

Impoliteness and Negotiation of Meaning in Ola Rotimi's *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*

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Abstract

This paper analyses impolite expressions in Ola Rotimi's *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*. The study applies a combined framework of Culpeper's impoliteness strategies (1996, 2005 and 2011) and Spencer-Oatey's Rapport Management Strategies (2008). The study reveals that the prominent patterns of impolite (abusive) expressions deployed in Ola Rotimi's drama text involve interlocutors' utterances capable of demeaning the self-esteem of others in the society of the text. Positive impoliteness strategy (using derogatory nominations) prevails followed by Negative impoliteness strategy. The impolite exchanges define the personality of the characters, lead to loss of political ticket that should have guaranteed electoral victory, and devalue relationships. When extremely applied, these strategies drive home, intensify and inform the absurdities in the life style of the retired soldier in the literary text. These birth inequality, polygamy, betrayal/deceit as inherent themes in the text and in a way, dismantle the retired soldier's family and political base.

As a symbolic representation of the many alliances some African countries enter into, using impoliteness drives home and intensifies the absurdities of the various relationships and their destructive effects overriding the positive ones they were supposed to serve. The paper concludes that impoliteness is strategic-pragmatic device that informs the motif of the drama text.

Key words: Language; Impoliteness; Interaction; Utterances; Rapport strategies

1. INTRODUCTION

Life is a constant flow of discourse in one context or the other and language is the means used to express the constant flow discourse. Language is a part of the social structure of our communities... (O'Grady et al, 2011), a means for self-identity and empowerment of individuals. This is because language defines and assigns power to its user. Given the above observations, language is the raw material for works of literature to mirror society from the point of view of authors using characters or entities (Brinton and Brinton, 2010). For instance, some characters in the drama text under consideration, are endowed with the power of speech to paint observation of situations. This study, therefore, investigates different instances and characteristics of the abusive verbal expressions in the text, *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*. The drama text is a representation of designated typical Africans in the post-colonial society who, through their talk-exchanges, make known their intentions, beliefs and ideas about the world around them coupled with the social structures that help influence the representation of the reality constructed by individuals and communities (van Dijk, 2013).

Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again is a symbolic humorous and satirical play about political struggles of modern Africa. The hero is a major-turned politician, Lekoja-Brown (LB), who contracted several other wives, unknown to his first wife over the years. The hero, like Nigeria/Africa, contracts many relationships that are detrimental to his political, economic and social growth unknown to the masses. The spouses that help spread him

thin range from traditional to politically advantageous partners and an independent, western educated woman (Liza) whose entrance into the family causes comedic chaos. Eventually, Liza becomes the only wife of LB. The play humorously highlights the political struggles of Africa due to contracted relationships, some by default of being a colonial property of the western countries and some due to political interest/ambition (pure symbiotic relationship). The study aims to examine the roles of impoliteness and relating them to interpersonal relationships and themes in the text.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Different research works have been carried out on Ola Rotimi's text, *Our Husband has Gone Mad Again*. The different studies have considered the literary text from the perspectives of CDA, Stylistics, Discourse Analysis, Stylistics and Pragmatics in Nigeria and probably elsewhere. However, there remains a gap of knowledge regarding pragmatics of impoliteness in unearthing the role and the intentions underlining the utterances within the themes of politics, gender inequality, cross-cultural marriage, polygamy, betrayal and deceit. Investigating these will help us understand the strategic and aesthetic use of impoliteness to code the playwright's message(s). The study specifically applies the framework of Culpeper's impoliteness and Spencer-Oatey's rapport management to examine the exchanges that reflected interpersonal relationships in the text and the reality in the larger society. Hence, a consideration of the different uses of abusive expressions in the society of the text.

Abuse involves the misuse of position, power or authority, treatment of someone or something cruelly or wrongly, non-verbally or verbally (to speak rudely or insultingly to someone or about someone). It is imbued with negative intentions such as betrayal (in the text). Generally, there are varied forms of abuse: *sexual abuse*, *drug abuse*, *child abuse* and *verbal abuse* (Robinson & Davidson, 2004). The type of abuse meant in this study is the use of negative words to describe a person, place or thing. It is the uttering of hurtful words to attack the personality of the abused. Certain characters in *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*, employ these linguistic expressions in the course of interaction and the abused feel terribly bad or hurt. All these plausible verbal abuses are characterized by a force which strengthens its offensive attack (Culpeper, 2011). As a linguistic practice, verbal abuse in terms of name-calling for instance, negatively labels someone or something and affects self-esteem (Sobola, 2018.p.105). Interestingly, verbal abuse as an instance of banter is not seen as anything bad apparently because such verbal duel is seen as a norm, something habitual and hence, no offence is taken. However, as trivial as it appears, verbal abuse in some contexts can

mar/sever relationships. Hence, its composition and that which it reflects in the play of Ola Rotimi, *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*, can be direct, indirect, and can take the form of curses. The drama text, therefore, applies abuses as vehicles addressing humorously the characters as well as some social and national issues. The present study therefore sets to identify the different occurrences of verbal abuse or impoliteness in the drama text; show the most frequently used abuse; relate the abuse with impoliteness strategies observed in the expressions; and highlight the likely reason behind their use. The study also holds the view that having any sort of power (education, native intelligence, presence, and so on) endows one with the temerity to use impolite expressions.

