

# Politeness Phenomena in Omobowale'S the President'S Physician

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## Abstract

The study conceives that the analysis of drama transcends the analysis of performance. Therefore, a critical attempt must be made to gain an insight into the individuality of the writer's style. To have a gainful analysis, therefore, our study is premised on the theoretical framework of Politeness Principle. The politeness analysis enabled us to apply Brown & Levinson's politeness phenomena in studying the politeness strategies deployed by Omobowale in using both the positive and negative politeness strategies which were obviously employed in the text. The study concludes that Omobowale made a judicious use of the three different continua of tenor, that is, power, contact and affective involvement in contextualising the text as a whole even as he employed the former in relaying to us what goes on in the entire Waverian society, a replica/symbol of Nigeria and other dictatorial African countries, and to convince us that the roles played by participants have effect on their use of language.

**Keywords:** FTA, politeness, The President's Physician, (non)verbal, style

## 1.1 Introduction

The works of Omobowale, a relatively young writer are yet to be critically examined in the academics. There is therefore a dearth of work on the use of language in his works. Also, due to the fact that the text, *The President's Physician* was published recently, that is, in 2004, it has not yet been examined in the literary and linguistic fields. Omobowale (2001) carries out a related study on medicine. In his work, he tries to juxtapose the two diametrically opposed fields of medicine and literature. His work is founded on the assumption that while medicine is based on empirical evidence or data collection, literature is largely predicated on the use of imagination. Omobowale posits that 'since literature is a reflection of life and human medicine guarantees physiological and psycho-social equilibrium, literature and medicine do not only complement each other, they also aim at similar objectives (2004:5). However, the work is carried out in the literary field and uses little or no linguistic tools.

A related study on Omobowale's *The President's Physician* was carried out by Osisanwo (2009). It is one of the few critical studies that have been carried out on Omobowale's *The President's Physician*. Osisanwo examined the transitivity and theme systems deployed by Omobowale in the text. Premised on the theoretical framework of Systemic Functional Grammar with special emphasis on transitivity and theme systems, Osisanwo's study peruses the meaning making strategies adopted by Omobowale in *The President's Physician*. He concludes that Omobowale makes a judicious use of the transitivity and theme structures in contextualising the text as a whole even as he employed the field and mode of discourse to relay what goes on in the entire Waverian society, a replica/symbol of Nigeria, especially during the military era, and more specifically, the Late General Sani Abacha's regime. Osisanwo further observes that the preponderance of the material process under the transitivity system shows that it is significantly dominated by actions and events, together with the characters that carry out the actions and events. Likewise under the theme system, he discovers the topical issues which dominate the playwright's mind due to the way the sentences are constructed. In addition, he identifies the syntactic relevance of the major resource systems of transitivity and theme. He discovers that while there is dominance in the use of material process at the level of transitivity, it is the unmarked theme that is used dominantly at the level of the theme.

The works of Omobowale still needs a critical examination spanning all aspects of his work including the linguistic and literary aspects. The present work is therefore founded on the belief that Omobowale's works, particularly *The President's Physician* are yet to be (linguistically) examined. It is an exercise in discourse stylistics which is aimed at investigating the meaning making strategies employed by the playwright and his combination of the languages of medicine and politics in the play. We shall therefore examine his peculiar use of language as a piece of social discourse using the politeness phenomenon as our framework.

In an attempt to explore this discourse-based study, we have decided to adopt Brown and Levinson's Politeness Phenomenon. This is hoped to help us to examine systematically the relation which exists

between language use and the social relationship of the speakers. Our analysis is also meant to serve as specimen for future analysts to undertake a (critical) study of interaction on several levels. Our framework shall therefore be employed to examine the different politeness strategies used by interlocutors (senior/junior, older/younger) in giving attention to the face wants of each other.

## 1.2 A Synopsis of *the President's Physician*

The play, *The President's Physician* is structurally divided into five movements with each movement having its own significance. The play revolves round the major characters, the military President of Wavaria, General Kalunga Ntibantunganyah (a dictator and avaricious leader who does not have the love of the citizens at heart) and his personal physician, Bituki Warunga (a medical practitioner, who is in a dilemma of keeping to his Hippocratic Oath or kill the President and grant his people the much desired freedom from the tyrant). Wavaria is an African country that has not experienced true political and economic independence since it gained freedom from its colonialists. The country has experienced a frustrated and unpalatable chain of dreadful experiences. The entire political landscape has continuously been pervaded by the dictatorial tendencies of egocentric political leaders who feign to be divinely appointed Messiahs. In fact, the terror of despotism has gradually become a part of life in the political landscape, having been transferred from one dictator to the other.

Bituki Warunga is caught in the tragic web of this self-centred dictator, as his personal physician. One very strange thing about this psychotic and dangerous dictator is that he is not physically strong for all that he makes his people to pass through. In fact, his next minute breathe lies in the hands of Bituki. Ntibantunganyah is a hypochondriac whose diseases have started affecting his reasoning. He cares less about anyone's life. He instantly gets rid of anyone who stands in his way. For instance, he does not hesitate to send her daughter (Eve) to the great beyond. In summary, the text depicts in its entirety an African nation full of corruption, oppression and political instability.

