

POLITENESS STRATEGIES IN THE QUR'AN AS MODEL FOR INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP: THE CASE OF NIGERIA ^(*)

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ABSTRACT

This study figures out the linguistic politeness strategies existing in the Holy Qur'an. The Holy Quran is a divine revelation and complete guidance for mankind. The study aims to investigate how politeness strategies in the Qur'an can effectively enhance interpersonal relationships among speech participants. The study tries to answer this question: to what extent does the application of Qur'anic politeness strategies help in creating harmonious relationship within human societies? The study extracted some politeness strategies from some verses of the holy Qur'an and analyzed them, using the Qualitative Content Analysis Method. Strategies of Leech's Maxims of Interaction are employed. The findings of the paper reveal that the Qur'anic politeness strategies provide the basic elements for interpersonal relationship and good neighborliness, regardless of race, color or religion. The paper finally recommends that future studies should unravel more rules and strategies of politeness in the holy Qur'an, since the issue of politeness studies in this Holy Book is not yet exhausted.

Keywords: *Holy Quran; Politeness Strategies; Linguistic Politeness; interpersonal Relationship*

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Politeness as a linguistic device is the practical application of communicative language to show deference, respect or recognition of the social status of the speaker and the hearer; the goal is to make both the speaker and hearer relaxed and comfortable with each other. There is a wide range of definitions of politeness that indicate different conceptualization of this linguistic phenomenon. It “covers all forms of linguistic behavior through which relationships are formed and maintained”² and research on politeness happens to be one of most prominent areas of linguistic pragmatics. Put in simple words, politeness is the knowledge of any affair or more specifically, language usage through which one is able to abstain from any kind of fault which would result in a peaceful and brotherly relationship among people of a community or region, or a way in which language is employed in conversation, to show consideration for the feeling and desire of one’s interlocutors, to create and uphold interpersonal relationship and to comply with the rules³. It is thus important to note that this phenomenon needs to be learnt and imbibed, because it is not spontaneous in mankind. In the light of this, Richard J. Watts stated that the skills of politeness in language usage have to be acquired and socialized into, through teachers, handbooks and manuals since it is not something one is born with⁴.

Several theories and strategies of politeness have been developed by researchers and scholars in various fields of sociolinguistics and pragmatics. Prominent among such scholars are: Goffman (1967), Lakoff (1973, 1977, 1989), Grice (1975), Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), Leech (1983), Matsumoto (1988), Sachiko Ide (1989), Spencer (2000), Scollon & Scollon (2001), J. Watts (2003), Fraser (2005), Felix-Brasdefer (2006), etc. Some of these researchers claim universal validity of theories across different cultures and languages of the world, some investigate politeness strategies in specific cultures, while others carry out cross-cultural comparison of politeness in different cultures.

However, the Qur’an, as a divine revelation and guidance for the whole of mankind is an encyclopedia of virtues. It was revealed over fourteen thousand years ago. The Qur’an as the word of God remains a scripture that stand the test

² Kádár, Z. D. (2019) Introduction: Advancing linguistic politeness theory by using Chinese data. *Acta Linguistica Academica*, 66(2): 149-164.

³ Olmen, D.V., (2017) *Politeness in language*. Oxford Bibliographies.

⁴ Watts, R. J. (2003). *Politeness*. Cambridge University Press. 9-10.

of time. It embodies principle of faith, worship, economy, wealth distribution, God - man relationship, interpersonal relationship and lots more. These principles need to be understood with open and positive mind, and imbibed; since ordinary words and theories of men are written or spoken for the purpose of being understood by readers or listeners, the Qur'an is more worthy of being understood than the words of men. It was revealed to regulate and govern human's life, educate men and raise them to the highest moral, social and intellectual levels, and shall remain so till the end of time.

This study is not based on any of the previous theories developed by researchers, or laid down principles and guidelines, because of its strong believe that the Qur'an, coming from a divine source, has all the prerequisites of perfection, and therefore, cannot depend on theories developed by humans who lack perfection. In addition, the Qur'an is a divine constitution that is compatible to all nations and cultures at all times.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Nigeria as a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural society has experienced series of violence, rioting and conflicts across all geo-political zones since independence from the British Rule in 1960. This in so many ways has militated against our corporate existence as a nation. Issues of national unity, national integration and national cohesion have been discussed at different forums with the aim of finding lasting solution to the incessant crises that almost have torn the country apart. However, researchers have traced the genesis of the series of inter-faith, ethno-religious and political crises in the country to the amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorates in 1914 which brought together people from different ethnic, religious, social and cultural backgrounds under one umbrella⁵. Others attribute these crises to the social structure of the country arising from the integration of some ethnic minorities in the Middle Belt (who are non-Muslims and non-Hausas) into the Northern Nigerian administrative structure which is ruled mostly by Muslim elites as in Southern Kaduna⁶. These have been identified as major reason of inter-faith, ethno-religious and political conflicts resulting in blood shedding among Nigerians. It could be said therefore, that instead of finding a way of unifying the ethnic and

⁵ Onwumah, A. C., (2014) Communal and ethno-religious crises and their implications for national development in Nigeria. *Developing Country Studies*, 4(17): 126-131.

⁶ Mahmud, S. (2009) Nigeria-Islamist activism and religious conflicts. In S. J. Hansen, A. Mesøy, & T. Kardas (Eds.), *The borders of Islam* Hurst and Company. 115-126.

religious groups, where each other's differences is understood and respected, the colonial masters have succeeded in planting the seed of discord among the citizens. The resultant effect is the situation in which different ethnic and religious groups see themselves differently.

Even though the conflicts hindering national cohesion in Nigeria stem from the merger of different ethnic, social, religious and cultural societies by our colonizers; crude, unguarded, hate and dangerous speeches are identified as the main tools that trigger most of the crises. These come in form of provocative, offensive and abusive languages from some religious adherents, preachers, politicians, and the print and electronic media.

In most cases, crises erupt when a party or an individual mocks, provokes, insults the other in respect of his or her tribe, religion, political affiliation or cultural background. The progenitor of such ill language could be ignorant about the gravity of his words. Few instances are cited to corroborate these facts: the violence which broke out in Kafanchan in March 1987 was as a result of provocative preaching by one Bello Abubakar (a Muslim who converted to Christianity) at the College of Education. Christian posters claiming "Welcome to Jesus Campus" was another fundamental reason in causing ethnic and religious hatred. Another one was the April 1991 violence in Katsina which started as a protest over a blasphemous publication in "*Fun-times*". There was also a report of sectarian violence in Hadejia, Jigawa state in December 2000 where two women insulted each other's prophets. One Jumai (a Christian) accused Prophet Muhammad of engaging in adultery by marrying many wives, and the other, Bintu (a Muslim) accused Jesus of being a drunkard by turning water into wine. Similarly, the inter-faith crisis of 2002 in Kaduna that led to the killing of over 200 persons was triggered by the offensive article on "*ThisDay*" Newspaper of 16th November, 2002 written by one Isioma Daniel challenging the call by some Muslims for cancellation of the Miss World beauty contest in Nigeria. Another disturbing instance is the case of the communal clash at the Benue State Polytechnic, Ugbokolo in June 1991 between Tiv and Idoma students where lots of people were injured and properties were destroyed. This incident started as a quarrel between a Tiv student and an Idoma lady⁷.

