

Original Paper

Politeness in Parliamentary Discourse: An Analysis of the Hansard of the Parliament of Ghana

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Abstract

This study investigates politeness in parliamentary discourse in Ghana. Using politeness theory as framework and the parliamentary Hansard as source of data, the study examines the politeness strategies employed by parliamentary actors, the implications of the frequency of the usage of the politeness strategies, and how the Standing Orders of Parliament determine the choice of a politeness strategy. Findings of the study show that political actors in the Parliament of Ghana use the bald on-record, the positive, the negative and the off-record politeness strategies in varied proportions. The study further reveals that the negative politeness strategy is the most frequently used politeness strategy with the Speaker being the highest user of the negative and the bald on-record politeness strategies. Again, the study found out that the off-record politeness strategy is the least used strategy. The Majority Members in Parliament use the highest frequency of the positive politeness strategies while the Minority Members of Parliament employ more negative politeness strategies. The study concludes that parliamentary discourse in Ghana employs more of the direct explicit polite expressions than the indirect implicit expressions of politeness. The study recommends that researchers should pay critical attention to the politeness phenomenon in parliamentary discourse.

Keywords

politeness, parliamentary discourse, bald on-record, off-record, Hansard, Standing Orders

1. Introduction

One central pragmatic feature of human communication employed by participants during interaction is the politeness phenomenon (Borris & Zecho, 2018). Polite behaviour is very essential to ensuring that there is good relationship between interlocutors in order to achieve desired outcomes in interaction. Sulastriana (2018) asserts that the ability to establish good communication can be seen from the ability to use polite language. In that regard, individuals are expected to maintain appropriate decorum and civility during interactions so as to avoid saying something that may hurt others. Politeness is an essential tool which is applicable in political discourse. It is therefore important that efforts are made to study how a political institution like Parliament employs politeness in parliamentary discourse for the purpose of establishing good relationships among parliamentarians and also ensuring that the dignity and integrity of Parliament is maintained. According to Balogun and Murana (2018), the political nature of man is his innate sense of dignity or self-importance that he wants others to acknowledge. This means that the desire of the politician to be respected and regarded leans to the notion of politeness. Political politeness is therefore a critical area that researchers should draw their attention to in their assessment of parliamentary discourses (Malima & Masindano, 2018). Parliamentary discourse is a subgenre of political discourse (Ilie, 2006) and it is prone to confrontations (Malima & Masindano, 2018). There is, therefore, the need to employ politeness strategies to mitigate potential face threats during parliamentary deliberations (Malima & Masindano, 2018). Parliamentary deliberations could be chaotic if the politeness phenomenon is ignored by parliamentary actors.

Parliament, as an institution, is guided by rules and regulations which are known as the Standing Orders of Parliament. All parliamentarians are expected to strictly observe the provisions in the Standing Orders during parliamentary deliberations. Some of the Standing Orders regulate discourse in Parliament. Thus, some Standing Orders have relationship with the politeness phenomenon which seeks to mitigate face threats.

A myriad of studies on politeness in political discourse have been conducted across the globe, with focus on several aspects of the discourse. With regards to Europe, Saleem and Alattar (2020) examined how politicians in the British and Iraqi parliaments employ (im)politeness strategies in political blame and blame avoidance situations. Their study also examined the similarities and/or differences in using (im)politeness and rhetorical strategies in parliamentary discourses. Drawing ideas and assumptions from Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness model, Culpeper's (1996) model of impoliteness, and Grice's (1975) cooperative principle, Saleem and Alattar (2020) found that the British MPs used impoliteness strategies at the blame stage and politeness strategies at the blame avoidance stage, whereas the Iraqi MPs exploited impoliteness at both the blame and blame avoidance stages. Murphy (2014) also investigated the use of (im)politeness in the Prime Minister's Questions (PMQ) sessions in the UK Parliament using Culpeper's (2011) impoliteness model for the analysis of impolite behaviours and discovered that opposition MPs used impolite expressions when asking the Prime Minister (PM)

questions, while government MPs employed politeness in asking questions. Treimane (2011) employed the Systemic Functional Parameters by Halliday and Webster (2002) and Halliday and Hasan (1991) to analyse parliamentary debates at the British House of Commons and the Latvian Parliament. The study used transcripts of debates from both Parliaments as data corpus. Findings of the study revealed that most typical noun phrases are used to signify politeness in both settings. Treimane's study revealed further that though politeness formulas are not codified in the Latvian Parliament, by conventions, noun phrases are identified as politeness markers in the Parliament of Latvia. O'Donnell (2013) investigated the use of some selected politeness features in the Parliament of Ireland during Question Time using parliamentary transcripts as data source. Findings of the study showed that both the Irish and British parliamentarians used a mixture of politeness strategies during Question Time, some of which included positive politeness, ignoring FTAs, mitigating FTAs, and self-justification.

In Asia, Maskuri, Djatmika and Purnanto (2019) investigated politeness strategies employed in directive speech acts in local Indonesian parliamentary proceedings. The findings of their study revealed that three politeness strategies were dominant: bald on-record, negative politeness, and positive politeness. Yu (2015), in turn, studied the use of politeness strategies in questioning government officials, and the factors that influence legislators' choice of questioning strategies during parliamentary Question and Answer sessions in Taiwan. The study adopted Lee-Wong's (2000) framework, which is a revision of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness model. Findings of the study showed that the bald on-record strategy was widely used by legislators. Yasmeen, Jabeen and Akram (2014) applied Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness model to examine how Pakistani politicians use politeness strategies, and their frequency of usage during the session of Privileged Motives. Findings of the study showed that the bald on-record strategy was most frequently used to show power and carefree communication style. David, Govindasamy and Nambia (2009) gathered data from the Hansard to determine the politeness strategies and the levels of (im)polite utterances made by Malaysian parliamentarians during parliamentary debates. Findings of the study showed dominance of polite utterances during parliamentary debates.

From the American perspective, Dridi (2020) used the politeness models of Brown and Levinson (1987) and Lakoff (2005) as framework to examine American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee's (AIPAC) political annual speeches and concluded that positive politeness is essential for gaining audience sympathy and reshaping public opinion.

Whiles some studies have been conducted on politeness in parliamentary discourse in the African context, it appears minimal attention has been given to the Ghanaian Parliament with respect to politeness strategies used on the floor of Parliament. For instance, Malima and Masindano (2018) examined confrontations in the Tanzanian Parliament. Using Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory as framework and parliamentary Hansard as source of data, the researchers found that verbal exchanges of parliamentarians contributed to confrontations. Agbara (2018) studied politeness in

Nigerian legislative discourse and indicated that parliamentarians employ the politeness phenomenon to express varied ideologies and interests. Sarfo (2016) investigated the similarities and differences in questioning and debating between the parliaments of UK and Ghana. Findings of the study revealed that question forms in both the UK and Ghanaian parliaments were similar. However, there were differences in relation to how the MPs expressed politeness. Whereas the Ghanaian MPs marked politeness with direct linguistic forms such as modal past, the UK parliamentarians expressed politeness indirectly.

Consequently, this study examined politeness in parliamentary discourse in the Ghanaian context. The study sought to identify the politeness strategies used in the parliamentary Hansard, determine the frequency of usage of the politeness strategies in the Hansard, and examine how the Standing Orders of Parliament determine the choice of politeness strategy in the parliamentary Hansard.

