Politeness in Administrative Discourse: Some Perspectives from Two Institutions in Ghana

Your face ... is like a book where men may read strange matters
Macbeth, Act 1, Scene V

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Abstract

Linguistic pragmatics studies have incorporated sociolinguistic perspectives of pragmatic variations in computer-mediated massages, and in spoken and written interactions. Rather than adhering to a strict first order participant constructed conceptions or a second order analyst constructed conceptions of politeness, this paper argues that each of them could be used to inform the other through variant methodological approaches. This paper interrogated the influence of organisational structure and cultural expectations in the contents of administrative discourses to signal (im)politeness from two institutions: University of Education, Winneba and the Ghana Police Service, Winneba. Situated in

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Ting-Toomey's face negotiation theory and Fraser's views on politeness strategies, this paper attempted to bridge the gaps between three pragmatic subfields: linguistic politeness research, organisational communication, and institutional communication pragmatics. Data was gathered through discourse completion tests, focus group discussions, observations, and a content analysis of selected written documents. One significant finding from the study was that differences exist in pragmatic variations: lexical, syntactic, and textual resources to mark (im)politeness in both institutions. The study recommends the choice of politeness strategies to be informed by the structure and cultural expectations of organisations to help reduce conflicts and confrontations inherent in human exchanges.

1. Introduction

Communication is a vital component of our daily lives and existence and no society has been known to exist without the means of communication. It involves the exchange of ideas, views, information, experiences and the sharing of meaning between persons, nations, societies, and cultures. This necessitates the continuous study in the area of the choice of words signalling (im)politeness and how it is influenced by the cultural and structural expectation of corporate organisation. Thus, every corporate organisation thrives on communication and extensively relies on a combination of processes of operational communication such as access to channels of communication, tools for information dissemination, and the availability of feedback mechanisms. Communication in essence enables corporate interlocutors to

effectively negotiate and persuade one another within their culturally diverse organisational settings and organisational lives. Their access ensures operational interactions between an organisation and its publics.

The understanding of the relevance of communication becomes more imperative in the 21st century for obvious reasons. For instance, the 21st century is the Age of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) powered by the developments in computer mediated forms of communication. The channels of communication in this age according to Pearson et al. (2003) includes letters, memoranda, facsimile, seminars, conferences, workshops, journals, bulletins, flyers, telephone conversations, e-mails, text messages, and face-to-face interpersonal interactions. However, they add that the computer mediated channels are gradually replacing the traditional face-to-face interpersonal forms of interactions in contemporary time of rapid ICT applications overflow.

Pearson et al. (2003: 304) emphasising on the relationship between organisational members and the role of communication state that "not only does a person belong to numerous organisations but that, he interacts with, and seeks the services of an even broader range of organisations on daily basis". Thus, a person may belong to one or more associations in an organisation; perhaps as an employee, supervisor and investor, or an administrator. This same person could also belong to other human institutions like a sports team, sororities or fraternities, academic departments, subject associations, neighbourhood associations, a political party, and to a religious group. Each one of these associations prospers on the communicative endeavours of the social actors. So much of what we know and who we are is as a result of our membership to all these communicative associations and to escape organisational membership in contemporary society is virtually unavoidable. Indeed, the survival of

all human institutions depends largely on the extent to which its members are able to negotiate and persuade one another through the means of communication.

The term politeness may seem like a well understood concept that pervades all human interactions. Most of us are fairly sure we know what we mean when we describe behaviours being polite, but in an attempt to say what it is, we end up giving general statements about protecting the face and equating politeness to some socially acceptable behaviours or sayings of a particular group or speech community (Watts 2005). In a world where traditional ways of knowing, seeing and doing things are increasingly being challenged and discredited, the study of politeness strategies employed in organisational communication is a worthwhile activity for the promotion of corporate rapport and corporate unity (Gamble & Gamble 2000). In view of this, the posers that preoccupied my attention in this paper were: how does the organisational structure or culture influence the choice of words and behaviour in an institution to signal (im)politeness? What are the perceptions of organisational members on processes for routine talk, sending e-mails, text messages or facsimile, writing memoranda or letters, and watching the non-verbal behaviours of others to make meaning more purposeful? These posers enabled this paper in its attempt at bridging the gaps identified in three pragmatic subfields: linguistic politeness research, organisational communication, and institutional communication pragmatics.

2. Rationale

Researches in (im)polite speech communication have focused

essentially on the complex ways in which messages are transmitted from a source to a destination in varied communicative efforts. Findings from these studies have shown that most messages are preponderantly made through verbal languages, gesticulations, facial expressions, and body postures. Several studies have been undertaken in different contexts regarding what should be acceptable as (im)polite communicative behaviours. In all these, one significant element predominantly discussed is the manifestation of politeness features through the 'protection and saving of the face' as espoused by Ting-Toomey (2005).

