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Analysis of Discourse in Nigerian Pidgin

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Abstract

Nigerian Pidgin (NP) can be described as the widest spoken indigenous language in Nigeria today. From east to west, from north to south, it is the language of choice. Thus it is prevalent in the metropolitan cities such as Lagos, Kano, and Port-Harcourt, especially in the military, police and air-force barracks, stranger-communities, and slum areas like Ajegunle and Mushin. In recent times, NP has been used extensively in the broadcast media for news casting, jingles, and all sorts of adverts in order to reach the masses of Nigeria for whom it is either a first, a second, or a third language. Similarly, in most institutions of higher learning, it is widely used among students, at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, in their informal communication. This is why it is often referred to as Nigeria's unofficial national lingua franca. Suggestions have been made by some prominent scholars such as Ben Eluigbe, Nick Faraclas, and Niyi Akinnaso for its adoption as our official national language because of its ethnic neutrality and non-affiliation as well as its currency and wide spread. Owing to the significance of the nature, use and status of NP in our country

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today, it is interesting to examine and investigate its conversational discourse structure or patterns. It is also useful to explicate features of conversations observable in NP in relation to those found in its superstrate, English, and substrates, indigenous Nigerian languages. In this paper, an attempt is made to analyse the discourse of NP with data collected through participant and anonymous observational as well as tape recording methods using a synthesis of methods, principles, and approaches proposed, employed, and adopted by Munby (1986), Melrose (1995), Fairclough (2001), and Collins & Hollo (2010). Findings from this study tend to buttress the fact that NP is the main lingua franca for the Nigerian masses or the grassroots.

Keywords: Nigerian Pidgin, discourse structure, national language, lingua franca

1. Introduction

The use of Nigerian Pidgin (NP) is widespread across Nigeria, especially in informal situations. All classes of Nigerians have been noted to use NP in both formal and informal conversations. In the Niger Delta area, where it is noted to be fast creolizing, it seems to be more in use in the most formal situation such as in teaching at both the primary and secondary levels of education. It has even been observed to be replacing both the indigenous languages and English in most oral conversations in tertiary institutions in that part of the country. Thus, it has become a significant factor in social communication across board and linguistic divide in most parts of the country.

In their paper, presented at the 17th NESAC Conference, University of Lagos, 14-15 December, 1986, and entitled "Towards a Typology of Variation in Nigerian English: A Critique of Some Existing

Frameworks of Analysis,” Adama Oduma and Victor Gomwalk aptly capture the linguistic scenario as follows:

In fact, many NE (Nigerian English) speakers show dual competence in either pidgin and broken, broken and standard, or pidgin and non-standard and are able to code-switch whenever the need arises (Oduma & Gomwalk 1986: 10).

This scenario however had been noted more than a decade earlier by John Spencer in his article entitled “The English Language in West Africa” where he claims that

The various kinds of English are not always struggling against each other for mastery, however; in the life of the individual they usually have complementary roles, and he is able to switch as occasion demands from, say Pidgin—or Pidgin flavoured English—to more standard forms shared by most English speakers everywhere, or into a technical register of English (Spencer 1971: 6).

In the period between the 1970’s and 1990’s, even up till 2000’s, Ogo Ofuani (1981), Rebecca Agheyisi (1984), Stella Donwa-Ifode (1984), Patrick Fawehinmi (1987), F. Akinnaso (1989), Ben Elugbe & Augusta Omamor (1991), M. Jibril (1995), Nicholas Faraclas (1996), and Joseph Osoba (2000, 2014) have observed, noted, and reported this trend of unprecedented rise in the use of NP among Nigerians. Its rising popularity, status, and elaboration among Nigerians of all classes now reflect its use in domains of exclusive preserve of English and the three major Nigerian languages, Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba, such as politics, education, advertisement, and media propaganda.

It may therefore be worthwhile to investigate the features of conversations in NP in at least five sample transcripts of its conversational discourse. Since it is becoming more frequently used by most Nigerians, it seems relevant to attempt to discover the nature and norm of verbal conversations of NP. For instance, one may be tempted to ask whether there are rules governing verbal behaviour in NP; and if the answer is positive, to ask what these rules are. So the question, ‘What rules or norms govern conversational discourse or dialogue in NP?’ may not only be appropriate but also relevant to this study. Thus one of the goals of this paper is to provide an adequate answer to this question. In this regard, I intend to examine NP in order to assess the extent to which meaning is negotiated in the ongoing communicative events, and specify the interactional processes, situational types, and social discourses and practices in operation (Melrose 1995: 65).

