

A PRAGMATIC STUDY OF IMPOLITENESS STRATEGIES IN FACEBOOK COMMENTS ON NIGERIAN PREACHERS' SERMONS

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ABSTRACT

The proliferation of social media interactions has immensely contributed to the growth and use of impolite language by individuals across different domains. There is limited research on the examination of impoliteness strategies used by Facebook commenters in antagonizing the theological perspectives (sermons) of Nigerian preachers. This study identified and examined the impoliteness strategies used by Facebook commenters, using Jonathan Culpeper's Impoliteness Theory. The study used a descriptive qualitative research design which relies on secondary data. The data was extracted from the Facebook pages of four (4) Nigerian preachers, namely: *Pastor David Ibiyeomie, Pastor Abel Damina, Prophet Chukwuemeka Ohanaemere (Odumeje) and Apostle Johnson Suleman*. A purposive sampling technique was employed in selecting fifty (50) comments used by Facebook commenters in antagonizing Nigerian preachers' sermons (sermons preached from January 2025-March 2026). Findings show that impoliteness strategies, including *insults, inappropriate identity markers, name calling, blunt contradictions, direct accusations and ridiculing* are used by Facebook commenters when antagonizing or reacting to the sermons of Nigerian preachers. The study concludes that the impoliteness strategies used by Facebook commenters are manifested using pragmatic tools, including but not restricted to, *presupposition, rhetorical questions, metaphorization, diminutive titles, deixis, inference, epistemic modality and irony*.

Keywords: Pragmatics, Impoliteness Strategies, Facebook Commenters

Introduction

Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that deals with the inference of meaning in relation to context. According to Geoffrey Leech and Michael Short (290), pragmatics is concerned with “the investigation into that aspect of meaning which is derived not from the formal properties of words and constructions, but from the way in which utterances are used and how they relate to the context in which they are uttered.” Following Leech and Short’s view, it is safe to state that pragmatics goes beyond the literal representation of words and sentences, and focuses on the meaning deduced from linguistic elements in relation to contexts. Similarly, Naoko Taguchi and Daniel Kadar (1) define pragmatics as a linguistic discipline that examines the linguistic resources/elements used in relation to context. Leech and Short, as well as Taguchi and Kadar share a common view, emphasising that pragmatics studies how interlocutors extract meaning from utterances in relation to context. The term “impoliteness strategy” constitutes a central concept within pragmatics, which this study seeks to address.

Impoliteness strategies, according to Femi Akamagwuna (2), refer to “linguistic and communicative devices used by interlocutors to express disrespect, arrogance, anger and power in a discourse.” On the strength of this, impoliteness strategies are deployed by individuals in revealing their disapproval, complaint and grievances on a subject matter. As for Jonathan Culpeper, impoliteness strategies are used to ‘embarrass’, ‘ignore,’ ‘ridicule’, insult” and attack a hearer’s face (Culpeper 424). Culpeper’s definition provides a comprehensive account of impoliteness strategies. The proliferation of social media interaction contributes to the deployment of impoliteness strategies by Facebook commenters in antagonizing Nigerian preachers’ sermons.

The emergence of social media handles creates an avenue for Facebook commenters to react to the sermons of Nigerian preachers, using impoliteness strategies. This is evident in the expressions and paralinguistic features employed by the commenters. There is limited research on the impoliteness strategies deployed by Facebook commenters in antagonizing the sermons (theological perspectives) of Nigerian preachers. This study hopes to address this gap.

Aim and Objectives

This study aims to examine the impoliteness strategies used by Facebook commenters in antagonizing Nigerian preachers’ sermons. Specifically, the study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- i. To identify and examine the impoliteness strategies used by Facebook commenters in antagonizing Nigerian preachers’ sermons.
- ii. To explore the pragmatic tools used in manifesting the impoliteness strategies.

Research Questions

In relation to the above objectives, this research intends to provide answers to the following questions:

- i. What are the impoliteness strategies by Facebook commenters in antagonizing Nigerian preachers’ sermons?
- ii. What are the possible ways of exploring the pragmatic tools used in manifesting the impoliteness strategies?
- iii.

Empirical Review

There are myriads of existing studies on impoliteness strategies. Some of such studies have examined the impoliteness strategies used by online commenters in addressing political issues in Nigeria (Temitope Ajayi 2018; Deborah Onwubiko 2022 and Ibitayo Oso 2023). Ajayi (2018), for instance, relying on Mey’s pragmatic acts and Culpeper’s impoliteness theory, investigates the

impoliteness strategies in Facebook comments of some Nigerian electorate during the 2019 Presidential Election. Using a qualitative research design, findings reveal that Nigerian electorates use *name calling*, *ridiculing* and *taboo words* in discrediting, attacking and threatening the faces of PDP and APC's Presidential Candidates and their supporters in 2019 Presidential Election. It is worth observing that Ajayi's integration of Mey's pragmatic acts and Culpeper's impoliteness strategy provides comprehensive theoretical frameworks for examining the impoliteness strategies used by Nigerian electorate during elections. Ajayi's study is different from this study as it explores the impoliteness strategies used in addressing political issues, not religious ones. This research is similar to Onwubiko's (2022) study which, using Culpeper's theory and a qualitative research design, examines the impoliteness strategies found in the comments of Facebook users over Supreme Court ruling on 2019 Imo Governorship Election. It was found that four strategies of impoliteness, namely: positive, negative, bald on record and mock politeness were used by Facebook users in attacking Supreme Court Judges. While Onwubiko's study conducts a rigorous analysis on the collected data, it is different from this study since it does not examine the impoliteness strategies used by netizens in reacting to Nigerian preachers' sermons. The findings of this study relate with Oso's (2023) study. Adopting a qualitative research design and Culpeper's impoliteness theory, the scholar (Oso) examines the impoliteness strategies used by people on Twitter in damaging the face of Nigerian politicians and their supporters in 2023 Presidential Election. The study finds that the tweets were characterized by *name calling*, *ridiculing*, *seeking disagreement* and *associating the other with a negative effect*. Though the data is sufficient and analysis is rigorous, Oso's work differs from this study; as it explores the strategies used in attacking Nigerian politicians, not preachers.

