



# Ableism Rapport Management: A Pragmatic Analysis of Ola Rotimi's *Hopes of the Living Dead*

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**Abstract:** This study aims to investigate the discourse of the leaders of persons with(out) disability as evidenced in the dramatic piece of Ola Rotimi to uncover the existing mechanism of their rapport management in their dialogic discourses. We argue that “disabled” leaders have a high rapport management tendency with their fellow individuals with physical impediments, while “able” leaders do not consider creating and managing rapport with “disabled” persons. Eight (8) dialogic interactions were purposively sampled from the literary piece for analysis. This selection was specifically made to answer the specific research questions for this study. The study employed a qualitative method of data analysis. The study deploys Spencer-Oatey’s rapport management theoretical framework. The study reveals that the dialogic discourses of leaders with(out) disability are used rapport management strategies that mitigated tensions in conversations, while the able-bodied leaders deployed un-mitigating rapport management or direct rapport mismanagement strategies in relating with disabled people. Additionally, the disabled individuals navigated their identities amidst the dehumanizing identities the medical authorities constructed for them.

**Keywords:** ableism, rapport management, disabled bodies, dialogic discourse, pragmatic analysis, people with disability

## 1.0 Introduction

Discourse is an actuality of the use of language by social actors in their social environment. In every conversation social actors engage in, there is always an encoding and decoding of meaning. Interlocutors could have in mind to just either exchange information or transfer knowledge, just in cases where you have lecture or sermon deliveries in classrooms and churches, respectively. Additionally, having conversations could also just be a lubricant to foster the wheels of relationships or to establish one if it was not in existence. Therefore, every conversation has certain goal(s) whether spelled openly or discreetly.

In conversations, social actors or individuals possess “face” (Brown and Levinson, 1987), which becomes a key element that determines if a conversation is going well or not. Face as a delicate phenomenon, is either saved or unsaved, and the flow or goal of the discussion also has some bearings on the impact face receives. When an interlocutor saves or gives face to the hearer or addressee, this marks approval or becomes an expression of friendliness. However, when it is hurt, unsaved or not given, it signifies disapproval or threatens friendliness, creating social boundaries and even othering categories. Interlocutors saving or threatening faces in conversations could either

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maintain a group or create an othered group. Rapport management strategies are deployed by interlocutors to either manage face or mismanage face.

Rapport management is the management of harmony and comfort, or disharmony, in discourses or in intercultural or cross-cultural communication. [10] sees rapport management as the (mis)management of harmony-disharmony among people. It not only examines the way that language is used to construct, maintain and/or threaten social relationships but also includes the management of sociality rights and interactional goals. Rapport management is crucial in interactional discourses that involve social actors, such as interactions that often occur between man/woman/non-binary and woman/man/non-binary, parents and children or wards, leaders and subjects or followers, etc., in order to maintain their social relationships (closeness or distance). *Hopes of the Living Dead* by Ola Rotimi is a play that is concerned with the unending sufferings from illness faced by certain persons with disabilities (lepers as used in the text). Since the physically challenged characters are faced with enormous struggles, rejections and dissociations from ‘regular’ patients (used to refer to able-bodied patients with no physical challenge), officials and others, still, in the face of all the storms, lived relatively in harmony and occasional disharmony. They had leaders that they unanimously selected, who served as their spokesperson with the hospital officials. The interactional discourses between the ‘ordinary’ physically challenged characters (here referred to as those that are not leaders) and their leaders as well as the dialogic discourse between the disabled leaders and the hospital officials would be examined to explore the ways they (mis)manage rapport in their interactional communication which invariably could lead to (dis)harmony and either sustain or disrupt their (chain) of social relationships.

Linguistic research on functional aspects of language in interpersonal interaction or communication includes, mainly, (im)politeness, face work, cooperative principles and rapport management (see Culpeper 2009, Brown and Levinson, 1987, Spencer-Oatey, 2000, 2008, Goffman 1969). Previous studies have been conducted on ableism and using this play by Ola Rotimi (see Udoh and Ejiaso, 2024), but this study contributes to the ongoing discussion on ableism by showing that through the conversations between able-bodied leaders and the disabled leaders in this drama engage in different rapport management strategies. These strategies fell into the main theme of this brief paper’s discussion: the binary of them and us.