The Play, *The President's Physician* can be contextualised within the sociological nexus of Nigerian drama (though the names of the characters do not indicate this), moreso, that the playwright is a Nigerian who hails from Osun State. Ogundeji (2004: 674) points out a number of identifiable features of Nigerian drama, all of which are incorporated in the sociological consequences of interaction of the indigenous languages and are observable in the text under consideration. The text, which depicts a bilingual multilingual African setting, incorporates indigenous language including names of places and people, folksongs (for instance the country's anthem) and other expressions into the English language. Each of these indigenous features has a particular role/function it performs. Indigenous features including songs and expressions are used in the play. Songs are used for general structural purposes to emphasise meaning, themes and to create appropriate settings in the play.

## 1.3. Theoretical Framework

The politeness principle (PP) grew out of the weaknesses of the co-operative principle (CP) (Odebumi 2002:180). This claim is justifiable due to the observable non-universal nature of the CP. Grice (1957/75) considers the four maxims which are expected to be obeyed in any communication, that is, maxim of quantity, quality, relation and manner. He however remarks that there is an additional maxim, 'be polite'. Whereas Grice's maxim of relation provides the point of entry into relevance theory, it is his maxim 'be polite' which informs the Brown and Levinson's politeness model.

The development of the politeness principle was taken over by Lakoff (1973). According to Leech (1983:79) the politeness principle (PP) is needed because the cooperative principle (CP) is not sufficient as an explanation to the relation between sense and force. Leech (*op.cit* :80) also cited Keenan (1974) to have pointed out that 'the maxims of CP are not universal to language because there are linguistic communities to which not all of them apply'. The inappropriateness of CP has therefore been recognized because it can not explain; (i) why are people always so indirect in conveying what they mean, (ii) what is the relationship between sense and force when non-declarative sentences are being considered. The concept of politeness revolves round the view that individuals should be polite to one another in any linguistic situation. Any flouting or violation of these results in encroaching into the fellowship face wants of the hearer.

As the Grice's (1975) cooperative principle is founded on the premise of the various maxims involved in any linguistic situation, so is PP. Politeness Principle is formulated as a series of maxims which people assume are being followed in linguistic utterances. Lakoff (1973) has formulated these maxims as follows:

- (a) Don't impose
- (b) Give Options

(c) Make your receiver feel good.

The theory of Politeness Phenomenon was developed by Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson (1978, 1987). Their theory has been described as one of the most elegant, powerful and convincing linguistic frameworks available to the study of English (see Simpson 1997:155). The emphasis of this framework is on the explanation of the linguistic strategies of verbal interaction. In presenting their position on Politeness, Brown and Levinson (1987:2) posit that;

certain precise parallels in language usage in many different languages can be shown to derive from certain assumptions about 'face' – individuals' self-esteem. We phrase this derivation in terms of three main strategies of politeness, 'positive politeness' (roughly, the expression of solidarity), 'negative politeness' (roughly, the expression of restraint) and 'off-record (politeness)' (roughly the avoidance of unequivocal impositions), and claim that the uses of each are tied to social determinants, specifically the relationship between speaker and addressee and the potential offensiveness of the message content...

It could be deduced from the above assertion that the whole idea of Brown and Levinson's politeness is built around the concept of face, (a fundamental aspect of human psyche), that is, a kind of public 'self-image' which individuals claim for themselves in any discourse (immediate setting) or in a society (wider setting).

The concept of 'face' has been very central to politeness. Politeness is the means by which we show awareness to another person's face (Odebunmi 2002: 181). Following Odebunmi (*op. cit*) face, the public self-image of a person (Yule 1996:60) exists in kinds, that is, as respect or deference which operates in social distance situation and as friendliness, camaraderie or solidarity. The concept of face has two interrelated aspects, that is, the positive and negative face. An individual's positive self-image, that is, his wish to be liked by others and his wants be desirable at least to some others is tagged 'positive face'. On the other hand, an individual's basic desire to be free from any form of imposition and his actions unimpeded by others or his will not to be encroached upon, coerced, ordered, forced, commanded or instructed is tagged 'negative face'. Nevertheless, there exist some circumstances which threaten an individual's face such as situations in which another individual tries to get people to do something for him or broach on a touchy subject. If such threats are successfully expressed, they utilize such verbal acts as criticism, request, complaints, offers, command, questions etc. Such utterances which constitute a threat to face are termed 'face threatening Acts (FTAs)'. Simpson (1997:156) notes that doing FTA is part and parcel of language usage. If it were not, verbal interaction would become extremely odd. Strategies are involved in doing FTA. Basically, two strategies exist in doing an FTA. These are the 'off-record' and the 'on-record' strategies. By 'off-record' is meant a verbal interaction which avoids any explicit mention of the goods and services requested through the use of avoidance strategy. On the other hand, the 'on-record' strategy contains direct link with the service requested. It is absolutely an impolite strategy which does not try in any way to save the face or seek redress. This strategy has been described as an action performed 'baldly without redress', that is, a 'baldly non-redressive strategy'.

Brown and Levinson opine that in doing an FTA, the speaker could use avoidance strategy in order to avoid offending the hearer. This relates to the negative politeness strategy, that is, preserved to protect the negative face of the interlocutor. Negative politeness could be done by a number of specific strategies including (i) use of indirectness (ii) use of hedges (iii) indicate pessimism (iv) minimize the imposition (v) apologize (vi) indicate deference (vii) state the FTA as a general rule (viii) impersonalise (ix) acknowledge the debt.

