

The Pragma-crafting Theory and Nation-building

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Abstract: Nation-building is investigated in this study, via a linguistic instrument: the Pragma-crafting Theory. I contend that the Theory explains how language directs education, peace, security, politics and other societal phenomena to evolve meaningful and sustainable development in Nigeria. Thus, the linguist is portrayed as a reformer of society. Recently published in American Research Journal of English and Literature, the Pragma-crafting Theory is evidently one of the latest, emergent, linguistic theories for the analysis of discourse. It depicts language use, comprehension and function as conscious, systematic and people-driven phenomena. Insights from research in pragmatics, sociolinguistics, discourse analysis and semiotics inform the Theory. EVENT and TEXT are basic notions which anchor a wide range of concepts in the Pragma-crafting Theory. EVENT consists of interactive and non-interactive participants while TEXT consists of setting, theme and p-crafting features. Therefore, the Theory is particularly an extension of Mey. The findings of this paper are thought-provoking: communication acts (speech acts) and communication features such as indexicals (INDXL), shared macro-knowledge (SMK), shared contextual knowledge (SCK), shared knowledge of emergent context (SKEC), contextual presupposition (CP), geoimplicature (GI), behavioural implicature (BI), pragmaveviant (PD), object referred (OR), operative language (OL) and other discourse components are used by encoders (ENCs) of verbal elements (VEs) and non-verbal elements (NVEs) as critical instruments in effective policy-making, national mobilization, national cohesion and national progress.

Keywords: Mey, nation-building, Pragma-crafting Theory, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, communication

INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, like in many other Third World nations, the roles of language in nation-building are often ignored. In this paper, I view “nation-building” as “developing a nation” (national development). Gboyega [1] posits that development embodies all attempts to improve the conditions of human existence in all ramifications. The word “national” in the phrase “national development” implies developmental strides that concern a whole nation. Going down history lane, it is clear that several developmental efforts in African countries and beyond, have despised the instrumentality of language in nation-building. See Ogwumike [2], Aremu [3] and Mimiko [4] for more insights on Development Plans in Nigeria. Language has connotations that may either be positive or negative. This paper explores the Pragma-crafting Theory in the investigation of how language can be used to foster progress in society in different domains of national life. In this regard, the Pragma-crafting Theory depicts the vehicular roles of language.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The present study explores three domains of national life to elucidate the instrumentality of language in nation-building as depicted in the Pragma-crafting

Theory: advertising, religion and education. I ask three pertinent questions as they relate to each domain, and attempt answering them.

1. Is advertisement a sphere from which nation-building via language can be investigated?
2. How does religion impinge on nation-building?
3. Is language-use a thing of credit in the transmission of knowledge in educational institutions?
4. Are indigenous languages useful in education towards nation-building?

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

Beyond being used as a theoretical framework for the analysis of discourse across genres, linguistic (language) theories are productive, illuminating frameworks from which tools for national transformation or progress can be explained as they apply to multifaceted domains: media, politics, education, religion, culture, etc. In this study, I hinge on certain notions in the Pragma-crafting Theory in the elucidation of the potency of language in affecting status-quo positively in society.

The notions in the Pragma-crafting theory are briefly explained below:

(i) P-crafting: It is a two-fold umbrella term: it comprises Event and Text.

(ii) Event: The participants of discourse (interactive and non-interactive participants) constitute Event. While the interactive participants perform linguistic, extra-linguistic and psychological acts, the non-interactive participants do not, and even if they do, their acts are always unconnected to the communication at hand; see Acheoah [5] where the label, H₂, is used to refer to participants who are present in discourse, but are not speakers' interlocutors.

(iii) Text: Text captures the trio: Setting, Theme and P-crafting Features. "P-crafting Features" is a concept which has discrete theoretical notions demonstrated by the interactive participants in three different frames: linguistic acts, extra-linguistic acts and psychological acts.

(iv) Interactive participants: These are participants who make linguistic, extra-linguistic and psychological contributions to a communication event.

(v) Non-interactive participants: Although present in a communication event, the non-interactive participants do not make verbal or non-verbal contributions that concern the communication event.

(vi) Setting: This is the physical place in which a communicative event takes place as can be ascertained from pragmatic or linguistic data.

(vii) Theme: It is the message in Text as worked out by P-crafting Features.

