

Internal request modification by first and second

language speakers

ABSTRACT

Faersch & Kasper (1989) distinguish two main types of internal request modification, namely: syntactic down graders such as interrogative structures and lexical down graders such as the politeness marker *please*. This study focuses on the question of whether Luganda English speakers would negatively transfer **into** their English speech the use of syntactic and lexical down graders resulting in pragmatic failure. Data were collected from Luganda and Luganda English speakers by means of a Discourse Completion Test (DCT) containing eight request situations. The analysis followed the speech act analytical framework developed for the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Patterns (CCSARP) project. Results showed that Luganda English speakers overgeneralized the pragmatic function of *please*. They inappropriately used it in English as an attention-getter, hence risking situational inappropriateness and pragmatic failure in English. Findings from this study may have theoretical and pedagogical implications for linguists, language teachers, learners, multilingual speech communities, textbook writers, syllabus designers and researchers.

Keywords

Internal request modification; cross-cultural speech act realisation patterns; politeness and interlanguage phenomena; pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge; pragmatic failure

Introduction

This article was originally submitted as part of chapter four of my doctoral thesis (unpublished) to the University of the Witwatersrand (Lwanga-Lumu 2000). The study examines contrastively the use of internal modification in the production and perception of requests in three groups of speakers: Luganda first language speakers (henceforth LL1Ss), Luganda speakers of English as a second language (Luganda English-LESs) and English first language speakers (EL1Ss). Luganda is one of the indigenous Bantu languages spoken natively by the Baganda tribe in Uganda. Uganda is a landlocked state in East Africa and a former British protectorate. It is a multilingual country with approximately thirty-five indigenous languages spoken by specific tribal groups, of which the Baganda is one. The Baganda (the native speakers of Luganda) comprise the largest population group in Uganda. Because of Uganda's colonial history, there are many English first language speakers, especially in institutions of higher learning such as universities, missionary schools and hospitals, as well as in some government institutions and non government organisations.

Since the colonial era and as stipulated by the 1995 constitution, the official language of Uganda is British English. For the past eighty years or so, English was very closely tied up with the political, educational, scientific, industrial technological development and international trade development of Uganda. As Matovu (1996: 2) states, 'English is the language of success in life after school in Uganda.' In Uganda, English has broken down tribal frontiers, so that people of differing ethnic origins use English to communicate to one another without stirring any tribal animosity.

Apart from fostering national unity, Matovu (1996) points out that an adequate knowledge of English is an indispensable requirement in Uganda for anyone to live in any wider context than the village. English is therefore the dominant official language and the indicator of academic, political, social and economic development. Although most educated Ugandans feel they have mastered English, they often lack communicative competence in English, especially in situations that require requesting, apologising, greeting, thanking, or expressing sympathy.

The main problem that the (LESs) face is that Luganda has an extraordinary amount of register,

stylistic and politeness variation. Therefore, these speakers have a variety of utterances with which to communicate whatever they want in Luganda and Kiganda culture. However, whatever they want to communicate in English is able to

be realised differently in style, politeness and register. The notion 'Kiganda culture' describes the beliefs, practices, forms, meanings and norms of the Baganda. Specifically, the assumption tested in this study is whether or not LE interlocutors actually inappropriately transfer the norms, forms and meanings of Luganda and Kiganda culture (such as internal request modifiers) to English (their target language).

Researchers concentrating on the language learner's inappropriate speech act realisation have demonstrated that even fairly advanced learners fail to convey or comprehend the intended illocutionary force or politeness value (see Blum-Kulka, 1982, and Thomas, 1983). The focus has been on negative transfer, given the potential risk negative transfer has on successful communication. According to Maeshiba, Yoshinaga, Kasper & Ross (1996), negative transfer is the influence of first language competence on the learner's interlanguage and pragmatic knowledge that differs from the target language. Studies have shown that negative transfer remains a significant source of cross-cultural miscommunication and pragmatic failure (Blum-Kulka, 1982; Thomas, 1983; Olshtain & Cohen, 1983, and Beebe, Takahashi & Uliss-Weltz 1990). The term "pragmatic failure" refers to the inability to understand what is meant by what is said (Thomas, 1983: 91). The LESs inappropriately transfer the linguistic, pragmatic and social-cultural norms from their L1 to the target language. Such pragmatic transfer may result in widespread pragmatic failure.

Successful performance of speech acts and the indication of politeness requires a speaker to be pragmatically competent. The speaker must have knowledge of pragmatic principles and linguistic forms (pragmalinguistic knowledge) and sociopragmatic knowledge (knowledge of how to use language appropriately in relation to social-cultural norms, values and beliefs) (Thomas, 1983). Some problems occur because most language teachers devote little time to teaching their students how to converse in English and to produce or understand utterances that are both linguistically well formed and contextually appropriate. The result is that some students commonly use forms that are contextually inappropriate because these forms differ in register, style and politeness from what native English speakers would employ.

In a study on sources and consequences of miscommunication in Afrikaans English, Chick concludes that Afrikaners and English speakers misunderstand one another because each enters the conversation with his/her own culturally preferred interactional styles (Chick, 1991). This study similarly investigates the problem of pragmatic transfer and intercultural miscommunication between LE and EL1 speakers responsible for the subsequent stereotyping that is evident in some of the encounters between the two groups of speakers. It thus considers the degree of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic complexity LE speakers fail to attain in the target language.

In addition to his well-known four maxims making up the Co-operative Principle, Grice (1975) points out that all sorts of other maxims (aesthetic, social, or moral in character), such as 'be polite', are observed by participants in conversation and may also generate conversational implicatures. His main focus was, however, on the four conversational maxims (Grice, 1975: 46). In distinguishing these conversational maxims, Grice was trying to identify presuppositions that enable participants in a speech event to co-operate and to assign to utterances the appropriate illocutionary value. Clyne (1994) advises that the notion of 'co-operation' needs to be regarded cautiously to allow for cultural variation.

