

## Face, Politeness and African Culture: The Hausa Example

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### **Abstract**

*A meaningful life often entails deep relationships and effective communication with our families, loved ones, and friends. However, close contact usually also comes with relationship disappointments and expectancy violations. Interpersonal relationships and their challenges and frictions have come to stay because even if we do not venture out of our homes, the places for people to meet, socialise, and date are changing; hence, there is a need for interpersonal relationship management through communication. This paper explores the dynamics of face, politeness, and African culture from a pragmatic perspective, drawing examples from the Hausa language of Northern Nigeria. This paper concludes that every ethnolinguistic group has its own established conventions regarding the utterances and actions of its members, which are regarded as polite or impolite. Despite these differences, there are grounds for similarities in how these diverse cultures perceive politeness. Also, that politeness can be achieved through employing paralinguistic and extra linguistic features like soft voice and silence; there is an asymmetrical nature of face negotiation between interactants depending on their status.*

**Keywords:** *Culture, Communication, Face, Politeness and Pragmatics*

### **Introduction**

Communication or interpersonal communication is far from simple, especially given two rather inconvenient facts: when people communicate, they often do not precisely say what they mean or mean what they say. This makes interpersonal communication and relationships complex. We communicate through language;

all languages perform dual functions through information transfer and social relationship management (Spencer-Oatey, 2018). According to Ononye (2014:3)

In interpersonal relations, individuals or groups typically have different subjective perceptions of (dis)harmony based on their differences in social identities or ideological positioning. Poor social relations management has been identified as one factor fueling interpersonal and intra-group conflicts, for example, in Nigeria today.

Although the notion of what constitutes polite behaviour may differ across cultures, it encompasses correct and appropriate situational language use, as well as considerations of others' differences. This paper aims to discuss the notion of Face and Politeness from the viewpoint of African cultural backgrounds using the Hausa language prism.

### **Face**

The question of human psychological identity is a complex issue that goes beyond the study of communication into psychology, sociology and even philosophy. However, an important aspect of identity has been recognised as an essential element in all communication: the interpersonal identity of the individuals in communication. The concept of Face is not new. It is 'Fuska' in Hausa, 'Eju' in Igala, 'Ihu' in Igbo and 'oju' in Yoruba. Scollon, Scollon and Jones (2012) believe that the idea was first introduced to Western scholars by the Chinese Anthropologist Hu Hsien Chin in 1944. Not in the reference, though the term had been used in English for at least several centuries before that. Later, the American sociologist Erving Goffman based much of his work on interpersonal relationships on the concept of face.

Even many years after Goffman's first article on Face-work (Goffman, 1955), the concept of face has been widely applied in Pragmatics, a field in Applied Linguistics. One main development in the concept after Goffman's can be observed within the field of Brown and Levinson's Politeness theory (Brown and Levinson 1978 and 1987), in which the sub-concepts of positive and negative faces as well as face-threaten acts (FTAS) are elaborated as having a universal impact. Scholars from different fields have openly challenged the universal view and the applicability of the FTA's classification in real-life situations over the years. Face theory is a paramount aspect of Pragmatics. For example, a white lie is a way of avoiding loss of face, to spare the feelings of the other person being

addressed or to save one's face. Indirectly formulated requests, such as from son to dad, are a face-respecting strategy. You must not use my car, is an example of a face-threatening strategy. Embarrassment or humiliation is facing loss and negative face wants. Positive face wants are the desire to be appreciated as a social person, while negative face wants are the desire to see one's action impeded by others. By face-redressing action, we mean redressing the action or withdrawing utterances that are face-threatening, humiliating, and embarrassing.

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), to maintain social relationships, people need to acknowledge the face of other people. Thus, we seek to make the other person feel good, enlarging their territory and maintaining their positive face. People also, at the same time, avoid treating each other's physical territory, the field of knowledge, or friendship, to maintain the other person's negative face. Thus, people aim to build up closeness and rapport with each other (their positive face) while trying to avoid being a threat to each other's social distance (their negative face). The face is understood as something that is emotionally invested and can be lost, maintained, or even enhanced. Odebunmi (2002:181) describes it as "the emotional and social feelings of self which an individual has and expects others to recognise".

