

Dits waar (it is true)

An Analysis of the Communication among Construction Workers at Mabapi Estates

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Abstract

This study analyzed the communication among construction workers at Mabapi Estate. Its primary objective was to establish the relationship between languages and work in construction industry through the description and explication of communication behaviors and competences that construction workers relied on to participate in intelligible socially organized verbal and non-verbal interactions. To gather data for the study, an ethnographic participant observation and semi-structured interview methods were used. The study established that construction workers: created a common language that comprised coinages and vocabulary derived from different language communities, had the propensity to talk about issues that may appear uncouth to the civilized society and that they employed varied non-verbal cues to enhance their verbal interactions.

Keywords: *Communication, Verbal Interaction, Social Constructionism*

Introduction

Mabapi Estate is a new community in the northern part of the Botswana capital city, Gaborone. As a new Estate that was still being established at the time of this study, it was home to a lot of construction work: roads, civic and residential houses were being built. The amount of construction work and its concomitant workforce comprising mainly Batswana and Zimbabwean immigrants made Mabapi Estate a fertile ground for research on professional, intercultural and interpersonal communications; hence this study.

The economic and political hardships in Zimbabwe occasioned a plethora of migration to Botswana by a huge number of Zimbabwean nationals in search of employment. When these Zimbabweans arrived in Botswana, despite many of them having been trained in many professional fields, they were unable to be absorbed into the already filled up job markets. They then opted to do menial jobs such as herding livestock, house maids and a very large number of them joined construction industry as cheap labourers. Those who joined construction industry found a lot of poor and uneducated Batswana already in the construction industry and they had to work with them. As a result of this situation, construction industry at Mabapi Estate, as was elsewhere in Botswana, comprised a huge number of unskilled labourers and very few professional builders who came from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Given the problems that normally occur when people from different social and linguistic backgrounds try to verbally and non-verbally interact, the researcher speculated that the social-cultural differences between construction workers at Mabapi Estate could serve as major hindrances to the smooth verbal and non-verbal interactions expected of people working together for a common goal. Because of their low socio-economic status and academic standing, the researcher speculated that contrary to the dictates of the social constructionist paradigm, each of the different groups (Batswana and Zimbabweans) that constituted the workforce could be verbally and non-verbally interacting from the ambit and assumption

Based on this envisaged communication problem, the central goal of this paper was to investigate whether or not construction workers at Mabapi Estate were able to participate as a collective in reciprocal, intelligible and socially organized verbal and non-verbal interactions, and if so, to describe and explicate the communication competences and behaviours that they relied on when participating in such interactions. This study therefore was exclusively devoted to an empirically based discussion of specific traits of conversations by Mabapi Estate's construction workers who comprised people from diverse social, cultural and linguistic orientations. To achieve the objective of this study, the social organization, orderliness and features of institutional setting in "conversations" or "talk-in-interaction" and non-verbal interaction by construction workers at Mabapi Estate were explored.

According to Schirato and Yell (2000, p. 14) "Communication practices are always produced, read and negotiated in terms of specific contexts....which are: meaning systems, material conditions and participants. Based on these pronouncements, it was envisaged that the unique contexts and circumstances of construction workers at Mabapi Estate produced communication traits that were commensurate with their unique contexts and circumstances which included: vocabulary, patterns of verbal and non-verbal interactions, and inter cultural relations. In the light of the objective of this study and initial expectations and hunches, the researcher aimed to answer one overarching question which was: How do construction workers at Mabapi Estate communicate amongst themselves given their diverse cultural and linguistic orientations. Two subsidiary questions were derived from this question and these were;

- What specific communication behaviors were characteristic of construction workers at Mabapi Estate?
- How do diverse cultural, verbal and non-verbal behaviors of construction workers at Mabapi Estate impact on their communication?

