



A Linguistic Appraisal of Brown and Levinson's Face Management Act View Using Charles Chinedu Ochendu's Fools' Paradise

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ABSTRACT

It is fascinating to appraise linguistic theories through the analysis of literary texts. This paper is an appraisal of Brown and Levinson's Face Management View (cited in Bossan Rita [1]) through the analysis of corpora selected from Charles Chinedu Ochendu's [2] novel, Fools' Paradise. Language theories or postulations provide useful insights on language use across genres, including the novel genre. The Face Management View captures not only the sociocultural and psychological of face threatening acts, but also their communicative potentials in written and spoken texts. The selected conversational turns were subjected to analysis to reveal whether or not face threatening acts (FTAs) and face saving acts (FSAs) were performed, the pragmatic motivations for performing FTAs and FSAs and the implications on the message of a text. The study concludes that even though the theory is bereaved of the dynamics of non-verbal communication, it is suitable for explaining the psychological context of language use in human interactions.

KEYWORDS: *Fools' Paradise Brown and Levinson, face threatening act (FTA), face saving act (FSA), politeness, speech act*

INTRODUCTION

Literary texts convey themes via the conversations of intra-text fictional characters. Such characters produce face threatening acts and face saving acts that impinge on writers' overall thematic preoccupation. This process essentially accentuates writers' creative indulgence. Bosco et al. [3] opine that a conversation is "a two-fold activity in which the participants form utterances that are products of shared meaning, and such utterances produce felicitous results to the communicative event." Like other naturally occurring conversations, the conversations analyzed in this study are initiated, developed or terminated via different discourse strategies. In other words, they are coherent. Commenting on the significance of coherence in human communication, Brenders [4] notes that "coherent conversation involves both the coordinated production of illocutionary acts and the management of the potential perlocutionary effects of utterances." Illocutionary forces and perlocutionary acts convey FTAs and FSAs in the conversational exchanges selected for analysis, in the appraisal of Brown and Levinson's Face Management View.

SUMMARY OF FOOLS' PARADISE

Fool's Paradise, is a nine-chapter novel. It narrates Onome's ordeals after her father's death: her relocation to her aunt's

place and the resultant exposure to bad friends. Like other young girls, Onome aspires to be educated. Unfortunately, get-rich-quick "syndrome" shatters her educational ambition as she indulged in prostitution. The novel lampoons prostitution which is caused by: the craze for money; and moral decadence in the society.

The story ends on a very tragic note: she contracted Aids that shatters her proposed marriage. The tragic element of the novel is elevated by Onome's suicide attempt.

BROWN AND LEVINSON (1978, 1987): FACE MANAGEMENT ACT VIEW

The Face Management Act View builds on related predating theories, and views "face" as an image of the self, delineated in terms of approved social attributes. Brown and Levinson redefine face as the public self-image that every member of society wants to claim for himself. Bossan Rita's [1] elaborate presentation on Brown and Levinson's Face Management View is instructive. According to her, Brown and Levinson:

"... see politeness as a cogent and rule governed aspect of communication, aimed predominantly at maintaining social cohesion via the maintenance of individuals' public face. Thus, they identify two types of face: positive face and negative face: Positive face is observed by the individual need to be appreciated and respected by



others as well as to maintain positive self-image. To put it another way, positive face has to do with a person's wish to be thought of; the desire to be understood by others, and the desire to be treated as a friend and confidant. Negative face on the other hand involves the freedom of action and the freedom from imposition. That is to say, it has to do with our wish not to be imposed on by others and to be allowed to go about our business unimpeded and with our rights to free and self-determined action intact. Hence in dealing with each other, our utterances may be oriented to the positive or to the negative face of those we interact with.

