

VARIATIONS IN SPEECH STYLE IN CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S *PURPLE HIBISCUS*

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Abstract

The focus of this paper is on the use of variations in speech style by interlocutors in dialogues. Interactants engaged in verbal discourse employ different speech styles on different occasions. This is largely informed by the fact that no one speaks in exactly the same way on all occasions. Many factors inform these shifts such as the speaker, the addressee, the setting, the topic of discourse and the purpose of discourse. Using Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, this study seeks to identify the variations in the speech style in the dialogues of the characters and the motivations for the shifts. It also seeks to determine the way the shifts affected the relationships between the characters as well as the power structures that are at play. To achieve these objectives, eight sample excerpts purposively selected from the text were used as data while ethnography of communication was used as the theoretical framework. Findings revealed that the different speech style variations identified were influenced mainly by the situation and social distance.

Key words: speech styles, style-shifting, speech event, social distance, power

Introduction

There is usually a display of shifts in the style of speeches of characters engaged in dialogues in written prose just as there are between interlocutors in face - to - face interactions on different occasions. Shifts in speech style take place sometimes within the same conversation depending on the degree of the attention to the clarity of the discourse. A shift in speaking may be as a result of a change in the self-image that the speaker wishes to project, in the type of information to be communicated, in the situation the interactants find themselves such as a noisy background, arrival or departure of other individuals, the context of the dialogue and in the impression that the speaker has about the listener, for instance where he has a hearing impediment. These variations depending on the occasion may be very formal, less formal or extremely formal and casual such as when the relationship between the interlocutors is very close or when they belong to different social classes. These shifts in style may be due to the speaker, the addressee, the age or the social background of the addressee, the social background, social distance or the situation. When such necessary adjustments in speech style are not made, they may attract social sanctions in formal situations. Additionally, if the purpose is misconstrued by the interactants, such issues such as feelings of inferiority, contempt or avoidance may arise among those of lower status, while the higher-status interactant may display pride, arrogance or condescension. In informal interactions also, if such style shifts in speech are not applied or where they are not appreciated it could mar relationships and also lead to breakdown in communication. This study seeks to identify the variations in the speech styles of the characters in *Purple Hibiscus*, what the motivation for the shifts are and how they affect the relationship between the characters. It showcases the different applications of speech style-shifts and the speech situations and speech events that informed the shift in the speech styles of the characters. To this end, the following questions were raised: what are the variations in the speech style in the text? What are the motivations for the speech style-shifts? How did they affect the relationship between the characters?

Synopsis of the Novel

Purple Hibiscus is the story of Kambili, a fifteen-year-old girl growing up in Enugu, Eastern Nigeria. Her father, Eugene Achike, is a strict Catholic who completely rejects the traditional beliefs of his own father, to the extent that he hardly cares for him. He forbids his children Kambili and Jaja from relating closely with their grandfather, claiming that he would contaminate them with heathenism. Eugene is also a strict disciplinarian who metes out harsh punishments to any member of his household, including his wife, who fails to uphold his rigid standards.

A visit to their father's sister, Auntie Ifeoma and her children at Nsukka offers them the opportunity to experience life differently. The form of Catholicism they practise is markedly different from the one they are used to. Auntie Ifeoma encourages her own children to speak their mind though guardedly. Kambili and Jaja become better able to voice their feelings. They also get to relate with Father Amadi, a young priest who is very close to Auntie Ifeoma and her family. Kambili finds that she is attracted to the priest.

While they are at Nsukka where Auntie Ifeoma is a senior lecturer in the university, the students go on rampage against lack of water and electric light. Kambili and Jaja are still at Nsukka when their auntie gets a distress call from a woman who is a neighbour to their grandfather (Papa Nnukwu) living at Abba and she hurries to the village to bring him back to Nsukka for medical treatment. The old man is nursed back to health but passes on while still staying with them at Nsukka. Eugene, Kambili's father learns of the demise and refuses to have anything to do with the pagan burial though he finances it. Back home he subjects Kambili and Jaja to physical torture because according to him they had slept in the same house with a heathen.

Meanwhile Ade Coker, an editorial staff of the Standard newspaper owned by Kambili's father gets killed when he opens an envelope with the State House seal allegedly for publishing an offensive article he was warned not to publish. Soldiers also invade one of Kambili's father's factories carrying dead rats in a carton and then closing the factory down saying the rats had been found there and could spread diseases through the wafers and the biscuits he produced. Unable to cope with the husband's continuous violence on her and the children, Beatrice, Kambili's mother poisons her husband. Jaja takes over the blame for the crime and is remanded in cell. Auntie Ifeoma and her children travel to America after her appointment with the university is terminated. She is accused of complicity in the student's unrest by the university administration. The novel ends in an optimistic note. Kambili has turned out more confident in her approach to life. Jaja is about to be released from prison after thirty-one months. He is hardened but not broken by his experience there. Beatrice, their mother is beginning to recover from psychological breakdown since after the death of her husband.

