

**‘Pragmatic Face and Ideology in Selected Speech Discourses of
President Muhammadu Buhari**

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‘*Face*’ an attribute of politeness theory is one of the most considerable frameworks for the analysis of social interaction. The proclivity of this study unveils how President Muhammadu Buhari (henceforth PMB) deploys pragmatic ‘*Face*’ as discourse strategy to instantiate ideology. Despite the substantial scholarships on ‘*Face*’, not much has been done on its linguistic role in the underpinning of ideology in speech discourses. This study aims at three goals. First, it takes account of ‘face’ as pragmatic resource for the production and interpretation of ideology. Secondly, it underscores ‘face’ as a discourse passage or strategy for comprehending a speaker’s ideological stance; and thirdly, it situates the place of the politeness theory in the explication of speech discourses by interrogating its relevance in such domain or context. The study examines 19 texts purposively selected from two speeches from *The Sun* and *The Guardian* of 29th May, 2016 and 1st October, 2016 respectively. The selected speeches, through the theory of politeness complemented by critical discourse analysis reveals that PMB deploys discourse strategies that are face threatening to designate derision and relations of superiority on those undermined and face saving to instantiate ideology of solidarity on those whose interests are being served.

Keywords : Politeness theory, pragmatic face, discourse strategy; ideology,

1. Introduction.

Communication can be perceived, basically as the pursuit of symbolic profit that interlocutors achieve through language. Language influences thought and action. The words we employ to designate or describe things to ourselves and others affect how we think and act. We deploy language actively to create and shape the world through social interaction. Malmkjær (1991, p.141) describes language as an instrument by means of which people can enter into communicative relations with one another. To Halliday (1978), language is seen primarily as a social semiotic resource for meaning, through it, humans negotiate, construct, and change the nature of social experience. The knowledge of language use is the ability of how to use it effectively. This implies, channeling it to do what one wants it to do in the appropriate context. This is pragmatics in its entirety.

Language usage is determined by situation and context. The more appropriate and effective the language of a message is, the more the receiver derives satisfying productive and meaningful relationships both in personal, public, social, political and educational lives (Edem, 2018, p.99). Language is a system of communication and communication in turn is seen as a tool in the hands of speakers/writers in solving problems. This means that the production of a written or spoken text is a social process which entwines the interaction between the writer/speaker and the reader. The way a writer/speaker communicates with language is determined by social structures. Consequently, all spoken and written texts are ideologically characterized in that they (i) replicate systems of belief and power; (ii) create identities and relationships; and (c) retain structures of inequality and privilege and 'face' as a linguistic behaviour proves to be a significant passage in this direction in substantiating ideologies as this study tries to unveil. Ideologies are based on a set of beliefs and attitudes shared by a group, class or society and they

are often expressed through language. Anything that is said or written about the world is articulated from a particular ideological position. In this way, every instance of language is a reflection of the prevailing discursive and ideological system in the society where it is used. This leads us into explaining briefly the concept of face and the theory of politeness in language usage.

2. Face and the theory of politeness in language

The most substantial concept of politeness theory is face. Being polite is not just about showcasing some accolade or compliment, it is rather the exercise of language choice to generate a context intended to complement addressee's notion of how he or she should be addressed. On the average, it is a way a speaker implicates a context that matches the one assumed by the hearer (Grundy, 2000, p.144-5). In a nut shell, the theory accounts for the redressing of slurs or an insult to a person's face by face-threatening acts. Slurs are often earmarked in discourse as pejorative, hence, are described as acts that damage the face of the speaker or hearer. Gumpez (1982), Van Dijk and Kirsch (1983) see discourse strategies as a form of language use interpreted as a complete communicative event in a social situation. They are communicative strategies that participants in a discourse employ as means of achieving their aims or goals, and face, as an attribute of politeness certainly proves to be one of such strategies through which a language user demonstrates his skills or expertise at appropriate language structures and vocabulary as this study intends to unveil through the selected speech discourses of PMB.

