

Analyzing Speech Acts and Politeness Strategies in a Mother-Daughter Conversation from AmmaDarko's *Faceless* (2003)

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to analyze a Mother-Daughter Conversation culled from AmmaDarko's *Faceless* (2003). It draws its theoretical insights from sociolinguistics: Speech Act and Politeness theories. Combining these theories with quantitative and qualitative approaches, it intends to examine how the two interlocutors (MaaTsuru and her daughter, Fofo) in the conversation address each other, the speech acts and the politeness strategies they employ and find out *in situ* if the speech acts and politeness strategies each party uses save or threaten the other's face. The analysis of speech acts reveals that Fofo has used a very great number of directives meant to query her mother while MaaTsuru has employed a very important number of representatives aimed at responding to every single query of her daughter. Similarly, the analysis of politeness strategies exudes that the interlocutors have selected politeness strategies which redress or mitigate face-threatening acts in their conversation.

Keywords: *Face-threatening acts, Mother-Daughter Conversation, politeness strategy, speech act.*

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Introduction

Every human culture, as it is generally believed, has a certain number of expectations as regards the use of language. These expectations, which vary from one culture to another, invariably serve as constraints/weights on communicative activities in social life. For instance, African culture requests children to show some respect, deference and social distance to/towards their parents while interacting/communicating with them. The foregoing request obviously appears to be a stereotyped perception of what a parent-child conversation normally exudes or should normally exude in social life. While it is a truism that 'politeness' towards one's parents or elderly persons is strongly stereotyped in African societies, it is imperative to note that there exist therein many various forms of politeness and the choice one makes or uses in a given context can only be deemed appropriate or not by the standards of that context. In this sense, it is highly misleading to perceive 'politeness' as ways of speaking that avoid causing offence by merely showing some respect, deference and social distance to another person.

In fact, Brown and Levinson [1], [2] warn us against holding such a stereotyped or restrictive perception of 'politeness' and posit that in any speech community, in some contexts, deference would be deemed inappropriate. In a friendly conversation, for instance, the participants would naturally consider deference towards each other as inappropriate. However, in another context whereby one is meeting someone for the first time, it is normal to show some deference to the person. This is a required social behavior governed by a set of established politeness norms. Politeness, in this sense, can be said to be a very important aspect in every human interaction or communication. This simply implies that it is perceived socially as a key indicator of a good human behavior in most cultures. Brown and Levinson [1] overtly highlight the importance of politeness in one of their most quoted definitions wherein they say that: "Politeness is how people behave in a way that attempts in considering the feelings of their addressee." To consider the feelings of one's addressee in a conversation, it is recommended that one draw on some politeness strategies. These strategies which are four in number (Bald on-record strategy, Positive politeness strategy, Negative politeness strategy and Off-record (indirect) strategy) are actually developed to save the listener's/herarer's face. In other words, they seek to mitigate or reduce the effects of Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs) [1]. FTAs are defined as acts that represent "a threat to another individual's expectations regarding self-image" [3]. According to Meyerhoff [2], some of the acts that threaten the addressee's negative face are orders or requests, threats or warnings, compliments or expressions of envy and those that threaten the addressee's positive face are disapprovals, disagreements, criticisms, bringing bad news about H or good news about S, being non-cooperative like interrupting, etc. Also, some of the acts that threaten the speaker's negative face are accepting an apology, saying thank you and so forth, and those that threaten the speaker's positive face are making an apology, showing lack of (physical or emotional) control, etc. To avoid FTAs in an interaction, the speaker and the listener/hearer must be conversationally involved or cooperative [4] or must be kind/generous, as Leech [5] would put it, if they really want to satisfy their face wants and save their face. But, as Odebo and Onadipe [6] clearly note, in an interaction, FTAs are scarcely evitable in that both participants may not bear the same kind of face. Meyerhoff [2] argues that "The term 'face-threatening act' builds on the notion of **speech acts** from the field of semantics and pragmatics." This is to say, one can divide speech acts up according to whether they constitute a threat to the addressee's or the speaker's face wants.

This study is actually set against the backdrop of these theoretical insights. It seeks to analyse a Mother-Daughter Conversation culled from AmmaDarko's *Faceless* [7]. It specifically intends to examine how the two interlocutors (MaaTsuru and her daughter, Fofo) in the conversation address each other, the speech acts and the politeness strategies they employ and find out *in situ* if the speech acts and politeness strategies each party uses save or threaten the other's face. The choice of this research topic was, as a matter of fact, motivated by the fact that there is a dearth of research works which have analyzed both speech acts and politeness strategies in a Mother-Daughter Conversation drawn from a contemporary African literary piece, like Darko's literary piece, for instance. There is a research gap to fill in here. And this paper sets out to fill in that gap. It draws its theoretical insights from sociolinguistics.

Theoretical Framework

As stated above, this paper draws its theoretical insights from sociolinguistics: Speech Act and Politeness theories. Both theories, as it is argued, help to account for how politeness is enacted in discourse. Politeness, as it is often claimed, can be encoded in social life by means of speech acts and politeness strategies. The study of speech acts and politeness has always been of great interest to scholars from fields like pragmatics, philosophy and sociolinguistics. But, as Bell [8] observes, the ways they approach the study are different: "Pragmatics scholars and philosophers approach speech acts (and politeness strategies) quite abstractly, using invented examples to illustrate points, but sociolinguists engage with them as they occur in natural language data." To stick to this observation, this paper seeks to draw its language data from a Mother-Daughter Conversation; a conversation culled from AmmaDarko's literary piece *Faceless*[7]. This literary piece is claimed here to mirror the social reality in contemporary Ghanaian society. This implies then that a linguistic study of a conversation between a mother and her daughter from this fictional text can provide a full insight into the interpersonal or social relationships between parents and their children in society. The epistemological questions that this study seeks to answer are: 'Whattypes of speechact and politeness strategy do MaaTsuru and Fofo draw on in their conversation?' and 'Do these speech acts and politeness strategies each interlocutor employs help save or threaten the other's face?' To provide an answer to these questions, this paper intends to apply two theories, one of which is Speech Act theory.

