

Discourse Analysis of a Typical Public Car Park Conversations in Nigeria: A Case Study of Uyo Central Park in Akwa Ibom State

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ABSTRACT

The Linguistic choices of car park conversations in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, are examined in this work using discourse analysis framework. There is an attempt to identify significant linguistic choices and the various techniques of linguistic expressions at this. The study made a tape recording of selected conversations from different people in the car park. Investigations reveal that the car park dealers make use of simple and compound complex sentences in Pidgin English and Ibibio dialect. Analysis on the car park discourse is based on frame analysis, turn taking and discourse markers. The study also describes and identifies basic discursive patterns among participants in a car park discourse. The car park is seen as a different language community where deviant linguistic items, code-mixing and code-switching abound. Children who have a better future should however be discouraged from mixing up too frequently with park dealers whose conversations are rooted mainly in Pidgin English.

Keywords: Car Park Conversations, discourse analysis, park dealers

INTRODUCTION

Words mean different things to different people, based on each person's experience and direct relationship of these experiences to particular words. For example, a medical doctor says, "Your mother has myelodysplastic syndrome", the listener is already upset that his mother has been ill and doctors could not find out what was wrong and now the listener is also confused. He has no frame of reference for those words and not even sure what questions to ask for an explanation. Although, "Bone marrow failure" is not much better, but at least, the listener has a basis for asking some questions to learn about his mother's illness.

The importance and influence of communication on human behaviour are dramatically underscored by Keating (1994) who holds that "communication is powerful; it brings companions to our side or scatters our rivals, it re-assures or alerts children and forges consensus or battle lines between us" The source implies that communication- the ability to share one's beliefs, values, ideas and

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feelings- is at the heart of all human contact. Whether one negotiates an affordable price or an inflated price with car park dealers depends invariably on how one is able to converse with these dealers. The concept of the car park (motor park) as it is conceived in Nigeria differs from the semantic, pragmatics or socio-linguistic appropriations designed or associated with the word in the native English language. In fact, the nearest conception of the idea embodied in car park that may be found in the English culture finds representation in the compound word 'car-park', which views it as "an area or a building where people can leave the cars". It is also seen as a station for the passengers to get on or off buses or taxis. Certainly, even the concept of a 'park' in the Nigerian context, without modifying the adjective 'motor' would also yield itself to the process of social; constructionism among the designated discourse practitioners.

The world of the car park invariably incorporates an entire array of realities and structures (with designatory identities and categorizations) which may not be meaningfully detachable from the term 'motor park' such as the notions of market and commerce, road transport, road workers among a host of other contingent concepts and discursive categorizations. According to Egole (2013), in a headline titled "What goes on in most car parks at night".

Most car parks across Nigeria do not only serve the purpose of loading and offloading passengers. They also serve several purposes which people do not know (1).

The resultant world of the car parks in Uyo metropolis in Akwa Ibom State, thus encapsulates a whole new string of socially constructed phenomena. Against this background, this study is geared towards bringing up different perspectives on the analysis of car park conversations.

UNDERSTANDING DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Discourse analysis has a strong link with other disciplines other than language and this affects the way scholars see the discipline. To arrive at an understanding of discourse analysis, it is pertinent that we define the term discourse. Originally, the word "discourse" comes from Latin "discursus", which denotes conversation and speech.

Discourse is generally seen as language in use. Sociologists and philosophers tend to use the term discourse to describe the conversations and meaning behind them by a group of people who hold certain ideas in common. Johnstone (2002) defines discourse as "actual instances of communication in the medium of language" (2). It is also referred to as connected speech or writing. In broad terms, the notion of discourse speaks to an understanding that social phenomena are never fixed or absolute, for which reason meaning could never be ultimately fixed. One of the basic understandings of the concept of discourse, based on the works of Michael Foucault is that discourse creates a world by

shaping our perceptions of it, pulling together chains of associations that produce a meaningful understanding, and then organizing the way we behave towards the object in the world and towards other people. Furthermore, according to Foucault (1973), discourse does not only shape our world but generates knowledge and truth. Knowledge for Foucault (as for most other structuralists and poststructuralists) was not something that existed independently of language. For linguists, discourse is an extended stretch of language, such as we find in conversations, narratives, polemical statements, political speeches, etc., is not just a string of sentences, one following the other, but rather, it exhibits properties which reflect its organization, coherence, rhetorical force, thematic focus, and so on

Discourse analysis on the other hand is viewed as language above the sentence or clause. It is the aspect of linguistics that is concerned with how we build up meaning in 'larger communicative units rather than grammatical units. It studies meaning in texts, paragraph and conversation, rather than in single sentence. Stubbs (1983) describes discourse analysis thus:

The term discourse analysis is very ambiguous. I will use it in this book to refer mainly to the linguistic analysis of naturally occurring connected speech or written discourse. Roughly speaking, it refers to attempts to study the organization of language above the sentence or above the clause, and therefore to study larger linguistic units, such as conversational exchanges or written texts. It follows that discourse analysis is also concerned with language use in social contexts, and in particular with interaction or dialogue between speakers (p. 1).

