

## **Impoliteness in buyer-seller interaction: A focus on the Egbudu market bargaining in Warri, Delta State**

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### ***Abstract***

*This study examined impoliteness in linguistics discourse. The study aim was to show the impoliteness strategies employed in the market. Data were drawn from the conversations of buyers and sellers in Egbudu market, Warri, Delta State. Premised under Stephen Brown and Levison's politeness theory, the study uses Jonathan Culpeper's Impoliteness strategy as a theoretical consideration. Data for the study were collected using tape recorder. Ten (10) excerpts were randomly selected from the population size, to indicate instances of impoliteness in Egbudu market. The study adopts an eclectic model approach, to capture both the social and interactional aspects of sellers and buyers in the market. Findings from the study reveal that sellers and buyers employs positive impoliteness strategy, negative impoliteness strategy, bald on record impoliteness strategy to impair mutual understanding which has an overall negative impact on trade. In order to reduce impoliteness in the market, the study recommends amongst others, in- training teachings for traders.*

**Keywords:** Impoliteness, interaction, social, strategy, negative

### **Introduction**

Market conversation is associated with the transactional and interactional function of language. It is a two-way interaction that elicits responses from speakers. In a sociolinguistic setting, social

actors negotiate and co-construct meanings, which are interpreted in their behaviors and utterances. Thus, an analysis of language in context allows for an evaluation of outcomes in such social setting, as the market. In the market, buyers and sellers converge to buy and sell. Ayoola (2009), observed that: “the buyer, who is the bargain hunter, is always in diametrical opposition to the vendor, who is out to make profit” The former comes prepared to bargain, bearing in mind that the latter, who expects a bargain, will fix a huge price on goods. The bargaining enables vendors and their prospective buyers reach a ‘convenient compromise’, as to what rate to sell goods or buy goods. In this process, various languages as well as different language behaviors come to play. Impoliteness is one of such language behavior; which often leads to undesirable outcomes. Hence, it becomes imperative to examine impoliteness in Egbudu market, Warri, Delta State, one of the big markets in South-South Geo-Political Zones of Nigerian.

Culpeper (1996) perceives impoliteness as: “the use of strategies to attack interlocutors face and create social disruption”. According to Culpepper, in Bousfield and Locher (2008) “impoliteness intends to cause the target’s ‘face loss’. It disguises itself behind utterances such as; verbal abuse, threats and bullying”. Scientific researches have shown that impoliteness is harmful and damaging than physical violence. No wonder a typical Deltan would refute impoliteness by constraining (verbally or otherwise) others who are likely to be impolite towards them.

Impoliteness abounds in the market and in different linguistic situations, despite its undesirable outcomes. In Egbudu market, where majority of the buyers and sellers use Naija language, impoliteness is highly noticed, that one would, if not

careful, falsely purport that impoliteness, is as a result of the language (Nigeria Pidgin/Naija) commonly used in the Warri area of Delta State. It is pertinent to state that, Warri is a multilingual, multiethnic, heterogeneous city, comprising Izon, Itshekiri, Urhobo, Isoko. Hence, Naija is the unifying language. It is mostly 'preferred or easy' language, commonly used in market transactions. It is mutually intelligible to both old and young; educated and non-educated; the rich and the poor.

Impoliteness which follows after Brown and Levison's Politeness work, is an area of pragmatic discourse that has not gained its needed scholarly attention. However, in an attempt to explore impoliteness, certain efforts have been made both in books and in journals. In journals such work as: Adelina, Koh, *The Customer is not always King* (2014); Keeskes, Istvan, *Intercultural impoliteness* (2015); Halim, Abdul's *Impoliteness Strategy used in a Politician Facebook* (2015); Qin, Dongxue's *Politeness and Impoliteness in Different Culture* (2016), and in books such works as: Bousefield, Derek's *Impoliteness in Interaction* (2008); Culpeper, Jonathan, *Towards an Anatomy of Impoliteness and Using Language to Cause Offence* (1996: 2011). Melina Laitinem (2011) *Verbal and non verbal impoliteness in the America Hospital , Drama House*

