

A Pragmatic Analysis of Cultural Influence on Politeness Markers in the Yoruba Context

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Abstract—Culture plays a significant role in language use. It is a parameter for measuring communicative competence of a language user. Thus, the use of language is the function of the culture that owns the language. This study is predicated on Grice's (1975) conversational implicature theory. Data was got from recorded conversations in different natural settings in Ondo West Local Government Area of Ondo State, Nigeria. The focus of the study is on politeness markers in "leader-follower", "husband-wife", "father-son", "buyer-seller", "friend-friend" and "elder brother-younger brother" conversations. Ten tape recordings were made out of which, seven were used for analysis. The pragmatic analysis of cultural influence on politeness has revealed the influence of culture on politeness markers in the Yoruba context. The study has also revealed the persuasive approach employed by the interlocutors to maintain and sustain conversation. It has been discovered that culture has conditioned the husband to assert while the wife is culture-bound to obey the assertion of her husband. This paper, therefore, recommends that language users should be exposed to the culture of the language being used as it will broaden their knowledge on how to sustain and maintain face saving act in a conversation. The knowledge of culture will definitely enhance the communicative competence of language users.

Index Terms—culture, context, politeness markers, Yoruba and Face

I. INTRODUCTION

Language in use is very paramount in any socio-cultural setting, and ability to use language in accordance with the dictates of the culture that owns the language usually enhances communicative competence of language users. That is why linguists see communicative competence as the ability of a language user to manipulate language to give information or maintain interpersonal relationship without violating the socio-cultural norms of a people (Farinde & Omolaiye, 2020, p. 94).

To maintain interpersonal relationship in a speech event, there is need for language users to protect face. Goffman (1955) describes "face", in conversation, as the positive public image one seeks to establish in a social interaction. The implication of this is that in a conversation, one of the interlocutors is expected to be respected. It is also expected that the faces of other participants in a discourse be preserved or protected. A language user who fails to save face in a conversation tends to pose threat to other interactants. Brown and Levinson (1987) concentrate on the concept of face. According to these scholars, human has two faces: positive and negative faces. Positive face is concerned with the desire for approval and acceptance by others, while negative face the desire to proceed without being impeded upon (Redmond, 2015). This implies that, any utterance that tends to go against the principle of face is regarded as face threatening act (Ajayi, 2020, p. 361). So, one of the strategies employed to save face in a conversation is politeness. Brown and Levinson (1987) come up with two forms of politeness – positive and negative politeness. As the name implies, positive politeness is designed to establish the hearer's positive face want while negative politeness is structured to redress the addressee's negative face want. Politeness makers or structures, therefore, is the use of linguistic structures that brings about utterance acceptability in a socio-cultural context. This is why Watts (2003, p. 18) defines politeness maker as "linguistic expression employed to show politeness". It is expedient to mention here that politeness is relative, in that what is accepted as politeness in culture A for instance, might be impolite in culture B. Thus, the concept of politeness is culture-bound. Politeness markers could be verbal and non-verbal. Verbal politeness marker is concerned with the use of language that depicts socially acceptable norms while non-verbal politeness marker is the socially acceptable way with proper manner and etiquette. Structures like "may I be allowed to ease myself", "could you give me the book", "you might wish to ask him about the issue" etc. are examples of verbal politeness markers. When a person stands up to great guests as they enter a room while that person keeps their elbows on the table during dinner is an example of non-verbal politeness marker. So, this paper intends to analyze verbal politeness markers

in the Yoruba socio-cultural context. The rationale behind this research is borne out of the fact that area of this study is relatively new, particularly in the Yoruba context. Hence, the study focuses on politeness markers in socio-cultural reality in a speech community. It is, therefore, expedient to briefly shed light on “pragmatics”, “language and culture”. “Socio-cultural context” and other related concepts that will form a theoretical base of this study.

