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Haggling exchanges at meat stalls in some markets in Lagos, Nigeria



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ABSTRACT This article centres on the social activity of haggling during service encounters in a typical Nigerian urban market place. The data corpus is derived from transactions between meat vendors and customers at meat stalls in some markets in Lagos, Nigeria. Haggling exchanges between meat vendors and their customers were secretly recorded and subsequently analysed to elicit the significant elements of haggling; identify the stages in a haggling exchange; and describe the discourse strategies employed by both classifications of interactant (vendor and buyer) involved in the socio-linguistic activity. The findings revealed that English, Pidgin and Yoruba were generally used in the transactions. The findings also revealed that both categories of interactant employed discourse strategies which include humour, dysphemism and euphemism, cajoling, flattery and flirting to achieve their ultimate goal of maximizing profit/bargain during the buying and selling encounters.

KEY WORDS: *discourse strategy, haggling exchange, interactant, market encounter, Pidgin, Yoruba*

1. Introduction

Very much like any other art among the Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria, haggling is an important aspect of traditional education that young Yoruba children receive from their parents or guardians, in the same manner it was passed down to them by their forebears. This important social activity is one of the pillars of economics that has been necessary for wealth generation and retention in many Yoruba communities since the advent of money, and it is still being vigorously practised in most of present day Nigeria. Haggling exchange frequently entails hard negotiation, compromise, subterfuge, and it sometimes degenerates into verbal abuse and name-calling. Indeed, many seasoned hagglers believe that it is not until the vendor loses his guard and becomes abusive that they have reached the real price of the good on offer.

A Yoruba adage says, 'A woman departs the market with a bargain.' The lexical item 'bargain' in the above translation could be substituted with 'profit' because the Yoruba word '*ere*' could be used in either sense depending on what side the proverbial 'woman' belongs to in the social activity of buying and selling. The Yoruba market place is a scene where the quintessential buyer (the bargain hunter) is in diametrical opposition to the vendor (the profit seeker). In the case of the latter, the line between profit making and profiteering becomes quite thin in a market place where the norm is for the vendor to name an unusually high price with the expectation that the buyer will respond by haggling tenaciously until they arrive at a purchase price that is acceptable to both parties.

The aim of this article is to describe and interpret the discourse stages and strategies employed by both vendors and customers in the exchange of goods in a typical Lagos market. Transactions in some meat markets in the Lagos metropolis were used to elicit the discourse strategies employed by both meat vendors and their customers. Unlike department stores, there are no fixed prices for goods and services. Consequently, prices are arrived at after a process of negotiation, which has been described as haggling exchange in this article. Haggling exchange between meat vendors and their customers were secretly recorded, transcribed and analysed. The data served as the basis for the analysis of the features of haggling exchanges. The discourse strategies employed by the two categories of interactant were elicited and described, and some observations were made concerning the significant linguistic choices employed by the interactants.

2. Haggling as a sub-genre of service encounters

According to Eggins and Slade (1997: 64), 'texts are looked at not only for the textual regularities they display and the generic conventions they flout, but also for the class, gender, and ethnic biases they incorporate'. Bakhtin (1986: 52) identifies genres as 'relatively stable types' of interactive utterances with definite and typical forms of construction. He defines speech genre as:

The typical forms of the utterance associated with a particular sphere of communication (e.g. the work place, the sewing circle, the military) which have therefore developed into 'relatively stable types' in terms of thematic content, style and compositional structure. (p. 52)

The above definitions can be further elucidated with Martin's (1992) description of 'genre' as a 'staged, goal oriented and purposeful social activity that speakers engage in as members of a culture'. Stage, in this sense, refers to each necessary step or process participants undergo to achieve their goals in a conversation, while goal refers to the ultimate point of closure or culmination of the discourse.

