

Non-verbal Cues and Politeness Strategies in Post Office Service Encounter in Nigeria

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Abstract: This study examined non-verbal cues and politeness strategies in interaction during service encounter at the post office in Ibadan, Nigeria. Ten out of thirty-two naturally occurring interactions between the service providers (Counter Attendants) and customers were purposively selected for the study. Backed by permission, participant observation and tape recorders were used for data collection. The data was analysed using a combine framework of Lim and Bowers politeness theory and Spencer-Oatey rapport management strategies. The result showed that intuitive role of the non-verbal cues serves as impicature that leads to categorisation of customers. The cues determine the type of social relationship enacted; age, gender and social class lead to differential address form and treatment of customers. These in turn either increase or decrease the social distance between the interlocutors and the power to control the interaction. Any hitch during transaction neutralises the privileged right of the customer.

Key Words: service encounter, non-verbal cues, politeness, rapport management strategy, interlocutors

Date of Submission: 03-02-2020

Date of Acceptance: 18-02-2020

I. INTRODUCTION

Service encounter is the meeting point involving a customer or client and a service giver. Scholars have proffered varied explanations of what it entails in terms of its nature, structure, the communicative acts, the relationship between the participants, the service culture, the discourse types and the interrelatedness of the discourse types. A more encompassing description has been that put forward by Servert (2002) as the totality of the entire exchange between a client or customer and a service provider from the initial contact through the conclusion of the exchange. Though this explanation is encompassing, there are other minute details that are not included such as the encounter being goal-oriented involving certain scripts. This is because service encounter embeds two discourse types comprising transactional and interactional ones. Within the interactional is politeness which oils the transactional sequences and makes the encounter a social engagement, leaving the interlocutors with memories that either mark the interaction as interesting or mar it. Politeness has been examined with respect to hospital/clinic, political, media and commercial settings and tangentially in hospitality industry. There is need to go beyond these places to other public spheres such as the post office in Nigeria, hence, the present study. The reasons for investigating the use of politeness in post office service encounter are not farfetched.

The Nigeria Postal Service (NIPOST) has been affected by a lot of factors in discharging its duties to the public. Initially, the outfit was created and patterned after what obtained in Britain during the colonial era. Working in the post office then was an accomplishment everyone wished to be part of because it accorded one a sense of class distinction, hence the *post office face*. Post office face is a term that is synonymous with segregative attitude in relation to the public. Currently, the segregative face has been replaced with dissatisfaction, anger and demotivation thereby erasing the class distinction that hallmarked working in the post office in the past. In addition to this is the repositioning of NIPOST to enable it to attain its optimal service delivery to the public. This repositioning can work either way- positive or negative. If positive, staff empowerment becomes paramount but if negative, it may lead to downsizing which may affect the status of the workers and leave some of them jittery with respect to what the future holds.

Again, NIPOST has been clamouring for autonomy to enable it take initiatives as a way forward. Recently, autonomy was granted to it but this seems belated given the unfavourable economic situation and the blossoming internet services and stiff competition with other private enterprises such as DHL, Fedex, TNT, UPS, Redstar and so on. The presence of these private initiatives has jointly reduced the importance and effectiveness of NIPOST in the eyes of the public. Also, NIPOST is a government outfit under the Federal Ministry of Communication. The implication is that it depends on the government for its capital funding requirements and personnel cost. These make the salary of the workers independent of whatever profits the organisation makes. The budgetary allocation has no bearing on its financial needs or recurrent needs. Indeed,

government investment in NIPOST is in terms of fixed assets and these have effects on its performance. This situation calls for an examination of staff attitude during service encounters generally believed to tilt towards impoliteness making one wonder if the staff attitude is related to the upsurge in the aggression of the counter staff in their struggle for survival. This paper is therefore, poised to consider how the nonverbal cues affect the use of language during service encounters at the post office especially in Ibadan metropolis, Nigeria.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Service Encounter and Non-verbal Cues