A. Pragmatics

Since this paper is based on pragmatic approach, it is, therefore, essential to briefly review the concept of pragmatics. The term pragmatics has been traced to Morris (1938) whose concern was to outline the general shape of semiotics. He distinguished three branches of inquiry within semiotics to include “syntax”, “semantics” and “pragmatics”. Further development of pragmatics has been traced to scholars like Austin (1962), Katz and Fodor (1963), Searle (1969) and Grice (1975). The goals of pragmatics are to investigate:

- i. how utterances convey meaning;
- ii. the roles of context in encoding and decoding message;
- iii. utterances in context and situation;
- iv. interlocutors’ responses to message and meaning;
- v. the causes of wrong message encoding; and
- vi. the causes of wrong message decoding.

Levinson (1983) describes pragmatics as the study of language from a functional perspective. This simply refers to context-dependent use of language. Brown and Yule (1983, p. 26) claim that “any analytical approach in linguistics which involves contextual consideration belongs to that area of language study called pragmatics” .

In view of the above, pragmatics is described as the principles of language in use and the interpretation that explains how extra-linguistic meaning encoded in the same manner actually being encoded in the same manner. Farinde and Ogunsiji (2010) also describe pragmatics as an aspect of language which deals with the study of how utterances have meaning in situation. Adopting pragmatic approach to the analysis of cultural influence on politeness marker in the Yoruba context, the study will definitely reveal the significant role of culture in language use.

B. Language and Culture

Language and culture are two linguistic concepts fused together to enhance communicative competence of a language user. In other words, these two concepts (language and culture) influence each other in language use. This is why Adegbite and Akindele (2005) claim that language and culture are connected to “aspect of culture”, “instrument of thought” and “cultural expression”. Some linguists see the fusion of language and culture as “interpretation of social realities”. Sapir (1921) describes language as not standing apart or run parallel to the direct experience but completely interpenetrates it. This implies that language is built on the culture of the people. Therefore, culture brings about language difference (as in the case of English and Yoruba). In other words, difference in language is an indication of cultural difference. In the same manner, Lyons (1968) claims that culture determines language, and then language determines our view of reality. In his own perspective, Greenberg (1978) posits that language is a prerequisite for the accumulation and transmission of the other cultural traits. This implies that language cannot be meaningful outside the context of the culture that produces it. Hence, language and culture complement each other. In the Yoruba culture, for instance, when a younger person has conversation with an older person, it is expected that the younger person’s speech be polite because the Yoruba culture respects age. This means that culture is a checking mechanism in language use. Therefore, language and culture are indispensable tools in language use.

C. Some Definition of Terms

Politeness: This is the means employed to show awareness of another person’s face in a conversation. In other words, politeness is the interlocutors showing awareness of face of each other in linguistic exchanges.

Self-Image: It is the “emotional” and “social sense” of self that everyone has, and expects everyone to recognize.

Face: Face could be described as the public self-image of a person.

Face-Threatening Act: This is a situation where one of the interlocutors says something that threatens the other interlocutor’s expectations regarding his public self-image.

Face Saving Act: This is when an interlocutor makes some utterances that lessen the possible face-threatening act.

D. Social-Cultural Context

Hymes (1964) has identified some features of context to include “participants”, “topic”, “setting”, “channel”, “code”, and “message form”. He has also identified context type (physical context, psychological context, linguistic context, and socio-cultural context). Since language is the property of a speech community, it (language) is, therefore, used for communication purposes. This same language now spreads across different socio-cultural areas of the world, and each of the socio-cultural contexts often determines the meaning of a particular word or expression. For instance, the English language used among many ethnic groups is an instance of a language enjoying the patronage of different cultural backgrounds which are most likely to have different belief, habits, value, systems, cultural heritage and religion (Osisanwo, 2008, p. 81). It is a fact that linguistic context is what is seen in terms of what immediately precedes and

what follows in an expression in a text, but for adequate description of any linguistic event, the factor of socio-cultural context and practice is paramount (Malinowski, 1923).

Firth (1957, p. 24) claims that “every utterance is actualized in a culturally determined context of situation and the meaning of an utterance is the totality of all the features in it that can be singled out as giving in-put to the maintenance of the pattern of life in the society in which the speaker lives”. The scholar, therefore, describes meaning as serial contextualization of our facts within contexts, each one being a function, an organ of the bigger context, and all context finding a place in what may be called the context of culture (Farinde & Omolaiye, 2020, p. 97).

