Pragmatic Perspectives on Postcolonial Discourse

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Linguistics and Literature

Edited by

Christoph Schubert
and Laurenz Volkmann

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PREFACE

The present collection of essays has its origins in the workshop "Pragmatic Perspectives on Postcolonial Discourse: Linguistics and Literature", which was chaired by the editors during the third conference of the *International Society for the Linguistics of English (ISLE-3)* at the University of Zurich, Switzerland, in August 2014. We are grateful to Marianne Hundt and her organizing team for providing a hospitable and inspiring environment for us to lay the foundation of this project.

The editors would like to thank all contributors for the fine cooperation and the speedy response to queries which cropped up during the editing process. In particular, we would like to express our gratitude to Inka Schieck for diligent proofreading and to Janina Wächter, who has proven to be an indispensable expert on formatting and homogenizing references. Needless to say, all remaining inadequacies are our own.

We also owe a debt of gratitude to Sam Baker, Victoria Carruthers, Amanda Millar, Sophie Edminson, Sean Howley and Courtney Blades at Cambridge Scholars Publishing for their great support in the preparation of the volume and during the production process.

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Christoph Schubert and Laurenz Volkmann
Vechta and Jena, May 2016

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INTRODUCTION

BUILDING BRIDGES BETWEEN LINGUISTIC AND LITERARY POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES

CHRISTOPH SCHUBERT AND LAURENZ VOLKMANN

1. Linguistics and literary studies: Shared interests

In their standard study *Linguistics for Students of Literature*, Elizabeth Closs Traugott and Mary Louise Pratt (1980) discuss the perennial challenge of how linguistic research can be applied to literary texts both by linguists and literary scholars. Their interdisciplinary approach is framed in by two interrelated caveats: that "linguistics is not essential to the study of literature" (1980: 20) on the one hand, and that, for linguists, literary texts constitute only one type of discourse on the other. Literature is indeed a "highly conventionalized" discourse, shaped by the historically situated norms of literary genre, the pragmatic conventions of fictional narratives such as reliable or unreliable narration and the conventions of rhetorical or poetic devices (ibid.). Given these provisos, namely that the stylistic and aesthetic elements of literary texts need to be taken into account both in linguistic and literary readings of such texts, an approach informed by what Traugott and Pratt describe as "applied linguistics" (ibid.: 19) or "literary pragmatics" (ibid.: 21, referring to Ohmann 1973) can be a very fruitful one. On this basis, the subdiscipline of "pragmatic stylistics" has been firmly established by Black (2006) as well as by Chapman and Clark (2014).

The heuristic tools of linguistics can contribute to a great degree to the understanding of a literary text; and literary texts can be used like any "speech act" as source material for linguistic analysis. Literary works must hence be regarded as both reflecting and creating reality in an intricate reciprocal manner. They can be aptly investigated using the interrelated

interpretative tools of variational linguistics, pragmatics, linguistic and culture-focused discourse theory, as well as race, class and gender studies.

Apart from areas such as syntax and semantics, discursive and particularly pragmatic aspects of linguistic research agendas can be seen as presenting most productive areas of scholarly interest. Speech acts, conversational routines or politeness in fictional discourses such as drama and narratives appear as extremely interesting domains to be analysed in collaborative approaches by linguistic and literary research. In this volume the shared pragmatic perspectives on literature aim at discussing and questioning some of the basic assumptions underlying traditional linguistic pragmatics and its applications. Rather than perpetuating ideas about pragmatic concepts such as politeness, communicative cooperation and other elements of "face work", the contributions to this volume underscore new insights gleaned from the evolving field of "postcolonial pragmatics" by demonstrating how speech communities, especially non-Western communities, exhibit different conventions with regard to pragmatic and discursive linguistic practices (cf. Reichl and Stein 2005, Mair and Korte 2010). In the following, a short survey of recent developments in the area of "postcolonial pragmatics" will be delineated. We will then outline the drift of the articles collected in this volume and how they contribute to the ongoing establishment of the new interpretative paradigm of "postcolonial pragmatics" and add new facets to possible future research directions.

2. Zooming in: Research agendas and approach

Sociolinguistic research on global Englishes so far has mainly concentrated on the linguistic levels of phonology, morphology, vocabulary and syntax (cf. Schneider 2007, Kortmann and Lunkenheimer 2011). In order to widen the approach and to attain a complete picture of discursive variability, the field of "variational pragmatics" (Schneider 2010) has been established in recent years. Hence, this new subdiscipline "is conceptualized as the interface of pragmatics with variational linguistics, i.e. with modern dialectology, as a branch of contemporary sociolinguistics" (Schneider and Barron 2008: 1). Although a few publications have started to investigate pragmatic and discourse-analytical questions of English world-wide (e.g. Mesthrie and Bhatt 2008: 131-155), there is still a great need for studies in this area. In 2011, Edgar Schneider points out that the pragmatic approach to global varieties of English is a "wide open field, though understudied" (2011: 25). Accordingly, it was only a few years ago that the discipline of "postcolonial pragmatics" was

programmatically initiated, emphasizing the fact that the advent of new communicative conventions forms a central area of postcolonial discourse studies (cf. Janney 2009, Anchimbe and Janney 2011). Along these lines, Eric Anchimbe and Richard W. Janney elaborate on the reasons for the development of postcolonial pragmatics:

> [T]here has been a wide-spread feeling, especially among many South Asian, Southeast Asian, and African colleagues, that a suitable international pragmatic forum is lacking for comparing their findings. Mainstream pragmatics tends to be so steeped in assumptions about monolingual Western interaction (enriched at times by bilingual studies) that findings about interaction in complex multilingual, multiethnic postcolonial contexts often fail to fit into standard theories. These colleagues long for emically adequate theoretical frameworks capable of explaining hybridic postcolonial communicative practices on their own terms. (ibid.: 1452)

In order to illustrate the research agendas of postcolonial pragmatics, Janney provides a few examples of potential intercultural misunderstanding caused by pragmalinguistic differences (cf. 2009: 203-204). One of them concerns *wh*-questions addressed to Australian Aboriginals as directive speech acts, which are likely to be answered by members of this ethnic group with a simple *yes* in order to show cooperation. Another instance relates to the reassuring response *no problem, sir* in service encounters in India, which is intended to show deference and the well-meaning intentions of the speaker but may not always correspond to the conversational maxim of quality, so that it may disappoint Western discursive expectations. Consequently, it is a central aim of postcolonial pragmatics to detect, investigate and explicate such communicative problems.

Furthermore, for the sake of terminological clarity, it is necessary to differentiate between adjacent pragmatic approaches. *Cross-cultural pragmatics* deals with the comparison of different cultures and languages and carries out "comparative cultural studies obtained independently from different cultural groups" (Trosborg 2010: 2). *Intercultural pragmatics*, by contrast, is concerned with active communication between speakers from different cultures, so it relies on "intercultural interaction where data is obtained when people from different cultural groups interact" (ibid.). *Postcolonial pragmatics* is interested in all of these issues, as it deals with geographical varieties of English with a postcolonial background, takes into account cross-cultural aspects in terms of linguistic interference and may additionally consider intercultural encounters of speakers with different regional and social backgrounds. The present volume intends to

further develop the new subdiscipline of postcolonial pragmatics, which is still in its infancy, and to point out emerging trends in this field. In doing so, our aim is an integrative investigation at the interface of linguistic methodologies and literary text analysis.

3. The definition of "postcolonial Englishes"

According to Braj Kachru (1992), the use of English around the world can be visualized by a model containing three concentric circles. The "inner circle" corresponds to *ENL* countries (*English as a Native Language*), while the "outer circle" includes nations with predominant *ESL* use (*English as a Second Language*), where English plays an important role in public life, chiefly owing to historical reasons of colonialism. Third, the "expanding circle" comprises countries where English is learned and used as a foreign language (*EFL*). Consequently, the focus of the present volume is on "outer circle" varieties of English, while the other two circles are also touched upon whenever appropriate and necessary.

In addition, worldwide *ENL* and *ESL* varieties are classified with the help of the following terms according to Edgar Schneider (cf. 2011: 29-30). "World Englishes" is the most general term, as it includes all national varieties of the world, referring to both *ENL* and *ESL* use. By contrast, the notion "New Englishes" only refers to younger varieties of English as a *second* Language, as they are used mainly in South Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. Finally, the term "postcolonial Englishes" comprises all varieties that have their origins in former British colonies, so it includes American English but excludes, for instance, English in England. Moreover, the attribute "postcolonial" highlights the historical evolutionary process that these varieties have undergone over the centuries.

Accordingly, Edgar Schneider (cf. 2007: 29-55) has developed a dynamic model of language contact that explains the analogous development of various postcolonial Englishes. Based on the underlying hypothesis that their formation is governed by a common diachronic process, the model obviously needs to be highly abstract in order to cover all kinds of development in various countries in its five consecutive steps. The first phase is entitled "foundation", when English is imported into a new geographical area. During this stage, bilingualism starts and a few place names are borrowed from indigenous languages into English (cf. Schneider 2011: 34-35). The next phase is "exonormative stabilization", in which the new English variety actually starts to exist, governed by rules and norms from the English mother country, while parts of the indigenous

population already learn to speak English. In the third phase, named "nativization", the connections between the settlers and their mother country become weaker, while contact between settlers and natives becomes more intense. As a consequence, through bilingual speakers a new variety comes into existence that is marked not only by lexical but also syntactic transfer. Notably, this is also the phase during which postcolonial pragmatic conventions start to develop. Fourth, there is the phase of "endonormative stabilization", in other words the establishment of the new variety on the basis of specific national norms no longer dependent on standards of usage from the mother country. The typical foundation for this development is political independence as well as the collective wish for a new national identity. The last step, "differentiation", implies that a new nation is marked by the development of various social groups that start to use their own sociolects and dialects, so that the postcolonial variety is no longer internally homogeneous.

