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TURN -TAKING STRATEGIES USED IN WOLE SOYINKA'S 'THE LION AND THE JEWEL'

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Abstract

Conversation analysis is an approach to language study used to analyze turn-taking in naturally occurring conversation. The theory generally describes the structure and sequential patterns in formal or casual conversation. Dialogues in Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel* could be classified as naturally occurring conversations because they involve two or more people (characters) who take turns to speak on matters that are concerned with marriage proposal in Ilujinle village. So, as important as conversation discourse is in dealing with social issues in society, not enough scholarly attention has been given to it. Therefore, this study seeks to explore turn-taking strategies in the above-mentioned text to see how they are being used in it. The paper adopts as its theoretical framework Sacks et al (1974) conversation analysis. The data for the study were analysed bearing in mind the topic of the study, that is, turn taking strategies used in Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel*. Turn-taking strategies such as taking the turn, holding the turn, yielding the turn, ellipses, greetings, questions, apologies, objections, request, statements, complete sentences, naming and eye gaze run throughout the text. The research found that turn-taking strategies used in the text make the conversation orderly and meaningful. The study concludes that conversation analysis is an excellent tool in handling social issues in society.

**Keywords:** Conversation analysis, turn-taking strategies, Wole Soyinka, holding the turn, yielding the turn

1. Introduction

Conversation analysis is an approach used to study social interaction, embracing both verbal and non-verbal aspects in a situation of everyday life (Rukanuddin, 2013, p.39). The theory was developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s by Harvey Sacks, Emmanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson (Sidnell,

2016, Para. 2). Turn-taking strategies are strategies used by interlocutors to manage turns in conversations as speakers or listeners (Sinaga et al, 2021, p.92) Stenstrom (1994 as cited in Nurul, n.d, p.28) asserts that there are three turn-taking strategies, namely, taking the turn, holding the turn and yielding the turn.

### **Taking the turn**

Taking the turn is used to initiate talk. It is divided into three parts, namely, starting up, taking over and interrupting. Starting up refers to when an interlocutor begins talk with hesitant or clean start. An interlocutor who begins talk with hesitant start often employs fillers such as uhm, well, I mean and hm to begin talking. Any interlocutor who uses any of these subdivisions of starting up strategy to initiate talk is not well prepared to talk. Clean start indicates that the interlocutor is well prepared to start talking (p.28). Taking over occurs when the current speaker acknowledges the receipt of the previous speaker's message, examines it before responding. Lexical items such as oh, ah, no, yes are often used by the current speaker to respond to previous speaker's utterances (p.28). Interruption occurs when a listener does not wait for the current speaker to stop talking before he/she talks. The listener may interrupt at the beginning or in the middle of current speaker's utterance (p.29).

### **Holding the turn**

Stenstrom (1994 as cited in Nurul, n.d, p.29) asserts that holding the turn simply means to go on talking. There are four devices that enable the current speaker to hold turn. They are filled pauses, silent pauses, lexical repetition and new start. Filled pauses occur when the speaker breaks off speech while continuing to speak, eg uh, uhm, hm (p.29). A speaker who uses this device while talking is not ready to relinquish floor to his/her listeners. Silent pause is a period of non articulation by the speaker. This signal often keeps the listeners waiting until the current speaker finishes talking, examples, uhm, hm (p.30). Lexical repetition refers to when a single word is used repeatedly. It shows that the speaker wishes to continue talking, examples, if, if, if, if (p.30). A speaker often makes a new start so as to avoid losing completely while interacting with others.

### **Yielding the turn**

This is the situation in which the speaker relinquishes turn to the prospective next speaker. Stenstrom (1994 cited in Nurul, n.d. p.30) points out that there are three subdivisions of turn- yielding

strategy, namely, prompting appealing, and giving up. In prompting, the speaker act promptly to make some interlocutors respond promptly than others. That leads to turn yielding signals like greeting, questioning, apology, invitation, objection, offer and request (p.30). Appealing is a turn which signals the listener to give feedbacks, examples, right, question tag, all right, ok, you know, you see (p.31). Giving up refers to when a speaker realizes that he/she has nothing more to say or thinks it is time for listener to talk (p.31). Turn can be yielded at a point where the speaker has completed his/her utterance.

