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Politeness in Print Media Political Interviews in Nigeria

Abstract. Unlike earlier studies that have examined political discourse with the media from the theoretical angles of community of practice, face work, or modified version of face work, the present research explores print media political interviews in two Nigerian news magazines, *TELL* and *The News*, using a revised version of the theory of relational work. Political interviews appearing in sixty editions of each of the magazines published between 2000 and 2004 were purposively sampled and analysed. Judging relational work to be sufficiently broad to accommodate other politeness models, especially face work, this paper, in analyzing media political interviews in Nigeria, incorporates into the frame relational work, relevant portions of face work and specific aspects of contextualisation theories. It demonstrates that to achieve politeness, participants in print media political interviews in Nigeria work on three contextual beliefs, namely, shared knowledge of subjects, shared knowledge of political gimmicks, and shared knowledge of ideological expectations. It shows that participants in the interviews put up politic, polite and impolite verbal behaviours, which are respectively indexed by confrontations and criticisms, veils, and condemnations and accusations. These indexes are respectively achieved with context-based understanding of discourse and activity types, face-threatening acts with redress, and face threatening acts without redress (bald on record). The paper concludes that the revised relational work theory enhances a clearer understanding of media political interviews and explains more clearly the beliefs and tendencies that participants invoke in the interactions.

INTRODUCTION

Approaches to politeness research have distinguished between behaviour that is polite and that which is not, largely picking cues from Brown and Levinson (1987) (See Fraser 1990; Escandell – Vidal 1996; Meier 1995a,b; Lakoff 1995; and Leech 1983). While this research direction is justifiable, it has not been able to account for the whole gamut of realizations of politeness phenomena in human society (cf Locher and Watts 2005).

Canonical studies on politeness, with possible exceptions of Watts (1989, 1992, 2003), Kasper (1990), Eelen (2001), Locher (2004) and Locher and Watts (2005), have largely preferred second order politeness to first order politeness (cf Watts et.al 1992, Kienpointner 1999), and consequently have seen politeness differently from non-linguists (Locher and Watts 2005). For example, Brown and Levinson’s theory of politeness, comprehensive and practicable though it is, have dealt exclusively with face work, which covers issuance of threats and their mitigation. It is this narrow coverage that has attracted the observation that the theory is not a theory of politeness but rather of face work. This conclusion is obviously reached because the theory has no answer for contexts where mitigation of face-threats is not considered very important, for example aggressive or rude behaviour; and it does not account for behaviour that can be tagged ‘appropriate’ ‘unmarked’ or ‘politic’ which is not necessarily polite (Locher and Watts 2005). If, in a humorous context, a wife tells her husband, “Darling, that’s rather ridiculous”, it may not be correct to tag the utterance ‘rude or ‘impolite’. Also, in peer interaction in Nigeria, especially among men, young or old, of Yoruba extraction, it is common to be made in exchanges, with no ill-feelings from any of the parties in the interaction. Such utterances are simply taken to be politic or appropriate. In each of the contexts, the activity type constrains the rating of the utterances made.

Fraser (1990), Escandell – Vidal (1996) and Meier (1995a,b) establish a clear dichotomy between what is polite and what is not. Fraser (1990) emphasizes the factor of norm breaching in conversations and ventures to differentiate between “impolite/appropriate and appropriate / politic / polite behaviours, but [does not] shed any light on whether there is a distinction between polite and merely appropriate behaviour” (Locher and Watts 2005:13). As a step further, Meier (1995 a, b) has suggested that the term *polite* should be replaced with *appropriate*. Meier (1995 b: 387) thus claims that politeness does “what is socially acceptable”. Lakoff (1973) and Leech (1983) adopt an approach that concentrates on social maxims, but they, like other researchers, do not tell what is polite from what is merely appropriate.

It is on the way to a more appropriate theoretical description of the politeness phenomena that the relational work approach has been proposed (Watts 1989, 1992, 2003, Locher and Watts 2005) which incorporates all the concepts: “polite”, “impolite”, and “politic”/appropriate”.

According to Locher and Watts (2005:10:)

Brown and Levinson’s framework can still be used, however, if we look at the strategies they have proposed to be possible realizations of what we call relational work.

