

Speech Style-Shifts in Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People*

Chinyeaka, Lauretta O.

Department of English Language and Literature
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
lo.chinyeaka@unizik.edu.ng

Abstract

This paper examines the use of speech style shifts by interlocutors engaged in dialogues. In verbal discourse interactants employ different speech styles in different situations. This is because no one speaks in exactly the same manner on all occasions. A number of factors inform these shifts in speech style such as the speaker, the addressee, the setting, topic of discourse and the purpose of the discourse among other factors. Using Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People*, this study seeks to identify the speech style shifts in the dialogues of the characters and the motivation 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, six sample excerpts purposively selected from the text were used as data while Ethnography of Communication (EOC) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) were used as theoretical frameworks. Findings revealed that the different speech style shifts identified were influenced mainly by the situation, addressee and social distance.

Introduction

In dialogues of characters in written prose, there is a tendency for display of shifts in the style of the speeches of interlocutors in different circumstances. Shifts in speech styles 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 shifts 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, social distance or the situation. When such necessary adjustment in speech style are not made, it would attract social sanctions in formal situations for instance or if the purpose is misconstrued by the interactants, problems such as feelings of inferiority, contempt or avoidance may arise on the part of the interactants of lower status while the one of higher status may exhibit an air of pride, arrogance or insult. 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 speech style shifts in the speech styles of the characters in *A Man of the People*, 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 speech style-shifts in the text? What are the motivations for the speech style-shifts? How did they affect the relationship between the characters? What are the power structures at work?

Conceptual Framework

Speech Styles

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). Speech style is a social feature of language use. (Yule, 2010:257). Ezeifeka (2018:136) 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 (2010:47) 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 (2013:239). She notes that the addressees and the context influence our choices of code or variety be it language, dialect or style.

Joos identifies 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 style 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 (2010:257) 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 (2010:47) 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 (2013:240) 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 (2013:241) 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 is also identified by Holmes (2013:242-243) 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) Last week British Minister David Cameron met Australian Premier Julia Gillard in Canberra... Their next 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 (2013:240) 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 (2001:199) 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 (2018:136) 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 (1977:39) 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 (2010:145) 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 group 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

This work is anchored in the theoretical frameworks of Ethnography of Communication (EOC) formerly called Ethnography of Speaking; and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The study focuses on how different cultures represent different speech communities with different speech situations, speech styles, speech events and speech acts the five taxonomy of units of social communication with speech events as the minimal unit of analysis in the framework. The relevance of CDA in the study is based on the notion of ‘power’ at play in the interactions among the different characters in the literary text. Luke (cited in Ezeifeka 2018) notes that “CDA usually begins with the assumption that systematic asymmetries of power and resources between speakers and listeners, writers and readers, can be linked to their unequal access to linguistic and social resources”

Ethnography of communication was championed by Dell Hymes (cited in Ezeifeka, 2018). According to her, it is a branch of studies in Linguistics and Anthropology that x-rays the study of language beyond the lexicon and grammar. She asserts that it is an approach to the study of discourse which is focused on particular ways of seeing the world and how these are showcased in particular ways of speaking. She notes that ethnographers observe patterns of communication and the symbols of meanings, premises and rules applied to speaking within specific groups of people which entails culture, race, ethnic group, or speech community. Their focus according to her is on the verbal and non-verbal ways of sense-making in different cultures in order to find out particular communication acts or codes that are important to particular groups, what types of meanings each group attach to different speech events, and how group members learn these codes. This qualitative approach to discourse analysis, she observes, is designed to increase awareness of enormous culture-bound assumptions such as what is normal, appropriate, usual and correct in human communication. Objects of study (e.g. the study of Igbo culture) according to her include:

1. Ways of speaking – distinct patterns of talk that is symbolically meaningful to that particular group within the broader spectrum of communicative behaviour generally. For example the speech situations/speech events reflected in the different excerpts from the selected literary text.
2. Speech communities defined by Hymes as people who share at least one valued way of speaking and interpretative resources within its location.
3. Native terms of talk – group specific labels for communicative practices that index their symbolic importance and meaning, for example words /expressions used within a specific ethnic group (in this case the Igbo tribe).

