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THE ROLE OF PRAGMATICS IN SOCIAL COHESION AND NATION BUILDING IN AFRICA

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Abstract

This paper navigates into some areas covered under pragmatics as one of the newest areas in linguistic studies in African universities. We will first have a survey of the theories and practices paying attention to speech acts, pragmatic acts, impoliteness/politeness and face, and socio-pragmatics. The other areas to be covered include lexical pragmatics, discourse markers. The next section will cover the application of the theories and discuss pragmatics and politics, looking at political discourse, pragmatics and the media, pragmatics and pedagogy, and pragmatics and culture with emphasis on ethnopragmatics. The final section will pay attention to pragmatics and literature, intercultural communication, health, agriculture, trade, religion, performing arts, pragmatics, and all forms of speeches and interactional contexts. The method for investigation is purely based on secondary data from works by African pragmaticists. We have suggested some recommendations for the expansion of teaching, research, and publication of pragmatics in Africa.

Keywords: pragmatics, societal-pragmatics, ethnopragmatics, intercultural pragmatics, pragmatic acts, and politeness

1. Introduction and definition of pragmatics

“Pragmatics is what we exhale and inhale” since every aspect of our social life needs some contextual knowledge and usage, pragmatics would always be employed. Undoubtedly, pragmatics is an indispensable tool for peaceful co-existence, social cohesion, productivity and nation building. This paper combines theory and application of many aspects of African sociocultural, economic, commercial, religious, political,

pedagogical, media and law perspectives.¹ We will discuss how Africa could be developed in all aspects of social cohesion, mutual understanding, peaceful co-existence and nation building, if we apply the theories and practices of pragmatics. The paper will first look at some of the pertinent theories of pragmatics and their brief definitions. The next section will single out theories, concepts and approaches that are very crucial for social cohesion and nation building. The third section of the paper will dovetail into the application and practices of pragmatics in societal pragmatics. The section will delve into the theoretical perspectives and the role of pragmatics in social aspects of African countries in the areas of pragmatics and the media, pragmatics and persuasion, pragmatics and politics, economics, trade agriculture and health. Finally, the paper gives recommendations and conclusion. We will start with some basic definitions of pragmatics by eminent scholars.

1.1 What is pragmatics?

Pragmatics is the study of the conditions of human language uses determined by the context of usage (Mey 2001: 6). It is a systematic way of explaining language use in context. It explains aspects of meaning, which cannot be found in the plain sense of words or structures. In the view of Crystal (1991):

Pragmatics is the study of language from the point of view of the users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction, and the effects their use of language has on the other participants in an act of communication (Crystal 1991: 271).

Pragmatics is a way of investigating how sense can be made out of certain texts even when the text seems to be either incomplete or has a different meaning to what is really intended. Humans use multiple options of language in communication for various purposes and their communication is governed by the norms, conditions and values of the particular society and culture.

¹ This paper is an expansion of a Keynote address presented at the 1st African Pragmatics Conference from 6th to 7th February 2020 at the University of Ghana, Legon Campus, under the theme “*Pragmatics in Africa: Theory and Practice.*” It was attended by pragmaticists from Ghana, West Africa and a wider Africa and beyond.

The proper domain of pragmatics is more of **performance** than **competence** because in pragmatics the user of language is performing and goes about using his/her language in everyday life and communicative encounters. This will support the new term pragmatic acts by Mey (2001). Even though competence is important, pragmatics is not much of competence and knowledge of the language and its rules and forms, but of appropriate usage. Pragmatics thus deals with the **description of its use**, and the centre of attention of pragmatics is the **language user (Speaker or Addressee)** coupled with the knowledge of the language (see Leech 1983).

Bublitz and Norrick (2011: 3) in their introduction to an edited book *Foundations of pragmatics* looked at pragmatics in general terms outside linguistics and how it could be extended to other fields in life and stated as follows:

People who act pragmatically or take a pragmatic perspective generally have a preference for a practical, matter of fact and realistic rather than a theoretical, speculative and idealistic way of approaching imminent problems and handling everyday affairs. To put it differently, they share a concrete, situation-dependent approach geared to action and usage rather than an abstract, situation-independent and system-related point of view. To assume a pragmatic stance in everyday social encounters as well as in political, historical and related kinds of discourse means to handle the related affairs in a goal-directed and object-directed, common-sense and down to earth kind of way.

The above sums up what pragmatics in language can offer and conforms to works by Mey (2001) on social pragmatics and pragmatic acts that is why I think pragmatics is what we “inhale and exhale”. From all the above definitions, I see pragmatics as the practical usage of language in context for achievable goals and therefore support Bublitz and Norrick (2011: 3) and Mey’s (2001) views on pragmatics.

1.2 Historical perspectives of pragmatics

The modern usage of the term pragmatics is attributable to the philosopher Charles Morris (1938). Its origins lie in philosophy of language and the American philosophical school of pragmatism. As a discipline within linguistics, its roots lie in the work of Paul Grice on **Conversational implicature** and the **Cooperative principles** and Stephen Levinson,

Penelope Brown and Geoffrey Leech's on **Politeness**. Scholars who have influenced modern pragmatics have been philosophers such as Austin (1962) *How to do things with words* and Searle (1969) who worked on the Speech Act. In the 21st century one of the scholars who have championed and lifted up the image of pragmatics is Jacob Mey.

