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Flouting/ Upholding the PP: The Example of Parliamentary Discourse in Plateau State House of Assembly

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ABSTRACT

It is pivotal that conversationalists respect each other's face. Language is a tool that humans use for interaction in a social activity. We can therefore say that language fulfils interactional function if it is spoken to establish or maintain social relationships as Brown and Yule suggest (1). Language can serve interactional functions without necessarily establishing or maintaining social relationships. For example, two participants in an exchange could be involved in an interaction and yet flout the politeness principle (PP). This paper, therefore, examines the use of polite and impolite language in parliamentary discourse in Plateau State House of Assembly. The paper explores the extent to which face-saving acts are employed in the legislator's proceedings. The study adopts Brown and Levinson's (1978) face theory. The data is elicited through direct observation and recording of legislators' utterances during Sittings. We conclude that the interactional function of maintaining good social relationships as suggested by Brown and Yule is observed and maintained, though not in all cases. Data also reveal that the PP is flouted at various degrees.

Keywords: Language, Parliamentary discourse, House of Assembly, legislators and Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

When conversationalists in a discourse show concern to each other's 'face', we say that they are being polite. Disagreements are likely to ensue between conversationalists as a result of divergent views especially in parliamentary discourse. As such, a threat to face is to be anticipated. It is expected that members of the parliament use strategic language in communication such that social relationships are built and maintained. This may not

always be the case however. What constitutes politeness and/or impoliteness is thus examined via flouting or upholding of the maxims [1].

The face theory as propounded by Brown and Levinson subsumes the politeness principle and the maxims. Politeness and/or impoliteness arise when interactants show or fail to show respect to each other's face. It may be difficult to delineate quite objectively what should constitute impoliteness because harsh words and criticism lose their venom if said among friends. That notwithstanding, we know that a norm in one context may be aberrant in another. However, what should be the norm in a formal gathering *prima facie* is elucidated.

The researcher was present in the House three days in a week for six months to observe the legislator's mode of exchanges. A video recording device was used to record the proceedings. After the observations and video coverage of the Sittings were over, data in the form of legislators' verbal expressions were transcribed for analysis. The tapes were played repeatedly to extract the data for subsequent analysis. Three significant events happened in the House while the data for this research was being gathered. The first is the resignation of the Speaker of the House and election of another Speaker. The second is the impeachment of the Deputy Speaker and election of another Deputy Speaker. The last is the physical presence of the Governor in the House for a budget presentation[2].

POLITENESS PRINCIPLE AND MAXIMS

Some illocutions (e.g. orders) are inherently impolite, and others (e.g. offers) are inherently polite. This view assumes that politeness is an abstract quality, residing in an individual's expressions, lexical items or morphemes, without regard for the particular circumstances that govern their use. Being 'inherently' polite implies being *always* polite, without regard for the contextual factors that define what is polite in a given situation (Mey 1993)[3]. Leech (131) presents the PP maxims which go in pairs as follows:

- (I) TACT MAXIM (in impositives and commissives)
 - (a) Minimize cost to *other*
 - (b) Maximize benefit to *other*
- (II) GENEROSITY MAXIM (in impositives and commissives)
 - (a) Minimize benefit to *self*
 - (b) Maximize cost to *self*
- (III) APPROBATION MAXIM (in expressives and assertives)
 - (a) Minimize dispraise of *other*
 - (b) Maximize praise of *other*
- (IV) MODESTY MAXIM (in expressives and assertives)
 - (a) Minimize praise of *self*
 - (b) Maximize dispraise of *self*
- (V) AGREEMENT MAXIM (in assertives)
 - (a) Minimize disagreement between *self* and *other*
 - (b) Maximize agreement between *self* and *other*
- (VI) SYMPATHY MAXIM (in assertives)
 - (a) Minimize antipathy between *self* and *other*
 - (b) Maximize sympathy between *self* and *other*

DATA PRESENTATION

Data is numbered for ease of reference in the analyses.

1. You will bear with me that the gallery is not like we are used to having. This is because of the activity we have today that concerns Plateau State. For those of us that are here, we welcome all of you to Plateau State House of Assembly and we believe that our phones will be off and you will all be with us until the Sitting of today is over[4].

