

DISCOURSE STRATEGIES IN THE CONFSSIONAL STATEMENTS OF SUSPECTS IN SELECTED POLICE CASE FILES IN TARABA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study analyses discourse strategies in the confessional statements of suspects in selected police case files in Taraba State, Nigeria. Previous studies on discourse strategies have revealed some attention to discourse strategies in selected political rally campaigns of the 2011 election in South-West Nigeria. Similarly, same has been observed in conversational strategies in selected sermons of Pastor E.A Adeboye and the effects of conversation repair strategies on counseling discourse in secondary schools in Kakamega Central Sub-county, Kenya, but not in the scholarship on discourse strategies in the confessional statements of suspects. In this study, the confessional statements of suspects extracted from the police case files in the Divisional Police Headquarters Jalingo Bali, Takum, and Area Command Headquarters Jalingo serve as primary data. Van Dijk's (2006) Socio-Cognitive Model of Critical Discourse Analysis was adopted as theoretical framework and qualitative descriptive and quantitative designs were deployed to analyse its data. The results revealed that the suspects used actor description, authority, comparison, evidentially, and number game, in their confessional statements. The dominant discourse strategies deployed are authority and comparison. The second dominant set of discourse strategies are actor description, evidentially and number game. The study concludes that using discourse strategies in the confessional statements makes the statements understandable.

Key words: Confessional Statement, discourse strategy, police case file, suspect, Taraba State, Nigeria.

Introduction

Discourse strategies are strategies employed by interlocutors to enable them to grasp one another's utterances while communicating, Walker (1994, as cited in Shartiely, 2013, p.36) sees discourse strategy "as a strategy for communication between or among people". This definition connotes that discourse strategy is the strategy people use to communicate with one another effectively. It has been observed that interlocutors who failed to deploy discourse strategies while communicating have never communicated effectively. House (2019, as cited in Shartiely 2013, p. 36), defines discourse strategies as "speaker strategies." This definition implies that discourse strategies are strategies employed by the speakers to enable them to communicate with one another effectively and understand one another's utterances very well. Van de Stuyf (2002, as cited in Shartiely, 2013, p.36), sees discourse strategies as "teaching strategies". This definition indicates that discourse strategies are techniques that teachers employ to impart knowledge to learners. Whenever teachers utilize discourse strategies as teaching techniques, learners understand them better.

Moreover, Gumperz (1982, as cited in Hidayati et al, 2019), defines discourse strategies as strategies employed by participants in speech events to grasp one another's utterances in a particular context of communication. The above definition of discourse strategies shows that they are often used by participants in speech events to grasp one another's utterances in a particular conversational situation. Taylor (2002, as cited in Shartiely, 2013), maintains that discourse strategies are conversational devices. This assertion suggests that discourse strategies are tactics often deployed by interactants to keep conversation smooth.

Confessional statements of suspects are free and intentional statements made by the accused to admit their crimes. Section 28 of the Nigerian Evidence Act (as cited in Ibraheem, 2013; Udoseu, 2017), defines confessional statements of suspects as statements made by the

people charged with crimes, suggesting that they have committed the crimes they have been accused of. Ibrahim (2013), and Udosen (2017) further assert that in common law, confessional statements of suspects are informal admissions of crimes committed by criminal defendants before the proper trial, to the person in authority. Any statement in which the maker admits his or her guilt in the presence of police officer, judge or jury before the proper trial can be considered as a confessional statement. Moreover, the police and criminal Evidence Act (PACE) of United Kingdom (UK) section 82 (1) (as cited in Ibraheem 2013, p. 291; Akinsulore, 2015, p. 994), defines confessional statements of suspect as “including any statement wholly or partly adverse to the person who made it; whether made to a person in authority or not and whether made in words or otherwise” This definition suggests that a confessional statement of suspect either made wholly or in part often has unfavourable effect on the person that made it.

