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Management of Turn Distribution in Academic Discourse among Undergraduate Science Students in a Nigerian Public University

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to analyze the management of turn distribution in academic discourse based on three turn taking systems of taking the turn, holding the turn, and yielding the turn by some undergraduate science students of a public university in Nigeria. The participants engaged in a discussion based on a chart presented by Global Peace Index on relative peace around the world from 2015 to 2016. The discussion which was video recorded, lasted 15 minutes. The study was underpinned by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) Turn-taking theory. Conversation analysis, using Drew and Heritage (1992) transcription notations, was used to transcribe the data. The result indicated that 'pleading' was among the strategies used by some participants of this study to take a turn. Also, gaze was used by some participants of this study as a strategy for seeking information not as a sign of nominating the next speaker.

Key Words: Academic discourse, conversation analysis, Turn distribution, turn taking.

Introduction

Stenström (1994) defined conversation as 'a social activity involving two or more participants who talk about something' (p. 189). As a social activity, conversation bounds the participants together in an ordered shared experience in relation to the world around them. In trying to share the knowledge or experience with others, participants are expected to abide by some etiquette which guide their conversation based again on their shared knowledge of such rules. Participants' identity, therefore, how intimate or distant they are, the subject of their discussion and the medium they choose to communicate with each other and the genre (Stenström, 1994) tend to affect how turns are constructed, distributed and managed. Power relations among participants such as between husband and wife, daughter and mother, teacher and student, for example, can affect how the conversation unfolds. The genre or the type of talk being engaged in by the participants – casual conversation, debate, employment interview, cross-examination – play a key role as to the expected nature of the talk. Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) proposed a model accounting for the management of turn distribution in both equal and unequal power relation. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the management of turn distribution in academic discourse based on three turn taking system of taking the turn, holding the turn, and yielding the turn (Stenström, 1994) by selected undergraduate science students in a public university in Nigeria. The study will be underpinned by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) Turn-taking theory. Conversation analysis was adopted for the analysis of the discourse using Drew and Heritage (1992) transcription notations (see appendix 1).

Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to analyze the management of turn distribution in academic discourse based on three turn taking systems of taking the turn, holding the turn, and yielding the turn by some undergraduate science students of a public university in Nigeria. Specifically, the study focused on how the participants manage turn exchanges in the ongoing academic discourse.

Academic Discourse

Discourse study explains what we do with language and why we are doing what we do with the language. The traditional concerns of linguists have been to describe grammar and phonology of the language under study. Since the 1970s, however, as reported by Jaworski and Coupland (1999), linguists have broadened their scope of language studies to include how language, meaning, and society are related. The study of language has, therefore, transcends the boundaries of grammar and phonology to include both verbal and non-verbal language, and how meaning is negotiated among conversation partners. Fasold (1990, as cited in Jaworski & Coupland, 1999, p. 1) postulated that "the study of discourse is the study of *any* aspect of language use." As there are a myriad of situations in which people use language, there emerge different types of discourses. Some of these situations are formal, such as the language used in courtrooms, schools, company meetings and so on, or informal, such as the language used in casual conversations. In academic situations, Jordan (1997, p. 193) identified four discourse types:

- *lectures*
- *seminars*
- *oral presentations*
- *verbalising data*

Verbalizing data entails presenting information verbally, which is represented in a form of graph, table or chart. According to Jordan (1997, p. 204) verbalizing data is one of the areas where students in arts and humanities may need little help while those in social sciences and technology require

considerable help. In order to examine the participants' management of turn distribution in academic discourse, a chart from Global Peace Index (GPI) 2016 was adopted for the participants to verbalize the information on the overall score on peace around the whole regions of the world. The following figure was presented:

**Figure 1: Overall peace around the world from 2015 – 2016**
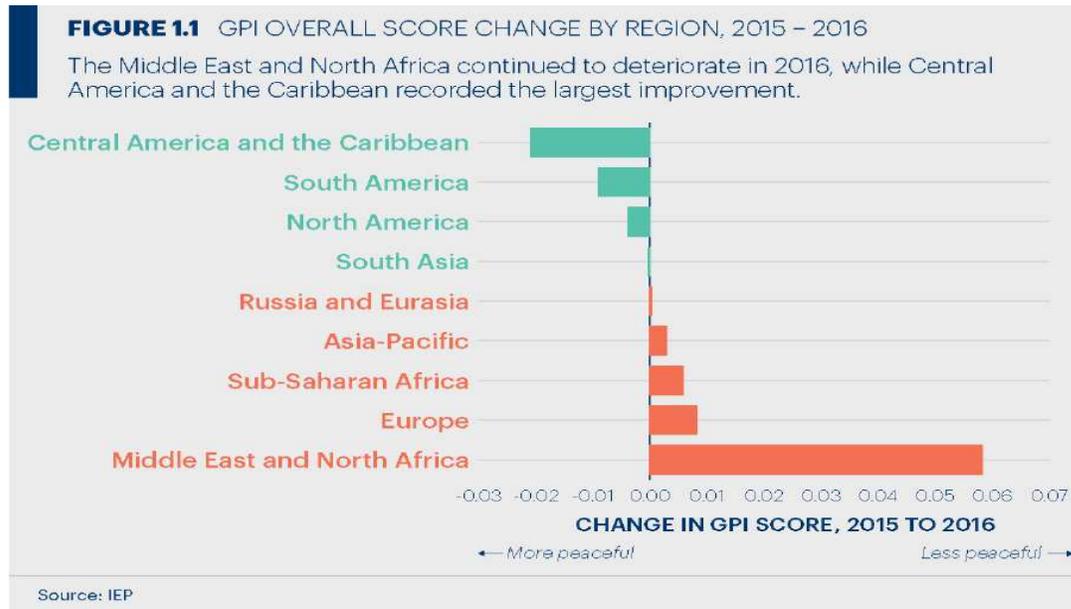
Adopted as it is from Global Peace Index (2016, p. 12)

