
A Psycho-Sociolinguistic Analysis of Retorts in Igbo

Chinonso Nwaeze & Helen Echebima

Department of Linguistics and Communication Studies/Igbo

Abia State University, Uturu

chinonsolaw@rocketmail.com; blitherj@gmail.com

Abstract

This study evaluates the psycho-sociolinguistic impact of retorts on individuals in Igbo language use. Specifically, it looks at the social and psychological factors that give rise to the use of retorts and their impact. Social factors could include age, gender, occupational status, status in the society, level of education and so on. Psychological factors involve the state of mind of the individuals as at the time the retorts were made. This is a qualitative research that adopts the use of unstructured interviews and observational analysis. From the analysis of the data, it is shown that the social factors which affect the use of retorts include age, gender, environment and relationship. It is observed that a person's origin could also affect how one reacts to a retort because a greater number of respondents disagreed to responding rudely and agreed to respond politely when retorted at. Our analysis indicates that the use of retorts does not have a great deal of negative psychological impact on individuals. Our findings also show that a greater number of people agreed to feeling embarrassed, but although they were embarrassed, they also agreed to laughing over the incident and not getting angry. The incident also did not affect their relationship with the person negatively. Face theory and communication accommodation theory were used in this research work, where every human lives in a world of social encounters which involves him or her in either face-to-face or a mediated contact with other people.

Keywords: Psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, retorts

1.0 Introduction

The term Linguistics according to Lyons in Agbedo (2015) is said to be the ‘scientific study language’. It is called scientific because it involves a systematic pattern in the study of the nature, structure, meaning, use, variation, changes and even the historical development of language. Its major concern is in the study of language which it does in a scientific manner. He further asserts that language itself is a means of communication that is uniquely human. That is to say, that it is a form of communication used only by humans. Language involves the use of vocal and sound symbols in the communication of ideas, emotions, feelings and desires.

Language is attained by a means of convention. Its basic characteristics include; arbitrariness, vocal auditory channel, interchangeability, productivity, semanticity, displacement, cultural transmission, discreteness, etc. Language is one of the major mediums by which human beings communicate their feelings, ideas and perspectives about things that happen around each other. It is on this note that (Agbedo, 2015) asserts that ‘Language is a passively-accumulated, culturally-inherited and institutionalized instrument created through time by any given speech community to enable its members use their faculty of speech to achieve their communicative needs’.

Retort is a form of human communication which tries to use humour to pass information across and usually in a sarcastic way. Retorts according to Norrick (1993) are short and witty responses to a preceding question which its main purpose is to amuse its hearers. Retorts could be studied from different perspectives in linguistic study. It can be studied from the semantic approach which would try to investigate the actual meanings behind these sarcastic statements. It could also be studied from the

psychological aspect which tries to investigate the psychological impacts which the use of these retorts have on their hearers. From a social perspective, the study of retorts investigates the social factors that bring about the use of these retorts. Retorts are meant to amuse their hearers especially the third party but sometimes, the direct receivers of these responses do not take it lightly or find it funny. They may understand it from a different perspective and could either feel hurt or insulted which could lead to misunderstanding between the parties involved if not well handled. This usually happens when the receiver misunderstands the utterer of the statement or when the retorts are used in an inappropriate manner. This study aims at identifying the social factors that gives rise to the use of retorts and to investigate the psychological impact the use of these retorts have on listeners especially in the Igbo socio-cultural community.

2.0 Empirical studies

This section examines some researches that are related to the study under investigation. This will enable this research to ascertain some similarities and differences between the study of retorts and studies on other humour related communication.

