

VOICES:

A JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES

A PUBLICATION OF:
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH & DRAMA,
KADUNA STATE UNIVERSITY.

VOLUME 2 • NUMBER 1 • AUGUST, 2023

ISSN: 2408-7475

VOICES:

A Journal of English Studies

Department of English and Drama, Faculty of Arts, Kaduna State University

Vol. 2 No. 1 August, 2023

© Department of English and Drama,
Kaduna State University

VOICES:
A Journal of English Studies
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Published by:
Department of English and Drama,
Faculty of Arts, Kaduna State University
voicesjournal@gmail.com

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ISSN: 2408-7475

Printed by:
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A LEXICO-SEMANTIC READING AND MEANING RELATIONS IN SELECTED CRIME-RELATED EDITORIALS IN *PUNCH* NEWSPAPER

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Abstract

The mass media plays a key role in disseminating information to the populace. Crime-related stories are preponderant in news reports considering the increase of crime rates in recent times and its infiltration in most societies. The Nigerian terrain is not devoid of such law breaking behaviours. Hence, the incessant public awareness, criticism and condemnation of these vices via various hard/online Newspaper reports in the country. How this information is circulated and meaning is achieved via lexical choices is considered pertinent. It is through the significance of this, that, this paper underscored a lexico-semantic reading and meaning relations in selected crime- related editorials in Punch Newspaper. The data for the study consist of five crime-related editorials of online Punch newspaper dailies. The selected editorials were retrieved from the newspaper dailies published between 2020 and 2021. The analysis of the data was subjected to both qualitative and quantitative methodological approaches so as to arrive at the set objectives. The study adopted Adegbija (1989) typology of lexico- semantic variation and meaning relations in the analysis of the data. The study revealed that the English as a second language setting of Nigeria has afforded educated Nigerians or writers of the editorials to construct some lexico- semantic peculiarities of the English language exhibiting local Nigerian flavours which distinguishes it from lexico-semantics of Native speaker's English. The study concluded that the media utilise language in projecting its views on issues of special and national interests while reflecting and representing happenings in the society.

Key words: *Punch newspaper; lexico semantics; crime; Nigeria.*

Introduction

The world is now a global village where people can have accesses to events and happenings in their immediate environment with ease. This is made feasible through the new information media. Trending with the new global world, the mass media, in essence, the newspapers now exploit the popularity of the internet to disseminate information to the public so as to support the hard copy editions of their dailies. As a form of information dissemination, the media is generally seen as the watchdog of the society. It gives a reflection of happenings in the society as well as perception of the people. Udoakah (2006, p.30) asserts, that mass media are part of the production machineries of a nation, and they also serve as lubricants to the economy their lubrication function to the economy is found in the information and education which they provide through news from the radio, television, newspapers, magazines and other printed literatures referred to as the print media.

The print media inform of newspapers and magazines function as journals of record and or opinion. The events of society are recorded daily, weekly or monthly depending on their frequency, albeit in summaries (p.37). The most vital section of a newspaper is the editorial. Editorials are expressions of the views of the editor. It is basically an article written on for the op-ed section of the newspaper or magazines in which an editor expresses an opinion about an important issue facing the city, state or nation. Editorials are basically the voice of magazine the opinion of the news medium on any given issue. It is regarded as an opinion piece that expresses the opinion of the news outlet's editor or publisher.

Lexico semantic variations abound in Newspaper editorials due to the use of educated Nigerian English usage in its presentation as opposed to standard British English. The study examines the use of English language in selected *Punch* Newspaper magazine editorials by employing lexico-semantic features and meaning relations to show how language is manipulated to convey opinion about crime related issues perpetrated by individual and or bodies in Nigeria as presented by the editor(s). It also explicates how readers are able to decode and deduce meaning from the encoded linguistic forms of word choices and constructions.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The Crime Situation in Nigeria

The importance of language in societal development cannot be undermined. The Nigerian sociolinguistic terrain is not an exception as language has performed major functions in the development of all its spheres such as education, communication, and administration as well as, the media. It is pertinent that the essential role of language in the mass media is explored since it is often assumed that language in the media exemplifies societal, cultural and ideological values especially in its ability to lend its voice against depravity.

