A sociolinguistic Study of Politeness strategies in the Lunda Culture

Sylvester Mutunda
University of Arizona, Tucson

Abstract

This article provides a descriptive analysis of politeness strategies in Lunda, a Bantu language of the Central African Plateau in the northwestern corner of Zambia. Drawing on the woks of Brown & Gilman (1960), and Brown and Levinson (1978), this study describes how and when address forms such as pronouns, kinship terms, teknonyms, personal names, and other strategies like taboos and euphemisms are used by the Lunda in their verbal interactions in order to convey the aspect of politeness. With data from live and recorded conversations, short telephone interviews, letters, and introspection, it came to light that the choices of linguistic strategies by interlocutors are guided by the social relationship that exists among them. Among the Lunda, this relationship is based on age, social status, and kinship. I will, however, demonstrate that age (*nyaka*) is not the only dominant index for expressing relationships between people (Pritchett 2001:126). Certain peculiarities should be noticed. For example, treating a wealthy youth with the same respect as an older person, as long as he uses his wealth to the benefit of others. Another common feature of the Lunda concept of relationship is the extension of kinship terms to non-kins.

I shall also observe that, though menstruation may be viewed negatively, as something to be avoided even in conversation, it also has some positive facets. The Lunda believe for instance that, aside being an indication of fertility, menstruation blood may be used by a woman to make love portion and eventually receive much-needed affection from her husband. In addition, secluding of a menstruating woman and restraining her from cooking or touching utensils spare her from regular social and household chores.

I will finally argue that with urbanization, caused by exodus from cities to rural areas and vice versa, modernization, and adoption of Western way of life, the Lunda polite linguistic and cultural behavior is gradually changing.

Introduction

In common with Koike (1989:187), I do believe that people communicate different sociocultural aspects through face-to-face encounters, that is, through conversations with others. One such aspect is politeness, which can be expressed using various linguistic as well as non-linguistic strategies.

This paper discusses politeness strategies in Lunda, a Bantu language-speaking people of northwestern Zambia, i.e. in Zambezi, Kabompo and Mwinilunga Districts. Before going any further, I should point out that Lunda is also spoken in western Angola and the southern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo, albeit with some linguistic variations such as tonality, palatalization and morphological features. In essence, I shall look at how Lunda speakers perceive and use the expression of deference such as pronouns and kinship terms. The employment of politeness markers such as taboos and euphemisms will also be examined.

Data Collection

The sources of information included my knowledge, experience and introspection, based on being a Lunda native; my speaking and writing knowledge of Lunda and other related languages and cultures; live and recorded exchanges with Lunda speakers including my siblings; short telephone interviews; and letters. I also made use of the very limited works on the Lunda language and culture.

Defining Politeness

The concept of politeness is so varied that it becomes not easy to formulate a single definition of it. However, it is only when the attention is focused on the reason for politeness rather than what politeness is that the concept can be understood. Bayraktaroglu (1991:5) observes that Lakoff, for instance, concentrates on the supportive features of politeness and says that politeness is for "reaffirming and strengthening relationships" (Lakoff 1973:298). Leech goes for the protective side of politeness and proposes that it is used to "avoid strategic conflict" (1977:19). For Kochman (1984), too, politeness has a protective mission, which is exercised when a person shows consideration for other people:

Politeness conversation is . . . a way of showing consideration for other people's feelings, that is, not saying or doing anything that might unduly excite or arouse. The

'gentleman's agreement (though, hardly confined to adult males) is and was 'you don't do or say anything that might arouse yours' . . . Ultimately and essentially, then, mainstream consideration is a form of protection, not really of feelings, but rather of sensibilities, (quoted in Bayraktaroglu 1991: 5)

These definitions, according to Bayraktaroglu, portray politeness as a form of behavior, which is exercised so that the relationship between individuals can be consolidated or, at least, kept undamaged. In this sense, politeness is taken as way to avert any damage to the relationship. For the purposes of this study, however, politeness is defined as "the communication of respect for the social relationship between speaker and listener through the use of communicative strategies recognized by the society as carrying a particular illocutionary force" (Koike 1989:189). Let us note that these strategies may or may not be linguistic conventions. The degree of politeness to be conveyed is contingent upon the social relationship between the two parties as perceived by the speaker including the variables of power and social distance.

Pronouns

The first work that comes to mind on pronominal forms of address is the study pioneered by Brown and Gilman (1960), which focused on the usage of the 2nd person pronoun in French, German, Italian, and Spanish centuries ago. This study reveals that pronoun usage is governed by two social considerations: power and solidarity. According to these scholars,

One person may be said to have power over another in the degree that he is able to control the behaviour of the other. Power is a relationship between at least two persons, and it is non-reciprocal in the sense that both cannot have power in the same area of behavior (Brown & Gilman 1960:255).

