A Semantic Analysis Of The Nigerian Police Discourse

Sijuade Toyin Adeniyi, M.Phil.
Department of Christian Education & General Studies
West Africa Theological Seminary
tadeniyi@wats.edu.ng; +2348133304025

Abstract

This study examined the language of police discourse. In doing this, the researcher gathered three different cases from a police station in Ipaja-Ayobo area of Lagos State. These cases are affray and drunkenness, death report, and assault. A semantic theory was employed in analyzing the information gathered. From the study, it was discovered that cases in police custody have different versions depending on the number of people involved and that the police focus only on one version of the information gotten from the person that first came to their station to report. The findings further revealed that the police are not careful in choosing their words; some words were used in the selected texts that were not appropriate in the context in which they were used. Also, the study found out that police reports include additional words or clauses that were not in the original statements of the suspects or witnesses. It was therefore recommended that linguistic tools should be applied to the investigation of any crime. This application may help to interpret different versions of information gathered by the police and this, in turn, may help to bring together good evidence against/for the suspect. Evaluation of crimes by linguists complements the police's effort in carrying out their duties.

Key Words: police discourse, linguistics, semantic, report, cases, crime

Introduction

There is a shift in the field of linguistics to other disciplines. Language scholars are now concerned with the relationship between language and other disciplines. Their focus is on how language is used in context and how language is used as a means of communication through spoken discourse or written text. Olufadi

(2018:340) makes it clear that "The primary function of language is for communication". Communication according to Oyebode (2011) "is an integral part of every human endeavour and human beings can achieve little or nothing without it". This shows that the essence of using language is to communicate, and for communication to take place, the structure as well as the function of language must be considered.

Discourse, though it is differentiated by some linguists from text, means both spoken and written structures above the level of the sentence. Matthew (2007:107) defines discourse as "any coherent succession of sentences, spoken or written." There are different areas of activity to which discourse may belong. It may be religion, science, law, journalism, legal, etc. This article is about the police discourse.

Police discourse is in both spoken (oral) and written forms though it may be first spoken before it is documented especially in the police interview. Police discourse may be regarded as a kind of a legal discourse. A legal document is written with a specialized variety of language and involves distinctive words, phrases, modes of expressions and meanings. This variety may be difficult to understand because it is different from any ordinary language. This makes the language of police different from other kinds. Syal and Jindal (2010:24) state that "there is a specific vocabulary and manner of use of English, which defines the legal language, the scientific language etc". It is the interest of the researcher to find out peculiarities in the legal discourse, police discourse to be precise.

From observation, it seems police officers judge any matter brought to their office on 'a first come, first served bases without considering the matter objectively. Ajayi (2015: 40) opines that "Police-suspect interaction has been observed to follow a systematic pattern where the police most times dictate the tune and nature of interaction." This signifies that the role of language in legal documents should not be taken for granted. Language is the means by which police interpret and re-interpret the law. It is the same language that is used to get

information from a suspect. Hence, they need to use this language effectively to avoid any problem that may be generated as a result of its misuse. In other words, the wrong use of language can implicate a person and can lead to a perversion of justice.

Existing works on police discourse have focused on spoken police-suspect discourse from Discourse Analysis point of view. Also, Ajayi (2015) examines police-suspect from Ethnography of Communication point of view and concludes that the police-suspect interaction in Nigeria is interrogative in nature. This study is different because it is concerned with written police discourse.

Therefore, this study, which was carried out in a police station in Ipaja-Ayobo area of Lagos State, was carried out to find out the linguistic features which characterize the police discourse. As a result of many cases investigated by the police, this work was limited to only three cases in police custody. From the case files collected from the station which contain affray, drunkenness, burglary, stealing, cheating, assault and death; three cases were purposively selected for analysis. Being a qualitative research, some texts such as extracts from police diary, police report, suspect's statement and witness's statements were descriptively analyzed and their semantic implications were drawn.