In corollary to that, they identify two types of face act: face threatening act (FTA henceforth) and face saving act (FSA henceforth). FTA occurs when one participant says something that represents a threat to another person's self-image. FSA on the other hand is the opposite of FTA. It ensues whenever one of the participants in a discourse says something that lessens the possible threat to another's face. There are three super ordinate and one opting out strategies of performing an FTA:

Performing FTA without redress

Do the act bald-on-record. This is observed in speaking directly or very directly, in the most direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way possible without any attempt whatsoever to mitigate the illocutionary force inherent in an act, regardless of the rating of the imposition. By implication, the act will be in full conformity with the Gricean maxims: quantity, quality, manner, and relation. For example, an utterance like Leave the house does not say more or less than is required (quantity), is maximally efficient in so far as it is non-spurious (quality), it is relevant (relation) and it avoids ambiguity and obscurity (manner). It is also significant that in performing such an act, a speaker shows little concern for the hearer's face. This is because the speaker in this context will highly likely to focus on the propositional content of the message; thereby provide no effort to reduce the impact of the FTAs, and are likely to shock the addressee, embarrass them, or make them feel uncomfortable. Examples of this strategy abound where the power differential or role relation is asymmetrical, e.g. military setting, law court, and so on. It is also observed in a discourse where the speaker holds high relative power and fears no threat to his own face from the addressee.

Performing FTA with redress

This is when the act is performed with no threat to the addressee's face intended. This can be done in two ways: performing FTA with redress using positive politeness strategy and performing FTA with redress using negative politeness strategy. Performing FTA with redress using positive politeness strategy (which appeals to

the addressee's desire to be liked and approved of). It is frequently employed in groups of friends, or where people in the given social situation know each other fairly well. They usually attempt to minimize the distance between interlocutors by expressing friendliness and solid interest in the hearer's need to be respected, in other words, to minimize the FTA. For example, You look nice today. What an elegant suit you are putting ... Other manifestations include where a speaker avoids disagreement, is optimistic, extends praise, gives sympathy, hedges opinion, etc.

In other respects, performing an FTA with redress using negative politeness is obvious when a speaker aims to orient him/herself towards a hearer's negative face – which appeals to the hearer's desire not to be impeded or put upon, to be left free to act as he or she chooses. Generally, negative politeness manifests in the use of conventional politeness markers, deference markers, minimizing imposition, being indirect etc. However, Simpson (1989) modifying Brown and Levinson ... identifies seven major strategies of using negative politeness:

- i. Hedge e.g. I'm sorry but I must ask you to leave my office.
- ii. Indicate permission e.g. The situation in the country is harsh. I will understand if you could not lend me N5, 000.
- iii. Minimize imposition, e.g. I need a little favour from you.
- iv. Indicate deference, e.g. I am ashamed but to have to ask you this favour.
- v. Apologize e.g. I don't mean to bother you.
- vi. Impersonalize, e.g. We regret to inform you.
- vii. Acknowledge the debt, e.g. I would be eternally grateful if.

(Simpson, 174-176)

Performing FTA using off record politeness

this is observed when ambiguous or vague, sarcastic or jocular. In this case, the utterance bears an implicature that evades clarity and thus can be immediately dismissed because, theoretically, the speaker doesn't commit him/herself to a specific intent ...

Do not perform FTA

Do not perform the act at all. This has to do with "saying nothing" i.e. "opting out" ... all a speaker has to do is resist or renounce his/her wish to make an utterance that risks being face-threatening ... This is especially observed in situations when a speaker decides to say nothing and genuinely wishes to let the matter drop ...

APPRAISAL OF THE FACE MANAGEMENT VIEW

In this section of the paper, we appraise the Face Management View by analyzing the interactions of intra-text characters: characters in the novel.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

Datum A

"Honestly speaking Alhaji, this is unfair ... This was a promise you made almost a year ago," came Aunt Mabel's sudden outburst from the inner room.

"Don't you trust me again? I said there is a contract I'm still expecting, when I get it I'll open the supermarket for you," Alhaji Wada reassured her.

The encoder of "Honestly speaking Alhaji, this is unfair ... This was a promise you made almost a year ago," performs FTA without redress. She is mindless of the addressee's face (bluntly threatens it) because she strongly believes a promise should be fulfilled. The encoder is expected to perform FSA because her interlocutor's social status is higher than hers; it can be inferred that Alhaji is richer and older than the encoder because the setting of the novel is Nigeria, where the expression "Alhaji" is connotative (rich man). The encoder of "Don't you trust me again? I said there is a contract I'm still expecting, when I get it I'll open the supermarket for you," does not want to react angrily (face saving act) even though his interlocutor violates the Politeness Principle. The reason for not reacting is clear; he is still very interested in maintaining the relationship. Usually, immoral relationship between a participant of discourse who has a higher social status than his/her interlocutor, result in disrespect. It is commonly said that "familiarity breeds contempt". Language use is so conventional that it conveys the social relationship between participants of discourse. Acheoah [5] opines that "sociolinguistic variables" constitute extra-linguistic acts.

