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Editorial

The articles in this special edition reflect the multifaceted nature of pragmatics, thereby addressing a wide range of topics from the theoretical foundations of the discipline to its application in analyzing social media discourse, legal judgments, artistic expressions, and environmental activism. The diversity of subjects and methodological approaches highlights the richness of pragmatics as a field and its relevance to various aspects of human interaction and communication.

“Discourse, Knowledge, Context” by Teun A. van Dijk explores the essential role of knowledge in discourse. The author elucidates how the mental context models of participants shape the adaptation of text or talk to the recipient's knowledge, and provides a comprehensive analysis of the cognitive and social dimensions of communicative context. Adewale Adebite's article “Discourse on the Social Media in Nigeria” examines the phenomenon of verbal violence in political campaign discourse on social media. He employs data from WhatsApp, online newspapers, and YouTube to reveal the cognitive, social, and cultural resources used in constructing and interpreting violence.

Ayodabo's “Pragmatics of Violence: Violentization of our World through Words” investigates the strategic construction of violence in contemporary discourses in Nigeria and Europe. Through the application of theories and concepts from pragmatics, this researcher identifies the typologies of violence and the pragmatic strategies used to construct and co-construct violent discourses. In “Intertextual Representation in Nigerian Appellate Judgements” by Donatus Emenike, how intertextuality shapes legal discourse to provide a clearer understanding of the communicative strategies employed in appellate courts is the primary focus of the work. Whereas, in “Single Pract, Multiple Pragmemes: Representation of Individual-Social Context in a Sample Request-Response Adjacency” by Chinwe Ezeifeke & Uche Oboko, the piece examines how individual and social contexts are represented in conversational exchanges.

“Wood-Off-Cuts as a Creative Resource: A Metaphorical Reflection on “The Ruler and the Ruled” Sculpture Project” by Chikelue Akabuike uses a unique metaphorical approach to analyze artistic expressions, while Anita Maledo & Goodluck Kadiri's “Implicatures of Protest on Environmental Degradation of the Niger Delta in Nnimmo Bassey's Poetry” dives into the environmental and political dimensions of pragmatics, and highlights how literary texts can serve as a powerful medium for social protest through which the implicit meanings and contextual factors that shape poetic discourse can be revealed.

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Discourse, Knowledge, Context

Teun A. van Dijk

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Abstract

Within a broad definition of pragmatics in terms of the structures of discourse controlled by the communicative context, this paper focuses on the crucial role of the knowledge of the speech participants. This knowledge is managed by a special epistemic device that is part of the mental context model of the participants. In order to be able to adapt their text or talk to the knowledge of the recipients, this epistemic device enables language users to engage in various strategies to infer such knowledge.

1. Introduction

The Discipline of Pragmatics

The linguistic (sub) discipline of pragmatics has undergone various definitions of its specific domain, goals, concepts, theories and methods. Morris (1938) and other philosophers located pragmatics within the broad discipline of semiotics, where it should account for the relations between signs and their users. Today, such a broad definition would also apply to sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics and cognitive linguistics. Philosophers of language, since the 1960s, proposed a more specific field of study for pragmatics in terms of illocutionary acts or speech acts (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969) and more generally in terms of basic 'postulates' of conversation (Grice, 1989). Finally, linguists in the 1980s added other typical topics to the field of pragmatics that depend on social identities of, and relations between, speech participants, as is the case for politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987) and deictic expressions (Akermand, 2017).

Today, the domain of pragmatics features a vast number of phenomena, concepts, theories and methods, as shown in handbooks and congresses of pragmatics, difficult to summarize in one coherent definition (and hence delimitation) of a specific domain of language studies, or more generally within semiotics (among a vast number of books, see, e.g., (Huang, 2017; Verschueren & Östman, 2022).

Communicative Context

One way to order the field of pragmatics is to define it in terms of the *communicative context*. The problem of such a definition or delimitation is that the very notion of 'context' is very general, and hence very vague, and used differently in many disciplines. Generally, contexts are any kind of natural or social structures that have systematic influence on a phenomenon being studied in a discipline (Duranti & Goodwin, 1992; Van Dijk, 2008, 2009).

For the specific study of language and language use, for instance, we may distinguish between social, political, cultural and historical contexts, studied in sociolinguistics and the corresponding disciplines, such as sociology, political science, anthropology, and history. In a broader sense, we may even add personal and social cognition as part of the context, as is the case for language competence, knowledge, attitudes, ideologies, norms and values.

Within such a broad theory of various kinds of overlapping contexts, the *communicative context* plays a special role. As part of various kinds of social context, it consists of the properties of the very *communicative situation* that have *systemic* influence on language use or discourse. This is typically the case for the spatiotemporal coordinates of the communicative situation, as they control the use of deictics of time (*now, today*, verb tenses, etc.) and place (*here, there* and other place adverbs), the roles and speech participants (as is the case for personal pronouns *I, us, you*, etc) and their relationships, such as those of power or intimacy (as is the case for style, politeness and speech acts). Indeed, also the social or communicative *act* being accomplished by specific structures of language or discourse, is also part of this very communicative situation, and as such also part of the way language users intend and understand a verbal (or more generally a semiotic) utterance.

It should however be stressed that not all social or other properties of the empirically complex social situation are part of the communicative context as it defines the domain of pragmatics. Whereas some properties of language users, such as their age or gender may have systemic influence on language use, they have many properties that don't, as is the case for their height, weight or eye colour, nor the specific clothes they wear, and many other properties that may have social significance, but not systemically codified in text or talk. Hence the communicative context is a special abstraction from the immensely complex, empirical communicative situation.

Language users not only learn the grammar and the rules and strategies of text and talk, but also learn which of the properties of the communicative situation constitute the communicative context and hence need to be taken in consideration when producing or understanding discourse. Indeed, the crucial explanatory function of pragmatics is to define under what conditions an utterance is *appropriate* in the communicative context. Obviously, because of cognitive constraints, communicative contexts can't be too complex, featuring hundreds of social properties, because at each moment language users must be able to analyze or construe the relevant communicative context, sometimes in fractions of seconds, in order to make sure the production or comprehension of text or talk is appropriate,

Context models

We have stressed that the communicative context is an abstraction of a set of specific properties of the 'real' communicative situation, whereas most of the other properties of the communicative situation may be socially relevant, but linguistically irrelevant. For the properties of the communicative context to systemically influence many of the properties of text or talk, language users need to *know* the communicative situation and it is this knowledge that is able, cognitively, to influence the production or comprehension of discourse. According to the theory of the cognitive representation of events or situations in terms of mental models, language users represent this knowledge of the communicative context in terms of specific mental models: context models. These context models are the cognitive structures that ongoingly control the production or comprehension of discourse and thus make sure it is appropriate (for detail, see Van Dijk, 2008)

Analysis of communicative situations (as they influence discourse) as well as theories of mental models of situations in general, suggest that context models consist of Time, Place, Participants (and their Identities, Roles and Relations), Acts (and their goals). We have seen above that these categories of the context model are needed to describe and analyze many of the "pragmatic" aspects of language use, such as deictic expressions, speech acts, politeness and other context-defined aspects of language use.

As indicated above, cognitive constraints require that context models cannot be very complex because they need to be active to control many aspects even of grammar. Context models are also dynamic, because ongoing time is changing, and so may be the identities, roles and relations of the participants and the acts they accomplish.

Different from pragmatic theories that define communicative context in terms of 'real' social properties of situations (and their participants), our definition of the *relevant* communicative context in terms of mental context models is crucial, because only such cognitive structures can influence the cognitive processes of discourse production and comprehension.

Since context models are a special case of the cognitive representation and control of the ongoing everyday experiences of people, it may be that the notion of context model is part of the cognitive aspect of the theoretically daunting problem of consciousness (see also Aerts, Broekaert & Gabora, 2000).

2. Knowledge

The Crucial Role of Knowledge in Language Use and Discourse

Whereas most of the properties of the communicative context mentioned above have been studied in a vast number of books and articles, there is one crucial property that has often been ignored or less studied: *knowledge*.

Of course, this property of the communicative situation is not unknown in studies of pragmatics and other fields of linguistics, such as semantics. For instance, to define the very appropriateness conditions of the speech acts of assertions and questions, we need to specify that a speaker knows something a recipient doesn't know, or vice versa. And to define presuppositions we also need to formulate a rule that says that speakers know about the knowledge of the recipients, as is also the case for an account of such common grammatical structures as definite articles on the one hand, as well as information-based structures of those of the Topic and Comment structures of sentences. In other words, many aspects of language or discourse need to be accounted for in terms of (shared) knowledge of language users, often formulated in terms of *common ground* (Clark, 1996).

Beyond grammar and speech acts, knowledge also plays a role in other structures of text and talk (Van Dijk, 2014). Indeed, an interesting line of research in Conversation Analysis, has shown that there are rules for speakers to communicate knowledge to recipients, e.g., depending on their specific expertise (Heritage, 2011).

Discourse genres may be defined and structured in terms of the (assumed) knowledge of the speakers/authors or recipients. As is the case for many genres, the very definition of news presupposes that the recipients don't know (all) about the events reported. The many genres of textbook similarly presuppose students don't know (all) about the topics of the textbook. But both for news reports and for textbooks large parts of the text is (pre)supposed to be known to the recipients. Indeed, most new knowledge in most discourse genres is defined or introduced in terms of (presupposed) knowledge already shared by the recipients, if only as members of the epistemic community associated with the linguistic community.

Knowledge in Context

Knowledge is a property of language users, and given its fundamental role in text and talk, it must be included in the communicative context as represented in context models. It contributes to the dynamics of context models, because during the interpretation of text or talk the knowledge of the recipients is systematically changed with at least the information conveyed by discourse and other (multimodal) aspects of the ongoing interaction. The same is true for the knowledge of the speaker about the changing

knowledge of the recipients. Failure to update one's knowledge in conversation may be sanctioned by reminders or criticism such as "As I just told you" and "I told you so!".

Epistemic Strategies

One of the theoretical and empirical problems of discourse and interaction is how language users know about the knowledge of recipients, and how they have access to such knowledge in fractions of seconds while needed in the online production of grammatical and other structures of text and talk.

Our hypothesis is that language users have acquired and use the following specific epistemic strategies to infer relevant knowledge at each moment of the ongoing production of discourse:

(a) **Generic Knowledge of the Epistemic Community.** Language users are not only members of a linguistic community but also of a social epistemic community. Hence, language users share such sociocultural knowledge with the recipients. This knowledge and many of its inferences may therefore be presupposed in discourse, as is routinely the case in all public discourse, such as news. Obviously, all this knowledge is not part of the context model, which only serves to activate the relevant part of generic knowledge of social cognition (see the vast psychological literature on the role of knowledge in discourse processing, references in Van Dijk, 2014).

(b) **Knowledge of Previous Communicative Events.** Both in public discourse such as news and in everyday conversations, language users may presuppose that recipients remember at least part of the knowledge conveyed in previous communicative events. They may remind recipients with such formula as "As we informed yesterday", or "this... I told you about".

(c) **Ongoing Situation.** Especially in ongoing interaction, as in conversation, language users presuppose recipients share knowledge about the current situation, including the presence of objects, people and their properties, possibly signalled by deictic expressions, pointing or gaze.

(d) **Ongoing discourse: Co-text.** Obviously, much knowledge acquired by the very ongoing discourse may be supposed to be known to the recipients. But lack of attention of memory may require speakers to repeat such knowledge with different formulas, such as "As I just said..."

The application of these strategies in actual discourse production does not need other assumptions about knowing what is in the mind of others, as is the case for the Theory

of Mind (TOM) based on specific mirror neurons, crucial in the account of all interaction and cooperation (see, e.g., Goldman, 2006; Hyslop, 1995). A variant of such theory is of course relevant for other aspects of talk-in-interaction, such as knowing about the emotions of recipients as a condition of the multimodal, embodied expression of empathy.

3. Conclusions

Within the huge field of contemporary pragmatics defined as the study of the ways the structures of text and talk depend on aspects of the communicative context, we need to go beyond the study of speech acts, politeness, indexicality and other structures defined in terms of the properties of Space-Time, Participants (and their Identities, Roles and Relations), Acts and Goals. Many aspects of text and talk also depend on shared knowledge of participants in interaction and communication, as is the case for definite expressions, topic-comment structure, and all knowledge needed to construe coherent interpretations of discourse. It is assumed that in order for language users to be able to produce contextually appropriate discourse, they need to have a mental model of the relevant properties of the empirically complex communicative situation in the form of a communicative context: a context model. Given the fundamental role of knowledge for meaningful and appropriate discourse, it must therefore be assumed that this context model also features a knowledge device. At each moment of ongoing discourse production this knowledge device needs to 'calculate' what recipients know in order to be able to understand such discourse. It is assumed that this device applies various fast strategies to infer the probable knowledge of recipients from (a) generic sociocultural knowledge of the epistemic community, (b) previous communicative events, (c) the ongoing situation, and (d) ongoing discourse: co-text. More generally it is recommended that pragmatics more generally pays attention to the role of knowledge in the theories of language use, discourse and interaction and as a condition of the pragmatic appropriateness of discourse.

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Discourse on the Social Media in Nigeria

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Abstract

Violence is a universal phenomenon and a serious social problem investigated from different disciplinary dimensions. Scholars have identified several types of violence in the literature, including verbal violence. This study investigates resources of violence in political campaign discourse on the social media in Nigeria. It uses data collected from social media sources on the Internet such as group WhatsApp, Online newspapers and YouTube; WhatsApp posts without sources are confirmed via downloads from the Opera Mini browser. A pragmatics analysis from the cognitive, social and cultural perspective examines the resources for constructing and interpreting violence in the interactional contexts of the discourse. The cognitive reveals the participants, processes, circumstances and logical features; the social reveals the personal identities, relationships and attitudes; and the cultural reveals the norms and values. The principles of salience and adaptability guide the relation of language to context. The conclusion states that violence discourse on the social media is an unhealthy phenomenon for political campaigns in Nigeria because of the damage it causes on the personality of the contestants, social relationships and multi-ethnic integration. A pragmatics analysis has revealed the resources for the expression of violence for social consideration and positive remedial action.

Keywords: verbal violence, political campaign discourse, pragmatic analysis, social media

1. Introduction

Violence is a universal phenomenon and a serious social problem investigated from different disciplinary dimensions. "We all have an interest in understanding violence" (Insight Exchange, p. 1). Types of violence mentioned in the literature include physical, socio-cultural political, psychological and verbal violence. Al-Tamini (2022) defines violence as a set of behaviours aimed at harming oneself or the other in multiple forms such as hitting, quarrelling, destroying or damaging and verbal forms such as threats, instigating sedition, innuendo, stinging joke and everything that leads directly or indirectly to inflicting harm. Violence exists in language because we are compelled to use the form, content and concepts of language prevailing in our culture; and we have neither the capacity nor the choice to escape the power of language. Thus, apart from the existence of language violence in dialogue with the other or with oneself, there is also hidden violence in language. Muji and Wahyu (2017) advocate the need to reduce

symbolic violence, which continues into physical violence, in order to preserve the integrity and harmony of nationhood and maintain self-respect and moral ethics.

Insight Exchange (2021) characterises violence as an interaction and a social exchange. Violence is social and unilateral. It is social in that it occurs in specific interactions comprised of at least two people and unilateral in that it entails actions by one individual against the will and wellbeing of another. Violence is deliberate because the perpetrators of violence anticipate resistance from their victims and take specific steps to suppress and conceal it. Virtually all forms of violence and systems of oppression entail strategies designed specifically for the suppression of overt and covert resistance. Lastly, resistance to violence is ubiquitous, though open defiance is the least form of resistance. Language can be used to conceal violence, obscure and mitigate offenders' responsibility, conceal victims' resistance, and blame and pathologise victims. Alternatively, language can be used to expose violence, clarify offenders' responsibility, elucidate and honour victims' resistance, and contest the blaming and pathologising of victims.

Violence is a serious problem and a topical issue of discussion. A number of works abound on violence of language and language /discourse of violence. The phenomenon of violence apparently characterises political discourse, including election campaign discourse, but fewer works have investigated the occurrences in details.

This study is inter-discursive as it discusses violence discourse in the contexts of social media and political discourses. Without doubt, both contexts enable and foster violence and would, therefore, play significant roles in understanding the resources that characterise violence and the means to control it. Social networks constitute an open digital space for complete freedom of expression that users may abuse in their daily conversations and such an unfettered freedom portends danger in using language as a tool to inflict harm on the other, thus creating social tension. A typical case of sanction of such abuse is the indefinite suspension of Twitter operations in Nigeria in 2021 by the Federal Government "for activities that are capable of undermining Nigeria's corporate existence" (Princewill, 2021).

2. Theoretical Preliminaries

Scholars have investigated political campaign discourse with different interests and from different perspectives (Opeibi, 2006; Omozuwa and Ezejideaku, 2009; Abdulahi-Idiagbon, 2010; Ademilokun and Taiwo, 2013; Oyeleye and Osisanwo, 2013; Akinola 2019; Adegoju and Oyeboode, 2015), cited by Oyeboode and Adegoju (2017). Some of these studies also utilise the social media as data base, as we intend to do in this work,

but none of them has discussed the topic of violence nor utilised the pragmatics approach. Studies have also been carried out to describe violence discourse. Gorrell, Bakir, Roberts, Greenwood and Bontcheva (2020) present a four-factor framework in understanding which politicians receive abuse in the UK general election of 2019 and why. Neshkovska and Trajkova (2020) analyse rhetorical violence in political discourse and Al-Tamini (2022) attempts a linguistic cognitive study of the language of violence in social media. All of these studies provide a useful literature base for this study by providing relevant contextual information on violence, especially from outside Africa, this study is different from them because it utilises pragmatics tools for analysis and also focuses on the Nigerian political social media context.

The study aims to examine the resources of violence in political campaign discourse on the social media in Nigeria. The objectives are to (a) analyse the cognitive, social and cultural meanings; (b) interpret the meanings expressed and (c) examine the implications of the meanings for political communication. First, the study elucidates language as a tool for constructing violence and the perpetuation of violence in political campaign discourse. Second, it explicates and demonstrates the tools of pragmatic analysis of discourse to, especially, the ever increasing population of graduate students, young researchers and scholars of the Pragmatics Association of Nigeria (PrAN) in the fields of discourse analysis and pragmatics.

The study utilises purposive data collected from social media sources on the Internet such as group WhatsApp, Online newspapers and YouTube. Spoken and written discourse that attack the persons of political opponents are listened to or read, downloaded and transcribed from the media from June 2022 to February 2023, at the heat of political campaigns of parties for the Presidential election scheduled for February 25, 2023.

Fifty posts are collected for this study but three online newspapers posts would suffice for analysis, given the constraints of space, convenience and the need to avoid monotony. One each on Asiwaju Bola Tinubu, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar and Mr Peter Obi. The number is representative of the weight of vilification of the contestants. According to Gorell, et al. (2020), the most prominent individuals receive, not only more abuse by volume, but, also, as a percentage of replies. For Tinubu, issues are raised about his health (*Sahara Reporters*, 2022), wealth (Tinubu, 2022) and identity (Iniobong, 2022). Further criticism also trails the "Muslim-Muslim ticket" (Murtala, 2023); that is, his choice of a Muslim as Vice-Presidential Candidate, apart from being a Muslim himself. Alhaji Atiku Abubakar is being tainted of fraud and corruption (*The Guardian*, 2007; *Vanguard* 2020). Mr Peter Obi is accused of breeding terrorists (Opejobi, 2022), financial impropriety (Adebayo, 2021) and lacking integrity and competence.

Of the 18 political parties contesting the Presidential elections in February 2023 (Egobiambu, 2022), the names of four candidates recur in the news as contestants in the election: Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Mr Peter Obi of the Labour Party (LP), Senator Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso of the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP) and Alhaji Atiku Abubakar of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). We can add a fifth contestant, Mr Omoyele Sowore of the African Action Congress (AAC), whom, apart from contesting, is a social activist and publisher of *Sahara Reporters*, an Online news agency that has heavily criticised his co-contestants.

A pragmatics analysis from the cognitive, social and cultural perspective examines the resources for constructing and interpreting violence in the interactional context of the discourse. In Section 5 below, the model analysis of a text is first presented illustrating the categories of pragmatics analysis. Next, the resources for constructing violence are identified across three texts and presented. In the analysis, the focus is on the utterance produced and received, while the interpretation is done from my viewpoint as analyst.

3. Literature Review

Chilton (2004) discusses three strategies of political discourse as coercion, legitimation and delegitimation and representation and misrepresentation. According to him, coercion is dependent on the utterer's resources and power. Examples are speech acts backed by legal and physical sanctions such as commands, laws and edicts. Less obvious forms consist of speech roles difficult to evade such as giving answers to questions and responding to requests, among others. Legitimation establishes the right to be obeyed whether by overt statement or by implication. The techniques used include arguments about voters' wants', general ideological principles, charismatic leadership projection, boasting about performance and positive self-presentation. In delegitimation, others, who are foreigners, enemies within, institutional opposition or unofficial opposition, have to be presented negatively through the techniques of ideas of difference and boundaries and speech acts of blaming, accusing and insulting. Representation and misrepresentation involves the control of information. It may be quantitative or qualitative. Secrecy is a strategy of preventing people from receiving information, while censorship prevents people from giving information. In misrepresentation, information may be given but quantitatively inadequate. Qualitative misrepresentation is simply lying, omissions, verbal evasion and denial. Euphemism can blur or defocus unwanted referents, whether objects or actions.

Narrowing political discourse down to election campaign discourse in Nigeria, Oyeboode and Adegoju (2017) present a review of some works on its principles, practices and strategies. Opeibi (2006) observes the emerging trend of direct attacks of

political actors during election campaigns to malign their opponents. According to him, political office seekers have neglected positive and issue-oriented discourse for negative advertisement. Taiwo (2007) identifies political lampooning as one of the major campaign strategies of Nigerian politicians during the 2007 elections. Using morphological and lexico-semantic tools, he identifies short forms, blending, acronyms, metaphor, pun, conversion and allusion that politicians utilise to satirise opposition parties' contestants. Omozuwa and Ezejideaku (2009) observe that election campaigns in Nigeria are characterised with propaganda, through attack on party, exaggeration, vagueness and diatribes. They also identify rhetorics in form of promises, religious allusions, repetitions, figurative expressions, coinages and Pidgin English.

Further on discursive strategies in newspaper campaign adverts, Ademilokun and Taiwo (2013) reveals how the creators utilise metaphorisation of party symbols, deployment of rhetorical questions, historical allusions, use of deictic pronouns for inclusion and exclusion. Oyebode and Adegoju (2017) probe into the affective use of language by the Nigerian electorate during election campaigns by interrogating different expressions of subjective opinions made by them on WhatsApp. He avers that the social media have provided the electorate a non-threatening atmosphere for them to intrude into the context of politics, express their attitude, place their judgements and attempt to influence the attitude and behaviour of others. The appraisal resources utilised in the texts provide instances of inscribed and invoked judgements that prompt some value positions. Negative instantiations of effectual meanings and judgement are largely used against one politician/party to expose their failure, condemn, discredit and dislodge them in the election, while positive instantiations of affect, judgement and appreciation to legitimise another politician/party and some of his actions during his earlier tenure of governance.

Describing rhetorical violence in political discourse, using data generated from contemporary high-profile politicians worldwide and their targets, Neshkovska and Trajkova (2020) underscore that violence in form of hate speech has become an integral part of political discourse nowadays despite the legislative implemented and the general condemnation it receives. They recognise that the right to free speech encourages many people not just to speak their mind freely but also to direct expressions of hatred towards an individual or group of individuals on the basis of certain characteristics such as race, colour, religion, descent, national or ethnic origin. "Their ultimate goal is to injure, dehumanise, harass, intimidate, debase, degrade and victimise the targetted groups and to foment insensitivity and brutality against them" (p. 99). The authors conclude that almost all politicians in their corpus assume the roles of analysts and judges. Since all of the subjects presented are powerful politicians, their negative comments might instigate actions against the target, either by the politicians themselves or their supporters who are influenced by such negative language. Thus the hate speech gives legitimacy to the actions that follow.

Gorrell, et al. (2020) use a four factor framework – prominence, events, online engagement and personal characteristics – to investigate online hostility levels towards politicians and concerns about the impact of this on democracy. The findings show that abuse is ‘spiky’, triggered by external events such as debates or certain tweets. Some tweets may become viral targets for personal abuse. On average, men received more general and political abuse; while women received more sexist abuse. Conservative candidates received more political and general abuse. The authors find out that individuals who had received more abuse across the preceding year have chosen not to stand for re-election.

Lastly, Al-Tamini (2022) does a cognitive linguistic study of language of violence on the social media. He observes that what gives words their power is the belief in their legitimacy, and the authority of those who speak them and produce new words, or reproduce old words in new contexts. According to him (p.348), the roots of violence in the Arabic language lie in the grammatical and literary heritage and the danger of violence in the heritage lies in its sanctification without considerations of the context in which violence appeared and in its reproduction in a modern context as a weapon with which to confront opponents. The violent metaphors that appear in the Arabic language are a direct reflection of the system of cultural perceptions in Arab mindset. He classifies the cognitive dimensions of linguistic violence into three dimensions as follows: language is a material entity made up of weapons (the words); language is a field of conflict, violence and self-defense, and a place where a person punishes himself to relieve his feelings of guilt; and language is an army that uses its tools to besiege opponents. At the end of the research, he recommends proposals for future studies aimed to address the seed of violence in language before it grows and bears its toxic fruit on the ground, by criminalising linguistic violence of all kinds, the most dangerous of which is implicit violence that uses language in constructing mental images that terrify and frighten people; and aimed to replace violent words with peaceful ones.

4. Theoretical Framework

Pragmatics is a discipline of applied linguistics that analyses and interprets meaning in context. For convenience, we shall distinguish three approaches of interpreting meaning in the discipline. The first approach arrives at pragmatic or contextual meaning of language from diverse analytical perspectives such as stylistic analysis, critical stylistics, pragma-stylistics, rhetorical analysis, (critical, multimodal, visual) discourse analysis, critical linguistics, conversation analysis, semiotic analysis, interactional analysis, sociolinguistic analysis, pragma-sociolinguistics and so on as the case may be. Other topics that fall into this category include ‘genre(al)’, ‘visual’, ‘functional’ analysis and many others that have been mentioned earlier in this paper.

The second approach proposes a distinct theory of pragmatics with an internal mechanism for interpreting pragmatic meaning. A very popular example of this is Jacob Mey's Pragmatics Acts theory, where an attempt would be made to interpret the 'pract' of violence from the interactive and textual categories (Mey, 2001). A third approach is the conception of pragmatics as 'a cognitive, social and cultural perspective' of interpreting language in context (Verschueren, 1999). We may distinguish between the approaches here by calling the first approach 'pragmatic meaning' or 'pragmatic analysis' of meaning and the latter two approaches as 'pragmatics analysis'. Teun van Dijk's works straddle the first and last approaches because Critical Discourse Analysis interpret 'pragmatic meaning' or does a 'pragmatic analysis' of meaning, while the socio-cognitive-contextual tools utilised for analysis reflect 'pragmatics analysis' (cf. Van Dijk, 2001).