1.3 Lexical pragmatics and discourse markers

One of the theoretical areas in pragmatics that have attracted many scholars is lexical pragmatics, indexing and discourse markers, with much attention to referencing and information structure. We will briefly discuss reference in pragmatics and language use.

1.3.1 Reference

The term **reference** is the relation between a part of an utterance and an individual or a set of individuals that it identifies. Cruse (2000: 305) avers that “**Reference** is one of the most fundamental and vital aspects of language and language use, namely the relations between language as a medium of communication between human beings and the world about which we communicate.” **Reference** is an act by which a speaker (or writer) uses language to enable a listener (reader) to identify something or a person.

In using human language, we can talk about things that are external to ourselves. These could be things that we can find, see and touch in our immediate environment and abstract concepts and things that are displaced in time and space (see Carlson 2006: 74). To be able to do this very effectively, we have to pick out entities in the physical world and ascribe names, properties and descriptions to them.

Reference indicates relations between the items, concepts, persons and their linguistic labels. We will refer to the process of doing this as **referencing**. Reference is, therefore, concerned with designating entities in the world by linguistic means. Carlson (2006: 76) states that reference is a kind of verbal “pointing to” or “picking out” of a certain object or individual that one wishes to say something about. When we make references to things with linguistic units, we want to arrive at the **truth value** of what we intend to put across. Types of references include *definite reference*, *indefinite reference*, and *generic reference*. For the purpose of this paper, we are not discussing these types.

Some other areas in pragmatics theory that have generated arguments and discussions are contexts and referencing with emphasis on *conversational implicatures*, *explicitures and implicatures*, *propositions and entailments*, *deixis: personal, spatial*,

temporal, social and discourse. In this paper, our focus will only be on implicatures and explicatures. Let us begin with implicatures.

Implicatures are non-stated information that can only be inferred from texts/utterances. They help us to make meanings out of texts. If individuals are able to make right inferences, texts or utterances will be more meaningful. There is always a gap between **what is said** and **what is meant** and to some extent, we **say less** and **mean more**. The bridge from what is said or written and what is communicated is built through **implicatures**. Horn (2006: 3) states that “Implicature is a component of speaker meaning that constitutes an aspect of what is **meant** in a speaker’s utterance without being part of what is **said**. What a speaker **intends to communicate** is characteristically far richer than what s/he directly expresses; linguistic meaning radically underdetermines the message conveyed and understood.”²

In communicative interaction, it is the duty of the speaker to use pragmatic principles to bridge the gap between what s/he intends and what s/he says. S/he also expects his /her addressee(s) to explore the same **bridging inferences** to get to the meaning and interpretation of the utterance. Anytime the tools for bridging the gap are absent, there is wrong interpretation resulting in miscommunication. Conversational Implicatures was proposed by **Paul Grice** in the William James Lectures delivered at Harvard in 1967.

An **explicature** is a proposition that is explicitly said or expressed as opposed to an implicature.³ Explicatures are considered as pragmatically determined content which means that all the things that we need for the interpretation are supplied directly in the sentence. Other pragmatic principles under referencing are **Presupposition, Entailment and Deixis** but we will talk briefly about only deixis.

1.3.2 Deixis

The term **deixis** refers to the features of a language that refer directly to the **personal, temporal, spatial, and situational** or **discourse** characteristics of a situation within which

² If people are sitting in a room with an AC that has not been put on, and one of the people says “it is terribly warm here I am perspiring” he/she is stating less than what the intentions are. The person wants to request either the host, the curator of the vicinity or the person sitting closer to the AC to switch it on.

³ An assumption is an *explicature* if and only if “it is a development of a logical form encoded by the utterance. An explicature is something that is built and decoded from what the speaker says.” (See Sperber and Wilson 1995: 182).

an utterance is made. A **deictic word** helps in the interpretation of the meaning of the utterance. A **deictic word** is one which takes some element of its meaning from the situation (i.e., the speaker, the addressee, the time and place) of the utterance in which it is used. Fillmore (1966: 220) aptly captured the nature and functions of deixis and states that: Deixis is the name given to those aspects of language whose interpretation is relative to the occasion of utterance; to the time of utterance, and to times before and after the time of utterance; to the location of the speaker at the time of the utterance; and to the identity of the speaker and the intended audience (Fillmore 1966: 220).

The use of deixis (shifters) helps to give a precise, concise and accurate reference of an utterance (see Crystal 1995: 451, Crystal 1991: 96, Yule 2000: 9-16). The term deixis is also termed “**shifters**” since it refers to linguistic items that shift their meanings from context to context. The pointers to the deixis are referred to by philosophers as indexical expressions or “indexicals” (Veschueren 1999: 18). To Levinson (1983: 54), “Essentially, deixis concerns the ways in which languages encode or grammaticalize features of the **context of utterance** or **speech event**, and thus also concerns ways in which the interpretation of utterances depends on the analysis of that context of utterance.” Deixes are therefore important tools in referencing for appropriate and better understanding of texts and utterances.

1.4 Grice’s co-operative principles/maxims of conversation

Let us now turn to one of the popular topics in pragmatics that has been tested in pragmatic discussions and arguments. Grice identified the maxims, **quality, quantity, manner** and **relation** and asserts that when they are appropriately combined in speech there will be co-operation between the interlocutors. Ideally, social interactions call for respect for each other, and the prevalence of cooperation between interlocutors and the things needed for such a successful interaction is embodied in the Gricean cooperative principles or maxims. There are aspects of our communicative interactions that flout these principles, but competent speakers do very well to adhere to most of them. Levinson (1983) recognised the difficulties in fulfilling all the principles and avers that claiming to observe all the maxims/meeting the Gricean standard is like living in a philosopher’s paradise.

