



doi 10.5281/zenodo.8369639

Vol. 06 Issue 09 Sept - 2023

Manuscript ID: #01008

Face Strategies in Ahmed Yerima's *Aetu*

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ABSTRACT

The concept of 'face' is highly significant in interactions, given that it either mars or promotes interpersonal relationships among individuals in interactions. The significance is witnessed in the large volume of scholarly works it draws in linguistic scholarship. Although existing pragmatic investigations have examined potent aspects of face from diverse perspectives, it is rare to come across a work that investigates face strategies in a feminist-oriented play such as Ahmed Yerima's 'Aetu,' purposefully selected for its richness in data. This study, therefore, sets out to examine the face strategies employed by Yerima to project his thematic preoccupations through Brown and Levinson's (1978/1987) face framework theory because of its easy adaptability and suitability to the data.

We found that positive, negative, and bald on record are the face types that characterize the data. The positive face projects mutual respect, the negative face involves social factors of power and social distance, and bald on record indicates the degree of imposition, all relative to Yoruba cultural ethics and practices. These are employed through designated linguistic choices as markers of politeness, respect, and difference, which are largely responsible for the responses that emanate from normal and extreme cases of politeness, thereby showcasing the fact that the performance of politeness or impoliteness is foregrounded relative to emerging events and occurrences in the play. This study gives insight into the linguistic choices of politeness relative to the treatment of women in Yoruba culture, thereby providing a template for the analysis of such in related contemporary African textual universes.

KEYWORDS

politeness, face treatment, respect, difference, women.



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1. Introduction

Grice (1975) reveals the concern of language users as relating how language is used by the people in their social interactions and in specific contexts, knowing what to say, how to say it, when to say it and how to be with other people. This has come to be known as politeness which some scholars equate with face (Brown and Levinson, 1987; Leech, 1983; Ehlich, 1992; Watts, 2003; Harris, 2003; Kadar, and Haugh, 2013 and so on). In which case, events, circumstances, and occurrences rub off on us as humans thereby reflecting in our emotions which are eventually projected in our utterances. It is therefore the emotions as packaged in our utterances that reveal the politeness or impoliteness of our utterances. The politeness or the impoliteness of an utterance marks the face associated with the utterance. Scholarly observations have shown that politeness concerns the interactional ways through which people build up and maintain interpersonal relationships (Locher, and Watts, 2005; Locher, and Langlotz, 2008; Haugh, 2013; Leech, 2014). The foregoing reveals that specifically, politeness takes cognizance of the behaviors through which people indicate that they take into consideration the feelings of their interactants through evaluative moments which dictates the face type employed in interactions.

The evaluative moments are reflected in people's linguistic and non-linguistic behavior through which they indicate that they take others' feelings of how they should be treated into account. Through this, people build up and maintain interpersonal relationships through evaluative moments between them or with other participants in the bid to assess their interactional behavior. Politeness, we can say, therefore concerns how people behave in what they perceive as polite in a given situation given their shared values. This comes in handy to determine the production and evaluation of language, behavior, and the participants' perceived moral order of an interactional context/event, that is, their perceptions of what should obtain in a given situation. Thus, the examination of politeness reveals information about the broader in-group, social, and cultural values that underlie the productive and evaluative interactional behavior of individuals (Kadar, 2017). Hence, scholars have seen politeness as a social action that consists of both linguistic and non-linguistic elements that provides insights into the social practices that surround individual language use (Harris, 2003; Mills, 2003; Locher, 2004; Arundale, 2006; Haugh, 2014; Kadar, 2017 and so on). These are manifested in the type of face projected in an utterance. As such, in this study, we see face as the end product of politeness, for it is the act of being polite or impolite that the face type emanate from. The positive politeness reflects the positive face while the negative politeness, bald on record, and the indirect face strategies are markers of impoliteness in interactions.

A consideration of the use of polite language and behavior becomes imperative going through the use of language in Ahmed Yerima's *Aetu*. In the play, Yerima projects the story of a woman who had been frustrated by men. This, of course, is a feminist story, as feminists strive for social justice for those who have been oppressed by the patriarchy, a system of power dominated by men in the society. It is concerned with bringing about a better society for women, men, non-binary people, and everyone in between towards creating a better world where nobody is denied opportunity or respect as a result of their gender.

