

LINGUISTIC POLITENESS FORMS IN ENGLISH AMONG IGBO BILINGUALS IN NIGERIA: THE CASE OF REPRIMAND

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ABSTRACT: *The study examined Igbo perception and expression of reprimand speech act in line with politeness as a conversation strategy in the conversational English of Igbo native speakers which is unexplored. Through a purposive sampling process, 3 000 questionnaires in the form of Discourse Completion Task depicting ten scenarios of imagined role-play between interlocutors written in English were distributed to undergraduates of Igbo extraction at seven universities systematically selected from South-East and South-South zones in Nigeria. Results showed that reprimands were conversational norms of Igbo bilinguals and were evident in their English language conversations as participants engaged in reprimanding occasioned by forms of misconduct. Findings also revealed that to achieve the conversational demands of reprimand speech act across horizontal, vertical and diagonal relationships as the case may be, the Igbo culture reflected observance of context, social status, social distance and severity of offence variables a consideration of which at the instance of a conversation underlies the choice/use of a particular strategy or another. The study concluded that speech act is culture-bound hence the need to incorporate pragmatics in language teaching.*

KEYWORDS: *linguistic politeness, reprimand, Igbo bilinguals, culture, social variables, Nigeria*

INTRODUCTION

This is part of our Doctoral study on politeness forms and hedging strategies in English among Igbo bilinguals conducted in South-east Nigeria in the second semester of the 2016/2017 academic session using Igbo native speakers as subjects (Dozie, 2017). The study investigated various indices of politeness such as apology, appreciation, request, greeting, offer, reprimand, excuses, breaking bad news etc and the Igbo views and expression of politeness as well as its implication as a discourse strategy. Among other human discourse strategies, politeness accounts for the acceptable customary and social behaviours of members of a society which facilitates interactions. It is an unwritten law which interlocutors must knuckle under to achieve effective and meaningful dialogue which is undeniably anchored on reciprocity and feedback. Linguistic politeness therefore expounds what informs interaction, how people interact and exchange ideas/thoughts and ultimately how interlocutors get on through language since it is believed that utterances are determined by the relationship existing between interactants as well as sociocultural context which help them navigate the complexities of diverse discourse situations particularly across cultures.

However, it is imperative that learners of a language achieve not only mastery and fluency in the target language but also appropriateness of use as they account for the totality of communicative

competence without which a learner may not effectively convey the intended message nor achieve the desired interpretation and feedback which has been variously studied as pragmatics. Cross-cultural pragmatics or pragmatic competence therefore explains that an all-round aptitude in language involves not just knowledge of the language but applying same appropriately considering the dimensions of social and cultural contexts always at play as there may be differences in the ways various speech acts are realized (Robert, Davies and Jupp 1992; Garcia 1993; Lightbown and Spada 1999; Kasper and Rose 2001). Similarly, Demeter (2006) acknowledges that speech acts primarily mirror the cultural values and social norms of a language as any speech act that does not typically depict the cultural, social and even the pragmatic essence in intercultural communication may result in misunderstanding of the appropriateness of the speech act as well as grasping the anticipated meaning of any expressed by someone else. Thus in every interlanguage or cross-cultural discourse or interaction; cultural peculiarities, social affiliations, pragmatic circumstances are some of the factors tied to the supposed meaning of an utterance. Primarily, reprimand like other speech acts is always actuated or necessitated by an action which in this case is an offense but of prime importance in this study is the Igbo perception of reprimand in line with politeness as a conversation strategy as well as its expression in the conversational English of Igbo native speakers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reprimand as a speech act is often perceived as an infraction or otherwise a face threatening act as the addressee is presumed to be offended by the speech act. It is important to note that conversations are naturally a chain reaction and reprimand as a speech act is not an isolated case. In other words, an action by the interactant/interactants always gives rise to a reaction by the interactant/interactants as the case may be and the implication is that reprimand is always triggered by an out of line conduct or utterance in the course of human interaction which aims to reprove any wrong practices.

