VAGUENESS FOR SPECIFICITY IN THE USE OF IGBO LANGUAE:AN APPRAISAL

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Abstract
The central aim of anybody that talks or writes is to pass an information to somebody. But, the speaker or the writer of any word or sentence may fulfil his or her aim, or may not.The reason as Lobner (2002) argues is that he or she has produced or failed to produce the sound and the sound pattern correctly, or spelt or arranged the words correctly or not; and the hearer or reader understands them or fails to understand them. In other words, whether the speaker is correct in his or her pronunciation or spelling or not matters a lot to the fulfilment of the aim of the speaker or writer. These are basic facts about communication. Unfortunately, many users of language overlook these basic facts and go about speaking as they like, not minding whether they are communicating or not. This has been found to be very common among many users of the Igbo language, hence this paper is set to appraise this and identify the possible causes and proffer possible solution. Words and sentences that form the corpus of the data have been collected over a long period from various users of the language, especially university undergraduate students of the institution wherethe author teaches. Other resource persons are newscasters, church service conductors and clergy, preachers, the author's household and from public discussions with emphasis on their speech. Cruise's (2004) exposition of descriptive type of meaning forms the basis for analysis of our data. It is thereforebelieved that teachers, especially language teachers, newscasters, language students, the clergy, lawyers, linguists and the public who use the language in their everyday communication will benefit immensely from the paper; while it will improve communication in the language generally.

1.0 Introduction

Meaning is central to every utterance or writing as each utterance or writing has one major goal, which is communication. To communicate, therefore, implies that the word or sentence should be rendered correctly or in the right form, or with the appropriate pitch variation depending on the intended meaning of the presenter. This, then, implies that the manner or the way an utterance or sentence is presented is of paramount importance for communication to take place.

Unfortunately, many users of language do not understand or care about the form or structure of the words and sentences of the language they use. Hence, many people think that once they can mutter or gibber words they are communicating. Some would not even want to accept that they should learn the right way to speak or use their native language which they often regard as simple and easy to speak and write.

As a result, they claim competence or mastery of their native language and proceed to speak and write it wrongly with the deception that after all their utterances are understood. Situations like this may occur due to long usage or fallacious statements that are being taken for granted. Take this statement in Example (1) for instance:

(1) 'Uwe Adannazụtara**abaghị ya ahụ**'
(Dress Adanna buy (pst) do enter (neg) her body)
Dress bought by Adanna does not size her

The Example (1) above is an example of statements that are erroneously rendered, yet people claim comprehension due to long usage. Perhaps, this is what Hall (2005:58) points at where he observes: "Words share out the work of reference between them, and also, crucially leave their owners (us) to do some of the work, by getting us to pay close attention to the linguistic and non-linguistic environments in which they are deployed".

Basically, such notion as observed by Hall (2005) leads most people to producing statements that are vague as in Example (1), in the guise of producing clear or specific meanings since many assume that they understand what is said. But this notion is wrong and deceptive, hence this paper is set to correct the misconception. According to Cruse (2004:193) "…the meaning of a sentence is simply the sum of the meanings of its words". Such words, it must be added, must be arranged in the correct syntactic order. In that sense, the statement in (1) above will read as in (2) below:

(2) 'Ahụ Adannaabaghị n'uwe ọ zụtara'

(Body Adanna enter (neg.) dress she buy (pst)

(The) dress bought by Adanna does not size her.

Therefore, whereas Example (1) is vague, Example (2) is clear, precise or exact in meaning specificity.

Data for this study were collected from utterances and writings of undergraduate students, newscasters, conductors of church services and preachers. Also, free speeches of author's households form part of the data.

Generally, the resource persons are native speakers of Igbo language. A greater percentage of about fifty percent are graduates, forty five percent obtained a minimum of school certificate while only five percent are blow school certificate qualification.

The data consist of isolated words and sentences. These were analysed to determine the type of vagueness in meaning that their usage produced and their meaning specificitylater provided.

This paper adopts the 'descriptive meaning approach' which Cruse (2004) adopted from Lyons for our assessment of the meaning we can adjudge to have specificity value. Also, the paper examines two extremes of meaning disposition – *Specificity* and *Vagueness* in the speech of Igbo language users, with particular focus on correct application of suprasegments. The paper shall enumerate the probable factors that negate specificity in meaning and which give rise to vagueness.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Definition of relevant concepts to this study

In this section, we shall present and discuss the major concepts germane to this study. These include Vagueness, Specificity, Descriptive meaning, Suprasegment.

