Impoliteness in Readers' Comments on the Nigerian 2023 Presidential Election Results in Linda Ikeji's Blog

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Abstract
New media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, X (Twitter), and online blogs, now give billions of people easy access to air their views through commenting features. However, these platforms' comment sections have become a breeding ground for incivility, including name-calling, personal attacks, and other uncomplimentary remarks. This paper examines impoliteness strategies employed in the comments section of Linda Ikeji's Blog following the announcement of the Nigerian 2023 presidential election results. Drawing on Culpeper's (1996, 2005) impoliteness theory, the paper analyses 82 readers' comments using Herring's (2004) Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis approach to examine prevalent strategies and their implications for computer-mediated discourse analysis. The findings reveal a predominance of bald-on-record impoliteness, characterized by direct and explicit verbal attacks, with a high level of emotional invective and polarization among participants. These findings underscore the challenges of maintaining civility in the discussions of contentious political events and contribute to a broader understanding of impoliteness in computer-mediated communication.
Keywords: Impoliteness Strategies, Linda Ikeji's Blog, social media, Nigerian 2023 presidential election, computer-mediated discourse.

Introduction
The Federal Republic of Nigeria was a colony of Britain until 1st October, 1960. For the first six years of post-independence, Nigeria practised a feeble parliamentary system of government. A series of crises culminated in the first *coup d'etat*, which heralded a long period of military rule until 1999, punctuated only by one four-year period of Federal civilian leadership and another three months during which an interim national government was in power. Since 1999, Nigeria has experienced an unbroken chain of civilian rule using a presidential system modelled after the US. Every four years since, Federal presidential elections have been conducted; the most recent occurred on February 25, 2023.

The eventual declaration of the election's winner and subsequent 'breaking news' reports that followed triggered various reactions among Nigerians, several of whom took to social media and other Internet communication media to air their views.

The eponymous Linda Ikeji's Blog, founded in 2006, is one of Nigeria's most popular entertainment and breaking news blogs. It was Nigeria's 31st most visited mass media website as of April 2024, with over 3 million visits (Semrush, 2024). The blog also has a comment section feature that allows readers to share their thoughts and opinions in response to blog posts. This often sparks engaging discussions and debates among the readers, with a high volume of traffic recorded. Overall, the comments section adds an extra layer of community engagement to the blog and allows readers to interact with the content and each other.

Despite these positive benefits, comment sections on social media and online blogs have been observed to be breeding grounds for incivility as users frequently engage in name-calling, personal attacks, etc. According to Taiwo, Akinwotu, and Kpolugbo (2021), such online discussions are often characterised by linguistic rudeness and impolite behaviour because of the polarised nature of opinions and attitudes presented by readers. Such behaviour includes uncomplimentary remarks, rumours, and harassment of interactants and other individuals directly or indirectly connected with the discussion. Moreover, Chiluwa (2012) states that new media platforms, such as blogs, have allowed people to air their *views.* This is corroborated by Onwubiko's (2020) observation that social media will enable individuals to communicate their feelings without minding whose horse is gored.   In addition, attitudes of impoliteness without care for consequences are particularly rife because of new media platforms' anonymity.

Crystal (2007) notably asserts that new *media,* which come from Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, etc., have contributed to a new mode of interaction and language usage. The ability to comment on topical issues, as expected, should promote readers' freedom to air their views on social issues. However, the harmful impact of uncivil public expression is a source of grave concern. This study aims to examine impoliteness in the computer-mediated discussion of political issues in Nigeria through an online platform, with the view of accounting for the impolite behaviour of participants and the strategies employed in realising them. In particular, the study investigates readers' comments on a post via Linda Ikeji's Blog titled 'Breaking! INEC declares APC's Bola Tinubu winner of 2023 Presidential Election', published on March 1, 2023 at 3:16 AM (local time).

At the time this study was conducted, eighty-two comments have been made on post. A content analysis was conducted to identify patterns of impoliteness in the messages using Culpeper's Impoliteness Theory (1996, 2005). To this end, the specific research questions answered in the study are: what features of impoliteness are used by the participants that constitute misuse of language among the participants?

Empirical Review

Quite a number of articles have been written about readers' comments on social media platforms, especially in the Nigerian context. Taiwo, Akinwotu, and Kpolugbo (2021) considered linguistic impoliteness and interpersonal positioning in online political forums, obtaining data from two Nigerian political discussion sites, Nairaland Forum and Gistmania. The study revealed that bald-on-record and negative impoliteness were predominant in the discussions and concluded that impoliteness prospers in online political debates because of the context, which gives participants the freedom to employ invective language.

Ajayi and Bamgbose's (2019) study considered ideological impoliteness strategies in online ethnic-religious conflict among Nigerians. Examining online comments and reactions to four recent national ethnic (political) and religious issues from three online platforms, Sahara Reporters, Vanguard Newspaper and Nairaland, it discovered different forms of impoliteness strategies that have permeated the discourse of online ethno-religious conflict among Nigerians and agreed the development portends a bad omen for the continued peace and unity in the country.

Onwubiko (2020) examined impoliteness strategies in Nigerian Facebook posts concerning the Supreme Court ruling in the 2019 Imo State governorship election. The study identified four strategies of impoliteness: bald-on-record, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness / sarcasm, and mock politeness. Another study on impoliteness strategies in Nigerian Facebook posts is Ajayi (2019), which focuses on electorates in the 2019 presidential election. The analysis revealed different impoliteness strategies, including name-calling and taboo words.

Beyond elections, Chiluwa's (2012) paper on social media networks and the discourse of resistance involved a critical sociolinguistic analysis of Biafra online discourse focusing on how Social Media Networks (SMN) have been used in recent times to champion social protests and resistance against oppression and political power abuse using virtual community identity, language variation and social interaction. In addition, although not on social media discourse, Aremu (2016) examined Western Nigerian politicians' use of invective songs. The research discovered the use of impolite/belligerent utterances, indirect speech acts, political confrontation behaviour, lexical harmony, and code-mixing.