The Igbo Culture and Reprimand

The Igbo are the group of people inhabiting the southern part of Nigeria. It is not exactly an easy task to try to trace their ancestry but they are a socially and culturally diverse group with one common language – Igbo and varying but mutually intelligible dialects. As a people, they are rooted in the elaborate customs, traditions and cultures that shape life and living in the land. Again, they are a highly agricultural, resourceful, sociable, hospitable, very resilient and deeply group-oriented sect. In the light of Igbo hospitality and sociability, Uchendu (1965) asserts that Igbo hospitality which loosely translates to sociability is stereotypical and founded on reciprocity principle which is a belief system anchored on mutual concessions in which a good deed or an act of kindness shown is directly or indirectly recompensed as an expression of good neighbourliness and congeniality. In other words, these acts of kindness are not gestures expected of the rich to the poor and vice versa but acts which show that life does not subsist in a society but by reciprocal concessions. Also, the traditional Igbo society venerates eldership and accomplishment is revered as a mark of fulfillment and key index for societal recognition. According to Nwoye (1989, 1992), the Igbo society is a classless entity and as such, her language is marked by statistically fewer linguistic forms for expressing class stratification reflective of respect and terms of address or titles. Also, Nwoye describes the Igbo society as an oral one whose history and culture are transmitted by word of mouth thus words hold a central position among the people. Furthermore, the communal life of the Igbo, their quest for inclusiveness and cohesion, as well as their value for brotherhood marks them out as a people who do not only show concern for the well-being of one another but as brothers' keepers. This explains why the Igbo bond and spirit which is reflected in their language and choice of linguistic terms to a large extent transcends most rules and principles believed to govern utterances. As aptly described by Nwoye

(1992) “the egalitarian Igbo society, with its concern for the collective other, which means placing the wants and needs of the Igbo group above those of the individual, enables acts such as requests, offers, thanking, reprimands become speech acts that habitually neither threaten the face of the speaker nor impose on the hearer”. Consequently reprimanding in the gregarious Igbo culture is commonplace because just as the people feel free to make requests or obligated to offer help, they equally reprimand at the instance of an out of line conduct or utterance in the course of human interaction aimed to reprove wrongful practices. Nwoye’s account of instances of reprimand in the Igbo culture depicts that reprimanding may be somewhat veiled rather than overly direct depending on the violation as well as context. Most importantly, the Igbo notion about reprimand is that they are generally born out of goodwill to get the better of everyone and an already bad situation which also accounts for the gratitude usually received in return in some cases. Reprimands in the Igbo culture may arise from such situations which include but are not limited to: insubordination, stubbornness, blunder, rowdiness, disobedience, carelessness, general indiscipline/misconduct, defamation of character, incorrigibility, renegeing on an agreement, public verbal assault, undue harassment, molestation, contravening a rule, etc. However, Nwoye noted that reprimands are performed by adopting either the directness or indirectness strategy but any attempt to deliberately adopt any strategy in place of another considering the obvious circumstance in seeking redress poses a boomerang effect.

Previous Studies

Garcia (1996), whose seminal study on the speech act of reprimand set the pace for more research in this discipline, studied the role-play exchanges of Peruvian Spanish speakers in two situations typified by a boss-employee relationship in the reprimand discourse scenarios. The study revealed that subjects chose solidarity over deference politeness strategies when reprimanding. However, when responding to reprimand, subjects were found to choose deference over solidarity politeness strategies. In essence, the study showed that the choice of strategies when reprimanding and responding to reprimand was two-dimensional.

In another cross-cultural study, Garcia (2004a) did a comparative investigation of politeness strategies of reprimands as well as responding to reprimands of Peruvian and Venezuelan Spanish speakers using two role-plays with an invariable interactant. Findings showed that given the social power variable, the groups were more inclined to adopt direct strategies which threatened their own negative face although the Venezuelans appeared more effusive in the speech act of reprimand and responding to reprimand as well.

