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Face Management and Speech Acting in Police-Suspect Interaction in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Police-suspect interaction is geared towards discovering details about crime. This phenomenon has received scholarly attention in the Nigerian context, with emphasis on discourse strategies employed by the participants. However, how ‘class’ informs language use, particularly by Investigating Police Officers (IPOs) in such interaction has been glossed over. Against this backdrop, this study investigates the ‘linguistic treatment’ meted out to high-profile suspects (HPSs) and low-profile suspects (LPSs) in six sampled police-suspect encounters in the State Criminal Investigation Department, Oyo State, Nigeria. Analysis draws inputs from Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory with emphasis on face and Searle’s model of speech acts. Directives, commissives, expressives, declaratives and assertives characterise police-suspect interaction. While these acts are employed by IPOs to threaten the faces of LPSs, the face threats inherent in them are mitigated with doses of face-saving acts in cases involving HPSs. Expressives are particularly deployed by IPOs to orientate towards HPSs’ positive faces.

1. Introduction

Police-suspect interaction is an institutional and goal-oriented activity that thrives heavily on language. In such interaction, the participants are observed to work at cross purposes; as, while the action, linguistic and non-linguistic, of the Investigating Police Officers (IPOs) is driven by the need to establish the culpability of suspect(s) regarding particular crimes, suspects’ actions are often motivated by the desire to prove their innocence, thereby ‘freeing’ themselves from the claws of IPOs. In view of this, the encounter can best be described as being ‘manipulative’ on the parts of the participants. Although police-suspect discourse has received much scholarly attention, particularly in the Nigerian context, it is quite surprising that no attention has been paid to how the class of suspects influences face management and speech acting in such interaction, especially in view of the common notion held in the country that high-profile suspects (HPSs) and low-profile suspects (LPSs) do not receive equal linguistic and non-linguistic treatments from IPOs during interrogation. This study, therefore, analyses speech acts and face management strategies in police-suspect interaction in the State Criminal Investigation Department, Oyo State, Nigeria. In particular, the study examines the various forms of face management strategies and speech acts deployed by IPOs and suspects in police-suspect
interaction as well as their pragmatic imports. The major objective of the study is to investigate how the class of suspects influences the forms of speech acts and politeness strategies deployed by IPOs in interrogations.

2. From Known to Unknown


Although these studies have explored different aspects of language use in police-suspect interaction, it is quite evident that none of them has specifically given attention to how language use, particularly as it relates to politeness and speech acts, is informed by the class of the suspect, that is, whether the suspect is informed or not, learned or not, and influential or not. Although Ajayi (2014) observes this in passing, the phenomenon has not enjoyed in-depth analysis, especially from the point of view of a particular theory of language studies. This study, therefore, promises to fill this very important gap in the literature.

3. Theoretical Background

Considering their relevance to the thematic focus of this study, Brown and Levinson’s (1978, 1987) politeness theory which emphasises on face and Searle’s (1979) model of Speech Acts are adopted as framework.

3.1 Brown and Levinson’s Politeness theory

Brown and Levinson’s (1978, 1987) politeness theory revolves round the concept of face. As
conceived by Goffman (1955), face refers to the positive public image one seeks to establish in social interactions. It is the impression one wants others to have of them in the course of social interactions (Ajayi and Fajinmi, under review). What this implies is that, in interpersonal interaction, just as one expects to be respected (having his/her face saved or protected), one is equally required to save or protect the face of the other participant(s). Failure to do this amounts to posing a threat to the other participant(s)' face. According to Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), humans have two faces: positive and negative faces. While the former has to do with the desire for approval and acceptance by others, the other has to do with the desire to proceed without being impeded upon (Redmond, 2015). Thus, actions, linguistic or non-linguistic, that violate the principles of these faces are regarded as face-threatening acts. Brown and Levinson (1987) identify two forms of politeness: positive and negative politeness. The former is designed to redress the hearer’s positive face wants, while the latter is designed to redress the addressee’s negative face want. Below are the various (non-)verbal sub-strategies to achieve positive and negative politeness in social interactions according to Brown and Levinson (1987):