Theoretical Framework

This study follows computer-mediated discourse analysis principles in the tradition of Herring (2004), who focuses on the empirical aspects of studying the patterns and choices made in computer-mediated communication, which are also critical assumptions made in traditional linguistic (non-computer-mediated) discourse analysis. This CMDA approach includes an additional assumption as to how the technological features of communication systems shape computer-mediated discourse. For instance, on a structural level, character limits on X (formerly Twitter) have been shown to correspond to greater use of informal language and more textisms, according to Boot et al. (2019), who also showed that the 2017 increase in character limits on Twitter led to the rise in the use of articles, conjunctions, and prepositions.

Regardless of the communication system, one must note that technology does not influence discourse deterministically; it can guide or constrain communication but does not strictly determine it (Herring, 2005). Therefore, while, according to Sankaram and Schober (2015), the ability to comment on news content on blogs leads interactive readers to demonstrate better comprehension of the text than noninteractive readers, more is needed to guarantee that interactions would be constructive. This has been the subject of several studies on (im)politeness strategies. Nevertheless, understanding the technological context remains crucial for effectively analysing online discourse. To this end, the technological context for this study is the comments section of a political post via Linda Ikeji's Blog (LIB).

Aligning with Herring's (2004) approach to computer-mediated discourse analysis (CMDA), the goals of the current study do not include theorising broadly about the nature of impoliteness in computer-mediated discourse or, specifically, news blogs. Instead, it is a descriptive, qualitative study that identifies different strategies and mechanisms of impoliteness employed in this specific instance of computer-mediated communication. Among the four domains (structure, meaning, interaction and social behaviour) of language to which CMDA applies, according to Herring (2004), this study focuses on the level of meaning, specifically on the pragmatic features of impoliteness, to shed light on the various ways in which people

communicate their intentions and negotiate social relationships in online environments. The data were content analysed and subjected to pragmatic analysis based on Culpeper's Impoliteness Theory.

In addition, the three levels of interpretation proposed by Herring (2004) provide a comprehensive framework for analysing the study results. By considering the data, the research question, and the broader implications of the findings (beyond the research question), the study aims to contribute to understanding impoliteness in computer-mediated communication and its significance in shaping online interactions.

Impoliteness Strategies

According to Locher and Bousfield (2008), impoliteness is a face-aggravating behaviour in a particular context. For Culpepper (2005), impoliteness constitutes the communication of intentionally gratuitous and conflictive verbal face-threatening acts which are purposefully delivered, unmitigated and/or (ii) with deliberate aggression. His definition accommodates both the speaker's and the hearer's perceptions of intention by highlighting the fact that impoliteness comes about when: the speaker communicates face-attack intentionally, the hearer perceives behaviour as intentionally face-attacking, or a combination of *both*.

However, for Culpeper (2011), full intentionality is not a necessary condition. That is, not all instances of impoliteness are intentional because sometimes the producer of impoliteness is not aware of the impoliteness effects they are causing, and being aware is a vital part of the notion of intentionality (Malle and Krobe, 1997). Nevertheless, the act is considered impolite because the producer is blamed for not predicting these effects (see Ferguson and Rule, 1983). This occurs more in close relationships where one person is likely to think one should have known better. Impoliteness is a negative attitude towards specific behaviour occurring in particular contexts. It is sustained by expectations, desires and beliefs about social organisation, particularly how others moderate one person's or a group's identities in interactions.

This study, thus, employs Culpeper's impoliteness Theory (1996, 2005), with the strategies being: (a) Bald-on-record (direct and explicit impoliteness) – a situation where the speaker's intention to offend or be rude is openly expressed. This occurs via face attack (direct, explicit verbal attacks on the recipient's face) and may include insults, ridicule, and offensive language to demean or undermine the recipient's self-worth. It also provides for derogatory language such as slurs, profanity, derogatory terms, etc. (b) Positive impoliteness which refers to behaviour or language that aims to demonstrate solidarity with the listener in a way that comes across as insincere or patronising. The strategy is to damage the addresses' positive face wants. (c) Negative Impoliteness, which is designed to minimise/reduce to the lowest degree imposition on the listener, often through hedging, indirection or deference, but can still convey a sense of impoliteness. This strategy is designed to damage the addressee's negative face wants. (d) Off Record (Sarcasm and Irony) – this is characterised by subtle, indirect or ambiguous forms of impoliteness, the speaker hints at negative feelings without explicitly stating them through innuendo, sarcasm, irony or implication. (e) Mock Impoliteness which is seen as a playful or humorous forms of impoliteness, the intention is not to cause genuine offence but to engage in light-hearted teasing or banter. Lastly, (f) Withholding politeness,

characterised by deliberate absence of politeness strategies such as greetings, expressions of gratitude or other conventional politeness markers, which can be interpreted as impolite.

Research Methodology
The data for the study comes from 82 comments made between 1st March and 6th August 2023 on Linda Ikeji's Blog post reporting INEC's declaration of the 2023 Nigerian presidential election winner. The significance of this event occasioned its selection. This descriptive study employs a qualitative method to describe the impoliteness strategies deployed by interactants/commentators on Linda Ikeji's Blog's post on INEC's declaration of the winner of the 2023 Presidential Election. The researcher selected 82 comments on the post between 1st March and 6th August 2023. This is due to their relevance to the topic of focus. The data were content analysed and subjected to descriptive and pragmatic analysis using Culpepper's Impoliteness Theory.

Data Presentation and Analysis
In addressing the research questions, the analysis identified the types of impoliteness used by the commenters based on Culpeper's theory. These include bald-on-record impoliteness, off-record strategies (sarcasm and irony), negative impoliteness, positive impoliteness, and withholding politeness. Additionally, the analysis revealed instances of misuse of language, such as derogatory terms, and the manipulation of expressions for insulting purposes and code-switching.

