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INAUGURAL LECTURE

TOPIC:

LANGUAGE: A SPICE FOR SEASONED CONVERSATIONS

by

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RED HALL

COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES,
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My Dear Students, Past and Present

Gentlemen of the Press

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

My Vice-Chancellor, Sir, it is with great reverence that I address this esteemed gathering today to deliver my inaugural lecture. I wish to note with pride that this marks the first inaugural lecture within the English Programme, a milestone not only for the College of Liberal Studies but also for my immediate and extended family. All credit is due to the Almighty, the possessor of heaven and earth.

As the scripture from 1 Samuel 2:8 states, "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, and he hath set the world upon them." This verse encapsulates the essence of my journey.

Growing up under the care of my grandmother, the prospect of mastering the nuances of the English language seemed distant and improbable. I fondly recall observing visiting relatives and friends with a mixture of admiration and longing, yearning for the day when I could effortlessly converse and articulate thoughts with the fluency they possessed. The image of effortlessly guiding a pen across paper, transcribing thoughts and ideas, felt like an unattainable dream.

Despite this modest beginning, I embarked on my educational journey with a determined resolve to defy expectations. Initially drawn to the allure of accounting, believing it to be a path to financial prosperity, my aspirations shifted following a setback in

Mathematics due to my P7 grade in West African School Certificate Examination. Subsequently, I entertained ambitions of becoming a lawyer or a broadcaster, dismissing the notion of becoming a teacher entirely. However, as the bible says, “Go ahead and make all the plans you want, but it's the Lord who will ultimately direct your steps” (Proverbs 16:1 TPT version). It became evident that the Divine hadcharted a different course for me, leading me to where I stand today.

Seasoned conversations actually took root during my sojourn at Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo (now Emmanuel Alayande University of Education). I consistently favoured the communicative approach to teaching over the traditional method. My aim was to foster interactive lectures, encouraging extensive dialogue between myself and my students, as well as among the students themselves. This pursuit led me to collaborate with the British Council, who graciously invited me and two colleagues to participate in a 'train the trainer' programme focused on the Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT) in 2008. Subsequently, we progressed from TKT to Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), which equipped us with contemporary materials, activities, and methodologies for facilitating interactive classes. The CLIL component, in particular, centred on the adept use of language (seasoned language) within classroom contexts. I eagerly assumed the role of consultant and principal trainer, imparting knowledge to educators nationwide. It was during this period that my fascination with conversational language began to grow.

While writing my doctoral thesis, I resolved to delve deeper into the study of discourse. In alignment with the primary focus of conversation analysts, I sought out natural conversations, identifying televised discourse as a rich source of data. My PhD thesis examined turn management in this genre. It identified the turn distribution strategies in Nigerian television talk shows, the contributions of these strategies to the management of the talks and the determinants of the patterns and features of turn-taking identified in these shows, and power and control in conversations.

What is conversation?

Conversation is a linguistic interaction between two or more people. It could be a casual everyday conversation, a topical or an institutional conversation. It is talk. It is the most basic and widespread linguistic means of conducting human affairs (McArthur, 1992). Conversation, therefore, is any interactive spoken exchange between two or more people and can be:

1. Face-to-face exchanges – these can be private conversations, such as talk at home between the family, or more public and ritualised conversations such as classroom talk or Question Time in the Houses of Parliament;
2. Non-face-to-face exchanges, such as telephone conversations;
3. Broadcast materials such as a live radio phone-in or a television chat show (Pridham, 2001).

Conversation is the spoken exchange of ideas, observations, opinions, or feelings between people (Nordquist, 2019). It is a joint activity in which two or more participants use linguistic forms and nonverbal signals to communicate interactively (Brennan, 2013).

To truly understand conversation, one must have a grasp of the underlying purpose behind the words spoken. This is as crucial as analysing the words themselves. It is fascinating to contemplate the myriad purposes conversations can serve. Through what we say, how we say it, and sometimes even what we omit, we can influence or reflect the purpose or function of a conversation.

A conversation can be transactional or interactional. A transactional conversation is one used for business or to exchange information on specific matters, while an interactional conversation is used to foster and maintain friendships. Both are of concern in this discourse.

Halliday (1973) proposed three categories of conversations according to their purpose. One is to fulfil a practical need, either to manage our relationships with others or to regulate their behaviour. Second, is to learn about our world or ourselves and express our personalities. Third, is to use our imagination and conversations to entertain ourselves, present new ideas or create imaginary worlds. Aside from the content of speech, participants in conversations

engage in numerous unconscious activities; these may not always be apparent to laypeople. In addition to talking, participants in a conversation also perform non-linguistic actions. These activities occurring during conversation are central to our research. In some of our publications, we have explored how conversations are initiated, maintained, and concluded, and how turns are effectively managed among participants to facilitate smooth flow (Olutayo, 2010); Interaction management in Nigerian television talk shows (Oyeleye and Olutayo, 2012); Determinants of turn-taking patterns (Olutayo, 2013); Cooperation and Politeness in conversations (Olutayo, 2015); Interruption and Overlaps as conversational strategies (Olutayo, 2012); Linguistic power and control (Olutayo, 2016); Backchanneling in Moments with Mo (Olutayo and Odebo, 2021); Meaning negotiations in television talk shows (Olutayo, forthcoming). Although turn-taking mechanisms appear to be universal, our research has revealed they are subject to cultural and institutional variations.

Seasoned Conversation

What exactly is a seasoned conversation? A seasoned conversation can be defined as an exchange where participants respect each other's face and space, take turns speaking, and manage interruptions and overlaps effectively to facilitate smooth and meaningful interaction. Such exchanges lead to intriguing negotiations of ideas, feelings, and opinions. They are characterized by graciousness, edification, meaning, and uplift. Seasoned conversation entails speaking truthfully and lovingly, selecting words thoughtfully to enhance interactions and positively influence all involved.

To "season" speech implies enriching it with elements such as courtesy, discretion, empathy, and purpose. Seasoning speech is an art that necessitates specific conversational skills. One such skill is mastery of language itself; understanding which language suits which situation and audience. It is also an art because the necessary skills or knowledge can be acquired through observation and experience. As an art form, it demands the deliberate application of imagination, knowledge, and skill to produce an aesthetic outcome. At its core lies aesthetics and beauty; at the essence of

seasoned conversations is the use of language that ultimately appeals to the beauty within interpersonal relationships. This art can be cultivated through study, but most importantly, seasoning speech is an art that caters to the human desire for respect and inclusion, which can be both given and received through conversations.

