

A SOCIOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF GENDERED DISCOURSE IN FEMI ODUGBEMI'S NIGERIAN TELEVISION SERIES *BATTLEGROUND*

Hauwa Mohammed Sani

Department of English and Literary Studies. Ahmadu Bello
University Zaria. Kaduna, Nigeria.

Abstract

*The interface between language and gender has for some time been a focal point of enquiry in sociolinguistics and pragmatics. While studies abound in the pure linguistic levels such as phonology, grammar, syntax and semantics, interest in gender discourse due to the development in and dynamics of human society has just started to grow with implications for sociolinguistic scholarship. This study examines contexts and the extents and constraints that gender exerts on language use in *Battleground*, a Nigerian television series on (NTA, DSTV, etc.) The series mainly focuses on the rich and their shenanigans in the context of modern Nigeria. Using conversational analysis as its theoretical framework, the study randomly selects eight episodes from the 2017/2018/2019 seasons as its data while adopting quantitative and qualitative mixed approach. Through a systematic analysis of the differences in the amount of talk, the amount of turns and distribution of such variable between male and female interactants in the series, the study establishes that Nigerian users of English are sexist and the society is still patriarchal, despite the gains made in recent times because of education and westernisation. The study concludes that language users should guard against sexism while gender discourse should be aimed at promoting gender equity, even if gender equality is utopian as the two sexes are practically not the same.*

keywords: sociolinguistics, gendered discourse, conversation analyses, turn-taking.

Introduction

Sociolinguistics tries to establish the relationship between language use and social organization. Milroy and Milroy (1990:269) posit that “sociolinguistics is the study of language as it is used by the real speakers in social and situational contexts of use. It has been established that our speech has been conditioned by some sociolinguistic variables which affects our use of language. These variables include social context, age, gender, social status etc. Language and gender remain a significant research topic in sociolinguistics. As Wardhaugh (2001:309) states, “A major topic in sociolinguistics is the connection, if any, between the structures, vocabularies, and ways of using particular languages and the social roles of the men and women who speak these languages”. The topic has evoked serious discussion. And a large amount of scholars at home and abroad have contributed a lot to its study, such researches in this area include: Kramer(1974),Spender (1980), Maltz and Borker (1982),Holmes (1992),Tannen (1990; ed. 1993), Wodak (1993),Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003), Lakoff (2004) Woofit (2005), Adejoke (2010), Sani (2016) etc. These are some of the gender- based researches in the field of language and linguistics. The major and common finding of these researches is that men and women behave differently when they communicate (many texts provide detailed list of such differences). For example, Eckert and McConnelGinet(2003), Lakoff (2004) and Tannen (1990) posit that comparing men and women, there are differences in phonology, grammar and vocabulary and in the body stances and movements that accompany speech.

As a social variable, gender is based on the biological sex of the speakers. As such, gender is a relatively straightforward category in the sense that it is unproblematic to define, readily observable, and there is no doubt as to how the speakers should be categorized (in contrast to for example social class, which is notoriously difficult to

define). And there are only two gender categories: male and female. As a factor in sociolinguistic analysis however, gender is conceived as a social construction of sex (Eckert 1997, Cheshire 2002). Biological sex is the underlying basis for the differentiation of roles, norms and expectations that apply to men and women and it is these social and cultural factors that constitute gender. The differences in patterns of linguistic variation between men and women are then a function of gender and only indirectly a function of sex: speakers are typically classified in terms of their biological sex, but the findings are interpreted in terms of the social roles and self-image of men and women.

Gender is understood to be a social concept through which society defines masculinity or femininity, a series of characteristics and behaviour through which its members are socialized from infancy; thus, the values associated with femininity do not correspond to any (anatomical or hormonal) essence. They are constitutions with cultural and social basis which change overtime and are concerned in a variety of ways outside the western views of the cosmos.