Language and Police

Linguistics is the scientific study of language. This is defined by Crystal and Davy (1986) as the academic discipline which studies language scientifically. Linguists study any language in use. Linguists are preoccupied with studying the discourse of various types; police discourse is not exempted. In the past, language analysts studied the traditional aspects of linguistics which include phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. Other aspects are discourse analysis, stylistics, sociolinguistics and psycholinguists.

Recently, linguists have developed an interest in legal discourse; they focus on forensic linguistics. It is a new field in the study of the relationship

between language and law. Momeni (2012) defines forensic linguistics as "an interdisciplinary course dealing with law and linguistics." The emergence of forensic linguistics paves way for studying the legal language and gives linguistic evidence to support any decision made in the court of law.

Police are responsible for making people obey the law and to prevent and solve crimes. Swanson, Territo and Taylor (1993) state that, "The police have a highly visible and perhaps even primary role in overcoming the threat and fear of crime because crime is an immediate threat to our respective communities." They further explain that the police assist in the prosecution of persons charged with acts of criminality. In this case, language is used to provide such kind of assistance. Since forensic linguistic deals with the legal language, it is therefore not out of place to say that this work falls within the field of forensic linguistic because it evaluates police discourse which is evidence used in police custody or court for/against a suspect.

There is no doubt that there is a connection between language and legal discourse. Matthews (2007: 143) defines forensic linguistics as "any application of linguistics, phonetics included, in a criminal investigation or judicial process." This work analyses the discourse of police with aim of exploring the linguistic feature of the police investigation. One may ask: how important is language to the police? What is the role of language in police discourse? In answering this question, Syal and Jindal explain that language is used in every branch of knowledge. Though language is used in every field, its use varies from one field to another. Udofot (2018: 379) is of the opinion that "variation is the key concept in relation to language and its use". This may also be true of the police discourse.

Moreover, language performs many functions. Salami, Osoba and Fakoya (2000) identify displacement and prevarication, among others, as characteristics of language. By displacement, they mean that language can be used to talk about things far and near in space and time. By prevarication, on the other hand, they mean that language can be used to convey false information.

Since language may be used falsely, and if police are not careful, they may get false information from a suspect or witness when interrogating a matter. This is another reason why police discourse must be studied linguistically.

Linguistic study of police discourse may also help to deal with vagueness in police documents. Mbisike (2017:232) states that "Vagueness deals with lack of clarity or a case of uncertainty". The way an expression is used may be vague; however, such vagueness may be resolved when the context in which such an expression is used is considered.

Semantic Approach to the Study of Text

In studying any text, various linguistic approaches could be explored. In this paper, the semantic approach is adopted. Semantics is the study of meaning. Matthew (2007:361) traces semantics to Breal in the late 19th century, "as an emerging science" … and "for Bloomfield in the 1930s". He further explains that semantics "was a field covering both grammar, as one account of meaningful forms and the lexicon." Narrowly, it lasts into the 1960s when it deals with the meaning of lexicon alone. From the 1960s onward, it deals with meaning of syntax. This shows that semantics accounts for the meaning of words and group of words, be it phrase, clause or sentence including larger text (discourse).

Meaning is an important aspect of language, and when language is used to communicate, meaning becomes an integral part of communication. In the words of Syal and Jindal, "Semantics is that level of linguistic analysis where meaning is analyzed." They further explain the relationship among the levels of analysis thus:

> The sound patterns of language are studied at the level of phonology and the organization of words and sentences is studied at the level of morphology and syntax. These are in turn organized in such a way that we can convey meaningful messages or receive and understand messages (Syal and Jindal 2010:141).

From the above, two important words – organization and meaning – are noted. In English, there are five (5) grammatical units namely: morphemes, words, groups, clauses and sentences. These units may be arranged in order of hierarchy (in a descending or ascending order) (Asiyanbola 2013). From below, it could be deduced that each unit is made up of members of the unit next below it on the scale. Sentences are made up of clauses, clauses are made up of groups, groups are made up of words, and words are made up of morphemes. Morphemes are the smallest grammatical unit that cannot be further sub-divided into any unit, while sentences are the highest grammatical unit.

