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Examining politeness in the explanation of English and Tshivenda apologies and greetings

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Abstract. Proficiency in English politeness is an invaluable tool in maintaining effective communication. Differences in beliefs, culture and customs, values and norms exist between English and other languages. Non-native English speakers encounter difficulties when making apologies and greetings in the language. The research examined politeness of English and Tshivenda apologies and greetings. The research paper adopted a qualitative research approach designed to build a holistic narrative description concerning social or cultural phenomenon. Formal and informal interviews were carried out ethnographically to collect data from selected 15 historical experts at Phawe, Zoutpansberg in Limpopo Province, South Africa. Data were quantified, simplified, organised, and interpreted using an 'emic' approach because they were interpreted from the perspective of the population under study. The research found that some Vhavenda people could narrate stories around politeness in their society. The research recommends the continuous practice of apologies and greetings to preserve the Vhavenda culture and custom.

Keywords. Apologies; communication; greetings; politeness; strategies

1. Introduction

All human beings need to communicate politely and effectively “all the time and in all situations” (Erasmus-Kritzinger, Bowler & Goliath, 2017:1). According to Susanti, Djatmika, Sumarlam and Rohmadi (2020), humans communicate verbally, non-verbally using gestures, facial expressions as well as in written form (Agbaglo, 2017). A wish is always there for people to establish rapport in active politeness relations with other humans (Krishnan, De Mello, Arumugam, Suppiah, Paramasivam & bin Ibrahim, 2021). As language is a tool for communication and interaction, politeness is a necessity in various propositions (Susanti *et al.*, 2020). Although effective communication is a universal development among the different cultures, it differs according to the social nature of persons and relationships between them, shaped and influenced by those who understand it. However, the pleasantness of greetings and apologies in communication is affected by the power difference, social distance and the weight of the request (Nene, 2017) between the sender and receiver. Thus, the status and the distance of the interlocutors are a prerequisite to effective communication.

Beliefs, cultures and customs, values and norms are a symbol of pride among different nations. Culture entails the defined group of people's consciousness and structures. It is the basis of expectations and values according to the ability to function excellently in a society. Culture is a requirement in recognising and responding to the values and norms of the other people appropriately. Donohue (2021) asserts that culture is a group's values and beliefs influencing behaviour and goals in a society. The custom involves a behaviour passed down from generation to generation, parents to their offspring in society with past symbolic meaning. It is a way of performing actions that societies have been doing overtimes. Maluleke (2012) asserts that custom incorporates a traditional and widely accepted behaviour specific to a society, place, or time. However, human cultures and customs vary histrionically based on numerous aspects, including greetings, apologies, appreciations, love and thanks, to name a rare.

Norms are the accepted behaviour ethics, or guidelines maintaining social order and stability among the members of a nation. It refers to a society's informal principles about appropriate or acceptable behaviour (Jayachandran, 2020). Values are the social rules or abstract concepts helping people in making right and wrong decisions. They are the guidelines not based on information from the past. Beliefs, on the other hand, are states or habits of mind in which trust or confidence is placed in some people. Thus, it is an assumption that is held to be true.

The current research is based on Rabie's (2013) premise that:

'The ideas, meanings, beliefs and values people learn as members of society determine human nature. People are what they learn. The politeness theory is based on the optimistic and pessimistic versions. The optimistic version postulates that human nature being infinitely malleable, a human being can choose the ways of life they prefer. The pessimistic version maintains that people are what they are conditioned to be; this is something over which they have no control.'

Rabie postulates that human beings follow the ideologies of their cultures which leads to behaviourism locating human behavioural triggers in a realm that is beyond human control. According to Sibadela (2002), one's politeness regulates the society in which the person lives, the time spent since the previous meeting, the distance between interlocutors, the number of individuals per group and their social status.

Politeness entails the way utilised by humans to "confirm consciousness of the face of another individual" (Jabur, 2019:1). It highlights insightfulness in offering something, rejecting and thanking to share respective functions (Susanti *et al.*, 2020) across cultures. Politeness is studied for the purposes including the chronological progress of politeness in normal reaction, face speaking ethnography, various situations and cultures, certain expectations of a society, social psychology of face administration, and interpersonal awareness and its appliances in examining the other culture's *modus operandi*, greetings and apologies. Erasmus-Kritzinger, *et al.* (2017) assert that they are used to enhance effective communication. Hence, it is enhanced by being helpful to other people and using polite language all the time times.

