Discursive Construction of Identity in Interactions among Undergraduate Students of University of Nigeria,Nsukka

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Abstract

This study identifies and analyses the discursive patterns that manifest in interactions by undergraduates of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka and how these patterns are used to construct their identities. Since no specific insight on identity construction in interactions among undergraduate students of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka is available in the literature, there is need, therefore, to provide this insight in order to show the contextual peculiarity of this youthful community. Therefore, this study analyses discursive patterns that are used by students to construct their identity. Purposively sampled extracts of conversations got randomly from 50 undergraduate students of University of Nigeria, Nsukka constitute the data for the study. The conversations were analysed and the discursive patterns used to index identity in the interactions were identified. It was observed in the interactions that code switching/code mixing, Nigerian Pidgin, peculiar lexical items, religious terms and ideologies expressed in interactions are discursive patterns used by the students to construct their identity.

Keywords: discourse, identity, interaction, Nigerian Pidgin, code switching, code mixing

1. Introduction

The university is one of the various social meeting points where people of different backgrounds converge. It provides opportunity for mingling and socialising among students and brings about series of interactions. In linguistics, the main focus is on language. Language is one of the main attributes of mankind; it is one of the social tools for interactions. Young (1930) explains that if language is considered from the angle of social psychology, it is important in two fundamental ways. Firstly, it relates to communication, and second as it functions in the socialization of the individual, that is, in the development of his personality. His view also reveals that it bears for the person the social definitions of situations, the world of discourse, and the whole range of culture contents which impinge upon him. “It is the medium of interaction without which social life could not develop, the individual could not
become intelligent” (p. 203). However, there are different ways in which people use language and this has a lot to say about them. In the acquisition of language from childhood, man comes in contact with so many factors that affect language learning and these factors which range from the family to the society, have effects on the way a language user uses language which in effect, affects the identity he portrays.

Wolfram (n.d) stated in his essay “sociolinguistics” that:

Language is one of the most powerful emblems of social behaviour. In the normal transfer of information through language, we use language to send vital social messages about who we are, where we come from and who we associate with. It is often shocking to realise how extensively we may judge a person’s background, character, and intentions based simply upon the person’s language, dialect, or, in some instances, even the choice of a single word.(1)

Discourse, according to Nordquist (2017, p. 1), is "the use of spoken or written language in a social context." Renkema (2014: 1) views discourse studies as "the discipline devoted to the investigation of the relationship between form and function in verbal communication”.

According to Foucault, “Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They constitute the nature of the body; unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects they seek to govern” (Weedon, 1987, p. 108).

This study seeks to show how undergraduate students of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN) use their discourses to indicate who they are. It specifically focuses on how students of the University uniquely construct their student's life experiences and the identities that underlie these in their discourses. Often, we find in interactions among students a way which they communicate that show their identity. This talks about the social indices that portray them and mark out their identity.

In a research by Chen (2006), identity construction of young American adults is explained from a Lacanian view point. He says that:

The view of identity from the research perspective is that identity does not describe ‘who I am’ or ‘where I belong’. From a Lacanian viewpoint, identity is a construct built from external and internal. Identity relates to self-construction in process or the ability to construct difference through the on-going articulation with others. Identity is not only constructed outside us or extant inside us, rather, it weaves itself through our relationships with others, it is constantly contradicting and shifting (p. 3).

From the above view point on identity, it can be deduced that construction of identity cannot be realised in isolation. There is always a need for a certain form of relationship between people to enable interactions that will in effect bring out that subconscious part of them. This study seeks to analyse samples of interactions among students, employing the concept of identity theory and some aspects of discourse analysis.

2. Statement of the Problem

Scholarly works are available on discourses and how identity is constructed in them. These range from identity in interactions on social media (e.g. Ruelle & Paverelli, 2006), advertisements in newspapers (Ryoo, 2002), to interviews on selected group of people (Massi, 2007). From these studies, it can be observed that interests have been on the formation of national identity, how a particular country employs their societal belief in their advertisements, individual identity with focus on identifying, analysing and describing those linguistic choices speakers make use of when referring to themselves.
and the ones they use when referring to others. However, the discursive construction of identity among undergraduates of University of Nigeria, Nsukka has not been the subject of any systematic investigation.

The university being a place where people from different backgrounds assemble and interact, it is imperative that a study be done on how the identity of students are constructed discursively through their interactions. This will enable us to gain insights into how students use their language to construct their social relations. From this study, we will gain understanding on how student identities are constructed in different social contexts.

