

Politeness and the Speech Act of Apology in Nigerian ESL Context

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Abstract

This study examined the politeness strategies utilised in the realisation of the speech act of apology within the Nigerian environment using Brown and Levinson's politeness theory as a framework with the sole purpose of identifying the predominant patterns of apology strategies among users of English as a second language in Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and made use of 300 participants from the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria – Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba. An open-ended discourse completion test (DCT) was the instrument through which data was collected. The responses extracted through the DCT were coded, classified, quantified and analysed through the instrumentality of descriptive statistics of frequency and simple percentage. The results of the data analyses indicate, inter alia, that the politeness strategies used in the realisation of the speech act of apology in Nigeria cut across the five super politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson for the performance of Face Threatening Acts (FTAs), including bald on-record strategies, positive politeness, negative politeness, off-record strategies, and don't-do-the-FTA. These were realised through various sub-strategies utilised mostly in composite forms. The conclusion drawn from the study buttresses the universality of politeness as a concept but emphasises the fact that its realisation is culturally-conditioned.

Key Words: politeness, apology, Face Threatening Acts, Positive politeness, Negative Politeness

Introduction

One of the fundamental functions of language is its role as means of human communication. Its study could be approached from two broad perspectives: the asocial and the social orientations. The asocial perspective studies the nature of language at the levels of sound, form/ structure, and meaning. This approach to language study is divorced from the context and the actual ways in which the knowledge of language is put

to use in the day- to -day communication activities. The social orientation, on the other hand, studies language use in social contexts and in doing this, distinction is drawn between grammatical competence and communicative competence. For the sociolinguist, knowledge of the formal features of language (grammatical competence) is not enough. Rather an individual should also possess the ability to make use of it in generating linguistic structures that are not only grammatical but appropriate with regard to different social contexts; hence, the emphasis on communicative competence. The major focus of language scholars over the years has been on grammaticality but this study recognises the importance of putting such knowledge to use as lack of appropriate use of the English language often leads to a break-down in communication termed pragmatic failure. To the best knowledge of the researcher, little attention has been devoted to the communicative aspect of language study especially within the Nigerian context, and it has become necessary to examine the communicative patterns of apology with regard to politeness within the Nigerian environment.

Politeness is a subtle means of ensuring harmonious interaction between “potentially aggressive parties” (Brown & Levinson 1987, p. 1). This presupposes that social interaction is a fertile ground for possible aggression and that necessitates the use of certain politeness strategies to curtail the occurrence of conflict. Experience has demonstrated that speech acts are often successfully accomplished when certain linguistic forms are strategically utilised in the course of social interaction to reflect politeness and this is an integral part of the politeness studies engaged by notable linguistic scholars over the years (Thomas 1995, p. 179). That notwithstanding, politeness is socio-culturally oriented and finds its meaning and application within the context of a particular culture. “To be polite is saying the socially correct thing” (Lakoff 1975, p. 53) Politeness strategies are the linguistic elements utilised by interlocutors, in the course of interaction, to redress the face threat inherent in some speech acts such as apology. Apology is an expressive speech act meant to convey the speaker’s feeling with regard to an offence he/she committed. The performance of the speech act requires the adoption of appropriate politeness strategies given that interactants give due consideration to each other’s self-respect for effective communication to take place.

The study of politeness generally and the speech acts of apology in particular have been done from different angles mostly by scholars outside the Nigerian context (Ruziyeva 2020; Al-Khatib 2021; Bataineh & Bataineh 2006, Ogiermann 2009, Murphy 2015, Prachanant 2016). The closest to the present work is of Dozie and Otagburuagu (2020), which studied realisation of apology among the Igbo people of South-East extraction but the aim of the study and the method of data collection differ significantly from this study. The major difference lies in the design of the instrument for data collection. They used structured questionnaire where respondents were required to choose from a list of

