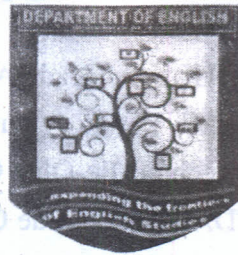


IJES



ILORIN JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
FACULTY OF ARTS
UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN, ILORIN, NIGERIA**



IJES

ILORIN JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES

Number 4, JULY, 2018

ISSN 0795-2309

**IJES is published by The Department of English, Faculty of Arts,
University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.**

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A Pragmatic Analysis of Psalm 23

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Abstract

The philosophical foundation of pragmatics posits that both the intralinguistic and extralinguistic contexts cannot be trivialised in the exploration of meaning of texts. However, existing works from the perspective of pragmatics which explore how language is used to mean in Biblical texts are scanty. The purpose of this study therefore was to employ the Speech act theory proposed by Searle (1976) as well as aspects of Lawal (1997) and **Bangura's (2007) features of context like linguistic, cosmological, socio-cultural, situational and discourse deixis to discover how** the writer of Psalm 23 used those aspects of pragmatics as meaning-inducing components. The analysis revealed that the writer performed especially Informative and Assertive acts to convince the audience, thereby creating plausibility for his claims and boasting. An exploration of cosmological context also revealed that he reflected Christian doctrinal positions about certain phenomena; situational-cum-socio-cultural context indicated he alluded to personal experiences in the historical background; and through discourse deixis, he alluded to events in other portions of the Scripture. More so, the writer exploited features of person deixis to identify and assign roles to discourse participants; while through linguistic context, elements such as modal verbs and sentence structures were used as pragmatic devices to accentuate meaning. On the basis of these discoveries, it was concluded that meanings of Biblical utterances are not locally absolute in the immediate linguistic contexts of the utterances but are also anchored to the inexhaustible contextual sources

external to the utterances. Therefore, the significance of pragmatics to this study is that it provides effective mechanisms for unveiling how language is used to mean in Biblical texts.

Key words: psalm 23, pragmatics, deixis, interlinguistic, extralinguistic

Introduction

There is an ever growing interest in meaning-oriented analysis of both literary and non-literary texts in recent years. Scholars have increasingly realised that the physical and social circumstances which surround utterances significantly shape their meaning. This is why Traugott and Pratt (1980, p.11) point out that "when language is used, it is always used in a context. What gets said and how it gets said is always in part determined by a variety of context factors." Duran, Aguado and Roldan (2005, p.2) also add that "there are several elements that condition discourse and its textual manifestations: situation, context, co-text, interpersonal factor, participants, and appropriateness." Butt, Fahey, Spinks and Yallop (1999, p.11) also subscribe to the viewpoint when they say that "a text is a harmonious collection of meanings appropriate to its context."

The importance of context also applies to the language used in the religious domain. Religion is a domain of human behaviour where language is an important component because religious ideologies are communicated to the audience through the resources of language. This explains why Donovan (1976, p.10) says that "religious language is an affective language because it affects people's feelings, enters into their imagination, influences their emotions and often gives the impression of conveying profound truth." The taxonomies of the language of religion as delineated by Ogunleye and Olagunju (2007, p.107) include: "the language of the Scriptures, the language of sermon, and the language of liturgy and prayer." The Bible is one of the widely read Scriptures among people, especially Christians, across cultures and languages. A Biblical discourse may be considered relevant to linguistic investigation because the Bible is constructed in

a “chunk of language that is written for the purposes of communication among real people in actual circumstances.” (Bloor and Bloor, 1997. p.4). Since the interest of linguists is the application of linguistic tools to the analysis of communicative processes in any domain of language, a Biblical text would be a valid object of linguistic analysis.

The book of Psalms is one of the sixty-six books of the Bible comprising a collection of sacred songs or hymns. The Book of Psalms itself contains one hundred and fifty chapters; each of which has varying lengths of verses. Psalm 23, which is purposively selected for this study, is a commonly recited chapter of the Psalms in Christian worships because of its religious value. Some linguistic studies which investigated the special and unique use of language in Biblical discourses include that of Friday-Otun (2004), Ogunleye and Olagunju (2007), Babalola(2007) and Dada (2012). However, none of these studies has given attention to investigating how the writer of Psalm 23 exploited pragmatic components to negotiate meaning. *The major thesis of this study is that meanings of Biblical utterances are not locally absolute in the immediate linguistic contexts of the utterances but are also anchored to the inexhaustible contextual sources external to the utterances. This study therefore aims at applying pragmatic mechanisms to Psalm 23 in order to discover how language is used to mean in Biblical texts.* The application of pragmatic mechanisms to the analysis of a Biblical text offers a precise objective and scientific account; thus the ideas underlying the text can be illuminated.