Seasoning speech involves blending the right "ingredients" to elevate our discourse, infusing it with transformative, revitalizing qualities. The Bible advocates for seasoning our conversations with salt and leading through example; Christ himself exemplified this, always speaking words that were gracious, tender, and true, tailored to the listener's needs and uplifting in nature. Ultimately, seasoning speech with salt is about communicating with wisdom, courtesy, and kindness, with the intention of nurturing others through our words.

This metaphorical use of "seasoning" underscores the significance of fostering cooperative, polite, and meaningful conversations, enriching them with the principles of quality, quantity, relevance, and manner as articulated by Grice (1975) and the politeness principle (Leech, 1983). This includes embracing the maxims of tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy, thereby creating interactions that are not only enriching but also respectful and engaging.

Language as Spice

In the context of conversation, likening language to seasoning or spice offers a kitchen-inspired analogy. It suggests that communication can be elevated by incorporating depth, grace, and flavour through the deliberate use of expressions, words, and paralinguistic cues that reflect linguistic mastery. Similar to how spices enhance and accentuate the inherent taste of food, language in discourse serves to enrich how messages are conveyed and received between speakers and listeners. This infusion of linguistic richness renders conversations more impactful, engaging, purposeful, and memorable.

By introducing thought-provoking ideas and questions, authentic self-expression, and adept facilitation of dialogue, individuals can elevate mundane exchanges into dynamic and stimulating

interactions that resonate long after the conversation concludes. This kitchen metaphor underscores the potency of language in enlivening discourse. The notion that language can single-handedly transform ordinary, or at times insipid, conversations into meaningful exchanges lies at the heart of seasoned discourse.

To cultivate seasoned conversations, language serves as the spice to enrich the essence and essence of communication encounters, akin to the role of salt or other natural seasonings in flavouring dishes. This metaphor underscores the importance of exercising discretion and empathy in linguistic expression. Just as culinary seasonings enhance the flavours of diverse dishes, our conversations are expected to be infused with not only impeccable language usage but also with language that aligns with the intended purpose within the given context. Even amidst intense emotions that may infiltrate our discussions, maintaining seasoning in our speech is crucial to articulating truths without undermining the dignity of those with opposing views.

Employing language as spice in conversations necessitates thoughtful consideration of the impact of our words on our audience and the preservation of their dignity, as elucidated in Brown and Levinson's face theory (1978). Through seasoned language, one can gracefully navigate challenging conversations while sidestepping inappropriate and divisive language.

Language in Human Interaction

Language, whether verbal or non-verbal, stands as the primary tool for human interaction. Without language, individuals, in a broad sense, would find it impossible to engage with themselves, let alone with others. In interaction, language transcends its role as a mere conveyor of information; rather, it serves as a mechanism for achieving social objectives (Wooffitt, 2005).

While conversations may initially appear disorderly, replete with pauses and hesitations, a thorough examination reveals language in action, elucidating the underlying organizational principles governing discourse. Conversation Analysis (CA) underscores the importance of delving beyond the superficial content of dialogue. Contrary to its name, CA does not solely focus on everyday conversations among acquaintances and family members. It serves

as a social inquiry tool encompassing all forms of interaction across various settings, from professional environments like doctor-patient consultations, legal proceedings, and classroom dynamics between educators and learners, to interpersonal exchanges within familial, political, ceremonial, and commercial contexts.

CA studies extend to encompass participants' non-verbal cues, including eye contact, body language, gestures, facial expressions, utilisation of objects, and spatial positioning within the physical environment. This holistic approach provides insights into the intricate dynamics of human interaction, irrespective of linguistic backgrounds and contexts.

Language and Seasoned Conversation

Language, whether spoken or unspoken, lies at the heart of conversations, serving as a potent tool for conveying ideas, thoughts, emotions, and fostering understanding and connection (Schieble, Vetter, and Martin, 2020). A successful conversation is one where language is skilfully employed to articulate opinions, express thoughts, and convey emotions through both linguistic and paralinguistic elements. Through language, individuals can share their unique perspectives, engage in meaningful exchanges, and bridge cultural gaps, nurturing empathy and fostering compassion. Language, as a versatile medium, plays a pivotal role in facilitating meaningful conversations by empowering participants to articulate their thoughts, exchange knowledge, forge authentic connections, provide effective guidance, and achieve desired outcomes directly. It serves as a cornerstone in establishing rapport, shaping perceptions, and guiding interactions, thus highlighting the importance of adeptly utilizing language to cultivate seasoned conversations (Shockley, Santana, and Fowler, 2003). Ultimately, the bedrock of impactful conversation lies in language, which enables individuals to connect, comprehend, and communicate effectively, thereby enriching the depth and quality of interactions.

Aside from a lack of language proficiency, barriers stemming from

differing linguistic backgrounds can also hinder the seasoning of conversations. These barriers can lead to misinterpretations, misunderstandings, and a disconnect between speakers and listeners. Furthermore, language barriers may distort messages, provoke conflicts, and propagate misinformation, ultimately fostering division among individuals.

Employing language as spice in verbal exchanges involves incorporating discourse markers, verbal fillers, and vocal cues, which are pivotal for maintaining conversational flow and expression. Discourse markers such as "you know," "like," and "I mean" serve as aids for processing information universally understood, particularly when accompanied by appropriate gestures and facial expressions. They contribute to fostering an environment conducive to productive dialogue, conveying curiosity, politeness, attentiveness, and engagement.

However, idiolect, the unique manner in which individuals utilize these linguistic elements, influences their efficacy. Ensuring the appropriate deployment of these linguistic tools can enhance fluency and competence, especially in multilingual settings (House, 2013). A strategic use of discourse markers, filler words, and thoughtful sounds can effectively enhance the seasoning and enrichment of conversations across diverse linguistic contexts.

Nonverbal Communication, Paralinguistics and Human Conversations

In research and personal experiences, we have been able to establish that achieving connection in conversations is not restricted to the purview of verbal language. Nonverbal communication crucially impacts human conversations by conveying a large portion of the message (Manosuv and Keeley, 2015). Su (2022) submits that 70 to 93 percent of all communication is nonverbal, highlighting its crucial role in understanding and interpreting interactions. Nonverbal cues such as body movements, facial expressions, eye contact, gestures, and tone of voice play vital roles in how individuals communicate with, understand and connect with each other. These cues can be used to contradict, reinforce, or substitute verbal messages, which takes its toll on the overall meaning of the conversation (Hall, Horgan and

Murphy, 2019).

