

The Place of Language in Entrepreneurial Sustainability of Small-Scale Businesses in Odogunyan, Ikorodu during Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Language plays a vital role in every area of human endeavour; without it, businesses cannot thrive. Small-scale business owners need to use language for regulatory, instructional, interactional, communicative, personal and interpersonal, heuristic, imaginative and representative purposes. Negligence or misuse of language can lead to stagnation, low patronage and the winding up of small-scale businesses. This study, therefore, investigates the indispensability and the influence of language skills in sustaining small-scale businesses in Odogunyan. It is qualitative research that employs a questionnaire to elicit data from many small-scale business owners in Odogunyan, Ikorodu, Lagos State. A random sampling technique was used to select small-scale business owners in Odogunyan. The researcher adopts MAK Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (1985) as a theoretical framework; the aspect of the theory that is relevant to this study is Halliday's metafunctions. The study reveals that appropriate use of words, effective listening, speaking, reading and writing skills, right pronunciation and avoidance of hate words by small-scale business owners are enhancers of continual business patronage by customers and clients. The researcher, therefore, recommends that small-scale business owners should apply all language skills appropriately in their daily transactions to sustain their entrepreneurship.

Keywords: Language use, Systemic Functional Grammar, indispensability, entrepreneurship and language skills

Introduction

Language, a verbal symbol of communication within a speech community, is very crucial in the daily transactions of all businesses in the world. Adedun (2014) opines that language is the most fundamental medium of communication; Fasanmi and Famuyiwa (2018) state that it is the wheel that propels communication. Leons (2005) as cited in Drid (2010) observes that man is distinguished from other animals not by faculty of thought or intelligence as *Homo sapiens*, but by his capacity to use language. Ajulo (2011) asserts that language helps man to communicate on several planes and in several ways for several purposes. It is an indispensable tool in dissecting the business of entrepreneurs. It is a system as well as a discourse (McCarthy and McCarten, 2010). Pei (1966) as cited in Nketim-Rex (2014) observes that language is a system of communication by sound used by members of a given community and that it operates through organs of speech and

hearing. Crystal (2011) submits that it is a human vocal noise or the graphic representation of this noise in writing; and that it is used systematically and conventionally by the speech community for communication. Without language, small-scale business owners (SSBOs) cannot communicate with customers and clients appropriately.

Considering the unavoidability of language use, Anyanwu (2012) asserts that it is an indispensable vehicle for constant communication. Johnstone et al (2018) conclude that if we do not communicate well, we fail. SSBOs therefore should communicate their products and services effectively to avoid possibly stagnating or even winding them up. To do this, English Language, the official language in Nigeria for business transactions is recommended to be used by entrepreneurs because of the multilingual, heterogeneous and multiethnic nature of the country. Adedun (2014) posits that English should be well-studied and documented for optimal success in the development of a nation. For Nigeria to obtain full development and success, the English language should be applied effectively in all areas of man's activities and interactions.

It is worth noting that the English language in Nigeria has assumed an enviable position. Akabogu (2015) observes that the enviable status of English is exhibited in its importance for communication. In the same way, Babatope (2014) states that it "enjoys a prestigious status in Nigeria (25)". He further avers that a high premium is placed on it as the country's official language. English seems to replace indigenous languages in all speech events. In short, many people are proud to use English because it seems to be an identifiable and unavoidable tool that marks off the educated ones from the illiterate folks. Many parents and teachers in local schools are ashamed to use the native languages and local vernaculars; they even stop their pupils, students and children from using these languages because they feel that educated people should not be heard speaking their indigenous languages. This is indeed an ironic disposition.

Babatope (2014) further observes that the English language is a language of intra-national and international communications, the language of administration as well as that of integration. Williams (2014) asserts that English is used as a second language and a medium of instruction, a language of education, administration, commerce, politics, law, etc. In the same vein, Akabogu (2015) observes that it is the language of government, education, legal system, trade and commerce, arts, culture, business and mobility of all kinds.

