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What people do with language and what language does with people: The example of the English Language in the Nigerian social space

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Abstract

In situationalising language, sociolinguistics is concerned not only with what people do with language but also with what language does with people. With the importance of the preponderant issues that surround what people do with language and what language does with people is seen as complementary aspects of sociolinguistics, scholarly interventions have largely neglected the two sides of language within the Nigerian context. This paper, therefore, relies on Gumperz' Interactional Sociolinguistics as its theoretical framework to explore how the English language is used in Nigeria with the purpose of uncovering what people do with (the English) language and what language does with people. Excerpts from X (formerly known as Twitter) are purposively selected for the study. The study shows that apart from language's communicative function, it is used to do many things. A language event does not occur in a vacuum – it comes to life in a social matrix. As people use language to do what they do, it in turn conveys information about its users. The paper concludes that language affects people's cognitive processes, creates cultural identities, and plays a significant role in societal dynamics. The significant influence that languages have on human experiences – both individually and collectively – is shown by this dynamic interplay.

Keywords: Language; Interactional Sociolinguistics; X/Twitter; Nigerian English; Netizens

1.0 Introduction

Language is a complex instrument that influences human thought, promotes social interaction, protects culture, and is used for expression and communication in a variety of contexts. A vital component of human life, language is an instrument that people use in a variety of ways. Fundamentally, language helps people to communicate with one another; enables them to exchange ideas, feelings, and knowledge. People communicate on a regular basis,

share their thoughts, and build social and personal connections with others through written and spoken forms. As a communication tool, language is essential for forming communities, connections, and creating social ties. It facilitates the sharing of common narratives, cultural values, and customs, which help different groups form a collective identity. Rabiah (2018) defines language as **“a communication tool used by everyone in their daily life to convey information and arguments to others”**. Language is closely related to intellectual growth and cognitive functions. It acts as a conduit for people’s reasoning, thinking, and learning. Language is a very crucial instrument in the process of achieving individual, group and national identification (Udoh, 2017). It serves as the main means of knowledge acquisition, academic discourse participation, and idea sharing in educational contexts. Beyond the boundaries of formal schooling, language fosters continuous intellectual development by empowering people to critically analyse, explore novel ideas, and express how they perceive the world. In this sense, language serves as more than just a tool for communication; it is a cognitive tool that moulds mental processes and influences academic endeavours.

Language is a quality that all people share; a key difference between humans and other animals, and the driving force underlying human interactions (Ogunsiji, 2013). The language spoken by a group of people goes a long way to indicate the personality, and socio-cultural of life of the people. To this end, it is safe to aver that the Nigerian English is one of the identity of the users in Nigeria. The effect and the role of English in Nigeria as an important tool in fostering unity, enhancing general administration, and adjudicating legal interpretation among others, cannot be underestimated (Danladi, 2013). This is to say that in Nigeria, the English language is a unifier; it cuts across different spheres, local languages, cultures and backgrounds. Jowit (1991) identifies five major contexts where English language and other mother tongues in Nigeria are prominently used. They include

- i. Official setting;
- ii. Educational setting;
- iii. The mass media;
- iv. Religious gatherings; and for
- v. Interpersonal relations

This confirms that the English language in Nigeria has risen to prominence as the national lingua franca for both domestic and foreign societies (Baker and Ishikawa, 2021; Galloway and Numajiri, 2020; Mahboob,

2018; and Jenkins, 2015). Nigerian English is characterised by a vivid and expressive vocabulary that mirrors the nation's multilingual environment. Nigerians frequently incorporate terms from their native languages into English, resulting in a linguistic mosaic that reflects the diversity of the country's cultures. This linguistic hybridity is a reflection of Nigeria's people's adaptability and tenacity as well as their history. It is essential to state that the English language in this country performs many functions; this range from disseminating information, haggling over goods and services, and imparting knowledge among others.

Extant studies on the use of English language in Nigeria have concentrated on the roles of the English language on Nigeria (Olorunsogo, 2019; Ushuple and Iskandar, 2019; Danladi, 2013; Adegbite and Akindele, 1999; Bamgbose, 1991), functions of English in relation to Nigerian languages (Taiwo, 2009) and the status of English language in Nigerian school system. What people do with language and what language does with people within the Nigerian context has not enjoyed robust scholarship unlike other usages of the English language in Nigeria. Thus, this paper explores how the English language is used in Nigeria with the purpose of uncovering what people do with (the English) language and what language does with people from a sociolinguistic perspective.