Scholars have conducted studies on discourse strategies in selected sermons of Pastor E. A. Adeboye, selected political rally campaigns of the 2011 election in South-West Nigeria, and the effects of conversation repair strategies on counselling discourse in secondary schools. However, these studies have not examined discourse strategies in the confessional statements of suspects extracted from police case files in Taraba State, Nigeria. Therefore, this study examines discourse strategies used in the confessional statements of suspects extracted from selected police case files from Taraba state by:

1. identifying discourse strategies in the confessional statements of suspects extracted from selected police case files in Taraba State and discussing them; and
2. calculating the frequencies of occurrence of the confessional statements of suspects and their percentages.

Review of Related Literature

Akhimien and Farotimi (2018) studied conversational features and strategies in selected sermons of Pastor E. A. Adeboye. The study aimed to identify and analyse the discourse strategies and conversational features used in the sermons to influence audience perception and response and enable the speaker to achieve his intended goals. Schegloff's Conversational Analysis (CA) was adopted as a theoretical framework of the study. The data for the study were three selected sermons of Pastor E. A. Adeboye; they were analysed, and the results showed that the pastor deployed several discourse strategies to influence the audience's perception and response so as to achieve his objectives. These strategies include the use of summons to take turns and catch the attention of the congregation. Other strategies are asking questions to demand responses, using proverbs to explain some ideas, narrating to unfold stories of testimonies of what God had done in the past. Conversational features such as feedback, turn taking, call-response, adjacency pairs, repair mechanism, opening and closing, were also used by the pastor to get the desired responses from the congregation. The data also showed that the congregation displayed different forms of linguistic and non-linguistic feedback by rising to their feet or lifting of hands, jumping, clapping, dancing or shouting. The former examines discourse strategies used in selected sermons of Pastor Adeboye while the latter treats discourse strategies in the confessional statements of suspects.

Similarly, Ademilokun (2015) researched on discursive strategies in selected political rally campaigns of the 2011 election in southwest Nigeria. The study revealed the process of political persuasion and mobilization in Nigeria. The researcher employed systemic functional linguistics analytical tool to analyse the study's data. The data were obtained from rallies of two political parties, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN). They were analysed and the results revealed that participants deployed

discourse strategies such as allusion, propagandistic language, code switching, code mixing, requesting, flattery, praises, and provocative language to appeal to the people to vote for them. The study concludes that while the discourse continues to be the tool for political struggles, it also highlights the cultural, linguistic, and social factors that have a bearing on the language of the politicians in southwest Nigeria. Also, while the former focuses on discourse strategies in selected political rally campaigns of the 2011 election in southwest Nigeria, the present study is concerned with discourse strategies in confessional statements of suspects in Taraba State, Nigeria.

On the other hand, Makeira (2015) worked on the effects of conversation repair strategies on counselling discourse in secondary schools in Kakamega central sub-county, Kenya. The study aims to identify discourse units that show conversation breakdown during group guidance counselling sessions, point out conversation repair strategies employed by the counsellors and their clients during guidance and counselling sessions, and state the effects of conversation repair strategies on counselling discourse. The study adopted Conversation Analysis (CA) developed by Harvey Sacks, Emmanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson as its theoretical framework and used a qualitative method of data analysis to analyse its data. The data were obtained through non-participant observation, interview, and audio recordings. They were analysed and the result indicated that there was a conversation breakdown during group guidance and counselling sessions due to mishearing, use of inappropriate words, insufficient information, vagueness, incorrect information incomprehension, interruption and change of topic. Further, the study indicated that conversation repair strategies employed by the counsellors and their clients during guidance and counselling sessions include request for repetition, neutral repair strategy, request for specification, request for clarification and other repetition. Furthermore, the effect of conversation repair strategies on counselling discourse is that they boost

conversation. While the former adopted Conversational Analyses (CA) as its theoretical framework the latter adopts the Socio-Cognitive Model of Critical Discourse Analyses as its theoretical framework.

