Research Paper

Pragmatic Analysis of Bet9ja Language

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ABSTRACT
The paper dwells on pragmatic analysis of Bet9ja language. One of the previous studies on Bet9ja shows thatfootball betting is one of the new forms of gambling/betting among Muslim youths today in almost all communities in Nigeria despite the fact Islam vehemently prohibits such activities. The other study acknowledges that the advancement and innovation in technology have brought fame to the betting game and has increased youth's patronage across countries of the world, and this has made many governments around the world, including the Nigerian government, legalise sports betting activities as a business contributing immensely to the economy of these countries. Hence, the present study set to discover the meaning of jargons, colours, numbers and other symbols used in the game of Bet9ja for encoding and decoding. Data for the study was also sourced from the secondary sources by extracting Bet9ja jargons and symbols from the internet and Bet9ja slips. The primary source was also employed to collect data for the study by holding structures interviews with a sampled population of people who are into the Bet9ja business in Makurdi metropolis. Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of Semiotics and the theory of Pragmatics by Grice, Stephen Levison and Charles Moris were adopted for the study. The study discovers that jargons, colours, numbers and other symbols are used in the game of Bet9ja in order to encode and decode.
KEY WORDS: Bet9ja, Language, Naija, Pragmaticsand Semiotics.

I.   INTRODUCTION

Human beings place premium on language because it is the fulcrum of most activities that are carried out in the society. There are different languages in the world and each of the languages has variations. The variations could be dialectal in nature comprising regional, social and ethnic dialects (Anyogo and Shagba, 2018). Under the regional basis, we have what is known as Nigerian English (NE) which reflects the culture and worldview of Nigerians (Adeyanju, 2007). Nigerian English according to Anyogo and Shagba (2018:45) 'is the English spoken in the Nigerian way and understood in the Nigerian Context'.

With the advancement in technology, other varieties of language are emerging such as the social media variety of English language characterised by unusual short forms of words, combinations of letters and numbers to form words, stickers, among other features. The increased interest in sporting activities and the quest to indirectly make a living from these sporting activities resultedin the introduction of Bet9jawhich created a new code. The Bet9ja language is characterised by jargons and symbolswhich can be understood only by those who are into the betting.

In Bet9ja language, numbers are given meanings beyond their ordinary meanings. Also certain capital letters used in Bet9ja and colours convey complete meanings in the same way,words and sentences can convey complete meanings in everyday language. The term Bet9ja is a blend of two distinct words 'bet' and '9ja'

(Nigeria). Bet has to do with a process of betting that something will happen, hoping or expecting that it will happen. It can be said to be a process of risking or staking money in order to predict the result. When the outcome of the result is as predicted, the predictor wins and if the other way round, loses the money staked.

The term '9ja' (Naija) captures the variety of activities carried out in Nigeria. The term Naija is another name for Nigeria. Bet9ja, therefore, is a number one betting site. It is a prediction site used by a lot of sports lovers in Nigeria to predict and win cash on different kinds of sports (Johnson, n.d). In other words, Bet9ja is an online gambling operating in Nigeria that offers betting on football matches. Bet9ja was co-founded by Ayo Djuroye and Kunle Soname who are its CEO and chairman respectively and was launched on September 10, 2013 with headquarters in Lagos (John, 2016).

Language is one of the means forhuman communication and interaction, hence it is not an overemphasis to say that language is essential to humanity.The term'language' is synonymous to code which is associated with the concepts of code-mixing (using two or more languages within the same utterance or in the same oral/written text) and code-switching (moving from one language to another and back again in the course of conversation).

Bet9ja as a number one betting site has its distinct language which is used in the betting domain and understood by those who share the ties and belong to the family of Bet9ja. Bet9ja language is well coded and cannot be understood by those who are not party to it. Sule and Adam (2018) studies the interface of footballing and gambling saga among Muslim youths in Nigeria with a focus on contemporary challenges and Islamic solution.The findings of the study show that football betting is one of the new forms of gambling/betting among Muslim youths today in almost all communities in Nigeria despite the fact Islam vehemently prohibits such activities.

