

Polite Request Strategies in Commuter Discourse in Xhosa

Authors : Mawande Dlali

Abstract : This paper examines the request strategies in commuter discourse involving taxi drivers and passengers in Khayelitsha as well as the responses to these requests. The present study considers requests in commuter transport as face threatening acts (FTAs), hence the need for the commuter crew to strategically shape their communicative actions to achieve their overall discourse goal of getting passengers to perform actions that are in their own interest with minimum resistance or confrontation. The crew presents itself by using communicative devices that prompt the passengers to evaluate it positively as warm, friendly, and respectful. However, the passengers' responses to requests range from compliance to resistance depending on their interpretation of the speaker's motive and the probable social consequences. Participant observation by the researcher was the main method of collecting examples of requests and responses to the requests. Unstructured interviews and informal discussions were made with randomly selected taxi drivers and commuters. The findings and explanations presented in this article revealed the predominance of polite requests as speech acts in taxi discourse in Khayelitsha. This research makes a contribution to the contemporary pragmatics study of African languages in urban context.

Keywords : face threatening acts, speech acts, request strategies, discourse

Conference Title : ICLLL 2020 : International Conference on Languages, Literature and Linguistics

Conference Location : Amsterdam, Netherlands

Conference Dates : May 14-15, 2020