Statement of the Problem

Beginning from Crystal and Davy (1969), scholars have carried out linguistic analyses of religions discourses using different linguistic approaches. Relevant studies include that of Friday-Otun (2004) who conducted: “A Pragma-Stylistic Analysis of Proverbs 26, verses 4 & 5”; while Ogunleye and Olagunju (2007) employed the Systemic Functional Grammatical approach to the study of Thematic Structures in Isaiah 49. Dada (2012) also did a Pragma-stylistic Analysis of John 3:16. A more recent linguistic study is that of Al-Ameedi and Abdul-Ameer-Al-A'ssan (2018) whose work is an exploration of “Retribution in

Biblical Texts: A stylistic Analysis". Exploration of meaning in Biblical texts has been the goal of these studies. However, while reading a Biblical text, fuller meaning may be elusive or imprecise if relevant tools, crucial for the interpretation of utterances, are missed. Therefore, the present study is an application of pragmatic insights, which are context-sensitive, to the interpretation of Psalm 23 in order to establish that meanings of Biblical utterances are not locally absolute in the immediate linguistic contexts of the utterances but are also anchored to the inexhaustible contextual sources external to the utterances.

Purpose of the Study

The study aims at employing the Speech act theory proposed by Searle (1976) as well as aspects of Lawal (1997) and **Bangura's (2007) features of context** to carry out a pragmatic analysis of Psalm 23. To achieve this aim, the study attempts to:

- (a) identify how the writer encodes intention through illocutionary acts performed by the utterances;
- (b) explicate how references are made to extralinguistic realities through elements such as Presupposition, Mutual Contextual Beliefs, Cosmological, Situational, and Socio-cultural contexts of utterances with a view to showing how the writer uses those features of context to contribute to meanings by providing external evidences, leading to the interpretation of the text; and
- (c) explore the discourse participants alluded to in the speech events in order to discover how the writer exploits features of person deixis to assign roles to them.

Research Methodology

The research methodology is essentially descriptive and analytical. The data consist of the six verses contained in Psalm 23. Versions of the English Bible abound; however, the version used in this study is the New International Version (NIV) because it is written in modern English. The Speech act theory proposed by Searle (1976) was adopted as a tool for the analysis. In addition, Lawal's (1997) features of context such as Linguistic, Cosmological, Socio-Cultural, and

Situational were incorporated with **Bangura's (2007) features of context such as person deixis and discourse deixis for the exploration of meanings inherent in the various utterances.** The descriptive quantitative study, therefore, involves the employment of the various pragmatic tools for the analysis of the utterances contained in the data.

Theoretical Framework

Leech and Short (1987, p.290) cited in Dada (2012, p.2) define pragmatics as follows:

The pragmatic analysis of language can be broadly understood to be the investigation into that aspect of meaning which is derived not from the formal properties of words and constructions, but from the way in which utterances are used and how they relate to the context in which they are uttered.

According to Wales (1989, p.365) "pragmatics is the study of language use which is concerned with the meaning of utterances rather than a grammatical sentence or proposition." However, Levinson (1983, p.5) sees pragmatics as "the study of language usage." Yule (1996, p.3) defines pragmatics in the following way:

pragmatics is concerned with meaning as communicated by the speaker (or writer) and interpreted by the listener (or reader)...It requires consideration of how speakers organize what they want to say in accordance with who they are talking to, where, when and under what circumstances. Pragmatics is the study of contextual meaning... Pragmatics is the study of how is more communicated than said.

Pragmatics, as it has been defined by various scholars above, advocates for a linguistic analysis of utterances, which considers the wider socio-cultural and ideological contexts in the production and reception of meaning. Some concepts that are germane to a pragmatic analysis of any text are succinctly captured by Alabi (2002, p.154) when he says:

pragmatics is used to refer to a field of language study which takes cognizance of the totality of the contextual variables like intentions,

speech acts, mutual contextual beliefs (MCBs), world knowledge, presupposition, implicatures, inference and/or context (whether sociological, psychological, linguistic, or socio-cosmological).