Okpala (2020) examined conversations between students and non-teaching staff. The study aimed to find out how students and non-teaching staff in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka and Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbarim campus, relate to each other during conversation and the types of discourse strategies used. The researcher employed the Conversation Analysis (CA) theory developed by Harold Garfinkel for this study. The data for the research were sourced from students and non-teaching staff interaction sessions in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka and Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Igbarim campus. They were analysed and the result indicated that the students related freely to the non-teaching staff. Students inquired about one thing or the other concerning results, admission, and the library from non-teaching staff. Non-teaching staff, on their part, asked questions for clarification on students' needs, made suggestions, and gave advice on how problems could be solved. The students interrupted conversations like the non-teaching staff. Besides, the students and non-teaching staff of the above-named Universities employed diverse discourse strategies such as turn-taking, speaker change technique, adjacency pairs, and repair mechanisms to relate with one another during conversation. While the former adopted Conversational Analysis (CA) as its theoretical framework, the current study adopted Critical Discourse Analysis as its theoretical framework.

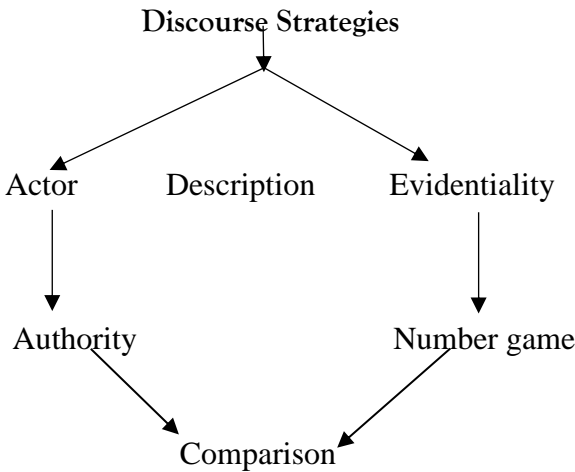
Theoretical Framework

Van Dijk's (2006), Socio-Cognitive Model of Critical Discourse Analysis is adopted as theoretical framework of this study. Liu and Guo (2016) assert that Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA) has its root in Critical Linguistics. They explain that Fowler's and Kress' descriptions of key terms, concepts of analytical viewpoints and

theoretical frameworks related to CDA are used by many linguists who have contributed to CDA. Aliah (2009, as cited in Aini, 2019) sees CDA as an attempt to decompose a text to provide a clear version of it. CDA is often used to analyse text to make it plain for the readers and hearers. Moreover, Wodak (2008, as cited in Amoussou & Alagbe, 2018), explains that CDA aims to analyse critically social inequality as expressed, signalled, constituted, and legitimised by language use in discourse. CDA examines societal injustices as indicated, noticed, established, and justified by the language use in discourse. Meyer (2001, as cited in Amoussou & Allagbe, 2018), says CDA aims to make explicit the social disparities and inequalities in society. This assertion suggests that CDA exposes how inequalities manifest in society between the oppressed and oppressors.

Van Dijk's (2006) analytical framework categories people in media into two groups, namely, positive self-representation and negative other representation (Igwebuikie, 2018). The framework states that categorising people into positive self-representation and negative other representation are strategies employed to create division between good and evil, superior and inferior, us and them. According to Tobbi (2021), Van Dijk (2006) proposes discursive strategies, namely, actor description, authority, burden, categorisation, and comparison. Consensus counterfactuals, disclaimers, euphemisms, illustrations/examples, generalisations, hyperboles, implications, ironies, racialisations, metaphors, national self-glorification, norm expressions, number games, polarisations, populisms, presuppositions vagueness and victimization for realising positive self-representation and negative other representation (p. 2,154-2,157).

Figure 1: Discourse Strategies Used in the Confessional Statements of Suspects



Methodology

Data for the study were extracted from the police case files in the Divisional Police Headquarters Jalingo, Takum, Bali and Area Command Headquarters Jalingo. The research identified discourse strategies deployed in the confessional statements of suspects and analysed them, using both qualitative descriptive and quantitative designs, through the instrumentality of Van Dijk’s (2006) Socio-Cognitive Model of Critical discourse Analysis.