2. Conversational Analysis

Conversational analysis involves the investigation of the processes of verbal interactions. Broadly speaking, conversational analysis can be defined as any study of people who are talking together, ‘oral communication,’ or ‘language use.’ But from a narrow perspective, it can be described as one particular tradition of analytical work started by the late Harvey Sacks and his collaborators, including Emanuel Schegloff & Gail Jefferson (Have 1999: 5). For this study, a synchronization of the broad and narrow perspectives is adopted and employed. This is done in an attempt at an explication of the interactional processes involved in natural conversations, especially as found in NP. Interactional processes are defined as “processes

which permit the articulation of a situation and its distribution between an emitter and a receiver in a form which can be readily re-articulated in language (or other codes)” (Melrose 1995: 52). Thus “emitter” and “receiver” are the interlocutors involved in a conversation or dialogue. The terms therefore refer to the speaker and the listener respectively.

In every human language, norms or rules exist for verbal exchanges. People do not just talk to each other. Rather they follow certain explicit or implicit norms which serve as a guide for maintaining social relations, such as showing etiquette, avoiding taboo, conforming with works ethics, and so on. Thus in English, following conversational norms, interlocutors take turn at speaking.

Conversations naturally entail many phases. This makes interlocutors or participants to shift from one stage or phase to another. In English, most common ways of effecting a “shift from one stage to another are by the use of markers such as ‘right,’ ‘okay,’ ‘now,’ ‘anyway,’ especially when they are pronounced with full stress and followed by some reference to the nature of the forthcoming activity” (Montgomery 1986: 154). The devices are also noted to include ‘openings’ and ‘closings’ in all conversations in natural languages. These devices are usually seen as being interpersonal as they relate to the various roles which an interlocutor or a participant may play in a conversation. This is perhaps why the interlocutors or participants are also called the encoder and the decoder.

In his detailed explication of “Language as Process,” Melrose (1995) suggests that the process of interpersonal negotiations lies in the twin encoder/decoder perspective which he explains as “a constantly changing context of situation, and fluidity of meaning (p. 62).” According to him, it is a two-way process because

it represents not only the act of producing a communicative event, starting from the relevant social discourse and practices, and passing through situation type and interactional processes to language and other codes, but also an interpretation of the communicative event, starting from language and other codes, passing through interactional processes and situational type to social discourses and practices (ibid.: 55-56).

He also notes that it is possible to have a mismatch in which there is no guarantee that the interpreter will 'read' the interpretational processes, situational type and social discourse practices in the way the producer 'meant' them. And it is precisely in this mismatch that it is possible to chart a changing context of situation, fluid meaning, and the process of interpersonal negotiation. This mismatch may be a result of variation in speech events whose sources include the role of speaker and hearer, or hearers, and their relationships, whether they were friends, strangers, young, old, of equal, or unequal status, and many other factors. In fact, these factors will most likely have an influence on what is said and how it is said (see Yule 2006: 143). Thus it may not be inappropriate to claim that

An interaction sequence is an activity sequence (social situation / subject matter) shared between participants in a communicative event, and realized both verbally and non-verbally; and ... that ... [it], in common with other interactional processes and certain situational variables, is not fixed, but may be interpreted in different ways by different participants, and is therefore open to negotiation (Melrose 1995: 96).

But everyday conversational interaction is not a monolithic interaction sequence. At least two types of interaction sequences can be identified in terms of genre. These are (1) those that derive from the schema of the ongoing social activity like shopping and (2) those that constitute the ongoing activity like socializing. The first type is said to be schematic while the second is discursive. The discursive type is so-called because they derive from social discourses and practices. An example of the schematic type is service encounter. Any casual conversation may be given as an example of the discursive type (see *ibid.*: 53).

3. Conversational Analysis and Nigerian Pidgin Conversations

One can assume that the raw data of everyday conversational interaction can be subject to rigorous analysis as demonstrated by Schegloff (1968: 1075). Since all natural languages occur first as speech, it seems possible to claim that conversational interaction can and do take place in them. Thus, if the raw data of everyday conversation in any natural language can be subjected to rigorous analysis then there is the possibility of applying a similar analysis to conversations in NP. Moreover, raw data of everyday conversation in NP should provide adequate evidence to prove the relevance and suitability of conversational analysis as a conceptual/analytical framework for the study of NP.

NP is becoming more primary in its conversation role where intimacy, emotion, high spirit, and hilarity or humour are constituents of the tenor of discourse among interlocutors. In this role, NP functions as low dialect while English and other major languages are

seen as high. Thus NP can be said in this regard to be a highly sensitive informal language. This diglossic role can also be compared to that of a non-standard dialect of a language. There are feelings, emotions, ideas, relationships as well as meaning potential that are captured in NP conversations that are almost impossible to express in standard dialects. Thus nastier, sharper, more basal, and more naturally unobtrusive conceptions and inclinations towards a brutally lower level of emotion laden acquaintance can be observed to feature more prominently in NP than any other language in Nigeria. In this role also, NP can be described as being close to argot or slang. This means that it is the primary choice of language for low class people or grassroots. Thus it tends to segregate the society into local or low class and urban or high class. This reflects even in literary works like Wole Soyinka's *The Trials of Brother Jero*, Ken Saro Wiwa's *Zoza Boy*, and Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* or *The Anthills of the Savannah*, in which only low class characters speak NP while those of high class speak impeccable English.

