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## Communication strategies: Persuasion and politeness in Akan judicial discourse

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### Abstract

*Persuasive Akan judicial discourse includes a variety of effective strategies, among them the use of apologetic expressions or mitigators, deferential modes of reference, indirectly authored speech forms (e.g., tales, riddles, proverbs, etc.), negotiation, compliments, and acknowledgment of impositions. These persuasive strategies help legal professionals in dealing with the face-wants that arise in the judicial process. In this article, I demonstrate how Akan legal professionals, in persuading a chief and his elders to do what they will otherwise not do—pardon an appellant—employ one or more of these strategies to achieve their ends.*

### Keywords:

### 1. Introduction

This article demonstrates that traditional Akan legal professionals employ various polite persuasive strategies when entering a plea for their clients. It also shows that the choice of a particular variety (i.e., the kind of register or speech form, such as the kind of reference or mitigating formula) made by judicial personnel is governed by their social status, the social status of the addressees, the cultural context, the information source, as well as the location of the discourse.

### Data and method

The article is based on transcripts of discourse collected in June 1995 in Asuom in the Eastern Region of Ghana. The data were collected in the palace of the Asuom chief and consist of utterances made by a chief intervener, who was entering a plea on behalf of some appellants, the chief's spokesperson, and some members of the 'jury'. A tape recorder

was used for the recording. Present in court at the time of the recording were the chief, his three counsellors, three elders, and an empanelled jury of seven composed of heads of the seven lineages in the town. The discourse is about three-and-a-half hours long. After the recording was made, permission was sought from the chief for the recorded material to be used for academic purposes, to which he expressed no objection after listening to the tapes. For the sake of anonymity, only the initials of the interactants are used. Although only a few excerpts are cited in the discussion, the claims made are based on the entire corpus and not on the cited excerpts only. In the analysis, excerpts are drawn from the data to support the analytical claims.

#### *Background to the discourse*

Sometime in 1993, KD, the head of the Asuom Aseneɛ lineage was summoned before the chief, his elders, and the other lineage heads to explain an action he had taken which was 'disrespectful' to the chief (and hence to the entire Asuom community). KD was found guilty and fined one sheep and a bottle of gin. Instead of abiding by the ruling, KD became angry and insulted the chief. The court asked him to apologize but he became even more defiant. KD's action was not the breach of a mere taboo; it was sacrilege.

In view of the magnitude of the disrespectful action, KD and his entire lineage had to be punished and humiliated in order to deter others from taking a similar course of action. He was 'forced' to abdicate as lineage head, and, as a tougher punishment, it was decided by the jury and the elders that, until such time as the gods were pacified by KD, the drums of the chief, *abɔmmaa*, would not be played at the funeral of any member of the Aseneɛ lineage.

Meanwhile, the chief's father and the appellant's father belonged to the same lineage. According to tradition, therefore, the chief and the appellants were related. When the appellant's father, an elder in the town, died, tradition demanded that the chief's drums be played. However, because of the punishment meted out to KD and the Aseneɛ lineage, the request made of the chief for the drums to be played was turned down. The appellants sought refuge in the 'office' of the chief intervener. The court sat on June 18, 19, and 20, 1995, in the chief's palace, to look into the plea.

## **2. Akan judicial system**

Among the Akan, there are two types of courts: a Western-style court (designed upon the British judicial system) and traditional Akan law and customs. This paper focusses on the latter judicial system. Detailed

accounts of this traditional judicial system can be found in the work of Dankwa (1928), Yankah (1989, 1995) and Obeng (1995). In this section, I simply point out that the Akan place a high premium on the administration of justice. This sentiment is expressed in the old Dankyira Kingdom and later the old Asante Kingdom motto, 'Justice and Freedom', which also happens to form the basis of present-day Ghana's national motto, 'Freedom and Justice'.

In the Akan state, judicial structures exist at levels ranging from that of the family to that of the village and two to that of the city. Minor family, and inter- and intralineage disputes are settled by respectable persons, usually with an empanelled jury. Major disputes, however, are settled by a village, town, or paramount chief with an experienced empanelled jury, usually selected from within the high domains of society. People found guilty by these traditional courts are typically made to pay a fine, part of which may be paid to the complainant as compensation. The empanelled members get paid from fines collected from the litigants. Offenses like murder, traffic violations, tax evasion, and such, are judged to be beyond the traditional court's jurisdiction and are referred to the Western-style courts.

Akan traditional law recognizes the need for appeal and every community has a person through whom a plea for intervention may be routed. The *dwanetoahene* or *dwanetoahemaa* 'appeal chief/chief intervener' or 'female appeal chief' is a highly respected advocate and diplomat. She or he is a well-practised speaker who is well trained in Akan customary law. His/her job is usually to enter a plea on behalf of (a) a person found guilty by the traditional court, or (b) someone who accepts responsibility for wrong done to another person. In certain situations, the chief intervener is able to get a new trial for the accused if the original trial was unfair. In most cases, however, he/she pleads for clemency or for a reduction in the fine imposed.

In the Akan judicial process, in addition to brevity and truthfulness, various politeness strategies perform significant roles in persuading the judicial professionals. A litigant with a 'good' case who is judged to be rude or impolite by the legal professionals, may 'suffer' at the hands of the jury. In view of the tremendous significance placed on politeness and persuasion in the Akan judicial process, I preface my discussion (of the politeness and persuasive strategies found in my transcripts) with a discussion of the theory of politeness and the concept of persuasion.

## **3. Politeness and persuasion**

Prior to exploring the linguistic forms and metacommunicative devices employed as politeness and persuasive strategies in Akan judicial dis-

course, I present brief accounts of the literature on politeness and persuasion. Rather than attempting to review the voluminous scholarship on politeness theory, I present a summary overview of the most influential work.

By far the most influential and yet the most widely debated model of politeness is that developed by Brown and Levinson (1987) in which they note that interactants have face (a favorable public image), consisting of two different kinds of desires or face-wants—the desire to be unimpeded in one's actions (also called negative face) and the desire to be approved of (positive face). Brown and Levinson contend that negative politeness strategies are considered less threatening than positive politeness strategies since positive politeness assumes that the hearer shares the speaker's feelings of closeness (although this may not necessarily be the case.)

Goffman (1967) notes that face goes beyond the common usages referred to as 'losing face' and 'saving face'. In fact, every human communicative action, especially those interpretable as making a demand on or as intruding into another person's autonomy, is a potential threat to face. Face must therefore be maintained either by avoiding all acts capable of threatening other interactants' face, or, if they cannot be avoided altogether, by performing those risks carefully in order to minimize the threat to face. Acts which threaten face are determined by three sociological factors: the relative power of the hearer over the speaker, which may vary according to context; the social distance between the interactants (speaker and hearer); and the degree of imposition involved. According to Brown and Levinson, in any communicative situation, the more serious the potential threat to face, the more considerable the level of politeness involved. They indicate that as a politeness strategy, acts which threaten face may be expressed indirectly.