Data Analysis and Discussions

The data are characterised by discourse strategies: actor description, authority, comparison, evidentially and number game. They are analysed as follows:

Actor Description

Actor description is a discourse strategy that is concerned with giving information about a person, a place or a thing and the way the

person plays his or her role in social or political context, positively or negatively (Tobbi, 2021, p.2, 154)

Except 1

That I am Fulani by tribe, I was born and brought up at Balariga village in Jigawa state. I attended Islamic school under Ishe taya. I came to Taraba State to rear cattle. On 18th May 2019, at about 14.00 hrs, I saw two caws grazing on a field near General hospital Takum. I looked around and I did not see any person nearby. I drove the bigger one to a nearby bush and tied it to a tree. After some time, I went to one butcher named Aminu Adamu “M” of Augwan Rogo and told him that I had a cow for sale. He followed me to the bush where I tied the cow and bought it at the rate of ₦95,000.000.

In Excerpt 1 the suspect gave detailed information about himself. The piece of information includes his tribe, the village where he was born and brought up, the state in which the village is located, the school he attended, the name of the person who oversees the school and what he (suspect) does to earn a living. The suspect indicates that his role is rearing of cattle, and it is a positive role. But he stole a cow and sold it to someone at the rate of ₦95, 000.00. This is a negative role; it does not mirror the role he claims to play in his immediate environment.

Except 2

That I am Fulani by tribe, I was born and brought up in Bali town, and I live in Angwan Kundi. I attended a local Quaranic school under Imam Habu Saleh. I earn a living by rearing cattle. On 25th October 2018, at about 10:30hrs I went to the farm of one Ornam Yayiru “M” of Kwararafa ward and harvested eighteen yam tubers and put them in a bag. I was about to go then I saw Ornam Yayiru and one of his friends by name Dabam John coming towards me. I threw the bag of yam on the ground

and started to run. Ornam Yayiru and his friend pursued me and caught me. They beat me severely and forced me to carry the bag of yam to this police station. I am guilty of stealing yam tubers from the farm of Ornam Yayiru.

In Excerpt 2, the suspect gave a detailed account of himself. The account includes his tribe, the town where he was born and brought up, the ward in which he lives in the town, the school he attended, the name of the person in charge of the school and his (suspect's) occupation. The suspect's role as indicated in the text, is rearing of cattle, and it is a positive role. However, he was found guilty of stealing yam tubers. The role that the suspect claims to play in his immediate environment may not be true because he was caught stealing yam tubers rather than rearing cattle.

Authority

Authority is the type of discourse strategy a speaker uses to quote authority to support his or her claim. The authority can be an organization, leaders with good moral characters, experts, the media and the churches (Tobbi 2021, p 2, 155). Incidences of authority are identified in Excerpts 3, 4, and 5 below:

Excerpt 3

I live with my elder brother Sabo Jauro of Magami Quarters, Jalingo. His wife named Halima Sabo Jauro, wanted to turn me into a slave. She often orders me to wash dishes, and clothes and fetch water for her every day. Sometimes she would insult me and my parents. I would not insult her because the organisation of Bandawa youth forbids young people from insulting elderly people. On September 19, 2018, at about 13:30hrs, my brother's wife was going to the market to buy something. When she saw me strolling with my friends, she asked me to tell her where I was going. I told her that I was strolling; I was not going to any place.

She shouted that I should return home, fetch water and wash dishes without wasting time. This statement made me angry, and I insulted her. She insulted me also and I beat her. When I was beating her, a police officer came to the scene and arrested me. I regret what I have done; my religious organization (Islam) forbids what I have done.

In Excerpt 3, the suspect made a reference to the organization of Bandawa youth, which forbids young people from insulting elderly ones, which stopped him from insulting his brother's wife back whenever she insulted him. Besides, the suspect disclosed that his religious organization (Islam) forbids what he did, that is, beating of his brother's wife.

Excerpt 4

On March 12, at about 14:00hrs, I collected the sum of ₦85,000.00 from one Mrs. Felicia Sunday of Mission Quarters, Bali, and I promised to supply her with 250 planks within one month. After a month, I was unable to supply her with the planks as I promised. She reported the matter to the police and the police arrested me and interrogated me. I told the police that I was unable to supply Mrs. Felicia Sunday with planks at the time I promised her because I fell sick. I did not do it intentionally. Moreover, the organisation of plank businessmen forbids us from collecting people's money without supplying them with planks. Now that I have recovered from the illness I suffered from at that time, I will try my best to supply her with the 250 pieces of planks I promised, or I will refund her money within two weeks.