Schnurr and Chan (2011) studied humour as it relates to relationships that are asymmetrical in terms of power. By this we mean two people of unequal and their main area of focus was in workplaces between superiors and their subordinates. They used the framework of rapport management to explore how different types of humour were responded to in relationships that are unequal in terms of power and how subordinates in work places dealt with potential face-threatening situations that emerged when their superiors used self denigrating humour or teasing. An analysis of their study showed that listeners achieve a range of

functions simultaneously by employing and often combining different response strategies. These responses include reciprocity, and hierarchical relationship between interlocutors. In this study, Schnurr and Chan identified two types of humour as teasing and self-denigrating humour which they termed as being ambiguous. They noted that instances of humour can be potentially face-threatening for both the speaker and the receiver. This is because, the humour may fail on the part of the speaker and since it failed on the side of the speaker; the receiver fails to understand it. But they further noted that teasing and self-denigrating humour to their ambiguous natures especially when it comes from a superior to a subordinate poses a challenge as listeners are left with the task of figuring out whether the message conveyed in the humour was meant seriously and how to interpret and respond to the inherent face-threat. They focused on two types of humour in their work which are teasing and self denigrating humour and their focus was in work places in situations that had to do with relationships between superiors and subordinates.

In their findings, it was observed that in all instances of humour and self denigrating humour, listeners found appropriate ways to respond to the humour of their superiors in ways that acknowledged and did justice to the kind of relationship that exists between interlocutors and at the same time considering the wider context in which the interaction took place. Thus, by responding to the humour, listeners managed rapport by acknowledging interlocutors' mutually intertwined face needs and sociality rights. In another study conducted by Marta Dynel (2009), several semantic and pragmatic types of verbal humour were listed and primarily, they were those that cannot be reduced to jokes. In her words, "humour is the focus of scholarly studies conducted from philosophical, psychological, sociological, anthropological and

linguistic perspectives” (Dynel, 2009).

Verbal humour which was the main interest of the study was defined or rather understood as that kind of humour that is produced by means of sound or text. Verbal humour is also being distinguished from non-verbal humour which manifests in the form of body languages or pictures. The underlying aim of the study according to Dynel is to help the readers appreciate the characteristics of conversational humour and familiarise themselves with a number of categories recurring in linguistic literature on the topic. She also presents a list of verbal humour types in her work. She further notes that the list proposed is theoretically, subject to expansion, given that second-order sub-types of humour abound.

The first verbal humour on her list is joke. The joke according to her is “commonly considered the prototypical form of verbal humour, produced orally in conversation or published in collections”. This humour category according to her, is defined in terms of its constituent parts. Hockett in Dynel (2009) advocated that a joke is made up of a *build-up* and a *punch*. Sherzer also in Dynel (2009) defines a joke as “a discourse unit consisting of two parts, the set up and the punch line”. The set-up usually comprises of a narrative or/and a dialogue while the punchline is the final portion of the text which usually comes with surprise and leads to disagreement with the whole set-up. There are a number of ways in which this disagreement can be resolved.

Puns, witticism, retorts, lexemes and phrasemes, teasing, self denigrating humour, amongst others were other forms of verbal humour identified by Dynel. She notes that verbal humour was divided into jokes and conversational humour, both which are not mutually exclusive but overlapping. She also notes that they embrace an array of semantic-pragmatic categories like in the case

of lexemes and phrasemes, anecdotes, etc. This review could be related to the research at hand in that the two involves the use of verbal humour as they both make use of active speech production to convey their messages.

3.0 Theoretical Framework

3.1 Face Theory

This theory, according to Redmond (2015), has its origin from an ancient Chinese culture over a hundred years ago. It is found in the writings of two missionaries, Arthur Smith and John Macgowan. Goffman (1967) defines 'face' as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact". Goffman asserts that every human lives in a world of social encounters which involves him or her either face-to-face or through a mediated contact with other people. He further asserts that in every situation man finds himself; he believes that man tends to act towards what could be referred to a line. A line according to him is "a pattern of verbal and nonverbal acts by which he expresses his view of the situation and through this, his evaluation of the participants, especially himself". Different people, according to Redmond, have different faces they present at different situations they find themselves and every face anyone decides to put on is aimed at leaving a particular impression on the person or people they meet.

