

INVESTIGATING POLITENESS AND FACE THREATENING ACTS IN CLASSROOM DISCOURSE AMONG SELECTED STUDENTS OF UNIZIK, AWKA.

Lucky Amarachukwu Onebunne
Department of English Language and Literature,
Faculty of Arts,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria
+2348063484255

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2279-0651>

la.onebunne@unizik.edu.ng

&

Oluchi Martha Ugwumba
Department of English Language and Literature,
Faculty of Arts,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria
+2348168128322

oluchiugwumbal6@gmail.com

Abstract

This research focuses on investigating politeness and face threatening acts in classroom discourse. The purpose of the study is to investigate different face threatening acts in classroom discourse and how politeness strategy is used to escape the effect of face threatening acts done by three hundred (300) level students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The researchers make use of one hundred and fifty-six (156) students of 300 level of Department of English Language and Literature of which a total of (30) politeness and face threatening acts were purposively identified and sampled by the researchers through observation method for the purpose of this analysis. Through the analysis, the researchers bring out the different face threatening acts in classroom discourse using six (6) maxims as formulated by Leech which are: tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy. The study suggests that lecturers in classroom discourse should generate politeness strategies to make their utterances more comfortable and appreciated inside the classroom.

Keywords: Politeness, Classroom Discourse, Maxims, Face Threatening Acts, Strategy

Background to the Study

Communication is one of the simplest functions regarding a language which establishes when people want to convey the meanings that are behind their intentions. Without a language, it is almost impossible to be connected with others and be a significant part of a conversation in a particular situation. Communication is an act to express what is in one's mind. It is a complex phenomenon. According to Owen, "communication is the process of exchanging information and ideas, it involves encoding, transmitting, and decoding an intended message" (45). There are several means of communicating, such as verbal speech, sign language, and augmented communication methods.

Language, on the other hand, is a code through which humans communicate and interact with one another by means of habitually used oral-auditory arbitrary symbols (Lyons, 4). Language is a device that establishes sound-meaning correlation, pairing meaning with signals to enable people to exchange ideas through observable sequence of sounds, and one language used for communication in most countries is the English language. The function of language include communication, expression of identity, play, imaginative expression and emotional release. Henry Sweet, an English phonetician also states that, “language is the expression of ideas by means of speech sounds combined into words” (78).

One of the major features of man, according to Mgbodile (19), is his ability to use language to send messages about objects, events and situations around him. Speech is what distinguishes man from other animals. According to Chukwuma and Otagburuagu, “speech is paramount to any language and knowledge of the English Language cannot be appreciably good without effective manipulation of the speech sounds, for linguistics competence (repertoire of language) and communicative competence (ability to use language to communicate effectively)” (97).

In human communication, we often conclude that certain behaviours are polite or rude, predicated on the verbal behaviour or language used by interlocutors. Politeness, from a linguistic perspective however, is not simply an etiquette or the social rules of behaviour; its major manifestations are the linguistic structures and language behaviour of participants in the social interaction. Politeness therefore, according to Cutting (20), refers not to the social rules of behaviour, but a pragmatic phenomenon identifiable, not only by the formal and structural arrangement of the words used in communication, but also by their function and intended social meaning which is a culturally conditioned behaviour. However, there are acts that hampers politeness in communication which is known as face threatening acts (FTAs).

The concept of face threatening Acts (FTAs) has become firmly embedded in pragmatics since its introduction in Goffman's (67) work on face. Much of the work that has been subsequently undertaken over the past four decades with regards to face threats has focused on understanding how participants avoid or reduce face threats in interpersonal interactions, or what is commonly termed “saving face”. Such work has generally come under the umbrella of politeness research.

In recent works, particularly on impoliteness, there have sometimes been passing references made to practices that can be evaluated as face-threatening, yet do not necessarily fall comfortably under the umbrella of either politeness or impoliteness theories. The major concerns tackled in classroom-oriented research may be related to the face threatening acts (FTAs) inhibiting teachers' teaching effectiveness and students' learning outcomes. Chaudron indicates that, “learning can be facilitated when the classroom provides the learners with comprehensible target language input in an affectively supportive climate” (6). Nevertheless, in classroom settings, the teacher (speaker) is clearly more powerful in some sense than the students (hearer). The climate of a classroom is not always supportive and sometimes even conflictive. Cole states that, in numerous situations, the speaker may not care whether the effect of a face-threatening act (FTA) is redressed (88). The classroom environment is one of the most suitable

examples, where the speaker (the teacher) may use a bald-on-record utterance.

Politeness and face threatening acts are concepts which are not really taken into consideration seriously by both teachers and students. The speech acts might be considered as normal behaviour teachers must do in order to maintain the classroom atmosphere as well as the students' discipline. However, serious implications might happen if this behaviour is not corrected not to mention avoided. Not only researchers but also English teachers and students may obtain insight into English teaching behaviour from a pragmatic perspective. Hence, this present research is necessitated to investigate politeness and face threatening acts in the classroom discourse.

Statement of the Problem

Embedded in language are so many tools of expression, of which politeness strategies are inclusive. While using these tools in expressing oneself, one encounters issues in communication, especially in the classroom discourse. Some factors hamper effective communication between the students and teachers/lecturers, these factors are known as face threatening acts (FTAs). According to some scholars (Arundale, 42, and Robert, 20), the notion of face threat itself, has remained largely dependent on the intuitive notion of threat to the positive face. These face threatening acts serve as the major gloss of this research on politeness and face threatening acts in the classroom discourse.