The relational work approach, while taking account of face-threats and their mitigation, does not emphasize their overt application. While we accept Locherian and Wattsonian relational work, we believe that the approach would be better representative if it more clearly spells out the components of its terminologies by overtly integrating Brown and Levinson’s face-threats and mitigations at appropriate points. The question of face want is vital in human interaction, and cannot just be made to go silently into the frame of relational work without playing a conspicuous role. This paper therefore proposes a modification of the concept of relational work for better workability. To this end, it offers a modified model of relational work with reference to political interviews in the print media in Nigeria. This immediately separates the present work

from Mullany (2002), Christie (2002), Harris (2003), Garcia-Pastor (2006), and others that have adopted the community of practice approach, the face work approach or a modified version of the face work approach to political discourse. Another divergence between the present work and earlier work on media political discourse is that it studies political interviews in print media, where very little effort has been expended in the literature.

Political interviews in sixty editions of *TELL* and *The News*, the most popular and widely read news magazines in Nigeria, were studied for politeness features. The editions studied were those published between January, 2000, and December, 2004. Only the interviews conducted with renowned politicians and old/serving government functionaries were sampled to clearly delineate our concept of politicians. By politicians, therefore, we mean not only members of political parties, some of whom are elected or selected into certain political offices, but also every serving functionary in a regime. Political interviews are largely previously arranged with the politicians, and, like many other media interviews in Nigeria, are edited for ideological compliance and grammatical correctness. But this editing does not affect the politeness features examined in the interviews, as they have very little to do with the forms of editing.

Theorizing Politeness and Relational Work

About nine theories of politeness have been recognized in the literature. These include those of Lakoff, Brown and Levinson, Leech, Ide, Blum Kulka, Gu, Fraser and Nolan, Arndt and Janney, and Watts (cf Eden 2001). Except Watts' as said earlier, all the others have related foci in concentrating on the distinction between polite and impolite behaviour, with a few partially treading the ground of politic or acceptable acts. Also, as earlier argued, Brown and Levinson's theory has towered above the others in this direction. We shall therefore review their theory of face-work and that of relational work (Watts, 2003; Locher and Watts 2005) with a view to adopting the latter, adding a few overt terminological and operational elements from the former.

Following Goffman (1967), Brown and Levinson (1987) built their theory of politeness on the concept of face, itself originating from the notion of deference and politeness in the Far East, where a good deal of importance is attached to losing or gaining face. Face is the “public self image of a person” (Yule 1996:60), i.e., the emotional and social feeling of self which an individual has and expects others to recognize (Yule 1996, Odebunmi 2003, Adegbite and Odebunmi 2004). This idea results in two types of face: positive face and negative face. Positive face occurs when the individual desires to be liked, approved of, respected and appreciated. Negative face is staged when the individual desires freedom from imposition by others. It has been observed, however, that cultures differ in realizations of negative or positive face.

Brown and Levinson (1987) allocate a large amount of space to mitigation of threat in their theory of politeness. For them, politeness ensures smooth human relations and avoids whatever can cause damage to another person’s face. Essentially, a person’s face is either saved or threatened. The former occurs when the person’s face wants are met; the latter results when the opposite occurs. Within positive and negative faces are integrated threatening acts (FTAs), i.e., illocutionary acts that can damage or threaten an individual’s positive or negative face. FTAs can be performed on record or off record. Using the off record strategy, the speaker is able to avoid taking responsibility for an action by opting for conversational implicatures or adopting vagueness and ambiguity. If the speaker goes on record, he/she is able to perform the FTA with or without redressive action. In either positive or negative face, the speaker gives attention to the face needs of the hearer.

Brown and Levinson (1987) design positive politeness strategies that could account for conversational interactions, giving consideration to the hearer’s positive face needs, by demonstrating “that the hearer’s wants or needs are thought of as desirable” (Mullany 2002:3). Also provided are negative politeness strategies, “where the speaker desires not to impose on the

hearer by restricting the hearer's actions, thus paying attention to the hearer's negative face needs" (ibid).