Studies on impoliteness strategies used in sports have been examined by different scholars (Juvrianto Jakob 2024; Esther Eseka 2023 and Irwan Pratama 2025). Jakob (2024), using Culpeper's Impoliteness Strategy analyses the comments used by Facebook users in attacking Cristiano Ronaldo. Using a descriptive qualitative research design, the study indicates that insulting expressions are most commonly found in Ronaldo's Facebook page. While this study concludes that impoliteness strategies are manifested in Facebook users' comments using *anonymity*, *emotions* and *lack of non-verbal cues*, none of the data presented in the study supports the author's claim. Likewise, Eseka (2023), using Culpeper's Impoliteness Strategy (IS) and a qualitative research design, finds that bald on record and mock politeness are used in criticizing sportsmen. While the data and analysis of this study is comprehensive, the collection of different data across diverse social media handles weakens the focus of the research work. Eseka's research differs from this study as it addresses the impoliteness strategies used by netizens in attacking renowned footballers, not preachers. A similar study to this research is the thesis written by Pratama (2025), relying on Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), examines the hate speeches used against Black footballers on X (Twitter). Using a qualitative research design, the study finds that positive impoliteness strategy and mock politeness strategy are used in criticizing Black footballers. The study finds that impoliteness strategies are deployed in undermining the legitimacy of Black players' presence in elite European football. While the data presented in Pratama's work is copious, the inclusion of names and faces of X commenters poses a serious ethical concern. Eskesa's thesis varies from this present study as it analyses the strategies used in attacking/criticizing footballers, not preachers.

Studies on hurtful utterances/speeches used in the religious domain abound (Abayomi Ayansola 2021 and Ezekiel Asemah, Emeke Nwaoboli and Queen Nwoko 2022). Ayansola (2021), using Mey's pragmatic acts, analyses the hate speeches used by some religious leaders in sharing

their ideologies on socio-political undercurrents in Northern Nigeria. Using a qualitative research design, findings show that *innuendos* and *name calling* are commonly used by the preachers. It is worthy to note that Ayansola properly applies Mey's Pragmatic Acts Theory (PAT) in examining the hateful utterances used by Nigerian preachers in complaining about the socio-political undercurrents in Nigeria. His work is different from this study as it analyses the hateful utterances used by Nigerian preachers in complaining, and not the ones used by Facebook commenters in antagonizing the preachers' sermons. Asemah, Nwaoboli and Nwoko (2022), using Peterson and Schramm's Social Responsibility Theory (SRT) examine the hate speeches of Facebook users in doubting the doctrines and miracles of Nigerian clergymen. Using a qualitative textual analysis and a purposive sampling technique, the study finds that Facebook commenters use hateful speeches in mocking Prophet T.B. Joshua after his demise. Some of the deficiencies found in the work of Asemah et. al include: the inclusion of the names and faces of the Facebook commenters, weak analysis as well as overgeneralizing the hate speeches on clergymen (instead of allowing the title reveal the name of the referent not "...clergymen in Nigeria as shown in the title of the paper).

While Asemah et al.'s (2022) work is the closest to this study, this research work differs from theirs. First, the collected data focuses on how people doubt the doctrines, credibility and miracles performed by only one Nigerian preacher- TB Joshua. On the other hand, this present study seeks to examine the impoliteness strategies found in the Facebook comment sections of four (4) Nigerian preachers, thereby extending the work of Asemah, Nwaoboli and Nwoko. What is more, the study adopts Social Responsibility Theory (SRT) in examining the hateful utterances used against Prophet T.B Joshua whereas this present study uses Culpeper's Impoliteness Strategy (IS) in examining the impoliteness strategies used in Nigerian preachers' Facebook comment sections. This, therefore, addresses a gap in Asemah et al.'s work and existing studies on impoliteness strategies in religious context.

Theoretical Review

This study is anchored on Jonathan Culpeper's Impoliteness Theory (IT). This pragmatic theory explores how a speaker attacks the face of a hearer in a communicative event (Jonathan Culpeper 350). Culpeper identifies five impoliteness strategies, namely: *positive impoliteness*, *negative impoliteness*, *bald-on-record impoliteness*, *mock politeness* and *withhold politeness* (Culpeper 356-358). Positive impoliteness strategy is used in damaging the positive face of the hearer (Culpeper 356). This impoliteness strategy is used in making a hearer feel unaccepted or disconnected from a group. Instances of positive impoliteness include: "*insulting, calling others names, seeking disagreement, ignoring/snubbing others, using inappropriate identity markers, the use of taboo words and making others feel uncomfortable*" (Culpeper 357-358).

As for negative impoliteness strategy, it is used for "interrupting", "ridiculing", "warning" and "frightening others" (Culpeper 358). This strategy is used in interfering in the freedom of the hearer. Instances of negative impoliteness include: "*interrupting, ridiculing, belittling others, condescending, invading others' space and frightening*" (Culpeper 358).

Bald-on-record impoliteness strategy, according to Culpeper (356), is performed in "a direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way in circumstances where face is irrelevant or minimized." It shows a direct and precise way of attacking a hearer's face in a communicative event. Instances of bald-on-record impoliteness strategy include: *making complaints, issuing commands, blunt contradictions and many others*.

Mock politeness strategy shows how a "Face Threatening Act (FTA)" is used in an "insincere manner" in such a way that the hearer would be able to arrive at the offensive point even without the speaker saying it directly (Culpeper 356). This impoliteness strategy deals with

the use of conversational implicature such that the speaker indirectly conveys a message to the hearer (Grice cited in Culpeper 356).

Withhold politeness strategy is intentionally used by a speaker in denying a hearer of his expectation (Culpeper 357). It focuses on the “absence of politeness” when and where it is required in a speech event (Culpeper 357). Withhold politeness strategy, according to Culpeper (357), is used by an individual who deliberately chooses to be unkind and inaccessible. Instances of withhold politeness include: *refusal to greet and thank others* (Culpeper 357). Withhold politeness strategy is excluded from the analysis of this study because it (withhold politeness) requires the deliberate refusal to greet or appreciate another, which does not manifest in this research work.

