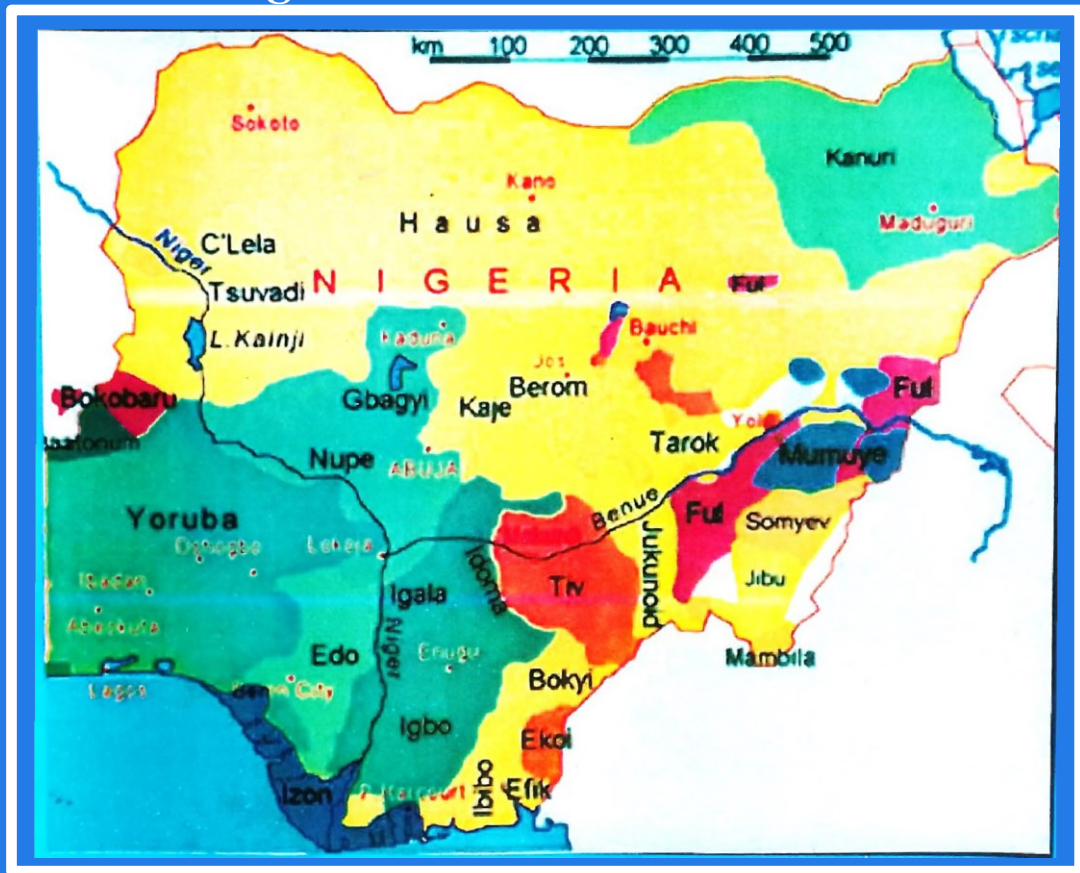


USEM

*Journal of Languages,
Linguistics and Literature*



USEM, Volume 13, 2025

• Printed by Pafbig Technologies-08142809795

USEM Journal of Languages, Linguistics and Literature

Volume 13, 2025

ISSN: 2141-4971

Department of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages
University of Uyo
Uyo
Akwa Ibom State
Nigeria

Designed and printed by:
Pafbig Technologies, Uyo
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Editorial

On behalf of the Editorial Board of **USEM Journal of Languages, Linguistics and Literature**, I am delighted to present the **Volume 13, 2025 Edition** of the Journal.

USEM Journal of Languages, Linguistics and Literature remains a reputable scholarly publication of the Department of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages, University of Uyo. This new volume continues our commitment to publishing high-quality research in language, linguistics, literary studies, discourse analysis, communication, and cultural scholarship. We are pleased that the journal continues to serve as an important platform for emerging and established scholars whose works contribute meaningfully to academic advancement and the preservation of knowledge.

The journal opens with an engaging historical-linguistic study by Thomas Thomas, titled *The Linguistic Evidence of Intergroup Relations Between Nsit People and Their Neighbours (1849–1959)*. The paper examines linguistic traces of contact, migration, and socio-cultural relations among the Nsit people and neighbouring communities.

The second article by Aniefon D. Akpan (Ph.D.), *Past and Continuous Tense Markings in Medefaidrin*, explores verbal tense structures in Medefaidrin and enriches scholarship on the grammar of this important language.

In the third article, Uddeshita Kanoujia and Vijay Kumar Roy present *Ecofeminist Critique of Anthropocentrism in Carolyn Merchant's The Death of Nature*, where they interrogate ecological domination and patriarchal structures through an ecofeminist lens.

The fourth paper, *Cognitive Interpretations of Eyi 'Face' in Idoma* by Oyidu Lucy Ikwu, investigates semantic extensions and conceptual meanings associated with the lexical item *eyi* in Idoma language usage.

The fifth article, *Assessment of Social Media Usage by Corporate Organisations in Abuja, Nigeria for Event Planning and Promotion*, examines the growing relevance of digital platforms in organisational communication, branding, and event management.

The sixth contribution by Wakkai Hosanna Hussaini and Dafaan Wulashik Lucius, titled *Use of English Ambiguity in Political Discourse: A Study of Politics Today on Channels Television*, analyses how ambiguity functions strategically in political communication and media discourse.

The seventh paper, *Language Documentation: A Necessity in Linguistic Studies* by Golden R. Ekpo and Wale J. Ogunyale, emphasizes the urgent need to document endangered and lesser-described languages for future generations and sustained linguistic inquiry.

In the eighth article, Aniefon D. Akpan (Ph.D.) returns with *Nominal Plural Marking in Medefaidrin*, a study that examines nominal morphology and pluralisation processes within the language.

The ninth paper, *Indigenous Languages and Political Communication in Nigeria: Akwa Ibom as*

Case Study by Peter Esuh and Thomas Thomas, highlights the strategic value of indigenous languages in political mobilisation, participation, and democratic engagement.

The tenth contribution by Vanessa Chivir Cdzer, Msooter Adzer, and Godwin Edet Ante further enriches this edition with interdisciplinary scholarship and fresh academic perspectives.

The eleventh article, *Pragma-Semantic Analysis of Epigraphs in Yorùbá Context* by Awoniyi Ogundeji, offers a compelling exploration of meaning, context, and cultural symbolism in Yorùbá epigraphic expressions.

We sincerely appreciate all contributors for entrusting USEM with their scholarly works. We also acknowledge the dedication of reviewers, editors, advisory board members, and the university community whose support has sustained the growth of this journal.

It is our hope that the studies published in this edition will inspire further research, scholarly dialogue, and intellectual development across disciplines.

Dr. Willie U. Willie
Editor-in-Chief

Notes...

The Linguistic Evidence of Intergroup Relations Between Nsit People and Their Neighbours (1849 – 1959)

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Abstract

Evidence of intergroup relations, especially in the precolonial period, between Nsit and her neighbours has to be reconstructed from lexemes of cultural borrowings. However, whatever criteria have been used to define intergroup relationships elsewhere, this work does not claim ignorance to that, but attempts linguistic methodology to complement them in order to introduce another angle to the field without prejudice to other methodologies. The paper illustrates what language data have to offer in the reconstruction of the history of a people. The methodology adopted here is simple. Cognates shared between Nsit and other speakers of Ibibio language are examined and interpreted from word lists covering a wide swathe as evidence of intergroup relationship among various Ibibio groups. The aim is to show that the Nsit people of antiquity and of contemporary times cherished such relationships as encoded by genetic affiliation or loanwords due to long periods of contact and shared proximity and cultural history. The interplay between linguistic borrowings and cultural contacts are factors that are used to advance this paper; hence, this paper adopts Ethnography of Communication methodology. Through this methodology, permutations and/or calculations of the lexicostatistical model were carried out, and items that provide hints on intergroup relations were analyzed using cognates shared among various Ibibio groups to determine the direction of borrowing between Nsit and her respective neighbours. It is therefore assumed that there is an overlap between genetically related dialects and clan or group formations in Ibibioland, even though some of the so-called dialects are not dialects in the real sense of the word, but mere inflections.

Introduction

An examination of the position of Ibibio in various genetic classification proposals in the light of available data will be the starting point in the exploration for linguistic evidence of intergroup relations between Nsit people and her neighbours. This is germane in the light of the fact that linguistic data provide useful insight into the history of a people, particularly regarding events and movements.¹ Atanda posits that “language should be regarded as the most important determinant

¹Imelda Icheji Lawrence Udoh, *Nigerian Indigenous Languages as Bricks for Building a National Identity: 81st Inaugural Lecture*, University of Uyo, 24th June, 2021, P. 23. See also Selbut R. Longtau, “An Exploration for Linguistic Evidence of Intergroup Relations between Speakers of Tarok and other East Benue-Congo Languages in Prehistory” (Jos: Development Alternatives, Research and Training (DART), 2006) P.1.

factor in considering a group as a group.”² According to Alagoa, “language is the most obvious indicator of kinship among the members of the various units of a ‘tribe.’ It is following the indication of language that the more subtle cultural relationship may be noticed.”³ The Nsit people and their neighbours belong to Ibibio ethnic nationality. They speak a language called Ibibio; thus, Ibibio is both the people and their language.⁴

The Ibibio genetically belongs to the Lower Cross group of Benue-Congo sub-family which in turn belongs to the Niger-Congo family, one of the largest families of languages in Africa.⁵ Under this genetic classification, Ibibio language belongs to the Lower Cross group – a group of closely related dialects to which Efik and Annang, with which Nsit and her other neighbours form a cluster, also belong.⁶ Essien refers to this cluster of dialects as *Ibibiod*.⁷ The study of the relationships between these (Ibibio cluster of dialects), as Diagne opines, can provide historians with ideas about the relationships between peoples.⁸ He goes further to assert that “classifying languages is one way of beginning to study relationships between peoples.”⁹

Nsit and her neighbours speak Ibibio language, but through different but intelligible dialects, and inflections. However, researches have shown that most of these groups speaking the dialects of Ibibio had no separate customs in the period under study, but had somewhat different inflections as a result of social and environmental circumstances.¹⁰

Curtin asserts that when groups of people speak related languages, we can assume that sometime in the past their ancestors spoke the same language and lived in the same part of the world.¹¹ This also confirms Uya’s postulation that “behind a linguistic relationship, there is always a generic or aerial relationship.”¹² According to him, “much of the works dealing with the migrations of African peoples have relied rather heavily on historical linguistics.”¹³ Thus, that Nsit, Iman, Ikono, Offot, Ibesikpo, Ibiono, Etoi, Itak, Uruan, Eket, Oron, Annang, Ibeno, Obollo, Okobo, Efik, and so on, in the period in view, used to speak the same language, though through different dialects and/or inflections, is a clear pointer to their common ancestry.

Linguistic evidence, especially the kind deriving from the work of glottochronologists, have taught historians and professionals of other disciplines a new model of how contacts between groups came

²J.A. Atanda, “The Historian and the Problem of Origins of Peoples in Nigerian Society” (Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, Volume 10, Number 3, December 1980), p. 76.

³E.J. Alagoa, “Ijo Origins” (Paper presented at the workshop on Traditions of Origin, Department of History, University of Ibadan, 1978) p. 3

⁴Okon Essien, *A Grammar of the Ibibio Language* (Ibadan: University Press PLC, 2008)

⁵*Ibid*, p. ix

⁶*Ibid*, p. ix

⁷*Ibid*, p. ix

⁸P.Diagne, “History and Linguistics, and Theories on the ‘races’ and History of Africa” in J.Ki-Zeribo (ed) *General History of Africa* (Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books (Nigeria) Ltd, 1990), p.89

⁹*Ibid*, p. 89

¹⁰Okokon Akpan, 60+, Senior Lecturer, Department of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages, University of Uyo, Uyo. 22 March, 2021

¹¹Philip Curtins, *Precolonial African History* (The American Historical Association, 1974) p. 15

¹²Okon Edet Uya, *African History: Some Problems in Methodology and Perspectives* (Calabar: CATS Publishers, 2009) p. 50

¹³*Ibid*, p. 50

to be made. This new model is hinged on lexicostatistics.¹⁴ Evidence of intergroup relations, especially in the period in view, between Nsit and her neighbours had to be reconstructed from lexemes of cultural borrowings. However, whatever criteria have been used to define intergroup relationships elsewhere, this work does not claim ignorance to that, but applies linguistic methodology to complement them in order to introduce another perspective to the field without prejudice to other methodologies. The paper illustrates what language data have to offer in the reconstruction of a people's history.

The methodology adopted here is simple: Cognates shared between Nsit people and other speakers of Ibibio language are examined and interpreted from word lists covering a wide swathe as evidence of intergroup relationship among various Ibibio groups. The aim is to show that the Nsit people of antiquity and of contemporary times cherished such relationships as encoded by genetic affiliation or loanwords due to long periods of contact and shared proximity and cultural history. (The evidences of cognates from the examination of wordlists are presented in a table below). The interplay between linguistic borrowings and cultural contacts are factors that are used to advance this thesis. Permutations and/or calculations of the lexicostatistical model were carried out, and items that provide hints on intergroup relations were analyzed using cognates shared among various Ibibio groups to determine the direction of borrowing between Nsit and her respective neighbours. It is therefore assumed that there is an overlap between genetically related dialects and clan or group formations in Ibibioland, even though some of the so-called dialects are not dialects in the real sense of the word, but mere inflections.

Who are the Nsit People?

Nsit is one of the clans of Ibibio ethnic nationality in present day Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. Other clans are Annang, Eket, Oron, Okofo, Iman, Offot, Ikonu, Oku, Itam, Ibiou, Efik, Itak, Itu Mbon Uso, Iwerre, Ibesikpo, Uruan, Etoi, Ikpanya, Eniong, Ibeno, Ito, Ukwa, Efut, Okoyong, Oku Iboku, Ika, Asutan, Ikpa Ibom and Iko. Nsit is spread into three and a half local government areas, viz, Nsit Ibom, Nsit Ubium and Nsit Atai. A part of Eket Local Government Area known as Okoon, with about eighteen (18) villages is Nsit. It was annexed to Eket by the colonial administrators to form part of Eket Division for administrative convenience (Akpan, 2016). Other local government areas are in Akwa Ibom State: Abak, Eastern Obolo, Essien Udim, Esit Eket, Etim Ekpo, Etinan, Ibesikpo/Asutan, Ikot Ekpene, Ika, Ini, Ikono, ikot Abasi, Ibiono Ibom, Itu, Ibeno, Mbo, Mkpato Enin, Onna, Obot Akara, Oruk Anam, Uruefong/Oruko, Okobo, Oron, Ukanafun, Udung Uko, Uruan and Uyo.

Nsit occupies the heart of Ibibio land. It lies between latitude 4°41 and 4°51 North, and between longitudes 7°56 and 8°04 East. Nsit falls within the tropical zone with a dominant vegetation of green foliage of trees, shrubs and oil palm trees belt which holds the highest density of cash crops. The climate in Nsit is typically equatorial, with high temperatures of over 80°F and a heavy rainfall of 3750mm (150 inches).¹⁵

¹⁴Adiele Afigbo, *The Igbo and Their Neighbours: Intergroup Relations in Southeastern Nigeria to 1953* (Ibadan: University Press Limited, 1987), P.31

¹⁵ E. U. Okoko, *Ubium History, Culture and customs* (Lagos: Paico Press and Books Ltd., 1988), p. 2

In the colonial period, Nsit was divided into two parts for administrative convenience – Western Nsit and Eastern Nsit. The Western part was later split into two local government areas: Nsit Ibom and Nsit Ubium in 1991, during the administration of General Ibrahim Babangida. The Eastern Nsit which was ceded from Old Etinan division to form a part of Uyo division was again carved out of Uyo Local Government Area in 1994 by General Sani Abacha to form Ekpe Atai Local Government Area. However, there are some Nsit villages and families in other parts of Ibibio, such as Nsit Ikpe in Ikono, Ikot Abasi I and Ndon Utim in Etinan, etc.

During the colonial period, seven District Courts were built in Nsit, it was an attempt by the colonial administrators to create “clans” out of an existing clan. Although in doing so, they did not study and or observe the differences that existed within the Nsit Clan, ranging from traditions of origin and migration, customs and tradition, totems and deities of different groups or sub-clans. The creation of those districts was faulty because different villages of diverse culture, tradition and totems were fused/forced together for administrative convenience by the colonial administrators. These districts were: Asang, Mbiaso, Ndiya, Ibiakpan – Obotim, Itreto, Odot and Okoṣon (Obio-Offiong, 1958, Antia, 2007). But in reality, Nsit clan is peopled by Afaha, Oboyo, Nung Oku, Okoṣon, Ibiaikot, Ibedu and Ibiakpan.

Nsit people and Her Neighbours: A Glottochronological View

Nsit people and her neighbours speak Ibibio language, though through different but mutually intelligible dialects. The language and its cluster of dialects belong to Benue-Congo – a sub of Niger-Congo phylum – which Meredith says began in the fourth millennium BCE, and spread from the Senegal River in the West to Cameroon in the East.¹⁶ However, some of these dialectal groupings, because of politics and parochial considerations between 1849 and 1959, claimed that they were ethnically not Ibibio.¹⁷ The divisive stance against their common root is also promoted by some scholars such as Uya and Udoh in their separate works. For example, Uya, in his bid to establish a separate identity for his Oron group insists that “in the precolonial period, an Oron man knew more about far away Biakpan than he knew about the Nsit people with whom he lived in great geographical proximity.”¹⁸ Also, Udoh opines that “there are nineteen languages in Akwa Ibom State.”¹⁹ These assertions are not only vague, but also grossly misleading,²⁰ and like Johnson postulates, “there are instances where political boundaries or topographic features have been pointed out as linguistic boundaries.”²¹

Linguistic evidences show that Nsit people and their neighbours in the period under consideration

¹⁶Martin Meredith, *The Fortunes of Africa: A 5,000 – Year History of Wealth, Greed and Endeavour* (UK: Simon and Schuster, 2014) p.19

¹⁷Essien, *A Grammar of the Ibibio*, P. ix

¹⁸Okon Edet Uya, “Historical Trends in the Cultural Developments of Nigeria, with Particular Reference to the Cross River State” in S.O.Unoh (ed) *Cultural Development and Nation Building: The Nigerian Scene as perceived from the Cross River State* (A Publication of the Academic Proceedings of the First Cultural Week of the University of Cross River State, Uyo) (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd., 1986), p.28.

¹⁹Udoh, *Nigerian Indigenous Languages*, P.40

²⁰Manfred Ekpe, “A Bird’s Eye View of the Origin, Migration and Disposal of the Peoples of the Former Eket Division of the Defunct Calabar Province” (An Unpublished Manuscript).

²¹Federick Johnson, “The Linguistic Map of Mexico and Central America”, in Clarence L. Hem, et al (eds) *The Maya and their Neighbours: Essays on Middle American Anthropology and Archaeology* (New York: Dove Publications, Inc. 1977) p. 92.

used Ibibio language in their communication and relations, not because of centuries of interactions among themselves, but because they originated from the same ancestry, and actually coexisted in a common locale before their dispersals. Thus, if centuries of interactions had influenced the language spoken by causing diverse inflections, such inflections could be said to have been exerted on the Ibibio groups inhabiting the borders as a result of their contacts over the past centuries with the Usakedet, Igbo and Ijaw respectively. According to Obio-Offiong,

The cultural background of the language, its classic aspect and other natural peculiarities no doubt had accounted for its different dialects most of which differ from one another only very slightly in sound system and tone and not in etymology. For instance, the Ibibio language is peculiar in its extreme richness in synonyms, and in this aspect, and in regard to vocabulary, each dialect, with the exception of the Ibibio proper which is the central dialect (sic), has the characteristic of being strongly influenced by the common use of only a very limited set of the synonymous words – for example, in central Ibibio dialect (sic) the following words are synonymous: Uket, efit, kpukpru, akpaimo, udonn, each of which in general use has the ordinary meaning of “all”. The first and the last words – uket and udonn may not be in common use in the Efik dialect but kpukpru; in the Annang dialect Akpaimo may be more commonly used. But the central Ibibio embraces all these words in their different contexts.²²

It should be noted that attempts at shredding the Ibibio based on minor inflections or dialects have been the stock-in-trade of scholars whose aspirations have been to become clan warlords instead of refined academics, which was why in Ibibio of the period in view, ‘dialectal differences were elasticated as different tongues.’²³ Dialectal differences do not mean language differences. The Oron people in the period under consideration used to speak the same Ibibio language as other groups; even though there were some words and phrases that were peculiar to them which the Nsit people had also borrowed into the main Ibibio language. Example, words/names like *Ekerendu*, *Akpakip* are Oron in origin, but were borne by Nsit people; and names such as *Abang*, *Akpambang*, and so on, are Nsit in origin, but were also borne by the Oron people.

The peculiarities in Oron and Okobo dialects were as a result of environmental factors, and their continuous relationship with the Ejagham and Usakedet peoples, and “further outsiders who do make a version of contribution to enrich Oro vocabulary.”²⁴ Dialects vary to reflect adaptations to a variety of personal contacts and social situations.²⁵ Noah, citing Swadesh, observes that dialectal differences among various Ibibio groups can be attributed largely to long period of isolation among the groups.²⁶ He also asserts that “linguistic homogeneity can be expected only if the population is small, socially unified and geographically limited, but with increased area and reduced contact with

²²Obio-Offiong, *An Introduction*, pp. 74-75

²³Ekpe, “A Bird’s Eye View”, p. 4

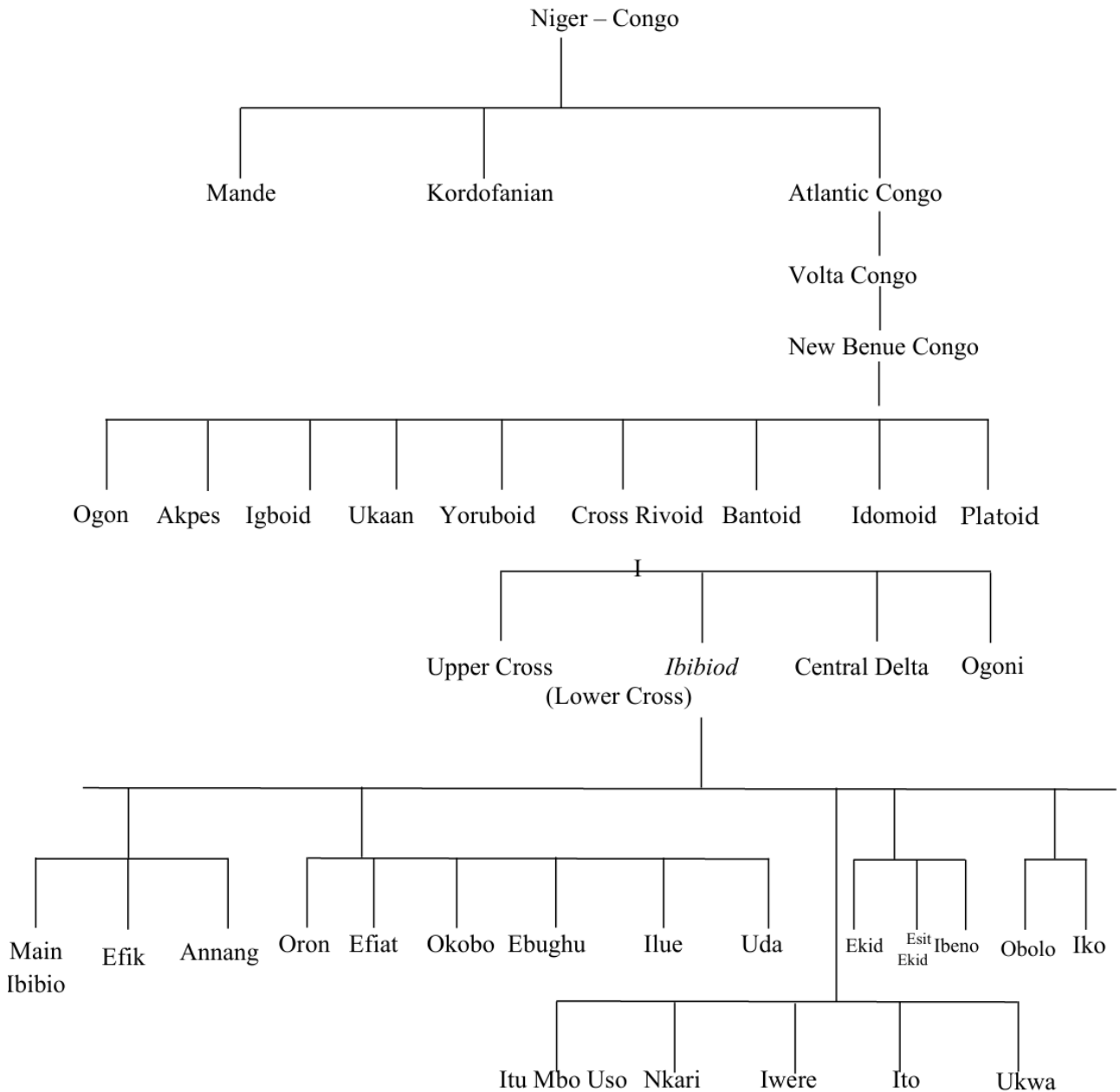
²⁴Etim Akaduh, *Ŋsini Orọ: An Introduction to the Study of Orọ Language in Nigeria* (Oron: Mason Publishing Company, 1984) p. x

²⁵ Morris Swadesh, *The Origin and Diversification of Languages* (New York: Aldine Press, 1971), P. 11

²⁶ Noah, *Ibibio Pioneers*, P. 7

the original speakers of the language, there is always a tendency to form variants of the same language.²⁷

Table 1: Niger – Congo Language Family where Ibibio and her dialects belong



Credit: The researcher restructures this language tree from numerous linguistic books he has read. Thus, the concept is his. The term “Ibibiod” was coined by Essien (2008: ix) as an umbrella term to

²⁷Ibid, Pp. 7 - 8

capture common origin of Ibibio and her dialects cluster (which linguistic classify as Lower Cross). Cross Rivoid is thus the coinage of this researcher.

Data Analysis and Discussion of Linguistic Evidence of Nsit - Oron Relations:

Oron and Okobo speak closely related dialects of the Ibibio. The two groups are Nsit neighbours, and they share a common boundary with Eastern Nsit. Marshall in his Intelligence Report states that “the language spoken by the people in the clan (Oron) area is a dialect of Ibibio.”²⁸ There are some evidence of genetic and/or genealogical relationships between Eastern Nsit and Oron/Okobo. For instance, typonyms such as “Unyehe”, “Esifa Family”, “Ukpabang”, and so on, found in Oron are of Eastern Nsit origin.²⁹

It is worth reiterating that both Nsit and Oron speak Ibibio language, even though because of “long period of separation from each other,”³⁰ as well as “long period of constant interactions with Biakpan (Ejagham) and some groups in the Cameroon such as Balondo, Usakedet, Oron, Efut,” and so on, new words had been introduced into the Oron and Okobo dialects³¹ which make them a little difficult for other Ibibio groups to understand.³² As noted by Swadesh, the differences noticed in Oron and Okobo dialects as compared to the main Ibibio language reflect mostly the mobility of the people, and partly their attitude towards their neighbours.³³ This somewhat difficulty, by other Ibibio groups, in understanding Oron and Okobo dialects stems from the fact that both dialects have letters “L” and “V” in their semi-orthographical arrangements. According to Obio -Offiong, “the central Ibibio is devoid of “L” and “Ch” (Ch as in church) in sound system and the sub-dialects (sic) of Efik, Enyong, Eket maintain this system. But the Ibuno-Obodom (Andoni) and the Oron involve “L””³⁴

Table 2: A Selection of Cognates Between Nsit and Oron/Okobo

ENGLISH	NSIT	ORON	OKOBO
Good morning	<i>Amesiere</i>	<i>Atagha/Emesiere</i>	<i>Emesiere</i>
Good night	<i>Asiere</i>	<i>Ogi/Asiere</i>	<i>Asiere</i>
Friend	<i>Ufan</i>	<i>Ufan/Nsanga</i>	<i>Ufan</i>
Money	<i>okak</i>	<i>Okuk</i>	<i>Okuk</i>
Market	<i>Urua</i>	<i>Urua</i>	<i>Urua</i>
Go	<i>Kaa</i>	<i>Kaa</i>	<i>Kaa</i>
Mother	<i>Eka</i>	<i>Eke</i>	<i>Eke</i>
Love	<i>Ima</i>	<i>Ima</i>	<i>Ima</i>
Time	<i>Ini</i>	<i>Ini</i>	<i>Ini</i>
Ear	<i>Utoñ</i>	<i>Utoñ</i>	<i>Utoñ</i>
God	<i>Abasi</i>	<i>Abasi</i>	<i>Abasi</i>
Salt	<i>Inañ</i>	<i>Inuñ</i>	<i>Inuñ</i>
Chest	<i>Ikpanesit</i>	<i>Ikpanesit</i>	<i>Ikpanesit</i>

²⁸R.N.O. Marshall, “Intelligence Report on the Oron Clan”, EKETDIST, File No. 1685 (1936)

²⁹Philip Jackson Okpoho, 70years, Village Council member, Unyehe, Nsit Atai LGA., 8 April, 2024.

³⁰Obio-Offiong, An Introduction, pp. 74-75

³¹Akaduh, Nsini Orø, p.x

³²*Ibid.*, p. vii

³³Swadesh, The Origin and Diversification, P. 11

³⁴Obio-Offiong, An Introduction, p. 76

The above listed words were a few examples of cognates sharing between Nsit and Oron/Okobo. In fact, there was over 90% cognate between Nsit and Oron.³⁵ However, Nsit people found it difficult to understand Oron people when they used their dialect, but that was not the case with the Oron people when their Nsit neighbours speak. The fact remains that in the period in view both Nsit and Oron peoples could use the central Ibibio language when communicating with each other for easy understanding.³⁶

Like the Oron people, the Okobo people claim that they are not Ibibio and are also not Oron,³⁷ even though there are copious evidences against their claims. Ntekim posits that, If one were to investigate the historical origin of people in the Cross River estuary with a view to categorize them into common stock, all communities might have belonged to one putative father. A contrast analysis of languages (sic) spoken in Okobo, Oron, Efik and Ibibio showed so many identical lexicons that can be used to show that they belong to a common strand of the Niger-Congo language family known as kwa group.³⁸

After submitting that a contrast analysis of languages (sic) spoken by different groups in the Cross River estuary shows so many identical lexicons that explain a common strand of the Niger-Congo language family,³⁹ Ntekim, like Uya,⁴⁰ still goes ahead to be economical with the truth, by stating that “no similarity exists between Okobo and Ibibio, no trace of Ibibio language could be found in Okobo language” (sic).⁴¹ This is falsehood at its peak. There is mutual intelligibility between Okobo and Nsit peoples; and in fact, there used to be more than ninety-one percent cognacy between Okobo dialect and the main Ibibio language spoken by the Nsit in the period in view.⁴² This is because, as Maison posits, “Okobo has traditions and evidence of migrants from Uruan, Nsit and Calabar.”⁴³

It is a fact that both Oron and Okobo were among distinct dialectal groups of Ibibio cohabiting the riverine Ibibio land in the period; therefore, to insinuate that these dialectal groups were operating independently at the time, without any contact with the Nsit, as Uya wants us to believe,⁴⁴ is vague, anachronistic, very unhistorical and revisionistic in its entirety. The truth remains that between 1849 and 1959, or earlier, the Okobo people did not regard Okobo as a language, but merely as *uyi* (intonation), hence, they used to refer to their dialect as *Uyi* Okobuo (Okobo intonation).⁴⁵

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 74

³⁶Akaduh, *Nsini Oro*, p. vii

³⁷Essesien Ntekim, *Okobo: Story of a Nigerian People* (New York: Xlibris, 2013), p. 201

³⁸*Ibid.*, p. 210

³⁹*Ibid.*, p. 210

⁴⁰ See Uya, *A History of Oron People of the Lower Cross River Basin*

⁴¹Ntekim, *Okobo: Story of*, p. 376

⁴²Udo, *Who are the Ibibio?* Pp. 68-72

⁴³Kojo Baffoe Maison, “A Socio-political Identity of the Oron People” (PhD Thesis, University of Calabar, 1988), P. 127

⁴⁴Professor Uya in his book “A History of Oron People of the Lower Cross River Basin” seeks to separate Oron Clan from the Ibibio by making many unguarded statements against the Ibibio, such as “uncircumcised”, “contaminated”, “descendants of slaves”, etc.

⁴⁵Ntekim, *Okobo: Story of*, P. xi

Linguistic Evidence of Intergroup Relations between Nsit and Ekid:

Some Ekid, just like some of their Oron and Okobo neighbours, had denied their Ibibio root of late,⁴⁶ and had gone as far as writing “the orthography” of their “language” to give credibility to their assertion that “Ekid is not a dialect of any language, but a “language on its own.”⁴⁷ Data gathered from the field show that Ekid people speak Ibibio language using their own tongue.⁴⁸ Some scholars of Ekid origin are against any scholarship that tends to link the Ekid with the Ibibio in genealogy. For instance, Udoyo and Wilson aver that,

While in the past, some Ekid people may have ignorantly accepted this pan-ibibio linkage arising from the seeming predominance of Ibibio-speaking people around them... Therefore, even though they may speak Ibibio language, they are ethnically not Ibibio....⁴⁹

A study of the science and nature of languages expounded by Morris Swadesh, including dialectology, supports the fact that the Nsit people and their neighbours all shared the same language but through different dialects.⁵⁰ Just like the Ekid scholars cited above, some Ekid chiefs, as reported by MacDonald, denied any relationship with the Nsit people and other Ibibio groups by emphasizing that they spoke Ekid but not Ibibio language.⁵¹ Ekpe argues that,

The Ekit (sic) forebears rightly said this because, firstly, as primitive people and illiterates they may not have known that the name Ibibio had been invented to represent a cluster of intelligible dialects which have a common origin to which Ekit forms the cluster. Their fathers and themselves never had an idea of what is Ibibio (sic), so they could not have accepted an identity they did not know anything about.⁵²

Ekpe is also of the opinion that the Ekid ancestors knew that their neighbours whom they knew as *Nsit Ibi* existed and spoke a language not same as, but intelligible to, that of Ekid.⁵³ According to him,

They called the Nsit Ibi language (sic) *IkwoNsitIbi*. There is no doubt

⁴⁶ See J.B. Adiakpan, *The Eket Speaking People* (Lagos: Okjohn Nigeria Limited, 2000). Before his venture into revisionism and obvious chauvinism and jingoism, Adiakpan had stated in 1962 that “the dominant tribe (sic) that inhabits the former Calabar province is the Ibibio tribe (sic). Other tribes (sic) found in the area are the Aros, a clan of the Ibo tribe (sic), the Kwas, a clan of the Eko tribe (sic), and the Ogonis, a clan of the Ijaw tribe (sic) found in the Opobo Division... until recently the Ibibios did not normally think of themselves in terms of tribe as, for instance, a Yoruba man may think. The Ibibio man thinks of himself as a man from one or another of the clans more than a man from the tribe (sic). It is because of this defect – a tendency to concentrate and master the little and neglect what is big and remote – that the Efiks claimed some years ago that they were not Ibibios”. Adiakpan in the 1960s saw the entirety of the people of the Lower Cross River region (that is today’s Akwa Ibom and the Efiks of Southern Cross River State) as Ibibio, and was entirely against any opinion to the contrary – See J.B. Adiakpan, “A Hundred Years Educational Work in the former Calabar Province (1846-1946)” (M.A Degree, Dissertation submitted to Durham University, 1962), pp. xiii-xxxix. See also Aniefiok Udoyo and Des Wilson, *The Orthography of the Ekid Language* (Lagos: Concept Publications Limited, 2006), pp: 29-33

⁴⁷ Udoyo and Wilson, *The Orthography*, P. 30

⁴⁸ Interactions with Selected Eket-Speaking People, namely Nsibiet John, Nseobong David-Umo-Idem, David Morrow and Aniefon Idorenyin.

