

Speech act of claiming among Cameroonian and Chadian French speakers

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Abstract: This article examines the ways in which Cameroonian and Chadian speakers are producing the speech act of claiming. The study focuses on situations in which the speaker occupies the position of claimant. The aim of the study is to describe the main pragmatic variations between the two groups of speakers. The methodological approach is based on variational pragmatics. The results show that the strategies are similar, but there are strong differences in the types of formulations and mitigation strategies. The results indicate that the Cameroonian data presented more indirect realisations of acts than the Chadian data. Participants from both language communities used a variety of markers to modify their claims. External modifications typically included politeness forms, forms of address, apologies, justifications, greetings and thanks. Internal modifications also included modalisers and minimisers.

Keywords: requests, claiming, politeness, variational pragmatics, French

1. Introduction

This article examines the act of claiming within two distinct groups of French-speaking people from Cameroon and Chad. The study is focused on the realisation of claims within the context of which the speaker is positioned as a legitimate claimant. Claiming is a type of speech act where the speaker requests the addressee to fulfill a specific right. This action is fundamentally threatening and has a probability of generating conflict. The analysis examines the discourse strategies used by speakers to formulate their claim, mitigate the threat to their face, and appear conciliatory. The study highlights a series of cultural variations by comparing two groups of speakers from Cameroon and Chad. In these socio-cultural contexts, the ideas of help, family, sharing, human kindness, and respect are dominant and require some social behavior. The issue is therefore to describe how speakers from the two groups use language to claim a right while preserving the socio-relational ideal. Having established the theoretical foundations and reviewed relevant literature, we now turn to the methodological approach of this study. The following section outlines the design, data collection, and analysis procedures employed to investigate the speech act of claiming among Cameroonian and Chadian French speakers.

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2. Literature review

2.1. Requesting an Incurive and Face Threatening Act

The act of claiming is a type of request. According to Austin (1969) and Searle (1979), the request is a directive act. The aim of directive acts is to influence the interlocutor's behavior in a specific direction (request, demand, pray, etc.). Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2001: 98) defines a request as an utterance in which the speaker asks the interlocutor to perform some non-linguistic act. By requesting, the speaker urges the addressee to act in the speaker's interest. Formulating requests thus consists of requiring the interlocutor to perform an action of which the speaker is the beneficiary. According to Croll (1991), a request is a transitive and factive speech act whose purpose is to compensate for and satisfy a lack. The act of requesting is therefore at the heart of a state of tension between the speaker's personal satisfaction, the maximisation of his benefit, and the cost to the addressee. A claim is a form of request in which a speaker demands compensation from the addressee for a right of which the speaker is the beneficiary.

The request is also a face-threatening act because of its intrusive and impositive aspects. Therefore, it has socio-relational, social, and linguistic implications. The intrusive and impositive nature of the request requires the speaker to use mitigation strategies to minimise the risks and potential conflicts: justification, apology, etc.

2.2 Research on requests

Since Austin and Searle, there have been several studies of the act of requesting (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Blum-Kulka, 1987; Leech, 1983; Béal, 1994) and pragmatics of interlanguage (Barron (2003). Cross-cultural, intra-cultural, and comparative studies have shown that factors such as power (P), social distance between interlocutors (D), and the degree of imposition (R) have an impact on the different formal expressions. In the French language, several studies describe the act of requesting in French texts from the Middle Ages (Denoyelle, 2014) and in modern French (Mbow, 2011). Some other researchers are interested in the acquisition of the query in learners (Holttinenn, 2014; Linchen Zhang, 2022; Marsily, 2015; Varga, 2005; Martín, 2020). Comparative studies describe pragmatic variations between French and Chinese (Do Quang Viet, 2010) and French-Finnish (Holttininen, 2014). While speech act theory has been extensively studied, there is a notable gap in research specifically focusing on Francophone African contexts, particularly among Cameroonian and Chadian French speakers. This study addresses this gap by exploring a subject that has not attracted the interest of researchers in this context. This study focuses on the cultural variations between Cameroonian and Chadian speakers, two communities that are geographically close. Both linguistic communities have French as one of their official languages, but there are many variations in practice. In this study, the act of request is studied in pluricentric French spoken in Cameroon and Chad. The aim of the study is not to describe the variety of French spoken, but to investigate the behaviour and discourse strategies involved in verbal interaction.

