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A Pragmatic Analysis of Politeness In *Nasir El-Rufai's* Speech and Social Media Users' Responses: Polite Language as a Tool for Social Inclusion and Sustainable Development

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"The tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell".

Abstract

Polite use of Language is a very important phenomenon in facilitating a successful conversation and avoiding conflict among interlocutors. This research paper carried out a pragmatic analysis of politeness in Nasir El-Rufai's speech and some Social Media Responses. This is essential based on the incessant conflict ravaging the nation, and peace cannot be sustained if our political leaders are not deliberate in their choice and use of language. This research aims at ascertaining whether or not politeness plays a part in his speech. In order to achieve this, excerpts were extracted from videos downloaded via YouTube and comments of responders screened shot from Face book; after careful studying, observation and selection. Also, scholarly journals and books on pragmatics and politeness theories were studied. After subjecting the analysis to Geoffrey Leech's theory of politeness, the findings revealed that, to some extent, ElRufai's Speech violated the politeness principles and impoliteness influences his speech and the responses of Nigerians on social media more than politeness does. This research is significant because of the way in which language is used among interreactants; when politeness is not properly utilized, tension and conflict are unavoidable. Theoretically, this research has provided linguistic information in relation to the analysis of politeness principles and practically, the findings of the study are a point of reference and alternative information about how to apply pragmatic theory, especially those that relate to politeness principles.

Keywords: Pragmatic, Politeness, cooperative principle, context, and conflict.

Introduction

Language is a channel of communication and coexistence. Language plays an important role in human communication; it can harmonise or heighten conflicts among interlocutors. We can agree that polite language denotes peaceful coexistence as it shuns speakers to

use utterances that might be interpreted as negative (e.g., a desire to have violence or conflict). Such language is capable of generating a positive environment for people around the world. Every nation of the world wants development and Nigeria is not an exception when it



comes to advocating for sustainable development in all aspects of life.

Sustainable development is unachievable if impolite use of language dominates any type of conversation. This is because the use of impolite language can cause tension and conflict among interlocutors, and when conflict surges, destruction of lives and property cannot be avoided thereby setting threat to sustainable development. Language can be used to encourage, discourage, strengthen good communication or even cause conflict between interlocutors, hence, there is need to use polite language for fruitful and successful communication. One of the ways through which language can be used to enhance good communication is through the linguistic phenomenon of politeness principles. The affirmation above collaborates with the view of Leech (1983) who saw politeness as “*strategic conflict avoidance*” which, in his opinion, could be weighed in terms of the degree of effort put into the avoidance of conflict situations. Leech further stresses the significance of politeness in language by saying that “unless you are polite to your neighbour, the channel of communication between you will break down and you will no longer be able to borrow his mower” (82). This explains that, for any meaningful friendship to take place, for a leader and his followers to work together successfully, for citizens of a country to exercise their rights and live peacefully, and for members of a family to live together peacefully and harmoniously, those involved must exhibit politeness in

their linguistic interaction. Hence, politeness is a universal linguistic behaviour.

Words are so powerful that when they are not properly used in a particular context, they will generate conflict and when conflict evolves as a result of impolite utterances, especially those of our leaders, sustainable development is impossible. Politeness is a form of respect (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Holmes, 1995) and functions to reduce or avoid conflicts (Lakoff, 1973, Siffianou, 1992) and to create balance (Leech, 1983) in communication. Hence, the impolite language of El-Rufai that gives the hearers the feeling that they are socially excluded from the political affairs of the nation Nigeria; a country in which its citizens are advocating for social inclusion and he is, in turn, sowing the seed of religious discord between Christians and Muslims. This is why it is expedient for this research to be carried out in order to address the problem of impolite use of language by leaders which its consequences cannot be easily curtailed.

Nasir El-Rufai is a former governor of Kaduna State whose speech is the focus of this research paper. El-Rufai’s speech with some Islamic clerics in Kaduna state, shortly after the just concluded 2023 presidential election in Nigeria sparked wider reactions among Nigerians who disagreed with some of his utterances during that meeting and see it as a strategy for instigating religious conflict in Kaduna state and the nation as a whole. Moreover, as a political figure and a leader, El-Rufai must use politeness strategy in his



speech to show leadership competence in uniting the nation, thereby, ensuring sustainable development. This paper focuses on a pragmatic analysis of politeness in El-Rufai's speech and the responses of social media users against or for his speech and ascertains how politeness plays a vital role in conflict avoidance which is the bedrock of sustainable development.

