

Violation of Maxims and Implicatures in 'The Fuel Subsidy Controversy' Editorial in *The Independence Newspaper*

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Abstract

*The fuel subsidy system in Nigeria, initiated in the 1970s, was designed to make petroleum products more affordable for citizens by reducing the cost of fuel. Historically, while the subsidies aimed to alleviate economic pressure on the populace, they have often been criticized for causing financial strain on the government and fostering corruption. Existing literature lacks a focused pragmatic analysis of editorial content on Nigeria's fuel subsidy issue, particularly in examining the violation of Gricean maxims and the generation of implicatures. Thus, the purpose of this study was to analyse the discourse on fuel subsidy removal in Nigeria as presented in the editorial titled 'The Fuel Subsidy Controversy' published in *The Independence Newspaper* on April 14, 2023. The methodology employed involved a thorough examination of the editorial's implicatures to uncover the various perspectives, concerns, and proposed solutions related to the fuel subsidy controversy. The study's findings revealed a diverse array of implicatures that illuminate the complexities of the issue, ranging from concerns about corruption and mismanagement within the oil sector to discussions about the economic impacts of subsidy removal and the importance of inclusive decision-making processes. Through implicatures, the editorial conveyed the urgency of addressing corruption, the need to consider the socio-economic effects of subsidy removal, and the significance of collaborative efforts among stakeholders. The study concluded that pragmatic implicatures in the editorial vividly shape the discourse on fuel subsidy removal. The findings reveal how editorial violations of Gricean maxims and implicatures shape public opinion and influence policy debates, emphasising the media's role in framing narratives and potentially swaying governmental decisions and public perception regarding fuel subsidy reforms. The study concluded that pragmatic analysis reveals the critical role of editorial content in shaping public discourse on the fuel subsidy issue. It is recommended that media outlets adhere more closely to Gricean maxims to ensure clearer communication and foster informed public debate.*

Keywords: Fuel Subsidy, Gricean Maxims, Editorial Content, Implicature, Public Opinion, Media Influence

Introduction

The fuel subsidy controversy in Nigeria has been a persistent and complex issue, deeply intertwined with economic, political, and social dynamics. Historically, the Nigerian government has implemented fuel subsidies to cushion the impact of high global oil prices on its citizens, aiming to maintain affordable fuel prices domestically. However, the subsidy system has long faced challenges, including allegations of corruption, mismanagement, and inefficiencies in its administration. The controversy intensified as the government grappled with the economic burden of sustaining the subsidy, especially amidst fluctuating global oil prices. Calls for subsidy removal have often been met with public resistance, rooted in concerns about potential adverse effects on the cost of living, inflation, and socioeconomic stability. Additionally, the discourse surrounding fuel subsidy removal is marked by differing perspectives from political, economic, and social stakeholders, further complicating the issue. Against this backdrop, the fuel subsidy controversy in Nigeria remains a focal point of public discourse, reflecting the intricate interplay between economic policies, political decisions, and the welfare of the Nigerian population.

The fuel subsidy controversy in Nigeria poses diverse challenges encompassing economic, political, and social dimensions, yet there exists a gap in understanding the linguistic and pragmatic elements within the discourse. Some of the existing literature provides insights into the economic implications and political ramifications of fuel subsidy removal (Adeoti, Chete, Beaton, & Clarke, 2016; Obasi, Ezenkwa, Onwa, & Nwogbaga, 2017; Igbokwe-Ibeto, Ewuim & Agbodike, 2015; Agiri, Erude & Ohanyelu, 2023); others have focused on pragmatic analysis on various issues (Hambali, Risdianto, & Rahma, 2024; Pranoto, 2024; Ratri & Bram, 2023; Hassan, Al-Rawe, Abdullah, & Hlaimi, 2023; Widya & Agustiana, 2023), but a comprehensive analysis of conversational and conventional implicatures in editorial writing on this issue is notably lacking. This study seeks to bridge this gap by investigating how deliberate violations of conversational maxims and the use of conventional implicatures contribute to the rhetorical strategies employed in the editorial 'The Fuel Subsidy Controversy' from The Independence Newspaper (April 14, 2023).

Thus, the purpose of the study is to unravel the employment of implicature within the editorial, exploring how linguistic and pragmatic choices shape the narrative surrounding fuel subsidy removal. By uncovering these linguistic elements, the research aims to enhance our understanding of how editorial content influences reader interpretations and contributes to the

broader discourse on fuel subsidy controversies in Nigeria, providing valuable insights for linguistics, pragmatics, editorial writing, journalism, and political discourse analysis.