Turn can be relinquished by eye gaze or mentioning the name or the title of the prospective next speaker (Agbedo, 2015). Ellipses are used to indicate the point where the speaker pauses to think of what to say next while making an utterance (Guide to Grammar and Writing, n .d)

Soyinka is preoccupied with lecturing, play writing and acting. He has been a visiting professor at the University of Cambridge, Sheffield and Yale. He taught drama and literature in the Universities of Lagos, Ibadan and Ile Ife. He founded the theatre group known as *The 1960 Masks*. In 1964, he founded *The Orisun Theatre Company* in which he acted and produced his own plays. He focuses his writings on mythology of Yoruba with Ogun the god of iron and war at centre. His plays *Swamp Dwellers*, *The Lion and the Jewel*, *The Trial of Brother Jero*, *The Strong Breed* and *A Dance of the Forests* were published in 1963. Others are *The Road* published in 1965, *Madmen and Specialists* published in 1971, *The Bacchae of Euripides* (1973), *Death and The king's Horsemen* published in 1975, *Bacchae for the African Stage* and *Opera Wonyosi* published in 1981. Soyinka's latest dramatic works are *A play of Giants* (1984) and *Lequiem for a Futurologists* (1985), He has written two novels called *The Interpreters* (1965), and *Season of Anomy* (1973). He wrote *The Man died* in 1972, *Ake* in 1981. His collections of poems include *Idare and Other Poems* (1963), *Poems from Prison* (1969), *A Shuttle in the Crypt* (1972), *Ogun Abibiman* (1976), and *Mandela's Earth and other Poems* (Soyinka, 2022).

In *The Lion and the Jewel*, Baroka the Bale of Ilujinle represents the past culture while Lakunle the

young school teacher represents the modern-side of the culture. Lakunle loves Sidi and wishes to marry her. She also loves him and wishes to be his wife, but insists that he must pay the bride-price before the marriage will be feasible. Lakunle is against the payment of bride price. To him, payment of bride-price is like buying a heifer from the market stall and such an act can make Sidi to become his mere property. Baroka, the Bale of Ilujinle, is also interested in marrying Sidi. He sends his most senior wife, Sadiku, to go to Sidi and tell her his intention. Sadiku goes to Sidi and relates Baroka's message to her. She tells Sadiku that Baroka is an old man, she will not marry him. Sadiku returns to Baroka and tells him what Sidi says, he becomes angry and uses all the means at his disposal to win Sidi's love. Baroka deceives Sadiku that he has lost his libido but hopes to regain it whenever he makes love with a virgin. Sadiku returns to Sidi and tells her that Baroka is no more a man. Sidi goes to his palace in order to jeer at him. At last, Baroka deflowers her and she marries him and rejects Lakunle who still desires to marry her after the incident.

Many scholars and researchers have studied Soyinka's pieces of work, especially *The Lion and the Jewel* from both literary and linguistic aspects. Specifically, the text has been explored through stylistics, discourse analysis, semantics and pragmatics but no enough scholarly attention has been given to turn-taking strategies in it. Again, most scholars are more preoccupied with the use of recorded conversation to undertake studies on conversation analysis than conversation in literary text. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate how turn-taking strategies manifest in the literary text through the following objectives:

1. to identify turn-taking strategies in the text.
2. to discuss the turn-taking strategies in consonance with the text preoccupation.

## 2. Review of Related Literature

Aceron (2015) carried out research on Conversation Analysis: The judge and the lawyers' courtroom interactions. The study aimed to examine the organisation of courtroom interaction and to describe how participants take turns in courtroom

conversation during preliminary session. The paper employed descriptive qualitative analysis technique of data analysis to describe how turn-taking in courtroom conversation during preliminary session was accomplished by the participants. Extract one shows that the judge's questioning strategy was characterised by his own style in form and use. During the preliminary hearing, most of the questions the judge asked were informative in form but interrogative in function. Adjacency pair (question/answer) indicates how the counsel of the complainant responded to the order of the court. It is also clear that in the extract, the counsel of the complainant was not prepared to present its point as it stammered often to complete its points in few seconds. However, the spontaneity and consistency of the language use of the judge as heard from the audio, shows that the judge is a seasoned and experienced lawyer who is different from the counsel of complainant who lacked spontaneity and consistency of language use while speaking in turns. In extract three, the defense counsel used insertion sequence to answer questions in the court. The court seemed not to be aware of what the defense counsel wanted to explain in simple or short sentences. Based on the findings, the study concludes that the judge's questioning was characterized by his own style in form and use. The questions the judge asked during the preliminary hearing were informative in form but interrogative in function. The counsel of the complainant was not ready to present its points as it attempted often to complete its points in few seconds. However, the language use of the judge as heard from the audio indicates that he is a seasoned and experienced lawyer. The counsel of the complainant lacked spontaneity and consistency of language while speaking in turns. The court did not know what the defense counsel wanted to explain in simple or short sentences.

