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A Cross-cultural Investigation of Apology Realisation Patterns in Luganda and English

A B S T R A C T One of the main challenges facing speech act research is the strong need to widen the scope of languages studied on the cross-cultural level, so as to make valid and universal claims of the politeness theory. This article reports on an investigation into speakers' realisation, in Luganda, Luganda English, and English first language, of apologies as a basic act of politeness. The investigation sought a) to verify the working assumption that the languages involved reflect different cultural politeness patterns in apology realisation and intensification; and b) if so, to determine to what extent these differences reflect cultural norms. Use was made of Luganda and English discourse completion task (DCT) questionnaires administered to 200 university students. The results show differences in the selection, intensification, and norms of politeness in the realisation of apologies. Apology may be a universal speech act, but its realisation and intensification vary according to conflicting cultural norms. Theoretical and pedagogical implications regarding politeness theory are drawn.

Keywords: speech acts, linguistic politeness, cross-cultural pragmatics, pragmatic transfer; pragmatic instruction.

1. Introduction: Staking out the field

The study described in this article belongs to the broad domain of speech act research, but it has a pragmatic focus. It aimed to analyze cross-culturally apology realization patterns in Luganda, Luganda English[1], and English as a first language in view of the potential conflictual situation arising out of the differences embedded in these languages. Luganda is a Bantu language spoken natively by the Baganda; the largest ethnic group in Uganda, East Africa. According to Fisher (2000: 58), although Luganda is a mother tongue to approximately 20% of the Ugandan population, it is widely understood beyond its natural speech community of

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[1] The term "Luganda English" (LE) is used in this article as a heuristic device; it does not imply the existence of a homogeneous groep of second language speakers.

Baganda. Besides, it is also the sole African language "with instructional materials and literature" (Fisher, 2000: 57). Uganda, was a British protectorate until its independence in 1962, after which, English has remained the language of education, of official government transactions, the judiciary, trade and commerce, the literature, and even religion.

English in Uganda is considered the language of success in life. It serves as the main lingua franca, breaking tribal frontiers, so that people of differing ethnic origins use it to communicate to one another without stirring any tribal animosity. The hegemony of English over the indigenous African languages, including Luganda, is evident at every level of society, especially in education. As a result of contact between English and African languages, especially Luganda, a variety of English developed "possessing its own distinctive features" with regional phonological differences, but "remarkably uniform in syntax and lexis" throughout Uganda (Fisher, 2000: 58).

In this study, it was assumed that Luganda English (LE) apologies would reflect pervasive pragmatic transfer from Luganda into English because Luganda speakers would tend to transfer strategies of Luganda norms of apology and politeness to English. In a culture-dependent (Lipson, 1994) remedial act like apology, which is "the result of a violation of a social rule" (Mir, 1992: 1), speakers will rely heavily on cultural norms characteristic of their speech community that will "condition their versions of (…) apology exchanges" (Lipson, 1994: 19). Indeed, the speech act of apology can be performed differently across cultures and the loss of face through apologizing (or failing to do so) may also vary across cultures (see also Clyne, Ball & Neil, 1991). One implication of transfer from the first language (L1) to the second language (L2) may be pragmatic failure, which may cause miscommunication between LE and English native speakers (EL1Ss), given differences in politeness behaviour that reflect different preferences for different strategies in different cultures (Chick, 1989). It, thus, cuts across the following three perspectives of pragmatics research: Interlanguage pragmatics, Cross-, Inter-cultural pragmatics. It seems, therefore, appropriate and useful to briefly explain each of them, before outlining a survey of the literature on politeness and apologies, the focus of the article, the presentation and discussion of its results, and relevant conclusions.

2. Inter-language pragmatics, Cross-, Inter-cultural pragmatics

Interlanguage pragmatics, "an intersection of pragmatics and the study of second language acquisition" (Kasper, 1995: 1), studies the production, the perception, and the development by second-language (L2) learners of pragmatic knowledge (Kasper, 1996), i.e.norms of use, for example politeness norms and apology strategies. It offers insights to improve our understanding of learners' development of pragmatic competence in the target language (e.g. Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1993; Félix-Brasdefer, 2004; Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993; Kecskes, 2004).

