POLITENESS MAXIMS AND VERBAL VIOLENCE IN FAMILIES: A STUDY OF EMEKUKU OWERRI NORTH, IMO STATE

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Abstract
The study examined politeness maxims and verbal violence in families' language use. The jeopardy of verbal violence in families against politeness maxims was discussed. The study hinged on Brown and Levinson (1978/1987) politeness theory and Leech (1983) politeness maxims. The method of data collection used are; two research instruments- questionnaire and observations. The study adopted a quantitative research design of the simple percentage for data analysis. Ten families were randomly visited to obtain data from the members. It was revealed that fourteen (14) out of the twenty-eight (28) participants were not aware of politeness maxims or its stipulations nor verbal violence and its implications. Also, the result proved ignorance of politeness maxims stipulations made speakers to use verbal violence as normal and acceptable language of rebuke or correction. Therefore, the study recommended that interactants should apply the stipulations of politeness maxims in conversations in the family so as to shun the menace of verbal violence. Again, the use of polite expressions/courteous utterances in family interactions enhanced self-confidence and good interpersonal relationships among interactants.
Key words: politeness maxims, verbal violence, families, language use

Introduction
The essence of communication is largely dependent on the existence of language. Language is used to create, form, destroy or damage one's well-being within the family and the society at large. Words are powerful tools that can either lift an addressee up or tear him/her down. Through language, feelings/emotions, ideologies, desires, questions etc are communicated. O'Grady, Archibald and Katamba (1) opine that "words can be used to achieve various ends; language is at the heart of all things human". Words that are being spoken do not just have an effect but how the words are spoken, the tone of voice, the facial expressions and body language all play a part in the message that is being conveyed to that individual (Brennan and Lane as cited in Thomason, 13). So much of what keeps the family together or broken rests hugely on language use and meaning.

The family stands as a microcosm of a nation. Language use and communication plays great role in family. The family ought to be a place where members feel loved and accepted the way they are. Mckay (219) emphasizing the importance of communication in family relationship asserts that "a family with chronic poor communication becomes a pressure cooker". Each member is vulnerable to emotional devastation. The children especially are susceptible to a range of physical and psychological symptoms. Families get into trouble when members are prohibited from expressing certain feelings, needs or awareness. The family as a unit is meant to create awareness, inculcate in the children the dynamics of conflicts and the promotion of peace making skills in homes as a necessary channel of socialization (Gumut, 116). Therefore, a family with chronic poor communication resorts to verbal violence.

Verbal violence entails the use of profane, dehumanizing and insulting language to cause emotional pain or distress on others. It is an act of hate speech, criticism, swearing, curses, coercion and teasing of a person who is in control of other (Lepper, 65-67). Living free is a fundamental development aspiration. It is an objective that has thus far received comparative limited attention in human development issues. Verbal violence creates fear in human development especially in a family. Kembe (14) corroborates that verbal violence is a salient aspect of domestic violence that has not received much publicity. Although, it is not physical in nature, does not leave visible bruises yet it is damaging and can leave individual with lasting adverse emotional scars for life. Family interactions that are embellished with verbal violence depict lack of politeness maxims and do more harm than good.

Statement of the Problem
Language use in the family is crucial for personality formation and perception. Polite expressions during family conversation keep interaction smooth and maintain the face-value of interactants. Politeness maxims are principles stated to enhance interactions for social relationships but most language users in the family are not aware of this. Because language use in the family is common therefore, it lacks appropriate linguistic tokens that promote consideration and solidarity among interactants. Due to lack of knowledge of politeness maxims, speakers in the family deploy verbal violence which is demeaning and destructive on the addressee. Again, verbal violence contradicts politeness maxims in that its stipulations are violated in the cause of interaction and that results to face-threat, anger, anxiety, low self-esteem, depression, animosity and so on.

Again, many studies abound on physical violence, domestic violence and sexual violence but just few on verbal violence and politeness maxims. Therefore, it is the intent of this study to expose the damage inherent in the violation of politeness maxims particularly in family sphere.

Purpose of the Study
The main purpose of this study is to create awareness to language users in the family about the effectiveness and benefits of politeness maxims for better flow of conversations among family members for quality family relationship.

Research Questions: The following research questions are formulated to guide this study:
- What are politeness maxims and their stipulations?
- How do speakers at family level perceive verbal violence and what are the implications on the victims?
- How has verbal violence promoted or demoted self-confidence and love on addressees in the family?

