



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



## Analysis of politeness strategies in kĩmwĩmbĩ (E531) condolence messages

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### Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the politeness strategies used by condolers in expressing condolence in Kĩmwĩmbĩ. Death is a natural part of human life. Regardless of its cause, it is usually very painful and therefore, losing a loved one causes deep feelings of loss and sorrow not only to the family of the deceased but also to friends and relatives. The main purpose of expressing condolence is to convey sympathy or compassion to the bereaved. Yule (2017) argues that in linguistic politeness, face is the most important concept and claims that a person's face in pragmatics is their public self-image. In expressing condolence, condolers threaten the face of the bereaved but also employ politeness strategies to formulate messages in order to save the bereaved's face. The study adopted the qualitative and quantitative research approaches and used Brown and Levinson (1978) Politeness Theory. Politeness theory focuses on 'saving face' which is a key aspect in politeness. The study was conducted in Chogoria Division, Maara Subcounty, Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. Purposive sampling was used to sample twenty condolence messages for analysis. A guiding card was used to categorize the condolence utterances with politeness strategies. The data was analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively providing explanation of these politeness strategies and giving their frequencies and percentages in tables. It was established that the four politeness strategies proposed in the politeness theory are used in expressing condolence in Kĩmwĩmbĩ, with positive politeness strategy being the most used. The findings add to the existing knowledge in pragmatics, especially on politeness and burial discourse. Similarly, the study provides data which can be used to compare with other languages hence aiding in generalizing conclusions of condolence speech act.

**Keywords:** Condolence; Politeness; Politeness Strategies; Politeness Theory; Kĩmwĩmbĩ

### 1 Introduction

Kĩmwĩmbĩ is one of the dialects of Meru cluster of Bantu languages spoken in the Eastern parts of Kenya. In the new updated Guthrie (1971) list of Bantu languages classification, Maho (2009) encoded Kĩmwĩmbĩ as E531. Kĩmwĩmbĩ is mainly spoken in Chogoria Division of Maara sub-county in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya.

Holmes (2001) argues that politeness is expressing concern for the feelings of others. He posits that being polite means expressing respect and avoiding offending the person the speaker or writer is talking to. However, at times speakers find themselves in situations where whatever they say amounts to face threatening acts since sometimes, depending on the nature of the conversation, they are unavoidable. Brown and Levinson (1978) argue that every speech act is a face threatening act (FTA). That is, it has the potential to create a threat to either the hearer's or the speaker's negative or positive face. Face threatening acts can threaten one's positive face which indicates personality and includes the need that their self-image is appreciated and approved. FTAs can threaten the negative face which refers to the need for freedom of action and freedom from being imposed. The participants in a conversation are often forced to do the face threatening acts even though they wanted to maintain each other's face. At the same time, they use politeness strategies to formulate messages in a bid to maintain the hearer's face when face threatening acts are unavoidable or desired in an utterance. They usually try to avoid damaging face by adjusting the choice of words in a bid to protect the

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interlocutors from feeling unease. Brown and Levinson (1978) outline the following politeness strategies: negative politeness, bald-on record, positive politeness and off-record (indirect).

Negative politeness strategy is geared towards the hearer's negative face wants. This strategy is avoidance-based in that it seeks to avoid imposition on the hearer. By avoiding imposition, the strategy ensures that there is reduction in the risk of face threat to the hearer. The strategy therefore avoids interference with the freedom of action of the hearer. Negative politeness strategies include apologizing, use of questions or hedges, being indirect, being pessimistic, minimizing the imposition and giving deference.

Positive politeness strategy is oriented towards minimizing the threat to the hearer's positive face wants. This strategy ensures that the hearer feels good about themselves, their possessions or interests, and are most usually used in situations where the interlocutors know each other fairly well, or when the positive face needs or self-worth of an individual have to be met.