Speech Act theory is often associated with the British philosopher John Langshaw Austin [3]. He worked in Oxford and elaborated his ideas in a series of lectures given shortly before his death and published in 1962 as *How to Do Things with Words*. He defines speech acts as **performatives**;—i.e. utterances that actually perform the action they express. He also distinguishes three types of speech act: locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary. A locutionary act is the activity of uttering the appropriate wording. This involves the act of referring to certain objects, people or phenomena in the physical world and making comments on them. An illocutionary force denotes what act is performed through the utterance, such as complimenting, accusing, warning, requesting, etc. It is also considered as an act which is performed through an utterance. An illocutionary act is often defined by social conventions. It basically refers to what one can infer from an utterance. A perlocutionary effect indicates what the act actually achieves with its hearer- an apology accepted, an offer taken up [8]. In other words, it is the effect an utterance produces on the hearer. The effect may or may not be intentional. Examples of a perlocutionary effect are amusing, persuading, pleasing, scaring etc. Bell (Ibid) contends that the difference between the locutionary act and illocutionary act is very important and then worth highlighting. For him, "Many different forms of wording can be used to express the same illocution." Two aspects of speech act can be distinguished here: direct speech act and indirect speech act. If an act is expressed overtly by the most obvious linguistic means, it is called a direct speech act. But if an act possesses the syntactic structure more usually associated with another act, it is considered as an indirect speech act [9]. Aitchison (Ibid) further argues that speakers get to know which act is intended in a conversation by simply drawing on some happy or felicitous conditions; i.e., circumstances under which it would be appropriate to interpret something as a particular type of speech act.

The American philosopher John R. Searle [11], Austin's former student, later built on his Speech Act theory and came up with a general theory of speech acts, which includes five classes:

- i. **Representatives or Assertives:** The speaker is committed here to the truth of the propositional content. Examples include assertion, claim, description, hypothesis, conclusion, report, suggestion, prediction, as well as making a statement of facts.
- ii. **Directives:** The speaker tries here to get the hearer to act in such a way as to fulfill what is represented by the content of the proposition. Examples include questioning, commanding, requesting, pleading, inviting, etc.
- iii. **Commissives:** The speaker is committed here to acting in the way represented by the propositional content. Examples include promising, threatening, offering, guaranteeing, vowing, warning, betting, challenging, etc.
- iv. **Expressives:** The speaker expresses here the sincerity and condition of the illocutionary act. Examples include apologizing, congratulating, thanking, appreciating, complaining, condoling, greeting, scolding, etc.
- v. **Declarations:** The speaker performs here an action by simply representing him/herself as performing that action. Examples include baptizing, passing a sentence, arresting, marrying, etc.

The second theory this study aims to apply here is the Politeness model put forth by the English linguists Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson [1]. The term ‘politeness’ ‘conjures up everyday perceptions of polite society’, etiquette and manners’ [8]. It is also perceived as ‘‘The actions taken by competent speakers in a community in order to attend to possible social or interpersonal disturbance’’ [2]. For Yule [13], ‘‘Politeness can be defined as showing awareness and consideration of another person’s face’’. In the linguistic study of politeness, the sociological notion of face appears very central in that, as Yule (Ibid) notes, it has to do with one’s public image; i.e. the emotional and social sense of self that one has and expects everyone else to recognize in social life. According to Bell (Ibid:144), the notion of face is a central construct in the study of politeness in the sense that it denotes a person’s public self-esteem. In fact, to show awareness and consideration of another person’s face or public self-esteem, one must avoid a direct or straight talk or directness [9], for instance. This is to say, one must not say something that represents a threat to that person’s self-image. In other words, one must avoid a face-threatening act (FTA) when interacting with the person, especially when such a person is older or socially superior to one. For example, a direct speech act like ‘Close the door’ from a child to his/her parent will be socioculturally considered as impolite in that the child is behaving here as if s/he has more social power than his/her parent. On the contrary, to sound polite, it is advisable then that the child use another type of speech act- an indirect speech act- ‘Will you close the door?’ or ‘Would you mind closing the door?’, which makes the child’s request less threatening to his/her parent’s face. This kind of act is called a face-saving act (FSA). Bell (Ibid) further notes that Brown and Levinson have built on common notions like ‘losing face’ and ‘saving face’ to distinguish two dimensions of face: **positive face** and **negative face**. A positive face is a person’s desire to be actively appreciated, while a negative face is the desire not to be imposed on, restricted or impeded. At this level, Bell argues that behaviour that caters to the first desire is **positive politeness**, and the one that caters to the second, **negative politeness** [8].

Politeness strategies are generally considered as the strategies a speaker uses to save (not to threaten or violate) the listener’s/hearer’s face. The sole aim of these strategies is to minimise or mitigate the effects of FTAs; i.e., these strategies seek to save the listener’s/hearer’s face. Brown and Levinson[1] have distinguished four types of politeness strategy: 1. Baldon-record strategy (saying what one wants to say directly without couching the statement or utterance in any politeness strategies.), 2. Positive politeness strategy (considering the positive face of H by indicating that in some respects), 3. Negative politeness strategy (satisfying H’s negative face by recognizing and respecting his/her negative face wants) and 4. Off-record (indirect) strategy (delivering one’s intention indirectly). The choice of a strategy in a given communicative situation, Brown and Levinson posit, depends on two major factors: i. the pay-off (a priori consideration) and ii. The circumstances (sociological variables)[1]. In addition, Meyerhoff[2] notes that the decisions about exactly what kinds of strategies would be polite or impolite in a given situation involve an evaluation of a number of different factors. These factors are three in number: power, social distance and the cost of the imposition[2].

Methodology and Analysis of Speech Acts and Politeness Strategies in the Mother-Daughter Conversation

This paper seeks to analyze a Mother-Daughter Conversation culled from AmmaDarko’s *Faceless*[7]. It draws its theoretical insights from sociolinguistics: Speech Act and Politeness theories. It combines these theories with quantitative and qualitative research methods. The data quantified here are nothing else but the language used in the Mother-Daughter Conversation. The linguistic features in this conversation are first described following the principles of Speech Act and Politeness theories outlined in the previous section. Next, the identified linguistic features are presented in numerical or statistical terms. Finally, the meaning of the meaning of these quantified linguistic features is sorted out qualitatively.

