



## **Pentecostalism and Nigeria's English Usage: A Pragmatic Analysis of Select Expressions**

**God'sgift Ogban Uwen**

Department of English and Literary Studies

University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria

[godsgiftuwen@yahoo.com](mailto:godsgiftuwen@yahoo.com)

+2348030892307

### **Abstract**

The paper attempts to investigate the pragmatic choices interactants make in the use of the selected expressions: *it is well, (we) thank God, glory be to God, it is not my portion, by the grace of God, I am rich, I am strong, my case is different, may God go (be) with you and the devil is a liar* spoken by Nigerian English users, especially among the Pentecostal adherents in their daily communicative activities. Specifically, the study aims to analyze the semantico-pragmatic peculiarities in terms of the contextual usage of the constructions in Nigerian English. The theories considered relevant to the study are van Dijk's Context Models and Mey's theory of Pragmatic Acts. The theories are relevant because they account for the situational appropriateness of language use which meaning is contextually-determined by participants with shared linguistic and sociocultural background. Data for the study were generated by means of participant observation by the researcher who is also Pentecostal Christian and speaker of Nigerian English in informal and formal domains. The findings indicate that the creations are aspects of contextual (mis)appropriation of biblical incidences into Nigerian English usage in specific interactive situations to pragmatically function as: interruptive marker, expression of empathy and religiosity, pragmatic presupposition, advance rejection of tragedy, exercise of faith and escapist stance, among others. Although the contextual meanings are mutually intelligible in the Nigerian sociolinguistic milieu, but the analysis is believed to enhance the desired comprehension during interactions involving Nigerian English users of different religious affiliations, and foreign speakers of English.

**Key Words:** Pentecostalism, Nigerian English, Pragmatic analysis, Selected expressions, Contextual uses.

## **1.0 Introduction**

Colonialism has had a multidimensional impression on Nigeria and Nigerians. These range from the political, religious, sociocultural, linguistic, legal, administrative, educational to the commercial spheres. The colonial masters came with political authority, Christian religion and the English language. Through political authority, Nigeria was divided then into protectorates for administrative convenience. The Christian religion was propagated through the activities of the undaunted missionaries that engendered the proliferation of churches grouped into the orthodox, unorthodox or the Pentecostal. The English language which was the communication tool of the British had been successfully implanted with increasing roles in education, politics, commerce, administration, law, religion, government and governance. Colonialism has therefore taken enormous toll on Nigerians especially in the political, religious and linguistic dimensions. The dynamic and flexible nature of English lends it to the increasing acceptance of emerging linguistic items and constructions to account for the contextual usages of creations that are mutually intelligible to interlocutors with shared socio-religious background within a period of time; that is the knowledge of English and the Bible.

According to Boyd (1933), the earliest translation of the Bible into English was in 1382 by John Wycliffe and William Tyndale did the printed copy of English Bible in 1522 while the King James came in 1611. This development facilitated the fusing and introduction of a number of forms and expressions in the process of its translation into the English language. The translation affords Christians the world over the adequate utilization of the Bible, through reading, comprehension and the practice of scriptural events, doctrines and admonition, and the application of biblical allusions to non-biblical circumstances and usages.

The Pentecostal waves in Nigeria from the 1970s and the increasing domestication of a number of English expressions as a sociolinguistic

outcome of Pentecostalism's bridging role in the Nigerian linguistic diversity, appears to have collectively enabled the extraction of biblical allusions and scriptural messages for uses among Christians in different speech events and contexts. A pragmatic assessment of such allusions and the similar creations could only help to disambiguate them by contextualizing the constructions with the intended meanings known to the discourse participants who have the preceding knowledge and referential mechanism for adequate interpretation. The paper therefore aims to investigate the scriptural origin, contextual usages and meanings of the selected expressions in the Nigerian English. It is believed that the analysis will expand the group of expressions adapted to Nigerian English usage.

