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THE COMMUNICATIVE FUNCTIONS OF 'YAANI' ON TANZANIA WHATSAPP PLATFORMS

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Abstract
The word **yaani** is one of the conjunctions used in Kiswahili. **Yaani** by its common and dictionary meaning is used to give further explanations to thoughts or ideas and it means 'that is'. In recent years, the word has obtained an interesting usage in the language both in the spoken and written communication thereby extending its meaning and usage from the dictionary meaning. This paper therefore seeks to widen the discussion on Kiswahili conjunctions with emphasis on **yaani** both in terms of providing a characterization of the word as well as placing its discourse usages in the appropriate social context. We try to explore the various discourse usages of **yaani** on Tanzania WhatsApp platforms. The data collection took into considerations one on one chats and communications on group pages among Tanzanians. From our analysis, we observed that **yaani** is used to express emotions, regret, surprise, emphasis and can be used as an interrogative word among others. In other contexts, it is observed that **yaani** is used in sentence initial and final positions as opposed to the usual usage as explained in the dictionary. We recommend in this paper that **yaani** be given a critical look at its current stage of development in the language.

Keywords: yaani, pragmatic markers, WhatsApp communication, Computer Mediated Discourse.

1. Introduction

Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) is the use of social media and other electronic gadgets for communication worldwide. WhatsApp messaging, one of the social media

platforms, has increased in recent years. WhatsApp messaging is amongst the most used platforms for communication in the world and Tanzania is not an exception. A survey by Bucher (2020) pegs WhatsApp users at 2.0 billion. It has been argued that language on WhatsApp is informal, usually, a deviation from the standard language to other levels such as writing style-spelling, grammar, and punctuation (Verheijen 2017; Indrajith and Varghese 2018). While some communications on CMC are very formal and could be used for references, others are informal in that users use a lot of abbreviations, short words and emojis. Communicators on such platforms including WhatsApp have been advantaged with other multimedia forms such as text, audio, images, animations, or video, which make writing on such platforms luxurious or more flexible. WhatsApp can be used for individual as well as group communication. Our study, aimed at analyzing the use of **yaani**, draws data from such WhatsApp chats among speakers of Kiswahili in Tanzania.

WhatsApp messaging is context-related and members of each group may have peculiar ways of writing in terms of vocabulary and word use and members in a group are likely to understand what is written or discussed than those outside of the group. Our data is taken from WhatsApp platforms used by both individual and group members. The language used on WhatsApp has many linguistic forms such as major grammatical units (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, etc) as well as the minutest linguistic particle (conjunctions, interjections, etc). **Yaani**, our focus in this paper is a word and has been used in various ways on WhatsApp platforms. The paper argues from the discussion above that the liberty of WhatsApp messaging affords chatters the opportunity to write with flexibility. This is possible with the use of non-verbal features such as emojis (both animated and non- animated) in writing.

Yaani has been used extensively and in different forms on WhatsApp chats of some speakers of Kiswahili in Tanzania as captured in our data. In this paper, we try to explore the various discourse usages of **yaani** on the selected WhatsApp platforms. In the TUKI dictionary, **yaani,** is listed as a conjunction in the general language usage of Kiswahili (Niger-Congo, Bantu). In its function as a conjunction, it binds units of speech together. Thus, in the third edition of TUKI dictionary (2015), this conjunctive function is expounded to mean *'that is'*.

The example below reflects its core meaning:

1. Mtu mwenyewe ni mrefu sana, **yaani,** anafikia futi sita au zaidi.
   'The person is very tall, **that is**, he is about six feet or more'.

Thus, as in the example above, it is obvious that the common usage of **yaani** is a conjunction that links two clauses, where the second clause throws more light on the first. However, in recent years, **yaani** has obtained an extended usage in the language both in spoken and written communication, so that it has taken on other functions such as acting as an interjection, among others. Thus, it has changed in meaning and usage from the dictionary meaning shown in the example above. Linguistic features that function as conjunctions such as 'that is,' 'you know,' 'I mean,' 'meaning,' 'mehn,' 'so to say,' and 'well', used to be regarded as empty and redundant in discourses likewise **yaani**. However, Goddard and Mean Patterson (2000: 98) argue that such linguistic features which used to be seen as not so important in conversations are now considered to be very critical in terms of usage in interpersonal communication. Bolden (2008) also adds that these linguistic features help to define discourses as well as categorize social relationships. The focus of this study is to determine the important uses of **yaani** with regards to how it may give coherence to units of speech as well as other functions that it may play depending on where it occurs in sentences. We observe that when **yaani** is used in its basic sense as a connector, it has additional roles that it plays. This is because beyond its function as a connector at the level of sentences/clauses, its meaning has wider distribution at the level of discourse. This is related to the meaning extensions that it holds from connector scope sentence/clause level to pragmatic usage in context. This paper therefore seeks to widen the discussions on this Kiswahili conjunction, **yaani** both in terms of providing a characterization of the word as well as placing its discourse usages in WhatsApp chats.