The politeness theory of face work as proposed by Brown and Levinson has had to contend with many criticisms. It has been observed that the theory does not give consideration to the fact that cultures and situations vary; does not consider the time and the way to use the rules and maxims of politeness proposed; assumes that particular expressions bear politeness or impoliteness inherently; concentrates on individual utterances rather than connected discourse, and most importantly, as will be reiterated later, cannot handle rude or aggressive situations (Blum-Kulka 1987; Fraser 1990; Gu 1990; Watts 1992; Agha 1994). However, these criticisms notwithstanding, the theory has been successfully applied to larger corpora of natural language usages. Yet the theory is not considered sufficient for the present study because in addition to cases of mitigation and redressive action, the media political discourse sampled contains a high degree of impoliteness and politic utterances, which face work cannot handle. That is why we have attempted to locate face work in the expanded frame of relational work to be able to account for this discourse situation as suggested by the relational work theorists.

Watts (1989, 1992, 2003) has been a major proponent of the theory of relational work. Other influential scholars and studies have been Kasper (1990), Locher (2004) and Locher and Watts (2005). As stated earlier, the theory of relational work has been motivated by the holes found in the theory of face work spearheaded by Brown and Levinson. Locher and Watts (2005) see politeness as a small portion of relational work, which has to be considered with respect to other realizations of interpersonal meaning. According to them:

Relational work refers to "Work" individuals invest in negotiating relationships with others. Human beings rely on others to be able to realize their goals and aspirations and as social beings they will naturally orient themselves towards others in pursuing these goals.

Indulging in social practice, they need not be aware of, and indeed are frequently oblivious of, their reliance on others.

What this implies is that the interactants are accustomed to a particular relational mode, and that many utterances that pass between them are expected, given the context of interaction. In the words of Okamoto (1999:51):

Expressions of politeness are relative to specific social contexts as well as to the speakers' ideas about politeness. An adequate account of linguistic politeness thus requires a close examination of the relationship among linguistic expressions in discourse, speakers' ideas about politeness, and social context.

The theory of relational work has been hinged on context, not on the notion that politeness is inherent in the expression, the standard stance of the theory of face work. The relational work theory is seen to be broader than face work, and is capable of handling directness, impoliteness, rudeness/aggressiveness and polite interaction, including verbal behaviours that are either appropriate or in appropriate. The basic concept of relational work with reference to politeness can be captured in the chart below:

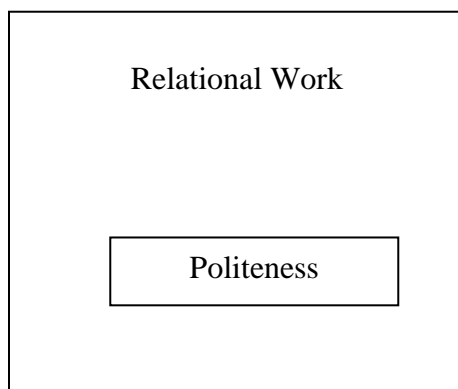


Figure 1: Relational Work and Politeness Theory

Figure 1 shows clearly that relational work, covering all forms of human interactions and their accompanying reactions subsumes politeness. Likewise, the traditional stance on face work suggests that face work is a subset of politeness theory. This is shown in the chart that follows:

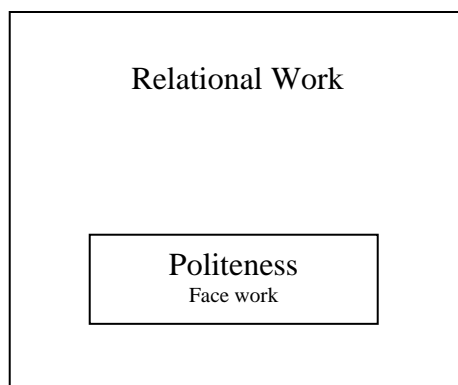


Figure 2: Relational Work, Politeness and Face Work

It is these inclusive relationships that feed our present view that components, especially the face work segment of relational work theory, have to be specified to more accurately give a representative account of the physical social, cultural, and emotional inputs of interactants in relational work.

Two aspects of relational work, namely marked and unmarked behaviours, are recognised. Marked behaviour is regarded as polite, as it is not taken as part of the expectations of the encounter. Unmarked behaviour is that which is seen to be politic or simply appropriate, no matter how it sounds, given the context of interaction. Relational work theorists emphasise the fact that what is taken to be polite in the existing literature may simply be contextually appropriate. This is amply demonstrated in Locher and Watts (2005).