This theory relates to this research work in that before people make statements to others, they could consider if the statement is face threatening or not. When people want to make comments or statements that could threaten the faces of others, they could be restricted because of the environment they are at that particular place. This is so because there are some things that ordinarily would not threaten a person's face but because of the environment where it was made, the person's face becomes threatened and the

person could get offended. Again a particular person might say something to another and that person would not get offended or the person's face would not get threatened. But another person might say that exact thing to that person and the person will get offended. This could be because the relationship between the hearer and both speakers differ respectively or that the hearer was in different moods when the statements were made. This is to say that psychological, emotional and social factors could contribute to what an individual considers as a threat to his or her face. According to Smith and Goffman (1967), there are two kinds of face which reflect two different desires present in everyday interaction. They are negative and positive faces. While the negative face, according to them, involves the desire to express one's ideas without being resisted, the positive face on the other hand, is the desire to have one's contributions approved of.

When speakers find themselves in a situation where a face threatening act (FTA) may have to be performed, their computation leads to the decision which results in five possible communication choices which are:

- i. Don't do FTA: This strategy is the most polite one. Brown and Levinson (1987) declare that an intelligent person is inclined to elude FTA or at least do their best to minimize the threat.
- ii. Bald on record: This strategy is used in situations where people are familiar. It is usually used in emergency situations. This form can be followed by expressions like *please* and *would* which are called mitigating devices. In this kind of strategy, the speaker is not making an attempt to minimize the face threat. This strategy is often used among family, friends or intimate people. In simple words, this strategy is a direct way of expressing things without any

- minimization to the imposition in a direct, clear and unambiguous way.
- iii. Off the record: This means not directly expressing actor's intention so that he or she eludes responsibility for doing a FTA. This strategy requires the hearer to interpret what the speaker is saying. In this strategy, by being indirect, the speaker avoids responsibility for a face threatening act and he does this by talking about something through commenting on another thing. For example, instead telling someone that has a body odour that he has a body odour, you can simply say "I use a lavender body spray, it's really nice, and you can try it too". There are a number of ways off the record strategies can be constructed. They include giving clues, presupposition, and use of metaphors and so on.
 - iv. Positive politeness: This strategy tries to minimize the threat to addressee's positive face. This can be done by attending to addressee's need and feeling of belonging to the group, joke to put hearer at ease, optimism and making offers and promises.
 - v. Negative politeness: This strategy is in relation to addressee's negative face. This can be done by being indirect, using questions, minimizing imposition. In this kind of strategy, the speaker minimizes the threat to the negative face to show respect and also not to show imposition on the listener or it expresses respect and consideration. In other words, negative politeness which attends to a person's negative face also includes indirectness and apologies. Strategies used in this approach includes being conventionally indirect, questioning, giving defence, apologizing.

From the above, we can infer that people follow certain kind of rules when they interact with others and the way people react to situations can be said to be a personal thing because the way Mr. A will react to a situation might not be the way Mr. B will react to the same situation. That is to say that politeness varies among individuals in interaction with one another.

This theory relates to this research work in that the level of politeness an individual employs in communicating with another person will go a long way in determining the persons' reaction to the statement. Someone might say something really offensive to another person and the person will not take offence because of the way the speaker made the comment. Someone else could say something that is not expected to make another person pick offence but might end up turning out so because the statement was made in a less polite way. This means that politeness also determines the impacts statements have on individuals.

3.2 Communication accommodation theory

Communication accommodation theory (CAT) has its origin as far back as the early 1970s. It is a theory that aims to predict and explain why individuals make adjustments in order to create, maintain or decrease social distance in interaction (Giles and Ogay, 2007). It explores the different ways in which we accommodate our communication, our motivations for doing so and the consequences. CAT addresses interpersonal communication issues as well as intergroup communication issues. This is to say that if Mr. James is a doctor and my friend, he would relate to me as a friend when addressing me but will relate to a group of doctors as a doctor in a meeting attended by only doctors. Language is the major focus of this theory but it has also been used to signal other communicative symbols that people use to signal their identities.

