



A Pragmatic Study of Politeness Strategies in the Inaugural Speeches of Civilian Heads of Government in Nigeria

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Abstract: The study is a pragmatic examination of the use of language by civilian heads of government in Nigeria. The study was informed by the need to understand the pragmatic strategies employed in crafting the presidential inaugural speech being the president's first official speech. It is believed that the inaugural speech is a comprehensive piece of political communication that affords the speaker the opportunity to say so much in one fell swoop. The objective is to unravel the deployment of the politeness strategy in conveying the speaker's intention. The study engages the politeness model proposed by Geoffrey Leech to interrogate the excerpts selected for the study. The study utilises data from the inaugural addresses of selected civilian heads of government. The study observes that political leaders in this category employ adverbial, adjectival and hedging as a pragmatic strategy for maintaining the self-esteem of the addressees. Nigeria's civilian heads of government display generosity in praising the addressees while being modest in praising the speaker.

Keywords: Pragmatics, politeness, inaugural speech, Nigeria, Context.

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INTRODUCTION

Language is a phenomenon which continues to occupy a pride of place in the affairs of men. It can be rightly argued that the ability to sustain or threaten the peace, unity and stability of the human society depends largely on the adequate or inadequate deployment of this divine linguistic ability. Human language operates in two important forms of usage; the spoken and written, with each form possessing different characteristics. According to Lemke (1995:7), communication is described as the social activity of making meaning with language and other symbolic systems in some particular kind of situation or setting. Lemke's view immediately raises the consciousness that language is one of the many ingredients required for effective communication. While the foregoing describes

communication in relation to the context of usage, the author in a (2010:21) study, explained communication as a process which transfers information, messages, thoughts and ideas from a sender through a channel to a receiver. Thus, in a communicative act, the speaker considers the receiver in crafting his/her message. This viewpoint underlies the fact that humans have the unique ability to spice a communicative act with the necessary linguistic ingredients to ensure the success of the communicative activity.

One important question that has continually triggered academic interest among language scholars is the need to unravel the different underlying motives behind our use of language. In other words, language scholars have not only

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identified the creative tendencies of human language but have gone steps further by identifying and unraveling the pattern of usage and the attendant variables that contribute to the so-called linguistic creativity in a particular discourse genre. Focusing on the importance of language in political communication, Teng (2015), argued that every political objective; the articulation of a candidate's ideology as well as the superiority of his/her political arguments can only be expressed through the instrumentality of language. It is therefore apt to claim that in politics, language is actually deployed beyond its primary objectives of describing and explaining events. Its application extends to the secondary level where political views and ideas are created. Political activities can be viewed as covering a wide range of communicative events. As opined by Ayoola (2008), to understand a piece of political communication, it is important we understand the intent, the content, the context, among others. Akinrinola (2016:87) also argued that political communication is characterised by different pragmatic strategies deployed by political actors to drive home their views. This is because of the need to effectively communicate their views to their audience. Wodak (2006) also argued that the analysis of political language is often concerned with: how are people and institutions named and referred to linguistically, what traits, characteristics, qualities, and features are attributed to them, by means of what pragmatic methods do specific politicians or political groups try to justify and legitimize their actions or inactions and facilitate intelligibility, from what macro and micro perspective are these arguments expressed, are the respective utterances articulated overtly, are they even intensified or mitigated and to what extent are they mitigated or intensified? It is therefore based on this submission that the current study seeks to examine the use of the politeness strategy as a communicative tool deployed in the inaugural speeches of Nigeria's civilian heads of government.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Early scholarly works on politeness can be traced to pragmatic scholars like Lakoff (1973), who proposed the rules: do not impose, give options and make the other person feel good, as reasons why participants in a communicative exchange may flout the Gricean maxims. Politeness is a feature of language use that is acquired through the process of socialisation. This is because according to Holtgraves (2008:10) 'in our day to day communication, our words, both spoken and written are typically directed at people who in their own rights are not abstract entities devoid of feelings, goals, thoughts and values'. Mills (2003:102) described politeness as "a battery of social skills whose goal is to ensure everyone feels affirmed in a

social interaction". Thus Teng (2015:1689) explained that politeness can be viewed as a major part of a range of pragmatic strategies which can be included under the umbrella of conversation management or relational work. He opined that the politeness strategy is appropriate for any human communication that is goal oriented. Fraser (1990) is concerned uniquely with scientific analyses of politeness as a general linguistic and pragmatic principle of communication, aimed at the maintenance of smooth social relations and the avoidance of conflict. Brown and Levinson (1987) submitted that politeness is an adornment of human language, more like an icing on the linguistic cake while on the other hand, politeness can be viewed as an extremely fundamental aspect of human communication, one that language users will definitely be unable to do without. In the light of these descriptions, Odeunmi (2015:213) clearly viewed politeness as a means to an end. In his opinion, politeness is a tool for achieving communicative finesse. In other words, in an attempt to socialise and fraternise in the society, we identify the need to garnish our language with certain linguistic flavours so as not to appear rude or uncouth to our interlocutors. Politeness is therefore, the application of 'good linguistic manners and etiquette' in interactive and general communicative contexts. Leech (1983: 81) stated that politeness principles are used to diffuse the rude or impolite force(s) of language. Odeunmi (2015) explained politeness as the skilled practice of establishing and maintaining good relations (rapport) between members of a society.