In recent times, the crises involve herdsmen and farmers in different parts of the country, for instance, the communal clashes in some parts of Kwara and Kogi states, the killings in southern Kaduna and the Jukun and Tiv conflict

⁷ Onwumah, A. C. (2014) Communal and Ethno-religious Crises and their Implications for National Development in Nigeria, *Developing Country Studies*, 4(17); 126-131.

in Taraba state. All these issues resulted from arguments arising from excusable issues, disagreements and bruising of feelings among different parties involved.

As mentioned earlier, Nigeria is a country with diverse linguistic and socio-cultural settings; with about 250 ethnic nationalities. Each of these ethnic groups is unique, having its norms, rules and cultural beliefs and practices that influence its politeness manifestation. Therefore, politeness phenomenon in Nigeria is mostly influenced by the linguistic and socio-cultural background of interlocutors and in some instances by their religious background.

Several researches have been conducted on the dimensions of politeness that manifest in Nigerian English and some indigenous languages, e.g. Adebija (1989), Odebunmi (2010), Enang, Eshlet and Udoka (2016), Kassem (2017), Agbara (2018), Kareem (2018), Dozie and Olagburuagu (2019). These works have either examined the operation of politeness in particular social contexts or focused on specific speech event which involves politeness. Enang, Eshlet and Udoka for example, explored politeness phenomenon in spoken Nigerian English among speakers of the three major Nigerian languages of Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo. The findings have shown that polite expressions in Nigerian English are reflections of the norms and social-cultural conventions of the various ethnic groups in the country⁸. Similarly, Dozie and Olagburuagu examined apology and linguistic politeness among Igbo speakers of English Language. This study also disclosed an obvious transfer of the nuances of Igbo (first language) to English (target language)⁹. Kareem, in his work highlights the operations of politeness phenomenon in Muslim discourse with reference to Friday sermons (khutbahs) of Imams in the south western part of the country which is a Yoruba speaking region. His findings show that the Imams are influenced by their cultural background as they tilt toward the Yoruba politeness culture¹⁰.

There are some politeness expressions functioning across cultural boundaries, such as the use of honorifics 'sir, ma, Mr., Mrs., His Excellency, Royal Highness, uncle, aunty, oga' etc. These expressions are used to address superiors and even colleagues at work places and beyond as a common practice. Similarly, the use of politeness makers like 'please', repeatedly and 'sorry' while

⁸ Enang, E. T., Cletus S. E., & Udoka, S. T. (2016) Politeness in language use: A case of spoken Nigerian English. *Global Academic Group*. 1-14.

⁹ Dozie, C. P., & Emeka J. O. (2019) Apology and linguistic politeness strategies in English among Igbo native speakers in Nigeria: An inter-language study. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*. 10(5): 1-9

¹⁰ Kareem, S. Im (2018) Politeness in Muslim discourse: A study of Nigerian Friday sermons. *International Journal of Linguistics and Communication*. 6(2): 20-34

making requests, giving apologies and making appeals is common among Nigerians. It is also worth mentioning that politeness expressions used by representatives at the National and State Assemblies also cut across cultures. At the Senate for example, members use expressions such as 'Mr. President' in addressing the President of the Senate and 'Colleagues', 'distinguished Colleagues' etc. in addressing other members.

3. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

3.1 Introduction

Politeness as a linguistic device is a specific way to show respect, deference and recognition of the social status of the speaker and the hearer. In essence, this linguistic phenomenon offers speakers the necessary knowledge enabling them to abstain from any kind of fault in his utterances. This may result in a peaceful, harmonious and brotherly relationship between interlocutors. The absence of expressive politeness in speakers has been responsible for many controversies which at one time or the other cause interpersonal relationship to grow sour; and worst still, trigger intertribal and (or) interreligious conflicts. The repercussions of such conflicts make it pertinent for individuals at any level to learn how to express themselves politely.

3.2 Categories of Politeness

The researchers' focus in the field of linguistic politeness in different cultures has helped develop theories, strategies and models that could be applied in speech acts to maintain a balanced social relation. These theories are broadly grouped into two categories, namely: first order and second order politeness. The first-order politeness refers to the commonsense notion of politeness, an evaluation of ordinary notion of politeness based on the norms of each society. In other words, it relates languages to some aspects of social structures and behavioral codes and ethics of a particular social group¹¹. This form of politeness according to J. Cesar Felix-Brasdefer (2008) could be expressive, classificatory or meta-pragmatic. The expressive is the polite intention the speaker manifests through speech, the classificatory is the classification of speech as polite or impolite based on the hearer's evaluation; and the meta-pragmatic is the way people think of politeness and the way it is conceptualized in different intercultural context. The second-order politeness is a level at which an attempt is made to develop a scientific theory of politeness which could elaborate the functions of politeness in

¹¹ Eelen, G., (2014) *A critique of politeness theories*. Routledge, iv.

interaction and provide the criteria by which polite and impolite behaviors are distinguished. The second-order politeness can present universal characteristics of politeness in different cultures¹². This categorization aims to make a clear distinction between what is regarded as commonsense and scientific notion of politeness. Investigations concerning linguistic politeness in different cultures have been considered as first-order politeness.

Researchers working on politeness research have at different times proposed theories of politeness which are based on the second-order politeness. Some of these researchers present what they assume as universal characteristics of politeness. Some of the theories are 'the Conversational maxim View', 'Politeness Rules', 'Politeness Principles and Maxims of Interaction' and 'the Face-Saving View'.¹³

3.3 Leech's Politeness Principle and Maxims of Interaction

Leech (1983) proposed the Politeness Principle and explained politeness as a regulative factor in communication by means of some set of maxims. He added that politeness is a factor that influences the relationship between speaker and hearer. Leech attached his Politeness Principle (PP) to Grice's Cooperative Principle.

Leech (1983) established six maxims to form his Politeness Principle; each of the maxims comes with two sub-rules. These rules are: (1) the tact maxim, used for impositives (actions to be performed by the hearer, e.g. ordering, commanding, requesting, etc.) and commissives (actions to be performed by speaker, e.g. promising, vowing and offering). The two sub-rules are: minimizing benefit to self and maximizing benefit to other. (2) The generosity maxim, works most a times with the Tact maxim as it is concerned with impositives and commissives. The difference is the fact that, the latter receives greater emphasis than the former in impositives that omit reference to the cost to hearer of an action and that describe the intended goal of the act as beneficial to speaker. It comes with two sub-rules: minimizing benefit to self and maximizing cost to self. (3) Approbation maxim is used in expressives and assertives, it requires the speaker to avoid talking about what is unpleasant to the hearer. This is done by way of minimizing dispraise to other and maximizing praise to other. (4)

¹² Felix-Brasdefer, J. C. (2008) *Politeness in Mexico and United States*. John Benjamins, 10-11.

¹³ The Conversational Maxim View is an umbrella term for Robin Lakoff's 'Rules of Politeness' (1973) and Goffrey Leech's 'Politeness Principles' (1983), while the 'Face Saving View' is proposed by Brown & Levinson (1978) & (1987).