In yet another study, Garcia (2004b) examined two role-play interactions of Argentinean Spanish speakers on reprimand and responding to reprimand on an asymmetrical relationship. The results of the study showed that while the females adopted the negative politeness strategies by using more mitigators to win the interlocutor’s consent, the males preferred to compel their interlocutors. Also, Argentineans were observed to use strategies that threaten the interlocutor’s face rather than their own face whereas in responding to reprimand, participants preferred threatening their own positive and negative face to a greater degree than their interlocutor’s in this case. The study concluded that within the cultural context of the interactions, social power and distance variables were by no means propelling factors in the speech act of reprimand.

Similarly, Garcia (2009) investigated intralingual pragmatic variation in the performance of reprimand in Spanish by examining Peruvian, Venezuelan and Argentinean subjects based on

Spencer-Oatey's rapport management framework. The result showed that although the three groups preferred the approval of their face wants, the groups still differed largely in terms of their observable responses because whereas the Peruvians and Venezuelans showed a rapport-challenging tendency, the Argentineans demonstrated a rapport-maintenance inclination. Again, while the Peruvians were not concerned about their self image, the Venezuelans and Argentineans desired to save their own face. By and large, the study noted a potential communication gap in a conditional intra-lingual transaction involving members of the three diverse cultural groups.

Conversely, Frescura (2006) studied the reaction of smokers when reprimanded for their overt disregard of the no-smoking regulations in two hospitals in Northern Italy. The study dwelt on a specific context of reprimand using observation of naturally occurring discourse and results showed that a number of reactive behavior were evident. The study observed that among equals, verbal and non-verbal reactions to the reprimand were possibly gender-related. Although the study noted that social power variable was likely to play a role in compliance by the offenders irrespective of social distance and gender difference.

Furthermore, Ahmadian and Dastjerdi's (2010) study explored the perception of reprimand speech act in American English and Iranian culture using 25 Americans and 35 Iranians subjects in open role-play and questionnaire as data collection instruments. The study revealed while Iranians were drawn to the social power variable, the Americans were not particular about that as they considered them of equal rights. Also, findings of the study showed that perceiving reprimand politeness was not controlled by social distance factor in both American and Iranian cultures but individuals in authority (parent, teachers) were found to reprimand more in order to check misconduct.

Although studies have been conducted on various speech acts with regard to politeness in Nigeria (Afolayan 1974; Agegbija 1989; Nwoye 1989; 1992; Odebunmi 2005; Odebunmi 2013; Enang, Eshiet and Udoka 2014), there has not been any detailed empirical study on the perception/expression of politeness and the speech act of reprimand in the conversational English of Igbo native speakers in Nigeria. This study therefore will help bridge this gap as well as expand research on the linguistic peculiarities, patterns and mannerisms of Igbo bilinguals.

METHODOLOGY

Population

The study participants were undergraduate students; males and females, aged between 17 and 25 years, purposively drawn from various federal and state universities in the five core Igbo-speaking states that make up the South-Eastern Nigeria, namely Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo state and the Igbo-speaking areas of Delta and Rivers States in the South-South Nigeria. The subjects were Nigerians of Igbo extraction and that is to say that the study targeted only Igbo native speakers who are learners of English as a second language. A total of three thousand (3 000) undergraduates participated in this study.

