Bald On-Record Politeness Strategy in Parliamentary Debates of the Parliament of Ghana

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Abstract

This paper examines how face needs are seemingly disregarded in parliamentary discourse, and the circumstances that frame such apparent infractions. Pivoting around politeness theory, politeness principles and maxims of conversation, the study uncovers means and ways in which Members of the Parliament of Ghana engage one another in debates on often contentious issues of national importance. By an analysis of content, the study identifies insults, accusations and imperatives as bald strategies used by the parliamentarians. All the actors in the debates – the Speaker, Majority MPs, Minority MPs – employed bald on-record utterances in a variety of ways and from either provocative or corrective positions in the discourse. The findings suggest that the Standing Orders on debates in the House are framed, in part, within the maxims of conversation proposed by Grice (1975), and they guide and influence the Members' use of politeness strategies during the debates. Besides, Members tended to commit face-threatening acts when they correctively pointed out that a previous speaker had flouted the maxims of quality and relevance. In view of the findings, the study recommends that closer attention be given to the role of context in the research on politeness.

1. Introduction

Politeness has been viewed as behaviour that is aimed at avoiding and reducing friction in inter-personal communication (e.g. Leech, 1983; Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987). From this perspective, and considering the significant role that politeness strategies play in managing, particularly, the interactional aspect of communicative exchanges, some scholars, like Lakoff (1973), have gone as far as to argue that being polite is even more important than the clarity required for optimal transmission of information in such exchanges. To quote Lakoff (1973:297, 298), Politeness usually "supersedes" the message being sent out, and "It is considered more important in a conversation to avoid offence than to achieve clarity." However, this is a position challenged to varying degrees by studies in, especially, institutional interpersonal discourse. (Shaw, 2000; House, 2008; Garces-Conejos 2009; House and Lévy-Tödter; 2010; Afful, 2017). For instance, while affirming that hosts of adversarial panel discussions on radio are more sensitive to the face needs of panelists' when moderating the latter's relational behaviour (compared to the transactional), Afful (2017) records that this does not deter the hosts from frequently employing the bald on-record politeness strategies (perceived outside of context to be the least polite) if they determined that a panelist's behaviour jeopardized the optimal clarity of the information that the panelist was transmitting. His findings show that the interaction does not break down as would be predicted because such adversarial interactions constitute an institution, with its own contextually determined rules of engagement that permit a level of politic impoliteness.

This paper examines linguistic performances of bald on-record acts in the specific setting of parliamentary discourse using the lenses of politeness theory and Gricean cooperative principles.

The notion of *context* is key in the discussion of politeness. In this work, we use the term broadly, but also to underscore specifically, the partisan political positions that members regularly take on the floor of parliament (hereinafter also referred to as 'the House'). We also use 'context' to refer to the House's rules of engagement – the Standing Orders of the Parliament. Members of a discourse community explicitly or implicitly set limits in order to ensure that the language that is used brings about acceptable effects. These limits determine what interlocutors may say in the communication, how they may say it, and how co-interlocutors receive or interpret what is said. In this respect, Christie (2005) and Harris (2000) contend, for instance, that systematic impoliteness is encouraged and rewarded in the institutional context of Parliamentary Question Time in the British House of Commons. Such impoliteness can be described as 'sanctioned'. Instances of impoliteness, sanctioned or otherwise, are significant in the attempt to explicate the contribution of linguistic politeness behaviour in parliamentary debates and proceedings. Harris (2000) argues that Members of Parliament constitute a

community of practice with its own expectations, and concludes that extending politeness theory to such adversarial institutional contexts can generate different forms of politeness. The practices and expectations of the parliament community enable House Members to interpret intentional face-threatening acts as an important component of an adversarial political process such that they do not lead either to a breakdown in communication or interpersonal relationship. He adds that such behaviour is particularly the expectation from a good parliamentarian and since this behaviour functions to maintain interaction, it is deemed politic speech (Watts, 2003, 2005).

