

An Analysis of Spoken Discourse between Yemeni and Russian Speakers

Lamis Abdulrahman

Department of English.

College of Education- Aden

University of Aden

Abstract

In this paper, the author presents a conversation between a Yemeni girl and a Russian tailor; the researcher first recorded the seven minutest extract and then analyzed conversation. The purpose of this study was to reveal that rules and features undoubtedly exist in peoples' daily speeches. The speech in the conversation was less formal, quick, less organized and structured. However, the researcher found many discourse features such as: field, maxims, tenor, affect, mode, lexical items, discourse markers and Non-verbal cues.

Keywords: Spoken discourse, Yemeni speaker, Russian speaker.

Introduction

According to Carter & McCarthy (2006) people communicate everyday to express themselves; their speech sometimes varies from topic to another. People start learning how to speak, but not necessarily how to write because most people prefer to speak much more than they write. Therefore, the importance of speaking leads researchers to think about how people communicate with each other by talking. Hyland (2011) states that the analysis of conversation with talks about peoples' interaction in social life and describing the features of spoken discourse is depending on some norms and personal character such as knowing their turn taking, interaction pragmatics features, social culture and status.

Literature Review

Cook (1989) defines the word discourse as the language in use. Brown and Yule (1983) on the other hand, explain that discourse analysis concerns in studying the analysis of language in use. Discourse analysis refers to the study of the relationship between language and the context in which it is used. McCarthy (2002) states that, discourse analysis study looks at both form and function in the spoken interaction. It looks for the linguistic items that describe the social and cultural factors in order to help us in the interpretation and the understanding of different situations. In addition, the study of discourse analysis helps researchers in understanding how people interact and use real language. According to Schiffrin (1994) discourse developed in a variety of disciplines such as: sociology, social psychology, sociolinguistics and anthropology. Hence, discourse analysis deals with different analytic approaches: conversation analysis, variation analysis, speech act theory, interactional sociolinguistics and pragmatics. Each approach mentioned emphasizes different aspects of language use, because they view language

as social interaction. Many researchers such as (Sacks et al, 1978; Mills, 1997; Cameron, 2000; and Heritage, 2004) were interested in analyzing the spoken discourse of people with their features and functions. In order to understand people's social interaction, researchers focused on the conversational analysis to obtain more information about their interaction. By spoken discourse analysis, the researcher can find in one conversation a variety of features and functions. Some people may argue that informal speech is formless and unstructured because it is not arranged and less formal. However, this view is not proved yet with evidence, because how people can understand each other by talking. This study is an attempt to analyze seven minutes extracts of informal conversation of English between two speakers from different countries and cultures.

Method

Chaudron (1994) states that there are four types of research: psychometric, interaction analysis, discourse analysis, and ethnography. Discourse analysis research is close to qualitative research. Creswell (2009) explains that there are five qualitative research approaches, namely: narrative, phenomenology, ethnography, case study, and grounded theory. This study is qualitative since it relates to narrative field i.e. in this study the researcher collected the data through a recording conversation and analyses it by using content base analysis.

Context of the Extract

According to Cameron (2001) it is difficult to analyze the speech without transcriptions, this is because, speech consists of sound, tones and intonations which disappear as soon as they are produced from the speakers. Therefore, it is better to record the conversation of the speakers in order to be able to analyze it in depth later.

The Text. Tailor and Customer

Francis & Hunston (1995) explain that using more than two speakers may cause complications and a confusion in the analysis process such as deciding the boundaries of turn taking and transaction. Therefore, in this study the choice of the number of speakers was limited to two speakers only.

Background to the Text

These seven minutes conversation between two speakers a Russian tailor and a Yemeni girl who wanted to sew a dress, both of the two speakers used English to communicate despite their few knowledge of English language. For ethical consideration, the researcher had informed the two speakers about the objectives of this study and that she would use a small portable digital for recording their voices.

Eksan comes from Russia; her English background is to some extent medium. Salma from Sana'a - Yemen, only she has few knowledge of English.

In my opinion, both of them appear to have no obvious accents, even though Eksana may speak better and very frequently. On the other hand, Salma usually speaks lower and hesitated. This conversation takes a place in a room of Eksans' house, Theysitin front of each other to discuss about what Salma wanted. Apparently, Salma uses more gestures during the conversation. Both of the two speakers do not know each other, besides, they do not share much common knowledge about the culture and customs. However, they communicated less formally. The whole conversation mainly concerns about the topic of sewing a dress. At first, they greeted each other since they met each other for the first time. Secondly, they talked about the high prices nowadays, and the model of dress Salma wants to sew. The third part is the short extract was about giving another cloth for sewing to Eksans when she will finish the current dress.

