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Genderlect as discourse in Yoruba movies

Abstract. This paper offers an analysis of gender discourse of Yoruba male and female movie characters. The Yoruba speech community is one of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. Their genderlect is examined and investigated in terms of their use of minimal responses, intensifiers, hedges, tag questions, polite and taboo words. The techniques of Media Monitoring and purposive sampling were employed to obtain relevant data. Randomly, four Yoruba movies were selected from which forty eight scenes were analyzed. From each movie twelve scenes, comprising single gender interaction and mixed gender interactions were considered. Social constructivism theory combined with the relevant aspects of Discourse Analysis was employed for the data analysis. In addition, a Chi-square analysis was done. The findings show significant differences between the gender groups in the use of hedges, intensifiers, minimal responses, taboos and euphemistic or polite words. The findings also corroborate the constructionist assumptions regarding gender-bound language taking context into consideration. Thus we conclude that the differences in the usage of male and female movie characters are determined, as empirically evidenced, by several sociolinguistic, psycholinguistic and discourse features within the context of situation or interaction in the Yoruba milieu.

Keywords: Genderlect, Yoruba, discourse, hedges, intensifiers, minimal responses, taboo.

1. Introduction

This paper is a study of Yoruba discourse, focusing on the differences in the way Yoruba men and women speak in selected Nollywood movies. Recent research tends to depict the existence of differences between men and women's language use as one of the principal issues of sociolinguistics (Crawford 1995). Researchers such as Maltz and Borker (1982), Tannen (1990), Wardhaugh (1991), Coates (1993), Trudgill (1974) and Swann (2000) have observed that men and women differ significantly in their use of language and that these differences are always a product of context. The basic idea of social constructivism is that the world is socially constructed and the social order in which we perceive the world is in a constant state of change. It is believed that while meaning is constructed through interaction between different people and their relation to objects and other people, differences also vary from situation to situation (Bryman 2008: 19-20). What this means

is that meaning is created through language depending on how people use concepts and what the meanings of these concepts are. In this light, we attempt to examine the possible gender differences in language use and the functions of some linguistic features in Yoruba movies based on social constructivism theory and relevant tools of discourse analysis.

The movie has been noted, especially by Aitchison (1998), to form an aspect of media that conceptualizes world events and situations which people have accepted as a means of gathering information about what is happening around the world. Thus the movie, as a genre of a fictional character, may be said to be one of the most suitable and appropriate media for expressing, exploring and exploiting the richness and complexity of genderlect. This may be the main reason for the widespread interest in movies among people of various social groups globally, as aptly observed by Bleichenbacher (2008:21).

Just as in real life or non-fiction, genderlect tends to be reflected in the discourse of movie characters as determined by their ethnic, linguistic or cultural backgrounds or affiliations. Obviously, some of these features have been discussed from the point of view of the native speakers of English language but it appears that much has not been done from the context of non-native speakers of the English language. Also, it was observed that these linguistic features are distinctively used by each gender. Thus the primary goal of this study is to examine the differences in the usage of discourse features by male and female characters in selected Yoruba Nollywood movies and to explain the functions of those features of genderlect.

2. Statement of the problem

The general gender communication differences can be noted to reflect in most male and female discourses in relation to their contexts. From a critical discourse perspective, it may be claimed that imbalance of power between male and female members of the society is the principal factor behind gender speech differences. Though this claim has been debated and elaborated on by social constructionists, this perspective has been widely attributed to Lakoff (1975), whose view appears to be revolutionary as there was no substantial work on the relationship between gender and language before hers.

Curiously, there was little or no empirical data to substantiate some of her viewpoints on genderlect. Other works, such as Trudgill (1974) and Holmes (1996), that focused on several of the linguistic features she discussed also fall short of providing sufficient evidence on genderlect. Moreover, much of the research on gender discourse as a linguistic behaviour has focused on the native speakers of the English language. Thus it appears that there is very little knowledge about how gender discourse operates in various other languages of the world in form and structure. Thus this leaves a gap to fill. From our observations it is clear that genderlect in form of linguistic variables in the selected movies could provide substantive evidence that underlies differences in the speech of male and female movie characters.

