Revista de Cercetare si Interventie Sociala

LINGUISTIC ETHNOGRAPHIC INVESTIGATION OF FACE NEGOTIATIONS IN INTERACTION

Longji Christopher GONSUM, Cise CAVUSOGLU

Published by:
Expert Projects Publishing House

expert projects
publishing

On behalf of:
„Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University,
Department of Sociology and Social Work
and
HoltIS Association

REVISTA DE CERCETARE SI INTERVENTIE SOCIALA
is indexed by Clarivate Analytics (Web of Science) -
Social Sciences Citation Index
(Sociology and Social Work Domains)

Linguistic Ethnographic Investigation of Face Negotiations in Interaction

Longji Christopher GONSUM[1], Cise CAVUSOGLU[2]

Abstract

This article focuses on face negotiation as an interaction management strategy in teacher-student interactions. The article viewed both linguistic and non-linguistic items as crucial components of face construction and meaning in interaction. The research was designed as a linguistic ethnographic study where the recording of naturally occurring interactions of 30 participants (28 students and two lecturers) in a Nigerian university was performed and analysed using micro discourse analysis. The interactional data was further supported by participant observation and stimulated recall sessions in order to account for the actual intentions of the interactants. The results of our analysis showed that face is the interactional architecture through which various social and interactional variables are manifested, accounted for and negotiated in talk. The study found the asymmetrical nature of the relationship between the teacher and the students as significant variables in the nature of the face negotiations that take place in the school setting. Ethnographic resources have also revealed face consideration as a relational and omnipresent entity in interaction.

Keywords: face, face negotiation, relational interaction, linguistic ethnography, micro-discourse analysis.

Introduction

The term Face is viewed by Goffman as the self-preserve of a person (1967). Face has come to be associated with the social knowledge and respect that we have for each other in any communicative encounter. Rampton sees face as "the sense of reciprocal respect and interactional well-being that participants in an encounter produce when they act broadly in line with what's expected" (2018: 4).

[1] Department of English Language Teaching, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Near East University, Nicosia, TURKEY. E-mail: chrisgonsum.longji@neu.edu.tr (Corresponding author)

[2] Department of English Language Teaching, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Near East University, Nicosia, TURKEY. E-mail: cise.cavusoglu@neu.edu.tr

Face consideration and face negotiation in teacher-students' interactions are often significant considerations that affect the entire interaction, especially in power sensitive and role routinized environments such as a Nigerian university social practices such greetings, apologies, reprimands praise, hedging are carried out with certain extra-linguistic linguistic manoeuvres that are considered appropriate or inappropriate in a given context or episode of talk. These extra-linguistic manoeuvres are often crucial in the effective presentation of one's message while maintaining the established and expected social solidarity or distance between interactants in interaction (Leech 2014). In other words, as captured by Badarneh and Migdadi (2018), face awareness is employed as a strategic social positioning strategy in interaction.

The employment of these interaction strategies are to a large extent tied almost as a ritual to the culture of a people. In Nigeria, face consideration (showing of respect or lack of it for self and others) between interactants is seen as an important part of the entire interaction. For example, Olaoye observed that a breach in greetings as a "language and cultural behaviour is regarded as an act of rudeness, insolence or indiscipline, and it is often followed with a heavy sanction" (2013: 671). This breach could be in the way and manner it was presented. Face negotiation and consideration in teacher-student interaction is therefore very crucial in avoiding breakdown in communication. Interlocutors are expected to recognize and perform or manage their respective expected expressive roles in interaction. The performance of these roles can be affected by many linguistic and non-linguistic factors that might be initiated willingly or unwillingly by the interactants. The aim of this study is to investigate the significance of social or non-linguistic factors on face negotiations and consideration in naturally occurring interactions between teachers and students. We also aim to explore how face threat and face support emerge in the interaction of teachers and students outside the usual classroom setting. The dearth of research on face in interaction in Nigeria makes this study important given the proposition that face recognition in Nigeria seems to precede polite expressions in interaction. In addition, the use of naturally occurring interaction supported by observational data for investigation will demonstrate the "boot strap" nature of interaction as a social practice (Gee, 2011), where face considerations are crucial components of the entire interaction.

This paper presents face negotiation as an interaction managing strategy, an ever-present and emergent phenomenon in naturally occurring contexts from an emic and discursive perspective. We hope to do so from a corpus of interactional data recorded in a registration office of a Nigerian university. In order to account for the emic structure of interaction, we have employed linguistic ethnographic resources of observation as well as Stimulated Recall Interviews (SRI) to account for participants' view on their interactive acts in given episodes of the interactions. This is aimed at revealing the complexities associated with face consideration in interaction as a social practice from a socio-pragmatic frame of relational management (Locher and Watts 2008). This relates closely to Goffman

(1967) conceptualization of face as respect giving. Official settings, such as the registration office of a department in a university, are sites where the interaction between university lecturers and newly admitted university students is discursively occurring. First, the awareness of the asymmetrical power relation is required in order for them to effectively negotiate and interpret face in interaction with their lecturers who are also the figures of authority. Second, these interactants are coming from diverse ethno-linguistic backgrounds which could lead to misunderstanding (Kadar and Haugh,), which may also influence their pragmatic use of the English language and the entire interaction.

Research on face in interaction

Goffman's definition of face as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself" (1967: 5) and the subsequent emergence and treatment of face by Brown and Levinson (1987) as the social values that are manifested in terms of negative or positive face have set the stage for many researches in politeness studies over the years. These views of face (Goffman 1967; Brown and Levinson 1987) are often criticised for being individual centred (Gu 1990; Locher and Watts 2005; Haugh 2010; Arundale, 2006; Arundale, 2010) and for lack of adequate attention on the actual communicative practice of talk-in-interaction (Arundale, 2013a). For example, following Goffman's (1967) frame of face as positive public self-image, Brown and Levinson (1987) view face as two distinct social psychological wants 'negative' or 'positive'. More recently, Locher and Watts (2005), view face as a deliberate "relational work," in interaction, and both Haugh (2007) and Eelen (2014) conceptualized face as a discursive construct that is a product of an encounter encompassing of a people sociality, while Arundale (2013b) presented face as a dialectic of connection and separation between the interactants in a non-summative social system. In order to avoid conflating these conceptualizations as advised by Haugh and Bargiela-Chiappini (2010), we have adopted Badarneh and Migdadi (2018) view of face as a positioning strategy in interaction bearing in mind the significance of deference in many Nigerian cultures, the context of this study.

