



## **DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND GRICE'S COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLE IN IGBO PHONE-IN RADIO PROGRAMME**

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### **Abstract**

Discourse analysis is a sub-area of linguistics that focuses on knowledge about language beyond the word, clause, phrase and sentence that is needed for successful communication. In speech events (like phone-in radio programmes), some participants violate the cooperative principle thereby giving a minus to the communicative effect of their speech. This is what prompted the researchers to undertake a study on discourse and cooperative principle with Igbo radio phone-in programme as a case study. The study is a qualitative and descriptive research which anchors on the Grice's (1975) cooperative principle. The data for the analysis were from live radio phone-in programme from Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria, (FRCN) Enugu. It was discovered that some participants in the radio programme due to their personal aspiration violated the principle of quantity and that of manner. The paper then suggests that for better communicative effect, people should be mindful of the cooperative principle in the course of their discussion.

### **Introduction**

Discourse analysis is a broad term for methods that explore the structure and expression of language within its social and cultural context. It looks at the linguistic content and the language use in a given text to convey meaning in different social settings. Discourse analysis is the analysis of written, spoken, or sign language including any significant semiotic event. This study therefore, is poised to look at discourse in relation to cooperative principle of Grice (1975). The paper is categorised under: the concept of discourse, the cooperation in phone-programme and the violation of the principle, then the summary and conclusion.



## **The Concept of Discourse**

Discourse is a systematically organised set of statements which gives expression to the meanings and values of an institution. Beyond that, it defines, describes and delimits what is possible to say and what is not possible to say with respect to the area of concern of that institution, whether marginally or centrally, (Malmkjer 2002:115 in Obiora, 2010).

Paltridge (2006:1) says that Discourse Analysis is an approach to the analysis of language that looks at patterns of language across texts as well as the social and cultural contexts in which the texts occur. It focuses on knowledge about language beyond the word, clause, phrase and sentence that is needed for successful communication. It looks at patterns of language across texts and considers the relationship between language and the social and cultural contexts in which it is used.

Discourse analysis is a view of language in use. This involves how, through the use of language, people achieve certain communicative goals, perform certain communicative acts, participate in certain communicative events and present themselves to others. Discourse Analysis considers how people manage interactions with each other, how people communicate with particular groups and societies, as well as how they communicate with other groups, and with other cultures. It also focuses on how people do things beyond language. This includes the ideas and beliefs they communicate as they use language, (Paltridge 2006).

Quoting Tannen (1989), Johnstone, (2008:2), opines that Discourse Analysis is the study of language in the everyday sense in which most people use the term. Discourse analysis then, is interested in 'what happens when people draw on the knowledge they have about language to do things in the world. It is thus, the analysis of language in use.' (Johnstone, 2002:3).

McCarthy (1991:54) asserts that Discourse Analysis is connected with the study of the relationship between language and the contexts in which it is used. It grew out of work in different disciplines in the 1960's and early 1970's, including linguistics, semiotics, psychology, anthropology and sociology. Discourse Analysis is not entirely separate from the study of grammar and phonology. Discourse analysts are interested in a lot more than linguistic forms.

This shows that the context of the discussion is very important for effective understanding of utterances. From all indications, discourse is the study of language in use. It involves both linguistic and extra-linguistic factors that influence meaning. Obiora, (2010)

## **Differences between Discourse and Linguistics**

According to Udemmadu (2010), discourse is associated with linguistic features. The central interest of Discourse Analysis is what these meanings are, and how they are realized in language.

By the relationship between linguistic and non-linguistic behavior, Harris means how people know from whatever situation they are in, how to interpret what someone says. If for example, an air traffic controller says to a pilot,



‘The runway is full at the moment’

The most likely meaning is that it is not possible to land the plane at the moment. This may seem obvious to a native speaker of English but a non-native speaker pilot needs to understand the relationship between what is said and what is meant, in order to understand that they cannot land their plane at that time. Harris’s point is that the expression ‘the runway is full at the moment’ has a particular meaning in a given situation. If one says,

‘The runway is full at the moment’

to a friend who is waiting with him to pick up someone at the airport, this is now an explanation of why the plane is late in landing. This is a discourse notion, (Paltridge, 2006).

