A speech act analysis of politeness strategies in Yoruba *abiku* names

Kamar Adewale Rafiu[1]
Habeebat Motunrayo Osho[2]

Department of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages
University of Ilorin, Nigeria[1,2]
email: rafenadewale@gmail.com[1]

Abstract - Politeness is a phenomenon which seeks to mitigate the potential destructiveness of face threatening acts (FTAs) in human interaction. 'Abiku' refers to children who die repeatedly at infancy. Àbíkú refers to a child who dies shortly after birth. Such a child among the Yoruba people of western Nigeria is believed to be in covenant with the spirits' world. Names given to abiku could be politely or impolitely crafted by the parents. The aim of this study is to do a speech act analysis of the force of perlocution in abiku names. The specific objectives were to: identify the FTAs in abiku names; determine the weight of seriousness of FTAs in the names; examine the names and present the directness and indirectness of the utterances; and explain how the meaning of these names are used to solve the mysteries therein. The random sampling technique was used in collecting relevant data from traditional healers and elderly members of the community reputed to have special knowledge of abiku. Brown and Levinson's model of politeness and Searle's taxonomy of illocutionary acts were used as tools of analysis. The study revealed that politeness strategies are not only used for FTAs, they are used to maintain social relationship between interlocutors. We concluded that there are social factors influencing the weight of the seriousness of FTAs in abiku names for a better understanding.

Keywords: Abiku, ftas, speech act, politeness, yoruba

1. Introduction

Naming is an integral part of Yoruba culture. Yoruba names are more than identification tags; they constitute an integral part of human experience and reflect the world view and etymology of the people. Àbíkú name is an aspect of Yoruba names that explains the circumstances that surround the birth of a child.

Idowu and Onadipe (2011) present a pragmatic overhaul of the phenomenal àbíkú in the Yoruba worldview. This work seeks to expand the frontier of the studies on Àbíkú by incorporating social factors to the understanding of Àbíkú. In other words, Àbíkú names can be studied from different linguistic perspectives using different theories; however, this study examined how sociopragmatic tools are used to add force and voice to the understanding of the mysteries around Àbíkú names. It is our belief that social factors provide more elucidatory insights into understanding the phenomenal world of Àbíkú. That is, social factors infuse the triangulable circle of participants in the life of the àbíkú child.

According to Yule (1998), politeness accommodates another person's public self-image. Cruse (2006) corroborates Yule's view when he admits politeness to be a face-saving act. In the opinion of Watt (2003), politeness as an act is not inborn, people have to learn and socialize into it.

In pragmatics, politeness is concerned with "…ways in which the relational function in linguistic action is expressed" (Kasper, 1990 in Barron, 2003). In the other words or statements, it concerns how language is well employed in a strategic way to achieve such aims as supporting or maintaining interpersonal relationships. Nevertheless, politeness does not only indicate a pragmatic concept but also signifies a lay concept and a sociolinguistic concept. The lay concept of politeness relates to an appropriate social behaviour and good respect for others. Politeness as a sociolinguistic concept is concerned with obligatory signals of respect or familiarity, which derives from such characteristics as age, family, position and social status. Adegbija (1989) views and states that politeness is associated with situations in which one speaks or behaves in a way that is socially acceptable and pleasant to the hearer. Thus, there is a common theme of politeness as a socially appropriate behaviour which runs through these definitions. Abiku literally means "predestined to death" in Yoruba (a major ethnic group in Nigeria). It is a concept similar to ogbanje among the Igbo people of Nigeria. A typical characterization is that they are cycles of wicked spirits who out of their own volition enter the wombs of pregnant women and are predestined to death shortly after birth (Awolalu & Dopamu 1979). Cultural mechanisms presented to account for the phenomenon is the presupposition that some children come into the world after a pact with their heavenly playmates to return after a specified period (Adegbola 1983). There are other categories of wandering spirits (known in the local parlance as elére, el̩e̩gbe, emèrè who play pranks on pregnant women for the sheer relish of mischief. Such 'children' upon birth, based on the covenanted pact with the spirits' world die shortly after birth (Idowu, 1965).

Idowu and Onadipe (2011) state that an abiku is believed to belong to a band of demons, who live near or inside a big Iroko tree. As a result, pregnant women are warned against night crawling around such a tree. Other notable abodes of abiku spirits are baobab tree and plantain shields. An abiku is said to possess power to penetrate a pregnant woman when it is sunny. Depending on the covenant, some abiku may choose to die immediately after birth, while some others may wait until an appointed time. A child of abiku has something that attracts other people's attention to him or her. Abiku is either, as it is widely claimed and agreed, so good looking that he or she is lavishly spent upon or sickly, that his or her state of health consumes the whole household expenses.