2.0 Theoretical Framework

This study adopts interactional sociolinguistics. This theory (which is primarily based on the works of J.J. Gumperz, 2003) aims to comprehend how people communicate and interpret meaning in social interactions by integrating sociological, linguistic, and anthropological viewpoints to create a unified qualitative interpretive approach and establish the analytical processes for sociolinguistic analysis. This paper's focus is deployed within the theoretical framework of social interactions. That is, it is concerned with the way individuals communicate within various domains and it emphasises the roles of language in the lifestyle of individuals. To an extent, it explains how language determines the way humans relate in their day-to-day activities. Interactional sociolinguistics is concerned with the "ability to interpret what participants intend to convey in everyday communicative practice" (Gumperz 2003:215). In order to create a single qualitative interpretive approach and develop the analytical procedures for sociolinguistic analysis, interactional sociolinguistics is a theory focused on understanding how interactants signal and interpret meaning in interaction through an analysis of social interactions integrating linguistic, anthropological, and sociological perspectives (Gordon, 2011; Schiffrin, 1996; and Tannen, 1992).

Before the emergence of Sociolinguistics as a discipline, the emphasis in linguistic enquires was more on structural analysis of language and less on function and meaning. Language should be related to the social contexts which give rise to it. Thanks to insight from the related fields of the social sciences like sociology, anthropology, social psychology, human geography, etc for taking cognizance that societal structures and values are related in some way to language. With this insight, sociolinguistics as a branch of linguistics becomes fully established as a separate discipline, which provides the tools for “comprehending the study of the structure and use of language in its social and cultural contexts” (Pride and Holmes, 1972:7). Sociolinguistics studies language as a social phenomenon; it reveals that language event does not occur in a vacuum – it occurs in a situation which can be socio-culturally defined. Moreover, language and society exhibit patterned co-variation. For a proper appreciation of language, therefore, it should be contextualized; it should be observed and studied. According to Trudgill:

Language is very much a social phenomenon. A study of language totally without reference to its social context inevitably leads to the omission of some of the more complex and interesting aspects of language. (1974:32)

In situationalising language, sociolinguistics becomes concerned not only with what people do with language but also with what language does with people. Thus there exist reciprocal actions between language users and language use. Language is an important instrument in the hands of its users; it can be used or abused. Language abuse arises as a result of its misuse. And the consequences of language abuse are great. In fact, it can destabilise the human society. This means that language is a double-edged sword; it creates order and meaning in the society if properly used and it can also create disaffection and disorder if misused.

3.0 Methodology

The choice of Nigerian netizens’ comments and commentaries on X (formerly known as Twitter) which are pivotal towards what people do with language and what language does with people constitutes the data used for this research. The comments on X are those that specifically convey information, make clarifications, and inform citizens about social status and so on. An examination of netizens’ choice of language usage can serve as a compass for understanding what people do with language and what language does with people within the Nigerian society. Samples that reflect actions performed with the language in focus were analysed to uncover what people do with language and what language does with people. The data were analysed using

Gumperz's (2003) interactional sociolinguistics.

4.0 Data Presentation and Analysis

4.1 What People do with Language

It is often explained that language is meant for humans and communication among humans is less cumbersome because of the use of language. It is therefore appropriate to assume that people perform different social activities with the use of language. This section explicate how language is used as a tool for different important functions by humans.

4.1.1 Language as a Tool for Exerting Social Dominance

Through the use of language, man can dominate his fellow men. In African societies, for instance, the phenomenon of bilingualism and biculturalism may be explained as being partly concomitant of colonialism. Language is part of man's culture and it is at the same time a vehicle for the expression of the culture. This is why learning a language implies learning the culture of the language. Language therefore is an agent of socialization and acculturation. Through the use of English in Nigeria, the users identify themselves as members of the larger speech community of English speakers.

Excerpt 1

@funshoda...

I have been plying this road for over twelve years without a single scratch on my car. See, no driver does it better than I do.

