

“I have headache in my stomach”: The Pragmatics of Utterance, Relevance and Meaning

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of pragmatics makes communicative competence a crucial subject in the literature of pragmatics, even though linguistic competence is also instrumental in the effective use of language to communicate messages. To explain the pragmatic underpinnings of an utterance in terms of relevance and meaning within any given context, this study examines the utterance “I have headache in my stomach” alongside other samples of expressions gathered from the Nigerian speech community. When an utterance is uttered, the physical (environmental), psychological, pragmatic or social nuances that generate are inevitable components of the inferential process. A speaker expects the “world-spoken-of” – as Allan [1] puts it – to be inferred correctly. This paper is hinged on a bipartite theoretical underpinning: the Pragma-crafting Theory; and the Relevance Theory of Communication. The study concludes that: the communicative value of an utterance is immersed in the ease and possibility of processing it for meaning (its topic relevance).

KEYWORDS: Pragmatics, semantics, sociolinguistics, Pragma-crafting Theory, Relevance Theory of Communication, Nigerian speech community

INTRODUCTION

The sequence of the words in the title of this paper is instructive; a participant of discourse produces an utterance before it is interpreted by first working out its relevance. The paper is restricted to speakers of the English language in a non-native setting (Nigeria). The following postulations establish the thrust of the paper:

- For pragmatic reasons, Nigerians use non-standard English expressions irrespective of their status;
- when educated Nigerians use non-standard English expressions in any communication situation, they demonstrate their social identity, cope with the pragmatics of intra-regional communication and achieve social integration.

As this paper progresses, I shall shift from the matrix (I have headache in my stomach) to present and analyze other expressions gathered from the Nigerian speech community. The paper is poised to show that to a great extent, the communicative relevance of an expression depends on its potency in intra-regional communication (intra-cultural pragmatics). Therefore, the thrust of the paper is to examine the pragma-sociolinguistic motivations for certain expressions that “have come to stay” in the speech patterns of Nigerian users of the English language who re-invented and “nativize” the language to cope with environmental and socio-cultural dynamics and realities.

The Pragma-sociolinguistics of Language Use

Pragmatics is the study of how speakers and hearers explore linguistic and extra-linguistic variables to derive meaning(s) from utterance(s). Unlike using grammar, the pragmatic use of language is not predictable¹. The variables which determine the use and interpretation of utterances are essentially contexts. Indeed, context can be immediate or remote (conditions of the society). Participants construct meaning intentionally and cooperatively via shared knowledge. This does not mean that the participants’ aims do not differ. No matter the differences, there are mental states they share, and such mental states facilitate the process of encoding and decoding utterances. Participants try as much as possible to realize communication through their linguistic and communicative competence. Pragmatic awareness is instrumental in decoding utterances when English is re-invented in Nigeria; Clark [2] notes that “for native speakers, the ability to respond appropriately to conventional or non-conventional pragmatic meaning may not require a high level of pragmatic awareness.” This study examines the relationship between utterances and their meanings in a given “pragmatic universe”, the Nigerian speech community². Commenting on the production and interpretation of an utterance, Levinson [3] submits that “understanding an utterance involves the making of inferences that are assumed or what has been said before.” Lyons [4] lists the following as features that are culturally and linguistically relevant to the production and interpretation of utterances:

(i) knowledge of "role" and "status" (where role covers both role in speech event as speakers or addressees, and social role, and status covers notions of relative social standing, (ii) knowledge of spatial and temporal location, (iii) knowledge of formality level, (iv) knowledge of the medium (roughly the code or style appropriate to a channel, like the distinction between written and spoken varieties of a language, (v) knowledge of appropriate subject matter, (vi) knowledge of appropriate province (or domain determining the register of a language).

