| RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Pragmatic Study of Impoliteness in the 2020 Endsars Protest in Nigeria

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| ABSTRACT

The study examined impoliteness as contained in protest discourse in Nigeria with emphasis on the 2020 Endsars protest across Nigeria. Previous studies on protest discourse had concentrated on the nature of speech acts and the interactional strategies employed in protest communication. The current study investigates the nature of impoliteness employed in protest-centred communication. Data for the study were obtained from different newspaper reports published during and immediately after the 2020 Endsars protest. The study of impoliteness seeks to shed more light on our knowledge of rapport and communication management. The paper employs Culpeper's model of impoliteness. This is because the impoliteness model points out the inherent affront, which further enlightens us on the communicative intention in protest discourse. The data for the study were obtained from various social media platforms in the heat of the endsars protest in Nigeria. The study notes that protesters in the 2020 Endsars protest in Nigeria deliberately avoided the withheld politeness approach. This is premised on the fact that the context of the discourse under study provides no affrdances for this impoliteness method. Furthermore, the study finds that protesters often deviate from the main cause of a particular protest due to the need to commit intentinal face threatening acts. This is done by exploring situational context of a particular protest.

Introduction

The Endsars was a social movement marked by mass protests against police brutality in Nigeria. The protests were intended to compel the Nigerian government to disband the Special Anti-Robbery Squad of the Nigerian Police for alleged notoriety, perceived police brutality and attendant unprofessionalism in carrying out their constitutional assignment. The protest actually started in 2017 with the hashtag #ENDSARS and got to the peak in 2020 following further reports of Police brutality culminating in huge protests and demonstrations across major Nigerian cities. It is noteworthy that the Endsars protest had such huge impact due to the influence of the social media as it recorded millions of retweet just days after it started. The immediate cause of the protest was the killing of a young man in Ughelli, Delta state. Even though the Police claimed that the victim did not die and that the officers involved were not from Special Anti-Robbery Squad unit, the youth were not convinced. The Endsars protesters made the Lekki toll gate in Lagos their point of convergence. The toll gate also served as the source of information for all the other point of protest across Nigeria. The protest gathered so much momentum that solidarity protests were organised by Nigerians in countries like America, the United Kingdom and Canada. The activities of the Special Anti-Robbery Unit of the Nigerian police had been a subject of debate in various media reports published by different news media outfits before the protest broke out. This notwithstanding, social media provided a rich platform for spreading the ideals of the protest. This, as rightly argued by Uwalaka (2022), is because the platform, being one that is largely unregulated in Nigeria, allows users to employ language as they deem fit.

Aboh (2024) opines that social media is the strongest platform for modern-day activism. This is evident in the use of new media platforms like X, Facebook, Whatsapp, Intagramm etc. in the propagation of the messages of various uprisings in recent times. Towards the end of 2020, the social media played a huge role in the Endsars protest that almost brought Nigeria to its knees. Nigerians experienced one of the most deadly protests in recent history, fueled by the power of social media communication. The protest arose from the alleged high-handedness of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad of the Nigerian Police. The protest started with a request from young Nigerians for the government of the day to disband the special anti-robbery unit. Matters however got to a head when the protesters refused to disperse despite the government's repeated assurance that the protesters' request would be considered. On the twelfth day of the protest, a team of military operatives stormed the Lekki toll-gate venue of the protest and allegedly opened fire on the protesters who thereafter went on a rampage and unleashed a reign of destruction on Lagos state.

The event culminated in huge loss of both public and private properties. The protesters went on rampage, burning down hundreds of government vehicles, and tens of government buildings while a reasonable number of private businesses and buildings were looted and vandalised. Even though the protest was held across different states in Nigeria, Lagos state being the epicenter witnessed a huge chunk of the destructive activities associated with the protest. In the aftermath of the wanton looting and destruction that trailed the protest, the Lagos state government estimated the total loss to be over two hundred billion naira. Notably, this amount was said to be more than the total budget of some states in West Africa. It should be noted that the protest gradually and steadily spread beyond the shores of Nigeria with international media like the British Broadcasting Cooperation, Cable News Network etc. focusing their attention on both on the protesters and on Nigeria.