3. Aim and Objectives of the Study
The aim of this research is to discuss how students of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka discursively construct their identity in selected interactions among them in the University. The specific objectives of the study are:
1. To identify the discursive patterns which manifest in students' interactions at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
2. To describe how these discursive patterns index the identity of the students.

4. Research Questions
The following research questions guide this study:
1. What are the discursive patterns that manifest in the discourses of undergraduate students of UNN?
2. How are these discursive patterns used to construct identities by the students?

5. Review of Related Literature
Some of the studies on language and identity include Taiwo’s (2012) language and cultural identity in Nigerian Online Diaspora. The study focused on the way Nigerians in Diaspora use language to construct their national identity. Data for this study was extracted from conversations in an online diasporic website, "The Nigerian Village Square" from September 2008 to April 2009. The discussions were observed and the way participants employ language in a bid to construct their social and cultural identities were identified. The data revealed, among others, that despite the fact that most of the members are well educated and capable of holding and maintaining a discussion in Standard English, they still resort to PNE (Popular Nigerian English) or Pidgin English in their conversations. This PNE and Pidgin English are language versions that are peculiar to Nigerians and by using it online, they are able to construct their national identity. He concluded by noting that the Africanization of English using culture specific lexis, verbal genres, and code-switching was a significant linguistic device used by the participants to construct their identities as Nigerians.

Maria (2007) wrote an article on "Identity and Alterity in TV Autobiographical Interviews of Argentinean Popular Artists' Discursive Strategies". Here, the concern is the investigation of the ways discourse is utilised to recover, symbolise and sort out a stretch of experience from the past into scenes and occasions that present the self, project a personal and social identity and, by contrast, establish alterity in discourse. The study focused on identifying, analysing and describing those linguistic choices speakers make use of when referring to themselves and the ones they use when referring to others. The data was gathered from oral interviews granted to selected women from Argentina. The study found out that morpho-Syntactic discursive activity in the data included the utilisation of ideologically challenged words and evaluative terms that for the most part bring out positive implications when used to allude to the "in-group", and imprecision, vagueness or negative undertones when alluding to the "outgroup".
There is also another research conducted by Ruelle & Peverelli (2006) on the discursive construction of identity through interaction on social media in a Chinese NGO. The data was got from an "on-going online discussion on We Chat, China's fastest growing social networking site". The analysis focused on instrumental, digital, phatic and analogous aspects of the posts. The data revealed signs about the connections between individuals from an on-going perspective e.g. which members are regarded as experts or leaders in certain issues etc. they showed that their exchanges revealed their group identity and the influence it has on members.

Woongaje (2002) also conducted a research on discursive construction of national identity in South Korean advertisements. He argued that in countries like Turkey, South Korea, Taiwan, Mexico, Brazil, and others, the reality of fast financial development has created societies subject to and in the meantime estranged from globalisation powers. Four magazines were used as data for this study - Sisa Journal, Hangyarae, weekly economist and Monthly Joongang. From the data, 5 major cultural discursive strategies used were identified: collective/family value (we-ness or one-ness), reconciliation/equality (between generations, between classes, etc.), nationalism/patriotism, high context culture, and postmodern consumer culture articulated by Koreanness. It was shown also that Koreans rely more on non-verbal representations than its verbal counterpart.

From the literature, it is evident that a wide range of studies on how identities are constructed in discourses are available. However, studies that tried to provide insight into how students of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka construct their identities in their discourses are not common. Since the socio-cultural context of the University is different from those captured in the studies reviewed above, this study attempts to highlight how socio-cultural peculiarities of the participants shape their language use and the construction of identity.

6. Method
This research work is limited to the undergraduate students of University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The population of the study comprises 50 undergraduate students of the aforementioned university who were randomly picked from different departments. Purposively sampling was used to select conversations of 50 undergraduate students of the University. The participants were engaged in a conversation and for each session, their conversations were recorded and saved in a Techno Spark K7 version of Android Mobile Phone. It was ensured that all the conversations capture different topics brought up randomly and discussed to enable the researchers identify the discursive construction of identity in interactions among the participants. Descriptive method of analysis was employed. It enabled the researchers to identify the discursive constructions of identity in interactions among the participants.

