The paper examines politeness strategies in *A Darkling Plain*. Our intention is to subject such politeness strategies employed by some characters in the novel to analysis. The work is anchored on politeness theory, a theory which many scholars have given several views over the years. The theoretical framework of this paper therefore derives from these views of notable scholars. For the purpose of bringing out and understanding the politeness expression strategies in this novel... *A Darkling Plain*, excerpts numbered 1-8 are drawn for analysis. It is evident that individual characters used various politeness strategies to achieve their aim. A speaker sometimes adopts a strategy which serves as a threat to his hearer’s ‘face’ self-image (face-threatening act), and at some other time uses a politeness strategy, which on the other hand, lessens threats to the hearer’s ‘face’ trying to recognize or respect such a listener’s public self-image (face-saving act). This goes to show that there is no faceless communication. Everybody, especially adults, desires that their self-image be given a due recognition; no one wants or expects his or her personality threatened or smeared by the other. This paper underscores the importance of politeness strategies in a nation like Nigeria in our quest for sustainable development. A nation where everybody recognises multicultural, multilingual and multi-religious nature our environment and avoids face threatening acts would definitely create the conducive atmosphere needed for the much desired sustainable development. This paper calls for proper orientation in politeness strategies for all that are involved in making public speeches and other forms of communications at various levels.

1.0 Introduction

Over the years, scholars in the field of pragmatics have bordered themselves with the task of explaining or analyzing the contextual use of language. To do this successfully, they have been faced with the issues of explicating how; meaning is conveyed in context by what is said; message is coded and decoded in context; speakers and hearers or writers and readers realize whether they are playing their desired communicative roles or not; context determines so much of what is conveyed in a communicative situation; they have arrived at their description (Osisanwo, 2008).

This paper discusses politeness expression strategies in *... a Darkling Plain* by Krisagbedo. The author, with his sociolinguistic background, narrates a story of a family which faces challenges financially and emotionally. However, the central theme of the novel revolves around the power of love and lust among men and women in our present day society. In the novel, where over textual analysis is drawn, instances of politeness expression strategies abound, and we shall analyze them in this paper. Politeness simply means the act of showing good manners and respect for the
feelings of others. The basic focus of politeness according to Yule (1996) is ‘face’ your face is your public self-image which you expect people to recognizes. We are therefore obliged to protect both out own face and others to the extent that each time we interact with others we play out a kind of mini-drama, a kind of reciprocity in which each party is required to recognize the identity that the other claims for himself or herself.

This work is divided into the following headings: Introduction which gives a brief background of the study, theoretical framework, textual analysis and conclusion. Our theoretical framework derives from views of scholars on politeness concept and their positions shall form the data-base for our textual analysis.

2.0 Background of the Study

In the society conversations take place on a regular basis whether in the family, among sibling, between friends and acquaintances, in the office between superiors, subordinates and colleagues or lovers. In doing this, according to Wardhaugh (2006) politeness strategies are adopted whether to save the hearer’s face or that of the speaker. According to the theory of face, there is norm that whenever we engage in conversation as Wardhaugh (2006) puts it “we are obliged to protect both our face and the faces of others to the extent that each time we interact with others we play out a kind of mini-drama, a kind of ritual in which each party is required to identify the face the other claims for himself or herself”. Hence, according to Schollon and Schollon cited in Wardhaugh (2006:276) there is no faceless communication.