### **1.1 Statement of problem**

English is adjudged to be the most widely spoken language globally. It enhances and bridges the communication gap in heterogeneous and multilingual nation like Nigeria. Because of its wide usage, it serves as the medium for international communication and transactions in communicative activities involving interlocutors from diverse national affiliations who must have acquired/learned English(es) in different sociolinguistic contexts. The differences in terms of contexts of usage and meanings in the Nigerian English expression with religious colouration and biblical origin, particularly interactions involving participants of dissimilar religious backgrounds constitute the problem of the study. Therefore, the study attempts to account for the scriptural origin of the selected constructions and their contextual usages and meanings among Nigerian Pentecostal Christians in order to ease the desired comprehension and mutual intelligibility in speech events involving Nigerian English users and non-Nigerian speakers of English.

### **1.2 Research questions**

The study specifically seeks to answer the following questions:

- i. What is the scriptural origin of the selected Nigerian English expression(s)?
- ii. What categories of Nigerians mutually understand the expressions?

- iii. What are the pragmatic dimensions in terms of the contexts and meanings in Nigerian English usage?

### **1.3 Significance of the study**

The study provides a dependable interface between the micro and macro roles of the English language in Nigeria and the global sphere in consideration of Akindele and Adegbite's (2005) enumeration of its functions include accommodation, participant and social mobility. The research is important to students and scholars in the field of sociolinguistics, and speakers of English as L1 and L2 because the corpus will provide the basis for the comparative study of Nigerian English (with religious allusion) and other Englishes in the world.

### **2.0 Literature review**

Pentecostalism is a charismatic protestant Christian movement that places emphasis on direct personal encounter with Jesus Christ (God) as the healer and saviour of mankind through the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the belief of converts to be "born again" (Kalu, 2008; Rotimi, Nwadiolor & Ugwuja, 2016). It is a revival movement with unique tenets and mode of worship which has gradually swollen up in terms of number of adherents and denominations. Pentecostal churches are the denominations that uphold the belief that all Christians should seek a post conversion experience called baptism of the Holy Spirit which is believed to be accompanied by a sign - the gift of tongues as encountered in the Book of Acts in the Bible (Isaacson, 1990; Rotimi, Nwadiolor & Ugwuja, 2016). The doctrines of this set of Christians are premeditated with the inspiration and recognition of the undiluted facts that there is one true God, salvation of mankind, baptism of the Holy Spirit, divine healing, final judgment of man, the heaven and the earth, among others.

Historically, in Nigeria, Pentecostalism started in the early 1960s with the establishment of the Scripture Union (SU) Movement. Through the evangelical students' revival in the 1970s, the Movement created their own spaces for worship by combining elements of African worship which was widely spread in the early 1980s by the establishment of many churches propagating same (similar) tenets (Kalu, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Aremu, 2013). Deriving its name and

mission from the historical event of the Biblical Pentecost, from the time of its foundation in Nigeria, it has propagated experiential Christianity. It does this through the spiritual revival of adherents by physical baptism with evidence of the Holy Spirit shown in speaking in tongues. Magbadelo (2004) claims that the increasing expansion of Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria, since the 1980s, is a result of the country's economic and political crisis which psychologically lured the frustrated populace to seek solace in these denominations. To Magbadelo, it is not a sort of blessing but an act elicited by 'helplessness'. On the contrary, Ukpong (2006) maintains that Pentecostalism, from its existence in Nigeria, has been a blessing to the Church and a reawakening call to the reality of man as a spiritual entity living to proclaim and propagate the gospel of Christ. Viewed in the negative or positive perspectives, its decade of practice has exerted influence on English language use in Nigeria.

In sociolinguistic considerations, Pentecostalism exhibits traits of some foreign language techniques influence on Nigerian Christians during visits for crusades. Its beliefs and dogmas have some level of impact on the English language usage and communication among Nigerian Christians (Offiong, 2003; Ugot & Offiong, 2013). The influences in this respect expectedly create linguistic choices in terms of constructions with peculiar registers and style among the target population. Studies have established that Nigerian Pentecostal Christians are evident in their character and language with peculiar linguistic phenomenon that shows stylistic deviations and diverse expressions that place their speech events in the Pentecostal context. Christianity as a faith has been seen to have developed a system of communication with specialized terms and expressions upon which meanings and usage may be redefined, modified or extended (Onoja, 2010; Amadi, 2013; Awonuga, 2016; Ushie & Nweze, 2019). The diverse expressions which redefine, extend or modify meanings in the contextual usage conform with the Nigerian sociocultural space that determine the assigned meanings by the interlocutors with common experience.

