Redressive Action in Political Discourse in the Face of Conflicting Views: A Case of the Building Bridges Initiative in Kenya

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Abstract— *Decency in language use forestalls breakdown of communication. In the face of conflicting views, it is inevitable to trespass on an opponent's interests, equanimity or personal preserve but speakers are expected to redress that by use of politeness strategies. This study analyses the use of redressive action in political discourse in the face of conflicting views. The researcher adopts politeness theory by Brown and Levinson (1987) to analyse, interpret and discuss the data collected from pre-recorded television telecasts of three public functions on Building Bridges Initiative (BBI) in Kenya, a constitutional amendment initiative that drew sharp conflicting opinions. This study adopts an analytical research design of the discourse of eight purposively sampled politicians to elicit politeness strategies they use to redress the face threats posed by their utterances on their target hearers. Descriptive qualitative research technique is used in the analysis of data. The study finds that the political class in Kenya employ all the four politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) to redress face threats.*

Keywords— ***Face threatening Acts, politeness strategies, interlocutors.***

I. INTRODUCTION

Politeness is a universal phenomenon. It is a vital component of effective communication. In multicultural set-ups like Kenya, speakers have to appreciate their audiences carefully to determine their needs, preferences and biases among other factors. Language, if not properly moderated, may elicit sharp reactions from parties that hold conflicting views. The political environment is no exception; political discussions, if poorly managed, may culminate in polarisation.

Politeness involves speakers as text producers showing their perceptions of themselves in relation to their text receivers and the hearers perceptions of those evaluations. (Rangkuti & Lubis, 2018) say that in daily life, people use language to do something or to influence others to do something. They continue to say that, in the context of social life that upholds diversity, the use of language always aims to keep social relationship to have more harmony, peace and tolerance. In line with the above stance, it is believed that the political class in Kenya in their sense to be seen as model persons would employ politeness strategies in their speeches even in the face of engaging in conflicting views with fellow speakers with a number of aims that include the message being understood and appreciated by the listeners, exuding an image of being a competent person in the society, promoting peace and harmony and avoiding breakdown of communication. In the face of conflicting views, like in the discourse chosen for this study, face threats towards adversaries are

inevitable and in a bid to avoid breakdown of communication, redressive measures have to be put in place in terms of employment of politeness strategies to minimise the potential of conflict and confrontation inherent in all human interactions as noted by Brown and Levinson (1987).

II.   BACKGROUND

Building bridges initiative (BBI) was in itself an initiative born out of bitter political rivalry and conflict between the government of the president of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta and the Leader of Minority, retired prime minister His Right Honourable Raila Amolo Odinga. After the August, 2017 elections, the Supreme Court of Kenya where, Odinga had lodged a petition, nullified the presidential elections which had been won by Uhuru Kenyatta and his deputy William Ruto citing rigging, irregularities and illegalities during the vote. Round two elections were held in October that year but was boycotted by Raila who argued that the necessary reforms had not been implemented in order to ensure that the re-run elections would be free and fair. The elections were nevertheless held and Uhuru Kenyatta was once again announced as the winner. The win was upheld against the protest of the opposition. What followed was a wave of mass protests. A plan was hatched by the opposition to cripple Uhuru's government by organising weekly pickets, rallies, processions and demonstrations in Nairobi, Kisumu and Mombasa (Orengo, 2019) and to the dismay of many, on 30th January, 2018, Raila Odinga swore himself in as the 'people's president' at Uhuru Park, Nairobi. The mock swearing-in of Raila Odinga as the 'people's president' in 2018 also added to the fears that the state was gradually becoming tenuous (Wamai, 2018; Human Rights Watch, 2018). However, how Raila and Uhuru struck a truce, held a closed door meeting and later shook hands in public is not known, but in an unprecedented move, on 9th March, 2018, Kenya's president Uhuru Kenyatta and the self-declared 'People's president' Raila Odinga came out of a closed-door meeting and shook hands in a symbolic gesture that came to be commonly referred to as 'handshake.' The agreement ended months of post-election violence and confrontations.

Consequent to 'handshake,' the President and Raila sponsored a programme tasked with implementing shared objectives of the two leaders. A presidential task force comprising of 14 members that included politicians, lawyers, academicians, bishops and others from both camps was constituted and mandated to collect data from citizens and offer policy recommendations on how vital contentious issues, among them: corruption, lack of

national ethos, devolution, divisive elections, safety and security, responsibilities and rights, inclusivity, shared prosperity and ethnic antagonism and competition (The Star newspaper 26th Nov, 2019) identified by the sponsors as causing problems in the country. The report dubbed BBI Report was going to then be used as a road map to changing the constitution. The BBI document which the taskforce came up with also sought to create new top seats of a prime minister and two deputies.