Nonverbal cues often convey intentions, motives, and emotions, enriching the meaning of verbal messages. Understanding these cues is vital for effective interactions during conversations. When nonverbal and verbal messages conflict, individuals tend to prioritize the information conveyed nonverbally to either affirm or challenge verbal statements. This underscores the significant influence of nonverbal communication in shaping conversations.

As Nigerians, many of us can recall the diverse nonverbal strategies employed by our parents during our upbringing. Failure to comprehend and respond appropriately to these cues often resulted in immediate repercussions once guests departed or later in the evening when we were fast asleep.

Examples of Nonverbal Communication in Human Conversations

Nonverbal communication encompasses various forms that play pivotal roles in conveying meaningful messages and fostering understanding in interactions. Here are some key examples:

1. **Facial Expressions:** Smiles, furrowed brows, raised eyebrows, and side-eye glances are powerful conveyors of emotions and feelings, often surpassing verbal communication in impact. Matsumoto and Hwang (2012) assert that nonverbal behaviours, such as facial expressions, serve to communicate emotions, psychological states, and attitudes. This aligns with Su's (2022) argument that a significant portion of communication processes is nonverbal.
2. **Gestures:** Hand movements and gestures, including waving, pointing, and utilizing hand signals, can accentuate verbal communication and convey specific messages. Scherer (2013) challenges the notion that only speech qualifies as conversation, contending that nonverbal behaviours like gestures fulfil the same communicative function as verbal communication does.
3. **Tone of Voice:** Vocal tone, pitch, rate, and volume significantly contribute to understanding the speaker's emotions and intentions, shaping the perception of the message. Riess and Kraft-Todd (2014) assert that tone of voice, as a nonverbal language, conveys a plethora of messages, including empathy,

which is essential for fostering connection in human conversations. Pitch, representing the high or low sounds of speech, serves as a cue that can influence the direction of a conversation (Zant and Berger, 2020).

4. Body Language: Body movements, posture, and gestures effectively convey emotions such as confidence, interest, boredom, or nervousness during conversations. Afifi (2013) emphasizes the social and cultural significance of body language messages, which can accentuate verbal expressions in conversations.

5. Eye Contact: Eye contact is a potent nonverbal cue that signals attentiveness, sincerity, or dominance in interactions. Sundaram and Webster (2000) note that frequent eye contact and smiling foster comfort and connection among conversation participants. For instance, it is commonly understood that prolonged eye contact from a person can indicate attraction or interest.

6. Written Words: Expressing thoughts and ideas through written communication allows for conveying complex information and responses nonverbally. Archer and Akert (1977) highlight how written cues aid in establishing connection between speakers and listeners.

By mastering and balancing these paralinguistic elements, individuals can effectively convey confidence, clarity, and meaning in their conversations, enhancing understanding and fostering better engagement with others.

Human Conversations, Connections, and the Impact of Language

Language serves as the bedrock of conversations, as noted by Hadley et al. (2020), who highlight its symbiotic relationship with discourse. In educational settings, conversations are instrumental in fostering language development among early learners, later evolving into valuable tools for meaningful exchanges. Establishing connections between individuals during conversations is pivotal for effective communication, shaping our mental well-being, emotional state, and overall quality of life.

Cosgrove and Hope (2023) underscore the profound influence of conversations on interpersonal and cultural dynamics.

With a focus on social benefits, Rosemalen (2016) emphasises the significance of connections among interlocutors in facilitating meaningful discourse. Human connection entails interactions where individuals feel valued, seen, and heard, fostering a sense of closeness and belonging. Conversations serve as prime opportunities for fostering these connections among people.

Research highlights the manifold benefits of social connections, including mood enhancement, stress reduction, improved self-esteem, problem-sharing, experiential learning, and potentially increased lifespan. Conversely, prolonged loneliness can have detrimental effects on both physical and emotional health, contributing to conditions such as heart disease, cognitive decline, and weakened immune function (Barber et al., 2022). **You can now imagine what we all went through during Covid-19 lockdown!**

One of the key elements distinguishing seasoned conversations is the establishment of a genuine connection, and language serves as a powerful facilitator of this connection. Through deliberate and thoughtful language use, speakers not only communicate with their audience but also forge meaningful connections with them. Employing expressions, words, phrases, and acronyms that resonate with listeners can significantly contribute to establishing this connection.

Words hold immense power, a fact explored across various linguistic disciplines such as Discourse Analysis, Psycholinguistics, Neurolinguistics, Sociolinguistics, Stylistics, and Pragmatics. Linguists have long sought to demonstrate the profound impact of language on human communication and connection.

By communicating in a language familiar to the audience, speakers foster a sense of connection and inclusion, resulting in heightened engagement and more purposeful conversations. Utilizing vivid imagery and seasoned language aids in creating mental images, evoking emotions, and ensuring clarity in communication, thereby enhancing the audience's understanding and connection to the message being conveyed.

Moreover, incorporating storytelling techniques, rhetorical devices, conversational tone, emotional triggers, and feedback loops in podcasts can deeply engage listeners, making the content more relatable and memorable—all accomplished through the versatile tool of language!

Human conversations serve myriad purposes, ranging from expressing needs and wants to transferring information, fostering social closeness, and adhering to social etiquette. However, these purposes can be undermined if the language used lacks seasoning. Given that language is the primary ingredient in any conversation, it serves as the carrier of seasoning, enabling individuals to regulate behaviour, convey messages effectively, build relationships, and adhere to social norms.

According to Lichtenthal et al. (2021), connection in conversations equates to meaningful dialogue, highlighting its crucial role in fostering understanding, building relationships, and facilitating empathy, trust, and conflict resolution. Achieving connections in conversations hinges on the existence of shared knowledge between speakers and listeners, often referred to as common ground.

In discourse analysis, common ground encompasses shared information, mutual knowledge, beliefs, and assumptions among conversation participants (Maro, 2021). It is indispensable for successful communication and is cultivated over time through grounding acts and the processing of already established information (Maro, 2021).

In conversational agents, common ground applications aim to ensure better communicative efficiency by framing grounding phenomena within common grounding processes. Kruijt and Vossen (2022) note that in the context of conversations, common ground plays an important role in referential expressions, especially in social dialogues where long-term relationships develop effective ways of communication, including conventions in how they refer to individuals that are often part of their shared experiences. The role of common ground in referencing in social dialogue is crucial, and more research is necessary to understand its potential better.

At this point, I would want to intimate the audience with some of the works we have done on conversations and language.

Interaction Management in Conversations

Conversations are multifaceted interactions influenced by various factors beyond linguistic competence. Shared knowledge, cultural background, social status, gender, and more, all contribute to the nuances observed in turn-taking behavior and interaction patterns, including pauses, overlaps, and interruptions.

