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*The International Journal of Humanities & Social Studies*

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# THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

## A Pragmatic Analysis of Impoliteness Forms and Strategies in Ekegusii Arbitration Discourse, Kenya

Callen Nyaboche Onyancha

Student, Department of Languages, Linguistics and Literature, Rongo University, Kenya

Dr. Nyakoe G. Damaris

Lecturer, Department of languages, Linguistics and Literature, Rongo University, Kenya

David Ogoti Ongarora

Lecturer, Department of Languages, Maseno University, Kenya

### **Abstract:**

*Politeness is a pragmatic concept that assumes mutually co-operative behavior considerateness for others and polished behaviour in verbal interactions. Politeness guards against harming the hearer and speaker's self-esteem (face) during conversation. However, some speakers may intentionally attack the target's face by being impolite. The purpose of this study was to analyze the linguistic impoliteness forms and strategies employed in EkeGusii arbitration discourse. The study adopted an analytical research design and was guided by The Theory of Impoliteness by Jonathan Culpeper. Naturally occurring data was collected through tape recording of actual arbitration conversations, semi-structured interviews and the researcher's native speaker intuitions. The study population constituted the utterances from participants of the arbitration sessions held. The sample population constituted the actual impolite words and utterances spoken during arbitration conversations. The study was carried out in Bonchari and south Mugirango Constituencies in Kisii County in Kenya since speakers in the two constituencies belong to the two dialects of EkeGusii; Ekerogoro and Ekemaate dialects*

*With permission from Rongo University, NACOSTI and the county Government, data collection was done through tape recording of the actual arbitration discourse, oral interviews after the arbitration sessions were conducted and through non-participant observation. Data analysis was done in line with Culpeper's Theory of Impoliteness.*

*The findings of this study revealed that most arbitrators attacked the face of those whose cases they arbitrated over. The face attacks made those in conflict dissatisfied with the resolutions reached by the arbitrators often leading to discontentment among those who were not favoured by the verdicts reached. The findings of this study may contribute to the study of impoliteness in Eke Gusii as one of the languages of the world hence enriching research on etiquette and communicative competence. Findings of this study, if availed to arbitrators, may enlighten and even render them better users of language in arbitration.*

**Keywords:** Context, face, face attack, politeness, impoliteness and power

### **1. Introduction**

The paper examines impolite language use in EkeGusii arbitration discourse. Impoliteness in language entails intentional attack on the self-esteem of a conversational partner (Bousefield 2008). William (2000) indicates that Arbitration as a means of dispute resolution, has always been the first step in conflict resolution among African communities before court processes could be explored. Arbitration is geared towards creating social harmony away from the court processes.

Impoliteness in arbitration discourse would not only cause aggression from those to whom it is directed, but also, divert focus from dispute resolution to emotion management. Jamet and Jobert (2013) observe that impoliteness has serious implications on interpersonal communication as well as society as a whole. Impoliteness in public hearings can render the process less productive. Tracy (2009) observes that during public hearings, interlocutors are permitted to express outrage and criticism while protecting face simultaneously. Tracy (2009) advocates for reasonable hostility.

Arbitrators in EkeGusii included the area Chief and his council of elders. The decisions reached during arbitration sessions are usually binding as the arbitrators are recognized as community leaders. Arbitration has always been a part of the political organization of the AbaGusii (EkeGusii language speakers) as elaborated by Narlove (1969).

Impoliteness is the use of language to cause offence (Culpeper 1996). In addition, Bousfield (2008) includes the hearer's perspective and defines impoliteness as language that causes offence on the hearer, and the hearer interprets it as offensive. Impoliteness is subsumed under the field of sociopragmatics and interpersonal pragmatics in particular (Locher& Graham 2010). According to Locher (2004), interpersonal pragmatics is the study of the ways in which social actors use language to form relationships in situ. Impoliteness entails use of language to hurt a conversation partner (Culpeper 2008). Participants of a conversation may resort to attacking one another's self-esteem (face), a situation that renders such verbal interactions less productive. Discontentment with decisions reached during arbitration processes

results in court processes which are not only time consuming but costly too. This study sought to analyze language use during EkeGusii arbitration sessions, in particular, the current study focused on analyzing the impolite forms and strategies that interlocutors of EkeGusii arbitration discourse could be using that hampered the arbitration process. Given that interlocutors seeking arbitration are already in conflict, impoliteness in such discourse may endanger reconciliation of such parties. The researcher sought to find out the impoliteness forms and strategies employed in EkeGusii arbitration discourse that would be reason for discontentment with the decisions reached in arbitration.

