



Opening and Closing Sequences in Nigerian Pidgin Sales Talk

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Abstract. One of the ways that individuals maintain good interpersonal relationships is by using appropriate opening and closing strategies in their conversations. Research on conversational openings and closings has been conducted in different parts of the world. Still, there is a shortage of scholarly works on openings and closings in Nigerian Pidgin. It is this gap that this study addresses. The aim is to discover how closely the patterns for opening and closing conversations in Nigerian Pidgin sales talk follow the sequences identified in prior research. The data comprises fifteen dyads of recorded conversations between salespersons and their customers collected from five different business settings. The duration of the interactions ranges from two to five minutes, and the participants are adult Nigerian Pidgin speakers from various walks of life. The corpus is analysed using Coronel-Molina's (1998) theory of telephone conversations. The findings show that all four components of conversational opening sequences identified by Coronel-Molina were found in the data—the summons/answer, identification/recognition, greeting adjacency pairs, and “how-are-you” adjacency pairs. For closing sequences, out of the four strategies proposed by Coronel-Molina, only one category was found: the final closing. The findings also show that opening and closing sequences are context and culture-dependent.

Keywords: Openings; closings; Nigerian Pidgin; Sales talk; service providers; summons/answer; identification/recognition; greeting adjacency pairs.

1. Introduction

Conversational openings and closings are essential to any interaction and directly affect how human relationships are maintained. Isosavi and Vecsernyes (2022, p.9) note that opening sequences are used to establish connections between interlocutors, while David M.K et al. (2012) report that openings refer to how a conversation is initiated and may include the use

of address forms, greetings, exchange of positive non-verbal movements like smiling, waving of hands and eye movement. For Majeed and Hassan (2022, p.232), openings are initiation chunks of speech used to start a conversation. Conversely, closings refer to how a conversation is closed and may include thanking and goodbyes with positive non-verbal acts like smiling, waving and eye contact. Bou-Franch (2011, p.4) notes that opening and closing sequences “are mainly phatic, inter-personally-loaded structural slots, mostly empty of content regarding the goal or reason for the interaction”. Bou-Franch adds that while in opening sequences, the social relationship between the participants is negotiated and established or recalled, in closing sequences, participants work to accomplish a joint, negotiated, frictionless termination of the social event. Openings and closings determine the circumstances for the initiation of the first topic in a conversation, indicate that all issues in a conversation are adequately taken care of (Illomaki and Kuusuvuori, (2020, p.1) and are more stylised than other parts of the conversation (Nurjanah and Rchmawati, 2022, p.28). Opening and closing strategies vary from person to person and from culture to culture and may constitute challenges to foreigners who are unaware of the rules guiding their use. Kerbrat- Orechoni, (2005) as cited in Tabbach and Van den Heede, (2021) observes that openings and closings are the locus per excellence of positive politeness. This goes to show that using the appropriate openings and closings enable interactants start and end conversations in a smooth and frictionless manner. Despite the growing number of studies done on opening and closing sequences in face-to-face conversations in different languages: Emery,2000 (Omani Arabic); Kpoko and Abrefa, 2017 (Akan in Ghana); Akindele, 2007(Basotho in South Africa), to the best of our knowledge, no study has been conducted on opening and closing sequences in face-to-face conversations in Nigerian Pidgin. It is this gap that this study addresses.

2. Literature Review

Studies on openings and closing sequences have been conducted in different parts of the world. Some scholars have focused on telephone conversations: Majeed and Hassan, 2022 (Behdini Kurdish); Al-Ali and Abu-Abah, 2021 (Jordanian Arabic); Taleghani-Nikazm, 2002 (Germany and Iran); Hopper and Chen, 1996 (Taiwan); Schegloff, 1968 (British English) while others have examined the structure of openings and closings in face to face conversations: (Felix-Brasdefer, 2015 among Yucatan Mexicans; Huang, 2016 for Taiwanese and Italians; Kpogo and Abrefa, 2017 for Akan in Ghana; Mahzari, 2019 for Saudi Arabic).