Over the last few decades, both oral and written narratives of abiku have changed and individual storytellers have adopted and adapted abiku in order to suit their specific goals. Today, abiku is still very much believed to exist among many Yoruba. However, what has changed is the fact that rates of infant mortality have greatly reduced and overcome. The

concept of abiku does not hold anymore the same meaning due to societal awareness. Nowadays, it is used as a metaphor for culture-captive and socio-political catch-phrase but not really attached to the infant mortality.

Abiku phenomenon is completely out of scientific realm. It does not mean that it is intended to discredit science since science has made some irrevocable contribution to improve child mortality rate to the extent that the concept of abiku has almost gone extinct. However, the fact is, there are still cases of children mortality without any form of infirmity. Whenever such incident happens, the Yoruba belief is that such child is an abiku and the solution would be to investigate the spiritual dimension. The truth of course is that there are many things and phenomena in the world that science or philosophy cannot explain them. Most issues that border on faith are beyond scientific explanation or philosophical rationalization.

In the Yoruba worldview, àbíkú exists. According to them, some children over time are re-birthed to the same mother with the previous look, sex, complexion and structure. Owing to ephemeral nature of abiku life, it is widely claimed that abiku completes several consecutive life-cycles with one mother. To ascertain this claim, suspected àbíkú are defaced after death. When such children are reborn, they still show previous marks on their bodies.

A good dimension to the understanding of abiku is the social correlation aspect. This refers to the incorporation of social variables to the triangulable life of abiku, namely, the parents of abiku with respect to naming, the society in which abiku lives and the abiku himself. Some of these social factors are: religious orientation, relative power, family history, social custom, rank of imposition, social distance and social taboo.

The researchers found rank of imposition, social distance and relative power needful for the analysis of Yoruba abiku names because of their impactful insight into this study. It is then hoped that, this study discovers the strategies fondly used to calculate the weightiness (W×) of a particular speech act between the speaker (S) and hearer (H) in abiku names using these three social factors.

Naming in Yoruba

The analysis names of abiku have become an aspect of name-practice among the Yoruba calls for a deep understanding of the whole concept of names of the Yoruba. A name is what somebody or something is called, it is a term or phrase by which somebody or something is known and distinguished from others. Yoruba names have been classified by various scholars. Adeoye (1982) classified Yoruba names into different classes: Orúkọ àmútọrunwá 'a name which a child is born with', orúkọ àbísọ 'a name that refers to circumstances' orúkọ àbíkú 'a name that depicts born to die again child', orúkọ oríkì 'attributive names', àlàjẹ 'nicknames', and àdàpè 'avoidance name'.

Àbíkú Names

The names of Àbíkú, the object of this study, are the names that are presented and given to the children that are believed to be members of a group of spirit-nymphs in Yoruba anthropology. These names are infused and injected with hopes, grief, prayers, fears, and the resignation of parents who have repeatedly lost their offspring to an early death. Abiku names are intended to serve the following purposes namely (1) Hide the child's identity and therefore make it impossible for their spiritual parents to recognize him/her and snatch him/her from the real world; (2) Shame the children and thus reprimand them by letting them know that the parents and name-givers are aware of and displeased with their successive coming in and going out of the world; (3) Command or plead with the children and with the forces or powers that be, to let the children live. This is done through death-prevention names; (4) Reveal to the children the parents' emotional or psychological state, especially their frustration; (5) Reveal to the children the joy and goodness in life and consequently, give them a reason to live; (6) Reveal both good and bad faces of the death. Death-prevention names thus reveal death's ability to spare one's life, its ability (7) Demonstrate that even though death is powerful, it is

not all-knowing because, through naming, it can be tricked by humans; and (8) Demonstrate that death has the power to take vengeance for an individual's action (Obeng, 1998).

Ogunwale (2015) classifies Yoruba abiku names into seven groups: Abiku names which encode appeal expressions, Abiku names having nauseating sorts of meanings, mollifying category of Abiku names, the Abiku petting names, parental declarative names, discourse names, assertive hope- sustaining names, and entreative names.

We can conclude, then, that abiku names and related names epitomize cultural ideas and values as well as the wishes of the society. Societies create such names to help deal with their overall psychological and socio-cultural experiences. The names help them to deal with the emotions associated with the loss of a loved one and the grief associated with such a loss.