Eggs and Slade (1997), observe that conversation is a critical linguistic site for the construction of inter-personal relationships and negotiating of social identity. Impoliteness which is intentional harm of the hearer's face (Culpeper 1996) may impact negatively on interpersonal relationships and particularly arbitration discourse. Goffman (1967) defines Face as the positive value that a person claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact according to Goffman (1967). Impoliteness has been categorized into two; first order impoliteness which are the layperson's behavior judgements according to their norms of practice such as impolite, rude, polite, rude, polished that are made by social actors themselves. Second order impoliteness on the other hand are theoretical concepts about impoliteness. Culpeper (2005), however observes that second order impoliteness are informed by first order impoliteness and cannot be disregarded.

Language use is expected to be in line with the social dictates of the linguistic group. However, any deviation from the social norms calls for an investigation into the reason for such an occurrence. Brown and Levinson (1987) argue that, during conversation, the interlocutors are keen to protect one another's face wants and, any competent speaker of a language is expected to mitigate any face harm they may cause their listener(s) by use of hedges, impersonalization, use of deference terms such as honorifics, use of in-group identity markers and through nominalization. Using language to mitigate face harm entails politeness according to Brown and Levinson (1987). However, instances of intentional face attack may occur in any form of discourse hence the need for investigations into impoliteness forms and strategies that might occur in EkeGusii arbitration discourse and determinants of such occurrences.

Impoliteness may occur directly through linguistic acts such as abuses, threats, ridicule, belittlement name calling and silencers, or indirectly through sarcastic remarks, ironic statements or jokes and teasing (Bousefield 2008). Culpeper (2008) observes that, speakers employ five impoliteness strategies in conversation which include: positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, bald on record impoliteness, mock impoliteness and withholding politeness where it is required.

### 1.1. Impoliteness

Impoliteness is not the absence of politeness but, the intentional use of language that is meant to harm the hearer's face. Mills (2003), however observes that communication is not always cooperative; sometimes speakers attack instead of supporting each other in a conversation and this amounts to impoliteness. Locher and Bousefield (2008) view impoliteness as behavior that is face aggravating in a particular context. Bousefield (2008) further emphasizes that impoliteness is intentional face harm. Culpeper (2013) defines impoliteness as inappropriate and negatively marked behavior that is not in line with the conversational norms of a given linguistic group. Culpeper (2008), agrees with Bousefield that impoliteness is intentional. Failure to consider others' self-esteem needs in a conversation is agreeably a common phenomenon in languages of the world. This study is an investigation into impoliteness strategies that may occur in EkeGusii arbitration discourse. Instances of discontentment with resolutions to conflict reached through arbitration are not a new phenomenon. This often results in the seeking of redress in courts by the parties involved. In many instances the parties involved complained of being harassed by the arbitrators, not being listened to well, being dismissed and unfairness in the whole arbitration process. This happened verbally pointing to a possibility of inappropriate language use during the arbitration process.

Language use that hurts the self-esteem (feelings) of the listener is considered as impoliteness. The current study seeks to investigate impoliteness strategies that interlocutors of EkeGusii arbitration discourse that may be causing discontentment with verdicts rendered by the arbitrators.

Lakoff (1973) argues that rules of politeness should be friendly, give options and should not impose on any one. Politeness entails avoidance of linguistic and non-linguistic expressions that will harm the hearer's face. Brown (2015) observes that politeness is a universal feature of human language that expresses the human sociality through speech. Brown and Levinson (1987) posit that there are two types of face that are projected during communicative events: negative face, which is a claim to one's territory, personal preserves, and rights to non-distraction or freedom from imposition and Positive face, which is the desire to be appreciated or approved of by other members of society. Threats to Positive face include: expressions of disapproval, disagreements, accusations and interruptions. These potentially lower one's self esteem. Threats to Negative face are: orders, requests, suggestions and advice. (Brown & Levinson 1987). Threats to ones face are referred to as impoliteness hence warranting an investigation into impolite language use in EkeGusii arbitration discourse as a possible cause of discontentment by some of those involved in the arbitration processes. The Theory of impoliteness was used to analyze the strategies that speakers used to intentionally attack the face of their interlocutors in EkeGusii arbitration discourse under the five impoliteness super strategies outlined in the Theory of Impoliteness. The theory catered for the categorization of the linguistic output strategies as realizations of impoliteness strategies too.