Sentences

Clauses

Groups

Words

Morphemes

In addition to the above, a sequence of sentences will constitute paragraphs while these, in turn, constitute discourse or text. Halliday and Hasan (1976) define a text as any piece of language that is in use, operational or functioning as a unity, whether spoken or written, in any style or genre, regardless of the number of active participants involved in it. It should show forth a form of consistency, which is defined by the concepts of register.

From the foregoing, it could be said that a string of sentences is text and in our introduction, we made it clear that discourse could be a spoken or written text. This work is concerned with police discourse and it is important to understand this discourse. Police discourses have a communicative role and

according to Saeed (2003:3), "Semantics is the study of meaning communicated through language." In communication, the context of use of language is important. This is in line with what Firth says that language is only meaningful in the context of situation.

Therefore, in analyzing police discourse, this study considers how police use language to communicate and its linguistic implication in the court of law. It is the task of semanticians to show how people communicate through language, and communication cannot take place if what is communicated cannot be understood or meaningful. This is buttressed by Ifeoma (2018:395) that language is used in communication "to convey meaningful message".

Methodology

This paper presented a semantic analysis of written police discourse. The written police discourse as observed from the documents gathered includes many issues such as police investigation report, death report, minute sheet, statement of the complainant, statement of a witness, statement of suspect and diary of action taken. All these issues are documented as evidence against the suspect. In carrying out the study, three different cases – death report, affray and drunkenness, and assault – were purposively chosen from the police files from a station in Ipaja-Ayobo area of Lagos State and a close study of the cases was done. The three cases sampled contain nine texts. Case 1 has four texts which include two suspects, one witness and one police report. Case 2 contains only two texts which are the texts of the suspect and police report. The last case, Case 3, contains three texts which are the statements of the suspect, complainant and police report.

In applying the semantic approach to the study of the selected texts, each text was analysed based on the prominent lexical features and choice of words used by the participants in the selected texts. Also, the analysis took into

consideration the meaning of words, their grammatical classes and sense relations, grammatical reference and idiomatic expression.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Data 1: Statements of Suspects, Witness and Police Report

Text 1 - Suspect A:

> I came to visit my friend and he bought us drink which we drank. Nobody gave me money [,] but the N500 was a change I brought from buying drinks. [It] is the money my friend and I were arguing about because I told him there was no change…. It was not fight, but it was drunkenness that causes all this. I have not done [right] for me to fight in the public.

Text 2 - Suspect B:

> On the 20th Feb 2011[,] Sunday and Saide [visited] me at home. Then I bought us drink and food [.] We all [ate] together [,] after eating and drinking[,] I [brought] out money in my pocket[,] that is how Sunday seize[d] the money, but after much begging, he gave me [part] of the money. Then argument broke between us; that is how we started fighting.

Text 3 - Witness:

> Today, [being] the 20th of Feb, 2011 at about 7:20pm, [I] saw two men fighting … themselves (each other) on the street, I went to them to make peace with them to resist from the act, but they bluntly refused and continue[d] with the fight.

The above were extracted from the police case file. Two men who are friends were fighting over N500. Though both of them claimed to be arguing, it was discovered from the witness's statements that they engaged in fighting.

Text 4 - Police report:

The case under analysis was titled 'Affray and Drunkenness' in the crime diary of the police case file and it was reported thus:

> Today being 20-2-2011 at about 2100hrs, one … came to the station and reported that two boys came to visit Lateef and they all drunk … engage[d] themselves in a public fight. The complainant stated further that they fought over N500.

ANALYSIS 1

From Data 1, it could be deduced that two men who are friends were fighting over N500. This is evident in the witness's statement and the police report. Their refusal to make peace led to their arrest by the police. This is done to enforce peace and orderliness in the nation. It should be noted that the primary duty of this arm of government is demonstrated in this situation.

