

PRAGMATIC -STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF CAMPUS CAMPAIGN BILL BOARDS: A STUDY OF FEDERAL UNIVERSITY WUKARI CAMPUS

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ABSTRACT

This study is a pragmatic- stylistics analysis of the language of campus campaign bill boards. The theory of pragmatic –stylistic analysis approach was adopted as an analytical method. The result of the analysis revealed that all the four bill boards studied have graphological features that are of pragmatic –stylistic significance. The most common ones are capitalization; large font sizes and boldfaced letters used to draw attention, to easy reading, and to make emphasis. The texts presuppose the existence of the unwholesome behaviours or acts campaigned against on campus. In addition to the presupposed meanings, there are implicated meanings, derivable from the context. The perlocutionary acts are mostly simple sentences drawn from one hyper-theme. The illocutionary forces or intentions advises, reprimands, urges, commands or warns the students against the unique acts /behaviours campaigned against. The expected perlocutionary acts are that students should shun or desist from the unique unwholesome behaviours/acts campaigned against. The outcome of the study helps the reading community to interpret and comprehend the texts. The exposed linguistic features convey unique messages which are capable of changing the unwholesome behaviours/ acts of the presupposed students to positive ones.

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KEYWORDS: Pragmatics, Stylistics, Presuppositions, Implicatures, Locutionary, Illocutionary And Perlocutionary Acts.

INTRODUCTION

Pragmatics and stylistics as sub fields of linguistics are closely related. Both of them focus on the study of language from functional perspectives. The two consider how language is used in a given context and the effects that the writer or speaker wants to create on the listener or hearer. Ibrahim (2015) citing Crystal (1992) asserts that pragmatics deals with written or spoken texts in terms of functions, their producers, that is, writer/speaker and receiver/readers /hearers and the context of text production. Stylistics on the other hand studies the function of language in context of communication. As a subfield of linguistics, stylistics investigates the use of linguistic features to achieve communicative purpose in a given context. Crystal and Davy (1985) asserts that stylistic analysis aims to analyze language habits with the main aim of identifying, from the general mass of linguistic features common to English as used on every conceivable occasion, those features which are restricted to certain kinds of social context; to explain, where possible, why such features have been used, as opposed to other alternatives, and to classify those features into categories based upon a view of their function in social context. Stylistics in this perspective is an approach to the study of the choices and use of linguistic resources in context.

Bill boards are vital tools used for different communicative purposes. They are often used to facilitate political campaign advertisements,

commercial advertisements, religious advertisements etc. The wordings are carefully selected in order to catch the attention of the audience and appeal to their emotions. In the words of Thomas (2015), there are many elements to consider when creating a successful billboard such as the design features, graphological placement, target audience and the goal of the campaign. The assembling of these elements to form an effective bill boards for traveling consumers as he explains further is formidable but nonetheless many brands do so in a successful, creative way. Billboards are prevalent on Nigerian campuses and are planted for different purposes. This study selects only campaign bill boards, that is, those containing messages against unwholesome acts or behaviours for students.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

Pragmatics

Meaning as an abstract entity in language is commonly studied under two related levels of linguistics- semantics and Pragmatics. Semantics concentrates on the study of linguistic meaning (meaning intrinsic to linguistic expressions) and independent of context. Pragmatics on the other hand deals with the use of language in contexts (linguistics, physical, epistemic, social context). As an academic discipline, pragmatics was established in the 1960 and se1970s as the result of observations by some philosophers and linguists that linguistic

factors only could not generate comprehensive and complete meaning of language. The non-linguistic factors such as body language and extra linguistic features play vital roles in generating meaning. The main concern of pragmatics therefore is the interpretation of language in relation to the language users in a given context.