Literature Review

Importance of Linguistic and Pragmatic Analysis in Editorial Discourse

Linguistic and pragmatic analysis holds paramount importance in revealing the features of editorial discourse, especially in the context of a sensitive and controversial topic like fuel subsidy removal. Firstly, linguistic analysis enables a meticulous examination of the language employed in editorials, shedding light on the specific choices made by writers to convey their arguments (Alba-Juez, 2016; Jegede & Osoba, 2019). Jegede and Adesina (2020) note that understanding the features of syntax, semantics, and lexical choices provides insights into how editorial messages are crafted, emphasizing certain aspects of the discourse while downplaying others. Pragmatic analysis, on the other hand, explores the contextual and implied meanings, offering a deeper understanding of the rhetorical strategies at play (Jegede, 2020a). In the context of fuel subsidy controversies, linguistic and pragmatic analyses can reveal the persuasive techniques employed in editorials, allowing for a good comprehension of how language shapes public opinion on complex issues.

Secondly, linguistic and pragmatic analyses contribute significantly to deciphering the impact of conversational implicatures within editorials (Jucker, 2017). Jegede (2020b) observes that conversational implicatures arise from deliberate violations of conversational maxims, influencing reader interpretation and comprehension. By employing linguistic tools such as implicature analysis, researchers can unravel the layers of meaning within editorials, revealing the subtle ways in which writers strategically convey their perspectives. In the context of fuel subsidy controversies, implicature analysis becomes crucial for understanding the unstated assumptions, implied connections, and rhetorical emphasis embedded in editorial language. This approach allows researchers to go beyond the surface-level content and explore the deeper implications that shape public discourse.

Furthermore, linguistic and pragmatic analyses offer a comprehensive understanding of how editorials function as persuasive tools within the broader context of political and social communication (Al-Hindawi & Saffah, 2017). Editorials serve as platforms for expressing opinions, influencing public sentiment, and advocating for particular viewpoints. By applying

linguistic and pragmatic lenses to editorial discourse, researchers can unveil the intentional strategies used to persuade and engage readers. This insight is particularly relevant in the fuel subsidy context, where divergent opinions and interests are at play. Thus, linguistic and pragmatic analyses not only decode the linguistic choices made in editorials but also elucidate the persuasive mechanisms that contribute to shaping public narratives on critical issues like fuel subsidy controversies.

Pragmatics, Discourse and Society

Jegede (2024) observes that the interdisciplinary field of pragmatics and discourse analysis has been a subject of interest for scholars across various domains, shedding light on the ways language is used in communication. In his recent work, Jegede (2024) highlights the growing significance of the interdisciplinary field encompassing pragmatics and discourse analysis, which has captivated scholars across diverse fields. He emphasises the fundamental insights offered by this interdisciplinary approach, revealing the crucial and complex mechanisms through which language functions in communication. Similarly, Jucker (2017) examines the historical evolution and foundational aspects of pragmatics and discourse, emphasizing their relevance in understanding language use in context. This exploration serves as a backdrop for contemporary studies that continue to investigate the complexities of language in societal interactions.

Al-Hindawi and Saffah (2017) contribute to this discourse by examining the application of pragmatics and discourse analysis within the context of education and practice. Their work highlights the practical implications of these linguistic theories, particularly in educational settings, where effective communication is paramount. By analysing discourse patterns and pragmatic strategies, educators can enhance instructional methods and foster better understanding among learners. Similarly, Osunbade et al. (2021) present a collection of essays that further enrich our understanding of the relationship between language use and societal dynamics. Through diverse perspectives and case studies, the contributors explore how pragmatic principles influence discourse in various social contexts, offering insights into cultural, political, and ideological dimensions of communication. The study reveals the significance of pragmatics in unravelling the realities of human interaction and shaping social discourse.

In Gross's handbook for higher education (2023), linguistic pragmatics emerges as a foundational component of language proficiency and communication skills. Understanding the contextual features of language use, including implicature and discourse strategies, is essential for effective communication in academic and professional settings. Integrating pragmatic principles into language instruction helps educators to better prepare students to explore diverse communication contexts and become proficient communicators.

In light of these discussions, Agbede and Mheta's study on pragmatic acts and discourse strategies in Nigerian newspaper editorials (2023) offers a valuable contribution to the field. By employing a socio-cognitive approach, the researchers examine the ways in which language is used to convey meaning and shape public discourse. Their analysis of implicature and other pragmatic phenomena sheds light on the persuasive strategies employed in editorial communication, providing valuable insights into the intersection of language, society, and ideology. Thus, their study reveals the relevance of pragmatics and discourse analysis in understanding and critically evaluating communicative practices in contemporary society.

This study serves as a fitting complement to the broader discourse on pragmatics and discourse analysis discussed above. By focusing on a specific textual example within the Nigerian media setting, this study provides a micro-level analysis that illuminates the application of pragmatic principles in real-world communication contexts. Through an examination of implicature and other pragmatic devices employed in the editorial, the study offers valuable insights into the persuasive strategies used to shape public opinion and influence discourse surrounding contentious issues such as fuel subsidy policies. By contextualizing the analysis within the broader framework of pragmatics and discourse, this study reveals the practical relevance of linguistic theories in understanding and interpreting communication practices within society.

