

Speakers' Rights in English -English and Yoruba-English Family Discourse.

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Abstract:

The aim of this study is to investigate speakers' rights to initiate conversations in native English (English-English) and English as a Second Language (Yoruba-English) family. More specifically, it aims to find out whether speakers' rights differ with different types of initiation within and between the two family conversation types.

The study further investigates speakers' rights to select one another for participation in conversation, and also finds out how such rights are reflected in interruptions in the two types of discourse. The framework for the analysis of the data is based on the Birmingham approach to discourse analysis. Some aspects of the work of the Conversational Analysts are also adopted. It is expected that both the English-English and Yoruba-English family will be hierarchically structured into higher social positions occupied by older adults (parents) and lower positions occupied by younger adults (grown-up children). Further, it is expected that the hierarchical ordering of both types of family will be reflected in the relative frequency with which the older and younger participants initiate discourse, select next speakers and interrupt one another.

It is also expected that the hierarchical ordering of the Yoruba-English family will be more rigidly ordered and maintained than that of the English-English family in such a way that participants in the discourse cannot step out of their position in the hierarchy and initiate talk if and when they choose. It is, however, expected that the younger participants in the English-English family will have the choice of stepping out of their position in the hierarchy to initiate talk.

On the basis of these expectations, it is predicted that the total proportion of initiations, current-speaker-selects-next technique, self-select technique, and interruptions that the older adults in both types of family conversation will produce will be greater than that of the younger adults. However, although the total proportions are expected to differ, it is predicted that in English-English family conversation, both older and younger participants will produce some of each type of initiation, will select any of the participants as next speaker or self-select, and will interrupt any of the participants.

By contrast, it is predicted that in Yoruba-English family conversation, not all types of initiation will be produced by both older and younger adults. Older adults will produce all types of initiation except the type that will be classified as 'Permission-seeking' moves, and the younger adults will produce all types of initiation except what will be categorised as 'Directives' and 'Regulatory negative' moves. In addition, it is predicted that the older adults in Yoruba-English family conversation will select any participant as the next speaker and will self-select in an interaction with their equals or younger adults and will interrupt any ongoing speaker; but that the younger adults will select only their equals as next speaker, self-select only when interacting with their own age group, and interrupt only members of their own age group.

The findings are found to support the prediction that the proportion of initiations, current-speaker-selects-next technique, self-select technique, and interruptions that will be produced by the older adults will be greater than that of the younger adults in both types of family conversation. The results also corroborate the prediction that in English-English family

conversation, both older and younger adults will produce some of each type of initiation, select any of the participants as next speakers or self-select, and interrupt any of the interactants.

The findings support the prediction that in Yoruba-English family conversation, not all types of initiation will be produced by both older and younger adults. Older adults are found to produce all types of initiation except those classified as 'Permission-seeking' moves, and the younger adults are found to produce all types of initiation except those categorised as 'Directives' and 'Regulatory negative' moves. Further, the findings support the prediction that the older adults in Yoruba-English family will select any participants as the next speaker and will self-select in an interaction with their equals or younger adults.

However, the results do not support the prediction that the younger adults will select only their equals as next speaker, self-select only when interacting with their own age group and interrupt only members of their own age group.

Keywords: Speakers' right/ Yoruba-English family/ Conversation types/ English-English family/ Conversational Analysts/ Directive and Regulatory negative moves/ Permission Seeking moves

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