2.1.1 Vagueness

Vagueness implies impreciseness or inexactness. Bussmann (1996:510)notes that "vagueness is not the object of internal linguistic representation"; rather "An expression is pragmatically vague with respect to certain semantic featureswhich it leaves unspecified". Hence, when a word or utterance fails to specify or distinguish the exact focus of the word or utterance meaning, it implies that it could mislead, misdirect or would not be helpful. Therefore, it will not communicate.

Malmkjær (2002), quoting Quine (1960) says that vague terms might be said to be 'dubiously applicable to marginal terms', as well as refer to items which are difficult to refer to their latitudes – where they begin and where they end. For instance, such words and statements as

(3i) 'Ụtụtụ' – morning

(ii) middle aged

(iii) He arrived at something to nine in the morning

Are all vague because, they are unspecific in line with Bussmann (1996) averment. 'Ụtụtụ' (morning) in (3i) is a period between the hours from say a second past 12 midnightand a second to 12 noon. The same goes for *middle aged* in (3ii) which is relative, and therefore not specific. The sentence in (3iii) again leaves the hearer to ponder over the exact time the man arrived after 8.30 am and a second before 9.00 am.

Vagueness in meaning can also occur when words or sentences are not rendered with the appropriate sound pattern or rhythm. For instance,

(4i**) 'convict**, as a noun must have its stress on the first syllable;

and as a verb, the stress falls on the second syllable thus:

(4ii**) con'vict**

Otherwise, it creates a problem to determine which word class it is and how well to pronounce it. Similar examples in Igbo language are the following:

(5i) 'bànyèrè' (v) – entered

(ii) 'bànyéré (prep) – because of; about

Each of the instances in (3), (4) and (5) above demonstrates that meaning becomes vague when wrongly pronounced.

2.1.2 Specificity

Specificity is a condition of being exact, peculiar, particular, precise, distinguishing and uncommon. It is a state of not being general. Cruse (2004) aligns withLangacker (1993) who likens linguistic specificity to viewing something from different distances. According to Langacker, "the less specific the greater the distance". This view further opens a host of other explanations to the meaning of specificity. Hence, Cruse (2004:48-49) says: "It is possible to distinguish several types of specificity". These he calls "type-specificity, "part-specificity" and "intensity specificity".

(a) Type-specificity, according to him is the specificity whereby "the more specific term denotes a subtype included within the more general type". For instance, in example (6):

(6) John bought a **car,** *car* is specific only to the extent that distinguishes it from other types of vehicle. In this case, its specificity is limited to the type (of vehicle), and does not extend to brand.

(b) Part-specificity refers to that specificity that distinguishes part from whole. For example:

(7) In specifying a period of the day, 'm̀gbáàchì' – *mid morning*is more specific than 'ụ́tụ́tụ̀' –*morning,*but only a part of it. Similarly,

(8) finger is part of hand; but whereas the former is specific, the latter is general even though it is its part.

*(c) Intensity-specificity*which is another type of specificity Cruse presents is that type of specificity that involves ranges of degrees of some property that are included in another range. This can be exemplified as in (9) below:

(9) 'OromaUche**tọrọ ụtọ** ma nke Ada **atọka**' – Uche's orange is **sweet**, but Ada's (orange) is **sweeter.** In Example (9), both Uche's and Ada's oranges are sweet, but at different degrees.

Thus, the degree of the sweetness of Ada's orange is more 'intense'. Hence, **'tọ (ụtọ)'** be sweet, and **'tọka (ụtọ)'** – be sweeter/more sweet present different intensities of being sweet whichis distinguished here with the enclitic **'ká',** and thus makes **'tọka'** – more sweet to be more specific.

(d) How to determine meaning specificity in language

Finegan (2004:193) enunciates ways that meaning is specified in languages. According to him, words, especially content words,*viz*nouns, verbs, prepositions, adjectives and adverbs have meaning because they refer to concrete objects and abstract concepts. But, more to that, they "are marked as characteristic of particular social, ethnic, and regional dialects and of particular contexts; and convey information about the feelings and attitudes of speakers".Finegan also observes that sentences equally have social and affective connotations; and he then asserts: "One obvious hypothesis is that the meaning of a sentence is simply the sum of the meanings of the words"

Continuing, Finegan (2014) observes that words mean what they mean because they are marked as characteristic of particular social, ethnic and regional dialects. When words perform functions as this, they play the role whichOnwudiwe (2017) tags "painting local colour"; and according to Ashipu (2006:127) such role by words "gives a penetrating picture of the people's way of life…"which Onwudiwe (2020) says include "ways of thinking and feeling which are distinctive of a particular region"In the absence of this ethnographic

function of words,Lobner (2002:20) categorically states thatwords do not carry any specific meaning *ab initio*, hence "…wordswhich we do not know do not have any meaning to us. What a word in fact carries with it when it is spoken and heard is its sound *form* (or its spelling if it is written)".