1.1 The Linguistic Implication of the Choice of Words Used in Data 1
Argument and fighting

The words 'argument' and 'fighting' as used in the above statements though similar can mean different things in judging a case. 'Argument' is a noun that is derived from 'argue' (a verb) and it means a disagreement between two or more people in a discussion over an issue; this in no doubt may lead to fighting. 'Fight' on the other hand means physical struggle with somebody using physical force. Having examined the two words, the argument does not necessarily mean physical combat. Comparing the statements of all the participants, the police statements indicate a physical force. This is evident in the use of the adjective

'public' to qualify fight as in 'a public fight'. The witness's statements also point to the same thing by using the phrase, 'fighting on the street' without referring to the argument between the suspects. In the contrary, the suspects used arguing and argument before they started fighting as they are depicted in their statements thus:

> A: I and my friend were <u>arguing</u>.

> B: Then, <u>argument</u> broke between us.

Men and boys

From the police's statement, these men were called 'boys'. It could be a mistake on the part of the police officer who was in charge of the case or a deliberate act. Perhaps, it may be as a result of the way the men behaved, fighting over just N500. On the contrary, these persons were called men by the witness. To linguists, boys and men may be explained and differentiated using semantic components:

> Boy   - Adult   + Human   -female
> Man   + Adult   + Human   -female

Words like 'man, woman, husband, wife, boy and girl' are being composed of elements such as adult, human, male or female. These words are related in one sense or the other. Lyons (1981) explains that the sense of some lexemes in terms of what might well be universal sense components can be represented as human, female and adult. Comparing the lexical relation between man and boy, we can have the above. Though the two words used above by the witness and the police officer have the same lexical relations and composed of the same elements; they are different in the sense that one is +adult while the other is –adult, that is, man and boy respectively. This sense is significant in the sense that the way a man will be handled or treated in the court of law is different from that of a boy.

Drank and drunk

These words are a conjugation of the word 'drink'. 'Drank' and 'drunk' are past tense and past participle of the verb form of 'drink' respectively. While the suspects used drank, the police officer used drunk. The word 'drunk' being a past participle form of drink should be preceded with an auxiliary, but it is not so in the statements of the police. Even if it is used as an adjective, there should be a verb that connects the subject and the adjective. Instead, a word was omitted for the reason best known to the officer in charge.

> … and they all drunk.

All these point to the discourse topic, affray and drunkenness. It may be deduced that the police officer was concerned with the opinion that the fighting was a result of intoxicated drinks taken by the two suspects.

1.2 The Discourse Topic and the Contents

This case was titled 'Affray and Drunkenness'. The notion of this discourse topic by the police officer constructs a notion of what the discourse is all about. Saeed explains that a thesis topic is a form of knowledge which then influences the way the whole discourse is interpreted and the meaning of what one subsequently hears. The police interpreted the case based on the title given. This was primarily based on the information gotten from the witness without taking into consideration the background of the case. From the title of this case, it could also be said that the suspects' state of condition led to their argument or fighting. If not, one wonders why two men would fight over N500. They were drunk; no wonder the case was titled 'affray and drunkenness'.

1.3 Semantic Implications of the Suspects' Statements

Different Versions of Statements

From the contents of the two suspects, it could be deduced that Suspect A visited Suspect B and a drink was bought. In addition, the following differences are noted in statements:

1. Suspect A was not the only visitor. There was a third person who accompanied Suspect A to Suspect B's house. This is evident in the statements made by Suspect B and that of police.

2. It was included in Suspect B's statements that he did not only buy drinks, he also bought food and all of them ate and drank. It is also clear from the witness's statements that he was not the second man that went with Suspect A to Suspect B's house.

3. The money (N500) they were fighting over may be the balance of the drinks bought or the money brought out from the pocket of Suspect B and was seized by Suspect A.

Looking at two statements made by the suspects, there are crucial differences in their versions. Even the versions presented by the police and the witness do not capture the whole truth. This has a great implication in the court of law. It may affect the final judgment negatively or positively. The addition of food and eating in Suspect B's records may mean a lot to the judge in deciding this case. Also, whether the amount (N500) that caused fighting was a balance of the drinks bought or was brought out from Suspect B's pocket has a great significance in the court of law.

One wonders why police extract only focused on the witness's report without taking into consideration statements made by the suspects. Some words must not be taken for granted in the versions produced by the suspects that may be of help to police in gathering their information. Though the police identified two persons as visitors to Suspect B, the suspects gave a much fuller version of what went on before the argument ensued between Suspect A and Suspect B. To the jury, the background knowledge of the case is important since they could not judge the matter on the surface.