2. Method

2.1 Research Approach

This study adopted the qualitative research approach in gathering data. Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human phenomenon (Creswell, 2014).

2.2 Data Collection and Analysis

The parliamentary Hansard is the main document that was used in gathering data for this study. Hansard is a verbatim record of parliamentary proceedings even including all interruptions, and this gives a true picture of the proceedings as they happen on the floor of parliament. Also, Hansard is a public document and hard copies are available at the Hansard Department for interested researchers to pick. The Hansard reports are also published on the website of the Parliament of Ghana. Hansard reports that contained the relevant data from the various parliamentary discourse subgenres such as motions for debates, Urgent Questions sessions, statements made on the floor of the House, and Oral Answers to Questions sessions were purposively sampled for the study.

Brown and Levinson (1987) categorised politeness strategies into four and these are: the bald on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness and off-record politeness strategies. There are sub-strategies under each of these four broad strategies. The sub-strategies were identified and coded under the main strategies which served as the main themes for the study. The table below shows the coding scheme for thematic analysis of politeness strategies in the study:

Table 1. Coding Scheme for Thematic and Textual Analysis

Theme	Codes
Bald on Record	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Giving direct imperatives for great urgency or desperation, 2. Giving sympathetic advice or warnings 3. Welcoming and farewells 4. Giving offers
Positive Politeness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Noticing/attending to hearer's wants (his interests, wants, needs, goods). 2) Exaggerating (interest, approval, sympathy with the hearer). 3) Intensifying interest to hearer 4) Using in-group identity markers. 5) Seeking agreement 6) Avoiding disagreement 7) Presupposing/raising/asserting common ground 8) Making jokes 9) Asserting or presupposing people's knowledge and concern for hearer's wants. 10) Offering and promising. 11) Being optimistic 12) Including both speaker and hearer in the activity 13) Giving (or asking for) reasons 14) Assuming or asserting reciprocity 15) Giving gifts to hearer (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation)
Negative Politeness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Being conventionally indirect 2) Questioning, hedging 3) Being pessimistic 4) Minimizing the imposition 5) Giving deference 6) Apologising 7) Impersonalising speaker and hearer 8) Stating FTA as a general rule 9) Nominalising 10) Going on record as incurring a debt off record as indebtng.
Off Record	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Giving hints/clues 2) Giving association clues 3) Presupposing 4) Understating 5) Overstating

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- 6) Using tautologies
 - 7) Using contradictions
 - 8) Being Ironic
 - 9) Using metaphors
 - 10) Using rhetorical questions
 - 11) Being ambiguous
 - 12) Being vague
 - 13) Over generalising
 - 14) Displacing hearer
 - 15) Being incomplete, using ellipsis.
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Adapted from Brown and Levinson (1987)

3. Results

This study sought to use the Hansard as source of data to investigate the politeness strategies that are employed in parliamentary discourse, the frequency of usage of the politeness strategies, and how the Standing Orders of parliament influence the choice of politeness strategies. Results of the study are presented below:

3.1 The Politeness Strategies Employed in the Parliamentary Hansard

Results of this study showed that Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies are used in varied forms in the parliamentary Hansard. These are the bald-on record, positive politeness, negative politeness and off-record strategies.

3.1.1 Bald On-record Strategies

Below are excerpts of the use of bald on-record politeness in the Hansard;

Extract 1

Minority MP: Mr Speaker, the Hon Member is grossly misleading this House. The NPP Administration never spent in excess of Appropriation. There were two—[Interruption]—Listen to me. Go and ask for the supplementary budget ceilings and you would realise that what you are referring to as the excess spending, was captured in the Appropriation Act. That is what we are saying—[No! No!]
—So, please, go and look at the supplementary budget. So, Mr Speaker, I would want to let him know that it is wrong, that spending was captured in the supplementary budget.

The extract captures a debate session of the annual budget of the government. In contributing to the debate, a Majority MP stated that the then government spent in excess of appropriation. A Minority MP then rose on point of order to disagree with the Majority MP. He was, however, interrupted by the Majority MPs. This interruption created some channel noise, thus making communication difficult for

the Minority MP. Being desperate and feeling the urgency to make his point, he resorted to bald on-record strategies of using attention getters such as, “*Listen to me*”. This provides him the opportunity to continue to make his point. His advice for the Majority MP to, “*Go and ask for the supplementary budget ceilings*”, was uttered baldly without redressive acts. This utterance is in tune with Brown and Levinson’s (1987) argument that where maximum efficiency is very important, no face redress is necessary. His desperation and great urgency to speak, despite the interruptions, became clearer when he repeated the bald on-record utterance that, “*So, please, go and look at the supplementary budget*”. The confrontations that characterise discourse in Parliament make it obvious for MPs to use bald on-record strategies to dominate and get attention from colleague MPs.

The extract 2 below reveals how the Speaker and a Minority MP use the bald on-record strategy in the parliamentary Hansard;

Extract 2

Mr Speaker: Hon Member, hold on. Yes, Hon Buah?

Minority MP: Mr Speaker, this is the Hon Deputy Minister for Energy. He is engaging in—This is not the place for that.

Mr Speaker: Tell me where he breached any rule.

Minority MP: Mr Speaker, he should speak to the facts.

Mr Speaker: Which facts? The man is giving you calculations of what it would have been...you are out of order. Hon Member, please continue. (19th November, 2019, p. 2681).

Extract 2 above examines the bald on-record politeness strategy used by the Speaker and a Minority MP. A Deputy Minister for Energy and a Majority MP was on the floor making trend analysis of how the increment of electricity bill would have been under a previous administration. Then a Minority MP rose on point of order. This made the Speaker to use bald on-record utterance to require the Deputy Minister to hold on for him to listen to the Minority MP who rose on point of order. The statement that, “*Hon Member, hold on*” uttered by the Speaker is a bald on-record politeness strategy enjoining the Deputy Minister to wait awhile for the Minority MP to make his point. When the Minority MP spoke, the Speaker employed another direct imperative utterance, “*Tell me where he breached any rule*”. The response of the Minority MP that, “*Mr Speaker, he should speak to the facts*” is also a bald on-record politeness strategy. Realising that the Minority MP did not have any bases for raising point of order, the Speaker told him directly that, “*... you are out of order*”, which is a sympathetic warning not to proceed any further on point of order. The Speaker then called on the Majority MP and Deputy Minister to continue. He said, “*Hon Member, please continue*”.

3.1.2 Positive Politeness Strategies

Brown and Levinson (1987) divided positive politeness into three forms: claiming common ground, conveying that the addresser and the addressee are co-operators, and fulfilling addressee’s want (for

some x). The analysis of the data show that various forms of Brown and Levinson's (1987) positive politeness strategies are used in varying proportions by political actors of Parliament. In the following extract, a Majority MP employed a number of positive politeness strategies while making a statement on the floor of the House about the Annual Celebration of Independence Day in Ghana.

Extract 3

Majority MP: Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to make this Statement on the Independence Day celebrations in our dear country. Mr Speaker, one week from today, Ghana, our beloved country, will mark her 56th Independence Anniversary. In spite of the challenging circumstances in which we find ourselves as a nation, we are delighted and therefore, grateful to the Almighty for keeping us together as one nation and in peace. On this occasion, we salute the founding fathers of the nation led by Osagyefo Dr Kwame Nkrumah, whose gallant efforts led to the attainment of nationhood for our country.

