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POLITENESS STRATEGIES ON SOME SELECTED SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

BY

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**A LONG ESSAY PRESENTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, FACULTY OF
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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to God Almighty and my entire family, especially my husband, Mr. Azu Stephen, and to my lovely kids, Valeria and Vince. This work is also dedicated to Issah Fati Gloria, Bertrand Neonoma, and Patrick Wonder for their massive support, and to all lecturers and colleagues who made my stay on campus a fruitful one.

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ABSTRACT

The interrogation of language as one of the many tools in humanities for enhancing African development cannot be relegated into obscurity. Any scholarly efforts aimed at addressing African development status quo without considering the critical role language plays is regarded as exercise in futility. Therefore, the impact of language use on social media such as Facebook and WhatsApp, on African development cannot be overemphasized. This study uses Brown and Levinson's (1987) Face Management Theory in order to account for Facebook messages and comment and WhatsApp chats on social. The analysis was based on the various politeness strategies adopted by users of WhatsApp and Facebook in their communication on social media platforms and why users of WhatsApp and Facebook choose those politeness strategies in the communicative event they are engaged. Qualitative and quantitative methods were employed to allow the codification of WhatsApp messages and Facebook posts and comments in analyzing the data. The analysis shows that out of 15 groups of Facebook, eighty percent use positive politeness and twenty percent use negative politeness: from the 15 groups from WhatsApp, it was also revealed that seventy-five percent use positive politeness and twenty-five percent use negative politeness. The researcher's analysis on why users of WhatsApp and Facebook choose the politeness strategies in the communicative event they are engaged revealed that social identity and relationship, informal communication between friends, family, and acquaintances, platform norms, character limitations, cultural norms, community and audience, communication purpose, power dynamics, personal style, social media literacy, and privacy concerns are among the factors. The results of the study have implications for media discourse in Ghana, and will serve as an impetus for further research.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the study

Sweet (2023) defines language as expressing ideas through speech sounds combined into words. Bloch and Trager (1942) also define a language as a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group cooperates. The language used in oral and written communication should be good and correct language in various situations. According to Wijaya (2019), written language can be generally more controlled when compared to spoken language. However, in today's use of social media, written language does not pay much attention to politeness since addressees can read so many meanings to a sentence depending on how familiar they are with the addressers, and the interaction is not directly face-to-face with other account users. Thus, there is freedom in expressing tastes, desires, and opinions that sometimes cause harm to oneself. Social media can be a double-edged knife that can provide advantages and disadvantages (Wijaya, 2019).

According to Sasu (2022), in the third quarter of 2021, 89.9 percent of the people connected to the internet in Ghana used WhatsApp. Facebook was also a popular social media platform, mentioned by approximately 74 percent of internet users, thus, the need for politeness strategies to enhance communication. Social media has equally made it more accessible and very easy to follow trending issues across the globe and to make contributions to social issues easier. Television stations have also embraced social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and other platforms so as to engage viewers and the general public. Currently, programmes on television are streamed live on Facebook, YouTube and other social media handles.

Brown and Levinson's (1987) concept of 'face' has focused on face-to-face communication. The theory on politeness has been widely applied and adopted to understand online communication,

including social media platforms. The concept of 'face' plays a significant role in politeness, and how both are employed social media as it (one's face) involves one's reputation, self- image, how people present themselves, engage with others, and uphold social norms on platforms, Facebook and WhatsApp inclusive. According to Brown and Levinson (1978), politeness is a redressive action taken to mitigate the disruptive effect of Face-Threatening Acts. They argue that every face has the potential to be damaged either positively or negatively because during any interaction, the speaker is likely to say something to threaten the face of the hearer. This makes politeness a necessary requirement for both the speaker and the hearer in any communicative event. The concept of face, thus, is very crucial to the study of politeness theory.

Goffman (1955) defines face as being the positive social value a person effectively claims, for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. The face is an image delineated in terms of approved social attributes. Goffman believed that speakers maintain face through face-work which is "actions taken by a person to make whatever he is doing consistent with face, face-work serves to counteract incidents' (Goffman, 1967:12). Brown and Levinson (1978:66) assert that face is emotionally invested and can be lost depending on the power relation and choice of words used in interacting with a person. In view of this, they formulated politeness strategies whose primary aim is to save face or mitigate FTAs. These strategies are Bald-on Record, Negative Politeness, Positive Politeness and Off-Record.

Brown and Levinson (1978) also claim that most speech acts, for example request, offers and apologies, inherently threaten either the hearer's or the speaker's face-want, and that politeness is involved in redressing those face threatening acts (FTAs). They further assert that such speech acts as apologies can be strategized to achieve negative politeness (Brown & Levinson,1978). This is because politeness serves as reversal action for the damage caused to the hearer's face and is a

crucial component for the maintenance of social and relational harmony between the speaker and the hearer. Hence, politeness plays a pivotal role in all social interaction.

Politeness is primarily and essentially a social act. It is aimed at maintaining good relations between participants. To say something nice to someone that will not cause any face threatening act between interlocutors is to act polite, both in the vernacular sense and in the most technical sense of paying attention to the addressee's face needs (Brown & Levinson, 1978; 1987). During social interaction, a speaker being polite may resort to a wide range of linguistic and non-linguistic expression in order to communicate a politeness term appropriately and according to the expected norms of interaction of a given culture.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, politeness terms are important because they are sensitive to social factors such as gender, age, power, social distance, and because what is considered an appropriate politeness term varies across cultures. From a pragmatic perspective, the negotiation of politeness may entail frequent attempts at directness or indirectness and politeness or impoliteness that are appropriate to the situation and may vary according to the social values of a particular culture. Also, the choice of appropriate degree of politeness employed may depend on the relationship between the participants - close or distant, power, age, gender, and the situation. Norrick (1978:284) argue that "it is essential to the smooth working of the society that there be standard means of admitting responsibility, implicating remorse and forgiving. Without these, we would probably be at one another's throats much of the time. In this sense, acts of politeness are more basic and important to society than such acts as thanking and congratulation, which by comparison are its pleasant by-products rather than functional principles". It is the absence rather than the occurrence of any politeness in many contexts that will be regarded as deviant and irrational behaviour, requiring explanation or inviting implicatures of lack of concern for the

addressee's face needs. Hence, politeness terms are very crucial in daily life to maintain harmony and it is important to know the rules of politeness and how to apply them depending on the context.

Politeness is very important to understand, as it helps in human communication. People think that politeness is identical with words such as *please*, *sorry*, *excuse*, and *thank you*. Being polite means that people appropriately speaking at the right time and the right place. People must understand what the context of speaking is and to whom they speak of, then they can determine how polite they need to be in the communicative event they are involved. On social media, most of the time people communicate nonverbally, text based and indirectly where there is no presence of physical appearance of the other person. The absence of these supporting cues to convey the meaning of the statement can hinder the achievement of effective communication, because it potentially raises problems in communication, for example, a misunderstanding. Misunderstanding can arise since every single one of social media users can interpret an expression in a written form differently. Besides being prejudiced for not being able to understand the character of the writer can also trigger it.

Statement of the problem

Although politeness has been studied in scholarly works in Ghana on Instagram and Twitter, there has not been much done in relation to WhatsApp and Facebook. Some scholars who have studied politeness on Instagram and Twitter are Herring (2000), and Abidin and Murthy (2010). Their findings emphasized the importance of respectful language, positive interactions, and avoiding offensive content in communication. It is with this concern that the present study seeks to explore the extent to which politeness strategies are used to show politeness on Facebook and WhatsApp by some social media users. In other for the users of Facebook and WhatsApp, who are mostly the youth, not to sound rude or offensive, they adopt some politeness strategies in their interaction. It

is against this background, in addition to my personal interest that I have decided to find out some of these politeness strategies used by some social media users in Ghana.

Research questions

1. What are the various politeness strategies adopted by users of WhatsApp and Facebook in their communication on the social media platforms?
2. Why do users of WhatsApp and Facebook choose those politeness strategies in the communicative event they are engaged?

Delimitation

The work is limited to a few WhatsApp and Facebook messages and comments. Due to the time frame for conducting the study, the researcher paid attention to activate Facebook and WhatsApp groups from January to August 2023 in particular. I chose WhatsApp and Facebook because beside the percentage of users in the country, it offers a wide range of data for analysis. Also, studying these platforms can provide insights into communication patterns, social interactions, and the impact of technology on society.

Significance of the study

The study is significant in the following ways. First, like all other scholarly research works, the results will add to the already existing knowledge on the use of politeness strategies, in general, and the use of politeness strategies in media discourse, particularly on the social media of WhatsApp and Facebook. In this regard, this research looks forward to clarifying many ways that social media users express themselves in a polite manner or save faces. In other words, the findings that will be arrived at will help improve the understanding of the nature of politeness terms used

by WhatsApp and Facebook users to express themselves. It will also show how WhatsApp and Facebook users show politeness as a vital key for the maintenance of saving their face in the various communicative events that they are engaged.

Organization of the study

The study is structured into five chapters. Chapter one looks at the background to the study, statement of the problem, research questions, delimitation and significance of the study, as well as organization of the study. Chapter two reviews the existing literature in relation to the topic. Chapter three discusses the methodology for the study, and Chapter four presents an analysis of the data collected. Chapter five, which concludes the study, provides the summary of the findings or data and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on two main issues. First, the chapter presents a discussion on the frameworks which guide the research. Second, the chapter reviews various works that have been done in the area of politeness so as to help situate the present study in a better perspective.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.1.1 Erving Goffman's (1955) Face Theory

Every human has an image he or she seeks to portray and protect. It could be one of a responsible parent, a funny friend, a first-class student, etc. These various faces depend on the social contexts they occur, which means a person could have several faces depending on the people he or she has contact with. Goffman (1955) uses this concept to explain human relations. To him, the face is “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular context” (Goffman, 1955: 213), as cited by Redmond (2015). This means that people seek others to respect and value the specific face they have taken, just as they do the same in return. If certain acts or words go against this concept, the image a person portrays may be threatened. This act is said to be a Face-Threatening Act.

This Face-Threatening Act causes a person to lose his or her face, hence the need to apply face work to restore the threatened face. Facework refers to how people mitigate or address these face threats (Lims & Bowers, 1991). Not only does this work lessen the effect of an FTA on a person's face and emotions, but it also builds a good relationship between people since it also respects personal dignity, honours and respects the positive public image a person seeks to establish in social interaction (Goffman, 1955).