In language, there is 'individual self-image or esteem' called 'face'. Yule (1996, p.60) sees "face" as someone's self-image. It refers to the emotional and social sense of self-worth that one has and equally expects everyone else to recognize. Hence, if anyone articulates something to someone that constitutes a threat to one's self-image that is called *face-threatening act* as this

study intends to showcase. This linguistic behaviour affirms Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) position that every utterance in an interaction carries with it the potential to create a threat to either the speaker's or hearer's face. Nonetheless, PMB deploys such language choice to substantiate face as well as enhance and maintain the communication of his ideologies

In any social interaction, there are two aspects of face, negative or positive. A negative face refers to one's freedom to act, the need to be independent and absolutely free from any form of imposition, while positive face indicates the need to belong or be connected to a larger group unveiling some level of good interpersonal relationships. Subsequently, a face-saving act that recognizes another person's negative face will be concerned about his need not to be imposed, flustered or slighted, while a face-saving act that emphasizes a person's positive face will display solidarity and attracts attention to common goal.

3. Method of analysis

Nineteen texts are purposively selected from two speeches of President Muhammadu Buhari delivered on 29th May, 2016 and 1st October, 2016, extracted from *The Sun* and *The Guardian* newspapers respectively. The aim is to unfold the diverse pragmatic face intentionally deployed by PMB as discourse strategies to instantiate or represent his ideological views on those whose interests are being served and those whose interests are being undermined. The theoretical approach considered for this study is Brown and Levinson's model of pragmatic face strategies complemented by Fairclough's model of critical discourse analysis. The essence is to annex or appropriate the interface between these linguistic models. Brown and Levinson (1987, p.60) identified different types of politeness strategies, namely bald on record, off-the-record or indirect strategy, negative politeness and positive politeness. To Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 61), speakers cultivate politeness strategies to maintain self-esteem.

The study will only lay bare the aspects of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies, initiated as well as netted in PMB selected speech discourses. Speech discourse is a peculiar one unlike normal conversation. The way pragmatic face is represented is quite different from the natural language. A critical study of the selected speeches shows that PMB utilizes negative and positive face strategies depending on the ideologies he wants to propagate. Fairclough (1992) model of critical discourse on the other hand, is considered essential and central to this study because it will enable us find the hidden meanings and ideological assumptions embedded in the speeches. The way issues are impinged, imparted or conveyed in speeches can exhibit important implications for public understanding and evaluation of such issues. Hence, CDA is deployed to aid and accentuate how speech texts are initiated, enacted, reproduced as well as challenge relations of power and dominance. This linguistic trivet is essential to this study because it unveils the correlation between these linguistic models in the analysis of texts.

4. Analysis and findings

The interest of the present study is to disclose the diverse aspects of pragmatic face strategies deployed by PMB as significant discourse passages through which his ideologies are enacted, realized or promoted in the selected speeches.

Negative face as Discourse Strategy

Negative face designates the basic rights of an individual, such as personal freedom as well as freedom of action. It is the desire to remain autonomous or independent from any imposition.

The following discourse constructions are illustrative indicating the ideologies they propagate or instantiate

1. No group can unlawfully challenge the authority of the Federal Government and succeed.
(Paragraph 15, Oct., 1, 2016 speech)

Text 1 is a typical negative face act that is blunt and threatening, instantiating an ideology of authoritarianism. A negative face threatening act is that which inherently causes harm or impairment to the face of the addressee or speaker by acting in opposition to the wants or desires of the other. Thus, threat in this context denies the actors involve further or future actions, since the caveat in the discourse is assertive and stern. The communicative act in the text affirms and also creates pressure on the hearer to desist from any form of unlawful challenge and submit to the authority or power of the government. Freedom of choice, expression and action are impeded when negative face is deployed as a threat. Instead of dialogue, an authority is influenced by assertion. The effect of the language on the reader is obvious because it conveys the ascendancy that exists between the Federal Government and any group. Such predominance enacts that no group is greater than the Government. Consequently, the face strategy is deployed over those whose interests are undermined.

2. A new insurgency has reared up its head... This Administration will not allow this mindless group to hold the country to ransom. (paragraph 13, Oct.,1 2016 speech)

Text 2 is equally an expressive discourse structure with a negative face threatening act substantiating an ideology of authoritarianism. The second part of the discourse exemplified by a new clause ascertains that the hearer is threatened by hegemony of the speaker. The threat is strengthened by the modal verb 'will' to show the speaker's commitment in the realization of such control. In fact, the modal verb gives the reader a deeper understanding of the government's position concerning this group. PMB's displeasure is captured in the rhetorical connotation 'mindless group'. Such linguistic term unveils PMB's remark as derisive on this group.