The motivation for conducting this study was derived from the understanding and appreciation of the significant role played by verbal and non-verbal interactions in human life. Grimshaw (1992) observes, talk is at the heart of everyday human existence. It is also pervasive and central to human history. Talk is central in every setting of human affairs, at all strata of the society, and in nearly every social context. Regarding nonverbal communication, Cherry (2015) posits that a significant portion of human communication is non-verbal and that human beings are everyday inundated with responding to non-verbal cues and behaviors such as postures, facial expressions, eye gaze, gestures and tone of voice. Secondly, the seemingly lackadaisical perception of construction industry as a fertile ground for intercultural and professional communication research by many scholars in Botswana led to the advent of this study. The researcher hypothesized that the informality, abundantly uneducated workforce, and the unpleasant conditions which were characteristic of this industry contributed to lack of interest in researching this area.

This research study was significant in that it could provide an important contribution to the literature on the communication behaviors and patterns of verbal and non-verbal interactions by construction workers in low resourced communities of developing sub-Saharan countries like Botswana. The available literature showed that many studies had been conducted in the field of communication, notably and most predominately, in intercultural communication, interpersonal communication and power and gender relations. However, none of those studies focused on the communication behaviors and patterns of verbal and non-verbal interaction perpetrated by the unique circumstances of constructions workers in low resourced and undeveloped communities.

Social Constructionism

This study was underpinned by the social constructionist theory. Two pronouncements have been instrumental in influencing the decision to use social constructionist framework to "drive" this study.

First, Schirato and Yell's (2000) contention that communication practices are always produced, read³ and negotiated in terms of specific contexts led to social constructionist framework being adopted to underpin this study. Given that the social constructionist scholarship emphasizes taking full cognizance of target audiences' socio-cultural contexts when analyzing communication processes and behaviours, it made sense to the researcher to "buy" into Schirato and Yell's (2000) pronouncement and embrace social constructionism as a theoretical framework for this study.

The other influence was derived from Fairclough's (1993) and Halliday's (2004) positions on the social functions of a language in human life and Cherry's (2015) pronouncement on the pervasive nature of non-verbal cues in human communication. Fairclough (1993) argues that language is a social construct that constructs societies. Halliday (2004) emphasizes that language is very instrumental in making and understanding meanings. Cherry (2015) on the other hand intimates that non-verbal cues implicitly reveal who we are as human beings and they impact significantly on how we relate with each other. Given that this study was mainly about verbal and non-verbal interactions, both of which are central to language use and construction of meanings, it seemed plausible to use social constructionist framework to "drive" this study.

According to Gergen and Gergen (2004), the basic idea of social constructionism is that human beings construct the world in different ways. The things that different people see or do mean different things to them. The differences as to what the world means to different people are rooted in their social relationships and traditional orientations (Gergen and Gergen 2004). Social constructionism is therefore described as an approach that emphasizes knowledge as a social construct and a product of social relations (Lupton 2003). Social constructionism questions the existence of essential truths and suggests that knowledge is susceptible to change rather than remaining fixed (Lock and Strong 2010). In the social constructionist scholarship, knowledge is not perceived as a universal and independent reality. Rather, it is seen as being constructed within social environments and influenced by social contexts (Dallos 1996). In the context of this study, Lupton (2003) and Dallos's (1996) arguments on the nature of knowledge suggested that we could not claim to know the communication behaviours and patterns of verbal and non-verbal interactions of construction workers at Mabapi Estate until and unless we interacted with them in their social environments and contexts. Thus, the position of social constructionist scholarship on the construction of knowledge ratified the objective of studying the communication processes of construction workers who as stated above had unique socio-economic circumstances.

Social constructionist scholarship perceives people as being constituted in and through social discourses and practices (Lock and Strong 2010). Its main emphasis is an examination of the ways in which knowledge that sustains and constitutes a society or culture is generated and reproduced (Lupton 2003). It is in consideration of this emphasis that construction workers at Mabapi Estate were characterized in terms of popular means through which they communicated and generated knowledge which sustained and constituted them. It must be noted that in advocating for the consideration of construction workers' verbal and non-verbal interactions and social practices which encompass communication behaviours, a social constructionist approach is demonstrating that the knowledge and interpretation of communication behaviours and patterns of interactions of construction workers at Mabapi Estate were influenced by their social context and were communicated through social activities.