The foundational premise of ethnography of speaking formulated by Hymes as noted by Ezeifeke (2018 134-135) includes:

1. Diversity in the systems of language use is to be explored in all its complexity
2. Societies differ as to what communicative resources are available to their members, in terms of language, dialects, registers, routines, genres, artistic formulae etc.
3. Societies differ in how these resources are patterned in use, in the work done (or doable) through speech and other communicative means and in the evaluation of speaking as an instrument of social class.

She also cites Hymes as arguing that any description of language on ways of speaking will need to provide data along four related dimensions, linked to judgments of situational correctness:

1. The linguistic resources available to a speaker – how many different styles he/she can choose from: formal, informal, casual, distant or frozen
2. Supra-segmental structuring – how many differently structured linguistic (speech) events like trials, religious ceremonies, debates, songs are recognized in the cultures
3. The rules of interpretation by which a given set of linguistic item comes to have a given communicative value
4. The norms which govern different types of interaction, for instance, different ethnic groups, among peers and for elders in different speech communities, speech styles, speech situations and speech events for example disclosure of information of a fellow to strangers.

She notes that based on the above premise, Hymes proposes the social units of ethnography of speaking research arranged in descending order of magnitude as shown below:

speech community
speech styles
speech situation
speech event
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 proposes 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.

Research Questions

1. What are the speech style shifts adopted by the characters in the text?
2. What are the motivations for the style shifts?
3. How did the style shifts affect the relationship among the characters?
4. What power structures are at work?

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. Six sample excerpts of the speech style-shifts would be used as data.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Excerpt 1

Later on in the Proprietor’s lodge I said to the Minister:
“You must have spent a fortune today.”
He smiled at the glass of cold beer in his hand and said;
You call this spend? You never see something, my brother. I no de keep anini for myself, na so so troway. If some person come to you and say ‘I wan make you minister’ make you run like blazes comot. Na true word I tell you. To God who made me.” He showed me the tip of his tongue to the sky to confirm the oath.
Minister de sweet for eye but too much katakata de for inside.
Believe me yours sincerely.”
Big man , big palaver, said the one-eyed man.
It was left to Josiah, owner of a nearby shop-and-bar to sound a discordant if jovial note.
“Me one,” he said, I no kuku mind the katakata wey de for inside. Make you put Minister money for my hand and all the wahala on top. I no mind at all.”

Everyone laughed. Then Mrs John said:
“No be so my fren’. When you done experience rich man’s trouble
you no fit talk like that again.
My people get one proverb: they say that when poor man done see
with his own eye how to make big man e go beg make e carry him
poverty de go je-je.” (14-15)

The speech-style shift as showcased in the expression ‘You call this spend? You never see something my brother. I no de keep anini for myself na soso troway.’ is from consultative to casual style. The speech situation/speech event that informed the shift in the speech style of the character in the excerpt above is the discussion among the Honourable Minister, Chief Nanga, Odili and others. Odili was commending the Minister on his philanthropic gestures towards the people of Anata on his recent visit there. The motivation for the shift style was the situation.

Excerpt 2

I edged quietly towards the journalist who seemed to know everyone in the party and whispered in his ears: “Who is the young lady?”
“Ah,” he said, leaving his mouth wide open for a while as a danger signal. Make you no go near am-o. My hand no de for inside.”
I told him I wasn’t going near am-o, I merely asked who she was.
The Minister no de introduce-am to anybody. So I think say na im girl-friend, or im cousin.” Then he confided : I don lookam , lookam stay I tire. I no go tell you lie girls for this una part sabi fine-o. God Almighty!” (15-16)

The speech style shift as reflected in the expression “Ah,” ... “Make you no go near am-o. My hand no de for inside.” is from consultative to casual. The speech situation/event that informed the shift in the speech style of the character in the excerpt above is Odili’s enquiry about the identity of the young lady in Chief Nanga’s entourage. Odili asked the journalist who the young lady in the Chief’s entourage was. The motivation for the style shift again was the situation.

