

Full Length Research Paper

Politeness in media talk shows: The case of media panel discussions in Ghana

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In human communication, the communicators involved in the interaction have an obligation to show politeness to each other for a successful conversation. Non-observance of politeness in a communicative act such as panel discussions has the potential to infringe upon the public self-image of the addressees. Situated in Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory (PT), the paper sought to explore the kinds of politeness strategies employed by discussants in media panel discussions (MPDs) in Ghana. Accordingly, twenty episodes of MPDs were recorded from media stations and content analyzed based on B&L's model. The results indicated that in most of the cases (43.35%), panelists marked politeness by addressing the positive face of their interlocutor (s) as against (38.93%) occurrences of negative face, with Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) on record (without redressive actions) recording 15.70%. The findings suggest that Ghanaian MPDs are characterized by positive politeness. The results of the study have sociological implications for media talk in Ghana. When panelists become aware of the importance of the face needs of their interlocutors, they will avoid embarrassments and incendiary language that threatens the face wants of discussants in interactions.

Key words: Politeness, face, positive politeness, negative politeness, FTA.

INTRODUCTION

Media talk comes in various forms such as confrontational television talk shows, open-line talk shows, advice-giving broadcast, news interviews, and political panel discussions (Hutchby, 2005). According to Hutchby, these discussions apart from educating, informing and entertaining individuals also influence people's lives and perceptions of individuals, groups, institutions, beliefs and the world at large. In all these, panelists involved in the discussion are obliged to show politeness to one another to ensure a smooth interaction. What is more, viewers or listeners are sometimes allowed to be part of the programmes through phone-ins or text messages, where

they comment on issues being discussed or comment on the demeanor or choice of words of the panelists. To this end, panelists have to be mindful of the feelings of the party who may be present or not. It is, therefore, assumed that being aware that politeness is a conversational imperative, panelists employ various linguistic politeness strategies to address the face wants of their interlocutors. Sometimes the participants in an interaction may be familiar with each other, so there is solidarity and its attendant symmetric relation as "equal to," "practise the same profession as," and "coordinate with" the other (Babatunde and Adedimeji, 2009, p. 86).

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As a result, the discussion is sometimes punctuated with jokes, laughter and teasing while participants still maintain respect for each other. Conversely, where participants are not known to each other there is social distance between them; and the discussions are characterized by “near-formality” culminating into deference and decorum in the use of language. But whether there is social distance or not between panelists, the participants are aware of the need to show politeness to each other.

In the Ghanaian context, some level of linguistic politeness has been explored on various topics and genres (Akpanglo-Nartey, 2017; Ofusuaa and Bosiwah, 2015; Edu-Buandoh, 2011). Collectively, these studies expand the awareness of the kinds of strategies employed in the achievement of linguistic politeness among certain aspects of the Ghanaian culture. However, little or no scholarly attention has been paid to how panelists in media talk programmes mark politeness. This state of affairs deprives people of the knowledge and understanding of the kind of politeness strategies favoured by panelists in Ghanaian MPDs.

The purpose of this investigation, therefore, is to explore the types of politeness in Ghanaian MPDs and establish the sub-strategies used to mark politeness. Two fundamental questions that guide the study are: 1. “What is the dominant politeness strategy employed in Ghanaian MPDs?” 2. “What sub-strategies do panellists employ to negotiate politeness in Ghanaian MPDs?” To answer these questions, a corpus of twenty live episodes of MPDs from radio and television stations were tape recorded and analysed for utterances signalling politeness. We assume that in so far as Ghanaian society or culture is characterized by we-feeling towards one another, MPDs will be dominated by positive politeness.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Politeness

There is no gainsaying that the fundamental principle of politeness and face permeates all cultures. It is for this reason that politeness and face work have attracted scholarly attention over the last three decades, engendering theories, models or frameworks for the study of politeness in different cultures and genres. The basic concern of these theories and models is how participants in an interaction show linguistic politeness.