Culpeper’s Impoliteness Theory/Strategy is relevant to this study because it provides a suitable framework for analysing the impoliteness strategies used in Facebook comments on Nigerian preachers’ sermons.

Methodology

This study uses a descriptive qualitative research design which relies on secondary data. The secondary data for the study was extracted from the Facebook pages of four (4) Nigerian preachers, namely: *Pastor David Ibiyeomie*, *Pastor Abel Damina*, *Prophet Chukwuemeka Ohanaemere (Odumeje)* and *Apostle Johnson Suleman*. The rationale for selecting these preachers is due to their high level of visibility, acceptance, followership and diverse theological perspectives. The majority of the comments were obtained from the Facebook pages of the preachers. However, a few comments were selected from the Facebook pages of content creators who engage in religious discourse. A purposive sampling technique is employed in selecting fifty (50) comments that relate to the impoliteness strategies used by Facebook commenters in antagonizing Nigerian preachers’ sermons (sermons preached from January 2025-March 2026). After a close reading of the comment sections of the preachers, the researcher identifies, categorizes and analyses the four impoliteness strategies (positive: 33 comments, negative: 3 comments, bald-on record: 6 comments and mock: 8 comments) found in the comment sections of the preachers. This study is anchored on Jonathan Culpeper’s Impoliteness Theory. It uses content analysis in exploring the data presented in tabular forms.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This section presents and analyses impoliteness strategies in Facebook comments on Nigerian preachers’ sermons. The impoliteness strategies extracted from Facebook comments are: positive impoliteness strategy, negative impoliteness strategy, bald on record and mock politeness.

1) Positive Impoliteness Strategy

Facebook commenters deploy impoliteness strategies in antagonizing Nigerian preachers’ sermons. The strategies analysed are: insults, name calling and inappropriate identity markers.

a) Insults

Instances of insulting expressions abound in the comments of Facebook users. Such expressions are manifested using pragmatic tools, namely: rhetorical questions and presupposition.

S/N	COMMENT	TARGET	CONTEXT OF SERMON	DATA SOURCE
i	Mr David, what business did you engage in that got you money so much that you became one of the richest preachers?	Ibiyeomie	Ibiyeomie’s claim of giving God one million dollars when he had no building of his own	https://www.facebook.com/share/r/19VzbLtLqn/?mibextid=UalRPS

ii	Tithe is about to end, go and look for work, sir.	Ibiyeomie	Ibiyeomie's teaching on giving to God	https://www.facebook.com/share/r/14W83d81WJ/?mibextid=WC7FNe
iii	This man, you too like money.	Ibiyeomie	Ibiyeomie's Teaching on giving	https://www.facebook.com/share/r/14W83d81WJ/?mibextid=WC7FNe
iv	They are business pastors looking for how to trend in Nigeria. If not that God is too quiet, some PASTORS should be cleaners.	Ibiyeomie	Criticism on Celestial Church of Christ	https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1AJrRBkLWx/?mibextid=UalRPS
v	What pattern of healing be that? Una dey act India film?	Odumeje	Deliverance service, when healing a man from Equatorial Guinea	https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1Bq7gMb2Vg/?mibextid=UalRPS
vi	The most painful part is that people are listening to this trash.	Suleman	Teaching on the prophetic ministry	https://www.facebook.com/share/r/1BaPGZtPqw/?mibextid=UalRPS
vii	You did the same too	Suleman	Sermon on the deceit of a pastor	https://www.facebook.com/reel/1404250756952563?fs=e&mibextid=UaIRPS
viii	Confused generations, if he should leave him, why not Paul leave Peter to his faith? Why rebuking him? ...you don't know your seniors. Am (sic) beginning to doubt Suleman as a pastor oh.	Suleman	Suleman's teaching on pastors correcting one another	https://www.facebook.com/reel/1374403484488918?fs=e&mibextid=UalRPS
ix	This boy is a noise maker.	Suleman	Suleman's teaching on pastors correcting one another	https://www.facebook.com/reel/1374403484488918?fs=e&mibextid=UalRPS

x	Pastor, you are simply preparing the ground for your own nonsense.	Suleman	Suleman's teaching on pastors correcting one another	https://www.facebook.com/reel/1374403484488918?fs=e&mibextid=UalRPS
xi	Keep quiet, did you face your church?	Suleman	Suleman's teaching on pastors correcting one another	https://www.facebook.com/reel/1374403484488918?fs=e&mibextid=UalRPS

All the items presented above either reflect direct or indirect insults extracted from Facebook comments on Nigerian preachers' sermons. While a direct insult is used in criticizing someone's actions, an indirect insult is implicitly used in criticizing someone or his actions. Instances of direct insults shown above include: Mr David, what business did you engage... and you are a noise maker. On the other hand, instances of indirect insults used include: *if not that God is too quiet, some PASTORS should be cleaners* and *Am (sic) beginning to doubt Suleman as a pastor oh*.

As displayed in the table above, there is the use of rhetorical questions in items (i), (v), (viii) and (xi) when antagonizing Nigerian preachers' sermons. In (i), a Facebook commenter uses the expression "Mr David, what business did you engage in that got you money so much that you became one of the richest preachers?" to indirectly notify Ibiyeomie that he uses the work/name of God to enrich himself. The use of the word "business" by the Facebook commenter implies that Ibiyeomie's source of wealth is not traceable to societal value, but lies on how he uses his sermons (ministry) to extort money from his members. Following the words of the Facebook commenter, it is safe to state that Ibiyeomie's claim of giving God one million dollars (when he had no building of his own) is false since the commenter believes the money belongs to the church and not Ibiyeomie. In the same vein, another Facebook commenter uses the rhetorical question shown in (v) "What pattern of healing be that? Una dey act Indian film" to criticize and downplay the miracle performed by Odumeje. Depending on the commenter's words, Odumeje is being dramatic and has not established a relationship with God that could produce supernatural results (miracles). In (viii), the rhetorical question "Confused generations, if he should leave him, why not Paul leave Peter to his faith? Why rebuking him?" is deployed by a Facebook commenter in rebuking Suleman, notifying him that none is above correction when it relates to spiritual matters. As shown in (xi), another commenter uses the rhetorical question "Keep quiet, did you face your church?" in warning/cautioning Suleman from mindling in the affair(s) of other preachers.