Politeness in language is a social characteristic that is built on cultural norms informed by the need to address the facial needs of individuals. Levinson (1983) describes face as the desire of individuals to be respected in public interaction. Yule (1997: 134) opines that "face is the public self-image of an individual." It refers to that emotional and social sense of self that everyone has and expects everyone else to recognise. The need to respect the social self-esteem of other people informs the necessity on the part of the interlocutors both in written and spoken discourse to select speech act strategies needed to avoid or circumvent trouble. In the words of Culpeper 2011 however, it is not in all situations that humans work towards peaceful interaction. In specific situations, language users intentionally seek to promote disunity through the use of language. This, as argued by Osisanwo and Iyoha (2021) and Guillén-Nieto (2023) negates the view that human communication can be studied only through the prism of impoliteness. As opined by Guillén-Nieto (2023) Taiwo (2021) and Chiluwa (2015), the need to understand human communication must extend beyond our understanding of what constitute polite communication and as language users, we should begin to probe into what language users do with what is not socially permissible, especially in the age of new media communication, going by its largely uncensored nature. It is on this note therefore, that the present study seeks to examine how social media users explore the intercommunication platform (Facebook) to advance the cause of the 2020 ENDSARS protest in Nigeria.

Impoliteness

The notion of impoliteness has been described by Iyoha (2015) along the line of linguistic in-appropriateness. For Mills (2003), impoliteness is a form of communicative behaviour that is considered as impolite because it violates the norms of communication in a given community.

Traditional theorists have explained that impoliteness, taken on its face value, will mean the opposite of politeness. Locher (2004) opines that "impoliteness clearly involves the relational aspect of communication in that social actors negotiate their position vis-â-vis each other. In this sense, impolite behavior is *as much* a part of this negotiation as polite versions of behaviour. "Bousfield (2008) explains that "impoliteness is the communication of intentionally annoying and conflictive and aggressive verbal and non-verbal face- threatening acts which are purposefully delivered: (i) unmitigated, in contexts where redress is expected. Locher's view of impoliteness, on the other hand, stemmed from a perceived interest in the relationship between power and politeness in disagreements. As a result of this, questions have been asked regarding what actually constitute impoliteness and that a reversal of the same model or approach employed in the analysis of politeness should be applicable for the study of impoliteness. This, according to scholars like Brown and Levinson (1978), Lakoff (1973) and Leech (1983), is because since the traditional politeness models were meant to analyse what constitute acceptable social interactions, they should equally be applicable in making us understand what constitute inappropriate and unacceptable social interactions. However, contemporary theorists in the study of interpersonal communication are of the opinion that language theories are not applied in a-one-size-fits-all approach. For example, Culpeper (2011) argued that politeness and impoliteness cannot be subsumed under the same model because most of the classic theories viewed impoliteness as simply the result of doing nothing. That is, impoliteness can only arise as a result of a speaker's conscious refusal to take redressive linguistic action or deliberately refusing to abide by the various maxims considered to spotlight politeness in interactions. A major approach in modern study of politeness is Culpeper's (1996) model of interaction. Culpeper (1996) argued that even though the Impoliteness phenomena are not totally unrelated to politeness phenomena, impoliteness as a concept cannot be totally accounted for using the same approach.

Social Media

The new media has been a platform for exchanging views and opinions on matters of public interest. The increase in the use of smart phones and easy access to airtime and data have continue to introduce new dimensions to human communication. One major feature of social media communication is the ability to reach a vast majority of people over a relatively short period as is the claim that one in every five persons is an active participant, in at least one of the social media spaces Delgado and Stefancic, (2018). They define social media as a network of database platforms that integrate public and personal communication.

Recently, Nigerians have explored the different social media platforms as avenues for the propagation and cross-fertilisation of ideas. Khosravinik (2022) avers that the social media provides the people the opportunity to have a say in matters of general interest. On the one hand, social media has continued to expand the horizon of language study while at the same time, providing a huge shift from the traditional pattern of interaction as well as in our day-to-day communicative exchange. Chiluwa (2015) argues that most protests in Nigeria which were considered successful both in organization and participation, due to the use of different social media platforms, namely *Facebook*, *Twitter*, SMS text-messaging and specialized blog sites to drive their ideas. This explains why the 2020 Endsars protest was driven by the social media frenzy it generated. The high level of engagement it was able to gather became a major force on the way the gospel of the protest spread like wildfire. This is because, according to Deluca, et al. (2012), "social media create new contexts for activism that is not possible in traditional media agitation, because they "foster a community of both individual and in-group participation, thus creating a new norm of expanded participation which in turn creates new expectations and loads of linguistic responsibilities". This view is supported by Themistocleous (2021) who acknowledged the impact of social media on language. He is of the view that new media platforms like Facebook, Twitter electronic mail, Instagram and other networking sites have driven a more advanced change in the ways and patterns of communication, especially among young people. This is because social media communication has the advantage of providing immediate and spontaneous feedback for those concerned to act upon. Thus social media provides language users with the rare opportunity of receiving immediate communicative feedback which defies distance and proximity. This, as claimed by Mingle and Adams (2015). The lexical choices of social media users when commenting on political, social or economic matters are often determined by their intention to either be polite or impolite in their communicative exchange. Scholars like Chiluwa (2021), Taiwo (2021)