Brown and Levinson (1978) see politeness as actions of face-saving and the distinction between positive and negative faces. It confirms awareness of another individual's face achieved in social remoteness or nearness (Jabur, 2019). 'Remoteness' is the high opinion or esteem while 'nearness' involves openness, companionship, or harmony. Therefore, speakers make propositions clear, precise effective and comprehensible to their listeners or readers (Nordquist, 2017). The addresses including 'Sir', 'Madam', or prescribed words, namely: 'please', 'excuse me', 'sorry', 'thank you' avoid proposition impoliteness. In Tshivenda, the

addresses occur differently from other languages due to the different cultures, habits and behaviours. Thus, the Vhavenda people think, feel and act differently since there are no mutual standards for considering one culture as above others.

2. Theoretical framework

Over the past decade or so, various scholars have tried to tackle the issue of politeness theory, but unfortunately, no one seems to have ever made a convincing discussion of it. Although some of them manage to give some detailed study of this theory, they approve or disapprove of one another's ideas. In this research paper, the works of a few scholars, such as Robin Tolmach Lakoff (1973), Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson (1978), Geoffrey Leech (1983), Herbert Paul Grice (1985) and Thomas (1995) were examined because they are illustrative enough to substantiate politeness theory.

2.1. Lakoff (1973)

This theorist developed politeness theory based on Grice's CP and believes that politeness rule minimises conflict between the interlocutors. Unlike Grice (1975), a universality of politeness was considered. Politeness rule necessitates polite action in the proximity of other people. Lakoff argues that the addresser must use the three subsets of formality rules, namely: do not impose, show reverence and give options, and display camaraderie to please the listener. The other rule contains four subset rules of maxims (Haugh & Culpeper, 2018) where the speaker remains aloof to avoid interference into other people's affairs although impoliteness may be subjective. An open discussion is ensured in the absence of status distinction among the people (Lakoff, 1973). Nene (2017) contends that even if indirect discourse is used to conceal any hint of failure face speakers can still understand its intention. Besides, the individuals do not consider the necessary rules to avoid a 'negative face' engagement. However, the speaker becomes polite if the listener is comfortable.

2.2. Grice (1975)

Grice developed his theory based on the meaning of the statement and the way the addressee interprets the speaker's proposition. Grice despised the ordinary use of language because statements have various meanings (Nene, 2017). He argues that statements were pleonastic and may mean something different from the actual meaning of the words used. Grice attempted to explain the processes interrupted by a spoken conversation. Grice claims that to understand any communication, social goals and direction regarding the maxims of cooperative principles is a requirement. Further, he estimates four sets of maxims, namely: quantity, quality, relation and manner required in maintaining politeness.

2.3. Brown and Levinson (1978)

Brown and Levinson's politeness theory has gained numerous reactions, applications, critiques, modifications and revisions (Harwood, 2017). They consider the Gricean framework on politeness' strategies as rational deviations from the Cooperative Principle (CP). To them, politeness is different from CP status because it is not a reasonable strategy unlike the CP which is socially neutral and natural. Politeness is a tool, they argue, for attaining a variety of goals that promote sound relations. Brown and Levinson postulate that politeness entails principles and maxims for explaining the reasons for speakers to be indirect in their propositions and to rescue the exceptions and deviation from the CP. They figure that politeness is communicated and signalled by the speaker rather than presumed to be operative. Any deviation from the CP,

according to them, threaten a 'face' since all interlocutors possess universal features personified in a universal 'model person'. These theorists claim that politeness is a conflict avoidance mechanism based on rationality whereas face is the central theme. Therefore, the 'model person' rationalises from communicative goals to the ideal means of achieving them. This person selects appropriate strategies for minimising any face threats to achieve a feeling of self-worth, reputation, or good names recognisable by everyone. Personal image can be threatened, preserved, or improved during one's interaction with other people. Applying the utterances like 'please' and 'thank you' (Nene, 2017) ensures an individual's competence in using respectful social learning. They estimate that every individual possesses a negative face and a positive face. A positive face is the desire to be liked, approved of, respected and appreciated by others, while a negative face entails the desire not to be impeded but the freedom to act as one pleases. Politeness, if used accordingly, can bring awareness to another person's face. Moreover, 'social distance' utterances can be maintained using respect or deference while 'socially close' ones are enhanced *via* friendliness, camaraderie, or solidarity (Jabur, 2019).

