



## Sociolinguistic Variables Involved in Making Requests Among the Anlos



Review article



Published in Nairobi, Kenya by Royallite Global in the **Journal of Linguistics and Foreign Languages**

Volume 1, Issue 2, 2020

© 2020 The Author(s). This article is distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY) 4.0 license.

### Article Information

Submitted: 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2020

Accepted: 25<sup>th</sup> July 2020

Published: 28<sup>th</sup> August 2020

Conflict of Interest: No conflict of interest was reported by the authors

Funding: None



<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

To read the paper online, please scan this QR code



**Calvin Mawuli Attricki<sup>1</sup> & Agbemor Kwami Akpeleasi<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Languages Department, Peki College of Education, Ghana

<sup>2</sup>Department of Languages, Jasikan College of Education, Ghana

Correspondence: [mawulicalvinattricki@gmail.com](mailto:mawulicalvinattricki@gmail.com)



### Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate different sociolinguistic variables involved in making requests found among Anlo conversational participants in natural settings. 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). From the discussions above, it can be seen that socio-linguistic variables of GRAPD are very necessary and are given much consideration when request is to be performed in Anlo. The analysis revealed that both the requester and the requestee consider the Gender, Rank, Age, Power or Distance that exists between them (the interlocutors). All these social variables affect request making in one way or the other among the Anlos. It is the social variables that the requester considers before making his or her request. The requestee also considers these social variables before considering granting or refusing the request.

**Keywords:** Anlos, making request, sociolinguistic variables

### How to Cite:

Attricki, C. M., & Akpeleasi, A. K. (2020). Sociolinguistic variables involved in making requests among the Anlos. *Journal of Linguistics and Foreign Languages*, 1(2), 19-38. Retrieved from <https://royalliteglobal.com/jlfl/article/view/319>



## Introduction

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. 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. Requests for certain items or services can be made (directly or indirectly) by certain people without such people being considered impolite or without the requestee's face being threatened. For example, in formal situations, superiors can, directly or indirectly, request subordinates to do certain things for them, and the subordinates will not feel imposed upon. In a village chief's palace, for example, subordinates may even feel honored to undertake the requested action or to provide the requested item (if they have it). For their part, superiors have a social obligation to help subordinates, so a subordinate who refuses a request by a superior may be seen as disrespectful (Obeng, 1997). In addition to exploring the pragmatic and sequential structure of requests, it will be established that appropriate request text formulation and performance are determined more by an intricate interplay of socio-cultural convention and considerations than any other thing.

## 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. In any speech community, request text formation and its performance constitutes a body of knowledge that members of the speech community must acquire in order to become socially integrated. The acquisition of the knowledge and skill for request performance becomes more imperative considering, the fact that request feature more prominently in our everyday verbal exchanges.

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. By making a request, the speaker impinges on the hearer's claim to freedom of action and freedom from imposition. This general misconception that all types of requests are imposition results in some Anlos even refraining from requesting what is justifiably their right. This misconception coupled with the individual's inability to determine appropriate linguistic forms employ in particular situation or before particular people underscore the queries

that arise. It is becoming evident these days that the Anlos are taking conversation management and the art of speaking for granted. This trend does not augur well for a culture that wants to survive in an era where the search for a dominant language and for that matter a lingua franca in Ghana is on the ascendancy.

The confusion in the minds of the Anlos with regard to request text formulation and performance could also be due to the fact that:

- a. Various linguistic forms for request text formulation have elements of ambiguity in them.
- b. Society is becoming multilingual and they are tempted to superimpose second language concept of request onto a Ghanaian Language syntactic structure, and
- c. They disregard socio-cultural components essential to request performance in Anlo.

Requests are acts meant to prepare the way for the performance of events either in favour of the speaker, addressee, both of them or a third person. Among the Anlos, the most frequently used and very important linguistic routines include greetings, requesting, rendering an apology, expressing gratitude, thanksgiving, recounting of one's mission among others. These everyday activities form part of the child's upbringing and training. Performance of these routines appropriately gives a person sociocultural recognition.