In one of our studies (Oyeleye and Olutayo, 2012), we explored how turn-taking behavior and interaction patterns facilitated participants' interpretation of each other's meanings and intentions during conversations. Television talk shows, being largely spontaneous and unscripted, were chosen as proxies for real-life conversations. Through close analysis of selected episodes, we observed how participants continuously engaged in interactions, navigating the dynamics of holding the floor, yielding the floor, and taking the floor.

Interruption and overlap as conversational strategies

Interruption in conversation represents a departure from the fundamental turn-taking rule, which dictates that only one participant should speak at a time (Sacks et al., 1974). Most studies have therefore defined interruption based on instances of simultaneous speech (Jaffe and Feldstein, 1970; Cook and Lalljee, 1972; Rutter and Stephenson, 1977), or by simultaneous turn-claiming (Duncan, 1972, 1973), which excludes, for instance, simultaneous speech resulting from overlaps involving listener attention signals or back channels (Yngve, 1970).

An interruption may occur when the next speaker assumes the floor before the current speaker relinquishes it, thereby halting their speech. In this light, an interruption can be viewed as contravening the norms of turn-taking. Interruptions may arise when the listener seizes the opportunity to speak during a pause in the speaker's discourse (Goldman-Eisler, 1968; Beattie, 1979a). These instances of interruption are often referred to as 'silent interruptions' (Ferguson, 1976, 1977). Akindele (1986:20) defines interruption as an action initiated by a participant who does not currently hold the floor while another participant is speaking,

resulting in a shift of speakers. It manifests as a form of verbal clash, entailing participants, irrespective of their social status, in a conflict over speaking privileges and responsibilities.

Interruption denotes a linguistic scenario where a co-participant abruptly interjects into the ongoing turn of another participant at a non-grammatical boundary (Onadeko, 1994:70). According to Onadeko (1994), responses to interruption may be either positive or negative.

An interruption is deemed incomplete until the first speaker ceases speaking (Tannen, 1994). For a pattern of interruption to persist, it requires not only someone persistently initiating speech while another is still expressing their thoughts but also the interlocutors persisting in yielding (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003). Thus, an interruption occurs when an interlocutor deviates from the rule of turn-taking, wherein the current speaker has not yet reached a transition-relevance place, but the next speaker contends for the floor, secures it, and contributes their own ideas (Olutayo, 2012).

Interruptions can be classified as competitive or cooperative. A competitive interruption arises when the interrupter seeks to prioritise their own speech over the current speaker's, even when the current speaker still holds the floor. This competition may revolve around either speakers vying for speech space or presenting differing ideas. In either case, attention momentarily shifts away from the main speaker and toward the interrupter (Olutayo, 2012). It is evident that unnecessary and competitive interruptions detract from meaningful conversations.

A co-operative interruption occurs when a speaker wants to support or reinforce the current speaker's point without disrupting their contribution. It usually occurs at the end of utterances. The supportive remarks could come in form of short commentaries or clarifying questions. Thus, both speakers remain on the topic of discourse (Olutayo; 2012). In this case, the conversation could be said to be seasoned.

Seasoned Language: Discourse Power in Conversations

Discourses, essentially conversations, are not confined by their setting; whether between two individuals, in a hostel, or within broader contexts like ongoing postcolonial discussions, their essence remains unchanged. They represent the exchange of opinions between parties, unfolding turn by turn. Linguists have extensively delved into discourses, while literary experts specializing in poetry, prose, or drama have engaged with them. Drawing from the postcolonial discourse as an example and examining how language functions as seasoning to wield discourse power, I will refer to two texts: Joyce Cary's *Mr. Johnson* and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, focusing on how language is employed to attain seasoning, synonymous with discourse power in this context.

The postcolonial discourse, initiated by the West, perpetuates a narrative portraying non-Western societies as less sophisticated, even dehumanising them compared to Western counterparts. Joyce Cary's novel, centered on Nigerians and Africans at large, serves as a representative text (Arab, 2019). Cary, having resided in northern Nigeria as a colonial representative, sets his novel within this milieu. In the preface, Cary himself notes that the character Johnson was inspired by a real-life clerk with whom he had worked in northern Nigeria.

This clerk had been a disappointment; he was stupid,
and he
could not be trusted with the files... what struck me so
forcibly
I suppose was that this unhappy boy was a failure at
his job,
who felt much more of an exile in Borgu, among the
pagans
whom he featured and despised, more than I did... I

remembered

him when I drew Johnson (7-8).

The author, Joyce Cary, used the novel to start a conversation that is tainted by its promotion of condescension towards Africans, hence, not seasoned; it demonises them, dehumanises Nigerians, and diminishes significant cultural practices such as Nigerian marriage customs. However, Achebe (1958) effectively countered the impressions propagated by Joyce Cary's work, employing language both within the text and at the discourse level. The following excerpt is from Achebe's debut novel:

Things Fall Apart:

Okonkwo knew these things. He knew that he had lost his place among the nine masked spirits who administered justice in the clan. He had lost the chance to lead the warlike clan against the new religion, which, he was told, had gained ground. He had lost the years in which he might have taken the highest titles in the clan. But some of these loses were not irreparable. He was determined that his return should be marked by his people. He would return with a flourish, and regain the seven wasted years (137).

Achebe employs events from Okonkwo's life to depict the decline of the African narrative and civilization in the wake of colonialism. Within the postcolonial discourse, Achebe also utilizes Okonkwo's unwavering resilience to symbolize the enduring strength of the African narrative and civilization. Through his use of language imbued with imagery reflecting African cultural representation, Achebe (1958) adds depth and seasoning to his contribution to the ongoing conversation, effectively responding to the prevailing narrative.