(viii) P-crafting Features: The features which enable participants of discourse to "p-craft" include: Indexicals (INDXLs), Shared Macro-knowledge (SMK), Shared Contextual Knowledge (SCK), Shared Knowledge of Emergent Context (SKEC), Geomplificatures (GIs), Linguistic Implicatures (LIs), Behavioural Implicatures (BIs), Contextual Presuppositions (CPs), Pragmadvivants (PDs), Object Referred (OR) and Operative Language (OL). It is necessary to understand these concepts:

a) Inference (INFR) has to do with making logical conclusions from available contextual data.

b) Indexicals (INDXLs) include demonstratives, first and second person pronouns, tense, specific time and place adverbs like now and here, and a variety of other grammatical features tied directly to the circumstances of utterance (Levinson 1983:54).

c) Shared Macro-knowledge (SMK) is the totality of what the participants of discourse understand as states-of-affairs in the larger society, rather than in their immediate society.

d) Shared Contextual Knowledge (SCK) is background knowledge of participants in the physical context of communication.

e) Emergent Context (EC) is any situation that suddenly emerges in an on-going discourse, and can impinge on illocutionary and perlocutionary acts.

d) Geomplificatures (GIs) was coined from "geographical" and "implicature" to refer to practices that have geographical restriction in terms of people, and not just in terms of physical boundaries; physical relocation does not remove the meanings from the psyche of the natives of that region where such meanings operate as OR in OL.

e) Linguistic Implicature (LI) are meanings implied through linguistic elements (language) of Text.

f) Behavioural Implicature (BI) are meanings implied through extra-linguistic and psychological acts.

g) Contextual Presuppositions (CP) are products of Shared Contextual Knowledge (SCK); in a specific (micro-context) physical context of discourse, participants deduce meanings from verbal and non-verbal data limited to the participants themselves. The meanings deduced are treated as background assumptions (BAs) which direct interlocutory roles. Decoders (DCs) imply that Encoders (ENCs) understand that certain Verbal Elements (VEs) and Non-verbal Elements (NVEs) are deduced or inferred as Object Referred (OR) in Operative Language (OL).

h) Linguistic Acts: These include: speech acts (direct, indirect and Pragmadvivants); supra-segmental features (stress, intonation, rhythm, pitch); phones (Ssss, Shhh, Mmmm, Ehmmn); Exclamations (Wao!, Oh!, Ah!, Abah!); and lyrical music. Due to space constraints, these concepts as well as others cannot be elaborately explained in this study. However, the concept, "phones", refers to speech features between the phoneme and the word. They are common components in both written and spoken discourses. Small as they are, they express emotions of various kinds besides having illocutionary potentials in context.

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

j) Psychological Acts: These are the different emotions expressed through linguistic and extra-linguistic acts.

Acheoah [6] presents theoretical concepts of the Pragma-crafting Theory thus:

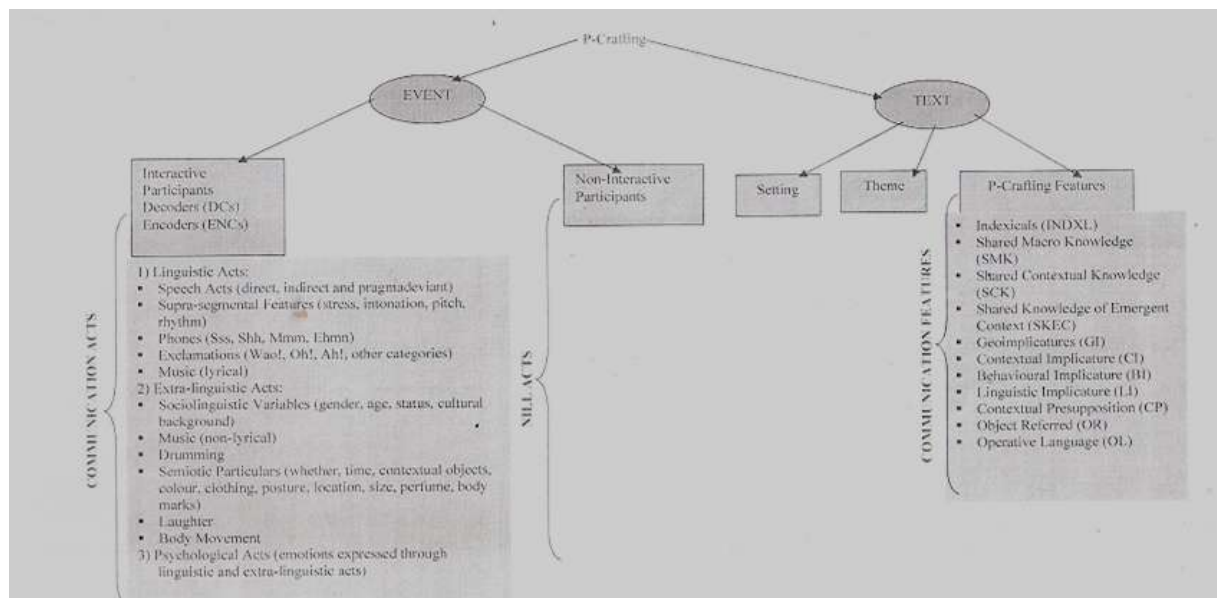


Fig-1: P-crafting Features of the Pragma-crafting Theory

THE PRAGMATICS OF LINGUISTIC THEORY IN NATION-BUILDING: AN APPRAISAL OF THE PRAGMA-CRAFTING THEORY

The simple answer to Research question 1 is: yes. The utility of a wide range of products that every nation consumes facilitates national-building in diverse ways:

- When language is used to persuade people to use certain health products, the workforce of the country is strengthened;
- When language is used to discourage people from using certain harmful products, the entire society is rescued from premature death;
- When language is used to induce people to eat certain nutritious food products, good health and high life expectancy is the resultant phenomenon.

Acheoah [7] submits that speakers use language (as evident in commercial adverts) to communicate their individual thoughts and feelings as well as psychological experience. The advertiser, for example, has personal feelings about the taste of the public (he may even have sound knowledge of it) and the desire of the consumer (since he has assumed that the consumer is a rational thinker); a rational thinker reads advertisement contents on different products and decide which is preferable despite his background knowledge of how deceptive language of adverts may be.

In advertisement, language is used to influence consumption patterns and standard of living; to do this effectively, advertisers rely on different types of shared knowledge as contained in the Pragma-crafting Thoery: Shared Macro-knowledge (SMK), Shared knowledge of Emergent Context (SKEC), Shared Contextual Knowledge (SCK), Emergent Context (EC) and Geoimplicature (GIs):

a) Shared Macro-knowledge (SMK) is the totality of what the participants of discourse understand as states-of-affairs in the larger society, rather than in their immediate society. For example, in sign-board adverts (as in other adverts), language is used as a communicative strategy employed by advertisers to market products. Using language to achieve advertisers' illocutionary goals or communicative strategies presupposes the use of speech act verbs with productive sequencing. For example, informative contents may be persuasive if they indicated superior performance of some products above others. Advertisers share macro knowledge with their audience concerning the fact that superior products have high utility.

b) Shared Contextual Knowledge (SCK) is background knowledge of participants of a particular discourse towards effective communication.

c) Emergent Context (EC) is any situation that suddenly emerges in an on-going discourse, and can impinge on illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. For example, the picture of latest best athlete in a particular region may be used in a product to convey the message that those who use the product will be strong and healthy. It should be noted that advertisers' strategies are not necessarily deceitful. They are often used to persuade people to use good products that such people hitherto disdained. In the context of this paper therefore, advertisers are potent nation-builders because they produce strong, healthy and productive citizens.

d) Geoimplicature (GI) was coined from 'geographical' and 'implicature' to refer to practices that have geographical restriction in terms of people, and not just in terms of physical boundaries.

Apart from shared knowledge, different types of presuppositions and implicatures are used to situate advertisers' messages in varied social and psychological contexts:

- a) Linguistic Implicature (LI) are meanings implied through linguistic elements (language) of Text.
- b) Behavioural Implicature (BI) are meanings implied through extra-linguistic and psychological acts.
- c) Contextual Presuppositions (CP) are products of shared contextual knowledge (SCK); in a specific (micro-context) discourse, participants deduce meanings from verbal and non-verbal data limited to the participants themselves. The meanings deduced are treated as background assumptions (BAs) which direct interlocutory roles. DCs (Decoders) imply that ENCs (Encoders) know that certain VEs (Verbal Elements) & NVEs (Non-verbal Elements) are deduced as OR (Object Referred) in OL (Operative Language).