Table 1

Type of Impoliteness	Occurrences	Percent
Bald-on-record	42	51.2%
Withholding politeness	17	20.7%
Off Record	11	13.4%
Negative	5	6.1%
Positive	1	1.2%
Mock	–	–
No Impoliteness:	6	7.3%
Total	**82**	**100.0%**

Table 1 shows the distribution of impoliteness types in the data. The bald-on-record strategy was the most frequently used, accounting for 42 of the 82 analysed comments. The extensive use of the bald-on-record strategy suggests a high emotional investment and polarisation among

the participants regarding the election outcome. The comments were characterised by a lack of restraint and a willingness to engage in overt forms of impoliteness, reflecting the intensity of the participants' feelings and the perceived high stakes of the election. Examples of bald-on-record impoliteness include comments referring to Tinubu as an "imbecile", alleging "clear daylight robbery", and making derogatory references to some supporters as "slavery Atikulated bleets". These comments demonstrate a disregard for politeness norms and a willingness to engage in direct face-threatening acts, reflecting the participants' strong emotional investment in the election outcome.

Withholding politeness, the deliberate absence of politeness strategies such as greetings, expressions of gratitude, or other conventional politeness markers, was the second most frequently employed strategy, making up 20.7% of the comments analysed. This strategy can be interpreted as a form of passive-aggressive behaviour, where the speaker indirectly conveys their negative attitude or disapproval by intentionally omitting expected politeness markers. The analysis also identified the use of off-record strategies, such as sarcasm, irony, and indirect impoliteness, which accounted for 11 comments. Off-record strategies may reflect an attempt to avoid confrontation or mitigate the potential consequences of explicit impoliteness. However, these strategies still contribute to an atmosphere of incivility and can be perceived as face-threatening by the targets. Examples included comments suggesting adverse outcomes through rhetorical questions (Comment 18) and sarcastic prayers for the president-elect's downfall (Comment 33).

Negative impoliteness strategies, which minimise impositions on the addressee through hedging, indirection, or deference while conveying a sense of impoliteness, were less prevalent, with only five instances identified. An example was Comment 1, which minimised the effect of a congratulatory message by suggesting not to "fight" the outcome. The analysis only revealed one instance of positive impoliteness.

Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings The discussion of findings is structured around the vital impoliteness strategies identified in the analysis. By synthesising the data and exploring the nuances of these strategies, this section sheds light on how participants navigate (im)politeness in computer-mediated discourse, employing various linguistic and communicative techniques to convey their impolite intentions and negotiate social relationships in the virtual environment.

Bald-on-record
Bald-on-record impoliteness involves direct, explicit, and unmitigated face-threatening acts, such as insults, ridicule, and offensive language aimed at demeaning or undermining the target's self-worth or public image. This form of impoliteness is the most prevalent in the data, accounting for more than half of the comments analysed. The extensive use of this strategy suggests a high level of emotional intensity and polarisation among the participants regarding the outcome of the 2023 Nigerian presidential election. The comments were characterised by a complete disregard for politeness norms and a willingness to engage in overt forms of impoliteness, reflecting the perceived high stakes of the election and the depth of the participants' convictions.

Bald-on-record impoliteness, which are direct, unmitigated face-threatening acts, dominates the dataset, accounting for more than half of analyzed comments. This prevalence is theoretically significant: it suggests that CMC environments, particularly those lacking identity verification, enable verbal aggression that would invoke immediate social sanctions in face-to-face contexts. The lack of physical co-presence, the attenuation of social accountability, and the absence of nonverbal feedback create conditions for toxic disinhibition, where participants engage in behaviour they would suppress in embodied interaction.

The bald-on-record examples cluster around four principal targets such as the victorious candidate, his supporters, the nation generally, and fellow commenters. However, they share common features: they eschew hedging, employ culturally resonant insults, and frequently invoke ethnic or religious identity as grounds for delegitimization. The following analysis examines each target category, identifying the specific CMC affordances that enable these explicit face-threats.

1. Against the Victorious Candidate: Cognitive Incapacity and Electoral Fraud

Core Pattern: Comments targeting Tinubu overwhelmingly focus on mental incapacity (dementia, slurred speech, memory impairment) and electoral illegitimacy (theft, fraud, corruption). This dual delegitimization—attacking both personal competence and procedural legitimacy—appears in examples (1), (2), (3), (4), (6), and (7).

Example	Primary Insult	CMC-Specific Element	Cultural Context
(1)	"imbecile"	Direct naming without mitigation	Archaic insult resurrected for emphasis
(2)	"corruption continue ooo"	Nigerian English emphatic "ooo"	Historical reference to past corruption
(3)	"clear daylight robbery...too large much wickedness"	Ungrammatical intensification; "haaa" interjection	Appeals to divine judgment
(4)	"bulabulablu"	Onomatopoetic mockery impossible in formal text	Viral meme from campaign moment
(6)	"When did last remember where he kept his Certificate?"	Rhetorical sarcasm	Callback to certificate controversy
(7)	"dementia-ridden greedy old fool"	Compound insult string	Ethnic conspiracy theory (Fulani cabal)

Example (1) demonstrates how CMC enables rehabilitation of archaic insults. "Imbecile," a 16th-century term that declined in usage, reappears here precisely because digital writing lacks the immediate social feedback that would mark it as inappropriate. The commenter can deploy this term without seeing the target's reaction or facing immediate contradiction from co-present others.

Example (4) reveals a distinctly CMC phenomenon: the viral meme as insult resource. "Bulabulablu" originated as mockery of Tinubu's perceived speech impairment during a televised campaign event, then circulated digitally as shorthand ridicule. The commenter assumes audience familiarity with this intertextual reference—an assumption reasonable only in a CMC context where viral content creates shared cultural knowledge across dispersed participants.

Example (7) is particularly sophisticated in its exploitation of ethnic anxiety. By congratulating Shettima instead of Tinubu and invoking the "Fulani cabal," the commenter activates historical fears about ethnic domination in Nigerian politics. The error (Shettima is Kanuri, not Fulani) is less significant than the rhetorical effect: framing Tinubu as a disposable figurehead. This ethnic-coded attack would be more socially risky in face-to-face contexts but circulates freely in CMC environments where identity is partially obscured.