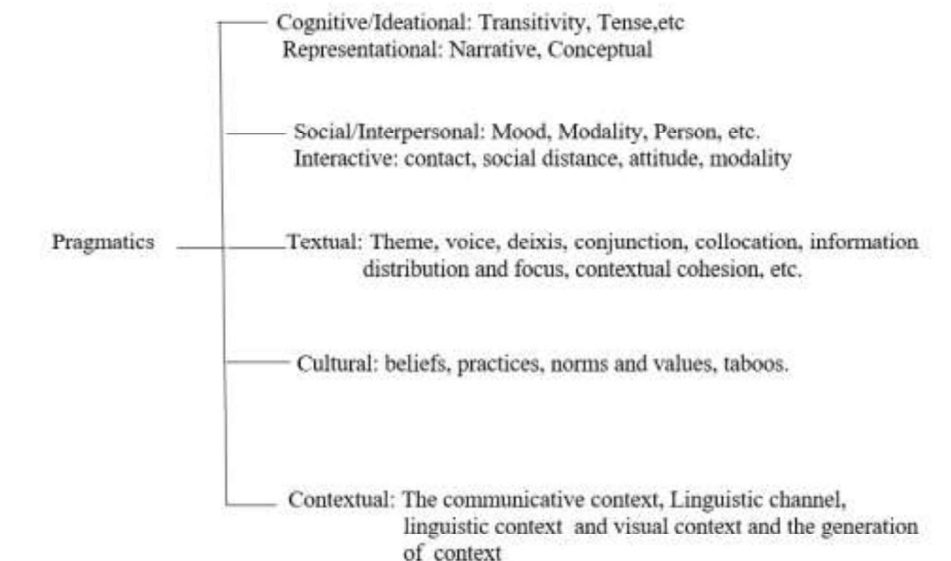
We wish to point out also that pragmatics analysis has to be 'wholistic' to be so called. In other words, all the categories (cognitive, social, cultural, linguistic and contextual) must be accounted for in the discourse. Fragmentation of the analysis is possible, but that would require changes of the title of such analyses. For example, the atomisation of categories of the pragmatic perspective into 'cognitive' 'social', 'cultural', 'linguistic' warrants their different titles other than 'pragmatics' analysis, notwithstanding several other topics in pragmatics such as speech acts, cooperative principle, politeness and impoliteness and intercultural and cross-cultural pragmatics that are covered using different appropriate theories.

In the categories presented below, concepts are derived from Verschueren (1999), Halliday (1973, 2004) and Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) and integrated into a framework of pragmatics analysis. The categories suggested by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) are included to account for visual features that may be relevant for description a pragmatics analysis.

- a. Context: The communicative context (language users, the mental world, the social world and the physical world); Linguistic channel, linguistic context and (we may add) the visual context; and the generation of context (lines of vision, the manipulation of contexts, contextualisation);
- b. Cognitive/ Ideational: Experiential (Transitivity, tense, modification, minor processes, lexical content; logical (polarity, hypotactic and paractactic complexes); Representational (narrative, conceptual);
- c. Social/ Interpersonal: mood, person, attitude, comment, lexical register, tone and intonation systems); Interactive: contact, social distance, attitude, modality; Cultural: beliefs, practices, norms and values, taboos.

d. Textual: Theme, voice, deixis, conjunction, collocation, information distribution and focus, contextual cohesion, intertextuality, sequencing of is renowned for sensational reportage. Sowore has been arrested for fake news peddling Mr Sowore is a publisher of *Sahara Reporters*, an Online news agency that is renowned for sensational reportage. Sowore has been arrested for fake news peddling (*Sahara Reporters*, 2022) and also charged for treasonable felony (*Sahara Reporters*, 2021).

Fig. 1: An Adapted Framework for Pragmatics Analysis



5. Analysis and Findings

5.1 Model Analysis

Context

There are four ingredients of the communicative context thus: language users (utterer and interpreter), the mental world, the social world and the physical world. The utterer of this text is concealed in the publication here under the cover of *Sahara Reporters*, New York. First, the risk of backlash from opposition is thus reduced for the individual and placed on the publishing channel. Second, the location of the media in New York instead of Nigeria is a manipulation of context in terms of distance, a possible calculation to shield the channel from immediate personal, social or institutional 'attack'. The voice of the utterer is clearly that of the online news agency, represented

by the publisher, Mr Omoyele Sowore of the African Action Congress (AAC). The agency of Mr Sowore's is presented in three capacities, as co-presidential candidate (an opposition of Interpreter 1, the target of the text); a social critic and activist; and a powerful voice of the press, the fourth estate of the realm in Nigeria.

Text 1

Ailing Tinubu Reportedly Suffering From 'Chronic Urinary Incontinence', Urinate On His Body In Public During A Visit To Ijebu Monarch

February 13, 2022 Sahara Reporters, New York



Source: <https://saharareporters.com/2022/02/13/ailing-tinubu-reportedly-suffering-chronic-urinary-incontinence-urinates-his-body-public>

The politician's security aide was seen constantly holding his nose while looking at the wet area

A video, which has now gone viral on social media shows the National Leader of the All Progressives Congress and former Lagos State governor, Bola Tinubu with suspected pee stains on his cloth during a visit to the Awujale of Ijebuland.

Tinubu, who was seated on a black leather couch alongside some other party stalwarts had risen to give a speech but his attire had soaked from behind, particularly at the butt area.



The politician's security aide was seen constantly holding his nose while looking at the wet area as another woman immediately wore her face mask as the Asiwaju rose up to speak.

This has piqued the interest of many Nigerians who insisted the wetness of the attire at the spot was urine. Others, however, argued that it might be sweat resulting from the long period of sitting on a leather couch.

Meanwhile, there have been concerns over Tinubu's presidential ambition considering his health challenges.

Recall that last month, Tinubu had informed President Muhammadu Buhari of his ambition to contest the position of president in 2023.

Tinubu also paid visits to some Northern states including Niger and Katsina to sell his ambition.

He had also met with the former dictator, who annulled June 12, 1993, presidential election, General Ibrahim Babangida, over his plans to be President of Nigeria.

Unconfirmed reports said Tinubu took a long time to get off the aircraft when he visited Niger State, and that he had to be assisted to get down.

There were also allegations that he had to visit the toilet many times on the flight back to Abuja, which is about 20 minutes.

SaharaReporters had reported that Tinubu, amidst his ambition for the 2023 presidential race to succeed Muhammadu Buhari, spent over four months patronising hospitals in France, the United States and the United Kingdom where he underwent several surgeries.

He was flown out of the country some days to Christmas in 2020 to Paris, France.

The APC leader returned to Nigeria on January 24, 2021, after a month absence from Nigeria.

He also went for a medical check-up on Thursday, June 10 to France and was conspicuously absent from the one-day working visit of President Muhammadu Buhari to Lagos State.

The interpreters of the text are in three categories. The target of the text is Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu (BAT), the Presidential candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), henceforth referred to as Interpreter

1. The second category is the media audience, particularly, the electorate in Nigeria, henceforth referred to as Interpreter
2. The third is the analyst, who is referred to here as Interpreter
3. The analyst has the opportunity to report and comment on both the utterer's speech and interpreters' 1 and 2 responses from his or her lines of vision.

The Mental World

The purpose of the utterer is to detract the political value of Interpreter 1 by presenting him in a negative light, in terms of ill health that would prevent the latter from contesting for the post of president. The argument is that Interpreter 1 is incapable of performing his duties as President of Nigeria on account of his ill health. However, the responses of Interpreter 1 in Examples 1 and 2 below are by denial and counter accusation, while those of Interpreter 2 in Examples 3 and 4 are diverse, depending on their slant as supporters or opponents of the target.

Example 1

I'm neither running for 100-yard or 500-yard race nor am I competing in WWE wrestling. I'm running for the presidency which is a knowledge-driven job.

I am very healthy (Odogwu, 2022)

Example 2

...We are not in any way surprised by the antics of the sinking opposition parties. What we found shocking was how quickly some compromised media organisations gulped the falsehood hook, line and sinker, without attempting to verify.. (Ndujihe, Akoni, Ajayi, Alechenu, Hassan-Wuyo and Jannamike, 2023)

Example 3

The presidential candidate of Labour Party, LP, Mr Peter Obi, has cautioned Nigerians not to hand over a 'sick country to a sick person'.

He advised that Nigerians should vote wisely, noting that it would be destructive if a sick person is elected to rule in the next four years. (Gsong, 2023)

Example 4

I was with him two days ago and I spent practically hours with him with a number of other leaders who visited him in Abuja. And I was really pleasantly impressed by his energy, his vigour. Eem Asiwaju is very very fit. He is fitter than me. When you look at him, he might look like, you know, somebody who is frail, or anything like that. But he's very energetic, he's very fit. He's well. He's not sick. And you can see that on TV. He's been everywhere.

(Femi Pedro, 2023)

The adverse comment in Example 3 is from Peter Obi, a co-Presidential contestant of the Labour Party, while the favourable comment in Example 4 is from an ally of BAT.

The Social and Cultural World

Two issues are salient about the social world surrounding the text. First is the violence that often characterises political campaigns during elections in Nigeria. Second is the hullabaloo about 'ill health' of a presidential candidate. Violence occurs in both physical and verbal forms and, most often, violence is solely verbal or accompanied by physical attacks among members of opposing political parties. Verbal attacks occur prominently in forms of hate speech, fake news and other injurious sentiments. When asked why election campaigns in Nigeria are based on sentiments and not issues, Dele Momodu, a political party leader says, surprisingly, on Channels Television on

February 7, 2023 that the focus of politicians is on power first before projects. Politicians wield so much power and influence in Nigeria and the culture of 'winner takes all' make them desperate to win at all costs.

The culture of violence in politics has become endemic to the extent that political party leaders have to be invited to sign a peace accord before presidential elections are held in the nation. An accord of non-violence, an undertaking to avoid actions that could promote violence during and after the polls, was signed by political party presidential candidates on January 14, 2015, spearheaded by the National Peace Committee. The content of the pact specifically emphasised the avoidance of hate speech and fake news. However, the APC and PDP, the two leading parties have repeatedly accused each other of violating that agreement (Premium Times, 2015). The peace accord for the current elections was signed on September 29, 2022 by presidential candidates and the national chairmen of the 18 parties in the contest (Majeed, 2022).

Ill-health became an issue of concern in Nigerian presidential elections because of the experience the nation had with late former President Umaru Musa Yaradua, who later died in office, and the current President Muhammadu Buhari. The scare is that politicians prefer to go abroad for treatment because of the precarious health facilities in Nigeria. The presidents spent a lot of time abroad when they were sick at great costs to governance and economy of the nation.

Though Nigerians would wish that they do not have a president who is sick at this time around, the text above faces backlash from many Nigerians because of some reasons. First is the perception of the text as hate speech against the victim, in deference of the peace accord signed previously by leaders of the political parties. It is a clear demonstration of fake journalism. An accusation of ill health basically requires a medical certificate as evidence. In this instance, none is provided. Instead, there is prevarication based on unverified sources of information shown in Example 5 below:

Example 5

There were also allegations that he had to visit the toilet many times on the flight back to Abuja, which is about 20 minutes. (Emphasis ours)

The allegation of illness is a distraction and waste of time, an effort in futility. The spite is to hurt the victim emotionally but not strong enough to stop the latter from contesting the election constitutionally. The relevant section of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in this regard says:

137. A person shall not be qualified for election to the office of President if –

... (2) Where in respect of any person who has been

(a) adjudged to be a lunatic;

(b) declared to be of unsound mind; ...

Second, most societies in Nigeria frown against denigration of dead or sick people in public because no mortal is immune from death or sickness. Third is the perception of the utterer and his news agency as a consistent perpetrator of hate speech in the guise of social activism. Although he has published harsh criticisms against all the major political opponents, he does not fare well in his party and public rating as presidential candidate (cf. Ogunsemore, 2023).

The Physical World

Aside from the utterer and interpreters, the physical context provides two pictures of BAT along with the written piece. The first picture presents BAT sitting comfortably at the centre of a sofa and looking forward with a smile. The second picture reveals some people sitting on couches and BAT standing up on the right side of the picture with his back turned on the reader. The picture reveals the wetness of his attire, an agbada at the butt area. The reader may be surprised at the tone of uncertainty encountered in the report despite the sensational caption of ill-health in the headline: "Ailing Tinubu Reportedly Suffering From 'Chronic Urinary Incontinence'".

Example 6:

This has piqued the interest of many Nigerians who insisted the wetness of the attire at the spot was urine. Others, however, argued that it might be sweat resulting from the long period of sitting on a leather couch. (Emphasis ours)

The transition from the blatant sensational face-damaging presentation in the headline of the text to an uncertain conjecture in the body of the text could spark off suspicion of the writer's ulterior motive by the reader.

Linguistic Channel and Linguistic Context

The report has the structure of a monologue but is interactive in nature. Verbal violence is interactive as perpetrators anticipate resistance, covertly or overtly (Insight Exchange, 2021). Also, as an Internet post, the text anticipates comments and responses from interpreters, as provided in Examples 1-4 above. It is interdiscursive, cutting across discourses of violence, political campaign and social media. It is intertextual because the text enables a recall of past discourses on the ill-health of some Nigerian presidents in the past and discourses on the peace pact signed by leaders of various political parties. The linguistic context of the text is activated by verbal and visual content, whereas the content is a mixed bag of narrative reporting, uncertain

claims and unfounded allegations. It expresses violence in form of hate speech and sensational negative reporting. The producer highlights a medical disease in the headlines of the text for which no medical evidence is provided in the body of the text.

The Generation of Context

The text is framed as hate speech that intrudes on the health privacy of the victim in order to detract the political value of the victim in the text. It is obvious that the visual representation of peeing on the body is not well contextualised. Also, the lack of consensus on whether the wetness of the attire is urine or sweat (Ex. 5) and the different responses by interpreters of the allegation are clear indications of different lines of vision.

Textual Features

Sentence Types

There are 16 sentences in the text of three types: complex (8), simple (6) and compound (2). The complex sentences (2,3,4,7, 8, 9,10 and 13) are packed full with relative clauses giving supported information pertaining to the accusation of illness and the circumstances surrounding it. Some simple sentences (5, 12) give added information in qualifiers in nominal groups. For emphasis, each sentence constitutes a paragraph in the text, except one paragraph that (10) that has two sentences.

There are 13 active and 4 passive sentences in the text, sentence 11 being a compound sentence. In the passive sentences, the agents of action as actor or senser are hidden, while the affected persons are revealed.

There are 12 unmarked clauses in the text and 6 marked ones. Apart from Sentences 1 and 4 where marked clauses refer to other human participants, the four remaining ones emphasise 'concerns' and allegations about Tinubu (Sentences 7 and 12) and he being 'assisted to get down' and being 'flown out' for medical treatment.

In terms of coherence, the topic is developed in three parts. Part 1 develops the perception of urine in Sentences 1-6. Part 2 focuses on ill-health, mentioned in Sentence 7 and developed in Sentences 11-16. Lastly, Sentences 8-10 discussion Tinubu's ambition and steps he has taken to achieve it. A noticeable faultline in the topic development is that the sensational topic of the text, viz. 'Chronic Urinary Incontinence', 'Urinate On His Body' is discussed only in the first part of the text before diverting to other issues.

Cognitive Features

Four tenses occur in the text as follows: past 7, past perfect 6, present perfect 3 and present 2. The tenses indicate that the Tinubu's ill-health has persisted from the past to the present and still persists in the present time.

Processes, Participants and Circumstances

Four processes are selected in the texts viz. material (9), verbalised (4), mental (3) and relational (3). The material process is of two types, action and event. The action process is performed by human beings in clauses where the agent/actor is either hidden (Sentence 14) or performs a non-extended action, such as 'holding his nose' (Sentences 1 and 4). The event process is performed by non-human agent on a human being (Sentence 2). In both cases, hidden human agents and non-human agents are presented in the report to hide the identities of actors in case of litigation. The affected person in all actions performed is Tinubu, the target of attack in the text.

The verbalised process represents verbs of saying (Sentences 6, 11 and 13), reporting the ill-health of Tinubu. The relational process either expresses attributes of illness of Tinubu or existence of allegations against him (Sentences 7, 12 and 16). Lastly, the mental process expresses perception of behaviour (Sentence 4) or reaction and cognition of people about tinubu's state of health (Sentences 5 and 8).

The circumstantial options in the text occur as follows: time 12, place 5, frequency 2, reason 1 and purpose 1. The time option indicate the constancy of Tinubu's ill-health and people's reaction to it, while the place expresses the location of the 'wetness' allegation against him. Other options exacerbate the condition of ill-health.

Social/Interpersonal Features

Person, Mood, Modality

The text is reported mainly in the voice of a third person 12 times. The reporter's identity is revealed in Sentence 13. Reference to Tinubu is made 6 times by appellation once (Sentence 1), name 2 times (Sentences 3, 9) and by personal pronouns 4 times (Sentences 10,11,14 and 16). References to others include human beings 3 times (Sentences 1, 2 and 6) non-human being 1 time (Sentence 2) and impersonal 3 times (Sentences 5, 7 and 12). The single instance of second person reference occurs in Sentence 8 as an imperative reminding readers about a past incident.

The dominant mood of the text is the declarative form, typical of the representational intent of the reporter. The single occurrence of the imperative mood is very significant because it indicates the direct involvement of the readers in the content of the text.

The verbs in the text are more of the non-modal than modal type and do not say much about the attitude of the reporter. Attitude is thus expressed by polarity and lexical register in the text. In terms of polarity, 17 of the 19 sentences have negative import while 2 are neutral. Across all the sentences are expressions with negative connotations

such as 'the constant holding of nose', pee, soaked attire, wetness, urine, health challenges, hospital ambition, visit to the toilet, medical check up, absence at meetings, etc. The expressions are intended to demean the personality of Tinubu and hurt him.

Lexical occurrences and collocations are used to indicate impolitic face threats on Tinubu as follows:

- i. nauseating words: urine, pee stains on cloth, soaked attire, toilet, hospital, etc.
- ii. repetition of words: wet area, wetness, butt area, sweat, soak, etc.
- iii. medical terms: hospitals, surgeries, medical check up, health challenges, assisted actions, etc.

Lastly, there is evidence of hesitancy and uncertainty in the text about the accusation of Tinubu based on words like 'suspected' and 'allegations' (Sentence 2), 'insisted' (Sentence 5) and 'argued' (Sentence 6). The words give the reader an impression that the accusation in the text is a mere fabrication, an attempt to stain the reputation of Tinubu.

5.2 Pragmatics Resources of Verbal Violence in Political Campaign Discourse

In this section, we shall present briefly and discuss some of the features of verbal violence observed in the sample texts of this study. Many examples have been presented from Text 1, thus a few more will be presented from Texts 2 and 3 (see the Appendix) to illustrate the findings.

5.2.1 The Multimedia Channel

In the review of literature earlier in this paper, the contexts of social media and political discourses have been identified to provide an open space for complete freedom of expression that users may abuse in their daily conversations and such an unfettered freedom portends danger in using language as a tool to inflict harm on the other, thus creating social tension. On the multimedia channel, individuals and groups with little or no resources or media experience have access to pass messages across to a wide audience.

It is observed that the texts analysed are interdiscursive, cutting across discourses of violence, political campaign and social media. They are intertextual because the texts enable a recall of past discourses such as the annulment of election of June 12, 1993 (Text 1), Senate inquiry (Text 2) and Niger Delta militancy (Text 3). The content of the texts is multimedia. For example, both Texts 1 and 2 have verbal and visual representations. Even Text 3, which overtly appears to be verbal, has a video version (Text 3, line 4). Lastly, the contents of the texts are a mixed bag of narrative reporting, uncertain claims and unfounded allegations. For example, apart from consisting of

injurious sentiments, Text 1 is a typical example of fake news, while Texts 2 and 3 comment on allegations that have not been legally proven.

5.2.2 Sentence Types and Coherence

The texts are dominated by simple and complex sentences. This may not be unconnected with the original spoken sources of the reports. Many of the reports have derived from transcriptions of interviews on online televisions and recorded videos. Nonetheless, the complex sentences contain relative clauses that give information on agents or affected persons in the texts (Text 2, Sentences 6, 10; Text 3, Sentence 3). Even, the simple sentences contain such information in quoted speech (Text 2 sentence 11) or qualifiers expressed in nominal or adverbial groups in texts (Text 1, Sentence 2; text 3 Sentence 1).

There are more active than passive sentences in the texts. As usual in reports, the passive sentences hide the identity of agents in the sentences in order to focus on the affected persons who are targets of attack. There are also more unmarked than marked clauses in the texts, where the marked clauses focus on the victims, allegations and sources of allegations against them.

Cohesion of the texts is achieved via multiple types of thematic progression. While the Constant Theme is employed in Text 3, which thematises the agent, the accuser of Peter obi, a mixture of types (including the simple linear, splitting and derived hypertheme) characterises Texts 2 and 3 where themes vary from accusers to evidence to the victim or circumstances of the events expressed. In terms of coherence, topical coherence occurs more than coherence between sentences, showing lack of proper planning typical of impromptu speeches. This means that sentences tend to connect more with the topic than with one another. For example, in Text 2 coherence is enhanced as follows:

Senate report: Sentences 1-4, 6, 7, 13, 17-19

Allegation of fraud: 5, 8

Atiku Abubakar's campaign: 9 -12.

Reporter's comment on Atiku Abubakar (14 -16) and Nigeria (20-21).

5.2.3 Multiple Tenses

The use of multiple tenses is observed in the texts. The number ranges from four to six tenses; Texts 1 and 2 have 6 tenses each while Text 3 has 4 tenses. The tenses include past perfect, present perfect, past, present, future past and future perfect tenses the intention is to make the allegations, accusations and abuses relevant for all times. In

other words, the content of the actions, states, inactions and wrongdoings of the targets indicates occurrences in the past time, which have persisted to the present and would be relevant for consideration in future contests of elections.

5.2.4 Processes, Participants and Circumstances

Material and verbalised processes occur significantly in the texts to express various meanings. Material processes occur as action and event types, where the action type has a human being as agent and the event type has a non-human being as agent. Where agents actions are extended, the agents are hidden to hide identities while the affected is overtly presented (Text 1, Sentence 14; Text 2, Sentence 18). Non-extended actions indicate actions performed on oneself (Text 1, Sentences 1 and 4). Material events occur to also cover up human identities, when non-human beings initiate investigations (Text 2, Sentences 2 and 12). Verbalised processes occur in the texts as reportorial verbs, such as 'say, call, argue, accuse', etc. Text 3 is dominated almost entirely by verbs of saying. Occasionally, the cognitive process occurs to indicate perception of objects or facts or invite the audience's attention or participation, e.g. 'recall' (Text 1, Sentence 8; Text 3, Sentence 6). Also, relational process may occur to indicate existence or attributes of individuals, especially when the focus is on ill-health (Text 1). The circumstantial options of time and place occur prominently in the texts to anchor the periods that actions and events take place as well as the locations. Some circumstantial details occur as 'range' to complete the verbal processes.

5.2.5 Person, Mood and Modality

The 3rd person option is predominant in the texts, as is typical of reports. The utterer presents participants in the texts, human and non-human, in the third person. Human and non-human beings serve as sources of evidence of allegations, accusations and abuses of targets. The targets are also referred to by name, pronouns or appellations. Once in a while, the 2nd person pronoun is used to invite interpreters to participate in the accusation, in order to give credence to the utterer's claims. Also, sometimes, the reporter uses the inclusive 1st person pronoun 'we' to involve the people as collaborators of verbal violence.

The texts are dominated by declarative clauses, which serve as assertions against the victim. In Texts 1 and 3, an imperative clause occurs significantly to draw the attention of interpreters to the 'recall' (Text 1, Sentence 8; Text 3, Sentence 6) of an earlier shared knowledge. On modality, the predominant choice of non-modal process options shows that verbs are not utilised to express social relationships and attitudes in the texts. Instead, negative attitudes and impolitic face threats are indicated by lexical items. Verbal items with negative connotations in text have been presented above. In Text 2, words used to disparage Atiku include 'diverting ... in public funds to private interests', 'should be prosecuted ... for siphoning of money' and 'fraudulently diverted ...'. These expressions are repeated several times in the text. In Text 3, derogatory expressions

repeated include 'should be in jail...'", invested state funds in a family business' and '...as a glorified YahooYahoo boy'.

6. Conclusion

This paper has identified and characterised verbal violence as a type of violence and exemplified its occurrence in political election campaign speeches on social media. It has utilised a perspective of pragmatics analysis to characterise and interpret features of violence discourse at the contextual, cultural, cognitive, social, textual levels of linguistic pragmatics.

The analysis and interpretation reveal that verbal violence contains the use of fake speech and hate speech in form of unwarranted and or unproven allegations, accusations and abuses. It is a deliberate attack intended to hurt the victim personally psychologically and socially retract their political fortunes in the forthcoming elections. One would hope that political campaigns would be based on issues pertaining to improvement in quality of lives of people. Unfortunately, politicians prefer attack on personalities of participants. An earlier remark that focus of politicians is on power first before projects is sadly impolitic for politics in a developing nation like Nigeria. It, therefore, behoves on Nigerian citizens to discourage this attitude and behaviour among politicians. The coordinators of several peace accords signed during the period are encouraged to do more in terms of monitoring verbal and physical violence during election campaigns. Finally, the study does not foreclose the analysis of violence discourse from other discourse contexts, such as family, sports, religion and school, among others, that may throw up further characteristics.

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Pragmatics of Violence: Violentization of our World through Words

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Abstract

This article explores the different canons of strategic violence construction in contemporary discourses in Nigeria and Europe. While plethora of existing studies on the language of violence pick interest in engaging the discourses of violence from sociology, media studies, (critical) discourse analysis, and sociolinguistics, they have significantly undermined the typologies and pragmatic strategies of constructing violence in contemporary discursive events in Nigerian and European sociopolitical space. The current effort is therefore directed towards addressing this lacuna by examining how violence is constructed and co-constructed in the communicative events of the two climes with a view to identifying the typologies of violence (co)constructed and the pragmatic strategies deployed in (co)constructing violence in Nigeria and Europe. Aspects of pragmatics theories and concepts including speech acts theory (Searles, 1979), cooperative principle Grice (1975), pragmatic acts (Mey, 2001), and discursive pragmatics Zienkowski (2011) were deployed to tease out the pragmatics of violentising discourses across various communicative contexts. Data purposively selected include a press release by Former President of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo delivered on the 27th February, 2023; a speech by President von der Leyen, delivered at the European Parliament Plenary on Russian aggression against Ukraine, on 1st March, 2022; and the communicative exchanges at INEC Office Collation Centre between INEC Chairman and Senator Dino Melaye, a political party agent, on the 27th February, 2023. Findings showed that three principal typologies of violence: physical, psychological/emotive, and socio-ideological violence were identified. These were variously grounded within the contexts of law and war in both Nigeria and Europe. Five pragmatic strategies were found prominent in the study, namely deresponsibilisation, blame game, defaming of character and identity, evocation of antecedent, graphicisation of physical (violent) acts. These mechanisms of violentisation of communication were ventilated through the acts of warning, threatening, asserting, indicting and alleging. Violentised discourses from the contexts of conflict, law and war, thus typify the dynamics of the communicative worlds of the two climes, and eminently forge out how language is capable of creating strategic violence in itself, for its users, and is capable of making or marring peaceful cohesion in our war-torn world.

Keywords: Pragmatic violence, Nigerian elections, Russia-Ukraine debates, Speech acts

1. Introduction

In spite of the experiences of disorientation and vulnerability that accompany violent acts, attempting to understand violence and how it relates to language may provide us with some important resources for comprehending the complex entanglements in the variables of language, violence and signification. Our language use, according to Silva (2017), is thus vulnerable to violence, conflict and excessive emotion, and inquiring into this vulnerability, and therefore may assist us to shed light on problems arising from such.

As language users, scholars and researchers from different scholarship backgrounds in the humanities and possibly allied specializations, we not only explore the destructive potential of violence for shattering experience and language, but also interrogate its productive potential for making language more accessible in its own use and circulation. To the extent that comprehending a text as a discursive event requires having a model of interactional text, it follows that no pragmatic function can exist without an overlapping metapragmatic function. Every engagement in violent-laden expression is therefore assumed to be for a pragmatic purpose. Based on the quantity and quality of violence that go on in different spheres of human life, it is pertinent to focus on the roles of language in violence discourse, in all its ramifications. Hence, this paper is an interdisciplinary attempt at entangling scholarship on physical, verbal and symbolic violence in the margins of the world, with some canons in pragmatics, semiotics, discourse analysis, literary studies, among others.

