



A Socio-Pragmatic Perspective of Some Wealth Names Ascribed to Married Igbo Women in Nigeria

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Abstract

Through a socio-pragmatic perspective, this research examines some wealth names that are ascribed to the married Igbo women in Nigeria. The objectives are to project some aspects of misconception of the status of the married Igbo women and their implications, as well as to advocate for the positive and progressive approaches to the perception of the status of the married Igbo women. Leech's (1983) Socio-pragmatics provides the theoretical orientation for this research. The data is a set of some wealth names collected, through observation technique, from the ascriptions used to address married women within the Igbo context across the southeastern part of Nigeria. The method of this research is qualitative. The methodological paradigm is interpretive, based on content analysis.

I. INTRODUCTION

The indigenous Igbo people are predominantly located in the Southeastern part of Nigeria, in Africa. Marriage is an integral aspect of the Igbo culture. Interestingly, some names, which may be marked as titles, are used to describe the status of married Igbo women. The factors which determine the ascription of these names, particularly the wealth-based ones, stimulated the focus of this research.

This research examines, from a socio-pragmatic perspective, some wealth names used to address the married Igbo women in Nigeria. The objectives are:

- to project some aspects of misconception of the status of the married Igbo women and their implications.
- to advocate for the positive and progressive approaches to the perception of the status of the married Igbo women.

Focus is on engaging with a socio-pragmatic analysis of some wealth names which presuppose the economic status and relevance of the married Igbo women in Nigeria. Many

works have been carried out on nicknames and titles used to address the married Igbo women, which are erroneously hinged on misconceptions framed around dependence and consumption. However, this research, through a socio-pragmatic approach, focuses on projecting the original and positive perspective that should influence the names, particularly the wealth names, used to address the married Igbo women. Certain questions that pertain to the research objectives crop up, such as:

- What are the causes of the misconception underlying some wealth names used to address married Igbo women in Nigeria?
- What are the assumptions and implications of those misconceptions?
- What are the positive approaches that could be adopted in names used to address the married Igbo women in Nigeria?

Through the socio-pragmatic perspective, the misconception underlying some wealth names used to address married Igbo women in Nigeria would be projected. Moreover, positive

approaches that could be adopted in names used to address the married Igbo women in Nigeria would be highlighted.

Expectedly, various works have earlier been carried out on diverse aspects of cultural and societal issues that are related to the Igbo women. For instance, Ezeifeke (2016) presented a collection of Igbo idioms that construct as well as reflect the gendered social order in the Igbo cultural milieu and calls for these expressions to be recontextualized. The paper adopted the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the research model.

Onukwube (2019) focused on the agricultural work traditionally entrusted on the women and how the modern women's economic life pattern shifted from the cultural or traditional principles to more sophisticated and intellectual empowerment, together with its attendant challenges.

Ubelejit-Nte and Erondu (2022) examined the gender-based values, ideologies and norms that mandate women devaluation and other relationships that have placed women in a subordinate status and recommends a cultural reorientation to "break the bias" and end all forms of discrimination against girls.

However, from a socio-pragmatic perspective, this research examines some wealth names that are ascribed to the married Igbo women in Nigeria. The objectives are to project some aspects of misconception of the status of the married Igbo women and their implications, as well as to advocate for the positive and progressive approaches to the perception of the status of the married Igbo women.

II. THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

The theoretical orientation of this research is based on the linguistic field of Pragmatics, hinged on Leech's (1983) Socio-pragmatics. On pragmatics, Verschueren (1999: 7) states that pragmatics involves a "general cognitive, social, and cultural perspective on linguistic phenomena in relation to their usage in forms of behaviour".

Still on explicating the theory of pragmatics, Mey (2001: 6) asserts that:

Communication in society happens chiefly by means of language. However, the users of language, as social beings, communicate and use language on society's premises; society controls their access to the linguistic and communicative means. Pragmatics, as the study of the way

humans use their language in communication, bases itself on a study of those premises and determines how they affect, and effectualize, human language use. Hence: Pragmatics studies the use of language in human communication as determined by the conditions of society.

Mbisike (2001: 183) states that: "Pragmatics is a theory of communication which deals with meaning in use." So, pragmatics basically deals with utterance interpretation within a particular context.

Sperber and Wilson (1981: 28) point out that "an adequate pragmatic theory should incorporate a general account of the processing of conceptual information in a context, and a particular account of whatever special principles and problems are involved in the processing of information that has been intentionally, and linguistically communicated." This proposition hinged on the theory put forward by H.P. Grice (1975), in which he points out that in all communication, there is a general agreement of cooperation between a speaker and a hearer, is what he called the Cooperative Principle (CP).

2.1. Cooperative Principle (CP)

The Cooperative Principle subsumes a set of maxims which specify the conventions that should govern participants in a conversation. The maxims, in other words, represent an attempt to account for how conversations are construed by participants in different speech situations. The maxims are as follows:

Quantity:

Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange). In other words, do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

Quality:

Do not say what you believe to be false. This is to say that you should not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

Relation:

Be relevant. Let your message be well related to, or connected with, the topic of discourse.

