



Conversational Structure in Market Place Discourse

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Abstract

This paper looks at the peculiarities of the conversations between buyers and sellers in the market place with an emphasis on the structure. In examining the interactions in this setting, attention is paid to the use of adjacency pairs, turn-taking management, the use of discourse-markers as a signpost and instances of overlaps that correlate the idea of power as they constitute the conversational structure prevalent in a market place discourse. The live data is collected at three specific markets - New Benin Market, Oba Market, and Student Union Government- in Benin City, Nigeria through the use of a tape-recorder which is later transcribed using the transcription symbols devised by Gail Jefferson.

Keywords: Conversation, Characters, Market Discourse, Benin-City

Introduction

Conversation Analysis analytic approach started in American sociology with the works of the sociologists Erving Goffman and Harold Garfinkel (Mazeland 153). The model of analysis adopted in this research paper is the Conversational Analysis Approach used by Harvey Sacks, Emmanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson which was based on the structure of conversations. Sacks examined conversations from Los Angeles Suicide Prevention Center while Jefferson and Schegloff analysed mundane conversations. Conversations are organised into turns which forms the basic analytic unit in conversational analysis. Conversation is any predominant kind of talk in which two or more participants freely alternate in speaking and can occur in institutional settings such as religious services, law-courts, class-rooms (Levinson 284).

Since conversation, to an extent, can be said to be not actually planned by interlocutors, in the society, the pressure for communication gives room for interactions among people. This type of discourse is characterised by negotiation or bargaining between the interactants, each has to take turns which have allocation rules. A speaker can self-select; and in the case whereby an appropriate selected speaker does not respond at a particular Transition Relevance Place, the current speaker continues (Sacks et al 700). Sacks introduced a term called adjacency pairs which refers to one kind of turn-taking management that involves pairs of utterances that usually occur together (Pridham 26). Discourse markers refer on to expressions in spoken discourse that are used pragmatically with a structuring and organizational function i.e. they have interactional functions (Lenk 246)

According to Milan Ferencik analysis of the Noche Dialogy (Night Dialogues) radio phone-in broadcast, interactants are usually involved in category work even as they portray the idea of politeness and effectiveness (351-4). Ferencik proves that such conversations are orderly and sequential because the interlocutors are involved in a patterned act of speaking. Robert Jones takes



this use of language further in analysing the literary text *Absurd Person Singular* by Alan Ayckbourn selecting two characters - Robert and Sidney. Jones shows that participants take a stipulated number of turns and the way the topic of a conversation is controlled correlates the idea of power which reveals the attitudes of these participants (Jones 169-72). The rate of turn-taking management and use of allocation rules by interlocutors can distinguish between the phases of talk-in-interaction that occur in a business transaction which is adopted by Barbara M.G Settineri in her analysis of shop and market conversations in Sicily (187).

Data Presentation and Analyses

1. Text ones

1. A - aunty you won buy [tomatoes ?
2. B - [↑ K::elly ((*calling out to her son*))
3. C - [on Monday abi ((*receiving a call*))
4. D - Good afternoon
5. B - wetin you de find ? ((*facing her son*))
6. D - aunty (.) I want to buy beans
7. B - ↑ how many rub:ber ?
8. C - ehm is he back ?
9. D - (.) half rubber is how much ?
10. C - ehn
11. B - < three hundred
12. D - how much last ? (.) is it not two hundred ?
13. B - you get change ?
14. D - ↑ I have five hundred
15. B - ((*bends down and sells the beans*)) oya go seat down there.

In every conversation, the main topic is always introduced by a speaker and the difference between interlocutors can be identified based on their choice of words. A turn is the basic analytic unit in conversation analysis and this extract comprises fifteen turns each consisting of at least one Turn Constructional Unit or TCU. According to Sacks et al, the TCU is described as the smallest complete unit which could fully constitute a turn (Robert 167). In this extract, we see a case whereby an adjacency pair is being transposed to function in an unusual way - i.e the first pair-part (question) is used in two ways; functioning as a question and also used as a reply to a question. For example - in Turn 7 and 9:

