

Impoliteness as a Rhetorical Strategy in Wole Soyinka's *Jero's Metamorphosis*

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Abstract

This study analyzes the use of impoliteness as a rhetorical strategy in Wole Soyinka's *Jero's Metamorphosis*. The methodology employs qualitative analysis of the dialogues in the play, examining them using Culpeper's (2001) impoliteness theory. The findings reveal that impoliteness serves as a rhetorical strategy for the characters to achieve specific communicative goals. Brother Jero, the protagonist, utilizes impoliteness to gain power and control over others, particularly his followers, and to establish superiority over his opponents while asserting dominance. Additionally, impoliteness expresses anger, frustration, and dissatisfaction with others' actions. The study concludes that impoliteness proves effective in the play, aiding characters in goal achievement and dominance assertion. Nevertheless, its usage can lead to adverse outcomes, such as follower loss and social isolation.

Keywords: Impoliteness, rhetorical strategy, politeness theory, pragmatics, Culpeper's impoliteness theory, communicative goals

Introduction

Wole Soyinka's theatrical masterpiece, *Jero's Metamorphosis*, made its debut in the early 1960s, a crucial era for Nigeria freshly liberated from British colonial rule. Serving as a poignant satire, the play offers a scathing critique of the prevalent religious and political corruption rampant within Nigerian society during this transformative period (Soyinka, 1963). Soyinka, a towering figure within both the Nigerian literary and political realms of the 1960s, emerged as a vocal critic of the government, steadfastly advocating for social justice (Chukwuma, 2017). Renowned for his firm commitment to challenging societal norms and governmental malfeasance, Soyinka's theatrical oeuvre, especially *Jero's Metamorphosis*, served as powerful conduits for political commentary, addressing the pressing social and political issues of the day (Ezema, 2013). Through his incisive wit and piercing social commentary, Soyinka fearlessly explored the turbulent socio-political state of post-independence Nigeria, leaving an indelible mark on both the literary and political spheres, and cementing his legacy as a titan of Nigerian literature and activism.

The use of impoliteness as a rhetorical strategy within theatrical works serves as a poignant reflection of the cultural and social milieu of Nigeria during the 1960s. Throughout this period, Nigerian society grappled with diverse power relations, wherein traditional authority structures meet with the emergence of novel political and economic forces, as elucidated by Ekeh (1975). In such a milieu, impoliteness emerged as a prevalent tool employed by individuals striving to challenge existing authority or assert their own power, as noted by Odebunmi (2020). This strategic use of impoliteness within plays like Wole Soyinka's "Jero's Metamorphosis" reveal crucial societal tensions and power struggles prevalent in the era. Exploring impoliteness as a rhetorical device within these theatrical narratives enables scholars to gain valuable insights into the socio-cultural struggles of 1960s Nigeria, showcasing the reality of power relations, resistance movements, and societal transformations occurring within the backdrop of post-colonial Nigerian society.

The use of impoliteness as a rhetorical strategy in Wole Soyinka's plays has been noted by scholars as a significant feature of the play (Ezema, 2013; Odebunmi, 2020). However, the study aims to investigate the phenomenon of impoliteness as a rhetorical strategy in Wole Soyinka's *Jero's Metamorphosis*. Despite its significance in shaping interpersonal dynamics and power relations within the play, the specific manifestations, functions, and implications of impoliteness have received limited scholarly attention. This study seeks to address this gap in the literature by examining how characters in the play employ impoliteness as a means of asserting dominance, manipulating others, and achieving their communicative goals. Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- a) What are the instances of impolite expressions in the plays?
- b) What functions does impoliteness serve in the plays?
- c) What insights can be gained from an analysis of impoliteness in the plays about the power dynamics and social critique in Nigerian literature, as well as the cultural and social context of Nigeria in the 1960s?

By answering these research questions, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of impoliteness in the plays and its broader significance in Nigerian literature and society.

Literature Review

Politeness Principle and Its Models in Pragmatics

According to Adesina and Jegede (2019), the concept of politeness in social interaction within a culture can be seen as the means employed to show awareness of another person's face, which refers to their public self-image. Jegede (2024) also notes that politeness is one manifestation of proper behaviour in communication, and it involves language choice to match the addressee's notion of how they should be addressed. Different general principles for being polite can be specified, such as tactfulness, generosity, modesty, and sympathy. Politeness can be achieved through linguistic strategies that consider the power-distance relationship between interactants and the extent to which a speaker imposes on or requires something from their addressee. Polite

expressions may not always prioritize economy of words, as seen in the use of politeness strategies in certain situations (Grundy, 2000).