Wardhaugh (1991) and others have investigated the speech behaviour of women and men at various levels using different methodologies. Owing to the many contradictory approaches, as-

sumptions and results, the need to develop a critically systemic approach and methodology on genderlect arises. Thus claims made about language used by women and men at different times, in different circumstances and with completely different samples, on the basis of different implicit ideologies should be examined, investigated and analysed carefully.

In this paper, the view that women use discourse features such as hedges, intensifiers, minimal responses, taboos, question tags, euphemisms and polite words more often than men and the need to examine the functions of these discourse features in different social contexts becomes a re-search problem to be investigated and resolved using Yoruba movies as a case study.

Operational definitions of terms

For the purpose of this study, we consider it necessary to define the following terms:

Hedges appear to be similar in form and structure in English and Yoruba. Examples are: *m`o rope* (I think), *se oori* (you see), *o dabi enipe* (it seems).

Intensifiers tend to be similar in form and structure in Yoruba and English. Examples are: *Oti poju* (too much), *eru yi le ju* (so enormous).

Language Use: Yoruba words used by males and females to communicate in the selected movies.

Minimal responses are also known as back-channel speech. They involve brief feedback or comments provided by listeners during the conversation interaction (*Hmmmm, ehennn, hunnn*).

Polite words (or euphemisms) are words associated with respect, etiquette, well-mannered behaviour. Examples: *ema binu* (sorry), *edakun* (please).

Taboo words and euphemism refer to prohibited words. They are forbidden because they are regarded as immoral or improper. Sexual organs and sexual acts in Yoruba culture are taboo words that should not be mentioned in the public. Euphemisms are used in their place.

Tag questions are the same in Yoruba and English. Examples of tag questions are: *abi beeko* (isn't it), *abi iwo ko* (aren't you), *se ohun ko ni* (wasn't it).

Yoruba Movies are movies produced by Yoruba movie industry in the Yoruba language.

3. Genderlect

From a sociolinguistic perspective, the term *genderlect* may be described as “the language of both male and female sexes” (Kramer 1977:122). This refers to language form and language use associated characteristically with either males or females. Just as “dialect” is defined as a variety of language of a people in a specific geographical area, genderlect can be defined as a variety of a language that is tied not to any geographical location or family background or a role but rather to the speaker's gender. The study of genderlect has been dominated by one word: difference. Differences between men and women and the way they speak have filled the pages of numerous articles and books.

Many of the approaches adopted in the study of genderlect have reflected different milieus ('Deficit' approach, 'dominance' approach, 'difference and discursive approach'). These approaches came one after another as a result of the shortcomings of the earlier ones. In a nut shell, the bot-

tom line is communication and differences. According to Tannen, a key advocate of the difference approach, communication is more or less cross-cultural and males and females are genetically unsuited to communicate successfully with each other. We learn to use language as we grow up, and since we grow up in different geographical areas, have different religious beliefs, class backgrounds, etc. – all these lead to different ways of speaking. Being male or female also leads to different conversational styles (Tannen 1990:42).

The 'discursive' approach which falls under the social constructionism sees context as the basis of the differences. The discursive approach is influenced by Michel Foucault as it focuses more on the production of knowledge and meaning, power/knowledge in correlation with history and historical events (Hall 1997: 51). Linguists working on genderlect now consider how gender is 'constructed' in its relation to cultural variables such as race, ethnicity, geography, class and economics; and how the factors which entail a society 'influence' how we construct gender. In other words, fresh insights have been gained on the various ways in which males and females verbally interact with one another and on the discourse problems that occur in the process. The most popular explanation given for the obvious differences is that the disparate verbal skills held by males and females are reflections of the disparate conditions of their gender in the society. Since male and female speakers of a language have different experiences, social roles and personal needs peculiar to their culture, it can only be expected that they develop different strategies and skills of speech to operate within and cope with sociolinguistic and cultural requirements in their society.

Findings from early works simply indicate changes and differences which can be observed in genderlect. For example, there are different opinions as regards the use of intensifiers, tag questions, minimal responses, euphemisms, polite words, and other forms. There is the view that women use tag questions more to get a confirmation of a personal opinion. There is also the view that men do not use tag questions as often as women as well as the one that says they do (McMillan, Clifton, McGrath & Gale 1977; Mulac & Lundell 1986). Similarly, there have been opposing views regarding (Dubois & Crouch 1975), further evidence that women use phrases that may communicate relative uncertainty. Uncertainty verb phrases, especially those combining first-person singular pronouns with perceptual or cognitive verbs (e.g., "I wonder if"), have been found more often in women's writing (Mulac & Lundell 1994) and speech (Hartman 1976; Poole 1979).

