Research Article

An Analysis of Discourse in Police Interrogation

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Abstract

This study titled; "Analysis of Discourse in Police Interrogation" examined features of language used in selected police/accused discourse in Adamawa State Special Anti-Robbery Squad {SARS}, police division, Yola. The corpus of the study is made up of the 13 written statements of confessions, interrogations, letters of undertaking and police investigation reports by participants in police/accused discourse in three different case files. The data collected was based on availability, accessibility and sustainability which were analyzed. The study is a descriptive research which made it qualitative. The study used the Grice (1975) cooperative principles, Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) discourse analytical framework and Burton's (1981) work for its theoretical framework. The study identified some Communication Strategies and Techniques used by the police during interaction like the use of simple language, the use of questions, and the use of emotional words. It also looks at the Structure or Organization of Content of Police/Accused Discourse; what information is relevant for a particular situation, how they communicate before an arrest, how they organize facts of a case and the findings and so on. The study also looks at the Linguistic Features of Utterances by Participants in the Police/Accused Discourse in terms of tenses, point of view and grammatical and spelling errors. The study revealed that no information is irrelevant during police/accused interaction. All information is useful if the puzzles are connected. It also revealed that no matter how hard people try to conceal the truth, they will say something that will pave way for the actual truth. The study recommends English for Specific Purposes (E.S.P) Practitioners to look into this research for future referrals especially by course designers.

Keywords: *Discourse analysis, Cooperative principles, Forensic linguistics, Communication strategies, Language and law, Grice's maxims, ESP (English for Specific Purposes), Discourse structure, Linguistic features, Confessional statements, Interrogation techniques, Adamawa State SARS, Qualitative analysis.*

INTRODUCTION

Dimbleby and Burton (2001) points out needs and purposes of communication. These needs include survival, cooperation, personal needs, relationship, persuasion, social needs, information, power, making sense of the world and self-expression. Power to a certain extend may seem to be like persuasion but the purpose is to get someone else to do something an individual want. But the word 'power' introduces something new into the situation. It suggests that the communicator intends to put the other person into submissive or helpless position. This can be achieved through communication. It suggests that the communicator has special privileges in terms of what they know or the means of communication they can use.

Castell (2011) in 'Communication Power' proposes that power affects the mind, and consequently the way people think and feel about things. The primary mode of power in this communication pertain is coercion, and so he focuses on coercion processes, and consequently political processes. Coercion involves the building of consent within populations which is often done through instilling fear and/or resignation.

Language has been recount by various scholars as the core of the communication process and is the spindle around which man's social, political, economic and environmental endeavors revolve. (Barber 1967; Langacker, 1967) etc. Language, the focus of human communication cannot be divorced from the theory of human behavior.

Language can be defined in its social context. Gumpez (1972) defines verbal interaction as a social process in which utterances are selected in accordance with socially recognized norms and expectations where language is very sensitive. It is the way in which humans use language to achieve life's goals and objectives in society that explains what discourse analysis is all about. Of late, scholars like John (2004) and Correa (2013) were concerned with the realities and complexities of interactions in other professional fields of enquiry. One of such is forensic linguistics, which is the application of linguistic knowledge methods and insights to the context of law, language, crime investigation, trial and judicial procedure. Language and law are interwoven and inseparable. To show the relationship between them, Gibbons (2003) asserts that law is an overwhelmingly linguistic institution. Laws are coded in language and the concepts that are used to construct the law are accessible only through language. Legal processes, such as police investigations, court cases and their management take place through the use of language. In forensic linguistics where discourse analysis is applied in the patterns of language use of voice identification the discovery of systematic language patterns that serves as crucial passages of civil cases, such as disputes over contracts and police investigation are handled. 'Police/accused discourse', is an institutional interaction goal-focused event, where the primary aim is to collect and combine evidence into a written statement for use in any subsequent court hearing (Gibbons, 2003).

