

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/347764859>

# Face Mitigation Strategies in Former Nigeria President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan's Memoir My Transition Hours

Article · May 2020

CITATIONS

0

READS

369

1 author:



**Bibian Ugoala**

National Open University Of Nigeria

22 PUBLICATIONS 14 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

## **Face Mitigation Strategies in Former Nigeria President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan's Memoir *My Transition Hours***

By:

**Bibian Ugoala Ph.D**

Department of Languages  
National Open University of Nigeria, Abuja  
Email: [bugoala@noun.edu.ng](mailto:bugoala@noun.edu.ng)  
Phone: 08034082115

### **Abstract**

This study examines various forms of face mitigation strategies in former Nigeria President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan's (GEJ) memoir *My Transition Hours (MTH)*. Using concepts from the Politeness and Face theory by Brown and Levinson (1987), the excerpts containing face saving acts (FSA) were chosen and analysed using the four verbal politeness strategies to redress loss of face. The objectives of the study are: to find out the face threatening act (FTA) GEJ tried to redress in *MTH*; to find out the corresponding FSA used to mitigate the FTA; and to find out if there are ways through which GEJ unknowingly threatened his own face in the memoir. The face threatening acts were categorized under eight subheads; three excerpts were chosen and analysed under each subhead, in all, twenty-four excerpts were selected and analysed. The study found that to redress the face threatened he deployed mostly the off-record politeness strategy through the use of rhetorical questions, declarative statements, euphemisation, overt blame making and extensive explanation. For the positive politeness FSS he used declarative statements that complimented him and endeared him to the reader(s). Argumentation and covert personal compliment through declaratives are negative politeness FSS deployed by GEJ. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan inadvertently threatened his own face through indirect apologies for taking certain actions, use of the singular subjective, objective and reflexive pronouns 'I', 'me' and 'myself' to appear good. In as much as there was no obvious use of derogatory terms in the memoir, in order to achieve peaceful societies, this study recommends that appropriate language should be used to retrieve threatened face, also in trying to save face, linguistic items and explanations which by implication or inference could threaten the speaker's or hearer's face further should be avoided. The paper proposes an addition to the outlined face-saving act by Brown and Levinson (1987) to include chronicling and priding one's achievement as positive face saving or face threat mitigation strategy.

**Keywords:** Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, Face mitigation strategies, face threatening acts, politeness, self-image, positive politeness, negative politeness

### **1. Introduction**

Former President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan's (GEJ) first memoir out of office titled *My Transition Hours (MTH)* generated some controversies both online and offline of the language used in writing the book. Some have eulogised the book while some have out rightly condemned the book on the grounds that the book contains derogatory terms and innuendoes targeted at a particular group of people. After leaving office, GEJ decided to write the memoir

to address some of the controversial issues that came up during his tenure. MTH contains explanations and strategies he deployed to save face of some of the alleged accusation and criticisms leveled against him and his administration. This way GEJ can be said to adopt politeness in his bid to mitigate the face threatening acts. Mills (2003) avers that, politeness is the expression of the speakers' intention to mitigate face threats carried by certain face threatening acts toward another. Brown and Levinson (1987) note that 'face means the public self-image of a person', it follows that one's face is always in progress and develops within social interaction. Each individual in a social group has his/ her own face that he/she wants to protect against criticism, insults and accusations. Adegbite and Odebunmi (2006: 503) point out that the concepts of politeness and face go hand in hand. This goes to say that politeness and face are inextricably linked.

The position held in this study about face mitigation, is in tandem with Yule's (1996:61) position that when the speaker says something that lessens the possible threat that comes from the interpretation of some action, it amounts to face saving strategy. Yule (1996) posits that politeness is showing awareness of another's face. When you say anything that represents a threat to another person's self-image face-threatening act occurs. Accordingly, face saving strategy (FSS) is defined here as explanations to mitigate the effect of the perceived face threatening acts/allegations leveled against one. In a bid to maintain politeness, people often attempt to minimize or mitigate face threatening acts through face saving acts (FSAs) and politeness strategies. People yearn that their self-image or face be given recognition; no one wants or expects his/her personality threatened or smeared by another. The objectives of the study are: to find out the face threatening act (FTA) GEJ tried to redress in *MTH*; to find out the corresponding FSA used to mitigate the FTA; and to find out if there are ways through which GEJ unknowingly threatened his own face in the memoir.

### **1.1 Goodluck Ebele Jonathan speech strategies**

Abuya (2012) examines through the pragma-stylistic approach, meaning of the linguistic acts that manifested in the Inaugural Speech of Goodluck Ebele Jonathan as the democratically elected President in May 2011 general elections in Nigeria. Based on the Speech Act theory of Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), the study found that President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan relied more on sentences that performed commissive acts than other speech acts in his Inaugural Speech.

Gyong (2012) studies GEJ's policy package tagged the 'transformation agenda' with the aim of highlighting obstacle to the policy. The study found that threats and challenges to the realization of the Transformation Agenda include absence of good governance and accountability, lack of synergy between political office holders and holders of public office among other factor. The study recommends that there is the need for a radical development strategy that will guarantee inclusiveness as opposed to exclusiveness in the Governance of the Transformation Agenda to be in firm place and concludes that there is the need to take bold steps towards exploiting the maximum benefits of the opportunities and strengths of the Transformation Agenda.