### 1.2. Arbitration

The Merriam Dictionary (1993) defines arbitration as the process of settling an argument or a disagreement between two people by somebody who is impartial, and, who is selected or agreed upon by the parties involved. Arbitration is a reconciliation process practiced by an authority figure who mediates between conflicting parties but is empowered to make binding judgements. The purpose is not to render a judgement in law but to reconcile the conflicting

parties and its norms. The relationship between community and the authority is cushioned by community representatives who advice authority (Williams 2000). Bell (2004) explains why alternative dispute resolution is preferable over court processes as a means of dispute resolution. Bell (2004) observes that until recently courts have been used as primary mechanisms to resolve disputes, However, public dissatisfaction with an adversarial system, government recognition of arrange of expert decision makers and increased awareness of the importance of acknowledging cultural differences among disputing parties are among the factors that have encouraged the rise of alternative dispute resolution.

Arbitration is an alternative to civil litigation or an alternative dispute resolution procedure. In the current judicial system in Kenya, conflicting parties have been referred back from a court of law to the Chief and village elders for arbitration. The Arbitration Act of Kenya (2010) allows reference to the community arbitrators on matters but not limited to marital conflicts, family disputes and land disputes. Criminal matters however are a preserve of the courts of law (Ibid). As Bell (2004) observes, arbitrators at the community level share a common culture with those in conflict, hence they understand better the frames Tannen (1993) on which the behavior of those in conflict is based. Arbitration as a means of conflict resolution is enshrined in the laws of Kenya in the Arbitration Act No. 4 of (1995). The arbitration Act allows those in conflict to choose one or more arbitrators and as well as a suitable meeting place to hold the arbitration session. The arbitrators' verdict however is binding hence giving them power over those in conflict.

Ultimately, the success of arbitration processes is to a large extent depended on the ability of the parties involved to hold a productive communicative engagement lest the verdict rendered is contested by part of those in conflict. Language use in arbitration discourse should be geared towards smooth communication. Those in conflict may be family members or people who are socially close to each other such as relatives, friends or even family members of the arbitrators. The current study seeks to find out if linguistic impoliteness is a contributor to the discontentment expressed by some of those arbitrated over.

Arbitration is commonly used to resolve conflict among Africans. Among the AbaGusii it is commonly used when one or both of those in conflict hail from the area under the jurisdiction of the Chief. The chief allows those in conflict to give their side of the story as he and his elders play judges. The chief and his council of elders (arbitrators) are expected to be neutral and each party is to receive a fair hearing. Instances of impoliteness in arbitration discourse if not guarded, would render conversations emotionally charged.

## 2. Methodology and Theoretical Background

This study adopted an analytical research design. Kothari, (2004) posits that Analytical Research Design uses facts or information already available and analyzes it to make critical evaluation of the material. The current study analyzed actual utterances from arbitration sessions as well as those from oral interviews. The data was analyzed and impolite words and utterances were identified guided by Culpeper (1996) five impoliteness super strategies.

The study is grounded on Culpeper's (1996) Theory of Impoliteness. Culpeper (2016) says that, for polite items to count as polite, they must go unchallenged. For impoliteness to count as impoliteness, it must be challenged by counter impoliteness, metapragmatic comments such as 'that's rude', indications of offence and symptoms of emotions such as humiliation, hurt or anger. It is such impolite linguistic items and utterances in EkeGusii arbitration discourse that were the concern of the current study.