3. If the militant and vandals are testing our resolve, they are much mistaken. We shall apprehend the perpetrators and their sponsors and bring them to justice..... (Paragraph 4, May 26th, 2016 Speech,)

The speaker in text 3 is not insinuating but affirming. The discourse structure reveals that the speaker is very much aware that there are groups of persons in the nation behind the present upheaval. The act or language in the text is commissive as well as face threatening. A close look at the discourse discloses a great level of dominance. To the speaker, the security of this nation is a priority for his administration. In view of this, he does not matter the status of the culprit in the society. The information structure is clear and the intention is made known to whosoever. With this, pressure is on the hearer to accept or reject the declaration and possibly incur the wrath. The discourse structure conveys those whose interests are undermined.

4. An important first step has been to get our housekeeping right. We have reduced the extravagant spending in the past. (Paragraph 4, 29th May 2016 Speech)
5. ...we have changed the way public money is spent. In all my years as a public servant, I have never come across the practice of padding budgets. I am glad to tell you now we not only have a budget, but more importantly, we have a budget process more closely tied to our development priorities than in the recent past. (paragraph 4, 29th May 2016, speech)

Three things are noted here in texts 4 and 5. Firstly, the languages indicate expressions that negatively evaluate the face of the actor(s) involved. Hence, the negative face strategy unveils contempt. Secondly, it reveals PMB's communicative act as an affirmation of principle driving deep his ideology of 'change' or 'restoration' and thirdly, the lexical items 'extravagant' and 'the practice of padding budget' are purely imagistic. They project the past leadership as corrupt. PMB uses this to create not just a verbal representation of a sensory experience but a mental picture of what has been the trade mark of the polity before his arrival. The language is deployed to threaten the face of those involved. His languages completely express contemptuous disapproval of their spending pattern, thus, a quick measure in curtailing it was necessary. The language captures those undermined.

A Mitigated-Negative face

This is also another face strategy deployed by PMB in the selected speech discourses under analysis. A mitigated negative face is often deployed by a speaker to make his communicative act less threatened to the hearer. See the discourse structures below as examples.

6. I know how difficult things are, and how rough business is. All my adult life I have always earned a salary and I know what it is like when your salary simply is not enough. In every part of our nation people are making incredible sacrifice. (Paragraph 1, Oct., 1, 2016 Speech).

Text 6 is mitigated in order to appeal to the conscience of the citizenry. The last clause with an adverbial complement indicates what would have been a face threatening act but was alleviated in the clauses before it. Rather than making the language fraught or uneasy for the audience through a direct remark like “*make sacrifice, everywhere people are making sacrifice*”. PMB presented the language in such a way that it lessens possible threat to the face of the audience. PMB is said to be performing a face-mitigated act that is ideologically pro-government.

7. As I said earlier on, we are engaging with responsible leadership in the region to find lasting solutions to genuine grievances of the area but we will not allow a tiny minority of thugs to cripple the country’s economy.(Paragraph 32, Oct., 2016 Speech).

PMB choice of words in this text is somewhat complicated. It is like saying yes to a thing and thinking no at the same time. This is the purpose of mitigating a speech to convey less threat. This mitigated language is embedded in the clause ‘*we are engaging with responsible leadership in the region*’. PMB’s aim in the context is to project a pro-government ideology. Words such as ‘*responsible leadership*, ‘*genuine grievances*’ and ‘*tiny minority of thugs*’ obviously betray the first premise in the discourse. The communicative act avers that there are leaders in the region that are irresponsible; there is also the possibility that the people’s grievances may not be genuine. The labeling “*a tiny minority of thugs*” couched in an NGP also negates whatever good intention he claims to have for this people. Note the NGP ‘*a tiny minority of thugs*’ has a pragmatic and cognitive value in text. It indicates a negative face that conveys denigration and

cynicism. The language is dysphemistic. Crystal (1992, p.112) sees dysphemism as the use of an offensive or disparaging expression instead of a neutral or pleasant one. It is invested by PMB to instantiate an ideology of authoritarianism or superiority as well as to showcase their insignificance.