The researchers introduced the chart to the participants who were informed to use the chart to express what they thought about it on the relative peace around the world from 2015 – 2016. In order to reduce 'researcher's paradox' (Labov 1972 as cited in Liddicoat, 2011, p. 15), involvement of the researchers in the discussion was minimized.

Theoretical Background

Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) Turn-taking theory seeks to account for how turns are initiated, constructed and distributed among conversational partners. Conversation is believed to be orderly exchange of talks with one speaker talking at a time for certain unspecified period and then relinquishes the floor for other conversational partners to take over. Depending on the context and situation, the current speaker may or may not signal his intent to relinquish the floor. In some contexts such a debate, competition for the floor is quite common, while in employment interview, certain orderly protocols are observed. Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) proposed a model for explaining turn distribution in conversation. The model comprised current speaker holding the turn (continues talking until he pauses, which sometimes leads to another speaker talking the turn), current speaker relinquishing the floor by nominating another speaker, and self-selection where another speaker takes over the turn. Zimmermann and West (1996) illustrated these turn exchanges in the following diagram:

Figure 2: Model of turn-taking in conversation by Zimmerman and West
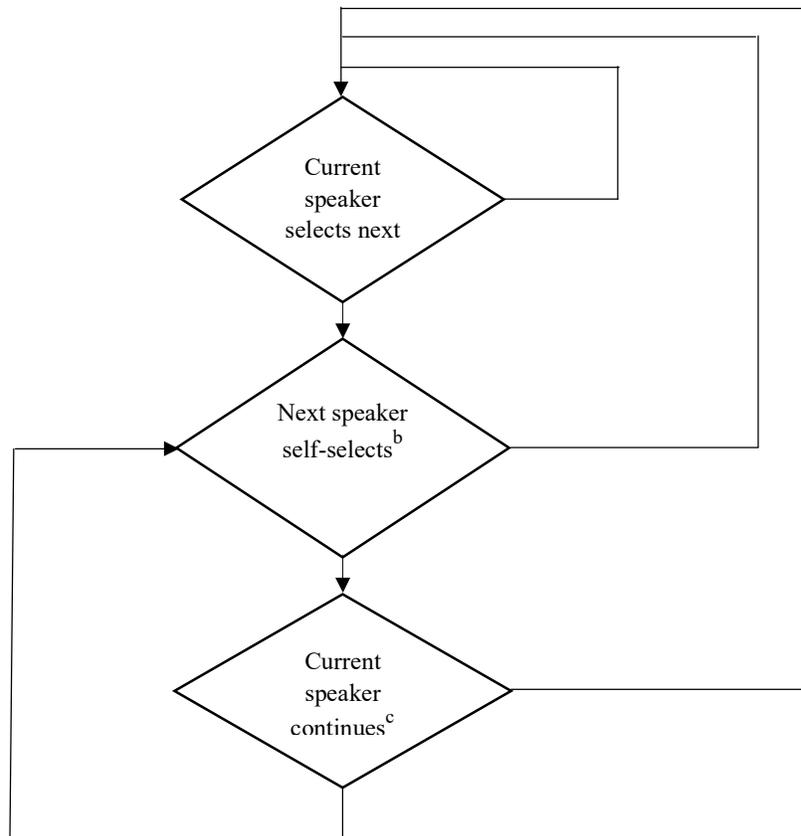
Zimmerman and West, 1996, p. 110

The figure above illustrates how taking a turn, holding a turn or yielding a turn (Stenström, 1994) occurred in casual conversation. In an equal power relation, struggling for the floor is very common particularly during debates (Berger, 2011, p. 293) without prior indication of the next speaker intent to take over the floor. Sometimes, however, transfer of speakership takes place when the current speaker indicates his/her willingness to relinquish the floor. Some of the signals which indicate transfer of speakership include gaze towards the next speaker by the current speaker, tone, or pitch (Jaworski & Coupland, 1999, p. 21). Sometimes the current speaker directly calls the next speaker by his/her name or title, or directing a question to him/her (Zimmermann & West, 1996, p. 109). Where these linguistic signals or direct nomination are indicated, the next speaker, and no one else, has the right and obligation to take over the floor from the current speaker. Otherwise, the current speaker continues. However, where the current speaker has not nominated the next speaker, the floor is open to all conversational partners to self-select with the one who initiated the talk as possessing the right to speak. In that case, the whole circle starts all over again, with the current speaker possessing the floor, and the right to nominate the next speaker. Where the current speaker did not indicate his/her willingness to relinquish the floor, nor any other speaker self-selects, the current speaker may continue.