In decoding an utterance, the hearer calculates all that are reasonably meant by the speaker³. The emergence of pragmatics demonstrates the experimental nature of language. Chomsky's emphasis on grammar is de-emphasized as research in pragmatics expands. Levinson [3] asserts that "the interest in pragmatics developed in part as a reaction or antidote to Chomsky's treatment of language as an abstract device, or mental ability ... Generative semanticists looking for the means to undermine Chomsky's position, came out with philosophical thoughts devoted to the importance of the users of language to an understanding of its nature ... To this day, most of the important concepts in pragmatics are drawn directly from philosophy of language." Given the fact that a speech community refers to a community of speakers whose experiences and behavioral patterns are evident and conveyed in one language, the pragma-sociolinguistics of using the English language in written and spoken discourses in Nigeria presupposes a clear understanding of the term "society" which refers to "people living together in a community". The social groups which constitute the structure of society include race, nation, speech community, state and ethnic group. The pragma-sociolinguistic corpora of Nigerian English are not incidental; Fowler [5] opines that "linguistic structure is not arbitrary, but is motivated and determined by the functions it performs." When the English language is used in non-native settings, it translates to something else. Thus, research in cross-cultural pragmatics is becoming more fascinating. Leech [6] asserts that he "did not attempt cross-cultural comparison of communicative behaviour, but acknowledges that research into the area would be fascinating." He observes that the transfer of the norms of one community into another may well lead to pragmatic failure. In post-colonial Nigeria, the use and interpretation of the English language continue to change due to emerging societal phenomena. See Ayodabo and Acheoah [7] for critical perspectives on post-colonial Nigerian English corpora.

Pragmatic analysis of language examines language use beyond its formal properties. Adegbija [8] submits that "the scope of pragmatics includes: the message being communicated, the participants involved in the message, the knowledge of the world which they share, the deductions to be made from the text on the basis of the context and the impact of the non-verbal aspect of interaction on meaning." Pragmatics shows the dynamics of performing illocutionary acts in natural communication. The message conveyed by an

expression may not be resident in the conventional meaning of the expression. This view aligns with Savas L. Tsohatzidis [9] who submits that "... knowing what illocutionary act a speaker has performed in uttering a sentence of his language is essential for knowing what he meant in uttering that sentence; it is well known, however, that what speakers of a natural language mean by uttering sentences of that language is not always the same as what those sentences themselves mean ...". The pragmatics of natural communication shows that speaker-meaning is usually intentional contents. English expressions used in Nigeria with non-conventional meanings are deliberate locutionary acts. This explains Chilton's [10] view that "cognitive pragmatics is defined as a study of mental states of the interlocutors, their beliefs, desires, goals, and intentions (cf. Bara [11] produced and interpreted by human individuals interacting with one another ... If language use (discourse) is, as the tenets of CDA assert, connected to the construction of knowledge about social objects, identities, processes, etc., then that construction can only be taking place in the minds of (interacting) individuals." In Nigeria, non-conventional English expressions are used to perform meaningful acts; expressions contribute to the meaning of sentences (linguistic acts).

Sociolinguistics is the study of language and society. Social nuances produce pragmatic corpora of Nigerian English – like the ones to be analyzed in this study. To capture the pragmatics of regional communication, Acheoah [12] evolves the term "geoimplicature". Pragma-sociolinguistics essentially explains linguistic attitudes alongside the socially realistic phenomena that underpin such attitudes.

Lucas [13] observes that "communication depicts a process by which meanings (often times abstract or subtle) are exchanged among individuals, groups or organizations through a system of mutually shared words, signs and symbols." Nigerians use expressions that index their identity. Mey [14] notes that "while language is not a determining feature of identity, it is a significant feature in many cases." Within a social structure, there are varieties of languages which contribute to the linguistic system, and facilitate choice-making. The socio-cultural norms of various communities form complex sociolinguistic phenomena. Language is a practically social phenomenon, creating meaning and contexts to whatever people say. As human beings, the relationship we have with others is demonstrated through our linguistic and social behaviours. We explore background assumptions for effective communication with others. It is in the various cultures of society that we realize the potency and significance of language in the transmission of information. Connelly [15] submits that "language thus stands for the socially constructed order within which we think and move and have our being." Language creates norms, values, traditions and ethics in society. There are numerous resources in language, and sociolinguistics explains such resources. For example, Byram and Zarate [16] capture a wide range of phenomena typical of the intercultural speaker. According to Byram and Zarate [16]

“the attributes to describe an intercultural speaker are: respect, empathy, flexibility, patience, interest, curiosity, openness, motivation, a sense of humour, tolerance for ambiguity, and a willingness to suspend judgment. All these elements refer to different representations but they are related to affective or cognitive influences. The intercultural speaker mediates between two or more cultural identifications. S/he is someone who crosses frontiers and to some extent is a socialist in the transit of cultural property and symbolic values.”