Pragmatic competence is "the ability to use language effectively in order to achieve a specific purpose and to understand language in context" (Thomas, 1983: 92). Pragmatic competence is often distinguished from "socio-linguistic competence", or "appropriacy", i.e. the knowledge of sociolinguistic rules (Wolfson, 1989) or culture-specific rules of use, such as style, (in)directness, and appropriateness, which allows the choice of language that is appropriate to the relationship between the interactants.

Two perspectives, cross- and inter-cultural pragmatics, have informed the methodology of interlanguage pragmatics research. Research in the cross-cultural perspective studies a particular

idea(s) or concept(s), for example a speech act such as apology (Bergman & Kasper, 1993), within several cultures and/or languages; compares/contrasts one culture to/with another on the aspect of interest (Kecskes, 2004). Indeed, in different societies and different communities, people speak differently and these differences in ways of speaking are profound and systematic. They reflect different cultural values, or at least different hierarchies of values, different ways of speaking and different communicative styles. In addition, such differences can be explained and made sense of in terms of independently established different cultural values and priorities.

A well-known example of cross-cultural research is the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project, in short CCSARP (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989). The project studied requests and apologies across four different languages, namely: Danish, English (American, Australian, and British varieties), French, German, and Hebrew. One of the findings from cross-cultural research is the realization of differences in ways of speaking in different societies and different communities which are profound and systematic (Wierzbicka, 1991:69). These differences reflect different cultural values, or, at least, different hierarchies of values, ways of speaking, and communicative styles. They can be explained and made sense of in terms of independently established different cultural values and priorities. Cross-cultural variables which affect the use of language have become extremely important in accounting for social realizations of speech acts (Wierzbicka, 1996).

Since the publication of the CCSARP research findings, and in spite of criticisms (e.g. Ide, 1989; Rose, 1992; Wierzbicka, 1991), the theoretical framework utilised in the CCSARP project has been frequently used for the contrastive analysis of speech act realisation patterns of first and second language speakers (e.g. Kasper & Dahl, 1991; Takahashi & Beebe, 1987). It has also been utilised in the study of African languages versus European languages (e.g. Bangeni, 1991; de Kadt, 1992; Gough, 1995; Kasanga, 2000, 2001, 2003; Lwanga-Lumu, 1999a, b, 2000, 2002) and will be used in the study described here.

Intercultural pragmatics differs from inter-language pragmatics in the sense that the latter is concerned with the development or nature of pragmatic competence of non-native speakers of a language, and studies native vs. non-native speakers interaction exclusively. Intercultural contrastive pragmatics, on the contrary is concerned with any interaction in which interlocutors do not share common linguistic or cultural backgrounds, be they both non-native speakers (Thomas, 1983). These three approaches have also contributed to explaining phenomena of pragmatic transfer, pragmatic failure, and intercultural (pragmatic) miscommunication, which are discussed in the next section.

3. Pragmatic transfer, Pragmatic failure, Intercultural miscommunication

Pragmatic transfer, according to Kasper (1995), is the use by L2 learners, for the comprehension, production, and acquisition of the TL's pragmatic information, of pragmatic knowledge of languages and cultures acquired prior to learning a TL (see also Maeshiba, Yoshinaga, Kasper & Ross, 1996). Littlewood (1983: 202) states that "learners often transfer their native-language preferences to their foreign-language [or second-language] performance". Transfer is, thus, a pervasive strategy in learners' performance (see Fraser, Rintell & Walters, 1981; Leech, 1983).