2. On behalf of all of us, we thank all of us for coming to screen these nominees and to confirm them as commissioners. Thank you very much.
3. When I saw that article I was taken aback. I want the entire people of Plateau State and our dear senior sister to know that... the issue of Principal Officers is not carried over...for anybody to go out and say the governor did that. I am sure we are not fair to the issue. It was a legislative matter; it was narrowed down to the Plateau Central zone... As far as I am concerned I think that somebody somewhere wants to mix issues. I just believe that emm if anybody has any difference or differences with the governor; it should be sorted outside the legislature. In the legislative business, all of us that were duly elected into the House are competent to be the Speaker. But one person has to be the Speaker. So it was a legislative matter, treated with every sense of due process in it. It was an issue that was accepted by the entire Honourable Members of the House. We never had an opportunity to sit with the governor to know his feelings. So honestly the governor is out of our issue when it comes to the issue of Principal Officers. I read the article and I personally feel that emm the phrase used for our humble, dynamic, and the House choice for a Speaker, it was a little bit emm she was unfair to him. If those are her wordings, we will be surprised. But if they are not her own then it is unfortunate. Honestly, the Speaker we have elected is a competent young man. An Accountant by training. A certified Accountant by training, a former union leader, he holds a Masters degree in administration. He is a unionist. Former Chairman of Plateau State. And a respected young man by the people of Mangu Local Government Council and his constituency at large. I feel if as it is written those are her wordings then it is unfortunate. We will be surprised. But otherwise I feel it is not a true picture of our Speaker. I feel it was a bit rough. It does not describe the person representing us all and I wish that if it is not her statement, whoever might have written that, the House will even demand an apology[5].

4. We appreciate our electorates for voting us into the House. My prayer for the people of Plateau State is that they have elected us, we are very grateful. They should allow us work. Our desire is that we remain one. Nobody should use any of us to express his dissatisfaction with another person.
5. The undersigned members of the Plateau State House of Assembly having satisfied the provision of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria of 1999 as amended section 92 subsection 2c have resolved to pass a vote of no confidence on the Deputy Speaker of the House, Honourable... for ineptitude, divertive tendencies, arrogance and unreliability. By this resolution, he is hereby removed or impeached from the office of the Deputy Speaker Plateau State House of Assembly. The under listed sixteen members of this Honourable House signed this...
6. Allow me present a motion of emm of urgent importance to this Honourable House. My dear Honourable Members, Jengere town and environs were thrown into darkness and a sorrowful state of people homeless and property ranging from residential buildings, schools, mosques, churches, electricity poles and hospitals worth billions of naira were destroyed. Mr. Speaker and my Honourable Colleagues, when I visited the affected areas, I could not control my emotions. I had to shed tears. However I was able to comfort the affected people by reading a chapter in the holy Bible- Lamentations chapter 3 verses 19 through 20, 21 and 23 of the holy Bible. You may endeavor to read these verses aah they will help you in life. Of recent Mr. Speaker and aah Honourable Colleagues, weather forecasters said greater flow and greater storms will be experienced because of drastic climatic changes in the whole world. In light of the above Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members, I wish to move as follows: 1. Plateau State Emergency Relief Agency should immediately step up action in providing relieve materials for the affected people in Jengere town and environs. 2. The statement by the weather forecasters should be taken aah seriously by our Emergency Relief Agency so as to forestall occurrences of these eeh

unpleasant eeh climatic changes. 3. Ministry of Housing and Urban Development should embark on awareness campaign for our people who intend to build houses to know what is required in building such houses... Honourable Speaker and Honourable Members I wish this Honourable House will throw its weight on the points I've raised in my motion so that my people can be eeh at least assisted to eeh maybe rehabilitated because some of them as it is now, are patching up with colleagues because they have no residential houses. Thank you very much.