As a political governance entity, parliament, like religion and law, is one of those spheres of institutional life where language largely constitutes actions that are carried out. Seeking consensus, elaborating policy, negotiating and mediating in conflicts, representing interests and opposing the policy of others, are all fundamentally linguistic activities (Bayley, 2004). A significant element in the politician's use of language in these ways is the demonstration of politeness features. Political discourse is fundamentally competitive on several levels. There is competition for votes, competition for the best arguments justifying the best standpoints; and, in interactional argumentation, competition for the floor. The discourse in parliament is certainly political and often antagonistic and aggressive, which can result in impolite behaviour. However, as an institution that has rules governing its sessions, the interactions are structured and members are expected to be decorous in their submissions. If an utterance is considered 'unparliamentary', the contributor can be made to withdraw it. A member who feels that a statement they made is justified may attempt to contest the directive to withdraw the statement, though on the insistence of the leader of the House, the withdrawal has to be done, even if reluctantly.

House rules notwithstanding, the evidence suggests that impolite or unparliamentary language is used on the floor of parliament, often involving bald 'impoliteness'. Since linguistic deviations from the norms of specified discourse communities are marked features, it is worth examining the debates that take place in parliament to find out when and how the bald-on record politeness strategy is employed in either parliamentary or unparliamentary ways, and how such behaviour affects the deliberations on the floor of the Parliament of Ghana. Moreover, though this is not the first time that research has been carried out in parliamentary discourse in Ghana, such work that has been from a politeness perspective is relatively limited. Research focusing on politeness in parliamentary debates contributes new perspectives to the existing knowledge on politeness in political discourse in general and parliamentary discourse in particular. The role of bald on-record acts is prominent in this regard.

2.   Politeness Studies in Parliamentary Discourse

A number of studies in politeness in parliamentary discourse has been conducted by scholars over the years. Using Cullpeper's (2011) impoliteness model as the framework for analysis, Murphy (2014), for example, examined how (im)politeness was employed in the Prime Minister's Questions sessions in the UK parliament. Murpy (ibid) observed that impolite expressions were employed by the Members of Parliament in the UK when asking the Prime Minister questions but the MPs aligned to the government used politeness strategies when asking questions.

Maskuri, Djatmika and Purnanto (2019) also studied how Indonesian parliamentarians used politeness strategies. Their study revealed that bald-on record, negative politeness and positive politeness were the dominant politeness strategies used in the Indonesian parliament.

Saleem and Alatatr (2020) looked at how parliamentarians in the parliaments of Britain and Iraq use (im)politeness strategies in politically apportioning blame and in avoiding blame. Additionally, they also explored similarities and differences in the use of (im)politeness strategies in the two parliaments. Their study found that the British parliamentarians used impoliteness strategies when apportioning blame but the politeness strategies when avoiding blame. On the contrary, the parliamentarians in Iraq employed impoliteness when apportioning blame and avoiding blame.

The limited research on linguistic politeness phenomenon in the discourse of the Ghana parliament include Sarfo (2016). Sarfo studied questioning and debate in the Ghana and UK parliaments and observed that, though there were some similarities between the two parliaments, politeness is expressed differently in the two parliaments. The findings show that the Ghanaian parliamentarians expressed politeness by using direct linguistic forms but those in the UK expressed politeness indirectly.

A work similar, in aspects, to this present study is by Akuka, Hammond and Wornyo (2021) who investigated the politeness strategies employed by parliamentary actors in the Parliament of Ghana, the implications of the frequency of the use of the politeness strategies, and how the Standing Orders of Parliament determine the choice of a politeness strategy. They found that the Majority Members in Parliament used the highest frequency

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of positive politeness strategies while the Minority Members used more negative politeness strategies. Their study further revealed the negative politeness strategy as the most frequently used politeness strategy overall, with the Speaker of Parliament being the highest user of the negative strategy as well as of the bald on-record politeness strategy.

Significantly, Akuka et al's discussion of the bald on-record acts focuses almost exclusively on when and how the Speaker of the House employs the strategy. The work thus falls short of revealing the dynamics involved in their reported instances of bald on-record acts (719 acts or 52% of the total bald strategies recorded) used by the majority and the minority MPs, the two other actors in the House debates. The obvious interest in this would be to find out how these members use the strategy to address an opposing MP, and what happens when they do.