It is perhaps this sentiment inherent in its discourse that warrants the negative attitude of the Nigerian elite to the use of NP in open or formal interactions. In their private capacity, however, it seems to be their doyen as they exude in its hilarity in harmony with the pleasure of their inner yearnings. Thus, this ambivalent attitude of the elite in terms of their derogatory perspective in an open and formal context and enthralling fascination of NP in privacy may be considered as a mere reflection of dual role of linguistic or verbal communication present in all human societies. Little wonder, politicians, advertisers, and public mobilisers now employ NP in their advertorial, jingles, and campaigns in Nigeria especially when there is the need for them to reach the grassroots for votes, patronage, or support. Anecdotally, NP is for clowns and English is for kings, but sometimes kings may

become clowns and clowns king, in role reversals. This study is done based partly on the principles/approaches employed or proposed by Munby (1986: 67-75), Melrose (1995: 43-46), Norman Fairclough (2001: 37-63), and Peter Collins & Carmella Hollo (2010: 204-209).

Collins & Hollo's (ibid.: 205) stimulating explication of the significance of tenor of discourse in contributing to the overall 'meaning' of the communication in terms of "the physical stances of the speaker and the addressee, as well as the degree of physical contact between them (including eye contact)" is germane to any elucidation and analysis of the nature and character of discourse in a language like NP. It may be that in most, if not all, human languages, the relationship between interlocutors—speakers/hearers—determines to a large extent the nature, type or structure of their discourse, which is evident through their use of certain linguistic markers. From their perspective, it seems not unlikely that

Most societies have clear expectations about the amount of personal space appropriate in different social situations and recognize that invasion of this with personal stance, gesture, or volume of voice is an indication of the differing power relationships between participants ... The verbal and non-verbal behaviour of the participants is influenced by their identity, both personal and as determined by their social and professional status (called functional tenor by some linguists), by what they hope to achieve through the communication, and by various other features of the setting (ibid.).

Their conclusion is that the crucial motivating factor in the dimension of tenor is distance which is caused by unequal, non-

reciprocal power relationships (socioeconomic, class, professional), by differences in age and gender, by the frequency of contact and the emotional involvement. Evidence of tenor is said to be found in differences in explicitness, in directness and terms of address in terms of the range of formality. Since these three linguistic markers are observable in NP, it seems appropriate to apply them in order to see how they operate in the language by a careful analysis of the sample data. Their descriptive and explanatory power may prove intellectually colossal in outlining and highlighting insightful comprehension of the inherent meaning potential in NP discourse. In fact, they may point to a fresh discovery of the nature of tenor of discourse implicitly or explicitly. Let us now consider each of those markers.

Explicitness markers can be described as those linguistic or paralinguistic features that make a discourse to be regarded as belonging to a range of formality, beginning from less formal, at one extreme, to very formal at the other extreme. The very formal end is characterized by little or no existence of shared knowledge or shared value system between the interlocutors, whereas the less formal end is characterized by much by them. Thus, cordiality, familiarity, and solidarity are associated with the latter while distance and power are associated with the former. This may involve swear words, taboos, tantrums, banter, clownishness, sloppiness, humour, casual note, cynicism, ridicule, jest, murmur, and mockery at the less formal end to show familiarity, solidarity, brotherhood, and bond. Thus this makes the less-formal and less explicit and, therefore, more implicit to someone outside the low social class. But the very-formal end of the continuum presupposes distance and power relation as evident in its complex and intricate as well as careful, tactful, and precise format. This tends to prove that there is a strong relationship between

formality and explicitness suggested by Collins & Holo (*ibid.*). Based on this argument, one may presume that the tenor of discourse in NP may lack explicitness markers.

Directness markers may be described as those strategies and principles such as pre-structures, face, past tense, negative polarity, hedges, etc. employed by interlocutors to express social distance. Moreover, since distant formal relations usually warrant a higher degree of both positive and negative politeness, it will seem inappropriate to communicate this tenor of discourse in an accent, a dialect, or language associated with low class people or grassroots. Thus the use of NP in a strictly formal relationship may simply indicate communicative incompetence. As a result, directness markers may be referred to as overt linguistic/sociolinguistic features of standard dialects and languages. These are the so-called pure forms that are consciously learned, mastered, and applied in the high diglossic role of language.