According to Mey (1993: 67), a criticism that is often offered of these principles is that they can be interpreted as a moral code of behaviour. However, my view is that such presupposed

universals are not set regulations to be obeyed, but are a set of descriptive guidelines. Against this background, I thus maintain that these maxims should be regarded as points of reference for communication purposes. In the

description and analysis of corpus for the present study, I establish whether or not these maxims apply to Luganda and Kiganda culture.

The cross-cultural speech act realisation patterns (CCSARP) project

During the past decade, the most significant study of cross-cultural speech acts has been the CCSARP project, supported by an international group of researchers (see Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989) and initiated in 1982 (see Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). The project was based on Brown & Levinson's (1978, 1987) theory of politeness and has contributed tremendously to the analysis of speech acts such as requests, across various languages (see Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989). Its main aim was to investigate whether there are pragmatic universal principles in speech act realisation patterns of L1 and L2 speakers and what could be the characteristics of these universals.

Researchers working with the CCSARP framework have conducted various studies on requests as speech acts (see Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989a; Blum-Kulka, 1987; Blum-Kulka, 1989; Hodge, 1990 and Gough, 1995). For instance, the few studies conducted in isiXhosa and isiZulu, respectively, show culture-specific features of discourse and prove that speech communities tend to develop culturally distinct interactional styles. Such studies further reveal that the greatest gap in our knowledge of speech patterns lies in African Linguistics and that little attention has been paid to the study of requests (except for Bangeni, 1991; de Kadt, 1995a, 1995b and Gough, 1995).

More studies, especially in African languages are, therefore needed for an increased awareness of the differences, and similarities in pragmatic norms across languages and cultures. To date, speech act realisation patterns and politeness phenomena have scarcely been investigated in Luganda and other African languages (but see Bangeni, 1991; Hodge, 1990; Matovu, 1996; Lwanga-Lumu, 1999a; 1999b and de Kadt, 1995a). Thus, on the descriptive level, the present investigation attempts to fill this gap in African Linguistics.

Description of the study

The major objective of this study is to identify the substantial cultural differences and similarities between Luganda and English speakers' use of internal modifiers in requesting. The investigation is based on the methodology developed by the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Patterns (CCSARP) project (see Blum-Kulka & Olshtain (1984). I used Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper's (1989a) classification of request strategies, which was set up to reflect a cross-linguistically valid scale of indirectness. The nine strategy types for the indirectness scale of English are as follows:

1. Mood derivable: The grammatical mood of the verb in the utterance marks its illocutionary force as a request. (e.g. *Clean up the kitchen.*)
2. Explicit performatives: The illocutionary force of the utterance is explicitly named by the speaker by using a relevant illocutionary verb. (e.g. *I am asking you to move your car.*)
3. Hedged performatives: The illocutionary point is directly derivable from the semantic meaning of the locution. (e.g. *I would like to ask you to move your car.*)
4. Obligation statements: The utterance states the obligation of the hearer to carry out the act. (e.g. *You'll have to move your car.*)
5. Want statements: The utterance states the speaker's wish that the listener carries out the act.

(e.g. *I want you to move your car.*)

6. Suggestory formulae: The utterance contains a suggestion to do the act. (e.g. *How about cleaning up?*)
7. Query preparatory: The utterance contains reference to preparatory conditions for doing the act (e.g. ability or willingness). (e.g. *Could you clean up the mess?*)
8. Strong hints: The utterance contains partial reference to an object or to elements needed for the implementation of the act. (e.g. *You've left the kitchen in a right mess.*)
9. Mild hints: The utterance makes no reference to the request proper but is indirectly interpretable as a request through the context. (e.g. *We don't want crowding here.* – a request to move the car).

(adapted from Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989a: 18)

These strategies represent the nine different ways a request can be realised in English. Blum-Kulka (1989: 46–47) says that three major levels of directness are manifested universally by requesting strategies, namely: the impositive level (the most direct), comprising strategies 1–5, the conventionally indirect level (strategies 6–7) and the non-conventional indirect level (strategies 8–9). (Here “conventional” means “conventionalised in a given language”.) In this study, these directness levels were applied to Luganda and Luganda English.

Comparison of internal request modifiers

In order to compare the internal request modifiers used by the LESs and those used by the EL1Ss and LL1Ss, we need to establish which phenomena should be attributed to universals of requests as speech acts, which to (more general) linguistic politeness strategies, and which to language/culture-specific developmental patterns of English and Luganda. The following questions will be examined with respect to LL1Ss, EL1Ss and LESs:

- a) Do the three groups use the same types of internal modifiers? (linguistic elements speakers use to modify their requests internally)
- b) Are all these types of modifiers identified in the CCSARP framework?

Blum-Kulka & Levenston (1987) observe that even after the speaker has chosen the appropriate directness level for requesting, he still has a variety of verbal means to modify the degree of imposition involved. The number and type of request modifications used by the LL1 and LE speakers were investigated by means of Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper's (1989) scale of indirectness outlined above.

Data collection and analysis

This study investigated the nature of personal variability in the choice of internal request modifiers in eight request situations. The situations were in the form of dialogues that reflect everyday occurrences of the type expected to be familiar to the students. A short description of the situation was given, indicating the social distance between the interlocutors, their social power relative to each other and the setting. An incomplete dialogue followed each situation. The request situations are outlined in Appendix 1.