Sampling Techniques

The institutions of study were selected through a Systematic Sampling Process (SSP) and they included: Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike (MOUUAU) Abia State, Nnamdi Azikiwe University (NAU) Awka Anambra State, Ebonyi State University (EBSU) Ebonyi State, University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN) Enugu State, Federal University of Technology Owerri (FUTO) Imo State, Delta State University (DELSU) Delta State and University of Port-Harcourt (UNIPORT) River State. Similarly, in the choice of faculties represented for all institutions of study, the SSP was also applied. Furthermore, using a self-designed balloting strategy, the various disciplines in the faculties were selected. Three thousand (3 000) respondents were studied by means of a pretested and validated 10-item reprimand discourse questionnaire (appendix A). Five hundred (500) participants were drawn from each of the five institutions that make up the core Igbo speaking states of the South-East zone. Similarly, two hundred and fifty (250) participants were drawn from each of the two institutions in the South-South zone. This study focused on the English language conversation of Igbo native speakers particularly as they employed politeness strategies in reprimand discourse which are influenced by sociolinguistic variables as social status, social distance, severity of offence and cultural variations.

Instrumentation

The major instrument for data collection was a ten-item pretested Discourse Completion Task (DCT) questionnaire. Although it has been argued that observation of naturally occurring speech remains the only dependable and consistent method for collecting data on speech act function in communication (Wolfson, 1983), the present study took into account; the vastness of the study area, population of the study, linguistic background of the samples and data collection for the specific speech act under investigation. Thus the Discourse Completion Task (DCT) was adopted as the production data collection method to capture the details of a cross-sectional questionnaire-based survey. The questionnaire was in two parts, while the first part focused on demographic data of participants, the second part addressed ten situations designed to provoke politeness strategies in form of reprimand which are: (1) Some unknown person called you and in the course of your discussion, you realized you were not the intended receiver. What would you say to the caller? (2) You had an agreement with your partner to always issue a cheque as a wedding present but your partner, in this case, got a gift item instead. What would be your spoken reaction to the situation? (3) You were told that your boss had been peddling nasty rumors about you. In that rage, what would you say when you confront him? (4) As a teacher, you walked into your class and the class was rowdy. What would you say to the students? (5) As a boss, what would you say to a subordinate who consistently makes the same mistakes in typing your mail? (6) Your partner scolds you in public. What would you say? (7) As a road user, another driver hits your car from behind. What would you say to that driver on getting down? (8) In a banking hall, the teller attended to a customer who rushed in not minding the long queue awaiting service. What would you say to the teller and the defaulting customer? (9) As a bride/groom to be, you suddenly find yourself being pestered for a fresh relationship. What would you say to the person? (10) On a hospital visit, the doctor began to touch you inappropriately. What would you say to the doctor?

However, considering that our pilot test which was carried out in a non-study institution in Owerri, the Imo State capital, showed that respondents did not complete the open-ended questions as required by DCT, rather they returned virtually unanswered questionnaire. The questionnaire was therefore redesigned to include guided options marked alphabetically from A – C which was further pretested before it was administered to the respondents. These options were structured to show that every possible option was polite but at varying degrees. Hence all option A was polite, all option B was more polite and all option C was most polite. The participants were expected to choose options which best typified their own in similar situations. The DCT represented diverse contexts of situations simulating the imagined role-play between interactants. Thus, sociolinguistic variables like social status of speakers, social distance between speakers and severity of the offence in question were posited in each situation.

Data Collection

Questionnaire data were collected at Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike (MOUAAU), Nnamdi Azikiwe University (NAU), Ebonyi State University (EBSU), University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN), Federal University of Technology Owerri (FUTO), Delta State University (DELSU) and University of Port-Harcourt (UNIPORT), Nigeria in the second semester of 2016/2017 academic session by means of a Discourse Completion Task (DCT). As this study is centered on human subjects who by extension were the researchers' partners, ethical concerns were considered in data collection. In each of the faculties selected for the study, willing students who indicated interest after the objectives of the study were highlighted and assured of anonymity of questionnaire as well as confidentiality of findings, were enrolled for the study. The researchers made the respondents realize that they were not participating in the study under duress but could withdraw at will. Willing members of staff were enlisted as research assistants in the distribution and collection of questionnaire. Having obtained verbal consent from the participants, they completed the DCT taking approximately 15 minutes.

Data Analysis

Quantitative analysis was used to analyze politeness strategies employed in reprimand discourse derived from the Discourse Completion Task (DCT)

RESULTS

Gender distribution and return of questionnaire by respondents according to Institutions.