It is perhaps not impossible to assume that NP may eventually find its way into playing that role. The reason is clear. Warri-based and Sapele-based NPs are currently being used in both primary and secondary schools in the Niger-Delta areas where the language has already creolized and may even be in the process of being decreolised. This formal usage of NP in those places, though unofficially, may gradually lead to its acceptance in certain formal situations. Moreover, the Niger-Delta scenario is cautiously being replicated in some primary schools in Ajegunle. In situations where teachers must teach his/her pupils whose primary medium of comprehension and learning is NP, the only option is to resort to Pidgin. However, this may not in any way detract from its inherent informal communicative status. The negative attitude of the elite toward the use of NP in the open either by themselves or their

children or wards might thus have been precipitated by their perception that the language is improper or inappropriate in formal situations. This may also be responsible for the feeling that it is less prestigious to use NP in most social contexts. But evidence of its use, sometimes, in those contexts tends to presuppose some sociolinguistic paradox prevalent among Nigerian elite.

Pronouns and terms of address (honorifics) have been described as the most prominent features/markers of tenor of discourse in all human languages. Thus, their use in most languages tends to indicate either social distance or proximity. The use of the pronoun system is rightly and carefully observed, captured, and expressed by Collins & Hollo (2010: 207) as follows:

Many languages express respectful, intimate, or dominant relationships through their pronoun systems: singular second person is used to address children, intimates, and social inferiors, second person plural in other cases ... In communities where such pronominal differences exists, it is possible to gauge the progress of one's relationship quite explicitly because one cannot begin using the singular form until explicitly invited to do so.

They cite a special verb *tutoyer* in French which refers to the practice of using of using the singular pronoun to buttress their viewpoint. Examples of languages that make use of patronymics, such as Russian, and other special honorific markers, such as Japanese, to signal tenor relationships are also cited. For instance, it is noted that, in the nineteenth-century Russia, the term for *they* instead of *you* was used by the serfs in face-to-face encounters with their superiors. This situation is similar to what obtains in the *Yoruba*

language where children address either of their parents or anyone much older with the plural second person pronoun form instead of the singular. In English, the use of the vocative *you* with the imperative, as in *You, pick up the book*, may be considered rude and therefore usually avoided. This is perhaps why, for them, it is not strange to find, especially among primary school teachers and nurses, the use of inclusive *we* in expressions like *And how are we feeling this morning?* and *We are skittish today, aren't we?* in order to avoid in a polite manner the second person singular pronoun. What seems to be observable in NP is perhaps the profuse use of plural second person personal pronoun *una* (literally meaning 'you them,' plural second person 'you' in English). The singular form *yu* ('you') is mostly used in very intimate relationships with peers, acquaintances, or a relationship involving younger interlocutors. So the shared knowledge of the interlocutors is very crucial here for an effective communicate to be achieved in their discourse. Faraclas (2014: 27-29) explicates the three forms of the second person non-singular pronoun, *una* 'you (plural, subject, emphatic)'; *una* 'you (plural, subject, SR)'; and *una* 'you (plural, object)' in the pronoun system of NP as follows:

The emphatic second person plural subject pronoun **una** carries a low-low tone sequence, and the subject referencing second person plural subject pronoun **una** also carries a low-low tone sequence. The second person plural object pronoun is **una** as well (ibid.: 29).

Moreover, it may be observed that the number distinction in the second person is made in NP with the second person plural form *ùnà*. This feature is however absent in English.

Honorifics, on the other hand, are markers of social and professional status, gender and kinship relationship among interlocutors. It can be noted that the more formal and distant the relationship the more specific the terms used. Examples like Your Honour, Your Grace, Your Royal Highness, Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms, Dr Smith, Sister Mary, Professor Smith seem to illustrate that point. Casual relationships can be marked by the use of first names or by calling an adult male and female *boy* and *girl* respectively. NP can be observed to have very few honorifics like Oga Joe ('Joe, the Boss'), Sisi Ononma ('Ononma, the Girl'), and Baba Alaye ('The Man' / 'The Generous One') which are used for showing affection and some level of familiarity. Perhaps, this dearth of honorifics in NP is owing to its almost informal nature of its discourse.

Having examined the relevance of the tenor of discourse, it seems also appropriate to investigate what happens in discourse in terms of formal aspects such as gaining and giving up the floor, turn-taking, pausing, interrupting, and so on which Jacob Mey (2001: 137-143) has carefully elucidated.

Yielding the right to speak or the floor is said to constitute a turn. In every conversational discourse, interlocutors tend to allocate turns to themselves or others using 'turn-taking mechanisms.' According to Mey (*ibid.*: 139),

Turns occur normally at certain well-defined junctures in conversation; such points are called 'transition relevant places' (TRPs). A TRIP can be exploited by the speaker holding the floor. This may be done directly, for the purpose of allotting the right to speak to another conversationalist of his or her choice ("Now, we'd like to hear Jim's view on this.").