Bald-on record strategy does not attempt to reduce the threat to the face of the hearer. It applies when an utterance is said in the clearest and the most direct way possible without any attempt to save the addressee's face. The FTA is direct and concise and cannot be interpreted in any other way. It is the strategy that is the least polite and it involves saying something directly as it is without caring about the other's face. Bald-on record strategies include alerting, expression of maximum efficiency, advice, showing little or no desire to maintain someone's face, metaphorical urgency for emphasis, welcoming and doing the face threatening act in the interest of the hearer.

Off-record (indirect) strategy is redress that is used in a situation where the speaker desires to do an FTA but wants to avoid the responsibility of doing it. This involves expressing something general or different from the speaker's true meaning and since the FTA can be interpreted in many different ways, it is left upon the hearer to interpret the relevant meaning of the utterance thus removing the speaker from the potential of threatening the face of the hearer. The off-record strategies include use of hints, being vague, use of rhetorical questions, being sarcastic, use of metaphor.

It is culturally expected that when one hears about the death of their loved one, they will express their grief through condolence. Zunin and Zunin (2007) posit that the term condolence originates from the Latin roots: "*con*" which means "together" and "*dolere*" which means "to grieve". Mwihi (2004) defines condolence as acts of active, conscious support and encouragement when a misfortune happens adding that they reduce the pain of the affected. According to Smith (2010), condolences express sorrow or regret to people whose loved one has died. Choosing the right words in such situations is important for both the bereaved and the condoler since the bereaved is grief-stricken and shocked.

Offering condolence is common to all societies and cultures, but the how of condolence differs depending on the culture of the deceased's speech community. Though there is a difference between culture and language, they are related and that is why context is imperative as far as language use is concerned. Condolers show concern for the bereaved through the employment of their culturally acceptable mourning expressions in condolence. Therefore, it would be useful to look at the speech act of expressing condolence culturewise (Al-Shboul & Maros, 2013).

Since condolence is a face threatening act (FTA), its communication is sensitive as it involves imposition (Brown & Levinson, 1978). Moghaddam (2012) posits that when expressing condolence, the speakers need to be careful to say only those words that are relevant and meaningful so as to avoid being offensive to the recipients. The condoler's message needs to have expression of care, hope and love so as to ensure that the bereaved finds some consolation in the words expressed. This study therefore focuses on politeness strategies that are used by condolers in expressing condolence in Kĩmwĩmbĩ.

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## 2 Research Methodology

This study used both the qualitative and the quantitative research approaches. The study was conducted in Chogoria Division, Maara Subcounty, Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya, the residence for native speakers of Kĩmwĩmbĩ, the language that was under investigation. Purposive sampling was used to sample three burial planning meetings and three burial ceremonies to be used in the study. Twenty condolence messages (CM) were purposively sampled for analysis. The researcher then transcribed and translated into English the condolence utterances with politeness strategies (PST) for analysis. The data was analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively providing explanation of these strategies and giving their descriptive statistics in tables.

## 2.1 Politeness strategies employed in expressing condolence in Kĩmwĩmbĩ

### 2.1.1 Positive Politeness Strategies

#### 2.1.1.1 Notice, Attend to Hearer (His interests, wants, needs, goods)

This strategy suggests that the speaker should notice all aspects of the condition of the hearer including remarkable possessions, noticeable changes and anything else that looks as though the hearer would want noticed by the speaker and approve of it (Brown and Levinson, 1978). The speaker, in using this strategy, notices something positive about the hearer and expresses his admiration about it. This politeness strategy aims at redressing the hearer's positive face wants thus making him feel good and appreciated. In using this strategy, condolers in Kĩmwĩmbĩ condolence messages make a general comment on the state of the bereaved with an aim of redressing their positive face wants thereby making them feel good.