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is Searle's (1969) speech act Theory, and Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory. Searle's theory is an improvement on Austin's speech act theory. It says Austin's theory has no clear principle of classification. It also postulates that there is confusion between the illocutionary acts and the verbs and that the categories are too interwoven. Searle is of the view that speaking a language is engaging in a rule-governed form of behavior. He also affirms that speech act is the basic unit of communication and that speaking a language is performing an act according to certain rules and that speech acts are intentional behaviors (Searle 1972). This study tends to examine abiku names within the scope of the context of utterance. This is as a result of the researcher's interest in contextualizing abiku names, and account for their linguistic realization. In handling this, we found locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts) most suitable. Searle came up with five classes of illocutionary acts: assertive, commissive, directive, declarative and expressive. These five components or variables offer a system that helps to illustrate the names. This theory checks for the speech acts inherent in abiku names and how they indicate the context of the speaker's utterance.

In any society, the rules and principles are practised that regulate how people speak and behave. Brown and Levinson (1987) offered a descriptive analysis of strategies used by the participants to maintain their respective faces in social interaction. Brown and Levinson (1987) sum up human politeness behaviour in five strategies: bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, off-record, and no FTA strategy. According to the research focus, one of the objectives of this research is concerned with the face-threatening act (FTAs) identifiable in abiku names. In analyzing this, we chose Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies. Also, three universal sociological variables have been introduced by Brown and Levinson that play a role in calculating 'Wx' or the weightiness of FTAs in abiku names.

Brown and Levinson (1987) developed and stated that politeness as socially determined by the rank of imposition, social distance, and relative power. Brown and Levinson's model predicts that increasing rank of imposition will lead to increased politeness; decreased social distance will lead to decreased politeness; greater power of speaker will lead to decreased politeness. Generally, as a degree of imposition increased politeness increased. They argued that certain factors will influence strategy choice, specifically the variables of social distance (D), relative power (P), and absolute rank of imposition (R×). Brown and Levinson create the following formula to calculate the weightiness (W×) of a particular speech act between the speaker (S) and hearer (H), helping the speaker to decide upon a strategy. The choice of politeness strategies is for the most part determined by the weight of seriousness of FTAs, assessed with one cultural factor and two social factors.

The weightiness of an FTA is calculated as:

$W× = D (S, H) + P (S, H) + R×$ (Brown and Levinson, 1987)

Where W× represents the seriousness of the FTAs, D (S, H) is the social distance between S (speaker) and the H (hearer), P (H, S) is the relative power of H over S, and R× is the absolute ranking of imposition in the given culture. All three factors P, D, and R contribute to the seriousness of the FTAs and determine the level of politeness with which

FTAs will be communicated in abiku names. Following the brief descriptions of the theories discussed above, we, therefore, adopt them because they are found suitable and appropriate for the analyses of data in this study. In addition to this, it is opined that a multi-methodological approach to the study of language use in abiku names will bring out details of how meaning evolves better than a single-language based approach.

2. Method

This study was carried out through a close study of personal names assigned to children thought to be abiku. The names were sourced and inquired about from some traditional native healers. Elderly members of the community who had special knowledge of abiku children were interviewed, and the data obtained were recorded, transcribed. This set of data served as the primary resources for the study. The secondary source of information included printed texts and previous studies on abiku names. The researcher used qualitative analysis to find out and describe the various politeness strategies used in abiku names. For the purpose of this research, out of fifty abiku names gathered, ten were randomly selected for analysis. The data collected were analyzed, interpreted, and described based on the focus of the study.

3. Results and Discussion

This section focuses on the purpose of the study, which centers on an analysis of abiku names with the aim of checking for how politeness strategies are observed in the names. The selected names were firstly translated from Yoruba to English before being analyzed. The names were qualitatively analyzed per datum. The tools mentioned earlier were applied to each of the data. The paragraphed method of analysis used in the work makes it possible to specify each of the tools used on each data for clarity. Afterward, the findings were adequately discussed. Three social variables were taken into consideration in this analysis namely "social distance between interlocutors (D)", "rank of imposition (R)'' and "relative power (P)." Each variable is treated as binary-valued so that the interlocutors are either family members or closed friends (−D) or even acquaintances/strangers (+D), they are of either equal status (−P) or unequal status (+P) and there is either imposition on the hearer (+R) or not (-R). The combinations of these three variables form four politeness systems, i.e. Solidarity Politeness System (−P, −D), Deference Politeness System (−P, +D), Power-Up System (↑P, +D) (↑P indicates that the addressee has more social power than the speaker), and Power-Down System (↓P, +D) (↓P means and indicates that the addressee has less social power than the speaker). This classification is modified from Scollon and Scollon's (1983; 1995) model.

