

Exploring the Universality of Politeness Strategies in Conjunction with Taboo Topics in Manenberg in Cape Town, South Africa

Tauhieda Brandt
South Africa

Abstract

Universal politeness has been investigated across multidimensional disciplines with anthropologists, ethnomethodologists, interactional sociolinguists, social psychologists, focusing on subcategories such as; linguistics politeness, the performance of socially pre-endorsed polite behavior and so forth. According to Brown & Levinson (1987), politeness strategies, face and face threatening acts (FTA's) are universal, a claim that has been criticized by many (Shi-Xu 2005-2007; Holmes 2006; Eelen, 2001). This article intends to critique Brown and Levinson's (1987) sentiment, in relation to the universality of their politeness theory, by investigating the Kaaps speech community that domiciles on the Cape Flats- a suburb in Cape Town, South Africa. Methodologically, qualitative research methods purely underpinned this study, allowing the author to collect primary data, by employing one-on-one and focus group interviews. Randomly selected participants comprised of twenty (20) males and twenty (20) females between eighteen (18) and sixty-five (65) years. Data analyses employed insights from Eggins and Slade's (2006) conversational analysis, Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), Iedema (2003) and Kress (2010) notions of multimodality. Results highlighted that Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies and FTA's, are not universally applicable concurring with Shi-Xu (2005-2006), Holmes (2006) and Eelen (2001). Additionally, politeness strategies were exemplified to be an ensemble of different codes, used concurrently when discussing challenging subjects. Furthermore, additional research on this subject is required, in order to ascertain the cultural applicability of politeness strategies as well as a cultural group indicator, in order to eradicate the misconstrue of politeness universality. Ultimately, research of this nature would inform government and public notice policy-makers to contextualize their messages to attract and retain the attention of their target audience.

Key words: Politeness Strategies, Face, Face Threatening Acts, Negotiable Taboo, Non-Negotiable Taboo, HIV and AIDS, Coloureds.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Studies have shown that HIV and AIDS campaigns do not usually take into account local language practices of target audience when disseminating information about HIV and AIDS, (Banda and Oketch, 2011; Bok, 2009; Norton and Mutonyi, 2009). The research aim was to conduct a sociolinguistic study of the language practices used by Kaaps speakers that reside on the Cape Flats in Cape Town, South Africa. Special focus was paid to taboo topics and the accompanying politeness strategies.

Available literature on politeness strategies is mostly centered on research conducted in the West (Brown and Levinson 1987) save critiques by Ide (1989), Gu (1990), Nwoye (1992), Janney and Arndt (1993), Mao (1994), Holmes (2006) and Shi-Xu (2007 & 2009). Recently, linguists concede that Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies are not universal. Attempting to apply Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, the author focused on HIV and AIDS preventative campaigns that continually adopt a top-down approach, which employs the Wests' notion of language practices, employing the standard version of the official languages. Adopting, Western language practices and other non-impactful strategies has disastrous effects on ground level, which is obvious by the soaring of HIV and AIDS (cf. WHO, 2016). Studies on the inhabitants of Manenberg predominantly focused gangsterism, drug trafficking, prostitution, low levels of education, women and children's abuse, drug and alcohol abuse, low levels of employment and so forth (Salo 2004, Stone 2002; Willenberg and September 2008), but insofar, no research explored the link between the local language practices and HIV and AIDS prevention. WHO (2016) identified those living with abject socio-economic conditions to be more susceptible to suffer the negative effects of HIV and AIDS. Therefore, it is pivotal that HIV and AIDS campaigns investigate and adopt the local language practices, in order to be effective. It is hoped that the investigation on Kaaps' taboos and politeness strategies will aid HIV and AIDS intervention campaigns to be more effective.

2.0 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF MANENBERG

Manenberg is largely associated with robberies, gangsterism, rape, teenage pregnancies, violence against women, drug and alcohol abuse, drug manufacturers and merchants, 'sugar daddys', impoverishment, prostitution, school drop-outs, poor health, lack of education and overcrowded housing (cf. Salo, 2004; Census, 2011; Stone 2002; Willenberg and September, 2008). Willenberg and September posits that Manenberg is mainly a 'Coloured' community, confirmed by Census (2011) which indicates that 63.8% 'Coloureds' resides there. This figure is contentious, as other races are inconspicuous in Manenberg and by visually estimating, the amount should be approximately 80-90%.

Moreover, Census (2011) indicated that 90.4% of Manenberg's residents live in rented places that belongs to the Cape Town City Council, with a slight percentage of 7.8% that owns the homes they inhabit. More or less 66% of the populaces are unemployed which is possibly be due to the low levels of education amongst others. Statistics shows that only 15.6% completed secondary school and only 0.8% completed tertiary education (Census 2011).

These variables contribute to the community being idle, under-challenged and under-privileged and relents many to affiliate themselves with criminal activity. Gang membership, is said to increase due to many reasons such as boredom, being ostracized, protection, intimidation, symbolic capital and capital gain (Stone,

2002; Salo, 2004; Willenberg and September, 2008). Manenberg's role models include; gang leaders, drug merchants and sex-workers because they appear protected, fearless, and wealthy. This dilemma is representative of most 'Coloured' communities, save some middle to upper class areas. The question, however, is, who are the 'Cape Coloureds'?