It is against this backdrop that we intend to find out how this conversational drama occasioned by politeness strategies is played out in A Darkling Plain., a contemporary novel by Krisagbedo. The novel has an Igbo Urban setting with some scenes in the rural setting and Port Harcourt, the oil city. The novel’s theme of love, lust, power play and male dominance revolves around the family of late James Nweke who left behind his wife Deborah to struggle in bringing up their three children: Mmeso the first born and the first girl, Chiemerie, the second born and only son, Nkiru, a girl and the last born of the family. Deborah as a hardworking woman sells ‘akara’ and manages to see Mmeso through the University who is now serving under the National Youth Service Scheme ready to take up a job to take care of the family. She is drawn between two choices for a husband, Eme, a struggling school teacher, her choice and Patrick, a rich young man, her mother’s choice. Eme, the maverick Casanova who does not really know what he wants in life fools around with other girls including his students while using one loose hand to hold on to Mmeso who is madly in love with him. Eme employs his own version of politeness strategies in his quest to marry Mmeso and also in his attempt to lure Nonye her own student into an amorous relationship. Patrick employs all politeness strategy available to him to win Mmeso’s love. Adolph, a married man, but Deborah’s lover enters the scenario, and tries to lure Deborah to become the mother of his son since his wife, Justine, cannot give him a male child. He employs all strategies to play into the heart of Deborah and chooses the master stroke of seeing Deborah’s life time dream of seeing Mmeso her daughter get married to Patrick instead of Eme. Onyinye, Mmeso’s bosom friend, employs her own antics to snatch Patrick from Mmeso whereas Ben her suitor is struggling to wed her. As the whole drama plays out, we observe a lot of politeness strategies by these
characters. In this paper we attempt to examine to what extent these politeness strategies work out for them in achieving their various personal agenda.

3.0 Theoretical Framework

First formulated in 1978 by Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson, politeness theory has since then expanded people’s perception of politeness. Politeness is the expression of the speakers’ intention to mitigate face threats carried by certain face threatening acts towards another. Being polite therefore comprises an attempt to save face for another. ‘Face’ is the public self-image that every adult tries to project. According to Yule (1996), politeness is showing awareness of another’s face if you say anything that represents a threat to another person’s self-image which is called face-threatening act. And whenever you say something that lessons the possible threat to another’s face, it is called a ‘face-saving act’. Osisanwo (2008) says:

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 lesson the possible threat amounts to FACE SAVING ACT.

Grice (1981) argues that all conversationalists are rational beings who are particularly interested in the efficient conveying of message. Brown and Levinson (1987) use this argument in their politeness theory by adding that rational agents will choose the same politeness strategy as any other would under the same context to try to mitigate face. They 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. This strategy is often used in situations where the speaker has close relationship with the audience, such as family or close friend.

Positive politeness strategies seek to minimize the threat to the hearer’s positive face. They are used 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 oriented towards the hearer’s negative face and emphasize avoidance of imposition 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 the first two politeness strategies earlier discussed. Negative face is the desire to remain independent so the speaker is more apt to include an out for the listener, through distancing styles like apologies.

According to Wardhaugh (2006:277),
When we interact with others we must be aware of both kinds of face and therefore have a choice of two kinds of politeness. Positive politeness leads to moves to achieve solidarity through offers of friendship, the use of compliments, and informal language use: we treat others as friends and allies, do not impose on them and never threaten their face. On the other hand, negative politeness leads to deference, apologizing, indirectness, and formality in language use: we adopt a variety of strategies so as to avoid any threats to the face others are presenting to us.

Off-record (indirect), the last politeness strategy devised by Brown Levinson is the indirect strategy. It uses indirect language and removes the speaker from the potential to be imposing. Here, a speaker makes a statement which indirectly insinuates that the listener has to do something.

Positive face refers to one’s self-esteem, while negative face refers to one’s freedom to act. The two aspects of face are the basic wants in any social interaction, and so during any social interaction, cooperation is needed amongst the interactants or participants to maintain each others’ faces.

The way in which people try to make conversations work is called cooperative principle according to Grice (1975). The cooperative principle is divided into four maxims: Maxims of quality, quantity, relevance and manner.

**Quality:** says that speakers should be truthful. They should not say what think is false, or make utterances which they have no evidence.

**Quantity:** a contribution should be as informative as is required for the conversation to continue. It should be neither too little, nor too voluminous, even though it is not always possible for one to decide what quantity of information satisfies the maxim in a given case.

**Relevance:** Speakers’ contributions should relate clearly to the purpose of the conversation. If a speaker’s contribution is not relevant to the subject-matter, it becomes useless to the objective which informed the conversation.

**Manner:** Speakers’ contributions should be perspicuous: clear, orderly and brief, avoiding obscurity and ambiguity. If a speaker’s statement is ambiguous for instance, meaning will be stranded.