2.1.2 Grice's Cooperative Principles

Language as a tool of communication is a vital element of human interaction. Information shared during human communication may or may not be what the context surrounding the discussion demands. Grice (1975) noticed this and came up with four sets of principles that he called the Cooperative Principles (CP). He explains the Cooperative Principles as making your conversation contribution such as required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose of the direction of the talk exchange in which you engage (Grice, 1975) as cited by (Quassemi & Kheirabadi, 2018).

The CP consists of four Maxims/Principles: Quality, Quantity, Manner, and Relation maxims. The quantity maxim has to do with speakers giving just enough information and not more than required in a conversation. They should also be sincere and speak only the truth and facts; this is the quality maxim. The utterances of speakers must be related to the context of the conversation, which is the relation maxim, and lastly, the manner maxim means the thoughts of speakers should be presented unambiguous, easily, and concisely. These maxims serve as a guideline about how a language can be used for better communication. They are, however, violated for various reasons. Quassemi and Kheirabadi (2018) observed that in English news, reporters are more used to vagueness (about economic and political reports) and lack quality (in sports news) to skillfully and technically present existing matters or social issues in front of readers. This strategy lacks specificity (quality) and therefore violates Grice's (1975) CP.

Kheirabadi and Aghagolzadeh (2012) do similar work concerning Grice's principles in conversation. They suggest that Grice's Cooperative Principles can be introduced as linguistic criteria or values of conversation. Grice's Cooperative Principles is a mere rewording of various "News Values" that are used to select some events as new and others as not. Galtung and Rouge

(1965), for instance, give twelve factors that qualify an event as news. Some include: frequency, unambiguity, meaningfulness, composition, etc. Kheirabadi and Aghagolzadeh (2012), thus, believe that these and other classifications will fall under Grice's Cooperative Principle because when journalists often refer to numbers, statistics, facts, and figures, they indirectly try to prove the maximum quality to their audience. A conversation should neither be too long nor short but should be informative enough. These accord with the maxim of quantity.

Again, the conversation should be relevant and related to the needs of the interlocutors - the maxim of relation. With the maxim of manner, information must be clear enough and unambiguous. Kheirabadi and Aghagolzadeh (2012) state that a conversation is a means of interaction between interlocutors, hence the need to observe Cooperative Principles. Despite the need to observe the CP, people in a conversation sometimes intentionally or not flout or violate the maxims, leading to conversational implicatures.

2.1.3 Leech's (1983) Politeness Principles

Leech (1983) believes that interlocutors often flout Grice's CP in daily conversations without being misunderstood. To him, conversational implicatures occur sometimes because interlocutors want to be polite towards the other. He proposes the Politeness Principle (PP) which are made up of six maxims: *Tact*, *Generosity*, *Approbation*, *Modesty*, *Agreement*, and *Sympathy* maxims.

These Politeness Principles seek to minimize the expression of impolite beliefs and establish a feeling of community and social relationships, as cited by Maharani (2017). Jabir (2014) cites that the tact maxim means minimizing cost to others, maximizing benefits to others; the generosity maxim means minimizing benefit to self, maximizing benefit to others; the approbation maxim means minimizing dispraise to others, maximizing praise to others; the modesty maxim means minimize praise of self, maximize dispraise of self; agreement maxim means minimize

disagreements between self and other, maximize agreement between self and other; sympathy maxim means minimize antipathy between self and other, maximize sympathy between self and other. Aside from its cooperative function, the Politeness Principle also serves as a base on which Grice's Cooperative Principles function.

In other words, the Politeness Principles serve as a channel through which the CP operates. As Leech (1983) states, unless you are polite to your neighbour, the channel of communication between you and your neighbour will break down and you will no longer be able to borrow his mower, as cited by Terkourafi (2014). Since these principles enhance good communication, Lulu (2019) notes that cultural factors influence the choice of the various maxims. For instance, whereas the Chinese prefer the politeness principle and its maxims because of their indirect manner of expression, the English rather prefer being straightforward, hence their use of the Cooperative Principle and its maxims much more often.

2.1.4 Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory

Brown and Levinson (1987) develop further Goffman's (1955) face theory. They view face as “the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself” (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 61), implying that every individual has an image that he/she seeks to have publicly. This public face (want) is further divided into two: the Negative Face want, and the Positive Face want. The negative face want is “the want of every ‘competent adult member’ that his actions be unimpeded by others” whereas the positive face is “the want of every member that he wants to be desirable to at least some other” (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 62).

Whereas the positive face seeks ratification, acceptance, and admiration in a group or among people, the negative face of each individual seeks not to be imposed upon by others. The face is something that is emotionally invested that can be maintained, enhanced, or lost through various

FTAs. Speech acts such as requests, orders, apologies, etc. may threaten a person's face if strategies that save one's face are not used.

Brown and Levinson (1987) give four politeness strategies that may minimize the threat of an FTA on an individual's face. These are the positive politeness strategies, negative politeness strategies, bald-on-record strategies, and off-record strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Politeness Theory, being the most influential theory on politeness (Niroomand & Sadeghoghli, 2016), serves as the main theoretical framework that guides this research, by focusing on the various strategies that Brown and Levinson (1987) propose to see how they are applied in conversations on Facebook and WhatsApp.

In a society, to have a harmonious life, there must be some rules to govern the interaction between people; these rules can also be understood as social norms. Interaction between humans is a place where humans can be connected. In these conditions, many things are very possible to happen, one of which is the emergence of conflict. Associated with the emergence of conflicts that occur in social interaction, the ability to establish relationships is very necessary, even from childhood. Apart from being something that arises as a result of social interaction, conflict is also seen as an important part of social interaction itself (Sims, Hutchins, & Taylor, 1997).

Social media platforms have become integral parts of our daily lives, offering spaces for communication, interaction, and information sharing. However, the dynamic nature of online communication often leads to conflicts, misunderstandings, and incivility among users. To navigate these challenges, individuals employ various politeness strategies to maintain positive online interactions. This research aims to explore the use of politeness strategies on selected social media platforms, with a focus on understanding their impact on user engagement, conflict resolution, and community building.

Goffman initially proposed the idea of politeness in his 1963 book *On Face-Work*, where he also coined the term *Face Threatening Acts (FTA)*. Brown and Levinson (1978) expanded on this as The Face Theory, proposing three essential conceptions of the face: expression, face-threatening acts (FTAs), and politeness techniques.

In light of the extensive usage and influence of these platforms on interpersonal contact, the study of civility on social media has gained major relevance. Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube have emerged as popular places for people to communicate, share their thoughts, and participate in debates. As these platforms continue to alter the way people interact, knowing how politeness requires negotiation and practiced in this setting is vital for numerous reasons: building positive relationships, fostering respectful dialogue, and maintaining a healthy online community.

Politeness Strategies in Online Communication

Brown and Levinson's (1987) facework theory explores how individuals manage their self-image, or "face," in social interactions. Online communication, as a form of social interaction, requires users to navigate face-threatening situations, leading them to employ politeness strategies to mitigate potential conflicts and maintain positive relationships. Also, Lakoff's (1973) theory of politeness distinguishes between positive politeness (enhancing rapport and solidarity) and negative politeness (respecting autonomy and minimizing imposition). These strategies, as the literature reveals, are often employed on social media platforms to establish and maintain social bonds while respecting individual boundaries.

Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory have been applied and extended to the realm of online communication, including social media platforms. In the context of social media, individuals employ politeness strategies to manage their online identity, maintain relationships,

and navigate potentially face-threatening situations. Online platforms often require users to adapt their facework strategies due to the lack of non-verbal cues and the asynchronous nature of communication. Users may utilize positive politeness strategies, such as expressing appreciation, acknowledging others' contributions, or engaging in supportive comments, to enhance rapport and maintain positive relationships. Also, negative politeness strategies, such as using polite requests or expressing understanding for differing viewpoints, can be employed to respect others' autonomy and minimize conflicts. It is important to note that the application of politeness theory to online communication is a subject of ongoing research, and scholars continue to explore the nuances and challenges posed by the digital environment.

Politeness theory provides a framework for understanding how individuals navigate face-threatening situations and employ politeness strategies to maintain social harmony (Brown & Levinson, 1987). While their theory does not specifically encompass "facework theory," it contributes to the broader field of politeness theory, which has relevance in understanding communication dynamics, including online interactions on social media platforms.

Lakoff (1973) proposed a theory of politeness that examines how individuals use language to manage interpersonal relationships and preserve face. The theory emphasizes two main strategies: positive politeness and negative politeness.

Positive Politeness:

Positive politeness strategies are used to enhance rapport, establish solidarity, and create a sense of friendliness and intimacy in communication. They involve emphasizing shared identities, interests, and positive qualities. Positive politeness strategies aim to make the other person feel valued, respected, and included. Examples include giving compliments, expressing agreement, using humour, and engaging in acts of camaraderie.

Negative Politeness:

Negative politeness strategies are employed to respect others' autonomy and minimize imposition. These strategies recognize and address the potential threat to the other person's negative face, which involves their desire for freedom, independence, and avoidance of social obligations. Negative politeness aims to maintain distance, avoid confrontation, and allow the other person to maintain a sense of personal space. Examples include using indirect language, hedging, apologizing, and offering deference or politeness markers such as "please" and "thank you."

Both positive and negative politeness strategies contribute to maintaining social harmony and avoiding face-threatening acts. They can be used in various contexts, including face-to-face interactions, written communication, and online platforms.

It is important to note that Lakoff's (1973) theory of politeness primarily focused on gendered language use and the social dynamics between men and women. However, the concepts of positive and negative politeness have been widely applied beyond gender-related contexts to understand the broader dynamics of politeness in communication.

Dynamics of Politeness in Communication

Online Community Implications: Politeness standards and tactics contribute to the general environment and well-being of online communities. The amount of civility influences users' feelings of belonging, involvement, and engagement on social media sites. Understanding the dynamics of politeness can assist academics in identifying methods to build more pleasant and inclusive online communities while reducing the dangers of bad behaviour and conflict.

Psychological and Emotional Impact: Individuals' online interactions might have psychological and emotional implications. The use of rude or offensive language, as well as cyberbullying and online harassment, can result in bad feelings, stress, and mental health problems. The study of

politeness on social media gives insights into the possible influence of communication styles and methods on the well-being of individuals.

Ayu and Sigit (2023) discuss politeness strategies employed by Facebook users, and they posit that Facebook, as a popular social media platform, provides users with various tools and features to engage in online communication. While the specific politeness strategies employed by individuals on Facebook may vary, here are some common strategies observed on the platform:

1. Compliments and Positive Feedback:

Users often employ positive politeness strategies by giving compliments and providing positive feedback to posts, photos, or achievements shared by others. This can include expressing admiration, praising someone's accomplishments, or commenting on their positive attributes.