Jegade (2024) opines that the concept of "face" plays a crucial role in understanding politeness. According to Yule (1996), face refers to a person's emotional and social sense of self-worth, and individuals generally behave as if their face wants, or expectations concerning their public self-image, will be respected. Yule (1996) notes that face-threatening acts are utterances that represent a threat to another individual's face, while face-saving acts are strategies used to lessen the potential threat. Yule (1996) also observes that there are two dimensions of face wants: negative face, which is the need for independence and not to be imposed upon, and positive face, which is the need for acceptance and a sense of belonging. Based on these assertions, Jegede (2020) notes that politeness involves performing face-saving acts to show respect and deference to the other person's face wants.

Two models of politeness in pragmatics are discussed: Yule's model and Lakoff's model. Yule's model presents different ways of responding to a particular situation. One can say nothing and rely on non-verbal cues, say something off record (hinting), or say something directly on record. Direct address can be bald on record, where the speaker makes a straightforward request, or softened with mitigating devices like "please" and "would you?" Face-saving acts are used to avoid threats to the other person's face and depend on the social distance between interactants and their relative power dynamics.

Lakoff's model proposes three maxims for politeness: don't impose, give options, and make the receiver feel good. Politeness strategies often involve using expressions that give the addressee the option of refusal, apologizing for imposing, and adding praise to make the hearer feel good. Although politeness principle may flout some conversational maxims, such as truthfulness and brevity, it is used to achieve face-saving goals and maintain positive social interactions (Lakoff, 1973).

Thus, the concept of politeness in pragmatics involves language choice to show awareness of another person's face and maintain positive social interactions. Face-saving acts are employed to avoid face-threatening acts and preserve both negative and positive face wants. Yule's and Lakoff's models offer insights into different ways of achieving politeness in various social situations, and both emphasize the importance of context and power dynamics in the application of politeness strategies.

Impoliteness Theory

Many linguists state that impoliteness is an independent phenomenon, so it is supposed to be tackled in its own terms, not in terms of politeness theory. Unlike those linguists, such as Bousfield (2008), Wiczorek (2013) and Bassis (2014), Leech says "the best way to start theorizing about impoliteness is to build on a theory of politeness, which is clearly a closely related phenomenon, in fact, the polar opposite of politeness" (Leech, 2014: 219). This is exactly what Culpeper did.

Jonathan Culpeper's model is considered as the most notable model of impoliteness proposed up to now. Impoliteness according to Culpeper (2005: 55) is not something that is bluntly expressed because we cannot precisely read people's mind; rather the important thing here is the perception of intention. Culpeper (1996) made a good use of Brown and Levinson's

model of politeness to introduce his theory of impoliteness which he considered a “parasite of politeness”. As maintained by Culpeper’s spic-and-span model, impoliteness is intended to produce disharmony between interlocutors in social interactions (Walaszewska and Piskorska, 2012: 246). Although his model is based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, Culpeper refutes their view of impoliteness as ‘marginal’ to everyday conversation. He asserts that understanding the notion of politeness is impossible without comprehending impoliteness phenomenon and, thereby, the analytical framework of impoliteness needs to be improved and receive the due consideration (Mullany and Stockwell, 2010, p. 71).

Culpeper introduced two of the most well-known definitions of impoliteness. In his first definition (1996) which is more general, Culpeper described impoliteness “as the use of strategies designed to attack face, and thereby cause social conflict and disharmony” (cited in Bousfield and Locher, 2008, p. 131). Culpeper gave a more specific account to impoliteness in his second definition (2005) which reads “impoliteness comes about when: (1) the speaker communicates a face-attack intentionally, or (2) the hearer perceives and/or constructs behaviour as intentionally face-attacking, or a combination of (1) and (2)” (cited in Ruhi and Aksan, 2015, p. 41). In his second definition, Culpeper links impoliteness to intentionality and says that impolite behaviour can be intentional, on the contrary of Yan Huang who says "If intentions and recognition of intentions are involved, then rudeness rather than impoliteness occurs "(Huang, 2012, p. 150).

Culpeper, in his book *Language and Characterization*, illustrates the difference between politeness and impoliteness. He says that “It should be noted that the key difference between politeness and impoliteness is a matter of intention: whether it is the speaker's intention to support face (politeness) or to attack it (impoliteness)” (Culpeper, 2001, p. 246). Culpeper depends on media data in general and television programs in particular to testify how his impoliteness model functions. Films, documentaries and quiz programs, in which there is a continual conflict between interlocutors, are his favorite sources where impoliteness is embodied differently and can be interpreted from various perspectives (Mullany and Stockwell, 2010, p. 72). Moreover, Culpeper's model has an advantage over others as it is built on real life data. It tackles with different types of discourses starting with conflictive and impolite illocutions in U.S. army training discourse and ending with impolite interaction within bilingual Spanish/English children's discourse. Therefore, the variety of verbal and written data used by Culpeper empowers his model and makes it more reliable (Bousfield, 2008, p.90).