Wardhaugh (2006) observes that conversation is a cooperative activity in the Gricean sense, and one that depends on speakers and listeners sharing a set of assumptions about what is happening. He further notes that conversation is cooperative also in the sense that speakers and listeners tend to accept each other for what they claim to be, that is, they accept the face the other offers and that face may vary according to circumstances, for at one time the face you offer may be that of a ‘close friend,’ on another occasion that of a ‘teacher’ and on a third occasion a ‘young woman’. It then follows that words in a conversation will be judged by the face presented at a particular occasion, however, there must be an agreement among the interlocutors on the type of face being presented. Thus, Wardhaugh (2006:294) asserts that “we will be involved in the face-work, the work of presenting faces to each other, protecting our
own face, and protecting other’s face. We will be playing out a little drama together to see that nothing mars the performance. That is the norm”. Furthermore Wardhaugh (2006) notes that in the conversational drama in which we are players involves respecting others’ face.

Leech (1980) defines politeness as forms of behaviour that establish and maintain comity. That is the ability of the participants in a social atmosphere of relative harmony and/or mutual understanding. To Leech, there is a politeness principle with conversational maxims similar to those of Paul Grice which we earlier enumerated. They are six maxims which include: tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy. The first and second form a pair as do the third and the fourth. Leech said that these maxims vary from culture to culture. That is what may be considered polite in one culture may be strange or rude in another.

The tact maxims: states that speakers should minimize the expression of beliefs which imply cost to others and maximize the expression of beliefs which imply benefit to others.

The generosity Maxim: says that minimize the expression of benefit to self; maximize the expression of cost to self. Unlike the tact maxim, the maxim of generosity emphasis is on the speaker, and says that others should be put first instead of the self.

The approbation maxim: states that speakers should minimize expression of beliefs which dispraise of others and maximize the expression of beliefs which express approved of others. That it is preferred to praise others and if this is not possible, to sidestep the issue, to give some kind of minimal response or to remain silent.

The modesty maxim: states that ‘minimize the expression of disagreement between self and other; maximize the expression of agreement between self and others. However, it is not being claimed that people totally avoid disagreement. But it is observed that they are much more direct in expressing agreement, rather than disagreement.

The sympathy maxim: which is the last one states thus: minimize antipathy between self and other; maximize sympathy between self and other. This could be in the form of speech acts such as congratulation, commiseration and expressing condolences – all of which is in accordance with Brown and Levinson’s positive politeness strategy of attending to the hearer’s interests, wants, and needs.

Wardhaugh (1998:255 and 2006:260) says:

When we speak, we must constantly make choices of many different kinds: what we want to say, how we want to say it, and the specific sentence types, words, and sounds that best unite the ‘what’ with the ‘how’. How we say something is at least as important as what we say; in fact, the content and the form are quite inseparable, being but two facets of the same object.

4.0 Literature Review
In a language like Javanese spoken in Indonesia, the concept and idea of politeness as Wardhaugh (2006) observes has given rise to three strata of language use whereby
depending on the social status of the person you are speaking with, you are compelled as a matter of politeness to use a particular speech style which must be appropriate. According to Wardhaugh (2006) some languages have built into them very complex systems of politeness whereby it is almost impossible to say anything without indicating the social relationship between the speaker and listener as regards status and familiarity. This will reflect in the speech style adopted for any conversational exchange.

In Javanese, there are the high, middle or low styles. According to Wardhaugh (2006), a choice of one of the styles is imperative because for each word in Javanese, there exist three variants in line with the three classes identified above. For example, the English word ‘now’ is ‘samennka’ in high style, ‘saniki’ in the middle style while ‘saiki’ would be used in the low style. Wardhaugh further notes that one is not allowed to freely shift styles, once you start with a particular style you must continue with it one is further compelled to certain verbs that are tied to each style. There seems to be a further complication of the politeness terrain in Javanese as Wardhaugh (2006) notes that the language has a set of what he calls honorifics referring to people, body parts, possessions, and human actions. These honorifics can be used to further modulate two styles, the high and low. He notes that there are both honorifics eg. ‘dahar’ for eat, and low honorifics, ‘neda’ for eat and only high honorifics can accompany high style, but both high and low honorifics can accompany low style. However, ‘neda’ for eat can be found in high style with no honorifics but basically in middle style honorifics are not employed. In low style with no honorifics, ‘eat’ is ‘mangan’ (Wardhaugh, 2006:277).