There are two general rules of selecting the next speaker proposed and elucidated by Harvey Sacks (1995: 223-224). The first rule states that “current speaker selects next speaker.” The example cited in Mey’s (2001: 139) above aptly illustrates this. But if the current speaker decides to proceed more indirectly, he may throw the floor open to whoever feels like speaking at that point. For instance, the current speaker may decide to make a request or an invitation, such as “Any other opinion or further comments on this matter?” (ibid.). Thus, here, it is the current speaker who allots the right to speak to the next speaker. This strategy tends to feature more in formal conversational discourse, such as meetings, interviews, and lectures, than in the informal such as gossips and banter.

However, socio-cultural context of the language of discourse or its diglossia may also, to a large extent, determine the degree of formality of discourse. In Nigeria, for instance, NP is regarded as a colloquial language which fits much of informal language use or discourse whereas English is the language of formal occasions or contexts. Thus, this first rule can be associated with the high social class where some social distance and courtesy must be maintained or displayed. The second rule involves a situation in which “a next speaker selects himself” (Sacks 1995: 224). This will most likely occur at a point when “a speaker has to pause for breath, or runs out of things to say, or simply declares his or her contribution to be finished” (Mey 2001: 139). This use of this second rule may be more associated with so-called non-standard languages like pidgins and creoles and several non-prestigious varieties of many languages. Here, the speaker can be rude, impolite, or humorous since the tenor of discourse is intimately informal. ‘Turn-threatening noises’ such as ‘Aaahhm’ or ‘back-channeler’ such as ‘I see’ or ‘Right’ (ibid.) may be observed to be more common in informal discourse. Thus it is not

unlikely that this feature will be prominent or predominant in any NP conversational discourse. In next subsection, the methodology employed for the collection of data for analysis in this study is enunciated and explicated.

4. Methodology

Data for the analysis was collected through survey method by personal observations. The discourse was also tape recorded. The interlocutors whose conversations were carefully observed and recorded were randomly selected residents of Ajegunle. The two research assistants well-acquainted with the Ajegunle area of Lagos State from where all the data were obtained were employed. This was part of the survey of a pilot study, started in 2006, on the use of Nigerian Pidgin in Ajegunle area of Lagos State, Nigeria an on-going research project on the corpus of Nigerian Pidgin. Ajegunle town was and is one of the worst slums in the State and most of its residents see themselves as slum-dwellers. Five sample data transcripts randomly selected from about thirty complete corpora obtained from about a hundred respondents/interlocutors are used in this study. A total of six young adult females (youths) and six young adult males (youths) made up the five samples. Their ages range between 20 and 29 years. Factors such as socio-cultural or ethnic background, sex, age, education, or language preference tend to influence their speech. The sample data transcripts, taken from severally observed and recorded instances of verbal interactions in the area, are considered suffice for analysis in this study.

5. Presentation of Data

(1) Sample Data 1 (two speakers)

This sample was part of recorded conversations between an orange vendor (OV) and her friend (F) at Wilmer Bus Stop, Ajegunle, Lagos State, Nigeria. (Orange Vendor = OV; Friend = F).

- i. OV: [Under a shed] Dis won we peson de pil orenj fo dis kaind hot aftunun ... Ai hop se ... [Her friend strolled in] Ah ah! Sisi Ononma, yu don kom egein? ... e en?
- ii. F: [She grabbed an orange] Abeg, pil dis won fo mi nao!
- iii. OV: Au a go pil orenj fo yu? Yu ... yu wey de ow mi.
- iv. F: Foget dat tin abeg.
- v. OV: I sopus ifun teik naif ... teik posu yu komot fo dis pleis. [Raised the knife]
- vi. F: Wetin apin nao? Abi ... ? Shey dat rons of yestade?
- vii. OV: Yu de fok op gan, yu de fok op. Wel, di orange wey yu don bai fo di past won wik nao, yu neva ifun ...
- viii. F: Oooh! [Raised her hands in frustration] ... si ... si, ai no sei na ... wetin ... wetin yu wan yan bi dis.
- ix. OV: Yu go fit gif mi deposit fo ...?
- x. F: Ao mosh? Ao mosh? Ao mosh?
- xi. OV: Yu no sey na ondred naira wey yu bai dat dei!
- xii. F: Ondred naira?
- xiii. OV: Wit yo boifrend! Yu no as hi bi!