Aetu, as a character in the play, largely makes impolite linguistic choices to project the voice of a frustrated woman, loaded with emotion, bleeding, and hurt beyond words which invariably reflects in the moral order of the interactional context as Yerima tactically employs certain face strategies to build and maintain the interactions of the characters in the play. Given a dearth of work on face strategies in Ahmed Yerima's *Aetu* in linguistic scholarship, this study sets out to examine the face tactics employed by Ahmed Yerima in *Aetu* to project his thematic preoccupations, as well as

exploring the linguistic choices on the culture of making over a woman to another man after the death of her husband relative to Yoruba cultural practice through the utterances of his characters. This study therefore is expected to significantly give more exposure on face treatment as measures of politeness guiding characters' utterances in the play, and set a template for such related analysis in linguistic scholarship thereby filling existing vacuum in scholarship in this direction.

2. Existing Studies on *Aetu*, Feminism and Face Strategies

In “*gender and time in Ahmed Yerima's Aetu*”, Oloruntoba (2018) explores the effects of time and historical change on Nigerian feminist literature in Ahmed Yerima's *Aetu*. He found a shift in the history of Yerima's writing from plays with historical themes to plays which engage explicitly with questions of gender and gender-related oppression. Oloruntoba (ibid) opines that Yerima's writing trajectory provides one example of the growing importance of gender concerns in Nigerian literature. The play, he observes, further presents an exegesis of one of Yerima's gender-focused plays. The paper is focused on the way in which traditional Yoruba practices fix women in socially subordinate positions as presented in the play. It also considers Yerima's handling of time in relation to feminist concerns with time and non-linearity in the play.

The paper also examines the ways in which gender inequality and patriarchal oppression are negotiated in the play, which according to Oloruntoba (2018), “like many others in his oeuvre, is built around the Yoruba cultural practices of wife inheritance and girl-child marriage”. Consideration is given to representation of time, as Yerima examines both western feminist theorizations of time, as well as the Yoruba mythological belief in what he calls *akudayaism*, that is, the transmigration of the spirit of the dead who as a result of its untimely death is unable to find a resting place among the ancestors continues to live on. Through the engagement with gender and temporalities, therefore, Yerima alerts readers of the importance of time and its connection with gender.

Another work on Ahmed Yerima's *Aetu* is Awoyemi's (2014) “*the playwright as seer: girl-child marriage in Aetu by Ahmed Yerima*”. Awoyemi (ibid), in the paper examines the negative impact of girl-child marriage and according to him, especially, on her psyche and the deviating after effects that such acts leave on only the girl-child, her offspring, and the society at large, with the hope that the perpetrators will desist from such horrible act. According to Awoyemi (2014), Ahmed Yerima had foreseen in 2007, six years before the obnoxious edict into the future and proffer solutions to the inevitable problem or expose the problem to scrutiny.

The issue of girl-child marriage has a lot of impact on the use of language that determines the nature of politeness in the play. Our observation shows that politeness plays a big role in structuring the utterances in *Aetu* as specified by the feminism principles that determine the social and cultural links that serve as pots where the utterances originate from. Politeness has been seen by scholars as efforts on redressing the affronts to a person's self-esteem or effectively claiming positive social values in social interactions. Such self-esteem is referred to as the sociological concept of face management. Politeness therefore could be seen as response to mitigate or avoid face-threatening acts such as requests or insults. The foregoing reveals that a look at politeness is an investigation of the linguistic and non-linguistic behavior through which people reveals that they take each other's feelings and relationships positively the way it ought to be. This is known in principle here as the face.

Specifically, face is a key factor in politeness. The concept of face was first introduced by Goffman (1955, 1967). In his work, Goffman (ibid) opines that face is the positive social value a

person assumes and is observed by others in a particular interaction. Subsequently, the consideration for the observation of positive face is heavily linked with politeness in interactions. It is such that the need to ascribe positive face to a fellow interactant necessitates the introduction of politeness. Watts, (2003) observes that politeness is employed in interactions to show awareness of persons' face. This obtains in situations of social distance or closeness, and according to Yule (1996:60), it is the means to show awareness of other peoples face. Also, face has been technically conceived as the public self-image of a person, that is, the emotional and social feeling of self which an individual has and expects others to recognize. This, in Locher's (2010) view, is synonymous with the recognition of face and the need to be polite as evident in its indispensability in social interactions and all other utterances that govern engagements. In recognition of maintaining politeness with co interactants, and according to Yule (1996) through this, politeness is achieved with the application of the face-work that rationally motivated means of mitigating face-threatening acts.

