

Research Article



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Investigating request structures among the Anlos

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate different request structures found among Anlo conversational participants in natural settings. It is intended to explore the various request strategies and responses to such strategies. The study employs qualitative research design. The population for this study is from three out of the thirty-six indigenous Anlo towns. In all, thirty-six respondents made up of children (aged between 9 and 14 years), youth (aged between 15 and 39 years) and the elderly (aged from 40 years and above) were selected from the three sites. The data collection instruments used for this study are observation, interview, role play and the use of discourse completion tests (D.C.Ts). The findings revealed that Anlos as a socio-cultural group follow a particular sequence in making a request. The performance of request according to this sequence shows a person's competence. The use of the address terms, the head act and then the adjuncts to the head act makes the whole requesting process to either be a face threatening or a face serving one. The adjunct to the head act helps to mitigate whatever imposition that may accompany the head act.

Keywords: interdependency, interpersonal relationship, request performance, request strategies, request structures, social interaction

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Public Interest Statement

The discussion in this section has revealed that Anlos as a socio-cultural group follow a particular sequence in making a request. The performance of request according to this sequence shows a person's competence. The use of the address terms, the head act and then the adjuncts to the head act makes the whole requesting process to either be a face threatening or a face serving one. The adjunct to the head act helps to mitigate whatever imposition that may accompany the head act.

Introduction

A request is a directive speech act. Its illocutionary purpose is to get the hearer to do something in circumstances in which it is not obvious that he/she will perform the action in the normal course of events (Felix-Brasdefer, 2010; Searle, 1969). According to Nguyen and Ho (2013), requests have been the most researched speech acts to date in cross-cultural, variational and interlanguage pragmatics (e.g. Barron, 2003; Byon, 2006). In Ghana, if an Akan request involves an imposition on a requestee, the imposition will not be imposed by the "requester," but by the society as a whole because of that society's collective culture and social interdependence. In the same sense, direct requests may not be construed as harsh or impolite, unless the interpersonal relationship between the requesters and the recipients is ignored. The relationship between a "requester" and a "requestee" is a key variable in structuring the request. Thus, personal context plays a significant role in determining the linguistic form to be selected or used, how such a form is used, and how it is interpreted by the requestee.

Problem Statement

Requests in the Anlo society are usually not considered impositions on recipients, because of that society's collective culture and social interdependence, and that direct requests may not be construed as harsh or impolite, unless the interpersonal relationship between the requesters and the recipients is ignored. It is common knowledge that both children and adults in the Anlo area are at one time or the other queried for inappropriate request term formulation or its performance. Such queries usually focus on the structure of the text formulation, the mode of delivery and performance, the scene of performance or the setting. In fact, the queries point to the fact that appropriate use of language is crucial to an integrated social life. Among the Anlos, the word request interprets a variety of verbal interactions whose sole purpose is to solicit assistance. It is important that these varieties of request be identified and their mode of performance addressed. Although Anlos make requests, there is no documentary evidence that suggests how they are structured, and used in this area of Ewe land. It is in this regard that this study is undertaken. Data were collected from three indigenous Anlo towns through observation, interview, role play and discourse completion tests.

Research Objectives

The purpose of this study is to investigate different request structures found among Anlo conversational participants in natural settings. It is intended to explore the various request strategies and responses to such strategies.

Literature review

Generally, request has a structures. Felix-Brasdefer (2010) states that the structure of a request may consist of two parts: the **head act** (the actual request) and **modifications** to the request (external or internal). He continued that the perspective of requests can be emphasized, either projecting toward the speaker (Can I borrow your notes?) or the hearer (Can you loan me your notes?). Since we must take into account many factors when we make requests (for example, the age, social distance,

gender, and level of imposition), speakers often employ different strategies (linguistic and non-linguistic) to minimize the effects of our request on the other person.

The view of Felix-Brasdefer is not that different from that of Trosborg (1995) and Sifianou (1992). To them, requests consist of two main parts, namely those of the core request or head act, and the peripheral modification devices. The head act consists of the main utterance which has the function of requesting and can stand by itself. For example, the request head act “Can/could you open the window?” is used as conventionally indirect request expressing ability.

On the other hand, the peripheral modification devices are optional items that serve to either mitigate or intensify the force of the requesting move. Request modification devices are made up of two main groups: internal and external modifiers. While internal modifiers are those devices appearing within the same request head act, external modifiers are those appearing in the immediate linguistic context surrounding the request head act, either preceding or following it (Safont, 2008). An example of an external modification (opener) is “Do you think you could open the window?” which aims at introducing the intended request and seeks the addressee’s cooperation. Another example of an external modification (preparatory) is “May I ask you a favor? Could you open the window?” which is used to prepare the addressee for the subsequent request.