The instrument used was part of a Discourse Completion Test (DCT) originally developed by CCSARP researchers for comparing the speech act realisation patterns of native and second language users. While the CCSARP project has provided the DCT questionnaire method, there are several limitations in using it. For instance, Beebe & Cummings (1996: 80–81) point out that the DCT data do not have the repetitions, the number of turns, the length of responses, the emotional

depth, or other features of natural speech. Similarly, de Kadt (1995b: 66) found that the DCT methodology ignores most social indexing mechanisms, especially non-verbal phenomena and lexical items (see also Lwanga-Lumu, 1999a, b).

To circumvent some of the limitations inherent in the use of the DCT questionnaire method, I used complementary methods of data collection. For instance, I supplemented the written questionnaires with videotaped role-plays and oral interviews (see chapter 6 of my doctoral thesis for further details). The disadvantage of using the video-equipment to collect data is that it is cumbersome and because it is conspicuous, it could have affected the communicative behaviour of the respondents. However, since the video-role plays and the DCT methods are invaluable for gaining insight into authentic speech behaviour, I used video-tape recording together with written elicitation techniques, so that non-verbal phenomena could supplement the verbal communication.

Beebe & Cummings (1996) state that despite some weaknesses, DCT elicited data have some advantages over naturalistic data. For example, the advantage of using the DCT as an instrument in this study was that of being able to collect data from a large sample and also from within the same language as produced by native and non-native speakers. By using written elicitation techniques, it was possible to obtain more stereotyped responses needed in comparing native and non-native speech behaviour. Before administering the questionnaires, they were pilot-tested. The items in both EL1 and LL1 were analysed to determine their cross-cultural validity and refine translations already produced via back-translations (see Appendix 2 for a sample questionnaire).

The sample speakers were equal numbers of males and females in each group, that is 100 Luganda first language speakers (LL1Ss), 100 English first language speakers (EL1Ss) and 100 English second language speakers whose first language is Luganda (LESs). The LL1Ss and LESs were full-time students in their second and third years of study at Makerere University in Uganda. As native English is the target for Ugandan learners of English, British and Australian English subjects used in the studies edited by Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper (1989) were used as a standard for speakers of English as a first language (EL1Ss), to avoid unnecessary repetition. Thus, the third group is not internal to Uganda.

Each group consisted of students doing any subject but linguistics. Using full-time Makerere university students as a sample ensured homogeneity as much as possible in social class, level of income, educational and English proficiency level, occupation and age range. One of the requirements for university entrance in Uganda is a good pass in English language, at Ordinary Level. Therefore, all university students in Uganda must be proficient in English because it is the medium of instruction.

Internal request modification

Internal request modifiers mitigate the force of a request. Internal modifiers are thus lexical items and phrases within the request utterance, the presence of which is not a necessary condition for the utterance to be understood as a request. For instance, the underlined parts in example (1) were coded as internal modifiers:

- (1) *Mbadde newunya oba wandiyinziza okunsenvulako eka.*
'I was wondering if you could drop on me home.'
(*'I was wondering if you could please give me a lift home.'*)

Faerch & Kasper (1989: 224) distinguish two forms of internal modification, namely: 1. syntactic downgraders, such as interrogative or conditional structures (as in *Could you clean up the kitchen?*), and negation tense and aspect markings, (as in *Shouldn't you tidy up the kitchen?*), and 2. lexical or phrasal downgraders, such as the politeness marker (*please*), consultative devices (*do*

you think), downtoners (modal adverbs such as *perhaps* and *possibly*), subjectivisers (such as I wonder/think/believe -/suppose) and hedges such as *somehow*. In short, downgraders are optional items that mitigate the impositive force of the request.

In the LL1 data analysed, speakers used alerters and interrogatives to mitigate the force of the imposition in their requests as identified in the CCSARP project. In addition, lexical and phrasal downgraders were used to soften the imposition, such as *bambi* ('please') and the affixation of an enclitic before or at the end of a verb to form verb + preposition morphemes (as in *sula + ko* – 'drop + on') with the force of (drop please). According to Matovu (1996), enclitics in Luganda are added at the end of a verb, or come just before a verb or noun to communicate politeness. Two cases in point are:

- (2) Ssebo mwami Kawumi Oyinza okunsulako eka?
'Sir, Mr. Kaumi, can you drop/me/on (with the force of please) home?'
(‘Mr. Kaumi, can you please give me a lift home?’)
- (3) Lwaki tonongoosezako ku ffumbiro n'enfumba mangu?
'Why don't you clean for me on a little the kitchen and I cook quickly?'
(‘Why don't you please clean up the kitchen, so that I can cook quickly?’)

According to Faerch & Kasper (1989), the most obvious criterion for selecting a strategy type from which to operate is frequency of occurrence. Faerch & Kasper (1989) state that the most widely used strategy type in the five languages they studied is the Query Preparatory 7 *Can/ could you do X?* While speakers in other languages vary their request realisations according to situational constraints, the native speakers of British English display most sensitivity to situational constraints regarding their choice of strategy types, and stick with the Query Preparatory strategy 7.

Faerch & Kasper (1989: 223) give an overview of the occurrence of the Query Preparatory in five situations, namely: S1 (Kitchen), S5 (Notes), S7 (Ride), S11 (Policeman) and S15 (Lecturer). They observe that in all five situations, the British English speakers' use of the Query Preparatory ranges from 78% to 99%. Compared to my findings, the frequency of occurrence of the Query Preparatory is lower in LE than in EL1 (amounting to between 7% to 89%, whereas in LL1 it is extremely low, amounting to between 0% to 4%). In both the EL1 and LE groups, there is agreement that the situations in which the Query Preparatory strategies are used more frequently are S5 (Notes), S7 (Ride) and S15 (Lecturer). The results from the three groups of speakers are depicted in Table 1.