For Brown and Levinson, although the specific manifestations of face-wants may vary across cultures with some acts being more face-threatening in one culture than in another, the concept of face itself, is universal. This assertion (that politeness has universal validity) has come under strong criticism. Blum-Kulka et al. (1985), for example, note that among Hebrews, frankness is greatly valued and indirectness is therefore not viewed as particularly polite behavior, since it requires the listener to infer the message intended. Consequently, they advocate the notion of pragmatic clarity, the degree to which the speaker's desires are made clear to the hearer. They note that, in making a polite request, the speaker must 'weigh the imposition involved in being coercive against the imposition involved in cognitively burdening the hearer and making it difficult for him or her to guess your meaning' (Blum-Kulka et al., 1985: 144). They indicate that cultures differ in the relative importance they attach

to 'pragmatic clarity' and that, in turn, accounts for differences in the perception of politeness by different cultures.

In a similar vein, Kasper (1990) notes that, in view of the collectively oriented nature of Japanese cultures, negative face wants may not be as important to the Japanese as they are in highly individualistic Western societies. Negative face wants do not provide an adequate account of politeness phenomena. Among the Japanese, therefore, indirectness is not universally intended or interpreted as a correlate of politeness. Clancy (1986) remarks that, for the Japanese, indirectness builds on the participants' shared presuppositions and can therefore be viewed as a way to express empathy.

Another shortcoming attributed to Brown and Levinson's theory is that speakers from different cultures do not rely on the same politeness strategies. For instance, although Chinese speakers are known to be motivated by Leech's (1983) modesty maxim (Chen, 1993), American English-speakers are motivated by the agreement maxim.

Among the Akan, Yankah (1991, 1995) notes that politeness in speech is accomplished by routing the speech through proxies or suffusing it with terms of politeness or courteous addressives expressing deference or solidarity. In a noncongruent interaction, a subordinate makes a special effort to mark an asymmetrical social relationship between him- or herself and a superordinate through deferential honorifics (such as traditional titles, appellations, etc.) and phrases (such as 'by your grace'). The subordinate may also attempt to considerably reduce any appearance of imposition on the superordinate through the use of polite terminal addressives.

Aristotle, in his *Rhetoric*, recommends the use of maxims or proverbs in persuasive discourse. In particular, he remarks that for heightening the rhetor's ethos, and thus raising the hearer's opinion of the rhetor's character, the rhetor is not to avoid uttering persuasive maxims. Cherry (1988), in a study of letters by faculty and graduate students to the president of their university in support of a colleague who had been denied promotion and tenure at a major state university in the US, makes mention of such possible polite persuasive strategies as the following: mitigating the illocutionary force of a request through distancing and passivization, hints, asking for permission to make a request (a common strategy for indirect speech acts), mitigating a face-threatening act through indirection, granting the hearer his options, and thanking the hearer for allowing one to make the request.

What is interesting about Cherry's study is that he found the degree of politeness did not correlate with the writer's academic rank, as expected. Although Associate Professors were clearly more polite than

the Professors, both Assistant Professors and graduate students were less polite. Cherry (1988: 73) points out that some graduate students, in making formal requests to the president of the university to consider the nontenured faculty's case, used explicit performatives which are by nature direct and impolite. He notes, however, that the writers who were least polite (graduate students) in their closing request were more polite in the opening of their letters. This led Cherry into hypothesizing that the less polite writers were 'making use of the shared expectation of greater deference and politeness in order to deliberately violate it' (Cherry, 1988: 77).

Close observation of the above discussion points to the fact that if speakers choose to be rude, it might be difficult, if not impossible, for Brown and Levinson's politeness model to exactly predict their linguistic behavior. Beebe (1996) partly supports this viewpoint. She remarks that, in spite of the fact that much of the research in pragmatics assumes that speakers have politeness as a goal, rudeness is sometimes a deliberate choice.

This does not suggest that Brown and Levinson's model is in any way rendered invalid. On the contrary, it simply predicts what is likely to occur. In fact, the model is necessary in order to formulate Cherry's interpretation of the graduate students' letters.

However, a more fundamental problem is implicit in these arguments: the subjectivity of measures of politeness. One way to assess the politeness level of a given behavior would be to compare it against behavioral norms of the community in question. If the behavior adheres to the norm, it could be considered polite. This is somewhat circular. It seems that the most frequently used method of politeness assessment is to rely on the individual researcher's subjective reaction to a given utterance, and it is assumed that such assessments are homogeneous in the speech community in question.

Among the Akan, brevity is a very important persuasive strategy. In Asuom (my research area), for example, during arbitration in the chief's court, the most senior orator holds a staff with no finial, which depicts the proverb 'A good case is argued in brief'. This staff sends a message to the litigants that unnecessary lengthy speeches will be treated as acts of deceit and, hence, unpersuasive. Furthermore, in attempting to persuade a chief and an empanelled jury, a speaker makes every effort to show communicative and social distance in recognition of the judicial professionals' higher social status. In the following section, I explore the politeness and persuasive communicative strategies in Akan judicial discourse.

#### 4. Persuasive and polite communicative strategies

The persuasive and polite communicative strategies discussed in this section include mitigation of face-threatening acts (FTAs) through the use of apologetic expressions, deferential modes of address and reference, speech forms with indirect authors, the use of specific hedges and sentence types which allow room for negotiation, acknowledgement of imposition, and the use of compliments.

##### 4.1. Mitigating face-threatening acts through apologetic expressions

Close attention to the transcripts indicates that such apologetic expressions as *sebe* 'apologies', *sebe sebe* 'apologies, apologies', *sebe mpen aduasa* 'apologies thirtyfold', and *yesre* 'we beg' may be prefaced to the face-threatening act to mitigate or tone down the illocutionary force of the utterance and, consequently, soften the perlocutionary effect of the face-threatening act on the addressee. The four excerpts cited as (1) to (4) below all involve noncongruent interaction and, hence, require a high level of mitigation to soften the force inherent in the talk. Specifically, they all involve a speaker of lower social status, and hence less power, talking to someone of higher social status and more power. Despite the fact that the chief intervener is highly respected in society, he does not have institutional status equal to that of the chief before whom he is entering the plea. For him to produce face-threatening acts without proper mitigators implies disrespect. Prefacing face-threatening acts with apologetic formulae and disclaimers, on the other hand, marks politeness. In particular, the apologetic formulae help maintain the addressee's positive face (Brown and Levinson, 1978) since their use implies the speaker's approval of the chief's image or social status.