<b>CM 16: PST 6</b> Na nĩuntũ nĩmbĩjĩ bũrĩa wĩ kĩo, ũkamenyeera aana baba baku.	And because I know how hardworking you are, you will take care of these children of yours.
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In the utterance, the condoler makes the widow feel good about herself by noticing and appreciating her hard work. The widow's face is threatened when the condoler asks her to take good care of the children now that the husband has passed on. The widow could feel pressured to do this but by praising her saying how hardworking she is, this pressure is lessened and the widow will feel appreciated and therefore take the responsibility feeling that she is equal to the task and without feeling imposed upon to do it.

#### 2.1.1.2 Include both Speaker and Hearer in the Activity

This strategy involves the speaker using an inclusive 'we' or 'let's' forms when he means 'me' or 'you' thus involving him and the hearer in the activity and as a result redressing face threatening acts of imposition to the hearer. (Brown and Levinson, 1978). The condolers use this strategy to show that the activity at hand or the loss is not just the deceased's family affair but it is a collective responsibility. Through this strategy, the condolers in Kĩmwĩmbĩ condolence messages show cooperation with the bereaved.

<b>CM 5: PST 1</b> Nĩ twendelee kũririkana famĩlĩ ĩno na maoya nĩkenda bagĩa inya.	Let us continue remembering this family in prayers so that they can get strength.
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In this utterance the condoler uses the inclusive 'us' to involve himself and the other mourners in the activity of praying for the family of the deceased. The condoler avoids directly referring to the mourners by use of the pronoun 'you'. By so doing, the condoler reduces the effect of the FTA of request to the mourners present. The mourners will therefore not feel imposed upon to pray for the family of the deceased since the condoler will also cooperate with them in doing so.

#### 2.1.1.3 Give or Ask for Reasons

This is another strategy of including the hearer in the activity by the speaker giving reasons as to why he wants whatever he wants. By the speaker including the hearer in his reasoning, the hearer is led to see how reasonable the speaker's FTA is. The speaker explains why the addressee needs to do or not to do a certain action (Brown and Levinson, 1978). This strategy is mostly used by condolers when they want the bereaved to behave in a certain way or to do or not to do a certain thing which they may not be comfortable with or when the condoler wants them to buy his/ her ideas.

<b>CM 5: PST 3</b> No ĩndĩ twabaririkana na maoya na Ngai nawe atonye mwananyi ũu baba wao aerete rĩ, maũntũ monthe makethwa me sasawa.	But if we remember them in prayers and then God fills the gap that their father has left, all things will be okay.
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The condoler makes an FTA by requesting the mourners to pray for the family of the deceased in this utterance. He further gives the reason for this request which serves to save their positive face. By telling them to pray for the family so that all will be well for them, the mourners will understand the importance of the request because they want the best for the family.

#### 2.1.1.4 Intensify Interest to Hearer

Brown and Levinson (1978) aver that this strategy involves the speaker communicating to the hearer that he does share some of his wants by intensifying the interest of his (speaker's) contributions to the conversation to the hearer through 'making a good story'. This pulls the addressee into the middle of what is being talked about thus increasing the

addressee's interest to it. By so doing, the threat that would have been caused by the act is warded off because the hearer will become interested in the story.

<b>CM 20: PST 3</b> Nūū atijī rūgono rwa airītu barīa ikūmi? Batano baarī baūgī na batano baritu.	Who doesn't know the story of the ten virgins? Five were wise and five were foolish.
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The condoler intensifies interest of the mourners and the bereaved family when she tells them of the story in the Bible about the ten virgins from Matthew 25: 1-13. In the story, ten virgins took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were wise and so took their lamps with extra oil in jars. The other five who were foolish did not take extra oil with them. Unfortunately, the bridegroom got late. When it was announced that the bridegroom had almost arrived, they woke up to light their lamps. The oil of the foolish ones had run out. They asked for some from the wise ones but they refused. They decided to go buy the oil. When they were on their way, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with the bridegroom for the wedding banquet and the door was shut. Later the other five virgins came back and requested the bridegroom to open for them but he refused telling them that he didn't know them. Later in the message, the condoler requests them to live prepared because they do not know the day or the hour when Jesus would come, which is an FTA. By first intensifying their interest by telling them about the story of the ten virgins, the condoler lessens the effect of the FTA such that they will be willing to do the request without feeling coerced to do it.

