

A Pragma-Stylistic Exploration of Selected Sign-out T-shirts' Inscriptions

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Abstract

In the last few decades, sign-out t-shirt inscriptions have become a fast-trending culture in the educational arena. Even though a considerable number of researchers have done series of works on t-shirt inscriptions in the linguistic domain, much still required to be done as far as Nigerian education sector is concerned. To this effect, the present research is aimed at a pragma-stylistic analysis of selected sign-out t-shirts deploying Mey's (2001) Pragmatic Acts Theory and foregrounding as both pragmatic and stylistic tools of analysis. A total number of five (5) purposively selected data are sampled and analysed. The data are sourced from the internet. Findings indicate that the inscriptions on sign-out t-shirts reveal the experiences, personality, and motions of the wearer in the sense that they tell the world certain realities about humans' efforts in pursuance of academic success. The Pragmatic Acts underscores the underlying intended meaning of the inscriptions, while the foregrounding reveals how language is deployed with the aim of arriving at the meaning intended by the wearer. The study concludes that the inscriptions on sign-out t-shirts have helped to unravel the hidden messages conveyed by the wearers and revealed the social realities that influence such inscriptions on sign-out t-shirts.

Keywords: *T-shirt inscriptions, Sign-out T-Shirt, Pragmatics analysis, Stylistic investigation, Foregrounding.*

Background to the study

Communication is a means by which humans interact with one another in a society. It is an agent of socialisation as no man is an island to himself. This implies that human interaction is not only desirable, but it is also a catalyst for sustainability and progress of human society. Mgbemena (2013) viewed communication as “the oil that lubricates activities within any human society”. By the above postulation, the wheel of human societal progress would be clogged if communication does not provide the much-needed lubricant. This means that progress and development would be elusive without communication. Language, however, is most widely used or most potent means of achieving communication objectives.

Language has also been identified as one indispensable vehicle that helps man to achieve effective communication, as it mirrors the mind in deep and significant ways (Akmaejeaar, et al., 2012, cited in Mgbemena, 2013). In a related sense, language is “the systematic, conventional use of sounds, or written symbols in a human society for communication and self-expression” (Crystal, 1969). Although, there are several ways through which communication could take place, however, the focus of this study is on written mode with particular emphasis on inscriptions on sign-out t-shirts. Inscriptions on objects such as stones, trees, houses, and many more have been a practice from time immemorial and across different ages of human development. An extension of this long-standing linguistic custom is frequently seen on apparel items including t-shirts, vests, and caps. These inscriptions reflect a person's religious beliefs, ethnic or tribal identity, preferred profession, and overall ideological stance on a wide range of issues. As indicated above, inscriptions could be on numerous objects, however, the focus of this study is on sign-out t-shirt, a brand of t-shirt customized as to commemorate graduation from higher institutions of learning such as universities.

T-shirt is a slim, soft item of clothing, which is traditionally worn as an undergarment or as a summer wear. It is also quite suitable for menial outdoor works, chores, and sports. In modern times however, the t-shirt has become “one of fashion basic item” that “captures the pulse of the time” (Critchell, 2013, cited in Chilwa and Ajiboye, 2016, p.3). The culture of sign-out t-shirts dates to the early twentieth century when university college students started using t-shirts with

messages or signatures to bear in mind their time in college and commemorate their achievements.

More significantly, as from the mid twentieth century, and mainly in 1970s, t- shirt inscription has become an effective messaging medium. This makes it is an important channel of communicating ideas, expressing emotions, conveying a few profound societal messages, and explicating each linguistic and extra-linguistic phenomena like, education, politics, religion, lifestyle and so on. T-shirt inscriptions are channels or means of performing communicative functions such as descriptive, expressive, and informative (Alozie,2020). Even if their underlying meanings are too profound to be comprehended, the stylistic equipment and the graphological animation deployed can make the inscriptions to be understood perfectly. Inscribing on sign-out t-shirts in Nigerian universities is a subculture where students in the final academic session customize t-shirts with their names, photos, and farewell messages to commemorate the end of the studies as well as their experiences.