Majeed and Hassan (2022) analyse opening sequences in radio phone-in programmes in Behdini to find out the effects of gender on the forms of the sequences. The findings reveal that the forms of openings depended on whether the caller was known or unknown and that the caller-unknown structures occurred mostly in female-female speech and rarely in female-male discourse.

In another study, Isosavi and Verserneyes (2022) compares opening sequences in Finnish, French and Hungarian Youtube videos with focus on addressing, greetings and gestures. The data discovers cultural similarities in the use of greetings, address forms and gestures. In terms of cross-cultural differences, the data shows that Finnish and Hungarian were closer to each other than to French.

Al-Ali and Abu-Abah (2021) examine opening phases of telephone conversations in Jordanian Arabic. The analysis shows that although the participants employed functional patterns similar to those found in other cultures and languages, there were peculiar options used by only Jordanians.

In a related study, Mahzari (2019) explores opening sequences in mobile phone calls and landline conversations between Saudis in order to identify the different patterns and to find out if similarities and differences exist. The results of the investigation show that even though similarities exist between the two, there are still areas in which the two mediums are different.

Kpogo and Abrefa (2017) examine the structure of face-to-face casual conversations among the Akans in order to find out the different ways openings and closings are patterned. Using Coronel-Molina's theory of telephone conversation, which is a development of Schegloff (1986) and Schegloff and

Sacks (1973) the authors juxtapose the structure of face-to-face casual conversations to that of casual conversations. The findings show two forms of face-to-face conversational openings: presence and absence of interlocutors with greetings and how-are-you sequences occurring in both forms. For closings, the study reveals three forms: introductory closings, intermediate closing and final closings.

Felix-Brasdefer (2015), in an examination of service encounters in Yucatan Mexican discovers that openings and closings did not occur in the data but that the conversations consist of pre-sequences in which inquiries were made about products and services.

Huang (2016) examines openings and closings among EFL students. The corpus was gathered from 768 email discourses between eleven Taiwanese college freshmen and thirteen Italian senior high school students. The results of the study reveal that both the Taiwanese and Italian students used openings and closing strategies in their interactions with each other. This present study analyzes conversations in Nigerian Pidgin sales talk, with focus on openings and closings, in order to find out the extent to which the data fits into Coronel-Molina's (1998) model of openings and closings.

3. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is Coronel-Molina's (1998) theory of telephone conversations, which is an adaptation of Schegloff and Sacks's (1973) and Schegloff's (1986) theory of telephone conversations. Like Schegloff (1986), Coronel-Molina proposes the following features of opening sequences in telephone conversations: summons/answer, identifications/recognition, greeting adjacency and inquiry sequence. The summons/sequence refers to the ringing of the telephone and the receiver's response by picking up the phone. This answer is usually in the form of the word 'Hello' or any other identification. The identification /recognition sequence involves each party identifying themselves and displaying recognition of the other party. The greeting sequence consists of exchanging greetings, while the inquiry sequence refers to that part of the conversation when both parties pose an initial inquiry. He expands Schegloff and Sack's pre-closings for closings to include features such as new topic introduction, recapitulation and final closing.

4. Data and Method

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative design. Data for this study consists of a corpus of naturally occurring conversations collected from different settings. The location is Abraka, a thriving commercial town in Delta State, Southern Nigeria. The instruments for data collection are an audio recorder, observation, and field notes. Adult Nigerian speakers of Nigerian Pidgin took part in this study. The data is presented first in Nigerian Pidgin, followed by their English translations. Jefferson's (2004) transcription notations will be used to transcribe the data.

5. Analysis and Discussion

5.1 Openings

Coronel-Molina identifies components of conversational opening sequences in telephone conversations as summons/answer, identification/recognition, greetings, and "how-are-you" adjacency pairs. All these forms occur in the data, although with variations, especially in the summons/ answer sequence.