McCormick (2002) explains that the Coloured community has vast backgrounds from a variety of places such as Europe, St Helena, Australia, Netherlands, West Indies, Asia, other areas in Africa and indigenous Khoi-San people. These diverse influences are evident in the linguistic practices of the Cape Flats. According to Matthews (2009), 'Coloureds' are largely bilingual and employ Afrikaans and English predominantly, with traces of languages such as Dutch, German, Flemish, Malay, Arabic, isiXhosa and isiZulu. This code was named, Kaaps, by Adam Small in 1974.

Leading from this, it is acknowledgeable that the 'Coloureds', does not usually use Standard English or Standard Afrikaans as their daily speech. Despite this phenomenon, HIV and AIDS information dissemination (when and if apparent) is in Standard English, Standard Afrikaans and Standard isiXhosa. Additionally, the living conditions described previously makes the community highly susceptible to HIV and AIDS. Therefore, meanings negotiated by HIV and AIDS campaigns are lost and/or do not attract and maintain sufficient attention, in order for the community to be adequately informed.

3.0 METHODOLOGICAL MATTERS

3.1 Qualitative Research Design

De Vos (1998:241), explains that qualitative research methods bring forth an all-inclusive tactic with the goal of comprehending social and behavioural meanings, which human beings ascribe to their daily doings and experiences. According to Neuman (2000:122), qualitative research methods allow for an in-depth investigation of matters, such as HIV and AIDS discourses, that arise in a natural flow of social life, to be recorded. Leading from this, qualitative research methods was chosen to conduct the current ethnographic study and informed the primary data collection process from interviews and observations that were conducted.

3.2 Sources of Data

The investigation relied entirely on semi-structured one-on-one interviews and focus groups and on observations. According to May (1997:109), "interviews yield rich insights into people's experiences, opinions, aspirations, attitudes and feelings.". The duration of one-on-one interviews lasted between 25 and 35 minutes and the focus group interviews lasted between 50 minutes and 1 hour and 50 minutes.

3.3 Study Sample

A random sample of the target population was selected to act as the informants. Forty informants were selected based on the pre-requisites of being multilingual, a Manenberg resident, and aged between 18 and 65 years. Both (20) males and (20) females were part of the interview process either as a one-on-one respondent, focus group participant or both. Interviews were recorded by two digital video cameras and a MP3 digital voice recorder. Interviews were held in the homes of the hospitable obliging interviewees in Manenberg.

3.4 Method of Data Analysis

Interviews were transcribed and translated into English. The interviews and observation data acted as the only primary source as research data. Data analysis was governed by conversational analysis and multimodal discourse analysis (Cameron, 2001; Terre Blanche et al., 2006; Eggins and Slade, 2006, Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006; Kress, 2010).

4.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Vetter (1971: 170), in biblical times, sexual topics, domestic issues, finances and so forth, were frowned upon and currently still is to varying degrees depending on contexts variables. What qualifies as taboos is a much-contested debate due to acculturation, globalization and modernity that joins different speech communities. Taboos, generally decided by the West remain relatively, unchallenged, alike politeness strategies. However, Brown and Levinson (1987) has been critiqued for disregarding the existence of traditional collectivistic communities that boasts contrasting politeness strategies that is individualistic in nature.

4.1 Face

The notion of face was coined by Brown and Levinson (1987), stemming from Goffman's (1967) study on face-work where Goffman describes, face as being an image of the self that is delineated in terms of approved social attributes. Brown and Levinson (1978:34) explain that; face has two sides namely; positive (being liked, consulted, approved of and accepted); and negative (the right which people exercise to be independent, not to be interfered with, or requested to do or say certain things) by individuals in their immediate and distant proximity. When these faces are contravened, it is considered to be FTA's. Nwoye (1992) explains that Brown and Levinson's theory on face is flawed, as it does not encompass the social representation of face in a Nigerian, Igbo society that has dual manifestation as group face and individual face which mirrors the Kaaps speech community's sentiment on the afore-said.

4.2 *Face Threatening Acts (FTA's)*

As illustrated above, the preservation of rights and freedom is sometimes challenged, Brown and Levinson (1978) refer to those as, FTAs. These FTA's appear when socially inappropriate behaviour has the potential to demean and disconcert an individual whether positive or negative faced individuals. However, there are means to buffer potential FTA's, by using different linguistic tactics, such as euphemisms, indirect speech, and non-verbal communication cues in the interaction, which in essence constitutes linguistic politeness strategies.

4.3 *Politeness Strategies*

Euphemisms could be categorized as a means of linguistic politeness which is a facet of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies. According to Bowe and Martin (2007:28), politeness strategies refers to behaviour that can preserve an individual's positive or negative self-image by circumventing imposition on a person's freedom. Grundy (2008:12) echoes Brown and Levinson's (1987), as he explains that politeness construes the formulation of an individual's face as a public self-image. Brown and Levinson (1987:5) posited that politeness must always be communicated, if not, the absence would signal no presence of politeness which dismisses inaction or silence as a potential politeness strategy according to these theorists. This sentiment is in line with Brown and Levinson regarding people's faces as human properties, that are largely analogous to their self-image that constantly needs attending by speaker and hearer. However, I agree with Holmes (2006:685), that knowing what people are feeling, thinking or experiencing, at a specific given time and space in a communicative event, is subjective. Another flaw in Brown and Levinson's face theory, is that of negative face, implying that an individual want to be free of imposition and hindrance. In egalitarian societies, such as Kaaps (Dyers 2008, Salo, 2004); Nigerian Igbo (Nwoye, 1992) and Asian (Ide, 1992; Matsumoto, 1989), there are no presence of negative face, because concern is with group interest, not micro individualism. However, the author is of the opinion that an individual may display positive or negative interchangeably as they choose to appropriate either or in different contexts under different circumstances.