Generally speaking, most of the studies on language and gender focus on the following three aspects: gender differences in language; sexism in language; causes for gender differences and sexism in language. Few of them are conducted in specific contexts like the Nigerian TV series *Battleground* a television series NTA, DSTV, etc.) which contains a large number of authentic and daily conversations between males and females, which can serve as a typical and representative data source of language and gender study. Besides, previous studies are carried out from the perspective of pragmatics and stylistics, but few from the perspective of sociolinguistics. The proposed research therefore will compensate for such insufficiency in the hope of obtaining some useful insights into and adding fresh ideas on language and gender study.

In this study, Conversational Analysis (CA) functions as the theoretical framework for it is quite suitable for the study of conversation and gender. Based on the previous studies on language and gender and CA, the researcher originally divides this analysis into two main parts: the analysis of the amount of talk and the analysis of turn-taking. The research answers these two questions; what are the differences between men and women in the amount of talk? : Are there differences in the amount of turns and their distribution of them?

Empirical Studies in Language and Gender

The earliest research about language and gender can be traced back to as early as ancient Greek. At that time, many dramas witnessed gender differences in language. However, it was not until the early 20th century that language and gender attracted anthropologists' and linguists' attention. Though there is a trend to study language and gender, it has not become an independent linguistic topic until the 1960s, when feminist movement appeared and sociolinguistics advanced. In the 1770s, such well-known linguists as Lakoff, Trudgill, Zimmerman, West, Thorne and Henley made a great contribution to the study by exploring the social roots of gender differences in language. Gradually, researches and studies began to flourish. In the early 1980s, Bolinger and other linguists thought of gender differences in language as a kind of sexism.

One relevant research on language and gender which was conducted within the context of television is that of Sani(2016). The study through the analysis of the thematic structure in the linguistic Stylistic of male and female in news reporting established the existence of systematic linguistic stylistic gender variations in the news reportage of the correspondents of BBC, NTA and Channels TV; in terms of themes selections, sentence patterns, vocabulary expressions and the subject matter covered by male and female reporters. These systematic differences have considerable implications

on the target audience as established in the research and the choices made to assign the role of Theme and Rhemes to a sentence element, unravel different trends on news reportage of male and female reporters. Based on the recurrent preferences in the thematic structures of the selected dyad's corpus, the study concludes that these distinctions typify the male and female reportage in the three television stations of BBC, NTA and Channels TV. On the implication of such variations, the research found out that Female reportage is more fragile, tender, simple, more detailed, more comprehensive and non-confrontational even in the worst of situation and quite accommodating to viewers with more emotional out fore in whatever they are reporting. Conversely male are more direct, realistic, persuasive, idealistic and pre-emptive in their mode of reporting.

In spite of the above- mentioned achievements, there are also limitations. Most of the studies focus on linguistic levels. As a result, discussions on conversational levels are insufficient. Furthermore, a large number of studies are decontextualized. Therefore, the present research intends to deeply analyze language and gender in an actual context, especially the conversational structures in *Battleground*. Also most of the previous studies on language and gender emphasize on three aspects: gender differences in language; sexism in language; causes for gender differences and sexism in language. Based on this the proposed research adopts the conversational approach and tries to make a deep analysis of language and gender in *Battleground*, in the hope of contributing to the existing knowledge in the relevant studies.

Theoretical Framework

Conversation analysis (CA) is an approach to the study of social interaction, embracing both verbal and non-verbal conduct, in situations of everyday life. CA began with a focus on casual conversation, according to Harold (1967) its methods were subsequently adapted to embrace more task- and institution-centered

interactions, such as those occurring in doctors' offices, courts, law enforcement, helplines, educational settings, and the mass media. As a consequence, the term 'conversation analysis' has become something of a misnomer, but it has continued as a term for a distinctive and successful approach to the analysis of sociolinguistic interaction

Inspired by Harold Garfinkel's methodology Erving Goffman's conception of the interaction order, CA was developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s principally by the sociologist Harvey Sacks and his close associates Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson. Goffman (1983). It is distinctive in that its primary focus is on the production of social actions in the context of sequences of actions, rather than messages or propositions. Today CA is an established method used in sociology, anthropology, linguistics, speech-communication and psychology. It is particularly influential in interactional sociolinguistics, discourse analysis and discursive psychology.