Conceptual Framework

Speech Styles

Yule (257) describes speech style as social feature of language use. Speech style according to Martin Joos, an online source is the form of language that the speaker uses which is characterized by the degree of formality. (Accessed 11:21 September 12, 2020) Ezeifeka (136) asserts that they are linguistic options open to the speech community for particular events and activity types. She notes that they include: varieties (High/Low, Standard/nonstandard, dialects, register choices, formal/informal/casual etc.) and speech events where they are appropriate – political, academic, folk literature, casual conversations; degrees of formality within one standard language. In language use, speakers usually adopt different styles of speaking. They can speak very formally or very informally depending on the circumstances. Wardhaugh (47) posits that ceremonial occasions usually require very formal speech; public lectures somewhat less formal, casual conversations between intimate persons on matters of little importance may be extremely informal and casual. According to him, the level of formality chosen may be related to a variety of factors such as the kind of occasion, the various social, age and other differences that exist between the interlocutors; the particular task that is involved such as writing or speaking, the emotional involvement of one or more of the participants. Holmes asserts that "language varies according to who is using it" (239) She notes that the addressees and the context influence our choices of code or variety be it language, dialect or style.

Joos identified the types of speech style as frozen style, formal style, consultative style, casual style and intimate style. Frozen style according to him is the most formal communicative style that is usually used during respectful events and ceremonies. It is also used when one shows hesitation, disinterest or prejudice. Frozen speech is used generally in a formal setting, does not require any feedback from the audience and is the most formal communicative style for respectful situations. Intimate style is for very close relationships like couples, family, and best friends. It is used in conversation between people who are very close and know each other quite well because they have the maximum of shared background information. Formal speeches are straightforward speeches. In this speech style, the speaker avoids using slang terminologies. What the speaker says is something that has been prepared beforehand. Casual speech style is an informal communication between groups and peers who have shared background information but don't have close relations while consultative speech style is used in semi-formal communication. In this type speech sentences are shorter and spontaneous and the speaker does not usually plan what he/she wants to say. A change from one to the other according to Yule (257) is called style-shifting.

Motivation for Shifts in Speech Style

Shifts in speech style are motivated by a number of factors such as speaker, addressee, age of addressee, social background of addressee, social distance, the situation and the speech event. Wardhaugh (47) avers that speakers can adopt different styles of speaking. He posits that speaker's speech can be very formal or informal depending on the

circumstances. Ceremonial occasions according to him, require very formal speech, public lectures somewhat less formal, casual conversations quite formal while conversations between persons who are intimate on matters of little importance may be extremely informal and casual. He notes that the level of formality chosen may relate to a variety of factors. These factors include the kind of occasion; the various social, age, and other differences that may exist between the participants; the particular task that is involved such as writing or speaking; the emotional involvement of one or more of the participants and so on.

Holmes (240) asserts that an addressee is an influence on style. She gives two examples to buttress her point thus:

- a) Excuse me. Could I have a look at your photos too, Mrs Hall?
- b) C'mon Tony, gizzalook

The first utterance according to her was addressed by a teenage boy to his friend's mother when she was showing the photos of their skiing holiday to an adult friend. The second utterance was addressed to his friend when he brought his own photos of the holiday. She posits that the better you know someone, the more casual and relaxed the speech style you will use on them. People according to her use considerably more standard forms to those they do not know well, and more vernacular forms to their friends. This generalization according to her holds across different languages. Holmes (241) also identifies age of addressee as an influence on style. She notes that people generally talk differently to children and adults though some adjust their speech style or accommodate more than others. Talking to younger brothers and sisters, even 3-year-olds, according to her, have been heard using sing-song intonation and 'baby talk' words like 'doggie' which they no longer use themselves. She observes that when talking or writing to a 6-year-old as opposed to a 30-year-old, most people choose simpler vocabulary and grammatical constructions. She adds that many speakers also use a different style in addressing elderly people, often with features similar to those that characterize their speech to children. Such characteristics according to her include a simpler range of vocabulary and less complex grammar, the use of "we" rather than "you" to refer to the addressee and sometimes even the sing-song intonation which characterizes baby-talk.