This explains why scholarly attention has been concentrated on computer-mediated communication which in the views of Chiluwa (2021), is the analysis of online verbal or written interactions that are intended to draw informed observations about language and language use. Shreds of evidence abound on the advantages of social media as a tool in political education and in general political exercise. This is made possible by the easy-to-use nature of the platform. In all of these, emphasis have been on what protesters do with language with little academic attention paid to how protesters employ language during protests across social media platforms. Taiwo (2021) argues that social media pragmatics, unlike the traditional face-to-face study of faceworks in human communication, focuses on impoliteness because the former allows a lot of miscommunication and conflict flaming as a result of its anonymous nature. In essence, social media users tend to be impolite and rude. He explained that the expression of pragmatic impoliteness in social media communication has been explored because of its tendency to generate heated exchanges which often lead to interactional incivility and hate speeches. It is on this premise that the present study seeks to examine the pattern of impoliteness employed during and after the 2020 Endsars protest in Nigeria with emphasis on how the protesters explore contextual nuances as a pragmatic strategy in constructing the Nigerian government, the Nigerian socio-political system and the Special Anti-Robbery officers.

Protest Discourse

Protest is an indication of a conflict resulting from a perceived ill-treatment from one group to another and it usually provides the platform for the expression of anger and discontentment through the instrument of language. Protest discourse is a form of linguistic exchange that gives no room for communicative decorum and many scholars have explored the use of language in protest event. For example, Osisanwo and Iyoha (2020) examined discourse issues in the media reportage of pro-Biafra protests in Nigeria. The data for the study were obtained from reports of selected newspapers about the protest. Unlike most studies that concentrate on the ideological inclinations behind most protests as evidenced in the language choices, Osisanwo and Iyoha focuses on the particular issues agitating the minds of the protesters. The study concludes that issues like the economy, unemployment, ethnic marginalisation, human rights abuse, injustice and corruption formed the basis of the discourse of the protesters. The study agrees with the submission of (Wodak 2001) that discursive ideologies galvanizing protests are better understood when socio-political issues discussed in the course of the protest are put into perspective.

Aboh (2024) studied the communicative strategies employed by protesters in the 2020 Endsars protest. Drawing from the social media critical discourse analysis and social movement theory, the study identifies the different patterns of identity construction employed by the protesters to drive the ideals of the protest. Having established the importance of social media as a tool for combating hegemonic and dictatorial leadership tendencies, Aboh explained that the protesters employ emotional and evidence-based linguistic choices such as, legitimation, polarisation, irony, metaphor, hyperbole and allusion to create a victim and

aggressor representation between the government and the people. Furthermore, the study affirms the view that emojis and symbols serve as communicative strategies or tools in protest discourse. He is of the view that the protesters were able to explore the provisions of these multimodal resources to demand for an end to police brutality in Nigeria.

Arege et al. (2020) examine the semiotic resources employed in protests embarked upon by Lecturers of public universities across Kenya and how they serve the purpose of conveying the intentions of the protesters. It was established that lecturers' strike are often in different forms, these are: general strikes, stay-in or sit down strikes, tool down or pen down and go slow strike. Findings of the study emphasise the importance of semiotics in protest discourse. Taking a cue from Fairclough's three-dimensional approach and Kress and Van Leeuwen's approach to Multimodal Discourse Analysis, the study discovers that protesters employ slogans, placards, press conferences and banners as a multi-linguistic strategy to achieve the objectives of the protest. The study establishes that protests are created and propelled using both linguistic and semiotic resources, making it very easy for the message of the protest to get to the relevant stakeholders. The protesters were able to achieve minimal success due to the multi-modal nature of the language choices employed.

Branimira (2019) also expresses the opinion that protests became an increasingly popular way of presenting grievances because they have been observed as useful tools in forcing the government, especially African leaders, to do what they should normally do for the citizens. This is because they employ non-conventional means to force the authorities to give in to at least some of their demands. The study submits that protesters tend to settle for simple and short sentences and expressions that are often accompanied with bold pictorial presentations. For Chiluwa (2015a), the success of a protest is hugely dependent on the ability of the organisers and participants to explore the sociolinguistic peculiarities of the target audience. In a study which focuses on the Nigerian subsidy protest of 2012, Chiluwa submits that the organisers were able to pull a very large audience due to their choice of communicative strategies such as code-switching and code mixing between English and other Nigerian indigenous languages (e.g. *Yoruba*) and the use of Standard Nigerian English and the local Nigerian pidgin to express solidarity and achieve social interaction.

Studies have also been conducted on the pragmatic implication of the language employed in protest discourse across Nigeria. These studies include Ayoola (2005), Agbara and John (2021), (2022) Omolabi and Adebayo (2024) and Eze et al. (2024).