Politeness is a continuum with impoliteness taking up the opposite end. Impoliteness and its opposite are features of interaction depending on the participants. It is synonymous with *rudeness*, *disrespect*, *insult*, among others. In short, it is thoughtless, uncharitable verbal or non-verbal behaviour which can be intentional or unintentional. Both Culpeper (2005) and Bousfield (2008) see it as an intentionally conflictive communication that attacks face either from the speaker's and hearer's verbal behaviour (Culpeper, 2005) or from speaker's verbal utterances (Bousfield, 2008). However, not all impoliteness strategies are impolite across cultures or contexts. Based on different contexts, there are social variables that determine its effect in interaction. Social variables like *power*, *age*, *gender* and *status* (economic achievement, education, social mobility, and so on). Acheampong and Kwarteng (2021) examine impoliteness using ten naturally occurring Ghanaian conversations that portray their norms and cultural behaviour. The researchers observe five different types of impoliteness strategies, which include the use of vocatives, dismissal, threats and silences to threaten the face of others in the exchanges with silences being used as responses to further intensify face threat and aggression. Nasirli (2021) extends the application of impoliteness to four (4) Hollywood movies. The study examines the frequency of impolite utterances by characters, types of impolite expressions and the factors responsible for their use (offensive/defensive etc.). Using twentieth century movies like *Gattaca*, *The Bucket List*, *Hidden Figures* and *Whiplash* as genres from comedy, biographical drama and science fiction, the study qualitatively applies Culpeper impoliteness strategies for its analysis. In the study, all impoliteness strategies apply with preference for positive and negative impoliteness strategies, which are intentionally used to cause offense. Cultural, social and contextual factors are found to determine these strategies.

Impoliteness and abuse are related as both function as face threats. Instances of both can sever relationships. Lentini (2013) in 'The Pragmatics of Verbal Abuse in Homer' identifies flying in intra-communal and inter-

communal (disruptive, non-disruptive) verbal abuse expressed in implicative verbal structures. Lentini also notes that Culpeper counts on Spencer-Oatey's Rapport Management model to address challenges posed by the study of impoliteness phenomena such as impoliteness' relationship with intentionality; impoliteness conventionalized forms and its indirect, implicational forms; the contexts legitimizing impoliteness and those exacerbating it; and the functions of impoliteness events. Thus, impoliteness, in the text under consideration, is seen as a linguistic uncharitable expressions that attack the personality, self-esteem and dignity of the abused which affect the characters negatively or positively (Sobola, 2018,p.105). The present study will benefit from combining Culpeper and Spencer-Oatey frameworks in analysing the expressions of impoliteness in order to arrive at a deeper understanding of it in the text.

Impoliteness is related to face due to the reason that where impoliteness exists, face is affected. Goffman (1967, p.5) notes the importance of face in related rituals of social interaction. He 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". Face is central to politeness and impoliteness theories that have been developed. While the focus of politeness theories has been on the use of communication techniques to foster social harmony in interactions, the focus of impoliteness theories is the opposite. This is the reason for the inclusion of Spencer-Oatey (2008) rapport management framework that combines well with Culpeper (2011) in analysing the text under examination. Lentini (2013) notes that with the concept of face, impoliteness studies have been targeted at treating face-threat or, better, face-attack strategies systematically. Culpeper (2011, p.118) observes that face-attack is more appropriate than face-threat when dealing with impoliteness phenomena. Impoliteness is sustained by expectations, desires and/or beliefs about social engagement rules, hence Spencer-Oatey (2008) who in her 'Rapport Management' framework broadens the concept of face to include three types of face and two sociality rights.

3. METHODOLOGY

The data for the study are fifteen (15) purposively selected relevant exchanges that reflect impoliteness. These exchanges are selected because they reflect the various themes of the text. Culpeper's (2011) impoliteness strategies are employed to categorise the impoliteness expressions relevant to the study while Spencer-Oatey's Rapport Management frame will be used to analyse the type of face threats including the rights violated. The reason being that Culpeper (2011) acknowledges Spencer-Oatey (2008) frame to address fundamental issues relating to impoliteness. Thus, it is believed that both frames will

benefit the present study. Culpeper's impoliteness theory subsumes under six different types:

(1) Bald-on-record impoliteness: It involves FTA (Face Threatening Acts) performed in concise, direct, clear and unambiguous way in situations where face is not irrelevant or minimized.

(2) Positive impoliteness includes Ignore, snub the other - exclude the other from an activity; Disassociate from the other; Be disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic; Use inappropriate identity markers; Use obscure or secretive language; Seek disagreement; Make the other feel uncomfortable; Use taboo words; Call the other names etc.

(3) Negative impoliteness includes Frighten; Scorn or ridicule and showing off (pride); Condescend; Be contemptuous; Belittle others; Do not treat others seriously; Invade the other's space; Explicitly associate the other with negative aspect; Put the other's indebtedness on record etc.

(4) Off-record impoliteness is the strategy performed in a way that an attributable intention clearly outweighs other interlocutors.

(5) Withhold impoliteness involves the inability of interlocutors to forgive and forget hurtful comments by not saying 'am sorry' or 'thanks' as the case may be, when politeness is expected and it is denied.