Spencer-Oatey (2008) also proposes a more holistic view of the face through a cultural prism, introducing the concept of "rapport management." In 2013, Arundele not in the reference, Haugh, and Hernandez restarted a theoretical discussion like this on the face. They initiated a debate about the notion itself being the appropriate metaphor to deal with the interpersonal level of communication.

At this point, it is essential to acknowledge that any communication inherently poses a risk: a risk to one's face and that of others. The balance is to be careful in projecting a face for us and respecting other participants' rights and claims. The outcome of the double risk- the risk to involvement face and the risk to independence face of both the speaker and the hearer means that all communication must be carefully phrased to respect face. This could be said another way: there is no faceless communication. Note also that the most extreme contrast between involvement and independence is between speaking (communicating) and silence (non-communicating).

Certain situational or social variables may affect different aspects of face work, including power, which can lead to one losing face or threatening another, social distance, the gravity of imposition, situational context, status, control, fear, character traits, exposure, level of maturity, and linguistic level, among others.

**Politeness**

Politeness is a behaviour that is respectful and considerate to other people. Polite behaviour across cultures universally includes elements of correct situational use of language, deference and considerations for others. Brown and Levinson’s (1978, 1987) theory of politeness has been the most influential framework of politeness so far, and it provides an important basis for discussing the notions of politeness and face. Politeness is how a speaker considers the feelings of a hearer when the speaker constructs utterances in interpersonal communication. The need for people is catered to with politeness, for a positive self-view to be maintained. Thus, politeness is a function of cooperation to avoid friction in interpersonal interaction.

**Table 1:** Summarises the positive and negative politeness strategies of Brown and Levinson suggest when interacting with people to maintain each other’s face.

Positive Politeness Strategies (Showing closeness, intimacy, rapport and solidarity)	Negative Politeness Strategies (Giving the other person a choice, allowing them to maintain their freedom)
Notice or attend to the other person's wants, needs or possessions	Be indirect; e.g. by using indirect speech act
Intensify your interest, approval, or sympathy for the other person	Do not presume or assume, e.g. by asking questions such as ‘Could you do this for me?’ or saying, ‘This probably will not be necessary but...’
Use of an in-group identity markers. e.g. in group address forms, Jargon and slang	Minimise imposition on the other person: e.g. by saying ‘I just wanted to ask if you could,’
Avoid agreement with the other person, e.g. by hedging or telling white lies.	Give deference to the other person, e.g., using the plural ‘You’ Vs. ‘I’
Presume or assert common ground between speaker and hearer.	State the imposition as a general social rule or obligation by using ‘request’ as a noun rather than ‘want’ as a verb.

Joke about things	Go 'on record' as incurring a debt or not 'indebting' the other person.
Assert or presuppose knowledge of, or concern for, the other person	
Making offers	
Make promises	
Be optimistic about things.	
Assume or assert reciprocity.	
Give (or look for) reasons for things.	
Include each other in an activity: e.g, by using 'we' rather than 'you' or 'me'	
Give the other person gifts and express sympathy, understanding, or cooperation.	

**Positive and Negative Politeness Strategies  
(Adopted by Brown and Levinson 1987)**

Politeness is not a natural phenomenon. It exists due to interactions between people and culture, and politeness is acquired with time through the sociocultural coexistence of people with one another. People perform politeness functions to various degrees to successfully communicate with each other. They use it to minimise the force of their speech acts. There are four main politeness strategies identified by Brown and Levinson (1987): negative politeness, positive politeness, bald record and off-the-record or indirect approach. They also focused on three social factors that speakers should consider when interacting with each other. They are power, social distance and the degree of imposition. Power refers to the social status of both the speaker and the hearer. Social distance is the factor that indicates the degree to which interlocutors are familiar with each other. This can be expressed using different linguistic forms to demonstrate respect, deference and politeness. Language users may also consider the context in which the speech act occurs and whether the other person might see the situation the same way they would.

