

Esoteric Politeness in Selected Pentecostal Christian Discourses in Lagos, Nigeria

Malabar Daisy Barro & Nwaugo Goodseed Ochulor

Department of Languages and Literary Studies, Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo

Abstract

The paper Esoteric Politeness in Selected Pentecostal Christian Discourses in Lagos, Nigeria examines the communication style of the demographic under study to reveal an assertive approach that often leads to misinterpretation. Employing Leech's Politeness Principle (1983) and Searle's Speech Acts theory (1969), this mixed-methods research investigates the role of speech acts, politeness maxims, and their impact on effective communication and interpersonal relationships. Data from 30 online questionnaires and five face-to-face interviews show a diverse communication style (34.3% polite, 33.8% face-threatening, and 31.9% neutral responses). The results indicate that assertive speech acts prioritize directness over politeness, with tact and sympathy maxims upholding politeness. A significant correlation between politeness levels and response counts was found. This research contributes to politeness theory by identifying "Esoteric Politeness." The paper concludes that adapting politeness levels can optimize engagement, enhance pastoral care, and improve interpersonal relationships within Pentecostal Christian communities and beyond.

Keywords: Esoteric Politeness, Pentecostal Christians, Communication Style, Politeness Principle, speech acts, interpersonal relationships.

Introduction

Politeness, a fundamental aspect of human communication, plays a crucial role in shaping social interactions and relationships. It serves as a lubricant for social exchange, facilitating cooperation and mitigating conflict (Goffman, 1967). The significance of politeness transcends cultural boundaries, with various societies placing premium value on courteous behaviour (Lakoff, 1973). However, politeness is context-dependent, influenced by factors such as power dynamics, social distance, and cultural norms (Scollon & Scollon, 2001).

To better understand politeness, researchers have proposed various definitions. Geoffrey Leech (1983) defines politeness as "the expression of sociability, consideration, and respect for others" (p. 82), achieved through the observance of six maxims: Tact, Generosity, Approbation, Modesty, Agreement, and Sympathy. Brown and Levinson (1987) offer a complementary perspective, defining politeness as "the redressing of the disturbances caused by the Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs) to the addressee's face" (p. 69). It can also be defined as the use of language to cater to the ego/self importance of interlocutors, based on the acceptable cultural norms of the particular community of practice in question. These definitions highlight the complex and multifaceted nature of politeness. Language is an attitude. In the realm of social interaction, interlocutors continually use language to negotiate and manage their identities, reputations, and relationships, including how they perceive one another's

level of politeness. As Ogiermann (2016) notes, "politeness is not a fixed or absolute concept, but rather a relative and dynamic one" (p. 12). This relative nature of politeness is echoed in Leech's Politeness Principle (1983), which provides one of several theoretical frameworks for analyzing politeness strategies.

Recent studies have employed Leech's Politeness Principle (1983) solely or in combination with Searle's Speech Acts Theory (1969) to examine politeness norms in various cultural contexts. For instance, Rebin and Salah (2024) used the mixed method in their study and hypothesized that there is a complementary relationship between the pragmatic scales and politeness maxims. They found that the cost-benefit scale is the most dominant scale used in English Interviews, and that there is a complimentary relationship between the pragmatic scales and politeness maxims. Similarly, Ni Kadek and Ni Wayan (2020) employed the qualitative method to study politeness in the English movie *Emma* (2020) and observed that the politeness maxims employed in the movie are influenced by the conversational goals of interlocutors. Bustan et al. (2021) used the qualitative method to study how characters in Rodger and Hammerstein's "King and I" employ Leech's Politeness Principle (1983) and Searle's Speech Act Theory (1969) in imperative dialogue. They found that the indirect, optionality and cost-benefit scales are frequently applied; and that context and characters' social background determine the use of the Politeness Principle in the play.

The researcher has observed a peculiar pattern of communication among Pentecostal Christians in Lagos, Nigeria. This distinct communication style, often characterized by assertive expressions of faith, seems to be startling; sparking bewilderment and misinterpretation among non-adherents and even fellow Christians who do not use language in the same way. This causes friction in communication which stems from misunderstandings of illocutionary goals. The present research aims to use Leech's Pragmatic Principle (Relative/Sociopragmatic Politeness) to analyze responses provided by the demographic to interview questions in order to reveal the communicative goals of Pentecostal Christians in Lagos, Nigeria. After studying the data, this peculiar mode of communication can be termed "Esoteric Politeness" because the participants' responses are given from the perspective of their faith and religious ideology. Analyzing these peculiar communicative patterns is important because these are not the typical retorts expected in response to grammatically correct utterances which are void of connotative meaning.

