SOCIAL BELIEFS FOR THE REALIZATION OF THE SPEECH ACTS OF APOLOGY AND COMPLAINT AS DEFINED IN CILUBA, FRENCH, AND ENGLISH

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Abstract

Most cross-linguistic studies of speech acts have dealt mainly with two languages, a native language and a second or foreign language (Carrell and Konneker 1981; Castello 1981; Blum-Kulka 1982; Daikuhura 1986; Eisenstein 1986; Wieland 1989; Chen Rong 1993, 2001; Sifianou 2001; Lee 2004, 2005). Neither have they dealt with an African language as the first language. The present study investigates a multilingual situation where the native speakers of Ciluba, French, and English are compared to the trilingual speakers of the three languages in terms of the realization of the speech acts of apologizing and complaining. It considers the social beliefs of the subjects of the four language groups for the realization of the two speech acts. The study is part of a larger study that was designed to discover the norms of the three languages under investigation and to see how people speaking a second and a foreign language, with different levels of fluency in each, can participate in the activity of the speech communities of the two languages without violating their socio-cultural norms, and what impact, if any, their knowledge of these languages has on each of the languages they speak. Data for the larger study was collected by means of a written questionnaire, role plays, and direct observation.

The data and results presented and discussed in this paper come from the written questionnaire administered to the monolingual English and French speakers and trilingual speakers native in Ciluba; and from the same version of the questionnaire administered orally to the monolingual Ciluba speakers. It was found that for the realization of the speech acts of apologizing and complaining, Luba socio-cultural beliefs were different from those of English and French, which are similar. In contrast to French and English, in Ciluba social distance and relative power between the participants play an important role in deciding whether the speech acts can be performed or not. The results also revealed that, despite the difference which exists between Ciluba and the other two languages, i.e., French and English, some subjects from the group of Ciluba monolingual subjects showed some similarities with the groups of French and English monolingual subjects in their responses to some items in the questionnaire. This deviation of some of the native speakers of Ciluba from their social beliefs was hypothesized to be a result of their contact with an urban environment and its mixed culture.

Keywords: Trilingual speakers; Pragmatic study; Metaphragnatics; Socio-cultural norms; Apology; Complaint.