In this extract, the MP expresses gratitude to the Speaker for giving him/her the opportunity to make a statement on the floor of the House. The expressions, "*thank you*", "*grateful to Almighty*" and "*salute the founding fathers*" are pleasing words to express positive politeness. Again, the extract contains inclusive devices which are prerequisite for positive politeness. For instance, expressions of endearment such as "*our dear country*", "*our beloved country*" all indicate interest and love for country. Also, the use of the plural pronoun, "*we*" as in, "*we find ourselves; we are delighted and we salute*", show the togetherness and cooperation of the Ghanaian citizens for common interest and beliefs. The extract also expresses optimism, which is a positive politeness marker. This is evident in, "*In spite of the challenging circumstances in which we find ourselves as a nation, we are delighted... for keeping us together as one nation and in peace*". Even though Ghana, as nation, has its own challenging moments, the MP's statement encourages the citizens to be optimistic because there is peace in the country.

The data show that the Majority MPs who are usually on the government side employ positive politeness strategies to express their agreement and support to the government's Financial Policy Statement presented to Parliament by the Finance Minister. The following extracts exemplify the positive politeness strategies of the Majority MPs.

Extract 4

Majority MP: Mr Speaker, thank you for giving me the opportunity to contribute to the Motion on the Financial Policy Statement of Government of Ghana for the year ending December 31st, 2018, under the authority of His Excellency the President, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, which was eloquently delivered by the Hon Minister for Finance. [Hear! Hear!] Mr Speaker, listening to my good

Hon Friend and Brother, Hon Armah-Kofi Buah, has made my adrenaline charge. Ghana did not only vote for a President; we voted for a President who is visionary. We voted for a President who is pragmatic; we voted for a President who is action oriented. (23rd November, 2017, p. 3729).

From data extract 4, the Majority MP begins by expressing gratitude to the Speaker for giving him the opportunity to contribute to the debate. This gratitude expression indicates that the Majority MP approves and appreciates the opportunity thus, the positive face of Mr Speaker is enhanced. The Majority MP appears to exaggerate his interest and approval of the financial statement of the government. This is evident from the choice of the word, *eloquently*. His exaggerated interest in the President is made manifest in the prosodic expressions, “*Ghana did not only vote for a President; we voted for a President who is visionary. We voted for a President who is pragmatic; we voted for a President who is action oriented*”. The MP’s use of the in-group pronoun, “we” expresses a positive politeness strategy of including both speaker and hearer, as well as all Ghanaians, in a common activity: *we voted*. The MP uses the positive politeness expressions to give approval to the financial statement of the government and he is rewarded with “*Hear! Hear!*” from his colleague Majority MPs.

3.1.3 Negative Politeness Strategies

The following extracts show the negative politeness strategies;

Extract 5

Minority MP: Mr Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to make contribution to the Statement by Hon Member for Ho Central. Mr Speaker, the recommendations so made are recommendations that I believe, if, as a country, we embrace, it is going to help an even development across the country.

In the extract above, the Minority MP employs a number of honorifics to give deference to the Speaker and colleague MPs. The expressions such as, “*Mr Speaker*” and “*Hon Member for Ho Central*” enhance the negative face of the Speaker and the MP. Though these honorifics appear as ritualised parliamentary language, they are used as face savers to mitigate face threats in parliamentary discourse.

Extract 6

Majority MP: Mr Speaker, without trying to challenge your ruling, I would have been very grateful if you could take two more contributions. This is because we have too long a list and I am afraid because we are ending on Friday, we may not be able to come on board with too many of our Colleagues. So, if you could take one from Hon Yaw Effah Baafi and Hon Dr. Kwabena Donkor, we would be most grateful, so that we can continue with the rest tomorrow. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, and it is with our indulgence. (27th February, 2013, p. 1067).

A Majority Member made this statement at the time the Speaker wanted to bring the debate to a temporary end but realising that there were many MPs on list who were yet to contribute to the debate, the Majority MP made a request for few more MPs to be allowed to debate. The MP skilfully made the request by using negative politeness strategies. First, he minimised the imposition of his request on the Speaker when he said, “*Mr Speaker, without trying to challenge your ruling, I would have been very grateful if you could take two more contributions*”. The fact that the MP is not challenging the ruling of the Speaker and also the fact that he requested for just only two more contributions, demonstrate that the MP is still within the authority of the Speaker, and Mr. Speaker, seeing that request was minimal, granted it. To demonstrate more negative politeness, the Hon. Majority MP used modal verbs to hedge the request. Such modal verbs include; “*would*”, “*may*” and “*could*”. The use of the “if-clauses is also a marker of negative politeness. His statement that, “*I would have been very grateful if you could take two more contributions*” and “*So, if you could take one from Hon Yaw Effah Baafi and Hon Dr. Kwabena Donkor, we would be most grateful*” are also a form of hedging in negative politeness strategies. The MP again used honorifics to give deference to the Speaker and his colleague MPs. This is evident in the address forms such as “*Mr Speaker*”, “*Hon Yaw Effah Baafi*” and “*Hon Dr. Kwabena Donkor*”.

3.1.4 Off-record Politeness Strategies

Off record strategy is essentially the indirect use of language where one says something that is either more general or completely different from what is intended so that it is left on the addressee to figure out what is intended. According to Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 211), “a communicative act is done off record if it is done in such a way that it is not possible to attribute only one clear communicative intention to the act”. Brown and Levinson (1987) assert also that speakers use off record strategies in order to avoid being responsible for the potential face threats their utterance might carry. Thus, an addresser who wants to avoid the responsibility for doing an FTA can do so by employing the off-record strategies where the interpretation of the utterance is left for the addressee to decide. The extract below demonstrates the use of off the record politeness strategy.

Extract 7

Majority MP: Mr Speaker, this budget is the right budget by the right President, at the right time—[Hear! Hear!] Mr Speaker—[Interruption.]

Minority MP: Mr Speaker, first of all, I know wise men do not proffer advice in the open, they do it behind the curtains; and when wise men jump into the fray and they are using very subjective and prescriptive language in the House, we need to be worried.

In extract 7 above, the Majority MP employs an off-record politeness strategy of presupposition. His statement that, “*Mr Speaker, this budget is the right budget by the right President, at the right time*” presupposes that a previous budget was not the right budget presented by the right President at the right

time. The utterance may thus implicate a criticism of a previous budget presented by a previous government at a previous time. The tautological use of the word, “right” is also an off-record politeness strategy. By stressing the word, “right” 3 times, the Majority MP expects his listeners to make inferences to the informative interpretation of the word.

In reply to the criticism of the Majority MP, the Minority MP resorts to the use of metaphor, which is another off-record politeness strategy. The Minority MP said, “*Mr Speaker, first of all, I know wise men do not proffer advice in the open, they do it behind the curtains; and when wise men jump into the fray and they are using very subjective and prescriptive language in the House, we need to be worried*”. His reference to the majority MP as a “wise man” is metaphorical. The Majority MP had been one of the longest serving MPs in Parliament. Thus, when his political party won elections, the expectation was that the MP would be given ministerial appointment but because the MP and his other two long serving colleague MPs were not given any appointment, the three were nicknamed, “the three Wise men”.