Ayoola (2005) investigates the linguistic and pragmatic features in media report of conflict with Unubi's (2013) and Fairclough's (1995) models of CDA as theoretical frameworks, he opines that those reporting conflict situations are often logical, drawing evidence from statistics and percentages as well as employing scientific persuasion to have a discursive edge over their opponents. The report of protest also highlights different forms of name-calling, mudslinging, flattery and praise-singing as strategies meant to diminish the opponent and seek social sympathy for the protesters. Chrisman and Hubbs (2020) also examined the importance of speech acts in protest discourse with the aim of unraveling what protesters do with language. He submits that the discourse structures of protest are not always explicit and that the nature of linguistic acts determine the success or otherwise of a particular protest. They submitted that protesters employ language as a tool for presenting a group in negative light while another group is presented as the oppressed thereby necessitating a negative evaluation of the protest target and a connected prescription of redress. This study concludes by observing that existing studies on conflict construction in the media underscore the contextual relationship that exists between language and social practices. In a study conducted by Agbara and John (2021) on the nature of verbal aggressions in the 2020 Endsars protest, it was established that protesters employed different forms of presuppositions and persuasive technique in order to make the message of the protest real and convincing. The study established the centrality of shared contextual knowledge in understanding the implicit meaning of protest discourse. For Omolabi and Adebayo, (2024), memes and humour have revolutinised the way people express themselves in times of protest. Adopting Acheoach's Pragma-crafting theory as the theoretical framework, the study which was focused on the pragmatic explanation of memes motivated humour in discourse related to ASUU strikes in Nigeria, established the view that in the course of the strike, social media users employ both linguistic and linguistic strategies. A combination of the strategies enables readers to draw inferences or arrive at conclusions about the intentions, attitudes, or character traits of individuals, all based on their observable behaviors.

Theoretical Framework

The study employs Culpeper's (1996) impoliteness theory. The framework was developed as a reactionary viewpoint to Brown and Levinson's politeness model which had submerged impoliteness as the direct opposite of politeness. Culpeper argued that there are communicative situations when the vulnerability of interactants' face is not equal and the need for communicative cooperation is almost non-existent. In essence, protest, being an anti-social behaviour does not require face maintenance. The theory is considered appropriate because it is capable of accounting for natural and intentional language use in confrontational situations. As opined by Culpeper (1996), it is not in all communicative situations that language users seek to maintain the face of their interlocutors. It is not always the case that humans prioritise the maintenance of face wants and social harmony. This is against the view expressed in Leech (1983) that language users are usually conscious of the self-esteem of their interlocutors as well as their personal social status. In essence, Culpeper (1996) opined that it is necessary to have an appropriate descriptive framework that aptly captures the nature of linguistic exchange that are inherently face threatening and impolite.

In his impoliteness framework, Culpeper identified five basic super-strategies which according to him are opposite in outlook to the orientation of face as conceived by Brown and Levinson (1987). Rather than enhancing or maintaining face, Culpeper's impoliteness super-strategies are meant to deliberately attack face.

1. Bald on record impoliteness- in this strategy, the face threatening act is performed in a direct and unambiguous way. Bousfield and Locher (2008), described this strategy as the use of language designed to attack face, and thereby cause social conflict and disharmony." Thus, in employing this strategy, speakers suspend face concerns and deliberately use words that are likely to generate discord and reduce the social acceptance of the addressee. Brown and Levinson (1987) described this situation as the period in communication when the speaker is considered powerful than the addressee.

2. Positive impoliteness – this explains the use of communicative strategy designed to damage the addressee's positive face wants. For example, the following situations are examples of bald on record impoliteness.
   i.   ignore or snub the other person;
   ii.   do not acknowledge the presence or absence of the other;
   iii.   exclude the other from participating in an activity;
   iv.   deny the other the privilege of association;
   v.   do not show interest in what is of interest to the other;
   vi.   use inappropriate identity markers. for example, show deference, employ honorifics, use titles or surnames with individuals who share close relationship with you or use nicknames with those who have distant relationship with you;
   vii.   use obscure and unfamiliar language.
   viii.   create confusion by using languages, dialect, idolects or jargons they are not familiar with;
   ix.   intentionally seek disagreement by selecting and discussing strange and sensitive topics and subjects. The objective is to generate heated debate.
   x.   negative impoliteness – this explains the use of communicative strategy designed to damage the addressee's negative face wants. Negative face wants are;
   xi.   make the other feel uncomfortable. For example, do not avoid silence, use jokes or small profane talk;
   xii.   call the other names. Use derogatory nominations as identity markers for the other.