Theories on politeness

Brown and Levinson

Brown and Levinson’s “Politeness Theory” (henceforth, PT), first published in 1978 and revised in 1987, offers

illuminating insights into linguistic politeness. PT which arguably follows the publication of Leech (1983)’s PP can be regarded as having attracted the most attention in politeness studies (Kuang and Maya, 2013; Cutrone, 2011; Edu-Buandoh, 2011, Gilks, 2010; Vilki, 2006; Wagner, 2004; Watts, 2003; Kitamura, 2000). The theory is based on Goffman’s face work and Grice’s “Conversational logic” (Wagner, 2004). Brown and Levinson argue that every individual possesses two types of face needs: positive face and negative face.

Positive Face is the need to be appreciated, approved, accepted and recognized. They suggest that when there is a disagreement positive face is threatened.

Negative Face, on the other hand, is the expectation that one will not be imposed upon, will not be impeded, intruded or put upon. Negative face is threatened when there is a request or an apology

Brown and Levinson further submit that human interaction is potentially dangerous and antagonist in the sense that participants are likely to commit FTAs. An FTA is committed when the hearer’s need to maintain his/her self-image or be recognized and respected is infringed upon by a speaker. To deal with FTAs, discussants adopt face-saving strategies which are the pivot around which successful interactions revolve. Accordingly, Brown and Levinson propose strategies for performing FTAs in interactions.

- i. Do the FTA on record without any redressive actions (considered to be the least polite).
- ii. Do the FTA on record with redressive action addressing positive face.
- iii. Do the FTA on record with redressive action addressing negative face.
- iv. Do the FTA off record

Doing the FTA on record means there is no attempt by the speaker to mitigate the impact of the FTA. Such a situation is likely to shock, embarrass or make the addressee feel uncomfortable, and it is mostly used among people who know each other very well. A speaker who knows his audience closely may also employ bald on-record strategies irrespective of the fact that the audience may be shocked or embarrassed. It is considered the least polite strategy. Consider the following examples.

“Come over here and help me solve this problem”.

“Switch off your mobile phones”

In the above examples, the speaker does not do anything to mitigate the inherent command in the utterances. This stems from the fact that the addressee might be a close friend. Closely associated with positive face and negative

face are positive politeness and negative politeness.

Positive Politeness is the strategy where the speaker attempts to minimize the threat to the hearer's face by employing polite manners. People who know each other very well employ positive politeness to show friendliness, and solid recognition of the hearer's need to be respected as seen in the following example:

I know you are in a hurry, but I would be glad if you could spare me just two minutes of your time.

Negative Politeness strategy is used when the speaker assumes that his/her utterance is likely to impose on the hearer, impede his freedom of autonomy or intrude his privacy. In many instances there is an inherent social distance or awkwardness in the situation. When negative politeness is employed, the accompanying awkwardness or embarrassment is weightier than what is in bald on-record or positive politeness. Certain requests and apologies are potential threats to the negative face of the addressee as in the following example.

Sorry to bother you, but could you draw your chair backwards?

In this example, the speaker does not intend to impose on the hearer. We therefore agree with Wagner (2004) that "in performing an apology the speaker acknowledges the addressee's face-want not to be offended" (p.23).

Off-record (indirectness) employs indirect language in order not to impose on the hearer. By so doing the speaker avoids a direct FTA to get his message across. A speaker adopting the off-record strategy may:

Give hints: "*You left the door open.*"

Be vague: "*Perhaps there is a mix-up somewhere.*"

Be sarcastic or joking: "*Fascinating, what solomonic wisdom he has!*"

Many believe that B&L's politeness theory serves as a benchmark for studies in politeness. According to Gilks (2010), it is one of the most influential frameworks on politeness to emerge from sociolinguistics. Vilkki (2006) affirms the influence of the model thus, "B&L's theory of politeness has been the most influential framework of politeness so far, and it provides an important basis for the discussion of the notion of politeness and face" (p.324).

