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A Pragmatic Analysis of English Textbooks in Hypertext

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Abstract

This study sets out to analyse the English textbooks in hypertext to know how it conforms to the cooperative maxims, the relevance theory and the speech acts involved. The aim of this study is to show that pragmatics can facilitate the understanding of the operations in the computer hypertext documents/presentations. The data of this study are 30 purposively selected English textbooks, which were gotten from the 400 level B.A (Hons) English course compact from University of Benin and Ambrose Alli University Ekpoma both in Edo state. The research method adopted here is qualitative, the Researcher obtained hypertext forms of these selected English textbooks and analyzed them by specifying comprehensively in a tabular form the English textbooks in hypertext presentations. The aim was to know if they conform to the maxims and showing the cognitive and communicative effects behind the hypertext presentations and thus, find out the predominant illocutionary acts these English books in hypertext display. Findings show the maxims of relation, quantity and quality have not been violated by the English books presented in hypertext documents however the maxim of manner was violated. Only two illocutionary acts i-e (Representatives and Directives) can be interpreted in this form of interaction. In conclusion, English textbooks in hypertexts and its relationship with pragmatics cannot be disparaged, it will aid a proper understanding of the computer hypertext documents when it comes to enhancing academic knowledge.

Keywords: Pragmatics, Hypertext, English Book and Maxims

1.0 Introduction

Yule, (2004) opines that 'pragmatics is the study of invisible meaning or how we recognize what is meant even when it isn't actually said (or written). Based on the above definition, one can categorically state that pragmatics goes deeper than just mere linguistic representation. The idea of pragmatics becomes more riddled with complexity in this age of new technology. Nelson, (1993) expresses the fact that the most notable implementation of hypertext is the World Wide Web often represented as *www*. To further expatiate the relevance of this term, hypertext, to what the study sets out to do, a brief look at Berners-Lee and Cailliau, (1990) 's view on hypertext, which sums all the definitions provided thus far:

Hypertext is a way to link and access information of various kinds as a Web of nodes in which the user can browse at will; potentially, Hypertext provides single user interface to many large classes of stored information, such as reports; note, data-bass, computer documentation and on-noting systems help.

Linguistics, especially pragmatics has often proved that speakers and writers often mean much more than they say/write and expect their hearers/listeners to understand them. Leech and Short, (1981) defines pragmatics as 'the investigation into that aspect of meaning which is derived not from the formal properties of words, but from the way in which utterances are used and how they relate to the context in which they are uttered.' In a nutshell, the idea behind this definition above, is that pragmatics captures utterances in relation to context of use.

The cooperative principle was proposed by Paul Grice in 1975, where he emphasized that participants expect that each will make a conversational contribution or discourse such as is required at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk. The main focus is on the conversational maxims. Maxim of quantity deals with the amount of information that should be delivered by the speaker, the maxim of quality, stresses the truth, the maxim of relation forces the speakers to provide statements that are relevant to the topic and the maxim of manner requires the speaker to create a clear, brief and orderly statement (Nurhidayah, 2015).

Sperber and Wilson, (1995) were the first to use this term above, within the cognitive linguistics before Paul Grice expatiated it further; the central idea of this theory is the communicative principle of relevance, it stipulates that by the act of making an utterance, the speaker is conveying that what they have said is worth listening to. Relevance, according to Allot (2013) can be defined as 'a property of input onto cognitive systems: an input with more relevance and has more cognitive effects it yields, however, less relevant, the more mental effort it takes to process.' The speech act theory is the main subfield under pragmatics which was explained by J,L Austin's idea is hinged on the fact that "in saying something, we are doing something" (Austin 1962: 12).

Accordingly, this ideology was based on his development of performative utterances and his theory of locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts (Illic and Radulovic, 2015). This study is based on Austin and Searle,(1969) who opine that language is a tool for performing actions; therefore the "meaning" we associate with an utterance (in this case written) is the user's intention and not the meaning of words in the utterance. Searle (1969) gives the conditions for performing speech acts. The "felicity conditions" must be met in order to make a promise for instance. Searle (1976) further gives 5 types of acts that are performed in speaking. They are: (i)representatives act which involves describing event, process, states assertions, claims, reports suggestion etc. (ii)Declaratives Acts involve pronouncing, sentencing, christening etc. iii Directive acts involve commanding, requesting, pleading, inviting etc. iv Expressive Arts involves greeting, scolding, condoling appreciating congratulating, apologizing etc and lastly, v Commissive Acts which involves challenging, betting, promising, threatening, offering, vowing, warning etc. Obviously, these explanation above coincide with Austin's illocutionary Act-the act that expresses the speakers intention.

