose the bald-on record strategy (Brown and Levinson 95). There are, however, different kinds of bald-on record usage in different circumstances, because S motives for doing the FTA may vary. Direct imperatives stand out as clear examples of bald-on record as we find in the examples above. Academics (Lecturers), during the post-graduate seminar presentations in the University of Benin, find that there is a need to communicate the FTA with maximum efficiency. This, in some instances, outweighs their want to satisfy the H’s face wants, and since ‘maximum efficiency’ is of great importance and is a shared knowledge between addresser and addressee, face redress becomes unnecessary. This strategy is not totally lost, rather it is just suspended.

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated in great detail the different uses of the various off-record and bald-on record politeness strategies. We found that Academics (occupants of the speaker role) acknowledge their hearer’s desire not to be coerced, and they achieve this by stating whatever their opinions are via the off record substrategies (giving hints, being ironic or metaphoric, presupposing and under/over stating their views). Finally, we discussed how

sometimes the need for 'maximum efficiency' outweighs the speaker's need to totally attend to face through the use of the bald-on record strategy.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary

The first chapter of the study outlined the purpose and scope of the study; the research method, the method of data collection and analysis; the review of related scholarship and justification of the study; and the thesis statement. The second and third chapters examined the positive politeness and negative politeness substrategies selected by the speakers during the question and answer sessions of postgraduate seminar presentations, in the University of Benin. While the fourth chapter examined, the off record and bald on-record strategies and the reason for these choices.

This study shows that academics are fully aware of the face damage tendencies inherent in their critique and as such use the mitigation devices and politeness strategies to neutralise the effect of the face-threat. We also discover that, sometimes, the speaker's need to attain maximum efficiency results in opting for the bald-on record strategy, while the off record strategy is used for total attention to the negative face wants of the presenter.

5.2 Findings

During the course of this study we found that in doing the FTA, the speakers generally preferred the redressive route, especially Negative politeness. The study recorded a high usage of this politeness strategy. We discovered that the negative politeness strategy is a culturally conventionalised strategy used in the postgraduate seminar presentation discourse in the University of Benin. This selection was based on its role in fostering comity amongst interlocutors, as well as preserving (respectful) distance among people.

Academics are aware of the mutual vulnerability of face as well as its sensitivity; they therefore opt for this strategy because of the payoff of being perceived as sensitive to the hearer's face. On the one hand, some speakers hedged their opinions, and understated their

views, so as not to come off as imposing on the hearer's face wants, regardless of the leverage provided by the power relation between some of the interlocutors. While on the other hand, the study showed that postgraduate students, while critiquing, mostly adopt this strategy because of the power-relation that exists between them and the seminar presenters. The place of power in this study cannot be overemphasised, as it influenced the speaker's choice of strategy. This is why, for instance, a postgraduate student critic will be expected to be pessimistic about his views, and hedge his opinions because the power relation established between the involved parties is that of equals. Thus, he could not afford to go bald-on-record.

Criticism is believed to likely lose its sting if done in a way that asserts mutual friendship. This is evidenced in the instances of the use of positive politeness to attend to the presenter's positive face desires. Those critiquing these seminar papers gave compliments, established common ground, used in-group jargon and slang, sought agreement with the hearer via small talks, exaggerated their interest and approval, made offers, and made promises to cushion face-threats. Also, a speaker was believed to easily win the heart of an audience by attending to the positive face wants of the listener, and this was achieved by showing an appreciation and an approval of the presenter's seminar paper regardless of the quality of the paper.

The study also revealed the sparing use of bald on-record strategy, and this owed to the texture of its tone. This strategy was mainly employed because of the payoff which was being perceived as direct, clear and unambiguous. Those who used this strategy were shown to have leveraged on the power-relation that existed between them and the hearer, and this permitted them to carry out a face threatening act, with little or no redressive action. Only lecturers, however, used this strategy. Hence, power-relation remains one of the central factors that influence a speaker's choice of linguistic politeness strategy.

Some others preferred to go off record, such that one clear meaning could not be attributed to their utterance, and this awarded them the payoff of being considered tactful, and non-coercive. Giving hints, using metaphors, indirect speech acts, presupposing, overstating and understating opinions, were the substrategies used to achieve the payoff.

5.3 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

There have been tons of ground-breaking researches on linguistic politeness, mainly on non-academic discourses like sermons, and sometimes on academic discourses such as replies to articles, and feedbacks. This study has contributed to the ginormous existing body of knowledge by investigating the linguistic politeness strategies employed by the academics involved in one of the most confrontational social interaction in the academic community- seminar paper criticism, in the University of Benin, noting their most preferred mitigation devices and the reason for their choices.

The study also helps to negate speculations that lecturers are generally impolite towards students because of the power-relation existing between them; as it shows instances of lecturers paying attention to presenter's face wants despite the power-relation leverage that they wield. It is therefore safe to assert that academics in the University of Benin, who help to perfect the thesis and project work of those presenting their seminar papers, seem to have understood the mutual vulnerability of face. They constantly pay attention to face, cushion the effect of their opinions, and replace outright disapproval with approval backed with suggestions and praises.

5.4 Conclusion

The analyses of the linguistic politeness strategies, show that face-threat mitigation, as well as positive and negative politeness foster harmonious seminar presentations. Face-threat or impolite remarks must be avoided as they may lead to friction, loss of face, or conflict amongst

interlocutors. It was discovered that a small percentage of lecturers inadvertently threaten their addressee's face because of the need to be clear and direct about their suggestions. Lecturers should continually contribute to social harmony during these seminars by paying apt and unwavering attention to the face of the presenter regardless of the quality of the paper. Utterances must be tailored to attend to the negative and positive face wants of the presenter.

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