#### 2.1.1.5 Be Optimistic

This strategy is used when the speaker expresses hope that the hearer will cooperate with him to obtain something. The speaker assumes that his wants and those of the addressee are mutual and therefore the addressee will cooperate with the speaker to obtain them since it will be for their mutual benefit (Brown and Levinson, 1978)

<b>CM 6: PST 5</b> Kambītīkie famīlī būkendelea gūtrust Ngai nīūntū nīwe wenka aūmba kūbūoreria.	Let me hope that the family members will continue trusting upon God because He is the only one who can comfort you.
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The loss of a loved one brings sorrow and sadness to the family of the deceased. In this example, the condoler uses positive politeness strategy of 'be optimistic' in urging members to continue trusting God for He will comfort them. At these difficult moments, they really need that comfort. Since the condoler wants the best for the family, he hopes that they will cooperate with him so that they get this comfort because it is for their own good.

#### 2.1.1.6 Use of in-group Identity Markers

Brown and Levinson (1978) posit that in-group identity markers show solidarity by conveying in-group membership. They indicate that both the speaker and the hearer are members of the same group through mutual knowledge. They help speakers to claim common ground with the hearer thus avoiding any threat to hearer's face. By the condolers using in-group identity markers, inclusiveness of the interlocutors is assured. These in-group identity markers include address forms such as mom, brother, sweetheart, babe, guys; in-group language or dialect such as codeswitching; contraction and ellipsis; and use of jargon or slang. Condolers use this strategy to make the hearer feel that there is a special bond between them and the speaker and to reduce the social distance between them thus reducing the force of a face threatening act such as a request.

<b>CM 1: PST 2</b> Endwa thīinī wa mwathani, itikīriani wendi wa Ngai.	Beloved in the Lord, accept the will of God.
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In the above example, the condoler uses an in-group identity marker when he addresses the mourners as 'Endwa thīinī wa mwathani' (beloved in the Lord) to show in-group membership. By use of this positive politeness strategy, the condoler makes them feel good for there is a special bond between them and the condoler and therefore reducing the force of the face threat that follows in the request for them to accept the will of God following the death of their loved one.

## 2.1.1.7 Offer/ Promise

In this strategy, the speaker redresses the potential threat to some FTAs by claiming that the speaker wants whatever the hearer wants and will help him obtain it. The speaker shows his cooperation with the hearer by promising to help him/her get what he/she wants. Brown and Levinson (1978) assert that even if they are false, offers and promises demonstrate the speaker's good intentions to satisfy the hearer's positive face wants.

<b>CM 4: PST 2</b> Na tükabūceragīra kwona būrīa bwendereete.	And we shall be visiting you to see how you are progressing.
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The family of the deceased needs support from friends and relatives even after the burial since the healing process takes time. The condoler in the above utterance uses promise as a positive politeness strategy to assure the family of the deceased of support after the burial. The condoler shows his cooperation with the family of the deceased by promising to help it to get the much-needed support. By the condoler giving the promise, he lessens the potential threat to the family since he demonstrates that he has good intentions to satisfy the positive face wants of the deceased's family members.

## 2.1.1.8 Jokes

According to Brown and Levinson (1978), speakers use jokes to put the hearer at ease through comically reducing the seriousness of a situation and to minimize the face threatening act of requesting. They are based on shared background knowledge and values.