5.1.1 The Summons/Answer

This summon aims to start the interaction and draw the addressee's attention to the addresser, while the answer is the addressee's verbal reaction. In telephone conversations, the phone's ringing constitutes the summons, and the answer is the addressee's response to the summons made of words like 'hello' and 'Yes.' However, in face-to-face conversation, as seen in this study, the conversational participants use interrogations as first signals, and herein lies the difference between sales talk and telephone conversations.

5.1.2 Interrogation

Sometimes, when interlocutors come within sight of each other, they begin the conversation with an interrogation as a signal to draw attention to themselves. They do this without any opening sequence and do not engage in phatic talk. The conversation below is an example of such an occurrence:

Exchange 1:

1. Customer: → ↑ How much for hypo? Medium size.
What is the price for hypo, medium-sized?
2. Shop Keeper: Two fifty.
Two hundred and fifty naira.
3. Customer: → What of Jik?

What about Jik?

- Shop Keeper: Three hundred naira.
Three hundred naira.
- Customer: Take. Give me change.
Here you are. Give me my change.
- Shop Keeper: One thousand naira! I no get change o. Just give me the fifty naira wey dey your hand.
One thousand naira note! I don't have any change. Just give me the fifty naira note that you have in your hand.
- Customer: I wan use am. Abeg give me my change.
I want to use it. Please give me my change.
- Shop Keeper: Take. Thank you
Here. Thank you.

Zhou and Yu (2023,p.186) note that interrogatives are the most commonly used conversational openers between strangers. An example is seen in Exchange 1, where the customer initiates the conversation with an interrogative 'How much for hypo? (Line 1) as a way of attracting the shop owner's attention and stating the purpose of her visit. After obtaining a response from the shopkeeper, she proceeded with another question: 'What of Jik?'The customer's use of the interrogative in Line 1, as well as 'Excuse o', is done to soften the impact of the request. Another instance of the use of the interrogative as a form of signal is seen in Exchange 2.

Exchange 2:

- Customer: → How much for Maggi?
How much is Maggi seasoning cube?
- Shop Keeper: Chicken own abi meat own?
Chicken or beef flavour?
- Customer: Meat.
Beef.
- Shopkeeper: Carton?
A full carton?
- Customer: Yes.
Yes.
- Shop Keeper: Na five thousand seven hundred naira e bi.
It costs five thousand seven hundred naira.
- Customer: No discount?
No discount?
- Shop Keeper: Na so dem dey sell am everywhere.
That is the price at which it is sold everywhere.
- Customer: Na here I dey, no bi everywhere, and I dey ask if you no go less for the price?
I am here, not everywhere, and I am asking if you won't reduce the price.
- Shop Keeper: No, ma. That na the last price.
No Ma'am. That is the last price.
- Customer: Give me one pack.
Give me a pack.

Zein et al. (2021, p.58) observe that the essence of interrogation in conversations is to make inquiries and seek clarification. They also serve as a way for interlocutors to register their presence (Chepinchikj 2020, p.4). In Exchange 2, the customer makes her request in the form of an interrogation: ‘How much is Maggi?’ (Food seasoning cubes). She is direct and straight to the point, with no time for pleasantries, and immediately states the reason for coming to the shop. Her primary objective is to make her purchase. The conversation continues with more question-and-answer sequences until the customer eventually takes her leave.

5.1.3 Address Forms

Another way through which participants initiate conversations is by using address forms. Afful (2006), cited in Kpogo and Abrefa (2017, p.79), asserts that terms of address are essential to human verbal behaviour and reflect a society's norms and practices. Zhou and Yu (2023, p.186) also observe that solidarity and power relationships influence address forms. This is exemplified in Exchange 3:

Exchange 3:

Customer: → Madam, you get coke? Cold one? Plastic?

Madam, do you have a Coke? A Cold one in a plastic bottle?

Shop Keeper: No Coke, only Fanta.

No Coke, only Fanta.

Customer: Give me Fanta. How much?

Give me Fanta. How much is it?

Shop Keeper: Five hundred.

Five hundred naira.