Similarly, the view that women use more hedges because of their reluctance to force their views on others appears to support Lakoff's claim that women are more likely than men, in the same situation, to use extra-polite forms such as, "Would you mind...". This claim has been supported by subsequent empirical works (Holmes 1995; McMillan *et al.* 1977).

Aitchison (1998) claims that women are more conservative when they talk by replacing imperatives or direct sentences with questions. For example, if a woman is asked "what time are we going to have the dinner?" she will answer "is it at 8?" instead of "it's at 8". However, this style of talking is specific to weak people who are afraid of provoking arguments and outrage. Women tend to use more standard forms than men and it is commonly alleged that women speak more correctly than men, but the real reason for this way of talking is still under question and only some justifications

have been proposed which can be right to some extent. For example, women are under pressure in patriarchal societies and are expected to be ladylike, so they have to behave more politely than men. Some people believe that talking properly is considered a part of their personality and associated with their femininity.

In conclusion, the literature reviewed above is considered germane to the study of genderlect as discourse in Yoruba Nollywood movies.

4. Yoruba discourse

The Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria have been described as a group of people with rich culture and values whose verbal discourses feature proverbs, folktales, rituals, songs, prayers, succinct sayings and even drumming and singing to enrich the meaning of what they say (Adegbija 1989). This is especially true when they speak their native language, although many of these characteristics have been carried into their English language usage. Their language use reflects their peculiar culture and world view which intertwine, as aptly observed by Hymes (1964). In other words, their speech variation occurs due to a number of linguistic and non-linguistic factors or variables such as language contact, social context, age, gender and social or educational status of participants/interlocutors. These variables tend to account for the peculiar discourse features of their language use.

As espoused in this paper, discourse can be described as language in use (see Brown and Yule 1983; Fasold 1990). So by Yoruba discourse, we simply refer to Yoruba language in use. The analysis of Yoruba discourse in the movies may present clearly a new perspective and understanding of the language, its use as well as its functions. New discourse features may be found to be peculiar to social interactions in Yoruba movies as a result of the Yoruba socio-cultural milieu or world view. If discourse is assumed to be underlined by social relations, then our focus here is to shed more light on peculiar discourse features employed in the selected Yoruba movies by men and women in the course of interaction.

As discourse analysis involves the study of language in context, we, in this paper, consider each of these linguistic features as a continuous stretch of language larger or smaller than a sentence. The reason for this is that discourse elements cannot be studied in isolation because of their peculiar feature of being dependent on context for their interpretation. Thus texts are analyzed as also language use 'above the sentence' and not only as sentences, sentence elements or a conglomerate of ideas (literary or otherwise) that are generated through sentence elements or structures. This perspective is well-captured by Coulthard (1977) when she states that the largest unit of discourse may overlap with the largest unit of grammatical organization (see Olateju 1988).

Since male and female speakers of a language have different experiences, social roles and personal needs particular to their culture, it can be only expected that the genders develop different strategies and skills of speech to operate within those circumstances, and that these are reflected in movies. The most popular explanation given for these differences is that the disparate verbal skills held by males and females are reflections of the disparate conditions of the genders in society. A hierarchical male-female relationship is seen to exist in society which is manifested in cross-

sex discourse (White 2003). Tannen's view is that verbal differences between males and females are caused by different cultural backgrounds. Women are assumed to think more often in terms of closeness and support in order to preserve intimacy while men are assumed to focus more on status and independence. These traits may be responsible for the obviously different views which men and women have of the same or similar situation (Tannen 1990:42). The question then is, do Yoruba male and female characters reflect those traits in their discourse in movies? If yes, does that lead to significant verbal differences in their discourse? These are the main questions we set out to answer in this paper.