Our investigation consists of a corpus of written data purposively obtained from the WhatsApp communication of group and individual chats among speakers of Kiswahili in Tanzania. Our data comprise exchanges of messages within a naturally occurring environment. The data was purposively collected from five (5) groups and five (5) individual WhatsApp communications of Kiswahili speakers in Tanzania with about 20 conversations consisting of 60 sentences featuring the use of the word **yaani**. The data was collected from June 2019– December 2019. The collection was done by asking respondents to forward WhatsApp chats from friends and families through a WhatsApp platform, which was purposively created. After these messages were sent, they were either downloaded from Microsoft Word, electronic notepads and or snap shots and categorized under various themes to facilitate the analysis. In the sections that follow, we analyze the various ways in which the word **yaani** featured in the selected conversations and what it implied.

2. 'Yaani' as a pragmatic marker

Linguistic features that bind units of talk together are termed in different ways in the literature. The terminologies include 'pragmatic markers' (Brinton 1996; Fraser 1996), discourse markers (Schiffrin 1987), discourse connectives (Blakemore 1989), discourse operators (Redeker 1991), discourse particles (Abraham 1991), pragmatic particles (Ostman 1983), and pragmatic expressions (Erman 1987). Alami (2015) agrees that the different terminologies used to illustrate these features show the diversity of functions that pragmatic or discourse markers perform. Also noting that there are various labels for the same linguistic features (Driesen 2019). Alami (2015) further argues that there is an overarching definition that binds them together be it as pragmatic markers or discourse markers. In relation to this, Fraser (1996) comments that discourse markers are a sub-category of pragmatic markers and or vice versa. They are also used interchangeably in the literature (Redeker 1991; Schiffrin 1987; Abraham 1991; Alami 2015; Kibiki 2019 and Driesen 2019). We will adopt the term pragmatic marker as the cover term for all related terminologies used elsewhere in this study.

By their definitions, pragmatic markers and or discourse markers are those little words/ linguistic elements or expressions, such as '*oh', 'well', 'and', 'now', 'right', 'you know', 'but',' so', 'that is'* and '*because';* that connect and organise units of talk together (Schiffrin 1987:31; Eastman 1992; Kibiki 2019). They express discourse coherence or relations. These units of talk could be conjunctions, interjections, interrogatives etc. (Eastman 1983 and 1992; Ameka 1991; Amfo 2007; Norrick 2009). Redeker (1990) posits conjunctions and interjections as pragmatic markers. The TUKI dictionary defines **yaani** as a conjunction as well as an element that binds units of talk together. However, we observed that it is also used as an interjection in addition to playing other functions. Dunn (1990) and Eastman (1992) mention that apart from **yaani**, there are other words that function as pragmatic markers in Kiswahili. Eastman (1992) believes that interjections such as **ehee** *'I understand*', **shabashi** '*bravo*', '*well done*' and even conjunctions are pragmatic markers. Other scholars, however, believe that that is not the case. Norrick (2009) argues that the complex and multifunctional nature of interjections are such that they cannot be listed among the specific classes of pragmatic markers. However, Eastman (1983) and Eastman (1992), Driesen (2019), and Kibiki (2019) have argued that interjections in Kiswahili be considered as a subcategory of pragmatic markers although they use the term pragmatic particles.

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Kibiki (2019) and Driesen (2019) revealed that the multi-functionality of pragmatic markers performs various functions depending on the context of use and specific conversational experiences. The explanations of Kibiki (2019) and Driesen (2019) imply that pragmatic markers can act as conjunctions, or interjections and more depending on the context. This means that context is of great relevance when discussing pragmatic markers. This claim has been supported by Nasir (2017: 15) who agrees that pragmatic markers have specific meanings depending on the context (thus becoming pragmatic meanings) and explained further that they have one core meaning which is procedural rather than conceptual. Fraser (1999) states that discourse or pragmatic markers are lexically drawn primarily from the syntactic classes of conjunctions, adverbs, and prepositional phrases. They are linguistically encoded clues which signal the speaker's potential communicative intentions (Fraser 1996: 168). Thus, they give more clues to interlocutors on how to interpret the relation between the current utterance and the previous utterance, or the other way round. This premise has also been echoed by Maschler (2009) and O'Neal (2013) who emphasize that pragmatic markers give meta-lingual interpretation depending on the context. This means that pragmatic markers can have different meanings in different contexts. Meanings also depend on the text as well as the interpersonal relations between the participants of the conversation.

In addition to having different meanings due to context, it has also been argued that pragmatic markers can be understood with the use of certain non-verbal communication features such as tone, pitch, facial expression, hand movements etc. (Jyh-Her et al. 2006 and Barsk 2009). This stance appears to corroborate the divergence in Eastman (1992) and Dunn (1990)'s ideas. Eastman believed that gestures could also play critical roles in interpreting utterances that accompany the interjections. Therefore, she did not restrict herself to the text but rather focused on the link with the extra-verbal reality. We refer to these gestures as paralinguistic or extra-linguistic features which occur more in written communication, especially on WhatsApp platforms as found in our data. The WhatsApp platforms have afforded chatters the opportunity to supplement their emotions with emojis which are almost not recognized in written communication. We agree with Eastman that such nonverbal cues are very important in explaining certain contexts when it comes to written communication. Eastman (1992) also argued that it is good to consider the sociocultural contexts of discourses. This is because age, gender, class, ethnicity, status, etc, could determine the type of interjections that are associated with communities to express thoughts and feelings. It is our opinion that a conjunction such as **yaani** be

considered a pragmatic marker because it can also play the role of an interjection as found in our data.