Stenström (1994) Turn-Taking System: An Overview

In a conversation involving dyadic, triadic or multiple participants, conversation partners are obliged to abide by some etiquette which makes their discussion smooth and conflict-free. Members of speech community, for example, know how to participate in turn-taking exchanges and how to adhere to rules that are appropriate in their community, by allowing overlap (if acceptable) to occur between utterances, and by using pause lengths that are compatible with their particular sociocultural norms (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain 2000, p. 173). Conversation, however, is not always a smooth exchange of talks (Gardner, Fitzgerald & Mushin 2009, p. 4) or a one-party-monopoly. As the current speaker talks, other conversational partners have the right to the floor which is either negotiated or competed. In explaining how speakership is owned and exchanged, Stenström (1994) proposed three turn-taking systems: taking the turn, holding the turn and yielding the turn.

Taking the Turn

Depending on many factors such as culture, social relationship, genre, situation or context transition from current speaker to the next is not always a smooth one. According to Stenström (1994), the beginning of an utterance can indicate whether the speaker taking a turn 'agrees to, doubts or objects to what the previous speaker said (p. 69). In an attempt to take the turn, the next speaker uses some signals such as filled pauses *(əm, ə:m)* and verbal fillers *(well, I mean, you know)* (Stenström 1994, p. 71) to indicate his/her willingness to take over the floor. Such signal, however, tends to indicate that the next speaker is willing to take over the floor but was not fully prepared. In some instances, some signals are used directly to indicate transfer of speakership. These include gaze towards the next speaker by the current speaker, tone, or pitch (Jaworski & Coupland, 1999, p. 21). Sometimes, the current speaker directly call the next speaker by his/her name or title, or directing a question to him/her (Zimmermann & West, 1996, p. 109).

Holding the Turn

'To hold the turn means to carry on talking' (Stenström 1994, p. 75). As already stated, conversation is neither unorderly exchange of talks nor a one-party monopoly. Sometimes, however, some conversation partners might want to deter others from contributing to the ongoing discussion by refusing to relinquish the floor for other conversational partners to take over. Those speakers who tend to hold the floor use some devices such as filled pauses and verbal fillers *(əm, ə:m,well, I mean, you know),* strategically placed silent pauses (a place where it is evident that the turn is not complete and that there is more to come), lexical repetition *(if ifif, it was a it was a,)* or initiates a new start (Stenström 1994, p. 76), to avoid being interrupted, and indicating their lust to hold the floor.

Conversation, however, is neither a one-party monopoly nor disorderly chunk of speech. When engaged in conversation, one person speaks at a time for certain unspecified period and then relinquishes the floor for other conversation partner(s) to say something. For orderly taking of turns, conversation partners must know when it is appropriate to change *speakership* and for the next speaker to know when it is proper for him to take a turn that 'legally' belongs to him. In other words, the current speaker must yield the turn.

Yielding the Turn

Yielding the turn suggests relinquishing the floor for other conversational partner(s), where the current speaker willingly yields the floor, or in some other instances, the floor is 'confiscated'. In a situation where there is a smooth transition from the current speaker to the next, the former (current speaker) invites, requests or offers the floor to the latter (next speaker). Stenström (1994, p. 78) suggested three strategies for yielding the turn: prompting, appealing, and giving up. Some acts such as greetings, questions and requests are examples of prompting acts. Some lexical appealers include

all right, right, OK, you see (occurring in a separate tone unit with rising tone) (Stenström 1994, p. 80). Giving up involves relinquishing the floor to other conversational partner(s) to say something. In some instances, the current speaker uses 'an effective hint for the listener to take over' (Stenström 1994, p. 80) and this include the use of filled pauses *(əm, ə:m).*

Depending on the situation and context, where other conversation partners felt that the current speaker 'denied' them a chance to the conversation, or s/he made a point which others would want to refute or affirm, the floor might be confiscated. According to Berger (2011, p. 293), struggling for the floor is very common particularly during debates without prior indication of the next speaker intent to take over the floor.

Conversation Analysis

Conversation analysis (CA) seeks 'to discover how participants understand and respond to one another in their turns at talk, with a central focus being on how sequences of interaction are generated' (Hutchby and Wooffitt 1998 as cited in Jaworski & Coupland 1999, p. 19). As CA is concerned with turns at talk, the obvious relationship between the two (CA and turn taking) is highly discernible. When one is engaged in conversation analysis, he/she is analysing talk in interaction. According to Liddicoat (2011, p. 1) CA has been an important tool for the analysis of not only talk in interaction but some 'things other than language including eye gaze, and body posture, silences and real-world context in which the talk is produced'. The use of CA in this study is conceived to account for turn exchanges that occurred among the participants.

Methodology

Data Collection

This research collected qualitative data using focus group discussion, which was thought to be less threatening to many participants (Krueger & Casey 2000 cited in Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech &Zoran, 2009, p. 2). Also, as the purpose of this study is to analyze the management of turn distribution in academic discourse multiple participants are required. The discussion lasted fifteen minutes which was later transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Participants

The participants of this study were 300 level students, equivalent to third year bachelor degree, from the Department of Biological Sciences of a public university in Northern Nigeria. There were eight participants, six of them Hausa speakers, among which two were females, one speaker each of Lunguda and Meroeh languages. All the participants were classmates from the same batch taking the same program. Thus, the participants were very much conversant with each other, with age range 18 – 25.