2.3. Variational pragmatics

This study is based on variational pragmatics. This approach is situated at the intersection of pragmatics and sociolinguistics. It describes the pragmatic variations in the act of claiming in French between Cameroonian and Chadian speakers. Schneider and Barron (2008) developed variational pragmatics from the idea that macro-social factors can determine pragmatic variation in language. According to Schneider and Barron (2008), the use of language in context is under the

influence of macro-social factors such as region, gender, social class, age, ethnic identity, and religion. Variational pragmatics is based on a double hypothesis. The first one states that speakers who share the same language do not necessarily share the same language. The second argument is that "pragmatic differences may appear between varieties of the same language" (Barron and Schneider, 2009: 425). These differences do not exclusively concern different languages. Even within the same language, pragmatic variations can exist. According to Schneider and Barron, pragmatic variation can be observed at several levels of social interaction: formal, actional, interactional, thematic, organizational, stylistic, prosodic, paralinguistic, and metapragmatic. This paper focuses on regional variation. The selected level of analysis is actional, as it involves investigating the claim speech acts and their various realizations. Having made these preliminary remarks, we now present the research method. It is vital to highlight the participants, the instruments and the data.

3. Method

3.1. Participants and data collection instrument

In order to collect the data required for this study, two groups of participants were set up. The first group (CMR) included 25 French-speaking Cameroonians (16 male students and 9 female students) between the ages of 22 and 32. They are all students at the University of Maroua. The Chadian group (TCD) is composed of 18 participants, divided as follows: 11 male students and 7 female students, between the ages of 20 and 44, In this group, 75% were students, and 25% were student-workers.

The Discourse Completion Task, an instrument widely used in the study of speech acts, was selected. It consists of a questionnaire with situational input, from which the informant is invited to provide a formulation in connection with the situation presented. The questionnaires were chosen for their productivity, effectiveness, and authority in the field of pragmatics. Data were collected using a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) designed to elicit natural responses to various situational prompts. The prompts included scenarios such as claiming a debt, asking for a salary, and requesting a payment. The selected situations are typical of everyday social practices in Chad and Cameroon. This is an opportunity to examine how speakers are using the language in social interactions and activities.

Situation 1: Your friend, brother, or sister has borrowed money from you. The repayment period has ended, and you want the money back. What do you say?

Situation 2: You are an employee of a local company here, and you are late with your salary payments. What do you say to your boss to claim your payment?

Situation 3: Your neighbour has asked you to do a small job on his house. The work is done, and you would like him to pay you. What do you say to him?

These situations involve two socio-cultural factors: power (P) and social distance (D).

S1: The participants have a low power relationship (-P) and mutual knowledge (-D).

S2: Participants have a power relationship (+P) and know each other well (D).

S3: Participants do not have a strong power relationship (-P) and do not know each other well (+D).

Table 1. Data collection procedure

Sit.	Request objet	Frame	Type of relationship		Variables
1	Claim a debt	at home	brother	sister	-P, -D
2	Ask for salary	at the office	employee	boss	+ P, -D
3	Request payment	From a neighbour	neighbour	neighbour	- P, + D

3.2. Data analysis

We collected 88 statements of requests from Cameroonians and 59 from Chadian speakers. The analysis explores the discourse strategies used by CMR and TCD speakers and attempts to explain some cultural variations. The results focus on three aspects:

The types of formulation used by speakers from the two cultures,

The mitigation strategies, including external and internal modifiers,

The discursive strategies that express hardening the act of claiming.

The contrastive approach provides elements of cultural variation that make it possible to understand the cultural conflicts and disagreements inherent in intercultural exchanges between Cameroonian and Chadian students at the University of Maroua. In the following section, we are going to present the results of the analysis of the responses proposed by the informants. The analysis focused on direct claiming, indirect claiming, mitigation, and modifiers.

4. Method

4.1. Types of realisation

The analysis of the types of query formulations reveals that there are invariants and significant variations between the two linguistic communities.