According to Johnstone (2008: 3-4), ‘discourse analysis’ rather than ‘language analysis’ underscores the fact that we are not centrally focussed on language as an abstract system. A set of generalisations, which can sometimes be stated as rules, about what words generally mean, about what goes where in a sentence, and so on. What distinguishes discourse analysis from other areas of study that bear on human language and communication lies not in the questions discourse analysts ask but in the ways they try to answer them: by analysing discourse, that is, by examining aspects of structure and function of language in use.

Sinclair and Coulthard (1975:23-24) claim that we need to distinguish discourse acts from grammatical structure. If discourse acts did turn out to be the arrangement of clauses in a consistence and hierarchical fashion, then they would replace (in speech) the confusing notions of ‘sentence’. And the higher ranks of what is now called ‘discourse’ would arrange themselves on topic.

Grammar is concerned with the ‘formal’ properties of an item, discourse with the ‘functional’ properties, with what the speaker is using the item for. In syntax, it is usually possible to find a crucial criterion, or a set of such based on diagnostic procedures of deletion, addition, permutation and commutation. In discourse the criteria are not so clear-cut, for example,

‘It’s nice and warm in here, if you’d like to come through’.

‘If’ in the subordinate clause, does not seem to indicate a condition in the main clause. The speaker is just making a request.

Discourse analysts study language on the notion of the sentence, typically studying longer passages of text, whereas grammarians traditionally do not work beyond the written sentence. In other words, discourse analysts work with ‘utterances’ (sequences of words written or spoken in specific contexts), whereas grammarians tend to work with ‘sentences’ (sequences of words conforming or not to the rules of grammar for the construction of phrases, clauses, etc.). Discourse analysts focus on the following questions when analysing texts: Who are the participants in the discourse, that is, the writer and reader(s), the speaker(s) and listener(s)? What is their relationship? Is it one between equals? Are there differences in power and knowledge between the participants? What are their goals?



More specifically, discourse analysts ask “what does this piece of language mean in this context? And what does the speaker/writer mean by this piece of language? What factors enable people to interpret the text? What does one need to know about the context? What clues are there in the surrounding text which will enable someone to understand the meaning?” In contrast, a formal grammarian can ask the question ‘what does this sentence mean?’ (McCarthy et al, 2002:55)

Stubbs (1981:108-109) states that a further obvious difference between discourse on the one hand and phonology and syntax on the other is that discourse structure is characteristically the joint product of two or more speakers. Bloor and Bloor (2007:2) conclude that linguists, in general, are concerned with the way in which language and discourse ‘work’ and their interest in language for its own sake.

### **Co-operative Principle**

Grice (1967; 1989) claims that people are disposed to presume, and that communicative behavior is guided by a set of principles and norms, which he calls the ‘co-operative principle’ and maxims of conversation. This means, make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged, (Grice, 1989:26). He further states that an interpretation that satisfies the co-operative principle is affected by four maxims which the communicator is presumed to abide by: Truthfulness (communicators should do their best to make contributions which are true). Informativeness (communicators should try as much as possible to be adequately informative). Relevance (communicators should endeavor to make contributions which are relevant). Style (communicators should be able to make contributions which are appropriately short and clearly expressed. Grice (1989) labels the maxims using terms which are perhaps, less intuitive: quality, quantity, relation and manner respectively.

Referring to Grice’s theory, Schmitt (2002) declares that Grice’s fundamental point was not that people always observe these maxims, but rather that they are unstated assumptions that underlie communication. So, if a speaker clearly flouts one or more of the maxims, (for example, by giving a very brief answer when a more informative one is expected), the speaker may be prompting the listener to look for a meaning that is different from (or additional to) the meaning that is expressed verbally. In affirmation of this, Paltridge (2006:62), quoting Grice (1975), states that when someone is speaking the understanding is based on what is being said on the assumption that what needs to be said is said, rather than more than needs to be said.

Grice based his co-operative principle on four sub-principles, or ‘maxims’. These are the maxims of quality, quantity, relation and manner. The maxim of quality says that people should only say what they believe to be true and what they have evidence for. Grice’s maxim of quantity states that people should make their contributions as informative as is required for the particular purpose and not make it more informative than is required. The maxim of relation maintains that one should make his contribution relevant to the interaction, or should indicate in what way it is not. His maxim of manner is that speakers should be clear in what they say. They should avoid ambiguity or obscurity and should be brief and orderly in their contribution to the interaction.



A person may, for example, say,

‘I may be mistaken, but---’ or end a sentence with

‘may be ---’ to show he is aware of and is following the maxim of quality. Equally, a speaker may say,

‘I won’t bore you with all the details’ to show he is aware of the maxim of quantity.