A single pragmatic tool does not capture certain dimensions of language use in a text. Therefore, a few of influential pragmatic tools (such as speech acts, contexts, mutual contextual beliefs (MCBs), inference and presupposition), which contribute to the processes of exhuming meanings of various utterances analysed in this paper, are discussed next.

Speech Acts Theory

A speech act is one of the influential tools employed for a pragmatic analysis of utterances. Scholars in the field of pragmatics (e.g. Searle (1976), Leech (1983), Yule (1996) and Mey (2001)) are of the view that when language is used, certain acts are being performed. For example, language is used to make assertions, to give warning, to request for things, etc. The three common types of acts which utterances can be said to perform are discussed as follows:

A Locutionary Act: According to Osisanwo (2003, p58), “alocutionary act is the act of saying, producing meaningful sounds, words with certain reference.” Leech (1983, p.199) succinctly captures the definition of illocutionary act in formal notation as: “s says to h that X. (X being certain words spoken with a certain sense and reference)”.

An Illocutionary Act: According to Osisanwo (2003, p58), “an illocutionary can be said to be a non-linguistic act performed through a linguistic or locutionary act.” Thus, a speaker can perform an act of *warning, promising, requesting, stating*, and so on, in the production of his/her utterances.

Perlocutionary Act: Osisanwo (2003, p59) says that “Perlocutionary act therefore, results from a language user's utterance and a product of the hearer's interpretation.” **Thus, a perlocutionary act is the effect that the illocutionary act has on the listener:** such as *misleading, persuading, convincing*, and so forth.

There are varying taxonomies of speech act types provided by theorists. However, one of the most widely used, which is adopted for the analysis of our data, is that proposed by Searle (1976). Searle's five main types of classifying illocutionary acts as reviewed by Leech (1983, pp.205-206) are as follows:

- (1) **Assertives:** An assertive act commits the speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition, e.g. suggesting, boasting, reporting, etc. Mey (2001, p.120) states that "these speech acts are assertions about a state of affairs in the world (hence they are also called 'assertives') and they carry the value 'true' or 'false'".
- (2) **Directives:** A directive act is intended to produce some effect through action, e.g. requesting, advising, ordering commanding, etc.
- (3) **Commissives:** A commissive act commits the speaker to some future course of action, e.g. promising, vowing, offering, etc.
- (4) **Expressives:** An expressive act reveals the psychological state of the speaker towards the state of affair, e.g. thanking, blaming, pardoning, etc.
- (5) **Declaratives:** A declarative act is performed by someone who is institutionally authorized to cause effect, e.g. sentencing, naming, appointing, dismissing, etc.

Contexts

Pertinent to the pragmatic explanations of language is context. Indeed, without the notion of *context*, there would be no theory of pragmatics. This is one reason pragmatics calls for some explicit characterisation and explanation of utterances through a consideration of contextual variables external to the linguistic features of the utterances. This view is buttressed by Schiffrin (1987, p.30) when she posits that:

discourse markers, contextualization cues, and sociolinguistic variables all have a contextualizing function. The markers are clues to the local contexts of utterances, contextualization cues to the interpretive schemas within which communicative intent is situated, and sociolinguistic variables to the social and expressive meanings of self, other, and situation. But because discourse markers are functionally linked to these other devices, the study of all these devices together can provide an emic guideline to speakers' contextualization of language at several different levels at once

Many scholars in the field of pragmatics such as Lawal (1997) and Bangura (2007) have identified a number of features considered to be contextual

variables. **Bangura (2007)** identifies five variables of context which are discussed as follows:

(1) *Person deixis*: This encodes the role of participants in a speech event in which the utterance in question is delivered. *First person* encodes the speaker's reference to her/himself; *second person* encodes the speaker's reference to one or more addressees, and *third person* encodes the reference of persons and entities which are neither speakers nor addressees of the utterance in question.

(2) *Place or Space deixis*: This encodes spatial location *relative* to the location of the participants in the speech events. *Proximal* encodes closeness to speaker, and *distal* encodes non-proximal or sometimes closeness to the addressee.

(3) *Time deixis*: This encodes temporal points and spans *relative* to the time at which an utterance was spoken, or a written message inscribed.

(4) *Discourse or Text deixis*: This encodes reference to portions of the unfolding discourse in which the utterance, which includes the text referring expression, is located.

