

Politeness Phenomena in Barclay Ayakorom's *Adance On His Grave: A Socio-Pragmatic Study*

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Abstract: In every human society, judgments about whether an utterance counts as impolite may be informed by stereotypical beliefs about gender-appropriate behaviour. Regrettably, in the African context, these gender stereotypes have not only dictated women's roles in the society, but have profoundly impacted language use in marital context, which is the focus of this study. This paper explored politeness phenomena in Barclay Ayakorom's *Dance on His Grave*. This was prompted by the need to investigate how language was used by the women folk in the play, to defy social stereotypes and enforce the recognition of their relevance. The study foregrounded the communicative functions of impoliteness in marital discourse. Specifically, it revealed both the linguistic and non-linguistic indices of impoliteness in marital context, with a view to identifying their pragmatic imports in the context of use. The findings showed that the patriarchal nature of the African context had profoundly impacted language use in marital discourse, which itself, is a source of conflict. Furthermore, contrary to the stereotypical conclusions of most gender studies in linguistics that women were co-operative conversationalists, the study observed that women could be linguistically uncooperative and impolite; especially in conflictual situations. Consequently, this paper concluded that women are major stakeholders in domestic and communal matters and as such, should not be dehumanized. The recognition of the female gender is not all about equality, but about relevance, value, rights to make impact and have optimal expression of their potentialities. This submission notwithstanding, there is need for mutual respect and understanding between the two genders in order to engender peaceful coexistence in the society.

Keywords: Impoliteness, marital discourse, conflict, context, communication

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I. INTRODUCTION

Language as a means of communication is one of the efficient facilities of human behaviour (Idowu, 2016: 1). According to Osisanwo (2003: 1), it is human vocal noise or the arbitrary graphic representation of this noise, used systematically and conventionally by members of a speech community for purposes of communication. From these scholarly views, it is evident that language is function-oriented and thus conceived to primarily serve communicative purposes among humans. It can then be said that language is a functional tool to man and thus, human-specific. Its use is fundamental in every speech community and as such, permeates every aspect of human endeavour, of which marriage is not an exception. Connubial conflicts are corollaries of slews of issues ranging from spousal unfaithfulness, irresponsibility, financial incapacitation and third-party influence, among others. Considering the communicative purposes that language serve in various contexts, this study examines language as an oil-greasing tool in marital conflicts. Specifically, it investigates the enactment of impoliteness strategies in connubial conflicts and their pragmatic imports.

Impoliteness is not simply a question of the omission of formal or formulaic social politeness. It is any type of linguistic behaviour which is assessed as intending to threaten the hearer's face or social identity, or as transgressing the hypothesized Community of Practice's norms of appropriacy (Mills, 2005: 268). For example, Culpeper described impoliteness as "communicative strategies designed to attack face, and thereby cause social conflict and disharmony" (2003: 1564). Correspondingly, Bousfield views impoliteness as a strategy to attack face. In addition, the Culpeper's (1998; 2001) approach to impoliteness in dramatic texts, especially on the issue of how impoliteness helps us understand a fictional character suggests that the choice of an impoliteness strategy of a particular character helps to increase our understanding of the personality of this character. More specifically, it helps us to understand (1) how characters position themselves relative to other characters, and (2) how they manipulate others in pursuit of their goals (1998: 83).

Furthermore, many linguists such as Bloomfield (1933), Lakoff (1975), McConnell-Ginet (2003), Mills (2003, 2005), Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (2003), Nemati & Bayer (2007) and others have dabbled into the study of language and gender differences. In the process of the study, they concluded that: in different contexts, men and women have differences to a degree in phonology, vocabulary and grammar, syntax options and that because of the traditional social factors, men have higher social status, thus leading to their privileges in speech. Similarly, Aydinoglu (2013) asserts that men use more impoliteness in their speech than women. Moreover, Fairclough (1989) notes that, 'there is need to increase consciousness concerning how language affects people's behaviour towards each other.' In view of the foregoing, this research investigates the complexity of language in marital discourse through the lenses of impoliteness. In specifics, it examines how language contributes to the manifestation of impoliteness in connubial conflicts. Using Barclay Anyakoroma's *Dance on his Grave* as the data base, the paper looks at the variations of impoliteness strategies deployed by the selected characters (couple) during conflict and the pragmatic import of the types of impoliteness used in the unfolding interactions in the play with little consideration for the socio-cultural context in which impoliteness was enacted.