Brown and Levinson's (1987) researched politeness in English, Tamil and Tzeltal. The theorists' formula was based on three socio-cultural variables: social distance (D); power (P) and the ranking of the imposition between speakers. Holmes (2006) and Shi-Xu (2005, 2007), contended this notion because it dismissed many socio-cultural elements that vary considerably between the West and East. Shi-Xu (2005) criticized this theory because it lacks universality and addresses a small percentage of the Western paradigm. Shi-Xu continues that politeness strategies should be conducive to the culture and context relevant to a specific space. Janney and Arndt (1993:14) criticized Brown and Levinson's politeness theory because their theory shows strong biasness towards British analytical logic and

North American Social Psychology, excluding Asia and Africa (cf. Ide (1989); Gu (1990); and Mao (1994).

Lwanga-Lumu (1998) also researched whether Brown and Levinson's politeness theory of indirectness applies to a Lungan and Lungan English speech community, that is predominantly part of the Ganda ethnic group that is found in Uganda, Africa. Lwanga-Lumu (1998) ascertains that the politeness strategy of indirectness is not part of the cultural normative linguistic practices of the Lungan and Lungan English speech groups. In her article, she highlights that the data revealed that indirectness is associated with sneaky, trickery and dishonesty, in these speech communities.

The linguist, Gough (1995:125) explained that after investigating the politeness strategy in isiXhosa, a language spoken by a Xhosa ethnic group, that resides in South Africa, that the data alluded that Brown and Levinson's (1987) principles of indirectness, seemed to be (mis)calculated on a restricted cultural English language basis and is not universally applicable. Therefore, in applying the notion of face and politeness strategies to the data, the author took into account the local contexts and cultures in Manenberg.

Although Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies received many criticisms, it sparked an increase in investigations on politeness, specifically in Asia and Africa. Based on this premise, to expand literature on African languages, the author investigated the taboos and politeness strategies (discussed later) situated amidst the Kaaps speech community.

5.0 TABOOS IN CONTEXT

This section focuses on the topics that the community of Manenberg considers taboo. It explores the diametric distinctions in taboo topics. We draw a distinction between taboos that are avoidable and those that are inescapable. The former is classified as negotiable taboos and the latter as non-negotiable taboos. Politeness strategies are discussed in terms of how they are used to de-taboo taboo topics.

5.1 Non-Negotiable Taboos

Non-negotiable taboos are avoided at all costs; for fear of bringing discomfort to oneself and or the interlocutors; fear of being ostracized by your community; fear of not being part of the in-group; and so forth. The common theme of fear (for physical, emotional or social pains) will be posited in this section, which is the governing factor that makes Manenberg's community abstain from the below stated non-negotiable taboo topics.

The first non-negotiable taboo topic that arose from the data, is referred to as; 'abstaining from addressing parents about their children's misconduct or addressing their children'. An informant, Versa (adult 65 years old male) highlighted that:

*You shouldn't ask about **their children** you shouldn't ask about their children you shouldn't ask **questions** to their children you shouldn't point fingers to the children!*

This response was corroborated unanimously by all the informants when questioned about taboo topics, they firstly highlighted this non-negotiable taboo. *It* also expressed the expectation that adults are afforded certain imagined rights over the children of the community. This *right*, no longer exist in the language practices and cultural norms of the community. The data alluded that this non-negotiable taboo, is considered to be a defense mechanism for parents helping them to cope with stressful contexts to raise their offspring in. Residents of Manenberg refrain from entering conversations about other's children, to avoid conflict that might result in verbal, physical confrontation, or at worst, death.

The rate of unemployment increased in the new millennium, which resulted in a huge shift in parenting styles. Previously, symbolic capital was money earned from employment and material goods, but job loss decreased the household income and parents then appeared to use their children's 'good image and personal progress' as symbolic capital. This practice has become more and more socially accepted in the absence of actual capital. Additionally, corporal punishment in schools was abolished in South Africa in 1997 (Rohrs, 2016), which skyrocketed the attention of the abuse of children. This resulted in parents increased protectiveness of their children from strangers disciplining their children (the adverse was the societal norm up until then). Subsequently, a noticeable decline in respect from children and youth towards seniors and authority added to the creation of this Non-Negotiable Taboo, by not approaching or entering into discussions surrounding community members about their children. This taboo possibly was influenced by the change in the constitution and personal finances.

Personal finance is also a Non-Negotiable Taboo. The data inferred that discussions about personal finances and financial sources should never be approached, as the data alluded. One respondent, employed by the South African Police Services (SAPS) explained that she would never confront neighbours about their finances. Beta explains:

*...the moment the poverty steps in and the struggling and the hunger in the families, I pick up that they probably lie about getting money for grants or they lie about getting money for kinna geld [children's government grants/ money], you know, things like that... soo... uhmm yes they **very** cautious you know.*

She also highlighted that the neighbours would neither divulge their need for financial help or enquire about her financial position either. Once again, it points to the heightened concern for appearing to look good, with respect to symbolic capital and the afore-mentioned non-negotiable taboo. Looking good, is not only confined to finances but to the cleanliness of the home too.

Interestingly, an adult male discussed house cleanliness in general that also encompasses male's infidelity according to the respondents, as a Non-Negotiable Taboo. The study's informant, Mister added:

Most things have been said already, but I would add to it generally... the household would be a huge thing if I must come into your house and tell you yor listen wanna laas het jy jou huis uitgevee? [When last have you swept your house?]... man stuff like that just in general everything about the house stuff ... even like the family as well... stuff like van jou man [of your man].

