Politeness in Multicultural Settings: Examining Gender and Politeness Strategies of University Students

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Abstract

Cameroon is culturally highly diversified, complexly multilingual with a colonial history as well as socio-economic that are liable to affect its politeness norms and practices. The country is a host to more than two hundred tribes and ethnic groups and its university campuses are a fertile arena for the conglomeration of members of these ethnic groups. This study is aimed at examining the politeness strategies used by male and female students in the University of Bamenda in their daily communications. The paradigm that underlined this study is Paul Grice's Conversational Maxim. The adopted instruments for the elicitation of data for the work were the questionnaire and a discourse completion task. The judgmental sampling method was adopted to select the 20 participants for the study. To attain the objectives, the researchers employed descriptive statistics, the independent *t*-test, and Pearson Correlation coefficient test to analyse the collected data. The findings indicated that there was a statistically non-significant difference among the politeness strategies used by male and female students in the University of Bamenda. This is an indication that both males and females use politeness strategies in their communication. The strategies they use include; bold on record, positive politeness, negative politeness and off record politeness strategies.

Keywords: politeness, politeness strategies, gender, multiculturalism, multilingualism, interpersonal relationships, communication

INTRODUCTION

Politeness is a driver on the wheel, that will decide the destination of a conversation. Politeness is showing good manners towards others, that is in behaviour and in one's speech. It is also a behaviour that is respectful and considerate of other people. It is a great virtue and also a mark of discipline. Every person wants to hear good things and see good behaviour towards themselves. Politeness is considered a manifestation of human civilisation, and one of the most effective strategies to modulate interpersonal relationships in human communication postulated by Hau and Chi, (2013). Eelen (2014) holds the view that politeness as a common-sense term. It implies "proper behavioural

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conduct". Scholastic treatment of the concept mostly emphasizes the preservation of positive relations among people.

Politeness in Cameroon, like in many other cultures, encompasses a range of linguistic and non-linguistic behaviours aimed at showing respect, consideration, and goodwill towards others in social interaction. However, politeness norms and practices in Cameroon are influenced by the country's rich cultural diversity, multilingualism, colonial history, and socio-economic factors. As a crossroads of art and African culture, Cameroon has more than two hundred ethnic groups; and these differences make it quite challenging for people of these different communities to understand each other perfectly, since they all have different cultural orientations. An utterance might be considered polite in the north but in the south, east or elsewhere, it is not.

Politeness strategies encompass a range of verbal and nonverbal behaviours aimed at maintaining social harmony, respect, and rapport in interactions. In Cameroon, politeness strategies are deeply rooted in cultural norms, linguistic diversity and social customs. Unless one is polite to one's neighbour, friend, colleague, brother, sister, the channel of communication between them will have a serious strain; there will be an issue in passing across your message (Leech, 1983:82). Politeness can be expressed in specific social contexts as well as to the speakers' ideas about politeness. These expressions vary across cultures and contexts but generally include;

- ➢ Greetings: using appropriate greetings such as "hello", "good morning", "good afternoon", "good evening", "ashiaooo", "wuna de de" or "I troweh salut" to initiate conversation and acknowledge others' presence.

- ➢ Polite forms of address: Addressing others with respectful titles, honorifics, or kinship terms, depending on their age, social status, or relationship to the speaker for example "Mr.", "Mrs.", "Miss", "Sir", "Ma'am", "Uncle", "Auntie", "Honourable", "Mbei" "Taa", "Ngia", "Ni", "Pa", "Ma", "Ndei", Manyi, Tanyi, Tangyie, please I am coming = I will soon be there; (sometimes when going) and so on.

- ➢ Using polite language to make request or express gratitude, such as saying "please" when asking for something and "thank you" when receiving help, favours, or compliments, I beg etc.

- ➢ Polite exit strategies: Using polite phrases or gestures to gracefully end conversations or interactions for example "it was nice talking to you", "take care", "goodbye", "we shall see", "we go see na", "till next time".