Existing Studies on Fuel Subsidy Controversy

Several existing studies have examined the different dimensions of the fuel subsidy controversy in Nigeria, offering insights from diverse perspectives such as economics, politics, and sociology. Economic analyses have been prominent, exploring the implications of fuel subsidy removal on government expenditure and fiscal sustainability. Studies by authors like Edeme and Okeke (2017) have investigated the economic rationale behind subsidy policies, examining their impact on national budgets and the overall macroeconomic stability. These works contribute to

understanding the financial considerations that underpin the subsidy system, providing a foundation for evaluating the economic feasibility and consequences of subsidy removal.

On the political front, research has focused on the decision-making processes and political implications associated with fuel subsidy policies. Studies such as those by Akinbobola (2016) have explored the political dynamics surrounding subsidy removal decisions, examining the role of political actors, interest groups, and public opinion in shaping policy outcomes. By analysing the political landscape, these studies highlight the intricate relationships between government decisions, public sentiment, and vested interests, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the fuel subsidy controversy as a political phenomenon.

Social impacts and public perceptions have also been central to existing studies, offering valuable insights into how subsidy policies affect citizens' daily lives and shape their views. Research by Ajayi (2019) investigated the social consequences of fuel subsidy removal, emphasizing its implications on household budgets, transportation costs, and overall living standards. Such studies contribute to the broader societal discourse, capturing the tangible effects of subsidy policies on the well-being of the Nigerian population.

While these studies provide crucial perspectives, a noticeable research gap exists regarding the linguistic and pragmatic analysis of editorials addressing the fuel subsidy controversy. The economic, political, and social dimensions have been extensively explored, but there is a dearth of literature specifically examining the language and Pragmatic strategies employed in editorials to convey perspectives on subsidy removal. This study aims to fill this gap by employing linguistic and pragmatic analyses to unravel the implicit meanings and persuasive techniques within editorials, offering a complementary perspective to the existing body of research.

In the context of fuel subsidy controversies, linguistic and pragmatic analyses become essential for deciphering the persuasive mechanisms employed in editorial discourse. While economic analyses provide quantitative insights and political studies unravel decision-making processes, linguistic analysis adds depth by examining the subtle nuances of language. Understanding how editorials strategically use language, conversational implicatures, and conventional implicatures contributes to a holistic comprehension of the narratives surrounding subsidy policies. This study builds on the existing research by bringing linguistic and pragmatic dimensions into focus, enriching the overall understanding of the fuel subsidy controversy in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

Cooperative Principles

Herbert Paul Grice's Cooperative Principle proposes that in conversation, participants assume each other's cooperation to achieve mutual communicative goals. This principle is reinforced by four conversational maxims: the maxim of quantity (where speakers provide just enough information without excess or deficiency), quality (where speakers convey truthful and well-supported statements), relation (where contributions are relevant to the ongoing conversation), and manner (where contributions are clear, orderly, and unambiguous). Violations or flouting of these maxims can generate implicatures. Implicature is a technical term for accounting for the implications of an utterance that goes beyond what is strictly implied by the content of the utterance; or a violation of any of the

Interestingly, speakers usually mean more than they say, especially drawing upon the context of the utterance. Implicature is a component of speaker meaning that constitutes an aspect of what is meant without necessarily being part of what is said. It denotes the implicit inferences drawn by listeners based on contextual clues, shared knowledge, and conversational principles. Essentially, implicature involves what is meant by a speaker but may not be explicitly stated. This layer of communication relies on the cooperative nature of language interaction, where listeners actively engage in interpreting not only the literal meaning of words but also the implied information that contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the intended message. Implicatures play a crucial role in facilitating efficient and contextually rich communication by incorporating shared assumptions and pragmatic considerations into the interpretation of spoken language.

Types of Implicature

1. Conversational Implicatures

Conversational implicatures are implicit meanings conveyed in communication beyond the literal interpretation of spoken words. These implicatures arise through conversational principles like the Cooperative Principle, where speakers are expected to contribute relevant and truthful information. Conversational implicatures arise from the pragmatic context and depend on shared knowledge, assumptions, and the cooperative nature of communication. They often involve inferences made by listeners to reconcile what is said with what is pragmatically expected. The

basic assumption in conversation is that, unless otherwise indicated, the participants are adhering to the cooperative principle and the maxims. In short, conversational implicature usually occurs when the conversational maxims are violated. Thus, literary devices and advertisements often violate the maxims.

Examples

Example 1:

Person A: "Can I borrow your car?"

Person B: "My car has been having some issues lately."

In this example, the Maxim of Quantity is flouted. Person B does not provide a straightforward answer to the question but instead hints at potential problems with the car. The listener is expected to infer that lending the car might not be a good idea due to the mentioned issues.