Table 1 shows that out of the 3000 copies of questionnaire distributed, 2748 representing 92% was returned consisting of 42% males and 58% females from various institutions of study.

Table 1: Gender Distribution and Return of Questionnaire by Respondents

Institutions	No. of Questionnaire Distributed	No (%) of Questionnaire returned		Male		
		Female (%)	Male (%)	Freq	(%)	Freq
MOUAU	500	440 (88.0)	200	45.5	240	54.5
NAU	500	461 (92.2)	198	43.0	263	57.0
EBSU	500	464 (92.8)	204	44.0	260	56.0
UNN	500	446 (92.2)	257	58.0	189	42.0
FUTO	500	478 (95.6)	148	31.0	330	69.0
DELSU	500	227 (90.8)	70	31.0	157	69.0
UNIPORT	500	232 (92.8)	76	32.8	156	67.2
TOTAL	3,000	2748 (92.00)	1153	42.0	1595	58.0

Key:

MOUAU = Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike

NAU = Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka

EBSU = Ebonyi State University

UNN = University of Nigeria Nsukka

FUTO = Federal University of Technology Owerri

DELSU = Delta State University

UNIPORT = University of Port Harcourt.

Respondents' English Proficiency level

Table 2 indicates respondents' self-assessment of proficiency level in English Language. Results show that the highest percentage (48.0%) was of the good proficiency level while the least percentage (0.8%) was of the weak proficiency level.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents according to level of Proficiency in English

Level of Proficiency in English	Frequency	Percentage
Weak	23	0.8
Fair	700	25.0
Good	1320	48.0
Very good	604	22.1
Excellent	101	4.1
Total	2748	100

Responses on Reprimand Discourse

Table 3 shows the frequency of respondents' Responses on Reprimand Discourse considering the situations projected by different scenarios and taking into account the guided options provided.

Table 3: Summary of Respondents' Reponses on Reprimand Discourse

Situation	OPTION A POLITE							OPTION B MORE POLITE							OPTION C MOST POLITE						
	MOU AU	NA U	EBS U	U N N	FU TO	DEL SU	UNIP ORT	MOU AU	NA U	EB SU	UN N	FU TO	DE LS U	UNIP ORT	MOU AU	N A U	EB SU	UN N	FUT O	DEL SU	UNIP ORT
1	10	11	15	10	14	5	9	248	259	26	251	269	128	131	182	19	19	185	198	94	96
7	3	5	7	3	3	4	1	131	137	13	132	142	67	69	307	32	32	311	333	158	162
8	64	67	67	64	66	30	33	76	80	81	77	83	39	40	300	31	31	304	326	155	158
9	34	36	36	35	37	18	18	350	366	36	355	380	180	184	56	59	59	57	61	29	30
2	73	76	77	74	79	38	36	167	175	17	169	181	86	88	201	21	21	203	218	104	106
6	165	176	171	17	178	86	88	97	101	10	98	105	50	51	176	18	18	178	191	91	93

3	5	2	8	2	6	1	3	10	11	11	10	11	5	5	428	44	45	434	465	221	226	
10	15	15	16	15	16	12	8	80	84	84	81	87	41	42	345	36	36	350	375	178	182	
4	364	381	375	36	395	184	188	39	41	41	39	42	20	20	38	40	40	38	41	19	20	
5	320	334	338	32	348	165	169	100	105	10	6	102	109	52	53	19	20	20	20	21	10	10
Total	1053	1103	0	111	106	114	543	553	1298	135	136	131	140	668	683	2052	214	216	2080	2229	1059	1083

