TURN TAKING COMPONENTS AND CUES
IN NGUGI'S AND MICERE'S *THE TRIAL OF DEDAN KIMATHI*

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Abstract:

Conversation analysis is an approach for language study that embraces verbal and non – verbal conduct in a situation of everyday life. Dialogues in Ngugi's and Micere's *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* could be classified as a naturally occurring conversation because they involve two or more people (characters) who take turns to speak on issues related to exploitative and oppressive rule of the British colonial masters in Kenya. So, as important as conversational discourse is in tackling issues bothering human beings, not enough scholarly attention has been given to it. Therefore, this paper seeks to explore turn – taking components and cues in the aforementioned text to see how they are being used. The paper adopts as its theoretical framework Sacks (1974) conversation analysis model. The data for the study were analyzed bearing in mind the topic of the study that is turn- taking components and cues. Turn – Construction components (units) such as single words, phrases, clauses, and sentences are used extensively in the text. Turn allocation in the text is either current speaker selects the next speaker, current speaker self-select or current speaker continues. Cues such as turn- yielding cues, turn-requesting cues, and back-channel cues run throughout the text. Turn yielding cues such as silences, adjacency pairs, tag questions, utterances made on a rising pitch, utterances made on a falling pitch among others are prevalent in the text. Back – channels employed in the text are in the form of utterances and actions. The study found too that turn – taking in the text makes the conversation orderly and meaningful. The study concludes that conversation analysis is an important tool in handling naturally occurring conversation.

Keywords: turn–taking components, turn–taking cues, conversation analysis, Ngugiwa Thiongo and Micrere Githae Mugo

1. Introduction

Conversation analysis (CA) is an approach to study of social interaction which embraces both verbal and non-verbal aspects, in situations of everyday life. It was developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s by Harvey Sacks, Emmanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson (Sidnell, 2016).

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Turn-taking is the way in which people engage in conversation in an orderly manner. It has two components namely turn construction component (unit) and Turn allocation component. Turn construction component (unit) is the component from which turns are being constructed. It consists of single words, phrases, clauses and sentences. Turn allocation component explains how interlocutors allocate turns among themselves. The rules of turn allocation stipulate that one participant talks at a time and change of a turn is done at a place known as transition relevance place. Rules are being applied at this point to allocate turns to interlocutors instantly (Agbedo, 2015).

Turn-maintaining cues are used by the speakers to keep their speaking turns. Hand gestures and vocal cues such as increase in volume and rate of speech in response to turn-requesting cues from listeners help to maintain control of the floor (Yang, 2007).Turn-yielding cues are used by the speaker to signal the listener that he has finished his talk and want another person to speak. The speaker can do this by speaking on a rising pitch or a falling pitch; he can gaze at the prospective interlocutor or mention his name. Malodor & Barker (as cited in Yang, 2007) say that turn requesting cues are used by the listeners who wish to speak. They often gaze at the speaker, lean forward towards him or make a hand gesture to indicate that they want to speak. Back-channel cues are gestures, signals, expressions or words used by the listeners to indicate that they have interest in utterances being made. Yang (2007) says that back-channel reinforces the speaker.

Ngugi's preoccupation with his work can be understood by tracing the history of the conflict between Kikuyu and British colonial masters that resulted in the Mau Mau war of 1952, which was triggered by three important factors namely the economic and cultural effect of land appropriation, the importance of education for the Kikuyu people and their administrative policies. *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* authored by Ngugi and Micere is Ngugi's response to the colonialist report about the Mau Mau movement which represents the movement and its leader, Dedan Kimathi as a Crazy man. Ngugi and Micere choose to counter the report by describing Kimathi as a man of courage and commitment. Kimathi was captured and put on trial in 1956 and was sentenced to death for possessing a revolver without a licence (Mambrol, 2019).

Many Scholars and researchers have studied Ngugi's works, especially *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* from both literary and linguistic aspects. Specifically, some aspects of the text have been explored via discourse analysis, stylistics and pragmatics, but no enough attention has been given to turn-taking components and cues used in it. Again, most scholars are more preoccupied with the use of recorded conversations to carry out studies under conversation analysis than conversation in literary text. This study therefore seeks to investigate how turn taking components and cues manifest in a literary work through the following objectives:

1. identify turn taking components and cues used in the text;
2. discuss the turn taking components and cues in line with the text preoccupation.