Nevertheless, scholars question the acclaimed universality of Brown and Levinson's notion of politeness and its universality. They feel that the variation of culture does not affect the face, whether positive or negative, and that cultural variation governs only the evaluation of whether a particular speech act is positive

or negative. Brown and Levinson are encouraged to consider non-Western cultures as their model is restrictive, individualistic, and egalitarian. It is said that their theory is in sharp contrast to the group-centered, hierarchy-based culture of Eastern societies like China and Japan. Similarly, Brown and Levinson focused only on how individuals express their speech acts politely. On the contrary, even within a culture, what makes an impolite utterance in a particular context might not threaten face in other contexts. Despite these criticisms, their work has remained the rallying point for subsequent studies and developments. The theory has also been a theoretical ambit for countless studies on language use in different situations. There are other models like Lakoff's (1973) principle of politeness, Leech's (1983) model of politeness, Fraser, and Nolen's 1978 politeness model, Spencer-Oatey 2000 Scollon and Scollon's 2012 model, Locher and Watts' 2003 2005, relational work theory, Ruhi's 2006 politeness model and Arundale's 2010 Face constituting theory.

### **African Culture**

Before an appraisal of face and politeness in African culture, it is necessary to understand the concept of culture. In discussing African culture, this paper does not presuppose that all African societies have the same explanation for events, the same language, the same mode of dressing and so on. Africa's rich cultures are so diverse that they vary from one country to another and within regions and countries. The culture of ethnic groups holds together the authentic social fabric of traditional practices and rites, art, music, and oral literature through which identities are built. Not all definitions of culture and their defining characteristics are needed to understand African culture. This discussion focuses on African culture and draws examples from it, as African cultures differ vastly from the cultures of other regions or continents.

The question of what culture is has fascinated scholars in various academic disciplines over the years, especially in the era of cross-cultural communication. Kroeber and Kluchhohn (1952) identified more than one hundred and sixty different definitions of the term culture. The term originates from the Latin word *cultura* or *cultus*, as in "agriculture, the cultivation of the soil .... From its root meaning of an activity, culture became transformed into a condition, a state of being cultured" (Frllich, 1989).

Culture is a learned system of meanings in this African context. This value-laden meaning system helps you "make sense" of and explain what happens in our

everyday intercultural and multicultural surroundings. It projects a sense of shared identity and solidarity among its group members, reinforcing the boundary between “we” as an in-group and “dissimilar others” as belonging to distant out-groups. It is a pattern of traditions, beliefs, values, norms, meanings, and symbols passed on from generation to generation and shared to varying degrees by interacting community members. Within the same cultural community, members share a sense of traditions, worldviews, values, rhythms and life patterns.

Taylor, Edward, is reputed as the scholar who first coined and defined culture in his primitive culture in 1871 and reprinted in 1958. Taylor views culture as a complex whole that includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, or any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. Culture serves to distinguish a person from others. Aziza (2001) avers that culture refers to the totality of behaviour patterns of a particular group of people. It includes everything that makes them distinct from any other group of people, for instance, their greeting habits, dressing, social norms, taboos, food, songs and dance patterns, rites of passage from birth, through marriage to death, traditional occupations, religious as well as philosophical beliefs. This shows that people who grow up in a particular geographical location are likely to become infused with the culture of that society, whether knowingly or unknowingly, during social interaction, and this is reflected in face and politeness, as human respect is a prerequisite for any type or form of intercultural or interethnic communication. Also, cultural tools evolve in social groups and change over time as they are passed down from generation to generation.

### **Review of Previous Studies on Face and Politeness in Africa**

Over the years, face and politeness have been among the most heavily debated and researched concepts and areas of study in Pragmatics and Sociolinguistics. Many theoretical and empirical books, articles, and various theoretical models concerning these notions have been proposed. The Pragmatics Association of Nigeria is not left out, as it has edited a volume on politeness concepts, models, and theories. Cross-cultural empirical research in various specific languages and cultures has been anchored. This section reviews recent studies on face and politeness in Africa.

