

**A SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF ABUSE TERMS IN IGBO
LANGUAGE: A CASE STUDY OF ORLU**

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CERTIFICATION

We the undersigned certify that this research work was carried out by Omereonyeobie Vivian Chinaza in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Bachelor of Arts degree in Linguistics Studies.

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PLAGIARISM CERTIFICATION

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DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to God Almighty for his grace and guidance throughout the duration of this journey.

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ABSTRACT

This research is a study on the concept of abuse and abuse terms as used by the Igbos with the Orlu community as a case study. Attention is given to the different forms that abuses take in the language community. Using the contextual theory of semantics, this study presents and describes data from Orlu village. Data analyzed shows that abuse terms in the language may be classified into three different categories based on their association with animals, human attributes, and evil phenomena. This research details how these abuse terms are used, their meanings as well as how the contexts of use play a very vital role in determining the meaning of an abuse term in sync with the speaker/abuser's intention. The findings of this work orderly presented in the last chapter of this work are useful for both native speakers of Igbo language and can also act as a source of reference for linguistic researchers in the language and beyond who seek to further study the nature of abuse as one of the functions to which humans put language.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 PRELIMINARIES

Language as a phenomenon has become a basic tool of all living things. Amongst its various forms of value it provides humans with its help in facilitating the task of communication. It is a means of expressing one's thoughts and feelings in such a way that one is understood by others. Either by speech or writing, humans use language to express their different states. A happy person expresses happiness either by gestures or words, so does a sad person, and even an angry person. Humans find ways to express their feelings using words provided to them by their language of immediate environment, or of choice. For the feeling of dissatisfaction, the intuitive response mode is by using abusive words and expressions to vent out this feeling. These words vary from persons to persons, groups to groups, and of course, languages to languages. It is also worthy to note that these abusive expressions are influenced (both structurally and otherwise) by a number of factors, one of which is context. So no semantic analysis will be termed a successful one without due consideration of context of use.

This study thus seeks to examine the concept of abusive expression in Igbo language, and render a well-structured semantic analysis of this concept, using Orlu as a case study.

1.2 IGBO PEOPLE AND LANGUAGE

The Igbo people are an ethnic group native to the present day South Central and South Eastern Nigeria. Geographically, the Igbo homeland is divided into two unequal sections by the Niger River – an eastern (which is the larger of the two) and a western section. The Igbo people are one of the largest ethnic groups in Africa. With a population of over 34million (as at 2017), the Igbo people’s primary religion is Christianity, sometimes syncretized with indigenous Igbo religion and belief systems, minority are Islam though. In rural Nigeria, Igbo people work mostly as craftsmen, farmers and traders. The most important crop is the yam. Other staple crops include cassava and taro. The Igbos are also highly urbanized with some of the largest metropolitan areas, cities and towns in Igbo land being Onitsha, Enugu, Aba, Owerri, Orlu, Okigwe, Asaba, Akwa, Nsukka, Nnewi, Umuahia, Abakaliki, Afikpo, Agbor, and Arochukwu. Small ethnic Igbo populations are found in Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea, as well as outside Africa.

The Igbo language is divided into numerous regional dialects, and somewhat mutually intelligible with the larger ‘Igboid’ cluster. The language is the principal native language of the Igbo people who are primarily of the Igbo descent. Igbo is

written in the Latin script, which was introduced by British colonialists. Igbo is also a recognized minority language of Equatorial Guinea and one of Nigeria's national languages, alongside Yoruba and Hausa.

Igbo is one of the major languages in Africa, and the language is also used as a second language in Igbo land since Igbos are usually bilinguals, speaking English as well. Being close to one-sixth of the population of Nigeria, the language has between 20 to 30 dialects. The major division is between the Onicha group in the North and the Owerri group in the South. Since the 19th century, there has been several attempts to develop a written standard language, starting with Isuama Igbo (1857-1905) and continuing with the Union Igbo (1905-1941), Central Igbo (1941-1973), and Standard Igbo (1973 to present).

Isuama Igbo was spoken by freed Igbo slaves in Sierra Leone, as a sort of lingua franca between different Igbo communities, but was quite removed from any Igbo dialect of the Igbo homeland. The Union Igbo was an answer to the growing number of Christian Igbos within Nigeria but being rather artificial, it was employed only as a liturgical and literary language. The central Igbo, based on the Umuahia and Owerri dialects, was the vehicle of many translations from European literature. Finally, Standard Igbo, implemented after the independence of Nigeria is also based on the Owerri and Umuahia dialects but it expanded Central Igbo vocabulary by

incorporating words from other dialects as well as loanwords. Subsequently, a written standard was developed.

1.3 ORLU DIALECT

Orlu is ‘unofficially’ regarded as the central capital of Imo state due to its enterprising and industrious inhabitants. The Orlu Senatorial Zone, as it is politically addressed, is made up of eleven (11) local government areas namely; Orsu, Njaba, Isu, Nkwerre, Nwangele, Ideato North, Ideato South, Oru West, Oru East, Oguta and Ohaji/Egbema, which altogether houses a population of about three (3) million people. Orlu, like other Igbo communities, has a rich cultural heritage. Their cultural festivals are graced by a display of different cultural masquerade heritages by which they proclaim their communal attributes, and heritages. Some of these masquerade are Mmanwu, Okonko, Oghu, Ebuebu, Ekeleke and Okorosha etc. The Orlu as a community comprises 10 villages, governed by a traditional ruler known as the Igwe of Orlu.

In addition to its prominence for the caliber of people this Igbo community has produced for the Nigerian business and political space, Orlu also serves as the permanent industrial site for a number of both state and federal agencies, which

includes; The Nigeria Immigration Training School (NITS), Imo State University Teaching Hospital, the Technological Skills Acquisition Center (TESAC), just to mention a few.

1.4 PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this linguistic research are as follows;

1. To establish that, like other languages, African languages (Igbo precisely), also provide its speakers the opportunity to communicate a numerous amount of human feelings of which dissatisfaction is one.
2. In doing (1) above, this study aims at examining abusive expressions (verbal and non-verbal) in Igbo language, and as a full fledge semantic analysis, look at the meanings of these expressions, the cause of meanings – are they context based or structure based.
3. To give a report also on the possibility of ambiguity across these abusive expressions.
4. Lastly, this work seeks to find a suitable way by which the abusive expressions in Igbo language may be categorized.

It is worthy of note that this study is not only interested in revealing the abusive expressions used by speakers of the Orlu dialect of Igbo language

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

This linguistic research is significant in these regards. A body of research as this provides great contribution to the semantic study of Igbo language and linguistic scholarship generally. As it lays hands on sub areas of semantics such as context and ambiguity, this study will be helpful to future investigators of the language as it hopes to be a handy guide to semanticists, prospective linguists, and second language learners (of the language). It will act as a comprehensive (not exhaustive) addition to the sociolinguistic part of Igbo language study, and Orlu, being our case study, will help achieve this goal as this dialect is more relatable than others to the general public. Language scientists will find this project useful, economical and devoid of vagueness. This study being a written material on the language will serve as a future reference as regards the language and anyone working on any related aspect of this research in general.