A haggling exchange is initiated when a vendor pronounces an unusually high price for a product which a customer expresses an interest in or an intention to purchase in a market setting. The customer responds by either slashing the price to a ridiculously low extreme or stating what s/he considers to be the true

worth of the good on offer. The vendor reacts by coming down a little lower, and the exchange continues until they reach the sale closure after both parties have arrived at a mutually agreeable price. Sale price is often influenced by a number of issues, which include: the type of goods (whether they are perishable); the time of day (the morning when goods are quite fresh or in the evening when the goods are no longer as fresh); the participants involved in the service encounter (e.g. male or female, young or old, rich or poor); and an array of other sociological and emotional rationale. For instance, urgent medical expenses, the need to fund an important ceremony, payment of children's school fees or liquidation are some reasons why a vendor may accept an unusually low purchase price.

3. Features of haggling encounters

Service encounter is a term that refers to the combination of verbal and non-verbal transactions that take place between a seller, on the one hand, and a buyer, on the other hand (see for instance, Mitchell, 1957; Ventola, 1987). A service encounter in a modern shop, manned by shop assistant(s) with the usual paraphernalia of trading such as catalogues, weighing scales and cash tills, is fairly predictable. It usually follows the order: sale request, sale compliance, sale, purchase and lastly, purchase closure (Eggins and Slade, 1997). The example below (Halliday and Hasan, 1985: 59) is cited by Eggins and Slade (1997) to illustrate the obligatory elements of a service encounter:

Service Encounter (Western Setting)

| | | |
|-----------|-------------------------|--|
| Customer: | <i>Sale request</i> | Can I have ten oranges and a kilo of bananas please? |
| Vendor: | <i>Sale compliance</i> | Yes, anything else? |
| Customer: | | No, thanks. |
| Vendor: | <i>Sale</i> | That'll be a dollar forty. |
| Customer: | <i>Purchase</i> | Two dollars. |
| Vendor: | <i>Purchase closure</i> | Sixty, eighty, two dollars. Thank you. |

While the above encounter may be true of a Western setting, such as Australia or the Netherlands, it is by no means representative of a typical service encounter in a Nigerian market. The data for this study, which differ from the above in some significant respects, demonstrate what can be described as the defining features of service encounters in a Nigerian urban market place. Text A below contains some obligatory and optional elements of a service encounter as well as the underlying semantic and pragmatic implications of a haggling exchange in the city of Lagos:

| TEXT A (The Dowry Payee) | | | Language (Yoruba) |
|--------------------------|-----------|---------------------|---|
| Turn | Speaker | Description | [Translations are in square brackets] Text |
| 1 | Customer: | <i>Greeting</i> | Se e nta [How are you doing]? |
| 2 | Vendor: | <i>Response</i> | A dupe, a nwo 'wo [Thanks, things are steady]. |
| 3 | Customer: | <i>Sale Request</i> | (selects a chunk of beef) Elo leleyi [How much is this]? |

| | | | |
|----|-----------|---|--|
| 4 | Vendor: | <i>Price declaration</i> | E san seven [Pay seven-hundred naira]. |
| 5 | Customer: | <i>Haggling (step 1)</i> | Four nko [What about four]? |
| 6 | Vendor: | <i>Negative response</i> | Ko gba [Not acceptable]. |
| 7 | Customer: | <i>Haggling (step 2)</i> | Elo ni jale [How much is the last price]? |
| 8 | Vendor: | <i>Response</i> | Ti e ba ti le san four-fifty [If you can pay four-hundred and fifty naira]. |
| 9 | Customer: | <i>Haggling (step 3)</i> <i>(cajoling)</i> | Jowo oko mi, je ki n san four [Please my husband, let me pay four]. |
| 10 | Vendor: | <i>Positive response</i> | O daa, e mowo wa [In that case, pay]. |
| 11 | Customer: | <i>Haggling (step 4)</i> <i>(pleading)</i> | Dakun olowo ori mi, three ni mo mu dani [Please, the one that paid my dowry, I have only three-hundred naira on me]. |
| 12 | Vendor: | <i>Termination</i> <i>of encounter</i> | E e ti i se tan te e ra 'ja [you are not serious about making a purchase]. |

Many market encounters in Lagos markets are initiated with the optional element of hailing or solicitation by the vendor (not in Text A). Turns 1 and 2 above can be described as the preamble or ice-breaker in a market place interactive frame. The interactants open the market encounter with exchange of greetings or pleasantries as a marker of politeness. The customer's utterance, 'Se e nta?' ('Are you making good sales') is the usual way of saying 'hello' in a Yoruba market setting. The response, 'a nwo 'wo' ('we are swimming in money'), which is laden with irony, is an equally warm way of saying that things are just okay. Underlying this response is the subtle hint that the vendor is anxious to make a sale and that the prospective buyer is assured of a bargain. With this brief exchange, the stage is set for a positive haggling exchange.