For example, boasting can be described as an inherently impolite act intended to confer undue advantage on the speaker. In an attempt to infuse politeness into discourse, certain linguistic elements are introduced. For example, the adverbial 'would' can be introduced into an expression in order to make the individual to whom it is directed to believe that s/he is not being mandated to carry out an act: 'would you like a cup of coffee?', 'I would love to state that the leadership of the senate is not doing enough', etc.

In essence, Fraser (1990) argued that politeness is not an inbuilt or natural characteristic of language but an individually conditioned interactional feature governed or dictated by social and contextual conventions which can be examined from four broad perspectives: the 'social norm' view, the 'conversational maxim' view, the 'face-saving' view and the 'conversational-contract' view. The approach to politeness as a social norm is founded on the belief that each society has its peculiar prescriptive social rules that are tied to differences in cultural context(s) that though not codified in any

etiquette manuals, are deeply enshrined in the language and sub-consciousness of its users. Pizziconi (2006) is of the view that members of speech communities possess clear linguistic and metalinguistic beliefs about, and are capable of, immediate and intuitive assessments of what constitutes polite versus rude, tactful versus offensive behavior. Politeness in this sense is equivalent to a normative notion of appropriateness. Such commonsense notions of politeness are traceable as products of historical developments and hence are socio-culturally specific. The conversational maxim approach was patterned after Grice's cooperative principle which is premised on the need to observe certain necessities in the course of a discourse. For example, Lakoff (1973, 1989) and Kasher (1986) argue that the need to maintain the communication chain demands that interactants clearly identify and wait to take their turn in a communicative event. Failure to observe and follow the rule of turn taking, according to Osisanwo (2006) will constitute a breach of the rules of polite communication.

Odebunmi (2015) basically grouped politeness into two broad categories: the traditional view and the post-modern school. The traditional view, which he described as the theory-driven conceptualisation of politeness is associated with pragmatic scholars like Lakoff (1973), Leech (1983) and Brown and Levinson (1987). The post-modern view of the politeness approach is credited to scholars like Eellen (2001), Mills (2003), Watts (2003) etc. A major difference between the two approaches is the behavioural and psychological perspective in the post-modern approach. The post-modern approach basically utilises the traditional theories to explain practical discourse situations. The theory based traditional approach will be annexed in the current study. Even though different cultures have different ways of utilising and expressing politeness, Holmes (2006:711) argued that the most influential works in the area of communicative politeness have attempted to address certain universalities that define the concept. This, in his words, involves a conceptualisation of politeness that includes not only the considerate and non-imposing linguistic behavior but also the notion of impoliteness as an equally important pragmatic strategy.

The two important theoretical approaches to the study of politeness are Brown and Levinson (1978) and Leech (1983).

Brown and Levinson's Politeness

The proposition on politeness put forward by Brown & Levinson (1978 & 1987) has been described as one of the earliest exposition on the

politeness phenomenon. Brown & Levinson (1987) argued that the need to be polite becomes necessary in human communication because participants identify the need to respect the self-esteem of interlocutors. The politeness theory in their view can be described as the pragmatic approach that accounts for the redirection or refining of possible communicative affronts. Brown and Levinson (1987) argued that politeness as a pragmatic strategy is established on the notion of face. Face being the positive public self-image that every member wants to be associated with. They defined face as the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken. Being an attempt to maintain the self-esteem of others, the Levinsonian model highlights in linguistic terms, the need to speak to others politely because we expect that we should also be treated with the same linguistic respect in future conversations. This view is further upheld by the author in a study in (2014) where, quoting Holtgraves (2008:10) it was stated that our language both spoken and written are naturally directed at human beings who are not devoid of feelings, goals, thoughts and values. He argued that our sensitivities to the feelings of others inform our inability to "say exactly" what we mean because we generally do not want to threaten, impose on or criticize our interlocutors partially because we have the same goals, feelings, thoughts and values which we love to protect. Ayansola (2016:114) opined that speakers may be considered or labeled impolite, if they fail to employ the adequate linguistic mitigation to diminish face threatening acts. Politeness is therefore, the expression of the speakers' intention to mitigate face threats carried by certain face threatening linguistic acts toward the listener. Therefore, being polite can be an attempt for the speaker to save their own face as well as the face of a referent.

Negative and Positive Face

Negative face is the individual claim to values such as pride, honour, dignity, consideration for the feelings of others, all of which the individual expresses through face maintenance. Negative politeness therefore can be described as the wish, desire or need of the individual to be respected. Within the wider social order, face maintenance is a condition rather than the objective of interaction. Positive face on the other hand, is a key explanatory construct in interpersonal language behavior where the speaker is very willing to preserve the dignity of the addressee for two reasons: to sustain societal peace and harmony and most importantly, everyone has each of the values listed above and also expect that these values will be respected by others in future because communicative roles are not set in stone. One important distinguishing feature between

negative and positive politeness as presented by Bousefield (2008) is that while positive politeness is a hearer oriented approach, positive politeness is employed by the speaker or writer to diffuse the force of face threatening acts in the process of communicating.