Table 1. The use of the Query Preparatory strategy in the five situations

	<i>S1 Kitchen</i>	<i>S5 Notes</i>	<i>S7 Ride</i>	<i>S11 Police</i>	<i>S15 Lecturer</i>
<i>ELISs</i>	78%	99%	85%	90%	92%
<i>LESs</i>	19%	89%	79%	7%	44%
<i>LLISs</i>	2%	1%	0%	0%	4%

The findings in Table 1 show little variation in the use of the Query Preparatory in both Luganda (LL1) and English first language (EL1), as opposed to the enormous variation in Luganda English (LE). To establish how the first and second language speakers use the internal modifiers to modify their Query Preparatory strategies, the situations were selected in each language in which the Query Preparatory appears more frequently. These situations are S5 (Notes), S7 (Ride) and S15 (Lecturer) for the five languages studied in CCSARP project. The distribution of syntactic

downgraders in these situations is depicted in Table 2, Table 3 and Table 4. The results for EL1s were obtained from Tables 2, 3 and 4 of Faerch & Kasper's (1989: 225) study. The responses were coded into the columns of Tables 2, 3 and 4 as follows:

- i. the Interrogative which includes: interrogative + negation (couldn't)
- ii. Conditional, which includes: modal verbs; and iii. Others/Combinations which includes: zero markings, the past time marker, the duration aspect marker and the subjunctive.

Table 2. Syntactic downgraders in situation 5 (Notes)

	Interrogative		Conditional		Other/Comb.		No Response	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
ELISs	98	96	1	1	3	3	0	0
LESs	100	56	1	1	37	37	6	6
LLISs	100	25	3	3	71	71	1	1

Table 3. Syntactic downgraders in situation 7 (Ride)

	Interrogative		Conditional		Other/ Comb.		No Response	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
ELISs	82	76	3	4	17	21	0	0
LESs	100	81	3	3	14	14	1	1
LLISs	100	2	3	3	95	95	0	0

Table 4. Syntactic downgraders in situation 15 (Lecturer)

	Interrogative		Conditional		Other/Comb.		No Response	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
ELIS	100	75	7	9	13	16	0	0
LESs	100	46	4	4	49	49	1	1
LLISs	100	13	0	0	85	85	2	2

These results show that, across situations S5 (Notes), S7 (Ride) and S15 (Lecturer), EL1 speakers decrease the use of the pure interrogative or interrogative + negation at the following rates: 96%, 76%, 75%, respectively. They tend to use more complex syntactic modifiers, such as the conditional and combinations to save 'face', as in the following examples.

- (4) S5 Notes
Could I borrow your notes from yesterday's class?
- (5) S7 Ride
Excuse me, is it all right if I go home with you?
- (6) S15 Lecturer
I was wondering if you could possibly try and squeeze your Aristotle paper in next week instead of in a fortnight's time. (Faerch & Kasper, 1989: 226)

In LE, the use of the interrogative or interrogative + negative varies across the three situations with

the following rates: S5 (Notes) 56%, S7 (Ride) 81% and S15 (Lecturer) 46%. In S5 and S7 (the Notes and Ride situations), the interrogative or interrogative + negation syntactic patterns were very popular in the LE group compared to their use in LL1 where the frequency is only 25% and 2%, respectively. This finding is contrary to my prediction, since it suggests that Baganda learners of English as an L2 do not transfer to English their use of syntactic downgraders. Rather, they seem to be conscious of the use and importance of the syntactic downgraders in the target language for both situations, as in the case of the EL1 speakers.

The high frequencies of the interrogative or interrogative + negation structures for S5 (Notes) and S7 (Ride) in EL1 and LE, suggest that both groups agree in their estimate of rights and obligations. For both situations, the requesters seem to be aware that they are in powerless positions because of the amount of imposition inherent in their requests for notes and a ride, respectively. As the speakers find themselves in a more difficult and imposing situation to make the request, they opt for higher levels of indirectness through the use of the interrogative or interrogative + negation syntactic structures to soften the requests.

Bearing in mind the artificial nature of the questionnaire method and the role-plays used to elicit data, together with the observer paradox, these results can only be suggestive. The single written responses required from the DCT questionnaire might not have reflected the negotiation of speech act realisation inherent in oral speech that is more frequent in Luganda. Because of such limitations, I supplemented results from the written questionnaire with videotaped role-plays and ethnographic interviews (see chapter 6, Lwanga-Lumu 2000).

The LL1 data show that speakers opted mainly for the more complex mitigators, such as the use of past tense with present time reference and combinations of tense, subjunctive, interrogative + conditional and the conditional. The following frequencies for other, or a combination of mitigators, that featured in the Luganda data are noted across the three situations: S5 (Notes) = 71%, S7 (Ride) = 95% and S15 (Lecturer) = 85%. For instance:

(7) Tense

Mbadde njagala kunjazika ku bifunze byo ebya jjo.

‘I had wanted to lend me (on) notes your for yesterday ‘

(‘I had wanted you to please lend me your notes for yesterday.’)

(8) Combination

Bamulirwana babwe, nti mwandinyambye nemuntwalako.

‘The neighbours theirs, that you were to help me and give me a lift (on/ a little bit) please.’

(‘My neighbours, I wish that you could please help me by giving me a lift home.’)

Results from the data analysis showed that speakers use specific lexical and phrasal downgraders to modify internally the impositive force of the request proper (the head act). Table 5, Table 6 and Table 7 depict the distribution of the lexical and phrasal downgraders in the three situations. “Zero Marking” in each of the three tables indicates that no lexical or phrasal downgraders were used. “Politeness Marker” refers to an optional element added to a request to bid for co-operative behaviour, such as *please*. “Consultative Device” indicates a phrasal downgrader, such as *Do you think ...?* “Downtoner” refers to sentential or propositional modifiers that are used by a speaker in order to modulate the impact his request is likely to have on the hearer. “Combination” stands for possible co-occurrence of lexical or phrasal downgraders in any one utterance. “No Response” indicates that either the respondent did not give a response or the response given cannot be coded as a request.