Equally too, one may indicate a change of topic using a device such as,

‘by the way’, or use a marker such as

‘anyway’ to show he is aware of the maxim of relation. He may for instance say,

‘this may be a bit confused, but ---’ to show he is aware of the maxim of manner.

A person’s contribution to an interaction is expected to be genuine, neither more nor less than is required, as well as clear and appropriate to the interaction. Grice argues that people assume a speaker is following these maxims and combine this with their knowledge of the world to work out what they mean by what they say.

A speaker is flouting a maxim if he does not observe a maxim but has no intention of deceiving or misleading the other person. One is ‘violating’ a maxim if there is a likelihood that he is liable to mislead the other person. For example,

‘Mummy’s gone on a little holiday because she needs a rest’ meaning ‘Mummy’s gone away to decide if she wants a divorce or not’ violates, rather than flouts the maxim of manner, (Cutting, 2002:40). Here the speaker intends the hearer to understand something other than the truth, on purpose.

A speaker may also ‘infringe’ a maxim when he fails to observe a maxim with no intention to deceive. An example is where a speaker does not have the linguistic capacity to answer a question. A speaker may also decide to ‘opt out’ of a maxim such as where he may, for ethical or legal reasons, refuse to say something that breaches a confidentiality agreement he has with someone, or is likely to incriminate him in some way, (Thomas, 1995; Cutting, 2002).

A maxim may also be flouted because of a clash with another maxim as in: (74) A: ‘What time did you come back from the village?’

B: ‘Seven’ when the person actually arrived at 7.04am.

Here, B flouts the maxim of quality (the truth) in order to obey the maxim of quantity (be brief), (Paltridge, 2006).

quality- tell the truth

quantity- say as much as is needed

Relation – be relevant



Manner – be clear (Grice's maxim simplified)

People do not actually always observe these guidelines in practice; people lie, waffle, digress and so on. This is true, but Grice's point is that these are not really instructions but they tell people what they normally do instinctively unless we are deliberately trying to mislead. It is true that they are not always strictly adhered to, but even when they are not, the cooperative principle may still be operating because the listener may assume that the speaker is following them. Irony or sarcasm, where people say the opposite of what they believe to be true, is one common instance that flouts the maxim of quality. Obiora (2010).

### **Co-operation in Phone-in Programme**

Before any media phone-in programme takes place, certain groundwork arrangements must have been completed. This is even more serious if the programme would attract resource persons. The presenter as the host arranges for resource people. He carefully selects his guests. The guests must be knowledgeable people who have something useful to offer to the listening community. The presenter does this in order to attract more audience (or listeners) to the programme and the station he is representing. This might be why he always identifies the programme and the station to remind the listener of the station. For instance-

Presenter- ọ dị mma daalụ. Ndị na-ege ntị cheta na ọ bụ 'Ka ọha Malụ' ka ị na-ege ntị na Redio Naijiria, Enugwu.

The resource people are respectable people, in most cases they are public office holders. Some are politicians and stakeholders in the Nigeria polity. For this reason the guest has to be a knowledgeable person especially as it pertains to his public responsibility. They are personally interested in the media programmes (especially phone-in programmes). This enables them to project themselves, their aspirations and achievements to the members of the public. With this they gain popularity.

The listener represents the members of the public who listen to the programmes for entertainment, educative and informative purposes. They call to the programmes for clarifications, comments and contributions when conversant with the issue at hand.

So, in an interactive media programme like the phone-in programme, a supposed mutual co-operation is supposed to exist between the parties so that their individual aspirations would be achieved at the end of the programme.

In the light of the above, the co-operative principle and its maxims as proposed by Grice (1975) should be adhered to. The principles of quality, quantity, relation and manner must be applied.

From the data collected, it is observed that some participants violate some of the principles. The principles which are commonly violated are the principle of quantity (which is 'say as much as is needed') and principle of manner (which is 'to be clear not vague'). Instances below justify the observation.