Our view of face in this paper shall take this relational perspective in order to adequately account for the socio-pragmatic and contextual factors that play crucial roles in the appropriate positioning, negotiation and interpretation of face in naturally occurring interaction. This appropriacy knowledge can be tied to linguistic, culture, norms and values, and social power awareness of an individual, a group of people or an entire society. Face as a linguistic and sociocultural concept has assumed a cardinal position in the explication of interpersonal communication in English as a Second Language (ESL) interaction, especially in naturally occurring interactions where, as observed by Gu (1990) deference is marked by many socially constructed factors. These factors, if captured and

analysed, can help us understand and situate face properly since face is a socially constructed phenomenon rather than an assigned linguistic artifact to the language user. It is hoped that ethnographic details could help untangle how the complex web of interactional order (Bargiela-Chiappin, 2003) is initiated, established and maintained in the course of the interaction in a given setting.

A framework that investigates face in interaction must take into account the actual practice of talk with all its attendant attributes. A discursive frame of 'face' has been advocated by many contemporary scholars (Copland, 2011; Locher & Watts, 2005; Locher & Watts, 2008; Spencer-Oatey, 2006; Spencer-Oatey, 2011) because of the insight it offers regarding the many possibilities of meanings and actions that can be generated in an interaction. Emerson underscores the significance of investigating interactions ethnographically because it is through the interactional processes that "social phenomena are expressed and play out in specific situations" (2009: 536). Face is omni-relevant/present in human interactions and present subtle avenue of establishing social distance and positions in interaction and it is through the careful observation of its manifestation that adequate meaning can be arrived at regarding rapidly occurring incidences (tensions) in interactions.

Methodology

Since our focus is on face in interaction, we have placed emphasis on what interactants do with language rather than the meaning of the words in use alone. We have relied on observation for vital clues to interactional meaning especially in the Nigerian context where English is only used as a lingua franca, while the sociolinguistic values of the people are typically not English (Akere, 2009). In such a context, the English language use is sometimes problematic. Dewey (2007) acknowledged that Lingua Franca English (LFE) speakers manifest a distinct feature of English language use that requires critical examination. By LFE, we have in mind Firth description of LFE as the use of English by "those exclusively involving non-native speakers" (1996: 238).

The Registration Office

All newly admitted students in academic programmes in the university are expected to go their departmental registration office for their credentials to be screened by assigned staff of the departments. This site was chosen for a variety of reasons. The first and obvious reason is that it is a site where definite and transactional interaction takes place and different face negotiations strategies are employed by the interactants. The realization of interactants' goals in a given interaction relies to a large extent on their strategic face negotiations. The official context of an office setting is a space that constrains interactants to employ tact in the realization acts of requests, apologies and various other interactional

acts without causing offence and indeed redressing offence in the course of the interaction. Thus, this site provides a genuine platform for the discursive practice of diverse face negotiations in interactions. Second, the lack of symmetry in the power relations between the lecturers and the students makes the registration office an interesting place for the discursive construction and negotiation of face given the proposition that respect and social status are highly regarded in Nigeria. The construction and negotiation of face work dynamics in such a site where power relations and cultural expectations are skewed in favour of the teacher in terms of teacher-student relations is a complex social phenomenon. These needs are brought to the fore by the interactants as both the teachers and the students aim to satisfy their respective needs in the interaction. This site also presents an authentic and practical avenue where interactants display their socio-pragmatic awareness of the context of the interaction in terms of what is considered appropriate.

A discursive approach to the interactional data is adopted using methods that are steeped in ethnography. This choice is anchored on Emerson (2009) position that social happenings should be treated as active 'doings' so that we can have a deeper understanding of how 'meaning' and 'action' are achieved in a given discourse.. In the same vein, Spencer-Oatey pointed out that a discursive approach to research data will enable us to present the data from the "perspectives of the participants rather than those of the analysts" (2011: 7). The discursive frame can best explore face using ethnographic tools (Copland 2011; Rampton 2018).

We have chosen Linguistic ethnography (LE) as an investigative tool because, in our view, LE will help open up a gamut of insights into the meaning of situated interaction. A multidisciplinary approach such as LE will not only help in exploring meaning but will help in adequately situating meaning within the context that it is emerging. LE is a research direction that places significance and importance on contextual cues as important ingredients that contribute in the unbundling of embedded meaning that scholars (Rampton *et al.*, 2004; Locher & Watts, 2006; Haugh, 2010; Culpepper, 2011) talk about. LE is the ethnomethodological approach that blends naturally with discursive views of exploring discourse data in line with the believe that "language and the social world are mutually shaping" (Rampton *et al.*, 2004: 2). Snell, Shaw & Copland (2015: 1) construe LE as the unambiguous combination of "linguistic and ethnographic approaches in order to understand how the world and communicative processes operate in a range of settings and contexts". The employment of LE is also aimed at trapping other forms of data other than linguistic data that will help in a better understanding of the face interaction. This need is adequately captured by Spencer-Oatey (2011: 8) that "ethnographers would argue that discourse is just one source of data, and that valuable insight can be gained - and in fact are needed - by studying the fuller context, such as through (non)-participant observation and conducting interviews". LE enables us to extract discourse data and enrich the discourse data with non-participant observation and interviews. A fuller understanding of the context, participant observation, and in this case, stimulated recall interviews

(SRIs) sessions all contribute to producing a richer data for deeper understanding of face in interaction.