This study limits its analysis to politeness expressions in the Yoruba context. Yoruba is an ethnic group in the Southern part of Nigeria. The study focuses on expressions or utterances that save face in the conversations of interlocutors.

II. METHODOLOGY

Data was got from recorded conversations. The data was gathered in different natural settings ranging from family, market, setting and place of work in Ondo West Local Government Area of Ondo State, Nigeria. Collection of data spanned two years. The level of interlocutors’ unconsciousness with regard to their conversations being recorded made the data standard because at the time of recording, interlocutors were at their natural best. Since the study is based on the Yoruba context, the interlocutors who are natives of Yoruba were selected and their conversations were recorded. In other words, the recorded conversations were in Yoruba language, and were still retained in their original form for originality. However, all were translated to English in the course of analyzing the data. Politeness markers in “Leader-follower conversation”, Husband-Wife Conversations, Father-Son Conversation, Seller-Buyer Conversation, Elder brother-Younger brother Conversation, and Friend-Friend Conversation were recorded. Over ten recordings were made, out of which seven were used for analysis.

The researchers anchor this study on “Conversational Implicature theory. The proponent of “Conversational Implicature” is Grice (1981) who tries to explain the principle behind implied meaning in a conversation. According to Grice, when utterances are made, there is tendency that the interlocutor may not wish to say everything in his utterances. However, the listener is then expected to interpret the meaning of such an utterance, particularly the unspoken words (Farinde & Omolaiye, 2020). Such meanings are not overt, they are covertly implied. Ogunsiyi and Farinde (2010) simply refer to such implied meaning as implicature. By implication, the term implicature could be referred to as an additional words needed to be understood. Lyons (1977) corroborates this by describing “implicature” as the extra information rested upon a distinction between what is actually said and what is implied in saying what is said. In the same manner, Kempson (1975, p. 143) defines conversational implicature as:

... assumption over and above the meaning of the sentence used which the speaker known and intends that the hearer will make in the face of an apparently open violation of the cooperative principle in order to interpret the speaker’s sentence in accordance with the cooperative principle.

The relevance of the theory to this study lies in the fact that politeness markers are embedded in a conversation in which some utterances are unspoken but implied to avoid face threat. Adopting conversational implicature as the theoretical framework will definitely reveal cultural influence on politeness markers in the Yoruba context.

III. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Politeness markers in the recorded conversations of the interlocutors are subjected to pragmatic analysis. As earlier mentioned, the recorded conversations selected are utterances emanated from “Leader versus Follower”, “Husband versus Wife”, “Father versus Son”, “Elder Brother versus Younger Brother”, Friend versus Friend, “In-law versus In-law, and “seller versus buyer”. It must also be mentioned that each of the conversations were got from different natural settings. The recorded conversations selected were then categorized for easy analysis and discussion.

Excerpt 1: Conversation between a leader and a follower

This is a political leader-supporter conversation. What brought about this conversation is based on the fact that a politician could not fulfill the promise he made with his followers. As a result, the follower became annoyed and decided not to put in his effort to the leader’s political ambition. Here is the conversation:

- (1) Follower: Oga, *a o ni le se isemo* (Oga, we will not be able to do the job anymore).
- (2) Leader: *Kiniidi?* (Why?)
- (3) Follower: Oga, *e da ojuwa. A se ise fun yin, sugbon a korinkankan. Ao le semo*
(Master, we were disappointed in you. We worked for you, but we did not get the reward. We can’t do it anymore).
- (4) Leader: *Dakun, eyinlasoyi mi* (Please, you are the garment of my honour)
- (5) Follower: *Atigbo, sugbon, etojuwa o* (Okay, but you take good care of us o)

The conversation above has revealed the grievance of the follower who describes his political leader as an ingrate. Hence, the follower decided not to embark on another political campaign. One could notice that the follower has issued a “face threatening act” in his utterance. The implication in the said utterance is that the political leader is not worth dying for, as such, he (the follower) has regretted working with him. Having understood the grievance of his follower,

the leader made a persuasive apology thus – *eyin lasoiyi mi* (you are the garment of my honour). This persuasive apology could be referred to as politeness marker, in that the statement tries to save face of the interlocutor (follower) despite the fact that the follower had issued face threatening act.