7. We sympathise with our colleague on this unfortunate happening in his constituency. We pray eeh that our constituencies will not experience this and we are trusting God that government will come to their aid. Mr. Speaker in his submission we are made to understand that the issue of the greater Jos master plan is very important. This is because government is insisting that buildings are done based on plans following due process. And I think this should not be done in Jos alone. We must also tell our people at home that as they build they must take into consideration some of these things.
8. This is a letter from my humble self addressed to the Clerk of the House of Assembly Plateau State. Principal Officers and Honourable Members, today the 9th of October 2013, I wish to resign as a Presiding Officer and Speaker of Plateau State House of Assembly. This is based on personal conviction. I thank God because I have led the House in integrity, honesty and with the fear of God. I painfully took this decision in the interest of peace. I wish all of you well... I know this came as a surprise to the public and the people of Plateau State. There is a time for everything. A time to be born and a time to die... but this is not death. This is a time for service. I know as a matter of reality I have not betrayed the confidence reposed in me. I want to thank you for the support for the past two years and four months... Plateau State has passed through series of crisis and turbulence. We cannot afford to create another crisis on the Plateau. That is the basis why I am resigning.

9. Principal Officers, immediate past Speaker, my Honourable Colleagues, life is a stage. If others were here and they are no longer here, that then means that one day I will also not be here and that calls for caution. I want to use this opportunity to appreciate colleagues, to appreciate the people of Plateau State for giving me this opportunity to serve the people of Plateau State. I don't look at it as change in leadership. I look at it as a relay race where you have somebody starting the race and handing over the baton to the next person to continue the race. Somebody had handed the baton to our colleague and today he has done the same and I am sure one day I will hand over the baton to somebody. That then means it is a race that must be run with caution. It is a race that must be run with sincerity. It is a race that must be run with faith and God who made us will definitely show us the way out. I want to thank all of you for deeming me fit to continue from where our colleague has stopped and I believe the cooperation you gave our colleague will be given to me. I also want to use this time to also appeal to us...
10. Mr. Speaker, this day 9th October 2013 is a very special Sitting day to this honourable House. I will want to plead Mr Speaker, maybe to do the unusual since our former Speaker did honourably honour this House by stepping aside. I think it will be good if we are given a small opportunity to share our experiences and of course our appreciation of his stewardship... we may also appreciate him for what he did while he was the Honourable Speaker so that the reasons of his resignation will not be misconstrued by mischief makers. This is a humble motion I want to move with the sincere belief that other Honourable Colleagues will find this expedient to support. I so move Mr. Speaker (a Member seconds). I plead that I may be allowed to breach order 7 rule 1 by allowing me stand while I make this presentation. The rule requires that I do my presentation while sitting. But because of the importance of what I want to say regarding my former boss and my colleague, I think I will be much happier if I say it while standing. I move that order 7 rule 1 be suspended so I make these wonderful comments regarding our former Speaker and Honourable Colleague

(a Member seconds the move)...(he says wonderful things about the previous Speaker while standing)

11. Ordinarily on a day like this, when I saw a change of baton from the outgoing Speaker to another Speaker, my heart bleeds. By the special grace of God, I and two other of my colleagues are going to be working with five Speakers in six years. That was what bled (bled [sic]) my heart. Ordinarily the appointment of Mr. Speaker is supposed to last for four years... More than two and a half years, here comes a resignation. We are speaking today for posterity to forgive us and for nemesis not to catch up with us. We all know that the Plateau State House of Assembly from the 6th Assembly to date is sick. And Mr. Speaker you must get prepared for the task. From the time you joined us in the House and today you are sitting on that seat, from now you will not get it as before. The times have changed. The good news honourable... is that you resigned and you are not found wanting. We have to state this on record and yet admit it glaringly that the House is sick right from the 6th Assembly and some of us that saw part of the 5th Assembly. It has never been this. And in six years to work with five Speakers, it means something is fundamentally wrong. So if you are called to hold that office, know that it is a thing of great challenge not a thing of joy. The first question is what happened or what is happening so that you can be prepared for the task. Honourable... you have said it all that there is a time to be born and there is a time to die. You were born and you die today as Speaker. Of course you were born on 6th of June 2011 and you die on the 9th of October 2013. What a premature death. But the good thing is that you are going to heaven because you died a good death- a righteous death. Everybody will bear me witness that aah many of us have been yearning for a day like this. And he has said that if the problem is this, he is stepping aside for corrective measures. Many of us including me standing have been yearning for a change of party and he has admitted if it is a fault of his, he is stepping aside for a change. That means that the task ahead of you Mr. Speaker- he said he has resigned is left for you- on what basis my brother