Paralinguistic Cues and Power Dynamics in Human Conversations

Paralinguistic communication serves as a potent tool for conveying power in human interactions, leveraging vocal cues to establish dominance, credibility, and influence. Power within conversations is often defined by one's ability to steer discourse, dictate its trajectory, and shape its outcomes. Elements such as vocal tone, pitch, volume,

inflection, and intensity play pivotal roles in signalling power and confidence (Barr, 2001). For instance, speaking with a lower pitch is commonly associated with traits like credibility, maturity, and authority, whereas a confident and assertive tone can convey the speaker's expertise (Mottram, 2016). By deliberately manipulating these paralinguistic features, individuals can project a sense of authority, command attention, and sway others during conversations. Aligning vocal characteristics with the desired level of authority facilitates the establishment of rapport, fosters understanding, and enhances the overall effectiveness of communication interactions. Power dynamics can also be present in spousal conversations. In a work in which I collaborated with another researcher, we analysed unseasoned conversations between a married couple. Here is an excerpt:

1. Susan: Hello, darling. How was your day?
2. Ken: **Like every other day. Food is not ready yet?**
3. Susan: No, it would be ready in a second and I'll...
4. Ken: **[interrupts Susan] Susan, it's Friday, you know I have to eat, take a nap before clubbing with the boys. [sighs]**
5. Susan: Darling, today was very hectic. I had to do the monthly shopping and then I had to do the laundry and then set up...
6. Ken: **Just get my food**
[Food is ready; he talks as he sits at the dining table to eat]. **I don't get it. I make sure I provide everything we need as a family; you don't work. What's so difficult in being a housewife?** [he sighs, hisses. She serves him some juice].
7. Ken: **what is this? I made it clear this morning, mango juice**
8. Susan: mango is a seasonal fruit
9. Ken: **[shouts] I don't bloody care! Get this thing off my table [he raises his voice louder] Now! Now!**

Excerpt from the
movie, "Mr and Mrs"

In this interaction, power dynamics significantly influences the

conversational behaviour displayed by Kenneth (the husband) towards Susan (wife). Kenneth's authoritative position as the husband is evident in his dismissive and demanding tone, as well as his interruption of Susan's attempts to explain herself. He uses unseasoned language (impolite utterances) to assert his dominance over his wife, thus reinforcing traditional gender roles and constructing her identity as subservient to his needs. Susan, on the other hand, adopts deference politeness strategies (seasoned language) in an attempt to maintain harmony and avoid conflict, highlighting the power imbalance within their relationship.

Cooperation and Politeness in Conversation

For a conversation to progress smoothly and achieve its intended objectives, participants must share an understanding of the discourse and demonstrate cooperation by respecting each other's perspectives and allowing each person their turn to speak. Effective conversational conduct necessitates a willingness and capability to collaborate (Gumperz, 1990). Successful conversations result in a level of relational and interactional satisfaction for each participant. Hence, effective verbal communication entails the ability to recognize and address the needs of one's fellow conversants. This involves adopting the perspective of others and adjusting one's language accordingly (Spekman, 1983).

Ideally, a conversation entails each participant showing genuine interest in the other's contributions, being patient and empathetic listeners, and adhering to Grice's Maxims. However, in reality, these conditions are frequently not met. For instance, one participant may seek to monopolize the conversation's resources (Roloﬀ and Douglas, 1985:162). Individuals who perceive themselves as being overlooked may respond by withdrawing, resisting, or expressing dissent, such as through irony. Reciprocity breaches often lead to dissatisfaction within groups and can contribute significantly to group disunity (Roloﬀ and Douglas, 1985: 170).

The Cooperative Principle, introduced by Grice (1975), is fundamental to the smooth functioning of conversations. Grice posited that to ensure seamless interaction, participants must adhere to specific social norms. The Cooperative Principle succinctly dictates that one should contribute to the conversation in a manner

appropriate to its purpose or direction, as accepted within the exchange (Grundy, 2000:74).

Grice delineates four maxims that conversational participants should uphold. The first maxim pertains to quantity, emphasizing that speakers should provide just enough information without overloading or under-informing their audience. The second maxim, the maxim of quality, mandates sincerity, requiring speakers to express beliefs that align with reality and refrain from uttering falsehoods or making claims unsupported by evidence.

The third maxim concerns relevance, stipulating that speakers should contribute information pertinent to preceding remarks. The fourth maxim, regarding manner, advises speakers to be concise, orderly, and avoid ambiguity or obscurity.

Non-adherence to these maxims in conversation may manifest as flouting, violation, or hedging. However, what do we observe in various spheres such as governmental circles, national and state assemblies, media platforms, family discussions, workplaces, religious congregations, and even academic institutions, envisioned as bastions of knowledge and learning? Instances of false news, unsubstantiated rumour, lies, exaggerations, and unfounded ideas abound, often fueling tension and potential chaos. Have we considered the toll these challenges exact on our mental well-being and peace of mind? It's no wonder that the Bible advises us to let our conversations be seasoned with salt.

The maxims articulated by H.P. Grice are susceptible to being flouted, violated, hedged, or disregarded altogether.

Flouting the Maxims

It is believed that any participant who fails to adhere to these maxims during a conversation, while expecting the listeners to grasp the implied meaning, has flouted the maxims. For instance, if a speaker provides excessive or insufficient information, they have flouted the maxim of quantity.

Example:

A: Where is your mother?

B: She's not at home; she went to the market and won't be back until 6 p.m.

In the hypothetical example above, B has given more information

than necessary, potentially exposing her mother to danger, especially in today's climate of kidnapping. A more appropriate response would have been to simply state her mother's whereabouts.

A speaker could also be said to have flouted the second maxim, the maxim of quality, when they make claims without evidence. This can be done through exaggeration, hyperbole, metaphor, irony, or banter.

Example:

"The Bursar's secretary is pregnant with twins."

A speaker flouts the maxim of relation when they expect the listeners to infer connections that were not explicitly stated.

Example:

"Don't forget Mum on Mothers' Day"

Violating the Maxims

A speaker violates a maxim when they intentionally mislead the listener, knowing that the surface meaning of their words will be understood differently from the truth.

Example:

"Nigerian Governor Hands Over Power To Deputy."

Hedging Maxims

Maxims are hedged when a speaker indicates to what extent they are adhering to them, often through metalingual glosses.

Examples:

"All I know is that the Vice-Chancellor has good intentions."

"They say men are dangerous."

In the examples above, phrases like "all," "know," and "They say" serve as metalingual glosses, indicating the speaker's awareness of the limitations of their information. This practice helps maintain conversational clarity and honesty.

Ensuring a conversation is seasoned involves observing both cooperative and politeness principles.

Politeness

Rather than prescribing behaviour, true politeness can be viewed as the strategies individuals employ to avoid causing offense, embarrassment, aggression, or presumption in conversation (Sisson, 2007). Brown and Levinson (1987) define politeness as the speaker's effort to uphold the self-esteem or "face" of both themselves and the listener.

Culture significantly influences how politeness is conveyed and negotiated (Sisson, 2007). Pan (2000) suggests that Brown and Levinson's (1987) concept of face may not be universally applicable, particularly in cultures less focused on individualism than Western culture. She argues that politeness is more context-dependent for the Chinese than for Americans and that face-saving does not always adequately explain polite behaviour.

