Gendered Acts of Face Negotiations in Teacher-Student Interaction: A Linguistic Ethnographic Investigation of Salutation

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Abstract
This article examined salutation as a valued and nuanced socio-cultural practice that serves the purpose of socially positioning interactants and impacting on face negotiations in interaction in Nigeria. This was done with the aim of demonstrating its significance in the shaping and ordering of naturally occurring interaction. The data for the study comprise naturally occurring interaction of 30 participants whose interactions were collected using linguistic ethnographic tools of recording, note taking, and observation while micro discourse analysis, with emphasis on notions of face negotiations as interaction strategies was used for the analysis of the data. The study revealed that students who failed to salute the teachers were offered varying face negotiations based on their gender differences. The study also found that both the office context and the power position of the teachers impacted variously on face negotiations. From the Nigerian sociolinguistic context and interpersonal pragmatics, salutation is viewed as a social solidarity and social positioning strategy especially in contexts where age, gender, and power are sensitive components of the context as such its observation or failure to observe it could easily affect the outcome of the entire interaction.

Keywords
gendered discourses, face negotiations, context, linguistic ethnography, power

Introduction
Salutation is conceived as a performance and practice of positive politeness strategies with varying illocutionary values such as trying to initiate a discourse, praising someone, welcoming someone, or simply as an observance of a cultural norm. Schottman (1995) believed that among many African cultures, easily fathomed are the social and “relative hierarchical statuses of the speakers through the choices they must make among different roles and greeting formula” (p. 490). In Nigeria, like many other countries, salutation is believed to serve the function of maintaining the social fabric of the society (Mathias & Onyima, 2015; Odebunmi, 2013). Salutation also contributes to the management of interaction as well as serving as indices for the measurement of proper socialization of both the greeter and the greeted and is a conventional ritual with sociocultural values and implications (Mathias & Onyima, 2015; Onuigbo, 1993). The expectation in Nigeria, in formal and informal settings such as school environment, government, and private offices, the village square among others, is that the younger person salutes/geets the older person or the person in position of authority (Onuigbo, 1993). Salutation is therefore the appropriate showing of respect as well as the evidence of the sociolinguistic awareness a person.

Among the Baatombu people of Benin Republic, Schottman’s (1995) research demonstrated that the greeting/salutation norm strategically places the responsibility of first position greeting and choosing the linguistic repertoire for the encounter on the superior interactant. However, bodily posture, lowered voice pitch, lowering of gaze, and other gestures of submissiveness are demanded of the inferior interactant since they constitute crucial components of the enacted act of salutation. Gu (1990) and Liu (2016) see the phenomenon of greetings among the Chinese as being more about establishing interpersonal relationships rather than achieving politeness only since the Chinese are more concerned with face consideration that socially connect the interactants and not politeness. The fact that the Chinese have a developed and complex address term meant that situational differences impact on the selection of address terms for salutation. Kim et al. (2012) further explained that face

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threat is cautiously avoided in interactions since the Chinese are culturally a confrontation averse people.

Most studies on salutation in Nigeria (Mathias & Onyima, 2015; Odebunni, 2013; Olaoye, 2013a, 2013b; Onuigbo, 1993) and around the world (Gu, 1990; Kim et al., 2012; Liu, 2016; Schottman, 1995) have concentrated on espousing the socio-cultural importance of the practice within specific cultures without giving much attention to the implication of the lack of salutation in interaction in discursive spaces like the offices. Most of these studies have not looked at salutation as impacting on face negotiations or indeed the and the impact of contextual variables such gender and power in the negotiation of face, especially where an interactant of lower social standing fails to observe the norm when it behooves on him/her to do so.

Aims of the Study

This article, therefore, examines the effect that the lack of salutation has in the negotiation of face in interaction. The article, also, examines the role of power and gender in the construction of face in interaction in a registration office of a Nigerian university. We believe that the university in general and the registration office, in particular, is a discursive site where both the teachers and the students are brought in contact with one another with entailing gender and power relations, and where sociality management skills are required and brought to the fore during interactional exchanges.

Face and gender are related notions that emerge or become manifest during interaction within a social space (Kim et al., 2012). From an interpersonal perspective, while face is seen as a relational property in an interaction, gender is a social identity construct that affects or impacts the negotiation of face (Culpeper, 2011). Both face and gender identities are therefore constructed during interaction within given social setting or social space (Mabelle, 2009). The social space is defined by Bourdieu (1985, p. 723) as a field of many dimensional forces or “as a set of objective power relations that impose themselves on all who enter the field and that are irreducible to the intentions of the individual agents or even to the direct interactions among the agents.” In a similar vein, Spencer-Oatey (2007) sees face and self in which case identity as directly related concepts which set the boundary between persons in an interaction and interactants. These boundaries are established and set on the basis of the participants’ face wants, face, needs, and face recognitions in an interaction. Two very important constructs that affect or impact the construction of face in an educational setting are identified by Holmes et al. (2011) as gender and power.