Example: "Congratulations on your graduation! You worked hard and deserve all the success. Wishing you a bright future!"

2. Supportive and Encouraging Comments:

Facebook users often use positive politeness strategies to offer support and encouragement to others. This can involve providing words of motivation, expressing empathy, or offering help and assistance.

Example: "I'm sorry to hear about your loss. Please know that I'm here for you if you need someone to talk to. Sending you love and strength during this difficult time."

3. Humour and Light-hearted Interactions:

Humour is frequently employed as a positive politeness strategy on Facebook to create a friendly and relaxed atmosphere. Users may share jokes, memes, or funny anecdotes to entertain their friends and connections.

Example: "Haha, that meme you shared had me laughing out loud! Thanks for brightening up my day!"

4. Polite Requests and Invitations:

Negative politeness strategies are employed on Facebook when users make requests or invite others to events or groups. They often use polite language and considerate wording to respect the autonomy and boundaries of others.

Example: "Hey, would you mind lending me your notes for the upcoming exam? I would appreciate your help!"

5. Disagreement and Conflict Resolution:

In cases where disagreements arise on Facebook, users may employ politeness strategies to mitigate conflict and maintain a respectful tone. This can involve using hedging, providing reasons, and acknowledging alternative viewpoints while expressing their own opinions.

Example: "I see where you're coming from, but I have a slightly different perspective on this issue. In my opinion, we should consider..."

It is important to note that the effectiveness and interpretation of politeness strategies on Facebook can be influenced by factors such as cultural norms, individual preferences, and the specific context of the interaction. Users may also encounter instances where politeness strategies are not consistently employed, leading to varied communication styles and potential conflicts.

Overall, Facebook users utilize a range of politeness strategies to enhance positive engagement, resolve conflicts, and maintain respectful interactions within the platform's social environment.

In conclusion, Lakoff's (1973) theory of politeness distinguishes between positive politeness strategies that enhance rapport and solidarity, and negative politeness strategies that respect autonomy and minimize imposition. These strategies play a crucial role in managing interpersonal

relationships and preserving face in various communication contexts, including online interactions on social media platforms.

Junita (2020) also discusses politeness strategies employed by WhatsApp users, and maintains that Politeness strategies employed by WhatsApp users can vary widely depending on individual preferences, cultural norms, and the specific context of interactions. However, there are some common politeness strategies observed on WhatsApp. These include the following:

1. Expressing Appreciation:

WhatsApp users often employ positive politeness strategies by expressing appreciation for others' WhatsApp statuses, chats, or contributions. This can include commenting, liking status, or replying with messages of gratitude.

2. Constructive Feedback:

When providing feedback or expressing disagreement, users on WhatsApp may use negative politeness strategies to respect the autonomy and perspectives of others. They may use polite language, provide reasoning, and acknowledge alternative viewpoints while offering their own opinions.

Example: "I understand where you're coming from, but I respectfully disagree. In my opinion, we should consider the following factors..."

3. Empathy and Support:

WhatsApp users often employ positive politeness strategies to show empathy and support to others, particularly during challenging times. This can involve offering words of encouragement, showing understanding, and expressing sympathy.

Example: "I'm sorry to hear about your loss. My thoughts are with you and your family during this difficult time. Please let me know if there's anything I can do to support you."

4. Acknowledging and Engaging with Others:

Politeness strategies on WhatsApp also involve actively acknowledging and engaging with other users' content. This can include replying to messages, asking questions, and expressing interest in their opinions or experiences.

5. Avoiding Offensive Language:

While not exclusive to WhatsApp, users often employ politeness strategies by avoiding offensive language, derogatory comments, or personal attacks. Maintaining a respectful and inclusive tone in interactions contributes to a more positive and politer online environment.

It is important to note that WhatsApp character limit can sometimes lead to a more concise and direct communication style, which may impact the extent to which certain politeness strategies are employed.

Related Literature on Politeness Strategies Used on Social Media

A study on politeness in the use of language in social media shows that communication patterns are realized in three ways; various forms of language which do not meet the standard language, the use of non-verbal representations, such as emotions, and ecrononciation, that is, writing the spoken language (Oktiya, 2021). The choice of utterances is affected by relative status, social distance, and range of imposition. When communicating with others, most utterances represent the obedience to politeness maxim, namely; being friendly, and considerate, suitable topic for the event, and pleasant voice with a true and good temper.

In Kepa's (2021) study of linguistic politeness in Polish social media, he maintains that the form of linguistic politeness operative in social media depends on technical functionality; talking about oneself and using indirect speech acts is a commonly accepted behavior; verbal and non-verbal messages are considered equivalent acts of linguistics politeness. Although the manifestations of

the traditional and the social media modal of linguistic politeness differ, both use the same communication script conforming to the expectation of the recipient.

In a study of comments on Facebook posts by Palestinians, Eshreth (2020) concludes that the most frequently used strategies of congratulation were illocution force indicating devices, an offer of good wishes, and an expression of happiness. Findings revealed that the most frequently used strategies by the participants were giving gifts to listeners, exaggeration, and in-group identify markers as a form of positive politeness on occasions related to marriage and the birth of a baby.

Ima and Sofwan (2017) also discuss politeness strategies in official Facebook accounts of CNN, TWSJ, and NBC on Obama visiting Hiroshima. The purpose of this study was to identify and count the percentage of the politeness strategies used in the comments of the official Facebook account of CNN, The Wall Street Journal, and NBC on Obama's visit to Hiroshima. They found out the politeness strategies toward Obama as the President of the United States at that time and the politeness strategies that are often used in those three Facebook accounts. Positive politeness used in the comments was highest with pre-suppose 26.7% and the lowest was performed by intensified interest - 0.9%. The scale of politeness was determined by politeness factors, and the highest level was performed by the ranking of imposition, and the politeness strategies and politeness scale mostly appeared in NBC'S Official Facebook Account.

Ambarwati (2019) also conducts a research on women's phatic speech acts on Facebook, and reveals that women are mostly fond of using polite expressions, using indirect sentences, using adjectives, using question tags, and humor with the aim of maintaining friendship and harmonious relationships. Also, the Internet-based communication media provide flexibility for women to interact and establish relationships. The research concludes that women's communication on

Facebook through phatic speech acts can be a source of learning approach to be polite in uttering utterances.

A study on students' politeness strategies to lecturers in sending messages through WhatsApp by Pratiwi and Anindyarini (2021) shows that some students were found sending messages without greeting the lecturers and instead conveying their intentions directly. Face Threatening Acts are common, and students frequently threaten the lecturers' faces. The words used in a student's message can affect the teacher's feelings and make the conversation appear informal. Students appear to be unaware of social distance, roles and status, and power dynamics when interacting with lecturers. Some students treat lecturers as equals, which comes across as rude and disrespectful. With the above, this current research looks at this issue from a different perspective since societal norms can influence interactions between the elderly and the young.

The findings from Sarita and Natsir (2022) on gender and politeness of request expression on WhatsApp show that male students applied three (3) politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987): bald-on record (21 sentences), positive politeness (8 sentences), and negative politeness (3 sentences), from the data that was analyzed. The researchers also found that female students applied four (4) politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987): bald-on record strategy (5 sentences), positive politeness (7 sentences), negative politeness (17 sentences), and off record (5 sentences), from the data that was analyzed. The significant difference in politeness strategies used by male and female students is that there is no off-record strategy used by male students; they apply the bald-on record strategy more often, while female students are more varied in using politeness strategies and mostly applied the negative politeness.

Yulandari and Edumas (2022) also discuss politeness strategies for men on WhatsApp, by describing male-language politeness strategies in group WA conversations. This research is descriptive qualitative because it generates data that describe the 'who, what, and where of events or experiences from a subjective perspective. The population was all the speeches in the WA alumni/bachelor (GA) group and the class/student group (GK). Data collection in WA conversations was taken in August-September 2022. The data collection technique was by taking screenshots of the WA groups and use the note-taking technique in MS Word. The data that had been collected was then coded based on Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness. The findings showed that males conversational in GK tend to use blunt politeness strategies and positive politeness strategies. This shows that the speech of men in GK tends to be less polite, especially if the interlocutor has close social distance with him. While in GA conversations, male speech tends to be politer seen from the choice of using language politeness strategies, men's utterances in G.A. conversations seem to rarely use frank politeness strategies even though their interlocuter have close social distances from them. This shows that the older a person is, the more careful they are in speaking.

Analysis of Politeness Strategies in YouTube Reaction Vlogs

Alcasero (2022), in his study, analyzes politeness strategies in YouTube reaction Vlogs. The purpose of this study was to analyze the politeness strategies used in YouTube reaction Vlogs and how these influence viewers. The results showed that there were 231 polite utterances used. The frequently used politeness strategy was positive politeness (48.05%), followed by bald on-record politeness (25.11%), and off-record politeness (12.99%). A phenomenon of logical inquiry was employed to gain the insight of 14 educators as participants in in-depth interviews and focus group discussions on how politeness strategies in reaction vlogs influence viewers. The following themes

emerged: make a good conversant, give respect and protect an image, train how to evaluate issues and reactions, learn to appreciate V logs, and aid in the teaching-learning process. Reaction Vlog, as an investigative genre of Vlogging, could become a springboard to teach politeness theory and supplementary materials in teaching. Reaction Vlogging, as a form of self-expression, could serve as a performance task among learners.

The reviewed literature in the paragraphs above has shown the use of politeness strategies in some social media platforms and how these platforms are inseparable from the educational factor., By complying with the language politeness strategy, the relationship between the speaker and the speech partner will run harmoniously. These studies have some bearing on the present study as this study also deals with politeness strategies on Facebook and WhatsApp which are also social media platforms.

Summary of the Chapter

This chapter discussed the theories that guide the present study. It also talked about previous literature that has been done on politeness and face. It bases on various theories that have focused on the concept of politeness and face. They include Grice's (1975) four sets of the principle (PP) made up of the six maxims – Tact, Generosity, Approbation, Modesty, Agreement, and Sympathy maxims, Goffman's (1955) Face Theory, and Brown Levinson's (1987) Politeness strategies. The chapter also reviewed previous works that have been done in the area of social media politeness strategies. These works mostly focused on politeness strategies on Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp. The next chapter will focus on the methodology used in conducting the research.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the methods that were used in conducting this study. According to Mouton (2002: 29), a scientific inquiry is driven by the search for the ‘truth’ or at least ‘truthful knowledge’. The prominent purpose of all research is to arrive at results that are as close to the truth as possible i.e., the most valid findings (Mouton, 2002: 29). Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to clarify the method and techniques that were used to collect the data. Discussed under the research methodology are the design, the sampling techniques and sample size determination, the method of data collection as well as data processing and analysis. This chapter also presents a brief profile of the study area.