(1)

Anonymous about 1 year ago

They I have succeeded in forcing this imbecile on us

| Like this! 12 | Dislike this! 48 | Reply |

(2)

Anonymous about 1 year ago

He will use the first four years to recover all the money he used to rig the election, no body should lament ooo

| Like this! 12 | Dislike this! 37 | Reply |

(3)

Anonymous about 1 year ago

How in on earth will Nigeria ever escape corruption? Clear day light robbery, everyone knows this. Is it this same jagaban that will conduct electrons in another 4 years. Haaaaa.....Yoruba runo o.....God have mercy! This is too large much wickedness

| Like this! 2 | Dislike this! 14 | Reply |

(4)

Anonymous about 1 year ago

Rubbish! We'll soon hear another bulabulablu. Somehow, it is OK he won so when he embarrasses Nigeria everywhere all those who supported him will learn their lessons.

| Like this! 17 | Dislike this! 69 | Reply |

(5)

Anonymous about 1 year ago

The king of Yahoo Yahoo in Nigeria has rigged the election. Nigerians wake up. Tinubu will die there. God has not chosen him. By force he entered, by force he will die there. God is greater than man. Watch out

[Like this! 10] [Dislike this! 18] [Reply]

(6)

Leading about 1 year ago

How can tunubu that have dementia rule Nigeria?

[Like this! 19] [Dislike this! 9] [Reply]

(7)

Anonymous about 1 year ago

Congratulations Shettima, the real president elect. Watch as the fulani cabal sideline this dementia ridden greedy old fool. He will be lucky if be lives to see the end of his first tenure.

[Like this! 2] [Dislike this! 1] [Reply]

The author gives a classic example of bald-on-record impoliteness in *(1)*. Their intention to offend or be rude is openly expressed without reservation. The word 'imbecile' is a common derogatory term to indicate that one is silly, stupid, or showing extreme mental incapacity. It originated in the 16th century from the Latin 'imbecillus', which means weak or feeble (*Online Etymology Dictionary*, 2024). It was popular during the 19th century but has since declined in use. In the build-up to the elections, many Nigerians had questioned Tinubu's mental acuity because of his advanced age (Obijiofor, 2022). However, a comment like this takes that sentiment further into derogatoriness. Also, using "they" is a distancing strategy to specify that Tinubu did not win the election but was instead forced upon Nigerians. Another attack against the election's winner can be seen in *(2)*, which alleges continued corrupt practices based on past actions. The use of 'ooo' in "nobody should lament oo" is a feature of Nigerian English that emphasises the prior statement. A similar sentiment is shared by the author of *(3)*, who considers that Tinubu won a 'clear daylight robbery', an allegation of deception, disapproval, and cheating throughout the process. The commenter also considers Tinubu's victory as "too large much wickedness". The ungrammatical juxtaposition of 'large' and 'much' indicates the magnificent nature of the alleged wickedness. They further call on God to 'have mercy'. The exclamation "haaa" further conveys the author's grave sense of pain, reinforcing the rhetorical question that began the comment, "How on earth will Nigeria ever escape corruption?"

2. Against the Victor's Supporters

Core Pattern: Comments targeting Tinubu supporters (examples 8, 9, 10, 11) shift from personal attack to prophesied collective suffering, often using first-person plural pronouns to construct ingroup/outgroup boundaries ("we" versus "you"). This category reveals how impoliteness in CMC serves audience performance rather than interpersonal communication.

(8)

Anonymous about 1 year ago

Funny thing we'll be here looking at many of you rejoicing now when hunger and boko haram will be dealing with you. Hunger knows no tribe or religion. We're watching from outside Nigeria.

Like this! 7   Dislike this! 50   Reply

(9)

Anonymous about 1 year ago

AS E DEY PAIN DEM, E DEY SWEET US.

Like this! 0   Dislike this! 0   Reply

(10)

Anonymous about 1 year ago

Sad day for Igbo Biafra kewnu rants and their salvery Atikulated bleets. Lol

Like this! 17   Dislike this! 3   Reply

(11)

Anonymous about 1 year ago

All of you cheering for this stolen mandate,you should brace yourself and be ready.You will look back at the days of Buhari and call it golden times by the time this new administration is done with you all.Voting for a candidate because he speaks the same language as you will never get us any ever.Go and ask the people in the north east has the enjoyed Buharis admin.And BTW,you might want to add cassava and agbado to your menu,it may be the only food items on your menu.

Example (8) epitomizes this pattern: "We'll be here looking at many of you when hunger and boko (haram) enter una head." The pronoun structure ("we" versus "una" [Pidgin: you plural]) constructs the commenter as an external observer, physically distant (residing abroad) and therefore immune to the consequences predicted for domestic supporters. This physical-

geographical distance is explicitly thematized, suggesting that CMC enables a specific kind of impoliteness: the expatriate critique that would be difficult to voice without revealing one's absence from the national community.

Example (9) introduces intertextuality as an impoliteness mechanism: "E they pain them, e dey sweet us ooo." This phrase, originating in political satire by Rivers State governor Wike and popularized through hip-hop, functions as cultural citation. The commenter assumes that readers will recognize the allusion and understand its connotation—mockery that leverages shared cultural knowledge. The CMC environment makes this intertextual strategy viable because participants can assume a level of shared media consumption impossible in heterogeneous face-to-face gatherings.

Example (10) escalates to ethnic attack: "sad day for Igbo Biafra kwenu rants and their slavery Atikulated bleets." The comment layers multiple insults—"Igbo Biafra kwenu" invokes the secessionist civil war (1967-70) to delegitimize Igbo political participation; "Atikulated" mocks supporters of rival candidate Atiku; "bleets" animalizes them as goats. This compound ethnic and political insult exploits CMC's relative anonymity: publicly voicing such sentiments in mixed-ethnicity face-to-face settings would risk immediate confrontation.

Example (11) invokes future poverty: "cassava and corn (agbado) go be una menu." This returns to the "agbado" motif established in example (27), demonstrating how digital political discourse creates its own symbolic lexicon. "Agbado" (corn), initially an agricultural policy reference, became a viral signifier for poverty and incompetence. The commenter can assume this cultural knowledge because CMC political discussion creates echo chambers where such meanings are reinforced through repetition.

3. Against Nigeria/Nigerians in General

Core Pattern: Examples (12), (13), (14), (15), (16), (17) express impoliteness directed not at individuals but at the nation-state itself or its electoral institutions. This category is theoretically significant: it shows impoliteness transcending interpersonal face-threat to become political critique, enabled by CMC's capacity for public broadcasting rather than dyadic communication.

