

“Una no kon sabi anything”: The Pragmatics of Discourtesy in Selected Nigerian GenZee Celebrities’ Social Media Posts

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Abstract

GenZee celebrities, while trying to confront the unbridled criticisms of cyber hecklers, resort to discourteous lexical items to save their damaged faces. Although studies on GenZee’s language use and style on social media have been explored, significant scholarly effort has not been solely dedicated to the uncivil language choices of Nigerian GenZee celebrities (henceforth NGCs). This study investigates the discourteous patterns that characterise the social media posts of Nigerian GenZee celebrities in response to the verbal and non-verbal taunts of netizens and how the GenZees’ social identities are subtly unraveled. Jacob Mey’s (2001) pragmatic act theory serves as the theoretical basis for the analysis. Selected posts of Habeeb Hamzat (Peller) and Amadou Elizabeth (Jarvis), two popular Nigerian GenZee social media influencers/celebrities, were purposively selected and retrieved on Tiktok and Twitter (X). The descriptive design was adopted and data were subjected to pragmatic analysis. Findings reveal that the social media posts of the two NGCs are furnished with impoliteness strategies through grammatical subversion, spiritual invocation, blame-shifting/buck-passing, and pidginisation to show utmost discourtesy and displeasure to the intended recipients of their posts and to address the excesses of cyberbullies. These devices were activated through specific pragmatic acts: condescending, praying, cursing, questioning and asserting practs. Through specific linguistic and pragmatic features/techniques, NGCs suppressed face attacks from individuals or situations perceived as threats to protect their public self-image (faces). Further studies could therefore be conducted on NGCs language of courtesy from other linguistic domains: sociolinguistics, phonology and so on, to contribute to the evolving body of knowledge on the discursive manifestations of impoliteness/ courtesy among GenZee speakers (precisely NGCs).

Keywords: Nigerian GenZee celebrities, Pragmatics of courtesy, GenZees’ social media posts

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Introduction

The discourse on generation Z (henceforth GenZee) is becoming popular in both local and global scholarly records. Various kinds of discussions have been explored and interrogated on this category of generation from multidimensional perspectives across disciplines. The term ‘GenZee’ is a popular term used to describe individuals or people born between 1997 and 2012 (Bejtkovshy, 2016) or groups of individuals born in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Raza et al, 2025). Studies have shown that the GenZees possess unique characteristics that are quite different from older generations. These features cut across language, religious, social, financial, career and even medical areas. One of the most common features of this generation is their digital fluency. Due to the generation’s constant exposure and interaction with the digital world, they are referred to as ‘digital natives’ (Shalevska, 2023). The GenZees are highly conversant with social media and technology, using different digital tools and applications more frequently than previous generations. In fact, Onoyovwi and Eziechine (2025) affirm that they have never been born without internet and are often tech savvy. As a result, they now influence older generations in terms of trends, communication styles, and even values.

It is worth noting that apart from being tech enthusiasts, the GenZees are known for their discourteous (impolite) verbal and written communication (Pandit, 2015; Abdullah et al, 2024), especially on social media. The perceived level of courtesy in their communication patterns makes it somewhat cumbersome for older generations to relate with them (Gabnelova and Bucho, 2021). Courtesy, as used in this study means impoliteness, that is, rude, uncivil or discourteous behaviours (in actions or words) that threaten or damage the faces of others. As averred by Rothwell and Waters (2022), in accordance with the assertions of previous scholars, the genzee discourse is characterised by communication styles that differ from earlier generations in that they are often embedded with impolite constructions (Rothwell & Waters, 2022), perhaps because the generation does not care about the feelings of others and have low empathy (Fromm and Read, 2018).

Like their contemporaries, Nigerian genzees are not exempted; they also possess the above identified features and one of the key factors driving their influence is the rise of Nigerian genzee celebrities (NGCs), that is, Nigerian influencers who, much like their peers, have grown up immersed in social media, digital platforms and are known for their discourteous behaviour in silencing their oppressors or antagonists. These influencers, whose communication patterns are laced with discourteous techniques, have become powerful trendsetters within their generation. These NGCs could be musicians, YouTubers, Tiktok stars, digital entrepreneurs, content creators, musicians, actors and so forth, whose performances and activities are wontedly aired on different social media platforms (WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram and Tiktok especially) since the genzees are known for their distinctive linguistic styles on different social media platforms to serve various purposes (Telaumbanua, et al 2024). In addition to their poor patterns of communication (Gould, Nalepa and Mignano, 2020), this paper concentrates on the language of the genzees, precisely the NGCs, and how courtesy

is unveiled in their communication patterns towards silencing their cyberbullies and oppressors. Put differently, the paper investigates the strategies of courtesy (behaviour characterised by some levels of impoliteness or any behaviour that threatens the face of others either deliberately or inadvertently) used by NGCs with a view to understanding the identities and the linguistic patterns of the GenZees. The NGCs selected for this study are Habeeb Hamzat, popularly known as Peller and Amadou Elizabeth Aminata, popularly known as Jarvis. These NGCs were selected based on their popularity, in terms of number of followers and audience engagement on social media, especially on Tiktok.