In this sense, power is an asymmetrical relation because two people may not have power over each other. Power may be demonstrated by social factors like age, status, occupation, or other fixed attributes. Brown and Gilman further posit that in a situation of communication involving a boss and subordinate member of staff, between parent and child power relationship, and between a teacher and students, for instance, the person who exercises power over the other uses T (u) and receives the deferential V(ous) from the addressee, who is supposed to have no power.

Solidarity, by contrast, is an inherently reciprocal relation. It is demonstrated between equals, people who are close or have a certain level of intimacy. Such situations result into reciprocal usage of the same pronoun form *Tu* by two or more people. The solidarity form of address is also referred to as the ordinary form (Das 1968). According to Das, "this form of address is used reciprocally by members of a family between themselves and between friends, and also between kinsmen of the same group.

It has also been shown that the power and solidarity semantics posited by Brown and Gilman do exist in the American system of address by names (Brown & Ford 1961). In American English, as these two scholars postulate, a person can be addressed by first name (FN) or title and last name (TLN). According to this study, there are three patterns that guide the speakers in their choice of form of address: mutual exchange of FN, mutual exchange of TLN, and non-reciprocal pattern in which a person addresses another by FN, and gets TLN in return.

As for the choice of the pattern, this is governed by social factors such as acquaintance, intimacy, age, and occupational status. This study reveals that Americans address people with whom they are casually acquainted by reciprocal TLN; but immediately they get used to each other, they switch to reciprocal FN. The non-reciprocal pattern is generated by two kinds of relations, namely difference in age and occupational status. This is demonstrated by the fact that children address adults with TLN, and receive FN in return. Among adults, a difference of 15 years in age is a decisive factor; thence a senior person receives TLN and gives back FN to the junior person. Similarly, those with a higher occupational status are addressed with TLN, while they use FN for their subordinate addressee. It is worth mentioning that there is not necessarily a correlation between age and higher occupational status; a younger person may have a higher rank than the older addressee. In this case, according to Brown and Ford, occupational status has priority over age; thus the superior officer is addressed with TLN, and gives back FN to the older addressee. Besides these three major patterns of address, there are other variants such as title without name, last name alone, and multiple names. Each of these symbolizes a certain level of intimacy between the speaker and the addressee.

These two earlier works can serves as springboards for the study of address forms in the Lunda society as well. The first thing to notice in Lunda forms of address is its use of the second personal pronouns. Lunda has two forms of second person: *eyi* (singular "you") and *enu* (plural "you"). The former is 'ordinary' while the

latter is 'honorific'. There are also two forms in the third person: *yena* "he" or
"him"and *wena* "they" or "them" (honorific). The honorific forms are used in referring
to a superior, prototypically in age and also in other social attribute, while
conversation is in progress between interlocutors. An older person uses the singular
form *eyi* ("you") for a younger addressee, and gets the plural honorific form *wena* in
return. For instance, if someone is seeking some information from an elder person, it
would be disrespectful to say: *nakukeña kuhosha na-n-eyi* ["I want to talk to you
(singular)] instead of *nakukeña kuhosha na wena* (I would like to talk to them).
But among friends and peers, the singular version is used. Consider the following
conversation between two friends:

(1) **A.**   *eyi wa yi-mona a boss halosi?*
Q: you saw them the boss yesterday.
"Did you see the boss yesterday?"

(2) **B.**   *na yi-mona wanyi.*
Ans.: I saw them not.
"I didn't see him."

The underlined pronouns in A's return refer to addressee B and referent (the boss),
respectively. The first is singular, indicating that speakers A and B are peers; but the
second is plural (in spite of the fact that it is referring to a single referent), showing
that he is superior in status to both speakers. The same relationship is shown in B's
turn: pl. *yi* refers to the boss. If speaker B is older or has a higher rank than speaker
B, then the first part of speaker A's speech would be something like this:

A.   *mwa yi-mona a-boss haloshi?*
Q: You (pl.) them saw the boss.
"Did you see the boss yesterday?"

As evidenced by the above examples, among the Lunda, hierarchy based on age
(*nyaka*) is the dominant idiom for expressing relationships between people (Pritchett
2001: 126). The hierarchy includes kings, rulers, elders in each household, parents,
older brothers and sisters, and finally the youngest members of the community.
Traditionally, hierarchy is arranged vertically according to age, starting with the
paramount chief all the way down to the most recently born child.

The Lunda recognize very definitely the hierarchy of age and consider orderly society
quite impossible without it. One of the keenest criticism of the European and his ways

is contained in the following aphorism: *muwundeli mosi wukulumpi* "I western civilization there is no senior". To Lunda wisdom this is an impossible state of affairs; there must be a respectable senior and, hence, the following is acceptable: *chizanda chakiñaña* "the frying-pan protects (i.e. keeps the peace)". As frying-pan keeps water from putting out fire, and fire from consuming water, so the elders keeps the peace between the young of relatively equal status.