The leader's utterance in (4) is metaphorically employed to reveal the significance of supporters in electioneering campaign. In the Yoruba socio-cultural context, it is believed that two wrongs cannot make a right. Hence, the use of *asoiyi* (garment of my honour) connotes relevance and significance of politeness to humanity. The conversational implicature of the utterance in (4) means that the success of a political leader lies in the efforts of the followers. So, the followers become a determining factor of the leader's success in an election. The response of the follower – *atigbo* (we have heard your plea) is an indication that the interlocutors were able to maintain personal relationship in the overall conversation because of the politeness marker issued by the leader. Persuasive approach deployed in (4) has made the leader achieved his aim even though he was not sincere to his follower. Hence, politeness marker becomes a strong tool for progress, peace and harmony.

Excerpt 2: Conversation between Husband and Wife

What brought about this conversation is the fact that the money for the upkeep of the family has finished. So, the wife expects that his husband provides another money so that there can be food in the house for the family. It is believed in Yoruba culture that one of the responsibilities of a husband is to provide for the family. This led to the conversation below:

6. Wife: *Ounje ti tan nile* (There is no food in the house)
7. Husband: *Kilo fi aduru owo ti mo fun o, ki o fi ran ounje sile se?* (What have you done with the enough money I gave to you to buy food in the house?)
8. Wife: *Eyin okunrin, e n gbiyanju o. Owo la n je bayi o. o tisu mi o.*
(You men are trying. It is money we are eating these days. I am fed up)
9. Husband: *Elo niki fun o?* (How much should I give you?)
10. Wife: *Iye ti agbara yin bagbe olowo orimi* (Any amount you are able to afford my husband)

It is obvious that the conversation above emanated from the family setting where the wife is concerned about the upkeep of the family as it is evident in the expression in (6). It is the responsibility of the wife to cook for the family while the husband is to provide for the family in Yoruba setting. From the conversation above, the husband was shocked to hear that the food bought with a lot of money got finished within few days. The implication of the husband's statement in (7) is that the wife must have been extravagant. Responding to the statement of the husband, the wife tries to save face by acknowledging the activities of men in terms of family upkeep. Thus, the wife's utterance *eyin okunrin e gbiyanju, o* (you men are really trying) is a politeness marker. Her further statement – *owo la n je bayi o* (it is money we are eating these days) has shown polite response to her husband's question in (7). The conversational implicature of the wife's response to the question of the husband, is that, there is hyper-inflation in Nigeria where Nigerian money has no value in market economy. If the wife decides to issue face threatening act just as the husband did, there would have been rancor between the couple. However, this is not so because in Yoruba culture, it is believed that a wife is expected to respect her husband no matter what. That is why expression like *oko ni ade ori aya* (husband is the crown to the wife's head) is prominent in the utterances of the Yoruba natives. So, the expression – *iyé ti agbara yin ba gbe olowo orimi* (any amount you are able to afford my husband) in (10) is also a politeness marker. The concept of *olowo orimi* which its equivalence in English (my lord) is one of the greatest politeness marker in the Yoruba socio-cultural context.

It is obvious that the use of politeness markers employed by the wife persuaded the husband, thus yielding to the request of his wife. It is also noticed that culture plays a great role in politeness markers in husband's and wife's conversations in an ideal situation.

Excerpt 3: Conversation between Father and Son

This is a conversation between a father and his son concerning the missing money in the house. The father had accused his son of stealing his money. the conversation goes thus:

1. Father: *Kilode to fi ji owo timo fi sibe yen* (Why did you steal the money I put there?)
timo fi sibe, semo pa iro?
2. Son: *Daddy kori be o* (it is not so Daddy)
3. Father: *Bi bawo?* (How do you mean?)
4. Son: *E ti fun mummy lowo yen* (You gave the money to mummy)
E ti gbagbe daddy (You have forgot)
5. Father: *Igbawo?* (When?)
6. Son: *Laaro Daddy.* (This morning Daddy).
7. Father: *Ah! motiranti* (Ah! I have remembered).