3. Negative Impoliteness- this talks about the use of communicative strategies with the intention to hurt the negative face wants of the other. Strategies employed here include.
   i.   Employ fright- through the instrument of language, instill the belief that action detrimental to the other will occur. This is achievable by bringing the other to the awareness of loss of safety.
   ii. Condescend, scorn or ridicule the other. The goal here is to emphasize you power over the other. Speak contemptuously of the other, do not take the other seriously, attach little or no importance to the opinion expressed by the other.
   iii. Invasion- encroach the other's privacy. For example, position yourself very close to the other in an uncomfortable manner. The speaker violates the rule of social distance in communication. Seek or speak about information that are too intimate given your relationship to the other.
   iv. Put the indebtedness of the other, either to you or to anyone on record. Constantly remind the other of a past benefit they enjoy.
   v.   Spotlight the negative attribute(s) of the other.

4. Sarcasm or mock Politeness: Culpeper described sarcasm as the impoliteness strategy where the speaker employs politeness with surface realization. In his view, the polite act is shrouded in insincerity. This is similar to Leech's (1983) conception of the principle of communicative irony. Leech explained that if and when it linguistic offence becomes necessary, such must be committed overtly. This strategy is executed by means of conversational implicature and presupposition while the other is allowed to draw inferences. For example, costly jokes, shallow praises and unsolicited or unmerited encomiums are sarcastic tools that serve the purpose of conveying impoliteness.

5. Withheld Politeness- Make no effort to respect the self-esteem of other. The absence of politeness moves where it is expected or necessary amounts to impoliteness. The implication of this deliberate act is that it damages the face of the party expecting the polite move. For example, refusing to show or express appreciation for a received favour or gift is considered as a deliberate act of impoliteness.

Methodology

The sample used for the study comprises social media posts and comments by various stakeholders: protesters, security personnel, political leaders and other leaders of thought. The study is descriptive in nature because it explains the study data as objectively as possible. The data for the study were collected over a period of six months beginning from October 2020. The data for the study were extracted from relevant Facebook posts with about twenty comments purposively selected from each of the posts related to the protest. A total of thirty excerpts were selected for analysis to drive the objectives of the study. To achieve meaningful and understandable result, the analysis follows a specific pattern based on the nature of communicative infelicity employed in a particular sample. The steps include identifying the impolite utterances within the selected extract; examining impoliteness strategies and sub-strategies in the extract based on the situational context; and spotlighting the identified face threatening act in terms of Culpeper's impoliteness paradigm.

Objectives

The objectives of the study are:
1. to identify how language is used in protest situation:
2. to identify how context influences language choices in protest discourse;
3. to identify the type of Face threatening acts contained in protest discourse.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This section presents and explain utterances generated on social media in the course of the 2020 Endsars protest in Nigeria. The excerpts are made up of statements that contain intentional invectives that are intentionally designed to aggravate the protest. The analysis which is propelled by Cupleper's model of impoliteness is presented below.

Bald on Record Impoliteness

This impoliteness is at work when the speaker intentionally attacks the face of the addressee so as to aggravate conflict. It shows that the speaker is intentional in the goal of fostering disunity with the instrument of language. Instances of such language use are exemplified in the following excerpts

POST: Police personnel were professional and exercised maximum restraints- IGP tells Amnesty International. Says report on shooting of protesters by the Police, not true.
The Inspector General of Police, IGP M.A. Adamu has affirmed that officers of the Nigerian Police Force acted professionally, exercised considerable restrained while some paid the ultimate price for peace during the recent Endsars protest…the IGP noted that officers of the force used legitimate means to ensure that the protests were carried out in a peaceful manner… the force decries the discriminatory tendencies exhibited by Amnesty International and wonders if men of the force, in the estimation of Amnesty International, are not humans beings equally entitled to the protection of their fundamental rights to life and dignity of human person.

RESPONSES:

the IGP is not truthful because there is so much evidence. Let the truth be told, there was no professionalism whatsoever.

Amnesty International must be suffering from selective amnesia to have downplayed the massacre and burning of properties of northerners, mostly hausas in the southern states of Rivers and Abia.

I pray such should happen to members of staff of Amnesty International and their families since they fail to mention those Police Officers killed by protesters.

The Police don't always and will never admit faults, this is what they do during interrogation, they will force you to say you are guilty of a crime you never committed.
You are an idiot, like a real big fool. You were part of which protest? You lying son of a bitch! I don't know if it is that your stupid religion that is affecting you or your tribe, bastard!