Research Design

A research design specifies the methods and procedures for acquiring the information needed to structure and solve the research problem, and stipulates what information is to be collected, from what sources, and by what procedures. A good research design ensures that the information obtained is relevant to the research problem, and that it is collected by objectives and economical procedures (Smith & Gerald, 2010). There is no single best research design. Instead, different designs offer an array of choice, each with certain advantages and disadvantages.

The researcher adopted the mixed research approach as a design for this research. Mixed methods research is the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoint, data collection, analysis, inference technique) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration (Johnson et al. 2007, 123). By this, we mean the

researcher employed both quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis in analyzing the data. Quantitative research methods are fundamentally concerned with gathering and evaluating structured data that may be represented quantitatively. Quantitative research is especially good at addressing the ‘what’ or ‘how’ of a particular issue since it concentrates on data that can be measured. The quantitative research design utilizes specific measurements of variables. In this research, the frequency count is used as the quantitative method to facilitate the counting of the number of occurrences of the various politeness strategies in the data analyzed. This study provides statistical account of the data. Qualitative method was employed to allow the codification and interpretation of the WhatsApp text messages and Facebook post and comments. One can really capture what you want to understand about your topic if you try to put the data into a numerical form. Also, qualitative method is great for this topic because it allows the researcher to compare common data procedure for qualitative versus quantitative studies.

Research Site

The study focused on WhatsApp and Facebook as social media platforms where the researcher gathered her data from for the study. On the basis of this study, it will be highly prudent and honourable to study the use of politeness strategies on social media, especially among WhatsApp and Facebook user, in an attempt to communicate with known and anonymous people. The reason for the choice of this research site is the researchers’ interest in social media and being a user of social media, conducting research through online messages is relatively cheaper than traditional methods like face-to-face interviews or survey because it eliminates the need for purchasing printing materials and reduces travel expenses. Online messages will allow the researcher, at any time, to get access to information, making it easier for the reduction the time needed for data collection. Also, online messages allow researchers to reach a larger audience across different

geographical locations, making it easier to collect data from diverse pool of participants. Participants of these media handles may feel comfortable sharing sensitive information since they have the option of being anonymous, which can lead to more honest responses. Since the data is recorded from Facebook and WhatsApp post and comment and WhatsApp messages, the probability of the data accuracy is high; thus, chances of errors in data collection and analysis can be reduced. Research conducted on Facebook and WhatsApp can provide valuable insights into people's behaviours, attitudes, and interactions in online environments.

Method of Sampling

The researcher used a random probability sampling technique, specifically Simple Random Sampling (SRS). By this method, every case of the population has an equal probability of inclusion in the sample. This method of sampling has the greatest freedom from bias but may represent the costliest sample in terms of time and energy for a given level of sample error (Brown, 1947). Also, in some studies such as surveys by collecting messages from people, the cost of obtaining samples can be high if the units are geographically widely scattered (Ghauri & Gronhaug, 2005). A total of 15 group messages were exported from WhatsApp and 15 messages were saved from Facebook groups.

Chain referral sampling was also used. Chain referral sampling first emerged in response to the neglect of social structure and interpersonal relationships in the survey research methods. As Coleman (1958:28) notes, most early analyses overlooked the role of relationships, never including (except by accident) two who were friends. The particular type of chain referral sampling that was used is snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is a chain-referral technique that accumulates data through existing social structures. The researcher begins with a small sample from the target sub-population and then extends the sample by asking other individuals to recommend others for the

study. Chain-referral techniques have the added benefit of providing relatively easy access to “hidden” sub-populations that are almost impossible to sample by standard. Extracts containing politeness strategies were the main focus of the researcher.

Data Collection Procedure

Data is basically the information that is required for investigating a research problem after proper design. Data collection is the process of gathering information and measuring information on variables of interest, in an established systematic fashion that enables one to answer stated research questions, test hypotheses, and evaluate outcomes. The importance of data collection lies in the fact that without gathering the particular information, the research could be carried out. The data may be primary or secondary. Usually, the methods of primary data collection in behavioural sciences include observation methods, interviews, questionnaires, and through databases.

The data for this research was primarily gathered from the posts and comments from Facebook and WhatsApp group messages. These posts and comments from Facebook were saved while the ones (messages) from WhatsApp were exported. Permission was sought from WhatsApp users and Facebook posts and comments were randomly selected. A total of 30 posts and messages were used. These posts and messages were left in their original state for discussion and analysis.

Data Analysis Procedure

According to LeCompte and Schensul (1999), research data analysis is a process used by researchers to reduce data to a story and interpret it to derive insights. The data analysis process helps reduce a large chunk of data into smaller fragments, which makes sense. The data for the research was analyzed mainly from two points of view. The first was based on the research questions. The research questions served as the main framework that guided the research; hence, the data was analyzed to answer these questions. Another procedure for the analysis was based on

the theoretical framework. Based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) belief that the more powerful a person is, the less polite he tends to be, the data was analyzed having this in mind with a view to checking how true the claim is. Linguistic items that show politeness or otherwise were then analyzed.

Problems Encountered

A key problem the researcher encountered was gaining information for analysis. Most WhatsApp users were not willing to export their messages to the researcher. This in turn affected the number of data intended for the research. Even with those who gave their consent, getting the information was delayed. Also, posts from Facebook were difficult to export and the researcher faced challenges in organizing and analyzing the data efficiently and this greatly affected the number of data intended for the research. These problems notwithstanding, the analysis and discussion of the data that were collected were without many problems.

Conclusion

The methodological procedures used in the data collection are presented in this chapter. The issues, thus, discussed in the chapter were sources of data, data collection procedure, sampling technique and sampling size and the method of data analysis. The problems encountered are also presented. The next chapter presents an analysis and discussion of the data collected.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

The previous chapter presented the methodological procedures used for the present study. In this chapter, the analysis carried out on the data and findings arrived at are presented. The chapter deals with the data that was collected from the selected social media platforms. From the data, the linguistic items used to mark politeness were divided into the following categories: lexical items and syntactic structures. These markers enabled the researcher to identify the politeness markers used in the data gathered from the social media, and how they are used to mark politeness. The analysis is done with reference to Brown and Levinson's ((1987) theoretical framework as discussed in Chapter 2. The concept of 'face' is constantly evidenced by the use of features identified in the data as politeness strategies.

4.1 Demographic characteristics of the respondents

The study identified the following demographic characteristics as key in the interpretation and analysis of the data: gender and age. The data are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of fifteen (15) WhatsApp groups

The total respondent is 1637			
Variable	Variable Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Groups	15	1637	100
Gender	Male	658	40
	Female	979	60
Age range	18-22	454	28
	23-27	546	33
	28-40+	637	39

Source: Author's construct (2023)

From Table 1, out of 1637 respondents from fifteen (15) WhatsApp groups, 658 respondents representing 40% of them were males while 979 respondents representing 60% of them were

females. Also, the age range of respondents was categorised according to the various WhatsApp group members. 454 (28%) respondents were between the ages of 18 to 22, 546 (33%) of the respondents were between the ages of 23 to 27, and 637 (39%) of the respondents were between the ages of 28 to 40 and beyond.

Table 2: Socio-demographic characteristics of fifteen (15) Facebook groups

Total respondent is 1305139			
Variable	Variable Category	Frequency	Percentage%
Groups	15	1305139	100
Gender	Male	302115	23
	Female	1003024	77
Age range	15-20	250670	19
		230680	18
	26-30	357450	27
	31-35+	466339	36

Source: Online data (Facebook groups 2023)

From Table 2, out of 1305139 respondents from fifteen Facebook groups, 302115 respondents representing 23% of them were males while 1003024 respondents representing 77% of them were females. Also, the age range of respondents was categorised according to the various Facebook group members. 250670 (19%) respondents were between the ages of 15 to 20, 230680 (18%) of the respondents were between the ages of 21 to 25, 357450 (27%) of the respondents were between the ages of 26 to 30, and 466339 (36%) of the respondents were between the ages of 31 to 35 and beyond.

4.2 LEXICAL ITEMS

In lexicography, a lexical item is a single word, a part of a word, or a chain of words (catena) that forms elements of a language's lexicon. In this study, the researcher's focus is on lexical items or expressions. A given lexical item can be thought of as a facet chosen by a writer to direct a reader's attention to a thing through a particular perspective (Hall, 1994). These lexical words have independent meanings. Lexical items identified in the data as linguistic forms used to mark

politeness were mainly; special discourse markers (please), establishing common grounds, and using jokes.

4.3 What are the various politeness strategies adopted by users of WhatsApp and Facebook in their communication on the social media platforms?

