MOCK-IMPOLITENESS AS A DISCURSIVE PRACTICE IN DRAUGHT PLAYING

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Abstract

Most works in the field of pragmatics and discourse analysis in Nigeria have investigated transactional discourses at the expense of interactional discourses. This paper therefore considers the phenomenon of mock-impoliteness in the pleasure discourse of draught game in Nigeria with a view to determining how participants in the game create and orient towards impolite expressions. The data for the study were gathered in Ibadan, Oyo State and Osogbo, Osun State. Five recordings were made in each state at different spots of the game. The data which were originally in Yoruba were transcribed and glossed by the researcher. Culpepper's impolite strategies of positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, sarcasm, withhold impoliteness and bald on record were used as the analytical tools together with Austin's performative acts. The paper finds that in an interactional discourse setting like draught playing, impolite utterances are uttered and understood as affiliative, facilitating and humorous expressions which sustain this kind of activity type. Impolite expressions are therefore only to be contextually interpreted.

1. Introduction

This study which finds its place within the discourse of pleasure is an assessment of how language serves its interactional role among lovers and players of draught in Ibadan, Nigeria. Brown and Yule (1981) have defined discourse as language in use and established that discourse analysis 'cannot be restricted to the description of linguistic forms independent of purpose, or functions which their forms are designed to serve in human affairs.' Along this line, language has been argued by these two scholars to be serving two equally important functions known as the transactional and interactional functions. This study investigates the interactional function of language in the discourse of draught players in Ibadan.

Draught is a game peculiar to male adults in Nigeria. It is a form of relaxation and a unique activity type which dwells so much on impolite language. Levinson defines an activity type as 'a fuzzy category whose focal members are goal-defined, socially constituted, bounded events with constraints on participants, setting, and so on, but above all on the allowable contributions' (Levinson 1992:69). According to him, the key to the meaning of utterances lies in knowing the nature of the activity in which the utterances play

a role. It is on this ground of being a unique activity type that one notices that participants in draught game in Nigeria are usually people of the same age grade and social class who are bound to want to tolerate one another.

The focus of this paper, however, is to present how impolite expressions or potentially impolite expressions, (Culpeper 2005) serve as affiliative and facilitating tools in the discourse of draught players. The specific objectives of this study are to identify the impolite strategies employed by the interactants in the game and to determine how the interactants create and orient towards mock-impolite utterances.

2. Literature Review

Schnurr, Marra and Holmes (2008) explore politeness as a means of contesting power relations in the workplace. They note that linguistic politeness can be defined as discursively strategic interaction: i.e. linguistic devices (perceived as having been) used in order to maintain harmonious relations and avoid conflict with others (Kasper 1990), while impoliteness is generally understood as the use of strategies and behaviour oriented to face attack, and likely to cause social disruption. However, despite these differences in meaning, politeness and impoliteness do not constitute polar opposites but should rather be viewed as points along a continuum. In this research, focus is on the categories located at the ends of this continuum: impolite and overly polite behaviours. Both types of behaviours are described as marked and non-politic/ inappropriate. Schnurr, Marra and Holmes (2008) use this continuum as a starting point and argue that not only does over-polite behaviour constitute non-politic behaviour, but in some contexts such behaviour may be perceived and conventionally thought of as impolite, whereas behaviours typically perceived as impolite (such as swearing) may actually be considered perfectly appropriate, and thus politic, in certain contexts.

Furman (2011) offers an empirical analysis of impoliteness and mock-impoliteness in colloquial Russian conversation (retrieved from a Russian reality television show, 'Dom-2') by examining the ways in which interactants produce and display an orientation to impolite and mock-impolite utterances. The paper utilises second-order approaches to identify potentially impolite or mock-impolite utterances at the same time. It argues that the actual classification of impolite or mock-impolite utterances is a first-order concept discursively constructed through the ways in which participants orient to a given utterance. The paper analyses the specific ways mock-impolite turns are designed both linguistically (through lexical items, turn structure and prosody) and para-linguistically (through laughter, pauses, body language) and examines how mock-impolite turns are discursively co-constructed by the interactants. By adopting the assumption of conversational analysis that the utterance of one turn projects the logical completion of the next, the researcher is able to reach a