Statement of the Problem

Quite a number of studies using Stylistic approach have investigated the phenomena of politeness and impoliteness in literary discourse such as Short (1989), Brown and Gilman (1989), Abdessalem (2001), Culpeper (1996), Simpson (1989), Sharyan, (2002) and AlBassam (2004). However, the studies done are not enough to validate their findings. Further research needs to be carried out in order to generalize their findings, which this paper attempts to do.

There are also related studies on gender and the critical role of language in marital discourse like Mulac, Weimann, Widenmann & Gibson (1988), Ige (2007), Nemati & Bayer (2007) and Kinuthia et al. (2016) respectively. It is observed that studies in the interaction between impoliteness and gender is still lean, hence the need for this research endeavour. Undoubtedly some studies exist in pragmalinguistic analysis of impoliteness in drama discourse. Some of these studies include: (Abdel Qader Al-Badawi, 2011; Furman (2011); Aydinoglu (2013); Toddington (2015); Mohammed & Abbas (2015). These studies have delved into linguistic investigation of impoliteness in literary texts written by foreign novelists like Arabian, Irish and Egyptian; also some having foreign settings such as Russia, South Africa and Kenya. Nonetheless, there is yet to be similar analysis in Nigerian drama discourse. Hence, there is a need to carry out a pragmatic analysis of Nigerian drama discourse. This study intends to fill this gap in literature.

Considering literary discourse as its primary field of investigation, this study attempts the analysis of linguistic impoliteness in literary dialogues of characters (couple) in dramatic text, *Dance on his Grave*. Lastly, this type of investigation will enable linguists to discover how language is constructed to enact impoliteness in this genre. The main thrust of this study is to account for the realization of linguistic impoliteness in the selected literary text with specific focus on marital discourse. Thus, the specific objectives of the study are to:

1. identify the types of impoliteness strategies enacted in the selected excerpts;
2. examine the linguistic choices that index impoliteness in the context of use; and
3. investigate the pragmatic import of the variant impoliteness strategies employed by the selected characters.

Research Questions

1. What are the types of impoliteness strategies enacted in the selected interactions?
2. What are the linguistic choices that index impoliteness in the context of use?
3. What is the pragmatic import of the variant impoliteness strategies employed by the selected characters?

Theoretical Framework

There are times when people use linguistic strategies to attack face - to *strengthen* the face threat of an act. This kind of linguistic strategy is labelled 'impoliteness.' The adoption of Culpeper's (2011) theoretical framework of impoliteness is premised on its appropriateness for the realization and classification of communicative (impoliteness) strategies designed to attack faces of interlocutors, thereby causing social conflict and disharmony in literary discourse. Furthermore, as a pragmatic concept, it focuses on contextual information that can further enrich studies in linguistic impoliteness in the genre. Therefore, attention is paid to the pragmatic tools (insult, condescension, threat, unpalatable question, and more) that are observable in the selected conversations and their functions within the context of use.

Culpeper (2013) asserts that, 'from a descriptive point of view, Impoliteness plays a central role in many discourses (from military recruit training to exploitative TV shows), yet those discourses are rarely described in detail.' From a theoretical point of view, many theories, notably in pragmatics and interactional sociolinguistics, are biased towards, and developed from, socially cooperative interactions—thus, they cannot adequately explain anti-social interactions (ibid). Considering this scholarly observation, it can be deduced that more and critical studies on impoliteness are required, hence, the need for its investigation.