I should however add that aspect of age is now changing; old age no longer in itself engenders respect. From time to time, a wealthy young individual is acknowledged as possessing great age, and therefore treated with the same respect (*kalemesha*) as an older person. This trend may be referred to "the periodic emergence of baby-faced elders" (Pitchett 2001: 127). Another important aspect in Lunda interaction is the concept of hierarchy (*kavumbi*). One may wonder why the Lunda value age in their daily interaction. It is a common belief among the Lunda that the elders have a certain power of blessing. They are considered as *nzambi wamu chiyedi* "second god". Thus, when a young person respects and honors them, they will bless him, and that blessing will be forever in his life. In the same way, when they curse him, it will be forever. Today, however, one's position within a hierarchy is determined not only by age, but also by acquired wealth, formal education, travel experience, industriousness, and how an individual makes use of the opportunity and power he possesses for the benefit of others. (Pitchett 2001: 136).

Kinship Terminologies

1. Behavior Patterns and terms used within the Family
Like any community, the Lunda family setting is characterized as an informal situation for activities among family members. In this situation, intimate relationship is emphasized and the talk is casual, covering a variety of topics, mainly for the purpose of maintaining personal relationship or creating solidarity. Although it is a situation of intimates, there are certain cultural linguistic rules governing politeness behavior in the home domain, one of which being the use of kinship address terms. Fisher (1984) discusses Lunda kinship terms, including the following, which are relevant to the present study:

S and P	Explanation
mama	mother, aunt on mother's side

a-mama	mothers, mother's sisters
	Honorific 'mothers' in general)
mama wakansi	aunt, a younger "mother", mother's younger sister
mama wamukulumpi	aunt, mother's older sister
tata	father, uncle on father's side
a-tata	fathers, fathers' brothers
	(Honorific 'fathers' in general)
tata wakansi	uncle, a younger "father", father's younger brother
tata wamukulumpi	uncle, father's older brother
yaya	older brother, sister or cousin
a-yaya	older relation
	Used honorifically as well
mwanyikami	young brother
anyikijami	young brothers
muhela	sister (sister to brother)
a-hela	sisters (sisters to brother)
a-muhela	(honorific 'sister')
mandumi	uncle on mother's side
a-mandumi	mother's brothers
	Used as honorific as well
tatankaji, tata wamumbanda	aunt on father's side (Female father)

a-tatankaji, atata	father's sisters (Used as honorific)
wamumbanda	
nkaka	grandfather, grandmother
a-nkaka	grandfathers, grandmothers
mwizukulu	grandchild

Lunda kinship terminology does not distinguish between patrilateral and matrilateral kinship as two contrasting groups, but rather indicates that "members of a given generation on either side are regarded as equivalent and therefore deserve the respect that is due to any elder" (White 1955:30). Thus, a father is called *a-tata* and a mother *a-mama*. The same terms apply to a father's brothers and a mother's sisters. The husband of a father's sister is likewise *a-tata*, and the wife of a father's brother is equally *a-mama*. Lunda will explain that he calls his daughter in-law *a-mama* "mother" because she bears children who may have his own name or that of his deceased brother or sister. This practice can be explained by the fact that, if an elderly person dies and a child of the same sex is born in his or her family during the mourning period, the newly born child may inherit the deceased name.

It should be noted that (a) the word *mwiha* "nephew or niece" is used for the child of a sister or a female parallel cousin, *mwana* "child" for a child of the male parallel cousin. In the case of children of cross cousins the terms are inverted, i.e. *mwiha* is used for the child of a male cross cousin, *mwana* for the child of a female cross cousin. (McCulloh 1951:19). The reason given for this is that the wife of a male cross cousin is called *muhela* "sister", and the children of a *muhela* are always called *mwiha*. (b) The parallel cousins of both father and mother are called *mwana* (by Ego) and their children   are called *mwizukulu* "grandchild".

2. Extensions of Behavior Patterns and terms used in the Individual Family

The behavior pattern and terms used within the individual family are extended
 further to the brothers and sisters of the parents. Uncles and aunts, on both paternal and maternal sides, are called "fathers" and "mothers" respectively in Lunda. Since the father's brother is called *a-tata,* his children will be one's "brother" and "sister". Similarly the mother's sister's children are also called and behaved to as brothers and sisters. The children of the mother's brother and the father's sister are not brothers

and sister, but *musonyi* "cousin". A man's cross cousins are treated like friends, and the behavior pattern is freer even than between brothers and sisters, for considerable laxity is allowed. In Lunda society, obscene language can only be used between people of the same age and this is especially frequent between cross cousins.

A study by Turner (1957) has suggested that cross-cousin relationship is a joking partnership. The joking is reciprocal, sexual in content, derogatory in manner and often contains reference to sorcery or witchcraft of the joking partner. Cross cousins have no restriction on one another's possessions, those of opposite sex may indulge in sexual play; and more interestingly, cross-cousin marriage is allowed, for it is the preferred form of marriage. (253, 254).

