

A Study of Politeness Expressions in Tiv

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Abstract

This study examines how politeness is encoded and expressed through various linguistic features. The aim of the study is to investigate the expression of politeness in the Tiv language. The study is founded on the politeness theory of Levinson and Brown of 1987. The theory posits that communication is a social activity that requires individuals to manage their “face”-their self-esteem, dignity and social identity in interacting with others. Data for the study is sourced from semi-structured interviews, focused group discussions, observation as well as printed materials. A descriptive and qualitative research design with a sample size of thirty participants is used for this study. The findings identify linguistic markers of politeness in Tiv such as ‘respectful titles’ (*Orvesen, Zaki*), ‘terms of endearment’ (*Adoomshima, Ishan Pepe*), “gratitude expressions” (*Msugh u Tom*) among others. The findings add that the contextual factors influencing these expressions include age, social status, relationships and situational contexts, such as greetings, apologies and requests, all of which shape the appropriateness of politeness usage. The study submits that the socio-cultural significance of these expressions lies in their role in re-enforcing respect, harmony and community cohesion, as well as sustaining cultural values through sensitive communication. The findings also show that the politeness strategies observed are: positive politeness to foster solidarity, negative politeness to reduce imposition, and off-record strategies such as euphemisms to handle delicate matters. The study concludes that politeness expressions in Tiv play an essential role in maintaining harmony, respect and social order within the Tiv speech community. The work recommends that Tiv language studies should incorporate politeness expressions to help learners understand the socio-cultural and socio linguistic import of language in maintaining respect and harmony.

Keywords: *Communication, Courtesy, Cultural Values, Euphemisms, Harmony, Politeness Expression*

1. Introduction

Language can only be effectively operative when used among people who share similar ideals, customs, tradition and even culture. It therefore follows that different language groups must align with specific strategies, practices and norms (overt or covert, expressed or implied, linguistic or non-linguistic) which govern language use and facilitate seamless conversation within the geographical location. Hence the notion of linguistic politeness plays a vital role in human interaction as it is believed that all of

the daily interactions of people are directly anchored on the principles of politeness which, according to Brown and Levinson (1987:65) helps to lessen or soothe the impact of an otherwise compelling utterance. For Brown and Levinson, certain acts such as requests are essentially face-threatening because they cause some degree of infraction and threaten the addressee's negative face which loosely translates to a violation of his/her right of action and freedom from imposition.

The concepts of language and society are inextricably interwoven due to the fact that one cannot exist without the other. Society operates on the basis of language and the functions of language are predicated on the existence and organisation of society. The Tiv people live in a society and commune by means of the Tiv language. The language enables them to operate at different strata and their communality influences the ways in which they use the language including the adoption of solidarity and politeness. This is in tandem with the Whorfian Hypothesis quoted in Holmes, (2013:342) which state among other things that, "We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages". To a reasonable degree, the Tiv people perceive the world and respond to it as provided by their language and by the organisation of their society.

In the Tiv society and any other societies, the nature of interactions is determined by many variables including the social classes of interactants and the social contexts in which the interactions take place. Therefore, social class is among the numerous factors which influence the way people speak or use a language.

The social class and context are variables in the deployment of solidarity and politeness in the use of language as well as other linguistic choices. McGregor (2009:156) notes that "All speech occurs in an interactive context in which interactants - speakers and hearers - make choices from the linguistic system". The variables in the linguistic system and the context act together to elicit linguistic attitudes, a concern which situates our discourse within the domain of sociolinguistics. It therefore becomes expedient to briefly define the subject and her sister discipline, the sociology of language.

Many scholars have given different definitions of sociolinguistics. However. Each of the definitions does not fail to acknowledge the fact that sociolinguistics deals with language and the way society influences its use and vice versa. Anyogo (2014:34) defines sociolinguistics as the study of speech functions according to the speaker, the hearer, their relationship, and the contact situation. This implies that the concern of sociolinguistics is about how language is used in relation to the speaker, the hearer and

the context. Agbedo (2000:23) submits that sociolinguistics is the study of language in relation to society. Going by this definition, the focal point of sociolinguistics is to analyse how the society affects the use of language and vice versa. In other words, sociolinguistics studies language and society, taking into consideration the social aspect of language as a means of human communication.

Sociology of language, on the other hand, is a term which views society as being broader than language, and therefore, as providing the context in which all language behaviours must ultimately be viewed. It embraces features such as ethnography of communication, linguistic etiquette, et cetera (Akindele and Adegbite (2005:89).

The views above suggest that, both sociolinguistics and sociology of language study the relationship between language and society. While one emphasises language, the other emphasizes society. Nevertheless, interconnectivity of the sister disciplines cannot be waived aside as evidenced in the way people adopt, express solidarity and politeness in their use of language.