options but this study used an open-ended questionnaire that placed no restriction on the participants. They were given free hand to respond as they would in every day context. In specific terms, the aim of the study is to explore the applicability of politeness strategies in the realisation of the speech acts of apology among users of English as a second language in Nigeria. It is concerned with analysing the choice of linguistic forms used to fulfill the face wants of participants in social interactions while performing FTAs such as apologising.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used for this study is Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, which hinges on politeness as face management. The thrust of Brown and Levinson's politeness theory is the concept of face and rationality. Face in their estimation is the public self-image every member of a particular society desire to claim for himself (1987, p.61). The theory contends that all adult members of a society have face and as well recognise others as such. Thus, interlocutors are always conscious of each other's face and make fastidious effort to meet their face needs as the neglect of one party's face will equally affect the other's face as well. Within the context of Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, face is a bi-directional concept, with two related aspects: positive and negative faces. Positive face emphasises the need to be appreciated by others in social interaction while negative face pinpoints the need of an individual to be free from impositions (Brown and Levinson 1987, p. 62). Strategies adopted to meet the positive and negative face needs of people in communication are designated positive and negative politeness.

For smooth interaction, interlocutors are to maintain face saving stance, by attending to the two basic face needs of one another through the mitigation or avoidance of FTAs. Accordance to Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness framework, FTAs can be avoided or mitigated by the use of politeness strategies (p.68). They outlined five super strategies for doing an FTA and they

are: doing the FTA on record (1) without redressive action, baldly, with redressive action using (2) positive politeness, or (3) using negative politeness, (4) off record, (5) don't do the FTA. Doing an FTA on record entails the use of a strategy that is subject to one possible interpretation. The speaker's intention is unambiguously stated and the hearers understand it as such. This can be done with or without redressive action. When a speech act is performed using explicit strategy, such as being blunt in making a request, the FTA is said to have been done baldly, without redressive action. This is typical of speech acts realized in strict adherence to the Gricean conversational maxims and is mostly utilized in emergency situations where face demand is compromised in the interest of efficiency. Performing an FTA on record with redressive action involves making a choice of strategy

that 'gives face' to the hearer; an indication that the speaker has no intention of taking the face wants of the addressee for granted. To achieve this, the speaker makes a selection of strategies that mitigate the threat inherent in such speech acts using either positive or negative politeness strategies.

The use of positive politeness strategies involves an inclusive approach to politeness that is achieved when the speaker's redressive acts are geared towards satisfying the positive face need of the addressee as exemplified in the use of strategies that appeal to the in-group spirit and acknowledging that they (both the speaker and the addressee) share certain desires in common. This by implication means that the FTA is not meant as a slight on the addressee and does not amount to a negative rating of his face wants. Negative politeness on the other hand entails the consideration of the negative face need of the interlocutors in recognition of the need to respect their claims of territory and the avoidance of encroachment. This can be realized through the use of impersonalizing mechanisms, which distance the speaker and the hearer from the FTA, the offer of apology for trespassing, deference, hedges and other linguistic constructions that aim at softening the FTA and offer the addressee a leeway to go contrary to the speaker's wish are instances. Negative politeness sub-strategies outlined by Brown and Levinson (1967) include: question, hedges, be pessimistic, deference, apologize, impersonalize S and H, avoid the pronouns "I" and "you", state the FTA as a general rule, Nominalize, go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebted H (p.131).

Doing an FTA off record, amounts to using politeness strategies that are subject to more than one possible interpretation so that the speaker cannot be held accountable for whatever interpretation the addressee decides to accord the speech act. Off record politeness strategies are those strategies that violate Grice's conversational maxims. Linguistically, they are realizable as metaphors, ironies, rhetorical questions, giving hints/clues, over statements, understatement, over generalization, use of elliptical sentences and making presuppositions. The fifth strategy is 'Don't do the FTA'. In other words, when the face threat inherent in doing an FTA outweighs the intended gain, the best option is to avoid doing the FTA.

A speaker takes into account certain factors before making a choice of politeness strategy for the performance of any FTA, considering the fact that certain strategies are more advantageous in some contexts than others in satisfying the face need of the addressee. For instance, by choosing to do an FTA off record, the speaker can avoid getting into verbal conflict with the addressee and can as well be regarded as a diplomat as he offers the addressee the opportunity to act in accordance with the interpretation, he gives to the speech act. For Brown and Levinson, the choice of strategy is basically influenced by the context of use which in turn is determined by three sociological variables; social distance (D), relative power (P) and the relative ranking of imposition (R)

in a specific culture. The sum total of these three variables determines the weightiness of an FTA and consequently the choice of politeness strategies.