Example	Core Expression	Face-Threat Mechanism	CMC Affordance Exploited
(12)	"Fulani jihad...just watch!"	Apocalyptic prophecy	Anonymity enables inflammatory ethnic claim
(13)	"RIP Nigeria"	Metaphorical death certificate	Brevity enabled by digital convention (RIP)
(14)	"It is finished"	Biblical death allusion	Cultural literacy assumption
(15)	"9ja don enter cruise ship aje"	Metaphorical disaster	Code-switching (Nigerian Pidgin + Yoruba)
(16)	"Mahmood Yakubu go commit suicide"	Death command to INEC chairman	Caps lock as shouting; public call for suicide
(17)	"useless Mahmood...disgrace... erikparikpa!!!"	Compound insult string	Punctuation as emotional intensity

Examples (13) and (14) demonstrate how digital brevity and religious allusion converge. "RIP Nigeria" borrows the digital convention of mourning (Rest In Peace) to declare national death in three words—a compression impossible without shared digital literacy. Example (14) extends this through biblical allusion ("It is finished"—Jesus's final words), assuming readers will recognize the reference and understand its implication: Nigeria's metaphorical crucifixion. Example (16) crosses into territory that would be legally actionable in many jurisdictions: a public call for suicide directed at a named official. The caps-lock shouting ("CHAIRMAN OF THE INDEPENDENT NATIONAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION") combined with the imperative "go commit suicide" represents impoliteness as incitement. That this circulates without apparent consequence suggests CMC platforms either lack enforcement mechanisms or tolerate extreme political speech that would be suppressed in state-controlled media.

Example (17) includes an untranslatable term—"erikparikpa"—whose meaning is unclear but whose aggressive intent is signaled through context and punctuation. This highlights a CMC-specific phenomenon: the invention of insults whose force derives not from semantic content but from performative context. The commenter creates impoliteness through form (repeated exclamation marks, compound insults, novel coinage) rather than relying solely on conventional insult terms.

(12)

Anonymous about 1 year ago

Fulani will do Jihad on you all . Just watch!

Like this! 1   Dislike this! 0   Reply

(13)

Anonymous about 1 year ago

Rest in Peace Nigeria!

Like this! 35   Dislike this! 74   Reply

(14)

Anonymous about 1 year ago

It is finished

Like this! 0   Dislike this! 0   Reply

(15)

Anonymous about 1 year ago

9JA UNA DON ENTER THE BIGGEST CRUISE SHIP AJE'

Like this! 5   Dislike this! 38   Reply

(16)

> **Anonymous** about 1 year ago
>
> For the first time, I am ashamed of this country call Nigeria! What an insult to our faces. Its been designed that people would go to court to meet their selected judges for a second round of mental abuse and betrayal. Arrogant Mahmoood, better you go commit suicide. Your life even with all the bribe, will never be the same.
>
> Like this! 14   Dislike this! 12   Reply

(17)

> **Anonymous** about 1 year ago
>
> Mahmood the fool, Your generations will suffer dieases and evil palgue. Every single one who had hand in this will suffer same fate. Erikparikpa!!!
>
> Like this! 26   Dislike this! 19   Reply

4. Against Other Commenters

Core Pattern: Examples (18), (19), (20), (21) reveal how bald-on-record impoliteness escalates through threaded interaction, with each turn raising the stakes of face-threat. This is the category most clearly enabled by CMC architecture: the visible thread structure incentivizes performative aggression witnessed by an audience.

(18)

> **Anonymous** about 1 year ago
>
> Rest in Peace Nigeria!
>
> Like this! 35   Dislike this! 74   Reply
>
> > **Bitter truth** about 1 year ago
> >
> > Thank God say I don japa
> >
> > Like this! 10   Dislike this! 37   Reply
> >
> > **Anonymous** about 1 year ago
> >
> > RIP to your family
> >
> > Like this! 1   Dislike this! 5   Reply

(19)

Anonymous about 1 year ago

This is a very sad day in Nigeria. God is alive and May 29th is a long way ahead. Remember what happened to Abacha.

Like this! 28   Dislike this! 15   Reply

> **Anonymous** about 1 year ago
>
> Any bad thought will surely happened to you, your family, your generation and the entire ibos including Biafras.
>
> Like this! 57   Dislike this! 20   Reply

> **Eric** about 1 year ago
>
> May what you wish Tinubu befall you a million times. Animal.
>
> Like this! 64   Dislike this! 13   Reply

(20)

Anonymous about 1 year ago

The best election in Nigeria so far that was able to reduced the normal pattern of over voting and thanks to BIVAS many over voting elections were cancelled this time around. Congratulations to Jagaban.

Like this! 10   Dislike this! 11   Reply

> **Anonymous** about 1 year ago
>
> Dear Elenu wogo wogo Keep drooling from two sides of your mouth. You have a task to protect your president. His vice and his backers are brutal men. While you stay online and retch ensure you WATCH and pray
>
> Like this! 0   Dislike this! 3   Reply

(21)

Anonymous about 1 year ago

All of you cheering for this stolen mandate,you should brace yourself and be ready.You will look back at the days of Buhari and call it golden times by the time this new administration is done with you all.Voting for a candidate because he speaks the same language as you will never get us any ever.Go and ask the people in the north east has the enjoyed Buharis admin.And BTW,you might want to add cassava and agbado to your menu,it may be the only food items on your menu.

Like this! 11   Dislike this! 10   Reply

> **Anonymous** about 1 year ago
>
> Hahahahahah. Mumu Igbos, want to teach Yorubas what is good or not good for us. Mumu Igbos.
>
> Like this! 2   Dislike this! 3   Reply

Within the comments section, interactants also exhibited bald-on record impoliteness in personal attacks towards one another. For instance, the third comment in *(18)* is a direct attack to the first, insulting not just the person who posted the comment but also to their family by wishing their death. Similarly, the second comment in *(19)* is in direct response to the preceding one. It is emotionally charged as the commenter places a curse upon the person they are replying. Another comment in response to the latter is the third in the same view, a direct insult featuring the use of 'animal'. Saying 'may what you wish Tinubu befall you a million times' represents an assumption of bad intention on the part of the previous commenter. Also, in *(20)*, a response to the preceding commenter, 'elenu wogo wogo' is a statement of abuse in Yoruba language. It roughly translates 'one who has a crooked mouth'. This connects with the next sentence, 'keep drooling from two sides of your mouth'. The author is directly insulting another commenter who praised the conduct of the election. Meanwhile, the person who made the second *(21)*, a self-claimed Yoruba, assumes that the person who made comment 58 is Igbo, which indicates the ethnically-charged nature of the past elections and makes a generalisation of igbo as 'mumu', a Yoruba word that means 'fool'. Also the lengthy 'haha' form suggests derisive laughter.