The investigation is carried out from the angle of pragmatics. Pragmatics deals with language used in context (Mey 2001; Odebutmi, 2006; Pranowo 2020); it goes beyond the literal interpretation of words and expressions and goes further to address hidden features/parameters that will enhance effective communication and interpretation of ideas and information which helps interactants in a discourse situation to understand one another. The pragmatic study of courtesy in Nigerian GenZee celebrities' social media discourse offers a multidimensional lens through which readers understand the interplay of language, power, identity, and digital culture. It moves beyond surface-level interpretations of "rudeness" or "courtesy" to interrogate the nuanced communicative acts that underlie these performances, emphasising how meaning is always contextually situated, socially constructed, and ideologically charged in the discourse of the selected NGCs on social media. Hence, the paper is guided by three research questions which are: What are the devices of courtesy used in selected social media posts of selected NGCs?; what are the pragmatic acts (practs) that are used to achieve these strategies?; and what are the functions of the pragmatic acts deployed by NGCs in their social media posts?

About the Selected Nigerian GenZee Celebrities

In this paper, the social media posts of two popular NGCs are used. They are: Habeeb Hamzat and Amadou Elizabeth Aminata. Habeeb Hamzat, who is popularly known as Peller was born in Ikorodu in May in the year 2005 (21 years), Lagos state. Peller is a content creator, streamer and comedian. He is known for his deliberate use of ungrammatical and incoherent English language expressions. In 2023, he started content creation and founded his comedic series tagged 'Peller Palava' in 2024. He has won notable awards such as TikTok Influencer of the Year and Next Generation Influencer of the Year (Fasuan, 2024). Amadou Elizabeth Aminata, popularly called Jarvis, is a 23-year old NGC who was born on February 29, 2002 in Edo state. She is a Nigerian young graduate of Ambrose Ali University with a BSc in Business Administration. Jarvis is an artificial intelligence (AI) robotic content creator and TikTok influencer and also a nominee of the Rising Star Influencer social media award. The selection of Peller and Jarvis as focal subjects in the investigation of the language of NGCs is justified based on the fact that both individuals exemplify the performative ethos characteristic of genzee celebrityhood in Nigeria, leveraging social media platforms not only

for entertainment and self-expression but also for provocative commentary that often challenges conventional norms of politeness, respectability, and celebrity decorum. Their linguistic practices and constructions, which are marked by boldness and deliberate courtesy, provide rich empirical material for pragmatic analysis, particularly in exploring how face-threatening acts and impolite expressions are strategically deployed to construct identities, assert autonomy, and engage with followers in highly interactive digital/cyber spaces. Moreover, their visibility and influence among Nigerian youths make them culturally and contextually relevant case studies for understanding the evolving dynamics of language use, identity performance, and social media engagement in contemporary Nigerian society.

The GenZee Discourse and the Language of Impoliteness

Existing studies have examined the language of the GenZees in different regions of the world from different linguistic perspectives. While Hajare (2023), in his research, examines the use of slangs by the GenZees and how they depict their identities in the society, Shalevska (2023) investigates GenZees as English as a foreign language speakers, focusing on how this influences their choice of words and linguistic constructions. Apart from the fact that the GenZees deploy various linguistic constructions in forms of slangs and other informal constructions as observed in the above studies, the study of Olonade (2023) also reveals that linguistic shift often features in the communication and interaction of the GenZees while Ezuruike and Ibileye (2025)'s paper confirms that the GenZees deploy neologisms while communicating in the society to express their feelings and pass across various messages to their listeners and that the linguistic innovations of the GenZees have recently augmented the English language in the modern world. Additionally, the research works of Abella et al (2024) and Yasminar, et al (2024) are similar in that they both underscore the linguistic styles/patterns of the GenZees on selected social platforms, which are somewhat similar to this present study, although not on NGCs as undertaken in this paper. The summary of the foregoing studies suggests that the GenZees have developed distinctive speaking and writing styles in the realm of online communication such as casual language styles on different social media platforms such as slangs, colloquial expressions, abbreviations and informal greetings, revealing the linguistic identities of the GenZees. Research confirms that the GenZees' language choices are laden with impoliteness techniques, which is one of the reasons their relationships with earlier generations do not work sometimes. One of the common ways of showing courtesy to others is through the use of various strategies or forms of impoliteness. This submission is marked in the study of Oluremi and Olugbemi-Gabriel (2022), in their investigation of how Yoruba proverbs serve as impoliteness and power negotiator in Kemi Adetiba's "King of Boys", following the theoretical underpinnings of Jonathan Culpeper's model of impoliteness. This suggests that the idea of impoliteness is not just an emblem of the Genzees as observed in Oluremi and Olugbemi-Gabriel's paper; the Yoruba language (proverbs) can also be a tool of impoliteness in communication, either positive or negative type. In addition, their work situates impoliteness

within a traditional, culturally embedded framework, showing how linguistic heritage can be mobilised to assert dominance or disrespect in nuanced ways. While their analysis is rooted in scripted cinematic dialogue and traditional proverbs, it draws attention to the performative and strategic use of language in hierarchical interactions. In contrast, this paper on impoliteness in Nigerian GenZee celebrities' social media posts engages with more spontaneous, unscripted and digitally-mediated communication. Although both studies examine impoliteness as a social and communicative tool, this present paper shifts the focus from traditional forms and settings to contemporary, fast-paced digital platforms where norms are rapidly evolving and where young public figures often use impoliteness to maintain their personalities.