(6) Impoliteness meta-strategy (sarcasm/mock politeness) when interlocutors, mock and express insincere remarks about another. This strategy shows the sarcastic nature of interlocutors where they obviously appear insincere.

Spencer-Oatey (2008) in Rapport Management puts forward three types of face and two types of sociality rights. Types of face include; (1) Quality face, which parallels the desire to being valued positively, (2) Social identity face designates the desire to be respected and accepted in one's social roles while (3) Relational face deals with a positive evaluation in relation to a group of significant others. With respect to sociality rights, we have (1) Equity rights which deals with the desire to be treated fairly and not unduly imposed on by others and, (2) Association rights which is the belief that one is entitled to associate with and have positive relationships with others.

4. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Negative Impoliteness

4.1.1 Belittle the Other Exchanges 1

LEJOKA-BROWN. [*with a broad sweep of the arm that takes in both Sikira and Mama Rashida*]. Wives OKONKWO. [*confused*]. Hunh?

LEJOKA-BROWN. [*indicating both women again*]. I said: Wives ... [*clears his throat*] Wives ...he is a lawyer

now. (p.5)

When Okonkwo pays LB a visit, LB introduces his wives dismissively with no name and deep regard. This is reflected again where he refers to them as *little crickets*. It is as if the women are added property whose value can be overlooked, an indicator of patriarchal society. The only time LB made as if Mama Rashida is important was toward the end of the text; at a time when everyone seems to want to leave him. Evident is lack of positive value and respect for both women in their social roles as his wives.

4.1.2 Frighten the Other

Exchanges 2

The following ensues when Polycarp brings in a cablegram to his Master:

LEJOKA-BROWN. [*irritated by the interruption, whirls round and, wielding a bottle, capers threateningly toward POLYCARP*]. The god of iron stuff this bottle down your noisy throat!(p.7)

In this exchange, LB is observed to use many negative impoliteness expressions. The way he addresses Polycarp indicates that he has no regard for him. The boy brings him his cablegram and that calls for his beer bottle to be snuffed down his throat. This is abuse, an aspect of negative politeness *frighten* which instills a belief that action detrimental to Polycarp will occur. Apart from frightening Polycarp (Negative impoliteness), the exchange instantiates an implicative positive impoliteness of swearing, using abusive language to curse someone. The way he snatches the cablegram from Polycarp does not convey respect; yet in the culture of Lejoka-Brown (LB), respect is reciprocal. Polycarp's social identity face, which is the desire to be respected and accepted in his social role as servant is not valued but belittled.

Exchanges 3

LEJOKA BROWN. Oohh...don't wish death on me, witch!

LIZA. Take your choice: peptic ulcer; high blood pressure; asthma; obesity; dermatitis; neuralgia; headache; insomnia; migraine; cardio-vascular. (p. 40)

The interaction is between Liza and LB after Liza's arrival, where LB approaches with a song, an opening gamble which fails to accomplish mellowing Liza for she coolly stops him with "No...please!." She pretends having "an excruciatingly acute sacroiliac muscle spasm" which LB did not understand. Again, in the course of the interaction, Liza describes what will happen to LB due to his decisions. She employs the use of obscure language that mystifies LB. Liza's words are premonition of what will happen to LB for hiding his many contracted marriages from her. Also, Liza refers to the consequences of his inability to control his outbursts as a leader, which will impact on his health (checking his pulse). Based on all these, Liza envisages a psychosomatic breakdown in the near future. The exchange frightens LB, undermines his self-confidence and threatens his positive face

and authority. The fright is an instance of negative impoliteness where one instills a belief that action detrimental to the other will occur. LB's response "don't wish death on me, witch" is both to a previous and later utterances of Liza while she compounds the consequences. Thus, LB rejects the before and after premonitions and adds negative derogative name *witch*. The premonitions can be regarded as the many social ills that can befall Nigeria/African nations that dabble(s) into relationships that are parasitic and detrimental to their development.

4.1.3 Ridiculing the Other

Exchanges 4

LEJOKA-BROWN. Madman, where are going?

POLYCARP. I dey go buy toilet paper sah.

LEJOKA-BROWN. I see ... for who?

POLYCARP. [respectfully]. For you sah.

LEJOKA-BROWN. Are you listening to the crazy idiot? When did I become your joke-mate?

POLYCARP. Na true Oga Major-I no craze yet.

LEJOKA-BROWN. Ehen? I see...Na so your papa dey take shit? Hunh? Answer. When your papa wan go latrine, he go take shokoto put for nyash; he carry damask agbada cover body, take cap knock for head finish, then he come butu dey shit for International Airport?

LEJOKA-BROWN [*hotly springing to his feet and seizing Polycarp by the scruff of the neck*]. Don't "Major" me, you goat! What

are you good for, anyway? This you don't know; that, you don't- what are you? A banana? Don't you have ears? Or you mean to tell me that Mama Rashida and

Sikira became dumb all of a sudden and didn't say one word to Liza? Not one word that you heard?

POLYCARP. Oh, dem spoke, Oga Major.

LEJOKA-BROWN. What, Oga Idiot? Spoke what? Angrily? ... Laughingly?

POLYCARP. Sisi Liza enter for di house...

[LEJOKA-BROWN *bends down to listen keenly*; OKONKWO *also leans over*.]