The social background of addressee was also identified by Holmes (242-243) as an influence on speech style. She illustrates it thus:

- a) Last week the British Prime Minister Mr. David Cameron met the Australian Premier Ms. Julia Gillard in Canberra... their next meeting will not be for several months
- b) Las' week British Minister David Cameron met Australian Premier Julia Gillard in Canberra... Their nex' meeting won't be for several months

These utterances according to her, illustrates a number of linguistic features which distinguish the pronunciations of newsreader on different radio stations. In (b) there is simplification of consonant clusters, so [la:st] becomes [la:s] and [nekst] becomes [neks]. The pronunciation of [t] between vowels is voiced so it sounds like a [d] hence meeting sounds like meeding. The definite article 'the' is omitted before the titles Prime Minister and Premier and the honorifics Mrs and Mr disappear. And finally utterance (b) contracts *will not* to *won't*. All these features according to her have been identified as typical of the contrasting styles of newsreaders on different New Zealand radio stations.

Holmes (240) observes that the speaker's relationship to the addressee is crucial in determining the appropriate style of speaking. She points out that "how well you know someone or how close you feel to them – relative social distance/solidarity- is one important dimension of social relationship". Many factors according to her, may contribute in determining the degree of social distance or solidarity between people such as relative age, gender, social roles, whether people work together, or are part of the same family and so on. These factors she notes may also be relevant to people's relative social status.

Social distance according to an online dictionary is "the perceived or desired degree of remoteness between a member of one social group and the members of another, as evidenced in the level of intimacy tolerated between them." It describes the distance between groups in society and is opposed to locational distance. The notion includes differences such as social class, race/ethnicity, gender or sexuality, and also the fact that the different groups mix less than members of the same groups.

On situation as an influence on style, Hudson (199) notes that many of the studies carried out have considered the effects on speech of variations in the situation. In two of such instances he reports that Labov found out that shop

assistants were more likely to pronounce the /r/ in fourth floor when he asked them to repeat it and he also found that people spoke differently in his interviews according to what they were talking about, and who they were talking to – their speech became less standard when they were talking about situations where they were in danger of dying than when talking about routine matters and it was less standard when talking to other members of their family than when talking to him.

Speech events can influence style. Speech event according to Ezeifeka (136) is the basic unit of analysis in ethnography of speaking. She states that “it involves the particular activity or aspect of the activity that are directly governed by rules or norms of the situation.” Instances she gave are lecture, inaugural speech, vote of thanks, convocation speech, sermon, welcome address etc. Coulthard (39) notes that speech event occurs in a non-verbal context which is the speech situation. He observes that speech events are the largest units for which one can discover linguistic structures and so do not have the same pattern with the situation. That is to say that several speech events can occur successively or simultaneously in the same situation just as different conversations can take place in a party. Yule (145) adds that in investigating what is known about participating in conversation or any other speech event such as debate, interview and other various types of discussions, it is quickly realized that there is enormous variation in what people say and do in different circumstances. He observes that in order to describe the sources of that variation, account would be taken of a number of criteria. For example, according to him, we would have to specify the roles of speaker and hearer(s) and their relationship(s), whether they were friends, strangers, men, women, young, old, of equal or unequal status, and many other factors. All these factors, he notes have an influence on what is said and how it is said. We would have to describe what the topic of conversation was and in what setting it took place.

Power structure is another influence on speech style. Pfetsch (2011) asserts that the various forms of relations between the negotiation partners are power. A power structure is an overall influence system of influence between any individual and other individuals within a group. Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English defines it as the way in which the groups of people who control a country, society, or organization are organized. It comprises symmetrical and asymmetrical relationships. Pfetsch avers that symmetrical relationships are characterized by a balanced mutual relationship based on similar allocations of power resources. Asymmetry according to him “is a structure one can find among most social and political relations and in relations between unequal parties.” He further observes that it is a relationship between the small and the great, the weak and the poor.” The unequal allocation of power resources, he notes, can lead to a point when the most powerful party makes threats and exerts pressure.

Theoretical Framework

Ethnography of Communication

Ethnography of Communication (EOC) formerly called Ethnography of Speaking, propounded by Dell Hymes is the analysis of communication within the wider context of the social and cultural practices and beliefs of the members of a particular culture or speech community. It is an approach to discourse analysis that takes into account both the communicative form which may include but is not limited to spoken language and its functions within the culture. The general aim of this qualitative research method includes being able to identify the communicative acts and /or codes that are important to different groups, the types of meanings that groups apply to different communication events, and how group members learn these codes, in order to provide insight into particular communities. The additional information derived may be used to enhance communication with group members, make sense of group members’ decisions and distinguish groups from one another among others.

Ethnography of communication was proposed by Dell Hymes as an approach to analyse patterns of language use within speech communities with a view to providing support for his idea of communicative competence which was reportedly a reaction to Noam Chomsky’s linguistic competence and performance. Ethnography of communication is meant to describe the characteristics that an approach towards language from an anthropological standpoint must take. They are as posited by Dell Hymes outlined below:

1. Investigate directly the use of language in contexts of situations so as to discuss patterns proper to speech activity.
2. Take as context a community, investigating its communicative habits as a whole. In other words, rather than divorcing linguistic form from its function, the analysis of a culture’s or community’s communication, linguistic and otherwise, must occur with respect to the socio-cultural context of its use and the functions of the meaning conveyed.