Terkourafi (2012), hinging on Goffman's (1967) assertion of what constitute linguistic politeness of behaviour, contends that it is the combined effects of the rule of self-respect and rule of considerateness as guiding principles for comportment and for "saving the face". Additionally, working from the grounded idea that 'face' and 'place' are mutually exclusive and complementary, Agyekum (2003) asserts that a polite communicative behaviour is measured by how well a person chooses their words and other gesticulations to protect their 'face' as informed by their societal norms and cultural expectations.

From the discussions so far, it is obvious that a myriad of explanations and descriptions have been given to the term "politeness" from different perspectives. While some studies in politeness have been undertaken in Ghana by Antwi (1989), Yankah (1995), Agyekum (1996, 2003), Afful (2008), and Ampem-Darko (2008) among others, most of these studies have concentrated on particular instances of (im)politeness such as verbal taboos, request forms, honorifics and status indexing, face threats, face-saving acts, and apologies. Specifically, minimal studies have been conducted on the use of linguistic politeness strategies and behaviours in business

settings in Ghana. This current study therefore in a modest claim, sought to fill the vacuum of inadequate scholarly attention by adhering to the proposition made by Anderson (2004) for more scientific researches. Specifically, within the framework of the Ting-Toomey's (2005) theory of face and Fraser's (1990) views on politeness strategies, the study sought to identify the means of information dissemination in two selected institutions per their organisational communication expectations; interrogate how the organisational structure and cultural expectations influence the choice of communicative behaviours to signal (im)politeness; and examine the perceptions of organisational members of the two institutions towards the use of other language pragmatics to signal (im)politeness.

To direct the study, I posed these research questions (RQ): RQ1: What are the means of information dissemination in the two selected institutions per their organisational structure cultural expectations? RQ2: How do the organisational structure and cultural expectations influence the choice of communicative behaviours to signal (im)politeness in the two selected institutions? RQ3: What are the perceptions of the organisational members of the two institutions towards the use of other language pragmatics to signal (im)politeness?

3. Data Collection and Procedures

Organizations are not bereft of the problems associated with communication. Such teething troubles includes issues of gate-keeping, bureaucracy, display of intense belligerency, verbal aggression, and the use of language offensive to the 'face'. The researcher therefore had to triangulate different instruments from

both quantitative and qualitative approaches to allow the acquisition of ample data on the experiences, knowledge, and perceptions of the respondents (Lindlof & Taylor 2002). Primarily, the focus was more qualitative since it provided a platform for wholistic observations of the total context within which the social actions of communication occurred. The triangulation therefore allowed the meanings that were derived from the data gathered to be shared, negotiated, and constructed with a view to ensuring empathic neutrality and avoiding procedural biases often associated with the gathering of data on a naturally occurring phenomenon such as communicative events.

The convenience and purposive sampling techniques were employed to non-randomly select 60 respondents (30 from each of the institutions). Ten key informants from each of the institutions were also engaged in semi-structured interview sessions each of them lasting between 15-20 minutes. A small survey was conducted by administering a modified version of the discourse completion tests (DCT) developed by Beebe (1990) to 40 participants (20 from each institution). Additionally, the contents of some sampled administrative discourses were subjected to a content analysis with the choice of words being used as the unit of analysis. Finally, the communicative patterns of the social actors engaged in various communicative acts in these institutions were observed and recorded for further analysis.

In order to make sense from the bulk of data gathered, extracts from the face-to-face utterances, letters, and memoranda were catalogued, indexed, parsed into components and transcribed using a transcription scheme developed by the researcher for identifying linguistic elements that were used to signal (im)politeness. In furtherance, with the help of the Ethnograph software, the Cross Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) coding manual

developed by Blum-Kulka (1989), and the Methods of Elicitation designed by Mills (2003), the parsed units were categorized into themes and subjected to narrative descriptions to allow interpretations throughout the paper. For the purposes of analysis the University of Education, Winneba and the Ghana Police Service, Winneba were given the pseudo names 'IA' and 'IB' respectively.

4. The Flow of Communication in an Organisation

Lesikar & Pettit (1994) affirm that organizational communication focuses on two sources: *internal* and *external* and each of these performs distinct but interrelated functions. Internal communication refers to the symbolic interaction occurring between an organization and its members. External communication is structured and it occurs between an organization and its stakeholder publics: clients, media, and so on. Giddens (1984) contends that corporate communicators interact with both the material and human resources of their institutions and that allows management to effectively carry out all its administrative and managerial functions. The flow of communication in an organization could be *upward, downward, horizontal*, or through the *grapevine*. Below in Figure 1 is a graphic representation of the corpus data gathered on the flow of information as informed by the organisational structure and culture of the two institutions involved in the study: the University of Education, Winneba (IA) and the Ghana Police Service, Winneba (IB).