Table 5. Lexical or phrasal downgraders in S5 (Notes)

	Zero Marking		Politeness Marker		Consultative Device		Down-toner		Other/Combination		No Response		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
<i>ELISs</i>	98	49	48	31	30	12	12	3	3	8	5	0	0
<i>LESs</i>	100	23	23	68	68	5	5	2	2	1	1	1	1
<i>LLISs</i>	100	39	39	19	19	0	0	1	1	36	36	1	1

Table 6. Lexical or phrasal downgraders in S7 (Ride)

	Zero Marking		Politeness Marker		Consultative Device		Down-toner		Other/Combination		No Response		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
<i>ELISs</i>	82	28	23	7	6	21	26	12	15	20	24	0	0
<i>LESs</i>	100	21	21	63	63	8	8	2	2	5	5	2	2
<i>LLISs</i>	100	32	32	15	15	3	3	0	0	47	47	2	2

Table 7. Lexical or phrasal downgraders in S15 (Lecturer)

	Zero Marking		Politeness Marker		Consultative Device		Down-toner		Other/Combination		No Response		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
<i>Urer</i>	80	43	34	3	2	17	21	14	18	13	16	0	0
<i>LESs</i>	100	44	44	19	19	16	16	8	8	12	12	1	1
<i>LLISs</i>	100	74	74	2	2	7	7	2	2	11	11	3	3

According to Faerch & Kasper (1989: 231), the British English speakers opted for Zero Marking with the following frequencies: S5 (Notes) 49%, S7 (Ride) 28% and S15 (Lecturer) 43%. The following proportions of the LE speakers preferred the Zero Marking: S5 (Notes) 23%, S7 (Ride) 21%, and S15 (Lecturer) 44%, whereas from the Luganda data, 39%, 32%, and 74% of the Luganda speakers opted for the Zero Marker, respectively. Note that for all three groups, Zero Marking is popular in S15 (Lecturer) and least popular in S7 (Ride). The observable difference in the preference of Zero Marking across the situations suggests that the three groups of speakers

have varied sociopragmatic characterisations of the three situations.

The EL1 speakers regard the Notes situation as one where the requester assumes the requesting role, and is in a powerless position. Therefore, he has to use either a Query Preparatory (to offer a negotiable option to the listener) or the politeness marker, *please* (cf. Faerch & Kasper, 1989; House, 1989). On the other hand, in the LE data, only a proportion of 23% opted for the Zero Marking compared to a proportion of 39% in LL1. The under-use of the Zero Marking in the Notes situation suggests that the learners may have overgeneralized the use of the politeness marker *please* and are basically unaware that the use of the Query Preparatory alone could indicate politeness. Consequently, in the LE data 68% opted for a politeness marker as opposed to 31% in EL1 and 19% for the equivalent of *please* in LL1.

The LE speakers' use of *please* in the target language has shown some deviations from the British native use. In the Ride situation, a similar overuse of the politeness marker is noted in the interlanguage English data, with 63% of the LE speakers preferring the use of *please*, as opposed to 7% of the EL1 speakers, and 15% of the LL1 speakers. A similar tendency of LE speakers to overuse the politeness marker was a common feature in the findings of House (1989) and Faerch & Kasper (1989). Examples of the use of *please* in the LE data are as follows:

- (9) Excuse me *please*, you are not allowed to park there.
- (10) *Please* Rose, could you borrow me your notes on yesterday's lecture.
- (11) Hullo, good evening Mr Kaumi! Would you *please* mind offering me a lift on your way back home?
- (12) Hey, Mr. Kaumi, excuse me, can you *please* kindly offer me a ride home?
- (13) *Please* Kato, I have got a countrywide stay away which coincides with your lecture, so would you mind giving it a week earlier?

The difference in the frequencies with which the LE and the EL1 speakers use *please* could be attributed to learners' overgeneralization. Luganda has no specific equivalent for *please*, therefore learners may have over-learned its use, hence the tendency to overuse the politeness marker more than the English native speakers. Evidence of the overuse of the politeness marker in my data is in examples (9) and (10): (*Excuse me please, you ...*, and *Please Rose, ...*). In this context, the Luganda English speaker has overgeneralized the pragmatic function of *please* and has inappropriately used it in English as an attention-getter because in Luganda, attention-getters and alerters are sometimes used to indicate politeness. A case in point is: *Bambi, Babirye lwaki tolongoosa wano?* ('Please, Babirye, why don't you clean up?') In this example, Bambi ('Please') is functioning as an alerter or attention-getter, as well as a politeness marker.

Similarly, in data collected from Makerere University students, Matovu (1996) found common inappropriate use of *please* in expressions such as *Sorry for your sickness please*, (spoken to a friend who is seriously sick) and *I am better please* (replies the patient). By using *please* in such contexts, LE speakers risk situational inappropriateness and pragmatic failure in the target language.

House (1989) and Faerch & Kasper (1989) also observed that L2 learners of English use *please* more frequently than British English speakers. Faerch & Kasper (1989: 232) attribute the learners' preference for the politeness marker to its double function as an illocutionary force indicator (*Could you please ...*) and as a transparent mitigator (*Can you please offer me a lift home?*) to indicate politeness. In this case, the use of *please* resolves the ability or willingness pragmatic ambiguity that is found in *Can you* questions, so as to become a clear request (Blum-Kulka & Levenston, 1987). L2 learners therefore tend to prefer using the politeness marker to other lexical

or phrasal downgraders because it fulfils Grice's (1975) conversational maxim of Manner: 'Avoid ambiguity' (see the introduction of this study).