Culpeper (2010) explains that the linguistic formulae such as vocatives, personal negative evaluations, dismissals, silencers and threats, are not semantically impolite per se but their context of usage yields impolite interpretations. Culpeper (2010) further observes that there are more implicit ways of achieving impoliteness than the explicit ones and that, more often, the implicit politeness linguistic formulae are used to communicate impoliteness. Any competent native speaker of a language understands the meanings of both direct and indirect (implied) utterances

This study sought to investigate the linguistic strategies that EkeGusii speakers employ in arbitration discourse with the guidance of Culpeper's five impoliteness strategies constituting of: Bald-on-record impoliteness, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, mock impoliteness and withholding politeness strategies.

## 3. Results and Discussion

Culpeper (2015) observes that interlocutors intentionally resort to attacking the face of their conversational partners. This study sought to explore the impoliteness strategies and forms interlocutors use in Eke Gusii arbitration discourse. An analysis of the data revealed that the interlocutors employed all the five impoliteness strategies with the arbitrators being the greatest employers of impoliteness strategies. Bald on record impoliteness, Mock impoliteness, Positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness as well as withholding of politeness were equally prevalent. Where is the data the explanations that you have outlined above?

Although interpretation of an utterance is context dependent, Culpeper (2011) observes that there are formulaic and conventionalized forms of impoliteness whose offensiveness is not easy to eliminate by means of context like understanding them to be part of friendly banter. The criteria for identifying impoliteness forms and strategies was based on identification of utterances that conventionally communicated offence, the nativist advantage (Chomsky 1967) of the researcher in identifying implied impoliteness and through observing of paralinguistic cues on the interlocutors that indicated offence.

### 3.1. Bald- on- Record Impoliteness

To begin with, Bald on record impoliteness strategy, which according to Culpeper (2011) is a face attack meted on an addressee directly, intentionally and unambiguously. Bald on Record impoliteness was realized through various output

strategies such as insults, abuses, use of taboo words, direct negative criticism, negative references, unpalatable questions, use of vocatives and reprimanding. Many instances were noted during EkeGusii arbitration discourse when Speakers employed bald-on-record impoliteness strategy.

Excerpt 1. Obwo no'bochinga (that is stupidity) In a case where a lady (Asati) is accused of infidelity, an arbitrator uses Bald on record impoliteness strategy realized in form of an insult obwono'bochinga (that is stupidity) in response to Asati's promise to end the illicit extra-marital affair in which she is engaged. Locher and Bousfield (2008) observe that impoliteness is closely tied with the very concept of power such that those whose face is damaged by an utterance find their response actions restricted by the power differences. The utterance obwo nob'ochinga obwate (you are being stupid) is a direct insult a bald-on-record impoliteness strategy. The face threatening act was performed directly and unambiguously. Asati, who is accused of being involved in an extra-marital love affair, does not respond. Bousefield (2003) observes that there are three responses that are expected on the occurrence of a face threat: the hearer may decide not to respond; they may accept the face attack or counter it defensively or offensively. Asati may not have responded because of the restrictions on her action prompted by the power relations with the speaker. Locher and Bousfield (2008) argue that the action environment of the socially less powerful is constrained in their interaction with socially more power conversational partners.

"A social agent A has power over another social agent B if and only if A strategically constraints B's action-environment" Wartenburg (1990) in Locher and Bousfield (2008) The Chief who is one of the arbitrators too in suggests that Asati should go to her matrimonial home and engage in sex to her satisfaction before she comes back to her husband

Excerpt 2. Genda seino orarinu kabisa oisaneke omanyegochocha [Go to your maternal home and have enough sex then come back.]. Amongst the Abagusii, people don't engage in sexual activities with their kinsmen (Ethnologue 2015). This too is a bald on record face attack in form of an insult. Asati's self-image is attacked since she is portrayed as a person who engages in sexual activities indiscriminately The chief further intentionally attacks Asati's face when he advises her to relocate to a bar where she can have as much sexual intercourse as she wants. The Chief directly attacks Asati's face by portraying her as a prostitute. Ogende ebaa ochikomenya aroro egekogera noo oraakwe emete eisaine buna otagege. [Then you can relocate to a bar where you will receive enough strokes of the 'stick']. The Chief euphemistically refers to the male sexual organs as 'sticks'. Reference to sexual organs 'emete' in a mixed gender and age group is taboo in the Abagusii culture (Ethnologue, Maisiba 2015); it is face aggravating to not only the target but even to the by-standers. Asati's face is severely damaged as she is presented as a promiscuous person with multiple sexual partners. This equally amounts to an insult since she is portrayed as a prostitute. Another arbitrator, an elder further aggravates Asati's face directly and unambiguously with yet another expression with taboo words