Using a set of honorifics to refer to human parts in Javanese is worthy of note because a situation similar to that exist in Igbo. For instance, ‘penis’ or ‘vagina’ is given a special treatment in conversation that is almost considered sacred. You hardly see Igbo using the equivalents of these words ‘amụ’ and ‘ọtụ’ directly. For ‘amụ’, the male private organ, several equivalents considered more polite are used in conversation. These include ‘ike nwoke’ (man power), ‘nnabụenyị’. And due to the English influence as well as the hip hop culture the youth have come up with such variants as John Thomas, koko, the long thing e.t.c. as polite versions for ‘penis’. In Igbo way of life politeness demands that children will almost not mention anything associated penis or vagina in what ever form before an elderly person. If a child happens to be present when elders are talking about such things, he would rather pretend not to hear than being considered rude or spoilt. Further on the Igbo politeness expression strategy Agbedo (2010) observes that women regardless of their age adopt some kind of politeness strategies when addressing men that occupy certain positions. He uses the Nsukka “Onyeishi’ who heads the elders’ council to expatiate. If a woman comes to address the ‘Onyeishi’ or the entire elders council, she would stoop to pay homage even though she may be older than the ‘Onyeishi’ and in the course of her speech she is not permitted to use proverbs. If situations however demands that she uses a proverb , she is required to obtain permission from the elders as a way of respect by using such words as “ as you elders normally say” before she goes ahead to release the proverbs. Furthermore, as a form of politeness, she would not go straight to the point she wants to make she has to dance around the point before saying exactly what brought her to the council elders. She may start by hailing the elders for their efforts, rendering apology for disturbing them as she knows that they have their hands full of issues for the day to deliberate on but that
she would rather be brief and not delay them if they can give her audience that the matter is very important.

Another language that makes extensive use of politeness strategies is Japanese. According to Wardhaugh (2006:280) Japanese are always described as being an extremely polite people noting that they show politeness by using honorific forms incorporating negatives. This, he notes, is analogous to English “Wouldn’t you like to…?” And is considered more polite than those without negatives; the longer the utterance the more polite; utterances with local dialect in them are less polite and those with few Chinese loan words in them are more polite: you are more polite to strangers than to acquaintances; your gender determines your use of honorifics; with men differentiating more than women among the available honorifics; whereas knowledge of honorifics is associated education, attitudes towards using them vary with age; politeness is most expected when women address men; the young address the old and members of the lower class address members of the upper classes. Wardhaugh (2006) notes that the Japanese are always very much aware of the social context of every utterance they use. They are brought up to use ‘wakimae’ (discernment) that is how to do right things socially so that personal face requirements if any are pushed to the background. According to Wardhaugh (2006:281) the evidence to support this claim and a similar claim by Nwoye (1992) concerning the Igbo of Nigeria is suggestive rather than conclusive, however, he states that it does remind us that people must be polite every where, they are not necessarily polite in the same way or for the same reasons. Wardhaugh (2006) notes the French use of ‘Tu’ for informal and ‘Vous’ for formal or politeness and English use of such titles as ‘Mr.’ to address others as a form of politeness in official setting. Wardhaugh (2006:282) attempts a summary of the importance of the principle of politeness in language use as follows:

In using language, we make use of devices that the language employs to show certain relationships to others and our attitudes towards them. Indeed, to use the language properly, we must do so. In using French, we cannot avoid the tu/vous distinction, in communicating in English, we must refer to others and address them on occasion; in speaking Javanese or Japanese, we must observe the conventions having to do with the correct choice of speech level and honorifics.