Data

The data for this research were collected from a Nigerian university located in North-Central Nigeria where recordings of teacher-student interactions in their natural form were collected using a Sony mini recorder at one of the registration offices for the registration of the newly admitted students of the Department of English. Field notes were used to record and capture the paralinguistic and non-verbal data in order to supplement the discourse data. We chose to record the interactions in this specific office because one of the authors used to work in this department, which enabled us to have the desired level of rapport as well as sufficient background knowledge of the ongoing interaction. We were also able to access the site with ease and sit unobtrusively in the office minimising the impact on the outcome of the interaction. This was aimed at subsequently presenting the data from an emic perspective. Since there are various registration points (the Admission Office, the Faculty Registration Office, and the Departmental Registration Office), it was hoped that the participants would not know when exactly their interactions were being recorded, although their consent was sought and obtained before the start of the study. This was hoped to enable us to achieve authenticity as much as possible in the interactions of the participants.

Participants

In total, interactions of 30 participants (28 students and two lecturers) were recorded during the departmental registration process over a period of six weeks. The two lecturers are employees of the university whose ages were between 34 and 45 and have worked in the university for more than five years teaching English language related courses. The student-participants were newly admitted students who had passed the Joint Admissions Matriculation Board (JAMB) examination (the test of English and Literature is compulsory for them to pass) and had enrolled for the BA in English Language degree programme of the university. Majority of the students had just graduated from secondary school (high schools) and their ages ranged between 18 and 23. Each interaction lasted between two to ten minutes, depending on the issues that came up in the course of the registration. The entire data set added up to 177 minutes 57 seconds of audio recordings. The registration entails the presentation of original results and admission letters by the students and the authentication of the results by the registration officers.

Interviews

Stimulated Recall Interviews (SRI) was also held after four weeks of the recording of the data with the participants in order to help us validate or refute

certain assumptions reached regarding the initial interpretation of the data. Sit-down interviews are good ways of exploring informants' perceptions of self, others, and place (Reed & Ellis, 2019). In these sessions, a portion of the data was selected (especially of what was made significant in the interaction by interactants) and played back to the participants, asking them to interpret what was happening in the interaction. The SRIs sessions were carried out with 15 of the interactants, i.e. 13 students (9 females and 4 males), and the 2 lecturers (both males). The decision regarding the interactions and interactants that were used for the SRI were reached at by spotting the 'critical incidents' that emerged as a result of the preliminary interpretation of the discourse and ethnographic data that were collected from the interactions. By critical incidents we mean interactional phenomenon that "deviates significantly, either positively or negatively, from what is normal or expected" (Edvardsson, 1992: 17). For example, when salutation is anticipated and the student fails to perform such among other such interactional slips. The questions that were asked during the playback sessions were semi-structured and open-ended in nature since no two interactions or critical incidents were the same.

Data Analysis

The data collected from audio-recordings were transcribed using the Jeffersonian Transcription Notation (Jefferson, 1984) (see the appendix A for the Transcription Notation). The transcribed data accounted for the primary linguistic data in this research while the ethnographic data were gotten from participant's observation and added unto the linguistic data in double brackets (()).

The methods used for the analysis of the data were Micro Discourse Analysis (MDA) and LE. These are both qualitative methods of analysis that emphasise layer by layer analysis of data. Firstly, our choice of MDA is anchored on the belief that ideas and meaning are constructed in several layers that are inter related such that the understanding of the first layer can lead to a deeper and better understanding of the meaning of the subsequent layer(s). MDA availed us the opportunity of looking closely at interaction (in linguistic forms) as they relate to social practices (Emerson, 2009) or as captured by Gee that "language and practices 'boot strap' each other into existence in a reciprocal process through time" (2011: 18). Both language and practice are mutually shaping each other as well as depending on each other. Secondly, our choice of MDA is based on its lineage towards the various possibilities of meanings that can be generated from an utterance. This fits well with our larger methodological framework of LE because LE is viewed as an approach. The description of the interaction that shows the negotiation and construction of face is prominently and carefully highlighted in critical incidence that were observed to have occurred in particular episodes of the interactions which also served as the bases for the SRI and their thematic classification. This is in line with many post-modern constructivist views of face

as a connected phenomenon rather than a dual property. Our observations of interactants' actions, behaviours, manners, attitudes, reactions, gesticulations and other noticeable body language were recorded in the fieldnotes and added to the recorded and transcribed data in order to flesh up and authenticate the discourse data. This became necessary in order to satisfy Gans' insight that Participant observation (PO) is capable of allowing "the researchers to observe what people do" (1999: 540) in a given episode rather than just reporting what is said about them. This also allowed for the simultaneous interpretation of the linguistic and ethnographic data as well as providing a plausible explanation of interactants face negotiation in interactional practice. In addition, the responses we got from the SRI sessions were added to the interpreted data to affirm or refute what interactants thought or believed their language use served. Therefore, our data was analysed under the following subheadings: (1) Are you a student?; (2) Please be orderly!; (3) When all is well.

The research site

The ethnographic study of this particular university's setting or 'social space' (Bourdieu 1985) shows that lecturers-students' relationship is a very formal one and can be described representatively as high and low. Using Bourdieusian categorization, the lecturers belong to the high strata while the students belong to the low strata. To emphasize the level of formality, students of the department of English are required to dress in the departmental uniform of purple top and black trousers or skirts (for males and females respectively) on Monday and Wednesday and be respectably attired for the remainder of the days of the week (Students' Handbook, 2013). Lecturers, on the other hand, are expected to ensure compliance of the students with proper conduct. On the wall of the door leading into the registration office is a notice board with various notices such as Lecture time-table, Change of lecture time and venues among other notices. Pasted conspicuously on the door of the registration office is the bold statement: "*Be Brief, Others Are Waiting*!". Inside the registration office, there is a big iron-file cabinet that is positioned in between two tables. The two tables each have swivel armchairs for the two lecturers that are the registration of officers of the department. Right in front of the lecturers' tables are two pairs of plastic chairs for visitors and students that come in. towards the end of the office is a book shelve and another chair where one of the researchers sat unobtrusively observing the on goings as well as recording of the interactions.