The subject of crime is mundane in every society whether developed or underdeveloped. Over the years, the crime rate in Nigeria has been increasingly alarming. Studies have shown that the frequency of crime rate in Nigeria ranks 17 among the least peaceful countries in the world, and the third most affected by terrorism based on global terrorism index. Categories of crime in Nigeria ranges from corruption, fraud, money laundering, and kidnapping, etc. which are committed by national bodies and individuals in various sectors. The major factor necessitating the increasing rate of crime especially by the youths is the rise in national income and the concurrent failure of employment generation and poverty alleviation (Osalor, 2009). This has necessitated various platforms, such as news outlets, to bring theses vices to public awareness.

Semantics

Semantics has often been described as the study of meaning, how expression, both written / unwritten are understood and what they stand for in relation to meaning. Palmer (1981, p.1) states that semantics is the technical term used to refer to the study of meaning and since meaning is part of a language, semantics is a part of linguistics. Saeed (2003, p.3) stresses that "semantics is the study of meaning communicated through language" thus, despite its fluid nature (meaning) it still holds a vital position in communication as we often subject ourselves to brain exercise in search of accurate words to express meaning, in order to clarify issues, we ask people to tell us what they mean. Basically, people use language to express an elicit meaning. Babatunde (2007, p. 67) views semantics as the study of meaning which seeks to convey and classify human experience through language and this is in tandem with Leech's (1971, p.4) notion that semantics is the study of human mind through, process cognition and conceptualization which are bound up by the way in which we classify and

convey our experiences of the world through language. Thus, we can describe semantics as essentially dealing with how people express their thoughts and feelings; how meaning is analysed either of words or concepts as it is upheld or agreed in any speech community.

The goals of semantics are provided by Babatunde (2007) as follows: to properly explicate how words and utterances function to convey meaning, especially as regards to the relationship between words and things; to explain the process of understanding word and utterances and the factors involved with understanding; to make available some forms at for the precise representation of meaning at the lexical phrasal, sentential and discourse levels; to provide formal definition of properties that are meaning dependent and also to state the relations between expressions and ; to explicate and characterise how human beings relate utterance to historical, cultural social cultural, political and ideological background experiences.

Lexico-Semantics

The term 'lexico' is derived from lexis, lexicon and lexicology which deals with words in a language in terms of form, meaning and behaviour. According to Jowitt (1999, p. 126) "the lexicon of a language including one word lexemes, phrasal lexemes, idioms, etc. contain hundreds of thousands of items, it is frequently augmented by fresh coinage and importations, and new meanings are constantly added to existing meanings of existing words, while gains are partially offset by obsolescence of some items or of certain meaning of some items." Extending the frontiers of lexis, Adeleke (2010) admits that lexis is the headwords of dictionary entries. The headwords are the base form of words from which other words forms are considered to be derived.

Lexical semantics deals with the study of lexis, it focuses on denotation, lexical relations and lexical universals. In other words, lexico semantics refers to the relationship that words have with one another in the context of use. As a sub branch of semantics, the field of lexico semantics has been described by scholars as the most productive and vibrant area of change is in the level of lexis and meaning. (see Babatunde, 2003).

The English language in Nigeria has indeed experienced and is still experiencing series of transformations via its contact with indigenous Nigerian languages and as a result has acquired some peculiar distinct features which make it appear in

variant to other forms of English in the world. Babatunde (2003, p.81) submits that "As a result of these exposures and other sociolinguistic factors, we now have variations in meaning of the English language used in Nigeria". Bamiro (1994) elaborates on the lexico semantics of Nigerian English by stating that "most differences between Nigerian English and other forms of English are to be found in the innovation of lexical items and idioms and their meanings". Similarly, Adebayo (2012) notes that lexico semantics as English used in Nigeria as a second language and that the socio-cultural indices prompt the variety of English that Nigerians use or speak.

Adegbija (1989, p. 165) identifies six factors that are responsible for lexico-semantic varieties of Nigeria English, which are: social cultural differences between the English and Nigerian people, pragmatic aspect of the dynamics of a multilingual context, the exigencies of varying discourse constraints and modes in English and the indigenous languages, the indomitable, pervasive and omnipresent influence of the media, the standardization of idiosyncrasies and errors, and the predominantly formal medium of the acquisition of English.