Positive Politeness

- Notice
- Exaggerate interest
- Intensify interest
- Use in-group identity markers
- Seek agreement
- Avoid disagreement
- Presuppose/raise/assert/common ground
- Joke (utilize shared knowledge, put H “at ease”)
- Assert or presuppose S’s knowledge of and concern for H’s wants
- Offer, promise
- Be optimistic
- Include the addressee in the activity
- Give or ask for reasons
- Assume or assert reciprocity
- Give gift to the addressee

Negative Politeness Output Strategies

- Be conventionally indirect
- Question, hedge
- Minimize the imposition
- Give deference
- Apologize
- Impersonalize S and H
- State the FTA as a general rule
- Nominalize
- Go on-record as incurring a debt, or as not indebting H

*S (Speaker), H (Hearer)

3.2 Searle’s Speech Acts theory

Speech act theory was originally introduced to language studies by J. L. Austin, a great philosopher, in 1962. His argument was that language users do not just make utterance, but they use utterances to perform actions. Austin (1962) identifies three basic forms of acts: locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. Locutionary act refers to the actual utterance/proposition made; illocutionary act
refers to the action the speaker intends to perform with his utterance, while perlocutionary act has to do with the effect of the utterance made on the hearer. Ever since its emergence, speech act theory has occupied a centre stage as an effective research tool, particularly as it relates to meaning and communication in language studies (Waribo-Naye, 2016). This approach to language analysis has been further expanded by scholars such as Searle (1969), Bach and Harnish (1979), Adegbija (1982), Searle and Vanderveken (1985), Mey (2001), Capone (2005), Odebunmi (2010), and Kesckes (2010). Searle’s model of speech Acts theory, is however, considered for analysis in this study, given its appropriateness for teasing out the pragmatic imports of the various acts found in the language of IPOs and suspects in police-suspect interaction. Searle identifies five illocutionary points as follows:

- **assertives** (assert, claim, affirm, state, deny, disclaim, assure, argue, rebut, inform, notify, remind, object, predict, report, retract, suggest insist, conjecture, hypothesize, guess, swear, testify, admit, confess, accuse, blame, criticize, praise, complain, boast, lament)
- **commissives** (commit, promise, threaten, vow, pledge, swear, accept, consent, refuse, offer, bid, assure, guarantee, warrant, contract, covenant, bet)
- **directives** (direct, request, ask, urge, tell, require, demand, command, order, forbid, prohibit, enjoin, permit, suggest, insist, warn, advise, recommend, beg, duplicate, entreat, beseech, implore, pray)
- **declaratives** (declare, resign, adjourn, appoint, nominate, approve, confirm, disapprove, endorse, renounce, disclaim, denounce, repudiate, bless, curse, excommunicate, consecrate, christen, abbreviate, name, call)
- **expressives** (apologize, thank, condole, congratulate, complain, lament, protest, deplore, boast, compliment, praise, welcome, greet).

In Searle’s argument, the illocutionary force is a refinement of point. For instance, ‘directives all serve to change the addressees’ obligations, but can come in the form of command, request, plea, permission, begging etc. which all count as different illocutionary forces with the same illocutionary point’ (Eckardt, n.d., 11).

While Searle’s model of speech act takes care of the various acts performed in police-suspect interaction, Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory (with emphasis on face) handles the deployment of such acts identified as face-management strategies in such interaction.

4. **Research Methodology**

The study adopts an eclectic approach to data analysis, drawing inputs from Brown and Levinson’s (1978, 1987) politeness theory and Searle’s (1969) model of speech act theory. Participant and non-participant ethnographic methods of data collection were employed for data collection at the State Criminal Investigation Department (S C I D), Oyo State, Nigeria, between 2013 and 2015. Appropriate ethical approvals were sought and got. Data comprised six interactions, three apiece between IPOs and HPSs; and IPOs and LPSs. These cases included threat to life, land dispute, forgery and fraud. Data were transcribed into texts, and those that took place in Yoruba were transcribed into English. Data were subjected to pragmatic analysis.