These expressions of politeness play a crucial role in establishing and maintaining positive social relationships, fostering cooperation, and preserving social harmony.

In the University of Bamenda, there seem to be a notable discrepancy in the application and perception of politeness strategies between genders. This imbalance stems from entrenched societal norms, cultural expectations, and traditional gender roles that influence communication behaviours among students. While both male and female students of the university of Bamenda aim to navigate interactions with respect and

decorum, there seem to be lack of awareness and understanding regarding the impact of gender dynamics on politeness strategies. This gap results in instances of miscommunication, unequal treatment, and potential discrimination, thereby hindering the establishment of an inclusive and supportive academic environment. To proper deepen this issue in, it is essential to explore the intersections of politeness strategies and gender within the context of the University of Bamenda, identify underlying factors contributing to gender-based differences in communication and develop strategies to promote equitable and respectful interaction among all students of the University of Bamenda.

More specifically, this study aims to identify politeness strategies used by male and female students in the University of Bamenda. It answers the question; what are the different politeness strategies used by male and female students of the University of Bamenda. The paper however hypothesises that, in spite of socio-cultural diversity of the community of students, there is no significant difference between politeness strategies of male and female students.

Politeness, as one of the social norms, is reflected in human interaction. Trosborg (1995) posits that politeness is a 'pragmatic mechanism' that has a structural variation which works together based on the speaker's intention of reaching smooth communication. Therefore, in interaction, people should know and realize politeness as an element that should be included. This recommendation ties with Paul Grice's (1975) Conversational Maxim Perspective.

Paul Grice's (1975) Conversational-maxim perspective is the theoretical frame adopted for this paper. This theory is in the area of Language, Gender and Politeness. According to Dynel (2009), Grice's (1989a, 1989b and 1989c) philosophy is the cornerstone of a linguistic pragmatic model of communication. In this theory, Grice argues that conversationalists are rational individuals who are primarily interested in the efficient conveying of messages. He makes this argument in an attempt to clarify how glaring it is that speakers can mean more than what they say. In this regard, he proposes the Cooperative Principle (CP) which postulates that one should say what he/she has to say, when he/she has to say it, and the way he/she has to say it. Dynel (2008 and 2009) add that the Cooperative principle is proposed as a tacit mutual agreement, a communicative sine qua non for producing and understanding what is said and implied. Grice (1975) bases his Cooperative principle on four maxims:

The maxim of quality: it says that people should only say what they believe to be true and what they have evidence for.

The maxim of quantity: it says that people should make their contribution as informative as is required for the particular purpose and not make it more informative than is required.

The maxim of relation: it says that people should make their contribution relevant to the interaction, or they should indicate in what way it is not.

The maxim of manner: it says that people should be clear in what they say, they should avoid ambiguity or obscurity and they should be brief and orderly in their contribution to the interaction.

The Cooperative Principle runs as follows: "Make your contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" (Grice, 1975:45).Grice goes ahead to present communicational cooperation, stating that talk exchanges "are, to some degree at least, cooperative efforts" (Grice, 1989a:26)."Cooperation" is then a technical term which should be understood not as a joint communicative effort towards a common goal (Thomas, 1986) but, as interlocutors' rationality underlying communicative exchanges. Being polite is more of a social and cultural rule or a background assumption independent from the CP model. Therefore, linguistic politeness, which can manifest itself in a variety of ways, will correspond to maxim and maxim flouts also in a variety of ways, just as any other intentional meanings communicated. Perhaps, it is due to this remark made by Grice that several researchers have based their politeness theories on the Gricean framework. Lakoff (1975, 1977, and 1989) deems Grice's notion of Cooperative Principle as insufficient and argues in favour of the Politeness Principle as an indispensable appendage whose aim is "to reduce friction in personal interaction" (Lakoff, 1977:64). Lakoff (1977) suggests two rules of Pragmatic Competence:

Be Clear (essentially Grice's maxims), and

Be Polite. She takes these to be in opposition to each other, and notes that they are at times reinforcing, and at other times in conflict. In addition, she posits sub-maxims(sub-rules), adapted as follows:

Rule 1: Don't impose (used when formal/impersonal politeness is required)

Rule 2: Give options (used when informal politeness is required)

Rule 3: Make a hearer feel good (used when intimate politeness is required)

These three rules are applicable more or less depending on the type of politeness situation as understood by the speaker. For example, if a speaker assesses the situations as requiring intimate politeness, window shutting might be requested by uttering: 'Shut the window', while informal politeness might be met with 'Please shut the window'. The reader is never told how the speaker or hearer is to assess what level of politeness is required.

Grice argued that adherence to these conversational maxims facilitates effective communication by promoting clarity, relevance, and cooperation between speakers. Violations of these maxims, such as being overly vague, ambiguous, or untruthful, can lead to misunderstandings and breakdowns in communication. Grice's conversational maxims provide a framework for understanding how speakers navigate conversational interactions and cooperate to achieve mutual understanding.

This theory is in line with this paper in that, people communicate with each other on a daily basis and the essence of communicating is so that your message should be understood properly. Hence in every communication, you have to be clear, no ambiguity,

give options by not imposing and also to make the hearer feel good. Communicators need to understand each other hence curbing social tension in the society. Thus Grice's Conversational Maxim aligns perfectly with this paper. In a society/community like ours Cameroon (Bamenda) conversational maxim facilitates effective communication by promoting clarity, relevance and cooperation between speakers that is both male and female. Violations of these maxims such as being overly vague, ambiguous or untruthful can lead to misunderstanding and a breakdown in communication.

Politeness Strategies

This section provides a comprehensive overview of research on politeness strategies. This section is concerned with revisiting earlier works in the area of politeness, politeness strategies, politeness and gender. The literature is reviewed through the use of research reports, dissertations, journals and the internet.

Politeness can be expressed in many ways but paying a compliment is one of the most obvious. Compliments are prime examples of speech acts which notice and attend to the hearer's interests, wants, needs, goods. Compliments constitutes positive strategy identified and discussed by Brown and Levinson (1987:102). Every day, people give and receive compliments on appearance, ability, possession, and some aspect of personality or friendliness. People like persons who give approval to them. Polite speech is the use of verbal strategies that take the addressee's feelings into account by showing respect for his or her 'face' (Brown and Levinson, 1987:61). Lakoff's (1973) work on politeness was amongst the pioneering attempts to study politeness as a pragmatic construct. Her work triggered a number of empirical researches that either confirmed or disproved her assumptions. In her view, there are some pragmatic rules that underlie the choice of linguistic expression. These rules have the same status as the rules of grammar, syntax, and semantics in one's linguistic repertoire as she states: "We should like to have some kind of pragmatic rules, dictating whether an utterance is pragmatically well formed or not, and the extent to which it deviates if it does". Lakoff's assumption is that pragmatic competence encompasses two general sets of rules. The first rule, "Be clear" is a literal abidance by the Gricean conversational maxims of quantity, quality, relation, and manner. The second rule, "Be polite", is composed of other sub-rules that represent Lakoff's own conceptualization of politeness: Don't impose: used when formal, impersonal politeness is required in formal and impersonal settings. Give options: used when informal politeness is required in informal settings. Make (the hearer) feel good: used when intimate politeness is required in more intimate relationships.