This paper evaluates the apology speech act collected within the Nigerian context using the five super strategies outlined in Brown and Levinson's politeness framework namely; bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, off record strategies, and don't do the FTA.

Methodology

The study adopted a quantitative approach to the analysis of the speech acts of apology elicited from the three major ethno-linguistic groups in Nigeria using Brown and Levinson's politeness framework. This approach quantifies the data obtained using descriptive statistical methods, precisely, frequency and simple percentage in order to arrive at an objective answer to the research question.

The population of the study consists of data taken from the three major socio-cultural groups in Nigeria (Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba). However, due to the enormous population in the three zones, quota sampling technique was used to draw a sample population of 300 participants, 100 from each of the ethnic groups. The instrument used for data collection was designed and responded to in the English language, and to that effect, the choice of participants was limited to students of tertiary institutions. An open-ended discourse completion test (DCT) was adopted as the instrument for data elicitation. The DCT is made up of five hypothetical situations meant to elicit apology from the respondents. The choice of using DCT as the instrument of data collection for the study is informed by its ability to generate large quantity of data within a record time. Secondly, with DCT, the situational variables of social distance and relative power can be controlled. This was done by adequate description of the contexts through which the apologies were elicited (see attachment).

Results

The results of the statistical analysis of the data with regard to the five hypothetical situations presented in the DCT are presented in Tables 1-5. From the analyses of the data elicited, a number of politeness strategies were utilised by the respondents in the construction of apologies within the Nigerian ESL context and these strategies were either used in isolation or combined in various degrees for the purpose of offering valid apologies. Respondents were not restrained in their responses as the questionnaire was in an open-ended format and they were encouraged to react to each hypothetical situation as they would in real life. The study focused mainly on the analyses of the head acts, that is the ultimate units that featured the speech acts of apology, while less attention was paid to apology intensification devices outside the head acts. The analysis took into

cognizance both the number of respondents that used a particular strategy and those that did not use it, hence the categorisation of the data into 'yes' and 'no'. 'Yes' represents the statistics of the participants that utilised the strategy, while 'No' accounts for the opposite.

Table 1 Apology Strategies used in Situation One

| Apology Strategies used | Frequency of Yes | % Yes | Frequency of No | % No |
|---|------------------|-------|-----------------|------|
| Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs) | 5 | 1.7 | 295 | 98.3 |
| Deference + IFIDs | 92 | 30.7 | 208 | 69.3 |
| Deference + IFIDs + Explanation | 156 | 52.0 | 144 | 48 |
| IFIDs + Explanation | 15 | 5.0 | 285 | 95 |
| Deference + IFIDs + Promise of forbearance | 15 | 5.0 | 285 | 95 |
| Deference + IFIDs + Explanation+ Taking of Responsibility | 5 | 1.7 | 295 | 98.3 |
| IFIDs +Explanation + Promise of forbearance | 12 | 4.0 | 288 | 96.0 |

Table 2 Apology Strategies Used in Situation Two

| Apology Strategies used | Frequency of Yes | % Yes | Frequency of No | % No |
|--|------------------|-------|-----------------|------|
| IFIDs | 3 | 1.0 | 297 | 99.0 |
| Deference + IFIDs + Explanation | 201 | 67.0 | 99 | 33.0 |
| Deference + IFIDs + Explanation + Promise of forbearance | 28 | 9.3 | 272 | 90.7 |
| Deference + IFIDs | 23 | 7.7 | 277 | 92.3 |
| IFIDs +Explanation | 27 | 9.0 | 273 | 91.0 |
| Deference +Explanation | 2 | .7 | 298 | 99.3 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|-----|-----|------|
| IFIDs +Explanation + Promise of forbearance | 6 | 2.0 | 294 | 98.0 |
| Deference + Self-Pride | 2 | .7 | 298 | 99.3 |
| Explanation + Promise of forbearance | 4 | 1.3 | 296 | 98.7 |
| IFIDs +Explanation+ Offer of Repair | 4 | 1.3 | 296 | 98.7 |