Pragmatic transfer has been studied along the negative versus positive dichotomy. However, for the sake of economy, negative pragmatic transfer is of particular interest here, given its

relationships with the concepts of pragmatic failure and miscommunication. Negative pragmatic transfer occurs "when a pragmatic feature [e.g., direct or indirect strategies, mitigation devices] in the interlanguage is (structurally, functionally, distributionally) the same as in L1 but different from L2" (Kasper, 1998: 194). Negative pragmatic transfer is sometimes distinguished into negative sociopragmatic transfer and negative pragmalinguistic transfer. The study of negative pragmatic transfer is significantly useful because this type of transfer often results in unpleasant consequences, such as pragmatic failure and miscommunication, which are discussed below.

An undesirable phenomenon in intercultural encounters resulting from transfer from L1 to L2 is pragmatic failure. It is the inability to understand, what is meant by what is said; i.e. "the inability to recognise the force of the speaker's utterance, when the speaker intended that this particular hearer should recognise it" (Thomas, 1983: 94). Pragmatic failure often results from non-native speakers' inappropriate transfer of pragmatic and social-cultural norms from their L1 in an effort to understand the L2. Following the dichotomous division of pragmatic transfer, pragmatic failure is distinguished into pragmalinguistic and socio-pragmatic failure.

Pragmalinguistic failure occurs, when the illocutionary force mapped onto a linguistic structure by an L2 speaker is different from that normally assigned to it by L1 speakers, thus resulting in failure by the former to understand the latter. Socio-pragmatic failure, however, stems from cross-culturally different assessments of the social factors governing speech act performance, such as: the setting and aim of communication, the power relationship or relative status of the participants, the amount of contact previously established between the participants, age, gender (e.g. Lwanga-Lumu, 1999b; Lwanga-Lumu, 2000). Several studies in this area have identified the heavy demand of the complexity of speech act realisation in the target language on non-native speakers, as a common source of difficulty. For instance, the apology speech act is potentially complex because it may comprise a series of speech act strategies, such as: expressing apology (I apologise); acknowledging responsibility (*It was my fault*); offering repair (*I will repair your car*); giving an explanation (*I had no transport*); or promising forbearance of some sort *(I will not come late again)*.

There are also various possible modifications for the intensification of the apology such as *I am terribly sorry*, or for mitigation, for example *Sorry for being late, but we never start on time anyway*. The speaker therefore has a complex task of selecting the appropriate strategy in a given situation. To understand the nature of apologies, it is important for the non-native speaker to consider for every apology how it is initiated, that is, whether the apology is initiated by a complaint, or a situation in which one feels that the apology is necessary. In addition, it is necessary to consider whether it is in the interests of the speaker to apologise, and how this apology is performed.

Another undesirable phenomenon akin to pragmatic failure, is miscommunication. In this article, miscommunication is understood as the communication of unintended messages (Clyne, Ball & Neil, 1991) based on the "meaning of another person's communication behaviour and its consequences for the persons involved in the interaction" (Banks, Ge & Baker, 1991: 104). Besides the problem of intelligibility (e.g. Smith, 1992), miscommunication in intercultural encounters may result in communication conflict (Clyne, 1977) or breakdown (Gudykunst &

Ting-Toomey, 1990)[2]. Sometimes miscommunication may lead to cultural friction (Chick 1986), hostile stereotyping, negative labeling or stereotyping of the ethnic other (de Kadt, 1998a), misevaluation, and, in some cases, the perpetuation of discrimination (Chick, 1985).

Despite the increase in interest and empirical research in the areas of intercultural pragmatics, research in this area involving African languages is still scanty. For instance, de Kadt (1992) bemoans the fact that little attention has been paid to the study of speech act realisation patterns in Bantu languages (but see Bangeni, 1991; Gough, 1995; de Kadt, 1992, 1994, 1995, 1998b; Lwanga-Lumu, 1999a,b, 2000, 2002; Kasanga, 2000, 2003). These studies reveal culture-specific features of discourse, as well as culturally distinct interactional styles of discourse. Since descriptive analyses of speech act and politeness phenomena in African languages are still scanty, more studies based on the cross-cultural communication level are still needed in African languages to make more valid conclusions of language universals of politeness. The study described here aimed to contribute to filling this gap.