7. Theoretical Framework
Analysis of data for this study is hinged on aspects of Discourse Analysis and Identity Theory. Discourse analysis as field of study implicates the general idea that language is structured according to different patterns that people’s utterances follow when they take part in different domains of social life. Akwanya (2015 p, 167) states that Discourse “came in from Latin to designate a conversation” and it became a “catchy word during the 1990’s, and could be applied to almost any speech event. It is often encountered in Rhetoric”. He also quotes (Benveniste, 1971) and states that “discourse is analysable only within the instance, since it is ‘characterised by this system of internal references’. A key interest will be to work out what an individual speaker is doing with the linguistic resources he has taken in hand, which includes the kind of identity he creates for himself by his management of the resource, his perceptions of the realities about which he speaks, the kind of identity he imposes on the one receiving his speech action, and the nature of intersubjectivity they operate between them” (P.170).
The interest of this study is to find out the kind of identity an individual speaker creates for himself in discourse. His continuous utterance will be analysed and his identity implicated in the discourse will be discussed. Philips & Hardy (2002. P. 2) states that “without discourse, there is no social reality, and without understanding discourse, we cannot understand our reality, our experiences, or ourselves”.

The field of discourse analysis is rapidly growing and evolving, and has become an area of interest to scholars from different fields. This discipline diversity has varied the conceptual connotation of the term. Most of the scholars especially linguists define the term as whatever is “beyond the sentence”.

Homi (2004) says that every culture is in reality multicultural and shapes its features (such as language...) through its relations to other cultures and through its interactions with the world. This contact between cultures, according to him, is what forms this diversity in identities. However, all human beings besides bearing their individual identities, hold also an identity connected to their societies. These dynamics is depicted in people’s spoken and written communications with others. Djite (2006) opines that “identity is the everyday word for people’s sense of who they are” As quoted in (Versluys, 2000) who rephrased it by saying that “identity is in many cases interpreted as “people’s sense of what, who or where they belong to.”(p. 36) Andreouli (2010) also defines identity as "a process which incorporates identifying oneself and being recognized by others". (P. 89)

Identity can be viewed in two broad ways, individual identity and social identity. Bamberg and De fina (2011) distinguishes between these two by stating that “Social Identities are large categories of belonging such as those pertaining to race, gender, a political affiliation, (Latinos, catholics, etc.); while personal identities are constructs that may include not only sets of membership categories, but also moral and physical characteristics that distinguish one person from another (a courageous person or a coward)” (p. 264). Turner, J. C., Oaks, P. J., and Auslam A. S. (1992) also differentiate the two by arguing that "personal identity refers to self-categories which define the individual as a unique person in terms of their individual differences from other (in-group) persons. Social identity refers to social categorisations of self and others, self-categories which define the individual in terms of his or her shared similarities with members of certain social categories in contrast to other social categories."

Identity is not static whereby one is identified with just one trait or one characteristics, people take up different directions or “positions” sometimes depending on the mode of discourse. Versluys (2000) in line with (Davies & Harre, 1990, p. 49) explains that “furthermore, when we look at the microlevel of conversations, identities can shift in the course of one conversation according to the different story lines that are taken up” (p. 91). Dowling (2011) posits that “identity is linked to racial and cultural heritage, sexual preference and issues of gender, age, and social class. Early socialisation and the enduring force of expectations also shape one’s identity from family, friends and community” (p. 2).

From the findings of most theorists, personal identity has a direct link to social identity. One’s personal identity is consciously or unconsciously shaped by the social group he identifies himself with. For the purpose of this study, we will focus more on social identity theory and how it directly or indirectly affects the individual identity. Social identity theory tries to explain how people construct their identity by trying to show the particular group they align with. Even when they find themselves in an abstract place that has no connection with their “in-group”, they still try to show that they are actually part of a particular group. The major proponents of this theory are Henry Tajfel and John Turner. They explicitly explained this concept in their works.

Islam (2014) defines the social identity theory as “a classic psychological theory that attempts to explain intergroup conflict as a function of group-based self-definitions” (p. 1781). He also cited (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) and explained that individuals characterise their own identities as to the social group they belong to and “such identification works to protect and bolster self-identity”. He also explained that this creation of identity involves a positive view of the “in-group” and a negative view of the “out-group”. According to Tajfel & Turner (1979), “the more intense is an intergroup conflict,
the more likely it is that the individuals who are members of the opposing groups will behave towards each other as a function of their respective group memberships, rather than in terms of their individual characteristics or interindividual relationships…the major characteristics of social behaviour related to this belief system is that in the relevant intergroup situations to members of other groups” (p. 34).