4.3.1 Positive Politeness

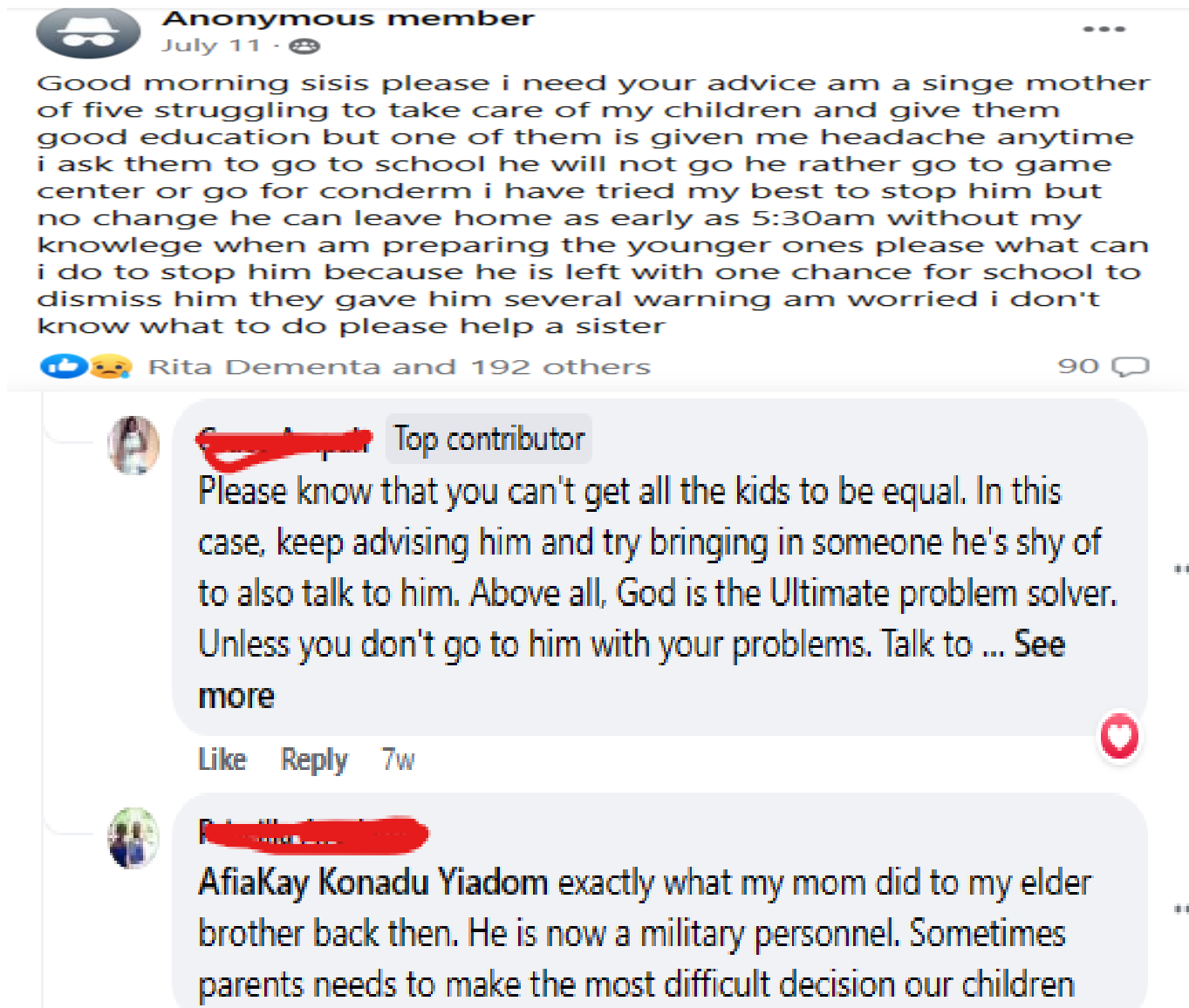
One of the politeness strategies adopted by the selected social media users which occurred often in the data was the use of ‘please’ to show respect or politeness to an addressee. It is considered as polite to use ‘please’ in an utterance whether it is addressing a superior or subordinate. A study by Murphy and De Felice (2017) concludes that the behaviour of ‘please’ is analyzed with regard to factors such as imposition levels, sentence mood, and modal verb type. Also, Leech (2014) posits that politeness is not obligatory; there is a varying gradient of polite and impolite behaviour. There is often a sense of what is normally recognized by members of society, how politeness will occur depends on the situation.

Using ‘Please’ to Mark Positive Politeness

‘Please’ can contribute to positive politeness by showing deference and respect towards the other person. It acknowledges their autonomy and emphasizes cooperation and goodwill in the interaction. ‘Please’ can enhance positive politeness in Facebook, post and comments and WhatsApp messages by adding a polite and considerate tone to the conversation. This is illustrated in Figure 1, data derived from Facebook.

4.4 Facebook group posts and comments

Figure 1



The image is a screenshot of a Facebook post and its comments. At the top, a post from an 'Anonymous member' dated July 11 is visible. The post text describes a single mother's struggle with a child who refuses to go to school, preferring a game center, and asks for advice. Below the post, it shows 'Rita Dementa and 192 others' liked it, with a count of 90 comments. Two comments are visible. The first comment, from a 'Top contributor' whose name is redacted, advises the mother to keep advising the child, bring someone he's shy of, and talk to him, stating that God is the ultimate problem solver. The second comment, from 'AfiaKay Konadu Yiadom', shares a personal anecdote about her brother who became a military personnel after a similar situation. Both comments have double-checkmark icons to their right, indicating they are verified or helpful. The first comment has a heart icon at the bottom right, and the second has a double-checkmark icon at the bottom right.

Anonymous member
July 11 · 🌐

Good morning sis please i need your advice am a singe mother of five struggling to take care of my children and give them good education but one of them is given me headache anytime i ask them to go to school he will not go he rather go to game center or go for conderm i have tried my best to stop him but no change he can leave home as early as 5:30am without my knowlege when am preparing the younger ones please what can i do to stop him because he is left with one chance for school to dismiss him they gave him several warning am worried i don't know what to do please help a sister

👍🥹 Rita Dementa and 192 others 90 💬

 **[Redacted]** Top contributor

Please know that you can't get all the kids to be equal. In this case, keep advising him and try bringing in someone he's shy of to also talk to him. Above all, God is the Ultimate problem solver. Unless you don't go to him with your problems. Talk to ... See more

Like Reply 7w ❤️

 **[Redacted]**

AfiaKay Konadu Yiadom exactly what my mom did to my elder brother back then. He is now a military personnel. Sometimes parents needs to make the most difficult decision our children

Source: **SISTER 2 SISTER (Facebook)**

In Figure 1, both posters and commenters used 'Please' in their online communication to foster a sense of politeness, respect, and consideration. It adds a courteous tone and helps create a positive impression in the post and using 'Please' to comment on a post shows politeness and gratitude, especially when seeking for information. Thus, the poster trying to seek information uses 'please' to foster a friendly atmosphere to get the necessary information needed and the commenter also uses 'Please' to promote better communication and cooperation.

Another instance is when requesting someone's opinion, 'Please' can be used to mark positive politeness. Using 'Please' in these instances shows respect and consideration for other person's time and willingness to help. Figure 2 below is an instance of the use of 'please' in data obtained from WhatsApp.

4.5 WhatApps Group Chats

Figure 2

30/03/2023, 4:53 pm - +233 54 703 2897: Hi
30/03/2023, 5:03 pm - +233 55 657 7029: Hello good evening everyone
30/03/2023, 5:04 pm - +233 24 848 9211: Evening
30/03/2023, 5:05 pm - +233 55 657 7029: Please we want to contribute money to buy something for our lecture
30/03/2023, 5:06 pm - +233 25 771 2769: Ok
30/03/2023, 5:06 pm - +233 25 771 2769: Please How much
30/03/2023, 5:07 pm - +233 55 657 7029: From 5cedis to 20
30/03/2023, 5:08 pm - +233 25 771 2769: Ok
30/03/2023, 5:09 pm - +233 55 657 7029: We want to make a hamper of provisions for him
30/03/2023, 5:10 pm - +233 55 657 7029: Like a bag of rice , oil, sardines, milk etc
30/03/2023, 5:10 pm - +233 25 771 2769: Ok
30/03/2023, 5:11 pm - +233 55 657 7029: Please am only suggesting ,u can also bring another idea
30/03/2023, 5:12 pm - +233 25 771 2769: The picture frame is good
30/03/2023, 5:14 pm - +233 25 771 2769: We can do the hamper and do the picture frame as well
30/03/2023, 5:14 pm - +233 25 771 2769: The picture frame is only 70ghc
30/03/2023, 5:31 pm - +233 55 275 9265: And how sure are you that none of the previous batches had ever given him a hamper too
30/03/2023, 5:42 pm - +233 55 657 7029: Becos he has a lot of the frame already
30/03/2023, 5:42 pm - +233 25 771 2769: Ok
30/03/2023, 5:43 pm - +233 25 771 2769: please, when are we sending the money
30/03/2023, 5:43 pm - +233 55 657 7029: And most people don't think of the hamper ideas, always frame
30/03/2023, 5:43 pm - +233 55 657 7029: The money can be sent to me and use your name as the reference
30/03/2023, 5:44 pm - +233 55 657 7029: So I will write it down
30/03/2023, 5:44 pm - +233 25 771 2769: Ok
30/03/2023, 5:44 pm - +233 55 657 7029: Momo number : 0556577029 , Rita Amoah
30/03/2023, 5:44 pm - +233 25 771 2769: Ok
30/03/2023, 5:45 pm - +233 55 657 7029: Please don't forget to use your name as the reference
30/03/2023, 5:45 pm - +233 55 768 5673: How much are we paying?
30/03/2023, 5:45 pm - +233 55 657 7029: From 5cedis to 20cedis , any amount you can afford
30/03/2023, 5:45 pm - +233 55 657 7029: Please I want to know how many agrees with the hamper
30/03/2023, 5:47 pm - +233 55 768 5673: It's an hamper?
30/03/2023, 5:48 pm - +233 55 657 7029: Yh
30/03/2023, 5:48 pm - +233 55 657 7029: Only provisions
30/03/2023, 5:49 pm - +233 20 302 5772: Yes or a citation
30/03/2023, 5:51 pm - +233 55 657 7029: No, he has plenty already , let make our own unique
30/03/2023, 5:51 pm - +233 20 302 5772: Ok
30/03/2023, 5:53 pm - +233 55 657 7029: Please if you agree with the hamper send a tumps up imoji
30/03/2023, 5:54 pm - +233 20 302 5772: 
30/03/2023, 5:54 pm - +233 55 657 7029: 
30/03/2023, 5:55 pm - +233 24 848 9211: 

Source: CMS 107 (WhatsApp group 2023)

In Figure 2, 'Please' is used to show that the person is making a request rather than giving a command or demand, and the commenter uses *Please* to acknowledge the choice to fulfil the request or not. Using 'Please' can also build a positive relationship between the two parties and increase the likelihood of the request being granted.