Turn-Taking

The actions that make up conversations are implemented through turns at talk, and turn-taking is therefore a fundamental feature of conversational organization. The analysis of how turn-taking works focuses on two major issues: i) what are the primary units of turns? and ii) how are these units allocated between speakers.? The fundamental analysis of turn-taking was described in a paper widely known as the *Simplest Systematics* (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974).

1) Sacks et al. identify turn constructional units (TCUs) as the fundamental building blocks of turns. TCUs can be sentences, clauses, phrases or single words that can be recognized as units in their own right depending on context. A crucial feature of TCUs is that they are projectable: that is, a hearer can recognize what it will take for a unit to be complete. It is this projectability that enables the split-second

timing that is characteristic of ordinary human turn-taking. The completion point of a current TCU is a turn-transition place (or TRP).

2) In the Sacks et al model, the allocation of units between speakers is implemented through a hierarchically organized set of rules. At any given TRP:

i) If the current speaker selects a next one to speak at the end of current TCU (by name, gaze or contextual aspects of what is said), the selected speaker has the right and obligation to speak next.

ii) If the current speaker does not select a next speaker, other potential speakers have the right to self-select (the first starter gets the turn), and

iii) if options (i) and (ii) have not been implemented, current speaker may continue with another TCU. At the end of that TCU, the option system applies again.

The turn-taking model sketched here is designed to accommodate a wide range of turn-taking possibilities, varying numbers of conversational participants, and circumstances in which the length of turns, and of conversations, and of their topics is not in any way pre-specified in advance. The system is implemented by the parties to the conversation without external regulation (party administered), and on a local unit-by-unit basis. Designed to account for the fact that much conversation takes place without much silence or 'dead time' but also without significant amounts of overlapping talk, the described system has multiple consequences.

In recent years, conversational analysis serves as a new and important approach in the study of language and gender. It is regarded as an influential branch in the modern gender language field for it has broadened its scope into a variety of formal and informal settings, and connected gender with conversational features, such as the amount of talk and turns.

Methodology

The data employ in this research is exclusively from the well-known TV, Nigerian series *Battleground*. The researcher randomly chooses eight episodes as the subject of study not only because it is popular with viewers, but also because it contains many daily conversations among men and women and for the sake of scientific and objective purposes. This makes it suitable for the study of language and gender.

In order to gain the exact and proper data, the researcher first downloads the 8 episodes of the series from the internet. Then they are played repeatedly via the media player. Meanwhile, relevant speeches and conversations between men and women are written down on paper for later observation and analysis. After all these, the data on language and gender in this series goes through the analysis procedures for a scientific and systematic study.

The methods used in the research can be classified as case study with the combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis. The quantitative approach uses tables and statistical figures to show the differences in the amount of talk and turns. The qualitative approach gives a systematic and content analysis of the data. The exact analysis procedure proceeds in the following way. Since the conversational analysis serves as the theoretical framework, a thorough analysis of language and gender in *Battleground* was conducted from two main aspects: the analysis of the amount of talk and the analysis of turn-taking. To be specific, the analysis of the amount of talk concentrates on the amount of words and sentences; the analysis of turn-taking focuses on the amount of turns and their distribution of them. In the process of analysis, statistic exploration was demonstrated in tables. Followed by qualitative analysis which was made to fully study gender differences in these two aspects in the

series. After the detailed analysis, the researcher arrives at a conclusion of the research by clarifying major findings.

The Battleground

Battleground is produced by Femi Odugbemi. It is a Nigerian TV series which was first released on the first of May 2017. It is a Telenovela series which focuses on the rich and their shenanigans. The series which seems to have a cult following revolves around the controversial and extremely wealthy patriarch of the Bhadmus family. It tells the story of love, power and deceit as it takes viewers through this family's love for one another, which is put to test when an unfortunate series of events lead to greed and power struggles within their ranks. It is a family drama that traffics in relationships, betrayals, infidelity, politics and romance, despite its popularity no study has been carried out on Battleground to the best of the researcher's knowledge. Since language in such TV series is used as a tool of communication it is inevitably featured by gender. Additionally, the show contains many daily conversations among women and men. Thus, it is quite suitable for the study of language and gender.