Customer: Take!

Here you are!

In Line 20, the customer begins the interaction by referring to the shopkeeper as ‘Madam.’ In the Nigerian society, it is considered impolite for a younger person to refer to their elder by name. Forms like ‘Uncle, Auntie, Madam’ and ‘Mummy’ are used to show respect for the addressee's age. From the data analysis, one common form of address the interlocutors use to initiate any interaction is the title plus greeting sequence, as seen in the following conversation.

Exchange 4:

Customer: → Aunty, good evening.

Auntie, good evening.

Shop Keeper: Good evening. Wetin you want?

Good evening. What do you want?

Customer: You get Extract soap?

Do you have Extract soap?

Shop Keeper: Yes

Yes

Customer: Bring am

Let me have it

(0.5):

Customer: → Aunty, this one no be original

Auntie, this is not the original.

Shop Keeper: How the original be?

How does the original look like?

Customer: For the original, dem no use Arabic write for am. Na English dem use.

The original has no Arabic inscription on it. The words are in English.

Shopkeeper: Na, this one I get.

This is the one I have.

Customer: No. I no wan this one.

No. I don't want this one.

In this exchange, the customer, the younger party, initiates the conversation with the title plus greeting. She refers to the shop owner as ‘Aunty’ out of respect for her age (Lines 25 and 30). Even when expressing her displeasure about the soap given to her, she remains polite by calling the shopkeeper ‘aunty.’ The conversation continues with the customer educating the sale person about the differences between the two kinds of Extract soap. A similar title plus greeting sequence is seen in Exchange 5 below.

Exchange 5:

Hair Dresser: → Aunty welcome, you wan do hair?

Auntie, you are welcome. Do you want to make your hair?

36. Customer: No, na my daughter.

No, it is my daughter that wants her hair-done.

37. Hair Dresser: She don loose her hair? Why?

Has she loosened her weaves?

Why so soon?

38. Customer: E no last. I wan make she fix weave-on. Na dat one go last.

Those weaves did not last. I want her to fix a weave-on. That will last longer.

39. Hair Dresser: After this one, she go braid hair, I go stretch am, she no go retouch the hair and after some time even you go surprise when you see the hair. U sef go regret wetin make you retouch your hair.

After this, she will braid her hair, and I will stretch it. She will not retouch her hair; after some time, you will even be surprised when you see it. Even you will regret why you retouched your hair.

40. Customer: How much I go drop? I wan reach market.

How much will I deposit? I want to go into the market.

41. Hair Dresser: Two thousand, five hundred naira. No need to wash am.

Two thousand, five hundred naira. There is no need to wash her hair.

42. Customer: Take, give me change. Abeg no waste time. Na she go cook the things wey I dey go buy for market.

Have it. Give me my change. Please do not waste time. She will be the one to cook the foodstuff I am going to buy in the market.

43. Hair Dresser: Ok, ma.

Ok, Ma'am.

Kordon (2006 cited in (Polo 2021, p.12) observes that the opening phase is rich in phatic language used to lubricate the switch from non-communication to communication. In the opening sequence of exchange 5, it is evident that the participants share a long-time relationship, and the atmosphere is relaxed and friendly. The use of 'Aunty welcome' by the hairdresser serves as a means of initiating the conversation. This done, she then proceeds to ask "You wan do hair? (Do you want to make your hair?)."

5.1.4 The Identification/Recognition

Kpogo and Abrefa (2017) observe that identification/recognition refers to a situation where a conversational participant (who has been summoned) tries to find out the addresser who is addressing them. In most interactions between shopkeepers and their customers, the identification and recognition process occurs when the interlocutors come within sight of each other.

Exchange 6: (In a Restaurant)

44. Customer: → ↑ Well done oo
Hello.

45. Restaurant Owner: → Welcome customer. Wetin you want?

You're welcome,
Customer. What do you want?

46. Customer: I want rice and stew.
I want rice and stew.

47. Restaurant Owner: Like how much own you want?

How much worth?
48. Customer: You fit give me like 1000 naira own?