In the same vein a threat to the positive face could be preserved by avoiding such linguistic acts which intrinsically damage positive face. Acts such as complaints, commands, questions, reprimand, criticism and accusations, damage the positive face. They act as threats to an individual's desire to be liked or appreciated. Positive politeness could be used to attend to the hearer's positive face. This politeness is not avoidance-based as the negative politeness, it only requires the speaker to make use of such linguistic constructions that can oil the wheel of interaction between the interlocutors, Such strategies used in positive politeness include; (i) complement the hearer (ii) claim common opinions and attitudes (iii) use in-group markers (iv) hedge your opinions. Let us briefly consider the focus of each of them.

### *Negative Politeness Strategies*

- i) **Using hedges:** It involves using the small particles of language which softens the impact of an FTA, for instance, ‘er...’, ‘sort of...’ ‘by any chance’, ‘as it were’, and modal auxiliaries such as ‘could, might, would etc’.
- ii) **Using indirectness:** It is a strategy built on mismatch between grammatical form and discourse function. Despite its obliqueness, the function of utterance is still conventionally understood, for instance, ‘Can you pass the salt?’
- iii) **Being pessimistic:** Here you express doubt about the chances of your FTA succeeding. It is a tactic of negative politeness, for instance. ‘I don’t suppose you could give us some cash’.
- iv) **Indicating deference:** This is obvious in polite terms of address, for example, ‘Sir’, ‘Madam’, to accord social status to your interlocutor. Deference can also be communicated if you humble yourself in some ways. In such a situation, you can downgrade your own ability as for instance ‘I am not too good at this sort of thing, ... can you help’, ‘Excuse me sir, would you mind if I ask you to shut the door?’
- v) **Minimizing the imposition:** This suggests that the FTA is not intrinsically serious and that you are only committing a minor negligible infringement on someone’s face, for example, an FTA like ‘Could I borrow a tiny little pinch of salt’
- vi) **Apologising:** This is where you mostly solicit forgiveness from your interlocutor for example, ‘please forgive me’, ‘sorry’, ‘I’m terribly sorry’, ‘excuse me’ etc. You can also apologize by referring to the impingement you are making for example ‘I would like to ask for a big big favour’. You can also indicate reluctance, ‘I hate to have to ask you this...’ You can as well give overwhelming reasons.
- vii) **Acknowledging the debt:** This is a straight forward admission in FTA that you are indebted to someone. For example, ‘I will never be able to pay you back’.
- viii) **Impersonalising:** This means removing reference to yourself from the FTA being done, it is often a feature of official correspondence where an FTA is being committed. For instance, ‘we regret to inform you...’
- ix) **Stating the FTA as a general rule:** This allows you to get yourself off the hook by ascertaining that the conditions that led you to do the FTA are general ones. For example, ‘textbooks must not be taken to the examination hall’.

### *Positive Politeness Strategies*

- i) **Using in-group markers:** This is a tactic designed to close down the social distance between speakers and to proclaim common identity. For example ‘dear’, ‘pal’, ‘guys’
- ii) **Complementing the hearer:** It involves saying nice things to the hearer. Compliments are often exaggerated. It can be focused on their appearance, capacities or possessions. For example ‘what a nice outlook!’
- iii) **Hedging your opinions:** This means that you should appear dogmatic in your views. For example, ‘Well it’s sort of, a bit of, an enviable position, really’.
- iv) **Claiming common opinions and attitudes:** This involves trying to seek agreement with your interlocutor and trying to avoid disagreement. For example, if a friend wears a poorly designed outfit, we can say; ‘Wahoo, it fits you so well’.

Working within the Brown and Levinson’s model, Thomas (1995) argues that the speaker needs to access the size of the FTA and calculate the FTA based on power and distance. He suggests the following strategies in doing FTA;

- performing the FTA on record without redressive action
- performing the FTA on record using positive politeness
- performing the FTA on record using negative politeness
- performing the FTA using off-record politeness
- not performing the FTA

The need for a focused outlet research into politeness phenomena has become increasingly evident in recent years (Christie 2005:1). Brown and Lewinson’s model has been criticized for its non-universality. Thus, Daly et al (2004: 950) cites (Eelen’s) (2001) criticism of the model’s normativity thus; ‘Members of our focus factory team often made use of strategies that could not be predicted by Brown and Levinson’s model’. However, Daly et al (2004:950), Locker et al (2005:9), Christie (2005:6) further argue that the model still has a great deal of analytical mileage because it provides a framework for the understanding of social behaviour.

For our study on the concept of politeness, therefore, we shall adopt Brown and Levinson's (1978/87) politeness phenomenon which is primarily social and anthropological in orientation, unlike others that are cognitive and philosophical and also seems the mostly developed. In addition, since it distinguishes the 'positive' and 'negative' aspects of politeness, it seems to accommodate and provide answers for directness and indirectness in speech which CP is incapable of doing.

In summary, Brown and Levinson's politeness phenomenon is another discourse framework which is very suitable for the discourse stylistic analysis of a drama text and the drama text under consideration. It is capable of describing the quality of social relationships between individuals. The model sets out to interpret a description of language use with an account of the social relations of the interactions (cf. Simpson 1989: 172). The model holds the view that message construction or 'ways of putting things' is part of the expression of social relationships.