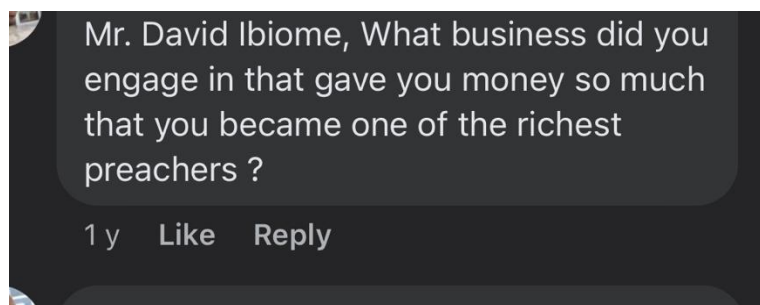


Fig 3.1: A Facebook commenter indirectly using a rhetorical question to insult Ibiyeomie.

Items (iv), (vi), (vii), (ix) and (x) manifest the use of presupposition as presented in the table above. In (iv), the comment “If not that God is too quiet, some PASTORS should be cleaners” can be presupposed that the Facebook commenter believes that Ibiyeomie is a fake pastor who should be punished for deceiving the saints. Additionally, the expression “some PASTORS should be cleaners” presupposes that Ibiyeomie is one of those pastors who are not qualified to function in the priestly office, but are fit for cleaning job. The commenter uses these words to downgrade the spiritual relevance of Ibiyeomie. Likewise, in (vi), the expression, “The most painful part is that people are listening to this trash” presupposes that the commenter views Suleman’s opinion on the prophetic ministry to be valueless, and is not worthy of getting the attention of Christians. Similarly, a commenter’s expression “This boy is a noise maker” presupposes that he considers Suleman’s sermon on Pastors’ criticism to be empty. In fact, referring to Suleman as “a noise maker” shows that he perceives Suleman’s words unedifying no matter how audible he appears to be when ministering. As indicated in (vii), the expression “You did the same too” presupposes that a Facebook commenter is of the opinion that Suleman beguiles his congregants just the way the pastor he refers to does. Expression (x) “Pastor, you are simply preparing the ground for your own nonsense” presupposes that a Facebook commenter views Suleman’s opinion on Pastors criticism against one another to be meaningless.

b) Name Calling

Facebook commenters are fond of calling Nigerian preachers different names. The name calling devices are realised using inference and metaphorization.

S/N	COMMENT	TARGET	CONTEXT	DATA SOURCE
xii	Haven’t seen a criminal like this.	Ibiyeomie	Teaching on giving to God	https://www.facebook.com/share/r/14W83d81WJ/?mibextid=WC7FNe
xiii	This Ibiyeomie is an unrepentant scammer .	Ibiyeomie	Teaching on giving to God	https://www.facebook.com/share/r/14W83d81WJ/?mibextid=WC7FNe
xiv	Ibiyeomie is a shameless thief , using God’s name to steal from his congregation. He should be arrested for fraud and manipulation.	Ibiyeomie	Ibiyeomie’s claim of giving God one million dollars when he had no building of his own	https://www.facebook.com/share/r/19VzbLtLqn/?mibextid=UalRPS
xv	Mumu man wan dey fine people money	Ibiyeomie	Ibiyeomie’s claim of giving God one million dollars when he had no building of his own	https://www.facebook.com/share/r/19VzbLtLqn/?mibextid=UalRPS
xvi	This pastor is an idiot who is always telling lies.	Ibiyeomie	Ibiyeomie’s claim of giving God one million dollars when he had no building of his own	https://www.facebook.com/share/r/19VzbLtLqn/?mibextid=UalRPS
xvii	Apart from been (sic) a pastor, he would also be a good Merit predict forecaster .	Ibiyeomie	Ibiyeomie’s sermon on giving to God	https://www.facebook.com/share/r/14W83d81WJ/?mibextid=WC7FNe

xviii	The most dangerous criminal that call (sic) himself a pastor. They are poor because they keep giving you their hard-earned money.	Ibiyeomie	Ibiyeomie's sermon on giving to God	https://www.facebook.com/share/r/14W83d81WJ/?mibextid=WC7FNe
xix	They are business pastors looking for...	Ibiyeomie	Ibiyeomie's criticism on Celestial Church	https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1AJrRBkLWx/?mibextid=UalRPS
xx	I always knew you to be an actor .	Suleman	Suleman's teaching on pastors correcting one another	https://www.facebook.com/reel/1374403484488918?fs=e&mibextid=UalRPS
xxi	He is a motivational speaker .	Suleman	Suleman's teaching on pastors correcting one another	https://www.facebook.com/reel/1374403484488918?fs=e&mibextid=UalRPS
xxii	Why Johnson is always talking fast, I don't know ... oga , calm down...you eat hot yam?	Suleman	Suleman's teaching on pastors correcting one another	https://www.facebook.com/reel/1374403484488918?fs=e&mibextid=UalRPS
xxiii	Leave him, leave him na so pastor take turn pulpit bandit	Suleman	Suleman's teaching on pastors correcting one another	https://www.facebook.com/reel/1374403484488918?fs=e&mibextid=UalRPS
xxiv	You face your church and leave them, mumu pastor . Face your church too	Suleman	Suleman's teaching on pastors correcting one another	https://www.facebook.com/reel/1374403484488918?fs=e&mibextid=UalRPS
xxv	Dr Abel is a reformed preacher and teacher designed to pull down capitalist pastors and restore the path to true Christianity.	Suleman	Suleman's teaching on pastors correcting one another	https://www.facebook.com/reel/1374403484488918?fs=e&mibextid=UalRPS
xxvi	Abel Damina is correcting the manipulators in our churches today, building empires for their children, flying on jet, stupid pastors .	Suleman	Suleman's teaching on pastors correcting one another	https://www.facebook.com/reel/1374403484488918?fs=e&mibextid=UalRPS
xxvi i	Suleman is a snake .	Suleman	Suleman's teaching on pastors correcting one another	https://www.facebook.com/reel/1374403484488918?fs=e&mibextid=UalRPS

xxvi ii	Sir, sorry no vex, are you REFEREE (sic)	Suleman	Suleman's teaching on pastors correcting one another	https://www.facebook.com/reel/1374403484488918?fs=e&mibextid=UalRPS
xxix	Who is that guy wey shake his head when 419 Johnson speaks	Suleman	Suleman's teaching on pastors correcting one another	https://www.facebook.com/reel/1374403484488918?fs=e&mibextid=UalRPS
xxx	Scammer pastors no like correction	Suleman	Suleman's teaching on pastors correcting one another	https://www.facebook.com/reel/1374403484488918?fs=e&mibextid=UalRPS