Apart from the description of what service encounter entails, it has been seen as a critical moment of truth evaluated from either the firm's point of view or the customer's (Sparks and Weber, 2008). It involves an interaction in person between a customer and a firm represented by an employee. Czepiel, Solomon, Suprenant and Gutman (1985) identify three factors that are part and parcel of service encounter and these include the service firm, the employee and the customer. Also, Chandon et al. (1997) proffer several dimensions necessary for assessing the quality of a service encounter depending on who is doing the assessment (the firm or the customer). The customer bases the assessment of the encounters on the provider's competence, listening skills and dedication while the firm considers the customer's courtesy, efficacy in getting the transaction completed and personal satisfaction. These factors are built into the characteristics of service encounter which happen to be goal-oriented, part of work activities and tasks involving stranger relationship, narrow conversation, sets of rules and roles between the service provider and the customer. Service encounter, therefore, is a social, dyadic encounter involving humans scripted to perform certain roles for the achievement of set out goal(s) through interaction. The humans are the service provider and a customer or client.

Key to the interaction during service encounter is communication which lays bare staff and customer attitude, disposition and pre-disposition. Communication facilitates the task, makes the customer feel valued and important, optimizes the delivery process and forms the basis for quality evaluation (Sparks and Weber, 2008). Linguistically, communication involves both transactional and interactional discourse types. Transactional discourse covers the goal for enacting the interaction while the interactional discourse ensures that the goal is achieved. Both the transactional and interactional discourses are intertwined in interaction and this is the reason why scholars interested in the hospitality industry identify variables that are embedded in both, such as being responsive, courteous and showing empathy (Sparks and Weber, 2008). Varca (2004) lists requisite skills along three dimensions which include skills, stress tolerance, empathy, social sensibility and behavioral flexibility. Interactional discourse embeds all the above-mentioned except skills especially what is referred to as hard skills. Interactional discourse is the domain of politeness involving both verbal and nonverbal attitudes that aid the achievement of goals in an interaction.

Ideally, Jackson, Goldthorpe and Mills (2002) rate social skills and personal characteristics very highly while Martin and Grove (2002) see pride in appearance and good attitude as more important. Nickson, Warhurt and Dutton (2005:201) support these scholars with their 'looking good' and 'sounding right'. These scholars go further to explain that:

... it is increasingly recognised that control of employees' attitudes and appearance are seen as legitimate managerial strategies for service companies in the name of customer care and service quality. Within these broader customer care strategies, the aesthetic content of labour, in the form of language, dress codes, shape and size of body, manner and style, is deliberately manufactured to appeal to customers.

In their study, they notice the same trend in their findings when they ask their subjects to assess the fundamental role appearance plays in relation to the success of the business. Fifty-three percent of their sample felt it was critical, forty percent felt it was important, and six percent saw it somewhat important. At least ninety-three percent of their respondents attributed significant importance to the image of customer-facing staff. Only one respondent suggested that the appearance of customer-facing staff had no importance to business success. Though this has been noted, their concentration is on the increasing importance of having employees possessing aesthetic skills that reflect "right appearance" that incorporates "looking good" and "sounding right" in service encounters. Gabbott and Hogg (2000) sum up these variables into verbal and non-verbal behaviours noting that the non-verbal makes the difference between two identical events that are identical. For the present study, non-verbal sign (appearance) embedded in service encounter is believed to affect politeness (sounding right). This study therefore examines how the non-verbal cues affect sounding right during service encounter at the post office. Sounding right in this study involves using words appropriately to reduce or increase the distance between the customer and the service giver during service encounter.

Appearance as a non-verbal cue comes in the form of age, gender, status, creed and dressing as well as kinesics and paralinguistic elements. In the hospitality industry, a lot of emphasis has for sometime been placed on technical skills. Recently, the focus has shifted from 'hard skills' (technical skills) to 'soft skills' in the provision of service to customers. Soft skills involve aspects of social and interpersonal skills largely concerned

with ensuring responsiveness, courteousness and understanding with customers. However, Nickson, Warhurst and Dutton (2005) extend these soft skills to include not just 'sounding right' but possessing aesthetic skills related to appearance of staff (looking good).