Similarly, Adika et al. (2025) examine GenZ's impoliteness within the context of TikTok, emphasising how platform features, trends, and digital culture influence the way young Nigerians communicate courtesy. Their paper aligns more closely with this study in terms of demographic and digital context. However, their focus remains largely on everyday GenZee users and comments on TikTok. This research, on the other hand, is more specific in its attention to GenZee celebrities, that is, public figures whose online expressions of impoliteness are not only shaped by digital culture but also by performance, branding, and audience engagement strategies. Thus, while this study shares thematic concerns with Adika et al. (2025), it distinguishes itself by narrowing in on Nigerian GenZee celebrity discourse and the performative impoliteness that often accompanies fame and influence on social media. This nuanced difference highlights the unique intersection of digital celebrity culture and impolite language practices in this paper.

In the study of Abdullah et al (2024), the factors that influence the politeness behaviour of the GenZees are investigated and the findings of the researchers suggest that impoliteness, as noticeable among the GenZees, is influenced by their frequent use of social media and informal linguistic patterns in online communication. This could be because most communication transactions that take place on social media do not give room for physical encounters/interactions of netizens, which could restrict some levels of courtesy in social media users' discourse/interactions. The documentation of Abdullah et al (2024) does not just focus on the language of GenZees alone but places emphasis on the issue of politeness/impoliteness in the GenZee discourse related to Adika et al. (2025), thus enriching the arguments raised in this study. However, these scholars limit their concentration on GenZees in general (as established in the studies of extant scholars above) and not on GenZee celebrities/influencers, as unearthed in Rasak et al (2025). Rasak et al (2025), although underscore the use of slangs by GenZee female influencers on twitter (X) and instagram, describing the different categorisations of slangs deployed by these influencers such as letter-homophones, flaming, onomatopoeic spellings, shortening and so forth, thereby facilitating the understanding of readers on the linguistic patterns of communication of the GenZees on social media, precisely the ones who are celebrities and influencers, emphasis is only placed on GenZee female celebrities in Malaysia and not on Nigerian celebrities as understudied in this study. Furthermore, while the existing

research of Rasak et al (2025) focuses on the study of slangs used by female GenZee celebrities on social media (precisely on Instagram and X), highlighting the linguistic creativity and identity performance within a specific gender group (females only), this paper is both similar and distinct in critical ways. Like earlier studies, this new research also explores the language practices of GenZee celebrities on social media (specifically on Tiktok and X), a rapidly evolving digital space where norms are continually challenged and redefined. However, this intellectual piece diverges by broadening the scope to include both male and female Nigerian GenZee celebrities, thereby offering a more inclusive and culturally specific lens. More significantly, rather than merely documenting the language choices of the GenZees, this paper delves into the pragmatic strategies of courtesy (impoliteness), examining how celebrities use language to express aggression, dissent and dominance which are often in defiance of conventional politeness norms. This focus on impoliteness and face-threatening acts not only enriches the academic discourse on digital communication but also provides insights into how power, gender, and cultural values are negotiated in Nigerian GenZee online spaces, making this study more analytically robust and socially impactful.

Theoretical Lens for Constructing NGCs Discourteous Narratives

Data analysis is anchored on the theoretical tenets of Jacob Mey's (2001) Pragmatic Acts Theory (PAT). Pragmatic Acts Theory (PAT) is a theory within pragmatics that emerged to address the shortcomings of Speech Act Theory, which does not appropriately consider how people actually use language in different situations/contexts. It places strong emphasis on the role of context in shaping the meaning of utterances, asserting that interpreting any discourse relies heavily on understanding its contextual background. It is employed in this study to describe the pragmatic acts (also known as practs) of courtesy performed and the pragmatic devices employed by NGCs on selected social media platforms. The diagram in Figure 3.1 explains the features of the Pragmatic Acts Model.