All the items reveal instances of name calling devices used by Facebook commenters in antagonizing Nigerian preachers' sermons. Name calling devices are used in derogatory manner in attacking an individual in a spoken or written discourse. As shown above, instances of name calling used by Facebook commenters include: a *criminal*, a *shameless thief*, a *snake*, *419 Johnson* and *scammer pastors*.

As projected above, items (xii), (xiii), (xiv), (xv), (xvi), (xviii), (xxii), (xxvi), (xxix) and (xxx) show the realization of inference on impoliteness strategies used in Facebook comments on Nigerian preachers' sermons. As shown in (xii), a Facebook commenter calls Ibiyeomie "a criminal." It can be inferred that the commenter calls Ibiyeomie that name (a criminal) because he feels most of his teachings focus on giving. And on this note, the commenter is of the opinion that Ibiyeomie uses his church as a fund-raising centre. In (xiii), a commenter calls Ibiyeomie an "unrepentant scammer." It is inferred that the commenter calls Ibiyeomie an unrepentant scammer because he sees him as a dishonest person who uses the ministry to engage in fraudulent activities. In the same vein, item (xiv) shows how a Facebook commenter calls Suleman "mumu pastor." It can be inferred that the commenter calls Suleman that name because he sees him as one who is intellectually deficient, and not called by God. The commenter uses this expression to dismiss or ignore Suleman's ideology on how pastors correct one another. In (xv) refers to Suleman as one of the "capitalist pastors." Using inference, it is safe to submit that a Facebook commenter views Suleman as a business man (not a reformed preacher like Damina) whose theological perspectives are being antagonized by Damina. In (xvi), a Facebook commenter sees Suleman as one of "the manipulators" and "stupid pastors" in the body of Christ in recent times. It can be inferred that the commenter uses these phrases to reveal Suleman as one of those who use God's name in accumulating wealth for themselves and their families without prioritizing the well-being of their congregants. In (xxii), a Facebook commenter refers to Suleman as "oga." It is inferred that the commenter deliberately uses this Pidgin lexical item in order not to acknowledge/recognize Suleman's spiritual authority. Rather, he sees him as an ordinary person who speaks uncontrollably. As posited in (xxiii), a Facebook commenter refers to Sule as a "pulpit bandit." In this context, it can be inferred that the commenter views Suleman as someone who uses his position to financially exploit his members. Depending on the commenter's words, Suleman uses his spiritual authority or the influence he has over his members to manipulate them.

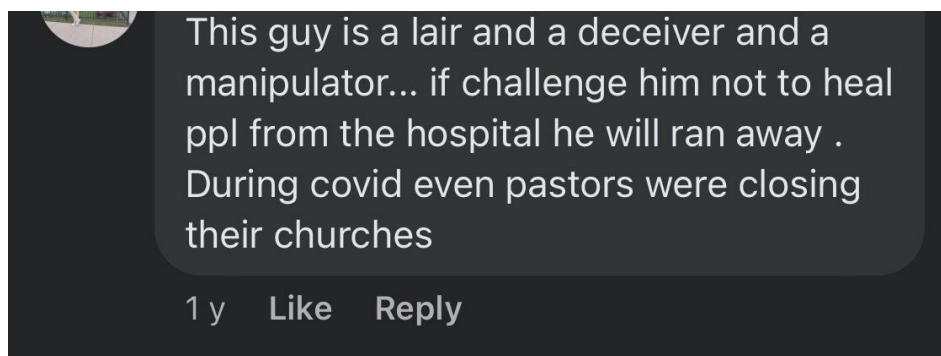


Fig 3.2 A Facebook commenter using name calling on Suleman.

Expressions (xx), (xxi), (xxvii) and (xxviii) show how Facebook commenters deploy metaphorization in antagonizing Nigerian preachers' sermons. In (xx), the word "actor" is employed by a commenter in revealing Suleman as a pretender or someone who does something in order to be rewarded. The commenter uses this word to show that the words of Suleman should not be taken seriously. In the same vein, as displayed in (xxi), Suleman is referred to as "a motivational speaker." This is metaphorical because it implies that the commenter pictures Suleman as someone who entertains/lifts the spirits of people, but lacks spiritual capacity (power) and divine message(s). In (xxi), the expression "As presented in (xxvii), a Facebook commenter uses the word "a snake" to project Suleman as a deceiver. The commenter uses this word to unveil Suleman as a dangerous and tricky individual who should be avoided by individuals; especially those in the Christian faith. In (xxviii), the commenter calls Suleman a "referee" because he sees him as someone who regulates or dictates the lives of his members/followers. Correspondingly, in (xxix), a commenter calls Suleman "**419 Johnson**" in order to project him as a dubious person who lacks spiritual authority.

c) Inappropriate Identity Markers

There are a few instances of inappropriate identity markers extracted from the comment sections of some Nigerian preachers. These inappropriate identity markers are manifested using diminutive titles.

S/NO	COMMENT	TARGET	CONTEX	DATA SOURCE
xxxix	Mr David , what business did you...	Ibiyeomie	Ibiyeomie's sermon on giving God one million dollars	https://www.facebook.com/share/r/19VzbLtLqn/?mibextid=UalRPS
xxxix	I don't understand what this guy says ...	Ibiyeomie	Ibiyeomie's claim of giving God one million dollars	https://www.facebook.com/share/r/19VzbLtLqn/?mibextid=UalRPS
xxxix	This boy is a noise maker	Suleman	Suleman's sermon on pastors correcting one another	https://www.facebook.com/reel/1374403484488918?fs=e&mibextid=UalRPS

All the items above inappropriate identity markers in Facebook comments on Nigerian preachers' sermons. Inappropriate identity markers are belittling communication choices that contradict the

expectation of the hearer in a communicative event. Instances of such words include: *Mr David*, *this guy* and *this boy*.