Ubong and Effiong (2012) investigate politeness strategies in the first inaugural addresses of Nigeria's President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan (2011) and America's President Barrack Obama

(2009). Adopting the Speech Acts Theory, the study considers the illocutionary forces in the speeches as well as the face-threatening and face-saving acts respectively, with the aim of identifying the similarities and differences in the speeches. The study found that the speeches were relatively alike because each speaker spoke for his entire nation, regardless of his political party, and both speeches show a preponderance of 'representatives' and 'commissives'. The study notes that while President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan's commissives show predominance in the use of modal verbs to express intention, President Obama's commissives consisted of modal verbs and infinitive clauses to project volition and purpose.

Kumuyi (2016) focuses on a pragmatic study of former President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan's campaign speech delivered during the declaration of as a presidential aspirant under the umbrella of People's Democratic Party. Through the Speech Act Theory of Searle (1969), the study brought to the fore meanings intended by Goodluck Jonathan. The findings revealed that the selected sentences of the speech comprised the assertive-92%, expressive- 50%, declarative-33%, commissive-8% and directive-17% speech types.

Opeibi (2016) examines how the Internet is influencing political engagement in Nigeria. The study applied a corpus-based discourse model to discuss how Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan (GEJ), Nigeria 's president from 2010 to 2015 uses his Facebook platform as a political discourse strategy to engage a range of stakeholders within and outside the country. Using Herring 's (2001; 2004) Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) and Corpus-based discourse model (e.g., Baker 2006; Bednarek 2008) as the basic theoretical model, the study confirms that Nigerian president Goodluck Jonathan used some conventional and creative ways to deploy this protocol to promote participatory democracy.

While some of these studies have furthered knowledge on some of GEJ communicative strategies, there has hardly been any research on face mitigation strategies by former Nigeria President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan's in his Memoir *My Transition Hours*. The studies above differ from the current study, in that this paper proposes an addition to the outlined face-saving act by Brown and Levinson (1987) to include chronicling and priding one's achievement as positive face saving or face threat mitigation strategy. The cultural practices in some parts of Nigeria encourage personal achievement display even when such achievements are obvious for people to see. It is not uncommon in Nigeria to hear 'I did this' and 'I did that' as we shall see shortly in the excerpts analysed. This immediately separates this work from the ones reviewed; also, this work focuses on face saving strategies in an individual's memoir where little research effort has been expended in literature.

## **1.2 Politeness**

Politeness is a wide area to investigate. So, in various ways, linguists and scholars have created excellent scholarship to promote politeness, understanding of Face threatening acts and face-saving acts especially when it is applied to the use of language in daily interactions.

Babatunde and Adedimeji (2008) examine the dynamics of politeness as a pragmatic concept and highlights how it operates in the Nigerian University of Ilorin community. They submit that six levels of politeness (super-formal, formal, semi-formal, informal, intimate, and ordinary) hold among the four major categories of the University community, while ten

politeness strategies, illustrated with a number of oral and written discourses, are identified. The study suggests that for a harmonious and peaceful coexistence, the Leechian Politeness Principles and the avoidance of Face-threatening acts in everyday interaction in order to observe other interlocutors' face wants should be encouraged.

Babatunde and Adedimeji (2008:3) state that 'politeness is the awareness of another person's face or the means employed to acknowledge the public self-image of a person. It is a system of inter-personal relations designed to facilitate interaction by minimizing the potential for conflict and confrontation inherent in all human interactions and transactions. This means that in social interaction done through any semiotic means, interlocutors should use appropriate means of expression so as not to demean the other party in the communicative event.

Obasi and Wayas (2010) examine the politeness strategies of former Nigeria military President Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida (IBB) in his bid to come back to power eight years after his exit from government as Nigeria military president. They observe that IBB used face saving acts which lessened the possible threat on the hearer and by so doing, he adopted what Brown and Levinson term positive politeness whereby the speaker demonstrates solidarity and compliment to the subject. They also note that IBB also adopted distancing style; hence, his use of the plural pronoun 'we' and 'our'. Obasi and Wayas (2010:15) note that politeness is largely but by no means exclusively, a linguistic behavior; there were linguistic (language –based) politeness and extra linguistic politeness deployed by IBB.

Adekunle and Adebayo (2017) analyze how linguistic politeness is exhibited in eight selected Independence Day Anniversary Speeches delivered by Nigerian Heads of Government between 1960 and 2011. The speeches were got from both the internet (<http://www.dawodu.com.htm>) and the national dailies— *The Punch* and *The Guardian* recovered from the archives of University libraries and Tribune House in Ibadan. Using insights from Leech's Politeness Maxims and Brown and Levinson's theory of "face", the study discovered that either consciously or unconsciously, the speech makers deployed tact maxim to achieve oneness, intimacy and solidarity with Nigerians but most importantly as a face-saving act. Pollyanna maxim was used to conceal the true extent of an unpalatable event and also to make the decoders feel happy and optimistic, modesty maxim signified that Nigerian Heads of Government are not arrogant and pompous and equally do not claim that they can achieve anything without the support of Nigerians; and lastly approbation maxim to praise, eulogize and acknowledge some selected people in some cases and all Nigerians in some others cases. The argument raised in this paper is that, a redress for face threatened may be equal to or more than the magnitude of the face threatening act. In other words, when one feels his/her face has been threatened, one can go to any length to retrieve the face that has been threatened. Through face work, people engage in a variety of actions to help maintain the face that is presented at different social settings. Such efforts are embarked upon in order to redress threats to the face; since face-threatening acts erode the desired face one attempts to protect and sustain.