Conceptual Clarifications
The manner in which utterances are presented in conversational situations can enhance or breach conversation depending on how speakers utilize politeness principles in the process of interaction and how the addressee reacts to such tokens. Politeness is a social deixis which expresses a high degree of solidarity between the speaker and the addressee. As a socialization process which begins from the family, all adult members learn how to behave politely, linguistically and otherwise. Hence, politeness has not been borne as instinctive but it is a phenomenon which has been constructed through socio-cultural and historical processes (O'Grady, Archibald and Katamba, 230). Mills (6) aver that "politeness is the expression of the speaker's intention to mitigate face threat carried by certain face-threatening acts towards another". Yule (135) posits that politeness is seen as showing awareness and consideration of

another person's face. Leech on his part, posits that politeness aids to establish and maintain mutual respect among interactants (128). Brown and Levinson (49) equally maintain that politeness helps interactants to minimize the imposition caused by a face threatening act. While Watts (156) views politeness as a social behavior that helps to maintain the equilibrium of interpersonal relationships within a social group. Again, Lakoff (178) lists other functions of politeness as thus:

1. The appropriate use of politeness defines an individual as competent, benevolent and worthy of trust.
2. Politeness is used to decide whether others are in or out socially; a basis on which to reward the good (the polite) and punish the bad (impolite).
3. Politeness is a tool by which societies maximize and legitimize gender distinction and define appropriate gender rules and roles.

Generally, individuals who engage in conversations are required to show a degree of politeness among them. Interactants are expected to show a level of social and linguistic considerations in interactions. Such considerations for the conversational needs of others have been termed polite behaviours. Politeness according to Grundy (187) is seen as the exercise of language choice to create a context intended to match/suit the addressee's notion of how he or she should be addressed. Therefore, in agreement with other scholars, this study assumes that politeness implies enhancing and maintaining the face-worth of interactants in conversational situation.

To maintain and balance social relation among interactants, certain degree of consideration is needed. Thus, Brown and Levinson (61) are of the view that in positive politeness, the speaker and the addressee have the same needs and the speaker indicates that to the addressee. Since politeness is a social phenomenon, its domain is beyond verbal choices but in co-operates behaviour and non-verbal mode that is wordless cues. For instance, when one offers her seat for another or bows in greeting, it is a sign of politeness but verbal violence is contradictory.

Verbal violence is a form of communication that is known to have destructive effects on the addressee. It is a profane language use that has a deep negative influence and leaves an indelible mark on the listener. Verbal violence can also be defined as "the use of derogatory and destructive language on another person" (Ewurum, Njoku and Umeh, 61). It can be expressed by such terms as global label, name calling, verbal abuse, dehumanizing language, demeaning words and so on. Verbal violence is "any language or remark that is intended to cause distress to the individual which can be perceived as being demeaning, humiliating, intimidating or disrespectful resulting in feelings of inferiority, lowered self-worth and self-esteem, stunned goals and ambition (Brennan qtd in Lani, 16). Lani (16) included in her definition of verbal abuse "as the use of critical or insulting behavior". The work argues that the word behavior keeps the definition open to include not just the words that are being spoken but the tone of voice, facial expressions and body language. These instances are normally overt in nature but at times can be subtle like double-edge comments. Going by the above definitions, it is assumed that verbal violence implies derogatory expressions, rude/nasty remarks, stony silence and mitigated attitudes on hearers.

Kembe (15) maintains that "verbal abuse is an act of constant criticism, name calling, social rejection, sarcasm and put downs on an individual". Obinauju (16) reveals that "the society contributes to perpetuating the act of verbal abuse by not taking it seriously enough and by treating it as expected, normal or deserved". This does not contradict the traditional Nigerian child rearing practice where the child is rebuked and chastised for doing wrong. According to the United Nation's Standard (cited in Kembe, 15) "verbal abuse is a condition of causing or

permitting to occur of any form of offensive or harmful contact on the body of a person. Such a contact incorporates any form of interaction, exchange of communication that brings shame, embarrassment, fear or disgrace to the person". Thus, it can be stated that verbal violence can be much more emotionally damaging than other types of abuse. This confirms the adage which says "sticks and stones may break my home but words will break my heart". Therefore, this study opines that verbal violence is like a sword that pierces through the heart with indelible mark. The addressee goes with an injury he/she nurse for the rest of life.