Table 3 Apology Strategies Used in Situation Three

| Apology Strategies used | Frequency of Yes | % Yes | Frequency of No | % No |
|---|------------------|-------|-----------------|------|
| IFIDs | 31 | 10.3 | 269 | 89.7 |
| IFIDs + Offer of Repair | 46 | 15.3 | 254 | 84.7 |
| IFIDs + Explanation | 40 | 13.3 | 260 | 86.7 |
| IFIDs +Taking of Responsibility | 17 | 5.6 | 283 | 94.4 |
| IFIDs + Self Pride | 10 | 3.3 | 290 | 96.7 |
| IFIDs + Explanation+ Offer of Repair | 22 | 7.3 | 278 | 92.7 |
| Positive Politeness+ IFIDs + Taking of Responsibility | 14 | 4.7 | 286 | 95.3 |
| Positive Politeness+ IFIDs | 37 | 12.3 | 263 | 87.7 |
| Positive Politeness+ IFIDs+ Offer of Repair | 54 | 18.0 | 246 | 82.0 |
| Positive Politeness + Explanation | 3 | 1.0 | 297 | 99.0 |
| Offer of Repair | 9 | 3.0 | 291 | 97.0 |
| Explanation+ Offer of Repair | 17 | 5.6 | 283 | 94.4 |

Table 4 Apology Strategies Used in Situation Four

| Apology Strategies Used | Frequency of Yes | % Yes | Frequency of No | % No |
|---|------------------|-------|-----------------|------|
| IFIDs | 6 | 2.3 | 294 | 97.7 |
| IFIDs + Explanation | 39 | 13.0 | 261 | 87.0 |
| IFIDs +Offer of repair | 45 | 15.0 | 255 | 85.0 |
| IFIDs + Explanation+ Offer of Repair | 79 | 26.0 | 221 | 74.0 |
| Positive Politeness+ IFIDs + Explanation+ Offer of Repair | 60 | 20.0 | 240 | 80.0 |
| Positive Politeness+ IFIDs | 2 | .7 | 298 | 99.3 |
| Positive Politeness+ IFIDs +Explanation | 6 | 2.3 | 294 | 97.7 |
| Positive Politeness + Explanation+ Offer of Repair | 24 | 8.0 | 276 | 92.0 |
| Explanation+ Offer of Repair | 37 | 12.3 | 263 | 87.7 |
| No Apology | 2 | .7 | 298 | 99.3 |

Table 5 Apology Strategies Utilised in Situation 5

| Apology Strategies Used | Frequency of Yes | % Yes | Frequency of No | % No |
|---|------------------|-------|-----------------|------|
| IFIDs | 74 | 24.6 | 226 | 75.4 |
| IFIDs +Taking of Responsibility | 68 | 22.7 | 232 | 77.3 |
| IFIDs +Explanation | 31 | 10.3 | 269 | 89.7 |
| IFIDs + Offer of Repair | 53 | 17.7 | 247 | 82.3 |
| IFIDs +Explanation+ Offer of Repair | 24 | 8.0 | 276 | 92.0 |
| IFIDs + Taking of Responsibility+ Offer of Repair | 10 | 3.3 | 290 | 96.7 |

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|----|-----|-----|------|
| Positive Politeness +IFIDs | 22 | 7.3 | 278 | 92.7 |
| Deference +IFIDs | 10 | 3.3 | 290 | 96.7 |
| Deference +IFIDs +Offer of Repair | 8 | 2.7 | 292 | 97.3 |

Discussion of Findings

In summary, the politeness strategies used in constructing apologies in the Nigerian ESL context were as follows: Bald on-record strategies (IFIDs and Taking of Responsibility); Positive Politeness (In-group markers, Promise of Forbearance, and Offer of Repair); Negative Politeness (Deference); Off-record Strategy (Explanation, self-pride); Don't Do the FTA (No Apology)

Listed below are the strategies utilised by the respondents in constructing apologies within the Nigerian environment with details of their usage.