2. Aim and Objectives

The aim of this article is to explore how violence is constructed and co-constructed in our world through expressions, texts, video contents and some extra-linguistic resources.

In specific terms, the objectives are to:

- i. highlight and discuss the typologies of violence constructed in the political texts and short video contents selected for the article; and
- ii. examine the pragmatic strategies deployed in constructing the violence typologies in the political texts and short video contents selected.

3.1. Perspectives on the Language of Violence

Studies on the language of violence are not entirely new. What is however found lacking is the triangulation of data of different climes to tease out wider purview of the unified essence and construction of the language of violence in cross-cultural contexts as we have in Africa and Europe. This article takes this stride because of the global weight of the Conference from which it emerged. It is a product of a Plenary presentation at the 6th Pragmatics Association of Nigeria (PrAN) International Conference held at Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo, Nigeria in March 2023. Language is generally associated with the abstract realm of thought, representation and expression, a realm that contrasts sharply with the material realm in which we tend to place violence. Language is often seen as antithetical to violence: violence is the outburst that comes when the rational order of language fails. Violence is as much part of our human condition as peaceful cooperative action is. Yet, regardless of it being basic in human condition, violence is a disconcerting concept.

Violence itself is a language we all learn to interpret. There is the symbolic language of ethnic and class violence, particularly in the struggle for power and domination. In 'investigating violence in language', Silva 2017: 7 identifies three perspectives from which we can interrogate the relationship between violence and meaning:

First, as the disconcerting episodes, **violence affects meaning** by either making people temporarily silent and flustered or by disrupting an entire framework of signification... Second, ... more than disrupting meaning, violence itself may be inflicted by utterances. In this perspective, **meaning itself can be violent**. In differently exploiting language resources to create inequality, racist invectives, misogynistic language, homophobic slurs and hate speech often affect the subject in bodily ways. Third, both **violence as disruption of meaning** (perspective 1) and **violence in meaning** (perspective 2) produce effects. Talk of crime... discussion of irritability and communicability, the circulation of stories about crime or the circulation of hate in stories make violence proliferate.

In Silva's (2017) work, the whole interest is to address the problem of violence in language, particularly how words inflict wound; the relation between physical and linguistic violence; and how racial invectives, misogynous language, homophobic slurs, hate speech, among others affect the body, and make us vulnerable to conditions of injurability that language brings about. Verbal violence is not just "mere words", but as much violence as physical violence. Racial insults have an immediate injurious impact on victims. There are two different dimensions that cause racist, homophobic

and other injurious speech to act as a blow on the victim's body: temporally, racial invectives condense a long historicity of unequal forms of address and distribution of wellbeing; somatically, they strike the body, harming a corporeal and psychic structure of affects that had been formed and sustained in linguistic practices.

Violent and forceful language can be harmful, but language that verges on provocation or incitement is clearly intended to prompt the other side into an ill-considered response, which itself may consist of either equally forceful or violent language, if not actual force and violence. Violent communication is communication that limits liberty, denies recognition of needs, diminishes the worth of a person, and/or blocks compassion. Violent communication is often the result of using manipulative or coercive language that induces fear, guilt, shame, praise, blame, duty, obligation, punishment, etc. Violent communication happens in speaking, listening, and thinking through self-talk or imagined conversations.

There is a phenomenon of language violence in dialogue with others, in dialogue with oneself, as well as hidden violence in language. This phenomenon has cognitive dimensions through which violence structures are built into general concepts, which are feared to be physically realized in reality (Al-Tamimi, 2022.). The extent of the damage that violent language can inflict on the soul and body is unimaginable. Encountering violent words can cause one psychological distress and extreme discomfort. Many individuals who result to suicide are products of both inter and intra violent communication.

Violence of language is the violence that a language, by its nature, imposes on its speakers through the authority that exists in the language itself and another symbolic authority that the language acquires from the social status of the speaker. This refers to language that is situated within relationships; i.e. one of the ways we understand what people mean when they speak or write is by referring to who they are, and how well we know them, and whether or not they have some kind of power or not. Language with its authority may force us to do with our words or our thinking what we do not like to do; when it restricts us to limited choices of words. Verbal violence can mean expressions such as threatening, instigating, sedition, innuendo, stinging joke, and everything that leads directly to inflicting harm (physical, psychological and emotional). Linguistic violence is inflicted by words, and it also occurs within words.

Violence thrives in language, and is finally realized outside it in physical reality. There are two types of linguistic violence in general discourse. The first type is in the context of war and the words of violence that users mention and intend their literal connotation, which are phrases derived from the domain of combat, such as bombing, killing, mutilation, etc. Such linguistic violence is justified in the context of war. The second type is patterns of linguistic violence that is exchanged by interlocutors in times of

peace and in the context of talk about religion, culture, family life or politics, and in which the same expressions from the same domain (fighting) are used.

In Nigeria, the effects of political activities that display hate speech, verbal abuse and violent communication have become apparent in a gradual democratic set-up over the years. More than ever before, the actions of politicians have negatively aggravated the situation, and kept citizens more divided. Odongo (2010) noted that hate speech refers to inciting and hate words against people who share certain group characteristics based on their own. This includes speech that advocates or encourages violent acts against a specific group, and creates an atmosphere of hatred or prejudice which in turn may promote hate crimes.

Verbal violence is on the rise in Nigeria, and finds expressions in two major factors that nurture and sustain its continuous existence, namely politics and ethno-religious conflicts. Orounye (2012) has observed that ethno-religious conflicts have become so pervasive that most of them are politically motivated. The outcome of most of these expressions of violence is wide-scale violence that often results in destruction of lives and property, intimidation and displacements of residents etc. Outbreaks of these conflicts often open the window for dissemination of injurious, hateful, dangerous and vituperative speeches that have the capacity of accelerating conflicts.

3.2. Review of Relevant Pragmatics Concepts

To chart the course of an effective meaning generation in relation to communication and violence, four relevant concepts are concisely interrogated in the sectional review. These are: context, implicature, speech acts and discourse. The selection of these four concepts is predicated on the goal of the paper which is to deploy pragmatic resources to unraveling the language mechanism for constructing violence.

3.3. Context, Implicature, Speech Acts, and Discourse/Discursive Pragmatics and Pragmatic Strategies

A very significant concept in pragmatics is *Context*. Here, context of an utterance refers to the relevant aspects of the physical or social setting of an utterance or discourse. If one can agree with Odebunmi (2006) that context is the spine of meaning, but that its scope is beyond human experience, that position may be further interrogated a little. Any form of human experience itself can be seen or described as context. There is no doubt that meaning cannot be identified without consideration of the context of utterance/text production.

Implicature refers to what is meant, suggested or inferred, as against what is literally stated. It has to be worked out, depending on the awareness of the speaker and the hearer of the presuppositions of the context of interaction. *Implicature* is the mid-way between what is said and what is implied, but not stated overtly. This is a sophisticated inferential procedure that is possible only through an understanding of the presuppositions of a situation of social interaction. Most often, this can be a source of violence in discourse. Grice (1975) identifies two types of implicature: conventional and conversational. The conventional implicature is workable through the normal or conventional meanings of the words used, whereas conversational implicatures are derived from a general principle of conversation. In other words; conversational implicature derives from the general conditions, which determine the conduct of conversations.

The main feature of pragmatics is the identification of speech acts, such acts may be direct or indirect speech acts. In an indirect speech act, the speaker utters a sentence, and means more than what he literally says. It could refer to utterances in which we say one thing and mean another, or say one thing and mean what we have said, and also mean another illocution with a different propositional content; hence, it is possible to perform indirect speech acts in violence communication, hate speech or abusive language. In indirect speech acts, the speaker intends to produce a certain illocutionary effect in the hearer, and he intends to produce this effect by getting the hearer to recognize his intention by virtue of the hearer's knowledge of the rules that govern the utterances of the sentence. Because of the hints, insinuations, irony, metaphor, etc. the speaker's utterance and meaning fall apart in indirect speech act. Indirect speech acts may not be thoroughly understood without due regard to the total pragmatic contexts in which they are conceived and used. This is largely because they are speech acts that perform other functions apart from the ones they are made to perform on the surface construction. Though paralinguistic features like postures, facial expressions, hesitations, pauses and tone of voice, may be appropriately utilized to modify and boost the illocutionary force of indirect speech acts, in violence-related discourses, the lexical choices often help to identify the acts being intended or performed.

Discourse is actually seen as a particular way of representing certain aspects of reality. Some specific conditions must thus be satisfied if discourse will effectively present the social construction of reality. These conditions include: the structural characteristics of particular societies, features of their institutions, aspects of their history, as well as issues relating to the beliefs, attitudes and values of the people. When we speak of **discourse**, we are always speaking of language that is in some way situated. And that is the meeting point between pragmatics and discourse. Language is always situated in at least four ways: First, **within the material world**, and where we encounter it (invariably, the context) will contribute to the way we interpret it; Second, **within relationships**; one of the main ways we understand what people mean when they speak

or write is by referring to who they are, how well we know them, and whether or not they have some kind of power over us; Third, **in history**, that is, in relation to what happened before, and what we expect to happen afterwards. Finally, **language is situated in relation to other language(s)** – utterances and texts always respond to or refer to other utterances and texts; that is, everything that we say or write is situated in a kind of network of discourse. These situations help in no small way in analyzing discourse of any type, violence discourse inclusive. Based on that, Scollon and Levine (2004) argue that “language in use,” whether in the form of spoken language or text, is always and inevitably constructed across multiple modes of interaction, involving speech and gesture. This is why video contents and written texts will suffice here, in the examination of language of violence.

3.4. Theoretical Orientation: The Triangulation

The paper collates resources of the theoretical bases of the speech acts theory, cooperative principle, pragmatic acts, and discursive pragmatics. Out of these resources. The pragmatic strategies were identified and interpreted. As scholars and researchers in the field of pragmatics, one may be tempted to assume that it may not be necessary to define this broad term, again, but defining the concept will help to freshen our individual and collective memories about this polymorphous field. Many authors (Bianchi 2004, Recanati 2004, Basso et al 2009, Ariel 2010, Sperber and Wilson 2012) have defined pragmatics as a field that is similar to the neighbouring discipline of semantics, in terms of interpretation of meaning. However, differently from semantics, pragmatics is interested in the meaning that does not coincide with the truth-conditional meaning of an utterance. Pragmatics studies how people use words to accomplish actions in their conversations such as requesting, directing, ordering, threatening, warning, abusing and apologizing, which are all present in discourse of violence.

3.4.1. Speech Act Theory

One of the theories of pragmatics that helps to define expressions is **Speech Act Theory**, which traces speech acts, and pays attention to the classification and characterization of speech acts. In other words, speech acting has to do with the action performed in saying what is said, and they are verbal actions happening in the world. According to Mey (2001:95), speech acting involves doing something with words, which in effect may bring about a change in a given state of affairs. The main thrust of speech act theory is that utterances do not only express a state of being but also perform an action. Obviously, we do not merely say something with our words, we do something with them. Also of note is that an utterance or a statement by a speaker is both an expression of meaning and attitude. And this is crucial in the interrogation of language of violence.

3.4.2. Cooperative Principle

One major theory of pragmatics is the **Cooperative Principle**, as advanced by Herbert Paul Grice (1975), and it derives from the cognitive-philosophical pragmatics perspective. The Cooperative Principle (CP) is a general principle that participants bring into play in a cooperative interaction, and its four categories as well as their submaxims are well discussed in several literatures. It is important to recognize these sub-principles (maxims) of *Quantity*, *Quality*, *Relation* and *Manner*, which illustrate CP, as unstated assumptions we have in conversations. One of the assumptions is that people are normally going to provide an appropriate amount of information: that speakers are telling the truth; that they are being relevant, in their contributions; and that they are trying to be as clear as they can. There is also the theory of **Implicature**, also espoused by Grice, which stemmed off from the CP. This also addresses the "Hornian Intervention in Cooperative Principle".

3.4.3. Relevance Theory

We also have the **Relevance Theory** proposed by Sperber & Wilson (1986), which is grounded on the idea that our cognitive systems have evolved in the direction of increasing efficiency, and are set up so that they tend automatically to maximize relevance. Our inferential systems tend to draw the greatest possible cognitive effects from the combination of the new information and context. In this approach, the search for relevance is a basic feature of human cognition, which is exploited, in ostensive-inferential communication. Speakers and hearers have powerful mind-reading abilities. In producing a certain utterance, the speaker tends to take for granted what background assumptions the hearer is likely to use, as well as what inferences he is likely to draw, among others.

3.4.4. Mey's Pragmatic Act Theory (2001)

Mey's Pragmatic Act Theory (2001), is considered a systematic improvement of speech act theory. Unlike speech act theory, pragmatic acts theory takes care of not just utterances but action and the situation that influences these utterances, and this is why the theory can accommodate any genre of discourse or utterance, violence communication discourse inclusive. In this theory, there are two parts to pragmeme - the **activity part** and the **textual part**. The activity part deals with the interactants, while the textual part refers to the context of language use. The interactants, who often operate within the confines of the activity part, communicate with the deployment of different speech acts such as indirect speech acts, conversational (dialogue) acts, psychological acts, prosodic acts, and physical acts. Similarly, in the textual part, the interactants operate within the ambit of (con)textual phenomena such as inference, relevance, voice, shared situation knowledge, metaphor and metapragmatic joker. The interaction between these two parts, activity and textual, makes up the pragmeme with its various practs or allopracts.

The goal of pragmatics is to explain how a listener can succeed in retrieving some interpretation intended by the speaker from an uttered sequence of words. This is done through the identification of particular speech act(s) that an utterance performs. Speech act implies doing things with words. Implied in the concept of speech acts is the assumption that the minimal unit of human communication is not a sentence or other expression, but rather the performance of certain kinds of acts such as *making statements, asking questions, giving orders, describing, explaining, apologizing, thanking, congratulating, etc.*

3.4.5. Discursive Pragmatics

Zienkowski (2011, p.1) describes discursive pragmatics as “a platform for the pragmatic study of discourse.” It is an interdisciplinary field of discourse analysis and linguistic pragmatics which has no agreement on the meaning of the two terms; as they are no straight forward items. The significance of discursive pragmatics, as an interdisciplinary and inter-theoretical cross-fertilization, relies on its communicative potential. Studies on discursive pragmatics range from topic, themes, theories and perspectives connected with rhetoric, cognitive linguistics, semantics, sociolinguistics, communication studies, philosophy, literature and many other interdisciplinary fields. All the above mentioned disciplines when critically assessed are products of an increasing pre-occupation with pragmatic concerns in connection to both functional and communicative language use.

3.4.6. Pragmatic Strategies

Pragmatics has contributed immensely to the concept of communicative competence, by concentrating on the adequacy of language in its social context as well as on the function of language use in actual interaction among interlocutors. Thus, 'pragmatic communicative competence' is concerned with the use of sufficient interaction styles to communicate a speaker's intended meaning, in a real interaction among interlocutors. Pragmatic strategies are thus the different tactics employed by language users to drive home the intended meaning (message) of the addresser (sender) to the addressee (receiver). This may be direct or indirect. Some pragmatic strategies particularly will include the use of interrogation, deresponsibilisation, labelling, name calling, presupposition, implicature, accusing and blaming, negative evaluation, judging and criticizing, dehumanization and demonization, among several others. Nevertheless, communication, being a two-way process through which an exchange of meaningful messages, takes place between and among interlocutors, involves thoughts, ideas, concepts, feelings, etc., towards a mutually accepted goal to create shared understanding. All these are necessary for effective interrogation of injurious or hate speech, and verbal violence.

4.0. Methodology

This study adopted the purposive sampling technique to select its data which comprise:

i) a 22-sentence press release by Former President of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo which he delivered on the 27th February, 2023. The Press Release comprises 22 sentences, and given the contexts of the release, the mutually shared background information and beliefs by all Nigerians and members of the international community, the various forms of knowledge and shared common ground, 8 of the sentences were selected. The sentences were selected from a copy of the Release obtained from *the Primeneews online*. The selected Sentences 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13 and 14 were subjected to analysis. The selection is based on the presence of lexical items that have potentials for expression, ignition, incitement, inducement and promotion of violence, either overtly or covertly. Though van Dijk (2003) posits that Pragmatics should study such acts within the broader domain of discourse, and not be restricted to isolated sentences, these sentences have been contextualized, given the various backgrounds that have produced them;

ii) Excerpts from the Speech by President von der Leyen, delivered at the European Parliament Plenary on Russian aggression against Ukraine, on 1st March 2022 constitute the second part of data. 10 of the sentences are analyzed. The sentences selected for analyses are Ss 2, 3, 6, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20.; and

iii) finally, the communicative exchanges at INEC Office Abuja Collation Centre between INEC Chairman and Senator Dino Melaye, a party agent, on the 27th February, 2023, labelled **dialogue**.

Purposive data selection from the 3 sources was hinged on: (1) the need to have a representative coverage of language use in Nigeria (national), and that of Europe (International); (2) the presence of notable indices of lexicalized violence in both climes' recorded and transcribed texts.

Using the top-down analytical approach, the paper first identified the types of violence and their underlying context in the political text and video content, before discussing the pragmatic strategies deployed in enacting these typologies of identified violence types and contexts.

5.0. Analysis and Discussion

5.1. Typologies and Contexts of Violence in the Selected Political Texts and Video Contents

a. Physical violence

Verbally and non-verbally constructed, physical violence concerns expressions and demonstrations that orient towards physical agitation and war-induced migrations. This violence type is found to be prominent in the context of politics, war/agitation. The dialogue between the INEC Chairman and Senator Dino Melaye divulges the various manifestations of this violence type.

Party Agent: Mr. Chairman

INEC Officer for Osun State: My score is here.

Party Agent: Mr. Chairman...

Vice Chancellor: My name is Prof. Folashade Ogunsola the Vice-Chancellor of Lagos State.

Party Agent: Mr. Chairman...

INEC chairman: You are now more than **disruptive**.

Party Agent: I am not disruptive. I am **defending** my vote and **allowed by law to do that**.

INEC Chairman: Oh Kwara, No, Osun, introduce yourself and read the scores...

The context of the **Dialogue** above reveals an altercation between the INEC Chairman and a party agent. While the party agent seeks the attention of the Chairman by repeatedly calling on the Chairman, the latter was ignoring the calls, alleging the complainant as a disruptor. This is typical of construction of violence because the deliberate attempt not to hear the party agent is a strategic means of deemphasizing the importance of the call, and consequently inviting a rancor. The simple clause "You are now more than disruptive" presupposes that he is aware of the calls, and found them at that point unbearable. On this, the party agent also resorts to the evocation of his legal right to complain about what he felt is an anomaly that needed to be addressed. Disruption is also symbolically stamped by the speaker's stand to protest and consequently interrupt the vote counting process.

Taking an excerpt from von der Leyen's Speech in **S.2**, 'They sought refuge **inside our borders**, because **their country was not safe** any longer', the S.2 is a depiction of

physical disruption (violence) punctuated by the indices of migration which are allegedly orchestrated by war in the case of the Ukraine versus Russia. Being made refugees of war, the speaker painted a situation of anarchy in Ukraine and its attendant lack of peace that resulted in their migration to other country's borders, seeking safety.

b. Psychological/Emotive violence

Still within the context of war and destruction, there is a mental subscription to psychological or emotive violence. This type of violence is defined by the state of mind and condition of the acts described through the propositional content of the speaker(s). Emotive verbs and other lexical indices concretize this violence type as exemplified in Ss. 3 & 4.

S.3 Thousands of people fleeing from bombs, camped in underground stations – holding hands, crying silently, trying to cheer each other up. (From von der Leyen's Speech)

S.4 'Your Excellency... tension is building up ...' (From Obasanjo's Letter)

Both S.3 and S.4 evoke a kind of psychological tension ignited by the different contexts of conflict. S.3 demonstrates this typology of violence by the fleeing, camping and crying of thousands of people as a result of the bombings described by the speaker. The portrayal of these people trying to cheer up one another is a testament to their state of emotional downcast.

c. Social-ideological violence (politics/war/law context)

Discourse has a way of revealing the ideology and identity of individuals. In other words, the US-THEM polarity is mostly fanned by constructing themselves in the best light while defaming others in the most cruel form. Socio-ideological violence is concerned as a type of violence associated with personalities' identity and ideological dispositions and how these have been perceived as inimical to the health and wellbeing of others. S.5 and S.6 demonstrate this violence types.

S.5 At this stage, we do not need wittingly or unwittingly to set this country on fire with the greed, irresponsibility and unpatriotic act of those who allegedly gave money to INEC officials for perversion and those who collected the blood money. (From Obasanjo's Letter)

S.6 Honourable Members,

This is a moment of truth for Europe. Let me quote the editorial of one Ukrainian newspaper, the Kyiv Independent, published just hours before the invasion began: 'This is not just about Ukraine. **It is a clash of two worlds, two polar sets of values.**' They

are so right. This is a clash between **the rule of law and the rule of the gun**; between **democracies and autocracies**; between **a rules-based order and a world of naked aggression**. (From von der Leyen's Speech)

Both illustrations (Ss. 5 & 6) reveal social violence in varied contexts and form. The first example is established in the contexts of election and its characterizing corruption which is a form of violence as captured by the lexical categories "set this country on fire" and "blood money". These are cautioning acts that warn against politicians who undertake illicit steps towards rigging elections for themselves and the potentially implicit violence that it can trigger.

The second example also solidifies this violence in the speaker's language use as he contextualizes within their legislative affordance the underlying import of the ongoing violent conflict between Ukraine and Russia. The speaker lexicalizes that it is an ideological clash between different types of leadership wherein one is democratic while the other is autocratic; where one operates within the ambits of the rule of law while other clings to the rule of the gun. The pragmatic import of this socio-ideological violence can be sieved from the disruption of the social order that suffers in the hand of blood-thirsty leaders whose identities portray violence by their conduct.

We need now to explicate some of the views discussed, so far, by investigating the pragmatic strategies employed in the expressions of violence in some aspects of data.

5.2. Pragmatic Strategies in the Construction of Violence in the Selected Political Texts and Video Contents

Six (6) pragmatic strategies were deployed to enforce violence in the studied texts and video contents. These strategies eminently engendered and amplified the three contextual typologies of violence as discussed in the previous section. The six pragmatic strategies deployed are: deresponsibilisation, assertive (acts of) accusation, threatening acts/blame game, defaming (identity/character), and graphicisation of (physical) violence acts. These are discussed in turn in the following sections

a. Deresponsibilisation

Deresponsibilisation is the act of evading responsibility. It is a tact individuals engage to shift blame or distance themselves from issues of political undertone. The adoption of this pragmatic strategy is intended to forge out self-exoneration and other-indictment. It connects to prediction of potential violence through indirect act of warning. S.7. projects this strategy:

S. 7. When the die is cast, it will be your problem and that of the nation. (From Obasanjo's Letter)

S.7 is not a case of pragmatic failure or incompetence, rather it is a case of deresponsibilisation. In his use of hedging, Obasanjo is asking PMB to share the responsibility for what he (Obasanjo) is saying. He is trying/has tried to 'deresponsibilise' himself, by heightening the impact of his expression. And it is in that pragmatic strategy that the violence in his communication resonates (Odebunmi, 2019, 14). According to Mey, (2021, 10), 'hedging', just like other forms of mitigation, is a form of deresponsibilisation; a way to decrease responsibility by downgrading the importance of what is being said, by referring to an authority, or even by 'masking' one's utterances such that they appear to originate from another source, belong to another speaker, or are at home in another context where they cannot be distinguished among the cacophony of voices that interfere in the interaction (Mey, 2021: 10-11). Threatening is a familiar form of verbal abuse, and can be very explicit such as expressed in the utterance above. Obasanjo, through this utterance, is creating a sense of fear, disaster and catastrophe which can result as a result of inaction of PMB to act. This is another pragmatic strategy of deresponsibilisation.

b. Assertive (acts of) accusation (pragmatically lexicalizes indictment) &(In)Assertive/hedged act (of accusation)

These are claim-making strategies with harsh and mild illocutionary force. Pragmatic assertion is a strategic deployment of language to introduce a new message with minimal reliance on presupposition. In this article, it is broadly projected through confrontational act – bald-on record type of engagement. It gets at direct acts with minimal face saving acts. Language use in this form is conflict-induced, and therefore construct violence in a wide sense.

S. 8. It is no secret that INEC officials, at the operational level, have been allegedly compromised to make what should have worked not to work and the results doctored.

S. 9. The Chairman of INEC may claim ignorance but he cannot fold his hands and do nothing when he knows that election process has been corrupted and most of the results that are brought outside BVAS and server are not true reflection of the will of Nigerians who have made their individual choice.

S. 10. At this stage, we do not need wittingly or unwittingly to set this country on fire with the greed, irresponsibility and unpatriotic act of those who allegedly gave money to INEC officials for perversion and those who collected the blood money. (Ss 8-10 are from Obasanjo's Letter)

Obasanjo has obviously, in S.8, taken a position, here, as he states his belief in unequivocal terms, particularly with the use of the words – ‘...*INEC officials... have been allegedly compromised and ...results doctored.*’ His use of the hedge ‘allegedly’ is characteristic of Obasanjo, whenever he wants to play safe with words (see Ayodabo, 2003). This pragmatic strategy is to force the INEC into doing what he (Obasanjo) wants them to do (that is, cancel/review the presidential election results-release process). The use of these words can provoke the INEC, as an institution, incite the opposition against the supposedly winning candidate/party, nudge the government at the center and the general public to possible unimaginable actions and inactions. These words, as used, here constitute hate speech; they are intolerant words of insult to condemn INEC and the entire results release process.

In **S.9**, the writer uses outright assertion in provoking the Chairman of INEC by declaring that ‘...*he cannot fold his hands and do nothing when he knows that election process has been corrupted...*’. This prodding of INEC Chairman’s conscience constitutes verbal abuse of the INEC Chairman’s integrity as an expected unbiased referee. Obasanjo goes on further to assume the role of the all-knowing, when he contends that ‘... *most of the results that are brought outside BVAS and server are not true reflection of the will of Nigerians who have made their individual choice.*’. This all-knowing strategy can be premised on his status as a statesman, which many people will believe has provided a sort of advantage for him to know more than most Nigerians and foreigners about the results being declared. Thus, his utterance has symbolically violentized the world of Nigerians and members of the foreign community, who consider Nigeria as the heart of Africa. If any violence erupts in Nigeria, as a result of this Press Release, it is capable of snowballing into many countries in Africa.

In **S.10**, expressions that display violent words include: fire, greed, irresponsibility, unpatriotic act, perversion, blood money’. All these give moralistic judgements on INEC. Referring INEC and staff as irresponsible and unpatriotic diminishes the worth of that institution and they key leaders. These are strong abusive and violent words that can cause psychological distress and extreme discomfort to the target victims.

S.11 is a dialogue the Nigeria’s Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) Chairman, Professor Mahmood Yakub and Senator Dino Melaye, the agent of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). This is a post presidential election encounter, and the verbal altercation occurred at the National Collation Centre of the INEC Office in Abuja.

S.11 Dialogue:

INEC Chairman: You are now being disruptive.

Party Agent: I am not disruptive. We are saying what you uploaded is not the right thing. You can bundle me out but the right thing must be done. I am a party agent.

INEC Chairman: You are now being disruptive.

Party Agent: That is not what the constitution says.

INEC. Chairman: You are now being disruptive.

Party Agent: I am not being disruptive. I am asking if what you uploaded is.. (inaudible).

INEC Chairman: Okay, next score, please! After the presentation, we will then come back to the issue you raised.

Party Agent: Let him say that what is uploaded is what he's going to present.

INEC chairman: Okay, score Kwara, Oh sorry, Monshood Mondan, please make your presentation. Kwara has done its own. Okay, please Osun state go ahead with your presentation.

INEC Officer for Osun state: Okay, my is Dr. Mutiu Olaleke Agnoke. I am the resident of electoral commission INEC Osun state.