do you resign? And some of us that have admitted that the House is sick, you must make consultations to know what made the House all this while sick because if the house does not cleanse itself up, what happened to Mr. A will definitely happen to Mr. B. That is the whole truth. That is the important truth. We were not elected as Speakers but as representatives from our various constituencies. Who is playing what? Who is responsible for the sickness of the House? Let's join hands together and intoxicate the House. I wish you well as a colleague, I wish you well as an elder brother, I wish you well as an honourable member representing the good people of Bokkos and I wish- I wish that the process of cleansing will start from you so that all of us will lead the people of Plateau State better. Honourable... I have said that you were elected as a representative representing the good people of Mangu South and not as Speaker Plateau State House of Assembly. This is just an addition. Therefore, as a good Christian you must know from the time you were elected as us, you either end well, or you step aside as you did. My joy is that the transition was peaceful. The other one witnessed by some of us was a little bit volatile. And that one that was full of volatility was even the one that deserved what we call impeachment which was very very sound. But this one, he resigned, and you will bear me witness that he has little or no problem or for being responsible for the problem we have in the House... The new Speaker, I wish you the best and you should be all-inclusive.

12. I have an appeal. Mr. Chairman, I am appealing, I don't need to move a motion ["that is it-go ahead"- says the Speaker] Thank you Mr. Chair. Because of the importance attached to this second most important document of this country, we need to thoroughly look into this as there are certain critical aspects of the observation that we need to look at Mr. Chair. Umm take for instance there was no sub head that money was subcharged and we are not asking the ministry involved in creating heads for them- so they should go like that?

13. I note with dismay the manner in which the ministry -ministry of works spent well above what was approved for them by the House of Assembly before asking for additional funds. This act was clearly depicted in eleven sub head of their capital expenditure[6].

DISCUSSION

It is evident that the speaker of the first utterance uses the tact maxim by politely asking the people at the gallery to turn off their phones and to also avoid unnecessary movements while the Sitting is in session. The speaker does this because he has the prerogative according to Order 5 Rule 1 subsection (ii) to “preserve order and decorum, and, in case of disturbances or disorderly conduct in the Galleries or in the Chamber of the House, and of all corridors and passages”. We can claim that this request is polite because of the use of cautious notes like ‘believe’ and the third person pronoun ‘we’. When positive politeness is used, speech strategies that emphasize the speaker’s solidarity with the hearer as *we*, and requests which are less indirect are observed. The speaker uses ‘we’, thus including himself. The use of ‘we’ makes the speaker part of the perlocutions of his locutionary act. Apart from the subtle admonition, the speaker cautiously welcomes the people at the gallery who are Commissioners, high ranking officers of the state and members of the press.

The Governor was at this Sitting in December, 2013 to present the 2014 Budget. As it is to be expected, he was there with his entourage. As such, the speaker chooses his words guardedly. Instead of blatantly admonishing them using the imperative, the speaker respects the face of his audience. There was never a time while the collection of the data for this research was in progress that the Speaker gave instructions to turn off phones or avoid unnecessary movements during Sittings. This is because Order 7 Rule 4 (i) of the House clearly stipulates that: “During a sitting, all Members shall enter or leave the House with Decorum”. Order 7 Rule 4 (ii) states that “Members shall not cross the Floor of the

House unnecessarily nor sit in a place allocated to any other Member". Order 7 Rule 4 (iv) requires that: "During a Sitting all Members shall be silent or shall confer only in undertones". So it is expected that other members are fully aware of the implication of leaving their phones on and leaving the chamber before the end of their sessions or while sitting is in progress because they all have the rules of the House and they are fully aware of the implications.

The second speaker tactfully maximizes 'benefit to *other*' by thanking everybody. He does this in a peculiar manner thereby refusing to be egocentric. He uses the third person pronoun in his locution. He says: "On behalf of all of **us**, **we** thank all of **us**..." The speaker also uses 'all' to include everyone present.

Speaker 3, though aggrieved because of a particular statement, still uses hedges in a bid to uphold the PP. He makes his speech using cautious notes to convey his discontentment. He says: "I want the entire people of Plateau State and **our dear senior sister** to know that..." A sister is one's biological sibling. 'Sister' is however used in this context to accord deference. In a typical African setting, 'sister' is used to connote solidarity rather than the literal sense of the word. A further confirmation to this is seen in the use of 'dear' and 'senior'. The offensive statement by this 'dear senior sister' was published in a newspaper, thus making it public. Because of the expected wide readership, the speaker also addresses the citizens of the state generally.