The following is a thorough and detailed analysis of language and gender in the 8 selected episodes of *Battleground* which mainly focus on the amount of talk and turns, and their distribution of them.

Analysis of the Amount of Talk in the Battleground

In general, amount of talk means how much a speaker speaks in a conversation. Its study concerning gender is to study which gender is more talkative. As it is widely acknowledged, women are more talkative. A large amount of previous studies has proven this belief. However, recent studies challenge it. Talbot (1998), in her book, *Language and Gender: An Introduction*, made the conclusion that men are more talkative under some occasions. Many other scholars further deepened the study and arrived at the same conclusion.

Then, how about the result in Battleground? Can the results of previous studies apply to this TV series? The researcher investigates this in the following paragraphs. She employs the common method which compares the total amount of words and sentences, and the average amount of them in both genders.

The table presents the findings of the amount of words and sentences in the eight episodes extracted from the Nigerian TV series *Battleground*.

Table 2

Table of Amount of Talk

TABLE OF AMOUNT OF TALK Items Gender	Word amount	Sentence amount	Average sentence length	Word ratio	Sentence ratio
Males	938	174	5.59	30.08%	58.8%
Females	2107	274	7.69	69.2%	61.2%
Total	3045	448	13.08	100%	100%

From the table above, it can be seen that among the 3045 words, there are 938 used by males, accounting for 30.8%, while 2107 were used by females, accounting for 69.2%. In terms of the number of sentences, females used the 2107 words to compose 274 sentences, taking up 61.2% of the total number. However, males only composed 174 sentences, taking up 38.8% of the total number. This clearly manifests that women speak far more than men in conversations. These findings contradict that of Mary M. Talbot (1998) that men, in a conversation between both genders, are relatively more talkative.

The conversation below is extracted from one the episode entitled: *Hadiza goes after her husband*. It happens between Chief Bhadmus and Hadiza.. The analysis can help us fully understand the conclusion above.

Example one:

Bhadmus: Hadiza I'm fed up with this trash I'll leave you.

Hadiza: I don't think that is a wise thing for you to do, where are you going to go? To stay in a hotel? If you live who will clear your name when MLA accuses you of embezzlement? Imagine the humiliation where will you start from at this old age? Your family will be embarrassed and they will call you an impotent failure. But if you stay, I will do all I can to clear your name and save your reputation. But I cannot choose for you until you make a choice, I'm the one who's leaving this house and I'll go and stay in the same hotel you stayed.

In this short conversation between Chief Bhadmus and Hadiza Bako, there are 119 words altogether, composing 8 sentences. Among the 119 words, the woman used 110, whose word ratio reaches as highly as 92.4%, far more than that of the man, only 7.6%. In terms of the sentence number, there are 7 composed by the woman, occupying 87.5% of the total number, while there is only 1 made by the man, occupying 12.5%. It is clearly shown that Hadiza spoke far more than Bhadmus. She appeared to be much more talkative in their short conversation.

Example two:

Chief: It must annoy you no end knowing that you can't get to me

Madam Commissioner: Who said I can't get to you? (laughter) one down, one more to go, you must be aware of Kola Bhadmus sister hmm? (Laughter) and you are our next.

Chief: Can that be a threat madam commissioner?

Madam Commissioner: Your days are numbered. I'll get to you if it is the last thing I do.

Chief: I love your commission. It seems you have not gotten round to the fact that I operate at a much higher level than you do.

Madam Commissioner: You can say whatever you want but this is not over.

In this short conversation, there are 10 sentences made up of 110 words. In these sentences, the woman takes up 6 and the man uses 4. However, the woman used 65 words, whose word ratio reaches 60%, far more than that of the man, which is only 40%. Obviously, the woman spoke more than the man.

Such examples which abound in *Battleground* can be easily found. They all show the differences in the amount of talk in conversations between males and females.

Analysis of Turn-taking

Turn-taking is the fundamental rule to guarantee the smooth transition of a conversation. According to Levinson (2001), it means one participant A to another participant B; another participant B begins to talk and then stops. Its study concerning gender is to study which gender initiates or offers the turn, and which gender takes the turn floor for a longer time. In the proposed research, we focus on the latter.