Politeness is a universal linguistic phenomenon that varies across cultures and languages. It plays a crucial role in human interaction by facilitating communication, maintaining social harmony, and reflecting cultural values. The Tiv language, spoken by the Tiv people in Nigeria, has its own unique mechanisms for expressing politeness, deeply rooted in the cultural norms and social structures of the Tiv society. This research aims to explore how politeness is expressed in Tiv, analysing the linguistic strategies employed and their sociocultural significance.

2. Statement of the Problem

Politeness in language is an essential social tool for maintaining harmonious relationships, particularly in a community-oriented society. In Tiv culture, like in many African communities, language serves as a marker of respect, hierarchy, and social status. Despite its significance, the complex interplay between politeness strategies and linguistic choices in Tiv has not been extensively explored in scholarly research. This study seeks to examine how politeness is encoded and expressed through various linguistic features such as speech levels, honorifics, indirect speech, and contextual expressions in the Tiv language. Furthermore, it aims to explore how these politeness strategies function in different social contexts, including interactions among family members, elders, and strangers. Understanding the role of politeness in Tiv language

will contribute to a deeper comprehension of Tiv sociolinguistic practices and enrich broader discussions on language and culture in African societies.

3. Aim and Objectives of the Study

The primary aim of this research is to investigate the expressions of politeness in the Tiv language. The objectives of the study includes to;

1. Identify the linguistic markers of politeness in Tiv language
2. ascertain the contextual factors that influence the use of politeness expressions in various social interactions among Tiv speakers.
3. examine the sociocultural significance of politeness expressions in Tiv.
4. find out the politeness strategies evident in the use of politeness expressions in Tiv language.

4. Research Questions

This research shall answer the following questions

1. What are the linguistic markers of politeness in the Tiv language?
2. What are the contextual factors that influence the use of politeness expressions in various social interactions among Tiv speakers?
3. What is the socio-cultural significance of politeness expressions in Tiv
4. What are the politeness strategies evident in the use of politeness expression in Tiv language?

5. Literature Review

The following concepts are going to be reviewed;

5.1. Language

Within the circle of linguistics, one cannot say nor do anything outside the concept of language. Language is the basis and foundational pillar of any linguistic exercise thus, the importance of language within the domain of linguistics cannot be overemphasised. Language, from one dimension can be regarded as a tool for communication either by an individual or a collective group. Language basically refers to the medium through which humans express their thoughts, feelings, desires and fears. It is one of the greatest capacity and genetic endowment God gave to man.

Language has a big role in life as humans are social creatures. Inderwati & Hayati (2015:53) states “it is believed that human beings and language are deeply embedded in the sense that people own a language and use it to interact with others”.

Language is a concept and a fascinating object of linguistics, as such, linguistic studies revolves and centers on language. Language is a concept in linguistics that cannot be overemphasized. It is basically a system of communication where sound, or signs convey objects, actions and ideas. It is a key to human lives, humans can eliminate misunderstanding by using it as an instrument to transfer communication among people. Malinowski (2011:4) opined that language is “the necessary means of communication; it is one indispensable instrument for creating the ties of the moment without which unified social action is impossible”. Language can thus be said to be at the core of humanity.

To Otagburuagu and Okorji (2003:1), language is “an intrinsic inheritance of man”. They further elaborated this definition by saying “what sets man apart from the rest of the animal kingdom is his ability to speak, he is man the speaking animal-homologues”. Contributing further on the subject of language, Eka and Udofot (2001: 3) argue that:

Language is the most brilliant of human inventions. It is also about the most useful. By means of language people who live together are able to interact and express their thoughts and feelings. Language is first perceived as a string of noises organized into a meaningful pattern for the purpose of communication ... It can as well be seen as graphic symbols also organised into meaningful patterns, the organized patterns being meaningful particularly to the people of the speech community where the language is used.

5.2. Tiv Language

According to Wegh (1998:33) the word “Tiv” has a triple meaning. It is the name of the Tiv ethnic group; it is also referring to their language (ZwaTiv), it is also the name by which the Tiv know their ancestral father Tiv. He further stated that Tiv land is located in Benue state, one of the thirty-six states of Nigeria’s present political structure; a state which is situated almost in the middle of the country and therefore falls within the geographic region popularly referred to as the Middle Belt. In the words of Orban (2005:3) Tiv is one of the major groups that occupy part of the rolling savannah region popularly known as the Middle Belt of Nigeria. Akese (2018:25) corroborates this when he assert that,

Tiv language is a prestigious indigenous language spoken among the Tiv people of Benue State. It is a tonal language with linguistic features such as phonetics, lexicography and grammar. The language is spoken by the Tiv people who are believed to migrate from “Swem” and have been living in one of the geographical zones in Nigeria called Middle-Belt. This implies that the language has been culturally transmitted from the ancestors to the present generation. The Tiv language has evolved from the culturally transmitted communicative skills just like any other language. The language is complex and dynamic in nature. It is complex due to its tonality and semantic variations.