Internal and external transactions of small-scale businesses should be carried out in English so that different categories of people from different ethnic groups and cultures can be communicated with easily. In other words, the entrepreneur will have a limited number of patronage, if s/he uses any of the Nigerian languages rather than English. Also, it is pertinent that the SSBOs in Odogunyan observe their environment and apply language skills appropriately in their daily communicative events. Odogunyan is a heterogeneous community, a suburb, in the northern part of the Ikorodu Local Government area of Lagos. It is a multilingual society; many people from all over the country and beyond reside there to carry out majorly, small-scale businesses for daily survival. The language of the environment is Yoruba but many SSBOs use Pidgin and non-standard English in their daily interactions and transactions of their businesses.

This study, therefore, investigates the contextual application and utilisation of language skills in enhancing entrepreneurial sustainability during covid-19 pandemic, using MAK Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar as its theoretical framework. The aspects that are relevant to this study are his ideational and interpersonal metafunctions. These (aspects) are suitable to this work

because business owners need to generate ideas and create interpersonal relationships between their interactants (customers and clients).

It is worth stating that the researcher observes that the Covid-19 pandemic causes a lot of abnormalities in the business world, and failure to have a linguistic shift from the normal conventional way of communication to a more technical and appropriate application of language skills may cause a lack of workability of entrepreneurship hence a need for this research.

The research questions of this study are as follows:

- i. How do Small Scale Business Owners' (SSBOs) application of language skills influence their interactional goals with their customers/ clients during the Covid-19 period?
- ii. What are the implications of the use of language skills on business transactions by SSBOs in Odogunyan?
- iii. Does appropriate use of language skills enhance increased patronage and entrepreneurial sustainability of the SSBOs in Odogunyan during the Covid-19 pandemic?

It should be noted that the Covid-19 period was an unusual period that called for carefulness in the application of language by all, especially entrepreneurs in their attempts to sell their products and services. A dreaded virus that started in Wuhum, China in 2019, killed tirelessly and brought the economy of powerful nations to a standstill and extended its venoms to Nigeria in 2020. In Nigeria, its destructive effects were unprecedented; everything was turned upside down. The number of Covid-19 casualties was huge; some of its accompaniments such as fear, hunger, uncertainties and disillusionment were remarkable. The indispensability of the application and utilization of language skills during this period became very crucial, in attempting to achieve success, especially in the businesses of the entrepreneurs.

In this research, the researcher uses the terms, “small-scale business owners” and “entrepreneurs” interchangeably.

The Concept of Language

Language is man's greatest tool in the business world; without it, the transaction of products and services will almost be at a comatose stage. McCarthy and McCarten (2010) observe that all business transactions are carried out or constructed with language. Crystal (2011) ascertains that it is impossible to conceive a rational being and a society without language. Adetugbo (2007) establishes that language defines humanity. In the same vein, Adedun, (2012) avers that it is a powerful phenomenon in the affairs of human beings. Johnstone et al affirm that language is an asset. Chomsky (2011) submits that everyone possesses the ability to acquire any language that is being spoken in his or her environment because of their Language Acquisition Device (LAD). Since language distinguishes man from animals and helps in all speech events, especially in the business of the entrepreneurs, it is ideal that language, its skills, features, types, structures and functions be understood by the entrepreneurs. However, this work focuses on language, its skills, features and functions.

Language skills

Language skills are “essential tools used in everyday communication” (Anana 2017). There are four language skills namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. Unoroh and Ogunmorin (2014) observe that the “four language skills are the bedrocks on which the learning of language is built” (156). Listening and speaking are primary language skills while reading and writing are secondary language skills. The notion of being either a primary or a secondary language skill depends on which one is first acquired or learnt. A child first speaks and then listens voluntarily without the aid of the teacher and thereafter, reads and writes. Reading and writing are not acquired but are learnt through the help of a tutor after the primary language skills might have been acquired.