3. Theoretical Framework

Linguists hold that users of language universally have at the core of their interaction the notion of face. According to Goffman (1967), face is "the positive social value which a person effectively claims for himself or herself by the line others assume he or she has taken during a particular contact. Face is an image of self, delineated in terms of approved social attributes." Goffman (1967:10) further adds that "While the social face can be his or her personal possession, and the centre of his security and pleasure, it is only on loan from the society; it will be withdrawn unless he or she conducts himself in a way worthy of it." It can be deduced that at the heart of the phenomenon of politeness is the notion of face. When one uses language in a communication situation, they usually maintain or enhance the face of another interlocutor in the communication situation. This is done to ensure that there is no misunderstanding that can result in a breakdown of communication.

Brown and Levinson (1987) categorize five politeness strategies that speakers select from to manage face-threatening acts (FTAs) and these are positive politeness, negative politeness, bald on-record, off-record, and "Don't do the FTA.

Positive and negative politeness strategies both consider the hearers' face needs but in different ways. Positive politeness seeks to minimize the potential threat of an FTA and is demonstrated by the speaker expressing understanding of, approving of, or admiring the positive image of the hearer (Wagner, 2004). Positive strategies involve [Speaker] S attending to [Hearer] H (his interests, wants, needs, goals) exaggerating (interests, approval, sympathy with H), intensifying interest to H, using in-group identity markers, seeking agreement, and avoiding disagreement. Other ways include presupposing/raising/asserting common ground, joking, asserting or presupposing S's knowledge of and concern for H's wants, offering promise, being optimistic, including both S and H in the activity, giving (or asking for) reasons, assuming or asserting reciprocity, and giving gift to H (goods, sympathy, understanding, co-operation).

By using negative politeness strategies, a speaker acknowledges that they are infringing on the hearer's face needs and, thus, attempts to mitigate such infringement. Brown and Levinson (1987) opine that negative politeness is often preferred by speakers because it is considered a safe means of negotiating the face needs of the hearer. They list the following examples of negative politeness strategies: be conventionally indirect, question, hedge, be pessimistic, minimize the imposition, give deference, apologize, impersonalize S and H : avoid the pronouns *I* and *you*, state the FTA as a general rule, nominalize, and go on record as incurring a debt or as not indebting H.

On the other hand, the bald-on-record option involves no redressive action because this strategy is utilized when interlocutors have an intimate relationship or when the speaker or context prioritizes, justifies or demands communicative efficiency over an interlocutor's face concerns. It is employed when the speaker elects to commit a face threatening act than preserve the hearer's face. Resources in this strategy include insults, accusations, and commands. In effect, there are diverse ways of employing bald-on record in different circumstances because the speaker can have several motives for his decision to do an FTA with maximum efficiency.

The speaker using off-record indirect politeness strategy uses language indirectly such that one finds it difficult to ascribe (only) one clear communicative intention to the act. It is the hearer's duty, then, to try to find out what exactly is the communication to him/her. The speaker may perform the off-record act in any one of the following ways: give hints, give association clues, presuppose, understate, overstate, use tautologies, use contradictions, be ironic, use metaphors, use rhetorical questions, be ambiguous, be vague, over generalize, displace H, and be incomplete, or use ellipsis.

Bald-on-record politeness strategy is treated in Brown and Levinson as speaking in conformity with Grice's Maxims (1975). This is because speech acts that fall under bald-on-record are direct, clear, unambiguous and

concise – attributes that Grice (1989) presumes are essential for conversations. As put forth by Brown and Levinson in their hierarchical presentation of the politeness strategies, however, bald-on-record is the least polite among the strategies and it is used when the risk of loss of face is the lowest. The principal reason that bald-on-record strategy is employed is when the speaker wants to do the face-threatening act with maximum efficiency more than he wants to satisfy the hearer's face. The motives for wanting to do the FTA with maximum efficiency, however, can be varied due to the different contexts.

Grice (1989) proposes four main conversational maxims on the principle that people act cooperatively in conversations in order to avoid a breakdown of the communication and, rather, achieve satisfactory outcomes. He proffers that persons engaged in conversation must therefore be sincere (maxim of quality), not say less or more than required (maxim of quantity), be relevant (maxim of relevance) and avoid ambiguity (maxim of manner). These maxims outline general principles supposedly governing successful communication. However, to follow strictly these maxims would inevitably require a speaker to disregard the face needs of one's audience. Why the communication may not break down in some situations of such disregard is one of the points this study is interested in.