Odebunmi, (2009) examined politeness in print media political interviews in Nigeria. Using a revised version of the relational work, the study explores print media political interviews in two Nigerian news magazines, Tell and the News.

He sampled and analysed sixty editions of each magazine published between 2000 and 2004, judging relational works to be sufficient to accommodate other politeness models, especially face work. The findings include that politeness can be achieved when participants in print media political interviews in Nigeria work on three contextual beliefs: shared knowledge of subjects, political gimmicks, and ideological expectations. This shows that interview participants display political, polite, and verbal behaviours indexed by confrontations, criticisms, veils, condemnations, and accusations. The consequent effects are that these indexes are achieved with a context-based understanding of discourse and activity types, face-threatening acts with redress, and face-threatening acts without redress. As important as this study is, particularly regarding face and politeness, the focus is not on the culture of the African people but on media and interviews. The findings, however, are of interest in this paper.

Thompson and Anderson (2018) worked on the perception of politeness from the perspective of Ghana. The study accounts for what Ghanaians perceive as politeness in their daily interactions by collecting data from interviews granted by one hundred residents who have lived for not less than twenty years, are elders above fifty years, and are residents of Accra, Kumasi, and Ho. They also speak Akan, Ga, Ewe, Mole, Dagbani, Guan, Gurma, Grusi, Mande and other languages indigenous to Ghana. The study concludes that politeness is seen as expressing respect or deference in this African community. That politeness can be expressed through speech like greetings, the use of titles and honorifics, and the use of 'please' and "thank you" The study further asserts that politeness can be achieved through employing paralinguistic and extra-linguistic features like soft voice and silence. This is an African country, and the research covers a multilingual and multicultural African context.

Gonsum and Cavusoglu (2019) studied the linguistic ethnographic investigation of face negotiations in interaction in Nigeria's multi-ethnic and multi-cultural context. The article focuses on face negotiation as an interaction management strategy in teacher-student interaction. The paper views linguistic and nonlinguistic items as components of face construction and meaning in interaction. The research was designed as a linguistic ethnographic study where the recording of naturally occurring interactions of thirty participants in a Nigerian university was performed and analysed using micro discourse analysis. The interactional data was further strengthened by participant observation and stimulated recall sessions to account for the actual intentions of the interactants.

The study's findings show that face is the architecture through which various social and interactional variables are manifested, accounted for, and negotiated in talk. Face negotiation between interactants has an asymmetrical nature depending on their status, and ethnographic resources have also revealed face consideration as a relational and omnipresent entity in interaction. This also confirms that communicative resources for politeness extend well beyond grammar, choice of words and lexicon. The findings of the above studies would form part of the basis for the conclusion in this paper.

### **Face, Politeness and African Culture: The Hausa Example**

Hausa is one of the major languages spoken in Nigeria. It is one of Africa's most widely spoken languages, after Arabic, English, French, Portuguese, and Swahili. The language is also a lingua franca and the language of commerce in West Africa. This language is spoken majorly in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Ghana, Niger, Sudan and Togo. The native speakers of the language are called Hausawa.

The universality of politeness and face initiation in speech acts, as championed by Brown and Levinson, is significantly marred by the view that languages differ as their cultures do, not only in speech situations. Any speech act requires an array of conversational norms and the integrality of the discourse or speech matrix in social indexing. Thus, the basis through which these indexes produce meaning depends solidly on the communicative norms of the language, the speaker and the influence of the surrounding agencies such as time, discourse type and parties involved, which affect how face and politeness are essential in the communication.

In Hausa's communicative space, politeness is met by three norms: conversational norm (CN), social norm (SN), and face-saving (FS). Each is indispensable and represents approved explicit rules of any speech act. The politeness in Hausa, thus, can be grouped into paradigms of Paralinguistic and Verbal utterance—the former centres principally on facial or whole-body actions and reactions. Though the notion of universality is denounced in this body communication, there is a discernible reference to closeness or evenness in the meaning-making or representation.