In the work of Agyekum (2010), request has three-part structure (act sequence) as follows: a. Address Terms b. Head Act c. Adjuncts to the head Act. He noted that the structure is sequential in a prototypical request. However, in some instances, the parts may interchange. The model for the structure of Akan request is adopted from Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984, ps.200 – 205). The structure is made up of: a. Address Terms – the speaker addresses the addressee politely, in a formal way by using the proper address terms. He uses terms of respect, in-group identity terms, affiliation tags and clan titles. b. Head Act – the head act is the nucleus, independent and obligatory part of the request speech act without which there will be no request. c. Adjuncts to the head Act – an adjunct is any attachment to the head to make the request viable. The head act of a request may be supported by external modification of the request (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984, ps 204 – 205). The head adjunct may take various forms, such as: a) checking availability, b) getting a pre-commitment, c) grounder, d) sweetener, e) disarmer and f) cost minimizer. The head adjunct may be simple or complex involving only one, more or all the strategies. The ability to request information or services has to do with both knowing how to perform a request in its less face-threatening form and having the ability to use lexical and grammatical resources properly in a specified context. Requests forms are largely conventionalized and cannot be produced simply by manipulating one’s grammatical knowledge. Thus, learners have to learn about NS conventional forms to know how to realize a request appropriately in a given context. Accordingly, second/foreign language learners are expected to acquire the form of the Target Language accurately and to use it in the target community context to convey meanings appropriately, coherently and in a strategically effective way (Liendo, 2012). It is however crucial to note that these conventions are not necessarily universal to all varieties of a language.

Requests, according to Trosborg (1995) and Sifianou (1992), are made up of two main components. They are what are termed as the core request or head act and the peripheral elements. The head act, as they define, is the main utterance with the function of requesting and can stand by itself. Yet, core requests may come before or after peripheral elements, which soften or aggravate the propositional content. The use of peripheral modification devices with face-threatening acts such as requests can change the degree of politeness involved when performing this specific speech act. Therefore, the ability to use these devices adequately is one aspect of pragmatic proficiency, which according to Nikula (1996, p. 29) refers to “the ability to use language not only correctly as far as grammar and vocabulary are concerned but also appropriately so that language use fits the social context in which it is being used.” The implication of this statement is that in order to use

language appropriately, speakers have to master both linguistic knowledge and socio-cultural and context knowledge including knowledge of the devices used for peripheral modification.

As elaborated by Sifianou (1992), peripheral modification devices can be internal or external. Internal modification refers to linguistic elements within the same speech act, whereas external modification is achieved by devices which occur in the immediate linguistic context rather than in the speech act itself. One instance of each type of modification is provided as follows:

Example 1: External modification

May I ask you a favor? I need some money for my new computer.

Example 2: Internal modification

Would you mind closing the window?

As far as internal modification is concerned, it is divided into *openers*, *softeners*, *intensifiers* and *fillers*. Openers refer to opening words and expressions which search the addressee's co-operation (for example, *do you think...*). They are conventionalized ways of introducing requests in English and they soften the illocutionary force of the sentence. The second type of internal modification is softeners which mitigate the force of the request by means of understatements (expressions such as *for a moment*, *a bit*), *downtoners* (*adverbs like just*, *possibly*, *perhaps*) and *hedges* (for example, *kind of*, *sort of*).

Labov and Fanshel (1977) point out that requests for action and information have mitigating and aggravating forms regarding the social relations between the speaker and the hearer. Requests for information, as they argue, are by definition aggravating or face threatening. According to these authorities, questions threaten negative face but they can also threaten positive face. Bublitz (1981) notes that “[i]t is a characteristic feature of questions often overlooked that the speaker by asking is not only able to cause the hearer to take the floor and react in a certain way, e.g. to answer...but that in addition he is also exerting his influence as to the content of the hearer's response” (p.852). Requests for information, based on this line of argumentation, are not neutral acts any more than ‘information’ is neutral. The relationship between the speaker and the hearer is of special significance to the activity and is being constantly monitored, negotiated and adjusted in the course of conversation.

Methodology

The study employs qualitative research design. A research is qualitative if it describes events and persons specifically without making use of numerical data (Best & Kahn, 2006). Specifically, the ethnography of communication approach to qualitative study is employed since the study focuses on an aspect of culture. In effect, the ethnography of communication is deemed the appropriate approach to this study because it enables the researcher to record by participating in some activities or observing the people from their own cultural perspectives as they go about their normal daily activities.