Example 2:

Person A: "How was the party?"

Person B: "The cake was delicious."

The Maxim of Relevance is flouted here. Person B's response does not directly address the question about the party; instead, they provide information about a specific aspect (the cake). The listener is prompted to infer that perhaps the cake was the most noteworthy part of the party.

Example 3:

Person A: "Did you enjoy the movie?"

Person B: "The cinematography was

The Maxim of Quality is flouted in this instance. Person B does not directly express enjoyment or lack thereof but focuses on a specific positive aspect of the movie. The implicature is that the overall experience might not have been enjoyable.

Example 4:

Person A: "Do you like my new hairstyle?"

Person B: "It's certainly unique."

The Maxim of Manner is flouted as Person B's response is vague and non-committal. The listener is led to infer that "unique" might not necessarily be a positive assessment of the new hairstyle.

Example 5:

Person A: "Can you help me move this weekend?"

Person B: "I have some plans."

The Maxim of Relation is flouted in this case. Person B's response is intentionally vague about the nature of the plans, and the listener is expected to infer that the plans might conflict with helping move, implying a potential unavailability.

It is important to note that it is speakers who communicate meaning via implicatures and it is listeners who recognize those communicated meanings via inference. The inferences selected are those which will preserve the assumption of cooperation.

2. Conventional Implicatures

In contrast to conversational implicature, conventional implicatures are not based on the cooperative principles or the maxims. They don't have to occur in conversation, and they don't depend on special contexts for their interpretation. Conventional implicatures are linguistic phenomena tied to particular words, contributing additional layers of meaning when these words are employed in communication. Unlike conventional meanings directly encoded in the definition of a word, conventional implicatures emerge from the use of specific words in context, adding nuances beyond the literal interpretation. These implicit meanings are generally associated with conjunctions, adverbs, or other function words. The essence lies in the inferred contrasts, emphases, or qualifications that arise when such words are utilized, enriching the conveyed message with subtleties that extend beyond the explicit content of the words themselves.

The English conjunction 'but' is one of these words that give rise to conventional implicatures. When 'but' is employed in a sentence, it introduces a contrast or contradiction between the information preceding and following it, creating an implicit meaning that goes beyond the explicit content of the words. This contrastive element enhances the depth and nuance of the

communication, illustrating how certain words, beyond their primary functions, contribute additional layers of meaning through conventional implicatures in language use. In the sentence, 'Mary suggested black, but I chose white', the fact that Mary suggested black is contrasted, via the conventional implicature of 'but', with my choosing white. Similarly, in the sentence, Sarah is intelligent, but her brother is a genius, the conventional implicature of 'but' highlights a contrast between Sarah being intelligent and her brother being a genius, emphasizing a difference in intellectual capabilities.

The English word 'even' possesses a conventional implicature that imparts a sense of contrast or surprise when used in sentences describing events. Its inclusion suggests an implicature of 'contrary to expectation.' When 'even' is deployed, it subtly conveys that the mentioned event is noteworthy or unexpected, emphasizing a deviation from what might be considered typical or anticipated. This conventional implicature with 'even' enhances the expressiveness of language, allowing speakers to convey nuances of surprise or emphasis by invoking the contrast between what might be expected and the actual occurrence described in the sentence. In the sentence, she finished the marathon, even with a sprained ankle, the use of 'even' highlights the surprising achievement of completing a marathon despite the challenging circumstance of a sprained ankle, emphasizing the unexpected nature of her accomplishment. Also, in the sentence, the team won the game, even though they were the underdogs, 'even' suggests a contrast with the team being the underdogs, emphasizing the unexpected victory and adding a layer of surprise to the statement.

Additionally, the word 'yet' in the English language carries a conventional implicature, indicating an anticipation or expectation of a change in the present situation in the future. When 'yet' is incorporated into a statement, it implies an assumption that the current state of affairs is temporary and likely to evolve, potentially in a contrasting direction. This implicature adds a temporal dimension to the discourse, suggesting that the conditions mentioned may not persist indefinitely and inviting an expectation of change or development over time. In the sentence, 'She hasn't finished her work yet', the use of 'yet' suggests an expectation that she will complete her work in the future, emphasizing the temporary nature of the current unfinished state. Similarly, in the sentence, 'The rain hasn't stopped yet,' the word 'yet' implies an anticipation of a change in weather, emphasizing the expectation that the rain will cease at some point in the future.