The discussion of this paper is as follows: the paper explores the concepts of face, then it examines rapport management and the conceptualization of ableist violence. Subsection 4.0 discusses the method this study employs. 5.0 explores literature on rapport management and studies on Ola Rotimi’s *Hopes of the Living Dead*. The following subheading discusses in detail the main theme of the study from data analysis. Section 7.0 deals with the discussion of findings, while Section 8.0 concludes the study.

## 2.0 The Concept of Face

The concept of ‘face’ could be traced to Brown and Levinson (1987), who conjointly propounded that facework is important in attaining politeness in social interactions that involve interlocutors, both within and outside of a particular sociocultural setting. For them, ‘face’, which is derived from (Goffman 1967), is tied to the notion of “being embarrassed or humiliated, or ‘lose face’. It is something that interactants hold up in interactions, and it requires investment emotionally and can be ‘lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction” (Brown and Levinson 1987). Thus, Brown and Levinson had the idea that interactants must cooperate in order to satisfy the face-wants of interactants. Face is concerned with respect, honour, dignity, and identity

that an individual has and needs to be upheld or met in discourse. Thus, not fulfilling the face desire results in disrespect, dishonour, conflict and so on. Face, in sum, could be said to relate to only the positive or 'good' aspect of an individual, which, of course, he or she wants to be projected and maintained or praised in discourse. According to Lim (1994:200 cited in Spencer-Oatey, 2008, 14), face relates to positive social values: people do not claim face for what they think are negative [values]. In every discourse, interlocutors may desire to be viewed in a positive light to enhance their social approval or friendliness. Spencer-Oatey (2008, 14-15) asserts that

“[P]eople have a fundamental desire for others to evaluate them positively, and so they typically want others to acknowledge (explicitly or implicitly) their positive qualities, and not to acknowledge their negative ones. Face is associated with these affectively sensitive attributes; however, exactly which attributes are face sensitive can vary from person to person and from context to context.”

There was consideration for the context or environment of discourse, while Brown and Levinson conceptualized 'face', because the situational context of text brings about the existence of 'cooperation' – “people cooperate and assume each other's cooperation) in maintaining face in interaction” (Brown and Levinson 1987), which they consider important in all contextual interactional discourse. Through the concept of face and its wants differ in cultures, as culture is vague and different, a specific cultural provision is important to possess, as it helps in communicative comprehension and resultant attaining face-wants of interlocutors.

### **3.0 Rapport and Rapport Management and Ableist Violence Conceptualization**

Rapport simply refers to friendly agreement and understanding between people. Thus, to manage rapport is not only involving the creation of friendly agreement or understanding among people but also its sustenance or maintenance, whereas its mismanagement involves non-creation of or rejection of friendliness, cooperation and understanding among people. To manage rapport amongst interlocutors, the face wants of conversationalists must be met in consideration of the contexts (both textual and situational) and fulfilling the sociality rights and obligations, particularly 'social expectancies' (Spencer-Oatey and Franklin 2009) from interlocutors as well as meeting the goals of interactions.

Rapport management is coined from the notion of politeness by Brown and Levinson (1987), which is required to either 'save' or 'lose' face, which consequently influences a current interactional discourse, negatively or positively. The notions from politeness and face by Goffman form the concept of rapport management, which helps in unravelling how social actors create and/or maintain their social relationship focusing particularly on the face sensitivities, sociality rights and obligations and interactional goals.

Rapport management is a subjective perception of harmony or disharmony, smooth turbulence and warmth-antagonism in the course of interpersonal communication, and this perception is dynamic and easily affected by society (Spencer-Oatey and Franklin 2009). Rapport management theory is propounded by Spencer-Oatey with the objective to examine particularly “the use of language to promote, maintain or threaten harmonious social relations” (Spencer-Oatey 2003).