7. B - ↑ how many rub:ber ?
8. D - (.) half a rubber is how much ?

This interaction which comprises fifteen turns involves four speakers but the main transaction of buying and selling as prevalent in the setting is exhibited by the turns taken by speaker B and speaker D. In this context, the sellers are eager to sell their product to any prospective buyer, so we see in Turn 1, the use of the single word “*aunty*” by speaker A as an attention getter to a particular female buyer who just walked past her shed. In completion of her turn constructional unit, one notices the use of the informative act that tells the buyer the nature of the product she sells and as a means of appealing she uses the word “*fresh*” to give the buyer a sense of guaranty that her product is good. As characteristics of talks in this context, we see the overlaps of turns - a situation



where one participant begins speaking while the other is midway through a TCU (Robert 168) - between the first three speakers who are involved in different course of talk as seen in Turn 1, 2, and 3. The word “*aunty*” used in Turn 1 can be seen to be semantically incorrect but in this context, it has been adopted as a cultural way of appealing to the buyer’s conscience in order to enhance patronage. With all this on-going talks, we see the allocation technique of self-selection used by speaker D “good afternoon” in Turn 4 - who was actually being referred to as “*aunty*” by speaker A - to draw the seller’s - speaker B - attention she is actually standing in front of her and she intends to purchase the item.

Speaker D introduced a first pair-part (greeting) in her turn which should be replied by the appropriate speaker that she had selected as the next to speak. Instead, the next speaker who is being distracted by her child is not focused in the conversation as she tries to call -to - order her child - this occurrence is typical of the society as women merge two things in a market setting like selling to a buyer and at the same time attending to their children. Speaker B speaks as the next person but eventually her utterance was not a reply to the pair-part provided in Turn 4 but rather in Turn 5 “*wetin you de find*” which can be inferred to mean a question to her child. In this case, there is a turn-lapse on the part of speaker B as she did not respond to the utterance of speaker D who has selected her as the next speaker because her turn constructional unit is a question instead of the second pair-part (greeting). Since this selected speaker did not respond appropriately we see the current speaker - speaker D - relinquishing the turn at the next Transition Relevance Place by self-selection.

Also, we see that speaker B takes more turns (6 turns) in the conversation but most of her turns can be said to be unrelated specifically to the process of buying and selling but as an exercise of power over her child who serves as a distraction. Speaker D continues in turn 6, using the word “*aunty*” as an attention getter and in completion used the declarative sentence “*I want to buy beans*” to select speaker B as the next speaker once again. The single word as used by the buyer can be said to be performing another function as compared to its usage in Turn 1, as the speaker employs it as a means to establish some form of intimacy or cordiality that might facilitate getting the item at a cheaper price despite the fact that they are not related in any way. Turn allocational strategies can construct the order of turns via the next speaker selection strategies (Herman 21), as seen in this conversation which results in the uneven turns of each participant as a correlation of the idea of power - relation. A speaker can stretch or reduce the vocalization of the intended last syllable of the turn or mark it with a noticeable tone movement (Mazeland 155) and this is seen in Turn 7 as speaker B stressed the word “*rub:ber*” which she provides as an appropriate answer to the declarative use of language in Turn 6.

The utterance of speaker B in Turn 7 “↑ *how many rub:ber*” though in a question form passes the information that the item is sold using a particular scale of measurement, “*rubber*” and is subject to change based on the seller. In Turn 8, the interrogative sentence “[*ehn is he back?*” provided by speaker C can be said to be irrelevant to the on-going negotiation and also indicative of the fact that there are other types of interaction that can occur simultaneously in a market setting. From observation, we can notice the transposition of the adjacency pair (question) - by the participants (speaker B and D) in Turn 7 and 9 respectively - used in Turn 9 “(.) *half rubber is how much ?*” as an answer to the question in Turn 7. The interrogative sentence as used by speaker D indicates the fact that she has little or no idea concerning the amount allocated to the proposed scale used in selling the item. In Turn 11, the pair-part (answer) “< *three hundred*” is used as a relevant



reply to the question in Turn 9. One thing peculiar about discourse of this type is the negotiation between the participants which is presented in Turn 11 and 12;

11. B - < three hundred

12. D - how much last ? (.) is it not two hundred? .

Also, we see the use of two interrogative sentences in the turn constructional unit of speaker B which serves as a question and also a suggestion to the seller as a means of bargaining, stating the amount that she is willing to pay for the item and at the same time selecting speaker B as the next to speak. The price of the item has been fully accepted by both participants but in Turn 13, we see the introduction of a new topic by speaker B which could either determine if the item can be sold or not, so we see her using the question “*you get change*” which is very relevant in this context. Speaker D response “↑ *I have five hundred*” in Turn 14 shows that she understood the seller’s question and she uses the declarative sentence above which now becomes a permission for the seller to package the item. In the last turn which is taken by the seller, we see through her non-verbal activity that the transaction was carried out successfully but there is a case of distraction in her part as she did not respond verbally to the statement in Turn 14 because her utterance “*oya go seat down there*” is not directed to the buyer rather as an imperative to her child who refused to be called to order as suggested in her Turn 2 and 5.