Thus, this study sought to find answers to the following questions:

1.   What bald-on record politeness strategies feature in the selected debates in the parliament of Ghana?
2.   How are the bald-on record strategies used by the members of the Parliament?
3.   How do other members of the House respond to a member's use of bald strategy?

4. Methodology

The data was obtained from the Hansard of the Parliament of Ghana for the following sessions: Thursday, 14th August, 2008 (Vodafone Sale); Tuesday, 2nd March, 2010 (State of the Nation Address by President Kuffuor); Thursday, 4th March 2010 (STX Housing Deal); Tuesday, 3rd August 2010 (State of the Nation Address by President Kuffuor). Only the specific events that were the focus of the research were considered; in effect, only the submissions that had politeness strategies were studied, and the bald strategies selected and duly analysed.

The unit of analysis employed in the research in order to be able to categorize the politeness strategies in the data accurately was the *'move'*. Goffman (1976: 272), describes 'move' as; "any full stretch of talk or its substitutes which has a distinctive unitary bearing on some set or order of the circumstances in which participants find themselves, such as a communication system, ritual constraints, economic negotiating, character contexts, 'teaching cycles' or whatever." Goffman states that a sentence is not the pertinent entity analytically since "a respondent could employ several in what is taken to be a single interactionally relevant event." There are instances that there are two or more moves in one turn. Moves are the structural categories in which a turn can be divided, and which identify a new function in the discourse of the speaker. It is at this level that Face Threatening Acts (FTA) and politeness strategies are identified.

Also, following Mullany's (2005) proposal that in its attention to the fine detail of talk, the methods of Conversation Analysis are very productive in the analysis of institutional talk, the research applied the two key methodological features of Conversation Analysis to the data; that is, to observe the underlying organization in the details of naturally occurring interaction; and to describe this underlying organization.

For the purpose of distinction, the speaker of parliament is also referred to as the Speaker (written with upper case 'S') in this study. Lower case 's', as in 'speaker', has been used when referring to other members whose utterances are the subject of comment in the data.

5. Findings and Discussion

Brown and Levinson (1987) treat bald on-record strategies speech acts that conform to Grice's (1989) Maxims. Bald-on-record politeness utterances are direct, clear, unequivocal and concise. As the least polite among the strategies, its use is commonly predicated on two conditions: (1) when the risk of face loss is lowest or (2) when the speaker's over-riding concern is not with the hearer's face, but to be maximally efficient in communicating a message.

5.1. Bald Strategy Types Employed by The Members of the House

A close examination of the data in this research reveals the different ways the Members of Parliament employed bald-on-record strategy for various apparent motives. Adopting Brown and Levinson's and Grice's categorizations, the following bald on-record acts were identified in the data:

- ✓   [not] Flouting the Maxim of Quality

- ✓   [not] Flouting the Maxim of Relevance

- ✓   Insults

- ✓   Accusations

- ✓   Orders/commands

5.2 [Not] Flouting the Maxim of Quality

Grice's Maxim of quality requires the following from interlocutors in every communication situation.

- ✓   Do not say what you believe to be false

- ✓   Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

The bald-on-record strategy that appeared most in the data was used when MP's thought that a submission that was made by a colleague did not conform to Grice's maxim of quality. It is a common practice among politicians to disagree on facts in relation to issues that are presented by their political opponents. It is therefore not surprising to find opposing MPs making attempts to restate facts that are presented by the other. However, the manner in which such facts are disputed is of interest. It was realized that many of the points-of-order that were raised on the floor of parliament during debates contained bald-on-record politeness strategy that sought to point out the falsity as well as the inaccuracies that previous utterances were believed to contain. This is illustrated in the extract below.