Key: MOUAU = 440
 NAU = 461
 EBSU = 464
 UNN = 446
 FUTO = 478
 DELSU = 227
 UNIPORT = 232
TOTAL = 2748

Assessment of Overall Respondents' Discourse on Reprimand

Table 4 reveals that 60.36% of the male respondents picked the polite option A while 39.64% of their female counterparts picked same option A. On the other hand, 44.90% of the males chose the more polite option B as against 55.10% females who chose same option B. Furthermore, 33.60% of the males selected the most polite option C whereas 66.40% of option C responses were recorded by the females

Table 4: Assessment of Respondents' Reponses on Reprimand Discourse (n=2748)

Situation	Social Status	Social Distance	Severity of Offence	OPTION A						OPTION B						OPTION C						
				POLITE						MORE POLITE						MOST POLITE						
				Freq	%	Male		Female		Freq	%	Male		Female		Freq	%	Male		Female		
						Freq	%	Freq	%			Freq	%	Freq	%			Freq	%			
1	S θ H	-SD	-	74	1.13	45	0.68	29	0.44	1547	19.10	698	8.62	849	10.48	1138	8.88	398	3.11	740	5.77	
7	S θ H	-SD	+	26	0.40	18	0.27	8	0.12	816	10.07	377	4.65	439	5.42	1915	14.94	570	4.45	1345	10.50	
8	S θ H	-SD	+	391	5.95	238	3.62	153	2.33	476	5.88	204	2.52	272	3.36	1873	14.62	696	5.43	1177	9.19	
9	S θ H	-SD	+			129		85	1.29				12.0									
				214	3.26		1.96			2184	26.96	973	1	1211	14.95	351	2.74	143	1.12	208	1.62	
2	S = H	+SD	+	453	6.89	275	4.19	178	2.71	1042	12.86	479	5.91	563	6.95	1254	9.79	419	3.27	835	6.52	
6	S = H	+SD	+	1034	15.74	625	9.51	409	6.22	604	7.46	262	3.23	342	4.22	1098	8.57	364	2.84	734	5.73	
3	S < H	+SD	+	27	0.41	18	0.27	9	0.14	63	0.78	28	0.35	35	0.43	2673	20.86	916	7.15	1757	13.71	
10	S < H	-SD	+	97	1.48	62	0.94	35	0.53	499	6.16	235	2.90	264	3.26	2156	16.83	725	5.66	1431	11.17	
4	S > H	0SD	+	2256	34.33	1359	20.68	897	13.65	242	2.99	119	1.47	123	1.52	236	1.84	53	0.41	183	1.43	
5	S > H	+SD	+	1999	30.42	1197	18.22	802	12.21	627	7.74	262	3.23	365	4.51	120	0.94	22	0.17	98	0.76	
Total				6571	100.00		60.36		39.64	8100	100.00		3637	44.9	55.10		100.00	4306		33.60	8508	66.40

S = Speaker; H = Hearer, SD = Social Distance
 < = Lower; = equal; > higher; θ = not established
 + = close; - = distant; 0 = neutral
 Severity of offence (+ = severe - = not severe)

DISCUSSION

Reprimand discourse acknowledges that in human interaction there is always the tendency for an out of line behavior and in the event of any impropriety, the defaulter is always censured, criticized or even condemned for such acts. Reprimand signals disagreement which expresses or shows tension arising from a discord. The implication therefore is that there exists an offence. In trying to censure an offender, the severity of the offence is taken into account. This means that a mild offence will attract light criticism while a grave offence would attract weighty criticism other variables notwithstanding.

The result of the study shows that reprimands are conversational routine of Igbo bilinguals and is also evident in their English language conversation. It is also clear from data obtained on Reprimand discourse that apart from the social variables of status and distance, so much attention is paid to severity of offence as that would ultimately determine the wording of the utterance – Reprimand. Thus, act of reprimanding among interlocutors where the statuses of the interlocutors were not established (diagonal relationship) and which automatically makes them socially distant (situations 1, 7, 8, and 9) swings between the more polite and the most polite responses with particular attention to the weightiness of the supposed offence. For example (situation 1) projects a scenario of mistaken caller identity and the majority of the responses were inclined to the more polite option B as the offence was not in any way severe but probably an honest mistake. The context portrayed in situation 1 and responses thereof which showed a preponderance of the more polite option B are similar to Garcia's (2009) projection using Spencer-Oatey's rapport management framework in an intralingual pragmatic variation. The study showed that Venezuelans and Argentines were more inclined to rapport maintenance which is deducible from the general response in situation 1.