Furthermore, social constructionism perceives reality as being socially created and viewed from a particular cultural standpoint (Gergen and Gergen 2004; Pearce and Croven 2009). It also views realities as being outcomes of communicative actions rather than simply being objective entities (Ford and Yep 2003; Griffin 2009). Gergen and Gergen (2004) clarify and emphasize that social constructionism does not deny the existence of "reality". They posit that whenever people define what "reality" is, they speak from the ambit of their cultural traditions. This means that people's perceptions, attitudes and knowledge about certain phenomena are always directly influenced by their cultural traditions, and can only be observed through their communicative actions. To put this in perspective, Gergen and Gergen (2004, p. 12) assert that:

For the constructionist, our actions are not constrained by anything traditionally accepted as true, rational, or right. Standing before us is a vast spectrum of possibilities, an endless invitation to innovation. This is not to say we should then, abandon all that we take to be real

Allied to this citation, Gergen and Gergen (2004) further assert that as people communicatively interact and engage in dialogues on different issues, they cross a threshold into new worlds of meanings. In a broader sense, social constructionism recognizes that as people communicate with each other, they construct the world in which they live (Lorber and Moore 2002; Gergen and Gergen 2004). This resonates well with Tan and Tan (2006, p. 349) who in demonstrating the relevance of social constructionism as a framework for studying communication processes posit that communication interactions are conduits through which “identities of participants involved in interactions are formed, shaped, affirmed or denied and cultures in which interactions take place are also renewed and modified”. This explains why this study purported to unearth the “communication sphere” of construction workers at Mabapi Estate by analyzing their communication behaviours and patterns of verbal and non-verbal interactions.

As captured in the extract above, the concerns of social constructionism indicated that the communication processes and practices of construction workers at Mabapi Estate could be embedded within their cultural orientations and practices, and could only be known through observing and listening to them speak. This was so because social constructionism views reality as being constituted through social interaction and continuing contests over meanings (Ford and Yep 2003; Griffin 2009). In the social constructionist view, the role of a language is to create social realities that are subject to change as the world changes (Griffin 2009). Griffin’s contention about the fluidity of social realities is congruent with Pearce and Croven’s (2009) assertion that our social environment is continually and communicatively created. It is not static and permanent. The assertion that our social environment keeps on changing indicated that if a different workforce were to be brought to Mabapi Estate, say entirely educated and skilled construction workforce, they would exhibit somewhat different communication behavioural patterns and worldviews from those shown by the workforce studied.

The emphasis on interpersonal communication by social constructionist theorists suggests that social constructionism takes cognizance of the importance of community participation and cultural practices. It is in the light of this that it was found to be an ideal approach to “drive” the study of the communication among construction workers at Mabapi Estate. The social constructionist view of communication runs counter to the “top down” communication perspective in which communication is “characterized as the exchange of information by social actors who function as processors of that information” (Ford and Yep 2003, p. 247). Communication behaviors and practices promulgated by the social actors are always “in tune” with the way such people construct social realities. This is occasioned by the fact that their communication of messages are done from the ambit and assumption of their cultures.

There is a close relationship between communication by construction workers at Mabapi Estate and social constructionism. This is because as the discussion above reveals, knowledge about what to say, how to say it and who to say it to, is given meanings, and is understood and experienced through cultural and social processes. Different communities have different beliefs, cultural and moral values, which influence what they say, how to say it, when they say it, who to say it to, and their general interpretations and perceptions about communication processes which include verbal and non-verbal interactions.

From Idealism to Pragmatism: Application of the Social Constructionist Theory

There are striking similarities between the concerns of this study and those of social constructionist paradigm, a factor that influenced the decision to use social constructionism to “drive” this study. First, investigating how construction workers constructed shared meanings and understanding, as was the objective of this study, resonates with the social constructionism’s concern about how human beings construct meanings and understandings. Second, the overarching and subsidiary questions for this study revolved around interactive social relationships between Zimbabweans and Batswana construction workers. In a similar fashion, social constructionism views the construction of shared meanings and

