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**Motor Park Discourse in South-Western Nigeria:
Relations among Discourse, Group Ideology and
Social Identity**

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Abstract

This study examines Motor Park Discourse in South-Western Nigeria with a view to presenting a cross-cultural and cross-linguistic perspective on the interrelations existing among the concepts of discourse, (group) ideology, and social identity as key interfaces of language practices. The aim is to isolate some of the ideological patterns underlying social-linguistic construction, on the one hand, and discourse practices on the other, among participants in the

studied speech community, and then to identify how such constructionism and discourse acts engender both speech-and-social identity. Thus, by relying on contemporary theories of discourse, existing literature on the cross-disciplines and data collected from motor parks across South-Western Nigeria, the study seeks to establish generalisations which bare themselves in light of the isolated group of Yoruba ethnographic speech community, by reappraising some of the theoretical positions amenable from other cultures for instance that 'identity is the product rather than the source of linguistic and other semiotic practices, and is therefore a social and cultural rather than primarily internal psychological phenomenon.

Introduction

Studies across diverse fields of the social sciences and humanities continue to impact significantly on linguistic research and discourse studies. Featuring prominently among these are the sub-fields of anthropology, social psychology, ethnography, literary criticism, semiotics and cultural studies to mention few. The resultant corpus of knowledge that emerges comes laden with a conglomeration of concepts which cut intricately through the multidisciplinary fields, to include discourse, ideology, race, identity, culture, class, hegemony, among others. Scholars have developed theories of identity which associate the concepts of language and nationality, as language (the tongues we speak) remains one of the major parameters known for relating the differences among cultures, and thus for discriminating the identity of the one from the other kind of people. But the list of parameters for identifying individuals (as distinct from the culture-bound groupings known as Peoples) remains long and extensive, as extensive as the scope of individual activity and engagement within society itself, from membership of the family unit to membership of a voluntary group: thus, the categorization of Social Identity (see Ochs, 1993).

But diverse as the representations of social identity may truly be, the centrality of language to the expression and creation of such identities cannot be overemphasized, and where language practices within the same cultural identity which has a common language constitute the broader context of the study, as is the present case, one may only speak of “the centrality of discourse [rather than just of language], to the expression and creation of sociocultural identities” (see Jorgenson & Philip, 2002). In conceptualizing its theoretical framework therefore, this study appropriates the Discourse Theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985), with its starting point in the poststructuralist idea that discourse constructs the social world in meaning; that, owing to the fundamental instability of language, meaning can never be permanently fixed, and thus that no discourse is a closed entity, but constantly gets trans-formed through contact with other discourses, leading to the notion of what has been designated within the theory as Discursive Struggle (Ibid). This study further adopts the Theory of Habitus (a set of bodily dispositions acquired through extended engagements in our everyday activities, that dispose us to act in certain ways) as developed by social theorist Pierre Bourdieu’s (1977). Furthermore, the concept of Conceptualization Cues, as developed through the interactional sociolinguistic approach of John Gumpers (1982) bears significance for the purpose of this study, while the study also draws remarkably from the insights of the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis which holds that the “real world” is to a large extent built upon the language habits of the group... [; that the] worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached... [but then that] the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation (Edward Sapir, 1929).

The idea of the Motor Park itself, within the socio-economic context of Nigeria and independent West Africa, is probably one of the most vivid illustrations of the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, among other theories of discourse and identity captured above. This is the more so in light of the hypothesis as modified and summarized in the often

quoted excerpt from Benjamin Whorf's (1940) *Science and Linguistics*, in the following words:

We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages ... We cut nature up, organize it into concepts, and ascribe significances as we do, largely because we are parties to an agreement to organize it in this way – an agreement that holds throughout our speech community and is codified in the patterns of our language. The agreement is, of course, an implicit and unstated one, but its terms are absolutely obligatory...

Obviously, even if a rhetorical or metaphorical extension, as it seems, the concept of the 'motor park' (the way it is conceived of in West Africa, Nigeria precisely) differs greatly from whatever semantic, pragmatic or sociolinguistic appropriations may be conjectured or designed for, or associated with the word in the native English language. Having a semantic variant in the equally re-constructed word 'garage', the concept encapsulates phenomena which would most probably seem outlandish to audiences from the western parts of the hemispheres, where public transportation may not call for any serious language re-invention: a fact which may be closely linked to the socioeconomic situation of the developed vis-à-vis that of the developing world.