These include dressings, hairstyles, cosmetics, eating patterns and so on. In CAT, communication is not only a matter of merely and only exchanging information about facts, ideas and emotions, but salient social category memberships are often negotiated during an interaction through the process of accommodation. The basic principles of CAT according to (Giles and Ogay, 2007) include the following:

- i. Interactants have expectations regarding optimal levels of accommodation. These expectations are based on stereotypes about out group members as well as the prevailing social and situational norms.
- ii. Interactants use specific communication strategies (in particular, convergence and divergence) to signal their attitudes toward each other and their respective social groups. In this way, social interaction is a subtle balance between needs for social inclusiveness on one hand and for differentiation on the other hand.

With respect to the strategies of convergence and divergence, CAT holds that interactants use communication to measure their attitudes towards each other and hence, it serves as a tool to measure the level of social distance between them. This constant movement of changing ones communication pattern is called accommodation. Convergence and divergence are two basic strategies used in this theory.

CAT applies to this work in that individuals could adjust (either by divergence or convergence) their modes of communication in order to accommodate other individuals while communicating. They could do this by either considering the faces of the people they are relating to before making statements or by adopting politeness measures when communicating to people. People could also do the

opposite of this when they don't wish to accommodate some individuals in their speech.

3.3 Cognitive theory

Most linguistic theories hold that language is learned differently and operates according to principles that are different from most learned behaviours. Cognitive psychology is a branch of psychology that explains that mental processing plays a central role in all learning and is the basic mediating variable for influences on learning that are external to the learner or internal influences (Lakoff, 1987). By external influences, "we mean factors that are within a learner's environment and not within him and by internal, we mean factors that are within the learner" (Lakoff 1987, p. 154).

Cognitivism relates to this research work in that the way people talk or communicate to others could be as a result of the intentional or unintentional attitudes they picked up from their environment. Children raised up where respect for elders and everyone else is paramount will end up learning how to be polite in talking or communicating with people. They will also tend to consider people's faces when making statements to others thereby, learning to protect people's faces when they speak. The reverse is the case with children who grew up in environments where people talk to others carelessly (Bednar *et al.*, 1991).

4.0 Presentation of Data (retorted conversations as narrated by respondents)

This section presents the conversations which each of the respondents had with the individuals who retorted at them.

Respondent 1: O nwere otu ubochi nne m siri m wetara ya efere ka o jiri tinye nri. Mgbe m wetara ya, m juo ya ebe

m ga-edebe ya, ọ zara m si “Debe ya n’isi m” wee puo n’ezi.

Respondent 2: O nwere ubochi nne m ziri m ozi zuta azu n’ahia. Mgbe m zutara ya, m gwara ya na mu azutala ya. Nne m na-asu akwa mgbe m batara, m kwuru, ọ juo m “kedu ihe i kwu na-eme”? M juo ya “kedu ebe m ga-edobe azu?”

Ọ kwusiri isu akwa, lewe m wee si m “dowe ya n’isi m”, onye ara.

Respondent 3: Nwanne m nwaanyi kpotere m n’utu ubochi uka wee si m, “gaa kwadowe na oge adighizi”. M wee juo ya, “kwadowe maka gini”?Ihe ọ zara m bu “kwadowe maka isi nri”.Gini ka taa bu?

Respondent 4: Otu ubochi, nne m gwara m ka m weta aziza zapu aja di n’ime ulo (ọ tuxru m aka ebe m ga-aza oge ọ na-ezi m ya bu ozi). Mgbe m wetara aziza m juo ya kedu ebe ọ siri m zaa, ọ tuo aka n’okporo uzo, si m lee ebe ahu (okporo uzo) gaa zaa.

Respondent 5: Otu ubochi nwa klaasi m gwara m wetara ya akwukwo ya m ji ma m bawara akwukwo ubochi echi ya. M chefuru ihe mu na ya kpara, n’ihi nke a e wetaghi m ya. Oge m bawara akwukwo, ọ juru m maka akwukwo ahu, m juo ya akwukwo nke ole, o si m akwukwo ndu.