Conceptual Review

Social Inclusion: The 2030 Agenda is based on the principle that every person should gain from prosperity and enjoy necessary standards of well-being. This principle is expressed through the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which seek to eliminate poverty and hunger for all countries and social groups, while ensuring access to healthy lives, education, modern energy, and vital information, among other essential needs. Acknowledging that meeting these goals is difficult without institutions actively working on behalf of the most impoverished and vulnerable, the Agenda includes broad aims that support the rule of law, promote equal access to justice, and encourage inclusive and participatory decision-making. Nonetheless, social inclusion presents a more intricate set of issues than those shown in the SDGs. No single global agenda can suitably address the various aspects of exclusion or effectively foster inclusion, especially when considering the diverse situations around the world.

Social inclusion can be understood as a process that ensures

individuals at risk of poverty and social exclusion acquire the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social, political, and cultural life, thereby enjoying a standard of living deemed normal within their society. This process enhances their participation in decision-making that impacts their lives and guarantees access to fundamental rights (Commission of the European Communities, 2003, p. 9). In policy discussions, initiatives aimed at promoting social inclusion have emerged in response to concerns regarding social exclusion. For the purposes of this research paper, social inclusion is defined as the process of improving participation in society for individuals disadvantaged by age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic status, through enhanced opportunities, access to resources, a voice in decision-making, and the respect for rights. Thus, social inclusion serves as both a process and a goal. Promoting social inclusion necessitates addressing social exclusion by dismantling barriers to participation in society, as well as taking proactive steps to facilitate that participation. As a political response to the challenges of exclusion, social inclusion represents a deliberate effort to embrace and welcome all individuals, fostering greater equality and tolerance.

Sustainable Development

The term "sustainability" originally originates from the field of ecology, denoting an ecosystem's capacity to endure over time with



minimal alteration. When the notion of development was integrated into the discussion, the focus shifted from purely environmental considerations to encompass societal aspects (Reboratti, 207–209) and capital economics.

The concept of sustainable development was first widely publicized in the World Conservation Strategy (IUCN, 1980) and has since become a central theme in discussions surrounding environment and development, endorsed by many prominent global leaders. A notable definition is presented in the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) from 1987, commonly known as the "Brundtland Report," which states that "sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Sustainable development is grounded in three core concepts: development, which refers to socio-economic growth within ecological limits; needs, which emphasizes the redistribution of resources to ensure a high quality of life for all; and future generations, which focuses on the long-term use of resources to secure a satisfactory quality of life for those who come after us.

The essence of sustainable development is further illuminated by the Triple Bottom Line concept, which advocates for a balance among three pillars of sustainability: environmental sustainability, which prioritizes the preservation of a quality environment essential for both economic activities and human

well-being; social sustainability, which seeks to uphold human rights, equality, and cultural identity while respecting diversity; and economic sustainability, which is vital for maintaining the natural, social, and human capital necessary for income and standards of living.

Achieving complete sustainable development requires a careful equilibrium among these pillars. However, this balancing act is challenging, as the pursuit of goals within each pillar must respect the interests of the others to avoid creating imbalances.

Pragmatics

Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that examines how speakers utilize language to achieve their objectives and how listeners interpret the meanings intended by the speaker (Aitchison 104). This field evolved through the contributions of various researchers following Austin's (1962) passing. A conversation relies not only on the speaker, who strives to convey a message, but also on the listener, who reaches conclusions based on the implications of the utterance, influenced by the context in which it occurs. Unlike syntax and semantics, which focus primarily on linguistic meaning and structure, pragmatics emphasizes human cooperation and knowledge. Semantics, which delves into the meanings of lexical items and their structures, serves as a foundation for pragmatics, which instead prioritizes the intended meanings that arise from context (Aitchison 88-104). The various definitions of pragmatics found in the literature highlight the



importance of context in providing a meaningful interpretation of language in practice. While interactional meaning in inaugural speeches has been the focus of numerous studies, the current research will concentrate specifically on utterances and responses.

Context

Pragmatics fundamentally concerns the speaker's intended meaning and how the listener interprets that meaning, making context a crucial element of the field. The context of an utterance encompasses everything that can influence its interpretation, excluding the specific form and content of the phrase or sentence itself, as well as any conventional meanings associated with gestures. However, defining context remains a challenge. It must include information about both the physical environment and the preceding discourse; in some instances, particularly with literary texts, subsequent discourse should also be considered.