From the fore-going, appearance in the hospitality industry during service encounter has only been related to employees but this study departs from the employees to the appearance of customers that position them to enjoy warm reception from service providers or givers. Furthermore, this study highlights the extent appearance of the customers affect the service providers in terms of paying them more attention in relation to the use of politeness expressions. Also, in this study, appearance is taken to include everything about the physical make-up of the customers especially their age, gender, status/economic achievement expressed through their dressing patterns. This becomes necessary as the culture within which this study is conducted places much emphasis on according respect or deference as a result of age, economic achievement and so on. Various scholars have assessed the role of age in interaction in most African cultures. Ugorji (2009) among others posits that age governs social relationships and is a means for maintaining socio-political order. Gender, on the other hand, is a social identity used to determine variation in speech (Christie, 2004). Antonopoulou (2001) in examining gender in brief service encounter notes that men and women have different view of this social engagement. Men see it as purely transactional without politeness strategies while women see it as a tri-partite event comprising initial greeting phase, a medial transactional phase and a final thanking or leave-taking phase. This emphasises the difference between men and women with regard to linguistic politeness. Dressing as an aspect of appearance in relation to politeness has not been given much attention. It is hoped that linking it to politeness will help shed light on its role in encoding politeness in service encounter.

2.2 Politeness, Culture and Service Encounter

Despite the criticisms against the universality of politeness according to some scholars, its applicability in understanding language use with respect to the attitude of participants cannot be contested. This gives room for community of practice to determine what works for a particular culture with respect to rules of engagement. This is what makes politeness culture specific and within the culture where this study is based, politeness is basically euphemistic given the indirect use of language to encode it in some situations compared to the Hausa where bluntness rules (Odeunmi, 2005). Odeunmi further explains that the Yoruba culture is a honorific laden one coupled with specific address terms employed to encode deference and respect as a result of age, higher status, economic achievement and so on while addressing people. The address terms include *O* or *Q* which doubles as a second or third person pronoun to indicate that an individual (speaker) is in a lower or equal age group. *E* (second person honorific pronoun) has as its counterpart *won* or *awon* (they, third person). *Eyin*, (honorific *you*) contrasts with *iwọ* with *o* as a non-honorific *you*. *Awon* is a third person plural honorific pronoun that contrasts the non-honorific *iwọ* (Odeunmi, 2013).

Culture and service encounter are related in the sense that culture is factored in when considering the success of realising the goal of making sales. Within service delivery, the expectations of customers must be understood if the satisfaction of customers is paramount. Service failure leading to the death of an outfit may occur if this is not taken into consideration. The expectation is likely to be subjective relating to cultural preferences but it has to be met. However, it is to be noted that the more far apart any two cultures are, the more their expectations vary (Warden, Liu, Huang and Lee, 2003). Though different people from different cultures visit the post office, the service providers need to be balanced in their attitude in order to accommodate even those not from the same area with them. Since during service encounter linguistic expressions running from civilised to rude and impolite behaviours may be expected, the service provider should need to maintain certain fundamental concepts that can help in analysing and understanding both shared and different cultural values in interaction (White, 2000). These concepts include face, face maintenance, solidarity, deference, hierarchy, status and power, social distance, directness and indirectness and without making connection to a matrix of intercultural shared norms and differences, pragmatic failure may arise. In Nigeria, Ekerete (2006) confirms the importance of culture in service delivery, Esu and Are (2009) point to friendliness as key to a customer's satisfaction while Opara and Kikame (2006) acknowledge the customer's experience and service provider's expert advice to be fundamental to moderate satisfaction of customers. This study is set to investigate how the non-verbal cues affect the use of politeness during service encounters at the post office given the challenges that the outfit is currently experiencing.

III. THEORETICAL CONSTRUCT

Politeness is a linguistic factor that determines attitude in interactions in its bid to reflect harmony and explains the rules of engagement. Politeness to an extent depending on the situation conveys rapport and for this reason this study employs a combined theory of Lim and Bowers (1991) politeness theory and Spencer-Oatey (2000) rapport management frame. Lim and Bowers model of politeness theory is a modification of Brown and Levinson's (1987) influential politeness theory and it includes various face wants and faceworks.