In fact, the nearest conception (of the idea embodied in 'motor park') that may be found in the English culture finds representation in the compound word "car park", which the Oxford ALDictionary (Turnbull, 2010 ed.) defines with the variation-clarifying caption of British English as "an area or a building where people can leave their cars". The British English word also takes semantic options in "garage" (as with, but differently from 'motor park' in NE above) and in "multi-storey car park", which all but have the same concept at their semantic root: even when the speaker chooses to use the same lexical items 'motor park' in the British English language. In a sharp contrast to the BrE however, using the alternative caption of Nigerian English, the OAL Dictionary defines the concept 'motor park' as "a

station for passengers to get on or off buses or taxis”, with an appended practical illustration of usage in the sentence *Passengers are set down at Molete Motor Park*. [Molete Park coincidentally constitutes one of the major Parks visited during the data collection procedure for this study].

Certainly, even the concept of a ‘Park’ (in the Nigerian and West African context, without the modifying adjective ‘motor’) would also yield itself to the process of social constructionism, among the designated discourse practitioners. The implication is that the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis as captured in the above excerpt immediately jumps into play. The world of the motor park invariably incorporates an entire array of realities and structures (with designatory identities and categorisations) which may not be meaningfully detached or detachable from the term ‘motor park’, such as the notions of: ‘market and commerce’, ‘mega-phonetic advertisement’, ‘road transport’, ‘road travels cum industrial customer-service relations’, ‘street-commuter-terminus life’, ‘road workers’, ‘passengers’, ‘street-bargain-smartness’, ‘destination and geographic mapping’, among a host of other contingent concepts and discursive categorisations. According to Egole (2013) Vanguard Online of September 14, in a headline titled *What Goes on in Most Motor Parks at Night*:

Most motor parks across Nigeria do not only serve the purpose of loading and offloading passengers. They also serve several purposes which people do not know. Research has shown that major parks in Nigeria turn to mini international markets at night with different kinds of traders all struggling to sell and also, a conducive atmosphere for smokers to enjoy themselves as they feel very comfortable doing their thing at odd hours.

Another report (Bivan, Edozie&Nurudeen, 2013) captures the relevance of the concept to the African reality in the following words:

The motor park in today’s modern society is arguably the most common ‘first contact’ for people travelling from one destination to another within Nigeria. For [its] African neighbors such as Benin

Republic, Ghana, Niger and other bordering countries coming into Nigeria, the motor park too probably is the first contact and thus gives the first impression.

The resultant world of the motor park in these regions thus encapsulates a whole new string of socially constructed phenomena whose realities do not merely corroborate contemporary theoretical positions in social science, linguistic and anthropological research but throw up new perspectives for viewing and understanding what we already know about language and thought on the one hand, and language and society on the other: including all other relevant modalities. Among other things therefore, it is the aim of this study to achieve the following major research objectives:

1. To attempt an ethnographic and sociolinguistic description of the language of the Motor Park in South-Western Nigeria, using qualitative critical analysis.
2. To chart the social identity, and then to draw the linkages between the discourse practices of the motor park and the cultural, super-structural ideologies and other similar fundamental belief systems attributive to the Yoruba of South-Western Nigeria.
3. To identify and describe the basic discursive patterns among participants in motor park discourse, which are amenable to theoretical sociolinguistic generalisations.

To this end, the study is sub-divided into four major parts. The current part serves to introduce the work by charting its theoretical framework and in that process defining the research problem. Part two presents a more detailed review of related literature, appended to which is a concise report on the research methodology. In part three we present the analysis of data gathered from the field, taking adequate recourse to the reviewed literature forming the theoretical base. And finally part four contains the conclusion and recommendations of the study based on the analysis.

Understanding Discourse

Literature on the subject matter of Discourse is wrought with contributions from prominent scholars, linguists and theorists without reflection on whose works the discussion of the concept would probably appear deficient. These include the classical works of Ferdinand de Saussure on Structuralism; Michel Foucault's contributions on Power, Knowledge and Discourse, which constitutes a certain break from Structuralism; the contributions of Karl Marx in understanding the Social phenomenon, which would invariably inform later understandings of social constructionism, to mention few. Though we do not set out here to elaborate on the various linguistic and social theories which go to the root of contemporary understandings of the concept of 'Discourse', by this reflection we hope, nevertheless, to draw attention back to the relativity of the term, and then to expound the major aspects quite significant for achieving the aim and objectives of this study.

Discourse theory, according to Jorgensen & Phillip (2002), "aims at an understanding of the social [reality] as a discursive construction whereby, in principle, all social phenomena can be analysed using discourse analytical tools". In broad terms then, the notion of discourse theory speaks to an understanding that social phenomena are never fixed or absolute, for which reason meaning could never be ultimately fixed. One of the basic understandings of the concept of discourse, based on the works of Foucault (1972, 1973, 1977), is that Discourse creates a world by shaping our perceptions of it, pulling together chains of associations that produce a meaningful understanding, and then organizing the way we behave towards objects in the world and towards other people.