It seems reasonable to assume that face management in interaction is affected by the variables of gender and power relations which are both social hierarchies that shape interaction. In other words, as recognized by Sifiano (2011), face is an individual property that has collective implications on individuals that are engaged in an interaction. Thus, the investigation of how power and gender affect face negotiations in real-life interactions of teachers and students is important in order to analyze how face threat and face support are constructed following students’ failure to practice salutation in the context of a registration office at a Nigerian university. Our research is, therefore, premised on the following research questions:

1. How does lack of salutation impact face negotiation in interaction in the Nigerian context?
2. How do gender and power impact face (face threat and face support) negotiations in addressing students’ lack of salutation in everyday interaction in an educational setting?

Face, Gender, and Power

Face, gender and power are social interactional constructs that contribute in the construction of various contexts of interactional exchanges and meaning. Face is couched into the theory of politeness by many scholars (Brown & Levinson, 1978; Gu, 1990; Ide, 1993; Leech, 1983) who have been criticized for their Eurocentric view of face. In recent contemporary studies (Arundale, 2006, 2010; Bargiela-Chiappini, 2009; Bock, 2017; Grainger, 2011; Kadar & Haugh, 2013; Sueda, 2014), face is viewed as a distinct but related notion to politeness that is relationally achieved in interaction. Goffman (1967, p. 61) defined face as the “image of self” while Brown and Levinson (1987) viewed face as the “public self-image” of a person. Both Goffman (1967) and Brown and Levinson (1987) have been criticized by many scholars (see Arundale, 2010; Locher, 2006; Watts, 2005 for recent examples) for being restrictive as they seem to have reduced face to an individual property that is manifested negatively or positively. Scollon and Scollon (1995, p. 34) also viewed face from an individual perspective but contended that face is the “interpersonal identity of individuals in communication.” The interpersonal dimension pointed out by Scollon and Scollon (1995) suggests that face is not what one thinks of him/her self alone but it is also what others think of him/her in a communicative endeavor that are shaped by context variables of gender and power.

Gender is defined by Holmes (2013) as the collective social and cultural identities of a group with regard to their sex. Bernd (2004) believes that interactions significantly take form/shape based on gender differences. In other words, interactions can result in discursive gendered talk. As a social construct, gender impacts on the process of human socialization and interactive endeavors. Although Holmes (2003) found that there is hardly a distinction to be drawn or a claim to be made, that women are more polite than men, in their study of femininity in Turkish schools, Ozkazanc and Sayilan...
(2008) found the school setting to be a discursive site where femininity was actively being constructed through gendered interactions. This finding is likely to be more emphasized in societies where power relations are unevenly distributed between sexes.

Power is observed by Wodak and Meyer (2016) as a crucial part of discursive achievements and is believed to be more significant than cognition. They further pointed out that the success of any critical study in interaction depends on our understanding of the language use of those in power. For example, Wartenberg (1990), Watts (1991), Thornborrow (2002), and Locher (2010) all point to the fact that those in power position are more disposed to making impolite utterances and face threatening acts. Culpeper (2008) sees power as a hydra headed snake that is difficult to define. On a more emphatic note, Locker and Bousfield (2008) claimed that there can be no interaction without power and that power is what guarantees the expression of impoliteness in interaction. Both power and gender are therefore key components of discursive identity construction through talk and interaction, whereas identities and face share in a kaleidoscopic representation in a relational relationship without a clearly defined boundary.

Naturally occurring interactional exchanges usually reveal a lot about the interface between face, power and gender. Wartenberg (1990, p. 85) defined power as; “A social agent A has power over another social agent B if and only if A strategically constrains B’s action environment.” The ethnographic study of this particular university’s setting or “social space” (Bourdieu, 1985) showed that lecturer-student relationship was a very formal one and could be described representative as high and low. Using a Bourdieusian categorization, the lecturers would belong to the high strata and possess power and authority while the students belonged to the low strata. The asymmetric nature of the relationship in the interaction means that the lecturer is in the visible position of power. To emphasize the level of formality, students of the department of English are required to dress in the departmental uniform of purple top and black trousers or skirts (for males and females respectively) on Mondays and Wednesdays, and be respectfully attired for Tuesday and Thursday and be dressed in “natives” on Friday (Students’ Handbook, 2013). Lecturers, on the other hand, are expected to ensure compliance of the students. The lecturers are therefore seen as custodians of the students and have the right to scold, reprimand and correct students. Thus, the power relation in a teacher-student interaction is an asymmetrical one with a dynamic dimension provided by gendered talk.