Discourse Analysis, which is the main concern of this study, is both an old and new field in linguistics. It can be traced back 2000 years ago to the study of language, public speech and literature. This study involves classical rhetoric, that is the art of good speaking, *grammatica*, rules of correct language use and *rhetorica* which is concerned with planning, organization, specific operations and performance of public speech in political and legal settings. The new field grew out of works in different disciplines in the 1960's and early 1970's, including Linguistics, Psychology, Anthropology and Sociology. Recently, there has been an increasing interest in analyzing the way sentences work in sequences to produce coherent stretches of language. Discourse Analysis is therefore concerned with "the analysis of language that looks at patterns of language across texts, as well as the social and cultural contexts in which the texts occur" (Paltridge, 2006).

There are some forms of communicative behavior which exist in the Nigeria Police Force. The notable ones are police-suspect interaction, police-criminal interaction, police-accused interaction and police-police interaction. In all these forms of communicative behaviors, the nature of language use differs. This study exemplifies and analyses the linguistic features of utterances and communication strategies and techniques of interaction in police-accused interaction. The study is an analysis of the structure of the spoken form of discourse and presents a general outlook of how police personnel use interrogation, that is, the skillful questioning of suspects during criminal investigation. Criminal investigation, here, refers to the study of facts that are used to inform criminal trial.

Statement of the Problem

Many a times, people find it difficult to interpret the language used by the police force during interrogation. Sometimes, people are confused and begin to say things that are not expected during interrogation even though they are innocent but because of the technical and complicated power of the language used by police personnel, such people sometimes run into much trouble. The police are tasked with the difficult and technical responsibility of tracing the culprits and proving beyond every reasonable doubt that the accused have actually committed the crime. Also, individuals that are involved in criminal activities tend to conceal the truth about their crimes, but by the use of investigations, the truth can be drawn. The works of Kate (2009) 'An Analysis of Police Interview Discourse and its Role(s) in the Judicial Process' sheds light on the current role of police-suspect interview discourse in the England and Wales criminal justice system, with a focus on its use as evidence. This study describes the linguistic features of the language of interrogation and the techniques of interaction between the investigating police officer and the accused person and other participants.

In line with the aforementioned problems identified, this study is to identify the communication strategies and techniques of interaction in police interrogations and also study the linguistic features of utterances by participants in police-accused interaction.

Scope of the Study

The study focuses on interrogations between the police and some accused persons in Adamawa State Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) police divisions, Adamawa State Police Command, Yola. Of peculiar interest to this study is the aspect of linguistic acts performed by investigating police officers and accused persons during police/accused interrogations in crime investigations. This study, however, restricted itself to spoken discourse used in police/accused interrogations because of time factor and the confidentiality of the organisation which made it difficult to source information.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE
Discourse Analysis

Stubs (2003:1) defines discourse analysis as an attempts to study the organization of language above the sentence or above the clause, and therefore to study larger linguistic units, such as conversational exchanges or written texts… discourse analysis is also concerned with language use in social contexts. Similarly, Brown and Yule (2008) posit that the analysis of discourse is, necessarily, the analysis of language in use. As such, it cannot be restricted to the description of linguistic forms independent of the purposes or functions, which these forms are designed to serve in human affairs. Other linguists, for instance Jaworski and Coupland (1999: 3), see DA as not only language reflecting social order, but also language shaping social order shaping individual interaction with the society. Discourse shapes and constraints our identities, relationships, knowledge and beliefs the same way social structures also shape and constrain a discourse. The object of study in DA as it developed in the field of linguistics, is the structure and function of language in use; Discourse Analysis pays particular attention to the ways language in context is organized and above the level of the sentence. Discourse Analysis also investigates aspects of language that are complex and abstract – for example, how speakers and writers use language in institutional settings, or how socio-cultural perspectives affect the production and interpretation of language. Stubbs (2003) examines the structure of conversation from two perspectives, i.e. the linguistic and the philosophical. He discussed the relationship between Discourse Analysis, Semantics and Syntax. Adopting the linguistic approach in his studies, he argued that several linguistic devices could be and are often used to structure discourse, adding that an utterance conditions can predict what comes after it. Stubbs (2003) employs for the purpose of analysis classroom recorded data. The analysis showed that various contexts demand different language use and that language performs different functions from one social situation to another. Using ample examples, he explicated how teachers manipulate language to guide the teaching process. The teacher controls and shapes the direction of the classroom discourse by virtue of his position as a transmitter of knowledge.