4. Politeness theory

Brown & Levinson's (1978, 1987) theory of politeness postulates general communicative principles, assumed to be valid for all languages and cultures. The authors claim that several universal principles interact with regard to politeness conventions. These conventions are generally determined by the awareness of "face" (the public self-image every member of society wants to claim for himself) by all competent adult members of society. In apologising for example, the speaker, aware of the imposition inherent in the apology, would use, to some degree, various face-saving strategies to save the hearer's 'face'. Although the extent to which the speaker uses such strategies may be culturally determined, Brown & Levinson (1987) claim that the basic principles involved are universal.

Studies conducted in non-Western cultures have criticised the ethnocentric character of the theory and have, thus, increasingly questioned the validity of universal principles and predictions of politeness theory (see Watts, 1992). Barnlund & Yoshioka (1990), from a questionnaire-based study of apologies in American English and Japanese, found that among Japanese respondents, there was preference for more direct and more extreme forms of apology, and among Americans, for less direct forms in contradiction to Brown & Levinson's (1987) universal theory of politeness. This is echoed by Coulmas's (1981) finding that apologies are more frequent and perform a wider range of functions in Japanese than in European languages. Therefore, he remarks that "[I]t cannot be taken for granted that interactional rules are defined in an identical manner in different cultures" (p. 70). Rose (1992) points out that such criticisms need to be taken seriously, if speech act research is to progress.

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[2] A relatively trivial incident I witnessed in the streets of Kampala, the capital city of Uganda, which sparked off my interest in the investigation of apologies from a cross-cultural perspective, illustrates the potential for conflict in different-cultures same-language encounters. The incident degenerated into an angry verbal outburst between a Muganda businessman and his British counterpart. The latter was angered by repeated apologies from the former for a late report. He kept on nodding his head, wrinkling his face and gesticulating without explanations, in contrast to the British businessman's expectation of plain explanations and solutions. I suspect the conflictual situation arose from both pragmatic failure and miscommunication; themselves, caused by a lack of awareness of cross-cultural differences in remedial interchanges.

Several studies in Chinese (e.g. Mao, 1994), Japanese (Matsumoto, 1998), and African languages and cultures (e.g. Nwoye, 1992) have criticized Brown & Levinson's concept of face. They claim it is individual-oriented, relevant to individualistic cultures, but inappropriate to collectivist ones in which the individual counts less than the social group to which s/he claims membership.

Despite the above criticisms, Brown & Levinson's groundbreaking work has remained topical in the study of linguistic politeness. Some still view it as highly relevant, although they suggest a revision of the framework, especially the reinterpretation of the notion of face. They advocate a return to Goffman's (1967) notion of face either from a constructivist (de Kadt, 1998b; Lwanga-Lumu, 2000) or an existentialist (O'Driscoll, 1996) perspectives. It is suggested that the notion of politeness be placed within the framework of relational work which "comprises the entire continuum of verbal behavior from direct, impolite, rude or aggressive interaction through to polite interaction, encompassing both appropriate and inappropriate forms of social behavior" (Locher, 2004: 51). The study described in this article posits that apology, or any remedial phenomenon, or at least the purpose of expressing regret for an offense committed (Mir, 1992) is found universally in discursive struggle in which interactants engage.

4.1 Apologies as speech acts

Apologies are speech acts that use politeness strategies to change what might be seen as an offensive act into an acceptable one and restore social relations. In other words, a speaker apologises if there is some behaviour violating social norms and when he/she believes that he/she was at least partly responsible for the offence. Owen (1983) restricts the apology to expressions such as (*I am/we are*) *sorry* and *I/we apologise*. This article, however uses Goffman's (1971) broader definition of an apology that considers function the most important criterion. An apology is "a convivial speech act" (Leech, 1983: 103) that serves or is required to restore social harmony after an infraction of a social rule. Hence, an apology has frequently been referred to (e.g. Mir, 1992) as a "remedial interchange". It focuses on redressing face-threatening behaviour by the speaker in admitting that he/she has offended the hearer. Little wonder apologies have received a great deal of attention (Maeshibu, Yoshinaga, Kasper & Ross, 1996; Lwanga-Lumu, 2000) and occupy a place second only to requests in the descriptive, cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics literature (after requests) research.