The Deputy President, Dr. William Ruto and his supporters were disgruntled. They saw this as a breach to a prior agreement that the president would support his deputy to clinch the presidency for the next two terms, as a reciprocation of his deputy's support for his own two terms which he had served as president. Ruto and his allies saw the creation of the positions of a prime minister and two deputies as a breach of the promise and was seen as a plan to scuttle Ruto's 2022 presidential bid. Ruto and his supporters accused Odinga of 'hijacking' the ruling Jubilee Party's agenda for his political interests, while proponents of the handshake and BBI faulted Ruto and his allies for curtailing the president's bid to unite Kenyans (Onguny, 2020). These disagreements culminated in two political factions within the ruling Jubilee Party: The *Tanga Tanga* faction, perceived as Ruto-leaning rebels, and the *Kieleweke* camp supporting the president and the 'handshake' that established the BBI (Onguny, 2020).

It is during BBI Report unveiling on 27th November, 2019; BBI Report Launch on 26th October, 2020, and speeches-which BBI discourse heavily dominated-made at a funeral of a prominent figure in Western Kenya on 9th January, 2021 that provided the researchers with a discourse where speakers had conflicting opinions in terms of those who supported BBI proposals and those who opposed them. It is in such a situation that use of FTAs is inevitable that provided the researchers with a rich context to elicit politeness strategies used by the speakers to redress FTAs they use in their utterances especially in the face of conflicting opinions.

III.   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Politeness Theory was propounded by Brown and Levinson. Their main argument is that participants in a conversation typically observe politeness. Politeness is taken to be the expression of the speaker's intention to mitigate face threats. Central to the concept of politeness is the idea of 'face' which the two theorists developed from the work of Goffman. Face, according to Goffman (1967, p. 5), is 'the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself [sic] by the line others assume he [sic] has taken during a particular contact.'

Goffman (1967) argues that participants in a conversation have potential for aggression which politeness tries to disarm. This aggression or virtual offence is committed when the listener interprets the speaker's utterances as a trespass on their interests, equanimity or personal preserve. From this, Brown and Levinson (1987) developed their concept of 'face' which they define as the public self-image that every adult tries to project and hopes will be maintained in the course of conversation. The tenet of face is important to this study since incompetent communication hurts the self-esteem of the hearer.

Based on Goffman's concept of face in face-to-face interaction, Brown and Levinson (1987) elaborate a theory of 'politeness strategies' that interactants use in their face-work. The authors treat this aspect of face as 'face wants,' distinguishing between negative and positive face (ibid. p. 62). Brown and Levinson (1987) define positive face as 'the positive consistent self-image or personality (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants.' It is also described further as 'the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others.' Negative face on the other hand is the desire of every adult that his actions be unimpeded by others. It is the need by speech interactants to be shown respect and not have their privacy and space invaded, resources spent and actions restricted without cause (Brown & Levinson 1987).

Participants in a conversation are assumed to be working together to maintain each other's face. But unfortunately, this is not easy. Levinson and Brown (1987) show that speech participants often perform actions that threaten face. They further note that many utterances are 'intrinsically face threatening.' This means they run counter to the face wants of the speaker or hearer. Acts that threaten face, they call Face Threatening Acts (FTAs). Those that threaten positive face are called positive FTAs and those that threaten negative face are called negative FTAs.

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), positive FTAs are acts that have the potential to indicate that the speaker (S) does not care about the feelings and wants of the hearer (H). Examples of positive FTAs are those acts expressing disapproval, criticism, ridicule, contempt, complaint, reprimand accusation or insult. Additionally, contradictions, disagreement or challenge, expressions (by S) of violent (out of control) emotions, introduction of irreverence, taboo/emotive/ topics, bringing of bad news about H, non-cooperation in the conversation as well as the use of offensive status-marked identifications have potential to inflict hurt on the hearer's positive face. On the other hand, negative FTAs are acts that potentially express

the fact that S has no intention of avoiding impeding on H's freedom of future action. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), these acts encompass, those acts that predicate some future act of H, and in so doing put some pressure on H to do (or refrain from doing) some act which include orders, requests, suggestions, advice, Reminders, threats, warnings and dares; Those acts that predicate some positive future act of S towards H, and in so doing, put some pressure on H to accept or reject them, and possibly incur a debt, which include offers and Promises; and finally, those acts that predicate some desire of S towards H or H's goods, giving H reason to think he may have to take action to protect the object of S's desire, or give it to S including Compliments, expressions of envy or admiration and Expressions of strong (negative) emotions towards H.

In the sense that positive and negative face as has been expounded above, it comes out clearly that 'negative face represents a desire for autonomy, and positive face a desire for approval' (Spencer-Oatey, 2005, p. 101). A 'communicative behaviour intending to cause 'face loss' of a target or perceived by the target to be so' is defined by Culpeper (2008, p. 36) as 'impoliteness.' In the context of impoliteness, face loss refers to a 'conflict and clash of interests' and the lowering of one's 'positive social value' (Goffman 1967, p. 5).