In Excerpt 4, the suspect referred to the organization of plank businessmen, which prohibits men who do business in planks from collecting money from people without supplying them with planks.

Excerpt 5

On 15th March 2015, at about 12:30hrs, I collected the sum of ₦100,000.00 from Ardo Hamanjulde of Bagoni village and I promised to refund the money when I sell one of my cows. On 30th March 2019, I sold one of my cows at the rate ₦150,000.00, but I did not refund the money. Ardo Hamaujulde reported the matter to an organization of cattle rearers called the organization of cattle rearers of Bali Local Government Council, which judges and punishes any of its members who commits crime. The leaders of the organization summoned me to appear before them and I came. One of them asked me a question and I was about to answer him then Ardo Hamanjulde insulted me. I insulted him too and we started to fight. As we were fighting three policemen came to the scene and arrested the two of us and brought us to this police station. Truly, I collected ₦100,000.00 from Ardo Hamanjulde and I have not refunded the money. I will try my best to refund the money within two weeks.

In Excerpts 5, the suspect referred to the organisation of cattle rearers of Bali Local Government Council, which judges and punishes any of its members who commit crime.

Comparison

Comparison is a type of discourse strategy that determines the similarities and differences between two or more things (Tobbi, 2021, p.2 155). The accused persons deployed this kind of discourse strategy to compare items involved in the cases under investigation to indicate their similarities and differences.

Excerpt 6

On May 2, 2017, at about 1100hrs, Alhaji Aba Uba “M” brought, three big cows for me to rear. He said he would pay me

thirty thousand naira per month, and I agreed and started rearing the cows. On May 15, 2017, at about 12:30hrs, I took the three cows to Mararaba cattle market and sold them without the knowledge of Alhaji Aba Uba. On May 20, 2017, at about 13:30hrs, Alhaji Aba Uba came to my residence to take his cows. I presented three smaller cows to him. He said his cows were bigger than the ones I presented to him. I insisted that the three cows I presented to him were the ones he gave me to rear. He left my residence without uttering a word. After one and a half hour or so, he returned with two police officers who arrested me and brought me to this police station. Truly, I sold Alhaji Aba Uba's three bigger cows and presented three smaller ones to him and said they were the ones he gave me to rear. I regret what I have done. I will buy three cows that are as big as the ones I sold and give him within one month.

In Excerpt 6, the accused person presented three more miniature cows to the complainant instead of the three bigger ones that the complainant gave him to rear. The similarities between the cows the complainant gave the accused person to rear and the ones that the accused person presented to the complainants are: They are large domestic animals kept for meat and milk. The cows that the complainant gave the accused person to rear were three and the ones the accused person presented to the complainant were three also. The difference between the three cows that the complainant gave the accused person to rear and the ones the accused person presented to the complainant is that the three cows the complainant gave the accused person to rear were bigger and more significant than the ones that the accused person presented to the complainant.

Excerpt 7

On January 2, 2019, at about 18:30hrs, I saw a young man holding two mobile phones. One of the phones was bigger than

the other. I looked around, but I did not see anybody close to us. I hit the young man with a stick, and he fell down and became unconscious. I took the two mobile phones he was holding and ran into a nearby bush. The following day I took the two mobile phones to Tati-Takum market to sell. Somebody said he would buy the bigger one at the rate of ₦30,000.00 while another person said he would buy the big one at the rate of ₦25,000.00. As we were bargaining, two police officers and the person I robbed came to the scene and arrested me.

Excerpt 7 shows that the suspect robbed the complainant of his two mobile phones. The two phones are similar in that they can be used to make calls and are portable. The difference between them is that one is bigger than the other.