Analysis of Speech Acts in the Conversation

The analysis of speech acts is carried out here following the key below:

Key:

Rep: Representative, **Dir:** Directive, **Com:** Commissive, **Exp:** Expressive, **Dec:** Declaration.

[7]

1. The entire three hundred and sixty five days of the previous year, Fofu had visited the house not more than twice, even though her abode in Sodom and Gomorrah was only some kilometres away (**Rep**). 2. The current year was already into its fifth month, and, but for the nightmare with poison, she still would not have been calling (**Rep**). 3. Her emotions about the woman who had carried her for nine months in the womb confused her sometimes (**Rep**). 4. Deep down inside her, she felt some affection for MaaTsuru (**Rep**). 5. Yet an overpowering urge to hate her also consumed her sometimes (**Rep**). 6. She often pondered over whether what she deemed to be hatred was merely a desire to cushion the pain of her existence and to blame MaaTsuru whom she held responsible for dumping her in the world, because that was how she felt about herself, dumped (**Rep**). 7. But the thoughts of hatred for her mother sometimes scared her, for one could have only one natural mother in one’s lifetime and there was already too much hatred out there on the streets (**Rep**). 8. So when she thought of her sister, Baby T, and their stepfather, she often concluded that maybe it was her intense hatred for those things that diminished to almost non-existence, the delicate line between her mother herself and the things she had done (**Rep**). 9. They were thoughts that she sometimes wished desperately to go away (**Rep**). 10. But something always awakened them like restless ghosts at night, like now, when her eyes beheld the creaking wooden gate of the compound house (**Rep**). 11. Having been briefed by Odarley on the way, she greeted no one else aside from NaaYomo when she