> Datum 1: Ikúògbàyígbé
> Ikúkògbàèyígbé
> Death NEG take this completely   'Death did not take this completely'

(A) Speech act analysis
(i) Locutionary act: The name Ikúogbàyígbé means 'death did not take this (one) completely'.
(ii) Illocutionary act of expressive (indicating): The speech act of this name is "indicating" that death did not take abiku. The speech act here is a direct speech act because it is an instance of 'declarative used to affirm'.
(iii) Perlocutionary act: The effect of the utterance (name) is indicating that death did not take abiku away completely but the hearer could have understood the utterance (his name) but still decides to leave.

(B) Politeness strategy
(i) Positive politeness: the speaker's positive face has been saved due to abiku's survival.

(ii) Weight of the seriousness of FTA:

$W\times = D\ (S<H) + P\ (S>H)$

$W\times = (\uparrow P, +D, +P, +R)$

The social distance (D) between the speaker (S) and the hearer (H) is shorter because the social status of the speaker (S) is high, while abiku's social status is low because the speaker has found favour before death by leaving abiku alone. This shows that there is no solidarity between the speaker and abiku. The speaker has relative power (P) over the hearer because death has damaged the hearer's face by not letting him go. The weight of FTA is minimized. The weight of this action may soften abiku's face and he may decide to stay.

Datum 2: Máàkó (mi lẹ́rù lọ)

Máàkóminíẹrù lọ

NEG carry pro (obj) prep load away 'Don't steal my belongings'

(A) Speech act analysis

(i) Locutionary act: The name Máàkó means please, desist from looting my properties. It is believed that abiku plummet the fortune of their parents due to his or her state of health that consumes the whole household expenses.

(ii) Illocutionary act of directive & expressive (commanding & pleading): The illocution of the name Máàkó is partly "commanding and partly pleading". We may come up with the assumption that the bearer's parents are both pleading and commanding abiku to stay and stop looting their properties. It is an indirect speech act because; it can be used as an instance of "declarative used to command". The child is politely commanded to stay alive.

(iii) Perlocutionary act: The name implies that abiku is commanded to stop dying, as against his will, and should stop looting the parents' properties but abiku may understand the speaker's plea but refuses to comply.

(B) Politeness strategy

(i) Off the record: This name causes partial damage to abiku's face because he is commanded to stop looting his parents' properties and also being pleaded with to stay against his will.

(ii) Weight of the seriousness of FTA:

$W\times = D\ (S>H) + P\ (H>S) + R\times$

$W\times = (\downarrow P, -D, -P, +R)$

The social distance (D) between the speaker (S) and the hearer (H) is constant because the speaker (S) and the addressee (Ad or H) are of equal social status and this shows that there is familiarity between the speaker and the interlocutor. This indicates that the speaker has limited relative power (P) over the hearer. Thus, the degree of imposition (R) on abiku is minimized because abiku may decide to leave. The weight of this action may soften abiku's face and he may decide to stay.

Datum 3: Ikúònọ́mọre.

Ikú kò ní ọmọ rere

Death NEG ASP child good

'Death does not have a good child'

(A) Speech act analysis

(i) Locutionary act: The name means 'death does not have any good child'.

(ii) Illocutionary act of assertive (declaring): The illocution of the name is "declaring". The speech act is direct because it is an instance of declarative used to assert that nothing good comes out of death.

(iii) Perlocutionary act: This name implies that death does not bring anything fruitful. Yoruba believes that death brings nothing but sorrow. Death is being termed a bad person and through this name, he may decide to spare abiku in order to change the speaker's perspective about him.

(B) Politeness strategy

(i) Negative politeness: The negative face of abiku is threatened that if he decides to leave, he should leave because he is of no use. The name is meant to be provocative to the spirits of the abiku.

(ii) Weight of the seriousness of FTA:

$W× = D (S<H) + P (S>H)$

$W× = (↓P, +D, +P, -R)$

The social distance (D) between the speaker (S) and the hearer (H) is shorter because the social status of the speaker (S) in relation to the addressee (Ad or H) is high and abiku's status is low and this shows that there is no solidarity between the speaker and abiku. The speaker has relative power (P) over the hearer because the speaker is frustrated and does not care if abiku dies or not. The weight of FTA is maximized because abiku is being threatened.

Datum 4: Dúróṣọmọ

Dúró   ṣe   ọmo

stay become child

'Stay and live like other children'

(A) Speech act analysis

(i) Locutionary act: Dúróṣọmọ means 'stay long enough to become somebody'. Abiku, in this case, is being compelled by the parents to stay. If abiku had his way, he would have died immediately after birth. Abiku is commanded to stay alive.