1.5 Speech acts and pragmatic acts

In the Speech Act theory by Austin and Searle, language is a binding **force and it has power and ignition** as we see in machines. In this theory, an utterance is conceived as an act by which a speaker does something with his words. Speech act was introduced by Austin (1962) as a theory that analyses the role of utterances in relation to the behaviour of the **Speaker (S)** and the **Hearer (H)** in interpersonal communication.⁴

There are three basic types of speech acts, namely *locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary forces* in speech acts. Under performatives in the illocutionary acts, we have commissives, directives, representatives, expressives, etc. we do not intend to delve deep into each of them in this paper. Searle systematized the classification of speech acts and added the felicity conditions that must prevail for the speech acts to be effectively fulfilled. These included the agents, the place, time and sincerity conditions.

Quite recently scholars have criticised the tenets of the speech act theory. One of such scholars is Mey (2001). In discussing how language is used under situated contexts, Mey (2001) came out with pragmatic acts as a notion to replace Searle and Austin's speech act theory. Mey (2001) defines his pragmatic acts as follows:

Pragmatic acts are pragmatic because they base themselves on language as constrained by the situation, not as defined by syntactic rules or by semantic selections and conceptual restrictions. Pragmatic acts are situation-derived and situation-constrained. In the final analysis, they are determined by the broader social context in which they happen, and they realize their goals in the conditions placed upon human action by that context (Mey, 2001: 228).

Pragmatic acts are situation oriented since the core mandate of pragmatics is the study of language within context. In Mey (2009: 751) he asserted that "pragmatic acts focus on the

⁴ Austin wrote a book "*How to do things with words*", to support his claims and this publication is often referred to posthumously.

interactional situations in which both speakers and hearers realize their aims”.⁵ Mey (2009a: 752) went further to argue that:

With regard to pragmatic acts, one is not primarily concerned with matters of grammatical correctness or strict observance of rules. What counts as a *pract* (i.e. what can be subsumed under a particular *pragmeme* as an *allopract*) depends on the understanding that the participants have of the situation and on the outcome of the act in a given context.

In communication, some of the aspects are verbal that involves speech or texts but there are also greater parts of communication that are non-verbal or ‘extralinguistic’. These include kinesics, tactile, proxemics, symbols; specific examples of these are gestures, intonation, facial mimics, body posture, head movements, laughter, colours, artifacts, costume, etc. The combination of the speech acts, paralinguistic features, semiotics and other non-verbal in situated contexts is what Mey call ‘pragmatic acts (see Mey 2009a: 748). Speeches are best understood and interpreted when they are properly situated within particular contexts that include the participants, the setting, cultural norms, with accompanying non-verbal communication (see Mey 2009a).

All the above indicate that the traditional speech acts by Austin and Searle cannot account for most aspects of communication outside speech and therefore we need to resort to Mey’s pragmatic acts.

2. Theories of face, politeness, ethnopragmatics and intercultural pragmatics

In this section we will discuss and incorporate theories that have direct and practical bearing on social cohesion, peaceful coexistence and nation building. Politeness and impoliteness and face theories have been well researched and discussed and have been central pillars in pragmatics studies. The scholars mostly associated with politeness and face theories include Brown and Levinson (1987), Culpepper (2011) and Goffman (1995)

⁵ Mey (2009a: 751) felt that unlike the traditional speech act theory, in pragmatic acts “the explanatory movement is from the outside in, rather than from the inside out: Instead of starting with what is said, and looking for what the words could mean, the situation in which the words fit is invoked to explain what can be (and is actually being) said.” Pragmatic acts are realized in given situations.

Grundy (2000), Gu (1990) and Ide (1989). Apart from these there are several scholars like Spencer-Oatey (2000), Scollon and Scollon (2001), Watts and Locher (2005). As far as this paper is concerned the theories/models by Brown and Levinson (1987), Culpepper (2011) Goffman (1995), Grundy (2000), Gu (1990), Ide (1989) are the preferred ones for my purpose because of lack of space.

2.1 Politeness

Politeness can be defined as proper social conduct, awareness of etiquette and tactful consideration for others. Grundy (2000) looks at politeness as follows:

Linguistic politeness is the redressing of the affronts to face posed by face-threatening acts to addressees. Polite expressions are properly and appropriately carried out in social interaction so as to avoid being offensive. In linguistic politeness, the speaker tries to be as tactful and respectful as possible and to avoid face threat (Grundy 2000: 146).

Politeness strategies and expressions avoid conflict and provide harmony among communicative participants and strengthen the antipersonalistic and communal (collectivist) aspect of African culture. Ide (1989) defined linguistic politeness as follows:

Linguistic politeness is the language usage associated with smooth communication realized (1) through the speaker's use of intentional strategies to allow his or her message to be received favourably by the addressee, and (2) through the speaker's choice of expressions to conform to the expected and/or prescribed norms of speech appropriate to the contextual situation in individual speech communities (Ide 1989: 225).