(5) *Social deixis*: This encodes social distinctions that are relative to participants-roles, particularly aspects of the social relationship holding between speaker and addressee(s) or speaker and some referent.

Lawal (1997, p.155) identifies six hierarchical contexts of an utterance: linguistic, situational, psychological, social, sociological and cosmological. The linguistic context relates to phonological, syntactic and semantic components exhibited by the language used. The situational context refers to the subject matter of discourse in relation to the factors of the physical event including concrete objects, persons and location. The psychological context refers to the mood, attitudes and personal beliefs of the language user. The social context encompasses the interpersonal relations among the interlocutors. The sociological context is concerned with the socio-cultural and historical setting of discourse. The cosmological context covers the world-view or the philosophical position of the language user.

Presupposition, Inference and Mutual Contextual Beliefs

The perception of the speaker's intention by the listener is done through the application of the interrelated notions of Mutual Contextual Beliefs (MCBs).

presupposition, inference and implicature. Lawal (1997, p.153) affirms this view when he says:

the concept of MCBs as proposed by Bach and Harnish.(1979) is quite related to the notion of “implicature” and “presupposition”. MCBs centre around the speaker's intention and the listener's inference. A speech act is performed with the aim that the listener will be able to understand and identify the intention of the speaker. When this happens, the listener puts certain facts together that will assist him to recognize the speaker's intention. These facts, which are well-known to both interlocutors, are referred to as MCBs.

The uniqueness of each of these interrelated concepts—Inference, Presupposition and Mutual Contextual Beliefs—are brought out in the various expositions by scholars as follows.

Presupposition: Osisanwo (2003, p.84) posts that “in speech writing, there are some basic assumptions which the speaker or writer must make concerning the hearer or reader in relation to the subject matter on ground. Such assumptions are made without any challenge from the interlocutors because they are built on assumed common ground.”

Inference: According to Wales (1989, 248), inference is “the process of deduction, of working something out, of making explicit what is unspoken or unwritten.” Osisanwo (2003, p.89) states that “the process allows the hearer (or reader) to deduce meaning from what is said (or written) and what is left on unsaid in the utterance.”

Mutual Contextual Beliefs: Osisanwo (2003, p.88) says that:

Bach and Hanish (1979) brought about the concept of Mutual Contextual Beliefs (MCBs). In a speech event a speaker has an intention and the listener or hearer will make some inference, both of them will base their role on certain facts shared by them. Such facts are called MCBs.

For an objective analysis of data in this paper, the Speech act theory proposed by Searle (1976), as reviewed above, was adopted. This is because the theory takes cognisance of both the speaker's intention and the importance of the

non-immediate context of discourse. In addition, Lawal's (1997) features of context were incorporated with that of **Bangura's (2007)**. Those tools shall be applied where necessary in the section that follows.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This section is devoted to the application of relevant pragmatic tools to the interpretation of utterances in Psalm 23.

Extract 1

The LORD is my shepherd, (Verse 1a)

Illocutionary act:

- (a) The writer commits himself to the truth expressed in the utterance. Therefore, the propositional content of the expression is "assertive act" of claiming.

Contexts:

- (a) **Situational:** The writer is claiming a certain intimacy with the Lord.
- (b) **Linguistic:** The expression is capable of revealing multiple senses which are: (1) the Lord is the servant I employed as a shepherd to provide tender care for my sheep. (Using the analogical expression: "The man is my driver." meaning, the man is the servant I employed to drive my car); (2) I am a sheep, and the Lord is a shepherd who provides tender care for my life. (Metaphoric expression). Basic semantic competence supported with the fact that the true world relationship does not permit a human being to be so described as animal: as revealed in the second sense makes the sense nonsensical and absurd. However, in the claim of intimacy with the Lord, the second sense is intended by the writer. This is further proved in the analysis that follows.
- (c) *Discourse or Text deixis: External evidence is sought in other portions of the Scripture where allusive reference has been made because certain contextual factors which are external to the utterance tend to predetermine the choice of lexical items contained in the utterance. Hence, we shall take recourse to the principle of intertextuality which functions as an important frame of reference in the interpretation of this utterance. The writer of the Psalm encodes the meaning on the assumption and belief that readers know*

his ethno-religious background which forms an important part of his identity. The expression "The LORD is my shepherd." reflects one of the titles given to the Lord God in the Bible. In Psalm 80:1, the Lord God is called "the shepherd of Israel"; showing the cultural affinity which the writer has with the nation of Israel. In addition, external information is that the people of God are described as "the sheep of His pasture" in Psalm 100:3. Also, David, the acclaimed author of Psalm 23, historically, was an experienced shepherd as detailed in 1 Samuel 16:11-13; therefore he uses the experiences of the intensive care given to the sheep to describe God's care for him. The various extra-contextual clues validate the claim that the second sense of the expression is intended by the writer. Thus, the socio-cultural cum-religious-background of the writer inform the choice of the lexeme "shepherd" to describe the intensive care of God, and to reflect his personal intimacy with God.