Ethnography of communication in effect is concerned with the way a certain speech event fits into a whole network of cultural beliefs and practices, describing things that are external to talk itself: who the speakers are, where they are, what beliefs and customs are important to their lives.

The stratifications in ethnography of communication according to Hymes (cited in Ezeifeka, 2018) are:

- i) speech community
- ii) speech style
- iii) speech situation
- iv) speech event
- v) speech act

Speech community – This refers to a group of speakers who share both linguistic resources and rules for interaction and interpretation.

Speech style – These are the linguistic options open to the speech community for particular speech events and activity types. These include varieties (High/low, standard/nonstandard, dialects, register choices, formal/informal/casual etc.) and speech events where they are appropriate – political, academic, folk literature, casual conversations, degrees of formality within one standard language.

Speech situation – This is the social occasion in which the speech may occur and it defines the appropriateness of speaking, the context of the speech event.

Speech event – This is the basic unit of analysis in ethnography of speaking. It involves the particular activity or aspect of activity that are directly governed by rules or norms of the speech situation.

Speech acts – This involves ways in which particular speech communities perform certain actions through speech, such as how thanking is done or requests are made in some speech communities.

The Speaking Grid

In order to analyse speech events, Hymes proposed a classificatory grid for identifying and defining a speech event which he argues can be useful in discovering the culturally relative taxonomy of communicative units described above. He calls this the SPEAKING grid: each letter representing a different possible component of communication.

S – Setting – (i) physical circumstances (ii) scene – subjective definition of an occasion.

P – Participants – (i) speaker/sender/addresser (ii) hearer/receiver/audience/addressee

E – Ends – purposes and goals/ outcomes

A – Act sequence – message form and content (discourse analysis), the words used to inform, direct, promise, request, mandate, question, invite, declare.

K – Key – tone, manner or spirit with which a particular message is conveyed: satiric, Ironic, serious, light-hearted, joking, mocking, sarcastic, pedantic, pompous, sad, happy etc.

I – Instrumentalities – channel (oral, written, signed, multimodal). This also includes physical forms of speech drawn from community repertoire: dialect, code, register and whether the speech is formal, informal, frozen, consultative and intimate. Code-switching may also be relevant here.

N – Norms of interaction and interpretation: - specific properties attached to speaking – interpretation of norms within cultural belief system. There are norms of greeting, addressing elders, cultural differences in loudness, silence, gaze return, body posture when talking to elders, comfortable conversational distance among strangers and among friends.

G – Genre – Textual categories such as a lecture, sermon, vote of thanks, convocation address, a market transaction, a political speech, a marriage transaction, a welcome address and numerous such other genres. These different genres are text types with their unique internal structures which accord with different social goals. For instance, there is a difference between how a lecture is structured as different from an inaugural

speech or a vote of thanks. Each has its own internal patterning and schematic structures and this enables one to discover when the speaker switches from one genre to another, like when somebody in a lecture is asked to stop “sermonizing” in a situation where they digressed from lecturing which is an academic genre to a religious genre.

Methodology

The speech style-shifts in the selected literary text, chosen because of the ingenious language use of the author are identified, the motivations for the style-shifts and the speech situations and speech events that informed the shifts in the speech styles of the characters are highlighted and subjected to Hymes SPEAKING grid. Eight sample excerpts of the speech style-shifts would be used as data.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Excerpt 1

“How was your holiday, Kambili?” Ezinne leaned over and asked.

“Fine”.

“Did you travel abroad?”

“No.” I said. I didn’t know what else to say but I wanted Ezinne to know that I appreciated that she was always nice to me even though I was awkward and tongue-tied. I wanted to say thank you for not laughing at me and calling me a backyard snub the way the rest of the girls did, but the words that came out were.

“Did you travel?”

Ezinne laughed. “Me? O di egwu. It’s people like you and Gabriella and Chinwe who travel, people with rich parents. I just went to see my grandmother.”

“Oh,” I said. (49)

The speech style shift as showcased in the expression “Me? O di egwu...” is from intimate to casual. The speech situation /speech event that informed the shift in the in the speech style of the character in the excerpt above is when Kambili asked her Ezinne, her classmate whether she travelled abroad during the holidays when they resumed classes. The motivation for the style shift was the situation. The interlocutors share the same linguistic background characterized by code-mixing/code switching English and the vernacular.

Excerpt 2

“You know Eugene did not get along with Ifediora?” Auntie Ifeoma’s whisper was back, fiercer, louder.