5. Methodology

In this paper, we employ an integration of qualitative and quantitative methods. This approach, as described by Keller & Erzberger (2004:174), enables the employment of complementary methods that facilitate a broadened perspective based on an indepth treatment, description and explanation of the subject area. Purposive sampling which involves media monitoring of both electronic and print media was employed. In this regard, series of films were viewed on DSTV Channels, especially on African Magic Yoruba, Okin TV, Galaxy Tv and lots more. Also, information was gathered online in respect to the comments of viewers and the total number of viewers of these movies. The data were sourced from selected Yoruba movies. After watching them severally with keen attention, the speeches/utterances of both male and female characters were transcribed in order to identify and select the relevant areas of interest. The data were then divided into three major groups: (1) cross gender, same period, (2) same gender, cross period.

The four selected Yoruba (Nollywood) movies are: *Oleku*, *Oga*, *Ainidariji* and *Gbaju*. They were selected because they contain scenes involving verbal exchanges between male and female characters, showing love, relationship, social and family life as their thematic centrality.

6. Presentation and analysis of data

6.1. Research question 1: Is there a significant difference in how men and women use intensifiers, taboo words, hedges, question tags, minimal responses and polite words in Yoruba movies?

The results of our analysis showing significant differences between men and women in the use of intensifiers, taboo words, hedges, question tags, minimal responses and polite words in our data are summarized in Tables 1a and 1b indicating the frequency and percentage of usage.

Table 1a. The frequency of selected variables in the speech of male and female characters

Linguistic variable	Male	%	Female	%
hedges	163	22.7	189	26.3
intensifier	122	29.1	92	21.9

question tag	59	30.7	55	28.6
minimal response	63	16.1	121	30.9
taboo words	106	30.9	68	19.8
politeness	14	12.9	48	44.4
total	527	100	573	100

Table 1b. The frequency of selected variables in the speech of male and female characters

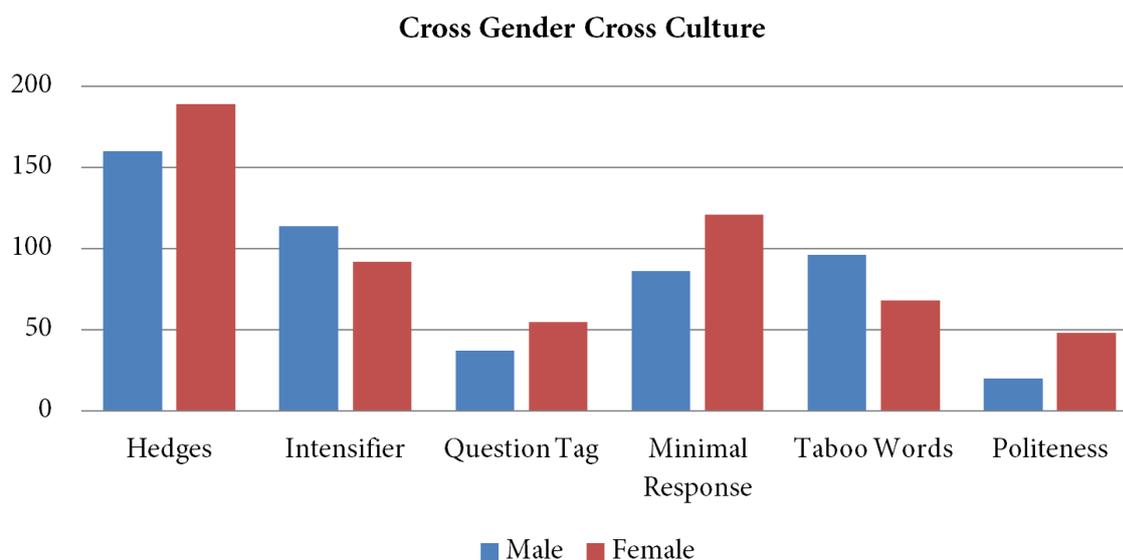


Table 2. Male Chi-square table

Linguistic variable	Observed N	Expected N	
hedges – 163	1	10	0
intensifier – 122	1	10	0
	1	10	0
question tag – 59			
minimal response-63	1	10	0
taboo words – 106	1	10	0
politeness – 14	1	10	0
total	6		

Table 3. Female Chi-square table

	Observed N	Expected N	
hedges – 189	1	10	0
intensifier – 92	1	10	0
question tag – 55	1	10	0
minimal response121	1	10	0
taboo words-68	1	10	0

politeness – 48	1	10	0
total	6		

Table 4. Test statistics

	MALE	FEMALE
Chi Square	000	000
Df	5	5
Asymp. Sig	1.000	1.000

6 cells (100.05) have expected frequencies less than 5.