3. Grandparents

The relationship between *nkaka* "grandparent" and *mwijikulu* "grandchild" is a joking one, similar to that of *asonyi,* cross-cousins, but slightly different. In the latter case, joking is reciprocal; but in the former case, joking seems to be directed mostly from *ankaka* "grandparents" and *ejikulu* "grandchildren". *Ejikulu*must show respect to *ankaka* which is due to senior people (Turner 1957: 183).

In addition, the relationship between *ankaka, ejikulu,* or *asonyi* contrasts to that between *aku* "in-laws" or siblings (*yaya, mwanyika,* and *muhela*) as far as sexuality is concerned (Chock 1967) and Turner (1957: 80-81). Since children cannot freely discuss issues pertaining to sex with their parents, the only person who can instruct them on sexual mores and techniques are *ankaka.* In addition, they can tease each other, saying whatever they like without inciting anger. They can use each other's possessions freely and can call one another for assistance with the assurance that it will be forthcoming (Pritchett 2001: 97-98). The Lunda refer to this egalitarian relationship that exist between grandparents and grandchildren as *wusensi,* joking relationship.

4. Relatives by Marriage

In bringing two families together, marriage widens the circle of relatives, and one would expect that, as far as the couple is concerned, the behavior pattern and term for father and mother would be extended to the each spouse's parents. To both the woman and the man, their respective siblings are *ishaku*, brother or sister in-law; and their parents are *muku*, father- or mother-in-law and son- or daughter-in-law. As for the grandparents of each side, the kin term *nkaka* is used and the usual behavior

pattern applied. These in-law relationships are indeed the same as consanguine ones, though with slight contrasts. Chock (1967) observed that "*Aku* and *mashaku* together are *wusoku wakusumbwag'ana,* kinsmen by marriage, which contrast with *wusoku wakuvwalika,* or *awusoku,*kinsmen by birth" (84).

The *ishaku* relationship is based on social equality like that of *wusensi*, joking relationship. For instance, *ishaku* greet each other loudly, they touch and slap hands frequently. *Ishaku* renounce the use of personal names and prefer to address each other as "Ishaku!" They can tease each other, say anything without offending one another they can even use each other's personal belongings with or without permission. It is a happy and carefree relationship.

The *muku* relationship, however, is based on social distance and mutual respect. This mutual respect finds its dramatic symbol in the treatment which the husband must accord his mother-in-law, the bride her father-in-law. They must avoid seeing each other, and if it is necessary to converse, it must be done out of sight, or with gaze averted. For instance, one informant suggested that, a son-in-law, upon seeing his mother-in-law approaching on the road, may run in into the wood rather than cross her path. Both husband and wife must also avoid pronouncing the names of the parents-in-law. By the principle of extended relationships, this behavior applies to the relations of the husband and the wife of all their parents-in-law of the opposite sex. As all the mother's sisters are "mothers", so to the husband they are all *maawenu* "mother-in-law". Likewise, the father's brothers all being "fathers", to the wife they are *taawenu* "father-in-law". Avoidance of seeing each other applies only between *akawuku* of opposite sex. However, avoidance between *aku* of the same sex may be done away with. For example, a son-in-law may drink beer and other refreshments with his father-in-law, but they cannot share regular meals.

The avoidance of the name, whether of husband and wife or of the parents in law must e maintained: the name must not be pronounced. Many euphemisms are resorted to when it becomes necessary to speak of or to these relative-in-law. This is one reason why the parents themselves take the names of their first-born child, prefixing *mama ya,* "mother of", and *tata ya* "father of". Thus the parents of Kaumba are *tata ya Kaumba* and *mama ya Kaumba.* This name may be pronounced. This is also probably one reason for extending to the wife all relationships, which are the husband's and vice versa. Thus, by courtesy, the parents-in-law are spoken of not as *akawuku*, but *amama* "my mother" and *atata* "my father". The same extension also applies to all the kin of the spouse and for all kinship terms both direct and

reciprocal. Another reason for this is the mutual respect, which is a principal basis of the Lunda marriage.

5. Further extension of Kinship terms

The behavior patterns, and terms used within the individual family are, however, extended even further than the family circle. For example, persons with whom there isn't any definite relationship are also referred to as *a-tata* "father" and *a-mama* "mother" if they are approximately as old as one's parents.

It should be emphasized that these kinship terms are used in complementation with personal names. Rather than address an older person by name, a younger person will choose a kinship term. For example, a young person would make a request to a non-kin adult woman in this way: *a-mama, añikiku menji akunwa*"mother, would you (plural) please give me some water to drink". Similarly, people of the age of one's elder brother or sister are equated with them, being addressed as *a-yaya* "elder brother / sister". People addressed in this way are those that one will not address by name; however such people will use names when replying younger addressees. If names are not known, then kinship terms are again used; e.g. an older person may address a girl or a boy as *mwanami*"my child", as shown in the following example, where an old man reached a village and asked a young girl for some water. He said: *mwanami, ñikaku-ku menji a kunwa* "my child, give me <u>please</u> some water to drink".