Listening is a conscious act of paying attention to speeches in both formal and informal settings. Obadere (2014) asserts that listening is the “ability to hear, comprehend and evaluate what a particular sound means” (190). It is also a deliberate process that involves four stages namely, selecting, attending, understanding and remembering (Adedun, 2012). Selecting means filtering and picking relevant speech sounds, attending is the ability of a listener to focus on the selected message, understanding means assigning meaning to each verbal and non-verbal cue and remembering entails recalling what has been stored up in the memory. Anana (2013) avers that it is the process of hearing, receiving, interpreting, evaluating and responding to what a speaker says. Madueke (2007) reports that listening involves receiving, processing and assigning meaning to aural stimuli. Before one listens, there must be a speaker. In other words, listening and speaking are interrelated.

Speaking is an ability of a normal human being who has no speaking impairment to utter meaningful speech sounds. I observe that a person who can express his/ her ideas appropriately through speaking can solve 95 per cent of his/her interactional, transactional and societal problems and that of others. To have a strife-free society, one needs to learn and master the techniques of speaking and thereafter speak effectively. Effective speaking means speaking clearly and meaningfully.

Reading is a mental communication process that demands interpretations of graphic symbols. Adedun (2014) notes that it is a mental activity that generates information and meanings from either written or printed materials. Unoroh and Ogunmorin explain that reading is “a complex skill which requires a lifetime effort to perfect.” (160). To successfully decode written and printed materials, one needs to understand the techniques of writing. Obah (1981) as cited in Adedun (2012) avers that reading operates in two levels: the level of identification of symbols and the level of conceptualisation of symbols. Anana (2012) asserts that word recognition; comprehension, reaction, fusion and utilization are components of reading.

Writing is an act as well as a process of producing alphabetic symbols on paper. Nketin-Rex (2014) avers that it is “the process of discovery” (135). The process of writing is very complex, starting from the prewriting stage, where the writer has to go into brainstorming ideas before writing, through the writing stage, to proofreading, editing and printing. Unoroh and Ogunmorin (2014) maintain that writing is a technical skill that involves complex and varied processes and that some processes may be going on simultaneously. They also posit that it is the “most difficult of all the four language and communication skills and that it is the last of the skills to be acquired” (161).

SSBOs in Odogunyan predominantly use primary language skills (i.e. listening and speaking skills) in their daily transactions and interactions. Secondary language skills, reading skills and

writing skills are rarely applicable to them because many of them are not lettered and besides they operate businesses on a smaller scale, hence, the justification for the lack of maximal utilization and application of second language skills in the environment in question.

Features of Language

Language is unique to man; Ewulo (2014) observes that it is “one of the greatest attributes that characterise humans.” (170). She further stresses that its main feature “makes human communication distinct from animals” (171). Jiboku (2005) as cited in Ewulo (2014) reports that a language is a tool that man utilizes to relate with other members of his society; uses it to express his feelings and control other variables. Its distinguishing marks from other phenomena or concepts are many; some of these are arbitrariness, discreteness, duality, dynamism and being culturally bound, vocal, systematic and discrete. Yule (2011) identifies intentional communication, reflexivity, displacement, arbitrariness, cultural transmission and duality as the features of the language. In the same vein, Hocket (1966) as cited in Adedeji (2014) lists, among other features, that language is vocal, arbitrary, productive, creative, non-instinctive, and conventional.

The Functions of Language

Language is used for multifunctional purposes; no area and aspect of human interaction and transaction is devoid of language use. Adedun (2012) notes that language is used as a tool of communication, for the enhancement of relationships, employment, persuasion, aesthetic and identification purposes, to keep records, and perform a textual function. Language is said to perform ideational, interpersonal and textual functions (Halliday, 1985, Daramola, 2005). The ideational and interpersonal functions of language are highly operational and applied by the SSBOs in Odogunyan, possibly because they are interested in creating ideas and enhancing the positive relationship with their customers and clients to sustain their entrepreneurship. The miniature nature of their business transactions and illiteracy could also be responsible for their choice of linguistic functions.