It is noted that there have been certain works on impoliteness. However, to the researcher's best of knowledge, none have examined linguistic impoliteness in Egbudu market, even when the vendors and their clients oftentimes employ impoliteness strategy, which sometimes results to negative outcomes. Hence, this study beams it light on, linguistic impoliteness in Egbudu market. The choice of Egbudu market is as a result of the fact that, it is one of the largest markets in Delta state. It comprises a good number of the populace from different

socio-ethnic - multilingual backgrounds and whatever happens in this study population indicates, to a large extent, everyday market occurrence in the Warri area, of Delta State.

### **Statement of problem**

Language behaviors that do not encourage buying and selling are noticed in Egbudu market, yet, there is paucity of literature on such impolite behaviors. How impoliteness is triggered, how they progress, its resultant effect on sales of goods and the strategies employed by interactants in displaying these behaviors are the problems of this study.

### **Objective of the study**

To find out the types of impoliteness strategies used in Egbudu market

### **Research question**

As a direction for the study, the researcher postulates the following questions:

- i. What type of impoliteness strategy is employed by buyers and sellers in Egbudu?
- ii. At what point do buyers and sellers result to impoliteness

### **Literature review**

Impoliteness study has received some attention from both First order (Li, 2016) and Second- order (Tracy, 2008) researchers. Bousfield and Culpeper (2008) have observed that, like in face and politeness literature, a considerable disagreement exists in term of the primary focus of impoliteness research, despite the areas harmonized by the first and second order approaches. This was a problem in defining impoliteness. However, Culpeper in

(2011) uses ‘intention’ as a yardstick in his definition of impoliteness, perceiving impoliteness as: “involving communicative behavior intending to bring ‘face loss’ to an addressee”. Terkourafi’s (2008) idea of intention, especially as recognized by the addressee is related more to rudeness than impoliteness. The latter believes ‘rudeness’ threatens the addressee’s face and subsequent the recognition of the speaker’s face-threatening intention by the addressee, while the former believes that impoliteness threatens the addressee’s face but no face-threatening intention is attributable to the speaker. However, much current studies on politeness and impoliteness seems to recognize the importance of practice-based norms. Culpeper (1996) builds a framework for impoliteness in relation to politeness strategies suggested by Brown and Levison (1987). He proposed a model of five impoliteness strategies. They are as follows: bald on record impoliteness, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, off-record impoliteness and withhold impoliteness.

According to Terkourafi (2008) “impoliteness occurs, when the expression used is not conventionalized relative to the context of occurrence. Terkourafi’s idea suggests that some completely polite behaviors in one context, can be assumed as impolite in another context. This collaborates with, Jamet & Jobert (2013), where they observed that in German context, directness is politeness. Similarly, Chick & Gough (cited in Ige;2001) have found in their studies that avoiding eye contact in Zulu context is a sign of politeness, whereas, the same is assumed to be an impolite behavior in British-South African Culture. These claims lend credence to Culpeper’s assertion that: “impolite language manifest through words, actions and the recipient interprets it better”.

Nwabunwene David (2017) carried out a study he titled *Impoliteness strategy in the Nollywood Movie: Nagging Wives of Jacob*. He focused on the conversations between the three wives of Jacob and other characters in the movie to account for how impoliteness gives rise to conflict in the family. He examined how impoliteness is deployed by characters in a polygamous setting. The data for the study are drawn from actual conversation between characters in the movie. The study which is focused on the coercive function of impoliteness is theorized on two concepts: Impoliteness and Conflict. The study identified five types of impoliteness as proposed by Culpeper. The study reveals among others that conflict in the movie is predicted on verbal abuse which is impoliteness.