Face threatening is a speech act that has received the least attention in the field of pragmatics. Ju indicates that research examining politeness and face threatening acts have been scant (26). However, the dynamics of impoliteness in interaction may expand our knowledge regarding the complexities of this phenomenon. The effects of the various factors on a speaker's choice of strategies have been the main concern of numerous studies on various speech acts, such as apologies, requests, complaints, refusals and disagreements. Furthermore, few interlanguage studies have reported on disagreement, on refusing or providing embarrassing information and on teachers' threatening behaviour in the act of teaching in classroom discourse. It is against this backdrop that this present research is necessitated to investigate politeness and face threatening acts in the classroom discourse.

Purpose of the Study

The objectives of this research are outlined below:

1. To investigate how politeness strategy is used to escape the effect of face-threatening acts done by the speakers in classroom discourse.
2. To identify the different face threatening acts in classroom discourse.
3. To evaluate how these face threatening acts hamper and affect effective communication between students and their instructors in the classroom.
4. To examine the effects of face threatening acts on the parties involved in interaction, and through examination, create and analyze the politeness strategies suitable for such situations.

Scope of the Study

This research study is limited in scope in order to ensure efficiency and accuracy in the conduct of the research. The scope of this research is hereby strictly restricted to investigating politeness and face threatening acts (FTAs) in classroom discourse, a study of 300 level undergraduates of English Department. These 300 level students are selected for the sake of convenience in the conduct of the research.

Significance of the Study

The following are the proposed significance of the study:

1. This study is of immense benefit to the undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, as it gives them insight into the different face threatening acts that hamper their effective communication in the classroom and expose them to the possible remedies to the problem.
2. This research also has significant effect on the lecturers of these undergraduates as they would be enlightened on the face threatening acts that affect their students' communication and their comprehension of what is being taught in the classroom. This would help the lecturers in devising more efficient politeness strategies to help the students overcome these face threats.
3. The findings of this research are also useful to teachers of all levels in the educational setting to get in-depth understanding of the topic under study. The knowledge and detailed awareness about the face threatening acts and the effect it has on effective communication in the classroom discourse will help them to identify effective ways to curb the menace for effective communication in the classroom discourse.
4. Through the findings of this research, the students would be in a better position to solve their difficulties and hurdles in their way of learning and the teachers will be able to provide suitable environment for the success in the learning.
5. Researchers and other stakeholders in various education fields will be provided with inputs, materials, data, facts and ideas for other researches through the findings of this study.
6. Lastly, the findings of this study also help to stimulate further researches on the topic.

Research Questions

The following research questions serve as a guide for the research:

1. How is politeness strategy used to escape the effect of face-threatening acts done by the speakers in classroom discourse?
2. What are the different face threatening acts in classroom discourse?
3. To what extent do face threatening acts hamper and affect the effective communication between the students and their instructors in the classroom?
4. What are the effects of face threatening acts on the parties involved in interaction?

Conceptual Framework

The Concept of Face

Some definitions of face focus on the social context, some on the linguistics, and some on interpersonal relationships. Despite the variation on focus, there are some grounds among the definitions according to Brown and Levinson, first is the notion that face is socially or interactively based; that is, face exists in response to the presence of others and in interactions with others. Second, face is a specific image we present to another person. We have a desire to be seen in a certain way by certain people, so the image we present is affected by the requirements of the situation or context. Third, our level of consciousness and intent about the face we present varies but becomes particularly acute when something occurs that undermines people believing our face is genuine (a face-threat). Finally, our face is primarily displayed through behaviours, the way we communicate and interact (78).

Erving Goffman's work serves as the foundation for most contemporary face theories. He is a sociologist who focuses on the interaction between individuals and the social world. So, his definition emphasizes the way individuals fit into society and its institutions and how a person sees him or herself contributing to a given social context. Goffman therefore defines face as, "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact" (213). This definition makes more sense when we take it apart a bit. Underlying "positive social value" is the assumption that people want to be seen as having value to others. Hence, people lay claim to that value by presenting themselves in certain ways to others; for example, a teacher wants to claim an image of an effective educator while a student might claim the image of a serious learner.

Goffman explains that a "line" is the pattern of verbal and non-verbal messages (like lines in a play) that people use to express and evaluate situations that is perceived by others as a reflection of the image people claim. People then form impressions of the other person (a vision of the person's face) on the basis of those lines. So, a teacher lectures students who see the lecturing as appropriate to someone with the face of a teacher.

Domenici and Littlejohn explain the physical face we present to others as a metaphor for a more conceptual face, sense of self, or identity that we present to others (69). While similar to Goffman's notion of social value, Domenici and Littlejohn emphasize the values reflected in the original Chinese use of face when they define face as a "desire to present oneself with dignity and honour (10)". Dignity and honour are also part of the foundation of politeness theory in the sense that we honour others by being polite and respectful.

Brown and Levinson conceptualize face as something that we want or desire from others. They define face as "the want to be unimpeded and the want to be approved of in certain respects (63)". They argue that when people interact, they recognize each other's desire to have their faces supported and generally provide such confirmation. Approval is reflected in the way that other people respond to us showing respect and honour. The importance of respect, of supporting a person's face, is the theme of some hip-hop and rap songs about not dissing someone, such as a couple of songs both called "Don't Diss Me."

A couple more straightforward definitions of face are presented by Craig, Tracy, and Spisak as “the self-image they present to others” (440). Cupach and Metts also define face as “the conception of self that each person displays in particular interactions with others” (3). Both definitions reflect the application often incorporated in communication, schools that emphasize interaction of faces and people's attempts to help each other maintain their faces. Cupach and Metts emphasize that when we present our self-conception, we are seeking confirmation of that conception (90).