The above encounter is an expression of anger by the agent of one of the political parties which contested for the Office of the President of Nigeria on 25th February, 2023. The exchange of words was between the INEC Chairman, Professor Mahmood Yakub and Senator Dino Melaye, the agent of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). Obviously, the Party Agent is the aggressor, given the fact that his political party seems not to be recording the expected level of success, as the results were being announced and collated, State by State.

The INEC Chairman's repetition of the expression: '*You are being disruptive*' does not go well with the Party Agent, and he keeps on, with a high pitch of tone, protesting that he wasn't being disruptive. There is no doubt that the party agent is aggressive, and he utters: '*I am not being disruptive '... You can bundle me out! But the right thing must be done.*' The noise being generated by the Party Agent has heightened the tension within the hall, and in the end, the Party Agent stormed out of the Collation Centre in annoyance. His outburst thus constitutes verbal violence. The INEC's responses to the Party Agent's utterances constitute a 'face off' or 'avoidance'. The response also breaks

Grice's CP sub-maxims of 'Quantity', 'Quality' and 'Relevance'. This strategy appears deliberate, on the part of the INEC Chairman. All he was concerned with, at that moment, was the presidential election results' collation and declaration of the winner. The Party Agent's words, in the pitch of expression, goes beyond mere complain; they constitute indirect verbal abuse, because as opined by Silva (2017:13), 'the idealized model of a shared metalinguistic world grounded on cooperation doesn't seem to hold in this case'.

b. Threatening acts/blame game

Threatening and blaming are two pronounced forms in which language violentises the world of speakers. Threats are constructed when potential dangers are spelt out with possible consequences, as denoted in S.12 and S.13 in the macro contexts of politics teased out predominantly by an indicting act.

S. 12. Let me appeal to the Chairman of INEC, **if his hands are clean, to save Nigeria from the looming danger and disaster which is just waiting to happen....'** (From Obasanjo's Letter)

S. 13. 'Your Excellency ... tension is building up ...' (From Obasanjo's Letter)

The above text in S.12 may look like an appeal ordinarily, it is an indirect accusation and indictment. The writer is raising an alarm, here, and possibly encouraging and indirectly urging those who may feel cheated or aggrieved by the results declared by INEC, so far, to be ready to react violently, perhaps 'through violent words, as he believes and opines that '*... danger and disaster ... is just waiting to happen...*'. The strategy used here is that of 'demand' and 'blocking compassion', and an outright implied **threat** or **blame**. S.13 is another case of implicit threat to force the INEC Chairman to review the election result process. Thus, this 'alarm call' is aimed at intimidating the INEC Chairman, by calling on President Muhammadu Buhari to act and intervene. Former President Olusegun Obasanjo and President Muhammadu Buhari are both ex-military men, hence the grave import of the expression '*...tension is building up...*' is understood by both the writer and the addressee. And that common ground is what the writer has exploited.

c. Defaming (Identity/Character)

Defaming is a recurrent pragmatic strategy in which someone's reputation is deliberately damaged by another. This is done through speech acts of indicting and alleging. In the context of politics, it is used to discredit leadership, and create distrust for them among their citizens.

S. 14. The Chairman of INEC may sneak out of the country or go back to his ivory tower. (From Obasanjo's Letter)

The reality being created/painted/envisaged, here, is, to some extent, contingent on Obasanjo's imagination, and perhaps expectation/viewpoint. The intention behind this prediction is hateful, and the effect of the utterance is hurtful to the person-victim that is mentioned. In essence, what is describable as hate speech, verbal abuse, violent language or violent communication is the whole act of being insulting, defaming, blasphemous, unpleasant actions, provoking, inciting or spreading false news. See also Mangantibe (2016). Generally, the main pragmatic strategy employed by Obasanjo in his Press Release is to speak violently to INEC, so that the institution might do what he (Obasanjo) wants, by inducing fear, guilt, blame, duty obligation on them.

Perhaps it is pertinent to note that politically motivated hate speech is generally an antecedent of election-related provocation and violence in Nigeria, as seen in the Press Release analyzed above. The fundamental question, therefore, is: why would Obasanjo, a social actor, considered a statesman by virtue of his profile and antecedent, and someone expected to be immersed in a peaceful sociability resort to such disproportionate use of words? The entire text features an interesting engagement of lexical choices in signaling the practs of warning and threatening. He has also relied on deresponsibilisation, largely as a way to hedge most of his utterances.

d. Evocation of antecedence

Speakers' violentisation of their world is sometimes strategically constructed by resorting to history to validate the projection of violence. This is demonstrated in the following S.15 and 16.

S. 15. War has returned to Europe. (From von der Leyen's Speech)

S. 16. Almost thirty years after the Balkan Wars, and over half a century after Soviet troops marched into Prague and Budapest, civil defence sirens again went off in the heart of a European capital. (From von der Leyen's Speech)

S.15 is a declarative, in which the President of the European Commission, Ursula Getrud von der Leyen, the German politician who has been serving as the President of the European Commission since 2019 presupposes that war was once in Europe. His strategy of recalling the agony and pains of the war then, is a signal warning to the entire European Union that a possible recall of history is here! Thus, this is a reiteration of the fact that what arises in a language may be processed within the language before it appears in reality. The implicature here is conversational. This strategy of appealing to history reenacts the violence that pervaded Europe in the past; thus the expression

of 'War has returned to Europe' is to show that the symbolic power of language comes from its ability to create violence through verbal expressions.

S.16 above is another recourse to history, where von der Leyen uses words of reality to inflict linguistic violence on his audience. The use of lexical items '*... thirty years after the Balkan Wars, ... over half a century after Soviet troops marched into Prague and Budapest, civil defence sirens again went off ...*' graphically and symbolically recalls the sordid war histories. The use of '*...again...*' has conventional implication in pragmatic terms, and von der Leyen perhaps uses this to jolt her listeners into consciousness about the looming dangers ahead. She has used these words to create a psyche of violence.

e. Graphicization of (physical) violence acts

This is the graphic representation of violence. It is intended to create mental images that arouse compassion from audiences. This pragmatic strategy is common to propositions indexing war, as can be seen in the following:

S. 17. Thousands of people **fleeing from bombs**, camped in underground stations – holding hands, **crying silently**, trying to **cheer each other up**.

S. 18. Cars lined up **towards Ukrainian Western borders**, and when many of them **ran out of fuel**, people picked up their children and their backpacks and marched for **tens of kilometres towards our Union**.

S.19. They sought refuge **inside our borders**, because **their country was not safe** any longer.

S.20. Because inside Ukraine, **a gruesome death count has begun**. **Men, women, children** are dying, once again, because a foreign leader, President Putin, decided that their country, Ukraine, has no right to exist. (Ss 17-20 are from von der Leden's Speech)

Graphic representation is also achieved above through number, a strategy that uses counting number of victims or casualties of war. We have a pillage of violent words, here, such as '*... people fleeing*', '*bomb*', '*... underground stations...*', '*... holding hands*', '*crying...*' all summing up as coercive language that induces sense of destruction, fear, aggression and desolation, thus blocking compassion. In other words, the world is assaulted and fouled by this communicability of violent discourse. Von der Leyen paints a picture of helplessness and desolation here, and the foulness of her words resonates pity in '*... when many of them ran out of fuel, people picked up their children*

and backpacks and marched for tens of kilometres towards our Union'. Obviously, the speaker is asserting the power and influence of the Union to be the available helper in time of crisis. This is a strategy of denial of responsibility through blaming of the actions (of the war) on precipitators of the war(s). This is a strategy of moralistic judgements and evaluation of others; thus she puts Ukrainians down, and exposes their helplessness and inadequacies. The linguistic items '*...sought refuge*', and '*...not safe...*' foreground the inescapable violence which the verbal expressions pragmatically project. She casts a moral judgement on President Putin as the source of the agony that is pervading Ukraine. This pragmatic strategy is also that of denial of responsibility (deresponsibilisation) as well as explicit threat of blame. Thus, we can see how violent, vulgar and inciting her words and expressions are.

6. Conclusion

Arising from the analysis, it becomes obvious that language and violence can manifest in different forms, and they can be of different types and in different contexts. Violence discourse can be either explicit or implicit, and can be expressed in direct or indirect speech acts. Such can be in form of **speech, gesture or conduct, writing, or display which disparages or intimidates a protected individual or group**. In other words, a speech that offends, threatens, or insults groups, based on race, colour, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, or other traits is characterizable as violent language, verbal abuse, language violence or hate speech. Although Pragmatics has traditionally favoured attention to harmonious or cooperative interactions, recruiting the canons of linguistic thinking to account for conflictive communication requires a great deal of rethinking, as Culpepper (2011) has opined. Because our language use is vulnerable to violence, conflict and excessive emotion, further inquiry into this vulnerability may shed light on how we can engage with violence through words. As language users and analysts, we have a responsibility of interrogating situations, utterances and texts that are capable of generating, promoting or igniting violence whether in the home front, at places of work, in politics, the economy, etc. in religious homes or even on the field of play, etc. In other words, as pragmaticists, we should show concern and interest in examining pragmatic strategies that are employed by speakers, in their utterances, and writers in texts. It should also be a source of interest to us to examine strategies, available, to mitigate the illocutionary effects of the violentized utterances and expressions. It is then that our relevance as language researchers and scholars will become utilitarian.

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Appendices

- i. Text of President von der Leyen's Speech to the European Parliament Plenary on Russian aggression against Ukraine, on 1st March, 2022.
- ii. Text of Olusegun Obasanjo's Letter to Nigerians, as published by the Primeneews online on 28th February, 2023

European Commission –

Speech by President von der Leyen at the European Parliament Plenary on the Russian aggression against Ukraine

Brussels, 1 March 2022

Madam President of the European Parliament,

Mr. President of the Council,

High Representative,

Mr. President of the Ukraine, dear Volodymyr,

Mr. Speaker of the Ukrainian Parliament,

My Honourable Members,

War has returned to Europe. Almost thirty years after the Balkan Wars, and over half a century after Soviet troops marched into Prague and Budapest, civil defence sirens

again went off in the heart of a European capital. Thousands of people fleeing from bombs, camped in underground stations – holding hands, crying silently, trying to cheer each other up. Cars lined up towards Ukrainian Western borders, and when many of them ran out of fuel, people picked up their children and their backpacks and marched for tens of kilometres towards our Union. They sought refuge inside our borders, because their country was not safe any longer. **Because inside Ukraine, a gruesome death count has begun. Men, women, children are dying, once again, because a foreign leader, President Putin, decided that their country, Ukraine, has no right to exist.** And we will never ever let that happen and never ever accept that.

Honourable Members,

This is a moment of truth for Europe. Let me quote the editorial of one Ukrainian newspaper, the Kyiv Independent, published just hours before the invasion began: **'This is not just about Ukraine. It is a clash of two worlds, two polar sets of values.' They are so right. This is a clash between the rule of law and the rule of the gun; between democracies and autocracies; between a rules-based order and a world of naked aggression. How we respond today to what Russia is doing will determine the future of the international system. The destiny of Ukraine is at stake, but our own fate also lies in the balance. We must show the power that lies in our democracies; we must show the power of people that choose their independent paths, freely and democratically. This is our show of force.**

Today, a Union of almost half a billion people has mobilised for Ukraine. The people of Europe are demonstrating in front of Russian embassies all across our Union. Many of them have opened their homes to Ukrainians – fleeing from Putin's bombs. And let me thank especially Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Hungary for welcoming these women, men and children. Europe will be there for them, not only in the first days, but also in the weeks and months to come. That must be our promise altogether. And this is why we are proposing to activate the temporary protection mechanism to provide them with a secure status and access to schools, medical care and work. They deserve it. We need to do that now. We know this is only the beginning. More Ukrainians will need our protection and solidarity. We are and we will be there for them.

Our Union is showing a unity of purpose that makes me proud. At the speed of light, the European Union has adopted three waves of heavy sanctions against Russia's financial system, its high-tech industries and its corrupt elite. This is the largest sanctions package in our Union's history. We do not take these measures lightly, but we feel we had to act. These sanctions will take a heavy toll on the Russian economy and on the Kremlin. We are disconnecting key Russian banks from the SWIFT network. We also banned the transactions of Russia's central bank, the single most important financial institution in Russia. This paralyses billions in foreign reserves, turning off the tap on Russia's and Putin's war. We have to end this financing of his war.

Second, we target important sectors of the Russian economy. We are making it impossible for Russia to upgrade its oil refineries; to repair and modernise its air fleet; and to access many important technologies it needs to build a prosperous future. We have closed our skies to Russian aircraft, including the private jets of oligarchs. And make no mistake: We will freeze their other assets as well – be it yachts or fancy cars or luxury properties. We will freeze that altogether.

Thirdly, in another unprecedented step, we are suspending the licences of the Kremlin's propaganda machine. The state-owned Russia Today and Sputnik, and all of their subsidiaries, will no longer be able to spread their lies to justify Putin's war and to divide our Union. These are unprecedented actions by the European Union and our partners in response to an unprecedented aggression by Russia.

Each one of these steps has been closely coordinated with our partners and allies, the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Norway, but also, for example, Japan, South Korea and Australia. All of these days, you see that more than 30 countries – representing well over half of the world's economy – have also announced sanctions and export controls on Russia. If Putin was seeking to divide the European Union, to weaken NATO, and to break the international community, he has achieved exactly the opposite. We are more united than ever and we will stand up in this war, that is for sure that we will overcome and we will prevail. We are united and we stay united.

Honourable Members,

I am well aware that these sanctions will come at a cost for our economy, too. I know this, and I want to speak honestly to the people of Europe. We have endured two years of pandemic. And we all wished that we could focus on our economic and social recovery. But I believe that the people of Europe understand very well that we must stand up against this cruel aggression. Yes, protecting our liberty comes at a price. But this is a defining moment. And this is the cost we are willing to pay. Because freedom is priceless, Honourable Members. This is our principle: Freedom is priceless.

Our investments today will make us more independent tomorrow. I am thinking, first and foremost, about our energy security. We simply cannot rely so much on a supplier that explicitly threatens us. This is why we reached out to other global suppliers. And they responded. Norway is stepping up. In January, we had a record supply of LNG gas. We are building new LNG terminals and working on interconnectors. But in the long run, it is our switch to renewables and hydrogen that will make us truly independent. We have to accelerate the green transition. Because every kilowatt-hour of electricity Europe generates from solar, wind, hydropower or biomass reduces our dependency on Russian gas and other energy sources. This is a strategic investment. And my Honourable Members, this is a strategic investment, because on top, less dependency on Russian gas and other fossil fuel sources also means less money for the Kremlin's war chest. This is also a truth. We are resolute, Europe can rise up to the challenge. The same is true on defence. European security and defence has evolved more in the last six days than in the last two decades. Most Member States have promised deliveries of military equipment to Ukraine. Germany announced that it will meet the 2% goal of NATO as soon as possible. And our Union, for the first time ever,

is using the European budget to purchase and deliver military equipment to a country that is under attack. EUR 500 million from the European Peace Facility, to support Ukraine's defence. As a first batch, we will now also match this by at least EUR 500 million from the EU budget to deal with the humanitarian consequences of this tragic war, both in the country and for the refugees.

Honourable Members,

This is a watershed moment for our Union. We cannot take our security and the protection of people for granted. We have to stand up for it. We have to invest in it. We have to carry our fair share of the responsibility.

This crisis is changing Europe. But Russia has also reached a crossroads. The actions of the Kremlin are severely damaging the long-term interests of Russia and its people. More and more Russians understand this as well. They are marching for peace and freedom. And how does the Kremlin respond to this? By arresting thousands of them. But ultimately, the longing for peace and freedom cannot be silenced. There is another Russia besides Putin's tanks. And we extend our hand of friendship to this other Russia. Be assured, they have our support.

Honourable Members,

In these days, independent Ukraine is facing its darkest hour. At the same time, the Ukrainian people are holding up the torch of freedom for all of us. They are showing immense courage. They are defending their lives. But they are also fighting for universal values and they are willing to die for them. President Zelenskyy and the Ukrainian people are a true inspiration. When we last spoke, he told me again about his people's dream to join our Union. Today, the European Union and Ukraine are already closer than ever before. There is still a long path ahead. We have to end this war. And we should talk about the next steps. But I am sure: Nobody in this hemicycle can doubt that a people that stands up so bravely for our European values belongs in our European family.

And therefore, Honourable Members, I say: Long live Europe. And long live a free and independent Ukraine.

My z vamy. Slava Ukraini.

SPEECH/22/1483 Related media

Extraordinary Plenary session on the Russian aggression against Ukraine

Participation of Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, to the European Parliament Plenary debate, on the Russian aggression against Ukraine

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PRESS RELEASE

2023 NIGERIA PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION **- AN APPEAL FOR CAUTION AND RECTIFICATION**

Nigerian Brothers and Sisters, greetings to you all.

I am constrained to speak at this point.

I crave the indulgence of the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, His Excellency General Muhammadu Buhari, to make this statement because I have had opportunity to keep him aware of what I know is happening and the danger looming ahead. On many occasions in the past, I have not hesitated to point out lacuna in the action of the President and his government. But as far as the election issues are concerned, the President has proved beyond reasonable doubt that he will want to leave a legacy of free, fair, transparent and credible elections.

Until last Saturday night, February 25, 2023, the good and noble plan and preparation for the elections seemed to be going well. For the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), a lot of money was spent to introduce Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), and the Server for immediate transmission of results from polling units. It is no secret that INEC officials, at operational level, have been allegedly compromised to make what should have worked not to work and to revert to manual transmission of results which is manipulated and the results doctored. The Chairman of INEC may claim ignorance but he cannot fold his hands and do nothing when he knows that election process has been corrupted and most of the results that are brought outside BVAS and Server are not true reflection of the will of Nigerians who have made their individual choice. At this stage, we do not need wittingly or unwittingly to set this country on fire with the greed, irresponsibility and unpatriotic act of those who allegedly gave money to INEC officials for perversion and those who collected the blood money. Let me appeal to the Chairman of INEC, if his hands are clean, to save Nigeria from the looming danger and disaster which is just

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waiting to happen. If the Chairman can postpone elections four days to the election, he can do everything to rectify the errors of the last two days – no BVAS, no result to be acceptable; and no upload through Server, no result to be acceptable.

Where BVAS and Servers have been manipulated or rendered inactive, such results must be declared void and inadmissible for election declaration. Chairman INEC, I have thought that you would use this opportunity to mend your reputation and character for posterity.

Your Excellency, President Buhari Muhammadu, tension is building up and please let all elections that do not pass the credibility and transparency test be cancelled and be brought back with areas where elections were disrupted for next Saturday, March 4, 2023, and BVAS and Server officials be changed. To know which stations or polling units were manipulated, let a Committee of INEC staff and representatives of the four major political parties with the Chairman of Nigerian Bar Association look into what must be done to have hitch-free elections next Saturday. Mr. President, may your plan and hope for leaving a legacy of free, fair, transparent and credible election be realised. Mr. President, please don't let anybody say to you that it does not matter or it is the problem of INEC. On no account should you be seen as part of the collusion or compromise. When the die is cast, it will be your problem and that of the nation. The Chairman of INEC may sneak out of the country or go back to his ivory tower. Your Excellency, thank you for hearing me out.

Compatriot Nigerians, please exercise patience until the wrong is righted. I strongly believe that nobody will toy with the future and fortune of Nigeria at this juncture.

Long live Nigeria in peace, security, stability and in the hope for greater future.


OLUSEGUN OBASANJO
February 27, 2023

Intertextual Representation in Nigerian Appellate Judgements

Donatus Emenike

Abstract

The study investigates the phenomenon of intertextual representation in Nigerian appellate judgements. The study is an explorative research, and in order to realize the objective of the study, four Nigerian Supreme Court judgements were randomly selected. The judgments were read and instances of intertextuality were identified and analysed to show their pragmatic significance in language uses. Specifically, the rapport management politeness theory was applied for the interpretation of data. Findings from the study show that the use of intertextuality in appellate judgment performs relevant rapport management functions. Some of the identified functions are: it serves as a performative shield; it is used to acknowledge the competence of the judgement givers in the discourse community. It is also used for credibility claim and to show involvement in the legal discourse community.

Keywords: Pragmatics, Intertextual, Representation, Nigerian, Appellate Judgment

1. Introduction

For some time now, linguistic scholars have shown much interest in the study of appellate judgments to establish their unique features for both general and specialist teaching in the use of English. Some of these are Ononye (2016), Kalejaiye (2016), Kurzon (2001). It is important to note that none of these studies have investigated the pragmatics of intertextual representation in appellate judgments.

Intertextuality is text production strategy that relates one text to other to achieve intended purposes. These purposes are not fully understood as scholars have continued to interrogate the significance of intertextuality in the context of specialist text production and interpretation. Intertextuality has been investigated in academic and other professional settings using different theoretical insights to explain its significance in the text composition process. Fairclough (1993), Udina, *et al* (2018) and Parkam (2014) consider intertextuality as a theory that can be applied in the study of texts, while Ho (2011) see intertextuality as a linguistic behaviour that projects meanings that are better explained using other linguistic theories like critical discourse analysis, politeness (pragmatics). These latter studies have shown that the application of the more established linguistic theories can further illuminate the phenomenon of intertextuality in text composition activities. In agreement with these studies, the

present study aims to explore the politeness significant of intertextual representation in appellate judgement context using rapport management model propagated by Spencer-Oatey (2002, 2004 and 2005). In order to do justice to this paper, the author will examine the Nigerian legal context, the concept of intertextuality, pragmatics, politeness theory and its realization in intertextual representation in the Nigerian appellate judgement texts.

2. Nigerian Court System and Appellate Judgment

The Nigerian court system is modeled after the British system by reason of the country's colonial experience. This means that Nigeria practices the Common Law tradition. Common Law practice according to Black Law Dictionary, is "the body of law derived from judicial decision rather than statutes or constitution." This means that cases are determined by making reference to previously determined cases, especially when the material facts are similar. Also significant is the precedential nature in which new cases follow laid down rules in previous cases. In addition, it is worthy of note that Common law system recognises court hierarchy in which the decision of the appellate court binds those of the lower court. Common law practice in Nigeria is traced to the enactment of the following laws in the colonial period; Ordinance no 3 of 1863 which introduced English laws in the territory of Lagos. Others are Ordinance no 4 of 1876, Ordinance no 17 of 1906, and the Supreme Court ordinance 1906. As noted above, the Nigerian court system practices the precedential system. One key element of this system is that there is hierarchy of court in which decision of lower courts can be reviewed by higher courts, by way of the appeal, especially if a party to a case is not satisfied. Such higher courts are the court of appeal and Supreme Court. The process of the determination of cases in courts of appellate jurisdiction requires that they dissect the decision of lower courts to establish if such lower courts followed due process and relevant legal norms to reach their decisions. This involves the citation of relevant judgment texts and applicable laws and legal principles for proper examination and determination of such cases. This implies that in the composition of appellate judgments, references are often made to previous texts in form of intertexts. This makes the appellate judgments suitable texts for the investigation of the phenomenon of intertextuality.

2.1 The Concept of Intertextuality

The coinage of the term ‘intertextuality’ is credited to Julia Kristeva (Fairclough, 1993:101). The idea behind the study of intertextuality is that no text is entirely new and independent of other texts. According to M. Bakhtin, “all utterances, spoken and written are demarcated by a change of speaker and are oriented retrospectively to the utterances of previous speakers and prospectively to the anticipated utterances of the next speakers” (qtd in Parkam 2014:867). It is argued that authors, in composing their texts, draw from other existing texts to properly situate their texts and guarantee better understanding of their positions and points of view in relation to others. In doing this, different intertextual relationships are constructed. The relationships so enacted could be that of support or contradiction. Therefore, the study of intertextuality as an enterprise in linguistic enquiry is to identify instances of intertextuality and explain the motivation for their use and the roles they perform in text production and consumption.

3. Theoretical Framework

The study relies on the Rapport Management Theory to explain the use of intertextuality in the context of appellate judgement texts. Rapport Management is a theory of politeness that has its root in Brown and Levinson’ politeness theory. To properly understand the theory of rapport management, the author considers it necessary to give historical perspective to its development.

Pragmatics is a field of linguistic enquiry that focuses on the explanation of meaning potentials, basically assumptions in contexts of verbal communication. Prasad (2008:151) defines Pragmatics as “ the study of the way in which language is used to express what somebody really means in particular situations, especially when the actual words may appear to mean something different”. This implicates the notion that what is said is grounded on what is unsaid (Fairclough 2003: 7). Speaking in the same vein, Yule (1995:127) refers to pragmatics as “invisible meaning”. According to him “ the investigation of pragmatics provides us with some insights into how more get communicated than what said” (1995:127). The explanation points to the facts that context play significant role in making meaning in communication situations

Ogoanah (2014) distinguishes two types of meanings in linguistic communication. These are sentence meaning and speaker’s meaning.

“sentence meaning is the context- dependent meaning assigned by the grammar, while speaker’s meaning is everything that a speaker intends to convey, whether explicitly or implicitly by producing an utterance in a given occasion “ (Ogoanah 2014: 8). Pragmatics is concerned with the study of the latter.

Pragmatics as field of linguistic study has its roots in the seminal work of Austin with the title, *How to Do Things with Words*, published 1962. The publication, among after

things, brought new insights to the functional realization of language in a given context. This marked a shift from formal linguistics to functional linguistics. The author introduced such concepts as performative, constative, locutionary act, illocutionary act and perlocutionary act which he used to explain different kinds of statements that are relevant in regulating human condition and relationships. The work by Austin was further developed by John Searle and he classified speech acts into directive, commission expressive and representative. A fuller taxonomy of speech acts as advanced by Austin and Searle can be better understood in the illustration below:

If an utterance is:	
A directive	The speaker wants the listeners to do something.
A commissive	S/he indicates that she herself will do something.
An expressive	S/he expresses her feelings or emotional response
A representative	S/he expresses her belief about the truth of a proposition.
A declaration	Her utterance results in a change in the external non-linguistic situation.

Source: Ogunsiji and Oloosun. (2009)

Following these early studies in pragmatics, scholars have come to explore different dimensions to the study of pragmatics. Some of these are Relevance theory by Sperber and Wilson (1986), Politeness by Leech (1983), Lakoff (1975 and 1983), and Brown

and Levinson (1986), Relational work by Marian Locher and Richard Watts and Rapport Management by Helen Spencer-Oatey. However, for the purpose of this study, the politeness-based Rapport Management is applied. To properly ground rapport management in the wider politeness theory, it is pertinent to explore the development that birthed it.

Researchers in politeness study are unanimous in tracing the origin of politeness research to the cooperative principles by H. P Grice (Harris, 1995; Kadar, 2017; Brown and Levinson, 1986). In his thesis, Grice argues that cooperation is the guiding principle of communication. Borrowing from Kant, he identifies four maxims which he claims are at the core of the cooperative principle. These are maxims of quantity (being adequate in formation), quality (being truthful), relation (being relevant), and manner (being clear). He asserts that for communicative activity/ conversation to be successful, none of these principles or maxims should be flouted. Grice's Cooperative Principle has had a huge influence in pragmatics research as notable scholars have adopted it for the analysis of text or point of departure for further interrogation of the concepts of pragmatics in the field of linguistics (Leech, 1983, Sperber and Wilson, 1986, Brown and Levinson 1986, Green, 1989 and Harris, 1995). Some of the works are patronizing, while some are critical. For instance, Harris questions the assumption that cooperation is the sole factor that instigates or sustains communication. In this regard, she contends that cooperation may not be the general principle, and that power also plays pivotal role in communication. She buttresses this assertion by studying communicative exchanges in a court setting (Harris, 1995: 117-15)

It is pertinent to note that at the early stages of the development of pragmatics, the study has been monolithic, where there were attempts to distill any perceived meanings that cannot be accounted for by the formal features of language as pragmatics. With time, however, scholars began to classify pragmatic meanings into different categories. This gave rise to the development of different pragmatics theories designed to account for shades of pragmatics meanings. For the purpose of the study, Rapport Management is relied on. Rapport Management is a politeness-based pragmatics that privileges the concept of face in its conception.