In a similar vein, Gorjian and Habibi (2015) undertook a study on the effect of conversation strategies on the classroom interactions: The case of turn-taking. The study aimed at examining how conversation strategies enhance the quality of talk-in-interaction. Non-random sampling method was used for the selection of the participants in the

speech events. 120 male students who studied English as a foreign language in Azad University in Abadan were selected and divided into two groups. They participated in a homogeneity test based on oxford placement test at pre- intermediate level. Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation for each group were calculated and the result indicated that the average means for the two groups were close to each other. Besides, it was discovered that the standard deviation for experimental group was 24.586% while the one for control group was 13.717%. Moreover, post test score of mean, and standard deviation for each group was calculated and the result indicated that standard deviation for experimental group was 13.838% while the one for control group was 23.38%. The study recommends that conversation strategies should be taught effectively in order to enhance spoken English.

Jansem and Boonsue (n.d) conducted a research on the students' turn-taking strategies in face-to-face and online learning. The aim of the study was to explore students' turn-taking strategies in two different contexts, that is, face-to-face and online discussions. The participants were 12 second year students who studied English as a Second language (ESL) at Chang Mai Rajabhat University. The data were obtained from video recording and entries of online discussion boards. In excerpt one, Nan, the current speaker used verbal language to allocate turn to the next speaker. She also used non-verbal language to interact with other interlocutors. It was discovered that face-to-face discussions were conducted in orderly manner. That is to say the topic of the conversation was initiated, discussed and concluded before next topic was introduced. The study further reveals that turn taking in a face-to-face discussion was managed through verbal and non verbal language. Furthermore, the study affirms that turn-taking strategies were interrupted during face-to-face conversation and online discussions. In the face-to-face situation, the current speakers were interrupted by other interlocutors during the conversation. The online conversation did not flow well because there were overlaps. The study concludes that students who learn language via

face-to-face or online situation can manage their turn-taking in different ways.

Kern (2009) carried out research on communicative competence among Japanese students who studied English for international communication at the Kochi University. The study aimed at finding out how students used turn-taking and turn-maintaining signals to take and maintain the floor. Conversations of seven students were video-taped, transcribed and analysed. The result shows that the students were not shy to take floor and to maintain it. Simultaneous speeches among the students occurred as back channeling. Interruptions also occurred during the conversation; they occurred more than back channeling. The research concludes that the students were not shy to take floor and to maintain it. Simultaneous speeches among them occurred as back channeling. Interruption also occurred during the conversation; they occurred more than back channeling.

Akhimien and Farotimi (2018, in Yakubu, 2020, p.137-138) undertook a study on conversation features and discourse strategies in selected sermons of Pastor E.A Adeboye. The study aimed at identifying and analysing the discourse strategies and conversational features that characterise the sermons and the roles they play in influencing congregation's perception and response to accomplish the speaker's objectives. Three sermons of the pastor were explored in order to identify and analyse the conversational features characterised in them. Schegloff's Conversation Analysis model was adapted as theoretical framework. The researchers obtained the transcribed version of the sermons and analyses them based on conversation analysis approach. The result of the analysis shows that Adeboye's sermons are characterised by conversational features such as feedback, repair mechanism, and turn allocation components. The study further indicates that Pastor Adeboye employed non-verbal conversational features such as pause, smile, laughter, raise of hands and head in his sermons. The study concludes that the pastor cautiously merges these features to make the congregation participate fully in his sermons. The act generates desired reactions from the congregation. The presence of conversational features in pastor

Adeboye's sermons suggests that the sermon could be categorized as kinds of conversations and not soliloquy as some Scholar earlier believed.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

This paper adopts conversation analysis (CA) as its theoretical framework. The theory was propounded by Sacks and his associates, namely, Schegloff and Jefferson. At First, the theory was used to analyse casual conversation, afterwards, it was extended to domains such as educational settings, doctors offices, courts, mass media (Allen, 2017). Conversational analysis contains features such as turn-taking, turn-taking mechanism, turn-taking components, turn-taking strategies, turn-taking cues, adjacency pairs and repair. But this study focuses on turn-taking strategies used in Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel*

### 4. Methodology

Data for this study are dialogues randomly selected from the text under review. Turn-taking strategies in the selected dialogues are identified, analysed, and discussed based on Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) conversation analysis model.