deeper and more detailed understanding of the production and perception of the phenomenon of mock-impoliteness.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study uses mainly Culpeper's (1995, 2005) impoliteness tools for this analysis and borrows from the speech act theory to reveal the conversational effect of the impolite expressions. Since Brown and Levinson's (1978) seminal work on politeness, much research on politeness has been firmly rooted in Goffman's notion of *face* (e.g., Goffman 1967). Goffman defines face as 'the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact' (Goffman 1967: 213). Accordingly, face is mutually constructed and sustained during social interactions. Brown and Levinson (1987) define politeness as a universal feature of language use, which means that every language has its own ways to express politeness. They argue that politeness is rational behaviour to all humans and that everyone has a positive and a negative face.

Watts (2003) heavily criticises Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, which includes five different strategies that the speaker can use in order not to offend the hearer anyhow. Watts (2003) notes that firstly, there is no mention of the ways in which the hearer might react to these politeness strategies, therefore the emphasis is only on the speaker. This in turn can be seen as an attempt to exercise power because it is only the speaker's interests that are considered. Furthermore, it seems that a speaker would have to do a great amount of work in order to choose an appropriate strategy. Moreover, Brown and Levinson's model does not take into a consideration the fact that more than one strategy could be chosen. (Watts 2003:85-88).

Culpeper, in 2006, proposes an impoliteness framework along the line of Brown and Levinson's politeness theory. He uses earlier definitions of politeness to define impoliteness - the use of strategies that are designed to cause social disruption instead of maintaining social harmony - and then points out that there have not been studies that focus comprehensively on the impoliteness phenomenon and its theories, although researchers such as Lakoff (1973) have studied confrontational discourse along with their models of politeness. Culpeper conceives of impoliteness as the use of intentionally face threatening acts.

As Culpeper's initial model of impoliteness was based on Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness, it was subject to the same criticisms—in particular, that it was decontextualized and put a strict emphasis on production to the exclusion of perception. These criticisms led Culpeper to reformulate his model of impoliteness to incorporate the discursive nature of social interaction. Specifically, Culpeper (2005: 38) defines impoliteness as those occasions when '(1) the speaker communicates face-attack intentionally, or (2) the hearer

perceives and/or constructs behavior as intentionally face-attacking, or a combination of (1) and (2).' Both Leech (1983:83, as quoted by Culpeper 1995:350) and Brown and Levinson (1987) have written that some acts, for example orders, threats, or criticisms are inherently impolite and unavoidably threaten the hearer's face.

Culpeper (1995) makes a distinction between inherent impoliteness and mock impoliteness. According to Culpeper (1995), this kind of inherent impoliteness concerns only acts that draw attention to another person's anti-social activity. Culpeper refers to mock-impoliteness as "impoliteness that remains on the surface, since it is understood that it is not intended to cause offence" (Culpeper 1996: 352). Terkourafi (2008: 68) defines mock-impoliteness as 'unmarked rudeness'; she suggests that 'unmarked rudeness' occurs when an utterance is used in a conventionalised setting and the participants have a similar jocular mindset. This second kind of impoliteness is the focus of this paper. The analysis for this study will be done using Culpeper's five super strategies that speakers use to make impolite utterances:

1. *Bald on record impoliteness:* performing the FTA (Face Threatening Act) in a direct, clear, unambiguous, and concise way even when face considerations are relevant.

2. *Positive Impoliteness:* strategies designed to damage the addressee's positive face wants.

3. *Negative Impoliteness:* strategies designed to damage the addressee's negative face wants.

4. *Sarcasm or mock politeness:* performing the FTA with politeness strategies that are obviously insincere.

5. *Withhold politeness:* Not performing politeness work where it is expected.

The excerpts for this study are sorted and analysed in line with these strategies although not in the above order but in terms of prominence.