Face Threatening Acts

A face threatening act is any linguistic exercise (use of language) that inherently diminishes the self-esteem or personal worth of an addressee or speaker by using language in a way that it clearly refuses to affirm the social desire of either party to be respected. Face threatening acts can be expressed through verbal (using words/language, either spoken or written), extra-verbal (using different characteristics of language such as tone, intonation, punctuations, etc.), or non-verbal (facial expression, etc.). Positive face is threatened when the speaker or hearer does not care about each other's feelings. Positive face threatening acts are utterances that show a lack of consideration for the freedom of the participants in a piece of discourse or that which does not want what the other wants. Negative face on the other hand, is threatened when a party in the interactive event makes no tangible effort to safeguard or respect the self-esteem of the other party in a piece of discourse. This choice, depending on the direction, impedes the freedom of the party whose face is threatened. It can result in a compromise for either the speaker or the hearer, and forces the concerned party to submit his/her will or freedom to the other.

The notion of Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) is a universal feature of the study of politeness propounded by Brown and Levinson (1987). It is viewed as a feature that cuts across all human linguistic cultures, though with variations. A face threatening act is one that threatens the personality of either the speaker or the receiver by working at cross purposes with their linguistic preferences. Yule (1996: 61) defines face threatening act as those language use or utterances which contain or poses a threat to the self-esteem of others.

It can therefore be deduced that indirect expressions or questions may be employed in place of imperatives or directives in order to mitigate the face threatening impact of the latter. Watts (2003) is of the view that Brown and Levinson's 'face' is construed as a double want: a want of freedom of action and freedom from impositions (this is called 'negative' face), and a want of approval and appreciation (a 'positive' face).

Politeness strategies are the pragmatic methods deployed in mitigating the effect of FTAs on

both the sender and receiver of language. To minimize the FTAs, Getkham (2013) argues that positive, negative politeness and off record strategies are employed by both the sender and receiver of language. In a communicative event, the speaker tend to employ positive politeness strategy which include showing cooperation, by claiming common ground, showing that the speakers/hearers or writers/readers as the case may be, are willing to fulfill each other's wants. For example, in terms of sharing common ground, the speaker usually claims common views, opinions, and dispositions with the hearer. To show that speaker and hearer are cooperators, the speaker may imply a knowledge of the hearer's wants and should include the hearer in the activities. In other words, the speaker is expected to take caution not to impose his or her opinion on the hearer. Brown & Levinson identified negative face, positive face, off record (indirect expressions) and bald-on-record as the main politeness strategies.

Johnson *et al.*, (2004) argued that declining to grant a request for example, can serve as a two edged threat. It can damage the positive and negative face of both the person making the request and the person declining to grant the request. While it can damage the negative and positive face of the person asking for a favour, it threatens the positive face of the person declining. Ogiermann (2009) identified a three dimensional approach to the study of politeness and associated with refusals. These are:

- i. Willingness-unwillingness
- ii. Ability-inability
- iii. Focus on-focus away from the requester.

The willingness-unwillingness approach differentiates between two types of refusals where the one declining the request for help clearly states his or her decision or gives a reason for declining. Let us look at the following utterances.

A: Give me some money

B: I don't have any money to give

C: Oh! I would have love to give you but I am very broke too

Utterance A is a direct request (asking for a favour) that threatens the negative face of the speaker. Utterance B is a direct refusal that shows the unwillingness of the addressee to oblige the request in A. Utterance B threatens the positive face of the speaker. Utterance C is a kind of polite refusal that shows the willingness of the addressee to grant the request but appears to regret the inability to do so. This kind of request threatens the positive face of the addressee. The ability-inability approach shows the poor sense or judgement of the one making the request. In the words of Johnson *et al.*, (2004), when we ask for favours, we actually expect that the other

person is in a position to meet our need and we naturally expect them to oblige us. This makes us choose people with the ability to meet our needs. The refusal therefore shows that the person making the request is over-emphasizing the strength of the addressee. The refusal here is a threat to the positive face of the speaker. However, an individual with commensurate strength to meet the need eradicates the threat to the positive face of the speaker because it affirms the linguistic competence of the person requesting help. This in turn decreases threat to his positive face. The third kind of refusal is one that completely violates relational expectation. It clearly points to the fact that the addressee is not focusing on the need of the speaker. He is therefore not interested in maintaining the self-esteem of the speaker.

Examples of language use that can threaten the negative face of the language receiver are given hereunder.

a. Any utterance that places a direct responsibility on or denies the hearer the privilege of a choice undermines the hearer as a party in the communicative act. This position tends to place the hearer under pressure to either perform or not perform the act. This include: threats, requests, reminders, orders, suggestions, advice, warnings etc.

- i. Threat: You will surely pay for your mistake.
- ii. Request: Let me use your car.
- iii. Reminder: You are old enough to know what is good for you.
- iv. Order: Don't leave the door opened.
- v. Suggestion: I think that the white gown is better.
- vi. Advice: Vote right.
- vii. Warning: Be careful of bad friends.

b. An utterance that expresses the speaker's personal sentiments towards the hearer or towards anything that has to do with the hearer.

Examples: compliments, expressions of strong negative emotion toward the hearer e.g. hatred, anger, distrust, expressions of envy or admiration.