1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study is more of a semantic analysis with some addition of sociolinguistics approaches to language study. This tells that so aspects of linguistic studies such as phonology, morphology, and syntax are not within our research boundaries. However, if by any means these areas are seen in this work, let it be considered that it is purely for emphasis and explanatory purposes.

Having said that, this study thus focuses at examining, semantically, the concept of abusive expressions in Igbo language, using Orlu as a case study.

1.7 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The limiting factors of this study are finance and time. The insufficiency of finance posed a challenge to the amount of the data collected by the researcher and other relevant materials. The researcher believes that for a topic as this, a large amount of data is required to render an exhaustive work. Thus the researcher states here that as comprehensive as this work may be, it doesn't claim to be an exhaustive work on the concept of abusive expressions and their semantics. This therefore opens a vacuum for further research and recommendations based on our findings. The challenges above restricted the researcher from gathering a large amount of data for analysis of the study. Also, the unavailability of adequate time was a challenge for the researcher as the researcher engaged simultaneously in the research work with other academic activities.

1.8 METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

Data for this study were gathered from different sources which can be split into two (2) namely:

- a) Primary data sources, and
- b) Secondary data sources.

Primary data include interviews of indigenes of the Orlu town in Orlu Local Government Area in Imo State. For this research purpose, recorded speech was taken from competent native speakers who were informants for this investigation. This was in a bid to collect first-hand information about how native speakers use abusive expressions as informants may (knowingly or unknowingly) distort the authenticity of the information they are disclosing. Among the places visited for data collection are Mr Kenneth Nwafor's (a titled ruler) house, Shoprite Owerri, market places, etc. The informants from whom data were gathered are of different ages ranging from twenty-one (22) to sixty-five (59), and also of different social status. This was to ensure that all factors that affects the use of abusive expressions by the Igbos are put into consideration in order to arrive at an accurate conclusion for this project work. The findings of this quest will be seen in chapter four (4) of this work.

The secondary data were gotten from both published and unpublished materials relating to the topic in the language. Articles and documents (which are properly referenced in the reference section of this work) from the internet were all also helpful. The Igbo dictionary (which enabled a proper distinguishing between Standard Igbo and some other dialects of Igbo language) was also useful to this work.

1.9 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY

The theoretical framework by which this study (being a semantic study in context is a relevant factor of meaning, hence a contextual theory of semantics.

1.9.1 THE CONTEXTUAL THEORY OF SEMANTICS

The contextual theory is mostly associated with the German analyst Ludwig Wittgenstein. This theory states that without context, the meaning of a word cannot be understood. Ludwig used an analogy that language is a game which has rules and is characterized by the moves of your opponent. This means that the use of language can be likened to a 'listen-say' phenomenon where the moves of your opponent determine your next move. Another example that explains this analogy of Ludwig is a fight where fighter B dodges only when fighter A throws a punch. Again, it is the context that determines the rules.

As opposed to the ideas sold by some theories of meaning, that meaning is both a mental picture in the mind of speakers- Idealists and referential entities- referential theory of meaning, Wittgenstein (1958) is of the opinion that it is wrong to regard meaning as entities. He rather opines that the meaning of any language or linguistic expression, be it word or sentence is determined by the context in which it is used. Another aspect of contextual theory of meaning is the one which deals with the meaning of words and sentences not as isolated entities, but as related to situations of occurrence and use. (Nwaozuzu 2015).

According to Wittgenstein (1953) in Hacker and Schulte (2009:43) "for a large cases of the employment of the word 'meaning' though not for all, this word can be explained thus, 'the meaning of a word is simply its use in the language'. This simple

statement is what underlies the perspective change most typical of the later phase of Wittgenstein's thought which goes thus; "a shift from a conception of meaning as a representation to a view which looks to 'use' as the crux of the investigation". In the history of philosophy, traditional theories of meaning were focused on pointing to 'something' – concrete – exterior to a proposition which bestows it with sense. This 'something' could thus generally be found either in an objective physical space or inside the mind as mental representation.

Wittgenstein (1958) took pains to challenge these conceptions arriving at the insight that, 'if we had to name anything which is the life of the sign, we should have to say that it was its use'. Ascertainment of the use of any linguistic expression, a word however, is not given to any sort of constructive theory building, as in the *Tractatus*. Rather when carrying out a semantic investigation, the philosopher must "look and see" the different variety of uses which the word or expression is put. An analogy with tools sheds light on the nature of a word, when we think of tools in a toolbox, we do not fail to see their variety; but the functions of words are as diverse as the functions of these objects (Hacker and Schulter 2009:11).

In giving the meaning of a word, only explanatory generalization should be replaced by a description of use. The traditional idea that a proposition houses a content and has a restricted number of Fregean forces (such as assertion, question,

command) gives way to an emphasis on the differences in usage, in order to address the countless multiplicity of uses; their unfixeness, and being part of an activity.

Wittgenstein introduces the key concept of 'language-game'. He never explicitly defined it since as opposed to the earlier 'picture', for instance, this new concept is made to do work for a more fluid, more diversified and more activity oriented perspective on language (Stratford Encyclopedia of philosophy 2002).

Another theory of meaning is the field theory propounded by Trier. It explains the vocabulary or lexicon of a language as a system of interrelated networks of semantic fields (Syal and Jindal, 2010), hence words that are interrelated may belong to the same semantic field, e.g chair, table, stool belong to the same field- that of furniture. Semantic field is defined E. Finegan (2012:542) as ' a set of words with an identifiable semantic affinity'. Other contextual theories deal with the context of use of words and sentences by the speakers of a language. On this, Firth (1957) says, "language is only meaningful in the context of situation". It is on this premise that linguists tried to establish the link between syntax and meaning- in-context situation (Halliday 1978). Thus, the sentence 'the king died' is grammatical, but can only fulfill its semantic function if and only if there was a king.

Norman (1984) opines that in Wittgenstein's definition of the contextual theory of meaning, it is quite clear that 'meaning is use', as he is sometimes interpreted as doing. This tells us that Wittgenstein alternatively refers to the contextual theory of

meaning as the 'use theory of meaning'. Norman's view against Wittgenstein is that the meaning of a word is the object that it names, in which case the meaning of a word could mean something different by it having a different feeling and communication would be difficult, if not impossible, knowing the meaning of a word can involve knowing a number of things about the word: to what object the word refers to (if any) whether or not it is a slang, what part of speech it is, whether or not it carries overtones and if it does what kind they are and a little more. To know all these, or to know enough to get by is to know the use and generally, knowing the use means knowing the meaning of the word of which one knows.

Observing more recent works on the topic of semantics and contextual theory of meaning, Uwajeh (2010) made it clear that grammar (which is the study of the structure of language) is no more and no less than Structural(or Textual) semantics i.e, the study of the structure of language thought and 'meaning', plus structural(or textual) symbolics; the study of the structure of language symbolization or 'form'. This is against the 'erroneous assumption' that the whole of the study of language meaning, i.e semantics, is part of the study of language structure i.e Grammar. The second type or branch of Semantics is Contextual or Use Semantics which is the meaning of linguistic expressions larger than the text. It is the situational semantics of linguistic expressions.