⁴⁹ Udoyo and Wilson, *The Orthography*, p. 30

⁵⁰ Swadesh, *The origin*, p. 11

⁵¹ Claude Maxwell MacDonald’s Report dated 28/11/1894, incorporated into the 1925 Jeffrey’s Report on the Tribes and Clans of Eket District.

⁵² Ekpe, *A Bird’s Eye View*.

⁵³ *Ibid*

that the Ekid forebears would deny speaking *IkwoNsitIbi*, which in fact, they did not speak. Speakers of *IkwoNsitIbi*, as known by the primitive Ekits, were what the Europeans classified as Ibibio proper. What the primitive minds could comprehend was that they spoke Ekit. They had no idea about language science; that what they considered as different languages was actually one language in dialectal form.⁵⁴

In a bid to counter those Ekid Chiefs reported by MacDonald, as well as the proponents of Ekid as a separate language from Ibibio, Ekpe asserts that,

The opinion of a people who are not knowledgeable in a particular area cannot be rightly quoted as an authority in the world of scholarship. Therefore, the Ekit Chiefs did not deny relationship with the Nsit Ibi, but only denied speaking the Nsit Ibi, language because, as primitive folks, they were not in the position to know that both Ikwo Ekit and Ikwo Nsit Ibi are technically speaking, the same language ... so denial by the Chiefs of not speaking Ikwo Nsit Ibi cannot be cited as authority that the Ekit forebears denied sharing ethnic group with the Ibibio. Even if they did ... the illiterate people were not in the position to determine the issue of ethnicity which is a scientific matter that requires knowledge of ethnology to be able to make an informed decision. So they could not be quoted since they were not in a position to know the science of language classification.⁵⁵

To Ekpe, if the primitive chiefs of Ekit were asked whether they were a part of the then political entity called the Calabar Province, they would have answered in the negative, because, according to him, they abhorred political hegemony to a fault.⁵⁶

On no account would they have agreed that Ekit (sic) was a part of Efikland ruled from Calabar. However, such denial would not invalidate the fact that Ekit was actually ruled at the material time from Efikland. If so, why then would the opinion of primitive people about language classification by scientific means invalidate the fact that indeed, *Ikwo* Ekit and *Ikwo* Nsit Ibi were one language? And that accordingly, based on the scientific finding, that *Ikwo* Ekit was in fact a dialect of *Ikwo* Nsit Ibi?⁵⁷

There are no strange words in Ekid; or simply put, there are no words in Ekid dialect that were not of Nsit origin. Those words used by the Ekid people who appear to be alien to other Ibibio groups were alienated by the Ekid environment, and by their interactions with groups outside Ibibio territory in the period under study, and perhaps, by the desire of their forebears to encode some of their ideas and beliefs just to disguise them from their neighbours; hence, the reason for a somewhat unidirectional intelligibility between the Ekid people and their Nsit neighbours, as well as other Ibibio groups.⁵⁸ Even at that, “speakers of Ekid dialect understand and speak the main Ibibio

⁵⁴*Ibid*

⁵⁵*Ibid*

⁵⁶*Ibid*

⁵⁷*Ibid*

⁵⁸Udo John, 75 years, Esit Urua, Eket Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State. 20 September, 2023.

language fluently from their birth.”⁵⁹

Like other dialects in the Lower Cross River, Ekid is *Ibibiod*. The Ibibio and its cluster of dialects fall under the Lower Cross group of the Cross River sub-branch of Proto-Benue-Congo of the Niger-Congo phylum.⁶⁰ This classification, however, suggests that all the dialects of Ibibio language had so many things in common, and all of them borrowed from one another. In this wise, the Ekid dialect borrowed a lot from *Ikwo* Nsit Ibi, and vice versa. There is over 90 per cent cognate between Ekid and Nsit (and other Ibibio groups).⁶¹

Table 3: Ekid Consonant Chart

PLACE OF ARTICULATION	BILABIAL	LABIODENTAL	ALVEOLAR	PALATAL ALVEOLAR	PALATAL	VELAR	LABIAL VELAR	ALLOTTED
Stop	vl vd	vi vd	vl vd	vl vd	vl vd	vl vd	vl vd	vl vd
	B		t d			K	k ^w	?
Implosive							kp	
Nasal	M		n		ɲ	ŋ	ŋ ^w	
Fricative		F	S					
Affricative				dʒ				
Approximant							w	

Source: Udoyo and Wilson, *The orthography of the Ekid language (Lagos: Concept Publications Limited, 2006) p. 48*

Linguistic Evidence of Intergroup Relations between Nsit and Annang:

Although Annang is not an immediate neighbour, per se, to Nsit, but the distance between the two groups is about four kilometers from Afia Nsit (around Ikot Oku Ikono). Thus, there are two cogent reasons to classify Annang as Nsit neighbour. First, there are a lot of Nsit villages and moieties in Annang, and vice versa,⁶² and secondly, the two Ibibio groups speak the same language (Ibibio), though with a very slight variation (on the part of Annang) resulting from a long period of separation; and their closeness to the Igbo people.

Like the Oron people, the Annang people in the period under consideration were against their attachment to the other Ibibio groups, hence, the effort, though unyielding, by politicians and

⁵⁹ Ibid

⁶⁰ Essien, *A Grammar of the Ibibio*, p. ix

⁶¹ Udo John, 75 years, Esit Urua, Eket Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State. 20 September, 2023.

⁶² See Thomas, “Nsit Clan”, pp. 48-51, pp. 82-84

scholars to sever Annang from the main Ibibio using political dialectics and “scholarships.”⁶³

As stated above, Annang people speak Ibibio language though with inflection that does not give them out as non-ibibio. There was 99.99 per cent cognacy between Annang dialect and the main Ibibio language such that no stranger could detect the difference in words and tones. A comparison of Annang and the main Ibibio consonant charts would explain the fact of Annang as a dialect of Ibibio language.

Table 4: Ibibio Consonant Chart

PLACE OF ARTICULATION	BILABIAL		LABIO DENTAL		DENTAL ALVEOLAR		PALATIAL		LABIO-VELAR		VELAR		UNVULAR	
Stop	vl	vd	vl	vd	vl	vd	vl	vd	vl	vd	vl	vd	vl	vd
	p	b			t	d					k			
Implosive Fricatives			F		S				Kp					
Nasals		M				n		ɟ				ŋ		
Approximants								Y		w				ɣ

Source: Okon Essien, *A Grammar of the Ibibio Language* (Ibadan: University Press PLC, 2008) p. 8

Table 5: Annang Consonant Chart

PLACE OF ARTICULATION	BILABIAL		LABIO DENTAL		DENTAL ALVEOLAR		PALATIAL		LABIO-VELAR		VELAR		UNVULER	
Stop	vl	vd	vl	vd	vl	vd	vl	vd	vl	vd	vl	vd	vl	vd
	p	b			t				kp		k			
Implosive Fricatives			F		S		ɲ							R
Nasals		M				n						ŋ ^w		
Approximants		W						J						ɣ

Source: Itoro Michael and P. N. Ijioma, *Anaan Pronouncing Dictionary: A Trilingual Dictionary of Anaan-English-French, English-Anaan-French and French-Anaan-English* (Aba: National Institute of Nigerian Languages, 2019) p. 13

It should be noted that the entirety of Annang vocabularies are Ibibio words. A review of the *Anaan Pronouncing Dictionary* by Michael and Ijioma reveals that the dictionary is filled with hundred per cent Ibibio words. About sixty per cent of the over twenty-two thousand lexical entries in the dictionary are spelt and pronounced the same way and with the same meaning as in the main Ibibio language; twenty-one per cent are inflectionalized to suit the Annang tonal system; while the remaining nine per cent entered Annang lexicon through contacts with their environment and outsiders.⁶⁴ Thus, it is submitted here that the attempt to raise Annang to the status of a language

⁶³Nse Usoro, 50 years, Ikot Osom, Abak Local Government Area. 20 July, 2022

⁶⁴ The researcher had done a review of the *Anaan Pronouncing Dictionary* by Itoro Michael and P.N. Ijioma. The work has been

was entirely political, and tantamount to a lazy-man's endeavor. In the words of Dr. Chris Ekpenyong (himself an Annangman) as cited by Umoh-Faithmann,

... We are just a unique group with one language though different dialects. It is surprising that when our leaders want to one way or the other exploit people, they bring up the issue of tribe (sic) saying this one is from Ibibio, Annang, Oron or Eket ... Those are trivial issues that came about either because of poverty or lack of direction with the government....⁶⁵

Indeed, Nsit people and their Annang distant neighbours speak the same language called Ibibio (or Nsit Ibi as the Ekid people prefer). The reason is that the two groups, and of course, all the groups in Ibibio, originated from the same root, even though the routes through which they penetrated their present locale may not have been the same.⁶⁶ However, Nsit and Annang had a lot in common in terms of intermingling with each other.

The Nsit people, just like other Ibibio groups, also borrowed from Annang lexical items. Such borrowings include toponyms, anthroponyms, hydronyms, and other onomastics. However, such borrowings were not always one-sided, but “give and take”, and are a result of bi-directional migrations in the remote past.

Linguistic Evidence of Intergroup Relations between Nsit and her Immediate Neighbours

The phrase “immediate neighbours” as used here refers to the groups such as Ikono, Iman, Ibiono, Offot, Etoi, Ibesikpo, Itam, Asutan, Ediene, Uruan, Ubium and Itak with whom the Nsit share a common territory. Thus, there are some peculiarities among these groups in terms of the kind of lexical considerations and phonemic distinctions. Eventhough the kind of lexical considerations and phonemic distinctions refer to here are too inconsequential for a linguistic attention they are given here, the fact remains that the Nsit people from about the period in view had always taken into considerations those notable peculiarities in the speech forms or semantics of their immediate neighbours, and had always used those inflections to distinguish their various neighbours, and dealt with them accordingly.

It was based on these notable but inconsequential divergences in tonal system that the Ibibio Language Panel abstracted from all the “dialects” of Eket, Iman, Ikono, Ikot Abasi, Itam, Offot, Etoi, Ibesikpo, Ubium, Ibiono and Nsit to come up with what they describe as ‘General Ibibio’ and set this up as the so-called ‘standard Ibibio.’⁶⁷ In doing this, the panel tended to avoid extreme divergences such as those noticed in the peripheral dialects in Eket, Anaan and Oron.⁶⁸

accepted for publication by an International Journal.

⁶⁵ Dr. Christopher Stephen Ekpenyong, former Deputy Governor of Akwa Ibom State, cited by Nabi Umoh-Faithmann in his book, *Ibobio Jews of Nigeria* (Uyo: Menorah Publication Commission, 1999) p. iii

⁶⁶Noah, *Ibibio Pioneers*, p. 6; Udo, *Who are the Ibibio?*

⁶⁷Essien, *A Grammar of the Ibibio*, p. 27

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, p. 27

Ikono-Ibiono-Itam Dialect Cluster:

As rightly observed by the Ibibio Language Panel, the substitution of the vowel [i] for [e] by the people of Ikono⁶⁹ had always been noticed by the Nsit people, and had always used against them from the inception of their relationship. It was on the strength of this that the Ibibio Language Panel rejected the Ikono pronunciation because it has never been accepted in General Ibibio.⁷⁰ Not that the Ikono had contributed nothing to the General Ibibio Language of which Nsit is at the centre of it. In fact, some Ibibio proverbs are traced to Ikono.⁷¹

Studies have shown that both Nsit and Ikono share onomastics, probably because the later is an offshoot of the former.⁷² Such onomastics represent one of the reference keys that languages offer for detecting historical contacts, convergences and influences.⁷³ According to Diagne, Toponyms are eloquent linguistic ‘fossils’ for the historian. Certain suffixes or prefixes... which are used to designate villages or urban settlements, automatically offer a clue to the presumed founders of the settlements and are pointers to the routes taken by peoples...⁷⁴

In other words, onomastics such as toponyms, anthroponyms, provide an inestimable means of exploring the history and existence of relationships among various groups, and an attempt can also be made to sketch out actual developments from changes in linguistic material.⁷⁵

Nsit and Ikono also share some anthroponyms owing to their history and contacts over time. Most of these anthroponyms are patronymic. In Ikono, there are family names which point to Nsit as the cradle of their evolution. Such names are Anyang, Nsit, Eduo, Ndiya, and so on. It can also be said that family names such as Nnung Ikono and Nnung Etefia found in Oboyo Ikot Ita are descendants of Ikono people.⁷⁶

The Nsit people in the period under study differentiated between Ibiono and non-Ibiono through their intonations and/or tonal changes in speech making. The Ibiono people had a somewhat different dialect (which is more than being called “inflection”) from the Nsit, Iman, Offot and Ubium.⁷⁷ Essien observes that,

Some dialects, like Ibiono... and some parts of Asutan Ekpe and Itam clans do not in fact have the ten vowel system. So apart from the social need to carry most parts of Ibibioland together in writing Ibibio, there is also an empirical reason for the ten-vowel system.⁷⁸

What Essien means in essence is that the phonemic distinction between /i/ and /i/ commonly found

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, p. 6

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, p. 6

⁷¹Edet A. Ukpong, *An Enquiry into Culture: Ibibio Names* (Uyo: Dorand Publishers, 2007) p. 290

⁷² Thomas, “Nsit Clan”, pp. 70-74

⁷³ P. Diagne, “History and Linguistics, and Theories on the ‘races’ and history of Africa”, in J. Ki-Zerbo (ed) *General History of Africa* (Abridged Edition) (Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books (Nig) Ltd, 1990). p. 94

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, p. 94

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 94-95

⁷⁶ Thomas Thomas, *Nsit History* (An Unpublished Manuscript)

⁷⁷Enefiok Andy, 70 years, Mbiotok Itam, Itu Local Government Area. 20 May, 2020.

⁷⁸Essien, *A Grammar of the Ibibio*, p. 27

in Ibiono and Itam does not appear to occur in Nsit and Ibesikpo.⁷⁹ The Ikono-Ibiono-Itam speakers and the Nsit speakers of Ibibio language in the period in view, however, did make a distinction between /ə/ and /ʌ/, as well as between /ʌ/ and /ɔ/. Phonemic distinctions were also commonly found between /ʌ/ and /a/, /i/ and /ə/, and /ʌ/ and /u/ or in the inflections of some Ibibio groups which allowed Nsit people to detect or situate where the persons they related with hailed from.⁸⁰

The gap between Ikono-Ibiono-Itam and Nsit was so wide such that it (the Ikono-Ibiono-Itam cluster) was rejected in writing by scholars of Ibibio language including Essien, himself an Ibiono person.⁸¹ According to Essien,

Ibiono speakers have to learn to pronounce *isi* as *isó*: ‘face’ *utim* as *útom*, *úyîm*, as *úyôm*: ‘noise’ in conformity with General Ibibio. In other words, some cases of substitution of [i] for [o] by Ibiono speakers also observed by Essien (1984:47) should be modified in favour of General Ibibio.⁸²

There were some “dialects” of Ibibio that did not, for example, distinguish between /ə/ and /ɔ/. For example, the Nsit people had no phonetic contrast between these two sounds which are very close phonetically. For Nsit, ‘etək’ (small), for example, interchanges with ètòk (which is the same as Annang and Ibesikpo pronunciation of the word. Annang had no /ə/ even phonetically). Thus, among the Nsit, Ibesikpo, Asutan and Uruan, [ə] and [ɔ] occurred in free variation.⁸³

Iman-Ubium Cluster:

The Iman and Ubium peoples had somewhat different inflections from Nsit, even though in lexical terms, there was hundred per cent cognancy among the three groups.⁸⁴ However, Iman, just like Ubium in the period in view, had a noticeable inflection that worth considering in this work. For instance, there was phonemic distinction between [i] and [ī] commonly found in Iman which did not appear in Nsit tone.⁸⁵

The substitution of the glottal [ʔ] for [kk] in intervocalic environments, as in *dàʔá* for *dàkká* common among Iman and Eket speakers of Ibibio was not found in Nsit (or the General Ibibio Language).⁸⁶

Shared Proverbs as Linguistic Evidence of Intergroup Relations:

No discussion of linguistic evidence of intergroup relations could be complete without the mention of proverbs. In Ibibio language, proverb is called “nke.” The word “nke” in Ibibio language is a generic name for all those types of verbal expressions which have more than one meaning – one being the literal or surface meaning, and the other a hidden and more profound one.⁸⁷ There are

⁷⁹*Ibid*, p. 27

⁸⁰*Ibid*, p. 27

⁸¹*Ibid*, pp. 6-7

⁸²*Ibid*, p. 7

⁸³*Ibid*, p. 27

⁸⁴Obio-Offiong, An Introduction, P. 74

⁸⁵Essien, A Grammar of the Ibibio, p. 27

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, p. 6

⁸⁷A.J.A. Esen, Ibibio Profile: A Psycho-Literary Projection (Lagos: Paico Books Ltd, 1982) p ...

three types of *nke*, viz: proverbs, rhyming couplets and folklore.⁸⁸

The origin of some of these *nke* can be traced. For instance, *Anyaañ ibohoke/iflñoke Edereobo* originated from Nsit. The idea is that no matter what happened on or before *Edereobo* (a day set aside by the Ibibio people to appease *Anyaañ* deity), *Anyaañ* must certainly be appeased. This proverb, because of the idea it expresses, had been adopted by Nsit neighbours, including Oron and Okobo.⁸⁹ Also, the proverb, *Anyaañikeenekentakidimiyookukwo* (*Anyaañ* stream does not follow smaller streams to rise in the rainy season) originated from Nsit and spread across Ibibioland. Another Ibibio proverb which has Nsit origin is *idim itieehe nte Anyaañ edod ebob* (some streams are not as big as *Anyaañ* yet bridges are constructed across them).⁹⁰

The Nsit and her neighbours, including Oron and Okobo in the period under study, shared both speech form, and proverbs. Field work and documentary evidence show that Nsit neighbours had no other proverbs (and idioms) than those they shared with Nsit. Some of these proverbs (or idioms) originated from Nsit, while some originated from some Nsit neighbours such as Oron and Okobo and crept into Nsit. Some of these proverbs spread from Nsit and *vice versa* through trade. The Nsit people who used to go to Okobo, Oron and Mbo to buy or sell (or engage in fishing) used to gather at the fishing settlements at nights to entertain themselves with their hosts; in the process, the exchanged their proverbs, idioms and other expressions. Maison posits that “a majority of the proverbs in Oron share similar, if not same wordings and imageries with other Ibibio, indicating shared past experiences.”⁹¹ Proverbs were an aspect of Nsit and her neighbours’ lives. It was a linguistic exercise aimed at instilling morals, and promoting the peoples’ history and culture.⁹² Proverbs were mostly learnt at night where elders would teach the young ones. Just like in other places in Ibibioland, a typical proverb transmitting session in Okobo, according to Ntekim, started with a call to attention, a kind of slogan and password:

Narrator: Ekong Nke
Audience: Nke ekong abasi
Narrator: Nte mbuk akede
Audience: Nnyin ikop itiene⁹³

Another form of *nke* among Nsit and her neighbours was called *ntañ*. *Ntañ* is rhyming couplets. It was a form of traditional Ibibio oral poetry which had surprisingly similar characteristics to the English heroic couplet perfected by such well-known English poets as William Shakespeare and John Dryden.⁹⁴ According to Esen,

In traditional Ibibio oral poetry, a form similar to the English couplet is used to convey a thought that is considered weighty and important.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, p.23

⁸⁹ Udo Isaac Obot, 80 years, Village Head, Iwok Obio Adaang, Nsit Atai L.G.A. 18 May, 2016 (Interviewed during fieldwork for my M.A History dissertation); Esen, Ibibio Profile, p.53

⁹⁰Nicholas Edet Okon, 114 years, Obio Nsit, Nsit Ibom L.G.A. 16 February, 2016

⁹¹Maison, “A Socio-political Identity”, p.68

⁹²Ntekim Okobo: Story of, p. 415; Esen, Ibibio Profile, p. 23

⁹³Ntekim, Okobo: Story of, p. 411

⁹⁴Esen, Ibibio Profile, p. 23

There are two sayings, if they were written down, they would make two lines or a couplet. The length of the lines is the same. The lines rhyme.⁹⁵

It should be noted that *ntan* were peculiar to the Ibibio people amongst all African people. Thus, for every Ibibio group (Nsit and her neighbours) to have them in their linguistic or cultural “warehouse” indicate the existence of a relationship amongst them. These couplets were the same in all groups, and were expressed in Ibibio language by all the groups.⁹⁶ This, too, also confirms Cutin’s postulation that, if two groups of people speak related languages, we can assume that sometime in the past their ancestors spoke the same language and lived in the same part of the world. The degree of linguistic separation will also indicate the lapse of time since the original group divided.⁹⁷

Conclusion

This paper attempts to reconstruct the agelong intergroup relations between Nsit people and their neighbours, using linguistic evidence. The preposition “inter” literally means “between” or “among.” Relations refer to the way in which one thing or one group is associated with, or connected to the other. Thus, intergroup relations, according to Nwabueze, is the simple or complex, conflicting or accommodating, cooperating, consensual, peaceful or acrimonious, intense, dense or indifferent way that one group is connected or associated with another in the course of their interactions.⁹⁸ Intergroup relations in the pre-colonial Ibibio were symbiotic (a give-and-take kind of), such that no group could give and not receive in return.

On the strength of the above definition, it seems appropriate to state that there are inter-connections among groups or clans in Ibibio land; and many groups or clans in Ibibio definitely have one form of relationship or the other with Nsit, because Nsit is one of the oldest Ibibio groups from where many groups in Ibibio sprang. Thus, a thorough work on Nsit will reveal the Ibibio people more. To study Ibibio or any part of it properly, Nsit has to be studied as a preliminary to such endeavour.⁹⁹

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⁹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 24

⁹⁶ Thomas Thomas, Mme Nke ye Mme Mbufiok Ibibio (An Unpublished Manuscript)

⁹⁷Curtin, Precolonial African, p. 15

⁹⁸ N. Nwabueze, “Towards a Wider Understanding of Inter-group Relations”, in R. T. Akinyele (ed) *Race, Ethnicity and Nation Building in Africa: Studies in Intergroup Relations* (Ibadan: Rex Charles Publications, 2003) p.4.

⁹⁹ Elijah Nelson Nkenta, *Antiquities of the Ibibio: From Prehistory to the Early days in the Gulf of Guinea and Western Sudan* (An Unpublished Manuscript). Elijah Nelson Nkenta, 60+ years, Mkpāt Enin, Mkpāt Enin LGA. 20 April 2023.

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Past and Continuous Tense Markings in Medefaidrin

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Abstract

Tense marks the relationship between the time of a situation and the time an utterance is made concerning the situation. This research investigates the tense system of Medefaidrin with a focus on the past tense and continuous tense. The paradigm function theory (Stump, 2001) was used in analyzing the data collected for this study. The data were collected using a structured wordlist. Using the purposive sampling technique, ten language consultants were selected and used for this study. The observation and interview methods were used in obtaining the data for this research. The research findings indicate that Medefaidrin has five affixes (-ed, -e, a-, en-, and null morpheme) used in marking past tense in the language. {-ed} is used to mark past tense after alveolar stops; {-e} suffixed after voiceless alveolar and palatal semi-vowel to mark past tense while {a-} and {en-} are prefixed to the words to mark past tense. The research also shows that the Medefaidrin language makes use of {-iñ} in marking present continuous tense. {-iñ} is suffixed to the root of the word to mark present continuous tense in Medefaidrin. Further studies should be carried out in other aspects of tense and morphology in the Medefaidrin language.

Keywords: Medefaidrin, Language, Artificial, Morpheme, Tense

1. Introduction

There are numerous studies on the theoretical and analytical aspects of tense. Research in the tense system of a language such as Ibibio (Essien, 2008; Urua, 2007), Ikwere (Alerechi and Kari, 2018), Igbo (Emenajo, 2015), Echie (Ndimele, 2003) and Oṛo (Noah and Okon, 2020) have shown that many natural languages make use of tense.

Tense can be marked by using morpheme affixation as seen below in the Ibibio data in (1);

- (1) Nyàákàá I will go.
Ìmítèm we have cooked.
Mmàákòp I heard it. (Essien 2008:79)

In example (1), the morpheme *yàá* is the future tense marker in the sentence and is affixed to the verb. In the Ibibio language, the present, past and future tense markers are morphemes affixed to the verb which is also observed in the Oṛo language (Noah and Okon, 2020). The goal of this study is to investigate the tense system of the Medefaidrin language, identify the morphemes or words used in marking the past tense and present continuous tense in Medefaidrin, and describe the operation of the affixes or words used as markers.

As a spirit-constructed language, the tense system of Medefaidrin will be described in comparison with the English and Ibibio languages to highlight the similarities (if any) because these two languages are used in the Medefaidrin language community.

Tense is a grammatical device in a language which helps in describing the events that is presently happening, or took place in the past or will occur in the future. The tripartite tense system includes the present tense, past tense and future tense. However, this research will not investigate the tripartite tense system; it will only consider the past tense and the present continuous tense. The tense system of the Medefaidrin language has not been independently studied and described. Research indicates that the morphology of Medefaidrin was given an overview and the tense system was not part of it. (Urua and Gibbon, 2009). Therefore, this study aims to investigate the tense system of Medefaidrin describing the past and present continuous tense markers as it occurs in the Medefaidrin language. This study focuses on the past and present continuous tense markers in the Medefaidrin language. It does not consider future tense markers but only focuses on how the language is presently used. The rationale for focusing on only the past tense and present continuous tense in Medefaidrin is to observe if the language has a free or bound morpheme to indicate events that had already taken place or events that is on-going. In the next section, the historical information on the Medefaidrin language is provided.

1.1 Historical Information on Medefaidrin

The Medefaidrin language was developed in 1931 with Michael Ukpog and Akpan Udofia as the possible credited inventors of the language (Adams 1947; Rovenchak, Gibbon, Ekpenyong, and Urua, 2016) The Medefaidrin language is written from left to right and has thirty-two (32) main symbols in the alphabet (Adams, 1947; Abasiattai, 1989). Medefaidrin is one of the few constructed languages that has written hydrographical script and one of the numerous artificial languages claimed to be spiritually inspired.

The Medefaidrin language is considered as an artificial language developed for the purpose of communication among Oberi Okaime members (Urua and Gibbon, 2009; Rovenchak Gibbon, Ekpenyong, and Urua, 2016; Urua, 2010; Etim 2010), since the inventors of the language claim to have been inspired by the seminant ‘Holy spirit’ to write the language; it is considered a secret language, divinely valued with an influenced register, and not for inclusive communication (Urua et al, 2009).

The Medefaidrin language was first referred to as Oberi Okaime (Adams, 1947, Hau, 1961). However, subsequent investigation into the language revealed that Oberi Okaime is the name of the church, whereas Medefaidrin is the name of the language (Rovenchak et al, 2016; Urua, 2010; Etim 2010). The language is spoken in Akwa Ibom state (Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area, Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area and Uyo Local Government Area) and in Cross River State (Calabar, Ibiayi and Ekpene Eki regions) by members of the church in these Local Government Areas.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Tense

Tense, according to Lyons (1968) as cited in Noah and Okon (2020:207), is derived from Old French, which is the Greek equivalent for ‘time’, khronos, translated into Latin as ‘tempus’. Research carried out in numerous languages of the world indicates that tense is not a universal grammatical category (Essien 2008, Noah & Okon 2020). Languages such as Chinese (Mandarin), Khmer, and Pirahã among others do not conjugate verbs to mark tense but rather depend on context,

aspect particles and time-indicating adverbs. Essien (2008) defines tense as a grammatical category that grammaticalises time reference by making use of indicators or operators (other than the adverb of time), which mark the relationship between the time of the situation and the time an utterance is made concerning that situation.

2.1.1 Past Tense

A past tense indicates that a situation took place or was held before the moment of the utterance concerning it (Essien, 2008:p79). In the Ibibio language, Essien (2008) posits that the indefinite past is marked by two allomorphs *màá-* and *ké-* whose realizations are dependent on the sentence types. The former is used in a positive sentence whereas the latter is used in a negative sentence. This is illustrated below in (2);

- (2) Mmàákòp
 1sgPST V
 ‘I heard it’
 b. Nkékòppò
 1sg.PST.V.NEG
 ‘I did not hear’

In the Ibibio language, the past tense markers are affixed to the verb roots as also observed in English. In the English Language, the [-ed] is used to mark simple past tense of verbs and it has three different realisations viz /t/, /d/ and /id/ (Ndimele 2003). These are illustrated below in (3);

	(3) Present tense		Past tense
Plead	/pli:d/	pleaded	/pli:did/
Talk	/tɔ:k/	talked	/tɔ:kt/
Comb	/kəʊm/	combed	/kəʊmd/

These English past tense allomorphs are environmentally conditioned and are in complementary distribution. Zero morpheme is also used to mark past tense in English as observed in (4);

	(4) Present tense		Past tense
cut	/kʌt/	cut	/kʌt/
put	/pʊt/	put	/pʊt/
set	/sɛt/	set	/sɛt/

2.1.2 Present Continuous Tense

In the Ibibio language, the present continuous tense is marked with null morpheme and also with the morpheme *sɔk*. This means that the present continuous tense in Ibibio is overtly unmarked and marked. This is observed in (5a) and (5b).

- (5)
 (a) Ntāñ ífíá
 1sg.gather firewood
 I am gathering firewood.
 (b) ɪsɔkitèm íyák
 3pl.P.C cook fish

we are cooking fish. (Essien 2008: 81)

In the English language, the present continuous tense is expressed using the marker {-ing}. The {-ing} suffix also serve as indicator for progressive aspect. Ufot (2009) opines that {-ing} participle as a form of verb displays multiple word class members such as verb, verbal noun (gerund), a participle adjective. Examples of present continuous tense is illustrated below in (6).

(6)

- (a) I am coming.
- (b) He is driving a car.
- (c) They are going to school.

The present continuous tense marker in English is suffixed to the main verb in the sentences as observed in (6).

2.2 Paradigm Function Morphology

Paradigm Function Morphology (henceforth, PFM) is a theory propounded by Gregory Stump, an American linguist in 2001. The fundamental idea of PFM is that paradigms play a central role in the definition of a language's inflectional morphology (Stump 2001). Paradigm as used in this theory means a lexeme's complete set of a cell where the cells are form-content pairing, the L is the lexical content, σ represents the morphosyntactic content and X is the variable used in representing the lexeme's root (Stewart, *et al*, 2007). Each cell is realized as an input and output sequence. The formal notion of PFM is given as;

$PF \langle L, \sigma \rangle = \langle X, \sigma \rangle$

Where PF is the value of a paradigm function; serves as the input cell and is the realization of cell L, with the morphosyntactic property set (Stewart *et al*, 2007). Here, the lexeme or the word which is represented as L serves as the input and the small letter of sigma σ is used in this formula to store the morphosyntactic properties that is intended to be applied to the lexeme or word represented as L. The application of the morphosyntactic properties on the lexeme equals to what is stored in the variable X.

For concreteness, the paradigm function morphology theory is applied to the Ibibio verb *táñ* 'gather'. The Ibibio verb *táñ* is realised to have the following morphological features where the paradigm function morphology theory is applied;

$PF = \langle L, \sigma \rangle = \langle R, \sigma \rangle$

$PF \langle \text{táñ}, \{\text{Num: none, PM: none, Tense: pres}\} \rangle = \langle \text{táñ}, \sigma \rangle$
 $\langle \text{dép}, \sigma \rangle$
 $\langle \text{nyàm}, \sigma \rangle$

Using the default form realised for the Ibibio verb *tañ*, many other verbs in Ibibio can also operate within this realization rule such as *dép* 'buy', *nyàm* 'sell', *kpáñ* 'fold'. Modifying the set of morphosyntactic properties given above for *táñ*;

$PF \langle \text{táñ}, \{\text{Num: sg, PM: 1sg, Tense: cont}\} \rangle = \langle \text{Ntáñ}, \sigma \rangle$

The output of applying the rule *táñ* will be *ntáñ*. This is formally represented as

$PF = \langle L, \sigma \rangle = \langle R, \sigma \rangle$

PF (<táñ, {Num:sg, PM: 1sg, Tense: cont}> = <Ntáñ, σ>

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Methods

This research adopts the qualitative method in describing the language data collected for this study. The sampling method used in selecting the language consultants is purposive sampling. The language consultants were selected for this research based on their ability to read and speak the Medefaidrin language, in addition to the years that they have been members of the Medefaidrin language community. The language consultants (2 females and 8 males) understood English which made the communication between the researcher and the language consultants hitch-free. The Ibadan 400 wordlist was modified to include phrases and simple sentences and used as a tool for data collection.

3.2 Study Area

The purposive sampling technique was used in selecting the village to be used for this study. In selecting the village to be used as the area of study, the following factors were taken into consideration; the most populated area where the Medefaidrin language is spoken, and the village where the oldest speakers reside. Initial findings indicates that many Medefaidrin speakers reside in Edem Urua where the headquarter of Oberi Okaime church is situated. According to the primary language consultant – Rev Richmel Ekit, many of the Edem Urua villagers speak the Medefaidrin language because they attended the Oberi Okaime school which makes Edem Urua village the most populated village of Medefaidrin speakers.

3.3 Data Collection

The method of elicitation used in this study was interview using a structured questionnaire. The interview method was used during the textual data collection. Ten (10) primary language consultants (2 females and 8 males) between the ages of 50 and 100 were used for this research. Those within the age range used had a better knowledge of the Medefaidrin language.

4. DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Past Tense in Medefaidrin

Past tense indicates a situation that took place or was held before the moment of the utterance concerning it (Essien 2008). Past tense marker can be either affixed to the verb root as observed in the Ibibio and English languages (in regular verbs) or a root vowel change in English. In the Medefaidrin language, there are four types of past tense markers observed from the data collected for this research. These past tense markers in Medefaidrin will be discussed in this section.

(i) {-ed} Past Tense Marker in Medefaidrin

In Medefaidrin, the {-ed} past tense marker occurs after the voiced and voiceless alveolar stops/t/ and /d/ as observed in example (7).

(7)	Present Tense	Gloss	Past Tense	Gloss
(a)	Brizard	conclude	brizarded	concluded
(b)	Fuñt	shoot	fuñted	shot
(c)	Atiu brizard.		Atiu <u>brizarded</u> .	
	I conclude.		I concluded.	

- (d) Atiu fuñt cc krova. Atiu fuñted cc krova.
I shoot a bird. I shot a bird.

The {-ed} past tense marker is realised as /-ed/ after the voiced alveolar stop and realised as /-id/ after the voiceless alveolar stop /t/ in Medefaidrin.

(ii) {-e} Past Tense in Medefaidrin

The {-e} is used in Medefaidrin to mark the past tense of verbs. This past tense marker has the highest number of verbs identified with it in Medefaidrin. The {-e} past tense marker occurs after voiceless alveolar plosive and palatal semi-vowels as the data below indicate.

(8) **Base form** **Gloss** **Past tense** **Gloss**

- | | | | |
|-------------|---------|----------|----------|
| (a) Filent | arrange | Filente | arranged |
| (b) Bonet | belong | Bonete | belonged |
| (c) Ribuent | create | Ribuente | created |
| (d) Wely | keep | Welye | Kept |

- (e) Atiu ribuent Atiu ribuente
I create I created

- (f) Atiu filent dge enoru. Atiu filente dge enoru.
I keep a book. I kept a book.

The {-e} past tense marker occurs in a two-syllable word that ends with the voiceless alveolar plosive and palatal semi-vowel as observed in example (8)

(iii) {a-} Past Tense Marker in Medefaidrin

The [a-] prefix is used to mark the past tense of verbs in Medefaidrin. This prefix past tense marker is identified in two verbs. Examples of this past tense are provided below in (9)

(9) **present tense** **Gloss** **past tense** **Gloss**

- | | | | |
|-------------|--------|----------|--------|
| (a) Lauz | come | alauz | came |
| (b) Lauspel | become | alauspel | became |

- (c) Atiu lauspel abitio. Atiu alauspel abitio.
I become bold. I became bold.

- (d) Lauz biej Rex alauz
Come here she came

The {a-} prefix past tense marker in Medefaidrin is observed in words that begin with the voiced lateral. The verb *lauz* ‘come’ in Medefaidrin ends with the voiced alveolar fricative, however, when the verb *lauz* ‘come’ is joined with the suffix {-pel}, the final sound in *lauz* loses its voice feature and therefore changes to the voiceless alveolar fricative /s/. The reason for the loss of the voicing feature is that it assimilates the voiceless feature of the suffix {-pel} and also assists in the easy pronunciation of the word.