Positive and Negative Face

Brown and Levinson's definition of face reflects their view that face actually has two components: positive face and negative face. They define positive face as “the want of every member that he or she wants to be desirable to at least some others” (62). Our wants include everything from the values we want to maintain (love, good education, loyalty), to the things we want to do (go to the movies, go home, or study). These wants are elements of our face that are present when we interact with others. So, if you want to play the role of leader on a group project, you hope that others will support your positive face which serves as your want.

Negative face on the other hand sounds like it should just be the opposite of positive face, but it is not. Negative face is the want of every competent adult member that his actions be unimpeded by others. Another way to think of negative face is when we want to do what we want, and we want other people to let us do it (okay, maybe that's not much clearer). If you are sitting in the library studying, your negative face is that you be left alone to study. If someone comes over and starts a conversation, they are interfering in your effort to maintain that want for privacy.

In a clearer sense, while negative face attests the fact that individuals keep their face by clearly showing that they do not intend to impose themselves on others (e.g., through mitigation and indirectness), positive face aims at establishing strong ties between individuals (e.g., by respecting other's desire to be liked, respected, or understood). Negative face, therefore, emphasizes other's rights and freedom whereas positive face cares about their self-esteem. As such, politeness is closely related to the negotiation and maintenance (and where needed, redress) of face in social encounters.

Positive face, as identified by Lim and Bowers is “the need for appreciation expressed through inclusion or belongingness and need for approval expressed by respect for one's abilities” (16). Harris describes negative face as an individual's basic claim to territories, personal preserves and self-determination (23). Humans are social beings who need both autonomy and belongingness in differing degrees according to the context they find themselves. Brown and Levinson (87) explain that every utterance carries with it the potential to create a threat to either the speaker's or hearer's negative or positive face and as such, comprises a face threatening act (FTA) e.g., request for information, help, advice, criticism, reminders, offers etc.

It is pertinent to note that, negative and positive face co-exist in a delicate balance; the threat to one kind of face can be seen as a direct support for the other kind of face, for example, request for information may not only satisfy the positive face, but may be

threatening the negative face. Needless to say, individuals are normally expected to maintain one another's face in any social interaction. Hence, Brown and Levinson take face to be universal as both positive and negative face are part and parcel of any human culture (87).

Nevertheless, human interaction is not always face-saving. There are situations where individuals' acts and speech become quite face-threatening; in fact, Brown and Levinson have claimed that most of our acts are face-threatening. Any act that can threaten interactants' face is a face-threatening act (FTA); it is an act that damages the face of the speaker (i.e., the self) or the hearer (i.e., other). It can either damage negative face or positive face; hence, negative versus positive face-threatening acts. Through negative face-threatening acts, addressees' freedom of action is breached and rules of politeness are flouted (although requests, for example, are FTAs even if they are mitigated). Positive FTAs, on the other hand, are acts through which the people show their indifference to, or disapproval of other's wishes and wants.

The Politeness Principle

A major contribution to the study of human interactions is the politeness principle (PP) as discussed by Leech, Brown, Levinson and Cutting. Leech defines politeness as forms of behaviour that establish comity; that is, the ability of participants in a social interaction to engage in discourse in an atmosphere of relative harmony (83). For Brown and Levinson, politeness refers to “redressive actions taken to counter-balance the disruptive effects of face threatening acts” (68).

In their theoretical position, Brown and Levinson attempt to give a description of the principles that lie behind the construction of social behaviour. They opine that “language usage is part of the very stuff that social relationships are made of; as such, discovering the principles of language usage may be coincident with discovering the principles out of which social relationships, in their interactional aspects are construed” (55). For Leech, these are the principles of agreement, modesty, tact, sympathy, generosity and approbation (133).

In an elaboration of these principles of language usage, Brown and Levinson further identified the concept of 'face' as a requisite quality in all social relationships (89). Originally conceived by Goffman, “face refers to a speaker's sense of linguistic and social identity” (67). In order to negotiate successfully in social interactions, interlocutors must identify and respect one another's face wants. When these face wants are not respected, an individual's face is threatened. Such acts (Face threatening acts or FTAs) represent a threat to the individual's expectations regarding his self-image and they infringe on his/her self-esteem. In a bid to maintain politeness however, speakers often attempt to minimize or mitigate such acts through face saving acts (FSAs) and politeness strategies.

In a further elaboration of the concept of 'face', Brown and Levinson (69) distinguished between an individual's 'negative' or 'positive' face. A person's negative face is the individual's need to be independent, his basic claim to territories and his freedom from imposition. A person's positive face however, is his need to be accepted and liked by others and his need to be treated as a member of the same group.

An individual's face wants may be threatened through acts such as orders, threats, warnings, requests, advice, suggestions, offers, promises, compliments and expressions of strong emotion, envy and admiration. In such instances, the speaker infringes on the addressees' personal preserves and independence. Acts that threaten positive face wants include expressions of disapproval, criticism, contempt, ridicule, complaints, accusations, insults, challenges, reprimands, disagreement, mention of taboo topics, a blatant non-cooperation and the use of address/familiar terms in initial encounter, all of which infringe on the hearer's need to be accepted, liked or to be connected.