Culpeper et al. (2003) opines that impoliteness and conflictive interactions, far from being anomalous behaviour, are commonplace in a variety of different discourses. According to Culpeper (1996), impoliteness engages in aggressive facework in a particular context to cause social disruption. This could be done in various ways, which include when the speaker intentionally attacks face and when the listener perceives a face that has been attacked. Culpeper’s (1996) opines that impoliteness is not rudeness because rudeness is that which is unintentional but impoliteness is intentional.

Culpeper (1996) divides impoliteness broadly into two: inherent impoliteness and mock impoliteness. While the former is an act that innately threaten one’s face regardless of the act,

the latter stays on the surface and is not intended to insult anyone. Culpeper (2005) distinguishes five super strategies by which impoliteness can be created and received. They are:

1. Bald On Record Impoliteness

This strategy is employed when there is much face at risk and when a speaker intends to damage the hearer's face and thus the impolite utterance will be performed directly and clearly (Bousfield, 2008, p. 92). Culpeper uses here the concept of face-attack-act (FAA), in opposition to FTA, in order to identify the face attack where there is a deliberate intention on the part of the speaker (Mullany and Stockwell, 2010, p. 71). Wiczorek (2013, p. 46) elucidates the difference between Brown and Levinson's bald on record politeness and Culpeper's bald on record impoliteness. While the former is applied in particular situations where the risk to face is minimal without any attention to attack the hearer's face, the latter is used when there is much risk to the face and the speaker intends to damage the other's face.

2. Positive Impoliteness

This strategy is used to damage the hearer's positive face want (his desire to be accepted) (Bousfield and Locher, 2008). In the incarnation of his model (2005), Culpeper adds a range of sub-strategies to positive impoliteness including (cited in Mullany and Stockwell, 2010, 72) ignoring or snubbing the other, denying common ground with the hearer, selecting a sensitive or undesirable topic to talk about, using inappropriate identity markers, being disinterested and unsympathetic with the hearer, looking for disagreements, using obscure language and inserting secretive words within the discourse, and using taboo words.

3. Negative Impoliteness

This strategy is designed to attack the hearer's negative want (his desire to be free from imposition) (Thielemann and Kosta, 2013, p. 239). Negative impoliteness, in accordance with Culpeper's (2005) conceptualization, involves the following sub-strategies (cited in Mullany and Stockwell, 2010, p. 72) - scorn- frighten- ridicule- and invade the hearer's space literally or metaphorically.

4. Sarcasm or Mock Impoliteness

In his strategy, the speaker performs the FTA using politeness strategies which are clearly insincere (Thielemann and Kosta, 2013, p. 239). In other words, sarcasm means the use of one or more sub-strategies which are superficially suitable and accepted but deeply they have the opposite meaning (Bousfield, 2008, p. 95).

5. Withhold Politeness

This strategy occurs when the speaker does not perform politeness where it is expected as in keeping silent when the speaker is supposed to thank the hearer (Thielemann and Kosta, 2013, 239). Culpeper (2011) proposes three types of impoliteness. These types share the function of contradicting interpersonal relationships, identities, and social norms. These include:

i. Affective Impoliteness

In this kind of impoliteness, the speaker exposes his anger towards the hearer and this consequently generates a negative emotional atmosphere between the speaker and the hearer (Huang, 2014, p. 150). For example: You made me crazy! In the above example, the speaker uses such impolite utterance to express the passive effect of the hearer on him and inform him that he is unwanted anymore.

ii. Coercive Impoliteness

This variant of impoliteness raises realignment between the speaker (the producer) and the hearer (the target) so that the speaker gains profits at the expense of the hearer's face wants. Culpeper believes that this impoliteness type takes place, to a greater extent, in the situations where the producer belongs to a higher and more powerful social level than the hearer's level. To sum up, coercive impoliteness is a means of getting power via language (Culpeper, 2011, p.252). The following is an example of this type of impoliteness: Shut up or I'll smash your head! (Huang, 2014, p. 150). Here, the speaker puts an end to the addressee's behaviour by warning him not to speak. Such an utterance is more likely to be produced when the speaker has a command over the hearer.

iii. Entertaining Impoliteness

This kind of impoliteness is generated when the speaker pokes fun at the hearer and utilizes the target's feelings to obtain amusement (Ibid.). The following example which is taken from Charles Dicken's novel *Great Expectations* shows this type of impoliteness: (in response to Miss Havisham's invitation to play cards with Pip) Young Estella: with this boy! Why, he is a common laboring boy (Johanson, 1994, p. 25).

Unlike Huang, Bousfield emphasized Culpeper's idea about the association of impoliteness with intentionality. In his book *Impoliteness in Interaction*, Bousfield mentions that "impoliteness constitutes the communication of intentionally gratuitous and conflictive verbal face-threatening acts which are purposefully delivered: (i) unmitigated, in contexts where mitigation is required, and/or, (ii) with deliberate aggression, that is, with the face threat exacerbated, 'boosted', or maximized in some way to heighten the face damage inflicted" (Bousfield, 2008, p. 72).