Generally, literary works, especially drama texts mirror societal issues. The choice of the data for the study was informed by the need to investigate the enactment of impoliteness in marital discourse and the pragmatic import of the interlocutors' linguistic choices in conflictual situation. Also, it is typically African in content and very relevant to the current study. Using the proposed theoretical framework, a pragmatic analysis of the selected interactions in the drama text is carried out.

The significance of this study stems from the fact that few studies have investigated communicative impoliteness in Nigerian literary texts. Therefore, this study will enrich the burgeoning field of studies in linguistic impoliteness using a literary background. In addition to this, the pragmatic oriented approach will reveal how impoliteness is realised in fascinatingly creative ways which underscores its complex and grave implications for interpersonal communication and society as a whole.

The findings of the study will further raise the consciousness of literary professionals on the general potential of conflict in entertainment and more importantly its relevance to advancing characterization and plot in literary works. In other words, it will enable them to be sensitive to the social dynamics of interaction. Lastly, it can also be used as a guide to resolving domestic and communal issues, especially linguistic-related ones.

Impoliteness

Many linguists argue that impoliteness is an independent phenomenon, and thus, should be tackled in its own terms independent of the politeness theory. Unlike those linguists, such as Bousfield (2008), Wiczorek (2013) and Bassis (2014), Leech asserts that, "the best way to start theorizing about impoliteness is to build on a theory of politeness, which is clearly a closely related phenomenon, in fact, the polar opposite of politeness" (Leech, 2014, p. 219). Consequently, Culpeper (1996) made a good use of Brown and Levinson's model of politeness to introduce his theory of impoliteness which he considered a "parasite of politeness". As a result, and in parallel with Brown and Levinson's strategies (bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, off-record, and don't do the FTA). Culpeper introduced two of the most well-known definitions of impoliteness. In his first definition (1996) which is more general, Culpeper described impoliteness "as the use of strategies designed to attack face, and thereby cause social conflict and disharmony" (cited in Bousfield and Locher, 2008, p. 131).

Later, Culpeper gave a more specific account to impoliteness in his second definition (2005) which states that, "impoliteness comes about when: (1) the speaker communicates a face-attack intentionally, or (2) the hearer perceives and/or constructs behaviour as intentionally face-attacking, or a combination of (1) and (2)" (cited in Ruhi and Aksan, 2015, p. 41). In his second definition, Culpeper links impoliteness to intentionality and says that impolite behaviour can be intentional, on the contrary, Yan Huang says, "If intentions and recognition of intentions are involved, then rudeness rather than impoliteness occurs" (Huang, 2012, p. 150). Unlike Huang, Bousfield highlights Culpeper's idea on the association of impoliteness with intentionality. In his book *Impoliteness in Interaction*, Bousfield mentions that "impoliteness constitutes the communication of intentionally gratuitous and conflictive verbal face-threatening acts which are purposefully delivered: (i) unmitigated, in contexts where mitigation is required, and/or, (ii) with deliberate aggression, that is, with the face threat exacerbated, 'boosted', or maximized in some way to heighten the face damage inflicted" (Bousfield, 2008, p. 72).

Sara Mills excluded the idea of inherent impolite behaviour in certain speech acts in her description of impoliteness when she stated (in Morley and Bayley, 2009, p. 213) that "it is essential not to see impoliteness as inherent in certain speech acts but rather as a series of judgements made by interactants on the appropriateness of others' actions." Locher's definition of impoliteness, however, emerged from her interest in power and politeness in disagreements, he says that, "Impoliteness clearly involves the relational aspect of communication in that social actors negotiate their position vis-à-vis each other. In this sense, impolite behaviour is *as much* a part of this negotiation as polite versions of behaviour" (cited in Davies, et al., 2011, p. 188). The variation of impoliteness definitions mentioned previously shows the profoundness of this pragmatic domain which has become a big challenge for linguists and scholars in the recent years.