Lim and Bowers (1991) opine that ‘face work refers to the way in which people mitigate or address these face threats (p. 421)’. Face-threatening acts occur which cause a loss of face leading to the use of face work strategies to repair and restore the threatened face.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

Goffman (1967) serves as the foundation for most contemporary face theory. He defined face as ‘the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact (p. 213)’. He noted that face is a concern for one’s projected image that is both immediate and spontaneous and is tied to the dynamics of social interaction. Face work denotes actions taken to maintain consistency between the self and the public. The two forms of face work include restorative and preventative. Restorative face work is the act of reinstating face after the loss of it has taken place; preventative face is the act of communicating to safeguard the threat of face being lost.

Politeness and Face theory, a branch of Pragmatics since its emergence has occupied a central stage as an effective research tool, particularly as it relates to meaning and communication in language studies (Owen, 1983). This approach to language analysis has been further expanded by scholars such as: Brown and Levinson (1987), Ting-Toomey (1988), Kim and Bowers (1991), Yule (1996), Domeneci and Littlejohn (2006). On the home scene, Osisanwo (2008), Babatunde and Adedimeji (2008), Odebunmi (2009), Ahamefula (2011) have also furthered understanding of the term ‘politeness’. Brown and Levinson’s model of face theory, is however, considered for analysis in this study, given its appropriateness for teasing out the forms of face-saving strategies in most forms of communication; and also because it dealt exclusively with face work, which covers issuance of threats and their mitigation. Though the theory has been criticized as not dealing with politeness, but dealing with mitigation of face-threatening acts, also some scholars have said that Brown and Levinson (1987) fits in better for dialogic discourse. These criticisms do not in any way mar the efficacy of the meaning affordances of face mitigation/face-threatening acts put forward by Brown and Levinson (1987) which are deployed in this study. Excerpts from GEJ’s memoir analysed in this study are responses to accusations and criticisms, this way the memoir could also pass as dialogic discourse.

Apart from Brown and Levinson’s classification of FTA and FSA, Kim and Bowers (1991) argue that face reflects three wants and provides the labels: Fellowship face, Competence face and Autonomy face to cover face needs. Autonomy face is similar to Brown and Levinson’s categorization of negative face.

Osisanwo (2008) avers that in an interactive situation, one of the participants can say something that threatens the other person’s expectations regarding his public self-image such a threat is regarded as a face threatening act. It is possible for the ‘attacker’ to realize that what he has said amounts to an attack on the public self-image of his interlocutor, and may wish to retract his action or statement, whatever he then says to lessen the possible threat to his interlocutor amounts to face saving act.

Brown and Levinson (1987) used Goffman's face theory as a foundation for explaining human interactions that revolved around being polite. 'Face' is something that can be lost, maintained or enhanced during a face-to-face or mediated contact with other participant. In developing politeness theory, they expanded and added to face theory by arguing that humans have two faces; one based on a desire for approval and acceptance by others which is referred to as the positive face, and the other based on a desire to proceed without being impeded upon known as negative face.

They define positive face as 'the want of every member that his/her wants be desirable to at least some others (1987, p. 62). They push the argument that when people interact they recognize one another's desire to have their faces supported and generally provide such confirmation. Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory deals extensively with face-threatening acts, which they define as 'those acts that by their very nature run contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/or speaker (p. 65)'. Face-threatening acts can be towards people's positive face and or negative face, and caused by acts we engage in ourselves or others' acts towards us. They use the concept of face to explain politeness. To them, politeness is universal, resulting from people's face needs.

The theory argues that most commonplace speech acts such as criticizing, inviting, advising or even complimenting, carry an element of risk for speaker and hearer. With each speech act we can cause a potential damage to the image of either the hearer or speaker, or both of them. They used four labels to show the available range of verbal politeness strategies to redress loss of face: bald on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness and off-record (indirect). Bald On-record strategies do not usually attempt to minimize the threat to the hearer's face, even though there are ways in which this politeness strategy can be used in trying to minimize face-threatening acts implicitly. Positive politeness strategies seek to minimize the threat to the hearer's positive face. They are deployed to make the hearer or listener feel good about himself, his interests or possession, and are mostly used in circumstance, where the audience knows each other fairly well. In addition to hedging and attempts to avoid conflict, some strategies of positive politeness include statements of friendship, solidarity and complements. Negative politeness strategies are concerned with the hearer's negative face and emphasize avoidance of extra burden on the hearer. These strategies state that the speaker will be imposing on the hearer and there is a higher potential for embarrassment than in bald on-record and positive politeness. Negative face is the desire to remain independent so the speaker is more appropriate to include an out for the listener, through distancing styles like apologies as we shall see shortly in the data analysed.