(ii) Illocutionary act of expressive (pleading): The speech act of this name is pleading. If we transcribe the full potential of the name to mean 'please, stay long enough to become somebody', we may come up with the assumption that the bearer's parents are pleading, which is a direct speech act because it is an imperative used to command.

(iii) Perlocutionary act: The name is articulated to make the nymphs/the divinity feel less angry so that they could allow the child to live on with their parents and stop shuttling between heaven and the earth.

(B) Politeness strategy

(i) Negative politeness: By this name, damage to the negative face of abiku has been done because he is commanded to live with the speaker till old age.

(ii) Weight of the seriousness of FTA:

$W× = D (S<H) + P (S>H) + R×$

$W× = (↓P, +D, +P, +R)$

The social distance (D) between the speaker (S) and the hearer (H) is shorter because the social status of the speaker is high and due to the name, abiku's status is low and this shows that there are differences in familiarity between the speaker and the interlocutor. The degree of (D) indicates that the speaker has relative power (P) over the hearer because (S) is commanding abiku to stay alive. Thus, the FTA is ranked(R) as an imposition because abiku is being commanded to stay alive. The weight of this action threatens the abiku's freedom of action to leave.

Datum 5: Ajá 'dog'

(A) Speech act analysis

(i) Locutionary act: Ajá simply means a dog. A dog is an animal that is always shut out in Yoruba land.

(ii) Illocutionary act of expressive (condemning): The illocution of the name ajá is 'condemning'. It is an indirect speech act because metaphor has been employed; the child, though not a dog, has been named so. It is therefore a special case of 'declarative used to challenge'.

(iii) Perlocutionary act: The name Ajá is a deprecatory name given by abiku's parent as a way of saying that the child's worth is nothing more than that of a dog. The perlocutionary effect of this utterance is to make abiku to be shut out by his companions.

(B) Politeness strategy

(i) Bald on record: Abiku's face is threatened by the name, it is believed that if the child is addressed that way, his feelings would be hurt. And he may decide against going back to the spirit world. Also, it is assumed that this kind of name will make the child to become irritating to his or her spirit companions; they will not want to associate with him and this will make him stay alive.

(ii) Weight of the seriousness of FTA:

$W \times = D (S<H) + P (S>H) + R \times$

$W \times = (\downarrow P, +D, +P, +R)$

The social distance (D) between the speaker (S) and the hearer (H) is shorter because the social status of the speaker (S) in relation to the addressee (Ad or H) is high and due to the name, abiku's (H) status is low and this shows that there are differences in familiarity between the speaker and the interlocutor. The degree of (D) indicates that the speaker has relative power (P) over the hearer because (S) did not minimize any FTA to the face of (H) abiku. Thus, the FTA is ranked(R) as an imposition in Yoruba culture (calling a person a dog). The weight of this action threatens the abiku's freedom of action to leave.

Datum 6: Ọmọ-Rótìm

Ọmọ ró tì m

Child stay prep pro (obj)

'A child has stayed with me/ the child should not die'

(A) Speech act analysis

(i) Locutionary act: Ọmọ-Rótìmí means 'the child has stayed with me'.

(ii) Illocutionary act of assertive (announcing): The illocutionary act is thus announcing. The speech act is a direct speech act because it is used as an instance of 'declarative used to affirm'. It is also classified as assertive in nature because the speaker is stating a fact.

(iii) Perlocutionary act: The birth of the child is believed to be a way of compensating abiku's parents for the loss suffered. This name implies that abiku has complied with the speaker's request to stay.

(B) Politeness strategy

(i) Positive politeness: The speaker's positive face has been saved because the child has agreed to stay.

(ii) Weight of the seriousness of FTA:

$W \times = D (S>H) + P (H>S)$

$W \times = (P, -D, -P, -R)$

The social distance (D) between the speaker (S) and the hearer (H) is constant because the speaker (S) and the addressee (Ad or H) are of equal social status and this indicates that there is a mutual relationship between the speaker and abiku. The hearer has relative power (P) over the speaker. The weight of FTA is minimized because abiku has agreed to stay.

Datum 7: Ewétán

Ewé ti tán

Leaves PERF finish

'herbal leaves have finished'

(A) Speech act analysis

(i) Locutionary act: Ewétán literally means 'herbal leaves have finished' that is, there are no more herbal leaves in the forest to cure whatever ailment that terminates abikus' life in infancy. The name is given after series of repeated infant mortality has been experienced by a mother that made the parents feel disgusted since there is a limit to human perseverance and endurance.