(iv) {en-} Past Tense Marker in Medefaidrin

The {en-} prefix is a past tense marker used to mark past tense in Medefaidrin. This past tense marker was observed in two words in the data. This is provided below in (10).

(10)	Present tense	Gloss	Past tense	Gloss
(a)	Xrin	tell	ensrin	told
(b)	Abzol	call	enabzol	called

(c) Abzol luzio bisanet Atiu enabzol liu
 Call your brother I called you

In example (10a), the syllable [eks] is replaced with the past tense marker /s/ and the past tense marker {en-} prefixed to the word. However, in example (10b), the prefix {en-} is affixed to the root of the word without deleting a syllable or sound.

(v) Null Past Tense Morpheme in Medefaidrin

The past tense of a word can be realized by the absence of an overt marker or morpheme. The English language is one of the languages that make use of zero or null past tense morphemes. This method of past tense marking is observed in Medefaidrin in (11).

(11)	Base form	Gloss	Past tense	Gloss
(a)	Takwet	beg	Takwet	begged
(b)	Maist	beat	Maist	beaten

(c) Nipgin miast xium. Rex vas eneen maist.
 Do not beat him. she has been beaten.

(d) Lauz arien takwet xium. Rib takwet xium.
 Go and beg him. She begged him.

There are two instances of null past tense markers in the data collected. The words with null past tense morphemes in (11) are observed to be past tense when they are used in sentences.

4.2 Present Continuous Tense in Medefaidrin

The Medefaidrin language has one morpheme used in marking present continuous tense and it is discussed below.

(i) {-iñ} Present Continuous Tense in Medefaidrin

This Medefaidrin present continuous tense has similar phonological behaviour with the English language present continuous tense marker. The English language uses {-ing} to mark her present continuous tense whereas Medefaidrin uses {-iñ}. The difference between the present continuous tense markers in the two languages is the orthographical representation of the consonant sound. Medefaidrin uses the grapheme {ñ} to represent the alveolar nasal, whereas English uses the grapheme {ng} to represent the same sound. The examples indicating Medefaidrin {ñ} continuous present tense marker is provided below in (12).

(12)	Base form	Gloss	Inflected form	Gloss
(a)	Takwet	beg	Takwetiñ	begging
(b)	Maist	beat	Maistiñ	beating
(c)	Lauz	come	Lauziñ	coming
(d)	Trek	eat	Trekiñ	eating

- | | |
|--|--|
| (e) Lauz biey
Come here | Atiu men lausiñ.
I am coming. |
| (f) Takwet xium zu britel.
Beg him to stop. | Rib eis takwentiñ xium.
She is begging him. |
| (g) Trek luziö ekyu.
Eat your food. | Atiu men trekiñ.
I am eating. |

4.3 Discussion of Research Findings

The Medefaidrin language has a tense system that is well structured as observed in the past tense and present continuous tense markers in this study. Using the Paradigm Function, the past tense markers of the Medefaidrin language are discussed here.

Data from this study indicate that the Medefaidrin language has similar past tense and present continuous tense markers with the English language. In marking the {-ed} past tense, the Paradigm function is given as;

$$PF \langle L, \sigma \rangle = \langle X, \sigma \rangle$$

$$\langle \langle \text{verb-t, -d} \rangle, \sigma \{ \text{Tense, PT-ed} \} \rangle = \langle \text{brizarded}, \sigma \rangle$$

$$\langle \text{funted}, \sigma \rangle$$

The past tense marker {-ed} occurs after alveolar sounds, that is in verbs that end with alveolar sounds. Medefaidrin marks past tense in prefix and suffix positions. The data used for this study indicate that Medefaidrin has two prefixes and two suffixes in marking past tense and one null morpheme. Using the Paradigm Function, the prefix past tense marker {a-} is given below;

$$PF \langle L, \sigma \rangle = \langle X, \sigma \rangle$$

$$\langle \langle \text{verb, l-} \rangle, \sigma \{ \text{Tense, PT: a-} \} \rangle = \langle \text{alauz}, \sigma \rangle$$

$$\langle \text{alauspiel}, \sigma \rangle$$

The Medefaidrin language marks present continuous tense using one morpheme. The Paradigm Function is used below to portray the environment in which {-iñ} occurs.

$$PF \langle L, \sigma \rangle = \langle X, \sigma \rangle$$

$$\langle \langle \text{verb-t, -k, -z} \rangle, \sigma \{ \text{Tense, CONT: -iñ} \} \rangle = \langle \text{Takwetiñ}, \sigma \rangle$$

$$\langle \text{Maistiñ}, \sigma \rangle$$

$$\langle \text{Lauziñ}, \sigma \rangle$$

$$\langle \text{Trekiñ}, \sigma \rangle$$

5. Conclusion

This research on the tense system of Medefaidrin focused primarily on the past tense and continuous tense markers. The result of this research indicates that the Medefaidrin language has similar past tense and continuous tense markers with English. The past tense marker observed to exist in English and Medefaidrin is {-ed}. This study observed five (5) morphemes used in marking past tense and one continuous tense marker {-iñ} in the Medefaidrin language; the affixes are {-ed, -e, a-, en-, and null morpheme}. {-ed} is used to mark past tense after alveolar stops; {-e} suffixed to after voiceless alveolar and palatal semi-vowel to mark past tense; {a-} and {en-} are prefixed to the words to mark past tense. {-iñ} is suffixed to the root of the word to mark present continuous tense in Medefaidrin. This study has contributed to the available literature on Medefaidrin and tense. The plural markers in Medefaidrin can be used as a background of study to related topics or

linguistics related fields of study. This study implies that the Medefaidrin language has a structured tense system. In addition, findings from this research indicate that the Medefaidrin language has a similar pattern of marking tense with English.

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Ecofeminist Critique of Anthropocentrism in Carolyn Merchant's *The Death of Nature*

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Abstract

Carolyn Merchant's *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (1980) is a historical and interdisciplinary study that examines the transformation of Western attitudes toward nature during the Scientific Revolution. Merchant traces the shift from an organic worldview, which understood nature as living and nurturing, to a mechanistic worldview that legitimised control, exploitation, and domination. The book situates this intellectual change within the rise of modern science and early capitalism, while also highlighting the symbolic and material links between the subjugation of nature and the marginalisation of women. This research paper examines *The Death of Nature* through an ecofeminist critical framework to explore the historical intersections of gender, science, and power. By engaging with ecofeminist scholarship, the study demonstrates the continuing relevance of Merchant's work to contemporary debates on anthropocentrism and environmental ethics. It also emphasises how scientific language and cultural metaphors shape human perceptions of the natural world, and how ecofeminism offers ethical alternatives grounded in interdependence and care.

Keywords: Ecofeminism, anthropocentrism, Carolyn Merchant, scientific revolution, mechanism, organicism, gender and nature, domination, capitalism, environmental ethics

Introduction

Ecofeminism developed in the late twentieth century as a critical framework linking environmental degradation to gendered structures of power. Emerging from feminist theory, environmental history, and critiques of industrial capitalism, ecofeminism argues that the domination of nature and the subordination of women are historically interconnected processes. As defined by Encyclopaedia Britannica, ecofeminism examines the relationship between women and nature and locates both forms of oppression within patriarchal and capitalist systems ("Ecofeminism", www.britannica.com).

A foundational text within this tradition is Carolyn Merchant's *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (1980). Written by a historian of science and environmental thought, the book offers a historical analysis of early modern Europe, tracing the transformation of nature from a living, organic entity to a mechanistic and exploitable system during the Scientific Revolution. Merchant demonstrates that this epistemological shift not only legitimised the control

of the natural world but also reinforced the cultural and material marginalisation of women. By situating scientific language, metaphors, and practices within their historical contexts, *The Death of Nature* provides a crucial framework for understanding the ideological roots of anthropocentrism and ecological crisis.

Merchant argues that before the rise of modern science, the natural world was conceptualised as a nurturing and life-giving mother. She writes, “The ancient identity of nature as a nurturing mother links women’s history with the history of the environment and ecological change.” (*The Death of Nature* 3). This worldview, prevalent in premodern Europe, reflects what Merchant describes as an organic theory in which “the identification of nature, especially the earth, with a nurturing mother: a kindly beneficent female who provided for the needs of mankind in an ordered, planned universe” was central (*The Death of Nature* 2).

This historical transformation was not merely philosophical, but also deeply moral and material. “Merchant’s work exemplifies ecofeminist historiography by linking epistemological shifts in science with material consequences for women and nature” (Warren 52). As mechanistic science advanced, nature was increasingly perceived not as a living organism but as a passive, knowable, and controllable machine. Reflecting on this shift, Merchant states, “The metaphor of the earth as a nurturing mother was gradually to vanish as a dominant image as the Scientific Revolution proceeded to mechanize and to rationalize the world view” (*The Death of Nature* 2). The decline of the organic model and the rise of mechanical philosophy stripped nature of its inherent vitality and severed its symbolic connection with femininity. This reimagining of the earth laid the ideological groundwork for both environmental exploitation and the patriarchal subjugation of women.

Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism, as a field of inquiry, draws from both ecological thought and feminist critique to explore the intertwined dominations of nature and women. It developed as a distinct movement in the late twentieth century, responding to the perceived failures of mainstream environmentalism and feminism to address the interconnectedness of gender, ecology, and power. This section of the paper examines the foundational texts and scholars who have shaped ecofeminist thought and situates Carolyn Merchant’s *The Death of Nature* within that intellectual lineage. This paper is embedded in ecofeminist historiography because it agrees with the core arguments articulated by Carolyn Merchant in *The Death of Nature*. Merchant argues that the Scientific Revolution in Europe transformed prevailing views of nature from an organic, nurturing female figure into a mechanistic system open to manipulation and control. Her study offers a historical account of how metaphors of nature as female, once protective and ethical, were replaced by notions of domination and exploitation. Merchant’s use of historical sources and her attention to changing scientific metaphors laid the groundwork for understanding the ideological shifts that justified environmental degradation alongside patriarchal dominance.

Vandana Shiva has also made a pivotal contribution to ecofeminist thought by highlighting the relationship between women and ecological knowledge, particularly in the context of rural India. In her work *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development* (1988), she critiques Western models of development and science for erasing indigenous and feminine ways of knowing. Shiva argues that

women, particularly in subsistence economies, are the primary custodians of biodiversity, seed sovereignty, and sustainable agricultural practices. Her ecofeminism is deeply political and postcolonial, emphasizing the effects of global capitalism and monocultures on both women and ecosystems.

Val Plumwood advanced the theoretical dimension of ecofeminism through her philosophical critique of dualism and anthropocentrism. In *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (1993), Plumwood identifies a logic of domination that structures Western thought, wherein reason is associated with men and culture, and nature is associated with women and irrationality. She critiques this binary as foundational to both sexism and environmental destruction. Plumwood's work is particularly significant for introducing the concept of "hyperseparation", a term used to describe the artificial divide between humans and nature and calling for a relational ontology that recognizes dependency, interconnection, and mutuality.

Ariel Salleh brings a materialistic and Marxist perspective to ecofeminism. In her writings such as *Ecofeminism as Politics* (1997), she introduces the concept of "embodied materialism," which emphasizes the physical, reproductive labour of women as foundational to ecological sustainability. She critiques both mainstream feminism and environmentalism for ignoring the gendered nature of environmental labour, particularly in the Global South. Salleh's approach connects environmental crises to the exploitation of both natural and human reproductive systems under capitalism.

Greta Gaard, a literary scholar and activist, contributed to the articulation of "queer ecology" and "intersectional ecofeminism." In her edited volume *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature* (1993), Gaard brings together essays that address the exploitation of animals, non-human life forms, and marginalized human groups. Her work underscores the importance of inclusive and intersectional approaches that consider how race, sexuality, species, and class interact with gender and ecology.

Merchant reflects on the impact and reception of *The Death of Nature*, noting that "early reviews focused on the connections between science and the domination of nature and on the relationships between women and nature" ("The Death of Nature': A Retrospective" 201). These reviews, she explains, emphasized the argument that "the mechanistic worldview lay open a new and brutal exploitation of the environment, of animals, and of a living, vital nature," reinforcing her core thesis that the rise of mechanistic science paralleled a broader cultural rejection of the feminine ("The Death of Nature': A Retrospective" 201). This acknowledgment underscores how her work not only revealed historical erasures of women and nature but also provoked debate regarding the entanglement of gender, science, and power. Additionally, Mies, co-author with Shiva of *Ecofeminism* (1993), critiques the mechanistic worldview and economic globalization. Mies proposes a subsistence perspective grounded in local knowledge, community control, and ecological harmony. Her critique aligns closely with Shiva's arguments and strengthens the political economy approach within ecofeminism.

Ecofeminism has also evolved through dialogues with deep ecology, posthumanism, and Indigenous knowledge systems. Deep ecology, while emphasizing the intrinsic value of nature, has been critiqued by ecofeminists for abstracting ecological relationships and overlooking the material

conditions and lived experiences of women. Scholars like Bina Agarwal have contributed to debates on the intersections of gender, development, and environment, emphasizing the role of collective action and institutional change. Ecofeminist scholarship offers diverse and multi-layered critiques of anthropocentrism, patriarchy, and capitalism. While Merchant historicises the ideological transformation of nature, Shiva, Salleh, and Plumwood provide frameworks for analysing how ecological degradation is gendered and structural. The literature underscores that environmental justice must include a critique of social hierarchies, exploitative economies, and epistemologies that separate humans from the living world.

Theoretical Framework

Ecofeminism critiques anthropocentrism by showing how nature has been historically feminized and subsequently dominated in parallel with the subordination of women. The theory assumes that ideologies of domination are interconnected and often operate through metaphors, language, and institutional structures. In this context, anthropocentrism refers to the belief in human superiority over the non-human world, often manifesting in utilitarian and exploitative attitudes toward nature. Carolyn Merchant's ecofeminism critiques this by exposing the gendered metaphors that frame nature as female and subordinate. Merchant situates her work within this framework by drawing attention to metaphors of nature as mother, virgin, and witch. She asserts that these images "provided cultural constraints and restricted actions" (*The Death of Nature* 3). Her analysis draws from historical texts, philosophy, and science to argue that these metaphors shifted drastically during the Scientific Revolution, giving rise to a mechanistic view of the world that justified exploitation. This paper also employs the conceptual tools of feminist philosophy, especially the critique of dualism, where mind is separated from body, culture from nature, and man from woman. In examining Merchant's text, the theoretical lens focuses on identifying how historical discourses about nature became gendered, and how these gendered metaphors contributed to anthropocentric ideologies.

Nature as Female and Ethical Constraint through Organic Imagery

The Death of Nature fundamentally altered environmental history by foregrounding gender in the analysis of ecological decline" (Kline 123). Merchant begins by emphasizing a foundational metaphor: nature was experienced as female, alive, nurturing, and morally evocative. She records that nature was widely viewed as a nurturing mother, sensitive, alive, and responsive to human action. In this worldview, harming nature was equivalent to harming a mother, creating an intimate bond. Merchant notes ethical expressions of this bond: miners "offered ceremonial sacrifices, observed strict cleanliness, abstinence, and fasting" before entering mines (*The Death of Nature* 4). These rituals reveal a profound reverence for Earth as a living body worthy of protection.

Echoing ancient and medieval cultural imaginaries, literary and philosophical sources reinforce this connection. Merchant cites Chaucer for portraying "nature as a kindly and caring motherly provider" (*The Death of Nature* 6). Richard Hooker articulated in Elizabethan sermons that "God being the author of Nature, her voice is but his instrument. By her from him we receive whatsoever in sort we learn." (*The Death of Nature* 6-7). This metaphor captures nature as divine teacher, with moral laws embedded in natural order. In Shakespeare's *King Lear*, Cordelia symbolizes an ideal nature: "She was strength and gentleness hewn as one: passion and order, innocence and maturity,

defenselessness and strength, daughter and mother, maid and wife. She represented simplicity in unity and the balance of the contraries. She was the mature integration of society and of nature as ideally reflected in the human being. She stood for unity, wholeness, and virtue, the utopian expression of human nature.” (*The Death of Nature* 7). Cordelia embodies unity and virtue, linking feminine natural identity to ethical community.

Yet tension existed even then. Merchant explains that pastoral imagery, “The pastoral tradition had its roots in nostalgia for the Homeric Golden Age, for the uncorrupted Garden of Eden, and escape from the ills of the city.” (*The Death of Nature* 8) though idealizing nature, allowed exploitation: “nature when plowed and cultivated could be used as a commodity and manipulated as a resource” (*The Death of Nature* 8). This suggests that while society revered nature, it also possessed the capacity to reduce it to object, especially as colonial expansion advanced.

Philosophically, dominant traditions contained contradictions in the portrayal of feminine nature. Plato viewed the cosmic soul as female: “The soul... was made ‘to be ruler and mistress, of whom the body was to be subject’” (*The Death of Nature* 10). Though elevated, feminine nature remained subject to masculine order. Neoplatonic thinkers depicted nature as “God’s powerful but humble servant” (*The Death of Nature* 10), stripped of autonomy. Still, marginal traditions Gnostic or alchemical maintained unity of male and female and resisted hierarchical dualisms (*The Death of Nature* 17).

Stoic and Renaissance natural philosophers described Earth as a living organism, complete with breath, moisture, and fluids like the human body. Merchant quotes Seneca describing the world’s life force: “How could she nourish... had she not an abundant supply of the breath of life?” (*The Death of Nature* 23). This poetic vision underscored moral constraint: to violate nature was to violate life itself. Another expression of nature’s vitality is the Golden Tree metaphor. Merchant describes the belief that “metals [were] plants growing beneath the earth’s surface” and that veins of gold formed a living underground tree, regrowing with time (*The Death of Nature* 29). People believed that unused ores would mature over years, evidence of Earth’s fertility and moral limits on extraction. These images created a moral ecosystem. Nature’s femininity demanded restraint, empathy and care. These metaphors served as cultural constraints against excess and exploitation, insisting that humans live within ecological and spiritual bounds.

Collapse of Ethical Limits under Capitalism and Science

Merchant details how these organic metaphors lost force with the rise of modern science and capitalism. Ancient and early modern critics of mining condemned it as sacrilege. Merchant cites the Roman author and naturalist Pliny the Elder’s warning that mining the earth provokes its wrath in the form of earthquakes. “We trace out... the veins of the earth... astonished that it should... tremble... these signs... expressions of the indignation felt by our sacred parent!” (*The Death of Nature* 29–30). Here nature speaks through violence, resisting human incursion.

Ovid’s “Metamorphoses” evokes the Golden Age: “Earth, untroubled... brought forth rich grain; the field... whitened with wheat... rivers of milk, rivers of honey” (*The Death of Nature* 30). This idyllic vision disappears when Earth is ploughed, unleashing inequality and war suggesting moral

collapse rooted in resource extraction. Seneca laments: “What necessity caused man... to stoop... burying him in mines... plunging him in the very bowels of innermost earth?” (*The Death of Nature* 31). Extraction symbolizes spiritual degradation.

By the sixteenth century, moral restraints were weakening. Agricola in his *De Re Metallica* (published in 1912 in English) argued that extracting metals was both necessary and righteous: “Nature has given the earth... to man that he might cultivate it and draw out... metals” (*The Death of Nature* 34). His arguments shift moral weight to human necessity and economic progress. Hence extraction becomes duty rather than sin, and profit trumps maternal respect.

Poets reframe this moral collapse in vivid imagery. Spenser’s lines (from “Mammon”) mourn Earth’s violence: “Then gan a cursed hand the quiet womb / Of his great Grandmother with steel to wound,/... Fountains of gold and silver to abound” (*The Death of Nature* 36). Earth becomes a violated mother, sacred space defiled for human pride. Milton’s description is harsher. Miners as violators, “rifled the bowels of their mother Earth” (*The Death of Nature* 37). The metaphor equates ecological destruction with psychic violence. John Donne connects sexual and extractive metaphors. In “Love’s Alchemy,” he notes: “Some that have deeper digged loves myne than I... say where his centrique happiness doth lie?” (*The Death of Nature* 37). He equates erotic greed with mineral greed, both acts of abasement. This merging of violent logic marks a symbolic shift from relational, reciprocal seeing of nature to a language of excavation, conquest, and violation. Merchant uses these examples to demonstrate that as industrial capitalism rose, metaphors, anchored in relational ethics, were replaced by metaphors of control, extraction, and domination. “Merchant’s approach integrates environmentalism with feminist critique, making visible the gendered assumptions embedded in scientific progress” (Salleh 39).

Mechanization of Nature and the Scientific Paradigm

The Scientific Revolution institutionalized the view of nature as a machine. Francis Bacon embodied this change and Merchant records some key metaphors. She draws attention to how the rise of mechanistic science restructured the relationship between humans and nature using language of domination and violence. In her later work, she further explains that Bacon’s metaphors were deeply embedded in the legal and cultural discourse of his time, stating that “although Bacon opposed the torture of human beings, his language was filled with metaphors of torture, rape, and subjugation” (“The Scientific Revolution and *The Death of Nature*” 524). These violent images positioned nature as both female and passive, a subject to be interrogated and exploited under patriarchal scientific rationality (*The Death of Nature* 169–170). He likened scientific inquiry to torture and domination: nature must be interrogated until its secrets produce technology and profit. This language borrowed heavily from witch trials, suggesting nature as female suspect.

Following Bacon, Descartes cemented dualism. Nature became inert matter, devoid of soul or moral consequence. In his view, animals were automata, and bodies dirt, to be manipulated. The Cartesian split between mind (rational, masculine) and body (material, feminine) reinforced hierarchical separation. Merchant states this transformation as “the cosmic and human body were once seen as organisms. They became, through modern science, clockwork and machine” (*The Death of Nature* 1). Nature becomes a neutral substrate to be managed. This metaphorical shift stripped

nature of moral subjectivity. No longer worthy of ethical consideration, it could be studied, quantified, and exploited. Scientific instruments became metaphors of mastery, and technological expansion mirrored masculine authority over nature and women. The scientific worldview thus created both epistemological and ecological rupture.

Witchcraft Trials and the Criminalisation of Disorder

Merchant argues that the same metaphors that pathologized nature were used to pathologize women. She notes that “nature is viewed as disorderly and chaotic and analogous to the dark side of a woman (witch)” (*The Death of Nature* 127). The dichotomy between ordered male sun and chaotic female Earth became political: nature as chaos was dangerous unless controlled. She notes that “female earth is replaced with the masculine sun. Fortune is a woman who must be conquered” (*The Death of Nature* 130). This metaphor legitimised violence and subjugation. Witch trials illustrate this metaphor in practice. Over centuries, poor women became scapegoats for ecological fears. Merchant contends these trials that “threatened women’s lives for over two hundred years” by casting them as embodiments of disorder (*The Death of Nature* 134). Medical and philosophical texts of the era described women as irrational, spiritually unstable, “incapable of clear thought” (*The Death of Nature* 141). Discourses about nature and mind reinforced each other in sustaining bio-political domination. Legal norms elaborated this logic. Merchant notes that the protection of women and nature “occurs under male supervision” (*The Death of Nature* 147). This surveillance extended from courtroom to plantation, forest, and factory. Women and Earth alike were normalised under patriarchal control. These trials helped erase organic metaphors and relational respect. Nature and women were reconstituted as static objects of exploitation, needing domination rather than dialogue.

Ecofeminist Responses and Reclaiming Reciprocal Metaphors

Merchant does not end in despair. She describes how women-led movements worldwide reclaim ancient metaphors. In India, the Chipko movement involved women hugging trees to prevent logging and restoring care-based relationships with Earth. In Kenya, the Greenbelt Movement saw women planting millions of trees to heal degraded land. These are living embodiments of reciprocal relational ethics. Merchant also highlights revived spiritual traditions celebrating Earth goddesses: Gaia, Innana, Isis, Demeter. Such symbols resist patriarchal cosmologies. According to Merchant, “ancient identities of nature as nurturing mother link women’s history with environmental change” (Preface to *The Death of Nature*). These cultural threads offer ethical alternatives to mechanistic rationality. Politically, Merchant proposes an ecological ethics grounded in reciprocity, not domination. She advocates sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, ecological education, and indigenous knowledge systems. She writes that recovering relational metaphors contributes to restoring planetary health. Humanity must shift from control toward cooperation—not domination. These ecofeminist alternatives blend ethics, epistemology, spirituality, and social justice. They affirm that nature is subject, not object and that caring for Earth is caring for humanity. They propose a regenerative cosmology in which human progress exists within ecological limits rather than above them.

In an age of global ecological crisis, anthropocentric thinking remains dangerously central. “Merchant shows how the metaphor of nature as a living organism was displaced by a mechanical

worldview that enabled domination over both women and the environment” (Lloyd 25). Reawakening organic metaphors and acknowledging the moral subjectivity of nature and women offers a vital path towards justice for both. Merchant’s work continues to guide ecofeminist scholarship and activism, reminding us that our metaphors shape our future. So “*The Death of Nature* can be read not only as a description of the past, but also as a prescription for a better, more balanced and equal, future” (David, et al., <https://notevenpast.org>).

Conclusion

This paper has shown how Carolyn Merchant’s *The Death of Nature* offers a powerful ecofeminist critique of anthropocentrism by tracing how nature was historically constructed as feminine, passive, and exploitable. Merchant reveals how organic metaphors depicting Earth as living mother serve as moral constraints on exploitation, rooted in cultural, philosophical, and literary traditions. Through a detailed historical analysis, this paper has examined how these organic images fractured under capitalist expansion and there was a rise of mechanistic science. Mining ceased to be a taboo and became an industrial necessity. Scientific discourse shifted towards metaphors of domination: nature as slave, forceable and silent. Simultaneously, women and nature were both pathologised and criminalised through imagery linking them to disorder, leading to witch hunts that aimed to suppress chaos in both social and ecological domains. Merchant documents how metaphors validated this violence, supplying both moral and legal cover.

Importantly, Merchant does not remain in this rupture. She documents feminist and ecological movements that recover alternative metaphors of reciprocity, stewardship, and embodied relationship. Chipko, Greenbelt, indigenous earth-spiritualities, and ecofeminist theory all enact a return to Earth as subject rather than object. These serve as practical and spiritual reminders that humans can live in ecological harmony. The key finding of this research is that metaphors are not mere linguistic ornaments: they structure moral worlds. The shift from nature as mother to machine shaped centuries of environmental damage and patriarchal domination. Yet, as Merchant argues, the reverse is possible. By reclaiming relational metaphors, societies can develop an ecological ethics built on care, equality, and sustainability.

This paper also reflects on the cultural roots of environmental destruction. Merchant’s work helps readers see how historical ideas continue to shape present-day policies and beliefs. It encourages a return to worldviews that respect balance, care, and connection. Ecofeminism, as shown in this study, is not only a critique of the past, but also a hopeful vision for the future, one where humans can live with, rather than above nature.

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Cognitive Interpretations of *Eyi* ‘Face’ in Idoma

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Abstract

This paper examines the cognitive interpretations of *eyi* ‘face’ in the Idoma language, spoken predominantly in Benue State, North-Central Nigeria. The study investigates the use of a human body part *eyi* ‘face’ to understand the abstract world. The objectives of the study are to identify the literal and extended meanings of *eyi* ‘face’ and evaluate the metaphorical and metonymical conceptualization of *eyi*. The prototype theory, conceptual metaphor theory and conceptual metonymy theory were adopted as the theoretical framework for this paper. Data collection were through participant and non-participant observations, informal interviews, introspection and secondary sources. The study reveals that *eyi* ‘face’ in Idoma has both literal and metaphorical meanings. The analysis further shows that metaphorically *eyi* ‘face’ has various interpretations such as FACE IS SURFACE, FACE IS DAWN, and FACE IS ATTENTION. While metonymically, several meanings abound as FACE STANDS FOR KNOWLEDGEABLE, FACE FOR EMOTION, and FACE FOR BEHAVIOUR. This study which adds to the literature on the Idoma language has brought to the fore how some abstract concepts are perceived using a human body part.

Keywords: Idoma, *eyi* ‘face’, semantics, polysemy, cognitive linguistics

Introduction

The ability of human beings to communicate and interact with each other is made possible through the medium of language which could be spoken or written. Language is exclusive to human beings and is an absolute necessity for the existence of the human race. Enumerating some of the functions of language, Prasad (2009) states that language aids in “passing on our ideas to others, concept formation, analysing complex situation to simpler ones and in retaining abstract ideas” (p.258). Language is therefore peculiar to humans, systematically organized, agreed upon by members of a society and used for both intra personal and inter personal communication.

There are situations in a language where some lexical items go extinct, new ones are created and existing lexical items have associative meanings which adapt to the needs of man and the society. Guhaoyue, Zhongjie and Jing (2022) state that “a word itself, as a huge corpus set, is in a dynamic state of development and requires constant creation of new meanings, due to the unremitting development of society and progress of human thought” (p.208). In other words, language enables the ideas and concepts conceived in the mind as well as the ideas and concepts through the five senses possible.

There are instances in human communication where a word or lexical item has diverse meanings but these meanings are all connected. This is known as polysemy. Fromkin, Rodman & Hyams (2011) state that, “when a word has multiple meanings that are related conceptually or historically,

it is said to be polysemous (poly – seamus) for example, the word diamond referring to a geometric shape and also to a base field that has that shape” (p.159). Sun (2019) explains further that “polyseme is a word or phrase with different but related senses leading to the ambiguity of an individual word or phrase that can be used in different contexts to express two or more different meanings” (p.340). To Xabibullaevna (2023), “cognitive linguistics argue that the meaning of polysemous words are related in a systematic and natural way forming radical categories where one or more senses are more prototypical (central) while others are less prototypical (peripheral)” (p.138).

Human body parts and organs are possible ways people initially grasp the knowledge of the world around them. With body parts and organs in metaphorical and metonymical expressions, people are able to comprehend abstract concepts and ideas in various spheres of life (Wei, 2010). The Idoma language has many words or lexical items that are polysemous including body parts. It has been observed that *eyi* ‘face’ which is a body part has various interpretations and it is also a way that the Idoma people understand various abstract entities. This paper, therefore, aims to shed light on the various meanings relating to ‘face’ which could be metaphorical or metonymical. *Eyi* as used in this paper means ‘face’.

The word ‘Idoma’ portrays the people, land and language. The Idoma people are the indigenous ethnic group of the Southern part of Benue State. Of the 23 local government areas, the Idoma inhabit 7 though some Idoma speaking groups can be found in some states such as Nasarawa, Cross-River and Enugu. Adejoh (2013) also states that “the Idoma are predominantly found in Benue State, but clusters of them (the Idoma people) can be found amongst other ethnic groups and nationalities especially in Nasarawa, Enugu, and Cross River States of Nigeria” (p.21). The Idoma people are surrounded by the River Benue to the North, by parts of Igbo and Ogoja lands to the South, by Tiv and Igede lands to the East and by Igala land to the West (Okpeh & Ochefu, n.d). The Idoma people speak the Idoma language which has dialects and it is classified under the West Benue-Congo groupings of the Niger-Congo phylum (Aziza, 2011).

Literature review

The body is defined as a physio-material part of the human being which comprises of the external and internal parts such as head, forehead, eyes, heart, stomach, etc. (Gbadegesin, 2003, p.175). The human being is made up of a physical structure comprising various parts. These parts can be internal (those inside the human structure) or external (those on the outer part of the structure). These parts perform various functions for instance the eyes are for seeing, legs for walking, heart for circulation of blood, etc. According to Wei (2010), “human beings use their bodies to interact with the outside world. The human body is a significant cognitive tool for human beings to perceive the abstract world and frequently regarded as the dimension to measure things around” (p.1). Circumstances arise where these body parts have extended meanings. Ciprianova & Kovacova (2018) argue that “the human body is among the richest sources for metonymic and metaphorical conceptualisations of target concepts worldwide” (p.6).

Polysemy is a situation where a word or even a phrase has more than one meaning and these meanings are connected in one way or the other. Lobner (2002) states that “a lexeme constitutes a

case polysemy if it has two or more interrelated meanings, or better; meaning variants. Each of these meaning variants has to be learnt separately in order to be understood” (p.44). According to Croft & Cruse (2004), “a polysemy is a word or phrase with multiple, related meanings. Polysemy can be understood as a variation in the construal of a word on different occasions of use” (p.109). Makni (2014) opines that “polysemous words are ubiquitous in written and spoken English. This is a phenomenon whereby a word has different, but related senses with respect to the contexts in which it is used” (p.5). In spoken or written language, situations abound where lexical items have several interpretations which are all connected in one way or the other. Furthermore, these interpretations depend on the contexts the lexical items are used.

A new approach, cognitive linguistics, came up in the 1980s which looked at polysemy from the cognitive perspective using the mechanisms of metaphor and metonymy. These cognitive mechanisms were looked at as more than figures of speech. Generally speaking, Li & Feng (2018) opine that there are two main cognitive devices involved in the process of meaning extension of polysemy – metaphor and metonymy. Cognitive linguistics is a combination of various academic fields such as cognitive psychology, neuropsychology and linguistics. Croft & Cruse (2004) identify three major hypotheses guiding cognitive linguistic approach to language: language is not an autonomous cognitive faculty, grammar is conceptualization and knowledge of language emerges from language use” (p.1). Geeraerts & Cuyckens (2007) state that “cognitive linguistics is the study of language in its cognitive function, where cognitive refers to the crucial role of intermediate informational structures in our encounters with the world” (p.5).

Cognitive grammar and cognitive semantics (the focus of this paper) are branches of cognitive linguistics. Cognitive semantics explores the relationship between human experiences, mental ideas and semantic structures expressed through language (Evans & Green, 2006). Crystal (2008) also states that “cognitive semantics identifies meaning with conceptualization – the structures and processes which are part of mental experience. The theory stresses the importance of bodily experience in conceptualization. It operates with an encyclopedic view of meaning not recognizing a clear boundary between linguistic and general knowledge” (p.84).

Empirical studies

Several researches have been done on polysemy of body parts and lexical categories using cognitive approaches. Saeed (2018) examined the polysemy of *khilal* using Tyler & Evans model of principled polysemy. The study identified the different senses of Arabic preposition *khilal* ‘though’ and did a contrastive analysis of *khilal* and the English ‘though’ in terms of their primary and extended senses. Following the first two criteria by Tyler & Evans (2001, 2003), it was discovered that the primary sense of *khilal* and *though* is that of an entity - TR (trajector) – passing through or entering a bigger or wider object - LM (landmark). There is, therefore, a movement from one side (the entry) to another side (the exit). Only one distinct sense was identified for *khilal* which is the temporal sense. The distinct senses associated with English ‘though’ are senses of extended action, on-the-other-side of sense, completion sense, temporal sense, transmission sense, means sense and cause sense. This study is related to the current study as they both look at polysemy from a cognitive approach. The difference is that while the former is on a preposition, the current study is on a body part. The theoretical frameworks used are also different.

Gwarzo (2019) explored the conceptualisation of body parts in Hausa from a cultural linguistic point of view. The study investigated the metaphorical and metonymical expressions of the body parts- 'hand' and 'head' based on cultural beliefs as well as the roles of these cultural beliefs in the conceptualisations. To achieve this, the research adopted the conceptual metaphor theory and conceptual metonymy theory. Two Hausa dictionaries and two Hausa newspapers were used to elicit both literal and non-literal meanings. Also, online search was randomly conducted. Twelve expressions with 'hand' and 'head' that are metaphorical and metonymical were identified. Gwarzo (2019) reported that the concepts, 'hand' and 'head' have metaphorical and metonymical meaning extensions. For instance, hand may stand for personality or for giving while head metaphorically can mean a container for intelligence or a bundle. These conceptualisations show that the meanings are based on the cultural beliefs of the Hausa people. The similarities between the former and current study are that they are both on the conceptualization of body parts though the difference lies in the languages.

Hasan & Sabir (2021) investigated the polysemy of 'Head' in English and Kurdish. The study examined the various senses of the body part 'head' in English and Kurdish as well as compared the polysemous meanings in both languages. The data was mainly collected from dictionaries and the experiences of the researchers. The study revealed that 'Head' has various meanings that are quite related. Metonymically, *ser* 'head' exhibits part-whole and whole-part relationship while metaphorically, *ser* means presidents, someone in charge, topmost rank, mind, or highest part of something. Despite cultural diversity, both languages have similar metaphorical meaning extensions. The current study is similar to the former as both look at polysemy from a cognitive perspective. However, the difference is that while the former study is a contrastive one between two languages, the current study is descriptive based on only one language.