The off-record which is the last politeness strategy devised by Brown Levinson relies upon implication, indirectness, and involves the breaking of conversational norms to imply a particular recommended course of action. Here, the speaker is relying upon the hearer's ability to decipher and interpret the speaker's intended meaning, which in most cases is indirectly suggested. Off-record politeness is accomplished through the speaker inviting conversational implicatures. The strategies are to give hints, give clues of association, presuppose, understate, overstate, use tautologies, use contradictions, be ironic, use metaphors, and use rhetorical questions. Also, the speaker can be intentionally vague or ambiguous, also over-generalizing,

displacing the hearer, and being incomplete by using ellipsis. Brown and Levinson (1987) have been criticized in relation to 'politeness' being a universal; they feel that the variation of culture has no effect on the face to be positive or negative. The criticisms of Brown and Levinson's theory in relation to the cultural nuances of African and Nigeria in particular show that, politeness strategies or face mitigation strategies even though they are culture-bound its use in communication will vary among individuals. Despite the criticisms, the theory is still relevant for the insights it provides for the understanding of how face is (mis)managed in communication.

### **3. Data and Methods**

The data for this study were excerpts from the memoir *My Transition Hours* (MTH) written by former Nigeria President Dr Goodluck Ebele Jonathan (GEJ). The book has an online copy and the physical copy; both have fifteen chapters but with differences in the content. The excerpts analysed here were from the hardcopy. After going through the memoir, the excerpts obviously containing FTA were chosen all through the book. The various accusations/criticisms against him and his government as mentioned by him in the memoir were categorized into eight sub-head. The four classification of FTA as categorized by Brown and Levinson (1987) as verbal politeness strategies to redress loss of face were used as basis for categorizing the faces threatened and the faces saved in the selected excerpt. It was observed that the face saving strategies (FSS) were in different categories interspersed in the book, so three of each FSS were picked and placed under the FTA sub-head they fitted into before the analysis. In all, twenty-four excerpts were selected and analysed.

### **4. Analysis**

Each sub-head in this section is based on the perceived criticisms which GEJ responded to in the memoir, the corresponding FSA GEJ used to mitigate the FTA, and the inadvertent self-threatening acts by GEJ.

#### **4.1 Accusation of being clueless**

He tried to save face in the above through saying:

##### **Excerpt. 1:**

'My team and I were certainly not clueless but filled with immense intellectual capacity and one of the best cabinets in the history of Nigeria' (page 6).

This excerpt is used by GEJ to orient himself towards the readers' positive face with the use of in-group identity marker. Deploying the phrase 'my team and I' to foreground the level of intelligence of him and his team. GEJ used this excerpt which is a form of positive politeness strategy and also a declarative sentence to mitigate the FTA of the criticism of being clueless.

##### **Excerpt. 2:**

'To say the least, my tenure as President saw Nigeria achieve phenomenal economic growth, becoming the largest economy in Africa in 2013' (page 6).



In this excerpt, GEJ extended the face-saving argumentative strategy of not being clueless. The seeming implication of this statement is that he is full of wisdom, and thus made Nigeria achieve ‘phenomenal’ economic growth’. This off-record politeness strategy passes across subtle messages through implication. GEJ seemingly implied that he is not clueless, but full of wisdom.

**Excerpt 3:** ‘my administration recorded many firsts in terms of appointments and national development’ (page 6).

In this excerpt, deploying the positive politeness strategy GEJ furthered saving his face through the declarative statement above, this probably is in order for the reader to appreciate him is reiterated in his reminding the reader of facts which the readers may not immediately remember. This is also a way of complimenting himself.

#### **4.2** Accusation of not providing security in the country

**Excerpt 4:** ‘I immediately began overhauling and reinventing our security architecture to confront the Boko Haram scourge. I recognized our security apparatus by re-equipping, training and fully motivating the armed forces afresh’ (page 15).

Excerpt 4, is another example of the deployment of positive politeness strategy by GEJ. He seemingly makes the reader(s) to feel that he shares the readers’ sentiment of the need to tackle security issues in the country. With this declarative statement, he presents himself as being capable to rise up to the security challenges posed by Boko Haram as against the criticism by the opposition. Boko Haram, is a dissident group in Nigeria (whose name roughly translates to “Western education is forbidden”).

**Excerpt 5:** ‘I summoned the Service Chiefs and other military and intelligence top brass to a meeting at the Presidential Villa where they laid out their strategic plans to rescue the girls. I also sought answers to burning questions in my mind’ (Page 29).

Excerpt 5: GEJ, ordinarily would not explain the Chibok girls’ kidnap, if it did not happen. He tried to save his positive face through explaining his efforts he made towards rescuing the kidnapped Chibok girls. It would be recalled that the dissident group—Boko Haram kidnapped more than 200 teenage girls from their school located in Chibok on April 14, 2014. The kidnap attracted the attention of Nigerians both at home and in the diaspora, and also the international community. Some people criticized the GEJ administration as treating the Chibok girls’ kidnap with kids’ gloves. In his explanation, he compliments himself deploying the positive politeness strategy to show that he was not lackadaisical in the rescue of the girls abducted by Boko haram and to mitigate the held assumption by some people that he treated the matter with kids’ gloves

**Excerpt 6:** ‘If the children must stay behind in line with the position of Borno State Government, why didn’t the State Governor make arrangements to protect the school children?’... In Nigeria, secondary schools are constitutionally the responsibility of the State Governments. The Federal Government can only recommend but cannot compel State

Governments to act with regard to secondary schools other than the Federal Government owned Unity Schools (Federal Government Colleges)' (Page 29).