#### 1.4. Justification for choice of framework

Our choice of Brown and Levinson's politeness phenomenon (which according to Grainger (2001:Online) predicts a preponderance of negative politeness strategies between clients and professionals) is predicated on the premise of the fact that we intend to investigate into the level of politeness involved in the exchanges which evolved between interlocutors within a given social context in *The President's Physician*. We have adopted the politeness phenomenon once Carter and Simpson (1989: 14) in their urge for a discourse stylistic based analysis say it aims at a rigorous, linguistically detailed and inclusive textual analysis, and our study is a rigorous one which pursues meaning/understanding in all possible face(s) within our reach. In addition, politeness phenomenon seeks to explain the linguistic strategies and verbal interaction. It is therefore one of the most elegant, powerful and convincing linguistic frameworks available to English study (Simpson 1997: 155).

However, our study shall focus on major social relationship strategies including: superior/inferior cum patient/doctor (Ntibantunganyah/Bituki), boss/subordinate (Ntibantunganyah/Oliver), and parent/child (Miguel/Bituki). In addition, the politeness phenomenon is a discourse framework which according to Simpson (1989: 172) is capable of describing the quality of social relationships between individuals in doing a stylistic (discourse) analysis of a conversational text.

#### 1.5 Analysis of Data

Following the approach suggested by Simpson (1989:180), for the purpose of this study, we shall extract three different passages tagged 'Extracts 1 –3' from the text for our analysis. In the first extract, we shall use one of the passages on the discourse between Ntibantunganyah and Bituki. It is however noteworthy to say this is an example of a superior/subordinate cum doctor/patient interaction. We shall therefore investigate the politeness strategies put in place while Ntibantunganyah assumes the position of the president, hence a superior on the one hand, and patient on the other hand. In the same vein, we shall investigate the politeness strategies put in place when Bituki assumes the position of an ordinary citizen, hence a subordinate on the one hand and doctor on the other hand, which depicts a change in role. For the second extract, we shall use a superior/inferior discourse in which there is no change in role. To exemplify this, we shall employ the only passage which ensues in a discourse between Kalunga Ntibantunganyah, the military life president of the Republic of Waveria and Oliver Themba, the Central Bank Governor. In the last extract, we shall investigate the politeness strategies employed in a father/child relationship. Although, there are two instances of discourse involving father/child in the text, we shall only be concerned with that which takes place between Miguel Warunga, Bituki's father and Bituki Warunga, the medical practitioner.

##### 1.5.1 Politeness Analysis in a Superior/Inferior versus Patient/Doctor

###### Exchange

###### Extract 1(a)

**Ntibantunganyah:** I like you very much, Bituki. You are indeed a very loyal aide.

**Bituki:** Thank you, Your Excellency.

**Ntibantunganyah:** I don't know what I would have done without you. I would probably have been dead by now.

**Bituki:** I am your loyal and obedient servant. Your wish will always be my command, Your Excellency.

**Ntibantunganyah:** Thank you, my friend. I extremely enjoy my role as the President of this country. You have control over the destinies of men. You can

do whatever you like and get away with it and I like that very much. Wavarians are too weak and they need a strong leader like me to show them the way. I know that some people do not like me, including some of my men. But I am not surprised and I do not care. You cannot satisfy the wishes of everyone. I look at this country and, at times, I think of her future and I know that for her to be great, the citizenry must be ready to make some sacrifices.  
(Pp.27-28)

The register dimension of tenor which is concerned with the existing social relationships played by interactants, is obviously observable in this situation. The roles played by participants therefore have effect on their use of language. Eggins (2004:99) cites Poynton (1985) to have suggested that tenor can be broken down into three different continua: power, contact and affective involvement. From his view, power dictates whether the role we are playing are those in which we are of equal or unequal power. For instance, while a friend to friend role is an example of equal power, a boss/employee role is an example of unequal power. In relation to this is the above exchange where the President opens the floor by making remarks that are quite appreciative of his hearer, thereby complimenting Bituki, saying nice things about him *'I like you... You are indeed a very loyal aide'*. In response to this, Bituki receives the appreciation and quickly makes his first negative FTA, that is, indicating deference with the use of the honorific, *'Your Excellency'*. This obviously presents the social status of the interlocutors outside the immediate setting. Although, Ntibanguntanyah is Bituki's patient, Bituki does not lose the sight of the fact that he is still his President.

The president realises that he has maximised his engagement of the physician, hence feels he has to invoke diverse politeness strategies in appreciating him. Therefore, in the next exchange he goes further to acknowledge the debt thus; *'I don't know what I would have done without you. I would probably have been dead by now'*. Bituki uses the opportunity to make his first positive politeness FTA, claiming merit for his professionalism and loyalty. *'I am your loyal and obedient servant'*.