Furthermore, according to Foucault (1973), Discourse not only shapes our world but generates knowledge and "truth." Knowledge for Foucault (as for most other structuralists and poststructuralists) was not something that existed independently of language. In other words, according to Gumpers (1982) knowledge is not simply communicated

through language but all knowledge is organized through the structures, interconnections, and associations that are built into language. This in practice implies that most discourses have the power to make people accept particular kinds of statements as true. In fact myths and folklores were not just discourses but were created through discourse. And the same process that goes into the creation of so-called practical non-realities in myth is what goes into the social construction of phenomena in today's world, from one field of human endeavor to another.

According to Laclau & Mouffe (1985: 105), discourse is “the structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice, [whereby articulatory practice refers to] any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of [such] articulatory practice”. It should be noted that ‘element’ here refers to “any difference that is not discursively articulated”. Obviously, the idea of ‘difference’ presupposes relationship among things in comparison, such that the one is not the same as the other, nor the other the same as another item. An ‘element’ in Laclau & Mouffe’s theory therefore designates not fixed lexical or linguistic categories (as traditional theories of grammar posit) but what goes into the construction or the making of identity; and then the articulation of such elements with the resulting modification of their identities in that process is what discourse refers to. The deliberate choice of metalanguage adopted by Laclau & Mouffe is significant, as it avoids designations such as the terms ‘concept’, ‘idea’ etc in place of ‘element’, ‘difference’, ‘articulation’, and so on.

In other words, discourse is created when the process of articulating (anything from objects in the putative real world to subjective abstract feelings, or socially constructed realities), in such a way that the contingent articulatory practices that ensue among the group, culminate in an ordered totality of relations among the different elements comprised in that process (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; see also Austin, 1962; Hymes, 1975). But the understanding of discourse

involves “the [partial] fixation of meaning within a particular domain” (Ibid), such as medicine, journalism, law, education, and so on. So that in the domain of law for instance, an ‘element’ consists in the discrimination of ‘the person who consigns cargo’ from ‘the person for whose receipt that cargo was consigned’ (or yet from some other contingent but differentiable subjects), with the discursive consequence of articulating the latter as ‘consignor’, and the former as ‘consignee’, thereby achieving a modification of identities in that process. But the structuring of the discourse here consists in the fact that such elements as are articulated in the terms ‘consignor’ and ‘consignee’

Aspects of Social Identity

The concept of social identity “encompasses participant roles, positions, relationships, reputations, and other dimensions of social personae, which are conventionally linked to epistemic and affective stances” (Ochs, 1996: 424). This implies that every individual operates a set of ‘outward appearances’ associated with particular functions (e.g. being a ‘student’ does not ‘preclude being a ‘child’ at the same time, nor being a ‘chorister’). Existing within society, and engaging in activities which make contact and relations with other individuals inevitable then presupposes that an individual is not merely a social being but possess membership of one social group or another. This basic understanding of social relationship and association goes to the root of the concept of social identity. What defines social identity then consists in the answer to the question ‘who is this person, as distinct from that person?’, or ‘who are these people, as distinct from those people?’. Obviously, the answer to the question goes beyond just the tag or label by which the ‘person’ or ‘people’ in question choose to identify themselves. The answer, and for that reason the definition of social identity, spans a historical chart of the lines of activity characteristically engaged in by the parties concerned, not in isolation but in relation to (those of) other groups, as well as considerations of the generally understood placement of the parties involved within society in relation to others.

To illustrate the foregoing, the poor are not a social group (identified as poor, having the identity ‘poor people’) because somebody or they themselves chose to call themselves the name (nor is the ‘rich’ in similar fashion). But each of these groups are identified as who they are as a result of the general (everybody-thinks-and-feels-and-knows-so) understanding that comparing the one people’s historical line of activities with that of the other (the poor rationalize on food, money, everything, the rich squander the same), the latter could only be called those people they are, and the former those people they are. Where language and discourse come into the picture however is in that, it becomes necessary to articulate those categorizations (the people who lack, and the people who have in abundance). Discourse in particular comes into the picture when one considers that each group requires the system of linguistic interaction exclusive to itself, and by which to articulate its lived experiences in relation to the immediate environment, with other groups in it.

Along with the values, beliefs and attitudes associated with them therefore, our various group memberships are significant to the development of our social identities in that they define in part the kinds of communicative activities and the particular linguistic resources for realising them, to which we have access (see Hall, Slembrouck & Sarangi, 2006). This implies that our various social identities are not simply labels that we fill with our own intentions, and the same is true for the discourse or linguistic resources employed by people in carrying on their everyday activities. In fact nothing in our social existence, and the terms for relating it, exists independently of, or in isolation from, our course of social life traced backwards and in relation to those of others around us: this is the essence of social identity.