2. Text two

1. A - bros , follow me buy your fresh tomatoes and pepper
2. B - how much for your tomatoes ? ((*pointing to a particular plate*))
3. A - One - twenty
4. B - on:e twenty for just one plate [of
5. A - [na hundred naira last 0.4) (unclear)
6. B - ((*looks and weighs the plate*)) < oya na give me hundred naira
7. A - pepper ?
8. B - N:::o [ok ehn
9. A - [fifty
10. B - hmm n:o I no want pepper (.) I don’t think I need pepper.

For effective understanding of any talk-in-interaction, the equal participation of the interlocutors is necessary. This conversations involves two participants - a seller and a buyer - who are represented as speaker A and B respectively. It can be stated that this type of transactional discourse most times is characterised by the language of the environment called “Nigerian Pidgin” which is used because it is understood by both participants. In a few cases, conversations of this type can involve the use of code-switching as evident in this extract which comprises ten turns. In this context, the gender of the buyer (male) and seller (female) can be said to be valuable and the word “*bros*” used by the seller in Turn 1 is appropriate. In this context, we see speaker A’s utterance as a way of conditioning her declarative statement “*bros, follow me buy your fresh tomatoes and pepper*” to a particular buyer who was actually going past her. As characteristic of this setting, the word “*bros*” has under-gone some semantic extension as it is used by the sellers to refer to any male prospective buyer whom they presume to be young when based on his age and also the single word “*fresh*” acts as an appeal to speaker B’s visual imagery in other to get patronage. In contrast with extract one, this extract consists ten turns and each participant has equal turn order i.e. each has five turns which could be implied to be based on the fact that there was little or no distractions



on the parts of the interlocutors and also shows the seller's eagerness to dispatch her product to this particular buyer.

A recognition at the transition relevance place occurs as speaker B takes the next turn because he has been selected based on the allocation technique adopted by speaker A in Turn 1. He responds "*how much for your tomatoes ?*" in Turn 2 using the question pair of the adjacency pairs to enquire concerning the product he intends to purchase. He goes further to state his choice by pointing to a particular plate showing that there are several plates on the table and each has its own price which are not actually fixed but can be sold due to the extent of bargaining between the participants. Similar to extract one, the item in this extract has a scale of measurement "*plates*" but this scale differs from one seller to the other. We see a different usage of the adjacency pair in this case as the seller in Turn 3 provides an answer "*one twenty*" to the question in Turn 2 unlike the first extract whereby the interlocutors make use of a single pair-part of an adjacency pair to function as both the first and the second pair-part. Also, in this response of the seller in Turn 3, we can deduce a general characteristic of language use between the interactants as she used the single phrase "one-twenty" without including the currency. To someone who is not familiar to the environment, this use of language can be said to be problematic but in this context it is relevant. In Turn 4, the buyer replies with a stressed "*on:e twenty*" which could be indicative of the fact that he thinks this item is overpriced and also a presumption that the seller intends to exploit him.

The main goal of every seller is to get patronage from their prospective buyer, so we see the overlaps of turns between the buyer and the seller in Turn 4 and 5 respectively. The seller seeing that the buyer might want to go away interrupts him "*[na hundred naira last*" in Turn 5, while he was yet to complete his turn by self-selecting herself as the next to speak and this indicates her eagerness to get patronage. In contrast, we see a different attitude of the seller in this extract - she is ready to compromise to prevent the buyer from going to another seller present - as compared to that of the seller in extract one who was rather not too eager to give her product away on a cheaper bargain. However, we see that despite the difference in the attitude of sellers in the two extracts, the word "*last*" as used in this extract indicates that the buyer intends to reduce the price only to that extent but in extract one, it is used by the buyer as a question to the seller in order to know the final amount she intends to sell the item. This was followed by a pause in the interaction which can be said to be a situation whereby the buyer ponders on either to buy the item or not.