However, good as this position sounds, its cross-cultural consistency may be difficult to justify. For example, among the Yoruba in Nigeria, it is not appropriate in any context for a child or a wife to use an expression such as “That’s crazy” with reference to the father or husband. But, in some genres, for example political discourse, no offence is taken, sometimes, as will be shown shortly, when such or related forms are used. This means that the theory of relational work has to work into its frame such cross-cultural and genral peculiarities, and tell us how they should be handled. Also, since the theory does not condemn face work in its entirety, it should

state overtly the major features of the theory that still operate in relational work. We shall attempt this in the analytical framework proposed for political interviews in this study.

Politeness and Political Interviews

It has been claimed that “political interviews are confrontational, competitive encounters” (Mullany 2002:6 [also Mullany 1999, Harris 1991]). Naturally, this claim stems from the nature of politics, which relies on the smartness, wit, and aggressiveness of participants, which are themselves major requisites for survival in the game.

Considering the fact that political interviews are confrontational and competitive, some scholars (e.g Mullany 2002) have argued against the possibility of using politeness theories to analyse political interviews. According to Mullany (2002: 10):

...in political interviews it is not the interests of participants to pay mutual attention to each other's face needs. The centrality of the preservation of face needs to Brown and Levinson's theory means that it does not appear to account for confrontational discourse where not paying attention to addressers' face needs and attacking their position is a frequent and expected occurrence. Failure to pay attention to the face needs of fellow interlocutors does not result in conversational breakdown in political interview....

For Mullany (2002), therefore, impoliteness dominates political interviews. Much as this position is sound, it is difficult to generalize that all political interviews all over the world are impolite. Again, we are slipping into the pit where Brown and Levinson's theory is condemned. Cultures and socio-political circumstances determine the trend and tradition of political interviews. Also, approaches to issues vary from place to place, and it is not sufficient to generalise for all political interviews, based on sampling only political interviews broadcast on the BBC radio as Mullany (2002) does. In Nigeria, for example, despite the aggressive nature of the interviews, attention is still given to the face wants of the participants, in a number of the cases, in the print media. We agree, however, with most critics of face work, especially Watts

et.al (1992), Locher and Watts (2005), etc, that face work theory cannot adequately account for aggressive verbal behaviours which overtly dominate political media interviews. It is on this ground that a revised model of relational work is being proposed to handle this discourse.

Politeness in Print Media Interviews

Two major types of print media political interviews emerge from the data; viz, the subjective / sentimental and the factual / analytical. The former often features a large quantity of politeness elements. The reason for this is that it often touches on the emotional judgement of the participants. The latter, which presents the situation as objectively as possible, often contains very few or no instances of politeness features. These interview types stamp our point that political interviews are not all venting of aggressions and boisterous belligerencies, as Mullany (2002) tends to posit.

Three aspects of relational work are found in the data; namely, politic verbal behaviour, polite verbal behaviour and impolite verbal behaviour. These are presented in the modified model of relational work in Figure 3, Relational Work in Print Media Political Interviews, below:

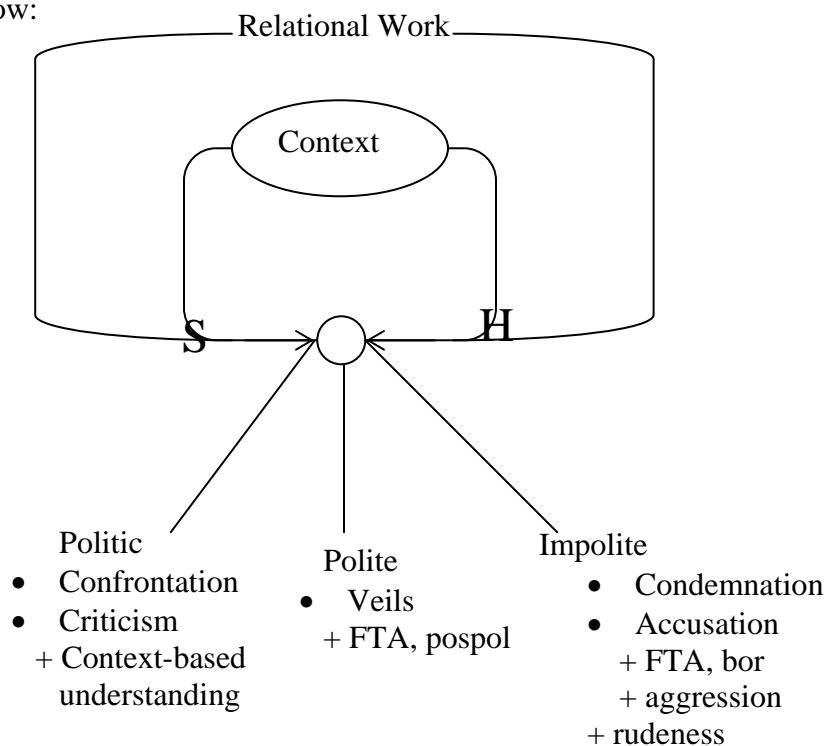


Figure 3 shows that context is common to the interactants. This includes: shared knowledge of subjects, shared knowledge of political gimmicks, and shared knowledge of ideological expectations in political discourse. With this contextual background, participants produce politic verbal behaviours, polite verbal behavior, and impolite verbal behaviour, which are respectively characterized by confrontations and criticisms, veils, and condemnations and accusations. The analysis that follows illustrates these features clearly and discusses their pragmatic implications.

Politic Verbal Behaviour

The findings reveal that when participants are confronted with certain issues, especially those that do not affect their careers or image badly, or are simply criticised, no offence is generally taken. Since such are usually expected, given the nature of politics, they are often seen to be treated as appropriate to the situation. Usually, the responses provided are taken to be neither aggressive nor rude, no matter the weightiness of the challenge or criticism. Given this situation, the principles of face work cannot be said to be applicable. Rather, the utterance can be said to be guided by participants' knowledge of the context of political discourse and the understanding that no breath need be lost over such issues. A few instances can be cited from the data:

Example 1:

TELL interviewer: Have you heard or read in the media where people insinuate that *your husband, the vice-president contest almost everything with his boss, the president- appointment, policy decision and so on.*

(TELL November 17, 2003:40).

TELL launches an offensive on the wife of the Nigerian vice president, Mrs. Titi Atiku, regarding her husband's unhealthy competition with the president. The interrogative goes with insinuations of a power tussle between the Nigerian president and the vice- president, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar. The overriding intention is to make Titi Atiku defend the allegation, which she does,

Example 2:

There is nothing the media or the people would not say. They say things to cause confusion.

(TELL, November 17, 2003:40)

In the accounts of face work, Titi Atiku's response would be taken as an FTA without redress, but in this interview, evoking the principles of relational work, it is merely politic, as no aggressive or rudely defensive reaction is put up by the journalists (or later, by the people) accused of loudmouthedness, rumour mongering and mischief. This is in spite of the fact that nothing in her defence seems to deny the charges leveled against the vice-president.

Sometimes, S confronts H with X in an indirect manner. This usually comes as a ploy to gain direct information from H, who may respond from a mood of anger. Somehow, H's truthfulness or falsehood is confirmed from the emotions put into the response. The interaction below demonstrates this point:

Example 3:

TELL interviewer: When the PDP held a rally there was crisis. Was the AD not going to hold its rally?

Governor Ibori: The AD was going to hold a rally. The permit that was granted for the rally was to SSRC not to AD. AD did not apply for a permit. The institution granted SSRC permission to hold a rally AD did not apply for a permit.

TELL interviewer: *Great Ogboru has said that the Thursday rally held by the PDP did not even have a police permit.*

(TELL, April 1, 2002:32)

Great Ogboru, a potent contender of the governorship position with the incumbent governor of Delta State of Nigeria, James Ibori, belongs to the Alliance for Democracy Party (AD), while the governor belongs to People's Democrat Party (PDP). Given the threat that the expanding

popularity of Ogboru constituted to the ruling PDP, executive sanctions were being schemed to prevent AD from holding a rally. When *TELL* revealed that the rally held by the ruling party did not have a police permit, the interviewer intended to subtly confront the incumbent with (i) being lawless (ii) being afraid of opposition (iii) being mischievous (iv) imposing sanctions unfairly. In fact, Ibori did not deny the allegations; rather he expressly confirmed them in his response to the question posed as shown in the following response of his:

Example 4:

Ibori: The rally that was held on Thursday was planned longbefore. We are in politics and we need to play politics. And it's a game of intrigues. The PDP wanted to show to the neophytes that politics is deep....