Brown and Yule (1983) observe that discourse analysis examines how addressers construct linguistic messages in order to interpret them. Every instance of language use is situated in a particular social context, which determines the kind of meaning communicated. Yule (2014) describes speech as a form of social identity and is used consciously or unconsciously to indicate members of different social groups. There are contextual features that shape the kind of language people use. These include: The interactants themselves, their discourse roles, the physical environment of the discourse, the worldview and cultural practices in the domain of the discourse, and so forth. Discourse analysis looks at the language together with these features in order to interpret meaning. This is why any good discourse analysis will generate data based on observation and intuition of the language users as demonstrated in this work. It is also pertinent to note that discourse analysis is concerned not only with complex utterances by one speaker, but more frequently with the turn-taking interaction between two or more, and with the linguistic rules and conventions that are taken to be in play and governing such discourses in their given context. The overall goal of any discourse analysis is to explain how language users construct and interpret meaning in discourse.

THE CAR PARK IN UYO

The typical car park in Uyo features different categories of people who actively take part in its everyday discourse. The list begins with the drivers of vehicles, then to the staff or people who deal in loading luggage into the vehicle, then to both the passengers, sellers, and beggars in that area. The concept of the car park is so deep, that it transcends the idea of a stationary garage; a cleared space with often uniformly painted uses and cars with people in it, waiting to dislodge or load passengers, but extends to the ephemeral space of the motor vehicle, in flight, bound for its destination and often to the street. Most often, the interaction between the driver or the conductor and the commuter continues all through the course of the journey and one may never forget the literal market, featuring outright buying and selling of virtually all imaginable and handy items of sale, which the stationary motor park is host to. A system and structure of things ordered around the motor park thus unfolds, with designations and classification of identities, and an inventory of peculiar vocabulary.

A close reading of the data gathered in this study however reveals such common discourse strategies used within the world of the car park. These strategies include the ploy of deceit, costly humour, song, begging, affectations, impersonation, sarcasm, bulldozing and face-threatening acts among others, used by mega-ponic advertisers, car park traders, streets-people in general, as well as passengers alike. The common discursive strategies travel with the ever on-course commercial vehicles and ephemeral extensions of the motor park.

METHOD

Given the noisy nature of the research environment, tape-recording method of collecting linguistic data was adopted, while participatory observation method was used in gathering the data analyzed in the study. The researchers 'visited the Itam Park, Mbiabong Oku Park, Nnuong Oku Park and Abak Road Park within Uyo metropolis. Unsuspected by the subjects, the researchers recorded their rhetorical pieces which were subsequently transcribed into writing. Data obtained from these sources were taken as sample representatives of what is obtainable anywhere not visited within the target study area, as all the parks in Uyo metropolis share the same socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This makes the car park dealers a linguistic group with almost, if not virtually the same speech styles and mannerisms.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents an illustration of the infinite repertoire of discursive practices and conversations constituting the discourse of the car park in Uyo metropolis, Akwa Ibom State. The discourse is so distinguished (from all other forms of

discourse), any willing speaker could then go ahead to elect whether to identify or not identify with the car park community, by plunging his/herself into the practical world of that community.