Austin (1975) popularizes the term speech act in his book *How to Do Things with Words* which was posthumously published. Austin defined speech act as what actions we perform when we produce utterances. According to Parker (1986:14), speech act as every utterance of speech constitutes some sort of act. Speech act is a part of social interactive behaviour and must be interpreted as an aspect of social interaction. On any occasion, the action performed by producing an utterance will consist of three related acts: locutionary act, illocutionary act, and perlocutionary act (Yule, 1996:48). Utterances have three layers of interpretation, locution, illocution, and perlocution.

Austin (1967:109) divides speech act in to three types. First, he distinguishes a group of things we do in saying something, which together we

sum up by saying we perform a locutionary acts, which is roughly equivalent to uttering a certain sentence with a certain sense and reference, which again is roughly equivalent to meaning in the traditional sense, (Yule 1996). Second, we also perform illocutionary acts such as informing, ordering, warning, undertaking, utterances which have a certain (conventional) force. Thirdly, we may also perform perlocutionary acts, what we bring about or achieve by saying something, such as convincing, persuading, deterring, and even say, surprising or misleading. These three related acts are used to buttress the analysis in this paper.

4. Methodology
The data for the study were gathered in Ibadan, Oyo State and Osogbo, Osun state. These cities were chosen mainly because they are two ancient Yoruba lands where the game is popular and appreciated by the people and also for their proximity to the researcher. Recordings were made in five places in the respective states and the data were transcribed and glossed by the researcher since the language of interaction in all of the settings was Yoruba. Excerpts were grouped under the respective impolite strategies. Because the researcher could not be present in all the places where the data were collected, the analysis made no account of participants' physical reactions but accounted for other extralinguistic clues like laughter and silence. The interactants in the data are labeled speakers 1, 2 ,3 and so on.

5. Data Analysis
Positive Impoliteness: This strategy is designed to damage the addressee's positive face want (Culpepper, 1996:356).In the data, evidences are found for positive impoliteness and they are presented below.

Excerpt 1
Speaker 1: Ẹ̀ní lo ma mọ̀ wípé **èmiàti e òsínínúegbẹ́**
Speaker 2: **àb'éyọ̀nnbá mi wíni?**
Speaker 1: Bíèyànnbáewí o, bíèyànòbáewí, wàtómò.
Gloss
Speaker 1: You will know today that **I am not your mate**
Speaker 2: **Is anyone talking to me?**
Speaker 1: Whether someone is talking to you or not, you will soon know.

In this excerpt, the locutionary act emboldened in the first utterance of speaker 1 is evidently a face threatening act. This is because in so many contexts, to say you are not someone's mate is suggestive of being superior to or better than that person. On the contrary, speaker 2's response does not give any orientation towards the supposed illocution of the first utterance. Rather, it ignores speaker

1's FTA by asking if anyone was talking to him. This act of snubbing or ignoring by speaker 2 is also not considered offensive by speaker 1 giving the response that follows. It is clear therefore that the impolite expressions are constructed and understood as mock-impolite expressions by the interactants.
Excerpt 2
Speaker 1: Heeee! Talòmoeniyìrí. **E wágbekúròníbíkí Tsunami t'ógbelo**
Speaker 2: Enuloníbít'ajàkàrà. Dákẹ́ kojẹ́ káwoenití Tsunami fẹ́ gbélo.
Gloss
Speaker 1: Heee! Who knows this man? **Come and help him out of here before Tsunami takes him away.**
Speaker 2: You only run your mouth like a bean cake eater. Keep quiet and let's see who Tsunami takes away.

The positive impolite strategy used here is inappropriate identity marker. Identifying anyone with the awful experience of Tsunami is an FTA. But the response of speaker 2 shows that he understands the impolite remark as what Bernal (2008) describes as non-authentically impolite utterances wherein the illocutionary effect of the impolite expression is missing. The casual response given by speaker 2 by virtue of referring to speaker A as a mouth runner shows that he (speaker 2) understands speaker 1's intended illocutionary force as not being a malicious attack but a mere mock-impolite utterance meant to add life to the game.