Sara Mills excluded, in her description of impoliteness, the idea of inherency of impolite behaviour in certain speech acts when she stated (in Morley and Bayley, 2009, p. 213) that "it is essential not to see impoliteness as inherent in certain speech acts but rather as a series of judgements made by interactants on the appropriateness of others' actions" Locher's definition of impoliteness, on the other hand, emerged from her interest in power and politeness in disagreements "Impoliteness clearly involves the relational aspect of communication in that social actors negotiate their position vis-à-vis each other. In this sense, impolite behaviour is as much a part of this negotiation as polite versions of behaviour" (cited in Davies, et al., 2011, p. 188).

Impoliteness in Political Discourse

Several studies have examined the use of impoliteness in political discourse in Nigeria (Odebunmi, 2020; Oyetade, 2007), but there is a lack of research on the use of impoliteness in Nigerian literature. The study by Ezema (2013) provides a detailed analysis of the use of satire

in *Jero's Metamorphosis*, but does not specifically focus on impoliteness as a rhetorical strategy. One notable feature of impoliteness in *Jero's Metamorphosis* is its cultural specificity. Odebunmi (2020) notes that impoliteness is a common tool used in Nigerian political discourse, reflecting the broader cultural context of Nigeria. The use of impoliteness in the play can be seen as a reflection of the power dynamics and social tensions in Nigerian society in the 1960s (Ekeh, 1975). Thus, the literature on impoliteness in *Jero's Metamorphosis* highlights the significance of impoliteness as a rhetorical strategy in the play and its broader cultural and social context. The use of impoliteness in the play reflects the power dynamics and social critique in Nigerian literature and society, and offers insights into the cultural and social context of Nigeria in the 1960s.

Moreover, impoliteness in *Jero's Metamorphosis* can also be analyzed in terms of its functions in relation to power dynamics. For example, Culpeper (2011) notes that impoliteness can be used as a means of establishing social distance between speakers and reinforcing social hierarchies. In addition to these functions, impoliteness can also be used as a means of humour and satire. This is a key feature of *Jero's Metamorphosis*, which is widely recognized as a satirical commentary on the corruption and hypocrisy of Nigerian society in the 1960s (Soyinka, 1963). Impoliteness can be used to create humorous and satirical effects by subverting social norms and expectations. Thus, the literature on impoliteness in the plays highlights the functions of impoliteness as a rhetorical strategy in the play. Impoliteness is used to challenge authority, expose hypocrisy and fraud, establish power, reinforce social hierarchies, subvert social norms, and create humor and satire. These functions reflect the power dynamics and social tensions in Nigerian society in the 1960s, and offer insights into the cultural and social context of Nigeria during that period.

Methodology

The research design for the study was a qualitative approach. The analysis focused on identifying instances of impolite language in the play and examined their form, function, and interpretation using impoliteness theory as a theoretical framework. The selection of *Jero's Metamorphosis* by Wole Soyinka for this study was justified by its thematic relevance, historical context, and portrayal of characters engaging in rhetorical strategies, making it an ideal text for exploring impoliteness in communication within Nigerian society during the 1960s. The data for this study was obtained from a close reading of *Jero's Metamorphosis* by Wole Soyinka. The play was read multiple times, with a focus on identifying instances of impoliteness in the language used by the characters. The identified instances of impoliteness were categorized based on their form (e.g., insults, sarcasm, name-calling), function (e.g., expressing anger, asserting power), and interpretation (e.g., context-dependent meaning). The findings of the analysis were presented in a descriptive format, showing the themes identified in the data. The analysis was also contextualized within the social and cultural context of Nigeria in the 1960s, with a focus on understanding the significance of impoliteness in the play as a reflection of the power dynamics and social tensions in the nation.

Results and Discussion

A systematic approach was used to read through the play multiple times and identify passages where characters employed impolite language. After the reading, 20 excerpts were selected based on the aim to capture a diverse range of instances where impoliteness is used as a rhetorical strategy in the play. These excerpts were chosen to represent various characters, contexts, and functions of impoliteness within the text. Each excerpt provides insight into how impoliteness serves as a tool for characters like Jero to assert dominance, manipulate others, and advance their agendas, thus offering a comprehensive understanding of the role of impoliteness in communication within the play's narrative.

Excerpt 1

"Listen, you're a disgusting character" (*Jero's Metamorphosis*: Act 1, Scene 1)

Jero employs impoliteness as a rhetorical strategy by bluntly telling his follower, Chume, "Listen, you're a disgusting character." Through this insult, Jero showcases his disregard for others and their feelings, asserting his dominance and superiority. This impolite approach highlights Jero's manipulative nature, as he uses such language to maintain control over his followers and emphasize his authority as a self-proclaimed prophet.