Key to Transcription Conventions

Transcription is an important aspect of the spoken discourse, regarding the transcription form, the researcher will apply the conversation as:

First Speaker: Salma (S)

Second Speaker: Eksana (E)

The Text:

1S: good evening madam (**Opening**)

2 E: Good evening.....

3 S: How are you..?

Well, I am Salma, my friend Liza told me lots about you (introducing and greeting)

4E: thanks am fine you fine? Thanks to Liza my name is Eksana and am from Russia I am here from 5 years.

5 S: am ok,.Mmmmmmm you know price high (**Situation**)

6 E: yes yes they said , am not out much do not know Arabic I here home

7 S: it is ok not fine out high highhigh price no cheap..... I remember situation happen in Alibi mall ,I don't have a lot of money and I go to buy vegetables I think the money will be fine but the seller said no give more I said no it is this money only he said no more then I go back without buying I feel embarrass. My friend also said in Yemen mall prices high.

8 E:Ahaaaa not fine anyway, sorry for your bad situation

Long Pause

9E:So, you come to sew dress here? (**Purpose**)

10 E: you want to sew that cloth (she was touching here the cloth of Salma

11 S: Ah, please yah, this one, but no model in my head

12 E:Actually, fashion now long but cut in leg and

13 S: I do not like cut but I can let you try.....

14 E: yah try cut

15S: good will do that

- 16 E:thanks ..when you want this busy lot days school dress work alot
17 S:Ahawhat about you sew next month
18 E: mean October? ..ok can
19S: good, madam
20 E: I have a thing to ask
21S: what?
22 E: bring another clothing to cover down
23S: sorry not get you?
24 E: I mean to sew down the main one
25 S:Aha you mean under main clothing (they meant a liner)
26 E: yah yah sorry bad English
27S: me too bad English, but we understand by hand move
28E: I happy coz talk to you any help?
29 S: yah can you please help me coz , I really want to sew
other clothing,? I saw your work on my friend dress I really love it it's beautiful.
30 E:yah, that dress was the best I made, ok for now and months later no, but can at end of year
can do.
31 S:Exactly, the dress was unique and new to see in weeding..ok then that is ok to wait for
months. Thanks dear
32 E:Thanks to you, happy you like my work
33S: ok will go bye(**Ending**)
34E: bye.

Data Analysis of the Text and Discussion:

Type of Interaction.

Interpersonal, casual conversation.

General Comments

In this text the two women were obviously self conscious about being taped. However, they behaved normally and the conversation moved smoothly. It is important to mention that despite the medium level of English, both of the speakers gave great help to the researcher with their effective interaction

In addition, since the spoken data were only collected through recording not videotaping, then the researcher only wrote the speakers' facial expressions and other subtle non-verbal communication.

Non -Verbal Cues

The speakers used their facial expressions, body language and gestures.

Generic Structure Analysis

Casual conversation is not easily to analyze for generic structure. However, there are identifiable stages of greeting, establishing identity, talking about economic situation and high prices,

describing, confirming request, sharing attitudes and polite the part closing. The conversation is typical of casual talk between two strangers. It is not easy to say how much is obligatory. The following tables shows the lines of the categories mentioned.

Sociocultural purpose:

The customer wants to convince the tailor to sew the clothing for her.

Greeting

In this conversation, Salma started the greeting since she was the person who visited Eksana in her house.

Establishing Identity

Salma is virtually asking Eksana about her ability of sewing, she insists also on sewing more clothing that is why she asks questions, and Eksana was responding according to her questions. In other words, Salma was dominating the conversation.

Confirming Relationship

Eksana changes the topic of Salma about high prices by saying: *(So, you come to sew dress here)* From this point Line (9), the conversation starts to change to more recognizable and direct to the purpose of the talk, which is sewing cloths. Apparently, Salma continues to control the conversation through her questions and requests.

Sharing Attitudes

After Salma expressed her likeness to the dress Eksana made to her friend *(I saw your work on my friend dress I really love it It's beautiful)* affect changes. Eksana also confesses that *(yah, that dress was the best I made)*, gently Salma also supports Eksana *(exactly, the dress was unique and new to see in weeding)*. This builds the relationship between the two speakers.

Table 1. An analysis of the Generic Structure Analysis

<i>Generic Structure Analysis</i>		
greeting	Line 1,2,3	
Establishing identity	Line	
Describing situations	Line 11, 29	
Confirming relationship	Line 9,17,19,29	
Sharing attitudes	Line 29	
closing	Line 33,34	

Register Field Personal *Analysis*

background and attitudes about Yemen

Embarrassing Situation

Salma here explained what happen to her in Alibi Mall when she went to buy something and she found that the price was higher than she had in her purse. Therefore, she did not buy anything at the end.