Language Use

Language is a means of individual self-expression, which makes it possible for individuals to live in a society. Through language, our individual thought and social control can be communicated. Language has been described by various scholars as the important aspect of the communication process and it is the central shaft, which man's social, political, economic and environmental endeavors revolve around. Henry sweet, an English phonetician and language scholar stated in his book, 'The Practical Study of Language' (1899) which was the last book he wrote that: 'Language is the expression of ideas by means of speech-sounds combined into words…' That is to say even noises or sounds from our internal organs can be referred to as language because it carries a meaning.

One outstanding work in police communication is Coulthard's (1992) Forensic Discourse Analysis. It is a new area of linguistics that studies language as used by the police, especially in criminal cases. Couthard's (1992) concern is in the area of 'substance', that is, comparison of samples of hand written recorded documents made by police officers of interviews with witness and suspects, and statements dictated by witnesses and suspects to police officers. The text is supposed to be a complete record of what was said during the interview and with the caution: *You are not expected to say anything unless you wish to do so, but what you say will be put into writing and given in evidence. Do you understand?*

This system of interrogating the accused person cuts across all police stations all over the world and the cautionary words too are the same. Coulthard's (1992) view on this is that the forensic discourse analyst is to take one or more interview records or statements and comment on their likely authenticity.

Language of Interrogation

Interrogation according to is the action of interrogating or the process of being interrogated. Similarly, it can be said to a kind of questioning in order to draw truth or fact from an individual about a particular situation. Shuy (1998) in his book *The Language of Confession, Interrogation and Deception gives an in-depth understanding of language used in interrogation. According to him,* the image produced by the word *interrogation* is not one that some law enforcement officers appreciate. In fact, one such officer explained on the witness stand that *interrogation* conjures up browbeating and rubber hoses, practices not condoned by the police. However accurate this officer's assessment may be of the bad public image the word *interrogation* evinces, he was probably right to avoid using it. By using the more neutral term *interview,* law enforcement joins the large body of professions that carry out such activity, such as journalists, physicians, employers, social scientists of all types, and many others, none of whom would characterize their practice as "interrogation.". he asserts that the term interrogation*,* in contrast, is used without negative connotation in the practice of law, and the *interrogative pronoun* is a perfectly respectable grammatical category used by linguists. He also asserts that law enforcement is growing uncomfortable with the term *interrogation* and is replacing the event with *interview.*

One of the most enlightening works on interrogation is by Inbau et al (1986), called *Criminal Interrogation and Confessions*. According to the authors, they point out different strategies for cases in which the suspect's guilt is reasonably certain and for cases in which the suspect's guilt is uncertain. There are situations in which a suspect sounds

guilty during interrogation even though at the end he or she will be declared innocent or cases where the suspect appears guilty but deep inside, he or she is innocent but will be declare guilty just because of the manner they were interrogated. It is important for laws enforcement officers not dwell entirely on a suspect's guilt because it can't be always certain. The general advice to a police interrogator is to be patient, to make no promises, and to avoid letting the suspect make repeated denials of guilt, because the more a suspect tells a lie, the harder it is to get to the truth. Inbau et al. postulates that, a woman is much more reluctant than a man to confess a crime about which she has made repeated denials of guilt. For suspects whose guilt is reasonably certain, therefore they advise police interrogators to be confident, to accuse, to focus on reasons why the suspects did it, and to avoid the issue of whether or not they did it. Police are also urged to flatter lower-status suspects by referring to them as 'Mr. or Mrs. and to keep higher-status suspects subjugated by using their first names. The interrogator is encouraged to play the role of psychologist, calling attention to symptoms of guilt such as eye aversion, restlessness, or picking fingernails. Noting such behavior, the police officer is to point out that such actions are manifestations of lying. Anytime a suspect responds with words such as "as far as I know," the interrogator should view this as an admission and proceed Accordingly (Inbau et al.1986). interrogators are encouraged to use a language that display sympathy and understanding to draw the truth from suspects for instance question like "when are you going to stop stealing?" instead of "are you the person that stole the laptop? Or "why did you stole the laptop?".