Ibrahim & Almajir (2022) examined polysemy and metaphor of Hausa perception verbs of vision using a cognitive approach. The study sort to identify the extended meanings of Hausa perception verbs and how these verbs trigger the conceptual metaphor of vision. The study employed the conceptual polysemy model proposed by Ibarretxe-Antunan and conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) propounded by Lakoff and Johnson. Data was collected using the ethnographic research method and 21 Hausa expressions related to vision were selected. The verbs examined belong to the visual sense modality: *gani*, *gaanaa*, *gaanee*, *shidaa* and *duubaa*. It was discovered that deliberate efforts are made when acquiring knowledge through the senses – in this case vision. Furthermore, the extended meanings include thinking, studying, examining, interviewing, experiencing, recognizing, searching, finding out amongst others. The similarities between this study and the current study are that they both examine polysemy from a cognitive linguistic approach. While the former focuses on verbs of perception in Hausa, this study focuses on a human body part – face – in Idoma.

Theoretical framework

Three theories make up the theoretical framework for this study: the prototype theory, the conceptual metaphor theory and the conceptual metonymy theory. The prototype theory came up in the mid-1970s with the research of Eleanor Rosch. According to this theory, every member of a category is either typical or non-typical. The typical members of a group have all the characteristics

that make up that group and the non-typical members have only some of the features that make up that group. Furthermore, not all concepts have a clear-cut boundary and members of a category are characterised by family resemblance. Every category, therefore, has its best example called a prototype. This prototype meaning is the literal or central meaning of polysemous words that is first understood and from this prototype meaning comes other extended meanings. Looking at the rankings of bird to the theory, for instance, robins ranked the highest and considered the best prototype of the category. This is followed by doves, then sparrows, canaries, owls, parrots, pheasants, toucans, ducks, and peacocks. Penguins and ostriches were considered the least non-typical.

The conceptual metaphor theory and the conceptual metonymy theory was propounded by Lakoff & Johnson in 1980. Metaphor is considered as a logical and mental process where the knowledge of a particular field is applied to another field. In this instance, the knowledge and experience of an area helps in understanding another area. This theory, therefore, is the process of systematically matching elements from a concrete domain called the source domain to an abstract domain called the target domain in order to understand the target domain. The source domain is concrete and well understood while the target domain is mentalistic and better understood using the source domain. Metonymy on the other hand is a situation where a one thing stands in place of another. According to this theory, there is the ability to conceive an idea in terms of its relation to another. These ideas which are closely related, operate within one domain and can stand either partly or completely for an idea. To Zhao (2022), “metonymy is one of the basic characteristics of cognition. It is extremely common for people to take one well understood or easy-to-perceive aspect of something and use it to stand either for the thing as a whole or for some aspects of it” (p.22). These theories would help to explain the cognitive interpretations of *eyi* ‘face’ in Idoma, and show the relatedness of the various meanings through the mechanisms of metaphor and metonymy. While the prototype theory would explain the literal and extended meanings as well as their relatedness, the conceptual metaphor theory would explain how meanings are extended metaphorically (from the source domain to the target domain) and the conceptual metonymy theory would explain how a well understood entity is used to stand for another entity that is not straight forward (within a single cognitive domain).

Methodology

This study is qualitative and descriptive in nature as it is concerned with the various meanings of *eyi* ‘face’ in Idoma. The researcher employed introspection, participant and non-participant observation as well as informal interview on the topic under investigation. The settings identified for observation were market places, church sermons, and family settings. These places were visited by the researcher for relevant data. Two market places, one government agency and two family settings were purposely selected in Otukpo, Otukpo L.G.A. Furthermore, the participants, who were drawn from various backgrounds (age, gender, status), were Idoma native speakers who speak the Central Idoma Dialect in Otukpo, Otukpo L.G.A. Since the research is qualitative in nature, expressions with the word *eyi* were noted. All these methods enabled the researcher to elicit first-hand information on the topic and notes were taken down. The secondary source of data was from *Ikepla kidoma mla oyibo* (Idoma- English vocabulary). The Idoma language has four major dialects and for the purpose of this study, the Central Idoma Dialect, which is also called Idoma *Enochi* (Idoma

9. Cut /interrupt person Face

To keep interrupting someone who is trying to make a point.

In this expression, *eyi* is mapped unto a non-human domain that is abstract. The extended meaning is to interrupt someone trying to make a point. The face in this instance expresses some form of emotion.

10. Eyi dùù
Face cloudy feeling
In this Dizziness

expression, *eyi* is extended to mean consciousness. The elements of *eyi* correspond to consciousness which is abstract and the target domain. A human body part is used to understand an abstract situation as *eyi* 'face' expresses a health situation physically.

11. Eyi chaa
Face openly

In Something factual / physical (11), *eyi* is extended to mean something that is real, or physically witnessed. The mapping is from a concrete and familiar domain that is human to an abstract nonhuman domain.

Metonymical meanings of *eyi*

This cognitive tool is also used to understand the world around human beings. One word is used in place of another to stand for or refer to an entity.

12. Kwu eyi nma nu
Take face from it

In the Take your mind / hope from it. above expression, *eyi* 'face' stands for mind or hope. Here, there is a CONTAINER FOR CONTENT metonymy as the face is looked at as a container that carries various things and in this case hope or mind.

13. òyi a nwùlà eyi
NOM DET open face

The The child is knowledgeable/ civilized. expression in (13) shows that FACE STANDS FOR INTELLIGENCE as the child is educated or well-informed.

14. Bi eyi mę̀la òchẹ
Hold Face with person

Eyi To have a bad relationship with someone here stands for having a bad relationship or not to be in talking terms or good terms with someone. In this instance, it shows BODY PART FOR BEHAVIOUR.

15. Lẹ eyi kwàjẹ
Have Face down

In this Take care of yourself / be watchful. example (15), BODY PART STANDS FOR BEHAVIOUR. Someone in this instance is admonished to be careful and watchful.

Eyi nyànyà kunu yáá

16. Face boldness of 3pro do
It is due to his/her boldness.

In the expression above (16), it shows BODY PART FOR BEHAVIOUR. This expression shows someone is able to achieve something due to his/ her boldness or not been afraid to air out issues.

17. O lẹ eyi họnò
The face 3sg have face bitter is capable of showing various kinds of emotions as shown in He / she is frowning (17) above. Here FACE FOR EMOTIONS is expressed as the person is not pleased which is shown through the face.

18. Eyi olòhi ku ílí a
Face Good of Cloth DET
In this The good side of the cloth. example, FACE STANDS FOR SIDE and in this instance the good surface of a cloth. Objects sometimes have smooth surfaces or sides that are meant to be visible.

19. Eyi obòbi ku Ílí a
Face Bad Of Cloth DET
In the the Face Bad Of Cloth DET expression here, FACE STANDS FOR SIDE and The bad side of the cloth. in the case, the bad side of an object. The bad side of an object refers to the side that is not meant to be visible as in the case of a cloth. In the case of wearing a cloth for instance, it means inside out.

20. Lẹ eyi klá ka ya ọ
Have face close that Do It
In the Ignore the challenges and move forward. expression, *eyi* is extended to mean FACE FOR EFFORTS, that is, to make efforts and forge ahead despite some challenges.

21. Eyi Jii
Face Sensational feeling
In Surprise this instance, FACE STANDS FOR EMOTION. Most times, our faces express the inner thoughts or feeling towards someone or a particular situation.

Findings and Conclusion

From the foregoing, it can be seen that *eyi* ‘face’ which is a body part is the core sense or prototype sense. The other senses are extended or non-typical senses which are in one way or the other connected to the prototype sense. This can be seen in Saeed (2018) as there is the prototype and extended meanings of polysemous words. To Gwarzo (2019) and Hasan & Sabir (2021), body parts are polysemous with metaphorical and metonymical meanings that are related. This study shows that there is a connection between the prototype sense and the extended sense as the extended senses have an attribute of the prototype sense. For instance, some possible attributes of ‘face’ is that it has a shape, it is in the frontal position and it performs various mental and physical functions. Also, most of the extended meanings can be said to have the attribute of performing various functions and have the notion of been frontal or visible. The mappings for metaphorical extensions

show a process of matching corresponding elements from well-known concrete areas to abstract concepts which could be concrete or abstract. The metonymical extensions on the other hand show a transfer within one domain. This can also be seen in Ibrahim & Almajir (2022) where meaning extensions connotes various things.

This study has undertaken an analysis of the cognitive interpretations of *eyi* 'face' in Idoma. The objective of the study was to identify the prototypical and non-typical meanings of *eyi* 'face', as well as identify the meaning extensions that are metaphors or metonymies as these are two essential tools of cognitive interpretation. The core sense or prototypical meaning of *eyi* 'face' is a human body part while the other meanings are related to the prototypical meaning in one way or the other. Twenty expressions with extended meanings of *eyi* were identified and analysed of which ten were metaphors and ten were metonymies. The metaphorical extensions showed various types of mapping from concrete human domain to the abstract domains. Also, the following types of metonymies were found: container for content, body part for behaviour, body part for emotions etc. This formal study has revealed polysemy as a feature of the Idoma language particularly body parts which aid in understanding and communicating about various human experiences apart from the body and also helps in inter and intra personal communication.

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Assessment of Social Media Usage by Corporate Organisations in Abuja, Nigeria for Event Planning and Promotion

Abstract

The study assessed the use of social media in corporate organisations' event planning and promotion in Abuja, Nigeria. The objective of the study is find out whether corporate organisations in Abuja use social media for event planning and promotion. Technological Determinism Theory was used, while data were collected through the quantitative research approach. It was found among others that social media like Facebook, WhatsApp and the likes are used to leverage events and ticketing sales and that social media are employed to craft exceptional, unique and engaging content.

Keywords: Social media, promotion, planning, corporate organisations.

Introduction

Since the innovation and invention of the online communication platforms, corporate organisations and event planning establishments have taken advantage of these communication tools to expand the scope of their businesses. Gupta (2024) asserts that brands are tapping into the avenues provided by digital communication platforms such as social media because they believe that most of their target customers are now online. Gupta (2024) further states that, since social media communication tools are currently town and market squares and it is clear that they remain one of the best places for the planning and promotion of events by corporate organisations and event planning firms. This implies that social media like Facebook, WhatsApp, X, TikTok, Instagram, among others give corporate and event planning organisation wider reach; meaning their activities can go beyond geographical boundaries and reach global markets.

According to Stewart (2024), digital communication platforms like Facebook, X, WhatsApp, and the likes offer huge advantages for the promotion, marketing and selling of all types of events; referring to these new communication innovations as indispensable tools in today's even organising. Karacaer (2022) corroborates that presently, social media is used by event planners and corporate organisations to convey their feeling to the target audience in seconds and as well get feedbacks from these audiences.

In the United States of America (USA), corporate event management organisations such as TravelPerk, MKG, Event Solutions, JR Global Events, Evolve Activation, Luxe Fete, MGM Resorts, AJ Williams Events, Rafanelli Events, Sequence Events and Absolute Production Services, according to Nashville (2024) have deepen their activities through the instrumentality of social media platforms. Miran (2024) concurs that social media tools have become important for event planning companies in France. Such companies include Gold for Events, Stratevent, Casting-Events, IDF Evenements, Preference-Events, Aventure Sport, Prestige Avenue and the likes (Miran, 2024).

In Ghana, social media has become useful in corporate organisations event planning. They use it to

increase visibility, focus and target specific advertising, engage in real time with customers, for expo and to build relations with clients and similar organisations (Mensah, et al, 2022).

In Nigeria, available data indicates that in the second quarter of 2024, the country has about 33 million social media users, with the percentage put at over 40%. Another statistic indicates that there are more than 90 million Nigerians with mobile phones, with over 48% and internet access of 36% (*Premium Times*, 2022). With this huge number of online communication presence, corporate organisations and event planning companies are capitalising on this to carry out their activities more effectively and efficiently.

Many scholars both in Nigeria and outside Nigeria have conducted studies concerning the employment of social media for event planning and promotion by corporate organisations (Koroma, 2018; Rathnakar, 2018; Paris, Lee & Seery, 2010; Akinrujumu & Adedara, 2024; Bradley, 2021). However, assessing the use of social media for corporate organisations' event planning and promotion in Abuja, Nigeria remains an interesting area to explore.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study is to examine the use of social media for corporate organisations' event planning and promotion in Abuja, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

1. Examine if corporate organisations in Abuja use social media for event planning and promotion.
2. Explore the purpose of using social media for event planning and promotion among the respondents.
3. Appraise the extent of the use of social media for event planning and promotion among the respondents.
4. Highlight the challenges of the use of social media for event planning and promotion among the respondents.

Conceptual Clarifications

Social Media

Social media are new forms of media that involve interactive participation. Kaplan and Heinlein (2010) define social media as "a set of Internet-based applications that build on the conceptual and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-created content". According to Arthur (2012), social media are internet-based tools and services that allow users to engage with each other, generate content, distribute, and search for information online. It is the interactive or collaborative nature of the medium that makes them "social". "Social media are web-based tools of electronic communication that allow users to exchange information individually or in groups, share ideas and opinions, make decisions and create, store, retrieve and exchange information because of its ability that allows the recording and manipulation of (text, images, videos, etc.), by anyone in the virtual world (Apuke, 2020).

Furthermore, social media are systems of networks and applications that use the Internet to create a website which is then linked through an electronic social system with other members who have the

same concerns (Sánchez-Moya & Cruz-Moya, 2015). Chijioke (2013) opines that social media are online based interactive tools via which humans can create and exchange information in a participatory manner on a real-time basis. The author further notes that social media are internet-based democratic and participatory communication platforms that allow inhibited exchange of information and documents among users.

Corporate Organisations: An Overview

Corporate establishments, bodies, organisations, companies or firms, according to DePamphills (2020) refer to the structure set up by individuals to meet up the specific needs of their coming together. It also means assigning individuals to specific business duties within and establishment (DePamphills, 2020). They are also units in organisations compressing all workers with each given his or her own functions for the overall benefits of the company. Corporate firms are entities established by individuals of like minds, stakeholders or shareholders, the primary aim of getting profits (CRI Team, 2024).

Event Planning and Promotion

According to Rome Business School (2024), event planning is a dynamic and interesting discipline that has to do with organising and coordinating different types of events depending on their scope and interest area. An event planner has the responsibility of meeting with potential and existing clients to know their needs; create detailed plans, budgets, timelines, and resources for events; as well as communicate effectively these plans to the target market (Rome Business School, 2024).

Review of Literature

This segment of the literature reviews studies by scholars and other literature on the benefits and challenges of the use of social media for event planning and promotion. To start with, Koroma (2018) investigated the effectiveness of the employment of social media to achieve the aim of marketing. The study employed both the quantitative and qualitative research designs. The study found that social media was instrumental in the marketing of organisations' goods and services. It equally established that clients do get to their organisations quickly and easily through social media. The study concluded that social media platforms have become important marketing communication tools, despite challenges such as issues around creating of content, managing time and clients, turning followers into customers, and getting traffic to one's website. Koroma's study recommended that online marketing establishments should continue to tap into the positive aspects of social media for their activities.

Rathnakar (2018) did an analysis on the impact of social media on promoting of events. The objectives of the study were to understand the important role that social media was playing in marketing promotion; its impacts of event promotion; social media recent trends in advertising and to explore the various social media platforms used for marketing promotion. Other objectives were to find out the level at which social media is employed for event marketing; and user's response to various advertisements on internet based social media websites; as well as to find out the cons of using social media for event promotion. Quantitative survey and interview research methods were used to obtain data from the respondents. The study's finding revealed that marketing and branding through social media is a very good investment which has consistently increased in value and

thereby considered as a safe and secure investment. The study also established that one of the traditional strengths of social media is that it has always been a hedge against inflation. The study further found that promotion of events on social media is challenged by time and other resource management, high competition, issues of fake information from dubious people, feedback and reputation management challenges and dynamic nature of social media audiences. The study concluded that social media has done a remarkably good job in spite of beating inflation and other challenges for years.

Similarly, social media is playing a very important role for consumer to take right decision on their needs (Casalo, Flavian & Guinaliu, 2011). This phenomenon is motivating deep changes in consumers' behaviour. This indicates that the development of online communications has changed the way of seeking information by consumers. The information of consumers' goods supplier is no longer. The major factors those influence the decisions are quickly being equalled by widely opinion and experiences form other consumers (Sigala, 2011). This method labelled as "Prosumerism". The different social media like individual web-blogs, social networks are major channels for making this method possible. Breazeale (2009) surveyed 125 papers dealing with the electronic word of mouth. The majority of these papers are characterised as being mainly empirical, to determine the facts about electronic word of mouth. An example of such a paper is a study about the motivation of consumers to participate in electronic word of mouth Henning-Thurau & Walsh, 2016) while a study by Bickat and Schindler (2018) addressed the potential value for consumers of engaging in social media.

Furthermore, Paris, Lee and Seery (2010) examined Facebook as social media platform for event promotion for consumers. The objectives of the study were to find out the relationships, influence and employment of Facebook for promoting special events and whether this motivates the consumers to attend the events. The study adopted the technology acceptance model. The study made use of the online survey method of data collection. Finding of the study among others showed that users' trust and expected relationship through Facebook had significant impact on their acceptance of Facebook and their intended offline attitude to be part of events. It was thus, concluded that Facebook use to promote events has great effects on consumers to attend such events.

The study by Akinrujomu and Adedara (2024) focused on leveraging fashion exhibition events and social media engagement for the promotion of Nigeria fabric brands. Content analysis and descriptive research methods were utilised. The study concentrated on Lagos, Port Harcourt and Hayati fashion weeks. The study found that social media was important in the promotion of local Nigerian wears. The finding further revealed that the use of social media had strong impact on creating awareness and buying habits of the customers concerning Nigerian fabric. The study concluded that Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, X, TikTok, YouTube, and other social media platforms were promoting made in Nigeria clothes. The study, therefore recommended the need to promote more made in Nigerian products and services via the social media networking sites. Bradley (2021) conducted a study on "The impact of social media marketing in the event industry: Executing a marketing plan industry". The study's research objectives were to find out whether social media marketing increased brand loyalty to the SMASH event held at the University of

Arkansas; if there was disparity between generational association regarding brand loyalty, social media, and the SMASH at the University of Arkansas; and to determine what forms of social media marketing was most recognised in promoting the SMASH event. Quantitative research approach was used in the study. Findings of the study revealed among others that social media handles were effective in the promotion of SMASH event in the studied university during the COVID-19 period. The study, thus concluded that social media has become imperative in the promotion and marketing of events. It recommended that more studies should be conducted on other institutions, using larger populations.

Theoretical Framework

Technological determinism theory was used to explain the crux of the study. Marshall McLuhan was the brainchild of this theory, which he propounded in 1982. This theory seeks to establish the causal relationship between technology and the characteristics of the society. Karl Marx posits that technology is deterministic, stating that progress and innovations in technology, particularly in production, serves as the fundamental drivers of human social interactions. According to this viewpoint, social relationships and cultural practices are in due course shaped by the technological foundation of a society. This theory states that technology underpins all human endeavours.

Technological determinism theory operates basically on two hypotheses. The first one explains that the technological advancements of a society are significant in shaping its various modes of existence. The second hypothesis states that transformations in technology of a society serve as the main and most important vehicle for modifying changes in society.

Based on the aforesaid postulations, it can be inferred that technology significantly impacts the diverse decisions human beings make, signifying that changes in any society can be linked to progresses and developments in technology. The theory points that societal development and advancement is connected to technological innovations and inventions, which in turn follows an unavoidable course.

As regards the crux of this research, corporate organisations and event planning establishments make use social media technology platforms to spread messages about their activities. The social media tools also provided the public the avenue to ask questions from corporate firms and event planning companies. This implies that the innovation of social media technology has brought a new dimension to the communication styles of corporate organisations and event planning establishments. Thus, this theory was considered relevant in this study.

Methodology

Research Design

The study employed the quantitative research approach. This research design method was adopted due to the arguments put forward by scholars such as Barbie (2001, p. 259) who emphasizes the value and importance of survey when he notes that “survey is probably the best research method available to the social scientist interested in collecting original data for the purpose of describing a population too large to be observed directly.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised Qmara Vie Planners, Wellington Events, Events by Eki, Events with Anthonia, Pereztopomtch Events, Veez Event Planners and Managers, Innate Arts and Media Ltd, ACE Party Planners and Weds and More Events. The study randomly selected these organisations and event planning establishments across the six Area Councils of Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria. In each of the organisation, a sample size of 10 was selected, through the purposive sampling method. The sample size for the study, therefore, was 100.

Validation and Reliability of Data Gathering Instruments

The first draft of the questionnaire was face validated by the researcher who, after personal scrutiny, made comments and observations after which the questionnaire was subjected to two other research experts, who equally vetted to modify the instrument before it was administered to the respondents. The reliability of the instrument was established through the test-retest method using sub-scale of 20 of a similar organisation and after an interval of two weeks, it was re-administered to people who have knowledge of event planning.

Method of Data Collection

The administration of the research instruments was done on a face-to-face basis by the researcher. The justification for the adoption of direct method of data collection was because such technique ensured a high return rate of the questionnaire administered as well as waiting for the respondents to send their responses was avoided in this form of data collection. The collection of data took three weeks.

Method of Data Analysis

Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics, which include frequency distributions, percentages through the use of tables and charts, as well as mean deviation on a measuring scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Strongly Disagree (SA) and Disagree (D).

Data Presentation

The researcher distributed 100 copies of questionnaire of which 87 were returned and found useful for analysis. Percentage representation is as illustrated in Figure 1.

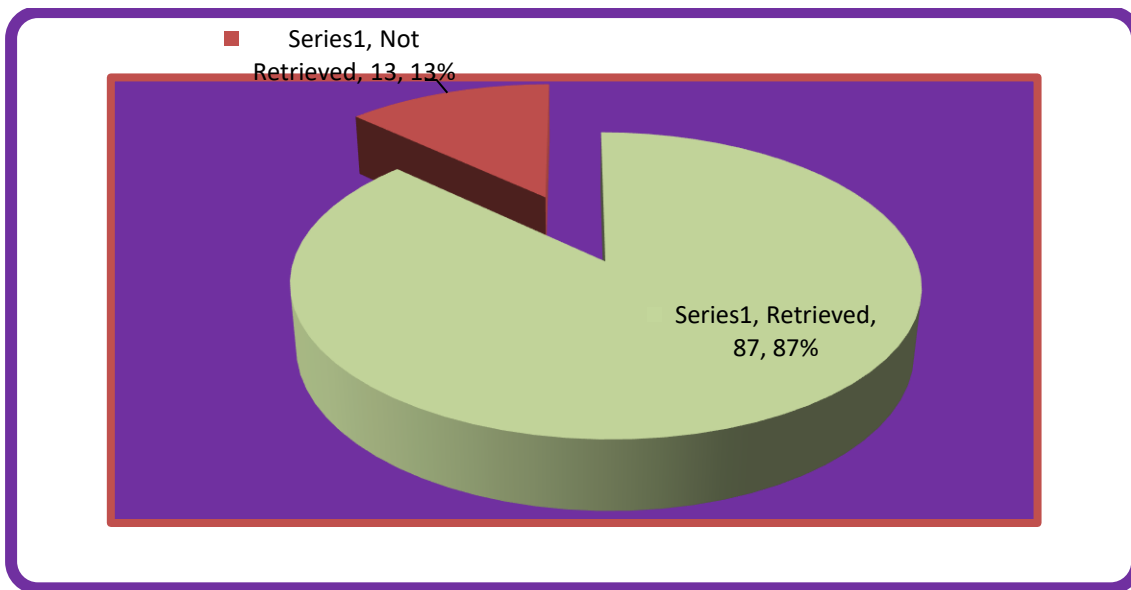


Figure 1: Response Rate Analysis

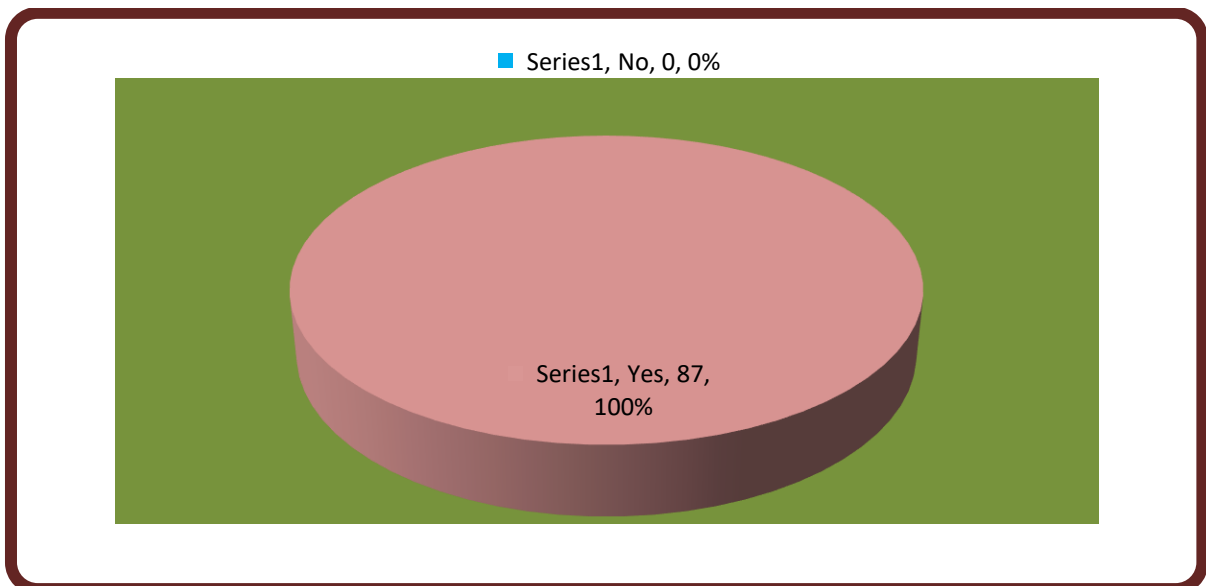


Figure 2: Use of Social Media for Event Planning and Promotion by Corporate Organisations
 It is implied by data in Figure 2 that social media has become dominate communication tools for event planners and corporate bodies.

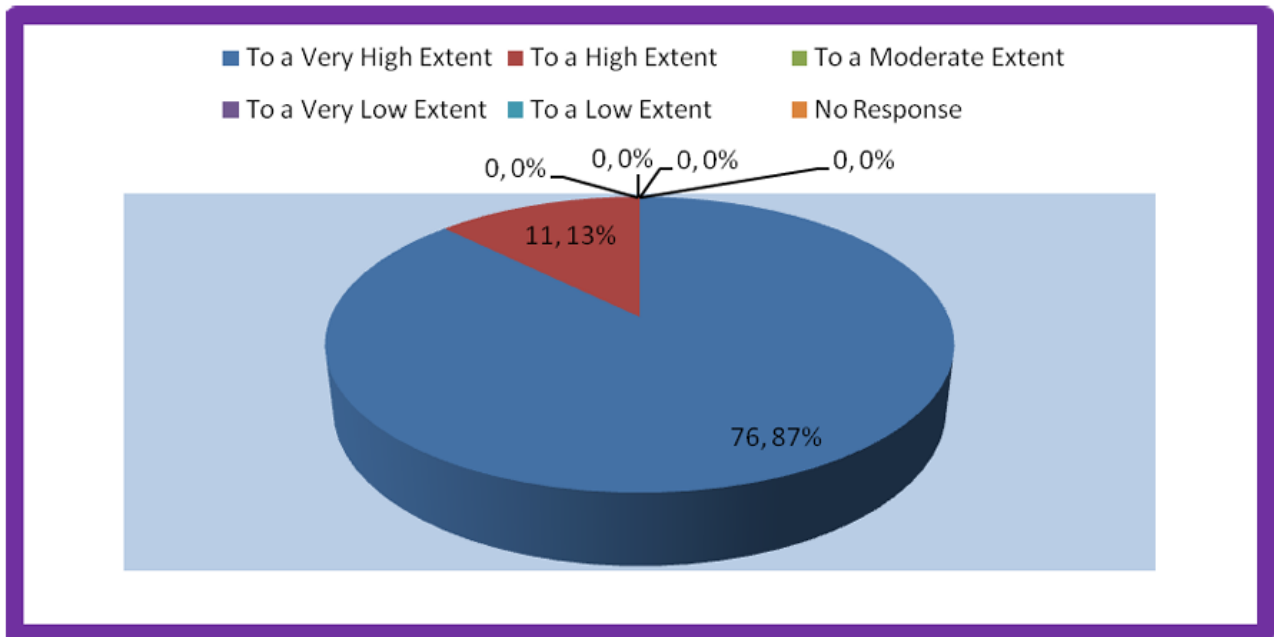


Figure 3: Extent of the Use of Social Media for Event Planning and Promotion

The results suggest that event planners and corporate organisations often use social media to create awareness about their activities.

Table 1: Purpose of Using Social Media for Event Planning and Promotion by Corporate and Event Planning Organisations

Options	AS	A	U	SD	D	Total	Mean Rating	Decision
Social media assists in optimising brand profiles and capturing the attention of millions within a second	74	13	0	0	0	87	4.8	Accepted
Use social media to create unique and exceptional event and corporate image hashtags	76	11	0	0	0	87	4.8	Accepted
Use social media like Facebook, WhatsApp and the likes to leverage events and ticketing sales	65	22	0	0	0	87	4.7	Accepted
Use social media to craft exceptional, unique and engaging content	66	19	2	0	0	87		Accepted
Use social media to collaborate with the right influencers, run contests about your organisation and pairing organic promotional efforts	56	31	0	0	0	87	4.6	Accepted
Social media enables your organisation to use live videos on event days	72	15	0	0	0	87	4.8	Accepted
Social media also enables your organisation to keep engaging with clients and customers even after staging events	77	10	0	0	0	87	4.8	Accepted
Cost-effectiveness of social media in corporate and event planning activities	61	26	0	0	0	87	4.7	Accepted
Use social media to build relationships and loyalty with customers, clients and organisations offering seminar services, goods and products	48	39	0	0	0	87	4.5	Accepted

The data presented in the Table 1 above indicates that social media has played role in event planning and promotion for corporate organisations.

Table 2: Challenges of the Use of Social Media for Event Planning and Promotion Options

	AS	A	U	SD	D	Total	Mean Rating	Decision
Issues rounding rapid spread of unsubstantiated messages concerning your establishment on social media	46	41	0	0	0	87	4.5	Accepted
Too much of information to handle on social media	65	22	0	0	0	87	4.7	Accepted
Challenges of knowing the exact and true followership of your activities on social media	59	28	0	0	0	87	4.6	Accepted
Competition and noise because you are competing with millions of other posts and promotions for the attention of the audience	70	17	0	0	0	87	4.8	Accepted
It requires and lot of time and resources to create and manage engaging content, respond to comments and messages, monitor and measure performance, and stay updated on latest trends and algorithms	62	25	0	0	0	87	4.7	Accepted
Challenges of constantly adapting to the changes that social media presents. You have to keep up with the evolving preferences and behaviours of the audience	68	19	0	0	0	87	4.7	Accepted
Challenges of considering the other options that your audience has when it comes to discovering and attending events	56	31	0	0	0	87	4.6	Accepted

It could be deduced from the finding in Table 2 that despite the huge benefits of using social media for event planning and promotion, it is faced with some challenges.

Discussion of Findings

Upon detailed analysis of data collected, result of the study revealed that social media is extensively used by corporate organisations for event planning and promotion (see Figure 2 above). Further findings further indicated that social media assists in optimising brand profiles and capturing the attention of millions within a second; social media is used to create unique and exceptional event and corporate image hashtags, as well social media like Facebook, WhatsApp and the likes are used to leverage events and ticketing sales. Findings also revealed that social media are used to craft exceptional, unique and engaging content, to collaborate with the right influencers, run contests about your organisation and pairing organic promotional efforts and that social media enables your

organisation to use live videos on event days. Other results showed that social media also enables your organisation to keep engaging with clients and customers even after staging events; cost-effectiveness of social media in corporate and event planning activities; and social media are used to build relationships and loyalty with customers, clients and organisations offering seminar services, goods and products (see Table 1 above). Bradley (2021) corroborates that social media handles were effective in the promotion of SMASH event in the studied university during the COVID-19 period. This also justifies that adoption of the technological determinism theory, which states that innovation of social media technology has brought a new dimension to the communication styles of individuals and organisations.

The study further found that challenges associated with the use of social media for event planning and promotion by corporate organisations to include: Issues rounding rapid spread of unsubstantiated messages concerning your establishment on social media and too much of information to handle on social media. Others are challenges of knowing the exact and true followership of your activities on social media; competition and noise because you are competing with millions of other posts and promotions for the attention of the audience, It requires and lot of time and resources to create and manage engaging content, respond to comments and messages, monitor and measure performance, and stay updated on latest trends and algorithms. Findings further revealed other hindrances to include constantly adapting to the changes that social media presents. You have to keep up with the evolving preferences and behaviours of the audience, and the challenges of considering the other options that your audience has when it comes to discovering and attending events (see Table 2 above). This finding align with an earlier one by Koroma (2018) who found challenges such as issues around creating of content, managing time and clients, turning followers into customers, and getting traffic to one's website.

Conclusion

The crux of the research was to evaluate the use of social media for corporate organisations' event planning and promotion. From the data gathered, the study concluded that social media has become imperative in the business of planning and promoting events by corporate establishments. This is due to the fact that social media used to create unique and exceptional event as well as building corporate image for organisations. It was also concluded that in spite of the advantages of the application of social media in event planning and promotion, it faced some challenges such as time consumption, issues of fake information, competition and the dynamic nature of social media audience, among others.

Recommendations

From the conclusion, the study recommends:

1. The continuous and good use of social media for event planning and promotion.
2. Stringent measures should be taken by social media owners to deal decisively with people who use these platforms to spread fake and unsubstantiated information about corporate organisations.

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Use Of English Ambiguity in Political Discourse: A Study of *Politics Today* on Channels Television

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Abstract

This qualitative study examines the strategic use of ambiguity in Nigerian political interviews within the theoretical framework of sociosemantics. The study addresses the understudied role of ambiguity, its causes and effects on political communication in Nigerian political context. Seven interviews conducted on Channels Television in the programme *Politics Today* were recorded. Key findings demonstrate that politicians use ambiguity to evade direct responsibilities, shape political narratives, and manage public expectations. Ambiguity also serves to elicit sympathy through emotional appeals, make extravagant accusations, and divert attention from pressing issues. The study further identifies political pressure, the need for a broad constituency, and the complexity of governance as some of the causes of ambiguity. Overall, the findings suggest that while ambiguity can foster participation, it compromises the clarity of political communication, leading to speculation and distraction from substantive issues. This research contributes to deepening the understanding of how sociosemantic strategies influences political discourse in Nigeria, underscoring the need for critical public engagement.

Keywords: English ambiguity; Political interviews; Nigerian politics, social meaning; social context, Pretext

Introduction

The term "use of English" encompasses the diverse functions of English in different contexts, such as communication, education, commerce, and politics. With historical roots in Great Britain and the United States, English has become a dominant global language that permeates many aspects of life (Ilyosovna, 2024). Its importance is especially pronounced in political discourse, where it serves as a key tool for communication, persuasion, and the dissemination of information. The use of English in political discourse facilitates debates that shape public opinion and influence policy decisions. Ultimately, it determines how politicians convey their messages and develop narratives to reach voters (Habiburahman & Abdul Rahman, 2024)

In political contexts, the strategic use of English is often accompanied by ambiguity—the ability of words, phrases, or statements to allow for multiple interpretations (Carnap & Morris, 1938). Politicians use various linguistic elements, such as metaphors, allusions, etc., to make their

expressions ambiguous. Metaphors are crucial in the language of political leadership, as they mediate between consciously rational ideology and unconscious myth. Charteris-Black as cited in (Arakelyan, 2009). This linguistic phenomenon is central to sociolinguistics and social semantics, with early contributions from scholars such as Charles W. Morris. At the beginning of the 20th century, Morris emphasised the importance of ambiguity in semantics and communication. Later advances, particularly in the work of (Leech, 1983) and (Horn & Ward, 2008), clarified the functions of ambiguity, both at the lexical and pragmatic levels of language.