Gender and Politeness

Mills (2003) described politeness and gender as it is often considered, to be a woman's concern. She then explains that women's linguistic behaviour is often characterised as being concerned with co-operation (more positively polite than the man) and the avoidance of conflict (more negatively polite than the man), Swacker, 1979 as cited in Holmes, 1995; says this happens because there is an assumption that women are powerless and very emotional. Furthermore, to Brown and Levinson (1987), discourse participants can show their politeness by maximising areas of agreement and minimising

areas of disagreement. Yet, people do not always disagree with what the addressee says, and it is possible that women and men tend to approach the notion of politeness differently. Similarly, females and males have their different norms in interactions which are quite dramatically contrasted in some contexts, (Holmes, 1995). Holmes also talks about women, men and politeness agreeable and disagreeable responses. The theory explains that women have a tendency to   agree or at least respond to other speakers, different from men that have very few explicitly agreeing responses. Holmes (1995) continues by saying that females and males have the different norms in interaction which are contrast quite dramatically in some contexts. Holmes (1987) explains through nice examples and interesting experiments using Brown and Levinson (1987) politeness model how gender differences may influence and affect linguistic politeness. She explained that women tend more to agree or at least respond to the other speakers, different from men that had very few explicitly agreeing responses. Holmes also talked about women and men's use of language in different ways due to their different interpretations of the use of language. Men use language as a tool to give and obtain information (referential function of language), whereas women perceive language as a tool of keeping in touch (affective or social function of language). Holmes (1995), therefore demonstrate that gender influences politeness and this may not necessarily be the case of the students of the University of Bamenda.

Watts (2003: 85-86) emphasizes that politeness strategies aim at supporting the hearer's positive face and at averting transcending of the hearer's freedom of action and freedom from imposition. The participant should choose appropriate strategies to minimize any face threats occurring in any social activities. Gleason & Ratner (1998: 286) state that, according to Tannen (1990), there is a relationship between gender and speech act that reflects the desirability of applying direct versus indirect speech acts to manage someone else's actions. Boys and men prefer to use the direct speech act, that is, they tend to command each other directly such as ''Get the stethoscope.''. On the contrary, women and girls prefer to use indirect forms such as '' Let's play doctor and use the stethoscope.'', or '' Let's take out the garbage.''. Tannen (1994) realises that when the women use indirect forms with men, this strategy usually backfires because men perceive that women do not follow the right way to ask them to do something, and feel manipulated by such a devious strategy.

METHODOLOGY

The judgmental non-probability sampling method was used to come up with the 20 male and female participants for the study.

The data was presented in the form of numerical scores and tables, and these helped quantify the politeness strategies of male and females. The quantitative data was obtained through the questionnaire while the qualitative data was obtained through a discourse completion task.

The discourse completion task was scheduled into scenarios with each scenario depicting a different act and requiring a different action. Three scenarios were created and the task

was given out and analyzed using content analysis. The questionnaire captured information on politeness as a whole.

FINDINGS

The analysis of the quantitative data entailed assigning numbers to the answers in the questionnaire and using various techniques to help determine the trends and relationship among the variables.

Table 1: Questionnaire Response rate

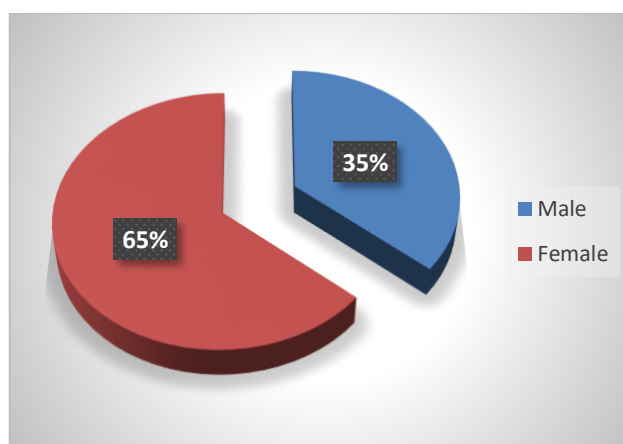| Number of questionnaires distributed	Number of questionnaires returned	Incomplete questionnaires	Valid questionnaires	Questionnaire response rate
25	20	0	20	80%

Source: Field survey (2024)

Figure 1: Respondent's Gender

Source: Field Survey (2024)

Figure 1 shows that out of the 20 students who took part in the study, 65% of them (13) were females while 35% of them (7) were males. The excess of females over the males can be linked to the general trend in the world where females seemingly dominate. It can also be linked to the efforts put in place to encourage girl education in this part of the country, a phenomenon hitherto taken for granted. It is also the reality in the University of Bamenda.