2. Review of related literature

Radford and Burns (2008) carry out research on conversation analysis of parents – child interaction in Nigerian families. The main objective of the study is to find out how parents and children interact at homes. The researchers use Sacks (1974) conversation analysis model to

conduct the research. They mount video on three different homes so as to capture parents – children interactions. The video captured all the cultural nuances and the data collected are transcribed according to conversation analysis procedure. The study reveals that parents – children interaction style at home is similar to interaction in the classroom. The interaction is highly instructional; the instructional talk reflects the cultural beliefs of the people about the role of adults and children within the family. The study further discloses that children learn in an immediate family environment where interaction does take place. Furthermore, the study reveals that there is a difference between the way parents – children interact in Nigerian families and the way parents – children interact in Scotland families. The study concludes that parents – children interaction can be intensified to encourage language development without disorganizing naturally occurring conversation or the purpose of the interaction.

Similarly, Enyi (2015) conducts a study on "Styles of Nigerian English Conversation: Discourse-Stylistic Analysis of a Natural Conversation." The study aims at identifying the common and recurring features of conversation in educated Nigerian English. The researcher uses an audio recorder as an instrument of data collection. He mounts the audio recorder secretly at the place where the conversation takes place in order to get an unadulterated social interaction. The data collected are transcribed in accordance with conversation analysis procedure. The study reveals that Nigerian English conversation has the features of inexplicitness of expressions, as the interlocutors depend on the background knowledge to understand the intended message. The use of adjacency pairs is recurrent in the introductory part in the form of greeting/greeting. The researcher also discovers that overlap occurs before the next speaker takes a turn and finally, the study discloses that topic for conversation changes often. It is concluded that conversation analysis is a viable tool in studying casual talks.

Nurfaidah (2015) undertakes a study of Conversation analysis: A report on mini research. He focuses on naturally occurring conversation from Oprah Winfrey's show which takes place on 25th February 2005. The method he uses to conduct the research is conversation analytic methodology. The recorded data are transcribed according to a conversation analysis convention that is a transcription symbol developed by Clark (2007). The study reveals that at the beginning of the conversation there is a mutual understanding among the interlocutors. The mutual understanding is indicated by question and answer on adjacency pairs with preferred responses. Afterwards the mutual understandings among the interlocutors disappear as there are dispreferred responses marked by delay and hesitation. The study further reveals that an overlap occurs due to inability of the current speaker to give up his speaking turn when an interlocutor displays turn requesting cues. Another overlap occurs when the current speaker tries to dominate the conversation. Furthermore, the study reveals that preference organization, another form of sequence organization does occur in the communication.

Ghilzai (2015) carries out study on conversation of turn taking behaviour and gender differences in multimodal conversation. The aim of the study is to supply empirical evidence relevant to gender differences in turn taking; to what degree these differences are accurate. The study analyzes turn taking in three types of conversational models: male to male conversation, female to female conversation and cross – sex conversation. Besides, it compares the differences between radio, television and casual conversation models. The study reveals that females take turns in conversation more than men. This assertion supports the notion that women talk more

than men. The study further reveals that men stick to their points, and remain silent when turns are relinguished to them by other speakers. The study concludes that females do not take turns the same way males do; they take turns immediately after turns are allocated to them while males are reluctant to take turns even when floors are relinguished to them.

Kpongo and Abrefa (2017) carry out research on the surface of face-to face casual conversation among the Akan. The study aims at finding out the structure of face-to-face casual conversation openings and closings among the Akan. It also tries to pair the structure of face-to-face conversation to that of telephone conversation. Coronel – Matina (1998) theory of telephone conversation is adopted as a theoretical framework. The study is carried out in Akan society, namely, Amamoma, Cape coast Ghana. Twenty dyads naturally occurring conversations are collected; they are not only collected from the indigenes of Amamoma but also from students and lecturers who are Akan and dwell within the community. The researchers recorded the conversations without the awareness of the interlocutors so that they should not influence the conversations. They employ Jefferson's (1984) convention for transcribing spoken data to transcribe the data recorded. Qualitative research design is used to analyze the data; the result of the analysis shows that Akan's face-to-face casual conversational openings are in two forms, namely, presence and absence of interlocutors. The study further reveals that identification and recognition sequence occur in the absence of interlocutors. On the other hand, closings are classified into three, namely, introductory closing, intermediate closings and final closing. Face-to-face and telephone conversations occur in two different ways but there seems to be things that make both of them common. Telephone conversation openings and closings are not all that different from the ones of face-to-face conversation although there are considerable changes in the closings across the two channels. In conclusion, Akan's face-to-face conversation has two parts called presence and absence of interlocutors. Identification and recognition of sequence do occur when participants are not present at the venue of the conversation. Closings are categorized into three: introductory closings, intermediate closing and final closing.