Focus Group Discussion

The activity that was selected by the researcher for the purpose of this study was not as part of a regular course taken by the participants. Before the commencement of the discussion, the researcher informed the participants that the discussion was not meant as a test. So, there was neither right nor wrong answer, and that they need not to speak in any particular order. As such, they can talk at any time they wished citing examples where appropriate. The participants studied the chart for few minutes, and they were asked to start the discussion by using the information provided in the chart, citing specific examples with facts and figures, where appropriate, with countries from each region were peace or otherwise was witnessed.

Data Analysis

1. **Transcription Notations**

Data was transcribed verbatim with notations adopted from Drew and Heritage (1992) (refer to Appendix 1). The data was then analyzed based on the three turn taking systems proposed by (Stenström, 1994) i.e. taking the turn, holding the turn and yielding the turn. The participants were coded as S1, S2, S3, depending on who spoke first, second, third in the discussion until the sixth speaker. Even though there were eight participants, two (both females), have not said anything throughout the discussion. When they were asked by the researcher of their silence, they said they were not current on global issues.

2. **Taking the Turn**

Taking the turn comprised possessing the right to speak during conversation. At the beginning of a conversation, the one who initiates talk has dual rights: right of speaking and right to nominate the next speaker. While the conversation was going on, such rights belong to the current speaker, whose initial comment tend to signal his agreement or otherwise with other speakers preceding him/her. In this study, taking the turn assumes various dimensions, some of which indicated agreement with past speaker, as in the following extract:

25 S3: [No. If you can remember

26   = °what happens during Olympics°,

27   = or a friendly [match

28 S2: [before the Olympics]

29 S3: Before. There was a BOMB (.) that was set in a STADIUM

30   WHERE the President of France (0.4) was there

31   watching the football.

In lines 26 and 27, S3 was not certain where a bomb was planted at a stadium in France. To clear such doubt, S2 who seemed to have this information interrupted S3 (the current speaker) to confirm the site of the incidence. The use of the word 'Before' at the beginning of line 29 was an ellipsis for 'yes, before the Olympics', which indicated acceptance of the information by S3.

At the beginning of the whole conversation, the first speaker (S1) talked of the Middle East, Europe and America, which seemed to pave the way for his conversational partners to either refute or agree with what he said. The beginning of conversation 'provides an important resource for projecting what the rest of the turn is going to be' (Schegloff 1987 as cited in Sidnell& Strivers eds. 2014, pp. 173-174). Some common features of beginning a turn include *appositional beginning,* e.g. *well, but, and, so,* and so on (Sidnell& Strivers eds. 2014, p. 174). The use of the word *'Actually'* (line 1) in the following extract indicated such a technique:

1 S1: ↑Actually (0.3) I'm not surprised by looking at this↓

2   = because (0.2) we all know what's happening↓

3   currently in the Middle East,

4   = Arab countries. In countries like Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, where (0.6)

5   = a lot of terrorists grou::p try to (0.5) that is take over the government, (0.5)

6   like (0.9) and even Yemen °and other countries°. (2.0)

7 Countries like (0.7) America↓ and other Europe countries

8 °we all know how they are°↓

9. (2.2)

The proponents of turn taking theory, Sacks, schegloff and Jefferson believe that conversation is more often organized in order to be coherent. As such, each bit of conversation tends to have relationship with the immediate utterance preceding the current one. This is what is referred to as *sequence organization* (Liddicoat, 2011, p. 138), which is built on *adjacency pair* (Schegloff and Sacks 1973 as cited in Liddicoat, 2011, p. 139). In explaining adjacency pair, Schegloff and Sacks believe that a question is conventionally followed by an answer, and a greeting by greeting. Adjacency pair also occurs where the current talk is meant to complement the preceding one. S1's long silence pause of 2.2 seconds in line 9, the production of line 8 in lower volume and the falling tone at the end of it, indicated the speaker's intent to relinquish the floor. The next speaker seized the opportunity of the silent pause to take over the turn, and his remarks (S2) seemed to be continuations of S1 talk above in lines 7 and 8, as the following extract indicated:

10 S2: To a greater extent (.) Europe is (0.3) le::ss pea::ceful for now.

11 = If you check countries like France, for instance.

12 >France is in Europe<.

13 = <France has experienced more than three attacks>,

14 = serious ones this year↓.

15 = So::, based on this <u>chart</u>, ahhy =,

16 ahhy can CONCUR with the chart =

17 = that >they're really saying the <u>tru</u>th here because< Europe

18 = PRESENTLY now, is not peaceful↓.