Politeness pragmatics explains the interaction methods used by interactants to build and maintain interpersonal relationship. According to Kadar, it "covers behaviour through which people indicate that they takes other's feeling of how they should be treated into account, and it comes into operation through interactive moments" (2017:n.p).

Politeness study has its roots in the H.P. Grice's Cooperative Principle. However, the attempt at theorising politeness is credited to Lakoff (1975 and 1983). To achieve politeness, Lakoff (1983) proposes three Strategies.

(1) Use of Redundancy before imposition.

Example: May I ask how much you earn per month?

Euphemisms: this requires using technical terms in order to avoid taboos such as words for sex, defecation.

(2) Use of Hedges - a hedge is a word, phrase or particle that modifies some other category such as noun phrase, a verb phrase or a sentence in that it relaxes the condition for its truth or acceptability.

Examples: (a) I guess we should go.

(b) I think his behavior was sort of unpleasant.

(3) Use appropriate amount of formality, for example in choosing the form of address, such as, 'His Lordship'

Following Lakoff is Leech. Leech has enormous influence in the theorisation of politeness as an area of language research. His first attempt was in 1977, which was later elaborated in Leech (1983). He introduced the notion of politeness principles. Leech (1983:8) defines politeness principles thus: "minimize (other things being equal) the expression of impolite belief [...], maximize (other things being equal) the expression of polite belief." The polite principle has the following maxims:

[1]. TACT MAXIM [in impositives and commissives]

[a] minimize cost to others [b] maximize benefit to others.

[2]. GENEROSITY MAXIM [in impositives and commissives]

[a] minimize benefit to self [b] maximize cost to self.

[3]. APPROBATION MAXIM [in expressives and assertives]

[a] Minimize dispraise of other [b] Maximize praise of other]

[4] MODESTY MAXIM [in expressives and assertive]

[a] Minimize praise of self [b] Maximize dispraise of self]

[5] AGREEMENT MAXIM [in assertives]

[a] Minimize disagreement between self and other

[b] Maximize agreement between self and other]

[6] SYMPATHY MAXIM [in assertive]

[a] Minimize antipathy between self and other]

[b] Maximize sympathy between self and other]

(Leech 1983: 132)

Leech locates politeness within the spectrum of socio- pragmatics, The maxims appear to be comprehensive. One noticeable feature is the bipolar nature that makes it easy to apply. However, Leech has been criticised for being pedantic. Two of the notable critics are Brown and Levinson. Brown and Levinson's politeness theory is another significant contribution to the understanding of linguistic pragmatics. They posit that politeness concern in speech event comes into operation when a speaker needs to threaten the hearer's face or public self-image. They argue that politeness is a universal concern in human language, and set out different politeness strategies that can be used when certain politeness concerns are at stake. They locate politeness in two distinct contexts: the desire to be autonomous and the desire not to be impeded or imposed upon. These, the operationalized as the concepts of positive and negative politeness.

3.1 Rapport Management Model

Rapport Management Model (henceforth RMM) is a pragmatic theory proposed by Helen Spencer-Oatey, and it seeks to elaborate on Brown and Levinson's politeness theory. Brown and Levinson's politeness theory revolves around the understanding that in any linguistic interchange all competent adult members of a language group have (and know each other to have) "face" which is the public self-image every member wants to claim for himself (1986:61). They contend that the need to protect face is universal and embedded in all languages as a result of the general realisation that everyone's self-image, encompassing reputation, prestige, and honour is at risk of being attacked. Brown and Levinson further state that there are two forms of face: negative and positive. They explain negative face to mean "the want of every competent adult member that his actions be unimpeded by others (1986:62). This relates to language use that is aimed at warding off attacks of self-image by persons involved in any communication event. On the other hand, positive face, to them, means the "want of every member that his/her want be desirable to at least some othersThese include the desire to be ratified, understood, approved of, liked or admired (1986:62). In addition Brown and Levinson also contend that the concept of 'face' is a universal phenomenon that is present in all languages and cultures.

Though Brown and Levinson's theory has been popular among researchers and has been applied to the analysis of texts with useful results (Marina Terkourafi and Liu Peng, Fang Xie and Lingling Cai), the theory has been criticised for underspecifying

the concept of face in a pragmatic analysis. One of the notable critics in this regard is Spencer-Oatey, the proponent of RMM. To this end, she seeks to refine and elaborate Brown and Levinson's politeness theory of face. In going about her thesis, she contends that interaction is governed by socio-pragmatic principles that social groups internalise and tacitly take for granted (2005:14). She further argues that rapport management cannot be fully accounted for by the consideration of face as just an interpersonal need in communication in the context of institutional and other social settings. She opines that the notion of face is beyond an individual as it extends to other groups that an individual belongs to such as family and other social groups. In advancing her cause, she introduces the rapport management theory. According to Spencer-Oatey, "Rapport management refers to the management of interpersonal relations along a harmony-disharmony continuum, considering how people use language to build, maintain, or jeopardize social relations." (2002:13). She introduces three variables to explain rapport management: face sensitivities, sociality rights/obligations and interactional goals. Adopting Erving Goffman's view, Spencer-Oatey explains face as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact" (*Culture*, 14). She further explains that face is of two forms: quality face and social identity face (2002:9). Quality face deals with the desire of everyone to be positively judged by others, while social identity face is the desire to be acknowledged in a group on the basis of an individual's personal trait or desire for people to acknowledge and uphold their social identities or roles. In a later revision, Spencer-Oatey introduces another facet to the explanation of face, and this is the concept of relational face. According to her, it concerns "people's desire for other people to evaluate their relational qualities, especially in communication in a positive way (2007:645).

She also explains social rights to mean social or personal expectancies or entitlements that individuals claim for themselves (2008 14). Sociality rights explain such rights accruing from positions and social status. According to B. Fraser, "upon entering into a given conversation, each party brings an understanding of some initial set of rights and obligations that will determine, at least for the preliminary stages, what the participants can expect from the other(s)." (1990:232). For instance, a judge in a court or a teacher in a class addresses their respective audiences with some assumptions that manifest in the choice of words or other language resources. According to Speneer-Oatey, if these rights are breached, rapport may be affected.

People's behavioural expectations within the communication interchange depend on the following: (1) contractual/legal agreements and requirements: contracts and societal requirements such as avoidance of discriminatory behavior; (2) explicit and

implicit conceptualizations of roles and positions: consisting of three main ideas: equality-inequality, distance-closeness and the rights and obligations associated with the role relationship. Teacher-student or mother-daughter relationships, for instance; (3) behavioural conventions, styles and protocols: they are developed through being exposed to social encounters. For example, the Muslim know how to behave in a mosque due to the fact that they have experienced the same situation many times; (4) sociopragmatic interactional principles (SIPs): socioculturally-based principles, scalar in nature, that guide or influence people's productive and interpretative use of language (Jiang and Spencer-Oatey, 2006:1634).

Sociality rights are also divided into two: equity rights and association rights. Equity right is related to what is considered to be fair or unfair in human dealings. It involves the concern that one is not unduly imposed upon or unfairly ordered about or taken advantage of or exploited, and also receives the benefits to which one is entitled (Spencer-Oatey, 2002:9). Whereas, association right explains how people relate and treat one another in a group considering their role relationships. It concerns the desire not to be ignored and a fair entitlement of interactional opportunity in a group. In essence, it concerns the extent of affective involve-detachment tendency in a group. She further explains the interactional goal(s) to mean a specific task and/or relational goal one may have when s/he interacts with another (Spencer-Oatey, 2005:14). According to Spencer-Oatey, interactional goals may damage social interaction if they come in conflict. If they do not, their management may result in rapport maintenance or enhancement (2005:14).

Spencer-Oatey suggests that rapport management could operate and be investigated in different domains. These include the illocutionary domain, discourse domain, participation domain, stylistic domain and non-verbal.

It is however, important to note that rapport could be investigated in written texts. The fact that every text is interactive is a pointer to this. Every text, be it written or spoken presupposes an addresser and an audience. This fact is acknowledged by Goffman when he states that, "Every person lives in a world of social encounters, involving him [] either in face-to-face or mediated contact with other participants" (5). Goffman goes further to locate interpersonal concerns[e.g face]in communication as he argues that "In each of these contacts, he[everyone] tends to act out what is sometimes called a line-that is, a pattern of verbal and nonverbal acts by which he expresses his view of the situation and through this the evaluation of participants, especially himself"(5). From the view expressed by Goffman, face, a major facet of rapport could be investigated in either face-to-face or mediated interaction such as written texts. Supporting this view, Patricia Díaz Muñoz suggests that "deducing these perceptions [rapport or relational concerns] from participants' metapragmatic comments might be more effective [in mediated contacts].

This study applies rapport management to the study of intertextual representation in appellate judgements. It is important to bear in mind that rapport management is a politeness theory that incorporates much of the existing theories before it, particularly that of Brown and Levinson. This means that some of the ideas expressed in those theories are relevant in rapport management analysis. For instance, major concern of politeness theory is the management of impositions. Lakoff adopts the use of redundancy as a means of mitigating impositions which threatens the addressee's face want, while Leech's Tact and Generosity maxims are also relevant in the management of imposition. Brown and Levinson's treatment of imposition falls under negative politeness which addresses individuals' desire not to be impeded. The views expressed is consistent with the assumptions of Rapport management theory. Though intertextuality is not recognized as one of the strategies of politeness, research has shown that intertextuality can perform such functions. Again, the texts used for this study are monologic and considered uncooperative (Andrei Marmor, 435), yet conversational. This is probably because there is no immediate feedback. The compositional techniques used, by the text producers, however, show the consciousness of a listener, though silent. This means that the text producer is trying to be cooperative. It is argued in this study that the use of intertextuality, though not identified by the respective politeness theorists as a politeness strategy, performs politeness functions. The study below serves to illustrate this position.

4. Data Analysis

4.1 Intertextuality in Legal Texts

Legal genre is one of the areas of discourse that the use of intertextual device is prevalent (Natalie Udina, 2018:1090). This is because of the tendency of members of the discourse community to draw from extant texts in order to define an existing state and project into the future. This is a culture that is embedded in the legal discourse community and it is traceable to the precedential system of justice and the need to distinguish and establish common grounds on legal issues in the context of an existing legal norm. In this essay, intertextuality is studied in the context of appellate judgment, a subgenre of the legal genre. The study of intertextuality in this research is presented under the following sub-heads.

4.2 Intertextuality as a Performative Shield

One major function performed by the use of intertextuality is that it serves to shield the court as the performer of an action in the context of appellate judgement writing. One major concern of politeness theory is the management of impositions. Lakoff adopts the use of redundancy as a means of mitigating impositions, while Leech's Tact and

Generosity maxims are also relevant in this regard. Brown and Levinson's treatment of imposition falls under negative politeness which addresses individuals' desire not to be impeded. The views expressed is consistent with the assumptions of Rapport management theory. Though intertextuality is not recognized as one of the strategies of politeness, research has shown that intertextuality can perform such function, especially in instances of impositions as the analysis below would show

EXTRACT 1 (Ikko Kashandadi v. Ingila Sarkin Noma)

In the face of the claim before the court, the plaintiffs having failed to discharge the heavy burden on them as per **Elia v. Omo-Bare (1982) 5 SC**. have failed woefully to establish their claim to a declaration of title and so, the claim is liable to be dismissed.

EXTRACT 2 (Ikko Kashandadi v. Ingila Sarkin Noma)

By the **Constitution**, the Supreme Court cannot hear an appeal on grounds of mixed law and fact unless leave of the court or the Court of Appeal is obtained. See **Oluwole v. LSDC (1983) 5 SC.1; Faleye v. Otapo (1987) 4 NWLR (pt 64) 186**. So to appeal on facts only ... where an appeal requires the leave of court and the leave is not sought and obtained, the appeal is incompetent and will be struck out. See **Ressel V. Russel (1987) 2 NWLR (pt 57) 437**.

EXTRACT 3 (Michael Odunze & ors v, Nwolu Nwosu & ors)

In the face of the claim before the court, the plaintiffs, having failed to discharge the heavy burden on them as per Elia v. Omo – Bare (1982)5 SC, have failed woefully to establish their claim to a declaration of title and so, the claim is liable to be dismissed.

In reaching a decision, the court usually refers to another text which serves as a reason or foundation for such a judgment. The text(s) referred to may be statutes and/or precedents. In employing intertextual device in this context, the court tends to assert that the decision reached was not its, but imposed by the existing legal norms. From this perspective, it could be argued that the use of intertextual strategy serves as a performative shield in that the text producer relies on the force of the intertext, rather than the court's opinion in reaching a decision. This serves rapport management function because it tends to mitigate imposition which has the effect of saving the face of the addressee(s). In extracts 1 and 2, references are made to existing texts to justify different positions. In extract 1 for instance, reference is made to a judicial precedent, **Elia v. Omo-Bare (1982) 5 SC**, while in extract 2, reference is made to the *1999 Constitution* and other texts such as **Oluwole v. LSDC (1983) 5 SC.1; Faleye v. Otapo (1987) 4 NWLR (pt 64) 186**. Also in extract 3, reference is also made to a judicial

precedents, *Elia v. Omo – Bare* (1982)5 SC. It is important to note that rapport management explains ways text producers employ linguistic options in managing interpersonal relationships in order to achieve a (dis)harmonious relationship depending on the goal of the text producer(s). Court judgements are impositions, but the court is conscious of the fact that an imposition is a breach of one's sociality right, hence the resort to an intertext for a shield. This serves to mitigate the impact of imposition on the addressee, and thus attends to his/her face needs. It further shows that the court did not impose any decision, but rather echoes the voice of the law in the intertext, which everyone, including the judge is subject to. Through this process of text composition, the text producer(s) distances him/herself from the text or decision thereby bridging the power distance between the addresser and the addressee. Ultimately, the judge claims common ground with the addressee as he/she shows that the text producer and consumer are subject to the law. This also has rapport maintenance orientation because the text producer aims to project the notion of equality before the law.

4.3 Intertextuality, Credibility Claims and Rapport in Appellate Judgment texts

Underlying every judicial inquiry is the desire to unravel the truth. The members of the legal discourse community are aware of this. Therefore, there is always the need to use composition strategies that project this idea, and intertexts have often been used to achieve this. In composing legal texts, especially judgments, references are made to verifiable texts. For instances, references are made to sections and pages of other documents. Also, exact statements of parties are referred to in course of reaching a decision. All these enhance the integrity of the judgment texts

EXTRACT 4 (Nigeria Navy & Ors v.t Navy Captain D.O. Labinjo)

The question is whether the submission is supported by the facts. The answer is clearly in the negative: it is clear **at page 1229 of the record that as far back as the 19th of October, 2016** the respondent had filed **a motion on notice** praying the court for an order striking out the appeal for want of prosecution. Appellants have not denied being served with the said **notice of motion** as contended ... The above being the case it follows that the submission of counsel has no factual basis.

EXTRACT 5 (Ikko Kashandadi v. Ingila Sarkin Noma)

"On the whole, subject to what I have said with regard to the order fixing boundary between communities this appeal fails as it lacks

merit. The decision of the Court below allowing the appeal by the respondents before us is affirmed"

The foregoing clearly brings to the fore the question of what really the parties are contesting in this case....and as settled that an appellate Court as this court, as well as the appellate lower courts have to discern the issues in dispute....This age long principle is) as embedded in the decision in **Chukwma & Ors. (supra) Nkwo & Ors v. Uchendu & Anor (Supra)**. I must emphasis that this ought to be the attitude of the lower appellate courts to this matter. Both have in this regard floundered.

Extract 4 is contained in the *arguing the case move-structure* (see Emenike, 2021). It contains an intertextual reference that is oriented retrospectively to an existing text, in this case, 'motion on notice' contained in the record of court proceeding. The text is referred to in order to test and ascertain a claim made by the appellants. Through the intertextual reference, the court is able to evaluate the submission made and advance the view that the claim of appellants has no factual basis. In this case, the text referred to provides evidence for the conclusion reached by the court. It is also important to observe that the reference to specific page number, 1229 and date enhances the credibility of the information presented. This process helps to promote transparency in the court process as members of the public can easily understand the basis for reaching judicial decision

Extract 5 is taken from the *arguing the case move*. In the extract, the Supreme Court makes explicit reference to the judgment of the lower court. The essence of the reference is to evaluate the judgment to show how it conforms or deviates from existing legal process and judicial tradition. This could be understood from the comment that follows the judgement extract: "The foregoing clearly brings to the fore the question of what really the parties are contesting in this case..... as settled that an appellate (Court as this Court, as well as appellate lower courts has to discern the issues in dispute..... I must emphasis that this ought to be the attitude of the lower appellate Courts in this matter. Both have in this regard floundered."

The significance of the intertext in quotation marks shows that it is the original statement of the cited author. This tends to erase doubt and fear of manipulating other speakers' statements in reaching a decision. Therefore the explicit reference in text composition helps to promote credibility. The critical reasoning that follows serves to evaluate the judgments of lower courts and submission of parties against existing legal practice to justify their acceptance or rejection within the context of the court judgment. The position advanced in the incorporated texts is rejected when the court states thus: "both have in this case floundered". It could be noticed that the intertext plays an important role in the decision making. Reference to specific page numbers and sections of intertexts and the use of exact words of parties make information credible because

they have verifiable source. This, in turn, enhances the integrity of judgment texts. The explanation shows that the use of intertextual strategy in the context of judgment writing helps to promote rapport in judicial conversation. It is important to note that the concept of face which Spencer-Oatey (2004:14) explains as “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact” is at the core of politeness study. No doubt, the use of intertexts promotes transparency in the judgment texts, and thus helps to achieve credibility claim by the judgment writer and the judiciary at large. It is argued in this essay that the use of intertextual device is a deliberate one that aims to achieve rapport management.

The Use of Intertextuality to Index Professional Competence

The use of intertextual strategy in legal context also performs rapport management function in the sense that it serves to acknowledge the competence of expert members of the discourse community. In both legislations and court judgments, references are made to prior texts. This tends to highlight their importance in legal text production and consumption chain. It is important to note that the significance attached to a text in the knowledge chain shows the competence of the text producer. The referenced texts and their perceived significance in the discourse community speak of the competence of the producers of the intertexts. This practice also serves to immortalize these text producers as their creative thoughts are regularly called upon to solve societal problems. For instance, this explains the reoccurrence of such names as Chukwudifu Oputa, Kayode Eso, Gani Fawehinmi and many others in the Nigerian legal space. Also, the ability to effectively use intertextual device is not a common one as it constitutes a part of genre competence that defines expert knowledge in a discourse community. According to Bauman and Briggs (1990:17), competence “is the knowledge and ability to carry out decontextualization and recontextualisation of performed discourse successfully and appropriately.” The above opinion expressed by Bauman and Briggs aptly explains the process of intertextuality. For instance, in order to realise intertextuality, a text composer refers to other texts, either overtly or covertly to establish relationships that are relevant for the proper understanding of the information being presented. This is not a simple task as the text producer has to search for appropriate intertexts, choose a cueing device and understand the context of use. In the word of Sierra (2016:29), “the competence required to perform intertextuality can index various attributes of performative identity, such as intelligence, wit, accomplishment, talent, maturity, experience, etc.” This shows competence as the text producer is presented as someone who is knowledgeable in Nigerian legal system and able to perceive similarities in legal codes. Also in extract 1 above, reference is made

to the totality of laws that make up the Nigerian legal system in order to achieve a unity of legal regime. This shows a consciousness that is embedded in the legal discourse community that a new law impacts on existing ones, as it either derogates from or consolidates them. Therefore, the ability to use the intertextual device in the context helps to claim both quality and identity face for the text producer and ensure positive reception by discourse community members and the larger society. Intertextuality as a feature of legal texts represents shared knowledge that discourse community members regularly draw from.

4.4 The use of Intertextuality as Means of Showing Involvement

According to Tiersma, "Virtually any legal document is liable, at some point in its existence, to be picked apart by an opponent eager to exploit a loophole or ambiguity in hopes of wriggling out of an agreement or contesting a will." (n.p). This is a prevailing sentiment that tends to condition the process of text composition and interpretation in the legal discourse community. This is also similar to the sentiment expressed about the use of intertextuality in legal discourse (Udina *et al*, 2018). The use of intertextuality in the production and interpretation of every legal texts invokes a certain consciousness that is shared among legal practitioners and judges. This, to a very large extent, highlights a shared emotion and commitment [involvement] among legal practitioners and judges in text production (See Lakoff, 1990:40). According to Besnie (1994:280), " Involvement is generally viewed as the product of the form of language use. [...], it is created and maintained when speakers consistently employ a variety of linguistic 'strategies', defined broadly as "systemic way[s] of using language." The same author observes that "...in all social settings, some sort of psychological connection between interactors is a prerequisite for successful communication, the nature and extent of this necessary psychological connection differ greatly across groups, subgroups within societies" (Besnie ,1994:283). The use of intertextuality in legal texts as shown in the extracts studied, therefore, helps to emphasize the social identity of text producers, and thus deepens the sense of involvement among discourse community members. This, in turn, helps to achieve positive reception of texts, thereby enhancing rapport between the addresser and addressees.

5. Conclusion

The study sets out to investigate pragmatic functions of intertextuality in the context of appellate judgment writing using rapport management. The study shows that intertextual strategy performs rapport management functions in the sense that it serves as a performative shield, indexicality of professional competence in a discourse community, contribution to credibility claim and means of showing involvement in discourse community practices.

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***Single Pract, Multiple Pragmemes:
Representation of Individual-Social
Context in a Sample Request-Response
Adjacency***

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Abstract

This paper appraises a sample request-response adjacency in a conversation between two friends with particular focus on how the response pract represents the individual-social context of the interlocutors. It argues that unlike what has been indicated in literature regarding pragmemes as a general situational prototype; a sociocultural concept that usually has several realizations as practs and allopracts, a single pract can also call to mind multiple possible pragmemes in the situated context in which it could be appropriately uttered. Using Mey's (2001) pragmatic acts theory (PAT) and his theory of the pragmeme as action-theoretic pragmatics, this paper elucidates how a single response utterance can represent multiple situational prototypes and hence, construe diverse interpretations that are contextually relevant to the individual speakers' interactional goals and the "scenes" the interactants identify with as well as the affordances and limitations of the context that are cognitively plausible and cooperative for the interactants. The paper also argues that the interface between meaning construction and comprehension is not only based on the general social context but also on the dialectical interaction of the individual speaker and hearer's private contexts as well as features that are salient to their conversational goals which determine how they design their utterances for their interlocutors. The paper concludes that pragmemes of refusal, rejection, invitation, promise, warning among others have been instantiated in a single response pract and these findings seem to go beyond Searle's conceptualization of indirect speech acts as well as Mey's perspective on the theory of the pragmeme.

Keywords: pragmeme, pragmatic acts theory, social context, private context, request-response, adjacency pair, practs, allopracts

1. Introduction

Language as a representation of human experience and enactment of interpersonal relationships in achieving communication goals involves, to a large extent, interaction of rational participants in the act of ostension (speaker-oriented: communicating something that is meaningful to the recipient) and inference (hearer-oriented: interpreting the communicated intention). To achieve communication success, interactants use various member resources – what Mey (2001, p.222) calls “shared situational knowledge (SSK)” in the prior and present context of the interlocutors. The above claim may summarize the goal of pragmatics which studies “intended speaker meanings” (Yule, 2010).

The interface between recipient design and intention-recognition is indispensable for all conversational success and much scholarly works in pragmatics have been devoted to how speakers and hearers negotiate meaning and achieve their communication goals. For instance, the Gricean theory of implicature (1975) recognizes how speakers and hearers cooperate as rational beings in the communication of their intentions through observance/non-observance of the conversational maxims, the neo-Gricean reductionist (component) approach in reaction to the deficiencies and overlap of the maxims (Horn, 1984; Levinson, 2000), the non-maxim based relevance theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1986, 1995), and the Austinian (1962) and Searlean (1969) speech acts theory all of which also belong to the component approach (Nodoushan, 2017), are all geared towards the same purpose; how do speakers and hearers achieve communication and conversational success? It has been argued that pragmatics entails taking not just the cognitive-philosophical view of the Gricean, neo-Gricean and post-Gricean era, nor that of the speech acts theory (SAT) but also incorporating the social and cultural aspects of any linguistic phenomena in relation to their usage and forms of behaviour (Kecskes 2010, p.2889). It is in recognition of the shortfalls of above theories, particularly SAT, that Mey (2001) propounded the theory of the pragmeme or pragmatic acts theory (henceforth PAT) which is the theoretical framework of this paper. By “pragmeme” Mey means “a generalized pragmatic act – a general situational prototype, capable of being executed in a situation” (Mey, 2001, p.221). Mey (2001) flawed Austin’s and Searle’s SAT on the grounds that it lacks the theory of action. According to him, SAT sees utterances as performing actions, such actions are not “situated action” in given social contexts, rather an individual-centred actions (2001, p.214). To Mey, human activity is not the privilege of the individual per se, but that of the individual situated in a social context, which means that the individual is empowered as well as limited by the conditions and forces of their social life (Kecskes, 2010, p.2889). Mey’s (2001) action-theoretic pragmatics or PAT holds that “the explanatory movement in pragmatic theories should go from the outside in” (that is, from actual situational contexts into prior contexts encoded in the utterances used) (Kecskes, 2010, p.2894, citing Mey, 2010, p. 221). Kecskes (2010) has, however, argued that owing to the

dialectical nature of communication, which Mey also recognises, the exploratory movement should not just be from the outside in, but also from the inside out (that is, from both directions). To Kecskes, Mey seems to over-emphasize the role of actual social contexts and situations and overlooked, firstly, the role of the lexical items which encode the history of their use in the actual utterances, and secondly, that prior and private contexts of the interlocutors play important roles in invoking the present actual situational context. Kecskes schematic representation of what happens in communication is thus: *from the outside in (actual situational context ↔ prior context encoded in the utterance used) and from the inside out (prior context encoded in the utterance used ↔ actual situational context)*. By integrating Mey's and Kecskes ideas, this paper seems to align with both arguments since for the former, situations imbue utterances with certain affordances and limitations and for the latter, communication is a dialectical activity. More focus was, however, be on Mey's PAT since Kecskes arguments, in some way, still upheld the former's views.

To Mey, an alternative to speech acts is needed which he calls pragmatic acts – situated acts that limit as well as empower the individual in his/her social interaction, enabling them to perform not according to the individual whims and caprices, but in line with the limitations and affordances of that situated social context. Mey (2001) also opposed the existence of speech act verbs and other illocutionary force indicating devices as well as the illocutionary-perlocutionary dichotomy on the grounds that some utterances do not carry such, yet, they encode pragmatic acts which derive their force not from the words or denotative meanings of which they are comprised, but rather from the situation in which they are appropriately uttered. According to Mey (2001, p.218) “our acting is determined by what the scene can afford and by what we can afford on the scene”. Continuing, Mey (2001, p.219) posits that “the scene not only determines our acting but also our actions determine and reaffirm the existing scene”. Kecskes (2010, p.2891) affirms Mey's views in his analysis of “situation-bound utterances” (SBUs) but argues that it is however the wording of prior experience and expression of the speaker's intention that provides the prelude to the construction of meaning which is supplemented by situational context and extralinguistic factors.