Obasi and Wayas (2010) studied the politeness strategies of former Military President Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida (IBB) in his bid to come back to power after his controversial exit from government after eight years of ruling as Nigeria as a military president. Although, IBB is constitutionally qualified to contest for the presidency, his ambition is generating too much dust because of some perceived wrong antecedents like the annulment of the June 12 elections adjudged to be free and fair by many among other issues. Obasi and Wayas (2010) observe that IBB uses face saving acts which lessen the possible threat on the hearer and by so doing, he adopts what Brown and Levinson term positive politeness whereby the speaker demonstrates solidarity and complement to the subject. Furthermore, they note that IBB also adopts distancing style; hence, his use of the plural pronoun ‘we’ and ‘our’. Again, Obasi and Wayas (2010:15) observe that “politeness is largely but by no means exclusively, a linguistic behaviour.
There are linguistic (language-based) politeness and extra linguistic politeness both they observe in IBB’s politeness strategies.

5.0 Analysis of Politeness Expression Strategies in … A Darkling Plain

In this section we intend to analyze politeness expression strategies adopted by some characters in the novel under study. And our analysis is anchored on the theory of politeness which we have earlier discussed. For easy and ordered analysis of such politeness expression strategies, excerpts are drawn from the text; numbered one to eight.

Excerpt 1

Her turn was not forthcoming, as more desperate customers that harangued and pestered Deborah got quicker attention than those who chose to wait for their own turn. Deborah was mindful of Onyinye’s undue deference to the impatient customers and promptly apologized to her “Soon the akara will be done and you will have your own,” “Ah don’t worry Mama, “Onyinye said, waving off her worries. “You can be attending to them. I am not in a hurry. I know how difficult it is for one to be doing all this alone. I wish I could be of any help.”

Deborah was getting more soaked up in the discussion than the more important business of attending to the customers until an irate customer shouted at her for not giving him attention.

“I am sorry, nna nna,” She apologized. “Please how much of the akara do you want?”

“I didn’t say akara. I said akamu and agidi.”

“Pardon me; I didn’t hear you very well.”

“How you go fit hear word when you just dey there dey talk?” the customer berated Deborah, barely controlling his anger. Obviously, his peppery squeamishness was building up steadily, prompting Onyinye’s uncouth intervention.

“Nnaa, take it easy.”

Deborah sensed the brewing verbal warfare and patted Onyinye on the lap as she arose to calm the customer.

“I said I am sorry. How much do you want?”

“Make you put thirty naira worth of agidi and ten naira for akamu.”

As the transaction progressed, Onyinye rose and picked some balls of akara, wrapped them in a ‘madam sorry’ brand of polythene, fished out money from her purse and handed it to Deborah. Taking it, she collected the wrap from Onyinye and added three more balls.

“This is for keeping me company,” Deborah said. Onyinye thanked her and left. (Pp. 8-9)

Here, we note that Deborah employs positive politeness towards the irate customer and also towards Onyinye her daughter’s friend for keeping her company. It is said that the customer is king and is always
right. This understanding may have motivated Deborah to use positive politeness strategies on the customer. She even gives him a pet name, *nna nna*.

**Excerpt 2**

“You told him about your financial problem eh?” Mmeso asked, her eyes wide on Chiemerie.

“No, I did not tell him anything”.

“Then, it was mum who told him?”

“I don’t think so”.

“You neither told him nor did mother. Then, it must be the spirits”.

Mmeso stood up and pranced about in fit of anger for a while. Stopping briefly, she turned in the direction of Chiemerie and looked him straight in the face.

“Look, you may think that you are still a small boy but somebody in SS3 class like you should be old enough to understand certain things…”

“But, sister,” he interjected fearfully, “Patrick is such a nice man and he has been very helpful to.”

“Shut up!” she shouted. “What do you know about being nice?” (P. 33).

In the above excerpt, Mmeso performs face-threatening act in that she does not recognize Chiemerie’s face, his self-image is not respected by Mmeso. Brown and Levinson (1987) have the following politeness strategies: bald on – record, positive politeness, negative politeness and off-record (indirect). Mmeso, judging from her action above, adopts ‘bald on-record’ strategy in addressing Chiemerie because her action does not minimize threat to her hearer’s face. The use of imperative (command) “shut up!” by Mmeso shows that she has more social power than her brother, Chiemerie who with his innocent statement tries to object the accusation leveled against him but to no avail.

**Excerpt 3**

“Shit!” Joe shouted, recoiling in amazement.