The population for this study is from three out of the thirty-six indigenous Anlo towns. These are Anloga, Woe and Keta. Anloga is the traditional capital of the 36 Anlo towns and the seat of the Anlo paramountcy. Woe is also one of the major earlier settlements of the Anlo Traditional area. It is the right wing seat of the three Asafo Divisions of Anlo. The administrative capital of the Anlos is Keta. These three indigenous Anlo fishing settlements are located at the South-Eastern part of Ghana. They are at the tail end of Accra – Dabala – Keta trunk road.

In all, thirty-six respondents made up of children (aged between 9 and 14 years), youth (aged between 15 and 39 years) and the elderly (aged from 40 years and above) were selected from the three sites. The data collection instruments used for this study are observation, interview, role play

and the use of discourse completion tests (D.C.Ts).

Data for the study was collected precisely at Anloga, Woe and Keta. Data was gathered at places where people use the language at. Request expressions of interest to the researcher were spontaneously produced. Communicative events recorded were those where request expressions were used such as traditional ceremonies or rites (outdooing, marriage, funeral, etc.) with an electronic recorder, a field note and a pen. Data was also gathered at other places where language was used spontaneously. The researcher's task was to identify the various request types and the styles used by the speakers in the course of their speeches. Some places where the data was collected include the Chief's palace, community centers, homes, schools, markets, farms, beaches, lorry parks, funeral grounds, bars and streets.

During the period of the observation, the researcher occasionally employed the rapid and anonymous survey method (Coates, 1993, p. 5) in which he sometimes played the role of a buyer. Questions that were on socio-cultural life related to the requests in Anlo were asked. The researcher then wrote the responses in a notebook. The researcher sometimes recorded the conversations with the electronic recorder. Participants whose interactions were recorded were informed about the study and they freely gave their consent for the use of conversations.

The researcher also conducted interviews to obtain information on request expressions in Anlo to seek clarification on some of the forms of request encountered. Unstructured interviews which allow the respondents free room to respond to questions were used. This method enabled the researcher to electronically record the voices of the informants as well as the styles and strategies they employed in their requests.

Role Play is a scenario specified and informants are asked to act the specific roles verbally. The greatest strength of the role play lies in the fact that they give the researcher the chance to examine the speech act in its full discourse context. This makes role plays much richer source of gathering information. With this, the researcher had the chance of observing the specific strategies employed by the respondents in specific context.

Discourse Completion Test (D.C.Ts) are written or oral questionnaire containing situational descriptions, followed by short slots with empty spaces for the speech act under investigation. They are tests that consist of incomplete discourse sequences that represents socially differentiated situations were given out to respondents. Respondents are asked to write out in the empty spaces what they would say in a given situation. Olshtain and Cohan (1983) used this method in their study of apologies in Hebrew and English. It was also used for most of the studies in the Cross-Cultural Study of Speech Act Realization Patterns (CCSARP) (Blum-Kulka et al, 1989).

The researcher adopted these sources of data collection because he did not expect a single source to provide him with all the necessary insights into the request forms used among the Anlos. This study focused on request as a directive speech act whose illocutionary purpose is to ask someone to do something for which under normal circumstances the person would not have done. The researcher's preoccupation was to transcribe the request expressions in the utterance. Data for the study was analyzed using Agyekum's (2005) GRAPD socio-linguistic variables: G-gender, R-rank, A-age, P-power, and D-distance. The naturalistic logic approach of qualitative data analysis was used.

The researcher differs in view expressed by Schafer (1967) as cited in Capo (1991) that theory is not controlled by the data but data are manufactured by the theory. The choice of this approach of data analysis was informed by the fact that it allows the researcher to derive meaning by interpreting what is said by the participants. The data analysis involved translating of the data gathered, coding and organizing it into categories or under sub-headings, describing and interpreting it.

Coding categories were developed taking into consideration the purpose of the study. The

researcher went through the coding and the categorization again ensuring that the various data collected were put under the right sectional heads. The researcher consulted two elderly educated Anlo men in their early 70s to help in test of reliability. In this sense, all the different aspects of the requests (head act, pre-commitment, etc.) were presented to each of them at different times and at different places for them to categorize them according to their understanding. In all, inter-rater agreement for all three of us was pegged at 72%. This is considered a good rate as it signifies that there is a great deal of agreement in most of the categories.

Results

Data gathered from Anlo were analyzed based on the sequence of request proposed by Blum-kulka and Olstain (1984). The main segments of requests within the sequence are:

- Address terms
- Head acts
- Adjunct to the head act.