Therefore, English usage religious adherents is intended to integrate and unify speakers of different Nigerian indigenous languages (Taiwo, 2009; Umera-Okereke & Ahaotu, 2018). The integrating function is performed through the communication of the shared sociocultural experience. In this direction, Chilwa (2007) states that English is developed to account for the sociocultural often marked by expressions that tend to construct and perceive the Nigerian environment with entries from scriptural and religious sources. These peculiarities in the usage of English in Nigeria are often described within the concept of Nigerianism. Nigerianism in English usage is a phenomenon that represents the domestication of English as a second language such that it accommodates some variants that express indigenous norms and sociocultural beliefs acceptable and intelligible in Nigeria (Aremu, 2013; Ikoro, 2018).

On the sources of Nigerian English expressions, Kperogi (2015, 2019) enumerate them to include linguistic improvisation, British archaism, normalized usage errors, and mishmash of American and British English. The author reiterates that Nigerian English is a fastest growing non-native variety globally which bears contemporary but distinct grammatic, structural and stylistic features that appear very interesting. In the context of Nigerian Pentecostal English usage, Aremu (2013) avers that the expressions are attributive to the sociocultural knowledge of participants who communicate with religious registers in religious and non-religious interactions to recontextualize the circumstances from scriptural events. Commenting on the frequency and dimensions of usage, Kperogi (2019) in a study on Nigerian Christian English expression reveals that over the years, the adherents have emerged as a fundamental source of the linguistic seepage of scriptural registers and expressions into popular Nigerian English occurring in increasingly vast domains. The scholar further hints that expressions such as *it is well, it is not my portion*, among others, are default expressions to show concern and express religiosity in tragic situations, and the conferment of positivism in obviously grievous circumstances. Aleke (2018), in a similar study states that Nigerian usage of the expression *to God be the glory* could account for different meanings depending on the

communicative situations to the expression of empathy, performative, conclusive, presupposition and response markers, meta-discourse or interruptive device. As insightful as the scholarly views above, they are not broad enough to account for the various pragmatic dimensions available in the Nigerian English usage concerning expressions with biblical inferences. The thrust of this research is a pragmatic analysis. Aside from broadening the scope in terms of the number of such expressions, the study aims to also provide the origin of the expression with scriptural references in addition to an expansive pragmatic analysis of their contextual meanings and usages among the Nigerian Pentecostal Christians.

### **3.0 Theoretical framework**

The theories considered relevant to this study are Mey's (2001) theory of Pragmatic Acts and van Dijk's (2008, 2009) Context Models. Mey's (2001) Theory of Pragmatic Acts proposes the relevance of allowing sociocultural context into interpretation of linguistic texts. Mey emphasizes on the environment from which interactants derive their affordances; that is, the contextual situation that determines meaning in relation to what is said, what is actually being said and what it meant. The Acts propel interactants adaptation to context and the context to the interlocutors relying on extra linguistic factors such as age, class, education, gender and shared sociocultural background of discourse participants. Also, van Dijk's (2008, 2009) Context Models suggest that language users adapt their discourse patterns to the prevailing social and communicative environment within the notion of appropriateness. The models according to the linguist, exercise a fundamental control function specifically in the manner conversations are produced appropriately in communicative situations. The models are activated and construed in situations where participants of similar background and experience engage in conversations within a defined sociolinguistic environment. The theories are relevant to the study because they account for the contextual appropriateness and appropriation of language use by discourse participants with common sociocultural environment where meaning is derived. The Nigerian Pentecostal Christians have a common sociocultural and religious

background that influences the appropriation of contextual meanings to English expressions.