Putri Arumningtyas (2017) examined impolite utterances in student-teacher's interaction in English teaching/learning process. The data were from 2016/2017, grade 7 students of SMP AL ISslam Kartasura. The objective was to describe the impoliteness addressed to teachers, to explain the context situation of impolite utterances. Through observation, the researcher gathered data from dialogue between teachers and the students and analyzed the data using the referential method. The study found bald on record impoliteness, sarcasm, positive impoliteness, withhold impoliteness and negative impoliteness strategies are used by interactants.

Oboko Uche (2016) examined politeness, impoliteness, face threatening and face management strategy and how they occur in student interaction among undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka and Madonna University, Okija Campus. She found that students employ (im)politeness in their everyday language in the University. To avoid face threatening act in everyday use of language, the study suggests impoliteness should

be introduced into university curriculum to enable students learn about others' face want and avoid face threatening acts. On the other hand, in another study on impoliteness, Lucky Joan (2015) studied impoliteness in British TV-series, Sherlock, with the aims to describe the types and functions of impoliteness used in Sherlock as well as characters responses to impoliteness. She analyzed three episodes of the first section of the TV-series and the transcript. Finding from the study reveals that negative impoliteness strategy is majorly used, alongside coercive function in order to gain more benefits. The former negates impoliteness while the later impoliteness seemed gainful.

Kecskes Istvan (2015) studied Intercultural impoliteness, that is, impoliteness that functions across different cultural background. According to him, "Individual evaluation of impoliteness in intercultural interactions depend on a number of factors which are: priority of literal meaning in language processing, familiarity with the impoliteness formulae in the target language and impoliteness norms in L1 of the interlocutor". Findings from the study reveals the impact of L1 (mother tongue) in the interpretation of impoliteness. Kecskes study is replicated by Qin who studies politeness and impoliteness in different cultures. According to Qin different countries of world have different ways of expressing (im)politeness. Speech that is polite in one culture may be considered rude in another culture (Qin 2)

Melina Latinen (2011) examined impoliteness in a famous American series, House M. D. The data for the study were impoliteness utterances used by the main character, Dr. House. Using the impoliteness strategies proposed by Culpeper (1996), anatomy of impoliteness and a chart of response to impoliteness by Derek Bousfield (2007) to analyze the reaction of Dr. House's patients after his impolite attitude towards them. The result found

all Culpeper's impoliteness strategies present. Also, the it was observed from the study analysis that some of the patients did not understand the face- attack, so did not reply to the impoliteness and some reactions to impoliteness was not shown. She analyzes the strategies employed by the main character.

Culpeper (2005) examines the relationship between impoliteness and entertainment in *The Weakest Link*, where he submits that impoliteness can be entertaining. Premising his study on Pleasure Theory, he argues that there is a self-reflexive pleasure in observing someone in a worse state than oneself. The fact that the audience is free from the ordeals of the victim puts the audience in a more psychological state. This brings some sort of pleasure, satisfaction or entertainment. Culpeper's study is quite similar to that of Toddington, who studied the relationship between impoliteness and humour with an aim not to explain why offence can be entertaining but to explain the ways in which we are influenced, as viewers, so that we interpret offence as funny. He achieved the study aim by combining humour theory and impoliteness theory.

From the literature reviewed, it appears impoliteness in Egbudu market have not gained scholarly interest. This is thus the departure of the present study from other studies in impoliteness and the dimension of freshness that this study promises to add to existing literature, in the discourse on impoliteness.