1.3 Purpose of Study

This study sets out to analyze the extent to which some English textbooks in hypertext layout conform to the cooperative maxims, the relevance it elicits and the type of speech acts in the layout. According to Tosca (2000) "people strive to achieve optimal relevance in their everyday exchange. The computer interaction is not left out.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

It is quite difficult to understand the way hypertext documents operate due to the codes and abstractions used by the tool-builders to provide information. Pragmatics on the other hand deals with the interpretation of utterances (written or spoken) beyond the linguistic representation. It becomes necessary to attempt an analysis of these computer software within the pragmatic premises to have a better understanding of how hypertext documents work. Today, information technology and its technological know-how have taken the world, especially the academic field by amazing and commendable storm. It has become necessary for students and scholars to work in line with this trend, not only will it sharpen their line of thought about the global world, it will also broaden their horizon and also enhance their academic skills.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study adds a new perspective to the study of literacy practices in technological environments. Practically and academically, the results of this study are likely to influence students who are studying English to understand the complex and bulky layout of the computer hypertext while seeking information on their related courses or English text. It can also serve as a reference tool on

how cognition and communication play a role in appreciating and understanding English books in Hypertext. It is also a perfect directory to what seem relevant in a search given that hypertext are presented in a bulk and in chains (Park Seomgbin 1998 :24)

1.6 Limitations of the Study

Due to the nature of the research method, some hitches were encountered. These include availability of a large data bank and power supply. Seeking information online requires a large amount of data and a well powered battery life in a mobile phone or in a computer. Electricity is a major setback when it comes to online academic search. This is the reason the researcher did not take too many English books. Another setback is the network, sometimes network failure slows down the search or even bring it to a halt.

1.7 Research Methodology

This study employed the qualitative approach research technique. The qualitative research according to Kothari (2004:3), "deals with qualitative phenomena i.e phenomena relating to or involving quality or kind." Kawulich, (2005) mentions that this method helps the researcher to develop a holistic understanding of the phenomenon under study. Kothari, (2004:9) consequently, buttress that there is no cause for subjective bias if the observation is carried out properly.

1.8 Methods of Data Analysis

Thirty English books were taken from the course compact of 400 level students studying English language, at the University of Benin and Ambrose Alli University, both in Edo state. The B.A (Hons) English has been accredited by the National University Commission (NUC) in these schools, that is the reason the researchers chose them apart from proximity to the researcher. Thus, these course compacts are written based on the benchmark provided by NUC. The researchers chose the final year English recommended books because students are more likely to do extra studies in their final year because of the project they are supposed to write as part of the requirement for the award of their B.A, (Hons) degree. The major instrument of this research is centred on researchers participation. According to Boiddan and Biken (1982), on highlighting the nature of qualitative research, they stated; "the key instrument of the qualitative research is the researcher himself herself (27). "This method helps the researchers to develop a holistic understanding of the phenomenon under study." Kawulich (2005). Consequently, "there is no cause for subjective bias if the observation is carried out properly" (Kothari 2004:9).

This research intended to classify these English books in Hypertext based on the presentations that conform to Grice's Cooperative maxims, Searle's speech acts and relevance based on Sperber and Wilson's relevant theory. While 30 English books may not represent the large number of available English books, it can also show that hypertext can be subjected to pragmatic theories and thus enhance the understanding of the computer software of which hypertext falls into this category.

1.9 Theoretical framework

This research is framed within Grice's Co-operative maxims(1975), Dan Sperber and Wilson's Relevance theory (1995) and Searle's Speech Acts, (1969). The cooperative principle was proposed by Paul Grice in (1975), who emphasized that participants expect that each will make a conversational contribution or discourse such as is requires at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk. This idea informed the use of cooperative maxims which are four in number, notably, maxim of quality, quantity, relation and manner.