5. **Data Analysis**

This section of the study focuses on the speech acts observed in police-suspect interaction and how they are pragmatically employed for face management by the participants.
Excerpt 1: Land Dispute

Background Information: The suspect, from his appearance, is well-educated and informed. He is clad in a pair of suit and accompanied by a young lady. I heard the IPO address him as Engineer XYZ.

1. IPO: You are engineer XYZ (assertive: confirming)
2. SUS: Yes (responsive)
3. IPO: Sit down sir (redressed directive: ordering)
4. SUS: Okay (responsive)
5. IPO: (Gives the suspect a confessional Statement paper to write)
6. IPO 2: (A senior officer walks in) My man be suspect? (directive: eliciting)
7. IPO: Yes sir (responsive)
8. SUS: You call me a suspect? (expressive: protesting)
9. IPO: I off your shoe? (directive: eliciting)
   Did I remove your shoes?
10. IPO2: Please give him Voluntary (directive/ minimising imposition)
11. IPO: Okay sir (responsive)
12. SUS: (Hands his statement to the IPO)
13. IPO: You don finish? (directive: eliciting)
14. SUS: Yes (responsive)
15. IPO: Ehn, engineer, igbà wo ni ẹ erect ki ní yẹn? (directive: eliciting)
   ...when did you erect something on the site?
16. SUS: Last year (responsive)
17. IPO: Láti last year, nothing is done on that place? (directive: eliciting)
   since last year, nothing is done on that place?
18. SUS: Yes (responsive)...

In the interaction presented Excerpt 1, series of speech acts and face-saving strategies are employed by the participants involved. The first statement by the IPO is an elicitation assertive act employed by him to establish and confirm the name and personality of the suspect as contained in his confessional statement. IPOs usually deploy this strategy to confirm the biographical information supplied by the suspects. What follows in the following line is a response to the personality affirmation statement of the IPO by the suspect. In line 4, the IPO deploys the use of command statement to make the suspect do his bidding (sit down). He however understands the threat this directive could constitute to the face of the suspect and therefore mitigates it with a dose of politeness strategy ‘respect the other’ with the use of ‘sir’ to save his face. In line 6, one of the two IPOs involved in the case employs the face management strategy of ‘solidarise with the other’, as he refers to the suspect as ‘my man’. The pragmatic import of this phrase is to send a signal to the first IPO to make sure the interaction is devoid of face-threatening elements often deployed by IPOs in interrogation, especially in cases involving LPSs (as shall be seen later in this study). The suspect considers the statement wherein he is being referred to as a suspect by IPO1 and registers his protest with an expressive act in line 8. This reaction from the suspect generates a counter expressive act in line 9 that shows his action, both linguistic and non-linguistic, towards the suspect in the interaction, largely orientate towards the negative face of the suspect. From the response of the IPO, it is obvious, were it for the respect and regard accorded him, he would have been subjected to the face-damaging conditions suspects, especially LPSs are subjected to in interrogation. Still in the bid to save the positive face of the suspect, IPO2 advises his colleague to give the suspect a ‘Voluntary Statement’ to write his statement. Every other instance of directive and responsive acts found in the excerpt is geared towards eliciting and supplying information.
Another face-saving phenomenon observed to be deployed by IPO1 in this interaction is the deployment of honorific pronouns ẹyin, e (honorific you) in showing deference to the suspect. In doing this, the IPO defers to the cultural practice among the Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria to distinguish between the non-honorific and honorific personal plural nouns (Ajayi and Balogun, 2014). The former is often found in interactions involving equals, a low and a high status, and sometimes in first encounter interactions.

Excerpt 2: Fraud and Forgery

Background Information: The suspect is in his late 50’s. He is a certified surveyor and estate manager, who schooled both in Ghana and Nigeria. He speaks impeccable English. Prior to the commencement of their verbal interaction, the IPO offered his own seat to the suspect, while he (the IPO) stood up. The IPO later sat on the table next to him while the interaction was still on-going.