“You should have told me now,” he said in a hushed tone. Eme increased the volume of the soft music to drown their discussion about Mmeso. Inside the bedroom, Mmeso felt willed and dejected…

“I am sorry, Mmeso”, he pleaded”. Do not mind that rascal. You know he is always like that”. He stopped to gauge her reaction. It was a very bad situation and he did not give himself much chance but there was no harm in trial. She heaved up gradually, picking her nose with a tissue paper….

“Eme!” she called Eme answered, wondering what would follow.” You are doing this to me?”

“I said that I am sorry”, he pleaded, snuggling up to her and trying to cuddle her.

“Take your filthy hand off me” she snarled.

“Take it easy now” (PP. 71-72).

It is said that “many days for a thief, but one day for the owner”. Mmeso has caught Eme red-handed of his infidelity. In a way of tendering apology, Eme said “I am sorry, Mmeso” trying to recognize her ‘face’. Part of Eme’s strategies was, first, increasing the
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volume of the soft music to distract Mmeso from getting the details of Joe’s conversation with him. And secondly, Eme referred to Joe as a rascal just to confuse her. But the question is, was Joe not telling the truth?

Excerpt 4
“I am not joking, Adolph” she said, cutting him short. “I have told you several times I have got it in the neck from my children because of this friendship thing. Please, I do not want to be part of this anymore Mmeso’s wahala is enough headache to keep me company. If you don’t mind I will like to be left alone.”
“That is exactly why I am here to deal with Mmeso-Patrick issue once and for all.”
“How do you mean?” she asked, buoying up. The face that knitted up in furrows began to loosen gradually. Adolph took one deep breath and exhaled. He worked his mouth as if to juggle up the words into their proper positions. It was a pleasant surprise that Deborah’s interest in him had suddenly been kindled by whatever pill, he claimed, he had for her headache… “A true friend”, Adolph said, “is one who overlooks your failures and tolerates your success…”
“What I am saying is that there is a sure way we can go around the Patrick issue and Mmeso would be willing to marry him any time. It is said that we live by hope but a reed never becomes an iroko tree by mere dreaming”
“How do you mean?”
“I know a man who can fix the marriage between the two almost at no cost. Look, the heap of yam tubers you reap depends on the number of mounds you have plowed. One’s effort decide what one eats for dinner- foe some it is pounded yam, for others it is roasted longwe or nothing. If you choose to have pounded yam for dinner, come and let me take you to the man.”
Adolph, in his characteristic subterfuge and subtlety, was stocking the power of a new idea to shackle Deborah’s mind and suck her down the irredeemable depth of hypnotism…
“Are you sure of this man?” Deborah asked, apparently getting excited by the new idea…
“Be sure you know the road well enough before you act as a guide.”
“Well, a kite of tattered wing is not a toddler. I know what I am saying. I can take you there if you want. The man is living at the outskirts of the town. Alternatively, he can come here if you so wish. The only thing is that it will cost you more.”
“I thought you said it would be a no cost”
“Well, not in that sense but, you know, the service he is going to render to you cannot be quantified in monetary terms. In any case, a person from whose head lice are being removed must learn to be grateful. By being grateful, one makes oneself deserving of yet another favour. As our people usually say, when the labourer is praised, his cutlass begins to cut even more keenly.”
“That’s alright but what about the after-effect on her? I mean ,don’t you think it could have permanent damage on her senses?” … “I give you my word that there will be no such thing.” … Deborah paused for a moment to think. Her
immediate worry was the financial implication of the project. Money, it is said makes the mare go. How much money would she need to make the mare go? Adolph had no immediate answer.
I can’t tell for now,” he said,” but I can go and find out if you want. You know I can do anything for you.” “ Go then and find out and let me have feedback as soon as possible.”(Pp. 83-85)

Here, we see Adolph adopting positive politeness strategy by offers of friendship and making himself an ally to Deborah in solving her immediate family problems. This strategy obviously pays off for him as we see Deborah let down her guards and ready to cooperate with Adolph all the way including granting him his earlier request which is the main reason Adolph had been coming to her that becoming his intimate lover.