Results

Are you a student?

This particular incident in this extract typifies the negotiation of face threat in interaction. Face threat in an interaction signifies disaffiliation (Leech 2014). A face threat could result from an evaluation that suggest a form of distancing being established by one or both of the interactants which could result from a variety of interactional factors. A threat is, therefore, the relational distancing between interactants in an interaction (Locher & Watts, 2006). Ten different instances of face threat were identified within the interactional data. One factor that stood out in this particular extract is the reason for the conflictive and face threat which is non-linguistic interaction: the dress style of the student and not his behaviour in the context. The choice of the following transcript was based on the conflictive and threatening interaction between the lecturer and the student that took place in the Registration Office. Although there are many other extracts that showed evidence of face threat in the interactions, the face threat in this extract appears to be more pervasive and richer in the actual practice of face negotiation in the form of reprimand, scolding and direct confrontation. The distancing and showing of disaffiliation are also flagrantly emphasized by the lecturer from the get go. The interplay of all of these factors is what we see in Extract 1. Here, Kan enters the registration office wearing a t-shirt and shorts and the interaction takes off with an interesting question:

Extract 1

---

1 Kan: ((Knock on the door)) Good morning Sir ((wearing a t-shirt and shorts with a nab shag on

2 his back))

3 Mr. John: *are you a student↑?* ((Looking sternly at the student))

4 Kan: yes sir. ((Courteously))

5 Mr. John: Will you go and dress up properly before coming here↑?

6 Kan: Sir↓? ((Sounding lost and confused))

7 Mr. John: *hmmmm* (0.5) *((looking into the eyes of the confused students))*

8 *((the student quietly opened the door and left almost without any sound))*

9 ((30 -35 Minutes later. Knocks on the door))

10 Mr. John: Come in here. Sit down, sit down. (..)You were here with your short.

11 Kan: yes sir

12 Mr. John: and what did I say? ((folding his hands while staring at Kan)

13 Kan: you said I should go back and change ((faintly))

---

15 Mr. John: **eh?**((sounding surprised and appearing not to have clearly heard Kan))

16 Kan: you said I should go back and change ((sounding remorseful and dejected))

17 Mr. John: and change? ((looking intently at Kan while flipping his hands to emphasis the

18 word'change'))

19 Kan: yes sir

20 Mr. John: so what did (…) how did you feel coming here with, in your short? ((Removing his 21 glasses, drops them on the table and folded his hands across each other as if to say 'explain 22 yourself))

23 Kan: I was just coming back from a journey and the time for my lecture is, was already up

24 and I now just (…) ((sounding apologetic with his face looking downward))

The interpretations that we can make of this interactional episode, as supplemented with ethnographic data in Extract 1 regarding face threat are numerous. Although the door of the office was open, Kan knocked the door before his first utterance (salutation) but is met or interpreted by Mr. John with a curious question "*are you a student?*" (line 3). The response of Mr. John is found strange by Kan because rather than answer his salutation as the norm in this context requires, Mr. John's response in line 3 is a demand for the clarification of Who Kan is. This critical incident was birthed because of the instantly recognised improper dressing of Kan **((*wearing shorts on a Monday*))** This proposition was also confirmed by Mr John during the SRI session when he was asked; "What was the relevance of asking if this candidate is a student?" His response was "I was surprised. I don't expect any student to come to my office wearing a Short". As can be seen, Mr. John's utterance deviates from the salutation in line 1, not on the basis of what was said or how it was said but because of the extra-linguistic feature that he (Mr. John) views as anomalous to the acceptable dress code of students. This validates Emerson's (2009) and Rampton's (2018) call for the analysis of both observational and interactional data to be taken together for a deeper understanding of meaning in interaction. Although Kan demonstrated decorum and respect by knocking on the door, Mr. John's explicit response "*Are you a student*?" in line 3 has a hint of a reprimand and not necessarily desire to know if Kan is a student. His question is both rhetorical and a reprimand of some sort and it also serves as the basis for the next turn based on his interpretation of the appearance of Kan, (wearing shorts and a t-shirt). Mr. John seemed aghast by Kan for not knowing his place or the context he is stepping in as a student. Once Mr. John established that Kan is a student, he assumes his full authority as the lecturer to address Kan.

The stern look of Mr. John and his raised tone while making the utterance "*Are you a student?*" in line 3 laid bare the face threat. The interpretation of the face threat is seen in the courteous response of Kan in line 4 "*Yes sir,*" which also seems to emphasize their relational positions in the existing context considering Kan's use of the honorific "*sir*." Kan's interpretation of Mr. John's utterance in line 4 with the honorifics "*'Sir↓?*" with a low condescending tone is equally indicative of his position as a student and shows that he has appropriately interpreted Mr. John's utterance in line 3 as a threat and is surprised at it. This is because up to that point in the conversation, Kan does not seem to know why he has been asked to 'go and dress up properly'. Knowing where he stands (younger vs older or student vs teacher) as a student constrains Kan from demanding for an explanation on why he is being sent to go and dress up properly by the lecturer. This position is confirmed by Kan during the SRI. As Kan states; "*I thought my dressing was okay*". Yet, he could not directly demand for the reason he was being sent away. The lexical properties used by Mr. John to execute the threatening command "*will you…*" in line 4 is a variation from the anticipated outcome of a response from salutation. It is through the ethnographic resources that the reason for such unpredictable response is known. This confirms Emerson's contention that it is only by paying close attention to interaction that we have a deepened "appreciation of variation and unpredictability, highlighting agency and contingencies" (2009: 536) that playout in interaction.