19 (3.4)

As pointed out earlier, each bit of conversation tends to have relationship with the immediate utterance preceding the current one. In other words, conversation is a sequence of talk linked to one another. The current talk, however, does not necessarily attune with the one preceding it. In this study, the discussion took a new dimension when S2 failed to mention America as one of the countries that was vulnerable to attack, and therefore less peaceful, and the use of silence by S2 of 3.4 seconds in line 19, made S1 to 'seize' the turn again:

20 S1: But (.) but I think (0.5) if America can be:: at THIS green

21 = that's peaceful country↓>then Europe should also be<=

22 = because if >Europe countries are VULNERABLE to attacks by terrorists<

23 = >America is also VULNERABLE because =

The use of the word 'but' at the beginning of his speech in line 20, S1 seemed to counter what S2 has said about Europe, particularly France, being target of terrorists attacks and therefore less peaceful. As for him (S1) if for the attack on France, Europe was labelled as less peaceful, America experienced similar situation. He (S1) was, however, met with counter comments from other conversational partners who believe that the attack on America was less or unsuccessful compared to that on Europe as the following extract indicated:

41 S3: = [There was no any successful attempt [=

42 S2: = > [They were not successful<=

43   = If you check the mortality rate, (0.3)

44   = if you check the mortality rate (0.6)[=

45 S4: [There was MASSIVE mortality rate =

46   = °in this attack on France° =

Three speakers – S3, S2 and S4 simultaneously argued that the attack on America was not severe in the period under discussion compared to other European countries such as France.

As the discussion unfolds, another notable phenomenon in taking a turn was 'pleading' for the floor. Pleading is used here to mean words or phrases that signify polite request for the floor. Such words as indicated in the extract that follows include *Please, I want to….* (line 66). Even though S2 has spoken before, he used a pleading technique in order to take a turn:

66 S2: Please, and I wan::t to (0.2) chi::p-in °something° here =

67   = °about ehh this (0.3) sub-Saharan Africa°.

68   °Now to my o::wn expe::ri::ence°, =

69   >I think sub-Saharan Africa<, the (0.2) this <u>margin</u>=

70   = is supposed to be WIDE↓

71   >compared to what I'm seeing here↓<=

S2 who has spoken previously is now pleading for the floor as his initial word 'please' indicated (line 66). Despite his plead for floor, he seemed not to be fully prepared for the turn. His utterances were marked with many silent pauses (lines 66, 67 and 69) and elongation of some words (lines 66 and 68), and constant use of lower tones (lines 70 and 71). According to Stenström (1994, p. 71), the use of filled pauses such as *(əm, ə:m)*, and verbal fillers like *(well, I mean, you know)* indicated that the next speaker is willing to take over the floor but was not fully prepared. Apart from these silent pauses and verbal fillers, constant hesitations and prolongation of some lexical items tend to indicate lack of preparation to take the floor as indicated above (lines 66-71).

Lack of preparation to take over the floor was also indicated by speaker S6, who was silent throughout the discussion but now want to come into the discussion. He used many verbal fillers and silent pauses, and refused to yield the floor, as the following extract indicated (line 85-93):

85 S6: No, no. If you ask me, (0.8)

86   = I DON'T agree, (0.7)

87   = if I'm correct, (0.8) ə:m (3.0)

88   = Somalia should be arou:::nd (0.9)

89   °North Africa, or sub-Saharan°↓(0.7)

90 S1: °Not sub-Saharan°

91   (3.0)

92 S6   °Not sub-Saharan°

      93   (3.4)

S6 speech was marked by many silent pauses and gaps of at least 3 seconds between turns (lines 87, 91 and 93). His speech was also characterized by lower volume which indicated his uncertainties on what he was saying. In some cases he stared at the ceiling or gaze at his conversational partners for assistance. Yet, he refused to yield the floor. Several attempts were made by other conversational partners to take over the floor, but he remained resolute and determined to continue as in the following extract:

      94   S6: I'm talking of (0.5) I'm talking of North Africa.

      95   (3.6)

96 S3: [Si-r

97 S6: [WELL, if you ask me=

      98   = >I'll agree with the CHART because< (0.6)ə:m,=

      99   = if you look at it, (1.8)

      100   = Europe has been in (1.2)

      101   = °war for long time°, (0.7) I think (2.2) ↓,°against America° ()

      102   = °They damaged there (0.4) and whatsoever°↓. (0.9)

      103   = So, i::f you COME to (0.3) Middle Ea::st, (0.3)

      104   = North Amer- sorry, North Africa a::nt (0.3)>sub-Saharan Africa>=

      105   = which I believe >Nigeria is among these countries<↓.(1.5)

106 S3:   [it is in sub-Saharan Africa

107 S6 :   [If you look at it =

      108   = we just start having (0.5) few of those crises recently ↓

The silent pause of 3.6 seconds in line 95 prompted S3 to attempt taking over the floor (line 96) from S6 but the latter continued immediately with a louder tone in line 97. The content of the speech itself from lines 100-102 indicated lack of awareness of current issues on the part of the speaker. Despite several failed attempts to provide concrete examples, S6 remained resolute in holding the floor. His desire to continue the discussion despite his limited information about the topic of discussion indicated that conversation partners tend to hold the floor probably for fear of being sidelined in the ongoing discussion.

3. Holding the Turn

Holding the turn implies continue to speak. In a conversation involving two or more people, one person plays the role of the 'talker' while the other as the listener. At some point, though, the roles change. Not all conversation partners, however, recognize such change of roles. They tend to hold the floor by saying more, which denies other conversation partners their fair share in the conversation. Some strategies that indicate holding the floor include the use of verbal fillers *(əm, ə:m)*, verbal fillers *(well, I mean, you know)*, lexical repetitions, and silent pauses (Stenström 1994, pp. 75-76). Schegloff (1982 as cited in Liddicoat 2011, p. 334) called the strategies for holding the floor 'continuers' – situations which indicate that the action underway as not yet being complete.