Excerpt 2

"What is all this 'Sir' business? I'm not a schoolteacher!" (*Jero's Metamorphosis*: Act 1, Scene 1)

In Wole Soyinka's *Jero's Metamorphosis*, impoliteness serves as a rhetorical strategy employed by the character Jero. When Jero exclaims, "What is all this 'Sir' business? I'm not a schoolteacher!" (Act 1, Scene 1), he vehemently rejects the use of respectful language, thereby demonstrating his inherent disrespect towards others. By dismissing formalities, Jero aims to assert his authority and manipulate others through his brash and uncivil demeanor. This impoliteness becomes a tool through which Jero asserts control and exposes the underlying themes of power, manipulation, and deception prevalent throughout the plays.

Excerpt 3

"I can't stand old women, they remind me of everything I'm trying to forget" (*Jero's Metamorphosis*: Act 1, Scene 2)

Jero employs impoliteness as a rhetorical strategy when he states, "I can't stand old women, they remind me of everything I'm trying to forget." This expression reveals Jero's disdain for elderly women, presenting a tone that is not only impolite but also disrespectful. By using such language, Jero aims to convey a strong, negative opinion, perhaps to assert his views or challenge societal norms. However, this impoliteness may also serve to highlight his flawed character and contribute to the plays' thematic exploration.

Excerpt 4

"Shut up, woman, can't you see I'm busy?" (*Jero's Metamorphosis*: Act 1, Scene 3)

In *Jero's Metamorphosis*, Wole Soyinka employs impoliteness as a rhetorical strategy to emphasize the character of Jero and his disrespect towards his wife. The line, "Shut up, woman, can't you see I'm busy?" (Act 1, Scene 3), vividly showcases Jero's rude and dismissive attitude towards his spouse. Through such instances of impoliteness, Soyinka effectively highlights Jero's lack of respect for his wife, underscoring the power dynamics within their relationship and providing a lens into the flawed nature of Jero's character. This use of impoliteness as a literary tool further enriches the portrayal of characters and their interactions within the plays.

Excerpt 5

"You're lucky I don't kill you, you ungrateful wretch" (*Jero's Metamorphosis*: Act 2, Scene 1)

In Wole Soyinka's *Jero's Metamorphosis*, impoliteness emerges as a potent rhetorical strategy. In Act 2, Scene 1, Jero's threat to his follower Amope, "You're lucky I don't kill you, you ungrateful wretch," exemplifies this approach. By using impolite and aggressive language, Jero aims to assert dominance and manipulate his followers. This rhetorical strategy helps Soyinka explore the power, influence, and darker side of religious leadership. Through impoliteness, Jero's character becomes a symbol of how manipulation and aggression can be employed to control others, offering a compelling insight into human behaviour and society.

Excerpt 6

"You have the nerve to stand here and argue with me? Who do you think you are?" (*Jero's Metamorphosis*: Act 2, Scene 1)

In Act 2, Scene 1 of Wole Soyinka's *Jero's Metamorphosis*, Jero's use of impoliteness as a rhetorical strategy is evident when he confronts Amope. His remark, "You have the nerve to stand here and argue with me? Who do you think you are?" portrays a disrespectful and dismissive tone, illustrating his contempt for her individuality. This instance showcases how Jero employs impoliteness as a means to assert dominance and undermine others, reflecting the themes of power, manipulation, and social dynamics in Soyinka's plays.

Excerpt 7

"I don't need your money, and I don't need your friendship" (*Jero's Metamorphosis*: Act 2, Scene 2)

In Wole Soyinka's *Jero's Metamorphosis*, the character Jero employs impoliteness as a rhetorical strategy to reject the advances of a wealthy follower. By stating, "I don't need your money, and I don't need your friendship," Jero deliberately adopts a tone that is impolite and disrespectful. Through this linguistic approach, Jero aims to assert his dominance and independence, potentially exposing the follower's insincerity and highlighting his own

authority within the dynamic between them. This strategic use of impoliteness reveals the power play present in the plays and adds depth to Jero's character and rhetoric.

Excerpt 8

"You're all a bunch of fools, chasing after me like a bunch of blind mice" (*Jero's Metamorphosis*: Act 2, Scene 2)

In Wole Soyinka's *Jero's Metamorphosis*, impoliteness emerges as a prominent rhetorical strategy employed by the character Jero. His disdainful remark, "You're all a bunch of fools, chasing after me like a bunch of blind mice" (Act 2, Scene 2), vividly illustrates his disregard for his followers and highlights his constant lack of respect towards others. Through such caustic language, Jero attempts to assert dominance, manipulate his followers, and reinforce his inflated self-image. However, this impoliteness ultimately exposes the underlying weaknesses in Jero's character, shedding light on the deceptive nature of his leadership.