The role of context in linguistic cannot be over-emphasized. This is stressed by Saeed (2003) that we need an account of them that can refer to what

the participants known as in an interactional approach, rather than an account limited to formal relations between sentences. The police extract does not take into consideration the real cause of the argument/fighting: the source of the money that caused the argument. Was it a balance of the drinks bought as claimed by Suspect A? Was it brought out from the pocket of Suspect B?

All the above pieces of evidence must be produced at the court before the final decision could be made. All these linguistic features help to identify parts of the texts which were distorted in all the statements gathered by the police.

Person Deixis

Saeed (2003:187) states that, "a deictic system grammaticalizes the roles of the participants." The fact that Suspect A used 'I' excludes other participants in the act of visiting. Kirkpatrick (2010) explains that the first person personal pronoun in the singular form refers to the person speaking or writing when referring to himself/herself. It is different from 'we' which according to Saeed (188) "encode information about some form of identification between the speaker and others" (p.188) Also, it should be noted that 'us' and 'we' used by Suspect A depends on the context. They refer to 'I' and 'he' which were already mentioned and do not include the third person. 'Us' and 'we' are anaphoric references. In the same way, 'he' is an anaphora to the nominal, my friend.

However, the use of 'us' and 'we' by Suspect B includes the third person. They refer to Sunday, Saide and me. In other words, the actions of eating and drinking involved the third person – Saide. This is buttressed by the police in their report that "They all drunk." The addition of 'all' should be noted in the police report. It may emphasize the fact that the third person plays a significant role in visiting, eating and drinking.

On the contrary, when the speaker grammaticalized the role of participants with the verbal element 'seize' the third party was excluded and used nominal 'Sunday' as the antecedent and the pronoun 'he' as the anaphoric

pronoun. The fact that 'he' in Suspect B's statements points to the noun 'Sunday' can be buttressed by Akmajian et al (2001) that "deictic comes from the Greek word for pointing, and the idea is that deictic terms pick out their referents like pointers, that is, in virtue of some relation to the context of utterance." Therefore, it could be said that in the above text, 'he' is a deictic word that points to 'Sunday'. This is very clear since the writer was specific by mentioning the concerned person.

Data 2: Statement of the Suspect and the Police Report

Text 5 - A. The Statements of the Suspect:

> … By the time I was leaving the house some minutes later, I checked to inform him and met him in a medical state that suggested epilepsy …. So I instructed they take him to a nearby hospital and on getting there, they were referred to the general hospital. By the time they got there and after examination by the medical personnel, they reported him to have given up the ghost.

Text 6 - B. The Police Report: SUD

> This deals with a case of SUD reported at the station…. He went back to check him only to meet him in [the] state of suffering from epilepsy. He directed that he should be taken to [a] nearby hospital for medical attention, but the doctor advised that he be taken to the general hospital. On the way, he slumped and died inside the vehicles. Thereafter, he was taken to the mortuary.

This is a case of the death of a family friend of the suspect. The deceased came to visit his friend and later died. When the suspect's statement and police report were compared, it was discovered that the police officer concerned added a

clause which was not in the statements made by the suspect who was also the complainer.

ANALYSIS 2

2.1 The Linguistic Implications of words and phrases used in data 2

Advised and referred

Worthy of note are the above words. While the police used 'advised', the suspect used 'referred'. The two words are not synonymous. If a person is advised to do something, the person may decide to take to suggestion or not. The use of 'advised' implies that the patient may or may not be taken to another hospital and that the doctor in the first hospital can handle the situation, but also gave the people the option of taking the sick person to another hospital. In case of referral, it may be assumed that the doctor had tried his best to revive the man, but could not do so and therefore referred him to another hospital.