A close look at politeness reveals that it is the awareness of other persons face. In which case, politeness is expected to be shown from the speaker to the hearer, consequently, the hearer receives a positive face from the speaker. Furthermore, scholarly observations have shown that politeness and face observations are social phenomenon and are culture oriented (Odebunmi, 2009). Notably, there are two groups of schools that opine that politeness and facework are universal, that is homogeneous, and heterogeneous (Terkourafi, 2005). The depth and short frame of this paper will not allow a deep peep into these believes and understanding them in order to extract and escalate the strength and weaknesses therein. However, the believes established that the value generating forces for politeness and facework are usually culture oriented and scholars have identified three social factors that enhanced/affects politeness and face management. These are: power- social status of interactants, social-distance-degree of familiarity and degree of imposition (Brown and Levinson 1987; Watts 2003; Mills, 2005).

The foregoing leads to the stemming and classification of the strategies employed in facework into: positive politeness, negative politeness, bald on record politeness, and indirect politeness. Positive politeness (face) is the individuals need for the face to be recognized and respected. This, according to Bamgbose (2020:34) is the need to be liked, admired, approved of, respected, and be appreciated. In doing this, the positive face of others is recognized. Negative politeness is the opposite of positive politeness as it does not preserve the positive face, rather the negative face is preserved. Several factors may be responsible for this. They range from culture, to social distance, personal ideological imbibe/believe between the speaker and the hearer and, for example, it can be lessened by such lexical choices as the use of polite words such as please, would, could and so on. The choice of words in utterances in this instance reveals that some illocutionary acts are too direct and face threatening, for instance, criticisms, questioning, suggesting and so on. The choices in the afore-mentioned category damage face and according to Bamgbose (ibid), may need to be considered relative to power, distance, and disposition.

Another category of face is the bald on record act. In this instance, no attempt is made to minimize recognition or threat to the hearer's face usually arising from familiarity between interlocutors. It is too direct that it draws shock, surprise, or embarrassment from listeners. This usually manifests in the use of imperatives and the confrontational use of the second person personal pronoun "you". The last of the face work is the indirect strategy. Here damage is neither done to the face, nor the speaker impolite, it is only for the hearer to respond at will and wish.

3. A Look at the Play *Aetu*

Aetu was written out of the feelings and emotions for the feminine genre. As such it had been categorized as a feminist write-up. In the play, Yerima engages Saura and Kande in interactions while Kande is on the search for healing for his father, Obajimi. Their interaction revealed that the course of Obajimi's sickness is the spell casted on the family by his grandmother, Aetu, just like others who died before him. After inquiring from Esu on the solution to the problem, Saura instructed Kande to make arrangement for sacrifice to the Grandmother, Aetu at her grave. When they got there, they were stopped by an unknown old woman who directed them on what to do. She showed them the actual grave of Aetu which they have missed before and told them the whole life story of Aetu and the agony she went through. Aetu was given out in marriage against her wish to a seventy year old man, Oke by her father.

The young 18 year old girl cannot bear the pains involved and therefore decided to elope with Atiba, the man she loves. They were caught in the act as Oke pursued and killed Atiba, goes ahead to force and rape Aetu. From the act, Aetu got pregnant and bore him a son. After some time, Oke died and Aetu was willed to his younger brother of almost 70 years, who when she resisted, forced and raped her as well. She got pregnant again and gave birth to a baby boy for him. He later died and Aetu was still willed to a third brother. In anger and desperacy, Aetu cursed all the men that were forced on her. With the curse, they fell ill and run mad before they died. Her world was filled with such bitterness that negative faceworks were largely projected in her utterances. In the end, Saura and Kande pleaded with her and she forgives the cursed ones and accepted all the sacrifices with the promise that she has lifted the curse. However, such is her anger that after the interception and forgiveness, Obajimi still died. Such is the provocation, the pains, the bitterness, the anger, and the frustration.