- (d) Socio-cultural: On the basis of the above logical and acceptable possible meaning provided by the extra-contextual clues, the choice of words in the utterance is a reflection of the writer's historical background.
- (e) Person deixis: The expression "the LORD" generates an implicature that a God exists.
- (f) Cosmological: The referring expression "The LORD" is a reflection of a Christian's unique identity of God. Also, the referring expression "my shepherd" is used to project the Christian philosophical stance that the issue of salvation and intimacy with God is personal. This revelation portends that the choice of human expressions is, in part, shaped by the ideological position of the user. Furthermore, the copula verb "is" (a relational process that describes co-referential relationship between the two referring expressions which are case marked subject and complement respectively) enacts the Christian conception of God as the Beginning and the End in whom other things are enclosed. (Revelation 21:6).

Based on Mutual Contextual Belief, no Christian would seek the alterative interpretation provided at the abstract level of meaning of the utterance. Considering the substantial simplifications in both the structure and the contents of semantic descriptions as revealed in the analysis, it can be claimed that the

meanings of utterances transcend the overt senses conveyed by the lexical items in the semantic net of utterances. In other words, meanings of utterances are not locally absolute to the immediate linguistic contexts because meanings are also anchored to the inexhaustible contextual variables of utterances.

Extract 2

I shall not be in want. (Verse 1b)

Illocutionary act:

- (a) The illocutionary act that is performed in the above utterance is an “assertive act” of boasting. Therefore, the writer commits himself to the truth-condition of the statement.

Contexts:

- (a) Situational: The writer is boasting of abundant living. In other words, the writer boasts that he cannot experience destitution.
- (b) Linguistic: The certainty or assurance of abundant living is expressed in the use of modal verb and its particle “shall not”. This linguistic element is employed as a pragmatic device to reinforce the truth-value of the claim made.
- (c) *Cosmological-cum-Discourse or Text deixis*: Basic knowledge of the Christian doctrinal positions about abundant living, which the writer covertly alludes to in other Biblical texts, is required. It is expressed in other portions of the Bible (Psalm 34: 10) “The young lions lack food and suffer hunger, but they who seek the Lord, none of them shall lack any beneficial thing.” On the basis of personal intimacy, which the writer claims he has with God as revealed in extract 1 above, he boasts therefore that he shall not lack. The writer also indirectly reflects an injunction in Joel 3: 10 that says “Let the weak say, I am strong”. On the bases of these Christian world views, the writer reflects his faith in God by boasting in His (God's) ability to direct his path to the realm of abundance.

Extract 3

He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me

beside quiet waters. (Verse 2) he restores my soul. He
guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's
sake. (Verse 3)

Illocutionary Act:

- (a) The extract above is a pillage of four (4) reporting expressions. Therefore, the category of speech acts which is preponderantly performed in all of them is both expressive and assertive of reporting.

Contexts:

- (a) Situational: Through the various utterances, the writer provides exhaustive information of the intensive care which the Lord bestows on him. Each testimony is a production of strong basis for confirming the truth – conditionality of his earlier claim.

- (b) Linguistic: This is a compound-complex structure that requires only basic competence in English grammar. The structure contains four main clauses which is the characteristic of most compound-complex sentences. A rhetorical device employed in the above extract is the repetition of pronoun “he” which alludes to the Lord God. Through the deployment of this linguistic element, the writer generates an implicature that a God exists.

- (c) *Person deixis*: Existing in the extract above are the following implicatures:

- (i) The *first person* “me” with its variant derivation “my” encodes the writer's reference to himself. (ii) The *third person* “he” with its variant derivation “his” encodes the reference of the Lord God as an active participant. On the basis that the utterances are information-given expressions, the absence of a third person deixis generates an implicature that (iii) there is/are (a) passive participant(s) forming the audience. Thus, the identified person deixes encode the roles of participants in the above extract.