4. The scope of postcolonial pragmatics

In principle, all aspects of pragmatic analysis may be transferred to postcolonial discourse as well, yet some of them are particularly promising for this approach, so that the main research questions can be outlined as follows (cf. Anchimbe and Janney 2011: 1451-1452). First and foremost, postcolonial pragmatics investigates interference processes of indigenous pragmatic conventions on English and in the opposite direction, referring to, for instance, speech acts and indirectness, the cooperative principle in combination with implicatures, politeness, and turn-taking processes. To name an example, the speech act of promising in West African cultures often does not have a binding character but is chiefly used to keep up the social bonds between the interactants (cf. Anchimbe and Janney 2011: 1453). With the establishment of new discursive conventions, linguistic items such as conversational routines may be refunctionalized by adopting a different contextual meaning. For instance, *sorry* in Cameroon English shows compassion and empathy for the problem of the addressee but does not necessarily acknowledge any responsibility for the undesirable state of affairs (cf. Anchimbe and Janney 2011: 1453). With regard to address forms, it is significant that kinship terms fulfil specific functions when used as alternatives to personal names.

Another focus is on the pervasive linguistic practices of code-switching and code-mixing in multilingual societies (cf. Mühleisen 2011), since a strategic language choice often has a specific pragmatic effect. For

example, switching between Nigerian English and indigenous languages or Nigerian pidgin may signal inclusion and solidarity or exclusion and distance (cf. Janney 2009: 205-206). Thus, hybrid communicative situations based on ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity will result in similarly hybrid communicative and social practices. Whenever group-related identities are contested or unstable, this will result in the tendency to establish patterns of verbal and non-verbal behaviour which fulfil a unifying function for the community.

Postcolonial pragmatics is also interested in the construction of distinct ethnic roles and identities. In Cameroon, for instance, Anglophones and Francophones may employ techniques of so-called "linguistic victimization" (Anchimbe 2006), such as insisting on the use of one's own language, "claiming not to understand others' languages" (Janney 2009: 206), as well as stigmatizing other languages. By contrast, multilingualism may occasionally result in interlingual accommodation, involving an adjustment of linguistic behaviour to the language of other participants in a communicative situation because of asymmetrical social or power relations. Finally, in cross- and intercultural communication (cf. House 2011), it is worthwhile to investigate the negotiation of common ground and mutual expectations.

5. Previous research

In order to point out the new research agendas proposed in this volume, it is necessary to outline central areas of previous research in the field (cf. Trosborg 2010: 3). First, there have been numerous studies based on Speech Act Theory à la John L. Austin (1975) and John Searle (1969). One influential example is the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) and the discourse completion test (DCT) initiated by Shoshana Blum-Kulka, Juliane House and Gabriele Kasper (1989). Here the authors analysed the two speech acts of requests and apologies, which are both potentially face-threatening. In the DCTs, informants had to fill in the speech acts in an incomplete dialogue taking place in a given situation. This approach was further developed in the volume *Interlanguage Pragmatics* by Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993). Anna Trosborg (1994) deals with the speech acts of requests, complaints and apologies in interlanguage pragmatics (1994), and Yamuna Kachru (1991) discusses speech acts in World Englishes, while Luanga A. Kasanga (2006) investigates requests in Black South African English. Applications of

contrastive pragmatics in the foreign language classroom are examined by
Pütz and Neff-van Aertselaer (2008).

    Second, many approaches have their foundation in politeness theory,
as established programmatically in the seminal monograph by Penelope
Brown and Stephen C. Levinson (1987). For instance, Sharita Bharuthram
(2003) looks at politeness phenomena in the Hindu sector of the South
African Indian English Speaking Community, whereas Elizabeth De Kadt
elaborates on politeness in South African Black English (1992). Raja Ram
Mehrotra (1995) examines politeness strategies in Indian English, and
Mulo Farenkia's edited volume (2008) is dedicated to politeness in
Cameroon English, while Bamgbose (1994) discusses didactic issues of
"politeness across cultures". The volume by Susanne Mühleisen and
Bettina Migge (2005) deals with the performance of rudeness and face
maintenance in Caribbean Creoles, such as "ritual insults", the pragmatic
meaning of Caribbean "kiss-teeth", a sound caused by an ingressive
airstream, homophobic threats, face attention through greetings or forms
of address, and face as a result of cultural socialization.

    Apart from these two main trends, there is also some work on the
acquisition of interlanguage pragmatics, such as Anne Barron's study
(2003) on pragmatic usage by Irish learners of German. Moreover, it is
essential to highlight the special issue of the *Journal of Pragmatics* edited
by Anchimbe and Janney (2011), including papers on English, French and
Chinese. However, most of these studies do not take into account literary
texts, which is one of the main reasons for the present collection of essays.
Eventually, it is necessary to mention the journal *Intercultural Pragmatics*,
edited by Istvan Kecskes, which provides the latest developments in this
field, such as special issues on impoliteness (issue 4, 2010) or on
evidentiality (issue 3, 2014).

6. The contributions to this volume

The contributions to this volume can be categorized according to three
main criteria: (1) geographical areas covered in the texts under scrutiny,
(2) literary genres under investigation and (3) elements of pragmatic or
discursive analysis covered by the articles. As to the geographical areas
covered, these include, in alphabetical order, Cameroon (Anchimbe),
Canada (Merkl), Ghana (Anchimbe), India and the Indian/Asian diaspora
in the United Kingdom (Peters, Saha, Volkmann), Jamaica and Trinidad,
including the West Indian diaspora in the UK (Centonze, Kinzel,
Schubert), New Zealand (Schubert), Nigeria (Schubert), Pakistan

(Mildorf), South Africa (Albers, Volkmann), the USA, specifically North American Indigenous peoples (Baudemann), and the Republic of Vanuatu in the South Pacific (Levisen).