Uwajeh (2010) states that “Contextual Semantics is NOT part of Grammar”. This means that understanding contextual linguistic elements has nothing at all to do with the structure of the language in use. This is against the general assumptions in Semantic literatures and the general beliefs postulated and published by the Generative grammarians about Semantics in Linguistics which has grown so widely and passed down to students of the discipline without questioning. He went further to state that Contextual Semantics is part of Pragmatics and this is in conjunction with Use (or contextual) symbolics i.e the study of the use of language symbolization or form. Thus, the erroneous assumption that the whole of the study of language thought or ‘meaning’ is part of Grammar results from the fact that in their sole pre-occupation with language, Generative grammarians do not seem to realize that the thought or ‘meaning’ component of language may also be studied in nonstructural terms apart from being studied structurally of course” Uwajeh(2010:53). He therefore categorized linguistics as a field of knowledge dealing with language both on the structural level and on the level of use, as shown in the table below;

LINGUISTICS

Structural or Textual Semantics	Use or Contextual Semantics
Structural or Textual Symbolics	Use or Contextual Symbolics
Grammar	Pragmatics

1.9.2 RELEVANCE OF CONTEXT THEORY TO THIS STUDY

Up till now, it has generally been assumed that one's grammar may either be context free (as with Chomsky's 1965 etc 'Competence Grammar' which his Generative Grammar purportedly is) or context sensitive (as with what Chomsky's 1965 etc would call a 'Performance Grammar' which his Generative Grammar decidedly is NOT) and still be a satisfactory characterization of language structure because language structure features cannot be accounted for correctly without obligatory reference to contextual factors, Uwajeh (2010:145). Let us consider some sentences with the traditional grammar notions tag 'imperative', 'interrogative', 'declarative (here is where abusive expressions come under)', etc as examples.

- i. Vivian, can you shut your mouth?- interrogative/question
- ii. Stupid girl, get out- abusively imperative.

Following the structure of the above sentences, they are both interrogative and imperative sentences respectively outside context, but how will one say this is purely so in these following cases?

In (i) above, let's say Vivian is talking and her lecturer says, Vivian can you shut your mouth?, in such context, this is certainly not a question but a command to keep

quiet. Similarly, (ii) above is not an imperative statement in this case, let's say Vivian is with her friend and the following conversation began;

Vivian's friend: "How far babe, how many children will you like to have?"

Vivian: 'Stupid girl get out. We never finish school you dey talk about children'.

From the above, it is seen that the contextual issues of pragmatics are indispensable for dealing with the structural matters of grammar in the proper conduct of grammatical descriptions. However, Uwajeh (2010) is not of the opinion or claim that language sentence structure is completely irrelevant for categorizing sentences illocutively (i.e according to the aim of a speaker in making an utterance as opposed to the real or actual meaning of the terms used) despite the crucial role of context in correct illocutionary categorization of sentences but rather, that certain sentence construct structure types do tend to reflect some particular illocutionary classification categories. Indeed were the situations essentially otherwise, 'language would to that extent be a chaotic phenomenon and corresponding linguistic communication fundamentally inefficient as a tool. (Uwajeh 2010:149).

It is therefore, paramount to emphasize here that the representation of even word meanings should naturally give rise to automated disambiguation in contexts so that when considered in an interpretation of sentences or even larger linguistic expressions/elements where the concerned ambiguous word occurs, the correct

meaning will be automatically selected. A word may be homonymous with several unrelated meanings. Let's take the popular English word 'bow' for instance, when used in isolation is represented as;

- a. 'bow'- to bend outwards at the sides (e.g, a bow-legged boy).
- b. 'bow'- a weapon to shoot projectiles with (e.g, a bow and arrow).
- c. 'bow'- a district in London.
- d. 'bow'- a kind of tied ribbon (e.g, a bow on a present, a bow-tie)
- e. 'bow'- the front of a ship (e.g, 'bow and stern')

From the above example, it is therefore the context in which the word 'bow' is used that will disclose to communication participants the meaning from the above listed meanings which are closer to or way similar to that of the speaker's intention in comparison with others on the list i.e the illocutive meaning.

Conclusively, the Contextual theory of semantics is that theory of semantics or meaning which states that without context, we cannot understand the meaning of a linguistic element or expression. This theory helps us view meaning as a language phenomenon embedded in context and context as the meaning bearer of linguistic features regardless of the structure of the linguistics elements (words and phrases). Thus in line with this framework, we shall arrive at a detailed finding on the meanings of various abusive expressions studied in isolation and in context as used by speakers of the Orlu dialect of Igbo language.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This second chapter earlier studies relevant to the present one shall be reviewed. This review of related literature shall be in three parts as follows:

1. Conceptual Review
2. Previous Related Studies
3. The Concern of the Present Study

2.1 CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

This section shall cover a description and review of linguistic concepts relevant to this study which will aid the understanding (for the reader) of this present work. As mentioned in the previous chapter, it is impossible to carry out a semantic study of abusive expressions in Igbo language without looking at the concepts of ambiguity (as most of these expressions possess more than one meaning), context (as the meaning of ambiguous expressions can be appropriately revealed by their different contexts of use), and a few other aspects of semantics. These concepts are presented in an organized manner which allows for easy linking up.

2.1.1 WHAT IS MEANING

The concept of meaning has been on that semanticists and linguists in general have argued upon for a long time. While some see meanings as a purely structural concept in language, a host of others view meanings as a contextual matter as words and language expressions may have the same texts and sounds but mean different things depending on their context of use. More on this will be discussed in the next chapter of this work where we shall discuss ‘Contextual theory of semantics’ as it will help us analyze and explain how abusive expressions derive meanings from context.

Meanwhile on meaning, Winitz (1991) explains that “the notion of meaning is central to theories of language. However, there appears to be considerable disagreement regarding what a theory of meaning should do, and how it pertains to other linguistic issues”. These scholars seek to explain why meaning components which is the main concern of semantics (a branch of linguistic analysis) must be included when analyzing a language. Also, Langacker (1987:12) says “ Meaning is what language is all about: the analyst who ignores it to concentrate solely on matters of form severely impoverishes the natural and necessary subject matter of the discipline and ultimately distorts the character of the phenomenon described”.

The above explains how Langacker tries to explain the essence of meaning in and of a language. He talked about the centrality of meaning to all linguistic concerns, meaning that all linguistics studies’ core is to drive towards the meaning of language constituents in different languages.

2.1.2 THE CONCEPT OF ABUSE

Abuse is not a phenomenon which requires an introduction or a lot of description before it can be understood as it is a common language function in different societies. No formal explanation is required for comprehension of the concept. However, Merriam-Webster dictionary defined abuse - amongst some other things - as a

1. corrupt act, practice or custom, for instance, the buying of votes and other election abuses.
2. excessive or improper use or treatment : the misuse of drug, or drug abuse.
3. language which vilifies or condemns usually intemperately, unjustly, and most times angrily - verbal abuse.
4. any physical maltreatment.

From the third definition above, the dictionary shows that language is a tool for abuse and this is the focus of this work. Abuse mostly springs as a reaction to an intense level of dissatisfaction which may result in anger also. In this study we shall look at the different abuse techniques that the Orlu dialect of Igbo provides its speakers.