3. Theoretical background

This research adopts the contextualization theory which deals with natural language or natural interaction. As propounded by Gumperz (1982: 131), contextualization is defined as a relationship between a speaker, a context (a cognitive construct like a frame, a schema), an utterance and a (non-referential) contextualization cue. This notion developed by Gumperz explains that language depends on context. The ensuing debate around this concept over the past years has been centered on the question of how much in language and which parts of it are context-dependent. It also, and perhaps more substantially, includes the question of how the relationship between language and context should be conceptualized in more theoretical terms. Gumperz (1982) categorized contextualization along three dimensions. The first is according to the aspects of context believed to be relevant for a pragmatic analysis of language (henceforth called the indexed features). The second is according to the aspects of language considered to be subject to a context-bound interpretation or meaning assignment (henceforth called indexicals). Finally, the third is according to the type of relationship which is believed to hold between the first and the second. Our research demonstrates that y**aani**, as shown in the analyses below, explores the context, interpretative usage, and, in other instances, blends both features.

One underlying point that formed the basis of our analysis is the argument that people make decisions about how to interpret a given utterance based on their definition of what is happening at the time of interaction. It is this categorization that we referred to above as indexed features. It explains how utterances are anchored in contexts, which in turn make the interpretation of these utterances possible. **Yaani**, in this instance, is a conjunction, but the context in which it is found may cause it to be interpreted as an interjection, a question marker, or bearing some other function. Driesen (2019) argues that aspects of a context that may be considered very critical are the larger activity participants are engaged in (the speech genre), the small-scale activity (or speech act), the mood (or key) in which this activity is performed. He continues that it is vital to also consider topic as well as the participants' roles (comprising "speaker", "recipient", "by-stander", etc.), the social relationship between participants, the information conveyed and or status in analyzing the pragmatic marker, which, for our study, is **yaani**. Therefore, we can infer from Driesen's argument that a context is the outcome of collaboration and efforts of

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participants. Driesen (2019) further explains that a context is about what is relevant for the interaction at any given point in time. The context can be revised, i.e. assumptions can be removed or added to it. According to Gumperz (1982), language is considered an activity, emphasizing that although we are dealing with the structured ordering of message elements that represents the speakers' expectations about what will happen next, it is not a static structure. It rather reflects a dynamic process which develops and changes as participants interact. Further justification of our analyses using the contextualization theory has to do with meanings associated with **yaani**. In this regard, the meanings assigned to **yaani** as used in the units of communication cannot only be adequately described by the glosses of the lexical items used, but also by an attentive analysis of the whole communicative experience in which they occur as part of routinized interactive exchange. **Yaani** as a pragmatic marker in Kiswahili is rich in meanings and it is used to show speakers' attitudes and emotions, therefore manifesting a deep and meaningful interconnection between the language and its contextualized experience.

4. Communicative functions of 'yaani'

In this paper, we considered, from our data, all linguistic instances in which **yaani** lexically connects a relationship between two phrases, clauses, and/ or sentences as a pragmatic marker. Thus, we identified that **yaani** keeps the smooth flow as well as functions as a marker of the coherence of discourses. We also noted that **yaani** can be used in addition to other paralinguistic gestures to bring differences in meaning as per what the WhatsApp platformers used. We now look at the various communicative functions of the Kiswahili **yaani**.

4.1 'Yaani' used as a connector

It is evident that Tanzanian WhatsApp chatters are aware of the dictionary definition of **yaani** as 'that is' as well as its usage as a connector of phrases/clauses. **Yaani**, in this context acts as a coordinating connective which conjoins at least two clauses/propositions, as shown in the examples from the conversation below.

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(2)

a.   MT: Kabisa, **yaani**, ukiwa na elimu kubwa halafu huna elimu ni aibu
sana. Ukitaka kuandika kitabu mada ni muhimu sana.
'Exactly, **that is**, it is a shame if you have a good education yet not
sensible. If you want to write a book, titles are very important'.

b.   GP: Ni kweli, tittle hiyo haina mvuto kabisa, **yaani** haishawishi mtu kusoma😊
'Truly, this title has no attraction at all, **that is**, it does not persuade one to
read'.

c.   MG: Mtu huyu amejaribu kuandika kitabu, we unasema hakivutii, **yaani**
ungekuwa wewe ungeweza? nakumbuka tuliyoko shule hata insha ndefu
ulishindwa kuandika😀😀
'Someone has tried to write a book and you are saying it is not convincing
enough, **I   mean** would you have been able? I remember back in school
you even could not finish   writing a long essay'.

d.   MLK: Naomba usaidizi huyu mdudu anaitwaje kwa Kiswahili?
'I need help with the name of this insect in Kiswahili'

e.   NN: Anaitwa fukufuku, Nakumbuka tulipokuwa watoto tulikuwa tunamwimbia
ili atoke nje, Waswahili mnajua wimbo wowote unaohusiana na mdudu
huyu? **yaani** my people please help me with this song? Wanaofanya tafiti
kuhusu Fasihi ya watoto..**yaani** hamjawahi kukumbana na wimbo unaohusu
mdudu huu?
'It is called fukufuku, I remember when we were kids, we used to sing to it,
so that it would go outside, Swahili people do you know any song
concerning this insect? I mean my people please help me with this song?
Those who do research in children's literature … **I mean** have you ever
come across any song concerning this insect?'