Various types of lexico-semantic variation abound. Adegbija (1989) takes the foremost lead by identifying five major classes of lexico semantic variations as transfer, analogy, acronyms, semantic shift or extensions and coinages or neologism. For Bamiro (1994) cited in Adedimeji (2007) ten categories of lexico semantic variation are identifiable to include loan shift, semantic under differentiation, lexico semantic reduplication and redundancy, ellipsis, translation equivalent, analogical creation and coinages. Jowitt (1991, p.136) identifies eight characteristics of popular Nigerian English. They are: local coinages that can form with Standard English morphological principals, extended or restricted meaning of standard English words or expressions, fore grounded standard English words or expressions which have become clichés, words or expression derived from pidgin, loan-words and expressions, slangs and stylistic. Adegbija's (1989) variations are stipulated below:

- *Transfer:* - This occurs when a meaning foreign to English is directly translated into English. (Babatunde 2001) cited in (Adedimeji 2007, p.10). Adegbija (1989, p.171) identifies types of transfer as transfer of meaning (bush meat, outing etc.) transfer of culture (bride price, introduction etc.) transfer of context (sorry, toast) and transfer of pidgin

features (Kola, dash etc.) further example of transfer are 'branch', 'horse head', 'chewing stick'.

- *Analogy:* - This arises when new words are formed on the basis of partial likeness or agreement with the existing words in either a source language or English (Adegbija, 1989, p.172). examples of analogical creation in English are arrange, bursted, head tie, gossiper, etc.
- *Acronyms:* - These are typical Nigerian words from the initial letters of a set of words e.g. WHO (world health organization, PHCN (power holding company of Nigeria)
- *Coinages of Neologism:* - These constitute the invention of totally new forms which can be in three categories (a) the existing stock in English (yellow fever, half current) (b) the existing lexical stock in mother tongues (agbada, tuwo) and (c) the hybridization of the English and lexical items (e.g. Ankara balls, Tokunbo car etc.)
- *Semantic shifts or extension:* - This occurs when the semantic range of words is restricted or narrowed, shifted or extended in Nigerian English. Narrowed words in Nigerian English are vendor, mechanic etc. shifts in meaning occur in words like chase, (woo a lady) escort (to see a guest off) and generalization/extension underline such words as brother, sister uncle, friend (including a stranger) etc.

Meaning relations

Meaning relations addresses the link or relationship between a word and another up to the level of sentence(s) in the process of achieving meaning. In other words, how the sense of an expression relates to and with the sense of other expression. The relationship that exists between words in an expression with respect to meaning can be seen from various perspectives among which are synonymy, antonym, hyponymy, homonymy, and polysemy.

Synonyms are different phonological words which have the same or very similar meanings (Saeed, 2009, p.65). E g. words such as massacre, murder, assassination, slaughter, execute can be described as synonymous to kill. Antonymy is said to focus on the contrast that exists between two expressions or within an expression that is, the relationship that holds between a proposition and its negation. Antonyms are typified into gradable antonyms, e.g. wide and narrow, tall and short. Complementary antonyms e.g. man and woman, alive and dead and relational antonyms which shows relationship e.g. husband and wife.

Hyponymy simply address the relation of inclusion between words or expression. It connotes a situation whereby a word or an expression entails a more general tern or word. e.g. tulips and rose include the meaning of flower. Homonyms are used to refer to word or expression with 'unrelated senses' there are basically two types; Relational homonym and complete homonym. The former occurs when two expressions are the same in meaning but different in form. The latter occurs where expression have the same form and sound with different meanings, e.g. mail as in 'harmour' and as in 'post'. Polysemy is a traditional distinction made in lexicology between homonymy and polysemy. They both deal with multiple senses of the same phonological word, but polysemy is involved if the senses are judged to be related (Saeed, 2009, p.64). Thus, Polysemy has to do with the situation where one word has more than one meaning and consequently more than one referent.

Methodology

Information dissemination is generally provided through the radio, internet sources, television, and newsprints such as newspaper, magazine and other printed literatures. The scope of this research is limited to Editors notes in *Punch* Newspaper which is a private owned newspaper in Nigeria renowned for being one of the highest circulating newspapers especially in the south-western part of the country that ensures balanced reporting. The study examines five (5) crime related editorials of the newspaper which are randomly selected between the months of January, 2020 to July, 2021. The voluminous nature of these editorials has been the reason for the restriction in selection. The editorials are retrieved online from the newspaper's official website. The study adopts Adegbija (1989) typology of lexico- semantic variation to the analysis of the data because of its focus on the context of usage and semantic range. The study also employs meaning relations to the analysis to proffer effective analysis in fully realising the meaning potentials of the word choices. The cultural and linguistic relevance of the language use are also considered germane in the study, this is due to the fact that Nigerian newspapers reportage exhibit an admixture of educated Nigerian English and indigenous languages.