<b>CM 14: PST 2</b> Nītwendete kūthi kwa baba īndī tūtīendete gūkua (laughter).	We want to go to heaven but we don't want to die (Laughter from the mourners).
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Before making this utterance, the condoler uses an FTA by requesting the family of the deceased and the mourners to accept the will of God following the death of their beloved. He therefore reduces the effect of this FTA through use of a joke in which he wonders why people fear death but still wants to go to heaven. This attracts laughter from the mourners. He means that the only way to heaven is through death. This joke makes them feel good because although their loved one is dead, he is in a better place in heaven.

## 2.1.1.9 Raise / Assert Common Ground

By raising a common ground, the speaker redresses a face threatening act through talking about an unrelated topic for a while then narrows down to the main topic thus stressing his/ her interest in the hearer. By engaging in the unrelated topic first, the speaker reduces the negative effects of face threatening acts towards the hearer (Brown and Levinson, 1978)

<b>CM 15: PST 3</b> Karūgono nī keragwa ka muntū ūmwe ūrīa athire kwa mūganga erwa agakua na akaūragwa nī mbogo....	A story is told of a man who went to a witchdoctor and was told that he would die. He was also told that it is a buffalo that will kill him....
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The condoler uses an unrelated story to raise the common ground with his listeners. He tells them a story about a man who went to a witchdoctor and was told that he would die and his death would be caused by a buffalo. He is also told when he would die. The man goes back to his people and tells them the message. They promise him that they would struggle to ensure that he is not killed by the animal. When the day came, they came out with spears and all manner of weapons to attack the buffalo and managed to kill it. They then slaughtered it and shared the meat amongst themselves. They then agreed that the head of the buffalo would be left with the man so that he can prepare soup. The hide too. When the others left, the man stepped on the hide, slid and fell on the horn of the buffalo which pierced his chest and he died. Even if his relatives had struggled to ensure that the man doesn't die, it is the same buffalo that finally killed him. He tells them that the day of the man to die had finally come just as it had happened to their beloved. The condoler uses this strategy to increase their interest on what he wants to tell them and also to lessen the effect of the FTA that follows when he requests them to be always ready because when their time to die will come, nobody will be able to prevent it.

## 2.1.2 Negative Politeness Strategies

### 2.1.2.1 Hedges/ Questions

Brown and Levinson (1978) argue that in this strategy, a speaker uses noncommittal statements which make the hearer feel that he/she is not being coerced to do a certain thing. Speakers use words and phrases such as such as ‘*I think*’, ‘*perhaps*’, ‘*it seems*’, ‘*could you*’, ‘*I wonder*’, ‘*may be*’ to show that he/she is not imposing on the hearer but giving an opinion. Speakers therefore use hedges to reduce the weight of an FTA in an utterance. Condolers use hedges to reduce the weight of a request. Use of a question as a politeness strategy satisfies a speaker’s want of not assuming that the addressee is willing or is able to perform a certain act. By using a question, the speaker sounds as if he/she is making a suggestion thus avoiding stating the FTA directly. That way, the speaker avoids imposing on the hearer

<b>CM 6: PST 6</b> Ndīciiria kwīna bata bwendele kwenda Ngai nīūntū gūtī makosa arūthīte kūjūkia mwendwa wetū.	I think it important that you continue loving God because He has not made any mistake by taking our beloved.
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In the above utterance, the condoler uses hedge in the use of the word ndīciiria (I think) to avoid imposing on the listeners. The condoler hedges the request in the statement when he says that is important for the hearers to continue loving God even after He has taken their loved one. This hedge makes the statement an opinion by the condoler and not a direct request. This helps tone down the effect of the FTA so that the hearers will not feel coerced to do the FTA.

### 2.1.2.2 Be Indirect

According to Brown and Levinson (1978), this strategy involves use of phrases and sentences that have contextually unambiguous meanings which are different from their literal meanings. The speaker avoids impinging on the addressee’s negative face by speaking in a way that avoids direct commands or requests thus making the hearer to feel not imposed on.