However some researchers have interrogated and debunked the universality of Brown and Levinson's theory. For instance, Kitamura (2000) suggests that Brown and Levinson's list of politeness strategies mainly cover very limited type of interaction, and that their examples comprise single utterances pertaining to clear communication goals like asking to borrow a book or

giving advice while ignoring, "any interaction such as simply enjoying a casual conversation, which does not involve a predetermined goal" (p.2). Cutrone (2011) as well contested the universality of the theory and argued that contrary to Brown and Levinson's categorization of Japan as a negative politeness culture, the frequent speech overlapping backchannels of the Japanese are not regarded as affecting the negative face of their interlocutors; rather such behavior is regarded as accentuating the positive face of the interlocutors. The foregoing is ample testimony of how linguistic politeness keeps on stoking intellectual thinking, with Brown and Levisohn's theory taking centre stage either being approbated or contested.

Geoffrey Leech

In 1983, Leech postulated "Politeness Principles" (henceforth, PP) which many regard as "the most appropriate for practical solutions, the most reasonable, and the most influential politeness theory" (Wang, 2009, p. 289). PP is derived from the "Cooperative Principle" (Grice, 1975). In the Cooperative Principle, Grice proposes four maxims to regulate conversation: Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner. The Gricean Maxims were, however, criticized on grounds of not having universal application to all conversations, and more important, all cultures.

To plug the hole in the Gricean Maxims, Leech came out with his PP to supplement, fine-tune, rescue and advance Grice's thought (Wang, 2009). Leech (1983) defines politeness as "social goals of establishing and maintaining comity" (p. 104). PP provides an avenue for the explanation of how politeness operates in an interaction and it concerns the relationship between self and other in a conversation, where "self" refers to the speaker (S) and "other" the hearer (H). Leech maintains that in a conversation, we should: "Minimize (all things being equal) the expression of impolite beliefs, and ... maximize (all other things being equal) the expression of polite beliefs" (p.81). Leech summarizes PP into six maxims similar to the four maxims of the Cooperative Principle. These are Tact Maxim, Generosity Maxim, Approbation Maxim, Modesty Maxim, Agreement Maxim and Sympathy Maxim (p.132).

Lakoff

Lakoff (1973) regards politeness as a system of interpersonal relations which aims at facilitating interaction in order that the potential for conflict and confrontation inherent in conversation could be minimized. She postulates three rules: (1) distance (2) deference and (3) camaraderie for the avoidance of conflict because "if

societies did not devise ways to smooth over moments of conflict and confrontation, social relationships would be difficult to establish and continue, and essential cohesion would erode” (p.106). Lakoff proposes some maxims to guide conversation: *Be brief, Be clear, Be polite*. Others are *Don't impose, Give options* and *Be friendly*. Lakoff submits that one person tells another something the other does not want to hear; one person refuses another's request; one person ends a conversation before the other is quite willing to go.

Collectively, the aforesaid theories do not only uphold the significance and contribution of politeness to successful communication, but they also provide helpful insights into politeness as a pragmatic phenomenon.

Empirical studies

A large number of studies have been done on linguistic politeness across cultures, varied disciplinary angles and institutions to provide helpful insights into politeness strategies. For instance, using Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis, Seyyed et al. (2016) investigated the kinds of politeness strategies used by Iranian EFL learners in a class blog. The study found that students employed positive politeness in both Student – Instructor interaction and Student – Student interaction. It has also been found out that researchers have a preference for negative politeness in the analysis and discussion sections of research articles in English (Agbaglo, 2017). In a similar study Akpanglo-Nartey (2017) identified the use of the imperative in making requests in Ga and English by children to indicate equality. Ofusuaa and Bosiwah (2015) on their part employed ethnographic research approach to investigate how the Akyems of Ghana make polite request. The result was that generally indirectness is used in making polite requests among the Akyems, and also age, gender and socio-economic status influence request making. In an earlier study, Edu-Buandoh (2011) also explored syntactic structures used as politeness markers in Ghanaian media panel discussions and found out that the syntactic structure, *Let me*, is a peculiarly Ghanaian politeness marker. Likewise, a study by Pinto (2015) investigated (im)politeness strategies in televised debates in the 2014 Brazilian presidential election and claimed that the mediator and candidates' use of different linguistic strategies was influenced by contextual aspects such as the audience, political ideology and unequal relations. Similarly, Stodulkova (2013) conducted another study on television talk show to investigate the influence of gender in discourse among adult middle and upper middle class from the United Kingdom and the United States. Stoduka concluded that female discourse is more polite than male discourse while British in general are more polite than Americans. Again, American men are comparatively less