Also, if a patient is advised, there may not be a need of giving the person any note, but if a patient is referred, it must be documented. This note is an evidence that the person has been to a place before going to another. The police need to be more careful in choosing words and the use of language in general. The police discourse as a legal document should contain appropriate words that will not implicate people. Akmajian, Demers, Farmer and Harnish (2001) warn the language user thus:

> Our contributions to conversations both reflect and affect the linguistic and non-linguistic context of utterance. Our comments can reflect features of the context of utterance in that we often "watch our language" by avoiding certain words or phrases … Our comments also can affect the context by making it appropriate for the same speaker to go on and say one sort of thing rather than another.

Inside the Vehicle and thereafter

This phrase also points to the sudden death of the man. It shows that the action word 'died' really took place in the vehicle to show that it was not expected. Even the conjunct, 'thereafter' implies that it was after his death that he was taken to the mortuary. The police account did not take into consideration the visit to the second hospital as explained by the suspect. It only mentioned the mortuary which though is in the hospital, is a different unit entirely. It is meant for the dead, not the living or a person in the state of unconsciousness as in the case of the person under discussion. Also, the general hospital and the mortuary cannot mean the same thing.

2.2 Semantic Implications of the Additional Clause

From A's statements, it was after the examination at the hospital that the person was confirmed dead. On the contrary, the report of the police showed that the person *slumped* and *died* in the vehicle. The additional sentence included in the police report was not in the suspect's account.

(1) On the way, he slumped and died

The above suggests that the man died before getting to the hospital. One may ask how could the unconscious person slump. From the two records, the man was in an unconscious state. Epilepsy is defined as a "disorder of the nervous system that causes a person to become unconscious suddenly, often with violent movements of the body" (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, New 7th Edition). In the same way, the word 'slump' means to fall suddenly. Therefore, the choice of 'slumped' as used by the officer is wrong.

The above is supported by Syal and Jindal (2010) that "when we try to analyze the meaning of a word or sentence, the set of features from the external world or the 'context of situation' becomes relevant, i.e. who is the speaker, who is the hearer, what is the role of each and the relationship of the two, what situation they are in." They also quoted Firth in support of the fact that the meaning of a word or a sentence must be related to the context of usage that

"language is only meaningful in the context of situation." The word 'slumped' is added to the text without taking into consideration the state of the man.

2.3 The Discourse Topic and the Contents

This case is titled SUD (sudden untimely death) in the police file. As in the first case, there is a correlation between the title and the contents of the police discourse. It seems the police officer was driven by the subject of the discourse. This discourse points to the subject of the case. This is in line with what Saeed say about the thesis topic. The case is interpreted by the police based on the topic given to the discourse. Everything revolves around the sudden death of the man. Salami, Osoba and Fakoya (2000) say that what constitutes thematic meaning is how a speaker or writer organizes his message in terms of order, focus and emphasis. Though the content may be the same or similar, the structure, focus and emphasis may affect the interpretation or meaning of a text. This is exactly the case with the issue under consideration.

2.4 Idiomatic Expression
Given up the Ghost

An idiom is a group of words whose meaning is different from the meaning of the individual words. Akmajian, Demers, Farmer and Harnish (2001) explain that "idiomatic meanings are not compositional in the sense of being determined from the meaning of the constituent words and their grammatical relations." The suspect used an idiomatic expression to write about the death of his friend while the police officer used the actual or denotative word. The two clauses can be compared thus:

(2) … they reported him to have given up the ghost.

(3) … he … died.

The expression 'given up the ghost' cannot be analyzed syntactically because the meanings and references of its parts cannot be simply adding up to get the

denotative meaning. The whole expression should be taken as a single unit of meaning.

From the above, (2) and (3) show that the person eventually died which indicates the state of no hope. In other words, he was reported dead or taken to the mortuary. Both expressions mean the same thing. The expressions 'given up the ghost' and 'died' are synonymous.

Data 3: Statements of the Suspect, Complainant and Police Report

Text 7 - A. The Statement of the suspect

… It happened that exactly three months ago, Mr. Adeoso came to my shop that he needed three [pairs of] trousers and all cost N2,700, [I mean] both the material and sewing. He gave me N1,000 in advance. Then [on] the third day, he collected two [pairs of] trousers and told me he [was] coming to give me some money to complete the remaining one and ever since then, he disappeared from my area … I saw him this morning at around 6:25am and I called him to give me the money and he said until he had the money. I seized his bag and he started beating me. He gave me several blows … I retaliated by giving him a blow and it affected his face.