Uses of English Language in Nigeria

In Nigeria, English Language performs both communicative and non-communicative functions. The communicative functions present English as an official language, the language of business, education, publications, government and governance, judicial administration, diplomacy, external and internal communication, language for social gatherings, aviation, religion, engineering, sport, etc. Under non-communicative functions, English language is used as a vehicle for ethnic unification, tool for the maintenance of communities, social groups, institutions and social values, and an agent for organization, exploration, development and discovery of things and ideas. Olabisi and Oluwanisola (2014) maintain that English in Nigeria is an official language, the language of technology, media, literature, politics, and commerce. Ewulo (2014) observes that English language in today’s world is “made a core course in the educational system and a prominent language” (170). English language is a preferred language of communication, as many people attach prestige to it. Nyong and Yekini (2014) state that English is not just the language of instruction in Nigeria but that it accords more and more relevance to educational stakeholders.

Besides its positive communicative and non-communicative functions highlighted above, English language can be used negatively as a powerful tool for division among the literate and illiterate

members of society. It can also be used as a strong vehicle for the war of words, sectionalism and separation even among the educated ones. These can be expressed through potential hate words, abusive words, indecent and corrupt words and vulgarisms of all sorts. In other words, English language, like a two-edged sword, can be used for unification and division depending on how it is applied. There is therefore a call for the appropriate use of English to record positive communicative and non-communicative outcomes.

Entrepreneurship and Entrepreneurial sustainability

The term, “entrepreneurship” is said to have initially originated from the Latin word, “prendere” and later from the French word “prendre” which means “to take (Wikipedia). It has faced a definition problem as many scholars have not universally agreed on uniformly acceptable definitions. Tilley and Young (2009) aver that there is no universal consensus on the precise meaning of entrepreneurship. This problem has not prevented several scholars from giving their definitions. Entrepreneurship is a self-discovery, self-actualization, and self-decisive process of conceiving, creating and producing businesses with the utilisation of resources, materials, services and systems (especially language) by the entrepreneurs (Source: Author). York and Venkahanmen (2002) as cited in Greco and De Jong (2017) observe that entrepreneurship is the process of addressing uncertainty, innovation and resource allocation for the creation of personal wealth and social benefits. In the same vein, Weidneger (2014) affirms that it is an open research process that comes with special solutions.

There are different types of entrepreneurship; Tarnanidis and Papathanasiou (2015) categorize entrepreneurship into three namely, conventional/economic entrepreneurship, ecological /environmental entrepreneur and social environment entrepreneurship. Greco and de Jong (2017) maintain that the common ground between entrepreneurship and sustainability is the concept of longevity, assuring long-lasting goods, values or services; preserving current resources for future generations and developing unique solutions for its practicability.

Entrepreneurial sustainability is the ability of entrepreneurs to do everything possible to obtain and detain the durability and workability of their businesses. Hockets and Wustenhagen (2010) state that it is the discovery, creation and exploitation of entrepreneurial opportunities that contribute to generating social and environmental gains for others in society. Katharina and Belz (2015) aver that entrepreneurial sustainability is the process of recognizing, developing and exploring entrepreneurial opportunities that create economic, ecological and social values that are beneficial. These opportunities can be permissible in small, medium and large-scale businesses. This study focuses on the sustainability of small-scale businesses through the appropriate utilization of language skills by small-scale business owners in Odogunyan.

Small-Scale Business

Many Nigerians are engaged in small-scale businesses; even the civil servants or people that operate medium and large-scale businesses still involve in small-scale businesses. The reasons for their involvement are not far-fetched; some of which are, the desire for self-employment and generation of daily income for upkeep, governments’ inability to cater for the needs of its teeming population, payment of meagre salaries by employers of labour, unemployment and frustration.

Small-scale businesses are used to help entrepreneurs to live meaningful lifestyles. They are the boosters of the Nigerian economy. Abiodun et al (2016) observe that small-scale businesses account for a large percentage of all businesses in virtually all economies and that they generate many private sector employments and outputs.