This model has three distinct face wants identified to exist in social interactions and they are fellowship face (the want to be included), competence face (the want that their abilities be respected) and autonomy face (the want for freedom to act independently). Lim and Bowers believe that in communication, interactants often perform illocutionary acts that threaten one or more of these face wants. So in order to circumvent this, interactants need to carry out mitigation acts. To this end, solidarity addresses fellowship face, indicating that one accepts the other as a member of an in-group emphasising the use of identity markers, being empathic, demonstrating personal knowledge, commonalities and cooperation. Approbation tackles competence face whereby appreciation of other's general abilities, possessions and performances are acknowledged. This is done through compliments and minimising blames. Autonomy face is addressed by tact which to an extent, recognises the other's freedom to act unimpeded.

Spencer-Oatey (2000) helps us to understand that interactants maintain different kinds of rapport towards each other during interaction. These rapport orientations include rapport enhancement (a desire to strengthen or enhance harmonious relationship), maintenance (a desire to protect or maintain harmonious relationship), neglect (a lack of concern or interest in the quality of relations perhaps due to focus on self) and challenge (a desire to challenge or impair harmonious relations). With these different rapport orientations, politeness is seen as an evaluative label used to make subjective judgments about appropriate social behavior during service encounter.

Lim and Bowers politeness theory as a modification of Brown and Levinson's (1987) influential politeness theory offers this study a nuanced categorisation of the main politeness strategies through extending the positive and negative face to include fellowship, competency and autonomy face wants in explaining relational intimacy and power differential in social interaction. Again, with Spencer-Oatey's rapport orientation management, the study will be able to categorise the different rapport orientations exhibited by the counter attendants toward the customers during the service encounter.

IV.METHODOLOGY

The setting for this study is Ibadan, the capital of Oyo state, Nigeria. Ibadan is picked due to being the largest city in the Sahara sub-region and one of the oldest places where the colonial masters established a postal unit fashioned after the British Postal System in London in 1898. Again, it is envisaged that the post offices in Ibadan will fairly share some of the characteristics found in other post offices in Nigeria. The data for the study comprises ten purposively selected interactions from a total number of 32 interactions between the counter attendants and customers during service encounters at the post offices for a month between the hours 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. The period is important because it marks the time when there is a remarkable increase in terms of patronage. This data is a naturally occurring interaction between the counter attendants and the customers collected through participant observation with permission from the management and the use of tape recorder and was descriptively analysed applying the combined framework described above. For convenience, CA will stand for the Counter Attendant and Cust. for the customer. Due to the bilingual nature of the data, interaction expressed in the local language was translated. The encounters are paired in order to indicate the difference in the ways the customers are treated in relation to their physical appearance through the counter attendants' verbal behaviours.

V. ANALYSIS OF DATA AND DISCUSSION

This section identifies and analyses the data using the afore-mentioned combined framework against or consistent with the cultural background of the setting. This pragmatic appraisal considers the non-verbal cues in relation to the accompanied politeness expression and rapport management orientation that encode and extend warm reception or otherwise to the respective customers. The first pair of extracts below indicates the role of age in interaction:

- Ex.1. CA: Daddy, *ibo ni* letter *yen n lo?* (Daddy, where is the letter going?)
Cust.: Within, *ni itòsí ni*, I mean Oyo state and I want to register it.
(Within. I mean within Oyo state and I want to register it).
CA: [weighs it] N180
Cust.: For how long *ló máa fi débè?* (For how long will it take to get there?)
CA: Before Friday
Cust.: *E joo sé e ní* calculator so that *màá lè fi* multiply *e nítorí kì í se eyo kan.*
(Please, do you have a calculator so that I can multiply it because the parcel is more than one).
CA: *E gbà* (Take)
Cust.: [collects and calculates] *E gba owó*, thank you
CA: Okay.

- Ex. 2. Cust: I want to buy stamp [bringing out N500 note] (a Youth Corp member)
CA .: How much? [Looking surprisingly at the sum of money the customer brought]
Cust: N50
CA .: No change o. You can buy from the next counter.
Cust: Alright.