entered the house; then joined Odarley in the fifth room **(Rep)**. 12. “Mother, **(Exp)**” she acknowledged Maa Tsuru without emotion. 13. “Fofu, **(Exp)**” MaaTsuru responded with difficulty and asked immediately, “did he do something to you? **(Dir)**” 14. Before Fofu replied, MaaTsuru glanced across at NaaYomo **(Rep)**. 15. The old lady had fixed a stare on them **(Rep)**. 16. MaaTsuru grew nervous **(Rep)**. 17. “Shall we go into the room? **(Dir)**” 18. She entered the room first **(Rep)**. 19. Fofu followed **(Rep)**. 20. Odarley remained outside **(Rep)**. 21. The room was partitioned with an old translucent curtain **(Rep)**. 22. Fofu’s four-year-old other half brother was asleep on a mat on the floor in the space in front of the curtain which served as the living room **(Rep)**. 23. MaaTsuru raised and pegged one corner of the curtain onto the line and entered the inner space, which was the bedroom **(Rep)**. 24. She slumped onto the bed and waited **(Rep)**. 25. Fofu hesitated, then moved and sat down carefully at the farthest point from her mother **(Rep)**. 26. Life on the streets made mixed up persons out of children **(Rep)**. 27. She looked about the room and back at MaaTsuru **(Rep)**. 28. Something did not quite fit **(Rep)**. 29. Then it dawned on her something was wrong **(Rep)**. 30. Something was missing **(Rep)**. 31. “Where is he, mother? **(Dir)**” she asked MaaTsuru. 32. MaaTsuru winced **(Rep)**. 33. She attempted to say something but her voice failed her **(Rep)**. 34. She paused, swallowed saliva and tried again **(Rep)**. 35. “He left **(Rep)**,” she said simply. 36. “He left? **(Dir)**” 37. It was a wail of pain **(Rep)**. 38. “After all that he did to Baby T? **(Dir)**” 39. To us all? **(Dir)** 40. He left? **(Dir)** 41. And you stood by and just allowed this smallish man to leave? **(Dir)** 42. Just likethat? **(Dir)**” 43. Tears welled up in MaaTsuru’s eyes **(Rep)**. 44. She did not speak **(Rep)**. 45. She couldn’t **(Rep)**. 46. “What made him leave, mother? **(Dir)**” 47. Fofu howled on, “and before he left, did you remind him of what you did for his sake? **(Dir)**” 48. What you sacrificed? **(Dir)** 49. Did you? **(Dir)**” 50. MaaTsuru began to weep **(Rep)**. 51. “I asked you, mother **(Dir)**. 52. Did you? **(Dir)**” 53. MaaTsuru began to cry **(Rep)**. 54. “Go away **(Dir)**, Fofu,” she managed between tears. 55. “Go! **(Dir)**” 56. Fofu’s face clouded fiercely **(Rep)**. 57. “Is history repeating itself here? **(Dir)**” 58. Are you sacking me, mother? **(Dir)** 59. Because of him? **(Dir)**” 60. ‘No! **(Rep)**’ 61. No! **(Rep)** 62. I am not sacking you from here **(Rep)**. 63. Not from this room **(Rep)**. 64. Not from this house **(Rep)**. 65. I mean to say, go away **(Dir)**. 66. From Accra **(Dir)**, if possible, Fofu. 67. Go away **(Dir)**. 68. Go somewhere far away from here where he can never find you **(Dir)**.” 69. “What are you talking about, mother? **(Dir)**” 70. Is it Poison? **(Dir)** 71. What does he want with me? **(Dir)**” 72. “Oh, child, go away! **(Dir)**” 73. MaaTsuru sobbed, “Go. **(Dir)**” 74. “Why mother? **(Dir)**” 75. Why? **(Dir)**” 76. Because they are animals **(Rep)**. 77. They know no mercy **(Rep)**. 78. And my hands are tied **(Rep)**. 79. Please **(Dir)**. 80. Go! **(Dir)**” 81. A part of Fofu was and would always remain the fourteen year-old that she was; but the harshness of life on the streets had also made a premature adult of part of her **(Rep)**. 82. She was both a child and an adult and could act like both, talk like both, think like both and feel like both **(Rep)**. 83. What she wanted to do was to say a whole lot of things to hurt MaaTsuru, and cause her pain **(Rep)**. 84. But she held back **(Rep)**. 85. Her mother was still not making complete sense **(Rep)**. 86. “Why should I go away, mother? **(Dir)**” 87. Who are they? **(Dir)**” 88. MaaTsuru wiped away her tears with the back of her hand and blew her nose into her cover cloth **(Rep)**. 89. “It’s Baby T” **(Rep)**, she said eventually. 90. “Baby T? **(Dir)**” 91. “Yes **(Rep)**. 92. MaamiBroni. . . **(Rep)**” 93. “The fat fair woman she lives with? **(Dir)**” 94. “Yes **(Rep)**. 95. She came to see me last week. **(Rep)**” 96. “So? **(Dir)**” 97. Doesn’t she sometimes come to . . . **(Dir)**” 98. “I know Fofu **(Rep)**. 99. I know **(Rep)**. 100. Oh God! **(Dir)**” 101. “Don’t bring in God’s name, mother **(Com)**. 102. You knew what you were doing when you chose him over . . . **(Rep)**” 103. “It was for their sake **(Rep)**,” she pointed at the baby and the sleeping boy. 104. “What should I have done? **(Dir)**” 105. “I don’t know **(Rep)**. 106. You should never have fed him and his sons at Baby T’s expense **(Rep)**. 107. You don’t see her **(Rep)**. 108. I don’t see her **(Rep)**. 109. We don’t know how she has grown to look like **(Rep)**. 110. All for what, mother? **(Dir)**” 111. For what? **(Dir)**” 112. MaaTsuru didn’t respond **(Rep)**. 113. She wiped away fresh tears from her face and resumed from where she had left off **(Rep)**. 114. “Something happened **(Rep)**, Fofu.” 115. “Something is always happening, no? **(Dir)**” 116. Always **(Rep)**. 117. And had I not gotten the good sense to leave home, who knows, he probably would have made you send me away too to work for some woman to make money for you four to live on **(Rep)**. 118. No? **(Dir)**” 119. MaaTsuru choked on saliva and coughed violently **(Rep)**. 120. “I don’t have the strength to fight you with words Fofu,” she said slowly, “and even if I did, I wouldn’t do it. **(Dir)**” 121. Fofu said nothing **(Rep)**. 122. MaaTsuru went on; “Last week a body was found behind a blue rasta hairdressing kiosk salon at Agboghloshie **(Rep)**. 123. Did you hear about it? **(Dir)**” 124. “Aren’t bodies always being found there like the aborted fetuses at Sodom and Gomorrha? **(Dir)**” 125. Is that news? **(Dir)**” 126. Well, maybe, for some people like you living in proper homes like here, it is **(Rep)**. 127. No? **(Dir)**” 128. MaaTsuru ignored the sarcasm to avoid the bait of another round of war with words, for what she was about to say was itself, war enough **(Rep)**. 129. “MaamiBroni didn’t come to give me money, she came because she was afraid. **(Rep)**” 130. Fofu frowned **(Rep)**. 131. Her unasked question was obvious **(Rep)**. 132. MaaTsuru went on **(Rep)**. 133. “Since she was the one I entrusted Baby T to, she . . . **(Rep)**” 134. “What are you trying to say, mother? **(Dir)**” 135. “She came to tell me. **(Rep)**” 136. “Tell you what? **(Dir)**” 137. “That the body behind the hairdressing salon . . . **(Rep)**” fresh tears choked the rest of her words. 138. Fofu’s eyes widened **(Rep)**. 139. “Baby T? **(Dir)**” 140. MaaTsuru began to shake **(Rep)**. 141. Fofu just sat there and stared at her **(Rep)**. 142. She felt no immediate pain **(Rep)**. 143. Even the anger and mixed feelings lay low **(Rep)**. 144. In her mind’s eye was a recollection of the last time she laid her eyes on her sister: Baby T’s reddish and swollen eyes from too much crying, with her belongings tied up in an old headscarf and held in loosely in her right hand as she followed MaamiBroni out of the compound **(Rep)**. 145. Her calmness, when she opened her lips again to MaaTsuru, surprised her own self **(Rep)**. 146. “Mother, what is happening? **(Dir)**” 147. Where do I fit into all this? **(Dir)**” 148. What has all this got to do with Poison? **(Dir)**” 149. “He got upset when he heard of MaamiBroni’s visit to