From the above sets of conversation, the use of **yaani** appears to be closely related to the
dictionary meaning, '*that is*' or '*I mean*'. In the terms of contextualization, its use here can
be perceived as an indexed feature which provides more context to enable a fuller
understanding of the conversation. Thus, in each of the instances, we find that apart from

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functioning as a conjunction connecting two ideas or units of expression, **yaani** also provides further meaning to the first unit of expression by extending the idea into a statement of opinion or into an invitation for the opinion of others.

4.2 'Yaani' used for clause switching

The examples in (2) above show chatters using the dictionary usage of **yaani** as a coordinating conjunction. In other instances, we also noticed that **yaani**, as a connector, links two clauses in which one clause could be in Kiswahili and the other in English, a typical example of 'clause switching' and also an example of language alternation[1]. We define clause switching as switching from one language to another language in inter-clausal positions. Instances of such switches are usually from Kiswahili in the first clause then English in the second clause. This is illustrated in the conversation below of Kiswahili-English inter-clausal switching.

(3)
a. NN: Naomba unitafutie neno **yaani** *please help me with the word*
         'Please look for the word for me, **I mean** please help me with the word'.

b. SV: Kuna wimbo tulikuwa tunamwimbia, ngoja niutafute.
         'There is a song we used to sing for it, wait and let me look for it'.

c. TS: Nangoja kwa hamu na ghamu jamaani, **yaani** tafadhali *just look for it*.
         'I am eagerly waiting people, **I mean** please just look for it'.

d. IE: Nyimbo kama huo zifundishwe shuleni! Panda meli baba yako anakwita ukale Ugali na Maharage. Mfunze mtoto akauimbe tafadhali. Tena, kuna mnyama **yaani**, *it is in the family of cats and it lives in the bush*!
         'Songs like these should be taught in schools! Climb the ship your father is calling you to sit and eat Ugali and beans . Teach the child to sing please.

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[1] Language alternation is defined as switching from one language to another such as codeswitching and or codemixing (Myers-Scotton 2006, Marjie, 2010)

Also, there is an animal **I think,** it is in a family of cats and it lives in the bush'.

e.　　WW:　Naam. Fuko ni mole **yaani**, *it is called mole*.
　　　　　Yes. Fuko is a mole, **that is**, it is called mole'.

f.　　SN:　Ohhhhh, nilikuwa nafahamu ile mole ya mtu akisema **yaani**, we have
　　　　　some *moles among us*. Lakini *seriously I think we have a mole in this house*.
　　　　　'Ohhh, I remember that human mole which goes by the saying, **that is**, we
　　　　　have a mole among us. But seriously I think we have a mole in this house'.

These switches are usually islands in nature where there is no matrix language[2] that sets the syntactic base for other language inputs. Each clause has its syntactic structure meaning that morphemes from the same language conforms to the grammatical structure of that language. In these instances, we have each clause in either Kiswahili and or English and both have syntactic relations dependent on each other. This can be explained by the fact that **yaani** is functioning in these instances as an indexical that connects the units of speech through context-bound interpretations or assigned meanings as understood through the contextualization theory. This is evident in examples (3a), (3c), (3d), (3e) and (3f) where we have sentences with a mixture of Kiswahili and English. It is noticed that apart from examples (3c) and (3f) which begin with Kiswahili words after **yaani** and (3b)[3], all the examples (3a), (3d) and (3e) have the second clauses in English after **yaani**. We argue that although (3c) and (3f) have **tafadhali** '*please'* and **lakini** '*but'* after **yaani** in the second clauses, the sentence structures are still that of English. This is because **tafadhali** and **lakini** in '**yaani tafadhali** *just look for it*' and '**lakini** *seriously I think we have a mole in this house*' are found in the same syntactic positions where the words '*please'* and '*but'* would be found in English, respectively. These do not necessarily make them Kiswahili structures. We also noticed as Gumperz (1982) stipulated, **yaani** in context is dynamic and

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[2] Myers-Scotton (2002)-The Matrix Language Frame Model explains that two languages participate in a language alternation discourse. There is the matrix language or otherwise the host language which determines the morpheme order and contributes the syntactically relevant system morphemes within which lexical items from the embedded language may occur.
[3] We noticed that there are some examples without yaani, however their presence make communication meaningful since they are part of the whole communicative event.

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may change or develop as participants interact; hence the different meanings of **yaani** in examples (3a)-(3f) that at once create emphasis as they consolidate the expressed notions.

4.3 'Yaani' used to express an emotional state

We also found examples of messages where chatters used **yaani** to express one emotion or the other. In such instances, **yaani** then expresses something along the lines of '*I mean, well, really'* etc. in line with Gumperz's third dimension of contextualization. Gumperz (1982) states that people make decisions about how to interpret a given utterance based on their definition of what is happening at the time of interaction. These can be coupled with some other features be it verbal or non-verbal cues. We argue that, used with other paralinguistic features, **yaani** may be interpreted as encompassing all the various emotions that one is able to convey. Thus, we found that chatters have used **yaani** such that it has gained other meanings apart from and beyond the dictionary meaning. We realized that chatters use **yaani** as an interjection as well as using it as a means to express their emotional states such as, anger, surprise and regret.