Premised on the above postulations on inscription on clothing materials which has been identified as an emerging cultural practice particularly among the youths, this novel behavioural trait is yet to receive adequate research attention. Therefore, this research is poised at beaming linguistic searchlight not only at the meaning potential of inscriptions on sign-out t-shirts, but also on marked stylistic devises employed in this unique discursive practice. In addition, inscriptions on sign-out t-shirts replicate the personalities and experiences of the graduating students and it is hoped that this study helps in revealing the connection between the personalities of the t-shirt wearers and the lexical choices used in the selected inscriptions. Furthermore, the study demonstrates how a linguistic theory could be used for explication of meaning of t-shirts' inscriptions. This exercise has received reputation and is still a huge part of academic culture of the Nigerian university communities. Therefore, the thrust of this study is to determine how Pragma-Stylistics as an interdisciplinary area of Applied Linguistics is used to reveal both the implied meaning and techniques used in communicating the intended messages conveyed in t-shirt inscriptions. The study adopts Pragma-stylistic approach and uses Jacob Mey's (2001) Pragmatic Acts Theory as well as foregrounding to be its theoretical framework.

Conceptual and Authorial Review of Literature

Pragmatics is the study of contextual meaning. It is the study of how we say what we mean and mean what we say. Pragmatics is the study of language use, particularly as related to the meaning derived on the dictate of contextual clues. Pragmatics is different from semantics because while the former is applicable to functional meaning (what language is used to do), the latter is concerned with the literary meaning (the formal meaning of words). On the other, stylistics is the study of style. Put it another way, stylistics is the study and analysis of spoken and written language in relation to linguistic and tonal decisions. Stylistics is the study of the interface between what is communicated and how it is communicated. Combining the two interrelated linguistic entities, pragma-stylistics is stylistics but with a pragmatic component added to it. "It involves the study of all the conditions, linguistic and extralinguistic, which allow the rules and potentials of a language to combine with the specific elements of the context to produce a text capable of causing specific internal changes in the hearer's state of mind or knowledge" (Hickey 1993, p. 578).

It is safe to submit that both pragmatics and stylistics cannot perform the evaluation satisfactorily, in isolation. Pragma-stylistics, in line with Davies (2007, p.106), is stylistics with a practical element. "It specializes in making use of pragmatic theories to literary works to make clear how powerful language or structural gadgets are applied in literary works". Its strategies combine "pragmatic and stylistic strategies to explain how (literary) language is hired in context and the way it may assist to signify the characters in a piece of literature" (Norgaard et., 2010, p.39). It is a method that tries to use the outcomes and technique of pragmatics to the conception of language style. According to Sell (1991: 99), the aim (of pragmatic stylistics) is "to narrate the writing and analysis of literary texts to the linguistic and sociocultural contexts". Thus, Pragma-stylistics according to Awolaja referenced in Yeboah, et al (2022) is simply stylistic with study pragmatic focus; that is, a systematic explication of both the linguistic and pragmatic aspects of a work geared to shedding light on the resources used for conveying meaning in the work, including not only the language but various backgrounds (social, ideological, psychological, etc.) that inform it.

According to Noogard, et al (2010, p. 47): The underlying pragma-stylistic investigation of dialogue are some central questions on stylistic analysis. It is on the premise of the above postulations that the present study aims at providing answers to the following questions among others: what are the preoccupations of the selected inscriptions on sign-out t-shirts in terms of meaning? What is the connection between the content and form of the selected inscriptions on sign-out t-shirts? How does context contribute to the understanding of the meaning of the selected inscriptions on sign-out t-shirts? What is the connection between the social variables and the message conveyed by the selected inscriptions on sign-out t-shirts?

Authorial Review

Hong (2005) examined slogans on t-shirt as a medium of verbal exchange which studied social or political beliefs or critiques as a manner of verbal exchange. It analyses t-shirt inscriptions as a type of propaganda to sell the contributions of ladies in post-battle America. The T-shirt as proven proper here serves as a veritable manner political and social awareness; a scenario in which organizations, churches, golfing equipment and political events use it to attain their audience, promote their manifestoes, inform, This is likewise a truism, while one recurs that within side the Apartheid years in South Africa, the t-shirts, have been normally used for evangelical purposes. Kelly (2003) considered t-shirts slogans as a manner of the protective photograph and expressing identification. Although, the above studies examined t-shirt's inscriptions as a means of social identity and instrument of actualizing the collective aspiration of a group of language users, the present study is interested in such inscriptions not as a means of political identification or struggle as in the cases of the United State of America and South Africa, but as a reflection of the experiences of the graduating students in Nigerian higher institutions of learning.