Extract 1

> MP1: Mr. Speaker, I want to confirm that what I read was in the Agreement, 43(51) to be specific. Mr. Speaker, let it be known by all that the decision to sell some shares of Ghana Telecom (GT) was initiated by the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and that if we had not stopped it, 80 per cent of GT's shares would have been sold for $138,000,000- (interruptions). Mr. Speaker, we stopped this transaction. We stopped it because we felt selling 80 per cent of Ghana Telecom's shares to them at only $138,000,000 was unacceptable-(interruption)

> MP2: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, Hon. Kan-Dapaah continues to mislead this parliament and the nation. He keeps talking about selling 87 per cent. I have just corrected him. I have the Agreement here. It was for 15 percent and I have explained to him the basis of that agreement... that is factually incorrect. (Thursday, 14th August, 2008)

It is realized from the extract above that MP2 did an FTA directly towards the previous speaker who was giving information to the House that he (Mahama) considered false and incomplete. What is clear is that the utterance was a direct attack with no consideration of minimizing the face loss of the addressee. An utterance such as "I think that the Hon. Member is continuously misleading this parliament and the nation" would have been more polite than what MP2 actually used.

A significant observation the study makes is that such uses of bald-on-record utterances to challenge the quality or truth of an opposing MP's submission were regularly followed by the FTA performer also presenting what they considered the facts or truth of the matter. In relation to the maxim of quality, then, the conclusion is that speakers that baldly threatened other member's face commonly did so by directly declaring the falsehood or

non-evidentiality of the latter's statements, while conversely evoking the same maxim to present what they apparently hold to be the truth.

Furthermore, in some instances, the MPs whose faces were threatened by their colleagues' rebuttal equally responded with their own bald FTAs as seen in the extract below.

Extract 2

> MP1: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, when my hon. Good Friend got up, he was talking about people misleading this House. He has been a former Minister for Communications. He just told this House that they had completed Phase 2. Mr. Speaker, that is a big lie ... (Thursday, 14th August, 2008)

The utterance "that is a big lie" baldly threatens the face of the MP whom the current speaker accuses of first telling the House that others had been making submissions that were false and inaccurate. This situation does not contradict Brown and Levinson's (1987) claim that an FTA is usually done baldly if the speaker does not dread retribution from the addressee. It simply shows that the performer of the FTA can, nonetheless, expect retribution depending on the context. As has been shown in the literature (Watts, 2005; Christie, 2005, Harris 2000), the oppositional nature of debates in the parliament of democratic jurisdiction like Ghana provides just such a context.

Other bald-on-record strategies that were used to depict the perceived untruth in Member's utterances were laced with adjectives/adverbs that gave descriptions about the level of the inaccuracies and falsehood in the submissions of some MPs. These descriptors, naturally, would increase loss of face to the targets threatened by the acts employed.

Extract 3

> MP1: Mr. Speaker, I have moved from that point, and so the offer proposal from Telecom South Africa, that was the point I was making, is far, far better than the offer that is placed before this honourable House. ...
>
> MP2: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, my hon. Senior Colleague, unfortunately is grossly misleading this House. ... (Thursday, 14th August, 2008)

The use of 'grossly' in the extract above indicates the extent to which the speaker considers the MP1's submission to be untrue. Other examples of similar use of bald-on-record politeness strategy are shown in the following extracts. The intensifying adjectives are underlined.

> MP1: on a point of order. Mr Speaker, my hon. friend there is completely misleading this house and must address the issue.
>
> MP2: Mr Speaker, the hon. Member is grossly misleading this house... (Tuesday, 2nd March, 2010)
>
> MP3: Yes, Mr. Speaker. My colleague is grossly misleading this House. ... (Thursday, 4th March, 2010)

It is perhaps indicative of the premium the Parliament as a deliberative and legislative political body puts on factual, accurate information that its members so often bluntly call out one another on the truth and/or accuracy of statements contributed to the deliberations.

5.3 (Not) Flouting the Maxim of Relevance
Second to the flouting of Grice's Maxim of Quality which attracted bald-on-record politeness strategy from some MPs was the flouting of Grice's Maxim of Relevance – Make your contribution relevant to the interaction at the stage at which it occurs. In parliament, it is expected that submissions made are directly connected to the motion under consideration. The data revealed that some face threatening acts were deployed baldly on record by some MPs when they thought that a colleague who had the floor was making submissions that did not have anything to do with the motion that was being debated and as such had to be prompted to speak on that.

Members are bound by the dictates of the Standing Orders of the House and, as such, Members of the House baldly took on their colleagues for saying things that were considered irrelevant.