I helep Sisi Liza tote her load go inside house. Mama Rashida and Sikira dem dey inside parlour by dat time.

LEJOKA-BROWN. Ehen?

POLYCARP. Tory* finish sah.

LEJOKA-BROWN. [to Okonkwo]. You see the di kpokpo garri* way God gimme for houseboy? (pp.30-32)

In the interaction, Polycarp enters with the news that Liza is already at home. LB, masking his fright, tortures both himself and Polycarp in trying to glean as much information as possible and threatening to strike him in connection to the situation at home when no information is forthcoming. LB's helplessness makes him to overreact. Though the different abusive expressions of LB are directed to Polycarp on the one hand, Polycarp on the other, re-affirms his claim with an indirect abuse covertly uttered in the Pidgin English; "Na true Oga Major-I no

craze yet". It should be noted that Polycarp, represents the uneducated who speaks strictly Pidgin English. The plain English translation of the Pidgin English of Polycarp is this, "It is true boss - I am not yet crazy".

Liza's early arrival puts LB in an uncomfortable position as he puts on the posture of somebody who wants to 'pooh' or 'shit' (passes excreta) at the airport. This posture of LB elicits Okonkwo's sarcastic request for Polycarp to buy toilet tissue for his master. However, Polycarp's stupidity prevents him from realizing that a joke has being made at the expense of his master. LB's reply in Pidgin English, is translated in plain English thus:

"Ehen? I see. Is that the way your father passes excreta in the toilet? Hunh? Answer. If your father wants to use the toilet, his trousers will be on him; he will put on shirt and cover his body just like that, even with a cap on and then passes excreta like that at the International Airport?"

These utterances referring to Polycarp's father ridicules him through a show of power that grants LB the temerity to do that. Polycarp is a houseboy who occupies a subordinate role. Accepting every insult directed at him, Polycarp however, refutes being referred to as a *madman*. LB variously addresses him as *goat*, *crazy idiot*, *kpokpo garri* (name-calling) which do not enhance Polycarp's quality face nor his social identity face (the desire to be respected and accepted in one's social role) within the household. Apart from this, Liza's sudden appearance is unexpected. This puts other contracted relationships in jeopardy, which applies to the contracted relationships in the text.

Exchanges 5

LEJOKA-BROWN. Well, how much have you just won at the lottery, Sister?

Where's the prize- money? Throw it down, let's count. (To Sikira)

LIZA. Must happiness depend on money alone? She (Sikira) is happy

to be alive and free. Think of the boundless ecstasies of human freedom!

LEJOKA-BROWN [*to LIZA, with malevolent casualness*]. Are you

there...I am very happy too Woman. Very happy indeed,

to notice that you have become used to this "gas chamber"

house so much, that you have now begun a Communist -

manifesto class in it.

LEJOKA-BROWN [*contemptuous*]. What basics? What d'you know

about politics? I mean, hard-bone politics...what basics?

LEJOKA-BROWN [*hisses*]. Talking grammar!

[*Turns away, deciding it will be wiser not to get tangled up in an argument with this "Book head"! He now directs his full attention at SIKIRA, in her new, provocative dress!*]

LEJOKA-BROWN. What is that partly-hatched lizard dress for?

LIZA. Partly-hatched lizard

LEJOKA-BROWN. I see.

[*Goes round her, pointing to the bare regions: the arms, shoulders, back, bosom.*]

What about this... and here...all these...windows...

doors ... openings wider than two football fields put together!

What photographer are you leaving them naked for?

SIKIRA [*running to a chair, picking up her dark veil*]. Sisi Liza will

sew a veil for me...

[*drapes veil over head.*]

...to cover the parts of my body you don't want open.

LEJOKA-BROWN [*with cynical calm contemplates the dress further*

then]. Go take the rag off. (p.56)

In the interaction, LB comes in from a meeting and meets Sikira dressed unfamiliarly. He observes the friendly atmosphere between Liza and Sikira and takes exception to Liza, educating Sikira on human rights and sewing skimpy dresses for her. After attacking Liza, LB faces Sikira, describing her exposed body and the dress as "partly-hatched lizard". This erodes Sikira's confidence and her desire to be respected and accepted (social identity face). She feels if LB accepts Liza the way she dresses, why would he not accept her. Here, Sikira's relational face did not attract positive evaluation in relation a group of significant others like Liza. This is a comment on the subservient role of women.

4.1.4 Condescend, Scorn, Ridicule

Exchanges 6

MALLAM GASKIYA. Protocol be hanged! Listen, fellows. Let's stop fooling ourselves. Please! This military Surprise and Attack nonsense just won't work in a political campaign.

MALLAM GASKIYA. And, aside from the fact that the present

Leader of our Party is so old-fashioned and autocratic about

the risky implementation of his whimsical strategy, this

whole mumbo-jumbo about military exercise in a political

set-up is a sham!

LEJOKA-BROWN [*rearing up*]. Now, you wait a min...

[*Bedlam: everybody talking, nobody listening.*]
 LEJOKA-BROWN'S

voice, however, booms over the others.]