Face management refers to the quality of face, which is related to individuals and social identity. Sociality rights management refers to the equity rights and association rights in interpersonal communication. On the other hand, social rights and obligation refers to the management of social expectancies (fundamental social entitlements that a person effectively claims for him/herself in his/her interaction with others. Social rights and obligations are concerned with social expectations

and reflect people's concerns over fairness, consideration and behavioural appropriateness. Interactional goals refer to the specific task and/or relational goals that people may have when they interact with each other.

The concept of ableism refers to the discrimination against persons with disabilities. It is a term that concretizes the binary construction that separates abled-bodied people from disabled people. This framework not only separates and marginalizes the disabled but could be the platform by which structural and institutional violences are meted out against the marginalized set that are categorized within the ableism frame. The *Hopes of the Living Dead* by Ola Rotimi can be viewed as a piece that portrays narratives of able-bodied and disabled people. It is a play that is concerned with the unending suffering from illness faced by certain persons with disabilities (lepers). They had leaders that they unanimously selected, who served as their spokesperson in interactions with the able-bodied (hospital) officials. The play's scenes illustrate the dynamics in the relationships amongst the disabled personas as well as between them and the able-bodied individuals.

There is a plethora of research carried out using the pragmatic tool of rapport management, both within the discourse of literature and from other social variables. This review will focus on research done using the analytic tool of rapport management, as well as work on the drama *Hopes of the Living Dead* by Ola Rotimi, with other tools of analysis.

## 4.0 Literature Review

### 4.1. Studies on Rapport Management

Jihong et al. (2020) investigated the topic "rapport management in intercultural interaction: a case study on Emails" to explore the email discourse interactional goals and style. Using the theoretical framework of rapport management by Spencer-Oatey, and employing genre analysis, the study revealed that participants in intercultural conversations are aware of the contextual factors of the interactions and social factors-participants' relations, role rights and obligations, and face sensitivity and individual factors that consider emotional regulation and stylistic formulations. This study tried to form factors that help interactants in conversations that influence their dynamism in judgement or rapport, and this premise is crucial in comprehending social issues or conflicts that occur in interactional communication, and to use adequate rapport management skills in solving the issue.

Again, Bamgbose and Lawal (2021) carried out a study on the topic: "pragmatic import of Yoruba Discourse markers in casual interactions" to examine the socio-pragmatic functions of discourse markers used in interactions. Spencer-Oatey's rapport management model was employed as a theoretical framework, and data were gathered through an eclectic approach of observation, recordings and note-taking within the period of July 2020 and December 2020. A total of 25 recorded markers were highlighted; nine with recurrent patterns were purposively selected for the study. Applying a qualitative method of analysis, the study showed that Yoruba discourse markers have a pragmatic function of laying emphasis, appearance and justification and are also used to mitigate face threats in the maintenance of cordiality interaction to sustain rapport and to cater for sociality rights and cultural obligations in conversations. The study concludes that discourse markers are essential in maintaining interactional social relations.

Schmidt (2020) worked on the rapport management in online spoken interaction: a cross-cultural linguistic analysis of communicative strategies to investigate specific ways in which people use language to manage their relationships in ViMELF, Video-Mediated English as a Lingua Franca Conversation. both qualitative and quantitative approaches were employed to answer three research questions(a) which linguistic strategies and features are used when managing rapport, (b) how is the

rapport management strategy influenced by the medium, the speakers background and idiosyncrasies and (c) how can corpus linguistic methods be appropriated to analyze a rapport strategy and its realizations in the form of linguistic features. The study showed that three linguistic features- pronouns, pragmatic markers and laughter impact how unfamiliar speakers position themselves in conversation and thereby effectively manage rapport.

Lauriks (2014) researched the multilingual repertoires and the strategic rapport management: a comparative study of South African and Dutch small business discourses to explore language usage within two small multilingual businesses to negotiate agency and power relationships in them. Data was collected using linguistic ethnography (Rampton, 2007) and Spencer-Oatey's rapport management and sociolinguistics of globalization were employed as a theoretical framework. It showed that people sometimes deliberately promote and maintain discordant relations, which can be understood as a rational response to the individual's social and economic context. The study recommends an enhanced rapport management framework suitable for the analysis of complex small business discourse. In a similar vein, Mbisike (2024) conducted research on the relevance of rapport management in marital conflicts: Issues from the Covid-19 Pandemic Lockdown to examine the rapport strategies involved in the marital conflicts depicted in a widely shared video skit on some WhatsApp platforms. The study aimed at projecting rapport orientations and relational skills used in marital relations management and adopted Spencer-Oatey's (2008, 2011) rapport management approach. Qualitative design was used for data analysis. The study revealed that all levels of language, ranging from speech acts, turn-taking, tone and address terms, gestures, and other body movements, amongst others, should be adequately managed in discourse as they impact rapport management such that marital relationships could be maintained or disrupted.