In Hausa socio-cultural and linguistic contexts, Politeness is viewed as a phenomenon that shows respect in any speech act. The word for politeness in

Hausa is “Ladabi”, which means respect. It is culturally required that a member of the Hausa speech community be well-mannered in speech and conduct in everyday life.

Politeness is evident in various aspects of language use in Hausa, including greetings, requests, apologies, compliments, disagreements, and more. In all these, it is important to note that one’s choice of words or structure appropriate for social interaction is determined by socio-cultural variables such as age, gender, and social status. Hence, politeness in Hausa culture is achieved through different ways, either directly or indirectly.

### **Politeness in Hausa Greetings**

Greetings are a social phenomenon in Hausa culture. At different times and in other situations, members of the Hausa community exchange words to express care and concern for one another. Standard greetings in Hausa consist of “*Ina kwana*” (Good morning), “*Ina yini*” (Good afternoon), and “*Barka da yamma*” (Good evening). In Hausa culture, younger community members are required to initiate greeting exchanges. For example:

**Younger:** “*Ina kwana*” (How did you sleep)

**Older:** “*Lafiya.*” (Well)

**Younger:** “*Ina gajiya?*” How are you?

**Older:** “*Ba gajiya.*” (No!)

**Younger:** “*Sannu.*” (Well done)

**Older:** “*Yauwa.*” (Thank you)

However, if the older person initiates the exchange, it is considered grossly impolite for the younger to respond by saying, “*Lafiya.*” In such a situation, the younger person is required by culture to return the greeting as in the example below:

**Older:** “*Ina kwana.*”

**Younger:** “*Ina kwana.*”

In this way, the greeting exchange will continue. In some situations, the younger person will have to apologise, as in “*Yi hakuri, ina kwanza*” (*Pardon me*), failing to initiate the exchange as culture requires. It is worth noting that in Hausa culture, you are more likely to be polite when you take time to enquire about the well-being of others.

Condolence greetings are another essential part of Hausa culture, known as “Gaisuwar ta’aziya”. Condolence in Hausa, unlike in English, is beyond just the expression of sympathy but that of empathy. It is an exchange that requires praying for the deceased because of the influence of Islam on the Hausa culture. A condolence greeting in Hausa also takes up the Islamic perspective. For example, a typical condolence greeting in Hausa is in the following pattern:

*Ina yinin mu. Yaya muka ji da hakurin rashi. Ashe Baba lokaci ya yi. Toh bari Allah ya tausasa zukatan mu. Allah ya jikan Baba, ya yi masa rahama. Allah ya haskaka makauncin sa ya kuma sa aljana ce makomar sa.*

#### **Translation**

Good afternoon. How are we coping with the loss? Baba’s time has come. May God comfort our hearts, have mercy upon him, and bless his soul. May God light his grave and make paradise his final abode.

This is the kind of condolence that is offered at the demise of a Hausa-Muslim person. Anything short of this is disrespectful. Ironically, this kind of greeting is only provided at the demise of a Hausa Muslim. Such cannot be offered when a Hausa Non-Muslim dies, but it is deeply cherished when such greetings are supplied by a non-Muslim. In Hausa culture, it is impolite to use the word “*Baba ya mutu*” (Baba is dead) but “*Baba ya rasu*”. (We have lost Baba). This is where euphemism is used to achieve politeness. There are many instances where Euphemism is used to achieve politeness.

