

PRAGMATICS, LEXICOLOGY AND CULTURAL MODELS IN LANGUAGE

MAYA GARCÍA DE VINUESA
Universidad de Alcalá

ABSTRACT. *This paper explores the relationship between the meaning of certain lexical entries and pragmatic strategies of indirectness in the investigation of a series of cultural models identified in discourse within a corpus of Ghanaian students speaking English as a second language. Through the analysis of the lexical entry FATHER, it demonstrates that the use of avoidance and certain face-saving strategies may be closely related to the occurrence of a cultural model which is linguistically encoded in this variety of English. Following Kwesi Yankah's (1995) studies on the connections between indirectness and social functions in Akan and Anna Wierzbicka's (1997) cross-linguistic research in lexicology, this paper argues that research on cultural models might benefit from an approach integrating an analysis of the connection between the meaning of lexical entries and pragmatic aspects in the context of discourse.*

KEY WORDS: *pragmatics, indirectness, lexicology, cultural models*

RESUMEN. *Este artículo examina la relación entre el significado de algunas entradas léxicas y determinadas estrategias pragmáticas relacionadas con la expresión indirecta en la investigación de una serie de modelos culturales identificados en el discurso en un corpus lingüístico de universitarios de Ghana, hablantes de inglés como segunda lengua. A través del análisis de la entrada léxica PADRE, se demuestra que el uso de estrategias indirectas y de protección de la propia imagen tiene una estrecha relación con la presencia de un modelo cultural lingüísticamente codificado en la variedad del inglés hablado en Ghana. Siguiendo la investigación de Kwesi Yankah (1995) sobre la relación entre la expresión indirecta y determinadas funciones sociales en la lengua akan y la investigación lexicológica de Anna Wierzbicka (1997) en distintas lenguas, este artículo sugiere que la investigación en modelos culturales podría enriquecerse con un enfoque que integrara un análisis de la relación entre las entradas léxicas y aspectos pragmáticos en el contexto del discurso.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *pragmática, formas indirectas, lexicología, modelos culturales*

1. INTRODUCTION

Following the explorations of Watts *et al.* (1992) and their proposals to integrate some pragmatic theories, such as those concerning politeness, into broader frameworks related to social and cultural theory, this paper seeks to highlight the fundamental role of pragmatics and its close connection with lexicology in the study of cultural models of discourse. In research on language and cultural models, pragmatic aspects of discourse do not provide “additional” or peripheral contextual information about lexical entries, but often constitute carriers of core meaning, as cognitive linguistics has already pointed out (Langacker 1987: 401), a tenet which offers new perspectives for research into cultural models of language. In order to illustrate this argument, I have used an oral corpus of Ghanaian university students speaking English as a second language and I have explored the connection of pragmatic strategies to lexical usage and cultural cognition. After analyzing discourse samples regarding the pragmatic strategies employed by the speakers in relation to certain lexical items, I have tried to infer the underlying cultural models. Drawing on these results, my proposal is that the analysis of pragmatic strategies, particularly those related to switches on the directness/indirectness continuum, such as avoidance and some face-saving strategies with reference to particular lexical items in discourse, may be the key for the reconstruction of particular cultural models such as those of “self”, “fatherhood”, “womanhood”, “achievement”, “servitude”, “friendship”, “love relationships”, etc.

2. CULTURAL MODELS AND LEXIS

Earlier accounts of the relationship of language to culture relied heavily on descriptions of the semantic structures of lexical domains. As Holland and Quinn (1995: 14) explain, the purpose of this methodological strategy was to capture relevant aspects of people’s culturally constructed reality. However, they point out that this tradition has come to an end because the organization of the lexicon on its own has proved to be too limited without reference to natural discourse, which contextualizes the meanings expressed by the speakers.

The use of the term “cultural model” in this paper refers, in agreement with Roy D’Andrade (1995: 112), to “a cognitive schema that is intersubjectively shared by a social group”. Ungerer and Schmid (1996: 50) also point out that “cognitive models” are connected to cognitive linguistics and psycholinguistics while “cultural models” are studied in sociolinguistics and anthropological linguistics, though there is an awareness that both terms are closely linked.

The long-standing tradition of research on the relation between cultural models and language, now the domain of social and cultural anthropology, can be traced back to Malinowski’s (1922) pioneering work on ritual and language. There is a parallel tradition among linguists, including Sapir, who expanded his study of language to obtain, by inferential means, cultural information encoded in particular lexical domains. I would

like to subscribe here to the view of Holland and Quinn (1995:3-40), who disagree with theories where the relationship of language to cultural models is either a simple one-to-one relation or a completely divergent one. In fact Lutz (1990), Quinn (1995), Holland and Skinner (1995) and others have precisely tried to show that cultural models relate to language in complex but effective ways. People will not always make clear their objectives in conversation, nor will they always speak in accordance with the cognitive models they might be assumed to share in a given culture. Moreover, as Holland & Quinn (1995: 6) point out, there is often a conflicting confluence of cognitive tasks, which may be reflected in the multiple purposes expressed in any single stretch of discourse. But, as has been shown recently, certain cultural knowledge is closely linked to talk and can be made accessible to the researcher. I am aware that in my own corpus, discourse is mediated by the fact that I am a foreign speaker, which is a strong interference with multiple effects. This has had important consequences for my own access to the cultural information encapsulated in the Ghanaian students' discourse: certain topics were very openly discussed, such as ideas about friendship or relationships, whereas other issues such as talk about fathers or female servants were embedded in strategies of indirection and avoidance within discourse.