The contributions feature the main literary genres of fiction – including novel, novella, short story and fairy tale (Centonze, Levisen, Merkl, Mildorf, Peters, Saha, Volkmann) – poetry (Albers, Baudemann, Volkmann), drama and radio plays as genres especially suited for applying theories of speech acts (Kinzel, Schubert, Volkmann), as well as film (Volkmann). As to the third criterion, the issue of which pragmatic and discursive elements were foregrounded in the articles at hand, this will be delineated in the short synopsis of articles below. They are loosely structured as ranging from more linguistically accentuated studies to increasingly interpretative articles probing into textual sources.

In a study based on empirical data gleaned in Ghana and Cameroon, **Eric A. Anchimbe** discusses how the communicative act of offering and the corresponding offer refusal act take on different forms and illocutionary intents in West Africa. Analysing kinship expressions as identified in dialogues, Anchimbe points out how factors such as age, religion, gender and social context in combination with the social paradigm of "collectivist communities" shape and form discourse. As in previous research by Anchimbe and in line with the gist of the articles in this volume, it is demonstrated how traditional models of pragmatic analysis are inadequate in explaining linguistic choices and phenomena in "collectivist, multilingual and multicultural (postcolonial) contexts".

Focusing on the "study corpus" of Samuel Selvon's novel *The Lonely Londoners* (1956), **Laura Centonze** outlines how this literary text foregrounds linguistic aspects of the life of West Indies immigrants in London during and after World War II. The narration of traumatic events, displacement and feelings of uprootedness is analysed with an eye on how the main endonormative (L1-oriented) features of a variety of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) are employed in the text. Pragmatic implications of code-switching, e.g. in "tense-switching", and the use of verbs are at the centre of this analysis, which shows how different cultural schemata reflect on language use and semantization.

Carsten Levisen's contribution offers an approach which the author calls "postcolonial ethnopragmatics" as a postcolonial critique of Anglo-Saxon trends of pragmatics and the assumption of universal maxims and speech acts. The focus of this article is on a translation of Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale *The Emperor's New Clothes* (*Keiserens Nye Klæder*) from Danish into a language spoken in the South Pacific. The recent translation entitled *Niufala Klos Blong Hae Jif* was the first translation of

any Andersen tale into Bislama, a postcolonial language born out of Melanesian-European language and culture contact in the nineteenth century, consisting of approximately 90% English words today. While the plot of Andersen's story seems easily accessible as being about truth, lies and deception, the Bislama translation offers different facets and shades of the narrative. Specifically, the Western concept of "lying" takes on different semantic and conceptual dimensions in Bislama – which proves that Western concepts of the pragmatics of speech acts do not necessarily tally with those of other cultures – leading to the insight of "different cultures, different speech acts", as Wierzbicka's dictum is quoted in the article.

Three postcolonial plays are investigated in **Christoph Schubert**'s article on speech acts, code-switching and appropriateness in literary discourse: *Once Upon Four Robbers* (1978) by Nigerian writer Femi Osofisan, *QPH* (1981) by the Jamaican Sistren Theatre Collective and *Ngā Pou Wāhine* (1995) by New Zealand author Briar Grace-Smith. Both polite and impolite utterances in dialogues are under scrutiny, with Schubert stressing the unquestionable observation that politeness and impoliteness are culturally constructed concepts, stongly relying on the social practices and normative values of the respective speech communities. In particular, the concept of "collective face" appears to play a major role in postcolonial texts (see the contribution by Anchimbe in this volume and the discussion of "collectivist communities" there), as does the employment of im/politeness strategies to reflect social stratifications and thus practices of social exclusion.

Till Kinzel discusses another literary genre by Trinidadian author Samuel Selvon, namely the radio plays published under the title *Eldorado West One.* Anchoring his analysis in the field of postcolonial studies, Kinzel argues in favour of using drama and radio plays as sources to be explored in both literary and linguistic studies. It is specifically the use of dialogue in the plays that exhibits characteristics of speech which "signal a host of concrete socio-political, ethnic and linguistic differences between individual characters and/or members of various [ethnic] groups". Kinzel displays how ethnically inflected dialectal language, particularly the rhetoric of trust, fellowship and bonding, is used time and again by characters in the radio plays to serve individual power interests.

Jarmila Mildorf scrutinzes the implications of "you"-narration for postcolonial fiction by interpreting Mohsin Hamid's highly ironic rags-to-riches-novel *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* (2013). Focusing on the generic and rhetorical strategies employed by the narrator to relate his story of how a young man quickly rises to become a wealthy entrepreneur

but then loses his fortunes again in later years, and of how he finds happiness and contentment with a beautiful lady who used to be his teenage love, the text displays how certain allegedly Western themes – the American Dream as a materialist approach to life – and generic modes – the "self-help" narrative as a directive on which to model one's life – are satirized and undermined through the ironic and humorous mode of the novel. Ultimately, as Mildorf argues, "[t]he novel deconstructs 'self-help' as a decidedly Western idea that underlies not only the textual genre of the same name but also some readers' expectations when reading (postcolonial) fiction".