polite than their British counterparts. It has also been found out that both British and Egyptian sports media analysts had a preference for positive politeness than negative politeness (Hamed, 2014). However, Egyptian participants employed more positive politeness while the British used more negative politeness strategies. Another study by Kuang and Maya (2013) showed that front counter staff in Malaysian private hospitals employed more impolite openings in interactions, but polite closings at the end of transaction.

Taken together, these studies provide helpful insights into the strategies used for the achievement of politeness in varied and many cultures and perspectives. However, as seen from the literature, and from the Ghanaian perspective, not much is known about the kinds of politeness strategies employed in media talk programmes. The present study is, therefore, undertaken particularly to unearth the kinds of politeness strategies employed in Ghanaian MPDs, and generally to contribute to the ongoing intellectual discussion about how politeness is achieved in various cultures and genres.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study employed largely the qualitative descriptive approach in that in a study of this nature, natural data are preferred because it is only natural data that reveal what happens in interaction (Golato, 2002). Accordingly, MPDs were recorded from radio and television talk programmes and analysed using Brown and Levinson's politeness theory discussed earlier. Their theory is chosen because it is “the most influential framework of politeness so far, and it provides an important basis for the discussion of the notion of politeness and face” (Vilki, 2006, p.324). Among scholars who used B&L's model in their studies to validate or dispel politeness principles in various cultures and genres are Kuang and Maya (2013), Kedves (2013), Cutrone (2011), Vilki (2006), Wagner (2004), Watts (2003), among others.

Data

Twenty episodes of MPDs were recorded from GTV, Metro TV and TV Africa and Luv FM from March 2014 – June 2014. Purposive sampling, was used to select the episodes because the medium of expression is English as opposed to most of the MPDs which are done in indigenous languages. The topics ranged from politics, education, religion, sports, entertainment, health and the economy among others. These stations were selected based on their popular discussion programmes such as “Breakfast Show”, “Talking Point”, “Good Morning/Evening Ghana” “Morning Show” and others. The inclusion of a radio station was informed by two reasons. First, it was to test the generally-held opinion that panelists in radio discussions are usually more emotionally charged because they are not seen by listeners (Goker, 2013). As a result language used is characterized by impoliteness and by extension FTAs. Secondly, Luv FM was chosen because it is the only radio station in Kumasi (where the data were recorded) that broadcasts its programmes solely in English. The station's programmes, “The Diary” and “Newsfile”, which are transmitted live from their flagship station Joy FM in Accra, (Ghana's capital city) have a wide listenership owing

Table 1. Summary of MDPs recorded from various stations.

Station	No of panellists	Programme	No of episodes
GTV	17	Breakfast Show	2
		Counselling Session	1
		Talking Point	1
		GTV Sports	1
		Kapito Show	1
TV Africa	13	Media Today	3
		The Rundown Show	1
Metro TV	11	Good Morning Ghana (GMG)	3
		Good Evening Ghana (GEG)	2
Luv FM	14	The Diary	3
		News File	2
Total	55		20

Source: From Data.

to the topics discussed and the calibre of participants that appear on the programmes. In all, a total of 55 individuals were involved in the 20 episodes, lasting between 1 – 3 h each. Table 1 gives a summary of the programmes recorded from the various stations.

As indicated in Table 1, in all a total of 55 participants took part in the 20 episodes. Out of these episodes, 6 MPDs were recorded from GTV, 4 from TV Africa, and 5 each from Metro TV and LUV FM. Six MPDs were recorded from GTV owing to the fact that being a state-owned media institution and covering the whole nation, they have more discussion programmes than the other stations which are private and arguably focus more on entertainment and maximizing profit.