2. Situating the Research Problem

Several studies and interventions to Mey's PAT are replete in literature. Tseng (2010) studies the pragmeme of “fishing for personal details” in email scams. The study claims that this pragmeme is contextually, conventionally and culturally attached to the situational context of emails and rarely in any other situation. Similarly, Kecskes (2010) investigates some situation-bound utterances (SBUs) like *how are you?*, *nice to have you with us*, *so long* and argues that their situational meanings differ from their

compositional structure by encoding the pragmemes of “greeting”, “welcoming a new employee” and “taking leave of someone” respectively. Vasilescu (2018) examines the pragmeme of “refusal” and how the practs-allopracts (including her coined term, “interpract”) may differ cross-culturally and may engender inter- and cross-cultural misunderstandings. Vasilescu distinguished between refusal and rejection – whereas one refuses a proposal, a request, an invitation, rejection may be more appropriate in ideas, opinions, initiatives, plans, advice and so on. Also, Becker (1999) analyses the pragmeme of refusal in the American culture which he captioned: “how to say ‘no’ without saying ‘no’”.

Other pragmemes that have been studied include: “greetings” (Constantinescu, 2018), “insults” in cross-cultural and intercultural misunderstandings (Allan, 2016), “alms begging” (Okpeadua, 2012), social practice of indirect reports (Capone, 2010), “referring as a pragmeme” (Mey, 2010). One interesting distinction between these works and the current study lies in the fact that while these studies go from the pragmeme as situational prototype to the possible practs that may be instantiated in different situations/contexts given cultural changes or situational variations, this study looks at a pract that carries with it the potential of encoding multiple pragmemes.

2.1 The Textual Data and Research Questions

The phone conversation which is the motivation for the present research is presented below. However, for ethical reasons, the names of people and places are contrived.

1. Ada: Hello, NG, how are you? Are you in Rumuni (pseudonym for the town)
2. Ngozi: Hi ADA, I’m okay. Yes, I’m in Rumuni today, but I’ll travel tomorrow morning.
3. Ada: Could you please book a one-night reservation in a good and affordable hotel in town. I need to come into town tomorrow evening to beat the Monday sit-at-home. My flight is at 1-00pm on Monday and I would like to be close to the airport so as not to miss it.
4. Ngozi: Uhhmm..., well, you see, I know many hotels close by, but I cannot guarantee their safety arrangements.
5. Ada: Just for one night. We might just find one that will suit us fine and also close to the airport.
6. Ngozi: Ummm. But, I live in Rumuni, my dear
7. Ada: Oh, my dear. Wow! What can I say? Many thanks. God bless you.

However, the adjacency pair that constituted the data for this study is in Utterances 3 and 6. The other turns may be regarded in sequence organization as expansion sequences: pre-expansion (1 & 2), insertion expansion (4 & 5) and post expansion/closing (7). But this is as far as our analysis of this conversation will go in terms of the tenets of conversation analysis. As mentioned earlier, our focus here is how this response in (6) could be interpreted so as to represent the correct intention(s) that NG wanted to communicate to ADA in line 6 for their interaction to achieve the desired communication goals. The response in (6) raises pertinent questions, some of them, which we hope to provide answers to in this paper, include: What possible pragmemes could be deduced from this simple response? What practs and allopracts are instantiated by these pragmemes? What aspects of the pragmeme schema are exploited by the interlocutors (the speaker and the hearer) to design and to infer the intentions of the speaker? How do the findings substantiate or extend knowledge in PAT and also complement the theory of representation of individual-social experience in language?

In the case of the study data, the context of the conversation used in the present paper was the insecurity in the Nigerian political scene, where incessant mindless killings, kidnapping, bandit attacks, terrorism, unknown gunmen and secessionist agitations have become increasingly persistent. In fact, the particular situation that engendered the conversation was the sit-at-home that has characterized every Monday in the Southeast. Initially declared by the proscribed Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) to mark the day their leader was arrested in Kenya and repatriated to Nigeria (he was arrested on Sunday, 27 June, 2021 and repatriated on Monday), some unknown hoodlums have continued to enforce this sit-at-home every Monday by causing mayhem, sometimes killing people who dared come out even after IPOB disclaimed the continued enforcement. This has resulted in people who intend to travel on Monday in the Southeast leaving by Sunday evening to beat that hindrance. If she had to leave her house on Sunday evening, it means that ADA would need a hotel reservation for the night in order to catch her one-o'clock flight on Monday. Before an attempt would be made to analyze this utterance, first Mey's concept of the pragmeme is explored subsequently.

3. Theoretical Framework

The Pragmeme

The theory of the pragmeme was initiated by Jacob Mey (2001) to account for language as situated action in context. Mey (2001, p. 222) described a pragmeme as "a generalized pragmatic act" while Kecskes (2010, p.2893) sees it as "a generalized

pragmatic act that is concretely realized by “practs” in situational use. See Mey (2001, p.222).

The pragmeme chart is structured as a two-part construct:

1. The ACTIVITY part (on the left column of the scheme) which centres on what the interactants are doing in using language; lists the various choices the language user has at his/her disposal in communicating. This part is considered as “a feature matrix” whose cells can be filled or empty as indicated by the “ \emptyset NULL” slot (Mey, 2001, p.222). According to Mey, “the language user may choose one or several of the available options; if all the cells are empty, the matrix goes to zero (\emptyset) representing the borderline case of silence (which is not the same as zero communication)”. Our paper identified two features that apply to it from this part: indirect speech acts and conversational acts
2. The TEXTUAL part (on the right column) symbolizes elements that are present in the textual chain, and involves both the co-text and context, represented as “Co(n)text”. Mey (2001, p.222) claims that though the listing is not comprehensive, most of the elements will be found to concurrently exist in any ordinary length of text. They include the following:

\emptyset INF – inference

\emptyset REF – (establishing) reference

\emptyset REL – relevance

\emptyset VCE – Voice

\emptyset SSK – shared situational (or dialogic) knowledge

\emptyset MPH – metaphor

\emptyset ‘M’ – metapragmatic joker (indexicality)

With the exception of “Voice” and “Metaphor”, the analysis in this study revealed that all the other features in the textual chain are applicable to the communication success of the interlocutors in the textual data of this study.

Following structural terms of phoneme-phone-allophones, morpheme-morphs-allomorphs, lexeme-lexis-allomorphs (Vasilescu, 2018, p.55), Mey’s pragmeme-pract-allopract meta-terms in PAT seem to be related in a kind of rankscale – a pragmeme is made of a number of practs in the same way as many allopracts may be instantiated from a pract. A pragmeme is thus a generalized pragmatic act labelled by a speech act

(Capone, 2005, 2010; Kurzon, 2016, p.265) which instantiates a pract in force. For instance, a pragmeme of INVITATION would require the speaker to instantiate practs/allopracts that attempt to gain the presence of the hearer at a particular place in accordance with certain social norm. The hearer will thus interpret this pragmeme by tacitly drawing from the implicit schema above in deciding on the action the speaker intends to perform (whether linguistically or extralinguistically) in the activity part; and from the textual part, deciding on the indexical of the situation that license inference, reference, relevance, voice, metaphor and metapragmatic signals that aid the decoding of encoded intentions.

Thus, when one has access to a pragmeme, one is not only exposed to language but also to a bit of culture (Allan, Capone & Kecskes, 2016, p.xvii). As the analysis would attempt to show, the pract in the response is uniquely attached to the context of the interaction where the speaker using indirect speech acts, invokes the situational factors and individual agency in the context of the utterance and coopts her interlocutor to infer her multiple meanings which could be analyzable as pragmemes.

Osunbade (2020) gives insights in an unpublished lecture of how pragmemes may be constructed and realized:

∅ Micro-pragmeme – realized by a pract consisting of a single utterance or minimal form of discourse connective counting as communicative act. Examples: *hei* (calling attention), *how are you* (greeting), *so long* (bidding farewell), and other situation-bound utterances in Kecskes (2010);

∅ Meso-pragmeme: - spans over various micro=pragmemes which count as a sequence. For instance: expansion of argumentative sequence (we are not terrorists; we are freedom fighters), contrasting sequence (strike action is beneficial in some ways but detrimental in others), counter-argumentative sequence (though they claim innocent, we know they may be so but we need evidences to prove their innocence);

∅ Macro-pragmeme – spans over some more or less delimited number of meso pragmemes counting as discourse genre or activity type. For instance, interpretations we get from reading a story, a novel etc. the text will have different pragmemes that convey the message of the author.

Meso-pragmeme construction and Macro-pragmeme above are conspicuously lacking in Austin and Searles's conceptualisations of speech acts. SAT may only have accounted for the first level of pragmeme construction, thus necessitating PAT to fill this obvious lacuna.

Pragmemes have two main functions: firstly, they convey the speakers' intention to have a certain action performed; secondly, they bear the mark of the situation in which they are uttered; they are therefore societal indexicals (Kurzon, 2016). It is in the light of this that Capone (2018, p.91) defines a pragmeme as "a situated speech act in which the rules of language and of society combine in determining meaning" or even more briefly, "speech act in context". With the conceptualization of the pragmeme, Mey (2001, p.223) argues that the illocutionary vs. perlocutionary force vanishes entirely. To him, "(T)here is only one force in any act of uttering, whether illocutionary or perlocutionary, and it is pragmatic: the force of the pragmeme"

Practs

Described as pragmatic access routes to the realization of a pragmeme, practs are individual contextual instantiation of pragmemes. They are the instantiated individual pragmatic acts ("ipras" or "practs") and they refer to a particular pragmeme as its realization. According to Mey (2001), for a pract to be effective, it must have the following variables, namely, "Setting up" which looks up to the "uptake and "coopting". They shall be discussed in turns subsequently.

Setting Up

"Setting up" in pragmatic acting, according to Mey (2001) presupposes that the context of the acting carries more weight than the act itself. Situational setting up is an integrated, constitutive and speaker-directed element of pragmatic act where the speaker creates a conversational context that the hearer can identify with. Consequently, there is heavy reliance on mutually-shared knowledge for the interpretation of the implicitly communicated message. In the data of this paper, NG relies on the mutually shared knowledge of their friendship, the security situation, the nearness of her place of abode to the airport and unguaranteed safety of the hotels in Rumuni to set up the scene of the pragmatic act in her response which ADA recognizes and identifies with, in spite of the fact that the actual words used seem to have scantily addressed NG's actual communicative intentions. Setting up, as indicated by Mey (2001), looks up to an "uptake in order to be "coopted". ADA's uptake in line 7 suggests that NG's setting up has achieved its desired communicative effect, that of convincing ADA to be coopted in her own suggestion of taking up her line of thought. According to Mey (2001), for a sequence to "count as" a pragmatic act, certain conditions have to be in place:

∅ The setting up (circumstance) has to be right.

∅ There need not be any explicit speech act (requesting, rejection, warning, etc); the conversational context determines the nature of the pragmatic act; in ABC contexts, when XYZ is said, the wording may count as an attempt to perform a pragmatic act (eg. bribing) and it will be understood as such.

∅ Without uptake, there cannot be a pragmatic act; however, the uptake can be cancelled by another subsequent act. For instance, in the data of this study, if after the uptake NG comes up with another pract – *I'll see what I can do* – the initial uptake is cancelled.

Coopting

Coopting serves as a product of setting up in pragmatic acts, a means of “seducing” (Mey, 2001, p. 210) the hearer to identify with the speaker’s views. A speaker performing a pragmatic act in most cases may decide not to make their intentions explicit to their interlocutors. They, thus, resort to implicit meanings which leave a lot unsaid, but then, they try to bring in the hearer to identify with their real intentions by using words that index situations in the context which s/he invites the hearer to infer. By responding with: *But, I live in Rumuni*, the respondent does not use words that express her real intentions, but she expects her hearer, as a rational and intelligent being, to recognize these intentions through the shared presuppositions and situational-shared knowledge of the context in addition to all of its affordances and limitations. She is therefore “setting up” the scene in which the context of the acting carries more weight than the spoken act itself and invites the hearer to make the relevant inferences.

Mey (2001, pp. 214-215) argues that, as action theory, pragmatic acts must be considered from two fundamental angles: from the angle of the individual agent, and from the angle of the act itself. He claims that it is these two that make pragmatic acts effective (p. 213). Two of these variables are considered in turn.

Agency

Any pract must be infused with agency for it to be effective in a particular context, otherwise it fails to be effective (Nodoushan, 2017). The individual agent in pragmatic acts is “not a free agent, with the prerogative to set goals and devise strategies or charting courses of action like a Platonic rider on her or his beast of burden” (Mey, 2001, p.214). S/he is rather empowered, as well as limited by the conditions of his/her life, which for the individual agent may include their class, gender, age, education, previous life history, culture and other such sociolinguistic variables. These variables have been identified by ethnomethodologists as “member resources” (MRs); resources

that people dispose of as members of the community, often also referred to as background knowledge. These resources bring into an interaction certain “constraints and affordances imposed on the individual in the form of necessary limitations on the degrees of freedom that he or she is allowed in the society” (Mey, 2001, p.214). When a pract is infused with agency, the agency makes the pract adaptable to the particular situation as an instance of a particular pragmeme, just as we pointed out earlier in Joshua’s use of the word: “nothing”. In the example, that is, NG’s pract, *But I live in Rumuni* could not have made any sense but for the context of her friendship with her interlocutor and the mutually-shared knowledge of the utterance history and other factors relevant to the private contexts and salience to their conversational goals.

The Act

This refers to the language used in performing the pragmatic act and points to the relationship between linguistic choices, situations of use and contexts of use. The act raises important questions from two perspectives:

∅ From the individual perspective, what language can I use to perform a specific act?

∅ From the context perspective, what language can be used to create the conditions for me to perform a pragmatic act?

Whereas the former perspective focuses on the adaptability of language as individual members rely on language to adapt to the ever-changing conditions surrounding them, and in so doing, generate meaning; the latter looks at traditional speech acts as contextual tools at our disposal to control our environment and adapt to it in various ways. Using our data in 6 as an exemplification, NG has used language and the expression: *But I live in Rumuni, my dear* to influence ADA’s line of thinking and to indirectly perform the act of subtle refusal to book the hotel and for ADA not to consider other hotels in town. Similarly, the context and language use from NG has created a condition for ADA to consider accepting NG’s subtle polite refusal to book a hotel. For according to Verschueren (1983: 276 in Mey, 2001, p.215), speech acts are functions from context to context. However, Mey notes (2001, p.215) that speech acts uttered in context are pragmatic acts. On the other hand, pragmatic acts need not be speech acts, not even indirect speech acts. It is pertinent at this juncture to examine Mey’s arguments on the latter position.

3.1 Pragmatic acts and indirect speech acts

In resolving the dilemma of indirect speech acts and pragmatic acts, Mey affirms that pragmatic acts cannot be equated to indirect speech acts because the focus of attention is not on the words uttered but on the things being done with the words. Mey (2001, p.215) gave an example with the difference in the indirect request:

Can you pass me the salt (compare with the direct request “pass the salt”)?

And the “hints” and “prompts” such as:

I’d like some salt.

Or

Isn’t this soup rather bland?

Mey argues that these indirect requests, hints and prompts may be efforts to have someone pass the salt but they do not count as “requests”, rather as pre-sequences to requests. Yet the desired effect of the salt being passed on is achieved. According to Mey (2001, p.219), the “so-called indirect speech acts derive their force not just from their lexico-semantic build-up, but from the *situation* in which they are appropriately uttered” (emphasis in the original). To Mey, therefore, there is no such thing, strictly speaking as speech acts or indirect speech acts, what is left are instantiated pragmatic acts (“ipras” or “practs”/ “allopracts”) associated with say, the request pragmeme (p.220).

Thus, whereas indirect speech acts, in line with Searle’s conceptualization, is determined by the structure of the language used for an utterance which has no direct relationship with the meaning the speaker intends for it, pragmatic acts are contextually-driven, with “underlying goal orientation among participants in a discourse which manifests itself in their interactional goals” (Mey, 2001, p.216). Mey classified indirect speech acts as allopracts because according to him, they are unpredictable as there is no way of determining *a priori* what an allopract could look like, or *a fortiori*, what it cannot look like, as any utterance can constitute a pract (and an allopracts) of say, incitement pragmeme (citing Kurzon (1998) provided the situation and circumstances are appropriate to allow such an interpretation.

Allopracts

As Mey (2001, p.221) claims, “no two practs will ever be identical (being realized in an actual situation, and every situation being different from every other), every pract is at the time an allopract, that is to say, a concrete and different realization of a particular instantiation of a particular pragmeme.” It may not be easy to differentiate between practs and allopracts based on the above claims. However, Vasilescu (2018, p.65) defines allopracts as “individual contextual choices made from a pre-defined set of options, which underlie practs”. She claims that whereas practs are transpersonal contextual choices, allopracts are personal contextual choices; practs are types,

allopracts are tokens in conjunction with temporary, content-form association as judged appropriate by a specific speaker at a specific time of interaction with a specific interlocutor, in accordance with their conversational history.

From the above discussions, it is possible to make these deductions about the pragmeme-pract-allopract schema.

Table 1: Illustration of the Pragmeme-Pract-Allopract Schema/Rankscale

S/N	Pragmatic Acts Schema	Explanation	Examples
1.	Pragmeme	Generalized speech act with situational affordability; a general situational prototype, capable of being executed in a situation	Greeting Insults Refusals Bribing etc
2.	Practs	What can be said in the situation; the instantiated individual pragmatic acts which refer to a particular pragmeme as its realization	For instance, the pragmeme of "Greeting" may be realized as <i>Hello, Hi, how are you? Good morning, hope you're good, how do you do?</i> and others.
3.	Allopracts	What is actually said; actual units of communication, different forms of expressing a pragmeme.	The examples above are allopracts of the pragmeme "greeting" but the choice of which will depend on variations determined by contextual factors: speaker, time and type of interaction.

Allopracts are therefore possible practs that the speaker chooses from regarding the same pragmeme determined by factors of the context. Allopracts variations may be:

- ∅ Speaker-centred: different speakers may voice the same pragmeme in different practs based on two considerations: firstly, individual subjective assessment of the communicative situation; and secondly, personal selection that reflect individual communicative competence.
- ∅ Time-centred: different moments of speech may trigger minor or major context change that influence speaker choices
- ∅ Interaction-centred: every speech event/encounter is unique. For instance, greeting in a lecturer-student encounter, may differ from one in personal encounter, inaugural address, traditional marriage exchanges, etc.

Allopracts are, therefore, reflections of how individual voices are heard on a community of practice at the very moment of speech. They are unique and temporary instantiations of practs.

4. Data Analysis

The pract, *But I live in Rumuni, my dear*, is not giving the hearer an information as in Austinian constative or locution, neither is it simply an indirect speech act where the structure of the proposition does not align with the content as Searle postulated. The utterance, which we will call a “mega pract”, is rather call to action, a situated pragmatic act that aligns with the affordances and limitations of the particular context of booking a hotel reservation for a friend in order for her to be close to the airport to catch an early morning flight in the context of prevailing insecurity. Unlike what obtains in literature of pragmemes being instantiated by practs, this mega-pract in study data is invariably loaded with multiple pragmemes which can be concretely realized through allopracts that remain unsaid. We present this scenario in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Pragmemes and Practs/Allopracts in the Mega-Pract *But I live in Rumuni*

S/No	Pragmeme Constructed	Instantiated (Implicit/Unsaid) Practs/Allopracts
1.	Refusal	No, I will not book the reservation. I refuse your request

2.	Rejection	Your idea does not sound right given the prevailing situation.
3.	Warning	Hotels in Rumuni are not safe. I cannot guarantee your safety.
4.	Inviting	Come to my house and pass the night. I invite you to my house.
5.	Promising	I will accommodate you for one night. I promise you a room
6.	Informing	I have a house in Rumuni that can accommodate you.
7.	Persuading	Change your mind about booking a reservation.
8.	Solidarity/Camaraderie	We are friends, remember. What are friends for?
9.	Admonition	You don't spend that money when you have me in Rumuni.
10	Coopting	Hope you agree?
11	Directing/declaration	My house is close to the airport. You need not worry.
12	Rebuke	I know Rumuni more than you.

From the above table, the pract *But I live in Rumuni*, which the recipient, ADA, regarded as the concrete realization of the pragmeme of subtle refusal primarily, carries with it other complex and multiple implicit pragmemes. It may be such complexities in the interpretation of a simple response that Mey (2001) claims are not accounted for in speech act theory. They cannot simply be written off as indirect speech acts because, as Searle would have it, the structure of the utterance differs from the functions it performs in context. The hearer, ADA, on hearing the pract, *But I live in Rumuni*, first of all gets the interpretation that NG is practicing "refusal" but in a polite way. NG is

“rejecting” the idea of booking a reservation for her friend because that idea is wrong based on the prevailing insecurity both in Rumuni and in the hotels in the town.

ADA also decodes the pragmeme of warning in that pract; to beware of such an idea, and also a subtle, implicit “invitation” to come to her house to pass the night instead. This invitation is accompanied by pragmemes of “promise” for free accommodation; “informing” ADA that she has a house in Rumuni; “persuading” her to change her mind from booking a reservation to putting up with her; expressing solidarity/camaraderie of their long-time friendship; “admonishing” her for even thinking of spending/wasting that money when she is available to help her; coopting her into her own line of thinking by declaration that her house is close to the airport. This is what Jacob Mey (2001) calls “setting up” strategy in pragmatic acts, a strategy meant to “seduce” and coopt the interactant into identifying with the speaker’s intentions.

In Table 3 below, we show how the hearer was able to decode these various pragmemes from this single response. We use Mey’s (2001, p.222) pragmeme schema to arrive at the above interpretation of the pract *But I live in Rumuni*

Table 3: Application of the Pragmeme Schema in the Interpretation of the Response, *But I Live in Rumuni*

S/No	Pragmeme Schema	Strategies evident	Application
1.	Activity Part	Indirect speech acts Conversational acts	<i>But I live in Rumuni</i> structure differs from the communicated intention. Marked use of language which licenses R-/I-/M-implicature (Horn, 1984; Levinson, 2000) Conversation of seven sequences with basic adjacency pair in Turns 3 and 6

Rumuni is leaving a lot unsaid and is inviting the hearer to work out the implicature. By making reference to her house in the town, she invites the hearer to make these deductions, through the invocation of situational-shared knowledge, that the utterance is relevant in conveying her intentions. She also appeals to the metapragmatic signals in the situation such as her place of abode in *Rumuni* to index an invitation to cancel her idea of booking a reservation but instead to stay in her house for the night in the face of prevailing insecurity.

4.1 Discussion

At least twelve (12) identified pragmemes are evident from the pract *But I live in Rumuni* and the present authors regard these as pragmemes. The allopracts realising these pragmemes are unsaid but can be retrieved from the individual and social contexts of the pract. These allopracts cannot be said to be generally recognizable by anybody who is not part of this conversation but are only recognized by the concerned interlocutors because of the affordances and limitations of their individual private contexts and conversational history. This upholds Kecskes (2010) view that the exploratory movement of analysis of any utterance should be both from the outside in (as argued by Mey, 2001) but also from the inside out; that is to say, from both directions. Attention should be given not just to the actual social context but also to the individual participants' private contexts, their egocentrism and their particular attention and salience in the achievement of conversational goals. This goes to prove that individual as well as social contexts play dialectical roles in meaning construction and in communication success.

From our analysis, the response pract is not a piece of information, or a constative utterance, in Austin's terms. It is a call to action; to compute the meaning based on actual situational context and prior individual contexts of the interlocutors in order to arrive at the multiple pragmemes that the utterance invokes. If NG had said, *come to my house and stay the night*, this pract would have an instance of the situational prototype pragmeme – INVITATION. However, her opting for *But I live in Rumuni* makes it an indirect speech act that falls on the activity part of the pragmeme schema and hence calls up for its appropriate interpretation most of the textual part of the pragmeme schema; inference, reference, shared situational knowledge, relevance, indexicality and marked use of language as metapragmatic jokers.

To interpret this pract, the interactants invoked both activity and the textual parts of the pragmeme schema; indirect speech act and conversational act as well as inference, reference, shared situational knowledge, relevance, metapragmatic indexicals respectively. Pragmemes realised by practs and allopracts reflect possible contexts that

uniquely license certain utterances, so utterances are not arbitrary but tied to particular situations. The data seem to disprove the fact that we can only go from pragmeme to practs that realise them; a pract can also call to mind multiple pragmemes. Thus, the utterance *But I live in Rumuni* is not just an indirect speech act but what we would call a mega-pract that requires the hearer to invoke the textual part of the pragmeme schema in order to infer the different situational prototypes – refusal, rejection, invitation and others as shown in our analysis.

In addition, we have argued in this paper that contrary to a pragmeme coming to life through being instantiated as practs and allopracts, a single pract, uttered in a particular pragmeme-inducing situation can index multiple pragmemes and as the study data illustrate, this single response pract has been used to execute at least twelve pragmemes, each of which is relevant to the situation in which that pract is instantiated confirming Mey's view on the force of the pragmeme. (2001,p.223). However, rather than moving from pragmeme being instantiated in several practs and allopracts, our findings show a reversal of this pattern; that of a single pract invoking multiple pragmemes. It is this reversal that makes our argument a unique contribution to the theory of the pragmeme.

5. Conclusion

Paper argued that PAT, as an action-theoretic reconceptualization of SAT, serves as a model of communication that better explains speech acts as situated actions in given contexts. Unlike the views expressed by Austin and Searle in the original conceptualizations of SAT as universal acts not tied to given contexts, PAT situates such acts in given contexts as pragmemes that are possible to be executed in particular social context.

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Wood-Off-Cuts as a Creative Resource: a Metaphorical Reflection on “The Ruler and the Ruled” Sculpture Project

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Abstract

“The Ruler and the Ruled” sculpture project engages the use of joinery in a process-oriented studio exploration. It explores wood-off-cuts using dovetail, flatlock, and dado joints among others as a method in an upcycling process to create visual imageries that metaphorically address the misinterpretations and consequences of Nigeria’s socio-political settings. Works selected for discussion include *Genesis of Disintegration*, *Entanglement*, and *Marriage of East and West*. Conceptually, these works address the plights of the downtrodden. Other African artists such as Sumegne, Dilomprizulike, Hazoume and Titos have created works that border around the same theme. However, the use of wood-offcuts effectively exploits upcycle in a creative interpretation distinct from tying, welding, and assemblage processes of joining, as practised respectively by the aforementioned artists. Nonetheless, this study attempts to validate how wood offcuts form part of the ongoing dialogue of the downtrodden. Focusing on joinery and its aesthetic effects, it metaphorically interprets the emerging forms while their formal features are conceptually analyzed using theories and models of visual social semiotics. Findings show that significant socio-political issues were raised through the range of works that address the plight of the downtrodden and the implications were also highlighted.

Keywords: Wood-offcuts, The Ruler and the Ruled, Sculpture project, Downtrodden, Creative Resources, multimodality, Semiotic resources.

1. Introduction

The use of seemingly waste materials to create an art form that adds aesthetic values to the environment and as well generates a means of livelihood for the artist that produces from such materials has become a focus in the twenty-first-century art practice (Akabuike, 2021a; Akabuike, 2021b; Ngwu, 2020; Ngwu, 2019; Obodo & Morgan, 2014). This has given rise to a lot of innovation in the field of creative art. These works sometimes metaphorically advocate the need to salvage the environment from degradation which would result in the improvement of health and quality of living among humans and the natural environment. Other times, they metaphorically advocate changes in harmful human activities that harbour unkind treatments of the downtrodden, emanating from political, economic, and social organizations.

Something that all artists have in common is their ability to draw from the materials around them, each in their unique way; to call for a reassessment of humanity's relationship as regards the political, economic, and social policies sometimes meted out to the downtrodden (Njami, 2005). The relationships between the rulers and the ruled in Africa are always strained by different forms of marginalization, agitations, and suppression which usually leave the ruled class complaining and rebelling against the ruling class. These forms of unhealthy relationships constitute the crux of this paper.