The third speaker emphasizes his solidarity with the offender to mitigate a threat to face. He says: "For anybody to go out and say the governor did that, I am sure **we** are not fair to the issue." Speaker 3 also refuses to disclose the identity of the offender. He says: "As far as I am concerned, I think that **somebody** somewhere wants to mix issues". The question we may ask is: who is this person? The speaker knows who he is referring to as well as his interlocutors but hedges his statement to refer to the person involved as 'somebody'. Again, the speaker says "I just believe that emm if **anybody** has any difference

or differences with the governor, it should be sorted outside the legislature". The cautious note is also observed here to 'minimize disagreement between *self* and *other*' as stipulated in the agreement maxim[5].

Speaker 3 tactfully employs the use of hedges as politeness strategy for obscurity. He utilizes hedges in his statements to attenuate the illocutionary force of his utterance. For example, he says: 'it was **a little bit** emm she was unfair to him' and 'it was **a bit** rough'. Lakoff calls the use of such words 'fuzzy' or 'less fuzzy' since their meaning implicitly involves fuzziness (vague or less vague) (195). The speaker uses hesitators as well, thus making his speech somewhat incoherent. He does this to mitigate the effect of his utterance. This phenomenon is observed as follows: "I just believe that **emm** if anybody has...", "I personally feel that **emm** the phrase used for..." and "it was a little bit **emm**..." The use of this hesitator in this context is a politeness strategy.

Another notable pragmatic device employed in the third data is the speaker's ability to uphold the quality maxim by using precautionary notes. Initial phrases are usually used by conversationalists to hedge. For example:

- I just believe that emm **if** anybody has any difference or differences with the governor...
- **If** those are her wordings...
- But **if** they are not her own then it is unfortunate.
- I feel **if** as it is written...
- I wish that **if** it is not her statement...

This indicates that what he is saying may not be totally accurate. We are however mindful of the fact that this speaker said in the affirmative that he read this article. These examples of hedges are good indicators that speakers are aware of the maxims and also try to uphold them. This, we may also label as presequences since they could serve as precursors to avoid explicitness. We are baffled at the speaker's insistence on maintaining a good social relationship with the offender when he tries to exonerate her, using several 'if's'. "...I wish

that if it is not her statement, whoever might have written that, the House will even demand an apology.” These questions may be asked: Will an apology be required only if someone else wrote this? Why not an apology from her too? Will an apology not be required from her if she is guilty? It is obvious that while the speaker observes the approbation maxim that requires a speaker to ‘minimize dispraise of *other*’ and the agreement maxim that states that a speaker should ‘minimize disagreement between *self* and *other*’, he also upholds the sympathy maxim that stipulates that a speaker should ‘minimize antipathy between *self* and *other*’. Speaker 3 expresses his discontentment in the best possible manner that upholds the PP to a certain degree. Again, this speaker upholds the sympathy maxim that states that a speaker should ‘maximize sympathy between *self* and *other*’. When the credibility of the Speaker of the House was questioned, he sympathizes with him by reacting but he does so cautiously so as to maintain a cordial relationship as well with the offender[6].

The fourth speaker upholds the PP by tactfully minimizing ‘cost to *other*’. An individual or a very minute section of the people of Plateau State may have caused this displeasure apparently by uttering unguarded statements. The speaker avoids any direct address to the affected person(s) and uses ‘the people of Plateau State’ as a covert reference. This speaker, using presequences, obscures his displeasure with ‘the people of Plateau State’. Instead of using the imperative plainly or tenaciously thus: ‘The people of Plateau State should allow us work’, he uses precursors as a strategy to avoid explicitness. What is ascribed as precursors here are: ‘We appreciate our electorates for voting us into the House’ and ‘my prayer for the people of Plateau State is that they have elected us, we are very grateful’. It is observable that embedded within his words of appreciation is his admonition: ‘They should allow us work’ and ‘Nobody should use any of us to express his dissatisfaction with another person’.