In speeches, the speaker selects strategies necessary for polite communication and when a face-threatening Act is about to be committed, the following strategies are developed (Harwood, 2017) strategies: saying something as it is (a bald-on record) when addressing other people, for example, 'Don't take it!' instead of saying 'could you please'; uttering no word at all but giving hints (off record) like searching oneself when one needs to borrow a pen or saying 'Ouch, I don't have a pen with me'; and appealing to a common goal and even friendship (on record positive politeness and negative politeness) in 'How about letting me come with you'. However, English native speakers perform a face-saving act using a negative politeness strategy in 'Could you lend me R10? or May I ask you if you have an extra R10?

Brown and Levinson's view of universality were criticised because it is limited to some Speech Acts, not well defined and not clear whether to cover culture-specific and cross-cultural communication (Al-hindawi & Alkhazaali, 2016). Although the second language (L2) speakers might have mastered the English language, they can still be affected by the 'rules of use. Harwood (2017) asserts that speakers can transfer their first language knowledge to L2. To them, an individual can construct face publicly while Goffman (1967) contends it is impossible. Also, Brown and Levinson used direct request strategies on a nine-point scale with 'mood derivable' and mild hints on it. They argue that internal modifiers include 'downgrades' in a polite request for an action, and 'upgraders' for carrying out a command to enhance the polite requests. Moreover, they argue that external modifiers like 'disarmers' and 'grounders' signal politeness in requests while 'grounders' occur when speakers provide reasons, explanations, or justifications for the requests.

2.4. Leech (1983)

Leech's theory deals with the notion of politeness and concerns why and how politeness is to be done. He advises that that sometimes a speaker can pretend to benefit from the hearer and in so doing violate the politeness rule because it is aimed to show genuine politeness (Grice, 1975). According to them, politeness can avoid a conflict between the interlocutors if they benefit from the polite conversation. Leech advises speakers to minimise their desires in favour of the listener's excitements. Nene (2017) claims that politeness theory deals with the culture and customs of the Vhavenda people and attaches value to altered aphorisms than do other cultures. Further, Leech claims that the tact maxim requires the addressers to minimise belief expressions which are not easy to maintain by the addressees, and to maximise this belief for the benefit of the other people. Size imposition aspect is entailed in this belief in 'Just call into

my room' and 'I've got a bit of a problem.' Thus, speakers alleviate request effects by offering something at will. Therefore, if something is considered beneficial to the hearer's an utterance can be expressed politely with no indirectness.

The maxim of generosity indicates that speakers minimise the self-beneficial utterances and maximise the self-expression cost. It helps to explain the acceptance of the utterance such as 'You must come and enjoy with us,' while 'We will come and enjoy with you' is indirect. Again, it indicates differences among languages or cultures in the extent to which speakers can apply this maxim. Members of another culture, according to him, are unable to attach more culture invaluableness to the generosity maxim than do others. Krishnan *et al.*, (2021) argues that concerning the approbation maxim, the speaker must minimise the expression of beliefs that express disapproval of others, maximise the expression of beliefs, which express approval of others. He argues that because utterances are equal, people praise others, have a minimal response, or become silent. The maxim of modesty states that speakers must minimise self-praise expressions and maximise the 'dispraise of self' expression. It may lead to rejection of a compliment paid to him. However, the maxim of agreement disagrees with the minimisation of expression of disagreement and maximises the agreement between self and other (Sibadela, 2002). The relationship between the interlocutors and the interaction avoid disagreement when expressing their agreement directly. Therefore, the Pollyanna principle ensures the use of minimisations as 'bit' and has relexicalisation aspects that replace an unpleasant term with the less unpleasant one for example, 'The speaker has just *lost* two hours work on it.'