Chiluwa and Ajoboye (2016) adopted a discourse pragmatic approach to examine how youths construct themselves and their group identities using t-shirt messages and slogans. The study found that t-shirt's inscriptions are major channel of youth popular culture. In addition, what the youth are (at the present) and their future aspiration for a better socio-economic and political society are revealed. Lastly, the study identified the linguistic structure and style of t-shirt messages. Although Chiluwa and Ajiboye's work is like the present study because they both

have the youth as their central focus, the present study is different from the above because it is based on sign-out t-shirts usually worn by students at the ends of their academic sojourn in universities and other educational institutions of higher learning. Besides, the theory and the linguistic approach adopted are different.

Alozie (2020) examined t-shirt inscriptions using the theoretical framework of multimodal discourse analysis and the qualitative design. The work posited that t-shirt inscriptions were used for the purpose of foregrounding the theme of readiness, position and desire, happiness, and celebration, as well as to describe the wearers, situations, and pass information to the public. It further contended that t-shirt inscriptions perform several functions among which are descriptive, expressive, directive, persuasive, and informative. Alozie's (2020) is different from the present study because it adopted a multimodal discourse analytical approach as against the adoption of a pragmatic approach in the present study. The choice of a pragmatic approach in this study is premised on the availability of availability of certain linguistic concepts such as inference, presupposition, Shared Social Knowledge (SSK) and more which are helpful in the analysis of selected data for this study.

Theoretical Framework (Mey's Pragmatic Acts Theory)

The theory of Pragmatic Acts was propounded by J. L. Mey (2001). It is an extension and modification of J. L. Austin's Speech Act theory (1962). The theory states that "meaning can only be recovered when the statement is properly situated in the appropriate speech context or environment" (Mey 2001, p.209). He contends that Pragmatic Acts Theory is "an action theory that is anchored on the pragmatic view of language as it is used by people for their own purposes and within their own respective limitations and affordances". He postulates that pragmatics act is an act which does not explain human language usage by starting from the words uttered by single, idealized speaker, rather it focuses on the interactional situation in which both speaker and hearer realize their aims, that is, instead of looking for what a word would mean in isolation, the situation in which the word is expressed is invoked to explain what is actually said. According to him, the theory focuses on "the environment in which both speaker and hearer find their affordances, such that the entire situation is brought to bear on what can be said in the situation,

as well as what is actually being said". This perspective is captured as a pragmeme; generalised pragmatic act regarded as the only force associated with making utterances".

According to Mey (2001), a pragmatic act is instantiated through an "ipra" or a "pract", which realizes a "pragmeme" as "every pract is at the same time an allopract, that is, a concrete instantiation of a particular pragmeme". In real meaning, what decides a pract are solely participants' knowledge of interactional situation and the potential effect of a pract in a particular context; thus, Odebunmi (2006) argues that "practing resolves the problem of telling illocutionary force from perlocutionary force". "The explanatory movement is from the outside in, rather than from the inside out: Instead of starting with what is said, and looking for what the words could mean, the situation in which the words fit is invoked to explain what can be (and is actually being) said" (Mey 2001, p.751). The "implied identification" is central to Mey's pragmatic acts, in the sense that, the importance is not on the "said" but the "unsaid". The hearer is usually influenced (set up) to see the speaker's act, as no act is explicitly made. There is no speech act to indicate a pragmatic act. The only way to identify a pragmatic act, therefore, is to be on the lookout, or listen to it. Mey (2001) also opines that a pragmatic act is based on language use as constrained by situation, not by defined syntactic use or semantic selection and conceptual restrictions. All speeches are, in essence, context situated. In pragmatic acts theory, "a speaker may co-opt others, set them up, influence them through conversations, and deny certain claims without betraying such acts through lexical choices."