In this research, it is expected that since politicians have conflicting views and feel like damaging their opponents faces, they nonetheless have to put the supporters (theirs and their opponents') into consideration. They have to struggle to strike a balance and paint a picture of competent individuals who can be depended on in a bid to win the opposers' supporters to their side and not to lose theirs to the opposing camp. Brown and Levinson (ibid. p. 68) state that given the mutual vulnerability of face 'any rational agent will seek to avoid these face-threatening acts, or will employ certain strategies to redress the face threats.' In this context, the notion of redressive action is discussed. According to Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 69), redressive action refers to the way a person 'attempts to counteract the potential face damage of the FTA.' Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 65) propose four politeness super strategies to minimise the possibility of face damage, namely Bald-On Record, Positive Politeness, Negative Politeness and Off-Record.

IV.   STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

More scholarly attention on how the aspect of politeness is used political discourse has been given to parliamentarians who are governed by standing orders in parliaments but little attention has been trained on the political class in

Kenya as they engage in conflicting views in public functions taking into consideration that the term 'political class' does not only restrict itself to elected members but encompasses all political participants in a political function and that as they speak they are not governed by any immediate standing orders to regulate how they deliver discourse like it is done in parliaments. This study will bridge that gap in specifically exposing knowledge of how members of the Kenyan political class employ the notion of redressive action by providing insights into the politeness strategies they use in the face of conflicting opinions.

V.   METHODOLOGY

Data was collected through non-participant observation of pre-recorded audio visual material of three selected events that captured political speeches surrounding BBI. The material was telecast publicly in Kenyan TV stations. The material was accessed from You Tube. From the recordings, the researcher transcribed the conversations for content analysis. Three events were selected, two of which BBI discussion was the main agenda and one social event where BBI issues were highly alluded to. Eight speakers, were randomly sampled for the study. The first two (dubbed speaker 1 and 2), were sampled out from the first Event- BBI Unveiling (dubbed Event 1); the next three (dubbed speaker 3, 4 and 5), were sampled from the second event-BBI Launch (dubbed Event 2) and the last three (dubbed speaker 6, 7 and 8), were sampled out from a funeral ceremony event (dubbed Event 3). The study sample was representative of both genders to avoid gender bias. The sample was also picked in such a way that the BBI proposers and opposers were equal in number, four speakers for each side (speaker 1, 2, 5 and 7 opposed the BBI and speaker 3,4,6 and 8 proposed it.) Of the two women (speaker 3 and 7) who were sampled for the study, one opposed the BBI and one proposed it. This was done to get balanced findings as the speakers conflicted in their views. The various politeness strategies used to redress FTAs were identified and explained. Thereafter, a table summarising the identified politeness strategies used by each of the sampled speakers was used to show the frequency of the politeness strategies employed at a glance. Finally, conclusions were drawn from the findings.

VI.   POLITENESS IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE

(Hinck & Hinck, 2002, p. 237), as cited in (Hussein, 2016) in their discussion on Argumentation and Advocacy, argue that, the audience expect candidates in political debates to 'have decent manners and not to resort to personal attacks on any occasion.' Thus, debaters are expected to show best interactional etiquette as a key to success in gaining the audience's acceptance and advocacy. However, in the discourse such as one that has been chosen for this study where FTAs are inevitable, interlocutors have to adopt the notion of redressive action for FTAs carried in their utterances. Any given utterance can serve relational and or instrumental goals and thus politeness strategies can be influenced by socio-pragmatic factors of social distance, relative power and absolute rank of impositions as proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) as we will at times identify in our analysis. Politeness strategies employed to redress face threats posed by FTAs are discussed below.

We are going to start with bald-on-record politeness strategy. Bald-on-record strategy is one of the politeness strategies put forth by Brown and Levinson (1987). They proposed that bald on record can be treated as being in conformity with Grice's maxims (Grice 1975). These Maxims are an intuitive characterisation of conversational principles that would constitute guidelines for achieving maximally efficient communication. They may be stated briefly as follows: maxim of quality (be non-spurious, speak the truth, be sincere), maxim of quantity (don't say less than is required and don't say more than is required), maxim of relevance (be relevant) and maxim of manner (perspicuity and disambiguation).