2.5. Thomas (1995)

Thomas postulates politeness as a real-world goal, deference, register, surface-level phenomenon, and an illocutionary phenomenon has more than one pragmatic force. The addresser conveys disagreeable messages to the hearer without making an offence. Concerning politeness (Samarah, 2015) pragmatic principles, addressers minimise impolite beliefs and maximise polite ones. Hence, speakers do not recognise Gricean maxims all the time. Regarding impoliteness, speakers believe differently, think impolitely, or convey their feelings indirectly. Thomas claims that Leech's approach shows a lack of motivation in restricting maxims, however, regarding cross-cultural comparisons and differences (Sibadela, 2002). He argues that Leech could have overcome irrelevancy in her approach if she considered maxims as socio-psychological constraints influencing the speakers to a greater or lesser degree.

Regarding Brown and Levinson's (1978) politeness theory and face management, Thomas argues that face entails one's feeling of self-esteem or self-image that can be damaged, maintained, or enhanced during interactions with other people. An image has a negative and a positive face. A positive face entails a desire to be appreciated, approved or cherished by other people. Negative face concerns the desire not to be controlled but acts as one pleases. They are illocutionary acts that damage the face of both the listener and the speaker. Therefore, adopting reliable strategies after assessing the size of the face-threatening act can reduce damage to the interlocutors' faces. Its size can be calculated based on power, distance and rating of imposition as their combination put in place the overall weightiness of the face-threatening act that influences the utilised strategies.

Thomas (1995) claims that it is a requirement for addressers to first decide if they can perform the face-threatening act or not as regards super-strategies, namely: four possibilities, three sets of on-record strategies and one off-record strategy. On-record super-strategies entail performing face-threatening acts using negative politeness as the speakers may decide to avoid

it when its degree is huge. Therefore, if there is a lack of redress, external factors compel the addressers to speak differently during emergencies and channel limitations (Krishnan et al., 2021). The speakers may focus on the propositional content of the message and disregard the interpersonal aspect of an utterance during danger or requiring someone to act. For example, Thomas claims that if there is danger in a place where children are playing, the speakers can use different utterances politely like 'I figure you should come out of that place' or 'That place is not safe'. If the request is made bold-on-record, the speaker may regard the weightiness of the face-threatening act as small. However, sometimes no attempt can be made to lessen the face-threatening act without any rating of the imposition.

The speaker can use a direct strategy to perform an act with redress (positive politeness) concerning the greater power differential and the positioning of oneself towards the individual's positive face. Further, the speaker can talk with other people politely when performing an act with redress (negative politeness). This can be done to appeal to the hearer's desire not to be controlled but to be left at liberty. Sibadela (2002) argues that conventional politeness markers are used in 'Dear brother, I miss you. I know it might not be easy for you but if you had any time, Sunday morning we could perhaps meet in town.' The speaker here is indirectly conventional by saying 'it might' and 'we could'. Krishnan et al. (2021) posit that performing off-record politeness requires utterance strategies that involve 'giving hints', 'using metaphors', 'being ambiguous or vague' like 'This isn't delicious, I can see you munching, is it?' However, the face-threatening acts strategy advises speakers to be silent if 'face' is potentially threatened.

In critiquing Brown and Levinson (1978) for suggesting that a face-threatening act cannot affect the interlocutors at different times, Thomas (1995) sees them as irrelevant because they can occur simultaneously. As a single apology by the speaker may frustrate the listener's face, one utterance can relate to both positive and negative faces simultaneously. Krishnan et al., (2021) argue that some Speech Acts can be inherently face-threatening while some utterances are threat-free although he claims that it is impossible to distinguish among them. In many cultures, an apology can be made on behalf of someone else so long as that person has control over it. Also, Thomas argues that people frequently say 'sorry!' when apologising on behalf of someone. However, there are situations where people do not expect the truth to be told for fear of hurting the listener's feelings. Although the Vhavenda people use politeness activities including, apologies, appreciations, love and thanks, (Susanti et al., 2020), the focus of this research paper was on apologies and greetings.