Datum B

Happy birthday to you ... happy birthday to you ... Abbas began to sing, ushering them into another joke session. She had told him the day before of her birthday and he had promised her a special gift.

"Please stop that," she cut him short. "What do you mean?" he retorted.

"Is today not your birthday ... or were you joking when you told me yesterday?" she fired back. He busted into laughter.

"Relax baby", he began when he came back to his senses. "How can I forget such a thing? ... I can't but show my love to you baby ... as I said, it's gonna be a special gift you'll never forget in your life, he boasted amidst excitement. But he kept her mind wondering.

"What kind of gift was he planning to give me? ... He had no money, he was only a student. Was he going to steal his brother's money to please me?"

In Datum B, "singing" is a face saving act; the encoder, like any other person expecting a promised birthday gift, would not be happy to see the person who made the promise, walk into the house without holding anything that looks like a gift¹.

Austin [6] acknowledges that an illocutionary act can be performed with a non-performative formula (without the use of words). The encoder of "Please stop that" performs a face threatening act, informed by the psychological context of the discourse – built around very high expectation of a promised birthday gift. The use of "please" (a conventional politeness marker) makes the FTA mild. To deploy politeness marker effectively in communicative events, the participants rely on mastery of the linguistic conventions of the language that is engaged in the communication. Acheoah [5] uses the term "Operative Language" (OL) for such a language. Mastery of the grammar and vocabulary of OL is crucial for the use and interpretation of direct speech acts and indirect illocutionary strategies. In discourse structure, one text reads another²; the utterance "What do you mean" in Datum B, is therefore a reaction to the implicature in the preceding utterance ("Please stop that"). The participants do not violate turn-taking hence they follow the Cooperative Principle of conversation. The encoder of "Relax baby" performs a face saving act (by subtly fusing "apology" and "acknowledgement" strategies) even though his interlocutor violates the Politeness Principle of conversation.

Datum C

"Onome you've finished your exams, congrats," he said.

"Thank you Alhaji," she replied.

"So what would you be doing alone at home when everybody has gone to work?" he continued.

"I'll be sleeping or watching films," she answered.

"Only you at home? ... Haba, I'll come and keep you company later, okay?" he said with a smile that revealed the gap in the middle of his neatly-arranged set of teeth.

The utterance "Onome you've finished your exams, congrats" is both an indirect speech act and an acknowledgement. Its primary illocutionary act is "informing the addressee about his intention to pay her a visit". Indeed, the encoder uses the utterance as a FSA towards the addressee in the sense that people present requests via a preparatory speech act like the encoder does in the text (e.g. commendations, acknowledgements, gratitude, etc.).

Even though the utterance "So what would you be doing alone at home when everybody has gone to work?" is a direct question, it is an agitation (implicature). The illocutionary goal of the utterance is to perform a face saving act with a negative politeness strategy known as "minimizing imposition" (as in Brown and Levinson's Face Management View). The encoder thinks that imposing his desire on the addressee can threaten the addressee's face (FTA) because individuals have the rights to decide their routine. He didn't

want to infringe on the decoder's rights. The utterance "Only you at home? ... *Haba*, I'll come and keep you company later, okay?" shows that the encoder asks a question and answers it himself. This is a violation of the Cooperative Principle of conversation. The performed FSA counts as "hedging" in the sense that the encoder does not give the addressee the opportunity of responding to the question. It also counts as "imposition" even though the language is not offensive.

Datum D

As Abbas walked up to where she was waiting, he handed her a stick of *suya* which she began to eat almost immediately.

"Thank you," he said as they continued walking.

"*Haba*, this is too small to be mentioned ..." Abbas replied with a mischievous look on his face. She was shy so she remained quiet.