LEJOKA-BROWN [*declaiming wildly*]. How do you know Surprise and Attack won't work in politics? What do you people know about politics-I mean hard-bone politics? Small, small boys, all of you... went to Europe and America, studied book, came back, talk big talk. You think politics in book is politics in real life? You lie, Book-heads! Politics means action, and action means war. Therefore, Military Surprise and Attack can win us votes if only we... [*members begin to walk out*] This is sabotage! Come back... Mallam Gaskiya... I said come back! Things must be done constitution-like. All right, all right, every Jackass go home ...go ... [*Tears map off board.*] (p.52)

Mallam Gaskiya scorns and ridicules LB's suggestions of applying military tactics of surprise and attack as their election campaigns strategies claiming it will not work. Condescendingly, he describes LB as old fashioned and autocratic. Mallam Gaskiya's comments deflates LB's ego, undermines his leadership, threatens and damages his quality and social identity face. LB retaliates, referring to the party members as *small boys*, *book-heads* and *jackass* simultaneously. This interaction caricatures retired military men coming back as civilian heads of state.

5. POSITIVE IMPOLITENESS

These are strategies designed to damage addressee's positive face wants, the desire to be treasured and accepted by others. Under positive impoliteness are such subcategories as:

5.1 Name Calling (Using Derogatory Nominations)

Exchanges 7

POLYCARP. [holding out cablegram]. Cablegram, Sir!

[LEJOKA-BROWN *snatches cablegram from him and starts prying the envelope open*]

OKONKWO. It sounds like war.

LEJOKA-BROWN. It is war! Politics is war ... Mhm. Last time, I took things slow and easy and what happened? Chuu! I lost a by-election to a ... a small crab ... a baby monkey.

[Winkles paper out of envelope, and starts unfolding it.]

Mhm. This time it is war!

[*Reads cable; the contents are disconcerting.*]

Unurni ya Allah!

OKONKWO. Bad news?

LEJOKA-BROWN. Gamalin-20

OKONKWO. Your politics?

LEJOKA-BROWN. My wife.

OKONKWO. Your wh-a-at? (pp. 7-8)

LB receives a cablegram, refers to its content and Liza (the writer) as *gamalin-20*, which indicates that both are

corrosive; he refers to the person he lost a by-election to, as *a small crab*, *a baby monkey*. These adjectives are instances of derogatory nominations, which depict LB as intolerant of others and boastful. He sees his political opponent as having no right to be a part of the circle he mingles. This damages relational face of others except in relation to Okonkwo. In these utterances, there is a blend of both negative and positive impoliteness. This is due to the implied messages in the derogatory nominations especially scorn and condescension, aspects of negative impoliteness. These name callings define the referents as not being entitled to associating with politically-minded others.

While explaining how he ends up marrying two wives in three days to Okonkwo, Sikira, the first wife gets the news from Polycarp that Liza, the second wife, is about coming to their husband. Sikira comes to their husband to see how she can help the situation in the exchanges below:

Exchanges 8

LEJOKA-BROWN. ... [*sees Sikira.*] what's your trouble?

SIKIRA. Polycarp said you got a cablegram. I hope it is nothing bad?

LEJOKA-BROWN. Thanks for your concern!

[*Sikira lingers on, which irks LEJOKA-BROWN.*] I said thanks for your concern. A-ah! Polycarp brought a cablegram, yes. Is your name Rahman Lejoka-Brown?

SIKIRA. [*teasingly polite*]. Sorry sah.

[*curtseys and exits*]

LEJOKA-BROWN. I married that problem only four months ago. (pp. 9-10)

From these exchanges, we observe the way LB addresses Sikira's invasion of his space. The implied disapproval of her unsolicited concern is noted. The intentional attitude of labelling others negatively by LB is evident in the exchanges with respect to referring to Sikira on different occasions as *a problem* and *as a headache*. Here, derogatory nomination (name-calling) and withholding politeness combine to evidently and blatantly display LB's regard for Sikira. There is a violation of quality, social identity and the relational face of Sikira. Not being valued positively (quality face), accepted and respected as a wife (social identity face) and not giving her positive evaluation with respect to other wives (significant others) were violated. Hence, Sikira's equity right, the right to fair treatment, was abused.

After arguing in terms of the best strategy to adopt in solving the issue that would arise when Liza, the second wife arrives, LB calls Mama Rashida (wife to LB's late brother), informs and instructs her to get every place ready to welcome her [*Sikira enters again.*]

Ignoring the Other

Exchanges 9

SIKIRA. Is my lord now going to pick up our new "Iyawo" (wife) from the airport?

LEJOKA-BROWN. [*a grunt*]. It is so.

SIKIRA. [*childishly taunting*]. Hey! Will she be bringing us chewing gum? Real American chewing gum?

LEJOKA-BROWN. The briefer the better, I tell you. Oya-let's go (to Okonkwo).

[They move off.]

Mama Rashida, we're going, o!

MAMA RASHIDA. [*running in, broom in hand*]. Go well my lord.

SIKIRA. [*cooing after LEJOKA-BROWN*]. My lord, tell sisi LIZA to bring us balloons, too o! (p.13)

The taunts from Sikira do not endear her to LB rather, they intensify LB's regrets. While Sikira is rude, asking challenging questions, LB snubs her thereby failing to acknowledge her presence. Ignoring Sikira intensifies her annoyance as she keeps rambling until LB leaves. Sikira's expressions imply betrayal, pain, portraying her fears of being replaced when she has nothing to hold unto in the relationship. Sikira's expressions attack the quality face of LB while the equity right of Sikira, the right to be treated fairly, was violated. Where a relationship is ignored, the result is conflict.