Tajfel (1978, p. 1) quoted in Rothbart et al, (1978) sheds light “on how people amalgamate their impressions of discrete individuals to form a perception of the group as a whole”. Reynolds (2012) claims that “people live, work and act in a socially constructed system, where there are group-based regularities of perception, cognition and conduct and this really has psychological consequences”. After the differences between social and personal identity given by Bamberg and De fina (2011), they also go further to explain that the distinctions can sometimes be "blurred" in interaction because "personal identities are built on the basis of social identity" (P. 1783). Ellemers, Spears, Doosje (2002) cited Gaylor & Doria (1981); Ellemers et al. (1997) and Drury & Reicher (2000) in explaining that social identity has a powerful impact on "perceptions, emotions and behavior". They also gave examples of "research participants who stick together with an unsuccessful group, even when they have the opportunity to leave" and "activists who jeopardize their personal well-being for causes or principles that are unlikely to affect their own immediate outcomes" (164).

8. Data Analysis and Discussion
People come from different backgrounds to study at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. These people have different identities which are not plainly visible and may not be determined upon encounter except in interaction. Therefore, discourse is a medium for construction of identity. There are discursive patterns observed in selected interactions among these students that index identity. These include: code mixing/ code switching, the use of Nigerian Pidgin, peculiar lexical items, some peculiar religious terms and ideologies expressed in interaction. These discursive patterns are discussed in what follows:

8.1. Code Mixing/ Code Switching
The term code mixing and code switching could be used interchangeably, although there are some differences between them as explained by Sharyanti and Cardenas-ciaros (2009). According to them, “code switching or inter-sentential code alteration occurs when a bilingual speaker uses more than one language in a single utterance above the clause level to appropriately convey his/her intents…code mixing also called intra-sentential code-alteration occurs when speakers use two or more languages below clause level within one social situation”. In both definitions, what is clear is that there is alternation between two or more languages in interaction.

These discursive patterns are employed by people to show their mastery of other languages apart from the one in use at the moment. They are also used to express alignment with a particular group e.g. ethnic group. Discursive practices like these are deployed by language users to construct their linguistic/ethnic identities. When language users alternate between English and their indigenous languages in interaction, linguistic markers that index their identities manifest.

In some of the selected interactions, most of the students alternated between English and their indigenous languages and this is done in a manner that their different ethnic identities are revealed. These linguistic patterns were observed in most of the conversations of the students. Instances of these are shown in the extracts below:

**Extract 1**

Speaker A – *hmm, you are looking for sexy, me I’m looking for gown, any gown seriously, do you have anyone that will size me?*

Speaker B – *Ndiongo ke oo*
Speaker A – okay .. uhmm .. what is Ndioghoke? (both laugh)
Speaker B – that means “ I don’t know”
Speaker A – okay, you don’t know..ohh..idioghoke
Speaker B – (corrects her) Ndiongo ke
Speaker A- (repeats correctly after her) Ndiongo ke
Speaker B – so, was it yesterday, Sandra showed us the picture of the decoration, it was so amazing, ake edo, on point

The interaction above is between two roommates who were discussing an upcoming programme. Speaker A tried to find out from speaker B the kind of dress to put on. It is observed that speaker B is Ibibio. She alternates between English and Ibibio two times in a single conversation. Ndiongo ke (I don’t know) and Ake edo (it will be). These linguistic clues reveal her ethnic identity.

Another instance of using code switching to construct identity is evident in Extract 2 below:

**Extract 2**

Speaker A-  you can’t even compare yourself with a medical doctor that did both biology and...
Speaker A and B- (speaking at the same time)
Speaker B – kee ihe osi now na omere as a pharmacist wey me as a doctor no do, except dispensing, even dispensing wa self...