The prevalence of bald-on-record impoliteness across all target categories suggests that CMC environments fundamentally alter the calculus of face-threat. When immediate social sanctions are removed, when identity can be partially obscured, and when audience performance replaces dyadic communication, participants engage in explicit verbal aggression that would be suppressed in face-to-face political discourse. This is not simply a matter of degree (more impoliteness online than offline) but of kind: the impoliteness enabled by CMC exploits platform affordances—threading, anonymity, asynchronicity, typographic emphasis—in ways materially unavailable to non-digital communication.

Off Record Strategy

Off-record impoliteness strategies in the data exploit cultural knowledge, religious discourse, and sarcasm to convey face-threat without explicit aggression. These strategies are particularly revealing of CMC's affordances because they depend on shared interpretive frameworks that participants can assume exist within their digital community but might not exist in heterogeneous face-to-face settings. Where bald-on-record impoliteness relies on explicitness, off-record strategies rely on implicature—requiring readers to infer hostile intent from ostensibly neutral or even positive expressions.

The data reveal three primary sub-strategies: weaponized prayer (examples 22, 25, 26, 28), coded language and sarcasm (examples 23, 24, 29), and apocalyptic prophecy (examples 25, 27). Each sub-strategy demonstrates how CMC enables ambiguity: the commenter can maintain plausible deniability ("I was just praying") while the in-group audience understands the hostile intent. This ambiguity is strategic, exploiting both religious convention and digital platform norms that privilege free expression.

1. Weaponized Prayer: Religious Discourse as Veiled Curse

Core Pattern: Prayers in Nigerian religious culture conventionally invoke divine blessing; in the data, however, prayers function as curses disguised through religious formulae. This pattern appears most clearly in examples (22), (25), (26), and (28), where commenters frame face-threats as supplications to divine authority.

Example (22) provides the clearest illustration.

(22)

Anonymous about 1 year ago

Akanni, Omo 'olodode, ASIWAJU, e ku o ri re'. The Lord God almighty will put all your enemies permanently under your feet, in the matchless name of JESUS. Amen.

Like this! 50   Dislike this! 35   Reply

At surface level, this reads as blessing: may God defeat your enemies. But the prayer's audience includes Tinubu's opponents, who are thereby cast as "enemies" who should be "permanently under your feet"—a metaphor of domination and subjugation. The prayer thus performs a double function: it blesses the in-group (Tinubu supporters) while cursing the out-group (his opponents).

The CMC-specific elements are crucial:

i) **Caps lock on "JESUS"**: This typographic emphasis transforms a standard religious formula into aggressive assertion, suggesting that divine authority is being invoked against enemies with particular force.

ii) **Excessive punctuation ("Amen!!!")**: Three exclamation marks intensify what would normally be a solemn closing, signaling aggression rather than piety.

iii) **Code-switching**: The addition of Yoruba eulogy ("Ẹ Kú Orire, Ẹ Kú Iṣẹgun, Asiwaju") explicitly marks this as ethno-religious in-group communication, excluding non-Yoruba readers from full participation.

(23)

Anonymous about 1 year ago

This is a very sad day in Nigeria. God is alive and May 29th is a long way ahead.Remember what happened to Abacha.

Like this! 28   Dislike this! 15   Reply

(24)

Anonymous about 1 year ago

For anyone that say this was free and fair...May your children and grandchildren exoeri3nce same "free and fair" in every area of their lives. Amen!

Like this! 6   Dislike this! 12   Reply

Example (23) extends this pattern through temporal threat. This ostensible reminder that the inauguration date is distant becomes a veiled threat when paired with "God is alive" (implying divine intervention might prevent the inauguration) and the reference to Abacha, a military dictator who died in office in 1998. The prayer's implicature: Tinubu might die before inauguration, as Abacha did. The CMC environment enables this ambiguity—the commenter can claim they were merely noting the temporal distance and expressing faith in divine justice, while the intended audience understands the death threat.

Meanwhile Example (24) inverts the prayer formula to attack opponents. This is prayer-as-curse: may you experience electoral fraud in all domains of your existence. The closing "Amen!" (with exclamation) signals that this is not sincere blessing but weaponized prayer. The CMC context is essential here: in face-to-face religious settings, such a prayer would be immediately challenged as inappropriate; in digital contexts, it circulates without immediate social sanction.

(25)

Anonymous about 1 year ago

If God did not put him there, he will die there.

Like this! 12   Dislike this! 7   Reply

Example (25) makes the death threat more explicit while maintaining prayer form. The conditional structure ("if God's hand is not in it") provides plausible deniability—the commenter is merely predicting divine judgment, not wishing death. Yet the function is clearly curse: if Tinubu was not divinely chosen, he should die in office. The Nigerian Pidgin syntax

further signals that this is informal, vernacular expression rather than formal prayer, yet it maintains the prayer's structure (conditional + divine agency + outcome).

2. Coded Language and Sarcasm: Implicature Over Explication

Core Pattern: Examples (26), (27), and (28) demonstrate off-record impoliteness through sarcasm and coded reference, requiring readers to infer hostility from ostensibly factual or congratulatory statements.

Example (26) deploys sarcasm through pseudo-factual enumeration. The commenter lists religious affiliations in a manner that mimics neutral reporting, then reveals the hostile intent through repetition of "Muslim Muslim Muslim" to suggest overwhelming dominance and the sarcastic closing ("Fantastic collaboration, yea right") that inverts the surface meaning.