Gender and Impoliteness

Lakoff, who made one of the early studies on gender differences in language, argues that women are more polite than men and "the marginality and powerlessness of women is reflected in both the ways women are expected to speak, and the ways in which women are spoken of" (1973b:45). Since then almost all the studies on gender differences have come to the same conclusion (Brown, 1980; O'Barr & Atkins, 1980; Tannen, 1990; Holmes, 1995; Cameron and Coates, 1998; Sarah Mills, 2003). Besides the role of the secondary status of women in society, different approaches of men and women to life and communication affect their use of impoliteness in language. Tannen explains that men regard the world as a battlefield of "a hierarchical social order in which he was either one-up or one-down" (1990:24) and to them "conversations are negotiations in which people try to achieve and maintain the upper hand." Women, on the other hand, regard themselves as

individuals “in a network of connections”. In their world, “conversations are negotiations for closeness in which people try to seek and give confirmation and support, and to reach consensus.” This may be why women abstain from impolite verbal acts.

The findings of the above studies on gender differences in language use notwithstanding, the present study examines the authenticity of these results in a conflictive situation. Hence, this study investigates the emergence of linguistic impoliteness strategies in marital discourse.

Context

According to Osisanwo (2003: 78), “since Pragmatics concerns itself with language in use, it must pay attention to the role context plays in language in use.” In view of this assertion, this study will look at the connection between context and impoliteness. Furthermore, highlighting the significance of context to textual analysis, Mc Arthur (1983: 30) argues that, “any expression of language is bound by time and space. It relates to a linguistic, a situational and socio-cultural context. ... items of language in total isolation have no function. They need a system and a setting to give them both function and meaning” (cited in Idowu 2016: 11). She corroborates this point as she posits that, “... the contextualization of data in any linguistic study is necessary for accurate textual interpretation... Consequently, the context of a text is the dynamic environment in which interlocutors interact and their linguistic expressions are adequately understood.”

Thus, the situation behind the manifestation of impoliteness in the ensuing interaction between the two interlocutors in terms of the relatedness of their socio-cultural background to their choice of linguistic and non-linguistic behaviour with situational expectations are examined in this paper.

Plays as Data

Brown and Gilman state that plays “provide the best information on colloquial speech ...” (1989:159). Culpeper claims that politeness is useful in the study of drama because “...frameworks of linguistic politeness can be used to shed light on literary critical issues.” (1998:83). There are outstanding studies in which plays are taken as data for impoliteness research. Among them we can cite *Politeness Theory and Shakespeare's Four Major Tragedies* by Brown and Gilman (1989), “The Rhetoric of Politeness and Henry XIII” by Lynne Magnusson (1992), the study of *Macbeth* in “Towards an anatomy of impoliteness” by Culpeper (1996), (Im) politeness in dramatic dialogue by Culpeper (1998), “Implication, Convention and *The Taming of the Shrew*” by Cooper (1998).

Review of Related Studies

Mohammed & Abbas (2015) opined that despite the offensive nature of *impoliteness and rudeness*, there is a main difference between the two pragmatic concepts. Hence, using Culpeper's (2005) model of impoliteness types: ‘*affective impoliteness, coercive impoliteness and entertaining impoliteness*’, and Segarra's (2007) classification of rudeness types including: *rudeness of word, rudeness of action and inaction rudeness*, in a selected extract from the play by George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion (1913)*, as a literary background, they exposed the main difference between impoliteness and rudeness taking into consideration not only the linguistic context of the impolite and rude utterances but also the encyclopaedic context. They concluded that rudeness is always intentional while impoliteness, on the other hand, is either intentional or accidental. In addition, that impoliteness sometimes emerges as a reaction to a rude behaviour, that is, the addressee uses impoliteness to respond to speaker's rudeness. The focus of the study is comparative analysis between impoliteness and rudeness which is different from the current study.