The opening interrogative, 'How much is this?' in Turn 3 is met with a terse imperative, 'Pay seven' in Turn 4. As a counter move, the customer slashes the quote by almost half with another terse interrogative 'How about four?' The vendor responds with a minor sentence declarative 'Not acceptable'. This prompts the customer to ask for 'the last price'. The customer discards her bravado and employs a 'face flattering act', 'Please my husband . . .' in Turn 9. This strategy seems to have an effect on the vendor as he accepts the new offer in Turn 10. However, the sales encounter turns sour when the lady decides to press home her advantage by making an even lower offer of 300 naira. The vendor terminates the haggling in Turn 12 with an impolite declarative, 'You are not serious about making a purchase'.

Haggling sometimes lasts a few seconds or several minutes, in most cases, during which both interactants use both verbal and nonverbal tactics at their disposal to try to outdo each other for optimum benefit. Although haggling is engaged in by many interactants in a market encounter, it falls under the classification optional element. This is because scenarios like Halliday and Hasan's, presented above, are also common in several Lagos markets where the prices of many everyday goods and services are so well known that haggling does not take place. In Text A, above, the haggling exchange does not culminate in a sale; hence there is no purchase or purchase closure.

| TEXT B (The Rude Vendor) | | | Language (Pidgin English) [Translations are in square brackets] Text |
|--------------------------|-----------|---|--|
| Turn | Speaker | Description | |
| 1 | Customer | <i>Sales request</i> | How much be this one? |
| 2 | Vendor: | <i>Sales response</i> | Pay six hundred. |
| 3 | Customer: | <i>Haggling response 1 (Rhetorical questions)</i> | For wetin? You no wan sell? [For what? Don't you want to sell?] |
| 4 | Vendor: | <i>Impatient response</i> | How I no wan sell? Na you no wan buy. [Why won't I want to sell? It's you who doesn't want to buy.] |
| 5 | Customer: | <i>Haggling response 2</i> | So na play I come play for market? [You mean I've come to the market for the fun of it?] |
| 6 | Vendor: | <i>Impatient response and dismissal</i> | How I go know wetin you come do for market? . . . I beg make I answer better people. (Turns to another customer) [How do I know why you have come to the market? Please let me attend to more serious customers.] |

Text B above, which is in Pidgin English, demonstrates that a haggling exchange could degenerate into an adversarial exchange. On hearing the quote of 600 naira by the vendor, the customer expresses her displeasure in a caustic manner with an exclamatory remark closely followed by an interrogative sentence in Turn 3. 'For what! Don't you want to sell?' The male vendor is offended that a woman could address him in such an audacious manner. Consequently, he responds in Turn 4 with an equally aggressive declarative, '*na you no wan buy*' ('it's you who doesn't want to buy'). The stage appears set for undisguised adversarial exchanges. In Turn 5, she restates the vendor's offensive remarks in Turn 4, but the latter doesn't seem to care. He seals his cheekiness with the dismissive remark in Turn 6, 'Please let me attend to more serious customers'. The adversarial haggling exchange in Text B is characterized by exclamatory, interrogative and imperative sentence types. Adversarial interactions are quite common in haggling exchanges in southwestern Nigeria. Like Text A, the encounter in Text B does not result in a sale. This can be contrasted with Text C which ends with a sale compliance.