Items (xxxi-xxxiii) reveal the use of diminutive titles by Facebook commenters when antagonizing Ibiyeomie's sermon on giving. In (xxxi), the word "Mr" (instead of Pastor) is deliberately used by the commenter in downgrading the spiritual authority of Ibiyeomie, projecting him as a random individual who does not operate in the supernatural. In (xxii), the inappropriate identity marker "this guy" is advertently used by a Facebook commenter in projecting Ibiyeomie as an ordinary man that lacks spiritual authority. Similarly, in (xxxiii), a Facebook commenter uses the diminutive title "this guy" to deny Ibiyeomie of his spiritual status, projecting him as a random man who is not worthy of honour.

2) Negative Impoliteness Strategy

Facebook commenters use negative impoliteness strategy when antagonizing Nigerian preachers' sermons. There is only one strategy (sub-strategy of negative impoliteness) found in Facebook comments on Nigerian preachers' sermons and this is ridiculing.

a) Ridiculing

There are a few instances of ridiculous expressions used by Facebook commenters. Such expressions are characterised by inference.

S/N O	COMMENT	TARGE T	CONTEXT	DATA SOURCE
xxxi v	This is the first time I have heard him quote a Scripture.	Odumej e	Odumeje's sermon on believers' complaints to God	https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1CeJGF8Xer/?mibextid=UalRPS
xxxv	Every entertaining stadium will has (sic) its own speaker.	Suleman	Suleman's sermon on pastors correcting one another	https://www.facebook.com/reel/1374403484488918?fs=e&mibextid=UalRPS
xxxv i	Is it not the same Johnson Suleman that said you cannot correct an elder in the faith even when he is wrong? He went on to correct another elder and came back to apologise to him? Take Suleman seriously at your own risk.	Suleman	Suleman's sermon on pastors correcting one another	https://www.facebook.com/reel/1374403484488918?fs=e&mibextid=UalRPS

All the items presented above show the ridiculous expressions Facebook commenters use in antagonizing Nigerian preachers' sermons. Ridiculous expressions are used directly and indirectly used in laughing at someone or his actions. Instances of ridiculous expressions presented above are: *This is the first time I have heard him quote a Scripture* and *Every entertaining stadium will has (sic) its own speaker*.

As shown in (xxxiv), the expression "This is the first time I have heard him quote a Scripture" infers that the Facebook commenter believes that Odumeje does not use Scriptural references to justify his teachings. With this, the commenter does not see him as a preacher, but rather views him as someone who uses his ideologies and beliefs in disciplining his congregants. Similarly, in expression (xxxv) "Every entertaining stadium will always has (sic) its own spectator", using words like "entertaining" and "stadium", it can be inferred that the commenter

indirectly tells the preacher that he is an entertainer whose pulpit he likens to a stadium. These words are used by the commenter to downgrade Suleman's spiritual authority. In (xxxvi), the expression "Is it not the same Johnson Suleman that said you cannot correct an elder in the faith even when he is wrong? He went on to correct another elder and came back to apologise to him? Take Suleman seriously at your own risk" infers that a Facebook commenter sees Suleman as a man who lacks integrity, thereby contradicting what he says in relation to pastors correcting one another.

3) Bald on Record Impoliteness Strategy

Facebook commenters use direct, clear and unambiguous expressions in antagonizing Nigerian preachers' sermons. Blunt contradictions and direct accusations form the sub-strategies of bald on record used by the commenters.

a) Blunt Contradictions

There are scanty blunt contradictions revealing Facebook comments on Nigerian preachers' sermons. These expressions are manifested using deixis and epistemic modality.

S/N	COMMENT	TARGET	CONTEXT	DATA SOURCE
xxxvii	You are out of your mind man. You're a natural man that's why you don't understand the spiritual things. You've only one verse talking about the identity of Christ yet Jesus himself affirmed that he has a Father. Matthew 6:9 (KJV)... Matthew 28:19 (KJV)	Damina	Damina's teaching on "Jesus is God Almighty."	https://www.facebook.com/share/v/18zRHi1PdG/?mibextid=UalRPS
xxxviii	No serious person will listen to this nonsense. The same you that said buhari (sic) will die before he ends his tenure.	Suleman	Sermon on the prophetic ministry	https://www.facebook.com/share/r/1BaPGZtPqW/?mibextid=UalRPS
xxxix	Apostle, those two Scriptures, you have misinterpreted them sir. ...and this Scriptures (sic) can never work together in a Bible Study.	Suleman	Suleman's sermon on pastors correcting one another	https://www.facebook.com/reel/1374403484488918?fs=e&mibextid=UalRPS

The items displayed above indicate blunt contradictions used by Facebook commenters in antagonizing Nigerian preachers' sermons. Blunt contradictions are direct and clear expressions used in opposing the opinion of an individual. Instances of such expressions are: *No serious person will listen to this nonsense* and *Apostle, those two Scriptures, you have misinterpreted them sir...and this Scriptures (sic) can never work together in Bible Study*.

As presented in (xxxvii), the You are out of your mind man. You're a natural man that's why you don't understand the spiritual things. You've only one verse talking about the identity of Christ yet Jesus himself affirmed that he has a Father. Matthew 6:9 (KJV)... Matthew 28:19" shows the use of person deixis "you" in countering Damina's opinion on Jesus being God. The use of person deixis in the expression "You are out of your mind man. You're a natural man that's why you don't understand the spiritual things" shows that the commenter's opinion does not align with Damina's.

As pointed out in (xxxviii), the comment “No serious person will listen to this nonsense. The same you that said buhari (sic) will die before he ends his tenure” reveals how a Facebook commenter clearly opposes the teachings of Suleman using deixis. In relation to this, the commenter uses the person deixis “you” to confront Suleman, asserting that the preacher’s failed prophecy shows that he lacks spiritual authority. In the same vein, the proximal deixis “this nonsense” shows that the commenter views Suleman’s current sermon as s trash; that is not worthy of capturing his attention.