Context is often categorized into two types: (physical) context and 'co-text,' highlighting the distinction between these two sources of information. According to Sperber and Wilson (1995), context is described as a "psychological construct, a subset of the hearer's assumptions about the world." This includes not only expectations about the future and scientific hypotheses but also religious beliefs, personal anecdotes, cultural assumptions, and beliefs regarding the speaker's mental state (15-16). Consequently, context extends beyond immediate discourse and the physical

surroundings of the interlocutors. Embugushiki and Upev further assert that "context incorporates any encyclopaedic knowledge necessary for processing an utterance, including scientific knowledge, cultural backgrounds, and religious attitudes; essentially, any factor that may influence an individual's interpretation of a statement" (4). This classification proves especially relevant for the pragmatic analysis of politeness.

Cooperative Principle

Grice's (1975) most significant contribution to linguistics is his theory of implicatures. He characterizes communication as adhering to what he terms the Cooperative Principle (CP), arguing that a fundamental assumption we make in conversations is the intention to cooperate in creating meaningful exchanges. Grice's Cooperative Principle has emerged as a central and somewhat contentious topic in pragmatics. Originally presented by H.P. Grice during a series of lectures in 1967, the Cooperative Principle states that, "Make your contribution such as is required, at the state at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" (48). To elucidate the processes behind implication, Grice formulated the following maxims: **Quantity Maxim:** this relates to the quantity of information to be provided, and under it fall the following maxims:

- a. Make your contribution as informative as required (for the current purposes of the exchange).



b. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

Quality Maxim: 'Try to make your contribution one that is true'.

a. Do not say what you believe to be false.

b. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

Relation Maxim: 'Be relevant'

Manner Maxim: 'Be perspicuous'.

a. Avoid obscurity of expression

b. Avoid ambiguity

c. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity)

d. Be orderly.

Politeness Principle

The concept of politeness holds significant importance in the field of pragmatics. As Green states, politeness encompasses "whatever means are employed to display consideration for one's addressee's feelings (or face), regardless of the social distance between the speaker and the addressee" (151). According to Grundy, "Politeness is the term we use to describe the relationship between how something is communicated to an addressee and that addressee's judgment regarding how it ought to be expressed" (164). Denham and Lobeck explain that politeness "expresses concern for others while also fostering the intention for this concern to be reciprocated; we exhibit politeness in order to make others feel comfortable, which in turn enhances our own sense of ease" (346). Lakoff's (1973) work on politeness proposed the rules: do not impose, give options and make the other person feel good, as reasons why participants in a communicative exchange may flout the Gricean

maxims. Politeness is a feature of language use that is acquired through the process of socialisation.

Politeness can be understood as the embodiment of qualities such as tactfulness, modesty, and kindness toward others, which collectively contribute to harmonious social interactions. Within the study of linguistic politeness, the concept of "face" stands out as a central theme. In the field of pragmatics, one's face is defined as their public self-image, which individuals strive to maintain and enhance in social contexts. A pivotal contribution to the understanding of politeness in intercultural communication is the theory of politeness formulated by sociolinguists Brown and Levinson, which has been extensively cited and utilized in research (Brunet, Cowie, Donnan, & Douglas Cowie, 2012: 2). This theory focuses primarily on the various strategies employed to express politeness in ways that protect the face of all participants involved in a conversation.

Moreover, the essence of politeness transcends mere verbal communication; it fundamentally involves a thoughtful consideration of the feelings, desires, and social norms of the interlocutors. This means that expressions of politeness can be communicated through both verbal language and non-verbal cues, such as body language and gestures, which play an essential role in conveying respect and understanding (Leech, 140). Hence, the dynamics of politeness are vital for facilitating effective and respectful communication across diverse cultural landscapes.



According to Leech's *Grand Strategy of Politeness*, for a speaker to be polite he should take into consideration two constraints while communicating with others: 1) the major constraint which involved the speaker to "place a high value on what relates to the other persons," and 2) the minor constraint which also involved the speaker to "place a low value on what relates to him" (1). Leech's theory might be applied and adopted to explain politeness in any act of communicative interaction in "Eastern languages such as Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, as well as in Western languages such as English" (1). Although considered not universal, Leech's *Grand Strategy of Politeness* remains workable among people from different cultures and languages (4). He reformulated the politeness maxims proposed earlier and modified them into ten new maxims, paying attention to their applicability to all cultures. Despite these modifications, it is a fact that politeness is not constant in all situations.

Uroko, in *Readdressing the Ethno-religious Conflicts in Southern Kaduna* asserts that, the southern Kaduna crises are driven by religion and ethnicity. These reoccurring conflicts have led to the sad state of southern Kaduna –economically, politically and culturally. Many lives and property have been destroyed as a result of the religious conflicts between Christians and Muslims in southern Kaduna. The December 2016 Massacre of defenceless women, children and the elderly men in southern Kaduna demand condemnation from spirited individuals and the government.

Dialogue should be used as a way of settling disputes rather than resorting to violence. The government should make sure that all those involved in any act of religious conflicts should be made to bear the full weight of the law.