Excerpt 5

“Are you calling me?” he asked.
“Yes,” Deborah answered. “Sit down here”
She said as Chiemerie entered. As he sat on the bed, she shifted closer to him and put her arm around his neck.
“Yes, there is something I want to tell you. You are not just my only son but also double as my husband. I am telling you this because of the position you occupy as the head of the family. No matter the age of a male child, he still commands authority among women…”
“There is an important job, which Adolph has volunteered to do for this family”, Deborah finally broke the ice.
“Job?” Chiemerie asked.
“Yes, but you people’s attitude towards him has not been encouraging at all and he may decide to call it off”.
“What sort of job are you talking about, mum?”
“That is not important for now. You will get to know about it at the appropriate time…”

Women have diplomatic ways of influencing men on certain issues. In her politeness strategy, Deborah draws Chiemerie’s attention to his household-head responsibility as a male child, which is traditional. The idea of Chiemerie being recognized as the head of the family as the only male definitely will swell his head. He had been looking for ways of exercising his male authority in the house especially over his younger sister and also in the distribution of household chores. Deborah even said that he is more than a husband to her; not only a son. These are all said by Deborah just to win Chiemerie’s heart from disrespecting and embarrassing Adolph each time he comes to their home and also win his support for the so called job that Adolph is about carrying out for the family. If it were not so, how could a son be double as her mother’s husband. However, this is to show mutual understanding between mother and son. Deborah tends to show that her son, Chiemerie, the only male in the family has a desire to be respected.

The approach adopted by Deborah as seen above is what Brown and Levinson (1987) call ‘positive politeness strategy’, because it confirms that the relationship between mother and son here is friendly. Deborah also tries as much as possible to
recognize her son’s face by way of praise. She goes extra mile by tenderly putting her arm around his neck. Deborah complements her son and sees him as his ally and was not imposing him and do not threaten his face hence, applying positive politeness according to Wardhaugh (2006) analysis.

Excerpt 6

“Have you seen what I was telling you?” she asked, spitting.
“What about?”
“Can’t you see the rustic nature of Mmeso’s village? The people are so primitive and backward. Even in this twenty first century, there are still people living in mud houses and go about almost naked”.

A little spark kindles fire. Onyinye was looking for a spark in Patrick to handle the wisp of smoke milling in her into an inferno but found none,…
“Yes,” Patrick said, smiling, “but I don’t see anything so peculiar about this village. After all, the whole of Africa was like this until only very recently when the white man arrived”. Onyinye was ready to haul calumnies boldly; she knew something was sure to stick.
“Onyinye! listen. Even if your village is London as you claim, which I doubt because….
“I am not saying that my village is London but you cannot compare any village in my state, “Home for everybody to this bush and their bushmen. You have lived all your life in my state and you know what I am talking about” (PP 116-117).

Leech (1980) says that a speaker should minimize dispraise of other but maximize praise of other (approbation maxim). His modesty maxim, also that a speaker (s) should minimize praise of self, and maximize dispraise of self. Onyinye, in the above excerpt, has failed to obey the two maxims: approbation and modesty in that she keeps praising here village and dispraising Mmeso’s. Her aim is to win Patrick’s heart to her own side; disassociating him from Mmeso, his ‘dream’. To her surprise, Patrick countered her claim that Mmeso’s village is primitive, after all the whole Africa was a village until the coming of the colonial masters who though came with their exploitation minds transformed some of the primitive areas in Africa to what they are today. So, Onyinye has no point saying that her village was not once backward. She was employing negative politeness which did not work out for her as she did not succeed in snatching away Patrick from Mmeso despite her additional extra linguistic politeness strategies like painting Patrick with unsolicited romantic kisses and hugging.

Excerpt 7

“Mummy, how can you say such an uncharitable thing about me?” she had cried.
“Between you and me, who is more uncharitable? Ask even your little sister, not to talk of Chiemerie”.


“Mum”, she started, “forgive me if my objection to Patrick’s proposed is being viewed as an uncharitable act. It is my sincere belief that marriage has nothing to do with charity…

“Oh, that is a twentieth century philosopher, mum. you see mum, each time I sit back to roll back my mind in retrospect, I remember how you toiled day and night to make me what I am today…” (PP.148-141).