Melefa, Amoniyan and Okechukwu (2003) researched rapport management strategies in selected media interviews with Peter Obi of the Labour Party, Nigeria, to investigate the rapport management strategies employed in selected media interviews with Peter Obi and provide explanations for the context that structured such strategies employed. The researchers downloaded 60 videos of media interviews between August 2022 and June 2023 from YouTube channels of Arise TV, Channels TV, British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and Cable Network News (CNN). Ten extracts were purposively sampled and qualitatively analyzed using Spencer-Oatey's (2008) rapport management theory. It showed that commenters used a request strategy frequently to elicit a response from Mr. Peter Obi. Both Mr. Peter Obi and the interviewers used the gratitude strategy to show appreciation, compliments strategy to highlight concerns unattended to. Again, contextual factors like past politicians' shortcomings discourses helped the interviewee to make plans for better security, education and economic improvement.

## **4.2 Studies on Linguistic Analysis**

Udoh and Ejiaso (2024) researched ableist violence: impoliteness strategies in the dramatic discourse of Ola Rotimi's *Hopes of the Living Dead* to explore face-threatening comments used on persons with disability which is a form of violence. The researchers employed a qualitative and quantitative research analytic design and purposively sampled the dataset. Using Jonathan Culpepper's impoliteness strategies as a theoretical framework, the study revealed that five impoliteness super-strategies- bald on record, positive super-strategies, negative super-strategies, withhold impoliteness strategies, and sarcasm impoliteness super-strategies – were used in comments about persons with disabilities. The study concludes that the play critiques face violating the impoliteness strategy in discourse concerning people with disabilities. However, it recommends that all 'faces' should be saved regardless of their physical make-up.

Lere (2012) investigated the stylistic analysis of Ola Rotimi's *Hopes of the Living Dead* to examine the writer's language choices and techniques in conveying messages. Insights from style as an individual served as a theoretical framework. Data were purposively sampled. Stylistic features, which include sentence types, code mixtures and switches, diction choices, Nigerianism, use of music and songs, figures of speech and use of gestures, were unravelled in the study. The research concludes that Ola Rotimi uses language as an instrument for national cohesion and conveys messages adequately. Additionally, Akinwande et. al. (2023) carried out research on echoes of political leadership failure: a stylistic reading of Ola Rotimi's *Hopes of the Living Dead* to explore the thematic focus of the literary piece, the lexico-semantic and syntactic features underlying the text. Data is drawn from the text and analyzed using the provisions of stylistics principles according to Bradford (1997). The study showed that leadership failures, need for purposeful leadership, and ethnic nationalism are themes and practical solutions to the national renaissance of the main theme of political leadership. It further showed that lexico-semantic and syntactic features used in the text include negations, address terms, imagery, synonyms, symbolism, contractions, and antonyms, amongst others. It concludes that the lexico-semantic and syntactic features in the text underline the purposeful leadership potency as a tool required for Nigeria's development.

Following the discussion highlighted, this current study focuses on investigating the rapport management strategies and the dynamics in the relationship between people with disabilities and able-bodied individuals in the play. The objective of the study includes the analysis of the rapport management strategies between these two groups and the social implications of such inter-relational dynamisms.

## **5.0. Methods**

This study employed content analysis and a qualitative analytic approach to the data. The researcher collected and purposively sampled eight (8) extracts of the characters' conversations for examination in this study. These were selected because they showed instances of rapport in them and involved dialogic discourses between able leaders and disabled leaders, as well as the conversational discourse amongst the physically challenged characters and their chosen leaders. Put differently, this selection was specifically made to answer the specific research questions for this study.