1. Illocutionary force indicating devices (IFIDs), Deference (D), Explanation (E), Promise of Forbearance (PoF), Taking of Responsibility (ToR), Self-Pride (SP), Offer of Repair (OR), Positive politeness (in-group markers) (PP), No Apology (NA)

Within the five hypothetical situations designed for the elicitation of apology strategies, a total of nine strategies were extracted as listed above. The strategies are sometimes used as single entities but most often their usages were encountered in composite forms. The respondents made use of the combination of both direct and indirect strategies on one hand and a combination of different indirect strategies on the other hand. These are designated as 'complex apologies' and 'compound apologies' respectively by some scholars (Obeng, 1999, cited in Alfatta, 2010, p.228). Within the confines of Brown and Levinson (1987) politeness theory, the above strategies can be seen as sub-strategies and can be rearranged to reflect the five super-strategies as follows:

- i) Bald on-record strategies (IFIDs and Taking of Responsibility);
- ii) Positive Politeness (In-group markers, Promise of Forbearance, and Offer of Repair);
- iii) Negative Politeness (Deference);
- iv) Off-record Strategy (Explanation, Self Pride);
- v) Don't Do the FTA (No Apology). The only strategy which could not fit into the structure of the established apology strategies is the one termed 'self-pride' by the researcher but even at that its usage is classified under off-record strategies because of the illocutionary opacity associated with it. For clarity, the apology sub-strategies and their variants as elicited in the data form the next item of discussion.

Bald on-Record Strategies

The most explicit form of the apology strategies encountered in the course of the research is the Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs). With this strategy, the speaker engages in an unconditional self-blame and unequivocally renders an apology using the direct illocutionary force indicating device encapsulated in the performatives 'I apologise' or through the use of semantic formulas like, 'I am sorry'. For Blum-kulka and Olshtain (1984, p.206), the following performative verb categories are included in offering direct apologies: sorry, apologise, regret, excuse, forgive, and pardon.

This study discovered frequent use of the IFIDs that runs through the five apology situations as elicited through the DCT. These include; I apologise, Sorry, I am sorry, Forgive me, Accept my apologies, together with the category recognized by Bergman and Kasper (1993) as intensified IFIDs. These are IFIDs, which are used with intensification devices: very, so, please, really, truly, mostly within the apology head acts. All of them were generally classified under the IFIDs. The use of IFIDs was recorded in all the Situations and towers high as the only lone apology strategy that enjoyed high preference but the percentage of usage was very low compared to other strategies. Most of the respondents did not view the exclusive use of IFIDs as a veritable means of rendering effective apology, but rather as an integral part of a complex system. Construction of apologies within the Nigerian environment as evident in the data presented in Tables 1-5, favours the use of hybrid strategies; a combination of two or more politeness strategies. 'IFIDs' and 'Offer of Repair' are the strategies used in isolation and even at that, 'Offer of Repair' made a lone appearance in Situation 3 only.

In combination with other strategies, IFIDs had the highest percentage of occurrence. In Situation 1 and 5, IFIDs were used throughout either as a singular strategy or part of the strategy combinations. In the remaining three Situations, they equally recorded high frequency. As recorded in literature and strengthened by the present study, an apology can be offered directly or indirectly. The direct forms of apology as encountered in the corpus used for this work are the IFIDs, which together with 'Taking of Responsibility' form the Bald-on record strategies. Olshtain (1983) accounted for indirect apologies in terms of the use of strategies such as offer of repair, explanation, acknowledgement of responsibility, and promise of forbearance and all these strategies were encountered in the present study. Whether these strategies can be valid and acceptable means of apologising are largely dependent on the context. The age difference between the interlocutors in addition to the severity of the offence committed and most importantly the social distance and relative power are all factored in when the choice of strategies is made.

Taking of Responsibility is another apology strategy where the offender takes full responsibility for the offence committed. This strategy forms a continuum that ranges “from strong self-humbling on the speaker’s part to a complete denial of responsibility” (Sadeghi, 2013, pp.32-33). Ogiermann (2009) echoes this in his classification of apology strategies, which subsumed ‘accepting responsibility’ and ‘denying responsibility’ under ‘Accounts’. The choice of either of the two depends on the disposition of the offender towards the satisfaction of his own face need; accepting responsibility constitutes face threat to the speaker while denial of responsibility is its face-saving counterpart. The version encountered in the present study has to do with acceptance of full responsibility for the offences committed and that qualified it to be classified as a bald-on record strategy. The speakers without equivocation took the blame for the offences.