2.1.3 SEMANTICS

Semantics as a field of linguistics concerns itself with the nature of the meaning (both of individual words and words grouped to form longer constructs like phrases and sentences). In linguistic, semantics is the formal term used to refer to the study of meaning. Since meaning is part of language, and the core of language, semantics is that level of analysis that seeks to reveal aspects of meaning in a language (Palmer, 1996:1). Furthermore, Akmajian, Demers, Farmer and Harmish, 2001:227 said that the study of linguistic units and their principles of combination

would not be complete without an account of what these units mean, what they are used to talk about and communicate. As part of a language's grammar, like phonology, morphology, and syntax, semantics is included in accounting for permissible conclusions about a language. Often, grammar describes what native/fluent speakers know of their language- their linguistic competence, and how well they can use the language – their linguistic performance. The description of meaning is a necessary part of the description of a speaker's linguistic knowledge (i.e. the grammar of his language must contain a component that describes what the speaker knows about how meaning is conveyed in his language. A language is often referred to as an arbitrary and conventional system of communication, a system of conveying messages. Moreover, communication and expression of ones feelings can be accomplished both by gestures and the use of words/terms basically as both of them convey meanings. Therefore to language, it is necessary to describe these meanings. Hence, a description of any aspect of a language is either a partial or complete description of the meanings of actions that the language can help the speaker or user convey. Words, phrases, sentences, and even gestures are the levels of language that carry meaning. Sentences and phrases are made of words. The word is the basic unit of semantics. Perhaps the semantic property of words (and morphemes) in general depicts meaningfulness or meaninglessness.

2.1.3.1. APPROACHES TO SEMANTICS

Two approaches to semantics were introduced in a quest to cover semantic scopes of language, and they are:

- a. The Formal Semantic Approach
- b. The Cognitive Semantic Approach

Because formal semantics describes the meaning of language using a descriptive apparatus of formal logic, the formal semantics approach is affiliated with the classical philosophical semantics. The core of formal semantics is basically to describe the meaning of natural language in a formal, precise and unambiguous way. This approach to meaning study concerns itself on how words are related to objects in the world and how combinations of words preserve (or not) the truth-conditions of their components. This approach is said to follow the Frege's principle of compositionality which states that "the meaning of the whole is a function of the meanings of the parts". It believes simply that a sentence's meaning is dependent on the individual meanings of the words that come together to make up the sentence.

Meanwhile, the cognitive approach to semantics is also known as "unstructural, contextual, or more so, psychologically oriented semantics". This approach refutes the conditions of object and relativity in semantics because it does not view the physical structure of language nor the physical objects referred to as important or useful for the description of the meaning of language and also, it disregards such

notions as strict compositionality and truth values. Thus, cognitive semantics seeks to examine semantics by dealing with psychological, biological and even cultural issues. The cognitive semantic approach is less bothered about notions of reference, rather postulated claims that will better explain semantics as perceived by the cognition.

2.1.3.2 THE CONCEPT OF AMBIGUITY IN LANGUAGES

Kampson (1977:80) defined ambiguity as “a grammatical phenomenon in which an expression can be given more than one interpretation”. Ambiguity is similar to polysemy in the sense that one stretch of utterance is giving more than one meaning. Ambiguity in language is a linguistic device which implies more than one meaning or interpretation to language components thereby impeding successful communication. The concept of ambiguity has been widely discussed in semantics. Hurford and Heasley (1995:121) are of the opinion that “a word is ambiguous when it has more than one sense and a sentence is ambiguous if it has two (or more) paraphrases which are not in themselves paraphrases of each other”. The explanation above points to the fact that ambiguity is a semantic property of words or sentences. Crystal (1980:23), Franklin and Rodman (1974:167) share the same view about ambiguity. They see ambiguity as a word or a sentence expressing more than one meaning.

2.1.3.2.1 TYPES OF AMBIGUITY IN IGBO LANGUAGE

Ambiguity takes different operating forms, hence, types of ambiguity. They are as follows:

(a) Lexical ambiguity

This is where different words that have the same form can have multiple meanings. Fromkin, et al (2003:586) state that lexical ambiguity refers to multiple meanings of sentences due to words that have multiple meanings. Take this sentence for an example;

He was **'lying'** on a stack of Bibles.

Examples of lexical ambiguity in the Igbo language are:

- i) 'ara' – 'breast/madness'
- ii) 'abu` – 'armpit/poem'
- iii) `agwa` - 'beans/character'
- iv) 'anwu – 'sunshine/mosquito'
- v) 'ilu' – 'proverb/ bitterness'
- vi) `agba` – 'jaw/arthritis, appointment'-(idiomatic),
- vii) `ude' – 'fame/ pomade'
- viii) `akwa` – 'bed/ bridge'
- ix) 'igwe – 'king/sky'

x) 'igwe` –‘iron/bicycle’,

(b) Phonological Ambiguity

In this form of ambiguity, emphasis is given to spoken words. In the Igbo language, when the expressions that have similar phonological realization are written down properly, they are disambiguated because Igbo has principles of writing; otherwise the meaning is tampered with. Some of the instances are as follows:

“Onye mma adighi ya/ Onye mma adighi ya” – can be interpreted as: ‘The person I know is not around/ The seller of knife is not around’.

“Amu siri ya ike/ A mu siri ya ike” – can be interpreted as: ‘His penis is strong/ He was born strong’.

c) Structural Ambiguity

This is another form of ambiguity occurs in grammatical structure of languages such as in phrases, clauses or sentences, thus leaving some structures prone to different interpretations. Fromkin, et al (2003:122) affirm that many sentences in all languages exhibit such ambiguities. Consider the following sentence that was used for a classified advert;

‘For sale: an antique desk suitable for ladies with thick legs and large drawers.’

In the first advert, the humorous reading comes from the grouping... (for ladies with thick legs and large drawers) as opposed to the intended...(for ladies) (with thick legs and large drawers) where the legs and drawers belong to the desk. The second example is not different either. Because these ambiguities are a result of different structures, they are instances of structural ambiguity.

Finegan (2004:151) points out that structural ambiguity can also occur in the organization of sentences, example:

‘She gave her phone to her boyfriend in Orlu.

Although the individual words are not ambiguous, these words strung together have more than one possible interpretation.

The above sentence can be paraphrased as

- i) It was to her boyfriend in Orlu that she gave her phone.
- ii) It was in Orlu that she gave her phone to her boyfriend.
- iii) In Orlu, she gave her phone to her boyfriend.

Now let’s consider some examples in Orlu based Igbo.

- iv) Onye ala, puo n’ebe a
Mad person, get out.

While this may sound like an outright insult/ abuse expression to a reader, it is worthy to note that this phrase is ambiguous in nature and not only that, the speaker’s

intended meaning can only be derived if the phrase is put in context. Let's do a quick one. Say the speaker is a man with his friend (a man too) and as they discuss and laugh, the speaker offers that statement. In this context, this abusive expression' no longer performs the function of abuse, rather it was used to express a deep level of familiarity.

So this study shall critically examine abusive expressions such as this and even beyond, stating how context affects them, their different meanings, and also attempt at classifying them by any common feature they possess.

2.2 PREVIOUS STUDIES

Prior to this study, a lot of studies have been carried out which had semantics as their linguistics focus. While some are based on structural semantics, others contextual based, and some others had other subtopics of semantics as their core. This section shall reveal some of these previous works that are relevant to this present study. For Hurford and Heasley (1995:121) "a word is semantically ambiguous when it has more than one psychological reference and a sentence is ambiguous if it has two (or more) paraphrases which are not in themselves paraphrases of each other".