#### **4.0 Methodology**

The data for the study were generated from primary and secondary sources. Data were derived from participant observation by the researcher who also a speaker of Nigeria English. The relevant data were extracted from the daily spoken usages of Nigerian Pentecostal Christian interlocutors particularly in Cross River State in class rooms, offices, markets, commercial and private vehicles, homes, mourning houses, churches, viewing centres, along the streets and other domains in varying fields of discourse. Also, the researcher made use of secondary materials especially the *Holy Bible* and other written texts to extract the origin of the expressions, and other useful insights. The two sources and the domains of usage of the selected expressions are believed to be reliable enough as settings that provide the relevant data that form the analysis and discussion in this study.

#### **5.0 Data presentation and discussion**

The relevant data were derived from extracts collated from daily conversations of the target discourse participants. The selected expressions consist of the corpus used for the analysis. Categorically, the findings are divided into two broad headings: scriptural origin of the expressions/usage and contextual usages/meanings.

##### **5.1 Scriptural origin of the expressions**

The geometric increase in the number of churches and in membership among the Pentecostal set within the Christendom, have influenced the infiltration of Biblical texts into the spoken Nigerian English. It is the sociolinguistic outcome of religion (Christianity) and language (English). This set of Nigerian English speakers extracted various scriptural verses and appropriated them for use in non-religious situations. The expressions with such Biblical origin from where it filtered into Nigerian English usage include *it is well, to God be the glory, it is not my portion, (we) thank God, my case is different, I am strong, I am rich, by the grace of God, the devil is a liar and may God go (be) with you/go with God.*



### **5.1.1 It is well**

There are two references to the origin of the expression *it is well*, one and the earliest is from the *Holy Bible* and the other by the Chicago's attorney Horatio Spafford. The Biblical reference is recorded in the Book of II Kings chapter 4 verse 26: "Run now, I pray thee, to meet her, and say unto her, is it well with thee? Is it well with your husband? Is it well with the child? And she answered, it is well". It was the Shunammite's response to Gehazi, the servant of Elisha even in the circumstance of the death of her only son. Elisha has sent Gehazi to enquire of the wellbeing of the Shunammite's family at the time her son was lying lifeless, her shocking response to the calamity that struck was *it is well*. Also, the origin of the usage is credited to Horatio Spafford, an emotionally battered but a successful attorney in Chicago who composed the hymn titled "it is well" in the middle 1800s after he lost everything he had (children, property and investment) to disease and mishaps, leaving behind only her wife who they both later dedicated their lives ministering to the down trodden (Wetherell & Walton, 2017; Hawkins, 2019).

### **5.1.2 To God be the glory**

As it is with the origin of *it is well*, the earliest usage of *to God be the glory* has two sources, first in the *Holy Bible* and later in the hymn published by William Howard Doane. The expressions is used in the epistle of Paul the apostle to the Galatians, in Galatians chapter 1 verses 4 to 5 "... God our Father: To whom be the glory...". Also, according to information accessed on [www.blueletterbible.org](http://www.blueletterbible.org) and <https://www.godtube.com> the hymn titled "To God be the glory" was written by the British blind methodist girl, Fanny Crosby in the 1800s and published by William Howard Doane in 1875, and in Lawry and Doane's song collection, "Brightens and Best" in 1954.

### **5.1.3 It is not my portion**

The scriptural origin of the use of the expression is found in the *Holy Bible* in the Book of Lamentations chapter 3 verses 24: "The Lord is my portion...". According to Kperogi (2015, 2019), the expression is used in Nigerian English as a misappropriation or rebuttal of whatever is not good and not of God. In the Biblical context, the Lord which is

good is the portion of Christians and anything that is evil is not the portion of Christians. The author noted that earliest instance of inverting the scriptural "it is my portion" to "it is not my portion" was by the Indian Nobel Prize winning poet, Rabindranath Tagore a century ago.

#### **5.1.4 (We) thank God**

*(We) thank God* is also seen to have had its earliest usage in at least two prominent Books in the *Holy Bible*. One is Ephesians chapter 5 verses 20: "Giving thanks always for all things unto God ..." and I Thessalonians chapter 5 verse 18: "In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God ..."