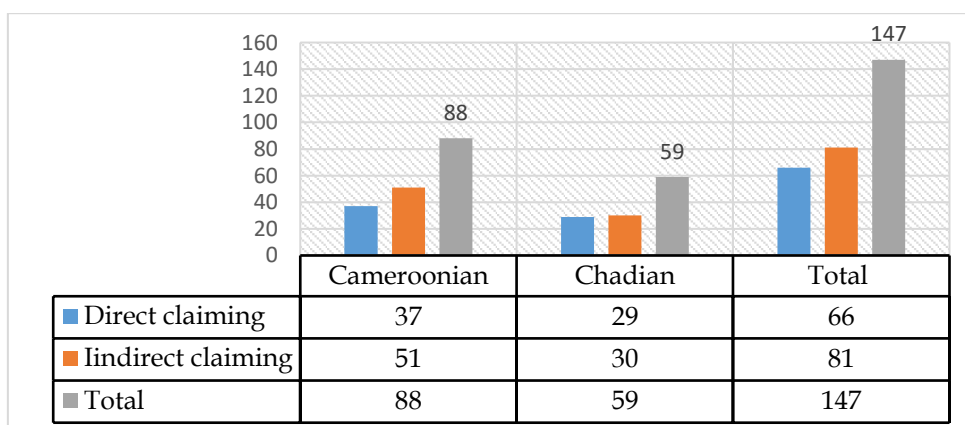


Figure 1. Distribution of types of formulation

According to Figure 1, indirect formulations of requests are used in 55% (81 examples) of the total corpus. The speakers in both groups, therefore, seem to favour more subtle enunciation. However, the CMRs used more indirect requests than the TCDs: they appeared 63% (51 statements) compared to 37% (30 statements). Concerning direct queries, it appears that there is no significant gap between the two groups; among CMRs, direct requests are used 56% of the time (37 examples), whereas they are used 44% of the time (29 examples) by TCDs. Therefore, the speakers seem to adopt a more performative stance when claiming their rights. Claiming a right is therefore

not linked systematically to a direct exchange. The following detailed analyses clarify the contexts in which these types of formulations are used.

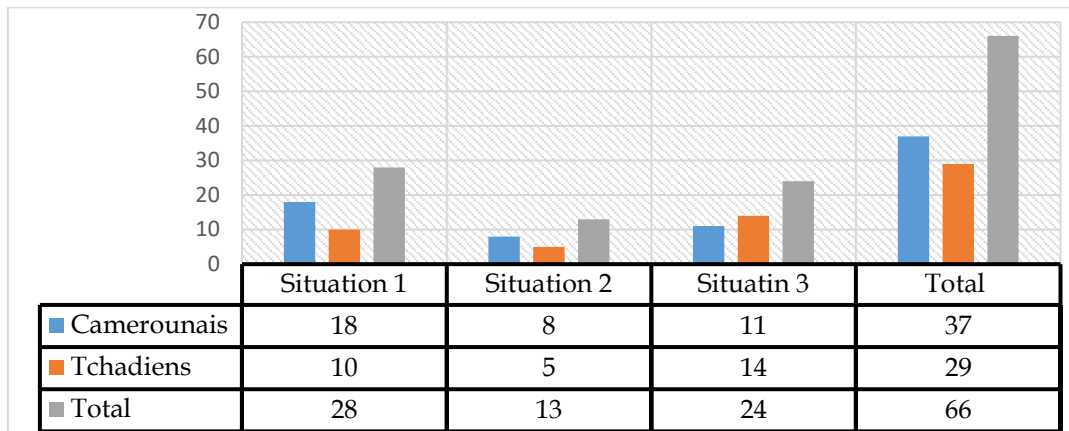


Figure 2. Distribution of direct formulations of requests by situation

As shown in Figure 2, direct claiming is most often used in situations 1 and 3, where the participants have a weak power relationship (-P) and mutual knowledge (-D). These cases represent 42% (28 examples) and 38% (24 examples) respectively. In case 2 (+P, +D), direct affirmation is less frequent (20%, for 13 examples). This suggests that the absence of a strong power dynamic encourages speakers to adopt more direct attitudes towards their debtors. This demonstrates that the level of familiarity between CMRs and TCDs can lead to situations of disrespect. The use of direct complaints did not differ significantly between the two groups: 56% (37 examples) for CMRs versus 44% (29 examples) for TCDs. To assert their rights, all members of both communities evaluate power dynamics and social distance. In both groups of participants, direct formulations are combined with mitigation strategies. It allows for a slight enhancement in the participants' relationship. Direct claiming is likely to use several types of discursive strategies.

Table 2. Forms of direct claiming

Forms of direct claiming	Example
Performatives	Monsieur, c'est inutile de vous rappeler que chaque ouvrier a droit au (sic) paie, alors je vous demande si je peux avoir mon argent, s'il vous plaît (S3-TCD). "Sir, I don't need to remind you that every worker is entitled to (sic) pay, so I'm asking you if I can have my money, please".
Expression of willing	Je veux mon argent. J'ai envie de faire quelque chose avec (S1-CMR). "I want my money. I want to do something with it". S'il vous plaît, Maître, je voudrais entrer en possession de mon argent (S3-CMR). "Please, Master, I would like to get my money"
The imperative	Donne-moi mon argent aujourd'hui, s'il te plaît. J'en ai besoin (S1-CMR) "Give me my money today, please. I need it." Rendez-moi mon argent "Give me my money back"
Expression of need or desire	Patron, j'aimerais recevoir ma paie du mois (S2-CMR). "Boss, I'd like my pay for the month" J'ai besoin de mon argent. (S1-CMR)

‘‘I need my money’’

4.1.2. Indirect claiming

Indirect requests seem to be very common in both varieties of French. Speakers of both varieties of French avoid making requests that could be interpreted as too direct. When asking for their rights, speakers of both varieties of French adopt a moderate and polite attitude.