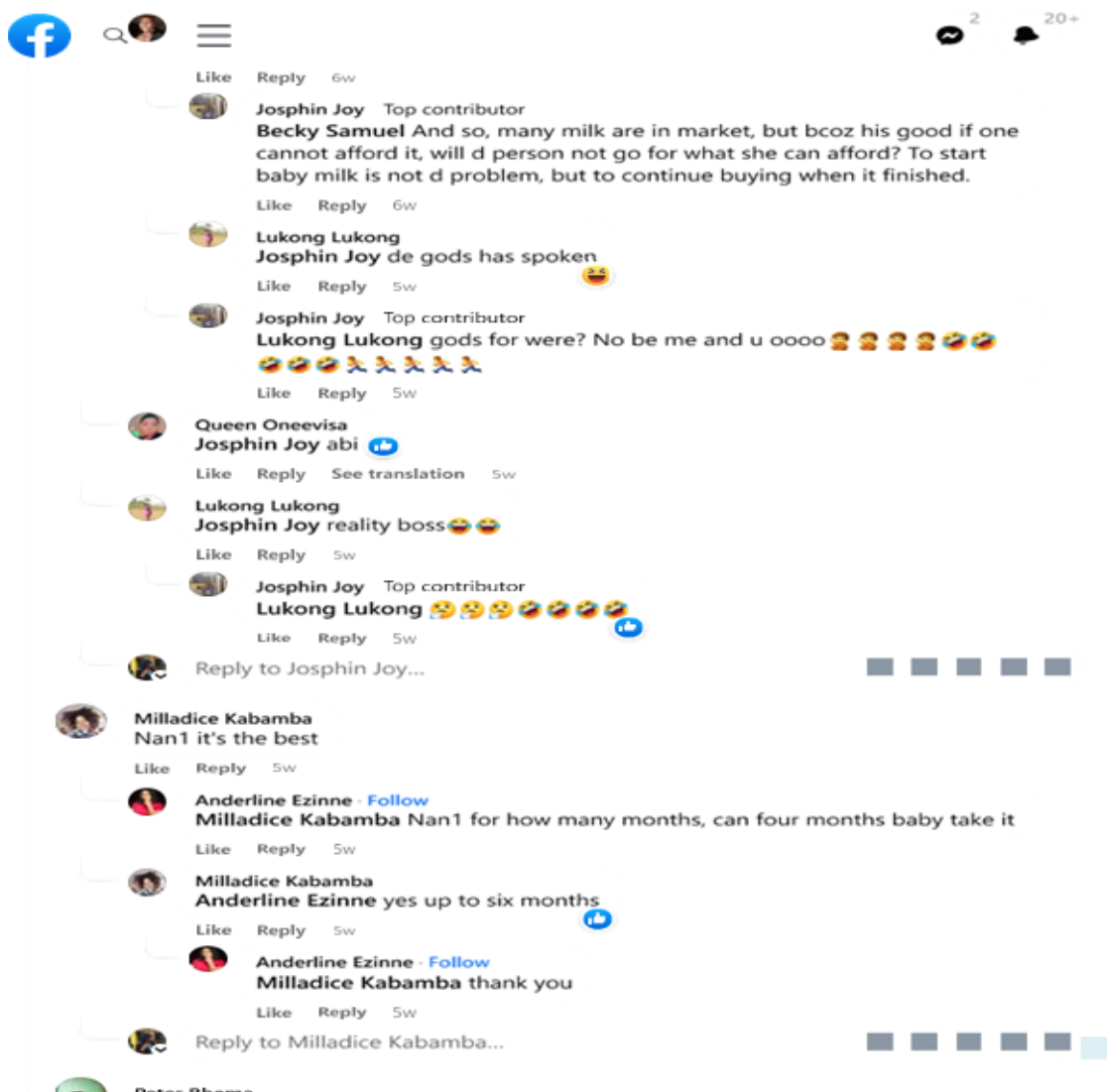
The Use of Modals to Mark Positive Politeness

Modals such as 'can', 'could', 'would', and 'will' can mark positive politeness strategies in online communication by expressing request, offers, or suggestions in a polite and considerate manner. The use of modals adds a polite tone and shows respect for the other person's willingness to help. It enhances positive politeness by acknowledging the other person's autonomy and creating a more harmonious online interaction. The modal verb 'Should' can be used to mark positive politeness online by suggesting a course of action that is beneficial for the other person. 'Should' is used to suggest or recommend an action without sounding too direct or imposing. It is a way of showing consideration for the other person's feelings and opinions.

Figure 3 shows the use of modals to mark positive politeness.



Figure 3



Source: TELL IT MUM (FACEBOOK)

Figure 4

30/06/2023, 4:37 pm - +233 24 008 3697: Pls does it take a long time before Momo quickloan is credited in the Momo account, 😞😞😞

30/06/2023, 4:38 pm - +233 20 885 9392: Nowadays d3333r saa

30/06/2023, 4:38 pm - +233 20 885 9392: One hour minimum

30/06/2023, 4:38 pm - +233 24 008 3697: Ohhhk, thanks

30/06/2023, 5:39 pm - +233 54 276 1525: Eeeeei baabaaa ay3 hyehyehye. No be joke ooo.

30/06/2023, 5:49 pm - +233 24 008 3697: Due to technical problem we are unable to credit your account dial *170# to apply again 😞😞😞😞😞😞

30/06/2023, 5:51 pm - +233 20 239 0913: Any quick loan services available

30/06/2023, 5:54 pm - +233 24 939 6761: Eiiiiii asem aba

30/06/2023, 7:03 pm - +233 54 413 1949: They are reviewing the interest, that's why....

03/07/2023, 9:38 pm - +233 54 852 8417: So much noise,, validation drop anaaa

03/07/2023, 9:41 pm - +233 24 772 5077: <Media omitted>

03/07/2023, 9:42 pm - +233 54 852 8417: Aww,,hmm

03/07/2023, 9:44 pm - +233 24 772 5077: 😊😂😂😂

04/07/2023, 12:09 am - +233 20 239 0913: I went for salary advance already

04/07/2023, 12:09 am - +233 24 008 3697: <Media omitted>

04/07/2023, 12:10 am - +233 24 108 3457: You have the right, it's your money but at end of the month hmmm 😊

04/07/2023, 5:21 am - +233 20 239 0913: Hmmm

04/07/2023, 6:52 pm - +233 54 820 9606: Pls can someone explain to me why the affordability on CARD changes, mine was about 800 plus and now 500 plus. It was initially 500plus and changed to 800 plus early this month but has gone back to 500plus

04/07/2023, 6:55 pm - +233 50 174 5367: This means that jdrif debdhekdnx nrjdifncnc hehdjdbcofjfb jeirjrbdeojbd rhiejhdhd is not stable 😂😂😂

Source: GCB Alert (WhatsApp)

In Figure 4, 'can' is used to inquire about something one needs to know and the commenter also used 'can' to reply to maintain a polite and friendly tone while offering assistance. 'Can' might also be used to express requests, seek permission, or inquire about someone's ability or availability.

4.3.2 Negative Politeness Strategies

Negative politeness strategies are used by Facebook and WhatsApp addressers in order to avoid imposing their views on Facebook and WhatsApp addressees. In the data, negative politeness used includes indirect speech acts, particularly request, and hedging, showing that the addressers are not imposing and attributing all responsibility by personalization.

The Use of Indirect Speech Acts

Indirect Speech Acts were identified by Brown and Levinson as one of the politeness strategies used to mark politeness. The Brown and Levinson theory explains that politeness utterances are based on contextually expected concern for face, which they call politeness weightiness. Brown and Levinson's speech act has been widely used in politeness studies and has received extensive empirical support (Dickey, 2016). Searle (1975) defines indirect speech acts as an utterance in which one illocutionary act is intentionally performed by means of the performance of another act. Indirect speech acts adopt a negative politeness strategy. Indirect speech acts are mostly used for request and orders. Requests such as 'I wish', and 'I appeal' were used to mitigate FTAs and mark politeness. These requests and orders are considered directives, according to Searle, and considered highly competitive according to Leech, which directly threatens the face of the people involved in a conversation.

Figure 5 below is an example of using indirect speech to mark negative politeness, as seen in the data.

Figure 5


Anonymous member
 July 10 · 🌐

Please administrator approve:
 I hope what I am about to do is not bad. When everyone sees their children as blessing to them, my husband sees our three children as evil, and treats them like animals. My children get panic when returning home from school and when their father is coming home, they run to hide from them. I have asked my husband many times why he maltreat my children, he doesn't give me tangible reasons. He will conclude he is training them. My children are indoors when daddy is around. I have prayed, I have fasted, people have talk to him still. I am a well to do hard working woman, I have saved enough to rent apartments for three years and by three years move to my own house. I want to take my children away. I don't want my children to pass through a father of tiger. I want to move out and let my children be happy. My children education and life is going down because of fear. I have talk to them, but still. The first child 13, 10 and 8.
 Will it be wrong to move out of marriage to make my children happy?

👍👎🗨️ 735 386 comments

Which kind of fear? What does your husband do to them?
 How does he treat them like animals?
 Remember, it takes both negative and positive sides to raise children and they will understand it best when they grow old.
 I'm surprised you did not mention what he does to them but a lot of people seem to know about it and giving you advice on it.
 Do come clearer madam. Thanks.

Like Reply 7w Edited 60

 **Aj Okoh** Top contributor
~~Someone told me~~ exactly my question. No info on what he's doing but everyone says she should leave

Like Reply 7w

 **Abishag** ~~Someone told me~~
~~Someone told me~~ exactly the same thing i wrote. She should have stated de exact things he does to them so we get de picture clear.

Like Reply 7w

 **Dymond Spark** Top contributor
~~Someone told me~~ how would u feel if u start running and panicking just at the sight of ur father..I don't tink she will cook up a story to post here..her statement"treating them like animals should be enough to know the kind of treatment he gives to this kids in the name of discipline.. 3ne3 s3 like by now some of us will be panicking when we see men..

Like Reply 7w Edited 27

 **Dymond Spark** Absolutely my Sister 🙏🙏🙏

Like Reply 7w

Source: TELL IT MOMS (Facebook group 2023)

Figure 6

04/07/2023, 9:04 pm - Franca@ucc: Guys please if you would want to register kindly dm with your name and money. It's just 5cedis

05/07/2023, 9:03 am - Franca@ucc: <Media omitted>

05/07/2023, 2:58 pm - +233 24 174 4302: I remember there was a time that man was sort of 'down' and poured my heart out on my stats (About the Agenda) and @233558275793 was making some funny comments about how one can be sad in this country and lot of funny comments...

@233558275793, guessed you've heard of the KNUST guy attempting to commit suicide? Life isn't easy and the word DEPRESSION kills faster than even COVID...

Let's all learn to be there for each other and not to reject some people just because "I'm not that cool with him/her", "As for me, s/he is not my friend oo" and other stuffs... Let's HALT!

Thank you!

05/07/2023, 2:58 pm - Princessyayra ❤️🎵🎵❤️ @linguistics: Welcome

05/07/2023, 3:01 pm - Princessyayra ❤️🎵🎵❤️ @linguistics: You err 😊

05/07/2023, 3:01 pm - Princessyayra ❤️🎵🎵❤️ @linguistics: But he talk sense cus hmm

05/07/2023, 3:03 pm - +233 24 174 4302: You won't understand why he wants to do that or why one would go to that extent because, s/he knows what's going on...

05/07/2023, 3:03 pm - +233 24 174 4302: One may be able to handle or to endure but the other can't just as one can handle but will give up along the way... A lot is going on in our(youth) lives that we don't talk about....

05/07/2023, 6:59 pm - Lexis UCC Debate: Good evening lovely people.