### **Conceptual framework**

Impoliteness is the major term in this study, as such; the study will focus on theorizing the concept of impoliteness. In the study of impoliteness 'face' is an all important issue. Face is a linguistic concept originally introduced by Erving Goffman in the 1960s. According to Goffman (1967) "face is self-image reflected in

terms of approved social attributes; It is a persona, which we present in a conversation; It is that positive social value a person effectively claims for himself". Sometimes, in conversations, people's faces are threatened. For Jonathan Culpeper (2011) Impoliteness maximizes face threats: He perceives impoliteness as a phenomenon which comes about when: "the speaker communicates face-attack intentionally or the hearer perceives and/or constructs behavior as intentional face- attacking or a combination of both". Culpeper (1996) proposes five strategies that speakers use to make impolite utterances, they are as follows:

**1. Bald on record impoliteness:** According to Culpeper (1996), this impoliteness strategy is direct, obvious, unpretentious and daring. It is used by speakers to attack addressee's face in a straight forward, obvious, unambiguous and brief way in situation where the face is stake". Bousfield (2008) purports that bald on record impoliteness is employed when there is much face at risk and when a speaker intends to damage the hearer's face and thus the impolite utterance will be performed directly and clearly.

**2. Positive impoliteness:** Culpeper (1996) describes this strategy as that: "used to damage the hearer's positive face want (his desire to be accepted). Positive impoliteness undermines addressee's desire to be loved, approve of, respected and appreciated by others". Culpeper adds that the realization of positive impoliteness are in form of:

- ignoring or snubbing the other
- denying common ground with the hearer
- selecting a sensitive or undesirable topic to talk about
- using inappropriate identity markers
- being disinterested and unsympathetic with the hearer

- looking for disagreements
- using obscure language and inserting secretive words within the discourse
- using taboo words (72).

**3. Negative impoliteness:** This is “the use of strategy to attack the addressee’s negative wants” (Towards 357). According to Thielemann and Kosta (2013) negative impoliteness is designed to attack the hearer’s negative face want (his desire to be free from imposition) Negative impoliteness involves the following sub strategies:

- scorn
- frighten
- ridicule
- invade the hearer's space literally or metaphorically
- condescend
- and belittling the other (Towards 357)

**4. Sarcasm or mock impoliteness:** Culpeper (1996:356) states that sarcasm is a face threatening performed using politeness strategies which are clearly insincere. Thielemann and Kosta, (2013), describes sarcasm as: “the use of one or more sub-strategies which are superficially suitable and accepted but deeply they have the opposite meaning”.

**5. Withhold politeness:** According to Culpeper (1996), this strategy occurs when the speaker does not perform politeness, where it is expected. The realization of withhold politeness is keeping silent and failing to thank. Culpeper also proposes three functions of impoliteness as follows:

**i. Affective Function:** According to Culpeper (1996), affective impoliteness is used by speakers to “display a negative emotional state such as anger in the context where the target is responsible for the negative feeling. In other words, it displays the producer’s negative psychological state because of the guilt that has been done by the target”.

**ii. Entertaining function:** For Culpeper, this is used “by the speaker who makes the target an object of entertainment. The purpose is to amuse other people by utilizing impolite strategy towards the target. It occurs between two or more interactants”.

**iii. Coercive function:** Culpeper says that: “coercive impoliteness is used by the speaker who intend to show power and social status which is higher than the hearer. The purpose of coercive impoliteness is to display the imbalanced power between not only individuals, but also to institutions or groups. It reflects a great distance of social power, although it may be used among friends so as to obtain power via language”.

Although, Culpeper’s model is one of the most comprehensive efforts in theorizing impoliteness, Ige, cited in David Nwabuwene (2017), says “it has been criticized by Eelen, Haris, and Mullany as insufficient in terms of universal application”. Mullany argues that: “all the inadequacies found in Brown and Levison’s model of politeness such as, Eurocentric norms, over-generalization and the limitation of the use of the term ‘face’, are also applicable to Culpeper theory of impoliteness”. However, Koh Adelina, cited in Nwabuwene (2017) argues that “Culpeper’s model is plausible because it aligns with classical and discursive approaches to impoliteness”. The classical approach emphasizes some shared conventions of meaning, whereas in the discursive approach, the level of analysis is at the interpretations that the interactants themselves make.

According to Nwabuwene (2017), Culpepper's theory brings these extreme views in alignment. Culpepper's theory has been adopted for this work because it is detailed in terms of itemizing impoliteness formulae in English language.