However, of interest in this study are those devices or politeness strategies often adopted by speakers to mitigate the effects of FTAs. These, as identified by Brown and Levinson, are positive politeness strategies (such as in-group identity markers or solidarity strategies) and negative politeness strategies or deference strategies usually seen in the use of expressions of restraint or redressive actions. A deference strategy is said to be at the heart of politeness because it performs the function of minimizing the particular imposition that the FTA unavoidably effects (129).

Two other strategies identified by Brown and Levinson are “bald-on-record” and “off-record” strategies (87). When acts are done “bald-on”, it is clear to participants what communicative intention led the actor to the act. Acts are therefore performed in the most direct, clear and unambiguous way possible. An act done “off record” involves indirect uses of language where it is not possible to attribute only one clear communicative intention to the act, such as use of ironies, metaphors, rhetorical questions, tautologies and implicatures.

Since politeness is a pragmatic phenomenon, it is influenced by contextual and situational factors, some of which are the social distance between the speaker and hearer(s), the relative power or control that speaker has over hearer, that is, the social dimensions of hierarchy and the ranking or size of imposition involved in doing the FTA in a particular culture and situation.

The Notion of Face Threat in Social Discourse

The notions of face and face threat were first introduced into academic discourse in Goffman's seminar work. He defines face as “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact, with a line being understood as a pattern of verbal and nonverbal acts by which he expresses his view of the situation and through this, his evaluation of the participants, especially himself” (213). In this way, he rooted the notion of face in the claimed self-image of individuals, consistent with the North American folk view of self (Arundale, 9).

In outlining the importance of face in interpersonal interaction, Goffman drew from English calques of Chinese emic face evaluative terms. He discussed, for example, how face can be maintained, lost, saved, and given (213-215). These can be traced directly back to the Chinese expressions *you/gu mianzi*, *diu mianzi*, *liu mianzi*, and *gei mianzi*/, respectively. He also introduced the notion of face threat, which, in contrast, does not have a clear counterpart in Chinese.

In this sense, the notion of face threat is arguably theoretical in origin, differing from the

notions of maintaining, losing, saving and giving face, which have pre-theoretical or folk theoretical origins in being rooted in the folk or emic metalanguage of Chinese interpersonal interaction. Yet, despite first introducing the notion of face threat, Goffman did not actually clearly define what he meant by it. He distinguishes between intentional, accidental (unintended), and incidental face threats, regarding intentional face threats as underpinning face aggression or attack (221-222). However, he left the conceptualization of face threat itself to rest on the intuitive notion of threaten(ing), defined as “to be likely to injure; to be a source of danger to” in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (29).

Following Goffman, Brown and Levinson drew from the pre-theoretical notions of maintaining, enhancing, and losing face, in claiming that, “politeness arises through implicatures that minimize (analogous to maintaining face) or redress (analogous to saving face) face threats in order to maintain/save face, or to avoid loss of face” (95). Unlike Goffman, however, Brown and Levinson outline a technical definition of a face threatening act (FTA), which in turn was predicated on their notions of positive and negative faces (86).

A face threat is thus defined as being realized and perceived as intentionally causing face damage relative to the contextualized expectations of participants. This definition largely echoes Goffman's original postulation of intended face threats, where the offending person may appear to have acted maliciously and spitefully, with the intention of causing open insult (217). However, this move inadvertently masks a shift back to an arguably under-theorized understanding of face threats, which as previously noted, ultimately rests on the intuitive notion of threatening, this leads us to the notion of face threatening acts (FTAs).

Face Threatening Acts (FTAs)

Yule and Song describe face-threatening acts (FTAs) as when an individual tries to do or say things which lead to other individual's face losing” (20). Whenever an individual performs positive or negative face-threatening, he or she will be considered impolite. Therefore, it is almost impossible to avoid the acts of face threatening. Goffman recognized that in our interactions with others, there are times when we fail in our attempts to take a particular line or present a particular face. Goffman used such phrases as in, the wrong face, to be out of face, shamefaced, and threats to face to describe situations where the face a person is attempting to maintain is challenged or undermined.

Suppose one aspect of the face you enact with friends is someone who is funny. However, after telling a funny story, one of your friends says, “You're not really funny, you know”. Your friend's comment challenges your image (face) as a funny person; one for which you expected support. How hurt would you be by the friend's comment? Goffman identified three levels of responsibility for a person's threatening another person's face: unintentional, the maliciously or spitefully intentional, and the incidental (where the face threat is a by-product of people's actions and is not done with malice or spite) (56). Each type of threat varies on how threatening it is perceived and in terms of what strategies people use to restore their faces. You might view your friend's comment about not being funny as intentional and malicious and be particularly upset.

One way of knowing people's faces have been threatened is by their emotional reactions. Face threats usually produce feelings of embarrassment, shame, humiliation, agitation, confusion, defensiveness, or chagrin. In contrast to such feelings, Goffman contends those who are able to maintain their face in the light of challenges are demonstrating poise. He defines poise as “the capacity to suppress and conceal any tendency to become shamefaced during encounters with others (215)”.

After being told you're not funny, could you keep your cool and remained poised, or would you tell your friend off? Think of a time where you have faced threats and remained poised? What was it that challenged your face? How were you able to maintain your poise? Can you recall the circumstances surrounding someone who has been described as poised? How did others react to the person?

Furthermore, Brown and Levinson's politeness theory deals extensively with face-threatening acts, which they define as “those acts that by their very nature run contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/or speaker” (65). Face-threatening acts can be toward our positive face and/or negative face, and caused by acts we engage in ourselves or the acts of others toward us.