O'Sullivan and Hall (2008) conduct research on conversation analysis in arts marketing. The study aims at exploring the use of conversation analysis methods in arts marketing. The researchers conduct eight telephone interviews with members of the audience of a regional United Kingdom (UK) symphony orchestra who are identified as users of online messages. The interviews are transcribed and interpreted using skill from conversation analysis, a model to qualitative data analysis which focuses on language-in-use as an activity between speakers. The study reveals that conversation analysis led interpretation suggests that participation in web conferences is more complex than conducting verbal interviews.

Akhimien and Farotimi (2018) undertake study on conversation features and discourse strategies in selected sermons of Pastor E. A. Adeboye. The study aims at identifying and analyzing the discourse strategies and conversational features that characterize the sermons and the roles they play in influencing congregation's perception and response to accomplish the speaker's objectives. Three sermons of the pastor are explored in order to identify and analyze the conversational features that are characterized in them. Schegloff's conversation analysis model is adopted as a theoretical framework. The researchers gained the transcribed versions of the sermons and scrutinized them, employing a conversation analysis model to disclose the conversational features that are invested in the sermons. The study reveals that Adeboye's

sermons are characterized by conversational features such as feedback, repair mechanism, and selection of the next speaker. The study further discloses that Pastor Adeboye employs non-verbal conversational features such as pause, smile, laughter, raise of hands and head in his sermons. The study concludes that the pastor cautiously merges these features to make the congregation participate fully in the sermons; this act generates desired reaction from the congregation. The presence of conversational features in Pastor Adeboye's sermons connotes that the sermon could be categorized as kinds of conversations and not soliloquy as some scholar earlier believed.

3. Theoretical Framework

This paper adopts conversation analysis as its theoretical framework. Conversation analysis was developed by Harvey Sacks, Emmanuel Shegloff and Gail Jefferson who was a student at the time.

It is concerned with methods by which people manage or conduct conversation. In other words, it is a systematic analysis of talk that is produced as a result of normal everyday interactions (talk – in-interaction). According to Napitupulu and Siahaan (2014), Sacks based his analysis on naturally occurring conversations to determine how interlocutors understand and respond to one another as they take turns.

The theory began with focus on casual conversation, later it embraced more tasks such as interactions in doctors' offices, courts, educational settings, mass media, etc. Conversation analysis comprises features such as turn –taking, turn-construction components, turn-allocation component, turn taking strategies, adjacency pair, turn-taking cues and repair. But for the sake of this study, the researcher would focus on turn-taking components and cues in Ngugi's and Micrere's *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi.*

4. Methodology

Data for the study comprise of utterances randomly selected from the text under review. Turn taking components and cues in the selected utterances are identified, analyzed and discussed based on Sacks, Schegloff and Jeffersons (1974) conversation analysis model.

4.1 Data analysis and interpretation
A. Turn-taking components and cues in the text
The text *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* by Ngugi and Micere is characterized by turn-taking components and a number of turn- taking cues.

Agbedo (2015) asserts that turn construction component (unit) consists of single words, phrases, clauses and sentences.

Data no. 1: Single words

Single words are widely used in the text as turn construction units. Examples:

> Johnnie: *"Enemy*?" p11
> Woman: *"What*?" p20
> 1st soldier: *"Winterbottom*!" p63
> 2nd soldier: *"Smith*!" p63
>
> The above words are instances of single words used as turn construction units to take or

relinguish floor.

Data no. 2: Phrases

Phrases run throughout the text. Examples:

> Johnnie: "Aaah, just bread..." p11
> Boy: *"I am"* p20
> Boy: *"But mama*!" p20
> Boy: *"Bread for Dedan"* p22
> Boy: *"The woman"* p43
>
> The aforementioned phrases are employed by the interlocutors to give up their speaking

turns or take turns.

Data no. 3: Clause

Clauses are broadly used to talk – in – interaction in the text. Examples:

> Boy: *"I am ready."* p21
> Woman: *"Bread is life."* p22
> Henderson: *"I am serious in my offer."* p33
> Boy: *"I want to apologize."* p42

Data no. 4: Sentences

Many sentences run throughout the text. Examples:

> Boy: *"I have fought with dogs and cats in the rubbish bins,…"* p19
> Woman: *"Your words contain wisdom, son…"* p21
> Judge: *"… The rule of law is the basis of every civilized community…"*p25
> Judge: *"I may remind you that you are charged with a most serious crime."* p25
>
> The above sentences are turn construction units used by the interlocutors to take or

relinguish turns in the text.