That is a person who can perform these routines and rituals well in social interaction is said to be communicatively competent and well educated. These routines are performed taking into consideration the socio-cultural norms and values of the society. Bonvillain (1993, p. 103) states that linguistic routines combine verbal material and social messages in patterns expressive of cultural values and sensitive to interactional context. Agyekum (2010, p. 211) adds that to combine the verbal and the social messages, one must know the rules of communication in ethnographic encounters and communicative competence. Requests are universal. This is because every language and speech community in the world employs it in one way or the other during a communicative encounter. That notwithstanding, the way they are employed and structured may vary from language to language and from one speech community to the other. Although Anlos make requests, there is no documentary evidence that suggests different sociolinguistic variables that are used in this area of Ewe land in making requests. It is in this regard that this study is undertaken.

**Research Objective**

The purpose of this study is to investigate different sociolinguistic variables involved in making requests found among Anlo conversational participants in natural settings.

**Literature review**

Philosophers like Austin (1962), Grice (1975), and Searle (1969, 1975) offer basic insight into Speech Acts as a new theory of linguistic communication based on the assumption that "the minimal units of human communication are not linguistic expressions, but rather, the performance of certain kinds of acts, such as making statements, asking questions, giving directions, apologizing, thanking, and so on" (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989, p.2). Austin (1962) defines speech acts as all the things we do with words. Austin (1962, p.75) assumes each speech act to have three major forms:

Locutionary: The function performed by uttering a well-formed, meaningful sentence,

Illocutionary: The communicative force which accompanies the utterance, e.g. promising, warning, denying, *requesting*.

Perlocutionary: The extent to which the receiver's state of mind/knowledge and attitude is altered by the utterance in question. According to Austin (1962) speech act is defined as all that we do with words. Based on this definition, a distinction is made between form and function of an utterance or sentence.

In the opinion of Jaworowska (2004), the speech act theory attempts to explain how speakers use language to accomplish intended actions and how hearers infer intended meaning from what is said. Although speech act studies are now considered a sub-discipline of cross-cultural pragmatics, they actually take their origin in the philosophy of language. She stated that Austin (1962) defines the performance of uttering words with a consequential purpose as "the performance of a locutionary act, and the study of utterances thus far and in these respects the study of locutions, or of the full units of speech" (p. 69). These units of speech are not tokens of the symbol or word or sentence but rather units of linguistic communication and it is "the production of the token in the performance of the speech act that constitutes the basic unit of linguistic communication" (Searle 1969, p. 136). To her, according to Austin's theory, these functional units of communication have prepositional or locutionary meaning (the literal meaning of the utterance), illocutionary meaning (the social function of the utterance), and perlocutionary force (the effect produced by the utterance in a given context) (Cohen 1996, p. 384).

Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) argue that there is a strong need to complement theoretical studies of speech acts with empirical studies, based on speech acts produced by native speakers of individual languages in strictly defined contexts. When second language learners engage in conversations with native speakers, difficulties may arise due to their lack of mastery of the conversational norms involved in the production of speech acts. Such conversational difficulties may in turn cause breakdowns in interethnic communication (Gumperz, 1982). Kasper (1997 p. 193) opined that when the non-native speakers violate speech act realization patterns typically used by native speakers of a target language, they often suffer the perennial risk of inadvertently violating conversational (and politeness) norms thereby forfeiting their claims to being treated by their interactants as social equals. Communication difficulties result when conversationalists do not share the same knowledge of the subtle rules governing conversation.