The theory of rapport management has been used in applied linguistics and interpersonal and communal pragmatics to account for interactional variables in discourse. The Rapport Management Strategies, as proposed by Spencer-Oatey (2000, 2008) serves as the theoretical framework. These strategies refer to linguistic items or lexical forms that can serve for face and sociality rights management, reaching interactional goals, and thus make for rapport management. Many studies have been carried out on rapport management strategies. According to Spencer-Oatey, there are five strategies which are used by discourse participants in applying social relations. These strategies are requests, compliments, apologies, gratitude and disagreement. He further asserted that rapport is managed through diverse domains, specifically discourse (linguistic) and non-linguistic domains (Spencer-Oatey and Xing 2003).

## **6.0 The Data and Analysis**

### **6.1. Binary of Us and Them**

In the following analysis, the dialogic conversations between the able-bodied hospital leaders and the disabled (inmates) leaders and/or disabled leaders and their fellow inmates have interesting rapport management strategies which were used to reinforce solidarity or to distance the social gap,

thereby creating and sustaining an *othered* category. Therefore, the theme of the binary of us and them surfaces across the selected data sample. The following are discussions around the theme following the selected rapport management strategies that were adopted by the interlocutors in the drama. We discuss the analysis in the following sub-headings: (a)Us: Mitigating Rapport Management for Personas' Inclusivity and (b) Them: Un-mitigating Rapport Management for Personas' Exclusivity. (6.2) negotiation of identity and (6.3) implications of binarized them and us.

### (a) *Us: Mitigating Dialogic Rapport Management for Personas' Inclusivity*

Across the interactional discourses produced by people with disabilities are manifestations of conspicuous interest in managing the 'face' of their fellow interlocutors and ensuring a smooth rapport system exists between and amongst them. While acknowledging and respecting the roles each of them performs within the disabled people's organizing, the inmates and/or people with disabilities deployed rapport management strategies, including but not limited to mitigating support moves such as lexical and syntactic downtoners or downgraders, for example, the use of modal auxiliary "may", inclusive linguistic terms to reinforce solidarity and friendliness. For example, in the following extract, two inmates, Hannah and Harcourt Whyte, demonstrate through their utterances how they intentionally manage their relationship.

[1]

*Hannah: Sir... Sir, eh... (addresses him in Kalabari Language) Mi boiri be ye fate? [meaning: Is that all... for this evening?]*

*HW: (without turning, he also replies in Kalabari) Ibite mingba ba lasaki [meaning: That'll be all. We may continue tomorrow. (Rotimi, 1985, p. 5)*

Here, Hannah's use of "Sir" acts as a mitigating move (a linguistic associative restraint that reflects the speaker's respect and acknowledgement of the hearer's social role of head leader of the group. Similarly, the leader's response further reinforces this rapport management by his deployment of an inclusive personal pronoun "we" and a lexical downtoner – modal auxiliary – "may" to highlight their uniformity and solidarity. This extract reflects the broader system of rapport management that exists within the disabled people's group in the hospital complex.

Other lexical and syntactic downgraders manifesting inclusivity amongst the inmates' utterances include other personal pronouns such as "our", "ours", "us", "ourselves" and so on. The use of these linguistic items that underline sameness not only acts as a mitigating supportive move for smooth conversations but demonstrates the extent of solidarity by which their group organizing is founded, ran and sustained. Importantly, the inmates share relational roles and deploy titles that mark closeness. For example, while Harcourt White addressed Hannah, he employed the linguistic relational term "sister", "sister Hannah", which is not only polite but also reinforces friendly relationality between the hearer and the speaker.

[2]

*Hannah: She says: what will happen to us now?*

*HW: The answer to the question you ask **sister**, is in ourselves. Each one tell one. From now on, we are alone. We fool ourselves if we believe that the big men of this place will care for us as before. (Rotimi, 1985, 21)*

[3]

*Hannah: Some people have started gathering into groups with people of their own kind. That too must stop.*

*HW: (surveys the group glumly) Sister Hannah has just told me that some of you again refused to eat today. Well, we can't go on like that. Each one tell one. We simply can't starve ourselves to death- which is what they want. Now, everybody must try and eat something.*

While these people with disabilities recognize their physical impediments or conditions, they intentionally deploy linguistic terms that predict or enhance positive feelings and relationality, manifesting communal caring and a supportive system. They intentionally avoided the usage of violent linguistic utterances because they perceived and understood that linguistic violence manifested through the usage of hurting, dehumanizing and impolite words has both social, psychological and physical injuries they leave on the recipient of the hurting words (Ejiaso 2024).