On the structure of the requests, it was revealed that the analysis corresponded to those proposed by Blum-Kulka and Olstain (1984) These are explained below with example from Anlo. These are as follows:

Address Terms

The address terms occur within and form part of the head act. Address terms in the Anlo dialect of Ewe include kinship terms, titles, personal pronouns, and proper names especially, day names occurring in alerters, subjects or other places in the utterances. Address terms are important in the Anlo dialect because a 'no-naming' style (e.g. 'he', 'heh', 'ewoɖe', 'kpɔɖa', 'hae', 'kpoɖawoe', etc) violates social norms, particularly when communicating with superiors and in formal contexts. Interlocutors make choices of address terms depending on the relative relationship, age, gender, power and social distance between themselves. Wrong choice of address terms may threaten the face of the addressee. This means politeness is determined not only by the use or non-use of address terms, but also by the appropriate choice in conformity to social norms and speaker-hearer role relationships. In order for the speaker to get his addressee to comply with his request, he must address the requestee in a formal way by using the proper address forms.

The address term may be a proper noun (e.g., *Kofi, Ama, Agbeko, Agbonotsi, Honyo, Senyo, Amuzu, Kpegolo, etc.*) or a pronoun (e.g., 'ewoe' 'you (sgl)' 'miawoe' 'you (pl.)'), kinship terms ('efo' – 'brother', 'tɔɖbi' – 'grandfather', 'nɔsrɔ' – 'brother or sister', 'nyrui' – 'maternal uncle', 'dadɔa alo daga' – 'maternal aunt' etc). Example 22 [Context: Atsu (age 26), is standing at one end of the sitting room. He asks his younger sister, Doe (age 22), to get him a comb from the bedroom.]

22

Atsu: Edo, tsɔ ayiɖa le kplɔ dzi le xɔdomea me nam.

Do: Ye nye hi.

Atsu: Akpe.

Atsu: Do, give me the comb on the table in the bedroom.

Do: Here is it.

Atsu: thanks.

In Example 22, Atsu's request involves "ordering" Doe, the sister to give him a comb. The use of the address form 'Doe' expresses rapport and closeness because this interaction is between siblings. The address form used has a mitigating effect on the requestee. The use of such clan names, day

names among the Anlos communicates positive politeness. In Obeng (1995, 1997, 1999), the use of day names is the most common address form among Akans. One might think that Atsu is impolite or that his request is an imposition on Doe and therefore a threat to Doe's face. This is because his request is direct and is neither preceded nor followed by a strong politeness marker. However, because the conversation is between siblings — brother and sister, little social negotiation or attention to linguistic marking of politeness is needed (Wolfson, 1988). The relationship between the requester and the requestee therefore plays a significant role in determining which linguistic form is selected, how it is used, and how it is interpreted by the hearer. In Example 22, there is no evidence in the reply of the requestee, Doe that Atsu is imposing anything on her. Example 22 also lends a measure of support to the point made by Obeng (1999) that requests for certain items can be made directly by certain people without such people being considered impolite or without the requestee's face being threatened.

Taking into consideration the status of the addressee, the speaker may refer to the addressee as “nyrui – maternal uncle”; “daga or dadja – maternal aunt” etc. In most cases, these address terms are followed by terms of respect such as “medekuku” (please/ I beg) etc. Example 23: “Members of a drumming and dancing group were asked to make a request to a sub-chief to buy drums for them through the oral discourse completion test at Anloga on 26th February, 2016. This is how their leader made the request:

23. Nunɔla: “Miafofo, mieḍekuku, fle ɔu na mi”.
Leader: “Our father, please, buy drums for us”.

From the Example 23, it must be noted that the address term “Miafofo” “Our father” is followed by a term of respect, “mieḍekuku” (please) before the head act. All what has preceded the head act have the illocutionary force of begging the requestee and making the request less face threatening. If the man had not selected his words well and for that matter his request, he would have been scolded for being disrespectful and communicatively incompetent in the Anlo speech community. According to Agyekum (2007), the terms (address and respect terms) are used as “softeners and persuasive terms in discourse either formal or informal, to request the addressee to do something.

Anlos also cherish the use of in-group terms as address terms like ‘fonye – my elder brother’; ‘danye – my elder sister’; ‘tɔnye – my own / mine’. Other address terms common among the Anlos are ‘vinye’ – ‘my child’, ‘fofonye – my father’, ‘danye – my mother’, ‘lɔxoyɔvi, toyɔvi - son-in-law, daughter-in-law’. When someone who belongs to the same clan wants to send another on an errand, this is how the request may be made: -

24. Hiagbe: “Vinye va madɔ wo”
Hiagbe: “My child, come let me send you.”

With the use of this address term “Vinye” - “My child”, requester has identified with the requestee to enhance compliance. The illocutionary force behind the use of this address term is the assertion that the requestee is the son of the requester. The requestee should therefore be able to help his father by honouring the request.