Cohen (1996) claims that the fact that speech acts reflect somewhat routinized language behavior helps learning in the sense that much of what is said is predictable. Wolfson & Manes, (1980) have found that adjectives nice or good (for example, "That's a nice shirt you're wearing" or "it was a good talk you gave") are used almost half the time when complimenting in English. They continued that the use of adjectives like beautiful, pretty, and great make up 15 percent of complements used. Despite the routinized nature of speech acts, there are still various strategies to choose from - depending on the sociocultural context - and often a variety of possible language forms for realizing these strategies, especially in the case of speech acts with four or more possible semantic formulas such as apologies and complaints. Target language learners may tend to respond the way they would in their native language and culture and find that their utterances are not at all appropriate for the target language and culture situation. (Cohen, 1996, p. 408)

## **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 (outdooring, 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 study focused on 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

Various factors are considered when making requests. These factors may determine a speaker's choice of words when addressing someone. For instance, in the Anlo culture, parents can make requests to their children in the form of commands but not vice versa.

The participants in any request event pay attention to these variables.

### Gender

Until recently, women were not accorded the same equality in rank to men in the Anlo culture. This prevented women from having a say in critical issues. This stems from the fact that men were the sole bread winners of their families. Males were accorded more respect than females. Females were regarded as less important and this is revealed in the low level of female education. The general view was that, even if females were educated, they would end up in the man's kitchen. In indigenous Anlo communities, women are expected to be at home to see to the upkeep of the home. This view continues to have effect on women and reflects in how they make request to their male counterparts. Women had to choose their words in ways that will not portray them as disrespectful. Agyekum (2005) acknowledges this phenomenon when he states that "if a woman fails to use the appropriate persuasive language in request to her husband, she is considered disrespectful and the face threat and impositions are heightened". Though the political and economic empowerments of females have grown over the years through campaigns, females are still considered as playing second fiddle to men in Anlo culture though not as pronounced as it used to be. This manifests in the ways females make their request in apologetic and persuasive manners.

Example 1 is a request situation where by during a family meeting in a courtyard of the family head, a woman who is a family member decided to make a request. She wanted to be allowed to make a submission. This was recorded at Anloga on 27<sup>th</sup> February, 2016.

1. Meḍe kuku lo, menya be mi nyɔnuwoa, miafe nya mesɔa to o gake medzi be miane mɔnukpɔkpɔ via ḍem ne nye ha maḍe tɔnyevia agblɔ.

*Please, I know that women's contributions are not considered seriously but I also want to be given a little opportunity to make a little submission.*

From example 1, the woman in question knows that women's views are considered unimportant as she captures in the idiom. She started by saying "meḍe kuku" meaning "please" to make the whole request less face threatening. As a result, she uses a coaxing strategy, which is, not requesting for a lot of time but something minimal. She does this in a bid to be given the chance to make her point. The illocutionary force behind the use of this coaxing strategy is to compel the requestees to give her the opportunity to speak



and to grant her request. The perlocutionary effect is that her request was granted. Example 2 is another situation where a woman (29 years) sees a neighbor who is a man (27 years) passing by and requests him to call his sister for her. This was recorded at Anloga on 27<sup>th</sup> February, 2016.

2. Mia ɲsrɔ, meɖe kuku medzi be maɖe fu via ɖe na wo, meɖe kuku atenua yɔ mia ɲvi Dzatugbi nam ne eɖoafea mea?  
*Our brother, please I want to bother you a little, can you please call me our sister, Dzatugbi when you get to the house?*

In Example 2, the woman knows that she is talking to a man and would not have to be very direct in her request. This makes her to be seen as a respectful and submissive woman. Anlo is a male domineering society and women are expected to choose their words well when they are talking to men. To be successful in her request, she decides to make the request indirect. She starts with a kinship deferential address form. This reflects the communal way of life among the Anlos because though the requester and requestee are not directly related by blood. There is this belief that Anlos in one way or the other are related hence the use of the kinship address form. The kinship deferential address form is also used to make the request less face threatening and to coerce the requestee to comply. The next in the structure is a respect term to show the woman's submissiveness and this is followed by a hedging device, then finally the head act. The perlocutionary effect of the woman's utterance is that an opportunity that she seeks has been given to her to make her contribution.