“Because Ifediora told him to his face what he felt.

Ifediorah was not afraid to tell the truth. But you know Eugene quarrels with that he does not like.

Our father is dying, did you hear me? Dying. He is an old man, how much longer does he have, gbo? Yet Eugene will not let him into his house, will not even greet him. O joka! Eugene has to stop doing God’s job.

God is big enough to do his own job. If God will judge our father for choosing to follow the way of our ancestors, then let God do the judging not Eugene.” (95-96)

The speech style shift as reflected in the expression “O joka! Eugene has to stop doing God’s job...” is from intimate to frozen style. The speech situation/speech event that informed the shift in the speech of the character in the above excerpt is when Auntie Ifeoma was complaining to Kambili’s mother about Eugene, Kambili’s father’s behaviour towards their heathen father. She complained that Eugene, not minding that their father was an old man with few more years to live yet will not let him into his house nor even greet him. The motivation for the style shift was the situation. The interactants share the same linguistic background characterized by code-mixing/code switching English and the vernacular.

Excerpt 3

“Papa Nnukwu is sick?” Amaka asked shrilly.

“Mom, when did you know?”

“This morning, his neighbor called. She is a good woman, Nwamgba, she went all the way to Ukpo to find a phone.”

“You should have told us!” Amaka shouted.

O gini? Have I not told you now? Auntie Ifeoma snapped. (147-148)

The shift style as showcased in the expression “O gini? Have I not told you now?” is from intimate to casual style. The speech situation/speech event that informed the shift in the speech style of the character was when Amaka’s mother informed her that Papa Nnukwu, her grandfather was sick. She asked her when she got the information and that she should have told them earlier. This made her mother angry. The motivation for the the speech style shift was the situation and the setting. Apart from the fact that it was a home setting, the interlocutors also shared the same linguistic background characterized by code-mixing and code switching English and the vernacular.

Excerpt 4

“Eugene, our father has fallen asleep.” Auntie Ifeoma said.

Papa stared at her for a while, surprise widening the narrow eyes that so easily became red-spotted.

“When?”

“This morning, in his sleep, they took him to the mortuary just hours ago.”

“Did you call a priest to give him extreme unction?” he asked.

Auntie Ifeoma ignored him and continued to look at her at her hands, folded in her lap.

“Ifeoma, did you call a priest?” Papa asked.

“Is that all you can say, eh, Eugene? Have you nothing else to say, gbo? Our father has died! Has your head turned upside down? Will you not help me bury our father?”

“I cannot participate in a pagan funeral, but we can discuss with the parish priest and arrange a Catholic funeral.” Auntie Ifeoma got up and started to shout. I will put up my dead husband’s grave for sale, Eugene, before I give our father a Catholic funeral. Did you hear me? I say I will sell Ifediorah’s grave first. Was our father a Catholic? I ask you Eugene, was he a Catholic? Uchu gba gi! Auntie Ifeoma snapped her fingers at Papa; she was throwing a curse at him. (186-187)

The speech style shift reflected in the expression Uchu gba gi! is from intimate style to frozen style. The speech situation/speech event that informed the shift in the speech style of the character in the excerpt above was when Auntie Ifeoma and Eugene were discussing the death and burial of their late father. Eugene recommended a Catholic burial for their heathen father because he did not want to participate in a pagan burial. His sister, Auntie Ifeoma vehemently opposed the idea. The motivation for the shift in speech style was the situation. Both characters were siblings who shared the same linguistic background that were characterized by code-mixing/ code switching English and the vernacular.

Excerpt 5

“They are telling Mom to shut up” Amaka said.

“Shut up if you don’t want to lose your job because you can be fired fiam just like that.”

Amaka snapped her finger to show how fast

“Auntie Ifeoma could be fired.”

“They should fire her, eh, so we can go to America,” Obiora said.

“Mechie onu,” Amaka said.

“America?” I looked from Amaka to Obiora.

Auntie Phillipa is asking Mom to come over. (218-219)

The shift style shift as showcased in the expression “Mechie onu” is from intimate style to casual style. The speech situation /speech event that informed the shift in the speech style of the character in the excerpt was when Amaka was recounting the experience their mother who is a lecturer in the university had as a result of the aftermath of students’ unrest. The administration threatened to sack her if she did not shut her mouth about the incident. Obiora, her younger brother preferred that she be fired so that they can go to America to the chagrin of Amaka. The motivation for the shift in speech style was the setting and the situation. The interlocutors were siblings and so shared the same linguistic background characterized by code-mixing /code mixing the English language and the vernacular (Igbo).

Excerpt 6

“Who sent you here?” Auntie Amaka asked.