Many language philosophers and linguists have defined pragmatics as a branch of linguistics that studies meaning beyond linguistic expressions. Yule (1996) for example, defines pragmatics as a branch of linguistics concerned with the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker (or a writer) and interpreted by a listener (or reader). It has consequently, more to do with the analysis of what people mean by their utterances than what the words or phrases in those utterances might mean by themselves. This approach as he further explains, explores how listeners can make inferences about what is said in order to arrive at an interpretation of the speaker's intended meaning. This type of study explores how a great deal of what is unsaid is recognized as part of what is communicated. It is based on this assertion that pragmatics is referred to as the investigation of the speaker's intended meaning. Pragmatics as seen by Yule investigates the use of language by participants in real context. It maintains linguistic expressions, which embody the literary meaning but captures the non-linguistic meanings (meaning intrinsic to context). It concentrates on the speaker-listener meaning and takes into account all the aspects of meaning that linguistic elements could not capture. Highlighting the emergence of pragmatics as a discipline, Li (2008) explains that the study of pragmatics began with Charles Morris (1903-1970). He was concerned with the study of the science of signs, which he called semiotics. Morris distinguished three branches of semiotics, syntactic (or syntax), which studies the formal relations among signs, semantics, the study of the relations between the signs and the object they denote and pragmatics, the study of the relation of signs to their interpreters, that is, people. In a similar vein, Mey (2004) also asserts that most definitions of pragmatics pay lip service to Charles Morris' famous definition of pragmatics as the 'study of the relations of signs to interpreters. Mey, however, points out that in a modern communication oriented terminology, it is preferable to talk about 'message' and 'language users'; in contrast to traditional linguistics which first concentrates on the elements and structures (such as sounds and sentences) that the language users produce. Pragmatics focuses on the language using humans. Put differently pragmatics is interested in the process of producing language and in its producers, not just in the end product, language.

Stylistics

Stylistics as a subfield of linguistics studies language variation which is dependent on the context of situation in which language is used and the effects that the writer speaker or writer wants to create on the target audience-the speakers of hearers. It attempts to establish principles that are capable of explaining particular choices made by individuals or social groups in their choice of language. Simpson (2004) describes stylistics as a method of textual interpretation in which primacy of place is assigned to language. He asserts that language is important to stylistics because words that form patterns and levels that constitute linguistic structures are important index of the function of text. On the place of text in stylistics, he maintains that the functional significance of a text as discourse acts as a gateway to its interpretation. Also he opines that while linguistic features do not of themselves constitute texts, 'meaning', an account of linguistic features, serves to ground stylistic interpretation explains why for the analyst, certain types of meaning are possible. Leech and Short (2007) based their definition on the use made of language. They define stylistics as the study of style, which is rarely undertaken for its own sake; simply as an exercise in describing what use is made of language. Explaining further, leech and Short opine that we normally study style because we want to explain something, and in general, literary stylistics has, implicitly or explicitly, the goal of explaining the relationship between language and artistic function. The motivating questions are not so much what as why and how. From Linguistic angle, it is 'why the author here does choose this form of expression.

Stylistic investigation is undertaken to uncover the uses made of linguistic expressions. Presupposing every stylistic investigation in this sense is an existing text. Being a methodological approach to language analysis, stylistic investigation is done at all the linguistic levels. Crystal and Davy (1985) opines that the ordered approach which seems most satisfactory in realizing the general aims of stylistic analysis involves taking the object of study-particular text and discussing it in terms of a number of interrelated levels of description. At each level, we study one aspect of the way in which language is organized (at the phonetic/graphetic, phonological/graphological, and grammatical, lexical, and semantic levels). Stylistics studies style in texts, literary or non-literary, spoken or written,

Statement of the Problem

Bill boards are planted to serve different significant purposes in the society. For politicians, they are essential media through which political ideologies are advertised. Business people on the other hand use bill boards to advertise their products. Religious institutions find them important for advertising their

religious ideologies or spreading their religious propaganda. Campus bill boards serve different purposes as they are varied. What lie behind the texts on bill boards often remain hidden to lay people which constitute obstacles to the interpretation and comprehension of the texts. Against the above background, this study is embarked upon to expose the underlying meanings of the texts through the use of pragmatic –stylistic approach. This approach deals with language use and its effects on the target audience in agiven contexts rather identification of the structural futures only

Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study aims to analyse the language of campus bill boards from pragmatic- stylistic point of view. The following objectives are formulated in order to realize this aim.