The speech act theory is another subfield of pragmatics which was explained by J,L Austin, his idea is hinged on the fact that "in saying something we are doing something" (Austin 1 :62: 12). Accordingly, this ideology was based on his development of performative utterances and his theory of "locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts" (Illic and Radulovic, 2015). The area of focus in Sperber and Wilson's Relevance theory is the cognitive and communicative effects of this aspect

of conversation which is obviously a non-conventional interaction; i.e one which takes place between a computer user and the computer software.

2.0 Review of Related Literature.

2.1 Pragmatics and hypertext interface

Levinson (1983), explains that 'pragmatics deals with inter-relation of language and principles of language use in context.' The problem is that hypertext which is a computer software is, based on Bamers-Lee and Cailliau (1990), explanation that "it is a way to link and access information of various kinds as a Web of nodes in which the user can browse at will." They further explain that "the onus is that it is potentially cumbersome to handle because it provides single user interface to many large classes of stored information, such as reports, notes, data-base, computer documentation and on-noting systems help." This however can be difficult for language scholars who may not be exposed to the mechanics of computer science. This stance is also in accordance with Eisenlauer (2015) who studied a critical hypertext analysis of social media with a focus on Facebook, and reveals convincingly that "the Facebook software imposes on the users, depriving them of basic authorial rights in the generation and reception of text, pictures and meaning." He also stated that "a critical hypertext analysis is admirably suitable to unmask the ideological tool in the digital age." This citation also shows that there are reasons to unmask the complexities that lies within the interaction between the computer users (in this case the students) and the computer software, i.e Facebook, to enable students gain hitch-free access to the world of computer.

Consequently, Tosca (2000), on studying pragmatic links, applies the linguistic theory of relevance to the study of the way links work, insisting on the lyrical quality of the link-interpreting activity' opines that "hypertexts are communication although, the circumstances of oral communication differ greatly from those of written, it can help to understand hypertext readers behavior." Sell (1981), posits that "writing and reading, even though they do not function face- to-face, one-on- one or even complementary with each other, are inextricably linked with the particular sociocultural context within which they take place."

2.2 Cooperative Maxims and the concept of Hypertext

Miall and Dobson (2000), on explaining hypertext and experience of Literature argue that hypertext discourages the reflective mode that characterizes literary reading. However, it is upon these premises of written communication and an unusual / nonconventional interaction that this study becomes important. Mehler (1999), analyzes text cohesion from a formalistic point of view in "Aspect of Text semantics in hypertext Barthes and Derrida (2000), try to integrate hypertext in the postmodern philosophical tendency to problematize the status of all linguistics.

The cooperative principle was proposed by Paul Grice in (1975), he emphasized that "participants expect that each will make a conversational contribution or discourse such as is required at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk." The speech act theory is a subfields of pragmatics which was explained by J,L Austin, his idea is hinged on the fact that "in saying something we are doing something" (Austin 1962: 12) Accordingly, this ideology was based on his development of performative utterances and his theory of locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. (Illic and Radulovic, 2015)

However, the world has become a global village as a result of information computer technology. Most often, scholars in the field of Arts and Humanities find it difficult to understand the mappings and ideology of this complex computer language, This, according to Mylonas and Durand,(2000), is because, it is complex to understand the notion and ideology of what hypertexts are; and more possible problem is that of overlapping hierarchies. According to Eisenlauer, (2015), "a critical hypertext analysis is admirably suited to unmask ideological tool in this digital age.

2.3 Overview of Speech Acts

Searle (1969), gives the conditions for performing speech acts. The "felicity conditions" must be met in order to make a promise for instance. Searle (1976) further gives 5 types of acts that are performed

in speaking. They are: (i) representatives act which involves describing event, process, states assertions, claims, reports suggestion etc. (ii) Declarative Acts involves pronouncing, sentencing, christening etc. iii Directive acts involve commanding, requesting, pleading, inviting etc. iv Expressive Arts involves greeting, scolding, condoling appreciating congratulating, apologizing etc and lastly, Commissive Arts which involves challenging, betting, promising, threatening, offering, vowing, warning etc. Obviously, these explanations above coincide with Austin's illocutionary Act- the act that expresses the speaker's intention.