- (d) *Discourse deixis*: The writer of the Psalm encodes the meaning of the first portion of the excerpt above (verse 2) on the assumption and belief that readers know the existing of God's redemptive or restorative promises in Ezekiel 34:13-14 where God says:

I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from

countries and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, ...I will tend them in a good pasture...they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel.

The text, which the extract alludes to, is a promise while the writer encodes his testimony as fulfilment of the promise. The second portion (verse 3) also alludes to Gods' promise in Isaiah 54:14 which says "In righteousness you will be established." Giving the fact that promise precedes fulfilment; it is obvious that the utterances covertly and pragmatically allude to other utterances which cannot be vaguely detached from the current utterances if the fuller meanings would be unveiled. Hence, allusion and intertextuality are important dimensions of pragmatics because they provide additional information to the surface utterances.

Extract 4

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. (Verse 4)

Illocutionary act:

The propositional content of the above extract is the assertive act of boasting.

Contexts:

- (a) Situational: The writer, expressing confidence in the presence of the Lord, because of the defensive instruments in His (God's) possession, is boasting of assurance of safety even in the atmosphere of insecurity.
- (b) Socio-cultural: Basic information about Palestine which informs the choice of some expressions is required. Dake (1991, p.557) in his comment on this verse says that "The deep, waterless, gloomy, world, beast-infested, rocky, dangerous death-lurking ravine so (sic) common in Palestine". Thus, the general atmosphere of terror and fear portrayed here informs the writer's choice of the expression "valley of the shadow of death."

Moreover, the natural shepherd uses the rod to protect and staff to guide his sheep. The writer in his portrayal of the Lord as his shepherd alludes to these defensive weapons as a basis of his assurance in God's security.

(c) Cosmological: The above extract is a reflection of the Christian doctrinal position about the abiding presence (God is omnipresent) of God.

(d) *Discourse deixis*: Other portions of the Scripture provide external evidence which predetermine the choice of lexical items contained in the above utterance. Isaiah 9:2 says "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned." Thus, the writer's boast of assurance of safety is based on the existing provision of God for people in the midst of troubles.

Extract 5

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows. (Verse 5)

Illocutionary act:

The propositional content of the two utterances is the assertive act of reporting.

Contexts:

(a) Situational: The writer is reflecting and testifying both to the certainty of safety in the midst of opposition, and the elevation to eminence.

(b) Linguistic: The extract contains two sentence structures that require only basic competence in English grammar. The first sentence has a simple structure. The structure of the second sentence contains two main clauses which is characteristic of most compound sentences.

(c) *Discourse or Text deixis*: The expression "my enemies" curled from the above extract is not vague because it identifies some persons uniquely in the external world. Knowledge of how God instructed Prophet Samuel, as contained in 1 Samuel 16:7-13, to anoint David, the writer of this Psalm as a king in the presence of his brothers rejected by God on account of their moral perversion is needed here. The expression "anoint my head" in the excerpt above, therefore, alludes to the glorious ascension of David to the

throne as a king in Israel because his godly qualifications distinguished him among his unqualified siblings. Presumably, his qualification and ascension to the throne ignited envy and hostility among his elder brothers who were rejected by God on account of their perverse disposition. This event informs the writer's choice of expression such as "in the presence of my enemies". Therefore, the expression "my enemies" refers to Eliab, Abinadab, Shammah, and other sons. Information such as this is not contained in the surface meaning of the expression. The principle of intertextuality makes meaning becomes fuller and elaborate when information as such is sought from other sources having detailed accounts.

(d) *Cosmological: Basic knowledge about the practice of the Christians in relation to testimony is required. Sharers of testimonies do so in order to express their appreciation to God and perform perlocutionary act of arousing the faith of listeners in the Lord God.* The extract, being a testimony, reveals the attitude of the writer toward the Lord. Therefore, an implicature generated is the writer's expressions of praising and thanking God.