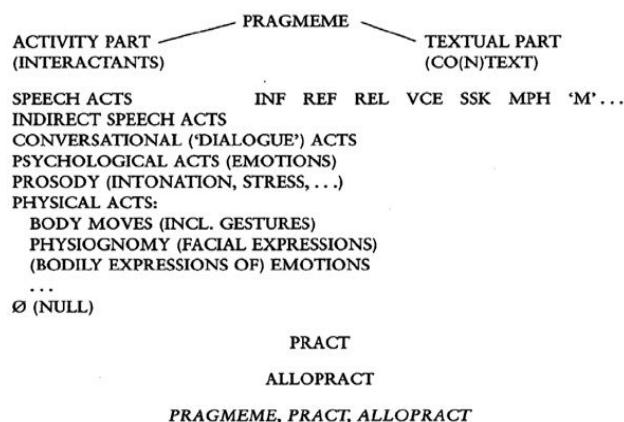


Figure 3.1 Pragmatic Acts Model of Mey (2001)

The diagram in figure 3.1 summarises the details of PAT. Mey's model focuses on what he calls '**pragmatic acts**' (or **pragmeme**), which are actions people perform through language, depending on the situation of discourse. These are not just based on the words used, but also on things like who is speaking, to whom, where, why, and under what circumstances. The PAT model is structured into two main components: the activity part and the textual part (under the root 'pragmeme'), both of which work together to account for how meaning is constructed and conveyed in communication. The activity part encompasses the various features or tools that speakers can utilise in communication to convey meaning beyond the literal content of their words. These include speech acts (both direct and indirect), physical actions, prosodic features such as intonation and stress, and psychological acts that reflect the speaker's internal states or intentions. These elements represent the performative side of communication, allowing speakers to act through language in diverse ways. The textual part of the Pragmeme model, in contrast, deals with the contextual and interpretive elements that shape how utterances are understood within a discourse. One of these is *relevance (REL)*, which refers to how significant or appropriate a particular message is in a given conversational context. *Inferencing (INF)* involves the listener's or reader's ability to draw conclusions and extract meaning based on what is said and what is left unsaid. *Reference (REF)* is concerned with how language is used to point to or identify people, objects, places, identities, or ideas. Additionally, *voice (VCE)* captures the tone, style, and point of view expressed by the speaker, while *metaphor (MPH)* involves the use of figurative language, particularly the comparison of unrelated things to enrich meaning. *Shared Situation Knowledge (SSK)* refers to the common background information or contextual understanding that participants in a conversation bring with them, which aids the interpretation of messages. Finally, the *metapragmatic joker (M)* functions as a marker that alerts the audience to what is happening on the metapragmatic level of communication, where indexicality (the way certain elements point to context or speakers' intentions) becomes essential for understanding the full meaning of an interaction. Specific elements in the activity and textual parts of the model are deployed to identify not just the pragmatic acts used by NGCs in their social media posts to redress face threatening acts, but also to explicate how these pragmatic acts are used for meaning constructions/interpretations in the NGCs online discourse.

Exploring the Research Blueprint

As earlier stated, this paper's focal subjects are Nigerian GenZee Celebrities (NGCs) and the social media posts of two of these NGCs (male and female) were selected. The NGCs are Habeeb Hamzat (Peller) and Amadou Elizabeth Aminata (Jarvis/Jadrolita). These Nigerian young celebrities were selected for this paper based on their social recognition and topnotch social media engagements. For example, in 2024, Peller was nominated for the Trend Upp awards Emerging Force (PM news, 2024). In March 2025, he was the youngest Nigerian to receive the 'Silver Bird Influencer of the Year' award while Jarvis was nominated for the social media award as the Rising Star Influencer in 2023 (Punch, 2023). Furthermore, their

popularity is confirmed on their social media platforms in respect of the numbers of their followers. As at the time of documenting this academic paper, Peller has over 11 million followers on Tiktok while Jarvis has over 7 million followers. Their popularity on social media is based on the number of their followers on TikTok because Tiktok is one of the favourite and the most patronised social media platforms by the GenZees (Diaz et al, 203; Zips and Holendova, 2024). Data were sourced on both TikTok and Twitter (X). They comprised purposively selected video contents and texts posted by Peller and Jarvis which were retrieved on various Tiktok and X pages. These posts were selected based on their relevance to the focus of this research, as they are fully embedded with various strategies of courtesy that are used to buttress the discussion on the NGCs' language of courtesy. Most of the data were retrieved from TikTok while very few were retrieved from X. Out of the seven extracts analysed, five were from TikTok, while two were retrieved from X. This is because these NGCs are more active and engage their audiences more on TikTok just like their genzee contemporaries. The sampling technique was purposive and the descriptive design was adopted for the analysis. Data were subjected to pragmatic analysis.

Data Analysis

This section presents the analysis of the selected posts of the NGCs. Here, the strategies of courtesy deployed by the NGCs are identified and explicated with the aid of the theoretical principles of the pragmatic acts theory of Jacob Mey. This section also features the pragmatic acts (practs) that are used to substantiate the strategies, the pragmatic resources utilised and the functions of the practs. Each of the identified social media posts comes with context which provides background information that will facilitate readers' understanding of the analysis.

Strategies of Courtesy in Selected NGCs' Posts

Certain strategies are employed by the NGCs to courteously address netizens whom they consider as cyberbullies or haters on TikTok and X. The dates and social media pages where the posts were retrieved are identified in the data presentation. For ease of reference and for proper data interpretation, each extract is attached to a context which gives the background to the NGCs' discourse. Four strategies of courtesy are examined in the analysis. They are grammatical subversion, spiritual invocation, blame-shifting/buckpassing and pidginisation and each is realised through some pragmatic elements/resources examined in this section.