Sokpo (2016:19) opines that Tiv language, which is under study, is a tonal language; tonal languages derive meaning through the use of tones. The tones perform various functions in the realisation of meaning in such languages; for instance, lexical and grammatical tones in Tiv language are made explicit only when the pitch is properly placed. The Tiv language according to Akase (2018:14) develops basically through oral literature, folktales, riddles, jokes, song, music, and dance”. He opines further that Tiv language has the following features; creativity, genetic, tonal, and duality”.

Yina (2011:13) states that Tiv is a southern Bantoid – Tivoid language in the Benue – Congo family and ultimately of the Niger – Congo family. According to Yina, Tiv is the largest sub-group in terms of population in the Benue – Congo family, which has 900 languages, stretching across Nigeria to Cameroon throughout Central Africa to Eastern Africa. Out of this number, ten major sub-families are in Nigeria. These include the Oko and Ukaan, Defoid, Edoid, Nupoid, Idomoid, Igbooid, Kainji, Cross River and Bantoid.

Adoo (2023:11) adds that it is one of the world’s few languages that display little dialectal variation with little to hinder mutual indelibility among its numerous speakers. These include the Iharev – Masev, Ukum – Shitile, Kwande and Gboko dialects. Yina (2004:128) further points that “the Gboko speech norms are widely considered to be the purest and authentic representation of Tiv language. Tiv language is the language spoken by the Tiv people and it functions as a lingua-franca among the neighbours of Tiv which are the Etulo, Jukun, Abakwa and Nyifon.

5.3. Phatic Communication

The term ‘phatic communication’ originated in the writing of the British functionalist school of linguistics. The first usage of the term is usually attributed to Malinowski (1923). The word phatic is from the word ‘*photos*’; that is the Greek word for *spoken*.

Therefore, it can be stated that phatic is verbal communication. Phatic communication involves speech that serves to establish and maintain initial social contact between people. In this sense, it enables interactants to carry out accent identification and categorisation by creating an environment that is rich in social and auditory information. It is language that binds the hearer to the speaker by a tie of some social sentiment or other. Besides, phatic communication joins people in a relatively inoffensive manner and allows them to exchange noncontroversial background information that is unlikely to create conflicts between interactants.

According to West and Turner (2011:18) phatic communication “consists of words and phrases that are used for interpersonal contact only and are not meant to be translated verbatim”. They add that “such a kind of communication can be thought of as content free because listeners are not supposed to think about the meaning of the statement; instead, they are expected to respond to the polite contact the speaker is making”. They gave an example as, when someone is asked “Hi, how are you doing?”, he is just being made contact to and the person who asks does not want really to know how the details about the other person is doing.

Cavugil, Tamer and Ghvari (2021:92) adds that phatic communication is seen as a kind of verbal formulae consisting of choices from a limited set of stereotyped phrases. Greetings and small talk are key examples of phatic communication. It helps the interlocutors to be at ease and establish connections on a more personal level. Verschueren, Ostman & Blommaert (1995:24) asserts that

The terms ‘phatic communion’ and ‘phatic communication’ are generally used to refer to utterances that are said to have exclusively social, bonding functions like establishing and maintaining a friendly and harmonious atmosphere in interpersonal relations, especially during the opening and closing stages of social-verbal-encounters. These utterances are understood as a means for keeping the communication channel open.

It is generally claimed that phatic communion is characterised by not conveying meaning and not importing information, thus phatic utterances are described as procedures without propositional contents. Greeting formulae, comments on the weather, passing enquiries about someone’s health, and other small topics have been characterised as prototypical examples for phatic communion. Phatic communion provides no important information but sets up a communicative bridge and creates a harmonious atmosphere to make good preparation for the following formal interaction.

5.4. Concept of Politeness

Frequently, in every day conversations it is normal to hear that someone's style is polite or impolite, or even some style is more polite than another.... etc. Linguistically speaking, according to which criteria can one decide what is polite or impolite? And are there any theoretical frameworks in taking these decisions? Politeness is the expression or the behavior one adopts in order to mitigate a social interaction. Different definitions are presented for politeness by linguistic scholars.

The linguistic model of politeness was put forward by Brown and Levinson (1987:61). They define politeness as "forms of behavior used to maintain and develop communication between potentially aggressive partners". The term politeness means to take hearer's feelings and desires into consideration when speaking and acting. This means that politeness could be expressed verbally and non-verbally in actions, Leech (1983:140).