In excerpt 6, GEJ deploys the off-record politeness strategy to further save face of the criticism of not rescuing the kidnapped Chibok girls. He used the common ground knowledge of the kidnapped Chibok girls to further his argument. By shifting blame through rhetorical question from himself to the Borno state government, he indirectly damaged his positive self-image. Casting blame on the Borno state government indirectly sets up GEJ for the reader as not being able to tackle security issues being the number one person in the country. GEJ presents this knowledge which he believes his critics ostensibly do not have. Through argumentation and through the mention of the lexical item 'constitutionally' he seems to visibly pass the blame of ensuring the security of the Chibok girls to the state government. In other words, he tries to save his negative face that it was not his direct responsibility as the then President of the country to take care of, and provide security for secondary schools. The seeming underlying argument GEJ pushes is that, the governor should be accountable for whatever happens in the state and in the secondary schools. Indirectly passing of blame to someone according to Brown and Levinson (1987) is face saving through the off-record politeness strategy.

### **4.3 Accusation of inability to fight Corruption**

**Excerpt 7:** 'Corruption is as old as independent Nigeria' (page 38).

In excerpt 7, GEJ deployed the negative politeness strategy to save face of the accusation by some critics that his administration was corrupt. GEJ used the declarative sentence to explain that corruption did not start during his era. In other words, he should not be bothered much about the rate of corruption in the country, since 'corruption is as old as independent Nigeria'.

**Excerpt 8,** 'Immediately after the 2011 elections, my administration was repeatedly accused of being corrupt. Despite the blackmail, I remained committed to combating corruption in a systemic way, knowing it was endemic' (page 43).

In excerpt 8, GEJ deployed the negative politeness strategy to further counter the criticism of his administration not fighting corruption. He links the argument here to the declarative in excerpt 8. GEJ seems to want to get the readers' empathy pushing the argument that despite the fact that corruption is endemic, he did his best possible to fight the scourge according to him '... I remained committed to combating corruption in a systemic way knowing it was **endemic**'. To assist him further his argument to convince the reader(s) of corruption being endemic, he chronicled the speeches of Nigeria's past leaders with some mentioning 'to fight corruption' as the sole aim for their taking over Government. In other words, even if his strategies to fight corruption were not effective, corruption is endemic. With this argument, he tried to save his negative face.

**Excerpt 9:** 'The premier global agency universally recognised to gauge corruption perception index stated that the last time Nigeria made progress was in 2014 while I was President. The country had moved eight places forward from 144 to 136' (Page 154).

In excerpt 9, GEJ deployed this off-record face saving strategy to further save face and to give the reader further reason why he should be absolved of the accusation of his administration being corrupt. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), face saving strategy which says

something indirectly and through implication belong to the category of the off-record face saving strategy. The implication of the declarative statement in excerpt 11 is that, corruption has become worse after his administration. This way, he pushed the knowledge that he did his best to fight corruption during his tenure as Nigeria's President.

#### **4.4 Criticism for removing fuel subsidy**

**Excerpt 10:** 'All over the world, subsidizing hydrocarbons is being discouraged. It does not help the economic growth of oil producing nations. That the Nigerian government-owned refineries are not working optimally is because of the subsidy on petroleum products, a development that discourages private investments' (Page 20).

In excerpt 10, he deployed the negative politeness face saving strategy to save face from the criticism of removing fuel subsidy during his tenure as the President of Nigeria. In the introductory part of this excerpt, he informs the reader of what happens all over the world in respect of hydrocarbons subsidization, and the effect of it on the society. Having done this, he proceeded to give the reason why the Nigeria refineries are not working fully. Through this chain method of argumentation, he indirectly commits the reader to reason with him that he was right in removing the subsidy on hydrocarbons.

**Excerpt 11:** 'For the new government to attempt deregulation shows that they knew the positive effects deregulation would bring to the economy, yet they hired protesters against my government' (Page 25).

In excerpt 11, he deployed the off-record strategy to save face from the criticism of removing fuel subsidy. With this argument, GEJ seems to foreground the belief that as the then President of Nigeria, he was not given the concession to take decisions which he felt was good for Nigeria. Deploying the contrasting conjunction 'yet' indirectly implying that the protest carried under the cover of subsidy removal was politically motivated, this way, he sets himself up for sympathy as someone who was not given a free hand to run 'his government'.

**Excerpt 12:** 'The Federal, State and Local Governments shared the gains from moving the pump price from 65 Naira per litre to 97 Naira per litre. These savings at the Federal Government level were pooled into a Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P)' (Page 25).