Please all those who said they'll pay through momo should pay to *0591627344. *

Name is Francisca Ayitey.

Those who have promised to pay tomorrow should kindly pay through the same number.

Deadline is 12pm tomorrow.

We're not taking anything after that.

You can still come and watch the movie if you don't pay the 5 cedis though but that'll be 10 cedis.

Thank you.

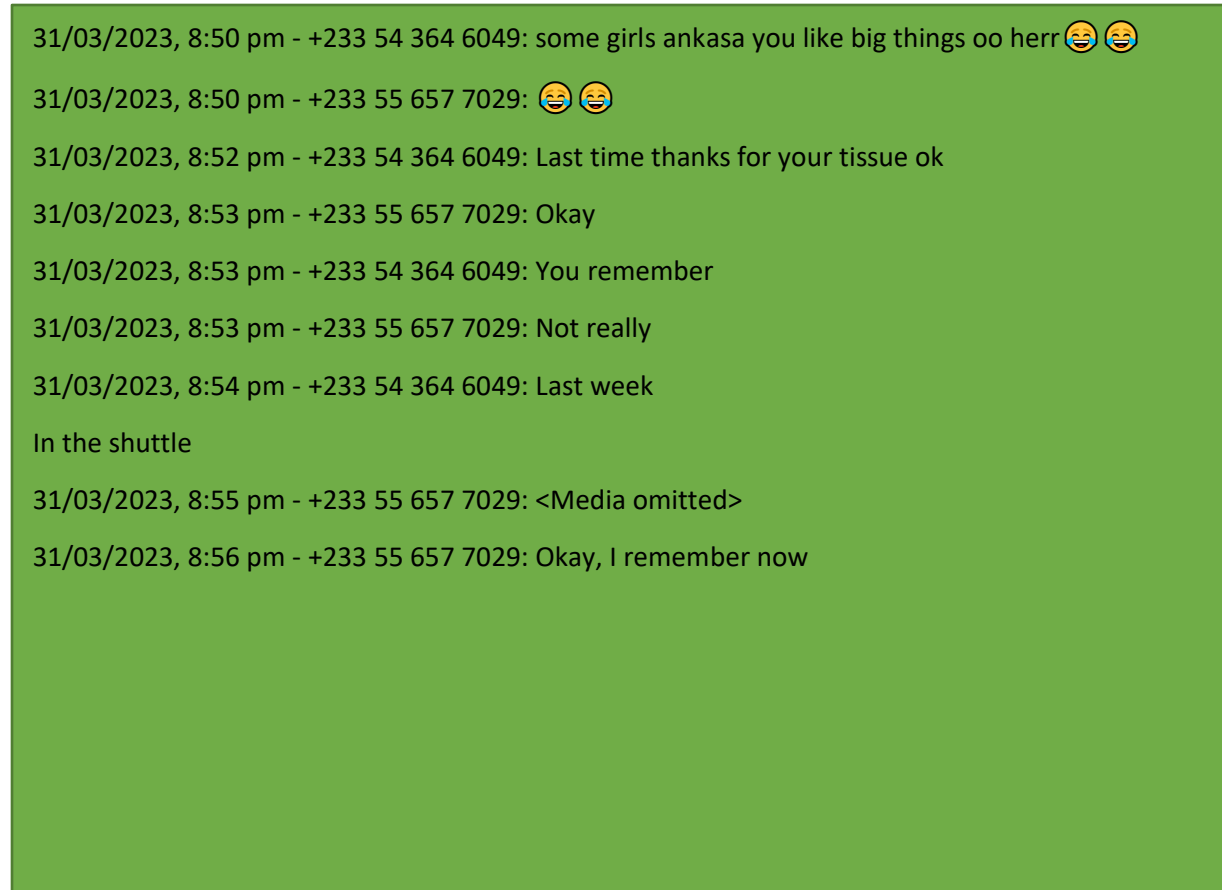
Source: Linguistics Level 400 (WhatsApp group 2023)

In Figure 6 too, there is the use of indirect strategies to make the speech of one of the interlocutors more interesting, when they want to reach goals different from their partners' or when they want to increase the force of the message communicated (Thomas, 1995). The poster often prefers indirect speech acts so that they do not infringe the addressee's face.

Hedging

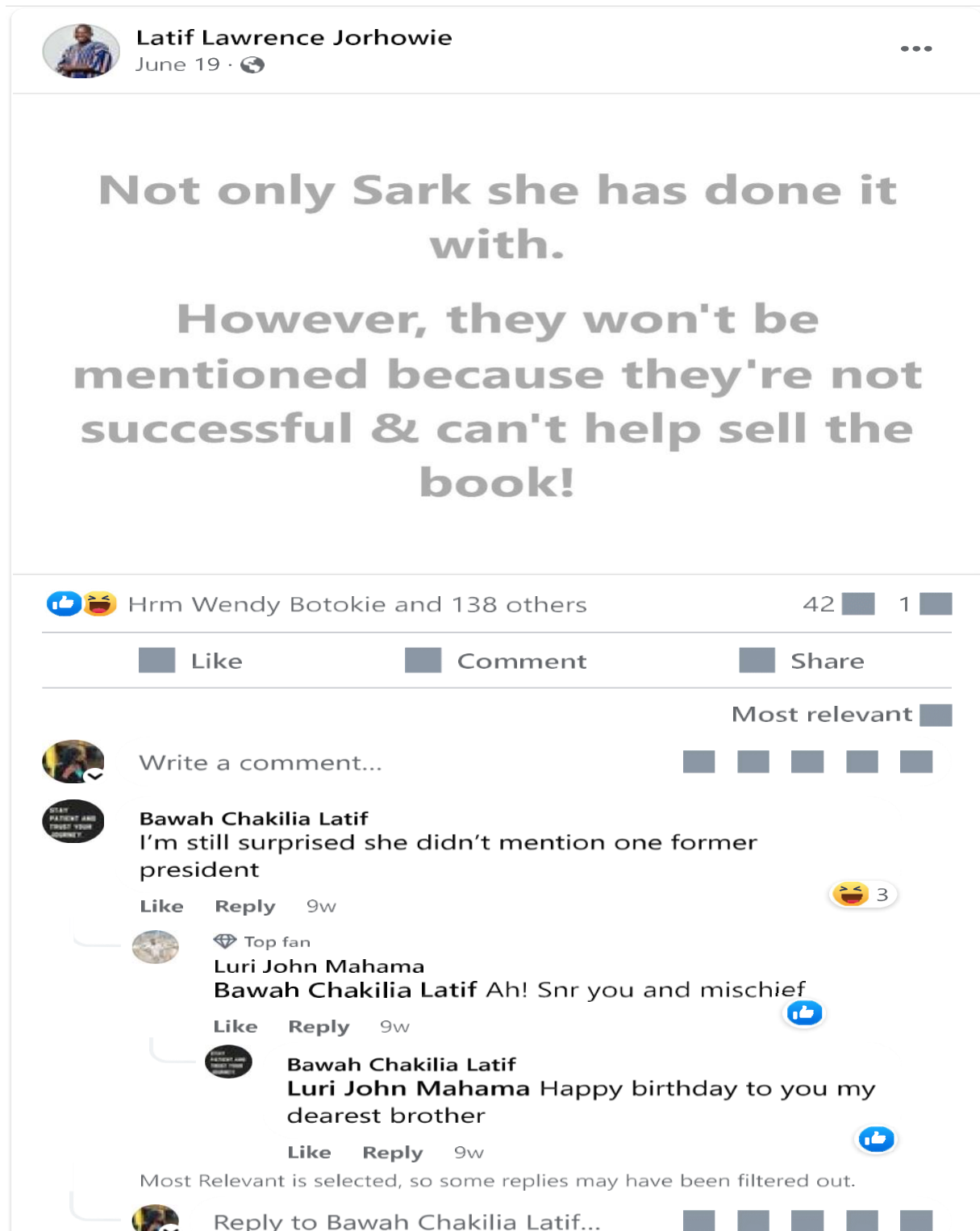
Hedges are words or expressions that lend an air of vagueness to claims. Hedges considerably weaken the force of a claim without totally denying it. A hedging expression, therefore, blurs selected social media users' intention with regards to the claims they make about an issue. Brown and Levinson (2000) offered a broader definition of the term *hedging*: a particle, word or phrase that modifies the degree of membership of a predicate or a noun phrase in a set, [and] says of that membership that it is partial or true only in certain respects, that it is more true and complete than perhaps might be expected. Hedges were also used by selected social media users to mitigate Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) and this marks politeness. A hedge modifies the illocutionary force of a speech. It does this by indicating something about social media commitment towards their utterance as not wanting to threaten the face of the addressee. Words such as 'some' are all hedges that soften FTAs in an utterance.