Manner:

Be perspicuous. Thus, let your message be clear by avoiding obscurity, and by avoiding ambiguity. As

much as possible, make your message brief, as well as orderly.

These maxims show that the cooperative principle suggests that communication is essentially a co-operative endeavour governed by specifiable conventions. Basically, successful communication depends on cooperation between interlocutors, as well as on correct interpretation of messages.

The notion of interpretation is vital to comprehension of messages. Invariably, the interpretation of utterances involves making the right inferences and appropriate assumptions, which in pragmatics are called implicatures. It is only when utterances are correctly interpreted that communication can be successful.

2.2. Implicatures

Grice (1975) classifies Implicature into two types, namely: Conventional Implicature and Conversational Implicature. [See, Kempson (1977), Sadock (1978), Levinson (1983), Thomas (1995), Yule (1996), Verschueren (1999), Mey (2001), Mbisike (2001), Huang (2007), Akmajian et. al. (2012)]. However, this research will latch on to the conventional implicature to analyze the data for the study.

2.2.1. Conventional Implicature

On Conventional Implicature, Sadock (1978: 282) states that:

Conventional implicatures include all non-truth-conditional aspects of what is conveyed by an utterance solely due to the words or forms the sentence contains. These include, then, most of what have been called by linguists the presuppositions of a sentence; they are closely allied to what is said in the strict sense, at least in that the same clause can determine either the truth conditions of a sentence or a set of conventional implicatures.

Invariably, conventional implicatures are entailed by the background information shared by both the speaker and the hearer. Thus, as Sadock (1978: 293) states: “conventional implicatures reside in the conventional meaning of the utterance.”

Moreover, Levinson (1983: 127) asserts that:

Conventional implicatures are non-truth-conditional inferences that are not derived from superordinate pragmatic principles like the (Gricean)

maxims but are simply attached by convention to particular lexical items.

Mey (2001: 50) notes that this ‘attachment’ may take the form of unavoidable, almost logical conclusions, such as when Leech (1983: 90) remarks that on hearing the following sentence:

“Sally is the secretary.”

we automatically conclude that:

“Sally is a secretary.”

In addition, Mey (2001: 49) points out that conventional implicatures do not depend on a particular context of language use. He asserts that:

Certain expressions in language implicate by themselves or ‘conventionally’ a certain state of the world, regardless of their use. For instance, the word ‘last’ always denotes (by conventional implicature) ‘the ultimate item in a sequence, as in ‘the last page of a book or manuscript’. Contrast, in conversation it might imply: ‘that which came before the time of speaking as when a speaker refers to ‘last winter’.

2.3. Socio-pragmatics

Leech (1983: 10) stipulates that “pragmatic descriptions ultimately have to be relative to specific social conditions”. He points out that pragmatics studies meaning in relation to a speech situation.

Leech (1983) notes that Socio-pragmatics is the sociological interface of pragmatics. So, Socio-pragmatics deals with any component of the social context that is distinctive to the pragmatic content of a specific language use. Leech (1983: 10) states that Socio-pragmatics is concerned with “more specific ‘local’ conditions on language use”.

Basically, Socio-pragmatic studies are culture-specific and therefore viable for this research, which is specifically directed at the Igbo culture, with particular focus on the conventional implicatures underlying the wealth names ascribed to married Igbo women in Nigeria.

III. MATERIAL AND METHOD

The data is a set of some wealth names collected, through observation technique, from the ascriptions used to address married women within the Igbo context across the

southeastern part of Nigeria. Leech's (1983) socio-pragmatic approach is adopted for the analysis. The method of this research is qualitative. The methodological paradigm is interpretive, based on content analysis.

IV. SOME WEALTH NAMES ASCRIBED TO MARRIED IGBO WOMEN

Consider the following Igbo address expressions that contain 'aku' which means 'wealth', as well as their English translations:

Oriaku - Someone who 'consumes' wealth.

Odoziaku - Someone who maintains and preserves wealth.

Okpataaku - Someone who obtains and acquires wealth.

Miriaku - Ocean wealth / Someone who brings exceeding prosperity.

Akudiya - Wealth personified / Manifestation of the wealth of one's husband.

Osodiemeaku - Co-acquirer of wealth, together with one's husband.

V. SOCIO-PRAGMATICS OF SOME WEALTH NAMES ASCRIBED TO MARRIED IGBO WOMEN

Oriaku - Someone who 'consumes' wealth.