Extract 8

Minority MP: Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to support the Motion to thank H. E. the President for his State of the Nation Address. Mr Speaker, on page 13 of the State of the Nation Address, particularly the last paragraph, Mr Speaker, the President asserts that and with your permission, I beg to quote: “The rule of law should remain our guiding and unbending principle. Those of us in public service should acknowledge that corruption is one of the biggest concerns to the people of Ghana. It is the one subject on which a surprising number of people are willing to tolerate a waiver of due process”. Mr Speaker, I would want to emphasise the words “...a waiver of due process.” Mr Speaker, were we going to set aside article 18 of the Constitution and engage in arrest without warrant or detention without trial, the invisible forces way? Is that what is implied by the waiver of due process by the President? (1st March, 2017, p. 1958).

The President indicated in his message to the House of Parliament on the state of the nation that the fight against corruption is so strong that Ghanaians are willing to tolerate a waiver of due process of the law. The Minority MP, in disagreeing with the president’s assertion and in order to avoid responsibility for a potential face threat, resorts to using off-record strategies of inviting conversational implicatures by way of asking rhetorical questions and giving association clues. The Minority MP asked two rhetorical questions in succession; “*Mr. Speaker, were we going to set aside article 18 of the Constitution and engage in arrest without warrant or detention without trial, the invisible forces way? Is that what is implied by the waiver of due process by the President?*”? By using rhetorical questions, Minority MP avoids the responsibility for doing the face threat. The Minority MP subsequently denies that he says the President is willing to set aside due process of the law by arguing that, “*Mr Speaker, I*

never said and I am sure I am on record, that, the President is willing to put aside constitutional guarantees in order to fight corruption. It was a rhetorical question that I asked.” This statement corroborates Brown and Levinson’s (1987) assertion that a communicative act is done off record if the speaker wants to avoid responsibility for doing FTAs. Thus, the Minority MP is not on record to have said that the president indicates he was willing to set aside due process in order to fight against corruption.

His reference to “*the invisible forces way*” is giving association clues to a by-election violence which occurred in a constituency called Ayawaso West Wuogon in which a vigilante group called “Invincible Forces” was purportedly blamed for violence against the opposition. Though the Minority MP did not mention the by-election violence, the use of “invincible forces” suggests violence.

3.2 Frequency of the Politeness Strategies in the Hansard

The data indicated that the various politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) were used at varied frequency by political actors as observed in the Hansard. The diagram below shows the frequency of occurrence of the various politeness strategies;

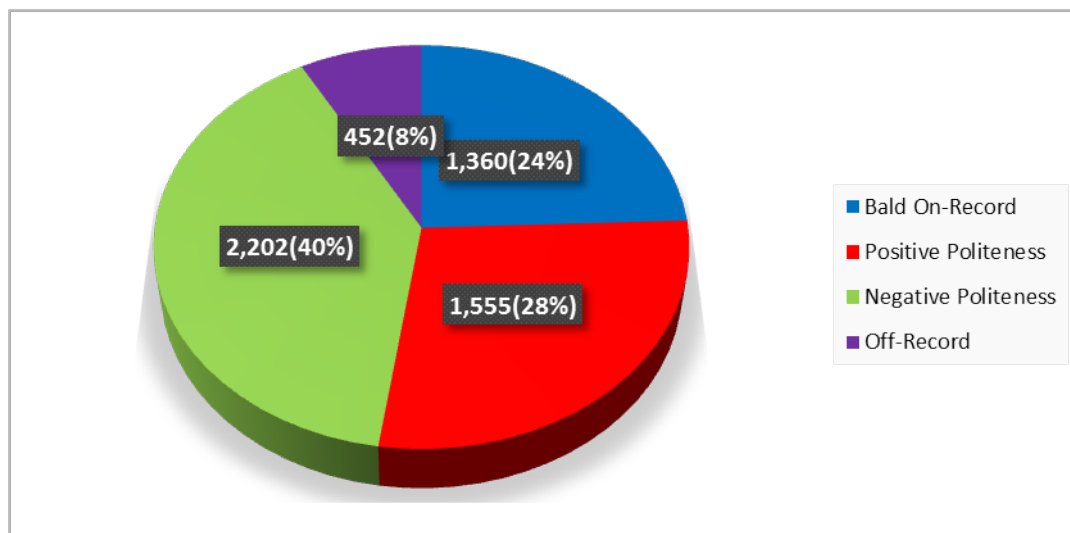


Figure 1. Frequency of Politeness Strategies

From the diagram, negative politeness is the most frequently occurring politeness strategy observed in the Hansard; 2,202 (40%), followed by positive politeness; 1,555 (28%), then bald on-record; 1,360 (24%) and the least strategy being the off-record politeness; 452 (8%). Brown and Levinson (1987) aver that the negative politeness strategies are employed when the speaker wants to give maximum respect or deference to the hearer. Thus, the frequent use of negative politeness strategies in the Hansard implies that parliamentary actors in Ghana give maximum respect to one another during parliamentary deliberations.

The data also show that off-record politeness strategy is the least occurring politeness strategy in the Hansard. In off-record strategy, the speaker avoids doing FTAs directly and rather employs indirect strategies of giving hints, using association clues, inviting conversational implicatures or being vague or ambiguous. The less frequent use of the off-record politeness implies that Ghanaian parliamentary actors use more direct explicit expressions and less indirect implicit forms of politeness. The findings of this study corroborate Sarfo's (2016) findings that politeness in the parliament of Ghana is expressed by direct linguistic forms such as the modal past.

The findings of this study also reveal that the categories of parliamentary actors, such as the Speaker, the Majority MPs and the Minority MPs, use the politeness strategies at varied frequencies. The diagram below shows the levels of usage of the bald on-record politeness strategies by the various political actors.