Speaker 5 (who is the Minority Leader of the House) speaks on behalf of fifteen other legislators. His statement flouts the tact maxim which stipulates that a speaker should 'Minimize cost to *other*'. He passes a vote of no confidence on the Deputy Speaker of the House. He however prefaces his speech with certain facts so that other interlocutors accept his point of argument or suggestion. This position supports our claim that presequences sometimes serve as a politeness strategy since a speaker would naturally not want to be seen as imposing his ideas on others. He is quick in asserting that he is not alone in passing this vote. He says, 'the undersigned members...' and 'the under listed sixteen members of this Honourable House signed this...' The precursor to this vote is however an obligatory condition of the constitution in order to satisfy the proviso of passing a vote of this magnitude such as, an impeachment. Order 6 Rule 3(ii) stipulates that "A Member presenting a Petition shall confirm himself to a brief statement of the parties from whom it came, the number of signatures attached to it and the material allegation contained in it, to reading the prayer of such Petition"[6].

This speaker's choice of words violates the agreement maxim which states that a speaker should 'minimize disagreement between *self* and *other*' as well as the sympathy maxim which states that a conversationalist should 'minimize antipathy between *self* and *other*'. The use of cruel words ('ineptitude, divertive tendencies, arrogance and unreliability') in describing the Deputy Speaker will no doubt spur abhorrence. This also violates Order 6 Rule 3(v) a. of the House which specifies that "Every Petition must be properly addressed to the House, respectful, decorous and temperate in its language, and must conclude with a prayer setting forth the general objectives of the Petitioner".

Speakers 6 and 7 uphold the sympathy maxim. The sixth speaker passionately reports the incident that wrecked parts of his constituency. He says, "...when I visited the affected areas, I could not control my emotions. I had to shed tears. However I was able to comfort the affected people by reading a chapter in the holy Bible..." He proffers solutions

to alleviate the hardships of his people. Speaker 7 supports speaker 6's move for relief materials and assistance[6].

Speaker 8 (who is the Speaker of the House at that time) reads a letter of resignation written by himself. He resigns his office as the Speaker of the House which he claims is on 'personal conviction'. He however violates the modesty maxim that requires a speaker to 'Minimize praise of *self*' and 'Maximize dispraise of *self*'. He says, 'I thank God because I have led the House in integrity, honesty and with the fear of God'. He also says, 'I know as a matter of reality I have not betrayed the confidence reposed in me'. Maybe these utterances would have sounded much better if they were uttered by another legislator. We are however aware that there is some level of dishonesty in the Speaker's reason for resignation. This is because politicians will not naturally be willing to resign their offices. The Speaker's countenance gives him away. The speaker flouts the CP (quality maxim) to uphold the PP. It is possible to objectively arrive at this implicature because the speaker for instance says: his resignation was based on a 'personal conviction' but says he took the decision '**painfully in the interest of peace**'. He also says, 'Plateau State has passed through series of crisis and turbulence. **We cannot afford to create another crisis on the Plateau. That is the basis why I am resigning**'. The Speaker upholds the tact maxim to a high degree because he refuses to disclose to the public that he was pressurized to resign his office or face possible impeachment or any similar action. Otherwise, why will he suddenly resign his office? The Deputy Speaker who refused to resign willingly was impeached the same day the past Speaker announced his resignation. Details of the impeachment are seen in datum 5. It is possible to arrive at the implicature that the Speaker was pressurized to resign his office or face possible impeachment because there was a preplanned action and a lot of lobbying since the Deputy Speaker's resignation was signed by sixteen other members of the House prior to the Sitting. He however consoles himself saying, 'There is a time for everything. A time to be born and a time to die... but

this is not death. This is a time for service'. These words also relaxed the tensed atmosphere since he hedges the despicable phenomenon by trying to prove to the public that he was satisfied with the step he took. In doing this act, speaker 8 maximizes cost to *self* in exchange to minimizing 'disagreement between *self* and *other*' and minimizing 'antipathy between *self* and *other*'. We also observe the use of litotes in this speaker's utterance. He deliberately uses understatements for effect which could have been expressed negatively for antipathy to thrive. He tries to reiterate the fact that his decision was taken willingly[4].