The prime reason for bald-on-record usage may be stated simply: in general, whenever S wants to do the FTA with maximum efficiency more than he wants to satisfy H's face, even to any degree, he will choose the bald-on-record strategy (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Direct imperatives stand out as clear examples of bald-on-record usage. Bald-on-record strategy is being non-spurious in your utterances, i.e. speaking the truth or being sincere (Sari, 2016). According to Sari (2016), a speaker should not say less or more than is necessary and should avoid ambiguity or obscurity and remain relevant. The term 'bald on record' refers to a form of politeness in which the speaker assumes a more powerful and authoritative position than the listener. Under these circumstances, the speaker does not make an effort to restrict threats to the face of the hearer (Algiovan, 2022, p. 104). Natalia (2018), as cited by Kariithi (2021, p. 7) states that in doing the FTA, the speaker conveys that they do care about the recipient, thus putting aside any redress strategies. Here sympathetic advice or warning becomes the option, hitherto, being bald on record. Direct imperatives stand out as clear examples of bald-on-record usage. There are, however, different kinds of bald-on-record usage in different circumstances, because S can have different motives for his want to do the FTA with maximum efficiency. These fall into two classes: those where the face threat is not minimised,

where face is ignored or irrelevant; and those where in doing the FTA baldly on record, S minimises face threats by implication.

Let us first consider bald-on-record without minimisation as discussed below.

Where maximum efficiency is very important, and this is mutually known to both S and H, no face redress is necessary, likewise to cases of great urgency or desperation. Redmond (2015, p. 18) suggests that we can directly raise the issue/threaten face but without making an effort to offset the face threat/loss by using on-record without redress. Consider the example below extracted from the discourse of the first speaker in Event 1.

I demand the right to be heard in the republic of Kenya like every other citizen of this republic (**U 1**) *(boos from the audience have been ongoing, now growing louder in a bid to drown what the speaker is saying. Chants of BBI, BBI, BBI, BBI are heard. The chair who spearheaded the BBI report goes to intervene, takes over the microphone)*

In **utterance 1** above, the speaker does not minimise the FTA his utterance carries because he is in a case of desperation because the audience that largely seem not to support him are trying to shout him down with boos. Therefore, employing redress could decrease the urgency with which he wishes to be heard.

Second type of bald-on-record politeness strategy is bald-on-record (with minimisation). Bald-on record with minimisation is where the speaker minimises face threats by implication. Imperatives stand out as clear examples of bald-on-record with minimisation and the speakers further minimise threats by being indirect as to who the object of the FTA is. Greetings and general rituals of beginning or terminating encounters often contain such bald-on-record commands. Other examples of bald-on-record with minimisation imperatives include offers. Redmond (2015, p. 18) suggests that going-on-record with redress involves directly raising the issue/threatening the face, but doing so with messages to minimise/restore face.

Instances of bald-on-record (without minimisation) found in the discourse of the political class in Kenya as they engaged in BBI debate are exemplified below in the extracts from the discourse of the fifth speaker in Event 2.

We do not have the luxury to say I don't care; (**U 2**) *we do not have a luxury to walk away.* (**U 3**)

In the utterance above, S minimises the imposition of the utterance in the sense that he becomes indirect as to who in particular the object of the FTA is. By using the pronoun *'we'* it is upon the hearers to include themselves rather than S pointing them out through a direct imperative in using the pronoun *'you'* which could have had a direct

imposition. The choice of such a politeness strategy could also be said to arise from the influence of the socio-pragmatic factor of social distance between S, who is the main opposer of the BBI, and his adversaries and therefore, his choice of the politeness strategy of minimising imposition, is an attempt to bridge the social distance between him and some members of his audience.

The second politeness strategy that is employed by the political class in Kenya is positive politeness. These are politeness strategies oriented towards redressing a hearer's positive face wants. Brown and Levinson (1987) outline the following positive politeness strategies: notice (attend to 'H,' exaggerate interest with H, intensify interest to H, use in-group identity markers, seek agreement, avoid disagreement, presuppose or raise or assert common ground, joke, assert or presuppose knowledge of H's wants, offer/ promise, be optimistic, include S and H in the activity, give or ask for reasons, assume or assert reciprocity and give gifts. The ones that were prevalent in the Kenyan political class's discourse are discussed below.

To begin with, one of the commonly employed type of positive politeness is to notice, and attend to 'H'. According to Brown and Levinson (1987) this output suggests that S should take notice of aspects of H's condition (noticeable changes, remarkable possessions, anything which looks as though H would want S to notice and approve of it). Consider the extract below extracted from the discourse of the sixth speaker in Event 3.

Mimi ningelisema sana, wakati ni mdogo, sitaki kuongea sana. (I would have talked, but the time is little and I don't want to talk a lot) Lakini kwa ajili (but because) his excellency the president is here and his handshake brother is here nataka ku (I want to) echo sentiments ambazo bwana (that mr.) poghisio alisema, (said) Malala aliguzia na huyo(touched on and) Kiprop kutoka huko (from) Nandi. (**U 4**)

In **utterance 4,** S shows H that he takes notice and places importance on the presence of the president and the former prime minister, the two handshake principals by saying that the sentiments he will echo are prompted by their presence. He also singles out speakers who have spoken before him and have supported BBI. Leech (1983, p. 132) calls the attempt for the speakers to maximise praise for the other as an approbation strategy which shows one's loyalty to a particular social group. This is done in a bid to claim common ground with the target hearer by showing that S and H belong to some set of persons who share common membership. Ide (1989) refer to positive politeness as solidarity politeness because it emphasises common ground between interactants. Going by the utterances above, H is given notice that S supports BBI

and handshake as H does and thus they belong to a common group.