Figure 7



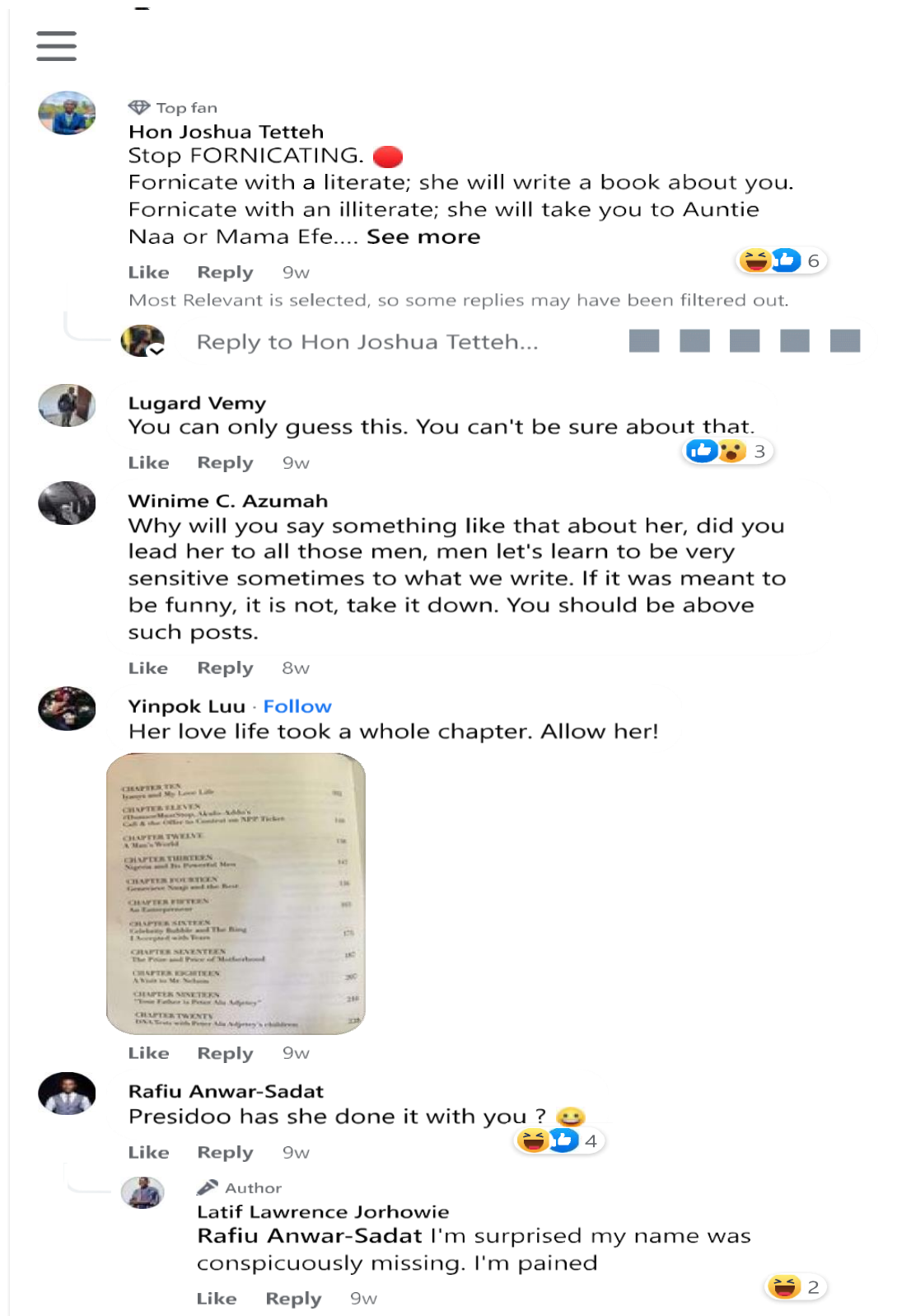
Source: CMS group 50 and 51 (WhatsApp)

Figure 8.0



Source: Individual Post (Facebook, 2023)

Figure 8.1



Source: Individual Post (Facebook, 2023)

In Figures 8.0 and 8.1, the addressers use hedging in the communication to help maintain a polite and respectful atmosphere. The use of these hedging devices acknowledges the potential for differing opinions, allows for open dialog, and helps prevent misunderstanding or conflicts. The use of hedging in online discussions helps users to express their ideas while being considerate of others.

Table 3: Data from WhatsApp and Facebook

Variable Category	Positive	Negative	Total
WhatsApp	75%	25%	100
No. people	1228	409	1637
Facebook	80%	20%	100
	1044111	261028	1305139

Source: Data Collected from WhatsApp and Facebook 2023

From Table 3, out of 1637 members from fifteen WhatsApp groups, 1228 members representing 75% used positive politeness while 409 members representing 25% used negative politeness. Also, out of 1305139 members from fifteen Facebook groups, 80% of the members, thus 1044111 members, used politeness while 261028, that is 20%, used negative politeness.

4.6 Why do users of WhatsApp and Facebook choose the politeness strategies in the communicative event they are engaged?

The choice of those politeness strategies by users of WhatsApp and Facebook in the communicative event they are engaged in is influenced by various forms of language which do not meet the standard language, the use of other non-verbal representations such as emoticon and pronunciation, that is writing the spoken language. The choice of utterances is affected by relative status, social distance, and range of imposition (Oktiva, 2021). Also, a combination of individual preferences, social norms, platform features, and context contribute to the choice of politeness

strategies used by WhatsApp and Facebook users in their communicative event they are engaged in.

Social Identity and Relationship: People often choose politeness strategies based on their relationship with the recipient. If the interaction involves close friends, family members, or people with whom they share a strong bond, individuals might use informal and familiar forms of address. On the other hand, when addressing individuals, they have a more distant or formal relationship with, they might opt for more polite and formal language. Using polite language and showing respect for others can help create a friendly and amicable atmosphere which is essential for effective communication with friends, family, and acquaintances as it helps to build trust and empathy between individuals, which is essential for maintaining healthy relationships.

Informal Communication between Friends, Family, and Acquaintances: Using polite language and showing respect for others can help create a friendly and amicable atmosphere which is essential for effective communication with friends, family, and acquaintances as it helps to build trust and empathy between individuals, which is essential for maintaining healthy relationship. Instead of criticising someone for their behaviour, one can express appreciation for their efforts and suggest ways to improve. Humour and light-heartedness in online communication also help to diffuse tense situations and create a relaxed atmosphere where people feel comfortable expressing themselves. It also shows the speaker is approachable and free.

Platform Norms: Different social media platforms have their own cultural norms and user expectations. For instance, platforms like Twitter tend to be more informal and conversational, which might lead to the use of less formal addressing. However, platforms like LinkedIn, which are oriented towards professional networking, might encourage more formal address systems.

Users of WhatsApp and Facebook may feel pressure to conform to the norms of the platform and use politeness strategies that are consistent with these norms.

Character Limitations: Some platforms impose character limitations, requiring users to convey their message within a restricted space. This can lead to the use of abbreviations, acronyms, or informal language, affecting the choice of address system.

Cultural Norms: Cultural background significantly influences how people address each other. In some cultures, the use of titles and honorifics is essential, even in online communication. In others, a more casual and informal style might be the norm.

Community and Audience: The type of address used can also depend on the audience of a particular post or message. If the post is directed at a specific community or interest group, the address might align with the conventions of that community.

Communication Purpose: The purpose of the communication plays a role. If the communication is informative or professional, individuals might lean towards more formal address. However, if it is meant to be humorous or casual, informal address system might be preferred.

Power Dynamics: Power dynamics between the individuals involved can also influence the choice of address. For example, addressing a celebrity or an authority figure might lead to the use of more formal language.

Personal Style: Some individuals have a personal style of communication that they carry across all platforms. This can include a preference for informal or formal address system, regardless of the context.

Social Media Literacy: Competence in using social media also affects address choices. Some users might be less familiar with platform norms and might unintentionally use an address system that does not match the context.

Privacy Concerns: Some users might choose to use fewer personal forms of address systems to maintain privacy and limit the personal information they share online.

Overall, users of WhatsApp and Facebook choose the politeness strategies in the communicative event they are engaged in based on individual preferences, cultural norms, platform dynamics, and the specific context of the communication. People navigate these factors to achieve effective communication and convey the desired level of politeness and familiarity in their interactions.

4.7 Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter, the words used to identify the politeness strategies used in the data were lexical items. It was also realized that the social media platforms used address terms and the adverb ‘please’ at the lexical level. Politeness strategies used in the data to mark politeness included hedges, modals, requests, and indirect speech acts. These strategies are used to mark either negative or positive politeness. Table 3 showing the frequency of the markers already discussed is provided in this chapter. The table shows that ‘please’ is the most used; modals were mostly used to mark positive politeness while hedges, request, and indirect speech were the least used to mark politeness. The choice of politeness strategies used by WhatsApp and Facebook users in the communicative event they are engaged in was a combination of individual preferences, social norms, platform features, and context. Different address systems can convey varying levels of politeness, familiarity, and formality. The next chapter will give a summary and conclusion of the long essay and make recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

This chapter gives a total summary of the study undertaken. It also brings into perspective the conclusion drawn from the study and makes recommendations for further research. Data was collected from fifteen groups from Facebook and fifteen groups from WhatsApp. Using this data, the research sought to find out the politeness strategies on some selected social media platforms. The problem that the researcher set out to investigate in this research were guided by the following questions:

1. What are the various politeness strategies adopted by users of WhatsApp and Facebook in their communication on the social media platforms?
2. Why do users of WhatsApp and Facebook choose the politeness strategies in the communicative event they are engaged?

Summary of Findings

After embarking on the study, the researcher came out with these findings. It was realized from the data that some Facebook and WhatsApp users used 'Please' and modals such as 'can', 'could', 'should', and 'will' to mark positive politeness. Indirect speech acts such as 'I wish', 'I appeal', and hedging such as 'some', were also used to mark negative politeness. The analysis was based on 15 groups from Facebook and 15 groups from WhatsApp: out of 1637 of the WhatsApp groups used, 1228 used positive politeness representing 75% and 409 used negative politeness representing 25%, the Facebook groups that was used made use of 1305139 with 1044111 using

positive politeness and 261028 representing 80% and 20% respectively. The researcher's analysis on why users of WhatsApp and Facebook choose the politeness strategies in the communicative event they are engaged revealed that the reason were social identity and relationship informal communication between friends, family, and acquaintances, platform norms, character limitations, cultural norms. community and audience, communication purpose, power dynamics, personal style, social media literacy, and privacy concerns.

Recommendations

Firstly, an interested researcher could further move beyond politeness in the pragmatic area and deal with other aspects of language. Notably, in semantics, one can study the specific features and dynamics of communication of each platform. Also, one can analyze the role of context and cultural norms in shaping politeness strategies, and investigate the impact of different message formats (text, emojis, stickers) on politeness.

More so, the Application developers can develop a novel text-mining methodology to mine politeness from chats on WhatsApp and posts and comments from Facebook. They can also implement user-friendly interfaces that promote clear and respectful communication and develop algorithms and filters to detect and flag offensive content. Lastly, users of social media can be educated on online etiquette and be provided with guidelines on respectful communication, and built-in tools for reporting and blocking abusive or inappropriate behaviour should be made available.

Conclusion

The researcher set out to determine the politeness strategies adopted by Facebook and WhatsApp users. The analysis for the research was done using qualitative and quantitative approaches. The two approaches were deemed necessary because the purpose of the research was to find the frequency of the occurrence of positive and negative politeness strategies by Facebook and WhatsApp users. The analysis of the data was also based on Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness. The data was analyzed in relation to 'face'. The politeness strategy adopted showed whether they were marking negative politeness or positive politeness. It could be seen from the analysis that most of the politeness markers were geared toward maintaining the positive face of the addressee. The selected social media users were more concerned with making sure that they did not impose on the addressee's face.

Finally, one can say that from the data analysis, users of WhatsApp and Facebook choose the politeness strategies in the communicative event they are engaged due to social identity and relationship informal communication between friends, family, and acquaintances, platform norms, character limitations, cultural norms. community and audience, communication purpose, power dynamics, personal style, social media literacy, and privacy concerns. It is for this reason that they adopt politeness strategies such as hedging, indirect speech acts, and requests to mark negative politeness, and the use of 'please' and 'modals' to mark positive politeness.

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