4. Analysis

We found that three types of face strategies characterize the play. These are: the positive face, the negative face and the bald on record face strategies. They are examined in turns below:

4.1. Positive Face Strategies.

The positive face recognizes the desire of an individual to be liked, respected, admired, and approved of. In this instance, the interlocutors express positive politeness as reflected in their lexical choices. Some examples are presented below: Let us examine extract 1:

Extract 1:

Kande: Did you know her then.....my grandmother?

Old woman: The whole village knew her. I was young, and I grew up to hear her sad story. Because of her, the people stopped the practice of making over a woman to another man without her consent.

Kande: Mama, she cursed my family before she died. See my father..... all the male children in the family died this way. (Old Woman chuckles) You chuckle. Did you know about the curse? I want to know.

Old woman: (Looks at Saura) Does he not know? I thought they said they know everything. The messenger of the gods. (chuckles again)

Saura: Tell us, Mama. The Priest who brought me up.... My grandfather, was too old to remember before he died, he did not tell me the story of Aetu. As I grew up, I picked things up here and there.

(*Aetu* pp. 13)

The extract above reveals the use of positive face strategy to create interaction that gives an expose on significant events and occurrences in the play. As we can see, Kande in the extract inquires from the Old Woman whether she knows his grandmother. A close look at Kande's inquiry reveals that he shows respect for Old Woman because of her age and status as the watchman of the graveyard. Kande's impression here is that the Old Woman knows his grandmother, hence, the subtle tone of the inquiry and moreover so that his request will be granted. Such lexical choice of "mama" shows admiration, respect, and approval of Old Woman's face. This reflects the conduct in a typical Yoruba cultural setting. Emphasis is laid on this lexical marker as it is repeated in Kande's next contribution for the same purpose. Taking cue of the respect and admiration accorded to her face, Old Woman concurs to Kande's request and reveals that she heard Aetu's sad story, and that it is because of the grandmother that the practice of making over a woman to another man without her consent was abolished.

Obviously, Saura and Kande do not have this information nor heard the grandmother's sad story before. The revelation came as a result of Kande's approval of Old Woman's face and showing likeness, admiration, respect and appreciation for the Old Woman, for without Kande's showing of positive face for Old Woman, both Kande and Saura would have been in the dark over the grandmother's story. Kande's application of the positive face strategy here therefore largely serves to provide the unknown information about Aetu, the grandmother, especially on stopping the practice of making over a woman to another man without her consent. Positive face strategy is further found in the play when Sauratries to woo Old Woman to reveal the knowledge about Aetu that he does not know. Extract 2 below gives further revelation:

Extract: 2

Aetu : My lord

Gbade : Nothing, my lord. Let me return to my father. I had only one child for your late brother. Let me go, my lord. My brother and mother just died, and my father's sight is going bad. I am the only child left, let me return home, I beg you.

Gbade : Did you hear the voice and the concern of a good woman? Young in age but tender in everything else..... Otedola, today I make my choice of my brother's properties..... I shall take his Tapa woman (Aetu) to enrich my bed. If I die with her by my side caring to my every needs, let no one blame the gods for loving me.

(Aetu pp. 34)

The interaction in 2 above opens with Aetu respecting and admiring Gbade as she sees him as being worthy of being liked and appreciated. In Yorubaland, the culture is that a woman's brother-in-law is the woman's husband as well, hence, she must accord him the respect that is due for the husband. In line with culture, therefore, Aetu subscribes to a lexical choice of the most respected word for a husband in Yorubaland, "my lord" to address her brother-in-law, Gbade. In Yoruba culture, the context of this metalinguistic lexical choice is deep as the referred person is taken as the owner of "oneself", in which case, he rules over and takes decision on one's life. However, we should not forget the fact that the lexical choice is made when Aetu wants to seek favour from Gbade, as such, positive face can be associated to being significant on such grounds.

The application of politeness further takes its toll as Gbade expresses his gladness at Aetu's response and further declare how polite she is and appreciate Aetu in the utterance, "did you hear the voice and the concern of a good woman?". In this, we see the admiration and the likeness that Gbade has as he decides to make Aetu, the tapa woman his wife. In another instance, we found issues of love to be projected through the positive face strategy. Let us look at extract 3 below:

Extract 3:

Aetu: (Seriously) No, my hearth is also for you for life. I swear.