The above conversation is between two medical students engaged in a discussion on the roles of pharmacists and medical doctors and how medicine as a profession is broader than pharmacy. In the above conversation, speaker B switches between English and Igbo (kee ihe osi, na omere, wa) and a little bit of Nigerian Pidgin as well. This shows his membership of the Igbo tribe. In the first conversation, as can be found in the preceding conversations, when a speaker code-switches or code-mixes, he or she directly or indirectly explains the meaning of the word or phrase to the partner who may not be conversant with the language, but in this conversation, that was not done and the other speaker didn’t ask for any explanation or translation either. This means that he is also conversant with the language. This shows a meeting point in terms of the linguistic identities of the participants in the conversation. Additional instance of using code switching to showcase identity is seen in Extract 3 below:

**Extract 3**

Speaker A- ehh, do you have any plans of going to the hostel today, favour?
Speaker B – ah ah, certainly, zan je mona, I will go

The conversation is between two classmates and friends that went to class to study. From the above interaction, it can be observed that speaker B code mixes English and Hausa (Zane je mona). From this, it can be inferred that speaker B is from the Northern part of Nigeria or has some affiliation with the region. Again, another instance of using code switching to index identity is found in Extract 4 below:

**Extract 4**

Speaker A – yeah, thank you
Speaker B- like the hair is fine and soft
Speaker A- (cuts in ) very very soft
Speaker B – original
Speaker A- (cuts in) yeah
Speaker B – human hair
**Speaker A**: yeah, it is, like, by the time I finish fixing it, oh God, mo ti lo fine ju (speaker B laughs) like I’m so fine (stress on the fine)
**Speaker B**: are you serious?
**Speaker A**: yes
**Speaker B**: oh my God
**Speaker A**: anyhow shaa, I will be saving it shaa, I don’t want to fix it in school
**Speaker B**: okay, when you go back home
**Speaker A**: yeah, ko wo ti e, shee o get? (speaker B looking confused) like ko wo is fixing
**Speaker B**: I mean, it’s not worth fixing here
**Speaker A**: oh, oh, oh

This is a conversation between two friends; one just got hair extender (attachment) from someone and they are admiring it. From the interaction, it is observed that the first speaker is from the western part of Nigeria and by her ability to code mix Yoruba with English (Mo ti lo fine ju, ko wo ti e, se o get), the listener is informed of her sociocultural identity. With the interactions above, typical Nigerian speech idioms like ‘shaa’, ‘shee’, etc. serve to reveal the identity of the interactants in this context.

### 8.2. Nigerian Pidgin

Nigerian Pidgin serves as a critical unifying factor for Nigerians. It is the most popular recommendation for Nigeria’s national language because of its neutrality. It is a language that largely neutralises the gap between the educated and the uneducated population in Nigeria. The deployment of this by Nigerians is a potent way of revealing their Nigerian identity. The interactions below showcase the discursive construction of a distinct Nigerian identity by the students:

**Extract 5**
**Speaker A**: how far babes, shebi you dey travel go house sef
**Speaker B**: nna eh, that one be like till August ending.

**Extract 6**
**Speaker A**: this guy don clear e mind say e no go reach there now
**Speaker A**: ehh... wetin be im name, that Ghanaian...
**Speaker B**: which guy now?
**Speaker C**: Mr. Eazi
**Speaker A**: ehe n, yes, e don turn am say next 3 to 4 years, e no go sing again
**Speaker B**: wetin happen?

**Extract 7**
**Speaker A**: guy, how far nah, why you dey like this?
**Speaker B**: Omo Naija too bad mehn, nothing dey happen, government just dey bad and everything, nobody dey try to help anyone, the country just dey stagnant, nothing dey happen mehn, everything just dey, the killings, the Benue killings, the presidency no dey do anything about am which dey very very bad, na wa oo, people just dey die, everyday, everyday, nobody get peace of mind, nobody get..fit sleep, night..wake up..morning fit sleep night..wake up...morning, things just dey very very bad mehn.

Extract 5 is between two students that just finished writing their exams. Extract 6 manifests between three friends who are discussing about the music industry and how some artists might not stay for long in the industry. Extract 7 captures interaction between two roommates. The interactions show
that speaker B is already fed up with the present state of the country and he says so much in response to a simple question asked by speaker A. From the conversations, the identities of the interactants as Nigerians are revealed owing to their discursive use of Nigerian Pidgin. Some of the Nigerian Pidgin texts in the extracts are: ‘shebi’, ‘omo mehn’, ‘dey’, ‘fit’, etc. These peculiar speech idioms are clear indexes of the identities of the participants in the interactions.