Excerpt 12, furthers his argument begun in excerpt 13 of the importance and gains of removing fuel subsidy. Not only had the Federal government gained from the move, but also the state governments too. Chronicling his achievements for the readers to see, and also reminding the readers who may have forgotten some of his achievements, is face saving through the negative politeness strategy. One of the criticisms of Brown and Levinson (1987)'s idea of the universality of politeness is negated by GEJ's chronicling of his achievements in order to save face. Politeness or face saving is culture bound. In Nigeria it is not uncommon to see and hear people boasting of their achievements to save face. This is what GEJ has done. He saves face by foregrounding the outcome of his achievements for the reader to see.

#### **4.5 GEJ's mantra of peace**

**Excerpt 13:** ‘I often wonder why my political philosophy which insists that ‘my political ambition is not worth the blood of any Nigerian’ was not attractive to many amongst our politicians. Threats of violence to ‘soak’ people in ‘blood’ were seen as warnings to scare voters away from the polling booth. It was one potent threat everyone knew would be carried out if it caught their fancy’ (Page 18).

In excerpt 13, he tries to save face through foregrounding his ‘peaceful nature’ and foregrounding their ‘hostile nature’. In other words, he foregrounds for the reader to see his ‘friendship and gentle nature’ as against the ‘hostile and aggressive spirit’ of his opponents. He deployed the common ground knowledge of President Buhari’s utterance to ‘soak people in blood’. It should be recalled that Muhammadu Buhari on May 14, 2012 spoke in Hausa while addressing members of the CPC from Niger State, who paid him a courtesy visit in Kaduna saying that “If what happened in 2011 (alleged rigging) should again happen in 2015, by the grace of God, the dog and the baboon would all be soaked in blood.” GEJ’s declarative statement in this excerpt is the off-record politeness strategy indirectly setting himself up for the reader to see him as a peaceful person.

**Excerpt 14:** ‘It is a treasonable offence to attack the convoy of a President. The security agents attached to me would have been justified if they had used deadly force, but I restrained them’ (Page 58).

In excerpt 14, GEJ indirectly reminds the readers of his constitutional powers as the President of the country to use his powers quash any uprising, this necessitates the subordinate clause, ‘but I restrained them’. In this excerpt, GEJ furthers his argument of his peaceful nature he begun in excerpt 13. This is a positive politeness strategy, complimenting himself for being peaceful and for doing everything in his power to keep peace in the country, even when he was pushed to be hostile, he restrained himself. GEJ, through this argument seem to encourage the reader to truly see as peaceful.

**Excerpt 15:** ‘Muhammadu Buhari was in my home State and I proactively ensured that nothing of that sort happened. He was not the President and it would have been easy to return the dubious compliment’ (page 59).

In this excerpt, GEJ saves face through the positive politeness strategy by foregrounding his peaceful nature that he had already started in excerpts 15 and 16. He mentioned the name of Muhammadu Buhari to imply and reiterate the argument begun in excerpt 16 that Muhammadu Buhari was probably aware of the attack on the convoy of a President. This strategic argumentation further draws the readers’ empathy towards him. The implication of the declarative statement in this excerpt is that his peaceful nature restrained him from retaliating to what was done to him which Muhammadu Buhari was aware of it.

#### **4.6 Criticism for not implementing the recommendations of the sovereign national conference**

**Excerpt 16:** ‘To those who may want to ask why I did not do it when I had the chance, my response would be to ask them to study the 2014 National Conference report and what it was able to achieve. If the report is implemented, it will address most of the grey areas agitating the minds of Nigerians’ (page 56).

In Excerpt 16, GEJ in trying to save his positive face threatened deploys the off-record politeness strategy through using rhetorical question to cue the reader into absolving him of the blame of not implementing the recommendation of the committee for restructuring of the country. He deployed the pragmatic concept of ‘common knowledge’ here to save face’. The general knowledge that he organized the Sovereign National Conference but failed to implement generated the face-saving argument in excerpt 19. He indirectly passed the blame of not implementing the recommendation of the Sovereign National Conference to his successor—the President-elect.

**Excerpt 17:** ‘One other document that I gave the President-elect was of utmost importance to me and even more significant than the main handover notes. It was a document compiled by an array of distinguished Nigerians, containing the report of the 2014 National Conference (page 99)’.

In excerpt 17, GEJ reiterates the face-saving strategy of not implementing the recommendation of the sovereign national conference he started in excerpt 19 through the assertion that the document was of ‘utmost important to me’. This off-record face saving strategy indirectly shifts the task of implementing the recommendations of the Sovereign National Conference to his successor. The critical reader may likely ask since GEJ claimed that the document was ‘of utmost importance’ to him why did he not at least start implementing it up till when he would hand over? By providing room for such likely question in the mind of the reader, he inadvertently presented himself as an incapable and inefficient President, thus threatening his own face.

**Excerpt 18** ‘Those who say that my administration should have implemented the Confab recommendations forget that I received the report few months before the last general elections and at a time when the National Assembly was on break. Also, this was when the National Assembly was engulfed by so much tension and distrust’ (page 99).

In excerpt 18, GEJ considers the accusation of not implementation the recommendation of the Sovereign National Conference as inappropriate; this necessitated his desire to protect his negative face. In deploying the off-record strategy to save face of the above criticism, he inadvertently threatens his face through indirect apologies for not implementing the recommendations of the sovereign national conference as a result of ‘tension’ and ‘distrust’. These indirect apologies may present him as an inadequate and a weak President.