Table 2: Degree of politeness of students

			Gender		Total
			Male	Female	
How polite do you think you are?	Not at all	Count	1	2	3
		% Within Gender	14.2%	15.3%	15%
	Rarely polite	Count	1	3	4
		% Within Gender	14.2%	23.0%	20%
	Sometimes polite	Count	3	5	8
		% Within Gender	42.8%	38.4%	40%
	Always polite	Count	2	3	5
		% Within Gender	28.5%	23.0%	25%
Total		Count	7	13	20
		% Within Gender	100%	100%	100%

Source: Field Survey (2024)

The table above shows that out of the 7 male students who took part in the study, 1 is never polite, 1 is rarely polite, 3 are sometimes polite while 2 are always polite. On the other hand, of the 13 female students who took part in the study, 2 of them are never polite, 3 are rarely polite, 5 are sometimes polite while 3 are always polite. Comparatively, 28.5% of male students are always polite while 23.0% of female students are always polite. From the descriptive statistics one can hastily conclude that male students in the University of Bamenda are more polite than female students. But statistically, is this difference in politeness between the male and female gender of the University of Bamenda significant?

Comparison of male and female Politeness Strategies

An Independent sample t-test was conducted to identify the difference in means score of students' genders according to each statement in the politeness strategy construct. In other words, we wanted to find out whether there is a significant difference in the responses of male and female participants as concerns their politeness strategies. Their responses are analysed in the subsequent paragraphs.

Table 3: Making someone comfortable in a discussion

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Making someone comfortable and gender	Male	8	4.38	.744	.263
	Female	12	4.17	1.193	.345

T	Df	Sig. (2tailed)
.438	18	.667

These findings show that the responses of the two groups (male and female) to the statement; when I am having a discussion with someone, I usually try as much as possible to make the person comfortable, displayed a statistically non-significant difference (t = .438, df = 18, p = .667). The mean score of the male respondents was 4.38 and the mean score of the female respondents was 4.17, which shows that the two groups were in agreement with the statement when I am having a discussion with someone, I usually try as much as possible to make the person comfortable. Both genders therefore recognize the importance of being polite.

Table 4: Saying things as they are and Gender of students

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Saying things as it is and gender	Male	8	3.38	1.188	.420
	Female	12	3.75	1.138	.329

T	Df	Sig. (2tailed)
-.710	18	.487

This shows that the responses of the two groups (male and female) to the statement; when discussing with someone, I say things the way they are supposed to be said with no sugar coating, displayed a statistically non-significant difference (t = -.710, df = 18, p = .487). The mean score of the male respondents was 3.38 and the mean score of the female respondents was 3.75, which shows that although the two groups were in agreement with the statement, the females were having a higher agreement rate than the males. This is an indication that while both males and females recognise the importance of being polite in communication, the females seem more aware of it. That is the men, find it very convenient to say things the way they are with no sugar coating than the females who like to please others and sugar coat their words. This can be linked to the fact that; most people hold the view that females are very emotional in all they do or say.

Table 5: Speaking in a suggestive form and Gender

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Speaking in a suggestive manner and gender	Male	8	3.88	1.246	.441
	Female	12	4.17	.577	.167

T	Df	Sig. (2tailed)
-.710	18	.487

This shows that the responses of the two groups (male and female) to the statement; in a discussion with someone, I speak in a suggestive manner rather than imposing my views, displayed a statistically non-significant difference (t = -.710, df = 18, p = .487). The mean score of the male respondents was 3.88 and the mean score of the female respondents was 4.17, which shows that although the two groups were in agreement with the statement, the females were having a higher agreement rate than the males. This is an indication that while both males and females recognize the importance of speaking in a suggestive manner, the females seem more aware of it.