Theoretical Framework

For the purpose of this current research paper, Leech's (1983) Theory of Politeness is adopted as the main theory. Also, Grice's Cooperative Principle theory shall equally be referred to where applicable. These theories of politeness capture the essence of the current research paper since the data to be analysed are speech of Nasir El-Rufai and the responses of some social media users which have already been committed to the written form.

Leech (1983: 132) identifies seven politeness maxims and their sub-maxims thus:

1. Tact maxim: (a) Minimize cost to other
(b) Maximize benefit to other.
2. Generosity maxim: (a) minimize benefit to self (b) maximize cost to self.
3. Approbation maxim: (a) minimize dispraise of other (b) maximize praise of other.
4. Modesty maxim: (a) minimize praise of self (b) maximize dispraise of self.
5. Agreement maxim: (a) minimize disagreement between self and other (b) maximize agreement between self and other.
6. Sympathy maxim: (a) minimize antipathy between self and other (b) maximize sympathy between self and other.



“Tact maxim” has been simply explained by Ogwuche as “the ability to be tactful or wise in one’s utterance, that is, ability to avoid offensive utterance” (123). The “Generosity maxim” centres on the belief that *others* should be put first instead of the *self* as it concerns directive and commissive acts. For “Approbation maxim”, Leech (135) writes that this maxim could be further explained or simplified to mean “avoid saying unpleasant things about others and more particularly about hearer”. The two sub-maxims of “Modesty maxim” which say that “minimize praise of self” and “maximize dispraise of self” agree with Ogwuche’s explanation that the maxim “involves humility and sometimes a sense of condescension, i.e., not being vainglorious or boastful”. Agreement maxim means that people should express agreement more directly in conversation and that disagreement should be expressed by regret or partial agreement. Odebunmi writes that “agreement maxim does not mean that disagreement should not be expressed, but rather that they should be expressed in an indirect manner” (5). Sympathy maxim means that people must congratulate others on their achievement, and condole with them when calamity happens to them or befalls them.

Research Methodology

To access data for this analysis, excerpts were extracted from videos downloaded via some mainstream media houses’ websites and Facebook, after a careful observation, 14 excerpts were

selected and subjected to Leech’s (1983) theory of politeness.

Analysis and Discussion

Excerpt 1

“... I tell them that, I did a thorough calculation; most of those that are not Muslims don’t vote for our party (APC). Most of them! So, why should I give them the deputy (governor) position? I did my calculation and I knew we could win the election without giving them. That’s first. This is politics”.

The above excerpt was extracted from a video that has gone viral on social media and mainstream media houses, where Nasir El-Rufai, a former governor of Kaduna state was seen and heard speaking to a group of Imams and was thanking them for the help they have provided, specifically in Kaduna state for ensuring a Muslim – Muslim ticket and at the national level for replicating same. He further clarified why he chose a Muslim as his deputy without giving the position to a Christian as expected. It can be deduced from his speech that, with the use of several personal pronouns “I” to show that he has achieved his political agenda in Kaduna state against the Christians, El-Rufai has violated the politeness principle, particularly the modesty maxim which stipulates that the speaker in a conversation should “minimize praise of self and maximize dispraise of self”. His statement sounds pompous. In order words, the idea behind this maxim involves humility and sometimes a sense of condescension, which is, not being vainglorious or boastful. Therefore, El-Rufai has flouted the politeness



strategy by not putting the feelings and desires of the hearer into consideration, thereby threatening the face of the hearer. Also, with his use of the plural pronoun “them”, he is, by implication, referring to Christians who have not voted for their party (APC). In a country where every group or individual is advocating for social inclusion and El-Rufai is saying that he won't include Christians in political positions that should be duly theirs, this would stir up conflict, thereby making sustainable development impossible.

Excerpt 2

“What we have proven for the past four years, what we've proven is, government that the governor is a Muslim, the deputy governor is a Muslim, SSG, a Muslim, Chief of Staff, a Muslim, Commissioner of finance, a Muslim; he will not cheat Christians in Kaduna state ...The top government hierarchies in Kaduna state are Muslims. But is there any Christian in this state that will prove we've oppressed them?”

This excerpt is also gotten from El-Rufai's speech with the Imams in which he was recounting and reminding them of successes he made during his tenure; how he was able to put Muslims in all the top government positions in the state. He went further to mention all the positions that the Muslims occupied in Kaduna state during his tenure as the governor. It can be deduced here that, ElRufai has violated the politeness principle, specifically the tact maxim which stipulates that in a conversation, the speaker should avoid offensive utterance and be

considerate in his use of language in order not to hurt the feelings of the hearer. More so, considering the context at which these utterances are uttered, one can say his statements are contradictory. This is because after boasting that all the top government positions were occupied by Muslims without consideration for Christians, he contradicts himself by saying that, “*He will not cheat Christians in Kaduna state*” or “*but is there any Christian in this state that will prove we've oppressed them?*”, when they were already feeling cheated and oppressed.