Excerpt 8

On 3rd March 2016, at about 11:30hrs I begged Habila John “M” of Kwararafa ward Bali to lend me eight 2 x6 inches planks. I promised to return the same number of planks he would lend me in two weeks. He lent me eight 2x6 inches planks. On March 17, 2016, at about 12:30hrs I carried eight 2x6 inches planks which were not as good as the ones Habila John lent me to his compound in his absence. When he returned to his compound and saw the planks, he reported the issue to the police and the police arrested me. The police said we should go to Habila John’s compound and compare the planks I carried to the compound with those that remained in the compound after he had lent me eight out of them. We went to the compound and compared the planks I carried to the compound with those that remained in the compound after he had lent me eight out of them. I noticed that the planks I carried to Habila John’s compound were not as good as the ones he lent me. I regret what I have done. I beg that we should go to timber shop; he should select eight 2 x6 inches planks he likes, and I will pay.

In Excerpt 8, the complainant lent the suspect eight good 2x6-inches planks, but the suspect returned eight 2x6-inch planks which were not as good as the ones the complainant lent him. The similarities between the planks the complainant lent the suspect and the planks the suspect returned to the complainant are the planks that the complainant lent the suspect were 2 x 6 inches wide, and the ones that the suspect returned to the complainant were also 2 x 6 inches wide. The planks the complainant lent the suspect were eight, and the ones that the suspect returned to him were also eight. The difference between the planks the complainant lent the suspect and the planks that the suspect returned to the complainant is that the complainant lent the suspect eight good planks, but the suspect returned eight rotten planks to him.

Evidentially as Discourse strategy

Evidentially is a discourse strategy that speakers use to provide evidence to support their claims (Tobbi 2021, p. 2,155). Plaintiffs often provide evidence to support their claims that the items involved in the cases under investigation belong to them. Instances of evidentially as discourse strategy are captured in excerpts 9 and 10 below.

Excerpt 9

On July 2, 2019, at about 1230 hrs, I saw two goats tied to a tree opposite Christian Reformed Church in Nigeria; number one Takum. I untied the two goats, took them to my compound and hid them there. On July 23, 2019, at 10:30hrs, I took the two goats to Tati-Takum, and sold them to one Andefiki Hassan. I sold the big one at the rate of ₦20,000.00, while the bigger one at the rate of ₦25,000.000. I was about to leave the point where I sold the two goats to Andefiki Hassan, when I saw two members of vigilante group and a certain man coming toward the point. When they arrived there, they asked Andefiki Hassan to show them the person he bought the two goats from. He told them that he bought the goats from me. The members of vigilante

group asked me to tell them where I got the two goats; I was unable to give them a satisfactory answer. The man who accompanied the members of the vigilante group to the scene (the owner of the goats) showed the members of the vigilante group marks he made on the right ear of each of the goats as signs of easy identification. The two members of the vigilante group seized the two goats, arrested two of us, and brought us to this police station. Of a truth I am the person who stole the two goats and sold them to Andefiki Hassan. He bought them without knowing that they were stole goats.

Excerpt 9 indicates that the complainant made marks on the right ear of each of the two goats as signs of identification. The marks serve as evidence that supports the claim of the complainant that the two goats belong to him.

Excerpt 10

On May 20, 2019, about 1930hrs, I went to the compound of James Tyorkusa “M” of the same address and forced the door of his store open with an iron bar. I stole a bag of rice from the store and took it to the compound of Mrs. Janet Terso “F” to sell. We bargained, and she said she would pay me ₦30, 000.00 for the bag of rice. I agreed, and she entered her house to bring the money; James Tyorkusa (the author of the bag of rice) arrived at the compound and identified his bag of rice. He showed me the signs he made on the bag of rice and asked me to tell him where I got the bag of rice. I was unable to answer him. James Tyorkuba shouted “Thief! Thief!”, People came and surrounded me and started to beat me. When they were beating me, two members of vigilante group came to the scene and arrested me. They forced me to carry the bag of rice to this police station. Truly I stole the bag of rice from James Tyorkusa’s compound and took it to the compound of Mrs. Janet Terso to sell, and I was caught there.

In Excerpt 10, the complainant showed the suspect the signs he made on his bag of rice. These signs serve as evidence that supports the complainant's claim that the bag of rice belongs to him.