me **(Rep)**. 150. He knew she had come to tell me **(Rep)**. 151. “Tell you what? **(Dir)** 152. Are you saying Baby T is dead? **(Dir)**” 153. MaaTsuru nodded **(Rep)**. 154. Fofu didn’t know what to think **(Rep)**. 155. “So Baby T is dead? **(Dir)**” 156. MaaTsuru nodded again **(Rep)**. 157. Fofu was scared and confused and in great emotional pain all at once **(Rep)**. 158. “My sister was staying with MaamiBroni **(Rep)**. 159. Then she dies **(Rep)**. 160. So MaamiBroni comes to inform you about it **(Rep)**. 161. You, who are her mother **(Rep)**. 162. And because of that, Poison gets upset? **(Dir)** 163. For which reason he tries to rape me? **(Dir)** 164. It doesn’t make sense to me **(Rep)**. 165. What does it all mean? **(Dir)**” 166. “He came to me **(Rep)**, Fofu. 167. He came here **(Rep)**.” 168. “What? **(Dir)**” 169. “He came here and turned me into a leper **(Com)**.” 170. “So that was why the woman in the third room didn’t respond to Odarley’s greeting? **(Dir)** 171. “Yes **(Rep)**. 172. And why you should also go away from here; he told me he would find you. **(Com)**” 173. “Me? **(Dir)**” 174. “Yes **(Rep)**. 175. And he swore to replace Baby T with you if we made him angry. **(Com)**” 176. “Replace? **(Dir)** 177. Make him angry? **(Dir)** 178. What are you saying mother? **(Dir)** 179. What is all this roundabout talk? **(Dir)**” 180. “Look, Fofu, please, go away. **(Dir)**” 181. The sleeping anger in Fofu awakened **(Rep)**. 182. “It’s all you keep telling me **(Com)**. 183. Go away; go away! **(Dir)**” 184. “How do I just go away somewhere, mother? **(Dir)** 185. Where should I go? **(Dir)** 186. I have nothing on me **(Exp)**. 187. I got a job at the vegetables market just a few days ago **(Rep)**. 188. I tried to stop stealing **(Rep)**. 189. But the little I had on me too, I just lost to Macho **(Rep)**. 190. So tell me something better. **(Dir)**” 191. “I have nothing better to tell you, child, and no money to give you too. **(Rep)**” 192. MaaTsuru cried **(Rep)**. 193. “I looked on and allowed something to happen that shouldn’t have happened **(Exp)**. 194. My hands are tied **(Rep)**. 195. I have my finger between his teeth **(Rep)**. 196. If I hit him on the head, I’ll make him chew off my own finger too inside his mouth **(Rep)**. 197. Then what would happen to them? **(Dir)**” she asked and paused, pointing again at her sons, 198. “Look at them **(Dir)**,” she went on no longer crying but clearly hurting. 199. “What have they done? **(Dir)** 200. Their only crime is that they came into the world through me. **(Rep)**” 201. Rage gripped Fofu **(Rep)**. 202. “Is their father is still your husband? **(Dir)** 203. You said he left, no? **(Dir)**” 204. MaaTsuru broke down **(Rep)**. 205. She began to cry again **(Rep)**. 206. “Don’t talk to me like that **(Com)**, Fofu,” she sniffed. 207. “Just because I made a lot of mistakes in life and I am poor, it doesn’t make me less your mother **(Rep)**. 208. So don’t talk to me that way. **(Com)**” 209. Fofu’s heart churned **(Rep)**. 210. She looked at her mother long and then turned her face away **(Rep)**. 211. “I don’t like coming to see you, mother **(Rep)**,” she began slowly, “Odarley’s mother sacks her like a fowl when she goes to see her. 212. She says Odarley is a thief **(Dec)**. 213. You don’t sack me when I come to see you **(Rep)**. 214. Yet, I don’t like coming to see you because I don’t like what I feel when I come to see you, mother **(Rep)**. 215. I don’t. **(Rep)**” 216. MaaTsuru looked away and stared into the outside void through the tiny window **(Rep)**. 217. Fofu’s outpouring didn’t shock her **(Rep)**. 218. It wasn’t the first time Fofu had said this to her **(Rep)**. 219. But somewhere inside her she said a silent prayer, that somehow something would happen to make it the last **(Rep)**. 220. “Mother, **(Dir)**” Fofu resumed. 221. Her voice was calm and too steady, “why was Poison upset about MaamiBroni coming to tell you about Baby T? **(Dir)**” 222. “He didn’t want me to know Baby T was dead. **(Rep)**” 223. “Just that? **(Dir)**” 224. MaaTsuru pursed her lips and refused to respond **(Rep)**. 225. “But Maami Broni came to tell you anyway. **(Dir)**” 226. “Yes. **(Rep)** 227. She was afraid **(Rep)**. 228. If Baby T was made out, someone was bound to remember that she was staying with her **(Rep)**.” 229. Fofu felt exhausted **(Rep)**. 230. “Did anyone say what happened? **(Dir)** 231. Why Baby T died? **(Dir)**” 232. “Poison only said it was Baby T’s own fault. **(Rep)**” 233. Fofu digested that and chuckled bitterly **(Rep)**. 234. “So how do you feel, mother? **(Dir)**” 235. “How do I feel? **(Dir)** 236. How am I supposed to feel? **(Dir)** 237. How do you suppose I should feel? **(Dir)** 238. Do you know what Poison told me to my face? **(Dir)** 239. That Baby T ceased to be my daughter the day I sold her to the streets? **(Dir)** 240. I sold my own daughter to the streets? **(Dir)** 241. Oh God! **(Dir)**” 242. She broke down again **(Rep)**. 243. Fofu remained calm and unimpressed **(Rep)**. 244. “I carried her for nine months in my womb. **(Rep)**” 245. MaaTsuru cried on **(Rep)**. 246. “I screamed in pain when I was bringing her forth **(Rep)**. 247. And look where she ended up dying? **(Dir)** 248. Under the open skies behind a kiosk at the market place? **(Dir)** 249. And all I have left is my anger at the world. **(Rep)**” 250. Oh God! **(Dir)**” 251. She noticed Fofu studying the blue and white plastic rattan bag in the corner near the bed **(Rep)**. 252. “Do you need it? **(Dir)**” she asked Fofu calmly, thinking Fofu needed it to pack in her few belongings and get away from Accra. 253. Fofu turned her attention from the bag, and it was like she had aged ten years more within the last few seconds **(Rep)**. 254. “I can give it to you if you need it **(Com)**,” MaaTsuru offered. 255. “I don’t need the bag **(Com)**,” Fofu retorted. 256. “Does he have some things inside? **(Dir)**” 257. “A few of his clothes **(Rep)**. 258. Yes **(Rep)**. 259. He left without warning **(Exp)**. 260. He just left. **(Exp)**” 261. “I don’t really care about that, mother, **(Rep)**” 262. Fofu snapped and rose to the bag, thankful to her stepfather’s smallish frame **(Rep)**. 263. She unzipped it **(Rep)**. 264. Inside was sparse, the leftovers of man neither here nor there **(Rep)**. 265. Not there for the wife, not there for the sons, yet, not gone completely from their lives either **(Rep)**. 266. She rummaged through and picked out an old pair of shorts; a faded checkered shirt, torn at one shoulder and a crumpled old baseball cap which still carried a pungent smell **(Rep)**. 267. Her four-year-old half-brother was up by the time she was through with her pick and was all over MaaTsuru on the bed like his baby brother **(Rep)**. 268. Fofu paid them no attention **(Rep)**. 269. “I’m off! **(Rep)**” she announced brusquely, and stepped out of the room.