(*TELL*, April 1, 2002:32).

Governor Ibori's response reveals a democracy that is characterized by bitterness, abuse of power, and absence of fairplay. Neither the journalists nor Ibori himself seems to read insults into the reaction.

Criticisms in the interviews are made directly, yet the participants seem to take them as part of the context and appropriate to it. In face work this would imply that a lot of these criticisms are launched without regard for H's face wants. Let us look at the interaction that follows:

Example 5:

The News Interviewer: *People are complaining about the spate of extra-judicial killings that attended the operations...*

Balogun: Yes, initially we had some teething problems, some of which were associated with logistics and over-zealousness.

(*The News* 26 August, 2002:42)

The interviewer questions the competence of the Nigerian police to accurately shoot at armed robbers, who are the target of the “Operation Fire-for-Fire” exercise put in place by the Tafa Balogun headed Nigerian police force. That extra-judiciary killings are committed by the police is an indication that lives of innocent citizens are at risk, thus adding to the high level of insecurity in the country. The interviewer is blunt, and does not indulge in any euphemistic hedges to criticize the inexperience and incompetence of the police. Yet, Tafa Balogun does not react rudely to this criticism. He merely presents the picture as he sees it. In fact, he seems to inadvertently confirm the insinuation that the police are incompetent. This is expressly stated in the affirmative ‘Yes’ and the expression that follows: “initially we ‘had some teething problems....’ The interviewer, of course, seems to imply that more training in handling arms and ammunition is required for the Nigerian police.

Sometimes, criticisms are hedged and delivered in an indirect manner. In an interview with *The News*, the governor of Ogun State of Nigeria, Otunba Gbenga Daniel charted, as follows, with *The News’* team:

Example 6:

***The News’* interviewer:** You have spent about 100 days in office. Before assuming office, were there expectations or standard that you envisaged you ‘ll meet when you assumed duties?

Gbenga Daniel: The way I ‘ll like to put it is that our state is endowed with good people who are articulate and intelligent. *But what we found is that there weren’t enough concerted efforts to harness all of those resources to achieve what you can call desirable objectives.*

(The News 15 September, 2003:24)

Gbenga Daniel’s criticism is subtle. He schemes with language to hide personalities and apportion blame. For example, he suggests that the way to achieve desirable objectives was to

harness all the resources in the state concertedly, but he does not mention the individuals who were supposed to do it but who did not. Given that Daniel just succeeds the previous government to power, it is easy to conclude that he is indirectly heaping blame on the past government in the its failure to record the said achievement. This is politic, but also strategic. He has newly assumed office, and seems not to want to begin his tenure on an offensive note

Polite Verbal Behaviour

Participants in the interviews are observed to exhibit polite verbal behaviour when they see the need to protect the interest of co-politicians or other members of the public defend a government policy or tactically handle a sensitive issue. In such cases, face work is very useful. Usually, veiling, achieved with face threatening acts with redress, positive politeness (FTA, pospol) is prominent. The politeness elements occur in the form of figures and roundabout expressions. Usually, unlike what obtains in medical communication where veils used by medical practitioners apply directly to the patient or their relations in immediate proximal context, (c.f. Odeunmi 2006, Adegbite and Odeunmi 2004), veils in political interviews usually apply distally. The face wants of X brought into the interview by S or H is usually positively addressed to protect his/her image. For example, when asked to comment on the people who collaborated with him to annul the June 12, 1993 presidential election, General Ibrahim Babangida, a former Nigerian head of state said:

Example 7:

Over 1001 actors were involved in the whole concept of June 12 and the sooner we start investigating their input in it the better for the development of politics in this country.