Research Methodology

The methodology that is adopted in this study is the qualitative descriptive analytical approach because it uses no numerical parameter in the analysis of data. The study adopts a pragma-stylistic approach for the explication of the meaning of the selected inscriptions and few elements of both activity and textual parts of Mey's (2001) Pragmatic Acts Theory such as interactants (participants), inference, relevance, shared social knowledge (SSK), etc. are used as its theoretical basis. The data for this study are five purposively selected inscriptions on sign-out t-shirts. The selected sign-out t-shirts are obtained from galantnaija.com, Nairaland Forum, and 9jaflayer. The analysis starts with the exploration of the pragmeme of every inscription to achieve the real meaning embedded in it. Finally, the employment of stylistic tools to realize the

different styles used in arranging the structure of the inscriptions to achieve the intended meanings is determined. This shows a logical progression from what is communicated (pragmatics) and how it is communicated (stylistics).

Data presentation and analysis

Datum 1



If I do Masters make I bend

Pract:"If I do Masters make I bend"

Pragmeme:

The inscription on this image instantiates a pragmatic act with a commissive visual allopract of vowing and expressive visual allopract of complaining and refraining. It is apparent in the inscription that, the student involved is an immediate graduate of a higher institution of learning who, to himself, had gone through hell during his studies. These unquantifiable stress and

academic challenges have negatively influenced his thought as he has no interest whatsoever in any subsequent academic degree after the one he has attained.

However, to drum up a more comprehensive analysis of this figure, some elements of Pragmatic Acts Theory (PAT), such as **SSK**, **INF**, **REF**, **REL**, **'M'**, **'MPH'** are considered. Based on the **Shared Social Knowledge (SSK)** which serves as the background knowledge for the information conveyed by the inscription on Figure.1, it is observed that over the years, using "sign-out t-shirt" to express gratitude, regret, happiness, sorrow, and so on, has become a fast-trending tradition among the youth and more particularly graduates of tertiary institutions. These t-shirts are designed with different colourful texts depending on their feelings and they are worn after their final exam on campus. This wearer for instance, seems to have become fed up with education, probably because of his academic challenges during his days on campus. More so, the inscription vividly reflects the fact that, the wearer is just through with a "bachelor's degree", and the next step is to proceed with "Masters" which he is refraining from. It further reflects his psychological feeling, though negative, towards all subsequent academic journey, of which Masters is inclusive.

INF: Drawing on the **Shared Experiential Knowledge (SEK)**, it can be inferred that the owner is just through with his final examination from a bachelor's degree and with this, he does not only seem to be satisfied but also fed up and extremely tired. It insinuates the immense narrowness of the chances that he could change his mind and proceed to study Masters. This is inherent in the statement which lucidly depicts him as tired but happy for the liberty at last. Using Pidgin especially in this context integrally substantiates and underscores his seriousness to stick to his words as it makes the statement sound more realistic and catchier. The **REF** in the above inscription "If I do Masters Make I bend" is the word "Masters". A reference is made to "Masters" which is one of the academic levels of education. Masters, unlike bachelor's degree is more technical, systematic, and complex in terms of academic such as the application diverse methodical and theoretical perspectives follows the bachelor's degree and comes before doctorate.

However, the message embedded in the inscription on figure.1, according to **REL**, is relevant to the trending "Signing Out" tradition established by the students of higher institutions in this

century. This makes it a common or social practice among the students of the contemporary society. It is also relevant in the sense that, immediately after bachelor's degree, Masters sets in. The 'MPH' in this inscription is the clause "make I bend" which serves as a metaphorical tool to underscore the wearer's unwillingness to embark on a masters programme. It is known that the word "bend" in this context, is an attribute associated with inanimate objects such as plastics, iron, steels, etc. It is impossible for human being to bend apart from the normal human's capability to control the joints of his/her body. The effect of this metaphor reiterates the nullification of his willingness to study masters degree. The **Metapragmatic Joker** in this inscription is inherent in "make I bend". This draws the attention of the wearer's folks who constitute the one-third of his audience. It is marked here with the use of a catchy slang "make I bend".

Stylistically, the inscription on figure.1 foregrounds several linguistic features at the graphological, syntactic and lexico-semantic levels as thus:

1) Graphological foregrounding: at this level, the clause "MAKE I BEND" is stylistically capitalized which construes a more profound stylistic meaning. The effect of the capitalization of this clause is to substantiate the emphasis on the wearer's unwillingness to proceed for Masters.