“We are from special security unit in Port Harcourt.”

“Do you have any papers to show me? You cannot just walk into my house”

“Look at this yeye woman oh! I said we are from the Special Security Unit! ...”

“How you go come enter like dis? Wetin be dis?”

Obiora said, rising, the fear in his eyes not quite shielded by the brazen manliness in his Pidgin English.”

Obiora, nodu ani,” Auntie Ifeoma quietly said, and Obiora sat down quickly. (225)

The shift style shift reflected in the expression “Look at this yeye woman oh!” is from consultative to frozen. The speech situation /speech event that informed the shift in the speech style in the character in the excerpt was when the men from the State Security Unit invaded Auntie Amaka’s home to carry out a search following the allegation of her involvement in the university students’ unrest. The motivation for the shift in speech style was the situation (linguistic) Pidgin is a lingua franca in Nigeria and so it is a common code especially among those residing in big cities. The men from the State Security Unit used it to address Auntie Ifeoma. The second speech style shift showcased in Auntie Ifeoma’s speech directed to her son in the vernacular which was from consultative to intimate was possibly meant to serve as a private instruction to her son because of the speech situation. The men from the State Security Unit obviously do not share the same vernacular code and so they were excluded.

Excerpt 7

Who will teach Amaka and Obiora in the university?

The educated ones leave, the ones with the potential to right the wrongs. They leave the weak behind. The tyrants continue to reign because the weak cannot resist. Do you not see that it is a cycle? Who will break that cycle?”

“That is simply unrealistic pep-rally nonsense, Auntie Chiaku,” Obiora said.

I saw the tension fall from the sky and envelope us all.

A child’s cry upstairs interrupted the silence.

“Go into my room and wait for me, Obiora,” Auntie Ifeoma said.

Obiora stood up and left. He looked grave as if he had only just realized what he had done... Her friend left soon afterwards. Auntie Ifeoma stormed inside, nearly knocking a lamp over. I heard the thud of a slap and then her raised voice. “I do not quarrel with you disagreeing with my friend. I quarrel with how you disagreed. I do not raise disrespectful children in this house, do you hear me? You are not the only child who has skipped a class in school. I will not tolerate this rubbish from you! I na-anu?” She lowered her voice then I heard the click of her bedroom door closing. (239-240)

The speech style shift as reflected in the expression “I will not tolerate this rubbish from you! I na-anu?” is from consultative to intimate style. The speech situation/speech event that informed the shift was when Obiora, Auntie Ifeoma’s son made a rude remark concerning Auntie Chiaku’s effort to dissuade his mother from her plans to travel abroad. The motivation for the style shift was the setting and the situation. Being mother and child, they shared the same linguistic code characterized by code-mixing and code switching English and the vernacular apart from the fact it was a home setting.

Excerpt 8

Auntie Ifeoma looked up from the forms she was going through.

“Amaka, ngwa, pick up a name and let Father Amadi go and do his work.”

“But what’s the point then?” Amaka said to Father Amadi, as if she had not heard her mother.

What the church is saying is that only an English name will make confirmation valid. ‘Chiamaka’ says God is beautiful. ‘Chima’ says God knows best, ‘Chiebuka’ says God is the greatest. Don’t they glorify God as much as ‘Paul’ and ‘Peter’ and ‘Simon’?”

Auntie Ifeoma was getting annoyed; I knew by her raised voice, her snappy tone.

“O gini?” you don’t have to prove a senseless point here!

“Just do it and get confirmed, nobody says you have to use the name!”

But Amaka refused.

“Ekwerom,” she said to Auntie Ifeoma, I do not agree.

Then she walked into her room and turned on the music very loud until Auntie Ifeoma knocked on the door and shouted that Amaka was asking for a slap if she did not turn it down right away. (266-267)

The speech style shift showcased in the expression “O gini? You don’t have to prove a senseless point here” is from intimate to casual style. The speech situation/speech event that informed the shift in the speech style was when Amaka was delaying in choosing an English name for her confirmation as required by the Catholic Church. She argued that Igbo names were as good as English ones. The motivation for the style shift was the setting and the situation. The interlocutors shared the same linguistic background characterized by code-mixing and code switching, being mother and child. The second speech style shift reflected in the expression ““Ekwerom,” she said to Auntie Ifeoma, I do not agree” is also from intimate to casual with a similar motivation.

Applying the SPEAKING grid, we represent the speech events as follows:

Excerpt 1

S=Setting: an interaction between Kambili, the protagonist and her class mate, Ezinne when they resumed classes after their holidays.

P=Participant: Kambili and Ezinne

E= Ends: The goal of the interaction is finding out where each of them travelled to during the holidays.

A=Act sequence: Questioning and informing

K=Key: Light-hearted

I=Instrumentalities: The interaction is oral.