1. IPO: (Hands over the confessional statement paper to the suspect)
2. SUS: (Reads the cautionary statements aloud). If you ask me a question and I refuse to respond, what will you do to me? (directive: eliciting) Hope you are not going to force me. (Assertive: clarifying)
3. IPO: At all (responsive)
4. SUS: Okay (hands the paper back to the IPO)
5. IPO: Thank you sir (expressive: acknowledging)
6. SUS: Let me read the petition first before I make any response. (directive: requesting)(the suspect remembers he needs to call his lawyer but he is not with his phone)
7. IPO: Let me give you my phone to call him (directive: offering)
8. SUS: Don’t worry. I will do that later (assertive: rejecting)
9. SUS: I live in Ibadan (assertive: informing)
10. IPO: Where in Ibadan? (assertive: eliciting)
11. SUS: XXX (response)
12. IPO: Thank you sir...(expressive: acknowledging) How many wives do you have? (assertive: requesting)
13. SUS: Why did you ask for that? (expressive: protesting)
14. IPO: Because it is part of your biography. We need to know because some people do deny their statements (assertive: informing)
15. SUS: Okay, 1 (responsive)
16. IPO: How many issues? (directive: protesting)
17. SUS: How is that related to the issue here? (Directive:protesting). I don’t want to get my children involved in this (assertive:informing)
18. IPO: Oga, do you know YYY? (directive: questioning)
19. SUS: Yes (responsive)
20. IPO: How do you know him? (directive: questioning)
21. SUS: I know him as an agent. You know, I am not denying that he paid (assertive: informing/explaining)
22. IPO: Of course, I know you. I know you very well now. (assertive: informing)
23. SUS: I don’t want to write my statement in reaction to his (the complainant) petition, because I don’t want to be defensive. I need to first of all give the background information. Now, I will explain what I want to write (assertive: informing and explaining)
24. IPO: Alright sir (assertive: agreeing)
25. SUS: Continues with the writing of his confessional statement
26. IPO: You want to tell me the documents are not forged? (assertive: questioning and clarifying)
27. SUS: Yes sir (responsive)
28. IPO: Are you now telling me you did not connive with those vendors? (assertive: questioning and clarifying)
29. SUS: Yes (responsive)
30. IPO: Okay, that is what I am trying to confirm before we go to madam (his boss) (assertive: informing)

The interaction in Excerpt 2 presents a picture very much akin to what is observed in Excerpt 1. The suspect, having gone through the ‘caution’ contained in the Statement Paper handed over to him, projects his negative face with the request on whether or not the IPO will force him against his will if he refuses to make any statement. The pragmatic import of this statement is well understood by the IPO: the suspect in question is one that is informed, hence cannot be manipulated by him. This is evident in the response of the IPO in line 3 where he orientates toward the negative face of the suspect, with a ‘promise’ he would not force the suspect. Following the statement of assurance from the IPO that he would not force him to make any confessional statement, the suspect returns the statement paper already given him to the IPO. This positive face-threatening gesture of the suspect, rather than evoke actions that could constitute a threat to his face, attracts a positive politeness expressive act ‘thank you’ from the IPO, a development that shows the IPO further orientates towards the face of the suspect. As shall be seen in the second phase of this study, this is a very rare gesture in cases involving LPSs. The query of the suspect in line 13 to the question of the IPO in line 12 shows he considers the question as face-threatening, as he wonders why the IPO will want to pry into his private (family) affairs. Further still, in deference to the negative face of the suspect, the IPO proffers an explanation as to why the question is necessary. This scenario is further repeated in lines 15, 16 and 17. In line 17 in particular, the suspect projects his negative face, insisting he will not bring his family into the interaction; and again, the response of the IPO orientates towards this negative face of the suspect. As an act of deference to the positive face of the suspect, the IPO, employing the ‘show respect to the other’ positive politeness strategy, refers to him as ‘oga’ in line 18. The choice of the word ‘oga’ here is to mitigate the threat the following question could constitute to his negative face. The comment of the IPO in line 22 ‘...I know you very well...’ to the submission of the suspect in the previous line is a positive face-saving strategy to ‘identify’ him (the suspect), depicting him as a man of integrity. In line 23, the suspect once again projects his negative face, insisting he would rather not be defensive in his statement. The agreement of the IPO to this stance is a negative politeness strategy ‘seek agreement with the other’ aimed at saving the negative face of the suspect.