Excerpt 3 Aye toigweti? Ngwategerera na'mato ao buna mwarenge koiranera buna esimi egoakwa kwaramorama buna nyoko enyuma [ Have you not heard with your own ears as you conversed with him on phone. You even abused him that he resembles his mother's buttocks?]. A recorded conversation between Asati and her lover (Oeta) contained references to buttocks (enyuma) a private body part whose public mention is taboo among the Abagusii (Bosire). The chief who is an elderly male was not expected to address Asati who was female and junior in terms of age, using the same taboo words. The speaker directly and unambiguously harms his Asati's face. The chief again asks Asati if her husband was incapable of satisfying her sexually in excerpt 4.

Excerpt 4 Omogaka oo otari gokorina buya? [Doesn't your husband satisfy you sexually?]. As an elderly male and socially powerful by virtue of the office he held, the speaker's reference to sexual intercourse (gokorina) publicly in such a mixed group setting is not only embarrassing, but unacceptable among the Abagusii (Maisiba 2015). The chief not only attacks the addressee's face intentionally and indirectly, but also attacks her husband's face by painting him as being sexually weak. Arbitration being a means of settling a disputes between two parties, the arbitrator is expected to be neutral hence such impoliteness towards Asati was uncalled for. The use of Bald-on-record impoliteness, which incidentally comes from the arbitrators points to partiality. During another arbitration session over a case of an unfaithful and irresponsible man (Aguta), elder points to Aguta's low-wittedness when he observes that Aguta was keen on marrying and re-marrying as he wasted family resources yet he had not satisfied his wife.

Excerpt 5. Nonye nenchera akonywoma nigo ere eyo'boriri. Taraisanekia omosubati oye ko ,Ne'nibo akona gotuguta. [Even the way he marries, he does it stupidly. He hasn't satisfied his wife's needs yet he keeps wasting his resources].

This is a pointed criticism that severely damages the addressee's face directly. Among the Abagusii, men are not only the heads of the home, but also providers (Ethnologue 2016). This criticism was made in the presence of aguta's in-laws who attended the arbitration session. Mufwene (1996) observes that among the Bantu, in-laws are accorded great respect to an extent that even the mention of their names in the presence of the in-laws is almost taboo. The reference to Aguta as a person who does his things stupidly, is an insult hauled at Aguta in the presence of his parents-in-law resulting in great face aggravation. Aguta had also blatantly lied to the wife Moraa about the financing of his education.

Excerpt 6. Aguta agantebia ng'a ngochiare esukuru lakini nomobunge ogoakana... eKero areta rirube narioa gontebia ng'a nebisi etakeire [ He told me that he was going to school with the member of parliament's full funding. On bringing the admission letter he said that school fees was required]. Lies are a form of bald-on-record impoliteness (Culpeper 2011).

### 3.2. Positive Impoliteness

The other impoliteness strategy that was realized in this study was positive impoliteness. Culpeper (2011) argues that a speaker who employs positive impoliteness strategies does not promote the hearer's desire to be approved of or being liked by other participants in the communicative event including the speaker himself. Brown and Levinson (1987) observe that at all times, speakers endeavor to protect the hearer's face through mitigation of any potential face attack

using a politeness strategy. However, in this study it was noted that some speakers intentionally attacked the hearers' positive face without any redressive effort. Positive impoliteness may be realized lexicogrammatically or through implicatures and indirect statements (Culpeper 2005). Attacks on the positive face may be in form of pointed criticisms and admonitions, threats, unpalatable questions and personalized third person negative references (Culpeper 2016).

Excerpt 7: Genda seino orarinu kabisa oisaneke omanyegochagocha egekogera chibesa echio oyonde agokoragereria onorete kabisa nachio chiakomwenirie. [Go to your home and 'be climbed' (have sex) then come back. The money that your husband uses to feed you has made you so fat and rude] The suggestion by the Chief, that Asatibe sent away from her matrimonial home back to her parents communicates rejection towards the addressee harming her positive face. The Chief's suggestion that Asati can engage in sexual activities 'be climbed' (orarinu) with her kins while at her maternal home portrays Asati as not only an immoral person, but also uncultured for that matter. Salikoko (1995) explains that the Bantu culture abhors sexual interactions among kinsmen.