A similar literary genre is put under investigation in **Susanne Peters**' analysis of humour in Aravind Adiga's Indian novel *The White Tiger* (2008). As in the case of Mildorf's reading of *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia,* Peters demonstrates how supposedly Western narrative conventions are satirized and deconstructed. In the case of *The White Tiger* the ironic subversion of narrative conventions of the confessional mode, the picaresque tradition and the epistolary form is performed through a blatant flouting of Gricean maxims of conversation in the excessive fabulations of the first-person narrator and protagonist. It is in the toying with Western narrative traditions, as Peters argues, "that this postcolonial novel unfolds its rebellious potential: by flouting the many conventions it engages in".

Different strategies of subverting and questioning established uses of narratives and language are elaborated upon in **Nandini Saha**'s study of two English-language novels by Indian authors, Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1980) and Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* (2004). Concerning both narratives, Saha explains how specifically Indian characteristics of storytelling as well as the "chutnification" of language through the multidimensional use of lexical items, local dialect expressions and references to local folklore are employed to aesthetically enrich these novels. She argues that it was partly due to the use of locally defined pragmatic discourse elements – such as the naming of places or the introduction of local address forms – that the novels under discussion both gained global attention and a "fresh lease of life" to the genre of English-language fiction written by Indian authors.

Matthias Merkl investigates the adaptation of English as a second language by newly arrived immigrants in Canada as related in Michael Ondaatje's novel *In the Skin of a Lion* (1987). Socioculturally significant strategies of language use are presented in the novel's negotiation of dominant discourse and the previously marginalized and silenced voices of social "underdogs". Discourses centering on members of different ethnic

minorities eking out a precarious existence in Toronto at the beginning of the twentieth century are thus juxtaposed with the "master narratives" of nation building as propagated by official historical accounts. Particularly, linguistic difficulties and powerlessness of immigrants are presented as being absent in dominant discourses. Along these lines, the pragmatic framework of acquiring and using English as a second language has significant effects on the construction of in- and outgroups. The novel, to some extent, takes on the task of expressing alternative (hi-)stories or alternative, supplementary accounts by giving the previously silenced positions an important contributory force.

Minority voices and positions in North America are also highlighted in **Kristina Baudemann**'s article focusing on Anglophone North American Indigenous Literatures. Discussing differences and commonalities between postcolonial and Indigenous studies, Baudemann focuses on Anishinaabe writer Gerald Vizenor's long "epic poem" *Bear Island: The War at Sugar Point* (2006), which centers on the 1898 Battle of Leech Lake (Minnesota), also called the Battle at Sugar Point ("the last war / between natives / and the united states", as Vizenor describes the event in his poem). In a detailed linguistic analysis it is exposed how rhetorical and stylistic aspects of the poem aim at a general "renewal of language", a deconstruction of Western narrative and linguistic traditions and a "decolonizing of the mind" of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous readers. These three aspects are reflected in Vizenor's use of Anishinaabemowin expressions in an English-language poem, his blend of epic poetry and haiku tradition within Anishinaabe dream songs and his playful approach to an oral storytelling situation as embedded in a genre steeped in Western traditions.

In his contribution, **Carsten Albers** shows that the socio-critical poetry of Phaswane Mpe (1970-2004) in post-apartheid South Africa can be fruitfully investigated by employing pragmatic tools in the process of close reading. With reference to deictic expressions, he points out that the inclusive or exclusive use of first-person pronouns invokes impressions of social separation or integration. By relating various illocutionary forces of speech acts to the poetic texts, Albers demonstrates that diverse messages and communicative functions can be determined. At the same time, the poems pragmatically presuppose a high degree of cultural knowledge about South Africa for their interpretation. Albers argues that the critical potential of Mpe's poems on the topic of HIV and AIDS mainly unfolds on the basis of metaphor and ambiguity and concludes that pragmatic parameters are highly beneficial for the examination of communicative contexts in poetic discourse.

In the final chapter to this volume, **Laurenz Volkmann** discusses a central question of postcolonial and ethnic minority literature, but also of literature in general. How and for what purposes do literary texts employ linguistic markers to characterize the racial or ethnic background of fictional characters or certain settings? As Volkmann argues, a wide range of linguistic markers can be employed, informed by an array of established stereotypical presentations dating back to the ages of colonialism and imperialism, which established a pervasive tradition of Othering in literature. While the article delineates important strands of this tradition and how strategies of linguistic Othering have been subverted in postcolonial literature, it zooms in on a hitherto less discussed element of Othering – the linguistic "device" of not using ethnic or racial markers when describing a literary character. Focusing on Hanif Kureishi's "post-ethnic" short stories (since the 1990s) and J. M. Coetzee's novel *Disgrace* (1999), Volkmann's article elucidates the various uses and purposes of texts in which these markers are avoided and omitted or obscured. Varying interpretations of such texts can serve to gain insights into culture-dependent processes of reader reception and, in addition, highlight the problematic issue of literature as a truthful presentation of reality.