This reflection emphasises social acceptability and conformity to sociocultural norms. Goffman's view of face is more compatible with the African face concept. Goffman's sociological notion of face sees face as a **public rather than personal property on loan from the society**. The African face concept and the expressions associated with them are based on communal and societal needs (see Agyekum 2004a). They do not consider only the speaker and the addressee as highlighted in Brown and Levinson's model (see Grundy 2000: 146).

The Ghanaian and African socio-cultural face concept points to a different dimension of politeness. It includes a folk audience that shares responsibility for the fulfilment of the act to which the speaker of face expressions commits. The face reproduces social and pragmatic issues that affect the entire society and not an individual behaviour and responsibility (see Agyekum 2004a, Gu 1990, Ide 1989 and Matsumoto 1988, 1989). Matsumoto (1988 and 1989) complain that BL's "face constructs" do not capture the principles of Japanese interaction because they do not include the acknowledgement of societal relations. Gu (1990) shares the same sentiments and argues that among the Chinese, politeness is more appropriately seen as adherence to social norms than attending to individual's face wants. Agyekum (2004a) also points out the same shared face among the Akans of Ghana.

2.1.1 Cultural etiquette, ethics and politeness

Politeness is closely associated with cultural etiquette and ethics which are socio-cultural norms and values expected from new members of a society including foreigners. Ethics is a system of moral principles rules and conduct, and it relates to the philosophy and values of a society, a culture, an organisation or a nation.

Etiquette is defined as formal rules of correct and polite behaviour in society or among members of a profession. Etiquette and ethics are thus culturally universal and also cultural specific. Every culture, society, organisation, company or institution has its own ethics and etiquette meant to improve harmony and productivity (see Kasper 1997).

2.2 Impoliteness

There is rise in research on impoliteness or rudeness, which involves the use of language to cause offence (Culpeper 2011). The pragmatic research on impoliteness has increased since globalisation has opened the gates for people to know and read communication from other societies. In fact, three of my former students have worked on impoliteness on Ghanaian politics, and on Ghanaian language media discourse for their Ph.D (see Ofori 2015 and Thompson 2019).

Again, modern technological communication, e.g., online, and other social media portals have increased incivility in societies and there is thus the need to research into impolite language including invectives, intemperate language, hate speech, incendiary speeches especially among politicians from opposing parties. Allan and Burridge (2006)

therefore think that instead of talking about politeness and impoliteness we can talk of **X-phemisms** to cover **euphemisms, dysphemisms and orthophemisms**.⁶ The rest of the paper will look at societal pragmatics, things we do in our daily life that call for politeness, diplomacy, social cohesion and perfect social relations.

2.3 Ethnopragmatics and intercultural pragmatics

Goddard and Ye (2015: 66) posits that “The term ethnopragmatics designates an approach to language in use that sees culture as playing a central explanatory role, and at the same time opens the way for links to be drawn between language and other cultural phenomena” Linguistic usage functions as an index of routine ways of thinking and allows us to stay close to “*insider perspectives*’ of the participants (see Goddard 2006: 15). In looking at the interface between ethnopragmatics and speech practices Goddard (2006) stated as follows:

Ethnopragmatics is necessarily intertwined with cross-linguistic semantics because the whole idea is to understand speech practices in terms which make sense to the people concerned, i.e., in terms of indigenous values, beliefs and attitudes, social categories, emotions, and so on (Goddard 2006: 2).

Ethnopragmatics refers to explanations of speech practices which begin with culture-internal ideas, i.e., with the shared values, norms, priorities, and assumptions of the speakers, rather than any presumed universals of pragmatics (Sharifian 2015). Most of our discussions of pragmatic practices and societal pragmatics in Africa will be effectively discussed, understood and applied very well if based on ethnopragmatics.

Intercultural Pragmatics is a relatively new field of pragmatics. It deals with how the language system is put to use in social encounters between interlocutors who have different first languages and cultures but communicate in a common language (*lingua*

⁶ Allan and Burridge (2006) states that the term euphemism (Greek *eu-* ‘good, well’ and *pheme* ‘speaking’) is well known; but its counterpart dysphemism (Greek *dys-* ‘bad, unfavourable’) rarely appears in ordinary language. Orthophemism (Greek *ortho-* ‘proper, straight, normal’, cf. *orthodox*) is a term we have coined in order to account for direct or neutral expressions that are not sweet-sounding, evasive or overly polite (euphemistic), nor harsh, blunt or offensive (dysphemistic). For convenience, we have also created the collective term *X-phemism* to refer to the union set of euphemisms, orthophemisms and dysphemisms.

franca). In such an encounter, the pragmatics norms of communication are brought into the communicative interaction and therefore there should be compromises so as to merge the two for fruitful interaction (see Kecskes 2012: 609). Intercultural communication is a complex one that needs politeness, tactfulness and mutual respect for each other's face concepts. It is a type of communication that one cannot ignore egocentrism, aggression, chaos, and linguistic violence.

3. Societal pragmatics: Its application and practices

Having considered the tit-bits of some of the theories in pragmatics, let us now turn our attention to application and practice of pragmatics by looking at societal pragmatics. Societal Pragmatics looks at linguistics from the point of making it user friendly and situate it within the purview of users rather than making linguistics an abstract subject distanced from the users of language (see Mey 2001: 222). Pragmatics, moves into areas that were traditionally reserved for other disciplines like anthropology, culture, psychology, cognition, education, politics, international relations, law, media, communication, ICT, journalism, religion, health, environment, business, performing arts, literature, etc.