It is also common for elderly women, especially marketeers, to address young male customers as *a-tata* "father" or *mfumwami* "my husband". The idea behind such practice is to entice these young men into buying their merchandises. However, this flattery evokes a sense of solidarity to addressee.

As evidenced in the above examples, the Lunda respect seniority, particularly in the family, but this is also extended to elders other than kinsmen. The extension of kinship terms to outsiders has the goal of "socializing the young into respect for their elders. [It also] fulfills the goal of one family under one sky" (Hong 1985:206).

Teknonyms

Teknonyms, the titles taken by parents on the birth of their first child (Pollard and Banks 1930:395), are used by both men and women. For instance, upon the birth of the first child, a woman becomes *Nyakalumbu* or *mama ya kalumbu* "the mother of Kalumbu" and her husband is *Sakalumbu* or *tata ya kalumbu*"father of Kalumbu". The

Lunda select the eldest child name as the source regardless of the gender of the child. This kind of address has a unifying role, in that, it helps the couple to be identified publicly in terms of the child they share. It also puts the husband and his wife on an equal level as they are addressed as the mother or the father of so and so, respectively.

It should be noted that in the family, if it happens that the couple does not have children yet, the husband and his wife will address each other using kinship terms, the husband would address his wife as *a-mama* "mother" and the wife would call her husband *a-tata* "father". The reason for this is that, when a man and a woman leave their respective parents and decide to live together as a couple, one automatically becomes the "second parents" of the other.

It may happen that a couple is barren. In this case, they are addressed teknonymously using the name of one of their kins' children. This practice is a collective measure taken by the community in order to compensate sterility and to make the person feel integrated in the community.

Although teknonymous address is conversely used by the husband and his wife, it should be noted that when the couple is being discussed with someone else, the husband and wife refer to each other as *mukwetala dami* "the owner of my house". This suggests that for the Lunda, marriage depends on the relations of solidarity and intimacy. This is the concept of "power sharing" by which agents; in this case [husband and wife] organize and incorporate power in their relationship (Keating 1998:12).

One other practice worth mentioning is that, though teknonymous address is primarily used by spouses among themselves, it is also extended to non-kin members. For instance, a young man will address his father's friend as *a-tata ya Nowa* "the father of Noah. This can be explained by the fact that the Lunda believe that the respect and obedience given to one's parents or senior kins should be extended to non-kin members.

Avoiding Personal Names

Another polite strategy that is used in Lunda community is the avoidance of personal names. Personal names are reciprocally used among friends, close associates, and members of the same peer or age group. On the other hand, the non-reciprocal use of personal names (PN) is determined by age and institutionalized status like kinship.

In this pattern, an older person addresses a younger person by personal name, but the latter dares not reply to the former in the same way. The Lunda consider as impolite, rude, and grossly insolent to address an older person by name. Such an act at times evokes a curse or an uncharitable remark about speaker's own family: *tata yeyi weluka kulela / kulona anyana wanyi* "your father does not know how to raise / teach children", in other words "you are a spoiled child".

From the foregoing, we can say that, like most people, Lunda orient to multiple concerns during interaction. One concern is to project and sustain desired identities. Hence, they attempt to maintain "face" in nearly all conversations.

Face Work

What is "face" and how is it maintained in our everyday interactions? According to Goffman (1972: 5),

The term face may be defined as the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. Face is an image of self-delineated in terms of approved social attributes — albeit an image that others may share, as when a person makes a good showing for himself (Quoted in Bayraktaroglu 1991: 6).

Goffman (1955, 1967) suggests that a participant's face is his image of himself in terms of approved social attributes. In an encounter, a participant claims a face for himself who is based on mutual appraisal between him and the other participants. All the participants are responsible for maintaining their own and each other's faces cooperatively in the course of interaction. This responsibility leads to a pair of related rules: the "rule of self respect", wherein a participant must stand guard over his own face, and the "rule of considerateness", wherein he must go to certain length to respect the face of others. Participants cooperate to try to ensure that neither they nor others are defeated, out of face, or in wrong face.

Basing their theory on the face work described by Goffman, Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) argue that social interactions across cultures are closely intertwined with every interlocutor's concern to maintain "face". Face means "something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction" (Brown and Levinson (1978: 66). There are two kinds of face: "negative face" or the rights to territories, freedom of action, and freedom from imposition; essentially the desire that one's actions not be impeded by

others; and "positive face", that is, the positive consistent self-image that people have and want to be appreciated and approved of by at least some other people. As explained by Fasold (1990: 161), "the rational actions people take to preserve both kinds of face for themselves and the people they interact with essentially add up to politeness."