Modesty maxim works with approbation maxim in terms of using expressives and assertive. It attempts to minimize praise for self and maximize dispraise for self. (5) Agreement maxim seeks opportunities in which the speaker can minimize disagreement between himself and the hearer, and maximize agreement. (6) Sympathy maxim is used in condolences and congratulatory speech acts, where the speaker makes attempts to minimize antipathy with the hearer, and maximize sympathy. These maxims vary in importance, with the tact and approbation maxims taking the lead, followed by the Generosity and Modesty maxims¹⁴.

3.4 Studies in Qur'anic Politeness

With respect to politeness strategies in the Holy Qur'an, few studies have been carried. The analysis of these studies was based on politeness theories and strategies proposed by frontline researchers in the field of linguistic politeness.

Available records have shown that the history of politeness studies in the Qur'an was championed by Al-Khatib's (2012) socio-pragmatic analysis of selected verses of the holy Qur'an. In his research, Al-Khatib showed that politeness strategies in the Qur'an can be discussed in the light of God-man and man-man (interpersonal). He identified three main communicative methods used by God in addressing humans. These methods are: "the direct method, storytelling method and the exemplifying method"¹⁵. He analyzed politeness strategies in the selected verse based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory in analyzing God-man interaction, where he concluded that the "bald on-record politeness strategy has the highest proportion, followed by positive politeness strategy, negative politeness and then, off-record which is almost absent".¹⁶ On the other hand, Leech's (1983) maxims of interaction are used in analyzing man-man interaction.¹⁷

Another study by Hassan (2016) focused on Qur'anic verses depicting different types of politeness strategies used in dialogue between God and His prophets, namely, Ibrahim, Musa and Adam. In this study, Hassan based his analyses of Qur'anic verses on the interactions between God and the said Prophets on Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness. According to him, all

¹⁴ Leech, G. N. (1983) *Principles of pragmatics*. Longman, 131-139.

¹⁵ Al-Katib, M. A. (2012) Politeness in the holy Qur'an: A sociolinguistics and pragmatic perspective. *Intercultural Pragmatics*, 9(4): 479 – 509.

¹⁶ Al-Katib, M. A. (2012) Politeness in the holy Qur'an: A sociolinguistics and pragmatic perspective. *Intercultural Pragmatics*, 9(4): 504-505.

¹⁷ Al-Khatib, M. A.. Politeness in the holy Qur'an: A sociolinguistics and pragmatic perspective, 505

politeness strategies suggested by Brown and Levinson are used in the Qur'an in general, though; the "bald on-record" strategy makes up the greater proportion. He concluded that politeness in the holy Qur'an represents God's mercy upon man, unlike politeness in man-man communication.¹⁸

Nawaz et al. (2018), also investigated politeness and impoliteness strategies used in conversation between God's prophets and the nations to which the prophets were sent. The study focused on what and how appropriately Prophets Nuh, Musa, Lut, Abraham and Muhammad (ASS) had used (im)politeness strategies in guiding their people, and how the people in turn, responded using the same strategies. They also examined how politeness theories developed by humans are related to the Holy Qur'an, using Brown and Levinson's (1979, 1987) theory of politeness and Culpeper's (1996) theory of impoliteness in analyzing verses of the holy Qur'an. The study concluded that all the prophets addressed their nations, using both positive and negative strategies, while their people responded by using impoliteness strategies, for instance, they used threatening politeness strategies.¹⁹

Jewad et al. (2020) conducted a sociolinguistic analysis of politeness strategies in the holy Qur'an. The researchers narrowed down the scope of their study to cover two chapters from the Holy Qur'an, namely; Surah Yusuf, and Surah Al-Kahf (the Cave). The aim of the study was to figure out whether the theories of Leech (1983) and Brown and Levinson (1987) could be applied to find out the positive and negative politeness strategies and the politeness maxims. The study concluded that, in the two chapters, negative politeness is more demonstrated, followed by positive politeness and then the politeness maxims.²⁰

A critical examination of the aforementioned studies reveals that, there are two main categories of linguistic politeness, namely: God – man and man – man (interpersonal). The present study attempts to extract some rules/strategies of politeness which are embedded in some verse of the Holy Qur'an, analyze the verses based on the rules, then examine how politeness strategies by humans are in harmony with the divine revelation. In this way, the study is different from the previous ones, since the previous studies did not set out specific rules, but

¹⁸ See Hassan, A. N. (2016) *Politeness in dialogues between Allah and His prophets in the holy Qur'an* [Master's thesis, Sudan University of Science and Technology]. 35 – 45.

¹⁹ Nawaz, et al. (2018) Politeness and impoliteness strategies in Qur'an: Analysis of conversation amongst prophets and their nations. *Al-Qalam*. 23(2): 73-89.

²⁰ Jewad, H. G., Zargham G. & Mohammad G. (2020) Politeness strategies and maxims in English for Islamic texts: A sociolinguistic analysis of Qur'an. *Arab World English Journal*. 101-107.

only analyzed politeness in the Holy Qur'an based on politeness strategies proposed by humans. While some of the studies attempt to investigate politeness as it relates to both God-man and man-man interactions like Al-Khatib (2012), others focused mainly on God-man relationship. The translation of the meanings of the Noble Qur'an by Al-Hilali, M. T., and Muhammad M. Khan²¹ is used in presenting meanings of the Qur'anic verses analyzed.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 The Qur'an and Linguistic Politeness

Right from the beginning of life on earth, God the Almighty, with revelations and divine scriptures, had sent prophets and messengers to guide human beings to His path. The Qur'an, which is most unique among the scriptures, is the last revelation and the only universal Message to the last and seal of prophethood, Muhammad (PBUH). The book is a material and spiritual guide for different classes in the community. In this regard, the Qur'an speaks:

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَىٰ وَالْفُرْقَانِ...²²

Shahru Ramadaanal lazee unzila feehil Qur'aanu hudal linnaasi wa baiyanaatim minal hudaa wal furqaan

“The month of Ramadan in which was revealed the Qur'an, a guidance for mankind and clear proofs for the guidance and the criterion.”

The central theme of the Qur'an is the exposition of reality (which was revealed to all messengers) and to the right way (which was taught by all messengers). All these are primarily meant to invite mankind to the right path and present clearly the guidance which he has lost as a result of his negligence or which he has corrupted based on his wickedness.

As mentioned earlier, the Qur'an provides guidance for the whole of mankind; it puts forward principles of universal application. This includes all kinds of principles of creeds, deeds, ethics, laws, rules and regulations that will make man attain real blessing and bliss. In the Holy Qur'an, there is no moral principle, practical rule or regulation that is not universally applicable.

Politeness, both linguistic and non-linguistic is one of the basic ethical teachings contained in the Qur'an among other several teachings. This paper is

²¹ Al-Hilali, M. T., & Khan, M. M. (1998) *The noble Qur'an, English translation of the meanings and commentary*. King Fahd Complex for Printing of the Holy Qur'an.