understanding as products of verbal and non-verbal interactive social relationships. Lastly, both this study and the social constructionist theory place emphasis on the influence of socio-cultural orientations and practices on the construction of shared meanings and understanding. It is in the light of these commonalities that the researcher chose to situate this study within the social constructionist framework. In other words, the concerns of social constructionism indicate that the construction of shared meanings and understanding by construction workers at Mabapi Estate were embedded within their cultural orientations and practices, and that those communication processes could only be known through observing and listening to them speak in their construction work environments. Therefore in applying the social constructionist theory, the researcher made verbal and non-verbal interactions between and among construction workers and consideration of construction workers' peculiar circumstances and socio-cultural and linguistic orientations as pinnacles for this study's research activities. As can be discerned from the section below, the application of social constructionist theory also influenced the choice of data collection methods for this study.

Methods and Rationale for their Selection

The participant observation method was employed to uncover levels of, and patterns of verbal and non-verbal interactions among construction workers who as stated above came from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Participant observation was conducted over a period of four weeks. Conducting participant observation in this time frame was appropriate because as a resident of Mabapi Estate the researcher was studying a culture he already knew in part and had experienced for some time. The researcher therefore did not need to spend time acquainting himself with the physical and social layout of his research site. The researcher also did not need to study nuances and etiquette as he already knew those from his previous encounters with some of the research subjects, albeit on very few occasions.

Participant observation enabled the researcher to acquire knowledge about the nature of communication interactions among construction workers, and that knowledge proved to be useful during the interpretation and analysis of data. It was instrumental in determining whether or not the communication processes of construction workers were situated within their socio-cultural contexts.

Participant observation data was recorded using a pen and paper. A journal was kept throughout the data collection process. A lot of data was generated through participant observation. To manage and organize the data generated through participant observation, Thyer's (2001, p. 11) idea of organizing qualitative data into analytical notes was used. Analytic notes represented a field analysis of data in terms of the extent to which they answered the research questions and hypotheses.

Given that not all aspects of communication can be learnt through observation, a semi-structured interview was also used to gather data for this study. The researcher interviewed selected informants such as foremen, supervisors, estate owners and some ordinary construction workers in order to learn unobservable communication aspects through interpersonal communication. During the interviews the researcher asked and listened to what was said about verbal and non-verbal interactions between and among construction workers. All in all, interviews were done with twelve respondents. Interviews were conducted at the interviewees' workplace at the agreed upon dates and times suggested by the interviewees.

The interview guide had six (6) items, although the researcher composed and asked interviewees some follow up questions as the interviews progressed. Despite the interviews having been semi-structured, an effort was made to ask respondents the same questions. Interview questions were asked as they had been worded and in the order that they appeared in the interview guide to enable ease of comparison and analysis of interview responses. All the interviews were recorded on a voice recorder and were later transcribed and analyzed. Prior to conducting the interviews, a pilot study was carried out to ensure that the questions were clear and suitable, and to avoid difficult experiences where respondents might request clarifications of questions or find them offensive. The pilot study was conducted with four respondents who did not form part of the final population of semi-structured interviewees.

As subtly alluded to above, it is important to note that in studying the verbal and non-verbal interactions and communication behaviours of construction workers, the researcher was both an insider and an outsider. The researcher was an insider because he was studying people some of whom had the same nationality as him, spoke the same language as him and had some prior knowledge and experiences of verbally and non-verbally interacting with them. However, being reasonably educated, not poor and formally employed in one of the highest institutions of learning in the country, the researcher's social status relative to the construction workers' made him an outsider. Also, the fact that some of the workers were foreigners and spoke their own native languages which the researcher did not understand made him an outsider. By not being an insider, despite his existing knowledge of the community and speaking the same language as some of the subjects supports Razavi's (1993, p. 160) argument that "even when anthropologists work in their own societies, they are rarely complete insiders".

As detailed above, the focus of this research was construction workers' verbal and non-verbal communication, and this was occasioned by the fact that construction workers at Mabapi Estate had diverse cultural and linguistic orientations. Participant observation was therefore used to enable the researcher to find out how those construction workers engaged in dialogical processes and conveyed messages rhetorically and non-verbally, and how their communication processes were embedded in and influenced by their diverse cultural codes, meanings, and values. As attested to by Lupton (1992), these cultural codes included: communication practices, gender and power relations and other factors that made up the framework of their everyday interaction.