Like greetings, expression of gratitude (as in "Thank you" in Datum C) is a politeness strategy. If it is not uttered after the offer, it generates an implicature as a matter of cultural pragmatics. The addressee's face can be threatened if it is not uttered. The utterance "*Haba*, this is too small to be mentioned ..." (hedge) is essentially a conventional politeness strategy, often used as a reply to an expression of gratitude. It makes one's interlocutor feel comfortable, especially when the offer is extraneous. In some cases, the person who offers the item uses the utterance to index high social status (wealth). The person who was given the item chose not to perform an FTA (by saying nothing) because she was not comfortable with the situation (psychological context).

In using FSAs, the speaker presupposes that the hearer knows: what is meant by what is said; and what is meant by what is not said. Therefore, pragmatic presupposition plays crucial role in face-threatening acts. Levinson [7] opines that "pragmatic presupposition is the relation between a speaker and the appropriateness of a sentence in a context."

Datum E

"Where are you coming from? She demanded angrily.

Em ... em I didn't go outside where you sent me." Onome managed to say before Aunty Mabel landed on her face a dirty slap that sent her crashing on the sofa."

"You're here for only two months and you've learnt how to talk with men? ... If this is what you've come here to do, you better go and pack your things and go back to your village, she said in a loud voice that got their neighbors coming to find out what was happening.

In Datum F, "Where are you coming from?" is a face threatening act performed without redress. The speaker maximizes imposition because she is higher in status than the addressee, her niece. Even if the addressee's social status were higher than that of her interlocutor, the fact that the speaker gives her shelter would have given the speaker the right (felicity condition) to perform the FSA without redress.

In conversational turns, certain sentential constructions are as a matter of linguistic conventions, inevitably loud. The question is a direct speech act and the illocutionary force is "condemning". However, the speaker is not intentionally proving her superiority over her addressee. She is merely putting the addressee on the right track (insisting on good conduct).

The utterance "Em ... em I didn't go outside where you sent me" is an "acknowledgement" – a negative politeness strategy. The participants obey the Cooperative Principle of conversation in terms of turn-taking. The encoder of "You're here for only two months and you've learnt how to talk with men? ... If this is what you've come here to do, you better go and pack your things and go back to your village" threatens the face of the addressee without redress, as a result of the psychological context – the fear that the addressee could be in a big problem if she is not properly guided and taken care of. Thus, her aunt's action is determined by what she intends to achieve (the meanings of the FTA she performs). Brenders [4] submit that "one of the central issues involved in any systematic analysis of communication is the role of 'meaning' in conversation. One general trend in such analyses has been to regard meaning as the products of social action ..."

Datum G

"What kind of sleep is this? This is almost 1:00 pm and you're still sleeping ... Didn't you sleep last night?" Hadiza asked, trying to pull her legs.

"That is left for you to decide," Rabi answered. Then she turned to Onome. "Baby! How far now? ... I hope you're learning fast?"

"Ah! This one? ... She is A1, she has learnt more than me," Hadiza interrupted. Onome was shy and couldn't talk. Being the youngest, she needed to show some respect.

The encoder of "What kind of sleep is this? This is almost 1:00 pm and you're still sleeping ... Didn't you sleep last night?" performs an FTA without redress (direct attack). Although the utterance is a question, the illocutionary force is "rebuking". The encoder maximizes imposition. The meaning of the utterance is that the addressee should stop sleeping (implicature). Even if the participants in a communicative event are close friends, the psychological state to be expressed via an utterance can necessitate blunt face-threatening acts. Besides the fact that the encoder is not in a position to perform the FTA (felicity condition), oversleeping is not an offence, and this is why the addressee responded with a face threatening act as well by saying, "That is left for you to decide," (a responsive speech act). In addition to performing an FTA, the encoder of "Baby! How far now? ... I hope you're learning fast?" deploys an illocutionary strategy that ridicules her challenger – she deploys topic shift to minimize the challenger's imposition. The participants do not obey the Cooperative Principle of conversation in terms of turn-taking, as evident in the topic shift and interruption.