Such negative portrayal may not endear Asati to both the participants of the arbitration process or even the bystanders (Bousefield 2008) in this conversation hence damaging her positive face. The negative criticism of the lady as being too fat (onorete) and rude (chiakomweniri) aggravates her positive face as well. The remarks communicate dislike towards Asati.

Excerpt 8: Omosubati oyo tiga agende sobo [Let this lady go to her maternal home. An arbitrator in excerpt 8 threatens Asati with being chased back to her maternal home. Literally this means being chased from her matrimonial home, an action that communicates rejection. Brown and Levinson (1987) posits that every person desire to be liked and accepted a need that constitutes the positive face. The threat to chase Asati not only communicates rejection but disapproval in equal measure hence Asati's positive face wants are not put into consideration.

Excerpt 9: Buna momanyete botambe omokungu nere okworokia signs chiokogania omosacha. Kero akworokirie igo naye kwa..... (inaudible) [You all know that it is a woman who shows interest in a man. The man only yields to the lady's advances].

An arbitrator in the case of Moraa against her unfaithful husband faults women for being too weak to resist the lust by men. The arbitrator insinuates that the lady in question was the initiator of the illicit love affair and Aguta was only being a man as expected. Such is a stereotypical, personalized negative evaluation of the women folk and consequently, an attack on the woman's positive face.

Excerpt 10: Aba nabwo baria ntari gotaka narora as'obosio bwane! [This are the kind of people that I never wish to catch sight of!].

An elder expresses contempt and disgust towards Aguta. These feelings aggravate Aguta's positive face and greatly damages it. He is portrayed as a detestable and an unsightly person. His positive face wants of wanting to be liked and appreciated are not taken into account by the speaker. Contempt and disapproval are direct impoliteness output strategies that aggravate the positive face of the addressee (Bousefield 2008). In this case Aguta's positive face is damaged without any mitigation effort. Tracy (2010) observes that people have a right to express outrage, yet, the norm of conduct for public life that is mostly espoused is civility. Tracy (2010) reiterates that one can express outrage and criticism without being disrespectful to the addressee.

Excerpt 11: Tinkoba n'obosoku goteba ng'a ekero nanywometu gochi sobo Aguta, nonya n'emegondo yabo yonsi enanyorete bakondiseti. Lakini rende nkarora tinkoru aroro inakobarerwa ng'a naetire ense. Nkaamua koremereria. [I won't be ashamed to say that when Aguta married me, they had leased all their land. However, I decided to persevere and stay because I didn't want to be considered a loose foot.]. Moraa embarrasses her husband in the presence of his mother-in-law. Matters relating to sexual immorality is a taboo subject between mother-in-law and son-in-law in the Abagusii culture (Hankassan 1988). In the land sale case between Nyaboe and her husband Obara, a witness asks Nyaboe an unpalatable question;

Excerpt 12: Omogondo nkooniwa ore banyene bataiyo? Omogaka nyene? [Can land be sold in the absence of the owner, the man?] The unpalatable question portrays Nyaboe as having done the socially unacceptable in the Abagusii culture. The speaker uses the rhetoric question (can land be sold in the absence of the owner?), with an intention of disendearing the lady seller and the buyer of the land. They are portrayed as having done something asocial, hence damaging their positive face. An elder reminds Aguta that he has been disorganizing his wife as she endeavors to invest for their family. He is also reminded that he did not take part in educating his wife who despite of that uses her resources to cater for family needs.

Excerpt 13: Bono my brother omong'ina oo nigo achete bwoo gasomete naende otemire ebinto ebinge aye gogoturubania. Sincerely ndagotebi ng'a you are abnormal. [My brother, you married your wife already educated. She has tried investing in many ways yet your work is to disorganize her. Honestly, let me tell you that you are abnormal.] The elder concludes that Aguta's actions show that he was abnormal. Aguta was belittled before his wife, and negatively evaluated. This are linguistic realizations of positive impoliteness (Culpeper 1996).