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework to be use for this study is based on Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) discourse analytical framework and Burton's (1981) work, found appropriate for the analysis of naturally occurring discourse. Among the three models, the framework of the study takes its root from Sinclair and Coulthard's model to give rise to a precise illustrative apparatus. The model can be used to account for any discourse piece and all kinds of speech interaction. The data analysis focuses on the examination of the structure of interaction expected to explain in details the intricate or complex functions of language, that is, whether it is a question, statement or command based on their grammatical structure and location in discourse. The theory places priority on the structure of discourse pieces or their proportion in the discourse, highlighting its features, whether such utterance is proposed to draw a truthful response (elicit) or it is a response itself, or how boundary marker is realized in discourse.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive research design for qualitative investigation of samples, data collection and data analysis. The present study is designed to describe police discourse and discover how communication takes place and is understood through language by identifying the questioning and responding techniques by the various participants.

The corpus of this study is made up of 5 written statements of confessions, interrogations, letters of undertaking and police investigation reports by the police, accused persons and witnesses from three different case files which were categorized into two annexes. Each annex is classified based on the case file it belongs to. Annex 1 consists four texts which include written statements of investigating police officers, accused persons, and letters of undertaking (case file1). Annex 2 consists one written statements of investigating police officer and an accused person (case file 2).

Permission was sought from the authorities to obtain data from the main source which is Adamawa State Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) police divisions, Yola. The data collected was based on availability, accessibility and sustainability. This is so because the police sector is an institution that deals with security so confidentiality or secrecy is highly needed. There are some recorded documents that will not be available for public usage and there are others that will be available as far as they are not highly sensitive. Such recorded documents that are not so confidential were easily accessible and sufficient for the research.

From the annexes, extracts were taken from statements of witnesses, accused persons, investigating police officers, police investigation reports and letters of undertaking. The extracts were studied and participants' contribution types, question types and various speech acts were analysed based on Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) discourse analytical framework and Burton's (1981) work. All these were found appropriate for the analysis of naturally occurring discourses.

For easy comprehension of the study as well as for security purposes, the names of the places and the people involved were withheld and were replaced with the notations used throughout the analysis; A1, for the three accused persons, W1 and W2 for the two witnesses and IPO1, IPO2 for police investigation officers, respectively. It should be noted that the data presented in this study comprise of two different case files. Case file one (1) which is a case of Criminal Conspiracy, Intimidation, Force and Intentional Insult and case file two (2) is a case of Criminal Conspiracy and Armed Robbery.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS
Presentation and Analysis of Strategies and Techniques of Interaction

This section presents some of the strategies and techniques used in the language of police interaction and its analysis. Extract from all the two case files are taken at random depending on the situation it belongs, and are analyzed.

Strategy is the plan or action intended to accomplish a specific goal. Technique on the other hand is the method of achieving something or carrying out something especially one requiring some skill or knowledge. In order words, it is a skillful or an efficient way of doing or achieving something. Both strategy and technique are embedded because they work hand in hand. The police used both in their daily interactions. During interrogations, police employ some strategies and techniques in order to make an accused person to comply. Such techniques or strategies make the work easier to both the police and the accused person. Some of these strategies and techniques are highlighted below;

Use of Simple Language Expression
Extract 1
"I have decided to make a complaint against you before the court. Do you wish to make statement? (Case file 1, text 1 line 1&2).
The above statement from IPO1 is a directive and relevant to the situation at hand and is made up of simple sentences with an independent clause, no conjunction or dependent clause. The statement is also a present perfect tense because it indicates an action that has been completed sometime before the present moment, with a result that affects the present situation. A complaint was initially lodged, which prompted the above statement that paves way for the accused person being charged to court. The utterance can easily be understood by an average English language learner or any other language used during the interaction. The purpose of this is for the police to make sure that perfect communication has taken place between them and the accused person. Ambiguous words are normally avoided by the police during interrogation for better understanding by both parties.