Besides,Olaore, Adejare and Udofia (2020) studies the nexus between the increasing involvement of youth in bettinggames and unemployment in Nigeria and submit that the advancement and innovation in technology have brought fame to the game and has increased youth's patronage across countries of the world, and this has made many governments around the world, including Nigeria, legalise sports betting activities as a business contributing immensely to the economy of these countries.Thepresent studydiffers from the previous studies because it set to unveil the meaning of Bet9ja jargons and symbols (colours, letters and numbers)respectively.

II.   METHODOLOGY

The survey design was adopted for the study to discover the meaning of Bet9ja jargons and symbols. According to Griffeee (2012), a survey design uses various data collection procedures to enable the researcher to investigate into a problem by asking questions of either fact (descriptive) or opinion (explanatory) from a sampled population for the purpose drawing a conclusion. He argues that the term *survey* is an umbrella term that allows for many data collection procedures including questionnaires, interviews, and observations. The survey design is relevant for this study because it enabled the researcher to seek explanations about Bet9ja jargons and symbols by consulting materials on Bet9ja andholding structured interviews with a sampled population of the people who are into thebusiness of Bet9ja.

Data for the study was also sourced from the secondary sources by extracting Bet9ja jargons and symbols from the internet. Also, Bet9ja slips were collected from a sampled population of the people who are into the business of betting and consulted in order to collect data for the study.One hundred slips (tickets) were collected. In the interpretation of the language used on those slips (tickets), twenty respondents that understand the language and own Bet9ja shops in some selected major areas in Makurdi metropolis were interviewed by the researchers in order to interpret the Bet9ja codes. In the course of data collection, the researchers interacted personally with the respondents. The researchers used jotters and biros in recording the responses from the respondents. The information collected from the primary sourcesand secondary sources was placed side by side for the purpose of validation before arriving at the data used for the analysis.

Conceptual Review

 Etymologically, the concept 'language' is derived from 'lingua' the Latin word for tongue, which emphasises the speech aspect as basic in language (Adetuji, Owaniyi, and Adeniran, 2017). They state that man is said to be a 'social being' and what makes man to act as a social being is his ability to use language for communication. Language as rightly asserted by Adetuji, Owaniyi, and Adeniran is the fundamental tool for social interaction that opens up the possibilities to convey, inform and share different ideas, thoughts, messages, feelings and viewpoints. Auer (1998) says language is not an abstract construction of the learned or dictionary-makers, but it is something arising out of the work, needs, ties, joys, affections, tastes, of long generations of humanity, and has its basic broad and low close to the ground. From the above definitions, we would say that language is very essential in human interaction for sharing of ideas, thoughts, feelings, messages, viewpoints and its use is greatly influenced by various contexts.

Pragmatics is the study of the speakers meaning for an utterance (Yule, 1997/2010). This implies that communication does not solely depend on the meaning of words that form an expression but also the speaker's meaning for an utterance. He further states that pragmatics could be considered as the study of invisible meaning. That is to say, pragmatics is the process of trying to understand what is meant by the speaker when it is not actually said. According to Agbedo (2000/2018), pragmatics is the study of meaning based on the speaker, the addressee and other features of the context in which the utterance is made. This simply means pragmatics is the study of contextual meaning.

Theoretical Review

The Variationist Theory was propounded by Labov (1960) and improved by Hudson (1980). Hudson (1980) avers that a set of linguistic items with similar social distribution form a variety. The theory holds that every language has varieties which could be classified as dialects, sociolects or social varieties, pidgin and creoles among others. Going by this theory. Bet9ja is a social variety of language spoken and understood by Nigerians who are into the game of betting, thereby constituting a speech community.

Grice, Levison and Moris propounded the Theory of Pragmatics. Pragmatics attempts to relate meaning to context of utterance. Levison (1983) says 'pragmatics is the study of those relations between language and context that are grammaticalised or encoded in the structure of language.' By this, Levision seems to be saying that context or situation of language use is very important in determining what a piece of language means and how it is to be interpreted. In the same vein, the social context of Bet9ja is full of expressions whose meanings relate to the context and cannot be understood outside the context or situation. Letters of the alphabet, numbers and colours convey meanings beyond their known meanings outside the context of bet9ja hence the application of the theory of pragmatics.