²² Al-Baqarah: 185

only concerned with the linguistic aspect. In this respect, the Qur'an projects two types of interactional relationship; Good-man relationship and man-man (interpersonal) relationship. The God-man relationship covers politeness rules and ethics that regulate communicative relationship between man and his creator, while the man-man relationship embodies a set of politeness rules governing interpersonal relationship (Al-Khatib, 2012). The latter, being the focus of the present study, helps maintain and consolidate harmonious interpersonal relationship, peace, tranquility and reduce conflicts and misunderstandings among the people within and outside of a community.

Unlike the conventional works and theories proposed by linguists, particularly those that claim universal coverage and, which according to critiques, are defective in one form or the other, the Qur'an has established a perfect model, not limited to a particular culture, race, time and place. The model is unique in that it is an impression of the divine nature of the scripture, the likes of which can never be produced by a created entity; and to affirm this, the whole world is being challenged in the Qur'an saying:

قُلْ لَئِن اجْتَمَعَتِ الْإِنْسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَىٰ أَن يَأْتُوا بِمِثْلِ هَٰذَا الْقُرْآنِ لَا يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِ وَلَوْ كَانَ
بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ ظَهِيرًا²³

Qu la'inijtima'atil insu wal jinnu 'alaa any ya'too bimisli haazal quraani laa ya'toona bimislihee wa law kaana ba'duhum liba'din zaheeraa.

“Say: If the mankind and the jinn were together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could not produce the like thereof, even if they helped one another.”

All in all, politeness in the Qur'an revolves around saying what is good during conversations, and shunning that which is bad, such as falsehood, slander, backbiting, shameful talk, etc., otherwise, devil will sow discord among participants, and such will lead to actions that will eventually lead to conflict. The position of the Qur'an towards peaceful co-existence is quite clear, even when one addresses his hearer impolitely, the Qur'an urges the addressee to reply courteously. The Qur'an says:

وَعِبَادُ الرَّحْمَنِ الَّذِينَ يَمْشُونَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ هَوْنًا وَإِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ الْجَاهِلُونَ قَالُوا سَلَامًا²⁴

²³ Al-Isra: 88.

²⁴ Al- Furqan: 63

Wa ‘ibaadur Rahmaanil lazena yamshoona ‘alal ardi hawnanw wa iza khaatabahumul jaahiloona qaloo salaamaa.

“And the (faithful) slaves of the Most Gracious (Allah) are those who walk on the earth in humility and sedateness, and when the foolish address them (with bad words), they reply back with mild words of gentleness.”

A related notion is narrated in another verse thus:

وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا اللَّغْوَ أَعْرَضُوا عَنْهُ وَقَالُوا لَنَا أَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ لَا نَبْتَغِي
الْجَاهِلِينَ²⁵

Wa iza sami’ul laghwa a’radoo ‘anhu wa qaloo lanaa a’maalunaa wa lakum a’maalukum laa nabtaghil jaahileen.

“And when they hear *Al-laghwa* (dirty, false, evil vain talk), they withdraw from it and say: ‘To us our deeds, and to you your deeds. Peace be to you. We seek not (the way of) the ignorant’.”

According to the Qur’an, it is therefore better to keep silent instead of impolite speech because silence is sometimes a source of safety and security. If one does not control the tongue, it will surely lead them to a trouble. The two verses quoted above are enough evidence to this assertion. Furthermore, there is an emphasis placed on the use of ethical language while performing speech act as it is an important measure and strategy to appeal to an addressee or a third party. The idea that polite behavior toward a foe, eventually transforms the foe to a friend is reiterated in the holy Qur’an in the following statement:

وَلَا تَسْتَوِي الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ
وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ²⁶

Wa laa tastawil hasanatu walas saiyyi’ah; idfa’ billatee hiya ahsanu fa’izal laze bainaka wa bainahoo ‘adaawatun ka’annahoo waliyun hameem.

“The good deed and the evil deed cannot be equal. Repel (the evil) with one which is better (i.e. Allah orders the faithful believers to be patient at the time of anger and to excuse those who treat them badly) then verily he, between

²⁵ Al-Qasas: 55.

²⁶ Fussilat: 34.

whom and you there was enmity, (will become) as though he was a close friend.”

4.2 Politeness Strategies in the Holy Qur'an

From the above discussion, it has become crystal clear that the aim of the Holy Qur'an is to establish a healthy, peaceful and harmonious social atmosphere, devoid of rancor or antipathy; an atmosphere where even people belonging to other faiths can enjoy freedom of conscience and worship. The aspect of politeness as described in this scripture, has been one of the most neglected or ignored subjects by even most Muslims who are supposed to be its custodians. Most people do not see the subject of politeness as important and therefore, do not pay adequate attention to it.

The holy Qur'an, among other matters related to living, sheds light on the matter of speech and its principles. A person's speech represents the kind of intellect and character he has. Therefore, the more refined and polite the speech is, the better the thought of the person, and the better and safer the social organization is. Below are some rules of politeness as stated in the Holy Qur'an which guide interpersonal relationship or man-man interaction

4.2.1 Speak Only What is Good

The Qur'an says:

وَقُلْ لِعِبَادِي يَقُولُوا الَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ يَنْزِعُ بَيْنَهُمْ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ كَانَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ
عَدُوًّا مُّبِينًا²⁷

Wa qul li'ibaadee yaqoolul latee hiya ahsan; innash shaitaana yanza'u bainahum innash shaitaana kaana lil insaani 'aduwwan mubeena.

“And say to My slaves (i.e. the true believers of Islamic Monotheism) that they should (only) say those words that are the best. (Because) *Shaitan* (Satan) verily, sows a state of conflict and disagreements among them. Surely, *Shaitan* (Satan) is to man a plain enemy.”

The Qur'an also says:

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ لَا تَعْبُدُونَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ
وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا...²⁸

²⁷ Al-Isra: 53

²⁸ Al-Baqrah: 83

Wa iz akhaznaa meesaaqa Banee israa'eela laa ta'budoona illal laaha wa bilwaalidaini ihsaanaw wa zil qurbaa wal yataamaa wal masaakeeni wa qooloo linnaasi husnan ...

“And (remember) when We took a covenant from the children of Israel, (saying): worship none Allah (Alone) and be dutiful and good to parents, and kindred, and to orphans and to *Al-Masakin* (the needy), and speak good to people (i.e. enjoin righteousness and forbid evil, and say truth about Muhammad) ...”

The Qur'an also says:

وَإِذَا حَضَرَ الْقِسْمَةَ أُولُو الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينُ فَارْزُقُوهُمْ مِنْهُ وَقُولُوا لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوفًا²⁹

Wa izaa hadaral qismata ulul qurbaa wal yataamaa wal masaakeenu farzuqoohum minhu waqooloo lahum qawlam ma'roofaa.

“And when the relatives and the orphans and Al-Masakin (the needy) are present at the time of division, give them out of the property, and speak to them words of kindness and justice.”

The verses above and others in Surah Al-Baqarah: 235, Surah An-Nisa: 5 and Surah Al-Ahzab: 32 recommend the speaker to choose the best of words and expressions while addressing a participant in a conversation. Included in the best of words is truth, fairness in speech, enjoining that which is right, forbidding that which is wrong and good advice. This also entails that the speaker avoids falsehood, shameful talk, slander and backbiting.