Excerpt 3

“... I replied, 'yes, we're looking for those who can deliver, we're not looking at your religion'. Of course, we consider the religious aspect but I can't say that (laughter). But what I am asking is who is being oppressed? Open up and tell us if this government has treated you unjustly. No answer. Unless you are just used to being engaging in criminal activities, used to killing people and we've stopped that. Or you we're used to blocking roads and we said if you do it again, there will be consequences”.

This excerpt is still the part of speech where El-Rufai was addressing Islamic clerics. He said that when people complain about his choice of a Muslim deputy and those who occupied the “hierarchical position”, his replied is that, he is looking for “those who can deliver”. Here, he has flouted the tact maxim which stipulates that in a conversation, the speaker should “minimize cost to other and maximize benefit to other. In other words, the idea behind tact maxim is that, the speaker should exhibit the



ability to void offence utterance, specifically to the hearer. El-Rufai's utterance here connotes that none of the Christian living in Kaduna state "can deliver". That is to say, only Muslims can deliver when it comes to leadership or holding political offices. This is an insult to the intelligence of other religions in Kaduna state which in this case, the hearers. Secondly, it can be deduced from the above statement that, El-Rufai's utterance violated the approbation maxim which states that, in a conversation; the speaker should "avoid saying unpleasant things about others and more particularly about the hearer. This is seen in the second part of his statement in this excerpt where he asserts that, *"Unless you are just used to being engaging in criminal activities, used to killing people and we've stopped that. Or you we're used to blocking roads and we said if you do it again, there will be consequences"*. This is just a baseless accusation, and by implication, he is referring to other religions, particularly, Christianity; which it is a known fact that a Christian is supposed to be the deputy governor which he denied that opportunity.

Excerpt 4

"And that's what we've proven again, since Senator Uba Sani and Dr Hadiza Sabuwa Balarabe still won the election, even with the religious gang ups against us. And you the Imams and Ulamas that are here, you were the ones who did the work not even the politicians because even the politicians betrayed us (Wallahi)".

This excerpt was also extracted from ElRufai's speech, where he was seen and heard,

"boasting" before the Imams about their Muslim-Muslim ticket's victory in Kaduna state; in spite of the believed "religious gang ups" against them. It can therefore be deduced here that, El-Rufai has violated the modesty maxim which stipulates that, in a conversation; the speaker should "minimize praise of self" and "maximize dispraise of self". In other words, the idea involves humility and sometimes a sense of condescension, which is, not being vainglorious or boastful. Furthermore, the use of the pronouns "we, us, you" as employed in the above excerpt, by implication, are referred to Muslims and their Imams; since other religions and the politicians were also excluded from the list of his voters.

Excerpt 5

"We're aware of those who collected money, on Election Day they switched off their phones, slept off and didn't even bother to come out to vote. Those we paid to go and vote didn't come out, and only the volunteer group members did".

The above excerpt is another utterance made by El-Rufai during his courtesy visits to the Imams and the Ulamas in Kaduna state. He was heard telling the Imams that they paid some voters but they failed to turn up on the Election Day. Therefore, it can be inferred that, by his utterance, he has violated the generosity maxim which specify that the speaker should "minimize benefit to self" and "maximize cost to self". In other words, the idea is that is more polite, in an offer, to make appear that the offerer makes no sacrifice, so that in turn it can become easier for hearer to accept



the offer. The speaker made an offer of money to the voters but when they failed to turn up because of reasons best known to them, that offer made to them now poses a threat to them. This is because El-Rufai made it look as if there is a consequence for their actions when he said, "We are aware of those who collected money..." and "those we paid..." but did not turn up. From this excerpt, it also inferred that the election was not a free and fair one; since the voters were presumably bought with money.

Excerpt 6

"I beg you in the name of God and the Prophet, to support Senator Uba Sani, when he finishes these four years, he should be re-elected, then we can continue to prove to people that Islamic leadership doesn't discriminate but doesn't condone indignity. That's the only thing we want to prove ... but this is not the end; we will have to do it for at least twenty years and that will make everyone understand. After Uba finishes his tenure and gets re-elected again, that will be sixteen, right? Then we'll have another tenure which will make it 24 years.