8.3. Peculiar Lexical Items

The use of peculiar lexical items is another index of identity construction in interactions among undergraduates of UNN. There are peculiar lexical items that the students unconsciously incorporated into their conversations and these form part of their discursive practices that are used for identity construction. The lexical items found in a person’s speech can indicate both the person’s ethnic and national identity. In Nigeria, there are various lexical items that are peculiar to the sociocultural context such that when they are used by one, other Nigerians will understand and also identify the user as being part of the system. Some of these lexical items are used in the selected interactions below:

**Extract 8**

Speaker A – Na G oo, na im be the way forward
Speaker B - na G
Speaker A – I swear, make I just get small money like this now go buy wrappa give my mama
Speaker B – babe, give am up, you wan use your mumsy run
(Laughter)
Speaker A – no now, make I just give am wrappa nah, na the thing wey go make am happy, say I dey buy things
(Muffled voices)
Speaker B – wetin you go come tell am
Speaker A – upon how she ask you how you get the money, wetin you go come tell am?
Speaker C – tell am na Ashawo
(Laughter)
Speaker A – which kain yeye ashawo, they go kill me sef; but last last, parents now, once you are giving them the money, they won’t even bother asking you because the country dey hard, the country dey hard I swear. OYO na your case for this country ehn, you got to hustle.
Speaker B – before it was yahoo, now it has turned to G
Speaker C – baptismal name for yahoo, is it not G?
(Laughter)
Speaker B – No, G means something else oo
Speaker A – nowadays, they are now doing small girl with big God, no more runs girls, na small girl with big God.

**Extract 9**

Speaker A – how far babes, what are your plans nah, after school?
Speaker B – I wan go internship next year
Speaker A – are you serious?
Speaker B – after internship I go run small oil money, nothing
Speaker A – (laughs) nnah, that oil money stuff ehn, hmm, n aim be the way forward. If you get job for any oil company like this ehh... hmmm

In the above conversations, there are lexicalisations that are peculiar to the sociocultural milieu of Nigeria and such are most times not found in the dictionary but function as part of the everyday speech idiom of Nigerians. The utilisation of these peculiar lexical items in conversation shows the identities of their users. In the extracts, some of these peculiar lexical items include: G, wrappa, runs,
ashwo, yeye, oyo, oil money, mumsy, etc. Most times, these lexical items are borrowed from different ethnic groups in the country but are now popularly used across ethnic boundaries. The use of these peculiar lexical items is a core component of identity formation for the users.

8.4. Religious Terms

There are terms that are specific to particular religious groups and when such terms are incorporated in conversation by language users, they are indirectly identifying with such religious groups. In some of the conversations, these terms were used by the participants and this use inadvertently indexes their social identity as they portray them as individuals who have affiliation with the religious groups. They terms capture their belongingness to these groups. The extracts that follow below are replete with these terms.

**Extract 10**

Speaker A – there is this question I want to ask ehh, your views matter in this question, its about marriage.

Speaker B All – okay

Speaker A- so you know this thing when they say ehm, I mean, when you go to church and then your pastor is preaching marriage and then he is like, God errm, formed eve from Adam’s and then errm, how everyman is supposed to have a perfect, the perfect one made for him from heaven…you know, I’ve heard of, if you miss your husband, your real husband, your other marriages that you may marry from other people that are not your husband will now start crumbling.

Speaker B – mmm

Speaker A- so my own question now is that, do you people believe in that everyman.

Speaker C – (cuts in) everyman has a wife

Speaker A – yes, his missing rib or…

Speaker B- (cuts in) there is something pastor Emeka…

Speaker A –(continues) …do you believe in making it work?

Speaker C – my dear, I believe in making it work oo

Speaker B – this question came up in Dominion city and pastor Emeka answered.

**Extract 11**

Speaker A –you now know how to do make up?

Speaker B – I don’t know how to do make up

Speaker C – you can…, you have a laptop now … download videos on you tube

Speaker B – yeah, yeah, I will definitely download videos on you tube and watch my sisters ask me what happened.

Speaker A – so which churches do your sisters attend?

Speaker B – okay, uhm, my sister got married into our family church, that’s where she is still going to.

Speaker A – what’s the church? What’s your family church?

Speaker B – Alpha Holy Flames, sorry, they changed the name…(they all laugh)

Speaker A – just like Deeper Life?

Speaker B – yeah, just like Deeper Life, then my brother goes to Apostolic Faith Church

Speaker C – But excuse me, Deeper Life, they don’t use to change their name

Speaker B – I know like, my church …

Speaker C – (cuts in) Okay, their customs and traditions are the same thing

Speaker B – yeah, like Deeper Life.

Speaker C – I thought you were going to Deeper Life
Speaker B – yes, I was born into deeper life, why do you think I don’t have pierced ears.