- xiv. F: Abeg, foget dat tin!
- xv. OV: Meik ai tel yu tru; meik ai tel yu tru, a bi yo sista, bot a go tel yu tru. Yu dey spoil maket fo mi nao, yu dey spoil bisnes ... [Laughter] Ah ah ...
- xvi. F: Aa! ... OK ... So yu no go kom gif mi ... eni orenj? Meik ... ai teik ...
- xvii. OV: Au ai go gif yu? Ai no trost yu nau! [Attempted to snatch the orange back]
- xviii. F: Abeg, abeg ... Yu don ... fok op ... Yu don fol mai and. Pil dis won!
- xix. OV: Yu do fol mi abeg, yu fol mi! Ogonma, yu fol mi. Ogonma foget dat tin, yu fol mi.

(2) Sample Data 2 (Two speakers)

This sample is an extract from a conversation between two females at the front of Speaker B's house, in a street in Ajegunle.

- i. A: Yu bin si Florence?
- ii. B: Winsh dee a si am sef? I don te we mai ai kash am.
- iii. A: No main am, shi bi twe!
- iv. B: Shi tink se na beta man i mari.
- v. A: A se di gel na Kpemgbu.
- vi. B: If to se na mi get di shansh we im get ...
- vii. A: ... Dat bobo fo don Kre!
- viii. B: A se man most shain im ai!
- ix. A: ... No JJC fo dis obodo we wi de.
- x. B: ... No slakin ... yu noin se A bi biaind beib nao ...

- xi. A: A se A fo don chop im ai korokoro.
- xii. B: ... Omo, foget dat said.

(3) Sample 3 (Two female speakers at Boundary, Ajegunle)

- i. A: ehen, Ai ia se Oson de bransh dis said tode ... Ai go obten am ..., abi wetin yu fil?
- ii. B: Na tru nao, yu we wan shop mit ... yu go most fit drop.
- iii. A: [Laughed] na so nao, notin fo notin. Im go drops, abi nao? Nwobi and Shepe most flo dis efni.
- iv. B: Me sef de una kru oh!
- v. A: Si yu sef go sain yo kongo? [Both laughed] Na mi, na mi ... Ai de meik tins shele fo dis said, ekweme!
- vi. B: Ai de tel yu.

(4) Sample Data 4 (Three male speakers at a hotel in Boundary, Ajegunle)

- i. A: Wai yu no go shop inof lifa?
- ii. B: Eniwia! ... eh
- iii. A: Lifa!
- iv. B: Na wia di pleis ... na wia ... na wia Ajegunle dee ... Yu ondastand, um? So ... na so I jos bi ... so ... wi go de meik tins apun fo di mufs. Ajegunle na fo Webba, yu onastand? I get won taim we dem se dem won dimolsh Ajegunle, bot wi let dem self no se ... meik una on, una fit? [Chuckled] Ao I won apun?
- v. A: Dem no bon dem!
- vi. C: Ai de ask dem ... dem won kom fil.

- vii. B: At list nao, so ... aniwia Ai go aot, Ai de tel pipu se ... Ol boi, una don enta dis end ... Una no ondastrand?

(5) Sample Data 5 (Three male speakers, at the house of Speaker B, Wilmer Road, Ajegunle)

- i. A: Ol boi, si en, I get won Erin ma fo Feis Tu (Phase 2), dis won no bi dat ... fo Feis Tu! We de apun dea nao, yu no ondastrand?
- ii. B: Dat Erinma de fok op!
- iii. A: No bi sa ...
- iv. B: Omo, fashi dat won ...
- v. C: Fashi dat tin, abeg.
- vi. B: Dat won ... dat won eeh, kos de folo am from fileij dairektli. [Laughter] Omo, lif dat won eh ... dat won nefa [More laughter].
- vii. C: Ol boi, Ai de fil fo yu o. [To A] A de fil am, Sege!
- viii. A: [Trying to regain floor] Won ... won kaind ... Erinma jost kom from fileij kom de get wings ... Ah, ol boi yu no fold im wings?

6. Data Analysis

In this analysis, each of the five data samples is examined as separate discourse in terms of its tenor and turn taking mechanism. Sequences and different phases are treated based on the meaning potential of its strategy.