From Figure 1 below, the grapevine is the most preferred (89%) means of information dissemination because it is usually performed in the form of gossips and rumour mongering. The respondents from the institutions added that even though management more often did

Figure 1. The Preferred Flow of Communication in IA and IB as Informed by their Organizational Structure and Culture
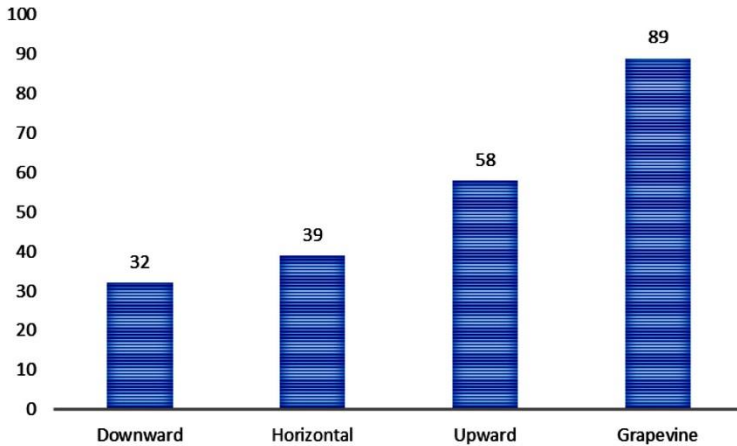
not encourage the presence of the grapevine, it was the most vibrant means of communication because management invariably use the grapevine to test organizational policies and decisions before implementing them. The data gathered revealed that albeit the inherent face threatening contents of messages carried through the grapevine, it was the most preferred because it was devoid of compulsion and any form of distancing or formality. Additionally, the table also shows that the upward flow of communication (58%) which included messages containing employee grievances and non-business related incidental exchanges such as greetings and routine pleasantries was also fairly preferred. The respondents claimed that such messages were often from subordinates to superiors or management and they involved a high level of formality and decorum. For instance, the purposes of exchanging greetings and pleasantries are simply for the creation of 'we-feeling' among

members.

Also, the horizontal flow of communication (39%) which was often between people of the same rank and status was comparatively less preferred in both institutions. The data showed that such messages were less face threatening because the interlocutors involved have equal level of power to control and coordinate tasks. From the respondents, communication at that level was often exclusive of power relations or any form of power play. Finally, the downward flow of communication (32%) which comprises of information from management to employees was the least preferred. Information disseminated through the downward means of communication includes directives, policies, instructions, and power-laden requests which are highly face threatening. The data reveal that it was the least preferred because it was highly embedded in power play and imposition. From the foregoing, it was evident that the flow of information in these institutions was 'the life source of these human institutions (ancient or modern, formal or informal, simple or complex, business oriented or non-profit); the absence of which most activities could grind to a complete halt.

Language provides infinite resources for expressing meaning in all communicative behaviours and linguistic politeness draws productively on these resources. For instance, our routine greetings, compliments, apologies, request, honorifics, and social indexes, humour, kinesics, and prosodic, and the sharing of encouraging feedbacks are lucid examples of communicative behaviours that are often couched in polite language.

5. The Politeness Phenomena and Organisational Communication

The relevance of the review of the politeness phenomena is to foreground the need for administrative discourse writers to become familiar with the fact that the contents of administrative discourses could either cause their recipients to 'lose face' and be despised, or to 'save face' and be appreciated. Messages being disseminated therefore should take cognisance of the face needs of their recipients and should be devoid of likely impositions and compulsions inherent in human exchanges including communicative events.

The definition of the term 'politeness' is an issue of greater concern to communication theorists, sociolinguists, pragmatics, lay members and social science researchers alike (Eelen 2001; Culpepper, Bousfield & Wichman 2003; Locher & Watts 2005; Culpepper 2011). Settling on a single definition from various perspectives has been a continual discursive struggle, especially on the value of the term and its usage. Watts (2003) discusses the concept of politeness and maintains that the term should be made the core issue in most investigations in human communication in the emerging fields of sociolinguistics, linguistics, and intercultural communication researches. For Watts, the concept of politeness expresses what he calls the first-order interpretive struggles over the discursive domains of lay conceptions of politeness and impoliteness. Using naturally occurring data from different discourse activities, he focuses on the definitions and explanations given for the term 'face' and descends heavily on communication theorists and sociolinguistic researchers who have equated the 'politeness theory' to the 'theory of face'. He argues that each compliments the other but should not be considered as similar. He further adds that the lack of distinction between the terms through the use of labels, has been the cause for the myriad of misunderstandings and inconsistencies arising from perspectives of researchers, even in terms of nomenclature. Watts

buttresses this argument with tenets and contributions from widely used models of politeness and faceworks such as that of Lakoff (1973), Leech (1983), and Brown & Levinson (1987).