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CHAPTER ONE

INVOKING KINSHIP IN OFFERS AND REFUSALS:
A POSTCOLONIAL PRAGMATICS PERSPECTIVE

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1. Introduction

The realisation of the communicative act of offering and the corresponding offer refusal act takes on different forms and illocutionary intents across cultures and communities. While in some cultures reasons for the refusal are considered personal, individual and private and may not be overtly revealed (cf. Barron 2005), in others, these reasons are generally provided as a means of convincing the offerer to accept the refusal or to mitigate the impact of the refusal, thereby maintaining social cohesion within the group. The two communities studied in this paper, i.e. Ghana and Cameroon, belong to the latter cultures, the so-called collectivist cultures (cf. Ide 1989, Nwoye 1992). Focus here is on how the kinship domain is evoked in the offer of a seat to an old man in a church and how kinship is also used to soften the presumed impact of the refusal of the offer in interaction in English. The forms used include kinship terms, kinship-related address forms, and other expressions that are related to the home and family domain. The motivation for the choice of kinship references by interlocutors is to recast interaction within the family or kinship circle where interpersonal relationship is determined by the natural order of age and where roles and obligations are more clearly defined along this natural age-based asymmetry. The family, therefore, becomes a microcosm of the larger community, which is then conceptualised as a kinship entity within which interpersonal relationship is based on blood relation rather than on negotiated social relations. Some of the terms and expressions used are borrowed from indigenous languages but used in communication in English.

The data used for this paper were collected in Cameroon (2009) and Ghana (2010) using a free discourse completion task (FDCT) questionnaire. The data were written and were produced in the form of dialogue based on the description of an interaction scenario that was provided. That such microlinguistic features as address terms were retained in the dialogue along with their sociocultural illocutionary intents reflects the extent of hybridism in social interaction in postcolonial societies which have a complex interrelationship between colonially-introduced languages and patterns of social behaviour and indigenous patterns. For such hybrid contexts to be properly investigated, an analytical framework built on their societal compositions is needed. This explains why I have used the emerging framework "postcolonial pragmatics" (cf. Janney 2009, Anchimbe 2011a, Anchimbe and Janney 2011a, b, forthcoming, Mühleisen 2011, Mulo Farenkia 2014) to analyse the data. I particularly factor in postcolonial pragmatic components like kinship, age, religion, gender and social history together with the collectivist thrust of the Cameroonian and Ghanaian societies to make sense of the kinship expressions identified in the dialogues. Because no glaring differences were observed between Ghana and Cameroon, I have not dealt with that in detail in the analysis.

2. Postcolonial pragmatics: Analysing postcolonial multilingual discourses

For a long time now, pragmatic phenomena and discourses in postcolonial multilingual societies have been studied predominantly using Western individualistic and monolingual frameworks. Two possible reasons account for this. Firstly, there was the unconscious assumption that sociolinguistics and anthropological linguistics were the best suited directions for research in these contexts. Secondly, there was no adequate analytical framework designed to investigate pragmatic phenomena in multilingual discourses produced in non-Western contexts. The Western theories and frameworks (cf. Brown and Levinson 1987) were, therefore, taken to be universal, and researchers in/on postcolonial societies had to tailor their datasets and analyses to fit the individualistic analytical frames of these theories (cf. Nwoye 1992, Anchimbe and Janney 2011a, b, Mühleisen 2011).

Postcolonial pragmatics emerged in response to this situation and operates on the premise that in order to adequately explain choices in postcolonial pragmatic behaviour and phenomena, researchers must

engage with the complex, multilingual and hybrid cultural contexts in which they are produced. In order to do this, it prioritises ethnographically-based research that provides direct access to situated communication, i.e. hearing postcolonial voices. It is only through such naturalistic communication that we can properly understand the singularities of speech situations and speakers' pragmatic choices in these situations (cf. Anchimbe 2011b, Mulo Farenkia 2014). Empirical observation and fieldwork are, therefore, preferred over intuitive-based formal logic oriented towards a supposed ideal speaker or speakers. Achieving this requires situated awareness and knowledge of the postcolonial speech communities, i.e. what Anchimbe (2015) refers to as postcolonial pragmatic components, which include (colonial) histories, languages, ethnic demography, traditions, cultural beliefs, tribal and family bonds, social conventions, as well as the collectivist thrust of the societies alongside their perceptions and expectations of individuals' group roles, rights, and responsibilities relative to others in their society. Without such a situated competence, any analysis of postcolonial cultural and social experience would run the risk of misrepresenting them or studying them using lenses that are not suited to them (cf. Anchimbe and Janney, forthcoming for more).