Fillmore's lexicographic studies represent a landmark in the study of language and culture. Rooted in prototype theory, his concept of semantic frames (elaborated in Fillmore and Atkins 1992) has resulted in an array of studies in lexicology and lexicography. It is my contention that its application to studies in language and culture might prove extremely productive as a methodology that would easily allow for the formulation of conclusions, which have been presented in a rather impressionistic fashion in the last decade. Eve Sweetser's (1995) application of Fillmore's frame analysis of the word *lie* in American English leads to a specific cultural model of informational exchange, where she finds interesting cross-cultural differences as to the morality of lying, although there are also important similarities.

George Lakoff's research into the human conceptualization processes, particularly the metaphorical ones, has had enormous repercussions in the analysis of cultural models associated with linguistic categorization. The proposals in Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) *Metaphors We Live By* posed a major challenge for linguistics, due to their claim that research into the relationship between language and mind can no longer be reduced to the innate capability to generate syntactic structures, as was the case in the Chomskyan tradition, but it also needs to be investigated in terms of language use, i.e. pragmatics, and its relation to cognitive models. In their study of metaphors pervading ordinary language, one of the most relevant aspects is what Lakoff and Johnson call the *cultural coherence* in metaphors: the central values of a culture will be coherent with the metaphorical structure of the fundamental concepts of that culture. Western values appear to be coherent with the spatial metaphors UP-DOWN, whereas their opposites would be incoherent with such values: "[Having] More is up" (e.g., having more material possessions, or a higher social status) is coherent with MORE IS UP, within the general scheme GOOD IS UP; however "Less is up" is definitely inconsistent with

Western cultural metaphors. Not all cultures give priority to the UP/DOWN orientation; some give more value to the ACTIVE/PASSIVE dimension, or the CENTER/PERIPHERY one. According to Lakoff and Johnson, these schemes seem to be common to all cultures. Variation is found in the relevance given to each of these schemes within a particular social group.

Lakoff and Johnson's approach led to an array of studies in language and culture, incorporating the cognitive perspective to the study of the lexicon and discourse, notably those by Quinn (1995) on the model of the American marriage and Holland and Skinner's (1995) models behind Americans' talk about gender types.

In the area of language and culture, Wierzbicka is the linguist who has most prominently embarked on large lexicographic tasks in search of specific cultural models in different linguistic corpora. For instance, one of her latest cross-cultural studies in the lexicon, i.e. *Understanding Cultures Through Their Key Words. English, Russian, Polish, German, and Japanese* (1997) is an outstanding example of research in this area, where the author explores the patterns of "friendship", "freedom", "fatherland", and "homeland" across the five cultures, as well as a set of culture-specific words in these languages. This brings us to the main topic of this study, i.e. the relation between pragmatics and cultural models.

3. PRAGMATICS AND CULTURAL MODELS

The pragmatic notion of indirectness may be said to be a structural principle of current models of politeness, which formulate its different realizations, through strategies or maxims: "With the central role of negative politeness and of the benefit scale oriented to *alter*, Brown and Levinson and Leech have put indirectness into the centre of pragmatic politeness models" (Held 1992: 139). On the other hand, I agree with those who suggest that indirectness and other fundamental pragmatic concepts deserve to be placed in wider theoretical frameworks than that of linguistic politeness, as Watts (1992), Ehlich (1992) and Werkhofer (1992) argue. Along the same lines, Katriel (1986) and Yankah (1995) have investigated cultural models of communication using the dimension of the direct/indirect continuum. Their approach links this dimension with wider historical and cultural factors determining the relevance of this continuum in the construction of meaning.

Tamar Katriel (1986) explains the cultural concept of *dugri speech* among the younger generations of Israeli citizens in terms of a principle of sincerity expected in conversation, manifested in an interpretation of politeness as usage of direct rather than indirect strategies: "The *dugri* speaker tells the truth, avoids beating around the bush, and speaks to the point. However, the cultural meanings attending 'dugri' speech as an embodiment of the 'bald-on-record' strategy par excellence in these two languages [Hebrew and Arabic] are quite distinct, and must be captured with reference to the larger cultural context in each case" (Katriel 1986: 14). The author argues that in the case of the Jewish speakers this communication phenomenon is closely connected to a socio-

historical process of reconstruction of collective identity. In fact, it is a communicative model related to a new model of the self and of the community, developed after the foundation of the modern state of Israel. The socialist orientation and the Zionist ideology of the *halutzim* (the pioneers) who arrived in Israel included the ideal of a new Jewish person, able to defend him/herself from external impositions, rejecting the features of passivity, weakness, vulnerability and defensiveness attributed to the Jews of the Diaspora. The popular contemporary Israeli metaphor expresses this new concept of the self and its external image in communication: "Like the prickly pear, the native born is sweet and gentle, but only to those who understand how to penetrate the tough and thorny exterior" (Katriel 1986: 19).