In the next exchange, the president appreciates Bituki and quickly performs a positive politeness FTA which requires the use of in-group markers, thus, saying; *'my friend'*. The president is depicted in the exchanges above as having encroached seriously upon his interlocutor's face wants, by commanding him about and in fact subjecting him to house arrest that he has to stay by him every twenty-four hours in a day. In the bid to repair the impingement already caused Bituki, the president once appreciated him with a Mercedes Benz car to compliment his service. In response to all his appreciations, Bituki also performs the negative politeness FTA, both with his use of the honorific *'Your Excellency'* and his attempt to be humble, that is, claiming to have done nothing and being loyal to his patient and president. In fact, from the president's utterances, it is obvious that while he as a patient in the current discourse assumes the role of the less powerful, Bituki as the medical doctor to a president does not allow his responses to totally depict that he (Bituki) is the more powerful interactant, though he is the one in the position to accept the president's pleasantries. The perceived social status between the interlocutors is therefore obvious. We shall now examine the other segment of this particular discourse which is from the same movement in the play.

#### Extract 1b

**Bituki:** Your brutal and coercive measures have continued to breed subversion among the people, Your Excellency.

**Ntibanguntanyah:** Really? So, which means your loyalty to me is as a result of my autocratic style, Bituki? (He moves near Bituki and sneers as he speaks). You are loyal to me because I command you; because you do not want to die – because you think I can kill you... is it true, Bituki? (Bituki is silent for a while).

**Bituki:** What do you want me to say, Your Excellency?

**Ntibanguntanyah:** (Shouts). Well, say anything....

**Bituki:** (Shouts back). I am sorry, Your Excellency; but you are right. I am loyal to you because I do not have a choice, because I do not want members of my family to die. My profession, medicine, has forced me all this while to be responsible to you to ensure your safety. But now, I think that I have had enough of you. (Bituki brings out a gun). Today you shall die.

**Ntibanguntanyah:** (Ntibanguntanyah stands up from the couch in fright). Is this real? You Bituki, of all people, you want to kill me?

**Bituki:** Yes, Ntibanguntanyah. Today, you shall die. (Brief silence, then, Ntibanguntanyah begins to plead for his life).

**Ntibanguntanyah:** Please, do not shoot me. You are a medical doctor and I recruited you as my personal physician to take care of me. I do not want to die. You are my physician. You owe it to me, on the basis of the oath that you swore during your induction, to protect me, even if you hate me. (Pp 29-31)

The extract above obviously takes place in a dream. It therefore makes the unimaginable confrontation by Bituki imaginable. It is a section of self evaluation. The discussion here therefore switches strictly to superior-subordinate, that is, president – citizen. Nevertheless, Bituki utilizes the opportunity to air his views on the perceived greed, selfishness, brutality and corruption which have eaten deep into the skull of the president thereby suffering the masses. Following the President's self-evaluation and appreciation of his non-conformist government, Bituki dissociates himself from him and performs his first bald, non-redressive FTA in which Bituki indicates deference thus; *'Your brutal and coercive measure have continued to breed subversion among the people, Your Excellency'*.

In total dismay that Bituki can look him up in the face even to say this, the president flares up, snares and threatens Bituki by advancing towards him. Hence, the president performs a bald, non-redressive FTA. In his next utterance, the President, shouts Bituki down, daring him to say anything further. Owing no apology to him, Bituki retaliates by shouting back at the president. Nevertheless, he still performs a negative FTA by apologizing to the president, begging forgiveness, but not regretfully. He acknowledges his perceived loyalty to Mr. President as the fear of dying if that is not done, and his flare for keeping to his Hippocratic Oath which forbids him from performing an arm to his patient. The (probable) highest state of baldly non-redressive FTA is finally done as Bituki brings out a gun, threatening to kill the president, and accompanying this with a baldly non-redressive statement, *'Today, you shall die'*. The president cannot believe what is happening to him. Bituki threatens further reaffirming to kill the President. Ntibanguntanyah suddenly begins to plead for his dear life not to be shot by Bituki. He recounts/recalls all the interesting things that Bituki should like to hear. Hence, he employs both the negative and positive politeness strategies by apologizing (that is, begging forgiveness) and using in-group marker to save his life and mend the damaged face wants of his interlocutor *'Please, do not shoot me. You are my medical doctor'*. This is a highly incongruous stage in which the event of superiority seems to have changed over. The movement ends with Bituki's sudden discovery that it was a dream after all.

Obviously, in the two passages analysed above, the interlocutors have both shared interactive powers, hence, having a change in roles. In the first extract, the President/patient takes on the role of the less powerful interactant as he uses elaborate negative and positive politeness strategies such as acknowledging his debt, using in-group markers etc, while the physician takes on the role of the more powerful interactant as he confidently accepts and approves of the president's appreciations, though still trading in deference phenomenon.

However, the next passage (Extract 1b) is furnished with unrestricted baldly non-redressive face threatening strategies. They both start differently by drawing on less polite strategies and metamorphosed into fully non-polite strategies, thereby damaging and encroaching into each other's face wants. When Ntibanguntanyah realizes the gravity and desperacy of Bituki, he quickly switches to manage his face wants by applying the negative politeness strategy, thereby begging not to be shot and the positive politeness strategy of using in-group marker. The second extract therefore starts with the President being the more powerful interactant, the role is later being dragged in between the two interlocutors. Odeunmi (2005:249) opines that "observance and non-observance of maxims allow for information to be shared freely between participants, with the interactions moving on a common assumed background". The President/patient and his physician/citizen assumed different roles depending on the issue being dragged at a particular time. Their shared knowledge on their political landscape and others also aid their interlocation. The moment the reality of non-observance of the politeness maxim dawns on Bituki, he comes out of his shell, opens up to Ntibanguntanyah, contributing his own possible quota to exonerating Waverians from his dictatorial tendencies. The discourse which ensues between the two interlocutors in this extract adheres to Grainger's (2001: online) comment that Brown and Levinson's Politeness Phenomenon predicts a preponderance of negative politeness strategy ('deference') due to the social distance between speakers, that is, the President, General Kalunga Ntibanguntanyah and the physician, Bituki.