Similarly, in many Nigerian cultures, politeness is highly contextual, and face-saving does not always equate to politeness. According to Odebunmi (2003), within Nigerian cultures, the Hausa and Yoruba exhibit contrasting politeness norms. While the Hausa tend to be forthright in their descriptions, including discussing deformities openly, the Yoruba tend to be more reserved. A Yoruba individual typically employs euphemistic language, especially when addressing sensitive or emotional topics involving others. Thus, when considering these cultural idiosyncrasies, conventions, and associations on a global scale, the politeness principle aligns closely with the use of euphemistic language (Odebunmi, 2005).

In my research journey, which began early in my career, language use has been a central focus. In Olutayo and Adedokun (2007), we delved into the role of the English language in educational reforms. Our observations revealed a tendency among education ministries and curriculum developers to prioritize the structure and content of curricula over language reforms, which are vital for effective instruction and assessment. We emphasized that educational reforms should extend beyond mere curriculum review to encompass updates in the language of instruction for both teachers and learners.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, I would like to further highlight a collaborative effort with the British Council in 2012. During this collaboration, colleagues from various African countries and I were sponsored to attend a week-long course at the Hornby School in Rwanda. While evaluating teaching, learning, and examination materials, we noticed a stark contrast: African countries tended to employ complex and technical language in their educational processes, whereas the materials promoted by the curriculum developers in western nations favoured simpler language accompanied by extensive use of graphics and visuals. This

observation aligns with the late Prof. Obanyan's characterization of the variety of English used in Nigeria as "Bookish English." It underscores the need for teachers to understand their students' learning preferences to better motivate them, enhance their interest in learning, and unlock their full potential.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, exploring language as a seasoning to enrich conversations has been the central focus of our research for nearly two decades. At this juncture, we are eager to showcase samples of our research, both individual and collaborative, highlighting the intricate interplay between language and conversations.

As stated earlier, my Ph.D. research focused on turn management in Nigerian television talk shows. The study utilized a theoretical framework that combined Conversation Analysis by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson, Brown and Levinson's Politeness Principle, and Grice's Cooperative Principle. Data collection was conducted from three prominent Nigerian TV talk shows ("Patito's Gang," "New Dawn with Funmi Iyanda," and "Inside Out") spanning the years 2004 to 2008.

Through the analysis, three main turn distribution strategies were identified: Current-Speaker-Selects-Next-Speaker, Next-Speaker-Self-Selects-as-Next, and Current-Speaker-Continues (where neither pre-selection nor self-selection occurs). The current speaker typically selected the next speaker through direct questioning, gaze, and gestures. On the other hand, the next speaker often self-selected by utilizing interruptions, overlaps, discourse markers, pauses, and falling intonation. In instances where there was no pre-selection or self-selection at Transition Relevance Places, the current speaker continued after a pause of approximately half a second or more. These non-linguistic activities in conversations were observed to be common among participants, often occurring unconsciously.

These strategies play a crucial role in effective interaction management among participants, as turn allocations are typically not restricted to any single participant but are moderated by the hosts. Specifically, our analysis revealed distinct patterns depending on the nature of the talk show.

Controversial topics, as seen in "Patito's Gang" and "Inside Out," tended to have more instances of self-selection and longer turns

compared to therapeutic shows, such as those in "New Dawn." Current issues also sparked contests for the floor, resulting in increased self-selections.

Furthermore, shows featuring professionals and youths as studio audiences exhibited a higher frequency of self-selection. Participants of higher social status tended to prompt more self-selections than those of lower status, although gender did not act as a barrier to self-selection.

Host demeanour also played a significant role: in episodes where hosts were domineering, as observed in all sampled episodes of "New Dawn," there were more instances of Current-Speaker-Selects-Next. Conversely, in shows like "Patito's Gang" and "Inside Out," where hosts adopted a more liberal approach, there was greater room for self-selection among participants.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, in our study conducted by Oyeleye & Olutayo (2012), we examined the intricacies of turn management in conversation, exploring the various turn distribution strategies and their impact on the management of discourse. Utilizing both quantitative and qualitative analysis methods, we uncovered three primary turn distribution strategies: Current-Speaker-Selects-Next-Speaker, Next-Speaker-Self-Selects-as-Next, and Current-Speaker-Continues.

In the Current-Speaker-Selects-Next-Speaker strategy, the current speaker typically chooses the next speaker through direct questioning, gaze, and gestures. Conversely, in the Next-Speaker-Self-Selects-as-Next strategy, the next speaker autonomously claims the floor through interruptions, overlaps, discourse markers, pauses, or falling intonation. When neither pre-selection nor self-selection occurs at Transition Relevance Places, the current speaker continues after a pause of approximately half a second or more.

These strategies may not be readily apparent to the layperson but are discernible to conversation analysts, shedding light on the complex dynamics at play in conversational exchanges.

Table 1: Frequency of turn distribution strategies in “PG”

Turn distribution strategies	PG 1	%	PG2	%	PG3	%	PG4	%	Overall	%
CSSN	48	25	19	12.33	15	12.09	14	10.52	96	15.9
NSSS	119	61.97	93	60.38	94	75.80	84	63.15	390	64.6
CSC	25	13.02	42	27.27	15	12.09	35	26.31	117	19.4
TOTAL	192	99.99	154	99.98	124	99.98	133	99.98	603	99.9

Keys:

CSSN- Current Speaker Selects Next

NSSS- Next Speaker Self-selects

CSC- Current Speaker Continues

PG1 had the highest number of turns because the topic was controversial. Thus, every participant sought an opportunity to participate in the talk. The high rate of NSSS in PG also suggests a high involvement of the participants in all the episodes.

Table 2: Frequency of turn distribution strategies in “ND”

Turn distribution strategies	ND1	%	ND2	%	ND3	%	ND4	%	Overall	%
CSSN	23	33.82	20	13.24	26	32.09	28	44.44	97	26.7
NSSS	31	45.58	105	69.53	36	44.44	15	23.80	187	51.5
CSC	14	20.58	26	17.21	19	23.45	20	31.74	79	21.7
TOTAL	68	99.98	151	99.98	81	99.98	63	99.98	363	99.9

Table 2 reports the turn distribution strategies in ND. CSSN = 26.7%; NSSS =51.5% and CSC=21.7%. Total percentage of turn distribution strategies = 99.9%. The results indicate that there were fewer instances of NSSS than we had in PG. The decrease in the number of NSSS demonstrates that turns were not evenly distributed in ND and that participants were restricted to taking the floor only when the host selected them. CSSN follows closely with 26.7%. This indicates that while the host had the upper hand, the participants still found a way to be involved in the discussion. Obviously, it is not in all conversations that turns are evenly distributed, the moderator or someone who is highly placed among the participants may dominate the talk.