| TEXT C (Fast Knife) | | | Language (Yoruba) [Translations are in square brackets] Text |
|---------------------|-----------|--------------------------|--|
| Turn | Speaker | Description | |
| 1 | Customer: | <i>Sale request</i> | (Woman selects a chunk of beef) Elo l'eran yii [How much is this beef?] |
| 2 | Vendor: | <i>price declaration</i> | E mu one-five wa [Bring one-thousand five-hundred naira]. |
| 3 | Customer: | <i>Haggling (step 1)</i> | O de gba seven [Won't you accept seven-hundred naira?] |
| 4 | Vendor: | <i>Response</i> | Ah-hah mum-my! E si na eran baun. O daa, e san nine. [Ah, madam, you slash the price of beef so sharply! In that case, pay nine hundred naira.] |

| | | | |
|----|-----------|------------------------------------|---|
| 5 | Customer: | <i>Haggling (step 2)</i> | Seven ni mo ni [Seven hundred is all I've got]. |
| 6 | Vendor: | <i>Nonverbal response</i> | (Vendor cuts meat into two as prelude for chopping into small bits.) |
| 7 | Customer: | <i>Haggling (step 3)</i> | Ta lo ni ko o ge e? Six ni mo ni o! [Who asked you to slash it? Six hundred naira is all I've got on me!] |
| 8 | Vendor: | <i>Verbal response</i> | Ah! Ko gba be e! [My! I can't sell at that price]. |
| 9 | Customer: | <i>Nonverbal haggling (step 4)</i> | (Woman starts to leave.) |
| 10 | Vendor: | <i>Response</i> | O daa, e wa mu ni six-fifty [In that case, pay six-hundred-and-fifty naira]. (Vendor hurriedly chops beef into small pieces.) |
| 11 | Customer: | <i>Sale Compliance</i> | (Woman looks aghast. . . She recovers and reluctantly searches her purse for money to pay.) |

Text C is an example of a successful haggling exchange where an experienced customer uses her skill as a hard negotiator to bring down the asking price from 1 500 naira to 650 naira. The vendor uses the expression 'mummy' in Turn 4 as a 'face flattering move' to cajole the lady and subtly encourage her to have consideration for him like a loving and generous 'mother' that she is taken to be. Notwithstanding, the customer insists in Turn 5 that she has only 700 naira. The extract exhibits elements of drama in the form of feigned anger in Turn 7, when the woman exclaims, 'Who asked you to slash it?'. This is closely followed by a further reduction of the vendor's asking price. The vendor's refusal in Turn 8 is followed by the non-verbal threat by the customer to walk away in Turn 9. The encounter is brought to a close with the vendors' anticipation of the customer's opportunism; he hastily chops the beef into tiny bits without being asked to do so to force a sale closure.

Text A, B and C above which we have subtitled *Dowry Payee*, *The Rude Vendor* and *Fast Knife*, respectively, demonstrate that haggling exchanges do not always end in sales, neither do they follow a fixed pattern. Unlike Halliday and Hasan's model of a service encounter reproduced above, processes of haggling exchanges in Lagos, Nigeria depend largely on the product on sale, the situation and the participants involved in the transaction. Consequently, it is possible to have different dialogic patterns with unique elements, such as those in Texts A–C, and many more from other data corpus beyond the scope of this study.

4. *The power of haggling*

Power is used in the context of this study to refer to the capacity of either party in the interaction to produce an effect on the other. In a market encounter, the vendor, on the one hand, encourages the customer to buy at a price that gives him/her a good profit margin, while the customer, on the other hand, persuades

the vendor to sell at a price s/he considers a bargain. Haggling amounts to a verbal power play as one party tries to outdo the other in the reduction/extension of profit/bargain margin. Many a skilful customer walks away to check the price elsewhere, making the vendor continue calling and pleading with him/her and sometimes granting his/her request during such times. Power in haggling takes the form of tone of voice, persuasive diction, subtle threats and veiled intimidation. Consequently, features such as age, sex, appearance and demeanour of a customer often reflect real or imagined power in a haggling exchange.

Kress (1985) argues that language provides the most finely articulated means for registering differences in social hierarchical structures (see Fairclough, 1989). Consequently, linguistic forms are often drafted into the service of the expression of power through 'syntactic/textual metaphor'. According to Kress (1985: 52):

Language is involved whenever there is contention over and challenge to power. Power does not derive from language, but language may be used to challenge power, to subvert it and to alter distributions of power in the short or the longer term.