One of the strategies used by S6 was the constant use of conditional clauses 'if you ask me' (line 97) and 'if you look at it' (lines 99 and 107). This strategy of using the 'if clause' helped S6 to hold the floor because, as Mazeland (2014, p. 477) pointed out '[i]n a compound TCU [Turn Construction Unit] with an *if ... then* format, for example, the initial adverbial clause is a preliminary TCU component that projects continuation with a specific type of second part, namely the *then-* clause'. In other words, *if clause* served as a 'holder' which fastened the current speaker with the listener to wait for the *then-* part of the utterance. The following extract indicated how the use of *if ... then* clause helped the speaker (S6) to hold the floor:

97 S6: [WELL, if you ask me=

98   = >I'll agree with the CHART because< (0.6) ə:m,=

99   = if you look at it, (1.8)

S6 also used verbal fillers in form of lexical repetition (lines 116 and 118). In lines 117 and 118, he used the expressions 'those things' and 'this thing' leaving the listener to discern what 'those things' and 'this thing' imply while he holds the floor:

116   (0.7) in fact, (0.6) weapon (0.4) weapon exchange=

117   °and all those things°=

118   because they're CLOSE TO (1.3) ə:m, ə:m, (2.1)

119   = this thing (1.5).

120   So, I THINK (0.7) I'll go with the chart=

121   = I'll go with the chart

Not only S6, other participants of this study use other strategies such as prolongation of certain lexical items and verbal fillers to hold the floor as the following extract indicates:

10 S2: To a greater extent (.) Europe is (0.3) le::ss pea::ceful for now.

11   = If you check countries like France, for instance.

12   >France is in Europe<.

13   = <France has experienced more than three attacks>,

14   = serious ones this year↓.

15   = So::, based on this chart, ahhy =,

16   ahhy can CONCUR with the chart =

17   = that >they're really saying the truth here because< Europe

18   = PRESENTLY now, is not peaceful↓.

In lines 10 and 15, the speaker prolongs the vowels of some lexical items, seemingly, to continue to hold the floor for a longer period. Also prolonged was the lexical item 'I' transcribed 'ahhy' to reflect the exact pronunciation of the speaker (line 15). Not only prolongation of some vowels but also constant repetition of similar word was used by some participants as a strategy for holding the floor. The word 'France', for example, was repeated in lines 11, 12 and 13. Line 12 seemed to be a tautology because the speaker already indicated that he was talking of Europe (line 10). His desire to continue to hold the floor, however, resulted in using 'grammar' to achieve his aim (holding the floor). Mazeland (2014) quoting Fox and Thompson 2010) describes the grammar which the

participants in conversation use as 'a massive set of linguistic practices that have evolve in, and are organized in terms of, *sequential positions* and actions of utterances in their everyday conversational bahaviour' (p. 476).

4. **Yielding the Turn**

Despite attempts by some participants to hold floor, several efforts were made by other conversational partners to confiscate the floor. Confiscating the floor occurs when the current speaker was interrupted by another speaker. In normal turn exchanges, the current speaker has the right to nominate the next speaker or indicate his/her willingness to relinquish the floor. In this study, however, there were several occasions of confiscating the floor from the current speaker in the mid of his talk. Consider the following extract:

    35   = Therefore (0.3) therefore looking at THAT we can
    36   = conclude that it's less peaceful (0.6). Since it has an,
    37   =   an a bala[nce =
    38 S1: = [Even (0.2) even the America, =
    39   = how many attempts were MADE by THESE terrorists
    40   >to attack America< [

S1 interrupted the previous speaker in the middle of the word 'balance' (line 37) in order to refute a point. The overlapping talk appears confrontational in nature. Confrontational overlap occurred in the conversation of this study where the attempt to take over the floor was to refute a point being made. In the conversation, therefore, several confrontational overlaps occurred, in some cases, by several participants at a time:

    39   = how many attempts were MADE by THESE terrorists
    40   >to attack America<[=
    41 S3: = [There was no any successful attempt [=
    42 S2:   = > [They were not successful<=

In the extract above, both S3 and S2 tried to counter a point with S2 stressing what S3 has said. The equal sign at the end of line 40, and at the beginning and end of lines 41 and 42 indicated that the speeches latched onto one another. In some other instances, however, the overlap was a cordial one as in the following extract:

    42 S2:   = > [They were not successful<=
    43   = If you check the mortality rate, (0.3)
    44   = if you check the mortality rate (0.6)[=
    45 S4: [There was MASSIVE mortality rate =
    46   = °in this attack on France° =
    47 S2: =°mortality in America is less↓
    48   compared to what you see in Europe°↓.

As S2 was making a point on the mortality rate in Europe, S4 stressed the point in line 45 by repeating what S2 has said previously in lines 43 and 44.

In some other cases, yielding the floor was done smoothly. Some speakers in this study indicated their willingness to give over the floor which was indicated by their tone of voice, or abruptly stopped talking which gave the next speaker a chance to take over. Consider the following extract:

50 S5: But I think in America::

51　　　= >they do not have problem of political instability< (0.4).