<b>CM 3: PST 2</b> Na ndībwīre mūjīī ūū ūkenda maoya mono.	I tell you this family will need a lot of prayers.
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The condoler avoids impinging on the mourners in this utterance by avoiding a direct request to them. She indirectly requests them to continue praying for the family of the deceased thus making them to feel not imposed on. This saves their negative face. By directly telling them to pray for the family, the condoler would have threatened their negative face.

### 2.1.2.3 Give Deference

In this strategy, the speaker humbles and abases himself or raises the hearer. In both cases therefore, the hearer is of a higher social status than the speaker. Brown and Levinson (1978) claim that the speaker indicates that the hearer is respected and valued and taken to be superior. The speaker reduces their importance by making the hearer look more important by praising or complimenting them.

<b>CM 14: PST 2</b> Arata ba X nīmbijī būrīa būramwendete. Kogu butītīraga mujīī ūū.	Friends of X I know how you loved him. So, you will always visit this family.
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The condoler ‘down scales’ his importance by praising the friends of the deceased saying that they loved him so much that they will not fail to visit the family after the burial ceremony. Through this praise, the friends of the deceased feel good and thus satisfying their positive face wants of notice and attend to the hearer’s wants. By so doing, they will feel valued and therefore will continue visiting the family without feeling that they are being coerced to do so.

### 2.1.2.4 Using a General Rule

Brown and Levinson (1978) aver that another way of disassociating the speaker and the hearer from a certain imposition in the FTA and thus communicating that the speaker does not wish to impinge on the hearer is by stating the FTA as a general rule, obligation or regulation. By so doing, the speaker avoids mentioning the hearer and so is not seen to be imposing on the hearer but rather drawing the hearer’s attention to existence of a certain general rule that applies to everyone.

<b>CM 6: PST 1</b> No Ngai atīūragua kīūria.	But God is never asked questions.
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In the above extract, the condoler is requesting the members of the deceased's family not to question God for having taken their loved one. He however avoids mentioning the target of the FTA. He avoids impinging on them by stating the FTA as a general rule that applies to anybody not just them. By mentioning them, the condoler would have threatened their negative face. This strategy is therefore meant to draw their attention to existence of such a regulation which also applies to them and therefore adhere to it without being forced to do so.

#### 2.1.2.5 Impersonalize Speaker and Hearer

In this strategy, the speaker avoids use of the pronouns 'you' and 'I'. The speaker speaks as if he/she is addressing somebody else or passing a general message. Brown and Levinson (1978) posit that to impersonalize speaker and hearer is to indicate that the speaker does not want to impinge on the self or the addressee by stating the FTA as if the performer were other than the speaker or may be not the speaker alone and the one being addressed were other than the hearer or only inclusive of the hearer. By so doing, the speaker avoids use of the pronouns 'you' and 'I' and instead uses 'it would be', 'inclusive we' or indefinites such as somebody, someone, anyone thus disassociating the hearer from infringement.

<b>CM 17: PST 5</b> Kīrīa mūjiari atiga kībatīi kūmenyeerwa.	What has been left by a parent should be taken care of.
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The condoler in this extract addresses the family of the deceased but talks as if he is addressing other people or passing a general message. He is directing the family members to take care of the property that has been left by their parent and not to fight for the same among themselves. However, instead of telling them directly not to fight over this property, he states the FTA as if the addressee were other than the family members thus avoiding impinging on them. By so doing the condoler saves their negative face.

#### 2.1.2.6 Minimize Imposition

A speaker uses this strategy with the intention of minimizing the seriousness of an FTA towards the addressee. By using this politeness strategy, the speaker shows that the imposition was not that serious and therefore should not be taken seriously (Brown and Levinson, 1978). In other words, it shows that the extent of the imposition is not much and therefore should be taken lightly. This is done by use of the word *just*.