Sample 1 is a discourse involving two young adult females, an orange vendor (OV) and her friend (F). OV had been sitting under a shed near a popular bus stop (station) peeling and hawking her oranges before F joined her. Both interlocutors share similarity or identity in terms of sex and age, so the relationship between them appears to be very intimate and informal. Hence, social proximity rather than distance can be observed to exist between them. This is evident in the manner in which their conversation started. OV opened the floor with a friendly and informal shout of surprise: *Ah ah! Sisi Ononma, yu don kom agein ... e en?* ('Ah ah! Ononma girl, so you here again?'). The use of the interrogative form by OV to welcome her friend and to express a pleasant surprise simply demonstrates that there exist an intimate cordial relationship between them. The use of the honorific, 'Sisi Ononma' tends to portray a casual relationship between the interlocutors. The use of noise, 'Ah ah,' to express surprise also indicates a level of intimacy between OV and F. The use of the second person singular pronoun, 'yu' in Clauses (i), (iii), (v), (vii), (ix), (xi), and (xiii) also reflects the casual nature of their discourse. There is the use of 'Abeg' in Clauses (ii) and (xiv) and noises 'Oooh' in Clause (viii) by F to take the floor from OV who was the current speaker. This strategy of taking the floor when it is not voluntarily yielded is ascribed to informal discourse because of its context of situation involving intimate relationships. It is turn-taking mechanism that tends to feature more prominently in non-standard dialects or languages of people of low social class such as the majority of the speakers of NP in Ajegunle.

The use of 'Laughter,' a non-linguistic phenomenon, as a turn-taking or discourse technique is also observable in this sample discourse. In clauses (xv) laughter is employed by OV to signal to F that she had understood the point that F was trying to make (her

request to have a free orange) but which she jokingly refused. It will most likely sound odd or embarrassing to use laughter in a very formal context in standard languages since it tends to be associated with humour, banter, and jokes.

Sample 2 is an extract from the transcript of corpora obtained at one of the interlocutor's resident in Ajegunle. Two young females were gossiping about their friend, Florence, who just got married to a rich young man in their neighbourhood.

Their discourse opens with Speaker A asking Speaker B when last she saw their friend, Florence, who we later understand to have just been married. The use of interrogative form, such as *Uh bin si Florence?*, is restricted to starting a conversation between peers, colleagues, and mates whose social relationship is very intimate and cordial. Interrogative forms are hardly employed in formal contexts since they tend to convey an idea or feeling of rudeness and impoliteness. Speaker B's response to the opening interrogation is another interrogative form common in monologues when the speaker is simply querying him/herself: *Winsh dee a si am sef?* ('When did I even see her?' / 'Which day did I even see her?'). This shows Speaker B trying to recall the last time she saw Florence. This technique of responding to a question by asking oneself another question in a seeming monologue may also be regarded as an attribute of non-standard dialects or languages such as NP. In a formal context, it would be inappropriate since it tends to show shoddiness, sloppiness, or slack on the part of its speaker. This is perhaps why interrogatives like that are usually avoided in formal occasions.

There is the use of the second person singular pronoun, 'yu' which also indicates that the relationship between interlocutors is very intimate. The pronoun is first used by Speaker A in Clause (i) and

later used in Clause (x) by Speaker B. Another interesting turn-taking technique used in Sample 2 is the alternating sequence where Speaker A makes a statement which is corroborated by Speaker B either by concluding/completing the current speaker's statement or by correcting it through an extended argument. This tendency seems to feature prominently in gossips as the interlocutors alternate turns by adding, correcting, or emphasizing further information. It appears that both interlocutors were engaged in a verbal dueling to prove who could display more prowess in their discourse. Thus, negative expressions, inappropriate in formal contexts, such as slang, swear, and abusive words and banters: ... *shi bi twe!* ('she is a fool'); ... *di gel na Kpemgbu* ('... the girl is stupid/unwise'); ... *don Kre!* ('... is ruined'); *No slakin* ('No room for sluggard'); ... *A bi biaind beib nao* ... ('... I am a two-timing girl' / 'I am very smart!'); and ... *chop im ai korokoro* ('... exploit/cheat on him openly'); are overtly employed in their altercation. From their discourse, they were deriding Florence for being faithful to her husband by not being wayward. This is the kind of attitude or behaviour either of them would have exhibited if she had married Florence's husband. There is the lack of laughter and the use of disaffectionate and boastful expressions in their discourse which tend to point to the general thread or direction of gossips!

Sample 3 is a transcript of part of a discourse by two young females at Boundary side of Ajegunle town. This conversation started with the use of noises, *ehen*, to signal the desire or intention of the speaker to commence a dialogue. It is used for introducing the topic/subject matter of discourse. It also indicates the informal nature of the discourse as it would be considered rude to begin a formal discourse with such noises. It may however be employed to draw attention to new information or new queries in a relevant and

appropriate context. There is a profuse use of the second person singular pronoun, *yu*, and slangy words like *drop*, *shain yo kongo*, and panegyrics like *ekweme* by both interlocutors to show their level of intimacy. It seems both ladies were planning for an outing that evening and were excited and boastful of how they would have fun and enjoy themselves. Laughter is another device used in this discourse to demonstrate their cordiality and acquaintances. The use of emphatic expressions like *Ai de tel yu* ('I told you') and interrogative form *abi wetin yu fi!* ('Or what do you think?') is also a pointer to the informal nature of their discourse.