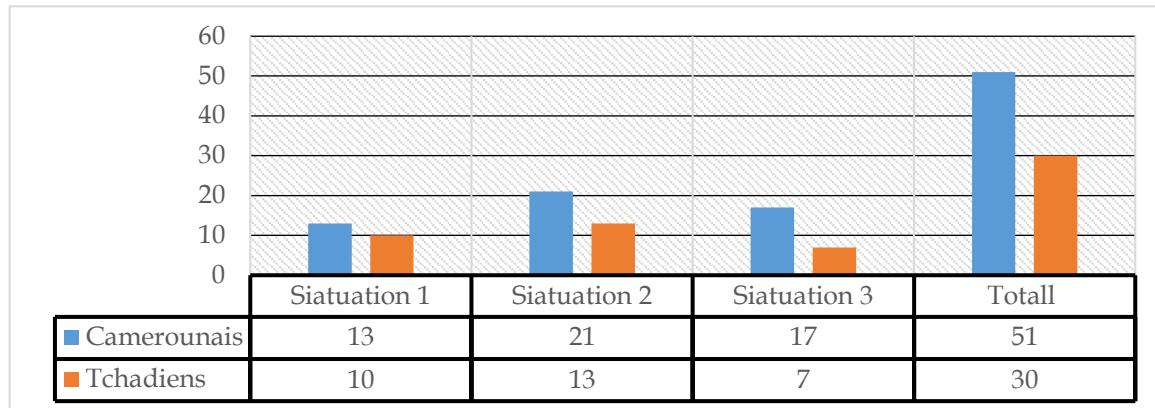


Figure 3. Distribution of indirect formulations by situation

As seen in Figure 3, CMRs make their demands more indirectly than TCDs. Their frequencies are assessed at 62% (51 occurrences) and 38% (30 examples), respectively. CMRs can thus be perceived as kinder, more courteous, and less directive than TCDs. It is also worth noting that circumstance 2 (+ P, + P) contains 42% of indirectly phrased requests, or 21 acts. This demonstrates power and social distance affect speakers' pragmatic practices. Despite the fact that they are aware of their rights, speakers from both groups respect hierarchy. The figure also demonstrates that when the participants do not have a strong power connection, there is no considerable social gap, and when there is no power to subjugate the other, the speaker uses the indirect speech act. This is shown in situations 1 and 3, when 29% of the requests are indirect. In these scenarios, indirect requests seem to be an implicit variation on negotiations. In both groups, speakers addressed indirect requests with the assertion and question.

Table 3. Forms of indirect claiming

Types of indirect claiming	Sub-type	Example
Assertions	Negative assertions	Patron Jusqu'à présent, il n'y a pas de bonnes nouvelles S2-CMR). "Boss, until now, there has been no good news." Je n'ai pas reçu ton signe jusqu'à présent (S2-TCD). ‘‘ I haven't received your sign yet’’
	Assertions based on circumstances	Les temps sont vraiment compliqués (S2-CMR). ‘‘These are really complicated times’’ Patron, comme tu vois là, c'est chaud sur moi ces derniers temps. (S2-CMR) ‘‘Boss, as you can see, things have been really hot for me’’
	Assertions focused on the object	J'ai besoin d'un peu d'argent (S1-CMR). ‘‘I need some money’’.

		Je n'ai pas de l'argent (S2-TCD) ‘‘I don't have any money’’
	Suggestive assertions	Le travail est fini (S3-TCD). ‘‘The job is done’’. J'ai fini boss (S3-CMR). ‘‘I've finished boss’’
Asking a question	Questions on ability	Ma sœur, peux-tu me rembourser mon argent? (S1-CMR) ‘‘Sister, can you pay me back my money?’’ Patron J'ai un petit souci ce mois-ci, pouvez-vous m'aider? (S2-CMR) ‘‘Boss, I've got a little problem this month. Can you help me?’’
	Questions focused on possibility	S'il vous plaît, Monsieur, serait-ce possible de pouvoir recevoir mon salaire? (S2-TCD) ‘‘Please, sir, would it be possible for me to get my salary?’’ S'il vous plaît, serait-il possible d'avoir notre dû? (S3-CMR) ‘‘Please, sir, would it be possible to have our due?’’
	Questions on availability	S'il vous plaît, Monsieur. Les salaires sont-ils disponibles? (S2-CMR) ‘‘Please, Sir. Are the salaries available?’’
	Suggestive questions	Votre travail est fini. Puis-je vous le rendre? (S3 TCD) ‘‘Your work is done. Can I give it back to you?’’ S'il vous plait, j'ai droit à combien pour ce moment? (S3-TCD) ‘‘Please, how much do I get for this job?’’