Head Act

This is the main reason behind making a request. If the other two segments (Address term and the adjunct to the head act) are present without the head act, there will be no request made. It is an obligatory part of the request and what the requester seeks the requestee to do. Agyekum (2010) states that the Head Act is the nucleus, the independent and the obligatory part of the

request speech act without which there will be no request. It is the message itself involving what the requester wants the addressee to do. In excerpt 25, members of a drumming and dancing group want their chief to buy a set of drums for them.

25. Miafofo, miedekuku, fle vu na mi.
Our father, please, buy drum for us

In Example 25, 'fle vu na mi' 'buy drums for us' is the main request to the chief. The use of other modifications like "**miafofo, miedekuku**" our father, we beg" is all geared towards making his request be devoid of imposition, less face threatening and culturally acceptable to the requestee. Another Example that explains this is example 26. This is a situation where a 36-year old man requests for a canoe from another man (aged 37) to be used for fishing. This was recorded at Woe on 12th February, 2016.

26. Nutsu: Afeto, matenua ze wo tɔdziɔua ayi tɔdzie
etsɔa? metɔge ve ne megbo."
*Mam: Lord, may I use your canoe for fishing
tomorrow? I will bring it back when I
return.*

In the Example 26, '**matenua aza wo tɔdziɔua ayi tɔdzie etsɔa?**' 'may I use your canoe for fishing tomorrow?' is the main request to the other man (the requestee). The use of the modification and as such an honorific like "**Afeto** - Lord', is all geared towards making his request culturally acceptable and less face threatening to the requestee. The illocutionary force of this utterance is that the requester is seeking permission to use the requestee's canoe for fishing.

Another Example is 27. Here, **Awusi** (a 57-year-old woman) requests her neighbor, **Aɔugba** (a 62-year-old woman) of salt to put in her soup.

27. Awusi: Woadaga Aɔugba, menjɔbe nyemefle dze le
asia me o, ɔeke kura mele asinye o, ne ɔe le
asi woa, medekuku, ku via ɔe nam made detsi.
Aɔugba: Yoo, vaxɔe
Awusi: Aunt Aɔugba, I forgot to buy salt from the
market, I don't have any, if you have some,
please, fetch a little for me
Aɔugba: Ok, come for it.

The actual Head Act in the request above is '**ku vi aɔe nam**'. The use of the address term and all other modifiers like the use of the grounder and checking for the availability are all geared towards making her request culturally acceptable and less face threatening to the requestee. The illocutionary force behind the head act is that the requestee is begging for some of the salt to put in her soup. There are certain items that are regarded basic for everybody and or every household to have. These items such as broom, pot, cup, plate, comb, spoon, salt, pepper, are used on daily basis. When someone wants to request for an item of this nature, the person would have to use mitigators and downtoners to reduce the face threat that asking for this item would cause to the requestee. This affirms the findings of Obeng (1997) that requesting for these items come with face threat so has to be done indirectly.

The Adjunct to the Head Act

An adjunct is any attachment to the head act so as to give reason for the request “to make it viable” (Agyekum, 2005). Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) explain that the speaker might choose to support or aggravate the speech act by external modifications. The head adjunct may take various forms such as: i) checking for the availability, ii) getting a pre-commitment, iii) grounder, iv) sweetener, v) disarmer, and vi) cost minimizer. The head adjunct may be simple involving only one of the above or complex involving more or all the strategies listed above. They are discussed as follows:

Checking the availability

Checking the availability of whether the item or the service being requested is there or not is to reduce the face threat of the requestee. This is done by finding out carefully even before the request (the head act) is made. For the speaker to be sure, he/she prefaces his/her main head act with a statement to verify as to whether the preconditions necessary for compliance holds true. (Blum-Kulka & Olsstain, 1984). One gives a prior indication that a request may be coming up and this may be done by ‘pre-request’, a turn that typically checks out whether some preconditions for the request are available or not’ (Brown & Levinson, 1987). This is done to prevent possible embarrassment to the requestee. If the requester finds out that the item being requested for is not available, then it becomes unnecessary to make the request. However, if he/she finds out that the item or the service to be requested is available then he/she goes on to make the request. Here is an example (example 28) between two farmers (A and B) at Anloga on the 28/02/16.