A female informant (Tiema) corroborated Mister's contribution and highlighted the appalling state of men's infidelity, in the community. Leading from this, it indexes a patriarchal society, where men are authoritative for a number of reasons and women remain subservient and unchallenging of their husbands' affairs despite the movement towards an egalitarian society as mentioned previously. This taboo is Non-Negotiable, due to the understanding that it is embarrassing (social fear) and as such, should never be discussed. This phenomenon is mostly found in households, where women live in patriarchal societies, and financially dependent on their husbands. Exceptions exists, however in the minority.

In such societies, women are mostly silent about their husbands' or partners' infidelity as they cannot financially provide for their own basic needs and this is also the case even if they are financially independent. As noted above, Census 2011 posited that the percentages of employed women are higher than that of men which completely contradicts the capital that empowers a patriarchal society. Surprisingly, both gender respondents steered clear of discussions surrounding women's infidelity. Additionally, both gender respondents also concede with respect to, not divulging any kind of knowledge of criminal activity.

The data alluded that divulging knowledge of criminal activity is a serious Non-Negotiable Taboo borne out of fear, due to the status and power criminals hold in their community. This is alluded to by the contribution of one female respondent;

*I think when it comes to people doing crime soes djy wiet **dai pison** het nou **dai pison** se huis in gebriek os {shaking head from side to side} praattie daa oo nie os **gattie** praat wie isittie om te piemppie man van dan wiet djy dai is a **groot** {signaling big with her hands} ding môre taaget hulle djou huis oek dai sit vi **djou** in a ding. Even here by us you can see the people you just keep quiet, some people will say you know you don't talk about that because that dai pison maak djou soema dood of whatever... dais so that's how it goes... [like you know **that person** burgled **that person's** house we [shaking head from side to side] will not speak about who it is to tell tales man because then you know it is going to be a **big** [signaling big with her hands] thing tomorrow they target your house also then it puts **you** in a thing. Even here by us you can see the people will say you know you don't talk about that because that that person will kill you or whatever...].*

Most respondents displayed little or no faith in the protection provided by SAPS, claiming that criminals "own" SAPS and are above the law. This sentiment was shared by all the research informants. The Non-Negotiable taboos above clearly exhibits the fear that governs choice of conversational discourse topics on the Cape

Flats. Contrastingly, there is a branch of taboos that requires has accompanying politeness strategies, that constitute these taboos as Negotiable, which will be discussed in the next section.

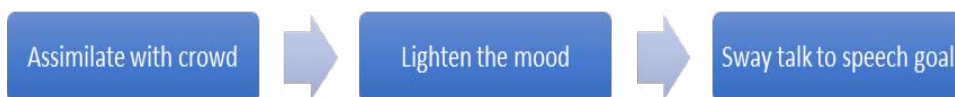
5.2 *Negotiable Taboos*

It is noteworthy that when there is a (accompanying) politeness strategy available will depict whether a taboo is Non-Negotiable or a Negotiable. When taboo topics are inescapable, interlocutors make meaning by negotiating cues to de-taboo taboo topics without contravening the social and cultural norms surrounding taboos. The verbalization of taboos becomes negotiated, which initiates ‘permissible’ taboo dialogue. The following section deals with the negotiated taboos alluded to by the collected data supplied by the Manenberg informants. The different ways to negotiate a taboo that is employed by informants will also be highlighted in this section and referred to as politeness strategies. The politeness strategies are expressed in different codes, named multimodality (Kress, 2010), which will be discussed later. The negotiable taboos that have been unearthed in the data are as follows: confronting a person, talking about sex, sexual organs, HIV and AIDS status and the cause of death (HIV and AIDS suspicions) and related topics. Extracts will be discussed to illustrate the presence of these negotiable taboos accompanied by the respective politeness strategies.

5.2.1 *Confronting Someone as a Negotiable Taboo*

The researcher identified that confronting a familiar or strange person about a sensitive topic is a negotiable taboo, and depending on the manner in which this issue is undertaken, it will be regarded as a societal transgression or not. The respondents agreed that should confrontation be required; it should be done when the two parties are alone. They indicated that an audience may pressurize the discussants and make resolve or information dissemination strained. The majority of the respondents agreed that confronting someone about a sensitive topic is laudable, except three women who posited that people should *let sleeping dogs lie*. However, should it be difficult to isolate the person in question from the audience, the addressor would resort to indirect speech. Indirect speech in a polite manner appears in the below format in Manenberg:

Figure1. Polite indirect speech model.



The success of indirect speech, depends on whether the targeted person realizes that the goal topic is meant for him or her. Unanimously, the informants agreed that the addressee will receive the message.

5.2.2 Sex and Sexual Organs as Negotiable Taboos

Discussing sex and sexual organs is an age-old taboo topic that persists. Societies differ by regulating sexual behaviour with respect to issues such as appropriate partners, sexual space, frequency of sex, suitable times to engage in sex, premarital sex, virginity, sex in marriage, and so on.

In the adult interviews, respondents spoke covertly about sex and employed multi-semiotics (Kress 2010) such as different intonations, facial expressions, gestures, euphemisms and metaphors and so forth to express themselves. Using multi-semioticity to refer to sexual matters indicates that this discussion is laden with politeness strategies. On the contrary, the over 55 year olds claimed to be comfortable speaking about sex, ironically, they abstained from sex talk in the interview except, to denounce being forced to discuss sex and sex organs with scholars, due to their scholarly curriculum. They denounce this practice as being, unreligious and attribute the fall in morale, high teenage pregnancy rate, and HIV and AIDS, to this sexual overtness practice.