Power is manifested in many ways in haggling, viz., conciliatory or aggressive tone of voice, reverence or audacity and choice of words. In the Lagos setting, with its peculiar Yoruba gerontocratic cultural background, young people, especially children, are more likely to be treated with condescension while the elderly are frequently treated with respect, irrespective of whether they are vendors or customers.

Well-groomed and gorgeously turned-out customers are viewed as possessing the financial muscle to pay higher; hence such people are addressed more courteously. Material well-being or hardship, rightly or wrongly, is often assessed in Lagos markets through the roundness or hollowness of a customer's cheeks or in the smoothness or scrawniness of his/her skin. Generally speaking, a potential customer's appearance often plays a role in the price many Lagos vendors place on their wares and the ultimate price agreed upon at the close of negotiation. For instance, when a vendor was asked why he settled for a higher sale price for an elegant lady, he responded that it would amount to folly on his part to settle for less since he too desires to be wealthy.

Power abuse is common on both sides of market encounters as children and many underprivileged members of the community usually come out worse off in haggling duels. For instance, the vendor in Text B is apparently discourteous to the customer, probably because he feels her patronage could not amount to much. In Text E, the vendor exhibits his low opinion of the customer by declaring to anyone within earshot that she is a thief's wife. Sometimes when a meat vendor meets his match, both interactants would trade insults with each other for a few minutes. The customer in Text C actually threatens to leave, thereby forcing the meat vendor to lower his price.

A prominent perspective of power abuse during buying and selling of meat is in the area of gender. It is not uncommon for male vendors to address young ladies with undue familiarity in exhibition of their perceived power as males. Such verbal acts, which are viewed as sexual harassment in some Western cultures,

are socially permitted in Lagos, when done in moderation. It is not uncommon for vendors to refer to young ladies as 'my wife' or compliment physical charm or beauty with slangy expressions such as '*orobo*' ('chubby lady') or '*lepa*' ('slim lady'). Many a young woman, on the other hand, uses her charm and persuasive power to leave the market with a better bargain than other customers, especially when the vendor is a lecherous male. Ribaldry frequently features in market encounters between male vendors and female customers, especially at meat stalls. This is one of the issues discussed in the next section.

5. *Haggling strategies*

Vendors and customers often employ similar haggling strategies in some respects and distinctly different tactics in many other respects. Such strategies include humour and ribaldry, dysphemism and euphemism, flattery and flirting, pleading and swearing, abuses and cheekiness.

1) THE POWER OF HUMOUR

Humour, according to Eggins and Slade (1997: 156), 'involves polysemy when both a "serious" and a "non serious" meaning can be recognised'. It often includes teasing, ironic remarks and dirty jokes that are capable of causing laughter. There is a general agreement among humour researchers that the clearest indication of humour is that someone present laughs. Jefferson et al. (1987) demonstrate that laughter initiated by the speaker is a form of invitation to intimacy, to which responsive laughter from the listener implies willingness to affiliate, while withheld laughter implies a declining of the invitation.

Lagos meat vendors, who are usually males, have a reputation for high humour, jokes and flirtatious behaviours, especially with female customers. Humour can be found in the banter and jokes often shared between such vendors and customers. An example from the data is, '*Oju yin gun rege bi iyawo gomina*' ('you have the striking look of a state governor's wife'). Such flattery compels the customer to smile and psychologically puts her in a good mood for a haggling exchange that will not hurt the charming vendor's profit margin. In Text D below, the vendor narrates a funny riddle to make a customer appreciate the hidden good quality of his product.

| TEXT D | | Language (Yoruba) |
|--------|-----------|--|
| | | [Translations are in square brackets] |
| Turn | Speaker | Text |
| 1 | Vendor: | Nkan ki s'ese rago; bee je won le e j'eegun, bee si sonu, won a le e s'eran nu [There's so much in a ram's trot; if you eat it, you stand accused of eating bones; if you throw it away, you will be charged with wasting meat] |
| 2 | Customer: | (Laughter) Enu re dun 'po [You've got sugar-coated lips]! |

An example of ribaldry, which is an integral feature of humour in market encounters among the Yoruba, can be found in the proverb shared by a meat vendor: '*bi yoo ti mo ni yoo mo, Akika o l'epon*' [even if it doesn't amount to much, a ram's testicles will be obvious].