> Excerpt 3
> Speaker 1: **Tíòbákínsepéàwonèyàngidití ó tidé. Séóyekín ma báìyàwó mi t'ay ò?**
> Speaker 2: Ódao!Bíèminiìyàwó ẹ̀ ni o, bíìwoniìyàwó mi ni o, enu ẹ̀ l'ajowàyí
> Gloss
> Speaker 1: **If not that real people are not here yet**, should I be playing game with my wife?
> Speaker 2: Ok o! Whether I am your wife or you are my wife, let's see how this goes.

In this excerpt, there is the derogatory deployment of name calling as a positive impoliteness. The first part of speaker 1's comment presupposes that speaker 2 with whom he was playing the game was not a real person. This is a clear FTA. He further compares him with his wife in the second part of the utterance. In Nigeria and most other African countries, the wife is presumably inferior to or under the control of the husband. This therefore suggests an attack on the face of speaker 2. Contrarily however, speaker 2's unaggressive response which even begins with a relaxed discourse marker produced with a mild laugh shows

that he does not orient towards the FTAs as attacks on his person. This confirms a mutual understanding of the illocutionary import of speaker 1's statement as seen in the perlocutionary reaction of speaker 2.

Excerpt 4
Speaker 1: Inkontímomá fi ojú e rílénì. Wàl'órógo.
Speaker 2: Níwonọ́**? Ìwotímomátógbéfùrọ̀ mi fúnko lo bámif'ọ̀wá**
Speaker 3: ahhahhahah (laughing) ingbọ́? Wọ́nnífùrọ̀ l'ománfọ̀ nísìyín
Speaker 1: Àtiàkọ́kọ́ àtièkejìyín, ẹ̀ tódákẹ́ tíowọ́ ìyabábàyín
Gloss
Speaker 1: What I'll do to you today, you'll say you're in trouble.
Speaker 2: You? **You that I will soon give my buttock to go and wash it for me**.
Speaker 3: ahahahaha (laughing) is that true? He said you now wash buttocks
Speaker 1: Both of you will soon keep quiet when I deal with you.

The use of taboo words is the positive impolite strategy found in the talks of speakers 1 and 2. To tell someone that you will have him wash your buttocks is of course an impolite remark but for the context of usage. The disregard given to the taboo utterance by speaker 1 and the statement on dealing with them show that he does not pick any offence in the taboo FTA.

Negative Impoliteness: These strategies focus on attacking negative face, that being the want to be unimpeded in one's actions. This strategy is designed to damage the addressee's negative face want (Culpepper, 1996:356). Evidences of negative impoliteness are also seen to be oriented towards mock-impoliteness in the excerpts below.

Excerpt 5
Speaker 1: Èmilònbát'ayòtíenunmú. Olobèrè mi n'ígboro. **Sorítínbásetánpẹ̀lú e wàáròpé caterpillar lókolùẹni.**
Speaker 2: Enuleyínkúfínwa caterpillar tiyín
Gloss
Speaker 1: It is I you're playing game with and you're running your mouth. You had better go and ask after me in town. **When I'm done with you, you'll think you were hit by a caterpillar**.
Speaker 2: It is mouth you use to drive caterpillar.

In this excerpt, speaker 1 adopts the impolite sub-strategy of frightening. One will understand this utterance better if you try to capture it in the context of a

disciplined mother warning the child. The child will definitely be scolded. However, the response given by speaker 2 shows that he conceives of speaker 1's utterance as an empty threat. The utterance is therefore a clear case of mock-impoliteness.

Excerpt 6
Speaker 1: **Wónti ẹ̀ nsọ̀rọ̀ ìwo no nso.Márùnsíméjì to gbàn'íjẹ̀ta, so ti di ribá?**
Speaker 2: Ìjetanìyen. Omi tuntúntirúbáyìí, ejatuntúndẹ̀ ti wo inú ẹ̀.
Gloss
Speaker 1: **People are talking and you are talking too. The 5 to 2 win I gave you two days ago, have you met that?**
Speaker 2: That was two days ago. There is a new water now and there are new fishes in it.