Data Analysis Procedure

The data were manually transcribed, followed by numbering of the sentences. We then did a content analysis of the data based on Brown and Levinson's theory. To achieve this, we adopted utterances signalling politeness as the unit of analysis. We then coded the manifest content which would be later represented in quantitative terms. Next, we assigned labels such as "familial term", "solidarity", "confession", "hedging", "disrespect", "apology" and the like to the utterances already underlined. The labels were then categorized into three broad areas for the frequency of occurrences of various politeness strategies. The categories were positive politeness, negative politeness and FTAs which were again sub-categorized for sub-strategies. Before the categorization and sub-categorization, a scrupulous cross-check was done on the list of all the occurrences. Some changes were made where some utterances were found not to belong to the category in which they were first put. Again, where an utterance contained both positive and negative politeness and an FTA each was categorized separately. The reason was that the focus was on utterances constituting the phenomena under investigation rather than the number of sentences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first research question sought to find out the dominant politeness strategies employed by panelists in Ghanaian MPDs. The results showed that panelists have a preference for positive politeness. The results are presented below in a tabular form. The study identified a total of 452 occurrences of utterances considered as politeness remarks. Out of these, positive politeness strategies constituted 45.35% while negative politeness recorded 38.93%, with FTAs (without redressive actions) recording a frequency of 15.70%. Table 2 provides quantitative analysis of the three categories.

As Table 2 indicates, overall, there were 452 utterances marking various forms of politeness. Out of these there was a high preponderance for positive politeness strategies over negative politeness and FTAs

For the purposes of comparing the two major politeness strategies: positive and negative politeness in MPDs, the following hypothesis was tested.

H_0 : There is no difference between positive and negative politeness strategies.

H_1 : There are more positive politeness strategies than negative politeness strategies.

Table 3 presents a one-sample test of the analysis. Since the p – values are less than the significance level (0.05) the indication is that there is enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis that there is no difference between positive and negative politeness strategies. This means

Table 2. Frequencies of occurrences of positive politeness, negative politeness strategies and FTAs.

Type	Frequencies	Percentages
Positive politeness	205	45.35%
Negative politeness	176	38.93%
FTAs (without redressive actions)	71	15.70%
Total	452	100

Source: From Data.

Table 3. One-sample test: Comparing positive and negative politeness.

Variable	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	95% confidence interval of the difference	
					Lower	Upper
Politeness	50.08	451	0.000	1.70	1.64	1.77
Positive politeness	23.99	204	0.000	2.62	2.40	2.83
Negative politeness	25.27	175	0.000	2.43	2.24	2.62
FTAs	16.89	70	0.000	2.07	1.83	2.31

that positive politeness strategies are employed more than negative politeness strategies at 95% confidence level. We can therefore conclude that Ghanaian MPDs have a fondness for positive politeness over negative politeness, thus answering Research Question 1.

A major reason that may account for the high preponderance for positive politeness in Ghanaian MPDs is that in quite a number of the programmes, the participants knew each other; so the barrier of formality, social distance and power gave way to intimacy, friendliness, jokes and the like. For example, during the recording it was observed that in as many as 13 out of the 20 episodes the participants knew each other. Therefore, they established common ground with other by showing solidarity, inclusiveness, group membership among others, in line with B&L's observation that positive politeness is used mainly among discussants who are familiar with each other, and probably are very well-known to each other.

It is instructive to state that while Edu-Buandoh (2011) identified the syntactic structure, *Let me*, "as a peculiarly Ghanaian politeness marker" (p.156), the present study also identified the NP *my brother* as a peculiarly familial term used to mark positive politeness in Ghanaian MPDs. The obvious reason is that in most of the interactions, the participants were mainly males. Whether this is a deliberate action by the producers of the various programmes or not could be explored in another study.

Research Question Two sought to identify the prevalent sub-strategies used to negotiate politeness in Ghanaian MPDs. The results showed that media panelists favoured familial/kinship terms for the achievement of positive

politeness and utterances signaling apology or asking for forgiveness to achieve negative politeness, while they showed more disagreements in the performance of FTAs.

Table 4 shows the frequencies of various sub-strategies used in the achievement of politeness.