**(b) *Them*: Mitigating Dialogic Rapport Management for Personas' Exclusivity**

In interactions with the able-bodied leaders, the disabled inmates chose linguistic strategies to ensure rapport management. While they shared and pushed their group's concerns with the hospital leaders, their selected linguistic items reflect the ingroup's unity and solidarity, and they recognize the roles and positions of the hospital facility leaders, whom they are under. The rapport management strategies they used in interacting with the hospital leaders include linguistic associative restraints that recognize the hearers' social positions and importance. For example, the use of "madam" to refer to the hospital's matron and "sir" and "my lords" to refer to the superintendent and the Senior Medical Officer, SMO, manifested across the text. However, when the disabled inmates' leaders felt threatened and dissatisfied with the able-bodied hospital leaders' harsh treatment and dehumanizing linguistic choices or treatments, they deployed mild mitigating moves to show their dissatisfaction as well as recognizing their positions of disability that disallow them from certain structurally conditioned patterns of labour, for example. The following extract in [4] illustrates this lightweight pushback from one of the inmates' leaders.

[4]

*Matron: Now, would anyone care to explain what all that merriment was about?*

*Nweke: We had just finished choir practice, Madam. Since we still had some time left before curfew, we were only keeping ourselves- er ... keeping ourselves ... going.*

*Matron: With drumming and dancing! Where do you think you are?*

*Editor: (with malevolent calm) In the hospital. The General Hospital of his Imperial Majesty King George V of England; situated in the land of Port Harcourt, in the Colonial Territory of Nigeria, West Africa, the World.*

*Matron: Is that supposed to be plain rudeness, or a display of high intellect in geography?*

*CAT: It's neither.*

*Matron: Beg your pardon!*

*CAT: You asked a simple Question, and he gave you a simple answer.*

*Matron: (curtly) No one is seeking your opinion....*

(Rotimi, 1985, 7-8)

CAT's responses: "It's neither" and "You asked a simple question, and he gave you a simple answer" reflect an undertone of dissatisfaction with the Matron's interrogations. However, in his responses, he still established and maintained mild face mitigating moves that reflect his lower position. His responses were not received in good faith by the matron, who immediately confronted him by describing his opinion as uncalled for.

Another example that further reflects the disabled people's polite expression of their dissatisfaction is in Harcourt Whyte's (HW) response to the superintendent when the latter commanded them, the disabled leaders' group, to lead his group out of the hospital premises. In defense for their humanity, Harcourt Whyte highlighted his and his group's integrity and requested politely to be allowed to live.

[5]

*SUPT.: Now, you listen to me! By the powers conferred on me by the laws of the land, I hereby again order you and all the patients in the Leprosy Wards, within twenty-four hours, to clear out of the premises of the General Hospital of Port Harcourt, and from the environs of Port-Harcourt!*

*HW: And by the powers conferred on me by the suffering people, I say: give us a chance to live like human beings, or we shall remain bones in your selfish throats forever!*

*SUPT: You want trouble, you'll get trouble*

(Rotimi, 1985, 46-47)

Harcourt Whyte's response shows his pushback or resistance to structural and institutional violent dehumanization and oppression, while insisting on his agency. This response reflects the group's pushback that occurred later in the drama text in an attempt to reclaim their agency and humanity.

On the aspect of exclusivity, the hospital leaders embody the ideal of ableism, able-bodiedness, while the people with disabilities are othered. The utterances of the hospital leaders reveal this *othering*. For example: "...Government is proposing to build a hospital for... people like you..." (SUPT in Rotimi, 1985, 70-71). Othering terms used by the hospital official include "you fellow", "lepers", "them" and so on. Additionally, Harcourt Whyte, the disabled people's leader, also reflected this othering in his speech, showing the internalization of the structural pattern that oppresses them.