Table 3: Frequency of turn distribution strategies in “IO”

Turn distribution strategies	IO1	%	IO2	%	IO3	%	IO4	%	Overall	%
CSSN	8	22.8	12	23.07	10	35.7	15	23.43	45	25.1
NSSS	23	65.7	20	38.46	12	42.85	48	75	103	57.5
CSC	4	11.42	20	38.46	06	21.42	1	1.56	31	17.3
Total	35	99.92	52	99.99	28	99.97	64	99.99	179	99.9

In Table 3, the numbers of identified turn distribution strategies appear lower compared to the first two tables. This discrepancy primarily stems from the duration of the show. "IO" was a 30-minute programme, resulting in fewer turns compared to the longer-duration shows. The frequency of Next-Speaker-Self-Selects-as-Next (NSSS) is notably higher by 57.5% than that of Current-Speaker-Selects-Next-Speaker (CSSN) and Current-Speaker-Continues (CSC). This highlights the host's liberal approach and her emphasis on fostering interaction. Moreover, the nature of the topics discussed often demanded a higher level of participant engagement.

A closer examination reveals that NSSS had the highest percentage in "IO1," while CSSN and NSSS shared the same percentage in "IO2." This discrepancy indicates that "IO1" was more interactive than "IO2." The similarity in CSSN and NSSS in "IO2" reflects the less controversial nature of the topic ("Inclusive Education") compared to "How Safe Are We?" in "IO1." "IO2" served as an enlightenment programme aimed at sensitizing viewers to include the physically challenged in mainstream education.

In "IO4," NSSS had the highest percentage. The topic of this episode ("No Romance without Finance") prompted greater audience participation. The nature of the topic often determines the occurrence rate of turn distributions. Therefore, we can conclude that while the quantity of turn distribution varied across the three shows, the frequency remained similar. Among the three turn distribution strategies, NSSS was the most frequently observed.

Olutayo (2012) conducted a study on interruption and overlap as conversational strategies in Nigerian television discourse. The objectives were to explore the circumstances leading to interruptions in conversations, identify prevalent types of interruptions in television discourse, and assess the frequency of overlaps successfully becoming interruptions. The findings unveiled that interruptions and overlaps frequently occur in conversations as supportive strategies, with cooperative interruption being the most prevalent type. Additionally, only a small proportion of overlaps successfully transition into interruptions. Furthermore, these conversational features serve as crucial strategies for participants to

actively engage in conversations. Can you envision a conversation devoid of interruptions and overlaps?

In one of our studies (Olutayo, 2013), we observed a rapid growth in television talk shows in Nigeria. This growth prompted a need for linguistic analysis to facilitate comparisons with similar TV programmes outside the country's borders. Critics have noted that foreign talk shows often feature extreme and socially undesirable opinions, bizarre behaviour, and instances of social deviance. These shows may include elements such as profanity, physical altercations, and confrontations as forms of interpersonal communication and conflict resolution. Moreover, they tend to focus heavily on sexuality and the portrayal of sexual preferences, often presenting exceptional cases as commonplace. This portrayal can lead to a distorted perception of reality and desensitize regular viewers to the misfortunes of others (e.g., Plake, 1979; Graf, 1998).

However, it is crucial to recognize that most Nigerian television talk shows diverge from these characteristics. Like their counterparts worldwide, Nigerian TV talk shows possess distinctive attributes shaped by their hosts and the cultural environment in which they operate (Olutayo, 2010). These shows are often utilized as tools for awareness campaigns, enlightenment, problem-solving, and entertainment. Unlike programmes featuring vulgar expressions and physical altercations, Nigerian talk shows primarily focus on reorienting the populace, shaping opinions on government policies, and addressing societal issues. This variance in content also implies that the patterns of turn-taking in Nigerian TV talk shows are influenced by different factors compared to those in the Western world.

In our research, we examined the factors influencing participants' conversational behaviours and the primary determinants of turn-taking patterns and features. Seven key determinants of turn-taking patterns and features were identified across these shows: discourse topic, programme duration, guests/participants' composition, cultural influences, social status, gender dynamics, and the personality of the hosts. These factors shed light on the turn-taking patterns observed in terms of participation levels, floor occupancy, shared understanding, turn length, and emotiveness.

Our subsequent inquiry revolves around whether similar patterns are observed in casual conversations.

In Olutayo, (2015), we examined instances of cooperation and politeness in conversations using Grice's Cooperative Principle and Brown and Levinson's Politeness theories, with particular attention to television discourse. From the analysis, findings revealed that while the hosts and participants sought to cooperate and exhibit politeness in the discourse, there were several instances of flouting and hedging of conversational maxims and face threatening acts. Out of the four maxims of cooperation propounded by Grice (1975), the maxim of quality was the most flouted. 70% flouts which were responsible for lots of interruptions from other participants were recorded. Although some of the flouts were meant to spice up discussions, they ate into the time allocated for the show. The quality maxim was always observed as the integrity of the guests and credibility of the talk show would determine the success of the show as regards the number of viewers. However, these days, contrary is the case. False news tend to sell more and attract more likes and followers.

Olutayo (2016) examines linguistic power and control in conversations. The author, through careful data analysis shows how the participants and the host used language to exercise power and control in conversations during the show. The study reveals that if language can be used as a means of power and control in broadcast talks, then, we could begin to think of examining casual and institutional conversations in Nigeria.

The host as the “owner” cum “controller of the show has the language with which to control participants, and even the audience because, invariably, the opinions and emotions of both are greatly influenced by how the host who is equally the moderator uses language to elicit the desired response, behaviour, and mutual intelligibility. The study identified features such as: topic orientation, question orientation, question and answer orientation and orientation to institutional status as instruments of power and control in a television discourse. We also concluded that the findings could be generalised to casual conversations and other institutional talks. Interlocutors could explore language to exercise power and control in conversations, especially among spouses, and parent-children interaction.

In Olutayo and Balogun (2020), we explored the discourse issues, strategies, and pragmatic functions of language use in selected Nigerian radio commercials. The radio commercials under scrutiny exhibited a variety of discourse issues, representing the diverse topics explored by advertisers. Through our research, we identified seven types of discourse issues prevalent in these commercials: drug abuse, quality service, healthy living, information and communication technology, comfort and relaxation, economy, and scholarship. Furthermore, we analysed the discourse strategies employed by advertisers to sway the opinion of listeners or encourage them to purchase a product or sample a service. These strategies encompassed citing evidence, adjuration, sloganism, rhetorical tactics, and pidginization. Our study conclusively demonstrates that advertising constitutes a persuasive discourse, wherein language plays a pivotal role in facilitating effective communication in radio advertisements.