The excerpt here shows speaker 1's attempt to put speaker 2's indebtedness at record. The reference to the last winning would have been a threat to speaker 2's face in a transactional discourse. Speaker 2 however understands the casualness of the discourse and attempts no defence but rather hopes for a better performance in the present game. This shows that speaker 2 understands speaker 1's comment as a mock-impolite utterance.

Excerpt 7
Speaker 1: Tawálófẹ́ p'ara won láyòbáyìí o?
Speaker 2: **Sé lárinèmiàtiomodéyìí? Á'sojú e. M'àtórọ́nsẹ́ ko lo rankànwáfún mi nisìyín.**
Speaker 3: Èminiomodé. Wàátótunso.
Gloss
Speaker 1: So who's going to win the game?
Speaker 2: **You mean between me and this young man? I'll soon send him to get me something.**
Speaker 3: Am I the young man? You'll soon have to say that again.

The utterance by speaker 2 suggests scorn and ridicule. It is ridiculous to say or attempt to send one's contemporary on errand and refer to him as a young man. This can be provocative in some other contexts. Speaker 3 who was the target of the provocative utterance acknowledges this FTA by asking if he was the young man. However, this was not followed by any aggressive reaction from the addressed person or a redress from the addresser. It is therefore mutually understood as mock-impoliteness.

Sarcarsm: In sarcasm, the FTA is performed with the use of politeness strategies that are obviously insincere, and thus remain surface realisation (Culpepper, 1996:356).Sarcastic expressions are also found in the data.

> Excerpt 8
> Speaker 1: Máfénọ̀ ẹ́ palénì. Èní lo ma gbàọ̀gáníọ̀gá
> Speaker 2: **Bẹ̀ẹ̀niò. Óyeko le nọ̀ mípabít'ànáàtìijeta**
> Speaker 1: Wòómá fi ojúànáwòmí o. Isétiyàtọ̀ o.
> Gloss
> Speaker 1: I will beat you to death today. It is today that you'll learn to respect your boss.
> Speaker 2: **Yes o. You should be able to beat me to death today like you did yesterday and two days ago.**
> Speaker: See, don't see me like I was yesterday o. The game is different now o.

Speaker 2's utterance is an insincere expression. It is sarcastic and ridiculous. The tone with which the *beeni o* is rendered suggests the irony of the utterance that follows. The expression in actuality means that speaker 2 must have won speaker 1 in their previous games. Speaker 1 however understands the sarcasm by warning the other not to rely on his past glory.

> Excerpt 9
> Speaker 1: **Ó màga o. omoẹ̀nìyànniwọ́n se báyìí. Ayémàníkà o.**
> Speaker 2: Esé, e mábámidárò. Ìyatiyínlánosajueléyìí lo.
> Gloss
> Speaker 1: **This is serious. See what has been done to a human being. This world is really cruel.**
> Speaker 2: Thanks. Don't console me. After all, your loss yesterday was worse.

This exchange was between a person playing game and a viewer. It can be deciphered that speaker 2 was probably being won at the moment and with a sympathetic and sober tone, speaker 1 tries to console speaker 2. The clever speaker 2 however knows that beneath the sympathy is jest and so he disregards and dissociates with the sympathy and rather reminds the first speaker of his own worse case on the previous day.

Withhold Politeness: These are instances of politeness that are not to be found in the conversation. It is when something is expected to be said but is not said or when something else is said.