In the excerpt above, El-Rufai is urging the Islamic clerics to continue to support APC and its candidate Senator Uba Sani for the next four years tenure and possibly another four years as governor of Kaduna state. The former governor's speech here shows that he has flouted the politeness principle, particularly the tact maxim which the idea is, the ability of the speaker to be tactful or wise in his utterance, that is, the ability to avoid offensive utterance. His speech is offensive to the hearer, specifically the Christians

in the sense that, El-Rufai was first and foremost addressing the Islamic clerics, boasting about their (Muslims) victory, and soliciting for the continuous support for a Muslim – Muslim leadership in all the political offices in the state. More so, he violated the modesty maxim which says that a speaker in a conversation should have a sense of condescension, which is, not being vainglorious or boastful. El-Rufai in his speech even went ahead to say that they will sustain an Islamic regime in the state and that, "this is not the end, we will have to do it for at least for 20 years" poses a threat to the hearers, which in this case, the Christians.

Excerpt 7

"I swear to God, this has been our plan from the first day we started APC in the state and God has been helping us. What we successfully did in Kaduna state (Muslim - Muslim ticket) has now been replicated all over the country. No liar will ever come out to play politics of Christianity and win election ever again. Peter Obi did and look where he is. We've solved that problem. He is silenced by forced. Since Asiwaju won the election, CAN (Christian Association of Nigeria) has been very silent. That's the only way there will be peace in this nation. By the time we do it over and over again (Muslim – Muslim ticket), everywhere will be calmed".

The above excerpt contains El-Rufai speech where he was seen and heard praising themselves (Muslims) of what they have done in winning the Muslim – Muslim ticket in Kaduna state and the country at large before the Imams. His utterance in this excerpt has



therefore, violated the modesty maxim which stipulates that a speaker should minimize praise of self and maximizes dispraise of self. In other words, avoid being boastful because it poses a threat to the self-image of the hearer. Again, he violated the approbation maxim which states that a speaker in a conversation should avoid saying unpleasant things about others and more particularly about hearer. What El-Rufai said in this excerpt about Peter Obi and the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) is impolite and therefore, a threat to their faces or self-image. Furthermore, looking at the context of situation, his utterance *“That’s the only way there will be peace in this nation”* sounds contradictory. This is because Nigeria is a multicultural and has different religion in it that are advocating for social inclusion and El-Rufai is also boasting of Muslim – Muslim democratic government and things that peace will ensure? And everywhere will be calmed?

Excerpt 8

“It is really disappointing for El-Rufai to brag about religion in a country that is trying to heal. What is the point of the speech? What point is he trying to prove in an election that was clearly questionable? APC tell your man not to sow seed of discord in this country”.

The excerpt above contains a response to El-Rufai’s speech by a social media user. The responder is reacting against his speech and he is calling out for APC as a party to call its candidate to order. The utterance can be said to have violated the politeness maxim which specifies

that in a conversation, the speaker should put the feelings and desires of the hearer into consideration. By saying that El-Rufai’s speech is pointless and that the election is questionable threatens his self-image and therefore, impolite. Even though the responder violated the politeness principle, he upholds the cooperative principle, particularly the quality maxim which stipulates that, in a conversation, ‘Try to make your contribution one that is true’. In other words, “Do not say what you believe to be false” and “Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence”. The responder is actually saying what is true based on the speech of El-Rufai which depicts sowing “seed of discord” among Nigerians, specifically between Christians and Muslims. Furthermore, El-Ruafai’s speech confirms the allegation of the responder which stipulates that the “election was questionable”; where El-Rufai, in excerpt 6 said that, *“We’re aware of those who collected money, ... those we paid to go and vote didn’t come out, and only the volunteer group members did”* confirms the responder’s questioning of free and fair of the election.

Excerpt 9

“I’m just praying ‘please God, let Mallam Nasiru come out and say no, this was doctored, that this is not him’. And I’m hoping he’ll still come out and say he was misinterpreted or that’s not what he said. But if this is what he has said, this is condemnable, is despicable, it’s not acceptable for anybody in public office, anybody outside the public office ... and he has to be condemned by everyone and I



hope that he'll come out and take those words back and say he is sorry".

The above excerpt was extracted from a conversation on Arise News channel in a program tagged: "The Morning Show" where the responder was seen and heard expressing his disappointment over El-Rufai's speech on Muslim – Muslim ticket in Nigeria just after the 2023 election. The responder claimed he has known El-Rufai and they've been close associate for some reasonable period now. But hearing such things coming from El-Rufai, is unbelievable, disappointing and condemnable. His utterance therefore, violated the politeness principle, particularly the agreement maxim which stipulates that people should express agreement more directly in conversation and that disagreement should be expressed by regret or partial disagreement. According to Leech (1983), partial disagreement is often preferable to complete disagreement. By saying that El-Rufai's speech is "despicable", he has violated the agreement maxim. Contrary to the politeness principle that this utterance violated, the responder upholds the cooperative principle, specifically the quality maxim which stipulates that "Try to make your contribution one that is true". In other words, do not say what you believe to be false and do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence. The evidence to his truth condition is El-Rufai's speech.