As revealed by our observation, the treatment accorded the suspect in this interaction is a function of his status, being a learned and informed fellow whom the IPO knows cannot be subjected to untoward treatment.

Excerpt 3: Assult and Threat to Life
Background Information: The complainant had claimed the suspect assaulted and threatened him. The suspect is a well-educated old man who should be in his early 60s. He is the landlord of the suspect.

1. IPO: È gbọ́ sé è pé é ní ghost? (while still writing his statement) (directive: eliciting)
   Did you call him ghost?
2. SUS: Èmi, a ghost? O tún ń paró mó mi (responsive)
   I, ghost? you are even lying on me
   IPO: Daddy, sè ti kọ́ ó tán? (assertive: eliciting) È kọ́ orúkọ́ yín sibí sir, kí è dë sign
   (directive: order)
   Daddy, are you done writing it. Write your name here and sign
3. SUS: Okay (responsive)
4. IPO: Sé ẹ fé drop èyí ní? (directive: eliciting)
   *Do you want to drop this?* (referring to the document the suspect was handling as evidence)
5. SUS: Béèni (responsive)
   *Yes*
6. IPO: Sé ẹ ni photocopy lọwọ? (directive: eliciting)
   *Do you have a photocopy with you?*
7. SUS: Rará (responsive)
   *No*
8. IPO: È jè kí n ọ̀ báá yín ẹ̀ se photocopy (directive: offering) (goes out to make the photocopy for the suspect)
   *Let me go and make the photocopy for you*
9. SUS: Okay
IPO: *Daddy è jókóó* (directive: ordering)
   *Daddy, sit down*

After some minutes, the IPO surfaced with the photocopies of the said documents. She genuflected while giving the suspect a copy as a sign of courtesy. Afterwards, she announced the matter would be taken to the DC’s office.

10. IPO: *Daddy, èyìn è màà bọ* (directive: ordering)
    *Daddy, you come*
11. SUS: Okay (responsive)

*The complainant was later seen prostrating to the suspect, begging him to forgive him.*

The interaction in Excerpt 3 further reinforces our argument in this paper. The IPO initiates the interaction with a question posed at the suspect. Showing deference to the age and status of the suspect (in line 3), the IPO tones down the threat the question put across to him could constitute to his negative face. The IPO does this with the deployment of ‘show respect to the other’ positive politeness strategy, referring to him as ‘daddy’. This strategy also manifests in the adjoining statement where the IPO subtly directs/orders the suspect to do her bidding. In lines 5, 7, and 9, the IPO employs ‘attend to the need of the other’ politeness strategy to appeal to the positive face of the suspect in the interaction. Specifically, the IPO asks if the suspect wants to make photocopies of some of the documents he has brought to defend himself in the case at hand. When informed yes, she practically offers to run the errand for the suspect. While leaving to run the errand, she once again refers to the suspect as ‘daddy’ while requesting him to sit. The gesture is repeated in line 11 after the IPO returns with the photocopies made. Essentially, it could be argued that the IPO here is operating within the ambit of the Yoruba socio-cultural belief that elders are to be respected and given deference in interpersonal interactions. However, as our observation reveals, ‘age’ might not be the sole reason the IPO acts in this manner as, if it were so, what is observed (as shall be seen later in this study) in another interaction involving an old man, even older than the one observed in the excerpt above, would not be witnessed. One is then compelled to add that social status is another factor that informs language use in police-suspect interaction, especially on the part of the IPOs.