Grammatical Subversion: This is the deliberate use of ungrammatical or unconventional language structures to achieve specific effect. The NGCs make use of grammatical subversion to suppress the face threatening acts of cyber hecklers on social media.

Extract 1

Context: Saida Boj, a Nigerian social media influencer scorned Peller because she had more followers on TikTok in 2024. Peller responded to the cyberbullying.

Peller: Saida Boj, do you remember me? The boy you abuse that day...you call me that 500 followers' boys...meanwhile you have 1 million follower...you are looking for a flame, and if you are finding a flame, to get out! (30 June, 2024. SaidaBoj -Tiktok)

In extract 1, Peller furiously addresses Saidboj, a Nigerian social media influencer and content creator for shading him when he had few followers on TikTok. His expressions are laden with wrong pluralisation (the use of ‘boys’ instead of ‘boy’ in referring to himself), violation of concord rules (‘you abuse’ instead of ‘You abused’,... ‘you have one million follower’ instead of ‘followers’); spelling error (flame instead of fame) and incoherent sentence (‘to get out’ instead of ‘get out’). These indicate the attribute that prioritises his personal style, value and creativity than the acceptable standard of communication in English. More explicitly, Peller uses these ungrammatical expressions to express anger and disrespect towards Saida Boj. For example, phrases like “The boy you abuse that day” and “you call me that 500 followers’ boys” show tense errors and mismatched grammar.

In addition, these errors make the message sound emotionally raw and aggressive. Instead of correcting the grammar, the speaker uses this grammatical subversion to emphasise frustration, as if the anger is too strong to allow careful speech. This adds to the sense of direct confrontation. Another way grammatical subversion is realised is through exaggeration and mockery. Peller says “meanwhile you have 1 million follower,” intentionally (or carelessly) using the wrong singular form “follower” instead of “followers” to undercut Saida Boj’s social media success, suggesting bitterness and sarcasm. Similarly, the phrase “you are finding a flame” is a misused version of “fame,” which may be a way of mocking Saida Boj’s desire for attention or fame. Hence, these grammatical errors help to belittle the addressee. In addition, the imperative sentence “to get out!” is a grammatically incorrect and abrupt way of telling Saida Boj to leave or a way of silencing her. It lacks proper sentence structure and ignores standard English form, which adds to its rudeness. The ungrammatical expressions which permeate throughout the message helps to create a tone of disrespect, emotional outburst, and confrontation. Instead of using polite or formal language, Peller chooses a rough, unfiltered style using grammatical subversion as a way to insult and reject Saida Boj directly. The grammatical subversion is activated by the condescending pract. Condescending is the act of treating someone as if you are better than them. Usually, this pract is used to ridicule and scorn others. Condescending pract is used by Peller to attack and ridicule Saida Boj’s personality (...meanwhile you have 1 million follower...you are looking for a flame). Peller’s asserting speech act, “you are looking for a flame”, is an inference (INF) that Saida Boj is an attention-seeker or a fame-seeker based on the shared knowledge (SSK) of the online conflict between Peller and the bully (Saida Boj). The ordering speech act, ‘get out!’ is an INF that Peller is dauntless and audacious.

Pragmatic Act: Condescending

Function: To ridicule and scorn netizens (Saidaboj)

2) Spiritual invocation: This is the act of calling upon a higher power or supreme being to invoke blessings or curses on someone or group of people in order to suppress face threats.

Extract 2:

Context: Jarvis responds to netizens who are always bullying her and ridiculing her on the virtual space for no reason.

Jarvis: Jarvis is doing this one. Jarvis is doing that one. Shame will catch you last last in Jesus' name (TikTok-Pelvis2024, May 4, 2024)

In extract 2, Jarvis expresses her displeasure to netizens who monitor her ways of life and constantly criticise her. She uses spiritual invocation, "Shame will catch you last last in Jesus' name," to express courtesy and most importantly to scorn netizens who often criticise her. By invoking "Jesus name," she draws in a powerful religious register that in many Christian contexts carries ultimate authority. It is a form of spiritual sanction: she is not just socially or emotionally hurtful, but morally and spiritually positioning herself above her critics. "Shame will catch you last last" suggests inevitable retribution (eventually, those who mock will themselves be embarrassed or exposed). The use of spiritual language intensifies condescension. In sum, this statement is courtesy wrapped in reverence. That is, using religion and prophecy to condemn, mock, and assert moral superiority while maintaining a veneer of piety. Additionally, the spiritual invocation is substantiated with a cursing pract (cursing is the act of invoking harm, evil, or misfortune upon someone, either directly or through words using offensive, profane, or indecent language) to challenge and silence netizens by wishing them nothing but shame. The reference (REF) to 'Jesus' name', a superior being in her expression is an inference (INF) that the tone of the message is serious which also serves as Jarvis' way of releasing her pent-up emotions and to challenge cyber bullies. Furthermore, she intentionally uses the future tense 'will catch' in the pract to indicate the imminence of their doom/shame/regret thereby damaging their wants to be loved, admired or valued.