II) DYSPHEMISM AND EUPHEMISM

It is a common practice for a vendor a in Lagos market encounter to exaggerate the quality of his/her wares, while the customer, on the other hand, understates it. This practice is exemplified with Text E below:

| TEXT E | | Language (Yoruba) |
|--------|-----------|---|
| | | [Translations are in square brackets] |
| Turn | Speaker | Text |
| 1 | Butcher: | (He lifts up the piece of beef as if it is too heavy) Eran banti-banti yi [This huge chunk of beef]! |
| 2 | Customer: | Tete gbe s'ile, ma je ko kan e l'apa [Put it down quickly; don't let it break your arm]. |

In an apparent exchange of good humour, the customer in Text E above responds to the vendor's exaggeration of the worth of the beef she wishes to buy by pleading jokingly with him to put it down quickly before it breaks his arm. Her response shows that she is not sold on the vendor's ploy in the encounter.

Vendors and customers frequently engage in dysphemism and euphemism as useful strategies for gaining upper hand over each other during haggling exchanges. For instance, late in an evening when a customer described a dark red chunk of beef as '*dudu*' ('blackened') as a ploy to get a lower price, the vendor retorted that it was 'straight from the slaughter slab' (meaning it was fresh). Both interactants were clearly exaggerating as beef from an animal slaughtered about midday could neither have turned dark, nor could it be described as 'straight from the slaughter slab' at 8.00 p.m. Another case of dysphemism can be found in Text C where the vendor's initial asking price is 1 500 naira in Turn 2, yet he settles for 650 naira at the close of the service encounter in Turn 10.

III) PLEAS, ABUSES AND SWEARING

Both vendors and customers sometimes have to plead with the other party during haggling exchanges. In Text A, the customer resorts to pleading with the vendor to accept her offer in Turns 9 and 11. There are also occasions when the vendor resorts to pleading with the customer to buy from him especially when it's getting close to the end of the day.

On the other hand, meat vendors often lose their guard and resort to abusing a customer, especially when such a customer displays utter ignorance of the prevailing price range of the product s/he wishes to purchase. Text F below is an example of such sleazy development in the data:

| TEXT F | | Language (Yoruba) |
|--------|-----------|---|
| | | [Translations are in square brackets] |
| Turn | Speaker | Text |
| 1 | Vendor: | (facing the direction of a co-vendor) Abi e e wo eran ti iyawo ole n na si three hundred [Can you imagine this wife of a thief offering to buy this piece of beef for three-hundred naira]? |
| 2 | Customer: | Sebi e si so iye te fe ta [What is the harm in saying how much you wish to sell it]? |

- 3 Vendor: Awa kii taja fun ru yin. E dakun, e rin siwaju
[We don't sell to people like you. Please go elsewhere].

Yoruba speakers, especially Moslems, often use the expression '*Wallahi*' when they wish to convince a listener that they are speaking the truth. This can be found in Text H, Turn 4, below.

IV) CAJOLING, FLATTERY AND FLIRTING

English shopkeepers, for instance, frequently use terms of endearment such as 'lovely', 'sweetheart', 'darling' and 'my love' to address customers without causing any offence. Likewise, Lagos customers do not feel offended when referred to in flattering terms such as: 'daddy', 'mummy', 'aunty', 'uncle', 'brother', 'sister', 'manager', 'director', 'chairman', 'first lady', etc. Such terms are believed to bring out the best in a potential customer. Yoruba speaking customers/vendors frequently use terms of endearment, such as: '*oko mi*' ('my darling/husband'), '*oko iya mi*' ('my mother's husband/lover') and '*olowo ori mi*' ('the one that paid dowry on me'). A common example of flattery such as 'You are my first customer today' may not be completely true, but it appeals to the psyche of the customer as a harbinger of good luck.