Table 1: Car Park Discourse in Uyo Central Parks

Conversations	Utterances
Conversation 1	Interlocutor A- Fine boy, Aka Uke. Interlocutor B- Bros Interlocutor C- Abeg, who dey go Ik. Interlocutor B- Na me! Interlocutor A- Oga, abeg, na who call you first. Interlocutor C- Oya, make we dey go, wey your motor?
Conversation 2	Interlocutor A-How much to Ik? Interlocutor B- Na jus 500 naira. Interlocutor A- For wetin Interlocutor B- Oga no talk too much, just com enter, na better price I call for you.
Conversation 3	Interlocutor A- Madame, make I help you carry your load. Interlocutor B- No worry.
Conversation 4	Interlocutor A- Eh, my man, dat price you just called is too exorbitant. Interlocutor B- Oga Professor, all dis grammar u dey talk sef, na bcos you na you, I call dat price sef.
Conversation 5	Interlocutor A- Oga Professor, you no no say recession dey. Interlocutor B- Oya take Interlocutor A- Mbok, oga I no get change.
Conversation 6	Interlocutor A- Fine gal, no dey stand under the sun oh, no spoil ur fine skin, abeg com sit down. Interlocutor B- thank you very much, am grateful. Interlocutor A- Ado akem, hmm, Uyai iban.
Conversation 7	Interlocutor A- Madame, Ehm..., Dis Ur Load Too Much. Interlocutor B- How you go dey call dis kind small tin, too much?
Conversation 8	Interlocutor A-Madame, no dey worry, we go soon full. Interlocutor B- You sure? Interlocutor A- Na me dey tell u na, E no tey d oda bus jus move, na one way to Port-Harcout. Interlocutor B- Okay ooo.
Conversation 9	Interlocutor A-Madame, you go drop something for ur load. Interlocutor B- Drop wetin? Kpem Idem fo Interlocutor A- Ah! Oya na, go pay for two seats be datnaa. Interlocutor B- My friend load dis thing, make I comot here.

Conversation 10	<p>Interlocutor A-You think say dis my oga no get sense, u think say him mumu lyk dose ur four children.</p> <p>Interlocutor B- I no blame you, you dey craze.</p> <p>Interlocutor C- Oya, E don do ooo.</p>
Conversation 11	<p>Interlocutor A-Eh, ma dame, you go enter drop abi.</p> <p>Interlocutor B- No wahala, just dey go, I dey in a hurry</p>
Conversation 12	<p>Interlocutor A-Mama Etimbuk comot for road before I jam u.</p> <p>Interlocutor B- Jam me naa, and make we see if you no go take care of my children.</p> <p>Interlocutor A- Abeg carry you and your children comot my road.</p>
Conversation 13	<p>Interlocutor A-How much you dey sell dis one?</p> <p>Interlocutor B-500 naira.</p> <p>Interlocutor A- Wetin b him use</p> <p>Interlocutor B- If you jus spray am one, pheem? All de cockroach oh, rat oh, snake sef, go jus die.</p> <p>Interlocutor A- Hmm, u sure?</p> <p>Interlocutor B- Madame you try am first, na you go com order for more.</p>
Conversation 14	<p>Interlocutor A-Broda, mbok hep mi</p> <p>Interlocutor B-Wetin be your own?</p> <p>Interlocutor A- Na hunger</p> <p>Interlocutor B- Afon. You thing say I be Buhari</p> <p>Interlocutor A- Mbok, Abasi aya udiiong</p>

Source: Fieldwork, 2016

It may be noted however that practising the discourse incorporates not only the verbal acts (the adversarial voice modes that characterize it) but also face-threatening as well as gestural acts. One major theme pre-occupies our analysis in this section: it is that of how the discourse of the car park gives away the identity of its practitioners whom, as earlier expounded, include the megaphonic advertisers (who persuade and beckon the passengers), car park traders, streets-people in general, as well as passengers and beggars. Data collected from the various car parks in Uyo reveals a much more standardized structure of discourse which not only strikes the rest of the population as peculiar to the given group, but also displays richness in conceptualization, construction and pragmatic usage. The use of Pidgin English and Ibibio dialect is prominent in this kind of discourse.

Since the car park is usually the first contact of visitors with indigenes of Akwa Ibom State, these dealers employ the use of Pidgin English for easier communication. When confronted with indigenes alike, these dealers use their dialect to communicate. Most times as shown in the table above, code-switching is code mixing employed as they use both Pidgin English and Ibibio Language in conversation. Example of code-switching used in car park conversations as presented in the table above include: in conversation 1, which is commonly used

in the car parks, “Fine boy, Aka Uke” is a good example of code-switching in the car park discourse. Bamgbose (1995) sees code mixing as a major influence of English on Nigeria Languages. It is evident that code mixing or code switching is a universal language phenomenon whereas there is language contact. Here, the car park spokesman firstly woo the passenger by either flattering them with phrases like, “fine boy or fine gal”, “*imaima*” and then asking them in their dialect “*Aka Uke*”, which means “where is your destination”. These dealers believe this expression is common to those who have at least been to Akwa Ibom once or twice, so in case of visitors who have no idea of the Ibibio expression, these dealers end up translating it to English or Pidgin English. Another example of code-switching in car park discourse as presented in the table above is in conversation 5, “*Mbok, Oga I no get change*”.