In Table 4, panelists employed six different sub-strategies to perform positive politeness as against five and four for negative politeness and FTAs respectively. Of these, familial terms (31.21%) topped the sub-strategies under positive politeness while apology (30.11%) and disagreements (38.02) ranked highest among the sub-strategies under negative politeness and FTAs respectively.

Another significant finding was that the results of the study do not support the popular opinion that radio discussions are more emotionally charged and by extension characterized by a high frequency of FTAs because the listeners do not see the panelists (Goker, 2013). Even though there were FTAs in the five radio discussion programmes recorded as part of the study, the panelists were largely emotionally disciplined.

The next section discusses some of the various sub-strategies for achieving linguistic politeness in Ghanaian MPDs. The discussion and analysis are based on Brown and Levinson's politeness theory. For space constraints few strategies are selected for the analysis.

POSITIVE POLITENESS

Familial terms

These are address terms related to kinship. In the

Table 4. Sub-strategies used in the achievement of politeness in Ghanaian MPDs.

Positive politeness			Negative politeness			FTAs		
Sub-strategy	F	%	Sub-strategy	F	%	Sub-strategy	F	%
Familial terms	64	31.21	Apology	53	30.11	Disagreement	27	38.02
Solidarity	52	25.36	Deference	48	27.27	Criticism	20	28.16
Agreement	33	16.09	Questioning	35	19.88	Order	16	22.53
Confession	25	12.16	Request	26	14.77	Disrespect	8	11.26
Hedge opinion	17	8.29	Indirectness	14	7.95			
Commiseration	14	6.82						
Total	205	100	Total	176	100	Total	71	100

Ghanaian context such terms as *brother, sister, mother, father* etc. have extended meanings to cover people to whom one is not biologically related. Thus, the use of such terms is influenced by the Ghanaian culture, and discussants use them freely in many interactions. The fact that in the study these terms placed first in the positive politeness strategies shows their depth and spread of usage among educated Ghanaians, and extending them into MPDs is a matter of satisfying a communicative need.

In Extract 1, a leading member of the main opposition party, J.B. takes on government for piling up debts and messing up the Ghanaian economy.

Extract 1

J.B.: *It's sad to hear a minister acknowledging that they are not confident. They have done surgical inquisition as to how come we incurred those debts and whether or not those debts went into productivity. I think that it's unfortunate. We have not managed ourselves well.*

Host: *Okay.*

DM: *I have listened to my brother very carefully. He's just made some good points. But he's very wrong on a number of things. A lot of things have been misconstrued (MTV: "GMG").*

Even though, DM disagrees with J.B. on a lot of things he says, he (DM) is aware that J.B. is a fellow panelist, and above all a colleague politician, so he uses a kinship term "my brother" to reflect this group membership. Thus, the strategy adopted by DM to address the positive face of JB ties in with B&L's in-group identity marker.

Extract 2

Host: *Let me start with our sister and mother. (TV Africa:*

"Media Today")

Here, the host invites the only female member of the panel to begin the turns. The structure "our sister and mother" is not only an expression of close affinity and endearment, it is also a familial expression which the host uses to show fellow feeling culturally. This addresses the positive face wants of the female panellist more than, for example, "Let me start with the woman among us."

Commiseration

B&L considers commiseration as a human-relations wants, where a speaker shows sympathy by consoling someone who has suffered an unfortunate experience.

In Extract 3, the speaker, a Chairman of a Commission of Enquiry, expresses sympathy for the addressee (a Minister of Sports) who sobs out his defence in an allegation of embezzling public funds when he led the Ghana senior national football team to a World Cup tournament.

Extract 3

Don't be emotional Honourable Relax, relax, relax ...don't be emotional, don't be emotional. Would you need two minutes? Counsel, would you need two minutes? Don't be emotional, okay, don't be, Honourable. No, no, no, relax Honourable. We are helping mother Ghana. Don't worry, don't worry, relax, relax, relax (GTV, GTV Sports)

The speaker offers comfort to mitigate the addressee's sorrow in a series of repetitions couched in imperatives. These imperatives should not be seen as an imposition on the face needs of the addressee. Rather they should be seen as a form of encouragement to make him emotionally stable. The inclusive pronoun *we*, in *we are helping Ghana*, is a strategy by the speaker to establish common ground with addressee who is a witness in the

enquiry. Just as the speaker is helping Ghana by leading the investigations to establish the truth or otherwise of the allegation, the witness is also helping Ghana in appearing before the Commission to establish same.