Theoretical Framework

A relational frame that is ethnmethodologically inclined is adopted in order to account for the effect and influence of power and gender in the negotiation of face as a direct response to students’ practice of salutation and to a large extent, politeness. This view is shared by many relational scholars (Bargiela-Chiappini, 2009; Haugh, 2007; Kadar & Haugh, 2013; Locher & Watts, 2005; Mills, 2011) who believe that face negotiations can best be accounted for in naturally occurring interaction as that would best allow the face needs and demands of the interactants to emerge naturally.

A relational frame will help account for the body of expectations (socio-cultural norms and values) that is directly or indirectly imposed on the language user in an educational context. These expectations are the indexical socio-cultural knowledge of the individuals and groups about the rules of appropriacy in interaction. Locher and Watts (2008, p. 1) pointed out that the contention of relational scholars is that “interactants’ judgment about relational status of a message is based on norms of appropriateness in a given instance of social practice.” Therefore, generalization about a particular practice should be avoided in order to allow episodes of interactional realities to emerge from a given interaction.

A relational investigation is, therefore, only possible if we are able to adequately situate the discourse data within the context of its occurrence by paying attention to various aspects of speech situations that the interaction is occurring in and how gender and power constitute significant contextual aspects that influence face negotiations especially as they discursively contribute in meaningful interaction in a school setting. The lack of salutation by the student in the context of our research is viewed as a major pragmatic failure with interactional consequences. As such, where the positive politeness strategy was expected and not given by the students, different reactions or face negotiations were presented by the lecturers toward the students. This is apparent since the power position resides with the lecturers. Similarly, the seeming discriminatory presentation of face acts to the male and female students by the lecturers regarding their failure to observe salutation also presents a useful perspective to this study.

Methodology

In this study, we employed linguistic ethnography (LE) as a methodology in order to investigate the context of the study as well as adequately account for the linguistic and paralinguistic data. This is because, like Locher and Watts (2005) and Rampton et al., (2015), we see discourse as only an aspect of the interactional data, the understanding of which depends on other ethnographic details. Furthermore, LE enabled us to present the data from the participants’ point of view. Both Rampton (2006) and Copland (2015) see LE as a method that makes it possible for discourse data to be extracted and be enriched with non-participant observation.

Data Collection

The data for this article were recorded in a Registration Office of a Department of English in a Nigerian university located in North-Central Nigeria. The interactional data were recorded.
with a recorder and were later transcribed using Jeffersonian transcription convention (Jefferson, 1984) because of its amenability with ethnographic interactional data. The observational data were taken using field-notes to record nonverbal and other significant paralinguistic items by one of the researchers who was physically present in the registration office only as an observer. A total number of 30 participants’ (28 students, seven of whom were males and 21 were females; and two male lecturers) interactions were recorded over a period of 6 weeks. The participants are newly admitted students who needed to be registered into the department. The entire data set added up to 177 minutes and 57 seconds of audio recordings. The student participants were recent graduates of high school, whose ages ranged from 18 to 23. The registration officers had been working in this office for 5 years and above and they are aged between 35 and 42.

Out of this data set, five specific interactions (from two males and three females) were identified for the lack of salutation at the beginning of the interaction. In all of these interactional episodes, gender, and power appeared to come forth as important elements in shaping the interactional choices of the participants. Our choice of the registration office for this research was based on the belief that the registration office provides a discursive site were various negotiations and several interactional practices could be recorded.

**Stimulated Recall Interview**

Again, in order to broaden and deepen the understanding of our preliminary analysis of both discourse and ethnographic data, we carried out stimulated recall interviews (SRI) sessions with seven of the interactants (five students and two lecturers). The SRIs were built around critical incidents that emerged from the failure of the students to first greet/salute the teachers. The teachers were asked why they reacted differently toward the male and female students’ failure to observe this nuanced politeness practice while the students were asked whether it was deliberate that they failed to observe this socio-cultural practice among other questions.