Use of Emotional Words
IPO2: you looked tensed. Have you eaten
 today?
A2: no.
IPO2: why haven't you eaten today?
A2: we were arrested since in the
morning and I didn't have the chance to eat
anything. (Case file 2, text 5, line 10-16)
The police are fond of using words that will have an emotional effect on the mind of the accused. Such words may appear trivial but are relevant to the case. For instance, a police can ask an accused person whether he eats or not before being arrested (as indicated in the extract above). Such utterances are nothing but tactics employed in order to relax the mind of the accused person and prepare him for further harder questions in order to unveil the truth. This is one of the time they activate their "Police is your friend" jargon because it is expected that someone that want to be your friend will inquire if you have eaten or not.

Use of Interrogative Statements
IPO2: What is your name?
A2: xxxxxx (A3)
IPO2: Where do you live?
A2: I live at Mayo-Lope ward, Zing
 Local Government Area.
IPO2: What do you do?
A2: Rearing of cattle.
IPO2: How old are you?
A2: 23 years. (Case file 2, text 5, line 1-9)
At the initial stage of every interaction between the police and both the accused and the complainant, it is no longer a new act that the police ask questions about their Bio data. The extract above is a statement from an accused person (A2). Those are irrelevant question types. It can be inferred from the statement that there was a prior interrogation that took place before it was documented. The accused person was asked about his age, name, address, religious view. We can also have a glimpse about his family background. All the aforementioned information about the accused person give the police the strategy on how to handle the case properly. For instance, a person's address may help the police to know whether he or she lives or grew up in a hoodlum area. But most importantly, such questions are asked to reduce tension on the side of the accused person so that they will feel relaxed.

Presentation and Analysis of Linguistic Features of Utterances by Participants
Linguistic features are certain conditions which delimit how language functions. Some of this linguistic features are highlighted and discussed below.

The Use of Tenses
Extract 1
"I was in the shop attending to customers
when one of my customers I call 'Mama'
met me to inquire for a price of some
items for a food supply program fo
r xxxxx wife for 40 days meant for" (Case file 1, text, lines 1-5)

Extract 2
"I by name xxxxx hereby settl-
ed with the issue that happened last week….
We are going to maintain peace and unity…
with W2" (Case file 1, text 4, lines 1-5)
The first extract is from one of the witnesses. It is a past perfect tense because it indicates an action in the past that had been completed before another time or event in the past. It aims to describe events that happened but is no longer happening because investigation has already taken place or is still ongoing.

Extract two describes an action that will take place in the future for sure. Therefore, it is a present continuous tense. It is a letter of undertaking written by one of the accused persons promising not to repeat his or her crimes and also to maintain peace and unity which is a continuous process.

Use of First Person Point of View
Extract 1
"…………………......I
told her to ask him but she insisted
that I should tell her what is happening
and we started exchanging words with
w2…………." (Case file 1, text 1 lines 24-27)

Extract 2
"I did not beat anybody among w2
family that were in the
shopping mall. …….." (Case file 1, text 1, lines 39-41)
The above statements are written in the first person point of view. The two extracts are from A1. The police believe in documenting things that comes from the horse's mouth that's the reason the statements from an accused person, witnesses, etc are written in the first person point of view. In case of the past repeating themselves in the future and the case re-opened, one cannot counter what he or she has previously said in terms of manipulation or blame-shift.

Grammatical and Spelling Errors
Extract 1
"On the 31st day of August being on Friday at about
02:30 hours I am go to my sister shop on my way
closed to xxxxx shopping plaza I saw xxxxx biting
a little boy so I am standing at the place
seeing me but I can not bear the cane of bit that
the small boy is having but before go closed to them
2 men came out from the shop and sart bitting
xxxxx up accuseing what did this small boy did to you
that you will bit him in this way..." (Case file 1 text 2 lines 1-9)

This above extract is from one of the witnesses involved in the case of Criminal Conspiracy, Intimidation, Force and Intentional Insult. some of the people involved in a crime case can speak a language fluently but when it comes to writing, they find it difficult. The underlined words are clear examples of some grammatical errors and some misspellings from one of the witnesses used for this study. It comprises sentence fragments-it doesn't give a complete thought. It also violates the standard pattern of sentence construction.