The types of speech act identified in the analysis above as well as their frequency rates are clearly indicated in the table below.

Speech acts	Representatives	Directives	Commissives	Expressives	Declaration
Frequency rate	156	98	09	06	01
Percentage (%)	57.77%	36.29%	03.33%	02.22%	00.33%

Table 1: Distribution of speech acts in the conversation.

As Table 1 exudes, the Mother-Daughter Conversation under study here contains 270 speech acts. As noted, representative speech acts come first in this conversation with a figure of 154 (i.e., 57.77%). This denotes that this conversation is rife with speech acts which assert, describe, suggest, state facts, etc. The table also shows that directives rank second in this conversation with a total number of 98 occurrences (i.e., 36.29%). This indicates that the conversation is concerned with acts of querying/questioning, requesting, pleading, commanding, etc. Again, the table reveals that commissives (09; i.e., 03.33%), expressives (06; i.e., 02.22%) and declaration (01; i.e., 00.33%) respectively occupy the third, fourth and fifth positions in the conversation. The use of commissive speech acts unveils that this conversation is marked by acts of threatening, promising, warning, offering, challenging, etc., while that of expressives points to acts of naming/greeting, complaining, etc. The only declarative speech act in this conversation denotes an act of renaming or passing a sentence. To have a clearer picture of how these speech acts are distributed across the participants in the conversation, it is necessary to further deepen the analysis. Table 2 is subsequently provided for this purpose.

Speech acts	Representatives	Directives	Commissives	Expressives	Declaration
Participants					
Narrator	1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8; 9; 10; 11; 14; 15; 16; 18; 19; 20; 21; 22; 23; 24; 25; 26; 27; 28; 29; 30; 32; 33; 34; 35; 37; 43; 44; 45; 50; 53; 56; 81; 82; 83; 84; 85; 88; 112; 113; 119; 121; 128; 130; 131; 132; 138; 140; 141; 142; 143; 144; 145; 153; 154; 156; 157; 181; 192; 201; 204; 205; 209; 210; 216; 217; 218; 219; 224; 229; 233; 242; 243; 245; 251; 253; 262; 263; 264; 265; 266; 267; 268.				
MaaTsuru	60; 61; 62; 63; 64; 76; 77; 78; 89; 91; 92; 94; 95; 98; 99; 103; 114; 122; 129; 133; 135; 137; 149; 150; 166; 167; 171; 174; 191; 194; 195; 196; 200; 207; 222; 226; 227; 232; 244; 246; 249; 257; 258.	13ii; 17; 54; 55; 65; 66; 67; 68; 72; 73; 79; 80; 100; 104; 123; 180; 197; 198; 199; 235; 236; 237; 238; 239; 241; 247; 248; 250; 252.	169; 172; 175; 206; 208; 254.	13i; 193; 259; 260.	
	102; 105; 106; 107; 108; 109; 116; 117; 126;	31; 36; 38; 39; 40; 41; 42; 46; 47; 48; 49; 51;	101; 182; 255.	12; 186.	

Fofo	158; 159; 160; 161; 164; 187; 188; 189; 211; 213; 214; 215; 228; 261; 269.	52; 57; 58; 59; 69; 70; 71; 74; 75; 86; 87; 90; 93; 96; 97; 110; 111; 118; 115; 124; 125; 127; 134; 136; 139; 146; 147; 148; 151; 152; 155; 162; 163; 165; 168; 170; 173; 176; 177; 178; 179; 183; 184; 185; 190; 202; 203; 220; 221; 223; 225; 230; 231; 234; 256.			
Odarley's mother					212

Table 2: Distribution of speech acts per participant in the conversation.

Table 2 reveals that it is the narrator who uses the greatest rate of representative speech acts with a total count of 89 (i.e., 57.05%). This can be accounted for here by the fact that it is the narrator who narrates the event going on in the conversation, depicts the characters (MaaTsuru, Fofo and Odarley's mother), their attitudes, emotions, and encodes her authorial perceptions, ideologies, biases, judgements (112; 119; 121; 128; 130; 131; 138; 140; 141; 142; 143; 144; 145; 205; 218, etc.) therein. As a result, she needs more representative speech acts than any other thing else. MaaTsuru, as the table indicates, follows the narrator in that she uses 43 (i.e., 27.56%) representative speech acts. She uses these speech acts to answer her daughter's (Fofo's) recursive queries (60; 61; 62; 63; 64; 76, etc.), state facts related to the tragic death of Baby T and her miserable life and by extension that of her entire family (114; 122; 200, etc.), acknowledge her failure, weaknesses/limits in life (120; 194; 195; 196, etc.) before her addressee, inform her about the death of Baby T (129) and persuade her to leave Accra (133; 135; 137; 149, etc.) in order to save her life from Poison, the streetlord.