- To identify and discuss the graphological and lexical features of the texts.
- To discuss the implicatures and the presuppositions underlying the texts.
- To uncover and explain the locutionary, the illocutionary and the perlocutionary acts in the texts.

Significance of the Study

This study is of significance to the linguists, curriculum planners, students of English language, linguistics and literature. Students and tutors of pragmatics and stylistics especially will find this study valuable as the identified features will aid interpretation and comprehension of the text. The study will serve as reading material for both students and tutors of the mentioned disciplines in tertiary institutions of learning. The outcome of the study is also expected to enable students on campus to guide against acts capable of affecting their academic pursuit and future in general

Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study examines the language of campus bill boards using pragmatic-stylistic approach. As

campus bill boards are varied and serve different purposes, the study is limited to the examination of selected bill boards that have texts on unwholesome behaviours or acts capable of affecting or ruining the presupposed students’ academic pursuits and their future in general. In order to carry out in –depth analysis, the numbers of selected bill boards are limited to four in the corpus

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

The selected bill boards were first snapped and transferred to micro soft pages for analysis. Secondly, they were numbered for easy referencing. Thirdly, they were studied and analyzed from pragma-stylistic point of view. The analysis was carried out under various sub-headings as follows:

The Context

Context in general sense refers to the surrounding or environment in which language is used. It includes the participants in a discourse and the objects around. The physical context in which the texts are situated is Federal University, Wukari campus. It is an academic environment where anything obstructing teaching and learning becomes a hitch. The study of the selected bill boards reveals that all the messages are geared towards reprimanding the target audience against unwholesome behaviours or acts. The intention of planting the billboards as could be drawn from the texts on them is to have a hitch free learning environment. The linguistic context as observed on the billboards is exophoric. The referent of the personal pronoun ‘you’, that is, students is not within the texts, which could only be inferred from the contexts. However, it tends to be clear based on shared knowledge(epistemic context). What do the interlocutors know pragmatically about the texts and the things contributing to our understanding of them? Pragmatically, the authors of the texts know that students engage in unwholesome capable of affecting their academic pursuit, hence they used linguistic weapon to fight against those acts. From interaction with the texts through reading, the readers draw lessons.



Figure 1:Ndlea/Nysc Drug Free

The above bill board contains campaign messages to students from NDLEA/NYSC DRUG FREE CLUB. The bill board has two categories of drugs often abused and addicted by the students. The large X on the lists implies that the campaigning group condemns the use of those drugs totally. The human skull and the bones are conventional symbols of danger. The concerned group wants to create awareness among students on the danger of abusing and addicting the drugs.

Graphological Features

Graphology pertains to writing style, especially shapes of letters-font sizes, italicization boldfaced, and capitalization. These are often used to convey special or unique messages. The analysis of the above billboard reveals the use of Capital letters which functions to draw attentions to the unique but dangerous drugs campaigned against; boldfaced letters for making emphasis; and special symbols- human skull and bones which symbolizes danger.

The Lexical Features

The lexical features are subjected specific. The key words are concrete nouns specifying the hard drugs that are often abused by some students on campus. They are heroin, cocaine, codeine, hemp and morphine. The verbs are: make, safeguard and stay, which directs or advice the target audience (the presupposed students students). These key lexical items are directly associated with campaign against drug abuse.

Presupposition

According to Potts (2014), the presuppositions of an utterance are the pieces of information that the speaker assumes (or acts as if she assumes) in order for her utterance to be meaningful in the current context. This broad characterization encompasses everything from general conversational norms to the particulars of how specific linguistic expressions are construed. The texts on the bill boards presuppose that there is drug abuse and addiction by students which affects the society the future of the students.

Implicature: Drug abuse and addiction affects academic pursuit, the future of the students and invariably the society at large.