   In view of this, Locher & Watts (2005) also proposed a more satisfactory model of linguistic politeness which is grounded in the theory of social interaction, and add that researchers should rather reconsider Goffman's (1955) notion of 'face' and not only emphasize the dual notion of 'positive and negative politeness' which formed the basis for Brown & Levinson's linguistic politeness model. Locher & Watts further stress the need for either the adoption of other iterations of these models of politeness, or a complete replacement of the two terms: politeness and face with the 'Relevance Theoretical Approach to Social Interaction (RTASI)' as suggested by Eelen (2001) and cited in Culpepper (2011). The RTASI model suggests that whenever both the speaker and the hearer are psychologically at par, their interactional practices must also be interpreted by the same criteria by which they conform to as socially appropriate and acceptable as signaling (im)politeness. The authors contend that Eelen's model is the closest to the assertions made by Goffman (1955) to which almost all the linguistic politeness models and theories subscribe to as their point of reference. They contend that the RTASI basically offers a more subtle and flexible method of deriving inferences and processes useful for routine social interactions.

   The foregoing shows that politeness is about being tactful and considerate for the plight of others in any social interaction (Brown & Levinson 1987). This affirms that everybody has a 'face' to protect in every social interaction. Invariably, this avowed awareness of the 'face needs' of interlocutors can be achieved through the conscious adherence to the influence of contexts and other social factors such

as the content of the interaction, and the linguistic channels or media acceptable as common systems for coordination and transmission of information, the organizational structure and culture expectations.

Leech (1983: 105) defines linguistic politeness as a "positive form of seeking opportunities for conformity" and suggests that the term politeness should be used to describe behaviours that are non-imposing but distanced with an intention to unite and establish rapport between interlocutors. Holmes (1995: 5) hinges on Leech's contributions, and provides a broader definition that borders on the notion that politeness is any behaviour that actively expresses positive concerns for others and it is non-imposing. Holmes' definition could be considered as a derivation from the works of Goffman (1967) and Brown & Levinson (1987), where the term politeness is described as communicative behaviours that show concern for people's face.

Below are some excerpts from the data from face-to-face interactions that were uttered with an indirect use of language to signal politeness in institution A (IA):

Example (1a)-(1d):

(1)   a.   "Honestly, it's getting cold in here."
      b.   "I wanted to remind you not to be late for the meeting."
      c.   "Remember to meet the students ahead of time."
      d.   "You would type out the report, I suppose."

The statement in (1a) implies that *"It would be convenient and more expedient, if the addressee could turn off the air conditioner, since the place was extremely cold"*. The speaker as such considered the face needs of the recipient by employing acts of indirection to utter a need and want statement. (1b) is an implicit reminder that has

been laced with a subtle compulsion from a speaker who was a subordinate to the addressee. Primarily, it indirectly means *"Do not be late for the meeting".* It could be seen from the choice of words the example that some form of power relation was at play, hence, the need for the use of this implicature. In (1c); *Remember to meet the students ahead of time* is an instruction and a directive that needs to be carried out. Directives are usually face threatening and disquieting, hence, the speaker resorted to the toning down of the compulsion by employing a suggestive or remindful tone which is less impulsive. From the (1d), it could be seen that the addresser is demanding the report from the addressee without compromise. Thus, the use of the emphatic command in the form of the appendage *"I suppose"* is to tone down the likely effects of the imposition. The need to protect the face is core to every communicative act since the face represents the individual, his/her status, power, gender, and any other multiple identities that make him/her a social actor.

6. The Theory of Face and its Implications for Corporate Communication

Ting-Toomey (2005) says the term 'face' is frequently used as a metaphor for politeness in a variety of contexts. We often hear of people "losing face" in social interactions that are embarrassing and uncomfortable, and "putting on a good face" in pleasant and desirable situations. In all these examples, we are not only talking about the eyes, nose, mouth, and cheeks that make up the physical face, but rather, a more holistic sense of the face (our personality) that is presented to the world in social contexts. Goffman (1967) as cited in Culpepper (2011) avers that the term face is the positive

social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. Everybody's place of work is regarded as his/her social group and the image and reputation of that organization is paramount in coordinating and managing their communicative efforts. If the individual puts up a reprehensible behaviour through his/her utterances or communicative acts, the negative effects could transcend from their "face" as a person, to the "face" of their institution or society: credibility and reputation of their institution or social group. Anderson (2004) says that the relevance of 'face' to the forms of communication as shown in Goffman's term 'facework'. Goffman (1967) as cited in Watts, Ide & Ehlich (2005) says that in order to avoid 'face threatening acts' communicators should consciously adopt strategies of tact and decorum during social interactions to enforce formality as well as reduce social distance.