A number of interesting studies have been carried out in the past that take this situated knowledge into account. The general conclusion in most of them is that mainstream Western pragmatic models are inadequate to explain phenomena in collectivist, multilingual and multicultural (postcolonial) contexts. For instance, in a study on greetings in the Eastern Maroon community of French Suriname and French Guiana, Migge (2005: 140) finds out that in this postcolonial setting, greetings have "clear social meanings and contextual associations that are partially constituted by the linguistic form" and are, therefore, "habitually employed to negotiate social relationships and people's social image". Investigations of other speech events in similar contexts have yielded similar results. These include descriptions of forms of address as politeness or respect strategy by Mulo Farenkia (2008, 2010), Anchimbe (2008) and Echu (2008); as name-escapism or name-avoidance respect strategy by Anchimbe (2011a); and as a distance-closing strategy by Nkwain (2014) in Cameroon. The difficulty of explaining certain speech events using Western pragmatic models has also been echoed by Nwoye (1992) in his study of Igbo (Nigeria) face; de Kadt (1994, 1998) in relation to Zulu politeness and face; Egner (2006) on promising in West African cultures; Kasanga (2006) on requests in South Africa; Kasanga and Lwanga-Lumu (2007) on apologies in Southern Africa; Ameka (2009) on access rituals in some

West African societies; and Nkwain (2011) on compliments and face in Cameroon Pidgin English. Postcolonial pragmatics offers a platform for more inclusive investigations of hybrid phenomena in postcolonial societies, taking into account those variables or components that encode meaning beyond what is verbalised.

The current chapter, therefore, relies on postcolonial pragmatic components like age, collectivist cultural structures, language choice, religion and social norms to understand respondents' choice of kinship terms in the offer and offer refusal utterances produced in the FDCT questionnaires. This is because speakers' intentions are crafted onto the society's expectations, requirements and obligations. Knowledge of such expectations grants easy access to speakers' intentions in specific contexts of interaction. The scenario studied here involves an asymmetrical social relationship within which age is primordial. Understanding the pervasiveness of age in these postcolonial societies offers an understanding of speakers' lingual choices. Besides this, the extent of the analysis depends on whether an offer is treated as a speech act in the Searlean sense or as a communicative event (cf. Sifianou 1999, Sommer and Vierke 2011). I take this up in the next section.

3. Offers and offer refusals: Communicative events or speech acts?

Most previous research on speech acts tends to limit analysis to the minimal unit that realises a specific act. The underlying understanding of speech acts as sentence analogues may have been influenced by Searle's (1969: 16) definition of a speech act as "the production or issuance of a sentence token under certain conditions is a speech act, and speech acts [...] are the basic or minimal units of linguistic communication." While agreeing that speech acts could also be analysed as minimal head units, postcolonial pragmatics also attaches a lot of importance to the external modification (cf. Blum-Kulka et al. 1989, Trosborg 1995) of the head unit even beyond the speech act utterance itself. This includes preceding and following turns in a conversation and other utterances that accompany the head act unit. So, I rather prefer to refer to these as communicative events, following Trosborg (1995), because most of the speech acts studied here were not produced as single turns or as minimal head units but were rather realised in several utterances. To analyse them in the strict Austinean, Gricean or Searlean sense would deprive us of the wealth of resources these interlocutors use to realise their illocutionary intents. Studying them

as communicative events gives us the leverage to describe all preceding speech acts, referred to by Trosborg (1995) as preparatory acts, and all following speech acts described also by Trosborg as supportive acts (cf. also Sifianou 1999, Blum-Kulka et al. 1989).[1]

The theory of communicative acts, as propounded by Trosborg (1995), covers not only speakers' intentions and assumptions when they communicate but also the outcomes of the communication. As she explains,

> A theory of communicative acts should be able to account for the speaker's intentions and tacit assumptions on which a particular communicative act is based, just as it should describe the linguistic realisations of these intentions. If we accept that language users perform communicative acts not only to be understood, but also hope to achieve an intended outcome of the acts they are performing, this must be accounted for within the theory. (Trosborg 1995: 21)

Consequently, any analysis of interactional discourse in postcolonial societies, I propose, should also take into account all accompanying utterances and speaker turns in any given interaction rather than just the minimal unit or head utterance that carries the main speech act. This is evident in some of the examples analysed below where focus is not only on where the offer minimal unit is realised but also on the preparatory acts that set up the favourable conditions needed for the offer realisation and the supportive acts that convince or persuade the offeree to accept the offer.

4. The data: FDCT questionnaire

A total of 200 questionnaires were administered: 100 in each country divided equally between male and female respondents (cf. Table 1). The interlocutors were between the ages of 17 and 60 years and were grouped according to age ranges. As Table 1 illustrates, most of the respondents, i.e. 69% of 200, belonged to the 17-25 years age range, since the questionnaire required much writing and was, therefore, administered mostly in educational institutions. This age bias, however, did not prove detrimental to the results because the offer and offer refusal realisation patterns and the choice of kinship terms were similar in all age groups. A

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[1] A recent publication that supports the use of speech events rather than simply speech acts in African languages is Sommer and Vierke (2011).

possible reason for this is that all members of these societies are exposed
to, and have coped with, the same or similar hybrid systems of social
interaction.

Age range	Ghana (n=100)		Cameroon (n=100)		Total	
	Females	Males	Females	Males	No.	%
17-25 years	36	28	38	36	138	69
26-34	4	11	5	5	25	12.5
35-45	5	7	3	4	19	9.5
46+	5	4	4	5	18	9
	50	**50**	**50**	**50**	**200**	**100%**

Table 1: Respondents of the FDCT questionnaire

The FDCT was designed for a larger project on offers and offer refusals in
postcolonial societies (see Anchimbe 2015). For this paper, one of the
three offer scenarios used in that project has been selected for analysis. It
involves interaction in a semi-official context, i.e. in a church, between
two asymmetrical interlocutors, an old man and a younger person. The
scenario was described in the questionnaire thus: "Offering a seat: An old
man enters the church and you decide to offer him your seat but he prefers
to stand." My focus in the analysis of the dialogues is on the kinship-
related expressions interlocutors selected to either maximise the
acceptance of their offers or to minimise the impact of their refusals.