Okoawo (2017) "A Linguistic Analysis of 'Gbé' in Esan", was a semantic study of the ambiguous abusive expression word 'gbé'. This work shows 'gbe' not just to be a word with different meanings, but also share more than one word class –

as a verb and an intensifier. Amongst these meanings, the word also functions as an abusive expression in the language as she presented data that revealed this. As a verb, the word means ‘kill’, ‘dance’, and ‘beat’, and it also showed how they can function both transitively and intransitively. The work examined also the syntactic environment in which ‘gbé’ can occur in a sentence. It was observed that for ‘dance’, ‘gbé’ occurs at the initial, middle, and final position. For ‘beat’, it occurs at the middle and final clause positions, and for ‘kill’, it occurs only at the middle position of a sentence, while for intensification, it only occurs at the clause final position. Not just sentential position, but context also so functions greatly to explain the difference in meaning it can convey.

Ugochukwu (2014) in his semantic work “Ambiguity in the Igbo language” did a study of the concept of ambiguity in Igbo language. He described the three types of ambiguity (phonological, lexical, and structural) in the language and came up with claims about the language’s nature of ambiguity. Some of these claims include the causes and implications of ambiguity in the language. He says that “Ambiguity can arise through the ascription of multiple meanings to single words. This is the case of homonymous and polysemous words. The assignment of different syntactic structure to a sentence also gives rise to ambiguity. This is where a sentence could be interpreted in several ways.

From the data we shall present and analyze in the following chapters, it is clear that a lot of abusive expressions in Orlu dialect of Igbo language express more than one meaning.

Generally, when a speaker uses ambiguous words or sentences, he/she does not consciously entertain their unintended meanings; although there is psycholinguistic evidence that when one hears ambiguous words, one momentarily accesses and then rules out their irrelevant sense. Consider this abusive expression as an example:

Ndu gi a gbala uka

Life you has gone sour

This expression could be given more than one interpretation which may not be what the speaker or writer has in mind. Thus it could mean;

a) Your life has gone sour

b) You are spoilt

Although both meanings may portray the expression as ‘abusive’, in some context of use, this may not be the case.

Ugochukwu (2014:179) presented some implications of ambiguity in Igbo amongst which are humor (by double meaning), embarrassment, and anger on the hearer's or addressee's part. The major findings of his work are summarized below:

- a) Ambiguity is a linguistic condition that is common in language.
- b) It is a fact of linguistic life, hence its use is often unintentional.
- c) When ambiguity occurs in a sentence, a lot of linguistic problems are created. For instance, meanings are impaired, communication marred and confusion is created.
- d) While structural ambiguity emanates from the grammatical analysis of a sentence, lexical ambiguity arises from the use of words that have more than one interpretation. Phonetic ambiguity arises from the phonological properties (production) of the expressions involved.
- e) Ambiguity as a linguistic device can be used for comic effect through a genuine intention to confuse.
- f) It can serve as a source of embarrassment and anger especially when used out of context.
- g) Some idiomatic expressions in Igbo are ambiguous.
- h) The study of ambiguity in Igbo language has not been subjected to extensions.

2.3 THE CONCERNS OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The enormous body of literature on Igbo language that has been published shows that many aspects of the language have been visited by both Igbo language scholars and other linguists. Both structural and the functional areas of this language have been studied and outstanding results discovered. However, this work seeks to, in addition to the language's scholarship, contribute immensely to both the structure (semantics) of the language and also the functions of the language as data presented and analyzed will show how native/fluent speakers of the language use it in expressing situational dissatisfaction which in most cases resort to anger and abuses. In line with this, this study presents itself as a comprehensive study to the issue of abusive expressions and their meanings; structurally and contextually.

CHAPTER THREE

DATA PRESENTATION

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter shall present the data collected for this research. These data shall be categorized under the various appropriate categories to aid an easy analysis and understanding in the next chapter.

3.1 ABUSE TERMS ASSOCIATED WITH ANIMALS

The following are abuse terms associated with animals as used in the Igbo language community.

Igbo abuse term	Gloss
1. <i>Átúrú</i>	Sheep
2. <i>Ánú</i>	Animal
3. <i>Ézì</i>	Pig
4. <i>Ánú ohia</i>	Bush animal
5. <i>Íkítá</i>	Dog
6. <i>Íkítá árá</i>	Mad dog
7. <i>Íkítá n'àgbó ujá</i>	Barking dog
8. <i>Éwú</i>	Goat
9. <i>Òbògwù</i>	Duck
10. <i>Úsú</i>	Bat

- | | | |
|-----|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 11. | <i>Ókpòrókó</i> | Stockfish (an extremely slim person) |
| 12. | <i>Énwé</i> | Monkey (ugliness) |
| 13. | <i>Ágwó</i> | Snake |
| 14. | <i>Ágú</i> | Lion |
| 15. | <i>Ísì ézì</i> | Pig's head |
| 16. | <i>Ányá ñkítá</i> | Dog's eyes |
| 17. | <i>Ñkítá ràchá gí ányá</i> | May dog lick your eyes |

3.2 ABUSE TERMS ASSOCIATED WITH EVIL

Some abuse terms in Igbo language are associated with evil. Some of them are:

- | | | |
|-----|----------------------|--------------|
| 18. | <i>Ekwéñsú</i> | Devil |
| 19. | <i>Ájó mmúó</i> | Evil spirit |
| 20. | <i>Ñwá ábùrù onu</i> | Cursed child |
| 21. | <i>Ájó ífé</i> | Bad thing |
| 22. | <i>Ájó mmádu</i> | Evil person |
| 23. | <i>Úsú</i> | Bat |
| 24. | <i>Ámósu</i> | Witch/wizard |
| 25. | <i>Mmúó</i> | Ghost |
| 26. | <i>Ùchù</i> | Cursed |

27. *Ájó mmúó jí gí áká* You are possessed by an
evil spirit.

3.3 ABUSE TERMS ASSOCIATED WITH HUMAN ATTRIBUTES

It was observed that one of the techniques by which most abuse terms are used is to associate them with human attributes. Below are some of the abuse terms in Orlu community which are associated with human features.