Speech Acts:

The locutionary act is the basic act of utterance, or producing a meaningful linguistic expression. Austin, referred to them as acts of speaking, acts involved in the construction of speech, such as uttering certain sounds or making certain marks, using particular words and using them in conformity with the grammatical rules of a particular language and with certain senses and certain references as determined by the rules of the language from which they are drawn (Yule 1996 & Sadock 2006 in Horn and Ward). The texts on the board have the following as locutions: (a) let's make our society a drug free society. (a) Safeguard your future. (c) Stay away from illicit drug.

Illocutionary Act

These are forces or intentions underlying the illocutionary acts. It is an utterance formed with some kind of function in mind. The locutionary act is performed via communicative force of utterance. The difference between locutionary and illocutionary acts as pointed out by Mey (2004) is 'saying' and doing 'In the same vein Sadock in Horn and Ward (2006) describes Illocutionary acts, Austin's central innovation, as acts done in speaking (hence illocutionary), including and especially that sort of act that is the apparent purpose for using a performative sentence. The texts on the bill board have the illocution of directives. Directives are attempts by the speaker to make the hearer to do something, which could be a request, an advice, order, or urge. In the first declarative sentence, the speaker suggests/ advices; in the second, the speaker urges/ orders; while in the third, the speaker issues command.

vi. Expected perlocutionary acts: this act describes the effect / change expected as the result of uttering the locutionary acts. In this context, it is expected that the students should shun drug abuse and addiction so that the society shall be free of drug and the student's future safeguarded



Figure 2: Say no to:

Graphological Features

The texts on the above billboard exhibits three graphological features: (i) Capitalization, which draws the attention of the reader or passersby to the words denoting unique objects (proper names) or important words; (ii) the fonts are in boldface which function to make emphasis and (iii) special symbols-the Holy Bible and the Holy Quran (symbol of Christianity and Islam). The symbols appeal to the students on the need to be of good conduct and exhibit acceptable moral behaviours.

Lexical Features

The lexical features are subject-specific. They are phrase nouns consisting of an adjective describing a noun which put together specifies unique unwholesome behaviours. They are riotous behaviour; buying of marks; tribal prejudice and religious extremism. These are campaigned against as they are capable of affecting the students' academic pursuits and future in general.

Presupposition

The texts presuppose that students engage in some unwholesome acts on campus which affects their academic pursuit. The most common listed and

campaigned against are Riotous behaviour, buying of marks and religious extremism.

Implicature

The listed are hitches to sound academic pursuit and excellence. They are riotous behaviour, buying marks, tribal prejudice, and religious extremism.

Locutionary Acts

There are five imperative sentences that could be drawn from the single hyper-theme *say no to*:

- (i) Say no to riotous behaviour;
- (ii) Say no to buying of marks;
- (iii) Say no to tribal prejudice and
- (iv) Say no to religious extremism.

The Illocutionary Force or Intention

The illocutions are directives/advice. The author advice, requests, or urges the students not to engage those acts.

Expected perlocutionary Act: students should shun those acts or desist from them so that their academic pursuit shall be terminated by effects of those acts.



Figure 3: Do you know that these acts can end your academic pursuit

Graphological Features

All the texts on the bill boards are in capital letters, which serves the purpose of drawing attention to the acts capable terminating or ending students' academic pursuit. The interrogation sentence 'Do you know these acts can end your academic pursuit' creates awareness on the consequence of indulging in the listed acts. The photograph of students as part of the texts draws attention of the reader to the existence of students that abandon academic pursuit on campus and indulge in these acts.

The Lexical Features

The lexical features are subject-specific. They are nouns enumerating acts that can easily end the academic pursuit of the presupposed students on campus. They include; Gambling, truancy, stealing,

fighting and drug abuse. The author cautions the presupposed students against engaging in these acts.

Presupposition

The text presupposes that students gamble, play truancy, steal, fight, and engage in drug abuse. Implicature: It implies that students who indulge in the listed acts may not graduate.

Locutionary Acts

There are five interrogative sentences that could be drawn from the sign posts.

Do you know that gambling can end your academic pursuit?