In using language to communicate in a speech community such as Nigeria, cognition – as explained in Cognitive Sociolinguistics – is crucial because varied meanings remain what participants of discourse have to decode. Martin Pütz et al. [17] aver that “Cognitive Sociolinguistics proposes that a more complete understanding of a usage-based nature of language is only possible if a range of social and cultural factors shaping usage events are systematically considered alongside the cognitive ones. Thus, Cognitive Sociolinguistics places a great emphasis on speakers, their place in a society, and their participation in different community roles. Cognitive Sociolinguistics also focuses on speakers’ implicit and explicit attitudes to and perceptions of linguistic variation ... Finally, Cognitive Sociolinguistics looks into the way in which cultural and community norms surface in individual usage events and considers the extent to which social, cultural and cognitive factors are inter-twined.”

Sociolinguistics and language contact phenomena are inseparable. It is not languages that come in contact. It is the speakers who do. The Nigerian experience with the colonial masters explain this claim. The use of English in Nigeria reveals social structure; the stratification of society in terms of people, the dynamic context of situations in which language is deployed and the relationship between the different categories of people in society. In the socio-pragmatics of language use, stereotypes are often noticed. Cognitive Linguistics explains the link between language, culture, ideology and power. Choice-making in language use is derived from knowledge of the normative properties of the particular language being used as medium of communication; Acheoah [18] calls this the operative language (OL). Without social structure, choice-making is hindered. Nigerians demonstrate profound communicative competence in violating the norms of the English language. According to Hymes [19] “a theory of communicative competence is anchored by three concepts: (a) the verbal repertoire of speakers (context-specific range of speech and styles; (b) the linguistic habits or routines (everyday sequential organization of utterances in narratives, verbal interactions, etc.; (c) social spheres of linguistic behavior (context-specific use of linguistic variables).” The numerous expressions that pervade Nigerian English corpora show that ethnicity influences use of English in Nigeria. Bronislaw and Archibald cited in O’Grady [20] posit that “Ethnography of communication analysis identifies discrete components of speech and the constraints that realized them: setting or locale,

scene or situation, participants, ends (outcomes or goals), act sequences, keys, instrumentalities, norms, interaction interpretation and genres.”

Theoretical Frameworks

The Pragma-crafting Theory is the major theoretical framework of this paper. However, the Relevance Theory of Communication is also explored to give the paper sound theoretical base.

The Pragma-crafting Theory

Acheoah [18] proposes the Pragma-crafting Theory. He contends that the theory is integrative and suitable for the analysis of discourse across genres. Concepts in the theory are as follows:

(i) **P-crafting:** It comprises “event” and “text”.

(ii) **Event:** The participants of discourse (interactive and non-interactive participants) constitute “event”. While the interactive participants perform linguistic, extra-linguistic and psychological acts, the non-interactive participants do not have to, and even if they do, their acts are not connected to the on-going communication. Acheoah [21] uses the label “h2” to refer to non-interactive participants who are present in an on-going communication, but are not the interlocutors of the interactive participants.

(iii) **Text:** “Setting”, “theme” and “p-crafting features” are the components of “text”. P-crafting features capture acts performed by interactive participants: linguistic acts, extra-linguistic acts and psychological acts.

(iv) **Interactive participant:** This is a participant who makes linguistic, extra-linguistic and psychological contribution(s) to an on-going communication.

(v) **Non-interactive participant:** A non-interactive participant does not make verbal or non-verbal contribution(s) to an on-going communication.