Analysing the way apologies are realised is interesting because in any speech community, participants may have to engage in remedial verbal action, therefore apologising is an important social ingredient of communication in all languages and cultures. Better still, getting insights into cultural perceptions and norms regarding conflict and apology is socially relevant because both conflict and apologies are culture-dependent (Lipson, 1994: 19). Speech communities may differ in what is regarded as an offence, the severity of the same offensive event and the compensation appropriate for the remediation. People's perceptions of the appropriate conditions for apologising may be mediated by social factors such as the interlocutor's relative status, and familiarity. Consequently, non-native speakers may sometimes be unequal to the task of determining the specific conditions for apologising in the target language, the strategies and linguistic means by which an apology can be realised and how to select contextually appropriate strategies from the apology speech act set.

5. Focus of the article

This articles describes the study that aimed to enrich the existing description of speech acts and politeness realisation patterns by comparing and contrasting the production and intensification of apologies by Luganda L1 speakers (henceforth LL1Ss), Luganda English speakers (henceforth LESs), and English L1 speakers (EL1Ss). These three groups of speakers overlap and are, to a certain extent, interchangeable. A total of 200 (100 for Luganda and another 100 for Luganda English) respondents were selected by random sampling. They were all full-time University students in their second and third years of study at Makerere University Kampala – Uganda; across several disciplines; to ensure as much homogeneity as possible in social class, income and education level, occupation, and age range. All the respondents were native speakers of Luganda and second speakers of English (Luganda English).

The study reported in this article was based on Olshtain's (1989) study, which focused on similarities and differences of the apology realisation patterns in four different languages, namely: Hebrew, Australian English, Canadian French, and German. In this study, the responses from Olshtain's (1989) Australian English speakers were used as EL1S respondents to avoid unnecessary duplication. Thus the results from Olshtain (1989) were contrasted with those from Luganda and Luganda English.

5.1 Design and instrument

Blum-Kulka & Olshtain's (1984) CCSARP framework pioneered the use of production questions, also called discourse completion tests (DCTs). One weakness of DCTs is their validity because the response they elicit is produced in a test-like rather than real-life situation (Sasaki, 1998; Kasper & Dahl, 1991). Given the need to manipulate variables in different situations, the use of DCT questionnaire methodology was found most appropriate in the study described in this article. Another advantage of DCTs is the possibility of gathering data, relatively easily, from a large sample of subjects (Rintell & Mitchell, 1989; Sasaki, 1998) and the ease to compare quantitatively responses of sets of respondents.

A brief description of the eight apology situations is outlined (see Appendix 1). The situations were based on Olshtain's (1989: 172) study and included social parameters such as the social power relative to the speakers, the social distance (familiarity) between them and the setting. An incomplete dialogue followed each situation. To ensure that the situations contained in the DCT questionnaires were natural for all groups and could provide a realistic basis for the subjects' interaction, the questionnaire was back-translated into Luganda and English and culturally transposed to Kiganda culture's social and pragmatic system as needed. The term "Kiganda" refers to the cultural norms, beliefs and practices of the Baganda. The Luganda DCTs were administered to twenty Luganda native speakers, as a form of pilot study to ensure validity and reliability. The Luganda and Luganda English DCTs were administered by research assistants at Makerere University-Kampala over a period of one month. The assistants read the instructions to the respondents and discussed the given examples to ensure successful and reliable completion of the DCTs (see Appendix 2).