Historically, the pre-colonial Igbo society was characterized by equity and balance, despite gender or biological delineations, such that women were highly regarded and economically empowered. Pre-colonial Igbo women engaged in farming and trading, and some were very prosperous. Unfortunately, when the colonialists came to Igboland, they altered the operational economic system in Igboland, such that the married Igbo women prevalently became constrained and majorly based their identity on their husbands. Thus, the husbands were predominantly the breadwinners, providers, and financiers of their families, while majority of the wives stayed home as housewives and largely were economically incapacitated, as well as generally dependent on their husbands, thereby became "Oriaku", which means "consumer of the husband's wealth". Invariably, the concept of "Oriaku" is obviously a colonial vestige. [See Adichie (2018), Ejeofobiri (2021)].

Thus, the socio-pragmatics of "Oriaku" is such that it contains conventional implicatures that are derived from events traced from the colonial era to the post-colonial era of

the Igbo society, and the ascription conveys meanings that portray the following:

- Colonial Vestige
- Economic Incapacitation
- Dependence

Nevertheless, the economic activities of the pre-colonial Igbo women portray that, originally, the women were economically empowered such that the ascription of "Oriaku" is a misconception of the economic status of the pre-colonial married Igbo women.

However, the concept of "Oriaku" emanated from the influence of colonization, which resulted in the men going to white collar jobs, while the women stayed at home to mind the domestic aspects of the family, thereby, became economically dependent on their husbands.

However, with the turn of events in the post-colonial era, the various opportunities available to the women have yielded different levels of economic empowerment for the married Igbo women. These different levels of economic status are expressed through the conventional implicatures conveyed in some of the other wealth names ascribed to married Igbo women, as presented in this research.

Odoziaku - Someone who maintains and preserves wealth.

Wealth is more sustainable when it is properly harnessed and maintained. Married Igbo women that support their husbands through being judicious, prudent, and proactive are held in high esteem, well regarded, and addressed as "Odoziaku". Thus, the conventional implicatures conveyed in "Odoziaku" include:

- Relevance
- Responsibility
- Respect

Okpataaku - Someone who obtains and acquires wealth.

Remarkably, the education of the girl child amongst the Igbo populace present opportunities that enhance the economic empowerment of the Igbo women to the extent that they participate in diverse fields of endeavour and involve in wealth acquisition. The married Igbo women that actively engage in wealth creation and wealth acquisition essentially maximize their possibilities and increase the economic status of their families and are thereby addressed as "Okpataaku". So, the conventional implicatures expressed in "Okpataaku" comprise:

- Potential Optimization
- Economic Empowerment

- Value-added

Miriaku - Ocean wealth / Someone who brings exceeding prosperity.

Culturally, the Igbo people believe that certain women carry “good luck” and positive aura that attract great wealth and progress to their husbands. So, men that trace their economic expansion or success to their marriages could address their wives as “Miriaku”, which symbolizes “ocean wealth” with uninterrupted flow. Aptly, the conventional implicatures conveyed in “Miriaku” specify:

- Breakthrough
- Blessings
- Prosperity

Akudiya - Wealth personified / Manifestation of the wealth of one’s husband.

Generally, the delight of the Igbo men is to lavish their wealth on their wives and family. So, they showcase their wives as a reflection of their wealth. In this connection, some Igbo men, particularly the wealthy ones, address their wives as “Akudiya”. Expectedly, the conventional implicatures contained in “Akudiya” portray:

- Fortune
- Opulence
- Abundance

Osodiemeaku - Co-acquirer of wealth, together with one’s husband.

Essentially, marriage is a joint venture and more rewarding when established in togetherness between the couple. So, married Igbo women that join their husbands in running their business enterprise are addressed as “Osodiemeaku”. Thus, the conventional implicatures contained in “Osodiemeaku” involve:

- Working in alliance with one’s spouse to create wealth.
- Partner in wealth acquisition.
- Collaborative relationship between a couple in business dealings.

Interestingly, multiple ascriptions can suitably be used to address a particular married Igbo woman who operates in diverse economic dimensions.

VI. IMPLICATIONS OF THE WEALTH NAMES

Oriaku - Excessive dependence on one’s husband, which results in limitations of one’s potential.

Odoziaku - Positive drive of worth and adding value to one’s husband’s acquired wealth.

Okpataaku – Economically empowered and progressive women.

Miriaku - Wholesomeness and blessings that flow without stopping.

Akudiya – Embodiment of affluence and prosperity of one’s husband.

Osodiemeaku - Cooperation and partnership in business, which enhance and increase togetherness between spouses and generate strong connections in marital relationships.

VII. POSITIVE APPROACHES TO THE PERCEPTION OF THE STATUS OF THE MARRIED IGBO WOMEN

- The married women should not be addressed with expressions that could limit their potentials.
- Positive expressions should be used to address them to boost their drive.
- Feel good expressions that enhance productivity should be used to address the married women.

VIII. CONCLUSION

From a socio-pragmatic perspective, this research examined some wealth names used to address the married Igbo women in Nigeria. To the extent that names are identity markers, it is strongly emphasized that positive expressions should be used to address the married Igbo women to boost their worth and drive. Further studies on socio-pragmatics from diverse perspectives are recommended.

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