**Excerpt 4: Land Issue**

**Background Information:** *The suspect was a 68-year old man alleged to have duped a client over some acres of land. He, alongside his accomplice, was alleged to have sold the said acres of land to more than one person; a development that resulted in a very serious dispute among the complainants.*
1. IPO: Èló ni X (the accomplice) fún un yín? (Directive: eliciting)
   How much did he give you?
2. SUS: 150,000 (responsive)
3. IPO: It is not possible. That is a pure lie (directive: disagreeing)
4. IPO2: At this age, you are still lying. (assertive: declaring). È ma kú sèwọn by the time you are convicted (assertive: threatening)
   You are still telling lies at this stage of yours, you would die in prison when you are jailed
5. IPO3: And you are still sitting down! Stand up (in an angry voice)(directive: commanding/ordering)
6. IPO1: Until baàl ẹ comes, you are not leaving here (assertive: declaring)
7. OCGI: That means he and X are partners in crime (assertive: declaring)
8. IPOs: Yes they are (assertive: confirming)

The interaction above presents a typical picture of how police officers threaten the face of LPSs unmitigatedly in police-suspect interaction. In line 1, the IPO puts the negative face of the suspect, an old man, on the spot with a question about how much was given to him as his ‘share’ from the proceeds realised from the ‘illegal’ land transaction. In line 3, the IPO employs the ‘disagree with the other’ bald-on-record strategy to threaten the positive face of the suspect without redress. The response of the IPO depicts the suspect as a liar. The IPO2 does not salvage the situation as he comments thus: At this age, you are still lying. È ma kú sèwọn by the time you are convicted “You are still telling lies at this stage of yours, you would die in prison when you are jailed”, employing the bald-on-record face-threatening strategy. As far as the IPOs are concerned, the old man is a monstrous liar, in spite of his old age. These assertive acts, as deployed by the IPOs, paint the old man as an irresponsible man and criminal. The IPO1 further threatens the negative face of the suspect with an unredressed threat that the old man would die in prison by the time he would be convicted. In line 5, the IPO1 makes a face-threatening assertion that borders on the freedom of the suspect. In line 7, the Officer in Charge of General Investigation (OCGI) categorically threatens the positive face of the suspect by referring to him as ‘a partner in crime’. Up until this time in the interaction, the suspect is sitting down. The OCGI feels this act is disrespectful, he hence commands him, without deference to his age, to stand up. This is an unredressed face-threat to the negative face of the suspect. In his helpless situation, the old man quickly rises to his feet in obedience to the OCGI’s command. This portrays the powerful status of the police and the powerless status of low-profile suspects in police-suspect interaction (as observed in Ajayi and Oyetade, 2016).

Excerpt 5: Forgery and False Representation

Background Information: The suspect is an HND holder who earns his living from estate and property management. He has been accused of forging certain property documents in the name of a popular pastor in Ibadan.

1. IPO: As an administrative agent, kí lé nìfìsì pélu property títa? (directive: questioning/eliciting)
   Who owns the property (directive: questioning/eliciting)?
2. SUS: I have been managing it (responsive)
3. IPO: You are an agent to bàbá? (assertive: eliciting)
4. SUS: Yes (responsive)
5. IPO: Since when? (directive: eliciting)
6. SUS: 2004 (responsive)
7. IPO: So since 2004, you have been the agent taking the rent of the property? (assertive: eliciting)
8. SUS: Yes (responsive)
9. IPO: Write it down that you have been agent to Mr WWW as regards his property (directive: command/ordering)
10. SUS: I am coming oo, there was one man collecting it before (assertive: explaining)
11. IPO: Èwo ló kàn yín? (directive: rebuking) You don’t have business with that (assertive: declaring) Îgbà wo ni? (directive) That is enough to distract us; we don’t want distractions (directive)

The pattern of interaction in the excerpt above is not different from the one presented in Excerpt 4, given the fact that the same kind of suspect is involved. Of course, the routined forms of acts found in police-suspect interaction such as directive, assertive and responsive manifest, albeit in varying degrees and pragmatic imports. In line 1, the IPO seeks to know the connection the suspect, who claims to be a property/estate manager, has with the issue at hand. The suspect responds accordingly in line 2. The question embedded in the directive act in line 3 is to establish the precise relationship the agent suspect has with the owner of the property in dispute (referred to as bàbá by the IPO). In line 7, the IPO seeks to know how long the agent has been working for the landlord which generates the response in line 8. In line 9, the IPO issues an unredressed command to the suspect to write down what he has said verbally. This gesture is a threat to the negative face of the suspect who in this context sees himself as being at the mercy of the IPO. The negative face threat becomes reinforced in line 11 where the IPO more or less shuts up the suspect when trying to give an explanation on a statement earlier made by him. In this very line, the assertive and directive acts deployed by the IPO are linguistic tools aimed at rebuking the suspect for ‘trying’ to distract his attention and ultimately waste his time.