Below is sample interview transcript: SRI with Abel

1 Longji: Good morning
2 Abel: Good morning sir
3 Longji: ((after playing back the recording)) what do you think of your interaction with Mr Jude?
4 Abel: Sir?
5 Longji: Was your interaction with the lecturer cordial?
6 Abel: I don’t know. He was angry maybe
7 Longji: But why didn’t you greet him?
8 Abel: Sir? I did not realize that I did not greet him
9 Longji: what do you think he meant by saying “Did we see today?”
10 Abel: I don’t know sir
11 Longji: Okay. Thanks for your time

In keeping with Gee’s (2011, p. 18) position that “language and practices ‘boot strap’ each other into existence in a reciprocal process through time,” we have adopted micro discourse analysis (MDA) because of its focus on layer by layer emphasis on the analysis of interaction as a unit. MDA as an analytical tool is often used in studies where LE is employed, as they both enable researchers to investigate the effect that specific social practices have on the use of language in everyday life. The significance of using MDA and LE in this article is also tied to the assumption that language and social practice are in a mutually shaping relationship (Rampton, 2010). In other words, the various possibilities that could be dug out from a given episode of social interaction in this school setting are accounted for through this eclectic approach to data.

**Participant Observation**

Our observations of interactants’ actions, behaviors, manners, attitudes, reactions, gesticulations, and other noticeable body language (removing of eye glasses, looking into the bag, staring at a student, etc) were recorded in the fieldnote and added to the recorded and transcribed data in order to flesh up and authenticate the discourse data. This allowed for the simultaneous interpretation of the linguistic as well as the ethnographic data. It also provided us with plausible explanations of interactants’ gendered face construction and face negotiation practices. In addition, their responses in the SRI were added to the interpreted data to affirm or refute what interactants thought or believed their language use served. In keeping with ethical requirements, the consent of the participants was sought and gotten for their interactions to be recorded and used in our study. We have also used pseudonyms for all the participants in order to conceal their identities.

**Findings and Discussion**

In the context of our study, salutation has the social pragmatic force of engendering convivial interaction as well as serving as a proof for proper socialization. Power and gender are viewed to have impacted the teacher-students’ interaction variously. The interactions of socially unequal interactants are embedded with certain socio-cultural expectations, as such it serves the function of socially positioning the interactants. The expectation in Nigeria is that the younger person salutes the older person (Odebumi, 2013; Olaoye, 2013a), and in a school setting, the expectation is that the students should first greet their lecturers in given episodes of interaction. A failure in observing this practice can lead to conflictive interaction at various levels. The lecturers, who are the authority figures seemed to react differently to the asocial behavior of the students regarding salutation based on gender of the students.
Power and Gendered Acts of Face Threat

The lack of salutation is observed by Olaoye (2013b) to be a nonverbal face threat, lack of respect, or lack of courtesy. A threat is a demonstration of disaffiliation (Arundale, 2010) and the imposition of self over other (Culpeper, 2011). This relational practice requires for its actualization certain recognizable power status (such as older than, in position of authority) to be fulfilled much like speech act verbs (Austin, 1962) and their felicity conditions. The extracts also show that the use of words of these authority figures in the office context toward the male students indicates a higher lack of tolerance for interactional slips of the male students. This seems to suggest the subconscious masculinity construction among Africans where boys are expected to be up and doing and be emotionally stronger (Uchendu, 2009). The choice of the transcript below is based on our observation that the failure to observe this nuanced sociocultural practice by the male students in our data pool resulted in face threat negotiations by teachers. In other words, when the students who failed to salute the teachers were males, it was taken up as a face threat by teachers. The extract below exemplifies such an exchange between a male student, Kim, who came in to complete his registration. It should be pointed out that all the names in our data extracts are pseudonyms.

Extract 1: Lack of Salutation by Kim

1. ((a student knocks and enters the office and stands quietly))
2. Mr. John: Yes (0.2) Yes↑ (. ) good morning sir↑ ((looking sternly at the student))
3. Kim: good morning sir↑↑ ((looking rattled and sounding very apologetic))
4. Mr. John: eh↑↑, you’ve not greeted me so I am greeting you ((looking at the student with a wry smile on his face))
5. Kim: I said good morning sir↓ ((sounding very subdued while clutching his school bag to his chest))
6. Mr. John: so why didn’t you greet me in the first instance? ((still looking at the student while stretching out his hand to collect the student’s credentials))
7. Kim: I am sorry sir↑ (drops his bag on the floor, picks out his credentials and hands them to Mr. John with his two hands))
8. Mr. John: (0.2) ((perusing the student’s file)) Your admission letter is not
9. Kim: here? ((pointing at his credentials))

The act of knocking at the door in all the interactional extracts is a proof that it is a sociopragmatic marker of courtesy and politeness in the context of our study. The silent pauses in Mr. John’s utterance in line 2 are evidence of his anticipation of salutation from Kim. The apparent failure of Kim to satisfy this sociocultural demand of greeting Mr. John implicates impoliteness by Kim Mr. John, leading to his Mr. John’s mock salutation in line 2. An impolite implicature is defined by Haugh (2010, p. 290) as “an instance where through implicating rather than saying, an impolite stance on the part of the speaker is occasioned.” In this case, Kim’s silence has an impolite implicature and is interpreted as face threat by Mr. John hence his mock salutation of Kim. The salutation is not only a mockery of Kim “good morning sir↑↑” with a rising tone but it has the value and social pragmatic force of a reprimand. A reprimand is a redressive and a cautionary (Leech, 2014) and can serve as a face preserving strategy.