### **Methodology**

The data for this study are spoken interactions between the vendors and their prospective customers in a natural speech situation in Egbudu markets, Warri, Delta – State, Nigeria, between December 16th and December 23, 2019. The data were collected informally using a tape recorder and some by researcher's observations. The recordings were done surreptitiously, in order to allow for naturalness and not to deter buyers from patronizing the selected sellers. Data containing both polite and impolite forms were collected and through a purposive sampling method, ten conversations with impolite utterances were identified and were separated for further study.

This descriptive research uses qualitative method. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1982) "qualitative data analysis is a process of collaborating data, arranging it, dividing it into feasible components, integrating it, looking for the design, finding what is important and what to be learned, and finally making decision what the researcher will tell other".

### **Data presentation and analysis**

The data is characterized by a specific turn-taking strategy. Whereby buyers and sellers naturally select turns. Participants listen to current speakers to understand and interpret their utterances before response. This natural turn taking design helps prevents frequent interruptions and overlaps. The settings in which the interactions resorted to impoliteness were highlighted

before the interaction. Nigeria Pidgin expressions used by interactants were translated beside/beneath the expressions. Data was analyzed using Culpeper's impoliteness strategies.

A woman goes to buy bags of rice in the market and then the following conversation ensues:

Buyer: good morning ma.

Seller: good morning.

Buyer: I wan buy three bags of royal umbrella rice, e dey? (Pidgin).

I want to buy three bags of Royal Umbrella rice. (English).

Seller: I get, na ₦27000 for one. (Pidgin).

I have. It is ₦27000 each bag. (English).

Buyer: nor be ₦18000? na even foreign sef? (Pidgin).

Buyer: Is it not ₦18000? Is it foreign rice? (English).

Seller: Mtchew, yes, .

Buyer: We no de quarrel oh. (Pidgin).

Buyer: We are not in dispute. (English).

Seller: I no go sell, gi mi chance. (angrily steps away from the buyer) Pidgin.

Seller: I will not sell, excuse me! (English)

Buyer: Imagine! so you can walk out on your customer like that:?  
(hisses and walks away)

In the above interaction, the seller in the process of bargain, tends to down rate the product, using negative impoliteness, inform of interrogative remark, (na foreign one sef?). Quickly, the seller who understands impoliteness strategy employs positive impoliteness 'mtchew' as a response to the buyer. The impolite exchange led to a debate. The buyer resorts to an explanation of the intention of her prior utterance, rather than bargain continue

with the bargain. This infuriates the seller, as the explanation matters less to her. She negates the buyer with a face threatening act, ‘... will not sell, excuse me!’, using mock politeness; an impoliteness strategy which according to Culpeper (1996:35) is simply and clearly insincere politeness.

A woman called a little boy hawking potatoes; he puts down the potato thinking the women wanted to buy some. The following conversation ensued:

Seller: Good afternoon mummy. Which wan you want buy? (Pidgin).

Seller: ...which of them do you want buy. (English).

Buyer: Please where can I buy plantain to buy?

Seller: Na plantain you wan buy, na im you kom let me kari down my load? (Pidgin) .

Seller: Is it plantain you needed and you made me bring down my pototo? (English).

Buyer: (Repeated same question and added) No vex my pikin. (Pidgin).

Seller: Stirs disdainfully at the woman, not uttering a word bent down, carried his potato and walked away.

In this scenario, the seller puts down his tray of potatoes, only for the buyer to ask of plantain. At the surface level, it could be said that the buyer made an enquiry, considering also the polite utterance ‘please’, with which the question was introduced. However, the circumstance which led to the question makes the question inappropriate, and thus, impolite. The buyer, before negotiating intention, should have at least shown some consideration for the seller and his goods. The strategy employed by the buyer tends to damage the seller's positive face want (Positive impoliteness). It appears the seller felt neglected hence,

his attributed intention to blame ‘na plantain you wan buy, na im u kom let me kari down my load?’. The buyer ignores (negative impoliteness strategy) the seller’s intention to blame her and exercises her authority, as an elderly woman, by repetition of a prior question. ‘Please where can I buy plantain?’. Her rejection to the weakening of stance/ acceptance of blame leads to a silence (impolite), and further exit of the seller.