The speaker employs the use of self-promotion and ululation to say, "See, no driver does it better than I do". In this instance, the personal pronouns "I" and "my car" serve to emphasise his unique control over the circumstance. "No driver does it better than I do" adds a comparative element, portraying the driver as superior to other drivers and not just as competent. Additionally, the speaker uses the word "See", which is a demonstrative term, to ask the passengers to verify the veracity of the allegation with their eyes. His claim is strengthened by the employment of demonstratives, which give the impression of immediacy and proof. The general message is intended for the passengers, perhaps with the intention of reassuring them of his competence

and fostering confidence in their driving ability. The excerpt shows the netizen's desire to project superiority over his peers in addition to using his experience and accident-free record to build dominance and authority. In addition to communicating his skill and knowledge, this speech may have an impact on the passengers' perception of the netizen's dependability and competence.

Excerpt 2

@ArinSma...

A vote for me is a vote for competence; In fact, my name – Arin – represents Ability, Responsibility, Integrity and Nobility. You can conclude that I am the best person for this position.

The statement's first directive sets an unmistakable tone of dominance and authority. This linguistic decision suggests that voters should blindly accept the assumption of competence by positioning the candidate's competence as both a desirable trait and a requirement. There is a subtle display of power as the candidate, Arin, presents the acronym that is generated from his name: Ability, Responsibility, Integrity, and Nobility. Dividing his name into positive qualities suggests a confident affirmation that he is endowed with these qualities. Arin purposefully frames the conversation to highlight his strengths by presenting this acronym, which serves to bolster the notion that these qualities automatically make him the better candidate.

The statement – you can conclude that I am the best man for this position – sums up a powerful declaration of authority. Since the wording is so clear-cut, there isn't much opportunity for different interpretations. By projecting an air of superiority, the candidate leads the electorate to believe that they are the clear-cut favourite for the job. In addition to demonstrating the candidate's expertise, this self-assured statement gives the electorate a sense of control over the decision-making process. There is a consistent theme of persuasive dominance across the entire statement. From the opening demand for proficiency to the certain conclusion, every word choice is purposefully chosen to shape and manage the audience's impression. The discourse in which the candidate seeks not simply support but unquestioning acknowledgment of their supremacy in the election contest is facilitated by the positive framing of attributes, the ending statement's assumed agreement, and the overall authoritative tone. The speech exhibits a conscious attempt to steer the narrative and position Arin as the qualified and authoritative

candidate.

4.1.2 Language is an Indication of Meaningful Existence in Society

The idea of what people do with language is further illuminated by speech acts theory as propounded by Austin and subsequently developed by his followers. The basic premise of this theory is that utterances do not occur in a vacuum; they are meant to perform specific acts such as stating, informing, requesting, etc. According to Austin, we use language to perform ‘acts’ and such acts are locutionary act (an act of making an utterance with a specific meaning), illocutionary act (an act of doing something in the saying e.g. “I declare this ceremony open”), perlocutionary act (an act which brings about an effect by the saying e.g. the addressee may be persuaded, convinced, frightened etc). For instance, the utterance “VIO” (Vehicle Inspection Officer) may be intended by the speaker to inform, warn or threaten. This, therefore, is the illocution of the utterance. It is expected that the utterance will have some effect(s) on the hearer (the addressee) e.g. he might be frightened. It is pertinent to note that the speech acts theory reminds us of some conventions, some socially conditioned constraints that may be imposed by the non-linguistic environment on the use of language. For example, in saying “I hereby declare this conference open”, and for it to perform “happy” or “felicitous” speech acts, I must be the right person to say so, that is, I must be the person so authorised. Furthermore, I must believe sincerely in it; there must be appropriate conditions and proper procedures must be followed. This scheme relates language to the world of “facts”, that is, to the “real” world as we understand it. Let us consider the following excerpt:

Excerpt 3

@olamidipup...

I am the best. No one can be compared to me in this world.
Another version of me can’t be seen anywhere.

The above excerpt makes a brazen claim to uniqueness and superiority. The first sentence is an outward declaration of confidence and a positive self-image. The definite article “the” denotes a special and unmatched status. This language choice may be interpreted as a calculated attempt to establish the speaker’s superiority and possibly in order to gain attention or establish dominance in social situations. Being the best is more than just a self-evaluation; it is a performative act that seeks validation from others in the social

sphere. The follow-up comment further solidifies the idea of incomparability. The speaker is highlighting their individuality and differentiating themselves from others by making it clear that no one else can be compared to them. By positioning themselves as someone who stands out and demands respect, the speaker uses language that conveys a desire for validation and recognition from the social context.