The use of wood offcuts to formulate sculpture through a fabrication procedure known as the joinery process falls within the category of art forms under this discussion. This paper is a sequel to previous articles in the series of the Ruler and the Ruled studio explorations Akabuike, (2021a, b), which explore in detail the practices of other African upcycling artists who transform their waste materials back into aesthetic objects that sometimes address human socio-political activities, especially as it relates to the downtrodden in society. It is against this background that "The Ruler and the Ruled" project, as a process-oriented studio exploration, (about which this paper reports) engages the use of joints, such as dovetail, flatlock, dado, rabbet, cross-lap, mortise and tenon, dowel, dowel in edge, mitre, halve, finger, and booth among other conventional and unconventional joinery processes in its interaction with wood. The project is also geared towards creating visual imageries that corroborate the efforts of other African artists and writers who metaphorically reflect on the ongoing socio-political issues and discuss events of the downtrodden within Nigeria, Africa and the world at large (Akabuike, 2020). This paper metaphorically analyses the formal features of the exploration results and discusses their conceptual references and meanings using the concept of multimodality, a qualitative and fine-grained analytical tool of meaning-making drawn from social semiotics theory.

2. Visual social semiotics

In visual communication, Micheal Halliday's *Language as Social Semiotic* in 1978 gave rise to other versions (Bezemer & Jewitt, 2015). It has been studied from such perspectives as content analysis (Bell 2001); cultural dimension (Stoian 2015); anthropological studies (Collier & Collier 1986); psychoanalysis (Diem-Ville 2001); film and television (Price 2015) and Social semiotics (Jewitt & Oyama 2001), (Stoian, 2016). This study, however, focused on the version proposed by Gunther Kress, Robert Hodge, Theo van Leeuwen, and others.

I discuss its connections with Pragmatics and other approaches, key concepts, analytical tools, and field applications to negotiate the nexus between a studio project and its socio-political implications. While *Visual Communication* conveys information and ideas visually. (Stoian, 2016), *Social semiotics* examines the production and dissemination of discourse across a variety of social and cultural contexts in which meaning is made by using a qualitative and fine-grained analytical tool of meaning-

making, such as "artefacts," "text," and "transcripts" (Bezemer & Jewitt, 2015). In this case, meaning is created through the "joinery as a sculpture process," and by drawing on social semiotics structures (that focus on meaning makers and meaning-making) while investigating wood media as the modes of communication to represent its understanding and shape power relations with the rulers and the ruled.

While Michael Halliday's theories, presented in *Language as Social Semiotic* (1994; 2004), metafunctions, Halliday & Matthiessen (2004), contend that each sign performs three simultaneous functions—expressing ideas about the world (the "ideational metafunction"), putting people in relation to one another (the "interpersonal metafunction"), and connecting with other signs to create coherent text (the "textual metafunction"), Robert Hodge, van Leeuwen and Gunther Kress's critique of Halliday's theory was not only based on Marx's book *Language as Ideology* (Kress & Hodge, 1979; Bezemer & Jewitt, 2015) but extended metafunction to visual social semiotic resources (1996; 2006) and renamed it as representational, interactive and compositional (Stoian, 2016). They took a similar attitude in *Social Semiotics* (1988), exploring any set of semiotic resources that people utilize in daily life, including language resources as well as resources for images and other forms (Bezemer & Jewitt, 2015; Stoian, 2016). They also consider that "the visual, like all semiotic modes, has to serve several communicational (and representational) requirements to function as a full system of communication" (2006, p. 41).

The perspective of the Social semiotics adopted for this paper involves the description of semiotic resources, image analysis, other visual means of communication and interpretation of images in a socio-political perspective partially in line with Jewitt & Oyama (2001). Thus, visual resources are viewed from a functionalist perspective; and like any other semiotic resource, they carry out multiple metafunctions at once to communicate meaning. It is the "ideational metafunction" and the 'other forms' that capture the interest of this study which is situated in the notion that "...Social semiotics cannot assume that texts produce exactly the meanings and effects that their authors hope for: it is precisely the struggles and their uncertain outcomes that must be studied at the level of social action, and their effects in the production of meaning" as suggested by Hodge & Kress, (1988) in this study of wood-off-cuts for meaning production.

Social Semiotics argued against some of the working hypotheses of classical linguistics and semiotics and in favour of a placed perspective on communication, similar to Pragmatics, the study of language in relation to the users of the language. Social semiotics aims to account for 'context', not based on "a naïve text-context dichotomy", but rather based on the assumption that "context has to be theorized and understood as

another set of text" (Hodge & Kress, 1988, p. 8). Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (1996) present a framework for the examination of images. The framework uses the system network as a heuristic framework for theorizing meaning as choice which is based on the broad semiotic characteristics of Halliday's social semiotic theory. In his book *The Language of Displayed Art* (1994), Michael O'Toole used Halliday's systemic functional grammar and the tools it provided to investigate the visual. Both approaches treat an image as a collection of resources for creating meaning.

In the 1990s, the topic of mode and multiple modes came to the forefront. The term "multimodality" became a keyword when the emphasis shifted from studying modes in isolation to focusing on how they interact (Bezemer & Jewitt, 2015). Kress & van Leeuwen (2001) describe the 'multimodal' perspective as follows.

"We aim to explore the common principle behind multimodal communication. We move away from the idea that the different modes in multimodal texts have strictly bounded and framed specialist tasks [...]. Instead, we move towards a view of multimodality in which common semiotic principles operate in and across different modes."
(Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 2).

Due to the multimodal nature of social semiotics, they are able to address modes of decision-making that are usually ignored by pragmatics, particularly in situations where people are not physically present and words are not used, as in this project (the ruler and the ruled). However, the two present unique interpretations, drawing on ideas from their various perspectives on meaning creation and multimodality, where the empirical domains of pragmatics and social semiotics overlap. These terms are the sign, semiotic resource, mode, affordance, orchestration and so on, in the context of social semiotics.

To conceptualize and justify how wood-off-cuts (the signifier), contribute to the discourse of addressing the plights of the downtrodden (signs), I (the sign maker) employed those words appearing in the field of social semiotics in the analysis of the project's exploratory outcomes (the ruler and the ruled which is the signified). The developing forms (modes) are metaphorically interpreted while their formal aspects are theoretically investigated using theoretical models of visual social semiotics, with a focus on joinery (affordance) and its aesthetic implications. Additionally, this effort to employ wood-off-cuts as a tool for a creative interpretation (material, social, cultural and modal affordance) is not unique to other methods highlighted in the Routledge quarterly *Social Semiotics* (established in 1990), which presents itself as "a journal for discourse and critique looking for high quality, politically engaged papers that use textual analysis, discourse analysis, political economy, ethnography or combinations

of these and or other methods, to say something concrete about the nature of life in our societies” (Bezemer & Jewitt, 2015, p. 2).

3. Insight into the origin of the Ruler and the Ruled

The ‘Ruler and the Ruled’ series originated from the ‘joinery as a sculpture process’ project at Nsukka Art School, Nigeria, in the late-1990s. The Joinery as a Sculpture Process (Akabuike, 2003) gave birth to several ideas, and forms which, though originating from a common artistic position delved into diverse directions like installations, wall panels, constructions and configurations of miscellaneous sculptural works that emerged with diverse techniques derived from both conventional and unconventional joints process (Akabuike, 2021 a). This paper, therefore, focuses on part of the body of works created from the project in wood using joints techniques as a studio process of glueing, fastening and bonding pieces of wood together to arrive at something wholesome referred to as the Ruler and the Ruled project (Akabuike, 2020).

4. Why “The Ruler and the Ruled”?

The 1967–1970 Nigerian civil war left its victims with many traumatic memories. It altered how both individuals and collective ethnic groupings inside the nation perceived leadership and followership. This phenomenon is not unique to Nigeria; the aftermath of war can be found in almost every African nation where there has previously been war. We witness, read about, and watch how corruption, the aftermath of war and its consequences steadily ruin Africa and Africans all around us. Starting with Kosovo, Bosnia, Burundi, Angola, the Congo Republic, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Burundi, and Angola, it then divided into various regions of the world such as Kuwait, Iraq, Iran, Israel, Palestine, India, Pakistan, China, Russia and Ukraine (Onuzulike, 2018; Greenlee, 2006). When the origin of these wars is investigated, they are not far from the effect of what this paper conceptualized as the ‘Rulers’ (the elected government officials in power, the governing bodies of a society, state or nations, and the colonizers) on the ‘Ruled’(the electorate, subjects, or those under the rulership of any constituted authority and the colonized). Also, the artist (sign maker) in this study metaphorically acts as the ruler, who transforms the wood-off-cuts (the ruled) into whatever shape or form he deems fit to make symbolical socio-political statements.

Hence, the effect of the rulers on the ruled and the quest to be liberated from the tyranny of the ruled have given rise to other societal abnormalities like terrorism, kidnapping, oil pipeline bombing and vandalization, assassination and thuggery. Other examples include African leaders using the youths as a prop to rig elections in order to sustain leadership positions and powers. Consequently, the masses fall victim to hunger, starvation, disease and death. Corruption, poor economic policies, looting of communal

treasure, nepotism and other forms of corruption emanating from leadership incompetence or selfishness.

As a result of the poor road network, many deaths of the ruled who ply these roads are reported throughout Africa, particularly in Nigeria. The ruled are not affected since they do not only travel by air but on their private jets. These developments gave rise to this project, the *Ruler and the Ruled*. I have read and observed how the natural riches of Africa have been connected to these tragic events, where these conflicts have drawn the interest of academics who have studied the "economics of civil war," also known as "greed and grievance in a civil war," and theorized as the "resource curse." I have sought to focus on these issues and their implications in my studio project under the theme of "The Ruler and the Ruled" the works engendered by the project include *Unity in Diversity*, *Forced Unity*, *Genesis of Disintegration*, and *Entanglement*, other includes *Re-Union*, *Though Hand may Join Hand*, *Marriage of East and West*, *The Developed and the Underdeveloped World*, and *Colony*. These and other works in the series draw upon a long list of metaphors, identified below, for their signification.

4.1 The "Ruler and the Ruled Idiom"

A detailed examination reveals that each technical decision made throughout the studio production has a clear connection to the factors that led to and affected the Ruler and the Ruled. In such works as *Unity in Diversity*, *Forced Unity*, *Though Hand May Join in Hand*, *Developed and the Underdeveloped world*, and *The Ruler and the Ruled* in which I have used disfigured and stylized human forms realized in woods, I make direct and indirect references to metaphors relating to the use of machinery in working processes of woodworks such as hammering, sawing, mortising, cutting, locking, drilling, punching, chiselling, roughing and smoothening.

In such works as *Derange*, *When two Eggs Meet*, and *Marriage of East and West*, one finds the composition of buried forms on a flat surface of smooth two-dimensional blocks of wood, and then one is drawn to ruminate over acts, and situations surrounding, mass burial, elimination, relocation, demarcation, division, separation, sorting, distancing, isolation, extermination, exclusion, marginalization, screening, besieging, amputation, hammering, crushing, maiming, slashing, hacking, disfiguring, perforating, shooting, terrorizing, sawing, handicapping, harassing, horrifying, emasculating, demobilizing, paralyzing, damaging, violating, afflicting, annihilating, assaulting, destroying, bombarding, bastardizing, battering, beating, flogging, slapping, kicking, bursting, wounding, beheading, blowing exploding, blistering, buffeting, breaking, bulldozing, butchering, splitting, squeezing...

In the works titled *The World is a Maze*, *Involvement*, *Unanimity of Trinity*, *Entanglement*, and *Re-Union* where I used "Halved Joint" to knit the pieces of wood together, I strive to raise questions relating to nailing, screwing, killing, shooting,

collision, raping, indicting, violating, dumping, arranging, detaching, scattering. When in *Genesis of Disintegration* and *Colony* where I used multiple joint technics, then I think about separation, partitioning, caging, capturing, monitoring, spying, demarcating, restricting, blockading, restraining, excluding, hindering, handcuffing, hijacking, clamping, arraigning, barring, cutting, building, and fitting.

Nonetheless, attention is also drawn to biding, gathering, bandaging, healing, rehabilitating and bonding. I have used a variety of everyday objects that provide strong analogies that are pertinent to the human conditions in Nigeria, Africa and elsewhere around the world. I have looked through the pores of woods and grains, the planned edge of the wood-off-cuts, the sharp and cutting edge of the chisels, the jagged teeth of the power tool cutting jig-saw blades, the rough and smooth surface of the rough and smooth sandpapers, the power spy drilled holes of the drilling machine, the burning furnace of the acetylene touch embellishment of pyrography, the scattered pieces of the jigsaw puzzle from wood-off-cuts and I have seen the Ruler and the Ruled everywhere. I elaborate on these thoughts further by closely examining some works on the Ruler and the Ruled phenomenon.

4.2 Conceptualization (Representational metafunction) of the Genesis of Disintegration

The Genesis of Disintegration (mode, signifier), (Figure.1) explores a depiction of a three-dimensional sculpture (mode) produced from the use of ‘*Multiple housing and Halved*’ joints (modal affordance) fastened with screw nails and reinforced with metals (semiotic resources) for strength and malleability in case of shock. I (sign maker, artist) attempt to depict the tower of Babel (vector, signified) which according to the Christian Holy Book Bible (Loftie, 1872), (Genesis 11:1-8;) was the origin of human dispersal (chains of semiosis), (signified). The work was structured in three participants (transformation, ensemble), the base (subordinate), the shaft (superordinate) and clusters (relay) of halved jointed wood-off-cuts configured in a semi-human form (transactional actor).

The base was fashioned from *multiple halved joints* placed horizontally on the floor plane and reinforced by drilling (vector, means) strips of $\frac{1}{4}$ rods (circumstances) into it to boost its strength and its malleability. Without this, the delicate halved joints usually split as a result of the wood grain formation. Halved joints appear smooth and well-fitted when viewed after fixing. However, this fitting is deceptive since it cannot carry a heavy load if a fastener is not used to anchor the two sides firmly together. Mounted on the base vertically are clusters of multiple housing/halved joints. These formed the sprouts which housed numerous multiple housing/halved joints to form

what looks like a giant *Ijele* masquerade (superordinate, the tower). This form was gradually built up with clusters of multiple housing/halved joints but always connecting using only one point of anchor. This enabled strength but also constitutes a big weakness at the anchoring point since this point carries a huge load without any reinforcement but the wooden fingers that formed the joints.

Apart from the cluster of halved joints fixed with screw nails, the piece is mounted free of any other fastener except the joints on which they hang. The third participant (relay) in the work is the individual-halved jointed wood-off-cuts (subordinate) assembled in clusters around the base. This set of individuals (mode) signifies people who seem confused or indecisive on what to do with the giant *Ijele* (tower) before them which of course visually looks like them in structure but far bigger.

4.3 Symbolic structure and analytical process

When viewed from afar, the work (mode) appears like a giant anthill, *Ijele* masquerade or a dilapidated castle. It has multiple units of flat wood-off-cuts of different shapes, textures and colours joined (orchestration) in such a way that they appear to unite giving the viewer (demand) a multi-choice of forms to choose from. While the base was structured with wood and metals that made it strong enough to house the giant form on top, the form itself, however, looks fragile.

This fragility, nonetheless, is make-believe, since the multiple housing/halved joints were also strung with strips of metal for strength and malleability. However, a strong weakness exists at the point where each cluster meets. The clustered jointed wood-off-cuts on the base, represent people of various human races and colours, coming together for a common developmental purpose with the phobia of possible breakdown, lack of trust and dispersal (symbolic process).

4.4 Narrative and conceptual discussion (structure, signs) and symbolic process

Despite every attempt to strengthen the forms by using strips of metals, screw nails, and advanced joinery techniques, to bind, bond, unit and fit the work together, there are still major flaws in the formation of its body which are the weaknesses at the anchoring points, where each cluster meets and connects. This is evidence of how difficult it has been to bring the people of various ethnic groups in Nigeria to bond irrespective of expounded efforts. The process of drilling holes, screwing nails and fastening joints brings to mind these efforts and how they are frustrated by foist men (some uniformed) who treat innocent people like an animal with impunity in Nigeria. The police instead, screw you of your money; the military drill you as if you are undergoing some military training, separate you from your family for no just cause and finally put handcuffs on you just because you refused to *roger* (bribe) them on the multiple Nigeria checkpoints.

Going deeper, one can also see how it is not surprising to the artist that human races can never acquire a socio-political, religious or economic unity as a result of that dispersal forced (foist) on them at Babel by God. The phenomena such as separation, partitioning, caging, capturing, monitoring, spying, demarcating, restricting, restructuring, blockading, restraining, excluding, hindering, handcuffing, hijacking, clamping, arranging, barring, cutting, and disintegration have come to stay with humanity.

4.5 Entanglement

The (ensemble) work Entanglement is made up of forty discrete rectangular pieces of wood off-cuts (minor elements) units (interactive metafunction), organised to provide a dynamic visual illusion yet fairly static (embedding, transformation) (mode). An attempt to visually study any (minor element) of each rectangular formation, leads the eyes to the next form (minor element) till it gets to the end. This is made possible by the use of *simple halve* and *finger* joints (vector) and the arrangement (orchestration) of each rectangular unit positioned uniquely at an angle different from any other unit (transformation, orchestration). These rectangles (minor elements) vary in size and form, though visually not easily identifiable. This was achieved through the juxtaposition of the forms entangled to pose an optical illusion (meaning maker and modes, transformation). However, the beginning arrangement and end transformation of the work (mode) look closely the same and are not as confusing or complicatedly arranged as the rest of the body. This is because the observer (demand) who started with either of the ends will end up with the same conclusion (sign) as he or she gets to the other end (chains of semiosis).

4.6 Narrative and conceptual structures of the interactive metafunction

The work evokes the same idioms to an observer (demand) as it did to the artist (sign maker) during the studio formation process (vector) and experience. It (the mode) engages with idioms (modal affordance) like relocation, demarcation, sorting, distancing, extermination, inclusion, exclusion, marginalization, screening, besieging, hammering, crushing, slashing, hacking, disfiguring, perforating, sawing, harassing, emasculating, demobilizing, paralyzing, damaging, violating, afflicting, annihilating, assaulting, destroying, bombarding, bastardizing, battering, bruising, wounding, beheading, blowing, exploding, blistering, breaking, bulldozing, butchering, splitting, and squeezing. These idioms (modal affordance) are also reflected in the formation process and the use of machines and manual assembling of the work (transduction).

4.7 Objective interactive conceptual interpretations of the metafunctions

The use of *Halved Joints* to knit *Entanglement* together is not accidental. I strive to raise the socio-political questions relating to nailing, screwing, cutting, shooting, collision, raping, dumping, arranging, pilling, and scattering. These are reflected in the visual illusion buried in the arrangement (transformation) of the forms and through the instrumentalist essence of formulating the halve joints using machines like the drilling machine, circular saw, jigsaw, jack plane and power nailing tools (semiotic resources). Each piece (minor element) is clamped with another through the arrainging, barring, cutting, shooting, building, and fitting made possible by various power tools (vector, semiotic resources).

Going deeper (modality), the complex interplay (transformation) arrangement of *Entanglement* could be attributed to the relationship that exists within one layer of cabbage or onion when peeled off from the ball. Each pulled layer (minor element) of cabbage or onion, reveals another layer (minor element) similar to but not quite the same as the previous layer as observed in the arrangement of *Entanglement*. This variable but a similar concept (transformation) found in the layers of vegetables and the arrangement of *Entanglement* metaphorically negotiates the artist's experience with humanity and governance. Each government (minor element) during campaigns promises to be different from the incumbent one. However, they end up being as corrupt as their predecessors.

Furthermore, people were created differently yet they all have basic features and attributes of humans (transformation). Then they are placed on one planet (transduction), earth, where they must meet, interact, mix, inter-marry and entangle (sign) with each other. Nonetheless, amidst these fundamental features and disposition as humans who are meant to socialize as one (orchestration), there are the tendencies toward idioms (vector) like swindling, cut-throat, maim, overthrow, outsmart, kill, shoot, relocate, demarcate, sort, distancing, exterminate, exclusion, screen, besiege, hammer, crush, slash, hack, disfigure, perforate, saw, harass, emasculate, demobilize, paralyze, damage, violate, afflict, annihilate, assault, destroy, bombard, bastardize, batter, bruising, wound, behead, blow, explode, blister, break, bulldoze, butcher, split, squeeze and kidnap (chains of semiosis).

4.8 Inter-semiotic relations and multimodal orchestration

These idioms reflect in man's everyday treatment of fellow man. In man's *entanglement* setting with each other arose socio-political questions relating to nailing, screwing, cutting, shooting, collision, raping, dumping, arranging, pilling, scattering, and marginalization. The interpretations of these idioms, however, differ in different climes, claims and social categories depending on who is interpreting it and the category in which he/she stands. However, at every point where men are placed under another for governance, there arise these idioms, most often than not, the ruled

(subordinate) constantly are being threatened by the inhumane attitude of the ruler (superordinate). This is further buttressed by the way I (sign maker) used various tools, materials and resources (semiotic resources) available to me as an artist (the ruler) to manipulate, subdue, reconfigure, recreate, and transform wood-off-cuts to any form I deem fit. Thus, the inspiration for this work was derived from a careful study of human encounters and adverse relationships that exist within the rulers (government, authorities) placed above the ruled (electorates, subordinates). This adverse relationship is most common in Africa and dreadful in Nigeria (Ojo, 2014; Fukuyama, 2014; Uraizee, 2011; DeLong, et. al, 2011; Akabuike, 2020).

Whereas the human character (transduction) is so dynamic that each human may physically appear to be the same (transformation) as every other human, there is always something unique that makes them different from one another on closer study and interaction. This uniqueness could either be positive or negative depending on the core values acquired while formulating life principles (Cavarnos, 1978). The Igbo concept of "*Mmadu ka eji aka*" literally meaning that "humans are greater because they have each other", could as well be put the other way; "*Mmadu ka a na aya*", which means that "men have become the bane of fellow men".

When one gets entangled with another human, more so politicians, one is bound to learn that each of them like the *Entanglement* has an unlimited layer of intriguing character and is like a cabbage/onion full of complexity. Studying them is like opening a new layer each time you encounter a new one and so is rulership in Nigeria. The symbolic essence of the work *Entanglement* (mode) draws from these intriguing characteristics (transduction/transformation) of humans in its ensemble, relaying the orchestration of transformation and transduction at the same time. They could never be the same, yet they look the same and are not the same. They are all the same "politicians" and have a lot in common, and at the same time, less in common no matter their size, height, complexion and age. This is the experience Nigerian politicians have given about themselves to the governed and *Entanglement* has metaphorically drawn on these to make meaning.

Entanglement (mode) also goes further to interpret (signified) the relationship that exists between most governments and their people in Nigeria's spheres. Usually, during the campaign the aspirant's leaders (ruler, superordinate), appear safe, inclusive, accommodating, compassionate, down-to-earth and friendly. However, they get out of control as soon as they get into power. They become beasts in sheep's clothing (Akabuike, 2020; Greenlee, 2006). This phenomenon has become glaring in Nigeria's system of government. It appears the leaders are engaged in cultic oaths (vector) as

pointed out by Ellis, (2017), an activity that probably leaves them incapacitated to solve the socio-economic problems they promised the masses before an election (Ellis, 2017; Ojo, 2014; Fukuyama, 2014; Uraizee, 2011; DeLong, et. el., 2011). Hence getting elected to tackle these challenges becomes a herculean task. It is speculated that they use diabolism to keep the masses under the illusion that they are running good government, whereas the reverse is the case. At this stage, the masses have become entangled such that getting out of the system might not be easy, so they conform by also devising possible means of survival which in turn worsen the system.

Entanglement as well contains 'narrative structures' of 'secondary participants', (circumstances) which are interpreted (signified) and conceptualized to reflect other spheres of life; like a situation where people easily get themselves involved in something but usually find it difficult to disentangle themselves from. The arrangement of *Entanglement* depicts a situation which seemingly appears smooth and safe but gradually got complicated and complex. This ensemble (mode) mirrors a murder scenario, destruction of lives and lies which most often are easy to commit, and most times difficult to cover up (Dudley, 1965). Hence, violence has been excessively inculcated into Nigeria's leadership (Ellis, 2017; Adebani, 2008). The intricacies in the formation and transformation structure of *Entanglement* point to the concept of deceit applied in an attempt to cover one lie with another just as it also applies to covering up more killings giving rise to more decadence in society (Econ Intelligence, 2021; Ojo, 2014; Fukuyama, 2014; Uraizee, 2011; Ellis, 2011). Politics in Nigeria is riddled with a lot of lies, destruction, corruption and mass murder as symbolically signified in the ensemble of *Entanglement*.

However, *Entanglement* advocates for a more critical reflection on the part of the masses before electing any leader. It is always safer for one to look before one leaps since the wrong move or a bad start could be detrimental to the overall system. In the Ruler and the Ruled series, therefore, I have worked with a selection of commonplace materials with potent metaphors relevant to the human condition in Nigeria, Africa and elsewhere around the world. I have looked through the cutting edge of the axe eyes and chisels, the bulging eyes of the mallet, the hammered back of the carved woods, the magnifying lenses of the hole saw, the pointed nipple of the nails and drill bits. I have also examined the shattered sieves of broken wood-shaven dust, the jagged teeth of the circular saw, the flaming anger of the acetytherlane lamp, and the savage rupture of the router machine as it rough handles a block of wood-off-cuts. Finally, I have piped through the spy holes of the rivet machine and the artistic manipulation of these machines on media and all I see everywhere is the ruler and the ruled, the ruler manhandling the ruled.

4.9 Marriage of East and West

The Marriage of the East and West, Representational metafunction

Figure 3 is a landscaped formatted two-dimensional work (mode) consisting of twelve panels (transformation) of a flat block of wood-off-cuts (semiotic resources). The centre panel (major element) is wider in size than the rest of the eleven panels (minor elements) and it (the centre panel) forms a bridge between the east and the west wings of the panels (ensemble of minor elements). The first six panels from the left to the right, constituting the west wing panels (superordinate) were joined with pieces of ebony wood-off-cuts (embedding, semiotic resources, vector); which tend to flow from one panel into another (orchestration), thus, creating a visual encoding of organic patterns on the surface of the panels as it flows (transitory spatial arrangements, embedding). On the bottom left side of the panels (the west wing), were other smaller pieces of assorted wood-off-cuts (semiotic resources). These assorted wood-off-cuts are more geometrically shaped than organically formed. Their visual encoding was carried on by narrative and conceptual structures methodically placed to depict the symbol of a sunset.

On the right side of the panel plane, appears a similar sun (depicted element) symbol meticulously placed to symbolize (signified) the rising sun. The five-piece panels constituting the right side that formed the east wing were linked or joined with the same organic forms as in the west wing to form the same visual encoding of narrative and conceptual structures. The middle panel (major element) which is wider than the rest of the panels (minor elements) has a marriage *nsibidi* structured (sign) symbol depicted in assorted wood-off-cuts (semiotic resources) reburied into it. This symbol was achieved using mortise and tenon joints made possible by cutting assorted pieces of wood-off-cuts (modal affordance) and burying (conceptual encoding) them within the middle panel to metaphorically represent the symbol of a broken marriage (signified) as interpreted (representation) by the “*nsibidi*” signs, and symbols.

Other materials (semiotic resources) such as copper wire, canes, and coins were meticulously fastened on the surface of the panels. These materials are tied, buried or attached to the panels to visually narrate a conceptual structure of unfolding action. A closer observation drives the observer (demand) to identify a tonal gradation and a juxtaposition of colours carefully rendered in natural wood colours (orchestration).

4.10 Objective interactive conceptual interpretations of the metafunctions

The inspiration for the work *Marriage of the East and West* was drawn from Nigeria’s socio-political and economic arena. The east wing as observed signifies the rising of

the sun, while the west denotes the setting. By implication, brighter colours ought to be emanating from the rising sun since light is at its brightest beam as it rises than when it sets. Metaphorically, however, the reverse seems to be the case as observed in the work. While the sun rises from the East panels as seen in the east wing of the panels, the east remains in darkness as the west absorbs all the light coming from it.