In contrast, the youth appeared to speak comfortably about sex. Alike the adults, they made use of multi-semioticity that comprises different intonations, facial expressions, gestures, euphemisms and metaphors and so forth to express themselves in this regard. The sexual terminology employed by the youth appears to be employed when discussions about sex and related topics took place within their peer groups but subjected to the relationship and social distance, but 'power' and speakers rank was not an influencing variable (Brown and Levinson 1987). It could be inferred that a correlation exists between the casualness of discussing sex and HIV and AIDS as the younger respondents have been earmarked by the WHO (2016) to be a high risk age group.

5.2.3 HIV and AIDS as a Negotiable Taboo

The respondents of Manenberg consider HIV and AIDS to be a taboo topic. An adult male explained that when HIV and AIDS is discussed, the audience will label the interlocutors or their loved ones, as victims of the disease. Therefore, the community abstains from discussing HIV and AIDS. However, since this taboo is negotiable, there have been various de-tabooing processes and politeness strategies that makes it possible to converse about the virus and related issues by employing gestures, metaphors and euphemisms to de-taboo a taboo.

5.2.4 Cause of Death (AIDS related) as a Negotiable Taboo

Many taboos exist about death and the dead which varies from culture to culture (Giger *et al.*, 2006). Taboos about the dead, mainly focus on the processes that have to be followed after the death, such as the corpse viewing, burial procedure, touching of the corpse, funeral attendees' behavior and so forth. Existing taboos also serve to regulate the behaviour of the loved ones left behind, such as when is appropriate to enter into new relationships, how the wealth left behind by the deceased should be distributed and spent, the colour of clothes the remaining spouse is supposed to wear, duration of mourning period and so on. In Manenberg, the cause of death, naturally, would be enquired about, by funeral attendees. However, since the onslaught of HIV and AIDS with the accompanying stigmas, the cause of death has become a negotiable taboo and funeral attendees have to exercise discretion and confidentiality not to make the cause of death an enquiry or a topic. Should this taboo be breached, a 'euphemistic' illness type will be offered as an explanation for the cause of death, in order to elicit the seemingly culturally politeness strategy for example; all types of cancer, sudden death, natural causes, tuberculosis, lupus, leukemia and so forth.

6.0 POLITENESS STRATEGIES

The author acknowledges that the politeness strategies identified in this section, are understood, practiced and recognized solely within the Kaaps speech community and in no manner purports it to be universally applicable. Brown and Levinson's impression of politeness is that the strategic conflict-avoidance ability functions in light of a social role, to potentially manage possible belligerence between interlocutors (Brown & Levinson, 1987:1). However, Matsumoto (1989:218) highlighted that cultures where the individual is more focused on adhering to the societal and cultural norms of expected behaviour as opposed to maximizing self-benefits, ceases Brown and Levinson's negative face to display importance or presence. The data that was collected presented that, politeness acts are tacitly agreed upon by the speakers of Kaaps, as they all adhere to the politeness laws unofficially scripted by the community. These politeness strategies are not stagnant but are amended and blended as Kaaps, as a code evolves so does it impact the politeness strategy type to de-taboo a negotiable taboo. However, there are taboos that unfortunately are almost impossible to de-taboo, which is the Non-Negotiable taboos.

6.1 Politeness for Non-Negotiable Taboos

The data inferred that the only politeness strategy, that is practiced when faced with a non-negotiable taboo, is avoidance. The non-negotiable taboos mentioned above appears to be most feared by informants and hence, they do not attempt to negotiate a de-tabooing politeness strategy, to address these non-negotiable

taboos. As Brown and Levinson (1987) explained, politeness is present in social interaction and can be achieved through complete avoidance. By addressing a non-negotiable taboo, according to Brown and Levinson's model, the responsibility is on the speaker to ascertain what face the hearer is displaying. This sentiment is corroborated by the informants of Manenberg, as they unanimously acknowledged that it is their obligation not to transgress or threaten the face of their audience by initiating talk on non-negotiable taboos which was made prevalent in the research data.

6.2 Politeness Strategies for Negotiable Taboos

This section focuses on the politeness strategies that are used as de-tabooing methods meant to ensure that talk on negotiable taboos may flow without causing conflict. Brown and Levinson's (1987) model on face and FTA's are individualistic in nature, and considers the speaker to be a rational agent that is unimpeded by social practices and is free to choose egocentric, asocial and aggressive intentions. However, the data supplied by the respondents in Manenberg allude to the phenomenon that both the speaker and the hearer constantly negotiates meaning in a communicative event, in order to maintain a harmonious interaction. Cognizance should be taken, that people might be experiencing positive and negative face, at the same time, in a single communicative event, depending on what was said, and by whom, and who the onlooker/s were. However, consensus exists amongst the research participants related to adopting one or more of the below-explained politeness strategies and also using them interchangeably in order to maintain an unhindered and positive outcome between interlocutors in a communicative event, such as a *laissez-faire* (let it be / going with the flow) approach.