Solidarity

According to B&L solidarity could be expressed by S claiming common ground with H by indicating that there is some sort of affinity between them in terms of group membership, values, attitudes, knowledge, interests and goals. In the data, forms such as *my colleague/friend/co-panellists*, and other terms of inclusiveness like *we, us, our* and first names were used to indicate solidarity.

Extract 4

Host: *Hon. A.P.*

Guest: *Now to come back to the question you just posed, my honourable member and his colleagues in parliament on the other side, the opposition side, were having fears; but I think now following from what the commission is doing, the fears are unfounded.* (MTV, "GMG")

Guest is an MP in the ruling party. The host invites him to respond to what the other guest, who is also an MP but from the main opposition party had said earlier. The fact that both are MPs is recognized and acknowledged by Hon A.P. As a result, he uses *my honourable member*, to establish common ground with his colleague MP by demonstrating group membership, regardless of their differences in opinion on the subject of discussion. In that case he performs a face-saving act. If he had referred to his colleague as "the opposition MP" that could have threatened the positive face of the MP from the other side of the political divide. ,

NEGATIVE POLITENESS

This is used to address the negative face of the hearer because there is the awareness on the part of the speaker that the hearer does not want his freedom to be hindered; neither does he want his actions to be impeded.

Apology/Asking for forgiveness

B&L consider apologies as a negative politeness strategy because they indicate "respect, deference, and distance rather than friendliness and involvement" (Wagner, 2004: 23). When a speaker makes an apology or asks for forgiveness it means he wants to make up for an action

previously committed and which infringed upon the face wants of the addressee. Sometimes too a speaker knowing very well that what he is about to say will threaten the face of the addressee can offer an apology beforehand. In such a case, the FTA addresses the negative face of the speaker. There were quite a lot of occurrences of such instances. Examples of apologies used were "I'm sorry", "excuse me", "forgive me", and 'let me apologise". Let's consider the conversational fragment below.

Extract 5

Host: *We have heard that some teachers in basic schools interviewed couldn't put their sentences together. I'm sorry. Erm is it not also true that some students who are poor, it has some correlation with the quality of teachers they had right from the beginning?*

Guest: *Poor teaching is a big problem. If a teacher doesn't know what they are doing, definitely the children wouldn't know what they are doing.* (GTV: "Counseling Session")

The guest is a professional teacher turned professional counselor, and for the host to suggest that some teachers could not speak English fluently was enough to wound the pride of the teacher-counselor. Hence the host has threatened the negative face of the counselor who has a teaching background, so he apologizes to restore equilibrium between him and the addressee (Leech 1983). Thus, the speaker uses apology as a damage repair strategy.

Extract 6

There is a company that is converting erm, erm, erm, latrine into gas. Forgive me those who are eating. (TV Africa: "Media Today")

Speaker renders an apology for her use of the word "latrine" because it is considered socially offensive, especially on radio. Even before uttering the word "latrine" she prefaces it with a hesitation marker *erm, erm, erm*, showing her awareness of the fecal matter the word conjures in the mind; hence, she appeals for tolerance from "those who are eating" and at the same time watching the programme. Her appeal for forgiveness is a redressive action to address the negative face of viewers.

FTAs

According to B&L, FTAs are acts or strategies that

threaten the positive or negative face of one's interlocutor. This section discusses one strategy: *on record/ bald on record* which B&L consider as the least polite strategy. Sub-strategies used included "disagreement", "criticism", "order" and "disrespect". The following examples typify their usage in the data.

Disagreement

One of B&L's politeness principles is "seek agreement" and "avoid disagreement". This principle is on the same wavelength with Leech's (1983) "Agreement Maxim" which runs as follows: "Minimize the expression of disagreement between self and other; maximize the expression of agreement between self and other". Disagreement is usually expressed in assertive/representatives illocutionary act. The first part of the maxim was flouted by participants as the following examples illustrated.