The Qur'an advocates speaking kind words with an addressee and avoiding ill talks, falsehood and other shameful words. This is simply because such kind words are calmatives and can make the addressee feel good and happy. Speaking only words of kindness is a way of building strong relationship among individuals or groups.

Leech's Approbation Maxim of avoiding whatever utterance that is unpleasant conforms to this rule. The speaker at all times is required to say what is good.

4.2.2 Speak Mild and Gentle Words

The holy Qur'an speaks:

²⁹ An-Nisa: 8

أَذْهَبَا إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَى. فَقُولَا لَهُ قَوْلًا لَّيِّنًا لَعَلَّهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ يَخْشَى..³⁰

Izhabaa ilaa Fir'awna innahoo taghaa. Faqoolaa lahoo qawlal laiyyinal la allahoo yatazakkaru 'aw yakhshaa.

“And go both of you [Moses and Haroon], to Pharaoh, he transgressed. And speak to him with gentle speech that perhaps he might be reminded or fear [Allah].”

In line with this verse, the use of gentle and mild words while speaking to people is much entrenched while performing speech act. It could be before a friend or foe, even while speaking to a treacherous or tyrant ruler. Perhaps, with a gentle and mild speech, the worst enemy may become a close friend. The use of gentle and mild speech has the power of softening the heart of the hard-hearted addressee and strengthening the bond of relationship between the speaker and the addressee.

This rule is in relation to Leech's Approbation Maxim of interaction which recommends people to avoid talking whatever is unpleasant. In which case, the speaker maximizes praise of the hearer.

3.2.3 Do not be Arrogant.

The holy Qur'an warns against the act of rudeness while addressing a participant in conversation; it says:

وَلَا تُصَعِّرْ خَدَّكَ لِلنَّاسِ³¹

Wa laa tusa'-'ir khaddaka linnaasi ...

“And turn not your face away from men with pride”

This verse manifests that a speaker should not turn his/her face away from a listener, or look down on him in the same manner; a listener is equally warned against such act simply because it might cause a feeling of irritation for each other. To further buttress the risk of turning one's face as a speaker or hearer, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was reprimanded for turning his face away from a blind man who went to him seeking guidance. In this regard, the Qur'an says:

عَبَسَ وَتَوَلَّى. أَنْ جَاءَهُ الْأَعْمَى³²

³⁰ Taha: 43-44

³¹ Luqman: 18

³² Abasa: 1-2

‘Abasa wa tawallaa. Anjaa-ahul ‘a-maa.

“(The Prophet) frowned and turned away. Because there came to him the blind man.”

The art of receiving and welcoming a guest or an acquaintance with respect and dignity, and speaking cheerfully with him, go a long way in fortifying the relationship between them. On the contrary, frowning and turning one’s face away from a speech participant can make a relationship turn sour.

This rule of politeness relates to the Modesty Maxim which works closely with the Approbation Maxim, and involves the speaker’s self-dispraise and avoidance of hearer’s dispraise.

4.2.4 Do not scoff one another

The Qur’an says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَسْخَرْ قَوْمٌ مِنْ قَوْمٍ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَاءٌ مِنْ نِسَاءٍ
عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِنْهُنَّ ...³³

Yaa aayyuhal lazeena aamanoo laa yaskhar qawmum min qawmin ‘asaa aany yakoonoo khairam minhum walaa nisaa’um min nisaaa’in ‘asaa aay yakunna khairam minhunna ...

“O you who believe! Let not a group scoff at another group, it may be that the latter are better than the former. Nor (some) women scoff at other women, it may be that the latter are better than the former ...”

The verse above emphasizes that it is essential for interlocutors to shun the act of derision about somebody or scoffing at them as the expression of scorn or mockery is capable of causing either party to be angry and thereby, arousing chaos and subsequently, serious disharmony among the individuals or groups.

It is certain that, avoiding scornful acts and mockery amongst individuals and groups can strengthen the bond of friendship, togetherness and foster stronger relationship. And as a result, a united and cohesive society is established.

This is also related to the Approbation Maxim of Leech, which involves self-dispraise on the part of the speaker, and avoids such for the hearer. It is also related to the Agreement Maxim, in which the speaker maximizes agreement with the other participant in the speech act.

³³ Al-Hujurat: 11.

4.2.5 Avoid Calling each other with Offensive Nicknames

The Holy Qur'an says:

... وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَزُوا بِالْأَلْقَابِ بِئْسَ الْإِسْمُ الْفُسُوقُ بَعْدَ الْإِيمَانِ وَمَنْ لَمْ
يَتُوبْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ³⁴

...wa laa talmizoo anfusakum wa laa tanaabazoo bilalqaab; bi'sal ismul fusooqu ba'dal eemaan; wa mal-lam yatub fa-ulaaaika humuz zaalimoon.

“Nor defame one another, nor insult one another by nicknames. How bad is it to insult to one’s brother after having faith [i.e. to call your Muslim brother (a faithful believer) as: “O sinner” or “O wicked”]. And whoever does not repent, then such are indeed *Zalimun* (wrong doers, etc) ...”

Nicknames are said to be invented names for some people or things used humorously or affectionately instead of their real names. These names are always based on conspicuous characteristic of the people or things involved. They are sometimes altered forms of real names. In some cases, nicknames are appellations that are self-given; some are invented by other people to the dislike of those nicknamed. The second category which is detested by the person being described is offensive, and that is being prohibited and warned against in the Holy Qur'an as clearly stated in the above verse. In the concluding part of the verse, the Holy Qur'an describes such nicknames as names of disobedience, and those found in the habit of calling people with such names are described as 'wrong doers'. This act can bring about crises and discomfort among participants.

In order to build a robust relationship, participants in a speech act need to respect the dignity of one another and avoid appellations which are disliked by either party. The Qur'an clearly prohibits the act of calling people by offensive nicknames, all in an attempt to fasten the bond of relationship within a given society.

This rule is also related to Leech's Approbation Maxim, which requires the speaker to avoid saying whatever is unpleasant to the hearer.

4.2.6 Lower Your Voice

The holy Qur'an states that:

³⁴ Al-Hujurat: 11.

وَأَقْصِدْ فِي مَشْيِكَ وَاعْضُضْ مِنْ صَوْتِكَ إِنَّ أَنْكَرَ الْأَصْوَاتِ لَصَوْتُ الْحَمِيرِ³⁵

Waqsid fee masyhika waghhdud min sawtik; inna ankaral aswaati lasawtul hameer.

“And be moderate (or show no insolence) in your walking and lower your voice. Verily, the harshest of all voices is the braying of asses.”

The holy Qur’an commands that a speaker should not raise his/her voice while performing speech act. This is an indication that there should not be exaggeration in speech act. One can only raise his/her voice where and when it is absolutely necessary. The speaker who raises his/her voice unnecessarily is likened to an ass, whose voice is the ugliest of voices. If this rule is set forth among pairs, a stricter rule should be expected between the led and the leader, the student and the teacher, the young and the old, the child and the parent, etc. Reference could be made to the companions [the led] and the messenger of Islam [the leader] where the holy Qur’an educates the former concerning the rules of conversation towards the latter. The Qur’an states this:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَرْفَعُوا أَصْوَاتَكُمْ فَوْقَ صَوْتِ النَّبِيِّ وَلَا تَجْهَرُوا لَهُ بِالْقَوْلِ كَجَهْرِ بَعْضِكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ أَن تَحْبَطَ أَعْمَالُكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ³⁶

Yaa ayyuhal lazeena aamanoo laatarfa’oo aswaatakum fawqa sawtin nabiiyi wa laa tajharoo lahoo bilqawli kajahri ba’dikum liba’din an tahbata ’maalikum wa antum laa tash’uroon.