The following conversation ensues between a drinks dealer, in his shop and a prospective buyer:

Buyer: Good afternoon.

Seller: Afternoon, what do you want?.

Buyer: How much one crate of coke, one carton of Heineken and one carton of Eva.

Seller: Coke is ₦2500, Heineken ₦4500, eva ₦13000.

Buyer: You be thief oh! (Pidgin) Since when did Eva turn ₦13,000?. I will pay ₦18,000

Buyer: You are a thief!... (English).

Seller: Tins de put money my brother, make I just comot ₦200, give me ₦19,800. (Pidgin)

Seller: There is inflation dear, I will consider a discount of ₦200, Pay ₦19,800. (English)

Buyer: Your market too cost. I go pay ₦18,800 (Pidgin).

Buyer: Your goods are so expense. I will pay .... (English).

Seller: Ok, no problem, you can check another place.

Buyer: I de comot oh (Pidgin). Am leaving! (English).

Seller: Silence.

In the above exchange, the prospective buyer, in his third turn introduces bald on record impoliteness strategy: (‘you are a thief!’) A strategy which according to Culpeper (1996), is direct, obvious, unpretentious and daring. It is used by speakers to attack

addressee's face in a straight forward, unambiguous and brief way, in situation where the face is stake" The seller who appears to have a good understanding of the processes of buying and selling, did not attend to the seller's face threat. He rather offers a discount, the buyer continues with his complains and hanging. The seller loses interest in trying to persuade the buyer and in his final turn employs silence: a sub- strategy of positive impoliteness, which Culpeper (1996) refers to as ignoring or snubbing the other. The seller's final action (silence) indicates the seller's weariness for the buyer's tireless negotiation and verbosity.

A teenage girl went to purchase foodstuffs. The following conversation ensued:

Buyer: Good evening ma, how much for these tomatoes?

(Pointing at a tray)

Seller: ₦250.

Buyer: Madam na ₦50

Buyer: Madam is ₦50

Seller: Ojii' comot here.(Isoko + NP)

Seller: Thief! leave here. (English)

Buyer: Your children na thief (hissed).

Buyer: Your children are thieves.

Seller: I hear, bye bye. EKPANA! (NP + Urhobo)

Seller: Have heard, bye. FOOL! (English)

Buyer: walks away, muttering word.

In the dialogue above, the seller appears to be in a hurry to let go his prospective customer. In the process of haggling, the seller introduces FTA, through the use of name tag, 'ojii', which means thief. The buyer perceives the impoliteness and refutes immediately. The seller who acknowledges the buyer's negative

response continues in her FTAs till the buyer walked away. The word ‘ojii’ and ‘ekpana’ are indigenous Isoko words meaning ‘thief’ and ‘fool’ respectively. It is observed that some buyers by their unreasonable bargain makes a seller use impolite expressions. Notwithstanding, for a seller to call a prospective buyer a thief is inappropriate for the context, as the buyer did not steal any of her goods. Also, in this conversation is the use of code-mixing (Urhobo and NP).

A buyer meets a seller of fairly used clothes. The following conversation ensues:

Buyer: How much is that top? (points at a pink top).

Seller: dat na ₦1700. (NP). Seller: That one is ₦1700 (English).

Buyer: for wetin? ₦1700 for just one ordinary Okirika! (NP)

Buyer: Why? ₦1700 for one fairly used shirt! (English).

Seller: (shouts) ₦1500 last!