The minimum expected cell frequency is 1.0.

The Chi – square analysis reveals that men and women use these features differently as the 6 cells (100.05) have expected frequencies less than 5 while the minimum expected cell frequency is 1.0. This result shows that there is a significant difference in the usage of these variables by the male and female characters. In addition, the frequency count/percentage of our data confirms that females use hedges, minimal responses and polite words more than their male counterparts while males use question tags, intensifiers, and taboos more than females. Below are some samples illustrating the use of the forms by both male and female characters (M= male character/speech; F= female character/speech).

Extract from *Gbajue*

Bayo – M: *Oti wa lokan mi tipe* (I have had it in mind for a while).

Funke – F: *Mmm.*

Bayo – M: *Moro wipe tin base bayi, odara. Abibeeko?* (I think it is better for me to face it now, isn't it?).

Funke – F: *Well, t'o ba roo be* (Well, if you so think).

Bayo – M: *O mo pe, emi o fe si idi mi sita* (You know that I don't want my secret exposed).

Funke – F: *Mmm, oma dara gan! Well, se pe o le ronu bayi* (Mmm, So nice of you! Well, so could think now).

Ahmed wo'le (Ahmed enters)

Ahmed – M: *Ina nla, oye keemo...ninu amohunmaworan* (High energy...You probably know him...on air).

Bayo – M: *Mmm. Se National hero ni?* (Mmm, Is he a national hero?)

Toke – F: *Well,(rerin) iwo nko?* (Well (laugh)...what about you?).

Funke – F: *Uhhh...hu-hh*, can't stop laughing.

The above is a sample of conversations among four friends-two males and two females. From the ten turns, females use minimal responses (4) four times while men use it (1) once. Hedges were used by the female groups (3) thrice and (2) twice by the males while question tag is used (1) once by the male gender. Other features such as taboos, politeness were also identified in the passage. Tables 1a and 1b show the frequency and percentage of the occurrences of these linguistic variables in the data.

From our analysis of Yoruba discourse, men appear to use less of these features than women. Men also use taboo words and intensifiers more than women as a consequence of the value that has been placed on men in Yoruba culture. Even though taboo words are prohibited, that is, Yoruba culture does not approve the use of such words in the public by both genders, men often use them in both single and mixed gender settings. The analysis also reveals that women use hedges, polite words and minimal responses more than men as a result of the socio-cultural factors in the Yoruba setting. For instance, it is believed that a woman should be submissive and polite in all situations. There are acceptable rules for discourse especially when it involves mixed gender. In the movies, the women were at the receiving end as most of them had to wait for their men to finish talking before they could respond. These features, as used by women, indicate their submission and unassertiveness. The male characters in *Oga* (movie) employed a lot of taboo words associated with breast, sex organs and their prowess in bed, such as: *daluru* (women hunter), *oga* (deceiver), *ekun* (lion), *eru aya* (breast), *fisifun* (make love) unlike the females.

6.2. Research Question 2 – what are the functions of taboo words, politeness, intensifiers, minimal responses, tag questions and hedges in the movies?

From the data, we were able to identify the various functions of these variables as used by men and women in the movies. These are explicated as follows:

6.2.1. Hedges

After identifying all the lexical hedges in the data, we grouped them into five different categories for the analysis of the lexical hedges according to their functional similarity as proposed by Crompton (1997:282). This classification enables us to analyse the lexical hedges more effectively by comparing differences between males and females.

Personal evaluations. One of the functions of lexical hedges used in these movies is personal evaluation. Hedges such as: *morope*, *odabi eni wipe*, *simi*, etc. (I think; it seems to me; I guess; I suppose) and many more were used by both genders in our data. The use of hedges is related to a speaker's personal evaluation. It is precisely the element of personal evaluation that makes these expressions lexical hedges and renders the utterance they govern less threatening. The example below illustrates the difference:

F: *Morowipe, Tinuade korira ju elo* (I think Tinuade hates more than you).

M: *well, ma worry, mo mohun timase* (well, don't worry, I will see to it).

F: *sugbon, emi nro bakan pe kin bere funranlowo won.* (but I kind of think I should ask for help).

M: *min mo, odabi eni wipe oo ti sure* (I don't know...it seems you're not sure yet).