Even though research on politeness abounds in the field of pragmatics, mixed studies on how the Politeness Principle (Sociopragmatic Politeness) is employed among Pentecostal Christians in Lagos, Nigeria remains understudied. This study intends to bridge the knowledge gap by discovering the role of speech acts in determining politeness; studying how Leech's politeness maxims interact to impact politeness and determining if there is a significant correlation between the degree of politeness of utterances and the number of responses received. The research questions for this study are in line with the aforementioned objectives. By exploring politeness strategies in this unique context, the present research will contribute to our understanding of the complex dynamics of human communication.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts Leech's Politeness Principle (Leech, 1983) and Searle's Speech Acts theory (Searle, 1969) to analyze politeness strategies in Pentecostal Christians' communication. In his book *Principles of Politeness* (1983), Leech provides a comprehensive framework for examining politeness, emphasizing its relative and context-dependent nature. He distinguishes between pragmalinguistic/absolute politeness and sociopragmatic/relative politeness. According to the scholar, the former is used to minimize the impoliteness of language that is inherently impolite, and maximize the politeness of language that is already polite; while the latter depends on the norms of the community of practice in question – an aspect which can make relative politeness face threatening to people outside the community of practice concerned. Sociopragmatic politeness – which will be the primary focus of this paper – by its very nature therefore, highlights the importance of context in language use. A crucial aspect of the Politeness Principle is the Pragmatic Scale, which measures the degree of imposition a speech act places on the hearer, thus helping to determine the politeness of utterances.

According to Leech's PP model (1983), politeness is based on the extent to which interlocutors respect the maxims of tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement and sympathy during a language event. In his General Strategy of Politeness (Leech, 2014), Leech submits that in order to be polite, S (*the speaker, self*) expresses or implies meanings that associate a favourable value with what pertains to O (*the addressee*); or associates an unfavourable value with what pertains to S. Leech (1983) also proposes the Pragmatic Scale (PS) also called the Politeness Scales, which he notes, "Have a bearing on the degree of tact appropriate to a given speech situation" (p. 123). In other words, the scales influence the level of consideration or delicacy required in communication. PS consists of the cost-benefit scale (on which is gauged the cost/benefit of an action); the optionality scale (on which illocutions are ordered according to the amount of choice which s allows to h" (p. 109) and the indirectness scale, "on which illocutions are ordered with respect to the length of the path [in terms of means-ends analysis] connecting the illocutionary act to its illocutionary goal (p. 123).

Speech Acts play a fundamental role in understanding politeness, as according to Leech (1983), As far as Searle's categories go, negative politeness belongs pre-eminently to the Directive class, while positive politeness is found pre-eminently in the Commissive and Expressive classes" (p. 107). Due to its link to politeness therefore, Searle's Speech Act theory (1969) has also been adopted as a theoretical framework for this study. Searle categorizes speech acts into five types: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. This classification facilitates analysis of how speech acts convey politeness or impoliteness. By integrating PP and the Speech Acts theory, this study enables a nuanced understanding of politeness strategies in Pentecostal Christians' communication, shedding light on the complex dynamics of human interaction.

Conceptual Clarifications

The Concept of Politeness

Politeness is a complex and multifaceted concept that has been extensively explored by scholars across disciplines. Linguists, sociologists, anthropologists, and philosophers have contributed to the understanding of the concept, revealing its dynamic and context-dependent nature. Lakoff (1973) pioneered the study of politeness, proposing that it involves "rules of pragmatics" that govern social interactions. She identified three rules: "be clear," "be polite," and "be relevant." Leech (1983), who expanded on Lakoff's work, defines politeness as a concept which is about the strategic use of language and behaviour to avoid conflict, maintain social harmony, and show respect for others' faces. He introduced the concept of Sociopragmatic/Relative politeness which he describes as a function of speech communities – meaning what is considered polite in one speech community can be considered impolite in another. He outlined six maxims: Tact, Generosity, Approbation, Modesty, Agreement, and Sympathy which can be used to measure politeness. Brown and Levinson (1987) developed the theory of "Politeness as Face-Threatening Acts," positing that politeness strategies mitigate the potential face threat inherent in social interactions. They distinguished between negative, positive, off-record and bald on-record politeness, emphasizing the importance of context and cultural norms. According to the scholars, negative face, people protect their negative face when they use language in a way that safeguards their autonomy, keeping them free from imposition, intrusion or restriction. Positive politeness can be observed when interlocutors employ linguistic strategies to enhance their positive face e.g. compliments. Off-record politeness is seen when a speaker uses indirect language in an effort to not be imposing on the hearer; while bald on-record politeness strategy is applicable when the speaker does not attempt to minimize threats to the hearer's face.