The study described here examined whether all the eight apology strategy types identified in the research done within the CCSARP framework are found in the three groups. It also attempted

to identify the type of utterances that are conventionally preferred by L1 speakers across the apology situations. The following strategies were selected across the eight apology situations:

i.   Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID)

Sigenderedde ekitabo nkyerabiddeyo eka. ("I'm sorry I've forgotten the book at home.")

ii.   Responsibility (Resp)

iii. Explanation (Explan)

iv.   Repair (Rep)

v.   Forbearance (Forb)

vi. Intensification (Intensif)

vii. Minimisation (Minim)

viii. Concern (Conc)

6. Results and discussion

The apology data are presented in Table1 and they represent the percentages of respondents for each group who used a particular apology strategy or modification in the eight situations. The respondents were not mutually exclusive (that is, a respondent could have used more than one different apology strategy or modification), hence the percentages show the actual realisation of the total in each case.

Table 1: Percentage of strategy selection in LL1, LE and Australian English (EL1) across eight apology situations

	IFID	Resp	Explan	Repair	Forb	Intensif	Minim	Conc
LL1SsN=800	61	28	2	39	3	2	5	5
LESs N=800	72	24	1	40	4	3	4	24
EL1Ss N=1526	75	71	4	12	–	24	8	5

Key: N= Total number of strategy preferences

As depicted in Table 1, the eight main apology strategies appear in all eight situations for the three languages, but with varying degrees of frequency. However, while the strategy of "responsibility" had the second highest percentage of usage in Olshtain's (1989) study of the three languages (that is Hebrew, Canadian French and Australian English-EL1), in Luganda and LE, the strategy of "responsibility" is the third highest and the strategy of "repair", the second highest. The similarity in strategy preference by LL1Ss and LESs for the other main strategies ("responsibility", "explanation", "repair", and "forbearance") suggests that the latter could be behaving according to their native Kiganda norms of realising apologies, thus deviating from the EL1 preference for apology strategies.

An interesting finding is that apart from the speakers' preference for the IFID strategy, pronounced differences (for the other four main apology strategies) are observed between native Australian English and the other two languages (Luganda and Luganda English). For instance, for the

"responsibility" strategy, greater proportions exist by a difference of 43% between EL1Ss and LL1s and by 43% between EL1Ss and LESs. In addition, none of the EL1Ss used the strategy of promise of forbearance, whereas the preference for LL1 was 3% and 4% for LE respondents. This finding is somehow in contrast to Olshtain's (1989) observation that there seems to be great similarity among the different languages in the use of apology strategies given the same set of situations. In addition, the differences among the languages studied within the CCSARP (Hebrew, Canadian French and Australian English) are not that pronounced. This contrast demonstrates that to a certain extent, given the same social factors and the same level of offence, Luganda speakers tend to realise apologies differently from the speakers of the different languages studied within the CCSARP.

The results show that the three language groups are very similar in the low-level usage of the Explanation strategy. A possible explanation for the similarity in the low-level usage of this strategy could be that the Luganda English speakers did not deviate notably from Luganda and EL1 speakers in their choice of the strategy of explanation.

Furthermore, the low-level usage of internal intensification points to the possibility that Luganda English speakers lack linguistic knowledge to intensify their apologies internally. They therefore tend to deviate from the EL1 usage by under-using the strategy of "internal apology intensification". Also, it could be possible that the LE respondents over generalised the use of internal apology Intensification by transferring the low usage of this strategy from Luganda into their English speech.

The observed differences in LE from EL1 usage, with respect to apology strategy preference and intensification, suggest that they could be part and parcel of a new institutionalised (non-native) variety, "Luganda English". These differences may result from "cultural scripts", which are differences in ways of speaking that are profound and systematic (Wierzbicka, 1996). They reflect different cultural values and could be formulated in a highly constrained semantic metalanguage, which allows us to portray and compare culture-specific attitudes, assumptions and norms.