Implicature as a Pragmatic Approach to Editorial Discourse

The application of conversational maxims in editorial writing plays a crucial role in shaping the persuasive and communicative effectiveness of the discourse. Editorial writers, consciously or unconsciously, adhere to or deviate from Grice's Cooperative Principle and its associated maxims—Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner—to influence reader interpretation and engagement. By strategically violating or adhering to these maxims, writers create conversational implicatures that prompt readers to infer implicit meanings beyond the explicit content. For instance, a deliberate omission of specific details in an editorial discussing fuel subsidy removal may violate the Maxim of Quantity, emphasizing the gravity of the situation without providing exhaustive information. Writers may also employ conversational implicature to reveal specific viewpoints, downplay opposing arguments, or create emphasis. Analyzing the application of conversational maxims in editorial writing provides valuable insights into the rhetorical strategies employed to convey perspectives, shaping public opinion and discourse on complex issues such as fuel subsidy controversies. Understanding how these maxims operate in editorial language enriches our comprehension of the deliberate choices made by writers to influence readers and shows the interplay between linguistic choices and persuasive intent in editorial communication.

Conventional implicatures, a concept crucial in linguistic pragmatics, refer to specific word choices or expressions that carry additional, non-literal meanings beyond what is explicitly stated. Unlike conversational implicatures, which arise from the violation of conversational maxims, conventional implicatures are associated with certain linguistic elements that inherently convey extra meaning. For instance, the use of conjunctions like 'but' or 'yet' introduces conventional implicatures by signalling contrast or unexpected continuation in meaning. In the context of fuel subsidy controversies, an editorial employing 'but' might emphasize a shift in the situation—perhaps from historical subsidy support to an unsustainable present state. The deliberate choice of these linguistic markers adds layers of meaning that extend beyond the literal interpretation, influencing how readers perceive the information. So, analyzing conventional implicatures in editorial writing allows linguists and researchers to reveal the relationships between linguistic choices and inferred meanings, providing insights into how language is strategically crafted to shape interpretations and reinforce rhetorical strategies within the context of complex and contentious issues.

Methodology

The methodology employed in this study involved a qualitative analysis of the editorial 'The Fuel Subsidy Controversy' published in The Independence Newspaper on April 14, 2023. The April 14, 2023 editorial was chosen due to its comprehensive coverage of the fuel subsidy controversy at a critical juncture in Nigeria's economic policy debates. This timing provided a rich context for examining the use of language and pragmatic elements in shaping public opinion. For identifying and analysing implicatures, the study employed Grice's Cooperative Principle to examine how editorial content conveys implicit meanings and adheres to or violates conversational maxims. The first step involved a comprehensive reading of the editorial to identify excerpts that explicitly presented conversational implicatures. These excerpts were then categorized based on the conversational maxims they violated. Subsequently, conventional implicatures marked by specific conjunctions, such as 'but' and 'yet,' were identified to uncover shifts, contradictions, or emphatic utterances in the discourse. The analysis was conducted with a keen attention to linguistic and pragmatic principles, examining how deliberate violations and implicit meanings contribute to the overall rhetorical strategies employed in the editorial. The analysis began with categorizing instances of maxim violations within the editorial, specifically noting breaches of Grice's maxims of quantity, quality, relation, and manner. This was followed by a thematic analysis to identify recurring implicatures and their potential impact on public opinion and policy debates.

Results

This section presents a detailed analysis of conversational and conventional implicatures within the editorial titled, 'The Fuel Subsidy Controversy,' published in The Independence Newspaper on April 14, 2023. Through a meticulous examination, the study identifies instances where conversational maxims are intentionally violated to shape the discourse surrounding the contentious issue of fuel subsidy removal in Nigeria. Additionally, the study explores the role of conventional implicatures marked by specific conjunctions in introducing coded meanings, shifts, and contradictions within the editorial.

Excerpt 1: "The President Muhammadu Buhari-led administration has elected to pass on the baton of partial or complete deregulation of the downstream sector to the incoming government

while the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) has warned that the move might set the nation on fire."

In this excerpt, the conversational implicature arises from the warning that the move to pass on the baton of partial or complete deregulation of the downstream sector to the incoming government might set the nation on fire. The maxim violated here is the Maxim of Quantity. While the warning is issued, it lacks specific information about why such a move might lead to severe consequences or set the nation on fire. The conversational implicature is that the speaker assumes a shared understanding of the potential risks without providing a more detailed explanation. The violation serves a rhetorical purpose, emphasizing the perceived gravity of the situation, but it leaves room for interpretation and inquiry into the specific concerns raised by the warning.

Excerpt 2: "Doing so will save the country from preventable social and economic crises and potential anarchy."

In this excerpt, the conversational implicature arises from the statement that taking a particular action (presumably related to fuel subsidy) will save the country from preventable social and economic crises and potential anarchy. The maxim violated here is the Maxim of Quantity. The statement is concise and lacks specific information about the nature of the action required, the potential crises being referenced, or the link between the suggested action and the prevention of anarchy. The conversational implicature is that the speaker assumes a shared understanding of the gravity of the situation without providing a more detailed explanation. While brevity can serve rhetorical purposes, the violation of the maxim leaves room for interpretation and may lead to questions about the feasibility or effectiveness of the proposed action in averting the mentioned crises.