Theory of Semiotics (1916) was propounded by Ferdinand de Saussure. He submits that semiotics studies sign language in a particular society. He further submits that semiotics is a systemic way of studying the meaning of signs. Saussure's sign refers to physical-sounds, letters, gestures among others tagged the signifier and of the image or concept to which the signifier refers – which is termed the signified and the relation that holds between the signifier and the signified is signification. Going by this theory, Bet9ja jargons, letters, colours among others are signifiers as well as what they represent or stand for is the signified.

Theoretical Framework

The study is also anchored on the theories of pragmatics and Semiotics because these theories account for the meanings associated with Bet9ja jargons and symbols. Theory of Pragmatics is used in discovering the meaning of Bet9ja jargons whose meanings relate to the context and cannot be understood or decoded as referring to the same meaning outside the context of Bet9ja.The Semiotics Theory is adopted in accounting for the meaning assigned to symbols in the game of Bet9ja. The meaning of red in Bet9ja may not be the same in another context. Hence, the interpretation of symbols is married with context in order to analyse the collected data in order to discover the meaning of the symbols.

Empirical Review

Sule and Adam (2018) studies the interface of footballing and gambling saga among Muslimyouths in Nigeria with a focus on contemporary challenges and Islamic solutions.They submit that football betting is one of the new forms of gambling/betting among Muslim youths today in almost all communities in Nigeria despite the fact Islam vehemently prohibits such activities. Their findings show that betting on football by Muslim Youths has emerged from what was originally seen as a seedy or criminal activity of the working class to having betting shops on each corner and online betting sites screening adverts on to TV screens nationwide. It has been a gradual development, but over the last century, everything about football betting and how it is perceived has completely changed.

Olaore, Adejare and Udofia(2020) studies the nexus between the increasing involvement of youth in bettinggames and unemployment in Nigeria. They claim that betting games have different sporting activities with which youth can play betting on depending on their knowledge and prediction capabilities from sports. The game has sports such as football, rugby, lawn tennis, basketball, wrestling, boxing, hockey, baseball, horse racing, gulf, badminton, swimming, javelin, among others. Sports betting and gambling have become one of the most popular gambling and entertainment activities among youths and major elites across several countries.

Olaore, Adejare and Udofia submit that the advancement and innovation in technology have brought fame to the game and has increased youth's patronage across countries of the world, and this has made many governments around the world, including the Nigerian government, legalise sports betting activities as a business contributing immensely to the economy of these countries. The findings show that betting has attracted many people's interest to different sporting activities across the globe, thereby improving the participation and interest of people in betting games.

III.   DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Bet9ja Jargons

1. **Bet:** This is the process of risking money or staking money in order to predict the result. It is a prediction which in the context of soccer, if it happens as predicted, the predictor wins and get the amount of money the betting worth.
2. **Ticket:** Betting slip printed after betting. It can be said to be a receipt stating the matches bet, the predictions made, the odds given, the total amount the entire betting worth and the amount the predictor staked (paid) for the betting.
3. **Cut ticket:** This is a situation betting is made and after playing the matches the result of one or certain matches fail to be as predicted. A team that could not perform as predicted is said to have cut the ticket.
4. **Under:** This simply means less than a predicted number. For example "under 215" means less than three (3) goals scored by the two teams i.e. the maximum of 2 goals scored.
5. **Over:** This means more than the predicted number. For example "over 2.5" means more than two (2) goals scored by the two teams i.e. at least three goal scored.
6. **Even:** This means the total score combined will be even number
7. **Odd:** This means the total score combined will be odd number
8. **Draw:** The two teams having the same result.
9. **Coupon:** In bet9ja domain, it means a sub-section in the betting process where bets are placed on different sporting events with the aim to cash out money based on the time slated for such events. It is a betting ticket that contains the list of the events predicted and it is presented to a predictor for further certification as well as identity to cash out the money the bet wins.
10. **Virtual:** In bet9ja domain has to do with a process where some selected sporting events are viewed as if they are in existence though not in the real sense but rather in a virtualized form. Here too, bets are placed according to a specific time frame usually in ninety (90) seconds the expectation here is that bets should provide results within the time frame in order to cash out money.
11. **Zoom:** The difference between coupon, virtual and zoom is only the time frame. The time frame for zoom is shorter than coupon and virtual.

Source: *Field work (10/2/2020)*

From the above presentation, it indicates that Bet9ja has jargons which are associated with it and used in the betting domain. This is in consonance with Grice, Stephen Levison and Charles Moris'Theory of Pragmatics. Pragmatics attempts to relate meaning to context of utterance.