Example (27) performs congratulation-as-mockery. The surface form is congratulatory ("Congrats Nigeria!") but the immediate negation ("I don't believe the best man won") reveals this as sarcasm. The announcement of permanent expatriation ("stay here in Canada forever") functions as implicit condemnation: the election outcome is so illegitimate that returning to Nigeria is unthinkable. This is off-record impoliteness because the commenter can claim they were merely stating personal plans, yet the audience understands this as damning critique of the electoral process.

Example (28) uses "LOL" as a marker of mockery. The response to another comment about Tinubu's cognitive capacity, this comment suggests a conspiracy: Tinubu is a figurehead; Shettima will be the real power. The "LOL" (laugh out loud) signals that this is not serious analysis but derisive mockery. However, "LOL" in CMC contexts is highly ambiguous—it can signal genuine amusement, nervous laughter, sarcasm, or (as here) contempt. The ambiguity is strategic: if challenged, the commenter can claim they were joking; yet the in-group audience understands the mockery.

These examples demonstrate how off-record strategies exploit CMC's multimodality (text + emoji) and its cultural conventions (LOL, sarcasm markers) to create layered meanings. The impoliteness resides not in explicit insult but in the gap between surface form and implied meaning—a gap that CMC platforms enable through their combination of written permanence and informal register.

(26)

Anonymous about 1 year ago

Muslim Muslim; senator president Muslim, inec chairman, Muslim. Fantastic collaboration, yea right!

Like this! 13   Dislike this! 20   Reply

(27)

Anonymous about 1 year ago

Congratulations to all Nigerians but me will remain in my Canada forever

Like this! 6   Dislike this! 28   Reply

(28)

Leading about 1 year ago

How can tunubu that have dementia rule Nigeria?

Like this! 19   Dislike this! 9   Reply

3. Coded Political Reference: "Agbado" as Symbolic Poverty

(29)

Anonymous about 1 year ago

Dem don teach u say to chop agbado for courtroom no good?

Like this! 1   Dislike this! 1   Reply

Example (29) introduces a highly specific form of coded impoliteness. This translates roughly as "Have they taught you that eating corn in the courtroom is not good?" The statement is opaque without cultural context: "agbado" (corn) became a derogatory term during the campaign after Tinubu made an agricultural policy speech that opponents mocked. It subsequently circulated digitally as shorthand for poverty, incompetence, and the economic hardship predicted under Tinubu's administration.

The comment's implicature: Tinubu supporters (the "una" - you plural) will be so impoverished they'll eat corn (a low-status food) even in court. The reference to "court" likely alludes to expected electoral challenges. The entire comment depends on shared digital cultural knowledge—the "agbado" meme only makes sense if one has been following the online political discourse.

This is CMC-specific coded impoliteness: the code is created and disseminated through digital platforms, it relies on viral circulation to establish shared meaning, and it can be updated rapidly as new campaign moments occur. Face-to-face political discourse cannot generate such codes at this speed or disseminate them at this scale.
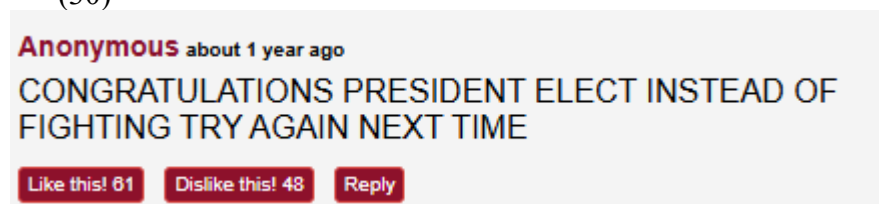
Off-record impoliteness strategies reveal how CMC environments enable sophisticated forms of face-threat that exploit ambiguity, religious convention, sarcasm, and coded reference. Unlike bald-on-record strategies that rely on digital disinhibition, off-record strategies rely on digital community formation: participants can assume shared interpretive frameworks because they inhabit the same digital discourse communities. The prayers, sarcasm, and coded language

function as in-group communication that excludes outsiders while maintaining plausible deniability if challenged by platform moderators or out-group members.

Negative Impoliteness

Negative impoliteness strategies—characterized by hedging, indirection, or deference designed to minimize imposition—are the least prevalent in the dataset, appearing in only examples (30), (31), (32), and (33). This scarcity is itself theoretically significant: it suggests that CMC political discourse around contested elections privileges maximalist face-threat (bald-on-record) over minimalist strategies. However, the few instances that do appear reveal how even ostensibly mitigated impoliteness exploits CMC affordances.

(30)

Anonymous about 1 year ago
CONGRATULATIONS PRESIDENT ELECT INSTEAD OF FIGHTING TRY AGAIN NEXT TIME
Like this! 61   Dislike this! 48   Reply

Example (30) demonstrates negative impoliteness through superficially deferential framing: "CONGRATULATIONS PRESIDENT-ELECT. INSTEAD OF FIGHTING, TRY AGAIN NEXT TIME"

The surface structure appears conciliatory: congratulations are offered, and opponents are counseled to try again rather than fight. However, multiple CMC-specific features undermine this reading:

i) **Full capitalization**: Writing entirely in caps is conventionally understood in digital contexts as shouting, transforming "congratulations" into aggressive assertion rather than sincere felicitation.
ii) **"Fighting" as delegitimization**: The counsel to avoid "fighting" presumes that opponents are inclined toward violence, casting them as unreasonable aggressors rather than legitimate political actors.
iii) **"Try again next time" as dismissal**: This appears to offer hope but actually minimizes opponents' grievances by suggesting the election was legitimate and they should simply compete in the next cycle.

The negative impoliteness resides in the gap between ostensible deference (congratulations, consolation) and performed dominance (caps lock, presumption of violence). This gap is CMC-enabled: without the typographic cue of capitalization, the statement might read as sincere; with it, the statement becomes mockery disguised as courtesy.