(The News 6 November, 2000:15)

Considering the highly sensitive nature of the issue, and the diplomacy of governance, Babangida decides to name a figure, not the actual personalities involved. He flouts the maxims of quality and manner, and exploits the maxims of quantity and relation (Grice 1975, Thomas 1995) to redress the face of the actual collaborators. If the whole of the information needed had been given, political crisis and insecurity would have followed, given the highly classified nature of the issue. Babangida's face saving approach is motivated by his stance expressed in an earlier portion of the interview, where he has said:

Example 8

The way the media looked at the June 12 issue is very myopic. There are a lot of actors in this. Thorough, unbiased investigation will reveal who did what, who played what role and then people will be able to now assess the true story. But in the absence of that, as a leader, I will not like a situation where I will sacrifice other people so that I could save my skin.

(The News, 6 November, 2000:15).

The whole scenario ultimately boils down to game-playing, which is a major characteristic of politics. If the main actor in the drama does not provide concrete information; who will? It is difficult for the press to make any headway with the findings. The wavy style adopted by Babangida only implies that annulling the June 12 election was a collective decision, which is beyond the power of the media (and or Nigerians at large).

Another interesting instance of veiling comes up in the interaction between *The News* and the former Nigerian Inspector General of police, Tafa Balogun. The interviewer seeks information about the rumour that some eminent Nigerian politicians are importing dangerous weapons into the country with the intention of using them to violently gain power in the 2003 general elections. A portion of the interview is presented below:

Example 9:

The News Interviewer: There have been talks about politicians stockpiling arms, ammunition and bullet proof jackets. Are you aware of these?

Balogun: Yes. We are fully aware...

The News' Interviewer: Are these weapons being reversed from politicians? Who are these people?

Balogun: *From people, you know. From people of various shades and opinions.*

The redressive action in Balogun's utterance "from people ... opinions" favours of the culprits. Indications of who the person are have been provided in the question posed by the journalist, i.e., "politicians stockpiling arms...", which Balogun himself does not refute. His roundabout statement: "... people of various shades and opinions" hides the identities of the culprits, obviously given their socio-political placements in the polity. Balogun is sensitive to the need to exercise caution about disclosing total information about politicians in a civil dispensation. At the same time, he is acting within the ambits of his professional competence to avoid naming offenders until trials have been concluded in the law court. In this capacity, he works like a medical practitioner who keeps a diagnosis, especially of a terminal disease, from a victim until a thorough laboratory investigation has been carried out (c.f Odebunmi, 2003). In a way, Balogun's act can be interpreted as opting out of the maxims of relation and manner (Grice 1975; Thomas 1995)

Impolite Verbal Behaviour

Impolite verbal behaviour, which occurs as condemnation or accusation, is put up when participants feel that the issues raised may affect their (political) careers or ambitions badly. On these occasions, participants display aggressive poses and sometimes rudeness to discredit the other party, confront the party with its irresponsible acts, defend their roles or protect their interests. To achieve this, unmitigated threats, tallying with a large part of face work's FTA

without redress in invoked. This FTA does not include all direct expressions as we have in the face work literature, but only those that practically make the other participant feel uncomfortable. The instances found in the data manifest in the form of insulting H, and expressing disappointment at H's action.

When asked by the crew of *The News* to comment on the attitude of Nigerians to the annulled June 12, 1993, presidential election won by MKO Abiola, the former Nigerian president, Ibrahim Babangida stated,

Example 10:

... Abacha continued for five years. *Most of the people who fought for June 12 eventually turned round to be active participants in Abacha's government. Their political convictions were thrown to the dogs.*

(*The News*, November 6, 2003:16)

Babangida meant to express his disappointment at the critics of his action of annulling the June 12 election. In a way, he has said that the critics served in a government that should have been fought to a stop. In this direction, he seems to see the critics as selfish, shameless, power-hungry and wave-driven idealists.

In another interaction, *TELL*, attributing the views expressed to a third party, condemns Governor James Ilori's Delta state government. This condemnation proceeds from the subtle to the blunt as shown below:

Example 11:

TELL interviewer: What would decide whether you return as governor or not in 2003. Is it your performance? *Your critics say you have not performed too well, that there is not much on the ground to show for the receipt of the largest share of the federal allocation.*

Ilori: My reaction to that is that performance is relative. Thank God you said James Ilori-led government has not performed too well. You did not say we have not performed at all.