Kwesi Yankah's research on pragmatics in the Akan language proposes a radically different cultural model of communication, where indirectness is one of the most salient features in the fragments of discourse he analyzes, with certain sociocultural functions typical of societies where the spoken word is much more powerful than the written one. Yankah (1995) surveys the speech of the *ockyeame*, the Akan kings' orators, who have to speak to the people on behalf of the royal authority. The existence of these speech intermediaries is related to minimizing the king's risk of face-to-face interaction with his subjects. As Yankah (1995: 18) puts it: "It is a fact that the very sacredness of kingship the world over encourages royal seclusion from the world's dangers, including its judgements". The speech intermediary has the function of communicating orders or even laws, and conveying the king's decisions, which affect important areas of his people's lives, such as regulation on communal work, taxes or celebrations. The *ockyeame* has a mastery of typically indirect strategies, particularly metaphor (*kasakoa*) and the proverb (*ebe*). Other frequent strategies are the avoidance of taboo topics, the use of euphemisms and several types of ambiguity. To appreciate the social relevance of the royal speech intermediaries, it is necessary to consider the importance of the spoken word in a number of West African societies, where written communication is a relatively new phenomenon. Yankah (1995: 10) quotes a Yoruba proverb which expresses the power of the spoken word, in spite of its fugacity in sound: "Speech is an egg, when dropped it shatters".

4. INDIRECTNESS IN GHANAIAN ENGLISH

As I mentioned above, one of the most interesting links which may be found between pragmatics and cultural models is found in the use of particular pragmatic strategies in discourse and their connection to certain topics. In the field of Varieties of English, research in pragmatic aspects is still at an initial stage, particularly in varieties of English as a second language. In the case of English in Ghana, I have only been able to rely on my own data and results in order to present some examples which would illustrate my contention¹.

English is the official language in Ghana, spoken since the complete annexation of the area around the Asante Empire to the British colony of Gold Coast in 1901. The most remarkable fact about the linguistic situation in Ghana is that since the country gained its

independence in 1957 English has been the only language used in formal secondary and tertiary education. It is used in academia, in the media, in business, and for all other official purposes throughout Ghana. The first assessment of the different levels of competence in English spoken in Ghana was carried out by Criper (1971), who determined its four major strata on the basis of the phonological, grammatical and semantic proximity to British English. Thus, for example, “Type I”, *Higher (Educated)* English, differs from British English only in the lexical domain; whereas the lower “Type VI” stratum is only partially “similar” to the British standard at the phonological level. Type I would correspond to the language of graduates who have lived in some native English-speaking country for some time, but less travelled graduates, teachers and secondary school graduates might be included in Type II, *Middle (Educated)*. Type III, *Lower (Educated)* would comprise those who have received some degree of formal education, and Type IV includes all those who have not had access to formal education. This situation, as Criper suggests, might be common in other West African countries, such as Nigeria or Sierra Leone, which are also multilingual societies with English as the official language².

4.1. *Data and ethnographic context*

Due to the lack of materials on spoken English in Ghana, I designed my own corpus, which I collected during a six-month period of fieldwork at the University of Ghana in Legon (Accra). Following Sinclair’s (1995: 14) ideas about the value of spoken language, I decided to collect an oral corpus which I would transcribe afterwards. This is the main source of the data which I have analysed in this paper.

The interviews with the students were based on a set of questions, which allowed for the extraction of significant contextual information about certain lexical items, as well as information about their embedding in particular pragmatic strategies within the discourse. Each of the 50 interviewees was asked to tell six brief stories from personal experience. They were told that two of the stories should refer to each of the following relationships: FAMILY, FRIENDSHIP, INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS. One of the two narratives had to be connected, in the student’s perception, to the feeling of JOY, and the other one to the feeling of ANGER (i.e. each interviewee told six stories, and the corpus contains 300 of these narratives in total). The narratives analysed in this paper belong to the FAMILY section.