On his part, Watts (2003) challenged the notion of politeness as a fixed concept, advocating for a more nuanced understanding of "polite" and "impolite" behavior. He introduced the concept of "politic behavior," highlighting the interplay between social norms, power dynamics, and individual agency. Eelen (2001) critiqued the dominant views on politeness, arguing that they oversimplify the complexities of social interactions. He proposed a more critical approach, emphasizing the role of power, ideology, and social context in shaping politeness. Arundale (2010) integrated insights from pragmatics, sociology, and anthropology to develop a theory of "face constituting theory." He emphasized the dynamic and emergent nature of politeness, highlighting the importance of inter-subjectivity and relational work. Scollon and Scollon (2001) examined politeness in intercultural communication, stressing the significance of cultural norms, values, and historical contexts. They demonstrated how politeness strategies can facilitate or hinder effective communication across cultural boundaries. These diverse perspectives demonstrate that politeness is a multifaceted and context-dependent concept. Understanding politeness requires consideration of linguistic, social, cultural, and historical factors, as well as power dynamics and individual agency.

The Concept of Pentecostalism

Pentecostalism, which is a relatively modern Christian movement, has its roots in the Methodist Church's Holiness movement. According to Harvey (2012), Pentecostalism prioritizes personal experiences of the Holy Spirit such as healing, speaking in tongues and baptism in the Spirit. Synan (1997) adds that central to this movement is the belief in the manifestation of spiritual gifts including prophesy, tongues and healing as evidence of the Holy Spirit's presence. McGee (2010) highlights the Spirit's power and guidance in the lives of Pentecostals while Wacker (2001) stresses the presence of ecstatic worship in the form of expressive and emotive practises such as shouting, clapping and dancing. Anderson (2004) describes Pentecostalism as a movement that prioritizes evangelization, often with a focus on the imminent return of Jesus Christ. Language being an attitude and a lifestyle reflects these aspects, and is a testament to the fact that our language reflects our world view (Whorf, 1941).

Christianity is a monotheistic Abrahamic faith centered on the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. At its core, Christianity emphasizes love, compassion, forgiveness, and redemption, with a focus on the individual's personal relationship with God. The faith is rooted in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, which contains the accounts of Jesus' life, teachings, and mission. Scholars have extensively examined Christianity, offering diverse insights into its nature, significance, and impact. Theologian Alister McGrath (2006) highlights Christianity's emphasis on the Trinity, incarnation, and salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Historian Diarmaid MacCulloch (2010) situates Christianity within its historical context, tracing its evolution from Jewish roots to global expansion. Sociologist Émile Durkheim (1912) views Christianity as a social institution, shaping collective identity and moral values. Philosopher John Hick (1989) explores Christianity's philosophical underpinnings, examining the nature of God, morality, and human existence.

In Nigeria, Christianity has become an integral part of the country's cultural and social fabric. With over 85 million Christians, Nigeria has one of the largest Christian populations in Africa (Pew Research Center, 2020). Nigerian Christianity is characterized by its vibrant worship, energetic evangelism, and diverse denominations. Scholars such as Ogbu Kalu (2008) and J.D.Y. Peel (2000) have examined the growth and development of Christianity in Nigeria, highlighting factors such as colonialism, missionary activity, and indigenous initiatives. Pentecostalism, in particular, has experienced rapid growth in Nigeria, with churches like the Redeemed Christian Church of God and the Living Faith Church becoming prominent forces in Nigerian Christianity (Ihejirika, 2011). The Nigerian Christian community continues to play a significant role in shaping the country's social, economic, and political landscape.

Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative data to investigate the concept of politeness among Christians in Lagos who identify as Pentecostals. It involves a sequential explanatory strategy, where quantitative data is collected and analyzed first, followed by qualitative data to provide

a more in-depth understanding of the findings. Purposive and snowball sampling were used for data collection, with the inclusion criteria being Pentecostal Christians living in Lagos Nigeria.