Excerpt 3

“They are going to give me doctorate degree,” he announced proudly.
“Doctor of
Laws,LL.D.
“That’s great” I said. “Congratulations.”
“Thank you my brother.”
So the Minister will become Chief the Honourable Dr M.A Nanga,”
intoned the journalist, a whole second ahead of my own thoughts on
the matter. We all cheered the impressive address and its future
owner.
“You no see say the title fit my name pem,” said the Minister with
boyish excitement, and we all said yes it suited him perfectly.
But the man wey I like im name pass na Chief the Honourable Alhaji
Doctor Mongo Sega, M.P.” said the Minister somewhat wistfully.
“Him own good too,” but e no pass your own, sir. Chief the
Honourable Dr M.A. Nanga, M.P. LL.D.’ Na waa! Nothing fit
passam.”
“What about Chief Dr Mrs’?” I threw in mischievously
“That one no sweet for mouth,” said the Minister. “E no catch.”
“Wetin wrong with am?” asked Mrs John.
“Because na woman get am e no go sweet for mouth. I done talk am
say na only for election time women dey get equality for this our
country.”

“No be so, madam,” said the journalist. You no see how the title rough like sand-paper for mouth: ‘Dr Chief Mrs’ E no catch at all.”(19)

The speech style shift as showcased in the expression “You no see say the title fit my name pem.” above is also from formal to casual. The speech situation/speech event that informed the shift in the speech style of the character is the announcement by Chief Nanga of the honorary award that was to be given him. Chief Nanga had just informed them of the award he was about to receive. The motivation for the style shift was the situation.

Excerpt 4

“Wetin you fit cook?” asked chief Nanga as he perused the young man’s sheaf of testimonials probably not one of them genuine. I fit cook every European chop like steak and kidney pie, chicken puri, misk grill, cake omelette . . .”
“You no sabi cook African chop?”
“Ahh! That one I no sabi am-o, he admitted. I no go tell Master lie”
“Wetin you de chop for your house?” I asked, being irritated by the idiot.
“Wetin I de chop for my house?” he repeated after me. Na we country chop I de chop.”
“You country chop no be African chop?” asked Chief Nanga.
“Na him, admitted the cook. But no be me de cook am. I get wife for house.”
My irritation vanished at once and I joined Chief Nanga’s laughter. Greatly encouraged, the cook added: How man wey get family go begin enter kitchen for make bitter leaf and egusi unless the man no get shame.”(46)

The shift style shift portrayed in the excerpt as seen in the expression “wetin you fit cook” in the above excerpt is from formal to casual style. This is reflected in the interaction involving Chief Nanga, Odili and the man who came to offer his services as a cook to chief Nanga. The speech situation/ speech event that informed the shift in the speech style of the character is the interview for a cook conducted by Chief Nanga. This was when Chief Nanga was interviewing a man who came to offer his services as a cook in his house. The motivation for the style shift was the addressee and the situation.

Excerpt 5

“Abi you no fit read notice?”
“Don’t be silly!” I said “and don’t shout at me!”
“Be silly!” he shouted. “Idiot like you. Look him motor self. When they call those wey get motor you go follow them comot? Foolish idiot.”
I parked my car outside the gate and went in, deciding to ignore the man who had not ceased shouting. “Na him make accident de kill them for road every day. Nonsense!” (105)

The speech style shift as reflected in the expression “Don’t be silly ... and don’t shout at me” in the excerpt above is from formal to frozen. The speech situation/speech event that informed the shift in the speech style of the character in the excerpt above was when Odili wanted to drive into the premises of Anata Mission Hospital in search of Edna, the young lady betrothed to chief Nanga but was prevented by the gateman. The motivation for the shift in the speech style was social distance and the situation.

Excerpt 6

(Odili) ‘‘ I gave you ten pounds only yesterday,’’ I said and was about to add that unlike our opponents we had very limited funds – a point which I had already made many times. But Boniface interrupted me.

‘‘Are you there?’’ he said. If na play we de play make you tell us because me I no wan waste my time for nothing sake. Or you think say na so so talk you go take win Chief Nanga.

If Government no give you plenty money for election make you go tell them no be sand sand we de take do am.

‘‘Man no fit fight tiger with empty hand,’’ added his companion before I could put in a word to correct Boniface’s fantastic misconception.

‘‘No be Government de give us money,’’ I said. We na small party, C.P.C. we wan help poor people like you. How Government go give us money...?’’

‘‘But na who de give the er weting call... P.C.P money?’’ asked Boniface puzzled. ‘‘Some friends abroad,’’ I said with a knowing air to cover my own ignorance which I had forgotten to worry about in the heat of activity.

‘‘You no fit send your friends telegram?’’ asked Boniface’s companion.