#### **5.1.5 My case is different**

The expression was probably unpopular in Nigeria until January 24, 2017 when the General Overseer of the Living Faith Church, Bishop David Oyedepo declared it as the year 2017 theme for the Church, while in New York ([www.winnerchapelny.org](http://www.winnerchapelny.org)). the Nigerian born preacher derived the text from the book of Isaiah chapter 8:18: "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders ...". Other supportive Biblical texts include I Peter chapter 2 verse 9, Matthew chapter 17 verses 20, Philippians chapter 4 verses 13, among others.

#### **5.1.6 I am strong**

The next Nigerian English construction considered is *I am strong*. The expression is believed to derive its origin from the *Holy Bible*, specifically in the Book of Joel chapter 3 verses 10: "... let the weak say, I am strong".

#### **5.1.7 I am rich**

Another expression in this category is *I am rich*. It is believed to be Christians' appropriation by extension of Joel chapter 3 verses 10 to include "Let the poor say I am rich". This implies in the religious context that, if the weak could say they are strong, the poor could as well say they are rich.

### **5.1.8 By the grace of God**

Among the contemporary Nigerian English expressions that originated from the Bible is *by the grace of God*. The expression is written in the Book of II Corinthians chapter 12 verses 9: "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness..." and Ephesians chapter 2 verses 8 and 9: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God, Not of works, lest to say men should boast". The extract is 'shortened' to *by the grace of God*.

### **5.1.9 The devil is a liar**

Again, the expression *the devil is a liar* with Biblical origin has filtered into Nigerian English. In the Book of John chapter 8 verses 44, the *Holy Bible* says: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it". The current usage is implied in semantic shift and extension.

### **5.1.10 May God go with you/go with God**

The final Biblical verse, considered in this study that is used by Nigerian Christians is *may God go (be) with you/go with God*. Exodus chapter 33 verses 14 says: "And he said, my presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest" and Deuteronomy chapter 31 verses 6 repeats: "Be strong and of good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee". The verses represent Biblical origin of *may God go (be) with you/go with God*. In the former, God assures Moses of His presence with him (and the Israelites) while in the latter, Moses encourages and assures Israel of God's unwavering presence with them in the battles ahead.

## **5.2 Contextual usage/meanings of the expression in Nigerian English**

Pragmatics is concerned with the study of language use particularly the meanings of utterances derived from the way they are used in relation to the context (Osisanwo, 2008). A pragmatic analysis should

therefore examine the contextual appropriateness of utterances in relation to the shared sociocultural experience and knowledge of discourse participants in a defined sociolinguistic environment. The discourse participants in this context are the Pentecostal congregants with shared sociocultural, sociolinguistic and religious experience particularly in the research area. The context of usage and meaning of expressions conform to the communicative situations upon which the utterances are deployed. The contextual usage and meanings in the Nigerian English usage are expressed to communicate the following dimensions of meanings.

### **5.2.1 Expression of concern and empathy**

In Cross River State, Nigeria, particularly among Pentecostal Christians, certain expressions with scriptural etymology are used in some communicative situations to express concern and empathy. Let us examine the interactions below:

#### **Excerpt 1**

- A: Atiku Abubakar has just tweeted that his son has tested positive of the deadly Corona virus.
- B: My brother, *it is well*.
- A: And our country has just recorded the first death resulting from the Covid 19 announced in the early hours of 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 2020.
- B: You mean the ex-Director of PPMC?
- A: Yes o! *It is well*. And John just called that his father died this morning. Not of the virus o.
- B: How old was the father?
- A: Eighty-two years. *We thank God*.
- B: It's okay. *To God be the glory*.

In excerpt 1 above, the expressions *it is well*, *we thank God* and *to God be the glory* are used as consolatory tact to express concern and empathy, Concerns for Atiku, whose son has contracted the ravaging corona virus and the ex-Director of PPMC, who recently died of same. The expressions in the Nigeria English are used in otherwise hopeless, tragic, destructive, disappointing and grievous situations. Kperogi (2019) claims that it so because in Nigeria the consistency in the occurrence of preventable tragedies are increasingly 'well'. The

author reiterates that it is rather offensive and intolerably annoying when same is said in similar contexts in the English native speakers' environment. On the contrary, the expressions are used by native speakers to communicate gratitude not consolation and empathy as the case with Nigerians.