One thing noticeable in the conversation above is that father is usually supreme over the son. Even when the father wrongly accused his son of stealing money, the son politely responded to his father's ignorance of the whereabouts of the money. The expression in (12) *Daddy, kori be o* (Daddy, it is not so) is a politeness marker. It is against the culture of Yoruba for a son or daughter to tell to the face of their parents that they are lying even when they are actually lying.

That is why expression like *agbalagba kii pa iro* (an elderly person does not tell lies) is a guide to the use of polite statement especially in a conversation between parents and their wards.

However, the conversational implicature in the conversation above is the use of politeness marker in (12) which implies that the father has told a great lie by accusing his son wrongly. In other words, the father was ignorant of the whereabouts of the money even though the father had issued a face threatening act. The son managed to save face and as such, the conversation ended well without the son calling his father a liar. So, all the responses of the son were politely employed to save face of the other interlocutor. The politeness markers in the conversation above are convincing expressions towards a successful conversation. The expression of the father in (17) *Ah! mo ti ranti* (Ah, I have remembered) has revealed the level of the father's ignorance of the whereabouts of the money.

Excerpt 4: A Conversation between Elder brother and Younger brother

There was an on-going issue that the elder brother prevailed on the younger brother. Even though it did not go down well with the younger brother, the elder brother made it known that he is still the elder brother. The conversation is represented below:

18. Elder brother: *Se o ya were ni? Mo niko kuro lori e* (Are you mad? I told you to forget about the issue).
19. Younger brother: *E le bu mi egbon* (you can abuse me brother)
20. Elder brother: *Mo ni ko kuro lo ri e* (I said you should forget about the matter)
21. Younger brother: *Egbon, motigbo* (I have heard you brother).
22. Elder brother: *Aburona a pon e le o* (you will also receive respect from Younger ones).

The conversation above has revealed the much respect the younger brother accorded to his elder brother even though it was not easy for the younger brother to let go of the issue at hand. In Yoruba setting or context, respect for elders is held in high esteem. That is why, when an elderly person is disrespected by a younger person either in conversation or a physical act, it is usually frowned at. The expression *agbalagba ni agbalagba maa je* (an elder remains an elder at all time) in Yoruba saying has buttressed this. So, the younger person is culture bound to respect an elderly person. This has revealed in the conversation between the elder brother and his younger brother.

The statement in (18) could be regarded as face threatening act. However, the response of the younger brother, which could be regarded as politeness marker, brought about positive face, thereby maintaining social relationship between the interlocutors. This is evident following the responses in (20) and (22). The response in (20) now became a plea-*mo ti niko kuro lori e* (I said you should let go of the issue) while that of (22) resorted to appreciation in form of prayer.

The underlying conversation implicature in the politeness markers is that it is not the wish of the younger brother to let go of the issue, but only respected his elder brother because of the cultural implication of the saying that *aburo kii ri agba fin* (younger brothers/sisters do not disrespect their elder brothers/sisters). It is noted in the conversation above that Yoruba culture plays a significant role in conversation of the interlocutors as it serves as a tool in measuring the communicative competence of the interlocutors in linguistic exchanges.

Excerpt 5: Conversation between Buyer and Seller

This conversation took place in the market setting where the interlocutors are on business transaction. Here is the conversation:

23. Buyer: *E kasan o* (Good afternoon)
24. Seller: *E kasan mummy* (Good afternoon ma)
25. Buyer: *Eloniasoyii?* (How much is this cloth?)
26. Seller: *N5,000.00ni Mummy* (It is N5,000.00 Mummy)
27. Elonijale? (How much is the last price)
28. *O se eyin, e san* N4,500.00 (Because it is you, pay N4,500.00)
29. *Se ele gba* N2,500. (Let me pay N2,500.00)
30. Mummy, *e ba mi ra* (Buy from me Mummy)

The conversation above has revealed one thing, sellers are usually polite during business transaction. In fact, they have polite tone during transaction. This is evident in the seller's utterances. The interlocutors' exchanges have elements of face saving act, as the two of them (buyer and seller) wanted to benefit from each other. In the conversation, one would notice that politeness markers are more in the utterances of the seller with the use of "Mummy" even though it is obvious that the buyer cannot be the mother of the buyer in terms of age.