Turn 4 in Text C where the Vendor says 'Aah mum-my' is an example of cajoling from the data. Likewise, in Turn 1 of Text G below, a female customer jokingly offers to go home with a meat vendor.

| TEXT G | | Language (Yoruba) |
|--------|-----------|--|
| | | [Translations are in square brackets] |
| Turn | Speaker | Text |
| 1 | Customer: | Je ki n kuku maa ba o re'le [Perhaps I should just go all way home with you]. |
| 2 | Vendor: | Mi o to bee. Omo kekere ni mi. E dakun o [I dare not. I'm only a young lad. I plead]. |

The meat vendor responds appropriately in Turn 2 with a flirtatious decline. Such bantering adds life to haggling exchanges in the market encounters and enables both parties to arrive at an early compromise since both interactants seem to understand each other's language. This observation is in harmony with Halliday (1994: 69), who points out that whenever someone uses language to interact, 'one of the things they are doing is establishing a relationship'.

6. Linguistic choices

A functional conversation analysis is incomplete without a look at some significant linguistic choices and occurrences in the discourse. For instance, the data contain linguistic choices such as Yoruba, English, Pidgin and their mixed usage, often described by linguists as code-mixing or code-switching. The data exhibit two significant grammatical features, namely mood and ellipsis which are discussed presently in the following subsections.

i) MOOD

Analysing mood choices shows how linguistic choices contribute to both the realization and the construction of role relations between interactants in discourse (Eggins and Slade, 1997). All the four sub-categories of mood, viz., declarative, interrogative, imperative and interjections (e.g. Quirk et al., 1972), feature remarkably in the discourse.

a) The interrogative mood was used in the most versatile manner in the discourse. It featured at the stages of greetings, sales request and haggling exchange and termination of exchange. The following are some examples:

Greetings

Text A, Turn 1 Se e nta [How are you doing?]

Sale request

Text A, Text 7 Elo ni jale [How much is the last price?]

Haggling exchange

Text B Turn 3 For wetin? You no wan sell?

[For what? Don't you want to sell?]

Turn 4

How I no wan sell? [Why won't I want to sell?]

b) Imperatives were used as follows:

Acceptance of offer

Text A, Turn 10 O daa, e mowo wa [In that case, pay].

Haggling trigger

Text C, Turn 2 E mu one-five wa [Bring one-thousand-five-hundred naira].

Sale closure

Text C, Turn 3 O de gba seven [Won't you accept seven-hundred naira?]

c) Unlike the interrogative and imperative clause types that featured prominently in the haggling exchanges examined, declarative sentence types were relatively scant in the discourse. The following are some examples of its use:

Continuation of haggling exchange

Text C, Turn 4 E si na eran baun. [you slash the price of beef so sharply.]

Text C, Turn 5 Seven ni mo ni [Seven hundred is all I've got.]

Termination of haggling exchange

Text A, Turn 12 E e ti i se tan te e ra 'ja [You are not serious about making a purchase].

Text H, Turn 4 Na me talk am [It is me who said so].

Response to a ribald banter

Text G, Turn 2 Mi o tobe. Omo kekere ni mi, e dakun o [I dare not. I'm only a young lad. I plead].

d) Interjections featured in the discourse as follows:

Jesting

Text E, Turn 1 (Vendor lifts up the piece of beef as if it is too heavy)
Eran banti-banti yi! [This huge chunk of beef!]

Anger

Text H, Turn 4

Wallahi, nobody go answer you for this market!

[I swear, no one will attend to you in this market.]

II) ELLIPSIS

Ellipsis is a term used to describe the grammatically permitted practice of dropping certain words or phrases in discourse, especially when such words have previously occurred in the context. For instance, in Text C, there is mutual understanding among interactants in respect of the use of expressions such as 'one-five' (instead of one-thousand-and-five-hundred naira) or 'six-fifty' (instead of six-hundred-and-fifty naira). Below is an illustration of ellipsis from Text A:

Turn 4 Vendor: *Price declaration* E san seven [pay seven].

Turn 5 Customer: *Haggling (step 1)* Four nko [what about four]?

In the above example, 'seven' is understood in the context of use as 'seven-hundred naira' while 'four' is understood as 'four-hundred naira'. The ellipsis of predictable items such as 'hundred' and 'naira' was done consistently throughout the data by many of the interactants.