Lobner's (2002) assertion above is very crucial to the purview of this paper in the sense thatwhen the sound pattern of a word is uttered, it can only be apprehended by the hearer if he recognizes them. It should be noted that the recognition "is only possible if the sound pattern is stored in (the hearer's) mind as part of (one's) linguistic knowledge".At this time, the hearer will be able to discriminate entities of a kind from entities of other kinds. But, it must be added that the ability of the hearer to recognise and apprehend the sound pattern is if it is rendered correctly, and if the appropriate prosodic features areapplied.

Vagueness and *Specificity* are both intrinsic dimensions of Descriptive meaning which Cruse (2004) presents in his exploration of types and dimensions of meaning. Similarly, Finegan's explanation of the type of meaning contained in content words is greatly in consonance with most, if not all the enlistments about Cruse's descriptive type of meaning.

2.1.3 Descriptive Meaning

Descriptive meaning as opposed to non-descriptive meaning is meaning that is all embracing in specificity of meaning in an utterance or a sentence. It is a term developed by Lyon and adopted by Cruse (2004). Descriptive quality of meaningisexpected to contain the following characteristicsas enunciated by Cruse (2004:44-45):

(i) It determines whether or not any proposition it expresses is true orfalse. In other words, it accounts for the "*logical"* and *"propositional"* quality of descriptive type of meaning.

(ii) It is the meaning of an expression which constrains what the expression can be used to refer to; it is the type of meaning which guides the hearer in identifying the intended referents. This accounts for the "*referential"* quality of descriptive type of meaning.

(iii) Descriptive type of meaning is **objective** that is, it presents only one specific meaning or information and thus displaces or removes doubts or vagueness in an utterance.

(iv) It is fully conceptualised in such a way that it provides a set of categories into which aspects of experience may be sorted out.

(v) Descriptive aspects of the meaningof a sentence are 'exposed' in that they are obvious and therefore can be negated or questioned.

The above exponents of the descriptive type of meaning help to clarify the reason for its adoption for this paper. It is considered the best way to classify meaning and check vagueness in utterances and sentences.

2.1.4 Suprasegment

As the name implies, a suprasegmentor suprasegmentalis a segment superimposed on another segment. As explained byLadefoged (2006), vowels and consonants are segments used to compose speech which together form the syllables that make up utterances. Then, "superimposed on the syllables are other features known as suprasegmentals. These include variations in stress and pitch. Variations in length are also usually considered to be suprasegmental features …" (p.22)

Linear segments are the phonemes with which we compose words and sentences. But, these phonemes used to compose words and sentences on their own convey no meaning than its sound form (Lobner, 2002). It is only when the suprasegments, also called nonsegments (themselves also phonemes) are placed on them that they begin to provide the required or intended meanings.

Clark, Yallop and Fletcher (2007) argue that it is not only that suprasegmentals are superimposed on cosonants and vowels, rather "patterns of pitch, loudness and tempo are an integral part of speech production and often a fully meaningful contribution to the message itself" (p.327). Hence, Laver (1994) and Winkler (2007) add that suprasegmentals bring about "settings and adjustments" whichaccompany speech production and therefore embellish the segments with required tempo and rhythm that help to portray the exact meaning of the word or sentence.

The suprasegmentals, notably pitch, rhythm and tempo (Cark, Yallop and Fletcher, 2007); stress, rhythm and intonation (Collins and Mees, 2003); lexical and rhythmic stress, lexical tone and intonation (Ashby and Maidment, 2005) combine with nonlinguistic or paralinguistic features to create meanings in utterances and sentences. According to Ashby and Maidment (2005:171), thenonlinguistic features are the "tempo of our speech, the overall loudness, the overall pitch range, the frequency of pauses and the typeof phonation that we use". All these affect and influence the meaning of an utterance.

2.2 Factors that militate against specificity in meaning

Several factors militate against specificity in meaning in languages. These include*linguistic incompetence, illiteracy, ignorance and stylisation*.Each of

these factors contribute in one way or the other in disrupting the authenticity of speech, thereby promoting vagueness in meaning.Now, let us briefly discuss these factors.

2.2.1 Linguistic incompetence

Every speaker of a language is expected to be capable to produce and understand utterances in his language, including novel and unfamiliar ones. This means that he should be knowledgeable in the grammar of his language which O'Grady (2009) breaks down into the five components of phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics that constitute the core content of the grammar of language. Therefore, having knowledge of any language means understanding these exponents of the language, whereas deviation from or lack of knowledge of them leads to linguistic incompetence.

Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams (2003:1) therefore say that when speakers attempt to use that knowledge, that is when they perform linguistically, there are physiological and psychological reasons that impair their exhibition of competence in their languages. Because of these physiological and psychological reasons, O'Grady (2009:5) inputs: "In investigating linguistic competence, linguists focus on the mental system that allows human beings to form and interpret the sounds, words, and sentences of their language".

Paltridge (2006:6) says of communicative competence:

> Communicative competence involves not only knowing a language but also what to say to whom, and how to say it appropriately in a particular situation. That is, it includes not only what is grammatically correct and what is not, but also when and where to use language appropriately and with whom. It includes knowledge of rules of speaking, as well as knowing how to use and respond to different *speech acts*; that is how, for example, to apologize or make a request, as well as how to respond to an apology or a request, in a particular language or culture.

Paltridge elucidates the variables that enhance the norm of linguistic competence in the above passage. All of these are grounded in "social and cultural setting in which the speaking or writing occurs", as well as "the community norms, values and expectations for the kind of interaction and *speech act*". Corroborating Paltridge, Onwudiwe (2017) asserts: "It does not suffice in saying that language generates meaning: it is also very important to

determine how language produces whatever meaning(s)… when such social variables as 'culture, social class, (and) even gender' are applied in understanding the interpretation of an utterance, meaning may no longer be … obvious" (p. 259). Unfortunately, acquisition of most of these attributes elude most language users, particularly speakers of the Igbo language, hence their incompetence and poor performance in speech that hinder specificity in meaning and thereby produce vague utterances.

2.2.2 Illiteracy

Closely related to linguistic incompetence is illiteracy. When a speaker does not acquire proper knowledge of the components of grammar, he will not speak with specificity.

Knowledge of these linguistic components of grammar provides the needed ingredients for good speech that will produce descriptive meaning. Thus, Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams (2003:13) writing on importance of acquiring linguistic knowledge that will produce specific meaning in utterances say: "Our ability to speak and understand, and to make judgement about the grammaticality of sentences, reveals our knowledge of the rules of our language". Lack of this knowledge is illiteracy.

2.2.3 Ignorance

A dictionary definition of ***ignorance*** describes it as "a lack of knowledge, understanding, or education". In other words, ***ignorance*** involves deficiency in knowledge and even education. But, we consider "lack of understanding" more appropriate for this paper.

When a speaker lacks requisite understanding about the grammar or lexicon of a language, he is wont to vague utterances. Similarly, utterances of such a speaker will be devoid of specificity in meaning.

2.2.4 Stylisation

Stylisation is a result of conglomeration of several other factors. These include pride, ignorance and illiteracy. Most often, a show of style in speech results to non-specificity in meaning. It could be in pronunciation of sounds and words, in intonation, in tone, in writing spelling, etc. Coupland (2007) observes that stylization has multiple meanings. However, the meaning which serves our purpose here is that which sees stylization as a general quality of language use.

Bakhtin (1986:132)inCoupland(2007) ponders: "Modern man does not proclaim'; rather he 'speaks with reservations'; 'he stylizes … the proclamatory genres of priests, prophets, preachers, judges, parochial fathers, and so forth".Coupland (2007) however views Bakhtin's thought as not only 'artistic'

but rather "It is a subversive form of multi-voiced utterance, one that discredits hegemonic, monologic discourses by appropriating the voices of the powerful, and reworking them for new purposes" (p. 149 – 150).

Coupland(2007) further appropriates his analysis ofBakhtin's (1986) view above with this other: "Our speech is …filled with others' words, varying degrees of otherness or varying degrees of "our-own-ness", varying degrees of awareness and detachment" (Bakhtin 1986:89). This, he regards as an important and noteworthy idea.

On the whole, stylisationis an attitude of disguising one's natural speech habit for the purpose of attaining a certain level. Hence, Coupland uses radio presenters to elucidate the point thus: "Radio presenters, for example, may be expected to project preferred and designed personas rather than in any simple sense their selves" (p. 150). The point here is that stylisation brings about change from the norm to a personal or idiosyncratic fashion which often leads to vagueness and derides specificity in meaning.