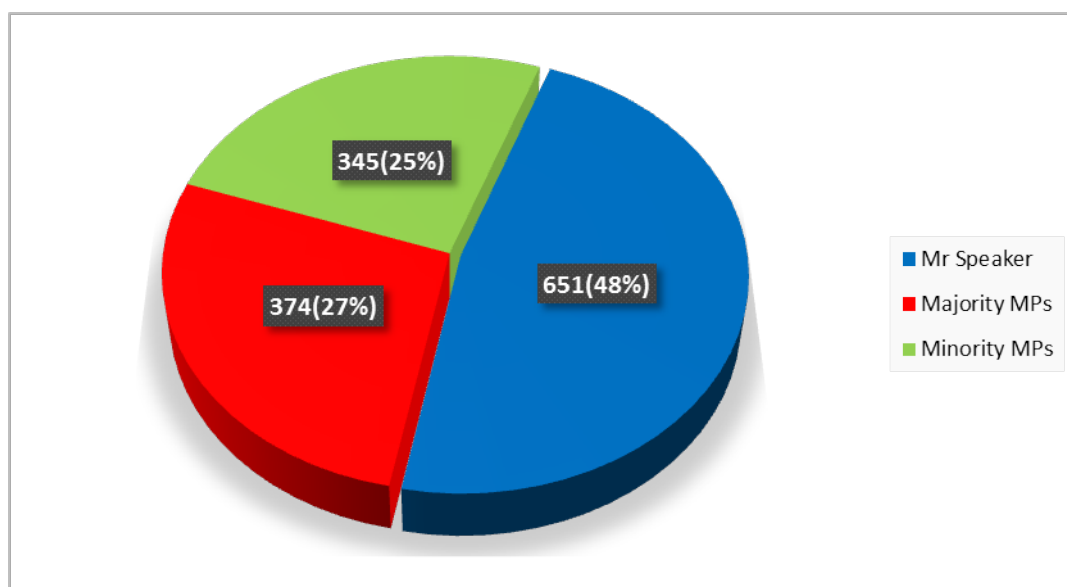


Figure 2. Frequency of Bald On-record Politeness

From the diagram, Mr Speaker had the highest frequency of usage of the bald on-record politeness strategies; 651 (48%), followed by the Majority MPs; 374 (27%) and then the Minority MPs; 345 (25%). The bald on-record politeness strategies which were used by the Speaker were mostly the imperative forms, sometimes uttered baldly without redressive acts. For example, “*Order, order!*”, “*Hon member, proceed*” or “*Hon Member, withdraw and apologise*”. Brown and Levinson (1987) state, that to do an act baldly, without redress, is to do it in the most direct, clear, explicit and brief manner possible and this is in line with Grice's Maxims of Cooperation (Grice, 1975) which also state that interlocutors ought to be informative, truthful, relevant and clear in their communication. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), an FTA is usually done baldly only if the speaker does not

dread retribution from the addressee. In the parliamentary setting, the Speaker presides over proceedings and he/she takes a neutral position. The Speaker may not dread retribution from the MPs since the MPs are aware that the Speaker is neutral in all deliberations. The Speaker also used the bald on-record strategies in circumstances where urgency and efficiency are much more required than face want. Where there is disorder in Parliament, the Speaker may suspend the face need of the MPs and resort to the use of bald on-record strategies such as, “*Order, Order*,” or “*Listen, listen to me*”, in order to restore order. Again, where the threat to the MPs’ face is very small, as in making offers, requests, suggestions that are obviously in the interest of the MPs, the Speaker may employ bald on-record strategies such as, “*have your seat*” or “*make your point*”. Again, the power relation between the Speaker and Members of Parliament does have an influence on the frequent use of the bald on-record strategies by the Speaker. The speaker is more powerful than the MPs and he determines who should speak. He /she can sanction the MPs if they are out of order.

There are also instances where the bald on-record politeness strategies are done with some special politeness markers such as “*please*” or “*kindly*”. For example, “*Hon Member, please continue*”, “*Hon Member, kindly take your seat*”, or “*Order, order, please*”. The use of such special politeness markers is meant to soften the command and lessen the threat to face. The Speaker utters these bald on-record strategies under certain relevant circumstances to enable him take care of the face wants of the MPs being addressed. In a circumstance where the Speaker must ensure that there is order in the House and also be mindful of the face need of the MPs, he uses these special politeness markers with the bald on record strategies to control the proceedings. For instance, the Speaker, under the circumstance of a heated debate, where there are interruptions, has to make use of the bald on-record strategy with the special politeness markers, “*order, order, please*”, to enable him bring the House to order.

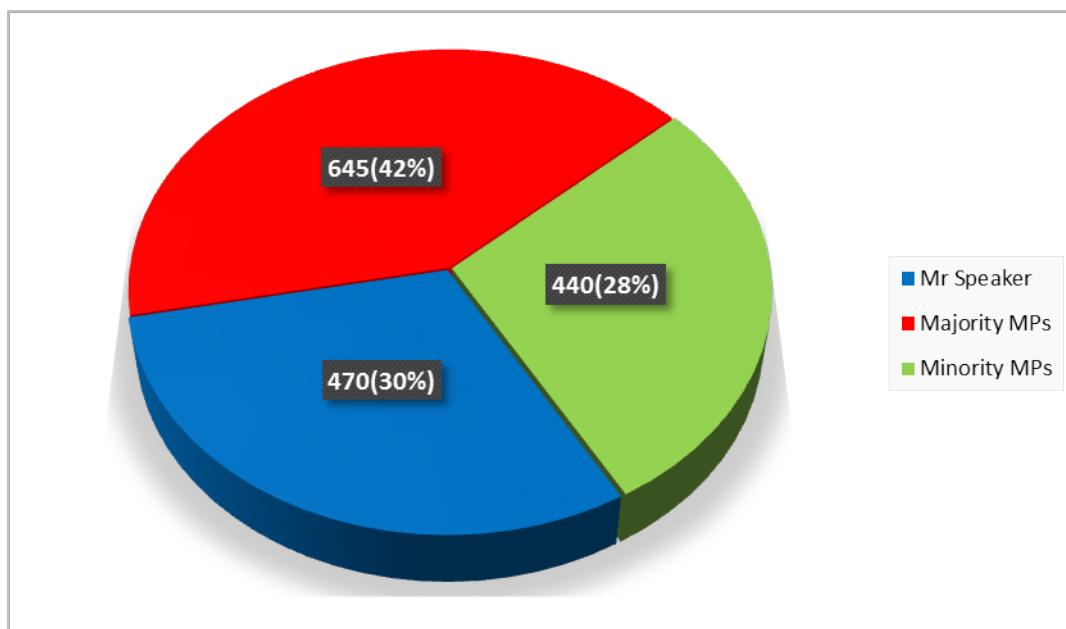


Figure 3. Frequency of Positive Politeness

The data indicate that 470 positive politeness utterances, representing 30%, are performed by Mr Speaker. The Speaker's positive politeness strategies are mostly the strategies that convey that Mr Speaker and Members of Parliament are co-operators. For example, the Speaker makes a statement that, "*Hon Members, now that correction has been made let us proceed*". The statement shows that there is co-operation between Mr Speaker and Members of Parliament. The Speaker also uses positive politeness utterance that fulfils the wants of the MPs. For instance, the Speaker presupposes knowledge of the MPs, shows his concern for them and also gives gifts to them as demonstrated in the following sentence, "*Hon. Member, you know your time is up but because of the intervention, I have added you two minutes*". In the sentence above, Mr Speaker presupposes that the MP is aware that his/her time is up. However, Mr Speaker gives the MP some additional time because there had been some interventions. This act by the Speaker fulfils the want of the MP and indicates that the Speaker shows concern for the MPs thereby ensuring cooperation in parliamentary deliberations. The implication for the Speaker using positive politeness strategies is to claim common ground and save the positive face of the MPs to ensure cooperation during parliamentary proceedings.

From the diagram, 645 (42%) of positive polite utterances were performed by the Majority MPs. This shows that the Majority MPs used the positive politeness strategies most frequently. The Majority MPs often use positive politeness to convey common grounds such as showing agreement, solidarity, cooperation and support for the government of the day. The findings corroborate Ide's (1989) argument that positive politeness is a solidarity politeness that emphasises common grounds. The implication for the frequent use of the positive politeness strategies is to show high solidarity, camaraderie and support

for the programmes of the government. They therefore employ positive politeness utterances in their contribution to communication from the President, Ministers and other Majority MPs. For example, the Majority MPs use positive politeness strategies to contribute to debates on the State of the Nation Address and Financial Policy Statement of the government, ministerial questions and statements made on the floor of the House by a Majority MP.