As can be noted, congruent with principles of social constructionism, the researcher chose methods of data collection that would enable him to interact with research subjects in their own socio-cultural contexts.

Data Analysis

Given the qualitative nature of this study, data was produced in the form of observation notes and narratives of subjects' opinions. As a result, data analysis was largely interpretative, analytical and descriptive and was mainly based on observer impressions. To put it differently, data was examined and interpreted by forming impressions and reporting those impressions using the coding guidelines prescribed by the grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss 2008). Grounded theory is an approach which is characterized by systematic processes of collecting, coding, analyzing and sub-dividing data into categories using themes that emerge from the data itself (Corbin and Strauss 1990; Corbin and Strauss 2008). It is one of the most rigorous, popular and widely recognized approaches to qualitative research (Jeff and Taylor 2014). Using the grounded theory approach, the coding enabled division and sub-division of data into common themes and sub-themes embedded in the data.

The analytic notes for all the two methods were accomplished through the questioning of data and making comparisons as suggested by Corbin and Strauss (2008). The questioning of data involved exploring opinions expressed by interviewees and observations made by the researcher in order to determine the extent to which they answered research questions and confirmed or disconfirmed hypotheses developed.

Findings

As was assumed prior to conducting this study, the different sub-cultural groups which constituted the construction workforce at Mabapi Estate were able to communicate between and amongst themselves. The author of this paper discovered that the different cultural groups were able to hold conversations and exchange ideas. Many Zimbabwean construction workers were able to utter some Setswana words and could, albeit minimally, communicate with Batswana construction workers. Confirming this discovery, construction workers who were interviewed indicated that for some unexplainable reason, Zimbabwean nationals were very quick to learn Setswana and many of them were able to engage Batswana in conversations, although in "broken" Setswana. It emerged, however, that not many Batswana construction workers were able to communicate with Zimbabweans in their (Zimbabweans) natural languages.

However, many Batswana construction workers could understand Zimbabweans when they talked but were unable to respond verbally. They therefore opted for using non-verbal cues such as; gestures, paralinguages, miscellaneous murmurs, nodding and headshake whenever they were unable to respond verbally. One Zimbabwean construction worker who was interviewed indicated that they as immigrants were forced to ascend to the linguistic levels and competences of their hosts; hence the tendency for them to make a concerted effort to learn the language of Batswana, an effort which in many instances pays off.

To facilitate the communication between the different sub-cultural groups, it was uncovered that the workers had created as “construction industry language”- a sub-cultural language which took care of the diversity in linguistic and cultural orientations of the workers. The language which was created derived its lexical items from languages such as English, Setswana, Shona and Ndebele. For instance, the word “Dits Waar” an Afrikaans word meaning “its true”, and pronounced “Ezvar” by construction workers, appeared to be what one may refer to as a trade mark word in construction industry. Mostly, the vocabulary for the common language of construction workers was coinages from these languages. Also, some English words were given strange meanings in that language. The following are examples of English words/phrases which were given strange meanings:

- i. “**second half**” was used to mean “see you later”.
- ii. “**cold drink**” (pronounced “coldrink”) was used to mean any none alcoholic beverage especially fizzy drinks.
- iii. “**I’m sure**” (pronounced “amsho”) used to express uncertainty.
- iv. “**Double up**” (pronounced “dablap”) used to mean taking a shortcut.
- v. “**Sharp**” was used to mean “good”.

Although conversations among construction workers just like any talk were opened and closed, questions were asked and answered, and requests were made and granted or denied, there was one striking aspect of their behaviors. That striking aspect was on issues that they talked about. Even though their conversations mainly revolved around issues pertaining to construction industry, the men who were in the majority had the propensity to talk about intimate relationships, women, their sexual escapades and drinking orgies. When talking about these issues, they appeared unperturbed by the presence of women. They also seemed unperturbed by the presence of the researcher who they had hardly verbally interacted with. What indicated that they were unperturbed when talking about those issues were a number of other non-verbal cues which permeated their conversations. The laughs, smiles, waving and pointing, and the tone of voice indicated free-will and happiness when talking about those issues.

