A Conversational Analysis of the Exchange Patterns of some Legislative Proceedings in Osun State House of Assembly

FALONI, KOLADE EZEKIEL

B.A. Ed (ENGLISH) UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA

ARP/05/06/H/1954

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, FACULTY OF ARTS, IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF DEGREE OF THE MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE, OBAFEMI AWOLOWO UNIVERSITY, ILE-IFE, NIGERIA

2013

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BY

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Assembly

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YEAR: 2013

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this research work was carried out by ***Faloni, Kolade Ezekie***l, with the registration number ***ARP/05/06/H/1954*** in the Department of English, Faculty of Arts, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, under my supervision.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the Almighty God, Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

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ABSTRACT

The study identified and analysed the turn-taking structure in the language of lawmakers in Osun State House of Assembly (OSHA). It examined the move structure and repair mechanisms in their conversational acts. It also described the semantic and pragmatic functions of the exchange features of the conversation. This was with a view to explicating the exchange patterns in the legislative proceedings in the state House of Assembly.

The study employed both primary and secondary sources of data collection. The primary source comprised four purposively selected proceedings in socio-political and economic matters in the state. These data were collected through observation method, tape and video-recording. The data were transcribed in order to capture both the linguistic and the para-linguistic features of the exchanges in the proceedings. The secondary sources included books, journals and the Internet. The data were analysed using the framework of conversation analysis developed by Pomerantz and Felhr.

The results showed that there were series of sequences at the beginning and at the end of the legislators' sittings which we classified into preliminary, purpose and parting sequence. The study further showed that there were ten different turn-taking structures in OSHA which include: selection by naming (that is, name of the honourable member), selection by naming constituency, selection by naming office, selection by naming relationship, selection by saying "Yes", selection by "Okay", selection by constituency and name, selection by questioning, and next speaker self selection. It was also found that the prominent out of these turn-taking structures was selection by naming constituency of the members while selection by "Okay" was rarely used. It further showed that the move structure in OSHA proceedings were intimating,

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response, feedback, challenging and supporting move. Furthermore, interruptions and overlaps were not common in legislative proceedings because turn-taking was strictly formalised.

The study concluded that despite that the exchange patterns in Osun State House of Assembly were strictly regulated, they followed the essential principles of informal political conversations.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter provides the background to this thesis. It discusses such issues as the inseparability of language, human being and society, language functions and adaptability of language to several domains of human activities. The chapter also examines the relationship between language and communication as well as surveys language situation in Nigeria. There is a brief examination of the notion of legislative language. The aim and objectives of this study and other preliminary matters are discussed.

1.1 Background Information

Language is useful in communication. Several scholars have offered a variety of definitions on the concept – communication (Burgoon and Ronfize (1978), Chappel and Reed (1984), Crystal (1971), Bennett (1976), Barthes (1980), Oyewo (2004), Akindele and Adegbite (2005), and Taiwo (2007)). Their works reveal that communication is a slippery term to define. For instance, Oyewo (2004:186) opines that "definitions to this human phenomenon have been approached and attempted from diverse points of view/disciplinary perspectives." Also, Crystall (1971) says that "communication is basically the transmission of information" and Chappell and Reed (1984) submit that "communication is any means by which a thought is transferred from one person to another".

Communication is considered successful when the hearer/reader is able to decode, in clear terms, what the speakers / writers encode in language. The ability of humans to use language to communicate is one thing that makes them different from other creatures. Akindele and Adegbite (2005:4) remark that "human beings possessed the ability to use a system of vocal symbols to represent inner thoughts or feelings, establish and maintain cordial relationship, and represent personal psychological experience".

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An individual or a group of people can use a particular language in different ways depending on "what" they do and "how" they intend to achieve "what". Taiwo (2007:1), considering language and its relationship with human beings, says that

> language should not just be seen as a tool for communication, but also as one for establishing social relationship between or among human beings. Therefore, language as a channel for self and collective expression stands as an indispensable tool to man and his society.

From the views of these scholars, it is obvious that language is very important among human beings. Language is used by human beings who live in communities to express their ways of life. Therefore, whatever system of rules and symbols a language possesses is given to it by its users. Language users who, in most cases, are people living in the same community, always share some things in common. They may share the same origin, profession, social classes, and so forth. Such a group of people tend to behave alike because the environment or context in which they operate constrains them to use language in a particular way.

The various situational uses of language give rise to the notion of language variety. This notion is reviewed briefly below for the purpose of characterizing / describing the variety under study.

1.2 Variety of English

There are two basic types of variety of English. These varieties are: variety according to use and variety according to users. We shall briefly consider these two in line with this study.

1.2.1 Variety According to Use (Registers)

Individual users of English have a variety of situations under which they use the language. As the subject matter or situation changes, the speaker varies his/her choice of words and perhaps intonation and syntax.

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According to Freeborn et al (1986), "the varieties emanating from the constraints of different use situations are called Registers". Ayoola (2006:170) explains registers as variety of language according to occupation or fields of specialization. He stressed further that this term covers the choice of words, terms, and expressions that characterize individual disciplines. The term also covers the language habits of professionals and clients who share the same industry. Every profession has its own jargon which is usually incomprehensible to outsiders who are not familiar with the profession. According to Halliday (1978:23), "register is determined by what is taking place, who is taking part and what part the language is playing". English language has resources which enable us to express thoughts in a number of different ways, according to the occasion, just as a person may have one outfit of clothes for work, another for sports, another for dancing, and another for church/mosque and another for ceremonial occasions. These language use situations have three dimensions. In other words, there are three basic factors relevant in the choice of a register. They are the field of discourse, the mode of discourse and lastly, the style of discourse.

By the field of discourse, we refer to the subject matter on which the individual makes an expression. This simply refers to the content area. There are several areas of human activity, hence linguistic expressions for such areas are almost limitless. Some of such areas are Agriculture, Law, Science, Medicine, Religion, Politics etc. For example, when you hear or read terms such as adjournment, client, accused, suspect, conviction, discharged and acquitted, without any iota of doubt we know we are in the field of Law; or when we hear "… washes brightest and it shows", "available in all reputable provision stores

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