A small-scale business otherwise called a small-scale business enterprise is a business that is established and managed mainly by the owners. It can be in form of combined ownership, family business, inherited business or bequeathed business identifiable and mostly characterized by its little number of employees and low turnout. It is a business that involves between 1 to 500 people. It can be teaching services, driving services, food, shoes, clothes, phone, soap, book businesses, the list is unexhausted. Any service provider or material provision that involves less than 600 people is a small-scale business enterprise.

Abiodun, et al (2016) aver that scholars, schools and authors have controversial definitions of small-scale business; but they further assert that its definition should be influenced by variations in capital outlay, number of employees, sales turnover, fixed capital investment, availability of machinery, market share and the level of development. Its varying definitions are also said to be determined by the nature and differences of one country to another; the nature and differences of economic situations and activities prevalent in an environment and the differences from one geographical location to another. Abiodun et al (2016) explain that a small-scale business is a business with fewer than 500 employees within 12 months in non-manufacturing industries.

MAK Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar

Michael Alexander Kirkwood Halliday popularly known as MAK Halliday with his contemporaries developed Systemic Functional Grammar (SFL) in the 1960s in the United States and later in Australia (O'Donnell, 2012 as cited in Almurashi, 2016; Ademola-Adeoye, 2014). SFL centres on context, semantics, lexicogrammar and phonology. Matthiessan and Halliday, (1997) as cited in Almurashi (2016) describe the tristratal model of language as the discourse-semantics level, the lexico-grammar level and the phonological, orthographic or graphological level. The discourse-semantics level has three metafunctions namely the interpersonal, the ideational and the textual metafunctions.

The interpersonal metafunction focuses on the fact that language can be used to maintain a good relationship; such relationship includes conversations and doing things with words in social groups, identification and reinforcement. Here, language is used to achieve social cohesion. The lexicogrammar centres on grammar and vocabulary i.e. lexis and grammar while the phonological, orthographic or graphological level comprises the written and the wording system (Eggins 2004).

SFL emphasizes the purposes and functions of language use, not language structure. Matthiessan and Halliday (1997) aver that language should be studied through meaning. Three general levels of meaning are explained in SFL as experiential, interpersonal and textual meanings. Experiential meaning deals with the representation of reality; the grammatical resource used in making our experiences in the world. One of the experiential meanings is the grammatical system of transitivity and this involves the processes, the participants, and the circumstances. The interpersonal meaning focuses on speakers and addressees and two of its main grammatical systems which are mood and modality (Matthiessan and Halliday, 1997 as cited in Almurashi,

2016). Textual relationship deals with the creation of texts and its main textual systems are the theme and rheme. All these functions and purposes do not apply to this study. The only aspects that are of relevance to this work are the functional applications of language (i.e., the ideational and functional aspects). The SSBOs (especially in Odogunyan) are expected to apply language functions appropriately for effective interactions and transactions of businesses with their customers and clients.

Language occurs in context and the businesses of the entrepreneurs are expressed in context. SFL is concerned mainly with context. Matthiessen and Halliday, (1997) identify the context of culture and the context of the situation. The context of culture deals with genres while that of situation concentrates on technical terms or registers. According to Halliday (1985) as cited in Matthiessen and Halliday (1997) the vital aspects of the context of the situation are the field, mode and tenor. The field of the discourse deals with the topic being communicated; the mode of discourse focuses on either the spoken or written forms while the tenor of discourse concentrates on communications and on the relationship between the communicators and the communicatees. Entrepreneurs are expected to understand both the context of culture and that of the situation to communicate their businesses effectively.

Methodology

This study adopts a survey research design. A-20 item questionnaire was designed, validated and used by the researcher to collect data on a 4-point Likert scale of agree, strongly agree, disagree and strongly disagree. The instrument was ministered to both personally and with the use of three research assistants.

Halliday's ideational and interpersonal metafunctions were implicitly adopted by the researcher. The responses of the respondents were used in identifying the metafunctions in the questions.