Brown and Levinson created an extensive list of various communication acts that can cause such face threat. For example, if a friend asks you to help her move into a new apartment next Saturday. She is threatening your negative face (autonomy) because you will have to give up whatever you might have planned. If you say, “No, I am sorry, I will be busy next Saturday,” you have threatened her negative face (interfered with the actions she wanted to take-moving), and you might have threatened your own positive face if she sees you as not being a very good friend (if you had a face of being a good friend).

Effects of the FTAs on Politeness Strategies

More recently, Jaszczolt indicates that FTAs refer to the interaction of conversations, in which interlocutors may threaten each other's faces by making requests and suggestions, by criticizing and advising, or by expressing guilt and thanks (22). Most speech acts performed by speakers are potentially face-threatening. FTAs can threaten a person's positive face, which indicates personality and includes the desire that the person's self-image is approved or appreciated. Threatening hearers' positive face covers the expressions of disapproval, criticism, contempt, complaint, accusation, insult, disagreement, and violent emotion; mention of taboo topics; interruption, non-cooperation; and conveying bad news about the hearer or good news about the speaker.

FTAs can also threaten the negative face, including the basic claim to personal possessions and private space as well as rights to non-distraction, freedom of action, and freedom from imposition. Threatening hearers' negative face includes orders; requests; suggestions; advices; reminders; threats; warnings; offers; promises; as well as expressions of envy, admiration, hatred, anger, and lust.

Some FTAs may threaten both aspects of the face; the distinction between threatening the negative and positive faces is only approximate. Moreover, the faces of both the speaker and the hearer can be threatened. The speaker can threaten his or her own face by expressing gratitude or apology.

As Jaszczolt asserts, FTAs can be performed either directly (on record) or indirectly (off record). Going on record gives the speaker credit for honesty, and he or she is considered trustful, whereas going off record makes the speaker appear tactful as his or her utterance is ambiguous, with more than one attributable intention. Going on record, along with positive or negative politeness, leads to the strategies of positive or negative politeness.

Positive politeness can be realized as suggesting commonality, understanding, and joint action, whereas negative politeness is expressed by showing respect and maintaining social distance. On record FTAs can be divided into those with and without redressive action.

The term FTA with redressive action refers to being of either positive or of negative politeness type, addressing the need to be approved of or the need to be left free from imposition. All speakers have a face, which they want to maintain; they also want to maintain the addressees' face. Therefore, for performing FTAs, the speakers attempt to minimize the face threat, unless the need to execute FTAs with maximum efficiency is greater than the need to preserve face. Simmons claims that "politeness, the act of considering others' feelings, is achieved through verbal strategies (65). To avoid the aforementioned FTAs, we may employ politeness strategies in our interaction.

Brown and Levinson also classify different types of politeness strategies for reacting to FTAs. The different politeness strategy types follow three sociological factors: The relative power of the hearer over the speaker, the social distance between the speaker and the hearer, and the ranking of the imposition in performing the FTA (56). We can respond with either of the two strategies, then a FTA is involved in an interaction. If we decide to perform it, we can perform the FTA either directly (on record) or indirectly (off record). If we perform it without considering the hearer, we perform the FTA baldly. To reduce the face-threatening effect on the hearer, we may use positive politeness, in which the speaker tries to save the hearer's positive face by reducing the distance between them, or negative politeness, in which the speaker tries to keep the hearer's negative face by valuing the hearer's personal territory.

Power and Solidarity

Researchers indicated that power and solidarity capture the way we juggle involvement and independence in real terms. Power refers to control over others, an extension of involvement and resistance to being controlled; power is an extension of independence; power serves the desire not to be imposed upon. In fact, "power may masquerade as solidarity" (Tanne, 94, cited by Tsuda, 93). Thus, indirectness may also damage communication when used only for selfish aims of manipulating others. For example, in a society where people are sensitive to the rank order of the people, indirectness is often employed by people of higher status to control people of lower status. Brown and Levinson state that "joking is a basic positive -politeness technique (85)". It seems that joking is used for people to feel that they share the same values; people make jokes to each other to maintain each other's positive face. Indirectness can be used to maintain the face of the speaker and the hearer while joking may be used to relieve tension.

Brown and Levinson state that talks among interlocutors may require softening devices to

facilitate conversations (231). However, it was revealed that, among close Chinese friends, informal conflict talks were intended to establish or enhance rapport and in-group solidarity. Under these circumstances, social contexts, such as the formality of a situation and the participants' relationships, were important variables in Chinese people's communicative behaviours. In their review of Kuo's study, Chen also proposes that, "a speaker's social identity determined his or her choice of politeness strategies" (26). The less powerful a speaker is in a conversation, the more frequently that speaker uses politeness strategies. In contrast, the more powerful a speaker is, the more direct and confrontational that speaker's politeness strategies become.

Theoretical Framework

Leech Politeness Principle

Leech politeness principle is a theory propounded by Geoffrey Leech in the year 1983. This politeness principle is propounded to give an account of how language is used in communication. According to Leech, there is a politeness principle with conversational maxims similar to those formulated by Paul Grice. He lists six maxims: tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy (132). These maxims vary from culture to culture (what may be considered polite in one culture may be strange or downright rude in another, minimizing the cost and maximizing the benefit to speaker/hearer).

Leech politeness principle is divided into six maxims, as shown below:

1. Tact Maxim: This maxim is used to minimize cost to others and maximize the benefit to others.

2. Generosity Maxim: The generosity maxim is used to minimize the benefit to self and maximize cost to self as well. Example: "You must come and have dinner with us". "You relax and let me do the dishes".