On the formation of identity, Bucholtz & Hall’s (2005) theorize a mechanism of indexicality which, according to the scholars, “relies heavily on ideological structures, for associations between language and identity [and that such mechanisms] are rooted in cultural beliefs and values – that is, ideologies – about the sorts of speakers who (can

or should) produce particular sorts of language”. Therefore, identity relations are said to emerge during discourse by means of several related “indexical processes”, which among others, include: “overt mention of identity categories and labels; implicatures and presuppositions regarding one’s own or others’ identity position; displayed evaluative and epistemic orientations to ongoing talk, as well as interactional footings and participant roles; and finally the use of linguistic structures and systems that are ideologically associated with specific personas and groups.

Research Methodology

Given the noisy nature of the research environment, tape-recording method of collecting linguistic data was adopted, while participatory observation method was used in gathering the data analyzed in the study. The researcher visited a major park in each of the four major cities in South-Western Nigeria and, unsuspected by the subjects, recorded their rhetorical pieces which were subsequently transcribed into writing. The motor parks included the Iwo Road Park in Ibadan, the Lagos Park in Osogbo, the Osogbo Park in Ife, the Challenge-Mokola-Gate Park in Ibadan and the Ojota Motor Park in Lagos. Data obtained from these sources were taken as sample representative of what is obtainable elsewhere not visited within the target study area, as all the States in South-Western Nigeria share the same Yoruba socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Also, due to the regular inter-State transport shuttles, the said States all get along quite regularly. This makes them a linguistic group with almost, if not virtually, the same speech styles and stylistics. Since our aim was not to conduct a comparative study, the data collected were subjected to close reading and correlation with one another, in order to isolate most of the common features. These were then grouped according to the rhetorical strategies they functionally illustrate. Catford’s (1974:27) theory of Translation Equivalence, which is premised on the view that every language is “*ultimately sui generis*”, meaning that its categories are defined in terms of relations holding within the language itself, was invoked in rendering the data in the target language (English).

Using this approach of translation, therefore, we were able to present the nearest equivalents of the data, thereby furnishing readers with the true data we are working with.

The Motor Park in Nigeria

The typical motor park in Nigeria features different categories of people who actively take part in its everyday discourse. The list begins with the executive members of the Union (Nigerian Union of Road Transport Workers in Nigeria, NURTW), a voluntary organization with branches across the States and Local Government Areas of the Federation charged with the responsibility of regulating the affairs of all road transport workers. The Union has its branches registered in every nook and cranny of the country where people require public transport to commute or travel from one point of the country to another, including even the rural settlements. According to information gathered from our respondents, membership of the Union automatically comprises all road transport workers, who constitute the Staff of the (stationary) Motor Park on the one hand (in one place or the other), and Staff of Public Transport on the other, from the highest wrung of the Organization featuring office-holding, capitalist-practicing owners of the different vehicles to the Drivers (who may not themselves own vehicles) and Agbero (Passenger Hosts), as well as the mega-phonetic jobbers who helped to advertise commuter or traveller routes as well as destinations, culminating in a hierarchical structure which all Staff observe with utmost loyalty and spirit of camaraderie.

But the entire apparatus of Road Transport Work is probably non-existent without the commuters and travellers who constitute the teeming clientele at the receiving end of its services. These, too, although they spend quite a fleeting moment of their everyday within the space of the public motor and motor park, or even on the road for that matter, yet constitute active members in the everyday practical discourse of the park. The concept of the motor park is in fact so deep and phenomenal that it transcends the idea of 'a stationary garage; a

cleared space with often uniformly painted buses and cars with people in it (the area), waiting to dislodge or load passengers, but extends to even the ephemeral space of the motor vehicle, in flight, bound for its destination, and often, to the Street. Sometimes the sense of the garage is extended, and one may simply be constituted by no more than just one or two vehicles waiting by the road side haphazardly to replicate the process described above, exactly as transpires within the space of a sprawling, well-organised motor park like the Ojota Motor Park in Lagos (it is perhaps in this latter sense that the idea of the motor park extends semantically to the Street, with Streets-people, so that what is couched in a rather accommodating formal term of Discourse here may simply be referred to in lay terms as Street Talk, with slangs and denigrating sleazy parlance in it). Most often, the interaction between Staff (Driver, Conductor) and Clientele (traveller, commuter, passenger) continues all through the course of the ensuing flight, and one may never forget the literal market, featuring outright buying and selling of virtually all imaginable and handy items of sale, which the stationary motor park is everywhere host to. A system and structure of things ordered around the Motor Park thus unfolds, with designations and classifications of identities, and an inventory of peculiar vocabulary which may not possibly be generated in this analysis.