As shown in Table 3, speakers from both communities use many different indirect claiming strategies. In detail, it appears that Cameroonian speakers prefer negative assertions (*Patron Jusqu'à présent, il n'y a pas de bonnes nouvelles* ‘‘Boss, until now, there has been no good news.’’), statements based on hard circumstances (*Patron, comme tu vois là, c'est chaud sur moi ces derniers temps* ‘‘Boss, as you can see, things have been really hot for me’’), and questions about capacity (*Ma soeur, peux-tu me rembourser mon argent?* ‘‘Sister, can you pay me back my money?’’) and questions on availability (*S'il vous plaît, Monsieur. Les salaires sont-ils disponibles?* ‘‘Please, Sir. Are the salaries available?’’). In TCDs, we can observe questions focused on the object (*Je n'ai pas de l'argent*, ‘‘I don't have any money’’) and suggestive questions (*S'il vous plaît, Monsieur, serait-ce possible de recevoir mon salaire?* ‘‘Please, sir, would it be possible for me to get my salary?’’). After presenting a few differences in the linguistic choices of indirect claiming, in the following section we will look at the mitigation strategies.

4.1.2. Mitigation strategies

The second level of analysis investigates mitigation strategies. According to Fraser (1980: 34), mitigation is a « modification of a speech act: the reduction of certain unwelcome effects which a speech act has on the hearer ». To avoid the risks entailed by a claim, CMRs and TCD speakers include a number of mitigation strategies in the formulation of the act. The main characteristic of these features is that they are subordinate acts or discourse markers grafted onto the formulation of the direct act (DA). Overall, it appears that Cameroonian speakers make much greater use of attenuation strategies in speech acts than TCDs. The analysis of the data reveals the following categories:

Table 4. Types of modification

Modifiers of speech act	CMR (N= 66)	TCD (N= 33)	TOTAL (N=99)
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Politeness formulas	21 (31 %)	8 (24 %)	29 (30 %)
Terms of address	15 (23 %)	10 (31 %)	25 (26 %)
Modalisation	13 (19 %)	8 (24 %)	21 (21 %)
Justification	7 (10 %)	2 (6 %)	9 (9 %)
Minimiser	5 (7 %)	2 (6 %)	7 (7 %)
Non-constraint formulas	3 (4 %)	1 (3 %)	4 (4 %)
Apologies	1 (1 %)	1 (3 %)	2 (2 %)
Greetings	0 (0 %)	1 (1 %)	1 (1 %)
Preliminary statement	1 (1 %)	0 (0 %)	1 (1 %)
Acknowledgements	0 (0 %)	1 (3 %)	1 (1 %)

Table 2 indicates that CMRs and TCDs used polite formulas (30%), positive forms of address (26%), and modalisation (21%). In terms of cultural variations, it appears that CMRs use more polite formulas (31% for 21 examples), and the nominal form of address has a positive value (23% for 15 examples). The TCDs, on the other hand, attach more importance to FNA (31%), polite expressions (24%), and modalisers (24%). The speakers of both communities are using Minimizers and justifications widely. These categories are used more by CMRs: there are 5 examples of modalisers, i.e., 7%, compared with 2 (6%) by TCDs. Concerning terms of address, it appears that CMRs prefer friendly terms (*mon frère, grande soeur*) and honorific titles (*grand, patron*). Chadian speakers use more honorific terms (*patron, monsieur*) and pronouns of address (*tu* or *vous*). These quantitative results also suggest that, when claiming their rights, Cameroonian speakers are more concerned with the relationship than Chadian speakers. They combined an individual claim with a concern for pacifying the exchange. In the claiming speech act, personal interest is a priority, but the defence of self-interest takes into account the common interest and the consolidation of the social relationship.

4.1.2. External modifiers

External modifications are optional clauses that occur within the speech act and modify the illocutionary force in an indirect way. External modifiers of the claiming act include various types of devices. These are presented and illustrated in the following table.

Table 5. External modifiers

Externat modifier	Example
Politeness Formula	S'il te plaît , j'ai besoin de mon argent, j'ai un problème urgent à faire avec (S1-CMR). "Please, I need my money; I have an urgent problem to deal with". S'il vous plaît , puis-je avoir ce dont j'étais prêté ce jour? (S1-TCD) "Please, can I have what I was lent today?"
Modalisation	Ma sœur, peux -tu me rembourser mon argent? Sister, can you pay me back my money? (S1-CMR) S'il vous plaît, Monsieur, serait -ce possible de pouvoir recevoir mon salaire? Please, sir, would it be possible for me to receive my salary?
Nominal forms of address	Salut, mon frère , S'il te plaît, j'espère que tu n'as pas oublié ce que tu me dois. (S1-CMR) "Hi brother, Please, I hope you haven't forgotten what you owe me". 30) S'il te plaît, grande sœur , j'ai déjà besoin d'argent que tu m'avais emprunté (CMR). "Please, big sister, I already need the money you borrowed from me". Boss , j'ai fini. Je m'en vais déjà. C'est comment? (CMR) 'Boss, I've finished. I'm already leaving. What's it like?'" Grand , tu m'as oublié (S1-CMR)