My motivation for asking students to tell their narratives from the perspective of experienced ANGER and JOY was the result of consulting a previous study in social psychology, by Scherer *et al.* (1986), published in the volume *Experiencing emotion. A cross-cultural study*. This research group carried out a comparative questionnaire study in eight European countries, with the aim of assessing the antecedents and regulation of, and reactions to, everyday emotional experiences. They situated their results within the area of the psychology of emotion, although there is one specific chapter of exceptional relevance for linguists, entitled “The verbalisation of emotional experiences”. In this chapter, the authors point out that the two emotions which were associated to larger samples of discourse were precisely JOY and ANGER, followed by sadness and fear,

which tend to be more repressed. They found that the first two emotions were linked to the presence of other people, particularly relatives or friends in the antecedent event, i.e. an occurrence of an emotion-eliciting situation. I also took up this research group's interest in the antecedent situations themselves, as they have been less investigated and are subject to much cross-cultural variation. As the authors conclude, "the study of the antecedents has shown the importance of social and interactive factors in producing an emotion and the importance of language in emotional episodes. Once emotion has been released, speech may occur". (Scherer *et al.* 1986: 126)

I deliberately avoided the traditional written questionnaire used in a number of surveys (e.g. asking people for definitions such as *How would you define the word mother? How would you define the word friend?*), searching instead for wider samples of discourse dealing with ordinary life situations where the speakers might be involved in what they were talking about. My aim was to obtain factual and affective information, coming from the experiential world of the speakers in chunks of discourse, rather than eliciting theoretical definitions of isolated lexical items. I assumed that this type of data would provide more realistic insights into the cultural models present in discourse, and that it might possibly bring out a richer picture of individual variation, particularly from the gender perspective.

Contrary to my expectations of finding emotional involvement in discourse, many of the Ghanaian students' narrations turned out to be quite devoid of such involvement, with a prevalence of indirect pragmatic strategies. Moreover, in some cases the data seemed even less informative about the lexical entries than simple definitions along the lines of traditional methods might have proved. This general "lack of involvement", and indirectness in the data led me to pay more attention to the less well known socio-cultural norms of communication in Ghana, which have so far attracted little attention from linguistic researchers.

Closer analysis of the data, through debriefing by some of the informants themselves and comments from experts in the field, directed my attention to the centrality of certain West African sociocultural norms of communication related to the direct/indirect continuum dimension in discourse:

- a) the importance of face-saving in certain African cultures in general and in most Ghanaian ones in particular;
- b) the presence of certain linguistic taboos;
- c) the hierarchy of values determining the appearance of certain topics and the avoidance of others.

The use of these switches along the directness/indirectness continuum provides central information about the lexical entries themselves, such as their axiological component (cf. Krzeszowski 1990), their culture-bound element (Tomaszczyk 1990), and the cultural models inherent in discourse, as is argued in this paper.

In the intercultural domain of my interviews with Ghanaian students, their conversational style tended towards a direct style, except in some cases in which I

observed abrupt switches to a much more indirect point on the directness continuum. One of these cases was systematically associated with the topic of fatherhood in conversation. Exploring the nature of these switches provided insight into the cognitive model behind the stretches of discourse about fathers.

4.2. An example: *The cultural model of “father” in Ghanaian English*

A frequency analysis of the lexical entry FATHER in family narratives shows that out of the 65 occurrences found in a corpus of ca. 127.000 words by means of the program Monoconc, 28 of the data samples present schemata on the authority of this figure, in contexts where it has the role of advising, scolding or giving approval, e.g.

5. ... that was when I failed my exams and my [[father]] was blaming me, that I was not taking m...
15. ...t home, this and the piece of advice my [[father]] gave to the two of us, I think everythi...
19. ...e. It was eleven, she wasn't coming. My [[father]] was angry, we called all the friends th...
20. ...it her, somebody wanted to push her, my [[father]] was angry, so he didn't talk to us for ...
21. , and how affected I feel, 'cause my [[father]] trusts me a lot, and with that he- he l...
39. ... was even able to (.) talk (.) em to my [[father]] about it. Q.- Did you express your ...
45. ...ger or did you suppress it? Yes, my [[father]] is (.) a very strict man. He has a bad ...
50. ...) for quite a while, but he is still my [[father]]. So even though we talk and- you know y...
51. ...them and that kind of thing but with my [[father]], he is just there because he is my father ...
52. ..there, he is just there because he is my [[father]]. I don't chat with him. I only talk with
53. we are closer to our mother than our [[father]], when we were young there was always
56. ... sister, when she tried to disobey my [[father]]. I was very angry with her because she ...
57. ...being very very insubordinate (.) to my [[father]]. Can you cite a particular instance ...
64. when I came, everybody was resting. And my [[father]] called me to his room and decided to ...

Fig. 1. *Sample: Frequency analysis of FATHER in a corpus of English in Ghana.*

A closer analysis of these lexical entries in a larger context shows their embedding in indirectness: in the anger narratives, one of the students, Kofi, tells me a story about

a situation in which he felt angry, in the context of his family. His father had slapped him as a punishment for his behaviour with his step-sister. By means of repetition and circumlocution, he finally comes to the point of his father's slap:

KOFI - Okay, this happened about four years ago, you see, my step-sister did something which I didn't like, so I complained to my daddy and my mummy, and they talked with her, so she was still repeating the same thing and so, some day I got angry, I- I tried to kick her- I kicked her with my leg,,and after that I regretted it, so when my daddy came in- my daddy got bored³, *he slapped me* and those kinds of things, And after that I felt so sorry, so dejected, so depressed, say, I was- I was so confused at that time...