Can you give me 1000 naira worth?
49. Restaurant Owner: Wetin you want use take chop am?

What would you like to eat it with?
50. Customer: With 1000 naira cow-leg, but you go put plenty stew o.

With 1000 hundred naira cow-foot, but put a lot of stew.

51. Restaurant Owner: Cow-leg na 1500 naira. Cow-leg plus rice, 1000, making 2500 naira.

Cow-foot on its own is 1500. Cow-foot and 1000 worth of rice will be 2500 naira.

52. Customer: Eeyyyh. The cow-leg cost o! Na 2000 I go pay.

Eeyyyh. Cow-foot is expensive! I will pay 2000 naira.

53. Restaurant Owner: The rice no go plenty o, you know say things don cost.

The rice will be very little. You know that things are expensive.

54. Customer: But you no go look dat one. I be your customer. Na, every day, I dey come chop.

But it would be best if you did not look at it that way. I am your customer. I eat here daily.

55. Restaurant Owner: You, too, consider me. Na inside di rice and cow-leg I go get money for shop before I see gain. You want make hungry beat me? I go muni for you because of next time.

Please also consider my situation. I pay my rent and profit from the sales of rice and cow-foot. Do you want me to go hungry? I will add a little extra rice for next time's sake.

56. Customer: Thank you.
Thank you.

57. Restaurant Owner: You go chop here abi you go carry go?

Do you want to eat in or take away?

58. Customer: I go carry am go.
I want to take it away.

59. Restaurant Owner: Oya, wait first, make I serve people for your back. Make I give them first. Na them first you.

Please wait a while; let me serve the people behind you. Let me serve them first. They were here before you.

In this exchange, it is evident that the parties are within sight of each other and are inside the restaurant. Upon entering the shop, the customer recognises the restaurant owner's presence by greeting 'well done' to acknowledge her presence. The restaurant owner, in turn, acknowledges him as a 'customer' and responds to his greeting. The dialogue is a long back and forth, with the customer haggling for a reduction in prices as he repeatedly appeals to the shopkeeper to cut down on the cost of his meal. The conversation is relatively informal, and it is clear that both participants have a long-term business relationship. Another example of identification/recognition is seen in next exchange.

Exchange 7:

60. Shop Keeper: → Madam, good evening. You wan buy something?

Madam, good evening. Do you want to buy anything?

61. Customer: Ehh. Good evening.

- Yes. Good evening.
62. Shop Keeper: Long time I never see you. Where you dey now?
I haven't seen you in a long while. Where are you based now?
63. Customer: I travel before.
I have been out of town.
64. Shop Keeper: Welcome, how that side?
Welcome. How was your trip?
65. Customer: Fine. You get antibiotics?
Fine. Do you have antibiotics?
66. Shop Keeper: Which one? Na you wan use am?
What type? Is the medication for you?
67. Customer: Yes.
Yes

The conversation above occurs in a medicine store where the shopkeeper and the customer are present and standing face to face. The shopkeeper immediately acknowledges her interlocutor's presence and addresses her as 'Madam,' a sign of respect. There is an exchange of greetings, and it is evident that they have a longstanding relationship. After the greetings, the discussion moves to the reason for the customer's visit to the pharmacy: 'You get antibiotics?' (Do you have antibiotics?). The shopkeeper immediately swings into the business mode, all professional. 'Which one? Na you wan use am?' (Which one? Is the medication for you?). Sometimes, when one party is unavailable or visible to the other, the party approaching calls out to the absent individual to assume the participant's position. The following exchange provides an example.

- Exchange 8:
- Customer: →↑ I dey greet o. Good morning
Hello. Good morning.
- Shop Keeper: Who be that? Wetin you want?
Who is that? What do you want?
- Customer: Na me o. Ada. I wan buy flit.
It's me. Ada. I want to buy insecticide.
- Shop Keeper: Abeg, wait small. I dey come
Please hold on for a little while. I will soon be with you.
- Customer: I hear o.
I hear you.
- Shop Keeper: Welcome. Which kind flit you want?
Welcome. What type of insecticide do you want?
74. Customer: Raid.
The Raid brand.
- Shop Keeper: Big one abi small one?