The data gathered also indicated that the Minority MPs performed 440 positive polite utterances which represents 28%. The positive politeness strategies were also intended to convey in-group identity markers, hedging opinion, avoiding disagreement and also including addresser and addressee in an activity.

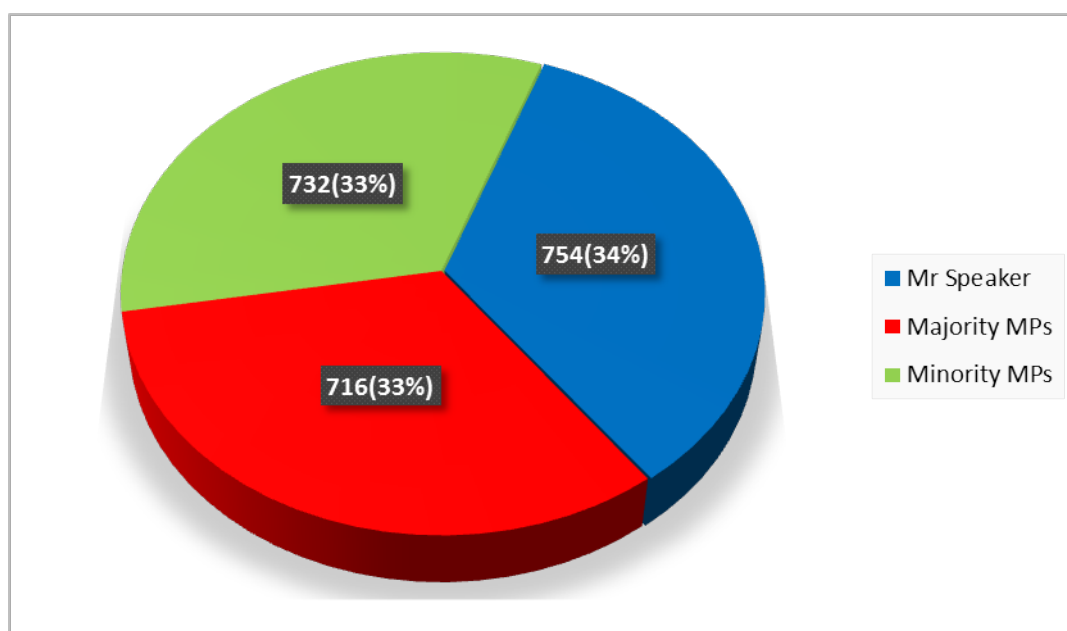


Figure 4. Frequency of Negative Politeness

From the diagram, the data show that the Speaker of Parliament uses the negative politeness strategies most frequently than the other parliamentarians. From the 40 Hansard reports that were analysed, the researcher recorded 754 (34%) negative politeness utterances made by Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker's use of the negative politeness strategies is to minimise the imposition so that the MPs would feel that their freedoms are unhindered or unimpeded by the Speaker. Brown and Levinson (1987) state that negative politeness is the most elaborate and conventionalised set of linguistic strategies for FTA redress. Most of the negative politeness strategies employed by the Speaker are the act of giving deference, being conventionally indirect and using questions and hedges. For example, the Speaker would always address the MPs as "*Hon Member*", "*Hon Member for (name of constituency)*" or "*Hon (name of MP)*". By the use of these honorifics, the Speaker raises the status of the MPs and takes care of their negative

face wants. The Speaker also uses conventional indirect utterances such as “*Hon Member, your time is up*” instead of directing ordering the MP to end or “*Hon Member, will you sit down?* (to mean sit down). The use of the modal verbs and hedges such as “*think*”, “*believe* and “*seem*” were frequent in the Speaker’s negative politeness utterances.

The data showed that the Majority MPs used 716 negative politeness strategies, which represents 33%, in the Hansard. The negative politeness strategies that were most frequently used by the Majority MPs are hedges, giving deference, giving apologies and questioning.

The Minority MPs used the negative politeness strategies more frequently as compared to the Majority MPs. The data indicated that 732 (33%) negative polite utterances were performed by the Minority MPs. The dominant occurring negative politeness strategies were; giving deference, questioning, hedging, being pessimistic and apologising. An example of negative politeness utterance by a Minority MP is as follows, “*Mr Speaker, with the greatest respect to your high office, in fact, if that is what my Hon Colleagues from the other side heard, I unreservedly withdraw that part of the statement*”. This utterance implies that the Minority MP admitted the impingement and withdrew the part of the statement that threatened the negative face want of the his/her Hon Colleague.

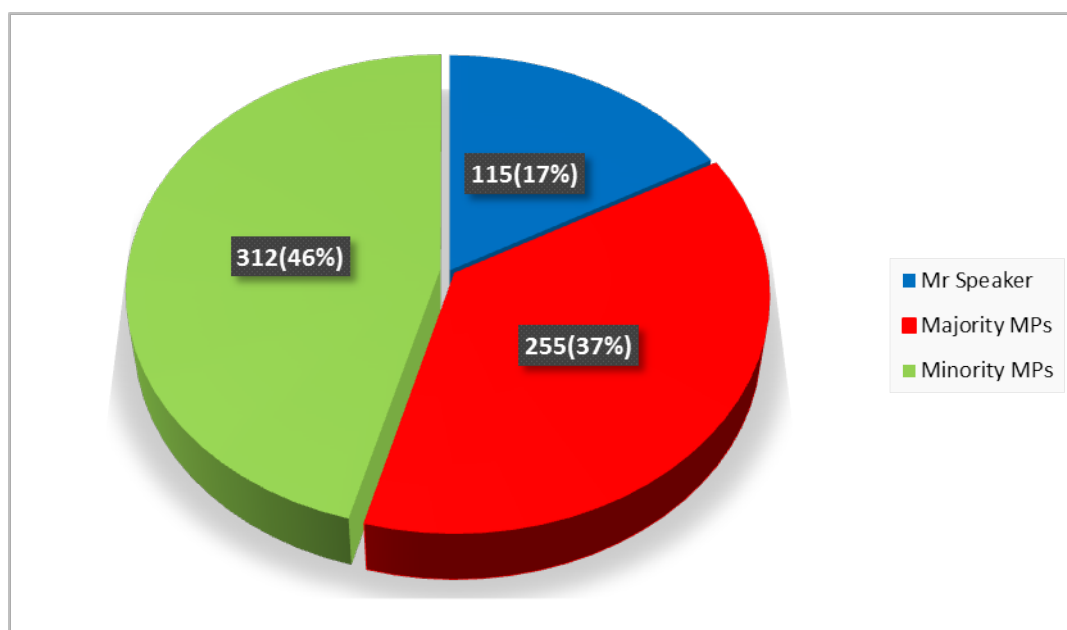


Figure 5. Frequency of Off-record Politeness Strategies

The diagram above show that the off-record politeness strategy is the least politeness strategy used by parliamentary actors in Ghana; Minority MPs uttered the highest number of off-record strategies; 312 (46%), followed by the Majority MPs; 255 (37%) and then the Speaker; 115 (17%). Brown and Levinson’s (1987) categorisation of politeness placed the off-record strategy as the highest form of

politeness. The off-record strategies include being vague, presupposing and being incomplete. Some examples of off-record politeness utterance were; “*Hon members, this is the floor of Parliament*”, “*Hon Member, please*” and “*Hon Member, in conclusion...*”. The statement, “*Hon members, this is the floor of Parliament*” is giving hint to the MPs to remind them to conduct themselves orderly and formerly as parliament is said to be a House of order and formality. The Speaker was being vague with the statement, “*Hon Member, please*”, as we do not know exactly what the Speaker intended to say. The Speaker, in the elliptical statement, “*Hon Member, in conclusion...*”, suggest to the MP to conclude while avoiding the direct imperative utterance. These off-record record strategies uttered by the Speaker appear as violation of Grice’s maxims of relevance and manner which state that participants should say only what is relevant and should not be ambiguous.