## The Violation of the Principle of quantity

Presenter- Eem, akwukwọ nsọ sị na ngozi na-adiri onye nuru na nti kwere karịa oge o huru n'anya. o buru na i soro m gaa na baibulu guo akwukwọ nsọ na Jenesi isi iri anọ na otu amaokwu nke mbu (Gen.41 v 1) ihe i ga-aguta bu maka etu Fero na-achi Ijiput n'oge ahụ sirị wee rọọ nrọ. Nrọ o roro wee buru etu efi asaa tara ahụ kposia ebe niine nkụ sirị wee si na mmiri Riva Nii puta wee loo ehi asaa mara abuba. Nke a bu ofu nrọ. o rokwara ozọ ebe oka nwere eze agadi nwaanyi putara kposia nkụ. Ha di asaa n'onuogu wee lokwaa oka mara abuba ha di asaa. Nrọ a wee gbaa ya ghari. E wee zekete nrọ zekete nrọ wee kpoo Joseef nọ n'ulo mkporo buonye oka nrọ ka o kowaa nrọ ahụ. O wee gwa ya na afọ asaa ka ehi mara abuba, na nri ga-adọ. Obodo di icheiche abia na-egoro nri udi a na-asị ka a ga gote 'export' maobu ihe ndi ozọ. Na afọ asaa nke ozọ ga-abu ugani, agu, udi agu ga-abu i gaa be ndi ogaranya ha si "ka m mee ka i mere" makana o nweghi onye ga-asị gi "bia rie nri". Nke a wee buru ihe anyi ga-eleba anya n'ime ya taa. Makana akwukwọ nsọ a kwukwara wee si na obodo obuna n'enweghi ndi amuma furu efu. Eem otu onye wee na-ekwu okwu buo amuma di egwu mgbe gara aga. O buru na i guru akwukwọ kpoo nkụ a na-akpo Nostradamus i ga-ahụ ebe e dere dekpochaaa ife ga-eme otutu afọ di icheiche n'ihu, ha niine wee mezue. N'elu uwa a anyi nọ ugbua a na-ebu amuma, a na-agba afa na-agba ama, eem na agu chi utari muo wee kwuru n'ebe obuna na mba uwa di icheiche taa....(continues)

In the example above, the presenter when signing-on the programme violated the principle of quantity in his introductory speech. Although he obeyed the other principles; of quality, relation and manner but that of 'quantity' was flouted because he spoke at length, more than required. This reoccurred over and over in his speeches. It is true that he is the pilot of the programme, but the principles are supposed to be obeyed.

Other participants also violate this principle as in-

Presenter- O nwere ka a ga-esi wee chekwaa nri a n'udi o ga-abu na mgbe obuna e ji kpaa aka nri erimeri adi?

Hon. Daniel- Ndi na-ege nti ekelekwa m unu ozọ. i ma ihe merenu bu oru ugbo a i furu a na-ekwu okwu ya, ofu ihe kwesiri inyere ndi oru ugbo aka bu ife a anyi nahu ekwu kita. A koputasia ihe n'afọ a oge anaghiakezi ya ka e nwee ya na-eri ya. 'So', o bu ebe a ka goomentị na-abata inyere ndi oru ugbo aka makana goomentị n'onwe ha ga-edebe onodu ga-ahụ ka ndi ahụ niine na-aga ofuma. Goomentị n'onwe ha nwere ike iru 'warehouses' ebe a na-edebe erimeri ebe a ga-ehekwa ya. Ha ejiri aka ha enweri ike goomentị egokoo ihe n'aka ndi oru ugbo oge ahụ o di onu ani, oge o nwere ike ifia ha ahụ irepu. E goo ya etu ahụ dọba ya chekwaa ya ofuma were ife e ji ehekwa ihe na-eme ka ihe ghara imebi wee chekwaa ya. Ebe ahụ ka goomentị nwere ike isi bata nyere ndi be anyi aka. oo ya bu ife anyi bu goomentị na-akwado ime ebe o bu na a fugo na nsogbu adibago n'ife oriri. Anyi nwee ebe a ga na-edebe ihe ahụ, e dobie ya o buruzie na e rue oge ife kbara ukọ ndi oru ugbo enweghizi ike inwete ihe n'ubi ha, ha abiazie na-egoro ya n'aka ndi 'co-operative society'. Ya ka e ji ekwu okwu 'co-operative society' makana goomentị n'onwe ha ama 'a run business' ka ndi ndi mmadu jikoro onu ga-esi wee 'run' ya. 'So', na o bu ndi 'co-operative society' ka a na-akpokuzi si ha ha jide onwe ha, ha jikorita onwe ha onu. 'Bank' nọ inye ego, goomentị nokwu inye ha nkwado. 'Then', ndi i mago na uwa a i furu dika a ja asi ya bu 'farming' a i furu bu



onye gbata ya rie. Ndị ọfụu kịta, yaa ndị ụmụ ikorobia na-eto eto fa etinyebeziesi uchu n'ihe gbasara 'agriculture', n'ihe gbasara ikọ ugbo, ha na-etinyezi uchu ebe ahụ, ha nwa n'onwe ha a na-ewebatazi ife ọfụu ụzọ ọfụu e si aruzi ọrụ ugbo na ka e si echekwazi ihe a kọtara n'ugbo. ụmụ okorobia be anyị .... (continues).