The main post in the sample above emanated from the office of the Inspector General of the Nigerian Police in response to the claim of indiscriminate shooting and extra-judicial killing of Endsars protesters. The post became necessary due to the widespread condemnation of the manner the Police handled the protest. Amnesty International, as an international organization lent its voice to the criticism of the Police action by condemning the Police for disrupting a peaceful protest and for denying Nigerians their right to a peaceful association. To debunk the claim of Amnesty International, the IGP issued a press release which

contains statements that constitute an affront against the face of the addressee. Firstly, the face-threatening act is evident in the headline which states that the claim of indiscriminate shooting of protesters is false. This is as good as referring to the international organization as a liar. The office of the IGP also attacked Amnesty International by accusing it of bias against policemen. This is seen in the call on them to be impartial in their reportage and show that Police Officers are also entitled to right to life and dignity of human existence as contained in the creed which guides their operations. In essence, it is clear that the post examined above was not meant to maintain social harmony but was intended to puncture the claim of Amnesty International against the Nigerian police. In doing this, the Press release contained numerous counter-accusations that sought to put the international organization on the defensive.

Furthermore, social media users across Nigeria responded to the post differently. While some took sides with the Police, others pitched their tent with Amnesty International. Most of the responses selected vilified the police while only one sided with the view expressed by the Police authorities. In reacting to the post, social media users employ the bald-on-record approach to air their views. For example, a user described the Nigerian Police as never admitting their fault while the IGP is described as "untruthful". This statement directly sets out to hurt the ego of the IGP who made the statement as an avenue to redeem the image of the Police force. It is noteworthy that the Endsars protest was a massive reaction to the high handed and inhuman approach of the Police to crime fighting. One of the impoliteness strategy identified in the response is the use of direct accusation both from the Police to Amnesty International and from the citizens to the IGP. Social media users also employ inciting statement as seen in a response. This is seen in the wish that a degree of calamity befalls family members of the workers Amnesty International.

Positive impoliteness

This impoliteness strategy affords language users the opportunity to perform face threatening acts that are designed to impinge on the positive face wants of others. Positive impoliteness is at work when, in spite of being aware of the other's need to be acknowledged, affirmed and be made to feel good, the speaker deliberately do otherwise. This is a sharp deviation from the traditional view of impoliteness as any form of language use that contradicts the norm of politeness. This confirms the view held by Baoqin et al. (2020) that impoliteness is any negative attitude towards a particular individual in specific context, which is considered as constituting social affront. In the contextual situation under analysis, instances of positive impoliteness is evident in communicative acts that convey snubbing, exclusion, use of honorifics, use of derogatory nominations, unnecessary jokes, etc. It is instructive to note that while the Endsars protest was triggered by the alleged highhandedness of a section of the Nigerian Police, social media users who championed the protest often deviate from the objective of the uprising. The positive impoliteness strategy is employed as a means of drawing attention to other issues that should be attended to in the body polity. Examples are presented in the excerpts listed below.

Buhari is a fool at sixty in Nigeria. Our mumu leader… Nigeria is a disgrace, our President is the biggest mistake that Nigerians made

It is high time the focus of the protest be shifted from the Police to the government.

We should shut down the Airports too, block their means of generating money.

Each of the excerpts above addresses different issues that are mostly removed from the immediate cause of the Endsars protest. Rather than call politely for Police reforms, social media users employ the Endsars platform to commit series of face threatening acts which include casting aspersions on the person and office of the president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. This is seen in FTAs like insults and the use of derogatory terms like "mumu" which means "fool" to describe the President. Excerpts identified in this regard also include curses directed at certain political office holders who ordinarily have nothing to do with the protest but got on the protesters' nerves by issuing statements that appear to contradict the expectations of the protesters.

it shall never be well with Minister of FCT. Boko haram will soon kill his family,
may God destroy Femi Adeshina and all APC supporters

Also, the call to shift the focus of the protesters away from the Police to the government is one that is intentionally designed as an impolite way of sirring up crisis within the polity. This impoliteness method clearly supports the claim by…………………….that language users tend to employ certain language choices to achieve certain FTAs. One of such approaches is instigation. Social media users employ language to instigate violence by calling on others to attack the government and shut down the airports. It will be noted that shutting the airports is a way of crippling the economy of the country by way of hampering a major source of government revenue. Furthermore, social media users equally employ language in the course of the protest to cast aspersions on the Nigerian state. This can be seen in face threatening acts calling for the disintegration of the country as seen in the excerpt below.

> The crisis is deeper than SARS, the Nigerian state has practically
> collapsed on many fronts, all remedial activities won't work without
> addressing the flawed, fraudulent, fictitious and fractured foundations
> of Nigeria as a single entity.

It is noteworthy that calls of this nature constitute direct affront on the government of any country. In the excerpt above, identity markers like flawed, fraudulent, fractured etc. are used to describe the union of the Nigerian state. This supports the claim made by Aboh (2024), is a clarion call for change by making allusions to concrete contextual situations. Some of the situations alluded to for this type of calls have equally been identified as responsible for certain divisive agitations in Nigeria. Osisanwo and Iyoha (2021) explain that such agitations are often linked to ideological underpinnings that are brought to the fore due to increase in marginalisation, worsening economic situation, human rights abuse, injustice, corruption and unemployment.