Sample 4 is a discourse involving three rascally young males at a local hotel in Ajegunle town. The youngsters can be described as braggarts who were eager to boast about their social exploits in Ajegunle which seems to give them courage and self-confidence. Outsiders see any youngster who lives in Ajegunle as a hoodlum, rascal, and brazenly daring! Thus their discourse aptly commenced with an interrogative form by Speaker A: *Wai yu no go shop inof lifa?* ('Why won't you be courageous or bold?') appreciating or commending Speaker B who appears to have been born in Ajegunle town and who seems to have a lot knowledge and experience of the place. This is perhaps why Speaker A, in Clauses (i) and (iii), exclaimed *lifa!* ('courage!'). This boldness is also evident in the speech of Speaker B in his narration of the failed attempt by a military regime to demolish many of the shanties built by Ajegunle residents in the middle 1980's. To demonstrate his courage while narrating his story, he chuckled to show his derision for constituted authorities. This chuckle is embedded in the following rhetorical questions to prove that those who live in Ajegunle are bold, courageous, and fearless: *una fit?* ('Do you dare?') [Chuckles] *Ao I won apun?* ('How will that happen?'). This is followed by a

statement of warning: *Dem no born dem!* ('They have not been born that will try it!').

There is also the use of the plural second personal pronoun, *una*, to denounce the government officials that attempted to carry out a demolishing order in Ajegunle and to reassure the other two of his power or courage to protect them and every member of Ajegunle community. Speaker C's interjection (a rhetorical question): *Ai de ask dem* ('I am wondering if they dare') ... *dem won kom fil* ('they wanted to ...') tends to support Speaker A's earlier assertion. The turn-taking technique of interjecting and the use of short noises by the interlocutors also point to the fact that their discourse is purely informal even though the subject matter was something very serious.

Sample 5 is a discourse by another group of three youngsters at Ajegunle. This is more or a chat about a new girl that one of them was trying to date. The girl lived in Phase Two, another popular suburb, in Lagos State, Nigeria. It seems Speaker A had had an earlier failed relationship with another girl at that place and that may be responsible for the negative responses he got from Speakers B and C. So when he introduced the topic of his gist, his friends jeered and mocked instead of praising and encouraging him. To commence his gist, he used the common expression, *Ol boi, si en ...* ('Guys, listen ...'). But as soon as he mentioned ... *won Erinma fo Feis Tu* his friends became angry and were no longer ready to listen to his story. The other two then took the floor from him. In spite of his frantic effort to regain lost floor, he could no longer convince or persuade his friends to listen to him. Laughter was used as a technique to ridicule Speaker A's effort to inform his friend that he was actually talking about a different girl. Speaker C is even more disparaging in his comment: *Ol boi, Ai de fil fo yu o!* ('Guy, I pity you!'). The markers of tenor of this and turn-taking techniques employed in this

sample transcript simply illustrate an informal discourse usage.

7. Conclusions

From the foregoing analysis of the five samples of the transcripts of data for this study, certain conclusions can be deduced regarding their discourse patterns, devices, and techniques or strategies. Generally, all samples exhibit more of informal features or characteristics of human languages. It appears that much of NP discourse is associated with informal contexts because their tenor is actually marked by non-distant socio-cultural relations. The fact that the tools of discourse analysis such as tenor of discourse and turn-taking mechanisms can be applied to NP discourse testifies to its descriptive and explanatory power and adequacy. The low social class of most speakers of NP who live in Ajegunle area of Lagos State is a significant factor in determining its appropriate tenor of discourse and its turn-taking mechanisms.

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Glossary

mufs = neighbourhood

chop inof lifa = boldness, courage

koko (Yoruba) = main issue

omo (Yoruba) = guy (young male or female)

okwu (Igbo) = talk

bobo (Yoruba) = young man

sege (Hausa) = an exclamation expressing emphasis

wings = pride

fall = to humble, humiliate; gain an upper hand; win a verbal contest

or an argument

drop = to give money out freely; to be generous

fall im end = to visit someone for a strong reason

bransh = to pay a short visit to someone

kpemgbu = a fool

JJC = an inexperienced person; a novice

obodo (Igbo) = city

slakin = to be slow and fearful

bihaind beib = a flirith; a girl who dates two or more men
simultaneously

obtein = to collect money from someone

twe = a sluggard, a fool

kre = to ruin

shoto = rubbish

shele (Yoruba) = an event, occurrence, or happening

ekwueme (Igbo) = one who does whatever s/he says

echi (Igbo) = tomorrow

rimuf = to take one's leave

ekwe (Igbo) = a scream or shout

moda krismas = a generous lady

shepe = strong drinks

nwobi = chopped roasted meat

fol mai and = I am humiliated or put to shame