#### **4.7 Accusation for postponing the 2015 general elections**

**Excerpt 19:** ‘Before the election was eventually rescheduled by INEC, ... At the end of deliberations, it was agreed that the elections be postponed for six weeks in order to create a safer environment for voters and officials on Election Day’ (page 65).

In excerpt 19, GEJ deployed the off-record FSS, indirectly cueing the reader to reason with him that the postponement of the 2015 general elections in Nigeria was not solely his decision but a joint decision.

**Excerpt 20:** ‘I handled the election and transition the way I did to maintain peace not just in Nigeria, but also in Africa’ (Page 142).

In excerpt 20, GEJ presents the argument in response to the alleged criticism he received from some quarters about his mismanagement of the election and transition. He used the declarative statement of this excerpt to seemingly reduce the tendency to feel threatened—a negative politeness FSS.

Excerpt 21: Though Nigeria made significant progress as a result of my administration’s electoral reforms, we must continue to build on what we have and ensure that we plug observed gaps in our system (page 157)

In excerpt 21, beginning the sentence with the transition device that expresses contrast ‘though’ GEJ signals a contrast from the piece of information he had just mentioned; and commits the reader to the meaning in the oncoming information. This way he threatened his face inadvertently through showing that he did not do enough during his tenure as the President.

#### **4.8 Accusation for not providing jobs**

**Excerpt 22:** ‘To address the issue of widespread unemployment, especially amongst our youth, my administration made job creation a key consideration for all programmes in our economic development vehicle known as the Transformation Agenda’ (page 134).

In excerpt 22, GEJ uses the positive politeness strategy to compliment himself and to respond to the criticisms of not providing job during his tenure as the President of Nigeria. He also, indirectly informs the reader(s) of the efforts he made towards providing jobs for some jobless Nigerians.

**Excerpt 23:** ‘I am pleased that the Buhari administration has acknowledged that the GIS has been successful in addressing the problem of graduate unemployment in Nigeria’ (Page 136). Excerpt 23, is the use of the off-record FSS to vindicate him of the criticism of him not providing jobs. This declarative is an indirect way of saying that the policy put in place by his administration has assisted his successor’s administration.

**Excerpt 24:** ‘At the 2016 Nigeria Economic Summit, it was noted that Nigeria had emerged as Africa’s leading economy and investment hotspot for some of the world's largest brands because of the policies and programmes that we implemented between 2010 and 2015’ (Page 139).

In this except, GEJ saves face by obviously complimenting himself using the declarative which is a positive politeness strategy to foreground the idea that Nigeria was able to attain the height because of the policies and programmes implemented by his administration. Giving a time range in the narrative ‘between 2010 and 2015’ also cues the reader into believing that all through his tenure as President, there were activities of job creation.

### **5 Findings and discussion**

5.1 Tabular representation of the different face-saving strategies deployed by GEJ in the excerpts

Categories	Excerpts/face saving strategies/methods used
Accusation of being clueless	1: positive politeness face saving strategy (FSS)

	<p>(complimenting self through declarative statement)</p> <p>2: off-record FSS (complimenting self through declarative statement)</p> <p>3: positive politeness FSS (complimenting self through declarative statement)</p>
Accusation of not providing security	<p>4: positive politeness FSS (complimenting self through declarative statement)</p> <p>5: positive politeness FSS (complimenting self through declarative statement)</p> <p>6: off-record FSS (blame making through interrogative—rhetorical question)</p>
Accusation of not fighting Corruption	<p>7: negative politeness FSS (argumentation through declarative statement)</p> <p>8: negative politeness FSS (argumentation through declarative statement)</p> <p>9: off-record FSS (complimenting self through declarative statement)</p>
Criticism for removing fuel subsidy	<p>10: negative politeness FSS (complimenting self through declarative statement)</p> <p>11: off-record FSS (euphemism through declarative statement)</p> <p>12: negative politeness FSS (foregrounding personal achievement through declarative)</p>
His mantra of peace	<p>13: off-record FSS (complimenting self through declarative statement)</p> <p>14: positive politeness FSS (complimenting self through declarative statement)</p> <p>15: positive politeness FSS (complimenting self through declarative statement)</p>
Criticism for not implementing the recommendations of the sovereign national conference	<p>16: off-record FSS (personal compliment through interrogative—rhetorical question)</p> <p>17: off-record FSS (extensive explanations through declarative statements)</p> <p>18: off-record FSS (extensive explanations through declarative statements)</p>
Accusation for postponing the 2015 general elections by six weeks	<p>19: off-record FSS (extensive explanations through declarative statements)</p> <p>20: negative politeness FSS (complimenting self through declarative statement)</p> <p>21: off-record FSS (personal compliment through</p>

	declarative statements)
Accusation for not providing jobs	22: positive politeness FSS (complimenting self through declarative statement) 23: off-record FSS (personal compliment through declarative statements) 24: positive politeness FSS (complimenting self through declarative statement)