In Olutayo and Olabode (2021), we undertook an examination and analysis of the types, frequency, and functions of backchannels in "Moments with Mo," a contemporary Nigerian television talk show. Backchannels, also known as responsive tokens, serve as signals of participants' involvement in ongoing conversations.

Our findings unveiled a range of backchannel items utilized in the episodes, including "mm/mm...hmm," "oh," "okay," "fantastic," "definitely," "awesome," "really," "lovely," "nice," "alright," "true," "good," "well done," "exactly," "right," "wow," "of course," "no," "yeah," head nod, and laughter. Notably, "yeah" emerged as the most frequently used backchannel item, with female participants employing more backchannels than their male counterparts.

These backchannel items served various purposes within the discourse, including continuation, alignment, disagreement, acknowledgment, collaborative finishing, and transition to different activities. Our study concluded that female participants exhibit a greater propensity towards backchannel behaviours in multi-party television discourse, potentially owing to their supportive nature, which, in turn, contributes to the conversational success of the talk show.

Mr Vice-Chancellor, Sir, research has also shown that meanings can be negotiated through repair mechanisms in conversations. Olutayo

(forthcoming) sets out to examine how conversational repairs are used to facilitate and negotiate meanings in selected episodes of *Moments-Girls-Talk*, a Nigerian television talk show produced by Ebony TV. The research investigates how misunderstandings and non-understandings are indicated and what repair strategies the interlocutors employ to negotiate meanings. Using Sacks and Jefferson's theory of conversation analysis, Schegloff's (1977) theory of repair and Varonis and Gas (1985) model of negotiation as theoretical frameworks, findings from this research reveal that communication often breaks down in a multiparty discourse when participants are faced with difficulty in constructing the intended meaning of a contribution/turn. Misunderstandings and non-understandings are indicated by questions, re-statements and clarification checks. In order to prevent total communication breakdown, conversational repair strategies are employed by participants. Types of repair strategies identified are self-initiated, self-repair; other-initiated, self-repair and other-initiated, other-repair. It is also discovered that self-initiated, self-repair is the most prevalent type of repair employed by the participants in all the episodes examined. Participants also negotiated meaning through repair patterns such as modification, re-ordering, specification, exemplification, replacement abandonment, repetition, rewording and elaboration.

As mentioned earlier, language is the primary means of exercising power. It is also the main medium for expressing politeness and impoliteness, and constructing identity in interactions. Olutayo and Jegede (forthcoming) investigates how linguistic power is used to construct the identity of wives in a typical Nigerian spousal discourse as evidenced in a Nollywood movie titled "Mr. and Mrs.". In the selected speech event, marriage is seen as a Community of Practice (CofP) where husbands and wives perform their gendered identities in different ways. We identified the impoliteness strategies and the types of impoliteness employed by the husband to exercise power over the wife while reconstructing her identity; the determinants of power and impoliteness; and how impolite utterances/actions lead to disharmony in the family. Findings reveal that bald on record (BOR) takes the highest number (20) in the discourse being examined, and most of them are utterances from the husband to the wife. There are

also instances of combinations of impoliteness strategies such as BOR + insult, BOR + use of inappropriate identity markers, BOR + frighten, BOR + calling the other names, BOR + exclude the other from an activity and other impoliteness strategies. Two main types of impoliteness found in the interactions are: affective and coercive impoliteness. It is also discovered that “husbandhood”, social-economic status and family background are the main determinants of power and impoliteness in African spousal discourse. The different roles played by participants in the discourse contribute greatly to how language is used to express impoliteness and reconstruct identity.

Ongoing research

Grace Olutayo and Jesutomi Orija are conducting two distinct studies. The first research delves into discourse strategies employed in online newspaper reports of uxoricide, analyzing their functions and contributions to meaning. Data is collected from "Premium Times" and "PMNews" between January 2022 and December 2023, employing Critical Discourse Analysis. Preliminary findings indicate a reliance on evidentiality and lexicalization by reporters to establish their cases.

The second study focuses on verbal violence and implicature in Wole Soyinka's "Chronicles of the Happiest People on Earth." It explores how violence is initiated through words, examining the implications of violent language on authorial commentary and the holistic interpretation of the novel. Employing a mixed-method approach and Paul Grice's Conversational Implicature Theory, the study uncovers that verbal violence in the novel serves as an intentional portrayal of societal decay.

Conclusion

Mr Vice-Chancellor, Sir, to round this off, I would like to mention a few effects of unseasoned conversations:

- ❖ Misunderstanding/conflicts in the family between spouses, parents and children, between friends and colleagues at workplaces, between the government and the governed and others. Not long ago, the minister of power drew the ire of Nigerians when he made the certain comments to support the increase in electricity tariff for “Band A” customers. He had to apologise to Nigerians because his remark generated widespread criticisms with some citizens calling for his resignation.
- ❖ Low self-esteem: a lot of people have lost their self-esteem because they have been bombarded with lots of unseasoned conversations.
- ❖ Many parents have unknowingly brought curses on their children, and affected them psychologically by making unseasoned utterances such as:
 - “Ori e o da! (Your head is not good)
 - “Useless child”
 - “You can never amount to anything in life!”The Yoruba would say “a o mo angeli t'o nkoja (we don't often know which angel is passing during those comments, who would put a stamp on whatever we say).
- ❖ Lost friendships: Many people have lost friends and potential allies because they were unseasoned in their conversations.

This lecture has provided valuable insights into the use of language as spice in seasoned conversations and the need to keep our conversations seasoned always. It is important that interlocutors handle language use in interaction with decorum to avoid conflicts, miscommunication, depression, and suicidal tendencies especially among our youths who do not have the resilience to bear those cutting remarks. Language in interactions should be used to encourage and build others and not to pull them down.

Let your conversations be seasoned with salt.

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With participants at TKT training: Kaduna, 2008.



Osun teachers during a TKT training



Teachers at a TKT training in Benin City

Photo sessions from Hornby School held at Kigali, Rwanda in 2012













Etisalat sponsored teacher training workshop in collaboration with British Council in 2011









At TKT/CLIL training, Kano, 2011

Photos from symposium on Quality Assurance in Zanzibar









Photos from Global Quality Assurance Association's symposium in Ghana