A close reading of the data gathered however reveals such common discourse strategies used within the world of the motor park (whether as found on ground or in movement), to include the ploys of deceit, costly humour, song, affectations, impersonation, sarcasm, bulldozing and face-threatening acts among others, used by the mega-ponic advertisers, motor park traders, streets-people in general, as well as Staff members and passengers alike. The common discursive strategies travel with the ever on-course commercial vehicles and ephemeral extensions of the motor park, and thus permeate the entire landscape of the region necessarily interconnected through inter-State flight shuttles within very short compressions of time. The strategies are analyzed below drawing upon the analytical methods used in the works of earlier scholars (who have researched on rhetorical

discourses and the language behaviour of small groups), such as Lloyd (2007) in “Rear Gunners and Troubled Privates: Wordplay in a Dick Joke Competition”, and Hobbs (2007) in “Miracles of Love: the Use of Metaphor in Egg Donor Advertisements”; as well as Awonuga (1988) in “Political Rhetoric: Awolowo’s Use of Language”.

Motor Park Discourse and Group Ideology

Our aim in this section of the analysis is to establish the existence of linkages between the discourse of the motor park and aspects of the (social and cultural) ideology of the Yoruba (occupying the South-Western region of Nigeria). It is imperative however to first of all expound some of the strategic patterns employed in the making of that discursive typology. One of the major highlights here is that language is strategically used in the motor park to flatter or deceitfully incite the target subject to desired ends. When this happens, the subject is deluded and goaded at the same time, into taking decisions contrary to what might have been their own original will. This would appear to be a marketing strategy shared by most sellers in open market trading across the country. The aim, when the strategy is deployed, is to prompt the subject into actions which the latter might not readily be disposed to taking, ordinarily, such as in the traffic jam situation, in which one driver lobbies for advantaged spaces by first of all taking leave of a fellow driver, the one who is to allow him make such a move (i.e. to allow the requesting driver hop in the space in front of him). An illustration of such a deceptive use of language will be seen in the expression ‘*Baba ‘be, ibelo ‘ngbe*’, translating in English as ‘Landlord, there is where you live!’ or ‘...there is where he lives!’

In the above expression, one may want to ask the question, where; or how does the concept Landlord come into the picture? Surely, the illocution in the expression is not placation, nor conciliation, nor pacification, as each of the synonyms would presuppose some sort of prior dispute between the party to be placated and some other party. As such, the illocutionary force has to be referent in some other discursive play. However the answer to the question begins with an

understanding of the concept of 'Landlord', as is pragmatically and socially constructed within the context of the lower, and lower-middle class in (South West) Nigeria. Here, the concept of 'group' or 'social-cultural' ideology begins to surface in the discourse pattern. The cited caliber of people (in addition to being Yoruba) are a social class made up of tenants with little or no means, whose members live with the immediate self-awareness of their absolute dependency, the dependency of their refuge, upon the whims and caprices of the often resident Landlord. The 'Landlord', understood and articulated emphatically among the group (illustrated in such expressions as 'Landlord has come', 'Landlord is not happy', 'Landlord said so', 'Our Landlord') is not only a persona held in loft esteem but (as the naming suggests), one who is almost deified. For a tenant therefore, the semantic expression, and not just the metaphorical/connotative one, when someone is related to as 'Landlord', is to say to that person, 'Your place (in the relative order of things) is sure!' and 'Your supremacy is established!' and 'My respect for you is unquestionable', etc!

Transferred (from this socio-cultural context) into the motor park discourse therefore, the interlocutor using the ploy of deceitful incitement (in the expression '*Baba 'be, ibelo'ngbe*') explicitly equates his victim with the Landlord, assuring the latter of his (the interlocutor's) acknowledgement of his own inferiority, with regard to the status and person of the target subject. Given the shared background of the parties therefore (and the shared awareness of the implicatures inherent in the Landlord-Tenant relationship), the subject unwittingly or unwittingly falls victim of the deceit. And if the use of the strategy is adept enough, the perlocutionary effect is positive and rewarding, as the subject feels prompted to accede to the wishes of the speaker. For one thing, such a subject feels gratified by the false notion of prestige, which he suddenly earns. It is noteworthy however that *Baba* is a masculine marker of gender, which could be substituted with the feminine *Mama*, marking the counterpart gender (of course, with the variation of Landlady to go with it in discourse and

translation). Thus we see how the set of structured socio-economic beliefs of the class translate into the everyday discourse of the people and of the motor park. The expression analysed misses complete sense viewed independently of the socio-cultural ideology that informs its context. The following table presents a list of other examples illustrating the strategy of Deceitful Incitement in the motor park discourse [attention should be paid to the apparent linguistic discord among the central lexical items.