In a situation where a woman decides to be direct in her request, the request is not likely to be successful. The woman is seen as being rude, disrespectful and or uncultured. She would be seen as threatening the face of the man she is requesting from. As a result, the man refuses to grant her request as in example 3 recorded at Anloga on 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 2016. In this example, a woman (35 years) asks her cousin who is a man (33 years) to erect a shade in front of their house for her to sell under.

3. Dede: Klufɔfo, wo gbado ɖe mɔnu nam.  
Avenu: Nenemae wodze be nagbloe ma? Nye mevo o.  
Amemabumabue fu ɖem na wo.  
*Dede: Klu's father, erect a shade in front of the house for me.*  
*Avenu: Is that how you have to say it? Am not free.*  
*Disrespectfulness is what is worrying you.*

The woman's request is turned down by the man because she was too direct in her request. This is seen as a face threat to the requestee (the man). The request would have been granted and for that matter successful if the woman had made it in an indirect manner by adding respect terms, in-group terms, adjunct(s) (eg. grounder, sweetener, disarmer and cost minimizer) to the head to make the request viable. This act of discrimination against women is fading out gradually in Anlo especially, in cosmopolitan Anlo communities like some parts of Keta.

### Rank

This social variable has to do with social ranks like being rich, belonging to a royal family, being a boss or a director of a company, holding a traditional or political position as very important aspects of a person's personality. People who are of a high rank make requests in ways that they do not consider whether the requestee's face could be threatened or not. Their subordinates (requestees) rather feel happy that someone highly ranked in society is requesting them to do something for them (Obeng, 1999). However, when subordinates are requesting things from people who are higher than them in terms of rank, they are mindful of the address terms and right titles to use. This helps to avoid face threat to them. We can have an example of a conversation between a sub chief at Woe and a palace attendant. This was during a visit to the palace by a youth group to invite the chief to be the chairman for the inauguration of their youth club on 23<sup>rd</sup> January, 2016.

4. *Fia: Yo nye tsamia la fe mee ɔa me nam kaba.*  
*Subɔvi: Meɔe kuku mesi.*  
*Chief: Call me my linguist from the next house immediately.*  
*Attendant: Please, I hear.*

Due to the power and authority the Chief has in the community, he can ask any member of his community to do anything for him at any time without the face of the person being threatened. The subjects see the service to their superior (the Chief) as an honor done them. This can be seen in example 4. The chief requests by commanding the attendant to call the linguist for him immediately. The attendant sees this as an honour done him. This shows in his response that "*meɔe kuku mesi*" meaning "*please, I hear*" to conform to the Anlos concept of politeness. If he had answered the Chief without the respect term "*meɔe kuku*" meaning "*please*", he would have been sanctioned appropriately. This would have been seen as disrespect to the authority of the chief. This is in consonance with the views of Obeng (1991) that people in authority can request

their subordinates to do something for them directly without threatening their face. Another Example of this is seen in example 5 at a mechanic's shop at Keta where a mechanic asks his apprentice to remove a lorry tire under a car.

5. *Fita: Blewusi, ɔe ataya vua te nam kaba.*

*Blewusi: Masta, meɔe kuku mesi.*

*Mechanic: Blewusi, remove the tire under the car  
for me immediately*

*Blewusi: Master, please, I have heard.*

In Example 5, the mechanic after addressing the requestee (the apprentice) by his name 'Blewusi', orders him to remove the tire under the car immediately. The requestee in turn addresses the requester with the title 'masta' 'master' then uses a respect term 'meɔe kuku' "please" before finally saying that he has heard him 'mesi' meaning 'I hear'. There is an illocutionary force behind the mechanic's utterance which is setting the requestee out to perform the requested action. The requester is not seen in this case as someone who is imposing anything on the requestee. The requestee rather sees himself as being honored by his master through the request. The requestee in trying to show his submissiveness and appreciation for the honor done him, uses the respect term 'meɔe kuku'. This discussion is in line with the findings of Agyekum in Akan that when people are making a request from a higher ranked or powerful person, they do not endeavor to avoid any face threat to the requestee. The higher ranked on the other hand are always addressed with appropriate titles, address forms and honorifics that correspond with their status and rank.