<b>CM 9: PST 1</b> Taīgīrīrani Ngai ūū na būkona būrīa akabūtethia.	Just trust upon the Lord and He will help you.
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In the above example, the condoler uses the word *ta* (just) to minimize the imposition of the FTA to the hearers. The condoler wants the family members to trust upon the Lord which they may find difficult at this time of sorrow and great sadness. He however lessens the seriousness of the FTA by using 'just' to show that the imposition is not that serious. That way he prevails upon them to trust upon the Lord.

## 2.2 Bald-on Record Politeness Strategies

### 2.2.1 Advice

In this strategy, the speaker gives advice to the hearer directly with no minimization of the FTA for it is for the benefit of the hearer (Brown and Levinson, 1978).

<b>CM 17: PST 7</b> Famīlī īno bwathi kūraitha rī, tigani kwona mau mangī. Onani Jīīsū.	Family members, when you want to look, do not see anything else. See Jesus.
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In this utterance, the condoler gives advice to the family members to depend upon God. He gives the advice by stating the FTA directly without any attempts to save their face. The FTA is direct and cannot be interpreted in any other way. This advice therefore threatens their negative face for it limits their freedom of action. However, the condoler uses this strategy for it is for their own benefit. The condoler wants them to depend upon God so that they can get his help, especially of comfort, in these difficult times.

### 2.2.2 Maximum Efficiency

Maximum efficiency strategy is used when the speaker wants to achieve maximum efficiency in stating the FTA. The speaker states the FTA directly and concisely with no attempt to lessen its threat to the addressee (Brown and Levinson, 1978)

<b>CM 2: PST 1</b> Ndīra members ba famīlī būtikamake na bwīrigīre mwathani thaa ino būkwīgwa būtaūkīrītwe.	I tell the members of this family not to worry and to trust on the Lord this time that you feel the loss.
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In the above utterance, the condoler advises the members of the family to trust and wait upon the Lord baldly. This FTA is stated directly and concisely without caring about their face wants. By so doing, he wants to achieve maximum efficiency in stating the FTA. The members of this family need help from God so that they can rebuild their lives after the loss. Therefore, the condoler uses this strategy without minimizing the effect of the FTA towards their faces because the FTA is for their own benefit and therefore, they will not feel offended.

### 2.2.3 *Metaphorical Urgency for Emphasis*

This strategy is used when there is urgency for emphasis (Brown and Levinson, 1978). The speaker does the face threatening act directly and concisely with the intention of achieving maximum effectiveness. The hearer therefore cannot interpret the message in any other way.

<b>CM 11: PST 2</b> Mami wīe inya nīūntū bwa ana baba baku.	Mum encourage yourself for the sake of your children.
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In this utterance, the condoler baldly tells the widow of the deceased to encourage herself for the sake of her children with no attempt to reduce the threat of the FTA towards her due to urgency for emphasis. Now that the husband is dead, she needs to be strong to take care of the children because they will depend on her for everything since their father has passed on. The condoler gives the widow the advice in a direct, clear and concise way without minimization of the FTA since it is for the benefit of both her and her children.

## 4. Off Record Politeness Strategies

### 2.2.4 *Give Hints*

In this strategy, the speaker does an FTA directly by giving some clues to the hearer with the hope that the hearer will pick from them the interpretation of what he/she means in his/her utterance (Brown and Levinson, 1978). The speaker avoids saying something directly for it will threaten the hearer's face. This is done through use of conversational implicatures, meaning that the FTA can be mitigated by inferences resulting from flouting maxim of relevance which states that speakers should be relevant in what they say.

<b>CM 10: PST 1</b> Mujīī ūū ūgatigwa na ĩoru mono.	This family will be left very lonely.
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The condoler in this utterance requests the mourners to be visiting the family of the deceased for it will be left lonely. He however does not tell them directly to be doing so for their negative face would be threatened. Instead, he gives a hint by saying that the family will be left lonely. That way, they will pick a clue and do his request without feeling coerced to do so.