Extract 4

> MP1: Mr. Speaker, I note that my friend, Hon. Bagbin is embarrassed by this picture and so I would not refer to it again-[*pointing to the picture on the front page of the enquirer of 12th August, 2008]* The picture of his flag bearer holding that placard-the way he has been defending it suggests to me that he is embarrassed by it. I would not refer to it again. ...

> MP2: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, if my hon. Colleague has nothing to say, he should sit down. ... (Thursday, 14th August, 2008)

The statement by MP2 denotes the irrelevance of the submissions of the previous speaker to the issue at stake though he does not clearly say so. His response is a direct imperative, a feature of bald-on-record politeness strategy as listed by Brown and Levinson (1987). There is no minimizing of the face-threatening act because the speaker does not consider the face of the hearer in any way, but rather goes ahead to do the FTA for maximum efficiency. It is noteworthy that, in baldly confronting his antagonist, the speaker also invokes the standing orders of the House, "On a point of order…" This gives further support to his bald approach.

Another instance of a member using bald on-record strategy to call attention to irrelevant information is shown in the example below:

Extract 5

> First Deputy Speaker: Hon. P.C. Appiah-Ofori, the motion is about the Off-Taker Agreement. If you have an issue of relevance-if you have another with the Off-Taker, raise it because the Off-Taker, according to the Chairman has been signed.

> MP1: Mr. Speaker, listen to me, please. What I am saying is as simple as A, B, C, D. (Interruptions) The Off-Taker Agreement has no significance if (interruptions) - listen to me, if the parent agreement is defective, the agreement here is – we have before the House. (Pause)

A look at the extract above shows that the First Deputy Speaker did a FTA towards the Hon. Member because he considered him to have flouted Grice's Maxim of Relevance by making submissions that did not have any bearing on the motion that was being debated. The Hon. Member also responded with an FTA as he realized that his face had been threatened. His use of "please" at the end of his initial utterance, "... listen to me, please" is redressive but was done after he realized that he was addressing the Speaker in the chair. However, the other part of the submission carried a bald-on-record strategy which hit back at the FTA he suffered. He sought to imply that those who seemed not to understand what he was saying were people who had difficulty understanding things that were very simple. His reference to "A, B, C, D" signifies his view that his submissions were simple in meaning, though they sounded complex to both the First Deputy Speaker and the other members who heckled him.

Extract 6

> MP1: Mr. Speaker, I am coming on Order 93 (4). Mr Speaker, the speech of the member must have reference to the matter under discussion. Mr. Speaker ... he is making are completely out of the realm of the subject matter under discussion. So, Mr. Speaker, I am asking you to rule him out of order, to let him stay within the contents of the speech presented here by the President. (Tuesday, 2nd March, 2010)

It is evident from the submission by the Hon. Member that he deemed what the previous speaker had said irrelevant to the debate on the President's speech, hence, his request to the Speaker to rule the transgressing contributor out of order. Standing Order 93(4) under Part Fourteen, "Rules of Debate" of the *Standing Orders of the Parliament of Ghana* does indeed state, "The speech of a Member must have reference to the subject matter

under discussion." Clearly, Grice's maxim of relevance is given legitimacy by this document, and is strategically exploited by the Honorable members during debates.

5.4 Insults

Insults – rude or offensive remarks or acts – are a familiar feature in politics. However, the setting where the act is carried out is significant. In parliamentary discourse, it is common to find traces of insults in the words of some MPs. Parliamentary insults represent institutional instances of aggressive self-assertion, which imply both standing out from the group and arguing on behalf of the group (Illia, 2001). Parliamentary insulting strategies can be seen as subversive transgressions of the institutional boundaries of parliamentary language use and practices. Standing Order 93(2) of the Parliament states, "It shall be out of order to use offensive, abusive, insulting, blasphemous or unbecoming words or to impute improper motives to any other Member or to make personal allusions."

The forms, functions, as well as the feedback on insults differ across different cultural and institutional settings. The data in this study revealed instances when utterances were insulting to other Members of Parliament. These utterances were realized as bald-on-record acts because they were FTAs that were done without any consideration for the loss of face but with maximum efficiency.