Pragmatic Act: Cursing

Function: Serves as emotional release and to challenge the excesses of netizens

Extract 3 (spiritual invocation)

Context: Peller subtly condemns netizens who advised him to go to school because of his linguistic incompetence

Peller: Am going to school oh Lord make my story no be like some people story wey graduate wey no come see better job. Make I come dey jobless to the extent I need to carry my phone to make mumu advice video for small pikin (X-Peller, 30 Oct, 2024)

Peller uses a combination of self avowal and social comparison to respond to online abusers in extract 3. First, he admits the potential vulnerability (“Am going to school . . .”) but immediately prays that his outcome will differ from others who have graduated but failed to find good jobs. This is a direct response to bullying. By invoking the fate of “some people” who graduate and do not fare well, he implicitly points out the absurdity of the criticism he receives (that going to school automatically guarantees success). Rather than having to justify not being yet successful, Peller, through the praying pract, prays to avoid the worst kind of failure, thereby establishing a threshold of dignity.” His reference (REF) to ‘Lord’, a supernatural Being shows the seriousness of his message, although with the intention to mock his abusers whom he refers (REF) to as being “jobless”. His expression ‘Make I come dey jobless to the extent I need to carry my phone to make *mumu* advice video for small pikin’ is an inference (INF) that depicts cyberbullies as idle beings who give useless pieces of advice to a young person (small pikin) like him instead of doing what is more profitable. The praying pract is used by Peller based on the shared knowledge (SSK) of the fact that many adult netizens often criticise him for not going to school, thus making it relevant (REL) for suppressing the face attacks.

Furthermore, beyond the mocking and social comparison, the spiritual invocation is central. He invokes God (“oh Lord make my story no be . . .”) to intercede and to protect himself from a fate that “some people” supposedly suffer. The spiritual invocation transforms the statement from mere complaint into a solemn protest (sarcastically). It declares that even if abusers mock him, he is not surrendering to their narrative, but appealing to a higher standard and outcome. In this way, the courtesy becomes more than insult; it becomes prophecy, prayer, and moral resistance. Peller prays to God in a sarcastic manner to indirectly satirise ‘jobless’ netizens who use their time to give unnecessary and unwise (*mumu*) advice. He uses disparaging adjectives (‘. . . graduate wey no see better job’ and ‘jobless’ people) to refer (REF) to his bullies/online unwanted advisors which is an INF that they are nosy and idle people. The praying pract is used by Peller to deflect shame. Here, Peller reframes the narrative of cyber bullies. Instead of acknowledging the shame of being an illiterate as accused by netizens as real, he places the outcome in God’s hands, albeit in a sarcastic way.

Pragmatic act: Cursing

Function: To deflect shame and ridicule netizens

3). Blame-shifting/buck-passing: This is the act of deflecting guilt by moving attention to someone else.

Extract 4

Context: Jarvis was bullied for befriending/bonding with Peller whom some netizens refer to as an illiterate.

Jarvis: I literally did not do anything wrong. You guys are the ones pissing me off.... You don't like the peaceful aspect of me. You people always like the angry aspect. (TikTok-Pelvis2024, May 4, 2024)

Jarvis uses the blame-shifting device to prove her innocence and identify netizens as victims of chaos since they do not ‘like the peaceful aspect of’ her. In extract 4, Jarvis’s statement, “I literally did not do anything wrong. You guys are the ones pissing me off. . . . You don’t like the peaceful aspect of me. You people always like the angry aspect.” are discourteous utterance that are embedded with blame-shifting/buck passing, achieved by asserting pract by way of several pragmatic tools: reference, relevance, affirming speech act, inference, and metaphor. First, she passes blame off herself by saying “I did not do anything wrong” onto her critics as observed in her use of “you guys . . . you people” by using the reference (REF) tool to a generalised “other” rather than a specific individual, thus preventing her from avoiding responsibility but instead, treat the netizens as collectively at fault. She uses unambiguous and direct expressions to address the uncouth and naughty attitudes of cyber bullies through the repetition of the pronoun ‘you’ to identify them as the ‘guilty ones’ who are not interested in her ‘peaceful aspect’ (positive sides) but delight and focus on her ‘angry aspect’ (negative sides). Further, Jarvis’ utterance is relevant (REL) because she responds directly to netizens’ complaints, making explicit what she believes their problem is (not her behaviour per se, but their selective preference for her being angry rather than peaceful). The affirming speech act is also used here. Here, Jarvis affirms that she has a “peaceful aspect,” that this aspect is being ignored or rejected, and contrasts it with “the angry aspect,” thereby staking a claim to her identity. Through inferencing (INF), she prompts the audience to conclude that the netizens are unfair, shallow, or hypocritical, since they choose to dwell on her anger and ignore her peace. Altogether, this strategy lets her assert moral and rhetorical agency, push back against disrespect, and force the attackers to confront the bias in their own judgments. All the sentences are assertive in nature to give the INF that Jarvis is not guilty of whatever allegations or negative thoughts of netizens about her and her bosom friend, Peller. The REF to herself as ‘I’ in the declarative sentence (I literally did not . . .) is therefore used to foreground her sincerity and innocence.