Compared to the use of *please*, LE speakers underused the consultative device across the situations analysed. Examples of the consultative device in my data include:

- (14) *Do you think* you could present your paper a week earlier? (LESs)
- (15) *Ofayo* bweneyazika ku bifunze byo ebya jjo? (LL1Ss)
(*Do you mind* if I borrow on (a little bit) notes your for yesterday?)
(*Do you mind* if I (please) borrow your notes from yesterday?)

The following low frequencies in the use of the consultative device occur in the learners' (LE) data across S5 (Notes), S7 (Ride) and S15 (Lecturer): 5%, 8% and 16%, compared to those in EL1, 12%, 26% and 21%, respectively. In the L1 data, the consultative device has even lower frequencies: 0%, 3% and 7%, respectively. The similar low preference for the consultative device in both LL1 and the interlanguage (LE) data suggests that LE speakers have not yet mastered the use of the consultative device because it is a lot more syntactically challenging than *please*. Because in LL1 the device is used infrequently, the learners tend to under-use it in English.

The downtoner is also underused in both LL1 and LE with the following frequencies across S5 (Notes), S7 (Ride) and S15 (Lecturer): Luganda 1%, 0% and 2%, respectively, compared to Luganda English with 2%, 2% and 8%, respectively. These findings are different from Faerch & Kasper's (1989), who found the following frequencies for British English: 3%, 15% and 18%, respectively.

The different preferences of LE and EL1 speakers for the downtoner could be attributed to the learners' difficulty in mastering the modal adverbs, such as *possibly* and *perhaps*. Compared to the use of *please*, the downtoners require higher pragmalinguistic competence and more cautious linguistic analysis than the learners may have been taught at school. The use of downtoners in EL1 is more intricate than in LL1, in the sense that their mitigating function and syntactic devices are part of the structural properties of English language which are not normally taught in context (Faerch & Kasper, 1989). Because the LE speakers are not sure of the intricate use of these modal adverbs in English, they tend to use them less frequently than the EL1 speakers.

Evident from the L1 data is the higher occurrence of the category other or a combination of lexical and phrasal downgraders in S5 (Notes), S7 (Ride) and S15 (Lecturer) with the following frequencies: 36%, 47% and 11%, respectively, compared to LE 1%, 5% and 12%, respectively. Examples of other or combinations of lexical downgraders in my data include the following:

- (16) Munange Rose, *omanyi jjo* sasoma nga ndi mulwadde. Nkusaba *onjazikeko katono ku* bifunze byo.
(*My dear Rose, you know*, I did not study yesterday because I was unwell. I request you to lend me *on (a bit) a little* on notes your.)
(*My dear Rose, you know*, I did not study yesterday because I was unwell. I request you to (*please*) lend me your notes?')

In the example above, the speaker uses a cajoler *omanyi* ('you know'). According to Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper (1989b: 284), a cajoler is a conventionalised speech item whose semantic content is of little transparent importance to its discourse meaning. It does not enter into syntactic structures, but it is used to increase, restore or establish harmony between interactants that may be damaged through the request. *Omanyi* in this case serves to establish harmony between the interlocutors and to minimise the imposition of the request. The use of the understaters, *ko katono*

ku ('a [little] bit of'), serves to under represent the imposition inherent in the request and to indicate politeness (that is, in Luganda such understaters carry the force of *please*). This could partially explain why the LL1 speakers used the politeness marker infrequently.

In the Lecturer situation, 74% of the Luganda speakers preferred Zero Marking as compared to 44% and 34% in LE and EL1, respectively. This could partly be due to the fact that among the Baganda, a lecturer, by virtue of his institutional social status, is dominant over the students. Therefore, the speakers could have felt that he had the right to make the request with less mitigation and the student was obliged to comply. I would have expected the Baganda learners to carry this over into their LE speech, but they seem to have behaved more like the EL1 speakers. This suggests that LE speakers are aware of the appropriate use of Zero Marking in English, and do not deviate much from the standard usage in native English.

Discussion

The results have shown that the three groups of speakers use the same types of internal modifiers identified in the CCSARP project to modify their requests. The overall trend observable for the three groups of speakers across the situations is as follows: EL1 speakers pattern their requests by preferring internal modification to external modification. They seem to favour Faerch & Kasper's (1989: 240) *compensation hypothesis*, which states that if one modification is absent from either the internal dimension or the external one, it is employed on the other dimension. On the other hand, LE speakers tend to favour the *combination hypothesis* stating that the choice of modification on one dimension triggers modification on the other dimension (see Faerch & Kasper, 1989: 240). The LE learners refrain from supporting their requests externally where they do not use internal modifiers and use external modifiers in the presence of internal modifiers. LL1 speakers also pattern their requests according to the compensation hypothesis, but unlike the EL1 speakers, the LL1 speakers prefer using external modification.

To account for the pervasive preference of internal over external modification observable among the British native speakers, Faerch & Kasper (1989) give a detailed examination of the structure and function of the internal and external dimensions. They point out that internal (lexical or phrasal modifiers) are shorter and therefore more economical. British English speakers prefer them because they conform to the conversational maxim of manner ('be brief') (Faerch & Kasper, 1989: 243). While internal modifiers carry no independent propositional meaning and occur turn-internally as part of the actual request, they serve an implicit rather than explicit politeness function. Although British native speakers use them unconsciously, they have implicit expectations for these politeness markers to be used in conversation. As a result, British native speakers, consistent with the conventional expectations of politeness among the speakers, may interpret the failure of occurrence of these politeness markers as an instance of offence resulting in pragmatic failure (Faerch & Kasper, 1989: 244).