The role of ambiguity in political interviews is particularly significant because politicians often use ambiguous language as a mechanism to formulate arguments, increase their persuasiveness, and manage public perception. This is where the concept of pretext comes into play. The term 'pretext' generally refers to an ulterior motive: a pretending to do one thing but intending to do something else (Widdowson, 2004) as politicians deliberately formulate statements that allow for multiple interpretations. With this deceptive tool, politicians can address a broader audience and defend themselves against criticism (Horn; Leech; Orwell). Recent studies, such as (Zaripovna, 2025), underscore the role of language as a central tool of political communication. It allows political rhetoric to function as an ideological tool and shape the audience's interpretation of events.

Political interviews are one of the means politicians use to engage with the public and persuade, manipulate, and sell their political ideologies.(Abdulkadir, 2023), argues that political interviews, like other political speeches, often lead to a repressive use of language, manifested in the form of manipulation, marginalisation, offensive language, propaganda, the use and abuse of power, and control over what can and cannot be represented in discourse, as a dominant ideology is imposed on the less privileged.

Despite the growing literature on ambiguity in political discourse, there is a significant research gap specifically addressing its application in Nigerian political interviews, particularly on platforms such as *Politics Today*. This study addresses this gap by examining how ambiguity in English influences the contextual clarification of political arguments, strategically highlights them, and enables comparative scenario analysis in political interviews. The objective of this research is to deepen the understanding of how ambiguity functions as an important communication tool that shapes public discourse, informs political narratives, and ultimately influences the landscape of governance in Nigeria.

As such, this study investigates the use of English ambiguity in political communications on television with focus on:

1. determining the uses of ambiguity in political interviews in *Politics Today* on Channels Television.
2. examining the causes of ambiguity in political interviews in *Politics Today* on Channels Television.
3. Identifying the effects of the use of ambiguity in political interviews in *Politics Today* on Channels Television.

Literature Review

Linguistic ambiguity describes a phenomenon in which words or expressions open up to multiple

interpretations, significantly influencing political communication and discourse. Taubaldiyev et al. (2024) argue that the choice and use of political terminology are not mere linguistic exercises, but strategic maneuvers to influence public perception. Political interviews often exploit these ambiguities through contextual analysis, allowing politicians to formulate messages that connect with diverse audiences while maintaining narrative flexibility. This fundamental understanding positions ambiguity as a crucial tool that politicians can use to engage the public in interviews and manipulate perceptions.

Examining the role of ambiguity in political rhetoric, Bach et al. (2025) argue that it has long been suspected and widely accepted that political candidates can benefit in elections by deliberately framing their positions and policy proposals in ambiguous terms. Similarly, Leech (1983) Analyses how speakers' intentions can be ambiguously obscured by contextual factors. This observation underscores how politicians strategically use ambiguity to deflect criticism while simultaneously appealing to diverse audiences.

While Orwell (1946) criticizes the widespread use of ambiguous language, warning that it often obscures true meanings and misleads the public, Widmaier et al. (2023) take a contrary position: the absence of ambiguity and uncertainty can generate false certainties and excessive risk-taking, thus increasing the likelihood of conflict. This dichotomy highlights the complexity of ambiguity in political discourse, where its interpretation can vary considerably depending on the context. Rivers et al. (2017) contribute to this understanding by highlighting that context can also influence implicit bias expressed through other mechanisms, including those related to cognitive control. This underscores the need for a nuanced approach when analysing political rhetoric, as different audience perspectives can lead to different interpretations of strategically ambiguous statements.

In media studies, Bach et al. (2025) argue that the communicator creates a message with multiple interpretations, targeting an audience with different interpretive groups, all to the communicator's benefit. Abdulkadir (2023) further explores this analysis by examining political interviews, arguing that ambiguity can manifest as oppressive language that facilitates manipulation and marginalisation of opposing viewpoints. Their findings lead to further research on the consequences of English ambiguity in the unique Nigerian context, where cultural and linguistic dynamics can further complicate interpretations. In addressing this complexity, Machin and Mayr (2012) advocates a multimodal analysis of political language, arguing that ambiguity goes beyond verbal cues and includes visual and contextual elements that enhance audience comprehension, a crucial factor in the age of multimedia communication. Friedman (2017) argues that heuristics generalise across situations and allows people to make quick decisions despite time pressure or incomplete information, but often lead to predictable misjudgments (cognitive biases).

He examines how cognitive biases affect the processing of ambiguous information and proposes that politicians use these cognitive tendencies to effectively achieve their communicative goals. Similarly, Benford and Snow (2000) Emphasise how ambiguity shapes social movements and political identities, allowing different groups to interpret shared but vague concepts, which can facilitate broader coalition efforts.

Meislová and Chryssoyelos (2024) analyze the consequences of ambiguous language in economic discourse, noting that all political actions are "prepared, accompanied, controlled, and influenced by language." This can lead to public misunderstandings and compromise the effectiveness of political actions. This search for clarity is echoed by Anjorin-Ojewole et al. (2025), who Emphasise the strategic use of ambiguous language in electoral campaigns, arguing that political language is used strategically to mobilize support, influence public opinion, and secure electoral victories. Eisenberg (2009) elaborates on this topic by examining the crucial role of contextual factors in amplifying ambiguity, as every action is considered potentially communicative, and context is the key factor in determining meaning.

The interpretation of meaning is highly dependent on the context of interaction, which allows politicians to effectively shape public discourse by controlling the interpretive context of their statements. Furthermore, Chahbane and Zrizi (2023) analyze the role of media framing in incorporating ambiguity, which influences public interpretations of political messages and events while reinforcing existing power structures. They examine how different issues are presented, which relates to the purpose of the presentation, as well as the political perspective and context. This becomes evident in the media, as well as in elections and political debates as Galindo-Silva (2024) examines how ambiguity influences political identities and illustrates how political parties use ambiguous messages to build consensus around common goals while allowing for multiple interpretations.

The literature highlights the diverse role of linguistic ambiguity in political discourse, revealing both its strategic importance and potential drawbacks. While Leech, Bach et al., and Taubaldiyev et al. emphasise the importance of ambiguity when addressing diverse audiences, Orwell's critique serves as a cautionary tale, underscoring the need for clarity in communication. Widmaier et al. offer a nuanced perspective that complements the discussions of Leech and Taubaldiyev et al., illustrating how deliberate ambiguity can facilitate discourse on controversial issues. This contrast between the advantages and disadvantages of ambiguity underscores the complexity of the literature.

The diverse perspectives consistently emphasise the crucial influence of contextual factors on audience interpretation, as demonstrated by Bach et al. and Abdulkadir. Their contributions underscore the importance of identifying the context of political communication to fully understand the consequences of ambiguity. Machin and Mayr's multimodal approach deepen this understanding and suggests that expressions of ambiguity are not limited solely to verbal language but are enriched by visual and contextual elements. In summary, the existing literature provides a comprehensive overview of the functioning of ambiguity in political communication and its impact on public discourse. However, the present study seeks to fill the existing gap regarding the specific use of ambiguity in English in Nigerian political interviews, an underexplored area. By focusing on this context, the study provides insights into how ambiguity functions uniquely in Nigerian political communication, highlighting both its strategic use and the cultural nuances that shape audience interpretation in this context.

Despite the extensive literature on linguistic ambiguity in political communication, there is a

significant gap in research specifically addressing its application in Nigerian political interviews. While scholars such as Widmaier, Bach, Leech, and others have examined the nuances of ambiguity in various political contexts, the distinctive features and effects of English ambiguity in Nigerian political discourse remain largely unaddressed. Existing studies often focus on Western frameworks and contexts, leaving a gap in our understanding of how linguistic ambiguity operates in common political interviews in Nigeria, a country with a diverse sociolinguistic landscape and complex political dynamics.

Researchers such as Taubaldiyev, Bach, and Abdulkadir have conducted extensive work on English ambiguity and its effects on political communication in various contexts within the theoretical framework of sociosemantics. However, there remains a lack of research focused on how ambiguity concretely manifests and influences political discourse in Nigeria. This research addresses this gap by examining the contextual use of English ambiguities in Nigerian political interviews. It aims to contribute to a qualitative understanding of how politicians manage complex narratives and public perceptions in this unique combination of Nigerian linguistic, political, and cultural environments.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design, specifically utilising discourse analysis approach. The qualitative design is suited to exploring complex language dynamics—ambiguity—in political interviews, particularly in the context of Nigerian political discourse. It aims to understand how politicians use ambiguous English expressions to manipulate the people, thereby shaping their perception and actions on public issues.

Research Population and Sample

Nigerian interviewers and interviewees in the conduct of political interviews on television constitute the research population. The interviewer and interviewees in the programme of *Politics Today* on the Channels Television form the representative sample used for the research. The interviewer and the interviewees conveniently made the sample size during which the data collection was made on the Channels Television.

The Channels Television is one of the major Nigerian television stations considered notably for its emphasis on timely broadcast of political matters. *Politics Today* is arguably the programme that is conveniently featured daily between 7 to 8pm, but 8 to 9pm on Sunday, in order to keep current Nigerians and non-Nigerians around the world on political developments in Nigeria. This is done by inviting guests from different backgrounds both in the studio and virtually to express their interests and opinions, attempting to explain the Nigerian and the world politics as they arise.

Data Instrument and Collection

Because the interviews in the programme *Politics Today* on the Channels Television was used as the source for the data collection, recording was used as the means for the data collection. This was necessitated by the reality that the interviews were not conducted by the researcher, but by a third party on television. Since the interview on televisions provide adequate and competent data for the research, conducting and recording interviews by the research were considered unnecessary, especially that recording the interviews on television minimizes or rather eliminated the weakness

of receiving unnaturally-occurring English conversations.

The data, which are seven interview sessions in the programme *Politics Today* on the Channels Television, were collected (or rather recorded) and subsequently transcribed for reporting. Collection of the data was conducted in eight days, beginning from 17th February to 24th February 2025 using a DSTV Explorer Decoder with Personal Video Recorder (PVR) capabilities to store and save recorded programmes for future playback. The recorded data were meticulously transcribed verbatim within three days, ensuring the accurate representation of spoken language, including intonation, pauses, and nuances that contribute to the understanding of ambiguity.

Data Analysis

The data were analysed, focusing on identifying recurring themes and linguistic strategies that illustrate the use, causes and effect of ambiguity – probing how they function within the political dialogue presented on the programme. It focused both on the structure of the language used and the broader context in which these interactions occurred. Care was taken to present findings in a way that does not compromise individuals' reputations or expose them to unwarranted public scrutiny, while also recognising their public status. Names of the Interviewer and Interviewees were deliberately left out to ensure confidentiality.

Limitations and Delimitations

The study was limited to the seven interviews recorded within the seven consecutive days used for the data collection and relied on publicly accessed materials. Findings of the research may not be generalisable beyond the context of Nigerian political interviews. Focus of the research was exclusively on political interviews featured on *Politics Today*, thus excluding other forms of political discourse, such as debates or social media communications.

Results

The Results of Research Objective 1

From the data collected, the following results for the use of ambiguity have been extracted:

Ambiguity as a Strategy for the Avoidance of Indictment

As a strategy to introduce his ambiguous question, the *Interviewer* shows a video about which the interview was conducted. This was followed by the ambiguous question asked by the *Interviewer*: “What is your view and take on what you saw happen today, especially when you can see on National television this evening?” This question is ambiguous essentially because it fails to specify the information the *Interviewer* expects to hear from *Interviewee 1*, leaving the Interviewee 1 to express what he felt as to express. Clearly, the Interviewer made such an ambiguous statement in order not to be held accountable for naming any person, place or thing. In his response, the Interviewee 1 appropriately responded using an ambiguous expression. A part of his ambiguous expression reads:

It was a major low for politics in Lagos state.... Lagos State has had its sophisticated political history for a very long time. Since the 1800 there's been a demand for an independent legislative

arm and to see what happened today was an assault on this very assembly that is, is, its members are supposed to owe their loyalty to the Constitution.

From the extract above it is obvious that the Interviewee 1 was unable to derive a concrete or specific understanding of what the question of the Interviewer demanded. He therefore decides to express in ambiguous expression in order to save himself from being indicted.

Use of Ambiguity as a Strategy for Developing an Effective Political Communication

From the same Interview 1 above, use of ambiguity has also been observed as a strategy for developing an effective political communication. As indicated in the Interview 1, it is from the ambiguous response of the *Interviewee 1* that further communication took place. For example, from the responses of the *Interviewee 1*, the *Interviewer* stated as a follow up: “So, if you look at what happened today....” This came as an attempt by the *Interviewer* to compel the *Interviewee 1* to disambiguate his first ambiguous response. To Emphasise the need for disambiguation, the *Interviewer* asked the question in a clear manner: “Do you have your worry about how this will impact on governance in the state?”

Such use of ambiguity as strategies for the avoidance of indictment and development of effective political communication are reflected in Interview 2. For example, the *Interviewer* asked a similar ambiguous question as a strategy to avoid indictment: “Mister Oki, what can you say about the turn of events today?” in his response, the *Interviewee 2* stated:

...today is a sad day for me, and indeed, it should be for all democracy loving Nigerians. I work at the dark days of Nigeria under the military junta. I looked at what a few of us did, putting our lives on the line for us to win back democracy....

Similarly, the *Interviewee 2* attempted to avoid being indicted by using the ambiguous statement above in exactly the way the *Interviewer* attempted. To generate further political discussion, the *Interviewer* understood the response of the *Interviewee 2* as expressing a devilish account of the political events in Lagos. He therefore used the ambiguous expression made by the *Interviewee 2* and asked: “What does that mean? That dare-devil?”

Use of Ambiguity as a Strategy for Establishing Wild Allegations

A typical instance where ambiguous statements are used to establish wild allegations is witnessed in Interview 3. For example, two *Interviewees* possessing different political interests had a cause to use violent communications in order to attract sympathy to their respective political ideologies. The *Interviewer* asked the first *Interviewee*: “...yeah, so honorable, you have said that members of your party were killed today. What more can you tell us?” In his response, he asserted without evidence: “...there is no ambition that worth the life of a human being and it is quite unfortunate today, we lost six good citizens of this state. Ah, irrespective of the political party....” The attention of the *Interviewer* diverted to his political opponent when there was a technical glitch with the studio equipment. Similarly, when his political opponent was asked a similar question that: “...Let me allow Senator Ajibola Bashiru to come in. I mean, there are allegations that you, members of your party in Osun state are killing PDP members. Why So? In his reaction, the *Interviewee* vented:

I will say that I'm very emotional tonight, and this is not politics. What happened in Osun today is carnage... I'm in a serious mourning, our chairman in Irewole local government, honorable Remi

Abbas was cut down in his prime today in cold blooded... Was killed like a common criminal by thugs of the People's Democratic Party in Osogbo local government, a leading functionary of government and I have video evidence here. Teslim Bebalaye led thugs to the premises of Osogbo local government, I have video evidence of it....

Such violent communications without evidence to support them demonstrate conscious use of ambiguity to establish wild and unsubstantiated allegations to attract sympathy and of course support to their respective ideologies.

Use of Ambiguity as a Strategy for Shaping Political Narratives

Interviewees often employ ambiguous phrases to strengthen their political narrative and portray a positive image of themselves to the electorates to gain their trust and ultimately their votes. A typical example of this can be seen in interview 5, when the *Interviewer* asked the *Interviewee*: "...earlier the High Court in Ilesha said OSIEC should go ahead and conduct election. Let me get your view on the the(sic) order of court?" The *Interviewee* retorted:

... it's quite unfortunate... This is a judicial rascality. There's a clear court judgment affirming the elected local government officials. There's no vacancy, so you cannot have election. And it is also laughable that a court of a lower jurisdiction is giving an interlocutory injunction. It gives a judgment of the court of higher coordinate. It is, it is laughable. I saw the (sic) what the Attorney General of the State said earlier, a lawyer. I'm shocked that the Attorney General of the state. That is a lawyer... So, it's simple, there's no vacancy. As far as the law is concerned, the Council Chairman and the councilors are back in office.

The *Interviewee* uses phrases such as "judicial rascality," "No vacancy" and makes references to legal principles such as injunctions, lower and higher court which can have different interpretations depending on the listener's perspective. These terms are confusing and ambiguous to a listener who is unfamiliar with such legal jargons. In the midst of these ambiguous responses of the *Interviewee*, he continually tries to persuade the listener through his narrative that his position on the matter is the legitimate one. He employs legal jargon and references to past court rulings to fabricate a layer of complexity that obscures the main issues at hand: "A lower court cannot give a restraining injunction against a judgment." By framing his argument in this way, he uses ambiguity in legal interpretation to support his stance while making it difficult for the audience to challenge his viewpoints without legal expertise.

Use of Ambiguity as a Strategy for Managing Expectations

Politicians often use ambiguity to manage public expectations effectively. Politicians use pretext as a tool constantly used by politicians. Politicians often get elected into offices on the back of promises they make to the electorates; these politicians use ambiguity to lower the expectations on themselves by the electorates after they get into those offices. This explains why pretext is a tool constantly used by politicians. This can be clearly seen in interview 6. The *Interviewer* asked the *Interviewee*: "... but it then means something that a lot of burden will be on your shoulder, ... you must now deliver for the people of Ondo State... Do you feel that pressure?" In the *Interviewee's* response he tries to minimize expectations upon himself by making ambiguous statements:

...I'm the man of the moment, and the one standing, you know, in front and the heaven is open over

me, and the whole burden is upon my shoulder. But I want to tell you that, yes, it might look that way, literally, that I carry the whole burden, but I have learned to share the burden, you know, with other, with my running mate, because he's also going to be part of the government and other qualified appointees that will be made in the course of the in the course of the the(sic) month or year. I don't know how many months you could take, but like just today, I've appointed eight of them, you know, got a new SSG....

The Results of Research Objective 2

The data gathered for this research provides the following results as causes of ambiguity in political communication:

Political Pressures and Scrutiny as a Cause of Use of Ambiguity

Ambiguity often arises from the political pressures and scrutiny faced by leaders holding political offices. This pressure and scrutiny come with the political terrain as people's expectations are built up during electioneering campaigns where promises are made to the electorates. An example can be found in Interview 6. The *Interviewer* asked: "But how would you summarize the race for you for the next four years. What should be the expectations of the people of Ondo State going into this four-year race?" In his response, the *Interviewee* said:

but the people Ondo state they know me. They know what I stand for, and they came out en masse to vote for me, ... expectation is high. Yes, no doubt about that, but they know what we can do already... So they know what we can do... we are just going to improve on all that we have started... we have some records, and we are going to improve on that... they have given us a new mandate for four years. God helping us, we will try our best and deliver all our campaign promises to the people.

The *Interviewee's* response above is vague and lacks specific details. This ambiguity is caused by the political pressure and scrutiny on the *interviewee* as a political leader.

Need for Broad Followership as a Cause for the Use of Ambiguity

In an effort to appeal to a broad audience to buy-into their biased narrative, every politician's desire is to broaden and increase his followership at all cost. In such cases, pretexts come into play and ambiguity becomes a useful tool in the hands of politicians during political interviews. This can be seen in Interview 5. The *Interviewer* asked: How did we get here? But how come your party and the PDP... got out against each other and people were killed, please how did Osun state get to this level and because they have accused you and your party of this violence." The *Interviewee* responded: "... it's quite unfortunate they've accused us of violence but we are at the receiving end. We lost a prominent member of our party, Remi Abbas you can see, I'm putting on black, black. We are still mourning him. One of the reinstated chairmen of Irewole local government was killed in the broad daylight. My convoy was fired out. They riddled my vehicle with eh bullet...."

The *Interviewee's* ambiguous response is a passionate attempt to make a broad appeal to convince the viewers that he and his party are the victims and not the aggressors in the conflict. This tactic creates an emotional connection with the audience, making it challenging for them to question the validity of his statements. Such appeals to emotion paired with ambiguous claims distract from factual analysis of the situation, leaving major topics inadequately addressed.

Another instance is seen in Interview 1. The *Interviewer* asked the *Interviewee*: “Do you imagine that this is a political godfatherism being played to the gallery or what exactly do you think is playing out here?” The *Interviewee* in his response, made an ambiguous statement because he wanted to appeal to the sensibilities of the broad listeners that his party was a law-abiding party. He replied: “I think that the APC has sort of normalized this idea of using intimidation and force to get their way, and that is what we saw today, an attempt to intimidate this, the speaker to resign and step aside by using armed men and using threats of violence. That's what we saw today, and that's unacceptable.”

Complexities of Governance as a Cause of Use of Ambiguity

Government and the complex realities in governance's naturally lead to ambiguous responses especially those of political leaders. This can be found in 7. The *Interviewer* asked: “Census... can we afford a census?” This question which is straightforward and demands a ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ answer, was answered as follows: Affordability? It's, you know, one thing, do we need Census data? It's another so, you weigh, you weigh, you weigh your options. If you look, of course, you know that you need data in planning, and without adequate data, you can't even churn out sound policy instrument that will drive development, you know, in the country.”

Due to the complex, intricate and myriad policies, processes and procedures in governance, the use of ambiguity becomes prevalent as part of the inherent bureaucracy associated with governments and governance.

Another instance can be seen in Interview 6. The *Interviewer* asked: “... But if there is one thing that you will, like the Nigerian people, and Ondo state people to know, Ondo state for economy wise, to improve the well-being and the economy of the state, what would that be Governor Ayedatiwa?” The *Interviewee* responded: “... we have good soil for cocoa production, and our weather is fantastic, so that we are leading in that among other states that are doing well in cocoa, but Ondo State is leading...” This is a positive statement about agriculture but lacks specifics regarding the complex challenges faced within those government sectors.

Fear of Misinterpretation as a Cause of Use of Ambiguity

Ambiguous responses are often strategically employed to avoid misinterpretation or misrepresentation. This is clearly shown in Interview 7. The *Interviewer* asked: “... 7 billion naira allegedly spent on consultancy. And this is alleged to have, and it does look like nothing is happening?” The *Interviewee* replied:

I don't know. I'm trying to, you know, I'm trying to avoid some things tonight. I don't want to, you know, ruffle feather so much, but I'm struggling here, Nigeria today is, is dining with poverty, with over 40% in multi-dimensional poverty. I think, no about 70 Is it? okay 72% in the rural area, then 63% generally, largely because we have a pandemic within the system. It is corruption.

Similarly, this can be seen in Interview 6. The *Interviewer* asked: “... without having to speak with all sides of the mouth your opposition criticize you heavily about things that went on your home front when you were on the campaign trail?” The *Interviewee* replied: “...You know that there's always all kinds of falsehood, you know, in politics all kinds of insinuations and assumptions. So, I

have my own fair share of it by those who do not really know me and my home too well....” This comment suggests a caution against potential misinformation without specifically addressing any accusations leveled against him.

The Results of Research Objective 3

The results extracted from the data collected for this study are presented below:

Evasion of Responsibility as an Effect of the Use of Ambiguity

Ambiguity enables politicians to evade direct questions, making it difficult for audiences to pin down their stances or responsibilities. For instance, in Interview 2, the *Interviewer* asked: “... what happened today that the DSS took over the assembly complex and the ins and outs of the complex today? What really happened? Who invited them? How did it get to this point?” The *Interviewee* states: “I honestly do not know, and until I have the facts, I will not speak to that,” he sidesteps the responsibility of addressing who invited the DSS into the assembly. This creates a space where he can avoid accountability for his party's actions.

Politicians often use ambiguous language to avoid taking responsibility for controversial issues. This is also evident in Interview 5 when the *Interviewer* asked: “Your party has already said that it will not participate in the election of tomorrow, but earlier the High Court in Ilesha said OSIEC should go ahead and conduct election. Let me get your view on the the(sic) order of court?” In the *Interviewee’s* response, he made the comment: “... As far as the law is concerned, the Council Chairman and the councilors are back in office.” This statement, while assertive, does not address the actual violence and disorder occurring within the state, allowing him to distance himself from accountability for the chaos.

Framing of Narrative as an Effect of Use of Ambiguity

Politicians often use ambiguous statements to frame issues in their favor. For example, In Interview 6, the *Interviewer* asked the question: “... it does look like that there is a renewed arising threat in the forest and the interiors of Ondo State in your own time, how much of an arising in Ondo State are you going to tackle them?” The *Interviewee* responded and emphasised that: “Amotekun is on ground, I can tell you that. And it has come to stay....” he uses ambiguity to suggest active security measures are being implemented without providing specific details on those efforts. This can lead audiences to feel reassured without knowing the depth of the security strategies in place.

Similarly, in Interview 2, the *Interviewer* asked: “... what can you say about the turn of events today?” In the *Interviewee’s* response, he lamented that: “... if we refuse to learn from history, that we may be consumed by it....,” suggesting that the current situation has historical precedents guiding future outcomes. This statement is vague but carries a strong implication about the dangers of inaction, influencing the audience’s perception towards urgency without detailing specific actions.

Manipulation of Public Sentiment as an Effect of Use of Ambiguity

Ambiguous language can manipulate public emotions. In Interview 3, when questioned on the violence in Osun State, the *Interviewee* in his statement, uses emotionally charged words to describe

the killing of his party members as “cold-blooded,” “brutally,” “mauled” and he evokes sympathy and horror, shaping the audience's emotional response regarding the violence without providing clear evidence of perpetration: “I have video evidence here.” This tactic can sway public opinion towards a status of anger and demand for justice.

Ambiguity can manipulate how the public perceives events. This can be seen in Interview 6, when the *Interviewer* asked: “... you must now deliver for the people of Ondo State does that dawn on you today, that in fact, more pressure will be on your head. Do you feel that pressure?” The *Interviewee* made the statement: “... I have learned to share the burden,” it reflects an attempt to portray himself as a collaborative leader, while the vagueness of his statement can obscure any potential shortcomings in his governance. This leaves the public unsure about the specific actions he will take.

Inducement of Speculation as an Effect of Use of Ambiguity

Ambiguity induces speculation. As the audience seeks to fill in the gaps created by the unclear and ambiguous expressions being uttered. In Interview 7, the *Interviewer* asked: “Let me allow you to just give us about the 60 seconds of analysis or your view on what went on in the National Assembly?” The *Interviewee* remarks: “... you can't hear many of the things that can I say go down, that you see happen, that you see daily happening at the National Assembly.” His ambiguous reference conditions the audience to speculate about what goes on behind the scenes, potentially stirring public intrigues or concerns without substantiated claims, giving room for further speculations.

Another instance of the inducement of speculation is seen in Interview 4. The *Interviewer* asked: “So, when we bring DSS into political civil operation, like what we saw in the DSS. I mean, in the case of the Lagos assembly leadership issue, give us an understanding in that kind of scenario, what really played out?” The *Interviewee* replied: “There must have been a build up to what you saw in Lagos. What played out in Lagos had a buildup. And all this build up was covered by the State Security Service.” This reply leaves room for the audience to speculate on what the build-up could have been as the *Interviewees* ambiguous reply did not shed light or give an explanation as to what the buildup was.

In Interview 2, the *Interviewee* references to “big masquerades” suggest hidden forces at play, inducing and prompting questions about who these individuals are and what their motives might be. This type of speculation can perpetuate rumors and narratives that are not based on facts, further complicating public discourse.

Deflection from Issues as an Effect of Use of Ambiguity

Ambiguous statements can redirect focus away from pressing issues. Politicians often use pretext to mask their true intentions. This allows politicians to deflect pressing questions without providing substantive answers. In Interview 6, Ayedatiwa is asked about his administration's plans: “What should be the expectations of the people of Ondo State going into this four-year race?” He responds with vague commitments about improving different sectors without detailing any concrete steps or timelines:

They have seen our the(sic) strides we have made in the(sic) every sector of the economy. Is it in Agric? is it in education? the healthcare delivery and all of that? So, they know what we can do... we are just going to improve on all that we have started. We are going to improve on that because...They have given us a new mandate for four years. God helping us, we will try our best and deliver all our campaign promises to the people.

This tactic allows him to use pretext and deflect from the issue regarding his administration's actual performance. This is also seen in Interview 2 when the *Interviewer* presses for clarity on the political dynamics within the APC by asking: "...let me ask you, okay, just for a moment, and you could see that the interesting interplay, for a lot of people who perhaps don't know what is going on in the APC and don't understand the dynamics?" The *Interviewee* replies with vague generalizations about history and democracy instead of addressing specific internal conflicts directly:

I don't know about the mandate on which they want to stand. But I know about one thing very clearly, in the defense of democracy, majority of us shall stand. We will stand by laying our lives on the line. If it will get to that, we will defend democracy as we have done time past, and let me tell you, going forward, I will also be at the forefront leading true Democrats to stand up for this tyrannical behavior that some people want to foist on us now.

Discussion

The way in which political communication is conducted, as evidenced by the results of the recorded interviews, confirms Carnap and Morris' (1938) assertion that no political communication is free from ambiguity, as every recorded interview begins with an ambiguous question and is sustained by ambiguous answers. The results, which also reveal the use of ambiguity to make wild accusations and influence public opinion, support Habiburahman and Abdul Rahman (2024) conclusion that political communication is inherently manipulative and seeks to influence public opinion. In this sense, Horn and Ward's (2008) concept of ambiguity as an integral part of political discourse supports the findings of this research and highlights that ambiguity is not merely incidental to political discourse, but a fundamental aspect of political communication that politicians use strategically to manage complex public interactions. Bach et al.'s (2025) conclusion that politicians use ambiguous language to address different audiences and thus create rhetorical flexibility is consistent with the findings of this research. Ambiguous statements allow politicians to discuss with different demographic groups without committing to specific positions. This suggests that ambiguity promotes a level of compromise that can strengthen support among undecided voters.

By focusing on the importance of context for the meaning of ambiguous statements, as argued by Leech (1983), the interviews revealed how speakers' intentions can be obscured by contextual factors, allowing them to formulate messages that are interpreted differently by different audiences. This is supported by Orwell (1946) who asserts that the use of ambiguous language is deceptive and highlights its potential to obscure meaning in political communication. Widmaier et al. (2023) Emphasise, however, that ambiguity, when used deliberately, can promote inclusive discussions on controversial issues. This is evident in the fact that the interviewer introduced all political interviews recorded for this study with an ambiguous question, specifically providing respondents

with the opportunity to express their opinions freely and without specification.

Furthermore, the study is consistent with the findings of Bach et al. (2025), who argue that ambiguity is a strategic tool in political persuasion and Emphasise the importance of media literacy for the public. Politicians' use of ambiguous language requires the public to critically interact with political messages to discern underlying intentions and meanings. Abdulkadir (2023) reinforces this idea by Analysing how ambiguity can manifest itself in repressive language, potentially marginalizing opposing opinions and warranting further investigation of its impact on Nigerian public discourse.

The findings demonstrate how ambiguity functions as a strategic tool for politicians, allowing them to navigate complex interactions without direct accountability. This is consistent with Horn and Ward's (2008) assertion that ambiguity is integral to discourse and promotes effective communication. As evidenced by the interviews, politicians' phrase and answer questions in a way that invites multiple interpretations. An example of this is Interviewee 1's ambiguous response about a "major low point for politics in Lagos State," which avoids specificity and allows for broader interpretation by the audience.

Bach et al. (2025) support this assessment by highlighting the importance of metaphors and rhetorical devices in political language, which help connect rational discourse with emotional responses. In Interviewee 4's comments about "political cronyism," ambiguity adds emotional weight while allowing for different interpretations to appeal to different audiences. This use of lexical ambiguity gives politicians the flexibility to tailor their messages to different audiences without risking alienation or confrontation.

Recent studies, such as Widmaier et al. (2023), Emphasise how ambiguity can promote inclusive discussions about controversial topics. For example, one interviewee's characterization of a judicial decision creates a platform for nuanced discussions and illustrates how deliberately ambiguous statements can deflect criticism while encouraging broader engagement.

Furthermore, the findings support Abdulkadir's (2023) assertion that political interviews often lead to the manipulation and marginalisation of opposing views. This is evidenced by interviewees' statements such as "Honestly, I don't know" about controversial party actions until further investigation, which serves as a tactic to avoid direct responsibility. This evasive language invites speculation and maintains a positive public image while avoiding accountability. This highlights the oppressive use of ambiguity to control narratives.

The role of visual and contextual factors in amplifying political messages, as highlighted by Machin and Mayr (2012), complements the interview findings. Ambiguity is not only a verbal construct but also encompasses visual cues that shape audience understanding and enrich the complexity of political rhetoric.

This research sheds light on the diverse role of linguistic ambiguity in political communication and reflects the fundamental theories and observations of Horn, Taubaldiyev, Bach, Leech, Orwell, Widmaier, Rivers, Friedman, and Abdulkadir. The findings suggest that ambiguity is a strategic tool actively used by politicians to influence and manipulate public opinion, manage expectations, and address the complexity of government. By exploiting ambiguity, politicians can flexibly shape their

narratives, but this can be detrimental to clarity and transparency in communication and ultimately significantly shapes public discourse.

Conclusion

This study examined the complex role of ambiguity in English in political interviews, particularly in the context of Channels Television's "Politics Today" program. By analysing various instances of ambiguous language, the study demonstrated how politicians use ambiguity as a strategic tool in their political arguments. The results demonstrate that ambiguity serves multiple functions, from avoiding prosecution to shaping political narratives and managing public expectations. The study also highlights how ambiguity allows politicians to navigate sensitive policy areas while avoiding direct accountability for their statements and actions. By using ambiguous English expressions, politicians frame their responses in ways that allow for multiple interpretations, thereby minimizing their accountability on complex issues.

The study also shows that the use of ambiguity is driven by various contextual factors, such as political pressure, the need for broad reach, and the complexity of governance. Politicians, closely watched by both their constituents and the media, often resort to ambiguity to manage expectations and cultivate favorable narratives. In doing so, they manipulate public opinion and distract from pressing issues, effectively manipulating the political narrative to their advantage.

While ambiguity can foster engagement and emotional connection, it poses challenges to public discourse. It encourages speculation and can lead to a shift away from fact-based analysis, as the public may focus more on the emotional weight of statements than their substantive content. Therefore, while ambiguity serves as a strategic tool in political communication, it risks perpetuating a culture of ambiguity and misunderstanding.

While ambiguity is perceived negatively as vagueness, it is useful in political communication because the data from this research provide abundant evidence. Since political communication in English begins with ambiguous utterances that require ambiguity resolution, complete political communication emerges through the processing of that resolution. In this sense, (political) communication is a resolution process, meaning that political communication ends when the identified ambiguity is resolved (or rather, resolved). Based on this conclusion, future research on English disambiguation in political communication can be developed (since the data from this study provide sufficient results for this). The use of English in diplomatic relations—a special form of political communication—will provide interesting data for investigating the use of ambiguity, as well as the English disambiguation process, which is not possible without an explicit analysis of the subject matter.

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Language Documentation: A Necessity in Linguistic Studies

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Abstract

Language documentation, otherwise known as documentary linguistics, is a relatively new branch of linguistics. It is mainly concerned with, though not limited to, endangered languages in indigenous communities. Despite the fact that many nigerilanguages are endangered, documentary linguistics has yet to reach such a status of a postgraduate programme in many Departments of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages in Nigeria. The present paper gives a brief historical background of the field, highlights some of its definitions and scope, presents data about Nigerian universities offering language documentation, and calls for creation of postgraduate programmes in language documentation in Nigerian universities. The rationale for this is based on the unfortunate fact that a good number of Nigerian languages are endangered.

Keywords: Language documentation, endangered languages, Nigerian languages, documentary linguistics.

1.0 Introduction

The emergence of a new academic field does not take place very often. However, in less than a century, linguistics has birthed a few more branches, including computational linguistics and corpus linguistics in the 1950s (Camburn, 2013; McEnery and Hardie, 2011), documentary linguistics, or language documentation in the 1990s (Ameka, 2015), and Internet linguistics in the 2000s (Crystal, 2011; Ogunyale, 2016). Language documentation, the focus of the present paper, concerns itself with the “creation, annotation, preservation, and dissemination of transparent records of a language” (Woodbury, 2010, p. 159).

Of the emergent domains, language documentation is offered as a full-fledged graduate course only in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Uyo. One would expect that language documentation at least deserves a priority of place the departments of linguistics in a country such as Nigeria where half or more of her languages are predicted to become extinct by the end of the century, which is barely a hundred years from now (Ngozi Emeka-Nwobia, 2020).