N=Norms of interaction and interpretation

G=Genre: Friend – friend interaction

Excerpt 2

S=Setting: The interaction between Kambili's mother and Auntie Ifeoma, Kambili's paternal auntie when the two were discussing about Kambili's father, Eugene in the former's bedroom.

P=Participants: Kambili's mother and Auntie Ifeoma

K=Key: serious, sad

I=Instrumentalities: The interaction is oral

N=Norms of interaction and interpretation: The interaction is usually on a friendly note.

G=Genre: Sisters – laws' interaction

Excerpt 3

S=Setting: The interaction between Auntie Ifeoma and her daughter, Amaka\

P=Participants: Auntie Ifeoma and her daughter, Amaka

E=Ends: The goal of the interaction is the reported sickness of Papa –Nnukwu, Amaka's grandfather.

A=Act sequence: Informing, questioning

K=Key: Serious, sad

I=Instrumentalities: The interaction is oral.

N=Norms of interaction and interpretation: Parent – child interaction

Excerpt 4

S=Setting: The interaction between Eugene Achike, Kambili's father and his sister, Auntie Ifeoma when they were the discussing the death and burial arrangement of their late father.

P=Participants: Eugene Achike's father and his sister, Auntie Ifeoma

E=Ends: The goal of the interaction is settling of issues concerning the burial of their late father

A=Act sequence: Informing, questioning and declaring

K=Key: Serious, sad

I=Instrumentalities: The interaction is oral.

N=Norms of interaction and interpretation: The interaction is usually intimate.

G=Genre: Brother-sister interaction

Excerpt 5

S=Setting: The interaction between Amaka, Obiora and Kambili when they were discussing the recent development in the university where Auntie Ifeoma, their mother is a lecturer.

P=Participants: Amaka, Obiorah and Kambili

E=Ends: The goal of the interaction is the threat by th university admimistratonon Auntie Ifeoma's appointment.

A=Act sequence: Informing, asserting and reprimanding

K=Key: Serious, pompous

I=Instrumentalities: The interaction is oral.

N=Norms of interaction and interpretation: The interaction is usually friendly.

G=Genre: Cousin's interaction

Excerpt 6

S=Setting: The interaction involving Auntie Ifeoma, herso, Obiora and men from the Special Security Unit when they came to search her house following the university students riot and her alleged involvement.

P=Participants: Auntie Ifeoma, her son, Obiora and men from the Special Security Unit

E=Ends: The goal of the interaction is the search of Aunty Ifeoma's house by men of the Special Security Unit.

A=Act sequence: Questioning, informing, and directing

K=Key: Serious, pompous

I= Instrumentalities: The interaction is oral.

N=Norms of interaction and interpretation: The interaction is usually done in Standard English.

G=Genre: Security officials-defendant's interaction

Excerpt 7

S=Setting: The interaction involving Aunty Ifeoma, her friend, Aunty Chiaku and her son, Obiora when Obiora made a rude remark in the discussion the two women were engaged in.

P=Participants: Aunty Ifeoma, her friend, Aunty Chiaku and Aunty Ifeoma's son Obiora

E=Ends: The goal of the interaction is the bid by Aunty Chiaku to dissuade Aunty Ifeoma from resigning from her job and travelling to America.

A=Act sequence: Questioning, declaring and reprimand

K=Key: serious

I=Instrumentalities: The interaction is oral.

N=Norms of interaction and interpretation: The interaction is friendly.

G=Genre: Friend-friend interaction

Excerpt 8

S=Setting: The interaction involving Amaka, her mother, Aunty Ifeoma and Father Amadi, Catholic priest and a friend to the family when they were trying to convince Amaka to choose an English name for her confirmation.

P=Participants: Amaka, her mother, Aunty Ifeoma and Father Amadi

E=Ends: The goal of the interaction is the bid to convince Amaka to choose an English name for her confirmation.

A=Act sequence: Questioning, directing, and declaring

K=Key: Serious, mocking

I=Instrumentalities: The interaction is oral.

N=Norm of interaction and interpretation: Parents give instruction and children comply.

G=Genre: Parent-child interaction

Discussion

In excerpt 1, Kambili's inquiry from Ezinne, her classmate on whether she travelled abroad for her holidays when they met on resumption of classes was what motivated the speech style shift from intimate to casual style. The style shift may have made Kambili more uneasy in relating with her friend as she was already undergoing emotional tension and was eager to please her. Symmetrical power relation is in force here as they were class mates.