Although the utterance "Ah! This one? ... She is A1, she has learnt more than me," is a FTA without redress, the addressee chooses not to perform an FTA because she is the youngest participant in the communication (socio-cultural pragmatics). Language use is immersed in socio-cultural beliefs and value systems of society part of which is giving older people some respect. The Face Management View reveals the roles of such socio-cultural underpinnings in the use and interpretation of language. Research still evolves on the significance of figurative language in interactions. In this regard, Brown and Levinson's Face Management View is very instructive.

DISCUSSION

The analysis reveals that in the performance of face threatening acts (FTAs) and face saving acts (FSAs), participants of discourse are conscious of not just the context of the conversation, but also their impression about themselves (self-image). This consciousness impinges on the use and interpretation of implicatures, adherence to the Cooperative Principle of conversation, the use of direct and indirect speech acts and the use of politeness strategies. A participant of discourse wants his/her interlocutor to be mindful of his/her social status, and show regard for same. People want to be loved, trusted, respected and given fair treatments. A speaker's social status is essentially his or her public image – a crucial human attribute that should not be relegated to the background. Relegating an interlocutor's social status counts as face-threatening the interlocutor without redress.

Participants in a conversational exchange, as we see in the data selected from *Fool's Paradise*, may decide not to obey the Politeness Principle of conversation. They may also decide not to obey the Cooperative Principle of conversation. These possible communication attitudes generate categories of implicatures. Indeed, the Politeness Principle and the Cooperative Principle (of conversation) are rule-driven. In addition, they can operate as cohesive devices in conversations.

FSAs are culture specific and this bedevils its universality. But debates are on, as regards the significance of cross-cultural differences in the use of FSAs in discourse. For example, Ming-Chung Yu [8] reports that "Searle (1975), supporting Austin's (1962) claim that speech acts are semantic universals and hence not culture-bound, maintains that across languages and cultures there are general norms for realizing speech acts and conducting politeness behaviour, and that while the forms embodying these norms may vary from one language to another, the cross-cultural differences are not that important."

Moreover, one of the weaknesses of face acts theories, is the fact that a speaker may utter unintended utterances; in other words, locutionary acts may not be intended in the same way that perlocutionary acts may be unintended. Thus, such acts are not predictable. Mey [9] asserts that "acting cooperatively,

people try to build up their interlocutors' 'positive faces', while trying to avoid posing threats to their 'negative faces'. This is especially important in linguistic interaction since every engagement in conversation opens up the possibility of 'losing face': I may either be 'drawn out' and say something I didn't really mean to say or didn't have the intention of sharing with my interlocutor (as often happens in 'open-microphone' interviews), or I may be subjected to bullying treatment by someone who doesn't like me, or who wants to exploit me for her or his own profits. When face is being threatened in interaction, both faces, the positive and the negative one, come under attack³." Face threatening acts in conversations show that processing an utterance for meaning is the core of human interactions. Sound understanding of the Cooperative Principle of conversation helps the analyst fish out textual meanings as conveyed through FTAs and FSAs.

Grice [10] presents an elaborate perspective of the Cooperative Principle:

The Cooperative Principle (CP) operates in the plans of speakers and understanding of hearers, by obeying maxims:

- **Quantity:**
 - Make your contribution as informative as required (for the current purposes of the exchange);
 - Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.
- **Quality:**
 - (Supermaxim): Try to make your contribution one that is true.
 - (Submaxims):
 - Do not say what you believe to be false;
 - Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.
- **Relation:**
 - Be relevant
- **Manner:**
 - (Supermaxim): Be perspicuous.
 - (Submaxims):
 - Avoid obscurity of expression;
 - Avoid ambiguity;
 - Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity);
 - Be orderly."

Indeed, Grice [10] also posits that "features distinguishing the Cooperative Principles are as follows:

1. The participants have some common immediate aim;
2. The contributions of the participants should be dovetailed, mutually dependent;

3. There is some sort of undertaking (which may be explicit but which is often tacit) that, other things being equal, the transaction should continue in appropriate style unless both parties are agreeable that it should terminate."