In the above interaction, the buyer thinks that the shirt has a reduced value, and without consideration for the seller’s ‘face, employs mock-impoliteness to undervalue the seller’s product; referring to the shirt as inferior (‘just ordinary okrika’). The seller in an abrupt, angered final remark brought the conversation to a close. The shout is again an impoliteness strategy. The seller employs the impoliteness strategy to display a negative emotional state towards the buyer. According to Culpeper (1996), one of the three functions of impoliteness is affective impoliteness: It is used by speakers to “display a negative emotional state such as anger in the context where the target is responsible for the negative feeling”.

A man went to the market to get some fruits, pineapple in particular. The following conversation follows:

Buyer: Good afternoon madam, how much (picks one pineapple from the tray) is this pineapple?

Seller: Only ₦400 sir.

Buyer: I will give you ₦150.

Seller: Ehh! you think say I thief am? Stupid man! (kept arranging her store like no one was there, thus neglecting the buyer). NP. Seller: you thought I stole the good? (English)

Buyer: starred a couple of minutes at the seller and walked away.

In the interaction, the seller uses bald on record impoliteness in her second turn. Bousfield (2008) purports that “bald on record impoliteness is employed when there is much face at risk and when a speaker intends to damage the hearer's face and thus the impolite utterance will be performed directly and clearly”. For Culpeper (2009), the seller’s response to the prospective buyer is “direct, obvious, unpretentious and daring”. Bargaining is a feature of the market. The seller who instead of response to bargain resorts to name tag ‘stupid man’ The above scenerio lends credence to Terkourafi’s (2008) view that “Impoliteness occurs when the expression used is not conventionalized relative to the context of occurrence. It threatens the addressee’s face but no face threatening intention is attributed to the speaker by the hearer. The seller having denied common ground with the buyer further ignores (positive impoliteness strategy) him and continues arranging her fruits. The buyer, after a stare of surprise, walked away.

A young girl goes to the market to buy beef, for her cooking. She approaches a meat seller and the following conversation ensues:

Buyer: megwo. (Isoko language).

Good morning ma. (English language).

Seller: vredo (Responds accordingly).

Buyer: (picks up a piece of meat from the table) how much?

Seller: ma pikin na ₦1500. (Pidgin).

My child, it's ₦1500. (English).

Buyer: (Brings out ₦600 from her handbag). Take.

Seller: sho ! abeg de go, no provoke me, you no de hear?

(flings her handkerchief around the meat on the table).

Seller: (exclaims) Please go away, don't provoke me. Are you deaf? (the young girl coldly walks away, after being embarrassed by the seller)

The buyer opens the conversation with an indigenous Isoko language; 'megwo' which is a greeting to an elderly person and the seller in turn responds 'vredo', in same language. It is observed that in a market place code-mixing sometimes occurs. This is as a result of different people of various tribes who converge to sell and buy. The seller in her final turn employs bald on record impoliteness, even when the conversation began on a friendly and polite note. Having denied common ground with the prospective buyer, she uses a FTA that is obvious and direct 'Are you deaf?'. This obscure expression was intended and used for further impoliteness. Here, the seller fails to understand that bargaining may or may not end on a common ground. Sometimes, the transaction may end up with the seller selling goods while other times it may end up abruptly and the buyer leaves the store.

A boy goes to buy beans from the market. The following conversation ensued between him and the seller:

Buyer: good morning .

Seller: morning.

Buyer: Oga how much for beans?

Seller: Which one?

Buyer: (points to a custard bucket) That painter.

Seller: ₦1000.

Buyer: ₦1000 e too much (NP). ₦1000 is much (English)

Seller: kai, mtchew , ...

Buyer: why you de hiss na. (NP). Why did you hiss? (English)

Seller: You sef know say na 1100 be painter of beans for dis market. Kai, nonsense.

Buyer: See as you de curse me because I wan buy beans. Put for me make I de go.