In a social interaction, whatever an interlocutor says is potentially a face-threatening act (FTA) in that it may cause the addressee to "lose his/her negative or positive face." However, participants adopt "strategies of politeness" in order to avoid face-threatening activities. There are positive strategies, which the addressee knows that he or she is liked, or approved of; issuing a complement to someone might be an example of this claim. Such strategies are termed positive politeness. Negative politeness, on the other hand, usually involves a show of deference and an assurance that the speaker does not wish to disturb or interfere with the other's freedom. Apologies and other forms of remedial work, as well as such strategies as indirectness in making requests, further exemplify negative politeness. The "face saving approach" suggested by Brown and Levinson is universal in that it is applicable to any culture and expected among many communities; and the Lunda are not an exception.

The purpose of a request, as a speech act, is to get the addressee to perform an act to the benefit of the speaker (Searl 1976). Requests, therefore, place an imposition on the addressee. If the speaker does not want to sound pushy, he or she can apply face strategies such as indirectness or polite hedges. For example, when requesting for some salt from a neighbor, one would use the polite plural say *a-n-kwashiku muña mwani* "would <u>they</u> help me with some salt,<u>please</u>", instead of singular form *n-kwashiku muñwa* "help me with some salt", which would threaten the addressee's face.

There exist sociolinguistic rules for politeness acceptance and refusal, which differ cross-culturally. Among the Lunda, like any other African community, serving meals to guests is customary and mandatory; in addition, visiting a friend (*ibwambu*) or any family member (*ntaña*) is usually carried out without prior appointment; and if a visitor comes while the host is having a meal, he will usually be invited to partake. However, if he chooses to decline the offer, he will politely say *a-ñ-anakenuku mwani, nada dehi* "would they please forgive me, I have eaten already". I should mention here that the Lunda believe that refusing to share a meal with your host is an "offense"; hence the guest has to apologize for declining the offer.

Taboos and Euphemisms

Language is used to avoid saying things as well as to express them. Certain things are not said, not because they cannot be, but because people don't talk bout them; or if those things are talked about, they are talked about in very round about ways. In the first case we have instances of linguistic *taboos;* in the second we have employment of *euphemisms* so as to avoid mentioning certain matters directly. Taboo is therefore, according to Agyekum (2002), "a system of placing prohibitions and restrictions on certain acts and utterances in a society" (370), while euphemism is "a shield against offensive nature of taboo expressions" (372).

Taboo expressions are universal; they are used in all languages of every human society. However, the degree of avoidance is language and culture specific, such that what is tabooed in one society may be the norm in another. Taboo is also based on cultural values and beliefs of the linguistic community towards certain topics. Therefore, verbal taboo and cultural norms are inextricably intertwined. This view is clearly stated by Farb (1973). In an influential article, he observed that "Any word is an innocent collection of sounds until a community surrounds it with connotations and then decrees that it cannot be used in certain speech situations. It is the symbolic value the specific culture attaches to the words and expressions that make them become taboos" (p. 91).

Among the Lunda speakers, the word taboo (*chinjila, chitumbu, chishimshima*) refers to items or occurrences that appear in daily conversation but should not be mentioned overtly; instead, euphemisms or embellished verbal forms should be employed in an attempt to show prudishness, avoid offensive situations, and thus, maintain acceptable verbal behavior. Such things include death; sexual organs; defecation; scatological fluids like menstruation; and pregnancy, to cite a few. For instance, as one informant told me, to talk about the dead is taboo, one does not say: *tuaya na kuzhika* "we went to bury", he or she should instead say: *tuaya nakusweka muzhimba* "we went to hide the body". This can be explained by the fact that death is highly honored, it is believed that a dead person is not totally dead but continues to live, hidden, in a different form, that of a spirit; thus, the use of the verb *kusweka* "hide". Pritchett (2001) states this view more clearly. In his study of the Lunda-Ndembu, he observed that:

The Lunda believe that the *akishi,* spirits of the deceased individuals, neither ascends to some heavenly plane nor descends into the depths of some hell but stay in the

same geographical region where they lived and died, continue to interact with their kin, and remain an integral part of the corporate community. . . The ancestors are present at daily communal meals and must be fed along with the rest. They witness intra- and intervillage disputes and develop their own judgments the merits of each side of any argument. They assist women through the difficult process of childbirth. They protect and guide men on their hunting forays into the forest domain. They make their displeasure known by inducing illness in those who breach the moral code, those who break promises, those who sow disorder and discord among the living, and those who fail to perform significant acts of remembrance towards the dead. (p. 287)

One other interesting taboo is the use of word like *kanyanda* "menstruate". Lunda speakers, from female teenagers and adults to males, all try as much as possible to avoid mentioning menstruation in their conversation. However, since menstruation is a human state that cannot be ignored completely, strategies must be found for talking about it. Hence, a variety of euphemisms are used. For instance, a more "refined' expression for menstruation would be *kuya kwitala dikwawu,* that literally translates "to go to the other house".