### **5.2.2 Expression of advance rejection of tragedy and maintenance of escapist stance**

In certain communicative situations, Pentecostal Christians deploy a few of the selected expressions to mean an advance rejection of tragedy and unpleasant event or to maintain an escapist stance. The interaction below characterizes the Nigerian context of usage.

#### **Excerpt 2**

- C: The wild wind last night blew off the roof of Mr. Johnson's house, rendering the entire family homeless.
- D: This is serious! *It is not my portion*. Just as a gas cooker exploded in my neighbour's home this morning, destroying property.
- C: So much of bad news these days. My brother, *my case is different!* I am a winner.

In the excerpt above, the use of the expressions *it is not my portion* and *my case is different* re-enact Pentecostal Christians confidence that nothing evil could come their way. Kperogi (2015, 2019) also maintains that Nigerian English usage reflects the rampant contradictory, narcissistic and escapist fatalism in Nigerian expression of religiosity. *It is not my portion* is observed to be in use beyond the research area and even among non-Christians. For example, Aisha Buhari was spotted to have used same during the husband presidential campaign on 19<sup>th</sup> March, 2015 in Benin, Nigeria: "The girl child doesn't have to leave her country to go and prostitute. *It is not her portion...*". The expression denotes the outright rejection and denunciation in advance of unforeseen tragedies while distancing from, and taking the escapist stance on unpleasant circumstances. The expression establishes the predetermined and divinely arranged good expectations from the God they serve.

### **5.2.3 Expression of faith and limitation of human's capabilities**

Again, Nigerian Pentecostal Christians use certain constructions with scriptural origin to express faith in the reality and occurrence of unseen things they hope and the natural restraint in man's all-round capacity to achieve or perform certain actions as the excerpt below suggests.

#### **Excerpt 3**

E: This is the third time you are writing UTME?

F: Yes! But I'll pass it this around, *by the grace of God*. Eee heh, what stage is that your father's building?

E: They are fixing doors now. He said *by the grace of God*, we'll park in by December.

F: *By the grace of God*, my father will start ours soon.

In the interaction between speakers E and F in excerpt 3 above, the focus of the conversation is the exercise of religious faith on things they hope for and request for the sufficiency of the grace of God to succeed in the UTME which the applicant is writing for the third time. The same faith is expressed in the provision of the financial breakthrough for the father to build a house. The conversation in the context points clearly on the limitless possibilities provided when the grace of God is upon adherents.

### **5.2.4 Expression of divine protection and the omnipresence of God**

In Nigerian English usage, the expression *may God go (be) with you or go with God* is in the appropriate communicative situation deployed as a call for divine protection and expresses the omnipresence nature of God. Let us observe its contextual usage is in the conversation below.

#### **Excerpt 4**

G: Will you still be travelling tomorrow?

H: Yes dear. My flight is by 8:45am.

G: Oh! *May God go with you*.

H: Thank dear. *May He be with you* until my return.

In excerpt 4 above, the contextual usage and meaning of *may God go (be) with you* communicates the presence of God in every part of the earth and beneath, and His capability of protecting believers in

all circumstances. He is therefore invisibly visible in all places and situation to protect and guide.

### **5.2.5 Utterances as figurative expression**

Another consideration is the use of some of the expressions figuratively for positivism rather than denoting their literal meanings. The utterances in this category are contained in the speech event below:

#### **Excerpt 5**

- I: My brother, please, would you assist me with N100,000.00  
J: Oh! And *I am rich* now. *I am strong* too. I just used the little money I am left with to buy drugs.  
I: *The devil is a liar!* Get well quick!  
J: Certainly! I'll survive all.

The utterances *I am strong* and *I am rich* in the above context are used figuratively as irony by the speaker to express his poor situation and deteriorating health. Also, *the devil is a liar* in the communicative situation above personifies the existence of the devil in human form. In addition to the literary devices, the utterances among Pentecostal Christians underscores the expression of the Christian faith and belief that God is capable of reversing unfortunate situations to pleasant ones.