Extract 7

> MP1: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, just a point of correction. The gentleman- [*interruptions*] [some hon. Members: You lose, kangaroo. Go, go high]. Mr Speaker, my hon. Good Friend was trying to read to us the purchase price... (Thursday, 14th August, 2008).

The use of the word "gentleman" was considered insulting in the cultural and institutional context. In the Ghanaian setting, it could be insulting to refer to someone as such when you know the person's name but you intentionally decide to not address them by it. In addition, the Standing Orders of Parliament stipulate how MPs are to address one another in the House. It is therefore unparliamentary to make reference to a colleague on the floor of the House, the way the speaker did, no matter how sensitive and heated the debate has become. It is clear from the extract that the use of the word by the MP resulted in interruptions from other members from the other side of the divide expressing their displeasure with the language of the speaker. In this particular instance, the offending MP reverted to use the appropriate address term without being asked by the Speaker of the House to do so.

Another example is found in the extract below:

Extract 8

> First Deputy Speaker: So let me hear from you first, then I will hear from the Hon. Majority leader.
>
> MP1: I will sit in the middle next time. I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, our Members should be very careful when they intend to speak for people who are not around. That guy, Sege bloke who just spoke- [interruptions]
>
> First Deputy Speaker: Hon. K.T. Hammond, you know how we address ourselves in this House.
>
> MP1: Hon. Member for Sege, he wants...

The above extract demonstrates another usage of insult as a bald-on-record strategy, which can be described as extremely bald. Hon. Hammond decided to ignore the conventions of parliament and did an FTA with maximum efficiency by not using the required address term for the Member whom he thought had made a submission on someone else's behalf which he should not have done. The use of 'That guy, Sege bloke' was too insulting, which unsurprisingly resulted in immediate reactions from the other MPs as well as the Speaker who directed that the speaker used the appropriate address. 'Bloke' refers to a man who is considered ordinary, and the term, as well as 'that guy', are expressions reserved for casual informal interactions. Parliament is a formal institution

and language used in formal settings is required. These reasons accounted for the spontaneous rebukes by other members of the house.

The next example of insult as bald-on-record strategy also illustrates how some of these insults were reacted to by the one whose face was threatened.

Extract 9

> MP1: Mr. Speaker ... Mr. Speaker, when he talks about the issue of frequencies being allocated, I forgive him because he is not an industry expert, he just got appointed Minister for Communication and that is where he learnt a bit about communication. He is not an industry expert so he does not understand...
>
> MP2: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, I want to refer to an unfortunate remark that was made by my friend and I wonder when he also learnt his engineering. He has not been known to be an engineer and so to use these sorts of words against me, I think is most unfortunate and I believe he ought to withdraw them... He is also a communication expert all right, he speaks good English, he went to big schools but he is not an engineer...
>
> MP3: Mr. Speaker, there is obviously no intention to disparage my good friend, hon. Kan-Dapaah. If he feels offended, I withdraw that statement.

The reference to MP2 as learning on the job was an affront to his abilities and capabilities as a Minister and his response clearly demonstrated his feelings about what was said. It was realized that utterances that were insults in parliamentary discourse were not allowed to pass without it being addressed. When an utterance was considered unparliamentary, the Speaker of the House directed that it was either withdrawn or reworded to suit the language that is acceptable. On the other hand, the manner a speaker was interrupted when an utterance was insulting to another prompted him to correct himself by using the appropriate words. Others also decided to express their displeasure by either reacting with the same face-threatening act or one that was redressive as seen from the reaction of MP2 who used a negative politeness strategy to respond to the bald-on-record that was used against him.

5.5 Accusation

Making statements indicating that someone is guilty of a crime or of doing something wrong is a significant feature in politics. Politicians trade accusations at each other as a way of showing how capable they are in handling issues better than their opponents. Though this is common politic behaviour, the question that arises is how these sentiments are expressed and how they are responded to. Examination of the data reveals that it is not only when politicians mount political platforms that they level accusations against one another; this occurs in parliament too. The utterances that were identified as accusations were done baldly-on-record as the speakers did not employ any words that would have minimised the effect of the imposition on the FTA that were done. The extract below clearly exemplifies the bald-on-record strategy of accusation.