Data Analysis

The data is analysed qualitatively by selecting lexico semantic variations and meaning relations of extracts from the selected *Punch* newspaper editorials. The analysis is based on their respective categories. A quantitative analysis which

consists of simple percentage ratings is subsequently done to support the findings from the qualitative analysis.

Transfer

Transfer deals with the situation whereby meaning of words, phrases or expressions that are not present or cannot be adequately presented in English language are traded or rearranged in manner that would reflect or accommodate the new experience. The different types of transfer variations have been identified as: transfer of meaning, transfer of context, transfer of culture and transfer of Nigerian pidgin features. The instances of transfer of context in the data or editorials are identified and discussed as follows:

Transfer of Context

This variation centers on the transference of situation which a word, phrase or expression do not ordinarily entail. They are words or expressions that are used differently from the denotative sense. In the sixth paragraph of datum 1, *Okada/ Keke taking restrictions beyond rhetoric*, contextual transfer is revealed in the expression:

These tainted officials who undermine public safety and sanity on the roads should be monitored, arrested and made to face the wrath of the law. (Punch, January 31, 2020).

The use of tainted officials in the expression above is an instance of contextual transfer whereby the meaning of taint which is contaminate or pollute is used to qualify the police officers. The editor's use of the adjective to qualify the police officers as opposed to the normal use for the word for the appropriate referent or circumstance indicates the intensity or the gravity of the corrupt practices of the police officer to members of the populace who plough the roads.

Similarly transfer of context is observed in first paragraph of datum 2, *Police callous killing of footballer in Ogun* in the following expression.

Callously, the Nigeria police have wasted another promising life. (Punch, February 26, 2020)

The use of 'wasted another promising life' could be described as transfer of context. In its denotative sense, the word waste is used for the non-living to mean

to use or expend carelessly, extravagantly, or to no purpose. Hence, the notion of an item or thing used carelessly or mercilessly is transferred into the situation of the killing and death of the young footballer by the erring Nigerian police force which goes to buttress the magnitude of the crime as well as justify the meaning communicated by the title of the editorial.

Likewise, contextual transfer could be discerned in paragraph 9 of datum 5, *ICPC's expose of bribery of judges by lawyers* in the expression as we have below:

The two other arms, especially the executive, should wake up and stop treating the congenital deficiency with levity. (Punch, Janurary 10, 2021)

From the above expression, 'the congenital deficiency' could be depicted as transfer of context in relation to its connotative meaning. 'congenital deficiency' literarily means a disorder in the immune system of a human. Its manner of usage in the expression above and in the context of use portends the intensity of bribery and corruption in the judiciary arm of government. Thus, it is deemed necessary that the executive arm of government to wake up to its responsibilities by staying positive, condemning, take necessary actions against and proffering immediate solution to the rot and vices that is eating deep in governmental affairs especially amongst judges and lawyers.

Again in the 10th paragraph of the data, another transfer of context is observed thus:

The NJC should beam its searchlight on judges who have a penchant for issuing frivolous Injunctions, who delay litigations, resume late, go on endless holidays and live above their income. (Punch, Janurary 10, 2021) The phrase 'beam its searchlight' denotatively means throwing a ray of light in a particular direction through a light source. In the context of use, it connotes that the NJC should investigate judges who commit various kinds of misconduct as listed above. This portrays the newspaper as being strongly against the misdemeanors in the judiciary system of the country.

Still on the 10th paragraph of the data, transfer of context is also revealed in the following expression:

The Nigerian bar association should clean its house by suspending the membership of lawyers who cross the line of rectitude (Punch, Janurary 10, 2021)

The act of cleaning a house means to tidy up a house. The connotative meaning of clean its house in this context is to portray the corrupt state of the judiciary in the country and the need for the Nigerian bar association to sanitise the entire system. The Newspaper not changing the narrative throughout the editorial suggests that its strongly advocating change by persistently calling on relevant judicial bodies to curb the rot in the system.