Fofo comes last here. She employs all in all 24 (i.e., 15.38%) representative speech acts. She uses these acts to make assertions which openly accuse, confront, challenge and despise her mother (102; 105; 106; 107; 108; 109; 116, etc.). She also uses these acts to state and describe facts related to her life on the streets, the root-cause, her feelings as regards all this, her mother and the news about the death of her sister, Baby T (117; 158; 159; 160; 161; 164; 187; 188; 189; 211; 261, etc.). In addition, the table exudes that Fofo employs more directive speech acts than her mother, MaaTsuru. In fact, out of the 98 directives identified, she has used 69 (i.e., 70.40%). A very great proportion (67 out of 69 (i.e., 97.10%)) of her directive speech acts is directed at querying/questioning her mother about her stepfather's whereabouts (176; 177; 178; 179, etc.), about the reason behind Poison's being upset (221), the cause of Baby T's death (230 and 231), her state (234) and the content of the bag (256). The remaining two directives (183 and 190) are acts of commanding. In (183), she repeats her mother's plea 'Go away, go away'. On the face of it, this act denotes despise simply. In (190), she orders her mother to tell her something better, which gives one the impression that her mother is not talking any sense to her. Unlike Fofo who has used 67 out of 69 (i.e., 97.40%) of her directives for querying/questioning, MaaTsuru has employed most of hers for pleading Fofo (54; 55; 66; 67; 68; 72; 73; 79 and 180) to leave Accra in order to save her life from the wicked and heartless streetlord, Poison. Given a question (meant to choke the speaker) her daughter asks her, MaaTsuru utters (100) to plead God for mercy. In addition, she uses (17) to make a request; she indirectly asks her addressee to come into the room. Again, she uses (13) to inquire if Poison has done something wrong to Fofo. This means maternal care. Besides, she employs (123) to find out if Fofo is aware of the news about a dead body found in Sodom and Gomorrah. Here she is expecting a positive confirmation (or a positive back-channel response) from her addressee. But the reaction she gets in return violently threatens her face wants (see 124; 125 and 127). Again, she uses (104), which, on the surface of it, looks like a rhetorical question, to indicate that she has had no choice in life other than the one she has made. She is queried by her daughter for having chosen a man (called NiiKpakpo in the fiction) over her children (Fofo, Baby T and their two brothers all born to another man called Kwei in the novel). She actually attempts in vain to justify herself and her choice. Her disguised rhetorical question meant to win her addressee's sympathy seems to have misfired in this context in that the reaction gotten in return figures out nothing else but apathy or/and antipathy. Her subsequent directives (197; 198 and 199) meant to redress her addressee's attitudes and encourage her to perceive the relevance of her choice seem not to receive an expected reply from Fofo too.

Moreover, Table 2 shows that there are 09 commissivespeech acts in the conversation under study. Out of the 09 commissives, MaaTsuru has used 06 (i.e., 66.66%) and Fofu only 03 (i.e., 33.33%). MaaTsuru has actually used these commissives to talk about Poison’s threats, promises and warnings (169; 172 and 175) towards herself and her daughter, Fofu. She also uses two of theremainder (206 and 208) to warn her daughter, Fofu, redressing her care-free or direct way of talking. She uses the last commissive (254) to encode ‘offering’ a bag to Fofu. Fofuemploys (101) to challenge her mother, asking her not to bring in God’s name in their conversation. In a much similar way, in (182), she indirectly scorns her mother who out of maternal care repeatedly asks her to go away from Accra. In (255), she baldly rejects her mother’s offer. The table also points out that there are 06 expressive speech acts in this conversation. MaaTsuru has used 04 (i.e.,66.66%) and Fofu 02 (i.e., 33.33%). While MaaTsuru uses these expressives to encode naming (or calling her daughter by her name ‘Fofu’, a clear indicator of frequent contact, high affective involvement and unequal power) (13i), her inaction/indecision which has brought about the unwanted situation in which she is (193) and her complaint about her husband leaving without warning (259and 260), Fofuemploys (12) to name (or call MaaTsuru ‘mother’, an endearment address term which points to frequent contact, high affective involvement and unequal power) and (186) to complain about her not having any penny on her (that’s actually the reason why she cannot go away from Accra as her mother requests). The last but not the least is the only declarative speech act identified in this conversation. This act (212) is used by Odarley’s mother to rename or pass a sentence on her daughter. In fact, she declares her daughter a thief (and by so doing, she consciously or unconsciously places a spell or curseon the little girl) and for this reason she sacks her each time she comes home to see her. In other words, she sentences or condemns her daughter, Odarley to life in the jungle (life on the streets).

This female parent’s attitude depicted here as well as that ofMaaTsuru whohas consciously or naivelychosen a man (called NiiKpakpowhose behaviour and actions later turn out to denote male irresponsibility and heartlessness) over her children and her inaction and total submission to fate,engendering thus the selling out of the latter to the streets is, from the point of view of traditional African values, weird and unbelievable. But this can be understood when these individuals are placed in their ‘proper context’. In fact, they live in apost-independence, post-colonial and post-modernist era. And, as Allagbé and Amoussou(forthcoming) observe, this post-independence, post-colonial and post-modernist era is characterized by a set of social changes (post/neo-colonialism, new capitalism, neoliberalism, feminism, individualism, relativism, migration, globalization, etc.) which has a very great impact on social life (public and private). This is to say, this set of social changes systematically influences human behavior, attitudes, perceptions and power relations in social life and is in turn influenced by human behavior. In other words, this set of social changes shapes and is in turn shaped by social reality. From this perspective, a social plague like streetchildren or irresponsible men/husbands/mothers/parents depicted in *Faceless*[9] canbe perceived as a direct or indirect consequence of social changes.Having dealt with the analysis of speech acts used in this conversation, let us now turn to the analysis of politeness strategies that the two conversants draw on in their interaction.

Analysis of Politeness Strategies in the Conversation

To foreground the politeness strategies drawn on by the participants (MaaTsuru and Fofu)in the conversation under study here, their actual performed speech acts are first of all extracted from the whole text and tabulated for the sake of clarity (see Table 3). Then some of these speech acts are selected at random and analyzed to exemplify the types of politeness strategy the two participants have used to interact with each other (see Table 4).Next, the findings are discussed.

Speech acts performed Participants	Statements	Questions	Requests/Commands
MaaTsuru	13i; 60; 61; 62; 63; 64; 76; 77; 78; 89; 91; 92; 94; 95; 98; 99; 100; 103; 114; 120; 122; 133; 135; 149; 150; 166; 167; 169; 171; 172; 174; 175; 191; 193; 194; 195; 196; 200; 207; 222; 226; 227; 232; 240; 241; 244; 246; 249; 250; 254; 257; 258; 259; 260.	13i; 104; 123; 197; 199; 235; 236; 237; 238; 239.	54; 55; 65; 66; 67; 68; 72; 74; 79; 80; 180; 198; 206; 208; 247; 248; 252.

Fofo	12; 51; 101; 102; 105; 106; 107; 108; 109; 116; 117; 126; 158; 159; 160; 161; 162; 164; 182; 186; 187; 188; 189; 211; 213; 214; 215; 220; 225; 228; 255; 261; 269.	31; 35; 36; 38; 39; 40; 41; 42; 46; 47; 48; 49; 52; 57; 58; 59; 69; 70; 71; 74; 75; 86; 87; 90; 93; 96; 97; 110; 111; 115; 118; 124; 125; 127; 134; 136; 139; 146; 147; 148; 151; 152; 155; 163; 165; 168; 170; 173; 176; 177; 178; 179; 184; 185; 202; 203; 221; 223; 230; 231; 234; 256.	183; 190.
Odarley's mother	212.		