In the use of FSAs and FSAs, interactive participants use different strategies in developing or terminating the conversation depending on: whose face is threatened, the possibility of alternative ways of saying something, the psychological states of participants, and the social relationship between the interlocutors, among other variables. The pragmatics of all these variables are implicature-motivated. The flexibility of implicature makes the performance of FSAs effective in discourse. According to Grice [10], "conversational implicatures have the following characteristics:

- a. They are cancellable e.g. when one finds situations in which the utterance of the form of words could not carry the implicature;
- b. They are non-detachable: It will not be possible to find another way of saying the same thing, which lacks the implicature in question, except where some special feature of the substituted version is itself relevant to the determination of an implication (in virtue of one of the maxims of Manner).
- c. They are calculable: The presence of a conversational implicature must be capable of being worked out; for even if it can in fact be intuitively grasped, unless the intuition is replaceable by an argument (the implicature if present at all) it will not count as a conversational implicature."

The performance of FSA is about the mental states of the participants in a communicative event. Interlocutors read each other's minds and make appropriate presuppositions based on the context of the communication. Chilton [11] rightly notes that "cognitive pragmatics is defined as a study of mental states of the interlocutors, their beliefs, desires, goals, and intentions (cf. Bara 2010: 1) produced and interpreted by human individuals interacting with one another ... If language use (discourse) is, as the tenets of CDA assert, connected to the construction of knowledge about social objects, identities, processes, etc., then that construction can only be taking place in the minds of (interacting) individuals." The politeness-driven potentials of FSAs make the cross-cultural performance of the acts a front-burner discourse in the literature. Cook, cited in Adeyemi [12] submit that "the Politeness Principle, like the Cooperative Principle, may be formulated as series of maxims which people assume are being followed in the utterances of others."

The conversations analyzed in this study reveals that difference in status between a speaker and his/her interlocutor is the reason for preferring one illocutionary strategy to another, as in the use of an indirect speech act rather than a direct speech act in a given context. In conversations, politeness can be used to establish speaker-

hearer social status dichotomy as in Onome's reply each time her aunty rebukes her. This view aligns with Mey [9] who contends that "one of functions of politeness is to create (or manifest) a distance between the interlocutors, as in the case of social-hierarchical placements that have to be maintained through language use."

Unlike the Politeness Principle and the Cooperative Principle (of conversation), the Principle of Relevance cannot be violated. It is non-negotiable and must naturally be followed. Onome cannot disobey her aunt's order to return to the village, even if she chooses to be impolite or uncooperative (face-threatening acts) in the conversation that occurred before her departure. According to Sperber and Wilson [13], "communicators do not 'follow' the principle of relevance; and they could not violate it even if they wanted to. The principle of relevance applies without exceptions.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the Face Management View is a good framework for interpreting the psychological underpinnings of language use in written and spoken texts. The theory also elucidates the dynamics for developing or terminating an interaction. It corroborates and develops classical speech act theories such as Austin [6], Searle [14] and Bach and Harnish [15] because it does not only capture speech act classification (FTA can be assertive, informative, etc.), but also captures illocutionary strategies (FTA can be direct or indirect as in Bach and Harnish's [15] "Speech Act Schemata"). However, a major weakness of the Face Management View is that it is bereaved of the communicative potentials of non-verbal communication.

Notes

1. In the Pragma-crafting Theory (cf. Acheoah [5], "semiotic particulars" are communicative extra-linguistic acts which include singing.
2. The notion of "intertextuality" in the literature of discourse analysis, is instructive in this regard.
3. Mey [9] posits that "cooperation is a complex concept involving many layers of interactive behavior including politeness and 'face'. By being polite, we conserve our integrity as interlocutors while being considerate of our partners' faces - in one fell sweep. Politeness is our strategy for conversational cooperation with least cost and maximum benefit to all interlocutors." In addition, Mey [9] cites Leech who submits:

"[S]ome illocutions (e.g., orders) are inherently impolite, and others (e.g., offers) are inherently polite" (1983: 83). This view assumes politeness to be an abstract quality, residing in individual expressions, lexical items or morphemes without regard for the particular circumstances that govern their use. Being 'inherently' polite implies being polite, without regard for the contextual factors that define what is polite in a given situation."

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