This statement might be interpreted as a linguistic performance meant to influence social views within the context of interactional sociolinguistics. Superlatives, such as “the best”, and a stress on incomparability are two ways that speakers manipulate how other people see them in a social setting. These remarks have a performative quality that implies a deliberate attempt to forge a certain social identity that is characterized by excellence and uniqueness.

4.1.3 Language as a Mode for Physical-Metaphysical Trans-Relationship

Another dimension to language use is the belief in the magical power of words across human societies. Despite the advancement of scientific culture, there is still the belief that mere uttering of some words can bring about the desired results. In traditional African societies, for example, it is believed that spirits can be conjured and diseases cured through incantations. Even when prayers are said, man shows his belief in the potency of words. This may perhaps explain the evocation nature of the language of prayer, libation, incantation, etc. It should be no wonder also that in some traditional societies, certain words are tabooed; mentioning them in ordinary contexts are forbidden. Furthermore, the African, particularly the Yoruba, believe, in the power of words and this is shown in the names given to children at birth. Such personal names are usually religiously held.

Excerpt 4

@NiyiDa...

The God whom I serve will not allow me to be stranded in
life. I am already God's own son.

The excerpt demonstrates how closely a person's religion, relationship with God, and perspective on life are all related. The vocabulary employed describes the trans-relationship between the physical and metaphysical realms. The opening statement links the speaker's deeds to their belief in a higher power. The word “serve” suggests a dedication to a spiritual or religious

practice and an intentional attempt to live a life that is in line with a higher purpose. The notion that God won't let him get lost highlights a faith in divine intervention and suggests a trans-relationship in which the spiritual world affects and moulds the material parts of human existence. The second portion of the sentence adds a metaphysical element to the person's identity. The speaker is positioned as a heavenly offspring by the language, which implies a spiritual adoption. This allegoric bond transcends the material world and suggests a deeper, transcendent relationship with the divine. By addressing God as a parent and the person as a son, familial language creates a strong spiritual bond that extends beyond the confines of the material world.

The fundamental idea of the message is that the individual's physical and metaphysical parts of existence interact dynamically. His understanding of life's events and circumstances is shaped by his trust in divine protection and guidance. This speaker uses his faith to overcome obstacles and find meaning in life, demonstrating the trans-relationship between the material and metaphysical realms and implying a close relationship between the spiritual and material facets of their path.

Excerpt 5

@spiritu...

This life is a warfront. Every religion has their spiritual process of winning life battles. For example, after fasting and prayers, Christians still use anointing oil and water while Muslims use ohuntu, etc to complement their prayers.

Within the framework of religious rituals, the aforementioned excerpt explores the meeting point of the material and spiritual domains. The opening metaphor, "This life is a warfront", establishes the context for the conversation by comparing life to a battleground where people fight with their spirituality. A trans-relationship between life's physical experiences and the metaphorical struggle in the spiritual world is introduced by this figurative portrayal. It implies that dealing with obstacles in life is similar to fighting a war, highlighting the necessity of developing tactics to get through them. The second sentence acknowledges the variety of religious customs and practices that are meant to help people deal with life's obstacles. This suggests that people of different faiths believe in spiritual processes that have the ability to affect or determine physical consequences. It emphasises the notion that religious activities work as a link between the material and spiritual realms of human existence. The foundation is laid by the way life is metaphorically

framed as a battlefield, and the examples given show how particular rituals act as links between the material and spiritual realms. The recognition of varied customs throughout many religions emphasizes a common conviction on the importance of these rites in overcoming obstacles in life by means of a combined physical-metaphysical strategy.

4.1.4 To Downplay Social Negativity

The skill of downplaying social negativity is deeply ingrained in communication, where language is a technique for addressing touchy subjects while maintaining personal connections. One common tactic is the employment of politeness indicators, as Nigerians frequently utilize respectful language, indirect requests, and shows of thanks to mitigate the impact of disparaging remarks. These indicators, which highlight the value of interpersonal harmony, are consistent with the cultural focus on respect and the preservation of strong social ties. In Nigeria, euphemisms and indirect language are frequently used linguistic methods to delicately handle bad situations. People frequently pass across information with veiled terms to make their messages more socially acceptable rather than by openly facing challenges. Euphemisms provide a certain abstraction that makes it possible for people to talk about delicate subjects without offending anyone or making them feel uncomfortable.

Excerpt 6

@Tolani...