From the two extracts above, terms pertaining to religious groups were constantly mentioned. In extract 8, for example, someone raised a question from a preaching in church and others try to address it, making reference to a particular religious group; same applies to extract 9. Various religious issues were raised including application of cosmetics and to perfect the skills. The religious terms that were thrown up from these interactions include: church, pastor, God, Adam, Eve, missing rib, Dominion City, Deeper Life, Alpha Holy Flames, Apostolic Faith Church. The use of these religious terms helps to reveal the religious alignments of the participants in these discourse events. The religious stances of the interactants are revealed and one is able to access their socio-religious identities.

8.5. Ideologies Expressed in Interactions

There are multiple social groups one can identify with and each social group has ideologies that guide it. For one to identify oneself with a particular social group; then, he has to possess the same belief system as the group and this shapes the individual identity of that person. In interactions, people’s ideologies can be identified and this is one way by which they showcase their identity. So, discursive expression of ideology is a veritable tool for identity construction. This manifests in the extracts below:

Extract 12
Speaker A – there is this thing society places on male and female. Because you are female, you should know how to cook, you should know how to clean because you are female ... they should tell me, you should know how to cook, you should know how to clean because you are human..

Speaker B – (cuts in) excuse me

Speaker C – let her finish

Speaker A – (continues) … because you need to cook, to eat good food and because you need to clean to have good hygiene not because I’m a female (they all say “okay”)

Speaker A – then as a guy, you should learn how to do manual labour because you are a man and you have to be strong, you have to be emotionally strong because you are a man ... you have to tell him that because he is a human being, he has to be emotionally strong in this situation and guys...

Speaker B (cuts in) – why can’t you tell a girl that she should be emotionally strong because she is a human being too?

Speaker C (cuts in) – calm down, she says in the eyes of society, excuse me, are you done? What drives a society? (they all talk at once then she continues) ...

What drives society, what drives society, what is society driven by? They are driven by our culture my dear, whether you like it or not. Do you know Africa is older than the Western that you are even saying? My dear, our culture is indigenous, the earlier you accept it, the better for all of us.

Speaker A – In western society, there are gender roles just that they are breaking it more than we are doing.

Speaker C – (shouting in anger) you are trying to copy them, that is the confusion.

Speaker A – I am not copying them, I just don’t like gender roles

Speaker C – you just don’t like gender roles, what is gender roles driven by, is it not your culture and tradition? Ehh?

Speaker D – okay, I get what she is saying

Speaker B – kelechi calm down. Okay, you just want to hear the word... Human ... ehh? That is just it? It doesn’t make sense, what you are saying doesn’t make sense.
The above discourse is between roommates who are discussing gender roles in their society. Speaker A is of the belief that the roles which society places on male and female are wrong. According to her, those roles should be carried out because the individuals concerned are humans and not because of their gender. This speaker aligns with the western ideology, but Speaker B and C have a totally different view. They believe that in African settings like Nigeria, things should be done differently. They believe in the preservation of their cultural ideology and this disparity in belief system caused a conflict in the interaction. There is this ‘self’ and ‘other’ conflict; such that each person believes that his/her “in – group” view is better than the other. At a point, the interaction degenerated into crisis because each group tries to hold onto and to prove the superiority of their cultural ideology.

Speaker A is from the Department of English and Literary Studies while speakers B and C are from the Department of Archeology and Tourism. In the Department of English and Literary Studies, one is permitted to challenge some perceived imbalance in society, but the Department of Archeology and Tourism is concerned with the preservation of societal heritage. This explains their varying belief systems and ideological standpoints. Because they belong to different groups with different ideologies and these ideologies are expressed in their interactions, insights are provided about their different identities from the ideological underlinings that manifest in their discursive practices.

9. Conclusion
So far, we have been able to establish, using Tajfel and Turners view of social identity theory, that people project their own identities consciously or unconsciously in their discursive practices through certain discursive patterns like code mixing/switching, Nigerian Pidgin, peculiar lexical items, religious terms, etc. Through these patterns, one is able to decipher people’s individual identity and the sociocultural groups they belong to. It has also been established that people’s identity can be gleaned from their interactions with others. The social group they belong to has an effect on their individual identity; this is realized most times when they express their belief on issues. It is observed that people hinge their views and policies on the social group they belong to, and if you do not have the same views with them, it can lead to conflict. There is this idea of the superiority of self, based on the in-group belief system and the inferiority of the other based on their out-group belief system. This often causes conflict.

References