As revealed in earlier instances of contextual transfer, another transfer of context is observed in paragraph 3 of datum 6, *Act now on avalanche of guns and gunmen*:

With their booming guns, bandits have seized control of the North-west, terrorizing the states in the region… (Punch, 16th February, 2021)

The lexeme 'booming' is used in relation to finance or what can be referred as economic boom which means expansion and phases of a business cycle. Using it to qualify guns depicts a contextual transfer which could be described as potential birth of new meanings in the Nigerian culture. Its usage in the context signifies the magnitude of guns possessed by the bandits or gunmen used committing crimes in the country.

Transfer of culture

This form of variation focuses on meaning that is alien to English but present in the indigeneous languages. Egbe (2009, p.286) notes that a conspicuous aspect of transfer is that of culture. Language and culture are like siamese twins. They cannot be divorced from each other. Examples of transfer of culture in the data or editorials are identified and discussed as follows:

In the third paragraph of datum 1, *Okada/ Keke taking restrictions beyond rhetoric*, the expression below, reflects transfer of meaning:

Also, the rate of crimes aided by Okada and Keke keeps rising. (Punch, Janurary 31, 2020)

The lexeme 'keke' in the above expression indicates a transfer of culture. It suggests a transposition of Nigerian language feature. 'Keke' is a Yoruba word meaning tricycle which basically serves as a means of transportation in Nigeria. The editor uses the word to effectively drive home its point to readers irrespective of his or her education and that of the readers.

Also, in paragraph 1 of datum 4, *Abiodun should tame Herders atrocities in Ogun*. Transfer of culture can also be discerned in the following expression:

Even obas and chiefs were subjected to the indignity of flogging by the invading soldiers (Punch, February 1, 2021).

The above is an instance of lexical borrowings from Nigerian indigenous language. The lexeme 'oba' means king or ruler in Yoruba language. Its usage is not in italics or in other graphological distinctive markers. This suggests the extent to which the word is used as part of the English vocabularies even among Educated Nigerians. The retention of this local language title in place of king is to replace its local and semantic distinctiveness. Also, the use of the word 'chief' is a traditional title in Nigeria. In the Yoruba tradition for instance, it means 'ijoye'. The chief supports the king in carrying out its traditional duties. Hence, 'chief' and 'king' are collocates.

Another instance of transfer of culture is exemplified in paragraph 12, datum 2, *Police callous Killing of footballer in Ogun* in the following expression:

The President, Major General Muhammadu Buhari (retd.), should be concerned about the rot in the police (retd) (Punch, 26th February, 2021).

'Major general' is an appellation that borders on vocation. The use of this nomenclature in this context is a reference to the niche the president has carved for himself while in the military which also suggests that the title can still be used for him even as a democratic sitting president.

Again in datum 6, paragraph 5, *act now on avalanche of guns and gunmen*. Transfer of culture operates in the following expression:

The sultan of Sokoto, Sa'ad Abubakar III, lamented, infact, it (North) is the worst place to be in the country… (Punch, 16th February, 2021). Where 'sultan of sokoto' is a designation that dwells on spiritual activities in Nigeria.

Coinages/Neologism

This form of lexico-semantic variation allows the creation of lexical items with nativised meanings and this variation is an inevitable occurrence in any language contact situation. This variation manifests in this study as an English-based Nigerian newspaper editorial.

In paragraph 4 of datum 2, *Police callous killing of footballer in Ogun* a kind of coinage is captured in the following expression:

… who saw the Remo Stars jersey on his son's corpse at the hospital (February 26, 2020).

Remo stars football club is a Nigerian football club based in Sagamu, Ogun, Nigeria. Hence, the jersey worn by the footballer, named 'Remo stars jersey' is a form of hybridization of the English and indigenous (Yoruba) lexical item.

Again in the fifth paragraph of datum four, *Abiodun should tame Herders atrocities in Ogun, the* variation of coinage" can be discerned:

While Oyo, Ondo, Ekiti and Osun states have formed the South-West Security Network known as Amotekun in their domains, the corps has yet to fully take off in Ogun. (Punch, February 1, 2021)

'Amotekun' is distinctively a Yoruba expression that literarily means 'one that looks like a leopard or cheetah'. The word is used as a codename for a western Nigeria security operation based in the six states of the south western Nigeria to support the Nigerian police in these six states to fight crimes. It has been employed in the editorial to buttress the fact the security network is not fully established in the state to restrain the roaming cattle herders and the act of violence committed by them.