Data was collected from 30 participants through online questionnaires administered to gather qualitative data and gain a deeper understanding of the participants' responses. Only 30 participants' responses were used for this study because additional responses did not provide any new politeness responses to the survey questions. Informal interviews (face-to-face) were later conducted with five respondents who had participated in the online survey with the aim of determining if context played a role in participants' initial responses. Only five participants were employed for this purpose due to their availability. The data gathered for this study does not include church sermons or other religious speeches typical of formal settings but was drawn from everyday situations to mirror how Pentecostal Christians in Lagos interact with others as they go about their daily lives in informal contexts. Purposive sampling is employed used because it involves selecting participants who are information-rich and relevant to the study, while snowball sampling is used in order to reach a specific population by leveraging social networks to access participants. Qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis to identify categories related to politeness; while the model comparison approach was used to separately determine the role of Leech's Politeness strategies and Searle's Speech Acts to politeness. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify patterns and relationships, while inferential statistics (chi-square test) was used to test the hypothesis. By combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches, this study aims to triangulate the data to capture both the depth and breadth of the phenomenon under study and provide a comprehensive understanding of politeness among Pentecostal Christians in Lagos.

During data collection, the following challenges were encountered:

- Some respondents could not submit their e-survey forms because of technical glitches. This challenge was overcome by asking them to do screenshots of their responses, which were then imputed by the researcher.
- Some participants admitted that while filling the e-survey forms, they chose the "conventional" or "expected" responses because when facing similar scenarios in real life, they have concerns about being misunderstood by their interlocutor. They attributed these misunderstandings to "low intelligence" on the part of their interlocutors, stemming from their inability or unwillingness to understand their Christian background which informs their answer choices.
- It was observed that some respondents selected the face threatening/impolite responses during the face-to-face interviews, but didn't do so when completing the questionnaires. This could be attributed to the change in context, as the face-to-face interviews occurred in a more informal setting while the online questionnaires created a more formal atmosphere. This is a reflection of the complex nature of human behavior and the importance of contextual considerations in future research.

Data Analysis

30 participants who identified as Pentecostal Christians living in Lagos were polled in this survey, all of whom reported to have received some form of education. Participants were asked how they would respond in different scenarios. For each question, two options were provided; one being a traditionally polite response and the other being a response that afforded respondents the opportunity to showcase their Christian faith. The second group of phrases was carefully chosen by the researcher, after noticing that they are often used by the chosen demographic in everyday conversations.

Table 1: Summary of Respondents' Level of Education

Level of Education	No. of Respondents	%
Secondary School Graduate	8	26.68
Undergraduate Degree	8	26.68
Postgraduate Degree	8	26.68
Other	6	20
Total	30	100