> Excerpt 10
> Speaker 1: Èni lo mágbaOlọ́hunl'ọ́ga

Speaker 2: Rájí, ọ̀mà n sowípéòun ma lúẹ́ nìyen.
Speaker 3: **Ma wòntì e**
Gloss
Speaker 1: It is today that you will know God is great
Speaker 2: Raji, he is saying he will win you, you know
Speaker 3: **You just don't mind.**

In this excerpt, it is clear that speakers 1 and 3 are the ones playing the game. However, speaker 1 makes a threatening statement to speaker 3 which he would be expected to have reacted to. Giving speaker 3's silence, a possible viewer (speaker 2) intervened to tell him he was being threatened and then speaker 3 demands of speaker 2 to dismiss speaker 1's comment. A number of inferences can be drawn from this. The first is the silence of speaker 3 to speaker 1's utterance which is a withheld politeness and the second inference is speaker 3's comment to speaker 2 to dismiss speaker 1's utterance. This neglect by speaker 3 is a clear FTA to speaker 1 but the illocutionary effect of this silence is a show of seriousness to the game rather than to make a noise. It is therefore a mock-impoliteness.

Excerpt 11
Speaker 1: Bámit'ayòkomọ̀ péìnkonjuìnkon lo
Speaker 2**: àb'éyànsọ̀rọ̀?**
Speaker 1: Wàtómọ̀ péèyánsọ̀rọ̀
Gloss
Speaker 1: play with me and know one thing is bigger than another
Speaker 2: **Is someone talking?**
Speaker: You will soon know that someone is talking.

One would have expected speaker 2 to also pose a confrontational statement to speaker 1 as a reaction but he rather directs his statement to probably a third party in the setting by asking if anyone was talking. This is to say he does not acknowledge speaker 1 and would reserve his comment. Speaker 1 does not accept this snob as an FTA and instead comments that speaker 2 will soon know someone is talking. This confirms a co-constructed and shared mock-impoliteness.

Bald on Record: While using the Bald on Record impoliteness according to Culpepper (1996:356), "the FTA is performed in a direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way in circumstances where face is not irrelevant or circumcised". Sometimes, the interactions get so nasty that participants in the game make direct attack on one another's face.

Excerpt 12
Speaker1:**Tínbámásetánpèlúe,àsákàrí re ganònílègbéríbobá de òdò ìyàwó re**
Speaker 2: ahahahahaha (laughing). Àjàláòré mi! Enúdùnjiyò
Gloss
Speaker 1: **When I'm done with you, even your penis will not rise when you get to your wife**.
Speaker 2: ahahahahaha (laughing) Ajala my friend! The mouth is sweeter than salt.

The foul language used by speaker one is not only an FTA but is also culturally frowned at in the public. However, giving the context of the discourse, rather than to meet with outright rejection from the addressee, he rather laughs at it and sees his colleague as a talkative person. This confirms that this kind of mockery is characteristic of such a setting.

Excerpt 13
Speaker 1: **Éyánòbás'ojúwonko. Bíòbánírí ran kòníríran**
Speaker 2: Ahahahaha (laughing) **mojeolódo, lóbáfé ké**
Gloss
Speaker 1: **Even if one makes his eyes so big, if he won't see anything he won't see anything**
Speaker 2: Ahahahaha (laughing) **I won the dullard and he is going to cry**.

Both participants in the discourse engage in confrontational utterances in their turns with their lexical choices. To have said speaker 2 made his eyes so big might be offensive outside a game setting. However, speaker 2 does not orient towards the illocutionary force of insulting as suggested by his laughter which is followed by an FTA from him too referring to speaker 1 as a dullard. The word 'dullard' is also an insulting word but both parties made no attempt to redress thereby indicating that the utterances are mock-impoliteness.

6. Conclusion
This paper has studied the impolite strategies in the discourse of draught players in southwestern Nigeria. The paper observes how the participants in the game humorously and affiliatively create and orient towards impolite expressions which is a common discursive practice in the activity type of draught playing. Five impolite strategies coined by Jonathan Culpeper (1995) from Brown and Levinson's (1975) politeness theory were used for the analysis. The strategies are positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness,

sarcasm, withhold politeness and bald on record. Austin's performative acts were also used to make clear the communicative implications of the utterances. Furman (2011) has argued that mock-impolite utterances are parasitic on impolite utterances and so contain linguistic or paralinguistic features of a characteristically impolite utterances. However, it is clear from this study that the expressions are only potentially impolite which means they do not take the forces of aggressive confrontations which come with impolite remarks.

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