Talking about such issues in the context in which they talked about them therefore non-verbally revealed the kind of people they were. It indicated that they were unrefined and illiterate. Educated and civilized people are generally very cautious and discreet about what they say and where they say it. By giving construction workers away in the manner in which they did, the issues that construction workers had the propensity to talk about and the context in which they talked about those issues played the role of non-verbal cues. The findings therefore summarily revealed that a combination of the issues that they liked talking about, the context in which they talked those issues and the non-verbal cues which permeated their conversations illustrated that construction workers used non-verbal communication to enhance their verbal interactions.

It was established that the diverse cultural and linguistic orientations of construction workers at Mabapi Estate did not impact negatively on their day to day verbal interactions. Construction workers at Mabapi Estates followed predictable conventional patterns of verbal interaction. For instance, there was turn taking during conversations and the turn takings were either in the form of words, murmurs, nodding or shaking of heads. Participants in conversations seemed to know when it was their turns to speak, a tendency that led to smooth verbal exchanges between communicators. For example, the excerpt below represents a typical greeting exchange structure for two Batswana construction workers:

Speaker One: Howzit (How are you?)

Speaker Two: Sharp (I am good)

In line with Goodwin and Heritage's (1990) idea of interactional sequence and Coulthard and Brazil's (1985) theory of turn-allocation rules, construction workers seemed to disdain silence between turns when holding conversations. Whenever they were holding conversations as groups and a silence occurred, one of the participants would quickly jump to break it as in the following excerpt of a conversation comprising Zimbabweans and Botswana workers:

Speaker One: *Mumuka Sei (Good morning)*

Speaker Two: *Zvakanaka (I am fine)*

Silence...

Speaker Three (breaking the silence): *Nekuti lacuna zvidhina (We have run out bricks).*

Speaker Two: *Uye hakuna cement (We also don't have cement)*

Silence...

Speaker Two (breaking the silence by producing a post completer): *Go raya gore ga re tle tirong Mangwana*

(It means we are not coming to work tomorrow).

The practice of breaking silences during conversations resonated well with Coulthard and Brazil's (1985) position that in a conversation, there is very low tolerance for silence between turns. They state that if in a conversation the next speaker does not begin almost immediately, the previous speaker would most likely produce a "post-completer" which may be in the form of either a question or repeat of his/her utterance. We see in the excerpt above speaker two producing a post completer because none of the participants was taking a turn.

It is important to note that three languages were used in the above excerpt; namely English, Setswana and Shona. In the last line of the second excerpt, Speaker two used Setswana but switched to Shona when saying "mangwana" (tomorrow). In the last but one line, the same speaker two used Shona but switched to English when saying "cement". The use of a mixture of languages indicated the complexity of a communication between and among speakers with varied linguistic and cultural orientations. This movement to and away from other languages attest to the relevance of Giles' (2009) theory of Communication Accommodation Theory in bringing different language groups into a meaningful communication practice. According to the Communication Accommodation Theory, when linguistically diverse people are engaged in a conversation, there is a tendency to constantly move toward and away from another's language and interactive patterns through a change in communication behavior (Giles 2009).

The concept of talk-in-interaction (conversation) denotes talking with one another as a social interaction, and that talking is an important part of our social being (Akindele (1988). Akindele (1991) further posits that research on conversation analysis has shown that talk is an orderly activity controlled by the use of mechanisms deployed and tailored for events of interaction across very many settings and participants. It is in the light of this theoretical pronouncement that an observation on conversational patterns of verbal interaction by construction workers at Mabapi Estate is made. Sacks (1974) provides details about conventional patterns of verbal interaction. He posits that conversation is rule governed, and that among the many basic rules, the following play more significant roles in conversation: "one party speaks at a time" and 'speaker change recurs". This is ostensibly what Akindele 1991, p. 69) refers to as "machinery deployed in and adapted to local contingencies of interaction".