### 3.3. Negative Impoliteness Strategies

Negative impoliteness strategies when used in a conversation are a form of intrusion into one's personal space and an impediment of one's freedom of action (Culpeper 1996). The output strategies of negative impoliteness include impolite interruption of an interlocutors' speech, threats issued to a conversation partner, asking unpalatable questions, dismissing of ones' contribution in a conversation and silencing a conversational partner.

In Asati's case, the arbitrators pay no attention to her negative face wants. The arbitrators attack Asati's negative face by asking her unpalatable questions concerning her private life. An elder asks her a question about her sexual relationship with her husband in excerpt 14.

Excerpt 14: Omogaka oo otari gogoisanekia? [Doesn't your husband satisfy you sexually?] The arbitrators dismisses of her responses when he implies Asati if she had been sexually involved with her alleged lover. Asati' responds that 'Momura oyo Tanya kobanainche' [This guy has never had sex with me] The arbitrator however refutes her answer 'teba ekeene'[Say the truth!]. It is an impediment to Asati's freedom of speech choices when the chief insinuates that she is lying in excerpt 15 and that there could be a problem in her marriage.

Excerpt 15 'Teba ekeene torigie eriogo. Omochando nyomb'ore' [Say the truth so that we can get a solution.] The elder coerces Asati towards her confession about the truthfulness of the unfaithfulness allegation to which she promises to bring to a stop 'Etogochagotigana [We are going to part]' These communicative events interfere with Asati's freedom of choice on what to say and what not to hence an attack on her negative face (Brown and Leevinson 1987) An elder interrupts this conversation with the threat in excerpt 16.

Exerpt 16 'Omanyete nkobogori ekeranya korwabwo ngotwange bobo' [You know I can fetch a cane and whip you terribly!]

The elder threatens to whip the accused if she doesn't tell the truth. Impolite interruptions as well as the threat are an attack on the negative face of the addressee. The threat to beat the speaker on the other hand is a form of coercive impoliteness (Culpeper 2011) intended to make the target change her mind about what she had earlier said. This form of intimidation, apart from being inappropriate in an arbitration process, amounts to intruding into the hearer's personal space as well as impeding their free will of speech hence attacking their negative face.

An elder orders a participant to get out of the meeting. Such a vocative 'sokaisiko!' (get out!) is an attack on the hearer's negative face (Culpeper 2015). The hearer does not have an alternative but to get out as ordered. This doubles up as a condescension. Vocatives according to Brown and Levinson (1987) do not construct but damage the recipient's negative face. Use of vocatives, condescension and dismissals are linguistic realizations of negative face attack on the addressed person (Culpeper 2010)

### 3.4. Mock Impoliteness

Indirect language use with an intention to harm face is characteristically mock impoliteness, unless it's geared towards isolating other people from a given conversation (Culpeper 1996). Mock impoliteness employs insincere expressions or non-conventional politeness that are cancelled by the context of usage. Mock impoliteness is implied impoliteness that is reflected by a mismatch between the context and the linguistic behavior that results in face damage. A contextual interpretation of an utterance may not yield the same meaning as the semantic interpretation of the utterance. Mock impoliteness may be realized through the use of irony, sarcasm, tautologies, ridicule and demeaning statements (Culpeper

2011). Implicit impoliteness according to Jamet and Jobert (2013) are slightly more frequent than explicit ways deploying impolite formulae.

Mock impoliteness strategy makes use of indirect linguistic realizations to attack the face of the addressee. The speaker relies on the recipient's linguistic ability to infer the intended face harm being communicated (Grice 1989). These implicational impoliteness strategies may also be form driven such as tautologies, convention driven such as ironic and sarcastic remarks or context driven such that the lexical choices a speaker makes that do not match the context of usage as in the case of implicatures (Grice 1989).

The chief reminds an accused person that, apart from the arbitrators being older than her husband, their reasoning too is different from that of her husband. The chief indirectly warns her that they were not as gullible as her husband. Having admitted her involvement in an illicit love affair, the chief warns Asati not to expect a similar response from the tribunal.

Excerpt 17: Emiaka yaito tegotwallow torengererie buna okagerete tokorengereria. Gose onye gokagete ing'a twensi nabo tore buna obegete omogaka oo, tekonyarekana [Our age cannot allow us to think in the way you assume we are thinking. In case you are imagining that you can manipulate us as you do your husband, then you are wrong].