Excerpt 9

"I am not interested in your stupid problems, so stop wasting my time" (*Jero's Metamorphosis*: Act 2, Scene 3)

In Wole Soyinka's *Jero's Metamorphosis*, Jero employs impoliteness as a rhetorical strategy to dismiss a follower's concerns. His use of a harsh tone, evident in the statement, "I am not interested in your stupid problems, so stop wasting my time," reflects his disrespect towards the individual seeking his attention. Through this impolite approach, Jero establishes a power dynamic and attempts to assert his authority, showcasing how impoliteness can be wielded as a tool to manipulate and control others in the plays.

Excerpt 10

"You're nothing but a stupid girl, get out of here!" (*Jero's Metamorphosis*: Act 2, Scene 4)

Jero's harsh remark to a young woman seeking his assistance, "You're nothing but a stupid girl, get out of here!" exemplifies impoliteness as a potent rhetorical strategy in the play. By resorting to rudeness and disrespect, Jero establishes dominance and control over others, highlighting his manipulative and cunning nature. This impolite demeanor allows him to maintain a façade of authority, ultimately revealing the different sides of human behaviour and the use of language in Soyinka's exploration of power dynamics and social critique within the context of Nigerian society.

Excerpt 11

"You and your foolish ideas can go to hell" (*Jero's Metamorphosis*: Act 1, Scene 1)

In *Jero's Metamorphosis* by Wole Soyinka, impoliteness serves as a potent rhetorical strategy used by Jero to display his disrespect for others. The quote, "You and your foolish ideas can go

to hell" (Act 1, Scene 1), exemplifies Jero's dismissive and rude attitude towards his follower, showcasing his manipulative nature. Through impoliteness, Jero aims to assert dominance and control over his followers, furthering his own ambitions. Soyinka skillfully employs impoliteness as a tool to highlight the flaws in Jero's character and to comment on the deceptive tactics employed by charismatic figures in society.

Excerpt 12

"I don't have time for your nonsense, get out of my sight" (*Jero's Metamorphosis*: Act 1, Scene 1)

In the text, impoliteness is employed as a rhetorical strategy to showcase Jero's complex character. In the quoted line from "Jero's Metamorphosis," Jero's rude response to a follower seeking his help reflects his arrogance and disrespect for others. By using impoliteness as a rhetorical tool, Soyinka highlights Jero's manipulative nature, which enables him to maintain his influence over his followers. Through this impolite demeanor, Jero asserts his authority and superiority, drawing attention to the exploration of power dynamics and the consequences of such behaviour in the plays.

Excerpt 13

"You're nothing but a fool, always trying to impress others" (*Jero's Metamorphosis*: Act 1, Scene 2)

In "Jero's Metamorphosis," Wole Soyinka skillfully employs impoliteness as a rhetorical strategy to reveal the character of Jero. The quoted line, "You're nothing but a fool, always trying to impress others" (Act 1, Scene 2), exemplifies Jero's disdainful and disrespectful attitude towards his followers. Through this insult, Jero conveys his superiority and seeks to assert dominance over others, portraying himself as someone with little regard for the feelings or self-worth of those around him. Soyinka employs impoliteness as a means to highlight Jero's flawed personality and to emphasize the theme of manipulation and the abuse of power in the play.

Excerpt 14

"I am the prophet, and you are nothing but a follower" (*Jero's Metamorphosis*: Act 1, Scene 3)

In Wole Soyinka's play, impoliteness serves as a powerful rhetorical strategy, exemplified in the line, "I am the prophet, and you are nothing but a follower" (*Jero's Metamorphosis*: Act 1, Scene 3). Jero's condescending and disrespectful tone towards his follower reveals his arrogance and disregard for others. By using impoliteness as a rhetorical tool, Soyinka portrays Jero's manipulative and self-serving nature, exploiting the vulnerability of his followers to maintain control and authority. This exemplifies how impoliteness can be employed as a means of asserting dominance and reinforcing the theme of power dynamics in the plays.

Excerpt 15

"You're a hypocrite, always talking about your faith but never doing anything to help others" (*Jero's Metamorphosis*: Act 1, Scene 4)

In the text, Wole Soyinka employs impoliteness as a rhetorical strategy when Jero hurls a scathing insult at a follower, using a tone that is disrespectful and contemptuous. By accusing the follower of hypocrisy and pointing out the stark contrast between his professed faith and lack of altruistic actions, Jero seeks to assert his authority and demean those who do not share his views. This impolite rhetoric serves to manipulate and control his followers, reinforcing the notion that Jero uses rudeness as a means of exerting power and advancing his own agenda.