In line 3, Kim quickly addressed his pragmatic failure of not greeting by greeting Mr. John apologetically by stating his salutation. It seems, therefore, that Kim’s silence in line 1 was an oversight and not an intentional impoliteness and face threat to Mr. John. This preposition is confirmed by Kim during the SRI session, where he claimed that he did not realize that he had not greeted Mr. John by saying “I forget [sic], I was nervous.” However, despite Kim’s redress, Mr. John continued with his reprimand in line 4 by asking explicitly why he had to greet Kim. The “wry smile” on his face while talking to Kim also has a communicative effect as it led Kim to put up a weak defense, almost a white lie by claiming “I said good morning” in line 5. In line 6, it seems Mr. John is still not satisfied with Kim’s redress by asking why Kim did not first greet him as seen in line 6 followed by his nonverbal act of stretching out his hands to collect Kim’s credentials which is suggestive of his desire to quickly get done with Kim. It was not until line 7, where Kim apologized, that Mr. John dropped the topic of salutation and moved onto his official business.

In line 7, Kim’s offer of apology “I am sorry sir↓” with a falling tone is indicative of his understanding that Mr. John is not pleased with his behavior. It should be pointed out that the discursive negotiation of this apology started in line 2 and the interaction leading to the apology showed how relational an apology can be achieved. The colloquial use of “eh” in line 4 is not as a discourse filler but aimed at reinforcing the threat issued in line 2 in the mock salutation. In fact, in line 8, the 0.2 seconds pause followed by Mr. John’s utterance “Your admission letter is not here” is presented as another failure on the part of Kim as a student—he had not saluted his lecturer properly and now he has a missing document in his file.

Extract 2: Lack of Salutation by Abel

This extract was chosen in order to present the relative gendered face threatening act that played out between Mr. Jude and a male student following the student’s failure to salute him. Mr. Jude had just returned from his lunch break and I informed him that some students had come to do their registration but he was not in. Apparently, he had passed some of the students on the hallway leading to his office:
1 (a gentle knock on the door)
2 Mr. Jude: Yes come in (about three students lined up to enter the office) Please one-one at a time (using his hands, signal’s others to stay out) yes sit down sit down (0.2) Did we see today (looking intently at Abel)
3 Abel: Sir ((sounding and looking a bit confused at Mr. John))
4 Mr. Jude: hmmm ((shaking his head in disapproval)) Let me look at your file “ko” and your credentials (((@@@@ mumuring))
5 Abel: Sir
6 Mr. Jude: Your credentials your originals (sounding upset))
7 Abel: (opened his bag to bring out his credentials))
8 Mr. Jude: (02) let me have them (stretching his hands and sounding impatient) what about your classes how many classes so far have you attended (perusing Abel’s credentials))
9 Abel: My (02) you mean in this school
10 Mr. Jude: Yes I mean your departmental courses
11 Abel: okay (looking at a piece of paper in his hands: a timetable))
12 Mr. Jude: ehen-
13 Abel: I have lesson with my class since last upper week (sounding very confused))
14 Mr. Jude: Last week-
15 Abel: Yeah
16 Mr. Jude: What
17 Abel: Yes sir

Mr. Jude’s response to the knock on the door and his follow up response in lines 2 and 3: “Please one-one at a time” places him in clear position of control. His short pause (0.2) from my observation was deliberate and was aimed at accommodating the student’s anticipated response: Salutation. Mr. Jude’s utterance in line 2; “Did we see today” while (looking intently at Abel)) was meant to serve as corrective feedback to Abel. Corrective feedbacks in talk are often used as face avoidance strategies (Ting-Toomey, 2005). Unfortunately, as seen in Line 5: “Sir,” Abel did not adequately interpret Mr. Jude’s indirect face threatening act of “did we see today.” The actual propositional content of the statement can only be gotten from the context of its occurrence. It implicates: if they met earlier, they probably have greeted each other but if not, Mr. Jude is simply asking Abel to do the needful by greeting him. This interpretation was also confirmed by Mr. Jude during the Stimulated Recall Interview (SRI) session when he was asked: what do you mean by the question “did we meet today?” Abel, on the other hand, was asked: “why didn’t you greet the lecturer?” but he said “I did not realize that I did not greet him.” In line 4, the guttural sound by Mr. Jude: “hmmm ((shaking his head in disapproval)) Let me look at you file “ko” and your credentials (((@@@@ mumuring))),” Mr. Jude openly demonstrated his dissatisfaction with Abel’s behavior by shaking his head and humming incoherently, implicating that he wanted to get done with the registration process as quickly as possible.