The data show also that the Majority MPs seem to use the off-record politeness strategies at a minimal level as compared to the other strategies. An example of off-record utterances by the Majority MPs are, “*Mr Speaker, if there is anything I would want to say, then there is this gospel song which says; ‘everything about you is great’*”. The statement suggests that everything about the government is good. The Majority MP thus, sought to agree with the programmes of the government.

3.3 How the Standing Orders Determine the Choice of a Politeness Strategy in the Parliamentary Hansard

The findings of this study show that a number of Standing Orders of the Parliament of Ghana influence how parliamentarians employ politeness strategies in parliamentary discourse. The extract below is Standing Order 86(3) states that:

Extract 9

Ministers shall be referred to by their Ministerial titles. The Deputy Speakers and the Deputy Ministers shall be referred to by the names of the offices held by them. All other Members shall be referred to as "Honourable" together with the name of their constituencies, that is, “the Honourable Member for”, where an Honourable Member has already been so described in a speech he may be further referred to as “My Honourable Friend’ or “The Honourable Gentleman, Lady or Member” (Standing Order 86(3), 2000)

The provision in Standing Order 86(3) above makes reference to the negative politeness strategy of giving deference. The honorific use of address forms such as, “Honourable”, “The Honourable Gentleman, Lady or Member”, which have become part of parliamentary language, confers respect and honour to the addressee. Hence, any MP who fails to use them is deemed to be out of order. The findings corroborate Treimane’s (2011) study which found that certain lexico-grammatical structures such as noun phrases, i.e., *The (right) Hon. Gentleman/Lady, My (right) Hon Friend, etc.*, which are used to signify politeness in the British House of Commons are prescribed in the rules of order, known as Erskine May’s Treatise on Law, Privileges, Proceedings and Usage of Parliament. Also, the

expressions, “My Honourable Friend” or “My Hon Colleague” are suggestive of positive politeness strategy of using in-group identity markers. The House of parliament is regarded as a community of practice and the sense of the we-feeling is highly regarded. Thus, Standing Order 86(3) influences parliamentarians to use both negative and positive politeness strategies during parliamentary debates. The following extract illustrates that parliamentarians are regulated by Standing Order 86(3) to be polite in their discourse”.

Extract 10

Minority MP: Mr Speaker, I believe that it is time that we reminded ourselves of the rules of debate of this House. Order 86 (3) says; and with your permission, I beg to read:

“Ministers shall be referred to by their Ministerial titles. The Deputy Speakers and the Deputy Ministers shall be referred to by the names of the offices held by them. All other Members shall be referred to as “Honourable” together with the name of their constituencies, that is, “the Hon Member for ...”, where an Honourable Member has already been so described in a speech he may be further referred to as “My Honourable Friend” or “The Honourable Gentleman, Lady or Member”. Mr Speaker, there is a good reason for this, so that we do not confuse names and also when we make comments, it does not appear as if we are alluding to people personally—it helps us (12th March, 2013, p. 1452).

This admonishment was necessitated by the fact that an MP previously referred to another MP as, “Akoto Osei” instead of “Hon Dr Akoto Osei”. The reference to the Standing Order seeks to remind the MP to give deference to a colleague MP. Though the rules dictate so, it is also perceived by the Ghanaian society that using honorifics to show deference, especially in a formal environment, is considered a polite behaviour.

Another Standing Order that influences the choice of politeness strategies by Members of Parliament is Standing Order 93(2). The Standing Order states that, “It shall be out of order to use offensive, abusive, insulting, blasphemous or unbecoming words or to impute improper motives to any other Member or to make personal allusions”. This Standing Order requires that MPs should be decorous and respectful to both the positive and negative face want of one another in their discourse. The show of decorum and respect for the face want of the addressee has been a practice in Ghanaian society. The extract below demonstrates that Standing Order 93(2) influences politeness usage in parliamentary debate,

Extract 11

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, we shall be guided by the rules and Standing Order 93 which deals with the content of our speeches, and we shall be guided by Standing Order 93 (2): “It shall be out of order to use offensive, abusive, insulting, blasphemous or unbecoming words or to impute improper

motives to any other Member or to make personal allusions”.

Hon Members, to say he is not a good liar is to say that he is a liar but not a good one—[Uproar.] I rule that the use of “not a good liar” is offensive and I direct the Hon Member to withdraw and apologise (23 November, 2017, pp. 3772-3774).

In contributing to the debate on the Budget statement, a Minority MP refers to the Hon Minister of Finance as not being a good liar. A majority MP rose on point of order and quoted Standing Order 93(2) to support his argument that the statement of the Minority MP presupposes that the Hon Finance Minister is a liar just that he is not a good one. The statement of the Minority MP therefore infringes on Standing Order 93(2). It is based on this argument that the Speaker quoted Standing Order 93(2) again and gave a ruling that, “*The use of ‘not a good liar’ is offensive and I direct the Hon Member to withdraw and apologise*”.

4. Discussion

This study sought to specifically investigate the politeness strategies employed in the parliamentary Hansard, determine the frequency of usage of the politeness strategies in the Hansard, and examine how the Standing Orders of Parliament determine the choice of a politeness strategy in the parliamentary Hansard. From data, it was obvious the parliamentarians in Ghana employ politeness strategies during parliamentary deliberations as evidenced in the Hansard. Politeness in parliamentary discourse is certainly an essential commodity for the growth of parliamentary democracy as politeness serves to enhance the face of parliamentary actors and gives them the opportunity to contribute to parliamentary business without fear of face threats. This resonates with Malima and Masindano’s (2018) assertion that there is need to employ politeness strategies to mitigate potential face threats during parliamentary deliberations.