The use of the Ibibio word “*Mbok*” means “please”. This expression is also predominant in the park. Another expression of code-switching is also in conversation 9, “drop wetin? Kpem idem fo”. From this conversation (between the car park driver and the passenger), it is evident that the passenger is infuriated during the course of negotiating with the driver, so the passenger reacts using the Pidgin English and Ibibio dialect. “Kpem idem fo”, which means “mind yourself oh” is the alternative response in which the passenger chooses to answer the driver. Conversation 14, also reveals the discourse between a beggar and a passenger where there is an interchange of Pidgin and Ibibio language.

In analyzing conversation in the car park, it is evident that there is the predominant use of simple sentences and compound-complex sentences. The simple sentences help the dealers to express an idea at a time, and to focus attention on the idea in an utterance. Simple sentences are preferable during negotiations, and it prevents confusion between both the car park dealers and the commuters, while the compound-complex sentences are mainly used for flattering and deceitful incitements in order to woo customer. From the data presented above, some of the simple sentences discovered are highlighted below.

- Conversation 2: Interlocutor A- How much to Ik?
Interlocutor B- Na jus 500 Naira.
- Conversation 3: Interlocutor A- Make I help you carry your load?
Interlocutor B- No worry.
- Conversation 5: Interlocutor B- Oya take.
- Conversation 13: Interlocutor A- how much you dey sell dis one?
Interlocutor B- Jus 700 Naira.

The above utterances although mostly in Pidgin English can pass for simple sentences. This is because one idea is expressed. Examples of Compound-Complex sentences as cited in the table above include:

- Conversation 2: Interlocutor B- Oga no talk too much, jus come enter, na better price I call for you.

- Conversation 4: Interlocutor B- Oga professor, all this grammar you dey Talk sef, Na because you na you, na y I call dat price.
- Conversation 6: Interlocutor A- Fine girl, no dey stand under the sun oh, no spoil your fine skin, abeg just come sit down.
- Conversation 8: Interlocutor A- Na me dey tell you na, E no tey the oda bus jus move, na one way to Port-Harcourt.
- Conversation 10: Interlocutor A- How u dey reason sef, you think say dis My oga no get sense, or you feel say him Dull lyk ur four children.

The above utterances can pass for compound-complex sentences as a result of the fact that they include two independent clauses and at least one dependent clause. Discourse analysis is sometimes defined as the analysis of language beyond the sentence. This contrasts with types of analysis more typical of modern linguistics, which are chiefly concerned with the study of grammar. Discourse analysts study larger chunks of language as they flow together.

In examining the discourse analysis of car park conversations in Uyo metropolis, the researchers take into consideration the features of conversational analysis such as frame analysis, turn taking, discourse markers and speech acts.

Frame Analysis

Frame analysis is a type of discourse analysis that asks, what activity are speakers engaged in when they speak? What do they think they are doing by talking in this way at this time? Frames are cognitive shortcuts that people use to help make sense of complex information. Jaworski and Coupland (1997) state that participants in a conversation often shift their stance to new or changing situations and the people associated, and thus the discourse in which they are participating. The examples of frame analysis present in the table above focuses on the ways in which these car park dealers, sellers and passengers position themselves, respond and adapt to variations in situations and discourses. In conversation 8, when interlocutor A, which is the driver assures his passenger that “na one way to Port Harcourt”, people who are not familiar with car park terminologies would get confused. What the driver meant with that expression is that once the vehicle starts moving, there will not be halting or branching anywhere. It does not mean that the road to Port Harcourt is straight and narrow.

Another example of frame analysis in car park is as presented in the table above in conversation 9, when interlocutor A tells interlocutor B that “you go pay for two seats”. Interlocutor A (car park dealer) simply asserts that Interlocutor B’s (the passenger) luggage is cumbersome and cannot be fixed into the vehicle as the luggage of one passenger, and therefore Interlocutor B should pay for an extra seat so as to fix the luggage inside the vehicle. The use of the frames “two seats” is common and understandable between the passengers and the dealers, thereby constituting car park terminology. Another predominant use of frames

which is popular in the car parks in Uyo metropolis as shown in the table above is in conversation 11, when Interlocutor A says “madam, you go enter drop abi”. The use of the car park terminology “drop” simply refers to the idea that the passenger boards a vehicle pays for all the seats that is meant to be filled by other passengers, thereby being the lone passenger. This usually happens when the passenger is in a hurry and cannot wait for all the seats in the vehicle to be filled. The use of this terminology is different when used outside the car park context. Another example is seen in conversation 14. The traveller equates himself to Buhari not because he is the President but due to the fact that Buhari as the President of Nigeria custodies all the country’s money and can afford to give out as he wishes. With this impressing the passenger waves off the beggar who is still pleading for help. In other words, the idea of frames has to do with the way people orient themselves to a discursive context.