4.3.1 'Yaani' used as an interjection

It was observed that **yaani** can be used as an interjection to express content or contempt etc. Ameka (1992: 113–114) distinguishes three categories of interjections namely expressive, conative and phatic. He explains expressive interjections as those that show the mental state of the speaker with respect to the emotions or thoughts they are having at the time of utterance such as 'wow' to express surprise and 'ugh' to express disgust. An expression such as 'sh!' is an example of a conative interjection used to ask for silence or to seek the hearer's attention. He also explains phatic interjections as those that are used to establish and maintain communication, such as 'mhm,' 'uh-huh' or 'yeah'. Our examples show a blend of expressive and phatic interjections in the conversation below.

(4)
  a.   BB: …**yaani**, tunaweza tukaungana na tukasajili wanafunzi ambao ni watoto wa Wakuu na wako zaidi ya wastani wa watu 500 ili tupate watu wengi chuoni.

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'..**yeah**, we can add and register the students who are the leaders' children and are averagely more than 500' so that we get many people in the university'.

b.　　CC:　　Mie, nafikiri ni sawa, yaani, ni hivyo tu.
　　　　　　　'I think its ok, **ohhh,** its ok'.

c.　　TT:　　….Dah, Chuo kitajaa, **yaani,** we acha tu.
　　　　　　　'……no, the university will be full, **ohh** you just leave it'.

d.　　BB:　　Nilitarajia wangeongeza watoto wa wakuu hata kama ni mia moja wangefaa zaidi. Kumbuka kwamba ni mara ya kwanza tunaofanya shughuli hii, lazima tuwe waangalifu sana.
　　　　　　　'I was expecting they would add the children of the leaders even if they are 100 they would have been enough. Remember this is the first time we are organizing such a program so we must be careful'.

e.　　CC:　　Jamaani, nilisema tuache tu **yaani,** bwana BB ache tu…**yaani.**
　　　　　　　'People, I said we should leave that **yeah**, Mr BB just leave it…**ugh'.**

Here, the chatter in example 4b uses **yaan**i as an expressive interjection to reject a suggestion made by the chatter in example 4a. We notice that the chatter in example 4c also shows a sign of frustrated contempt, ('ohh you just leave it'), with the decision being taken and appears to be in disagreement with the chatter in example 4a, thus confirming what Ameka (1992) stipulates. The **yaani** used in this example as a contextualization cue shows the chatter is not in agreement with whatever decision s/he took or has taken prior to the suggestion and thus marks the closure to the conversation. The same chatter in example 4e tells off the chatter in example 4d with the same use of **yaani** in an expressive mode and with another interjection of tiredness/disgust at the tail end of the sentence. Thus, it is used as an interjection to express the attitude of one chatter towards another in a given discourse.

4.3.2 'Yaani' used to express surprise, regret, anger

In other contexts, **yaani** is used to express other emotional states of the WhatsApp chatters. These are not normally interjections as found in section 4.3.1. They are used with emojis. In relation to this usage it helps to remember that **yaani** has its core meaning as a conjunction; however, Dunn (1990:38) argues that although a pragmatic marker has its basic meaning, the meaning may change depending on the context in which it is used. The conversation below has examples of **yaani** with emojis used to express the chatters' emotions:

(5)
  a.   TM: Kama aliniambia mapema ningechukua tu. Kwa kweli sijui,
              nisingempa…**yaaniiii**   .(emoji with face of regret)
              'If he/she had told me, I would have taken it. Truly, I don't know, I wouldn't
              have given (it) to him **you see** (expression of regret)'.

  b.   MA: Ala!, alikuwa mwalimu wakati huo?…. aise **yaani** □!(emoji with face of
              surprise)
              'Seriously!, he was a teacher all this while… I see wow !(**expression of
              surprise**)'

  c.   FA: Wakubwa wa nchi wanakula pesa na wanalala…, hata siku hizi kupata
              kuona mke ni shida. **Y**aani, *it's so unfair*. (emoji with face of anger)
              'The leaders in this country are spending money and sleeping…even to
              get your wife these days is a problem. You see (**expression of anger**) it's
              so unfair'.

The examples above of the usage of **yaani** with paralinguistic features such as the emojis of facial expressions of the chatters, coupled with contextualization cues used in the sentences show the various emotions the chatters are expressing. In this context, the chatter uses **yaani** to express the idea that a particular proposition has violated the expectations of the group members or chatter. Drawing on Gumperz's theory of contextualization to analyze these examples, **yaani** can be said to be functioning as an indexical as its interpretation or assigned meaning is context-bound. We noticed that, in line with the

context of the discourse, chatters, being aware of the communicative mode and desiring that their communicative partners understand their moods, use **yaani** with specific emojis to express their peculiar emotions. We also observed that when **yaani** is used with emojis to express regret as in example 5a, it appears to imply 'you see'. The chatter in example 5b also expresses surprise by using the emoji with a surprised face with **yaani**, while in example 5c the emoji with a face of regret with **yaani** is used to show anger.