The position that Mr. John occupies in this episode of interaction puts him in a favourable position to use such distancing strategies without regard to the feelings of the interactant. Line 6 presents us with an even more curious interaction. Mr. John's interpretation of Kan's innocuous and surprised response to his utterance in line 5 "sir↓?" is with a humming sound ((hhmmmm)) followed by a prolonged silence (0.5) forcing Kan to make the necessary assumption that made him to quietly leave the office. Line 6 typifies his apparent lack of interest regarding the interactional goal of Kan. It seems then that both lines 4 and 6 are interpreted as face threats and distancing strategies because Kan understands them to mean, he was not welcomed for whatever reason and therefore he leaves. Kan's act of leaving the office is typical of face negotiations among Africans (being confrontation averse with older ones) especially because of age and social standing of the interactants (Olaoye 2013). This proposition was also confirmed by Kan during the SRI session when asked why he left the office without inquiring why he was being asked to leave. The prolonged silence is equally a non-verbal act that threatens Kan. Clearly this opting out strategy by the lecturer was not for want of what to say but another way of forcing Kan to make his own interpretation of his silence that is directly connected to his earlier command.

The interpretations we get from lines 1-8 of Extract 1 show that the discursively negotiated face (of Kan and Mr. John) indicates a progressive decrease in their relational connectedness while their difference is also discursively emphasised as the interaction progressed. This emphasized difference (high vs low, lecturer

vs student) in the evolving interaction developed into a more serious situation-dismissal. In addition, the extract shows that face threat interpreting can equally emerge from non-verbal cues or actions. The reaction of Mr. John to the non-verbal act of wearing a short as evinced in lines 1-8 is given more light in lines 20-21. This extract, among others also shows too that silence is also a form of face threat that can emerge from on-going interaction and the interpretation of such nonverbal cues are crucial to the understanding of the emergence of meaning and action in interaction. Kan also confirmed this position at the SRI session by saying because "he was silent and looked angry, so I left." This suggests that Mr. John's silence and his disposition are discursive components of the interaction as they contributed significantly to the execution of the face threat and the establishing of social distance between him and the student.

Please be orderly!

Face, as stated earlier is the relational interplay of mutual respect, power and social position between interactants. This suggests therefore that, there will be instances when these interactants will emphasise what separates them and times when they emphasise what unites them. In this extract and 15 other extracts that show significant evidence of interactants showing solidarity with one another. In other words, it is the display of relational solidarity. Mr. Jude had just come into the office and greeted with one of the researchers who was already seated in his position. He had just finished a 2 hours class and looked tired a bit. He sat down with his water-bottle in his and reclined backward into his swivel armchair as he sips water from the bottle. The relational negotiation of face support in the interaction can be seen in Extract 2 and the follow up analysis below.

Extract 2

---

1 Nandi: ((or other students knock on the door))

2 Mr. Jude: (.) Come in (.) yes, ((seeing about three students entering his office)) please, please,

3 ((waving his hands dismissively)) let me attend to you one after another (…) yes?

4 Students: (.) Okay ((other students went out leaving only a student in the office))

5 Mr. Jude: ((looking directly at the student before him in anticipation)) (0.2) can I hear you?

6 Nandi: (…) ((looking into her bag))

7 Mr. Jude: Your credentials↓? ((sounding a bit impatient and irritably))

8 Nandi: yes ((bringing out a file from her bag))

9 Mr. Jude: why are they in a file? ((Sounding surprised at the sight of the departmental file))

---

10 Nandi: I just want to open the file.

11 Mr. Jude: Eh? ((Expressing surprise at the student's response to his question))

12 Nandi: I want to open the file sir.

13 Mr. Jude: you want to open the file or you have opened it already?

14 Nandi: (0.5)

15 Mr. Jude: Sit down, sit down (0.2) ((Hurriedly changing the direction of the interaction)) do you have your originals with you?

16 Nandi: yes sir ((quickly sits and sounding a bit tensed))

The act of knocking at the door by Nandi or the other students in line 1 is a non-verbal utterance that has the pragmatic force of a request to come in and is also in consonance with the cultural expectation of the setting which requires that you don't barge into people's offices without seeking their permission. The act of knocking on the door is a polite request as well and it is also recognition of the face needs of Mr. Jude. The general expectation by Nandi is that her desire to be asked to come in will be granted. This interpreting is satisfied by the response or utterance of Mr. Jude as seen in lines 2 and 3. Mr. Jude's response in these lines is indicative of a supportive face by satisfying Nandi's desire. The first three lines in this extract signals the discursive face support between the interactants. The use of *"please, please"* with a falling tone and waving his hands Mr. Jude is a deliberate attempt at cushioning the effects of his subsequent utterance which is correctly interpreted by the other students by their act of leaving the office in line 4. Mr. Jude seemed to be deliberately polite partly because Mr. Jude is aware that the students have been waiting for him attend to them. This we find as significant in understanding interactional discourse as it confirms the important effect of observation the structure of interaction and the analysis of emotions especially to the analysts (Emerson 2009; Rampton 2017). In line 5, we also witnessed an unusual situation that was tolerated by Mr Jude. This particular student stepped into the office and stood quiet. We observed that Mr. Jude's anticipated something (greetings in the form of salutation or the reason for her coming) from Nandi but she stood in front of his table clutching her student's file to her chest while she seemed to be quiet in anticipation of Mr. Jude saying something (sit down, what can I do for you? etc).