52　　　So, that's why actually, this Middle East (0.6)

53　　　°they are having this problem°↓. (0.4)

54　　　°They use to kill one another°. (0.3)

55　　　So, ALL °because of this political instability°↓. (0.7)

56　　　<The politics in those countries is not stable>. (0.9)

The rephrasing of line 55 in line 56, and a silence of about a second indicated that speaker (S5) was ready to relinquish the floor to the next speaker. Without any silence in the inter-turns, the next speaker immediately took over. In some instances, however, the silence was longer than 2 seconds which indicated that the floor was open for any next speaker to self-select:

47 S2: =°mortality in America is less↓

48　　　compared to what you <u>see</u> in Europe°↓.

49　　　(2.1)

50 S5: But I think in America::

51　　　= >they do not have problem of political instability< (0.4).

The silence of 2.1 second opened the floor for the next speaker – S5 who self-selected, and used the opportunity he gained to counter what the immediate past speaker has said. One notable feature of the conversation in this study was that there was no direct nomination of the next speaker by the current speaker neither was there any sign such as gaze or any gesture to indicate next speaker. The gaze was sometimes used by the current speaker when he requires assistance of some information that will allow him to continue dominating the talk.

Conclusion

In this study, management of turn distribution in academic discourse among Nigerian undergraduate science students has been analyzed. The study indicated that 'pleading' was among the strategies used by some participants of this study to take a turn. Another notable characteristic of this study is lack of direct nomination of the next speaker by the current speaker, and that gaze, was used by some participants of this study as a strategy for seeking assistance not as a sign of nominating the next speaker. The findings suggested that in the academic discourse used in this study direct nomination of the next speaker by the current speaker is rare, and that gaze tended to indicate seeking assistance from conversation partners. Future studies may require larger population to account for how gaze is used as a sign for seeking assistance instead of a signal for nominating the next speaker in turn taking interaction.

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Appendix 1: Drew and Heritage (eds.) (1992) transcription notation

[Starting point of overlapping speech.

] End point of overlapping speech

(2.4) Silence measured in seconds

(.) Pause of less than 0.2 seconds

↑Upward shift in pitch

↓Downward shift in pitch

word Emphasis

wo:rd Prolongation of sound

°word° Section of talk produced in lower
volume than the surrounding talk

WORD Section of talk produced in higher
volume than the surrounding talk

w#ord# Creaky voice

£word£ Smile voice

wo(h)rd Laugh particle inserted within a word

wo- Cut off in the middle of a word

word< Abruptly completed word

>word< Section of talk uttered in a quicker
pace than the surrounding talk

<word> Section of talk uttered in a slower
pace than the surrounding talk

(word) Section of talk that is difficult to hear
but is likely as transcribed

( ) Inaudible word

.hhh Inhalation

hhh Exhalation

. Falling intonation at the end of an
utterance

? Raising intonation at the end of an
utterance

, Flat intonation at the end of an
utterance

word.=word 'Rush through' without the
normal gap into a new utterance.

((word)) Transcriber's comments

(Adapted from Drew and Heritage (eds), *Talk
at Work*. Cambridge: CUP, 1992.)

CONVERSATION ANALYSIS 179
3110-Ch-11.qxd 10/11/03 12:27 PM Page 179

Appendix 2: Transcription of the Primary Data

1 S1:   ↑Actually (0.3) I'm not surprised by looking at this↓
2   = because (0.2)we all know what's happening↓
3   currently in the Middle East,
4   = Arab countries. In countries like Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, where (0.6)
5   = a lot of terrorists grou::p try to (0.5) that is take over the government, (0.5)
6   like (0.9) and even Yemen °and other countries°. (2.0)
7   Countries like (0.7) America↓ and other Europe countries
8   °we all know how they are°↓
9   (2.2)
10 S2:   To a greater extent (.) Europe is (0.3) le::ss pea::ceful for now.
11   = If you check countries like France, for instance.
12   >France is in Europe<.
13   = <France has experienced more than three attacks>,
14   = serious ones this year↓.
15   = So::, based on this chart, ahhy =,
16   ahhy can CONCUR with the chart =
17   = that >they're really saying the truth here because< Europe
18   = PRESENTLY now, is not peaceful↓.
19   (3.4)
20 S1:   But (.) but I think (0.5) if America can be:: at THIS green
21   = that's peaceful country↓>then Europe should also be<=
22   = because if >Europe countries are VULNERABLE to attacks by terrorists<
23   = >America is also VULNERABLE because =
24   = they engaged in the same activities< [
25 S3:   [No. If you can remember
26   = °what happens during Olympics°,
27   = or a friendly [match
28 S2:   [before the Olympics]
29 S3:   Before, there was aBOMB (.) that was set in a STADIUM
30   WHERE the President of France (0.4) was there
31   watching the football.
32   = >And it was ONE night that the ISIS =,
33   = if you can remember<, (0.5)
34   = that (interrupted) the France↓ within ONE day (0.6).
35   = Therefore (0.3) therefore looking at THAT we can
36   = conclude that it's less peaceful (0.6). Since it has an,
37   =   an a bala[nce =
38 S1:   = [Even (0.2) even the America, =
39   = how many attempts were MADE by THESE terrorists
40   >to attackAmerica<[=
41 S3:   = [There was no any successful attempt[=
42 S2:   = > [They were not successful<=
43   = If you check the mortality rate, (0.3)
44   = if you check the mortality rate (0.6)[=
45 S4:   [There was MASSIVE mortality rate =
46   = °in this attack on France° =
47 S2: =°mortality in America is less↓
48   compared to what you see in Europe°↓.
49   (2.1)
50 S5: But I think in America::
51   = >they do not have problem of political instability< (0.4).