As shown in the discussion on patterns of verbal interaction by construction workers, the concept of turn-taking was used to assess the communication among construction workers. The notion that in conversation one party speaks at a time suggests that in a conversation, a minimum of two participants is required. This requirement facilitates turn-taking (Goodwin and Heritage 1990). Sacks (1974) agrees entirely with Goodwin and Heritage (1990) on the minimum number of participants for a talk. Also important to note, is Tan and Tan's (1990) position that body actions such as nods and murmurs and even "back channel" behaviors such as sentence completion and requests for clarification constitute a turn. Taking a side in what constitute a turn, Tan and Tan's (1990) argument seems to hold true for what constitute a turn in conversation as it takes cognizance of the role of non-verbal communication in verbal interactions. To suggest that nods, murmurs and "back channel" behaviors constitute a turn in a conversation take cognizance of other factors that enhance verbal interactions as was witnessed in

Batswana construction workers resorting to non-verbal cues when holding conversations with their⁹ Zimbabwean counter parts. It is for this reason that nods, murmurs and other non-verbal behaviours were considered as turns in the analysis of the construction workers' verbal interactions. As indicated in the methods section, non-verbal cues were recorded using a pen and paper in a journal that was kept throughout the data collection process.

Theoretical Implications

This study has raised very important issues that can potentially inform communication practices and processes not only in the communication by construction workers in low resources communities of developing countries such as Botswana, but also in the wider field of communication research and practices. While not undermining the potential impact of other issues that have been raised in this study; there are basically three issues that have significant implications in the broader discipline of communication research and these are: the creation of a common language by culturally and linguistically diverse groups, language competence vis-à-vis language performance and non-verbal communication.

In terms of the creation of a common language, the findings validate the theory that whenever culturally and linguistically diverse groups work together over an extended period to pursue a common goal, they inadvertently create a common language-sub-cultural language. The common language they create will identify them as a group and enable them to have meaningful verbal interactions and exchanges. It will also enable them to construct shared meanings and understanding to pursue their goal. Even though that language may not be understood by "outsiders" as it was the case with what the researcher calls "a language of construction industry" above, it will be meaningful to the cultural groups which on account of living together for an extended period have become a community in their own right. That language is born of the old and fully developed languages that are already spoken and understood by the concerned groups and it is formed through processes of lexical blending (coinages), lexical borrowing and borrowing of other linguistic features from each of the old and fully developed languages. In the case of construction workers at Mabapi Estate, the fully developed languages that they had when they started working together were; Setswana, Shona, and English. They borrowed lexical items from all these three languages to form their own sub-cultural language that took care of the diversity in their linguistic and cultural orientations. The significance of the creation of a sub-cultural language by construction workers in terms of theory is the explanation of the origin and development of new languages.

While the discussion above largely confirms what the theory on language contact stipulates, there is a new aspect which is portrayed by the findings but is not addressed by that theory. That new aspect is what one may call "a semantic and phonological defilement of an existing language". As shown in the findings section, the language that has been semantically and phonologically "mutilated" is English. For example, the findings have unearthed that phrases like "double up" and "I'm sure" are not only given strange meanings in the construction industry language, but are also pronounced strangely. In the light of this, it can be theorized that language contact due to contact by culturally diverse speech communities does not only result in lexical blending, lexical borrowing and borrowing of other linguistic features; it can also result in either one of the languages being semantically and phonologically mutilated.

It should be noted, however, that English as the language that has been "defiled" is foreign to both the two cultural groups. Although borrowing of lexical items from Setswana and Shona are manifested in the findings as well, unlike English affected words from these two languages maintained their original meanings and pronunciation in the course of the creation of what is referred to above as "construction industry language". Despite the fact that vocabulary from respective cultural groups' native languages did not experience changes in meanings or sounds as a result of contact, it would be too hasty to theorize solely on the basis of these findings that only a language that is not native to either one of the interacting cultural groups suffer meaning and pronunciation changes. Such a generalization can only be made if other similar researches consistently produce the same results.