Aetu: Me too. I swear by the gods, no one will touch this body except you. I will keep it for you until we are ready. I swear I will kill myself if anyone.....

Atiba: It is okay. (they embraces)

(*Aetu* pp. 26).

The interaction reveals utterances of emotion borne out of love and promises of togetherness forever. Positive face here, of course, is powered by the love shared between Atiba and Aetu. The exchange reveals deep emotion on either side, the youthfulness notwithstanding, the desire to be together for life is mutual. Aetu further goes on to express that "I swear by the gods, no one will touch this body except you. I will keep it for you until we are ready. I swear I will kill myself if anyone ...", such is the depth of their love. The preferred lexical choice here is the first person personal pronoun "I", "me", "my", "myself" to make heartfelt promises to one another. The whole of their interaction is built on politeness and the desire to respect and honour each other. This kind of lexical choices are expected of interactions of such nature as exchange of love pleasantries and promises go with admiration, love, respect, appreciation and lots more.

4.2 Negative Face

Another politeness strategy identified in the play is the negative face. In the performance of negative face, the speaker is seen as preserving the negative face of others which is likely considering the distance between the speaker and the hearer. The speaker does not count the hearer worthy of likeness, admiration, respect, appreciation, nor approve the face. In which case, the speaker or hearer is disrespected but not directly. The following extract mirrors this for effective understanding. Let us examine extract 4 below:

Extract 4:

Saura: Haa, but you are a little girl.... A mere child!

Aetu: I paid the price, did I not?

Saura: You did, but I still say you are too young. I mean, a young girl fooling Esu that way. You made me believe that you were a man. My god and master will be angry with you.

Aetu: Why? I sent my brother, and you collected it. I gave him money, and you collected it. I gave oil, and mashed cocoyam, and your god and master ate it all, so now, he must bid my wishes and desires.

Saura: But I still say you are a child.....

Aetu: And so? Does a woman not feel the pains of the heart? Does a woman, aggrieved, no right to a voice? (chuckles). I see you are one of those who prefer the muffled cries of a woman, not her voice. Shioo! You this man of

Saura: Mind your tongue girl, I see you are not afraid of my god, Esu

Aetu: But I am..... this is why I have left the safety of my house to be here tonight. I am afraid of the gods, but I fear more the tongues of the messengers of the gods. They see what they want to see, and hear only what their hearts tell them to say. Their tongue speak what they feelthe gods would have wanted to say.....

Saura: (upset) Then I am a fraud? Saura is a man of

(Aetu pp.15)

The interaction in the extract above reflects more of confrontation than friendliness. The interaction opens with Saura more or less embarrassing Aetu by addressing her as “a little girl”, “amere child”. The utterance shows that Saura does not have the desire to respect, admire nor like Aetu, hence his relegating and regarding her as being lowly. Aetu in response confronts Saura and does not show respect for him. This is more emphasized in “I paid the price, did I not”, which in Yoruba context and culture, is not a recognized way of talking to an elder. Looking at the response, it is devoid of respect. Here, Aetu is claiming her right that even she may be a mere child, she has done what is expected of her to consult Esu, the insistence which indicates deviance is projected here.

Saura’s next contribution reveals that he deliberately chooses not to respect Aetu. His claim is that she fools esu and made him believe that Aetu is a man. This infuriates Saura and it eventually turns to confrontation that ensued in an argument that leads to disrespect from the two parties. Negative face is further shown when Saura sounds a note of warning to Aetu to mind her tongue. The response to this is seen in the further disrespect and confrontation as Aetu insults Saurathe more.Both Saura and Aetu make the use of the second person personal pronoun “you” in the context of the interaction above to insult each other. The negative face strategy is employed by Yerimahere to build and sustain the conversation between the two characters with the view to reveal gender cultural preference of a man over the woman, thereby showing how women are relegated to the background in the society as only a man can consult esu.This however is heavily refuted by Aetu as revealed in the extract.

Another instance of negative face is found in the play when Saura attempts to know more about Aetu. He asks Old Woman a question that sets up the negative face as revealed in extract5below:

Extract 5:

Saura: Who is your husband, woman?

Aetu: I thought they said you know everything?

Does his face escape your divining sight? Wash them and open them wider and see. The face of an animal... a he goat! Have you lost your powers, Priest? Can you see him now?