76. Customer: Do you want the big or small size?
Big.
The big size.
- Shop Keeper: One thousand eight hundred naira.
One thousand, eight hundred naira.
- (0.5):
- Customer: Take. Give me change,
Here. Give me my change.
- Shop Keeper: Thank you
Thank you.

In this exchange, line 69 marks the initiation of the identification/recognition sequence as the summoner (shopkeeper), who was out of sight, seeks to know the addressee's identity. 'Who be that?' (Who are you?), 'Wetin you want?' (What do you want?)'. The customer responds to the enquiry by identifying herself as "Ada" and stating the reason for her visit: "I want to buy flit" (I want to buy mosquito insecticide).

5.1.5 Greetings

Greeting is a speech act where the speakers intentionally make their presence known to another to show attention to and suggest a relationship or social status between individuals or groups of people encountering each other. (Kim et al cited in Adedokun and Marais 2023, p.147). This is in accordance with the views Amer et al. (2020, p.63) expressed that greetings function as a switch to open or close relations. Ativie (2020, p.199) observes that interlocutors use greetings to establish rapport and give face support. The data reveals that greetings are the most frequently used opening strategy, as more than three-quarters of the recorded transactions show the use of this strategy. The most common greeting form in the data is the "time of the day" greetings such as "Good morning" and "Good afternoon". In addition, the data also show that age does not determine the greeting initiator, as an older customer may initiate greetings to get the attention of the younger service provider. In Exchange 9 below, the shopkeeper uses greetings to initiate the interaction.

- Exchange 9:
- Customer: → Good afternoon.
Good afternoon
- Shop Keeper: → Welcome.
Welcome.
- Customer: Give me shampoo.
Give me shampoo
- Shop Keeper: E dey the counter wey dey for your back. Any other thing?
It is on the shelf right behind you. Anything else?
- Customer: Weave-on gloss. How much e bi?

Weave-on gloss; how much is it?
 Shop Keeper: Seven hundred naira.
 Seven hundred naira.
 Customer: Ok. Put am for nylon for me.
 Ok. Put it in a bag for me.

Exchange 9 begins with a greeting sequence initiated by the customer to kick-start the transaction. This is followed by a request for a product stated in the form of a directive. The customer asks for shampoo and is given directions on where to get it. She proceeds further to ask for weave-on gloss and how much it costs. The shopkeeper replies, 'Seven hundred naira'. The data also reveals that the shopkeeper sometimes initiated greetings, as seen in the dialogue below.

Exchange 10:
 Shop Keeper: → Good evening, ma.
 Good evening, Ma'am.
 Customer: → Good evening. Give me one cartoon of Ribena.
 Good evening. Give me a cartoon of Ribena.
 Shop Keeper: See am. Three thousand, five hundred.
 Here it is. Three thousand, five hundred naira.
 Customer: How much?
 How much?
 Shop Keeper: Three thousand five hundred naira.
 Three thousand, five hundred naira.
 Customer: But I buy am three thousand last month.
 But I bought it for three thousand naira only last month.
 Shop Keeper: Ah! That na the old price. Things don go up.
 Ah! That is the old price. Prices have gone up.
 Customer: God help us. See the money.
 God help us. Here's the money.
 Shop Keeper: Thank you.
 Thank you.

The function of greeting in the above is to serve as an ice breaker, establish a bond and keep the flow of the conversation smooth. We see this in the conversation as both parties exchange greetings before delving into a discussion about skyrocketing prices. Both interlocutors share a relaxed and friendly relationship.

5.1.6 The 'how-are-you' Sequence

The How -are-you sequence comes immediately after the initial opening sequence. During this process, the interlocutors enquire about the well-being of family members. After this is done, they proceed to the

transaction's main business. An example is shown below.