Before elaborating on the reason for considering menstruation as taboo, I should point out that there are two models of menstruation taboo, namely, negative and positive (Agyekum 2002). The former views menstruation as filthy, toxic and polluted, while the latter emphasizes the benefits of fertility. As one female informant explained to me, women have positive feelings about menstruation because it defines them as women; for girls, menstruation is viewed as a prelude to the real life, a transition from girlhood to womanhood.

There are several reasons for regarding menstruation as taboo. Among the Lunda, menstruation is considered one of the most dreadful, polluting and messy scatological substances, and the less talked about it the better; that is why direct reference to it should be avoided as much as possible. Not only that mention of menstruation expressions need to be avoided but also any sexual contact with a menstruating woman. I was informed that traditionally, a woman who menstruates has to seclude herself to a separate house or room until her menstruation is over; hence the expression *kuya kwitala dikwawu* "To go to the other house".

The seclusion of menstruating women reflects the societal attitude towards women. It functions as a strategy for suppressing women and for reducing their status in a

male-dominated society. Traditionally, among the Lunda, a woman in her menstrual period is considered unclean and must be moved to an isolated hut, where she is usually prevented from the ordinary life of her tribe and mixing freely with other people. Frazer (1951: 702) and Delaney et al. (1988: 9) records a similar notion.

During menstrual period, the woman has to strictly observe certain restrictions. For example, she should not touch cooking utensils and neither cut fire wood nor cultivate; only her grandmother or other "clean" women, those not on menstruation, will kindle the fire and cook for her. Some of my informants said that one time in their village, all the people were ill, because "the women did not cook properly. They spoiled their chests" a*mbanda ateleka chiwahi wanyi, akisa ntulu jawu* . They meant that the women, while having their menstrual period, were using salt while they were cooking. According to the Lunda tradition, women should not add salt then. Salt weakens the body, and while the woman is menstruating, the body is weak already. Also salt gives sexual appetite, yet no sexual intercourse is allowed during the monthly period.

Menstruation is believed to be a dangerous stage. When a woman is having her menstrual period, she is vulnerable to different kind of dangers, but even more she is considered to be dangerous to herself, because she is thought to cause illness to people who are vulnerable. This means, that it is dangerous for her to have sexual intercourse as this may lead to the man's death (Rasing 1995: 28). A similar notion is echoed in Delaney, Lupton and Toth (1988: 7).

It is worth mentioning at this point that, though menstruation is viewed negatively and, therefore, a menstruating woman should be secluded and isolated from the rest of the community, that seclusion ironically has its positive aspects. One positive side is that if the menstruating woman is isolated and restrained from touching utensils and cook, she is relieved from her daily social routines and chores. Another positive aspect of menstruation is the power attributed to it. The Lunda people believe that menstrual blood may be used to make love potions and charms; it can also help a woman receive much-needed affection from her husband.

I should, however, recognize that the "linguistic practices" I have discussed are no longer "immaculate". Indeed, as Irvine argues, "Increasingly participating in a global political economy of language, [politeness] systems and their ideologies are being reconfigured" (Irvine 1998:61).

Indeed, modernization has had a lasting impact on Lunda polite language. In a short but highly informative article, White (1947) examined the interaction of two different but related languages of people living side by side in their villages in two districts of Zambia, namely Zambezi and Kabompo. His particular interest was to determine "the effects of contacts with other Bantu languages through migrant labour or trade, and the effect of contact with European languages" (p. 66). He observed that industrialization in particular set in train a number of social factors, which could only have far-reaching effects on the linguistic situation in the area. Among these, White singled out migrant labor — the immediate consequence of the high demand for cheap labor that various mines in South Africa, Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia) and Zambia, generated — as one of the most interesting phenomena. He also mentioned colonial administration based on Western model as another factor. As a crowning factor he mentioned the introduction of what he terms the "money economy" (p. 66).

Thus, all in all, White identified migrant labor, trade, the geographical proximity of communities speaking various languages, the Western type of administration, and the money based economy, as factors which have immediate and significant impact on the languages he was considering. One should, however, also add education, which has been an important factor in the social and linguistic changes that have occurred in much of Africa in general and Zambia in particular.

All these factors, particularly the migration of people from rural to urban area and *vice versa,* has had a lasting impact on Lunda polite language in that, to a considerable extent, word borrowing, which has not been uni-directional, has created a new type of language behavior, especially among the youth. It is, thus, not uncommon to hear, for example, a teenager say to his father *dady, nyinka kuku money* "dad, give me some money". The underlined words are loaned from English, while the 2nd person singular is used instead of the honorific 3rd person plural *anyikiku*. Word borrowing can also be found is writings. In one of the letters I received from my youngest brother, there are sentences such as "*Mudala mwisakamana!* Tudi hohu chiwahi" (big brother, do not worry, we are just fine). Note that the italic segment is loaned from Bemba, one of the main languages spoken in Zambia.