(Aetu pp.17)

Saura’s question to Aetu in the extract above can be considered harmless with good intention, but instead of Aetu to respond accordingly, out of anger for the supposed husband, maybe, and the mentioning of him by Saura, she flares up and insults Saura.She mocks Sauragiven thathis spiritual power fails him such that he cannot see nor identifyAetu’s husband that violates her. Ordinarily, such identification is supposed to be an easy task for a Priest in Yoruba land, as such,it is expected thatSaura’sshould be able to spiritually see and identify Aetu’s husband,as a Priest should be able to have a know of activities, events and occurrences and of course, the partakers, hence, the mockery.

Aetu is further infuriated by the husband's offence which necessitates the use of such negative face lexical markers as "he-goat" to refer to him. We must take note of the metalinguistic implication here as Aetu, a woman can be seen unbundling her anger through violent, insulting and pinching words on the opposite sex. Such application of lexical choice, apart from being negative, is harsh, and can be only be employed by a feminist to indicate a man as an animal.

Once again, the second person personal pronoun "you" comes in handy as a tool of insult, disrespect and disrespect as Aetu reacts to Saura's query above. All these are not meant to be the norm in Yorubaland as elders are to be respected in all circumstances, as such unruly behavior and rude utterances are not expected from Aetu to Saura because of the status and age difference. The negative face strategy is also employed in the play to create and maintain conversation among the characters as evident in Yunde and Kudi's interaction with Aetu. Let us witness their interaction in extract 6 below.

Extract 6.

Yunde: Oh, how I wish I were you, Aunty. To have men flock around me, buying expensive gifts for me. You must teach me the trick. I must marry a rich man.

Aetu: Little hungry children do not recognize a deadly medicine, of poison mixed with melon and spinach for Esu's slunch at the crossroads where three footpaths meet, they foolishly think it is egusi soup, andeko. They prepare to eat, not knowing how close they are to their graves.

Yunde: We still do not understand, Aunty.

Aetu: And may Eledumare not let you understand when it is too late. You see a man all oiled up in ori oil, ready to be burnt, and you say, ha I want to rob his beauty oil, and I want to stand close to him as the camp fire burns.

(Chuckles) Little children.

Kudi: Aunty, you continue to lose us.

Aetu: It is a pity you girls get it all wrong. I thought you would learn from my pains that why I asked you to come. But alas... see how you lap up my pains thinking it is honey. Pity (She continues to sob).

(*Aetu* pp.39)

In the extract above, what started as a polite interaction between Yunde, Aetu and Kudi later turns out negative as Aetu got disappointed with Yunde and Kudi's attitude towards men. The negative face is registered on the part of Aetu as what seems to be a compliment and admiration from the girls, what they envy, wish and want in Aetu as expressed turns sour in Aetu's ears. The respect and politeness is reflected in Yunde's respectful request, "Aunty you must teach me the trick", that is how men flocks around Aetu, and buys gifts for her. Yunde's respect for Aetu is seen in the lexical choice "Aunty", a tag for a respected elderly Sister in Yoruba land. Further, it is a mark of respect for someone more knowledgeable than one.

However, contrary to the context of the on-going discourse, Aetu's turned round with a negative response to the compliments as she sees Yunde and the others as being naive and lacking in knowledge about men, hence her reference to them as "little hungry children", which is insulting, confrontational, and expresses negative face. This response to Yunde's compliment is insulting and the negative face here shows Aetu's lack of respect, appreciation nor administration for the girls who just admired her. She continued to hurl insult at them throughout her contribution in the extract. This,

however, is yet another of Ahmed Yerima's strategy in condemning the man folk owing to their vanity. In the extract above, Yunde further respectfully expresses her lack of understanding of Aetu's condemnation. Still another negative face is registered as Aetu insults Yunde over her expression that she did not understand what Aetu is saying. The extract obviously reflects Aetu projecting negative face for the girls. In the end, the cause of Aetu's anger and negative face for the girls is reflected. She is disappointed that the girls do not see her in pains in the way she is being treated by men, instead, they are focusing on the sweet aspect rather than agonizing aspect of men and life, hence her remark, "it is a pity that you girls get it all wrong".