Using a film adapted from Amy Tan's novel (1991) titled, *The Joy Luck Club (1993)* as a data base, Rong (2009) demonstrated how politeness and impoliteness theories can be used to interpret conversations, hence our understanding of relationships between characters and how non-linguistic features in relation to paralinguistics and characters' performance reveal the contradiction between the mothers' conversational goal to enhance the face of the self, and the social goal to ‘protect’ the other's face. According to the research, sense of humour is created through this observable contradiction. The study concluded that language is a tool that can be used to enhance face in power relations. Also, in verbal conflicts, it is used to destroy the interlocutor's face and manifest power (institutional or personal). This study focuses strictly on verbal conflicts between mothers and their daughters, while the current study focuses on marital conflict.

With the instrumentality of Brown and Levinson's model of politeness and Culpeper's framework of impoliteness, as well as Grice's cooperative principle as a theoretical background, Abdel Qader Al-Badawi (2011) critically reviewed the dialogues between the dramatic and fictional characters in four literary works. Two of them are written in English by Irish dramatists. These are *Pygmalion* by Bernard Shaw (1912), and *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde (1895); the other two texts are *Fate of a Cockroach (1966)* by the Arab dramatist Tawfiq Al-Hakim and *Palace of Desire* by Egyptian novelist Najuib Mahfouz (1954). Each text is analyzed to see how sex, power, social distance, and interactive role affect characters' use of (im)politeness. It

was discovered that, especially in the case of invocations (prayers); an exact English equivalent often does not exist, thereby causing a loss in meaning and degree of conveying of the politeness or impoliteness utterance. The study concluded that the pragmalinguistic tools - politeness and impoliteness theories as well as Grice's cooperative principles are useful in explaining the dynamics of characters in literary discourse, and in explaining the interactive role of characters in literary texts. This study used both Impoliteness and Cooperative Maxims as theoretical base for the exploration of impoliteness in the study, also the data base is foreign while the current study deployed strictly the impoliteness theory and has Nigerian data-based literary texts.

Nemati & Bayer (2007) did a comparative study between six English and eight Persian film-scripts with a family and social theme. They examined the deployment of intensifiers, hedges and tag questions in the Speeches of Men and Women with the aim of determining gender Differences in the Use of these linguistic forms. Contrary to Lakoff's (1975) belief that women, compared to men tend to use more hedges, intensifiers, super polite forms, question intonations, etc., the study observed no significant difference between the groups under study with regard to the use of intensifiers, hedges and tag questions. This study is different from the current one in that it focuses on gender differences in the use of intensifiers, hedges and tag questions in speeches which is different from the current study's.

All these studies notwithstanding, sufficient attention has not been accorded the exploration of impoliteness in literary discourse in Nigerian context, especially, with focus on marital conflict. Therefore, this study investigates the deployment of impoliteness strategies between a couple in the selected drama text. Precisely, the paper identifies the different types of impoliteness used by the couple and the pragmatic import of the variant strategies deployed by them in the context of use. Lastly, the contextual factors underpinning the manifestation of inherent impoliteness strategies are examined. Thus, this study deems it fit to carry out a pragmatic study of this linguistic tool in literary discourse.

II. METHODOLOGY

The pragmatic approach adopted for the study is based on the model of Culpeper's (2011) theoretical framework of impoliteness. There are ample evidences of linguistic impoliteness manifestations in the selected text. However, since the study focuses on marital conflicts within the selected text, only the impoliteness strategies generated between the couple (the King and his Queen) are subjected to analysis. And in order to account for the classification of the impoliteness strategies deployed by the couple in the text and aptly give a detailed description of their pragmatic import in the context of use, a qualitative approach was adopted. Out of a corpus of 509 words with a total of 28 turns, 195 words with 15 turns are purposively selected and subjected to critical examination for their portrayal of communicative impoliteness under investigation.