(vi) **Setting:** This is the physical place in which a particular communication takes place. It can be ascertained from the pragmatic or linguistic elements of “text”. It can be immediate or remote (relational/referential). If “text” does not present the immediate physical setting of a particular discourse, the setting can be ascertained from the real world through presupposition and world knowledge based on the category of participants and their contributions to the communication; that is, the linguistic, extra-linguistic and psychological acts they perform.

(vii) **Theme:** It is the message in “text”. It can be worked out by using p-crafting features.

(viii) **P-crafting feature:** It is an inference-making feature of “text”. P-crafting features include: indexical expressions

(INDXL), shared macro-knowledge (SMK), shared contextual knowledge (SCK), emergent context (EC), shared knowledge of emergent context (SKEC), geoimplicature (GI), linguistic implicature (LI), behavioural implicature (BI), contextual presupposition (CP), pragmativiant (PD), object referred (OR) and operative language (OL).

(a.) Inference: This has to do with making logical deductions from linguistic and extra-linguistic elements of "text".

(b.) Indexical: Indexical expressions include demonstrative pronouns, first and second person pronouns, tense, specific time and place adverbs (like "now" and "here") and a variety of other grammatical features tied directly to the circumstances of utterance (cf. Levinson [3]).

(c.) Shared macro-knowledge: This is the totality of what the participants of discourse understand as states-of-affairs in the real world at large; the phenomena transcend practices in their immediate speech community.

(d.) Shared contextual knowledge: This is background knowledge of participants in the physical context of communication.

(e.) Emergent context: In the Pragma-crafting Theory, any situation that suddenly emerges in an on-going discourse, and can impinge on illocutionary and perlocutionary acts, is referred to as emergent context.

(d.) Geoimplicature : It is coined from "geographical" and "implicature" to refer to practices that are restricted in terms of people rather than geographical boundaries. Resident in the psyche of the people in a particular speech community, the practices/states-of-affairs are object referred (OR) in the operative language (OL).

(e.) Linguistic implicature: It is any meaning implied through linguistic element(s) of "text".

(f.) Behavioural implicature: It is any meaning implied through extra-linguistic and psychological acts.

(g.) Operative language: This is the language being used for communication in an on-going discourse. The operative language is significant in the sense that there are pragmatic implications both in the violation of its conventions and compliance with its norms.

(h.) Contextual presupposition: It is a product of shared contextual knowledge. For example, in a specific physical context (micro-context) of discourse, participants deduce meanings from verbal and non-verbal data. The meanings are explored as background assumptions (BAs) which direct interlocutory roles. Decoders (DCs) imply that encoders (ENCs) understand that certain verbal elements (VEs) and non-verbal elements (NVEs) are deduced or inferred as object

referred in the operative language.

(i.) Linguistic acts: These include speech acts (direct, indirect and pragmativiants); supra-segmental features (stress, intonation, rhythm, pitch); phones (Ssss, Shhh, Mmmm, Ehmmn, etc.); exclamations (Wao!, Oh!, Ah!, Abah!, etc.); and musical lyrics. The term "phones" refers to speech features between the phoneme and the word. They abound in written and spoken discourses, and are used to express emotions of various kinds; this function implies that they have illocutionary potential in context.

(j.) Extra-linguistic acts: They include sociolinguistic variables (age, cultural background, social status/class, gender and participants' relationship); non-lyrical music; drumming; and semiotic particulars (weather, time, contextual object, colour, clothing, posture, body movement, perfume, location/position, size and body marks); silence; and laughter.

(k.) Psychological acts: These are different emotions expressed through linguistic and extra-linguistic acts.

See Acheoah [18] which presents the diagram of theoretical concepts in the Pragma-crafting Theory:

The Relevance Theory of Communication

The Relevance Theory of Communication explains communication as an activity in which the decoder of an utterance (the addressee) is made to work out the topic relevance of an utterance (cf. Sperber and Wilson cited in Xinyue Yao [22]). Due to space constraint, this study does not present elaborate perspectives on the theory. See Sperber and Wilson [23] as well as Xin Yau [22] for fascinating insights.

Presentation and Analysis of Corpora

In this section, samples of expressions gathered from the conversations of Nigerians over a period of time, are presented as a-j for critical comments. This paper does not explore a strictly conventional approach to textual analysis. It simply examines the corpora by drawing insights from semantics, pragmatics and sociolinguistics.

a. I have headache in my stomach.