- (1) [Context: The chief intervener begins his plea by drawing the other judicial professionals' attention to KD's—the one responsible for the trouble—snobbish attitude. This is to indicate that in spite of the fact that he is the one entering the plea, he does not condone wrongdoing.]

Cl: *Sebe, onipa` baako koraa nni ha a, KD*  
 Apologies person one at-all not-be here whom KD's  
*ano nkaa no da.*  
 lips not-touch him ever  
 'Apologies, there isn't a single person here whom KD has  
 not insulted before.'

In example (1), the speaker prefaces the face-threatening act, that of KD having insulted everyone at the assembly, with the apologetic expression *sebe* for two main reasons. First, it tones down the painful act of being the one to remind everyone at the gathering about KD's disrespectful behavior. Second, it shows the speaker's strong dislike for the effect of the insult on everyone, including the chief. The speaker appears to imply something like 'I apologize for reminding you about this insult and I also apologize for the terrible effect this reminder will have on you'.

Bringing up KD's bad behavior at this time could also be seen as a persuasive strategy. The chief intervener is, with this utterance, dissociating himself and the appellants from KD's action. He is also drawing the attention of the jury and the chief to the appellants' awareness of the gravity of the offense and the guilt involved. The fact that they recognize the offence committed, and their realization of the need to enter a plea, warrant leniency and/or clemency. Another expression which tones down the chief intervener's utterance is the euphemistic expression *ano nkaa no da* 'lips not touched before', i.e., 'not insulted before'. Here, we see that in spite of the mitigating effect of the apologetic formula, the chief intervener attempts to lend a further measure of refinement to his utterance. The apologetic formula and the euphemism, therefore, make the chief intervener's potential face-threatening act less offensive and thereby helps maintain his positive, and the addressees' negative, face. Using the apologetic expression will therefore make the utterance have a positive impact on the chief and on the jury.

- (2) [Context: The chief intervener appears to be summing up his plea. He has talked about the chief's magnanimity and the fact that the cordial judicial atmosphere in the chief's court makes pleading for his clients a smooth task. He pleads with the chief to temper justice with mercy by quoting the chief's dog's name, a name denoting forgiveness.]

Cl: *Sebe mpen aduasa nana na wato n'aboa din*  
 Apologies times thirty Nana it-be he-named his-pet name,  
*enni-bone-akyi.*  
 don't-follow-evil-back  
 'Apologies thirtyfold, it is Nana who's named his pet "Don't-pay-evil-with-evil".'

In example (2) the chief intervener attempts to persuade the court not to repay evil with evil, i.e., not to punish the appellants with a view to retaliating for KD's wrongful actions. Given the noncongruent interactive situation, the subject matter of the chief intervener's talk becomes even more face-threatening. To tell a social superior, especially the chief, not

to be vindictive is tantamount to 'teaching' him wisdom, an act which is taboo in Akan. It comes as no surprise, therefore, when the chief intervener attaches the mitigating expression 'thirtyfold' to his apology. Reminding the court of the name of the chief's pet is also a form of indirectness involving a pseudo-addressee. Among the Akan, as an alternative to confrontation or silence, one can give one's pet a certain name which is inherently a response to or a reaction against certain prevailing actions judged to be bad by the pet's owner. In this particular case, the chief may have named his dog 'Don't-pay evil-with-evil' as a strategic reaction to vindictiveness on the part of certain members of the society. By reminding the court of the name of the chief's pet, the speaker appears to be alerting the court to the chief's nonvindictive nature and, hence, to the possibility of his accepting the appellants' plea. The stretch *Sebe mpen aduasa* 'Apologies thirtyfold', with the structure N+ADJ (the N with the pragmatic feature [+mitigation] and the ADJ with the pragmatic feature [+intense mitigation]) may therefore be treated as a persuasive strategy since it marks asymmetry in status and thereby maintains the speaker's as well as the addressee's face.

- (3) [Context: The chief intervener is nearing the end of his plea. He has already reminded the chief that he is aware of the chief's kindness and nonvindictive nature. He subsequently appeals to the chief to accept his plea and to change his earlier decision to not let his drummers play at the funeral.]

Cl: *Yesre nana na waso dwanetoe yi mu na*  
 we-beg Nana so-that he-holds plea this in so-that  
*wama agofomma no agoro wo ayie no ase.*  
 he-allows drummers the drum at funeral the under  
 'We beg Nana to accept this plea and let the drummers play at the funeral.'

In example (3), the apologetic expression has the structure of a simple sentence (i.e., N+V+N). The expression 'We beg Nana' expresses humility on the part of the speaker and the appellants. It is also a syntactic status marker. Among the Akan, apart from situations in which a speaker is sarcastic, it is only people with less power who beg. To speak as a beggar, then, is an indication that one accepts the other participant's social superiority. The use of the inclusive first person plural pronoun *Ye(n)* 'we' is also a good persuasive strategy. The chief intervener, a respectable social superior, is seen identifying himself with the appellants' course and thereby attracting a certain degree of deference to the plea and subsequently making its rejection difficult.

- (4) Cl: *Nana, w'adaworoma menim se sebe*  
 nana your-grace I-know that apologies  
*worenni wansena akyi*  
 you-will-not-follow flea back  
*na sebe sebe a, woremmere wo kuro.*  
 so-that apologies apologies that you-will-not-hurt your sore  
 'Nana, by your grace, I know that, apologies, you won't  
 allow yourself to be intimidated by the house fly—[KD]—to,  
 apologies, apologies, [take an action that will] hurt your  
 sore [people].'

Example (4) involves several persuasive strategies. In particular, the speaker uses a deferential title (*Nana*), followed by flattery ('by your grace'—which marks the chief's power and generosity), an indirectly authored speech form (a proverb) whose use the speaker apologizes for, and an apologetic formula ('apologies, apologies'). In this excerpt, the speaker appears to be pleading with the chief not to be enraged by the action of the 'relatively' useless social subordinate (KD—labelled the 'house fly') into taking a course of action that may eventually be detrimental to the chief himself. Apologizing for the use of the indirectly authored speech form as well as repeating the word 'apology' again marks social asymmetry and assures the chief that he is still in control.

In the chief's court, power is the overriding social dimension of politeness. A superior like the chief attracts linguistic deference while KD, a subordinate, does not. Expressing social distance and power distinctions therefore satisfies the chief's negative face-wants. This strategy of showing asymmetrical status, then, has the tendency to make the chief and the jury act with leniency since the chief intervener's request is couched in very polite terms.

The previous discussion points to the fact that the skillful use of apologetic expressions makes such expressions have positive impact on the addressees and, hence, prove effective in persuading and in performing face-saving for all discourse participants. It may also be noted that these apologetic expressions act like pre-sequencies—interactive actions that are performed prior to upcoming, potentially embarrassing, speech acts. They therefore either partially or totally eliminate face-threatening acts or obstacles in an upcoming utterance.