3. Approbation maxim: The approbation maxim is used to minimize the dispraise of others and maximize the praise of others. This maxim is fairly apparent, operates, and proposes that all things should be made equal (in terms of responding to one another's feedback).

4. Modesty maxim: This maxim is used to minimize praise to self and maximize dispraise to self. In the modesty maxim, the speaker must minimize praise of self and maximize the dispraise of self. This maxim has the same concept as the approbation maxim. Both approbation maxim and modesty maxim focus on the degree of good or bad evaluation of others or self, which later will be expressed by the speaker through an utterance.

5. Agreement Maxim: This maxim is used to minimize disagreement between self and others and maximize agreement between self and others. In the agreement maxim, a trend is to maximize agreement between self and other people and minimize disagreement between self and others. Furthermore, the disagreement is usually expressed through a partial agreement or regretful expression. An example is shown in the table below:

A: Linguistics is difficult to learn.

B: True, but the phonetics is quite easy.

C: That woman has achieved much.

6. Sympathy Maxim: The sympathy maxim is utilized to minimize antipathy between self and others and maximize sympathy between self and others. For instance, if bad luck or any disastrous events happened to an individual, one must be given sympathy or condolences. The example illustrated below:

A: My father hurt his leg last week and still can't walk.

B: I'm very sorry to hear that. (Polite) (Leech, 108-109)

It is pertinent to note that, Leech acknowledges the context's role in evaluating politeness; Although Leech's model focuses on absolute politeness, his inclusion of a relative way of looking at politeness can be regarded as innovative in the new paradigm of politeness models, which sees politeness at a discourse level. The present study is important because it analyses politeness and face threatening acts using Leech's politeness principle at the discourse level. The maxims postulated by Leech in his politeness principle will therefore be used in this research study to investigate the politeness and face threatening acts adopted in lecturer-students discourse in English language and Literature department, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Methodology

The researchers adopted a descriptive research design to describe politeness and face threatening acts (FTAs) that affect the undergraduate students of the English Language and Literature department, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. A descriptive research design is adopted as a most suitable design for this research because it helps to critically evaluate the classroom discourse to elicit original data that is described without any manipulation of what is being observed.

The area covered by the researchers is the English language and literature department, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Since it would be difficult to assemble data from the students in 400 levels in English department, the researchers choose to limit the area of the study to only students of 300 level in order to study the students thoroughly to find out the face threatening acts that affect them in communication.

The population of the study comprised of a total of one hundred and fifty-six (156), students of 300 level of English Language and Literature Department, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

The researchers adopted a purposive sampling technique as the most suitable technique to get the sample needed for the research. This sampling technique enables the researchers to get accurate data from the sample of the population which from the researchers' judgment, is made up of 156 students in the department.

The instrument used by the researchers is observation. Through observation of the lecturers-students communication, the researchers were able to get information as regards the different face threatening acts that affect these undergraduate students in the course of communication.

The researchers adopted a qualitative method of data analysis to analyse the excerpts or data gotten through the researchers' observation of expressions made in lecturer-students'

discourse. This qualitative method is used to critically analyse the data using Leech politeness principle.

Analysis

The researchers, being both lecturer and student of the Department of English Language and Literature, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka observed the lecturers-students' communication in the 300-level classroom during lectures. Data obtained from classroom observation was first transcribed verbatim and then analysed qualitatively by the researchers. Next, the researchers categorized the data collected in terms of types and functions of face threatening behaviour, and the frequencies of occurrence of the face threatening acts were computed with descriptive statistics.

The researchers used the descriptive qualitative method conducted by collecting data, classifying data, analysing data, and drawing a conclusion. A total of 30 politeness and face threatening acts were purposively identified and sampled by the researchers for the purpose of the data analysis. Specifically, these politeness and face threatening acts were analysed using Leech politeness principle which formed the yardstick for this research. Hence, the politeness and face threatening acts are analysed below using the 6 main maxims of conversation propounded by Leech:

1. Tact Maxim
2. Generosity Maxim
3. Approbation Maxim
4. Modesty Maxim
5. Agreement Maxim and,
6. Sympathy Maxim

The frequency of occurrence of these maxims are represented in a tabular form below:

Politeness Principle & Face threatening Acts	Frequency of Occurrence	Percentage of occurrence
Tact Maxim	8	27%
Generosity Maxim	6	20%
Approbation Maxim	4	13%
Modesty Maxim	5	17%
Agreement Maxim	4	13%
Sympathy Maxim	3	10%
Total:	30	100%

1. Tact Maxim

The researchers identified the use of tact maxim in the lecturer-students classroom discourse. This maxim deals with directive speech which is either polite or threatens the positive face of the students involved. The findings of the research shows that the lecturer in the course of teaching the students used the tact maxim. Below are excerpts of the lecturers' use of tact maxim:

DATA I

Excerpt 1: Open the door, please!

Excerpt 2: Can you read the passage, please.

Excerpt 3: Those who are seated at the back are not paying attention to the class.

Excerpt 4: Some of you students refused to do my assignment.

Analysis of Data I

The utterances delivered by the lecturer above are commanding utterances in the form of request. The lecturer delivers the utterances in imperative form to make the students involved do something. From the observation of the researcher, it could be deduced that the lecturer made use of the tact maxim in commanding the students. This tact maxim is applied by the lecturer in commanding or ordering the students. For instance, in excerpts 1, "Open the door, please!" The lecturer succeeds in violating the student's negative face of not wanting any form of disturbance. This is also applicable in the second excerpt, "Can you read the passage, please". The lecturer commands the students involved to perform acts which ideally, they may not want to, but because the lecturer has a higher authority over the students, the student addressed must oblige.