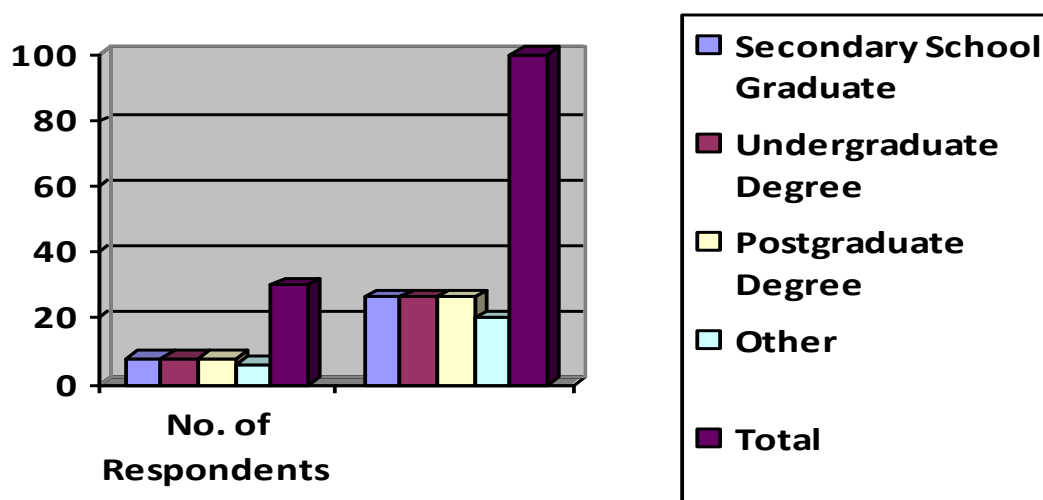


Table 2: Data

Question	Response	Frequency	Percentage
1. What is your religion?	Christianity	30	100%
	Islam	0	0%
	African Traditional Religion	0	0%
	Other	0	0%
2. What is your nationality?	Nigerian	30	100%
	Other	0	0%
3. What is your highest level of education?	Primary School Certificate	0	0%
	Secondary School Certificate	8	26.67%
	Undergraduate (academic) degree	8	26.67%
	Postgraduate (academic) degree	8	26.67%
	Professional degree	0	0%
	Other	6	20%
4. Imagine you lost some money and someone said to you, "Poor you!" How would you respond?	Thank you	16	53.33%
	I'm not poor, I'm rich!	14	46.67%
5. Imagine you see someone looking for something in their bag. You think they're looking for money, but they're not. You tell them, "When you find that money, give me some" and they retort, "Sorry to disappoint you." What would be your response?	It's alright	18	60%
	I can never be disappointed in Jesus' name!	12	40%
6. Imagine you're on a bus and the driver suddenly says, "Come down!" What would be your response?	Silence	15	50%
	I'll never come down in Jesus' name! I'll only go up!	15	50%
7. Imagine you fall ill and have to tell someone about it. What would you say?	I'm not feeling well today	9	30%
	I'm very strong today	21	70%

8. Imagine someone asks you for money. You really want to give, but you don't have. How do you tell them?	Sorry, I don't have money today	8	26.67%
	Sorry, I'm very rich today	22	73.33%
9. Imagine you're going to write an exam and someone tells you, "If you don't prepare well, you'll come last." How would you respond?	Okay, thank you.	15	50%
	I shall be the head and not the tail in Jesus name!	15	50%
10. Imagine you go for a job interview but don't get the job and someone says to you, "That's a shame." How would you respond?	That's okay	15	50%
	I'll never be shamed in Jesus name!	15	50%

After analyzing the data, the results were as follows:

Table 3: Summary of the Distribution of Utterances and Corresponding Speech Acts

Utterance	Frequency	Speech Act	Occurrence
1) Thank you	16	Expressive (Exp)	7.6%
2) I'm not poor, I'm rich!	14	Declarative (Dec) + Assertive (Ass) + Commissive (Comm)	6.7%
3) It's alright	18	Exp	8.5%
4) I can never be disappointed in Jesus' name!	12	Dec + Ass + Comm	5.7%
5) Silence	15	Not Applicable (NA)	7.1%
6) I'll never come down in Jesus name, I'll only go up!	15	Dec + Ass + Comm	7.1%
7) I'm not feeling well today	9	Ass	4.3%
8) I'm very strong today (meaning I am unwell today)	21	Dec + Ass	10%

9) Sorry, I don't have money today.	8	Exp + Ass	3.8%
10) Sorry, I'm very rich today (meaning I am broke today).	22	Exp + Ass + Dec	10.5%
11) Okay, thank you.	15	Comm + Exp	7.1%
12) I shall be the head and not the tail in Jesus name!	15	Dec + Ass + Comm	7.1%
13) That's okay	15	Exp	7.1%
14) I'll never be shamed in Jesus name!	15	Dec + Ass + Comm	7.1%
Total	210		100%

Speech Acts

According to Searle (1969), speech acts can be classified into

1. **Assertives (Ass):** These refer to statements that can be true or false.
2. **Directives (Dir):** Refer to commands/requests that can either be obeyed or disobeyed.
3. **Commissives (Comm):** These allude to threats or promises that can either be fulfilled or unfulfilled.
4. **Expressives (Exp):** Expressions of emotion or attitude.
5. **Declarations (Dec):** Speech acts that change the world by creating new facts or circumstances.

Table 4: **Summary of Speech Act Distribution**

Speech Act	Frequency	Percentage
Exp	49	23.3%
Dec + Ass + Comm	71	33.8%
Dec + Ass	21	10%
Exp + Ass	8	3.8%
Ass	9	4.3%
Exp + Ass + Dec	22	10.5%
NA	15	7.1%

Comm + Exp	15	7.1%
Total	210	100%

Politeness Maxims

According to Leech (1983), upholding or flaunting the following politeness maxims results in polite or impolite utterances:

Tact: Minimize cost to the hearer, maximize benefit.