It is also clear from the discussion that among the Akan, Brown and Gilman's (1960) classic power semantic (social status) is given more weight than their solidarity semantic. The chief intervener's language, it is seen, is characterized by circumspection and self restraint since he is expected, as a subordinate to the chief, to speak with deference.

#### 4.2. Deferential modes of reference

Among the Akan, a nondeferential term of address or reference (usually a full name without a title, e.g., Kwabena Oduro) threatens the addressee's or the referent's face, since it is an indication that he or she is not respected by the speaker. By contrast, the use of deferential titles as terms of address and reference is a significant act of politeness and, hence, persuasive strategy. Like apologetic expressions, these modes of reference are prefaced to upcoming potential face-threatening acts. Basically, they mark asymmetry in status. In particular, they are lexical and syntactic markers of politeness and status which speakers employ to show their awareness of the social superiority of the addressee or the referent. When used by a speaker, they suggest something like 'I acknowledge your high social status and I am hopeful that you will act in accordance with your status'. Excelling among equals is considered a greater achievement than, say, punishing a subordinate or displaying a show of force before subordinates. If one accepts the position of a subordinate, then, by implication, one has accepted the addressee's or the referent's power over oneself. So, being punished further threatens the addressee's or referent's face. Specifically, if one is referred to as 'The Generous One' or 'The Magnanimous One' and one displays stinginess or self-serving behavior, then one does not merit those positive attributes.

Among the deferential titles used in the transcripts are *Nana* 'Elder/Chief', *ɔdeɛfoɔ* 'Generous One', *Yen wura* 'Our Master', and *Baafɔɔ* 'The Magnanimous One'. The excerpts presented as examples (5) to (8) illustrate their use.

- (5) Cl: *Asem a ɔdeɛfoɔ reka yi eye nokore*  
 Story which generous-one is-saying this it-is true  
*turudoo.*  
 absolutely  
 'What the Generous One is saying is absolutely true.'

In example (5), the speaker refers to the chief as *ɔdeɛfoɔ* 'Generous One'. Using this formal title as a mode of reference indicates politeness on the part of the chief intervener. In particular, it satisfies the chief's positive face needs—the need to be admired. As a deferential title, this mode of reference also marks the chief's superior status and power, i.e., his being in a position not only to give but also to give generously. The source of power here is wealth. The Akan respect people who give generously. Marking asymmetry in this context is a negative face-maintaining device. The chief intervener, by using this reverential reference title, shows his desire to treat status and generosity as a social norm

or value. Thus, the use of this mode of reference affirms his recognition of the chief's authority and generosity. He therefore attempts to persuade the chief to pardon the appellants, since even if KD (the accused) does not see the aforementioned positive attributes in the chief, he (the chief intervener) and the appellants do.

- (6) Cl: *Yen wura adaworoma, ɔnhu yen mmɔbɔ.*  
 our master grace he-must-see us pity  
 'By our Master's grace, he should have mercy on us.'

The use of the referential title *Yen wura* 'Our Master/Lord' in example (6) marks the humility of the speaker and is an indication of control by the referent. In this excerpt, the chief's social prestige and his role as a leader are clearly marked. This kind of reference marks negative politeness. No one can impose anything on the crown. Use of the referential title as well as the humble plea for mercy smooths out the problem in a problematic discourse encounter since its nonaggressive nature is likely to appease the chief and the jury and thereby hasten the resolution of the problem.

- (7) Cl: *Se nea madi kan aka no, enam baafoɔ*  
 as I-have first said because-of magnanimous-one  
*ayamyɛ nti asem*  
 magnanimity because-of case  
*a eyɛ den mpo no ɔma yie*  
 which it-is difficult even it he-makes good  
*toa yie na asomdwei ba.*  
 join good and peace comes.  
 'As I have already pointed out, because of The Magnanimous One's magnanimity, difficult cases are arbitrated peacefully.'

In example (7), the speaker lays more emphasis on the chief's magnanimity by referring to him as *Baafoɔ* 'The Magnanimous One'. In this particular excerpt, the chief's magnanimity is expressed by prefacing a course of action (the chief intervener's ability to enter successful pleas for his clients) with the adverbial clause of reason, *enam Baafoɔ ayamyɛ nti* 'because of the Magnanimous One's magnanimity ...'. The use of the reverential title as well as the entire stretch of talk in which it occurs is a strategy of politeness and persuasiveness. There is no need to impose one's wish upon the chief, since he is kind. Moreover, he is liked as a result of his kindness. There is, therefore, neither a negative nor a positive face-threat involved in the encounter. The fact that the other interlocutors respect him and are, therefore, not aggressive towards him, and the fact that he himself is kind, make the negotiation a smooth one.

- (8) Cl: *Nana mfa n'ani nto na mmofra yi*  
 Nana should-with his-eyes put-on and children these  
*mpata no na asem yi to ntwɔ.*  
 compensate him so-that case this end cut.  
 'Nana should take things into consideration (i.e., be sympathetic) so that these children will compensate him in order that this case be settled.'

In example (8), the reverential and courteous title *Nana* 'Chief/Elder' tones down the command nature of the stretch that follows it. Like the other reverential titles, it shows the speaker's recognition of the referent's superior social status and prestigious role. It also expresses social distance and marks the speaker's unwillingness to impose his ideas on the referent. This, obviously, is an effective persuasive strategy since it creates an impression that the message is nonaggressive and conciliatory. The chief intervener's pragmatic competence is evidenced in the ease with which utterances which seem potentially risky are preceded by reverential titles which have a positive perlocutionary effect on the chief and the jury.

#### 4.3. Using speech forms with an indirect author

This involves the use of such speech forms as tales, riddles, proverbs, idioms, metaphors, and others. The use of such speech forms performs several communicative goals. In the first place, since they are believed to be cultural truisms by the society, their use lends a measure of weight to the truth or falsity of a proposition being presented. In particular, since they are cultural truisms, the truth is incontestable. Second, such speech forms are ascribed to the sages and the ancestors, so anyone who employs them in the right pragmatic context is covered by their protective facade. Finally, since they are ascribed to a third party, usually the ancestors, an appropriate deployment of such indirectly authored speech forms is a politeness strategy as it indicates a disclaimer of performance on the part of the speaker and hence an expression of humility (Obeng, 1995). The use of such speech forms, then, constitutes the deployment of effective, persuasive, communicative strategies (Yankah, 1991).

Close and systematic observation of the transcripts reveals that the abovementioned speech forms undergo such structural changes as truncation, a shift from declarative statements to questions or questions to declaratives, 'structural expansion', substitution of one word for another, and so forth. With riddles, in addition to the above changes, the stimulus and response may come from the same source instead of from different sources. Second, the frequent inversion/question form may change to a declarative one and words may change syntactic positions. The three

main indirectly authored speech forms—tale, riddle, and proverb—are discussed in turn.