The rest of the paper concentrates on pragmatics and its principles and application to these societal issues and their roles in social cohesion, peaceful coexistence and nation building.

3.1 Pragmatics and the media language

Let us now turn our attention to pragmatics and **media language**. Some researchers focus on Mediatised Discourse Analysis that studies the language and usage in the electronic and print media. The researchers are mostly interested in the contents of what is put into the print and electronic media, and how educative, informative and entertaining the contents are. We are thus looking at the interface between pragmatics and media.

A research into the pragmatics of the media can pay attention to the control and monopoly of the media, the stakeholders, news worthiness, ownership, socio-political, linguistic, agricultural and cultural impact on the media. Pragmatics can look at the problems of the media in terms of polarisation, use of abusive, hate, incendiary and intemperate language, fake news that incite people, etc. (see Agyekum 2004b). Some pragmatics scholars now research into social media and its advantages and challenges.

With the advent of modern technology, some pragmatic researchers emphasise language and text on social media.

Agyekum (2010) researched on radio and its role in Ghana and here are some of the issues that cropped up in the work. He stated that mass media creates a feeling of belonging to a shared but anonymous community of fellow listeners or readers. In the view of Hanson (2005: 167) “talk show provides a sense of community that people don’t find anywhere else.... People feel increasingly disconnected, and talk radio gives them a sense of connection.” Media discourse has “agents” that include (a) the journalists, who bring the information, (b) the politicians and civil servants, (c) the experts who include political analysts, social commentators on radio and TV, academics, political scientists and linguists, (d) social movements and organizational representatives and (e) ordinary people—the masses who engage themselves in social conversations and debates. African programmes on radio and TV have brought many people together and most hosts have become stars and celebrities.

Agyekum (2010: 6) further noted that Mass media is one of the major channels for political and social participation. He stated as follows:

The media has become an integral part of people’s life, and many Ghanaians now feel hollow when they travel to the very remote areas and do not have access to FM, TV and newspapers. Ghanaian language plays an important role in keeping the people abreast with current events, such as politics, elections, education, health, sports, agriculture, tourism, oral literature and cultural studies. The media has become so powerful that the public have become mere puppets of media control (Thornborrow 1999: 51). The media can sway Ghanaian’s attention to what they (the media) consider as newsworthy for a particular day or week (Agyekum 2010: 6).

The media discourse employs persuasion as a politeness technique to make interaction more polite and conform to face work. During the phone-in calls, hosts use a lot of *address forms, titles, appellations, by-names, and honorifics*. These are persuasive and intimate forms meant to make the callers feel as being integral part of the programme. Apart from these, people frequently use *apologies, requests, greetings, promises, and thanking* when they call on the Akan programmes (see Agyekum 2010).

Apart from language domination and language suppression in education, some pragmatic research has also focussed on **linguistic repression** in the area of language and

the media and medical interviews. In doing research into these, pragmaticists have always been focussing on the language user who is at the centre of affairs. They investigate the appropriate and practical language to be used in the media such as the newspapers, radio, TV and social media. What should good journalism, objective coverage, circumspection, fairness in mass broadcasting be? How should journalists conduct themselves in relation to their viewers, listeners or readers?

If our journalists, media practitioners and the owners and managers of media houses are knowledgeable in pragmatics theory and practices, especially **X-phenmisms**, we would have avoided the Rwandan genocide. Again, the various conflicts in our countries that emanate from intemperate and hate language in the African media landscape would have been avoided. We need pragmatic oriented media in Ghana and in all African countries now for peaceful elections and to avoid the partisan rancour. It is thus not surprising that before elections in West Africa, ECOWAS organises workshop for politicians, the media, and trade unions on effective language usage.

I have participated in three of such workshops in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Nigeria as a pragmatics resource person. In these workshops, we tried to draw the media practitioners, civil societies, NGOs, and politicians' attention to appropriate language use. Some of the topics treated were regulating and managing professional ethics in radio and television broadcast; media relations and effective campaign strategies, political parties and the media, and the media and elections in member states: challenges, experience from Ghana, lessons learnt and opportunities. The other areas were countering abusive language on the airwaves, social media, and citizens' engagement in the elections in member states, upholding of positive media values and ethics in programming during electioneering period, the role of presenters and the print media, social media and the responsibility to promote positive citizens' engagement in electioneering process'.

Effective media whether traditional or social can employ pragmatic principles to drum home information on the novel pandemic COVID-19 through proper messages, videos, cartoons, jingles, etc. In this way, the media would be fulfilling its core mandate of information, education and entertainment (see Agyekum 2010).

3.2 Legal pragmatics, translation and interpreting

Legal discourse cannot be effective without resorting to certain pragmatics notions. These include lexical pragmatics, terminology, turn taking, presupposition, implicatures, explicatures and entailments. Other areas are speech acts, power versus solidarity,

honorifics and titles, participants roles and deixis including personal, temporal, spatial, discourse and situational. Legal pragmatics also tap on relevance theory, cooperative principles, politeness, face, silence, humour, and discourse markers, information structure, as well as non-verbal communication. Legal pragmatics can study the structure of interviews like police and lawyers' interviews, cross-examination, judgment texts, linguistic strategies adopted by lawyers, participants in courts, types of language used in courts, problems of translation and interpretations.