> Oga! I witnessed a policeman publicly execute a citizen of this nation, what's
> professional in that? Policemen fired live ammunition at very close range.

> Buhari oleee, Jubril El Sudan …

The impolite strategy of name-calling is also evident in the Endsars protest discourse as seen in the samples presented above. The word "oga" is a kind of appellation used in describing someone who is of superior status but can also be used in a derogatory sense depending on the context of use. In this sample, the word is employed in its impolite form to refer to the police boss. In this context, the choice of the lexical item "oga" prepares the ground for the speaker to refute the claim made by the Police boss that "Policemen were Professional in their response in the course of the Endsars protest". In this light, the speaker disagrees with the submission of the IGP thereby consciously committing a face threatening act which impinges on the addresses's positive face want.

Also the name Jubril El Sudan is a derogatory name used in referring to Muhamadu Buhari, the President of Nigeria. The name gained traction when the President was hospitalized in the United Kingdom for about six months and stories of his purported death began flying around and was propagated majorly through social media platforms. It was alleged that the President had passed on but was cloned and replaced with a certain individual called Jubril of Sudan who had similar characteristics with the Nigerian President. Unbelievable as the story may sound, it was a narrative that gained traction at that time and the name became an indirect way of describing the Nigerian President as someone who is not aware of the Nigerian social, political and economic realities because "he is not a Nigerian." The choice of the name in this context is therefore geared towards provoking the supporters of the President and to further fan the embers of the conflict which had trailed the Endsars crisis.

Negative impoliteness

Negative impoliteness is the communicative strategy designed to damage the negative face wants of others. As opined by Leech (1983), negative face wants refer to the communicative need of language users to have their ways(s) in inter-personal communication. In human communication, negative face wants are characterized by the needs of adult members of the society to have their opinion respected, to be free from any form of interference or imposition. Contextually, the communicative methods employed in this impoliteness strategy include those intended to frighten, threaten, remind other of indebtedness, ridicule or claim superiority over the other. Examples of this are presented below.

Fright

Before Nigeria go better, na to open fire on all these old fools calling themselves our leaders. Call them to a meeting and open fire on them.

Unsolicited Advise

A sensitive government would act fast. If these youths are not attended to in the next ten days, something will happen.)

The samples presented above convey two different instances of pragmatic impoliteness. While the first one is designed to instill fear in the others (political leaders), the second one offers advice that is laced with threat. In the first excerpt, the user explores contextual knowledge to invite other Nigerians to cooperate with him and eliminate the political leaders who have been considered as the main clog in the wheel of the progress of the country. The call here, considering the momentum garnered by the Endsars protest, serves the purpose of unsettling the Nigerian political leaders with the aim of creating fear and a deep sense of insecurity in them.

On the other hand, unsolicited advice is that counsel that is either un-necessary, not required or is intended for the purpose of casting aspersion on the other. In the discourse of the Endsars protest, instances of this type of advice is seen in the excerpt below.

Nigerian government, the youths are being harassed, threatened and killed under your watch! Prove to us and to the rest of the world that you do not support this.

What about reviewing the pay package of politicians and making it public including their benefits.

It is instructive to note that each of the advice given here is meant to portray the government of the day as being insensitive to the plight and the suffering of the average Nigerian youth. It is also noteworthy that the request to make the pay package of Nigerian politicians public is one that has continued to generate debate among Nigerians. The argument is that Nigerian politicians are the highest-paid in the world, even when the country is one of the poorest in the world. It can therefore be said that the request seeks to unravel the privacy and secrecy surrounding the total emolument of the average Nigerian politician.

Sarcasm or Mock Politeness

This approach to the study of impoliteness occurs when the speaker intentionally employs a joke intended to impinge on the self-esteem of the addressee. It is also conveyed with an act of politeness that is laced with a tone of insincerity. Culpeper (2011) explained that this act is contained in statements that show deference or care where none is expected. This approach to communication is also contextually sensitive because it is a surface or artificial politeness which may be interpreted to convey impoliteness because of certain contextual clues often backed with the insincere or artificial desire to express social intimacy. This is exemplified in the following excerpts.

POST: Protesters give water to Police officers

I love this... at least they will know that the protest is even for them to live a better life.

I see how hungry they look, Nigeria too has failed them, this is the change we need, we are succeeding, let's spread love and look out for one another.

...that thing must change o, how will you use your own money to buy Police uniform? We will change that...