Nsia, another student, talked about an occasion on which, feeling he had been unjustly reprimanded by his father, he decided to *send him to the appropriate quarters*, i.e., to tell the elders of the family so that they would question his father's reaction. Nsia also employed strategies of repetition, gave hints and employed circumlocution:

NSIA - Er (.) I could remember when I was in secondary school, form four- naturally, I'm a very quiet boy, I dont talk wherever I am, unless the need arises, so, in form four, somewhere in nineteen (.) er (.) eighty nine, or so, I became extremely quiet in the house and I get up, always in my room, I would go out, I *don't* even talk to- it was not intentional, it was, something unconscious, I don't even talk to my people in the house, or nothing, I just do my own thing. So one day, my father noticed this trend of er (.) affair, my sudden change in behaviour and called me, and was virtually attacking me, whether I have been taking some drugs these days, whether I have been smoking these days, that's why I don't want to mingle with the people in the house, so it was quite a surprise for me, because, er (.) my own father telling me this (.) It was the first time, so even, in fact, I was very angry [...]. I've been quiet all my lifetime- not quiet, but I don't talk often, and he knows it very well, he has given birth to me and he has examined me from childhood, so this trend of affairs means that he does not trust me ...

Q. - Did you have to restrain the expression of your anger?

NSIA - Initially er (.) I was (.) er (.) this is a personal thing, see, this is something personal, I- I'm someone who does not talk but when I become angry at times, I overact, so I thought my father had done- *has* caused great damage to my image, so some few hours later on something came into my head that I should er (.) *I should send him to the appropriate quarters*, to answer why he decided to treat me that way, putting me where I'm not, putting me where I don't belong, well it was very strange, telling me that I've been taking drugs of late, it was something big to me, so I decided to retaliate, or to seek vengeance, *by (.) something like sending him to the appropriate quarters*, to answer why he should treat his son that way. So that was the- the form of- that was the form of revenge that I had in (.) my head.

Nsia was probably quite embarrassed to tell me not only that he thought that his father's attitude was unfair, but also that he had sought revenge by means of complaining to the elders of the family, whose authority was well above his father's. In fact, he told me the latter part of the story only after I prompted him to expand on the incident. In his

second part, he first hesitated about giving details of what followed, and then he gave solid reasons before he mentioned his final reaction: he presented his action as something unusual in his behavior, justifying himself for his tendency to overreact, and finally he emphasised the damage that his image had suffered.

When I scrutinized the stories narrated by some of the female informants, I observed a pattern of a more extreme degree of indirectness than that of the male students. It was particularly striking in their response to my second question about the expression of their feelings of anger, ranging from clear avoidance of the issue, to an attitude of empathy with their fathers, an “understanding” which prevented the open expression of anger. Martha, for instance, avoided answering the whole question the first time I asked her to tell me some story, telling me that she did not remember any occasion of conflict in her home. Upon being asked the same question later on in the same interview, she made the following generalization:

MARTHA - I know that my father always knows better than I do, so whenever something happens I know that he is telling me something, like he knows what's best for me to do and I would do it. I try as much as possible, I've never been in such a situation before ... to be angry and ...

Mercedes Bengoechea (personal communication) observes that “the voice of authority” is a pervasive feature in women's discourse, in an intertextual relation with authority. In some instances, as in the above example, this voice functions as a means of submission, although in other cases, it is used to cause resistance.

Another female student, Connie, told me that once she was angry the day of her elder brother's birthday party, because the cake she had made for him fell on the ground. But, off-record, she added that there was tension in the family, as her father had just married again:

CONNIE - Okay, that was my big brother's birthday and he was 25, and I bought- I made a cake for him and my father was going under some tension because he has married again and thought that we didn't like- married- but that wasn't it. The whole day was a disaster for my brother and I. The cake fell, nobody- nobody- like, we expected to enjoy together and the cake fell, and my dad asked me how much was the cake- he was undergoing some tension. It was like- It was like- I don't know whether my step-mother felt er (.) bad, because she didn't do- like she forgot. So it was like a disaster ...

Q. - And how did you feel when the cake fell down ?

CONNIE - I was angry. I mean, because after all- that disaster- the cake had to fall down, and I mean, friends were coming over ...[...]. Then, I mean- when the whole- it's like there was tension. There was tension. And then in the end, the cake fell.