These two interactions feature an elderly person and a young fellow respectively who visited the post office for a purpose. There is a difference between the way each of the customers received attention and is treated as well as their appearance relating to their age. First, the choice of words relating to the approach is tailored to cultural expectations. This matches the way each is expected to be addressed based on age. In the immediate cultural setting, age is revered, hence the address form and the bid to open the interaction by the CA to show respect/deference. *Daddy* is an address form that has been semantically extended to include individuals one does not have any filial affiliation with. Apart from this, *daddy* also serves as a greeting formula employed in opening the interaction indicating that the customer has been noticed as well as the willingness of the CA for the patronage. Greeting, therefore, functions as a formula used to consciously and deliberately acknowledge the presence of someone, show attention and suggest a type of social status (Ekanjume-Ilongo, 2013). Age accounts for the detailed encounter and the extra mile the CA takes to ensure a smooth and successful transaction. Apart from greeting, another honorific address form common to the locale is employed to further situate the age difference. This is related to the use of *e*, a respect formula. These tokens are used to guarantee rapport enhancement and consolidation of rapport maintenance. Compared to the second interaction, there is no opening move by the CA. If the clients in both interactions were reversed, the CA would have attempted to assist the customer in looking for balance and would not bluntly dismiss the customer outright as that attitude would ensure rapport neglect. Another factor affecting the use of politeness in the two encounters relates to reduction and strengthening of distance between the CA and the customers. *Daddy* reduces the distance in the first interaction and strengthens the social relationship enacted (rapport enhancement and maintenance). This expression encodes a higher level of intimacy though both share no filial relationship. This shifts the power within the interaction to the old gentleman without making any effort to determine the course of the interaction. Appearance in terms of age, therefore, determines which way the interactions go and the type of rapport initiated. In the interaction, higher levels of solidarity and tact reduce the CA's power over the customer. However, everything still depends on the mood of the CA which affects the politeness level. This is because mood has been seen as a determining factor in influencing social judgements especially trust (Lount, 2010), friendliness (Wyland and Forgas, 2010), appropriateness of individuals making requests (Forgas, 1998b) and the way social context influences the perceptions of others (Avramova, Stapel and Lerouge, 2010). In the next extracts, status has the upper hand in the interactions which expedites action of the CA or provides a hitch during the transaction as shown below:

- Ex 3. Cust: Give me four N50 stamps.
CA: Ok sir.
Cust: Thank you.

- Ex. 4. CA: Sir, I will not accept this letter.
Cust: What?! What do you mean?
CA: The whole envelope has been smeared by red gum and it is untidy.
Cust: Ok, what do you want me to do?
CA: Maybe you can get another envelope.
Cust: But you saw me fixing the stamp and you did not say a thing.
CA: (Silence)

The first interaction flows but there is a conflict in the second. These interactions foreground the power of the honorific and respect term *sir* in signaling politeness and indifference. The use of *sir* by both CAs increases the distance between the interlocutors and indicates status. The first use invites cooperation and rapport maintenance indicating concession of control in the interaction while the second simultaneously serves as both the opening move and respect formula that disarms the customer and concedes power to the CA conveyed through making suggestion, an indicator of asymmetrical power. Again, sparse use of words in Ex.3 concedes power to the customer while the messed up envelop in Ex.4 helps categorise the second customer, hence his treatment despite the use of the obliterated honorific term, *sir*. In the interaction in Ex 4, there is lower level solidarity, approbation and tact as the power of the CA over the customer increases. This is because the educated ambience and the messed-up envelop do not tally. The next pair of interaction considers class as encoded by the use of the word, Germany:

- Ex. 5. Cust.: *Ẹ kààáro mo fe* send letter *si* Germany.
Good morning, I want to send a letter to Germany.
CA: *Sé ẹ fe register e?* (Do you want to register it?).
Cust.: *Beni* (Yes).
CA: *Ẹ mú un wá kí n weigh e* (Bring, let me weigh it).
Cust.: *Ẹ gbà*. And *ẹ jo kí ẹ register e dada*
[Hands over the item] Take. Please, help me do it properly.
CA: *Ẹ ma worry tí ẹ bá tí register e, ó sure pé ó máa débe*
Don't worry, once you register it, it will surely get to its destination
Cust.: *Eni tí mo fẹ send e sí náà ló ní kí n register e*
The person that said I should send it said I should register it.
CA: No problem.
Cust.: *Ẹ ẹ é* (Thank you).