[6]

*HW: Forgive me, my lord – but the Nigerian people have many faces. Some faces are smooth, well-fed; some are wrinkled, hungry; others, well-fleshed, no troubles. Some are..."*

(Rotimi, 1985, 46-47)

Whyte's utterance showed differences between an ideal and the othered mirrored through the ideal. This way, he reinforces the institutional violences and structures that perpetrate unique systemic violences on some while excluding others.

Across the able-bodied or institutional leaders' utterances in conversational engagements with the disabled people are manifestations of un-mitigating rapport management moves or direct mismanagement strategies. Such strategies include explicit and direct interrogations as in "What's all this about? ...What are you doing here? You and the other women- at this time of night, in the Male Ward?" (SMO, P. 12-14), "...what is it" (SUPT in Rotimi 1985, p. 46), explicit disagreement (criticism or negative evaluator) as in "I find that question irrelevant and impertinent" "...I don't think we're here to discuss facial varieties and their social implication..."

Explicit order include: "Walk out!" (SUPT., Rotimi, 1985, p. 47); "As you were! Everybody. Don't move. I say", "That's it. Now as you were ..." and "Hands under the mattress, Miss Hannah; head turned to the dancer- as you were!" (Matron in Rotimi, 1985, p.6). Time intensifiers used alongside the explicit orders include "right now", "right away", and "certainly".

## 6.2. Negotiation of Identity

Here, the focus is on the navigation and struggles underscored in the individualities of the disabled inmates, both amongst themselves and in the face of the hospital authorities and powers embodied

in the personalities of the Matron, Superintendent and Senior Medical Officer, SMO. The disabled individuals' usage of rapport management strategy amongst themselves demonstrated their recognition and respectability for their fellow inmates. Additionally, in their organizing and labour, they create and foster care and love towards themselves, showing up for one another in their downs and speaking inspirationally to themselves in order to be unrelentless in pushing for their group's preoccupation. While it was not any struggle to recognize their unique personalities, qualities and self within their group, it became a challenge for them to navigate their identity in the face of the medical authorities. In an extract from a scene where the matron interrogated the inmates on their rights to sing and dance after their choir rehearsals, which ended earlier. In her interrogations, she questioned their humanity, personality and individuality, which underscored her unrecognition of them as human beings, just like them, the able-bodied people.

[7]

*Matron: (curtly) No one is seeking your opinion. (turns again to the Editor). In the first place. I was addressing him... (indicates Nweke). Since when did you become the spokesperson for the ... (restrains herself from describing the group), or who do you think you are?*

*CAT: Another question.*

*Editor: Leper, madam, I am a leper- like the rest ... of them... (with a sweep of the arm taking in the entire inmates). Lepers, lepers all – at the mercy of the hospital authorities.*

*Matron: You could be – (...)* (Rotimi, 1985, 7-8)

From the above, Editor, one of the inmates highlights that he is a leper, by extension reinforcing the meaning the medical facility has inscribed on their bodies. This identity appears as the acceptable one for the medical authorities, which marks confinement, restriction and absence of humanity. Thereby, they are not recognized as individuals like the able-bodied ones who are allowed limitless opportunities, including, maybe, dancing after their choir rehearsals ended earlier. A struggle of identity, the disabled inmates faced all through the unfolding scenes in the play. While faced with this rejection and denial of their humanity by the able-bodied, the disabled inmates still recognized their own humanity and continued to pull themselves together in pushing for their own preoccupation of charting a good course for themselves.