28. *Ónyé àsí* Liar
29. *Ónyé òkpì* Stingy person
30. *Àpkíríógológó* Long throat
31. *Òmà òkè yà, omà òkè ònyé òzó* Self centred person
32. *Ísé úkwú* Big head
33. *Ítì íké (strong ears)* Stubbornness
34. *Èzíghí ézì* Irresponsible
35. *Ónyé íwé* Angry person
36. *Ónyé ná àmárò ihe* One who knows
nothing
37. *Àkpà ní* Glutton
38. *Èfùlefu* Lost one / Worthless
being

39.	<i>Ónyé árá</i>	Mad person
40.	<i>Ónyé ìbèribè</i>	Useless person
41.	<i>Ónyé ñzúzú</i>	One who misbehaves
42.	<i>Ónú íkpútú</i>	Wide mouth
43.	<i>Áká èkpèntá</i>	Leprosy hand
44.	<i>Ónyé óshí</i>	Criminal
45.	<i>Ókpó</i>	Fool
46.	<i>Ngwóló</i>	Cripple
47.	<i>Ìtì</i>	An unintelligent person
48.	<i>Úlé</i>	Lazy
49.	<i>Èkwúrèkwú</i>	Talkative
50.	<i>Ézé ùlé</i>	Decayed teeth
51.	<i>Ólùkú</i>	Fool
52.	<i>Ónyé áfó úkwú</i>	Pot bellied person
53.	<i>Àkpà ákpú</i>	Bag of akpu/ Fat
	person	
54.	<i>Ónyé nsògbú</i>	Trouble maker
55.	<i>Òchó òkwú</i>	Disturber
56.	<i>Ónyé ìbèribè</i>	Idiot

- | | | |
|-----|---|-----------------------|
| 57. | <i>Ónyé né nwé ònà</i> | Bastard |
| 58. | <i>Òjì òsì émé égó</i>
feaces at charity | One who donates |
| 59. | <i>Ímí òhó</i> | Wide nose |
| 60. | <i>Òfèkè</i> | Dullard/unwise person |
| 61. | <i>Ónyé nkwútò</i> | Blasphemer |
| 62. | <i>Ányá ókwú</i> | Greed |

Presented above are data gathered which show terms for abuses which the Igbo people of Orlu community employ to express their displeasure,

3.4 OTHER FORMS OF ABUSES IN ORLU COMMUNITY

Below are other terms for abuses which are being used in the language community. The forms and use of these abuse terms varies from one context to another. Some of them are:

- | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 63. | <i>Álú</i> | Abomination |
| 64. | <i>Árá gbagbuo gi</i> | May madness strike
you |
| 65. | <i>Òtòlò gbá gí</i> | May diarrhea strike you |
| 66. | <i>Ányá nyùkwá gí</i> | May you go blind |
| 67. | <i>Égbè ígwè gbàgbúo gí</i> | May thunder strike you |
| 68. | <i>Ájó mmúó jí gí áká</i> | You are possessed by |

- | | | |
|-----|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| | | an evil spirit. |
| 69. | <i>Òjì òsí èmé égo</i> | One who donates
feaces at charity |
| 70. | <i>Chúkwú búó gí ónú</i> | May God curse you |
| 71. | <i>Íkítá ràchá gí ányí</i> | May dog lick your eyes |

This chapter has presented the data on the various abuse terms present in the language community. In the following capter, we shall discuss these data with sentencial examples showing their meanings, uses, and different factors which may influence the speaker's choice of abuse term.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter shall entail a discussion and analysis of the data presented in the previous chapter. These analyses will reveal the nature of the concept of abuse terms, their meanings and use by the Orlu people of Igbo community.

These data shall be discussed by grouping them into different categories.

Below are some of abuse terms used in the language community:

4.1 ABUSE TERMS ASSOCIATED WITH ANIMALS

In the Orlu part of Igbo community as well as other parts, abuses basically come in the form of animal names. Humans go as far as referring to others as animals depending on the animal which best fit the reason for the abuse. Consider the following examples:

Igbo abuse term

1. Átúrú

Gloss

Sheep

2. Ánú

Animal

- | | | |
|-----|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 3. | <i>Ézi</i> | Pig |
| 4. | <i>Ánú ohia</i> | Bush animal |
| 5. | <i>Íkítá</i> | Dog |
| 6. | <i>Íkítá árá</i> | Mad dog |
| 7. | <i>Íkítá n'ágbóùjá</i> | Barking dog |
| 8. | <i>Éwú</i> | Goat |
| 9. | <i>Òbògwù</i> | Duck |
| 10. | <i>Úsú</i> | Bat |
| 11. | <i>Ókpòrókó</i>
slim person) | Stockfish (an extremely |
| 12. | <i>Ènwè</i> | Monkey (ugliness) |
| 13. | <i>Ágwó</i> | Snake |
| 14. | <i>Ágú</i> | Lion |

15. *Ísí ézì* Pig's head
16. *Ányá ñkítá* Dog's eyes
17. *ñkítá ràchà gị anà* May dog lick your eyes

The data presented above shows terms in Igbo which the language users employ in abusing themselves as a form of expressing their displeasure or dissatisfaction over an act. Consider the following sentences;

- a. Speaker A: Amara biko nyem akpa m, i ne me ka **ewu**

Amara please give me my bag, you are acting like a goat

- b. Speaker A: Gini ka **ewu** ahu ne me n'eba?

What is that goat doing there?

Speaker B: Onye ka i na kpo ewu?

Who are you calling a goat?

Speaker A: O wu Amadi na

It is Amadi

- c. Speaker A (shouting at speaker B): **Ezi** puta n'eba!

Pig leave there!

- d. Speaker A: Anayo ajoka, o dika **enwe**

Anayo is too ugly, he looks like a monkey

- e. Speaker A: Ele umu Ngozi?

Where are Ngozi's children?

*Speaker B: Amakwa m. Odika ha puola, umu **nkita** ahu*

I don't know. It is as if they have left, those dog's children The sentences above present few examples on how abuses are used in the Orlu community. Expressly, it is seen that the language users employ animal names as a major form of abuse. When using this form of insult,

the speaker's intention is to equate the speech recipient with the qualities of the animal being called.

It is worthy of note that this form of abuse is the most common form of abuse in the Igbo culture. Like every other forms of abuse, these forms are mostly descriptive. What this means is that, the abuser describes the abused with features of the animal he/she mentions. Some examples to buttress this descriptive nature of abuses in Igbo are seen in data (11), and (12) above. In the former, we observed that one is being called 'okporoko' which is the language's term for dried stockfish. Explaining this fish, an okporoko has no flesh or better put, all the flesh in the fish has been dried, making the fish look more bony than fleshy. So when one is abused with the term 'okporoko', it is most likely because the person is skinny. Scarcely so or never is a fat or chubby person insulted with that term. This shows that insults in this form are mostly descriptive. The same goes for the data in (12) where monkey is used to express a high level of ugliness.

From the above, when an abuser abuses a person with an animal name, they are only likening one or more characteristics of the animal to the person and not the entire animal. Consider the table below.

Animal Names as Abuses	Semantic connotation
Ezi (Pig)	Dirtiness

Enwe (Monkey)	Ugliness
Okporoko (Stockfish)	Tiny
Agwo (Snake)	Cunny
Aturu (Sheep)	Foolishness

The table above shows how the characteristics of animals are used as abuse terms in Igbo language community. When these words are used as abuses it is their semantic connotation that the abuser intends to communicate to the abuse. So if in the cause of a heated argument, one speaker calls the other one 'ezi', he/she means that the other is a very dirty person, and if called a monkey, he/she is referred to as ugly. This is the sense correlation in using animal names as forms of abuse.

Another phenomena discovery found in the cause of data collection is the fact that not all animal names are used as abuses. On the other side of the spectrum, some animals are actually used as honorifics and praise terms in the Igbo language community. An example of this is seen in data (14). For 'Agu' - lion, the cognitive connotation is that of strength, agility, and pride. For this reason, when someone is called an 'agu' he is mostly being praised rather than abused, hence the term is used for men of valor, men with great achievements and of course, royalty. Just like in the above case, a description and a likening of a lion's features still takes place here. Following this explanation, we can rightly say that

not all animals are used as abuses, some are praises depending on the qualities and perception of the animal.