Theoretical Framework
This study utilizes Brown and Levinson (1987) politeness theory and Leech (1983) politeness maxims for data analysis.

Brown and Levison (1987) Politeness theory: It is the theory that accounts for the redressing of the affronts to face posed by face-threatening act to addressee. It is based on the concept that people have a social self-image that they consciously project and try to protect. Brown and Levinson (61) construct their politeness theory on the premise that many speech acts are threatening in that they do not support the face wants of the speaker and or those of the addressee. They propose that a face threat directly affects the perceived relationship between the speaker and the hearer. For example, intrinsic face threat specified by this theory include: disapproval, disagreement, challenge and non-co-operation. Brown and Levinson (66) categorized face into two; positive face and negative face. They define positive in two ways: "as the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some other executors" or alternatively, "the positive consistent self-image or personality (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants". It can also mean when others like, respect and approve of us. Brown and Levinson posit negative face "as the want of every competent adult member that his actions be unimpeded by others or "the basic claim of territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction that is freedom of action and freedom from imposition. Negative face implies when we feel that others cannot constrain us in any way.

Leech (1983) Politeness Maxims: Leech (128) posits politeness maxim as a way of explaining how politeness operates in conversational exchanges. Leech's concept on politeness maxims is concerned with conflict avoidance and geared towards comity. A polite speaker tactfully employs language in order to make his/her statements acceptable to the decoders. To be polite is saying the socially correct things (Lakoff, 34). Leech observes that politeness is sometimes relative to people and their culture, expressed through language use. Leech identifies seven (7) politeness maxims as thus;
1. Tact maxim which stipulates that speakers should;
   a. minimize the expression of beliefs which imply cost to others and maximize the expression of beliefs which imply benefit to others.
   b. minimize the expression of impolite beliefs and maximize the expression of polite beliefs.
2. Generosity maxim states that interactants should;
   a. minimize benefit to self
   b. maximize cost to self
3. Approbation maxim states that speakers should;
   a. minimize dispraise of others
   b. maximize praise or approval of others
4. Modesty maxim stipulates that speakers should always;
   a. minimize the expression of praise of self

b. maximize the expression of dispraise of self
5. Agreement maxim states;
   a. minimize the expression of disagreement between self and others
   b. maximize agreement between self and others
6. Sympathy maxim stipulates that speakers should;
   a. minimize antipathy between self and others
   b. maximize sympathy between self and others.
7. Pollyanna maxim states that;
   People should look at the bright side instead of the gloomy side in talking about others.

Methodology

The research adopted a descriptive quantitative type of study which aimed at obtaining data through questionnaire and observation. Ten (10) different families, five (5) families each from the two villages (Eedibia and Ezeogba) that make up Emekuku autonomous community were randomly selected to obtain data for analysis with the intent to find out if language users in the families know what politeness maxims are and their perception of verbal violence. Family members form the population for the study and questionnaire were distributed to the members who filled and returned.

Data Presentation: Participants' demographic data using statistical analysis of the simple percentage in a table below:

S/N 1.	Variable(Family)	Group (10)	Frequency of Data	Valid %	Cumulative%
	Five families	Ezedibia	3	10.7%	10.7%
	Five families	Ezeogba	2	7.1%	17.8%
	Five families	Ezeogba	4	14.3%	32.1%
	Five families	Ezedibia	2	7.1%	39.2%
	Five families	Ezeogba	3	10.7%	49.2%
	Five families	Ezedibia	3	10.7%	60.6%
	Five families	Ezeogba	2	7.1%	67.7%
	Five families	Ezedibia	2	7.1%	74.8%
	Five families	Ezeogba	4	14.3%	89.1%
	Five families	Ezedibia	3	10.7%	100%
		Total	28	100%	
2.	Sex	Male	11	39.2%	39.2%
		Female	17	60.7%	100%
		Total	28	100%	
3.	Age	30 yrs below	9	32.1%	32.1%
		31 yrs above	19	67.8%	100%
		Total	28	100%	
4.	Position	Father	4	14.3%	14.3%
		Mother	10	35.7%	50%
		Biological son	2	7.1%	57.1%
		Biological daughter	4	14.3%	71.4%
		House help	8	28.5%	100%
		Total	28	100%	
5.	Religion	Christian	27	96.4%	96.4%