The buyer's act of looking at the item in the plate shows that he is trying to see if the product is actually "fresh" as stated by speaker A in her utterance in Turn 1. The buyer's utterance "*< oya give me hundred naira*" in Turn 6 by self-selection, shows his acceptance of the on-going negotiation and he also states the currency used in this transactional discourse. This turn taken by speaker B can be said to correlate with the idea of change of power between the participants. At first we see that the seller was inferior because she is eager to sell but at the place of turn changeover, she becomes superior in the sense that she had actually succeeded in getting what she wants from the buyer. Despite the fact that she has sold the item the buyer wants as stated in Turn 2, the seller goes further to use the allocation technique - self-selection - to try to talk the buyer into buying the second product which she sells as she used the question pair "pepper" in Turn 7. The buyer understands that he has been selected to speak next and replies, using the negative "*N::o*" with a stress to show his lack of interest in the proposed item in Turn 7. The building stones of turns are turn constructional units which can be said to occur at a completion point when it is relevant to the interaction (Mazeland 154). In this case, the buyer completes a turn using the discourse marker "*[ok*



ehn” in Turn 8 which can be seen as the use of two semantically different words in a turn constructional unit. In conversations at times, meaning can be deduced incorrectly by the participants and this may lead to misunderstanding. In this extract, the use of the discourse marker “[ok ehn” by speaker B in Turn 8 becomes misunderstood by the seller - speaker A - as a signpost that she should proceed to the next item which she sells.

As an eager seller she responds to the discourse marker used in turn 8 instead of the first answer provided by the buyer. She proceeds by informing the buyer in Turn 9 “[fifty” through an overlap of turns stating the stipulated amount of the item “pepper”. However, the buyer’s use of the discourse marker is as a result of distraction and so it is not to be implied as an answer just as it is assumed by the seller. Contrasting this extract with extract one, we see that the distraction that results in the breach in communication is as a result of the buyer’s inappropriate utterance that was misinterpreted by the seller to be an adequate response because it helps facilitate patronage. The conversation is brought to a close by the buyer negating the use of the word “[ok ehn” in Turn 8 as a response from his utterance “*hmm n:o I no want pepper*” in Turn 10. The discourse marker “*hmm*” can be said to be a signpost to the negative response which immediately followed it. The idea that the buyer might actually be indecisive as presented in his choice of words in Turn 8 “*N:::o [ok ehn*” is seen as being reinstated that his actual response was a negative “*N:::o*” and this we can see as he code-switches from one language to the other “*hmm n:o I no want pepper (.) I don’t think I need pepper*” in turn 10.

3. Text three

((Baby crying))

1. A - what are you saying ?
2. B - I said th:ree
3. A - no, its five hundred ↑ last
4. B - ↑ last < you no sell four ?
5. C - (unclear) I think se na this one be five hundred ((*pointing to something else*))
6. B - > sell it for me na (.) I bin price well ((*picks up the item and shows it to her friend*)) ((*the seller whistling to comfort her crying baby*)) see wetin I de price (0.2)
7. C - ok:ay
8. B - I no still try [before
9. A - [dem don price am like that FOUR hundred ((*baby crying*))
10. B - ↑ you no sell? ((*baby cries louder*)) na so i fit take buy ((*drops the item*)) make we de go.

This conversation involves three interlocutors but the talk - in- interaction which shows the process of bargaining mainly involves the turns of two participants; that is, speaker A and B. From the context transcribed, we can state that the conversation had begun before it was being captured by the tape recorder. The baby crying at the beginning of this extract which comprises ten turns serves as a distraction to the seller just like the child roaming the market place in extract one. The seller’s use of the question pair “*what are you saying*” in Turn 1 shows that she had been inattentive to the on-going conversation which is as a result of she paying attention to her crying baby. The buyer in return makes use of the second pair - part (answer) “*I said th:ree*” in Turn 2, and the use of the prosodic features



stress) depicts that she might have probably stated the amount she intends to pay earlier on but the response in Turn 1 serves as a lapse on the part of the seller. The seller's response "*no, it is five hundred ↑ last*" in Turn 3 is an answer to the declarative statement in Turn 2, she uses the negative "*no*" and at the same time states the amount for which the product can be sold.