Number Game

Number game refers to using numbers and statistics to support one's arguments (Tobbi 2021, p. 2,156). The suspects used this type of discourse strategy to give accurate numbers of items involved in the cases under investigation. Instances of the number game are captured in excerpts 11 and 12.

Excerpt 11

On March 12, 2015, I went to my farm and worked for about four hours. I became tired and decided to return home. When I was returning, I met a little boy of fifteen years old rearing five cows. I gave the boy ₦500.00 and begged him to go to a nearby village and buy soft drinks for me. The boy collected the money and left immediately. After the boy had left, I drove the five cows away. After two days, I hired a pick-up van to carry the five cows to Garba-Chede cattle market and sell them. The pick-up van developed mechanical problems as it was moving. While the driver was trying to repair it, I saw a police patrol van with some policemen, the boy and his father coming toward us. I made an attempt to run away, but before I could run, the policemen arrested me and the driver. Truly, it was I who stole the five cows; the driver did not know that the cows were stolen ones.

In Excerpt 11, the suspect disclosed that he worked for about four hours on his farm, that the complainant's age is fifteen years and that he gave the complainant ₦500.00 to buy soft drinks for him, and he drove the five cows of the complainant away. Here, the suspect used numbers and statistics to support his explanation.

Excerpt 12

On March 15, 2018, at about 9:30hrs, one Mr Ande Adamu “M” of Kpambo village said I should produce 200, 2x6 inches planks for him at the rate of ₦180,000.00. I agreed to do the work and he paid me the whole money. On April 20, 2018, I directed my workers to produce 200 2x3 inches planks for Ande Adamu; they mistakenly produced 200 2 x4 inches plank. I told Ande Adamu to add some money to the one he paid me and carry the 200, 2 x4 inches planks which my workers mistakenly produced. He refused and reported the matter to the police and the police arrested me. I plead with him to give me two weeks to enable me to produce 200, 2x3 inches planks for him, or I will refund his money. It was not my wish that my workers should produce 200, 2x4 inches planks instead of 200, 2x3 inches planks for Ande Adamu; it was a mistake. Moreover, 200, 2x4 inches planks have more value than 200, 2x3 inches planks.

In excerpt 12, the suspect disclosed that the complainant gave him ₦180,000.00 to produce 200, 2x3-inches planks for him. He directed his workers to produce 200 2x3-inches planks for the complainant, but they mistakenly produced 200 2x4-inches planks. The suspect deployed numbers and statistics to make his statement authentic.

Findings

The study disclosed that the suspects deployed discourse strategies in their confessional statements. The discourse strategies include actor description, authority, comparison, evidentiality and number game. The dominant discourse strategies the suspects deployed in their confessional statements are authority and comparison; they occurred with a frequency of 3 or 25 percent each. The second dominant discourse strategies the accused persons used in their confessional statements are: actor description, evidentiality and

number game; they occurred with a frequency of 2 or 16.67 percent each.

Table 1

Discourse Strategies Summary Across Confessional Statements

Category	Frequency	Percentage%
Actor description	2	16.67
Authority	3	25
Comparison	3	25
Evidentiality	2	16.67
Number game	2	16.67
Total	12	100

To find a frequency of a category, count how many times a specific category appears in the data. To find the percentage of the category, divide the number of occurrences of that category by the total number of occurrences of all the categories in the data, and then multiply the result by hundred.

Conclusion

The study was focused to examine trajectories and linguistic significance of discourse strategies in the confessional statements of suspects in selected police case files in Taraba State, Nigeria. The data analysed in the study revealed that the suspects deployed five different types of discourse strategies, namely, actor description, authority, comparison, evidentiality and number game in their confessional statements. The study, therefore, is implicated in its ability to shape the minds of the public to understand the role of language in police discourse. The study is also implicated in its ability to shape the attitudes, opinions, and beliefs of the general public as to how the police officers and suspects interact for the sake of national cohesion and peace. The study concludes that confessional statements of the suspects made freely and voluntarily are authentic pieces of evidence that reduce weight on the judicial system and the police.

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