Finally, Coupland (2003:154)presents the summary of "the defining criteria of stylisation"which also indicate the adverse effects it has on specificity of meaning, to include the following:

i. Stylised utterances project personas, identities and genre other than those that are presumably current in thespeech event;
ii. Stylisation is fundamentally metaphorical. It dislocates a speaker and utterances from the immediate speaking context.
iii. It is reflexive, mannered … It … invites attention to its own modality, and radically mediates understanding of the identificational and relational meanings of its own utterances.
iv. It requires an acculturated audience able to read and predisposed to judge the semiotic value of projected persona or genre. It is … especially tightly linked to … speech and non-verbal styles entertained by specific discourse communities.
v. It instigates, in and with listeners, processes of social comparison and re-evaluation (…), focused on the real and metaphorical identities of speakers, their strategies and goals …
vi. It interrupts a current situational frame, embedding another layer of social context within it, introducing new and dissonant identities and values. In doing this, its ambiguity invites re-evaluation of pertaining situational norm.
vii. Since the performer needs to cue frame-shift and emphasise dissonant social meaning, stylised utterances will often be emphatic and hyperbolic realisations of their targeted styles and genres.

viii. Stylisation can be analysed as strategic inauthenticity, with complex implications for personal and cultural authenticity in general.

3.0 Analysis of Data.

Having explained vagueness, we hereby apply some data to examine how vague they are

3.1 Instances of vagueness in the use of Igbo language

Vague utterances abound in the speech of most users of the Igbo language. These vague utterances span across pronunciation of sounds, words, and sentences. They also occur in the observance of tone and intonation in isolated words and connected speech. As discussed above, causes of such vague utterances are as a result of either or all the factors discussed above.

As earlier stated, we shall first present the data and then state the cause of vagueness. We shall go further to give the specificity dimension in the meaning involved and finally proffer the type of specificity involved. It also needs be mentioned that both isolated words and words in connected speech will constitute the data. However, a little more emphasis will be on speech which is noticed to produce more vague utterances in the data collected and even in daily use of the language, particularly caused by wrong pitch fluctuation. Words and sentences which produce vague meanings the way they are used, spelt, constructed or translated are also presented and analysed below.

3.1 Vagueness occasioned by pitch fluctuation

Meaning of every utterance depends on both segmental and non-segmental phonemes. However, for meaning of any utterance to be very obvious rests more on non-segmental phonemes and ability of the speaker to use them appropriately (see Onwudiwe, 2018, 2019). When reverse is the case, it results to meaninglessness due to vague expressions.Hence, Abercrobie (1967:102) asserts:

> The pitch of the voice continually fluctuates while we are talking. It seldom rests on a held note for more than a fraction of a second, and most of the time it is the process of either rising or falling. This fluctuation of voice-pitch is found in the speech of all communities. It is not a random fluctuation, but follows well-defined (though usually not generally acknowledged) melodic patterns which are common to the community and which are of considerable and linguistic importance.

In the data collected, the under listed present vague expressions due to poor or wrong pronunciation, first in isolation and then in connected speech.

a) Words in isolation

Word	Standard/specificity pronunciation	Vague pronunciation (Data)	Cause(s) of wrong pronunciation
i) Anụmba (name) (avsat to scolding)	Ánū̩m̄bá	Ànụ̀m̀bá	Linguistic incompetence, ignorance, long time of usage
ii)Ezeọdịlị (name) (one destined to be king)	Ézèọ́dị̀ị̀lị̀	Ézèọ́dị́lị́	Long time of usage, ignorance
iii)Izuchulwu (name) (God's decision)	Ìzúūchúkwù	Ìzùchúkwú	Linguistic incompetence, ignorance
iv)Elochukwu (name) (God's plan)	Élóōchúkwú	Élòchúkwú	Linguistic incompetence, ignorance
v)Esowune (name) (bother not)	Ésòwùnè	Èsòwúnē	Linguistic incompetence, stylisation, ignorance
vi)Ekelozie (name) (creator has established his position)	Ékělòzíé	Èkéélòzíé	Linguistic incompetence, long time of usage, ignorance
vii)Nwachukwu (name) (God's child)	Nwáāchúkwú	Nwáchúkwú	Linguistic incompetence, long time of usage, ignorance
viii)Alagbu (name) (Do not scorn) ix)Emenaka (name) (do notfight)	Ányááràgbùsị̀ Émēnááká	Álàgbú Émēnákà	Ignorance, long time of usage,linguistic incompetence Stylisation, long time of usage, ignorance
x)Ekwuagana (name) (talk not too much)	Ékwūàgànà	Èkwúàgànà	Long time of usage, ignorance,
xi)Obileri (name) (heart can absorb)	Óbìlèérì	Òbìl̀èrí	Long time of usage, ignorance, stylisation
xii)Anarado (name) (goddess do not convict (me))	Ànàáràdòsị̀	Ànáràdó	Ignorance, long time of usage, linguistic incompetence
xiii)Ọgwụdile (name)(efficacious medicine)	Ọ̄gwụ́dị́ìlè	Ọ́gwụ̀dị́ìlè	Long time of usage, ignorance, linguistic incompetence

xiv)Iloenyenwa (name) (malice does not give child)	Ílóēnyēńnwá	Ílóēnyèǹnwá	Ignorance, linguistic incompetence, long time of usage
xv) nweta(achieve)	Nwétá	nwétâ	Ignorance, stylisation
xvi) gbasara (concerning)	Gbásárá	gbásárâ	Ignorance,Stylisation
xvii) ukwu(great)	Úkwú	úkwû	Ignorance, long time of usage

The examples in**(a)** present isolated words that are wrongly or poorly pronouncedby the resource persons in the third column of the tablewhich obliterate their meaning specificity.The specificity or standard pronunciations are presented in the second column.