Excerpt 3: "From the perspective of those in vehement opposition to fuel subsidy removal, the federal government has said more than it has done in tackling the root causes of the corruption-ridden oil and gas sector."

In this excerpt, the conversational implicature arises from the perspective that the federal government, in the eyes of those opposing fuel subsidy removal, has spoken more than it has taken substantive actions to address the root causes of corruption in the oil and gas sector. The

maxim violated here is the Maxim of Relation. The statement implies a gap between the government's discourse and its actual efforts in addressing corruption, but it lacks specific details about the government's initiatives or the concrete steps it has taken. The conversational implicature suggests a disconnect between words and actions without providing sufficient information to support this claim, potentially leaving room for interpretation and questioning the effectiveness of government measures. The violation serves a rhetorical purpose, emphasizing perceived shortcomings in the government's commitment to addressing corruption in the oil and gas sector.

Excerpt 4: "According to the NLC, the federal government told Nigerians in 2016 that it had removed fuel subsidy. So, how can the same government come back in 2023 to tell the long-suffering citizens that have been buying petroleum products at exorbitant prices, amidst orchestrated scarcity, that it wants to remove subsidy again?"

In this excerpt, the conversational implicature arises from questioning the consistency of the government's stance on fuel subsidy removal over time. The maxim violated here is the Maxim of Relation. The speaker implies that the government's previous statement in 2016, claiming the removal of fuel subsidy, contradicts its current intent in 2023. However, the violation lies in the lack of a clear explanation of the specific details or circumstances surrounding the government's previous claim and the subsequent reconsideration in 2023. The conversational implicature suggests a logical inconsistency in the government's position without offering a more detailed analysis or context, potentially leaving room for interpretation and questioning the government's credibility. The violation serves a rhetorical purpose, emphasizing a perceived inconsistency in the government's statements regarding fuel subsidy.

Excerpt 5: "Such a decision will definitely lead to an upswing in the pump price of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) and other related petroleum products with spin-off effects on the costs of transportation, food prices, rent and school fees, etc. leaving the masses to bear the brutal brunt."

In this excerpt, the conversational implicature arises from the statement that the decision to remove fuel subsidy will lead to an upswing in the pump price of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) and other related petroleum products, affecting various aspects like transportation, food prices, rent, and school fees, placing the masses in a challenging position. The maxim violated here is

the Maxim of Quantity. While the statement provides a general overview of the potential consequences, it lacks specific details about the extent of the price increase or the nuanced impacts on different aspects of daily life. The conversational implicature is that the speaker assumes a shared understanding of the severity of the consequences without delving into more precise information, potentially leaving room for interpretation and further inquiry. The violation serves a rhetorical purpose, emphasizing the broad negative implications of the decision.

Excerpt 6: "Instead, the focus, according to both the NLC and JAF, should shift towards getting the four refineries working and producing petroleum products at all costs."

In this excerpt, the conversational implicature arises from the statement that the focus should shift towards getting the four refineries working and producing petroleum products at all costs. The maxim violated here is the Maxim of Quantity. The statement is concise and lacks specific information about the reasons or strategies behind the suggested focus shift. The conversational implicature is that the speaker assumes a shared understanding of the necessity and urgency of the proposed action without providing a more detailed explanation. While brevity can be intentional for emphasis, the violation of the maxim leaves room for interpretation and may lead to questions about the practicality or feasibility of achieving the stated goal. The conversational implicature highlights the prioritization of refinery functionality but lacks clarity regarding the comprehensive plan to achieve this objective.

Excerpt 7: "Furthermore, findings by experts on the economy have revealed that if the controversial fuel subsidy is eventually removed, it would increase the revenue base by no less than N6 to N7 trillion on an annual basis. Although this revelation looks mouth-watering, it raises the fundamental, burning questions, as always."

In this excerpt, the conversational implicature arises from the statement that removing the controversial fuel subsidy would increase the annual revenue base by no less than N6 to N7 trillion. The maxim violated here is the Maxim of Quantity. While the revelation is presented as substantial, the lack of detailed information or the specific methodology used by the experts to arrive at this estimation violates the maxim of providing sufficient information. The conversational implicature is that the speaker assumes a shared understanding of the significance of the revenue increase without offering a more comprehensive explanation. The violation serves

a rhetorical purpose, emphasizing the potential economic benefits of subsidy removal, but it leaves room for ambiguity and questions about the reliability of the presented figures.

Excerpt 8: "Similarly, sundry allegations over unscrupulous procurement of raw materials and equipment, mismanagement of the uncovered illegal refineries as well as vandalism of oil pipelines despite the presence of members of the armed forces in these areas have angered those in opposition to fuel subsidy removal."