The utterance in line 5 is almost a solicitation for salutation from Mr. Jude. Mr. Jude could easily have interpreted her silence as a rude behaviour but he overlooks it for the sake of achieving progressivity (or maybe he was making up for the time the students waited for him) in the interaction it seems. Our initial interpretation of this interaction within the context of the remaining recordings as well indicated that there were gender related discourses at play, i.e. the fact that this particular student was a female seemed to matter in Mr. Jude's choice of overlooking the apparent "rude" behaviour of not greeting him. Although Mr. Jude has refuted the proposition that he seemed very patient with Nandi during the SRI by simply saying "I don't think so," the utterance in line 5 is almost an indirect

way of saying 'greet me, why are you here?'. Yet in line 6, there appear to be a complete lack of processing of Mr. Jude's utterance by Nandi, thus constituting a 'trouble.' A trouble in talk is said to be ubiquitous (Arundale, 2010) much as the needed repair to the trouble and repair is warranted if the trouble is consequential to the progress of talk-in-interaction. The silence in line 6 is allowed to pass since it is adjudged as inconsequential by Mr. Jude to the interactive goal. It is clear that Mr. Jude does not want to halt the progressivity of the ongoing talk or rather he wants to get the registration process done with as soon as possible knowing too that there are students waiting outside the office to be attended to by being supportive throughout the interaction. Although this behaviour seemed to be in tandem with the 'let it pass' feature of LFE (Firth, 1996), it seems to us that the underlying reason for the overtly convivial interaction is tied to the historicity of the construction of femininity in most African contexts, where female are believed to be more in need of being talked kindly. Three critical incidents were observed, (the lack of salutation in line 5, being in possession of the departmental file in line 9and her keeping mute to a question in line 14) in this extract that should have resulted in a some form of reprimand resulted in face support instead. Despite these acts that show a lack of courtesy on the part of Nandi, line 11 is a weak accusative and a reprimand of her obvious failings by Mr. Jude to which we observed another lack of response from Nandi. Rather than reprimand from Mr. Jude, he offers her a seat. In addressing this practice at the SRI, Mr. Jude claimed that "yes, I don't like students standing on [*sic*] my head." This was in contrast with other 4 incidents we have observed in other transcripts where the teachers made a big deal of the students' failure to salute them.

The negotiation of face in teacher-student interaction seems to depend more on the interpreting that the teacher makes of the student attitudes towards him and other expected duties since he is the one with the higher authority. In culture-sensitive environments such as our research context, where students' behaviours can be viewed by the lecturer as proper or improper, such judgements have been seen to affect the negotiation of both face threat and face support, especially as adjudged by the teacher which in turn forms the crucial bases of their social positions in the first place. Despite the obvious lapses on the part of Nandi, this extract shows a progressive supportive behaviour from the Mr. Jude because of his disposition towards the student. He seemed to be more tolerant of this student than he was of the students in other Extracts where certain interactional and or behavioural lapses were observed.

When all is well

The natural flow of interaction is optimized when interactants show adequate cognitive awareness of context, subject and their interpersonal roles. This particular extract is representative of other extracts where the social distance and interactional goals of the interactants seem to take the centre stage. This particular extract

shows that certain lapses in interactions can occur and be redressed without losing the focus of the interaction. It is clear therefore that the cognitive awareness of the interactants is equally a factor in their construction of discourse. Many scholars (Ide, 1992; Watts, Ide & Ehrich, 2005) have argued that the sociolinguistic awareness of appropriacy of context and prevailing situation of an interaction significantly affects the construction of face. . The components that contribute to meaning and action are mutually complementing each other, as they collectively create meaning in talk. Face negotiation in the extract below provides evidence that face maintenance is not a form of face threat maintenance strategy but is a constituent unit in face contributes in the establishing of relationships between the participants in a given episode of talk.

Extract 3

---

1 Mr. John: ((Just after dismissing a student to go out and put his credentials in a proper order))

2 The next person↑ ((almost on the top of his voice))

3 Doris: ((knocks faintly on the door)) good morning sir↓

 4 Mr. John: Yes↓

5 Doris: you said I sho[uld …

6 Mr John: No] I mean (0.2) you can tell I am coming to attend to you after (0.5) ...

7 tell the student there to come in ((speaking faintly, while searching for a particular file from a

8 stack of files on the book shelve)) Yes↓ please be fast↑

9 Doris: Sir↑ ((moves further into the office and stood, looking lost and a bit confused))

10 Mr. John: ((looking into a file)) sit down sit down sit down ((stretching out his hands while

11 looking at the student))

12 Doris: ((stands up and hands her credentials to Mr. John))

13 Mr. John: are these credentials (0.2) are these originals enough↓

14 Doris: Yes sir

15 Mr John: ((perusing the student's file)) How many results are you using↓

16 Doris: Two

17 Mr. John: Two results↓

18 Doris: Yes Sir

19 Mr. John: okay (0.2) ((looking directly at the student)) Are you facing any challenges with

20 your lectures↓

 21 Doris: No sir

After attending to three students earlier in the day, Mr. John looked a bit nervy and exhausted. Mr. John's utterance "*The next person*↑" ((almost on the top of his voice)) in line 2 is suggestive of the nerviness. Although we recorded 17 instances of students knocking on the door, this was the only extract that Mr. John responded with a "**yes**↓" for both the act of knocking on the door as well as the Doris' salutation in line 3. Her incomplete statement in line 5 "*you said I should …*" confirms the proposition that face in interaction is relationally constituted (). She seemed to have interpreted the edginess in his voice in line 3 "Yes↓". Although she tried to tell him she was in the office because he asked for her to, the underlying implicature of his response in line 6 to line 8 seem to suggest that he wants Doris to be more patient. This we found surprising because we our observation suggests the contrary. Mr. John seemed very distracted by what he was looking for from the file cabinet.

In line 8, Mr. John tries to bring the interaction back to track with emotive expression: *Yes↓ please be fast↑*. This particular utterance has multiple implications among which is; come in and be fast about it or let me have your credentials. These propositions seem to result from the power position that Mr. John is speaking from or Mr. John's utterance is laden with certain unpredictable "emotional currents" (Emerson 2009: 536) that precedes the coming into the office of Doris. When asked why he seemed eager to dismiss the Doris initially, Mr. John contended that the fact that he could not find what he was looking for made him "very uncomfortable". Since he is the person that will determine how the interaction pans out, the student seemed to seek some form of support from Mr. John as she moves further into the office and he seemed to quickly realise that.