Lastly, there exists cases where some parts of an animal are used as abuses as opposed to the use of the whole animal. Consider data (6), (7), (15), and (16).

f. Speaker A: Gini ka i na ele, lekwa anya gi ka **anya nkita**

What are you looking at? Look at your eyes like dog's eyes

g. Speaker A: Okwa m gwara gi?

I told you right?

Speaker B: Gwara m gini?

Told me what?

*Speaker A: Si na Amara n'ebu isi ya ka **isi ezi***

That Amara carries her head like a pig's head

h. Speaker A: Biko wepu anya nkita gi na iri m

Please remove your dog eyes from my food.

In these data, we notice that some parts of an animal can also be used as an abuse or insult term. This case is just a simple case of simile where objects are directly likened to other objects due to shared features.

4.2 ABUSE TERMS ASSOCIATED WITH EVIL

In the Orlu community, we observed quite a number of abuse terms which have some negative spiritual affiliations. Below are some of these abuse terms;

- | | | |
|-----|---------------|--------------|
| 18. | Ékwénsú | Devil |
| 19. | Ájó mmúó | Evil spirit |
| 20. | Íwá ábùrù ónú | Cursed child |
| 21. | Ájó ífé | Bad thing |
| 22. | Ájó mmádù | Evil person |
| 23. | Úsú | Bat |
| 24. | Ámósú | Witch/wizard |
| 25. | Mmúó | Ghost |

- | | | |
|-----|--------------------|---|
| 26. | Ùchù | Cursed |
| 27. | Ájó mmúó jí jí áká | You are possessed by an

evil spirit. |

Listed above are some of the most common terms for abuses in the Orlu community in Imo state. These abuse terms have embedded in their semantics some spiritual connotations which are mostly negative and it is this property that qualifies them to be used as abuse terms in the speech community. These terms are used to refer to people in the community who perform extremely badly. During the course of data collection for this work, it was observed that these terms are the most scarcely used forms of abuse in the community. This may be because of the nature of the abuse terms and the spiritual inclination they may have. Hardly will one find people on the streets abusing themselves with those terms as compared to the abuse terms associated with animals and otherwise. These terms are employed in speech acts like every other abuse term, however, they are considered to be more heavy than others. This is due to their spiritual affinity. It was observed that one doesn't necessarily have to be spiritual before one can use these terms or be referred to by them, the choice of abuse terms used in a speech act is completely participant-dependent.

Consider the following speech extracts;

i. Speaker A: Biko puo n'eba, **ajo mmuo**, e choro iri nwa gi?

Please leave there, evil spirit, do you want to eat your child?

Speaker B: I na kpom **ajo mmuo**, gi wu **ekwensu**.

Are you calling me an evil spirit, you who is a devil

j. Speaker A: Nne gi bu **amosu**, ya mere unu enwe ego

Your mother is a witch, that's why you people are poor These examples above show how these kinds of abusive terms are used in Igbo. They are not terms one is bound to hear everyday on the streets as they are particularly used in heated arguments most common amongst adult women. This set isn't that common amongst men and youngsters also.

4.3 ABUSE TERMS ASSOCIATED WITH HUMAN ATTRIBUTES

The most common of all sets of abuses that was observed are those associated with human attributes. These terms are common because their creation happens to be infinite and their use sparse across individuals of different age ranges, social and economic status. The people of Orlu community, like other

humans in the world, randomly create terms to either abuse or mock themselves easily. Consider the following data;

28.	<i>Ónyé àsí</i>	Liar
29.	<i>Ónyé òkpì</i>	Stingy person
30.	<i>Ápkírìógólógó</i>	Long throat
31.	<i>Òmà òkè ya, òmà òkè Ónyé òzó</i>	Self centred person
32.	<i>Ísí úkwú</i>	Big head
33.	<i>Ìtì íké (strong ears)</i>	Stubbornness
34.	<i>Ézíghí ézì</i>	Irresponsible
35.	<i>Ónyé íwé</i>	Angry person
36.	<i>Ónyé ná àmárò íhé</i> nothing	One who knows
37.	<i>Àkpà òrì</i>	Glutton
38.	<i>Éfùlefú</i>	Lost one / Worthless being
39.	<i>Ónyé árá</i>	Mad person
40.	<i>Ónyé ìbèrìbè</i>	Useless person
41.	<i>Ónyé òzúzú</i>	One who misbehaves
42.	<i>Ónú òkpútú</i>	Wide mouth
43.	<i>Áká èkpèntà</i>	Leprosy hand

44. *Ónyé óshí*

Criminal

45. <i>Ókpó</i>	Fool
46. <i>Ìngwóló</i>	Cripple
47. <i>Ìtì</i>	An unintelligent person
48. <i>Úlé</i>	Lazy
49. <i>Èkwúrkwú</i>	Talkative
50. <i>Ézè ùlé</i>	Decayed teeth
51. <i>Ólùèkú</i>	Fool
52. <i>Ónyé áfó úkwú</i>	Pot bellied person
53. <i>Àkpà ákpú</i>	Bag of akpu/ Fat person
54. <i>Ónyé ñsògbú</i>	Trouble maker
55. <i>Òchó òkwú</i>	Disturber
56. <i>Ónyé íbèribè</i>	Idiot
57. <i>Ónyé né nwé ñnà</i>	Bastard
58. <i>Òjì ñsí èmé égó</i>	One who donates feaces at charity
59. <i>Ímí òhó</i>	Wide nose
60. <i>Òfèkè</i>	Dullard/unwise person

61. Ónyé ñkwútò Blasphemer
62. Ányá úkwú Greed

Presented above are data gathered which show terms for abuses which the Igbo people of Orlu community employ to express their displeasure towards one another. The gloss presented with these data show the semantic connotations of these abuse terms, however it is due to note that the ways these terms may be used in speech acts greatly differs. For this kind of abuse which seeks to ridicule someone's bodily/physical appearance, the speech settings and speech participants are a great determinant for the semantic implications of these abuse terms. Let's discuss some data collected in the course of field work;

- k. Speaker A: I cho iri ka icho ka m wetere gi mmiri?

Do you want food or should I bring you water?

Speaker B: **Onye nsogbu** biko wete nke odo

Trouble maker please bring the other one.

- l. Speaker A: **Onye iberibe** wete kwa ego mo

Idiot bring me my money

m. Speaker A: Gini ka isi i choro i gwa m

What did you say you wanted to tell me?

*Speaker B: I na eri ka iri, lekwa aru gi, **akpa akpu***

You eat too much, look at your body, fat person

n. Speaker A: O bu gini ka mere gi ka iji na eti

What did I do to you that's making you shout?

*Speaker B: **Onye asi**, amam si o bu gi nwere ego m Liar, I*

know it was you who took my money

o. Speaker A: I nwe olu maka i bu **onye afo ukwu**

You are jobless because you are a pot bellied person

p. Speaker A: **Onye ara**, biko hapu dim. Biko, ejim Chineke yor gi

Mad person please leave my husband alone. Please,

I'mbegging you with God

Speaker B: **Onye ne nwe nna**, owu otua ka ha nemeBastard,
that's how they behave.

q. Speaker A: Okwa unu afugu **onye mkpi** a, o choro ife nine

*Hope you all have seen this stingy person, he wants
everything*

Speaker B: Lekwa gi, **onye iberibe**.