Respondent 6: Otu ubochi, mu na umu akwukwo ibe m nokoro onu, ha wee si m na ha na-eche otu onye nkuzi anyi. M wee juo otu n’ime ha so wee ne-eche ma o meela ihe omume nke ya, Ọ si m na o meela nke ya wee sorokwa na-eche.

Respondent 7: Otu ubochi, nwanne m nwoke gwara m sie ihe ndi oyibo n’akpo “indomie”. Ka nkeji iri atọ gacahra, ọ

puta n'ime ụlọ juo m ma m sichaalas, m si ya sichaa gini, o zaa m 'nri ekeresimesi ahu'.

Respondent 8: O nwere ụbochị mx na enyi m kwekoritara iga zuta akpukpo ukwu n'ahia, anyi kwekorita na o ga-abu na ehie, oge m kporo ya na ekwentị ichetara ya, o juo m si, ije ebe ole? Ije mee gini? M wee si ya, Ije na Klasi je gwuo egwu, gbanyo ekwenti m.

Respondent 9: Enyi m nwaanyi gachara ahia bata, Mgbe m huru ya ekelere m ya wee juo ya nne m i batago? Asisa o nyere m bu, mba, abatabeghi m! Aka m no n'ahia.

Respondent 10: Mu na nwoke ahu na-aruru m ugboala m nwere nkwekorita na o ga-abia mezie ugboala mu na uhuruchi ubochi monda. Akporo m ya n'oge ehie ubochi monda ahu ka m mara ma nkwekorita anyi o dikwa ka anyi si kwuo. O zaghachiri m na-aju m ma anyi o nwere nkwekorita?

Respondent 11: Otu mgbe, enyi m nwoke gwara m na anyi ga-aga gbaa boolu na mgbede, ka mgbede ruru, o kporo m n'ekwenti juo ma m garuola n'ebe a na-agba boolu. M juo ya boolu nke ole, o si m boolu FIFA.

Respondent 12: Otu ubochi nwanne m obere siri m nyere ya aka mee ihe omume ya. Asiri m ya chere n'oge mgbede anyi ga-eme ya. Mgbe mgbede ruru o si na o bx ya weta ya? M siri ya weta gini? o si m weta ego ahu . Na o bx mu echetaghi ihe omume ahu. Abaara m ya mba me jukwa imere ya ihe omume ya ahu.

Respondent 13: Nna m gwara m ka anyi jee ahia gote oka a ga-eji mee nri abali. Oge anyasi ruru o juo m si i gotela ihe ahx, m si ya, "gini"? O siri m gote isi gi wee were iwe puo.

- Respondent 14:** Nwa akwukwo kporo m n'ekwe nti, si m na anyi ga-enwe ntughari. M juo ya si ubochi olee, o si m ubochi Kraist ga- abia.
- Respondent 15:** Chinenye gwara m na o ga-abia hu m. Amalitere m kwadowe ihe niile m kwesiri inye ya. Mgbe oge rutewara mgbe o kwesiri ibia n'ulo m, akporo m ya ka m chetera ya n'oge na-akwudobe nso. Chinenye siri m na o gaghi abia. O wee pinyuo ekwentu ya.
- Respondent 16:** Agwara m nwanne nna m maka ego na-akpa m n'ulo akwukwo, o juru m ihe m ji ego eme, akowachaara m ya ma gwa ya nke kacha di oke mkpa na xqch[m na-ele anya iji ego gboro mkpa, mu na ya kwuru otu izuxka xbochi ahụ m kporo ya. Ka ubochi ruru enwetaghị m ozi ya, m kporo ya ubochi echi ya. Ihe nwanne nna m gwara m bu na o nweghi ubochi o gwara m na o ga-enye m ya, na ubochi o ga-enye m ya, n'ubochi o nwetara ego ka o ga-enye m ya n'ihi na o nweghi ego m nyere ya dowere m.
- Respondent 17:** A bia n'akuko a, o nwere mgbe otu enyi m nwaanyi a na-akpo Chilota mere udi ihe a. Mgbe ahụ asiri m ya na o ga-eduga m n'agbamakukwo enyi m nwaanyi ubochi Satqdee, ka o ruru ubochi Satqdee ahụ, o buru akpa ya bia si m na o nwere ebe o na-aga, ebe o kwetechagoro na ya ga-eduga m igbankwu enyi m nwaanyi. Nke a wutere m nke ukwu.
- Respondent 18:** Otu ubochi m kuzichara ihe n' ime ulo akwukwo, m gwara umuaka m na-akuziri na onye ndu ha, gwa ha na m ga-enye ha ihe omume mana o ga-abu n' udi e mepe akwukwo a zaa. M wee rucha ubochi