The main tools for analysis are: Insults, Pointed Criticisms/Complaints, Unpalatable questions, Message Enforcers, Negative Expressives, Dismissals, Silencers, Threats, Condescensions, Challenges and Convention-driven: (sarcasm, teasing).

Data Analysis

The grammatical units such as words, groups and clauses that index communicative impoliteness in the utterances of the interlocutors are italicized for proper identification and analysed for their pragmatic import in the context of use. We therefore give a critical analysis of the impoliteness expressions identified in the selected marital discourse in the text.

a. Impoliteness:

Unpalatable Question

- Have I been deaf *before* in this house?
- Why do you think I am waiting?
- Am I not free to pass where I please?
- What gives you the impression that you are ruling this land better than what I can do?

Pragmatic Import: the first interrogative depicts a change of mood with the use of *before*.

It indicates the ambience of conflict which the speaker had expected the interlocutor to have acknowledged. In spite of the conflictual situation, socio-culturally, a woman is not expected to speak to her husband in this manner. The second one is used to reinforce the conflictual state/ face attack launched at the interlocutor.

The third one was used to defy the authority of her interlocutor over her freedom of movement. Although the last question is unpalatable, it is equally a challenge. Though implicit, it presupposes a *vote of no confidence* in her interlocutor's leadership.

b. Impoliteness: Challenge

- If you don't want me to talk to you like that, then you talk to me like a human being.

Pragmatic Import: To seek disagreement.

c. Impoliteness: Insult (Name Calling)

- So, that is the meeting *you hens* have been having all day, eh?
- You think these matters are for *egg heads*?
- You have the power of the devil!

Pragmatic Import: *Hen* is an offensive term that deliberately insults a woman's personality, activity and age. The use of derogatory nominations such as *hens* and *egg heads* by the speaker indicates his disregard for the women-folk and his disapproval of their activities. Though used ironically, the speaker uses the nominal group, *egg heads* to denigrate the women-folk in terms of aptitude to handle both communal and domestic matters.

The third expression is a negative assertion borne out of anger and meant to attack the interlocutor's face for her obduracy. Also, the linguistic choice of the speaker is a reflection of the socio-cultural superior role imposed on the male gender, including his social status as the king.

d. Impoliteness: Silencer

- Enough of this *foul* talk!

Pragmatic Import: It is used to shut his interlocutor up because of his disregard for the issue raised by her.

e. Impoliteness: Contdescension/Dismissals

- *You* can take care of your stomach

Pragmatic Import: Considering the + Higher role of her interlocutor, the speaker's use of personal pronoun *you*, in this context is condescending. The speaker uses it to scorn or ridicule her interlocutor. Socio-culturally, such explicit affront is unacceptable. The woman is in charge of culinary activities; hence, her linguistic choice in this context does not align with her socio-cultural dictates.

f. Impoliteness: Message Enforcer

- *I repeat!* You will do what I say in this palace!
- *Yes!* If you want to eat, go and prepare your meal!
- *I have spoken.*

Pragmatic Import: While the speaker (male) in the first sentence used *I repeat* to affirm his authority, his female interlocutor uses *Yes!* and *I have spoken* to reinforce her earlier statement, to show that she really meant what she had said and that there was no going back.

g. Impoliteness: Threat

- And let me tell you, if you want peace in this house, you have to restore peace in the land. Call off the proposed invasion of Angiama!
- Now, if I hear any more rubbish from you, I will tell you that I married you in this house!

Pragmatic Import: The female speaker in the first sentence uses threat to attempt the imposition of her will on her interlocutor and to show that a contrary move on her demand was detrimental.

The second speaker uses *threat* to express his anger and silence her.

h. Impoliteness:

Pointed Criticism

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>We don't want this face saving attempt on flimsy excuses.</i>• <i>If there were men in this land, you should have acted immediately!</i> |
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Pragmatic Import: the speaker uses *pointed criticism* in the above excerpts to condemn and to accuse the men folk of their lacklustre attitude.

