ABSTRACT

Guidance and counselling programmes in high schools in Kenya are communicative events organised in group or individual sessions to remedy social or academic issues affecting students. Particular breakdowns often arise in such conversation settings due to their informal nature and turn control necessitating conversation repair among the participants. It is therefore, imperative to study the conversational nature of guidance and counselling discourse so as to identify inconsistencies that may lead to breakdown and misunderstanding and also the effects of the repair strategies used to address them. With regard to conversation repair, existing literature has mainly focused on a one-on-one conversation and classroom setting and not on a highly interactive group counselling sessions. This study, therefore, sought to examine effects of conversation repair strategies employed by teacher-counsellors and student-counselees during group guidance and counselling sessions in selected secondary schools within Kakamega Central Sub-County. The specific objectives were: to examine the discourse units that signal conversation breakdown, to describe the conversation repair strategies employed by interlocutors and to examine the effect of these conversation repair strategies employed by counsellors and counselees on counselling discourse. The study was premised on the conversation analysis theory (CA) developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s by Harvey Sacks, Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson. CA is designed to investigate norms and conventions that speakers use in interactions to establish communicative understanding. Analytical research design was adopted for this study. The study population was forty-three group counselling sessions that were held within a period of five months in eight public and private high schools within Kakamega Central Sub-County. Thirteen group guidance and counselling sessions representing thirty percent of the target population were purposively sampled and used in the study. Participants in the guidance and counselling sessions were teacher-counsellors and students. Data was collected through audio recordings, note taking and observation schedules. An interview guide was also used to gather information through a face-to-face interview with teacher-counsellors. Data collected were analysed using mixed method along thematic lines. However, the analysis was skewed towards qualitative method. Conversation Analysis procedure and the typology of conversational repair strategies set out by Kenworthy (1984) were also employed in data analysis. Data collected were presented in prose. The study findings revealed that syntactic and prosodic units signalled conversation breakdown. The results revealed that preference was given to other-initiation, self-repair and other-repair. The study also found that sometimes, there can be multiple occurrences of trouble sources, repair initiations and repairs within a transaction. Further, it was established that conversational repair strategies influenced the flow of the discourse. The study concludes that group guidance and counselling is important with regard to recognizing and repairing broken segments in conversations. The research recommends that counsellors should monitor the flow of conversations, besides participants should use comprehensible language during the counselling discourse. Finally, there is need to equip teacher-counsellors with linguistic skills of identifying and repairing breakdowns in guidance and counselling discourse. It is hoped that findings of this study may contribute to the body of knowledge in conversation repair in specific contexts such as discourse analysis, conversational analysis and therapeutic sessions.