Connie's story focuses on the birthday cake which fell down, although the theme of her father's tension after his new marriage is what seems to have triggered her negative feelings, her perception that the whole thing was a “disaster”. But she

wouldn't tackle directly the issue of her father's decision and what she felt about it. The statement that she understands her father's "tension" is the only comment on it. I would not like to over-interpret Connie's words, but the allusions to this new situation in her family did not seem altogether irrelevant in connection with the no longer eatable cake. There may be other reasons for Connie's indirectness: after all, I as the interviewer was a stranger rather than a friend; I was her lecturer in Spanish, but she had no obligation to disclose any private information to me, especially as she touched upon some very personal issues.

The students' discourse, in the stories in which their fathers were the main characters, contained extreme instances of *off-record* strategies, as they might be labelled within Brown and Levinson's model of politeness (1987). These include: Kofi's overstatements about his sister's disregard for his authority, Nsia's hints about his motives for reporting his father to the elders, Martha's over-generalizations about her father, and Connie's understatements regarding the motives of her anger in relation to her father's new marriage and his new wife's blunder.

In contrast, narratives in which the students remembered having experienced the feeling of joy in relation with their fathers revealed a different pattern, with the prevalence of directness. The relevant event is told at the beginning of the narrative and, in 4 of the 7 narratives in which fathers are mentioned as a source of joy or as participants in their children's joy, there is a common topic regarding academic achievement and a consequent approval by the father:

MARTHA: With my father, er (.), somewhere last year, when I received a letter, I told him that I'd been awarded a scholarship and he was so happy, he broadcasted the information to most of his friends .

ALBERT: When I qualified for Saint Charles Secondary School. Er (.) actually it was a joy (.) in the family, because er (.) it's very scarce for people to er (.) pass that- this thing. And it was noted to be a very good school. And anybody from a particular family going there is being regarded- er (.) because it's a minor seminary. People have some kind of er (.) hope in you- that you come out to do something- yeah, actually the family, the whole family was happy. And there was joy. Particularly my father, who was proud, yes.

An attempt to interpret these instances of code-switching from direct discourse (joy stories) into the opposite (associated with the experience of anger) when students talked about their fathers, may lead to one generalization: the indirect style is invariably used when the students narrated stories where personal, intimate or highly sensitive information was communicated. This style is found in other narratives which form part of the corpus, dealing with other topics, such as suffering in relationships, disapproval by family or clan, or disappointment with friends. But indeed, this general pattern becomes more evident after a close analysis of the corpus, where the most outstanding cases of avoidance and indirection were found in those stories in which the student had

felt anger at some event associated with her or his father. There seemed to be some kind of taboo in talking about these issues.

4.3. *Indirectness and the cultural model of FATHER in Ghanaian English*

Unsatisfied with the fairly obvious interpretation of my data that fathers must be very respected and feared by their children in Ghana, I mentioned my puzzlement to Prof. Kari Dako, an expert in the field of lexical studies in Ghanaian English. Her suggestions were indeed illuminating, as she pointed out the presence of a taboo, associated with the belief, specially among the Akan group, that although kinship is of a matrilineal type and the child inherits the material possessions and the physical traits from her or his mother, the father is the one through whom the spirit is inherited. Therefore, for a Ghanaian to criticise his or her father is equivalent to criticising a precious part of their own family and moreover, of himself or herself:

While matriliney gives great weight to maternal ties in Ashanti, *patri-filiation* is also quite important. Though it is true that father and child do not belong to the same *abusua*, paternity nonetheless remains an essential feature of social life and status. A child of good standing must not only have a recognized father, but should also be named by him. Moreover, his moral life and training are the father's responsibility. The basis of the father-child relationship is the concept of *ntoro*, a named group whose membership is acquired through patri-filiation. Associated with it is the belief that while the child obtains its blood from the mother, its spirit and personality derive from the father. The important concepts in this regard are the father's *sunsum* (his personality conceptualized as a personal soul), and his *kra* (his spirit, the source of his life and destiny), both of which he transmits to the child. It is believed that the child cannot thrive if its father's *sunsum* is alienated from it and that its destiny and disposition are fixed by the *kra*. (Nukunya 1992: 31)

This belief may well explain the switches to indirection made by all of the Ghanaian students who talked about some story in which they had experienced the feeling of anger in relation to their fathers. The terms used by the students to refer to their fathers in connection with this belief also point to a particular cognitive model of "fatherhood", with certain common schemata closely linked to the switches along the directness/indirectness continuum.

The cultural concept of fatherhood and about the figure of the father seem to be connected to a model of the FATHER composed by a variety of possible actions and feelings: the actions of "conceiving", "knowing a child's nature", "slapping", "verbally exercising authority", "guiding morally and spiritually", "giving approval", and the feelings of "great tension" and "pride" seem to metonymically convey a model of a father close to the image of a semi-god who provides the appropriate response and the adequate guidelines for action⁵. The analysis derived from the students' discourse yields the following cultural model inherent in their discourse where they use the lexical entry FATHER:

THE FEATURES OF THE FATHER ARE BIOLOGICAL PATERNITY, KNOWLEDGE OF CHILDREN'S INDIVIDUAL PERSONALITIES, PHYSICAL DIMENSION POWER, ORAL POWER, EVALUATION IN TERMS OF THE APPROVAL, SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE, AND PRACTICAL GUIDANCE IN EVERYDAY LIFE.