Extract 10

> MP1: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, the Government has not added anything to the stock of equipment and materials that the previous Government left with the security agencies. So it was through these materials that they have been able to achieve the reduction in armed robbery and also the drug trafficking...
>
> MP1: Mr. Speaker, I want to tell him that during their time, throughout the whole country, they built houses half way, quarter way, whatever it is and locked them- [interruptions.] So, what is he talking about? (Thursday, 4th March, 2010)
>
> MP2: Mr. Speaker... Mr. Speaker, at that time a deliberate decision was made by the NDC that GT should remain on line services alone...

MP3: Mr. Speaker... It is just that because of their poor management,
their partnership with the foreign partner, which was a United States
(US) based cellular operator did not come to fruition...

The extract above shows that the accusations were not directed at the individual MPs but rather at the entities those MPs represented, that is, their parties. This is the reason why each speaker does not mention the name of the MP the speaker addresses. The speakers rather use words like "the Government," "their," "NDC".

5.6 Commands/Imperatives

Commands or imperatives stand out as obvious examples of bald-on-record politeness strategy. When used, the expectation is that the one addressed is to obey the order that is given by the speaker. The hierarchical structure of parliament places all the Members of Parliament at par in terms of core functions. However, the positions that some of them are given such as Majority leader, Minority Leader, and their Deputies, place them a little above the others in terms of the power that they wield in the House. This does not mean that such privileged members can do things as they wish, however.

The findings show that commands were employed in parliament, but these were found to be used mostly by the Speaker of the House. The use, by the Speaker, of the imperative '*Order, Order*' as a bald-on-record strategy, for example, is an institutionalized norm in Parliament for ensuring that decorum is maintained for the smooth flow of debates. That notwithstanding, the data reveals that there were instances when the Speaker employed other, non-institutionalized imperatives that were face threats to some of the MPs. These utterances are compared with others that were seen to have redressive markers when they were used as exemplified in the following extract.

Extract 11

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member for Bole-Bamboi, conclude now. Your time is up.

Mr. Speaker: Let him speak. (Thursday, 14th August, 2008)

The two utterances above are commands that were issued at different stages in the same sitting to some of the MPs by the Speaker of the House without consideration to loss of face of the addressees. The politeness marker "please" if included in the imperatives would have minimised the threat to face as was found in other utterances exemplified below.

Extract 12

Hon. Speaker: Hon. Members, please speak to the motion

Hon. Speaker: Hon. Minority leader, this is not question time. Please
go on. (Thursday, 14th August, 2008)

Hon. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, kindly conclude. (Thursday, 4th
March, 2010)

Irrespective of the use or non-use of threat mitigators in the imperatives issued by the Speaker, the MPs were observed to have obeyed the directives. On the other hand, no MP's utterance was found to be a direct imperative that was obeyed by the addressee. This gives credence to the fact that the Speaker is the director of proceedings in the House of parliament.

6. CONCLUSION

The study reveals that the bald on-record politeness strategy is an important feature of the discourse during debates in the House. Members of Parliament employ bald strategies to sidestep (the otherwise expected) face work that could weaken the efficiency of the particular communication, to underscore the urgency of a communication, or simply because they are expected by or find support in the standing orders to act baldly on-record. The bald strategies recorded in the data included insults, accusations and commands or imperatives. All three actors in the debates, from the Speaker to the Majority MPs and Minority MPs, were found to perform bald on-record acts on various occasions in various ways, from both provocative and corrective positions in the discourse.

It can be concluded from the discussion that the Standing Orders of the Parliament of Ghana guide and influence Members of Parliament's use of politeness strategies during debates in the House. This affirms a similar observation by Akuka et al (2021). The present study further establishes, however, that the Standing Orders relating to debates are themselves framed partly within the maxims of conversation proposed by Grice (1975). Members tended to commit face-threatening acts in their remonstrations when they sought to point out that a previous speaker had flouted the maxims of quality and relevance. This not only demonstrates awareness of the Standing Orders but also indicates the importance that the House, as a community of practice, places on factual, evidential and relevant contributions to the discourse. What this means is that researchers in the area of politeness crucially need to consider the role context plays in probing the data. Doing so will reveal subtleties and peculiarities of the particular discourse that will lead to a deeper understanding of the field.

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