Turn Taking

Turn taking is a general feature of conversation. Turn taking is a basic characteristic of any normal conversation, speakers and listeners change their roles in order to begin their speech. (Coulthard, 1985). It has been observed that people involved in a conversation do not just talk in a disorderly manner. A person speaks and after his turn, another person takes the floor. Especially in car park discourse which involves mostly negotiations, bargaining, rowdy and noisy conversations would lead to confusion between the dealers and the passengers. At the first instance, most dealers rush and engage in rowdy conversations with the passenger, but once the passenger has selected the dealer of his choice, the rest of the conversation is taken in turns. In examining turn taking as used in car park conversations, the researcher will analyze the aspect of adjacency pairs as present in the table above.

Adjacency Pair is a unit of conversation that contains an exchange of one turn each by two speakers. The turns are so related to each other that the first turn requires a range of specific type of response in the second turn. It is a sequence that contains functionally related turns. Examples of Adjacency pairs as present in the table above include:

- i. Question-Answer Pair

Conversation 2:	Interlocutor A- How much to Ik?
	Interlocutor B- Na jus 500 Naira.
- ii. Request- Acceptance/Rejection

Conversation 3:	Interlocutor A-Madam, make I help you carry your load?
	Interlocutor B- No worry.
Conversation 14:	Interlocutor B: Wetin be your own?
	Interlocutor A: Na hunger

Discourse Markers

Discourse markers is the term linguists give to like “well”, “oh” “but” and “and” that break our speech up into parts and show the relation between parts. “Oh” prepares the hearer for a surprising or just-remembered item, and “but” indicates that the sentence to follow is in opposition with the one before. However, these markers do not necessarily mean what the dictionary say they mean. Some people use “and” to start a new thought while some people put “but” at the end of their sentences, as a way of trailing off gently. Discourse markers are also present in car park conversations (in Uyo metropolis), and they might be slightly different from the ones used in a formal setting. The setting for car park conversations is informal and pidgin or Ibibio language (or both) is mostly used during the conversations. Examples of discourse markers in car park conversations include abeg, Oya, Eh, mbok, ah, oh. These markers are present in the table 1 above. “Abeg”, which means “please” in English, could be viewed as a discourse marker in the car park setting. In conversation 1, interlocutor A uses “abeg” during the conversation when he said “Oga, abeg, na who call you first”. The use of the expression “abeg” by the speaker shows the speaker’s attitude as it connects with the discourse.

Swan (2005) (as cited in https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Discourse_marker) views discourse marker as a word or expression which shows the connection between what is being said and the wider context. Swan affirms that a discourse marker indicates a speaker’s attitude to what he is saying. In conversation 1, it is clear from the speaker’s use of the discourse marker “abeg” that the speaker is almost infuriated, but tries to calm down thereby pleading with the passenger to disregard his colleague’s response. “Oya”, also is an expression in Nigerian Pidgin English which means readiness or urgency. In conversation 1, “Oya, make we dey go, wey your motor”, interlocutor C is impatient and cannot tolerate an argument from the two dealers, so the speaker selects the first person who called him. The discourse markers in this car park conversation play a role in managing the flow and structure of discourse. The word “Afon” (meaning good) as used by interlocutor B in conversation 14 in the table, expresses a kind of exasperation on the part of the passenger, perhaps he did not expect that kind of request that early morning by a beggar. He appears irritable and almost directs the beggar to Buhari.

CONCLUSION

Over the years, the car park has played a significant role as the first contact of foreigners in a particular area or state. This study examined car park conversations in Uyo metropolis with a view to analyzing as well as appreciating the aesthetics of the car park discourse. The analysis thus presented a random selection of conversations which were tape recorded by the researchers through observation

and listening, with a view to analyzing the role played by such discourse practices in creating the identity of the car park dealers as well as discourse. The analysis therefore buttresses the view that the language employed in the car park is specific in nature as such its register belongs to the larger language group known as English for Specific Purpose (ESP). English used in the park business in this work is rooted in the Nigerian English variety. This study therefore recommends that young people who travel with adult passengers should be discouraged from utilizing the pidgin-bined expressions of the car park dealers as it is not healthy for their communication life.

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