## 1.5.2 Politeness Analysis of a Strictly Superior/Inferior Exchange

### Extract 2

**Oliver:** Yes, Your Excellency. But...

**Ntibanguntanyah:** Shut up. Can you tell me why my money has not been sent to the National Express bank in the Bahamas?

**Oliver:** This is what I've been trying to explain to your Excellency. The money that you instructed me to send to the bank in the Bahamas must be deducted from the fifty million dollars the World Bank earmarked for the resuscitation of Wavaria's healthcare institutions.

**Ntibanguntanyah:** And so bloody what?

**Oliver:** I am sorry. But it is not just possible, sir, for me to do this.

**Ntibanguntanyah:** Not possible? (Stands and moves towards Themba in anger). You mean you have the guts to tell me that?

**Oliver:** I am sorry, Your Excellency. It is not entirely my fault. The World Bank has only released six million dollars, which the Health Minister immediately allocated to the six hospitals. I thought it was more important than to...

**Ntibanguntanyah:** (Sharply). Then to what? (Pulls out his pistol). Themba, you want me to put some bullets into that stupid skull of yours before you begin to think?

**Oliver:** (Begins to tremble). I am sorry, Your Excellency. Pardon me and have mercy on me, your Excellency. The situation seems to be beyond my humble control. The six million dollars, I was told, will be used to procure new medical facilities for all those hospitals. (The president walks away from him. He begins to stroke the tip of his gun. He walks back to Oliver, and points the gun at the back of the Central Bank Governor's skull).

**Ntibanguntanyah:** Oliver Themba!

**Oliver:** Yes, Your Excellency.

**Ntibanguntanyah:** I know that you have received all the money from the World Bank. You cannot trick me. I am the President. I make it my duty to know everything going on at the Central Bank. Now, repeat after me.

**Oliver:** Yes, sir.

**Ntibanguntanyah:** No one, not even a dying patient or a woman in labour pain, is more important than Kalunga Ntibanguntanyah.

**Oliver:** (Repeats the statement with fright). No one, not even a dying patient or a woman in labour pain is more important than Kalunga Ntibanguntanyah.

**Ntibanguntanyah:** Say it again.

**Oliver:** (Mumbles). No one, not even a dying patient or a woman in labour pain is more important than Kalunga Ntibanguntanyah.

**Ntibanguntanyah:** Good. (He walks away from him and stands alone). Oliver, I have always trusted your competence and obedience. Do not give me any cause to distrust you. If you do, you will not see the sunrise of the next morning.

**Oliver:** Yes, Your Excellency.

**Ntibanguntanyah:** I expect my 24 million dollars to get to the NEB by tonight. My percentage of the World Bank loan is more important than the monetary allocation to those hospitals. Do I make myself clear Oliver?

**Oliver:** Yes, Your Excellency. (Pp. 44-46)

Extract 2 starts on a rather unimpressive note of scolding. It connotes an exertion of power and superiority of an individual over the other. Ntibanguntanyah, a greedy President, scolds the Central Bank Governor and sees him as unimportant. He encroaches upon and damages his face without apology, hence, performing a baldly non-redressive FTA thus; *'You must be mad, Oliver. You are a miserable pig'*. In response to this, Oliver, the inferior has no option than to accept what the president says because his life and work are still important to him. He receives the presidential damage with the affirmative *'Yes'*. He however tries to negotiate his defense by first planting a negative politeness strategy *'Your Excellency'*, thereby indicating deference. As he advances to defend his case with *'But...'*, the president snatches the floor from him and shuts him up (a command). After issuing the command, the President compounds the damage by asking the interlocutor a question. Oliver therefore tries to

use the given floor to present his case with a lot of negative politeness strategy.

The President refuses to understand and consider the defense but asks a further question; *'And so bloody what?'* Oliver, a completely inferior officer to the president has no option than to still apologise to the president for not sending the twenty-four million dollars into his foreign account – 'a perceived money laundering'. He apologises by using a negative politeness strategy of 'begging for forgiveness' and quickly indicates 'deference', exonerating himself and not forgetting the presidential pleasantry 'Sir'. Oliver's statement infuriates Ntibantunganyah the more as he engages in a non-verbal linguistic strategy of advancing towards Oliver Themba in anger and accompanying it with questions. This is really a critical stage of a baldly non-redressive FTA with which the face wants of the Central Bank Governor is encroached upon, even as the President questions, accuses and commands him.