2) Syntactic foregrounding: at this level, the inscription has been foregrounded with what we call "transposition" of phrasal structures which results to "left branching" phrase marking on the tree diagram. More explicitly, we can see that the subordinate clause (Beta) is set forth while the main clause (alpha) is positioned at the back. The effect of this process is to lay emphasis on the "make I bend" which insinuates "impossibility". It is a well-established fact that most times when a grammatical structure is set forth to precede others, such a structure as being emphasized on, is made very significant.

3) Lexico-semantic foregrounding: the above inscription has been foregrounded with a few lexico-semantic tools as follows:

a) **Linguistic tool:** use of Pidgin is a Linguistic tool that is aimed in this context at reflecting the social variable or class the owner and his audience belongs to. The use of pidgin in "make I bend" makes it clearer that the owner and most of his audience are youth, and using Pidgin is very peculiar to this social class. The effect of this, lies in the intention of emphasizing his

trauma to proceed for Masters. This is probably because, for someone to sound more realistic, you must speak in the variety of language your audience understands the most.

b) Figures of Speech:

i) Metaphor: The word "bend" is a metaphorical language. Its effect is to ascertain the wearer's unwillingness to proceed for Masters.

ii) Hyperbole: This refers to the act of exaggerating a particular action or statement. The use of hyperbole is inherent in the phrase "make I bend" which is not possible. The effect of this, is the reiteration of his trauma and unwillingness to study master's programme.

Datum 2



16 carry-overs but we later graduate.

Pract:"16 carry-overs but we later graduate"

Pragmeme:

The inscription on the sign out t-shirt in figure 2 is also an example of pragmatic act with an assertive visual allopract of explaining and expressive visual allopract of rejoicing. This figure presents the owner of the t-shirt to be an immediate graduate of a tertiary institution who implicitly expresses how he had severally failed before he eventually graduated. Furthermore, it is apparent that the challenges he had faced during his academic years were enormous, yet he was resilient.

Based on the **Shared Experiential Knowledge (SEK)**, it can be inferred (INF) that the wearer is a signing out student and prospective graduate of a tertiary institution. It further reveals that he

had been battling with 16 carry-overs before he finally signed out. Moreover, the inscription expresses the struggle to sign out rather than the difficulties with carry-overs or the anxiety associated with repeatedly taking a single course's exam. The wearer's inattention and carefree attitude toward learning, among other things, may have been the source of this. The inscription paints a vivid picture of the wearer's individuality and his feeling towards education by revealing his jubilation and happiness for ultimately signing out and getting liberated from academic challenges. The inscription is relevant (REL) to the prevalent atmosphere dominating the signing out celebration, where final year students express their gratitude and joy and share their personal experiences throughout their days on campus. This wearer^ for instance, shares his personal stories and experiences which reflect his immense resilience and endurance and in the same vein, expresses joy to be privileged to sign out this very day despite his academic challenges on campus as an undergraduate. **The Metapragmatic Joker** in the inscription is the phrase "16 carry-overs" as marked, with figure which captivates the attention of the other folks and the general audience. This is because the phrase "16 carry-overs" sounds too huge and odd to be heard. To this effect, a series of questions will pop in from different angles which is because of the metapragmatic joker.

Stylistically, the above inscription foregrounds a couple of linguistic features at graphological and lexico-semantic levels.

1) Graphological foregrounding: a cursory inspection of the first phrase of the Inscription "16 carry-overs", we can observe that its black line is bolder than that of the subsequent structures. The effect of emboldening a particular part of a text is to make emphasis on that part. The implication of this to the context is that having "16 carry-overs" has been a "greater challenge" for him.

2) Lexico-semantic foregrounding: at this level, the linguistic tool of the use of a substandard variety of language (i.e Pidgin) is deployed. The effect of this is giving room for the expression of reality.