Also, for situations 7 and 8, although the offences were adjudged severe, the majority of the reactions tilted towards the most polite option C while in situation 9 which was considered a severe offence, subjects were more inclined to the more polite option B. This critical finding is significant because knowing what constitutes a severe offence and getting reactions not quite at par with the said severe offence only denotes that the social status variable which was not established between the interlocutors at those situations played a major role in the reactions. However, It is important to note that while previous reprimand speech act studies (Garcia 1996; Garcia 2004a; Garcia 2004b; Garcia 2009; Frescura 2006; Ahmadian and Dastjerdi 2010) clearly spelt out interlocutors' social status variable in all situations, the present study deliberately integrated situations where the status of interlocutors were not established to emphasize the fact that interactions naturally cut across unfamiliar margins which is typical of the Igbo society. The result therefore shows that the Igbo culture succumbs to status symbol in reprimand discourse.

Again, in acts of reprimand among status equals (horizontal relationship) and socially close interlocutors (situations 2 and 6) considering the weightiness of the offence, responses were more to the most polite option C but partially too to the more polite option B and the polite option A. The spread of these responses may be tied to individual differences, perception and of course reaction to a supposed infraction. In other words, participants had varied reactions to the scenarios projected in situations 2 and 6 as they adopted majorly the Positive politeness, Negative politeness and Bald-on-record strategies as the case may be to express their disagreement. Our finding which partly agrees with Frescura (2006) on reprimand act among status equals indicates that reactions vary but are not entirely dependent on social distance or

gender variables. From the result, we may therefore infer that context primarily influenced the participants' choice of strategies and reaction to the infraction.

Furthermore reprimand acts between interactants where speaker is lower than hearer (vertical relationship) and due consideration to the weightiness of the offence as severe in (situations 3 and 10), reactions yielded the most polite option C and this could be attributable to the variables of social status and social distance at play in those scenarios, thus the offended is subjected to forms of negative politeness strategy to avoid bruising the ego of the offender as opposed to bald-on-record or directness strategy advanced in previous studies by Nwoye (1992) which advocated outspokenness in situations as 3 and 10. Therefore the prevailing boss/subordinate (situation 3) and doctor/patient (situation 10) circumstances further highlighted the need to avoid the offence-causing potential of directness strategy even though the offence is established. This significant finding agrees with Garcia's (2004a) study of subjects' choice of politeness strategy which threatened their own negative face on account of social power variable which plays a vital role in the performance of the speech act of reprimand regardless of the offence. The inter-relatedness of the choice of strategies following similar context by vastly different linguistic backgrounds may be tied to culture specificity. However, the finding equally disagrees with Garcia (2004b) that social power and distance variables were by no means propelling factors in the speech act of reprimand.

Moreover, in acts of reprimand among interactants where speaker is higher than hearer (vertical relationship) and in consideration of the severity of offence as in (situations 4 & 5), responses were predominantly the polite option A which shows that social status/power variable was instrumental in the choice of utterance and in which the speaker felt there was nothing at stake as he/she had nothing to lose or invest either way. Thus he opted for the directness strategy to drive home the point. This corroborates Garcia's (1996) study that older participants in interactions typified by the boss-employee relationship irrespective of gender and of the upper middle class were more assertive and commanding. Similarly, the result also agrees with Ahmadian and Destjerdi (2010) who had reported that reprimands were vastly used by persons having the power of command and control (parents, teachers) to prevent or reduce a child's misconduct. In line with the current finding, previous studies by Brown and Levinson (1987) posited that the Bald-on-record was a strategy adopted by speakers in power and who did not bother about violation or non-compliance from the hearer but were only concerned about being efficient. This result is further strengthened by Nwoye's (1992) study which advocated the bald-on-record or directness strategy regardless of other variables at play. Thus, for Nwoye, the Igbo feel obligated to criticize, reprimand or admonish when people's behaviour falls short of what the group expects.