3. The historical foundations of the Vhavenda nation

The history of the Vhavenda people was used by the researchers as a premise for understanding their distinguished behaviour vis-à-vis that of the English. They are the people located in Venda, a composite entity comprising different ethnic groups, culturally different, but entirely related (Pikirayi & Magoma, 2021). Venda is located in the Northern part of Limpopo Province, South Africa. The Venda of yore stretched from Musiningira Ha-Alilali the present-day Harare in the North to Madimaswa (Vaal River) in the South as Limpopo River was not a border between South Africa and Zimbabwe (Neluvhalani, 2017). The name Venda means *livhele la u fhedza ndala* (The maize for averting hunger). Both historical and empirical sociological paradigms have been highly influential in creating the Vhavenda nation (Rivers, 2010). In Venda, the tribal ethnic groups consist of the Vhangona (Mudau & Motenda, 1958) group who are the real Vhavenda people, *Ngwaniwapo* (indigenous), *Tshidza tshapo* (local grave), *Denga na kupa* (one of the heavens), *Ntangi wa kugara* (the first inhabitant) of Venda (Pikirayi & Magoma, 2021), aboriginal (Munyai, 2016) and the "autochthonous nation"

(Neluvhalani, 2018:5). The name 'Ngoni' means *muthu was shango la nama* (person belonging to the land of meat). Vhangona are the ones who named everything including all places, mountains, rivers, hills, grass, trees, stones, insects, and birds (Mudau, 1958). Van Jaarsveld (1975), and Hanish (1994) assert that Vhangona were the ancient nation in South Africa who lived in their country earlier than the Khoisan.

Their totemic names include *Ndou/Mutavhatsindi, Mukwevho, Kwindi, Muzhelele, Muluvhu, Mulea, Munarini/Khomola, Mumbedzi, Munyai/Mulozwi, Mudau, Munarini, Mulembetu, Mulovhedzi, Mugwena*. (Dzivhani, 1940) and *Mutwanamba* "who were originally Shona" (Beach, 1980: 214). The Vhangona tribes are owners of *zwifho/zwitaka* (holy forests) including lions, tigers, big snakes and Nngwana (young sheep) and *zwidudwane* (half-humans) staying in lakes and rivers (Marole, 1966). Even today the inhabitants of Venda revere the ruins and the sacred places of Vhangona. In the 9th century, they had already established their kingdom at Mapungubwe under the leadership of Shiriyadenga (bird of the sky) commonly known as Thovhele (King) Tshidziwelele Nemaphungubwe (Mafela, 1994; Smith, 2020). Beach (1980:213) argues that as the "connections between the Singo and the Changamire Rozvi are clear", it is evident that Thovhele Tshidziwelele was not the same as the first Singo. According to Dzivhani (1940), the Vhangona origin is unknown except that they were in Mapungubwe from the time immemorial.

The non-aboriginal/real Vhavenda people are *Vhasenzi/Masingo* as the oral tradition throughout Venda agrees that independent Ngoni clans were living in Soutpansberg before their arrival (Hanish, 1994). The Vhasenzi and Vhalemba having settled in Venda lost their Kalanga affinities through intermarriage and became assimilated into Tshingona culture and language. *Vhalaudzi* and *Vhandalamo*. They came from Central Africa during the 17th century (Munyai, 2016) to Venda as "refugees fleeing from the wars of the great Changamire" (Beach, 1980: 212). They arrive in Venda in around 1700 A.D. and never settled at Mapungubwe since it had already been vacated by the year 1300 A.D. The Vhasenzi "have taken the name 'Venda' for themselves, but their claim to have the exclusive right to the name is not justified as they were not real Venda" (Beach, 1980:212). Ralushai (1982) asserts that it remains taboo for these refugees to enter the Vhangona holy shrine for fear of inviting troubles to themselves. On their arrival to Venda, the Vhasenzi settled at Lwandali mountain in Tshiendeulu ruled by chief Mmbwayapenga (Crazy dog) Netshiendeulu before finally settled at Dzata (Phophi, 1990).