(ii) Illocutionary act of assertive (declaring): The illocution of the name is "declaring". The speech act is direct because it is a case of "declarative used to affirm". The abiku parents are declaring that there are no more herbs to take care of abiku.

(iii) Perlocutionary act: The name implies that the parents are putting the child on red alert that if he or she decides to fall ill again preparatory to his or her recurring return to heaven, there are no leaves left to prepare whatever herbal concoction needed to ward off his or her

predicament. The utterance is meant to be provocative to the spirits of the abiku and he may decide to stay.

(B) Politeness strategy

(i) Negative politeness: The negative face of abiku is threatened that if he decides to leave, he can leave with the hope that abiku would feel disgraced and debased, and so stop shuttling the heavens and the earth. (ii) Weight of the seriousness of FTA:

$W\times= D (S<H) + P (S>H)$

$W\times= (\downarrow P, +D, +P, -R)$

The social distance (D) between the speaker (S) and the hearer (H) is shorter because the social status of the speaker (S) in relation to the addressee (Ad or H) is high and abiku's status is low and this shows that there is no familiarity between the speaker and abiku because he is not ready to stay alive. The speaker has relative power (P) over the hearer because the speaker is frustrated and does not care if abiku dies or not. The weight of FTA is maximized because abiku is being threatened.

Datum 8: Olètúbo

Olè   tú   bo

Thief PERF return

'The thief has returned'

(A) Speech act analysis

(i) Locutionary act: The name olètúbọ̀ means 'thief has returned'. Abiku is believed to cycle rapidly and repeatedly through birth and death. Abiku movement from one to the other provides him a sense of agency. It is believed that abiku steals their parents' joy and their motive is to see their mother cry when they die, severally because the tears running on their mothers' face is valuable in the spirit of abiku. In abiku's case, he is the one seeking the downfall of the people of this world (especially his parents).

(ii) Illocutionary act of declarative (announcing): The illocution of the name is 'announcing'.

It is a direct speech act because; it is an instance of 'declarative used to announce', abiku's parents are announcing that abiku has returned again to steal their joy.

(iii) Perlocutionary act: The utterance is used to make abiku stay because he could have understood the speaker's view.

(B) Politeness strategy

(i) Negative politeness: The negative face of abiku has been damaged because he/she is announced as a thief.

(ii) Weight of the seriousness of FTA:

$W\times= D (S<H) + P (S>H)$

$W\times= (\downarrow P, +D, +P, -R)$

The social distance (D) between the speaker (S) and the hearer (H) is shorter because the social status of the speaker (S) in relation to the addressee (Ad or H) is high and due to the name, abiku's status is low because he is named a thief and this shows that there is no mutual relationship between the speaker and the hearer. The degree of (D) indicates that the speaker has relative power (P) over the hearer because (S) did not minimize any FTA to the face of (H) abiku. Thus, the FTA is ranked(R) as an imposition in Yoruba culture (calling ones' child a thief). The weight of this action threatens the abiku's freedom of action to leave.

Datum 9: Kílàńkó

Kíni   à   ń   kó

QM 1STpl ASP celebrate

 'What are we celebrating/naming'

(A) Speech act analysis

(i) Locutionary act: The name Kílàńkó literally means 'What are we celebrating?' Yoruba people believe that the return of abiku does not give any hope to his parents. Therefore, they do not see any reason for which he/she should be celebrated since his/her arrival has brought

with it another round of suspense. On the other hand, the word "ko" refers to a shortened form of 'ìkómo', which is usually associated with the process of a ceremony of giving names.

(ii) Illocutionary act of expressive (questioning): The illocution is questioning. It is a direct speech act because it is an instance of 'interrogative used in questioning'.

(iii) Perlocutionary act: The perlocution effect of the utterance is to make abiku stay, he may recognize the speaker's meaning but still decides to leave.

 (B) Politeness strategy

(i) Negative politeness: Abiku's face is threatened by the name, he is denied a befitting naming ceremony, in an attempt to hurt his feelings and make him stay alive. It is believed that if the child is addressed that way, his or her feelings would be hurt and he may decide against going back to the spirit world.

(ii) Weight of the seriousness of FTA:

$W\times= D (S<H) + P (S>H)$

$W\times= (\downarrow P, +D, +P, -R)$

The social distance (D) between the speaker (S) and the hearer (H) is shorter because the social status of the speaker is high and abiku's status is low because he is degraded and does not worth spending lavishly upon and this shows that there is no mutual relationship between the speaker and the hearer. The degree of (D) indicates that the speaker has relative power (P) over the hearer because (S) did not minimize any FTA to the face of (H) abiku. The weight of FTA threatens abiku to stay.