The encoder of a violates the convention of the operative language (OL). Linguistic conventions are often violated by speakers for pragmatic reasons. Uttered by a child to his mother, the utterance is worthy of pragmatic interpretation; cognitive immaturity (linguistic incompetence) informed it. The encoder makes generalization on the meaning of "headache". The expression is assumed to mean "a state of not being well" rather than "ache in the head". The utterance shows that an expression can be understood as a whole, not in terms of compositional semantics (the morphemes which combine to create words). World knowledge (shared macro-knowledge) is instrumental in decoding language use that

violates linguistic norms. The encoder of an utterance that contains a non-standard expression, presupposes that the decoder will understand the message therein. Non-standard expressions are dominant in spoken discourses because speaking is not as fundamentally formal as writing. In any communication, when expressions are used unconventionally, the participants' emphasis shifts from linguistic competence to communicative competence because the latter is very immersed in using language to achieve illocutionary goals, and is informed by extra-linguistic nuances. Nigerian speakers of the English language rely on some level of knowledge of the operative language (linguistic competence) to demonstrate communicative competence by flouting linguistic conventions. Meaning is not strictly word-based. Adebija [24] contends that at the Master Speech Act level, meaning is the totality of factors that facilitate the interpretation of an utterance. An utterance picks its topic relevance or meaning from the state-of-affair with which it co-occurs. I hold the view that expressions have their semantic representations in their deep structure analysis. This being the case, the deep structure of “I have headache in my stomach” can be taken as:

I have x in my stomach (where x is any linguistic stretch that conveys the encoder's understanding of the meaning of “headache” within societal phenomena/events/state-of-affairs e.g. “not feeling fine” (*I have not feeling fine/headache in my stomach).

Discourse is not merely a mechanical process. It also involves creativity on the part of the participants. Nigerians “domesticate” English by violating its norms.

b. Have you received alert?

The speaker presupposes that the hearer understands “alert” as bank alert, especially on deposited money (shared contextual knowledge). Wodak [25] submits that “presuppositions have remarkable properties regarding the triggering of audience consent to the message expressed. Presupposed content is, under ordinary circumstances, and unless there is a cautious interpretive attitude on the part of the hearer, accepted without much critical attention (whereas the asserted content and evident implicatures are normally subjected to some level of evaluation).” This utterance is supposed to be ambiguous if not for the shared knowledge with which it is encoded and decoded in the Nigerian speech community. Different kinds of text messages, even alerts (e.g. security alerts) enter into mobile phones. But in the Nigerian context, social nuances restrict alert mainly to salaries/wages. Even Korede Bello, a popular Nigerian musician, released a song with the lyric “I don get alert, Godwin”.

c. Close-up is not good Macleans.

In the above utterance, “macleans” is understood by the encoder as a super-ordinate term for all brands of toothpaste, whereas like Close-up, Macleans is also a brand of toothpaste.

When a seller tells a buyer that macleans is available for sale, the seller means “all brands of toothpaste are available for sale”. Acheoah [26] evolves the term “neuterism” for a form of discrimination which involves subsuming certain commercial products under one brand. This implies that the discourse on gender discrimination transcends discrimination against the male or female gender; even inanimate objects suffer discrimination. Nigerian speakers of English usually have rationale for constructing meaning, and the cognitive process that underpin the use of expressions in the Nigerian speech community is often pragmatic. Kasia M. Jaszczolt [27] notes that “Grice's Co-operative Principle and its maxims do not purport to give a cognitive access into individual speakers and their intentions; instead, they constitute an attempted summary of rational behaviour, model speakers, using a theoretical construct of an intention (of different levels of embedding) ... post-Gricean approaches made considerable progress in researching the domain that Grice's philosophical writing did not delve into, namely the addressee's cognitive processes that govern comprehension. Post-Gricean developments have also made considerable progress in modeling a rational speaker's cognitive processes associated with predicting the very act of collaboration in constructing meaning ...”

d. In that shopping complex there is a business centre.