The next positive politeness strategy that was employed by the political class in Kenya is in-group identity markers. The strategy conveys in-group membership where the speaker claims common ground with the hearer. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), One way of showing in-group membership is use of generic names such as (mac, mate, buddy, pal, honey, dear, love, mom, brother, sister, sweetheart, guys, fellas) and so on. Another way is use of code switching which involves any switch from one language or dialect to another. This switch occurs where we may expect a switch into a code associated with in-group and domestic values to be a potential way of encoding positive politeness when redress is required by an FTA. The use of jargon or slang is yet another way of expressing in-group membership. In-group membership can also be expressed by use of contraction and ellipsis. Gareth (2013) says that in-group markers are used in a text to create a sense of camaraderie (companionship, belongingness) between a speaker and a hearer in most contexts. (Wangia & Otonde, 2020, p. 115) pose that use of in-group language or dialect is also a form of S explicitly claiming common ground with H. They say that, it is a code-switching phenomenon which involves switch from English into a spurious dialect, or a dialect not normally used by S or H, to soften an FTA or turn into a joke.

The example below is extracted from the discourse of the third speaker in Event 2:

Sisi kama ma MCA tunangoja the next process na tutacheza kama sisi. **(U 5)** *(As MCAs, we are waiting for the next process, and we will play like us) (claps and cheers from the audience).*

S uses slang, highlighted in **utterance 5** above, that is popular with the youth at present times to express in-group identity with especially the youth in the audience. It is worthy of note that the speaker had been invited to the podium to speak on behalf of the youth. The slang with literary meaning that 'what is expected of somebody will be done as expected' is used to highlight that the MCAs will support the BBI come the next process, probably meaning voting it in were a referendum to be conducted. The cheers and claps after the utterance underscores that S's presupposition that the phrase will be understood by the audience is exacted resulting in an in-group association encoding positive politeness.

The next positive politeness strategy that was employed by the political class in Kenya as they engaged in BBI discourse is including S and H in the activity. A speaker uses the 'we' inclusive when s/he really means 'you or me.'

They can call upon the cooperative assumption and thereby redress FTAs. Ambuyo et al. (2011, p. 213) say that one of the positive politeness strategy involving the inclusion of both Speaker and Hearer in an activity mitigates an FTA. The use of the cooperative assumptions 'we' when the Speaker really means 'you' or 'me' and thereby redressing FTAs. Consider the examples below, extracted from the discourse of the eighth speaker in Event 3.

We want one strong united Kenya of forty-eight million people (cheers) That is the nation that we seek, that is the nation that we desire. Kwa hivyo, hiyo ndio barabara ambayo sisi tutatembea. **(U 6)** *(so that is the road we will walk)*

In **utterance 6**, highlighted above, the president appeals to the audience on the matter of all-inclusiveness that BBI seeks to bring. S uses the inclusive 'we' to call upon the cooperative principle by showing H that they are somehow locked in a state of mutual helping hence redressing H's positive face.

Seeking agreement is another positive politeness strategy that was used by the political class in Kenya to redress FTAs. Another characteristic of claiming common ground with the hearer is seeking ways in which it is possible to agree with the speaker. assumption and thereby redress the FTAs towards H's positive face. Ambuyo et al. (2011, p. 213), in their study on Politeness in the Question Time Discussions of the Kenyan Parliament posit that a speaker avoids disagreement through the 'token agreement' where, he desires to agree or appear to agree with the hearer which leads also to mechanisms of pretending to agree. They noted that the Members of Parliament (MPs) keep on twisting their utterances so as to appear to agree or to hide disagreement, and concluded that this was a common strategy employed in parliamentary discussions as a means of enhancing solidarity or common ground amongst the MPs.

Consider the examples below extracted from the fifth speaker in Event 2.

I mean am not saying anything, am just saying I want to be persuaded, and forgive me if am slow, forgive me, there are so many Kenyans who are in my category. Are we together? (U 7)

And I want to thank the young, bright, intelligent man from Kitale because he said, we should not bring 16th century technology and am sure he was referring to the wheelbarrow and possibly he was referring to me and this wheelbarrow, sindio? (isn't it?) **(U 8)**

In **utterance 7** above, S seeks agreement with the audience by asking if they are together in what he is saying. In

utterance 8 he seeks agreement with the audience in terms of his interpretation of the words of a previous speaker by using a question tag. Brown and Levinson (1987) say that by seeking agreement S intends to claim common ground with H.