	<p>‘‘Big, you've forgotten me’’</p> <p>Patron, jusqu'à présent, il n'y a pas de bonnes nouvelles (S2-CMR).</p> <p>Boss, so far there's no good news (S2-CMR).</p>
Non-constraint formulas	<p>S'il te plaît, peux-tu me restituer l'argent que je t'avais prêté? Si tu en as eu bien sûr.</p> <p>‘‘Please, can you give me back the money I lent you? If you had any, of course’’.</p> <p>J'ai besoin d'argent en ce moment; s'il te plaît, est-ce que tu peux me restituer l'argent que je t'avais prêté? Si tu en as déjà. (S1-CMR)</p> <p>‘‘I need money at the moment. Can you please give me back the money I lent you? If you've already got some’’.</p>
Apologies	<p>Bonsoir, Monsieur. S'il vous plaît, excusez-moi de vous déranger, mais j'ai un souci (S2-TCD).</p> <p>‘‘Good evening, Sir. Please excuse me for bothering you, but I have a problem’’</p> <p>Pardon, tu peux me trouver quelque chose? (S1-CMR)</p> <p>‘‘Excuse me, can you find me something ?’’</p>
Greetings	<p>Bonsoir, ma sœur ou mon frère, Je traverse un moment très désagréable, si tu peux m'avoir déjà mon argent. Merci. (S1-TCD)</p> <p>‘‘Hello, sister or brother, I'm going through a very unpleasant time. If you can give me my money back, Thank you’’.</p>
Acknowledgements	<p>S'il te plaît, ma sœur, je passe un moment un peu compliqué si tu peux me restituer mon argent. Merci. (S1-TCD)</p> <p>‘‘Please, sister, I'm having a bit of a hard time if you can give me back my money. I'd appreciate it’’</p> <p>Bonsoir, mon frère, Je traverse un moment très désagréable, si tu peux m'avoir déjà mon argent. Merci. (S1-TCD)</p> <p>‘‘Hello, sister or brother, I'm going through a very unpleasant time. If you can give me my money back, Thank you’’</p>
Justification	<p>Bonsoir, Monsieur. S'il vous plaît, excusez-moi de vous déranger, mais j'ai un soucis (S2-CMR).</p> <p>‘‘Good evening, Sir. Please excuse me for bothering you, but I have a problem’’</p> <p>Je veux mon argent. J'ai envie de faire quelque chose (S1-CMR)</p> <p>‘‘I want my money. I want to do something’’.</p> <p>S'il te plaît, j'ai une urgence financière, si tu peux me restituer mon argent là pour que je gère une affaire d'urgence (S1-CMR).</p> <p>‘‘Please, I have a financial emergency. If you can give me my money back so I can deal with an emergency’’.</p>

As shown in Table 5, the politeness formulas used by speakers in the two groups are "*S'il te plait*" and "*S'il vous plait*." They are used by 31% (21 examples) of CMRs and 24% (8 examples) of TCDs. In terms of the lexical-syntactic aspect, polite formulas are generally preceded by the directing act. They often also appear in a medial position in the utterance and can be combined with other mitigation features such as apologies, modalisation and acknowledgements.

E.g. Donne-moi mon argent aujourd'hui, s'il te plait, j'en ai besoin. (S1-CMR)

‘‘Please give me my money today, I need it.’’

Bonsoir, Monsieur. S'il vous plait, excusez-moi de vous déranger, mais j'ai un soucis (S1-TCD).

‘‘Good evening, Sir. Please excuse me for disturbing you, but I have a problem’’

S'il te plaît, j'ai une urgence financière ; tu peux me restituer mon argent-là pour que je gère une affaire d'urgence. (S1-CMR)

‘‘Please, I have a financial emergency; can you give me back my money so that I can manage an emergency.’’

The role of apologies and acknowledgements is to mitigate the threat and anticipate any probable incidents. The speakers from the two linguistic communities used formulas like *Excuse-moi*, ‘‘Excuse me’’. TCDs also generally employed some acknowledgement formulas at the end of the utterance. Speakers used widely Nominal forms of address. The data analysis shows that CMRs tend to use relational terms (*Mon frère*, *ma sœur*, *grande sœur*, *Grand*), honorific titles (*Patron*, *Boss*), and the form *Monsieur*. Mulo Farenkia (2008) notes that relational terms, titles, and honorifics play a significant role in intercultural dialogue. According to Zheng Li Hua's politeness strategies (1998), these forms of address contribute to highlighting the social value of the addressee in order to please him or her. TCD speakers prefer the terms of address like *Monsieur* (Sir), *Patron* (Boss), and *Maître* (Master), which are formal. When CMRs address their hierarchy, they use the honorific titles *Patron* (Boss) and *Chef* (Chief), whereas the repertoire of TCDs is more extensive. Our findings also indicate that relational terms are scarcely used by TCDs.