Pragmatic act: Asserting

Function: To defend self-identity and shift blame

Extract 5 (Blame-shifting/Buck-passing)

Context: Peller reacts to the criticisms of netizens about the breast slapping challenge he engaged in with Jarvis.

Peller: You know I don’t like to dey ‘exploding’ my baby (Jarvis)...so that’s why I deleted the video...and some people still dey post the video (Tiktok -Peller March 11, 2025)

Translation

Peller: You know I don't like to expose my baby....that was why I deleted the video...and some people are still posting the video.

In extract 5, Peller shifts blame away from himself through the blame-shifting device realised through asserting *pract*. This is achieved through the tools of reference (REF). For instance, the referent “some people” becomes the ones responsible for the continued circulation of the breast slapping video he feels should have been withdrawn. The *asserting pract* is in his affirmation that he does not like to “explode” (expose) the body of ‘his baby’ who is inferred (INF) to be Jarvis. This assertion functions to present him as someone who is morally aware, reasonable and even protective. The shared situation knowledge (SSK) tool also helps to understand his message to netizens as listeners are aware of the criticisms and know that the video had gone viral. Hence, the knowledge of these situations surrounding the video which involves Peller and Jarvis gives force to his assertion and blame-shifting, because the audience can infer (INF) he is acting in good faith and under pressure from public scrutiny.

Further, through inference (INF) and metaphor (MPH), Peller’s language helps re frame the narrative to cast himself in a more favourable light. The metaphor, “my baby” used by Peller to describe Peller is striking. By calling her “my baby,” Peller positions himself as someone who must shelter and defend Jarvis. In their public dynamic, this adds weight to his actions (not exposing her body and deleting the video) as not just personal but as an obligation to protect someone under his care. Moreover, by saying he *deleted* the video, he is making an affirmative speech act: he is owning up to a corrective measure, communicating that he recognised the problem. Listeners are meant to infer (INF) from his expressions that he cares about Jarvis’s dignity, that he is responsive, unlike those who continue to share the video. The blame thus shifts from “I acted wrongly” to “people are still doing wrong by not respecting the deletion and my decision.” He affirms responsibility in part (by deleting), but shifts the ongoing harm to the netizens (those who ignore his deletion of the video). This enables him assert moral agency, protect his image, and redirect criticism toward those who perpetuate the spread, rather than him alone.

Pragmatic act: Asserting

Function: To shift blame and maintain moral standards

4) **Pidginisation:** This is a linguistic process that deals with the use of simplified language or pidgin for communication. NGCs deploy Nigerian Pidgin English to express courtesy in their responses/reactions to netizens’ face threatening acts.

Extract 6

Context : In 2024, some netizens condemned Peller for planning to get married to Jarvis at a very young age.

Peller: Are you mad? ...wetin dey worry you? Alaye, if you love person, dey show her. All that one that your mama and your papa dey marry 30 years, 40 years...una no kon sabi anything (TikTok - 14 Dec, 2024; Joy Reality Shop)

In extract 6, Peller uses the pidgin English to react to the opinions of netizens about his decision to get married to effectively express his feelings, knowing full well that it is a language understood by many. It also shows the identity of NGCs as lovers of colloquial/informal discourse rather than formal discourse. This pidginisation is buttressed through questioning pract. The questioning pract is used by Peller to express his displeasure and to firmly challenge netizens by utilising the REF (in forms of pronominals and nominal phrases: you, your mama, your papa) tool to directly attack them. His expression ‘una no kon sabi anything’ is an INF that their perceptions/mindsets about marriage are foolish since they still think like their parents (your papa and your mama) that got married late (dey marry 30 years, 40 years). In addition, Peller directly condemns netizens without mincing his words. This is activated through the use of pronominals (you, your, una) to specifically damage their faces and directly and boldly caution them. He uses the metaphor ‘Alaye’ (a Yoruba slangy word used to seek the attention of others) to belittle and call bullies to order, depicting the seriousness of his message to them. Here, pidginisation strategy is blended with questioning pract by Peller to express anger, blame and disagreement (in a way that seems less official), thus giving room for him to be sarcastic and expressive.

Pragmatic act: Questioning

Function: To challenge the excesses of netizens and condemn them

Extract 7

Context: Netizens rebuked Peller for always making disrespectful posts on social media. Extract 7 shows his reaction on X.

Peller: Hajsvavsbsbsb I fit write and post anything. No be una papa buy me phone (X: @Peller089 October 18, 2024)

In extract 7, Peller’s post on X, “Hajsvavsbsbsb I fit write and post anything. No be una papa buy me phone,” illustrates a clear act of courtesy, constructed through pidginisation and pragmatic strategies. The use of Nigerian Pidgin English immediately establishes an informal, confrontational tone that departs from the polite conventions often expected in public discourse. The sentence, “I fit write and post anything” asserts personal freedom, while “No be una papa buy me phone” dismisses any assumed authority the audience may feel they hold over his online behaviour. Through pidgin, Peller strips away the formalities of Standard English, using a culturally grounded, unfiltered register that resonates within his local audience. This is activated through the asserting pract. The asserting pract in his post relies heavily on inference (INF) where readers deduce that Peller is reacting to criticism, even though such criticism is not directly mentioned. His use of exaggerated gibberish “Hajsvavsbsbsb” at the beginning of

his utterance adds an expressive tone, signalling mockery or irritation, further intensifying the rudeness of his response.