Exchanges 10

MAMA RASHIDA. [*sternly*]. Sikira!

SIKIRA. What is it?

MAMA RASHIDA. The chairs, Woman, they need dusting ...the windows-blinds, the chair covers must be ...

SIKIRA. [*nonchalantly*]. Aaahh.

[*She turns away to resume her gaze through the window*]

MAMA RASHIDA. Now, you listen to me, woman! (pp. 14-15)

Exchanges 11

SIKIRA. Will our husband care for me now that that Miss world is coming here?

MAMA RASHIDA. [*lost*]. Miss World?

SIKIRA. That black-white woman who spent her whole life roaming the streets of America!

MAMA RASHIDA. [*shocked*]. Liza?

SIKIRA. Must I spell out her name? (p.15)

Exchanges 12

ALHAJI MUSTAFA. ... the Government demons broke it down ... I thought I could stop the devils. ... Tell the master not to try fighting the devils either, when they come to break down this house of his ancestors. No use. [*Turns to go*].

Tell the master that the Government devils gave me three pounds for my house

ALHAJI MUSTAFA. [*Stopping at the door*]. Oh ... how rude of me. [*Turns around*]. What time is the young lady arriving?

SIKIRA. Young lady - ha! The witch is old enough to

be my grandmother!

ALHAJI MUSTAFA. I beg your pardon! (pp. 17-18)

Prior to previous interactions, Liza's arrival is imminent, LB instructs Mama Rashida to put the house in order. In turn, Mama Rashida tries to persuade Sikira to show interest in putting the house in good shape. In the interaction, Mama Rashida explains to Sikira that she is working herself to stupor not because of the memorial ceremonies of her departed forebears nor for her wedding but that she cares that when Liza steps into the house, she will know that humans live there unless she has no shame. To this, Sikira in exchanges 10, does not care. Her worries are voiced in exchanges 11 - that Liza will displace her. To vent her anger, she describes Liza as a prostitute, which damages Liza's social identity face and relational face absentia.

Shortly, Alhaji Mustafa pays a visit to inform LB that his ancestor's house has just been demolished by the Government but met his wives. Alhaji Mustafa also applies name-calling to convey his impotent power at stopping the government operatives from demolishing his ancestor's house. Also, before leaving the women, he inquires about Liza's arrival. Sikira's response describes her impotent power at stopping what will soon happen as she in derision attacks Liza in absentia describing her as an old woman. Also on p.26 of the text, Liza describes LB as *the devil* when Mama Rashida tries to defend LB. These deny the referents the rights of being fairly treated and have positive relationship with others.

Exchanges 13

LIZA. Someone ought to have told you, my dear girl that it isn't proper for a *housemaid* to go peeping into the bedroom of ...

SIKIRA. Housemaid!

[*Incensed, to MAMA RASHIDA*]

Did you hear that *grasshopper*? I told you she would come and kick everybody round... I'd rather die than let that *cockroach* kick me around!

LIZA. What did you say?

SIKIRA. Oohhoo! [*Girds her wrapper tightly, ready for a fight*]

MAMA RASHIDA. Patience, you, patience, I say ...

SIKIRA. Let go, Mama Rashida! That fowl wants her proud feathers plucked!

LIZA. Now wait a minute!

MAMA RASHIDA. Calm down!

SIKIRA. I'd rather die than let that cockroach kick me around!

LIZA: Who is a *cockroach*?

SIKIRA: Who is a *housemaid*?

MAMA RASHIDA. [*pinioning Sikira's arms behind her*]. Now you ... calm that hot temper right now, or I'll hit you!

SIKIRA. Didn't you hear what that antelope called me?

LIZA. I'm sorry, there must be a ...

MAMA RASHIDA. Listen to that, she says she's sorry.

SIKIRA. I don't want to hear ...

MAMA RASHIDA. [*whacking SIKIRA's arm*]. Quiet! Ta-ta-ta-ta-ta! What has got into you?

SIKIRA. First thing that mosquito did was land on my head, biting me all over. (p.24)

To get the situation right, the following ensued:

LIZA. Maybe I'm ... getting everybody ... confused or something. Is this Mr. Lejoka-Brown's house? By that, I mean: the house of Rahman Lejoka-Brown?

MAMA RASHIDA. This is Mr. Rahman Lejoka-Brown's house, sister ...

[*rubbing her hands together prayerfully*]. May Allah the All-powerful, the All-seeing protect it from the hands of destroyers ...

LIZA. [*impatiently*]. Sure, sure, sure ... My dear women, six years ago, Mr. Lejoka-Brown-er ... Mr. Rahman Lejoka-Brown and I got married.

SIKIRA. [*a grunt*]. Halleluyah!

LIZA. In court ... ring and all

SIKIRA. Ehen? Therefore!

[*Singing to the tune of Bobby Benson's Taxi Driver highlife**]

If you marry in Magistrate Court nko?

I don't care

Whether you wear all rings in this world o,

I don't care

Whether you know book *tele** you tire o

I don't care!

MAMA RASHIDA. Sikira!

SIKIRA. I've slept more nights with the master than you have, therefore...

LIZA. More wh-at?