The Speaker who succeeds the previous Speaker of the House speaks after his election and swearing in on the same day. This is presented in datum 9. He however upholds the PP in his speech by showing some reverence to the past Speaker. He says, 'I don't look at it as change in leadership. I look at it as a relay race where you have somebody starting the race and handing over the baton to the next person to continue the race. Somebody had handed the baton to our colleague and today he has done the same and I am sure one day I will hand over the baton to somebody'. His speech lightens the House, making the atmosphere serene. He is also being modest when he says, '...life is a stage. If others were here and they are no longer here, that then means that one day I will also not be here and that calls for caution'.

Speaker 10's comment, 'I will want to plead Mr. Speaker, maybe to do the unusual since our former Speaker... did honourably honour this House by stepping aside' confirms our assertion that the Speaker who resigned was pressurized to do so. The statement explains clearly that the Speaker who resigned was not wanted in that capacity by other members. We are taken aback when the same speaker who exposes what was surreptitiously done: '... did honourably honour this House by stepping aside' says: '...so that the reasons of his resignation will not be misconstrued by mischief makers'. This speaker moves a motion so that members of the House may be allowed to express their

appreciation for the Speaker's stewardship. He respects the Speaker's face by employing positive politeness in his speech strategy. This emphasizes his solidarity with the Speaker. He pleads to breach Order 7 rule 1(i) which states that "A Member desiring to speak shall indicate by show of hand and if called upon, shall address his observation to Mr. Speaker or the Chairman, while sitting"[3].

The next speaker (speaker 11) however speaks passionately about the Speaker's resignation. He upholds the PP by maximizing 'sympathy between *self* and *other*'. He feels aggrieved at the frequent change of Speakers. He says his heart bleeds and he speaks 'for posterity to forgive us (them) and for nemesis not to catch up with us (them)'. In his opinion, something is fundamentally wrong with the House if in five years six Speakers are changed when ordinarily the appointment is supposed to last for four years. The speaker raises his tone and stresses 'something is fundamentally wrong' apparently for emphasis. This underscores the relevance of SFG to our analysis since investigation at the level of the text takes cognisance of units smaller than the text like the tone of voice. These smaller units must however be viewed from the perspective of their contribution to the meanings expressed by the total text in context[2].

The eleventh speaker also personifies the House by ascribing human qualities to it. He says, 'the Plateau State House of Assembly from the 6th Assembly to date is sick'. He warns the new Speaker to get prepared for the task ahead of him instead of celebrating since the House is 'sick'. He says, 'We have to state this on record and yet admit it glaringly that the House is sick'. He employs litotes to uphold the PP because instead of stating the obvious thus: 'People are obsessed with leadership positions', he uses personification. 'The House' is used to refer to 'the legislators'. If this speaker were to say that 'legislators are crazy about being the Speaker as such, constant antagonism and subsequent impeachment and change', he would have been lynched perhaps. This speaker employs humour and pun to describe the appointment and resignation of the Speaker who resigned as birth and

death respectively. He upholds the approbation maxim by maximizing 'praise of *other*'. He praises the past Speaker for dying a 'righteous death' since he was not faulty. He also attests to the fact that the past Speaker is not responsible for the 'sickness' of the House. He politely suggests that they should make collective efforts to detoxify and 'cleanse' the House of its 'sickness' starting from the Speaker. By inference, we discern that the new Speaker is 'sick' too and as such, responsible for the problems of the House.

Speakers 12 and 13 speak on the budget. Speaker 12 exaggerates the importance of the state's budget as the 'second most important document of **this country**'. He calls on his colleagues for a critical scrutiny. When he discovers certain hazy areas of the budget, he tactfully upholds the PP and puts forth his observation as a question. He says, 'there was no sub head that money was subcharged and we are not asking the ministry involved in creating heads for them- so they should go like that?' The next speaker also uses subtle words to express his dissatisfaction with the attitude of the ministry that spent more than the approved sum allocated to her before requesting for additional funds. Speakers 12 and 13 could have requested or thrown a motion that the ministry executives be called upon to answer questions or clarify issues. But the two speakers did not.

CONCLUSION

Conversationalists are expected to behave politely towards one another. People should respect one another's face. We conclude that because of the legislator's social context of the discourse, they decide to curb important information in order to uphold the PP. At other times, the PP is flouted. To a large extent, though not in all cases, the interactional function of maintaining good social relationships as suggested by Brown and Yule is observed and maintained.

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