Excerpt 10

"... A political figure, a leadership figure is using religion ... and he got carried away and got to the extent of saying that, look, a Muslim – Muslim

leader should be imposed both in Kaduna state and also at the national level in Nigeria for the next 20 years. That thing he said is sensitive, provocative, it doesn't show enough intelligence. I think what he has done here is really disappointing ... I hope that he will come around later and say that perhaps, this is an artificial intelligence induced robotic representation of whatever it was that he said".

This excerpt is gotten also from a television channel "Arise News" programme tagged "The Morning Show" where another responder who was interviewed on the same issue of Muslim–Muslim ticket bragged about by El-Rufai. The responder was also expressing his disappointment over what El-Rufai's speech depicts. This can therefore be said that, his utterance violated the politeness principle; which was also sparked up by the impolite speech of the *speaker*, particularly the agreement maxim which states that agreement should be expressed more directly in conversation and that disagreement should be expressed by regret or partial agreement. More so, by saying that "... it doesn't show enough intelligence" connotes that the hearer does not have enough intelligence and therefore violated the politeness principle, particularly the approbation maxim which specifies that in a conversation; the speaker should "avoid saying unpleasant things about others and more particularly about hearer".

Excerpt 11

"Well, if you know El-Rufai very well, the former governor of Kaduna state, then you'll have to guess one million



meanings to whatever he said ... he is playing the card, preparing himself so that the Muslims will say, 'this is our religious champion, this is the man who will defend our religion'... he is not consistent, he is so slippery that sometimes you hardly can tell. This man is trying to stir up a serious problem for the new administration, and that's why the new administration must watch out. I am not going to suggest to them what to do but they must watch out. But you see, it's easy for such statement to stir up sentiment among Muslims and also stir up anger among Christians who do not understand. El-Rufai is known for this crafty and this terrible way of dealing with people".

The above excerpt is from another responder who was also a Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) representative in Kaduna State. He expressed his disappointment over what El-Rufai said in his speech that the Muslim – Muslim ticket must be sustained beyond 20 years. By saying that El-Rufai is inconsistent, slippery, crafty and responsible for stirring up conflict in Kaduna state violated the politeness principle particularly the tact maxim; which states that the speaker must display the ability to be tactful or wise in his or her utterance. That is, the ability to avoid offensive utterance. Again, this utterance violated the approbation maxim which stipulates that a speaker should avoid saying unpleasant things about others and more particularly about hearer. This responder also violated the agreement maxim which states that people should express agreement more directly in conversation and that disagreement should be

expressed by regret or partial agreement. Therefore, it can be deduced here that the speaker violated the politeness principles and upholds the cooperative principle, particularly the quality maxim which stipulates that in a conversation, "Try to make your contribution one that is true". In other words, do not say what you believe to be false and do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

Excerpt 12

"... People come into leadership without us as a nation having a provision that will require that we check the mental capability of the people we handover leadership to them. That's why we have terrible people in leadership positions ... and from this video; it shows that he (El-Rufai) had a hand in all the killings that happened, just because he wanted to exonerate the people, create fear in the people, and set confusion in the state. Well, whatever that has a beginning must have an end".

Again, this excerpt contains an utterance by the CAN representative in Kaduna state, expressing his disagreement to the Muslim – Muslim ticket that is said to be sustained beyond 20 years in Kaduna state and the nation at large. By implying that El-Rufai lacks mental capability to lead, he is a terrible person, and had a hand in all the killings that happened in Kaduna state violated the politeness principle, particularly the tact maxim which states that one should exhibit the ability to be tactful or wise in his or her utterance, that is, ability to avoid offensive utterance. In other



words, the speaker should be considerate in his or her use of language in order not to offend somebody or hurt one's feelings. Furthermore, the responder flouted the politeness principle, specifically the approbation maxim which states that, in a conversation, the speaker should avoid saying unpleasant things about others and more particularly about hearer. The hearer (responder) also disagrees with the speaker's (El-Rufai's) claim of sustaining the Muslim – Muslim ticket beyond 20 years and expressed his disagreement directly. Therefore, he flouted the agreement maxim. It can be deduced therefore, that the responder flouted the politeness principle and upholds the cooperative principle.