‘‘Let’s not go into that now, I said. What do you need twenty-five pounds for? And what have you done with the ten pounds?’’ I felt I had to sound firm. It worked. We give three pound ten to that policeman so that he go spoil the paper for our case. Then we give one-ten to Court Clerk because they say as the matter don

reach him eye the policeman no kuku spoil am just like dat. Then we give another ten pound...’’

‘‘Alright,’’ I said. ‘‘What do you want the twenty-five pounds for?’’

‘‘They no tell you say Chief Nanga don return from Bori yesterday?’’

‘‘So you wan give am money too?’’ I asked.

‘‘This no be matter for joke; we wan the money to pay certain persons wey go go him house for night and burn him car.’’

‘‘What ! No we don’t need to do that.’’ There was a minute’s silence.

Look my frien I done tell you say if you no wan serious for this business make go rest for house. I done see say you want play too much gentleman for this matter... Dem tell you say na gentlemany dey give other people minister...? Anyway wetin be my concern there? Na you sabi’’. (114 - 115)

The speech style shift as reflected in the expression ‘‘So you wan give am money too?’’ is from formal to consultative style. The speech situation/speech event that informed the shift in the shift in the speech style of the character in the above excerpt was the demand for more money by the touts that Odili engaged to counter Chief Nanga’s more vicious opposition group. This was when Boniface, a tout and one of the other stalwarts woke him up one early morning and demanded twenty-five pounds. The motivation was the situation and social distance.

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

Excerpt 1

S= Setting: The informal discussion involving the Honourable Minister, Chief Nanga, Odili, the protagonist and other acquaintances of Chief Nanga concerning the honorary doctorate degree that the minister was to be awarded.

P= Participants: The Honourable Minister, Chief Nanga, Odili, the protagonist and other acquaintances of Chief Nanga.

E= Ends: The goal of the interaction is the information concerning the honorary doctorate degree that was to be awarded Chief Nanga.

A= Acts Sequence: informing, affirming, questioning.

K= Key: Jubilant, light-hearted.

I= Instrumentalities: The interaction is oral and formal.

N= Norms of Interaction and interpretation: Honourable ministers' interactions with their acquaintances are usually formal and the language used is English.

G= Genre: Minister – acquaintances interaction.

Excerpt 2

Setting =Setting: Odili is making inquiry from the journalist about the identity of the young lady in the chief's entourage.

P= Participants: Odili and the journalist

E= Ends: The goal of the dialogue is the identification of the young lady in Chief Nanga's Nanga's entourage

A= Act sequence: questioning, responding and affirming

K=Key: serious, light-hearted and conspiratorial

I= Instrumentalities: The communication is oral

N= Norms of interaction and interpretation: The interaction is done in pidgin interspersed with English expressions

G=Genre: Inquirer-respondent interaction

Excerpt 3

S= Setting: Chief Nanga is notifying some of the people in his entourage about the the honorary award that was to be given him

P= Participants : Chief Nanga, Odili, the journalist and Mrs. John

E= Ends: The goal of the interaction is to create awareness about the award of the honorary degree

A= Act sequence: informing, responding

K=Key: Jubilant, light- hearted

I= Instrumentalities: Oral communication with systematic turn-taking among interactants

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

G=Genre: Minister- Entourage interaction

Excerpt 4

S= Setting: An interaction involving Chief Nanga, Odili and the man who came to offer his services as a cook to chief Nanga.

P= Participants: Chief Nanga, Odili and the man offering his services as a cook to Chief Nanga.

E= Ends: The goal of the interaction is the eligibility of the interviewee for the position of cook.

A= Acts of sequence: Questioning, responding, questioning, informing.

K= Key: serious, light-hearted, and sarcastic.

Excerpt 5

S= Setting: An interaction between Odili and the gateman when the former wanted to drive into the premises of a hospital in search of Edna, who was betrothed to Chief Nanga but was stopped by the gateman.

P= Participants: Odili, the protagonist and the gateman.

E= Ends: The goal of the interaction is the bid by Odili to drive into the premises of the hospital.

A= Acts Sequence: Questioning, Reprimand, Proclamation.

K= Key: Serious, abusive, and pompous.

I= Instrumentalities: The interaction is oral and frozen.

N= Norms of interaction and interpretation: Formal interactions are usually courteous.

G= Genre: Visitor – Gateman interaction.

Excerpt 6

S= Setting: A formal interaction involving Odili and the political touts he engaged to counter Chief Nanga's opposition group when Boniface, one of the touts and one of the other stalwarts came to him demanding twenty-five pounds.