(31)

(32)
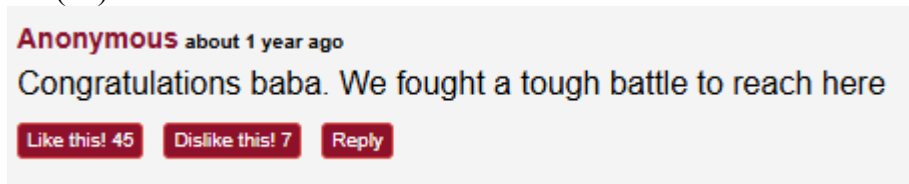
Examples (31) and (32) employ hedging and ellipsis to create ominous ambiguity. Both comments address the election victor. The unnecessarily long ellipsis in (31) creates suspense, suggesting foreknowledge of negative future events. In speech, suspenseful pausing is ephemeral; in CMC, ellipses create permanent textual suspension, allowing the threat to linger.

(33)

Example (33) deploys negative impoliteness through sarcastic expression of relief. The commenter thanks God for having "japa" (Nigerian Pidgin: escaped, emigrated), expressing relief at being beyond the reach of Nigeria's problems. The negative impoliteness is directed both at the political situation (which is implicitly condemned) and at those who remain in Nigeria (implicitly characterized as victims or fools for staying).
The CMC elements include:

- **Code-switching for emphasis**: "Japa" is a Pidgin neologism that has gained currency specifically through digital political discourse about economic migration. Using it signals membership in a digitally literate community.
- **Multiple exclamation marks**: "Nigeria tire me!!!" intensifies the expression of exhaustion and disgust, a typographic intensification unavailable without digital writing conventions.

The negative impoliteness functions through distancing: the commenter establishes physical and affective distance from Nigeria, implicitly condemning those who lack this distance. This form of impoliteness—critique through expression of relief at escape—is enabled by CMC's

capacity to connect geographically dispersed participants who can explicitly thematize their diaspora status.

The relative scarcity of negative impoliteness strategies suggests that CMC political discourse around highly polarized events favors explicitness over indirection. However, the few instances that do appear demonstrate how even ostensibly mitigated impoliteness can exploit digital affordances (caps lock, ellipses, code-switching) to create face-threat through implicature rather than explication. The CMC environment enables a distinctive form of "polite rudeness"—statements that maintain surface-level deference while encoding hostility through typographic and paralinguistic cues.

CMC as Impoliteness Amplifier and Transformer

The analysis reveals that computer-mediated communication does not merely transport face-to-face impoliteness strategies into digital spaces; rather, it fundamentally transforms impoliteness practices through four interconnected mechanisms:

i) **Digital Disinhibition and Accountability Attenuation:** The prevalence of bald-on-record impoliteness (over 50% of examples) demonstrates that CMC environments reduce immediate social sanctions for explicit face-threat. Unlike face-to-face political discourse, where participants must manage real-time relational consequences, CMC's asynchronicity and partial anonymity enable verbal aggression that would be suppressed in embodied interaction. Death wishes (examples 5, 7, 16, 18, 19, 25, 26, 28), explicit ethnic attacks (examples 10, 21), and calls for suicide (example 16) circulate with apparent impunity, suggesting that platform governance either cannot or will not enforce the norms that regulate face-to-face public speech.

ii) **Multimodal Intensity Encoding:** CMC enables impoliteness intensification through typographic and visual resources unavailable to spoken or traditional written discourse. Participants systematically exploit caps lock (examples 16, 30), exclamation marks (examples 3, 17, 22, 26, 33), elongated interjections (examples 3, 21), ellipses (examples 31) etc. to encode paralinguistic features of aggression into asynchronous text. This multimodality transforms impoliteness from purely semantic to performatively expressive: the form of the message (how it looks) becomes as significant as its content (what it says).

iii) **Cultural Code and Digital Intertextuality:** The data reveal sophisticated exploitation of shared cultural knowledge—linguistic (code-switching between English, Yoruba, Pidgin), religious (weaponized prayer), historical (Abacha reference, Biafran War allusion), and intertextual (viral memes like "bulabulablu" and "agbado"). This cultural coding serves dual functions: it intensifies face-threat through culturally resonant insults while simultaneously excluding out-group members from full comprehension. Critically, CMC enables rapid creation and dissemination of new codes (the "agbado" meme) at speeds impossible in non-digital contexts.

iv) **Performative Escalation Through Threading:** Unlike dyadic face-to-face confrontation, threaded CMC interaction creates a public performance context where backing down signals weakness to a witnessing audience. Examples (18), (19), (20), and (21) demonstrate how impoliteness escalates across turns as participants compete

for face in front of aligned spectators. This cascading hostility is architecturally enabled: the visible thread structure incentivizes one-upmanship, where each contribution must exceed previous ones to maintain credibility within one's in-group.

Conclusion

This study performs an analysis of impoliteness strategies in the blog Linda Ikeji's post on the declaration of Bola Ahmed Tinubu as the president-elect after the 2023 presidential election. Comments on the posts reveal the majority of the interactants demonstrated disappointment using impolite expressions. The analysis revealed a high incidence of incivility and cyberbullying as users frequently engaged in name-calling, personal attacks and hate speech. The comments were characterized by a lack of respect for other users' opinions, with users resorting to insults and derogatory language when they disagreed with others. They engaged in bald-on-record, mock politeness/sarcasm and negative impoliteness. The usage is characterized by impolite linguistic behaviour, code-mixing, and use of emojis, thereby revealing harassment of individuals who can be harmful, reach a wide audience, and have long-lasting effects on the victim's mental health and well-being.

Some of the most noticeable features of impoliteness in the comments analysed are; (a) Emotional invectitude and polarization - The intensity of the emotions expressed in the comments, ranging from disappointment and anger to mockery and ridicule, reflects the highly polarized and emotionally charged nature of the election and its aftermath. The comments section became a platform for venting frustrations and expressing deep-seated sentiments, mostly in an uncivil and impolite manner; (b) Ethnic and religious tensions - Several comments contained derogatory language targeting specific ethnic or religious groups, reflecting the underlying social divisions and tensions that characterized the election. Examples include comments attacking the Igbo ethnic group (Comment 11) or making references to the religious affiliations of elected officials (Comment 4); and (c) Negative impact on public discourse - The prevalence of impoliteness strategies in the comments section raises concerns about the negative impact on public discourse and the quality of online discussions. Instead of fostering constructive dialogue and reasoned debate, the comments section became a breeding ground for incivility, potentially exacerbating societal divisions and undermining the principles of democratic engagement.

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