The free Encyclopedia Wikipedia (2007: 1) defines politeness as the manipulating good behavior or etiquette, whose goal is to make the participants of an interaction feel comfortable and relaxed to each other. Fraser (1990: 232) and Watts (2003:20) have a similar viewpoint about politeness. Fraser states that there are some obligations and rights, which are considered by the addresser and the addressee of any conversational contract, which govern the negotiation of that contract. Also, there is always a possibility to renegotiate during the course of time as regards the situational context progressing. Watt (2003:20), on the other hand, defines politeness as the appropriate (linguistic or non-linguistic) behavior the participants handle in an ongoing interaction. It may be made prior to entering the interaction, but during the course of time, there is always a possibility for a re-negotiation of the construction of that behavior. It is clear that both of these definitions focus on the progressing of an interaction and how it may affect the procedures the parties adopt from the beginning of an interaction upward.

The definitions above, do not differ much from each other, they all imply that politeness is the behavior that is employed to overcome conflict and aggression (the negative politeness) in order to enhance smooth interaction (the positive politeness).

Ashizuka et al (2015:1) opines that politeness could be expressed, for example, through dressing appropriately, and using appropriate "facial expressions, gestures or bodily postures". Yoshimura and MacWhinney, (2011:101) adds that politeness could further be expressed verbally using honorific language represented through certain linguistic forms of a particular language, such as in Japanese.

Ede (2023::4) asserts that “politeness is a pragmatic phenomenon. It is because, pragmatics emphasises the importance of context in understanding meaning, and this is particularly relevant to politeness. The interpretation of politeness strategies depends on the context, social norms, and the relationship between interlocutors”. Ede finally submits that “politeness , falls under the umbrella of pragmatics. It focuses on how people use linguistic strategies to mitigate face-threatening acts and maintain social harmony in their interactions”. Pragmatics and politeness are concepts closely related within the field of linguistics, as politeness is a theory of pragmatics. Pragmatics is the study of how people use language in context to convey meaning beyond the literal words, while politeness as a theory specifically examines how people use language to manage social interactions and maintain positive social relationships.

Holmes (2001:268) confirms that for the speaker to be polite or impolite linguistically, he is required to speak according to the relationship that relates him to the hearer. Therefore, making decisions about what is polite or impolite in any community depends on two factors.

First is an assessment of the social relationship between interlocutors along the dimensions of power and solidarity. As Fairclough (1989:66) emphasizes that “politeness is based on the recognition of differences of power, degree of social distance,” or solidarity. Second is the knowledge of the social values and norms of the community. Accordingly, for further details, the researchers allocated a review, in the following sections, of the most important theories of politeness that might help in understanding how politeness functions between interlocutors of similar and/or different social relations.

Asoribare (2025) researched on politeness in Kwara State International Revenue Service. The study aimed at politeness among customers and staff of the organisation. He focused on politeness strategies such as unco-operative response, refusal, elliptical response and strong obligation statements. These strategies are discussed and applied in details as they affect the relationship between the staff of the organisation and the customers that patronise them.

In another development, Abdulkadir, Abubakar and Mohammad (2020) undertook a study on politeness strategy in Hausa request as a common ground for speaker and hearer as co-operators. The study aimed to analyse how politeness strategies work in Hausa when it comes to request making. The sociological variables considered in the study were: social distance, power status, and ranking of imposition.

The present study considers not only requests but greetings, apologies, pet names and so on.

In the same vein, Enang, Eshiet and Udoka (2022) in their study on politeness in language use focused on spoken Nigerian English. The politeness areas explored were on expressing congratulations, condolences, greetings, saying no politely and so on. The present study covers all those areas and many more as expressed in Tiv language.

6. Methodology

The study adopts the descriptive qualitative research design. This study adopts this type of design because politeness in the Tiv language involves the interplay of linguistic features, cultural norms, and social values. A descriptive qualitative design allows the researcher to explore these elements in-depth, focusing on how politeness is expressed in Tiv and its cultural significance. Moreso, a descriptive qualitative design enables the use of diverse data sources such as interviews, and observations, and textual analysis (e.g., Tiv proverbs, folktales, oral traditions). This is critical for understanding the multifaceted nature of politeness in Tiv.

The method of data collection refers to how the research instruments will be applied to gather data from participants. Since this study focuses on exploring politeness in the Tiv language through qualitative means, multiple methods of data collection will be employed to ensure comprehensive and accurate findings. The key methods will include interviews, focus groups, observations, and textual analysis.

7. Theoretical Framework

The study adopts the politeness theory of Levinson and Brown. This theory is adopted because the theory serves as a suitable framework to examine how Tiv speakers use language to express politeness and manage their relationships within their cultural and social context. Politeness theory, primarily developed by sociolinguists Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson (1987), is an influential framework for understanding how individuals use language to manage social relationships, particularly concerning the maintenance of social harmony and face. The theory posits that communication is a social activity that requires individuals to manage their "face" — their self-esteem, dignity, and social identity — in interacting with others.