Text 8 - B. The Statement of Complainant

… I was passing by my tailor's shop… My tailor confronted me and told me that I owed him N800, a balance of N1,800. I promised him that by the end of this month by God's grace when I received my salary, I would pay his money. But he refused and seized my bag … While I was trying to collect my bag from him, he pushed me, then I held his trouser… Then he gave me a fist blow on my left eye which swelled up and [I] was bleeding through the nose.

Text 9 - C. The Police Report: A Case of Assault Occ. Harm

> This is a case of assault occ. harm reported at the charge room office … Victor reported that he gave his trouser for sewing at the rate of N1,800 … and paid N1,000 to balance N800… He stated further that on his way to his house, he saw PB1 and he asked of his balance… and he begged him that by month end, he [would] pay him …   PB1 refused and collected the poly bag in his hand and beat him up and gave him a fist blow on his left eye. As a result of this PA4 sustained injury on his eye … PB1 was invited and both statements were obtained.

ANALYSIS 3

3.1 The Linguistic Implication of words and phrases used in data 3

Seized and collected

The two words though similar in meaning do not mean the same thing. To seize means to grab or to take somebody/something from other suddenly or by force while to collect means to take away something. From these definitions, one could say that the right word that fits the situation in which it is being used is 'seize'. It could be said that the bag was grabbed or collected by force/suddenly.

Promised and Begged

The above words are not synonymous and they mean different things. While the complainant used 'promised' to assure the suspect that he would pay the money he owed him, the police used 'begged' to mean that the complainant really pleaded with the suspect, but he refused and gave him a blow.

Until and the end of the month

(1) … he said *until* he had the money.

(2) … by the end of this month … I would pay his money.

(3) … by month end, he [would] pay him.

In (1) clause, the writer was not specific when the money owed would be paid. However, in (2) and (3) it was noted that the money would be paid by the end of

the month. It may be as a result of the unspecified time that the suspect took the action of seizing the bag. From this and other words used in the suspect's writings, police may get the whole truth.

The Use of adjectives and determiners

Worthy of note is the use of adjective by the police officer to qualify the type of bag collected from the complainant by the suspect. Kirkpatrick (2010) differentiates between the above classes of words and explains that an adjective is a word that describes or gives more information about nouns or pronouns. On the other hand, a determiner is a word that is used in front of a noun or pronoun to give some information about it. In the data under consideration, 'his' and 'my' were used by the suspect and complainant respectively to modify 'bag' to indicate ownership of the bag. To describe the bag and be specific about the bag in question, the police officer used 'poly' to qualify it. This is necessary in judging the case. It is one thing to know the owner of the bag; it is another thing to know the type of this bag.

Likewise, 'fist' was used to qualify 'blow' in the same data. Though both fist and blow are nouns, the first (a nominal adjective) was used to qualify the second. The use of the nominal adjective has helped to clarify any ambiguity that may arise in using the word 'blow'. Somebody may be blown with a hand or weapon. The use of 'fist' helps us to understand the context in which 'blow' was used.

3.2 Semantic Implications of the Statements

Differences in the Versions Presented

The following differences were noted in the statements made by the suspect, complainant and the police report:

1. The amount quoted by the complainant and the police is different from the amount stated by the suspect. The suspect opined that he was owed

N2,700 while the complainant and police officer reported N1,800 though all of them indicated that N1,000 had been paid.

2. Also, it is revealed from the suspect's statements that the money is meant for both the material bought and the sewing of the material while that of other parties indicates sewing only.

3. From the suspect's statements, it is clear that the complainant started the beating.

It is expected that the police officer in charge of this case would take into consideration all the above points noted in the versions produced by the concerned people. Instead, he concentrated on the complainant's report. This affected the interpretation or meaning of the statements.