Generosity: Maximize benefit to the hearer, minimize cost.

Approbation: Express approval and appreciation.

Modesty: Avoid self-praise, humility is preferred.

Agreement: Avoid disagreement, seek consensus.

Sympathy: Show understanding, empathy, and shared feelings.

The following are the key principles of and objectives associated with these maxims:

1. Striking a balance between speaker's goals with hearer's needs.
2. Prioritizing the hearer's face (self-image) and social harmony.
3. Using linguistic strategies to mitigate face threats.

The maxims imply that:

1. Politeness is context-dependent and culturally variable.
2. Effective communication requires consideration of hearer's perspective.
3. Leech's maxims provide a framework for analyzing politeness in language

The Pragmatic Scales

Leech (1983) provides the Pragmatic Scale (PS) as a means by which to measure the politeness of utterances/speech acts. This scale consists of three components, namely cost-benefit, optionality and indirectness. The tables below give a breakdown of these concepts and their relationship with the maxims of tact, modesty, sympathy, approbation as applicable to the data:

Table 5: Leech's Pragmatic Scale

S/N	Pragmatic Scale	Description
1	Cost-benefit (C-B)	Used to determine the cost or benefit of an action on the hearer or speaker.
2	Optionality (O)	Used to evaluate the degree to which the speaker's illocutions provide options/choices for the hearer.
3	Indirectness (I)	Used to gauge the amount of "work" needed by the hearer in deciphering the speaker's intentions.

Table 6: Summary of the Distribution of Pragmatic Scales and Politeness Maxims

Utterance	N° of Responses	Pragmatic Scales						Occurrence	Maxim	Politeness Verdict of Utterance
		C-B				O	I			
		CS	BS	CH	BH					
1) Thank you	16	0	3	0	3	NA	0	7.6%	Tact - Upheld (U)	Polite
2) I'm not poor, I'm rich.	14	0	3	3	0	NA	0	6.7%	Modesty-Flaunted (F)	Face-Threatening (FT)
3) It's alright	18	0	3	0	3	NA	0	8.5%	Sympathy (U)	Polite
4) I can never be disappointed in Jesus' name!	12	0	3	3	0	NA	0	5.7%	Approbation (F)	FT
5) Silence	15	NA	NA	1.5	1.5	NA	0	7.1%	NA	Neutral
6) I'll never come down in Jesus' name, I'll only go up!	15	0	3	3	0	NA	0	7.1%	Approbation (F)	FT
7) I'm not feeling well today	9	0	0	0	0	NA	0	4.3%	NA	Neutral
8) I'm very strong today (meaning I am unwell today).	21	0	0	0	0	NA	3	10%	NA	Neutral
9) Sorry, I don't have money today.	8	0	3	0	3	NA	0	3.8%	Tact (U)	Polite
10) Sorry, I'm very rich today (meaning "I am broke today).	22	0	0	0	0	NA	3	10.5%	NA	Neutral

11) Okay, thank you.	15	0	3	0	3	NA	0	7.1%	Tact (U)	Polite
12) I shall be the head and not the tail in Jesus' name!	15	0	3	3	0	NA	0	7.1%	Approbation (F)	FT
13) That's okay	15	0	3	0	3	NA	0	7.1%	Sympathy (U)	Polite
14) I'll never be shamed in Jesus' name!	15	0	3	3	0	NA	0	7.1%	Approbation (F)	FT
Total	210									

Key:

- **CS:** Cost to speaker
- **BS:** Benefit to speaker
- **CH:** Cost to hearer
- **BH:** Benefit to hearer
- **O:** Optionality Scale
- **I:** Indirectness

Key to Understanding the Figures Assigned

- 0 = Low cost/benefit; direct utterance
- 1.5 = Moderate cost/benefit
- 3 = High cost/benefit; indirect utterance

From the table 5 above, participants' responses can be summarized thus:

- Polite = **34.3%** (72)
- Impolite/Face-threatening = **33.8%** (71)
- Neutral = **31.9%** (67)
- **Total = 100%** (210)

The following informed the values assigned to variables on the pragmatic scale:

- The scale used consists of the scale from 0-3.
- Speakers in the data are addressing non-adherents and fellow Christians who do not use language in the same way or are encountering it for the first time.
- "Benefits" and "costs" here are emotional or psychological in nature.