“O you who believe! Raise not your voices above the voice of the Prophet, nor speak aloud to him in talk as you speak aloud to one another, lest your deeds should be rendered fruitless while you perceive not.”

The act of raising one’s voice above others in a conversation is being detested by the Qur’an, and should be avoided as a result. The relationship among interlocutors is better strengthened when the led, the children and the young lower their voices in conversation with their leaders, parents and elders respectively. This is particularly important between the leaders and the led, the parents and their offspring and the old and the young.

The rule that the speaker should lower his voice is related to the Tact Maxim, impositives in particular. The speaker is expected to maximize benefit for his hearer while commanding or ordering and while advising or requesting.

³⁵ Luqman: 19.

³⁶ Al-Hujurat: 2.

4.2.7 Do not Impose

The holy Qur'an speaks:

قُلْ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ فَإِن تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْهِ مَا حُمِّلَ وَعَلَيْكُمْ مَا حُمِّلْتُمْ وَإِن تُطِيعُوهُ تَهْتَدُوا وَمَا عَلَى الرَّسُولِ إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ³⁷

Qul atee'ullaaha wa atee'ur Rasoola fa in tawallaw fa innamaa 'alaihi maa hummila wa 'alaikum maa hummiltum wa in tutee'oohu tahtadoo; wa maa'alar rasooli illal balaaghul mubeen.

Say: "Obey Allah and obey the Messenger, but if you turn away, he (Messenger Muhammad) is only responsible for duty placed on him, and for you that placed on you. If you obey him, you shall be on the right guidance. The Messenger's duty is only to convey (the message) in a clear way (i.e. to preach in a plain way)."

The Qur'an also states thus:

وَإِن مَّا نُرِيَنَّكَ بَعْضَ الَّذِي نَعِدُهُمْ أَوْ نَتَوَقَّيَنَّكَ فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ الْبَلَاغُ وَعَلَيْنَا الْحِسَابُ³⁸

Waim maa nuriyannaka ba'dallazee na'iduhum aw natawaffayannaka fa innamaa 'alaikal balaaghu wa 'alainal hisaab.

"Whether We show you (O Muhammad) part of what We have promised them or cause you to die, your duty is only to convey (the message), and on Us is the reckoning."

These Qur'anic verses explain the responsibility of the messenger and of course those that are his heirs in terms of carrying out his evangelical mission. The responsibility is purely to communicate the word of God Almighty in clear terms. This principle is adopted by all the prophets and messengers of God, and emulated by their disciples and companions; the principle of not imposing one's thought, beliefs or system on another individual or group of individuals after a clear speech has been delivered. It means that anybody engaged in any form of evangelism, whether religious, political, economic, social or cultural should imbibe the principle of conveying his mission in a clear way without attempting to impose his ideology on anyone. The hearer therefore has a choice of going the way of the speaker, or going the other way.

³⁷ An-Nur: 54.

³⁸ Ar-Rad: 40.

An attempt to convey a message to other interlocutors or appeal to them does not require the use force or imposition, instead, conviction and persuasion. If the other interlocutors are convinced with ideas, opinions and thoughts of a speaker, and accepted such willingly without any form of intimidation or force, the relationship between the interlocutors will surely be pleasing.

This rule of politeness is in relation with Leech's Agreement Maxim, which requires the speaker to avoid imposing his opinion on the hearer. Instead, he should maximize agreement with the other interlocutor.

4.2.8 Avoid Word of Disrespect

The holy Qur'an says:

وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا إِمَّا يَبُلُغَنَّ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا أُفٍّ وَلَا تَنْهَرْهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا.³⁹

Wa qadaa rabbuka allaa ta'budoo illaa iyyaahu wa bilwaalidaini ihsaanana, immaa yablughanna'indakal kibara ahaduhumaa aw kilaahumaa falaa taqullahumaa uffin wa laa tanharhumaa wa qullahumaa qawlan kareeman.

“And your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him. And that you be dutiful to your parents. If one of them or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of disrespect, nor shout at them, but address them in terms of honour.”

A child, no matter his/her position or wealth, power or affluence, should not let his/her parents [at old age] hear any offensive word from him/her, not even say 'uff' which in Arabic is the mildest word of disrespect. In the same manner, elderly persons should be regarded and honored as one's parents, and treated as such in terms of addressing them in the most polite manner. This is not limited to parents and the elderly, but other individuals should be treated with reverence, and should not be addressed in obnoxious manner but with respect. As long as children respect their parents in speech act, by avoiding offensive utterances and words of disrespect, the relationship between them grow stronger. This is similar to other participants in conversations. The more they avoid words of disrespect amongst themselves, the better their relationship.

The Qur'anic politeness rule above is related to the Approbation Maxim of Leech, this requires the speaker to avoid saying anything unpleasant to the hearer.

³⁹ Al-Isra: 23

4.2.9 Do not Speak Out of Knowledge

The Holy Qur'an says:

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَٰئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا⁴⁰

Wa laa taqfu maa laisa laka bihee 'ilmun; innas sam'a wal fu'aada kullu 'ulaa'ika kaana 'anhu mas'oolaa.

“And follow not (O man i.e. say not or do not or witness not) that of which you have no knowledge. Verily, the hearing, and the sight, and the heart, of each of those, one will be questioned.”

The Qur'an in this verse admonishes that before one speaks, one should have the knowledge of that which one speaks about; and therefore, warns against the habit of speaking out of knowledge. This also includes accusing the hearer of something which one has no knowledge about, bearing false witness and speaking on the basis of suspicion which is mere imaginations and illusions. The Qur'an says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ...⁴¹

Yaaa aiyuhal lazeena aamanujtaniboo kaseeram minaz zanni inna ba'daz zanni ismun.

“O you who believe! Avoid much suspicion; indeed some suspicions are sins.”

Speaking about something without adequate information about it or bearing false witnesses causes participants in speech act to engage in arguments, which in most cases negatively affects their relationship. The Qur'an therefore admonishes that interlocutors avoid speaking about something or about each other based on conjecture.

This rule also applies to the Approbation Maxim, in trying to mitigate disagreement about what a speaker has no knowledge about.

4.2.10 Do not Insult Other People's Deities

The Holy Qur'an says:

وَلَا تَسُبُّوا الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ فَيَسُبُّوا اللَّهَ عَدْوًا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ...⁴²

⁴⁰ Al-Isra: 36.

⁴¹ Al-Hujurat: 12.

⁴² Al-An'am 108

Wa laa tasubbul lazeena yad'oona min doonil laahi; fayasubbul laaha 'adwan bighairi ilmin

“And insult not those whom they (disbelievers) worship besides Allah, lest they insult Allah wrongfully without knowledge ...”