According to these schemata, the father is thus endowed with great responsibility in the lives of the family members no matter how old they are, and he is respected to the point of being immune to direct criticism even to outsiders of the Akan culture. The spiritual and moral responsibilities associated with fatherhood seem to be enhanced by the absence of material obligations, which pertain to the mother's relatives (especially her brothers) in the matrilineal model of family. The cultural model of the father, especially the SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE schema, forms the basis of the most relevant metaphor for fatherhood: A FATHER IS A SPIRITUAL GUIDE. These metaphors constitute the cognitive model whereby the child (even as a grown up) perceives his father as a very powerful and influential member of the family. The linguistic immunity given to the father, evidenced by the Akan students' sudden switches to indirectness in their discourse in English, may be explained in terms of this particular cognitive model of the father behind their talk.

5. CONCLUSIÓN

Many questions as regards the connection between indirectness, other pragmatic strategies and cultural models still remain unanswered. One of them is whether indirectness may be associated with other cultural models in conversation in Ghanaian English, in other varieties of English, or even in other languages. Indeed, the use of indirectness in Ghanaian English conversation is not restricted to this particular cultural model (FATHER). My investigations of other lexical entries which belong to semantic fields such as servitude, the expression of feelings, "sexuality and spirituality" have shown that they also trigger indirectness, thus pointing to different relevant schemata of the associated cultural models.

Pollard (personal communication) insisted on the importance of contrasting analyses related to these different topics and also suggested taking into account the speakers' competence in English as a second language: the non-native speaker's use of a more limited lexicon might also cause unintentional indirectness. Another well-known factor is the constraint felt by the speakers in interview situations where the interviewer is from a different speech community, as was the case in my data collection technique. Finally, a wider scope in the investigation of indirectness across cultures might raise certain common contexts and cultural models which might trigger the use of this strategy. Pollard has previously identified it in the speech of older Jamaicans, and from a cross-cultural perspective she adds: "...while I do not think that the style is culture

specific, I am suggesting that it is a more prominent feature of discourse in some cultures than in others” (Pollard 1996: 87).

Indirectness seems to be a very prominent feature in Ghanaian English, although it should not be considered culture-specific, as research in the generalized use of this strategy in other languages has shown. It is in these particular father narratives, when the informants talked about having experienced the feeling of anger, where their discourse resembles that of the masters in their tradition of the art of speech: the *okyeame*. The royal orators, by distancing the kings from the direct spoken word, succeed in saving their kings’ face. Likewise, the women and men students whom I could interview protected their fathers’ image at the same time as they talked to me quite openly and naturally about themselves by means of elegant code-switching along the directness dimension.

As this paper aimed to demonstrate, research into pragmatic aspects such as the switches in the directness/indirectness dimension may constitute an effective perspective enabling the linguist to observe core schemata of cultural models associated with particular lexical entries, and to gain more insight regarding the construction of meaning in discourse. I believe that the example analyzed in this paper illustrates not only one of the basic principles of cognitive linguistics, whereby semantics and pragmatics form a continuum, but also that pragmatics has a fundamental contribution to unveiling central aspects of cultural meaning and cognition, which is not only relevant to linguistic theory but also to related disciplines such as cultural theory and cognitive anthropology.

NOTAS

- 1 However, there are previous studies about both English in Ghana and the pragmatics of West African languages, particularly these by Yankah (1995) on aspects of the Akan language.
- 2 The most complete account of the bibliography of English in Ghana is found in Amoabeng’s (1986) PhD thesis, *The English Language in Ghana: a comprehensive annotated bibliography*. The relevant studies comprise two main areas: an earlier one on teaching English to African students, and a more recent one on the state of the English language in Ghana.
- 3 *Bored* is used in the sense of “angry” in Ghanaian English.
- 4 *I don”t* instead of “I didn”t”: in conversational Ghanaian English it is frequent to find the use of the Present tense instead of the Past once it is clear that the speaker is talking about events in the past. This is a grammatical transfer from the Ghanaian languages Akan, Ewe and Ga, where the past tense is signalled either by a one verbal morpheme for the whole set of clauses within a sentence, or by an adverb.
- 5 As is demonstrated by Reich (1977), these types of beliefs are not unique to West African matrilineal groups. It was already noticed by Bachofen, the “discoverer” of patriarchy, that in patriarchy, “the realm of the idea belongs to the man, the realm of the material to the woman. (...) The transience of natural life goes hand in hand with mother right. Father right is bound up with the immortality of supranatural life belonging to the regions of life” (Bachofen 1967: 150).

REFERENCES

Ahulu, S. 1992. *English in Ghana*. Unpublished Ph. D. Dissertation. University of Cambridge.