F: *ori, mo guess pe on ti mi ni* (you see, I guess you are joking).

Looking at the example above it is easy to see how removing the personal evaluation: *morowipe, moro bakan pe, odabi eniwipe* (I think, it seems) from the conversation would make it sound more direct and thus more threatening to the hearer. The fact that the whole utterance starts with the speaker marking the following speech as his or her personal evaluation of some sort is certainly important for softening his critical comment.

Expressions of approximation. Hedges were employed by both genders in the movies as approximate expressions, such as: *bakan, bee bee* (sort of; kind of; in a way; somewhat; somehow, etc). In the data, these expressions were regularly used to soften critical comments. It is clear that these words were not only used to make a specific semantic relationship fuzzier but also to make the relationship between the speaker and the content of his/her utterance fuzzier.

M: *Se kaku sope, Moji Ajasa n manage e beebie ni?* (Should we then conclude that Moji Ajasa is somehow reluctantly dating you?)

M: *Rara oo, emi gan ni mo n wo lona kan boya kin kuku koju si Asake nikan* (No, I am even the one considering whether I should stop double dating and focus on Asake alone).

F: *Helooo ni bi ooo, ahhh! Emi o ma risi bi ore e se n se bakan simi.* (Hello everyone. ahhh! I am not comfortable with the strange behaviour of your friend to me).

Expressions of limitation. Some lexical hedges were used in the movies to express a limitation of some sort. What this means, in practice, is that all the hedges in this category limit the scope of the utterance and thus soften the content of a critical comment. Examples: *di e* (a little/ little/ a bit), *di e loku* (just/ almost/ slightly). The function of these hedges is best illustrated with examples from the data:

M: *To me, oye ki Damola respect iyawo e die* (Damola ought to respect his wife a bit)

F: *Is quite unfortunate fun Adesewa tori mo warn ee daadaa.*

M: *Esa je kama gbadura fun won okere opo* (Well, let's just keep praying for them, whether little or much).

Expressions of hesitation. Some of the lexical hedges used by males and females in these movies explicitly mark hesitation. It is important to bear in mind that hesitation can be expressed in many ways, not just with single lexical hedges. Thus, certain hedges have a clear hesitant meaning, for instance, *boya* (perhaps; maybe; probably), to list some of the most common ones.

F: *Boya kin lo fejo damola sun ore e boya o ma yipada* (Maybe I should go and report Damola to his friend, perhaps he will change).

F: *Hhhmm, boya Lo gbijanju.* (Hhmmm, probably..... go and try your luck)

Expressions of insecurity/ uncertainty. Previous research by Coates (1988: 8) has shown that women use hedges to mitigate the force of what is being said. Men use them to reinforce what is being said as well. The use of *moro'pe* (I think, it seems) may signal that the person is unsure about what he/she is saying.

M: *Honey, igba wo lori Moji last* (Honey, when last did you see Moji).

F: *Emm, o da bi mpe mori ninu newspaper nigba pipe* (Emm, I think it is a long time I saw him, in the newspaper).

M: *Odun to k'oja abi igbawo* (Last year or when?) B'oya (May be)

F: *Mo n ro wipe odun to koja yini* (I think it was last year).

“F” is not very sure if she had seen “M” (meaning through his picture or interview) in the newspaper, and she shows this by using *I think* as an uncertainty marker. But *I think* does not always indicate insecurity; rather, it may be used when the speaker is trying to protect herself from possible indictment of falsehood, slander or generalisation. This seems to confirm previous research which shows that women use hedges in ways other than an indication of weakness.

6.2.2. Intensifiers and polite words

Generally, **intensifiers** are used by females and males in these movies while **polite words** are mainly used by females. Intensifiers are used more by males. In the movie *Ainidariji*, the way Adesewa's friends described her beauty when they wanted her to accompany them to the Club and how they complimented one another exemplify this.

F-Friends: *Woo, Adesewa, so mo pe hot cake ni e, irun ori e beautiful, shape wa lovely gan pelu beauty e. kodemawo je ki oruko e koro e now* (see, Adesewa, you know you are a hot cake, your hair is beautiful and your physique is lovely, allow your name to influence you now)(Her name, *Adesewa* literally means beauty queen).

F-Adesewa: *Please, mi o wa si school tori party, eyin naa dunju, edara pupo, so elo je gbogbo igbadun* (Please, I am not in school because of the party. You are all so sweet and beautiful! So, go and enjoy yourselves!)