Table 6: Sugar-coating words and Gender of students

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Sugar coating words and gender	Male	8	2.75	1.035	.366
	Female	12	2.25	1.055	.305

T	Df	Sig.(2tailed)
1.046	18	.310

The findings gotten here shows that the responses of the two groups (male and female) to the statement; when discussing with someone, I sugarcoat words in order to make the person draw inference and conclusion, displayed a statistically non-significant difference (t = 1.046, df = 18, p = .310). The mean score of the male respondents was 2.75 and the mean score of the female respondents was 2.25, which shows that the two groups disagreed with the statement. Both genders therefore disagreed to the importance of the usage of that strategy in their daily communications.

Table 7: Toughness of the discussion and Gender of students

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Toughness of the discussion and gender	Male	8	4.13	.641	.227
	Female	12	3.83	.835	.241

T	Df	Sig. (2tailed)
.835	18	.415

The results show that the responses of the two groups (male and female) to the statement; no matter how tough the discussion is, I do not speak in a way that seems to belittle or humiliate someone displayed a statistically non-significant difference (t = .835, df = 18, p = .415). The mean score of the male respondents was 4.13 and the mean score of the female respondents was 3.83, which shows that although the two groups agreed with the statement, the males were having a higher agreement rate than the females. This is an indication that while both males and females use this strategy in their daily communications, the males seem to use it more than the females.

In addition to the survey, a discourse completion task was given out and analyzed using content analysis. This is in order to be able to bring out that inner politeness of people which cannot be captured using a questionnaire. This part captured 3 scenarios, which will be analysed below.

Scenario One

You are studying in the library and the person sitting next to you is playing his/her walker man very loudly. You cannot concentrate on your studies and you have an exam the next day. You would like the person sitting next to you to turn the music down.

As expected, the responses of the students are varied when it comes to this scenario. While some were polite, others were impolite. The impolite students were brutal in their demands. Take for example a student who bluntly said;

Bro you are in a library not a studio or snack. Another student said,

turn that rubbish off. If you want to listen to loud music, go to a club or a bar. Even yet is a student who said;

she will shout at them because everyone is supposed to know the library is not a place for music no matter the volume.

These are the few cases of impoliteness witnessed.

In their politeness, respondents showed different behaviors in their demands. These behaviors could be grouped in to; normal politeness, salutations, appreciation and apology. Students demonstrated their normal politeness by using statements such as;

Please do you mind turning down your volume a little, it's a little too loud and as a result it's disturbing me.

Please if you don't mind, can u turn down the volume of your receiver, I can't concentrate as the volume is too loud.

Excuse me please do you mind turning down your volume so we can study? Thank You Very Much.

Sir please can you kindly reduced the volume of your music so I can concentrate? The loud volume is really limiting my focus. Thank you!!!!

Hi, I am sorry to bring this to your notice. I am trying to study, but I find it hard to concentrate because of the music, could you please bring the music down so that we can both get work done?

As per salutations, these group of students demonstrated their politeness by first of all greeting the counterpart before expressing their wish. Examples here are;

Good day! Please can you tune down your volume or use your headset? I'm trying to read and it's distracting me.

Hello (with a smile), please can you turn off your volume or reduce it a little I'm studying thanks.

Good afternoon. Please can you help me reduce the volume of your walker man? I'm reading for an exam, sorry for inconveniencing you, just that I can't read with noise please. Thank you

Good morning or good day. Please can you help me by turning your volume down? Thank you

Good afternoon to you. Please can you turn down your music it's too loud I can barely concentrate. Thank you.