As seen in (xxxix), the comment “Apostle, those two Scriptures, you have missinterpreted (sic) them sir...and this Scriptures (sic) can never work together in Bible Study” shows how a commenter uses epistemic modality in challenging and rejecting Suleman’s opinion on the attitude of some preachers in correcting their fellow preachers. The use of the epistemic modality “can never” makes the commenter’s opinion objective, affirming his rejection of Suleman’s opinion.

b) Direct Accusations

There is scanty use of direct accusations in Facebook comments on Nigerian preachers’ sermons. Some of such accusations are realised by labelling, inference and name target.

S/N	COMMENT	TARGET	CONTEXT	DATA SOURCE
xl	Ibiyeomie is a shameless thief. He should be arrested for fraud and manipulation.	Ibiyeomie	Ibiyeomie’s claim on giving God one million dollars	https://www.facebook.com/share/r/19VzbLtLqn/?mibextid=UalRPS
xli	This is one of the pastors that discouraged me from going to church.	Ibiyeomie	Ibiyeomie’s claim on giving God one million dollars	https://www.facebook.com/share/r/19VzbLtLqn/?mibextid=UalRPS
xlii	Damina, you have said more heresies, evils and nonsense than this... You are not perfect either. When you said people should continue watching porn is worse than this. The list are (sic) many.	Damina	Damina’s teaching on prosperity preachers	

The items presented above show direct accusations used in Facebook comments on Nigerian preachers’ sermons. Direct accusations refer to a state of pointing out the wrong doings of an individual directly and openly. Instances of direct accusations include: *Ibiyeomie is a shameless thief. He should be arrested for fraud and manipulation* and *Damina, you have said more heresies, evils and nonsense than this...you are not perfect either*.

As presented in (xl), the Facebook commenter’s expression “Ibiyeomie is a shameless thief. He should be arrested for fraud and manipulation” reveals the use of labelling. In this context, the commenter uses the label “shameless thief” to accuse Ibiyeomie of being a thief. The commenter uses this comment to tarnish the reputation of Ibiyeomie, revealing him as a criminal (thief) who should be arrested and punished for exhibiting such an act.

Expression (xli) “This is one of the pastors that discouraged me from going to church” infers that a Facebook commenter projects Ibiyeomie as a failed shepherd who drives away the sheep from God. The commenter uses this expression in order to make others disassociate themselves from the preacher.

Expression (xlii) “Damina, you have said more heresies, evils and nonsense than this...you are not perfect either. When you said people should continue watching porn is worse than this...” manifests the use of name target as used by the commenter in antagonizing the sermon of Damina on false visions and prophecies. In this context, the commenter uses name target by fronting the referent (Damina). The words “heresies”, “evils” and “nonsense” are used to point out the failure of Damina. Also, the commenter uses the expression “... When you said people should continue watching porn is worse than this” to accuse Damina of being hypocritical, and should not be listened to.

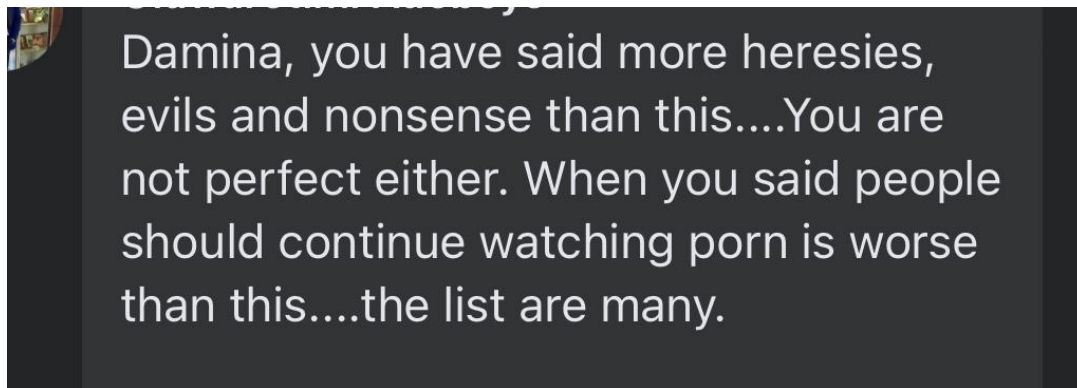


Fig 3.3 *A Facebook commenter accusing Damina.*

4) Mock Politeness

Facebook comments on Nigerian preachers' sermons show how commenters indirectly antagonize and make jest of the teachings of the preachers. Sarcasm and irony constitute sub-strategies of mock politeness deployed by the commenters.

a) Sarcasm

There are numerous sarcastic/humorous expressions captured in Facebook comments on Nigerian preachers' sermons. The sarcastic expressions presented in the table below are manifested using presupposition, implicature and code-switching.

S/N O	COMMENT	TARGE T	CONTEXT	DATA SOURCE
xliii	They now preach in dollars because naira failing (sic)	Ibiyeomi e	Ibiyeomie's claim on giving God one million dollars	https://www.facebook.com/share/r/19VzbLtLqn/?mibextid=UalRPS
xliv	It is very true he gave God one \$1M because God has its (sic) bank account. And he won't bless anyone who doesn't give him money (laughing emoji).	Ibiyeomi e	Giving God one million dollars	https://www.facebook.com/share/r/19VzbLtLqn/?mibextid=UalRPS
xlv	Different 'Gods' the same devil o. preach gospel not doctrine. Don't know why Christianity is divided in the name of church. May God open our eyes.	Ibiyeomi e	Ibiyeomie's criticism on Celestial Church	https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1AJrRBkLWx/?mibextid=UalRPS

xlvi	Na Flavour cause all this thing. If not how Odumeji take know say God dey sleep	Odumeje	Odumeje's sermon on believers' complaints to God	https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1CeJGF8Xer/?mibextid=UalRPS
xlvi	E mean say god dey sleep ooo, well he is not referring to the God I know (sticker of Odumeje).	Odumeje	Odumeje's sermon on believers' complaints to God	https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1CeJGF8Xer/?mibextid=UalRPS
xlvi	See as he serious dey preach na because Flavour dey UK for show. Make Flavour come back na the white man go dey preach because GO is cooking.	Odumeje	Odumeje's sermon on believers' complaints to God	https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1CeJGF8Xer/?mibextid=UalRPS
xlix	You feel talking about others is the way to go? That is a cheap way. You were an honorable man sir some time ago.	Damina	Damina's sermon on false visions and prophecies	https://www.facebook.com/share/r/1BclQ7Xrr9/?mibextid=UaIRPS