(e) *Person deixis:* The use of multiple personal pronouns as co-reference is noticed in the whole text. This multiple personal pronoun may lead to discrepancy of identity. There is a drastic shift in the use of third person "he" (See extract 3 above) to the use of second person "you" (See extracts 4 and 5 also) both of which allude to the Lord God in the linguistic context of the Psalm. The shift in the use of personal pronouns (from the third person deixis to the second person deixis) conveys an understanding that there are some referents to be indentified uniquely in the world. The use of third person pronoun contained in the preceding extracts indentified uniquely three discourse participants: (1) the Psalmist or the writer, (2) the shepherd (The Lord God) and, (3) the audience witnessing the testimony. However, the use of second person pronoun conveys an understanding that there are two discourse participants: (1) the Psalmist or the writer, and (2) the shepherd to be uniquely indentified as actively involved in the dramatic monologue. The writer's choice of both the second person and the third

person pronouns as co-reference (to the shepherd, the Lord God) may signal the implication of multiple referents because each pronoun conveys a different world's population. The shift in the use of pronoun is a pragmatic device of turn-taking allocation. The writer uses the device to manage the floor. This pragmatic device reveals a withdrawal of the writer from the side of the audience reading/hearing the testimony to the side of the Lord. A withdrawal from the collective audience to the closet of the Lord where he maintains a personal intimacy with Him (God) is a reflection of a Christian doctrine that salvation is personal, not collective.

Extract 6

Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever. (Verse 6)

Illocutionary acts:

- (a) In the first clause of the compound sentence, the propositional content is a prayer because the writer is trying to get the realities of the world to conform to his words. Therefore, the illocutionary act that is performed is directive.
- (b) In the second clause of the compound sentence, the writer commits himself to a certain course of action. Therefore, the illocutionary act that is performed in the utterance is commissive act of promising. The commissive act, however, requires sincerity condition. The present modal verb "will" represents the state of being capable of doing something without actuality of the action at the moment. The verb signals just the state of potentiality without immediate performance. Therefore, the maxim of quality is at stake in the utterance, because we are not certain whether the writer is being truthful (maxim of quality) to his profession or not. We assume by the maxim of quality that if the writer is committed to his profession, he is being sincere in designating the illocutionary force of the utterance as promise of commitment.

Contexts:

- (a) Situational: The writer prays for himself in the first clause of the extract and makes a promise of commitment to abide in God's presence always.
- (b) Linguistic: The extract is a compound structure that requires only basic competence in English grammar. Attention is given to the first clause in the extract. The writer configures abstract objects of the world (goodness and love) which have no semantic affinity with the verb of motion "follow" (functioning as process material) to express his experiences of the world. The fact that, concrete nouns are more accessible, evaluative, perceptible, and descriptive by reference to the physical attributes of their existence, the writer gives the abstract words physical identities. Intuitively, our world experience does not support the ideas that the abstract objects can perform the action attributed to them. However, in the metaphorical artistry of the writer, the lexical rules of the lexemes in the semantic net are legitimately broken in order to convince the readers that the law of nature could be violated through prayer.
- (c) Cosmological-cum-*Discourse or Text deixis*: The utterance in the second clause presupposes the Christian teaching about eternal abiding in God's presence in heaven; therefore, the believers must be steadfastly committed to their profession to get there. The Christian philosophy about life after death in heaven in God's presence is expressed here. The truth conditionality of eternal abiding in God's presence is reinforced in the expression "forever". The expression, "I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever." therefore, is an allusion to the eternal city described in Revelation 21:23 where God's elects "will dwell forever" at the close of ages.

Findings and Conclusion

This study is concerned with the application of the Speech act theory proposed by Searle (1976) as well as aspects of Lawal (1997) and **Bangura's (2007) features of context** to the interpretation of Psalm 23. In terms of speech acts, it was revealed that the writer performed especially Informative and Assertive acts to convince the audience, thereby creating plausibility for his

claims and boasting. Also, an exploration of cosmological context revealed that he reflected Christian doctrinal positions about certain phenomena; situational-cum-socio-cultural context indicated he alluded to personal experiences in the historical background; and through discourse deixis, he alluded to events in other portions of the Scripture. Moreso, it was discovered in Extract 5 in particular that the writer exploited features of person deixis such as multiple pronouns and co-referentiality to identify and assign roles to discourse participants; while through linguistic context, elements such as modal verbs and sentence structures were used in Extract 2 and 6 as pragmatic devices to accentuate meaning. On the basis of these discoveries, it was concluded that assigning correct interpretations to, especially, a Biblical utterance requires an exploration of extra-linguistic realities surrounding the utterance; without which meaning potentials in a Biblical text would be taken at face value. Therefore, the application of pragmatic tools to a Biblical text has enabled us to discover how language is used to mean in biblical texts.

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