### **5.2.6 As pragmatic markers of presupposition, interruption and conclusion**

Pragmatic presuppositions are assumptions resulting from shared beliefs and information that determine meanings in relation to the speaker, hearer and the context (Osisanwo, 2008). The shared knowledge presupposes the contextual usage and meaning which some of the selected Nigerian English utterances express. Also, Aleke (2018) asserts that pragmatic markers occur in some instances in Nigeria discourse as interruptive device to cause a break in communication or bring a conversation to an end. Let us observe the conversations below.

#### **Excerpt 6a**

- K: The Nigerian Senate is set to approve a 30 billion dollars loan plan sent by the President.

L: *It is well.*

**Excerpt 6b**

M: Mr. Joshua has had enough of tragedies this year. Just in a few months, his car was stolen, he lost his parents and now his wife is...

N: *To God be the glory.*

**Excerpt 6c**

O: The Federal Government has withheld the salaries of lecturers who did not enroll in the Integrated Personnel Payroll System.

P: *We thank God.*

In excerpt 6a above, the response *it is well* presupposes that the interlocutors share common background knowledge of the insensitivity in mortgaging the future of Nigerian in accumulated, huge and perennial debts. The most painful and regrettable experience is that even when such loans are granted, as it was in the past, will never be used for the purpose for which it was granted. The context of usage and meaning, presuppose that it is rather not well. Also, in excerpt 6b, the utterance *to God be the glory* by speaker N in the communicative situation is not actually an expression of gratitude or excitement, rather it is an interruptive device deployed to interrupt speaker M to cause a pause in the communication. Apparently, speaker N is not interested in the continuous enumeration of the tragedies that befell Mr. Joshua and his family within the short period. It is a politeness strategy that suggests harmony which is mutually interpretable by the speakers M and N. Also, in excerpt 6c, it is clear that the interactants are conversant with the developments leading to the withholding of the University lecturers' salaries which suggest that the information might not be fresh. Speaker P's response *we thank God* is not in this context intended to thank God in the actual sense but uttered as a conclusive marker to end the conversation which reminds them of a rather pathetic situation which has brought untold hardship on the lecturers and their dependants.

**5.2.7 Expression of religiosity**

Kperogi (2016, 2019) states that Nigerian English usage in most instances is meant to express religiosity. The expressions in this category are contextually devised to communicate the religious status



of the interactants in religions and secular settings. The utterances that fall within this description abound in the sampled conversations discussed. They include *it is well* and *to God be the glory* in the communication situation by speakers A and B in excerpt 1, *it is not my portion* and *my case is different* to express denunciation by speakers C and D in excerpt 2. Also, the use of *by the grace of God* to show the infinite capacity of God by interactants E and F in excerpts 3 and *may God go with you* which proposes the ever-present nature of God by speaker G in excerpt 4 and *I am rich ... I am strong* by speaker J in excerpt 5 suggesting God's capability to reverse ugly situations, and many others, separately and collectively address the religious consciousness of the interlocutors.

## **6.0 Conclusion**

The study has demonstrated that, the advent of Pentecostalism as a religious phase in Nigeria from 1970s, has had a successful and enormous impact on Nigerian English usage in interactions within religious and secular domains which is spreading further to include non-Christians. Although the selected Nigerian Pentecostal Christian English expressions illustrated in the study are inexhaustive representing samples of a larger corpus, but they were analyzed to establish adaptations in terms of contextual usage and meanings within the Nigerian sociolinguistic milieu. The study has carried out an etymological review of the expressions with the conclusion that they all have a common source – the *Holy Bible* from where they are (mis)appropriated into Nigerian English usage. In Nigerian communicative situations of this nature, the constructions are contextually adapted as expressions of concern and empathy, advance rejection of tragedy and maintenance of escapist stance, faith and limitation of human's capabilities, divine protection and the omnipresence of God and figurative devices, and in other instances, the utterances serve as pragmatic markers of presupposition, interruption and conclusion. Although contextual usage of the utterances revealed some semantic extension and shift in Nigerian English, but the discussions have provided insights into adequate comprehension of the selected expressions by speakers and non-speakers of Nigerian English.

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