Also, in this turn constructional units, the seller's use of the word "*↑ last*" with a high intonation shows that the item can only be bought at that price as stated and cannot be reduced any further. The buyer in Turn 4 repeats the word "*↑ last*" but it functions here as a question rather than as a statement, so we see her going further to bargain for the item "*< you no sell four ?*" with a slower tone than first used showing as an appeal to the buyer thereby selecting the next person to speak as the seller. Considerably, we see that speaker B actually was with a friend as the next turn taken in the conversation is neither taken by speaker B or speaker A whom she had selected; rather by another interlocutor who is introduced by her turn-taking design into the conversation. This situation in a conversation is referred to as 'Turn-grab' which he defines as "interposing oneself into an interaction uninvited and against the rights of invited speakers" (Herman 27) and this is seen in Turn 5 when speaker C takes a turn that was intended to be an answer to the question of speaker B in Turn 4. From her response "*I think se na this one be five hundred*" in Turn 5, speaker C had not been attentive to the conversation and this can be as a result that she is distracted by the item she was pointing to, which in her opinion is worth the stated amount by the seller.

The idea of power is introduced in this interaction when we see speaker B controlling the conversation as she brings it back to the main bargaining of the item by self-selecting herself as the next speaker. In this extract, speaker B - buyer - takes more turns as compared to the first extract (where the seller takes more turns) and the second extract (which comprises ten turns evenly distributed among the participants) so we can assume that it is because she is in dire need of the item which the seller is unwilling to give away at the amount she intends to offer. The demonstrative act "... ((picks up the item and shows it to her friend)) *see wetin i de price*" in Turn 6 and the selected words used by speaker B shows that she has allocated the next to speak as speaker C who replied appropriately in Turn 7 "*ok:ay*" stressing the word to indicate that she now understood the on-going interaction. After the affirmation from her friend, we see speaker B in power once again as she self-selects herself to speak in Turn 8 "*I no still try [before ?]*" pointing out that she had bargained well for the item, as peculiar to this setting, an overlap of turn occurs as the buyer and seller competes for the floor. This overlap in Turn 8 and 9 can be seen as a turn-grab because from the last words of speaker B in Turn 8, we see that she was posing a question to get an answer from her friend and not from the seller who grabs the turn by speaking next.

In Turn 9 "*dem don price am like that FOUR hundred*", the seller states the fact that people had come to bargain for this particular item at the price proposed by the buyer in Turn 6 but she did not sell it and so she would not sell it to her also. Negotiation is always prevalent in this setting as we see speaker B trying to bargain once again for the item in Turn 10 "*↑ you no sell four ?*" and her use of a rising tone as a means of drawing the seller's attention which requires an answer. A turn-lapse occurs on the part of the seller because she did not provide the second paired-part to the question and so we see that speaker B continues her turn "*na so i fit take buy*" as she noticed that the seller had become more distracted from the conversation by the increase in the pitch of the baby crying, so she states that she can only purchase the item at the price she had stated as a question in Turn 4.



In this same turn constructional unit, speaker B continues speaking despite the lack of response which she understands to mean that the seller would not sell the item, so she beckons to her friend as she completes her turn “*make we de go na*” bringing the interaction to an end.

Although in most cases, sellers, while seeing that the buyer wants to go tries to call back their attention and also negotiate the price of the item just like the seller in extract two, this particular seller seems not to be in a hurry to sell her product and this can be linked to the fact that she might be the only one selling the item in the vicinity. This extract reflects an unsuccessful business transaction between the participants which can be said to be as a result of both interlocutors disagreement on the price of the item.

4. Text four

1. A - ↑ how much? ((*pointing to a particular polythene bag*))
2. B - ↓ fifty naira
3. C - they sold kerosene one – fifty (0.2)
4. A - ((*picks the crayfish in the bag and passed it to her friend*)) [why e soft?
5. C - [why e soft?
6. A - na sun
7. C - <ok:ay na sun make am soft ((*touching the item again*))
8. B - no worry e go soon cheap just now before ona go resume
9. C - choose another one ehn > if you don't like this one
10. A - all of them is the same thing ((*drops the item*)).