- All polite responses have zero cost to and bring maximum benefit to speaker (S) and hearer (H) i.e. 0-3-0-3 configuration.

Hypothesis:

There is no significant correlation between the degree of politeness of utterances and the number of responses received.

Table 7: Summary of Interaction between Degree of Politeness and Responses

° Of Politeness of Utterances	Responses Received			Total
	Low (<15)	Medium (15-20)	High (>20)	
Polite	8 (14.7)	64 (42.5)	0 (14.7)	72
Impolite	26 (14.5)	45 (41.9)	0 (14.5)	71
Neutral	9 (13.7)	15 (39.6)	43 (13.7)	67
Total	43	124	43	210

$$E_n = \frac{\text{Row Total} \times \text{Column Total}}{\text{Group Total}}$$

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$$

$$\Sigma = 13.8 + 26.4 + 91.9$$

$$\text{Chi-square } (X^2) = 132.1$$

$$\text{Degree of freedom (df)} = (\# \text{ of rows} - 1) \times (\# \text{ of columns} - 1)$$

$$(3 - 1) \times (3 - 1)$$

$$2 \times 2$$

$$df = 4$$

$$p\text{-value} = 0.05$$

The calculated chi-square (132.1) is greater than the critical value (9.49).

We therefore reject the null hypothesis that there is no significant correlation between the degree of politeness of utterances and the number of responses received and accept that there is a significant correlation between the two variables.

Table 8: Summary of the Results from Hypothesis Testing

Degree Of Politeness of Utterances	Responses Received			Total	df	P-value	X ²	Critical Value	Decision
	Low (<15)	Medium (15-20)	High (>20)						
Polite	8	64	0	72	4	0.05	132.1	9.49	Rejected
Face-threatening	26	45	0	71					
Neutral	9	15	43	67					
Total	43	124	43	210					

Discussion

Out of 210 responses, **34.3%** (72) were polite; **33.8%** (71) were face-threatening while **31.9%** (67) were neutral. This is a pointer to the diverse communication style of this demographic. On closer observation, the following communication patterns were found with respect to speech acts and politeness strategies.

With respect to speech acts:

- The combination Declaration + Assertive + Commissive (**33.8%**) dominates, indicating a strong emphasis on statements that declare, assert, and commit.
- Expressives (**23.3%**), which convey emotions or attitudes, form the second-largest category.

Other patterns include:

- Assertive speech acts are prominent, appearing in four categories (Declaration + Assertive + Commissive; Declaration + Assertive; Assertive; Expressive + Assertive).
 - Commissive and Expressive speech acts often co-occur (Commissive + Expressive; Declaration + Assertive + Commissive), suggesting a connection between commitment and emotional expression.
 - Assertive speech acts alone are relatively rare (4.3%), implying that assertiveness is often combined with other illocutionary forces.
 - The NA category (7.1%) indicates instances where speech acts are absent.
- The following can be deduced from the above findings:
- The prevalence of assertive and declarative speech acts suggests a direct communication style among Pentecostal Christians in Lagos, Nigeria.
 - Expressives and commissives highlight the importance of emotional expression and commitment in this community of practice.
 - The observed distribution of speech acts may be influenced by cultural, social, or religious contexts specific to Pentecostal Christians in Lagos, Nigeria.

With respect to politeness strategies:

- The high percentage of face-threatening responses (33.8%) may challenge traditional notions of politeness in religious contexts, suggesting Pentecostal Christians in Lagos may prioritize assertiveness or directness over politeness.
- Upholding tact and sympathy maxims upholds politeness.
- Modesty and Approbation maxims, when flaunted, lead to face-threatening behavior.
- The neutral responses (31.9%) may indicate that Pentecostal Christians adapt their communication style to specific contexts.
- Expressive speech acts (e.g., "Thank you", "It's alright") uphold Tact or Sympathy maxims, indicating polite behavior.
- The combination of Declarative + Assertive + Commissive speech acts (e.g., "I'm not poor, I'm rich!", "I shall be the head and not the tail...") flaunt Modesty or Approbation maxims, leading to impolite/face-threatening behavior.
- Direct utterances (I: 0) are more common in polite (e.g., "Thank you") and impolite/face-threatening (e.g., "I'm not poor, I'm rich!") utterances.
- Indirect utterances (I: 3) appear in neutral utterances (e.g., "I'm very strong today", "Sorry, I'm very rich today").
- High Benefit to Speaker (BS: 3) and low Cost to Hearer (CH: 0) correlate with polite utterances.
- High Cost to Hearer (CH: 3) and low Benefit to Hearer (BH: 0) correlate with impolite/face-threatening utterances.
- The Optionality Scale (O) is not applicable (NA all through) because the utterances do not present options for the interlocutor to choose from.