The guest made a lengthy contribution. He was repeating his points more often than not, thereby violating the principle of quantity.

### **The Violation of the Principle of Manner**

This principle in some cases is violated by some participants especially the callers. They do this by using obscure, vague and ambiguous expressions. For instance-

a) Caller 10- Mkpumkpụ m na-ekwu bu na biko achoro m iju 'Honorable' nke 'House' ihe na-eme. Ihe a na-eme anyi n'Uzouwanị na o kariziri akari. Gini ka a ga-eme ya?

Presenter- Ihe ndi gini?

b) Caller 1- Ife unu na-ekwu di mma. Mana ana m asi na goomentị ga-enyere ndi ọrụ ugbo aka, makana o nwere onye ọrụ ugbo na-arụ one, two, three. Maka o nwere onye i ga-asi ya ruba ọrụ ugbo o ma na o gaghi aruta one, two, three o yere Presenter- Daalu so. Eeem, o na-ekwu o buru na e wele ego wee kwado ndi ọrụ ugbo ha enwee ike ruo one, two, three. Eeem onye aghotaro ya, i ma na asusu a o suru dika nke ndi mmm ndi mgbago mgbago. A si gi na o ruru one, two, three ama m noo unoeni ka a na-ekwu maka ya. A nara achọ uru achọ. Ndeewo.

c) Caller 13- Eehee. E nwee esemookwu na 'marriage' onye o 'feel o too big' isi nwanne ya 'sorry'. 'Like myself now' m nwee nsogbu 'with my wife', o buru na m si ya na m di 'sorry', mmadu agara anu ya.

Presenter- 'Okay' mmadu agara anu mgbe i gwaru ya.

Caller 13- Na mmadu agara anu na anyi sere okwu.

In the example (a) the caller assumed that everybody understood what was happening in uzouwanị. But that is not so. That was why the presenter asked the question 'ihe ndi gini?', 'which people were disturbing them? Because, maybe he did not know or that he wanted to carry other listener along. So, that caller flouted the principle of manner because he was so vague. The same principle was violated by the caller in example (b), who assumed that everyone knew what 'one, two, three' stands for. For the sake of clarity the presenter helped. These instances indicate the application of implicature. Implicature refers to the inference a hearer makes about a speaker's intended meaning that arises from their use of the literal meaning of what the speaker says; the conversational principle and its maxims.

Implicature manifested in the above extractions because the callers assumed that the hearers, including members of the public, understood the slogan 'one, two, three'. But he lost sight of the wider audience made up of different people from different backgrounds. This is why he violated the principle of manner.





The caller in the example (c, line 3) above sounded very ambiguous in his speech. He used the ‘anaphor’ ‘ya’ in ‘*o buru na m si ya na m di* ‘sorry’ *mmadu agara anu ya*’.

The second ‘ya’ in the expression (in the example c line 3) above is very ambiguous because one does not know exactly what that ‘ya’ is referring to. Is the ‘ya’ referring to ‘when he said sorry to his wife?’ Or is it referring to ‘that he quarreled with his wife?’ The presenter asked whether it was that nobody will hear ‘when he said sorry to his wife’. But he failed it because the caller later made it clear that he was referring to ‘that nobody will hear that he quarreled with his wife’ when he said, ‘*Na mmadu agara anu na anyi sere okwu?*’, Not that ‘*Mmadu agara anu mgbe m gwara ya* ‘sorry’.

### Summary and conclusion

The study was able to highlight what discourse analysis is all about and how the analysis can be applied to Igbo phone-in radio programmes. It was discovered that the participants in the radio programmes, in their attempts to achieve their personal aspirations violated some of the co-operative principles or maxims, like the principle of quantity and the principle of manner. The paper therefore suggests that more researches should be done on the related topic so that the readers would get more insight on the importance of adhering to the co-operative principles in the course of their speech events.

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