All the women here used what is called empty adjectives and politeness markers to describe one another (Lakoff 1975). By their compliments, the conversation is facilitated. Also, in the movie *Oga* when Shina Ayo's mother came to talk with Yoyin's parents, both female speakers use polite words in their speech to each other.

Yoyin's mum: *E se gan ool! Eleyi tun daa gan* (Thank you a lot! This is very nice).

Shina ayo's mum: *Eleyi kere* (It was the least we could do).

Yoyin's mum: *Ile yin rewa o, lai ti wo ayika. Ike anabi niyi o* (Your house is really beautiful even though I haven't been in it. This is the Prophet's blessing)

Camille: *Looto, eje ka lo wo ayika* (Really, come on then let's move around).

From *Oleku*:

M-Ajani: *Asake rewa pupo ju* (Asake is so beautiful).

M-Ijaola: *oma n wumi ki omoge ri rumu rumu bayi* (I love to see a cute and chubby damsel).

This illustrates how female characters use polite words (or euphemisms) and intensifiers as devices to make sure they do not threaten their interlocutor's status, role or face, thereby keeping

good social relationships regardless of whether or not the relationship will continue in the future. The male characters in contrast use intensifiers to buttress and reinforce their points.

6.2.3. Minimal responses

In our data, minimal responses were produced by both genders in the course of the conversation; however, women used them more often than men. Examples are: *Yeah, mmm, uh huh, yes, yea* and *right* etc. especially when code mixing.

Bayo-M: *Oti wa lokan mi tipe* (I have thought about it for a while).

Funke-F: *Mmm.*

Bayo-M: *Moro wipe tin base bayi, odara. Abibeeko?* (I think it will be better to face it now, isn't it?).

Funke-F: *well, toba roobe* (well, if you think so)

Bayo-M: *omope, emi o fe si idi mi sita* (You know, I don't want my secret to be exposed).

Funke – F: *ermm, oma dara gan, well, sepole ronu bayi* (Mmm. So nice of you, well, so could think now)

Ahmed wole (Ahmed enters)

Ahmed – M: *Ina nla, oye keemo...ninu amohunmaworan* (High energy...You probably know him...on air).

Bayo-M: *Mmm. Se National hero ni?* (Mmm, is he a national hero?)

Toke – F: *well, (rerin) iwo nko?* (well (laugh)...aren't you?)

Funke-F: *Uhhh...hu-hh* (can't stop laughing.)

Minimal responses, as used in the movies, tend to support the speaker indicating that the interlocutor was listening to (attentive to) or in agreement with what was being said. When used, they never seem to interrupt the flow of the conversation. This feature (or technique) seems to corroborate Coates's finding that since minimal responses are well placed in the conversations, they do not cause any interruption (Coates 2004: 129). Several researchers have found that, in casual conversations, it is women who take on the role of facilitators (Holmes 2001; Tannen 1990). It has been demonstrated that men are less sensitive to the interactional process. From the excerpt above it is clear that both male and female make use of minimal responses to show the listener's active participation in the conversation. The interpretation is that Bayo goes against the norms of male speech strategies by being more supportive and less competitive in the discourse process. Hence, a minimal response is used here to show that the listener is actively involved in the conversation and supportive.

6.2.4. Question Tags

Tag questions are used by both male and female characters in the movies to perform the following functions:

- a) an invitation of others to participate in a conversation or take their own turn;
- b) a polite facilitation of an addressee's entrance into or turn in a conversation;
- c) a certainty of the acceptability of the subject-matter to the addressee;

- d) an expression of uncertainty, circumspection; thoughtfulness, carefulness;
 c) a reflection of concerns for the addressee's feelings or emotion.

These are found in the extract below:

Well, inu mi ndun bakan sa. I mean pe emi nikan lo rewa ju l'oju e laarin gbogbo wa. I guess am the best for him. abi? (Well, I am somehow happy. I mean that I am the most beautiful of all of us here to him! Isn't it?)
O ga o, o ma nya mi lenun bi awon obirin ti se ma nfe iru eniyan bayi. You know!
Abi kot'oro ni? (It is a surprise that ladies love men of that sort. Isn't it?)
Ah, eleyi te ngbon kiri tele bobo leyin. O kan ma loyin s'ere ni. Woo, you see! Abi beeko? (As you dote on the man, he may end not been serious about the affair as you are. Isn't it?)