4. 3. Bald on Record Strategy

Another face strategy found in the play is the bald or record. Where these are found, they pose threat to the hearers as there is no respect nor admiration for the others' face as the speaker does not like the hearer's face. Utterances in bald on record are direct and may be insulting, confrontational, and at times challenging. Such are employed in the play to show that the speaker is not interested in mitigating the threat to the hearer's face. An instance of bald on record face is recorded in the play when Aetu went to Saura (the Priest) to place a curse on those she considers her enemy. The following ensues:

Extract 7:

Saura: You little child. I am both the esu and Abesu, priest of the trickster god and a man of profound honor.

Aetu: Please be a priest tonight. I am weary of the heart of men. Be a priest tonight and complete my task. Even your god, esu will soon get tired of your talk.

My heart burns Baba Saura. Let me say what brought me here to your master.

Saura:(Now obviously angry) you are determined to push me to anger. You little child...

Aetu: (Chuckles again.) I wish I were a child, Baba. Lost in the prattle of my childhood play... innocent, silly and coy I wish, Baba.... But see How well I have grown...teeth and all at my first crawl. (Rises so that she pushes her stomach out.)

See, I am with a child, put there byan Agbaya.... an old fool like.... (Looks at him intently.)

Saura: Your tongue, girl ... mind what you say to me, before my god.

Aetu: Then look at me again, Abesu. Would a girl carry this? Eight month of pain gone. Enh? I say would a girl carry this? A man did this, Baba..... and I am always in pain for a moments pleasure of a smelly he goat. Priest, let me ...let me do what I have come here to do in your shrine.

(Aetu pp.19)

As we can see from the extract, from the opening to the end of the interaction, the interactants are at logger heads and lexical choices of face threat without mitigation are their convenient and preferred choices. A close look at the extract reveals that the act is being adopted out of provocation. Saura on his part gets angry out of being provoked by Aetu. Out of provocation Saura refers to Aetu as a "little girl" and he further goes on to remind Aetu of the fact that he is "both the priest of esu and Abesu" so that Aetu can accord him the respect he deserves.

Aetu however fails to hear all these as she is so deep in bitterness, agony, and pains and she needs to speak to esu desperately. She can only talk to esu to make her grievances known through Saura, the Priest, hence, Aetu's anger when Saura restricts her. Such insulting lexical choices as "little girl" provokes Aetu, making her to be deviant to Saura. The bald on record strategy is further adopted as Aetu continues to confront and insult Saura when she asks him to "be a Priest tonight". In Yoruba

land, Priests are expected to be mini gods that helps out of challenges, in which case, Priests are not seen as ordinary men, they are supposed to carry special powers. So, Aetu needs Saura to assist him with the Priestly power invested in him, hence, her anger at Saura's declination. In Aetu's case, she is frustrated and sees nothing good in men. This challenge to Saura is insulting and a bald on record face as Aetu sees in him an ordinary man and not a spiritual Priest that he is. Aetu obviously is impatient with Saura, and Saura also is not patient with Aetu, and that is why in his following contribution, Saura as obviously reflected in the text (now obviously angry) resorts to such impolite bald on record face threatening utterance "your tongue, girl...".

Saura's challenge to Aetu however brought about a revelation of the course of the pain and frustration in Aetu. In the cause of the revelation, Aetu insults Saura with bald on record face. In the end of her contribution Aetu reveals that truly she was a child until she was put in a family way by "an Agbaya, an old fool like....". As presently in the play, she looks at Saura intently. This is suggestive of the fact that Aetu's intention is to liken the "Agbaya" that impregnates her to Saura. In which case, she bluntly refers to Saura as an old fool...." and that is how she sees all men. Of course, this is another feminist perception reflected by Yemira here.

The use of personal pronouns to execute negative face is repeated here as such lexical choices as "you", "your" are also markers of the bald on record face strategy. Saura's reaction is to caution Aetu bluntly again through the bald on record as reflected in "your tongue, girl... mind what you say to me". Obviously, the reference to Aetu as a "girl" again is insulting, not to talk of the direct caution "mind what you say to me". Aetu, still full of anger responds to the confrontation on Saura calling her "a girl" in anger asking him "... would a girl carry this?". The question was repeated in anger with a rider "eight months of pain gone". She leaves Saura to struggle and give answer to her question. The accusation goes to every man as Aetu assert that "a man did this", inflicting pain on her for his moment's pleasure. In her anger, Aetu refer to the culprit as "a smelly he goat", hence, her desire to place a curse on the man.