6.2.1 *Going with the Flow (Acting Ignorant) as Politeness Strategy*

It was established from the interviews that untruths are far more prevalent in Manenberg's discourses than Grice's (1975) contribution of presence of the maxim of quality (truth value) in order to have communication between two or more people be hindrance free. The respondents were questioned as to how they react to a situation when they aware that there's a person living with HIV and AIDS (PLWH/A) or if HIV and AIDS was the cause of death and they were informed otherwise. The majority of the informants stated that they *go with the flow* and this means that they abstain from threatening the claimant's face by leaving the claim unchallenged. This politeness strategy is in line with the Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness model on refraining from threatening a speaker's positive face, which means that the speaker wants to be well-liked and believed by society. The politeness strategy of *going with the flow* (letting it be / acting ignorant), brings into the relativeness of the maxim of quality that is concerned with truth value. According to Grice (1975), politeness strategy is attained by conforming to

one of four conversational maxims, namely: manner, quantity, relation and quality. Grice claims that these maxims should be adhered to in order to guarantee the smooth running of a social communicative interaction. Leading from this, Grice neglects the phenomenon that the individual's psychological make-up influences their actions and that falsehood is told for many reasons such as: to save their personal or family's reputation, to be accepted socially, for protection, to establish and maintain relationships, to be part of the conversation, to be given attention, to gain the latest information on gossip, and so on as was inferred, by the data collected, in Manenberg.

Furthermore, the author identifies that the smooth running of a communicative interaction is not solely reliant on the speaker, as Paul Grice suggested with his conversational maxims. The author considers that Grice (1975) and Brown and Levinson (1987) have erroneously placed the responsibility of conflict-free communication solely on the speaker's intuition or psychic ability to ascertain the face displayed by the receiver. They disregard the responsibility of the audience that also needs to be forthcoming, pliable and suggestive within a communicative event to facilitate the unhindered communication. Leading from this, it is the author's conclusion that the smooth running of communication is the responsibility of both the audience and the speaker.

6.2.2 Sarcasm as Politeness Strategy

Numerous studies across disciplines posited that sarcasm has been considered to be a form of speech, that only witty individuals and those with a high IQ employ for jesting, as a passive aggressive technique and so forth (Chin, 2011). Sarcasm is also a linguistic tool, that is used to negotiate meaning in a communicative event, when direct speech would be considered as the transgression of a social norm, and threatening the audience's face. Sarcasm has been highlighted by the 66% of the respondents (predominantly the younger respondents coupled with some seniors), as a politeness strategy to be employed when a negotiable taboo needs to be de-tabooed. On the other hand, 33% posited that the respondents (senior respondents) do not understand sarcasm and often their intended messages have been compromised and undervalued. This sentiment is corroborated by Salo (2004) that indicated that the education level in Manenberg is low, as discussed previously. Therefore, the 33% highlighted that they feel, that their sarcasm, as a politeness strategy is wasted on the masses. Leading from this, it is noteworthy that Kaaps speakers have a repertoire of politeness strategies to index should the employment of one fail. Politeness strategies are useful when understood by both parties which concurs with my previous sentiment that the smooth running of a communicative event is the responsibility of all stakeholders.

6.2.3 Gossiping as Politeness Strategy

Generally, gossiping is an action that is associated with people that discusses other people's private affairs, with the objective of ill-intent, or passing the time, and so on. Ironically, in Manenberg, gossip appears to be used as a politeness strategy. The informants were questioned about the manner in which they were informed or in which manner would they inform others about PLWH/A. The respondents claimed that gossiping in hushed tones, despite the absence of the discussed party, was highlighted as a politeness strategy. Furthermore, it can be deduced that the normative gossiping, has been reformulated to a vehicle of HIV and AIDS information dissemination, for the protection of PLWH/A and those potentially vulnerable, to the disease. Despite normative gossiping being a common linguistic practice, which could possibly be attributed to the high unemployment rate, and many other socio-economic vices (cf. Salo 2004), it seems to have a protective tendency, according to the respondents. However, gossiping acts as a constituent of politeness strategies that are employed by Kaaps community members.

6.2.4 Language Convergence as Politeness Strategy

Language convergence appears to be a politeness strategy not only related to negotiable taboos, but also to language practice in general. 'Coloured' people living in Cape Town and especially on the Cape Flats, predominantly speak Kaaps, as mentioned elsewhere. Kaaps is a hybrid language, which is an ensemble that has unique grammatical structures (Brandt, 2014) that has influences from English and Afrikaans, amongst many other codes. For example; a pseudo-named respondent, Versa explained that he first establishes which code would be suitable for his goal, and which code the audience would understand best. Versa highlighted that he will base his linguistic choice on these two variables, before he chooses the best code to communicate to his audience. Interestingly, an adult male, whose mother tongue is Kaaps, exercises this politeness strategy of language convergence to those that he needs to communicate with, to accommodate the receivers and to ensure comprehension of his message.

Brown and Levinson (1987) explained that the speaker is a rational agent that always makes choices, in order to refrain from threatening the positive or negative face of the interlocutors. Versa illustrates, that the speaker converges his language to suit his or her recipient, as a politeness strategy to de-taboo a taboo topic, in order to ease any possible linguistic transgression. Similarly, language divergence appears to be a politeness strategy as well.

6.2.5 Language Divergence as a Politeness Strategy

The respondents exercise language divergence to show respect to elders or to divert talk on a negotiable taboo topic from young children. In the initial stages of the interviews, cross-generation informants shared consensus about being

communicatively overt, with respect to HIV and AIDS. Informants were later questioned, by the interviewer, on the impact of conversation about HIV and AIDS, sexual topics, and gossip, by a surprise intrusion of an interlocutor or interlocutors, unmatched to their specific generation or in-group. Interestingly at this point, informants' responses differed.