All the items presented above constitute Facebook comments on Nigerian preachers' sermons. Sarcasm is a form of irony used in mocking or criticizing an individual or a group of people. Instances of sarcastic expressions used in Facebook comments on Nigerian preachers' sermons include: *They now preach in dollars because naira failing (sic)*, *Na Flavour cause all dis thing. If not, how Odumeje take know say God dey sleep* and *You feel talking about others is the way to go? That is a cheap way. You were an honorable man sir some time ago.*

As shown in the table above, items (xliii), (xlv) and (xlvi) reveal the manifestation of presupposition. As indicated in (xliii), the comment "They now preach in dollars because naira failing (sic)" presupposes that the commenter sees Ibiyeomie as one of the preachers who are materially driven, and whose ministries are rooted in money, not God. The comment presented in (xlv), "Different 'Gods' the same devil o. Preach gospel not doctrine...may God open our eyes" presupposes that the Facebook commenter mocks Ibiyeomie, stating that his teachings are false, and do not focus on the God of the Bible. Relying on the commenter's words, it is safe to presuppose that the concluding expression of the commenter "...may God open our eyes" indicates that he views Ibiyeomie as a fake preacher who deceives people, using God's name. Likewise, the comment displayed in (xlvi), "E mean say God dey sometimes ooo, well, he is not referring to the God I know" presupposes that the commenter believes that Odumeje does not have any intimate relationship with God. Thus, all his teachings are heresies.

Expressions (xlv), (xlvi) and (xlix) indicate the use of implicature in Facebook comments on Nigerian preachers' sermons. In (xlv), the comment "It is very true he gave God \$1M because God has its (sic) bank account. And also God won't bless anyone who doesn't give him money" shows how a Facebook commenter indirectly makes jest of ibiyeomie by projecting him as an extortioner who uses God's name to generate fund from his members. The expression "And God also won't bless anyone who doesn't give him money" shows how the commenter uses fake agreement (using smiling emoji) in laughing at Ibiyeomie's theological perspective on giving.

Depending on the commenter's words, though the lexical choices portray acceptance, it indirectly amplifies the mockery of the commenter on Ibiyeomie's sermon. In (xlix), the expression "You feel talking about others is the way to go? That is a cheap way. You were an honorable man sir some time ago" is indirectly employed by a Facebook commenter in notifying Damina that he currently does not see him as a man of honour anymore, but sees him as someone who keeps attacking other preachers because he has nothing to preach about. To add to it, the phrase "a cheap way" as used by the commenter, implicates that he believes Damina's ministry is of low value since he neglects his primary assignment and focuses on criticizing his fellow preachers. Furthermore, as presented in (xlviii), the comment "See as he serious dey preach na because Flavour dey UK for show. Make Flavour come back na the white man go dey preach because GO is cooking" is deployed by a Facebook commenter to indirectly submit that Odumeje is using preaching to while away time before Flavour arrives from UK. What is more, building on the commenter's word "Make Flavour come back na the white man go dey preach because GO is cooking", it can be said that the commenter believes that Flavour is more spiritual than Odumeje. On this note, the commenter submits that Odumeje is better off as a cook than being a preacher.



Fig 3.4 *A Facebook commenter mocking Odumeje.*

Expressions (xlvii), (xlviii) and (xlviii) show the use of code-switching. In (xlvii), the expression "Na Flavour cause all thing this thing. If not, how Odumeje take know say God dey sleep" depicts the use of inter-sentential code-switching used by the commenter. Even if the commenter pretends to be curious, his main intention is to mock Odumeje, indirectly revealing him as someone who is Scripturally bankrupt of God's divinity, supremacy and uniqueness.

b) Irony

The only ironic expression extracted from Facebook comments on Nigerian preachers' sermons is presented in the table below.

S/N	COMMENT	TARGET	CONTEXT	DATA SOURCE
1	If our herdsmen go near Odumeje, they will know I got the power make nobody try me o	Odumeje	Odumeje's healing of a man who suffers from body pains	https://www.facebook.com/share/v/18erXET1tC/?mibextid=UaIRPS

As presented above, expression (1) "If our herdsmen go near Odumeje, they will know I got the power make nobody try me o" demonstrates an ironic expression in Facebook comments on Nigerian preachers' sermons. This comment is ironically used by a Facebook commenter in submitting that Odumeje does not have any power. Therefore, confronting Fulani herdsmen will expose him as being powerless. Following the words of the commenter, it can be deduced that he

uses this comment to notify others about the powerless state of Odumeje, showing him as someone whose verbal power does not equate his spiritual power or authority.

Conclusion

This study has examined impoliteness strategies in Facebook comments on Nigerian preachers' sermons. Based on the analysis conducted in this study, it was found that impoliteness strategies, including *insults*, *inappropriate identity markers*, *name calling*, *blunt contradictions*, *direct accusations* and *ridiculing* are used by Facebook commenters when antagonizing or reacting to Nigerian preachers' sermons. The study concludes that the impoliteness strategies used by Facebook commenters are manifested using pragmatic tools, including but not restricted to, *presupposition*, *rhetorical questions*, *metaphorization*, *diminutive titles*, *deixis*, *inference*, *epistemic modality* and *irony*. This study does not claim to be sufficient on its own. Thus, it has limitations that are traceable to the limited number of preachers used for the study. The following are suggestions for further research:

- i. Future researchers should carry out a comparative study on the impoliteness strategies used against Christian and Islamic preachers on social media handles.
- ii. Future researchers can investigate the reactions of preachers' followers (congregation) on the impoliteness strategies found in the comment sections of their religious leaders.

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