- i. Compliment: You have a lovely apartment here.
- ii. Distrust: It's important we entrust this responsibility in capable hands.
- iii. Hatred: You don't seem to get anything right.
- iv. Envy: Hmm, what a lucky guy!
- v. Anger: Can't you use your sense? Do you even have any?

c. An utterance that expresses certain positive future act. The utterance places a degree of obligation on both the speaker and the hearer. While the need to fulfill the obligation is placed on the speaker, the hearer is expected to either accept or reject the gesture, thereby incurring a debt of gratitude.

Examples: offers and promises.

- i. Offer: utterances here may include unsolicited assistance like a free ride, which the hearer is expected to either accept or reject

Speaker A: let me give you a ride.

Speaker B: gets into the car and sits.

or

Speaker B: oh thanks, I am not going your way.

- ii. Promise: I will ensure good governance.

Instances where the negative face of the speaker is threatened are exemplified hereunder. The affronts encountered here are ordinarily expressed from the hearer to the speaker.

a. Any utterance that shows the speaker as submitting to the power of or showing deference to the hearer. Utterances here include the following:

- i. Accepting expression of: gratitude or apology
- ii. Excuses
- iii. Acceptance of offers
- iv. A response to the hearer's violation of social etiquette
- v. The speaker commits himself to something he or she does not want to do

Threat to the speaker (Positive face-threatening acts)

Positive face is threatened when the speaker or hearer appears not to care about the feelings of the other person. The parties in the communicative event appear unwilling to cooperate or accept the need to maintain the face wants of one another. Just like negative face threatening acts, positive face threatening acts can also cause damage to the speaker or the hearer. When a party is made to stay aloof or stay away from others to the extent that his or her self-esteem is threatened or reduced, positive face is threatened. This tends to be the case when a party is not completely comfortable with the other parties' poor use of language which results in a battered personal image.

Leech's Politeness

One major reaction against the views expressed by Brown and Levinson (1978) is Leech (1983). Leech argued that politeness is much more than an icing on language, more than a superficial and dispensable adornment of human language, politeness is a deeper phenomenon which language users cannot do without. It is a component of language itself (Leech 1987). He adopts a blend of both the pragmalinguistic and the socio-pragmatic approach to the study of politeness. In this regard, he examined the interface between pragmatics and linguistic forms by drawing attention to ways in

which polite and impolite linguistic forms are used as raw materials for both polite and impolite communication while at the same time examining the role of social relationship as a trigger for either polite or impolite communication.

According to Leech (2014), politeness is so central to language use that both native and non-native users at the point of either acquiring or learning a language must necessarily imbibe the things that constitute polite or impolite use of any particular language, he explained that:

Many children learning their native language soon discover the importance of saying things like 'please' and 'thank you', which are insisted on by their parents in the process of becoming "built-up" members of the society. This reminds us that politeness is a social phenomenon largely manifested through the use of language.

This position by Leech clearly shows that the phenomenon of pragmatic politeness is indeed indispensable and is in fact one of the features that sustain human society through the prism of language. Leech further emphasized that to be polite is to speak or behave in such a way as to (appear to) give benefit or value not only to yourself but to the other person(s), especially the person(s) you are conversing with. Leech's characterization of politeness begins with the acknowledgement among others, of the fact that politeness is not obligatory, but created by an urgent sense of what is normal and acceptable to the society. He goes further to say that the degree of expression is situation sensitive, reciprocal, ensures transaction of values and has the tendency to preserve a balance of value between the participants in a communicative act. Gu (1990:253) argued that people only exhibit politeness when there is a good reason to do so. Pizzicioni (2006:706) also argued that deviations from the Gricean maxims are informed by specific interactional goals. Leech (1983) further attempt a distinction between four main types of politeness which are; trivalent and bivalent ((thanks) honorifics, vocatives (titles) politeness, positive politeness and negative politeness, pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic politeness, addressee politeness and third person politeness

Giving a summary of the foregoing in what he described as rapport management, Spencer-Oatey (2008:14) opined that the trivalent and bivalent

distinction is that between honorifics and vocatives, positive politeness and negative politeness captures the different strategies in mitigating the force of possible affront. While negative politeness serves to mitigate the offense that is likely to result from a direct imposition in order to reduce the force causes of the linguistic offense through the use of indirect expressions, hedges and understatement, positive politeness functions by giving or assigning certain positive value to the addressee. This is achieved by making offers, invitations, offering compliments, expressing appreciation and felicitations. On the other hand, pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic politeness explores the use of polite expressions as determined by the situational context (Meyers 1989). In this regard, Leech (2014) explained that the polite expressions 'thank you', 'thank you indeed' and 'thank you very much may constitute either polite or impolite expressions based on the context of situation. Finally, addressee politeness and third person politeness addresses can be described as extended politeness. This occurs in a situation where there is a third party addressee who is not present in the immediate communicative environment. Wodak (2006) explained that political communication is an example of an exchange which falls under this category. In an effort to explain politeness as regulative rather than being rule governed, Leech (1983) proposed a set of maxims that are intended to x-ray both the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic view of politeness. The maxims are; tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement and sympathy.