> Datum 10: Ikúlóògùn
> Ikú   ní òògùn
> Death BE remedy
> 'Death has remedy'

(A) Speech act analysis

(i) Locutionary act: Ikúlóògùn means 'death has a remedy'. The name signifies a mockery of death and demonstrates that even though death is powerful, it is not all-knowing because, through naming, it can be overpowered.

(ii) Illocutionary act of assertive (stating): The speech act of this name is "stating". The speech act is a direct speech act because it is used as an instance of 'declarative used to affirm'. Abiku's parents are stating that death has been defeated.

(iii) Perlocutionary act: The name implies that abiku has agreed to stay because death has been defeated.

(B) Politeness strategy

(i) Positive politeness: It is the positive face of the speaker that is saved by the name because death has been conquered.

(ii) Weight of the seriousness of FTA:

$W\times= D (S>H) + P (S>H) + R\times$

$W\times= (P, -D, +P, +R)$

The social distance (D) between the speaker (S) and the hearer (H) is constant because the social status of the speaker (S) is high and due to the name, abiku's is threatened that he is going nowhere. The degree of (D) indicates that the speaker has relative power (P) over the hearer. Thus, the FTA is ranked(R) as an imposition because abiku is committed to staying alive. The weight of this action threatens the abiku's freedom of action to leave.

Based on the relevant data gathered, the present study has made the following discoveries about the politeness strategies used in abiku names. It was discovered that each name in the study exhibits a form of politeness or the other with different strategies. The study also unveiled that abiku names employed four types of politeness strategies which are bald-on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record strategy. Among these four strategies, the negative politeness strategy is the most frequent strategy employed which emphasizes avoidance of imposition on abiku. By attempting to avoid imposition from the speaker, the risk of face-threat to abiku is reduced.

Similarly, we observed from the analysis that the speaker used other FTA strategies such as positive and off-record politeness strategies when they decide to mitigate the imposition on abiku and it is also, the use of the bald on record speech act that indicates a direct way of stating something, without minimizing the imposition, in a direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way.

Our findings further revealed that there are some social factors influencing the weight of the seriousness of FTAs in abiku names which are Power, Social Distance, and Rank. This study has shown that the speaker has more relative power than the hearer because the weight of the (S) face wants is greater than the (H), the speaker wants abiku to stay.

The general level of the seriousness of FTAs indicates that the social distance (D) between the speaker and the hearer is shorter than being constant because no abiku ever pledges to stay put in life, which explains why there is little or no social relationship between abiku and the speaker and this maximizes the weight of FTAs.

The rank order of influences, that is, the effect of differences between the interlocutors on abiku names was investigated among the three factors, and it was revealed that the hearer is usually imposed on to stay alive through the use of FTAs which explains why abiku social status is low in Yoruba culture.

This study also revealed that the illocutionary act of assertive is the most influential speech act in this study which commits a speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition. Also, how meanings are implied in abiku names via direct and indirect speech acts are observed. Through this, the speaker's intended meaning is pronounced, and this is used to avoid misunderstanding in communication.

The names, aside from being used to ridicule, condemn and hurt the feelings of abiku. This study revealed that abiku names are used as message enforcers and also used to threaten, and challenge.

4. Conclusion

This study has revealed some socio-cultural insights into abiku names. The concept of politeness remains an integral part of human interaction which aims at a harmonious relationship and peaceful co-existence between interlocutors. However, the study has been able to demonstrate that the intricacies relating to politeness are usually endangered by the asymmetric relationship between participants. As we observed in the study, FTA which underlies threat is mostly used by the speaker towards abiku to exercise imposition which is often necessitated by the context of utterance.

References

Adegbija, Efurosibina. (1989). A comparative study of politeness phenomena in Nigerian English. *Multilingual*: *Journal of Cross-Cultural and Interlanguage Communication* 8(1), 57–80.

Adegbola, Ade. (1983). *Traditional religion in West Africa*. Ibadan: Daystar Press.

Adeoye, C. L. (1982). *Oruko Yoruba.* Ibadan: Ibadan University Press Limited.

Awolalu, Omosade. & Adelumo Dopamu. (1979). *West African traditional religion.* Ibadan: Onibonoje Press.

Barron, Anne. (2003). *Acquisition in Interlanguage Pragmatics*. Amsterdam: John Benjaimins B.V.

Brown, Penelope & Stephen Levinson. (1987). *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage. Studies in Interactional Sociolinguistics.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Cruse, Alan. (2006). *A Glossary of Semantics and Pragmatics.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press

Idowu, Bolaji. (1965). *Olodumare: God in Yoruba belief.* Ibadan, Nigeria: Longman.