Acceptance of responsibility forms part of the apology strategies utilised in Situation 3 and 5 where the speakers took ultimate blame for the smashing of the screen and the injury incurred by the stranger respectively. In these situations, it was used in combination with IFIDs and positive politeness strategies. The combination is necessitated by the fact that the use of IFIDs is highly routinised, and may not adequately capture the emotions of the speaker or his innermost feelings towards the addressee. As such, other strategies that make specific reference to the offence committed and the willingness of the offender to take the blame becomes necessary. Acceptance of responsibility is a sincere and humble means of offering an apology. It conveys the speaker’s willingness to make amends and initiates the revival of the social stability disrupted by the offence (Norrick 1978, Bach & Harnish 1979, Holmes 1990, Lazare 2004, Tsoumou 2021).

Positive Politeness Strategies

Positive Politeness strategies were massively used in response to the Questionnaire. The usage was done at two levels directly and indirectly (the classification is done for convenience). The direct usage of the strategies was actualized through overt reference to in-group identity markers and the use of endearing terms that tend to close the social distance between the interlocutors. Indirect usage of the strategy refers to other strategies that are geared towards the satisfaction of the positive face needs of the addressee but excludes those mentioned as direct usage of the strategies above. Offer of Repair and Promise of Forbearance are some of the positive politeness strategies in this category. They were taken care of in subsequent discussion and will not form part of further discussion within the positive politeness strategies discussed here. The expressions of positive politeness as identified in this study include: my babies, my dear, dear friend, my friend, my darlings, dearest, dearie, sweethearts, angels, my brother. All these are endearing expressions that tend to disarm the offended by striking the chord of

mutual relationship that exist between him/her and the offender prior to the offence. As expected, positive politeness strategies are commonly used among interlocutors who are very familiar to one another as evident in Situations 3 and 4 where the strategies were dominantly used. In Situation 3, the interlocutors are friends and classmates while Situation 4 occurred in a family setting where a parent has to apologise to the children for not being able to pay their school fees as earlier scheduled. Both are cases that involve minimal social distance, hence the use of positive politeness as part of the apology strategies.

Having noted the preponderant use of positive politeness in contexts that involve close social relationship among the interactants, the usage equally took a different dimension in Situation 5 where two strangers were involved. There, the respondents were to apologise to a stranger whom they bumped into in a restaurant and who sustained injury as a result of a fall resulting from the encounter. Some of the respondents, precisely 7.3 percent made use of positive politeness in combination with IFIDs while apologising to the stranger. They succinctly made reference to the stranger as brother, sister and dear. Hence, the variants of the apologies rendered therein were 'My brother, I am sorry, Forgive me dear, Sorry sis'. One can explain the use of endearing terms in a scenario that involves total strangers, who were meeting for the first time and probably may not cross each other's paths in the future, in terms of the injury sustained by one. The offender was moved by the fact that he has inflicted pain on a fellow human in a situation that was avoidable had he (the offender) been more careful. The incidence quickly invoked the spirit of brotherhood and the fact that all humans have blood running in their veins and undergo pains when hurt whether physically or emotionally irrespective of their places of origin. The offender was overtaken by emotion and could not do less than referring to the offended as a brother and a dear one. At that moment the apologise could only see himself in the offended and that bridged the social distance instantly. This kind of apology disarms the offended and has a way of soothing the wound albeit the psychological effect occasioned by the offence. Hence, in Situation 5, it is the nature of the offence committed rather than the relationship that exists between the interlocutors that prompted the use of positive politeness strategies in a context that would have ordinarily given rise to the use of strategies that emphasise avoidance of encroachment into personal territories.

Promise of Forbearance hinges on a pledge of avoidance of similar offence in future actions. It is the least popular among the strategies as evident in the data presented in the previous chapter. It was used in Situations 1 and 2. It could be noticed that in these two Situations the speakers have lower power status in comparison with the addressee and there had to make pledges of more serious commitment towards appointments in their future dealings with the offended. It is also pertinent to note that

the offences committed in the two situations have to do with time and since time is irrecoverable, the offenders could only make amends by promising to avoid such offences in future dealings with the addressees. This strategy has a strong bearing towards the satisfaction of the positive face need of the offended and a realisation of one of the sub-strategies of positive politeness represented by 'make a promise'. Its usage has a close affinity with situations characterized by minimal social distance (D) and less social power(P) as well. Making of promises is only feasible among people of close relationships who interact with one another every now and then. One cannot make a promise of forbearance to a stranger because they might not have cause to interact again in the future and as such no future offence is envisaged. This explains why the usage of the strategy was prevalent in Situations 1 and 2 though in combination with other strategies. The version recorded in this study reads, 'It will not happen again; I promise not to disappoint you next time; I will try my best to avoid future re-occurrence'. These statements of commitment assure the addressee that the speaker cares for his wants and is committed to actualizing such in subsequent encounters and this is one of the tenets of positive politeness.