- (i). TACT MAXIM: minimize cost to O, [and maximize benefit to O]
- (ii). GENEROSITY MAXIM: minimize benefit to S, [and maximize cost to S]
- (iii). APPROBATION MAXIM: minimize dispraise of O, [and maximize praise of O]
- (iv). MODESTY MAXIM: minimize praise to S, [and maximize dispraise to S]
- (v). AGREEMENT MAXIM: minimize disagreement between S and O [and maximize agreement between S and O]
- (vi). SYMPATHY MAXIM: minimize antipathy between S and O [and maximize sympathy between S and O].

These maxims were reviewed in Leech (2014:90) into what he described as the General Strategy of Politeness (GSP). He opined that in order to be polite, the speaker (S) expresses or implies meanings that associate a favorable value with what pertains to others (O) or associates an unfavorable value with what pertains to self.

THE COMPONENT MAXIMS OF THE GENERAL STRATEGY OF POLITENESS

Maxims (expressed in an imperative mood)	Related pair of maxims	Label for this maxim	Typical speech event type(s)
(M1) give a high value to O's wants	Generosity, Tact	Generosity	Commissives
(M2) give a low value to S's wants		Tact	Directives
(M3) give a high value to O's qualities	Approbation, Modesty	Approbation	Compliments
(M4) give a low value to S's qualities		Modesty	self-devaluation
(M5) give a high value to S's obligation to O	Obligation	Obligation (of S to O)	Apologizing, thanking
(M6) give a low value to O's obligation to S		Obligation (of O to S)	Responses to thanks and apologies
(M7) give a high value to O's opinions	Opinion	Agreement	Agreeing, disagreeing
(M8) give a low value to S's opinions		Opinion reticence	Giving opinions
(M9) give a high value to O's feelings	Feeling	sympathy	Congratulating, commiserating
(M10) give a low value to S's feelings		Feeling reticence	Suppressing feelings

(Revised General Strategy of Politeness (GSP) chart culled from Leech 2014)

In explaining the revised maxims, Idowu and Owuye (2019:255) submitted that Leech’s approach performs the double function of explaining both the choice and the degree of politeness. Leech argued that the maxims presented in the GSP have been conditioned based on the value or direction of politeness to be exhibited. While the O-oriented maxims ascribe value to the addressee, the Speaker oriented maxims diminish the value ascribed to the speaker. It then goes to say that the politeness approach proposed by Leech is basically centred around making the addressee feel good. The maxims explaining Leech’s General Politeness Strategies are explained as follows.

- i. Maxim 1- Give a high value to the want of others. This is a maxim of generosity that is expressed through the use of the commissive speech act. The speaker employs this maxim by making offers, invitations, and promises that will directly address the needs of the addressee.

Subtle and indirect imperatives are also employed under this maxim. Examples,

You must cooperate with the government for the good of the nation
 You should spend your next holiday with us
 Your safety is my priority

- ii. Maxim 2 – Give a low value to the speaker’s wants. This is politeness strategy which employs the tack maxim. The speaker employs indirect request through the use of hedges and adverbials. This plays the role of mitigating the speaker’s imposition on the addressee. ‘can you pass the salt’, ‘could you please help with my luggage’.
- iii. Maxim 3 - Give a high value to the addressee’s qualities. This is an approbation maxim that seeks to explore man’s natural desire for compliments. The speaker here expresses appreciation towards the addressee. Pragmatic acts like appreciating, thanking and

commiserating are often employed to perform this strategy. ‘Thank you for your efforts’, ‘we appreciate your contributions’.

- iv. Maxim 4 – Give a low value to the speaker’s qualities. This strategy is like the approbation strategy. However, the strategy is speaker oriented. The speaker employs this self-depreciating method to either sought for or accepts a compliment. Locher and Watts (2005:20) describe this approach as a way of the speaker diminishing the attribution of value to himself/herself. Even though the speaker appreciates being complimented, he is not pushy in asking for it. Speakers often attribute certain compliments extended to them to luck and privileges. ‘it is a privilege to stand here this morning’, I was somehow lucky to emerge as the overall best student.
 - a. oh! It’s a brand new car you have got here
 - b. we are just managing
- v. Maxim 5 – Give a high value to the Speaker’s obligation to the addressee. This involves showing deference to the addressee. It is a politeness strategy that involves the addressee showing respect and expressing the speaker’s obligation towards the addressee. Apologies like ‘I am sorry’ are mostly employed to carry out this strategy.
- vi. Maxim 6 - Give a low value to the addressee’s obligation to the speaker. This is another dimension of obligation where the onus falls on the addressee to mitigate the force of a self-imposed obligation on the speaker. For example, responses to apologies often minimize the fault: It’s OK. Don’t worry. It was nothing etc. Similarly, responses to thanks often minimize the debt: That’s alright. You’re welcome, No problem, Glad to be of help, what are friends for etc, are expressions used to deploy this strategy.
- vii. Maxim 7 - Give a high value and consideration to the opinion of others. This maxim explains that the speaker expresses politeness by expressing agreement with the opinion of other interlocutors. The main focus of this strategy is therefore the expression of either agreement or disagreement between interlocutors. In responding to others’ opinions or judgments, agreement is the preferred response while disagreement is dis-preferred
 - A: It’s a beautiful house, isn’t it? B: Yeah, absolutely breathe taking. In this example, the addressee employs intensification to agree with the view expressed by the speaker. A contrary or negative expression will surely constitute impoliteness.
- viii. Maxim 8 - Give a low value to S’s opinions. This politeness strategy requires interlocutors to reduce the force inherent in the opinions they

express. This is done with the deployment propositional hedges such as I think, I guess, I don’t suppose, It might be that, don’t you think etc. in deploying this strategy, the speaker consults the addressee’s opinion and defers to the hearer’s suggested superior understanding, wisdom, or experience. (Hyland, 1998) described hedges as a politeness strategy employed in expressing lack of complete commitment to the truth value of an accompanying proposition. Idowu and Owuye (2019) quoting Myers (1989) explained that propositional hedging can be realized in many different linguistic forms which include conditional statements, modifiers and different verb choices.