Data no. 5: Adjacency pairs

Adjacency pairs run throughout the text. In question/answer pairs, the first part is often a question which signals the end of the turn thus inviting another interlocutor to answer the question. Examples:

> First Soldier: "*Where are the terrorists who were supposed to be all over Nyeri?...*" p12
> Second Soldier: "*The bloody fuckin Mau Mau are finished without that bugger Kimathi!*" p12
> First Soldier: "*What is the idea of arresting the whole village then?*" p12
> Second Soldier: "*For Screening. These natives are very slippery, man....*" p12
> First Soldier: "*...there is...attempt to rescue him. Something like what happened last night.*" p12
> Second Soldier: "*Personally, I don't think they will try again... They are fuckin cowards. They won't come out into the open daylight and fight it out like men.*" p13

In the above discourse, we observe that the second part of the first pair is marked by dispreferred response while the second parts of the rest of the pairs are marked by preferred responses.

Data no. 6: Turn taking cues

The text is characterized by diverse cues for turn taking such as silences, tag questions, complete sentences, utterances made on a rising pitch, utterances made on a falling pitch, use of name and gaze.

Data no. 7: Silences

> Judge: "*Dedan Kimathi..., you are charged that on the night of Sunday, October the 21st, 1956, at or near Ihururu in Nyeri District, you were found in possession of a firearm, namely a revolver, without a licence, contrary to section 89 of the penal codes which under Special Emergency Regulations constitute a criminal offence. Guilty or not guilty?*" (Silence for some seconds.) p3
> Judge: "*Dedan Kimathi..., you are charged that on the night of Sunday, October the 21st, 1956, at or near Ihururu in Nyeri District, you were found in possession of a firearm, namely a revolver, without a licence, contrary to section 89 of the penal code whih under Special Emergency Regulations constitute a criminal offence. Guilty or not guilty?*" (Dedan Kimathi remains silent). p24.
> "*I may warn you that your silence could be construed as contempt of court in which case I could order that you be sent for a certain term in jail. (Kimathi, remains silent...,)*" (p25)

The silence by Kimathi after the judge has pronounced his verdict on (p3) and (p24 – 25) of the text, shows that the judge can continue to have the floor since Kimathi refuses to talk when the judge relinquishes the floor to him.

Data no. 8: Tag questions

Limited numbers of tag questions are used in the text to mark the end of turns. Finegan (2004), notes that a sentence which ends in a tag question clearly invites an interlocutor to take the floor.

Examples:

Woman: *"You are hungry, aren't you?"* p18
Henderson: *"You don't keep your mind out of the forest for long, do you?"* p34

Each of the speakers gives up his/her speaking turn to another speaker after asking the tag question.

Data no. 9: Complete sentences

Finegan (2004) asserts that turns often end in a complete sentence, as such the use of complete sentences in the text signals the end of turns. A complete declarative sentence often begins with a capital letter and ends with a full stop.

Examples:

Boy: *"I have not eaten anything since yesterday."* p18
Priest: *"The world passeth away and the lust thereof, but the word of God abideth forever…"* p48
Woman: *"I am not alone ----"* p60
Woman: *"In the struggle, you learn to adapt to change circumstances…."* p60

Each of the sentences above indicates the end of a turn thereby inviting an interlocutor to take a turn. Finegan (2004) says that the end of a turn may also be indicated by a rise or fall on a pitch of one's voice.

Data no. 10: Utterances made on a rising pitch

Interlocutors in the text often make utterances on a rising pitch to relinquish floors to others. Onuigbo (2003) says that rising pitch is used in polar questions.

Examples:

Settler: *"…Did you hear that crank?"* p29
Settler: *"…Did you hear the cheek?"* p29
Boy: *"Are you crazy?"* p52
Woman: *"…were they carrying anything in their hands?"* p53
Kimemia: *"…Has Kimathi ever prevented a brother from speaking his mind?"* p71

Each of the above expressions is uttered in a rising pitch signaling the end of a turn.

Data no. 11: Utterances made on a falling pitch

Utterances made on a falling pitch are used in the text to give up speaking turns. According to Onuigbo (2003) utterances which make statements are uttered on a falling pitch.

Examples:

Boy: "…She died during childbirth" p18
Judge: "There's no liberty without law and order." p27
Kimathi:"He sold out for his stomach." p33
Boy: "I don't want to fight with you" p42
The above utterances are made on a falling pitch to relinquish floor to other participants.

Data no. 12: Current speaker select next speaker by mentioning the name of prospective next speaker

Agbedo (2015) asserts that turn allocation of current speaker select next speaker is done by mentioning the name of the prospective next speaker.

Turn-allocation of current speaker select next speaker here is done by mentioning the name or title of the prospective next speaker.