3.3 The Discourse Topic and the Contents

The case is titled 'assault occ. harm'. From the above data, occ. stands for occasioning while PB1 and PA4 refer to the suspect and complainant respectively. It should be noted that this data also solidifies our claim in first and second data that police are driven by the subject of their cases. This is better captured by Saeed (2010) "that listeners [readers] add their inferences when they interpret utterances, fleshing out the material in ways that depend on the knowledge provided by the discourse topic." By examining the police report in data 3, one would discover that although the police officer in charge of this case obtained the suspect's statements, his report only revealed that of the complainant's statements. It is only the last sentence that showed that 'both statements were obtained.'

Conclusion

From the analysis of the police discourse, it was discovered that the police are driven by the discourse topic and the first reporter of the case

irrespective of the person that is innocent or guilty. This is evident in the way the police structured and interpreted the information gathered. From the data collected and analyzed, the following linguistic features were identified: synonymous, sense relations, adjectives, determiners and idiomatic expressions. Additionally, the study revealed that there are different versions of cases used in the police custody. This is as a result of information gotten from different persons and in the process of reporting, the police also produce another version.

Finally, the researcher recommended that linguists should be involved in investigating any matter whether in the police custody or court to provide assistance that may help to clarify any ambiguity or issues. Most importantly, the application of linguistic tools complements the effort of the police in the court of law.

REFERENCES

Ajayi, Temitope. (2015). "An Application of Dell Hymes' Ethnography of Communication to Police-Suspect Discourse: A Case Study of the Criminal Investigation Department, Iyaganku Police Station, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria" in *Papers in English and Linguistics (PEL)*. Vol. 16, No. 2, 40-53.

Akmajian, Adrian, et al. (2001), *Linguistics: An Introduction to Language and Communication* (5th ed.). New Delhi: PHI Learning Private Limited.

Asiyanbola, Akinola A. (2013). *Basic English Grammar for Universities: An Introduction* (Rev. Ed.). Lagos, Nigeria: Olive Tree Publishing Venture

Crystal, David and Davy, Derek (1986), *Investigating English Style*. England: Longman Group Limited.

Halliday, M. A. K. and Hassan, R. (1976),*Cohesion in English.* London: Longman.

Ifeoma, C. C. (2018). "Language and the Mass Media Commercials" in *Journal of the English Scholars Association of Nigeria (JESAN).* Vol. 20, No. 1&2, 394-406.

Kirkpatrick, Betty (2010), *Correct Grammar Correct English*. Nigeria: EPP

Lyons, John (1981), *Language and Linguistics: An Introduction.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Matthew, P. H. 2007. *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Linguistics* (2nd ed.)*.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mbisike, R. C. (2017). "Vagueness in Some Unsolicited Text Messages of A GSM Service Provider" in *Journal of the English Scholars Association of Nigeria (JESAN).* Vol. 19, No. 1, 231-246.

Momeni, Negar (2012), 'Linguistic Recontextualization of Police Investigation: A New Approach in Forensic Linguistics" in *International Journal of Criminology and Sociological Theory*. Vol. 5, No.1, 796-807.

Olufadi, Kifayat Gambari. (2018). "Communication Styles and Speech Accommodation in Conversation" in *Journal of the English Scholars Association of Nigeria (JESAN).* Vol. 20, No. 1&2, 340-355.

Oyebode, O. Opeyemi. (2011). "A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Selected Outdoor Political Campaign Resources Used for the 2011 General Elections in Nigeria". An Unpublished Thesis Submitted to the Department of English, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria.

Saeed, John I. (2003), *Semantics* (2nd ed.). USA: Blackwell Publishing.

Salami, L. Oladipo, Osoba, Gabriel A. and Fakoya, Adeleke A. (2000), *Linguistics: A Short Introduction.* Lagos: Ginnail Nigeria Limited.

Swanson, Charles R., Territo, Leonard, and Taylor, Robert W. (1993), *Police Administration, Structures, Processes and Behaviour*(3rd. ed.). New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc.

Syal, Pushpinder and Jindal, D. V. (2010), *An Introduction to Linguistics: Language, Grammar and Semantics (*2nd ed.).New Delhi: PHI Learning Private Limited.