Bet9ja, Letters, Numbers and other Symbols

Codes (signifier)	Meaning (signified)
1	Home win, meaning home team will win
2	Away team, meaning away team will win
X	Draw, meaning the match will end in a draw
1XDC	Home team win or draw, meaning the home team will either win or draw. It also means double chance for the home team.
X2DC	Away team win or draw, meaning away team will either win or the match will end in a draw. It also means double chance for the away team.
12DC	Either of the team wins, it means double chance for both teams
12	Same as in the above on other betting sites
OV 0.5 or OVER 0.5	At least one (1) goal scored before the match ends.
OV 1.5 or Over 1.5	Both teams will score at least two goals combined i.e. 2 or more goals in the game.
OV 2.5 or OVER 2.5	More than 2 goals will be scored by the time the match ends, that is at least 3 goals will be scored
OV 3.5 or OVER 3.5	The two teams to score a minimum of four (4) goals combined
UN 1.5 or UNDER 1.5	There will be less than two (2) goals in the game, i.e. maximum of one goal (1 – 0 or 0 – 0).
UN 0.5 or UNDER 0.5	Less than a goal i.e. a statement/no goal (0 – 0)
UN 2.5 or UNDER 2.5	Less than three (3) goals will be scored by the two teams i.e. the maximum of two (2) goals.
UN 3.5 or UNDER 3.5	Less than four (4) goals will be scored by the two teams i.e. three (3) goals maximum
XHT	First half draw, meaning the two teams will draw in the first half of the match.
IHT	Home team win first half i.e. home team will win in the first half of the match
2HT	Away team win first half, meaning an away team will win in the first half of the match
XST	Draw second half, meaning both teams will draw in the second half of the match
IST	Home second half, meaning home team will win in the second half of the match.
2ST	Away second half, meaning away team will win in the second half of the match.
GG	Goal-goal, meaning both teams will score against each other (BTS – Both Teams Score)
NG	No goal, meaning both teams will not score against each other i.e. no goal – goal
IH (Handicap 1:0)	Home team will be given a goal ahead of the game, that is, home team is leading 1 – 0 before the game starts.
2H (Handicap 0:1)	The away team will be given a goal ahead of the game, that is, away team leading 0 – 1 before the game starts.