ahụ gwa ha na onye ọ bụla weta akwukwo nke ya. Ka ubochi ahụ ruru, m wee gwa onye ọ bụla weputa akwukwo nke ya, ha siri m akwukwo ginị. M si ha akwukwo nsọ.

Respondent 19: Otu mgbe, nne m gwara m ka m sie osikapa. O gwara m ka m tinye nchanwu na nri ahụ. n wantiti oge, ọ juo m ka m tinyela ya, m saa ya , tinye ginị? O sara m tinye isi gi.

Respondent 20: N' ulo, Mgbe o ji nkeji iri gafee elekere nke ano n'oge mgbede, Papa m wee kpo m si m ka m kwadoo maka igbankwu nwaanyi nke anyi nwere iga n'Enugu. Mgbe ọ kporo jxq m ma m ad[kwala nkwadobe maka emume ahụ, mgbe m zaghachiri emume nke ole, ya si m emume ahụ m gwara gi maka ya. O wee puo na ekwenti ya.

Respondent 21: Otu ubochi agwara m enyi m nwoke na anyi ga-aga ukanwa onye otu anyi. Mgbe ubochi uka ahụ ruru, m kpo ya n'ekwenti juo ya ma ọ ga-abiazikwa ukanwa ahụ. O juru m ukanwa onye? Azaghachiri m ya si ' ukanwa Buhari'.

Respondent 22: Otu ubochi, oyi m nwaanyi gwara m na anyi ga-eje ebe nwata ulo akwukwo anyi ahụ adighi. Ka ubochi ahu ruru, ọ kporo n' ekwenti ka m kwadobe, mana ajuru m ya ebe anyi na-eje. O zara m si 'Na anyi na-eje obodo oyibo ihu ozu Nelson Mandela'.

Respondent 23: Oge mu na onye ukochukwu bi, ọ gwara m kwadoo maka ogbakọ nke anyi ga-aga na elekere iri na otu nke ututu. Mgbe ọ kporo m, ọ juru ihe m na-eme, ma m kwadochakwaala? M juru ya kwadoo maka ginị, ọ gbanyuru ekwenti ya nke mere ka ogbaghara di n'isi m. Ebidoro m chebe ihe q bx ma

echeteghi m. Agara m juo ya ka o chetere m, m were oso jee kwadoo.

Respondent 24: Otu nwoke kporo m n'ekwenti were na-agwa m okwu mana uche m adichaghi n'ih na ana m agba ekwu okwu n'ekwenti m nke ozo. Mgbe o kwuchara ihe O choro ikwu, m zaghachiri ya ma juo ya ma o bu m ka o na-agwa, o zaghachi m mba na o bu ejima m ka o na agwa.

Respondent 25: O nwere otu nwokorobia mu na ya kpara na anyi ga-ahu maa nwee nzuko n'uhuruchi ubochi uka na-abia. Ka ubochi ahu ruru, anyi kpara n'ekwenti, m gwa ya na ya kwadowe. O kujo elekere anjo ubochi ahu o kpo juo ma m biaruola ebe ahu, m juo ya ebee ole, o saa m si n'eligwe.