2.0 A Brief History of Language Documentation

Like many other branches of linguistics, the origin of language documentation is often traced to the West. Although linguists’ practice of documenting languages has a long history, the shift to a strong focus on endangered indigenous languages did not occur until the end of the 1980s and early 1990s (Seifart, et al., 2018). A foremost spur was a talk by German linguist Johannes Bechert at the 1987

International Congress of Linguists in Berlin, where he lamented that while languages and the worldviews and philosophies encoded in them are vanishing, “linguists in general are not concerned about the imminent loss of a major part of their empirical basis” (Ameka, 2015, pp. 15-16). This was the prompt for a motion to raise awareness on language endangerment among linguists and the general public that was later presented at the business meeting of the Comité International Permanent des Linguistes (CIPL), a body committed to the promotion and development of the linguistics science all over the world.

A more prominent impetus came from American linguists in the 1990s. English has dominated the Native Amerindian languages and as a result of which many of the indigenous languages in America have become either extinct or endangered — Michael Krauss (1992, p. 5). To raise awareness about the endangerment of Native American languages, Kenneth Hale, an American linguist who had been studying and documenting many unstudied and endangered Native American and Native Australian languages, organized a panel on language endangerment at the Linguistic Society of America (LSA) annual meeting in December 1991 (Hale, 1992). The panel discussion was published in March the following year, leading to another panel on endangered languages at the 15th International Congress of Linguists held in Quebec, Canada.

At the Canada Congress, Michael Krauss—an American linguist and founder of the Alaska Native Language Center, an organization devoted to the documentation and teaching of some endangered Native American languages—raised the alarm about the immediate and impending extinction of most human languages, and calculated that “at the rate things are going—the coming century will see either the death or the doom of 90 per cent of mankind’s languages” (Krauss 1992, p. 7). He thus urged “universities and professional societies [that] have crucial influence in determining research and educational priorities...to do some serious rethinking of [their] priorities lest linguistics go down in history as the only science that presided obliviously over the disappearance of 90 per cent of the very field to which it is dedicated” (p. 10). Since then, a number of universities across the world have been offering various graduate programmes in Language Documentation, or Documentary Linguistics, e.g. the University of Hawai’i in the US, the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in the UK, and the University of Uyo in Nigeria.

The America experience is similar to that of Nigeria, a country of over 500 languages, a few of which have become extinct and many of which are heading towards extinction. As in America, one of the most prominent factors responsible for language endangerment in Nigeria is English, the country’s official language and perhaps the most enduring legacy from the British Colonial master. In the 1990s, American linguist Ronald Schaefer and leading Nigerian linguist Francis Egbokhare conducted documentation projects of Emai, an endangered Edoid language of fewer than 50,000 speakers in Edo State; their major findings showed that while the adult speakers of the language were multilingual, the young speakers were shifting to English, and this informed the conclusion for one of their studies: “At the very least, the role of English in propelling language endangerment situations in the rural Bendel region of southern Nigeria has been underestimated. Perhaps it has been underestimated in other rural areas of West Africa as well.” (Schaefer and Egbokhare 1999 quoted in Bruce Connell, 2015, p. 118). A similar conclusion has been reached by many other scholars such as Ndimele, who describes English as “a predator language which is steadily

consuming other tongues” in the world at large and in Nigeria in particular (Ndimele, 2005, p. 67).

The Linguistics Department at the University of Uyo pioneered language documentation studies as a graduate programme in Nigeria, and it is home to leading scholars in the field, such as Professors Eno-Abasi Urua and Imelda Udoh, who have done extensive documentary work on Lower Cross and Upper Cross languages—Ibibio, Leggbó, Medefaidrin, Ibeno, and Anaan among others.

3.0 Levels of Language Endangerment

The number of languages in the world, according to a consensus among linguists, is about 7000 (Eberhard et al., 2024). However, these languages are not evenly distributed across the regions of the world: “c. 4% are in Europe; c. 15% in the Americas; c. 31% in Africa; c. 50% in Asia and the Pacific” (Crystal, 2014, p. 6). Similarly, the distributions of speakers’ populations across languages are heavily disproportionate: out of the six billion people in the world, only twenty languages have up to 50 million speakers and just eight languages (Mandarin, Spanish, English, Bengali, Hindi, Portuguese, Russian, and Japanese) have up to 100 million users (Crystal, p. 19; Austin and Sallabank, 2010, p. 1).

A number of frameworks have been developed for measuring the levels of language endangerment, such as the UNESCO 9-factor model (Moseley, 2010); Fishman’s 8-factor Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) (Fishman, 1991); Ethnologue’s 5-factor vitality categories (Lewis, 2005); and the Endangered Language Catalogue’s 7-level Language Endangerment Index (LEI) (Lee and Way, 2018). The UNESCO language vitality and endangerment model is adopted in this paper. In general terms, Moseley (2010) categorizes a language as either extinct or living; a third realization is a dead language. An extinct language has no living speakers and no uses in any domains any longer; a recent example is Yahgan, a Chilean and Argentine language whose last speaker died on 16th February, 2022 (NPR, 2022). Likewise, a dead language no longer has native speakers, but it has some uses as people still use it for some purposes; a popular example is Latin, which died around 750AD, but is still used for liturgical rites in the Catholic Church. Dead and extinct languages are alternative terms; the Linguist List, an online resource for linguistics, has a list of 573 extinct languages (Linguist List, 2020). A living language, in contrast, has native speakers who currently use it, e.g. Hausa, Ibibio, Idoma, Igede, Igbo, Yorùbá, English, etc.

Further, a living language is either safe or endangered. A safe language, otherwise known as viable language, has a population base that is sufficiently large and thriving to guarantee long-term survival, is spoken by all generations of its users, has an official status as the language of government, education, and commerce, and is accorded high prestige (Moseley, 2010); the top eight languages mentioned earlier belong in this category. From the foregoing, the Nigerian languages that can be categorized as safe are Hausa, Igbo, and Yorùbá, which are officially recognized national languages, each of which has a speaker base of over 10 million (Blench, 2020). Endangered languages, on the other hand, are classified into five-level categories by UNESCO: vulnerable, definitely endangered, severely endangered, critically endangered, and extinct (Moseley, 2010). A vulnerable language is one which, although it has been passed to the younger generation and is thus spoken by most children, it may be restricted to certain domains, such as home. A language is definitely endangered when children no longer learn it at home as their mother tongue. A language

becomes severely endangered when it is spoken mainly by grandparents and older generation; while the parent generation may understand it, they do not speak it to their children or among themselves. A language becomes critically endangered when its youngest speakers are grandparents or older who speak the language only partially and infrequently. Finally, a language becomes extinct when its last speakers die or suffer aphasia.

4.0 Definitions and Scope of Language Documentation

Nikolaus Himmelmann (2006, p. 1) gives one of the classic definitions of language documentation: “a lasting, multipurpose record of a language”. He also describes it as “a field of linguistic inquiry and practice in its own right which is primarily concerned with the compilation and preservation of linguistic primary data and interfaces between primary data and various types of analyses based on these data.” Peter Austin (2010, p.19) defines language documentation as “systematic recording, transcription, translation and analysis of the broadest possible variety of spoken (and written) language samples collected within their appropriate social and cultural context.” In summary, language documentation is “a branch of linguistics that is concerned with the proper documentation of all aspects of a language” and “a comprehensive record of the linguistic practices characteristic of a given speech community” (Eno-Abasi Urua, 2010, p. 166)

From the definitions above, we can derive a number of features of documentary linguistics. One, it is a subfield of linguistics. However, it is by no means limited to linguistics. Experts in language documentation work in partnership with programmers, anthropologists, videographers, historians, geographers, teachers, etc. In fact, language documentation involves collaboration with members of the language community. The traditional so-called ‘lone wolf’ research carried out entirely by a single individual runs counter to the norm in language documentation. In essence, language documentation is "a collaborative and cross-disciplinary enterprise" (Bruna Franchetto, 2006, p. 191).

Also, data, usually called primary data, is core in language documentation. Primary data refers to direct recordings of actual communicative events, linguistic practices, or linguistic behaviour in a speech community which are collected in their real temporal, social, and cultural contexts. By and large, data is one principal distinguishing factor between language documentation and language description—a traditional and conventional exercise in linguistics whose goal is to produce descriptive works such as orthographies, dictionaries, grammars, and texts from data elicited from speakers but not necessarily within appropriate social and cultural context. In some instances, resulting ‘findings’ from such elicitations may not be totally accurate: an example is Hyman’s (1983)¹⁰⁰ conclusion that there is no syllable structure in Gokana, an Ogoni (Lower Cross) language spoken in Rivers State. The data from which his analysis arrived at this judgement was a handful of sentences collected from an Ogoni student in the US; however, about thirty years later after having access to ample data from more native speakers, Hyman amended his earlier claim which was “motivated in part by overlooked (possibly ambiguous) evidence”, with a clarification that there is “some advantage to recognizing syllables in Gokana” (Hyman, 2010: 95, 113). The Hyman situation arose due to the fact that language description, unlike language documentation, may not

¹⁰⁰ We appreciate Prof Urua, who introduced Hyman’s work to us in her Phonetics and Phonology classes.

necessarily collect comprehensive and all-encompassing primary data.

Conversely, language documentation is a shift to collection of large amounts of comprehensive discourse, i.e. a wide range of linguistic phenomena in genuine communicative situations. Language documenters regard grammars, dictionaries, and other descriptive outputs as secondary or analytical resources, which are “constructed on the basis of, and via generalization over, primary data” (Austin, 2006, p. 87) or as “dependent products that annotate and comment on the documentary corpus.” (Good, 2010, p. 212). Good examples are *Owe Bilingual Dictionary* and *Olukumi Bilingual Dictionary*, both resulting from documentation of the two Yorùbá dialects by Bolanle Arokoyo (2017) of the University of Ilorin.

Another vital scope of documentary linguistics is preservation of endangered languages. This was the motivation for language documentation in the first place, and still remains a key driving force for the field. Documentary linguists do not just collect primary data, they ultimately keep and preserve it in what is known as a digital archive: an electronic repository for safekeeping or storing collections of digital resources such as videos, audios, pictures, maps, documents, etc. for a very long time in order to make them available for posterity. Some archival contents are open, available to access by a group of people such as the speech community and researchers while some are restricted. As Peter Austin (2006, p. 100) succinctly puts it: “Digital archiving offers opportunities to store data for communities to use, other scholars to access, and for preservation for future generations of community members, the general public, and researchers.”

A number of archives exist, hosting data on scores of languages, such as Endangered Language Archive (ELAR) whose deposits include Urua’s (2013) data of the Uruan dirge songs; others include the Language Archive (TLA), the Archive of the Indigenous Languages of Latin America (AILLA), the Pacific and Regional Archive for Digital Sources in Endangered Cultures (PARADISEC) (Andrea Berez-Kroeker and Ryan Henke, 2018). No known endangered language archives exist in Nigeria; most of them are hosted in universities and other institutes in the West; ELAR for instance is hosted on the servers of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London and Kaipuleohone is administered by the Department of Linguistics at the University of Hawai’i. Consequently, there have been calls for indigenous archives in Africa, a foremost of which is the West African Language Archive (WALA) initiative, which is a result of a collaboration between the Universities of Bielefeld (Germany), Cocody (Ivory Coast), and Uyo (Nigeria). WALA has multi-media data on Ega, Abbey, Anyi, and Baule, some of the endangered languages in Ivory Coast; and Iko and Ibibio, Lower Cross languages in Nigeria. The initiative “aims to encourage local scholars to create high quality decentralised repositories documenting West African languages, and to make these repositories available to language communities, language planners, educationalists and scientists via an internet metadata portal such as OLAC” (Gibbon, Ahoua, Gbery, Urua, and Ekpenyong, 2004, p. 579).

Another feature of language documentation is metadata. Metadata refers to data about data, or information describing the constituent resources of a documentary corpus, including, for example, their content, creators, and any access restrictions (Good, 2010). Metadata makes collected or archived materials and files easy to organize, find, and reuse. Metadata falls into several different

categories: descriptive, structural, technical, rights, and preservation (Kung, Sullivant, Pojman, and Niwagaba, 2020). Descriptive metadata is contextual information about the materials that explains what they are, provides contextual details about their production and helps users locate and reuse them. Structural metadata is information about where an object is located in a sequence, hierarchy or file structure. Technical metadata is information about the form, size, and specifications of digital objects. Rights metadata includes information about an object's copyright status, the copyright holder, and any relevant licenses (Kung, Sullivant, Pojman, and Niwagaba, 2020).

5.0 Data and Analysis

The data for this study were collected from 12 Federal Government-owned universities, two from each of the six geo-political zones in Nigeria. One main criterion for the selection was availability of information on undergraduate and postgraduate linguistic courses and/or modules available on the university portals. The universities are Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria; Usmanu Danfodiyo University (UDU), Sokoto; University of Ibadan (Unibadan); Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU), Ile Ife; University of Uyo (Uniuyo); University of Benin (Uniben); University of Jos (Unijos); University of Ilorin (Unilorin); University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN); Nnamdi Azikwe University (NAU), Akwa; Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University (ATBU), Bauchi; and University of Maiduguri (Unimaid).

At undergraduate level, nine (75%) of the universities have at least language documentation or documentary linguistics as a module. In other words, a quarter of the universities do not offer language documentation as a module in their undergraduate programme: the universities are ABU, ATBU, and Unimaid.

At graduate level, only three universities (25%) explicitly list language documentation as either a programme or field of specialization. The universities are the Unibadan, OAU, and Uniuyo. Among the trio, only Uniuyo offers language documentation as a full-fledged programme.

6.0 Why Prioritizing Language Documentation?

For one, too many Nigerian languages are endangered, although some are more endangered than others. An atlas of Nigeria languages puts the number of languages in Nigeria at 550 (Blench, 2020, p. xxi), out of which 400 are considered endangered (Ngozi Emeka-Nwobia, pg 1645, citing Ohiri-Aniche, 2014). Languages such as Mgbò (190,000 speakers), Gera (200,000 speakers), Bede (250,000 speakers), and Reshe (44,000 speakers) have been labelled vulnerable. Polci (22,000 speakers) and Èkpèyè (30,000 speakers) are definitely endangered. Hya (3000 speakers), Pyam (3000 speakers), and Jiba (2000 speakers) are severely endangered. Ilue (5000 speakers), Àhàn (300 speakers), Défàkà (200 speakers), and Bakpinka (4000 speakers) are critically endangered. Sambe, Centúúm, are extinct¹⁰¹. Even the major languages, Hausa, Igbo, and Yorùbá, usually called the Big Three for having more speakers than any other language in the country, suffer some level of endangerment, especially Igbo and Yorùbá. Studies by Fabunmi and Salawu (2005) and Adeleke Fakoya (2008) have categorized Yorùbá as a potentially endangered language; a similar conclusion

¹⁰¹ The data were collected from <http://www.endangeredlanguages.com/lang/country/Nigeria>, the endangered languages database of the Endangered Language Project (ELP). As at November 2024, the platform had data on 172 endangered Nigerian languages. Part of the data were also derived from Roger Blench (2020).

was reached on Igbo by Ngozi Emeka-Nwobia (2020).

Moreover, endangered languages and dialects exist in each region of the country. Àhàn is spoken in the southwestern states of Ondo and Ekiti; Ilue is a Lower Cross language native to Akwa Ibom State and Défàkà in Rivers State are both in the South-South; Èkpeye (also native to Rivers State) and Mgbò, Igboid languages are spoken in the Southeastern states of Imo and Anambra; and Bede, Reshe, and Pyam in Yobe, Jigawa, Kebbi, Niger, and Plateau States in the North, perhaps the region with most endangered languages in Nigeria. Similarly, many dialects of Hausa, Igbo, and Yorùbá are threatened.

When many more Nigerian universities introduce documentary linguistics as a course, many more endangered Nigerian languages will be captured, which may even lead to discovery of ‘new’, unstudied languages and dialects. The exact number of languages in Nigeria is unknown because armchair linguists outnumber the dirty-footed field linguists, collating raw language data. When more linguists embark on linguistic fieldwork, which is core in language documentation, they would come back with loads of data from which speculations, theories, and claims about Nigerian languages and linguistic situations can either be empirically confirmed or refuted.

Language documentation affords academics an opportunity to render social service. Language documentation is an avenue for the academia to give back to remote communities, whose taxes also went into building the universities or funding them via tuition fees paid for their children on campuses. Getting their linguistic practices and safekeeping the data for their unborn generations is perhaps the height of academic social service.

Prioritizing language documentation at linguistics departments of all universities is a quick means to realizing indigenous digital language archives, which scholars such as Urua have been calling for. With ample data on languages from a multilingual country like Nigeria, international funding organizations and even the Federal Government would be willing to finance setting up of digital repertoires, which will serve as go-to databases for hundreds of Nigerian languages and dialects. Such indigenous archives are already in operation in the US and Australia, e.g. Alaskan Native Language Center Archives (ANLC) University of Alaska and Pacific and Regional Archive for Digital Sources in Endangered Cultures (PARADISEC), University of Melbourne and University of Sydney.

7.0 Conclusion

One way that Linguistics and Nigerian/African Languages can live up to its name and expectation is by deploying its experts and trainees (students) into documenting the hundreds of threatened languages in Nigeria as well as Africa at large. By so doing, in the long run, linguists are not only helping to safeguard linguistic practices and diversity, they are also indirectly carving their names in gold for posterity, when some unborn generations may decide to revive their languages by drawing from edited data collected by a particular linguist or group of linguists generations ago.

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Nominal Plural Marking in Medefaidrin

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Abstract

This study investigates nominal plurals in the Medefaidrin language to identify and describe the plural markers observed in the language. The Medefaidrin language is an artificial (spirit) language developed by Michael Ukpong and Akpan Udofia in 1931. This research was carried out in Edem Urua village in South-south, Nigeria. The purposive sampling technique was used to select the ten language consultants used for this study. The in-person interview method was adopted for data collection. The Ibadan 400 word list was used in addition to phrases/sentences developed for the purpose of data collection. In analysing the data, the Paradigm Function Morphology theory was used in analysing the inflectional morphological processes. The research findings indicate that Medefaidrin makes use of three primary noun plural markers namely {-s, -is, -tiu} and two other plural markers; {-lo-} and {-y}. The {-lo-} plural marker is an infix while the {-y} plural marker is a replacive suffix that replaces {-en} in *binen* “woman” to produce the plural form of the word *biny* “women”. The data for this research indicate that Medefaidrin makes use of replacive and additive types of inflection. Further study is recommended for verbs and other plural markings in the Medefaidrin language.

Keywords: Inflection, morpheme, allomorph, plural, Medefaidrin

1. Introduction

Plural is a grammatical term that refers to numbers in morphology. The study of numbers is concerned with whether an item is plural or singular (Essien 2008). Plural markers have been researched in many African languages such as Igbo, Yoruba, Anaañ, and Ibibio (Nweya, 2016; Ajíbóyè, 2012; Etim and Udondata, 2019; Essien, 2008). The lexical categories that mark plurals differ from one language to another. For instance, the Ibibio language marks plural in nouns, pronouns, verbs, and adjectives as observed in (1) whereas the English language marks plurals in nouns, pronouns, and determiners (demonstratives);

(1)	Singular	Gloss	Plural	Gloss	Part of Speech
a.	àfiá	white	mfiá	white(many)	Adjective
b.	wákkó	remove	wúúñó	remove(many)	verb
c.	ànyé	him/her	àmmọ.	they	Pronoun
d.	áwódèèn	man	ídéén	men	Noun

(Essien 2008, p.91)

As observed in the Ibibio data presented in (1), plural is marked according to the number of items for nouns, pronouns and adjectives; and the number of times an action is carried out is marked for verbs.

Natural languages such as Ibibio and Igbo have been observed to mark plurals in different lexical categories. However, the language used for this study is Medefaidrin; an artificial (spirit) language (as opposed to natural languages) used in Edem Urua in Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area in Southern Nigeria for communication among her community members. This study investigates noun plural marking in the Medefaidrin language. Noun plural marking in Medefaidrin has been identified in previous studies (Adams, 1947; Urua and Gibbon, 2009) although the studies were not morphological but historical and documentation studies without in-depth morphological analysis. Therefore, this study will investigate noun plural marking in Medefaidrin as an independent study, to identify the noun plural markers in Medefaidrin, highlight the morphological positions. In the next section, the historical and linguistic information on the Medefaidrin language is provided.

Historical and Linguistic Information on Medefaidrin

In 1931, Michael Ukpong and Akpan Udofia developed the Medefaidrin language for communication among the Oberi Okaime members in Southern Nigeria. (Adams 1947; Rovenchak, Gibbon, *et al* 2016). The developers of the Medefaidrin language claim to have been spiritually inspired by the *seminant* ‘Holy Spirit’ to create the language and hence the Medefaidrin language is considered as an artificial (spirit) language (Urua and Gibbon, 2009; Rovenchak *et al*, 2016; Urua, 2010; Etim 2010). There are thirty-two primary symbols in Medefaidrin Alphabet (Adams, 1947; Abasiattai, 1989).

The Medefaidrin language was initially known as Oberi Okaime at conception but later changed to Medefaidrin (Adams, 1947, Hau, 1961, Rovenchak *et al*, 2016; Urua, 2010; Etim 2010; Urua *et al*, 2009). The users of Medefaidrin are speakers of mostly Ibibio and Efik speakers who are members of the Oberi Okaime religious group in Akwa Ibom State (Itu, Ibibio and Ikot Ekpene Local Government Areas and Cross River State (Ibiayi, Calabar and Ekpene Eki regions).

2. Inflectional Morphology

Inflection is a morphological term used to describe the change in the morphosyntactic form of a word (Crystal 2008). Essien (2008) posits that inflectional morphemes are commonly defined as those morphemes that mark grammatical (as opposed to lexical) categories such as number, person, gender, tense, aspect and mood.

Two types of inflection are mostly discussed in morphological literature; replacive and additive (Taiwo, 2006). Additive inflection is a type of inflection in which a morpheme is attached to the root or stem of a word to produce another form of the word. Examples of additive inflection in English are provided in (2);

(2)	Word	Inflected form	Word class
a.	book	books	noun
b.	car	cars	noun
c.	wife	wives	noun
d.	child	children	noun

As observed in (2), the morphemes added to the base forms of the words simply added grammatical information to the words without changing the word classes of the inflected forms of the word.

In replacive inflection, “a sound (mostly a vowel), a tone or another word substitutes an existing sound, tone or word to produce another form of the word” (Taiwo, 2006). This type of inflection

exists in the English language as shown below in (3);

(3)	Singular	Plural
a.	woman /wʊmən/	women /wɪmɪn/
b.	goose /gu:s/	geese /gi:s/
c.	man /mæn/	men /mɛn/

The replacive type of inflection is also observed in the Ibibio language as evident in the data provided in (4);

(4)	Singular	Gloss	Plural	Gloss
a.	ábíà	an expert	mbíà	experts
b.	áyín	child	ndítò	children
c.	áwónwààn	woman	íbáàn	women

(Essien, 2008: p.132)

In the Ibibio data presented in (4), the prefix vowel in (4a) is replaced with a bilabial nasal sound and it could be attributed to homorgancity, and the first four sounds in (4c) singular form of the word are deleted and replaced with the vowel sound /i/.

In the Ibibio language, noun plurals can be marked by the use of the word *mme*. Essien (2008:132) states that *mme* is a nominal plural marker which occurs as a free morpheme. This is illustrated below in (5)

(5)	Singular	Gloss	Plural	Gloss
a.	ùsàn	plate	mmè ùsàn	plates
b.	ìkpáñ	spoon	mmè ìkpáñ	spoons
c.	àkpókóró	table	mmè àkpókóró	table

(Field data, 2023).

In the English language, noun plural is primarily marked by the addition of the suffix {-s} phonologically realized as allomorphs {-s, -iz, z} depending on the phonological environment it occurs (Ndimele, 1999). In addition, noun plural in English is also marked with the use of null morpheme. The examples of the {-s} plural marker realizations and null plural marker in English are illustrated below in (6);

(6)	Singular	Plural
a.	car /ka:/	cars /ka:z/
b.	bag /bæg/	bags /bægz/
c.	box /bɒks/	boxes /bɒksɪz/
d.	bus /bʌs/	buses /bʌsɪz/
e.	bucket /bʌkɪt/	bucket /bʌkɪts/
f.	cup /kʌp/	cup /kʌps/
g.	sheep /ʃi:p/	sheep /ʃi:p/

Ndimele (1999: p.55) points out that “the English plural marker {-s} occurs after voiceless sounds that are not sibilants; {-iz} occurs after sibilant sounds and {-z} occurs after voiced sounds which are not sibilants”. The rationale for reviewing the Ibibio plural markers and English plural markers is because the two languages are used in the language community where the Medefaidrin language is used for communication. The review of the two languages indicates that in the Ibibio language, the additive plural markers occur before the noun as observed in Example (5) whereas, in the English language, the plural markers occur as the suffix of the noun in Example (6).

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.1.1 Paradigm Function Morphology

Paradigm Function Morphology (henceforth PFM) was propounded by an American linguist; Gregory Stump, 2001 (Stewart *et al*, 2007). Paradigm as used in this theory signifies a lexeme's complete set of a cell (Stewart *et al*, 2007) The formal notion of PFM is given as;

$$(7) \quad PF \langle L \sigma \rangle = \langle X \sigma \rangle$$

Where PF is the value of a paradigm function, the L represents the lexeme, σ represents the morphosyntactic content and X is a variable (Stewart *et al*, 2007). The symbols on the left side of the equal sign serve as the input cell and the symbols on the right side of the equal side represent the output. Here, the lexeme or the word which is represented as L serves as the input and the small letter sigma ' σ ' is used in this formula to store the morphosyntactic properties that are intended to be applied to the lexeme or word represented as L.

The Paradigm Function Morphology theory is applied to the noun "plate" to illustrate the functionality of the theory. The English noun *plate* has the following morphological features where the paradigm function morphology theory is applied;

$$(8) \quad PF = \langle L, \sigma \rangle = \langle R, \sigma \rangle$$

$$PF \langle \text{plate}, \{\text{NUM:PL}, \text{Tense: PRES}\} \rangle = \langle \text{plates} \rangle$$

The above rule states that the lexeme is *plate* and the morphosyntactic properties are enclosed in the curled bracket which are represented as Number; plural (Pl), Tense; present tense. The morphosyntactic properties are applied on the lexeme *plate*, which produces the output on the right side of the equal sign as *plates*.

3. Research Methodology

The Oberi Okaime religious centre in Edem Urua village in Ibiono Ibom was selected as the study area for the research using the purposive sampling technique. The study area was selected based on the most populated Oberi Okaime religious centre in Southern Nigeria. The population size of Medefaidrin speakers in the Oberi Okaime community is estimated at 1000.

The language consultants that participated in the research were bilinguals – Medefaidrin and Ibibio. Eight males and two females participated in the research. These language consultants were selected based on ability to communicate at the beginner's level in Medefaidrin. A structured word list of phrases and sentences in addition to the Ibadan 400 word list was used for collection of data. The in-person interview method was used during the textual data collection. The collected data were analysed using descriptive method of research.

4. Pluralisation in Medefaidrin

4.1 Pluralisation

Pluralisation is concerned with numbers; determining the subject's grammatical number. In this study, plural marking in nominals were observed as discussed below.

i) Person

Person is a grammatical category that shows participant's roles in a speech or discourse (Essien,

2008). Three persons are traditionally identified in speech; the three personal pronouns are also observed in Medefaidrin as shown in (9).

(9)	Person	Singular	Plural
	1st	atiu ‘I’	biu ‘we’
	2nd	liu ‘you’	kiu ‘you’
	3rd	rex/rib ‘he/she’ ak ‘it’	regmus ‘they’

In Medefaidrin, the verb forms do not change to indicate persons in sentences where the personal pronouns serve as the subject of the verb. This is illustrated in (10).

(10)	Singular	Gloss	Plural	Gloss
	atiu trek	I eat	biu trek	we eat
	liu trek	you eat	kiu trek	you eat
	rex/rib trek	he/she eats	regmus trek	they eat (Field data, 2023).

In marking person plural in Medefaidrin, sound substitution is mostly used. In the Medefaidrin language, personal pronoun has the three persons identified in the traditional literature of personal pronouns. In the first and second persons, the data indicate that *-iu* is the root of the words. First person singular and plural have *at-* and *b-* respectively as the prefix affixed to the root *-iu* to form the first person singular and plural pronoun in Medefaidrin. In the second person singular and plural, the prefix *l-* and *k-* are affixed to the root *-iu* to form the second person singular and plural pronoun respectively. The *-iu* in the words can be said to be radical roots and on the other hand, the *-iu* can be said to signify person in the language. In the Medefaidrin language, *rex* means ‘he’, *rib* means ‘she’ and *ak* means ‘it’. For the third person plural pronoun, *regmus* is used to represent ‘they’. From the data for the Medefaidrin language personal pronouns, it is observed that the Medefaidrin language follows the pattern of representing personal pronouns in the English language rather than Ibibio especially in the third person singular pronoun.

i) Noun Plural

Urua et al (2009) observed one noun plural marker in Medefaidrin. They note that noun plural in Medefaidrin is formed by adding the suffix {-s} to the word. In this study, three noun plural markers are observed and they are {-s}, {-is}, {-tiu}. The three noun plural markers are discussed in the following sub-section.

1) The Medefaidrin {-s} Noun Plural Marker

From the available data for this research, it is evident that the {-s} plural marker is the most common noun plural marker in Medefaidrin. This {-s} plural marker is used with words ending with the /a/ and /o/ vowel sounds as shown below in (11).

(11)	Word	Gloss	Plural	Gloss
a	bina /bi.na/	person	binas /bi.nas/	persons
b	sloka /slo.ka/	sucker (of plant)	slokas /slo.kas/	suckers
c	ruzoda /ru.zo.da/	driver	ruzodas /ru.zo.das/	drivers
d	krova /kro.va/	bird	krovas /kro.vas/	birds
e	feno /fe.no/	fish	fenos /fe.nos/	fishes
f	wrinkanto /rin.kan.to/	masquerade	wrinkantos/rin.kan.tos/	masquerades

The {-s} noun plural marker affixed to words ending with the /a/ and /o/ vowel sounds in the Medefaidrin language is used in phrases in (12) to illustrate their usage in the Medefaidrin language.

- (12) a. cc ruzoda
 a driver
 'a driver'
 b. sueny ruzoda-s
 many driver-PL
 'many drivers'
 c. airi feno
 one fish
 'one fish'
 d. sueny feno-s
 many fish-PL
 'many fishes'

The Medefaidrin plural marker {-s} attached to the nouns in example (11) is also phonologically realized as /-s/ in the Medefaidrin language. The {-s} plural marker is also used with words that end with /n/ and /ñ/ nasal sounds. These are illustrated below in (13).

(13)	Word	Gloss	Plural	Plural	Gloss
a.	siktriñ /sik.triɲ/	toe	siktriñs	/sik.triɲs/	toes
b.	vashian /vaʃian/	animal	vashians	/vaʃians/	animals
c.	ebinen /e.bi.nen/	lady	ebinens	e.bi.nens/	ladies

The {-s} noun plural marker affixed to words ending with the /n/ and /ñ/ nasal sounds in the Medefaidrin language is used in phrases below in (14) to illustrate their usage in the Medefaidrin language.

- (14) a. airi siktriñ
 'one toe'
 b. kred siktriñ-s
 two. toe-PL
 'two toes'
 c. xo vashian
 'an animal'
 d. seta vashian-s
 three animal-PL
 'three animals'
 e. cc ebinen
 'a lady'
 f. sueny ebinen-s
 many lady-PL
 'many ladies'

The data provided for the {-s} plural marker from (11) to (14) indicate that the {-s} plural marker is used with words ending with vowels /a/ and /o/; and the nasal sounds /n/ and /ñ/. Using the Paradigm Function Morphology theory, the {-s} plural marker in Medefaidrin is realized thus with nouns that end with the vowel /a/. The meanings of the abbreviations used in the PFM analysis of

the data are provided in Appendix 1 to assist in understanding the processing of the data

$$(15) \quad \text{PF} (\langle L, \sigma \rangle) = \langle R, \sigma \rangle$$

$$(\langle L, \{\text{noun-VI}\}, \sigma \{\text{Num; PL-s}\} \rangle) = \langle R, \sigma \rangle$$

In the rule stated in (15), the L represents the lexeme, and the VI that is suffixed to the noun in the curled bracket denotes a vowel sound. The first representations enclosed in the first curled bracket signify that the lexeme represented as L should be a noun ending in a vowel. The small sigma sign σ , represents the morphosyntactic properties which are enclosed in the curled bracket after the small sigma sign. The morphosyntactic property enclosed in the above notation is Number (Num), which in this formula is plural (PL) overtly represented as the suffix {-s}. The R on the right side of the equal sign signifies Realisation, which is the output derived from applying the morphosyntactic property (noun-plural) on the lexeme ending with vowels which are /a/ and /o/ as observed in (16)

The Paradigm Function Morphology theory given above in (15) is a default function for the data provided above in (11) that operates within the rule. Hence, applying the above Paradigm Function rule in (15), gives the following; the ‘noun-a, o’ represents nouns which end with the vowel sound /a/ and /o/.

$$(16) \quad \text{PF} (\langle L \{\text{noun-a,o}\}, \sigma \{\text{num;PL-s}\} \rangle) =$$

- $\langle \text{slokas}, \sigma \rangle$
- $\langle \text{krovas}, \sigma \rangle$
- $\langle \text{ruzodas}, \sigma \rangle$
- $\langle \text{binas}, \sigma \rangle$
- $\langle \text{wringantos}, \sigma \rangle$
- $\langle \text{fenos}, \sigma \rangle$

The {-s} plural marker in Medefaidrin is also realized in words ending with /n̄/ and /n/ nasal sounds. The Paradigm Function Morphology theory indicating the rule of marking noun plural in words ending with /n̄/ and /n/ is provided below in (17).

$$(17) \quad \text{PF} (\langle L, \sigma \rangle) = \langle R, \sigma \rangle$$

$$(\langle L \{\text{noun-n, n̄}\}, \sigma \{\text{Num, PL-s}\} \rangle) =$$

- $\langle \text{siktriņs}, \sigma \rangle$
- $\langle \text{vashians}, \sigma \rangle$
- $\langle \text{ebinens}, \sigma \rangle$

(2) The Medefaidrin {-is} Noun Plural Marker

This {-is} noun plural marker is affixed to nouns in Medefaidrin that end with the alveolar sounds; /s/ and /z/ which are sibilants and it is phonologically realised as /is/. This is illustrated below in (18).

(18)	Word	Gloss	Plural	Gloss
a.	kutras /kutras/	branch	kutrasis/ku.tra.sis/	branches
b.	seclus /se.klus/	grass	secluis/se.kluis/	grasses
c.	emax /e.maz/	name	emaxis /e.mazis/	names
d.	sonez /sɔ.nez/	sister	sonezis/sɔ.nezis/	sisters

The {-is} noun plural marker affixed to words ending with the /s/ and /z/ consonant sounds in the Medefaidrin language is used in phrases below in (19) to illustrate their usage in the Medefaidrin language.

- (19) a. cc kutas
'a branch'
- b. sueny kutas-is
many branch-PL
'many branches'
- c. Dge seclus eis aula
'The grass is green'
- d. Abzid seclus-is kefras dge antonimpt
tall grass-PL cover the land
'Tall grasses cover the land'
- e. Amry emax eis Okon
my name is Okon
'My name is Okon'
- f. Regmial emax-is nues Richmel arien Etim
3PL name-PL is-PL Richmel and Etim
'Their names are Richmel and Etim'

The noun plural marker {-is} is phonologically realized as /is/. The Paradigm Function for the realisation of the Medefaidrin {-is} noun plural marker is provided below in (20).

- (20) PF (<L, σ>) =<R, σ>
(<L {noun-s, -z}, σ {Num, PL-is} =<R, σ>

In (19), the rule states that the lexical items are nouns that end in /s/ and /z/ and the morphosyntactic property *Number;plural* is applied on the lexemes (nouns ending with /s/ and /z/) and the realisation is given as the output in R. The principle stated here relates to the formation of plurals in nouns ending with sibilants applies to the set of data used for this research in (18). Hence, the Paradigm Function rule in example (20) can be filled with the nouns ending in sibilant sounds as observed below in (21).