Table 3: Distribution of speech acts performed by each participant in the conversation.

Chracter name	Utterance number	Utterance	Type of politeness strategy
MaaTsuru	17	Shall we go into the room?	<i>Off-record strategy.</i> Here the speaker makes a suggestion.
	35	He (NiiKpakpo) left.	<i>Negative politeness strategy.</i> This utterance satisfies the addressee's (Fofo's) face wants in that it provides an answer to her first query.
	54	Go away, Fofo.	<i>Bald on-record strategy.</i> Here the speaker uses a direct order.
	252	Do you need it(the bag)?	<i>Positive politeness strategy.</i> In this utterance, the speaker seems to show concern for the addressee (Fofo).
	254	I can give it (the bag) to you if you want it.	<i>Positive politeness strategy.</i> In this utterance, the speaker seems to show concern for the addressee (Fofo).
Fofo	182	It's all you keep telling me.	<i>Off-record strategy.</i> Here the speaker instead of telling her addressee straightaway that she is talking nonsense simply makes recourse to indirectness.
	190	So tell me something better.	<i>Bald on-record strategy.</i> Here the speaker uses a direct order.
	235	How do you feel?	<i>Positive politeness strategy.</i> In this utterance, the speaker seems to show concern for the addressee (MaaTsuru).
	255	I don't need the bag.	<i>Bald on-record strategy.</i> Here the speaker does not couch her intention in any politeness strategy. She utters her intention directly.

Table 4: Distribution of politeness strategies in the conversation.

It is obvious in Table 4 that the two interlocutors (MaaTsuru and Fofo) in their conversation have drawn on all the four types of politeness strategy. But it should be noted that Fofo selects three of these strategies (bald on-record strategy, off-record strategy and positive politeness strategy) with *bald on-record strategy* being the most foregrounded type. This denotes that she, as Meyerhoff[2] notes, “simply does the face-threatening act and doesn't wrap it up with any positive or negative politeness strategies.” One plausible reason for the recurrent use of this politeness strategy is that the speaker seeks to avoid the risk of being misunderstood by her addressee. Or, as Brown and Levinson [1] hold, the speaker seems to speak here in conformity with Grice's four Maxims [14] (1. **Maxim of Quality:** Be non-spurious (speak the truth, be sincere), 2. **Maxims of Quantity:** (a) Don't say less than is required, (b) Don't say more than is required, 3. **Maxim of**

Relevance: Be relevant, and 4. **Maxim of Manner:** Be perspicuous; avoid ambiguity and obscurity) which serve as conversational principles meant to maximally achieve efficient communication. Another plausible reason for Fofu's recurrent use of *bald on-record strategy* is that she is close or familiar to her addressee. This apprehension is clearly indicated by her use of an endearment address term 'mother' in (12) (an endearment address term which denotes frequent contact, high affective involvement and unequal power) to call her addressee, MaaTsuru. Moreover, her use of off-record strategy and positive politeness strategy indicates her attempts to redress or mitigate any potential damage to her face and that of her listener.

Unlike Fofu, MaaTsuru has employed all the four types of politeness strategy (bald on-record strategy, off-record strategy, negative politeness strategy and positive politeness strategy). She has actually mingled all these strategies to appeal to her addressee, Fofu, who openly accuses and holds her responsible for the miserable life she has to live (on the streets). Here MaaTsuru is in front of somebody who questions, interrupts, challenges and scorns every single speech act she utters. And given her being conscious of her guilt, she has no choice other than to soften her language, spicing it thus with euphemistic and indirect or suggestive expressions. For this reason, she has, for instance, to draw on bald on-record strategy and off-record strategy to bridge the gap of power deferential and social distance between herself and her daughter with a view to calming her flaming anger. She also has to use negative politeness strategy in order to avoid an overt imposition on her listener. Again, her use of positive politeness strategy is meant to show her concern (a sort of maternal care) for her addressee. She actually cares about Fofu who lives on the streets and is abused and threatened by the streetlord, Poison. Though MaaTsuru is (represented here as) helpless, powerless and voiceless, she wants her daughter to run away from Accra to save her own life, indeed.

Conclusion

This paper has set out to analyze a Mother-Daughter Conversation culled from Amma Darko's *Faceless* [7] from a sociolinguistic perspective. It has specifically drawn on Speech Act and Politeness theories. It has combined these theories with quantitative and qualitative research methods to describe the linguistic features the participants (MaaTsuru and Fofu) in the conversation have employed to interact with each other. The quantitative analysis has exuded very important findings. The analysis of speech acts, for instance, has revealed that the participants have used the various types of speech act (representatives, directives, commissives, expressives and declaration) at varying proportions. But the striking linguistic feature here is that while Fofu has used a very great number of directives meant to query her mother, MaaTsuru has employed a very important number of representatives aimed at responding to every single query of her daughter. In other words, in her attempts to understand a certain number of issues related to her life, mother and family, Fofu has employed speech acts which obviously represent her as confronting, challenging and scolding her mother. MaaTsuru, on the other hand, while addressing her daughter, Fofu, has used speech acts which project her as powerless, appealing and caring.

Similarly, the analysis of politeness strategies has exuded that the two interlocutors have selected the four types of politeness strategy (bald on-record strategy, off-record strategy, negative politeness strategy and positive politeness strategy). It is important to note here that while Fofu has selected three of the politeness strategies (bald on-record strategy, off-record strategy and positive politeness strategy) with *bald on-record strategy* being the most foregrounded type, MaaTsuru has used all the four types. In other words, the two interlocutors, in their conversation, have in one way or the other attempted to attend to their face wants. This has helped them to redress or mitigate the effects of face-threatening acts, which, as mentioned in the introduction of this study, are scarcely evitable in any human interaction.

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