28. Agbledela A: ‘Medekuku, eza aɖu ya nefle etsɔa kata na wo nukuawoa? Mehia ne ɖe na nye agblea’
 Agbledela B1: ‘Ao, esɔgbɔ akpa, eɖe susɔ. Nyea gblea melolo nenema o’
 Agbledela B2: ‘Ao, gake meva kaba o, metsɔ susɔea na Adenyo ehi mezee vɔ.’
 Farmer A: ‘Please, did you use all the fertilizer you bought yesterday for your crops? I need some for my farm.’
 Farmer B1: ‘No, it was too much, I have some left. My farm is not such a big one.’
 Farmer B2: ‘No, but you didn’t come early, I gave the rest to Adenyo after I finished using it.’

In this interaction, the requester, farmer A makes the utterance as a way of checking if the fertilizer is there or not. When the requester is sure of getting the item as found in the conversation above, it is then that he is that sure of getting the item as can be seen in the answer by B1, he then goes on to make the actual request because he is sure of the availability of the item. On the other hand, if the requester were to have the answer as stated in by farmer B2, the request for the fertilizer would not have been necessary. In this case, the requester would have saved his face and that of the requestee by not proceeding to make the actual request any longer.

Example 29, recorded at Woe on the 26th February, 2016 is another example of checking for the availability of the item or the service before making the request. This is an example involving two friends (Adenyo and Kofitse) who went to pluck some mangoes together the previous day.

29. Adenyo: Kofitse, mango hiwo miegbe etsɔa vivi

ɲutɔ, nyea meɖu tɔnyea kata vɔ. Eɖe gale asi
woa?

Kofitse: Ao, nye ha meɖu tɔnyea kata.

Adenyo: *Kofitse, the mangoes that we plucked
yesterday are so sweet, as for me I have
taken all those that I have, do you still have
some?*

Kofitse: *No, I have also eaten all.*

In the interaction in example 29, the requester used ‘Eɖe gale asi woa?’ as a pre-request availability checking utterance to find out whether the addressee is still having some of the mangoes or not. It is only when that pre-condition is fulfilled that the requester may have the opportunity to carry on with the request. If it is not, then the requester would not be able to make his/her request anymore. In this case, the face threat and face loss to both the requester and the requestee are minimized. The face threat would have been great if the requester had started with his/her request before being told by the requestee that the item is not available.

Getting a Pre-Commitment

The speaker precedes the request with an utterance that can count as an attempt to obtain a pre-committal (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). The requester, in the case of borrowable items like, money, pressing iron, axe etc. assures the addressee of bringing back the items requested as soon as possible. By this he commits himself to his own words. This is illustrated in example 30 as stated below:

30. Nutsu: Afetɔ, materɲu aza wo kodzia aɖe doe le
afea megbea? metrɔge ve ne mewoe vɔ.
Man: *‘Sir, may I use your hoe to dig a hole behind
the house? I will bring it back when I finish
using it.’*

In Example 30, the requester has committed himself to returning the hoe after use. The second part of the request ‘*metrɔge ve ne mewoe vɔ*’ meant to assure the owner that he will not have the inconvenience of going back for it himself, should he need it urgently. There are two speech acts used in the example 30, a directive and commissive. The first part is a directive (request) and the second part is a commissive (promise) which has been used by the requester to support his request. With the use of the commissive, the requester has committed himself to the whole request process. The requester is assuring the requestee that he will bring it when he returns. By this the requester has committed himself to the request.

Another illustration in this direction is Excerpt 31 where a woman was going to the market and decided to send her child to the neighbor’s house to be with the neighbor till she comes back for him.

31. Nyɔnu: Meyina ɖe asime mava, medzi be magble Besa ɖe
miagbɔ, ne megbɔ mava kplɔe.
Afelikea: Yoo, nagbɔ kaba.
Woman: *Am going to the market, I want to leave Besa with
you, I will come for him when am back.*
Neighbor: *Ok, be back in time.*

The requester commits herself by saying that she will come for the son when she returns. This is an assurance to the neighbor that the child will not be with her forever to prevent her, the neighbor from doing other works or restricting her from moving. It is also assuring her that she, the requestee will not have the trouble of bringing the and be looking for requester. The requester gives a promise (a commissive) that she will come for her. Here, as stated by Agyekum (2010), a directive speech event of request is supported by a commissive speech event of a promise. In effect, the pre-commitment is a way of getting the requestee to grant the request.