#### 4.3.1. Tale

A tale cited by the chief intervener, first to remind the court of KD's irresponsibility and then as a polite and persuasive strategy, is quoted and discussed as example (9).

- (9) [Context: The chief intervener talks about how KD's wealth has 'blinded' him to the extent of making him insubordinate, and led to KD's unnecessary show of force in the town and the mess he has put everybody in. He cites a folktale in which an arrogant tiger who thinks he is impregnable is tricked to death by the relatively weak but wise and agile monkey. He cites this tale to support his claim that wealth and physical strength alone could not save the accused.]

Cl: *Aboa no kaa se biribi ara ntumi no no,*  
 Animal that said that nothing not-overpower him when  
*enyɛ ɔkwakuo na ɔmaa no saae?*  
 it-not-be monkey who he-make him stuck  
 'When that animal said nothing on earth could overpower  
 him, wasn't it the monkey who made him get stuck/entangled?'

In example (9), the chief intervener is maximizing dispraise for KD while at the same time maximizing praise for the chief. Maximizing praise for the chief falls directly under Leech's (1983) approbation maxim, which requires a speaker to minimize dispraise for others while at the same time maximizing praise for them. However, at the same time, it relates to Leech's tact maxim in a rather strange way. This maxim requires a speaker to minimize cost to others and maximize benefit to others. The strategy as employed here is obviously beneficial both to the chief and to the chief intervener's appellants. On the one hand, it praises the chief's power in putting KD in his rightful place (subordinate status) and thereby portrays the chief as socially or culturally powerful, although KD may have more wealth than he (the chief) does. On the other hand, it benefits the chief intervener and the appellants since it indicates their support for the chief's course of action (i.e., punishing KD), thus maintaining their positive face and thereby putting them in the chief's 'good books' and, subsequently, getting their plea accepted.

Truncating parts of a proverb instead of narrating it in full is also seen as a persuasive and polite strategy. After all, everyone at the assembly, including the chief, knows the story so narrating it will not only be a waste of time, it will amount to teaching a moral, an act which is detestable in a context such as this. Rendering the tale in a rhetorical interrogative form is also consistent with the face-work being done, since

like all rhetorical questions, it is not meant to be answered and it is assumed that the other interactants know the obvious answer. From the above discussion, it is quite obvious that cultural context is a significant factor in determining politeness. It also points to the fact that the institutional roles and the status of the interlocutors play a significant role in determining the appropriate forms of language that can be used in a communicative situation.

#### 4.3.2. Riddle

Two riddles are cited by the chief intervener to persuade the chief and the jury to accept the plea. The first riddle is cited to remind the court that society treats social superiors deferentially. The second riddle is cited to remind the court of the need to arrive at a just and wise verdict.

- (10) [Context: The chief intervener continues to argue that the plea be accepted by the chief. At this juncture he cites a riddle to support his argument that the deceased is socially superior to the accused and should therefore be treated with deference.]

Cl: *Mmom sebe yen nyinaa nim se*  
 well apologies we all know that  
*Kɔɛ-ansa-na-obi-reba*  
 Mr-Arrived-before-every-one-else  
*ye panin sen Kɔ-akyirikyirikyiri*  
 is older than Mr-Arrived-long-ago  
*ne Kɔ-da-da-da.*  
 and Mr-Arrived-long-long-ago  
 'Well, apologies, we all know that Mr. Arrived-before-every-one-else is older than both Mr. Arrived-long-ago and Mr. Arrived-long-long-ago.'

- (11) [Context: The chief intervener continues his plea. At this juncture, he is arguing that he has confidence in the court and that he hopes that a culturally acceptable decision will be reached.]

Cl: *Enti mogyi di se sebe yede yen ho*  
 so you-believe that apologies we-with our self  
*kwatrekwa ne ahuro*  
 nude and foam  
*bepue afi adwareɛ abɛhwɛ sebe ɔkwasea?*  
 come-out from bathroom come-see apologies fool  
*Daabi da.*  
 Never  
 'Do you think that we'll ever come out of the bathroom naked with foam on our bodies to see, apologies, a fool? No, never!'



In examples (10) and (11), the speaker uses riddles and apologetic expressions as polite, and hence, persuasive, strategies. In example (10), the riddle is prefaced by the apologetic expression *sebe* 'apologies'. Using indirectly authored speech forms in front of superordinates without the proper redressive expression is treated as a face-threatening act. Such a person may be said to be rude and uncultured. Prefacing the riddle with the apologetic expression is therefore an indication of negative politeness. Specifically, it indicates that the speaker recognizes the superior status of the addressee. Secondly, the use of the inclusive pronoun *yen* 'we' in particular, and the 'inclusive' expression *yen nyinaa nim se* 'we all know that ...' in general, indicate that the speaker is not teaching anyone anything new. To attempt to teach the most important politician in the town a moral not only threatens his face, it diminishes his office as a whole since it portrays him as an unwise person. Looking at the way the riddle is posed, we see that the speaker phrases it in such a way that the answer is provided within the stimulus. Thus, the riddle does not have the normal pattern of Akan riddles, namely a stimulus and a response provided by different speakers. Under normal circumstances, the riddle should have been rendered like this:

- (12) a. *Kɔ-akyirikyirikyiri ne Kɔ-da-da-da ne*  
Mr-Arrived-long-ago and Mr-Arrived-long-long-ago and  
*Kɔɛ-ansa-na-obi-reba hwan na ye panin?*  
Mr-Arrived before- every-one-else who he-is eldest?

However, the speaker rendered it as:

- (12) b. *Mmom sebe yen nyinaa nim se Kɔɛ-ansa-na-obi-reba ye panin*  
*sen Kɔ- akyirikyirikyiri ne Kɔ-da-da-da.*  
'Well, apologies we all know that Mr. Arrived-before-every-  
one-else is older than both Mr. Arrived-long-ago and Mr.  
Arrived-long-long-ago.'

Close observation of examples (12a) and (12b) indicate that the riddle in (12b) undergoes considerable structural modification. As has already been pointed out, it undergoes structural expansion. The stretch *mmom sebe yen nyinaa nim se* 'well, apologies, we all know that ....' is prefaced to the riddle. Second, instead of being rendered as an interrogative as in (12a), (12b) is in a declarative form. The final structural modification undergone by the riddle in (12b) is the permutation of the noun phrases (NPs): NP<sub>1</sub> in (12a), *Kɔ-akyirikyirikyiri*, moves to NP<sub>2</sub> position in (12b). NP<sub>2</sub> in (a), *Kɔ-da-da-da*, moves to NP<sub>3</sub> position in (b) and NP<sub>3</sub> in (a), *Kɔɛ-ansa-na-obi-reba*, moves to NP<sub>1</sub> position in (b).