Datum 3



This Marlian is now a graduate

Pract: This Marlian is now a graduate

Pragmeme:

The above figure carries an inscription with an example of Pragmatic act with assertive visual allopract of identifying and informing and expressive visual allopract of rejoicing. This inscription takes another dimension in its analysis. It may sound funny but conveys a vital message about the wearer, since the t-shirt is also a crucial medium to tell the world who and what we are (Nothdruff, 2018). It reflects the wearer's height of academic seriousness. The word "Marlian" gives the meaning some more artistic flavor because it makes a reference to Naira Marley whose artistic figure is used to portray nonchalance towards the established socio-cultural norms. The purported "Marlianism" is characterized with the perpetration of social vices

such as taking hard drugs, promoting hooliganism, flouting some social rules and this manifests through its common slogan "Marlians, No manners". Hence, when someone is tagged a "Marlian", such person is likely to be a stubborn scoundrel or nonchalant scallywag. Based on the **Shared Experiential Knowledge (SEK)**, it is vivid that this wearer describes herself as a Marlian which insinuates her inattentiveness towards education. Probably her focus may be only to graduate rather than being so serious, to the extent of chasing a distinction. However, despite this level of unseriousness and nonchalance, she still graduated. **INF:** it can be inferred (INF) that she was not so serious in her studies and might have been faced many difficulties because of this, but despite that, she finally becomes a graduate, hence this achievement calls for celebration. **REF:** In the first phrase of the sentence, reference (REF) is made to the fast-rising Hip-Hop musician, Afeez Fashola also known as "Naira Marley" who is known for using vulgar expressions and anti-social proverbs to satirize the Nigerian society. And more pertinently, he enhances some social vices like hard drugs, and this is apparently inherent in his common nickname "**Igbolabi**" which means "to Indian hemp, we gave birth". This, coupled with "sagging" of trousers is central to the basic characteristics of "Marlianism" and their slogan also reflects that the movement is all about "no manners" which implies that, to be a Marlian, you must liberate yourself from all social constraints that may hinder you from doing what you like, even if it is against the established social values of the society. They believe adhere to social manners appropriately limits your freedom to smoke, sag, dress inappropriately practicing adultery, etc. **Metapragmatic Joker:** the above inscription embeds the word "marlian" which serves as the metapragmatic joker. This inevitably draws the attention of the new audience towards the wearer.

Datum 4



School no hard, na you dey find 2.1

The inscription above is an instance of Pragmatic Act with the assertive visual allopract of stating and the expressive visual allopract of mocking and condemning. It is evident that the inscription above embeds two allopracts; the explicit allopract which is the assertive visual allopract of explaining and the implicit allopract which is the expressive visual allopract of mocking and condemning. The above inscription paints a vivid picture of the wearer's personality as an immediate graduate. It simultaneously presents a picture of what he could have done when he was an undergraduate. It apparently reflects his eccentric subscription to the prevalent concept of "last last school na scam "that is flying in the air these days. More explicitly, the wearer was just through with the final exam from a tertiary institution in Nigeria hence the decoration of this "Sign-out t-shirt" to express his liberty from all academic bond as well as the expression of how much trivial education seems to him. Every student of tertiary institution is

likely to graduate someday no matter the difficulties encountered, and measures taken to maneuver the way out, through examination malpractice or any other similar means, irrespective of the numbers of carry-overs, spill overs, then it's an extremism running after "First Class "grade in school. Probably this ideology prompted the statement "School no hard, na you dey find 2.1 which means "education is not hard to attain, you are the one running after "First Class grade".

Based on the **Shared Experiential Knowledge (SEK)** which serves as the psychological context that surrounds the statement made by this wearer, it could be inferred that this wearer had just finished his final exam as an undergraduate in a tertiary institution. It also means that he, like other outgoing students, must have been making some relentless toils to graduate even with a lesser grade than Second Class Upper (2.1). Over the years, it is a general belief that when someone graduates with a distinction, at least Second Class Upper (2.1) if not First Class, there is a high inclination that such a person gets a very good job and gets respected everywhere. However, the reverse seems to be the case these days as corruption prevails and cyber-crimes becomes a shortcut to economic fortune rather than education. To this effect, all students practically take education with levity and its significance only seems to manifest in the need for literacy and being a student nowadays only seems to be attached to being exposed and experienced and that is all.

REL: Because the wearer was an undergraduate and is just signing out. It is also relevant to the overarching ideology of the students of the contemporary society that, whatever you attain as a grade, you'll inevitably graduate, so no need for going to the extreme. This means toiling for First Class is irrelevant since we will graduate and this informs the contextualization of "school no hard...".