### **Age**

Another socio-linguistic factor that affects request in Anlo is age. Children are expected to use language devoid of coercion but full of respect when they are making requests either from their parents or any other elderly person. They are expected to be submissive in their choice of language. They are also not expected to mention the name of the elderly person. A child's request may not be complied with because of improper language. On the contrary, adults can request young ones to do things for them without using persuasive language because when an elderly person requests younger ones to do something for him, it is not considered to be potentially face threatening. This respect of hierarchical requests among the Anlos also applies to Akans. Agyekum (2005) states that in Akan, "if children are requesting things from their parents, they have to use deference expressions while parents may minimize deference expressions when making

request from their children. It is also noteworthy that people of the same age can make requests to each other without being scolded. It must be emphasized that though age is a factor in the except 6 below, other socio-linguistic variables like distance, rank etc also played a part in compliance with the requests by the requestee. The scenario below illustrates the essence of age among the Anlos in making request where a young girl requests a man to give her a rag to use in cleaning a table.

6. Nyɔnuvi: Tso ɔovu ma nam. Medzi be matutu kplɔa dzi  
kplii.

Njutsu: Mebua ame kura o. Hawoe menyea? Menya be  
metsi awu yea?

*Girl: Give me that rag, I want to clean the table with it.*

*Man: You don't respect at all. Am I your equal? Don't you know  
that am older than you are?*

In Example 6, the child was too direct, too commanding and showing disrespect to the elderly. In Anlo culture, children who behave like this are regarded as uncultured. Her request is not granted because the illocutionary force behind the words she uses for her request was too great. It shows command. The words were harsh, impolite and face threatening to the requestee. If she had considered that the man is older than she is and for that matter used politeness marker and a respect term to mitigate the face threat associated with her request, it would have been granted.

In Example 7, a girl (aged 18) requests the brother (aged 31) to escort her to collect a book from the neighboring house. She thought it was late in the night and she would not be able to go alone.

7. Nyɔnuvi: Efo Selikem, meɔe kuku medzi be maxɔ agbalë

Senyo gbɔ gake za do, me vɔvɔm, medzi be nakplɔm ayie.

*Girl: Brother Selikem, please I want to collect a book*

*from Senyo but it is night and am afraid too, I want you to escort me.*

The girl, realizing that she wants a service from an elderly person uses honorific 'Efo' 'brother'. After this, she uses respect term. The illocutionary meaning derived from the use of the honorific and the respect term is to persuade and elevate the requestee. This will make the man get swollen headed. She then goes on to state the reason for making her request so that she would sound more convincing before finally stating her request. A situation like this will make the requestee finds it difficult to turn the request down.

Children and young people in Anlo culture need to use apologetic devices, address terms and honorifics in making a request from adults. On the contrary, adults may ask the children and the youth to perform chores or run errands by calling them by their names without the politeness devices. In the example 6, the girl did not sound apologetic in her language use. She has also not used any address term or honorific in making his request. Her request was therefore not met. There is too much of face threatening in her request.

### Power

The Anlos, just like some other tribes in Ghana, consider social rank like richness, being a boss or a director of a company as very important aspects of one's personality. Other things such as belonging to a royal family, holding a traditional or political office also gives power. Powerful people can make direct request to less powerful people but not the other way round. When people are requesting something from a powerful person, they endeavor to avoid any face threat. The powerful persons are always addressed with appropriate titles, address forms and honorifics that correspond with their status and rank (Agyekum, 2005; Obeng, 1999). Excerpt 8 is an example from Keta. A seamstress (aged 39) who is more powerful per Anlo culture, requests her apprentice (aged 18) to switch off a lights in a room. This was recorded at Keta on the 20<sup>th</sup> February, 2016.

8. Afenɔ: "Tsi akadja kaba."

Dɔsrɔvi: Meɖe kuku mesi.