### **6.3. Implications of the Binarized Us and Them**

The idea here is to shed light on the impact of and contextual meaning of the rapport mismanagement strategies deployed by these groups of individuals. The play demonstrates different strategies of rapport management which were deployed by (able-bodied and disabled) interlocutors, and each strategy used has varying motives. While it could be deduced that the disabled inmates used rapport management strategies both amongst themselves and with the able-bodied hospital leaders to show acknowledgement of their individuality, humanity, and even to manage their conversations, the able-bodied leaders, instead, deployed rapport mismanagement strategies which underscore their unrecognition of the individuality, humanity or respectability of the disabled inmates. The rapport mismanagement strategies used by these hospital leaders not only undermined the inmates as human beings capable of feeling, living and relational, but also created and sustained an othered category, which is second placed to their own position. The othering system highlights system and structural patterning of hierarchy and power dimensions where the able-bodied hospital leaders are placed in advantageous positions based on many fronts, including the ideal body or able-bodied personality, the hospital positions that bequeath them with power and authority and a healthy state. However, the

disabled persons are disadvantaged on some fronts, including having some physical impediments (some have their fingers, toes, and eyes out), sick or unhealthy state (as lepers), being confined in rooms, thereby having no power and authority bestowed on them, and being positioned as being at the mercy of the hospital authorities. This power and social distance underscored in this play shows how systemic and structural powers oppress and marginalize some social actors, here, disabled individuals, whose plights and humanity were not considered. Instead, the oppressive system subjected them deeper into their unplanned or non-self-inflicted plight. It further shows how the structural systems sideline or decenter the marginalized or racialized within its socio-cultural, economic, political and medical systems, leaving them to navigate and negotiate their identities through their unfavourable and unpalatable situations and to chart their fate.

## 7.0 The Discussion

From the foregoing, it could be deduced that the dramatic characters/ interactants managed or mismanaged rapport; managed- by fulfilling face wants of others, sociality roles and right and cultural obligations and interactional goals, which facilitate the creation or sustenance of social relationship amongst the conversations, while the avoidance or rejection of these from speakers leads to mismanagement of rapport and non-creation or disruption of social relationship. From the conversations between the physically challenged and their leaders, they employed the linguistic strategies of associative expressiveness (list them), agreement, illocutionary speech acts and indirect strategies while also maintaining their social roles as leaders and subjects and obligations from leaders to lead and followers to pay heed to the leader's instructions. Again, they displayed sensitivities to one another's facial expressions and consequently cooperated in order to achieve their aims for their interpersonal communication, which resulted in the harmony, tranquility and smoothness that the physically challenged had amongst them. Their employment of mitigating supportive moves, requests, downgrades, and appreciation/ gratitude upgraders fostered their in-group harmony. However, from the interaction between the members and leaders of the physically challenged sect and the (hospital) officials, they are punctuated with disharmony. It could be deduced that the officials only occasionally tried to use associative expressiveness (linguistic strategies of inclusion) when their interactional goal was to make them leave the hospital wards. Ordinarily, because of the tension between these two groups of people (able-bodied and disabled), their discourses vary. The officials' discourses are pontificated by the usage of linguistic strategies of associative restraints, refusal or disagreement intensifier (upgraders). They showed little or no concern for the face wants of "others", played down on their sociocultural roles and rights and obligations as well as their existing divergent interactional goals; the physically want to be accepted, allowed and treated humanely like others (especially 'regular patients'), while the hospital officials and government want them out of the hospital. Therefore, there was no intent for social relations from the officials, who are powerful because of the social advantage and position they have and physical advantage. However, the lepers expressed intention to create a rapport and manage it, in the discourse studies, with the officials,

## 8.0 Conclusions

In conclusion, the current study has shown that the discourse of leadership between powerful discourse participants and less powerful or unprivileged ones, particularly between officials and lepers, has different rapport management strategies. The official discourses are marked more by the use of linguistic strategies of associative restraint, illocutionary speech acts of explicit disagreement

and refusal upgraders because of a lack of intent for social bond, which is deduced from the discourses, is that of avoidance of social relationship creation. But on occasions where they want to get others to do their bidding, they express little associative expressiveness even in their associative restraints strategies, explicit interrogations and (in)direct linguistic strategies. This further creates and strengthens the existence of inequality as a social reality, which powerful social actors mostly use and manipulatively make the less powerful do their bidding. On the other hand, the lepers, while within themselves or with officials, expressed illocutionary acts of explicit gratitude, associative expressiveness, indirect strategies and are sensitive to the others' (officials') face wants, which is why they also apply linguistic strategies of associative restraints. They understood their social roles and rights and obligations and want to fulfil them, while also demanding that their interactional goals be met to create social relations and manage the rapport with others.

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