Although in line 5 Abel used the honorific “Sir” with a falling tone to indicate he needs a bit of clarification, it was in our view used to pacify Mr. Jude. Clearly the student at this point does not know why Mr. Jude is being edgy toward him. In line 6, Mr. Jude’s utterance is interpreted as a command and a demonstration of the social distance between them: “Your credentials your originals.” It seems clear that the impolite implicature of Abel’s lack of salutation is responsible for the impolite stance taken by Mr. Jude. Our interpretation of Mr. Jude’s utterance as impolite is because of the sudden abrasiveness of his verbal acts: “Your credentials your originals” which were delivered as distancing strategies. Haugh (2010) also contends that often impolite acts are used as counter strategies and this seems to be in use by Mr. Jude. The ellipted part of the language structure (which could have been ‘let me have/see your credentials and your originals. . .”) also implicates to a large extent Mr. Jude’s unhappiness with the student. From the observation of one of the researchers, Mr. Jude was visibly upset with this student and he sounded upset.

Again, in line 8 while perusing the student’s documents, Mr. Jude asked Abel two curious question; “what about your classes how many classes so far have you attended.” We also find these questions curious and face threatening since he seemed to want to find out if Abel attends lectures like he should. This is because we deduced from the indirect propositional content of the second question a negative evaluation of Abel: “Do you even attend lectures?” This too is another form of face attack and a demonstration of disaffiliation by the lecturer that seems a preparation for a reprimand. In line, Line 16, Mr. Jude’s use of “What” as a reprimand for Abel’s use of the informal “Yeah” in line 15 for “yes” is also another manifestation and way of showing disaffiliation and this is perhaps the first time that Abel was able to overtly correct himself with an honorific as a discourse softener “Yes sir” in line 17.

**Power and Gendered Act of Face Support**

The extracts that have evidence of the occurrence of the lack of salutation where a female student is the person involved in the interaction seemed to suggest a higher level of tolerance for their slips by the authority figures. Face support is the evidence of solidarity in interaction (Arundale, 2010). These extracts seemed to suggest that female students were given greater face support even when they failed or forgot to present a first position salutation. The face support discursively expressed by the teachers seems to also suggest the underlying masculine desire to be protective of the female kind as well as the subconscious construction of femininity. The extract below is an interaction between Hafsat and Mr. John and will suffice as an example:
**Extract 3: Lack of Salutation by Hafsat**

1. ((a student knocks, peeps and partly enters the office, standing by the door))
2. Mr. John: Yes? (0.1) come in (.) yes, come in! Why are you standing there? ((dropping his pen on the table and looking puzzled by the student))
3. Hafsat: Sorry sir ((stepping into the office with a file in one hand and a bag on the other and gently closing the door))
4. Mr. John: Ah ah! sorry for what? For standing there? eh? (0.1) Yes (.) sit down, sit down (0.2)
5. yes (.) let me see your credentials (.) meanwhile, what is your name? ((looking intently at Hafsat while stretching out his hands to collect her credentials))
6. Hafsat: Hafsat Gana((stands and hands Mr. John the credentials and sits again))
7. Mr. John: Hafsat Gana Ali ((calling out the name while perusing the file))
8. Hafsat: It’s Gana Ali I cut it short ((looking downward and clasping her hands))
9. Mr. John: Okay, but why putting it short? Supposing you ask me to write it and I write it short as Gana Ali instead of Gana Aliyu ((still flipping through the credentials while intermittently looking at the student))
10. Hafsat: No, in school it’s Hafsat Gana Ali I am using. I cut it short when I was in school ((adjusting her sitting position and relaxing somewhat))
11. Mr. John: Okay you changed it. You are no longer Gana Aliyu you are Gana Ali
12. Hafsat: No it’s one name

The act of knocking at the door by Hafsat in line 1 is a polite non-verbal act of a request which equates to “may I come in.” This request is ascended acceded to by Mr. John with a “Yes↑↑” in line 2 followed by a momentary pause. The pause seemed to be aimed at giving enough room to accommodate Hafsat’s next anticipated utterance; “salutation.” The pause is followed by an encouragement on the part of Mr. John for Hafsat to come in in line 2. This is interpreted as the first face support in the extract. We witnessed three pauses in line 2, all of which were aimed at allowing Hafsat to slot in her salutation. Hafsat’s act of standing by the door (from field notes) seems to affirm the feminine posture of being cautious and risk averse, which is largely associated with the female gender (Bock, 2017). In line 2, Mr. John’s desire of a supportive face is emphasized by his direct question of “why are you standing there?” Unlike in extract 1, this student’s lack of salutation did not attract any form of reprimand (direct or indirect) or indeed a counter face threat. On the contrary, she is offered a place chair to sit.