Politeness theory is built on several foundational concepts, which can be applied to the study of politeness in Tiv language. Such concepts include; face positive

face, negative face, face-threatening acts (FTAs) and politeness strategies. The concept of face refers to an individual's projected self-image during communication. Brown and Levinson divide face into two types:

Positive face refers to the desire to be liked, admired, and approved of by others. While negative face refers to the desire to be free from imposition, interference, or intrusion in one's actions and choices. In Tiv culture, respect for elders, the hierarchical nature of social relationships, and community values emphasise both positive and negative face, especially in interactions involving greetings, requests, or apologies.

Face-threatening acts refer to any communicative act that could potentially damage or threaten the face of the speaker or the hearer. Such acts might include direct requests, complaints, criticism, or suggestions, which can be perceived as impolite. Tiv speakers employ various strategies to mitigate the impact of FTAs, particularly when speaking to individuals of higher social status, older age, or greater authority, ensuring politeness through indirectness or respectful language.

Brown and Levinson identify four main politeness strategies that people use to mitigate the impact of FTAs and protect face:

Bald On-Record: A direct, unambiguous approach where no effort is made to mitigate the threat to face (e.g., a direct command or request). While directness might be seen as impolite in some cultures, in some contexts within Tiv society, it may be acceptable, especially among peers or family members.

Positive Politeness: This strategy involves making the hearer feel valued and respected by emphasising solidarity, common ground, and shared interests. It includes strategies such as showing interest, compliments, and inclusivity (e.g., using respectful terms for elders, addressing people in a way that conveys warmth or solidarity).

Negative Politeness: This strategy aims to minimise the imposition on the hearer by showing deference, acknowledging their autonomy, and avoiding intrusion (e.g., using indirect language, hedging, or apologising for requests). Negative politeness is crucial in Tiv interactions, especially when addressing elders or individuals of higher status.

Off-Record (Indirectness): This strategy involves indirect language that allows the speaker to avoid responsibility for face-threatening acts (e.g., hints, insinuations, or ambiguous expressions). Off-record politeness is common in Tiv, particularly in contexts where directness might be seen as disrespectful or inappropriate.

8. Data Presentation

Politeness and its features can be evident in Tiv language in different aspects of the language and culture. These expressions are essential in managing social interactions, ensuring respect, and maintaining harmony within the community. The Tiv people, like many other cultures, use politeness markers to navigate various social contexts, reflecting their values of respect, hierarchy, and communalism. Politeness in Tiv is deeply embedded in the language and manifests in several forms. These include greetings systems, politeness in apology, requests, compliments, and questions, as well as in euphemisms, pet names among others as the data below indicates.

Table 1: Basic Tiv Greetings and Politeness

S/N	Tiv Greeting System	Gloss
1	Msugh u	I greet u
2	Mo kpan m sugh u	me too I greet u
3	M hemba u sughn	I greet u even more
4	Msugh u kpishi	thank you (very much)
5	Ne nder vee	good morning (at people)
6	M nder dedoo	I woke up well (response to the greeting)
7	U pande vee?	Good afternoon/evening
8	Ne pande vee	good afternoon/ evening..

Table 2: Politeness in Tiv Greetings

S/N	Form of greeting	Type of greeting	Politeness marker	Paralinguistic features	Gloss
1	Greeting an elderly person	Orvesen u nder vee	Orvesen (elder)	This is accompanied by bending down to say it	(elder good morning)
2	Young person to Young person	Orne/ orwan ka nana or orne mna civir	orne, orwam and the phrase mna civir	Hand shake or folding of the hands into a fist	this guy, my guy how is it/ guy I give respect
3	Addressing traditional rulers	Aondo aver Tor	Orchivirigh, Zaki and the phrase “Aondo aver Tor”	Bend down and say	may God increase your life span my chief

4		Orchivirigh			many respect
5		Zaki			title to anyone who is holding a traditional title

Table 3: Politeness in Pet Names in Tiv

S/N	Category of people	Pet name	Gloss
1	Father to children (female children)	Amama	small mother
2	Father to son	Paapa	male child (daddy)
3	Husband to wife	Shima-wam	my heart
4		kwase udedoo	good woman
5		Adoom shima	my love
6	Wife to husband	oryawam	head of my family
7	Husband to wife	Wan zam (kwase)	slim woman
8		Iase Kuma	befitting open teeth
9		Sha pepe	morning star
10		Ii kwase	black woman
11		Afa zende	she has a good movement
12		Doo kenger	beauty to behold
13		A wa gburgbur	she is full of flesh
14		Kuma ashe	worthy to the see