From the excerpt 3 also, the lecturer indirectly commands the students to pay attention to the teaching by saying "those who are seated at the back are not paying attention to the class", this is a form of interference into the students' private lives. Also, from the excerpt 4, the lecturer indirectly violates or threatens the students' negative face by reprimanding them for not doing the assignment. However, evidence from the research also shows that the lecturer adopted politeness strategies to mitigate the face threat on the students by using "please" as exemplified in excerpts 1 and 2.

2. Generosity Maxim

Below are some examples of generosity maxims adopted in the students-lecturers' interaction:

DATA II

Excerpt 5:

Student: I know the answer to the question sir, but I cannot pronounce it.

Lecturer: Just make an attempt, let me help you if you make a mistake.

Excerpt 6:

Lecturer: Just do it by yourself, if you find any difficulties, you can ask me anyway.

Student: Okay Sir!

Analysis of Data II

From the observation of the researchers, it was deduced that the lecturer adopts the generosity maxim to offer a helping hand to the students involved in the conversation. From the two excerpts, the lecturer gives a hand to the students by offering guidance since the students don't feel confident to answer the question or discharge the task given to them by the lecturer. An offer belongs to commissive type of speech act, where the speaker does a certain act that benefits the hearer. In this context, the hearer receives guidance from the teacher as a benefit. This is therefore a form of politeness strategy employed by the lecturer on the students.

3. Approbation Maxim

In this study, the approbation maxim of politeness principle occurs when the lecturer gives compliments to the students on work well done. A speaker gives compliments usually when the addressee can finish their tasks or answer the speakers' questions perfectly, etc.

Instances of approbation abound in the research findings below:

DATA III

Excerpt 7:

Lecturer: You did a perfect work. To anyone who hasn't finished the task yet, just keep going. Make sure you complete your task.

Student: Okay sir!

Excerpt 8:

Lecturer: Attention please, if you are still noisy, I will not tell you the result of your quiz.

Students: (Absolute silence).

Lecturer: Well, that's good. The first one is John, 60%. I hope you will get better score next time and I hope you will not sleep in class anymore.

Analysis Of Data III

The excerpts above from the findings of the research shows that the lecturer adopted the approbation maxim to compliment the students for a good work. In the excerpt 7, "You did a perfect work..." The lecturer gives compliments to his student by saying "perfect". As it is known that the word "perfect" is categorized as an adjective, especially positive adjective. The usage of a positive adjective is very crucial in approbation maxim. Same is applicable in the excerpt 8, where the lecturer used the positive adjective "good" to compliment the student. However, the lecturer also adopts a face threatening act in the excerpt 8 above, where he says "I hope you will get better score next time and I hope you will not sleep in class anymore". This is bound to violate the negative face of the students who would feel insulted by the lecturer before the other students.

4. Modesty Maxim

This is another type of maxim exemplified in the lecturer-students communication. This maxim comes in form of threat, warning or demanding someone to be modest in character or to do something modestly, it is a threat to the positive face of the students. The positive face is the need to be appreciated, expressed through inclusion or belongingness and need for approval, expressed by respect for one's abilities. Instances of modesty maxim from the research are outlined below.

DATA IV

Excerpt 9: I noticed you all performed very poorly in the previous quiz I gave you.

Excerpt 10: You students are lazy, to read your books is even a problem.

Analysis of Data IV

From the observation of the researchers, it was deduced that the lecturer used the modesty maxim indirectly on the students to demand the modesty and good conduct from the students. From the excerpt 9, "I noticed you all performed very poorly in the previous quiz I gave you", the lecturer fails to appreciate the efforts of the students by putting it straight to them that they failed, and this would affect the positive face of the students by making them feel bad and not appreciated. However, expression was used by the lecturer to demand that the students perform better next time. This is also applicable in excerpt 10.

5. Agreement Maxim

There is a tendency to refuse someone's opinion on social interaction and conversation. When the speaker and hearer are sharing their opinions, and both of them agree with the opinion being shared, the agreement maxim happened. On the other hand, if one of them disagreed, disagreement happened. Agreement maxim is divided into two types, partial and full agreement. The example of agreement maxim in this study can be seen in the following conversations by the lecturer and students:

Excerpt 11:

Lecturer: Just do the task. How long do you need to finish it?

Students: In 20 minutes, sir?

Lecturer: Well, I give you 20 minutes.

Excerpt 12:

Lecturer: What do you understand by morphology?

Student: Morphology is how words are formed.

Lecturer: You are almost correct, but it's preferable to go with this definition: Morphology is the scientific study of word formation.

Analysis of Data V

The excerpts above show agreement between the lecturer and the students over

something, hence, the agreement maxim. For instance, in excerpt 11, the conversation between the lecturer and the students is considered as an agreement, since the lecturer agrees with the student's offer. The usage of "well" marks the agreement between the student and lecturer which is 20 minutes. Same is applicable in the excerpt 12 above, the lecturer and students get to agree on a better definition of "morphology" different from what the student defined earlier.

6. Sympathy Maxim

In our daily lives, we often show our sympathy toward others. Sympathy is usually given to appreciate or give high value to the other. It can be seen as exemplified in the research from the following dialogues:

DATA VI

Excerpt 13

Lecturer: Was he sick yesterday?

Student: Yes sir, he was down with malaria and typhoid. That is why he didn't come to school yesterday.

Lecturer: Eyaa. Many people fall sick these days. I hope he will get better soon.