P= Participants: Odili, Boniface, one of the thugs and one of the other stalwarts.

E= Ends: The goal of the interaction is the bid by the touts to collect twenty-five pounds from Odili.

A= Acts Sequence: Questioning, responding, proclamation.

K= Key: Serious, pompous and sarcastic.

I= Instrumentalities: The interaction is oral initially formal and then frozen.

N= Norms of interaction and interpretation: Formal interactions are usually courteous.

G= Genre: Politician – Touts interaction.

Discussion

In excerpt 1, the speech-style shift as showcased in the expression ‘You call this spend? You never see something my brother. I no de keep anini for myself na soso troway.’ is from consultative to casual style. The speech situation/speech event that informed the shift in the speech style of the character in the excerpt is the discussion among the Honourable Minister, Chief Nanga, Odili and others. Odili was commending the Minister on his philanthropic gestures towards the people of Anata on his recent visit there. The motivation for the shift style was the situation. The style shift created a very friendly and relaxed atmosphere among the interlocutors. The power structure at work here is symmetrical.

In excerpt 2, the speech-style shift as showcased in the expression ‘You call this spend? You never see something my brother. I no de keep anini for myself na soso troway.’ is from consultative to casual style. The speech situation/speech event that informed the shift in the speech style of the character in the excerpt is the discussion among the Honourable Minister, Chief Nanga, Odili and others. Odili was commending the Minister on his philanthropic gestures towards the people of Anata on his recent visit there. The motivation for the shift style was the situation. The style shift created a happy and relaxed atmosphere among the interactants. The power structure at work here is also symmetrical.

In excerpt 3, the speech style shift as showcased in the expression “You no see say the title fit my name pem.” above is also from formal to casual. The speech situation/speech event that informed the shift in the speech style of the character is the announcement by Chief Nanga of the honorary award that was to be given him. Chief Nanga had just informed them of the award he was about to receive. The motivation for the style shift was the situation. The shift in speech style brought about a relaxed and joyous atmosphere among the interlocutors. The power structure at play here is symmetrical.

In excerpt 4, the shift style shift portrayed in the excerpt as seen in the expression “wetin you fit cook” in the above excerpt is from formal to casual style. This is reflected in the interaction involving Chief Nanga, Odili and the man who came to offer his services as a cook to chief Nanga. The speech situation/ speech event that informed the shift in the speech style of the character is the interview for a cook conducted by Chief Nanga. This was when Chief Nanga was interviewing a man who came to offer his services as a cook in his house. The motivation for the style shift was the addressee and the situation. The shift in speech style generated a relaxed atmosphere among the interactants so much so that the interviewee to speak more freely. The power structure at play here is asymmetrical but the spirit in which the message is conveyed is light-hearted and so it shifted the speech style from formal to casual style.

In excerpt 5, the speech style shift as reflected in the expression “Don’t be silly ... and don’t shout at me” in the excerpt above is from formal to frozen. The speech situation/speech event that informed the shift in the speech style of the character in the excerpt above was when Odili wanted to drive into the premises of Anata Mission Hospital in search of Edna, the young lady betrothed to chief Nanga but was prevented by the gateman. The motivation for the shift in the speech style was social distance and the situation. The speech style shift enraged the gateman and made him rain abuses at Odili. The power structure on display here is asymmetrical. There is an obvious display of power based on social distance on the part of Odili who is of a higher social status.

In excerpt 6, the speech style shift as reflected in the expression “So you wan give am money too?” is from formal to consultative style. The speech situation/speech event that informed the shift in the speech style of the character in the above excerpt was the demand for more money by the touts that

Odili engaged to counter Chief Nanga's more vicious opposition group. This was when Boniface, a tout and one of the other stalwarts woke him up one early morning and demanded twenty-five pounds. The motivation was the situation. The shift in the speech style was probing. The power structure at play here is symmetrical. Both parties were negotiating a deal and so they exercised equal power.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is seen that language is dynamic. The different speech events thus informed the shifts in the speech styles from consultative to casual, consultative to casual, formal to casual, formal to casual, formal to frozen and formal to consultative respectively. The different speech style shifts identified were influenced mainly by the situation, addressee and social distance. The excerpts depict more of symmetrical than asymmetrical power relations among the characters.

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