*Madam: Switch off the light immediately.*

*Apprentice: Please, I hear.*

The seamstress is a boss in this case. She has power and can command and be obeyed by her apprentice who is the requestee in this case. As stated by Obeng (1969), in formal situations, superiors can directly or indirectly request subordinates to do certain things for them, and the subordinates will not feel imposed upon. The seamstress has not used any grounder or sweetener because she is more powerful than her apprentice. She has also not used any address term, honorifics or any respect term to soften and make her request less face threatening. She directly tells the apprentice. The illocutionary meaning derived from her utterance is command. The use of the adverbial 'kaba' 'immediately' shows' the rate at which the order given by the boss is expected to be obeyed. When the word 'kaba' is used in 'Anlo, it puts some sort on pressure on the requestee. Another Example is excerpt 9, where the owner of a fishing net asks his workers to pull the net fast to shore. This was recorded at Woe on 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 2016.

9. Ɖɔɔ: Tɔnyetɔwo, mihe ɔɔa ɔe kpodzi kabakaba.  
*Fisherman: My people, pull the net to shore fast.*

In Example 9, the fisherman who is the owner of the fishing net and a rich man in the area employs casual labourers to work for him. He has that power of being an employer. He is therefore ordering and or commanding his workers to pull the net fast to shore. Because the illocutionary force behind his utterance is an order or a command, his act should have been seen as a face threatening act. However, the workers (the requestees) do not see that as a face threat because of the power that he has. In addition to this, the man uses 'Tɔnyetɔwo' 'my people' an in-group term with a possessive marker suggesting that the requestees are all his. This is used to make the request less face threatening to the requestees. The actual request 'miheɔɔadekpodzi' 'pull the net to shore' followed by 'kabakaba' 'very fast' is used to portray how fast the order is expected to be obeyed. Because the requester is someone who commands power and authority, he does not use any respect terms or honorifics. This is in line with what Obeng (1999) and Agyekum (2005) state that powerful people can make direct request to less powerful people but not the other way round. When people are making request from a higher ranked or powerful person, they endeavor to avoid any face threat but they mostly do not use respect terms and honorifics. The powerful persons are always addressed with appropriate titles, address terms and honorifics that correspond their titles.

### **Distance**

This refers to the intimacy that exists between the interlocutors. The social distance between an addresser and the addressee affects a request. The closer and more familiar people are, the more they make requests to each other in an informal way. Also, what would have been considered as a face threatening act (FTAs) by people who barely know each other may be interpreted differently by people who are familiar to each other. People are however very careful with requesting something from people they might have met for the first time. In example 10, the requester is an intimate friend of the requestee).

10. Nufiala. A: Do ga aɔe nam ne egbo tso banka. Ega aɔeke mele asi  
nye o.

Teacher A: Lend me some money when you are back from  
the bank. I don't have any money on me.

*Nufiala. B: Mesi, nenie nehia?*

*Teacher B: I hear. How much do you need?*

In Excerpt 10, Teacher A directly asks Teacher B to lend him money. Due to the intimacy or the close relationship between the interlocutors, the requester can ask this directly without the face of the requestee being threaten. In most European cultures, the requestee's face would be threatened when a request of this nature is made directly. Among the Anlos, and in other societies such as the Akans (Obeng, 1997), (Agyekum, 2010), Igbo (Nwoye, 1992) and the Greeks (Sifianou, 1992), there is a high degree of interdependence among members. Requests are not seen as impositions and therefore do not threaten the face of a "requestee." The way the Anlos think about each other's acts, and the forms in which the interlocutors proceed, may not render certain forms of requests (which are considered impositions in societies that emphasize individual responsibility) an imposition. Although requests in Anlo society may cause discomfort or inconvenience to a requestee, they are tolerated in the interest of societal cohesion and interdependence. This communal life exists in other societies such as Igbo (Nwoye, 1992) and Akan (Obeng, 1999). Thus, if an Anlo request involves an imposition on a requestee, the imposition will not be done by the "requester," but by the society as a whole. The relationship between a "requester" and a "requestee" is also a key variable in structuring the request.