Do you know that truancy can end your academic pursuit? Do you know that stealing can end your academic pursuit? Do you know that Fighting can

end your academic pursuit? Do you know that drug abuse can end your academic pursuit?

which are capable of ending the students' academic pursuit. The author reprimands, or warns the student

Illocutionary Force or Intention

The illocutionary force or intention is in Searle's term is expressive. The author expresses his psychological state by condemning the listed acts

Expected Perlocutionary Act

Students should know the inherent effects of those habits on their academic pursuit and shun them or desist from them.



Figure 4: Do you have problems of:

Graphological Features

The texts are written in large, capitalized and boldfaced letters to enhance easy reading, emphasize the unique problems listed, and draw attention to them. The illustrating photographs which serve as part of the texts practical the existence of students with the listed problems on campus.

The lexical Features

Just like the preceding texts, the lexical features are subject-specific. They are phrasal nouns consisting of an adjective and a noun specifying unique problems that are capable of ruining the students' academic pursuits. The unique problems are: poor concentration, choice of career, poor time management, and coping with opposite sex. The phrasal nouns specify the problems that some presupposed students face on campus. Such students are advised to visit the student affairs division for counseling.

Presupposition

The texts presuppose that students with the listed problems exist on campus.

Implicature

It implies that students with such problems need counseling.

locutionary Act

There are four interrogative sentences that could be drawn from the bill board.

Do you have problem of poor concentration? Do you have problem of choice of career?

Do you have problem of poor time management? Do you have problem of coping with the opposite sex?

Illocutionary Act

The illocutionary force is expressive. The author expresses his feelings over those unique problems and inquires of the students with such problems for counseling.

Expected Elocutionary Act

Students with the listed problems should go to the guidance and counseling unit.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study has revealed that the texts on the campus bill boards have unique messages. All the studied category of billboards contain campaign messages on the unwholesome behaviours/ acts common on campus such as drug abuse and addiction, religious extremism, gambling and buying of marks among others are common among students. Each billboard contains unique messages denoting presupposed act that students should shun or desist from. It was observed that all the texts on the bill boards are foregrounded for the purpose of catching attention, easy reading, and making emphasis.

The billboard texts as confirmed by the analysis were all based on presuppositions. The campaign messages are drawn from existing fact that students on campus engage in unwholesome activities that are capable of affecting their academic pursuit. It was observed that some of the locutions are in phrasal forms but are simple sentences drawn from a hyper theme such as in text 4 where about 4 interrogatives sentences are derived from one hyper theme 'Do you have problems of:'. Each of the four phrases on the billboard is a sentence as exemplified in the analysis. The outcome of the study has also shown that language in addition to its communicative functions

is used in different real contexts to achieve different purposes. In this context, the NYSC Drug free club and the University Guidance and Counseling unit carefully selected language to influence the thoughts of the students. The illocutions are advice, urge or reprimand the students to desist from the unwholesome acts or behaviours campaigned against..

CONCLUSION

The primary concern or functions of language is to communication information about the world. This study has revealed that pragmatics and stylistics are related disciplines, which focus on the analysis of language in context with particular attention on the effects that the writer or speaker wants to create on the hearer or listener. In linguistic communication, some meanings are intrinsic to linguistic expressions, while others are implied or implicit and context dependent. The use of language for campaign is one the vital uses to which language are put. The study has revealed that billboards are one of the means of reaching mass audiences. The texts on the billboards convey persuasive messages in forms of reprimand, advice, urge, etc. Persuasion was achieved at the graphological level through foregrounded features such as capitalization, large font sizes and boldface type.

There are different physical actions that are performed by using different tool. Austin and Searle's study on how to do things with words have proved that there are many social actions that are performed through the use of words. This study has shown that language is used to advice, to direct, express feelings, to make assertions or urge student to develop positive attitude by desisting from unwholesome behaviours/ acts capable of affecting their academic pursuit. The application of pragmatic-Stylistic approach to the study of text has revealed that both disciplines are vital tools for analysis of language use in context to achieve set objectives. The application of this approach focuses much on the contextual interpretation of language rather than structural. The results have shown that the texts do not only inform but are also means of performing social acts. The illocutions are messages carefully selected to sway the minds of the students from acts/ behaviours capable of destroying their academic career or pursuit.

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