4.3.3 'Yaani' used to express emphasis

As a connector that binds clauses together, we have shown as discussed in example 3 above that **yaani** can bind two clauses from different languages. As a pragmatic marker, **yaani** can also be used as a linking word to introduce an emphatic clause. In this function, it serves as a connector for elaboration in that it is used to create the possibility for one to express emphasis in the next clause. The examples in the conversation below illustrate this function:

(6)

a.   LK: Mbona nilikuuliza kama umepata hicho kitu na umeninyamazia? **Yaani**, Upo kweli?
'Why have you kept quiet when I asked if you got the thing? **Really**, Are you there?'.

b.   ARS: Alishikwa na hofu alipopata habari **Yaani** kama ingekuwa kweli lazima angezimia kwa woga😀😀
'He was afraid when he heard the news, **indeed** he would have been scared if it were true'.

c.   FA: Inabidi ofisi iwafikirie. Hiyo saa 5 usiku mnarudiaje nyumbani? Daladala zinakuwa zimesharudi kwa matajiri, **yaani** hapa kuna mdada mmoja anatembea hadi Mbagala kwa miguu. Tuombe jicho la rohoni....
'The office must consider them. At that 11pm how do you return home? Public transports would have been returned to their owners, **indeed** here there was a woman who walks to Mbagala by foot. We should ask for a spiritual eye.'

   d.   FA: **Yaani** kweli mungu atupe jicho la 3. Ooo jmn! na kamkatiza maisha na
                    watu wake jmn..**yaani** mtoto wake bado mchanga.
                    'In fact, truly God should give us a third eye. Oh my! And to shorten
                    someone's life, **truly** her child is still young.'

   e.   CS: Very powerfull 🙏**yaani** machozi yalinilenga!
                    'very powerful **honestly**, I shed tears'.

In these examples, we find that **yaani** is used to lend emphasis to portions of the dialogue for the effect of making a strong point. In example 6e above, we even find that there is the double effect of using the emoji of a solemn face with **yaani**, as previously seen in 4.3.2 above, to emphasize the chatter's deep emotion stirred by whatever s/he is talking about. Thus, although we find in these examples that **yaani** plays its primary role of connecting two clauses/ sentences, we also observe that it can equally function as a connector for elaboration, in which it will imply '*honestly*', '*indeed*' or '*truly*,' etc in English. Our data shows examples where chatters use **yaani** to connect clauses/ phrases together where the second clause/phrase is an emphasized /elaborated form of the first. For instance, the chatters in examples 6a-6e use **yaani**, which is translated as '*really*', '*indeed*', '*truly*' and '*honestly*' in English, to introduce the clauses that are emphasized forms of the first ones. When **yaani** is used in this manner, it occurs mostly in the clause-final position. In such usage, the chatter pays extra attention to the clause that was written immediately prior to the introduction of **yaani**. Within the context of its usage, the connector **yaani** does not emphasize one particular word, but the entire clause preceding it. In these examples, we argue that the use of **yaani** conforms to the third category of the contextualization theory where it functions both as an indexed feature and as an indexical. Thus, it is at once an aspect of context that is relevant for a pragmatic analysis of the discourse unit while it also takes on an assigned meaning that is context-bound.

4.3.4 'Yaani' used as an interrogative term

There are other instances where **yaani** is used as a question marker. In such instances, it is used by chatters to show the type of sentences or tone they are expressing since they cannot use sounds to show these. In Kiswahili, asking a question does not usually change the sentence structure without the use of an interrogative word like declarative questions in English. Besides, it is sometimes difficult to know if a sentence is a statement or question

when one is speaking without using intonation, although there are some interrogative words such as **lini**, '*when*'; **wapi**, '*where*'; **je**, '*question marker*'; etc. These interrogative words are usually found at the end of the sentences, though **je** may occur at both the initial and final positions (Mohammed 2001). In the instance where the speeches do not have interrogative words or question tags, a statement is made into a question by raising the pitch of one's voice at the end of the sentence in speaking. Thus, when the communicator is not actively speaking, it will be difficult to know if the sentence is a question or a statement. Therefore, in writing, to know if a sentence is a question, the communicator will be required to use a question mark or an interrogative word. In our study, we found that the chatters on the WhatsApp platforms resorted to using **yaani** with a question mark to denote questions. This use of **yaani** with question marks appears to have been developed by chatters to give the other communicative partner the clue that what they had written was intended to be a question. Examples of this usage are elaborated in the conversation below:

(7)

a. LK: Nzuri hali yako na nadharia ya ufungwa ilivyokubana.
      'It is good for you and your theory of bankruptcy'.

b. LK: Mimi nimefungiwa hasa, nakuambia ni zaidi ya ufungwa..**yaani?.**
      'I have been locked up, I tell you it is even more than bankruptcy …
      question marker'. (isn't it?)

c. KO: Bado unahitaji **yaani??** Uchawi **yaani**?
      'Do you still **really** need it?' **is it** whichcraft?

d. A: 😂😂😂 **yaani?** hata sijui umewaza nini.
      '**really?** I don't even know what you are thinking.'

7e. C**:** Ulafi tu, **Yaani??**
      'It is just gluttony, **isn't it?**'

f. GP: Lakini kuna wengine uwezo wanao ila hawaoni kama ni priority.
      'But there are others who can claim that they don't know it's a priority'.

g. W: Kabisa priorty ina maana yake ..sijui kama unaona hivyo, **yaani**??