Using these cultural norms, we can determine to a certain degree, what constitutes a society's unspoken "cultural grammar" whose parts could surface sometimes in open discourse as proverbs, common sayings or popular wisdom (see Wierzbicka, 1996). This framework of cultural scripts can assist in innovatively and rigorously clarifying such differences between cultures and facilitate comparison in cross-cultural communication.

The use of language in a given situation adds culture-specific meaning to utterances (Mesthrie, 1999). Even where speakers could be using similar rules of grammar, if the patterns of expressing politeness and such speech acts as apologies are different from those used by native speakers, the tendency for second language speakers would be to transfer the different strategies into the new English. Thus, in the comparison of Luganda English and English first language cultural scripts, we can say that to a certain extent, Luganda English speakers lack grammatical or pragmatic competence to know what apology strategies to use in appropriate situations and how to intensify them. Hence, the tendency for the speakers is to transfer their cultural norms or scripts of speaking from Luganda into English, the target language.

A similar tendency towards transfer has been observed for the strategy of "minimisation". This

strategy involves minimising an offence committed by using tactical moves to divert the hearer's attention from the past offence to the future or by denying the fact that a serious offence has been committed. LE Ss probably behave according to Kiganda norms that govern the usage of the strategy of "minimisation". They tend to transfer the low level of preference for this strategy into their English speech, hence the difference from the Australian English standards. Similarly, according to Lwanga-Lumu (2000), the results from external modification suggest that the LE respondents did not react according to the EL1 standards. The learners overused external modification, even where Australian English, L1 respondents did not consider the use appropriate.

6.1 Summary and implications

The investigation described in this article has demonstrated that the act of apologising is

cross-culturally generalisable to the three language groups, since respondents made full use of the total range of apology strategies. The differences in the preference and intensification of apology strategies by Luganda and EL1 speakers suggest that, to a certain extent, Luganda and English L1 speech communities differ in their cultural norms or scripts of politeness. A probable explanation could be the extent to which the lack of linguistic knowledge in English may force LE Ss to deviate from the conventional usage shared by the EL1Ss .

Finally, the anomalies in my findings could point to certain limitations resulting from the use of the questionnaire methodology in the CCSARP project for data collection, the nature of the data collected, the universality claims and theoretical assumptions underlying the project. For instance, the main problem observed in the investigation reported in this article is that in some cases, a similar questionnaire item failed to elicit the expected speech act from Luganda and Luganda English respondents. Therefore, asking the respondents to give their responses was probably a big task that could have made the instrument more artificial. In her study of Zulu directives, de Kadt (1995) points out a similar limitation. Despite these limitations, by collecting data within the CCSARP framework, it has been possible to fulfil one of the main aims of the study reported in this article; to compare apologies cross-culturally, as well as within the same language, as produced by first and second language speakers.

While the findings are only suggestive, they have indicated, across the three groups, some fine points of speech behaviour and have provided a basis for outlining the following suggestions. The first suggestion is that Linguistic (i.e. grammatical) proficiency does not always tally with pragmatic competence. The mismatch between grammatical proficiency and pragmatic competence is, in part, a result of inadequate instruction and syllabuses. Therefore, pragmatic instruction, both through formal instruction and by means of the incorporation of pragmatic aspects in reading or learning materials has been suggested (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1993; Boxer & Pickering, 1995; Chick, 1996; Kasanga, 2001). This type of instruction would have a two-fold aim: (i) to sensitise learners to the importance of pragmatic issues and heighten their awareness to the potential of pragmatic failure and miscommunication, and (ii) to alert gatekeepers to the inevitability of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic pragmatic variation (see also Kasanga, 2001, Lwanga-Lumu, 2002).