The theory of face has assumptions which consider face, conflict, culture, and structure as key components of self-identity in interpersonal interactions with individuals negotiating their identities differently across cultures; management of conflict to be mediated by face and structure and culture and acts threatening one's projected self-image (West & Turner 2009). Thus, what may be regarded and revered in one organizational culture may be overlooked and abhorred in another organisational structure and culture. Hinging on Goffman's "facework", Ting-Toomey (2005) identifies two cultures in communication: individualistic culture and collectivistic culture. The individualism or individualistic culture refers to the tendency of people to dwell solely on their individual identity (the 'I') over their group identity (the 'Me') and basically focus on the 'I' factor. Collectivism on the other hand, dwells on group identity (the 'Me') and there is a high tendency of team work emphasising the 'we'

factor. In attempting to use the individualism (first order) and collectivism (second order) concepts as perspectives to focus on organizational communication and politeness, evidence from the corpus data revealed that the administrative discourse writers of both institutions could not adhere to a strict first order participant constructed (Culpepper 2011) or a second order analyst constructed conceptions of politeness (Locher & Watts 2005, Terkourafi 2008). In effect, the evidence from the data proved that one concept is often used to inform the other with the view to enhancing productivity and maintaining organisational rapport.

Kasper (1990: 127) comments that relying solely on 'the concept of face' as the guiding principle for observing decorum during interactions is an affirmation that every social actor in a communicative act is regarded as a Model person (MP) endowed with two basic properties: 'rationality' and 'face'. Rationality is said to refer to the mode of reasoning from an end to a means that will help to achieve that end. On the other hand, face is said to be a well thought-out property worthy of consideration for theoretical assumption to attain rationality. The theory of face provides opportunities for organizational communicators to reflect on using communication to mediate potential difficulties arising from diversities of communication styles inherent in subcultures in institutions such as Department, Units, Divisions, Sub-divisions, and their accompanying inherent culture-specific ways of communication.

A polite communicative behavior is measured by how well a person chooses his/her words and other gesticulations in an interaction (Agyekum 2003). The African concept of face is embodied in what Watts et al. (2005) call first order politeness. Politeness in this concept is considered a folk notion with the view to answering the question: 'how do the members of my community

perceive and classify my actions in terms of its suitability against the backdrop of my societal norms and values?' Many pragmaticists (e. g., Grice 1975, Leech 1983, Gamble & Gamble 2000) have argued that a person's use of language is often influenced by the pragmatic maxims of his/her socialisation to signal (im) politeness. Grice (1975), for instance, submits that every conversation or communicative behaviour is a cooperative enterprise. Grice thus formulates the cooperative principle that says; "Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs by the purpose or direction of the talk exchange." This general principle is further categorized into four specific maxims of *quantity, quality, relation*, and *manner*. Grice's fundamental point is not for people to always observe these maxims, but rather, regard them as unstated assumptions that lie beneath communication, such that, if a speaker clearly flouts any of the maxims (e.g., gives a very brief answer when a more informative one is expected), he/she may be prompting the listener to look for another meaning besides (or additional to) the acclaimed meaning expressed. In other words, the listener must work out the conversational implicatures from the interaction through the use of inferences.

7. Organisational Structure and Culture in Relation to Fraser's Views on Politeness

Every organization has a structure and culture. The organisational structures are used to define, implement and monitor policies and give directions to the business of the organization or institution. The structure of every institution is determined by the strategic choices of

the dominant leadership styles of the management of that institution. Every organization is thus inherent with differing cultures and subcultures for which the organizational members are expected to consider and adhere to for organizational growth (Kotter 1990, Deal & Kennedy 2000, Schein 2004). Ravasi & Schultz (2006) perceive organizational culture as a set of shared mental assumptions guiding interpretations of communicative acts in specific contexts. Therefore, organizations strive on "healthy" organizational culture with a focus on enhancing productivity, growth, efficiency, and a reduction in counter-productive behaviours detrimental to the organisational turnover. Schein (2004) also submits that culture is the most difficult organizational attribute to be changed by an administrative discourse writer in the dissemination of information. This assertion is based on researches on "facework" and the need to protect the "face" as proposed by pragmaticists and sociolinguists on "face" concepts such as those as espoused by Locher & Watts (2005), Ting-Toomey (2005), Terkourafi (2008), and Culpepper (2011).