Phrase/sentence	**Specificity/standard utterance (pronunciation)**	**Vague pronunciation/utterance (Data)**	**Cause(s) of vagueness**
i) ụmụ Chineke "The Creator's (God) child"	ụ́mū Chínéékè	ụ́mụ́ Chínékè	Linguistic incompetence, ignorance, long time of usage
ii) n'ime	níímē	náímē	Ignorance, linguistic incompetence
iii) anyaya	ányíā [aɲɪja]	ányá yā [aɲaja]	Linguistic incompetence, ignorance
iv) ezeya	ézíyē [ezije]	ézé yā [ezeja]	Linguistic incompetence, ignorance
v) na ọ ga-abịa	nǫ̀gààbíyá	nàǫ́gààbíá	Linguistic incompetence, ignorance
vi) ma imee	mḭ́mēē	màímēē	Linguistic incompetence, ignorance
vii) Mbiliten'ọnwụ	Ḿbìlíté nǫ́ǫ́nwụ́	Ḿbìlíténáǫ́nwụ́/Ḿbìlíté nàǫ́nwụ́	Linguistic incompetence, ignorance, long time of usage

The causes of vagueness in these utterances are largely due to ignorance and linguistic incompetence due to lack of knowledge and understanding, first of "speech settings" (Larver, 1994) and second, the *melodic pattern* that applies in each case, which here is either "tone" or "intonation" (Abercrombie, 1967:105).Specifically, examples (iii, iv, vi,vii and xiii) are cases of pitch fluctuations due to intonation.

Closely associated to lack of knowledge and understanding here is long time of usage of pronouncing these words with wrong pitch fluctuation. Consequently, these utterances are devoidof the requiredqualities of descriptive type of meaning which are being logical or propositional, being referential, being objective, being conceptual and being expositional. Hence, theyare vague as they do not communicate.

b) Words in connected speech (phrase and sentences)
viii) dika ọ na-abịananchịkọtankendụya

"looks as if he is coming to the end of his life"

(b1) Standard utterance: dị kà **ọ̀**nààbịyá ná ńchịḱọ́tá ǹkè ńdụ̀ yá

(b2) Vague utterance: dị kà **ọ́**nààbịá ná ńchịḱọ́tá ǹkè ńdụ̀ yá

ix) N'aha nke Nna, na nke Ọkpara na nke Mmụọ Nsọ "In the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"

(b3) Standard utterance: Nááhāǹkè Ńnà nà **ǹkè̀Ọ́kpárá**nà ǹkè Ḿmṵ́ọ́ Ńsọ̄

(b4) Vague utterance: Nááhā ǹkè Ńnà na`**ǹké Ōkpārā**nà ǹkè Ḿmṵ́ọ́ ńsọ̄

x) Eze Solomon bụ onyedereakwụkwọ a malitereechicheya dị kaodiboOnyenweanyị wedataraonweyan'alana-achọ amamihenaenyemakaChineke "King Solomon who wrote this book, who started his reign as servant of God humbled himself seeking God's wisdom and help"

(b5) Standard utterance: Ézè Solomom**bú**ónyé déré ákwṵ́kwọ́ à **málítéré** ọchịchịyā dị́ kà

òdìbò Ónyénwéányị́ **wédàtàrà**ònwé yā nààlà nâchó àmàmĭhenà ènyèm̀áká Chínéékè

(b6) Vague utterance: Ézè Solomon **bú** ónyé déré ákwṵ́kwọ́ **āmálítéré** ọ́chịchị́ yā dị́ kà òdìbò

Ónyénwéányị **wédàtárá**ònwé yá nààlà **nààchọ́**àmàmíhé nà ènyèmáká Chínéké.

xi) Otutodịrị NnanaỌkparanaMmụọ Nsọ

"Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit"

(b7) Standard utterance: Òtùtó dịrị́ Ńnà nà Ọ́kpárá nà Ǹmṵ́ọ́ Ńsọ̄

(b8) Vague utterance: **Òtùtò** dịrị́ Ńnà nà Ọ́kpárá nà Ḿmṵ́ọ́ Ńsọ̄

The examples in (b) are of two parts. The first (in tabular form) comprises mainly phrases. As enunciated in the last column of the table, issues that lead to their mispronunciation are basically linguistic incompetence and ignorance. Most of these utterances are rendered with different pitch variation, even by the same people. Some of the points of great mispronunciation are highlighted.