### Data Analysis and Interpretation

The text *The Lion and the Jewel* by Wole Soyinka is characterized by a number of turn-taking strategies.

#### Datum No 1: Using Lexical Item Well to Take Turns.

**Well** is used to take turns in the text, examples:

Sidi: "Well, why should I" p.12

Sidi: "Well, don't you know?" p.12

Sadiku: "Well, will you be Baroka's own jewel?" p.20

Lakunle : "Well, Sidi, I did think...

But Somehow it was not the proper thing" p.22

Baroka: "Well, the plays was much alive until I come?" p.16

In the above dialogues, characters used lexical item **well** to take turns

#### Datum No 2: Using Lexical Item Oh to Take Turns.

**Oh** is used scantily to take floor in the text, examples:

Lakunle: "... oh, it is you Sadiku?" p.19

Baroka: "Oh. Oh. I see you dip your hand into the packets of the school teacher ..." p.50

Sidi: "Oh how I hate him! How I loathe and long to kill the man!" p.59

Characters used **oh** to take turn in the above dialogues

#### Datum No 3: Using No to Take Turns

**No** is widely used in the text to take turn, examples:

Lakunle: "No, no I have Fallen For that tricks before ..." p.4

Sidi: "No, no let the school teacher count!" p.12

Lakunle: "No, no. I've never been drunk all my life" p.13

Sidi: "No, we will not ..." p.35

Baroka: "No, the madness has not gripped them yet." p.39.

Here, the characters used **No** to take turns in their conversations.

#### Datum No 4: Using Lexical Item Yes to Take Turns.

**Yes** is scantily used to take turn in the text, examples:

Lakunle: "Yes, and I will stand by every word I spoke ..." p. 2

Baroka: "Yes, faithful one, I say it is well ..." p.29

In the above dialogues, turns are taken by using lexical item **yes**.

#### Datum No 5: Using Filled Pause or Verbal Fillers to Hold Floors.

Filled pause or verbal fillers are used in the text to hold floor, examples:

Baroka: "... Eh, Mister Lakunle?" p.18

Sadiku: "Ah! Oba Ala is an accommodating good. What a poor figure you cut!" p.36.

Sadiku: "Aaah. It is true what they say. You are going to convert the whole village so that no one will pay the bride-price again" p.36

Sadiku: "Ah! Such is the greed of men," p.42

Baroka: "Ah! I see you love to bait your elders." p. 48.

Filled pause or verbal fillers are employed by the characters in the above dialogues to hold floors.

#### **Datum No 6: Using Silent Fillers to Hold Floor.**

Silent fillers are used by some characters in the text to hold floor and think of what to say next, examples:

Sidi: "Hm?" p.38

Baroka: "Hm . Hm. I think I know

Where she 'll be found ..." p.39

Baroka: "Hm. Lakunle. But more about him later ..." p.50

Silent fillers are employed by the characters who engaged in the above conversations to hold floors and think of what to say next.

#### **Datum No 7: Using Ellipses to Indicate the Point to Pause and Think.**

Ellipses are used here to indicate the points where the interlocutors (characters) pause to think of what to say next, examples:

Lakunle: " ...A grown-up girl must cover up her ...

Her ... shoulders? I can see quite ... quite

A good portion of that! ..." p. 2

Lakunle: "Sidi, a man must prepare to fight alone

But it helps if he has a woman who....

Can understand ... like you" p.6

Baroka:" Yes, yes ... it is five full months since I last took wife ... Five full months ..." p.8

Sidi: "The house ... seemed ... empty." p.38

Sidi: " ... Did not the Bale

Send ... did Baroka not send ...?" p.40

Ellipses in each of the above dialogues indicates the point where the characters pause to organise their thoughts"

#### **Datum No 8: Relinquishing Floor to Others via Greetings.**

Greetings are used here to relinquish floors to others, examples:

Lakunle: "A good morning to you sir" p.16

Sidi: "A good day to the head and people of this house" p.38

Here, characters relinquished floors to others through greetings.