The population of this work involves all small-scale business owners in Odogunyan. Since this population is very large, a simple random technique was applied to select a sample of 75 respondents (who were small-scale business owners). These respondents comprise the owners of provision stalls, sellers of recharge cards, and food items, and those who render teaching, driving services and tailoring services. Some respondents were unable to fill in the questionnaires, some were not returned and some returned were haphazardly responded to. The researcher sorted these out and came out with 75 filled questionnaires. After this, an item-by-item analysis of the responses was done by the researcher. The number of respondents that ticked the same responses was collated and results were grouped using frequency counts and simple percentages as shown in the results below.

Results and Discussion

Question 1: How do Small Scale Business Owners' (SSBOs) application of Language Skills Influence their Interactional Goals with their customers/ clients during the Covid-19 period?

Table 1: The influence of language skills on the SSBOs' interactional goals with their customers during the Covid-19 pandemic.

S/N	Questionnaire Items	A	SA	D	SD
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1.	Entrepreneurs may not survive long if they do not know how to speak and convince their customers/clients to patronize them.	30 (40. %)	43 (57.33%)	0 (0%)	2 (2.70%)
2.	The wrong use of words may mislead customers/clients thereby, leading to the stagnation of small-scale businesses.	30 (40 %)	44 (58.7%)	1 (1.33%)	0 (0%)
3.	An entrepreneur should be a good listener in order to sustain his/her business.	37 (49.33%)	38 (%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
4.	The ability of an entrepreneur to read can help him/her to interpret texts well and this will assist him/her to continue effectively in his/her business.	32 (42.70%)	40 (43.33%)	2 (2.70%)	1 (1.33%)
5.	Entrepreneurs need to understand individual differences in pronunciation if they are to sustain their businesses.	40 (43.33%)	22 (29.33%)	10 (13.33%)	3 (4.0 %)
6.	If an entrepreneur does not know how to write well it can hinder the rapid growth and sustainability of his/her business.	31 (41.33%)	30 (40 %)	10 (13.33%)	4 (5.33%)
7.	Entrepreneurs' inability to understand new trends in language use can hinder the growth and sustainability of their businesses.	43 (%)	25 (%)	5 (%)	2 (2.70%)

Table 1 above, reveals that the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that English language occupies a prominent and central place in sustainable entrepreneurship. This is in line with Kadri (2003) 's observation as cited in Ogunleye et al 2014) that English has enjoyed high status within the nation. The study further reveals that small-scale business owners (SSBOs) are expected to speak appropriately to convince their customers/clients to patronize them, be good listeners, use words correctly, read effectively, understand individual differences in pronunciation, write well and understand new trends in language use to grow and sustain their businesses. It, therefore, means that the appropriate application of language skills by SSBOs immensely determines the sustainability of their entrepreneurship.

Question 2: What are the implications of the use of language skills on business transactions by SSBOs in Odogunyan?

Table 2: Implications of language skills on the business transaction by SSBOs in Odogunyan

S/N	Questionnaire Items	A	SA	D	SD
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8.	Entrepreneurs need to master language skills for effective communication.	30 (40%)	45 (%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
9.	An entrepreneur can lose his/her customers/clients if he/she is unable to listen effectively	32 (42.70%)	42 (%)	1 (1.33%)	0 (0%)
10	Customers and clients may be interested in products and services if entrepreneurs can talk well.	32 (42.70%)	33 (%)	10 (13.33%)	0 (0%)
11.	Entrepreneurs must read well so that they can interact effectively with their customers and clients	41 (%)	32 (%)	2 (2.70%)	0 (0%)
12.	Entrepreneurs; inability to master the pronunciation of words can affect their businesses negatively.	20 (%)	20 (%)	32 (42.70%)	3 (4.0%)
13.	An entrepreneur's inability to understand how different people from different tribes speak can affect his/her business negatively	36 (%)	25 (%)	10 (13.33%)	4 (5.33%)
14.	Entrepreneurs should understand techniques of writing to interact appropriately with clients and customers.	37 (%)	24 (%)	10 (13.33%)	4 (5.33%)
15.	An entrepreneur's ability to write will help him/her to communicate well with his/her clients and customers.	40 (%)	30 (40%)	4 (5.33%)	1 (1.33%)

In Table 2 above, the results of the analysis show that the SSBOs need to master language skills such as general speaking skills, listening skills, reading skills and writing skills, as the greatest per cent of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed to this. They equally need an in-depth knowledge of customers'/clients' differences in pronunciation. However, their mastering of the skill of pronunciation is not necessary for sustainable entrepreneurship as the results of the analysis of item 12 show.