It is also observed that the symbol and colours used on the east wing (supposedly the rising of the sun) are dark colours while the ones used on the setting (west wing) are brighter colours this juxtaposition is an anomaly. It ought not to be so since the intensity of the sun is higher when it is rising than when it sets. However, this is what we have represented in the work. The colour misplacements metaphorically symbolize the saying "*Monkey dey work and Baboon dey chop*" literarily meaning that '*while the Monkey works, the Baboon enjoys the dividend of the work*' implying that while the sun rises from the East, it shines in the West.

This is also likened (signified) to gagging the mouth of the cow that trashes the corn. It leads us to the other materials buried or fastened within the work that formed part of the remaining symbols. Copper, tin, lead and coal symbolically represent the mineral resources which are derived from the eastern part of the country. But from the work's rendition, we see that the dividends of these minerals are being spent on the western side of the country and by so doing, lunches the material's derivation sources into the darkness while placing the west where the resources are spent in glory.

The model also presented a parallel insight into the relationship that exists between Europe as the colonial masters and Africa as the colonized. In a neo-colonization setting as observed by Akabuike, (2020), *the King that devours his people* and as also depicted in fig. 4 captured by an unknown artist, showing a graphic that illustrates how the dividends of a palm tree are enjoyed across the fence by the West (Europe), while the people at the base of the tree (East, Africa) remain in deprivation of what they work for. This is a typical syphoning mechanism by the West (Europe) to keep Africa in perpetual poverty. Furthermore, while the mineral resources like tin, copper, gold, coal and oils are gotten from the east (Africa), they are refined and brought back to Africa and Europeans who acquired them from us enjoy the proceeds.

Going further, the slogan '*one Nigeria*' becomes questionable because gold and other mineral resources derived from the Western part of the country remain exclusively in all ramifications for the west to enjoy while the ones derived from the Eastern part are perceived as the national cake meant to be enjoyed by all. The alleged oneness comes only in the colours of the skin (transformation) which is the same colour arrangement that runs through the wood structure and the element of the joint that stocked the wood-off-cuts together. The percentage of intermarriage among different ethnic groups in

Nigeria is very minimal which implies the oneness that the name Nigeria represent is fake. It is not yet attainable.

That is why now and then riot breaks out to claim the lives of many people who are not native inhabitants of the part of the country where the unrest happened. This disunity is fueled more by the marginalization of the Niger Delta, a region from which the greater percentage of the country's oil is derived. As a result, any attempt to fight for their right earns them the gallows. A typical example is the case of the late King Saro Wiwa who was brutally murdered for speaking about the marginalization of his people (Uraizee, 2011). The implication of these outcomes points to the fact that some people believe it is their birthright to be the ruling class (The Ruler) in the country while others were born to be ruled.

This disunity is worsened by the growing multiplicity of religions in Nigeria. In Christendom, the Catholics find it difficult to wed the Protestants yet we claim that we are one Nigeria. If a Catholic cannot wed a fellow Christian in another denomination, is it a Muslim that he can marry? The Boko Haram terrorists in the North whose activities are worse off, than the act of pipeline vandalism in the Niger Delta with their occasional kidnapping for ransom are not termed terrorists. But the IPOB members who peacefully agitate for good governance are called terrorists.

The artist, therefore, through the instrumentalist essence of the studio project 'the ruler and the ruled'(model) draws attention to these issues so that permanent solutions might be proffered. It advocates unity in Nigeria because if all Nigerians learn to accept one another as brothers and sisters and the right of every Nigerian is protected through the enforcement of unity and equity Nigeria will be a good place for all to live in peace and bliss.

5. Conclusion

The paper has described the concepts and metaphors implicated in the production of some of the works done in "The Ruler and the Ruled" series. The study utilized 'wood-offcuts' timbers as the basic material which metaphorically reflected the concept of "The Ruler and the Ruled". It opened up channels of creative dialogues and possibilities over the effect of the ruling class on the downtrodden (the ruled). The implications of wood offcut timbers as material for art have shown a strong functional significance in linking its physical quality to the effect of bad governance. The materiality of "wood-offcuts" allows for an oscillation between process and material whereby manipulating artistic tools to form metaphors of new visual imageries that speak to the plight of Nigerian citizens. These possibilities were utilized in works that seemed to combine

experience with objects and forms. These imageries are ways to connect material and technique to provide intersections where meanings have been drawn from the works. While this study may have generated controversies, it is every artiste's goal when they create to stir up controversy by creating work that both asks and responds to real-world issues. Additional research from the current study can still be carried out in several ways to improve the work that has already been done.

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Implicatures of Protest on Environmental Degradation of the Niger Delta in Nnimmo Bassey's Poetry

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Abstract

This paper examines implicatures of protest on environmental degradation of the Niger Delta in Nnimmo Bassey's poetry collection, *We Thought It Was Oil But It Was Blood*. Nnimmo Bassey's poetry has received scholarly attention from the point of view of literary and linguistic criticisms. However, there is paucity of pragmatic studies in poems from the collection. Significantly, H. P. Grice's principle of implicature has rarely been applied as an analytical tool to explore the themes of protest and ecological devastation of the Niger Delta region which are the foci of the entire poetry collection. Therefore, this study is an attempt to undertake a pragmatic analysis of selected poems from the collection using H. P. Grice's Cooperative Principle as a theoretical framework. The thrust of the study is to decipher the extent to which the poet adheres to the conversational maxims of quality, quantity, manner and relation in the projection of protest and the Niger Delta issues in the selected poems. Purposefully, poems which foreground environmental degradation, oil exploration and exploitation and protest which characterise Niger Delta poetry are selected to project how the poet presents, projects and protests the Niger Delta issues. Our findings reveal that the poet's violation and adherence to Grice's maxims of Quality, Quantity and Relation are pragmatic tools used to project the messages inherent in the poems.

Keywords: Nnimmo Bassey, Niger Delta poetry, oil exploration, protest, cooperative principle, implicature, environmental degradation

1. Introduction

The concept of implicature is key to pragmatics as it is one of the most important aspects of the discipline. Reiter and Placencia (2005) corroborate this fact when they assert that H.P Grice's cooperative principle and its related maxims of conversation is one of the most important contributions to the study of pragmatics. Implicature stands as a paradigmatic example of the innate characteristics and power of pragmatic explanation to linguistic phenomenon (Levinson, 1983). Basically, it concerns itself with how a hearer attains the level of expressed meaning from the level of implied meaning. During conversation, meaning making transcends the spoken words, utterance interpretation being a central issue in pragmatic researches (Osunbade, 2020,

p. 177; Ogungbemi, 2024). Interlocutors deduce much more from what has been spoken and communication requires people to cooperate (Mey, 2001, p. 71). In other words, implicature gives a clear account of how it is possible to mean more than what is actually said (Levinson, 1983.p. 97). In a bid to communicate or converse in a maximally efficient, rational way, the cooperative maxims stipulate that participants should speak sincerely, relevantly, clearly and provide sufficient information.

According to Reiter and Placencia,

Grice observed that conversation is usually coherent and continuous; thus, he assumed that there must be some kind of prior agreement between interactants concerning the principles of the exchange, an agreement that makes the participants recognize common aims and specific ways of achieving them (2005, p.146).

Cooperative principle holds that language is interpreted on the assumption that the user obeys four maxims: quantity, quality, relation and manner. These maxims each consists of sub-maxims that govern accepted conversational behavior. Conversational implicature is an indispensable part of the system of everyday communication. A speaker might communicate either by obeying the maxims or flouting them provided the hearer is able to decode the strategy which is employed (Kroeger, 2018, p. 142). In other words, the hearer is not expected to slavishly follow the principle; speaker and hearer only need to be aware that it exists.

According to Kroeger (2018), Grice describes different specific patterns of reasoning that generate conversational implicatures. The first case is that in which there exist an apparent violation but no maxim is really violated. The implicature triggered in this case becomes necessary that it turns out to be that there is no real violation. Another notable case is that an apparent violation of one maxim results to a conflict with another maxim. Third, Grice described instances of maxim flouting where deliberate and obvious violations are intended to be treated and recognized as such.

Kroger (2018) adds that sometimes, speakers utter tautological sentences or contradictions. In cases like these, the communicative value of the utterance comes basically from the pragmatic inferences triggered. The semantic content of the sentence contributes little or nothing, the semantic content may be uninformative. Metaphors, ironies and other figures of speech can be regarded as flouting the maxim of quality since the literal semantic content is false. However, Grice's cooperative principle has been criticized on the ground that it represents a philosopher's paradise and does not pay attention to the realities of life and conversation as these principles do not always apply in real life (Capone & Mey, 2016).

In this study, Nnimmo Bassey as a poet-activist, articulates his dissent against the agonizing oppression, marginalization and sufferings of the Niger Delta people due to the nefarious activities of the government and corporate oil companies who are out there to degrade the environment by oil exploration. Nnimmo Bassey's poems focus on environmental sensitization and project the untold pain brought about by the aftermath of oil exploration in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. He employs poetry as a tool to register his protest against the hazardous effect of oil exploration in his collection, *We thought it was oil but it was blood* and squall for the rescue of the environment.

Three poems – “We thought it was oil but it was blood”, “When the earth bleeds” and “The United Niger Delta Oil Co” – are purposively selected from the collection and subjected to a rigorous analysis using Grice's cooperative principle. This analytical tool helps to x-ray clearly how the conversational maxims are employed by the poet to register his protest, disappointment and anger against the perpetrators of these nefarious acts.

The poetry collection, *“We thought it was oil but it was blood”* bothers on the correlation between exploration, exploitation and devastation. It x-rays resistance poetry by portraying the struggles and protestations of the Niger Deltans, the adverse effects of oil exploration on the environment, history, agriculture, culture and economic life of the Niger Delta people in particular and Nigeria in general. This study investigates how Bassey employs poetry as a potent tool to protest the injustice meted out to his people. It examines how his violation or adherence to the conversational maxims helps him to register his protest.

2. Statement of the problem

The poetry of Nnimmo Bassey has received critical attention from the point of view of literary and linguistic criticisms. Some of such studies include Maledo and Uzezi (2021), Gomba (2016), Abba and Onyemachi (2020) and Igwedibia (2018). A reading of such studies showed that not much has been done in Nnimmo Bassey's poetry from the perspective of pragmatics. Most importantly, the poems have rarely been studied using Grice's cooperative principle as analytical framework. Also, the issue of oil exploration in the Niger Delta has not been given enough scholarly attention from the point of view of linguistics and pragmatics. Bassey recognizing the urgency in this employs poetry as a way to tackle the issue. And this is what this study is meant to investigate.

2.1 Aim and objectives

This study is aimed at examining the implicatures of protest on environmental degradation of the Niger Delta in Nnimmo Bassey's poetry. The specific objectives are to:

- i. investigate the extent to which the selected poems adhere to or violate the maxims of quality, quantity, manner and relation,
- ii. give a meaningful interpretation of the selected poems based on the implicature generated through the violation of the conversational maxims; and
- iii. show how the selected poems are able to protest against the issues discussed and how they affect the Niger Delta environment.

Literature Review

The poetry of Nnimmo Bassey has received a good number of critical attentions from the perspectives of linguistic and literary criticisms. From the linguistic point of view, Maledo and Uzezi (2021) is a stylistic study of Nimmo Bassey and Tanure Ojaide's poetry using the Hallidayan Transitivity System of the Experiential Metafunction. From the literary perspective, Gomba (2016) studies minority rights in the poetry of Ibawari Ikriko, Nnimmo Bassey and Ogaga Ifowodo. The study investigates how power is a determining factor in control and dispossession. It argues that the exercise of state might is a repression strategy which designs accumulation for the states and its privilege entities and concludes that dispossession, environmental degradation and underdevelopment are connected with repression which culminates in resistance and violence.

Also, Abba and Onyemachi (2020) is a study on eco-alienation in the Niger Delta Eco-poetics. The paper avers that the anthropocentric standing of man at the center of the universe which is the root cause of hyper-capitalist greed is the premise in the discussion of eco alienation in Ojaide's *Delta Blues* and *Home Songs* and Nnimmo Bassey's *We thought it was oil but it was blood*. It argues that the poetry collections project the feelings of disconnection between the Niger Delta people and the oil wealth in their community and concludes that rather than improving the condition of living, oil becomes a metaphor for death and that eco poetry is a very useful tool to interrogate the eco estrangement, not just in the present Niger Delta but also in the Eco-discourses globally.

Grice's principle of conversational implicature has also been applied to pragmatic works as well. Igwedibia (2018) is a study of selected poems of Audre Lorde using Grice's cooperative principle as analytical tools to investigate the extent to which the

selected poems adhere or violate Grice's maxims. The study concludes that the poems adhere to the maxims and violates them in the same frequency. Li (2017) is an endeavor on Grice's cooperative principle as a stylistic device to x-ray the ultimate meaning and the aesthetic effects in Bishop's *North Haven* and *Insomnia*. The paper adopts a pragma-stylistic approach to investigate the poems and it argues that the reader's understanding of the poem is enhanced by the level of the relation between Bishop's violation of cooperative principles and the generation of conversational implicature. It concludes by stating that a multidisciplinary path to the exploration of literary texts by linguistic principles should be encouraged. While noting the importance of the above studies, it appears that none of them has deployed Grice's maxims to the study of Nnimo Bassey's poetry.

3. Theoretical framework Implicature

Implicature as a pragmatic aspect of meaning was first identified by H.P Grice (1975). He describes the characteristic features of implicatures and proposes a systematic explanation for how they work. In his William James lecture series at Havard, partially collected and published in Grice (1979), he presents a panorama of his thoughts and laid out his analysis of implicatures which attracted great interest in and research about his topic. He labelled these ideas the tottering steps towards a systematic, philosophically inspired theory of language and this has come to be known as Gricean pragmatic theory. Sometimes, it is cited as the beginning of pragmatics as a separate field (Kroeger, 2018).

Grice identifies two types of implicature. These are conventional implicature and conversational implicature. They both convey additional level of meaning beyond the semantic meaning of the words and utterances. However, in the case of conventional implicature the same implicature is always conveyed, regardless of context, whereas in the case of conversational implicature, what is implied varies according to the context of utterance (Thomas, 1995, p. 57). Conventional implicatures are non-truth-conditional inferences that are simply attached by convention to particular lexical items or expressions. It is derived by the conventional meaning of words and utterances. This is not a very interesting concept in pragmatic study. Huang (2007) maintains that Grice's theory of implicature remains one of the cornerstones of contemporary thinking in linguistics pragmatics.

Grice argues that there exists an underlying principle that determines how language is used with maximum efficiency and effectively to achieve relational interaction in

communication. This he calls the cooperative principle. Grice formulated the cooperative principle and conversational maxims on the assumption that the effective exchange of information is the main purpose of conversation (Reiter & Placencia, 2005, p. 145). He focuses on the rationality and/or otherwise of conversational behavior rather than on any other feature of conversation. Grice believes that since conversation is usually coherent and continuous, there must be a kind of prior agreement between interactants which concern the principles of the interaction, an agreement which makes the participants perceive common aims and specific ways of achieving them. According to him, there exists an overriding principle of conversation which is “make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange” (Grice, 1975, p. 45). Participants are expected to observe this principle. He divided the cooperative principle into four maxims classified into nine categories. These are: Quality, Quantity, Relation and Manner. The cooperative principle and the maxims ensure that the right amount of information is provided and that the interaction is conducted in a truthful, relevant and perspicuous manner in an exchange of conversations. The cooperative principle of Grice and the maxims which form the bedrock of this study are provided below.

Quantity: Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purpose of the exchange).

Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

Quality: Do not say what you believe to be false.

Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

Relation: Be relevant.

Manner: Avoid obscurity of expression.

Avoid ambiguity.

Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).

Be orderly.

Each of the above constitutes a convention that is normally obeyed in conversation. Grice observes that there are occasions when people fail to observe the maxims. He then suggests five ways of failing to observe a maxim: Flouting a maxim, violating a maxim, infringing a maxim, opting out of a maxim and suspending a maxim. A speaker may fail to observe a maxim, not with any intention of deceiving or misleading, but because the speaker wishes to prompt the hearer to look for a meaning which is different from, or in addition to the expressed meaning. This additional meaning he

calls “conversational implicature” and he terms the process by which it is generated “flouting a maxim”. A flout occurs when a speaker blatantly fails to observe a maxim at the level of what is said, with the intention of generating an implicature (Thomas, 1995, p. 65). Therefore, this study is meant to show how the flouting, violation, infringing, opting out or suspending of any of Grice’s maxim becomes a form of protest in Nnimmo Bassey’s poetry.

3.1 Methodology

This study adopts textual analysis using Grice’s cooperative principle in the study of three of Bassey’s selected poems from the poetry collection *We thought it was oil but it was blood*. The poems are purposively selected based on their subject matter and their adaptability to the focus of the study. The aim is to show how the violation or otherwise of the Grice’s maxims helps the poet to register his protest, contributes to meaning making and enhance our understanding of the selected poems. The study employs a qualitative descriptive method and the analysis is done at the different levels of Grice’s maxims.

4. Data Analysis

The poetry collection, *We thought it was oil but it was blood*, Bassey displays environmental rights activism. The poems testify to the resilient will power even in the face of subjugation and oppression. As a well-grounded environmental activist, Nnimmo Bassey who assumes the responsibility of sanitizing the environment projects his activism in this collection of poetry. The oil motif resonates throughout the poems. The transnational oil firms ally with the Nigerian government by wielding military might against the Niger Delta people. Gas flaring, oil spillage, and the dangerous spreading of oil pipe line even in residential areas pose terrifying hazard to the people. Farm lands are rendered barren and aquatic lives are destroyed by oil spillage and exploration activities.

The poem is inundated with metaphors to portray the horrendous effects of the activities of oil exploration on the people. For instance,

Heart jumping into our mouths/floating on/emotion’s dry well...

represents the horrible experiences of the Niger Delta people. The contrast between the expectation of the people and the actual reality is glaring. “We thought it was oil but it was blood” reveals the disappointment faced by them. The “dance” which

accompanied the oil is replaced with “hearts jumping into our mouths/floating on emotion’s dry well”. Rather than dancing with joy in our hearts, they “leapt in fury” as things fall apart.

Maxim of Quality

The guiding principle of the maxim of quality is “make your contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs” (Levinson, 1983, p.101). In other words, do not say that which you believe is false. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence. Instances of metaphors, tautologies, and other figures of speech flout this maxim.

The chosen poems are inundated with the flouting of the maxims of quality. In *we thought it was oil but it was blood*, “heart jumping/ into our mouths” (lines 16-17) overtly and blatantly flouts the maxim of quality as hearts do not possess the capability to jump into mouths. Bassegy flouts this maxim in order to exploit it for communicative purpose. The inference drawn from this utterance is that the people were thrown into a state of severe panic and fear. The assumption that the above utterance is cooperative can be maintained by looking beyond the superficial or literal meaning that hearts jump into mouths.

Also, “Floating on /emotion’s dry well” (17-18) also violates this maxim. In the first instance, nothing floats on dry wells. Again, emotions do not own wells. The implicature generated here is that the activities of oil explorers have brought so much pains to the people that they cry and tears no longer flow from their eyes because their tears are exhausted. This is a device employed by the poet to reiterate the suppression experienced by the people. In the same vein, “Dried tear bags” (line 40) also flouts the maxim of quality. In the first case, tears do not have bags. Secondly, tears cannot be dry. This line is however cooperative as the poet uses it to show the magnitude of the brunt of oil exploration activities.

Furthermore, “Evil horrible gallows called oil rigs/Drilling our souls” (lines 46-47) is a metaphor used to describe the oil rigs, which instead of improving the lives of the people “drill” their souls and take life out of them. This line flouts the maxim of quality as it appears false on the surface level. The poet seems to be saying that which is false. The implicature generated is that the effect of oil exploration is very destructive to the lives of the people.

“...Burnt sky” (line 57) is also a blatant violation of the maxim of quality. Bassegy ostentatiously violates this maxim for communicative purposes. In the actual sense, sky cannot be burnt. However, the words are employed to describe the air pollution and environmental degradation caused by oil exploration activities. Hence at the non-

superficial level, this utterance cannot be said to be non - co-operative. "But the blood will speak" (line 65) is yet another violation of the maxim of quality. Blood do not and cannot speak, when these words are taken literally or at the surface level. This deployment of personification by the poet is a device to vehemently protest and display his activism. It is a threat or a warning to those who are involved in oil exploration activities. He informs them through this maxim violation that the blood of the innocent people who may have lost their lives or source of livelihood through oil spillage and its attendant environmental pollution will "speak". The implicature triggered here is that the oil explorers would be haunted and made to pay for their sins. Lines 27 – 28 adheres to Grice's maxim of Quality as the Ogonis and the Ijaws of the Niger Delta have suffered the brunt of oil exploration and exploitation:

First it was the Ogonis

Today it is Ijaws (lines 27-28)

Here, there is no apparent violation of any maxim.

In "When the earth bleeds", one cannot help but notice the conspicuous flouting of the conversational maxims which begins from the title of the poem. For instance, "bleeding rigs" (line 9) is an obvious and blatant flouting of the maxim of quality. Rigs do not have blood and cannot bleed. A cursory look at this line reveals that the utterer has said that which is false. However, the implicature generated is that the oil rigs are sources of pain and injury to the people in the Niger Delta regions. "This oil flows from the earth's sick bed" (Lines 10-11) is yet another flouting of the maxim of quality. Earth is not a human being with a sick bed. The violation of the maxim of quality is an instrument deployed by the poet to show the state of the earth which is no longer the same since it has been polluted by oil.

"But in Ogoniland we can't even breathe" flouts the maxim of quality. Man cannot survive without breathing as oxygen is a prerequisite for life. This hyperbole implicates the fact that the air and the atmosphere have been polluted due to gas flaring and other activities linked with oil exploration. In the same vein, "Let's bandage the earth" also violates the maxim of quality. It is not possible to bandage the entire earth. No bandage can hold the earth. This figure of speech has been deployed by the poet to encourage his people not to relax or lose hope, but to be optimistic, proactive and make good use of what is left of the land to their own benefit.

In the poem, *The United Niger Delta Oil co*, the maxim of quality is violated. "We will pump blood into the belly of the earth" flouts against this maxim as it is semantically anomalous. The earth has no belly which blood will be pumped into. Also, "the lament of the silent drums" (line 43) is an ostentatious flouting of the maxim of quality. This figure of speech appears contradictory as a drum cannot be silent and lament at the same time. The implicature generated is the untold lament and pains experienced by the people as a result of oil exploration activities. "Oil makes life stop" (line 49) is unarguably, literally false. The expression flouts against the maxim of quality by generalizing that oil puts an end to life. This statement must have been borne out of intense disappointment, pain and grief which has overwhelmed the poet, contrary to the expectation that oil would make "things move" in the Niger Delta region in particular and in Nigeria in general, nothing improves, rather, things get worse.

The title of the poem "The united Niger Delta Oil company incorporated" is a metaphor for corporate plunder as the united Niger Delta Oil Company incorporated "shared and divided the land and the sea/took the entire coasts of our country (lines 12 and 14).

Maxim of quantity

The basic principle of this maxim is: "make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purpose of the exchange in which you are engaged" (Levinson, 1983, p.101). This maxim requires that one makes one's contribution as informative as is required, without deliberately holding back any fact. It also requires that one does not make one's contribution more informative than needed.

The titled poem, "We thought it was oil but it was blood", blatantly flouts the maxim of quantity as the line is repeated twelve times in the poem, thereby giving too much information than is necessary or needed. Repeating the line twelve times makes the contribution more informative than is required. In "The United Niger Delta oil co" Bassey adheres to the maxim of quantity by stating boldly, without mincing words that the culprits of *The United Delta oil Co* are "Shell, Exxon-Mobil, Texaco, NNPC/Elf, Chevron Agip, Statoil and similar entities". The poet states clearly and unambiguously that these companies have jointly decided that "the most desired entity of all" is the "United Niger Delta Oil Company incorporated" (lines 9-12). Their excessive greed results in the plundering of the natural resources of the region. Bassey accuses the culprits and pillagers of looting as the Delta "they re-christened their property" (line 17). And in "When the earth bleeds", the maxim of quantity has been broken as well. The lines "the oil only flows when the earth bleeds" is repeated six times. This gives too much information thereby flouting the maxim of quantity. The poet employs repetition for the sake of emphasis, to make people realize the damage of oil exploration to the earth.

Maxim of manner

The title poem, "We thought it was oil but it was blood", presents several instances of non-adherence to the maxim of manner. By repeating "we thought it was oil but it was blood", twelve times in the poem, the poet flouts the maxim of manner. The lack of brevity of this information makes it flout the maxim. By this outright violation of this maxim, Bassey represents or registers his bewilderment, fury and disappointment. Also, "Emotion's dry well" (line 18) represents the tears and suffering of the people. This information is however, obscure as emotions do not possess wells that will run dry. However, at the non-superficial level, it portrays the pain these activities have caused the people, thereby triggering the implicature of suffering. In stanza 18 lines 8-20, "Slaughtered by the day/ we are the living/ long sacrificed" out rightly flouts the maxim of manner as this expression is not perspicuous and lacks clarity. A careful examination of this shows that one cannot be slaughtered by the day. However, it is a metaphor for expressing what the people experience in the hands of the oil explorers and exploiters who are oppressive, both to the people and to the environment. In the second poem, "When the earth bleeds", copious cases of flouting of the maxim of manner abound. "In conference hall / we talk in gardens of stones / The ocean waves bathe our eyes" (lines 22-23) violates the maxim of manner by offering information that lacks clarity. It is not clear how talking in the garden of stones contributes meaningfully to the subject matter. However, it generates an implicature that although these issues are discussed in conferences, they seem to fall on deaf ears.

The third poem, "The united Niger Delta oil co" also flouts the maxim of manner. "The savage land" violates the maxim of manner as the expression is repeated thrice in lines 18-20. Although this repetition inhibits brevity, it generates the implicature of emphasis to convey the seriousness of the subject matter. The expression need not be repeated thrice before the message can be passed across.

Maxim of Relevance

This maxim requires that one make one's contribution relevant. In "The United Niger Delta Oil Co", there are obvious cases of flouting of the maxim of relation. The thematic thrust of the poem, just like in the other selected poems, is protest on oil exploration. The analogy in the lines below appears to flout the maxim of relevance. The topic under discussion is oil exploration activities. The biblical analogy on how the serpent deceived Eve by making her eat the forbidden fruit and how Eve in turn lures the husband into eating from it is presented in the poem. The relation between oil

exploration and how Adam and Eve sinned against God remains a wonder as it seems to be out of point with respect to the subject matter of the poem.

The snake bedevilled the apples (line 21).

And Adam, adamant to the sneer in her eyes (line 22).

However, a more critical look reveals the inference that both scenarios have deception or deceit as the underlying message. Just like the serpent deceived Eve and Adam, the oil explorers deceived the people and took advantage of them.

Another glaring case of the flouting of the maxim of relation is “the tapster tapped the palms to death” (line 33). Once again, this is another case of veering off the topic of discussion. A palm wine “tapster” tapping palms to death has nothing to do with the aforementioned oil companies exploring oil from the Niger Delta region. Implicature is also generated here that nothing is left of the soil after oil exploration due the damages caused by the activities, just like the “tapster” has killed all the palm trees after tapping them. The digression to the butterflies in lines 49-58 is also an instance of sinning against the maxim of relevance. Butterfly pointing accusing antennas at the ponds of their spills has no relation with oil exploration and spillage. However, implicature is triggered that even nature is not happy with their wicked acts.

5. Findings and Conclusion

This study has established the fact that Grice’s conversational maxims can be successfully applied to poetry. Thus, it has made a major contribution to the application of pragmatics to the study and analysis of poetry. Since the chosen poems are inundated with metaphors, there is a higher frequency of the violation of the maxim of quality than any other maxim. Bassey’s flouting and violation of the conversational maxims and the consequent generation of implicature have aided a better understanding of the poems. This has also enabled Bassey to protest the present status quo in the Niger Delta region.

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