Example 11 also illustrates this. In Example 11, Dotse wants his cousin Agbenyo who is staying in Tamale to give him a smock he is wearing. This was recorded at Anloga on 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 2016.

11. Dotse: Fonye Agbenyo, wo awu ya, egatwo toe.  
Mawudlawo fe awuwo ha mele aleagbegbe o. Enya  
kpɔ ɲutɔ. Meka de dzi be bubuwo gale asi wo fũu.  
Agbenyo: Wo mele asinye fũu o gake ebɔ de Tamale.  
Ateɲu atɔɔ ema ne enyo ɲu wo ko.  
Me bubu flege ne meɔo Tamale.  
Dotse: Oooook!! Akpe kakaka  
*Dotse: Brother Agbenyo. This your smock is for the rich.  
It is not common. The dresses of even the angels are not  
like this. It is very nice. I am sure you have a variety of them.*  
*Agbenyo: I don't have a variety of them but there are many of  
them at Tamale. You can take this one if you like it. I  
would get another one when I get to Tamale.*  
*Dotse: Waow!! Thank you very much.*

In Example 11, the requester, Dotse hints first by complementing the quality of his cousin, Agbenyo's smock. He said that it beautiful and that it is for the rich people, not common and hyperbolically saying that even the dresses of angels are not like it. Illocutionary meaning derive from all these praises implies that he is interested in the smock. Dotse even goes on to say that he is sure he (Agbenyo) has varieties of that smock. Agbenyo, realizing that Dotse is interested in the dress first says he is not having varieties of the dress but he goes on to make an offer. The offer that Agbenyo made is the perlocution or the effect of Dotse's utterance. Agbenyo offered that 'Ateju atso ema ne enyo nu wo ko. Me bubu flege ne meɔ Tamale.' Dotse readily accepts the offer and thank him.

An analysis of Example 11 reveals that the use of the hint is motivated by the distant nature of the interactants' relationship and by the inherent difficulty of making the request. The requester, Dotse is Agbenyo's cousin. He lives in another town and happened to pay a visit. Because of the communal way of living among the Anlos, even the extended family members are regarded as very close relations. However, in spite of this relationship between the requester and the requestee, Dotse and Agbenyo were not close friends, thus dictating the choice of an indirect request. When faced with communicative difficulty, the Anlo interlocutors resort to indirectness to save face and to gain interactional advantage. This is in line with the findings of Obeng (1997) that Akan interlocutors are mostly indirect in their speech when they have communicative challenges. Dotse's indirect approach convinces Agbenyo to grant the request. The illocutionary meaning of the words he chooses earns him the perlocutionary effect. The perlocutionary effect is that he Agbenyo gives him the smock. Given the distant social relationship between the interlocutors, a direct request in example 11 would have revealed Dotse as being pragmatically incompetent and uncultured. His request may however not be granted.

### **Summary**

From the discussions above, it can be seen that socio-linguistic variables of GRAPD are very necessary and are given much consideration when request is to be performed in Anlo. The analysis revealed that both the requester and the requestee consider the Gender, Rank, Age, Power or Distance that exists between them (the interlocutors). All these social variables affect request making in one way or the other among the Anlos. It is the social variables that the requester considers before making his or her request. The requestee also considers these social variables before considering granting or refusing the request.



**Conclusion**

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.

**Author Biographies****Calvin Mawuli Attricki**

Calvin Mawuli Attricki was trained as a teacher at E. P. Training College, Amedzofe, Ghana. He had his Bachelor of Education Degree in Ghanaian Languages (Ewe) from the University of Education, Winneba. He also had his Master of Education Degree in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) and Master of Philosophy Degree in Applied Linguistics from University of Education, Winneba. Being an ardent language teacher, he taught at Anglican Basic School, Penyi; Akatsi Sec. Tech, Akatsi and Zion College, Anloga. Currently, he is a tutor at Peki College of Education, Peki. He also teaches at University of Cape Coast Distance Education Center, Ho and University of Education Distance Education Center, Sogakope. He served as the head of Languages Department and a member of the Governing Council of Peki College of Education, Peki. Because of his passion for reading and writing (Literacy), he is a National Core Trainer on the USAID Early Grade Reading Implementation Training Program.