We observe that CMR speakers use less restrictive formulas in their requests than TCD speakers. In the CMR speakers, 75% of statements are less obligatory than in the TCD speakers (25%). The non-obligatory formulas are composed of adverbial phrases (as soon as possible) and statements (if you've had some, of course, if you've already got some). They indicate that the fulfilment of the contractual obligation depends on the circumstances. Like modalisers, non-constraint formulas seem to show the flexibility of contractual obligations in both cultures. The CMRs appear more conciliatory and flexible in asserting their rights. According to Goffman (1974), justification appears to be a repair strategy in the same way as apologies and prayer. According to the data, CMRs used more justification strategies than TCDs. Table 4 reveals that on a global scale, CMRs produced 10% (5 examples) of the mitigation procedures involving the justification strategy. In the group of TCDs, this process is used (6%), i.e., 2 examples. In the above examples, the formulation of the requests is justified in different ways. The speakers are not using the right-holders' reasons to justify their claims. This might appear too egocentric, particularly in African societies where the values of solidarity and sharing are very important. Based on the above illustrations, it appears that to justify their claims, Cameroonian speakers indicate that they have a problem, an emergency, or that they are going through a financial hardship. The Chadians said they were victims of financial crises. In both societies, speakers justified their claims with reasons such as urgency and crisis. In this way, they presented their requests as necessities in order to impose an obligation on the debtor to fulfil them.

4.1.2. Internal modifiers

The internal modifiers identified in the data are hedgers and minimisers. Hedges are word that may mitigate the illocutory force of face-threatening acts. According to Leech (1983), minimisers are words or phrases that decrease the cost of speech acts. A few examples that were found in the data are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Internal modifiers

Internal modifier	Example
Modalisation	Ma sœur, peux -tu me rembourser mon argent? ‘‘Sister, can you pay me back my money?’’ S'il te plait, peux -tu me restituer l'argent que je t'avais prêté? Si tu en as eu, bien

	sûr. 'Please, can you give me back the money I lent you? If you had any, of course''.
	Please, sir, would it be possible for me to receive my salary?
Minimisers	J'ai besoin d'un peu d' argent (S1-CMR). 'I need a bit of money''.
	Patron J'ai un petit souci ce mois-ci, pouvez-vous m'aider? (S2-CMR) 'Boss I've got a little problem this month; can you help me?''
	S'il te plait, Patron, comme tu vois là, ça ne va pas. C'est chaud pour moi. Est-ce que tu ne peux pas me trouver un petit quelque chose là? (S2-CMR) 'Please, Boss, as you can see, things aren't going well. It's hot for me. Can't you get me a little something here?'

Speakers from both communities express their feelings, opinions, and attitudes about their requests. Therefore, the formulation of requests gives emphasis to subjectivity. The modalisation is based on the use of verbs (*peut* 'can' and *pourrait* 'could'), adverbs (*peut-être* 'perhaps' or 'may be'), and the conditional tense (*serait* 'would'). The speakers are presenting the fulfilment of the contractual obligation as a probability and not as a binding obligation. The modalisation is probably intended to encourage the addressee to resolve to meet the requirement rather than coerce him or her. It therefore appears to be an important enunciative category in the peaceful formulation of the request.

In the utterance of the request, speakers in both groups usually minimise the cost to the addressee by attenuating the symbolic value of the object or situation. Cameroonian speakers use minimizers more than Chadian speakers do. According to Table 6, 7% of CMRs and 6% of TCDs used minimisers. Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1994) notes that in minimization, the speaker shows that the requested act can be carried out without great sacrifice. The verbal features are adverbial phrases (un peu de 'a little') and the adjective (petit 'small'). These minimisers are more used by CMRs, but the linguistic patterns differ. According to our observations, CMRs prefer adverbs, while TCDs use more adjectives.

E.g. J'ai besoin d'un peu d'argent (S1-CMR).

'I need a little money''

Patron J'ai un petit souci ce mois-ci, pouvez-vous m'aider ? (S2-CMR)

'Boss I've got a little problem this month, can you help me?''

Vraiment, mon frère, je suis dans le besoin, si tu peux me faire un petit (S1-TCD).

'Brother, I'm really in need, if you can give me a little.'

Acts of claiming can also be 'hardened'. The following section looks at some examples identified in the data.

4.5. Polirudesse

Requests may be formulated using hard language. A characteristic feature is the use of harshness that is likely to affect the addressee's face. When claiming their rights, some speakers, exclusively TCD speakers, switch from politeness to impoliteness. Fracchiolla and Romain (2015) describe this strategy as polirudesse. Figure 4 presents some quantitative data on this behaviour.