Exchange 11:
 Customer: → How now?
 How are you?
 Hair Dresser: Mummy, good afternoon
 Madam, good afternoon.
 Customer: Na only you dey here?
 Are you alone here?
 Hair Dresser: Na only me o. You wan do hair?
 I am alone. Do you want to make your hair?
 Customer: Yes, where your other girl?
 Yes. Where is the other hair-dresser?
 Hair Dresser: E travel.
 She's out of town.
 Customer: What of your daughter?
 What about your daughter?
 Hair Dresser: E go village
 She's gone to the village.

Hair Dresser: (To an attendant). Help mummy lose her hair.

Help Madam to loosen her weaves.
 Customer: (To attendant) Put towel
 Place a towel around me.

106. Hair Dresser: Any time wey work dey na hin e dey travel. When work no dey, e go siddon for saloon from morning to night.

She only travels when there is work to do. She sits in the saloon from dawn to dusk when there is no work.

Customer: She think say na you e dey do?
 She's undoing herself, not you.

108. Hair Dresser: When e come back, I go collect my saloon key from am. No be school e go; no be hair e learn.

When she returns, I will take the key to my saloon from her. She is neither in school nor learning hairdressing.

It can be observed in the above exchange that the How-are-you sequence precedes the greetings. The customer in this exchange is the older of the interlocutors. In Nigeria, it is considered rude for a younger person to address an older person using this expression. The conversation shows that the interlocutors are familiar with each other and are pretty close. After the opening greetings, they enquire about others 'Where your other girl?' (Line 100) 'What about your daughter?' (Line 102).

Exchange 12:
 Shop Keeper: Good Evening
 Good Evening.
 Customer: Evening
 Evening.
 Shop Keeper: → How you dey?
 How are you?
 Customer: I dey fine.

I am fine.
 112. Shop Keeper: Long time no see. We still be brethren?
 Long time no see. Are we still brethren?
 Customer: We dey together. I travel na im make am.
 We are! It is just that I haven't been around.
 Shop Keeper: No wonder. Wetin you want?
 It is no wonder. What do you want?
 Customer: Bournvita. The medium size.
 Bournvita. The medium size.
 Shop Keeper: Make I bring am.
 Let me get it.

In this exchange, the conversation begins with the greeting sequence (Lines 108 and 109). Lines 110 and 111 show the 'how-are-you' sequence. The tone of the discussion is light and friendly, and it is evident that the participants share a long-time relationship, hence the question, 'We still be brethren?' (Are we still brethren?) (Line 112). After the first two core sequences, the shopkeeper proceeds to the purpose of the encounter as she asks, 'What do you want?' The customer replies, 'Bournvita. The medium size'. The conversation ends with no closing statement other than 'Let me get it. There are no exchanges of thanks or gratitude for services received or patronage.

5.2 Closings

In a sales setting, once the exchange of goods, services, information or money has taken place, it is then up to either of the interlocutors to terminate the conversation. This termination is what is known as closing. Levinson(1983) cited in Sun(2005,p.110) considers conversational closings as very delicate in that while no individual is under obligation to leave while the discussion has not been concluded, terminating a conversation suddenly may offend the other party. Schegloff and Sacks (1973,p.291) state that "conversational endings vary from a wide range of conversations-in-their-course to a regular common closure with 'bye bye' or its variants." Van de Koot-Dees and Sliedrecht (2023,p.6-7) note that as an interactional phenomenon, closings provide insight into interactional mechanisms and relationship management between participants. This present study found that out of the four closing sequences proposed by Coronel-Morina, only one category was found in the data- the final closing. In the data examined, the closing sequences were initiated by both the shopkeepers and the customers. Many interactions ended with the words 'Thank you' or 'Thanks' by the shopkeepers or the customers. For the shopkeeper, the

expression of thanks serves as a means of expressing gratitude for the customer's patronage and encouraging future visits. In most cases, the customer did not respond. An example is seen in Exchange 13 below.