The last positive politeness strategy that was employed by the speakers to mitigate face threats is giving reasons. As posited by Brown and Levinson (1978) another aspect of including H in the activity is for S to give reasons as to why he wants what he wants. By including H thus in his practical reasoning, and assuming reflexivity (H wants S's wants), H is thereby led to see the reasonableness of S's FTA (or so S hopes). Consider the examples extracted from the eighth speaker in Event 3 given below.

Ya kwanza ni umuhimu wa umoja, umoja wetu kama sisi wakenya, kwa sababu bila umoja hatuwezi timiza lolote la kudumu katika taifa letu la Kenya. **(U 9)** *(the first one is the importance of unity, our unity as Kenyans, because without unity we cannot accomplish anything that lasts in our nation of Kenya.)*

S in **utterance 9** gives reasons as to why he is so concerned with unity of the country. He says this in line with substantiating the need to have had a handshake and the subsequent BBI. He says the reason for his value of unity is because the nation cannot accomplish anything that lasts without unity. By giving reasons S assumes H is led to see the reasonableness of S's FTAs hence redressing face threats to H's positive face.

The third strategy of negative politeness was also used as redressive action to redress the FTAs used in the discourse of the political class in Kenya as they engaged in BBI arguments. Negative politeness is redressive action addressed to the addressee's negative face: his want to have his freedom of action unhindered and his attention unimpeded. Sadia et al., (2020, p. 3776) describe negative politeness, as a type of politeness in which the speaker tries to be independent. Brown and Levinson (1987), propose the following negative politeness: be conventionally indirect, question/hedge, be pessimistic, minimise the imposition, give deference, apologise, impersonate S and H, state the FTA as a general rule, nominalise, and go on record as incurring debt, or as not indebting H,

The negative politeness strategies that were prevalently employed by the political class in Kenya included giving deference, minimising imposition, being conventionally indirect and impersonating S and H. These strategies are discussed below.

Giving deference is one of the negative politeness strategies used in BBI discussions. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), there are two sides to the coin in the

realisation of deference: one in which S humbles and abases himself, and another where S raises H (pays him positive face of a particular kind, namely that which satisfies H's want to be treated as superior). Deference serves to defuse potential face-threatening acts by indicating that the addressee's rights to relative immunity from imposition are recognised-and moreover that S is certainly not in a position to coerce H's compliance in any way. Deference has this double-sided nature (either the raising of the other or the lowering of oneself). For instance, honorifics directly or indirectly convey a status differential between speaker and addressee or referent.

Upon analysing the Kenyan political class's discourse, it was observed that there is frequent use of honorifics especially when speakers direct their discourse to an addressee who is high ranking in position than they are as exemplified below from the extract of the discourse from the first speaker in Event 1.

Your excellency, **(U 10)** *we must have an honest discussion here, even the way Junet you are running the programme, we must make it an honest discussion (boos and claps of mischief from the audience). Your excellency,* **(U 11)** *it will be a lie for me to leave this stage without saying that this programme has been skewed to leave other people who have different opinions to speak what they want to say (louder boos from the audience) and so whether Junet, whether Junet (louder boos from the audience) I must say it (wilder boos) and so your excellency,* **(U 12)** *I must say it as it is (wilder boos) Just hold, just hold, just hold on, relax (amid boos from the audience) If we are going to build, if we are going to build an honest Kenya, going forward (boos) Your excellency,* **(U 13)** *we must be able to put our views in the ground. It starts your excellency* **(U 14)** *from who mobilised the people who came to this podium, because if this podium is going to be used to lecture other people, to give other people views, we must your excellency* **(U 15)** *come out and speak our voices (boos from the audience)*

In **utterances 10-15,** S gives deference to H by using an honorific 'your excellency' though he vehemently opposes BBI which the president is the main proponent, S by use of these honorifics conveys to his target and the audience (whom most seem to be pro BBI from the boos meted at S) in general that the addressee is of high P differential and his rights to relative immunity are recognised and that S is not in a position to coerce H's compliance in any way. This agrees with Habwe (2010) who notes that referent honorifics give respect directly to hearer while other referent honorifics can provide inferences that indirectly give respect to the addressee like the other general

addresses which include the questioner, the chair, executive, backbencher, front bench etc.

The second negative politeness strategy that was commonly employed by the targeted speakers is minimising imposition. One way of defusing the FTA is to indicate that Rx, the intrinsic seriousness of the imposition, is not in itself great, leaving only D and P as possible weighty factors; for example: I just want to ask you if (I can borrow / you could lend me) tiny/ single sheet of paper. Or, I *just* dropped by for a minute to ask if you . . . Here just conveys both its literal meaning of 'exactly', 'only', which narrowly delimits the extent of the FTA, and its conventional implicature 'merely.' Examples of minimisation of imposition identified in the Kenyan political discourse as they engaged in BBI talks are discussed below.