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'Exactly, priority has its meaning. I don't know if you see that, **do you?**

In examples 7a-7g above, chatters use **yaani** to ask questions. Drawing on the contextualization theory, this sets the context of the dialogue – question – while it also adds to its meaning. In this regard, we observe that sometimes **yaani** itself expresses the question marker. Now, the question markers used with **yaani** give the other interlocutors the clue that these units of dialogue are intended as questions and not as statements. This usage also demonstrates the fact that chatters are aware that they are using written communicative platforms which restrict their ability to indicate questioning through the use of intonation. Therefore, these chatters have managed to use **yaani** with question marks to confirm that their sentences are intended to ask questions. We noticed through our study that this usage of **yaani** conforms to other such instances of language use as posited by Kibiki (2019) where **sawa** '*ok'*, for instance, is used with question markers to denote question sentences. In our study, we noticed that the chatter in example 7c asked a question about a statement made and a question asked by the chatter in examples 7a and 7b. Our observations reveal that when **yaani** is used to ask questions, it could mean '*really*?'; '*is it*?' or '*isn't it*?' as shown in examples 7b, c, and e. These cues in 7b and c appear to prompt the chatter in example 7d to ask, *really*? and then answer with laughter emojis before responding, '*I don't even know what you are thinking'*. In another example, the chatter in 7e asks a question with **yaani**: *It is just gluttony*? *Isn't it*?' Besides, the statement in 7f also generates the response in 7g where the chatter, after stating an opinion, uses **yaani** translated as *'do you'* to invite a further response. Thus, we observed from these instances that **yaani,** used with question markers, would take on different meanings as well as impact on the context of the dialogue.

4.3.5 'Yaani' used to introduce received information

During this study, we also noted that **yaani** can be used to introduce received information. In this regard, we realized that whenever chatters wanted to report information that they have acquired or received from other people they usually topicalized such information with **yaani**. This usage is very similar to how **yaani** is used in its spoken version. Here are a few examples in the conversation below:

(8)

a.   HB: Lazima tuwaulize sasa. Ukiwa na viongozi wanakalia vitu, matokeo yatakuwa hivyo. Nishaona grp lingine imetumwa jana na **yaani** wakasema imetokea leo.
'We should ask them now. If you have leaders who withhold information, things will be the way they are. I have seen the other group was sent yesterday and **I hear** they said it came today'.

b.   LT: Kweli nashangaa, mpaka sasa hatujaona. Kwani uliona lini?.
'Truly I am surprised, we have not seen it until now, when did you see it'.

c.   HB: **Yaani**, jamaa akaniambia. **Yaani**, akasema ndivyo inafanyika. Yeye alikuwa kwenye grp.
'**I hear**, someone told me, **I hear**, he said that is how it is done. He was in the group'.

d.   UM: Sidhani ni kweli lakini mwulize tena. Mbona sisi bado…. pia nikasikia **yaani** wakasema *police will investigate that* na wote watakamatwa.
I don't think it is true but ask again. Why is ours not yet ready…. also I heard **that** they said the police will investigate that and all of them will be arrested'.

From the above examples 8a – 8d, we observed that **yaani** is used to signal that chatters were reporting information that they had heard from or had been told by someone else. This can be deduced from example 8a where the chatter states that s/he had seen that another group had successfully been sent something and that s/he had heard that whatever had been sent was also expected to be received by their group. The dialogue suggests that this information was acquired from someone else. We also observed that **yaani** prefixed the part of the interlocution that refers to the acquired information. In example 8c, a further reference is made to the fact that the information has been acquired: 'someone told me'. Thus, it is evident that **yaani** is used to introduce facts stated as received information, as exemplified in the WhatsApp chats collected for our study. Here again, as per the contextualization theory, we found that the use of **yaani** to report acquired information helped to define the context of the information being given out. Thus, it functioned as an indexed feature that served the purpose of clarifying the source of the knowledge or information being shared.

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4.3.6 The syntactic position of yaani

Further examples of the use of **yaani** from the WhatsApp chats of some speakers of Kiswahili in Tanzania also revealed that **yaani** can be used in sentence initial, sentence final and sentence medial positions. It must be noted that the sentence medial position of **yaani** appears to reflect its usual position and primary usage as a connector of two phrases/clauses. We, however, realized that when it is shifted around, the position in which it is placed designates a particular meaning. This is illustrated in the examples below:

(9)
a.   LK: **Yaani,** kila kona dear. Sijakuona kwa siku nyingi.
                     '**Maybe**, every corner my dear. I have not seen you in ages.'

b.   L K: **Yaani**, wanaona kama unajitolea zaidi kwao...**yaani** kuwasaidia tu.
                     '**Actually**, they see that you avail yourself to them.. **I mean**, just to help them'.

c.   CI: Ndio, kufika kwenye karamu unaona chakula tele ukishalewa **yaani**
                     'Yes, arriving at a feast and you see a lot of food when you are drunk… **you see**'

d.   WW: Ni nini? Ulifikiri nini? Nakuambia anakula kama anaconda… **yaani,** hahahaha
                     'What is it? What do you think? he eats like [an] anaconda…. **I tell you,** hahahaha'.