Lexical Items refer to:

- Name and background (*Eksana, Russia, etc*)
- Attitudes and experience (*I really, I love it, etc*)
- Yemeni places names (*Alibi mall, Yemen mall, etc*)
- Adjectives expressing affect (*bad, beautiful, embarrass, happy, etc*).

The following table explains the analysis of the register.

Table 2. An Analysis of the Register

<i>Register Analysis</i>	
Field	Line (5,6,7,8)
Embarrassing Situation	Line (7)
Lexical Items	Line 4 (name and country) Line 29 (attitude " Salma loved the dress) Line 7 (names of malls) Line (line 7,26, 28,29)

Tenor

Contact: Low – speakers have met for the first time.

Status: for the first time to hear it seems to be equal. However, Salma has status because:

- She is in her country
- She knows a lot of information about situation and places

Opinion, being very polite (*my friend Liza told me about you, I saw your work on my friend dress I really love it*).

Affect: Moves from medium to high.

Affect markers increase as the relationship builds (*I really want to sew, other clothing, I saw your work on my friend dress I really love it It's beautiful*).

Mode: Spoken face-to-face conversation.

Discourse Markers:

There are some discourse markers between the two speakers such as (*yah, well, anyway, actually, and, but and ok*)

Brief Pragmatics Analysis

Eksana responds shortly to Salmas' questions and talk. In general, there are some maxims applied in this conversation: maxim of quantity, the majority of conversation was an application of the maxim of quantity since both of the speakers are sharing information and these information are truth information and that means here there is an application for the maxim of quality and the information in the whole conversation are clear and relevant to the purpose which Slama came for "sewing clothing". That means there are application for the maxims of relevance and manner. The following table explains the other discourse elements in the conversation.

Table 3. An analysis of Other Spoken Discourse Elements

<i>Other Spoken Discourse Elements</i>	
Opinion	Line (3, 29)
Affect	Line (29)
Discourse markers	Line (5, 7, 8, 11, 12, 14, 17, 18, 25, 29, 30, 31)
Pragmatics (Maxims)	Line (all conversation shows the maxims)

Conclusion

Based on the data analysis, the two speakers were in high position to respond which means that they were more active to the interaction. Salma dominated the follow-up utterances to some extent, it happened because Salma had a chance to share her knowledge to Eksana about the places and the situations. Related to the results of data analysis of the spoken discourse, it is easily to conclude that there are number of rules and functions, which were implied in the seven minutes extracts, which have made crucial contribution to the two speakers. For this reason, casual conversation or informal speech is neither formless nor unstructured. The speakers used variety of verbal communication, such as field, maxims, tenor, affect, mode, lexical items, and discourse markers. Non-verbal cues were also performed such as: gaze, facial expressions, and attitude. This means that they did not only perform verbal interaction in the conversation, but also they used non-verbal response to react to their ideas.

As a recommendation, it is better conduct a study between two speakers from the same culture and country to see the difference between this study and the recommended one.

References

Brown, G., and G. Yule. 1983. *Discourse Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Cameron, D. (2000) *Good to Talk? Living and Working in a Communication Culture*. London: Sage.
- Cameron, D. (2001). *Working with Spoken Discourse*. London SAGE Publications.
- Carter, R. and McCarthy, M. (2006), *Cambridge Grammar of English. A Comprehensive Guide: Spoken and Written English Grammar and Usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chudron. (1994). *Second Language Classroom: Research on Teaching and Learning*. Cambridge University Press.
- Cook, G. (1989). *Discourse*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Creswell. (2009). *Research Design: qualitative, quantitative, Mixed Methods*
- Francis, G. & Hunston, S. (1995). 'Analysing everyday conversation'.
- Heritage, J. (2004) 'Discourse analysis as a way of analysing naturally occurring talk', in David Silverman, ed., *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice*, London: Sage. 200-21.
- Hyland, K. (2011). Academic discourse. In: Hyland, K. & Paltridge, B. (Eds.) 2011. *The continuum companion to discourse analysis*. London: Continuum. pp. 171-184.
- McCarthy, M. (2002). *Discourse Analysis for Language Teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mills, S. (1997) *Discourse*. London: Routledge.
- Sacks, H., Schegloff, E. and Jefferson, G. (1978) 'A Simplest Systematics of the Organization of Turn Taking for Conversation', in J. Schenkein (ed.) *Studies in the Organization of Conversational Interaction*, pp. 7-55. New York: Academic Press.
- Schiffrin, D. (1994). "Approaches to discourse." Oxford: Blackwell.