- ix. Maxim 9 - Give a high value to the feelings of others. This politeness strategy is built around the sympathy maxim. In employing it, the speaker is expected to sympathise with the feelings of the addressee. In pragmatic acts like condolences and congratulations, Leech (2014:97) opined that it is polite to show others that you share their feelings: feeling sad when they have suffered misfortune, and feeling joyful when they have cause for rejoicing. All these courteous pragmatic acts can be made more achieved pragma-linguistically through adverbials, comparative adjectives etc.
- x. Maxim 10 - Give a low value to the feelings of the speaker. This strategy seeks to downplay the feelings of the speaker. It is a politeness strategy where the speaker appears not to burden his interlocutors with his feelings. It is believed that ascribing a high value to your feelings is an indirect way of asking for help thereby placing a burden on the addressee.

In summary, Leech (2014) submitted that the maxims identified above are not completely exhaustive. Rather they are described as the most frequently occurring instances of language use where utmost consideration is given to the other party in a communicative event.

METHODOLOGY

Politeness is a sociolinguistic feature that is common in our everyday language use. The study is a pragmatic explication of the use of language in political communication. The research attempts a descriptive and objective explanation of linguistic data. The data for the study were extracted from presidential inaugural speeches which were sourced from different media houses across Nigeria as well as from the internet. The study employs the politeness model of pragmatics proposed by Geoffrey Leech as its theoretical springboard. The study is saddled with the main objective of examining the deployment of the pragmatic strategy

of politeness by civilian heads of government in Nigeria.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Text 1 is the first post-independence presidential inaugural speech to be delivered by a Nigerian leader. It is very instructive that the text is replete with lexical items showing deference to the British government from whom Nigeria was obtaining independence.

Excerpt 1: *We are grateful to the British officers whom we have known, first as masters, and then as leaders, and finally as partners, but always as friends...And there have been countless missionaries (adjectival hedging) who have laboured unceasingly (adverbial hedging) in the cause of education and to whom we owe many of our medical services. (appreciating) We are grateful also to those who have brought modern methods of banking and of commerce, and new industries. I wish to pay tribute to all of these people and to declare our everlasting admiration of their devotion to duty. And finally, I must express our gratitude to Her Royal Highness, the Princess Alexandra for personally bringing to us these symbols of our freedom and especially for delivering the gracious message from Her Majesty, The Queen. And so, with the words 'God Save Our Queen', I open a new chapter in the history of Nigeria and of the Commonwealth, and indeed, of the world... our constitutional advance has been purposefully and peacefully planned between representatives of all the various interests in Nigeria... All our friends in the Colonial Office must today be proud of their handiwork and in the knowledge that they have helped to lay the foundations of a lasting friendship between our two nations.*

The speaker opens the address with a polite expression where he gives a high value to the obligation extended by the addressee. This is further followed by phrases where the speaker extols the qualities of the British officers. Aside paying deference to the addressee, the speaker uses the relative clause "*whom we have known, first as masters, and then as leaders, and finally as partners, but always as friends*" to present a positive image of the addressee and pay glowing compliments to the transformation that the relationship between Nigeria and the British has gone through. The relative clause is intended to diffuse the perceived negative impressions Nigerians may have towards the 'British officers'. The expression '*to whom we owe many of our medical services*' is another example

of a relative clause hedged in to further strengthen the pragmatic act of appreciating.

Another politeness strategy employed in the excerpt is hedging. This strategy is particularly employed to strengthen the show of appreciation. '*Countless*', '*unceasingly*' '*purposefully*' and '*peacefully*' are made up of an adjective and adverbs that have been deployed to further drive home the pragmatic act of appreciating the efforts of the British officials regarding their missionary effort and their contributions towards the growth and development of education. The adverbs '*purposefully*' and '*peacefully*' serve the purpose of appreciating the dedication of the British to the crafting of a new Nigerian constitution. The noun phrases '*our friends*' and '*a lasting friendship*' are examples of pronominal hedges that have been employed to show Nigeria's appreciation to the Colonial Office's commitment to a lasting post independent relationship with Nigeria.

Excerpt 2: *Today, our new constitution comes into effect; a constitution carefully drawn up by ourselves for ourselves.*

The referent item in this sample is the 1979 Nigerian constitution which also serves as the legal document on which Nigeria's second republic was built. The excerpt serves to acknowledge the ownership of the Nigerian constitution. More importantly, it is noteworthy that this excerpt flouts the politeness maxim which ascribes a low value to the needs of the speaker. However in the excerpt, the speaker states emphatically that Nigerians have actually wanted a constitution drafted by Nigerians and not one prepared, imposed and handed over by foreigners who probably had a shallow understanding of the Nigerian social, political and economic situation.