In addition, the following expression in paragraph one of datum six, *act now on avalanche of guns and gunmen,* reflects an example of coinage:

... Boko Haram insurgents launch frequent attacks on communities, farmlands and military formations with formidable firearms (Punch, 16th February, 2021).

The word 'boko haram' is a coinage that represents a particular ideology or group of people in a country. It is a formation from a Nigerian indigenous language (Hausa) and Foreign language (Arabic). It is an emergence in the Nigerian English situation to express new experiences as well as to mean forbidden western education.

The term is also used to describe a sect that violently attacks government institutions and it is prevalent and restricted to the Northern part of the country. Its usage in the editorial implies negativity to the wellbeing of the government and the Nigerian populace.

Similarly, coinage operates in the fourth paragraph in the following expression:

The inspector general of police, Mohammad Adamu, said the force lost 100AK47 rifles in attacks on 37 police stations when hoodlums hijacked the ***EndSARS*** protests in Abuja.

The word 'EndSARS' is a social movement that started on the social media hence, the hashtag. The movement was against SARS, a tactical police unit in Nigeria created to curtail violent crimes such as armed robbery and kidnapping. But over the years, SARS has been a major source of violence and corruption. Its usage in the editorial depicts the high extent of the menace of guns in the country. The government's failure in taking effective measures in restricting the menace led to the social protests by citizens who were eventually overpowered by these gunmen. This lends credence to the title of the editorial that the government has a lot in its hands to maintain law and order and protect its citizenry by all means necessary.

Acronym

Acronym is a form of lexico-semantic variation depicting the formation of new lexical items through a combination of initial letters or larger portion of existing words. Some acronyms have emerged in the Nigeria mileu which are peculiarly Nigerian-based. These acronyms are intelligible to Nigerians. Some of these

acronyms are evident in the data. In datum 5, ***ICPC's expose of bribery of judges by lawyers*, acronyms are generously utilised as exemplified below:**

EFCC- Economic Financial Crime Commission
ICPC- Independent Corrupt Practices and other related Offences Commission
INEC- Independent National Electoral Commision
NJC - National Judicial Council (Punch, Janurary 10, 2021).

The usage of these acronyms in the Nigerian English situation cannot be undermined. The acronyms represent crime related bodies in the country that deals with issues relating to crime as such, the editorial utilises them to support the crime-related discourses. Similarly, acronym-induced words have been established in Nigerian English that they take suffixes. A typical example is observed in the second paragraph of datum 5, '**ICPC's** 84- report, entitled,…'

Also, in datum 2: *police callous killing of footballer in Ogun*, and datum 3: *fatal mob action culture in Ogun*, the following acronym can be discerned:

LASG - Lagos State Government (Punch, July 14, 2020).
IGP - Inspector General of Police (Punch, Feb 26, 2020).
Some of these acronyms are formations based on initial letters that might not be able exist alone. Examples of these types of acronyms itemized above are, EFCC, ICPC, NJC and IGP.
Semantic Shift

It is a lexico-semantic variation where meanings of a new word or group of words have their semantic range restricted or shifted, extended to cover new concept in Nigerian English (Jowitt, 1991). Semantic shift manifests in **the third paragraph of datum 1,** *Okada/ Keke taking restrictions beyond rhetoric*:
Also, the rate of crimes aided by Okada and Keke keeps rising. (Punch, Janurary 31, 2020)

The lexeme 'okada' is a motorcycle used in Nigeria and and a few West African countries for commercial purposes. It was initially the name of an airline which originally originated from the name accorded to a town in Benin city. Hence, there is a shift in meaning from the original word. Also, the word keke indicates

an extension in meaning as the meaning of 'keke' has been extended from bicycle to tricycle.

In the same vein, paragraph 3 of datum 3: *fatal mob action culture in Lagos,* displays semantic extension, where it states:

Yamah's case was typical with his vehicle; he mistakenly hit a partially sighted man around Ikorodu garage (Punch, July 14, 2020).

The meaning of the lexemes 'Ikorodu garage' have been extended to motor or public places used for public transport system.

The 8th paragraph of datum 6: *act now on avalanche of guns and gunmen,* the following statement suggests semantic extension:

Depressingly, there is as usual, no national consensus on how to tackle the gun menace and manage the brewing ethno-religious undertones (Punch, February 16, 2021).