Exchange 13:
 Customer: Madam, good afternoon.
 Madam, good afternoon
 118. Shop Keeper: Afternoon.
 Afternoon
 Customer: You dey sell brush?
 Do you sell toothbrushes?
 120. Shop Keeper: Yes
 Yes
 Customer: Give me one brush, paste and small vaseline.
 Give me one toothbrush, a small-sized toothpaste and the most miniature jar of Vaseline.
 Shop Keeper: Paste? Which type?
 Toothpaste? What brand?
 123. Customer: Close up.
 Close up.
 124. Shop Keeper: What of the Vaseline?
 What about the vaseline?
 125. Customer: Anyone you get, do.
 Any brand you have is okay.
 126. Shop Keeper: Take
 Here.
 127. Customer: How much?
 How much?
 128. Shop Keeper: Three hundred and fifty naira.
 Three hundred and fifty naira.
 (0.5)
 129. Customer: Take.
 Here.
 130. Shop Keeper: → Thank you.
 Thank you.

In this exchange, the shopkeeper ends the conversation with 'Thank you. While it can be argued that 'thank you' is an expression of gratitude, the words serve as a closing initiator because they signal the end of the interaction. Another example is seen in Exchange 14.

Exchange 14:
 131. Customer: You get Bournvita?
 Do you have Bournvita?
 132. Sales Person: Mama no, na milo I get. You no dey drink Milo?
 No, Ma'am. What I have is Milo. Don't you drink Milo?
 133. Customer: No. For where! If I drink am, e dey get as my belle dey do me. E too sweet.
 No, not at all. Whenever I take Bournvita, my stomach gets upset. It's too sugary.

134. Sales Person: Eya! Make I ask my neighbour whether e get am.
Eya! I will ask the shop owner next door.
135. Customer: → Thank you.
Thank you.

The data also contains instances of the conversations ending abruptly without 'goodbyes' and 'thank you', as exemplified in exchanges 15 and 16.

Exchange 15:

136. Shop Keeper: Wetin you want?
What do you want?
137. Customer: I want Chemiron blood medicine
I want Chemiron blood medicine.
138. Shop Keeper: That one no dey
It is out of stock.
139. Customer: Which blood medicine you get?
What other blood medicine do you have?
140. Shop Keeper: Jawaron dey
Jawaron is available.
141. Customer: How much?
How much is it?
142. Shop Keeper: 300 for card
300 for a sachet.
143. Customer: Take, give me change
Here you are. Give me my change.

In the above, the interlocutors do not attempt to exchange pleasantries. Their attention is focused on the task, and the transaction is brought to a close as quickly as possible. The customer terminates the conversation with 'Take, give me change'.

Exchange 16:

144. Customer: Una get Jordan toothbrush for small pikin?
Do you have a Jordan toothbrush for children?
145. Shop Keeper: Yes.
Yes.
146. Customer: Dis one no be Jordan, na Jordan the pikin say e want.
This is not the Jordan brand. My child insists on a Jordan toothbrush.
147. Shop Keeper: Tell am say na de new Jordan.
Tell him that this is the new Jordan toothbrush.
148. Customer: Pikin wey sabi read? No o.
Make I go find Jordan own.
To a child who can read? No! I am going to search for the Jordan brand.

The conversation in Exchange 16 is brought to a close by the customer who insists on getting her child a particular brand of toothbrush. She ends the

conversation rather tersely 'Make I go find Jordan own' (I will search for the Jordan brand).

6. Conclusion

This study examines sales talk in Nigerian Pidgin to investigate the most common realisation patterns for openings and closings. To a large extent, the opening sequences in most of the data conform with Coronel-Molina's (1998) framework, as all four patterns were found in the data. However, this is not the case with the closing sequences, as only one of Coronel-Molina's categories was found in the data- the final closing. The study also shows that the degree of familiarity between the interactants contributed to how the conversations were initiated and progressed and that age plays a vital role in how conversational openings in Nigerian Pidgin are initiated.

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