This talk-in-interaction which involves three participants - a seller and a buyer who is accompanied by her friend - begins with the use of the adjacency pair - question - “↑ *how much?*” in Turn 1 and its second paired-part in Turn 2 “↓ *fifty naira*”. This conversation which comprises ten turns is different from extract two which also has ten turns that are equally divided between the interlocutors but the turn order is different as there is un-equal distribution of turns between the participants. The non-verbal act demonstrated by speaker A in Turn 1 gives details concerning the scale of measurement “*polythene bag*” which is adopted by this seller which varies according to the individual that sells the item. This interaction does not indicate in the transcribed extract the item being sold but the researcher being a passive participant observes that speaker B sells crayfish and some other items, so this extract is as a result of the bargain between the buyer and the seller and the item is “*crayfish*”. From previous extract analysed, one notes that the prices of the items are not fixed rather they are subject to negotiation but this particular item tied in a nylon is not subject to bargaining and this is why we see that the buyer did not make any attempt to negotiate the price.

In Turn 3, we notice the occurrence of turn-lapse because it could be deduced from Turn 2 that speaker B had selected speaker A as the next speaker but she does not reply which could be linked to her question in Turn 4 “[*why e soft?*” as she observes the product. Speaker C grabs a turn by self-selecting herself as the next speaker in Turn 3 “*they sold kerosene for one –fifty (0.2)*” and from her utterance we see that these participants - speaker A and C - had being involved in an earlier transaction of purchasing



the item “*kerosene*“. Speaker C who is inattentive to the on-going transaction shows her displeasure concerning the increased price of the item which can be said to be the motive behind her utterance in Turn 3. We see that an allocation technique has been used by speaker B in turn 3 to pick the next to speak as speaker B whom she wanted to either take sides with her concerning the issue of the increased price of their item rather we see something else in Turn 4. After the pause, speaker A and B speak at the same time which signifies an overlap of turns seen in Turn 4 and 5 repeating the same question posed to the seller “[*why e soft?*?”. Peculiar to this extract, we see the overlaps of turns between two buyers which is rarely obvious in a business transaction like this because in most cases the competition for the floor erupts between the buyer and seller.

The seller who is questioned in Turn 4 and 5 replies appropriately by providing them an answer “*na sun*” in Turn 6, stating the reason why the product is soft to be an effect from the sun. The idea of power comes to play in this extract as we see speaker C -who is not the person purchasing the item - taking more turns (4 turns) than the other interlocutors as she self-selects herself as the next to speak in Turn 7. As a means of proving she understands the reason provided in Turn 6, speaker C restates the reason for the softness of the item as given by the seller in Turn 7 “*< ok:ay na sun make am soft* “. The seller seeing that the buyer is not convinced with the answer she gave in Turn 6 goes further to appeal to her, in order to get patronage, she states “*no worry e go cheap just now before ona go resume*” in Turn 8, though this is not the buyer’s complaint concerning the item.

This appeal of speaker A introduces the fact that the buyer is seen as superior in this case while she - speaker A - is powerless that’s why she sort to use a unrelated talk as a means to get patronage. Also, we see speaker C in Turn 9 “*choose another one ehn < if you don’t like this*” taking control again but this time she takes sides with the seller to appeal to her friend who had lost interest in the item. The discourse marker “*ehn*” used by speaker C in Turn 8 acts as a cohesive device which signposts to the selected speaker that she still holds the floor and that there are different items of that kind that she can choose from despite seeing her friend’s lack of interest in the item thereby selecting her as the next to speak.

Understanding the changeover of turns, speaker A outrightly shows her loss of interest in turn 10 “*all of them is the same*” depicting that it looks un-presentable to her and so she drops the item and leaves. This transaction is futile based on the buyer’s choice of what exactly she wanted though her friend tries to make her see reasons to purchase the item. Her negligence can be said to be as a result of the buyer seeing another place where she can buy the item unlike the case of extract three where the buyer tries all in her power to make sure she gets the item she needed.

5. Text five

((Noise))

1. A - please do you have cord ?
2. B - co::rd, go inside (unclear) (0.6)
3. A - do you have cord ?
4. C - USB co::rd ? ((discussing with someone))
5. A - ·hh can I see ?
6. C - which one do you want ? (.) black or white ((brings out a bag))



7. A - BLACK ((takes a black cord from her) (0.4) < bring another one ·hh this thing cannot enter ((children talking and playing)) ((seller collects the cord and continues her discussion)) give me an ordinary cord instead of the one that has BBM ((pointing to the BBM logo on the cord))
8. C - ehn ((continues discussion))
9. A - g::ive me another one instead of the one that has this ·hh this BBM
10. C - ↑I don't have any other one.