2.4 Hypertext and Relevance theory

Yus (2011) who observes that "non-cognitive oards are obtained in a number of internet activities," but the communicative effects, although may not be obviously linguistic can be implied given that there is a one on-one corresponding between the anchor text which the user inputs and the hypertext document presentations. This study has also show that Relevance Theory can be fruitfully applied to "cyber pragmatics." (Francisco, 2011). Pragmatic theories can be used to interpret the nonconventional free-to-face interaction such as involves human and computer since according to Walaszews and Piskorka (2017) , pragmatic principles can be used to address problems of communication taking place in circumstances removed from prototypical situations of face-to-face interactions

Although, from the above studies it is obvious that scholars have been analyzing the activities of hypertext with the aim of explaining how it works, using some linguistics theories such as pragmatic relevance theory, predominantly; literary theories such as the formalistic approach, the context of reading as explained by Arif (2003), who studied hypertext in the context of reading on the web, the results showed that students understanding varies depending on the presentation of hypertext reading and he concludes that neither computer nor text reading skills alone are adequate basis to start using hypertext technology in language classroom. This study is centred on nonconventional conversation patterns which involves the interaction between a computer user and strings of computer language which is riddled in hypertext. This study therefore attempts to differ in the sense that it views English books in hypertext using Grice's maxims, the pragmatic relevance theory and speech acts to explain the mapping of hypertext documents/presentations

3.0 Data presentation and Analysis

The researcher having observed the course compact of the 400 level Students of the two schools, purposively selected 30 recommended English books. The primary data were the English books and then the subsequent search of these books online presents the hypertext version from which the researcher based her analysis upon. However the, the range of hypertext documents were categorized using the Grice's cooperative maxims, Searle's speech acts and relevance based on Dan and Sperber's relevant theory

Table 1 classification of Cooperative Maxims (English Books in Hypertext and Conformity to Maxims).

Maxims	Examples of English Books in Hypertext (English Books)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Stick to the point of discussion ✓ Say something relevant <p>The hypertext that has corresponding terms as written in the search is seen as the one which conforms to the Maxim of relation.</p>	<p>sentencesyntax">https://www.thoughtco.com>sentencesyntax 2Fmanjon>language">https://www.org.es>2Fmanjon>language wiki.psychology">https://illen.mwikipedea.org>wiki.psychology Intro(PDF)">https://inguistics.ucla?Ing>Intro(PDF) art-fiction">https://www.enotes.com?topic>art-fiction Dong-Pregnatics">https://www.anazon.com>Dong-Pregnatics https://www.greatspeechwriting.co.uk library>stylistics">www.question.com>library>stylistics</p>
<p>Quantity: Participants are required to be as information as possible >all hypertext references seem to be as informative as possible by providing many sources for which the anchor text (English Books) can be found.</p>	<p>https://www.thoughtco.com https://en.mwiliipedia.org document">https://www.scibed.com>document www.researchgate.net catelog">www.benjamin.com>catelog ...">www.cambridge.org>... booksmi">www.mitpress.mit.edu>booksmi book>how">www.goodreads.com>book>how title>oclc">www.worldcat.org>title>oclc ing>Intro(PDF)">https://inguistics.ucla>ing>Intro(PDF) Dong-Pregnatics">https://www.enotes.com>Dong-Pregnatics https://www.greatspeechwriting.co.uk library>stylistics">www.question.com>library>stylistics</p>
<p>Quantity Involves information provided by these speaker is valid and true Also involves the provision of adequate knowledge Note: what informs this maxim here is that the links in the hypertext documents bear notable academic institutions which undoubtedly makes the information provided there is relatively valid and true.</p>	<p>https://www.academia.edu https://www.cambridge.org https://www.mit.edu http://www.britannica.com... https://www.jstor.org... https://www.goodreads.com... https://www.stanford.edu... https://www.oxfordhandbook.com...</p>
<p>Manner Participant in conversation must be clear, as brief and as orderly as possible, no ambiguity or obscurity. Obviously the hypertext documents/links</p>	<p>English Book: Pragmatics Hypertext documents. wiki>pragmatics">https://en.n.wikipedia.org>wiki>pragmatics pragmatics">https://thoughtco.com>pragmatics resource">www.linguisticstudy.org>resource entries>preg">www.strandford.edu>entries>preg</p>