- Ex. 6. Cust.: *Ẹ joo mo fe weigh kini yìí* [showing the parcel]
Please, I want to weigh this parcel [showing the parcel].
CA: *Ẹ mú un wá* [weighs it] N700 (Bring it)
Cust.: Ah ah, *kíló dé? Ó ti po jù* now (Ah ah, what is it? It is too much now).
CA: *Şé èmi ni weigh àbí ẹ kò rí wí pé nnkan tó tóbi ẹ gbé wá?*
Am I the weigh or can't you see that it is a big parcel that you brought?
Cust.: Eh eh so what?
CA: *Ẹ wò ó, tí ẹ bá fe ra stamp, ẹ dáhùn nítorí* other people
Look here, if you want to buy stamp be fast about it because others are waiting
Cust.: Okay, okay *ẹ mú un wa* (Okay, okay bring it).
CA: *Şe ẹ fẹ register e now?* (Do you want to register it now?)
Cust.: No *mo ò register è*

Again, in these interactions, the tones differ because there is a cordial relationship between the interlocutors in the first while it is lacking in the second. The first customer portrays class arising from the implication of posting a letter to Germany while the second customer reflects poverty conveyed through challenging the price tag for the postage. These indicate the intimacy, power and rights of participants in the interactions. The intuitive categorisation reached by the respective CAs helped them to determine the kind of social relationship enacted. Though both CAs apply the use of *ẹ*, an honorific respect formula approved by the society, the rapport implications differ. The use of the honorific term in Ex.5 tends to build and maintain rapport enhancement while in Ex.6 the respect formula is neutralised with the implicit challenge of the customer's rejection of the postage price leading to rapport neglect. The next pair of interactions still conveys the role of class, in addition to gender, ethnicity and mood of the CA:

- Ex. 7 Cust.: Please I want to post a letter
CA: Where?
Cust.: Lagos, and how much stamp am I going to buy?
CA: It depends, we have N50, N100, N200 and so on, let me see what you want to send
Cust.: Don't worry.
CA: You are funny o sister, do you think I want to check what is in your letter, at least the letter will come to us.
Cust.: I know but let me put it in the envelop.
CA: Okay.
Cust.: Take.
CA: N100.
Cust.: Alright

- Ex. 8 Cust.: I want to register and was directed to the other place (Angry).
CA: It is not you that I said to go there
Cust.: *Ẹ má da èniyan káakiri* now. (Stop misdirecting people up and down now.)
CA: *Ó dáa, N100 ni owó yin.* (Okay, your money is N100.)
Cust.: Okay.

In these interactions, the tones differ, while Ex.7 reflects lightness and camaraderie, Ex.8 depicts seriousness and discontent. The variables that implicitly play central roles with respect to appearance are gender, ethnicity (the lady in Ex.7 is from Igbo extraction) and disposition (mood) of both the CA and the customer. Regarding

Ex.7, the predominant use of English as code for the interaction portrays the user as distant and aloof as against the use of Yoruba (language of the environment), a more meaningful code that serves as a means for constructing identity (Cashman, 2005, Bani-Shoraka, 2005). Again, it has been observed that gender reflects the linguistic variation between men and women more through politeness strategies. While a lot of researches support divergence between men and women, it is also evident that women have transformative affect on the outcome of a situation by their mere soft feminine presence and touch. In the interaction the feminine reply plays down the rejection of the CA's request. In spite of the apparent mistrust and discomfiture the CA still makes light of the situation. This is probably because of the mood of the CA and feminine presence which is one of the factors that feed on power and distance and ultimately politeness. Mood has been noted to implicate politeness norms (Morse and Afifi, 2015) and social judgements relating to friendliness (Wyland and Forgas, 2010) and how social context influences the perceptions of others (Avramova, Stapel and Lerouge, 2010). The CA's perception of the interaction is neutral and reflects friendliness, hence the lower perceived power experienced in the interaction and the resultant attentiveness of the CA. In Ex.8, the situation encodes dissatisfaction as result of inattentiveness of the CA thwarting the need of the customer. The circumstance should have been a cue for the CA to increase his level of politeness by way of apology; however, the CA's stance reflects anything but rapport neglect. The interaction portrays less tact, solidarity and approbation as both interactants try to hold on to their respective power to control the situation. In Nigeria, the customer is not usually right in government owned establishment because salaried employees are not predicated on the number of sales for salary is assured come the end of the month. In this kind of conflictual situation, rights are jettisoned and power is in charge. By the CA's replies, his stance shows his gratitude for being a civil servant that enjoys certain immunity. The last pair of interactions features the role of obligation, educated ambience, politeness and rapport management during transactional process:

Ex.9 Cust.: Please I want to collect money sent to from abroad.