Summary of Findings

The impoliteness strategies deployed by the interlocutors are: *insult, message enforcer, threat, unpalatable questions, pointed criticism, challenge, silencer, unmarked behaviour* (sarcasm/dismissals). While *insult* was mostly used by King Olotu to scorn the women's defiance, effrontery, 'uncultured' revolt and quest for relevance, he used *message enforcer* and *threat* to show power or exert his authority by the virtue of his social status as a King and a husband who should be 'in-charge', giving directives that must be obeyed without questioning. He used *threat* to attack his wife's face directly by the virtue of his superior role (+ Higher role). Furthermore, he deployed *silencer* to in order to stop her from talking.

On the other hand, Queen Alaere mostly used *unpalatable questions* as indicated above; she attacks her husband's face indirectly. She used them to seek disagreement and make her husband feel uncomfortable; this she demonstrated by talking unabated. She used *pointed criticism* to launch a direct, unmitigated face attack at her husband; she used it to disdain and belittle men's competence in handling communal matters; she further uses *message enforcerto* reaffirm her earlier statement for clarity. She used *challenge* to show anger and her displeasure over the current situation, lastly, she used *unmarked behaviour* (dismissals) to disregard her husband's instruction or show lack of interest in the issue raised by him; it was an unmitigated attack to his face. Queen Alaere also exhibited non-verbal impoliteness, such as *snubbing* the king as she enters the palace, *looking away without uttering a word* and *walking out* on the king. All these are positive impoliteness as they were used by the performer to damage the addressee's positive face wants.

III. CONCLUSION

The examination of marital discourse in the drama text, *Dance on His Grave* reveals the deployment of Impoliteness Strategies by the couple (King Olotu and Queen Alaere) to achieve different goals. Beyond the fact that the discourse accentuates the intentions and goals of the couple in a conflictual situation, the study observes that the judgements about impoliteness between the duo are meshed with different factors such as status difference (power relations) and socio-cultural dictates. Meanwhile *message enforcers, silencer, sarcasm, unpalatable questions, challenge, insult (name calling), condescension, threat* and *pointed criticism* are the pragmatic tools deployed by the couple to foreground the communicative roles of impoliteness.

Language is culture-specific and gender-sensitive; so also is impoliteness – the diverse manifestations of impoliteness strategies deployed by both genders is an attestation to this assertion. While the man could attack the woman's face using *insult* (name calling), the female counterpart would not respond accordingly considering the socio-cultural dictates of their roles. The male interlocutor uses impoliteness to denigrate the personality and ability of his interlocutor, to affirm his authority, to attempt the subjugation of the female counterpart, to express anger and show disapproval of his interlocutor's linguistic behaviour. Conversely, the female interlocutor deploys impoliteness to seek disagreement, defy authority, to condemn, to scorn and reinforce her stance.

This paper has not only advanced a scholarly contribution to the existing body of knowledge on marital and literary discourse, but serves as a boost to the understanding of the pragmatic imports of impoliteness in the genre. This particular study highlights how impoliteness stimulates marital conflicts. The outcome of this study validates Tracy and Tracy's (1998, p. 227) assertion that impoliteness strategies are "communicative acts perceived by members of a social community (and often intended by speakers) to be purposefully offensive". Language was used in the play to foreground the will and intention of interlocutors. Thus, the use of impoliteness strategies is associated with intentionality and offence. Consequently, this paper concludes that impoliteness strategies are linguistic resources used deliberately to cause conflict, aggravate a conflictual situation or social disharmony.

Although impoliteness strategies often occur in specific contexts associated with conflict, this paper argues that their use in marital context can be detrimental to the society. Therefore, beyond linguistic competence, communicative competence is advocated; that is, the deployment of linguistic forms that appropriately reflect the social norms governing behaviour in specific encounters.

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