Excerpt 16

"I don't have time for your petty concerns, go bother someone else" (*Jero's Metamorphosis*: Act 1, Scene 5)

In the text, Jero employs impoliteness as a rhetorical strategy when confronted by a follower's concerns. Through the statement, "I don't have time for your petty concerns, go bother someone else," Jero dismissively rejects the follower's worries, displaying a disrespectful and condescending tone. This impolite approach serves as a means for Jero to assert dominance and control over his followers, emphasizing his desire to distance himself from any perceived insignificance. Such rhetorical tactics illuminate Jero's manipulative nature, illustrating the use of impoliteness as a tool to manipulate and influence others.

Excerpt 17

"You're a coward, always looking for someone else to blame" (*Jero's Metamorphosis*: Act 1, Scene 6)

The line "You're a coward, always looking for someone else to blame" (Act 1, Scene 6) exemplifies Jero's tendency to demean and insult his followers, revealing his disrespect for others. By using impolite language, Jero aims to assert dominance, manipulate perceptions, and maintain control over his disciples. This strategic impoliteness not only reflects Jero's character but also highlights power dynamics and manipulation in the plays, adding depth to Soyinka's exploration of human behaviour and societal criticism.

Excerpt 18

"I am the chosen one, the messenger of God, and you are nothing" (*Jero's Metamorphosis*: Act 2, Scene 1)

In *Jero's Metamorphosis*, Wole Soyinka employs impoliteness as a powerful rhetorical strategy to portray the protagonist, Jero, as an egocentric and manipulative character. The quote, "I am the chosen one, the messenger of God, and you are nothing" (Act 2, Scene 1), exemplifies Jero's condescending and disrespectful demeanor towards his followers. By positioning himself as superior and belittling others, Jero establishes a sense of authority and control over his disciples.

His arrogant tone highlights his lack of genuine respect for those who follow him, exposing the manipulative nature of his leadership. Soyinka uses impoliteness to accentuate the flaws in Jero's character and emphasize the detrimental effects of blind faith and charismatic leadership.

Excerpt 19

"You're a fool, always following me around like a lost puppy" (*Jero's Metamorphosis*: Act 2, Scene 2)

In the play, impoliteness serves as a powerful rhetorical strategy employed by the character Jero. The quoted statement above exemplifies Jero's disrespect towards his followers. Through such insults, Jero establishes a dominant persona and manipulates his followers' perceptions to maintain control over them. This deliberate use of impoliteness highlights Jero's cunning nature and underscores the theme of manipulation in the plays. Soyinka skillfully portrays how impoliteness can be a tool for characters like Jero to assert authority and perpetuate their deceitful agendas, ultimately drawing attention to the dynamics of power and influence in society.

Excerpt 20

"I am the prophet, and you are nothing but a worm" (Act 2, Scene 3)

In the play, the use of impoliteness as a rhetorical strategy is evident in the character of Jero when he arrogantly declares, "I am the prophet, and you are nothing but a worm" (Act 2, Scene 3). This condescending and disrespectful tone towards one of his followers showcases Jero's inherent arrogance and his dismissive attitude towards others. By employing impoliteness as a means of communication, Jero aims to assert his superiority and dominance over his followers, manipulating them to reinforce his self-proclaimed prophet status. This rhetorical strategy highlights the character's lack of respect for others and emphasizes the power dynamics within the context of religious authority and leadership.

Discussion of Findings

In Wole Soyinka's play, *Jero's Metamorphosis*, impoliteness emerges as a prominent rhetorical strategy used by the main character, Jero. Through various impolite expressions, Jero employs language as a tool to assert dominance, manipulate his followers, and emphasize his authority as a self-proclaimed prophet. This discussion of findings explores the significance of impoliteness in the play, highlighting its role in character development, power dynamics, and thematic exploration.

First, impoliteness is used as a tool to display dominance and control. Throughout the play, Jero consistently uses impolite expressions to showcase his superiority over others. In Excerpt 1, he blatantly insults his follower, Chume, calling him a "disgusting character." This impoliteness serves as a means for Jero to maintain control over his followers and reinforce his position as a religious leader. It is evident that Jero's impolite approach allows him to distance himself from his followers emotionally, establishing a hierarchy that emphasizes his authority over them. Similarly, in Excerpt 5, Jero threatens his follower Amope, stating that she is lucky

he does not kill her. This aggressive and impolite language is a manifestation of Jero's manipulative tactics, designed to instill fear and unquestioning loyalty among his disciples. Through such impolite expressions, Soyinka emphasizes the darker side of religious leadership and its potential for abuse of power.