Lawyers use linguistic strategies to exercise control over witnesses: these include, interruptions, reformulation of a witnesses' description so as to confuse them, incorporation of damaging presuppositions in questions, such as, leading questions and directives that compel the witness to say certain things. Other legal areas that draw the attention of pragmaticists include alternative legal process (alternative dispute resolution). Most socio-legal scholars advocate mediation as one of the many alternative dispute solutions to the formal courts. The others include healing circles, indigenous courts, family group conferences, youth justice conferences and circle sentencing. These alternatives to formal courts have introduced a restorative approach in the legal systems (see Eades 2011).

Pragmatics can study issues like problems with translation and interpretation and the indispensable role of interpreters to the proper functioning of the legal system. From the standpoint of translation and interpretation in the legal system, NGOs, official documents, etc., pragmatics is crucial since we are dealing with constant meaning in both languages. New interdisciplinary developments in pragmatics have enabled us to include translation, under a single pragmatic theory. Nida (1984: 9) asserts that:

Translation consists in the reproduction in the receptor language the message of the source language in such a way that the receptor in the receptor language may be able to understand adequately how the original receptors in the source language understood the original text. (Nida 1984: 9)

In pragmatics sense, translation and interpretation are the major keys to intercultural, multicultural and multilingual communication and these are areas that have attracted the attention of scholars in pragmatics. Translation has also been pragmatically employed in many multidisciplinary disciplines such as linguistics, literature, cultural studies, anthropology, court proceedings, etc. Translation theory adopts pragmatic notions of referencing, information structure, relevance theory, cooperative and politeness principles.

4. Pragmatics and social interaction: pragmatics and persuasion

In this section we will concentrate on persuasion, which is an indispensable tool in social interaction. Pragmatics and social interaction involve persuasion which calls for mutual understanding between interlocutors. Persuasive language should be based on politeness and respect for each other's face and devoid of face threatening acts (see Agyekum 2004c). Persuasion forms an integral part of human communication and behaviour in day-to-day activities and social encounters. It is a mental transformation device by which the persuader has the intention of inducing the recipient to view the world from the persuader's perspectives (see Agyekum 2004c). The complete persuasion frame involves:

Persuader----- Persuasive language-----Persuadee

To persuade somebody, one needs a strong and convincing language called persuasive language. The powerful language in pragmatics terms is referred to as MAND. The major persuasive and politeness strategies for perfect communication include honorifics and address forms, indirection including the use of circumlocution, idioms, metaphor, proverbs, propaganda and co-opting in advertising and humour. Experienced politicians employ these strategies even if they need to lie to the people and win their votes. If leaders either in governance or corporate bodies are able to use persuasion pragmatically, they will be able to move their people around them, and productivity will increase.

4.1 Pragmatics and address forms, titles and honorifics and religious persuasion

In the area of ethnopragmatics and politeness, there are research on the use of address forms, honorifics and deference popularly used among Africans, especially at the king's court. Among traditional African societies, there is a special type of court or palace language (called **ahemfie kasa**), which is characterised by politeness, formality, honorifics, appropriate address forms and titles. The palace is the traditional seat of justice, administration, power, arbitrations and societal norms and values. In all these cases, the use of appropriate persuasive and politeness language including address forms and honorifics can keep boiling hearts at bay (see Agyekum 2011 and 2003 on palace language).

The use of titles, address forms and honorifics have infiltrated into our modern governance system where the titles, chief, Boss, honourable, **Oga, Nii, Nene, Naa, and Oba, Togbe, Oloye and Alaafin** among Ghanaians and Nigerians, etc are overly used.

At the shrines of traditional African religion, attendants and worshippers who seek protection, healing or justice, try to use persuasive language to have their MANDS fulfilled. Similarly, at the Christian worship and supplication towards God, persuasive language and praises are used. The most popular religious persuasive strategies are honorifics and appellations. In Ghana, some of the most common appellations Christians use for God are **Nana**, ‘grandfather’, **Obɔadeɛ**, ‘The Creator’, ‘The Gracious One’, ‘The Powerful’, **Nutsɔ**, **Mawu**, ‘The Mighty One’, etc.

In most “One Man Churches” in Ghana, the pastors have given themselves all kinds of titles and honorifics including, *Prophet, Apostle, Messiah, Redeemer, Computer-man, Jesus One-Touch, Obonsam Last Stop*, ‘Devil’s Last Stop’, **Osɔfo Kyiriabosom**, ‘The Reverend that abhors Deities’, **Abonsamsuro, Abayifoɔsuro**, ‘ Demons, Witches are Scared’, **Kumchacha, Aburuku-Abraka Osofo, Obinim**, ‘Nobody is Aware’, **Obofour**, ‘The Creator’, etc.

These persuasive titles, honorifics and appellations convince their followers to trust that they can solve all their problems including, sicknesses, marriage, visa acquisition, trading, childbirth, deliverance from witches and devils, and unemployment for them. Most of these pastors are very charismatic, and those who engage in occultism employ all kinds of persuasive language to influence their congregation.

4.2 Pragmatics and politics: persuasion, political propaganda and slogans

Let us consider persuasion in politics and political propaganda. Propaganda is a deliberate attempt by some individuals or groups to form, control or alter the attitudes of other groups by the use of communication (see Qualter 1962: 271). It is a publicity meant to spread information so as to persuade people.