Table 2.1: Motor Park Discourse and Group Ideology

Excerpt	Yoruba	English
1	O lenu	You have mouth (i.e. You have influence, connection, etc); You're mouthed
2	O lenudaku	You have mouth as hell
3	O lenubiiketu	You have mouth like kettle (i.e. your influence is great/obvious/etc)
4	Ori'edurosibe	Your head remains there
5	Ori'ewambe	Your head is there (i.e. your position/status is established/ensured)
6	O'moTinubu	You're acquainted with Tinubu (which makes you influential)
7	Baba'agba	Elderly father (i.e. highly respected/revered one)
8	Wa'gbayi	You will be honoured
9	Omoolu aye	Descendant of OluAiye(an honorific term for Yoruba historic Kings of the Old Oyo Empire)

In Excerpt 1 from the table above, the seeming meaninglessness of the expression 'you have mouth' (translated literally from '*o lenu*'), is quite striking. Even if its truism (comprehended in English denotatively) is to be ignored, the axiomatic sentence in grammatically correct English should have been, 'you have a mouth'.

But the expression *o lenu* is a clipped form whose ellipted completion isn't *be* (i.e. *o lenun'be*, 'you have mouth there'). Our concern is however not with the linguistic but with the discursive structure of the sentence, and the set of ideological patterns that uphold its construction. In the first place, '*enu*' (literally 'mouth', but in the socially constructed sense, meaning 'a say') is construed among the Group to be something associated with 'Power'. You are deemed to be 'powerful' if you have a say in a matter or in the turn of events, i.e. in the system of things around you. The expression 'you have mouth' is thus an articulation (Laclau&Mouffe, 1985) of the fact that the person in question is 'influential', 'important', 'significant', and 'well-connected (with people in authority)'. This is most illustrated in Excerpt 9 (*omoolu aye*, 'descendant of OluAiye', an honorific term for Yoruba historic Kings of the Old Oyo Empire), and in Excerpt 6 (*o'moTinubu*, "You're acquainted with Tinubu", Tinubu being a prominent aristocratic family in Lagos, Nigeria).

A set of understanding about the ideological patterns of the people comes to the fore in light of the foregoing analysis. It would appear that the Yoruba arrogates a lot of importance to social influence, which is often hardly detachable or distinguishable from affluence. Given the preponderance of honorific expressions, humorous incitements and salutations built around the subject-matter of affluence therefore, it would appear that ascending the social ladder and becoming wealthy is the ultimate goal of the people in life, and thus something which each member of the group aspires to. Even when the members would not expressly articulate or confess to this, each time an interlocutor employs the discursive strategy of deceitful incitement or even humour, placing such members in the putative grandeur of affluence, the perlocutionary effect exhibited on the part of such a target audience (the addressee) is so remarkable that a denial of individual subscription to the above-stated hypothesis would be abject futility. The subjects speedily accede to the (sometimes unconcealed) wishes of the speaker even when regarding what the speaker currently asserts and expresses of them, they themselves know the contrary to

be true: that ‘they do not have any mouth anywhere’, ‘that they do not even know the road to SirTinubus’ family house’, ‘that their head is not there’, ‘that deifiedOluAiye’ is not in any reasonable way theirancestor’, and that they are not what the discourse expressly purports them to be: ‘affluent’, ‘influential’, ‘powerful’, ‘important’, ‘connected-with-persons-in-authority’, etc. In fact that if they are anything, what they are, are merely ‘ideological beings’ and ‘subconscious or even unconscious holders cum embodiments of the ideology that: life is meaningful and desirable and worthy of living only when you are affluent and wealthy’, for only then are you construed and held among your own people as ‘important’ and ‘esteemed’ and ‘enviable’, etc.

Motor Park Discourse and Identity

Commercial transport workers in Nigeria are certainly aware of the public assessment of their way of life. They know that the society to which they belong does not accept them on moral grounds and that there is the general tendency to brand their language ‘dirty talk’, ‘street language’, ‘garage slang’, etc. But the influence of language on the understanding of ‘who is a member of the motor park community’ is unmistakable. The present domain would indeed seem to be one of the most vivid illustrations of how discourse undertakes the process of carving out a group’s social identity’. Over the years the discourse of the motor park has continued to evolve. Its structure in pre-independence Nigeria would not possibly compare to what constitutes the form and content of the discourse today. Data collected from the various ‘garages’ reveals a much more standardized structure of discourse which not only strikes the rest of the population as peculiar to the given group, the people of the ‘streets’, but displays a richness in conceptualization, construction and pragmatic usage that this excluded, observant rest-of-the-population, participate voluntarily in that discourse, albeit via infrequent replication and usurpation.

One major theme preoccupies our analysis in this section: it is that of how the discourse of the motor park gives away the identity of its practitioners whom, as earlier expounded, include the “mega-ponic advertisers (who persuade and beckon the passengers), motor park traders, streets-people in general, as well as Staff members and passengers alike” (and passengers of course signifies an indefinable proportion of the entire larger community. The following table presents a list of examples illustrating the endless forms of expressions which articulate the common identity of participants in motor park discourse.