#### **Datum No 9: Using Questions to Relinquish Floors.**

Questions are used extensively by some characters in the text to relinquish floors to others, examples:

Sidi: "... How many were there, the teacher-man?" p.12

Sidi: "What did 1 say?" p.17

Lakunle: "Is he at these tricks again?" p.19

Lakunle: "Is it for nothing he is called the Fox?" ... 23

Sidi: "... What battle have you won?" p.33

In the above dialogues, turns are relinquished via questions.

#### **Datum No 10: Using Apologies to Relinquish Floor.**

Apologies are employed by some characters in the text to relinquish floors, examples:

Lakunle: "Please, don't be angry with me

I didn't mean you in particular.

And anyway, it isn't what I say ...." p.14

Sidi: "I have come, Bale, as a repentant child." p.40

Apologies are employed by some characters in the above conversations to relinquish floors.

**Datum No 11: Using Objections to Relinquish Floor.**

Objections are employed by some characters in the text to relinquish floor to others, examples:

Sidi: "They will say I was no virgin that I was forced to sell my shame And marry without a price" p. 7

Sidi: "A way you mean, to avoid payment of lawful bride price A cheating way, mean and misery ... " p.9

A character (Sidi) in particular yields turn by objecting Lakunle's idea of trying to marry her without the payment of bride-price.

**Datum No 12: Taking Turn by Making Statements.**

Statements are made to take turns in the text, examples:

Sidi: "... You 'll make no prey of Sidi with your wooing tongue Not this Sidi ...". p.20

Sidi: "Tell your lord that I can read his mind,

That I will none of him

Look-judge for yourself

He's old. I never knew till now

He was that old ..." p.22

In the above dialogues, turns are taken by making statements.

**Datum No 13: Relinquishing Floor by Making Request.**

Request is made by a character to relinquish turn to another character in the text, example:

Lakunle: "Oh Sidi, vow to me your own undying love and I will scorn the jibs of those bush minds who know no better ..." p.6

**Datum No 14: Using a Complete Sentence to End Turn.**

Finegan (2004) says turns often end in a complete sentence, examples:

Lakunle: "One hardly thinks that Baroka would have time

For such childish nonsense." p.17

Sidi: "The message is for me, not for you." p.19

Sidi: "I remember that Bale called me An unwanted stranger." p.41

Sidi: "A woman spoke to me this afternoon" p.45

Complete sentences are used to end turns in the above dialogues.

Agbedo (2015) says that turn can be yielded to a prospective next speaker by mentioning his/her name or gazing at him/her.

**Datum No 15: Relinquishing Turn by Mentioning the Name of Prospective Next Speaker.**

Some characters in the text relinquished floor to others by mentioning their names, examples:

Lakunle: "Oh Sidi, I want to weed

Because I love ..." p. 8

First Girls: "Sidi, he has returned.

He came back just as he said he would." p.10

Baroka: "Akowe. Teacher wa Misita Lakunle." p.16

Sadiku: "But Sidi, are you well? ... p.21

Lakunle: "Well, Sidi, I think

But Somehow it was not the proper thing ..." p.22

Here, turns are relinquished by mentioning the names of prospective next speakers.

**Datum No 16: Relinquishing Turn to others by Eye Gaze.**

Eye gaze is used by some characters in the text to relinquish floor to others, examples:

Lakunle: [looks and gets suddenly agitated]

"... look at that! Look, look at that!" p.2

Sidi: [looks at him in wonder for a while]

"Away with you. The village says you're mad,

And I began to understand ..." p.10

In the above dialogues, turns are relinquished by eye gaze.

## 5. Findings

The researchers noticed that turn-taking strategies such as stating up (well), taking over (oh, no, yes) silent fillers, filled pause, ellipses, prompting (greetings, questioning apologies, objections, request), complete sentences, statements, mentioning the names of prospective next speakers, and eye gaze run throughout the text. The study has confirmed the assertion that conversation is more orderly when interlocutors observe turn-taking strategies.

## 6. Conclusion

The research reveals that turn-taking strategies abounds in the conversations about the past culture represented by Baroka on one hand and the modern culture represented by Lakunle on the other hand. The study concludes that the use of different forms of turn-taking strategies by the dramatis personae in the text makes the conversations run smoothly, and in orderly manner.

### 6.1 Suggestion for Further Studies

The paper recommends that further studies be conducted on turn-takings strategies in selected prose and poetry works of other prominent African writers.

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