Stylistically, the above inscription has been foregrounded from lexico-semantic standpoint. This is instantiated with the use of a substandard variety of English that is known as Pidgin, which is common in Nigeria among the youth to express emotions and share experiences and ideas. The use of Pidgin appropriate linguistic tool because it is associated with the lexico-semantic level to arrive at a comprehensive stylistic analysis. Instead of using a standard variety of English as it is expected of a prospective graduate of a higher institution like him, the wearer chooses to be

deviant from the norm, not only because the use of Pidgin is common among the youth but also reiterate his liberty to express himself to his folks more conveniently. The effect of the use of the Pidgin is in two folds; to make emphasis on the fact that he has liberty to deviate from the established norm and express himself in whichever language he likes, even if the variety is not expected of him. On the hand, there is always this overarching mentality that for you to call a spade, a spade, or to be realistic, you should speak in the language your folks understand most. The wearer believes that the only people with whom he can effectively communicate are those who, like him, have similar beliefs and have experienced the same educational circumstances. They can confirm their understanding of the message by using the language that they are most comfortable using.

Datum 5



Even with EVIL UNCLES, I STILL GRADUATE.

Pract:Even with EVIL UNCLES I STILL GRADUATE.

Pragmeme:

The above Sign-out t-shirt carries an inscription with an example of Pragmatic act with expressive visual allopract of mocking and condemning and expressive visual allopract of rejoicing and celebrating. The explicit allopract is the expressive visual allopract of mocking and condemning, while the implicit allopract, is the expressive visual allopract of rejoicing and celebrating. If we make an in-depth of the underlying message the inscription is aimed at conveying, we will submit that the wearer must have undergone series of challenges before this actual graduation was attained.

Based on the **Shared Experiential Knowledge (SEK)**, it can be inferred (INF) from the inscription that the wearer is a prospective graduate, who just finished writing his final paper in a higher institution, thus, signing out. The inscription further reflects the challenges faced by the wearer, particularly, from his family. This fact is evident in the first phrase "Even with EVIL UNCLES", which insinuates that his academic expedition so far, has not been a walk-over, for he conceives that he was challenged both physically and spiritually which in turn affected his academic journey, along the way. This probably led to frequent academic failure which he was finally able to conquer. To him, this academic failure must have emanated, not because of laziness or nonchalance towards education, but due to the uncles' nonchalance towards or the spiritual plot set against him by his "EVIL UNCLES". However, the wearer feels he has overcome all the evil sorceries against him by finally signing out and graduating. **INF**: it can be inferred that the wearer is a prospective graduate and a signing out Student of a tertiary institution. He has also been faced with many challenges which he believes to have set in because of the evil plots drummed up by some of his uncles against him to hinder him spiritually from graduating. From another perspective, it may be said that these tagged "EVIL UNCLES" are evil because they hesitated to support him either financially, emotionally, or physically, which made him infer that they don't care about him. This inscription is relevant (REL) to the success he attained by signing out finally, despite the challenges and contempt from the side of his "evil uncles".

Stylistically, the above inscription is foregrounded in three levels of stylistic analysis: graphological, syntactic, and lexico-semantic. To arrive at an appropriate stylistic analysis, each of these levels will be explicated on an equitable basis, below:

Graphological foregrounding: The inscription is foregrounded at the graphological level as instantiated in the capitalization of "EVIL UNCLES" and "I STILL GRADUATE". It is evident that the sentence apart from the first letter of the first word starts with a lower case, but when it got to "EVIL UNCLES" it changes to capital letter, which means there is more meaning attached to the EVIL UNCLES. Foregrounding the evil uncles by emphasizing on the graphological element by using upper case all through is marked for identifying the extent of the uncles' wickedness. The effect of the capitalization in the context of "EVIL UNCLES" is to reiterate that they are not just evil uncles, but also a great challenge hindering his way to success. On the other hand, the effect of the capitalization of "I STILL GRADUATE" is to emphasize how great it is also, to conquer and overcome the great challenges and maneuver his way out to success.