From the spread of the general result on reprimand discourse across polite, more polite and most polite responses as the case may be and given the prevailing circumstances, we may therefore deduce that responses that yielded to the negative politeness strategy as in (situations 3 and 10) confirms earlier studies by Beebe and Takahashi (1989) that the English do not show disagreement or criticism directly, rather, they tend to make suggestions or a request to avoid directly expressing disagreement. The above is a reflection of enculturation and influence of the nuances of the English language in the conversational English of Igbo bilinguals which is not exactly far from intercultural expectations/manifestations. As reported by Nwoye (1989), understanding the fine details of linguistic politeness and the approaches for its attainment in a particular language is an indispensable part of knowing the language and also the core of the

ethnography of communication. However, the bald-on-record or the directness strategy of the responses in situations (4 and 5) mirrors into the life, culture and routines of Igbo bilinguals that eldership in any given situation is a prerogative as exemplified by Nwoye's (1992) study.

By and large, since all the responses had a certain degree of politeness, it is important to state that 66.40% of the most polite responses were recorded by the female respondents while the male respondents recorded only 33.60% which agrees in part with Garcia's (2004b) study that while the females used more mitigators to win the interlocutor's consent, the males preferred to compel their interlocutors. Suffice to say that this significant gap is a further confirmation of earlier studies that females have been found to adhere more to linguistic politeness principles than males. (Brown, 1980 and Adegbija, 1989)

Implication to Research and Practice

From the review of related literature and analysis of study sample, the findings of this study have been able establish the following:

- ✚ Reprimand speech act is a culture/context-bound phenomenon.
- ✚ The Igbo bilinguals' native language is transferred to an extent to their target language production.
- ✚ Interlanguage, Intralingual and cross-cultural studies on the performance of reprimand speech act come with pragmatic variations.

CONCLUSION

This study is a clear indication that expressing politeness is a culture/context-bound phenomenon and reechoes that the ideals of the Igbo of South-eastern Nigeria are reflected in their speech forms under which linguistic politeness is investigated. The study examined the perception of politeness as well as choice of politeness strategies of reprimand speech act in the conversational English of Igbo native speakers in Nigeria and concluded that whereas linguistic politeness in Igbo is anchored on socio-cultural perceptions of the appropriateness of language in use, linguistic politeness in English among Igbo bilinguals is an interaction between languages and cultures as the Igbo rely on some of the linguistic forms of their native language (native/first language transfer) to communicate effectively and politely, too in the target language. It is important to note that however the speaker tries to frame his/her utterance given all applicable variables in order to tone down its effect on the hearer, it does not preclude the fact that reprimand speech act has been performed and the hearer's perception and interpretation of same is undeniably clear. Ultimately, to accomplish the conversational demands of reprimand speech act, the Igbo culture reflected observance of social status, social distance and severity of offence variables a consideration of which at the instance of a conversation underlies the choice/use of a particular strategy or another. The study has found evidence to further strengthen the notion that language in general and more specifically speech act is tied to culture hence the need to incorporate pragmatics in language (English language) teaching as well as its inclusion in instructional materials at various educational levels.

Future Research

The study is restricted to the speech act of reprimand and the situations investigated for Igbo learners of English as a second language in Nigeria using the Discourse Completion Task (DCT). Similar studies involving smaller samples should be carried out adopting principally

the observation of naturally occurring discourse and or the role-play methods. Also, the findings of this study can be adapted to a new purpose for other interlanguage and cross-cultural studies to ascertain the linguistic peculiarities of a multicultural Nigeria.

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