Table 4: Politeness in Tiv apology

S/N	Tiv apology	Meaning
1.	Gba dem mo a kwaghbo tso	please forgive me
2.	Yam anyi	I am sorry

Table 5: Politeness in Request

S/N	Politeness in Request	Meaning
1.	Mzamber we	I beg you
2.	We alumum yo we a nenge adoo u yo	if you agree or if it pleases you

Table 6: Politeness in Complements

S/N	Politeness in Complements	Meaning
1.	Msugh u tom	well-done
2.	Or yer tom ve	well-done

Table 7: Politeness in Questions and Answer Form

S/N	Politeness in Complements	Meaning
1.	U ngu dedoo ga angom?	Hope you are well my dear

Table 8: Politeness in Plea Names

S/N	Politeness in Complements	Meaning
1.	Zungwem	pity me
2.	Terzungwe	God has pitied me
3.	Nguzungwen	He is piting me
4.	Mdeyuem	I have stopped sorrowful
5.	Mzervaan	I have been crying

Table 9: Politeness in Euphemism in Tiv

S/N	Form of Euphemism	The politeness in Euphemism	Meaning
1.	Death of a traditional ruler	akinde u Tiv yohol	Tor Tiv is dead in a polite way
2.	Euphemism of call of nature	Msoo u zan sha toho	I want to go to the bush meaning excrete is worrying me
3.	Euphemism of health/diseases	Agba tar ayange ne	he/she is affected by the world of nowadays meaning he or she is infected by HIV and aids

Table 10: Politeness in Complexion

S/N	Politeness in Complexion	Meaning
1.	Sham pepe	Fine lady morning star
2.	nyian kwase	Fair lady
3.	kwase u dedoo	Beautiful lady

Other forms of politeness include:

i. *Politeness in Tiv Prayers*

Tere, ka sha a we m veren Ishima ye. Aondo wam, ka sha a we m suurye I de vem ahenge ga;

Tere, nam, m fa igbenda you,

Tesem I hange you

Hemen mo ken Mimi wou, tesem gadia ka we, u lu Aondo u myem wan ye

ii. *Politeness in Tiv Traditional Healing*

Kwagh a er ga, angev or bu beon (it is well, your sickness shall be cured)

iii. *Politeness in Courting and Dating*

This can be reflected in name calling such as

Adom Shima (my love)

Shan pepe yen my morning star

Teram sha Shima cross of my heart

Table 11: Politeness in Youth to Youth Communication

S/N	Youth communication	Politeness marker	Gloss
1.	Orwam u dee ver	Orwam	My guy good morning
2.	Orwam u pande ga	Orwam	
3.	Bokiwam u pande Nena	bokiwam	
4.	Or vesen shuun yol	or vesen	

iv. *Politeness in Tiv songs*

I civir ter Aondo I civir Ter Aondo erdoo na hembra Tar doo un Ishima a na se wanna, a na uma na sha u paan se shaa mhoon. A bughior nav hundau uma utsorn wuese ter wuese ter taru ungwa kwagh na, wuese ter wuese ter.. This songs shows gratitude and hard work

v. *Politeness in Resolving Crisis*

Ayoosu nga ve a mgbejime hitsombur/ man ne de ayoosu

Lu nen mbe kulon ayol gen (be each other keeper)

9. Data Analysis

In the table one above, Tiv basic greetings include time-based expressions such as "msugh u" (I greet you), "ne nder vee" (Good morning), and "U pande vee?" (Good afternoon/evening). While these expressions are functional, they demonstrate minimal politeness unless specific markers or gestures are added. For example: "orvesen u nder vee" (Elder, good morning) includes "orvesen" as a politeness marker. Accompanying gestures, such as bending down when greeting an elder or traditional ruler, enhance politeness.

Also in table III, politeness markers in Tiv greetings and pet names reflect respect, affection, and social harmony. In basic greetings, markers such as "orvesen" (elder) indicate respect for age and hierarchy, while phrases like "Mna civir" (I give respect) emphasize mutual courtesy among peers. Titles such as "orne" and "orwan" convey camaraderie and respect in informal settings. When addressing traditional rulers, expressions like "aondo aver Tor" (May God increase your lifespan) and titles such as "zaki" and "orchivirigh" (many respects) signify reverence and submission. Non-verbal gestures like bending down further enhance the politeness of these greetings. Pet names also incorporate politeness markers to express affection and admiration. For instance, terms like "amama" (small mother) and "paapa" (daddy) show respect and nurture when used by parents for their children. In marital relationships, expressions such as "shimawam" (my heart) and "oryawam" (head of my family) reflect love and respect for spouses. Descriptive pet names like "Sha pepe" (morning star), "kuma ashe" (worthy to behold), and "afa zende" (she has a good movement) celebrate personal or physical attributes while maintaining politeness. In all, these markers demonstrate the embedded values of hierarchy, intimacy, and communal respect in Tiv culture.