Excerpt 3: *I simply refuse to accept the cynical view that Nigerians prefer chaos to order...I am a firm believer in the good nature of the Nigerian, and I will continue to appeal to that good nature.*

This excerpt is designed to make the addressees feel good. In an attempt to appeal to Nigerians to be orderly and eschew corrupt tendencies, the speaker expresses a rejection of the negative perceptions about Nigerians. He states this by employing the adverb of manner '*simply*' as a hedging device. The adverb is designed to strengthen and ascribe fact to the proposition.

Excerpt 4: *While noticeable achievements have been made, the problems of our economy have become even more complicated. There has been a steep rise in the rate of inflation in Nigeria as is the case all over the world. Nevertheless, we are*

dedicated to building a viable economy by fostering broad mass participation and the utilization of local resources.

While acknowledging the achievements recorded in other areas in the life of the nation, the speaker employs the introductory adverb 'nevertheless' to neutralise the negative viewpoint expressed earlier. It also serves the purpose of assuring the audience that his administration is prepared and ready to build a viable economy notwithstanding the high global inflation rate.

Excerpt 5: Now that the elections are over, we must act as good sportsmen, set aside differences and harness our energies to the task of nation-building.

The excerpt above opens with a remonstrative phrase that seeks to chide the politicians to be magnanimous either in victory or defeat and do away with post-election wrangling which had hampered effective nation building. The pragmatic act intended to charge the elected governors to put the interest of the nation first and above party loyalty is introduced with the adverbial phrase 'I would like to'. The phrase perfectly serves the purpose of distancing the speaker from the threat inherent in the direct version of the proposition contained in the subsequent request. This shows that the speaker acknowledges the fact that the governors had hitherto placed party affiliations above the interest of the nation.

Excerpt 6: I would like to enjoin all our state governors to bear in mind that regardless of their party affiliations, the interest of the nation is supreme.

Excerpt 7: I assure you all that the Federal Government will give equal treatment to each state of the federation regardless of the party in power in that state. We shall immediately map out strategies to encourage Nigerians to engage in fruitful agricultural activities.

The modal auxiliary verbs 'will' and 'shall' have been used as a pragmalinguistic tool to achieve politeness. These linguistic elements were deployed to strengthen the pragmatic force of the act of promising performed in the speeches. In some cases these auxiliaries are either preceded with the verbal element 'assure' or the negator 'not'. Whatever the form of these auxiliaries, they have been designed to achieve one and the same purpose; to categorically emphasise that the elected officials will not deviate from the promise upon which they have secured the votes of the people. This is a politeness strategy that is intended by the speaker to give a high value to the needs of the addressee. The speaker considers it necessary to assure the audience of being totally

committed towards fulfilling the proposition contained in the subsequent pragmatic act. Another hedging device identified in the speeches examined in this study is the modal auxiliary 'can' which serves the purpose of pragmatic softening and strengthening. The element was identified in thirty-two (32) instances in the sample. Some of the excerpts are presented below

Excerpt 8: Nigeria can and must become a great and modern nation... let us re-dedicate ourselves to the service of this great country so that it will be a place we can and shall all be proud of... We cannot afford to fail in this task and by the grace of God, we shall succeed... We can fix our problems... We have a good starting point because our predecessor already launched a master plan that can serve as a basis for a comprehensive examination of all the issues... we can be confident in our ability to move Nigeria forward... we can be a united people capable of doing what is right for our nation.

The speakers in the excerpts identified above focuses on the strength of the addressees and encourage them that Nigeria has the potential to be great. It should be noted that the speakers employ the second person plural pronoun 'we' and the inclusive pronoun 'us'. In deploying this politeness strategy, the speakers not only encourage the audience about a better Nigeria but also express agreement with the addressee's desire for a better Nigeria.

Excerpt 9: We in Nigeria are fully aware of the recent events in the world, from which it would appear that a new paradigm is evolving for a new world order...

The excerpt above employs an adverb and an approximant that have been combined to achieve the same pragmatic effect. While the hedge 'fully' performs the function of strengthening the awareness of Nigerians of the events in the world, 'appear' reduces the commitment of the speaker to the truth or falsity in the claim that 'a new paradigm is evolving for a new world order'. Another example of epistemic hedging is seen in the excerpt presented hereunder where the epistemic verb 'appear' acts as a softener for the stated proposition. The proposition would have diminished the self-esteem of the addressee. This is however mitigated thereby making the assertion milder. Thus the speaker employs maxim 1 which ascribes a high value to the addressee's need for face maintenance. This is also seen in the use of the collective pronoun 'our' which includes the speaker in the group of those who have failed in the mission to build a viable and united country.

Excerpt 10: In recent times Nigerian leaders appear to have misread our mission.

The approximator 'some' is another hedging device employed in the speech. While the word conveys mild condemnation in certain instances, it conveys appreciation and commendation in others. Generally, it is a numerical approximator which has been used to avoid specificity. With its deployment, the speakers soften the force of the propositions and make the referent less inclusive. While the first instance explains the belief that some who fought for Nigeria's democracy did not live to witness its manifestation, it shows the speaker as paying homage to them even in death.