I'm starting to think my soul mate is a woman

The excerpt expresses a personal assessment of romantic emotions and raises the possibility of a change in the speaker's conception of her sexual orientation. This excerpt centres on how the netizen minimises or sidesteps conversations about homosexuality. The statement's opening self-reflective admission alludes to a continuous process of reflection and realisation. This linguistic choice suggests a certain amount of ambiguity or investigation, which may have been influenced by relationship expectations and society conventions. The excerpt provides a potential aspect of downplaying homosexuality and implies a specific gendered preference. People may present their experiences in a way that conforms to conventional expectations in a culture where heteronormativity is prevalent, downplaying or avoiding open discussions about same-sex attraction. The word "soulmate" lends additional meaning to the remark because soulmate relationships are frequently

romanticised and culturally linked to heterosexual partnerships. The person may be downplaying any potential same-sex attraction by suggesting the possibility that a woman could be their soulmate in an effort to reconcile their feelings within a more socially acceptable framework. The sentence quietly conveys the intricate relationship between one's own self-discovery, society expectations, and the possible denigration of homosexuality. The wording employed facilitates a step-by-step examination of emotions, which may have been motivated by the need to conform to social expectations and lessen the difficulties involved with candidly talking about same-sex attraction.

4.1.5 To Enhance Social Acceptability

A variety of techniques are used in the strategic use of language to increase social acceptability, such as being courteous, communicating indirectly, using slang or cliché, expressing humility, using language that is focused on the community, being generous in one's statement, and using cultural allusions. These linguistic techniques are closely linked to cultural norms in promoting social acceptability and enhancing constructive social interactions within Nigeria's richly varied and interwoven social fabric.

Excerpt 7

@Uberfac...

During the civil war, "horizontal refreshments" was a slang term for prostitutes.

The colloquial phrase "horizontal refreshments" adds a touch of humour and indirectness to the description in this context by acting as a euphemism for prostitutes. The term's euphemistic connotations allude to an effort to lessen the delicate or maybe taboo subject of talking about sex work. It is possible that speakers during the Civil War used coded language to get around social conventions and restrictions on talking about sex and morals. The use and dissemination of these euphemisms reveal the attitudes that were prevalent at the time about sex work. The selection of euphemism denotes a degree of tact and recognition of social norms around the subject of conversation. This is a sociolinguistic tactic people use to have conversations about potentially delicate topics while abiding by the social norms that are in place.

In the particular linguistic context of the civil war, the use of a euphemistic phrase may have made describing sex work somewhat socially acceptable. It made it possible for people to bring up the topic without explicitly breaking

societal taboos or risking criticism for using explicit language. This language choice indicates that the speaker is conscious of how crucial it is to uphold social norms, especially during turbulent times like a civil war. Furthermore, among speakers who understood the coded language, the usage of such euphemisms may have fostered a sense of unity or camaraderie. In order to strengthen a feeling of community and common viewpoints, in-group communication frequently makes use of shared language markers. In this instance, the use of euphemism might have given rise to a linguistic subculture among those who were familiar with and spoke with the terminology. The use of euphemism in this context makes seamless the discussion of a potentially sensitive subject while adhering to social norms, highlighting the function of language in managing social dynamics in a difficult historical era.

Excerpt 8

@NowTheEnd...

Pedophiles Are Now Calling Themselves ‘Minor Attracted Persons’ and Want Inclusion in the LGBTQ+ Movement.

The statement tackles a contentious subject by addressing a delicate matter with language. By examining this statement under the prism of interactional sociolinguistics, we may investigate how linguistic decisions influence the social acceptability or rejection of particular notions in society. It is noteworthy that the phrase “Minor Attracted Persons” was used in place of “pedophiles” in an effort to reframe and soften an act which is considered to be a serious crime. It’s possible that this euphemistic wording is used to lessen the negativity associated with the term “pedophiles”. The term “Minor Attracted Persons”, which has a more neutral feel to it, might be an attempt to minimise the seriousness of the act and elicit a more sympathetic or neutral reaction from the audience. The expression “want inclusion in the LGBTQ+ Movement” conveys a need for acknowledgement and acceptance in a larger social setting. The excerpt suggests that these people are looking for recognition and a position in a group that has fought for acceptance and rights. In order to be in line with the advancements made by other oppressed groups, it is possible that the LGBTQ+ Movement was purposefully linked to a social movement that has been successful (in some parts of the world) in battling for acceptance and rights.