In a typical market setting there is always sounds which can be labeled as “noise” which is as a result of interactants either trying to buy or sell an item. This extract comprises ten turns in which the buyer takes more turn (5 turns) than the seller basically to ensure that the seller is attentive and provides meaningful contributions to the on-going interaction. Just like extract one, we see the way the interlocutors make use of the adjacency pair - question- in two forms i:e a question used as a question and also as an answer. For example:

A - do u have cord ?

C - USB co::rd ?

A - ·hh can I see ?

The question form used at the beginning of this question: “please do you have cord” based on the response in Turn 2 “co::rd go inside “ shows that speaker B is not the seller in this context and so directs the buyer the seller who is sitting inside the shop. Also, we see the use of the polite word “please” in Turn 1 but in asking the question to the seller in Turn 3 “do you have cord?” she omits the word “please”. From the context, it can be inferred that speaker A intentionally omitted the word “please” in Turn 3 and could be based on the fact that the first person she interacted with was older than her so she was trying to be polite but speaker B can be presumed to be one that is possibly younger. As directed by speaker B in Turn 2, speaker A goes inside the shop and approaches the seller who responds “USB co::rd” in Turn 4 indicating that there are other cords that she sells or available. In Turn 5, we see that speaker A understands the question to be an answer so she proceeds with her question “·hh can I see” which was answered with another question “which one do you want (.) black or white?” in Turn 6 by speaker C. This question in Turn 6 shows that the buyer has been selected next to speak and this she recognises by providing an answer “BLACK” in Turn 7 showing that she had selected her choice from the options she is given. The buyer made use of the item but discovers that it could not fit in to her phone and she request for another cord in the same turn constructional unit “bring another one , the thing cannot enter” but the seller neglects her request after collecting the cord from her. The seller continued talking with another person who is present at the scene but not involved in the interaction of buying and selling.

This non-response of speaker C gives room for speaker A continuation of her turn and states again in a way to make her complaint clear “give me another ordinary cord instead of the one that has BBM” which indicates that the cord she is given is not the exact type she wants and so she has the right to ask for another. Speaker C who is now lost in talk with the other person replies with the discourse marker “ehn” in Turn 8 which signposts that she had not been listening to the buyer and does not even care to listen because she has become so engrossed with the interaction with the other person. It is normal for such occurrence to take place but from deductive reasoning, one can say that this particular interlocutor who is the seller in this context might actually not be the owner



of the shop and this might be the reason why she is more interested with talking with this unknown participant than with the buyer standing in front of her. Also, in this extract, there are no overlaps of turns but rather negligence on the part of the seller to speak as she is selected by speaker A and this can be linked to the fact that the seller is not in a hurry to sell the product or interested in the on-going conversation that would result in a successful transaction.

In Turn 9, we see that the buyer understands that the seller is distracted so she uses the word “g::ive” with a stress just to get the attention of the seller which was achieved at the end as the seller replies appropriately in Turn 10. In this context, we see that the seller is not eager to sell and so feels she has the power to either respond to the buyer or neglect her. From the response of the buyer “hh can I see?” as indicated by the in-breath in Turn 4 shows that she might have been searching for the item for a long time and seeing it now she tends to be the one without power. In Turn 10, we see the seller’s use of an high tone “↑ I don’t have any other one” shows that she is being impolite as assumed by the buyer who leaves the shop. This response by the seller in Turn 10 also depicts that she feels the buyer is interrupting her discussion and the only way to stop her was to just reply her so she can leave her to concentrate. Speaker A felt really bad based on the response she gets from speaker C and so she leaves since she is the one who intends to give her money out and not the other way round.

Conclusion

The data analysed has shown that conversations in a market place are peculiar and also represent the characteristic structure of talk-in-interactions. We have seen how turns are distributed among the participants; the length of the turn taken; the peculiar use of the adjacency pair (question); instances of overlaps between interlocutors and how discourse markers serve as signposts to the interactants as a means of achieving meaningful and purposeful communication which could lead to a successful business transaction. In terms of language usage, the interlocutors tend to converse using the “pidgin” language and this is used by both the semi-literate and literate class in the society as it helps in effective communication in this setting. The sellers stay at a shed while waiting for buyers and most times they keep using the phrase “aunty, bros” as an attention getter and the buyers if interested in the items respond by going to the shed.

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