In line 3, we see Hafsat’s apology, “sorry sir ((stepping into the office. . .))” as a response to Mr. John’s query in line 2. This apology is not meant as a repressive of her lack of salutation but for waiting or standing at the door. Line 4 presented the relational face support of Hafsat’s apology. It seems that Mr. John is surprised at Hafsat’s act of apology as he uses a colloquial expression “ah ah” and “eh” in the beginning of his utterance in line 4. Colloquial expressions are known for their pragmatic function of establishing rapport and social solidarity (Leech, 2014). The use of these colloquial expressions also seemed to suggest a willing convergence or face support on the part of Mr. John regarding Hafsat’s act of apology. Efe and Forchtner (2015) observe that, apologies are used to silence wrongs. It seems that Hafsat is aware that her standing by the door is not taken well by Mr John but she is completely oblivious of her lack of salutation. Thus, her sorry was aimed at amending the wrong of standing by the door. However, the pauses in line 4 suggests that Mr. John was still anticipating Hafsat’s greetings, salutation, or the reason for her coming. This proposition is confirmed by Mr. John when asked during the SRI session: “was were your long pauses in anticipation of salutation from the students?” He said “well, they students should know what to do or say first.”, yet Yet it was strange that he did not feel disrespected or threatened by her lack of salutation.

Our ethnographic data showed that Mr. John’s patient wait for Hafsat’s salutation was exhausted as he stretched out his hands to collect her credentials as seen toward the end of line 4. The anticipated act in our view was a reprimand or a face threat for failing to exercise salutation as was the case in Extract 1, but instead, he delved into the main reason of her being in his office (registration). This action, in contrast to the face negotiations that took place when the failure of salutation involved the male students, seemed to suggest that the fact that Hafsat is a female student mattered to Mr. John. He seemed to avoid openly reprimanding female students in other extracts as well in over their failure to observe salutation at the beginning of their interaction. Adegbija’s (1993) position is emphasized by Akere (2009) that salutation in Nigeria is a significant linguistic move that is employed to show deference and respect as well as establish rapport and solidarity. What we have here is the rapport and solidarity.

Three significant incidents that should attract reprimands or could be perceived as face threatening acts are the failure of Hafsat to observe salutation, and her peeping into the office and her act of standing by the door even when she was asked to come in. Yet in line 7, Mr. Jude calls out her name from her student file. This too is another indication of face support. This appears to be a deliberate act aimed at helping the female students to feel relaxed. This particular tendency to empathize with the female students is also observed in the remaining three extracts that showed a failure of salutation by female students where no direct reprimand or face threat was presented to the student. Line 9 presented the willful desire of Mr. Jude to negotiate a face support by clearly concentrating the whole discussion on Hafsat’s name. The relational interpretation of the interaction shows that face support
negotiation is equally better fostered by the person with the greater power (lecturers) and female students enjoy more empathy in interaction than male students enjoy.

**Conclusion**

Gender as a social construct has enjoyed significant attention in the study of politeness. Holmes and Stubbe (2003) established that the claim that women are more polite than men is unfounded. The fact that the interactions transpire differently based on the perceived gender of the interactants is, however, not in doubt. What seemed evident is that gender can be discursively constructed especially when the words we use in interactions are embedded with certain sociocultural expectations and beliefs. Gender differences significantly affect or impact on face negotiation in interaction especially regarding how people in authority interpret face and construct face in interaction. The failure to greet/salute an older person by a younger person in the context of our research can be interpreted as an act of rudeness, impoliteness, and an unuttered face threat. We have analyzed both linguistic and ethnographic data in a naturally occurring interaction in an office setting in order to demonstrate the gendered differences that emerged from the lecturers’ reactions following the failure of both the male and female students to observe this routine and mundane socio-cultural practice in the registration office.