In Nigeria, “business centre” means “a place where computer services (such as photocopy, lamination, typing, etc.) are provided”. The encoder of d implies that a shopping complex is not a business centre whereas it is. However, the encoder relies on shared knowledge to convey the meaning to the addressee. The expression “business centre” possibly evolved from Nigerian campuses, and today, even educated Nigerians use it. A native speaker of English does not understand the Nigerian meaning of “business centre”. The way language is used in representation is incredibly fascinating. Bennet [28] asserts that “language does serve as a tool for communication, but in addition, it is a ‘system of representation’ for perception and thinking.” In using language to represent societal phenomena or facets of life, social action is demonstrated.

e. Mr. Rogers is an ex-service man.

Like other Nigerians, the encoder of e uses “ex-service man” to mean a “retired soldier”, and this is not British English. It is acceptable to say that an “ex-service man” is a “man who has retired from public (civil) service”. The encoder of a and e do not explore the morphology of a word to get the meaning. Rather, they rely on what obtains as the meaning of an expression in their speech community. Indeed, “ex-” plus the base gives the meaning of “ex-serviceman”. As Labov [29] rightly notes, “no use of language can be divorced from its social context since special meaning is parasitic upon language.” Indeed, context, whether broad or immediate, remains crucial in the search for meaning. According to Pratt [30] “speech act theory provides a way of talking about utterances not only in terms of their surface grammatical

properties but also in terms of the context in which they are made, the intentions, attitudes, and expectations of the participants, the relationships existing between participants ... rules and conventions that are understood to be in play when an utterance is made and received." The use of expressions to convey meaning as resident in the brains or understanding of Nigerian participants of discourse means that such expressions perform speech acts or linguistic acts, whether they are used in written or spoken communications.

f. I want to buy pure water.

It is not the pureness of the water that is emphasized in *f*. Although there are other containers that contain pure water, it is a particular type of packaging of water that Nigerians know as pure water (sachet of water). A seller can reply a buyer: "I don't have pure water, but I have Ragolis water." Nigerians even complain about the unhygienic condition of such so-called pure water, yet the name is retained. If it is not "being pure" that informs the expression "pure water", then the meaning is immersed in social phenomena. When the utterance is uttered, the perlocutionary effect is achieved by the speaker; that is, the seller gives the product to the buyer if it is available. This implies that expressions perform crucial functions at the macro discourse level once interactive participants of the same speech community understand what such expressions mean (p-crafting). Interestingly, meaning is more resident in the macro discourse (speech act) level rather than in the words or expressions that constitute utterances.

g. Our uncle said I did well in my class work.

Sometimes, the conventional meaning of "uncle" is not meant or conveyed when a Nigerian primary school pupil uses the word in communication. It is not always as a result of not knowing the conventional meaning. Rather, it is as a result of intentional regional usage (geomplicature) that eventually became popular. Nigerian parents and their wards know the situational contexts for choosing either the non-conventional meaning of "uncle" (a male teacher) or the conventional meaning (brother of one's father or mother). However, the native speakers of English are not familiar with this non-conventional meaning, and have to be part of the social nuances that underlie the construct before they can decode it in any situational context. The status of primary school pupils may be the reason for their use of "uncle" and "teacher" interchangeably; that is, in the African tradition, children see full grown adults as parents, uncles, aunts (connotative meaning). Congruence is "the match of a speaker's status and the appropriateness of speech acts given that status" (Bardovi-Harlig [31] Pragmatic use of language, as evident in the meaning and relevance of utterances, is the production of acceptable illocutionary acts via linguistic and communicative competence.

h. Those traders charge buyers.

The above utterance violates the norm of the operative

language (English). In one of its meaning entries, the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English (cf. Hornby [32]) states that "charge" means "to ask an amount of money for goods or a service". Therefore, using the expression to mean "asking too much amount of money for goods or a service". Indeed, the context of using "charge" in *h* also amplifies the meaning; to work out the topic relevance (cognition), the decoder relates the utterance to a market setting (the context of buying and selling). Dijk [33] opines that "the actual context is defined by the period of time and the place where the common activities of speaker and hearer are realized and which satisfy the properties of 'here' and 'now' logically, physically and cognitively."

i. This new product is carry-go.