The *Lemba* tribe have no chiefs of their own, have distinct customs like the clapping of hands as a token of appreciation of the gifts they receive. They "do not eat pork nor the flesh of any animal killed by people of other tribes" (Forgotten Books, 2016:60). The Lemba people claim to relate to Semitic origin. The *Amandebele* led by Makwarela (hereditary name Mpaphuli) established themselves as chiefs among the Vhavenda people although they have a different pedigree. They are the descendants of the Matabele chief Musi (Forgotten Books, 2016). The 'Ndzundza' group (Windham, 1905) or *Balauti* of Nelwamondo came as hunters and settled at Tshivhale under chief Netshivhale and usurped their chieftainship due to marriage with the Vhangona. The *Tsongas* and *Shangaans* led by the Portuguese Native Commissioner Joao Albasini (Forgotten Books, 2016:60) arrived from Mozambique and settled at Luonde (Windham, 1905) under chief Neluonde. Some Tsongas and Shangaans settled in the areas including Miyohle (Xikundu) areas under chief Matibe, Maneta (Mhinga) led by chief Maneta and Madzivhanombe areas ruled by chief Nemadzivhanombe.

Tshivenda is regarded as the official language of South Africa and it is a member of the Nguni languages (Islam, 2018). Tshivenda comprises various dialects including *Tshiphani*/proper *Tshivenda* spoken in the Northern part of Venda, for example, the Tshivhase

and part of Mphaphuli areas. *Tshiilafuri* is used in the Nzhelele areas including Kutama and Sinthumule while *Tshironga* Mahematshena, Tshimbupfe and Vuu, *Tshimbedzi* in the Mphaphuli areas such as Tshaulu, Lambani and Makuya whereas *Tshilembetu* or *Tshinia* is in the Niani areas including Mutele, Manenzhe and Mukununde (Marole, 1966). However, the Vhavenda people show politeness using both verbal and non-verbal communication. Maluleke (2012) asserts that "traditional cultural practices reflect the values and beliefs held by members of a community for periods often spanning generations". The Vhavenda people use *uthonifha* (show respect) as an outstanding code of conduct for youth, men and women and even some elders to other elders per power differentials and status based on culture and custom and has been used to regulate family nature and clan relationships. Susanti *et al.* (2020) assert that they are known for respect, politeness and communication practice. The Vhavenda youth are usually taught to respect their elders from an early age. Boys are taught to squat down while putting hands together on their knees. Girls are taught to curtsy, head bent slightly down, and hands put together.

Nonetheless, among the traditional leaders, the funerals, the initiation schools for boys and girls such as *Domba* and *Tshikanda* (for both males and females), *Vhusha* and *Musevhetho* (for only females), *Vhutambo* (for males); and other traditional rituals, for example, it is still observed although it is a taboo to use non-verbal communication. In *Mula/Hogo* initiation and several cultural events including *Tshigombela*, *Tshikona*, *Malende*, *Tshikhaba* and *Tshifasi* greetings are practised to a lesser extent. However, the English culture is quite discrete from the Vhavenda people not only in terms of appreciation and acknowledgments but also in greetings and apologies. Politeness is based on cultural settings employing cultural and linguistic interpretation, logical argumentation, and critical reflection. Therefore, the researchers sought to answer the question regarding the maintenance of the greetings and the apologies in English politeness based on the following theorists:

3. Methodology

The current paper adopted a qualitative research approach using ethnographic research design around Vhavenda people's social interactions and behaviours providing rich, holistic insights, actions of the location they inhabit (Krame & Adams, 2018). Ethnographic research was used because it used the in-depth observation and thick description of people, habits and mutual differences (Alfikri, 2021). Also, it "relied heavily on up-close, personal experience and possible participation of intensive language and culture learning, and a blend of historical, observational, and interview methods (Genzuck, 2003). Non-probability sampling was conducted using purposive sampling procedures as the researchers relied on his judgment to choose members of the population to participate in their research. A relatively small and easily accessible group was selected to ensure the feasibility of the research (Caulfield, 2020). An 'expert sampling' method was used to obtain the consent of selected 11 Vhavenda people experts to participate by providing views of their definite culture.