It is believed in the Yoruba ideology that sellers do not become buyers in their own commodities. Hence, they will have to use persuasive mechanism to convince their buyers to buy their goods or commodities. This can only be achieved with the use of politeness markers in the utterances of the sellers during business transaction. The conversation began with greetings which is paramount in business conversation. The greetings were indications that the interlocutors were at their natural best for business transaction. Hence, utterances in (24), (26), (28), and (30) are politeness markers. The utterance in (28) *O se eyin ...* (because it is you ...) is a persuasive politeness marker which appears that the buyer is given an undue favour. The conversational implicature is in (30). Apart from the fact that, the seller tried to maintain face saving act, she refused to tell the buyer that her price is below the cost price of the cloth. This implies that the seller was not ready to sell the cloth at N2,500.00 instead of the seller to simply say no to the price of the buyer, he resorted to pleading – *Mummy, e ba mi ra* (buy from me Mummy). One thing that is noticeable in business transaction is pleading and persuasive mechanisms, and the seller had effectively deployed them in his utterances.

Excerpt 6: Conversation between a Friend to a Friend

This is a friend-to-friend conversation where friend A was not happy with friend B on the basis of information divulged. The conversation is presented thus:

31. Friend A: *Talo so fun Tola nkan to sele?* (Who told Tola what happened?)
32. Friend B: *Emi ni* (I am)
33. Friend A: *Ore, e tobi lowo mi ni o* (Friend, it is because I so much have respect for you.)
34. Friend B: *E se* (Thank you)

The issue of friendship is significant in human nature. And as such, two or more individuals come together for interpersonal relationships. Hence, friendship because social integration in a society. As earlier mentioned, the data above borders on a conversation between a friend and a friend on the grounds that Friend B divulged classical information to Tola. This is evident in (32). Friend A was not happy for what friend B did. However, he (Friend A) tried to issue a face saving act in (33) in order to maintain interpersonal relationship. The utterance- *Ore, e tobi lowo mi ni o* (friend, it is because I have so much respect for you) is a politeness marker. Ordinarily, friend A could simply say that what friend B did is bad.

In the Yoruba socio-cultural setting, friendship is significant. That is why expression like – *a n wa ore kun ore* (one keeps on having friends) is in the utterances of the Yoruba natives. It must be mentioned here that there could be good or bad friends. However, one could say that the friendship in the conversation above is good because the interlocutors were able to maintain interpersonal relationship with the use of words. In fact, Friend B was able to acknowledge his mistake, thus appreciating friend A for issuing face saving act.

Conversation implicature in the conversation is in (33). The expression – *Ore e tobi lowo mi ni o* (Friend, it is because I have much respect for you) implies that, Friend B would have been punished for divulging such classical information. The conversation has revealed one thing; that friendship could be made or marred with the use of language. The use of positive utterance could make friendship (as in the case of the conversation above) while that of negative utterance usually mars friendship.

Excerpt 7: Conversation between mother-in-law and son-in-law.

This conversion came up upon the invitation that the husband insulted the family of the wife. Here is the conversation.

31. Son-in-law: *Mummy, e nikin wari yin*(Mummy, you asked me to see you)
32. Mother-in-law: *Iyawo yin ni eti bu family oun* (Your wife said you insulted Her family).
33. Son-in-law: *Mi o to be kin bu family ana mi Mummy* (Who am I to insult the family of my wife?)
34. Mother-in-law: *Ki lo wa sele?* (What actually happened)
35. Son-in-law: *Mo kan ba wini o* (It is just a caution)
36. Mother-in-law: *Ejo, e ma ja o* (Please, live in peace o)
37. E se mummy: (Thank you mummy)