These uses of question tags are almost completely different from their functions in English where they are simply used for negating simple positive statements or affirm negative ones. This difference can be attributed to different cultural norms/ways of talking or conversing in Yoruba and English. Thus different conversational strategies are evident markers of a different cultural milieu.

6.2.5. Taboo words

In our data, taboo words were used by both men and women but were mostly produced by men. According to Jay (1999:84), there are many reasons for people to use taboo words; people have a desire to express their feelings, relieve their negative stress and establish their identities and status through their speech. This may differ in expression and form from culture to culture. Our data reveal that taboo words were used for **humorous effect, catharsis, or showing of power**. In some scenes, humorous effects are reached by mentioning some words that the society perceives to be forbidden. For example, words and expressions related to sex, sexual organs and the sexual act. Words such as *ibalopo* (fuck), *idi* (ass), *Oko* (dick), *Omu* (boob) etc. were used in the movies. In *Ainidariji*, Damola and his friends used taboo words for this purpose. For example, Damola humorously expressed his affection toward a woman in the following excerpt:

Damola: *Oluwa o, ewo idi yi. Kinti e le ponla* (good Lord, look at that ass! I wish I could have a feel of it).

Friend: *eru nla, oki sibe, yepa!* (big ass, so loaded, wow!).

The second function here is catharsis. This happens when we are extremely angry and need to express our anger in violence, the uttering of these forbidden words may provide a relatively harmless verbal substitute for other dangerous acts. For instance, when Shina Ayo in *Oga* realised that his best man wanted to have sexual intercourse with his fiancée, he used a lot of taboo words to express his anger. Also, a lot of taboo words were used in *Oleku* and other movies, *such as: Daluru, Oga, Ibale, Oja, Ekun, Aja, Ojo Weliweli, Esin, Opeke, Beleja yan, Asewo, Fisifun, Dasibe, Tosibe.*

Taboo words are used to stress the masculinity of the speaker, especially in conflict. Breaking the rules has connotations of strength and freedom which men find desirable as previously noted

by Trudgill (2000:18). This was justified by Damola in *Ainidariji* when he resorted to taboo words in his conversations with his wife and friends to show that he was the head of his family.

A cultural factor may be responsible for why men tend to use more taboo words than women in the movies. In the traditional Yoruba culture, women tended to be restrained from using strong and violent expressions. In fact, they were often trained as housewives who must be submissive to their parents and husbands in words and acts. Thus housewives would address their husbands using appellatives and praise-names instead of their actual names. A Yoruba woman who failed to exhibit this characteristic (or virtue) was seen as lacking in home training. With the influence of western education, some of the values appear to have been eroded.

7. Conclusion

The basic linguistic variables were identified in the movies and categorized under six heading: hedges, intensifiers, minimal responses, question tag, taboo words and politeness. We counted the number of tokens of a particular linguistic form used by each gender and compared it to the others. We also made use of frequency counts, percentage, chi square analysis and charts. In the application of the X^2 distribution, we attempted to test if an observed series of values differs significantly from what was expected.

In this study, we were able to establish a correlation between the six linguistic variables and the concept of gender. These variables were studied, analyzed and represented qualitatively and quantitatively under the form of frequency count, percentage represented in tables, chi-square analysis and charts. We also used the discourse analytic technique of transcribing and analyzing texts and discourses to investigate interactional patterns of men and women in the media genre. We were able to highlight and explicate the functions of the linguistic features (conversational strategies) in the selected movies. The findings from our analysis clearly show that women make use of hedges, minimal responses and polite words more than men while men use taboo words and intensifiers more than women in Yoruba movies. It is important to note that the differences in the functions of these features, especially question tags and intensifiers, in English and Yoruba are rooted in cross-cultural differences.

This study raises a number of questions requiring further research. It would be interesting to see how taboo words are used in other languages, in other regions of the world, and whether there are equivalent euphemisms that can replace them in similar contexts. It seems important also to know whether or not, why and how males use taboo words more than females in other languages. Can answers be found in cultural differences, affinity or universal culture? Other features may also need further probing in order to arrive at an enriched understanding of gender differences globally.

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