Using the perspective of speech acts theory (Austin, 1962), where an utterance is seen an act, the lack of salutation was equally viewed as an act with divergent perlocutionary effects. Our analysis showed that while the male students’ failure to observe salutation was viewed as a face threatening act by the lecturer hence his counter face threat in the form of a reprimand and cautions, the female students’ lack of salutation did not attract any reprimand. Rather it was face support that was consistently given by the lecturers. In Arundale’s (2010) terms, the lecturers’ interaction with the male students showed “divergence” and showed deliberate “convergence” with the female students. Another point of note is the use of colloquial expressions in the two sample extracts. While “eh” was used by the lecturer to establish social solidarity and face support with the female, it was used to emphasize face threat, divergence and social distance with the male student. The extracts confirm Bernd’s (2004) claim that interactions are significantly shaped by gender. Another contrasting feature of the interactional data is the fact that both the male and the female students understood the value of apology and employed it as face redressive strategies. Our analysis showed, however, that while the apology of the female student was accepted and actually was not even required, the male student was discursively pressured by the teacher into apologizing even after the repair of his lack of salutation thus confirming Wodak and Meyer’s (2016) assertion that power is more significant than cognition. This is similar to the finding of Ozkazanc and Sayilan (2008) that masculinity and femininity are hegemonic in their construction and that male students are believed to demonstrate resistance and toughness. Therefore, apologizing, which is known to have the perlocutionary effect of appeasing for wrongs perceived to have been done was negotiated differently by students for an “offense” committed by both male and female students. Our evidence showed that, this male student was not offered a seat like the female student was and was kept under pressure. This leads us to conclude that male lecturers in the context of our study use their power positions to allocate and negotiate gendered face at their whims and caprices reaffirming the position of power over cognition.

**Implications of Findings**

Most studies on face and politeness have been conducted in Eastern cultures (e.g., Gu, 1990) and Western cultures (e.g., Brown & Levinson, 1987) without paying much attention to the manifestation of face in the interactions of Africans as well as within the setting in African contexts. Curriculum that is sensitive to both the first language and first culture of the interactants would present a better understanding of social practices that depict politeness or lack of it. Our findings showed that in contexts where face needs is given significance in how expressions and interactions play out, a cross-cultural pedagogical framework that emphasizes communicative competence as advocated by Byram (1997) that can accommodate interactants’ first lingua culture performance in a second lingua culture is desirable.

Methodologically, this study, advocates for the use of LE in studies on face negotiation. The use of LE in this study has revealed the importance of non-linguistic elements in the fashioning out of meaning and understanding in the actual practice of face negotiation in the analyzed interactions. For instance, interactional strategy of opting out was adequately accounted for because of the employment of LE. The use of such a method has shed light on the actual use and function of these interactional strategies that hitherto would have been lost or left unaccounted for.

The use of SRI technique was equally very resourceful at many levels. By playing back the interactions of the interactants to them, and allowing the interview questions to emerge from episodes of their interactions, our personal beliefs and assumptions were kept at check. Again, the SRIs sessions served as a form of triangulation of the discourse data by ensuring in-depth interpretation. The SRIs also made it possible for wider understanding of the face strategies and negotiations used by the interactants. Like most ethno-methodologies, SRI was important in this study because it provided the possibility for us to question certain interactional occurrences as well as enrich the quality of our interpretation of both the linguistic and non-linguistic data. Thus, this study highlighted once more the important work SRIs do in providing a deeper understanding of the emic perspectives of the participants as well as increasing the trustworthiness of the analysis done by the researchers.
Limitation of the study

For a deeper theoretical framework to be developed on face competence: an ability to adequately interpret and account for face negotiation, comparable data from other contexts need to be collected over a longer period of time. A grounded theory approach will be necessary to present the actual negotiation of face across cultures. This is because the significance that have been attached to the sociocultural practice of salutation, might have less social significance in furthering and structuring interactions in other contexts.

In conclusion, further studies on face negotiation regarding the lack of salutation by both male and female students could be done to depict the gendered acts of face negotiation by female lecturers. Again, studies can be conducted on the interactional nature of reprimands given to male or female students as a discursively practice of politeness/impoliteness. The acts of politeness, practice in the classroom context will present even more discursive issues since the presence of other students may impact on the negotiation of interactional moves. We also believe that a study in contexts, where power positions are more subtle may present different findings regarding the lack of salutation in interactions with possible neutral gendered realization of face.

Appendix

.A micropause—a pause of no significant length.
(0.7) A timed pause—long enough to indicate a time.
[ ] Square brackets show where speech overlaps.
(( )) An entry of ethnographic data.
Bold Denotes a raise in volume or emphasis.
↑ Rise in intonation
↓ Drop in intonation

Transcription Keys Adapted from Gail Jefferson

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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