Fraser (1990) sees a 'general lack of consistency' among researchers on what is acceptable or otherwise as a polite communicative behaviour, and contends that whatever is socially appropriate in a particular context or culture may be socially inappropriate or perhaps, excessively polite in another context or social group. Fraser thus reviews perceptions on communicative behaviours signalling politeness and groups them into four categories, namely; social-norms views; conversational-maxim views; face saving acts views and conversational-contract views.

The social-norm views reflect the historical understandings of politeness as embraced by the society and prescribed by social norms with implicit and explicit rules of behaviours, state of affairs, and ways of thinking in contexts. Politeness as such is equated to 'good

manners' to which the individual's behaviour must conform to. In the Ghanaian context, each speech community or society has laid down rules of communication, prescribed from their belief systems. A corporate organization is also a smaller community within the society with communicative principles, behaviours, norms, beliefs, and value systems prescribed from its organizational culture. All these descriptions dictate procedures for the coordination and management of communication.

The conversational-maxim view principally has its roots in the work of Grice (1975), commonly referred to as the *cooperative principles/maxims* (CP) which have already been discussed in the antecedent sections of this paper. Hedging on Grice's CP of *Quality, Quantity, Manner*, and *Relevance,* Fraser reiterates that interlocutors should not only think about *"what is said"* but also about *"what is not said"*. Fraser thus proposes the maxim; *"more is meant than is said"* which by implication enjoins communicators in organizations to *"say what they have to say"*, *"say it when they have to say it"*, and *"show how it should be said"*. As a result, administrative discourse writers must see the conversational maxims as two rules in opposition to each other, i.e., "to be clear" and "to be polite". One strategy that was subsequently gathered from the data was the use of indirection especially, in 'IB'. The use of the indirection as a polite strategy demands that the speaker should be clear and polite, but also mindful of acts of compulsion and imposition that are inherent in the choice of words. The example below is from a content analysis of extracts from a dismissal letter from 'IA'.

(2) *We <u>would</u> be very grateful if you <u>could</u> hand over all items belonging to the institution to your HOD immediately. You are also <u>kindly</u> requested to hand over the keys to your office and*

apartment to the Estate office or security before the close of day tomorrow.

It could be seen from the choice of words in the extract above that the writer of this administrative discourse had resorted to the use of indirections and implicatures. This was achieved through the use of modals and formulaic lexical markers to signal politeness and to reduce the effects of imposition and compulsion. The third and most spoken about of Fraser's (1990) proposals is the 'face-saving acts' view which states that some communicative acts are intrinsically threatening to the face and so require softening when speaking or writing. Fraser (1990) is thus commenting on Brown & Levinson's (1987) categorization of the two types of face (i.e., negative and positive face) in terms of the participants' want, rather than their stipulated social norms. To affirm or reject this assertion, the data from the two intuitions was analysed to reveal these findings. Thus, some examples of face saving acts were gathered: in-group identity markers, hedging, honorifics, endearment terms, terms of address, hints, contractions, passivation, and polite lexical/formulaic markers such as *Please, thank you, excuse me, kindly,* among others. Some examples of face saving acts such as the use of question tags as appendages to needs/wants statement gathered from IA are as shown in Example (3a-d):

(3) a. Daniel will prepare the proposal for the new undergraduate programmes. Won't he? (Question tag as an appendage)

   b. You would wait for the financial report from the DFO. Wouldn't you? (Question tag as an appendage)

c. Please Sir, take it or leave it. <u>Ok?</u>
   (Contractions derived from an appendage)

d. He can't print all the documents today. <u>Can he</u>?
   (Contractions derived from an appendage)

Finally, the conversational-contract view is based on the notion that upon entering into a communicative act, the interlocutors are assumed to have entered a contract with a sense of rights and obligations pertaining to the act. This contract entreats all participants to be informative and be actively involved in the entire communication process enjoining. None of the participants can be silent and expect the other(s) to conform to the demands of the contractual agreement. Silence is considered a "conversation killer" (Garcia 1989: 15). In the bid to disagree with Fraser's views on silence being a conversation killer, Garcia argues that although silence is considered as a conversation killer, it could be adopted as a politeness strategy to save a person's face by way of showing disinterest in a topic under discussion, or perhaps, as a way to avoid gossip or any form of interaction. Both Fraser and Garcia are of the view that administrative discourse writers should manage and coordinate communication effectively by purposefully playing the roles of efficient gate-keepers so they could enhance corporate rapport and productivity.