In this excerpt, the conversational implicature arises from the mention of sundry allegations related to unscrupulous procurement, mismanagement of illegal refineries, and vandalism of oil pipelines despite the presence of armed forces. The maxim violated here is the Maxim of Relation. The implicature suggests a connection between the mentioned allegations and opposition to fuel subsidy removal, implying a causal relationship. However, the violation lies in the lack of specificity and clarity regarding how these diverse allegations are directly related to the opposition to subsidy removal. The speaker assumes a straightforward connection between the various issues, potentially oversimplifying the complex reasons behind opposition. The conversational implicature highlights the need for more precise information to establish a stronger and more transparent link between the mentioned allegations and the stance against fuel subsidy removal.

Excerpt 9: "Nigeria, being an oil-producing country, does not need to import petroleum products, which warrants fuel subsidy and the attendant wanton corruption in the subsidy regime."

In this excerpt, the conversational implicature arises from the statement that Nigeria, as an oil-producing country, does not need to import petroleum products, justifying the existence of fuel subsidy and implicating corruption in the subsidy regime. The maxim violated here is the Maxim of Relation. The statement links Nigeria's status as an oil-producing country directly to the necessity of importing petroleum products and the resulting fuel subsidy, implying a causal relationship. However, the implicature suggests that this causal link may oversimplify a complex issue, violating the maxim of providing precise and relevant information about the relationship between oil production, importation, fuel subsidy, and corruption. The conversational implicature is that the speaker assumes a straightforward connection, potentially neglecting nuanced factors that contribute to the subsidy regime and corruption issues.

Excerpt 10: "Nevertheless, we call for a roundtable of all stakeholders, the private and public sector players in the oil and gas sector as well as Non-Governmental Organizations, on the desirability or otherwise of fuel subsidy removal."

In this excerpt, the conversational implicature arises from the call for a roundtable discussion involving various stakeholders to deliberate on the desirability of fuel subsidy removal. The maxim violated here is the Maxim of Manner. While the speakers express the need for a comprehensive discussion involving both private and public sector players as well as NGOs, they do not specify the specific details or methods for conducting the roundtable. The violation of the maxim of manner leaves the manner of organizing and executing the proposed roundtable open to interpretation. The conversational implicature is that the speakers assume a shared understanding of how such discussions are typically organized, leaving room for flexibility in the actual implementation of the proposed roundtable, but potentially causing ambiguity regarding the precise logistics.

Excerpt 11: "The trio of the National Operations Controller, the Independent Petroleum Marketers Association of Nigeria (IPMAN), Mike Osatuyi, the CEO of the Centre for the Promotion of Private Enterprise, Dr. Muda Yusuf and the Chairman of the Major Oil Marketers of Nigeria (MOMAN) insist that fuel subsidy removal should be carried out without further d

In this excerpt, the conversational implicature arises from the speakers insisting on the immediate removal of fuel subsidy. The maxim violated here is the Maxim of Quantity. The speakers, represented by the National Operations Controller, Mike Osatuyi, Dr. Muda Yusuf, and the Chairman of MOMAN, express a firm stance on subsidy removal but do not provide extensive information or elaborate on the reasons behind their insistence. By not offering a more detailed justification, the speakers assume a shared understanding of the reasons, violating the maxim of providing sufficient information. The conversational implicature is that they believe the urgency is apparent or widely understood, relying on the listeners to infer the reasons for their insistence. This violation serves a rhetorical purpose, emphasizing their strong collective stance on the issue.

Conventional Implicature

Excerpt 1: "Osatuyi explains that the fuel subsidy has remained up till now because of the federal government's regulation of the oil industry but it is no longer sustainable."

In the excerpt, the conjunction 'but' operates as a marker of conventional implicature, introducing a contrast between two related clauses. The conventional implicature of 'but' suggests a shift or contradiction in the expected continuation of the idea. Here, the initial clause highlights the persistence of the fuel subsidy due to the federal government's regulation of the oil industry. However, the subsequent clause introduced by 'but' signals a departure from this status quo, indicating that despite the historical regulation, the subsidy is no longer sustainable. The use of 'but' as a conventional implicature serves to convey a critical meaning, emphasizing a change or development in the situation, enriching the understanding of the relationship between government regulation and the sustainability of the fuel subsidy.

Excerpt 2: "We cannot but at this point call for a full investigation into all acts of corruption in the oil

In this excerpt, the conjunction 'but' functions as a marker of conventional implicature, introducing a sense of inevitability or necessity. The use of 'but' here is not indicating a direct contrast but rather emphasizes the strong recommendation for a full investigation into corruption in the oil sector. The conventional implicature arises from the implication that, given the circumstances or information presented, there is no alternative action but to call for an investigation. It conveys a sense of compulsion, where the severity or urgency of the situation demands a specific response. The use of 'but' in this context enriches the meaning by framing the call for investigation as not just a suggestion or option but as a compelling and unavoidable course of action in response to perceived corruption in the oil sector.