#### **Politeness in Hausa Requests**

The request is potentially a face-threatening act since it requires the “requestee” to do something for the “requester”. In Hausa culture, most requests are pre-modified and/or post-modified by some peripheral mitigation devices aimed at reducing face imposition. Sometimes, requests are made explicitly, and other times, implicitly. When a person chooses to be implicit, he is considered respectful (polite). However, indirectness in a request can sometimes be regarded as disrespectful if the requester is of lower social status or younger than the “requestee”. For example, when your teacher counts money, you say, “*Ina matukar so in sayi litafi amma ba ni da kudi*” (I wish to buy a book, but I do not have money). The teacher may consider your statement disrespectful and feel that even if you want him to assist you with some cash, you should find an appropriate

way of saying it. However, if you make the same statement to your father or elder brother, it will be most appropriately polite because it serves as a face-saving act.

Requests in Hausa culture are considered highly polite if some mitigation devices accompany them. Such devices are also face-saving acts by themselves. The most common mitigation devices in Hausa are “*Don Allah*”, “*Ka taimake ni*”, “*Ina neman gudunmawar ka*”, “*Yi hakuri*”, etc. These devices can be used before or after the request head. For example: “*Don Allah ka ara mun keken ka*” for the sake of God, please lend me your bicycle); “*Ka taimake ni don Allah*” (Help me, please, for the sake of God). The use of “*Don Allah*” here serves as a mitigation device that saves the face of the hearer in doing the speaker’s demands.

Rejection of a request is another face act in Hausa culture. It is highly impolite for a request to be rejected without any form of mitigation, especially when the rejection is coming from a person of lower social status or younger than the requester. In Hausa culture, to soften the face-threatening act, the “requestee” may use some mitigation devices, such as “*Ka yi hakuri*” (I am sorry) and “*Ni ma mabukaci ne*” (I am also a needy). By using these devices to reject a request, one is considered polite, and this also saves the hearer’s face.

Request rejection is more likely to occur when the speaker has a higher social status or is older than the hearer. A man has more potential to refuse a fellow man's request than a woman. This is probably because women are seen in society as weaker in the African society.

### **Compliment as Politeness in Hausa Culture**

Compliment is another socio-cultural and linguistic phenomenon in the Hausa speech community. It is considered socially appropriate for members of such a community to express their likeness over one another’s appearance, ability, and possessions. As a highly cultured phenomenon, a compliment is context-bound within the Hausa community. In other words, what may be considered a good compliment in one context may be regarded as disrespect in another. For example, “*Nere nawa ka sayi hularka?*” (How much did you buy your cap for?) is a common phrase. While this strategy may be appreciated as a politeness when expressed by an older person or a person of high social status, it is considered grossly impolite when represented by a younger person or a person of lower social status to an older person.

Similarly, in an Islamic-influenced Hausa community, it is not culturally appropriate for a man to express his likeness over a woman's beauty or appearance, especially if she is married.

A compliment response is the acceptance or rejection of a compliment offered. Like with the compliment, the response is also context-bound. Compliments can be either accepted or rejected directly or indirectly. In some situations, rejecting a compliment could mean abandoning the speaker's assessment of the hearer, which could be disrespectful if the speaker is older than the hearer. This is so because, in Hausa culture, elders' opinions are to be respected and accepted even if you have a contrary opinion. In accepting compliments in Hausa culture, the complimentee is not expected to upgrade the assessment; doing so would be rude. However, the complimentee can downgrade or reassign the rating to the complimenter or God. "*Ina tasowa dai*" (I am just coming up), "*Yin Allah ne.*" (It is God's doing) You can also be appreciative to the complementer or any third party. For example, "*Na gode*" (Thank you) or "*Godiya ga Allah*" (Thanks be to God). These kinds of responses to compliments are highly considered polite and respectful in the Hausa socio-cultural context.

#### **Apology as and Politeness in Hausa Culture**

Apology is another aspect of language in use. It is universally agreed that an apology can be used for different purposes, such as expressing sympathy, strategic disarmament, and remedial acts. In the Hausa community, apology is used for all these purposes. Like in other cultures, an apology in Hausa culture is potentially a Face Threatening Act (FTA) since it threatens the positive face of the speaker. For example, "*Ina gani na tafka babban kuskure.*" (I think I have made a huge mistake.) Here, the speaker expresses his shortcomings, which are causing damage to his positive self-image.