Excerpt 13

"Confessions will still continue with more hidden agendas this man helped kill Kaduna

Christians, burn their churches and destroy APC Buhari led government".

This excerpt is extracted from a Facebook comment section when the video of El-Rufai's speech was posted there. The responder is saying that the speaker has more confession to make as he believes that the speaker has more hidden agenda. By implication, he accused El-Rufai of being responsible for killing Christians, burning churches and destroying APC in Kaduna state. This impolite allegation came as a result of El-Rufai's utterance and claim of sustaining Muslim – Muslim ticket beyond 20 years in the state and the nation at large. This utterance has therefore violated the politeness principle, particularly the Pollyanna principle which stipulates

that people should prefer to look on the bright side rather than the glooming side of life. It also means that interactants should prefer pleasant topic to unpleasant ones. Again, the utterance violated the approbation maxim which stipulates that a speaker should avoid saying unpleasant things about others and more particularly about the hearer. The tact maxim is also violated by the responder.

Excerpt 14

"If you like start fighting each other again and not use senses. This man is trying to incite war through religion. Please Nigerians use your wisdom. Christian, Muslim, traditionalist, WE ARE ONE".

This is another excerpt extracted from Facebook comment section where the responder is expressing his disappointment over the speaker's speech and at the same time, implying that the speaker is the inciter of conflict in the state and that the masses should not buy into his gimmicks. The utterance therefore has violated the tact maxim which states that the speaker should display the ability to be tactful or wise in his utterance, that is, the ability to avoid offensive utterance. He also flouted the agreement maxim by expressing his disagreement directly instead of with regret or partial agreement. It can therefore be said that, this utterance violated the politeness principle and upholds the cooperative principle, particularly the quality maxim which emphasises truthfulness in a conversation.



Discussion of the Findings

1. The finding reveals that El-Rufai was consistently impolite in his linguistic choice, thereby attracting impolite responses from the responders (in this case, the hearers). Therefore, when impolite utterances ensued between the speaker and the hearer or among interlocutors, the conversation is said to be unsuccessful. When a conversation is termed unsuccessful, conflict or tension becomes the order of the day, which also makes sustainable development impossible.

2. The finding reveals that the speech of El-Rufai on sustaining a Muslim – Muslim political leadership in Kaduna state and the country at large poses a threat to the identity of Christian community in Nigeria and thereby excluding them from participating in politics of the day. Nigeria is a multicultural and multi-ethnic country with a diverse religious group and as such everyone seeks for social inclusion but when such rights are denied, then conflicts ensue and when conflicts are fully grown, the possibility of a sustainable development will be an illusion.

3. From the analysis done in this research paper, the finding reveals that impolite use of language can result to impolite response from the hearer, and when impolite utterances ensued, it can lead to conflict, when conflicts surge, it can result in destruction of lives and properties thereby making sustainable development impossible.

4. Social inclusion pertains to the ability to “participate in the key activities in the society in which they live” (Saunders, Naidoo, & Griffiths,

17). The finding also reveals that when inclusive politics is practiced in a democratic nation like Nigeria, it can ease tension and conflict that might emerge as a result of exclusion, and thereby making sustainable development in any sphere of life a reality.

5. The finding also shows that leaders, especially the political leaders and the religious leaders should be mindful of their linguistic choices. In other words, their language should be carefully and intentionally chosen in order to avoid stirring up anger and sentiment between individuals or among groups and instigating insurrection in the country. And when this is done, peace will be the order of the day in the country, thereby achieving sustainable development in all aspects of life. More so, since context is important in drawing meaning from utterances in pragmatics, it can therefore be deduced that El-Rufai’s utterance denotes religious segregation because he was in the midst of Islamic clerics when the impolite words were uttered.

Conclusion And Recommendation

This research paper recommends that, in order to achieve the sustainable development goal, political figures or actors and religious leaders in this country should embrace polite use of language in their speech deliveries at campaign rallies or in any type of conversation among them that concerns the future of this nation, which will also bring about the sense of inclusion and national unity. In pragmatics, a conversation depends



not only on the speaker, who is trying to deliver a message, but also on the hearer, who draws a conclusion from the implication of the utterance, depending on the context in which it occurs. It is also concerned with how humans use language, what the speaker means and how the hearer interprets the words uttered. Politeness as an aspect of pragmatics plays a vital role in every successful conversation. In trying to be blunt or truthful in a successful conversation, the speaker should employ the principle of politeness by being tactful, modest, nice and considerate in his or her utterance; that way, there will be a balance between cooperative principle and politeness principle for a tension-free and conflict free interaction, thereby ensuring a sustainable development in the country.

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