Contestation arose amongst the responses between the two different generation groups and intra-generationally, with regards to the frequency of talk on HIV and AIDS, as well as related topics. According to some of the youth informants, HIV and AIDS is seldom discussed amongst their peers, and should they be sporadically surprised by an adult or younger child, they resort to communicating in a different code, which is 'unfamiliar' to the unwelcomed party, which in essence is language divergence.

On the other hand, the younger research counterparts identified sex, as a constant discussion in their daily social interaction with their peers, but should they be surprised by an unwelcomed guest (younger or older), they would also opt to employ language divergence. The different codes that the respondents identified for performing this politeness strategy, are Gayla (Cape Flats gay community dialect), biology jargon or basic English accompanied with related tone that would confuse a 'conversational intruder' about the topic that was under discussion. Unanimously, the respondents' explained that they resort to language divergence, to show respect to elders and not expose young children to matters unsuitable for their age. However, the adults predominantly employ the politeness strategy of remaining silent, which is associated as multi-semiotic politeness strategies which contrasts with Brown and Levinson (1987:5) that politeness always needs to be communicated.

7.0 MULTIMODAL EMPLOYMENT IN POLITENESS STRATEGIES

The researcher established that multimodal communication is present in high-context (verbal and non-verbal communication taken into regard) speech communities, such as Manenberg. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) explained that multimodal communication is the combination of two or more codes co-appearing for one communicative objective. Politeness strategies in this community comprises multi-semiotics. The goal of the multimodal politeness strategies appears to replace or minimize potentially vulgar or profane verbal language with gestures, facial expressions, speech tempos, intonation and silence. This multimodal politeness practice is used cross-generationally by both genders when faced with negotiable taboos. This high-context speech community appears to place more focus on the manner in which a message is negotiated and conveyed, rendering the content, secondary to aid friction-free communication.

Furthermore, the use of hands is a constant amongst participants and employed for various reasons, namely: emphasis, signage of words and profane language, indexing the most appropriate terminology from their schemata, code-switching

and displaying in-group membership. However, in this study, the use of hands is deliberately used to signify various elements of profanity which respondents prefer not to verbalize as a means to perform politeness in the presence of the authors. However, the author suspects that in her absence they would freely swear and curse as it is well known fact that it makes part of 1) Manenberg's language practices 2) symbolizes in-group membership and 3) voice and agency. Given that no linguistic forms are inherently imbued with politeness or impoliteness, it can be hypothesized that cursing may actually be a manifestation of politeness within a given community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Eckert & MacConnell-Ginet, 1992 in Dynel, 2011). Swear words (profane language) within communication serve many goals such as, sign of (im)politeness, indexical of a particular identity, a display of in-group membership and so on.

8.0 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the author set out to critique Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory on politeness strategies and face threatening acts by researching HIV and AIDS discourses on the Cape Flats in Cape Town, South Africa. The author focused on taboos and politeness strategies employed as a language practice by the Kaaps speech community. The distinction between non-negotiable taboos and negotiable taboos was discussed. Non-negotiable taboos have been demonstrated to predominantly employing one politeness strategy, avoidance. A discussion was held on negotiable taboos, which are taboos that have de-tabooing strategies in place, like politeness strategies. It has been noted that such de-tabooing is a meaning-making resource that eases talk surrounding a negotiable taboo; *it* ensures that a taboo is discussed in a communicative event, without undermining the norms and culture of the society and abstaining from threatening any party's face. It has also been noted that consensus between the youth and adults exists with respect to politeness strategies, so talk and politeness is understood between these age groups. This existing consensus also facilitates that talks between these generations occur minimally unhindered.

9.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The author recommends that more research be done in respect of Non-Negotiable and Negotiable taboos that are contextually applicable and their accompanying politeness strategies. Research of this nature, will contribute to the contestation of the universalization of theories propagated by the West. Also such research will facilitate the minimizing of linguistic transgressions made by public notice policy-makers and government for various linguistic landscapes for example; medical campaigns; information dissemination campaigns and marketing campaigns.

REFERENCES

- Banda, F. & Oketch, O. 2011. Localizing HIV/AIDS discourses in a rural Kenyan community. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*. 46 (1) 19-37.
- Blum-Kulka, S. 1987. Indirectness and politeness in requests: same or different? *Journal of Pragmatics* II: 131-14.
- Blum-Kulka, S. 1989. *Playing it safe: The role of conventionality in indirectness*. In Blum- Kulka, S. House and Kasper 1989a. 37-70.
- Blum-Kulka, S, House, J. & Kasper, G. 1989. *Investigating cross-cultural pragmatics. Requests and Apologies*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation.
- Bok, S. 2009. A multimodal analysis of selected national Lovelife HIV/AIDS prevention campaign texts. M.A Dissertation. Unpublished. Bellville: University of Western Cape.
- Bowe, H. & Martin, K. 2007. *Communications across cultures: Mutual understanding in a global world*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.
- Brandt, T. 2014. *A sociolinguistic study of euphemisms on HIV/AIDS by Manenberg's youth and adults*. M.A Dissertation. Unpublished. Bellville: University of Western Cape.
- Brown, P. & Levinson, S. C. 1987. *Politeness: Some universals in language use*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cameron, D. 2001. *Working with spoken discourse*. London: Sage Publications.
- City of Cape Town. *City of Cape Town Census*. 2011. Accessed 5 September 2018 [Online] Available at: <http://www.capetown.gov.za/censusinfo/Census2001-new/Suburbs/Suburbs%20Index.htm>.
- Chin, R. 2011. "The Science of Sarcasm? Yeah, Right." *Smithsonian Magazine*. Accessed on 14 November 2018 online: <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/the-science-of-sarcasm-yeah-right-25038/>
- De Kadt, E. 1992. Requests as speech acts in Zulu. *South African Journal of African Languages* 12 (3): 101-106.
- De Kadt, E. 1994. Towards a model for politeness in Zulu. In Bouton, Lawrence F. (ed.) *South African Journal of African Languages* 14(3) 103- 112.
- De Kadt, E. 1995. The cross - cultural study of directives: Zulu as a non - typical language *South African Journal of Linguistics*, Supplement 27: 45 -72.
- De Vos, D. 1998. *Rediscovering American values: The foundations of our freedom for the 21st Century*. New York: Routledge.
- Dynel, M. 2011. You talking to Me? The viewer as a ratified listener to pragmatics film discourse. *Journal of Pragmatics*. 43(6):1628-1644.
- Eelen, G. 2001. *A critique of politeness theories*. St John's Publishers, Manchester.
- Eggs, S. & Slade, D. 2006. *Analysing casual conversation*. London: Equinox.
- Giger, J., Davidhizar, R. & Fordham, P. 2006. Multicultural and multi-ethnic considerations and advanced directives: Developing cultural competency. *Journal of Cultural Diversity*, 13(1):3-9.