The interlocutors in the conversation above have maintained face saving act as they are expected to be accorded respect. It is believed in the Yoruba culture that in-law A is not superior to in-law B. That is why the expression – *ana kii kere* (No in-law is ordinary) in the utterances of the Yoruba natives play a significant role in the conversation between the two in-law (as in the case of the conversation above). However, more respect is usually accorded to the mother-in-law than the son-in-law because it is believed that, he who that gives his daughter's hand in marriage has done a great favour. This is what brought about the expression in (33) – *Mi o to be ki n bu family ana mi Mummy* (Who am I to insult the family of my wife?). Hence, expression in (33) is a politeness marker. The utterance is used to maintain public self-image of the other interlocutor. Eventually, the conversation ended on a good note.

Feature of conversational implicature manifested in (35) in that, the son-in-law euphemistically presented the misunderstanding between him and his wife when he said it was just a mere caution. The expression – *mo kan ba wi ni o* (I just cautioned her o) implies that the wife must have done or say something that was unpalatable that made the husband indirectly insulted his in-law's family. Probably the wife must have lacked some expected attitude which might be caused by her parents. The use of "Mummy" in the conversation is an indication that, by extension, the mother-in-law is also a mother to son-in-law in the Yoruba context.

IV. DISCUSSIONS

The pragmatic analysis of cultural influence on politeness markers in the Yoruba context has brought one thing to the fore-that culture has great influence on politeness marking in conversation. Expressions are politely used in accordance with the dictates of the culture of a people. This has revealed the role of culture in language use. Politeness markers maintain and sustain face saving act thereby creating good atmosphere for conversations.

The study has revealed persuasive approach employed by the interlocutors to maintain and sustain conversation. For instance, the use of *e yin laso iyi mi* (you are the garnet of my honour) is a good example of persuasive approach employed by the political leader to get things done. Hence, politeness markers promote peace and harmony between interlocutors in linguistic exchanges.

In the analysis, it has been discovered that husband and wife do not have equal right in terms of whose voice should be more authoritative. The culture has given the husband the privilege to assert while the wife is to obey the assertion. This is evident in (7) when the husband queried the prudence of his wife. In other words, Yoruba culture has placed husband over and above wife. This is similar to Okpameri culture where a wife is sanctioned for saying negative utterances against her husband.

Politeness markers serve as convincing mechanism in order to sustain social relationship in a conversation. For instance, instead of the son to tell his father that he (the son) was accused wrongly, he decided to say that his father must have forgot when he gave money to Mummy. The study has revealed the fact that a son is not expected to say that his father had told a lie in the Yoruba culture.

Also, the issue of in-law in the Yoruba culture is significant, in that both mother in-law and son-in-law are accorded almost the same respect. For instance, conversations in (31) – (37) have revealed the mutual respect between the interlocutors. The study has also revealed semantic extension in the use of “Mummy”. In Yoruba setting mother-in-law is also a mother to the son-in-law because of the communal tendency. Therefore, conversational implicatures in the conversations analysed are indications that it is not necessary to say everything as they are if there is need to sustain and maintain face saving act in linguistic exchanges.

V. CONCLUSION

Culture plays a significant role in language use. It is a yardstick for measuring communicative competence of a language user. It is not out of place to state here that culture has a great influence on language use. Therefore, the use of language is the function of the culture that owns the language. Moreso, the context in which an expression or utterance is used usually determines its meaning. So, what is polite in language A might be impolite in language B because of difference in the cultures of languages A and B.

So far, this study has made a pragmatic analysis of why and how politeness markers are employed in the Yoruba context. It has been observed that politeness markers are used in accordance with the dictates of culture. For instance, the expression *Daddy kori be o* (Daddy, it is not so) has cultural underpinning as it is wrong for a son to tell to the face of his father that his father has told a lie in the Yoruba context because it is believed that father or an elderly person does not tell a lie. So, *agbalagba ki pa iro* (an elderly person does not tell a lie) is embedded in the Yoruba linguistic exchanges. Since politeness markers are usually influenced by the culture of a language, this paper therefore recommends that language users should be exposed to the culture of the language used as this will enhance their communicative competence in a speech community.

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