From the examples above, it is evident that the position of **yaani** is not restricted in sentences. Although **yaani** is usually used in the middle of phrases as a connector, evidence from the data revealed that **yaani** can also be used at sentence initial, as well as sentence final positions. Besides, it can be used in two or more positions within one sentence as in example 9b. We also realized that when **yaani** is used in different positions, it takes on different meanings as seen in the examples 9a- 9d above. Thus, in its discourse-related usage, there appears to be the tendency for **yaani** to affect overall meaning while it is itself susceptible to a variation of interpretations based on where it may be positioned.

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4.3.7 Yaani in the sentence initial position

Following from the discussion in section 4.3.6 above on the position of **yaani**, we highlight a few observations on the use of **yaani** to begin utterances as in the conversation below.

(10)
a.   RGH: **Yaani** ni mashetani nakuambia... hata hataki kuongea nami maana akiwa na akili angeweza kujua ana mtoto mchanga. **Yaani**, nilipata chakula tele…kmf: maziwa yanatokaaaaa...na hata yeye hataki kula. Kwa chakula sina wasiwasi namnyonyesha tu   mara kwa mara. *God blesssss u*.
'**I mean**, it is the devil I tell you.. even he doesn't want to talk to me meaning he doesn't   have sense to know that he has a child. **You see**, I got a lot of food for instance: I had a lot of breast milk and even the baby didn't want to feed. So, with food I don't have a problem. I am breastfeeding the baby from time to time. God bless you'.

b.   RGH: **Yaani,** pesa aliyotuma, tukarefill gas, umeme na maji... Balance tutakomaa ivoivo mpka aamue kutuma. **Yaani** *yesterday I learnt something* ulipokuwa unaniambia kwenye gari, nikasema *I won't beg him for money again*. Nitapambana na hali yangu na mwanangu, akituma sawa asipotuma sawa.
'**I mean**, the money he sent I used it to refill gas, bought credit for electricity and water. **You see**, I learnt a lot yesterday when you were advising me when we were in the car, I told myself I will not beg him for money again. I will manage my situation with my child with what is left, whether he sends or not, that's fine.

We highlight these examples of the use of **yaani** in sentence initial positions because we found that even though it may appear in this position in different instances, its meaning could still change due to the context of the discourse. Therefore, just as in other positions, **yaani** does not always retain the same communicative meaning each time it appears in the sentence initial position. Thus, we argue that sometimes the position can pinpoint or assign a role/ meaning that is drawn from the context within which it is used. Analyzing this from the standpoint of the contextualization theory, we make similar arguments as we have made earlier that **yaani**, in the sentence initial position, functions both as an indexed feature and

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as an indexical. That is to say that it acts or affects the meaning of a unit of dialogue as it is itself acted upon or affected by the context of that dialogue. Evidence from examples 10a and 10b above show **yaani** used in sentence initial positions in the utterances. However, it is revealed that in one instance its usage implies '*I mean*' whereas in the other instance it means '*you see*' despite its occurrence in the initial position of the second sentences of the same utterances.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, we have argued that the informal nature of WhatsApp messaging platforms has afforded chatters the opportunity to use language in a non-standard way. WhatsApp messaging can be in groups and or individual chats. Communicators on such platforms have the advantage of other multimedia forms, which makes writing on such platforms luxurious or more flexible; and this study has shown how some WhatsApp communicators in Tanzania assign several communicative functions to **yaani**, a conjunction in Kiswahili, aside from the basic role that it plays as a connector. This is because people make decisions about how to interpret a given utterance based on their definition of what is happening at the time of the interaction.

      In our analysis, we have revealed that **yaani** is a pragmatic marker and that it plays very important communicative roles in the chats of the selected WhatsApp users where the word has obtained an interesting usage. The implications of this are that the word has gained in meaning and usage extending beyond its dictionary meaning. In effect, other communicative partners within the context of a dialogue in which **yaani** is used have had the opportunity to decode as well as interpret other meanings of the term from its core meaning in discourses. The variety of distinctive uses of **yaani** by the selected Tanzanian WhatsApp users range from its dictionary usage as a connector and interjection to expressing emotions such as regret, surprise, emphasis. We also found it being used as an interrogative word as well as to introduce received information. Syntactically, we found that **yaani** can occur at initial, medial, and final positions in sentences and that each position designated a particular meaning.

      We concluded that these distinctive uses of **yaani** confirm Gumperz's arguments that any utterance can be understood in numerous ways. This means that meanings could be analyzed based on context as well as by the participants involved. We also argue that this assertion is especially true for WhatsApp platforms which are context-related,

therefore giving chatters room to invent and negotiate their creativity and relationships to assign additional meanings to **yaani** based on the context of their conversations. Such platforms have also afforded the WhatsApp users the additional advantage of simulating extra-linguistic features such as pitch, tone, stress, and emotion by adequately using non-verbal cues such as animated and non-animated emojis.

From this analysis, we conclude that the many meanings of **yaani** in usage depend on the context and topics discussed and it is up to the communicators to decide on its meaning in any given discourse. We also recommend that as more meanings evolve for the word **yaani**, it would be necessary that the variety of meanings that it yields be captured in the dictionary (to make these other meanings formal) since language is dynamic and evolves. We believe that this will make people better aware of and better able to decipher the varied meaning of the word so as to avoid miscommunication.

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