Table 1. The accusations (FTA) and the FSS

In his bid to redress the alleged accusations/criticisms which GEJ thinks has made him to loss face and lower his self-image, it was found that he deployed mostly the off-record politeness strategy as cateracterised by Brown and Levinson (1987), that is, most of the declaratives statements through which he saved face are indirect communicative acts. He used lexical items like rhetorical questions, declarative statements, euphemisation, overt blame making and extensive explanation. For the positive politeness FSS, he used declarative statements through which he overtly complimented himself for the things he did which he felt the reader(s) was unaware off. He used structures which endeared him to the reader(s). Argumentation and covert personal through declarative statement are negative politeness FSS deployed by GEJ. An addition to the four politeness strategies as pointed out by Brown and Levinson (1987) suggested by this study is the chronicling of one’s personal achievements for others to see. GEJ kept recounting his personal achievements as a face saving strategy in the memoir, this strategy strengthens the criticism of the universality of the concept of ‘politeness’ as stated by Brown and Levinson (1987). The cultural nuances of a people and an individual’s orientation play a great part in the politeness strategies and forms of redress an individual may adopt to save face.

## 5.2 Strategies through which GEJ inadvertently threatens own face

GEJ threatened his face in excerpts 17, 18 and 21. In all these excerpts he deployed the off-record FSS to save face, but he inadvertently threatened his face. Through indirect blaming his successor, indirect apologies for taking certain actions and through absolving himself of blame from critics, he unwittingly presented himself as an indecisive person. He deployed the use of the singular subjective, objective and reflexive pronouns ‘I’, ‘me’ and ‘myself’ to appear good. He threatened his face also through the use of rhetorical questions to absolving himself of the blame of the inability to implement the recommendations of the sovereign national conference, rescue the kidnapped Chibok girls, and removal of fuel subsidy. Though the rhetorical questions are not meant to be answered, they devices through which he cues the reader(s) into reasoning with him. Through extensive explanation of the reasons he did not do certain things or take certain decisions he unwittingly presented himself as a weak and an indecisive person.

## 6 Conclusion

The paper concludes that people use different strategies to safe face especially when they feel their image have been threatened or smeared, and emphasizes the importance of politeness strategies in public narratives in a nation like Nigeria in our quest for sustainable national



development. The cultural practices and nuances of a society determine and shape the face-saving strategies deployed at different circumstances. Irrespective of place and social status in the society, the quest and desire for people to be seen in certain ways play a great role in how they interact with one another. The freedom to say one's mind in different situations also requires that one makes utterances that will not demean or make a co-interlocutor to lose face. People are uneasy when they feel they have been demeaned in any way through speech or writing. In order to achieve peaceful societies, this study recommends that appropriate language should be used to redress threatened face. The paper has also shown the different forms and face-saving strategies in a public figure's memoir, where little work has been done in Nigeria. Future research can explore face saving strategies and or face threatened strategies in other memoirs. A comparative study can also be done on the face saving strategies deployed in two different memoirs either in Nigeria or internationally.

### REFERENCES

Abuya J. E. (2012). A Pragma-stylistic Analysis of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan Inaugural Speech September 2012 English Language Teaching 5(11)  
DOI:[10.5539/elt.v5n11p8](https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v5n11p8)

Adegbite, W. and Odebunmi, A (2006). 'Discourse Tact In Doctor-Patient Interactions In English: An Analysis of Diagnosis in Medical Communication in Nigeria' *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, 15(4), 499–519 (2006)

Babatunde, S. T. and Adedimeji, M. A. (2008). 'The Theory and Practice of Politeness Phenomena in a Nigerian University'. *Issues in Intercultural Communication* (2). 1, 77-95, USA: Indiana University Press.

Brown, P. & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Domenici, K. & Littlejohn, S. W. (2006). *Face work: Bridging theory and practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Gyong, J.E. (2012). A Social Analysis Of The Transformation Agenda Of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan. DOI:[10.19044/esj.2012.v8n16p%p](https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2012.v8n16p%p)

Kumuyi, O. O. (2016). A Speech Act Analysis of Nigerian President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan's Declaration Speech. *Global Journal of Social Sciences Studies*, 2(1): 26-32. DOI: 10.20448/807.2.1.26.32

Odebunmi, A. (2009). 'Politeness in Print Media Political Interviews in Nigeria': *California Linguistic Notes* Volume XXXIV, (1) Winter.

Opeibi, T. (2016). Digital Media and Civic Engagement in Nigeria: A corpus-Based Discourse Study Of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan's Facebook. In TAIWO, R and Tunde Opeibi, Nova Publishers New York pp 1--34

Osisanwo, W. (2003). *Introduction to Discourse Analysis and Pragmatics*. Lagos: Femolus-Fetop Publishers.

Osisanwo, W. (2008). *Introduction to Discourse Analysis and Pragmatics*. (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). Lagos: Femolus-Fetop Publishers.

Owen, M. (1983). *Apologies and Remedial Exchanges*. New York: Mouton.

Ting-Toomey, S. (1988). Intercultural conflicts: A face-negotiation theory. In Y. Kim & W. R. Gudykunst (Eds), *Theories in intercultural communication* (213-235). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Ubong and Effiong S. J. (2012) Pragmatic Analyses of President Goodluck Jonathan's and President Barack Obama's Inaugural Addresses' *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*. 2(12), 261-278.

<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2012/05/2015-ll-be-bloody-if-buhari/>