Table 2.2: Motor Park Discourse and Identity

Excerpt	Yoruba	English
1	Tuale: owomejif ^o eyankan	Tuale (pronounced /TWA-lay/): two hands for one person
2	Pa ^o ro lo	Cruise on
3	Jeun lo	Earn on
4	Jeunsoke	Earn up or fatten up
5	Carry go (Nig. Pidgin)	Get on
6	Go on soun	Move on forward
7	Wolepelushenji ^o e o	Enter with your change
8	Fi ^o le	Leave it
9	Kosi were	No problem
10	O ^o npe (nle)o ^o ndoshe	It carries, it becomes Soap
11	Kos ^o asiko	No time
12	O ^o mbo ^o leo	Someone or the person is getting down (i.e. alighting)
13	O ^o loyuno ^o ponmo o	The person carries a pregnancy and a child
14	Gbagbe; Gbagbe ^o oshi	Forget; Forget trash (i.e. do away with ‘idle-/irrelevant-/unimportant-talk’)
15	Gb ^o aju	Ignore/pay no attention to/etc
16	Baba were	Elder madman (expressing

		extreme reverence or disapproval)
17	Oonife fi ata gun gun le tiro	You wouldn't apply ground pepper for eye makeup
18	Oonife fi petrol din dodo	You wouldn't fry plantains with petrol
19	Oonife se prison break lalagbon	You wouldn't perform Prison Break in Alagbon
20	Nuttin do you/me (Nig. Pidgin)	No problem (show of approval; alignment with/loyalty to someone)

The above table presents an illustration of the infinite repertoire of discursive practices constituting the discourse of the motor park in Nigeria, and which mostly betray its identity, as soon as the practitioner successfully articulates any of the component communicative items. The discourse so distinguished (from all other forms discourse), any willing speaker could then go ahead to elect whether to identify (or not to identify) with the motor park community, by plunging themselves into the practical world of that community. It is perhaps in this sense that Bucholtz & Hall's (2005) proposal about the relationship which exists between 'identity' and 'discourse' most comes to the fore: that

Identity is best viewed as the emergent product rather than the pre-existing source of linguistic and other semiotic practices and therefore as fundamentally a social and cultural phenomenon (p. 558).

It may be noted that practicing the discourse however incorporates not only the verbal acts (with the adversarial voice modes that characterize it) but also face-threatening as well as gestural acts. Since we deal with data transcribed into text, and then translated into English however, the analysis must have little or no use at all for the oral, gestural aspects of such practices. This detracts nothing, however, from the place of such antics in the construction of identity

for both the motor park (together with its human membership) and the peculiar discourse which subsists alongside it.

The peculiarity and richness of the discourse in defining the identity of its practitioners is however tremendous. The construction of most of the discursive items and expressions would seem to employ what Bucholtz & Hall (relying on Ochs, 1993 & Silverstein, 1985) term the 'indexicality principle'.

...indexicality is fundamental to the way in which linguistic forms are used to construct identity positions. In its most basic sense, an index is a linguistic form that depends on the interactional context for its meaning... More generally, however, the concept of indexicality involves the creation of semiotic links between linguistic forms and social meanings.

This implies that the items listed in Table 2.2 above (as illustrative of the infinite items and expressions which make up the discourse) are not meant to be understood independently of the context of the motor park (obviously, conjointly with the context of the relative social class and the Yoruba belief system). The expressions are mostly incomprehensible, read out of context. Excerpt 10 is perhaps the most illustrative of this: *O'npe (nle) o'ndoshe*, "It tarries, it becomes Soap". Here, the neuter third person singular pronoun 'it', in English, has a semantic equivalent in 'o' in Yoruba, while the infinitive verb-forming morpheme 'n' in "*npe (nle)*" and "*ndoshe*" signifies *condition* 'if', or *modality* 'might, would, may, can, etc', rather than signifies its original denotational role of marking the present continuous tense. Thus, the full sentence without ellipsis would read as follows: "if it gets to lie in wait unnecessarily (i.e. tarry), it might form into Soap (or soapy substance)". But even at this level of the interpretation, grasping the sense in the construction remains most elusive. What might form into soapy substance if gets saved for later? And what is wrong with that thing 'it' forming into soapy substance (whatever it is)?