Excerpt 11: *Some* have not lived to see the fulfillment of their hopes – on them be peace – but nevertheless they are remembered here...the country recall to our minds their achievements, *some* of them on a national scale.

Because civilian presidents are products of elections, it becomes understandable that the elected leaders will make reference to the electoral process. It is instructive that elections in most developed countries including Nigeria is often fraught with violence which often result in loss of life and properties. In the following excerpt, the speaker employs pragmatic hedging to downplay the severity of the electoral shortcomings. The speaker expresses agreement with the populace that the elections were not perfect. In an attempt to convey his belief and convince the audience that the number of death is within a manageable range, the speaker employs the adverbial 'mostly' to show that there is more of emotional injury than death. The speaker however reluctantly acknowledges that lives were actually lost in the course of the elections. In making this admittance, the speaker employs the approximator 'some' which serves as a narrower in order to also avoid being specific. The adverbial can therefore be describe as an evasive pragmatic strategy that aids the speaker's need to avoid being factual. The approximator 'regrettably' is used by the speaker to empathise with those who lost their loved ones to the so called 'electoral shortcomings' nay electoral violence.

Excerpt 12: We acknowledge that our elections had some shortcomings...We came out of the election experience feeling hurt with mostly emotional injuries, but in some instances, regrettably, there had been physical wounds, and even death...

In the sample presented below, the speaker employs the negative sentence adverbial 'unfortunately' to introduce the claim contained in the proposition. The lexical elements that perform

pragmatic hedging in this sample are: 'unfortunately' 'senseless' and 'some', a combination of adverb, adjective and pronoun. On the one hand, the adjective serves to convey the speaker's belief that the wave of violence stained the success recorded in the elections. On the other hand, the adjective shows the speaker's direct condemnation of the attendant violence, while the pronoun 'some' shows indefinite and unspecified number or quantity.

Excerpt 13: *Unfortunately*, despite the free, fair and transparent manner the elections were conducted, a *senseless* wave of violence in *some* parts of the country led to the death of ten members of the NYSC and others...Some of their successors behaved like spoilt children breaking everything and bringing disorder to the house.

The approximator 'some' serves as a softener for the affront contained in the proposition. The element also reduces the speaker's commitment to the assertion. It also gives the expression an open ended referent because it refers to no one in particular. Rather, it addresses the generality of past Nigerian leaders.

Excerpt 14: Our experience has confirmed this, such that some have regarded me as a loner in my belief that Nigerians can change.

The subject of discourse in this excerpt is corruption. The speaker refers to his belief about the attitude of Nigerians towards corrupt practices. The approximator 'some' has achieve the purpose of creating numerical neutrality between those who share the speaker's believe that Nigerians can change and those who do not.

Excerpt 15: As far as the constitution allows me I will try to ensure that there is responsible and accountable governance at all levels of government in the country.

In the excerpt presented above, the speaker employs lexical approximators which serve the purpose of strengthening and narrowing the proposition. The statement opens with the conditional or hypothetical construction 'as far as'. This is employed to narrow the speaker's commitment to the promise contained in the pragmatic act of promising. This act of promising is equally strengthened by the lexical approximator 'will' as a strengthener for the speaker's commitment towards fulfilling the promise. It can therefore be concluded that the speaker pragmatically shifts the blame for his eventual inability to fulfill the promise on the limitations that are likely to be imposed by the constitution.

DISCUSSION

Politeness is evidently employed as a pragmatic strategy in the inaugural speeches delivered by Nigeria's civilian heads of government. This means that even when the speakers identify a need for verbal reprimand, especially on issues of national interest, such is done in a way so as not to verbally offend the addressee. The speeches can be described as the first official opportunity for the elected leaders to appreciate their supporters, extend a hand of fellowship to their opponents and make informed comments about the state of the nation. In doing all of this, the speakers explore the provisions of pragmatic politeness. It is important to note that in their choice of strategies, the speakers acknowledge the role of both the immediate and extended audience in their emergence as political leaders. As a result of this, they make conscious effort to respect the face and self-esteem of the addressees. Political leaders in this category employ mostly adverbial and adjectival hedging as a unique pragmatic strategy in passing their messages across. It is equally observed that civilian heads of government in their inaugural speeches, express obligations to others, ascribe value to the opinion of their addressees, ascribe a high value to the addressees' emotions by commiserating with individuals and groups who lost loved ones in the course of elections. They often employ softeners to diffuse the threat inherent in a proposition and choose to make sweeping or general comments even in instances where the citizens, as a result of the shared contextual knowledge, are likely to identify the direct referent. It therefore can be concluded that the politeness strategy is a very important communicative albeit pragmatic strategy that is annexed in political communication, especially the presidential inaugural speech.

CONCLUSION

The study establishes that Nigeria's civilian heads of government identifies the need to be polite in expressing the views, desires and aspirations of their respective governments. It is observed that the inaugural speech as an important genre of political discourse is often confrontational and antagonistic. Thus speakers therefore make good effort to diffuse the affront inherent in this category of communicative act. The study reveals that the speakers identify the face needs of the addressees and tries as much as possible to mitigate the various threats contained in the inaugural addresses. These are purposely designed to make the addressees feel good. In staying true to the Leechian politeness maxims, the study observes that civilian heads of government equally employ the politeness strategy of making promises, giving assurances, offering invitations and expressing agreements.

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