The speaker uses these structural modifications to pragmatic effect. Fronting NP<sub>3</sub> to NP<sub>1</sub> position brings NP<sub>3</sub> into sharp focus. NP<sub>3</sub> represents the deceased, NP<sub>2</sub> the lineage head (KD), and NP<sub>1</sub> the lineage members. In this riddle, the speaker is saying that the deceased is socially superior to the other categories of persons and should therefore be treated deferentially. The speaker (the chief intervener) states that apart from the fact that the deceased could have been a lineage head in his lifetime if he so desired, Akan culture calls for the veneration of ancestors. The deceased, now an ancestor, rightfully deserves reverence more than the other persons. The strategy adopted by the speaker is, therefore, persuasive. The effects of KD's misbehavior should not be felt by the deceased, who is socially superior to him (KD).

In the next riddle, example (11), the speaker impresses it upon the chief and the jury that they should not repay KD's 'insanity' with another act of 'insanity'. As in (10), the speaker apologizes for his use of the riddle in order to show his humility and to indicate that he does not intend to teach anyone what is common knowledge. This riddle, like the previous one, undergoes structural expansion and modification. Under normal circumstances, the riddle should have been rendered.

- (14) a. *Hwan na agyimi, ohene a, ɔde ne ho kwatrekwa ne ahuro pue*  
*behweɛ ɔkwasea anaa ɔkwasea no?*  
'Who is the stupidest; the chief who came out of the bathroom  
naked to look at a stupid person brought before him or the  
stupid person himself?'

It is however rendered as

- (14) b. *Enti mogye di se sebe yede yen ho kwatrekwa ne ahuro bepue*  
*afi adwareɛ abehwe sebe ɔkwasea? Daabi da.*  
'Do you think that we'll ever come out of the bathroom naked  
with foam on our bodies to see, apologies, a fool? No, never!'

In (14b), we see that the speaker truncates the stretch *Hwan na agyimi, ohene a*, 'who is the stupidest, a chief who ...'. The deletion of the word *ohene* 'chief' is very significant in terms of the degree of politeness expressed by the speaker. Using the word for chief would be very impolite and would have threatened both the speaker's and the chief's face, since the speaker will be seen as rude and the chief as a stupid person. It comes as no surprise, therefore, when he deletes it and replaces it with the first person plural pronoun *yen* 'we'. The use of the first person plural pronoun also makes the speaker part and parcel of the riddling process and part of the riddle's target. It points to the fact that he is aware of the assembly's

intelligence and decent way of life. It indicates that they (the members of the assembly) are socially mature and will, therefore, never engage in any acts of insanity. The use of the double negative expression *Daabi da!* 'no, never' as a response to the stimulus (riddle) is also a polite, and hence, persuasive strategy. Here, the speaker emphasizes the fact that such insane behavior as going out naked to see a stupid person would never be exhibited by members of the assembly.

Thus, through use of the riddle in (11), the speaker is recognizing the chief's and the entire assembly's maturity and capability of arriving at a nonvindictive, nonbiased and just decision. This strategy is highly effective in persuading any Akan. Having told one that he is intelligent, just, and nonvindictive, it is highly improbable that that person will act in a manner contrary to such attributes.

#### 4.3.3. Proverb

In this section I examine two excerpts—examples (15) and (16). In example (15), the chief intervener cites a proverb to express the view that the accused (KD), and not the appellants, must suffer the consequences of his own action. In (16), the chief's spokesperson cites a proverb to indicate the fact that the chief will, as always, be merciful since it benefits no-one if the appellants (who are related to him) are severely punished.

- (15) [Context: The chief intervener argues that like the pompous tiger, KD's action has incriminated himself and his entire lineage, an act which is rather unfortunate since he alone should have suffered from the consequences of his action. He cites a proverb in which he draws an analogy between a tree that dies with climbers around it. Subsequently, he pleads with the chief and the jury to accept his plea.]

Cl: *Seesei wasa; nso ofuntum, ɔde ne wuo*  
Now he's-stuck but ofuntum he-with his death  
*abesea mmatatwene.*  
come-infect mmatatwene

Now he's stuck; like the *ofuntum* [rubber] tree his death has caused *mmatatwene's* [climber's] death.' (That is, 'Now he's in trouble and he's put everyone else in a mess.'

- (16) [Context: The chief intervener has finished presenting his case. The jury has already adjourned to the jury room and returned with a decision to accept the plea. The chief's spokesperson, OKN, presents the decision to the assembly and he cites a proverb to indicate that the chief is sensitive to the plight of his people.]

OKN: *Sebe, ɔretwa ne tekrema atoto awe se nea*  
Apologies he's-cutting his tongue roast eat like  
*wanya nam anaa?*  
he's-got meat Q?  
'Apologies, will he cut off his own tongue, roast it and eat it pretending he's got meat?' (That is, 'Will he be harsh on his own kith and kin?')

In example (15), the chief intervener attempts to persuade the chief and the jury that the appellants are not the accused and that it is through the action of the accused that the appellants are 'standing trial'. The fact that the chief intervener does not apologize for the use of the proverb is very significant here. Although the source of this mess, KD, the *ofuntum* tree, is of high social status, his action does not justify deference. Thus, the chief intervener does not show any warmth (positive politeness) towards him. This is obviously an effective persuasive strategy. Neither the chief nor any member of the jury will be bothered by the chief intervener's face-threatening act against KD, and this indicates that he (the chief intervener) is with them (the chief and the jury) rather than against them. After all, earlier in the discourse the chief intervener has indicated that KD has been rude to everyone at the assembly.

A look at the original proverb and how the chief intervener renders it in this context also reveals several structural changes. In citation form, the proverb is rendered as:

- (17) a. *Ofuntum wuo sae mmatatwene.*  
'*Ofuntum's* death causes *mmatatwene's* death.'

In example (15), however, the chief intervener renders it as:

- (17) b. *Seesei wasa; nso ofuntum, ɔde ne wuo abesea mmatatwene.*  
'Now s/he's stuck; like the *ofuntum* tree, his death has caused *mmatatwene's* death.'

In (17b), the rubber plant (*ofuntum*) is personified. The use of the third person singular pronoun forms *wa-* and *ɔ-* 'he/she' supports the claim being made about the personification. Personifying the proverb makes it more meaningful to the interactants and, hence, more persuasive to them. The speaker, by prefacing the stretch *Seesei wasa* 'she/he is stuck ...' to the proverb, undertakes structural expansion of the proverb.