A possible explanation for the LL1 speakers' under-use of internal modifiers and preference of external modification across the situations is that in Luganda, external modifiers such as giving reasons, justifications and explanations, or praises are considered transparent politeness procedures which speakers use to conform to conversational principles of Quantity, Relevance and Clarity (see the introduction of this study). On the other hand, in English, such preference of external modification over internal modification by LE speakers may be considered as an instance of verbosity and low politeness. In Luganda, the use of external modification, together with non-verbal features of communication, such as posture and gesture, helps to create a context of politeness. It is also important to note that for some native English speakers, such as the British,

Australians and Americans, the Luganda way of communication makes them feel uncomfortable because it calls attention to difference of power and distance between the interlocutors.

Conclusion

This investigation has shown that the amount and type of internal request modifiers selected by speakers are culturally determined by pragmatic, discourse structural and psycholinguistic judgements. A systematic investigation of verbal and non-verbal dimensions of interaction in Luganda and other languages is therefore needed to sensitise language learners and L1 speakers to expect differences and similarities in speech act realisation patterns and cultural norms across languages. Knowledge from such an investigation would partly enable L1 speakers of the target language to be more tolerant towards L2 learners' deviations and to reduce negative cultural stereotypes generated by intercultural miscommunication.

Perhaps, most importantly, this investigation has shown several specific interlanguage phenomena, such as overgeneralization and verbosity. For instance, in Luganda, there is no specific equivalent for *please*, therefore Baganda learners of English as a L2, tend to overlearn its use, and as a result, use the politeness marker more than their English native counterparts. These findings are in line with Blum-Kulka's (1982) notion of speech act interlanguage. She observes that learners sometimes produce forms inappropriate to both L1 and L2. This suggests that Baganda learners of English at times revert to transfer of linguistic forms from Luganda and overgeneralization, when they encounter difficulties in the target language. Thus, to a certain extent, the question of whether differences in the choice of internal request modification patterns of Luganda and English speakers stem from different cultural norms is positively answered.

The verbosity evident in the LE data could be seen as an instance of pragmatic transfer and failure. Some LE speakers probably invested more verbal effort than the EL1 speakers by providing more information than was actually needed for the given occasion, and ended up potentially irrelevant and impolite in English. These learners seemed to put emphasis on clarity at the expense of politeness (that is, they were selecting meaning over form), as they attempted to produce more polite forms from the Luganda notions of presumably polite.

In a nutshell, the insights gained from this study must be examined with some reservations, since they are based on written as opposed to more spontaneous oral responses to an elicitation task. Above all, written responses reflect only one kind of task and are therefore limited in scope. Nevertheless, the study suggests several areas for future research and may have some theoretical and pedagogical implications to researchers, linguists, textbook writers, course designers, second and foreign language teachers, as well as language learners.

First, more research is needed (especially in African languages) to facilitate careful description of speech act realisation patterns of L1 and L2 speakers. The results from such studies could assist syllabus designers, textbook writers and language teachers in making corresponding changes in approaches to L2 language and foreign language teaching. The textbook and the classroom impose limitations on pragmatically appropriate input and these limitations may hinder the learner from becoming truly proficient in communicating in the target language. Therefore, collaborative effort is necessary among researchers, syllabus designers, textbook writers and language teachers to select and sequence semantic formulas to be used in class at each point in the language syllabus, according to the situation selected.

Second, applied linguists, language teachers and textbook writers need to focus more on speech acts and classroom activities that can help learners acquire the norms of politeness which first language speakers of the target language use to determine syntactic options. Using language

textbooks compiled through collaboration, the language teachers could tailor class activities according to improved methods, which are directed towards making the teaching of English sociolinguistically and sociopragmatically useful. For instance, the teaching of the “interrogative sentence” versus the “declarative sentence” in grammar lessons could be used as a starting point to teach the notion of “indirectness” versus “directness” (see Lwanga-Lumu, 1999a). Most second language teachers and grammar textbooks mainly deal with the syntactic (interrogative sentences) and semantic (questions) features and do not include pragmatic features.

In depth research on speech act and politeness realisation patterns in different languages, (in particular African languages) is thus urgently needed to provide valuable and adequate data. Such data could be used by syllabus designers, textbook writers, and language teachers (in collaboration with the language learners) to identify learners’ needs and problems and design language learning programmes and class room activities, which address the problem of pragmatic failure. Teachers, in particular should ensure that their learners know what they are doing when they, for instance use specific lexical or phrasal downgraders, such as the politeness marker *please*, and the consultative device *Do you think...?*, to modify internally the impositive force of a request in English.

Above all, student teachers and in-service language teachers should be proficient and well trained to teach the target language and in particular, to focus on the pragmatic features that hinder communicative competence among second language learners. Through thorough training, we can to a certain extent, try to avoid a situation where a language teacher strives to show the confused second language learners the error of their ways without knowing anything about their ways!

Appendix 1

Request situations

- S1 A student asks his roommate to clean up the kitchen the latter had left in a mess the night before.
- S3 A girl wants to get rid of a boy for pestering her on the street.
- S5 A student asks another student to lend her some lecture notes.
- S7 A student asks other people living on the same street for a ride home.
- S9 An applicant calls for information on a job advertised in a paper.
- S11 A policeman asks a driver to move her car.
- S13 A student asks a lecturer for an extension on an assignment.
- S15 A university professor asks a student to give his lecture a week earlier than scheduled. (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989a: 14–15)

Appendix 2.

Example of (DCT) questionnaire (English version)

S5. Between students. Babirye missed lectures the day before and would like to borrow some lecture notes from Rose.

Babirye:

Rose: Of course, but please bring them back on Friday when coming for the next lecture.