Extract 7

Host: *Have we lost our African values?*

Guest1: *Yes.*

Host: *When was that?*

Guest 1: *Years ago.*

Guest 2: *No, no, no, that's a lie. But when we say that African values are broken, that's a lie.*
(TV Africa: "The Rundown Show")

In the exchanges, Guest 2 vehemently disagrees with Guest 1 that African values got lost years ago. In his disagreement, he performs an FTA on record without redressive action, and this is a threat to the negative face of Guest 1. Again Guest 2 impugns lies on the part of Guest 1, and this also smacks of impoliteness on the part of Guest 2.

Criticism

This is a situation where a speaker expresses disapproval by saying someone or something is wrong. As explained earlier, in MPDs this usually occurs when there are participants from opposing parties, especially the ruling party and the largest opposition party. In most cases, there are criticisms and counter-criticisms between these parties. In their bid to outdo the other, they perform bald on record FTAs, threatening each other's negative face as seen in Extract 8.

Extract 8

Guest 2: *At some point, the first citizen of this republic*

said ... halt the payment that you are doing to this man because it has come to my notice that it is undeserving. Yet you ignored that call by the first citizen of this republic. You decided to ignore all his instructions and went ahead to pay WY. I think that the state has lost enough. This smacks of corruption! (TV Africa: "Media Today")

The speaker who is from one of the opposition parties criticizes government appointees for wrongfully paying a huge judgment debt to a man, against the instructions of the President. He does not take into consideration the negative face wants of the government spokesperson on the panel; hence he failed to provide a redressive action to minimize the FTA.

Showing disrespect

According to B&L, when a speaker's choice of words shows blatant disregard for a person or an institution, for whatever reason, it smacks of disrespect; and in linguistic politeness such disrespect constitutes an FTA (without redressive action). Extract 9 below is an illustrative example.

Extract 9

To me when it comes to the media, to me the most useless institution is the National Media Commission (TV Africa: "Media Today").

The panellist shows disrespect for the National Media Commission (NMC), the regulatory body responsible for exercising an oversight role regarding responsible journalism and other related issues regarding media ethics in the country. Interestingly, the panellist himself is a journalist, who takes on the NMC for dereliction of duty. By showing disrespect to a state-owned body, the panellist is also engaging in incendiary language that NMC cautions journalists against. By his disrespect, he becomes part of the problem of bellicose utterances by some journalists, on air. Again, his utterance is a serious FTA to the face want of the NMC member on the panel. The speaker could have provided a redressive action to mitigate the FTA.

CONCLUSION

The study has proffered illuminating insights into the various strategies (and sub-strategies) used in the achievement of politeness in Ghanaian MPDs. Drawing on PT, the study found out that 43.35 % of discussants marked politeness by addressing the positive face of their interlocutor (s) as against 38.93 and 15.70% for negative

politeness and FTAs, respectively. These results provide a basis to conclude that Ghanaian MPDs have a preference for positive politeness. The study also found out that kinship or familial terms are used in marking positive politeness. In this sense, the study deepens our knowledge and understanding of how panelists in Ghanaian MPDs show awareness of the face wants of one another. Against this backdrop the study adds to empirical studies on the ongoing conversation about the kind of linguistic politeness employed in certain cultures and in certain genres.

The findings of the study have some implications for media talk in Ghana, and further research. Panelists in media talk must be mindful of the face wants of one another in order that they could select linguistic choices that address the positive or negative face wants of fellow panelists for the achievement of successful interactions.

It would also be interesting to explore a gender-based comparative study regarding which of the genders in Ghanaian media panel discussions has a preference for which politeness strategies when the panel is composed of both male and female. Such a study will be in sync with Stodulkova (2013)'s study which investigated the influence of gender in British and American television talk-shows, and found that female discourse is more polite than male discourse.

All in all, there is no naysaying that politeness is observed by participants in their daily communication. However, whether or not one type of politeness strategy dominates the discussion could be known only through research; and this is what this paper has sought to do.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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