Respondent 26: Otu ubochi mu na enyi m nwaanyi kwekoritara igara otu enyi anyi oriri na nkware o hiwere maka ncheta omumu ya. Ubochi ahu, o juru m ma anyi o ka ga eje, m chefu ebe anyi na-eje, juo ya ebee? O si m na mkposi di na ngalaga anyi.

Respondent 27: Otu mgbe, enyi m nwaanyi gwara m na nne m na-akpo m n'ekwenti, n'ih na anuchaghi m ihe o kwuru, m wee juo ya ma o si na n ne m n'akpo m. O si m mba, na o bu enyi m nwoke na akpo m.

Respondent 28: Nne m gwara m ka m gaa wetara ya akwukwo ya ebe o na-edowe ya. M Juru ya ebe o no, o gwara m ka m bia lee ya n'imi ya.

Respondent 29: Agwara m onye nkuzi m nke nwoke ka onye m ohere ka m gaa nyuo miri. O gwara m ka m bia nyuo ya nonu ya

5.0 Data Analysis

This section gives an analysis of how social factors such as age, gender and relationship status influence the use of retorts in Igbo.

5.1 Age as a social factor influencing the use of retorts

Looking at the data presented above, majority of the respondents, who had people retorting at them, were younger than their discussants. In this regard, Respondents 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 10, 13, 16, 19, 20, 23, 25, 28 and 29 were retorted at by people who are older than they are. In a similar manner, respondents 4, 5, 8, 11, 15, 17, 21, 22, 24, 26, 29 were retorted at by people who were their age mates while respondents 10, 13, 15 and 19 were retorted at by people who are younger than them. From this data presented, one can establish that an individual in a typical society is most prone to experiencing retorts from older members of the community. One is also prone to experiencing a good number of retorts when interacting with one's mate. On the other hand, one is least prone to experiencing retorts in his/her environment when one interacts with younger individuals. Direct retorts are mostly seen as used by elders to younger ones.

5.2 Gender as a social factor influencing the use of retorts

From the data presented, it can be deduced that respondents 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 13, 15, 16, 18, 23, and 25 were females and they were also retorted at by females. In the same vein, respondents 11, 12, 19, 22, 24 and 27 were males and were also retorted at by people of the same gender. Respondents 5, 6, 7, 14, 17, 20, 21, 26, 28, 29 and 30 were retorted at by people of the opposite gender. A closer look at the data in this third category of respondents showed that out of the 11 respondents in this category, one can observe that 7 of them were from males to females while 4 was from females to males. This makes the total number of females that retorted to the

respondents 17 and the total number of males that retorted at respondents 13.

5.3 Relationship status as a factor that gives rise to the use of retorts

In our data we see that respondents 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 13, 14, 17, 18, 20, 21, 24 and 29 were retorted at by their family members. Similarly, respondents 5, 6, 9, 10, 12, 15, 16, 18, 22, 23, 25, 26 and 28 were retorted at by their friends while respondents 11, 19, 27 and 30 were retorted at by people who did not share any close relationship with them either as family member or friend. This is an indication that one is most likely to get retorted at by friends. One is also likely to get retorted at by one's family members. The least likely people to retort at others are people who share no close relationships with them in the Igbo community.

5.4 Psychological factors underlying retorts in Igbo

In this section, we highlight the psychological factors that give rise to the use of retorts in the Igbo community. The psychological factors considered here are anger and happiness. From the data on the retorted conversations by the respondents and the people who retorted at them, there are instances where we can see the respondents being walked out on or being asked to leave the presence of the speaker. The conversations below are instances of such.

Respondent 1: O nwere otu ụbọchị nne m siri m wetara ya efere ka o jiri tinye nri. Mgbe m wetara ya, m juo ya ebe m ga-edebe ya, o zara m si "Debe ya n'isi m" wee puo n'ezi.