In (16), the chief's spokesperson first and foremost apologizes for the use of the proverb. This is used as a politeness strategy. Specifically, since the proverb talks about the chief's point of view, it would be impolite if OKN presented it without the proper redressive strategy. Prefacing it

with a redressive expression, therefore, maintains the chief's face since proper articulation of his point of view attracts a high degree of respect for him. Secondly, rendering the proverb in an interrogative form is also a sign of politeness. The question word *anaa* performs an affective function. The proverb is usually cited in the declarative form:

- (18) a. *Wotwa wo tekrema toto we a, wonyaa nam.*  
 you-cut your tongue roast eat if you-not-get meat  
 'If one cuts off one's tongue, roasts it and eats it one's got no meat.'

In this discourse, however, it is rendered as:

- (18) b. *Sebe, ɔretwa na tekrema atoto awe se nea wanya nam anaa?*  
 'Will he cut off his own tongue, roast it and eat it pretending he's got meat?'

In (18a) the second person singular pronoun is used for the generic third person reference. In (18b) the third person singular pronoun forms *wa-* and *ɔ-* are used instead the second person singular pronoun form *wo* 'you/your'. Pronominal substitution in the above context performs an affective function because it identifies the chief with the action expressed by the proverb—that of being sympathetic—and therefore does not imply anything that will jeopardize the appellants' wellbeing.

#### 4.4. Using hedges that allow room for negotiation

Using hedges that allow room for negotiation is another important strategy employed by the Akan chief intervener to persuade the chief and the jury to pardon his appellants. This persuasive strategy involves such conditional sentences as those cited in examples (19) and (20) below.

- (19) [Context: The chief intervener signals his wish not to impose his will on the chief while at the same time asking for the acceptance of his plea.]

Cl: *Se ebetumi a, anka nana ntu ne nan*  
 If it-will-be-possible if then nana should-lift his foot  
*nsi asem yi so.*  
 place story this on  
 'If possible Nana should put his foot on this case.' (That is, '... stamp his authority upon this case.')

- (20) [Context: The chief intervener continues to use hedges to signal his wish not to impose anything on the chief and the jury while at the same time pleading with them to let sleeping dogs lie.]

Cl: *Se erenha ɔdeɛfoɔ a, anka mesre*  
 If it-will-not-trouble magnanimous-one if then I-ll-beg  
*se ɔngyae ma enka.*  
 that he-not-leave so-that it-stays  
 'If it will not be too much for the Magnanimous One, then I plead with him to forgive us.'

Scholarship on politeness (e.g., Holmes, 1984; Ng and Bradac, 1993) indicates that speakers have several hedging strategies at their disposal for indicating that they do not wish to impose their wish on the addressee. Such features as prosody (pitch, volume, tempo, etc.), syntactic devices (tag questions, the use of modal auxiliaries, etc.), as well as such paralinguistic features as pausal phenomena and hesitation have been mentioned. These hedging devices tend to reduce the force or strength of such face-threatening acts as commands and are therefore mainly negative politeness strategies (see Blum-Kulka et al., 1985; House and Kasper, 1981; and Kasper, 1990).

In example (19), the stretch *se ebetumi a, anka ...* 'if possible' is used as a hedge to soften the locution behind the face-threatening act, which is the directive: *nana ntu ne nan nsi asem yi so*. 'Nana should stamp his authority on this case'. To give the chief direct orders without a proper mitigator is considered very impolite. However, the above hedge, which is syntactically a conditional clause, makes it seem less apparent that an order is being given. The word *betumi* 'possible' indicates that the speaker wishes not to impose anything on the chief. Furthermore, it implies that the speaker 'gives' the addressee the option of saying that the 'if' (i.e., the necessary) condition for the action to be performed may not pertain. On the surface, therefore, the chief is free to say that it is not possible for him to stamp his authority on the case. In reality, however, this kind of sentence pattern has the potential to impress it upon an addressee to act in favor of the speaker.

In (20), the hedge *se erenha ɔdeɛfoɔ a, anka mesre se* 'if it'll not be too much for the Magnanimous One, then, I beg that ...' or 'if it will trouble the Magnanimous One, then, I beg that ...' reduces the locution inherent in the directive *ɔngyae ma enka* 'he should forgive'. This hedge not only exploits the conditional clause structure, it also employs such persuasive strategies as the use of reverential title *ɔdeɛfoɔ* 'The Magnanimous One' and the expression *mesre* 'I beg', both of which put the speaker in a subordinate status in relation to the addressee (the chief). Marking asymmetry in status is a negative politeness strategy and hence an excellent persuasive strategy, especially in such a case as this one in which status is extremely significant.

## 4.5. Acknowledgement of an imposition

The chief intervener is able to judge the extent of an imposition and subsequently uses downgraders to soften its effect on the chief and the jury. He acknowledges the imposition by overtly stating his awareness of it (the imposition), the effect of the imposition on the target addressee, and then providing a mitigator or 'downtoner' to soften the force of the imposition. Two excerpts are cited for explication.

- (21) [Context: The chief intervener begins his plea by attacking KD. He draws an analogy between KD's action and an Akan folktale in which a foolhardy pompous tiger is tricked into his death by a weak but wise monkey. He tells the assembly that KD has by his action put every member of the lineage in jeopardy. He then attempts to ask for clemency for the appellants.]

Cl: *Yenim se yei ye shaw efise yei nye asem*  
we-know that this be bother because this not-be case

*a anka*  
which would-have

*teteh no yeka di nkyene, nso mmere*  
olden-days the we-say eat salt but time

*adane. se ebetumi*  
change if it-be-possible

*a, nana adaworoma ongye mpata na*  
then nana by-his-grace he-should-get fine so-that

*asem yi to ntwā.*  
case this end cut

'We acknowledge the fact that this is a bother because this is not the kind of crime (which in the olden days) one would have committed and eaten salt (i.e., which was punishable by death), but times have changed. If possible, by Nana's grace, he should accept a fine and close this case.'

- (22) [Context: The chief intervener continues to plead for clemency for the appellants. He pleads with the chief by acknowledging the fact that the chief is being asked to 'go an extra mile'.]

Cl: *Yei dee yenim se yereha nana ne ne*  
this as-for we-know that we-are-troubling nana and his  
*mpaninfoo dee nso*  
elders indeed but  
*n'adaworoma, ontu ne nan ntia asem yi so.*  
his-grace he-should-raise his leg step case this on

'Indeed, we're aware that we're bothering Nana and his elders, however, I appeal to Nana to step on this case (i.e., take control over it and make his own decision—a decision that will be favorable to the appellants).'