It is important to note that not all expressions of apology are considered polite. There are expressions of apology that are rather rude and disrespectful. For example, "*Toh na ce ka yi hakuri mana.*" (Alright, I said I am sorry.) This kind of apology is considered impolite due to the use of "Toh" and "mana," which convey the speaker's unwillingness and insincerity in offering the apology. Furthermore, an apology in Hausa culture is considered highly polite when using a combination of different strategies. For example: "*Na yi matukan danasanin abin da ya faru. Don Allah ka yi hakuri. Ba zai sake faruwa ba.*" (I deeply regret what happened. In the name of God, forgive me. It will not happen again.) This

apology is considered more polite and sincere in Hausa culture than just saying, “Ka yi hakuri” (I am sorry).

In Hausa culture, there is another phenomenon called “Cin fuska”. This means that whatever you say or do that brings shame and disrespect to the hearer amounts to “cin fuska” (Disrespect). For example: “*Na san tun da ban ba ka kudi ba zan fadi jarabawanka.*” (I knew that since I did not give you money, I would fail your examination). This statement is a threat to the positive face of the hearer. The table below represents the paralinguistic network and how body parts contribute to politeness and face.

<b>Rejection</b>	<b>Approval</b>	<b>Convincing</b>	<b>Indifference</b>
<i>Horizontal head nodding, vertical head nodding, and shattered lips.</i>			
<i>Face frown</i>			<i>face tightening</i>
<i>Thumb flip</i>			<i>Shoulder spread</i>
			<i>Lips twisting</i>

The four-layered distribution of communicative features brings us closer to understanding how a speech act is executed in relation to body language. They altogether bear connotational meaning and are context-tied. If responses relate to acceptance, they move their heads vertically. Furthermore, if there is disapproval or rejection of the interlocution, they flip their thumb fingers horizontally. These communication networks induce performative roles, enact management of mutual cohesion, and clarify a good space for social aspects of the conversation. This is not only restricted to Hausa speakers but applies to African languages.

Politeness and face are realised basically through verbal utterances. Sometimes, they co-occur with body language and serve as supplements. Once that utterance is made, it automatically designates politeness or otherwise. The only conflicting incidence that emanates despite linguistic background is affected by mutual intelligibility. For instance, in the Hausa speech setting, if someone reacts with ‘to’ (tɔ), meaning ‘ok’, what is precisely the face reality of the communicative term is approval. Still, the deep meaning expresses doubt or disapproval. For instance, in ‘to yanzu ka yarda kenan?’ However, the word ‘to’ impedes the continuous network of discourse and, as such, creates opposing faces and politeness.

Similarly, here are some of the verbal utterances in respect of politeness and face in Hausa:

<b>Rejection</b>	<b>Approval</b>	<b>Convincing</b>	<b>Indifference</b>
<i>Ah!</i>	<i>haka</i>	<i>naam</i>	<i>ok</i>
<i>Hmm</i>	<i>Naam</i>	<i>Masha Allah</i>	<i>anyway</i>
<i>Silence</i>	<i>Masha Allah</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>haka</i>
<i>Ok</i>	<i>Discourse progression</i>		<i>discourse diversion</i>

For instance, when a Hausa speaker utters "ah!" in a speech, there is a widespread belief that it signifies disagreement or rejection of the discourse or speech.