With respect to the hypothesis:

- As politeness increases or decreases, response counts also change.
- This has the following theoretical implications:
- The findings validate the idea that politeness plays a crucial role in effective communication.
- It also implies that politeness strategies employed by Pentecostal Christians in Lagos, Nigeria, significantly impact response patterns.

Interpretation of Findings:

- Nigerian cultural values such as respect for authority and the elderly or emphasis on direct communication, may influence Pentecostal Christians' politeness strategies.
- Pentecostalism's emphasis on spiritual boldness, evangelism, or charismatic expression might lead to more assertive communication styles.
- Pentecostal Christians may prioritize group identity and shared values over traditional politeness norms.

Implications

The findings have the following implications for Communication and Politeness Theory:

- They highlight the importance of considering cultural, religious, and social contexts in understanding politeness strategies.
- The results suggest politeness is not a fixed trait, but rather a dynamic and adaptive communication strategy, thus corroborating Leech's submission on relative/sociopragmatic politeness.
- Pentecostal Christians in Lagos, Nigeria can adapt their politeness levels to optimize engagement and responses.
- Recognizing the impact of politeness on responses can enhance pastoral care and improve the effectiveness of counseling.
- Politeness awareness can improve interpersonal relationships between members of Pentecostal Christian communities and non adherents.

Study Contributions:

This study contributes to:

- Empirical evidence supporting politeness theory in a specific cultural and religious context.
- Provides insights into effective communication strategies for Pentecostal Christians in Lagos, Nigeria.
- Contributes to the understanding of politeness and its impact on social interactions.

Recommendations for Future Research:

Pursuant to the findings of the current research, the following are fertile areas that could be explored by future research on politeness

- Compare politeness strategies across different Christian denominations or religious groups in Lagos, Nigeria.
- Examine specific politeness strategies (e.g., honorifics, hedging) and their effects on responses.
- Investigate the relationship between speech acts and politeness strategies.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to examine the utterances of Pentecostal Christians in Lagos, Nigeria to reveal their communicative goals. Through a nuanced exploration of linguistic strategies, this study reveals how the demographic employs politeness strategies to navigate social interactions, maintain spiritual integrity and affirm their faith. The key findings of this study reflect Leech's submission (1983) on relative/sociopragmatic politeness. From the data, relative politeness (as opposed to absolute politeness) is operational among Pentecostal Christians in Lagos, Nigeria, who tend to respond promptly and emphatically to grammatically correct statements which in other contexts are void of connotative meaning. Though this reaction is a

natural, expected and even a desirable phenomenon within this community of practice, it can be considered face-threatening to non adherents and even to fellow Christians who do not use language in the same way; leaving the interlocutor baffled; wondering what they did/said wrong to elicit such a response. The present study reveals that this peculiar communicative pattern, which this paper terms “Esoteric Politeness”, is significant enough to be the object of future research on politeness, as it accounts for 33.8% of the data coming in second place closely behind polite responses (34.3%). Esoteric politeness departs from traditional notions of politeness in that it is about the speaker asserting and protecting their own spiritual well-being by voicing their spiritual beliefs when their Esoteric Face is threatened. This protection of their Esoteric Face is often done for themselves or their loved ones, as has been observed in this study. In other words, Esoteric Politeness is not just about using language in a way that ensures the protection of the interlocutor's face as propounded by Brown and Levinson (1987), Leech (1983) and other scholars, but it is about protecting one's Esoteric Face by asserting and safeguarding one's own spiritual well-being and that of loved ones using speech acts.

The breach in communication which can ensue between the demographic of this study and other speech communities can be avoided if speakers are mindful of the perlocutionary effects of their utterances, educate their audiences on esoteric face wants, as this will contribute in preventing misunderstandings in communication; as well as take into consideration the context of language use in every speech event before attributing meaning to utterances, to avoid misinterpretation. By examining the intersection of language and religion, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the crucial role played by politeness in shaping communication and social relationships within specific social and cultural contexts.

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