Question 3: Does appropriate use of language skills enhance increased patronage and entrepreneurial sustainability of the SSBOs in Odogunyan during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Table 3: Increase in patronage and entrepreneurial sustainability of SSBOs in Odogunyan during the Covid-19 pandemic.

S/N	Questionnaire Items	A	SA	D	SD
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16.	Effective use of language can assist small-scale businesses to grow effectively.	30 (40%)	45 (%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
17.	The right choice of words can make small-scale businesses to be well-patronized by customers/clients.	31 (41.33%)	44 (58.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
18	An entrepreneur who can speak effectively can get more patronage than one who does not know how to speak well.	30 (40%)	41 (%)	4 (5.33%)	0 (0%)
19	The use of hate words can provoke the customers/clients thereby making them stop patronizing entrepreneurs.	32 (42.70%)	43 (57.33%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
20	If an entrepreneur does not know how to pronounce some words, it can affect his/her relationship with those who patronize him/her.	35 (%)	30 (40%)	10 (13.33%)	0 (0%)

The results of the analysis in Table 3 above reveal that appropriate application of words by SSBOs can increase customers'/clients' patronage, the right choice of words, effective speaking skills, avoidance of hate words and the right pronunciation are exhibitors and enhancers of continual business patronage by customers'/clients' patronage. These findings are in line with Johnstone et al 2018)'s the observation that language ability can promote performance and that language is an asset. For the entrepreneurs during Covid-19 pandemic era, language is indeed an asset in sustaining their entrepreneurship.

Again, Halliday's ideational and interpersonal metafunctions were implicitly applied by the researcher. The textual metafunctions of the theme (the beginning of the statement 'and the rhyme, the rest of the statement), the creation and application of mood and residue elements in the interpersonal metafunction; and the processes constituted the major elements of Halliday's metafunctions applied in this study. These metafunctions were related to the research questionnaires distributed to the respondents by the researcher. The highest numbers of the respondents, who agree, strongly agree, disagree and strongly disagree with the questionnaire items indicate the covert application of Halliday's metafunctions and the respondents' understanding of the declarations used in the questionnaire items. Considering the responses of the respondents on the questionnaire items, it is obvious that replies are mainly based on the understanding of the main transitivity structure of Hallidayian metafunctions as indicated in the twenty (20) questionnaire items used in this study.

Conclusion and Recommendations

As discussed above, language is man's greatest weapon in achieving success in all fields of human endeavour. Man's business activities cannot be practicable in the absence of language and its appropriateness in uses and usages. The indispensability of language use and the importance of

the right application of language skills by SSBOs are sacrosanct to the sustainability of their entrepreneurship. Language, therefore, has assumed a central position in the businesses of the SSBOs. Mastering listening, speaking, reading and writing skills by entrepreneurs are essential for business longevity. In Nigeria, the English language, a preferred language and a powerful tool in discussing and transacting businesses of all sorts has assumed a prominent and prestigious position more than indigenous languages. It is the language of business and for any entrepreneur to survive the Covid-19 negativism on businesses such SSBOs need to learn and master the technicality of language use, especially language skills.

Since the appropriate use of language and its skills is indispensable in sustaining entrepreneurship, the researcher, therefore, recommends that SSBOs should be versatile with the effective use of language skills in transacting businesses. Entrepreneurs who do not know how to communicate in English at all should enrol in tutorials and learn how to listen, speak, read and write for possible business sustainability. The present-day and future entrepreneurs are to adopt effective use of language in their enterprises to sustain their businesses.

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