8. Findings and Discussions

The first research question (RQ1) sought to identify the means of information dissemination in the two selected institutions per their

organisational structure and cultural expectations. Findings from the data for this question revealed that the means of information dissemination in both 'AI' and 'IB' are the use of letters, memoranda, facsimile, seminars, conferences, workshops, journals, bulletins, flyers, telephone conversations, text messages, e-mails, and face-to-face interpersonal interactions. These findings affirmed the contributions of Pearson et al. (2003) and Lesikar & Pettit (1994) on the channels of communication employed in institutions. Lesikar & Pettit (1989) had earlier reiterated that the computer mediated forms of communication and the social media applications and software had not come to replace either the traditional means of information dissemination (i.e., letters, notices, flyers, hand bills, memoranda, facsimile) or the face-to-face forms of social engagements. Rather, both forms are complementary and their use should be encouraged in a world where the need for a paperless society is being advocated.

Leech (1983) had cautioned that communication is potentially dangerous and antagonistic in nature and if not well handled it could lead to conflicts and confrontations. In view of this, in the production of an administrative discourse the stringing of words to constitute the content is crucial to the initiator of the messages and premium must be placed on the selection of the choice of words. Any offensive use of language from either the addressee or recipient could cause either of them to 'lose face' just as a complimentary remark could also cause them to 'gain face'. In view of this, each of the institutions had access to all the forms of communication but was careful with their choices with regards to content, context formality and the relationship between the sender and the recipient engaged in any communicative endeavour.

The second research question (RQ2) was targeted at interrogating how the organisational structure and cultural expectations influence

the choice of communicative behaviours to signal (im)politeness in the two selected institutions. From the data gathered, some similarities and differences in content and other patterns of interactions were recorded as field notes and programmed into the built-in processor of the ethnograph per an approximation of about ten thousand (10,000) words. As discussed earlier in this paper and for purposes of easier understanding of the analysis, the locales of the study; University of Education, Winneba and the Ghana Police Service, Winneba have been given pseudo names such as 'IA' and 'IB' respectively. These labels were employed throughout the discussion of the findings of the study drawn from the data gathered from both institutions.

   In view of this, the excerpts below in (4a-f) were categorised as power-laden words gathered from the corpus from face-to-face interactions collected from 'IB'. The underlined portions are the words employed consciously and unconsciously by the communicators to signal (im)politeness.

(4) a. *Speaker 1*: Inspector, I would like to see the docket on the goat-stealing syndicate.

   b. *Speaker 2*: Correct Sir. I go bring am right now, sir [sic].

   c. *Speaker 1*: Call me corporal on your way out. Will you?

   d. *Speaker 2*: Yes sir, please I am sorry but corporal has already left for the parade grounds at the training school. I can get somebody to get him for you, Sir.

   e. *Speaker 1*: The clock is ticking so get him here at once *(almost on top of his voice)*.

   f. *Speaker 2*: No vex sir, I go bring am right now [sic].

The Ethnograph 6.0 is a qualitative data analysis (QDA) software for processing written data through text-segment that are coded by the user of the software. The software has an in-built processor that is able to code-count identifiable categories of words, structures, or paragraphs per the number of written data that is attached or fed into it. The facility is designed to facilitate the identification of linguistic units and their functions as parsed in particular sentences. The communicative interactions gathered as field notes comprising of 10,000 words were fed into the Ethnograph 6.0. Upon specific instructions to the categories of words to be generated or processed from the data, the Ethnograph 6.0 then generated a specified number of linguistic elements that signalled politeness from the transcribed data (i.e., letters, memoranda, notices, flyers, banners, computer mediated messages such as emails, facsimile etc.) from the two institutions (i.e., IA and IB).

The categorised data were grouped according to the frequency of their occurrence per every 10,000 words fed into the built-in processor of the Ethnograph 6.0. The processed data identified are as displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Categories of Words Signaling Politeness as Generated by the Ethnograph 6.0 from IA and IB

Category of words	IA	IB	Total occurrence of the words	Categories identified per every 10,000 words
Bald-on imperatives in formulaic entireties, and hedged performatives	629	443	1072	10.72
Compliment of solidarity, terms of address, honorifics	445	726	1171	11.71

Explicit imperatives, contractions, lexical makers, back channels and ellipsis	543	823	1366	13.66
Alerters, attention getters, impositions, and question tags	832	352	1185	11.85
Aggravated forms of directives as in Need/Want statements	646	421	1067	10.67
Epistemic modal forms, prosodic, and kinesic	587	749	1336	13.36

Source: Author's compilation (2015)

From Table 1 above, it could be seen that examples of positive politeness strategies such as indirections, epistemic modal forms, implicature, address forms, imperatives, hints, and hedged performatives formed 10.72% of the 10,000 words fed into the Ethnograph 6.0 from both the written and oral communication discourses of both institutions. For instance, it was observed that hedged performatives were often used in place of statements bordering on explicit demands, directives, instructions, and requests. This, according to some administrative discourse writers, was purposefully done to reduce instances of face threats inherent in the choice of words constituting the content of letters and some routine conversations. Other examples such as, terms of address, indirections, honorifics, and status indexes gathered from face-to-face interactions which formed 11.71% of the transcribed data are as shown below:

(5) a. "It would be great if you could turn off the computer for me."
   b. "I will be forever grateful if you turned off the computer."