- Goffman, E. 1967/1999. On Face-Work: An analysis of ritual elements in social interaction. *The Discourse Reader*. London: Routledge.
- Gough, D. H. 1995. Some problems for politeness theory: deference and directness in Xhosa performative requests. In *South African Journal of African Languages* 15 (3): 123-125.
- Grice, P.H. 1975. Logic and conversation. In Cole and Morgan 1975: 41-58. *Syntax and Semantics, Voi.3: Speech Acts*. 59-82. New York: Academic Press.
- Grundy, P. 2008. *Doing Pragmatics*. London: Hodder Education.
- Gu, Y. 1990. Politeness Phenomena in Modern Chinese. *Journal of Pragmatics* 14: 237-257.
- Holmes, J. 2006. Politeness Strategies as Linguistics Variables. In *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, 9:684.
- Ide, S. 1989. Formal forms and discernment: Two neglected aspects of linguistic politeness. *Multilingua* 8: 223-248.
- Iedema, R. 2003. Multimodality, Resemiotization: Extending the analysis of discourse as multi-semiotic practice. *Visual Communication*. London: Sage Publications.
- Janney, R. J. & Horst, A. 1993. Universality and relativity in cross-cultural politeness research: A historical perspective. *Multilingua* 12 (I): 13-50.
- Konrad, E. 1992. *Trends in linguistics: Studies and monographs 59. Politeness in language studies: Its history, theory and practice*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Kress, G. 2010. *Multimodality: A social semiotic approach to contemporary communication*. London: Routledge.
- Kress, G & Van Leeuwen, T. 2006. *Multimodal Discourse: The modes and media of contemporary communication*. London: Arnold.
- Mao, L. M. R. 1994. Beyond politeness theory: 'Face' revisited and renewed. *Journal of Pragmatics*. 21 (451 -486) North- Holland.
- Matsumoto, Y. 1989. Politeness and conversation universals- Observation from Japanese. *Multilingua* 8: 207-222.
- Matthews, W. 2009. *Multimodality and negotiation of Cape Flats identity*. MA Dissertation. (Unpublished). Bellville: University of Western Cape.
- May, T. 1997. *Social Research: Issues, methods and process*. 3rd Edition. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- McCormick, K. 2002. *Language in Cape Town's District Six*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Neuman, L. 2000. *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Norton, B. & Mutonyi, H. 2010. Languaging for life: African youth talk back to HIV/AIDS research. 2010. *Language Policy*. 9:45-63.
- Nwoye, O .G. 1992. Linguistic politeness and sociocultural variation of the notion of face. *Journal of Pragmatics* 18: 309-328.

- Rohrs, S. 2016. Twenty years in, corporal punishment is alive and well. *Daily Maverick*. Accessed on April 7 2017 online: <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2016-03-14-twenty-years-on-corporal-punishment-in-schools-is-alive-and-well/#.WO-IXVOGP-Y>
- Salo, E. 2004. *Respectable mothers, tough men and good daughters producing persons in Manenberg township South Africa*. Unpublished Doctoral thesis. Atlanta: Emory University.
- Searle, J. R. 1975. Indirect speech acts. In Cole and Morgan 1975. *Syntax and Semantics, vol.3: Speech Acts*. 59-82. New York: Academic Press. Searle, John R. 1979. *Expression and meaning: Studies in the theory of speech acts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Stone, G. 2002. The lexicon and sociolinguistic codes of the working-class Afrikaans-speaking Cape Peninsula Coloured community. In Mesthrie, R. (Ed). (2002). *Language in South Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Terre Blanche, M., Durrheim, K. and Kelly, K. 2006. First steps in qualitative data analysis. *Research in practise: Applied methods for the social sciences*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town.
- Vetter, H. 1971. *Language behaviour and communication: An Introduction*. Itasca: Peacock.
- Werkhofer, K. T. 1992. Traditional and modern views: the social constitution and the power of politeness. In Watts, Ide. and Ehlich. 155 - 199.
- Willenberg, I. & September, R. 2008. *Profile of the Manenberg community*. Unpublished Report. Bellville: University of Western Cape.
- World Health Organisation. (WHO). 2001. Accessed on 15 February 2017. [Online]. Available at: www.who.int/hiv/en/
- Xu, S. 2005. *A cultural approach to discourse*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Xu, S. 2007. *Discourse as a cultural struggle*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.