The Qur'an prohibits insulting the deities being worshiped by other people, even though they might be false gods. As mentioned earlier, one of the politeness principles is that people should avoid insulting one another in speech act. Insulting the deities of other people is condemned in stronger terms because of its implication. It does lead to a bigger evil than its benefit because those being insulted might insult Allah in retaliation, which is more grievous than insulting their own deities.

Apart from the evil of insulting Allah, individual participants in the speech act ignite the fire of hatred amongst themselves, and thereby makes it difficult for them to be attached as brothers and sisters in humanity. By avoiding insult of other people's deities, the relationship between interlocutors will be maintained.

This politeness rule is related to Leech's Approbation Maxim, which requires the speaker to avoid saying anything that is unpleasant to the hearer.

4.2.11 Preach with Wisdom and Fairness

The holy Qur'an says:

ادْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ...⁴³

'ud'u ilaa sabeeli Rabbika bil hikmati wal maw'izatil hasanati; wa jaadilhum billatee hiya 'ahsan.

“Invite (mankind O Muhammad) to the way of your Lord (i.e. Islam) with wisdom (i.e. with the Divine Revelation and the Qur'an) and fair preaching, and argue with them in a way that is better. ...”

The holy Qur'an exhorts that anyone who bears the responsibility of preaching people to the Path of God should apply wisdom while speaking with them. This means that he or she conveys messages in a fair, respectful and wise manner. Those who find themselves to be men of God should not be provocative in their preaching, instead, should mind their words. It is important for the relationship between the preacher and his audience to keep going that the former delivers his message in a way that it does not arouse the anger of the latter. The same wisdom

⁴³ An-Nahl: 125

is applied when an argument ensue in the process, otherwise there will not be cordial relationship them.

This politeness rule is actually in relation with Leech's Maxims of Approbation and Agreement. It seeks that a preacher or any speaker should distance himself from speeches that are capable of making the hearer very unpleasant. Instead, he should try to seek agreement by using persuasive and words of encouragement.

4.2.12 Do Not Return Evil Talk with Evil Talk

The Qur'an says:

وَعِبَادُ الرَّحْمَنِ الَّذِينَ يَمْشُونَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ هَوْنًا وَإِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ الْجَاهِلُونَ قَالُوا
سَلَامًا⁴⁴

Wa 'ibaadur Rahmaahil lazeena yamshoona 'alal ardi hawnaa, wa izaa khaatabahumul jaahiloona qaloo salaamaa.

“And the servants of (Allah) Most Gracious are those who walk on the earth in humility, and when the ignorant address them (with ill talk), they say, (word of) ‘Peace’.”

In another verse, it says:

وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا اللَّغْوَ أَعْرَضُوا عَنْهُ وَقَالُوا لَنَا أَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ لَا نَبْتَغِي
الْجَاهِلِينَ⁴⁵

Wa izaa sami'ool laghwa, 'a'radoo 'anhu wa qaloo lanaa 'a'maalunaa wa lakum 'a'maalukum salaamun 'alaikum laa nabtaghil jaahileen.

“And when they hear Al-Laghwa (dirty, false, evil vain talk), they withdraw from it and say: To us are our deeds and to you are your deeds. Peace be to you, we seek not (the way of) the ignorant’.”

The Qur'anic verses above stress the need for people to be humble and exercise patience when addressed with ill speech by others that deliberately or otherwise intend to cause trouble. Instead of responding with another ill talk, one should overlook their short-comings and advocate for peace by saying kind words of *salaam* (peace) to them. The idea of repressing one's anger and pardoning fellow men is paramount in maintaining good relationship between participants in conversation. It is clear that two evils cannot make a right, and tit for tat can only

⁴⁴ Al-Furqan: 63

⁴⁵ Al-Qasas: 55

destroy the corporate existence of people in a society, hence the need for parties to overlook the ill speech by others and respond in a mitigating manner.

Leech's Maxim of interaction which conforms with the above politeness rule of the holy Qur'an is the Approbation Maxim; it calls for avoidance of unpleasant utterances by the speaker.

4.2.13 Avoid Defamation

The Holy Qur'an says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ جَاءُوا بِالْإِفْكِ عُصْبَةٌ مِّنْكُمْ لَا تَحْسَبُوهُ شَرًّا لَّكُم بَلْ هُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مِّنْهُمْ مَا اكْتَسَبَ مِنَ الْإِثْمِ وَالَّذِي تَوَلَّى كِبْرَهُ مِنْهُمْ لَهُ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ⁴⁶

Innal lazeena jaa'oo bilifki 'usbatum minkun; laa tahsaboohu sharral lakum bal huwa khairun lakum, li kul limri'im minhum maktasaba minal ismi; wal lazee tawallaa kibarahu minhum lahu 'azaabun 'azeem.

“Verily, those who brought forth the slander (against Aishah the wife of the Prophet) are a group among you. Consider it not a bad thing for you. Nay, it is a good thing for you. To every man among them will be paid that which he had earned of the sin, and for among them who had greater share therein, his will be a great torment.”

In these verses, the Holy Qur'an condemns in strong terms the spreading of falsehood, fake news and slanderous or libelous statements that are targeted towards defaming an individual or group. In fact, the harm caused by spreading falsehood is limitless; apart from the fact that such act tarnish the image of such individual or group, the resultant reaction by the victim may lead to loss of lives and properties. The verses serve as warning to the creators of such lies and those who spread them of the impending wrath of the Almighty.

One of the evils that destroy the fabrics of human societies and the existing relationship among people is defamation. The act is injurious and difficult to redeem. It is therefore important that people avoid blackmail, slander and other acts that damage someone's reputation, so as to maintain the relationship between them.

This rule is related to Leech's Approbation Maxim which calls for avoidance of unpleasant talk, such as slander against others.

4.2.14 Avoid Fake News

⁴⁶ An-Nur 11

The Holy Qur'an says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَن تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصْحَبُوا
عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نَادِمِينَ⁴⁷

Yaaa ayyuhal lazeena aamanoo in jaa'akum faasikum binaba'in fatabayyanoo an tuseebo qawmam bi jahaalatin fatusbihoo 'alaa maa fa'altum naadimeen.

“O you who believe! If a *Fasiq* (liar – evil person) comes to you with any news verify it, lest you should harm people in ignorance, and afterwards you become regretful for what you have done.”

The holy Qur'an in this verse warns against creating and spreading fake news. It also warns against acting upon any information that is being spread; and orders investigating the news that the sinner and the wicked convey to make sure it is authentic. Otherwise, if the sinner's word is taken for granted and a decision is based on it, regardless of whether the information is true or not, the repercussions might be regrettable.

Spreading of fake news has become common in many parts of the world especially through the social media platforms. The consequences of this act, if not verified, can be devastating and can cause the bond relationship between people to break. It is therefore the desire of the Qur'an that any information that is received should be verified to confirm its authenticity before acting on it.

Leech's Maxim of Approbation is in consonance with this Qur'anic rule of politeness, calling people to avoid whatever is unpleasant, and could cause disunity in a society.