***Ah! Wannan ka yi niyyar ba ni?***

***Ah! Is it what you intended to give me?***

The entire text becomes propositionally negated by uttering this exclamation as the speaker marks his speech with dissatisfaction and denial. On the surface, someone may declare it an exclamation that arises solely from emotional articulation. Still, a Hausa speaker can extract deep meaning by revealing what is intended, i.e., disapproval. If this is all about the denial of expression, it stresses the negativity of discourse exchange, which will inevitably impede interlocution. In the Hausa speech act, there is a diversion/digression of discourse primarily by one party, especially if the intention is to hinder the progressive flow of the event. E.g.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <b><i>A: Kana da kudin?</i></b>               | <b><i>Do you have the money?</i></b>         |
| <b><i>B: Kudi na da wahala</i></b>            | <b><i>money now has become a problem</i></b> |
| <b><i>A: Ya za ka rayu yanzu?</i></b>         | <b><i>How will you survive now?</i></b>      |
| <b><i>B: na gamsu da kaina</i></b>            | <b><i>I am comfortable with myself</i></b>   |
| <b><i>B: Na yarda da kokarin kai</i></b>      | <b><i>I believe in self-commitment</i></b>   |
| <b><i>B: Zan tabbatar da tsaron kaina</i></b> | <b><i>I will ensure my self defence</i></b>  |

From the above, the B participant showed reluctance toward the A participant. Perhaps, B does not welcome the statement of A. This reveals that the face value was first initiated by A, and B built the impression of negative politeness. That is why B dominated the whole exchange, and A remained silent, playing an insignificant role in the act; the interactive exchanges were curtailed. What is uniquely essential is how the conversational implicature has been tempered and how the maxims of manner, relevance and quality are reduced to nothing. By this, we can attest that if the information is diverted, it can create vagueness, and

vagueness often leads to unsuccessful speech situations, as such, making utterances blunt.

In this instance, the other party becomes flustered and manages a negative face, which inevitably affects the network of politeness. In an ideal speech situation, every segment is expected to have passed through an adjacency pair: question-answer, offer-acceptance, statement-responses, or offer-rejection

Silence is most common in Hausa people's communication in terms of face value. Speakers often know whether the discourse requires continuity or not. If the discourse requires progression, the two interlocutors interact through a shared contingent of exchanges. However, if one is not cooperating among the interlocutors, primarily by volitional utterance refusal, the discourse abruptly stops, and eventually, face and politeness tend to be negative. This scenario is personally specific and determined by the nature of the discourse or the time at which the discourse was made. For instance,

- |   |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| <i>A: Akwai alkawarin tafiyar? How far about the journey?</i> |                                     |
| <i>B: Naam</i>  | <i>Yes</i>                          |
| <i>A: Ko ba za a tafi ba?</i>                                 | <i>Aren't you coming?</i>           |
| <i>B: Zan</i>   | <i>I will</i>                       |
| <i>A: Ka tabbatar da tafiyar?</i>                             | <i>Are you sure of the journey?</i> |
| <i>B: Shiru Silence</i>                                       | <i>Silence</i>                      |
| <i>A: Yaushe za a tafi?</i>                                   | <i>When is the journey?</i>         |

Here, speaker A is not economical with words and becomes suspicious of speaker B his mood probes uncertainty, which gives him the courage to question the faithfulness of the speech. Speaker B, perhaps because of age or personality, was deserted and angrily reacted with non-cooperation in the discourse. In this manner, it disrupts the speech situation and their politeness space.

### **Conclusion**

In Africa, because of diversity in cultural values and orientation, every ethnolinguistic group has its own established conventions regarding the utterances and actions of its members, which are regarded as polite or impolite. Despite these differences, there are grounds for similarities in how these diverse cultures perceive politeness. From the empirical reviews and the Hausa example, the following conclusions are drawn: the concern for politeness across African cultures is universal and there is focus on community related face; politeness is

met on three norms: conversational norm-CN; Social Norm-SN and Face Saving-FS, each is indispensable and represents approved explicit rules of any speech act; there are also needs for positive regards in most African cultures and the degree of politeness and conception of politeness may not be similar; in African communities, politeness is seen as an act of expressing respect or deference; politeness can be expressed through speech like greetings, the use of titles and honorifics, and the use of 'please' and "thank you". Politeness can be achieved through employing paralinguistic and extra linguistic features like soft voice and silence; there is an asymmetrical nature of face negotiation between interactants depending on their status and that ethnographic resources have also revealed face consideration as a relational and omnipresent entity in interaction; and this also confirms that communicative resources for politeness extend well beyond grammar, choice of words and lexicon.

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