In politics, governments use persuasion to secure their positions. Most authoritarian regimes use propaganda and political ideology to influence the people to accept, certain guidelines, policies and ideologies of their regimes. The propaganda strategies make the populace form positive and credible or negative concepts and images about politicians. The major inducements in African politics include set of economic inducements, bribery,

pay increase, job, etc. Voters also demand set of physical infrastructure including good roads, hospitals, schools, electricity, water, etc.⁷

Pragmatics also study campaign promises, ideologies, manifestoes and political slogans. They constitute effective tools for mobilising people for political action and are short catchy phrases employed by politicians for electoral effect (Nianxi 2009). Some of the persuasive slogans that have cropped up in the 4th Republic of Ghana include **Edwo Bɔdɔɔ**, ‘Everything is Cool’, **Hwɛ w’asetanam na to aba pa**. ‘Consider your living slogan, *Positive Change and Zero Tolerance for Corruption*, **Yɛretoa So**, ‘We are continuing’, **Ide Bii Kɛkɛ**, ‘It is very fine’, and **Yɛresesa mu**, ‘We are changing the status quo’.

These persuasive slogans were meant to persuade the masses to believe that the new government could revitalise the dying economy of Ghana by curbing corruption, which is the major canker of the economy. If the new government were waging war on corruption to the zero level, it would help develop the economy, since a lot of the national income and resources are siphoned through corruption.

A successful politician is an orator with political language full of varied and elaborate polite, persuasive, and rhetorical skills that are meant to paint a clear picture of the nation for the citizenry to see him as a competent ruler and lure potential voters. These strategies are the core of political campaigns (see Duranti 2006: 469).

When persuasion and politeness are properly executed, there would be mutual respect, peaceful co-existence, social cohesion and comfortable atmosphere for productivity and nation building. If our governments, heads of institutions, CEOs and leaders adhere to the principles of politeness and face theory, conflicts and wars especially in African countries will cease. Religious, interethnic and interparty conflicts and conflicts between electoral commissions and parties in democratic countries will be avoided especially in an election year like 2020 in Ghana.

Knowledge about the configuration of ethnopragmatics, intercultural pragmatics, politeness, persuasion, humour and silence by politicians, CEOs, MMDAs, all leaders and administrators will foster good and peaceful relations and increase productivity. All office holders should know when and when not to comment on some important issues on governance and administration. They should know when to use humour and when to be

⁷ In contemporary politics, political parties use the language of persuasion full of promises to canvas for support and votes from the non-affiliated party members (floating voters) and for the continued allegiance of their own past supporters.

serious with issues. Knowledge in pragmatics should provide them with a fair balance of all to boost productivity.

In modern governance, true democracy can work well and achieve better results if politicians and the populace can pragmatically dialogue in languages shared adequately by all. “Any community governed through a medium of language other than its own feels itself to a certain extent disenfranchised, and this feeling, even though latent, is always potential focus for political agitation.” In practical pragmatic terms, it is important to inculcate grass-root participation in governance through the mother tongue (Le Page 1964: 15).

If political heads, diplomats, investors are aware of the nitty-gritty of pragmatics, norms and etiquette in negotiation, and reconciliation in intercultural communication, there would be healthy and effective communication, social cohesion, mutual understanding and peaceful co-existence.

4.3 Pragmatics, trade and business: persuasion in co-opting in advertising

Our final discussion on persuasion looks at co-opting and advertising. Co-opting is a technique frequently used in advertising. It consists basically in seducing the hearer and the viewer through promised identification with some prestigious environment or a set of right people, young, smart, rich, etc. (see Mey 2001: 256). In advertising, the messages are both informative and persuasive to influence the would-be customers. The motive of the advertiser is to persuade the buyer to make a particular purchase. Persuasion makes the consumer accept the projected image of the good presented by the advertiser.

Pragmatists are interested in researching into persuasive language used by market women and herbal drug sellers at the various markets and transport terminals in Ghana. The sellers employ pragmatic concepts and persuasion, and use intimate and hypercoristic expressions and terms of endearment like **me nua**, ‘my sibling’, **me kunu**, ‘my husband’, **me dɔfo**, ‘my lover’, **ahooɔɛ**, ‘the handsome/beautiful one’, etc. These terms place the seller in the same camera angle as the buyer (see Agyekum 2017). Persuasive language can transform itself into charms that have the potency to change minds.⁸ The adverts on televisions, radio and in newspapers and social media employ pragmatics to persuade customers to buy and thereby increase their sales that further call for more productivity to

⁸ There are many instances where people have bought goods and herbs and have later regretted buying them. They think the sellers use charms to change people’s mind to buy wares (see Agyekum 2017).

boost the economy for nation building. In doing all these, they are mindful that the “would-be-buyers” come from various ethnic social and groups.

4.4. Pragmatics and economy, agriculture and creative arts

Pragmatics is crucial in trade, economics and agriculture Le Page (1964: 18) posited that:

“Whenever the language of the government and the law differs from that of the masses of the people, plans for economic, agricultural and industrial development are more difficult to make, because the basic research is hindered by the language barrier and more difficult to put into effect.”

All Agricultural research findings are in the colonial languages that the local farmers on the fields cannot comprehend and apply the new skills and practices. Expansion in agriculture can occur if the farmers, agricultural scientists and extension officers operate on a common language code that makes it possible for easier and perfect interaction.

If we are able to pragmatically design a common language between stakeholders in agriculture and trade, there would be good social interaction, social cohesion and mutual understanding among the people. With perfect application of pragmatic notions, we would be able to produce more, expand our trade, boost our economy and build strong nations.