The word 'menace' is used to describe a person that is likely to cause harm or damage. The meaning of the word has now been extended and ascribed to arms ammunitions especially in felony to mean the display or various acts used by deadly weapons in a threatening manner and or to cause physical bodily injury or death. Its usage by the editor in the context suggests a strong dismissal of the crime and the government inability to curtail its exigencies and it is supported by the expression in datum 20.

The penultimate paragraph of datum, 6 also depicts semantic extension. This is shown in the following expression:

Nigeria's Illegal gun epidemic should be addressed. Buhari's laidback approach is escalating gun violence (Punch, February 16, 2021).

'Epidemic' is a common occurrence of an infectious disease. The meaning of the lexeme is extended to cover the proliferation of guns in the country. The use of the lexeme also portrays an extension of meaning so as to make the word suitable

in order to accommodate new exposures especially in the phase of the increasing crime rates.

Synonymy

Synonymy addresses the situation where the sense of an expression or word is similar with that of another and that is sixth explicated in paragraph 6 of datum 1, *Okada/ Keke taking restrictions beyond rhetoric*:

...The government should periodically demand fact sheets on confiscation of these motorcycles. If the seized ones are to be destroyed in this renewed enforcement, they should be publicly done, in the manner Kenya's authorities incinerate illicit arms and ammunitions (January 21, 2020).

Synonymous relationships can be observed between the two pairs of the lexemes 'confiscation' and 'seized' and 'destroyed' and 'incinerate' in the above expression. The usage implies that 'okada' and 'keke' riders are not only to be blamed for being an access for crimes but also the tainted police officials who claim to impound these means of transportation from prohibited routes to make illicit money. Hence, the public destruction of illicit items by Kenya authorities is worthy of emulation. This unpleasant situation as cited from the editorial through these related lexemes is a way of intensifying what is needed to be done by the Lagos state government.

Likewise, the first paragraph of datum 5, *ICPC's expose of bribery of judges by lawyers,* displays another synonymous sense thus:

Accordingly, a new survey details the sordid transactions soiling the temple of justice through the underhand exchange of tons of bribe money between the bar and the bench (January 10, 2021).

A paradigmatic relationship exists between 'sordid transaction' and 'underhand exchange' which suggests the extent to which bribery is entrenched in the Nigeria Judicial system. The potential intensity of the lexemes, 'sordid transactions' presupposes that the rot in the system may continue to linger if not immediately addressed. Hence, the newspaper editor's suggestions in the need to sanitize the Nigerian justice system as indicated in the concluding paragraph.

Similarly, the following expression is observed in paragraph 5 of datum 6:

In Birnin Gwari and Kajuru LGA's of Kaduna State, bandits murdered 19 villagers two Saturdays ago. In January gunmen operating on motorcycles had slaughtered 12 persons in three Birnin Gwari LGA village (February 16, 2021).

A sense of synonymy is portrayed by the lexemes, 'murdered' and 'slaughtered' to firmly establish the inhumane nature of the gunmen in taking the lives of the citizenry in large numbers. These expressions can be perceived as a means of amplifying the populace anxiety of the disaster considering the pathetic disposition that the lexemes employed represent.

Polysemy

The centrality of polysemy is the situation whereby same word or lexeme may have a set of different meanings. The use of polysemy can be observed in the fifth paragraph of datum 1, *Okada/ Keke taking restrictions beyond rhetoric:*

Though thousands of motorcycle have been seized before now and crushed… (January 21, 2020).

The polysemic word 'crushed' has different semantic propositions such as having a strong feeling of romantic love towards a love interest or people pressed together but in this context, it portrays a sense of outright dismissal towards the threat caused by the motorcycles.

Hypomymy

Hyponymy is a relation of inclusion whereby the meaning of a more general word is included. The sense of a word or expression would include a super-ordinate word or term. It is observed in paragraph 3 of datum 1, ***Okada/ Keke taking restrictions beyond rhetoric:***

Their deployment in bombings, kidnapping and banditry was also why the army banned the use of motorcycles in the states of Kano, Katsina, Zamfara, Sokoto, Kaduna, Kebbi and Niger. In Abia state, the time span for their operation has been limited for several reasons. **(January 21, 2020).**

The hyponyms of the afro mentioned Northern states are to highlight the locations where the use and operation of this means of transportation has been prohibited by the army. The inclusion of Abia state in the next sentence is to

project it as different entity from the Northern states as well as inform readers about the lesser measures taken to curb the use of motorcycles in the state.