The samples presented above emanates from an event that occurred in the course of the protest. The protesters carried gave water and refreshment to Police officers against whom the protest was originally directed. While this act conveys politeness, it is a form of politeness designed to subject the Police officers to ridicule. The act is aimed at presenting the protesters as compassionate and friendly against the harsh and high-handed nature for which the Nigerian Police is known. On the one hand, as observed in the comments which trailed this act, the protesters successfully show the Police officers as unprofessional, under-fed and under-remunerated. On the other hand, the protesters employed this mock politeness to show that the government has failed in relation to the welfare of the men of the Police force. This is shown in utterances like *I see how hungry they look, Nigeria too has failed them*

Discussion of Findings

The samples utilized for the study are short messages posted on Facebook by Nigerians to contribute their views during the 2020 Endasrs protest in Nigeria. It therefore becomes important that the posters and the commenters mutually share the contextual knowledge of the posts. The posts were obtained over six months, October 2020 and March 2021. Even though the posts were triggered by the inhuman treatment of Nigerians by the Nigerian Special Anti-Robbery Squad, they actually generated discussions about the economy, politics, quality and cost of living etc. In this light, it is noteworthy that while the goal of the protest was to condemn and correct the high-handedness of the men of the Special Anti-robbery Squad of the Nigerian police, the protest discourse shifted towards the economy of the country. Protesters were evidently complaining about the rising cost of living, insecurity, corruption and a generally unfavourable economy. In carrying out its analysis, the study adopts Culpeper's theory of impoliteness and it should be stated that four of the five frameworks associated with the model were attested in the discourse of the Endsars protest.

Firstly, protesters employ language to perform bald-on-record impoliteness. This attest to the opinion by Lynne (2019) that sometimes, linguistic choices in conflict situations are deliberately made to achieve the goals of the conflict. This also supports the claim by Taiwo (2021) that the social media, due to its largely uncensored nature provide its users the platform to use derogatory expressions that are designed to forment trouble. This awareness justifies the recent call for the regulation of the use

of social media in Nigeria. In this approach, even when the addresses are notable individuals who deserve respect in the society, the protesters explore the anonymous nature of the social media to unleash linguistic invectives social media upon them. This is a deliberate action that is designed to infuriate the addressees and further incite the public.

Secondly, the use of positive impoliteness is also evident in the discourse of the 2020 Endsars protest. Protesters deliberately attack the positive face of the Police, political leaders and other notable government representatives through the use of derogatory remarks like mumu (fool), ode (imbecile) etc. This strategy is also seen in the use of certain familiar terms like 'oga'(boss) 'my friend' 'ogbeni' (gentlman) for individuals who share no close relationship with the protesters. It is noteworthy that this approach is even used among protesters to refer to one another, especially in situations where they differ on certain opinions. This also highlights the use of indigenous linguistic resources to appeal to other young Nigerians to join the protest.

Thirdly, the study identifies the use of sarcasm as a major linguistic strategy in communicating impoliteness in protest discourse. It is used as an instrument of naming that is designed to negatively present the Nigerian Police so as to drive home the demands of the protesters. This is seen in instances where the protesters show sympathy to Police Officers by giving them food and water. Although it is naturally expected that the protesters would be hostile towards the Police, the protesters show through their sarcastic linguistic choices and insincere polite action, that they are better than the men of the Nigerian Police.

As argued by Chaffe (1993) and Chiluwa (2015b) protesters usually want their protest to be hugely revolutionary. This explains why the Endsars protesters in the samples employed for this make statements that condemn various negative acts affecting the Nigerian society. This also shows that the discourse associated with protest as evident in the study often deviates from the main subject matter to other areas. This is premised on what Culpeper (2011) described as "a deliberate intention to address sensitive issues that are likely to offend the addressee(s) and further create social dis-equilibrum." This is also evident in the relevance of context in the generation of protest discourse. As explained by Okesola and Oyebode (2023), certain impoliteness strategies are conventionalized for specific social contexts. This is because the strategy employed by social media users to convey impoliteness in the 2020 Endsars discourse is basically socio-political and economical

Conclusion

This study examined the impoliteness in EndSARS protest discourse and how the protesters employ language in achieving the goal(s) of the protest. Four impoliteness strategies were identified: bald on record impoliteness, negative impoliteness, positive impoliteness A major linguistic strategy identified is positive-self and negative-other presentation which is a main feature of impolite discourse. This is evident in the fact that the immediate and remote issues surrounding the protest became the subject of debate among pro and anti-government individuals who used the opportunity of the protest situation to analyse contextually relevant issues. The study also established the fact that apart from using the protest to call for an end to Police brutality, the 2020 Endsars protest also serves the indirect purpose of demanding social justice and equal treatment for Nigerians irrespective of their position or status in the society.

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