

Some Reflections on Politeness Strategies among Shona Speaking Couples of Zimbabwe

Kudzai Gotosa¹ and Maxwell Kadenge²

*¹Department of Linguistics, University of Zimbabwe, Harare, Zimbabwe
E-mail: kudzaigotosa@gmail.com*

*²Department of Linguistics, School of Literature, Language and Media,
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa
E-mail: maxwell.kadenge@wits.ac.za*

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ABSTRACT Gender equality has been a topical issue internationally with many organizations advocating equality between males and females as crucial for development but, ironically, cases of gender-based violence are on the rise in African societies. Based on the hypothesis that mis-communication is one of the major causes of gender-based violence, this paper explores politeness strategies used by Shona speaking couples. The conflict resolution strategies employed include the use of proverbs, modal verbs, enclitics, tag questions, totems, hedges, silence and the inclusive pronunciation. The researchers seek to demonstrate culture-specific polite strategies that have the potential to curtail aggression between interactional parties, especially how they enhance smooth communication, obviate crisis and disruption and maintain social equilibrium and friendly relations. This paper underscores the importance of communication and recourse to traditional linguistic practices, as strategies for reducing cases of domestic violence involving spouses.