SIKIRA. More nights; therefore, by native law and custom, I hold a senior place in this house.

MAMA RASHIDA. Enough! Come now!

[*Shoves SIKIRA roughly out of the living-room.*]

To your room!

LIZA [*blankly*]. Native law and what!

SIKIRA [*over her shoulder*]. Whether you like it or not!

MAMA RASHIDA. Out!

[*Escorts SIKIRA from the room.*]

[*LIZA, alone in the living-room, stares absently in front of her,*

absorbing the shock. (p.25)

After the realisation has dawned on Liza that the women are actually her husband's wives, Liza immediately decides to go back to America while Mama Rashida tries to calm her down in the following exchanges:

Exchanges 14

LIZA. What room are my things in?

MAMA RASHIDA. The last one

LIZA. [*LIZA steps out. Freezes. ...*]

MAMA RASHIDA. [*kneeling beside LIZA*]. Sister, I beg of you ... do not let anger turn your head inside out. Have patience I pray you. Come ...

LIZA. Think things over! There's nothing ...totally, clearly, absolutely... nothing to think over, Mama. I cannot... I cannot and will never surrender my person to be devoured in this ...blatantly decadent, third rate domestic circus! Nor will I ever condescend to sharing the same monster of a husband with that...that...that smutty, ill-bred, foul-mouthed, uncouth, mangy, grossly ribald, whipper-snapper of a chipmunk!

MAMA RASHIDA. [*mild protest*]. Now, now, the master is not a monster! (pp. 26-27)

In exchanges 13, both Liza and Sikira engage in a fight of words. Interestingly, the exchange is abuse-laden. Sikira exhibits the behaviour of a typical African woman in a polygamous setting. Liza insults Sikira unknowingly using belittling referring expression *housemaid* and Sikira also replies referring to Liza as a *cockroach*, *grasshopper*, *fowl*, *antelope*, *mosquito*, using her society's images. It should be noted that Liza represents the educated elite and that fact is evident in her utterances made of several complex expressions as in *blatantly decadent*, *third rate domestic circus*; all instances of name calling meant to belittle the household (exchanges 14). Other words used by Liza to describe the identity and character of Sikira include; *ill-bred*, *foul-mouthed*, *uncouth*, *mangy*, *grossly ribald*, *whipper-snapper of a chipmunk*! These are instances of positive impoliteness particularly, associating the other with negative aspects that are humiliating and derogatory. These different abusive (impolite) expressions connotatively express feelings or attitudes towards a place and people's characters and ultimately attack the quality face of the referents, their desire to be valued thereby lowering their self-esteem respectively.

Liza with her understanding of the western law has to show off her ring, an indication that she was legally married to LB while Sikira with her understanding of native law and customs, adds to Liza's misery by informing her that she has slept more nights with LB and by right holds a senior place in the household. It was at this point that Sikira vented her anger and struck back at Liza. Both through their utterances display their animosity to one another by not according themselves positive self-value. Sikira is disinterested and unsympathetic to whether Liza is educated, married in court or abroad, with all the rings in the world. Both damaged and violated the quality face and equity rights of each other.

Exchanges 15

LIZA. ...You listen to me Mr Major.

[*She advances, forcing LEJOKA-BROWN to back up defensively. They both look like awkward partners doing the tango.*]

Politician ...Rahman Taslim Lejoka-Brown! [*His retreat is blocked by a chair.*]

I've been waiting patiently ...ooh, so patiently, for you to c-o-o-l it, so I could say something. But no. Now, you listen to me, buddy, and man, you listen good!

[*kicks off her shoes.*]

Now, when I Elizabeth Tayanta, married you in the Congo, I had the impression that I was entering into a union with you alone, and you with me.

LEJOKA-BROWN. True, but...

LIZA [*drowning his voice out*]. Never, Mr Lejoka-Brown, never did I once imagine that I was doomed to becoming one of your three sacrificial slaves in this ...this ...

[*With a sweeping gesture that takes in the entire house.*]

...nauseating, clay-walled, gas-chamber!

LEJOKA-BROWN [*hurt*]. Lai la i lan la!

[*Springs to his feet.*]

I won't have this house of my grandfather's insulted!

LIZA. Please, don't shout!

LEJOKA-BROWN. Get that straight!

LIZA. Your shouting will only succeed in attracting curious spectators from the outside, Mr Lejoka-Brown!

LEJOKA-BROWN. I don't care!

LIZA. Well I do! I hate washing my dirty underwear in public!

LEJOKA-BROWN. My dear woman, I'm not an underwear!

LIZA. Don't obscure the issue, please. It is quite apparent that a breach of faith has been flagrantly committed by you...

LEJOKA-BROWN [*gruffly*]. As an African, I have a right to marry as many wives as I can handle...

LIZA. Under native law and custom- true. But *our* marriage was performed in Court, Mr Lejoka-Brown! In the Congo: under the *French* law: one man, one woman. So... don't you

go around kidding yourself, fellow! (p. 39)

Prior to this conversation, LB unwittingly asks "where's everybody?" which ignites Liza's pent up emotions leading to addressing him as "Mr Lejoka-Brown", "you are Mr. Lejoka-Brown aren't you?" These indicate positive impoliteness of using a title and surname to inappropriately identify LB where a close relationship pertains. Further addressing LB as *Mr. Major, politician*, using his full name- *Rahman Taslim Lejoka-Brown* has an affect; a distancing one, on LB. These names convey a deterioration of their relationship and put him on the

defensive, making him to stammer, unsure of himself. This leaves LB at the mercy of Liza who now pumps him with questions, boxing him into a corner as LB thinks of less incriminating answers to give. Thus, at this point, Liza assumes more power over LB.