The reason for this can be easily understood. Our study population, as all other users of the language who incidentally are native speakers of Igbo ignorantly claim competence in the use of the language. They would therefore rather spend time to study and understand the phonology and syntax of English and other foreign languages and often forget that as these other foreign languages, Igbo has its own phonology and syntax. So, they mutter the words and phrase of the language anyhow. Many of them also do not have sound knowledge of phonetics, hence their difficulty in observing the correct speech settings and pitch fluctuations involved. This is the reason for the vagueness in the guise of specificity as noticed in the utterances.

Examples (viii, ix, x and xi) are utterances collected from service conductors and clergy men. As is obvious, their renditions are mainly the result of stylisation, ignorance linguistic incompetence and long time of usage. Apart from their curriculum of study in the seminary which would be majorly on theology, philosophy, sociology, etc. not adequate attention is paid to language and linguistics which is the major tool for their ministration. Consequently, these utterances fall short of the qualities of descriptive meaning and meaning specificity.

3.3 Vagueness occasioned by wrong lexicon, syntax and semantics

Some of the data collected indicate vagueness in the areas of using the lexicon of the language. Here, a lot of people feel that they are at liberty to introduce words anyhow. Some even coin their own and use without minding whether they are communicating or not.

In other cases, some structure their phrases and clauses anyhow, thereby producing strange statements. In other cases, they do not mind whether correct concord is observed or not. In the area of semantics, it is noticed that the influence of culture in language is thrown overboard. The under listed are examples:

Word/phrases/sentence collected (vague words/phrases/sentences)	**Specificity/standard forms of the words and sentence**	**Cause(s) of vagueness**
i) Ezinne kwuru na yakabụ **nwa "**Ezinne said that she is still a **baby**"	Ezinwannekwurunayakabụ **nwata**	Ignorance, linguistic incompetence, long time of usage
ii) Ha jereebe a na-**agba**nkwụ nwanyi "They attended the venue for **pouring wine for woman**"	Ha jereebe a na-a**kwankwụ/ebummanyan wanyị**	Illiteracy, ignorance, long time of usage
ịiii) Ha na-ememmemme**ịlụ nwunye "**They are celebrating **marriage of wife**"	Ha na-ememmemme**ịlụ nwanyị**	Illiteracy, ignorance
iv) Chikena-**egbuọja "**Chike is **blowing wooden whistle**"	Chike**na-afụ ọja**	Ignorance, linguistic incompetence, long time of usage
v) Obikpona-**afuopi**"Obikpo**is whistlingthe trumpet**"	Obikpona-**egbuopi**	Ignorance, linguistic incompetence, long time of usage
vi) **Ada naEbere**bụ **nwanne**"Ada and Ebere is/are sister"	**Ada naEberebụụmụnne**	Linguistic incompetence, ignorance
vii) Amakacḥọrọ ka ọ **banye*ọkada*** wee laa**"**Amaka wants to **enter an *ọkada* (motorcycle)** home	Amakamchọrọ ka ọ **rịkwasa*ọkada*** wee laa	Ignorance, long time of usage, linguistic incompetence
viii) NnaNwekeziriya ka o jee**gotereyankwụ elu**"Nweke's father sent him to go and buy palm wine for him"	NnaNwekeziriyaka o jee**nutere/lutereyankwue lu**	Ignorance, illiteracy
ix) Ndị uweojiinwuderendị na-**agugbanwanyị n'ike**	Ndị uweojiinwuderendị **na-adakponwanyị/akwanwanyị ikon'ike**	Ignorance
x) O nweghị ihe e **mefọghị** yaka ọ maraihe	O nweghị ihe e **meforoya/e meghị ya**	Linguistic incompetence, ignorance