With regards to appreciations (cajoling), these group of students began by appreciating the lovely music coming from the counterpart's phone before going ahead to caution him/her. Examples include;

Hellooo, your music is soooo soothing to the extent I can't help but constantly connect with it, please have mercy on me and help me study by turning the volume down to just your ear level

Heyyyy, that's an amazing song you're playing over there. I'm sorry but could you just turn the volume a little bit down, I kind of need to focus on my studies thank you.

The last group of politeness here as seen by the researcher are those who expressed their politeness by beginning with an apology. To demand the other person to reduce his or her volume, these respondents had this to say;

Hi, I am sorry to bring this to your notice. I am trying to study, but I find it hard to concentrate because of the music, could you please bring the music down so that we can both get work done?

I am sorry to disturb you but please can you kindly turn down your volume. I do have an exam I'm preparing for and I can't seem to concentrate with the sound, I will be grateful if you can be understanding enough to turn your volume down.

Even yet are those who demonstrated some kind of politeness by going straight to the point. Some examples of their responses include;

Do you mind turning off your music?

I am preparing for exams can you turn down the volume of your gadget

As seen above, though different, a majority of the responses follow a path which is that of being polite to the person on the other side. We can say from the analysis that students of the University of Bamenda are generally polite. This goes to confirm the results seen in the quantitative analysis.

Scenario Two

You are running to catch-up with a friend. You accidentally bump into an older woman causing her to drop some packages. What do you say?

Based on the responses of the participants, four themes can be formulated to capture these properly; help, apologize, apologize and help, conscientious.

The first theme has to do with students who said they will just help the elderly woman gather her things without offering any apology. They were however very few of them. Their responses included;

Helped her out with the things she's carrying

I will hurriedly pick up her packages before going my way

Pick them up and help her stand on her feet

I pick up everything before leaving

The second theme is made up of students who said they will tender their apology to the elderly woman and go their various ways; their responses included;

Please I am sorry.

I'm so sorry ma, I wasn't looking

Oh! I'm so sorry madam, I didn't mean to

Please ma am really sorry.

I'm sorry mother

I'm sorry ma'am

In the third group, we look at students who said they will apologize and then go a step further to help the elderly woman gather her things. See their responses;

Pick them up and say I'm sorry ma'am

Ma, Please I am very sorry ... You help her on her feet's and pick up the things she dropped.

Please I'm sorry, let me help you gather them, I'm so sorry forgive my manners

Oops am sorry ...then help her pick them up

I'll say sorry then help her out before I continue

Mum I'm sorry and I'll pick up the packages

I'm sorry mommy I'm truly sorry let me help you with that....

Finally, the last group of students is made up of those the researcher calls conscientious students. These are students who do not only apologize and help to pick up her stuffs, but demand to help her more. Their responses were;

I help her pick them up and even go as far as taking it to her house or pay a taxi to take her home if am actually really in a haste. The friend can wait.

Ohh sorry mam I didn't mean to, then I try to help her pick up the stuff, and still say sorry and at least explain that it because I'm rushing for something important

I'm very sorry ma, then pick them up and hand over to her or opt to carry to her destination

These group of students do not only demonstrate respect but a sense of commitment and Godliness. These are the kind of students society will be proud of. Note that, very few of them answered in this line.

Scenario Three

On your way to attend lectures, you have an accident with the bike you boarded and you soiled your dress. You have to go back home, get a change of clothes before going to class. You finally get to class 30minutes late and the lecturer is already in class. Note the lecturer doesn't condone with lateness in his class, so he started raining insults at you.

In this scenario, a good number of the students said they were going to politely apologize to their lecturer and let go. However, the degree of politeness in the apologies differed. We classify them in to four groups of; direct apology, apology and explanation, apology and permission to explain, no apology.

Under direct apology, the following statements were common amongst users;

I start crying and apologizing

I will go on my knees and apologize to him

Sir am sorry for being late

I'm sorry sir

Meanwhile, the common statements made by those who apologized and gave reasons immediately were;

I'm Sorry for my Lateness Sir. it wasn't my intention. I was caught up in an unforeseen circumstance. On my way to your class, I was involved in a bike accident which soiled my dress. Had to hurry back home to get it changed I'm Sorry Sir.