Another bald on record face strategy is recorded in the encounter between Oke and Atiba. Let us see the extract below:

Extract 8:

Oke: Young man, we meet again.

Atiba: Yes my lord.

Oke: I see your ears are blocked. I told you to leave Ayishatu alone. She is my wife.

Atiba: That was not what she told me. She said that I was the one she wanted.

Oke: she is confused. All little girls are confused in matters of love. Men on the other hand are foolish, and need to be set right most times in matters of love. And it seems

you have chosen a good place for us to settle the matter once and for all. Akalu, deal with him. Teach him a lesson. Hold him, grab him and kill him.

(Aetu pp 27)

Bald on record face strategy is also employed in the interaction here as Oke and Atiba meet and a misunderstanding ensues among them over the issue of being the lover of Aetu. Aetu is in love with Atiba rather the old man Oke. For this, Oke sought to stop Atiba from possessing Aetu, whom Aetu loves dearly. Oke's first utterance to Atiba is insulting, "young man" as a form of greetings. However Atiba's response is positive and full of respect for Oke whom he referred to as "my lord", of course with the tag master attached to it in Yoruba land. With the desire and intent not

to minimize threats to Atiba's face, Oke told him "I see your ears are blocked". Oke's anger and his scolding of Atiba arises out of Atiba's refusal to leave Aetu despite several previous Oke's warning to Atiba to let go of Ayishatu (Aetu) as she is his wife.

Yerima equally applies the bald on record strategy as Atiba turns deaf ears and twist Oke's (whom he calls his lord) words directly, and by implication, Atiba calls Oke a liar in "that was not what she told me. She said I am the one she wanted". Oke's response here is equally insulting as Oke believes that if the girl is senseless, the man ought to be sensible. In anger Oke commands Akalu (his servant) to deal with him (Atiba), teach him a lesson, hold him, grab him and kill him, thus the interaction ends in violence. We can also see the manifestation of the second person singular personal pronoun "you" and the third person singular personal pronoun "him" as lexical markers of bald on record face strategy.

Another instance of bald on record face is recorded in the interaction between Fausa and Gbade in the extract below:

Extract 9:

Fausa: (sobbing) I am sorry, baba, forgive me.

Gbade: Who is your baba? Look, Fausat, or whatever you call yourself, your days of enjoyment without real work are over. You shall pack your load, and leave this house. If you take what belongs to my late brother, we shall beat you before sending you out of my sight, empty barrel..... (Aetu pp.32)

In 9 above, Fausa opens with an attempt at showing affection, respect, and admiration for Gbade, her late husband's Brother. She shows positive face hoping to receive same in return. However, the reverse is the case as Gbade starts to rain insult on her. The first question he asks her is insulting. From the beginning to the end of the contribution, Gbade uses the bald on record strategy as he poses threats to Fausa's face without mitigation. A major tool employed here is the second person singular personal pronoun "you" and "your" in the extract. The personal pronouns serve as riders for the dislodgement of insulting, abusive, disrespectful, and display of lack of admiration for the face of Fausa as Gbade orders her to pack her load and leave. Also, she must not take anything that belongs to her late husband or else, the threat that she will be beaten. The last part of Gbade's contribution reveals the directive and threat being issued to Fausa all bald on record.

5. Conclusion

This study has examined how the Ahmed Yerima has deployed the face strategies to build and sustain conversations through the utterances of his characters in the play, Aetu. We found the positive face, the negative face and the bald on record strategies are employed in several instances as a tool to, apart from carrying out the relational activity in the play, reveal events and occurrences that form the theme and largely project Ahmed Yerima's preoccupation in the play relative to the Yoruba idea of making a woman over to a man without her consent. Also, Yerima through the face strategies dealt ruthlessly with the issue of relegating the feminine gender to the background while allowing the male gender to have the upper hand in the society. The study has successfully given a thorough expose on the evils encountered by women in the hands of their male counterpart and our analysis have shown that the act been condemned in the play highly favoured by the society. The study therefore is a review of the negative societal cultural developments and has set a template for the analysis of such in related Africa plays.

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