In excerpt 2, Eugene, Kambili's father's antagonistic attitude towards his aged heathen father who Aunty Ifeoma, sister alleged that he would not welcome into his house nor even greet him was what motivated the speech style shift from intimate to frozen style. On this style of speaking, Holmes (240) avers that "the speaker's relationship to the addressee is crucial in determining the appropriate style of speaking" She observes that "how well you know someone or how close you feel to them ... is one important dimension of social relationship." The style shift may have more increased the strain in their relationship as siblings over the matter especially as she further charged him to stop playing the role of a judge over their father which God was big enough to play. Symmetrical power relation is in force here which according to Pfetsch "is characterized by a balanced mutual relationship based on similar allocations of power resources."

In excerpt 3, Amaka's loud expression of her displeasure at her mother's failure to inform them earlier of their grandfather's illness motivated the speech style shift from intimate to casual style. Apparently Amaka was very fond of her grandfather. More so, she and her brother, Obiora were raised in a home where freedom of expression was encouraged quite unlike Kambili's own home. Wardhaugh (47) posits that "... conversations between persons who are intimate on matters of little importance maybe extremely informal or casual." The shift may have better heightened her annoyance at her daughter.

In excerpt 4, Auntie Ifeoma's indignation at her brother, Eugene's proposal of a Catholic funeral for their late father who was a notable heathen motivated the speech style shift from intimate to frozen style. On being informed earlier on of the death of their heathen father, Eugene's first response was whether she called a priest. He then went on to announce that he cannot participate in a pagan funeral but that they can arrange a Catholic burial to the chagrin of his sister. The style shift heightened rift in their relationship as Auntie Ifeoma threw a curse at him. Being members of the same family, symmetrical power relation is in force here.

In excerpt 5, Amaka's recounting of their mother's ugly experience with the university administration that threatened to sack her mother if she did not shut her mouth about the incident and the younger brother's sudden outburst that they should sack her so that they can go to America motivated the speech style shift from intimate to casual style. Apparently her brother's disposition on the issue contradicted her graver outlook. Being his elder sister, the speech style shift may have helped in calling Obiora to order. According to Yule (145) ... the roles of speaker and hearer(s) and their relationship(s), whether they were friends, strangers, men, young, old, of equal or unequal status... all have an influence on what is said and how it is said." Asymmetrical power relation is in force here.

In excerpt 6, Auntie Ifeoma's demand of the men from the Special Security Unit to show her their search warrant when they announced their mission to search her house motivated the first speech style shift from consultative to frozen. The speech style shift may have instilled a sense of fear in Auntie Ifeoma especially as the very man that addressed her simultaneously pushed her aside. Asymmetrical power relation is in force here which depicts social distance. Pfetsch (2) notes that that asymmetry "is a structure one can find among most social and political relations and in relations between unequal parties" The unequal allocation of power resources according to him "can lead to a point when the most powerful party makes threats and exerts pressure." The second speech style shift which was from consultative to intimate was motivated by Auntie Ifeoma's fear of a possible assault on her son by the security men when he made an attempt at confronting them in a show of manliness. The shift in speech style which was done in the vernacular was possibly intended to serve as a private code to her son since the men obviously belonged to a different tribe. The style shift sent the message across to the son because he sat down quickly. Asymmetrical power relation is also in force here.

In excerpt 7, Obiora's rude interruption into the discussion between Auntie Ifeoma and her friend, Auntie Chiaku motivated the speech style shift from consultative to intimate style. Auntie Chiaku's bid to dissuade his mother from resigning from her job and travelling to America met with stiff opposition from Obiora who was possibly nursing hopes of his family travelling abroad. Again, the discussion took place in his home. Yule (145) notes that "there is an enormous variation in what people say and do in different circumstances" He points out that in order to describe the sources of that variation a description of what the topic of conversation was and the setting it took place should be made. The home setting also explains his mother's disciplinary measures to arrest the situation. The style shift may have better driven her rebuke home to her son. Asymmetrical power relation is in force here.

In excerpt 8, Amaka's reluctance to choose an English name for confirmation motivated the first speech style shift from intimate to casual. She argued that Igbo names glorify God as much as English names. The style shift may have helped to establish her mother's position on the matter as she obviously expected her obedience. The second style shift from intimate to casual was motivated by Auntie Ifeoma's insistence on Amaka's compliance stating that she did not have to use the name. The style shift must have strained the mother-daughter relationship between them as she flouted her instruction. Asymmetrical power should be reflected here though it was truncated by Amaka's obstinacy. From the above discussion, it is evident that language is dynamic. The different speech events thus informed the shifts in speech style from intimate to casual, intimate to frozen, intimate to casual, intimate to frozen, intimate to casual, consultative to intimate, intimate to casual and intimate to casual respectively. The different speech style shifts identified were influenced mainly by speaker's relationship to the addressee, the setting and social distance. The shifts also depict more of asymmetrical power relations between the different characters than symmetrical.

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