I'll simply apologize to him for coming late and give him my reason of coming late.

Good morning sir. Am sorry for coming later after you but it wasn't my intention. I got into an accident on my way to school and had to go back home for a change of clothes. Please spare me for today's class.

On the other hand, some apologized and asked the lecturer the permission to explain themselves. For example;

Stay silence and apologise later after his done talking then tell him what happened

Apologize and be quiet, then ask for his permission to explain yourself out

Simple, AM SORRY Sir/Ma I think the way am panting would explain Better but if he/she chooses to shout, then it's well

I will apologize to the teacher. If he gives me an opportunity I will explain, if not I will apologize with the hope that he will forgive me

I'll stay silent while the lecturer speaks while facing the floor and when he stops before I'll say am sorry for being late and if the lecturer is willing to listen before I will explain why am late.

Others simply said they will not apologize while some said they will walk away. Some of their statements were;

Stay quite and listen to him

Nothing. I can't argue with the lecturer.

Keep my head bowed to the flow and remain silent

Remain silent

I will walk away

Nothing. The important thing is to be in class.

Ignore

Summary of Findings

This study had as main objective to examine the politeness strategies used by males and females students in the University of Bamenda. To achieve the objective, the researcher employed three analytic techniques; descriptive statistics, Pearson Correlation, and independent *t*-test. Results from the descriptive statistics showed that out of the 20 students who took part in the study, 65% were females while 35% were males. Results from Pearson correlation carried out indicated that; there was a non-significant relationship between politeness and gender of students at the University of Bamenda. Findings from the independent sample t-test carried out showed that there were no significant differences in the responses of male and female students on the different politeness strategies used during communication. It was also seen that there is a significant (.001) difference in the responses of male and female students on the different speech acts used with females favoring its use over the males. Based on the results, females seemed to validate the usage of pragmatic competences in their daily communications more than the males as seen in the significant (.000) differences in the responses of the two. Additionally, females seem to validate the usage of interpersonal rhetoric in their daily communications more than the males as seen in the significant (.005) differences in the responses of the two. Lastly, we saw that overall, there was no

significant difference in the responses of male and female students on the different rationality and face used in their daily conversations.

The findings of this paper is linked to the adopted theory of this work in that, conversationalist are interested in the efficient conveying of messages, making sure that their counterparts understand exactly what they mean to convey and what message they are conveying in return. In the same light, Paul Grice conversational maxim's point of view is that, communicators have to be clear, be polite, they don't impose, they give options while communicating and also make the hearer feel good. This theory also postulates that communicators have to make their conversations relevant, and informative as possible. In the nutshell, this work emphasis the need for people to be polite in all of their conversations irrespective of the gender.

DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this paper is in line with what Mills (2003), said in her book Gender and Politeness. Mills says politeness is often considered as a woman's thing, just as the findings of this paper, though the males are aware of politeness, but the females are the once who uses these strategies the more in their discourse. Mills says females are more positively polite inclined than the males.

Also, Deborah Tannen's concept (1990), she says men have a unique way of expressions that is they are often direct in their speech act, unlike females who are often indirect in their speech act. This is in line with the findings that states that men/women speak in a suggestive form but the contradictory part here is, each gender has a specific way of expression. That is, the males are always direct while the females indirect.

CONCLUSION

The study of politeness strategies provides valuable insights into the complex dynamics of social interaction and communication. Throughout this exploration, we have examined various aspects of politeness, including positive politeness, negative politeness, gender and politeness, all these help in shaping politeness behaviour. Our investigation has revealed that politeness is not merely a matter of etiquette or manners but serves crucial social functions, such as maintaining harmony, preserving face, and managing social relationships. Politeness strategies allow individuals to navigate the delicate balance between expressing their own needs and respecting the needs and feelings of others.

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