4.2 What Language does with People

Language is a major mode through which people construct realities, negotiate businesses and sustain relationships, among others. This section considers how language shapes power relations, creates human relevance and identity.

4.2.1 Language is a Tool for Information Dissemination

Language conveys information about its users. The information so conveyed may have to do with the user's educational background socio-economic status, geographical origin, sex, occupation, etc. When we deal with varieties of language according to users, dialectal variations are invoked. Dialects can be social or geographical and, in fact, in a society which is socially stratified, the variety of language one uses will be one of the variables identifying one with particular social class. Geographical dialect on the other hand reflects one's regional or geographical origin. According to Quirk and Greenbaum (1973:2), "the classic basis for linguistic variation is geographical dispersion". Language reflects the geographical and cultural environments in which it is used. This factor explains the use of such words as 'Iroko', 'Oba', 'Obi', 'Emir' in Nigerian English.

Indeed, language is a socio-psycho-cultural phenomenon. This means that it has to do with the social, psychological and cultural aspects of the user's life. This is why learning language implies learning a culture. In fact, the phenomena of bilingualism and multilingualism in many areas of the world necessarily imply biculturalism or multiculturalism. Language and cognition are also related and without language cognitive development will surely be hindered. To some extent, therefore, language is a reflection of cognition. According to Alex and Alex (1959:198), "Language participates in the processes of cognition just as it does in human intercourse: it shapes the individual's thought or fixes it for him". Language offers its users potentials for self-expression and the exploration and analysis of conceptual process.

Excerpt 9

@followlas...

This is to inform the general public that psychiatric services are now available in Isolo General Hospital.

The excerpt opens with a common technique to indicate at the outset of a communication that it is meant to be understood broadly. The phrase

“general public” highlights inclusivity by implying that a wide range of people will find the material useful. In order to engage a varied audience and make sure the content reaches as many individuals as possible, this language choice is part of a sociolinguistic strategy. This deliberate use of language draws the audience in and highlights the importance of sharing new and important information. When “Isolo General Hospital” is mentioned, it gives clarity and makes it easier for people who are interested in the psychiatric services to get in touch with them. An interactional sociolinguistic tactic to increase the message’s impact is the use of precise, concrete language. It creates a feeling of closeness and accessibility by enabling the audience to associate the content with a well-known and concrete place.

The statement’s general tone is official and informative, fitting the type of message it is trying to deliver. Given that the material relates to healthcare services, the formality enhances the information’s perceived legitimacy. Formal announcements frequently follow linguistic conventions to guarantee authority, clarity, and reliability. This remark is designed to carry out the social function of informing people about a service that may have an effect on people’s quality of life in the community. By raising awareness and enticing people to take advantage of the recently made available psychiatric treatments, the language choices seek to close the gap between the healthcare facility and the community it serves.

4.2.2 Language shows Social Relevance

Interpersonal interactions, societal hierarchies, and cultural standards are all intricately linked to the strategic use of language. The deliberate choosing of linguistic civility and respectful address is a crucial component of using language to achieve social relevance. Nigerians understand the importance of social hierarchies and frequently show respect by using formal titles, honorific, and polite language. In addition to upholding cultural norms, this linguistic etiquette places people in a positive social position and increases their perceived significance and impact. Language-based social status and authority acknowledgment is another widespread practice in Nigeria. People use proper titles and honorific while speaking to elders or other people in power. This language acknowledgement adds to the speaker’s total social significance by being consistent with the cultural respect for age and hierarchy. It strengthens the speaker’s comprehension of social expectations and standards, making them more acceptable in the specific social setting.

Excerpt 10

@iyalojagene...

The Iyaloja promised to work with the market heads under her leadership to sensitize and re-orientate every stakeholder...

The term “Iyaloja” denotes a position of leadership in a cultural setting, related to business or market management. This title represents a certain hierarchical structure within the society and has social value. By designating the speaker as an authority figure in the market context, “Iyaloja” creates a sociolinguistic signal that affects the statement’s social dynamics. To “work with the market heads under her leadership” is a pledge that highlights leadership and teamwork inside the market system. The excerpt denotes a collaborative approach, recognising the value of teamwork and shared accountability. This language selection reinforces the social significance of the planned acts by being consistent with sociolinguistic methods that place an emphasis on community involvement and collaboration. The actions stated demonstrate recognition of the need for a change in viewpoints and a shared understanding among the market community. The word “re-orientate” denotes a purposeful attempt to modify or adapt viewpoints, but the word “sensitize” emphasises increasing awareness and consciousness. These words show an understanding of social dynamics that can call for a careful and sophisticated strategy in order to bring about meaningful change.