For instance, making language learners explicitly aware of the apology realisation and intensification strategies in both languages and the social factors determining the preference

of apology strategies could be of much help (see also House, 1996). In the case of Luganda, learners' explicit awareness of the use of apology strategies such as acknowledging responsibility, or giving explanations and a combination of exclamations or emotional expressions and repetitions, could go a long way in reducing pragmatic transfer and cross-cultural misunderstandings (see Bou-Franch & Garces-Conejos, 2003). First language speakers could well interpret deviation from their own normal social norms as rude, racist, impertinent, sarcastic or aggressive. Therefore, language learners should be taught the social norms for a particular given culture. This would enable them to understand how to realise appropriate speech acts and how to be sensitive to the speaker's situation, as well as the hearer's.

Indeed, we perhaps ought to "take the direct approach to teaching pragmatic knowledge as a starting point and combine it with exercises that practise directly-taught knowledge indirectly" (Bou-Franch & Garces-Conejos, 2003: 7). For instance, language teachers could provide authentic language activities focused on speech act and politeness performance. These activities could then enable language teachers to sensitise their learners to the different socio-cultural meanings of the speaker, and the situational context. Eventually, teachers would facilitate the learners' acquisition of communicative competence in the target language.

The suggestion of pragmatic instruction goes against a sway of opinion, which opposes "normative language" teaching, or the teaching of other people's norms. These critics include those in the area of Critical Linguistics, who believe this kind of instruction is politically biased, that it reinforces inequalities because it teaches only one variety of the discourse, and would be a "threat to ethnic identity" (Taylor, Meynard &Rheault, 1977).

Unfortunately, such a criticism fails the credibility test because it rebounds on those who, by denouncing the inculcation of norms to L2 speakers, they assume that the latter might be non-thinking machines and thus unintentionally subscribe to the kind of deficit theory they want to dissociate themselves from.

Finally, further research, focusing on social and contextual apology and other speech act features (such as non-verbal features of communication), is desirable to identify further the speech act and politeness realisation patterns in different languages (especially in African languages). At the same time, it might be useful to incorporate modern technology (where possible) by organising web-sites allowing for creative and cross-cultural presentations in which people from different cultures and languages can hold inter-net workshops. They could discuss topical issues about cross-cultural speech act and politeness realisation patterns. This would encourage others to learn more about their communicative patterns. These web-based discussions should involve teachers, applied linguists and language learners and parents or members of the community. Such interaction should encourage the participants to work collaboratively in the development and exchange of resources, information and materials appropriate in designing second language teaching programmes. If learners are credited with a sense of discernment, then they should be allowed to make the choices they want.

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Appendix 1: Apology situations

S2   A university professor promised to return the student's term paper that day but did not finish reading it.

S4   A student borrowed her professor's book, which she promised to return that day, but forgot to bring it.

S6   A staff manager has kept a student waiting for half an hour for a job interview because he was called away to an unexpected meeting.

S8   A waiter in an expensive restaurant brings grilled pork ribs instead of dried fish in peanut sauce.

S10 A notoriously unpunctual student is late again for a meeting with a friend with whom she is working on a paper.

S12 A driver in the parking lot backs into someone else's car.

S14 The speaker offended a fellow worker during a discussion at work. After the meeting, the fellow worker comments on the incident.

S16 The speaker has placed a shopping bag on the luggage rack of a crowded bus. When the driver brakes, the bag falls and hits another passenger.

(Olshtain1989: 172)

Appendix 2: Discourse completion test (DCT) Questionnaire (English version)

Instructions: In each of the following eight situations, one sentence is missing in the dialogue. You are asked to fill in the missing sentence, so that it fits into THE ENTIRE TEXT. Please read the following example and each situation TO THE END before writing your answer.

Example: Between a mother and her 12-year-old son

Mazinga: Do you know where my shoes are?

Mother: They're on the veranda and they're terribly dirty.

Mazinga: I don't want to do that now; I want to play foot-ball with my friends

Possible answers: (Go and clean them right away! Why don't you clean them now?).

S2:   A student is seeing his/her teacher who had promised to return his/her assignment that day. However, the teacher forgot to mark it.

Student: I was going to talk to you about my assignment, if it's all right.

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