From this conversation, we can see that the person the respondent was having a conversation with got angry which made him to retort at the respondent and walked out on the respondent.

Respondent 2: O nwere ụbọchi nne m ziri m ozi zota azu n’ahia. Mgbe m gotere ya, m gwara ya na ma egotela ya. Nne m na-asụ akwa mgbe m batara, m kwxx, ọ jụọ m “kedu ihe ị kwurụ eme”? M jụọ ya “kedu ebe m ga-edobe azu?”
O kwusiri isụ akwa, lee m wee si m “dowee ya n’isi m”, onye ara!

This conversation proves that the person who was having a conversation with the respondent was disappointed because he expects the child to know where to keep the fish.

Respondent 8: O nwere ụbọchi mxna enyi m kwekọritara ịga zuta akpukpọ ukwu n’ahia, anyi kwekọrita na ọ ga-abu n’ehihie, oge m kpọrọ ya n’ekwentị ichetara ya, ọ jụọ m si, ije ebe ole? Ije mee gini? M wee si ya, Ije na Klasi je gwuo egwu, gbanyxọ ekwenti m.

The fact that the phone was hung up on the respondent in this conversation is an indication that the other partner in the conversation was angry that the respondent forgot what they had discussed previously.

Respondent 12: Otu ụbọchi nwanne m obere siri m nyere ya aka mee ihe omume ya. Asiri m ya chere n’oge mgbede anyi ga-eme ya. Mgbe mgbede ruru ọ si na ọ bx ya weta ya? M siri ya weta gini? ọ si m weta ego ahụ . Na ọ bx mu echetaghi ihe omume ahụ.abaara m ya mba ma jukwa imere ya ihe omume ya ahụ.

The respondent in this conversation felt angry because her younger sister retorted at her. This made her to scold her younger sister and also refused to help her with her home work.

Respondent 13: Nna m gwara m ka anyi jee ahia gote oka a ga-eji mee nri abali. Oge anyasi ruru o juo m si i gote gini? O siru m, gote isi gi wee were iwe puo.

The respondent clearly indicated that his father was disappointed at his narration of their conversation. According to him, his father walked out in anger after the conversation.

Respondent 16: Agwara m nwanne nna m maka ego na-agba m n'ulo akwukwo, o juru m ihe m ji ego eme, akowachaara m ya ma gwa ya nke kacha di oke mkpa na x bqchi m na-ele anya iji ego gbou mkpa, mu na ya kwuru otu izuka x bqch[ahu m kporo ya. Ka ubochi ruru enwetagh i m ozi ya, m kporo ya ubochi echi ya. Ihe nwanne nna m gwara m bu na o nweghi ubochi o gwara m na o ga-enye m ya, na ubochi o ga-enye m ya, n'ubochi o nwetara ego ka o ga-enye m ya n'ih i na o nweghi ego m nyere ya dobere m.

A look at this conversation, one can deduce that the respondent's uncle was angry that she called to remind him of the money he promised her because he shouted at her and told her that she did not give him any money to keep for her.

The rest of the retorted conversations did not show a reflection of anger in the conversations. From this, we come to the conclusion that most retorts are not made as a result of anger in the Igbo society. Those who retort at people do so most probably to add humour to their conversations.

6.0 Summary and Conclusion

From the analysis so far, it is observed that the social factors which can influence the use of retorts include age, gender and relationship status. It is observed that in the Igbo society, individuals are at more risk of being retorted at during a conversation with an older person in the community. It is also observed that females are more likely to retort at females during a conversation than their male counterparts. In a like manner, people are also at greater risk of getting retorted at when having a conversation with people they share a close relationship with such as family members or friends.

Psychological factors that could influence the use of retorts in this research are anger and humour. The analysis shows that people rarely use retorts out of anger; rather, they use it as a form of humour during conversations. The use of retorts has social and psychological impact on people in the Igbo society. Our findings indicate that the impact retorts have on individuals both socially and psychologically are not negative.

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