When the above utterance is used in the Nigerian speech community, the meanings vary, depending on the context. For example, if a speaker uses the expression carry-go (verb-verb compound as a noun such as in *i*) to describe a person or thing, the addressee will understand that whoever or whatever is described is said to be "perfectly ready for use", "good", "reliable", "rugged", "tested and trusted", "beautiful", etc. In many cases, the expression is used in Nigerian Pidgin (Dis one na carry go). There are also instances in which the expression is verbal category in Nigerian Pidgin to imply "rush it"/"don't miss it" (The thing good no bi small. Carry go). When English is used in non-native settings, shared knowledge is crucial for decoding utterances. Shared knowledge is often the basis for decoding utterances because mastery of the normative properties of English or any other language is insufficient for decoding meaning.

j. Alhaji bought v-boot.

Nigerians have given non-factory names to cars. The encoder of *j* is aware that the decoder knows the type of car known as v-boot (object referred), despite the fact that many cars have v-shaped boots. The construction of knowledge about social objects is resident in the minds of the participants in a particular communication event so that the communication can thrive.

The different names given to cars in Nigeria are products of social phenomena. If there is no pragmatic failure when an expression is used in communication, then it is an indication of speaker-hearer shared knowledge. Sperber and Wilson [23] note that "relevant information is that which yields the greatest change in the hearer's knowledge for the least processing efforts."

Discussion

The conventional meaning of expressions cannot fully account for speaker-meaning, and this explains why extra-linguistic justifications abound for the corpora (*a-j*) analyzed in this study. The principles that underpin pragmatic use of language show that language use impinge on language

structure, and this is essentially what research in pragmatics is concerned about. Nigerians who use the English language are aware of the functions of language. They use the English language to achieve illocutionary goals even when their utterances negate the norms of the language. Without a grip of the psychological setting of an utterance, it is difficult, if not impossible, to decode it. The psyche of the people of a particular speech community (such as Nigeria) is an indispensable element of the inferential process. Adeyemi [34] submits that “‘Schemata’ is the plural word for ‘Schema’. It refers to either (the totality of items of knowledge in the brain) or (the totality of items activated in relation to a particular topic in a communicative process). Each schema denotes items of knowledge that are associated with an object, person, event, action, place, etc.” When an utterance is uttered, its relevance and meaning are derived from a wide range of inference components including the setting, situation, participants, etc. For example, Adeyemi [34] submits:

“Hymes [19] proposes a taxonomy of ‘situation’ components which he neatly reduces to the acronym of SPEAKING as follows:

Setting and Scene: This refers to the general physical circumstances in which the communication event takes place including the time, period, place, weather conditions and cultural views of the setting.

Participants: This describes the status, roles and relationship between sender/addresser ... speaker-hearer denotes participants in a speech event; sender-receiver denotes participants in both speech event and non-fictional writing (i.e., real author and real reader); addresser denotes the implied reader of fictional texts.

Ends: This refers to outcomes of speech act, which can be classified into (i) results-intended and/or unintended, and (ii) goals – individual and/or general.

Act sequence: This refers to the form and content of the message of text: how and what is said, ‘words’ and ‘the topic’.

Key: This describes the manner in which a textual message is conveyed, e.g. the lecture might be delivered in precise way or perhaps in a light-hearted way.

Instrumentalities: These are the channels employed in communication and the forms of speech, e.g. telephone, telegram, face-to-face, e-mail, etc.

Norms: This refers to conventions or rules of social and speech behaviors: linguistic, paralinguistic and non-linguistic conventions may be universal or may be specific to culture of participants.

Genre: Genres are categories which can be fairly identified through the linguistic forms they typically employ e.g. poem, letter, story, etc.”

Adeyemi [34] also submits that “one of the clearest and most influential of previous attempts to classify the main (macro function) of language was formulated by the linguist, Roman Jakobson (1960), and further developed by Hymes (1960). The scheme proceeds, generally, by first identifying the elements of communication, as follows:

The addresser: the person who originates the message. This is usually the same as the person who is sending the message.