Again, prior to this conversation, LB wrongly sums up that the barrages of questions from Liza indicate that the women have met and Liza accepts the status quo. However, something makes him to study her once more and decides to come clean with her. LB starts with illuminating Liza about his grandfather's exploits which he believes will lead to subsequent romance, but Liza brings him back to the present by referring to him as *Mr. Lejoka-Brown* and asking if he is hungry as he wants to bite her ear off in a bid to romance her in exchanges 9. The irrelevant questions and *I'm in no mood to be slobbered on* make him realise that all is not well. To show this, Liza whirls round saying: *You listen to me Mr. Brown. Politician...Rahman Taslim Lejoka-Brown! ...*(p. 39)

At this point, deference is lost which affects LB's quality face, social identity face and relational face simultaneously. His inattentiveness makes Liza have to assert her power by distancing herself and addressing him as a stranger. This denies LB the desire to be valued, respected and accepted in his social roles and to positively evaluate him in relation to a group of significant others (African men). This comes to a halt when she refers to his grandfather's place as *nauseating, clay-walled gas-chamber* (derogatory names). The insults directed at him can be accommodated, but disrespecting his grandfather's house, dishonouring the dead, is unforgivable. Hence, the raised voice which helps to turn the situation to his favour.

Addressing him as *Mr. Lejoka-Brown, fellow, brother Rahman* (humiliating and depriving names) display disrespect as it affords Liza certain measure of power. Cresting on the power, Liza multiplies the reference with *bushmen, hooligans* (derogatory names). At the end, LB begs Liza to listen so that they can arrive at a consensus as how to move forward in order to resolve their issue. Through his attitude, LB forfeited the right to be treated fairly or have positive relationship with her, hence her distancing strategy.

DISCUSSION

Abusive expressions are referring expressions that erode the self-esteem or dignity of the other (Sobola, 2018). The study observes both positive and negative impoliteness strategies. However, positive impoliteness takes the lead, especially using derogatory nominations. It should be noted that the interesting twist of the plot led to the title of the drama text, an abusive/impolite expression, '*Our Husband has gone mad again!*' This

is a positive impoliteness strategy especially associating the other with negative aspect. Thus, the utterance, 'Our Husband has gone mad again!' is a response of Sikira (positive impoliteness strategy) to the unruly behaviour of LB. Thus, 'Our Husband has gone mad again!' is a linguistic taboo, which is forbidden (Burridge, 2010). From the discussions of the selected excerpts, the type of linguistic expression that convey impoliteness is coloured by educational, linguistic background and the worldview of the characters. For instance, Liza, who represents the educated elite, employed complex adjectival expressions in most of her utterances unlike the traditional imagery employed by Sikira, the uneducated, depicting typical African society in the use of images like *antelope*, *mosquito* and *grasshopper*. Again, the impoliteness expressions highlight the relationships in the text and are the results of angry outbursts and fears. Intentionally, they reflect LB's attitude to Sikira, Liza, Polycarp and Party members (domineering). Polycarp occupies a subordinate position of someone handicapped in retaliating; while the others can talk back to LB (Liza, Mallam Gaskiya). This reflects the fact that power dictates the use of impoliteness. LB compared to other male characters is arrogant, conceited while Okonkwo and Alhaji Mustapha are courteous, respectful to others both male and female. Therefore, LB uses more impoliteness than all other characters in the text. The use of positive impoliteness challenges power through dousing of ego (Alhaji Gaskiya/LB) and superiority (for keeping Liza in the dark about his (LB's) marital alliances which is a breach of their marital contract (Liza/LB).

The study further discovers that the intermittent utterance of LB in the text, 'Are you there...' not only depicts power, but also an idiolect since it is peculiar to LB. Again, it is observed that in most cases, there is a simultaneous damage of the quality, social identity and relational face of the characters to whom the impoliteness expressions are directed. In the relationship between LB and Liza, there is a simultaneous damage of the quality, social identity and relational face of their self-esteem. In relation to rights of the characters, equity and association rights were violated leading to a near dissolution of LB's marriage to Liza. Sikira's description of Liza damages Liza's social identity and relational face though in absentia. Equally, Liza's rights to a positive relationship with others were violated before her arrival. Overall, there is a simultaneous damage and violation of the self-esteem and rights of the characters to whom the impolite expressions were directed. Symbolically, the relationships are either symbiotic/parasitic/politic/emotionally beneficial or otherwise to the characters involved just like Nigeria's/Africa's contracts with the outside world.

CONCLUSION

The use of impoliteness spurred laughter due to play on words hence, the tag of the drama text as a political satire meant to correct societal ills. Truth and verbal abuse are not inseparable but inevitable in the linguistic expressions of interlocutors in dialogues. Thus, the study concluded that impoliteness imbues the characters with certain measure of power to retaliate at different junctures in their relationships and thus helps develop the different themes in the text.

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