Politeness in Tiv apologies, requests, compliments, and questions reflects humility, respect, and empathy. In apologies, phrases like "gba dem mo a kwaghbo tso" (please forgive me) and "yam anyi" (I am sorry) express regret and appeal for forgiveness through markers like "gba dem mo" (please). Requests, such as "mzamber we" (I beg you) and "we alumum yo" (if it pleases you), demonstrate deference using terms like "mzamber" (beg) and "yo" (agree). Compliments, including "msugh u tom"

(well-done) and "Or yer tom be" (well-done), recognize effort and achievement respectfully. In questions like "u ngu dedoo ga angom?" (Hope you are well, my dear), politeness is conveyed through affectionate terms like "angom" (my dear). These expressions highlight the Tiv cultural emphasis on respect, humility, and concern for others.

Furthermore, politeness in Tiv plea names, euphemisms, and descriptions reflects empathy, respect, and cultural sensitivity. Plea names like "zungwem" (pity me), "terzungwe" (God has pitied me), and "nguzungwen" (He is pitying me) evoke compassion and humility, appealing to the emotions of others. Euphemisms in Tiv soften harsh realities, such as "akinde u Tiv yohol" (Tor Tiv is dead) to address the death of a traditional ruler with dignity, or "agba tar ayange ne" (he/she is affected by the world of nowadays) as a respectful way to discuss HIV/AIDS. Similarly, phrases like "msoo u zan sha toho" (I want to go to the bush) use indirectness to address sensitive matters like excretion. In describing complexion, terms such as "sham pepe" (morning star) for a fine lady and "kwase u dedoo" (beautiful lady) shows admiration and politeness. These expressions highlight the Tiv cultural value of addressing sensitive topics and interpersonal relationships with care and respect.

Politeness in Tiv is evident in various contexts, including prayers, traditional healing, courting, and youth communication. In prayers, respectful addresses to God like "Tere" (Lord) and humble requests reflect reverence. Traditional healing expressions, such as "kwagh a er ga" (It is well), offer comfort and reassurance. In courting, affectionate terms like "adom shima" (my love) and "shan pepe yen" (my morning star) show intimacy and respect. Among youths, markers like "orwam" (my guy) and "bokiwan" (my close friend) emphasize closeness and respect in friendships. These examples highlight the Tiv cultural value of maintaining politeness and empathy in various social interactions.

The identifiable Politeness Strategies in the above forms of Tiv Politeness

In the data provided, Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies that interlocutors can use to deal with face-threatening acts (FTAs) are:

Positive Politeness: This strategy is used to show closeness, affection, and solidarity, aiming to satisfy the positive face (the desire to be liked, admired, or accepted). In greetings, phrases like "Orne mna civir" (I give respect) and "Aondo aver Tor" (may God increase your life span, my chief) express respect and solidarity. In compliments and pet names, terms like "Adom Shima" (my love), "Shan pepe yen"

(my morning star), and "Sham pepe" (morning star) create an intimate, affectionate tone.

Negative Politeness: This strategy is used to avoid imposing on the listener and to acknowledge their negative face (the desire to be independent and free from imposition). In requests, "Mzamber we" (I beg you) and "We alumum yo" (if it pleases you) use indirectness and hedging to show respect for the listener's autonomy. In apologies, expressions like "Gba dem mo a kwaghbo tso" (please forgive me) and "Yam anyi" (I am sorry) mitigate the imposition on the listener, showing acknowledgment of the offense and requesting forgiveness.

Off-record (Indirectness): This strategy is used when the speaker wants to avoid direct confrontation or to allow the listener to interpret the meaning. In euphemisms, "Agba tar ayange ne" (he/she is affected by the world of nowadays) avoids directly addressing HIV/AIDS, using vagueness to soften the impact. In requests like "Msoo u zan sha toho" (I want to go to the bush), indirectness is used to avoid directly stating the need to relieve oneself.

Bald-on-record: This strategy involves direct communication, often without concern for politeness, and is used when the relationship allows or demands it. In informal youth communication, terms like "Orwam u pande ga" (how are you, my guy) are direct but show solidarity without heavy politeness markers. These strategies reflect the Tiv speakers' ability to overcome and balance social dynamics, in relation to respect, intimacy, and autonomy based on the relationship and context.