- (21) PF (<L {noun-s, -z}, σ {Num; PL-is} = <kutrasis, σ>
<seclusis, σ>
<emazis, σ>

(3) The Medefaidrin {-tiu} Noun Plural Marker

The {-tiu} noun plural marker is suffixed to nouns in Medefaidrin that end with the /o/ vowel sound and voiced alveolar sound /n/. This is illustrated below in (22).

- | (22) | Singular | Gloss | Plural | Gloss |
|------|----------------------|------------|------------------------------|-------------|
| a | hramo /hi.ra.mo/ | sheep | hramotiu /hi.ra.mo.tiu/ | sheep |
| b | meto /me.to/ | market | metotiu /me.to.tiu/ | markets |
| c | sobdilen/sob.di.len/ | individual | sobdilentiu /sob.di.len.tiu/ | individuals |
| d | poplen /po.plen | people | poplentiu /po.plen.tiu/ | people |

The {-tiu} noun plural marker affixed to words ending with the /o/, and /n/ sounds in the Medefaidrin language is used in phrases below in (23) to illustrate their usage in the Medefaidrin language.

- (23) a. cc hramo
'a sheep'

- b. sueny hramo-tiu
quan sheep-PL
'Many sheep'
- c. xo sɔbdilen
'an individual'
- d. sueny sɔbdulen-tiu
quan individual-PL
'many individuals'

The Paradigm Function for the realisation of this plural marker {-tiu} is given as in (24).

$$(24) \quad PF \langle L, \sigma \rangle = \langle R, \sigma \rangle$$

$$PF(\langle L \{ \text{noun-n, o} \}, \sigma \{ \text{noun; PL-tiu} \} \rangle) = \begin{matrix} \langle \text{sobdilentiu}, \sigma \rangle \\ \langle \text{poplentiu}, \sigma \rangle \\ \langle \text{metotiu}, \sigma \rangle \\ \langle \text{hramotiu}, \sigma \rangle \end{matrix}$$

The Paradigm Function of the {-tiu} noun plural marker in Medefaidrin presented in (24) states that the function of the singular words which are nouns ending with the sounds /n/, and /o/ changes to plural when the plural suffix marker {-tiu} is suffixed to the noun.

(4) Exceptional Plural Markers in Medefaidrin

There are exceptional cases of noun plural markers observed from the Medefaidrin data collected during this research. The plural markers are presented below in (25).

(25)	Singular	Gloss	Plural	Gloss
a.	eliuk /e.liuk/	leaf	eloliuk /e.lo.liuk/	leaves
b.	binen /bi.nen/	woman	biny /bi.ni/	women
c.	swis /swis/	this	swes /swes/	these
d.	swad /swad/	that	swod /swod/	those

Some of the Medefaidrin words in (25) are used in phrases below in (26) to illustrate their usage in the Medefaidrin language.

- (26) a. fript cc. eliuk fra mea
Cut a. leaf for me
'cut a leaf for me'
- b. fript dge eloliuk
cut the leaf-PL
'cut the leaves'
- c. cc kisplegnt binen
'a beautiful woman'
- d. Dge biny nues kisplegnt
the woman-PL is-PL beautiful
'The women are beautiful'

In (25a), the syllable {lo} is infixes into the singular word *eliuk* 'leaf' to mark the plural form of the word which is *eloliuk* 'leaves'. In (25b), the sounds [en] in *binen* is replaced with {y} to mark the plural of the word, which is *biny*. In addition, as applicable in other languages such as English, plurality is also marked in determiners in Medefaidrin as shown in (25c) and (25d) above through

ablaut. However, these two plural markers in (25a) and (25b) may be radicals which are only applicable to the words illustrated in (26), therefore further research is required for this noun plural markers.

4.2 Discussion of Findings

The analysis in Subsection 4.1 indicates that the Medefaidrin language has two noun plural morphemes: {-s} and {-tiu}. The two morphemes are treated as noun plural morphemes because they occur in the same phonological environments to mark plurality in nouns and are in complementary distribution. The {-s} morpheme mostly occurs after vowel sounds /a/ and /o/ and the voiced alveolar and velar nasals: /n/ and /ñ/. The {-tiu} noun plural morpheme is suffixed to words that end with the alveolar nasal /n/ and the /o/ vowel sound. It can be argued that the {-tiu} noun morpheme is suffixed to the alveolar nasal /n/ due to the fact that the noun morpheme {-tiu} begins with an alveolar sound which makes the Medefaidrin language to select the {-tiu} noun plural marker to occur after the voiced alveolar nasal /n/. There is, however, the exemption of the above submission regarding the {-tiu} with nouns ending with /o/ like the *hramotiu* ‘sheep’, *metotiu* ‘markets’ although the data for nouns ending with /o/ are few. The {-tiu} noun plural morpheme in Medefaidrin cannot be said to be an allomorph of {-s} noun plural morpheme because {-s} occurs after alveolar sounds such as /ñ/ and /n/ and {-tiu} also occurs in nouns ending with /n/. Allomorph is when a single affix has more than one shape (Haspelmath and Sims, 2013:p22). Allomorphs occur in complementary distribution and have the same meaning.

The {-is} plural allomorph is observed in nouns that end with voiceless and voiced alveolar fricatives /s/ and /z/. The {-is} noun plural marker can be argued to be an allomorph of the {-s} noun plural morpheme in Medefaidrin. This submission is given because the {-s} noun plural morpheme cannot be suffixed to nouns ending with voiceless and voiced alveolar fricative in the Medefaidrin language. Therefore, the /i/ vowel sound is prefixed to the {-s} noun plural morpheme which transforms it to {-is}. The {-is} allomorph is only affixed to voiceless and voiced alveolar fricative /s/ and /z/ as observed in the data for this research.

Available data indicate that Medefaidrin marks plural in nouns and demonstratives through infix, sound replacement and vowel root change. There are a few data provided for the infix plural marker as observed in example (24). This can be attributed to the fact that the Medefaidrin language is no longer used for communication outside the religious gatherings of Oberi Okame religious group and therefore, the noun infix plural marker provided were found in the old records of the Medefaidrin language which many parts of the Medefaidrin language records were destroyed because of the ink used in writing the lexical items.

5. Conclusion

This study investigated noun plurals in the Medefaidrin language with the aim of describing the noun plural system of Medefaidrin. This study was carried out in Edem Urua community with ten (10) language consultants that were purposively selected. This study observed that Medefaidrin has three noun plural markers {-s, -is, -tiu}. The {-s} noun plural marker is used with words ending with vowels and nasals. The {-is} noun plural marker is affixed to nouns in Medefaidrin that end with the alveolar sounds /s/ and /z/. In addition, the {-tiu} noun plural marker is suffixed to words in

Medefaidrin that end with /o/ vowel sound and voiced alveolar sound /n/. It can be concluded that the {-is} noun plural marker can be argued to be an allomorph of {-s} noun plural marker in Medefaidrin. Furthermore, the data used for this study indicate that the additive and replacive types of inflection are used in marking noun plurals in Medefaidrin. This study implies that the artificial (spirit) language – Medefaidrin has a structured plural system.

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Appendix 1

Meaning of Abbreviations

*PL- Plural, R - Realisation,
σ – morphosyntactic properties*

Num –Number, L –Lexeme, Vl – Vowel,

Indigenous Languages and Political Communication in Nigeria: Akwa Ibom as Case Study

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Abstract

Communication only takes place when both the sender (of a message) and the receiver understand each other. Without understanding, there is no message; and whatever is passed as message in that circumstance is no message at all but noise. Therefore, for communication to exist between two persons, both of them must understand the message, and a message can only be passed and understood when the language adopted as a vehicle to convey the message is familiar. Hence, this paper assesses the import of indigenous languages in political communication in Nigeria. It makes a case for the development of indigenous Nigerian languages. Since Nigeria is too large, and obviously tasking to undergo a study of this nature within a short period of time, the researchers had zero-in on Akwa Ibom State and use it as a case study for the research. However, the result of the finding shows that there is mass participation in governmental programmes and politics when such programmes and policies are communicated to the people through their indigenous languages than when they are communicated through “foreign” language. Three programmes of government were analyzed, and the conclusion has been that the two which the government used indigenous languages to communicate to the people succeeded while the other failed because the people were alienated because of the language adopted for communication.

Key words: Language, Politics, Communication, media, Government

Introduction

The degree of access to, and consumption of mass media products have come to be seen as an index of a nation’s development (Udoakah, 1998: 5 7). Again, no nation can develop without the involvement of its people in development processes. And the people can only be involved or participate in their national (or state) development through effective political communication which the media play a leading role. In Nigeria, development is stagnated and cannot be said to have moved upwards on the world’s rating table due to poor political communication which keeps the people far away from government policies and programmes. The reason, to borrow the words of Udoakah (1998:5-7), is because “ a stereotype has been developed which makes the media of mass information to be seen as urban preserves, yet, the majority of the population are found in the rural areas and much of the envisaged development has the rural areas as the target”.

Media practitioners alone cannot be blamed. The government which estranges the people through the adoption of English language (which is entirely foreign) also has a fair share of the blame. Successive governments in Akwalbom state, for instance, behave as if this misconception cannot be reversed. It cannot be denied that one of the major problems of development in Akwalbom State, especially in the rural areas – as is the case in rural areas in other Nigerian states – stem from misunderstanding of political messages. Political messages are sent through the vehicle of English language, and the target audience, which is the indigenous population, finds it difficult to be carried along since the vehicle appears foreign to them. Of course, foreign things are strange, and strange things are scary with a propensity to drive people far away.

Language is a key factor in political communication, as in every other aspect of communication. But in political communication, especially in a monolingual state, indigenous language should be used effectively in order to get the people mobilized in a bid to get the state developed with less or no rancour.

2.0 Conceptual Review

2.1 Language Defined

There are many definitions of language as there are different experts, linguists and authors. To Wilson Des (1997) language is “a system of communication between humans through the use of agreed written or verbal symbols and as a speech peculiar to a particular ethnic group”. Language is constructively systematic, culturally acquired and a symbolic vocal behaviour of human beings.

Azikiwe, U. (1998) maintains that “language could be said to be a means of social control, it is a collection of motor responses, it functions symbolically and so is used for verbal communication”. Languages are a vehicle through which thoughts are conveyed and or passed to members of a society. Kathryn and Ross Petras (1996:469) hold that:

Language is alive; it's not dry grammatical rules and vocabulary lists, but a vibrant record of our thoughts, actions, ideas, and emotions... Given all the diversity of cultures in the world, it's not surprising to realize that there are so many languages in the world... you'll never hear most of them. Many are obscure languages from the isolated jungles... Most languages are spoken only by a few people – and then a few language are spoken by most people...

However, the duo define a language as

... a way of combining words and sounds in a grammatical way that is understood by listeners who are fluent in the same language; it is mutually intelligible (p4 70).

Language, to us, is the sharing of thoughts, ideas, inventions, etc. through words to a community or group that understands vividly, and are able to make out something from what is shared, and give feed backs in like manner.

2.2 The Language Situation of Akwalbom State

Akwa Ibom State which is used as a case study for this work is hetero-homogenous. It is homogenous in the sense that diverse groups making up the state are said to have shared a proto-

ancestry, and or, originated from the same stock. It is also viewed as heterogeneous society by a few persons because some of the groups making up the state though related historically and culturally, deny being Ibibio.

The people of Akwa Ibom State are grouped into three, viz: Ibibio, Annang and Oro. This grouping is somewhat political in the sense that all the groups understand and speak Ibibio language. But in actual fact, the state is made up of two major linguistic groups – Ibibio and Oro. This is because Annang (with eight local government areas) speak and understand Ibibio language, though through a different accent.

The Oro people (with five local government areas) speak a somewhat different language from the Ibibio, although they understand the main Ibibio language. According to Essien, O. E (2008: ix), the Oro people speak Ibibio as a second language. This is to say that there exists a one-sided intelligibility between Ibibio and Oro.

2.3 Communication and Political Communication: What they are

Communication is simply the exchange of ideas, feelings, and thoughts through a language that is familiar between the exchanger and the exchangee. Umanah (1996: 100) asserts that “the basis of a genuine communication process is the ability of individuals to talk to themselves”. He goes on to state that:

Communication is not something someone does to somebody. It is not something somebody does with someone; nor is it exactly the talking to or with somebody. Rather communication should be perceived and/or realized as what people take into account and are susceptible to; the way they take these things into account and become susceptible to them. (P. 100).

Communication becomes a mass concept when a group or a community takes something into account towards concerted goals (Umanah, 1996:100).

On the other hand, political communication is simply the conveyance of governmental policies and or programmes to the governed in a language that both the government and the people understand, and ensuring that the goals upon which such policies and or programmes were conceived are attained, and feed back received from the people through the same medium. Political communication takes its identity from politics and communication. It is an art of informing the public about the allocation of scarce resources to different sectors of the economy for development in a manner that the message would get to the target audience to ensure their participation.

3.0 Indigenous Language and Political Communication in AkwaIbom State: A Nexus

Political communication takes its identity from politics and communication. Going by this, we can maintain that political communication is an art of informing the public (the masses) about the allocation of scarce resources to different sectors of the economy for development in a manner that the message would get to the target audience in a bid to ensure their participation.

As an aspect of communication, political communication is a vehicle through which the vision, aspiration and policies of government, and how to benefit from the government, are commented to the people.

For the people to be totally involved in the affairs of their state; and for development to be witnessed, an informed masses is a sine qua non. A government worth its name has to devise a means through which the masses are carried along in the scheme of things. One of such means is the use of indigenous language to communicate government's policies and programmes.

The degree of access to, and consumption of mass media products have come to be seen as an index of a national development, as no nation can develop without the involvement of its people in development processes. How can the people be involved in the development process of their state? This could be done through effective political communication. According to Urua, E (2004:4);

Most Nigerians who live in the rural areas are generally monolingual or minimally bilingual. The print and electronic media utilizes English ... The majority of Nigerians obviously cannot assess the information conveyed in such mediums, because the information is not conveyed in a language they understand...

Thus, political communication can only be effective when the message is understood by the people or when the message gets to the target audience (the masses). The message can only get to the masses if such message is conveyed in the language they are familiar with.

Many government programmes in Nigeria failed because more than sixty percent of the people are not aware of such programmes, or what they stand to gain from them. Some government's programmes are sabotaged by the people they were intended because of poor communication.

English is the official language in Nigeria, hence, every government business is conducted in English language. However, findings show that the people, especially, in the rural areas are adverse to any government information being sent across to them in English language, but are always happy when the same government's information is channeled to them in their indigenous language.

In trying to draw a nexus between language and development, an eminent Nigerian Linguist, Professor Okon Essien, asserts that countries that are developed use their mother-tongue (indigenous language) in whatever aspect of the economy (Essien, E., 1998). What this means is that the use of mother-tongue in political or governmental communication in a state enhances adequate participation by a greater percentage of the populace. At this point, political communication connotes the extent to which the people are informed about how their government has been (or will be) able to harness the resources of the state productively and prudently for the good of all. Motaze, Dorothy (2004) maintains that "the greater the number of citizens who actively participate fully in the harnessing and the greater the number of those who benefit from it, the better".

She warns that factors which restrict section of the state's population from active participation (in the affairs of the state), as well as those which deprive sections of it from full enjoyment of the benefits should be downplayed. (Motaze, D. 2004). One of the factors that can restrict sections of

the state's population from actively participating in political affairs and development of the state is depriving them access to necessary information. And to do that successfully is by barring them from reaping from their own language.

Imelda Udoh (2021:17) posits that language is used to participate in communal activities, and it fosters political and democratic culture, as well as enrich the individual. What the erudite linguist and language scholar avers is that the language a people speak engenders political participation, development and democratic culture; thus, people should be allowed to partake in the development of their society by using their own language in political communication. The resultant effect of not using indigenous languages in political communication has always been responsible for system sickness such as riots, increasing crime rates, apathy, lack of patriotism, vandalization of public infrastructures, etc.

Using indigenous languages in political communication does not only curb the menace of restiveness, apathy and lack of patriotism among members of the state, but also engenders unity by ensuring integration, stability and sense of belonging. History has it that Martin Luther was able to carry through the Reformation in Germany principally because he could appeal to the people in their mother tongue (Umoh, S. J. 2004). While commenting on Martin Luther's reformation strategists, Umoh S J. (2004) avers that:

His translations of religious texts in German, his issuance of pamphlets and tracts; and his speeches and sermons, in the same language, all helped immeasurably to bring the German Reformation to fruition.

From the foregoing, one can see why it is necessary to use the different languages spoken in the rural areas because each language or dialect has its own peculiar contribution to make towards the development of that area.

Policy statements from government concerning the administration of their countries and their constituent entities constitute political communication (Udoakah, 2021), and such policy statements should be well received by the people, if, the objectives of such policies must be achieved. It is through indigenous languages that a government policy is understood and appreciated by the people, especially in the rural areas. When a people understands and appreciates government's policies, they are bound to change in the positive. These changes, in turn, permit, and possibly, compel other changes in the social and economic realms. As people change, they also affect the political realm directly by generating demands for government to satisfy, and indirectly, by producing new social structures which both generate demands and create new resources on which the government can draw. Once indigenous languages are adopted for political communication, the social mobilization of the majority parts of the population then can both push and permit the government to expand their operations. Thus, languages are a vehicle of development, politically, socially and economically.

To mobilize a people towards development in a state using the media becomes effective only when the people have access to the mass media and are able to comprehend the message (Etukudo, N. 1989: 69).

4.0 Better Life Programme for Rural Women and MAMSER: Why they succeeded

Better Life Programme for Rural Women and the Directorate of Mass Mobilization for Social and Economic Reconstruction (MAMSER) were launched in 1987. The former was created by the wife of the then Head of State, Mrs. Maryann Babangida, while the later was created directly by the Federal Government with the aim of providing political education programmes for Nigerians, so as to create a new social order for the political emancipation of Nigerians and the upliftment of the Nigerian nation. On the other hand, Better Life Programme for Rural Women was created to enhance the social, economic and political status of Nigerian women. (Otoghagua, E. 2007).

Both programmes succeeded to a great extent in the country. Their successes were greatly enhanced by the use of indigenous languages and socio-cultural structures of various Nigerian peoples in every level of their implementation. In AkwaIbom State, for instance, Better Life Programme for Rural Women was localized and code-named “NkaUforoIbaan”. About 95% of the activities of that programme was conducted and/or carried out in Ibibio language. The extent to which local language and socio-cultural structures enhanced BLP was felt when the arrow-head of the programme, Mrs. Maryann Babangida was recognized at the international level; and won a prize to that effect with Prof. WangariMaathai, a Kenyan, who founded Green Belt Movement (a community development and environmental protection programme). Mrs. Maryann Babangida and Prof. Maathai shared US \$100,000 cash prize including a sculpture each at the Africa Prize Award ceremony in London on 19th September, 1991. (Otoghagua, E. 2007).

Commenting on the success of MAMSER and BLF in AkwaIbom State, Etukudo, N. (1989) maintained that both programmes were fused together, and were totally localized. He goes on to state that:

For women mobilization, MAMSER in AkwaIbom State organizes representatives of all women organizations in the state into an apex development association known as NkaUforoIbaanAkwaIbom... under the aegis of the Better Life for Rural Dwellers Programme (Etukudo, N. 1989: 9)

Indigenous language was used in mobilizing the women for development. MAMSER also conducted their activities, such as political education, etc, in Ibibio language. At a point, the media was localized,, and journalists sampled the opinions of the people in Ibibio language. The media (journalists) as well as the state Directorate on Programmes Implementation Strategies were advised by the Advisory Council of MAMSER, which was the highest consultative body at the state level, to make programmes relevant to the various groups in AkwaIbom State (Etukudo, N. 1989).

Hence, Ibibio language adopted as a de facto official language in the state regarding MAMSER and Better Life Programme. Of course, that was in tandem with the then Federal Governments’ policy regarding social mobilization and political education in the country. The political Bureau set up by the Federal Government in 1986 to prepare Nigeria for the Third Republic States in part of its report that:

Social mobilization must be seen in terms of involving the people in taking part actively and freely in discussion and decisions affecting their general welfare. In other words, social mobilization and political education should aim at increasing people's level of awareness or cognition of political and other issues so that they can apply their energies positively and participate actively in the social and political life of the country.

What this means is that for people in the rural areas to be involved, their language must be used in educating them, and they must be encouraged to use their indigenous languages to air and or express their views.

5.0 Family Support Programme (FSP): Why it failed

When General SanniAbacha overthrew the Interim National Government (ING) headed by Chief Ernest Sheneke in 1993, his wife, Maryann Abacha, like her predecessor, launched her Federal Government-backed pet programme, Family Support Programme (FSP) in 1994. The programme was aimed at improving on the experiences of women in development as well as showing the role of the entire family in national development, especially as it affects social sectors, health, education, commerce and industries, agriculture, social development, child care, etc (Otoghagua, E. 2007).

Unlike Maryann Babaginda's Better Life for Rural Women (BLF), Mrs. Abacha's Family Support Programme (FSP) failed in its entirety, chiefly because the very people it was targeted were not carried along. The programme, even though had converted the structures put in place by BLF, failed to key into the yearnings of the people by localizing its activities.

Communication was poor. The rural dwellers were completely cut off and alienated. They were unaware or ill-informed of the goings-on in the programme because their languages were not adopted as *defacto* official languages of the programme. In fact, the programme died long before the demise of General SanniAbacha. This is not to say that poor communication alone was responsible for the collapse of the programme, there are other factors, too, such as corruption and lack of political will, etc., but poor communication, negligence of indigenous languages, contributed greatly to the fall of the programme in the rural areas.

6.0 Factors Meditating Against Indigenous languages in Political Communication in Nigeria

There are many factors fighting against the use of indigenous languages in political communication in Nigeria. These factors include politics, technology, etc.

6.1 Politics and Indigenous languages in Nigeria

In Nigeria, politics is placed above everything else, including development and progress. Government policies regarding indigenous languages are stamped by the very people who formulated the policies just because of some parochial considerations. For instance, politicians from the so called majority ethnic blocs would do anything to ensure that the languages of the so-called minority blocs are not reckoned with in Nigeria in the same way they sit on their political and social rights.

6.2 Technology and Indigenous Languages

Max Weber, cited by Umanah, A. (1996) in his examination of the capitalist economic activity, introduces a concept that he calls “rationality”. He sees rationalization as the extension or expansion of areas of the general society within its bounds of rational decision, and the industrialization of social labour which makes available the criteria of instrumental action for the penetration of other areas such as urbanization, *technification* of transport and communication, etc (Umanah, 1996: 105).

Lack of necessary technological know-how to develop some indigenous languages to literacy level is a bane on some indigenous languages. For instance, most Nigerian languages are yet to fashion out their orthographies. Those with orthographies have no machines or computers with the kinds of letters in their orthographies.

According to Urua (2004):

Indigenous Nigerian languages have struggled with the problems of relevance in a changing world, especially when juxtaposed with the roles and functions and languages such as English, Arabic and French...

The obvious lack of some letters in the orthographies of some indigenous languages is the reason some of these languages are not found in the internet, and this constitutes why government policies and programme are not translated into them, and the media find it difficult to go to press with them. Urua (2004:5) remarks that when Nigerian languages are easily accessible, it means that these languages and cultures are given wide promotion and publicity, thus generating more interest from people to carry out research on various aspects of these languages, leading to further development. There are other factors militating against indigenous languages and political communication in Nigeria. Such problems which include literacy, urbanization, and poverty have been covered by such eminent scholars as William Hachten, Lerner, Schramm, etc (Umanah,, A. 1996:109).

Conclusion

For any society to develop effectively and with speed there should be a synergy between the government and the governed. And there can only be such synergy when there is no gap in communication between the government and the people. Thus, to ensure that the gap is closed, political communication should also be done in indigenous languages since findings show that the people are always excited and willingly participated in the development of their society when they are fully aware of developmental plans and policies of their society.

According to Urua, E (2004) “Studies have shown that people appreciate information better and also learn better if such information is transmitted in a language they understand”. Therefore, the authors are of the opinion that government at all levels in Nigeria should ensure that political messages are passed to the people in indigenous languages, at least at Pari Paso with the English language which is Nigeria’s lingua franca and official language.

Nigerian indigenous languages which are yet to be developed to literacy levels should be developed

so as to become languages of the media and politics in Nigeria along with the English language. Although there is a great need to improve literacy, we must not lose sight of a basic communication fact that people are motivated to learn if they satisfy basic needs through learning.

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Classes Of Derivations in Tiv

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Abstract

This study embarked on an in-dept investigation of the classes of derivation in Tivoid language spoken predominantly in Benue State, Nigeria with the aim of contributing to the linguistic documentation and preservation of the Tiv language. Derivation being a morphological process whereby new words are formed from already existing words is one of the word formation processes in Tiv language that reveals the complexity and productivity of Tiv morphology. Using native speaker consultations and elicitation techniques to gather data, the study employed the distributed morphology framework and critically examines the classes of derivation in Tiv, focusing more on the intricate relationships between roots and affixes. Through a detail analysis of prefixation, suffixation and other morphological processes like conversion, this study identified and categorized the various classes of derivation, bringing to limelight their distribution and productivity including the relationships between phonological, morphological, and semantic properties in the structure of the derived words. The findings revealed important regularities and inconsistencies in the behavior of different derivational classes such as nouns formed from verbs, nouns formed from adjectives, formation of diminutives and formation by conversion, shedding light on the underling structure of Tiv word formation. The study concluded that in Tiv, derivations are formed through processes, such as: prefixation, suffixation, circumfixing and conversion. And most derived forms are nominals.

Keywords: Language, Morphology, Derivation, Word, Affixes, Conversion.

Introduction

The Tiv language, spoken predominantly in Benue State, Nigeria, is a rich and complex language with a unique morphological structure comprising of a unique system of derivation that plays a crucial role in shaping its vocabulary and grammar. Derivation is a crucial aspect of Tiv morphology, enabling speakers to create new words from already existing roots and the language to adapt to changing contexts and incorporate new concepts and ideas, thereby creating new meanings and expanding the language's lexical repertoire. A study of the classes of derivation in Tiv will provide understanding of the linguistic structure, usage and significance, ultimately contributing to

the language's preservation and promotion. The study draws on the theoretical framework of distributive morphology to analyze the classes of derivation in Tiv language. The objectives are to identify the different classes of derivation, describe the morphological processes involved and explore the significance of the derived words in the language. The study's findings will have implications for language documentation, language teaching, language preservation, promotion and a deeper understanding of the Tiv language and its cultural significance.

Statement of the problem

The Tiv language, spoken in Nigeria exhibits a complex system of derivation, whereby words are formed through various morphological processes. Despite its importance, there is lack of comprehensive analysis of the classes of derivation in Tiv. The study aims to address this gap by providing a systematic description and analysis of the derivational morphology of Tiv, identifying the classes of derivation, their characteristics, and the patterns of word formation they exhibit.

Methodology

The study adopts the native speaker consultations and elicitation techniques in gathering data. These techniques involve asking Tiv speakers to provide examples of derived words, judge the grammaticality of certain forms and explain the meanings and usage of derived words. These methods are appropriate because they allow for control of variables and ensure that the data collected are relevant to the research questions. The study employs the theoretical framework known as Distributed Morphology developed by Halle and Marantz (1990) which posits that morphology is distributed across different components of the grammar, rather than being a single, centralized module. It breaks down words into smaller units with features that combine to create words. This theory is appropriate in the description and analysis of the relationships between roots and affixes and the patterns of derivation.

Literature review

Language

Language is a human system of expression using words. O'Grady, Archibald and Katamba, (2011:1) submit that, language is at the heart of all things human. It is used by humans to talk, read, write and listen. It is part of the social structure of the human communities; it indeed defines the human being and set him apart from the rest of life. Agbedo (2015:14) concurs that language is a human system of communication that uses arbitrary signals, such as voice sounds, gestures, or written symbols. Finegan (2008) avers that language is a vehicle of thought or system of expression that mediates the transfer of thoughts from one person to another.

Thomas and Warein (1999) posit that, one of the obvious ways of thinking about language is as a systematic way of combining smaller units into larger units for the purpose of communication. For example, we combine the sounds of our language phonemes to form words lexical items according to the 'rules' of the language we speak. Those lexical items can be combined to make grammatical structures, again according to the syntactic 'rules' of our language. Language is essentially a rule-governed system of this kind, having a system of sounds, a system of grammar, a system of meaning; variations in usage are often systematic as well. Within these systems, there is scope for creativity and invention and these are evident in the subfields of language, one of which is

morphology through word formation processes.

Morphology

In linguistics morphology refers to the mental system involved in word formation or to the branch of linguistics that deals with words, their internal structure, and how they are formed (Aronoff and Fudeman 2011:2). In the same vein, Haspelmath, (2002:1) sees morphology as “the study of the internal structure of words.” Denham and Lobeck (2013) assert that morphology is the study of the rules underlying our knowledge of the structure of words. Nurhayati, (2020:3) agrees that, morphology is generally described as “the study of the internal form of words and the rules of the organization of words in a language.” Words of a language have structures ranging from simple, to complex and compounds. A word with a complex structure is made up of a free morpheme plus bound morpheme(s). Morphemes are the smallest indivisible units that bear meaning in language. Morphemes are divided into two groups, inflectional and derivational morphemes.

The constructions of many words in language involves the operations of both inflectional and derivational morphemes on words. However, there is a distinction between the two operations.

Inflectional morphology examines the use of bound morphemes to mark grammatical functions in words such as number, tense, possession, case, gender and these are syntactically dictated. For example: Noun: cup/cup-s, Verb: talk, talk-s, talk-ing, talk-ed and Adjective: big, bigg-er, bigg-est. while derivational morphology examines the use of bound morphemes to create new words from already existing roots.

In essence, morphology, the study of the structure and form of words, serves as a foundational pillar within the realm of linguistics and allied disciplines. It delves into the intricate architecture of language, unveiling the mechanisms through which words are constructed, transformed, and imbued with meaning (Peter 2024). These mechanisms are known as word formation processes.

Word formation process

Booji (2005) asserts that word formation processes are ways of creating new words by means of morphological rules and patterns. Bauer (2001) avers that word formation is the study of how words are formed from other words and how these new words fit into the grammatical system of language. Matthews (1991) posits that word formation deals with the processes language employ in forming new words. According to Peter (2024:583) word formation processes contribute to the expansion of a language’s lexicon by creating new words from existing morphemes. These processes can include compounding (e.g., “bookstore”), blending (e.g., “brunch” from “breakfast” and “lunch”), derivation (e.g. “teacher” from “teach”) and conversion (e.g., “to email” from the noun “email”) etc. This study is concerned with describing word construction through the process of derivation.

Derivation

According to Agbedo (2015: 186) derivation is primarily concerned with the processes whereby new words are formed from existing words. It involves the addition of an affix or affixes to a root or stem to produce new words, whose meanings and distributions are somewhat erratic. He cites instances such as, the suffix ‘-ly’ that creates adjectives from such nouns as *friend*, *man* equally

derives adverbs from the adjectives *slow*, *quiet*. Also, the suffix ‘-al’ that derives nouns from such verbs as *survive* and *propose* creates adjectives from the nouns – *condition*, *phrase inflection*, *culture*. He further submits that, in derivation as a morphological process, it is often customary to draw the distinction between class maintaining and class changing processes. The former process produces a new word but does not change the class, for example child -noun childhood- noun, king – noun kingdom – noun. The latter process on the other hand produces a new word that belongs to a different word class for instance: personal – adjective, person – noun, characteristic – adjective, character – noun.

Agbedo also points out that not only does derivation operates with affixes, it equally involves conversion phenomenon whereby a word changes the word class without any affixation, as attested by the following examples: ‘a man’ – noun to ‘to man’ – verb and ‘suspect’ – verb to ‘the suspect’ – noun. Similarly, Booij (2005:5) concurs that, changing the word class of a word, as happened in the creation of the verb ‘to tax’ from the noun ‘tax’, is called conversion, and may be subsumed under derivation. Another term for this phenomenon of conversion according to Aronoff and Fudeman (2011: 115) is zero-derivation which changes the lexical category of a word without changing its phonological shape.

Booij, (2005:51) avers that, the basic function of derivational processes is to enable the language user to make new lexemes. Lexemes belong to lexical categories such as Noun, Verb, and Adjective and the derived lexemes may belong to a different category than their bases. He sums up that, derivation is the formation of lexemes by means of affixation, conversion, reduplication, and root-and-pattern morphology (Booij, 2005:72). Derivational patterns commonly change the word-class of the base lexeme – i.e. nouns can be derived from verbs, adjectives from nouns, and so on. For such cases, the terms denominal (‘derived from a noun’), deverbal (‘derived from a verb’) and deadjectival (‘derived from an adjective’) are in general use (Haspelmath 2002:68).

The operation of affixes on already existing roots to derive new words is called affixation. According to Agbedo (2015:187), affixation is a word-building or word formation process that involves the addition of a phoneme or group of phonemes to a root or stem to modify, extend or change the meaning and /or function of the word. A root as expressed by Carstairs-McCarthy (2002:20) is the ‘core of a word’ it denotes the morpheme that makes the most precise and concrete contribution to the word’s meaning while those morphemes that precede the root (like en- in enlarge) are called prefixes, while those that follow it are called suffixes (like -ance in performance. An umbrella term for prefixes and suffixes (broadly speaking, for all morphemes that are not roots) is affix.

An affix according to Katamba, (1993:44) is a morpheme which only occurs when attached to some other morpheme or morphemes such as a root or stem or base to form a new word or change the grammatical function of a word. He explains three types of affixes:

- i. Prefixes- a prefix is an affix attached before a root or stem or base like re-, un- and in-:re-make un-kind in-decen.t

- ii. Suffixes- a suffix is an affix attached after a root (or stem or base) like-ly, -er, -ist, -s, -ing and -ed. Kind-ly wait-er book-s walk-ed.
- iii. Infixes- an infix is an affix inserted into the root itself.

Aronoff and Fudeman (2011:3) point out another type of affix which they call circumfixes. According to them, “circumfixes are affixes that come in two parts: one attaches to the front of the word and the other to the back.” Thus, derivation results in the formation of new words bringing about expansion to the language’s vocabulary.

A coverage of all the Tiv derivational processes or classes would be impossible in a study of this size, but the study will attempt to supply a representative selection of the classes of derivation in Tiv and provide reasonable documentation of most classes for the purpose of reference, documentation and preservation of the Tiv language. Because of the versatility of derivation in Tiv, one might have expected that many of the processes involved would have been sufficiently predictable in both their application and their meaning so that the lexemes thus derived would not count as lexical items. However, the complexities involved in the processes produce entirely new lexemes with distinct meanings. O’Grady *et al* (2011:123) submit that, “once formed, derived words become independent lexical items that receive their own entry in a speaker’s mental dictionary. As time goes by, they often take on special senses that are not predictable from the component morphemes.” The word ‘writer’ for example is often used not just for someone who write but rather for someone who writes for a living e.g. She’s a writer.

Data presentation and analysis

**Class 1. Nouns derived from verbs with prefix m-
Table 1.**

Root Verb	Prefix	Derived noun
Tsaha – punish	m-	mtsaha – punishment
Kura – guide	m-	mkura – guidance
Hen – think	m-	mhen –a thought
Vese – grow	m-	mvese -growth
Ver – place	m-	mver – placement
Tim – destroy	m-	mtim – destruction
Venda – refuse	m-	mvenda – refusal
Nenge – see	m-	mnenge – opinion
Mem – rest	m-	mmem – freedom
Ban – lack	m-	mban – lack
Pav – divide	m-	mpav – division
Yem – depart	m-	myem – departure
Kohol – gather	m-	mkohol – conference
Kôôm – reform	m-	mkôôm – reformation

In class 1. Table 1. The attachment of prefix *m-* on all the verbal roots creates nouns. This operation is class changing, prefix *m-* deriving nouns from verbs, what others call deverbal (derived from

verbs). This process tends to be phonologically neutral, having no effect on the segmental makeup of the base. Morphologically, the attachment of the affix-prefix *m-* on the verbal root changes the class from verb to noun as well as their structures from simple and indivisible to complex and divisible. For instance, *Tim* – destroy (a verb, structurally indivisible) to *Mtim* – destruction (noun, structurally divisible *M-*(affix) *tim* (root)). Semantically, there is a meaning relation between the root and the derived form though they are distinct words with independent entries in the Tiv dictionary. For instance, the root *yem* – depart carries the meaning of depart or leave and the derived noun *myem* carries the meaning of departure, which is a nominalization of the action described by the verb *yem*. Class 1. derivatives are the most productive of all the classes of derivations in Tiv.