In line 10, Mr. John looks up and looked at the student for the first time and offers her a seat while simultaneously demanding for her credentials. This act seems to implicate his desire to refocus on Doris' goal of being in the office. His act of stretching out his hands to demand for the credentials without verbalisation seemed to also emphasis the micro level of the interaction especially regarding the importance of their relational positioning in this particular context. Again in line 13, the act of standing up as a mark of respect by Doris in order to give Mr. John her credentials is also in recognition of the relational position they both occupy in the interaction. It seems that when interactants with lower social power display cognitive awareness of the social context, the interactant with the higher social power empathises with them. In line 19 Mr John wanted to know if as a new student, she had any problems with her lectures. This validates Haugh (2007) position that politeness is co-constituted. This is particularly significant because in extracts where different forms of reprimands were given to the students, none of such emotive acts were recorded. When this proposition was put forward to two lecturers in our study during the SRIs, they both agreed that it was just a natural reaction towards students that are respectable.

Conclusion

Face consideration and pragmatic awareness in the analysed data is seen as an interaction management strategy and as a cardinal requirement for interactional achievement especially in higher learning education context such as a Nigerian university. The observational as well as the empirical data showed and demonstrated that the power position of the lecturers is seen to have greatly impacted the negotiation and construction of face by the interactants. This suggest therefore that a student who fails to demonstrate a good understanding of the face needs of his teacher can easily be adjudged as rude or uncouth. This is similar to Chang and Haugh's (2011) findings in business interaction and Copland's (2011) findings on face negotiation during feedback sessions. Our study equally agrees with Mills (2011) that face operates in interaction in a dyadic relation and as a discursive practice that relies on ethnographic cues for a fuller interpretation. It agrees also with Badarneh and Migdadi (2018) that face is a tool of strategic positioning in interaction. The three extracts that have been analysed were selected as representative of various face negotiations in interaction.

Our study showed that face threat is a strategy of social positioning as observed by Badarneh and Migdadi that, "language users resort to face attack as a strategic tool of taking stance toward the addressee" (2018: 96). Face threats and face support are not only given in linguistic terms; they are weaved wholesomely as discursive practice in interaction such that, the physical appearance, manners and attitudes of the interactants that are incongruous to sociocultural expectation could be interpreted as a threat or a form of disaffiliation. Face threats seem to operate in two broad dimensions; overt and covert face threats. Face threats that are presented in a linguistic form are overt in nature while face threats that are manifested as a result of sociocultural and sociolinguistic failure are covert in nature and can only be properly understood from an emic perspective and by relying on ethnographic data. The asymmetrical power relation between the teachers and the students seem to affect the construction of linguistic face threat more. The constituting and construction of responses from face threats by interactants showed that while the students respond to face threats with apologies, explanations and opting out strategies, the lecturers respond with counter threats, reprimands and cautions to emphasise their power positions and establish their stance regarding a given addressee.

Face support is equally a social positioning strategy which is a response from different situations that require face negotiations. The interactions showed that face support also relies on the teacher's interpretation of the student's interactive moves since the students are inevitably looking for some form of support in (in the lecturer's office) the interaction. Our data also showed that face support was showed more to the female students than to the male students by the two male lecturers. This seemed to support the claim by Adichie (2014) that in the African context; men feel a sense of duty towards protecting women hence subconsciously

subordinating them by so doing while men are expected to be strong and soak in everything that can be thrown at them.

The extracts demonstrating face as a cognitive awareness of what is appropriate show that human interaction can be deliberately convivial if everyone does or says what he or she is expected. Face has been presented here as a cultured and deliberate adherence to expected social practice (Bargiela-Chiappini, 2003). Both our linguistic and ethnographic data showed that sociocultural knowledge of contextual expectations is crucial in achieving face in talk (Emerson, 2009). In general, face negotiations in ESL carries with it vestiges of the local content where it is used hence the need to examine critically the context of its occurrence or use. Based on our findings, we would suggest a similar research where the authority figures in the interactions are female lecturers and also a research into face negotiations between interactants of equal social standing to see if their construction of face will differ from the positions that we have put forward.

Appendix

(.)	A micropause - a pause of no significant length.
(0.7)	A timed pause - long enough to indicate a time.
[ ]	Square brackets show where speech overlaps.
(( ))	An entry of ethnographic data.
Bold	Denotes a raise in volume or emphasis.
↑	Rise in intonation
↓	Drop in intonation

Transcription Keys Adapted from Gail Jefferson

References

Adichie, C.N. (2014). *We should all be feminists.* New York: Vintage Books.

Akere, F. (2009). The English language in Nigeria: the sociolinguistic dynamics of decolonization and globalization (pp.1-15). In: W. Adegbite, & B. Olajide, *Keynote Address*, Ibadan: University Press. doi: 10.4314/oye.v14i1.42450

Arundale, R. B. (2006). Face as relational and interactional: a communication framework for research on face, facework, and politeness. DeGruyter, 193-216. doi: 10.1515/PR.2006.011

Arundale, R. B. (2008). Against (Gricean) intentions at the heart of human interaction. *Intercultural Pragmatics*, *5*(2), 229-258. doi: 10.1515/IP.2008.012

Arundale, R. B. (2010). Constituting face in conversation: Face, facework, and interactional achievement. *Journal of Pragmatics*, *42*(8), 2078-2105. doi: 10.1016/j.pragma.2009.12.021

Arundale, R. B. (2013). Conceptualizing interaction' in interpersonal pragmatics: Implications for understanding and research. *Pragmatics*, 109-139. doi: 10.1016/j.pragma.2013.02.009

Arundale, R. B. (2013). Face as a research focus in interpersonal pragmatics: Relational and emic perspectives. *Pragmatics,* 1-10. doi: 10.1016/j.pragma.2013.05.013

Atkinson, D., Okada, H., & Talmy, S. (2011). Ethnography and discourse analysis. *Continuum Companion to Discourse Analysis*, 85-100.