Though the bald on-record strategy is the least desirable politeness strategy, the data indicate that all the parliamentary categories used the bald on-record strategies in varied forms. This is obviously so because parliament is characterised by confrontations, and parliamentary actors would have to use the bald on-record strategies to clear channel noise, establish control or get attention. The data showed that Mr Speaker is the highest user of the bald on-record politeness strategies with the Majority MPs following and then the Minority MPs. In the parliamentary setting, the Speaker presides over proceedings and he/she is expected to take a neutral position. The Speaker does not dread retribution from the MPs since the MPs are aware that the Speaker is neutral in all deliberations. The Speaker also uses the bald on-record strategies in circumstances where urgency and efficiency are much more required than face want. Where there is disorder in Parliament, the Speaker may suspend the face need of the MPs and resort to the use of bald on-record strategies such as, “*Order, Order*, or “*Listen, listen to me*”, in order to restore order. Again, where the threat to the MPs’ face is very small, as in making

offers, requests, suggestions that are obviously in the interest of the MPs, the Speaker may employ bald on-record strategies such as, “*have your seat*” or “*make your point*”. Again, the power relation between the Speaker and Members of Parliament does have an influence on the frequent use of the bald on-record strategies by the Speaker. The speaker is more powerful than the MPs and he determines who should speak at what time. He /she can sanction the MPs if they are out of order. There are also instances where the bald on-record politeness strategies are done with some special politeness markers such as “*please*” or “*kindly*”. For example, “*Hon Member, please continue*”, “*Hon Member, kindly take your seat*”, “*Hon Member, please continue*” or “*order, order, please*”. The use of such special politeness markers is meant to soften the command and lessen the threat to face. The Speaker utters these bald on-record strategies under certain relevant circumstances to enable him take care of the face wants of the MPs being addressed. In a circumstance where the Speaker must ensure that there is order in the House and also be mindful of the face want of the MPs, he uses these special politeness markers with the bald on record strategies to control the proceedings. For instance, the Speaker, under the circumstance of a heated debate, where there are interruptions, has to make use of the bald on-record strategy with the special politeness markers, “*order, order, please*”, to enable him bring the House to order.

The data collected showed that the MPs and the Speaker used positive politeness strategies to claim common grounds, demonstrate cooperation, seek agreement and to show camaraderie as in-group members. The positive politeness strategies were most frequently used by the Majority MPs. The Majority MPs, who are usually on the government side, employ positive politeness strategies to express their agreement and support to government policy decisions and programmes. The findings corroborate Ide’s (1989) argument that positive politeness is a solidarity politeness that emphasises common grounds. The implication for the frequent use of the positive politeness strategies is to show high solidarity, camaraderie and support for the programmes of the government. They therefore, employ positive politeness utterances in their contribution to communications from the President, Ministers and other Majority MPs. The Speaker uses positive politeness strategies to fulfil the want of the MP and also indicate that the Speaker shows concern for the MPs thereby, ensuring cooperation during parliamentary proceedings.

Negative politeness is considered as highest form of respect for interlocutors. Brown and Levinson (1987) state that negative politeness is the most elaborate and conventionalised set of linguistic strategies for FTA redress. The negative politeness strategies are employed when the speaker wants to give maximum respect or deference to the hearer. Thus, the abundant use of negative politeness strategies in the Hansard implies that parliamentary actors in Ghana give maximum respect to one another. On the frequency of usage of the politeness strategies, the data indicate that negative politeness is the most frequently occurring politeness strategy as observed in the Hansard. The negative politeness strategies that are frequently employed in varied proportions include the strategies of giving deference,

questioning, hedging, apologising and using rhetorical questions. The most dominant negative politeness strategy in parliamentary discourse is the use of the honorifics, “*Mr Speaker*” and “*Hon Member*”, “*my Hon Colleague or Friend*”. Almost every Member of Parliament precedes every statement with, “*Mr Speaker*” and this shows the deference the MPs have for the Speaker. The Speaker would most often refer to the MPs as “*Hon Members*” and the MPs refer to one another as “*Hon Member*”, “*my Hon Colleague or Friend*”. By the use of these honorifics, the Speaker raises the status of the MPs and takes care of their negative face wants. The speaker also uses conventional indirect utterances such as “*Hon Member, your time is up*” instead of directly ordering the MP to end or “*Hon will you sit down?* (to mean sit down). These questioning and hedging as negative politeness devices are prevalent in parliamentary discourse in Ghana. For instance, the hedging words such as, “*believe*”, “*think*”, “*seem*” and “*appear*” are employed in varied degrees. Again, the use of the modal past verb forms such as, “*could*”, and “*would*” are common in parliamentary discourses. The data show also that Mr Speaker is the most frequent user of the negative politeness strategies. This is to enable the Speaker, as a leader of the House, minimise imposition so that the MPs would feel that their freedoms are unhindered or unimpeded.

Findings of this study show that off-record politeness strategy is the least frequently occurring politeness strategy in the Hansard. In off-record strategy, the speaker avoids doing FTAs directly and rather employs indirect strategies of giving hints, using association clues, inviting conversational implicatures or being vague or ambiguous. The less frequent use of the off-record politeness implies that Ghanaian parliamentary actors use more direct explicit expressions and less indirect implicit forms of politeness. The findings of this study corroborate Sarfo’s (2016) findings that politeness in the parliament of Ghana is expressed by direct linguistic forms such as the modal past. Minority MPs uttered the highest number of off-record strategies, followed by the Majority MPs and then the Speaker. This implies that, as MPs in opposition, they are cautious not to do a face threat on-record for fear of retribution from the majority MPs and the Speaker, who is usually elected from the majority side.

The study revealed also that certain Standing Orders of the Parliament of Ghana determine the choice of politeness strategies. Standing Order 86(3) makes allusion to the negative politeness strategy of giving deference. The use of expressions such as, “Honourable”, “The Honourable Gentleman, Lady or Member”, “Mr Speaker”, which are considered as negative politeness utterances, are entrenched in the Standing Orders. This corroborates Treimane’s (2011) assertion that certain lexico-grammatical structures such as noun phrases, which are used to signify are prescribed in the rules of order. Also, the expressions, “My Honourable Friend” or “My Hon Colleague” are also suggestive of positive politeness strategy of using in-group identity markers. The House of parliament is regarded as a community of practice and the sense of the we-feeling is highly regarded. Thus, Standing Order 86(3) influences parliamentarians to use both negative and positive politeness strategies during parliamentary debates. Again, Standing Order 93(2) requires MPs not to use offensive, abusive, insulting,

blasphemous or unbecoming words or to impute improper motives to any other Member or to make personal allusions but to be decorous and respectful to one another. This provision alludes to both the positive and negative face want of Members of Parliament.

5. Conclusion

The political actors in the Parliament of Ghana, such as Members of Parliament and Mr Speaker used the politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson's (1987) in various forms and frequencies as observed in the parliamentary Hansard. These strategies include the bald on-record politeness strategy, the positive politeness strategy, the negative politeness strategy and the off-record politeness strategy. Further, negative politeness is the most frequently occurring politeness strategy in the parliamentary Hansard of Ghana, while the off-record strategy is the least occurring politeness strategy. The Speaker uses the highest frequency of negative politeness and bald on-record politeness strategies in the Hansard. This implies that the Speaker demonstrates the greatest level of respect to the other parliamentary actors and also shows power and control over parliamentary business. The study revealed that Majority Members of Parliament use more positive politeness strategies to imply higher solidarity, camaraderie and cooperation among themselves and government appointees. These conclusions confirm Yu's (2015) assertion that political roles, either as a government legislator or an opposition member, influences parliamentarians' use of politeness strategies.

The study further concludes that the Standing Orders of the Parliament of Ghana require parliamentarians to employ politeness in their discourse and that parliamentarians' use of politeness strategies is guided and influenced by the Standing Orders. Although Watts (2003) refers to honorifics such as, "Mr Speaker", "Honourable", "The Honourable Gentleman, Lady or Member" as politic language, the intent and purpose of the Standing Orders lend credence to the use of politeness strategies. This conclusion corroborates David et al. (2009) who indicated that Standing Orders serve as face savers, manage discourse, and maintain respect and integrity in parliamentary discourse.

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The Hansard Department, Parliament of Ghana

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