Open-ended and modifiable questions were used to stimulate the participants to provide their opinions, experiences, narratives, or accounts of politeness that has been occurring overtime. This participant observation, documents and other social research methods were used during the years 2019-2021. Employing open setting approach and active observation, the researchers were able to collect data from the community within which they live (Caulfield, 2020). They used 'face to face' and 'focus group' strategies to interview the Vhavenda people formally and informally for obtaining profound and diverse feedback. Participants narrated their stories using the Tshivenda Home Language translated into English. As the researchers and two

informants were the Vhavenda natives, first-hand information about the participants' cultural behaviour and interactions (Caulfield, 2020) was obtained. Oral descriptions, field notes, and transcripts resulted in narrative descriptions (Konono, 2021) to identify themes. Using the 'live and work' research technique and 'emic' approach, primary data were identified, quantified, simplified, organised, interpreted and recorded. This systematic research depended entirely on the data collected from the observation of the research variables in their natural settings (Creswell, 2014) to arrive at objective outcomes.

4. Findings and discussions

After having examined the politeness theory among the Vhavenda people's culture and customs (Sibadela, 2002), values and norms, the researchers came up with the differences between English and Tshivenda apologies and greetings based on the two different cultural backgrounds of the native speakers of the two languages.

4.1 Differences between English and Tshivenda apologies

Apologies are one interesting area where there is a huge contrast between the Tshivenda and the English culture. Moreover, it goes in line with culture and custom. English people say 'Sorry' in all situations (Samarah, 2015) like wrongdoing, upsetting someone, and sympathising with someone (Forster, Billingsley, Burnette & Lieberman, 2021). However, it is impolite to say 'Sorry to hear that' for the loss of a friend or relative (van Hooijdonk, Liebrecht, 2021) because it is tantamount to claiming responsibility. In that sense, it is better to use 'My condolences' or 'My sympathy'. However, if someone says: 'Excuse me can you lend me your ruler', that person is using an acceptable way of requesting than 'Sorry, lend me your ruler'. However, if one says: 'Excuse us' in the vicinity of some people, it is a polite way of asking the person to leave the place.

Making an apology is situational as it depends on the person to whom one is apologising and how the speaker feels about it. A common way of showing remorse, getting attention and sympathising is 'sorry'. However, 'Sorry I'm late...' is a weak apology. Adding an extra word, as 'I'm so/ extremely sorry' makes the meaning effective (Forster, *et al.*, 2021). One can use 'How careless of me!' to criticise oneself after having done something wrong. 'I shouldn't have...' is used with regret after having done something that shouldn't have been done like 'I didn't mean to hurt you. 'It's all my fault' is used when one takes responsibility, as in: 'I should have arrived earlier...'. 'Please don't be mad at me' is the informal apology for something wrongly done and the speaker doesn't want to upset someone. When asking for forgiveness 'I hope you can forgive me / 'Please forgive me', (Forster *et al.*, 2021) can be used. 'I cannot say/express how sorry I am' is a strong way of apologising. Also, 'I apologise/I'd like to apologise for...' is a more formal, while 'Please accept my (sincere) apologies' is the strongest and most appropriate, when used with 'sincere' like 'Please accept my sincere apologies.'

However, in Tshivenda apologies, there is no difference in the manner of articulation. The verbal communication *pfarelo* (the apology for forgiveness) is done *vis-à-vis* non-verbal. The Vhavenda people apply predominance of the progressive tense asking for forgiveness ordinarily using the simple present tense. For example, they can say *Ndi khou humbela pfarelo* (I am asking for forgiveness/ 'sorry') instead of *Kha vha mpfarele* (Forgive me). They can rather use idiomatic expressions to make an apology most polite, as in *Ndi khou humbela u farelwa lufhanga* (I am asking that you catch me knife); or *Zwanda mafhini* (Hands in the milk) simply meaning Forgive me. (Forster *et al.*, 2021) Sometimes a mediator may be sent with money, beasts, or any other form of a token of forgiveness to the person (Forster *et al.*, 2021) to whom

the apology is to be made. However, both tenses are acceptable in this context. In English culture, one can only say: 'sorry' to ask for forgiveness (van Hooijdonk, Liebrecht, 2021). In English, there is no standard form of making an apology.