TELL interviewer: *Many say you have done nothing.*

Ilori: Is this another tour or media assessment like the one held last year? Delta State in the last three years, we have done within the limits of our resources.... All other criticisms, in my view, are malicious and mischievous.

(TELL, April 1, 2002:33).

The confrontation kicks off with the hedged “have not done too well” and rises to the unmitigated: “Many say you have done nothing.” The first seems to be meant to gauge the governor’s reaction and to see the trend of his argument. The interviewer seeks to know the level of the governor’s assurance of a re-election. He immediately hinges this on the criterion of the governor’s performance, which he seriously doubts, given the information that despite the huge federal allocation that Delta State takes, very little development has been recorded by Ilori’s government. By the expression “...you have not done too well”, therefore, the governor’s face could be said to be partially positively redressed with the hedging. Hence, he finds a space for justifying some performance: “You did not say we have not performed at all”. This pride is smashed with the unmitigated condemnation that he has done nothing. With these bald on record acts, Ilori’s face becomes seriously threatened, and he resorts to self-assessment and aggressiveness.

It is part of political interviews to accuse co-participants of one fault / wrong or another, just like what obtains in political debates. To launch accusations in the interviews, participants mainly draw on FTAs without redress directed at H’s positive or negative face. Accusations of threats, irresponsibility, prejudice and mischief largely characterise the exchanges. This is shown below:

Example 12:

TELL Interviewer: Why is the fuel scarcity problem not abating?

Oshiomole: *Government, we have maintained, causes this scarcity. And government is using it as a weapon of blackmail.*

(TELL, April 23, 2001:40)

Oshiomole, the president of the Nigerian Labour Congress, accuses the federal government of Nigeria of being irresponsible. His declaration of this view is unmitigated, and shows the level at which the government's inability to provide fuel adequately for the people has fetched it disrespect among the people. Government's loss of positive face is demonstrated more clearly in another portion of Oshiomole's response to the question in Example 12. This response is presented in part in the example below:

Example 13:

Professor Jerry Gana said the other day that Lagos and Abuja people were over-pampered just because they get fuel at ₦22 per litre. And since he said so scarcity is now in Lagos and Abuja... *if you destroy your own economy.... Then you have no business in government. If government cannot deliver fuel, it cannot do anything.*

(TELL, April 23. 2001:40).

By this utterance, Oshiomole has (i) bluntly declared that the Nigerian government could not provide fuel for the people (ii) implicitly said that the government has, by its inability to supply fuel, destroyed the nation's economy (iii) advised the leaders to quit their offices on the grounds of incompetence.

A situation where accusations are both reported and issued by participants is evident in TELL's question posed at Emmanuel Nwanyanwu, the co-ordinator of the Obasanjo / Atiku re-election campaign organization for the south-eastern part of Nigeria:

Example 14:

One vitalis Ajumbe, who is running on the platform of ANPP for the Ikeduru council, actually wrote *a petition accusing you of vowing to stop him from winning election and that there are plans to assassinate him, which he claimed he has been able to link to you.*

Two stages of accusation are seen in example 14. First, there is the one attributed to Vitalis Ajumbe, marked lexically by “wrote a petition accusing you” and “plans to assassinate him, which he claimed....” The second stage is affected by the interviewer’s presentation of the point, which immediately charges Nwanyanwu with the accusation. The FTA without redress exerts an imposition on the accused. H is thus implicitly requested to explain his involvement in the matter at hand.

Conclusion

By and large, we have shown that much of what transpires between participants in political interviews is informed by previously or spontaneously conceived opinions which may be presented directly, using politic, polite or impolite expressions. These features are very useful ground for generalizations on the genre, and aid a better understanding of the interviews. They also illuminate the beliefs and tendencies that participants bring into the interactions. The study thus opens the field for inquiries into politeness in print media political interviews in Nigeria, where extremely little work yet exists. Future research can explore political interviews in other print media such as daily and weekly newspapers that also feature occasional interviews using relational work theory. It is also possible to compare politeness features in the print media with those in the electronic media. Such research can also cross-culturally examine media political discourses in African and say, Britain or the US.

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