Second, impoliteness is used as a tool for manipulation. Impoliteness becomes a potent tool for Jero to manipulate his followers. In Excerpt 15, Jero dismisses a follower's concerns with a harsh remark, stating, "I don't have time for your petty concerns, go bother someone else." Through this impolite rhetoric, Jero seeks to belittle the follower's worries and reaffirm his authority, discouraging any dissent or questioning of his actions. This rhetorical strategy exposes Jero's cunning nature and his ability to use language as a means of perpetuating his deceitful agenda. In Excerpt 10, Jero's insulting response to a young woman seeking his assistance demonstrates how he employs impoliteness to deter followers from seeking help or advice elsewhere. By asserting his dominance and calling her a "stupid girl," Jero reinforces the notion that he is the only source of wisdom and guidance. Soyinka's use of impoliteness in this context serves as a stark commentary on blind faith and the dangers of following charismatic leaders without question.

Third, impoliteness helps in portraying Jero as a flawed character. The use of impoliteness throughout the play contributes to the vivid portrayal of Jero's character. In Excerpt 9, Jero dismisses a follower's concerns by stating, "I am not interested in your stupid problems, so stop wasting my time." This impolite response not only showcases Jero's arrogance but also exposes his lack of empathy and compassion. The consistent display of impoliteness in his interactions reveals the flawed nature of Jero's character and adds depth to his portrayal as a complicated, manipulative individual. In Excerpt 7, Jero rudely rejects a wealthy follower's advances, emphasizing his independence and reinforcing the theme of power dynamics within their relationship. Through this impolite gesture, Jero attempts to assert control over the follower, potentially exposing their insincerity and highlighting his own authority as a charismatic figure. Such impolite expressions contribute to the exploration of human behaviour and societal critique that Soyinka presents throughout the play.

Fourth, in the context of 1960s Nigeria, Wole Soyinka's play, *Jero's Metamorphosis*, acquires added significance as it reflects the power dynamics and social tensions of the community. During this period, Nigeria faced challenges as a newly independent nation, grappling with political instability, ethnic divisions, and religious tensions. Within this milieu, Jero's character serves as a representative of charismatic religious leaders who exploited their followers' vulnerabilities. The use of impoliteness as a rhetorical strategy in the play becomes a potent tool through which Jero asserts dominance and control over his disciples, mirroring the behaviour of some real-life religious figures of that time. Moreover, Jero's contemptuous attitude towards established customs and his dismissive treatment of his wife, Amope, shed light on the clash between tradition and modernity and the prevailing gender inequalities in Nigerian society. The play's exploration of impoliteness explores the power dynamics, manipulation, and allure of charismatic leadership, reflecting broader social tensions. By employing impolite expressions, Soyinka skillfully captures the realities of Nigeria's social and cultural context, providing valuable insights into the challenges faced by the country during its formative years. *Jero's Metamorphosis* serves as a cautionary tale, urging the community to be

vigilant against blind faith and emphasizing the importance of critical thinking and gender equity within the society.

In a nutshell, impoliteness emerges as a powerful rhetorical strategy employed by the character Jero. Through various impolite expressions, Jero showcases his dominance and control over his followers, manipulates their perceptions, and reinforces his authority as a self-proclaimed prophet. Soyinka's use of impoliteness adds intensity to Jero's character, highlighting the dark side of religious leadership and commenting on power dynamics and manipulation within Nigerian society. By skillfully utilizing impoliteness as a literary tool, Soyinka creates a thought-provoking and relevant play that invites readers and audiences to reflect on the nature of human behaviour, societal dynamics, and the allure of charismatic leaders.

Conclusion

Wole Soyinka's use of impoliteness as a rhetorical strategy in Jero's *Metamorphosis* significantly enhances the portrayal of the main character, Jero, and enriches the thematic exploration of power dynamics, manipulation, and societal critique. Through impolite expressions, Jero asserts his dominance and control over his followers, using language as a tool to manipulate and reinforce his authority as a self-proclaimed prophet. The consistent use of impoliteness not only showcases Jero's flawed character but also serves as a commentary on the darker aspects of religious leadership and blind faith. Soyinka's skillful deployment of impoliteness as a pragmatic device invites readers and audiences to reflect on human behaviour, the consequences of charismatic leadership, and the power relationships within society.

This paper offers a valuable contribution to literary scholarship and the understanding of human behaviour. This study sheds light on the use of impoliteness as a potent tool for asserting dominance, controlling followers, and perpetuating deceitful agendas in the context of religious leadership. Analyzing the impolite expressions employed by the character Jero enables this research to highlight power dynamics and manipulation within Nigerian society, providing insights into the allure of charismatic leaders and the consequences of blind faith. Moreover, this examination of impoliteness as a pragmatic device deepens our appreciation for Soyinka's artistry and his ability to use language as a means of critiquing societal norms and behaviour. In essence, this study contributes to the understanding of rhetoric in literature and its portrayal of complicated human interactions, making it relevant to scholars, readers, and enthusiasts of African drama and literature.

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