Consider the extracts below from the second speaker, Event 1.

(to the organiser who has come near him as a signal that he should conclude) Just a minute honourable Junet, **(U 16)** *just give me one minute.* **(U 17)**

In **utterance 16-17**, S uses the word 'just' to minimise imposition as had been explained above. This agrees with the findings of Njuki's and Ireri's (2021) study. In their study on Positive and Negative Politeness Strategies Used by Kenya's Members of National Assembly, they found out that members of the Kenya's national assembly employ use of minimisation of imposition through techniques like using the word 'just' to understate the seriousness of the imposition.

The third negative politeness strategy that was prevalently used by the political class in Kenya is being conventionally indirect**.** In this strategy a speaker is faced with opposing tensions: the desire to give H an 'out' by being indirect, and the desire to go on record. In this case it is solved by the compromise of conventional indirectness, the use of phrases and sentences that have contextually unambiguous meanings (by virtue of conventionalisation) which are different from their literal meanings. The use of the words connoting conventional indirectness is a deliberate attempt to camouflage any form of unpleasant communicative behaviour which could arise from the turn of events (Hammond, 2021, p. 31).

Consider the example below, extracted from the seventh speaker, Event 3.

na ndugu yangu, rafiki yangu ni mmoja wa wale wanapropose. Aki propose, anajieleza na mimi nikipinga najieleza. Na sio nikipinga, unabandikwa jina, wewe mfuasi wa mwingine **(U 18)** *(and my brother, my friend is one of those who propose. When he proposes, he explains himself, and if I oppose, I explain myself. And it should not be that when I oppose, I am branded that I am another person's follower.)*

In the extract above, S who is opposed to BBI proposals says that people should be given the liberty to make a personal choice on whether or not to support BBI proposals. she says, if you oppose, you should not be branded that you are a follower of another person who also opposes the BBI. Here she impersonates H by strategically structuring the utterance to be in the passive form to eliminate mentioning a definite subject which the utterance is directed to hence redressing the FTA carried by the utterance. This augurs with Ting-Toomey's (2015) suppositions on face negotiations of affections and endearment through indirectness as a form of face-saving to protect the face needs of both the speaker and hearer in challenging situations.

The fourth negative politeness strategy that is employed by the political class in Kenya is impersonating S and H. Brown and Levinson (1987) posit that, one way of indicating that S doesn't want to impinge on H is to phrase the FTA as if the agent were other than S or at least possibly not S or not S alone, and the addressee were other than H, or only inclusive of H. This results in a variety of ways of avoiding the pronouns 'I' and 'you'. In performatives, this can be done in the direct expression of one of the most intrinsically face- threatening speech acts-commanding-most languages omit the 'you' of the subject of the complement of the performative. For example, 'You take that out!' becomes 'Take that out!'

Below is an example of impersonating H negative politeness strategy extracted from the first speaker in Event 1.

Your excellency, it will be a lie for me to leave this stage without saying that this programme has been skewed to leave other people who have different opinions to speak what they want to say **(U 19)** *(louder boos from the audience)*

In the **utterance 19**, S impersonates H by omitting the subject 'you' or an actual name of a person or names of persons. By distancing H from the accusation, S alleviates face threat to H's negative face. Ways of avoiding the pronouns, 'I' or 'you', is in the use of imperatives, impersonal verbs as in the use of passives, and in pluralization of 'you' or 'I.' (Wambugu, 2018). As wambugu proposes, it is clear that the speaker above succeeds to impersonate H by employing use of the passive voice.

The last super strategy of politeness that was employed by the political class in Kenya is the off-record politeness**.** In Brown and Levinson's (1987) view, a communicative act

is done off-record if it is done in such a way that it is not possible to attribute only one communicative intention to the act. In other words, the actor leaves himself an 'out' by providing himself or herself with a number of defensible interpretations. S cannot be held responsible to have committed oneself to just one particular interpretation of the act. Thus if a speaker wants to do an FTA but wants to avoid responsibility for doing it, he/she can do it off-record and leave it up to the addressee to decide how to interpret it. According to Cutting (2008) the hearer's face is protected by having the option to retreat behind the literal meaning of the words and the speaker can save his face by denying having performed the face threatening act. Consider the examples below.

This is an extract from the fifth speaker in Event 2.