Tables 2 Classification of Relevance Theory

Cognitive Effect	Interlocutors are the software documents (hypertext and the user (researcher)). There is no obvious cognitive assumption on the part of the computer software, the core is that the system is often referred to as "garbage-in-garbage out". The only assumption of reference on the human user is that the cyberspace harbours a broad spectrum of academic resources with which he/she can get informatics he/she seeks. In this manner, therefore, the user control the cognitive mapping of this non-conventional conversation pattern.
Communicative Effect	On the ground of communicative effect, the only explicit phenomenon is that the English books in the hypertext which the user seek information about seem relevant as most hypertext documents bear synonymous terms with anchor text. This equally shows that the communicative principles of relevance skill holds within the human activity and the internet. Although, the relevant stimuli can be said to be stereotyped, but the fact that the user's input brings about the corresponding assumed response which appeals to the user cognition to search on and continue with hypertext document. The relevance cannot be brushed aside.

Tables 3 Classification of Speech Arts

Speech Arts	Anchor/Hypertext	Illocutionary Forces (Exploration)
Representatives	Pragmatics http://www.en.m.wikipedia pragmatic">http://www.thoughtco.com>pragmatic resource">http://www.linguistic security.org>resource	Introduction: These hypertext presentation can be seen to be indirectly introducing documents which the user can select from and find relevant information
Directives	literary">http://www.rep.utm-edu>literary pragmatic">http://www.thoughtco.com>pragmatic powerpoint">http://www.cayons.edu>powerpoint	Directing suggesting: These hypertext documents can be said to be directing and equally suggesting where and how to get more information concerning the anchor text.
Declaratives		NIL: No interaction within this task could show this speech act.
Commissives		NIL: No interaction apart from this search C and hypertext presentation could show this speech act.
Expressive		NIL

4.0 Discussion of Findings:

From Table 1, it is quite clear that the presentations of the hypertext documents conform more to the maxim of relation. What informs this is that from the table, the hypertext document corresponds with the terms written in the English Books which are referred to as anchor-text are the same with the hypertext layout. The Maxim of Quality has equally not been flouted. Quality highlights the fact that information must be valid and true, it must involve adequate knowledge and this is also obtained in the hypertext presentations. Such notable virtual academic bodies such as Cambridge, MITpress, encyclopedia Britannica edu>leaners,jstor, Questia are unarguably true and valid sources of academic information.

The Maxim of quantity has also not been flouted; all hypertext documents as presented in the table are all as informative as possible given the above conformity to manner of quality. However, the Maxim of manner can be daunting in this form of interaction. The hypertext documents may be clear but it is not the same as being brief or unambiguous or orderly. The user searches for limited information and a myriad of hypertext documents are presented consequently violating the maxim of Manner.

From the Table 2, the classification based on the relevance theory shows that on the basis of cognitive effect, there is obvious cognitive assumption on the part of the computer software since the computer is tagged "garbage in and garbage out". Hence, the cognitive assumption and inference is one-sided, only on the part of the user who inputs a data search. Moreover, on the side of communicative effect, the computer software which is hypertext documents seem to correspond with the user's input of the anchor text (English Books) this means that the communicative principle of relevance still holds.

The Table 3 shows that this is a typical non-conventional interaction and it seems as though the illocutionary forces are limited. In other words, the representatives are shown indirectly in the hypertext presentation which involves introducing these English books in hypertext forms. Directives are also manifested in terms of directing and suggesting more related hypertext documents. However there is no illocutionary forces to show commissive and expressive because there is no verbal interaction here.

Conclusion

From these findings, it shows that pragmatics principles can aid the understanding of English books in hypertext documents by the way each maxim plays out in seeking information regarding English books in hypertext documents. Thus, it reveals that there is no cognitive effect or assumption on the part of the computer software.

4.1 Recommendation:

This study recommends that more pragmatic theories can be used to interpret the non-conventional free-to-face interaction such as involves human and computer since according to Walaszews and Piskorka (2017) , pragmatic principles can be used to address problems of communication taking place in circumstances removed from prototypical situations of face-to-face interactions

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