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The fact that ethnic, religious, cultural and political differences among Nigerians contribute to the many conflicts in different parts of the country is not disputable. In addition, impolite speech is a major factor that ignites the flame of most of the conflicts the country has experienced. This has adversely affected national cohesion in Nigeria as stated earlier. While efforts by successful governments lack effective mechanism to manage such conflicts, a better alternative means to foster this elusive phenomenon in our country is being suggested; this is the Qur'anic strategies of politeness. These strategies, as explained in a previous section depict that each individual, regardless of his or her race, color, religion, status and political inclination has an important role to

⁴⁷ Al-Hujuraat: 6

play in ensuring peaceful co-existence and national cohesion. One can imagine a situation where individuals (no matter their affiliation) in a country see themselves as brothers and sisters in humanity; certainly peace and trust will prevail, and by extension, the people therein can work together as one, and therefore a greater tendency towards national cohesion.

At this juncture, attempt has been made to juxtapose the significance of politeness strategies in the Holy Quran vis-à-vis national cohesion in Nigeria. This is done in a way that Nigerians regardless of their religious and cultural backgrounds would appreciate these strategies as an important model that is capable of ensuring the Nigeria of our dream. The model is essentially centered on speaking only that which is good, true, modest, kind, etc. and avoidance of falsehood, slander, insult, backbiting, arrogance, shameful talk and other forms of ill speeches. The Qur'an says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا⁴⁸

Yaaa aiyuhal lazeena aamanut taqullaaha wa qooloo qawlan sadeedaa.

“O you who believe! Keep your duty to Allah and fear Him, and speak (always) the truth.”

... فَاجْتَنِبُوا الرِّجْسَ مِنَ الْأَوْثَانِ وَاجْتَنِبُوا قَوْلَ الزُّورِ⁴⁹

... fajtanibur rijsa minal awsaani wajtaniboo qawlaz zoor.

“... So shun the abomination (worshipping) of idols, and shun lying (false statements).”

وَلَا تُطِعْ كُلَّ حَلَّافٍ مَهِينٍ. هَمَّازٍ مَشَاءٍ بِنَمِيمٍ⁵⁰

Wa laa tuti'i kulla hallaafin maheen. Hammaazim mash shaa'im binameem [Surah Al-Qalam, verse 10-11]

“And (O Muhammad) obey you not everyone *Hallaaf Mahin* (the one who swears much and is a liar or is worthless). A slanderer, going about with calumnies” (Q68: 10-11)

The application of this model would serve as the basis for resolving issues before they escalate into feuds that eventually affect our national unity and cohesion. All the Qur'anic strategies that have been analyzed earlier are strategies that would

⁴⁸ Al-Ahzab: 70

⁴⁹ Al-Hajj: 30

⁵⁰ Al-Qalam: 10-11

have served as major solutions to those instances of discords and conflicts earlier mentioned.

Imagine if the ‘man of God’ at the Kafanchan Christian crusade of 1987 had known and applied Rules 4.2.1, 4.2.2 and 4.2.11 of the holy Qur’an, and the Muslims had applied Rule 4.2.12, the conflict that ensued would have been averted. Similarly, had the ‘*Fun-times*’ publication of April 1991 and ‘*This Day*’ Newspaper’s publication of November 2002 applied Rules 4.2.1, 4.2.8 and 4.2.10, and the Muslims on the other hand, applied Rule 4.2.8, the crisis would not have occurred. It is also clear that if the two ladies who happened to be the genesis of the crisis in Hadejia in December 2000, had applied Rules 4.2.1, 4.2.8, 4.2.9 and 4.2.10, the conflict that claimed lives and properties would have been averted. The violence that occurred as earlier cited would have been averted as well, assuming the two parties involved had known and applied Rules 4.2.1, and 4.2.8.

The impoliteness (in speech) among some politicians makes the political environment unfavorable and sometimes volatile, leading to violence in some areas. If politicians imbibe and apply these strategies, it shall be well for all. Assuming they apply all the Rules during electioneering campaigns and rallies, particularly the first four Rules,⁵¹ Rule 4.2.8 and 4.2.13, violent clashes would be averted. Some people have made permanent enemies and cannot work together as a result of such clashes. In another instance, some winners in elections tend to make mockery of the losers against the Rule: “do not scoff one another” (4.2.4), creating room for acrimony. But if the other party has applied Rules 4.2.1, 4.2.4 and 4.2.8, the two can still work together in harmony.

Other cases that had resulted to negative consequences on Nigeria as a nation and that had affected national cohesion were instigations and incitements of violence by some religious leaders and the looseness of some followers; sometimes, as a result of inadequate knowledge of the religions, or mere hatred of the other faith. Imagine if religious leaders apply the Qur’anic model, by guarding their speeches and avoid talking loosely; Nigeria could have been much more united and coherent. The application of Rules 4.2.1, 4.2.2, 4.2.7, 4.2.9 and 4.2.11 should have made the difference.

Imagine what would have been the situation if parties in all the communal clashes in different parts of the country have been good speakers and good listeners by applying the model, particularly, Rules 4.2.1, 4.2.4, 4.2.5, 4.2.11, 4.2.12, 4.2.13,

⁵¹ Rules 4.2.1, 4.2.2, 4.2.3 and 4.2.4.

and 4.2.14, the clashes would have been prevented, and as such, enhanced national cohesion. It should be mentioned that any nation that is void of peaceful co-existence, is void of national cohesion; since the parties involved in the fracas will always remember losses incurred in the hands of each other. This is in line with an African adage which says: “the wound may be healed over, but the scar remains forever”.

On individual basis, Nigerians can be cohesive if they adopt and comply with these politeness principles as exemplified above. When individuals apply the model, by speaking only what is good and in low voice, avoid calling people by nicknames they detest, avoid making mockery of others, avoid insulting each other or each other’s religion, avoid imposing one’s religion on the other, verifying information to ascertain its veracity etc. the chances of having a strong, united and cohesive Nigeria are very bright.

6. CONCLUSION

This study examined linguistic politeness strategies in the Holy Qur’an, with emphasis on man-man (interpersonal) interaction among individuals in a society, with reference to Nigeria. In line with the study analysis, the Qur’anic Politeness Rules/Strategies are found of greatly effective in avoiding conflicts on one hand, and enhancing harmonious interpersonal relationship on the other. These rules are of significant effect if they are imbibed by participants in speech acts within the society. The study highlights fourteen (14) different rules/strategies, extracted from different verses of the Holy Qur’an, and analyzed them based on the contents of the Qur’anic verses. The analysis also included a compatibility test with Leech’s Maxims of interaction, to examine the degree of their conformity with the highlighted Politeness Rules. This has revealed that the Approbation Maxim is conforming to eleven (11) of the Rules, while each of Modesty Maxim, Tact Maxim and Agreement Maxim conform to one (1) each. The findings indicate that, these rules - if applied by interlocutors – have the necessary potentials to avert potential conflicts and also enhance individual’s social relations. It also indicates that, ignorance or non-application of these Rules was responsible for almost all the conflicts that ravaged Nigeria and some other societies. The study finally recommends that more studies on politeness phenomenon in the Holy Qur’an be carried out to bring out more strategies of politeness for the benefit of mankind.

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