Conclusion

This article has discussed some of the politeness strategies use by the Lunda in their daily verbal interactions. I have demonstrated that there exists, in Lunda, a moral

code, which is expressed in the ideal behavior of individuals in the community, that is a behavior that is appropriate according to Lunda customs. Part of this moral code consists of using the plural pronoun. In this area, anyone other than a small kid is addressed in the second plural; any senior is addressed in the third plural. Extension of kin terms of address to non-kin members, the use of teknonyms instead of personal names, taboos and euphemisms are equally used.

References

- Agyekum, K. (2002). Menstruation as a verbal Taboo among the Akan of Ghana. *Journal of Anthropological Research* 58: 367-387.
- Bayraktaroglu, Arin. (1991). "Politeness and interactional imbalance". *International Journal of the Sociology of Language 93*: 5-34.
- Brown, R. & Gilman, A. (1960). The Pronouns of Power and Solidarity. In *Style in Language,* Eds. Thomas A. Sebeok, pp. 253-276. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Brown, R.W. & Ford, M. (1961). Address in American English. *Journal of Abnormal and*
   Social Psychology 62: 375-85.
- Brown, P., & Stephen Levinson, S.C. (1978). Universals in language usage: politeness Phenomena. In *Ouestions and Politeness*. E. Goody (ed.), 56-311. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- ——— (1979). *Politeness.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- ——— (1987). *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage.* Cambridge: CambridgeUniversity Press.
- Chock, P.P. (1967). Kinship and Culture: Some Problems In Ndembu Kinship. *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 23 (1): 74-89.
- Das, Sisir K. (1968). Forms of Address and Terms of Reference in Bengali. *Anthropological Linguistics 10* (4): 19-31.
- Delaney, J., Lupton, M.J., and Toth, E. (1988). *The curse: A cultural history of Menstruation,* rev. ed. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Farb, Peter. (1973). *World play.* London: Jonathan Cape
- Fasold, Roger. (1990). *The Sociolinguistic of Language.* Oxford: Blackwell.
- Fisher, M.K. (1984). *Lunda-Ndembu Dictionary*. Chingola, Zambia: Christian Literature Press.
- ———. (1984). *Lunda-Ndembu Handbook*. Chingola, Zambia: Christian Literature Press.
- Frazer, J.G. (1951). *The Golden Bough.* New York: McMillan.

- Gal, Susan, & Irvine, J.T. (1995). The Boundaries of Language and Disciplines: How Ideologies Construct Difference". *Social Research* 62 (4): 967-1001.
- Goffman, E. (1955). On face-work: an analysis of ritual elements in social interaction.

  Psychiatry 18: 213-231.
- ——— (1967). *Interactional Ritual.* New York: Anchor Books.
- ——— (1972). *Interactional Ritual.* London: Penguin.
- Hong, B. (1985). Politeness in Chinese: Impersonal Pronouns and Personal Greetings. *Anthropological Linguistics* 27 (2): 204-214.
- Irvine, J. T. (1998). Ideologies of Honorific Language. In Schieffelin A., Kathryn A. Woolard, & Paul V. Kroskrity, eds., *Language Ideologies: Practice and Theory.*
- Keating, E. (1998). *Power Sharing: Language, Rank, and Social Space in Pohnpei, Micronesia.* New York: Oxford University Press.
- Koike, D. A. (1989). Requests and the Role of Deixis in Politeness. *Journal of Pragmatics* 13:187-202.
- Kochman, T. (1984). The politics of politeness: social warrants in mainstream American Public etiquette. In *Meaning, Form and Use in Context: Linguistic Applications,* (eds.), D. Schiffrin (eds.), 200-9. Washington, D.C: George Town University Press.
- Lakoff, R. (1973). The Logic of Politeness, or minding your p's and q's. In *Papers from The Ninth Regional Meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society,* 292-305. Chicago: Chicago Linguistic Society.
- Leech, G.N. (1977). *Language and Tact.* Linguistic Agency, University of Trier Paper 46. Trier.
- McCulloch, M. (1951). *The Southern Lunda and Related Peoples: Northern Rhodesia, Angola, Belgium Congo.* London: International African Institute.
- Pollard F.H. and Banks, E. (1930-1937). Teknonymy and other Customs among the Kyans, Kenyahs, Kelamantans and others. *Sarawak Museum Journal* 4 (12-15): 395-409.
- Pritchett, J. A. (2001). *The Lunda-Ndembu: Style, Change, and social Transformation in South Central Africa.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Rasing, T. (1995). *Passing on the Rites of Passage: Girls' initiation rites in the Context of urban Roman Catholic community on the Zambian Copperbelt*. Amsterdam: African Studies Centre.
- Searl, J. R. (1976). A Classification of illocutionary act. *Language in Society,* 5:1-23.

- Turner, V.W. (1957). *Schism and Continuity in an African Society.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- White, C.M.N. (1947). Modern Influence upon an African Language. *The Journal of The Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 77 (1): 67-73.
- ——— (1955). An Outline of Luvale Social and Political Organization. *The Rhodes-Livingstone papers* 30: 31-51.