When a vendor says 'one-five' instead of 'one-thousand-five-hundred naira', the customer is expected to register the psychological impression that s/he is being offered the product at a give-away price (see for instance, Wodak, 2006). This is supported further by the casual tone of the utterance. The customer's response of slashing the price to 'seven' is clearly her way of demonstrating that two can play the game. Perhaps we could conjecture at this juncture that this practice is a carryover from the olden days among the Yoruba people when money was denominated in 'bags' and coins without overtly mentioning the currency unit. Then, people talked of pounds in bags; for example, 'one-bag' ('*apo kan*'), 'one-shilling' and 'three-pence' ('*egbeedogbon*'), 'nine-pence' ('*nain*'), 'six-pence' ('*sisi*') and so on.

III) CODE-MIXING AND CODE-SWITCHING

Several languages, which include English, Yoruba, Pidgin, Igbo, Hausa and many others Nigerian languages, feature prominently in market encounters in the Lagos metropolis. As Lagos meat vendors are predominantly Yoruba speakers, much of the verbal exchanges are in Yoruba. Where the customer does not speak Yoruba, the interactants communicate in English (with many observed non-standard forms) and Pidgin. Throughout the data, money is denominated in English, even when the interactants are communicating in Yoruba. The vendors use terms such as 'customer', 'mummy', 'uncle' and 'daddy' instead of their respective Yoruba equivalents of 'onibara', 'mama' or 'baba'. Likewise, cash denominations such as, 'one-five', 'two-fifty' or 'seven' are used instead of Yoruba equivalents of '*egberun ati eedegbeta naira*', '*oji le ni irugba ati naira mewa*' or '*eedegberin naira*', respectively.

The use of code-switching and code-mixing in Yoruba situations enables interactants to meet at a common linguistic boundary where both non-Yoruba speakers and linguistically indolent Yoruba speakers are put at ease. The

classification of some Yoruba speakers as linguistically indolent is informed by the predilection of the modern Yoruba speaker to use English equivalents of concepts that s/he simply refuses to master in his/her mother tongue (e.g. the Yoruba numeral system) or foreign expressions that s/he finds chic and trendy (e.g. English kinship terms).

IV) PIDGIN

The alternative to Yoruba as a lingua franca in most Lagos markets is invariably Pidgin. It is the language of urban trading and interactants find it quite handy in a community with diverse ethnic orientation such as Lagos. This language, if it can be referred to as such, is commonly used by members of the community with limited education. Below is an instance of the use of Pidgin in the data:

| TEXT H | | Language (Yoruba) |
|--------|-----------|---|
| | | [Translations are in square brackets] |
| Turn | Speaker | Text |
| 1 | Customer: | So I no go get two-fifty naira meat [You mean I can't get two-hundred-and-fifty naira worth of beef?] |
| 2 | Vendor: | For where? Person weh hold three-fifty naira never get meat . . . (silence) [Here? Even a person with three-hundred-and-fifty naira has not got meat to buy . . .] |
| 3 | Customer: | Answer me now! |
| 4 | Vendor: | <i>Wallahi</i> , nobody go answer you for this market. Na me talk am. [I swear, no one will attend to you in this market. I am the one that says so.] |

The customer in Text H above is obviously not a Yoruba speaker; otherwise she most certainly would have spoken in Yoruba. The vendor too responds appropriately in Pidgin until Turn 4 when he introduces the popular Arabic term '*Wallahi*' ('I swear by Allah') in exasperation.


7. Conclusion

This study has helped to establish that the patterns of sociolinguistic practices which are witnessed in one part of the globe often vary significantly from what obtains in other parts. While haggling is not necessarily unique to the Lagos/Nigeria situational context, the study shows the desirability of more intensive discourse analysis of casual conversations in bilingual and multilingual/multi-cultural situations such as Lagos metropolis. This will enable scholars and students interested in cultural or market discourse have a better grasp of some discursive realities in different linguistic and socio-cultural contexts.

While we were able to describe and explain some stages of market encounters found in the Lagos metropolis, we didn't attempt to unify all the stages identified into a single procedure. This is because we consider this premature, as more research has to be conducted on this genre before one can come up with a convincing and comprehensive theoretical framework that could be applied for the analysis of market encounters or haggling exchanges in situations that are comparable to Nigeria's Lagos metropolis.

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