CA 1: Be patient, the person that will attend to you will be with you soon [pointing to another Counter Attendant].

Cust.: [accosting CA 2] It is you we are waiting for.

CA 2: What exactly do you want?

Cust.: I want to collect money sent from London

CA 2: You will fill a form.

Cust.: Where is the form? I am tired of the queue and this one by one filling of forms. Can't you tear it apart and look at it on the system?

CA 2: We can't tear it.

Cust.: Alright

Ex. 10 Cust. 1: Please do you have gum?

Cust. 2: No I don't have. Why not ask the CA?

Cust. 1: [Silence, then sees the one beside the counter man] Please sir can I use your gum?

CA: No don't want to ... okay, see it. It is very little.

Cust. 1: [Silence, still looking at the counter man]

CA: Okay, use some, just a little

Cust. 1: Thank you

In these transactional processes are encoded different levels of intimacy, power and rights for the achievement of individual goals of buying and selling. The code for the interactions is English which distances the interlocutors. In Ex.9, the customer knows his right, hence the boldness in accosting the CA for proper service and attention. Reading the customer including the code choice for the interaction, the CA perceives an educated ambience and this determines the nature of politeness and rapport approach. The feeling arising from dealing with someone above one educationally makes the CA not to give ground for intimidation and necessitate the choice to be in charge. The power to control the situation is encoded through the adopted questioning strategy and ability to bluntly refuse to oblige or disapprove the customer's request without considering his face needs. Questioning has been equated to level of politeness. Allwin (1991) observes that formulating questions to reflect politeness depends on its indirectness. In this situation, prefacing it as direct ones give no options to the addressee and the CA's questions brood no argument. The customer sensing the inadequacy of the CA tries to accommodate knowing that he is not going to win the argument; hence he makes a concession by implicitly agreeing to go with the rejection of his suggestion. The mild agitation of the customer is not used to successfully secure him a good negotiation out-come because the CA knows he has a poor alternative as he holds the trump card of power. The need to consolidate his power to control makes no provision for rapport enhancement or maintenance. In Ex.10, the interaction actually involves a lady. Normally, the CAs do not like to share their

service materials with customers and this is where appearance, the feminine magic comes to the rescue to overpower, turn down for a moment the normal convention of the post office and wear down the reserve of the CA. It can be said that gender attracts certain immunity in terms of the right to have certain services rendered even if it is outside the guidelines of services in some outfits. This is not related to linguistic variation but from the nonverbal make up of women.

VI. CONCLUSION

From all the excerpts, implicature plays a vital role which feed on the non-verbal aspects and results in covert agreement and eventual cooperation in all the interactions. Implicature as well as appearance (nonverbal elements) in the interactions reduces and economises words needed to achieve the goals of the transactions. Again, appearance plays a major intuitive role in determining the reactions of the CAs in rendering service to the public. This intuitive role may probably be due to the power appearance possesses to affect and determine who has the upper hand in calling the shots (power), the rights of the participants and the level of intimacy the CAs are willing the customers to be part of. Camaraderie is the highest level of intimacy determined by age and feminine imbued power. Again, as a nonverbal sign, it aids in categorising individuals and creating an impression in the mind of the CA leading to conveying or denying of politeness. Through appearance recognition is given or withdrawn by way of attending to a customer appropriately for them to achieve their goal at the post office. These nonverbal signs in line with Sundaram and Webster (2000) are intrinsic to evaluation of the customers' experiences as they serve as communicators of meaning perceived or read consciously or unconsciously and interpretable as intimacy, distance, dominance in communication.

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ARUA Ifeanyi E. "Non-verbal Cues and Politeness Strategies in Post Office Service Encounter in Nigeria." *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 25(2), 2020, pp. 40-48.