Grounder

This is the reason for making the request. It also gives explanation to the main request. The explanation must be convincing enough to persuade the requester to render the service or give out the item. The grounder may come before or after the head act in Anlo. The two strategies are illustrated below;

1. The grounder before the Head Act
 32. Nyɔnu: Ame aɔɔke mele miafe afea me hi ale ŋku ɔɔ
 ɔɔvi ya ŋu nam o, medzi be woanɔ miagbɔ mayi
 mɔdzi mava.
*Woman: No one is in our house to take care of this
 child for me, I want him to be with you whiles
 I travel and come.*

Example 32 brings the grounder, the reason for bringing the child to the neighbor's house rather than leaving him in the house. The statement, 'Ame aɔɔke mele miafe afea me hi ale ŋku ɔɔ ɔɔvi ya ŋu nam o' is put at the initial position before the Head Act – 'medi be woanɔ miagbɔ mayi mɔdzi mava'. That first part before the head act serves as the grounder. The illocutionary meaning of the grounder in this case is to reduce the rate of imposition and lessen the possible face threat of the requestee. Another Example is 33, where a mother sends the daughter to buy drug in the town for her since she, the mother, is not feeling well.

33. Dada: Adzowa, nye lame mekɔkɔm o, nye
 fukpefiwo kata nye vem, madɔ wo nafle
 atike nam le dua me.
 Adzowa: Yoo, danye, mesi.
 Mother: Adzowa, am not feeling well, all my joints
 are paining me. Let me send you to buy
 medicine for me in town.
 Adzowa: Ok, mother, I have heard.

In Example 33, the grounder, that is the reason for sending the daughter to buy the medicine has been stated. This is placed at the initial position before the Head Act and just after the address term 'Adzowa'. Here, the mother explains why Adzowa has to go to the drug store to buy the medicine for her. That is, she is not feeling well and all her joints are paining her. When a grounder is stated like this, the requestee sees the need for either compliance or denial of the request. The illocutionary meaning or force behind the statement of the grounder is to convince the requestee to comply with the request.

The Grounder after the Head Act

34. Nyɔnu: Danyevi, meḍekuku nam edze vi aḍe ne made
detsi, meyi ḍe asime egbea gake meḅḅ be
nyemefle ḍeke o.

Afelikea: Yoo, vaxɔe

Woman: *my sister, please, give me some salt to put
into my soup, I went to the market today but I
forgot to buy some'.*

Neighbor: *Ok, I have heard.*

In Example 34, the requester prefaced his request with the head act before giving a reason (grounder) for the request. These two strategies are used among the Anlos as a means of indicating politeness. Whichever one is adopted, the messages and the understandings are the same.' In the example 34, the requester prefaces the head act with a kinship term 'Danyevi', signifying politeness, belongingness and respect. This is followed by politeness marker 'meḍekuku' to show the requestee's submissiveness. All these help to mitigate whatever face threat that may follow the request. Then comes the head act and then finally, the grounder comes 'meyī ḍe asime egbea gake meḅḅ be nyemefle ḍeke o. Thus, explaining why she needs to be granted the requested item. Another Example that illustrates the existence of the grounder after the head act can be seen in the following example recorded at Woe on the 24th February, 2016 where a man, Honyo (aged 32) asks his sister, Dzatu (aged 26) to buy some drinks for him since he would be receiving some visitors.

35. Honyo: Nɔsrɔnye, va dze aha aḍe ve nam, amedzroa
ḍewo le mɔdzi gbɔna gbɔnye, medzi be maxɔwo
nyuie.

Dzatu: Yoo, megbɔna

Honyo: *My sister, come and buy some drink for me,
some visitors are on their way to my place, I
want to receive them well.*

Dzatu: *Yoo, am coming.*

Here, the requester starts by using kinship referential address term 'nɔsrɔnye' to create that rapport between him and the requestee and make the request less face threatening. Then comes the head act. It is after the head act that the requester states the grounder which is the reason for the request. That is that some visitors are on their way coming to him and he needs some drinks to receive them with. The illocutionary force behind this is begging the requestee to comply and get the drinks for him and that noncompliance will make him to be seen as a bad guest.

Sweetener

A sweetener is a request strategy where the speaker uses persuasive utterances and expresses an exaggerated appreciation of the addressee's ability to comply with the request and hence reduces the imposition and the face threat involved. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) noted that in using the sweetening strategy, the speaker uses persuasive utterances. This is done by expressing exaggerated appreciation of the hearer's ability to comply with the request which lowers the imposition involved in the request. Let's examine the Example 36 where a woman (aged 54) wants to send a lady (aged 17) to pick a cloth from her grandmother in the next village for her. (Woe 29/02/16).

to all of them. As a mother connotes love and care, the requestee should now behaves as such and show them the love and care by giving them the needed advice. The illocutionary force behind this is to make the woman feel honored and convince her to perform the requested action. It is also to reduce the face threat and the imposition which may have come with the request. The requester would have made the woman felt bad if she could not give the advice. This will thereby increase the woman's 'face' threat. The request would then be considered impolite.