Idowu, O. & A. Onadipe. (2011). Politeness Phenomenon in Abiku names Among the Yoruba Africans: A Pragmatic Study of Cross-cultural Communication, 7 (4): 127-132

Kasper, Gabriel. (1990). *Linguistic politeness:* Current research issues. *Journal of pragmatics*, 14 (2), 193-218.

Obeng, Samuel. (1998). Akan Death-Prevention Names: A Pragmatic and Structural Analysis. Names: *A Journal of Onomastics*, 46 (3), 163-187. Maney Publishing.

Ogunwale, Joshua Abiodun. (2015). 'Paradigm Shifts in Yoruba Anthroponyms: A Critical Discourse Analysis on Yoruba Reincarnated Child names.' *International Journal of African Society, Cultures and Traditions,* 3 (4), 32-48. European Centre for Research Training and Development, UK.

Searle, John. (1969). *Speech acts: An essay in the Philosophy of language*. NY: Cambridge University Press.

Searle, John. (1972). *Speech acts: An essay in the Philosophy of language*. Mind 81(323): 458-468. Berkeley: University of California.

Scollon, Ron. & Suzanne Scollon. (1983). Face in Inter ethnic Communication. In: Richards, J. Schmidt, R. (Eds.) Language and Communication. 156-190. London: Longman.

Scollon, Ron. & Susanne Scollon. (1995). Intercultural Communication. *A Discourse Approach*. London: Blackwell.

Watts, Richard. (2003). *Politeness*. UK: Cambridge University Press.

Yule, George. (1998). *Pragmatics* (Revised Ed.). NY: Oxford University Press.

APPENDIX

Mádójútmí- (don't put me into shame)

(ikú) Làṁbè – (it is death) that we are appealing to)

Bámtálẹ - (stay on with me till my old age)

Ikúmápàyí- (may death never snatch this away)

Kalèjyé- (settle down to enjoy live)

Mábóògùnj- (don't waste the herbal medicine being dispensed on you)

Jẹnríọbéjó- (permit me to be your dance partner)

Dúrósaró/Dúrósinmí/Dúrójayé (be alive to practice smithy/be alive to succeed me, be alive to enjoy life)

Kílàṅkó (what is it that we)

Ekúlujú (it is rats that inscribed the eye-sockets)

Ọkóya (the hoes that we can use to dig the graves have broken)

Òkúta (stones)

Jẹnríọbéjó- (allow me to be able to dance with you)

Ikúsàánú- (death, have mercy)

Bamtale- (stay on with me till my old age)

Ikúmápàyí- (may death never snatch this away)

Ọmọyìí (this child) kòtóyèsí(is not worth respect)

Ẹlḍè (pigs)

Ajá (dogs)

Ajáríungbé (food for the dogs)

Báyéwú (grow/develop with live)

Málọmọ́ (stop shuttling)

Máàkó(mi lẹ́rù lo) (please, don't sit on the floating of my properties)

(ỌmọDèìndé- (child, please, return (home)

Ajítòní- (one who wakes up today)

Yémíítàn- (stop deceiving/ cajoling me)

Kògbọdòú- (it should not die)

Ṣíwọ́níu- (stop your deadly activities)

Fìdímáyé- (stay put on earth)

Ajẹìígbé- (good ventures should not go down the drains)

Ayélàágbé- (find habitation on earth)

Ọkóya (the shovel/ hole (for digging the graves) has torn,

Ikúdáyìíró (death spares/retains this)

Ọjóyẹ (postponement of appointed date)

Ikúkòyìi(death rejects this)

Ìgbékòyìí (grave-yards rejects this)

Abíiná (although he has already been born, (we don't know yet what follows).

Àsi-ń-wòó (we keep watching)
Bíòbákú(If he does not die)
Aájúwò (it will support caring)
Kúyè̩ (death is suspended)
Kòkúmó̩ (it no more dies)
Ààtàndáre (dunghill has vindicated (us)
Kásìmáawòó (let's keep our fingers crossed, hoping for its survival), etc.
O̩mo̩- Rótìmí (child, stay with me)
Rógbuyì (stay/live to be famous/popular)
Dúrówojú (stay/live to look at my face)
Jáyésinmi (allow people to have peace of mind)
Ikúéèsàn (dying is not a better option)
E̩kúnsúmi (I feeel disgusted by incessant lamentation)
Meèrókó̩ (I can no more find shovel/ holes for digging the graves)
Àkísàtán (there are no more rags to be used as coffin sack- cloth.
Ikúforíjì (death forgives/pardons (this)