**Agbemor Kwami Akpeleasi**

Agbemor Kwami Akpeleasi is a teacher trainer at Jasikan College of Education, Jasikan, Ghana. He graduated with teacher's certificate "A" from Jasikan College of Education. He also had his Bachelor Degree in Ghanaian Language Studies (Ewe) and Master's degree in Applied Linguistics from the University of Education, Winneba. Agbemor has taught for thirty years with eleven years of experience as a teacher educator. He serves as a head of the languages department. He is a member of the academic board and some committees in Jasikan College of Education. His areas of expertise are: Syntax, Morphology and Phonology. Agbemor has a number of publications to his credit.

**References**

- Agyekum, K. (2005). Aspects of Persuasion in Akan Communication. *RASK: International Journal of Language and Communication*, 21, 63-96.
- Agyekum, K. (2010). *Akan verbal Taboos in the context of the Ethnography of Communication*. Accra: Ghana University Press.
- Austin, L. F. (1962). *How to do things with words?* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Blum-Kulka, S., & Olshtain, E. (1984). Requests and apologies: A cross-cultural study of speech act realization patterns (CCSARP). *Applied Linguistics*, 5(3), 196-213.
- Blum-Kulka, S., House, J., & Kasper, G. (1989). *Cross-cultural Pragmatics: Requests and Apologies*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation.
- Bonvillain, N. (1993). *Language, Culture and Communication: The meaning of*
- Capo, H. B. C. (1991). *A comparative phonology of Gbe*. Berlin: Walter de
- Cohen, A. D. (1996). *Studies in second language acquisition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Grice, H. Paul (1975). Logic and Conversation. In P. Cole & J. L. Morgan (Eds.), *Speech Acts* (pp. 41-58). New York: Academic Press.
- Gumperz, J. J. (1982). *Discourse strategies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- House, J. and G. Kasper. (1987). "Interlanguage pragmatics: Requesting in a foreign language". *Perspectives on Language and Performance*, Vol. 2. Eds. W. Lörcher
- Kasper, G. (1997). Can pragmatic competence be taught? Retrieved November 2008, from the World Wide Web: <http://nflrc.hawaii.edu/Networks/NW06/>.
- Kasper, G., & Blum-Kulka, S. (Eds.). (1993). *Interlanguage pragmatics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- King, K., A. & Silver, R. E. (1993). Sticking points: Effects of instruction on NNS refusal strategies. *Working Papers in Educational Linguistics*, 9, 47-82.
- Lin, Yu-leng. (2011). Test of Analytic Bias in Native Mandarin and Native Southern Min Speakers. In Yun Xiao Liang Tao and Hooi ling Soh (Eds., *Current issues in Chinese Linguistics*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Nwoye, O. (1992). Linguistic Politeness and Socio-Cultural Variation of the Notion of Face. *Journal of Pragmatics* 18, 309-28.
- Obeng, S. G. (1997). Communicational Strategies: Persuasion and Politeness in Akan Judicial Discourse. *Text*, 17(1), 25-51.
- Obeng, S. G. (1997). Indirectness in Pronominal Usage in Akan Discourse. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 16(2):201-21.
- Obeng, S. G. (1999). Request in Akan Discourse. *Anthropological Linguistics* 412, 230 - 251
- Searle, J. R. (1969). *Speech acts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Searle, J. R. (1975). Indirect speech acts. In P. Cole & J. L. Morgan (Eds.), *Syntax and semantics, Vol. 3: Speech Acts* (pp. 59-82). New York, Seminar Press.
- Sifianou, M. (1992). *Politeness Phenomena in England and Greece: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*. New York: Clarendon Press.
- Wolfson, N. and Manes, J. (1980). The compliment as social strategy. *Papers in Linguistics. International Journal of Human Communication*. 13. 391-410.