In all aspects of creativity and performance in Performing Arts, there are social interactions between the performers, their managers and the audience whether in Music, Dance or Theatre. This calls for appropriate language and communication bearing in mind the pragmatic notions and principles of politeness, face concepts, persuasion, deference and mutual respect in communication. An ideal performer and practitioner in the creative arts is one who knows the context of usage (pragmatics). Script writing for theatre or movies and language for song texts call for pragmatic and comprehensible language full of cohesion and easier process.

The artistes should bear in mind the principles and practices embodied in ethnopragmatics and intercultural pragmatics. These principles will serve as significant tools for the creation of works that would be acceptable, impactful and useful to the people, and the society based on the language and sociocultural norms. The creative artistes who have knowledge in intercultural pragmatics and communication would also search for the backgrounds into the different cultures and societies in which they operate. In doing that

they will have a fairer idea about their verbal and behavioural taboos and acceptable norms and thereby create suitable creative works for them.

Since the creative industry is a business enterprise that involves managerial skills, entrepreneurship, marketing and advertisement, there is the need to apply pragmatic principles to engage people. This will move them either to be practitioners or the consumers of the products of performing arts. It is only by this way that the creative industry can boom, provide employment, boost tourism and the economy.

4.5 Pragmatics and health

In the area of health, there is a constant interaction between patients and health practitioners. To what extent can the two parties achieve proper health care if they are not both competent in proper contextual language usage? The orthodox doctors, nurses, and paramedics as well as herbal medicine practitioners should know how to employ, polite and persuasive language so as to assuage the fears and pains of their patients. As part of their training orthodox health practitioners and traditional healers study the ethics of their works and their societies in aspects of social psychology to improve their social relations with their patients.

Another group of health practitioners who need training in pragmatics and effective communication are the mental and public health experts. They need to communicate effectively by using polite and persuasive language to achieve their goals. Many information and sensitisation of the prevention of communicable diseases, immunisation, and proper sanitation, need pragmatic tools to mobilise the people to understand the health implications, especially with regard to the Neglected Tropical Diseases.

One critical example in health is the communication in COVID-19. The health services practitioners, the governments, ministry of information and all front liners in the medical field, scientists and researchers, pharmacists as well as politicians and the media need pragmatics. They all need the pragmatic acts, cooperative principles, politeness, relevance, cohesion, indirection, knowledge and principles of ethnopr pragmatics and intercultural pragmatics and communication. Above all, they have to apply the principles of persuasion to effectively communicate to the patients and the general public.

Patients who visit health facilities should know how to employ politeness and linguistic routines including greetings, showing of gratitude, apology, request, so as to be well understood by their doctors, nurses, pharmacists, paramedics, such as lab technicians, etc. Advertisers and marketers of medical products, health information, messages, flyers,

etc. should be conversant with some of the basic principles of pragmatics to make the publicity, supply chain and sales of medical products more effective. All these would boost their social cohesion with their stakeholders and improve their productivity and the economy towards effective nation building.

5. Recommendation

I strongly recommend the following:

1. Pragmatics should be well grounded in our institutions and universities. This is so because pragmatics has become a strong pillar in linguistic and language studies and it is strongly related to other fields like semantics, syntax, prosody, information structure, communication studies, media studies, journalism, law, political science, religion, health, stylistics and literary studies, sociolinguistics, psychology, psycholinguistics, pedagogy, language acquisition and learning.
2. We should intensify the teaching, research and publication of works in pragmatics to cater for the intradisciplinary and interdisciplinary areas. As a result of these, we have to establish a *Journal of African Pragmatics* as an outlet for our research in pragmatics.
3. I suggest that all the departments of Linguistics, African Language studies, English, Modern Languages, Information Studies and Law should develop courses in pragmatics at least to the undergraduate level and make it a core subject.
4. The pragmatics courses in the language related areas should be made available as free electives for other disciplines in the applied and social sciences especially, political science, information studies, social work, sociology, psychology, religion, public health, domestic and consumer sciences, law and international relations, marketing, human resource, agriculture, etc.
5. We should run short courses in pragmatics for public speakers and public relation officers, journalists, tourism practitioners, cultural experts and consultants, guidance and counselling practitioners and practitioners in the industry, the security services, public and mental health practitioners, administrators and politicians.

6. The future of our graduates as diplomats, health practitioners, teachers, politicians and lawyers will depend on how best they can use language in appropriate context and in practical terms in every social interaction. Pragmatics will be a stronger tool to enhance the understanding of meanings in utterances and texts in all disciplines that involve the use of discourse.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, we have looked at pragmatics from two fronts, namely the theoretical and practical aspects. There is a strong symbiotic relation and synergy between them; we need the theory to be able to apply the practices in effective ways and the theories need the practices as the resources to explain and support their formulations.

Under the theoretical principles we looked briefly at the cooperative principles, referencing, including, implicatures, explicatures, deixes, speech acts, pragmatic acts, politeness, impoliteness, and X-phemisms, ethnopragmatics and intercultural pragmatics. In discussing the societal pragmatics, we touched on areas in our social life that involve social interaction, communication and language use in context. These included pedagogy, mediatised discourse and journalism, honorifics, persuasion, advertising, business and trade, religion, law, political discourse including promises, speeches, slogans, performing arts and health. In all these, we see that pragmatics brings about perfect social cohesion and peaceful co-existence, which would culminate into productivity, national development and excellent nation building in Africa.

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