Also in the 7th paragraph of the data, Hyponyms can be observed thus:

It contains a raft of **penalties,** including **fines** and **jail terms** by offenders. **(January 21, 2020).**

Other hyponyms observed in the data are exemplified in paragraph 3 of datum 3, *Fatal mob action culture in Lagos*

The mob attack on Yamah is in keeping with the **unconscionable deeds** of the okada riders. They have come to be associated with **lawlessness, unwarranted violence and arson.** They **flout traffic laws without impunity**. On the expressways**, they ride against the traffic, carrying multiple passengers.** (July 14, 2020).

The listed hyponyms exhibited in the subsequent expressions, correlate with the hypernym 'unconscionable deeds'. Hence, they vividly depict the unreasonable excessiveness of the commercial motorcyclists in the state.

Line 3, paragraph 2 of datum 4, ***Abiodun should tame Herders atrocities in Ogun stipulates***:

…Southwest has been under siege from marauding herdsmen, who under the pretext of grazing, **committed odious crimes**. In particular, **kidnapping for ransom, robbery and rape** have been habitually traced to these armed herders. **(Punch, February 1, 2021)**

The nature of the crime committed by the herders is portrayed in the hyponymy relation of the lexemes 'odious crimes'. The word serves as the super ordinate term having a relation of inclusion with words, like ransom, robbery and rape. The sense of inclusion signifies the magnitude of the herders' act of violence in relation to the effect on the society.

Table 1: Frequency distribution of lexico-semantic variations in the data

Lexico-semantic variations	No. of frequency	Percentage
Transfer of context	6	25
Transfer of meaning	4	17
Coinage	4	17
Semantic shift	6	25
Acronym	4	17
Total	24	100

Table 2: Frequency distribution of meaning relations in the data

Meaning relations	No. of frequency	Percentage
Synonymy	3	37
Polysemy	1	12
Hyponymy	4	50
Total	8	100

Tables 1 and 2 above reveal the different lexico-semantic variations and meaning relations that were observed and analysed in the editorials of the Punch newspaper. A total of six occurrences constitute contextual transfer while transfer of meaning reflected four instances. This indicates that the newspaper editorial employ more of this semantic variation of transfer (context and meaning), where the total summation of their occurrences gives ten (10).

The frequency occurrence of coinages in the data is 17%. The occurrences of this variation depict and support the argument of the indomitable, pervasive and omnipresent influence of the media as one of the casual factors of lexico-semantic variations. These coinages are positive effects of languages in contact and cross cultural absorptions which serve to localise the English language and meeting the immediate local needs of its readers.

Out of the four entire instances of semantic shift variation that was observed in the data, three (3) is extensive and one (1) depict a shift in meaning. The editorials display four (4) instances of acronyms with approximately 17%. This suggests that the editorials are inclined with the formation and recognition of its usage.

The editorials employed different senses of meaning relations to present their arguments. Synonymy sense relation displays three (3) counts and reveals the intelligent feature of the media in illustrating events especially in crime-related context. The sense relation of polysemy had the lowest frequency of 12%. Its usage in the data portrays the voluminous nature of the English language which contains various lexemes and meanings. Also, hyponymy reflects four (4) counts. It is employed in the editorials to elaborate and substantiate the narratives.

Findings and Conclusion

The ESL setting of Nigeria has afforded educated Nigerians or writers of the editorials to construct some lexico-semantic peculiarities of the English language exhibiting local Nigerian flavours which distinguishes it from lexico-semantics of native speaker's English.

Medubi (2007, p.116) asserts that, editorials are pieces of exhortation written as it exposes on specific issues of general concern. Editorials serve as the watch dog of the society by fighting to establish good behaviour and social vices. The findings from the study corroborate this assertion as the editorials create awareness and rebuke all forms of law breaking offenses committed by various bodies or individuals in the country. This is succinctly captured through various appreciable sense of meaning relations and lexico-semantic variations which has also revealed its potency in conveying dormant meanings established in the lexemes.

The study has been able to buttress the relevance of meaning in human interaction, particularly, in media commentaries and reportage as it affects crime-related subjects in Nigeria. Also, the study establishes that the media utilise language in projecting its views on issues of special and national interests while reflecting and representing happenings such as crimes in the society.

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