Excerpt 6: Land Issue (False Ownership and Malicious Damage)
Background Information: There are two suspects here. They are accused of claiming ownership of some acres of land, which they claimed belonged to their late father. The two suspects are interrogated at different times

1. IPO: What was the agreement between you? (directive: eliciting)
2. SUS: Oga promised to share the profit of the business with me after four years...(response)
3. IPO: What condition did your oga give for the sharing? (directive: eliciting)
4. SUS: That is if the business succeeds...(responsive)
5. IPO: You are a fool, and did it succeed? (Assertive: insulting)
6. SUS: (Shakes his head). Sir, God knows I tried (declarative)

...4.

7. IPO: Şé o lè kòwé? (directive: eliciting)
   Can you write?
8. SUS: Rárá (responsive)
   No
9. IPO: Kí ló dé tí o paró fún mi? (directive: condemning) Why are/were you lying to me?
10. SUS: Mi ò paró fún un yín in (responsive/declarative)
    *I did not tell you lies* (emphasis)
11. IPO: Mâ á fó etí e. Idiot ní é (commissive: threatening)
    *I will slap you. You are an idiot*
12. SUS: keeps quiet
The first four lines (1–4) of the interaction above take the normal question and answer interaction that characterises police-suspect interaction. However, the dimension changes from line 5 where the IPO begins to launch unmitigated face threats on the positive face of the suspect. In line 5 in particular, the IPO insults the suspect, calling him a fool. A similar negative face-threatening act is observed in line 11 where the IPO threatens the suspect he will slap him, and further refers to him as an idiot. This act is sequel to the face-threatening submission of the IPO that the suspect is telling lies, which he tries to debunk. Following our argument in this paper, it is quite evident that the suspect being interrogated here, being a low-profile one, does not enjoy the kind of ‘benefits’ high-profile suspects have access to in police-suspect interaction, given his class. Going through the interaction, one could see the deployment of assertive, directive and commissive acts by the IPO to threaten the positive and positive faces of the suspect. All the suspect could do, as evident in his role in the interaction, is to ‘statutorily’ appeal to the positive face of the IPO by doing his bidding; that is, providing responses to all the questions put across to him, and particularly by keeping silent (in line 12) after the threat of the IPO to slap him.

6. General Discussion and Conclusions

Studies such as Ajayi (2016), Ajayi and Oyetade (2016) have established the fact that low-profile suspects are often presumed guilty by investigating police officers, as evident in language use by IPOs in police-suspect interaction. The present study has further reinforced this phenomenon, particularly by examining and comparing the ‘linguistic’ treatments got by high-profile and low-profile suspects in police-suspect interaction. From our observation, police-suspect interaction features various forms acts as directives, assertives, commissives, declaratives and expressives. In the interaction, IPOs employ more of directive acts to seek and elicit information from suspects, while suspects employ more of responsive sub-act of assertive act. More often than not, IPOs’ use of directive, assertive, declarative and commissive acts is loaded with acts that constitute threats to the positive and negative faces of low-profile suspects. Low-profile suspects employ responsive acts as a strategy to appeal to the positive faces of IPOs. Although interactions involving high-profile suspects also feature the acts observed in cases involving low-profile ones, it is noteworthy that these acts, as employed by IPOs, have embedded in them face-saving strategies, such that tone down the threat they could constitute to the faces of high-profile suspects. In particular, IPOs deploy the acknowledgement sub-act of commissive act in interactions with high-profile suspects as a face-saving strategy. High-profile suspects deploy assertive acts to project their negative faces in police-suspect interaction. Thus, it suffices to conclude that, the class, that is, whether the suspect is informed, uninformed, learned or unlearned, and influential or not plays a great in determining language use by IPOs in police-suspect interaction.

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