A pragmatic exploration of the structures of apology strategies in five momo languages: a comparative study

Evangeline Siri Fonchia
University of Yaoundé 1

The present study reports a descriptive comparison of the structure of apology strategies used by speakers of Ngie, Ngishie, Meta', Moghamo and Iyirikum of the Momo Division of the North West Region of Cameroon. When an action or an utterance has resulted in an offense, the offender needs to apologise by using a speech act of apology. This investigation is based on a corpus of exchanges from 100 speakers of the above-mentioned five languages with each language represented by 20 speakers of both sexes and of all social classes in these societies. The respondents completed a Discourse Completion Test (DCT) based on 14 different social situations. Two variables: social status (social distance and social dominance between the offender and the affected) and gender were controlled to avoid the effects of formality and informality. This study employed Cohen and Olshtain's (1981) model of classifying various types of apology strategies. The findings revealed similarities and differences between speakers of Ngie, Ngishie, Meta', Moghamo and Iyirikum in terms of their use of apology strategies. In addition, in relation to the illocutionary force Indicating Devices (IFIDs) of explanation /justification as a form of direct apology was the most used. Concerning gender, respondents more or less used the same apology strategies but the female used a variety of apology strategies in one situation than the male in addition to the fact that the female apology strategies were accompanied by non-verbal elements of communication. Results of this paper support earlier findings in other languages thereby suggesting the universality of apology strategies. This study reinforces the culture specific aspects of language use and is important for the teaching and learning of these languages.

Reference

Cohen, A. D and Olshtain, E. 1981. Developing a measure of sociocultural competence: the case of apology. *Language Learning*, 31(1): 113-134