Disarmer

The addressee is aware of the possible discomfort his\her request is likely to bring to the hearer and a likely refusal so he tries to mitigate it. This is revealed by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) when they state that 'the speaker indicates his\her awareness of a potential offence thereby attempting to anticipate possible refusal'. The example 39 is about a woman (Ablayo aged 37) asking her neighbor (Akpene aged 35) to give her a dining table to use for her visitors. This was recorded at Anloga, (28/02/16)

39. Ablayo: Akpene, 'Maḍe fu na wo vie, meḍekuku
 ye wo nuḍukplɔa nam maxɔ amedzrowoe'.
*Ablayo: Akpene, 'I will worry you a little; please
 give me your dining table for my visitors
 to eat on, I will return it when they are
 gone'*

The requestee starts the whole request with a personal name '**Akpene**' to create rapport and association between her and the requestee. The head act in this case is '**ye wo nuḍukplɔa nam**'. The requester is aware of a potential offence her request might cause to the addressee so he decides to use the structure '**Maḍe fu na wo vie**'. This has an illocutionary meaning that should the speaker's request be turn down, it wouldn't be a surprise because she already knows that she is offending (worrying /disturbing /bothering) and that, there is the possibility of refusal. The use of '**Maḍe fu na wo vie**' also serves as a mitigator to reduce the imposition and the possible face threat which might have come with the head act.

Another illustration of disarmer in request among the Anlos is example 40. This was recorded at Keta on 25th February 2016, where a driver's mate who wanted to pick more passengers asked the passengers on board to shift to make way for more passengers to come on knowing that the vehicle is already full to capacity.

40. Metivi: Miatowo, meḍekuku, maḍe fu na mi vie he,
 miteyi vie ne woanɔ anyi ne miadzo kaba.
*Driver's mate: Our people, let me worry you a little,
 please, shift a little for her to sit for us to go
 quick.*

The driver's mate knows it will be a worry to the passengers to pick more people since the vehicle was full to capacity. He knows the potential embarrassment and inconvenience he will be causing to the passengers. So, he wants to minimize the possible face threat by using a kinship term '*Miatowo*' '*Our people*'. Hethen follows it with a politeness marker '*meḍekuku*' '*please*' before the disarmer '*maḍe fu na mi vie he*' and then finally, the head act '*miteyi vie ne woanɔ anyi ne miadzo kaba*'.

Disarmer and Cost Minimizer

The speaker indicates consideration of the 'cost' to the hearer involve in compliance with the request (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984). The argument here is that, in the process of the request, the requester may make certain demands that could be 'costly' to the addressee. The speaker foreseeing this chooses his words in a way to mitigate the possible cost. Let's look at the example 41 where a woman (Ablewɔ) requests to pluck some mangoes on a tree in her neighbor's (Zanu's) house. (Woe, 28/02/16)

41. Ablewɔ: *Enyrui Zanu, tsoe kem nenyebe ete ɔe dzi wo ha,
menya be ewo koe matenju aɔe fu ya na, meɔekuku,
magbe mango vi aɔe woatsia dzi.'*

Ablewɔ: *Uncle Zanu, 'pardon/forgive me if it bothers you, I
know you are the only one I can worry, please,
I want to pluck some mangoes from the tree'.*

In the Example 41, the requester prefaces her request with an address term which is a kinship term 'enyruui - uncle' before a cost minimizer '*tsoe kem nenyebe ete ɔe dzi wo ha, menya be ewo koe matenju aɔe fu ya na*'. This is an utterance which has an illocutionary meaning to raise the abilities of the requestee as being the only person among the lot who is capable of performing the task for her. This leaves the addressee with no option than to comply with the request. The requester after using the disarmer and the cost minimizer also uses a respect term and a politeness marker to further reduce the rate of imposition and lessen the possible face threat.

Conclusion

Socially, in our day to day interactions with our fellow humans, we ask for assistance. We expect these to be granted us. Because of the interdependency of our societies, especially in Ghana, no one can comfortably exist in life without going through the everyday ritual of requesting to satisfy his or her needs. No one can claim to be self-sufficient. In social interactions, we request people to explain concepts and expressions that we do not have understanding of. It can however be seen that one of the basic rituals that we perform in life is requesting. Life would have been meaningless, tough and very difficult to live without the act of making request. There are individual or personal requests. Individuals make their demands or requests. Groups as large as countries and even continents also make requests. Powerful and less powerful, rich and poor, male and female, young and old and religious inclinations make requests. Request making is very necessary in life. In the present study, it has been shown that, even though it is a universal phenomenon (e.g. Agyekum, 2010; Obeng, 1999; Nwoye, 1992), its conceptualization, norms, performance and interpretation may vary across cultures. Request text formation and its performance therefore constitute a body of knowledge that members of a speech community must acquire to become socially integrated.

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