10. Discussion of findings

Politeness expressions in Tiv hold significant sociocultural importance as they reflect the values of respect, harmony, and social cohesion inherent in Tiv society. These expressions are tools for maintaining relationships, showing reverence to elders and authority figures, and fostering community unity. For example, titles like orvesen (elder) and zaki (traditional ruler) emphasize respect for age and hierarchy, while affectionate terms like adom shima (my love) reinforce bonds in intimate relationships. Politeness in greetings, apologies, and requests, such as gba dem mo (please forgive me) and mzamber we (I beg you), ensures smooth interpersonal interactions and conflict resolution. Additionally, euphemisms like agba tar ayange ne (affected by the world of nowadays) demonstrate cultural sensitivity in discussing delicate matters. These expressions are deeply rooted in Tiv cultural norms and help sustain the communal and respectful fabric of their society.

Based on the data presented, politeness strategies in Tiv language include positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record strategies. Positive politeness is evident in terms of endearment and respect, such as *adom shima* (my love) and *orvesen* (elder), which foster closeness and solidarity. Negative politeness is used to respect the listener's autonomy, seen in phrases like *mzamber we* (I beg you) and *we alumum yo* (if it pleases you), which hedge requests to reduce imposition. Off-record strategies involve indirectness and euphemisms, such as *agba tar ayange ne* (affected by the world of nowadays) to soften sensitive topics. These strategies highlight respect, affection, and cultural sensitivity in Tiv communication.

Based on these findings the politeness theory is applied in the different expressions as it achieves both harmony in relationships and face saving. The off-record strategies are also adequately demonstrated in terms of euphemisms and indirectness to respect the views of the listeners or addressees.

11. Conclusion

This study has investigated the use of language and politeness expressions in Tiv language, focusing on their linguistic markers, sociocultural significance, and the strategies employed to manage face-threatening acts. It explores how Tiv speakers use various politeness markers such as respectful titles, terms of endearment, gratitude expressions (*Msugh u tom*), and hedging phrases/ The study identified key contextual factors—such as age, social status, relationships, and the nature of the interaction—that influence the use of these politeness expressions. The sociocultural significance of these expressions is rooted in Tiv values of respect, hierarchy, and community cohesion. Politeness expressions are vital in reinforcing social bonds, ensuring smooth interactions, and preserving cultural norms.

The study also explored the use of politeness strategies, including positive politeness to promote solidarity, negative politeness to respect individual autonomy, and off-record strategies (e.g., euphemisms) to address sensitive topics indirectly. Ultimately, the study highlighted that politeness expressions in Tiv play an essential role in maintaining harmony, respect, and social order within the Tiv community. These expressions are not merely linguistic forms but are deeply embedded in Tiv cultural practices, guiding social interactions and ensuring cultural continuity.

12. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, this study therefore recommends the following;

1. It is recommended that Tiv language programs should incorporate politeness expressions to help learners understand the cultural and social importance of language in maintaining respect and harmony.
2. Media platforms in Tiv-speaking areas should encourage the use of polite expressions in broadcasts, ensuring that public figures and the audience observe and uphold politeness markers in communication.
3. Future studies and researchers on Tiv language should further explore how politeness expressions vary across different social contexts, such as in rural versus urban areas, and between generations.
4. The study also recommends fostering dialogue between older and younger Tiv speakers to ensure the continued use and understanding of politeness expressions in the community.
5. Moreso, local governments and educational institutions should implement cultural awareness programs to teach the younger generation about the sociocultural significance of politeness expressions in Tiv society.
6. Efforts should be made to document and preserve traditional politeness expressions and strategies, particularly as Tiv language is increasingly influenced by globalization.
7. Tiv speakers should be encouraged to use euphemisms and off-record strategies, especially when dealing with sensitive issues like illness, death, and personal matters, to avoid conflict and ensure respect.
8. This study can serve as a foundation for cross-cultural communication studies, promoting understanding between Tiv speakers and speakers of other languages or cultures.
9. Researchers and linguists should develop modern politeness norms that incorporate both traditional and contemporary ways of politeness in a changing social and technological landscape.
10. Politeness expressions should be actively used in formal and professional interactions within Tiv-speaking communities to reinforce respect for hierarchy and professionalism.
11. Workshops and seminars focusing on politeness strategies in Tiv could be organized to raise awareness and offer insights into effective communication within Tiv society.

12. Politeness strategies can be integrated into community-based conflict resolution programs to help minimize misunderstandings and preserve interpersonal relationships.

13. Contributions to knowledge

This study contributes to the general knowledge of linguistics by providing a detailed analysis of politeness expressions in Tiv language, highlighting how language functions as a tool for maintaining social harmony and respect in Tiv-speaking communities. The study sheds light on the linguistic markers of politeness, such as respectful titles, terms of endearment, and euphemisms, which enrich our understanding of the subtle ways in which speakers navigate social dynamics.

Additionally, the study provides insights into the practical application of politeness strategies in everyday interactions, offering recommendations for language teaching, cultural preservation, and conflict resolution. The findings serve as a resource for scholars, educators, and policymakers interested in promoting respectful communication and understanding within Tiv society and beyond.

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