To further compound this, the President pulls out a gun from his pocket threatening to shoot Oliver. This is another non-verbal FTA. Oliver apologizes to the president, by begging and pleading forgiveness that is, employing the use of a negative politeness strategy. All his self-defense go to the President's deaf ears as he further alleges him of lying. Ntibantunganyah believes it is more important for him to emmerse wealth than for the sick in the hospital to be catered for. The President therefore performs another non-redressive FTA by commanding, instructing, and ordering Oliver to repeat the following after him. *'No one, not even a dying patient or a woman in labour pain, is more important than Kalunga Ntibantunganyah'*. The President's impingement and encroachment upon the fellowship face wants of the Governor here depicts a rather 'teacher – pupil' or 'adult – child' interaction. He strengthens this further by commanding him to repeat it, thus, *'Say it again'*. Although Oliver mumbles to repeat this, he has no option since he is under duress.

However, Ntibantunganyah realizes that despite his threat, he still needs the support of Oliver Themba to get the money. As Simpson (1997: 161-2) observes, one uses the positive politeness strategy as a supplement to negative politeness in providing an excellent position for 'buttering somebody up' before you try to get them to do something for you hence, Ntibantunganyah employs the positive politeness strategy in his next utterance by performing the positive politeness of 'complimenting the hearer' thus; *'Oliver, I have always trusted your competence and obedience'*. Nevertheless, he still has to take on his role as his boss and President of the Republic of Waveria by using a bald, non-redressive FTA in his next statement, hence, warning and threatening Oliver thus; *'do not give me any cause to distrust you. If you do, you will not see the sunrise of the next morning'*. He affirms that he is more important than any other Waverian, therefore his desire should be first. He therefore makes his last bald, non-redressive FTA with an interrogative statement thus; *'Do I make myself clear?'* However, Oliver whose life is dare to him(self) remains loyal to Mr. President, even with his foremost expression, *'Yes , Your Excellency'*,

The above analysis has been another interesting passage in which the dominance of power and authority is obviously stated. Following Poynton (1985) as cited by Eggins (2004:99), power dictates whether the role we are playing are those in which we are of equal or unequal power. This is obviously a case of unequal power. The inferior/subordinate Oliver Themba makes judicious use of negative politeness strategies to save the face of the military President of the Republic of Waveria, hence, taking on the less powerful interactive role. On the other hand, the superior/boss, Gen. Kalunga Ntibantunganyah displays power difference to his interlocutor as he issues series of baldly non-redressive FTAs to his interlocutor, paying no attention to the face wants of the so called CB Governor, by completely damaging both his positive and negative faces, hence, encroaching upon, coercing, ordering, forcing and commanding him.

### 1.5.3. Politeness Analysis of a Strictly Father/Child Exchange

#### EXTRACT 3(a)

**Bituki:** Good morning, father,

**Miguel:** Good morning, Bituki. How are you?

**Bituki:** Fine: (*fidgeting*). I am surprised to see you here. It is quite early, father.

**Miguel:** Yes, it is. (*Sits*). While it is unusual of me to rise up as early as this, I have come to discuss a very important issue with my son.

**Bituki:** Then it must be a very serious matter, father.

**Miguel:** Yes, I suppose so. I believe that you are the only one who can save us, save Wavaria and its people.

**Bituki:** I know why you are here. You want to know whether I have taken any decision about how to get rid of the President.

**Miguel:** Bituki, your intellect is what I admire in you. I am not surprised that you know why I have come here. I quite understand your position regarding the services you render to Ntibantunganyah. As a one time medical practitioner and a caring doctor, I have felt the same way too. Our profession requires that we should be concerned about the lives of others and that the Hippocratic Oath must be truthfully and faithfully adhered to. But then...[Pause]

(Pp.32-33)

The register dimension of tenor is also appropriate in this situation. Following Eggins (2004:99), the continuum of contact is relevant here. Contact dictates whether the roles being played are those which bring us into frequent contact (for instance contact with spouses) or infrequent contact (for instance contact with distant acquaintances). The exchange at hand is a discourse between a father and child. It is therefore an instance of frequent contact. Bituki's first remarks to the father are clearly phatic. This is accompanied by the first FTA of the interaction with the use of both the negative and positive politeness strategies of indicating deference and using in-group marker respectively in the utterance; *'Good morning father'*. Bituki continues his next utterance by fidgeting and wandering what could have brought his father that early to his house. He therefore performs a positive politeness strategy by using an in-group marker saying *'I am surprised to see you here. It is quite early, father'*. The father responds with a baldly non-redressive politeness strategy *'Yes, it is'* and he employs the non-verbal strategy of sitting down to reassure his son that there is no problem. He however continues with a declarative complex sentence declaring his mission with another non-redressive politeness strategy, accompanied by a complimentary *'my son'*, that is, using in-group positive politeness strategy.

Having probably discovered his rather too baldly non-redressive strategy and compared with his mission, Miguel decides to protect Bituki's face, by hedging his next statement. He employs the negative politeness strategy of FTA and at the same time compliments the hearer with the use of a positive politeness strategy by saying things that should interest Bituki. This strategy is adopted in order to oil the wheel of their interaction (despite their father-child relationship) and he further supports it by using another negative politeness strategy, that is, impersonalising *'who can save us'*, thus: *'I believe you are the only one who can save us, save Waveria and its people'*.