In example (21), the main message in the chief intervener's talk is: *ongye mpata na asem yi to ntwā* 'he should accept compensation and close the case', which is a plea for the chief to do this. The chief intervener, however, sees the face-threatening act inherent in the above stretch, so he begins by showing his awareness of the imposition. This acknowledgement of an imposition is done by prefacing the face-threatening act with the stretch *Yenim se yei ye shaw* 'we know that this is a bother'. The use of the inclusive first person plural pronoun identifies the chief intervener with the appellants and puts him in a subordinate status relative to the chief and the jury. The above excerpt points to the fact that it is common knowledge that the appellants are by their action bothering the chief. This string is then followed by another stretch, *efise yei nye asem a anka teteh no yeka di nkyene* 'because this case was punishable by death in the olden days' which confirms the gravity of the offence committed. This is eventually followed by a hedge, realized by the conditional clause *Se ebetumi a ...* 'if possible ...' and then the face-threatening act. The above example, then, is a clear display of Akan power structure and the communication strategy involved. The chief intervener's utterance is clearly out of place in addressing the chief and it comes as no surprise when he employs appropriate mitigating measures to make his case tellable from his point of view and listenable from the chief's and the jury's point of view.

As with example (21), the acknowledgement of the imposition in example (22) is followed by other redressive strategies. The acknowledgement *Yei dee yenim se yereha nana ne ne mpaninfoo dee* 'indeed we're aware that we're bothering Nana and his elders ...' is followed by the compliment *n'adaworoma ...* 'by his grace' and then the face-threatening act *ontu ne nan ntia asem yi so* 'take a decision that'll be favorable to the appellants.' All the utterances prior to the face-threatening act to a large extent remove any offensive intent in the upcoming face-threatening act and are therefore politeness strategies.

In both (21) and (22), we see that the stretches have the structure: acknowledgement of imposition + one or more mitigators + face-threatening act (imperative). To speak to the chief in an imperative form without any mitigator is considered rude and impolite. Prefacing the imperative with the above redressive elements is consistent with the face-work being done. An interesting feature of the face-threatening acts in

examples (21) and (22) is that they both involve a request for forgiveness. One requests forgiveness only when one accepts blame or wrongdoing. Accepting blame or wrongdoing diminishes one's status since it puts one in a subordinate position. In both examples, therefore, the chief intervener brings the chief's power into focus and thereby empowers him to perform an act—to forgive—consistent with his status. The two examples, therefore, enhance the chief's face (see Goffman, 1967) since they indicate the respect the speaker has for him. At the same time, by accepting blame, the chief intervener's face is to some extent damaged (cf. Brown and Levinson, 1987).

#### 4.6. Complimenting

In a descriptive taxonomy of compliments in American English, Wolfson (1983) and Knapp, Hopper, and Bell (1984) point out that compliments are used mostly in interactions involving equals. They indicate further that in a subordinate–superordinate interaction, subordinates were complimented more than superiors. A superior who is overly complimented will obviously treat it as an face-threatening act. Among equals, compliments mark positive politeness; in an unequal status domain, they mark deference if the subordinate is complimented by the superior.

Close attention to the transcripts indicate that the trend is completely different in Akan judicial discourse. Specifically, throughout the discourse it is only the chief who is complimented. Nowhere in the discourse does the chief's spokesperson compliment the chief intervener or any other person. By implication, this suggests that compliments are performed as negative politeness strategies, since they mark asymmetry and place the chief in a position of power. One excerpt is referred to in the discussion which follows.

(23) [Context: The chief intervener continues to plead on behalf of the appellants. He compliments the chief for his knowledge and kind heartedness.]

Cl: *Nana ye nimdefo a ne yam*  
 nana is knowledgeable-person who his human-touch  
*nso ye enti mebeka*  
 also good so I-come-say  
*asem wo ahemfie ha a, memmre.*  
 case at palace here if I-not-tired  
 'Nana is knowledgeable and generous so I don't have a  
 hard time entering a plea in this palace.'

In this excerpt, the chief intervener compliments the chief on his generosity and intelligence. The above compliments put the chief in a rather tricky situation. In view of the magnitude of this case, it will be stupid for the chief intervener to flatter the chief by attributing to him compliments he does not merit, since this will be viewed as an indirect insult. The compliments given here by the chief intervener are therefore genuine. If they are genuine compliments, then the chief will find it difficult to act contrary to them. In effect, as much as these compliments enhance the chief's negative politeness (i.e., freedom from imposition), they also, to some extent, put some form of pressure on him.

#### 5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have attempted to show that appeals for intervention, like requests and apologies, are considered face-threatening acts, since they go against the desires of the hearer as well as the listener. To prevent face-threats, Akan legal professionals, especially chief interveners, employ various persuasive strategies when entering a plea for their clients. The form of the redressive strategies employed is dependent upon the social distance between the chief intervener, the appellants, and the chief. The power the hearer has over the speaker is also important in determining the kind of redressive actions the speaker should employ. In particular, the choice of a variety of register is governed by the social status of the addressees as well as the location of the discourse.

Throughout this article I have demonstrated that politeness and persuasion go hand in hand. Negative politeness strategies tend to predominate in noncongruent or asymmetrical status interactions. In particular, subordinates tend to speak with deference to superordinates since greater attention is paid to the relative sociocultural roles and positions of the discourse participants. The chief intervener employs a wider range of persuasive strategies than does any other legal professional, since at the time of pleading he is directly or indirectly placed in a position of powerlessness and, most importantly, since the burden of proof lies on him and his clients. His speech, therefore, is considerably restrained due to the caution with which he delivers his plea. The adoption of a confrontationist strategy will obviously not be in the interest of his clients.

The analyses done in the core sections of the paper also reveal that, like apologies, pleas for mercy also provide an excellent illustration of indirect speech acts (Searle, 1979) since in such encounters the speaker accepts responsibility for the act, shows remorse, and thus indicates the detrimental nature of the act to the hearer. By accepting responsibility

for the act and expressing regret, the appellants, through the chief intervener, were able to get the chief to pardon them. The nonaggressive nature of the chief intervener's message style appeased the chief and thereby made resolution proceed quickly and smoothly.

The use of such complimentary speech forms as 'Nana is ... generous' together with deferential modes of address like 'The Generous One' as well as 'The Magnanimous One' put the judicial professionals in a position where refusal of a plea became impossible. An individual would not earn these complimentary labels unless he or she really merited them; it would be ironic to be labelled generous if one were stingy.

The deployment of such communicative strategies as the use of indirectly authored speech forms (like tales, riddles, and proverbs), apologetic expressions, the acknowledgment of an imposition, and hedging were shown to soften the locution of upcoming face-threatening acts and thereby render them polite and persuasive.

In sum, it may be argued that polite behavior is required of subordinates engaged in noncongruent interaction since the employment of high levels of mitigation helps to obviate any potential crises and thereby enables the subordinates to persuade the superordinates to do what they might otherwise not do, namely accede to the appeal or request.

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