5. Invoking kinship in offers and offer refusals

From the description of the offer scenario above it is supposed that both
interlocutors do not know each other. The relationship between them is
asymmetrical as far as age is concerned. The offerer is construed as a
younger person who offers to an old man in the context of a church. This
context brings in an important postcolonial pragmatic component, i.e.
religion, which has an enormous influence on postcolonial citizens' social
behaviour (cf. section 5.4 below).

   The scenario itself, as it is described, does not suggest any kinship or
family relationship. It is not situated in a kinship or family context either.
Invoking kinship in the offer and offer refusal utterances is ultimately the
choice of the respondents, guided, I presume, by the expectations and
conceptualisations of their societies. In an earlier study on the use of

kinship terms for respect and deference in Cameroon (Anchimbe 2008), I illustrate the salience of recasting social interaction between strangers within family space where respect and deference are easily achieved. Wong (2006) also finds interesting, distance-closing and respect-laden uses of the kinship term *aunty* in Singapore English. Collectivist postcolonial societies, no matter how far apart, tend to conceptualise interaction, social relationships, speaker role expectations and interpersonal role negotiations within their society in terms of family relations, membership, roles and expectations. As the examples below illustrate, falling back to family or kinship circles is a means of refurbishing social ties and ensuring that social cohesion thrives within the group.

In all, there were 189 occurrences of kinship address terms in the dialogues constructed by the 200 respondents (cf. Table 2 below). These kinship terms are analysed here according to the function they play in the dialogue. Four main functions were identified and are described below with examples from the data. These functions are: 1) kinship as natural asymmetry, 2) kinship as distance-closing strategy, 3) kinship as default social behaviour, and 4) kinship as group face locus. These functions are extrapolated from the sociocultural structures, historical trajectory, gender conceptualisations as well as religious hybridism of these postcolonial societies – variables which I refer to as postcolonial pragmatic components (cf. Anchimbe 2015).

5.1 Kinship as natural asymmetry

Kinship is a natural relationship between people and is usually dependent on blood line. However, in postcolonial societies, as mentioned above, kinship relationship is also often extended to include people who have no blood relationship. The respondents to the FDCT questionnaire made extensive use of kinship references in a situation where no blood relationship existed. Here, kinship is conceived of as a natural asymmetry between people who take up kinship-like roles and hence adhere to them in communication.

As the examples below illustrate, the choice of kinship term always creates some form of natural asymmetry or oppositeness between the interlocutors involved (cf. Figure 3 below). This means that as soon as interlocutor A is addressed as *father*, he immediately adopts the role and status of *father* vis-à-vis interlocutor B, and then also accordingly addresses him or her as *child* or *son* or *daughter*. When this happens, then

we say a kinship contract has been signed, which then moderates the tone of the interaction and the behaviour of those involved in it.

In examples (1) to (3) below, the natural asymmetry is between *daddy* and *son* (1), *daddy* and *daughter* (2) and *father* and *son* (3). In all three examples, the kinship relationship proposed by the younger person (YP) is reciprocated appropriately by the old man (OM). Accepting such a relationship goes with accepting the sociocultural package that accompanies interaction between father and child. Age is primordial and is the natural order that dictates how the younger person, here reconceptualised as a child, has to behave, both verbally and physically, towards the old man.

(1) YP. **Daddy** sit here (getting up).
     OM. Oh! **My son**, thank you so much. I can stand. (CaM14)[2]

(2) YP. **Daddy**, please have a seat.
     OM. Thank you **my daughter**, but I think I'll stand. (GaF23)

(3) YP. **Father**, I don't see it normal for you to be standing. Would
     you mind having my seat?
     OM. Oh **son**! Thanks a lot. It is very rare to find such persons like you
     but I prefer standing. (CaF24)

The way the YP's turn is framed in (3), i.e. "I don't see it normal for you to be standing", suggests that surrendering one's seat to old people is the default social behaviour in this situation. Age as a natural marker of asymmetry and the diminishing physical power that goes with it constitute the core of this social behaviour.

A hint at the hybrid nature of the society can be found in the OM's turn in (3): "It is very rare to find such persons like you". This statement implies that the apparent default behaviour, exhibited by the YP, is no longer observed by other younger people. Those who still observe it are rare. Here we see a mix of the predominantly individualistic tendencies of the West introduced probably during colonialism and the collectivist social expectations of indigenous cultures.

In the next three examples (4) to (6), indigenous kinship terms, i.e. *Agya* ("parent") and *Nana* ("elderly person, male") both from the Twi language (Ghana) and the widespread term *Papa* (also *Pa*), are used to

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2   These correspond to respondent codes: CaM14 means: Cameroonian male, serial number 14; CaF: Cameroonian female; GaM: Ghanaian male, and GaF: Ghanaian female. The numbers simply distinguish the respondents and run from 1-50 for each gender in each country.