In terms of language performance vis-à-vis language competence, the findings of this study have shown that performance takes a center stage in communication, that is, one does not need to be competent in a language to verbally interact with a speaker of the same language. The findings reveal that Batswana and

Zimbabweans were able to have verbal exchanges and effectively work together despite not having¹⁰ a tacit understanding of each other's languages. Even though they spoke in what I call "broken languages", meaning grammatically incorrect languages (Setswana, English and Shona), they were still able to put their messages across.

Allied to the point about language performance and competence is the issue of the utility of non-verbal cues in intercultural communication. As shown in the findings section, construction workers used non-verbal cues such as laughter, smile, gestures and paralinguistics to enhance their verbal interactions. It is also shown in the findings section that Batswana construction workers were able to circumvent their lack of ability to respond in Shona through the use of non-verbal cues such as; murmurs, head shakes, gestures and others. The fact that Batswana construction workers confirmed that they could understand Shona but were unable to speak it, implies that understanding a language is more important than being able to speak it. The fact that those workers were able to use non-verbal cues to execute instructions and commands given in a language they understood but could not speak, underscores the importance of non-verbal cues in communication between people from varying linguistic backgrounds. It must, however, be emphasized that different cultural groups attach different meanings to the same non-verbal cues. For example, a head shake may mean different things to different cultural groups. The fact that Zimbabweans were able to understand the non-verbal cues used by Batswana in response to what they said suggests that there was a commonality between the cultures of the two different groups. That commonality enabled and facilitated interaction and construction shared meanings and understanding between Batswana and Zimbabweans construction workers.

While the use of non-verbal cues by construction workers largely validate the tried and trusted principles of non-verbal communication, there is just one aspect that this study has unearthed which to the knowledge of the researcher is not addressed by the non-verbal communication scholarship. As discussed in the findings section, construction workers' had the inclination to talk about issues that can be perceived as gross by the civilized society and that such issues revealed who they were and could potentially have an impact on how they related with other people, especially those who could perceive their behaviors as unrefined. Given that the issues that they talked about and the context in which they talked about those issues revealed their identities, those then became non-verbal cues in their own right. They became non-verbal cues because they communicated information about them in a non-verbal way. In other words, construction workers never explicitly announced that they were uncivilized and illiterate. It is the issues that they talked about and the context in which they talked about those issues that implicitly revealed their characters. However, the literature on non-verbal communication does not classify subject matters or issues for discussions and social contexts as having the potential to implicitly communicate information in a non-verbal fashion. As shown in section two above, the literature on non-verbal communication only considers behaviors such as facial expressions, gestures, paralinguistic, body language and posture, proxemics, eye gaze, haptics, appearance and artifacts as non-verbal cues. In the light of this, it can be theorized that people's penchants and social context can also be non-verbal cues.

Conclusion

The findings of this study showed that dialogical processes of construction workers at Mabapi Estate were entirely embedded in and were influenced by their social status, circumstances and cultural orientations. That construction workers devised a sub-cultural language peculiar to their setting validate Sapir (1949) contention that each community has its own way of looking at the world and that the way a community looks at the world is mirrored by their language. According to Sapir (1949), each community develops a language that will suit their needs. In line with this pronouncement, construction workers at Mabapi Estate developed a language that enabled them to communicate amongst themselves despite their unique circumstances. Given that construction workers mostly comprised of the poor, illiterate, uneducated, and formally unemployed people, they made sense of the world in ways that were commensurate to their statuses and they developed a language that reflected their socio-economic statuses.

This study has also validated Akindele (1991), Sacks (1974) and Tan and Tan's (2006) contention that a conversation is an orderly activity. As shown by the findings of this study, the orderliness of verbal

interactions between and among construction workers allowed interactional tasks to be accomplished in the way that took cognizance of circumstances and participant.

Finally, this study has shown that non-verbal communication plays a significant role in human interactions. As shown in the findings section, construction workers talked about issues that non-verbally identified them as a socio-cultural group and they employed varied non-verbal cues to enhance interactions among themselves. These validate Cherry's (2015) contention that non-verbal details provide implicit information about who we are and they impact on our interactions.

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