Table 2. Nouns derived from adjectives with prefix

Adjectives	Prefix	Derived noun
Tsee – hot	m-	Mtsee – heat
Ndohoo – cold	m-	Mndohoo coldness
Taver – hard	m-	Mtaver – hardship
Soo – to love	m-	Msoo – love

In table 2. The examples illustrate the operation of the same prefix *m-* but in this case, it attaches to adjectives to produce nouns, what Haspelmath (2002) calls deadjectival (derived from adjectives). The operation does not trigger any phonological changes on the structure; morphologically, it changes the grammatical category from adjective-root to derived form-noun, and semantically, the roots and derived forms have related but distinct meanings. For instance, *ndohoo* describes the quality of being cold and *mndohoo* represents the abstract concept of coldness which is a nominalization of the quality described by the adjective.

Class 2. Nouns derived from verbs with i- -y- -n

Table 1.

Verb	Affixes	Noun
Tese – teach	i-y-n	ityesen – a teaching
Kaa – say	i-y-n	ikyaaan – a saying
Wase – assist	i-y-n	iwyasen – assistance
Kura – protect	i-y-n	Ikyuran protection
Tese (teach)	i-y-n	ityesen – teachings

The examples in Class 2 table 1 represent a derivational operation that attaches circumfix as well as triggers some changes in the structure of the derived forms. The affixes *i-* and *-n* with an insertion of *-y-* sound after the initial consonant function together on verb roots to produce nouns. For instance, the noun *ityesen-* a teaching is derived from the root verb *tese*-teach by the addition of prefix *i-*, the insertion of /y/ sound to palatalize the initial consonant /t/ and the addition of the suffix *-n*. Both prefix *i-* and suffix *-n* with /y/ sound operate in pairs on verb root to form a noun that represents a specific instance or product of the action described by the verb. For example, *ityesen-* a teaching represents a specific instance or product of *tese*-teach, such as a lesson. This is a class changing operation from verbs to nouns.

Table 2. Nouns derived from adjective and verb

Adjective/Verb	Affixes	Noun
Bume - foolish (adjective)	i-y-gh	ibyumegh - foolishness
Maa – build (verb)	i-y-gh	imyaagh – Structure

Similarly, class 2 table 2 expresses a similar derivational operation that attaches circumfix as well as triggers some changes in the structure of the derived forms as table 1. The circumfix *i-* and *-gh* are attached at the initial and final of the adjectival-root with an insertion of sound /y/ after the initial consonant sound to modify it to be more palatal in quality. For instance, the adjective *bume* – foolish is circumfixed with the affixes *i-* and *-gh* and the insertion of sound /y/ after the initial consonant of the adjectival-root *i-b-y-me-gh* to form the derived noun *ibyumegh* - foolishness. There is a change in grammatical category from adjective and verb to nouns.

Class 3. Nouns derived from adjectives with circumfix m- -m

Adjective	Prefix/Suffix	Noun
Doo – beautiful	m-/-m	mdoom – beauty
Vihi – ugly	m-/-m	mvihim - ugliness
Kehe – fat	m-/-m	Mkehem - fatness
Nyoho – sweet	m-/-m	Mnyohom – sweetness

The examples in class 3 are the operation of circumfixes on the adjectival-roots to form the nouns. The operation triggers no phonological changes but morphologically, the prefix *m-* and suffix *-m* are both attached to the initial and final of the root to form nouns that have meaning relation to the root. For instance, the adjectival-root *doo* – beautiful describes a quality of being beautiful similarly, the derived noun *mdoom-* beauty represents the abstract concept derived from the adjective *doo* - beautiful. This process is deadjectival (derived from adjectives) and is class changing, a change from adjectives to nouns.

Class 4. Nouns derived from verbs with prefix i-

Verb	Prefix	Noun
Engem – to shine	i-	Iengem – glory
Civir –to respect	i-	Icivir – respect
Chihi – to disrespect	i-	Ichihi – disrespect
Ember – to rejoice	i-	Iember – joy
Kever - break	i-	Ikever – fracture
Wuese – to praise	i-	Iwuese – praise

The examples in class 3 show derivations of nouns through the operation of prefix *i-* on the verbal-root with no other changes to the root. This is a deverbal operation- nouns derived from verbs. It is also class changing. For instance, when the prefix *i-* is attached to the verbal-root *engem-* to shine, it forms the noun *iengem-* glory. There is thus, meaning relation between the verbal-roots and the derived nouns though there have distinct meanings. For example, the noun *iember-* joy is a nominalization of the verb *ember* – to rejoice where the action of rejoicing is transformed into a

tangible concept or feeling of joy a noun.

Class 5. Derivation of diminutives from nouns

Noun	Prefix	Diminutive
Iwyua – dog	an-	Aniwyua – small dog
Ikyegh – chicken	an-	Anikyegh – small chicken
Gambe - bed	an-	Angambe – small bed
Yough – house	an-	Anyough – small house
Gbande – dish	an-	Angbande – small dish

Examples in class 5 represent the process whereby the prefix *an-* is used to form diminutive nouns from noun roots, indicating a smaller size. This process is class maintaining. The meaning of the root is modified to convey a sense of smallness. For instance, the prefix *an-* is attached to the noun *iwyua*-dog to form the diminutive *aniwyua* – smaller dog. Both the root and the derived form have meaning relation, both are nouns representing dog however the meaning of the derived form is modified to indicate a smaller dog while the root is simply a dog.

Class 6. Derivation by conversion

Table 1. Adjectives derived from Verbs

Verb	Adjective
Hèmba – to win	hèmba – great
Tséé – gone round	Tséé – hot
Ngér – write	ngér – plenty

The examples in class 6 table 1 are examples of derivation by conversion, whereby a word changes the word class without any affixation. It is also referred to as zero-derivation which changes the lexical category of a word without changing its phonological shape. For instance, the verb root *hembra*– to win changes its lexical category from being a verb to becoming an adjective *hembra*-great indicating a class change and representing distinct meanings.

Conclusion

This study critically examines classes of derivation in Tiv. It explores the various classes of derivation that occur in the language which are formation of nouns from verbs, nouns from adjectives, derivation of diminutives and derivation by conversion. The findings indicate that, most derived forms are nouns, this means that, the process of derivation in Tiv language majorly involves nominalization, the process of transforming other grammatical categories such as verbs or adjectives into nouns. The findings also indicate that, the most productive affixes in the language are the addition of prefix *m-* on roots to form nouns and the addition of prefix *an-* on noun roots to form diminutive nouns. Other prefixes and suffixes together with circumfixes are active in the formation of new words.

Also, the process of conversion operates to change the grammatical category to form new words with distinct meanings. Most derived forms through the addition of affixes on the roots have meaning relation to the roots. The derived forms are either the abstract concept of the quality describe by the root or a nominalization of the action described by the verb. The study recommends more exploration and descriptions of other morphological processes in Tiv grammar for documentation.

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Pragma-Semantic Analysis of Epigraphs in Yorùbá Context

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Abstract

This study conducts linguistic investigation on literal or contextual meanings of Yorùbá epigraphs and the illocutionary act which the derived meanings perform in Yorùbá socio-cultural context. The study aims at classifying the Yorùbá epigraphs into various categories in tandem with their identified linguistic features. The data samples for the study were collected by open request in WhatsApp forum of Isundunrin Community High School Old Students' Association in Ejigbo Local Government Area of Osun State, Nigeria. Fifty-one male members whose age ranges between thirty-five and sixty-five years responded. The researcher purposively selects seventy out of provided eighty-eight epigraphs. The researcher explores a synthesis of Wittgenstein's (1953) Use Theory of Meaning and Searle's (1969) Speech Acts as theoretical framework for the data analysis. The study shows that epigraphs in Yorùbá context are made to express emotions, ideas, thoughts, warnings, eulogies, or condemnations. The epigraphs, whose source in Yorùbá conveys proverbs, are either complete or non-complete. Literal and contextual meanings of the epigraphs are negotiated to perform illocutionary act of assertives, expressives, and directives. The study, therefore, recommends further language studies on epigraphs in Yorùbá socio-cultural context using other linguistic theories.

Keywords: Context, Epigraphs, Complete, Non-complete, Illocutionary Act

1.0 Introduction

The study of meaning within linguistic and cultural framework requires a nuanced integration of pragmatic and semantic perspectives. Morris (1938) establishes that meaning, when conceived as a semiotic item, refers to "the relations of signs to objects to which the signs are applicable," thereby foregrounding the interpretive link between signs and their referents. Within this orientation, Babatunde (1991) emphasises that meaning is not static but deduced from expressions through various mechanisms such as explication, explanation, and definition. This dynamic nature of meaning further highlights its tractability, as Odeunmi (2008) opines, suggesting that meaning can be systematically analysed and interpreted across communicative contexts. In alignment with this, Cruse (2000), as cited in Odeunmi (2008), identifies three dimensions of meaning: speaker's meaning, hearer's meaning, and sign's meaning which together underscore the interactive and layered nature of linguistic interpretation. Lyons (1977) also identifies two dimensions of meaning realisation. These are descriptive and non-descriptive. The descriptive meaning shows the aspect of meaning that conveys factual, referential or cognitive information about the world (contemporary issue). It is what an expression says about an object. This is obvious in some Yoruba epigraphs like *ìwà pèlè, à se lá, wéré ni'sé Olúwa*. These epigraphs convey description. Non-descriptive meaning does not directly describe an issue. It showcases deployment of connotation or emotions. Examples include *ayé tótó, ayé mo júbà, mo bèrù àgbà*

Against this theoretical backdrop, this paper undertakes a pragma-semantic analysis of epigraphs in the Yorùbá context. Epigraphs, inscribed texts often embedded in material culture, constitute a rich semiotic resource for exploring the relationship between language, culture, and meaning. By examining how Yorùbá epigraphs encode, convey, and negotiate meaning, this study seeks to reveal the interplay between pragmatic functions and semantic structures, thereby situating Yorùbá inscriptions within broader discourses of linguistic and cultural meaning-making.

1.1 Yorùbá Epigraphy

Ugorji (2022) explains that the term epigraphy derives from the Greek word *epigraphēin*, which means “to inscribe or write.” According to the Cambridge Dictionary Online (2025), epigraphy refers to the study of words engraved or written on durable materials such as stone or clay. Similarly, Hornby (2010) defines it as “a line of writing, a brief phrase inscribed on a building or statue, or a prefatory remark in a book.” Puhvel (2015) also views epigraphy as the study of inscriptions recorded on hard, enduring materials. Broadly, epigraphy can therefore be understood as the study of concise, meaningful inscriptions deliberately crafted on surfaces of objects to convey specific messages. These inscriptions, often termed epigraphs, are short but significant expressions that invite reflection and may provide insight into contemporary issues. Within the Yorùbá cultural context, epigraphs appear on various surfaces such as house walls, signboards, bicycles, motorcycles, buses, and similar objects, serving as communicative and symbolic markers. Epigraph is a very significant tool for understanding Yoruba human history and culture. Within the Yoruba cultural sphere, epigraph is not merely ornamental but embodies knowledge systems, values, and historical records that have shaped community life for generations. Yoruba epigraph constitutes vital repositories of information that link the present to ancestral traditions.

Importance of Yoruba epigraph to human livelihood is multidimensional. First, it functions as a medium of historical documentation. Inscriptions carved into stone or wood preserve accounts of dynasties, heroic deeds, and socio-political developments, thereby providing authentic records for posterity. Second, Yoruba epigraph possesses a religious and spiritual dimension. In sacred contexts, inscriptions are used to consecrate spaces and objects, serving as channels of communication with deities and ancestors. Such practices reinforce spiritual wellbeing, which is integral to the holistic concept of livelihood in Yoruba cosmology.

Yorùbá epigraph plays an educational role by transmitting indigenous knowledge. Proverbs, maxims, and symbolic representations inscribed in art and architecture encapsulate moral lessons, guiding human conduct within society. Economically, these inscriptions enhance cultural heritage tourism, as sites with preserved epigraphs attract researchers, visitors, and cultural enthusiasts, thereby contributing to local development. In sum, Yoruba epigraphs are more than carved words or symbols; they are instruments of memory, spirituality, education, and economic value. Their preservation and study remain indispensable to sustaining human livelihood, as they illuminate the profound interconnection between culture, history, and everyday survival.

2.0 Theoretical Framework

This research draws on a blend of two linguistic perspectives in semantics and pragmatics:

Wittgenstein's (1953) Use Theory of Meaning and Searle's (1969) Speech Act Theory. The Use Theory of Meaning posits that language consists of different "language games" grounded in socio-cultural practices that regulate how language is applied. The theory emphasises that language should be understood as a dynamic, context-dependent, and socially situated phenomenon. It maintains that a word's meaning is not tied to its abstract features but rather to how it is employed in communication. Thus, meaning emerges from the context, whether social, cultural, or situational in which linguistic units (words, phrases, clauses, or sentences) are used. Eze (2016) interprets this as a contextual or operational view of meaning, while Ugorji (2022) stresses that word meaning is determined by its function in a given situation rather than by the lexical category it belongs to.

In contrast, Speech Act Theory, developed by Austin (1962) in "How to Do Things with Words" (cited in Ogundeji, 2023), argues that utterances amount to performing actions. According to Osisanwo (2008), although pragmatists differ on the classification of speech acts, they generally recognise three major types: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. Locutionary acts refer to the production of meaningful words or expressions; illocutionary acts represent the speaker's intention conveyed through linguistic performance; and perlocutionary acts describe the impact of those utterances on the listener. This study focuses primarily on illocutionary acts, since they deal with the speaker's intentions. The illocutionary acts identified by Searle (1969) are employed for analysis of the Yorùbá epigraphs. The illocutionary acts are: directive, assertive, commissive, expressive and declarative. In Yoruba context, epigraphs are written by authors with specific purposes aimed at advising (assertive), directing (directive), appreciating (expressive) or warning (directive) society about contemporary issues. The synthesis of the two linguistic theories is therefore instrumental to descriptive research on pragma-semantic analysis of Yorùbá epigraphs.

3.0 Research Methodology

The qualitative and descriptive research design was adopted to provide literal and contextual meanings as well as illocutionary acts which the Yorùbá epigraphs convey. The data samples for the study were collected by open request in WhatsApp forum of Isundunrin Community High School Old Students' Association, Ejigbo Local Government Area of Osun State, Nigeria. Fifty-one male members of the chat platform whose age ranges between thirty-five and sixty-five years responded to the request with a list of eighty-eight epigraphs. The respondents are literate and witnessed the era when inscribing epigraphs on vehicles in Yorùbá society was common. The researcher purposively selects seventy out of provided eighty-eight epigraphs. The researcher represents the samples with alpha-numeric codes by forming acronyms through first letter of subheadings in data presentation and discussion such as AE1-AE17, Assertive Epigraphs 1-17; DE1-DE5, Directive Epigraphs 1-5; EE1-EE9, Expressive Epigraphs 1-9; RE1-RE9, Rhetorical Epigraphs 1-9; PCE1-PCE10, Proverbial Completive Epigraphs 1-10; and PNE1-PNE20, Proverbial Non-Completive Epigraphs 1-20. The researcher analyses the data deploying linguistic theories of Wittgenstein's (1953) Use Theory of Meaning and Searle's (1969) Speech Act Theory.

4.0 Presentation and Discussion of Data

Data are presented and discussed one after the other in line with use of pragma-semantic approach.

4.1 Assertive Epigraphs

Assertive Epigraphs are the inscriptions ascribed on vehicles whose denotative, contextual or implied meaning negotiation performs illocutionary act of assertive. They are made to state or inform. Table 4.1 shows instances.

Table 4.1: Assertive Epigraphs

Data Code	Epigraph	Gloss	Semantics	Speech Act
AE1	Owó tútù	Cool money	God's real blessings	Assertive
AE2	Má fẹ̀yí s'òpin Olúwa	This should not be an end, Lord	God's more abundant blessings	Assertive
AE3	T'èmi d'ayò	Mine becomes a joy	I am successful	Assertive
AE4	Mo bá Olúwa dúró	I stand with God	I have no other gods except God	Assertive
AE5	À se là	Doing to succeed	One's career to make him/her successful	Assertive
AE6	Wéré ni'sé Olúwa	God's work is simple	God blesses easily	Assertive
AE7	Ti Olúwa ni yó se	Thy will be done	God has control on all things	Assertive
AE8	Gégé ire la ó se	Blessings to come on our way	We shall be blessed	Assertive
AE9	Kí'kú má pa aláàánún èmi	Death should not kill my benefactor	My benefactor shall not die	Assertive
AE10	À se kún lowó	Work needs be done to bring more money	Wealth multiplies with more hardwork	Assertive
AE11	Olúwa ló gbón	Lord is wise	God is wisest/unquestionable	Assertive
AE12	Ayé kòótó	Earth rejects truth	People dislike truth	Assertive
AE13	K'ásò láyò	We shall alight in joy	Journey mercies	Assertive
AE14	Ìwà l'oba àwúre	Attitude is king of ritual	Attitude determines altitude	Assertive
AE15	Owó ni kókó	Money is important	Money is good	Assertive

AE16	Tení kú ló tán	Who dies has an end	Death is end of life	Assertive
AE17	Ayé la b'égàn	We meet reproach on earth	People are addicted to condemnation	Assertive

Assertive epigraphs in Yorùbá socio-cultural background are ascribed to convey desired meanings. The contextual or implied meaning deduced from the epigraphs is aimed at performing illocutionary act. It therefore states, informs and advises. AE1, "owò tútù, cool money contextualises God's real abundant blessings. The inscription suggests the financial status of the epigraph's author as buoyant, and informs that the well-to-do receive(s) the affluence from the legal business but not through money ritual. The inscription "owò tútù" contextually advises the society against inordinate quest for money "money ritual". AE11, "Olúwa ló gbón", which denotes God is the wisest and contextualises God is unquestionable, is to convey didactic teaching. The contextualised meaning informs not to see oneself as wise or powerful for which s/he is successful but to realise the success is by God's wisdom or power. AE12, ayé kòótó denotes earth rejects truths but "earth" contextualises people, making contextual meaning realisation as "people dislike truth". This semantic structure states to emphasise the rejection of people who speak truth to power in the society. AE16, "tení kú l'ótán" denotes "who dies has an end". The contextual meaning realised as "death is the end" is to instill moral in young ones in the socio-cultural context. The epigraph's meaning is though polysemous, it is moral inclined. AE17, "ayé la b'égàn" contextualises semantic effect informing to shun worries over condemnation people make against one another. The epigraphs and their intentional meanings are structured to declare, state, inform or advise, the assumptions of illocutionary act of assertive in texts.

4.2 Directive Epigraphs

Directive Epigraphs are the Yorùbá inscriptions whose literal meaning or contextual meaning performs illocutionary act of directive. Table 4.2 show the directive epigraph's instances.

Table 4.2: Directive Epigraphs

Data Code	Directive Epigraph	Gloss	Semantics	Speech Act
DE1	Félèlè	Fly like flag	Flourish in life	Directive
DE2	E jé wón ó wí	Let them say	Concentrate on your business	Directive
DE3	(W) Ìwàpèlé	Behave gently	Do not violent	Directive
DE4	Èniyàn se pèlé	Humans should behave themselves	Be kind and honest	Directive
DE5	E fura	Be watchful	Be careful	Directive

The directive epigraphs in Yorùbá context perform speech act of directives which warn, demand,

request or order. DE1, "félèlè" with the literal meaning "fly like a flag" and contextual meaning "flourish", is ordering. The epigraph contextualises doing well in life by becoming a rich personality in wealth, opulence, knowledge or human relations. The meaning negotiated is deeper than its structure. DE2, "e jé wón ó wí, let them say" is requesting.

In Yorùbá context, it negotiates semantic structure of not being bothered by whatever anybody can say on one's life. It is believed that people own their mouth and can say anything with it and what they say should not constitute disruption of concentration. DE3 "Wù'wà pèlé, behave gently" gives order and it is demanding or requesting. The inscription, in the context of use, connotes gentility, meekness, and calmness which Yorùbá believe are a key to admiration and success. DE4, "èniyàn se pèlé, humans be simple" also foregrounds request or demand for one out of two possibilities which humans can assume. The two possibilities of "simplicity and difficulty alternate each other and the demand is on positivity. DE5, "e fu'ra, you should be careful" is an expression signalling warning. The undetermined number of people "you", a second person pronominal which can represent one or more is directly directing request of carefulness. The expression in Yorùbá context is polysemous in meaning realisation. It denotes being watchful, being meticulous, being tactful; being innovative; being original; and being happy. For being watchful, to whom the Yorùbá epigraph is said, may have frenemies around him. For being happy, the addressee may have been noticed to get close to grave most especially as a result of a certain predicament which saddens his heart.

4.3 Expressive Epigraphs

Expressive epigraphs show their literal or contextual meaning perform illocutionary act of expressive by acknowledging, appreciating or apologizing. Table 4.3 shows instantiations.

Table 4.3: Expressive Epigraphs

Data Code	Expressive Epigraph	Gloss	Semantics	Speech Act
EE1	Títílopé mi Olúwa	My thanks are boundless, Lord	To be ever appreciative of God's goodness	Expressive
EE2	Ó já s'ópé	It ends in praise	To be thankful	Expressive
EE3	Òlá ègbón	It is brother/sister's influence	One's brother/sister renders help to become great	Expressive
EE4	Olá Father	It is father's influence	Father's conscious effort	Expressive
EE5	Olá mother	It is mother's influence	Mother's conscious effort	Expressive
EE6	Mo bèrù àgbà	I fear the aged	I fear the witches and wizards	Expressive

EE7	Ayé mo júbà	I salute the earth	I salute sorcerers	Expressive
EE8	Ayé tótó	I hail the earth	I hail sorcerers	Expressive
EE9	E f'orí jímí	You should release my head	Forgive me	Expressive

In Yoruba context, epigraphs are made to express feelings and emotions. EE1, *títílopé mi Olúwa* signifies an epigraph with literal meaning as "my thanks are boundless, Lord". It contextualises "being ever appreciative of God's goodness", the appreciation and expression of emotions. EE2, "*ó já s'ópé*", in Yoruba context, means "it ends in praise" expressing feelings and emotions. The contextual implication depicts the experience of the person who gives thanks as pleasant. EE3-EE5 "*olá ègbón*, brother/sister's influence", "*olá father*, father's influence", "*olá mother*, mother's influence" are expressive because they epitomise acknowledgement of brother/sister, mother and father respectively.

They logically convey either greetings or thanks. Each of the epigraphs realises semantic effect acknowledging power of either brother, sister, mother or father to affect, control or manipulate something or somebody in the favour. "*Olá*", influence in Yorùbá context and as it is used connotes an action exerted by a person with power on another person to cause a change. It means further that without the relation's used power or authority, the achieved success is difficult. So, the expressions acknowledge and show feelings and emotions of expressed appreciation. EE6-EE8, "*mo bèrù àgbà*, I fear the aged", "*ayé mo júbà*, earth I salute", "*ayé tótó*, earth I hail thee". The Yorùbá epigraphs' literal meanings are realised on the surface semantic level. In Yoruba context, the aged is a literal meaning to "*àgbà*", and earth surface to "*ayé*". However, socio-culturally, "*àgbà*" and "*ayé*" can mean witches, wizards, sorcerers, or magicians. *Àgbà* and *ayé* are synonymous with each other. They simply denote ones who are possessed and capable of using magical power and abracadabra to capsize, upturn or overhaul people's life in the spiritual realm. So, I fear the aged contextually realises connotative meaning as I fear magicians; *ayé mo júbà* connotes I salute sorcerers; and *ayé tótó* is semantically synonymous with I hail witches and wizards. These epigraphs act expressives by expressing acknowledgement and feelings.

4.4 Rhetorical Epigraphs

The rhetorical epigraphs are also named elicitation epigraphs, question epigraphs or interrogative epigraphs. They demand answers which are said to oneself. Table 4.4 gives examples of rhetorical epigraphs.

Table 4.4: Rhetorical Epigraphs

Data Code	Rhetorical Epigraph	Gloss	Semantics	Speech Act
RE1	Tà n tó Olórun?	Who is compared to God?	Who is worth of God's comparison?	Directive

RE2	Ta laà bá fẹ̀yìn tì?	Who can we lean on	Who can help?	Directive
RE3	Ta la lá barò re?	Who is your confidant?	Who do you confide in?	Directive
RE4	Ta ló kojá àdánwò?	Who is beyond test?	Who cannot fail?	Directive
RE5	Ta ló gbón?	Who is wise?	Who is wiser than God?	Directive
RE6	Tá n fẹ̀ràn re?	Who likes you?	Who loves you?	Directive
RE7	Tá n fé á ní	Who wants us to have?	Who wants us to have?	Directive
RE8	Tá n mò'la ?	Who knows tomorrow?	Who is sure of future?	Directive
RE9	Ìbá sè'wo únkó òré	What if it were you, friend?	Can you allow others address you the way you address?	Directive

The rhetorical epigraphs in Yoruba are explored within the socio-cultural background to convey meanings which are capable of provoking thoughts and causing the readers/listeners make response to the question to oneself. RE1, "ta l'ótó Olórun?" with literal meaning "who is compared to God?", is elicitation act demanding response which is made by one to oneself. In Yoruba cultural belief, the interrogative epigraph can have response as "none is compared to God". Thus, it gives meaning realisation of God as superior to mankind. RE2, "ta laà bá fẹ̀yìn tì?" translated as "who can we lean on?", is an interrogation which elicits response and epitomises discourse act. Contextually, the response to the interrogation is "none except God". The response negotiates semantic effect that God can be leaned on without sordid consequences. The rhetorical epigraph logically conveys meaning ordering the society to rely on only God, the Supreme-Maker. RE4 makes meaning negotiation beyond the translated semantic structure "who is beyond test?".

The translation of the interrogation is contextually deciphered in various forms. Contextually, the mentioned "test" is either negative or positive. People swimming in wealth are being tested and ones wallowing in poverty are also being tested. Evil that befalls a man is contextually deciphered as test of endurance if persevered, can turn his life around. The interrogation in the context of use, conveys a meaning giving warning not to mock at people experiencing life turbulence because table turns. RE8, "ta ló m'òla" translated as "who knows tomorrow" is closely related to RE4. However, "tomorrow" contextualises "future" which no one can give its account. Contextually, the interrogation conveys meaning towards warning and disallows unnecessary mockery against anybody. RE9 "ìbá s'èwo únkó, òré?" "what if it were you, friend?" portays meaning realisation of reprimanding. The rhetorical epigraph's meaning realisation communicates to who address people the manner they cannot accept to be addressed. Data RE1-RE10 give both literal and implied meanings. They show elicitation act demanding response in various forms by either the reader/listener. This epitomises discourse act, the pragmatic implication.

4.5 Proverbial Completive Epigraphs

These are epigraphs with complete semantic realisation and complete thought. Table 4.5 show their instances.

Table 4.5: Proverbial Completive Epigraphs

Data Code	Proverbial Completive Epigraphs	Gloss	Semantics	Speech Act
PCE1	Ìgbà l'ayé	Life is time	Do not misuse time	Directive
PCE2	Olórun l'úgo	God hides	God is watching	Assertive
PCE3	Jéjé l'ayé	Earth is gentle	Life is simple	Assertive
PCE4	Alábòsí òré	Hypocritic friend	Frenemy	Assertive
PCE5	Telégàn lósòro	Reproacher has problem	Disregard reproaches	Directive
PCE6	T'Olúwa ni yó ó se	Thy will be done	Submissive to God	Assertive
PCE7	Òjó gbogbo bí odún	All days like festival	With the rich, all days are festive seasons	Assertive
PCE8	Òbirí l'ayé	Earth is spherical	Life is rotational	Assertive
PCE9	Telédàá l'ase	Creator has authority	God's wish is irrevocable	Assertive
PCE10	Ìwà l'oba owó	Attitude is king of money	Attitude determines altitude	Assertive

Proverbial Completive Epigraphs are the Yorùbá inscriptions denoting wise-saying in Yorùbá context with complete expression making complete thought. The PCE is the blend of metaphor and proverb as an inscription deriving semantic senses. It forms semantic alignment with the argument of Medubi's (2018) which states that proverbs "support someone in need of emotional comforting".

PCE provides unconscious guides for the Yorùbá societal needy who sort out their predicament themselves merely reading and deducing literal or contextual meaning from the epigraphs. PCE1, "ìgbà layé, life is time" contextualises semantic form which negotiates warning meaning "do not misuse time". The epigraph reprimands people wasting time and resources. It places prominence on importance of time in doing things or taking action. The epigraph contextually emphasises consequences of either or not utilizing one's time in life. PC3 realises semantic structure of warning

and advises to take life with ease and simplicity. PCE7 opens mankind's inner eyes to the fact that all unused days are festive seasons with conditions. The conditions include being rich, healthy, respectable, and admired in the society. The rich spends money joyfully; the healthy celebrate peacefully; and the respectable or admired are celebrated with; making all days look like festive seasons. The epigraph is didactic instilling the virtue of hard-work, the source from which one can become rich. PCE8 presents a fact "earth surface/ life is spherical".

The epigraph is metaphorical denoting life as a ball which is spherical and rotational. The nouveau meaning realisation is that nothing is permanent in life but a synthesis of sweet and bitterness whose face deems either sweet or bitterness at anytime. PCE10 depicts Yorùbá cultural practice to value character over money. The epigraph shares meaning placing attitude over richness and corroborating attitude as determinant of altitude. The epigraph contextually foregrounds semantic effects that warn against the practice in reverse order in the society which places richness over character.

4.6 Proverbial Non-completive Epigraphs

Some epigraphs in Yorùbá context are proverbial, and non-completive, structurally. The epigraphs whose structures are divisible and meaning of one structure depends on another for complete semantic realisation and complete thought are termed Proverb Non-completive Epigraphs. PNE is mostly said in part by the productivist (writer/speaker) with expectation that the receptivist (reader/listener) will say the completive part. NPE is realised as indicated in the following table.

Table 4.6: Proverbial Non-Completive Epigraphs

Data Code	Non-completive Epigraph	Gloss	Completive Part	Gloss	Semantics	Speech Act
PNE1	Àjò l'ayé	Earth surface is sojourn	Òrun ni'lé	Heaven is home	Stewardship accounts on earth will be made in heaven	Assertive
PNE2	Tení bégi lójù	He who fells tree has problem	Igi á rú'wé	Tree shall re-sprout leaves	Denial cannot deter destiny	Assertive
PNE3	Oba bí i Olórun	King like God	Kòsí	No	God is indomitable	Assertive
PNE4	Eni a fè la mòn	We know whom we love	A kòmòn eni tó fè'ni	We do not know who love(s) us	Look before you leap	Directive
PNE5	Ti Olúwa ni	Earth is	Àti èkun re	Its	All belong to	Assertive

	ilè	Lord's	è	fullness	God	
PNE6	Bánú so	Soliloquise	Máse bá èniyàn so	Do not collogue	Do not discuss your success with people	Directive
PNE7	Àséélè	The rendered service	L'àbò wá bá	is to fall back on	You reap what you sow	Assertive
PNE8	Òwúró l'awà	We are in the morning	Oba j'álé ó san ni	King bless our evening	God to make future better than now	Assertive
PNE9	Ìbàjé èniyàn	Man's backbiting	Ko dásé Olúwa dúró	Does not hinder success	Man's hatred cannot hinder success	Assertive
PNE1 0	Òní l'arí	We see today	Kòsí eni tó mó'la	Nobody knows tomorrow	Do well because table turns	Directive
PNE1 1	Ìrònún ikokò	Thought on leopard	Ni yó pa'já	Will kill dog	Thinking to harm a fellow can kill the evil doer	Expressive
PNE1 2	Ojú la'rí	Face is seen	Inún jìn	Thought is not known	People are difficult	Assertive
PNE1 3	Bó o sé e re	If you do well	Ó ó ba ní'bè	You will meet it there	One's endeavour is not in vain	Assertive
PNE1 4	Bá ò kú	If we do not die	Ìsé ò tán	Doing is not ended	Death terminates people's success	Assertive
PNE1 5	Àim'àsikò	Not knowing the time	Lóún dámún èdá	Worries creature	People are troubled by not knowing their time	Assertive
PNE1 6	Bólóde ò kú	If the landlord does not die	Ojúde ò le hu gbégi	The land cannot grow weeds	Owners are caring for their properties	Assertive
PNE 17	Bémìn báá wà	If there is life	Ìrètí n be	There is hope	Life is paramount to	Assertive

					success	
PNE 18	Ore l'ópé	Goodness pays	Ìkà ò pé	Wickedness is evil	Do good but not evil	Directive
PNE 19	Ìpàkó ò gbó sùtì	Man's back does not see	Orí elégàn lódàrú	Reproacher suffers mental disorder	Concentrate without minding reproachers	Directive
PNE 20	Àtélewó ení	One's palm	kì íí tan niíje	Does not deceive one	One's destiny is in his hand	Assertive

PNE3, "Oba bi i Olórun, king as God"; "kòsì, no" instantiates Yorùbá epigraph whose one of the structures "kosi, no" does not convey a complete semantic realisation rather its clear-cut meaning is dependent on the preceding structure "Oba bi i Olórun, king as God". The intentional meaning the combined structures of the epigraph contextually foregrounds is the quality of God as indomitable. This semantic structure is informative, and advisable performing the illocutionary act of assertive. PNE5, "Ti Olúwa ni ilè, earth is of Lord's; àti èkun re, and its fullness" signifies non-completive epigraph as the first structure is root-words on which the second structure is dependent for derivation of complete meaning explication.

Yorùbá lifts verbatim the structure from Bible and uses it as epigraph whose semantic effect is "all belong to God", to advise or discourage revolvers against feudalism. By the meaning implicitly implied, it performs illocutionary act of assertive. PNE7, "àséélè, the rendered service, l'àbò wá bá" is a Yorùbá proverb used as epigraph. The two different structures are interdependent for complete semantic realisation which, in Yorùbá socio-cultural context, connotes "you reap what you show". PNE10, "òní l'arí, we see today; kòsì eni tó mó'la, nobody knows tomorrow" with the desired semantic structure of "do well because table turns" are also interdependent for meaning making. PNE11, "irònúń ikokò, thought on leopard; ni o pa'já, will kill dog" are obvious evidence of two different structures that are interdependent for complete senses. The first structure is made of nominal phrase while the second structure contains finite verb, making a clause and showing relationship between leopard and dog for cutting-edge meaning realisation of "ill-thinking against fellow is an evil to bedevil the evil perpetrator". PNE13, PNE14, PNE16 and PNE17 deploy if to show the degree of syntactic and semantic interdependence in their structures.

Proverb Non-completive Epigraphs (PNE) are sometime syntactic and semantic independent. They are independent clauses and possess capacity to make complete semantic realisation. PNE1, "àjò l'ayé, life/earth surface is sojourn; òrun ni'lé, heaven is home" with fused implicature as "accounts of stewardship on earth will be made in heaven". PNE2, " tení bégi lójù, he who fells tree has problem, igi á rú'wé, tree shall re-sprout leaves with connotative association shared as "denial cannot deter destiny". PNE4, "eni a fè la mòn, we know whom we love; ako mon eni tó fè'ni, we do not know who love(s) us" for which we have suggested meaning as "look before you leap". PNE18, ore l'ópé, goodness pays; ìkà ò pé, wickedness is evil" with semantic derivation as "do good but not

bad". The structures in each of the proverbs turned epigraphs are meaningful independently. They perform illocutionary act of either assertive or directive.

5.0 Conclusion

This study investigates semantic negotiation of epigraphs in Yorùbá context and the illocutionary act which the negotiated meanings perform. The epigraphs convey meanings by descriptive and non-descriptive forms. The realised meanings from the epigraphs are rooted in socio-cultural practices of Yorùbá context which perform illocutionary acts of assertives, directives and expressives, exhibiting pragma-semantic attributes. The study specifically identifies a plethora of epigraph types such as assertive epigraphs, directive epigraphs, expressive epigraphs, elicitation epigraphs, proverbial completive epigraphs, and proverbial non-completive epigraphs. The study reveals that the speaker's desired meanings influence language constructions whose semantic effects perform illocutionary acts. Therefore speaker's intentions determine expressions whose meanings are realised for a purpose.

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