Badarneh, M. A., & Migdadi, F. (2018). Acts of positioning in online reader comments on Jordanian news websites. *Language and Communication*, *2018*(58), 93-106. doi: 10.1016/j.langcom.2017.08.003

Bargiela-Chiappini, F. (2003). Face and politeness: new (insights for old (concepts). *Journal of Pragmatics*, 1453-1469. doi: 10.1016/S0378-2166(02)00173-X

Bourdieu, P. (1985). The social space and the genesis of groups. *Theory and Society, 14*(6), 723-744. doi: 10.1007/BF00174048

Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Universals in language use phenomena*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Chang, W., & Haugh, M. (2011). Strategic embarrassment and face threatening in business interactions. *Journal of Pragmatics, 43*(12), 2948-2963. doi: 10.1016/j.pragma.2011.05.009

Copland, F. (2011). Negotiating face in feedback conferences: A linguistic ethnographic analysis. *Journal of Pragmatics, 43*(15), 3832-3843. doi: 10.1016/j.pragma.2011.09.014

Culpeper, J. (2011). It's not what you said, it's how you said: Prosody and Impoliteness. In: *Linguistic Politeness Research Group, Discursive Approaches to Politeness* (pp. 57-97). Boston: De Gruyter Mouton. doi: 10.1515/9783110238679.57

Department-of-English. (2013). *Students handbook*. Jos: PLASU.

Edvardsson, B. (1992). Service breakdowns: A study of critical incidents in an airline. *International Journal of Service Industry Management, 3*(4), 17-29. doi: 10.1108/09564239210019450

Eelen, G. (2014). *A critique of politeness theory (Vol. 1)*. New York: Routledge. doi: 10.4324/9781315760179

Emerson, R. M. (2009). Ethnography, interaction and ordinary trouble. *Ethnography, 10*(4), 535-548. doi: 10.1177/1466138109346996

Firth, A. (1996). The discursive accomplishment of normality: on 'lingua franca' English and conversation analysis. *Journal of Pragmatics, 26*(1996), 237-259. doi: 10.1016/0378-2166(96)00014-8

Gans, H. J. (1999). Participant observation in the era of "ethnography". *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 28*(5), 540-548. doi: 10.1177/089124199129023532

Gee, J. P. (2011). *An introduction to discourse analysis: theory and method (3rd ed)*. London: Routledge. doi: 10.4324/9780203847886

Goffman, E. (1967). *Interaction ritual: Essays on face to face behaviour*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company.

Goffman, E. (1969). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguim.

Gu, Y. (1990). Politeness phenomena in modern Chinese. *Journal of Pragmatics, 3*, 237-257. doi: 10.1016/0378-2166(90)90082-O

Harris, S. (2003). Politeness and power: Making and responding to 'requests' in institutional settings. *Text, 32*(1), 27-52. doi: 10.1515/text.2003.003

Haugh, M. (2007). The co-constitution of politeness implicature in conversation. *Journal of Pragmatics, 39*(1), 84-110. doi: 10.1016/j.pragma.2006.07.004

Haugh, M. (2010). Jocular mockery,(dis) affiliation, and face. *Journal of Pragmatics, 42*(8), 2106-2119. doi: 10.1016/j.pragma.2009.12.018

Hertzog, E., & Lev, A. (2019). Male dominance under threat: Machoism confronts female defiance in Israeli gym. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 1-30. doi: 10.1177/0891241619834662

Ide, S. (1992). On the Notion of Wakimae: towards an integrated framework of linguistic politeness. *Mejiro Linguistic Society*, 298-305.

Leech, G. N. (2014). *The pragmatics of politeness*. Oxford: Oxford Studies in Sociolinguistics. doi: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195341386.001.0001

Locher, M. A., & Watts, R. J. (2005). Politeness theory and relational work. *Journal of Politeness Research, 1*(1), 9-33. doi: 10.1515/jplr.2005.1.1.9

Locher, M. A., & Watts, R. J. (2008). Relational work and impoliteness:Negotiating norms of linguistic behaviour. *Mouton de Gruyter*, 77-99.

Mills, S. (2011). Discursive approaches to politeness and impoliteness. In: *Linguistic Politeness Research Group, Discursive Approaches to Politeness* (pp. 19-56). Boston: De Gruyter Mouton. doi: 10.1515/9783110238679

Olaoye, A. A. (2013). Sociolinguistic documentation of endangered ethnography of communication in Yoruba language. *World Journal of English Language, 4*(1), 32-40. doi: 10.5430/wjel.v4n1p32

Pomerantz, A. (2005). Using participants' video-stimulated comments to complement analyses of interactional practices. In: H. Molder, & J. P. (Eds.), *Conversation and Cognition* (pp. 93-113). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi: 10.1017/CBO9780511489990.005

Rampton, B. (2017). Interactional sociolinguistics. *Working Papers in Urban Language and Literacies*, 205, 1-16.

Rampton, B. (2018). Key concepts in the exploration of the interaction order. *Working Papers in Urban Language and Literacies, Paper* 239, 1-8.

Rampton, B., Tusting, K., Maybin, J., Barwell, R., Creese, A., & Lytra, V. (2004). UK linguistic ethnography: A discussion paper. Unpublished. www. ling-ethnog. org. uk,, 1-24.

Reed, K., & Ellis, J. (2019). Movement, materiality and the mortuary: Adopting a go along ethnography in research on fetal and neonatal postmortem. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 48*(2), 209-235. doi: 10.1177/0891241618769997.

Snell, J., Shaw, S., & Copland, F. (. (2015). *Linguistic ethnography: interdisciplinary explorations*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. doi: 10.1057/9781137035035.

Spencer-Oatey, H. (2006). Theories of identity and the analysis of face. *Journal of Pragmatics*. doi: 10.1016/j.pragma.2006.12.004.

Spencer-Oatey, H. (2011). Conceptualising 'the relational'in pragmatics: Insights from metapragmatic emotion and (im) politeness comments. *Journal of Pragmatics, 43*(14), 3565-3578. doi: 10.1016/j.pragma.2011.08.009.

Watts, R. J., Ide, S., & Ehlich, K. (2005). *Politeness in Language: Studies in its History, Theory and Practice (2nd ed)*. New York: Mouton de Gruyter. doi: 10.1515/9783110199819.