xi) Ha mere mmemme**ịtọ okwutentọnalankeụlọ ụka ha**	Ha mere mmemme**ịtọ ntọalaokwutenkeụlọ ụka ha**	Ignorance, linguistic incompetence
xii) Egbuekparaike dị **okeégwù**	Egbuekpara**nnukwuike**	Linguistic inconvenience, ignorance
xiii) Ndị oji ego achụ ego **nubataraagharaagharan**'imeSteetanyi	Ndị oji ego achụego**bataran'ụbara**n'imeSteetanyị	Illiteracy, linguistic incompetence
xiv) Nkọlị rịọrọ Adaobika o **nyere aka**jeeozi	Nkọlị rịọrọ Adaobika o **nyereya/ha**aka jeeozi.	Linguistic inconvenience, illiteracy, ignorance
xv) Onyeisi**ọkanga** **"**Leader"	Onyeisi ? ?	Ignorance, long time of usage, illiteracy
xvi)Ọ bụghị gị bụ**ihe** m na-agwa "You are not **the thing** that I am talking to"	Ọ bụghị gị **bụ onye**m na-agwa	Linguistic incompetence, ignorance
xvii) *Q.*Izuu, gịnị kaina-eme? "Izuu, what are you doing now?" *R.* **O nweghị! "Nothing!"**	*Q.* Izuu, gịnị kaina-eme? *R.* **ana m ezuike/arahụ ụra/ dg.**	Ignorance, linguistic incompetence

The examples on the wrong use of lexicon, syntax and semantics presented above greatly affect meaning specificity of the language. Most of these data came from newscasters and students. From the table, it is clear that ignorance and long time of usage and linguistic incompetence are the major causes of vagueness in these areas. It must be repeated that because a word or statement has been in use for a long time does not mean it contains specificity qualities or meets descriptive meaning standards.

Take for instance, the dialogue in Example 2(xvii) which is a common scenario in our communication. The *Response:* **O nweghị "**Nothing" is not only vague, but also it does not communicate and therefore does not contain qualities of descriptive type of meaning. This is because no human being that still has the breath of life is unengaged with one thing or the other at every moment of his life, hence the suggested standard/specificity responses.

3.4 Vagueness occasioned by wrong translation

This is another area that users of the language joke with a lot. These people forget that translation is not simply changing the words in a statement into another language. They are oblivious of the fact that translation connotes transfer of one culture to another. Unfortunately, our media workers come tops in this careless translation despite the fact that they influence a great number of

the populace. Hence, in so doing they help to create problems for the language. Some of these vague translations in our data include:

i) **Ụtụtụ ọma**for Good morning, instead of **Ị bọọia chi/ Ị pụtakwaraụra**

Ehihieọmafor Good afternoon instead of**Daalụ/Deeme,**

Mgbede/Uhuruchiọmafor Good evening

Greeting is one of the nonmaterial aspects of the Igbo culture and therefore should be translated in line with the culture it belongs to, and not that of a foreign culture such as English as reflected in Example 3(i). Anything to the contrary produces vague utterance and therefore will stall communication.

ii) **Ụlọ ọbaego ọkwụnetiti**for Central Bank, instead of **Ụlọ akụ/Ọba egoetiti**

iii) Ọ bụghị ihe**mgbagwojuanya**na o meriri "It is not **confusing**that he/she won, instead of

Ọ bụghị ihe**ịtụnanya**na o meriri.

iv) O kwesịrị ịdị na-**enyendị mmadụ éfè** ijigbanahụ ọrịa Corona

"It is necessary to **leave people alone** in order to run away from Corona, instead of

O kwesịrị ịdị **na-anọpụ n'ebendị mmadụ nọ**ijigbanahụ ọrịa Corona.

v) Gọvanọ **nyereikike**ka a kwaliteSteet a ka ọ dị ka Dubai.

"The Governor **gave authority** to develop this State to look like Dubai, instead of

Gọvanọ **nyerentụziaka**ka a kwaliteSteet a ka ọ dị ka Dubai.

Looking at these translations from the point of view of Cruse's qualities of descriptive meaning, and the cardinal points of meaning specificity discussed earlier in this study, we would discover that none of them meets these conditions. But, these are common and everyday expressions of the users of Igbo. Their frequency and long period deceitfully make them to feel that they are correct.

4.0 Summary and Conclusion

This study of vagueness for specificity, and with a focus on the users of the Igbo language has not been an easy journey. It is an area that had been in the author's

mind for a long time now, particularly whenever the issue about the endangered status of the language is mentioned, hence this study.

Although time and space did not allow a more comprehensive study to be carried out in this exploit, but it has been ignited as it is strongly hoped that it will motivate like minds to join in this crusade to salvage the Igbo language. It must continue to be said that the most deadly blows the language is receiving come from the owners of the language themselves who clandestinely dig the grave for the language through their apathy towards the language (Also, see Onwudiwe, 2016).

Nonetheless, it is our strong hope that this study will excite quite a number of them through creating some awareness in their minds. When this happens, it is also hoped that users of the language will be more cautious when using the language, especially our media workers and preachers who reach a great percentage of people through the medium.

More importantly, our effort has exposed some of the grey areas that linguistic scholars and the general Igbo populace should focus to address the endangerment stigma looming over the language. More and radical efforts in this regard are by this contribution being solicited.

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