Analysis of Data VI

The excerpt above shows the lecturer's expression of sympathy towards his student who is reported to be sick. In the conversation above, the lecturer asks the student's condition since he did not attend the class a day before. Then, the other student informs the lecturer that the student who did not attend the class is sick. In this context, the lecturer gives high value towards the student's feelings by saying "I hope he will get better soon". It works as an intensifier that indicates sympathy maxim.

Discussion Of Findings

From the tentative research carried out, the researchers explored the politeness principle and threats to the positive and negative face of the addresser and the addressee in lecturer-students' communication in linguistic context.

The findings from the research show that tact maxim has the higher percentage of occurrence 8(27%), this is followed by generosity maxim which has a relatively high percentage of occurrence 6(20). Other maxims explored have the following percentages of occurrence in the classroom discourse: approbation maxim 4(13%), modesty maxim 5(17%), agreement maxim 4(13%) and sympathy maxim 3(10%).

The following are recommended by the researchers:

1. The researchers recommend that lecturers in classroom discourse should generate polite utterances and utilize some politeness strategies to make these undergraduate students feel more comfortable and appreciated inside the classroom.

2. For future researchers who are willing to conduct similar research, they need to include a larger member of respondents and variety of data so that generalization can be made more reliable.
3. Further studies are expected to consider the non-verbal expressions of lecturers in the classroom, such as tone, mimics, and gestures to see how those expressions complementing the utterances are generated by lecturers.
4. The future studies are also recommended to involve more research subjects, in this case lecturers with various backgrounds for comparison to figure out how far the different backgrounds of the interlocutors can affect their language.

Conclusion

Face threatening act has been the main core to both politeness and impoliteness strategies. Realizing that all speech acts have the tendency of threatening the speakers' and hearers' face, this is what instigated this research study on the face threatening acts in lecturer-students language communication. This study found 6 types of politeness principle uttered by the lecturers in the classroom discourse, which are: tact maxim, which mostly deals with the directive utterances, generosity maxim, which mostly shows an offer, approbation maxim, which deals with the usage of the positive adjective, modesty maxim, which demands for modesty, agreement maxim, which deals with the agreement utterances in the maxim, and sympathy maxim, which is delivered in declarative form.

In conclusion, speech act studies have been flourishing in the field of pragmatics. However, research on politeness and face threatening acts in classroom discourse remains insufficient. Furthermore, studies on FTAs have included discourse analysis or have analyzed the effects of social status on strategies used within the face and politeness framework. Thus, additional studies investigating FTAs in undergraduate teaching environments and students' responses to such acts are required. Finally, the threatening behaviour of undergraduate lecturers in relation to "face", "face-work", or "politeness" could be instruments that might supply richer insights into social values and perceptions of lecturers from different social contexts and reflect different sociological and psychological factors.

Works Cited

- Arundale, Robert. *An Alternative Model and Ideology of Communication for an Alternative to Politeness Theory*. *Journal of Pragmatics*. 1999.
- Arundale, Robert. *Face as Relational and Interactional: a Communication Framework for Research on Face, Facework, and Politeness*. *Journal of Politeness Research*. 2006.
- Brown, Penelope, & Levinson, Stephen. *Politeness: Some Language Universals in Language Use*. 1987.
- Brown, Penelope, & Levinson, Stephen. *Universals in Language Usage: Politeness Phenomena*. In E. Goody (Ed.), *Questions and politeness: Strategies in Social Interaction*. 1978.

- Chukwuma, Helen, and Otagburuagu, Emeka. *English for Academic Purposes*. 2002.
- Cole Searle. *The Construction of Social Reality*. 1995.
- Culpeper, Jonathan. *Impoliteness and the Weakest Link*. *Journal of Politeness Research*. 2005.
- Cupach, William, & Imahori, Todd. *Identity Management theory: Communication Competence in Intercultural Episodes and Relationships*. 1993.
- David, Lyons. *Face work Solidarity, Approbation, and Tact*. *Human Communication Research*. 1991.
- Doug Cutting. *Pragmatics and Discourse*. 2nd Edition. 2008.
- Gerard, Chaudron. *Second Language Classroom: Research on Teaching and Learning*. 1988.
- Goffman, Erving. *On Facework; An Analysis of Ritual Elements in Social Interaction*. 1967.
- Holtgraves, Thomas. *Social Psychology, Cognitive Psychology and Linguistic Politeness*. *Journal of Politeness*. 2005.
- Holtgraves, Thomas. *Face and Face work in Interpersonal Communication*. 2008.
- Hornby, A.S. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*. 1995.
- Hussein Slahand Jasim Betti. *Politeness Theory and Relational Work*. *Journal of Politeness*. 2005.
- James, Owen. *Politeness and power: Making and Responding to Requests in Institutional Settings*. *Text Interdisciplinary Journal for the study of Discourse*. Vol. 2003.
- Jaszczolt, Kasia. *Semantics and Pragmatic: Meaning in Language and Discourse*. 2002.
- Leech, Geoffrey. *Principles of Pragmatics*. 1983.
- Mgbodile, Thomas. *Fundamentals for Language Education*. 1990.
- Tannen, Deborah. *Gender and Discourse*. 1986.
- Tracy, Karen. *Reasonable Hostility: Situation- Appropriate Face-Attack*. *Journal of Politeness*. 2008.
- Tsuda, Sen. *Indirectness in Discourse: What Does It Do in Conversation?* *Intercultural Communication Studies*. 1993.
- Turner, Ken. *The Principal Principles of Pragmatic Inference: Politeness*. *Language Teaching*. 1996.