'Offer of Repair' is a positive politeness strategy as it aligns with 'Give gifts' an attribute of positive politeness as stipulated by Brown and Levinson. This strategy is one of the indirect apology strategies meant to fulfil the positive face needs of the addressee. Here, the speaker acknowledges the damage caused by his/her offence and takes a step further by opting to bear the cost of the damage done by the offence. The level of commitment as far as this strategy is concerned depends on the nature of the offence committed. Its usage is restrictive in nature because it is mostly used in situations where repairable damages were done. Instances of its use occurred in Situations 3, 4 and 5 with minimal occurrence in Situation 2. Details of usage will be outlined subsequently in various Situations where the usage occurred.

Negative Politeness Strategy

Deference is a negative politeness strategy that tends to highlight the distance between the interlocutors. Its usage often enacts a master- subordinate scenario where respect to the addressee's public space is of utmost importance. Deference as recorded in the present study are mainly in the form of formulaic address terms like; Sir, Ma, Rev, Dr and Prof (as in cases that involve student-lecturer encounter). Deference like other negative politeness strategies presupposes a recognition of the fact that the addressee has a right to personal territories and that the speaker is not in any way taking that for granted but Holmes (1995) prefers to accord deference especially formal address terms the status of positive politeness. This has to do with the fact that positive politeness approves of and affirms the positive self-regard of the addressee. In which case, the use of

the address terms assures the addressee that the speaker respects him/her for what he/she is and is willing to make amends. Deference is not primarily an apology strategy judging from the fact that none of the respondents used it as a sole means of apologising. Rather it serves as a means of paying respect or acknowledging the addressee's status in the society.

The use of Deference was recorded in Situations 1, 2 and 5. These are situations that are accorded plus social distance (D) and to a considerable extent unequal power relationship between the interactants. The respondents acknowledged the need to show maximum respect to the addressees involved in those three Situations through the use of the address terms noted above while apologising to them. Situations 1 and 2 elicited higher usage of deference as the greater number of the strategies used made combinations involving deference and IFIDs plus or minus other components. This is expected because the personalities addressed in those situations are the speakers' superiors in education and religious matters respectively. Its usage in Situation 3 even though minimal is equally understandable because the addressee therein is a stranger and has no intimate tie with the speaker.

Off Record Strategies

Explanation is one of the indirect apology strategies as extracted from the questionnaire, and its occurrence is witnessed across the five apology situations. It is classified as an off-record strategy because it gives either mild or strong hint on the circumstances that brought about an offence without explicitly asking for forgiveness. It is a strategy that tends to give account of what led to the offence for which apology is being offered. This strategy offers a leeway for the offender to attend to his/her own face needs by providing a detailed account of how the offence came about. In most cases, the addressee realises that the offender is not entirely to be blamed for whatever happened. Within the Nigerian context as evident in the data presented in the previous chapter, "Explanation" as an apology strategy was never used in isolation but woven into a larger structure. This is because offering a valid apology is a dicey issue. The speaker is often torn between whose face to give greater attention to; his or the addressee's? As noted earlier, apology is a face-saving act to the addressee but a face-threatening act for the speaker and that explains why some people feel reluctant to offer apology.

In view of the two faces that demand attention, the speaker has to do a great deal of face work to accommodate the two faces. The offender has a number of both implicit and explicit apology strategies at their disposal to choose from but among all of them, 'Explanation' appears to be the best means of attending to their own face after taking care of the addressee's face needs. Even at that, the fact still remains that the need to attend to the offender's own face should not overshadow that of the offended, lest the apology

becomes invalid. The acceptability of an apology is solely dependent on its ability to reflect sincere feeling of remorse, and repentance for the offence committed (Bataineh & Bataineh 2006). It is based on this that “Explanation” is not considered good enough as a lone apology strategy but an appendage to a more acceptable structure. This assertion has a leaning with the novel strategy discovered in the course of this work termed ‘Self Pride’. This strategy was recorded in Situations 2 and 3.