- Amoabeng, K. 1986. *The English Language in Ghana: A Comprehensive, Annotated Bibliography*. New York: State University of New York at Stony Brook.
- Bachofen, J. J. 1967. *Myth, Religion and Mother Right*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Bengoechea, M. 1993. *Adrienne Reich: génesis y esbozo de su teoría lingüística*. Madrid: Ayuntamiento de Alcalá de Henares y la Dirección General de la Mujer.
- Brown, P. and S. Levinson. 1987. *Politeness. Some Universals in Language Use*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Criper, L. 1971. "A Classification of types of English in Ghana". *Journal of Africa Languages* 10 (3): 6-17.
- D'Andrade, R. 1995. "A folk model of the mind". Eds. D. Holland and N. Quinn. 112-150.
- Ehlich, K. 1992. "On the historicity of politeness". Eds. R. Watts, S. Ide and K. Ehlich. 71-108.
- Fillmore, C. and B. T. Atkins. 1992. "Toward a Frame-Based Lexicon: The Semantics of *Risk* and its Neighbors". *Frames, Fields and Contrasts. New Essays in Semantic and Lexical Organization*. Eds. A. Lehrer, and E. Feder Kittay. New Jersey/London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. 75-102.
- Held, G. 1992. "Politeness in linguistic research". Eds. R. Watts, S. Ide and K. Ehlich. 131-154.
- Holland, D. and N. Quinn, eds. 1995 (1987). *Cultural Models in Language and Thought*. Cambridge/New York/Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.
- Holland, D. and N. Quinn. 1995. "Introduction. Culture and cognition". Eds. Holland and Quinn. 3-40.
- Holland, D. and D. Skinner. 1995. "Prestige and intimacy: the cultural models behind Americans' talk about gender types". Eds. D. Holland and N. Quinn. 78-111.
- Katriel, T. 1986. *Talking straight. Dugri speech in Israeli Sabra culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Krzyszowski, T. P. 1990. "The axiological aspect of idealized cognitive models". Eds. J. Tomaszczyk and B. Lewandowska-Tomaszcyk. 135-165.
- Lakoff, G. and M. Johnson. 1980. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Lakoff, G. and Z. Kövecses. 1995. "The cognitive model of anger inherent in American English". Eds. D. Holland and N. Quinn. 195-221.
- Langacker, R. W. 1987. *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar I, Theoretical Prerequisites*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Lutz, C. and L. Abu-Lughod, eds. 1990. *Language and the Politics of Emotion*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Malinowski, B. 1922. *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Nukunya, G. K. 1992. *Tradition and Change in Ghana*. Accra: Ghana University Press.

- Pollard, V. 1996. "Cultural Connections. The Verbalization of Recall in some Creole-speaking Communities". *Caribbean Language Issues Old & New*. Ed. P. Christie. Kingston: The University of the West Indies Press. 86-100.
- Quinn, N. 1995. "Convergent evidence for a cultural model of American marriage". Eds. D. Holland and N. Quinn. 173-192.
- Reich, Adrienne. 1977. *Of Woman Born*. British Edition: London: Virago.
- Scherer, K., H. G. Wallbott and A. B. Summerfield, eds. 1986. *Experiencing Emotion. A cross-cultural study*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Paris: Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme.
- Sinclair, J. 1995. *Corpus, Concordance, Collocation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sweetser, E. 1995. "The definition of *lie*: an examination of the folk models underlying a semantic prototype". Eds. D. Holland and N. Quinn. 43-66.
- Tomaszczyk, J. and B. Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, eds. 1990. *Meaning and Lexicography*. John Benjamins Publishing Company. Amsterdam/Philadelphia
- Tomaszczyk, J. 1990. "The culture-bound element in bilingual dictionaries". Eds. Tomaszczyk and B. Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk. 289-297.
- Ungerer, F. and H. Schmid. 1996. *An Introduction to Cognitive Linguistics*. London/New York: Longman.
- Van Dijk, T. A. 1987. *Communicating Racism: Ethnic Prejudice in Thought and Talk*. London: Sage
- Watts, R. J., S. Ide and K. Ehlich, eds. 1992. *Politeness in Language. Studies in its History, Theory and Practice*. Berlin/ New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Werkhofer, K. T. 1992. "Traditional and modern views: the social constitution and the power of politeness". Eds. R. Watts, S. Ide and K. Ehlich. 155-202.
- Wierzbicka, A 1997. *Understanding Cultures through Their Key Words. English, Russian, Polish, German, and Japanese*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wodak, R. and B. Matouschek. 1993. " 'We are dealing with people whose origins one can tell just by looking': Critical Discourse and the Study of Neo-Racism in contemporary Austria". *Discourse and Society* 4, 2: 225-48.
- Yankah, K. 1995. *Speaking for the Chief. Okyeame and the Politics of Akan Royal Oratory*. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.