Some words are being misspelled like 'bitting' and 'biting' instead of beating, 'accuseing' instead of accusing, 'sart' instead of start, 'cane' in place of kind etc. Nevertheless, some of the errors can easily be understood by some educated persons. In the same line, some incomplete sentences or sentences that are wrongly spoken or written, and some misspelt words can alter the effectiveness of investigation and probably give an unfair verdict at the end.

The chapter was able to identify the communication strategy and techniques of interaction in the language of police interaction, it analyzed the structure or organization of the content of police/accused discourse and studied the linguistic features of utterances by various participants respectively.

Discussion of Findings

Based on the analysis of data obtained from this study, the following findings were deduced. The police use simple language expression, interrogative statements and emotional words during interrogations. statements like 'what is your name? where do you live? Did you robbed Mr. xxxx wives when he travelled? (case file2, text 5 line 1, 3 and 17) are all strategies used by the police during interrogation. Emotional words are also used by the police as one of their techniques. Statements like 'You look tensed. Have you eaten today?' (case file2, text 5 line 10 and 11), are emotional words employ by the police to make an accused person feel relaxed so that he or she can gain their trust. There is also the use simple language expression by the police to the accused person or any common language used in the area of the accused or crime (case file1, text1, lines 1&2).

The police used statements that does not require immediate response at that particular time. The best thing to do is to comply whether one is guilty or innocent of the charges. An individual's age, environment and etc. matters in every police investigation. It gives an insight on the person being interrogated as trivial as it may appear. No information is irrelevant. All information can be useful from all parties if the puzzles are connected that's why the police interrogates any person found at a crime scene even if they think they are not related with the crime at hand. No matter how hard people try to conceal the truth, from the statements of witnesses and accused persons, they will say something that will pave way for the actual truth because at that moment of interrogation their emotional state of mind is in turmoil and they may likely spit out an utterance that they were not questioned on. The police use statements during interrogation in such a way that the culprit will admit to the offense unknowingly. The police force follows due process in their daily activities so that there won't be any loopholes.

The study also finds out that the police use the act form of declaratives, response/reply, starter, informative and comments in their discourse. *'I have decided to make a complaint against you, before a court'* (case file1, text 1, line 1) is a declarative because it does not require a linguistic response from the accused person. They also use simple language expression as in indicated in the aforementioned statement which is made up of simple sentence with independent clause and no conjunction. The study finds out the use of some linguistic features of interaction in the police –accused discourse. They include the use of tenses, (case file1, text 3, line1-5, and text4, line 1-5), first person point of view (case file1, text 1, lines24-27 and lines 39-41) and grammatical and spelling errors (case file1, text 3 lines 1-9. Some words are being misspelled like 'bitting' and 'biting' instead of beating, 'accuseing' instead of accusing, 'sart' instead of start, 'cane' in place of kind, 'I am go' instead of I am going, 'sart bitting' instead of start beating, 'cane of biting' instead of the kind of beating etc.

Conclusion

The study draws its conclusion from the findings, that the police used statements that does not require immediate response at that particular time. The best thing to do is to comply whether one is guilty or innocent of the charges. An individual's age, environment and etc. matters in every police investigation. It gives an insight on the person being interrogated as trivial as it may appear. No information is irrelevant. All information can be useful from all parties if the puzzles are connected that's why the police interrogates any person found at a crime scene even if they think they are not related with the crime at hand. The police use emotional words during interrogation. No matter how hard people try to conceal the truth, from the statements of witnesses and accused persons, they will say something that will pave way for the actual truth because at that moment of interrogation their emotional state of mind is in turmoil and they may likely spit out an utterance that they were not questioned on. The police force follows due process in their daily activities so that there won't be any loopholes. There is also the use simple language by the police to the accused person or any common language used in the area of the accused or crime.

Recommendations

The following recommendations can be deduced from the above findings of the study.
   i) The police should create some kind of awareness to the general public to give insight at the content of their work in such a way that people will braced up themselves when interrogated and innocent people will not be convicted unfairly.
   ii) The police personnel should have enough patience to gather facts so as to give a fair judgement at the end.
   iii) The government should give maximum support to the police force.
   iv) More study should be embarked on similar areas and courses on psychology should be made as a core in schools.
   v) E.S.P Practitioner, especially course designers should incorporate such study into the curriculum.

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