Sometimes, when one is angry, and could say something which one would not have said if in normal mood. And that is what exactly happened when Mmeso addresses her mother “Mummy, how can you say such an in charitable thing about me?” But when she realized that what she said was so dry on her mother; that is her statement did not recognized her mothers face, her public self-image, she apologized (face-saving act). Part of her politeness strategies is by praising her mother, reminding her about the good things she has done for her. How her mother suffered in the past, so that she, Mmeso could become what she is at present; a graduate.

**Excerpt 8**

“Hello Pat. It is me, Mmeso… Don’t you know Mmeso again? probably, there are so many ‘Mmeso’ in your life eh? Well, my own Mmeso is Mmeso Onyeke”. “Mmeso!” Pat screamed, as he leaped up in ecstasy. “Where are you phoning from? Port Harcourt?”

“Yes. Please, listen. Pat, I am sorry about the embarrassment the other day. Just take it as one of those things in courtship. That is how it is with us, women. You just have to bear with me…”

“That’s great men! Now, tell me; are you saying YES to my proposal?”

“Mmm… well, if that is what you want, yes” (p. 182)

The above excerpt shows the union of two lovers who have been in courtship for a long time. It comes at a time when Pat almost gives up to the fight. Mmeso, how had been before and so rude to Pat realizes her mistakes and decides to apologizes to him. She did not go straight to her apology; she indirectly accused Pat of insincerity when she said”… probably, there are so many Mmeso’s in your life…” Which implies that Patrick may have other girls in his mind, and that made him not recognize Mmeso’s identity, even when she mentioned her name. Even at the point of accepting Patrick, Mmeso still delayed her ‘yes’, which is typical of women when it comes to courtship. This they do to elevate their women hood image before me. Pat wonders what has caused the sudden acceptance from Mmeso, could it be his patience, his politeness strategies including frequent visits to family with gifts and cash, going to the extent of going to the village to search for Mmeso even at the risk of being rebuffed by Mmeso? Whichever one it was, we may say that Patrick has paid his dues with his various politeness strategies he adopts to woo Mmeso.

**6.0 Conclusion**

We have, in this paper, examined politeness expression strategies in … a Darkling Plain. A novel written by an author whose linguistic prowess undoubtedly influences the socio-cultural, economic and religious background of the story. With politeness
theory, which this work is anchored upon, we were able to analyze such politeness expression strategies adopted in the novel. To make our analysis easy and understood, excerpts were drawn from the novel, which numbered 1 – 8, for easy step by step analysis. It is discovered that individuals have their different ways of expressing politeness; it could be through face-threatening act or face-saving act. It is face-threatening when the speaker does not recognize the self-image of the listener, and it is face-saving if the speaker is aware of or protects the listeners ‘face’ self-image. All these strategies amongst others have been given attention in our discussion. We see Onyinye employing a lot of bald on record strategy with Patrick, whereby she does not want to mitigate or reduce the effect on him when she uses all sorts of derogatory terms in describing Mmeso, Deborah and their entire family and village. We also see this kind of situation playing out when there was a public brawl on the issue of flushing the toilet with Deborah, Chiemerie and other tenants. (Pp.58-63) Deborah’s neighbour, Papa Chime bluntly referred to her as a prostitute with no intention of saving her face. While Deborah referred to Papa Chime, as a slave.

The paper observes that in every communication there is the need not only to save one’s face but that of others. There are certain truths or facts about a person or race that are open secrets but politeness strategy demands that you play down on such and avoid mentioning such for peace to reign. Hence, this calls for caution in every communicative organ whether vertical or horizontal. This understanding has serious implications for those saddled with responsibility of disseminating public oriented information and messages as well those in governance at various levels. A good understanding of politeness strategies is very important for those seeking elective posts. We see how IBB tried his hands at some politeness strategies. Besides, President Goodluck Jonathan’s politeness strategies which is a subject of further research is unparalleled in history of democratic process of Nigeria. On the whole politeness strategies are very relevant in dousing tension and maintaining peace towards a sustainable development in a polity like Nigeria.

References