On the matter of IEBC, the recommendations that I have read, say that, political parties participate in the appointment of commissioners to IEBC. My brother Raila Odinga is good in football, so let me try to ask, how fair will be a league where the referee is appointed by teams and not all teams, some teams? **(U 20)** *How fair would this league be?* **(U 21)**

In **utterance 20-21**, S asks rhetorical questions helping S in creating a hands off mechanism on committing the FTA the utterances carry upon the drafters and the supporters of BBI proposals who are actually the primary targets of the utterance. Considering the event which is specifically BBI Report Launching, these utterances that are poking holes at the report as it is being launched carry very high rank of impositions. It is being alive to this socio-pragmatic factor of rank of impositions that determines the speaker's choice of effective employment of politeness strategies of off-record nature. The utterances are also directed secondarily to all members of the audience so that they can interrogate deeply as to the validity of reasons S has for opposing BBI proposals.

This next example is from the fourth speaker in Event 2.

Tusielekeze watoto wetu kwa mambo ya zamani, (let us not direct our children to outdated things) the world is changing fast and we need… **(U 22)** *na tunapeleka watoto kwa shule. (and we take our children to school)*

In **utterance 22**, S leaves the utterance 'hanging in the hair,' to minimise the FTA carried in the utterance which is directed at criticising the ideologies of the deputy president, the main opposer of the BBI, whose wheelbarrow slogan has been criticised for being retrogressive. This is achieved by making the intent of the utterance not clearly defined.

This last example below is extracted from the eighth speaker in Event 3.

La mwisho na nimalizie, brother Atwoli na wewe senator Malala, musione simba amenyeshewa mufikirie ni paka **(U 23)** *(The last thing so as I conclude, brother Atwoli and you senator Malala, do not see a lion has been rained on then you mistake it for a cat) (cheers and claps from the audience)*

In **utterance 23**, S uses a proverb in what looks like an address to the two individuals he mentions. By S saying that people should not mistake a rained on lion for a cat, after the two individuals tell him to crack the whip on those who disrespect his leadership, it is probable that though he frames the utterance to sound like he is addressing the two individuals he mentions; the statement is over-generalised more effectively to those who disrespected him and by extent the statement aims at sounding a warning to them rather than Atwoli and Malala. It will be upon the addressees to decide whether this warning applies to them hence making the utterance off-record politeness strategy. The utterances also show that the speaker being the head of state has a high power differential giving him the audacity to warn anybody of lower power differential hence being in line with Brown's and Levinson's (1987) proposition that socio-pragmatic factor of relative power can influence an interlocutor's choice of politeness strategies.

The above findings on the use of off-record politeness are also in line with Wambugu (2018, p. 62) who says that it may be that the clues sum up to an utterance that is ambiguous in context but by using what is technically indirect the speaker will have given a bow to the addressee's face and therefore minimised the threat of the FTA.

From the analysis of the discourse of the Kenyan political class as they engaged on the matter of BBI, it is evident that as they aired their differences in opinion concerning BBI proposals, they threatened the faces of their addressees but they were careful and considerate of their primary targets' faces and attempted to counteract the potential of face damage of the FTAs through the notion of redressive action. They did this by employing all the four politeness super-strategies namely bald-on-record, positive, negative and off-record politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987). The table below clearly illustrates this.

Table 1: Overall summary of politeness strategies employed by the political class in Kenya as they engaged in BBI discourse.

POLITENESS STRATEGIES	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	TOTAL	%
Bald-on-record	6	5	0	3	4	5	2	3	28	**8.02**
Positive	19	16	24	35	45	8	15	35	197	**56.45**
Negative	26	9	10	8	29	2	4	6	94	**26.93**
Off-record	3	3	3	4	5	4	4	4	30	**8.60**
Total	**54**	**33**	**37**	**50**	**83**	**19**	**25**	**48**	**349**	**100**

From the table above, positive politeness strategy was the most frequently used by the Kenyan political class at 56.45%, followed by negative politeness strategy at 26.93, off-record politeness strategy at 8.6% and the least employed of all the politeness strategies was bald-on-record politeness strategy which formed 8.02%.

VII.   CONCLUSION

This paper has analysed how redressive action is applied in political discourse in Kenya in the face of conflicting views. It is evident that the political class employ all the four politeness strategies as proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) to redress face threatening acts carried in their utterances. Positive politeness strategies are more prominently employed than the negative strategies. These strategies facilitate the bridging of gaps between speakers and hearers and create a cordial environment that aids in successful interaction even in the face of very conflicting opinions. The use of bald-on-record politeness strategy was also witnessed in the political discourse in Kenya. The political class employed both bald-on-record with minimisation and bald-on-record without minimisation although it was established that they preferred bald-on-record without minimisation over the inclusion of minimisation. The apparent justification for this preference is that they considered BBI discourse as one that needed fast resolutions and there was no need to be ambiguous or indirect. The speakers also employed off-record politeness strategies which gave a bow to the hearers' faces and minimised face threats carried in the FTAs used.

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