### 2.2.5 *Rhetorical Questions*

These are questions that do not require any answer. When a speaker uses this strategy, he/she does not need an answer from the addressee but the intention is to make the hearer reflect and act on what is being said without feeling being coerced. By using a rhetorical question, the speaker wants the hearer to do something but avoids direct request or command which would make him/her feel impinged upon (Brown and Levinson, 1978).

<b>CM 13: PST 4</b> Famīlī, kabūtijī ūtethio wetū umaga kī Nga?	Family members, don't you know that our help comes from the Lord?
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The condoler requests the family members to trust upon the Lord for their help through the rhetorical question. A direct request would have threatened the negative face wants of freedom from imposition for they would feel coerced. The use of the rhetorical question is therefore meant to prevail upon them to do what the condoler wants them to do without feeling pressured hence saving their negative face.



### 3 Results

The study revealed that the four politeness strategies proposed in the politeness theory are used in expressing condolence in Kĩmwĩmbĩ, with positive politeness strategy being the most used. Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage of the politeness strategies evident in Kĩmwĩmbĩ condolence messages.

**Table 1** Summary of Politeness Strategies used in Kĩmwĩmbĩ Condolence Messages

Politeness Strategy	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Positive Politeness	38	63.3
Negative Politeness	11	18.3
Off Record	6	10.0
Bald-on Record	5	8.3
Total	60	100

The most common used politeness strategy is positive politeness strategy. Of the sixty (60) politeness strategies identified, thirty-eight (38) were positive politeness strategies which accounted for sixty-three (63) per cent. These were in form of giving/ asking questions, including the hearer and the speaker in the activity, claiming common ground, giving offer/promises, using in-group identity markers, intensifying the hearer's interest, noticing and attending to the hearer's interest, use of jokes and being optimistic. This shows that condolers are more concerned with the positive face wants of their hearers, especially the members of the bereaved families, and therefore ensured that they attend to them as they expressed their condolences.

The second most used politeness strategy is negative politeness strategy with eleven (11) occurrences accounting for eighteen (18) per cent of the total politeness strategies identified. These were in form of hedges/ questions, minimizing imposition, use of general rules, giving deference, being indirect and impersonalizing speaker and hearer. This shows that the condolers endeavored to ensure that their interlocutors' wants to have their freedom of action unhindered are satisfied.

Off record politeness strategy came third with six (6) occurrences accounting for ten (10) percent of the identified politeness strategies. These were in the form of rhetorical questions and giving hints. These politeness strategies show that condolers sometimes did FTAs in their condolence messages but wanted to avoid responsibility of doing them.

Bald on politeness strategy was used the least in Kĩmwĩmbĩ condolence messages. This strategy occurred five (5) times and accounted for eight (8) percent of the strategies used. This was in form of providing maximum efficiency, giving advice and showing urgency for emphasis. The use of this strategy shows that in some instances, the condolers made the FTAs in the most direct way possible without lessening their effect on the hearer's face to show the urgency of the FTA and to achieve maximum efficiency.

### 4 Conclusion

The study revealed that when expressing condolences in Kĩmwĩmbĩ, condolers use politeness strategies to maintain the hearer's face by lessening the effects of the FTAs on their faces. These politeness strategies also enable the condolers to build and maintain a good relationship with the hearers by showing that they value their face wants. Condolers use all the four politeness strategies outlined by Brown and Levinson (1978) in expressing condolences in Kĩmwĩmbĩ. They use various positive politeness strategies to ensure that they do not damage the positive face of their hearers. They also avoid imposition on their interlocutors by use of negative politeness strategies. They also sometimes go off-record when they want to do an FTA but do not want the responsibility of doing it. Lastly, they use bald-on record politeness strategies when they do not want to reduce the threat to the hearer's face so as to achieve maximum efficiency in doing the FTA.

## Compliance with ethical standards

### *Disclosure of conflict of interest*

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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