All things considered, the statement exhibits a communication approach designed for the social context of a commercial environment. Terms like “Iyaloja”, “market heads” and “stakeholders” are used to strengthen the social structure of the market community in addition to communicating duties and hierarchies. Through sensitisation and reorientation, partnership and community engagement are promised, and this speaks to the dynamics and perceived requirements of the social context.

4.2.3 Language as a Medium for Class Difference

Language serves as a means to exert social distinctions. Without a doubt, the way people use language often signals their social standing in different environments. The following excerpts and analysis will show how language is a major tool for maintaining class relevance and status.

Excerpt 11

@IfyAni...

I am committed to transparency and fairness, and I appreciate the understanding extended to me...

The first statement conveys a feeling of moral obligation and honesty. The first-person singular pronoun “I” implies that the speaker is taking responsibility for these ideals. The emphasis on dedication to justice and openness fits with a rhetoric that is frequently connected to professionals and higher socioeconomic strata. A sense of moral and ethical standards that may be anticipated in particular societal circumstances or professions is reflected in the language employed. The second half of the sentence adds a degree of acknowledgment and thankfulness. The term “appreciate” carries a tone of politeness and courtesies that is connected to particular social conventions. In this situation, expressing thanks is in line with social norms of civility and manners, which can differ depending on one’s social status. This sentence’s word selections demonstrate an understanding of the social mores and expectations connected to higher socioeconomic classes. The language used is consistent with formal and professional conversation, emphasising adherence to ethical principles and expressing gratitude. These decisions could be deliberate attempts to project specific socioeconomic marks and shape the speaker’s identity.

5.0 Discussions and Conclusion

This study relies on netizens’ use of the English language on X. Using Gumperz’ Interactional Sociolinguistics, it is evident that Nigerian netizens go beyond the mere dissemination of information with language. Social dominance, Physical-Metaphysical Trans-Relationship, and enhancement of social acceptability are some of the phenomenon that people do with language. These show that language is essential for both self-discovery and the expression of emotions. People express their innermost ideas, feelings, and experiences through language. This emotional aspect of language contributes to mental and emotional health by improving interpersonal relationships and self-awareness. People can use language to share their emotional worlds with others and make sense of their experiences, whether through poetry, storytelling, or casual conversation. Social and cultural elements have an impact on how people use language. Language shapes people’s perceptions of the world and interactions with others in their communities by reflecting and

upholding cultural norms. Language acts as a medium for the transmission of customs, ceremonies, and communal recollections, which contributes to the preservation of cultural heritage. Furthermore, people and organisations utilise persuasive communication to sway ideas, galvanize communities, and negotiate social systems. As such, language is an instrument of power and influence.

Probing further into what people do with language, sociolinguistics informs us that language is used for different discourses. This introduces us to the category of ‘register’ which is the variety of language according to use (Halliday, *et. al.* in Fishman 1968:140). The peculiarities of register are seen in its lexis and grammar. The noun phrase in ‘free kick’ takes us to the game of football while the expression ‘kick the car’ is expected in the field of automobile driving. We expect ‘forward match’ in the language of parade while put on a cap to match takes us to Field of fashion and dressing. We expect ‘in the ring’ in the field of boxing or wrestling while the phrase “the ring bearers” takes us to Christian marriage. The sentence “He is the ring leader” has an idiomatic context.

Formally, register is distinguished by the sociolinguistic variables of mode, tenor and field. More is the rhetorical channel selected (whether spoken or written); the field refers to the nature of the on-going activities while tenor defines the role relationship set up in the communication network. These sociolinguistic variables define farther the process of using language to do things. Each of human endeavour calls for the use of specific language form or variety and the ability to use the forms of language appropriate to situations is necessary for anyone to lay claim to the mastery of a language.

What people do with language and what language does with people are mutually reinforcing. Language is used by people for learning, communicating, expressing emotions, and maintaining cultural traditions. In turn, language affects people’s cognitive processes, creates cultural identities, and plays a significant role in societal dynamics. The significant influence that language has on human experiences – both individually and collectively – is shown by this dynamic interplay.

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