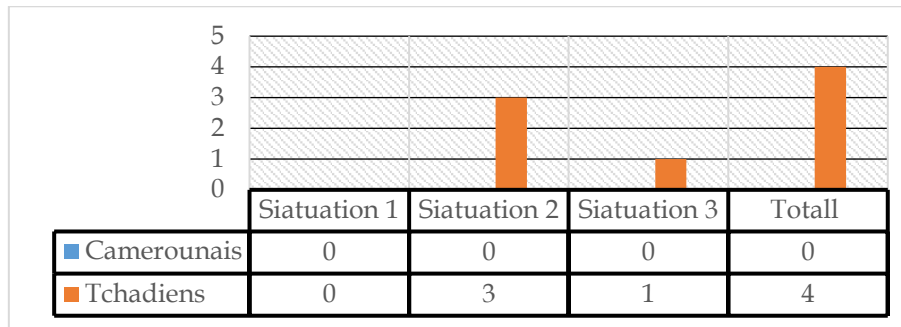


Figure 4. Distribution of rude requests

As shown in Figure 4, all the brutal formulations identified in the data are exclusively expressed by the TCDs. In situation 2, where the participants have a strong balance of power (+P) and mutual knowledge (+D), there are 75% (3 examples) of cases, whereas in situation 3 (-P, +D), there are 25% (1 example). It appears that when formulating their claim, TCDs can appear very aggressive and impolite towards their addressee. The following four examples reveal that the behaviour of the speakers varies between face-work and impoliteness. These statements are hybrids, consisting of softening procedures and acts of impoliteness.

Table 7. Strategies of polirudesse

Internal modifier	Example
Negative impoliteness	S'il vous plaît, (politesse négative) Patron, (politesse positive) nous sommes parvenus au terme de notre contrat (politesse négative). À vous d'honorer votre part de contrat (impolitesse négative) (S3-TCD). "Please (negative politeness) Boss, (positive politeness), we have reached the end of our contract (negative politeness). It's up to you to honour your part of the contract (negative impoliteness)".
Harasement	55) Patron (politesse positive), Je sais que ce n'est pas facile pour vous de vous rappeler certaines choses vu vos occupations (politesse négative). Croyez-moi, si j'ai le choix, je ne pouvais pas venir en personne pour vous le demander (politesse négative). Mais malheureusement, je ne pouvais pas attendre (impolitesse négative). Merci (politesse positive). (S2-TCD). "Boss (positive politeness), I know it's not easy for you to remember certain things, given your workload (negative politeness). Believe me, if I had the choice, I wouldn't come in person to ask you (negative politeness). But unfortunately, I couldn't wait (negative politeness). Thank you".

These examples also show cases of fake politeness. Under the appearance of negative politeness (apologies, indirect speech acts, minimizers, etc.) and positive politeness (positive terms of address), the speakers are being very disrespectful to their addressee. It appears that in asymmetric interactions, disagreements and conflicts between the participants can sometimes turn into a form of impoliteness.

5. Discussion and conclusion

The aim of this study was to describe the discourse strategies used by Cameroonian and Chadian speakers when expressing requests in French. The analyses reveal the following conclusions:

In terms of the types of requests, speakers in both groups tend to make indirect requests. The Chadian speakers, however, made very few indirect requests. These indirect requests are either questions or assertions with different semantic-pragmatic values. The directness of requests is made up of several features (performative formulas, imperatives, and expressions of desire). An analysis of the processes used to soften the request also reveals significant differences. It appears that brutal formulations have been found. The softener used in both groups consists mainly of nominal forms of address, modalisers, and polite expressions. Other devices, such as justifications, apologies, and non-constraint formulas, complete the discourse arsenal. The results showed that the Cameroonian data presented more indirect realisations of acts than the Chadian data. Participants from both language communities used a variety of markers to modify their claims. External modifications typically included politeness forms, forms of address, apologies, justifications, greetings, and thanks. Internal modifications also included modalisers and minimisers.

Overall, this study highlights that variables such as social distance and power affect the formulation of the request in both cultures. In situations where the participants know each other, the acts of claiming are more flexible and mitigated. When there is a strong relationship of power, there is a greater use of formal language (honorific and relational terms of address). This study not only highlights the differences in claiming strategies between Cameroonian and Chadian French speakers but also offers valuable insights for educators, linguists, and intercultural communication trainers. The findings of this research may be used to apply a variety of practices and tools to avoid conflicts and misunderstandings in intercultural interactions. They could also be used in education to teach the cultural variations and communication habits that are specific to these two communities. The above conclusions are based on an exploratory analysis. These results could be deepened by analyses based on a larger sample in both cultures, and even more than that.

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