It is agreed that men are inclined to take the turn for a longer time in a conversation between males and females. Is this true in *Battleground*? In the following section we will examine it. In *Battleground*, we see differences in the time of both genders taking the turn floor. The following table shows the amount and distribution of turns in conversations between males and females.

Table 2: Table of Turns

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TABLE TURNS Iter Gender	Turn number	Word number	Average length	Ratio
Males	126	938	16.72	52.3%
Females	115	2107	8.16	47.7%
Total	241	3045	12.63	100%

From the table, we can clearly see that men's turns reach as high as 126 in all the eight episodes, which take up 52.3% of all the turns. Compared with men's turns, women's turns occupy 47.7% of all the turns. In terms of average turn length, there is an obvious difference that a gap of 8.56 words between male talks and female talks. Thus, females speak far more than males in a turn even when they occupy limited turns. This finding justifies the earlier view of some scholars that men, in a conversation between both genders, occupy more turns floor.

The following is an example of conversation between two genders in Battleground. The analysis will enable us to have a better understanding of the amount of their turns distribution. It is extracted from an episode of the first season. The conversation happens between two women Hadiza and Jacinta and two men. In an episode entitled: *The prime enemy* where Hadiza (MrsBako) declares herself the new prime.

Hadiza: Hopiness has been blessed with new leadership it is a new day a new time a different era.

Male Speaker1: What is the meaning of this?

Male Speaker2: Speak respectfully you are now addressing the prime, Hopiness

Jacinta: Are you joking how? What happened? Was there an election?

Male Speaker1: Now listen carefully and at what you revealed, we should all stand out and give our respects ...

Male Speaker2: Stand for what? This thing you are pulling Mrs. Bako I want to know what it is and where you are going.

Male Speaker1: Have some respect! You are speaking to the prime

Jacinta: And the only prime I know is not Hadiza Bako.

Male Speaker2: now...

Hadiza: There was a time not too long ago when you should have been punished for your insolence Jacinta but I will let it lie today and give you time to adjust.

In these short conversations, there are altogether 10 turns, female gender occupying four each of them 2 turns respectively while the two males occupy 6 turns each occupying 3 respectively. This is also true in the above two examples that men, in a conversation between both genders, occupy more turns floor. A variety of examples of differences in the amount of turns and their distribution can be found in this TV series. Turns in conversation are basic units and they are worthy of being studied in a specific context.

To sum up, there are differences in the amount of talk and turns, and their distribution. It is safe to say that in some occasions women are more talkative even when in some occasions men hold more turn floors than women.

Conclusion

This research studies language and gender in the Nigerian TV series *Battleground*. Eight randomly chosen episodes constitute the data for analysis. This paper is conducted leaning on the theoretical framework of conversational analysis. Precisely, the analysis of language and gender in this paper involves two main parts: the

analysis of the amount of talk and the analysis of turn-taking. It has made a thorough analysis of these two aspects in the specific context. Quantitative and qualitative examination, together with comparison and contrast method shows the differences in the amount of talk, turns and their distribution. The findings of this paper add to the budding of scholarship in language and gender study.

In terms of the amount of talk, the present research finds that women occupy a higher rate. Their words and sentences constituted up to 69.2% and 61.2% of the total in all eight episodes respectively, while men's only 30.8% and 38.8% respectively. The statistics show the fact that women are more talkative than men on some occasions even though they were accorded limited turns. Analysis of turn-taking concerning gender in the *Battleground* mainly centres on the amount of turns and their distribution. Among all the turns in the eight episodes, males occupy 52.3% while females 47.7%. Though the gap is small, it also demonstrates that men are inclined to take more turn when they engage in a conversation with women. The study establishes that Nigerian users of English are sexist and the society is still patriarchal when it comes to the distributions of turns in conversations in the *Battleground*, despite the gains made in recent times because of education and westernisation. The study concludes that language users should guard against sexism while gender discourse should aim at promoting gender equity, even if gender equality is utopian as the two sexes are practically not the same.

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