The strategy as found in the situations mentioned above has the following variants; ‘You know it is not in my character to neglect appointments’ and ‘You know I cannot intentionally break your laptop’. In Situation 2, the strategy was combined with Deference while in Situation 3, it was combined with IFIDs. The researcher considers this strategy as novel because it can neither be classified as a case of ‘No Apology’ nor ‘Denial of responsibility’ but rather a case of self-exaltation, the presentation of oneself as infallible and that amounts to self-glorification and arrogance. The acceptability of such apology strategies lies in the fact that they are not used in isolation but in combination with other strategies. Otherwise, the apology so rendered cannot be valid considering the fact that an apology has the potential of redressing the damage an offence caused the addressee (Olshtain 1989; Edmonson et al 1984). The variant ‘You know it is not in my character to neglect appointments’ was used in Situation 2 by respondents while apologising for disappointing a priest/ pastor in a religious engagement. The apology is definitely not a polite one and that accounts for the addition of ‘Deference’ to it as a means of showing some respect to the religious leader. The frequency of its usage equally attests to the fact that it is an unpopular strategy; less than 1% of the total respondents utilised it. The same thing is applicable to the second version ‘You know I cannot intentionally break your laptop’ as recorded in Situation 3. In this case, the respondents explicitly apologised through the use of IFIDs and then added the strategy identified as ‘Self Pride’ and the percentage of usage is equally very low in comparison with other strategies. From whatever angle one may choose to look at the use of the strategy in two situations, one may come to the conclusion that it is not called for. There is no justification for its usage at all even in Situation 3 where the interlocutors are friends, the severity of the offence committed calls for sober reflection and outward show of regrets verbalised through a sincere apology. The situation does not call for exhibition of pride as that would only cause more pain to the offended. In situation 2, the offence committed is equally serious because it has to do with time. No time lost can be regained. Therefore, even if the offender is known by the priest for being duty conscious, that should be the more reason why they should be sincerely sorry for disappointing the priest and not an occasion for drawing attention to their supposed impeccable records within the parish.

Don't Do the FTA

No Apology is another strategy recorded in the present study; a situation whereby the speaker refuses to suffer self-effacement and would rather maintain his/her own face than lose it in the process of apologising. Cases of 'no apology' can take the form of explicit and implicit denial of responsibility, justifying the act, blaming a third party or the complainer (Trosborg, 1987). The strategy was only used in Situation 4 and by two out of the three hundred respondents that participated in the study. There was an unambiguous denial of responsibility as the respondents could not bring themselves so low as to apologise to their children for not meeting up with the payment of their school fees as promised. This could only occur in a context where the speaker's social power exceeds that of the addressee as evident in Situation 4. There, the speaker wields enormous social power and could afford to disregard the face needs of the children without risking the disruption of social harmony within the family. However, it was still an unpopular strategy within the Nigerian environment. Subsequent sub-section is devoted to the discussion of the utilization of apology strategies in each of the five apology situations.

Conclusion

This paper has been able to examine the patterns of realisations of the speech act of apology using Brown and Levinson's politeness theory in the Nigerian context through the qualitative and statistical analysis of the data yielded by the DCT. Apology constitutes a face threatening act to the speaker with varying degrees of weightiness (depending on the context), which determines the choice of strategies for its realisation and this is duly attested to in the study. The isolated examination of the various apology contexts created for the purpose of this paper yielded different patterns of apology structures according to the weightiness attached to each FTA by the respondents. In cases where the respondents marked some of the apologies as highly face threatening, they used more of explanations, self-pride, which is the novel strategy discovered in this study (off-record) and even the highest numbered strategy, 'Don't do the FTA' as face saving mechanisms but where the threat is less, the strategy usage tended to be simpler. Generally, the realisation of apology within the Nigerian environment is mainly a function of strategy combinations that cuts across the five super strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson

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