Additionally, Peller's statement draws on shared situational knowledge within Nigerian digital spaces, where unsolicited advice and content policing are common. His rhetorical question, "No be una papa buy me phone," relies on this cultural understanding to land as an insult. The reference (REF) to "una papa" (your father) is particularly provocative, as it taps into a broader cultural taboo. For instance, in many African societies, flippantly invoking someone's parent, especially their father, is considered highly disrespectful. This deliberate reference (REF) thus escalates the post from mere defiance to direct insult. The tool of relevance (REL) also explains how the post, though seemingly random in structure, is contextually meaningful as a rebuttal to an implied conversation about what he should or should not post. Through expressive speech act, Peller boldly reveals his autonomy and expresses contempt for any imposed social control. The entire post functions as a face-threatening act, directly challenging the audience's desire for respect or moral influence. In other words, by saying "*I fit write and post anything,*" Peller is asserting his right to freedom of expression. The asserting pract, therefore, functions to express personal autonomy and to reject control and censorship from others, making it clear that he (Peller) alone decides what he posts on his platform.

Pragmatic act: Asserting

Function: To express personal autonomy and reject netizens' control

Discussion of Findings

From the analysis, four specific strategies of courtesy were deliberately deployed by the NGCs (Peller and Jarvis) to suppress face threats and attacks of netizens whom they consider as their haters/cyber bullies. These strategies are grammatical subversion, spiritual invocation, blame-shifting/buck-passing and pidginisation. Findings reflect that these strategies of courtesy were substantiated with the aid of pragmatic acts which are realised through pragmatic elements to expiate and aptly interpret the messages of Peller and Jarvis to their listeners. Grammatical subversion is only found in Peller's messages and this is achieved through the condescending pract to ridicule and scorn netizens who do not find his personality and activities appealing in some ways. The use of spiritual invocation, which is used by both Peller and Jarvis shows their high level of anger and frustration as a result of netizens' malicious behaviours towards them. It is also an indication that the GenZees, although not totally critical about religious beliefs/values, recognise a supreme power whom they believe has the authority and supernatural power to fight for them.

Moreover, the spiritual invocation strategy is activated through the cursing pract; in Peller's case, it was used to deflect shame and ridicule his abusers/harrassers while in Jarvis' case, she uses the pract as a form of emotional release and to challenge the excesses of her accusers. In respect of blame-shifting/buck-passing, both Jarvis and Peller deploy this strategy to

discourteously silence cyberbullies from oppressing them. While both use the asserting pract to achieve this, Jarvis specifically deploys the asserting pract to defend her identity and to shift responsibility while Peller uses it to maintain his social and moral standards in addition to using it to shift blame on his bullies like Jarvis. Apart from the above strategies, the analysis unearths the use and function of pidginisation as another discourteous strategy of NGCs (particularly Peller in two of his posts on TikTok and X respectively) which are manifested through questioning and asserting practs to challenge the excesses of netizens and to express personal autonomy on social media. While this is noticeable in the messages of Peller to netizens, depicting his unrefinedness and nonchalant attitude towards challenging the excesses of netizens and condemning them, this does not feature in the messages of Jarvis, which could imply that she is more refined and serious in justifying her claims and assertions to rebuild her damaged reputation. In all, pragmatics plays significant roles in understanding the perception, concerns, arguments and messages of the NGCs towards discourteously suppressing threats and attacks from bullies on social media as reflected in the speakers' judicious use of pragmatic elements such as speech acts, inference/inferencing, reference, metaphor, relevance and shared situation knowledge.

Conclusion

From this study, it has been observed that the Nigerian GenZee Celebrities' expressions on social media (precisely Peller and Jarvis) are laden with impoliteness/discourteous discourse reinforced by devices such as grammatical subversion, spiritual invocation, buck-passing and pidginisation, in conjunction with condescending, asserting, praying and cursing practs. The study re-echoes the stances of Hajare (2023) and Shalevska (2023) that the GenZees are individuals who deliberately use informal expressions to communicate, leading to their display of impolite manners during online communication (Abdullahi et al, 2024). Through pragmatic features/techniques, NGCs suppress face attacks or threats from individuals or situations perceived as threats on social media to not only protect their public self image (face) but to reveal some of the notable characteristics/identities of the GenZees in the society in addressing conflict in cyber spaces and in handling chaotic online situations. It is therefore recommended that future studies delve into NGCs' language of courtesy from other linguistic lenses, like sociolinguistics, phonology, and beyond, to paint a richer, more nuanced picture of how GenZees/NGCs navigate impoliteness in their conversations not only on social media, but in other social contexts.

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