4.2 Differences between English and Tshivenda greetings

In English, there is no standard form of showing this mutual respect. Also, there is no difference between the age gaps or sexes. The English-speaking people utilise numerous verbal forms for greeting one another formally and informally (Islam, 2018). Commonly they 'Hey' and 'Hi' instead of 'Hello'. While 'Hi' is polite to use in a casual situation, 'Hey' is used for people who met some other times. The response of 'Hello' is 'Yes' and its original meaning is 'Welcome' with the response 'Hello' (Ferguson, 1967). Both greetings are popular among the youth. 'How are you?' or 'How do you do?' is preferred to informal 'How's it going?' 'What's up', 'Wazzup' or 'Howdy' in Canada and U.S.A. The appropriate answer is 'Great', 'Fine', 'Nothing' or 'Not much'. Its contract the expressions are 'Hi', 'Haway' even 'Hay' and 'Hiya' (Licoppe, 2020).

With close friends, co-workers and family members, 'Good to see you' is appropriate. Also, the English people hug/and or kiss when they greet one another to show politeness. The informal 'Long time no see' is used when people haven't seen one for quite some time based on how frequently see one another. The formal greeting is 'I haven't seen you for a long time'. 'Good morning'/'Evening'/'Afternoon' greetings can replace 'Hello'. Good morning" is an excellent, uncomplicated example of politeness. It is not an affirmation, but a welfare wish, it can be treated like affirmation and given a culture-specific facetious response (Sibadela, 2002) in 'Good morning' used in the day commencement, 'Good evening' late in the day and 'Good afternoon' during the day. 'Pleased to meet you' is used when meeting someone for the first time. The greeting 'Yo!' is more polite in America (Isam, 2018) although it is slang and often used jokingly with very close friends and family members.

Among the Vhavenda people, politeness is shown differently by different sexes. Vhavenda women use non-verbal, verbal (Sibadela, 2002) and sometimes both. They crusty down on the floor as it is taboo to sit on chairs with the people of the highest integrity. Politeness differs is maintained differently per the age gap, power, status and sexes. Maluleke (2012) estimates that "every social grouping in the world has specific traditional cultural practices and beliefs". Young women usually lie down on their side with both palms of hands placed together and the head slightly bowed down. The elders, for example, interpret the meaning of this non-verbal communication which might be coupled with the utterance 'Aaa!' (laddies' greeting) and respond accordingly. If a Muvenda girl says *Ndi khou da zwino zwino* (I am coming just now) after someone has asked her out, it does not mean that she will be honest with the proposal. Instead, this is another polite way of showing disapproval of a request without threatening the speaker's face. However, the elderly women can say 'Aaa!' without lying down. They curtsy and/or place both hands together while in a sited position. In the process of greeting, women are not allowed to look at the face of the elders when talking to them.

Vhavenda men show respect differently women because there is no lying down among the menfolk. They only say *Nndaa!* (Greeting) without squatting but placing the palms of their hands together. Young men perform their greetings rather differently. They squat on one knee while the palms of hands are placed together and rest on one of the knees particularly that which is raised a little bit. It is not allowed to just place the hand palms without verbally greeting. Currently, greetings and apologies (Susanti *et al.*, 2020) among the Vhavenda people are fading away because of the Western and European cultural influences. For example, utterances

including 'Hallo/'Hello!', 'Sorry!', 'Say it again!' and 'Excuse me!' are used. The Vhavenda people can say *Vhane-vhanga* (my owner) when replying to the elders calling them (Munyai, 2016) and appreciated when addressing traditional leaders: *Thovhele* (king), *Khosi-khulu* (paramount chief), *Khosi* (chief) and *Muhali* (headman). However, *muthomphei* (your highness) addresses a person of higher status. All the verbal and non-verbal communication used by the Vhavenda people to show politeness are scant in the English language.

Conclusions

Politeness theory among the Vhavenda people is broadly and inversely communicated in different social interactions. Acculturation is to blame as these days Vhavenda people are neglecting their societal behaviour in favour of the Western culture. For example, nowadays women may stand and greet their husbands or elders and supplement their expression by kissing and hugging them. The emergence of Western colonisation eroded Vhavenda people's culture rudely as in their families, among friends, religious and social domains, polite greetings and apologies are used to a lesser extent. The youth spend time attending kindergartens, crèches, schools and churches without concentrating on their culture and customs, and norms and values. Eventually, they display impoliteness in communication. However, it is a point of concern that the African culture is dying a natural death while the Western and European cultures are still put in place robustly. Politeness is being practised wisely as they still observe it regardless of the difference that exists between the two nationalities.

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