The addressee: the person to whom the message is addressed.

The channel: the medium through which the message travels: sound waves, mark on paper, telephone wires, words process or screens, etc.

The message form : the particular grammatical and lexical choices of the message.

The topic: the information carried in the message.

The code: The system of communicating the language or dialect e.g. Swedish, Scottish English, Sign language, etc.

The setting: the social or physical context ...”

The emergence of novel expressions in Nigerian English is fascinating. What is even more fascinating, is that the immediate or remote contexts of such expressions can easily be worked out. Adeniran, cited in Ayodabo [35] notes that “the coverage of the term ‘context of situation’ is wide and varied in nature and texture. Some of its content may be physical or concrete, and immediate; some others may be psychological, abstract and remote.” Context is fundamental to decoding utterances.

Communication cannot be explained without considering speakers’ intention, that is, the reasons for utterances. Adegbija [24] asserts that “the concepts of intention are very important in understanding of speech acts. It refers to the goal purposed to be achieved, resident in the mind of a speaker or a hearer ... people often have different intentions. Sometimes, the intention may coincide. Intentions can change as interaction progresses. They can also be modified in the cause of interpersonal interaction. In most types of interaction, there is a communicative intention. Intention is often indeterminate; that is, they may not be always easily accessible. The addressee in a communicative exchange often tries to recognize the speaker’s intention. Deduction about the meanings being communicated by the speaker is often based on the context of interaction and interpretation of the intention of the speaker.” Adegbija [24] is instructive as far as the notion of context is concerned. He posits that “broadly, we may identify at least four types of context as impinging on utterance interpretation: the physical, the socio-cultural, the linguistic, and the psychological. Pertinent questions for probing into the context include the following: Did the communicative exchange occur at night,

in the morning, twenty years ago, at a church, at a mosque, in a bedroom, in the market, at a cemetery, at a hospital. Socioculturally, one may ask questions such as these: what are the beliefs, habits, value systems, or cultures of those involved? Are their religious and cultural beliefs at hand? Linguistically, what are the other words appearing in the environment of the word used? What do they mean? What do they imply within the physical and socio-cultural setting? Psychologically, what is the state of mind of those involved in the interaction?"

Retrieval of speakers'/writers' intended meaning/message is the core of pragmatics.

Conclusion

In *a-j*, it is clear what the English language is being used for in the Nigerian speech community; to make reference to state-of-affairs. The pragmatic analyst attempts therefore, to describe the components that inform effective use of language to achieve illocutionary goals. Interpersonal meanings have to be effectively communicated. This is why participants of discourse try to make their utterances "easy to mean". Interestingly, Eva Alcon Soler [36] notes that "pragmalinguistics refers to the resources for conveying communicative and interpersonal meaning, whereas sociopragmatics refers to the social perception underlying participants' interpretation and performance of communicative acts." Nigerians are collaborative in language use and interpretation because they are not alienated from the world-spoken-of. Although the level of indirectness in an utterance determines its pragmatic meaning, what remains crucial is that shared knowledge facilitates decoding the meaning of spoken and written texts in Nigeria⁴.

Notes

1. Within the purview of pragmatics, the principles that direct language use remain context-dependent.

2. According to Carnap (1956), cited in Levinson [3], "there was room for a pure pragmatics which would be concerned with concepts like "belief" "utterance" and "intention" and their logical interrelation."

3. Inference-making is the core of natural communication. Adebija [24] asserts that "inference involves the drawing of a conclusion from known or assumed facts or statements, from available data or a particular premise. It is the deductive process through which the addressee or reader progresses from the literal meaning of an utterance to what the speaker/writer actually intends to express. The context of an utterance is often very crucial in making the appropriate inference. Inferences are made on the basis of the background context, our experience of life or world knowledge, and the mutually shared beliefs. Knowledge of the literal meaning of an utterance often contributes towards making the appropriate inference that will lead us to the non-literal meaning."

4. Scholars agree that pragmatic meaning concerns the speaker's communicative intention (the direct illocutionary goal of the speaker).

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