In the above conversation, the seller reduces the price for a bucket of beans below the usual rate but the buyer goes ahead to bargain. The seller uses impolite utterance to disapprove the negotiation. The buyer understands impoliteness formulae and quickly, enquired the reason for the impolite utterance. The seller in an attempt to explicate why he hissed, yet, resorts to another impolite utterance. The buyer perceives the impoliteness in the seller's use of language. Hence, the complain in his final turn. The buyer, within the context of their discussion interprets the word 'nonsense' as a swear word.

In a grocery, the following conversation ensued between a teenage girl and her prospective male customer:

Buyer: (Picks one big size corn beef, one sack and motor nylon, and shows the seller) how much?

Seller: ₦2000 only.

Buyer: Nonsense! ₦2000?

Seller: Oga na your wife no well! Your full family no well.

Seller: It is your wife and family who are not alright.

Buyer: I don't blame you that's how you insult your husband at home.

Seller: (clapping hands) shameless he goat, woman wrapper. Wetin you come find for market?

Seller: (clapping hands) shameless he goat! Worthless man! What are you looking for in the market?

Buyer: (agitating) I will slap this woman now!

Seller: (grabs buyer's shirt and seized him) slap me, IDIOT! Make you slap na, see my face.

(other people intervened in the heated quarrel, the seller released the prospective buyer and he went his way)

In the exchange above, the seller in her second turn uses bald on record impoliteness strategy, as a response to a perceived impoliteness. The buyer refutes by responding in same manner. '...that's how you insult your husband at home'. The seller performs the FTA using Positive Impoliteness: Culpeper (1996) describes this strategy as that: "used to damage the hearer's positive face want (his desire to be accepted). Positive impoliteness undermines addressee's desire to be loved, approve of, respected and appreciated by others". The seller uses using inappropriate identity markers, such as, 'shameless he goat', 'woman wrapper' worthless man' to address her prospective customer. This turn- taking conversation escalated to a heated quarrel; a near fight situation, which resulted to social conflict and later resolved through the intervention, of other people in the market.

A prospective buyer walks into a mini boutique and the following conversation ensued:

Buyer: Correct man! Give me a nice white long sleeve shirt, size 40 please. I have a function tonight.

- Seller: na short sleeve de now. Check tomorrow abeg..(NP)
- Seller: Short sleeve are available now. Check tomorrow please.  
(English)
- Buyer: Guy your kolo strong, I get show today, you de say tomorrow (NP)
- Buyer: Your madness has increased. I have a function today and you are talking about tomorrow (English)
- Seller: Oya take that one wen I hang outside.
- Seller: Ok, take that one I hung outside.
- Buyer: You no well. That na shirt?
- Buyer: You are not okay. Is that a shirt?
- Seller: gi me chance, make I attend my customer.NP (ignores him and began to attend to another buyer).
- Seller: Excuse me; let me attend to my customer. (English)

In the above conversation, the buyer's use of the expression 'strong madness', appears impolite. However, it is not intended for impoliteness but a joke. Hence, the seller does not respond to it as impolite rather, he renders an alternative for the buyers need. The buyer feels that the alternative does not suit his need. He refuses common ground in a yet insulting manner. The seller perceives the seller's final turn as impolite and immediately belittle's the buyer (negative impoliteness strategy) by leaving him to attend to another customer.

### **Conclusion and suggestion**

In conclusion, it is evident from this study that, impoliteness as a negative behavior, hinders communication goals and yields unpleasant results. Culpeper outlined five strategies of impoliteness: bald-on-record; withhold politeness; positive

impoliteness; negative impoliteness; and mock impoliteness strategy. All of these strategies were identified and discussed in this study, bringing to fore negative attitudes that delays sales of goods and wastes buyer's time, in the market. Discussions from this study can impact on language use as some of the findings could be harnessed in planning and organizing appropriate in-training teachings for traders; towards achieving better services and results.

To reduce the occurrence of impoliteness between buyers and sellers in Egbudu market, the study suggests among other measure, in- training teachings for traders, less use of high tones during bargaining, time conscious and lastly, positive politeness.

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