In response to this, Bituki further damages Miguel's face with an open accusation pointing to the reason of Miguel's presence in his place thus; *"I know why you are here. You want to know whether I have taken any decision about how to get rid of the President."* Miguel responds with another positive politeness FTA. It should be affirmed that the positive politeness is often used as a supplement for negative politeness, because it basically provides an excellent opportunity for 'buttering somebody up' before you finally present your case (cf. Simpson, 1997: 161-2). Miguel supports his off-record request with his utterances, realizing two positive politeness strategies by claiming common opinions and attitudes and using in-group markers such as; *'As a one-time medical practitioner'*, *'Our profession'*. The statement is also apologetic with Miguel's admittance of the impingement, a negative politeness strategy, that is, encroaching into the face wants of Bituki. He rounds off this section by hedging his view with a non-verbal linguistic strategy of pausing, as obviously stated thus; *'But then... (pause).'*

### Extract 3b

**Bituki:** The wind murmurs father. How can I satisfy you and Pikita without other people knowing about how I broke my oath and became a murderer?

**Miguel:** You are my son. You must listen to me. The time has come for you to set us free.

**Bituki:** But when shall I be free if I violate the ethics of my profession by killing the president?

**Miguel:** Each person's experiences are unique to him. Yours may not be like mine. Mine will definitely be different from Pikita's, in spite of the fact that she is my daughter. You must take a decision that is in joint interest as a family and prepare to live with the consequences. In Wavaria, we suffer under the pangs of oppression, under a repressive hand with retrogressive palms. Our cries of anguish go unheard. Where then shall we turn for help? To whom shall we go with our lamentations and complaints? Wavaria is sinking, and stinking. The

country is heading for a parlous precipice. Please, Nuranga, God of Wavaria, all-knowing, all-seeing, all-powerful, do not abandon us. Come to our rescue. Save us from the oppressive darkness of Ntibantunganyah. (*Dancers file out and fill the stage singing in a well-choreographed form, as lights go out*). (Pp. 38 – 39).

It is glaring in this passage that the interlocutors have just got to the peak of the discussion. The passage begins with a metaphorical statement from Bituki, used as an analogy for his subsequent statement. Bituki therefore follows up the exchange by asking a question thereby threatening and damaging the positive face of his father thus; *'How can I satisfy you and Pikita without other people knowing about how I broke my oath and became a murderer?'* Having studied the situation which seems to be getting out of hands, Miguel wades in again by repairing and subsequently damaging the face wants of Bituki. He achieves this by first using the in-group negative politeness strategy which also serves to claim common opinions and attitudes with the interlocutor to cement the discourse: *'You are my son'*. He however goes further to damage his face wants with the next imperative statement which is a baldly non-redressive on-record FTA: *'You must listen to me'*. This is also anchored on the fact that he (Miguel) is still the father of Bituki. His last statement in this particular exchange is a hybrid of a baldly non-redressive and redressive strategies, in which case Miguel declares his request and quickly manages Bituki's face wants with the negative politeness FTA – impersonalising the request thus; *'The time has come for you to set us free'*.

Bituki's next utterance depicts that he is still the more powerful interactant. He further encroaches upon the father's positive face wants with another question; *'But when shall I be free if I violate the ethics of my profession by killing the president?'* The last aspect of the discourse, taken on by Miguel depicts a combination of positive and negative politeness strategies, with a bulk of positive politeness through which he recounts and makes a comparative analogy of Bituki, Pikita and himself, and presents them to the perceived listener/hearer. A higher level of literary organization where the authors allow a fictional speaker to direct comments towards the implied reader of a text, is an interesting area of study which uses the positive politeness strategy (cf. Simpson 1989: 189). Hence, Miguel's last statement is basically predicated on positive politeness FTA.

This particular extract has also been a very interesting one in which the son (Bituki), who happens to be in a position to help and deliver his people, is constrained by his professional ethical provisions. He therefore takes over the role of the more powerful interactant, while the father, who believes that his life and that of Waverians lie at the mercy of Bituki, his son, takes on the less powerful interactive role. Hence, most of Bituki's statements are anchored on a confident issuance of a baldly non-redressive FTA, while in the bulk of Miguel's statement, he seeks redress with the use of both positive and negative politeness strategies, despite their father-child relationship. The issue that arises at this point is therefore not restricted to the relationship, but who needs what from whom, how, when and for what purpose. All these determine how it should be presented and whether the request could be considered to be granted or otherwise.

### Conclusion

Finally, the three passages/extracts from our data, when compared show a marked difference in the interactive relationship of the different characters involved at different points. While there is a reversal of role for example in the president/physician or superior/subordinate relationship, likewise in the last extract, there is also a perceived change in role as the child takes on dominance, that is, a more powerful interactive role over the father. However, the second extract depicts a strict display of power and authority in which the president displays his power as the number one citizen, hence takes on the more interactive role, while his subordinate, the CB Governor takes on the less powerful interactive role. The three different continua of tenor, that is, power, contact and affective involvement are observable in the text. The first which is power dictates whether the role we are playing are those in which we are of equal or unequal power for instance, as exemplified in the dream context of the exchange between the president and his medical doctor. A boss/employee role is an example of unequal power, as observed in the discourse between the CB governor and the president. The second which is 'contact' dictates that the roles being played are either those which bring us into frequent contact (contact with spouses) for instance, the discourse between Bituki and father, or infrequent contact (for instance contact with distant acquaintances). The roles played by participants therefore have effect on their use of language.

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