		Moslem	___	___	____
		Traditional	1%	3.5%	100%
		Total	28	100%	100%
6.	Family background	Educated	6	21.4%	21.4%
		Uneducated	10	35.7%	57.1%
		Married	5	17.8%	74.9%
		Single	4	14.3%	89.2%
		Divorced	3	10.7%	100%
		Total	28	100%	
7.	Occupation	Civil servant	5	17.8%	17.8%
		Business	12	42.8%	60.6%
		Students	11	39.3%	100%
		Total	28	100%	
8.	Residence Type	Self-compound	8	28.5%	28.5%
		Public compound	20	71.4%	100%
		Total	28	100%	

From the table above, twenty-eight (28) out of thirty (30) copies of the questionnaire were filled and returned. From the twenty-eight (28), thirteen (13) which represented 46.4% were retrieved from five families in Ezedibia while fifteen (15) which counted for 53.5% were gathered from another five families in Ezeogba village in Emekuku. Out of the twenty-eight (28) family members that participated, eleven (11) that indicated 39.2% were male respondents while seventeen (17) which was 60.7% were female respondents. From the twenty-eight (28), nine (9) represented 32.1% were 30 years below while nineteen (19) which was 67.8% were 31 years and above. On the position of participants in the family, data retrieved showed that out of the twenty-eight (28), four (4) which counted for 14.3% were fathers, ten (10) which represented 35.7% were mothers, two (2) that counted for 7.1% were biological sons, four (4) which implied 14.3% were biological daughters while eight (8) that indicated 28.5% were house helps.

On religion, twenty-seven (27) that represented 96.4% respondents were Christians while only one (1) which indicated 3.5% was a traditional worshiper and no Moslem among all the participants. Family background indicated that out of the twenty-eight (28) respondents, six (6) that indicated 21.4% were educated, ten (10) that represented 35.7% were uneducated, five (5) which implied 17.8% were married, four (4) that counted for 14.3% were single while three (3) that indicated 10. 7% were divorced. Then by occupation, five (5) which indicated 17.8% were civil servants, twelve (12) which implied 42.8% were business people and eleven (11) that implied 39.3% were students. Lastly, residential type showed that eight (8) represented 28.5% of the respondents resided in their personal compounds while twenty (20) which indicated 71.4% lived in public compound.

Results and Analysis

Questionnaire/Research Questions	Idea/Lack of knowledge of politenes	Perception of verbal violence	Ignorance of verbal violence	Promotion of self-confide	Demotion and Enhancement of Hatred	Total

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	s maxims and Stipulations		implications	nce and love		
Strongly Agreed	5	4	2	____	3	14(50%)
Agreed	3	3	1	____	2	9(32.1%)
Disagreed	____	____	____	____	3	3(10.7%)
Strongly Disagreed	____	____	____	____	2	2(7.1%)
Total	8 (28.5%)	7 (25%)	3 (10.7%)	0 (0%)	10 (35.7%)	28

From the table above, politeness maxims and their stipulations were classified as; idea and lack of knowledge of politeness maxims stipulation in language use. By this, it was evident from the data that fourteen (14) that represented 50% of the respondents were stiffly in agreement that they had no knowledge of politeness maxims and its stipulations in language use. The result revealed that nine (9) which counted for 32.1% conformed to be ignorant of the implications of verbal violence on addressees rather they used it as language of rebuke. Three respondents out the twenty-eight (28) which implied 10.7% participants disagreed to the promotion of self-confidence and love by those they abused verbally while only two (2) which counted for 7.1% respondents vehemently disagreed that they were been hated in the cause of correction on wrong deeds.

Discussion of Findings

From the foregoing, it can be deduced that interactans in the families do not have knowledge of politeness maxims and even those who were aware did not speak in accordance with the stipulations. This was contrary to Brown and Levinson (178) positive politeness strategies of seek agreement and avoid disagreement. Also, it did not conform to Leech's (128) concept of politeness which is concerned with conflict avoidance. Through observations, language users in families used verbal violence as language of rebuke and correction of wrong deeds and were ignorant of the implications. Again, it was observed that, the speakers' tone, voice and facial expression sent negative meaning to the addressees as the addressees perceived anger, humiliation, hatred etc. This contradicted Svarova (9) who states that "addressers should indicate that they are reluctant to impinge".

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study concluded that verbal violence violated politeness maxims and the stipulations in families. Speakers deliberately employed verbal violence as acceptable utterances of rebuke and correction. Therefore, the study recommended that family conversations be embellished with courteous utterances using the stipulations of politeness maxims to shun the menace of verbal violence.

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