Excerpt 3: "Billions of dollars have been expended on Turn Around Maintenance of the perpetually moribund state-owned refineries without any returns. Yet, members of staff of these refineries continue to draw salaries and allowances every month."

In this excerpt, the adverb 'yet' serves as a marker of conventional implicature, introducing a contrast or unexpected continuation of information. The conventional implicature of 'yet' emphasizes the paradoxical situation where significant funds have been spent on maintenance

without any returns. The subsequent clause, introduced by 'yet,' highlights an additional surprising aspect—the ongoing payment of salaries and allowances to refinery staff despite the lack of positive outcomes. The use of 'yet' implies a continuation of unfavourable circumstances, creating a sense of contradiction between the significant expenditures and the persistent lack of productivity. This conjunction contributes to the overall critique of the inefficiency in the management of state-owned refineries, employing conventional implicature to underscore the unexpected or contradictory elements within the described scenario.

Discussion of Findings

In the presented results, various conversational implicatures emerge from the examined excerpts, shedding light on the complexities surrounding the discourse on fuel subsidy removal in Nigeria. These implicatures often arise from violations of conversational maxims, particularly those of Quantity and Relation, and they play a crucial role in shaping the interpretations and perceptions of the audience.

The first set of excerpts highlights violations of the Maxim of Quantity, where speakers provide concise statements that lack specific details. This deliberate brevity serves rhetorical purposes, emphasizing the gravity of the situations discussed but leaves room for interpretation and inquiry. For instance, the warning about the potential consequences of deregulation lacks explicit information, triggering a conversational implicature that assumes a shared understanding of the risks without offering a detailed explanation. Similarly, violations of the Maxim of Relation are evident in excerpts where there is an implied gap between words and actions, such as the government's discourse versus its efforts in addressing corruption. The conversational implicature suggests a disconnect without providing sufficient information to support the claim, leaving room for interpretation and questioning the effectiveness of government measures. Moreover, some excerpts violate the Maxim of Quantity by presenting general overviews without specific details, like the potential consequences of subsidy removal on various aspects of daily life. This violation allows for the creation of conversational implicatures that assume a shared understanding of the severity of the consequences without giving more precise information.

The discussion of conventional implicatures further enriches the analysis. The use of conjunctions like 'but' and 'yet' introduces implied meanings, emphasizing shifts, contradictions,

or inevitabilities in the discourse. For example, the conjunction 'but' in the explanation of the fuel subsidy's sustainability implies a change in the situation, si a departure from the historical regulation. In a nutshell, the conversational and conventional implicatures identified in the examined excerpts contribute to the complexity of the fuel subsidy discourse. The deliberate violations of conversational maxims and the use of conventional implicatures serve rhetorical purposes, emphasizing key points and framing the narrative in a way that invites interpretation and reflection. Understanding these implicatures is crucial for comprehending the critical perspectives and arguments presented in the discourse on fuel subsidy removal in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The analysis of implicature in the selected editorial unveils the different meanings embedded in the discourse surrounding fuel subsidy removal in Nigeria. The deliberate violations of conversational maxims, particularly Quantity and Relation, strategically shape the narrative by emphasizing key points, invoking gravity, and encouraging interpretation. The use of conventional implicatures, marked by conjunctions like 'but' and 'yet,' adds further depth to the discourse, introducing shifts, contradictions, and a sense of inevitability. The findings contribute to existing theories in pragmatics by empirically demonstrating how editorial content on contentious socio-economic issues, such as the fuel subsidy controversy, can strategically manipulate implicatures to sway public opinion and influence policy discourse. This emphasises the practical relevance of Gricean maxims in analysing real-world communicative phenomena, shedding light on the interplay between language use, persuasion, and societal dynamics.

The findings are presented in distinct segments, each focusing on different types of implicatures found in the analysed editorial. One segment identifies explicit violations of Gricean maxims, noting instances where the editorial directly disregards principles of quantity, quality, relation, and manner. Another segment explores implicit implicatures inferred from the editorial's language use, encompassing critical implications and insinuations that influence reader interpretation. Together, these segments offer insight into how linguistic choices in editorial content contribute to shaping public discourse and policy debates surrounding the fuel subsidy controversy.

This study contributes significantly to academic literature by providing empirical evidence of how editorial content on the fuel subsidy issue strategically employs implicatures to influence

public opinion and policy debates, enriching our understanding of pragmatic language use in socio-economic discourse. Practically, it reveals the importance of media literacy in critically evaluating editorial narratives and highlights the potential impact of language manipulation on public perception and policy formulation. Future research could explore the role of implicatures in shaping diverse stakeholder perspectives on fuel subsidy removal, as well as investigate the effectiveness of different communication strategies in mitigating misinformation and fostering informed public discourse on complex economic policies.

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