8. What sense is there to damage a gas line as a result of which many towns in the country including their own town or village is put in darkness as a result? What logic is there in blowing up an export pipeline and as a result income to your state and local governments and consequently their ability to provide services to your own people is reduced?
(Paragraph 14, Oct., 1, 2016 speech)

If politeness involves the expression of the speaker's intention to mitigate face threats, then text 8 is a good example of such mitigated act. To appreciate this utterance as such, let see the presupposition mechanism used implicitly to make an assumption in the language. Firstly, the action of someone is attributed as bad here. Secondly, anyone who engages in such act is not in his right senses. However, this is not depicted outright. The question form is used as Tact Maxim to lash at the perpetrators, mock them and instantiate a pro-government ideology. Tact Maxim is often used to maximize benefit. A critical study of the discourse structure aligns with Brown and Levinson's strategies of minimizing imposition. As tact, the interrogatives are used, firstly, to minimize imposition and seek for information. Secondly, they are indirectly deployed as indices to unveil the madness of those involve in the act. To PMB, such act is unwise in as much it also has adverse effect on the immediate community of the perpetrators. Thirdly, the interrogatives are deployed to construct a mental situation and expect the listeners/stakeholders to take a serious thought of the situation or context. Text 9 below is another example of the interrogative deployed to seek response from the addressees.

9. Read also: has Buhari failed Nigeria already? (Paragraph 5, 29th May 2016 speech)

One interesting thing about text 9 is that it is a prototype of a typical discourse structure with a pointer. Such discourse texts are often represented by one or more words that create in the reader the awareness of the context in which the comments that follow are being made. There are two parts to the text – the given information and the comment that follows. The act in the text projects a negative face strategy mitigated to avoid direct threat or insult on the face of PMB by those propagating false news against the administration. The interrogative is deployed by PMB to seek redress and to re-establish his commitment to the leadership of the nation. It also affirms that he is very much aware of his promise to change Nigeria. PMB uses the interrogatives in the context, firstly to elicit response from the readers, and secondly, to mark a judgeable content or to help readers make a sound judgment or evaluation of his administration already adjudged by those undermined as failed.

Positive Face as Discourse Strategy

Positive face as politeness strategies seek to minimize the threat to the hearer's face. These strategies are used to make the hearer feel comfortable to the speaker's remark or comment. In addition, speakers often invest this face strategy where there is an attempts to avoid conflict, create friendship, solidarity, compliments, and so on. The texts are illustrative enough.

10. Corruption is a cancer which must be fought with all the weapons at **our** disposal. It corrodes the very fabrics of the government and destroys society. (paragraph 17, Oct., 1 2016 speech)

11. This is what corruption and mismanagement has done to **us** and that is why **we** must fight these ills. (paragraph 4, May 29th, 2016 speech)

The acts in text 10 and 11 are positive face. The texts draw our attention to common goal. The face structure of the texts instantiate PMB's restorative ideology. PMB plank of change is built on freeing the nation from the stigma of corruption and its practices within and outside the country. On the economic front, the discourse structures also give an insight to the reader why

corruption is termed as a disturbing and dangerous phenomenon. Text 10, with an equative metaphor, reveals that corruption is tantamount to cancer. Consequently, something needs to be done about it. Everyone knows how deadly ‘cancer’ as a disease is and how fast it can spread if not checked or curtailed. The sense in which the concept is used spells doom if something is not done to check its spread in the Nigerian context. Text 11 reveals it as illness that must be jointly fought. The lexical semantic-representations enrich our understanding of the context. Thus, text 10 and 11 are deployed by PMB to elate or create in the readers a feeling of disgust for the concept---corruption.

12. These experimental Nigeria House model Units will be constructed using only made in Nigeria building materials and components. (Paragraph 2, 29th May, 2016 Speech)

Nigerianism as an ideology is realized in text 12 through a positive face saving act. The construction has a social implication as it establishes some level of mutual beliefs and intentions concerning made-in-Nigeria products. The face saving act unfolds PMB’s informative intention of re-invigorating the building material sector. The information here re-institutes his change phenomenon, because with this; massive employment might be generated as well as developing sector capacity and expertise.

13. Illegal mining remains a problem..... Special measures will be in place to protect miners in their work environment-- (Paragraph 5, May 29th, 2016 speech)

Text 13 depicts a positive face saving act as well. The act shows not only PMB’s concern about this group but also a sense of belonging. He deploys the declarative form of the indicative mood that is commissive to substantiate his ideology of liberalism. Liberalism is a political doctrine that takes into cognizance the protection of individuals and also enhances the freedom of individuals to the central problem of politics. Thus, commissive in this sense, establishes for the

miners some measures of security and safety. The discourse structure unveils for the reader those whose interests are served.