Syntactic Foregrounding: At the level of syntactic analysis, there is a Foregrounding that emanated because of the "syntactic inversion" that occurs in the arrangements of the structure of the inscription. This undergirded by the "thematic fronting" of the subordinate clause (Beta)"even with EVIL UNCLES", over the main clause (Alpha), "I STILL GRADUATE".

Findings and Conclusion

The data collected for analysis are some selected Sign-out T-shirts of a few students of different Nigerian tertiary institutions downloaded from different platforms online of which Facebook is also inclusive. Hence, the findings were drummed up from the data analysis giving appropriate answers to the proposed research questions. However, the underlying meanings of the inscriptions on the presented sign-out T-shirts vary depending on the context and the intention of the wearer. For example, Mey's Pragmatic Acts Theory (2001) is used to explore the intention and the actual messages the wearers intended to convey. For example, "memories and Nostalgia". Inscriptions on sign-out T-shirts often serve to capture memories and commemorate a specific time or event. They can be a reminder of the experiences, and moments shared during a particular period. This instantiated in the inscriptions like "Cheated in every exam", "Delay not denial, I'm a graduate! I made it", "16 carry-overs but we later graduate", and "Even with EVIL UNCLES I STILL GRADUATE" are typical examples of sharing the experiences of the challenges and their resilience to attain the target goal.

There is also the meaning of Identity and Belonging: Sign-out T-shirts can also symbolize a sense of identity and belonging to a specific group or community. For example, "This Marlian is now a graduate", "LASPOTECH no hard, just buy textbooks, and "My pikin no fit come FUTA" also presupposes that the first wearer belongs to "Marlians", the second belongs to LASPOTECH, and the last person belongs to "FUTA".

Expression of Emotions: The inscriptions on sign-out t-shirts can be a form of self-expression, allowing individuals to showcase their unique interests, humor, or values. They might include quotes, jokes, or symbols that reflect the wearer's emotional state. For example, inscriptions like "If I do masters, make I bend", "My Pikin no fit come FUTA", "No next semester's", "I just dey write JAMB", "my next of kin will continue" among others are typical examples. There are several social variables that influence the inscriptions on sign-out T-shirts. Some of these variables include:

Age: The age of the individuals wearing the T-shirts can also play a role. Younger individuals may be more likely to use slang, pop culture references, or humorous phrases, while older individuals may prefer more serious or sentimental inscriptions. It is observed that all these wearers are youths.

Personal interests and hobbies: The personal interests and hobbies of the individuals wearing the T-shirts can greatly influence the inscriptions. For example, if a group of friends is passionate about a particular sports team, they may include references to that team in their inscriptions. This is instantiated in the inscription like: "From Computer Science to Computer Village".

Group identity: The group or community to which the individuals belong can also shape the inscriptions. For example, members of a school club or organization may include the name or logo of that group in their inscriptions to show their affiliation. This is exemplified in the inscription that reads This marlian is now a graduate.

Social trends and influences: Current social trends, such as popular memes, catchphrases, or hashtags, can also impact the inscriptions on sign-out T-shirts. People may want to be up-to-date and incorporate these trends into their designs.

Personal relationships and inside jokes: Personal relationships and inside jokes among the individuals wearing the T-shirts can be reflected in the inscriptions. They may include nicknames, references to shared experiences, or inside jokes that are meaningful to them. For example, If I do masters make I bend.

These social variables can all contribute to the diversity and uniqueness of the inscriptions on sign-out t-shirts, reflecting the individual and collective identities of the wearers.

In conclusion, this study presented a pragma-stylistic Analysis of selected inscriptions on Sign-out T-shirts. The analysis of this work deployed Mey's Pragmatic Acts Theory (2001) to explore the underlying messages like personal experience, resilience, identity, belonging, emotions, jokes, and others embedded in the inscriptions. The stylistic tool of foregrounding was deployed to examine the various stylistic devices that were adopted by the wearers to appropriately convey their desired messages. Findings of the study showed that there is a symbiotic relationship between individual experiences as graduating students in higher institutions of learning and the intended message(s) of inscriptions on sign-out t-shirts. In addition, the study proved that pragmatics and stylistics could be combined as a potent linguistic theoretical basis for the analysis of how language is used in different social domains.

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