In the Yoruba system of proverbs there is a saying that “if the leaf sticks to the soap for so long, it itself becomes soap”, meaning that association gives room to assimilation, to acculturation, etc (“if a sheep keeps the company of mongrels, it will end up eating shit itself”). But even this is not synonymous with the above expression, nor does it share any semantic or interpretational relationship with it. The expression *O’npe (nle)*, *o’ndoshe* is used simply to discourage procrastination or delay with respect to various kinds of human acitivity. *Oshe* in motor park discourse refers to something which, contrary to one’s hope, has somehow turned into ‘an embarrassment’. In another construction, containing the word, e.g. *osheyi mi*, (literally ‘soap stained me’, and alternatively ‘I was stained by soap’), simply articulates the fact that the speaker ‘was or got embarrassed’ regarding some matter whose background knowledge must have been shared with the audience. The original expression “it tarries, it becomes soap”, must then be understood and mentally reconstructed in the terms of “delay would cause (us/you/me/them) an embarrassment”, or “if it (the matter) delays, it would become an embarrassment”. The mechanism of construction here (in terms of the social context that went into the making or construction of the expression) may have something to do with the scenario of someone coming out of the bathroom (but in the full glare of a household, with one or two visitors there present) has got soapy matter or lather left unwashed in unconcealed places on his body: this being considered to be socially embarrassing [it would be noted that even in present day times, a number of houses in slum dwellings and other low-income settlements in Nigeria still have their bath-compartments built or situated in out-houses where going in and coming out could be done only in the full glare of neighbours, co-users, etc].

Another good example, which vividly illustrates the *indexicality principle* of Bucholtz & Hall (2005) is illustrated in (see Exerpt 1, Table 2.2 above) *Tuale: owomejif’eyankan*, “Tuale: two hands for one person”. This construction is most significant in motor park discourse for a number of reasons, which include that, the expression constitutes

the group mode of salutation adopted by members of the motor park and road Staff, and then (in relative terms), used by all other voluntary participants in the motor park discourse, for paying obeisance to people higher than one(the speaker) in hierarchy (whether such ranking is humorously self-defined or self-proclaimed, i.e. by the speaker as is often case, or whether it is dictated by the formal administrative order of things in the motor park: sometimes it could be dictated by the felt or actual indication of social superiority attributive to the addressee).

A second reason why the act *Tuale: owomejif'eyankan*, is most significant in the discourse of the motor park has to do with the understanding that, the expression is a fusion of verbal and gestural act [see video slides showing the performance], and one which most self-evidently illustrates the theory that Discourse is performative language(Butler, 1990; Austin, 1962), “the structured totality [of communicative phenomena] resulting from the articulatory practice”, where ‘articulatory practice’, deliberately coined’ (Laclau&Mouffe(1985: 105) signifies the process of subjecting experience and reality and relation of things to the act of speech, whose result is a ‘structured totality’ of verbal and performative phenomena. The gestural aspect of *Tuale...* comes just within this definition of Discourse. Usually, the untranslatable term *Tuale* has its meaning expressed parenthetically in front of it, as *owomejif'eyankan*, in English, “two hands for one person”. In performance however [see video slides at appendix], the speaker pauses in his track (bolts upright in the occasion he had been sitting), and throws his two hands up in the air in salutation with the palms facing forwards, while he simultaneously articulates the word *Tuale*. Usually, the speaker does not perform the verbal act independently of the gestural (except in written dialogue), the act may however be dictated by occasion, and thus allows for improvisation. The context of this construction may not be unrelated to the notion of comradeship and salutation, which is attributive to Force practice (military, police, etc) on the one hand, and to the Yoruba cultural ideology that arrogates supremacy and

unquestioned respect to age, even though in practice the expression may be addressed to people who are much younger than the performer, but whom the latter now acknowledges as superior and respect-demanding for the time being. The very fact and process of performing this discursive act strikes the audience/viewers without any effort, and registers the identity of the discourse (of the motor park) quite instantaneously.

Conclusion

This study examined motor park discourse in South-Western Nigeria with a view to analyzing some of the group-based ideological patterns that underlie the social-linguistic construction of that discourse, within the isolated speech community, and then with a view to analyzing the role played by such discourse practices in creating the identity of the group, of its members as well as of the motor park discourse itself. The study thus presented an ethnographic and sociolinguistic description of the language of the motor park in South-Western Nigeria, thereby expounding the linkages between the discourse practices of the people, on the one hand, and the cultural, super-structural and social ideologies designating their collective identity, on the other. The analysis conducted therefore buttresses the theoretical position that identity, and indeed social identity is but the cumulation of a group of people's historical chart of activity, self-expression and life-engagements, not in isolation but in relation to those of other groupings in society, and within context of the generally understood placement of the parties involved (in comparative terms) within society. This study also further submits that discourse is therefore the *linguo-expressive articulation* of such social identity, for which reason identity may not be exclusively and objectively deemed a product rather than source of linguistic and other semiotic practices (contrary to Buchiltz & Hall, 2005): nor indeed vice versa. It is the recommendation of this study therefore that studies on relations among culture, identity and linguistic practices should lean towards cross-cultural and cross-linguistic approaches, which appropriate inexhaustible data and resources for assessing theoretical

generalisations amenable from rather monolingual, singular cultures and speech environments.

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