See you, useless person.

r. Speaker A: Biko wepu **isi ukwu** gi n'eba

Please take out your big head from there

Speaker B: Hapu m aka, i na nu ife, **nti ike** gi ga eti gi na nogbu kita *Leave
me alone, you don't hear word, this stubbornness of yours will
put you in trouble now*

The sentences above reveal how abuses are being used in the language community as well as their semantic inclination. Under this kind of abuses, we notice that they are both descriptive and metaphoric. Descriptive in the sense that abuses are formed by describing a feature of someone and metaphoric in its comparison nature. The people of Orlu community compare people they intend to

abuse with other people of things with which they perceive share some features. This comparison is mostly done metaphorically. To further buttress this point, take data (53) as examples seen in (m) above. In this case, the person being abused is referred to as 'akpa akpu' (bag of garri) which is big and swollen in nature. This metaphoric form of abuse needs no further explanations to the abused as it is a very common abuse technique in the language community and beyond.

In addition to the above, it is worthy to note that this abuse form is equally used as a form of mockery, and it has a wider use than the others discussed above.

OTHER FORMS OF ABUSES IN ORLU COMMUNITY

Consider the data below;

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 63. Árú | Abomination |
| 64. Árá gbagbuo gi | May madness strike
you |
| 65. Òtòlò gbá gi | May diarrhea strike you |
| 66. Ányá nyúkwá gi | May you go blind |
| 67. Égbè ígwè gbàgbúo jí | May thunder strike you |
| 68. Ájó mmúó jí jí áká | You are possessed by |

an evil spirit.

69. Òjì nsíè mé égó

One who donates

feaces at charity

70. Chúkwú búó gi ónú

May God curse you

71. Nkítá ràchá gi ányí

May dog lick your eyes

The data presented above in this category are abuses terms and phrases

which was observed and collected during the course of data collection for this research. With their semantic connotation presented beside them, these terms were employed by speakers on Igbo language in uncomfortably heated situations where a speech participant happens to insult another speech participant. This chapter will therefore not be complete without adding them to the body of data.

4.4 THE ROLE OF CONTEXT IN DETERMINING THE MEANING OF AN ABUSE TERM.

In the previous chapter of this work, it was established that this entire semantic study will be carried out using a theoretical framework known as the Contextual theory of meaning. This is a theory which helps look at the meaning of

linguistic units from the angle of the context where these terms occur. Simply put, this theory states that meaning is inaccurate without due consideration of context.

For this semantic study, context plays a very vital role. Let it be stated here that the abuse terms presented above are merely names of animals, features of animals, evil connotations, human attributes, etc, and all of these are just words and phrases independently. They only function as abuse terms given that there is an already existing feud or tension leading to an argument or anything of that sort. Other than that, these words/terms are mere words. That already existing feud, tension, or dissatisfaction that speech participants have towards another is the context which warrant the use of the terms above making them function as abuse terms,

Putting that in context, let's take for an example two good friends talking randomly and jokingly, speaker A laughs and calls speaker B 'ewu' - 'goat' as they both laugh and keep walking. The term 'ewu' used there won't be regarded as an abuse term. This is because it was not used in the right context. Does 'ewu' still mean goat? Yes it does, but was it an abuse term there? No it wasn't. The same thing applies to most other terms presented above as cases where these terms do not serve as abuses/insults were observed.

Having said that, the situation, social setting (context) of speech, and how these abuse terms are used are actually more important than the terms themselves.

Simply put, abuse terms are not abuse terms without the appropriate context. These terms may go as far as serving other functions. This is the pivotal role that context plays in the meaning and use of abuse terms as was observed with the Igbo language speakers in the Orlu community. Once again, the meaning of these abuse terms can not be revealed without due consideration to their context of use. Abuse terms and abuses are context-dependent.

This chapter has presented data from Igbo language showing the meaning and use of abuse terms in the language. The data analysed in this chapter resulted in some findings which are summarized and orderly arranged in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter shows the summary of this entire study, conclusions are drawn based on the findings of the study, and the researcher's recommendation is also given.

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

This research is squarely a semantic study in Igbo language using the Orlu dialect and community as a case study. In this work, an analysis was done on the concept of abuse terms in the language. Every chapter from one to the five is an input of the previous chapter. This orderly arrangement hopes to easily help a reader navigate with adequate necessary understanding as onereads through.

Chapter one is the introduction of this research. This chapter introduces and explains the study, the language under discussion, the methodology of this study, scope and limitations of the study, the purpose and significance of this research work as well as the suitable theoretical framework for the study.

Chapter two explained the basic concepts of this study. It also talked about works which have been done before and share some relationship to this present study. Also, the concern of this present study was given by the researcher in this chapter.

Chapter three was a brief and straightforward introduction to the data collected for this study. This chapter presented the data to be discussed in the fourth chapter of this study.

Grouping the collected data into different sets, chapter four described and analysed these data that were gathered for this study and it also showed the findings on the nature, meaning and use of abuse terms in Igbo language. Some of these findings will be orderly summarized below.

5.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The following are the researcher's discoveries on the concept of the semantics and use of abuse terms in Igbo language.

1. The Igbo language has different ways of forming abuse terms. They include the use of animal names, features of animals, evil connotations, human attributes, etc.

2. The use of human attributes are the most common form of all, seconded by the use of animal names. Meanwhile as seen from data collected, not all animals are used as abuse terms, some are used as praises and honorifics depending on the features and society perception of the animal.

3. Regardless of which abuse form is used, one thing is certain, the context must be right, else the abuse term won't be regarded as one.

4. On the innate nature of abuse terms, it was observed that a large majority of these terms are either descriptive or metaphoric. This means that terms are used to abuse people in the community by describing the abused as something or someone awkward, or a complete metaphoric comparison with another object, person, animal, or even situation.

5. Abuse terms in Ibo language may either be words, phrases, or sentences. However form they may take, it is paramount to state here that these terms are not statements of facts, they are, most times, terms to pass one's displeasure to another.

5.3 CONCLUSION

The way language users make use of language elements (words, phrases, sentences etc) in experiencing themselves differs. It is important to note that when people verbally abuse other people, they are only expressing

themselves. Throughout the course of this research we have seen that verbal abuses are simply a bunch of ridiculous terms said in a harsh manner and in a tensioned environment (context) used to express one's dissatisfaction over an act, something, or someone.

A lot of semantic studies only reveal the positive communicative functions of language failing to realise that aspects of language use such as curses/abuses/insults are also parts of human day to day communication. This work therefore shed light into the negative use of language by the Orlu people of the Igbo descent.

5.4 RECOMMENDATION

This work, focusing on one of the negative uses of language, seeks to reveal the nature of verbal abuse in Igbo language. However, at this juncture, this work does not claim to be an exhaustive work on the topic of abuses and abuse terms in Igbo. This is because this work only concentrated on verbal abuses used by speakers of the language, meanwhile there exist other forms of

abuses and insults which are done by no verbal means. In a bid to achieve an exhaustive literature on the concept of abuse in Igbo culture, the research suggests that some more works be done on the non-verbal forms of abuses/insults in the Igbo culture.

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