HS	Home, score meaning home team will score at least a goal in the game.
HNS	'Home no score' meaning, home team will not score any goal in the game
AS	'Away score' meaning an away team will score at least a goal in the game.
ANS	'Away no score' meaning an away team will not score any goal in the game.
IGG	'Home win but goal – goal' meaning home team will win the match but both teams will score against each other in the game.
2GG	'Away win but goal – goal' meaning an away team will win but both teams score against each other in the game.
OV1.5 HT	Before the first half ends, there will be at least two (2) goals.
UN 1.5 HT	Less than two goals will be scored in the first half of the match
OV2.5HT	Before the first half of the match ends, there will be at least three (3) goals
UN2.5HT	Less than three (3) goals will be scored in the first half of the match i.e. maximum of two goals will be scored in the first half.
UN ST 2.5	Less than three (3) goals will be scored in the second half of the match i.e. maximum of two (2) goals will be scored in the second half of the match.
OV ST 1.5	Less than two (2) goals will be scored in the second half i.e. maximum of one (1) goal to be scored in the second half.
1 – 2 goals	At least 1 goal and at most two (2) goals will be scored in the match
1 – 3 goals	At least one (1) goal and at most three (3) goals will be scored in the game.
Half time more goals	More goals will be scored in the first half than the second half.
No half time goals	No goal will be scored in the first half of the game
Second half more goals	More goals will be scored in the second half than the first half.
Home UN 1.5	Home less than two meaning home team will not score up to two (2) goals in the game.
Away OV 1.5	Away more than 1.5 meaning an away team will score a minimum of two (2) goals or more goals before the match ends.
Away UN 1.5	Away less than 1.5, meaning an away team will not score up to two goals by the end of the match.
Home OV 0.5	Home team score at least 1 goal, meaning home team will score at least one (1) goal before the end of the match.
Home UN 0.5	Home team less than a goal, meaning home team will not score up to a goal in the game i.e. no goal for them.
Away OV 0.5	Away team will score at least one (1) goal before the end of the match. This is straight forward.
HT/ST/1/1	Home team will win both first half and second half
HT/ST/1/X	Home team will win first half and draw in second half of the match.
HT/ST/1/2	Home team will win in the first half and an away team will win in the second half of the game.
HT/ST/X/1	The two teams will draw in the first half and home team will win in the second half of the match.
HT/ST/X/2	The two teams will draw in the first half and an away team will win in the second half of the match.
HT/ST/2/1	Away team will win in the first half of the match and the home team will win in the second half.
HT/ST/2/X	An away team will win in the first half and draw in the second half of the match.
HT/ST/2/2	An away team will win both first half and second half of match.
ODD	The sum of the total score at the end of the match will be an odd numbers
EVEN	The total score combined will be an odd number
ODDHT	The total score at the end of first half will be an odd number
EVEN HT	The sum of the score line at the end of first half will be an even number.
ODD ST	The sum of the score line in the second half of the match will be an odd number.
EVEN ST	The sum of the score line in the second half of the match will be an even number.
GG HT	Goal-goal first half meaning both teams will score each other in the first half of the match
NG ST	'No goal second half' meaning both teams will not score each other in the second half of the game.
1 OR GG	Home team will win or both teams will score against each other i.e. double chance for the home team
2 OR GG	Away team will win or both teams will score against each other.
X OR GG	The match will end in a draw or both teams will score each other.
X AND NG	The match will end in a draw and both teams will not score against each other i.e. either of the team wins without the other scoring.
X AND GG	The match will end draw and both teams will score against each other.
X AND NG	The match will end in a draw and both teams will not score against each other.
1XHT	Home team will win in the first half or it ends in a draw.
12HT	Either the home will win or an away team will win in the first half of the match.
X2HT	An away team will win first half or that first half will end in a draw.
1XST	The home team will win second half of the match or draw in the second half of the match.
X2ST	An away team will win second half of the match or the second half ends in a draw.
12 AND GG	Any team will win the match and both teams will score against each other.
1X AND NG	The home team will win or draw the game and both teams will not score each other.
X2 AND GG	The away team will win or draw the game and both teams will score each other.
X2 AND NG	An away team will win or draw the game and both teams will not score against each other.

Source: *Field work (5/3/2020)*

From the above demonstration, it is clear that in Bet9ja, certain numbers, letters and their combination convey meaning the same way words and sentences do convey meaning. This is in agreement with Saussurean theory of semiotics. These letters, number and their combination (the signifiers) stand for something (they signified). Elsewhere, these letters, numbers and combination become meaningless or encode as something else.

They are, however, meaningful in the betting domain or context in line with Grice, Levison and Moris pragmatics theory.

Bet9ja Colours

S./No	Colour	Icon	Meaning
1	Green	🟩	"Winning" – this is when what you predict happens in the game
2	Red	🟥	"Lost" – this is just the opposite of green, that is, when you predict a game wrongly. Alternatively, what you predict does not happen in the game.
3	Yellow	🟨	"Running" – this is when a game is still in play or still playing and not yet finished
4	Orange	🟧	"Being processed" – this is when your games are in check for payment
5	Ash	⬜	"Cancelled" – this is when a game is been terminated. Example, canceling a game in other not to play again.

Source: *Field work (5/3/2020)*

A cursory look at the above table reveals that in Bet9ja, colours represent or convey different meanings from their universal meanings in consonance with the Semiotics Theory which accounts for the meaning of colours based on the notion of the signifier and the signified.

Contribution to Knowledge

The findings of the study show that Bet9ja language is coded, hence, it is understood best by people who are into the business of betting. The study discovers that jargons, colours, numbers and letters are meaningful in the game of Bet9ja based on the relationship between the signifier and the signified.

IV.   CONCLUSION

Language is very essential to human beings and defines humanity. It has varieties and it is understood by those who share the rules, conventions and values of such a language or variety of a language. With the advancement in technology, new varieties of languages are emerging such as the social media variety of language and Bet9ja language which is characterised by jargons, colours, letters and numbers. Bet9ja language is used in the betting domain and understood by those who are into the business of betting. The language is highly coded and very difficult to understand by those who are not party to betting. For one to be very successful in the business of betting in Nigeria, understanding Bet9ja language is very imperative.

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