This is a sarcastic remark that indirectly insinuates low intellectual abilities on the addressee. Her husband too is portrayed in the same light of foolishness to such an extent that he condones unfaithfulness from his wife. The implicature in this statement is contextual since as things stand the man is unable to tame his wife resorting to arbitration. Foolishness is exposed when Mora a ridiculously reveals that, Aguta had not only disposed of their only remaining cow to buy clothes, but gave it out to the buyer together with the rope he had used to lead it to the market. Culturally, the rope is returned in anticipation of another cow. The man is therefore portrayed as not only an irresponsible and selfish husband, but also, as being culturally naive. (Jamet and Jobert 2014) observe that implicit impoliteness may occur without any conventionalized impoliteness formulae being uttered.

Excerpt 18: 'akagenda Riosiri (a market) akaonia eng'ombe agatigerani omogori mpaka engori! [He took the cow to the market, sold it and even gave the tethering rope to the buyer!] (laughter from the audience). She further gives a sarcastic remark about her irresponsible husband; 'inkarora ng'a nonye ninche mbwate endamuamu, tiga akondisi.' [I decided to let him lease the plot since I realized that I was the jealous one in that matter]. Whom, having sold the last cow they had, still demanded to lease the only piece of land that the family had left. At surface value the statement looks like a decision arrived at after careful reflection on the matter. However, the implicit meaning portrays the man as irresponsible and despicable. The man's face is greatly damaged by the mockingly impolite utterance. Mufwene (1996) observes that in the African context in-laws accord each other great respect. Such portrayal of the man by his wife strips him off the respect from his in-laws who unfortunately were part of the arbitration team.

An elder uses an endearing term 'mose' usually used with little boys to show them affection among the AbaGusii. Ironically, the unpalatable question that comes after, and the insult after, show that the speaker did not intend to be affectionate at all

Excerpt 19 Bono mose egento ndakobori omoyio oyo twaigure, emeyio nemenge okobogori omoyio oyio bw'esword okamotobia ng'a otageete akorusie ebinto ebio bikogera okona konywomanywoma abakungu ekio nekeene? [Young man (endearment) if I may ask you about these swords you have been carrying, is it true that you asked your wife to chop off the things that kept you marrying over and over]. The target understands the indirect face attack and denies the allegation. Bousfield (2008) refers to politeness that does not match the context of usage as mock impoliteness.

Reference to sexual organs in a mixed age and gender group is taboo among the Bantu ( Mufwene 1996). Elder three asks Aguta if he asked his wife Moraa to chop off the things that caused his promiscuity 'Okamotobia akorusi ebinto ebio bikogera okona konywomanywoma' (you asked her to chop off those things that caused your constant marrying and remarrying) Although the speaker does not call them by name, the euphemism is still very clear.

### 3.5. Withholding of Politeness

A speaker may also withhold politeness where it is expected such as failure to thank a person who has extended a favour to you (Locher 2008). The major cases of withheld impoliteness were the failure by the arbitrators to appreciate the contributions of some of those in the arbitration discourse. Even those who offered to be witnesses were not thanked at the end of the arbitration sessions. An arbitrator says Twaigure bono. [We have heard], to a witness. The arbitrator should have thanked the witness for intervening in such a matter hence restoring peace.

## 4. Conclusion

This study has shown that arbitration among the AbaGusii is marred with impoliteness which in itself causes conflict among the users instead of its primary function of conflict resolution. In all the three arbitration cases sampled none of them was resolved in the spirit of building consensus, healing of broken relationships (Williams 2000). In the land case, Nyaboe was ordered to refund the money paid by the land buyer yet she had clearly stated that she used the money to educate her children. In the case of Asati's unfaithfulness, she was excommunicated from her matrimonial home while in the case Aguta and Moraa, Aguta was asked not to set foot in Moraa's (his wife's) house. Human interpersonal relations as well as society as a whole remained strained. It is clear that the adversely impolite interlocutors are the arbitrators. In as much as arbitration takes place, instances of discontentment with the verdict from arbitration may be reduced with avoidance of face attacks and redirection of focus on conflict resolution.

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