14. EFCC was given the freedom to pursue corrupt officials ... (Paragraph 2 , May, 29th, 2016 speech)

This is also a positive face saving act in its own right. The text unveils PMB's broadmindedness, objectivity and neutrality for a corrupt free society. Corruption, to him, is one disturbing factor in the polity which needs to be checked. One of the ways of doing this is what the clause is concerned, granting EFCC some level of autonomy or leverage to deal with the menace, thus, demonstrating or validating his ideology of liberalism. The whole essence is to complement his change agenda.

15. Finally, let me commend Nigerians for your patience, steadfastness and perseverance. You know that **I** am trying to do the right things for our country. (Paragraph 47, Oct., 1 2016speech)

Text 15 is deployed as a face saving act to instantiate an ideology of exceptionalism or positive self-presentation. This is captured in his use of the self-inclusive pronominal 'I'. The essence is to project his administration to be better than the one before him. However, his language seems to violate the Politeness Principle of Modesty propounded by Geoffrey Leech (1983). The Modesty Maxim says that one should minimize praise of self; maximize praise of others. The clause 'finally.....,' is used to unveil some level of affection signifying interpersonal function. The second clause begins with a topical theme that is arguable whether he is doing the right thing or not is solely left for the audience to decide not him.

16. *But* let me say to all Nigerians today, **I** ran for office four times to make the point that **we** can rule this nation with honesty and transparency, that **we** can stop the stealing of Nigeria's resources so that the resources could be used to provide jobs for our young people, security, infrastructure for commerce, education and healthcare
(Paragraph 4, Oct., 1 2016 speech)

The language in text 16 is laden with optimism. It is manipulated by PMB to save face, to unveil a positive-self presentation as well, consequently, instantiating an ideology of exceptionalism as well as solidarity. PMB's use of the self-inclusive pronominal 'I' may designate that 'he' still remains as one of Nigerians best fitted for the position of the president to help bring the nation back to the path of sanity and restoration. Thus, all other administrations before him have been ineffective. His semantic shift from 'I' to 'we' shows unanimity or solidarity, a means of making other stakeholders involved, that is those who share his ideology and philosophy of change and restoration.

Blame Transfer as a positive face strategy.

Positive face saving act is expressed in numerous forms in speech discourses. Some can be enacted through blame transfer. Blame transfer is an ideological passage or construct often used by speakers to shift blame. The essence is to save face from public criticisms and taunts.

17. On our arrival, the oil price had collapsed to as low as \$30 per barrel and we found nothing has been kept for the rainy day. (Paragraph 1, 29th May, 2016 Speech).
18. The infrastructure, notably rail, power, roads were in a decrepit state. All the four refineries were in a state of disrepair... (Paragraph 2, 29th May, 2016 speech)
19. But this is only temporary. Historically about half our dollar export earnings go to importation of petroleum and food products! **Nothing was saved for the rainy days** during the periods of prosperity. **We are now reaping the whirlwinds of corruption, recklessness and impunity.** (Paragraph 20, Oct., 1 2016 speech)

A close look at text 17 -19 depicts a kind of positive face strategy dubbed or labeled as blame transfer. This strategy according to van Dijk (1995, p.37) is an ideological construct that has been fashioned and propagated by politicians to blame all ills of the society on others. Texts 17 and 19 blame the immediate past administration for leaving empty treasury. Text 18 blames the past administration for keeping the country and her facilities in a state of rot. It uncovers the

derelict state of the country's infrastructures that would have made life easy and comfortable for the common man. This face save strategy becomes a manipulative to seek empathy from the reader or listener on the situation. Rather than right the wrongs of a badly fouled situation or accentuates on a cold, hardheaded planning that evinces confidence and trust, PMB blames and criticizes the administration before his inception.

Conclusion

The analysis of the speech texts is actually not a total pragma-critical discourse dissection of the speeches used; rather, it is used as an illustration to justify the claim on the relevance of pragmatic face in the representation of ideology in speech discourses. PMB's speeches unveil face strategies in the context that showcase that his words are not just mere words rather they are couched with meanings that propagate his views on those whose interests are being served and those whose interests are being undermined or (indirectly destroyed). In fact, his words convey his world view. The approach used in this study offers us plenty opportunities in the understanding of speech texts. It reveals that the politeness theory can lend a valuable hand in the understanding and interpretation of ideology in any discourse text and it establishes for us a medium or passage for comprehending a speaker's ideological stance; consequently, developing the reader's intuitive insight of ideological driven texts.

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