52   So, that's why actually, this Middle East (0.6)
53   °they are having this problem°↓. (0.4)
54   °They use to kill one another°. (0.3)
55   So, ALL °because of this political instability°↓. (0.7)
56   <The politics in those countries is not stable>. (0.9)
57 S3: =Sir, what I can say is that =
58   the America is now a SUPERPOWER = (0.5)
59   °it's the one that's controllingthe world°. (0.4)
60   So, the Afri#ca#, North Afri#ca# and East Afri#ca#n countries
61   = °are the developing countries°.↓ (0.3)
62   And the (.) the Americans are ( )
63   = to <u>see</u> that the Africans are °developed°.↓ (0.2)
64   THAT'S why they are innovating (0.2) ə:m<u>crises</u>
65   = that will <u>interrupt</u> the °growth of the countries°. =
66 S2: Please, and I wan::t to (0.2) chi::p-in °something° here =
67   = °about ehh this (0.3) sub-Saharan Africa°.
68   °Now to my o::wn expe::ri::ence°, =
69   >I think sub-Saharan Africa<, the (0.2) this <u>margin</u>=
70   = is supposed to be WIDE↓
71   >compared to what I'm seeing here↓<=
72   = based on the serious <u>cases</u> (.) we experienced =
73   = within the 2015 and (.) 2016.
74   = Nigeria is a:: living (.) testimony =
75   = as can JUSTIFY what's on the go (0.2) =
76   The<u>rate</u> of death (0.3) deaths, =
77   = >that the mortality rate↓ we experienced in 2015<↓(0.5)
78   So, I THINK↓ (0.2) a:::nd even CURRENTLY in 2016 =
79   = like what we're experiencing in South-south,
80   = and even in the North-east here↓ (0.4)
81   >So, I think the deaths RATE<↓,=
82   = the (0.5) this thing,> the chart <
83   = is supposed to be::, as it be::, (0.3)
84   = >longer compared to what I'm seeing here↓<.
85 S6: No, no. If you ask me, (0.8)
86   = I DON'T agree, (0.7)
87   = if I'm correct, (0.8) ə:m (3.0)
88   = Somalia should be arou:::nd (0.9)
89   °North Africa, or sub-Saharan°↓(0.7)
90 S1:   °Not sub-Saharan°
91   (3.0)
92 S6   °Not sub-Saharan°
93   (3.4)
94   S6: I'm talking of (0.5) I'm talking of North Africa.
95   (3.6)
96 S3   [Si-r
97 S6   [WELL, if you ask me=
98   = >I'll agree with the CHART because< (0.6)ə:m,=
99   = if you look at it, (1.8)
100   = Europe has been in (1.2)
101   = °war for long time°, (0.7) I think (2.2) ↓,°against America° ()
102   = °They damaged there (0.4) and whatsoever°↓. (0.9)
103   = So, i::f you COME to (0.3) Middle Ea::st, (0.3)
104   = North Amer- sorry, North Africa a::nt (0.3)>sub-Saharan Africa>=
105   = which I believe >Nigeria is among these countries<↓.(1.5)

106 S3   [it is in sub-Saharan Africa
107 S6   [If you look at it =
108   = we just start having (0.5)few of those crises recently ↓
109   [((Everybody talking at the same time))
110 S6 ((continues)):   [I'm coming hello, hello,=
111   = °we just start having this experience°. (0.5)
112   = NOW if you look at Middle East Africa::n (0.6)
113   = I think (1.2) ((looking at the ceiling))ə:m (0.8) this (2.3)
114   = I'm sorry, (0.4) this, (0.6)°it has escape my mind°. (2.4)
115   >These are places where you have exchange o::f<,
116   (0.7) in fact, (0.6)weapon (0.4) weapon exchange=
117   °and all those things°=
118   because they're CLOSE TO (1.3)ə:m, ə:m, (2.1)
119   = this thing (1.5).
120   So, I THINK (0.7) I'll go with the chart=
121   = I'll go with the chart
122   because itsss, (0.5)
123   to me it's okay. (0.6).
124   And Asia↓ (0.8) if we look at this thing (0.9) mmm (0.6)
125   = they don't have (1.5) they don't experience that much↓ (0.7)
126   = I will only say↓
127   = they experience (1.5) mmm (1.2)
128   = all these crises going on during (2.0) late back 20s =
129   = em, (08)
130   = you know, (0.7)
131   = should I say (3.2) (°their technology is not that advanced°) THEN (1.3)
132   = something like that.
133   (2.8)
134 S2: I'm- (3.2)
135 S1: () For me, I didn't sa::y (0.4) I completely
136   (2.6)
137 S2: When I'm checking the range↓
138   = it's just one year 2015 2016 there↓. (0.5)
139   °Like South Africa, for instance°↓.
140   = South Africa:::
141   (4.2)[
142 S6:   [South Africa is not here↓ =
143   = THIS chart's OKAY. =
144   = I'll go with the chart↓.