The statements in (5) above were uttered with a consideration of the listener's negative 'face needs'. As a result, even though these instructions were rendered as performatives, they had been laced with power laden directives and the choice of words were purposefully selected to tone down the effects of compulsion and impositions. Nonetheless, a similar statement from the data revealed a 'need/want' request that was rendered bluntly without a consideration of the 'positive face needs' of the recipient as shown in (6).

(6)   "I need the report now!"

From the data, it was revealed that the speaker of the 'need/want' statement or command in Example (6a) was a person of higher rank or status and he/she did not consider the addressee's 'face' needs as paramount to his/her intentions. The speaker in the example having been aware of the positive face needs of the addressee could have considered it and rendered the statement as:

(7)   a.   I *know you've been kind of hard pressed with time and other things lately, but could you finish the report for me in the shortest possible time?*
       b.   You *may not see him but would you mind sending the report to him all the same.*

Although the examples above are couched in question tags, they are carefully embedded in the form of a request and hence, a command. Therefore, an inclusion of a subtle intent of compulsion. The questions may seem rhetorical but they connote some level of expectation or affirmation from the addressee. The subtle command are less face threatening, and as such, the addressee even though

he/she did not explicitly respond to them employed non-verbal cues like a nod or a smile to show understanding and subsequent compliance to the intent.

In effect, it was indicative from the data retrieved from the Ethnograph 6.0 gathered from the two institutions that in spite of the differences in their organisational structure and cultural expectations, a total of 71.95% of the contents of face-to-face communications and the written forms of communication were employed to signal politeness consciously or unconsciously.

The final research question (RQ3) sought to examine the perceptions of the organisational members from the two institutions towards the use of other language pragmatics to signal (im)politeness. The data for this question was gathered through the use of some discourse completion texts (DCT). Some extracts from the cues provided in the tests are as shown:

(8) a. *"To me, when you are respectful and obedient to organizational policies and procedures in relation to the rules of communication then it means you are polite."*

   b. *"I think when you do not use offensive language towards your colleagues then you are polite."*

   c. *"Well, I will say that anytime you do not become vulgar or insult people then you are a polite person."*

   d. *"I guess if you do not hijack or interrupt people when they are talking but allow them to make their contributions then you are certainly polite."*

e. *"To me, when you employ modal verbs, epistemic modals, kinesic, and hedges in order to avoid imposition and compulsion in your communicative activities then you are a polite person."*

f. *"Well, a behaviour which expresses the concern for others and takes into consideration the use of formulaic structures such as 'excuse me', 'I'm sorry', 'please', and 'forgive me can be considered polite'."*

The excerpts in (8a)-(8f) support the assertions of Leech (1983) which designates that linguistic politeness is a positive form of seeking opportunities for conformity. The data as such elucidates this view from Leech as being the understanding of the term politeness. Additionally, findings from the data also confirmed the categories of culture specific politeness strategies espoused by politeness researches such as Brown & Levinson (1987), Leech (1983), and more recent works of Culpeper, Bousfield & Wichman (2003) on strategies to signal (im)politeness. These studies have reported extensively that communicative behaviours provide a wealth of insights into strategies that are either 'face saving' or 'face threatening' which in context could be considered as signalling (im)politeness.

9. Conclusions and Recommendations

This paper thus concludes that organisational communication is a key tool for human resource development in every institution in terms of corporate rapport and cordiality. The administrative

discourse writer of an institution should be conversant with the structure and cultural expectations of his/her institution so it could inform the choice of words for producing the content of all the means of information dissemination. Additionally, at the theoretical level, the use of concepts like 'facework', 'relational work', and 'rapport management' had been seen just like the term 'politeness' to encapsulate a single concept accounting for a sense of interpersonal relationships in a social setting. The study therefore concludes that signalling politeness or impoliteness is context, culture, and structure specific.

In view of this, the study recommends organisational communicators including every administrative discourse initiator should be familiar with the structure and value systems (culture) of their institutions to serve as the guiding principles of all communicative endeavours. For instance, messages carrying bad news such as cost cutting, downsizing, dismissal, budget cuts, pay freezes and death should be crafted with extreme linguistic tact with a view to toning down the psychological and emotional effects embedded in the inherently face threatening words associated with the production of such messages. There should be the conscious efforts in enforcing useful proactive measures to reduce instances of conflicts and confrontations inherent in human exchanges.

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