Examples:

Kumathi: "*Shaw Henderson! Friend and killer of Africa ugh!*" p32
Henderson: "*Listen, kimathi. I come to make a deal*" p33
Henderson: "*Look here, Dedan. I am a plain soldier.*
It's true that at times I play the special
Branch, a hunter of man,…" p33
Henderson: "*Why must you twist what I say like that Dedan?...*" p34
Banker: "*…You are a wise man, Dedan…there's no need to fight the banks. We are your true friends…*" p39

In each of the above utterances, name or title of the interlocutor is mentioned to indicate that the turn is shifted from the caller to respondent.

Data no. 13: Relinquishing floor by gazing at the prospective next speaker.

Agbedo (2015) says that the current speaker can give up his speaking turn to another by gazing at him.

Examples:

Boy: [eyeing the woman as if she were a prophet]: "*How did you know? Were you in Nairobi too? We called it the city of life and death.*" p17
Kimathi: [turning round to face Henderson, fury in his eyes]: "*What more do you want from me?*
Sale of our people …land … Sale of my soul.
For a badge from king George, or it is the Queen?" p54
Woman: [looks at Kimathi. Then she stares slowly working herself into a passion as if trying to still the doubt wavering in Kimathi's heart]:
"*I want to say a word*
In answer to what our brother

Has said about our kinsmen!…" p73

Data no. 14: Pauses and silent fillers

McCarthy (as cited in Napitupulu and Siahaan, 2014) observes that pauses are methods of signaling a transition relevance place. But this paper argues that not all pauses indicate end of turns in a conversation; they can also signal a moment for a speaker to think of what to say next or a moment to breathe as we can see in the following utterances:

Boy: *"I don't know how to thank you for what you have done today. But…but…If I can do something, anything, you know…"* p20

Judge: *"…No society can be without laws to protect property…I mean protect our lives …Civilization…Investment…Christianity…"* p26

Kimathi: *"They used to dance these*
Beforethe white colonialist came
in the arena…at initiation…
during funerals…during marriage…" p37

Warder: *"This prisoner…bad blood…since I came on duty, I have not yet rested. People …in and out…"* p53

Ellipses, in each of the above utterances, signals the point where the interlocutor pauses to think of what to say next or breathe. Apart from ellipses which indicate pauses by interlocutors to organize their thoughts before putting them across to their listeners, silent fillers are also used to do the same work.

Examples:

Johnnie: *"HM. Should have seen when we captured her. She swore at us, spat in our faces and kicked like a wild goat as we bound her…"* p10

Women: *"…Hm. Take the case of us peasants, for one. We are told you are Luo, you are Kalenjin, you are Kamba, you are Maasai, you are kikuyu…"* p14

Boy: *"Hm. The man was clever at court cases and bribed the magistrates…"* p18

Speaker, in each of the above expressions, makes use of silent filler to organize his/her thoughts before relating them to his/her listeners.

Data no. 15: Back-channel cues

Back channel cues are widely used in the text to encourage the speakers.

Examples:

[Jubilance and excitement among the Africans…] p26

"some blacks clap…" p27

"…an African…does not speak at all, but keeps nodding his head in agreement" p38

All: *"Long live Kenya people's Defence Council!"* p68

All: *"Long live people's Field Marshal*

Long live Kenyan people's Freedom Armies!" p70
All: "*Long life Kenya peoples Defence council!*
Long life Kenya people's Freedom Armies!" p70
Crowd: "*Long live Kenya People's Defence Council*
Long live Kenya People's Struggle!" p74
[applause from Africans] p83

Back-channel cues above are uttered, performed to indicate that the listeners are interested in the utterances made by the speakers. Mey (2006) is of the view that back-channel clues are used to support the speaker.

Data no.16: Turn – requesting cue
Turn-requesting cue is also used in the text to indicate that there are interlocutors who wish to speak.

Example:

"*…several hands are raised, other generals and fighters anxious to speak.*" p72

5. Findings

The researcher found out that characters in the text used turn construction components (units) such as single words, phrases, clauses and sentences to relinquish or take turns. Turn allocation in the text is done in the ways that the current speaker selects the next speaker, current speaker self-select and current speaker continues. Turn yielding cues, turn requesting cues, back-channels cues are also used in the text. The study also found out that turn-taking in the text makes the conversation orderly and meaningful.

6. Conclusion

The study revealed that conversations in the text are on the struggle by the people of Kenya to gain political and economic independence from Britain on one hand and Britain's effort to consolidate its power in Kenya on the other hand. The study concludes that turn-taking components and cues used in the text assigned a variety of functions to the conversations.

6.1 Suggestion for further studies
The paper recommends that further studies be conducted in turn – taking components and cues in selected prose and poetry works of some other African writers.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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