A critical evaluation of Research Question 2 necessitates positing that there cannot be meaningful and sustainable progress in society if institutions that preserve ethics and values are relegated to nothingness. Religious institutions are vehicles of national rebirth, cohesion and orientation. To make messages persuasive and motivating, religious leaders explore different categories of shared knowledge and presuppositions. For example, in teaching obedience to constituted authorities, Shared Macro-knowledge (SMK) prevents preachers from making assertions that do not align with

what their congregation knows as states-of-affairs. Similarly, Pragmaveviants produce thought-provoking messages. To be able to restore society to rectitude, religious leaders should see where others grope; they should be able to interpret NVEs as equivalents of certain VEs; the whole purpose of reviving value system of society is based on the fact that certain attitudes negate ethics and morality; the Pragma-crafting Theory explains BIs (Behavioural Implicatures) as implied/implicated meanings of certain linguistic, extra-linguistic and psychological acts. If religious leaders have roles to play in national orientation, their written and spoken messages for society have to be coherent and contextual. Thus, the Pragma-crafting Theory is a blueprint of how language can be productively used in religious discourses for the common good of society¹. It is not necessarily the leadership of different religions that can explore linguistic theories for effective communication. Thus, this paper posits that religious themes, which are not necessarily conveyed by religious leaders, can be articulated via an integrative communicative principle such as the Pragma-crafting Theory. Figure 2 illustrates the domain-specific instrumentality of language in nation-building:

Advertising	Influencing consumption pattern
Religion	Preserving ethics and morality
Education	Knowledge transmission

Fig-2: Domain-specific Instrumentality of Language in Nation-building

Language is a tool for transforming society via the education domain. However, transmission of knowledge is best achieved when the pragmatics of language use in education is explored at its best. Concepts in the Pragma-crafting promote formal education because such concepts:

- help the government in making policy decisions concerning language;
- facilitate the preparation of instructional materials;
- generate better teaching techniques;
- enhance learners' comprehension of lessons and concepts taught.

Geoimplicatures (GI) can be explored in the selection and use of instructional materials that are products of Nigerians' existential experiences. It can also be used as paraphrases for English concepts that Nigerian learners do not understand in the course of a lesson; the teacher can use "a carry-go" as a synonym for a reliable-product, "a 419 man" as a synonym for "a fraudulent man" just to enhance effective teaching for the good of the nation that already acknowledges the roles of education in technological and overall development of society. Through GI, the Object

Referred (OR) in the alien Operative Language (English) is easily inferred². Since Geoimplicatures are essentially regional elements, indigenous languages have vital roles to play in the transmission of knowledge. They can even co-exist with English informal education in Nigeria.

To teach societal values, ethics and morality in schools, the implications of sociolinguistic variables such as age, gender, status, etc. (see the Pragma-crafting Theory for more tips on these variables) in multi ethnic and multi-lingual Nigeria can be investigated.

Semiotic particulars in the form of traditional objects and their social, scientific and medicinal values can be used to promote Indigenous Knowledge System (IKS) in education. In the Pragma-crafting Theory, semiotic particulars show the potency of extra-linguistic elements in the conveying and interpreting messages. Indigenous Nigerian languages have roles to play in national cohesion, invention and mobilization. Fafunwa [8] declares:

"It is our thesis that if the Nigerian child is to be encouraged from the start to develop curiosity, initiative, industry, to manipulative ability, spontaneous flexibility, moral

dexterity, mechanical comprehension and the co-ordination of the hand and eye, he should acquire these skills and attitude through his mother-tongue; after all this is the most learning medium. This is where the average European or English child has a decided advantage over his mother tongue, the latter is busy struggling with a foreign language during the greater part of his primary education.”