Bibliography

Bangeni, G.N. 1991. A cross-linguistic comparison of requestive behaviour between English and

- Xhosa by native speakers of Xhosa who are advanced second language learners of English, with regard to level of directness. Ms. Department of General Linguistics, University of Stellenbosch.
- Beebe, M.L., Takahashi, T. & Uliss-Weltz, R. 1990. Pragmatic transfer in ESL refusals. Pp. 55–73 in S.D. Krashen, R. Scarcella & ?? Andersen (eds.), *On the Development of Communicative Competence in a Second Language*. Cambridge, MA: Newbury House.
- Beebe, M.L. & Cummings, M.C. 1996. Natural speech act data versus written questionnaire data: How data collection method affects speech act performance. Pp. 65–86 in S.M. Gass & J. Neu, (eds.), *Speech Acts Across Cultures: Challenges to Communication in a Second Language*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Blum-Kulka, S. 1982. Learning to say what you mean in a second language. *Applied Linguistics* 3 (1): 29–59.
- Blum-Kulka, S. & Olshtain, E. 1984. Requests and apologies: A cross-cultural study of speech act realisation patterns (CCSARP). *Applied Linguistics* 5(3): 196–213.
- Blum-Kulka, S. 1987. Indirectness and politeness in requests: Same or different? *Journal of Pragmatics* 11: 131–146.
- Blum-Kulka, S. & Levenston, A.E. 1987. Lexical-grammatical and pragmatic indicators. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 8: 47–61.
- Blum-Kulka, S., House, J. & Kasper, G. (eds.) 1989. *Cross-Cultural Pragmatics: Requests and apologies*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Blum-Kulka, S. 1989. Playing it safe: The role of conventionality in indirectness. Pp. 37–70 in S. Blum-Kulka, J. House & G. Kasper (eds.) 1989.
- Blum-Kulka, S. & House J. 1989. Cross-cultural and situational variation in requestive behaviour. Pp. 123–154 in S. Blum-Kulka, J. House & G. Kasper (eds.) 1989.
- Blum-Kulka, S., House J. & Kasper, G. 1989a. Investigating cross-cultural pragmatics. Pp. 1–34 in Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper (eds.) 1989.
- Blum-Kulka, S., House, J. & Kasper, G. 1989b. Appendix: The CCSARP Coding manual. Pp. 273–294 in Blum-Kulka, S., House, J. & Kasper, G. (eds.) 1989.
- Brown, P. & Levinson, S. 1978. Universals in language usage: Politeness phenomena. Pp. 56–289 in E.N. Goody (eds. ??), *Questions and Politeness: Strategies in social interaction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brown, P. & Levinson, S. 1987. *Politeness: some universals in language usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chick, J.K. 1991. Sources and consequences of miscommunication in Afrikaans English-South African English encounters. Pp. 446–61 in J. Cheshire (ed.), *English around the world: Social contexts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Clyne, M. 1994. *Intercultural Communication at Work: Cultural values in discourse*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- de Kadt, E. 1995a. The cross-cultural study of directives: Zulu as a non-typical language. *South African Journal of Linguistics*, Supplement 27: 45–72.
- de Kadt, E. 1995b. I must be seated to talk to you: Taking non-verbal politeness strategies into account. *Pragmatics and Language Learning* 6. 143–53
- Faerch, C. & Kasper, G. 1989. Internal and external modification in interlanguage request realisation. Pp. 13–50 in H. Blum-Kulka & G. Kasper (eds.) 1989.
- Gough, H.D. 1995. 1995. Some problems for politeness theory: Deference and directness in Xhosa performative requests. *South African Journal of African Languages* 15(3): 123–25.
- Grice, H.P. 1975. Logic and conversation. Pp. 41–58 in P. Cole & J. Morgan (eds.), *Syntax & Semantics*, Vol. 3: *Speech Acts*. New York: Academic Press.
- Hodge, F. 1990. Cross-cultural study of request realisation patterns across two groups of native speakers of English. *South African Journal of Linguistics* 8(3): 121–28.

- House, J. 1989. Politeness in English and German: The functions of *please* and *bitte*. Pp. 96–122 in Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper (eds) 1989.
- Lwanga-Lumu, J.C. 1999a. Politeness and indirectness revisited. *South African Journal of African Languages* 19(2): 83–92.
- Lwanga-Lumu, J.C. 1999b. Cross-cultural contrastive analysis of request directness levels. *Southern African Journal of Applied Language Studies* 7(1): 88–106.
- Lwanga-Lumu, J.C. 2000. Requests and Apologies in Luganda and English. Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of the Witwatersrand.
- Maeshiba, N., Yoshinaga, N., Kasper, G. & Ross, S. 1996. Transfer and proficiency in interlanguage apologising. Pp. 155–187 in S.M. Gass & J. Neu (eds.), *Speech Acts Across Cultures: Challenges to Communication in a Second Language*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Matovu, B.N.K. 1996. The role of English in Uganda's growth and development: A case study of the problems of communicative competence in English of Makerere University undergraduates. Unpublished paper. Kampala: Institute of Languages, Makerere University.
- Mey, L.J. 1993. *Pragmatics: An Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Olshain, E. & Cohen. A. 1983. Apology: A speech act set. Pp. 18–35 in Nessa Wolfson & E. Judd (eds.), *Sociolinguistic and language acquisition*. Rowley, MA: Newbury.
- Thomas, J. 1983. Cross-cultural pragmatic failure. *Applied Linguistics* 4(2): 91–1

Research interests: General Linguistics (Pragmatics and Second language acquisition), Applied Linguistics, Adult and Continuing Education, Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), Language and Literacy.	Dr Joy, Christine, Lwanga-Lumu Department of English VISTA University- Soweto Campus Private Bag X09 Bertsham - 2013 Lumu-JC@sorex.vista.ac.za
---	---