Poor teaching and learning of indigenous languages have been the major cause of student-apathy towards indigenous language subjects in schools. Nigerian indigenous languages are so communicatively potent that they should not be relegated to the background. Pre-established arguments have been that such languages do not have the extensive vocabulary to cope with the monster, globalization (science and technology). Two concepts in the Pragmatic Theory can be used in evolving vocabulary items to facilitate teaching and learning of different subjects or courses in primary, secondary and tertiary education in Nigeria: Emergent Context (EC) and Geomplificatures. Indeed, the pragma-lexico-semantic credentials of indigenous Nigerian languages are evident in a wide range of discourses, including proverbs³. The generation and articulation of Nigerian proverbs are immersed in the existential experiences of different cultures; proverbial constructs are informed by norms, values and social phenomena and figurative devices (particularly metaphor) that concern Nigerians. Teaching tropes in indigenous languages facilitate the understanding of tropes in English. This will go a long way to help secondary school students who offer English literature as a career requirement. In Nigerian languages, extended language (tropes) is used to make discourse vehement; symbolism and metaphor are dominant in discourses expressed in Nigerian languages. A wide range of strategies of rhetoric are exhibited through Nigerian languages, and this accentuates their communicative potentials. For example, analogies are often used to extend discourse, while metaphors concretize messages. In Yekhee/Afenmai (a minority Nigerian language) for example, a noun can be used to refer to more than one thing, in which case the referent is speaker-based. For instance, *Otoo* means “ground” or “floor”. Similarly, *Ade ke* means “fool” or “foolishness”. Also, the noun *ēlamhi* (meat) is used both normatively to mean “meat that can be eaten” and pragmatically to mean “a foolish person”). Yekhee words cut across word-class: nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, etc. The words are skillfully “deposited” in multi-facetted discourse situations as strategies of rhetoric. The speaker ensures that the meanings (semantic components) are not always denotative. Mutual contextual beliefs among interlocutors facilitate pragmatic shift from conventional meanings of words unto context-driven meanings that register speakers’ idiosyncratic competence. In many Nigerian languages, meaning can

be defined in terms of use (the meaning of a sentence is determined by the set of acts it performs in communicative situations) and context (contextual variables which may be social, psychological, pragmatic, or linguistic). So long as the cognitive maturity (reasoning and understanding) of Nigerians is more reflected in their Mother Tongues, indigenous languages should be given adequate attention in formal education.

Given the illiteracy rate in Nigeria many Nigerians cannot cope with the challenges of modern technology. For example, they cannot operate ATM machines because such machines are configured in English. Scholars have expressed the need for the development of ATM interface technologies which are expressed in indigenous languages.

CONCLUSION

Language is an instrument of nation-building. See Adebija [9], Adegoju [10] and Levinson[11] for illuminating perspectives on the roles of language in society. However, the roles and dimensions of language in promoting national life is facet-driven, that is, choice of words, speech act selection and sequencing depends on communicative goals in political, religious, administrative and other spheres of national life. On advertising as a sphere of national life, Acheoah [7] submits that man has used language (as evident in commercial adverts), to communicate his individual thoughts and feelings as well as psychological experience. The advertiser, for example, has personal feelings about the taste of the public (he may even have sound knowledge of it) and the desire of the consumer (since he has assumed that the consumer is a rational thinker); a rational thinker would read the advertisement contents on different products and decide which was preferable despite his background knowledge of how deceptive language of adverts could be. The categories of implicatures and presuppositions in the Pragmatic Theory are germane in the explanation of psychological issues in the use of language for nation-building. For example, the presuppositions that the public are aware of the deceptive linguistic and paralinguistic dimensions which most adverts take, did not mean that the advertiser would use destructive adjectives to market his products, as doing so would amount to mere publicity rather than advertisement.

NOTES

1. Acheoah (2013) examines language use in religious discourse and notes that oratory (ability to enchant with language and manipulate it even for ungodly motives) in presentation of messages puts religious leaders on different rungs of the ladder of recognition in Nigeria; a situation which makes those of them who are not eloquent, miserable.
2. From the perspective of Geomplificatures, Nigerian languages can be explored alongside English in transmitting knowledge in formal education. The

Nigerian government has concentrated on promoting science and technology to the neglect of language education. Development processes in Nigeria have long neglected the place of indigenous languages as government battles with challenges of modern times: revamping the economy, tackling religious violence, finding solutions to the outbreak of epidemic, quest for scientific and technological breakthrough, and so on. The absence of the role of indigenous languages in nation-building is the reason for the poor ranking of indigenous African languages. Given the prominent position of Nigerian languages in multilingual discourses, it is urgent to relocate the place of such languages in national life.

3. The Pragma-crafting Theory lists “ethnic group” as one of the sociolinguistic variables; proverbial discourses are essentially ethnic.

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